



Painting by Juan Vladimir Martinovitch

Listening to Saint Michael...

On 3rd February during the talk about discretion, St Michael had this to say: "Gentlemen, I must tell you about something which has struck me this week and has filled my soul with feelings of fear and sadness; which one of us practises solid virtues? For example which one of us practises charity, obedience? We'll be doing well; we may even be good in the sacristy or elsewhere. We will probably be critical of one of our brothers; we may find it difficult to put up with an awkward individual; we will obey such and such a superior and yet will not respect the desires of another one. Am I going to say that such failings are a sign of weaknesses? No, I must say that there is no sign of solid virtue, and that in such circumstances our charity and obedience are sporadic and not lasting. How the devil must have a good laugh when he sees how easily he can draw us onto an illusion and even make us like it. He is able to make us work at our own sanctification apparently and even to make us holier, if need be by filling us with dispositions which are innocent in appearance and yet we find ourselves empty handed at the hour of death. He is sufficiently cunning to rob us of our good deeds; he is capable of sucking all the life blood in us and leaving us with our skeleton! The devil is a crafty guy! He will take care not to tempt us openly against chastity; he will not want to turn us into murderers, thieves and rebels!

For such matters he will leave us in peace; what difference does it make to him if we are not great sinners as long as he wards us off all virtues, as long as we reach the end of our life empty handed, while all along we thought we were without even a venial sin! He leads us to believe that we have all the virtues; he doesn't touch at their empty structure since they seem to have poor foundations and then one day the whole thing collapses in the most shocking of ruins.

Cachica Notebook, 2



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BETHARRAM

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NE

NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE
NOTICIAS EN FAMILIA
NOTIZIE IN FAMIGLIA
FAMILY NEWS

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

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A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

You are the fairest of the children of men

In this issue

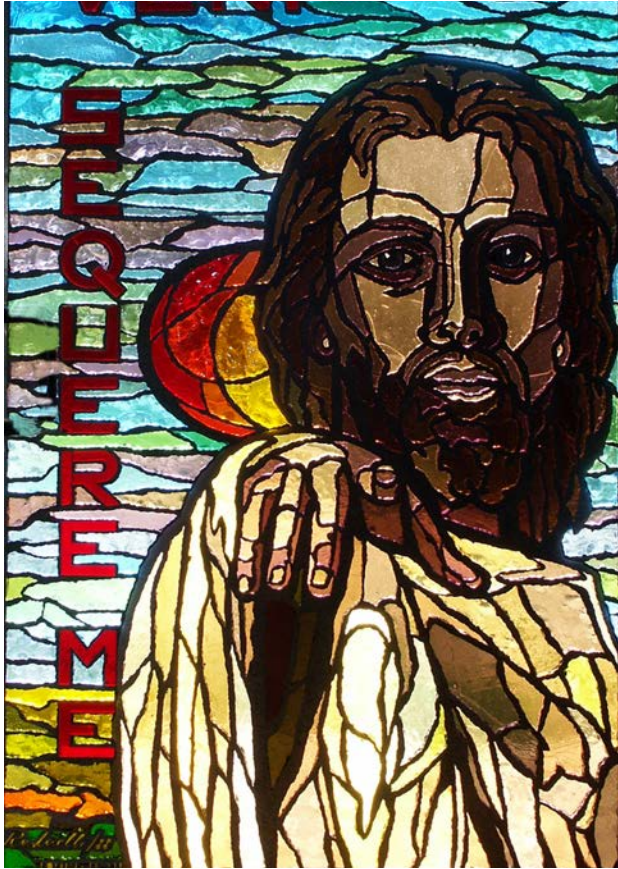
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"You are the fairest of the children of men and grace is poured upon your lips, the Lord will bless you for all eternity." The psalmist applies this declaration to the king's son but the Christian reader and the Christian who prays applies them to Jesus, the Son of God made man, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The vocabulary of the entire psalm calls upon the five senses so that we can see the beauty of the Incarnate Word.

The Gospels don't spend time describing the physical beauty of Jesus but rather the different forms of beauty: his humanity, his goodness in dealing with people, his ability to welcome them, and to listen to them.

Not forgetting the beauty of his message – his words, the beatitudes and the parables. Were ever more beautiful words written to compare with the Beatitudes, or the Parable of the Father and his two sons in Luke 15, 11 ss? People hearing them declared: *"What is all this*





Stained-glass by Rev. P. Francesco Radaelli scj in Nazareth

his Mother's womb and in the arms of his parents; he is fair in his miracles and under the assassin's blows; he is fair as he invites to life and when he doesn't bother too much about death; he is fair when he restores to life and when he takes it away; he is fair on the Cross and in the tomb and in heaven. Listen as you hear the sound of the weakness of his flesh and don't close your eyes to the splendour of his beauty". (Cit.VC.24)

The summit of his beauty is shown in the Transfiguration and the Resurrection. But this beauty which changes Jesus shines throughout his entire life, lighting even times when he appears disfigured through the wickedness and cruelty of the sins of mankind in his passion: first of all the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, the humiliation of the insults and slap in the face, the unjust condemnation in his crucifixion and

disgraceful death. He who in his death seems to be disfigured in the eyes of mankind and so lacking in beauty that they cover their faces rather than look. (Cf Is 53, 2-3) "It is precisely on the Cross that he shows the fullness of his beauty and the power of God's love (VC 24). This mass of suffering at the heart of an ocean of pain is a permanent proof of the will to love the Father and all mankind. Even disfigured

even the least architectural character. They allowed an overpowering light to shine in distorting the images and spoiling the harmony." Fr Garicoits having passed away, the task of knocking down the "poor shelters" and thinking up a more worthy setting fell to Fr Chirou and his colleagues. The years 1867-1873 engraved on the site of 'Calvary' that image which from then on became inherent, the first thing that strikes the traveller, a row of white chapels which provide meditative thought along the way of the cross, like Rosary beads. They were conceived by an architect of 25 years, Fr Basilide Bourdenne SCJ.

'Calvary', envisaged by H. Charpentier in 1623, was completed two and a half centuries later, in 1873. The job being finished, one of the main workers, Fr Chirou, died on 29 August 1873. Everything was already settled for the official opening on

14 September, under the chairmanship of Monsignor Lacroix. Betharram was the scene of unforgettable celebrations. Between twenty and twenty five thousand faithful, according to Fr Etchécopar, had hurried there, surrounding all the Bishops of the Province. Throughout more than eight days, prayers, songs, speeches and fanfares followed each other. Everyone could join in with the exclamation of one of the most noted speakers, Fr Caussette of Toulouse: "Oh Holy Hill of Betharram! Who has so often seen crosses fall, and crosses raised, in our country... blessed land, so loved by Mary, ... How good it is to pray, to remember and to hope on this high ground."

Raymond Descomps scj
(1916 - 2009)



THE CALVARY OF BETHARRAM (8)

Oh Holy Hill of Betharram!



The beautiful esplanade at the end of the Stations of the Cross, by its height, its remoteness, its dominant viewpoint over the plains, makes an exceptional place to pray: it had always been given particular attention, since the time of H. Charpentier. In 1812, the three crosses were given wooden statues of Christ and the two thieves; but due to the effect of the bad weather, they fell down in 1836. Terracotta statues replaced them in 1839; they didn't last. From 1864, Fr Chirou (appointed Superior General of the Society of Sacred Heart Fathers, by the Bishop, after the death of St Michael Garicoits) undertook the restoration of the three crosses, or 'Calvary' as it is properly known. The five large statues made of cast iron, that can be seen today at the East side of the esplanade, were ordered: the statue of Christ on the cross, those of the two thieves and of St John at the foot of the cross, the statue of the Virgin Mary standing under the cross. Fr Etchécopar was able to write in March 1867: "Calvary is becoming more beautiful; the crucifixion set makes a great impact."

The same year, work continued on the last four stations. The 13th Station is pondered in front of a Pietà in Carrara Marble. Among the actors of Calvary, a place had to be found for another character, as in the life of Christ: opposite the Pietà, Mary Magdalene lets her hair down in the shade of large beech trees. Monsignor Lacroix, however, judged the first constructions to be insufficient and he

encouraged Fr Chirou to undertake a larger and more beautiful layout.

That is how the construction of the Chapel of the Resurrection began from 1867. We know what a gem owes to the beauty to its setting. This was sadly not the fortune of the bas-reliefs of Renoir. "The old-style chapels," said Fr Vignolles, "were just poor quality, narrow, inelegant shelters, without

as he was Jesus is fair because of the love which drives him, because of his patience, the gift of life, of forgiveness and the power of reconciling all things. Love alone is the sole attraction; this is why when lifted from earth Jesus draws all men to himself. "He became an indescribable attraction for our hearts, a perfect model and an all-powerful help" (St Michael's Manifesto). His beauty grows and is to be seen in his disciples: attracted by his beauty they decided to get to know him, to love him, to serve him and to imitate him. If these disciples are genuine they give a glimpse of their Master's beauty and thanks to his joyful life they attract other men and women amid whom they are living. And so it is that the question is constantly being asked: "Why is it that they are like this?" This question gives the disciples a chance of speaking about Jesus, of announcing him. Such is the beauty of the saints!

Since Jesus' disciples gather as a Church like its Master it is also beautiful – beautiful through the Word which it announces, listens to and puts into practice – beautiful through the gentle presence of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus; it is beautiful because of the priestly ministry exercised, because of the diversity of charisms in consecrated life and the commitment of the laity in the world. It is beautiful thanks to its liturgy and Christian art, because of the communion and service of the missionaries, martyrs, and the care of the poor and the forgiveness of sin.

This is the first reason for the religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be happy and joyful in their vocation. The second

reason is the result of our origins and the place where the "Sacred Heart conceived us and formed us" through the mediation of our Father St Michael Garicoits: Betharram, the beautiful branch. We often refer to ourselves as Betharramite without realising that we are being called "beautiful". So that this name should mean anything to us it must refer to people who show the beauty of Jesus through the qualities witnessed to by St Michael Garicoits and which he wanted us to possess: humility, to go unnoticed, obedience, and devotion to duty, gentleness, joy, happiness and charity. These virtues are the image of our origins. If we practise them with joy then we will become attractive for others who will want to practise them too. History has formed us thanks to these qualities, through our great works, our silent work at the service of the poor, through persecution and expulsions from France in 1904 or China in 1954. Yes, the spirituality, consecration, fraternity and mission of Betharram are fair. Our past is fair, our present must be fair so that the future can be fair. Fair as the Heart of Jesus! Fair as Our Lady of Betharram! Fair as are St Michael, St Mariam and Father Etchecopar!"

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
Superior General

Happy the merciful hearts!



In unison with millions of hearts come from the whole world, our fathers Wilfred Pereppadan and Simone Panzeri accompanied some groups of young people to the World Youth Day, which have been, as the Pope says, “a prophetic sign” for the world, “a mosaic of fraternity”, “because, in fact, in this world in state of war, we need fraternity, we need closeness, we need dialogue, we need friendship”.

Photo published on Facebook by Fr Wilfred Pereppadan scj

and joy is clearly manifested through the young people from 183 countries gathered in Krakow. Between two and three million young people attended the Mass concluding World Youth Day in Campus Misericordiae. Everywhere we go we see young people who are enthusiast about their faith and celebrate their faith in their own language by praying, singing and sharing their culture. Yes, love is our language, language of our Catholic faith and no barriers of cultural difference affects this love and friendship which unites us in Christ. Remembered you all and prayed for your intentions when I visited the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy and the Chapel of Divine Mercy.”

India

Meaningful moments for the novices
► The Month of August was a blessing for our second year Novices Br. Joseph Packiaraj, Wichai Peter, Sharath Chandra & Wilbur Mark Dias as they ended their canonical year. The celebration was preceded by a day of recollection, guided by Rev.Dr. Anton Paul SDB with the participation of the Regional Vicar and the members of the Community. As a part of their preparation for their Mission, our second year novices were

sent for 10 days of Village Ministry at Kolar, with “Sunanda” an NGO, run by the sisters of St. Joseph of Tarbes. Our young novices animated a day of prayer for the students of Lake Montfort School for Children from grade 4 to 10. Please do continue to pray for our young brothers as they step out on their mission and community experience.

Thailand

Sampran ► On July 30, the Sampran community celebrated the feast of our lady of Betharram. It was a very beautiful feast indeed with colorful decorations. We had Priests, religious, laity and especially our benefactors who joined us for this celebration.

Farewell, Fr. Raimondo ► On September 3, the betharramite religious of the Vicariate gathered together in Chiang Mai to celebrate the Eucharist with Fr Raimondo Perlini before his returning to Italy after dedicating 51 years of his life to the catholic mission in the Chiang Mai Diocese. Apart from the brothers of the Congregation, Fr Raimondo was accompanied in his thanksgiving mass by some diocesan priests and some friends.

IN MEMORIAM

On August 10, at the age of 87 years, **Mrs. Olga Elsa Lenzina de Gouarnalusse** died. She was the mother of Fr Sergio Gouarnalusse SCJ, of the community of San Juan Bautista, in Buenos Aires. We express our condolences to Fr Sergio and to his family and we promise to keep them in our prayers.

François Verley (aged 90), a priest of the Diocese of Tarbes-Lourdes and brother of Fr. Gabriel Verley SCJ, of the Vicariate of France and Spain, died on August 15th. We pray with Fr Gabriel for the eternal rest of François.

On September 12, **Mrs Margaret Anthony**, suddenly passed away. She was the grandmother of Fr Yesudas Kuttappassery, priest-in-charge of our residence in Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam). United in prayer with Fr Yesudas and his family, we commend their dear one to our Heavenly Father.

Region



France-Spain

Laity and religious together ► Betharram, July 24 - At the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Betharram, the participants of the international session, the laity of the "Fraternité Me Voici" - at the end of their annual assembly - and the many faithful flocked to Betharram, gathered together for a solemn celebration. It was an international celebration, with songs in different languages: in Guarani (Paraguay), in Sango (Central African Republic), in Malayalam (India), in Karen (Thailand) in French (Ivory Coast). Fr Gaspar Fernández Pérez, SCJ (Superior General) presided over the concelebration while Fr Laurent Bacho SCJ gave the homily on the beautiful commentary of the "Our Father" made by St Michael Garicoits.

Spiritual retreat

From 1 to 6 of August the religious of the Vicariate of France-Spain held their annual retreat at the "Maison Neuve" in Betharram. The preacher was Fr Horacio Brito, Superior General of the Garaison Fathers and rector emeritus of Lourdes. During the retreat, Fr Horacio helped our confreres to enter more deeply into the mystery of Mercy and into the message of Lourdes. This fruitful week enriched the faith and the life of all the participants.

Côte d'Ivoire

Assembly ► Wednesday, September 7, the religious of the Vicariate gathered for an Assembly in the Adiapodoumé community.

They reviewed the Acts of the 2011 General Chapter and elected the delegates and the substitutes to the Regional Chapter to be held in 2017.

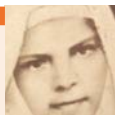
On the day after, Brs Arnaud, Christian, Landry and Serge have made their first profession at St Bernard's parish of Adiapodoumé, during a mass presided by Fr Jean Luc Morin (Regional Superior).

Region



After the assembly of Brazil (26 January) and that of Argentina-Uruguay (7 April), was held the last assembly of the Region, on June 10 for the Vicariate of Paraguay. Delegates and substitutes were elected to the Regional Chapter convoked by the Regional Superior, Fr Gustavo Agin scj from October 16 to 19, 2016 in Lambaré (Asunción, Paraguay). All the religious of the Region and lay associates from the three vicariates are invited to a pre-Chapter from October 14 to 16.

Region



England

Echoes of WYD ► Fr Wilfred Pereppadan SCJ took part with a group of young people in the meeting of the World Youth Day and he sent in this message: "Cześć (Hello) and Blessings from Pope Francis from World Youth Day 2016. It was a great privilege to make this journey with young people of Jesus Youth UK as a pilgrimage to Krakow to attend World Youth Day. The message of love

Shades of grey according to Francis



THEY WERE ALL GOING TO GET UP, THINKING THAT THE SPEECH OF THEIR JESUIT CONFRERE WAS OVER. BUT AFTER ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS, FRANCIS WISHED TO TOUCH ON A FINAL ISSUE. YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS, WHEN THINGS ARE CLOSE TO YOUR HEART...

THE 28 POLISH JESUITS SAT DOWN ONCE AGAIN TO LISTEN TO THEIR POPE. THAT WAS LAST SUMMER IN KRAKOW.

Now I want to add something. I ask you to work with seminarians. Above all, give them what we have received from [St. Ignatius'] exercises: the wisdom of discernment. The church today needs to grow in the ability of spiritual discernment. Some priestly formation programmes run the risk of educating in the light of overly clear and distinct ideas, and therefore to act within limits and criteria that are rigidly defined a priori, and ignore concrete situations: «you must do this; you must not do that». The seminarians, when they become priests, have difficulty in accompanying the life of so many young people and adults because many are asking: 'can you do this or not?'. That's all. And many people leave the confessional disappointed. Not because the priest is bad, but because the priest doesn't have the ability to discern situations, to accompany them in authentic discernment. They don't have the needed formation. The Church today needs to grow in her capacity for spiritual discernment. And especially priests really need it for their ministry. That is why we must teach seminarians and priests in formation: they routinely receive the confidences of the consciences of the faithful. Spiritual direction is not only a charism for the clergy, but also for the laity, that is true. But I repeat,

you must teach this above all to priests, to teach them in the light of the Exercises about the dynamic of pastoral discernment, which respects the law but knows how to go beyond it. This is an important task for the Society of Jesus. I was very touched by the thought of Father Hugo Rahner. He thought clearly and he wrote clearly! Hugo said that the Jesuit should be a man with the nose for the supernatural, that is, he must be a man gifted with a sense of both the divine and the demonic in relation to the events of human life and history. The Jesuit must therefore be capable of discerning both in the field of God and in the field of the devil. This is why, in the Exercises, St. Ignatius asks to be introduced not only to the intentions of the Lord of life but also to those of the Enemy of human nature and his deceptions. What he wrote is bold, it is truly bold, but this is discernment! Future priests need to be formed not with general and abstract ideas, which are overly clear and distinct, but with the aim of discernment of spirits, so that they can help people in their concrete lives. We need to truly understand this: in life not everything is black over white, or white over black. No! The shades of grey prevail in life. We must teach them how to discern in this grey area.

The international session



« ...This session has helped me to give real substance to the little knowledge I have about Betharram and the life and works of St Michael Garicoits.

...As I made my way up Calvary following the Stations of the Cross, alone or with others I tried to make the link between the Passion of Christ and the life of St Michael; it was not an easy life. Last night in the saint's bedroom I was struck by the feeling of inner peace which I felt. It was during the "night before the battle" that I discovered the courage of St Michael Garicoits, a man of prayer and of faith, who despite the many difficulties always trusted in God in whom he could see the face of a Father full of goodness and mercy.

...Besides, the diversity of our origins has helped me to understand what we mean by "intercultural". It is nothing other than St John's Gospel in practice. "Jesus was about to give his life for the nation. But it was not only for the nation, it was to gather as one the children of God". (Jn 11, 51-52)

...This session has been a real spiritual treat for us.

Valentin N'Zoré N'Guessan scj,
fully professed on September 14th, 2016

AFTER THIS LAST WITNESS AT THE END OF THE 2016 INTERNATIONAL SESSION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO COME BACK TO AN EXPERIENCE WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR 15 YEARS NOW AND IS LEAVING AN INDELIBLE MARK IN THE MEEK, HUMBLE AND OBEDIENT HEART OF OUR YOUNG BROTHERS ON THE EVE OF THEIR FINAL COMMITMENT.

THERE IS NO BETTER GUIDE THAN FR GASPAR, SUPERIOR GENERAL, WHO DURING HIS TWO TERMS, MET NEARLY ALL THE BATCHES OF THIS APPOINTMENT.

The year 2001 marked a new stage in initial Formation, didn't it?

... At the beginning of the new millennium, Father Francesco Radaelli took in effect, fundamental decisions for initial Formation in the Congregation: the creation of the three novitiates of Bethlehem, Adrogué and Bangalore, one per region; the establishment of a Formation Service for

the entire Congregation; a year free of any commitment before perpetual profession and the Formation Session for religious about to pronounce their perpetual vows. These four initiatives are still in force except for a few changes dictated by reality.

From 2001, a session was held every two years without exception, as well as a special session in 2009 so that eight young men

Councils of May 23rd in Rome (Generalate House) and of July 30th in Pibrac (France)



Br. Hermann scj



Br. Marie-Paulin scj



Br. Valentin scj



Br. Armel scj

The Superior General with the consent of his Council

- admitted to **final profession Br. Hermann Bahi Djison, Br. N'Zoré Valentin N'Guessan, Br. Armel Daly Vabié** (Region St Michael Garicoits, Vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire), and **Br. Marie Paulin Yarkai** (Region St Michael Garicoits, Vicariate of Central Africa);

- decided to present to the diaconate **Br. Alcides Ramón Riveros Díaz** (Region Fr. Auguste Etchecopar, Vicariate of Paraguay), **Br. Armel Daly Vabié, Br. Constant Katé Dédé** and **Br. Valentin N'Zoré N'Guessan** (Region St Michael Garicoits, Vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire).

- and, as a reply to the requests submitted on July 29th by Fr. Jean-Luc Morin, Superior of the Region St Michael Garicoits, gave his approval to

- the **closing of the community of Montemurlo** (Vicariate of Italy) and giving back the pastoral care of the parishes (Montemurlo, Bagnolo & Fornacelle) to the diocese of Pistoia;
- the **acceptance of the parish San Francesco in Pistoia and the opening of a new community;**
- the **closing of the community of Parma** and giving back the pastoral care of the parish of *S. Andrea in Antognano* to the diocese of Parma;
- the **acceptance of the parish of Langhirano (diocese of Parma) and opening of a new community.**

- and, as a reply to the requests submitted by Fr. Austin Hughes, Superior of the Region Ste Mary of Jesus Crucified, the Superior General gave his approval

- **to the opening of the new community of Yadavanahally-Adigundanahally**, in the outskirts of Bangalore, where our Brothers already have the pastoral care of the two parishes (St Antony's church & Saint Joseph's church) and
- **to the appointment of Fr. Rojo Thomas as superior of the new community** (Vicariate of India);
- **to the appointment of Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong as Master of scholastics** of the community of formation "Ban Garicoits" in Sampran (Vicariate of Thailand).

On September 1st, the Superior General received from the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life the indult granted to **Fr. Vicente de Menezes for leaving the Congregation** in order to be incardinated in the diocese of Belo Horizonte (Brazil).

Brother Paul Lamothe scj

Benquet (France), 15 March 1936 – Bétharram (France), 31 August 2016

Who didn't appreciate Brother Paul with his beret? Who didn't appreciate his kindness, his sobriety, his love of the earth and his smile? In these last years, Paul's loveliest expression was his big smile; it was the only way he had of communicating with others. Man of faith, faithful religious and servant of God, Brother Paul showed us by his life the importance of simplicity so necessary in religious life. There is no need to embark on great speeches – all that is needed is a presence, his availability, a ready ear and awareness of others. The image which Christ takes in the grain of wheat fallen to the ground could also resume Paul's life. His was a life given totally to the Congregation in the different communities in which he served, the major part of which was on the farm in Betharram. Today, his smile has disappeared from before our eyes. His depart touches us and puts us before that stage of our own earthly life, that is our death. It is never easy to accept this stage of our life. Christ himself lived through this same passage. He gave up his whole life as a grain of wheat fallen to the earth and totally committed to carrying out the will of his Father, to save the world through love. This is the strength of Easter morning which will give the grain of wheat the power to spring to life so as to produce much fruit of life, life which is stronger than death. From now onwards Brother Paul's life will blossom in God. This is our hope and our belief this afternoon as we celebrate Brother Paul's life.

I believe that Brother Paul has left us this



simple witness necessary for all Christian lives and all the more so for all religious lives. We are called upon to give our lives, to be free like the wheat grain fallen to the ground, to serve freely, without calculating or measuring, so as to bear witness to the goodness of God, to love really, to tell the world how much God loves everyone with a love full of kindness and mercy. Yes! Let these words of the Apostle Paul find an echo in us: *"Let us love one another since love comes from God."* In this Eucharist we thank God for everything that Brother Paul accomplished, served and prayed. Paul's life will continue producing fruits. We entrust him to the God of love and of life. We pray that Brother Paul will continue to contemplate the face of God with an eternal smile. Amen.

Jean-Dominique DELGUE scj
Regional Vicar

from the Saint Michael Region and the Saint-Miriam Region could take part, given that no session was scheduled for the year of the General Chapter. So far, there have been nine Sessions in all.

This session immediately turned out to be a "must do".

In fact synchronising with all vicariates was not easy nor immediate. One difficulty was that we had to deal with three different calendars for school holidays. In Latin America it is January and February; Europe and Africa take July and August; Asia has April and May. For some, participation in the session interfered with their normal course of studies at the seminary. But we reaffirmed the need to precede perpetual profession with a year clear of any academic commitment, as written in our Rule of Life, and the situation has improved.

For several years we held to scheduling the session in the spring, but we realized that a significant factor, as surprising as it is, was the weather in Betharram! In order to facilitate the acclimatization of youth, site visits and pilgrimages, it was decided this year to return to a session taking place in summer.

How many religious have had this experience?

Since 2001, 106 young people of the three regions have passed through these international sessions. **Nearly a third of the members of the congregation?** Exactly. In all, there are 36 young people from the St Michael Garicoits Region (34.18%), 30 from the Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region (29.22%), 40 from the St. Miriam Region (37.73%). These proportions

are interesting because they seem fairly balanced between the regions. However, it must be said that 19 of the participants later left the Congregation, some a little before pronouncing perpetual vows, others soon after, others a few years later.

What has changed in 15 years of experience?

The first sessions were divided into two parts: the first took place in the Holy Land (Bethlehem and Nazareth) and the second in Betharram. The difficulties of obtaining a visa to Israel for some brothers, the 'tourist' nature of some visits to holy places rather frustrated the objectives, and the trips were increasing costs ... All this has brought us from 2009 to make this experience only in Betharram to focus on our real objectives.

Have these objectives also changed over the years?

No, the goals set for this experience have remained constant during these 15 years:- To provide young religious preparing for perpetual profession with a deep experience of spirituality which affirms their identity and sense of Betharramite belonging. - To deepen their sense of the prophetic and charismatic character of our Father Saint Michel, through knowledge of the places where he lived his own spiritual experiences and mission.- To facilitate an intercultural experience by getting to know one another in diversity, by respecting differences & learning to value them, by meeting and enriching each other in sharing the good things offered by each culture. All this is very important in a congregation increasingly as international as Bétharram.

However, since 2012, the year of the new Rule of Life, we insist on religious getting to know it better, so we study it, we pray with it and deepen understanding of it because we are aware that many religious were not familiar with it, and this weakens our sense of belonging to the Congregation. We also asked the various animators to use different methods to present the themes.

What do 'different methods' mean in practice?

The use of modern IT tools was obvious. But beyond the technical aspect, we tried to encourage the active participation on the proposed themes, to give more space for sharing, for constructive examining of experiences, deepening and clarifying of certain issues. In addition, a personal time is given daily to each participant so that he can internalise in silence the subject treated during the day.

To deepen the knowledge of St. Michael, for

example, we read one of his letters each day, because it is precisely in his correspondence that St. Michael talks about his inner life, his emotions, his spirituality and in which is reflected the gentleness he showed to people.

Sometimes to deepen knowledge and more comprehensive understanding of the Rule of Life, we discussed concrete examples in the light of the Rule of Life.

In short, fewer conferences and more exchanges?... You could say so. But the goal is to stimulate a deep and constructive sharing to enable young people to be fully aware of their choices.

In addition to deepening spiritual awareness, what other positive aspects for participants?

The session allows foremost to establish relationships between religious cultures: European, African, Latin American, Indian,



Members of the 2016 session

The F.V.D. welcomed in Betharram by the young participants in the session for a day of sharing



a 'good morning'; friendships made while in the queue for lunch; dialogues exchanged with strangers from other countries during the two-hour train journey; a joy that was expressed at every opportunity and got the better of fatigue. Each of the days spent in Krakow was incredible: I was impressed by the large number of pilgrims from all over the world and the fact that we were all there to share the same faith and the same love of God.

If I were to recount everything that we experienced during these days, I would have to write a book!

In summary, I can tell you that the Church is more alive than ever, that we young people are not afraid of going out into the world and speaking about God, we are ready to fight for a fairer world and especially that we are ready to show mercy vis-à-vis our brothers.

During these days, an echo resounded to which we could not remain indifferent: we are called to live and share God's mercy, to go out in search of others, to bring what we lived these past few days, to every family, every parish, every person we meet, because we cannot keep such joy only in the memory. I can certainly say that God took me in his arms in a special way and I felt a lot of love and affection from him during these days.

My life of faith is now different from the way it was before this meeting. And I'm sure the Betharramite charism is the way I wish to know Christ and to follow him.

Alejandro Gross Brown Bobadilla

THE LAITY AND THE CHARISM OF BETHARRAM

To choose our faith journey

THE F.V.D. GROUP OF THE YOUNG BETHARRAMITES FROM PARAGUAY, HAD THE EXCELLENT IDEA TO COMBINE A JOURNEY TO THE ORIGINS WITH A FULL IMMERSION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD. THEIR DESTINATIONS: FROM BETHARRAM TO KRAKOW, WITHOUT TRANSITION. AND WAS ONE REALLY NEEDED AFTER THE TRAINING IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND FRATERNITY WITHOUT BORDERS OFFERED BY THE YOUNG BROTHERS IN THE SESSION?

It is difficult to express in a few words what we experienced both at Bétharram and at World Youth Day. These are moments full of emotion and feelings that marked a 'before and after' in our spiritual journey.

To begin with Bétharram, the cradle of our charism, we proposed to follow the footsteps of our Father St Michael. We all had a preconceived idea of a shrine and a seminary, but, once there, we had a different perception of the place: it was like coming home.

This place where we have never been before turned into a family home; we almost reverted to being children, and we started to move here and there, amazed by every detail, contemplating with moist eyes the bedroom of our Saint.

How to express what we felt when entering the sanctuary and contemplating Our Lady of Betharram, so bright and so beautiful? I tried to imagine the moment when St. Michael has focussed on this image and discovered his mission. Never before now, did I feel so strongly the presence of Saint Michael: his example and his legacy could be seen in the religious and seminarians we met.

It was as if we were meeting the Risen

Lord at every moment. What an amazing experience to share the Eucharist with Betharramites of other countries! To see clearly that the charism could have travelled so far from its place of origin and continue to fascinate the heart of people.

I would like to share with you the phrase that marked this visit. After praying the rosary, Father Gaspar addressed us with the words: "The future of the Congregation is in your hands. "What a mission and what a responsibility! How could we not meet the living God in Betharram, where everything speaks of his presence in this place full of nature, peace and joy?"

After leaving Betharram, with hearts swelling and on fire, we set out for the youth meeting with Pope Francis; many memories crowd in when I think about this week. We were assigned a lodging, not in Krakow, but in a village two hours away by train. The great thing is that basically, it allowed us to sleep with Polish families, a wonderful experience as we could see their way of life.

The World Youth Days were characterized by joy; people were happy, singing everywhere, dancing, jumping; strangers who, on meeting you, greeted you with

and Thai. Living together is possible, as is group work. This is an opportunity to forge bonds of friendship, as seen on Facebook. But I want to emphasize that the sessions helped to deepen our spirituality and our mission, which was lacking in some of the newer Vicariates. In this area, the religious of the Vicariate of France-Spain, which is hosting the session, offered young people the contribution of knowledge and experience, passing the charism that flows from the source in all its freshness.

Other religious contributing to these sessions are acting as 'resources' for these meetings.

During all these years, many of our brothers were engaged in giving conferences and /or accompaniment. At first they came mostly from 'the cradle of the Congregation'...men such as Fr. Beñat, Fr. Jean (Lambert), Fr. Gaston, Fr. Jean-Do, Fr Jean-Luc, Fr Jacky , brother Emile, Fr. Gerard ... But in recent years, younger brothers have joined the leadership team: Fathers Mauro (Brazil), Chan (Thailand), Stervin (India) and Jean-Paul Kissi (Cote d'Ivoire) in particular.

Was it due to their greater availability?

Not just that. It was important to offer a presence of Formators of all ages and from all cultural backgrounds, both to facilitate communication with and among young people and to guarantee them support in their language. The brothers I have named have also attended Formators' courses, and more and more, they have a good command of English.

Indeed, at each session, the issue of

language is raised. Is it an obstacle?

Although we are very insistent that English be taught in houses of formation, language remains a real problem for communication between young people. It is true that young people who speak English become more numerous each time, but still many do not speak it. And among those who have mastered this language, many have learned it before entering Betharram; in formation houses, we do not take sufficient care of this aspect which is increasingly important for a person who wants to be a missionary.

The session is now well established initiative, but have you in mind other possible solutions?

Sometimes I wonder whether the sessions should not be longer and more intense to allow young people to internalize more the experience of our charism. Each congregation has its own style of building its Formation program. The fact is that the quality of the sessions also depend a lot on participating groups and the Formation previously received in the communities. Some groups were very difficult, they lacked maturity or showed rebellious attitudes and accepted with difficulty the proposals offered by the session. The 2016 group has proved itself, very mature, and has expressed enthusiasm for the proposals made, even suggesting interesting initiatives to further improve the climate.

In conclusion, what importance do you give to these sessions?

They are a very valuable experience for the reasons I just stated. And they justify all the efforts made by the Regions and by the General Council

in both human resources and financial resources.

Young people themselves say in their testimonies that the Session is a crucial time in their formation, mainly because it offers them the opportunity to learn about our father and founder St. Michael Garicoits. Furthermore, the visit to the places helps

them to trace an even deeper experience. Knowledge of brothers from different cultures will be a plus when it comes to ask some religious to be available to go to work in other vicariates.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
Superior General

« It is the challenge of the cultural mix which I am not likely to forget, and which was very well accepted by all the religious. We were all able to accept the differences by mutually accepting each other in view of the need to form international communities. The religious, taking part in this session succeeded in grasping these realities: they were open to the cultural facts. Of course there are still a few difficulties in communicating because of the language but that can easily be resolved as each religious is involved in learning another language so as to make conversations easier.

What I retain from this session is the invitation to get a better knowledge of the Betharram spirituality and of our belonging to our religious family. Each Vicariate has its realities what was mentioned in the different conversations and it is in these realities that the Betharramite spirituality must be inculturated. This is possible thanks to a prayer life and fraternity in community which is to be encouraged at all times.

I was very happy to be able to follow this session as a young Formator; I have learned a lot from the seniors and from those religious in formation. I pray that our desire to live and share the treasure of Betharram may grow in us all the time.

Jean Paul Kissi Ayo scj, Master of novices



The 2016 session in its daily unfolding | care for the interior life and intercultural enrichment

- First of all meditation to begin our day; we were each invited to give real consistence to this rendez-vous of personal prayer.
- During Lauds a letter from St Michael was read in the three languages thus giving us a better knowledge of our Father founder. This initiative was greatly appreciated by all especially as we were praying around his desk on which he had written many of those letters. The saint's bed room helped the young religious to be impressed by such a sacred space.
- After a more intellectual work during the day, there was a more personal reflection and feed-back allowing the young religious to deepen the topics further.
- In the evening the examination of conscience was proposed to all, according as it is recommended in the Ignatian method of prayer.

- Every week the young religious met his director for the session; this enabled him to review the topics studied, discuss whatever problems encountered during the session and the unfolding of the day.
- Personal times of silence were a regular feature of the session, especially during the walks at Ibarre, Igon, Loyola, Lourdes, not forgetting the daily reminders met in the sanctuaries, or the Calvary of Betharram.
- The evenings made way for the presentation of the different vicariates thanks to the use of "power points" which are interesting.
- The liturgy is the special space where the differences are noticeable, some being more imagined than others but all convey a lively interest to the words and actions. Even if the language barrier continues to be a real problem for the discussion groups, the singing leads to a real communion. The differences can be noted too at cooking level and the special meals!

There was a real sense of openness during the Masses on Sundays. At Betharram the Sunday Masses took on a special appeal with the contribution of the young guests invited by the Vocations team: the Betharramite youth from Ivory Coast, or the FVD youth from Paraguay on their way to the World Youth Days in Krakovie not forgetting the "Me Voici" Fraternity. Times of prayer and sharing were a rich experience for all the sessionists as well as for the regular visitors to the sanctuaries at Betharram. These latter were agreeably surprised at seeing the vitality of the Betharram youth beyond

their usual horizons We were very happy to see how attached the young religious are to the reality of Betharram in the wider world. We animators were witnesses of the constant growth of the spirit of St Michael Garicoits. Today it is all the more evident in the new realities at the "peripheries" of our Europe which has such a crying need of the vitality!

Laurent Bacho scj,
General Councillor for formation