



Painting by Juan Vladimir Martinovich

Listening to Saint Michael...

Ours is a hidden life; no matter what we do we can never know whether we are agreeable in God's sight; we have said that this is wisdom on God's part; what's the point of being assured on this question? Our need and our duty is to do all things well and then to abandon ourselves entirely into His fatherly hands. What He wants, as He wants it and courage! That's what should always be in our mind, where ever we are and in whatever position we may find ourselves, always fully aware of how unworthy we are of the tiniest graces from the Lord.

Cachica Notebook, 9

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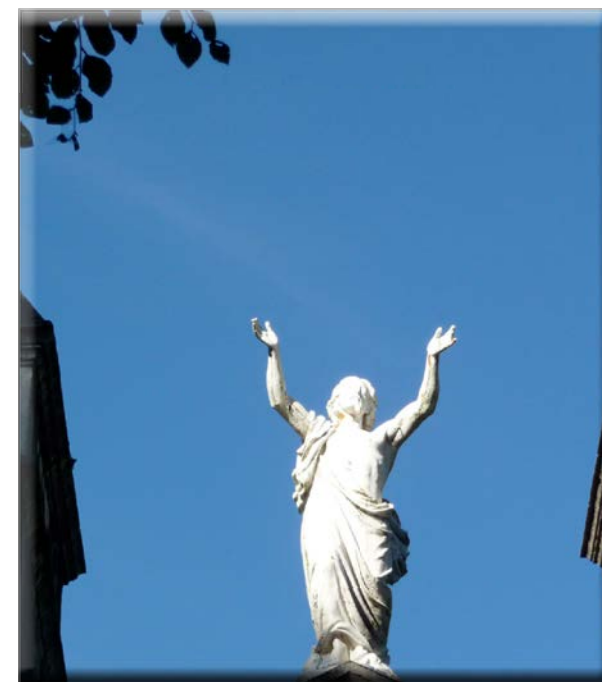
Supplement
Betharram Way of the Cross

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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

114th year
10th series, nr 113
14th March 2016



Let the austere climate of Lent give way to the joyful announcement of the Resurrection: "Do not be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen." (Mt 28:5b-6a)
May the wonder of this good news fill our life!
Best wishes!



Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

113
2016

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Following Jesus going towards the Resurrection with this Cross

IN THIS PERIOD OF EASTER, OUR SERIES TAKES A BREAK IN ITS TIMELINE TO ACCOMPANY JESUS ON THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS AT BETHARRAM.

IN ADDITION TO THIS ISSUE OF NEF, OUR READERS, IF THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN ANY OF THE BETHARRAMITE COMMUNITIES DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, COULD RELIVE THE PASSION OF CHRIST BY CLIMBING THE WAY OF THE CROSS SET UP BY ST MICHAEL GARICOITS.

« The Betharram Stations of the Cross comprise 15 stations which let you relive as many episodes of the Passion of the Saviour. They don't mention the 3 falls, alluded to in the Stations of the Cross known as 'Jerusalem Way of the Cross'; no touching gesture from Veronica told only through spoken tradition. Only the scenes of the Gospel are remembered here. From the outset, the Stations of the Cross of Betharram intended to have a 15th station, as a reminder of the miracle of the Glorious Cross of 1616, the station of the

Lord's Resurrection – at that time known as 'The Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre'. It's the normal crowning of the Mystery of Christ, the other side of his death

Raymond Descamps, scj

« Today, it starts off with Gethsemane at the exit of Our Lady's Chapel. We are invited to pause: here is the betrayal of Judas; and then we climb to the major scenes of the 4th Gospel. *To be closer to the suffering Lord, agonising, dying, in order to be ever closer to the Glorious Sepulchre.*

Gabriel Verley, scj



First Station
- At Gethsemane

"Father, everything is possible with you! Take this cup away from me!" However, God overcomes human frailty. "Not what I want, but what you want!". This 'yes' of obedience is the 'yes' of filial love. It is the 'yes' of our salvation. "Father, may your will be done!"

Superior General
Prot. n. 054/EN/16



Rome, 3 March 2016

For the attention of

all the religious of the Congregation
of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram

Subject : Convocation of the next ordinary General Chapter in 2017.

After listening to the proposal of the Council of the Congregation (appointed as A Working Commission, with the advice of my Council, cf. RdV S. 10) about the venue and the date of the celebration of the next ordinary General Chapter,

and with the consent of my Council (cf. RdV Nr. 205/a),

I CALL

the XXVII ordinary General Chapter

from 6 to 24 May, 2017

in Asunción (Paraguay).

The Rule of Life reminds us that «*the General Chapter [is] the sign of unity and charity for all religious of our Institute, it is an ecclesial event*» (RdV Nr. 180).

From now on I invite you all, religious and laity, to pray the Lord so that this meeting, so important for the life and the mission of the Congregation, bear fruit abundantly.

In Corde Jesu,

Fr. Graziano Sala, s.c.j.

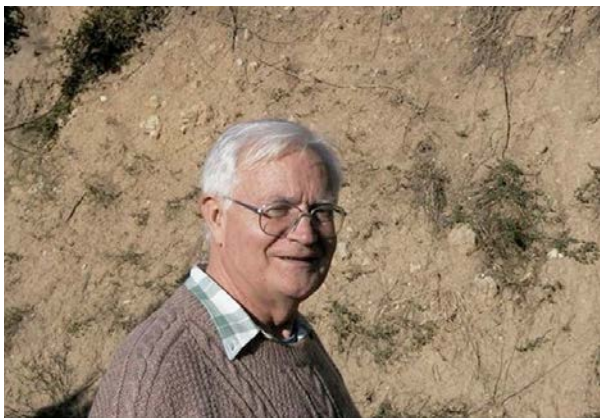
Fr. Graziano Sala
(General Secretary)



Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez, s.c.j.

Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez
(Superior General)

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Brother, will be given to him not because of any actions he may have performed but as a sign of his love and mercy. He now understands the extraordinary revelation which St Michael Garicoits has bequeathed to us: "What should be the principal character of our spiritual life? Christian goodness. Without this goodness we shall never have the spirit of generosity with which we ought to serve God.

Fr Andre Grossard can present himself before God the Father, full of love and mercy as he unites himself to the words of Jesus on the Cross "all is accomplished". All is accomplished and we can be sure that he is saying it with humility, fully aware of his shortcomings, his limits and his weaknesses. He can present himself in peace for God's arms are outstretched to him, full of compassion. In this year of mercy more than ever, we are sure that his Son Jesus will present our Brother so that he will be received with compassion and forgiveness. He was a Religious of the Heart of Jesus for 30 years as educator and teacher and for 25 years as a religious priest in parish ministry. We pray that our heavenly home of peace, solace and consolation which the Lord in his goodness has appointed for our

May Our Lady of Betharram stand beside our Brother, Father Andre, in this ultimate offering of his life. Let us receive the consoling words of Pope Francis in this year of Mercy: "Mary never grows tired of casting her eyes of mercy on us and making us worthy of contemplating the Face of Mercy, her Son Jesus. May Fr Andre pray for us, for Betharram, so that young candidates may present themselves and that we can pass on the charism of the Heart of Jesus, "humble and obedient" which Saint Michael left us. May our act of brotherly love this morning place us under the protection of Mary that like her "we may be always ready for whatever God wants and obedient to whatever God does."

Homily by Laurent Bacho scj

In memoriam

On March 1, in Uzein (France), at the age of 99 years, Mrs Marie Thérèse Vignau, mother of Fr Michel Vignau SCJ and sister of Fr Baradat SCJ, returned to the Father's House. We entrust her to the mercy of the Lord and we pray Jesus, the Good Shepherd, to console her family.

Betharram Communities in a Church "which goes forth"

Rome, 14 March 2016

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Here we are full in the heart of Lent which is a way to purify ourselves and renew our Baptism as we celebrate Easter. With this letter another path is open before us: the preparation of the 27th General Chapter which will be held at San Bernardino (Vicariate of Paraguay) from 6 to 24 May 2017.

With the consent of my Council, I decided to summon the 27 General Chapter of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram in the place and on the date mentioned above (RV 182: st 9). We have also decided to name the Council of the Congregation as the "Working Commission" as laid down in statute No 10 of our Rule of Life.

We have decided to celebrate the feast of St Michael Garicoits on the 14 May 2017 with the laity of the three Vicariates which are part of Father Auguste Etchecopar Region. We shall celebrate Mass in the morning, we shall have lunch together and then we shall take the time to listen to what they want to tell us. In this particular Region there are a lot of people who share our mission. Without them Betharram would be unable to bring its mission to a happy conclusion particularly in the realm of education.

In our discussions with the Working Commission we decided to stress

the Betharramite mission; what are its principal characteristics? "We don't have specific good works" said Fr Davignau to those who were consulting him in 1968. Our mission can be summed up in every type of ministry: education, parochial ministry, health, spiritual direction, accompanying groups, popular missions, but cannot be identified with any one of them. Rather than a particular ministry the mission of Betharram is more like a way of working marked by the spirit of obedience; this is what keeps us free, available, capable of leaving everything, no matter how competent we may be, "to leave immediately" for wherever the Superiors may call us.

St Michael, quoted in article 15 of the Rule of Life, has this to say: "the aim of our Society is not so much to preach, hear confessions or teach, etc., as to form men well disposed to perform these ministries worthily when the bishop or leader of the Society asks them. The object of the Society is then to train and form these ministers so perfectly that at the first signal of the will of their bishop or superior they can be worthily chosen to work for the salvation of souls".

Pope Francis made me reflect on this when he spoke about the synodal dimension of the Church in his talk



«Free, available, capable of leaving everything,... "to go forth"
for wherever the Superiors may call us».

on 17 October 2015. As you know the word "synod" means "walking together", "advancing together". This idea is one of the most precious heritages of Vatican II. Everybody knows how necessary, exacting, beneficial and beautiful it is to "advance together".

As consecrated souls even though the mission may scatter us worldwide, our particular way of life consists in "walking together". That demands that we listen to each other in fraternal communities, in assemblies of the Vicariate, in Regional and General Chapters, and in Councils. Then we must listen to the people to "the point of feeling in them and with them what is God's will for us to set out". We must also listen to the priests, to pastoral agents, the Bishops' Conference, the Holy Father.

"We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives." (EG 171).

Our communities will be meaningless if we don't communicate what is essential in our eyes and if we don't listen to what our brother wants to tell us. Without

Decisions by the General Superior & his Council

During the General Council on 13 February 2016, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council...

- **admitted to final profession and presented to the Diaconate Br Jacob Biso Puliampally and br Antony Siluvai** (Vicariate of India, Region of Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified);

- **admitted to final profession Br Dédé Katé Constant** (Vicariate of the Ivory Coast, Region of Saint Michael Garicoïts).

IN MEMORIAM

Father André GROSSARD scj

Paris (France), 29 January 1928 - Nay (France), 3 March 2016

| Texts 2 Cor 4,14 - 5,1 and John 9, 25-30 |

We have chosen this Gospel text corresponding to the liturgical season we are celebrating just now; this second part of Lent brings us to contemplate the Pascal mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Also here at Betharram on the 400th anniversary of the miracle of the Cross, we are more aware of the mystery of the Cross which is the source of the mercy of God the Father which we are contemplating in this Holy Year. As religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram our Rule of Life shows us that the sick "with Our Lady at the foot of the Cross share very closely in the redemption of mankind." We know the sufferings which

Fr Andre Grossard endured, the sufferings of seeing himself diminished, the sufferings of seeing his own body, that "outer human nature falling into decay". Following in the footsteps of Jesus he had to drink the bitter dregs of which the Gospel speaks and which filled him with bitterness. His illness was a source of physical and psychological torment preventing him from having a calm and serene relationship with his community and friends. Thanks to our Faith we believe that death frees us from the degradation of the exterior so that the inner being can benefit from the extraordinary weight of eternal glory which "God the Father prepared for him and which He is preparing for us" as St Paul assures us.

reports, and constitution of dossiers. These are all matters which have a real connection with formation.

7/- Obviously, our reflexions were often backed up by points brought to our attention by statements by the Pope in his different meetings, especially the different declarations to Major Religious Superiors and the congress for the young in formation in September, as well as for the 50 anniversary of the Council document "Presbyterorum Ordinis". The celebration of Mass on 2 February with the Pope for the closing of the year of consecrated life was a very touching moment.

Conclusion:

All our reflexions bore in mind the reality of our Congregation with all its joys and sorrows as they were raised by the Superior General in his introduction: in five years there have been 35 Final professions and the exit of 9 religious who have left the

Congregation after a few years ministry. Today Initial Formation represents 30 scholastics of whom 13 have completed their theology, 14 novices and 43 postulants. Obviously we haven't forgotten nor hidden the vocational desert which Europe is facing just now and which doesn't leave us indifferent.

However we had the joy of seeing 7 new Formators native of the realities of our Congregation and who came to join their 6 elders who had assisted at the last Formation Session at Adiapodoume in July 2007. These are fresh energy who have undergone preparation and who now bring a great deal of hope for the future of Betharram.

Laurent Bacho SJ
GENERAL COUNCILLOR FOR FORMATION



communication and without listening there can be no meeting possible between brothers, so much so that communities become hotel lodgings for residents. How could we be agents of the culture of meeting others, if fraternity which is supposed to be typical of religious life doesn't find a way into our communities

by a genuine and deep sense of communication amongst ourselves?

We are all brothers "marching together" towards our meeting with Christ, the Lord, in the Church and in the Congregation. Within it no one can dominate the others. On the contrary in the Congregation as in the Church someone must "lower himself" to be at the service of his brethren throughout the entire journey. The Congregation like the Church is an upturned pyramid the tip of which is beneath the foundations. This is why those who hold positions of authority are called "ministers" because they are the least of all. Let us never forget that! For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today and always the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is that of the Cross.



"Everybody knows how necessary, exacting, beneficial and beautiful it is to 'advance together'."

It is fundamental to integrate this ecclesiology so much so that instead of being a source of division between Superiors and religious, like enemies clashing as they pursue opposing plans, we love each other like brothers, we watch over each other, we feel involved in the life and mission of every religious and every community. Finally, it is the only thing that matters in the Congregation. Superiors like any other religious are at the service of each brother, of each community, for the life and mission entrusted by the Church to the Congregation where so ever we have been mandated.

"Walking together", communication, listening and meeting are not contradictory with the "going forth" demanded by the mission. The spirituality of "going forth" is founded anthropologically but also

theologically: "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for me and for the Gospel will save it" (Mk 8, 35). We cannot fulfil ourselves if we don't make this movement out: personal blooming is the recompense for the gift of self to others as part of service. "To go forth" means a willingness to go further afield, to bid farewell to our securities, to all that we have achieved, to go to places where there is still plenty of work to do, without being preoccupied for self, but looking out for the good still to be done on the outskirts. If we take a look at some of our actual implantations, especially the colleges, we began in the outskirts stripped of educational structures. Today however such works are in the heart of the city.

The General Chapter is a golden opportunity to "walk together" in a precise place and for a short period of time so as "to see, judge and act" on the fidelity of Betharramites worldwide to the spirituality and mission entrusted by the Holy Spirit, to St Michael in the 19th century, and to us today. And after this short interlude, we shall resume our "walk together" in the missionary dispersion of our communities which is the reason for our consecration. It will be a time for listening to each other after a time for listening to the people and the Pastors, so as to find out in what direction to go in response to the Will of God which has assembled us. Every religious has played an active role in electing those delegates who will represent him in this listening and discerning exercise. Here all the votes are of equal value.

The preparation and celebration of the Chapter is a time of grace to intensify our listening to the Word of God and the life of those men who will listen to us; it will intensify also our prayer asking for the courage to do God's Will and not that of those who are the best speakers, who have greatest influence or exciting ideas. It should also be a special time to practise the works of mercy showing what we really are.

The Commission has prepared material to help us pray, reflect, and share in our community meetings, assemblies, the Regional and General Chapters. We shall thus make sure that the delegates of all the religious will receive the strength, wisdom and light of the Holy Spirit in order to instil a fresh surge in our religious family for the next six years in fidelity to the Gospel of Mercy and to the men and women of our times. For this we are not alone; we can count on Our Lady of Betharram, on St Michael Garicoits, Fr Etchecopar and on all the Betharramites in heaven and on earth; they are interceding for us, so that those who embody the charism today may remain faithful to it and through their dynamism will draw others on the same path.

May we, in the light of this charism, remain united daily in the "Here I Am" of the Heart of Jesus.

We remain fraternally in this gentle, humble and obedient Heart.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
Superior General

1/- An experience of God.

This experience has its source in meditation on the Word of God, together with a personal review especially in accompaniment and the daily examen. We are of the opinion that God lets Himself be known through his Word but also in the different situations which arise through the "incessant fermentation" of his Spirit which is constantly working in our cultural roots which are often the fruits but sometimes obstacles.

2/- This contemplation results in the imitation of Jesus "emptied and obedient". The practice of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius throws a special light on the disciple's pathway often full of the joys but also the humiliations which, even though not always sought after, are transformed into a path towards growth. The gentle touch of the formator helps the novice to see how such frustrations are a method of progress and are the necessary vigilance whereby God's glory is first.

3/- If God's Word is primary source then the Rule of Life and the "ratio formationis" are the special means of providing us with excellent criteria for judging the progress the novice is making and which is the major concern of the Formator. These two methods to be found in the charism of St Michael help the Formator to reach the right conclusion in the discernment of which he has responsibility; the Regional Council and the General Council depend on his judgement in order to exercise the



discernment which is theirs by right.

4/- In our present day society where personal achievement, blossoming and promotion are the order of the day, initial formation means to be at the forefront of the personal development requiring freedom and responsibility. We can see for ourselves the dangers of a form of education where these two terms are not connected. Our "ratio formationis" contains these two aims.

5/- Even though it is obvious to all concerned, we often returned to the idea that formation touches the heart of the individual which is the source of an authentic conversion. Good personal judgement is necessary showing that conversion is to be found in deep seated changes "internal and external"; "disposition and position" are the themes which are dear to St Michael whose equilibrium can be found in his whole life.

6/- As Formators we were able to discuss the different points of life in our Houses of Formation: use of the different means of communication, abuse of alcohol, pocket money, rendering accounts, provisional budgets, study, legal views, preparation of

learn with others. I discovered that they had worked sufficiently hard with the means at their disposal to accompany and form the religious of the Congregation.

I also realised that formation is a vocation. The religious brother is called to pass this on, through his life and through the whole heritage of the Betharramite religious family. I was happy to see our elders who still have the same get-up-and-go and a great love for the support and formation of religious brothers. I also had the joy to see the young religious say their "Here I Am" to progress with their brothers who want to share and live out our spiritual heritage. A lot of effort has been made to improve the formation and give the maximum resources and tools. I am thinking especially of the Rule of Life and the Formation Guide (*Ratio Formationis*) which are treasures but also of the years of formation which are granted to the religious to prepare them better for their task. The openness towards the regions' different cultures made an impression on me, just as the reality of today's world does. They are aspects that have



been taken into account, not forgetting or losing sight of the essence of our Betharramite religious life, the legacy left to us by St Michael Garicoits. So, it is in relying on the Grace of God that I have accepted this service that has been asked of me; I have much to learn. The year of formation that I am following in Paris, being at the Betharram base house, allows me to acquire better bearings and solid bases for my own formation in order to pass on our shared heritage.

Jean Paul Kissi Ayo scj

Formators' Session in brief

IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO LET THE REST OF THE CONGREGATION KNOW ABOUT THE WORK THAT WENT ON HERE IN ROME FOR THE LAST TEN DAYS DURING THE SESSION FOR THE 13 MEMBERS RESPONSIBLE FOR INITIAL FORMATION TOGETHER WITH THREE REGIONAL SUPERIORS AND FOUR MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL BETWEEN 28 JANUARY AND 7 FEBRUARY 2016. WE STARTED OFF WITH THE "FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES" OF THE INITIAL FORMATION PROGRAMME IN BETHARRAM.

Why have a Chapter in Latin America?

Is it to allow the religious from the regions of St Michael Garicoits and St Mariam to do some tourism? Or to reduce travel for the religious of the "Fr Auguste Etchecopar" region? Without a doubt, it is not. Who presided over this choice?

The start of the missionary adventure of the community of the eight Betharramites chosen by Father Garicoits in response to calls from the Bishops of Bayonne and Buenos Aires. We would like to remember the month of August 1856 when a group of religious left their family framework of the Pyrenees to travel to the fringes of "The New World" which thousands of Basque and Bearnese people had emigrated to, no longer able to survive in large families in the Pyrenees. Betharram, in a unanimous voice, responded to this great missionary adventure to Buenos Aires and Montevideo. And in 1904, amid all the uncertainty, lifted by the expulsion of the religious from France, it was the opening towards Asuncion. But "you have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount..."

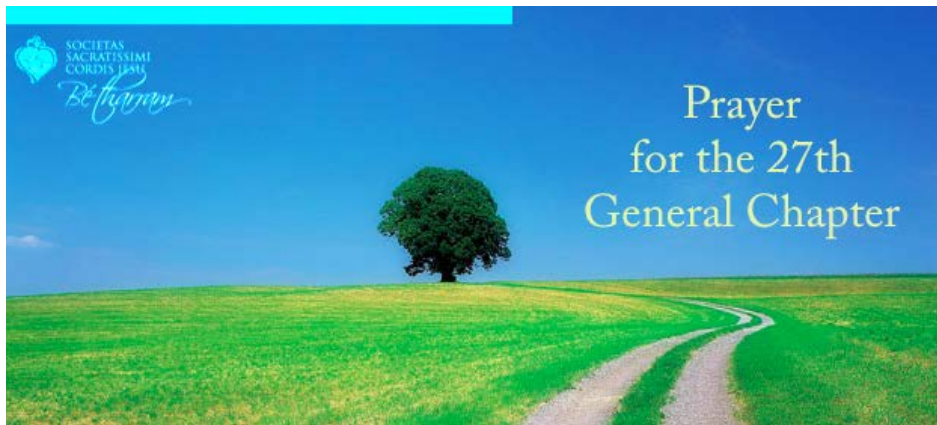
"...[you have] also a great history to accomplish". (*Consecrated Life*, nr. 110) This journey towards new horizons supported our missionary boldness when we could have been tempted to curl back up into our shells, to deal with what we have, at least within our "old Europe". We have to dare to live our choices in the face of new challenges, in the place we are in of course, but also by coming up with new people who would be capable of strengthening

our hope, without leaving us crippled by our shortcomings. To think that Fr Guimon was 63 years old when he left Betharram in tears for America, conscious indeed of the sacrifice of his life that constituted this departure: "Betharram, Betharram, so I have to leave you then."

We would wish for this crossing of the Atlantic for the Chapter to increase the availability - wanted by our founder - in all of us who make up the religious of Betharram: "The object of the Society is then to train and form these ministers so perfectly that at the first signal of the will of their bishop or superior they can be worthily chosen to work for the salvation of souls". (RdV. 15). If the General Council has taken the decision for Paraguay to be the place for the Chapter, it's good to continue to live out the mission in "Betharramite Community" in the new places that the Spirit may put to the discernment of the Congregation.

Laurent Bacho scj
General Councillor

Prayer



Prayer for the 27th General Chapter

O Virgin Mary, you welcomed with joy
the call to be the Mother of God and our Mother too.

You took the road without delay,
to bring the Good News to your cousin Elizabeth.

At Cana, you told your Son Jesus...
what people needed for the wedding feast to continue.

At the foot of the cross, you stood by Him,
taking your place, without complaint,
without begging to change your position...
sharing fully in the mission of your Son.

In the Upper Room,
you prayed with all the disciples, for the Holy Spirit;
and they became courageous witnesses throughout the world.

In your motherly tenderness, look upon us your sons,
the Religious of Betharram, journeying to the General Chapter.

We wish to imitate and manifest in our community
the generous spirit of the Heart of Your Son.

Help us, religious and laity, to be eager and happy missionaries;
may we have the courage to respond to the challenges of today's world
through love, without delay, without reserve, without turning back.

Amen.

who have a long experience in training the young as well as with those who have short experience or those who have just entered like me. Yes, it was a perfect platform where each formator could talk about his style of helping the young "to know, to accept and to improve oneself" in order "to love, to serve and to live" with the people of God as "Shepherds and servants" not as mere "public officials". It was also a time of Grace for me to know and to understand how the Charism of our Founder Saint Michael Garicoits translated and rooted in various cultures. By coming together, I felt as if we all re-energised our "value of living together and the value of sharing together". The creativity in leading the prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist led us always to touch the divine within us. There is no doubt to say that it was a well organised encounter which made me and each one to feel at home. The continual presence of Fr. Gaspar and Fr. Enrico and the constant attention of Fr. Graziano were much appreciated and highly valued. The celebration of the conclusion of the Year of Consecrated Life on the 2nd Feb along with our beloved Pope Francis challenged me to renew my spiritual commitment, apostolic vigour and missionary enthusiasm for God, for the Church and for the Congregation. The different themes (like vows, accompaniment, fraternal life in

community, mission and cultures, usage of the media and the modern technologies) stimulated my original desire/love to commit myself in a better way to the service of our young. It is true that we are presented with multiple challenges but we need not panic! We need not be afraid. The Formators meet reassured me that I am not alone in



the world. I have rather our formation community and the other Formators to support me and to encourage me in my mission which is formation.

Stervin Selvadass scj
Master of scholastics

When I received the notification of the Formators' Meeting in Rome, I realised more about the importance of the service that was asked of me. I had to meet up with older priests who had been my formators, in order to pray and reflect with them about the formation. I went to this formation session to listen to and

A time of Grace! Thus, I will summarise all that we have lived during those days when we shared our experiences and our dreams concerning our programmes of the formation in our religious family. It is a great joy to meet personally all those I knew only on the basis of social networks.

A moment of Joy!... but also an appropriate time to reflect on our worries/concerns and everything that we desire to be great! A time of Thanksgiving for all the new growth that the Lord of the harvest has entrusted to us. A time to unite us in prayer as brothers who pray and take care of each other along the path of accompaniment of our young. Let us be the witnesses of the creative and harmonious power of the Gospel, even if we belong to different cultures; let our hearts and our commitments follow the same direction. In the light of shared experiences, we could state that this horizon follows the line of our commitment, our dedication and our responsibility for the vocations and for the lives that the Lord has entrusted to Betharram.

It is an experience that inspires me and strengthens me in the mission that I assume for my region. As I said earlier, we form a great team i.e. to say that as a formator, I feel myself as one who accompanies; at the same time accompanied by the other Formators.



In my opinion, this characterises the unity and shared responsibility in the ministry of accompaniment. I thank all who prepared it that we could live this Kairos! I thank God and leave myself to him, under the protection of our Lady of the Beautiful Branch.

Gleciomar Guilherme da Silva scj
Master of scholastics

It was in fact a great joy to meet all the Formators of the Congregation in Rome. It was indeed a moment of grace; a time of enrichment to be with the Formators



A rule of life

“THE WAY TO HOLINESS FOR PRIESTS BEGINS IN THE SEMINARY” POPE FRANCIS REMINDS US DURING A CONGRESS ORGANISED BY THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY FOR THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONCILIAL DECREES *OPTATAM TOTIUS* AND *PRESBYTERORUM ORDINIS*, IN NOVEMBER 2015. IN A SIMILAR WAY THE PATH TO HOLINESS FOR BETHARRAMITE RELIGIOUS BEGINS

AT THE ENTRANCE TO OUR FORMATION HOUSES.

IN ORDER TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR THE FORMATORS HERE IN ROME FOR THEIR SESSION LAST JANUARY, THE SUPERIOR GENERAL, FR GASPAR GAVE THEM THIS EXTRACT FROM THE POPE’S TALK, WHICH IN TALKING OFF THE SLEEVE PROPOSES A RULE WHICH IS NECESSARY.

One thing that I would like to add to the text — sorry! — is vocational discernment, the admission to seminary. Seek the health of that young man, the spiritual, material, physical and mental health. Once, when I had just been appointed master of novices in 1972, I took the results of a personality test to the psychologist, it was a simple test that was done as one of the elements of discernment. She was a good woman, and also a good doctor. She said to me: “This one has this problem, but he can proceed if he does so in this way...”. She was also a good Christian, but in some cases was adamant: “This one cannot” — “But doctor, this young man is so good” — “He is good now, but know that there are young people who unconsciously know, they are not aware of it, but unconsciously they feel that they are mentally ill, and seek strong structures that will protect them in life, in order to go on. And they go on fine, until the moment comes when they feel well established and there the problems begin” — “It seems a bit

strange to me...”. And I will never forget her response, it was like that of the Lord to Ezekiel: “Father, have you ever wondered why there are so many police officers who torture? They enter young, they seem healthy but when they feel confident the illness begins to emerge. Those are the strong institutions that these unconsciously sick ones seek: the police, the army, the clergy.... And we all know that there are many illnesses which come out”. It’s curious. When I realize that a young man is too rigid, too fundamentalist, I do not have confidence; in the background there is something that he himself does not know. But when they feel confident.... Ezekiel 16, I cannot remember the verse, but it is when the Lord tells his people all that he did for them: he found them when they were just born, and he clothed them, he espoused them.... “And then, when you felt secure, you prostituted yourself”. It is a rule, a rule of life. Eyes open to the mission in seminaries. Eyes open.

Speech on 20 november 2015

THE LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION

What experience do you have of discernment?

AT THE HEART OF FORMATION DISCERNMENT IS SOMETHING WHICH IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR THE FORMATORS. TO ACCOMPANY A YOUNG MAN IN DISCERNING HIS VOCATION REPRESENTS A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY. FR DANIEL GONZALEZ SCJ, NOVICE MASTER IN THE FR AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR REGION, IS WITNESS TO THE REALITY OF SUCH A MISSION, AS HE SUGGESTS A FEW POINTERS WHICH ARE USEFUL FOR EVERYONE SINCE DISCERNMENT IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY, IN EVERY STAGE OF A VOCATION.

What experience do you have of discernment? I understand that this question put to me, does not ask what discernment is or its various stages, but asks rather what experience I have of it. It is a difficult question, which I am not sure how to answer, especially in writing.

Accompanying a young person on his path of discernment, in his quest for the very purpose of their existence, is quite an adventure. Like any adventure it generates expectations, emotions, enthusiasm; it poses challenges, questions, it forces confrontation with choices made in the past with the way those choices are being lived now. It is a real journey of formation and growth, even for the guide of the person in formation.

We sometimes want to take off our sandals and kneel before the sacred land that each person represents, just as we feel the desire to contemplate, praise God and exult in His creation and work in the life of the person. It is sometimes tempting, admittedly, to "manipulate" the burning bush in the life of a young person, or on the contrary, to give up on the burden of supporting the person. For each of these journeys, I carry in my backpack some beliefs that encourage and guide me:

1. God wants to reveal Himself, and He is

the first to wish for our development. Therefore, if the young person is honest in his quest, he can not fail to meet Him.

2. God, who created us, continues his work in His creatures. It is therefore a question of knowing how to discover Him.
3. This journey can only be done if the young person feels a real desire for God, if his heart is generous, his will is strong and if the clay from which he is made is still flexible enough to be modeled.
4. The young person is the lead character in his journey; my role is limited to accompanying him and to proposing elements that allow him to achieve his course.
5. For there to be discernment, it is necessary that the young person is animated by an inner spiritual life, that he lives a personal encounter with the Lord, manifested in daily life, in the Word, in the Eucharist ...

If all this is present, the path is joyful, even if difficulties arise and the challenges are stretching. For my part, I try to welcome the young person, to listen and to provide the necessary elements, drawn from the method of St Michael to find the will of God, in the Ignatian rules of discernment, in the Word... in the knowledge gained



from the development of the person ... in what others have done with me... If I do not see these beliefs in the young person, but rather a lack of uprightness, of honesty, or if I notice that the youngster has already made his decision and does not lend himself to this task of searching, or that the clay has hardened ... I have to say that it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve a genuine process of discernment; because *idoneus* (the humanity of the young) is in some ways "damaged", which does not allow *expeditus* (being freed), to choose what leads to the purpose for which he was created, *expositus*. In this case, it is necessary firstly to try to understand and help bring the problem to light, then to provide all the elements to solve it and develop a personalized itinerary. In some cases it will be necessary to resort to a professional in psychology and / or psychiatry. If necessary, this process can take place simultaneously with vocational discernment, but you must then be very careful at the moment of making choices, especially definitive choices that, for my

part, I will have some qualms in accepting. Some signs of a good discernment process:

1. A young person who is self-aware, who knows his talents and weaknesses; with a healthy autonomy; with an open mind and the desire to grow.
2. A young person who has discovered his personal call, his identity and mission. A young person who knows how to take charge of his life, from his specific vocation and his own character.
3. A young man who makes his inner spiritual life the centre of his life.
4. An open young person who is able to respond to God and to the reality he is called to live.
5. A young person who loves Bétharram in all its respects and identifies with his charism and mission.
6. A young person trained in the art of discernment; and as a good Betharramite, able to accompany others.

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