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114th year
10th series, nr 115
14th May 2016

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

A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Listening to Saint Michael...

Is not the unity of the Church something which the simplest of folks should recognize as one of her characteristics? Who should keep a watchful eye on the preservation of this unity? In a word what constitutes the Head of the Church, its centre, towards which all the faithful should press forward? It's Rome! It is the successor of St Peter! Our Father Superior used to say: my mother felt the need to be on the side of Rome. When she was getting married France was in a state of revolt; the clergy had taken the Constitutional oath. Since she didn't want to have anything to do with her Parish priest she had to go to Spain to get the nuptial blessing from a priest in union with Rome. She used to say that France had cut itself off from the Pope and that we should be on his side. With her blood this Christian mother had been able to transmit her attachment to the Holy See to the heart of her son. He used to tell us that he had never taught the four articles. He had always believed in the infallibility of the Holy Father. He always said that if he had believed the contrary it would have seemed to him that he was in a state of mortal sin.

Cachica Notebook, 14

Were not our hearts on fire?

The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the fundamental and original event of the Christian Faith. If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless. (1 Cor, 15, 14). The four Gospels tell how the followers of Jesus experience the meeting with the Risen Christ – an experience which is in total contrast with the experience that had been theirs during the passion and death of the One they loved dearly and in whom they had placed all their trust, because He responded to so many questions that made up their lives.

For them the Risen Christ was the Crucified One. Like Mary Magdalene and the disciples of Emmaus they have great difficulty in recognising Him. They had seen Him die on the cross and He was well and truly dead. It was the end of all that they had experienced with Him and the contrary would never have occurred to anyone: namely that Jesus who had died could be alive. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognizing Him

In this issue

- Page 4 • A 153-year young message
- Page 5 • Substance and expression
- Page 7 • Our daily bread
- Page 8 • "The Sacred Heart Showers"
- Page 11 • The richness of praying together
- Page 14 • Bird's eye view of the Congregation
- Page 16 • Notices from the General Council
- Page 18 • The Calvary of Betharram (5)
- Page 20 • Listening to Saint Michael



115 2016

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(Luke 24, 16). They had to pass from the state of being with Him, of believing in Him, of having total trust in Him, not just for a given time but in everything and for good. The only thing which helps them was seeing the marks of the cross on his Risen Body: the wounds on his hands, his feet, and his side. The Risen Christ is well and truly the same Jesus who was crucified!

The shock of the passion and death of their Master Jesus “who went about doing good” (Acts 10, 38), because he “proved that he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people” (Luke 24, 19) left them scattered and lost; the death had broken their ideals and projects and everything looked like a failure. Now what they had experienced with the Crucified Lord now alive helped them to understand this truth that the death of Jesus wasn't a failure. By giving over the life of Jesus on the cross, through love, the Father showed his Mercy and freed man from sin. It is the time of the alliance: in the death of Jesus the Father loves mankind as he has always loved him and the man Jesus loves the Father as he has never loved him.

Whoever meets the Risen Jesus understands, with his heart on fire, that everything Jesus endured in Jerusalem, his passion and death, was written in the Scriptures and that he himself had announced it on three occasions according to the synoptic gospels. From that point of view we can talk about the type of consolation which St Ignatius felt on the banks of the Cardoner: “While he was sitting there his eyes and understanding began to open up. Not that he actually saw a vision but he understood many things, things spiritual as well as questions

concerning faith and texts and with such a clarity of vision that they all seemed new to him”. (Autobiography of St Ignatius No 30) (cf. Luke 24, 45)

With the agony in Gethsemane, the humiliations of the passion and the solitude of the cross, it seemed that the Father had abandoned his Son. By recognising the Risen Jesus, it was perfectly clear that the Father, in hiding, had always been at his side, that he had always supported his Son and kept his promises: He who loses his life will find it and who humbles himself will be exalted”.

The mentality of the disciples changes completely, before and after their meeting with the Risen Jesus. The fact of his death on the Cross, had filled them with sadness, disappointment and fear. We had hoped... that was three days ago... but him they did not see. Their meeting with the Risen Jesus fills them with consolation; they are bursting with joy! It really was true, they said to each other. According as they became aware of what was happening, something was taking place in their souls; they are full of joy and this joy makes them capable of facing all adversity. The women, full of fear and a great joy... Jesus came to meet them and said: “Rejoice! (Mat 28,8-9) Such was their joy that they didn't dare believe what they were seeing and stood there amazed. (Luke 24,41) The disciples were filled with joy on seeing the Lord. (Jn20,20).

Example: The two disciples of Emmaus experienced self knowledge which led them from overcoming the dramatic events in Jerusalem and breaking from the group. As they listened to the commentary by Jesus their hearts were on fire because they realised that “what had happened during



The workmen began at once to strike the five statues which adorned the facade when on a word from Lescun, Monestier called out “Have respect for these master pieces; it would be a pity to destroy them!” The order was obeyed; but the helpers rushed into the sacred shrine and began to create havoc accompanied by curses and blasphemy. At this moment the courageous mayor said “Citizen, I am only asking you in the name of artistic relics to spare this monument “. “Yes, replied Monestier, “Let's spare it; but I want the doors to be built up. Citizens, get out!” With one voice the iconoclasts shouted “The Calvary!” The Calvary!” and straightaway like wild beasts they flung themselves on that part of the booty which they could not be deprived of. They smashed the doors of the Chapels; the statues were smashed and mutilated and children were able to play with the debris. On the chapel door at the top of the Calvary there was a statue of the Virgin in white marble. A miserable wretch took pleasure in beheading it. The story goes that later on he underwent

the same fate. There is also a story that from the bronze statue of Christ on the Cross a nest of bees escaped, whereas from the statue of the impenitent thief there was only a hornet's nest. This event caused serious reflexions but nothing could touch the hearts of such men! Of the many statues which adorned the eight Chapels there was only the statue of Christ on the column which escaped the weapons of the revolutionaries. The remains of all the others were collected in a handcart and burnt the next day on the public Square in Nay. A monument which was dearly loved by all the people had been destroyed. Did this make these poor people any better or happier? Of course not! Let's put aside such a sad thought and let's thank Providence for saving the Chapel and the house from the ruin which was threatening them. Let's also thank those good people who, with M. Lescun, acted in such an unexpected way on the spirit and perhaps on the heart of the terrible emissary of Robespierre.

(From the Chronicles of Betharram/Abbe Menjoulet)

Once the chapels had been emptied and all traces of religion wiped out, the Revolutionary Guards kept the danger of a resurgence of the religion at bay. The Chapel, the chaplains' house and the Calvary on the hill site were sold by auction. Nine landowners in Lestelle formed an Association to buy the ruins of the chapels, and the road leading to Calvary “for a religious programme”. You can imagine the courage necessary to sign such a declaration during the Reign of Terror! In 1805 all these properties were handed over to the Bishop. in 1805. (Raymond Descomps - « Echos de Bétharram »)

THE CALVARY OF BETHARRAM (5)

Thank you M. Lescun... (The Calvary under the Revolution)



When the French Revolution broke out there were six chaplains in Betharram. For them the first consequence of this outset of the revolution was the interruption of their apostolic works. Next on the 2nd November 1789 came the law passed by the National Assembly and which against all human and divine laws declared that the property of the Clergy would be at the disposition of the nation. At that moment began the destruction throughout the entire kingdom. Betharram could not avoid the common disaster and saw itself stripped of all its possessions which it had received through the generosity of the public and especially through the generosity of the priests who had retired over the past century and a half.

In the month of July 1790 the revolutionary assembly went deeper and deeper into the way of misconduct and passed that most famous Civil Constitution of the Clergy. According to this law there was an article suppressing Chapels and Chaplains. The little Society of Betharram was definitely scattered in the course of 1791. The different members of the Society were allotted a pension which was not paid. Finally the storm grew more dangerous. So these good priests were obliged, just like all the other churchmen who had remained faithful to their duty, either to go into hiding in their own country or else go abroad.

In 1793 Catholic Religion was totally abolished. During the Reign of Terror Churches and cloisters were desecrated or destroyed as they had never been even during the invasion of the Barbarians. Who is the senior citizen who even today does not remember the unforgettable excesses of the revolutionaries? It was at this time that the ferocious emissaries of the Convention were rampaging throughout France, under

the banner of representing the people. Monestier, from the Puy-de-Dôme, arrived here under the orders of Robespierre bringing the guillotine to this part of the world. He was in Pau in the first months of 1794. When there was no more blood to spill he was advised to create ruins, and it was on Betharram that people were trying to bring destruction.

On 17th March 1794 Monestier set out for Lestelle, together with a few civil servants from the Region as well as all that Nay and the neighbouring villages counted as revolutionaries. With the approach of this angry crowd consternation was widespread; but face at the dangers which threatened one could only but pray and sigh, but care had to be taken to hide both prayers and tears.

However one man armed with courage and goodness, Mr Lescun, then mayor of Lestelle together with his town councillors faced Monestier and addressed him forcefully as he was entering the village. The man carried on and made straight for the Chapel. His helpers talked about getting down to the job; ladders were brought and put against the facade.



*Paschal vigil 2016 in the Basilica Sagrado Corazón of Barracas
(Buenos Aires, Argentina)*

those days" had already been foretold in the Scriptures. At sunset, as they sat down to table to break bread, their eyes were opened and in their companion they recognised Jesus "whom our chiefs had delivered up, had him condemned to death and crucified" (Luke 24,20). They understood the reality of the three messages: Jesus was the principal protagonist of the events in Jerusalem, just as they were foretold in the Scriptures and just as He had revealed Himself in the breaking of bread. All comforted, happy, enthusiastic, they retrace their steps and make their way back to the group of disciples.

"Peace be with you!" This is the greeting from the Risen Christ which was to ring out three times in John 20 (19, 21 and 26). Far from seeking to wreak vengeance, the victim of injustice, violence and humiliation at

the hands of the powerful of this world, "Jesus meek and humble of heart" appears as a messenger of peace. The last word wasn't going to be a power struggle and violence but one of love even unto death.

The result of such an experience is the gift of the Holy Spirit and the missioning of the disciples so as to open to all, men and women, the way of personal renewal.

Easter is an invitation to call to mind the fundamental experience of the meeting with the Risen Jesus and to give it fresh stimulus; this is something which has impact on our whole way of life. Have you noticed anything in your life which is anything like the experience of the disciples?

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
Superior General

A 153-year young message



Saint Michael, surrounded by shades of bright and fresh colours is the image of the vitality of his message which some of our brothers propose to young people in vocational discernment, from Brazil to Central Africa, from Thailand to Bétharram. A happy way of celebrating the entrance into heaven, 153 years ago, of our Founder.

HAPPY FEAST TO YOU ALL!

Image published by Br. Jeferson Silvério Gonzaga scj for the Facebook page of "Betharramitas do Brasil", as to announce meetings for vocation promotion in the Vicariate of Brazil

IN ORDER TO FOSTER THE CREATION OF VIBRANT AND FRATERNAL COMMUNITIES, THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2011 EMPHASISED ON THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY SUPERIOR BY DEFINING A NEW STYLE OF ANIMATION AND AUTHORITY. IT IS WRITTEN IN THE ACTS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2011, P. 62:

« We experienced in the chapter a true sharing and communion in the spirit. This awakened in us the desire for a new style of life in the communities of the Congregation based on dialogue, listening, acceptance of differences, the joint seeking of the will of God. (Cf. RL 96)



P. Phairote scj



P. Hiran scj



P. Chokdee scj

In their search for a greater focus on religious community life, made possible thanks to a greater number of religious, for giving a boost to the future of the mission works and guarantee a more faithful testimony to the style of Betharramite life on the formation houses, we wish a fruitful and joyful minister to the community superiors and to all our brethren in Thailand. **Always ahead!**

We have also noted some situations of risk for communities: community meetings abandoned because the needs of the apostolate or choices of mission that lead to dispersal...

[70] The General Chapter asks every community superior to take seriously the responsibility confided to him. Each religious must take his own responsibility seriously.

It is given to the Superior above all, to be a witness to and proponent of fraternal life. The Rule of Life strongly underlines this. (RL 175ff, 279ff). A strong presence is demanded of him so that he can be bold enough to give life to the community project, accompany each one of the religious in his community and live his responsibility as a service. »



P. Chan scj



P. Arun scj



P. Suthon scj

Notices



From above on the left and clockwise:
church of Phayao, community of Sampran & Study houses (Ban Betharram, Ban Garicoits), community of Maepon, church of Huay Tong, community of Chiang Mai, community of Ban Pong

In the meeting of May 5th of the General Council, the Superior General, with his Council, approved the reorganisation of the Vicariate of Thailand into 6 communities and the appointment of the respective community superiors, in response to the request of Fr. Austin Hughes, Regional Superior of the Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified, and his Council.

Community of Chiang Mai (Chiang Mai, MaeTaWar) | Superior: *Fr. Hiran Thomas Klinbuakaew*

Community of Maepon (Maepon, Chomthong) | Superior: *Fr. Suthon Khiriwathanasakun*

Community of Huay Tong | Superior: *Fr. Chokdee Damronganurak*

Community of Ban Pong (Ban Pong & Huay Bong) | Superior: *Fr. Chan John Kunu*

Community of Phayao | Superior: *Fr. Arun John Baptist Kano*

Community of Sampran (Ban Betharram & Ban Garicoits) | Superior: *Fr. Phairote Peter Notchachawan*

Substance and expression



IN 1962, AT THE OPENING OF THE II VATICAN COUNCIL, JOHN XXIII URGED TO ADAPT THE FORMULATION OF THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE TO THE CHANGING TIMES. "IT SHOULD BE GIVEN GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THIS METHOD AND, IF NECESSARY, IT SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT WITH PATIENCE." FULLY FAITHFUL TO THIS PROGRAMME... AND WITH BOUNDLESS PATIENCE, POPE FRANCIS PRECEDES US AND GUIDES US ON THIS JOURNEY WITH WORDS AND DEEDS.

41. At the same time, today's vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness. "The deposit of the faith is one thing... the way it is expressed is another".⁴⁵ There are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another. With the holy intent of communicating the truth about God and humanity, we sometimes give them a false god or a human ideal which is not really Christian. In this way, we hold fast to a formulation while failing to convey its substance. This is the greatest danger. Let us never forget that "the expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning".⁴⁶

42. All of this has great relevance for the preaching of the Gospel, if we are really concerned to make its beauty more clearly recognized and accepted by all. Of course, we will never be able to make the Church's teachings easily understood or readily appreciated by everyone. Faith always remains something of a cross; it retains a certain obscurity which does not detract from the firmness of its assent. Some things are understood and appreciated only from the standpoint of this assent, which is a sister to love, beyond the range of clear reasons and arguments. We need to remember that all religious teaching ultimately has to be reflected in the teacher's way of life, which awakens the assent of the heart by its nearness, love and witness.

(*Evangelii Gaudium*)

⁴⁵ John XXIII, Address for the Opening of the Second Vatican Council (11 October 1962): AAS 54 (1962), 792".

⁴⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint (25 May 1995), 19: AAS 87 (1995), 933.



From the homily of Pope Francis on the occasion of the jubilee for boys and girls

Saint Peter's square 24 April 2016

« At this point in life you feel also a great longing for freedom. Many people will say to you that freedom means doing whatever you want. But here you have to be able to say no. If you do not know how to say "no", you are not free. The person who is free is he or she who is able to say "yes" and who knows how to say "no". Freedom is not the ability simply to do what I want. This makes us self-centred and aloof, and it prevents us from being open and sincere friends; it is not true to say "it is good enough if it serves me". No, this is not true. Instead, freedom is the gift of being able to choose the good: this is true freedom. The free person is the one who chooses what is good, what is pleasing to God, even if it requires effort, even if it is not easy. I believe that you young men and women are not afraid to make the effort, that you are indeed courageous!

Only by courageous and firm decisions do we realize our greatest dreams, the dreams which it is worth spending our entire lives to pursue. Courageous and noble choices. Do not be content with mediocrity, with "simply going with the flow", with being comfortable and laid back. Don't believe those who would distract you from the real treasure, which you are, by telling you that life is beautiful only if you have many possessions. Be sceptical about people who want to make you believe that you are only important if you act tough like the heroes in films or if you wear the latest fashions. Your happiness has no price. It cannot be bought: it is not an app that you can download on your phones nor will the latest update bring you freedom and grandeur in love. True freedom is something else altogether.



The motto of the pilgrimage was: "Mercy leads us beyond". The youth really enjoyed this time of prayer, meditation and reflection ...

Region



Argentina-Uruguay

Lay meeting ► On April 30, in the Betharramite college "San Miguel Garicoits" of Martin Coronado, the team of the lay associates of the Vicariate organized a meeting for the lay people of the colleges of Martin Coronado: "San Miguel Garicoits" and "Sagrado Corazón". The meeting focused on the theme of mercy: to be enveloped by the mercy of God and to be merciful with brothers.

The meeting was attended by over 70 people: teachers, parents, alumni and friends and it was guided by Frs Constancio Erobaldi SCJ and Giancarlo Monzani SCJ.

Ordination to the diaconate and lay meeting in La Plata

► Saturday, May 7, the Vicariate had a day of celebration, in the Chapel of the Betharramite College of La Plata. Two events closely related to each other took place: the day started with a meeting of the Betharramite laity reflecting on the theme: "Diaconate and mercy". The meditation was led by Fr. Giancarlo Monzani scj.

As a fruit of what was experienced during the day, the lay people attended the ordination to the diaconate of Brother Juan Pablo García Martínez scj, by the

laying on of hands of H. E. Mgr Jorge Vázquez, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Lomas de Zamora. Fr Gustavo Agin scj, Regional Superior of the Region "Father Auguste Etchecopar", Fr Daniel González scj, Regional Vicar and several other



Betharramite religious from different communities of the Vicariate attended the celebration. A day that will be etched not only in the mind, but also in the hearts of those who attended these events!

Brazil

Betharramite mission ► From April 21 to 24, the Betharramite religious of the Vicariate conducted a mission in the Betharramite Parish of San Sebastian, in Sabará (Minas Gerais). It was a very rich experience. In fact many religious from all the Betharramite communities in Brazil were involved. Some religious and lay people from other places joined in as well: from Setubinha, Passa Quatro, Belo Horizonte, Brumadinho, Paulinia...

All the participants had a busy schedule: formation sessions with the laity, with young people, with couples and families. There were also moments of celebration and conviviality.

The mission ended on Sunday morning with the celebration of the Eucharist.



Italy

Canonical visit and assembly ► On April 12, the Superior General, Fr Gaspar Fernández Pérez SCJ, officially started the canonical visit to the Vicariate at Albavilla (Como), by visiting the community residing there. At the end of the visit, on May 10, the religious of the Vicariate held an assembly. Fr Gaspar gave a final report on the visit, highlighting the journey made by the Vicariate and showing the path to follow in the near future.



40 years ► On April 17, the Betharramite community of Castellazzo di Bollate (Milan) celebrated the 40th anniversary of its presence in the Parish of St. William. At 11:00 a Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated, presided by the Superior General, Fr Gaspar Fernández Pérez, SCJ, and concelebrated by Fr Egidio Zoia SCJ and the Dean of the Pastoral Area of Bollate.

At 15.00, in one of the halls of "Villa Arconati", during a cultural event, 40 years of the presence of Betharram were revisited and the Italian translation of the book "St Michael Garicoits, a spiritual teacher of our time" was officially released. Apart from the translator himself, Mr Mario Grugnola, a lay

betharramite, about one hundred people were present at this event. All were quite happy to hear about the spiritual and social commitment of the Betharramite Fathers, who still play a significant role in this area.

Ivory Coast

Final profession ► On Saturday, April 2, Br Kate Dedé Constant SCJ made his final profession in the parish Notre-Dame des Pauvres in Dabakala.

The newly-professed was surrounded by the Betharramite religious of the Vicariate of Ivory Coast, by his relatives, by the priests and religious of the pastoral area, by the parishioners and Betharramite lay associates, by friends come from Adiapodoumé, by the Vicar General of the diocese of Katiola, by the Regional Superior Fr Jean-Luc Morin SCJ and by the Regional Vicar Fr Hervé Kouakou Kouamé SCJ. The Virgin of the Beautiful Branch and our Father Saint Michael Garicoits may support Constant in his following of the Merciful Jesus.

Betharramite Youth ► From April 29 to May 1, in the new retreat house of Adiapodoumé, the Betharramite youth had a three-day retreat on "How to live chastity as a young Betharramite with passion and mercy". The resource person was Br. Habib Cossi Yelouwassi.

Central Africa

Pilgrimage of mercy ► On the initiative of Fr Arsène Noba SCJ, the Betharramite Parish of Our Lady of Fatima at Bouar organized a pilgrimage from the Parish O. L. of Fatima (Bouar) to the "Infant Jesus" seminary of the Carmelite Fathers (Iole).

Our Daily Bread

HOWEVER VOLUMINOUS IT MAY BE, THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ST MICHAEL GARICOITS, FOR A BETHARRAM RELIGIOUS, IT IS NOT A SIMPLE REFERENCE BOOK...

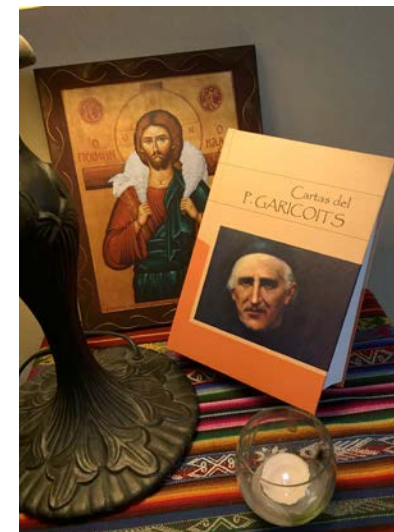
"[The correspondence] connects [St Michael] with all those who have entered under his personal orbit. His letters and words prolong his actions amongst us." It is the perfect source of the spirit of the Founder and the food necessary to live according to his charism in all its richness and its depth.

So far there was a Spanish translation which could be printed on paper if needed. And now in this beautiful month of May comes a magnificent book thanks to the work of the late Father Miguel Martinez Fuertes scj, who some years ago had launched this huge undertaking, then Father Angelo Recalcati scj got down to the

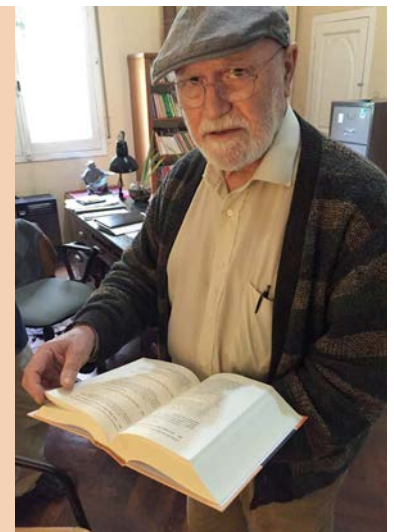
complete revision of the three volumes, the translation of the notes, the whole culminating in the translation. Finally thanks to Fr Gustavo Agin scj who undertook another thorough reading of the text before printing. Fr Giancarlo Monzani scj, chose the outside cover.

The Regional Superior, Fr Gustavo Agin, says that the SCJ Religious who would like a copy of the correspondence may request it by email (gustavoagin@yahoo.com.ar).

¹ Cf. Introduction to the Correspondence of saint Michel Garicoits, Pierre Miéyaa scj, Vol. 1 (p. 13 in French edition)



The correspondence in Spanish in one volume: over 1000 pages, available in two editions: hardback or paperback



On the right, Angelo Recalcati scj

The “Sacred Heart Showers”

COULDN'T WE INSTALL SOME SHOWERS FOR THE HOMELESS LIKE THE POPE HAS DONE?" A QUESTION AS SIMPLE AS THAT CHALLENGED THE BETHARRAMITE COMMUNITY AT BARRACAS, TOGETHER WITH A FEW ASSOCIATIONS AND PARISHIONERS ABOUT THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY POPE FRANCIS IN THE VATICAN; THIS CONSISTED SIMPLY OF MAKING AVAILABLE FOR THE HOMELESS SOMEWHERE WHERE THEY COULD REST, BE IN THE HEAT, EAT AND WASH THEMSELVES. ABOVE ALL IT WAS A PLACE WHERE THEY COULD COME FACE TO FACE WITH A HUMAN BEING, A FRIENDLY HAND AND A WILLING EAR TO LISTEN TO THEIR SUFFERINGS, THEIR HOPES, KNOWING THAT THEY WOULD FIND SOMEONE TO LISTEN TO THEM AND GIVE THEM SUPPORT.

In the month of August 2015 someone came to see me after Mass saying “Couldn’t we install showers for the homeless just as the Pope has done at the Vatican?” That’s how it all began. We had a meeting with three Associations and we decided to launch the project. We were convinced by the decision of Pope Francis to open up near St Peter’s Square some showers and sanitary services for people in desperate situations. We judged this to be prophetic on the part of the Pope which deserved to be reproduced here in Buenos Aires. Without wanting to make stupid comparisons we think that there are more people sleeping in the streets in Buenos Aires than in Rome. Consequently it was urgent to reply quickly to this quest for help which day after day was unfortunately growing in the big cities.

All this was only possible thanks to community discernment.

I began by speaking about it at a community meeting, so that everyone knew all about the project and so that once it was agreed on all could bring their contribution. We agreed not to open

a place to practice charity but to have something exactly for the benefit of the down and outs. These are people living on the streets in very unstable social conditions. By mid September a lorry load of sand arrived; at once began the demolition of the old parish toilets. The place was redesigned so as to make way for two showers, two wash basins and toilets and at the same time leaving room for the Parish.

True enough the “Sacred Heart Showers” are not the first and only sign of mercy in the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires nor in Betharram either.

This initiative is worthy of notice for two reasons: the first because it was the result of wanting to copy the action of Pope Francis in Rome; and secondly because it is not, strictly speaking, a pastoral action by the Church. In other words: the voluntary helpers, the people who come to us and those who will make use of the services are not all Christians. As a matter of fact the construction of the showers, wash basins and toilets was carried out by an enterprise whose owner is “our elder

Before beginning the celebration, it seems good to me to make way for the singing. This predisposes the soul to the encounter with God the friend. It is certain that it reduces suffering, it aerates the mind, it makes us brothers and sisters, helping us come together in God. Time is not golden; it is just time, a space that we offer to meet with each other and to meet the Most High. The gesture of peace can never fail. It multiplies the desire of forgiveness and a life in fraternity, in communion. The humble daily life becomes present in common prayer: joy and pain are given to the Lord as an offering of people travelling along the path. Christmas and Easter are special celebrations. The parish is divided into eight communities and each community meets for dinner in the street. (This reminds me of my childhood meals taken in the courtyard of the building). After the midnight mass (celebrated at eight in the evening), I take part in dinner with one of them, and after midnight, I visit

the other communities by bike. Sharing a glass of wine and a piece of cake is also a way to celebrate God with those I hardly ever see at church.

In Buenos Aires, they asked me to lead the group FA.LA.BE. Falabe is not just an acronym which stands for the Family of Betharramite Laity. It is also a group of friends, close to the religious community, working or spiritually supporting the mission of the Vicariate. Praying with them means awakening the desire for God in the heart, as animated in St. Michael, giving the whole person over to serving others as God asks of us. We keep in touch through the internet, during days of spirituality, and during the retreat in October.

I thank God for the joy of sharing my faith with my brothers. With them I meet You, Lord. With them, prayer becomes life and life becomes prayer. With them, life is a celebration.

Giancarlo Monzani sc





couples and young married couples. I visit them in their homes, I bless them, I remind them of the celebrated sacrament, I invite them to gather in small communities of friends. In small groups, prayer is a sharing of life, the joys and sacrifices of every day. Everything is new, everything feels good, everything has the scent of love. The pages of the Gospel guide prayer, illuminate life, encourage

children. I am surprised by their ability to make contact with God, to enter into the mystery of God who is close and merciful, who embraces and gives joy. Children do not stick to logic, they are quick to turn off the brain in order to turn on the heart. Just a few gestures, a kiss, a hug, or hand on heart, eyes half closed, a short silence, and everything is emotion, joy. With them, I simply feel peace, the simplicity of the very young seeps in; thanks to them, I too feel small, like them, before God.

With First Holy Communion children too, it is easy to catch a glimpse of heaven. There is more movement, song and dance. We move, we wave, we put the Gospel into practice ... We talk about creation in all its forms and with all its colours. We offer to God what he has given to us, and with these things, we offer ourselves. Even small acts of service and coming close to others become prayer.

In parishes I visit, I take care of engaged

us to make new commitments in society. The Gospel breaks down like an ear of wheat: it speaks and provides nourishing wealth. I remember the birth of new friendships within groups, holidays celebrated together, baptisms of newcomers, whose godfathers and godmothers were chosen from among the group. How much do I thank God for the gift of these friendships that persist despite the distance!

San Rocco, in Santiago del Estero, is a blessing from the Most High. I remember those years fondly. Perhaps the best years of my priesthood. In this hinterland, people are straight forward and human relationships easy going. In this land burned by the sun, life is a celebration and this celebration results in "asado" (grilled food eaten outdoors), wine and song, it's a family spirit. Those values cannot be absent from prayer. Mass is punctuated by songs: at the beginning, at the penitential rite, at the time of the psalm, etc.



brother in the faith'. His father and he are Jews who worked gratuitously on the site in a Catholic Church. The atmosphere is the most important. We don't ask for a baptismal certificate nor for a work permit; like that all can come here. A real loving heart is all that is needed.

The work was completed by the end of December and in the southern hemisphere this marks the beginning of the summer holidays. The showers were therefore officially blessed and inaugurated on 8th March 2016. A week later they were being used by the people living on the streets; they had access to a heated bathroom, clean clothes in good condition, afternoon tea on the Tuesday and breakfast on Saturday morning.

On the first day seven people came to have a closer look! Actually, we are helping about 45 people a day. There are many requests above all now that

we are entering the winter season. We are working with about 15 volunteers and professionals: nurses, social workers and psychologists. The bathrooms are often an excuse. What we really want is that those using the showers will always find a resting place, somewhere good for their health, both physical and spiritual; a place where there are people offering not only clothing and food but sharing the life experiences of their visitors. Consequently meal times are wonderful. Around the table the volunteers are mingled with the people of the streets. As Jesus taught us when for the first time he broke bread. When you listen to each one's tale they are their life story, the open wounds, their desperation. We volunteers listen; our task is to welcome, make a place for these people in our lives and accompany them on their journey. On its own the showers are only the first step.



We don't imagine that we are solving the problems of the people living on the streets. With them we try to make sense of mercy especially in this year. But we are trying to take a few more steps. The next step will consist in opening the workshops where those who wish may learn a trade and practise it; why not have a worker's cooperative! A long route awaits us. For the final aim of the project of the "Sacred Heart Showers" is the reinsertion of people in socially difficult positions into the working community. What a dream! Something which started as a bathroom imagines itself appealing to anyone in the wider community so as to become a way of humanisation and valorisation of life; and this in the face of a system which is constantly driving out certain individuals by exploiting the poor and encouraging marginalisation and slavery. This is why

the "Shower Project" is carrying on with the help of willing souls, volunteers, members of associations, parishioners, and thanks to donations from many anonymous souls bringing gifts of items needed for health and hygiene, and clothing in good condition. A year ago the showers were but a dream. Today the dream consists in fighting the causes which bring some people to live on the streets, to come and help themselves to the showers, and to put in place work places which restore dignity to life and so that all together we may go forward.

Sebastián García scj

The richness of praying together

IN THE CHAPTER ON THE BETHARRAMITE LIFE OF PRAYER, ARTICLE 91 OF THE RULE OF LIFE OPENS UP TWO PERSPECTIVES THAT COULD BE SUMMED UP WITH TWO WORDS: EDUCATION AND COMMUNION. RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING, FR. GIANCARLO MONZANI, SCJ, REVEALS US WHAT HE HAS CHOSEN TO TELL US ABOUT THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF HIS EXPERIENCE AND OFFERS US A TESTIMONY WHERE EMOTION HAS IN STORE NICE SURPRISES.

Articolo 91

In the same way that Christ taught his Apostles to pray, we are educators in prayer of the faithful by praying with them. "Celebrate the Lord with all your heart through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, always giving thanks for all to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ep. 5.19-20)

I acknowledge with joy that I never went to meet lay people to teach them to pray. I just tried to support them in prayer. In fact, I often ask myself this question: is it that I am the one teaching or the one learning? When I am with lay people, my heart beats excitedly, attentive to their sharing. The laity have a simple and loving heart, their hands full of life, they have a long journey in this world, and with their sense of reality, they do not add unnecessary words, they are not preaching.

In community, we have a habit of repeating the same prayers. Our liturgies have been through the mill of the centuries. Sometimes they are dusty or are prayers led by actions which are difficult to understand or that don't mean much. However, they have a richness which puts us in communion with all the saints and with the universal Church. These are

prayers which sanctified Michael Garicoits, Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified and our holy fathers of Bétharram who preceded us. They make us a church set on a path singing to the glory of God, a church which admits its mistakes and forgives. A Church like a people sometimes walking in the desert, sometimes fighting against the enemy and sometimes enjoying peace and abundance through the presence of the Most High.

I like praying with the psalms. Some time ago now, a Spanish nun, Aleixandre Dolores, taught me to enter into the heart of Jesus, of the church and of people today in these prayers. This applies to the Gospel as well, because here I draw inspiration for the Sunday homily.

I have had occasion to live a variety of prayer experiences with people of all ages. I still like praying today with nursery