



Painting by Juan Vladimir Martinovich

Listening to Saint Michael...

Plato saw in all created objects a reflection of eternal light, an imperfect image of him who is before all else. He compares them to shadows that a man sees in the depths of a cave, but who cannot see the realities that pass before the entrance behind him. Plato who because of his wisdom was nicknamed the theologian, could not imagine facing the sun of total truth. But a child, after the coming of the Saviour, contemplates Him at leisure, speaks to Him, and is spoken to by Him.

If Theologian Plato returned to the world he would kiss the feet of even a little Christian beggar, he would be ecstatic before him, and he would listen to him as if an oracle.

Cachica Notebook, 26

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!



Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

121
2016

Generalate House
via Angelo Brunetti, 27
00186 Rome (Italy)
Telephone +39 06 320 70 96
Fax +39 06 36 00 03 09
Email nef@betharram.it
www.betharram.net

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NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE
NOTICIAS EN FAMILIA
NOTIZIE IN FAMIGLIA
FAMILY NEWS

News bulletin of the Congregation
of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram

A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

114th year
10th series, nr 121
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I will always praise the Lord's mercy

Pope Francis through his reflections, actions and gestures during the Jubilee of Mercy that we have just lived, has helped us to understand that in the Gospel as in the practice of the Christian life, the law is not what is most important, but the welcome and forgiveness of the brother, echoing what the Father of kindness has done for each of us. It is in this way that fraternity is built between neighbours and solidarity between peoples.

Mercy comes alive in the celebration of the sacraments and in the warm reception of people during pastoral activity, catechesis and within groups. What mercy is spread by the devotion of our Betharramite brothers in parishes, shrines & chaplaincies! ... in celebrations of baptism, the Eucharist, reconciliation & during visits to the sick and by the attention paid to each individual...



"With conviction, let us prioritise the Sacrament of Reconciliation, since the touch with our hands mediates the greatness of mercy. For each penitent, it will be a source of true inner peace. (Misericordiae Vultus, 17)

Let us thank the Lord for our missionary brothers of Mercy, in the dioceses of Chiang Mai and Bayonne, who have been able to absolve the sins reserved to the Holy See.



"The time has come for the Church to rediscover the joyful announcement of forgiveness ... to take on the weaknesses and difficulties of our brothers." (MV 10)

The attention and care we take of our older brothers and sick people is the first manifestation of our mercy. This is done with dedication in the retirement home of Betharram, in the communities of Albiate, Albavilla, Chiang Mai, Olton, Belo Horizonte and Mendelu.



"It is in each of these "little ones" that Christ is present. His flesh becomes visible again as a tortured, wounded, whipped, hungry, lonely ... body to be recognized by us, touched and served with care." (MV 15)

Many of our brothers are devoted to the ministry education. Teaching those who do not know is a work of mercy, whether in the schools of Betharram, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil,

Thailand (Maepon); be it in the sewing workshop of Ban Pong, where young girls learn a job that gives them a life opportunity. In Côte d'Ivoire, there is the House of Welcome on the campus of Dabakala, the educational farm of Tshanfeto, where young people are offered agricultural training. In the same spirit, Caritas Bouar (Central African Republic) promotes the work of the land by organizing, for example, a seed bank. I am also thinking of the 30 village schools (CAR), the college in India, the chaplaincy of two religious Brothers in schools in England, teaching the poor in evening classes in Barracas. There are also the colleges of St. Michael-Garicoits of Rosario and Asunción. In addition, a retired English couple spend three months each year teaching English to our pre-applicants in Chiang Mai. Let us have a thought for all our brothers engaged in catechesis in all different sectors.



"To be capable of mercy, we must first of all listen to the Word of God. [...] It is thus possible to contemplate the mercy of God and make it our way of life. (MV 13)

Other brothers practice mercy by visiting and caring for the sick in Monteporzio (Italy), Niem and Bouar (CAR), listening to and alleviating the suffering stemming from social injustice as in Paraguay, where suffering engenders various types of addictions, as in Paraguay. Some serve the sick like our Betharramite brothers who are

of adoration, of love, like you give it today.

These external victories must not make us forget the triumphs brought by the Cross to the innermost thoughts of the soul.

Triumph over spirits which, after relying on their pride, were happy to desert the paths of error and come back to the lessons of the Cross.

Triumph over hearts, where a hatred of God and a contempt for good had accumulated into such decline that they seemed irreparable, and who surprised the world by the excess of their charity.

Triumph over despairing souls, who on the day of trial, of danger or of suffering, felt the need to turn towards the victim of Calvary to ask His forsaken love for the consolation, the strength that they needed, and the undying hope that they were once more hungry for.

Here is what this celebration says to you. It speaks to you about the victories of the Cross. It shows you the Cross upright, in every place, sometimes persecuted, but always leading souls to its light.

It says to you:

Christian, hope in the middle of suffering,

mourning, separations.

Look at Calvary and higher than Calvary. Trials will bring you an eternity of glory, like Christ.

Christian, be strong in the fight. The divine crucified will not abandon you.

Christian, don't let yourself be knocked down by the malice of men.

The cross is planted on a rock that the whole of Hell unleashed couldn't shake.

Abbé Maupas
Diocesan Missionary



THE CALVARY OF BEHARRAM (11)

The triumph of the Cross

In September 1916, Abbé Maupas celebrated the 300th anniversary of Calvary in the chapel of Betharram with a speech, the second part of which we now propose. It was in the middle of the First World War...

Look at the Cross in Jerusalem's Calvary: a cross of pain, of humiliation, of shame, that seems to destroy the work of its victim by snatching away his last breath. But the wonders are a sign that there is something different in this instrument of execution. The pharisees turn away beating their chest, and some days after the Cross is preached in the streets and squares of Jerusalem. Look at the Cross throughout three centuries of bloody persecution. It was hidden in the catacombs. However, the number of its worshippers grew continually, and one

day it would appear in the heavens in the eyes of Constantine who would give the Church the freedom to put it up in broad daylight and to teach it from the temples.

Heresy will try to keep in check its beauty by denying the truths of the faith of which the Cross is the summary and the symbol. But defended by the Church, she will be radiant in a more dazzling clarity. Religious divisions will try to disable it by violently separating Christians from their leader. The masses of believers will be saved from their clutches and

the lost souls will yearn to come back, to be rested, in the heart of the Church, at the foot of the Cross. May they make themselves heard again, blasphemy, sarcasm of the beginning! Some will blush at the Cross and will desert it. But the Cross will again receive public and resounding allegiance of faith,



The holy door of St Peter Basilica has been closed. The rite of closing has been achieved by Pope Francis, on Sunday 20 November, before the conclusive mass of the extraordinary Year of Mercy, in the Solemnity of Christ King of the universe.

chaplains to hospitals. Six brothers from the Adiapodoumé formation community visited youths detained in Abidjan detention and correction centre (Mica) in June.

"Mercy is the basic rule that dwells in everyone's hearts when he looks sincerely at the brother he meets on the path of life" (MV 2).


Some of our brothers in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil accompany groups of young people from the cities for rural missions: these young

people share the faith and joy of the Gospel and provide services to the isolated interior.

"The person [of Jesus] is nothing but love, a love that gives itself freely. Relationships with people who approach him have something unique and singular. The signs he performs, especially towards sinners, the poor, the excluded, the sick and the suffering, are marked by mercy." (MV 8)


In Brazil, certain bishops took back three parishes that we had run and

nourished very well. But Betharramites were not discouraged, however, and have re-oriented themselves in favour of missions to people in areas where much needs to be built up: Sabará, Setubinha (MG) and Serrinha (BA). During one of my visits, I sensed the fear of those people who thought I was coming to move the religious! They were accustomed to perpetual changes of priests, for priests had not wanted to remain long in these places far from the buzz of the great cities. In Uruguay we left the *parish of the Basques* in the centre of Montevideo for a mission in the López neighbourhood of Tacuarembó, where everything has to be built up from scratch there too. This corresponds to the Betharramite prophecy which is, in the words of St. Michael Garicoits, “to go where others do not want to go”, responding to the call of superiors.


 “The first truth of the Church is the love of Christ. The Church becomes a servant and mediator of that love which goes as far as forgiveness and self-giving. Consequently, where the Church is present, the Father’s mercy must be manifest. [...] Where there are Christians, anyone should find an oasis of mercy.” (MV 12).

When he arrived in Lampedusa, Pope Francis highlighted the drama of the refugees by a prophetic gesture. The Montemurlo community welcomed a family of refugees and took them with them to the new parish of

Pistoia. The Monteporzio community also welcomes refugees in transit to Germany or America.

 “Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has absolved sin and overcome rejection through compassion and mercy.” (MV 9)

The actions of Pope Francis, through his chaplain, in favour of the poor around Saint Peter’s, provoked a chain reaction of actions of mercy including in Betharram. The best known are those of the *Showers of the Sagrado*, in the Parish of the Sacred Heart of Buenos Aires. One of our brothers served meals organised by Franciscans in Milan. Our brothers in Rome collaborate in the service of a meal offered every Monday evening to 120 people and a dormitory that welcomes 20 homeless people in the Piazza del Popolo. This help is organized by the charismatic group of Friends of Jesus, Mary & Joseph who gather to pray in our church in Rome.

 “It is crucial for the Church and for the credibility of her message to live and to testify herself to mercy.” (MV 12).

Betharram is a work of mercy in the care of children. In Bethlehem the novices visit children abandoned by their families and fostered in two homes. In Bangalore, our brothers have a home for street children. The Casa del Niño in Adrogué (Argentina) welcomes chil-



forgiveness a right? Have we ever obeyed, not because we were obliged to do it, or because things would otherwise have taken a wrong turn for us, but simply by through the power of this mysterious, silent, incomprehensible being we call God and for His will? Have we ever tried to love God, even when we felt no great enthusiasm, and when He seemed absent and far from us, even as though we were speaking to someone obstinately deaf? Have we ever done a job that required the courage to forget and ignore ourselves? Have we ever been good and kind to someone who, for their part, has shown and still shows us not the slightest sign

of gratitude and understanding? “Every day I seek these experiences in the depths of my heart; when I find them, I can tell myself that I have had a spiritual experience, that I have received the action of the Spirit of God that works in me. I can say that I have experienced God. But if I find nothing in this, I have lived the spiritual desert. It is a struggle that does not end at any moment; grace does not come at once and does not dwell in the soul. There is rather a time for consolation and a time for temptation, a struggle that lasts a lifetime”.

Angelo Sala sci

Article 86 - Silence, respect for the mystery of God within ourselves and each other, promotes attentiveness to God, as well as the work of honest dialogue with one another. It will be a ministry of charity.

PRACTISING THE RULE

In the desert, in the school of silence and listening

SOMETIMES THE RULE CAN BE 'READ' IN THE LIVES OF OUR BROTHERS BEFORE EVEN FOLLOWING THE LINES OF THE BOOKLET WHICH IS PRESENTED AT THE TIME OF FIRST PROFESSION. NOT ONLY IS IT A RULE TO WHICH WE ALL REFER IN A SPIRIT OF COHESION AND UNITY, BUT OUR RULE OF LIFE PASSES FROM WORDS INTO THE SHARED PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMON LIFE.

When I started to get passionate about motorbike tourism, I was fascinated by taking a trip on two wheels along the tracks of the Sahara desert. Since that experience, I have not been able to turn away.

It is especially the challenging aspect that fascinated me in the desert: you cannot just get carried away by the romanticism, because this kind of travel requires meticulous preparation. The slightest mechanical or other glitch that can occur on a highway can become a big problem in the desert. I remember that everything from the motorcycle to clothing to food was prepared in the smallest detail. When setting out on a Sahara trek, there are two essential calculations to be made: the mileage of the trip, and therefore the fuel consumption, and the daily water reserve. The fatigue caused by these preparations is compensated by the sight of the landscape and above all by the sensation of being able to "float" on the sand with a means of mechanical transport, as if you were sailing in the open sea. The desert is indeed a great sea of sand, where you feel surrounded by silence and infinity.

This great adventure ended with my first trip to the Central African Republic, where I realized that there was also another type of "desert". My religious vocation quickly

grew out of this new voluntary experience, and on this path that I continue to follow, I discovered that there was also a spiritual desert. If, indeed, the geographical desert spoke to my heart, the spiritual desert is the central place of the struggle against all that obstructs our relationship with God, with ourselves, and with others. Where I live my mission, it is clear that the adversity, fatigue and preoccupations that hinder my search for intimacy with God are on the menu every day. In this sense the desert is devoid of any romantic meaning and adventure, rather it becomes the image of the interior space that every man finds in himself when he travels into his heart and discovers hidden depths, unknown places where he can acquire a new self-awareness and relationships that are vital to him.

But first, I believe, it is necessary to specify what the real experience of the spiritual desert is.

For this I will rely on a paper by the theologian Karl Rahner who, in a very concrete way, draws examples from our everyday life: "Have we ever decided to remain calm, for example, after being treated unfairly? Have we ever forgiven someone without that someone thanking us because they considered the

dren from 8am to 5pm to allow mothers to go to work.

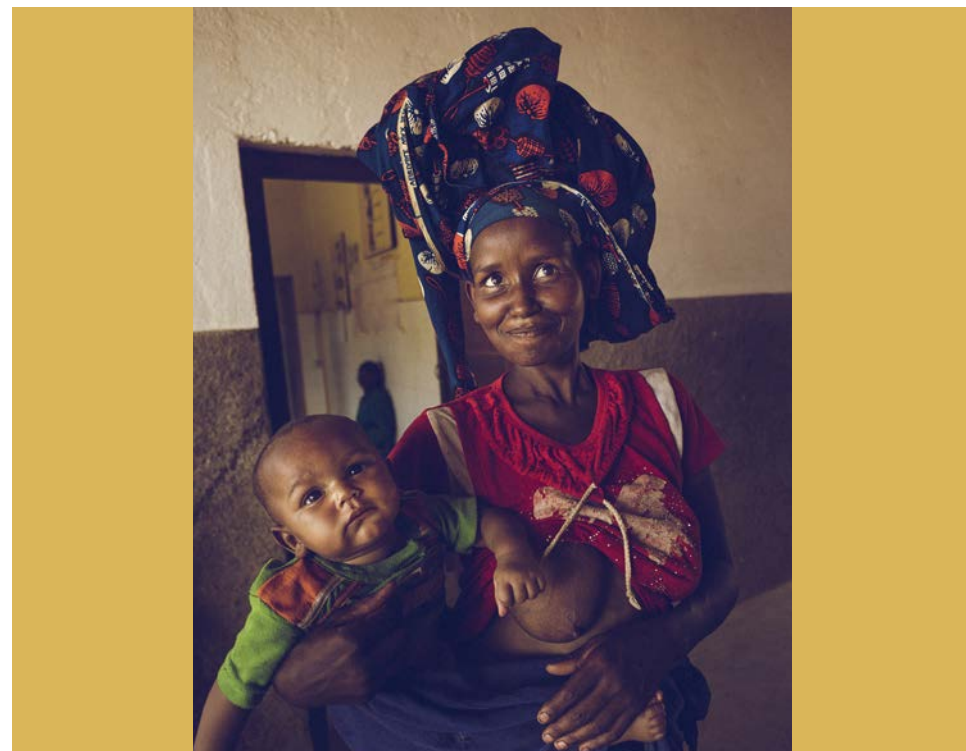


"The mercy of God is not an abstract idea but a concrete reality through which He reveals His love as that of a father and a mother who let themselves be moved deeply by their son ... An affective love." (MV 6)

Most of these works of mercy carried out by the religious and lay people of Betharram throughout the world are not limited to this jubilee year. These works were done before and will contin-

ue to be done in the future through the gift of self. Many people associate with our actions of mercy through voluntary service and pecuniary support. Without the collaboration of these lay brothers and sisters, we could not carry out many of these services. The Lord does not forget the glass of water stretched out to one of his children. For all this, we thank and proclaim in chorus: *I shall sing the faithful love of Yahweh for ever, / from age to age my lips shall declare your constancy.*

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
Superior General



Guess Who's Coming to Dinner



"Excellency, you are welcome to our house!"

Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi scj, Master of the novices of the Region Saint Michael Garicoïts, meeting the Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Mgr Pierbattista Pizzaballa ofm...



We would like to bring to your attention that the Vicariate and the whole Region "Fr. Auguste Etchecopar" have been working for quite some time to host this event that involves the whole Congregation.

In the pictures you can see the final stages of the renovation and the construction of new living spaces of a retreat house that the Vicariate owns in San Bernardino (next to Asunción) and that will be inaugurated on the occasion of the General Chapter.



Region



India

Final Vows & Diaconal Ordinations ►

On 11th November, we had the joy of celebrating the final vows of four of our brothers, Br. Bistis, Br. Vipin, Br. Edwin

and Br. Jestin. Rev. Fr. Austin Hughes, the Regional Superior, received their vows in the presence of Rev. Fr. Biju Alappat, the Regional Vicar of India, Rev. Fr. Tidkham, the Regional Vicar of Thailand, all the delegates of the regional chapter, the family members of the newly professed and the invited friends of Betharram.

On the following day they were ordained deacons by His Lordship Most Rev. Aloysius Paul D'Souza, the Bishop of Mangalore.



Thailand

On-going Formation ► On 10th of November our community had the monthly recollection led by Fr. Veerasak Supaperm a MC priest.

He shared about the maturity of Seminarian life.



Region



Holy Land

Gathering of seminarians in Beit Jala ►

On November, 6, there was a gathering of seminarians in Beit Jala and the novices of the St Michael Garicoits Region were also invited along with their Master, Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi SCJ.

The gathering was inaugurated by the Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, H. E. Mons. Pierbattista Pizzaballa OFM who presided over a solemn celebration.

Later the seminarians were shown round the seminary: the chapel (designed by Fr. Francesco Radaelli SCJ), community spaces, classrooms and library.

The meeting ended with the lunch and the traditional football match.



Central Africa

The betharramite mission in the Central African Republic turns 30 ►

The 1984-1985 Chapter of the Italian Province had called for the opening of a mission ad gentes which would be linked directly to the Province itself; the 1986 Chapter decided to, "consider favorably the request



of the Bishop of Bouar asking to establish a Betharramite community in his Diocese." After 30 years, the Vicariate of Italy has planned to celebrate this anniversary. In fact, on December 3 and 4, the Betharramite Parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Lissone, organized a symposium to present to the wide public testimonies and images of this happy occasion.

Region



Paraguay

Towards the General Chapter ► From November, 17 to 28, the General bursar, Fr. Graziano Sala scj, was in Asuncion to begin the preparations for the next General Chapter which will be held there from 6 to 24 May 2017.



The novices - Patrice, Emmanuel, Fulgence - with Dn. Chris Napoleon during a formation session run by Rev. Fr. Pierre Grech scj in Bethlehem

The Dn. Chris Napoleon Pelayo Nombres, a Filipino member of the Congregation of the Franciscans of Our Lady of the Poor, has asked to enter our Congregation.

On October 27, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, accepted him for a period of at least three years of probation, as requested by the Rule of Life. We welcome him with joy as a gift of the Lord so that he can discern whether the Lord calls him to live the impulse of the Incarnate Word in our Family of Betharram. Dn. Chris Napoleon is living at present in our community in Bethlehem. We have entrusted Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo scj, Master of the novices of the Region St. Michael Garicoits to guide him in this period of probation.

- On December 2, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life granted the indult of leaving our Congregation to Fr. Chaivot Chaorenkun and Fr. Chanchai Temaroonrung from the Vicariate of Thailand, in view of their incardination in the Diocese of Nakhon Sawan (Thailand).
- Besides, the Superior General received from the same Congregation the document confirming the decree of dismissal of Br. Martial Mengué (Vicariate of Central African Republic) from our Congregation.

We painfully acknowledge the separation of these brothers. We wish them to continue their following of Jesus where ever they will be. Let us accompany them with our prayer.

The Nativity of the Lord

IN THE MIDST OF OUR DISTRESS NEW LIFE IS BORN...

Since the beginning of advent, the streets of Bethlehem had already begun to be illuminated by garlands and lights. On the main square of the nativity a big Christmas tree is already installed, and every evening pilgrims, tourists, inhabitants of Palestine and Israel, whether Muslim or Christian are involved in what is going to happen. The atmosphere already announces that news, good news, will be happen here in Bethlehem, and there will be the joy in the crowds. And yet one cannot remain indifferent to the poverty and simplicity of this place. Bethlehem, today is a small town where the vast majority of the population is Muslim, Christians are a minority; But a minority that holds an important and appreciated place. Besides, the celebration of the nativity brings together all the inhabitants of Bethlehem, as well as people from distant cities; not forgetting the pilgrims who flock to the square of the nativity to witness a unique and universal event.

How beautiful it is to admire the presence and fervour of all those people who come to celebrate the birth of the one who brings us peace, the one who comes to live among us.

In this sober place, which has nothing extraordinary or grandiose, God is born. Our Lord has taken flesh. His birth shows us how valuable we are to him. God could have saved us with a show of greatness, or from his heavenly throne, but no, he comes to us. He comes down to our level to share

our poverty, our sufferings, and the reality of our existence. This total abasement reveals that henceforth our humanity is called to enter into communion with its creator. God himself comes to meet the people he created to communicate to them his Being and his Life. He comes to us, to live with us in order to make us, men and women who are alive. The people of Israel walked in darkness, waiting to see a new sun, a sun of justice and peace, rise for them; And the

word spoken by the prophets is made real and fulfilled "a branch shall come forth out of the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall sprout from its roots." (Isa. 11: 2) The nativity of Our Lord shows us the new hope that is given us. It is a new life that is inaugurated, humanity is no longer doomed to perdition. God raises us to divinize us and make us worthy. God dwells in our poor, weak and limited humanity to bring forth life.

At Christmas the poor take to heart the Son of God who lives with us in our desperation and makes a new hope spring from our despair and tears. It is the light of Christmas that He brings us. God becomes poor to

make us rich. We are enriched by him with his life and his love. A Christmas hymn says this: "Those who walked in the darkness saw their night come alight and on the people who lived in anguish a light has shone. The birth of the Saviour Messiah is the good news that brings us out of our anxieties, our fears, our doubts and our fatalities. Yes life is possible, life can be born and begin again. Henceforth paths of life are opened to us. God is here, life is here, love is here. And He builds this life with us day after day and we have to believe it.

Yes we cannot celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord and not believe in life. The Incarnation tells us that our humanity is now regenerated and revived. He who is born among us makes us stationary people alive and active. We are invited to open the eyes of our hearts so that the one who is the light of the world shines for ever. Celebrating Christmas is celebrating the joy, the life, the love of God among men. Michael Garicoits contemplated this beautiful mystery of our faith He contemplated God descending into poor and sinful humanity to reconcile us with Himself. *«The incarnate Word is a humble God. From the bosom of his Father to the bosom of Mary, what a step! When he leaves this exciting heaven, he goes to the vilest, most disagreeable place in the world, to a smelly stable! My Saviour, what extraordinary graces do you owe to the Blessed Virgin, who welcomed you so well and hosted you for nine months with so much love, without losing virginity.»*

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May the celebration of Christmas be a source of hope and new life for us.



Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo sci