



Painting by Juan Vladimir Martinovich

Listening to Saint Michael...

God loved men more than angels: they sinned, but instead of sending them to hell, as he did with the angels, he sent them a Saviour; And then, if they served him after all that he did for them, he destined them for a happiness greater than that which they would have enjoyed had they not sinned, a happiness that surpasses that of the angels.

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NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE
NOTICIAS EN FAMILIA
NOTIZIE IN FAMIGLIA
FAMILY NEWS

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of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram

A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

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How is the Consecrated Life prophetic?

Pope Francis insists that the consecrated life is "prophetic". It is good to try to reflect on this dimension of our life. Tradition links monastic life to Elijah and John the Baptist. St. Bernard speaks of the prophecy of consecrated life, less because of its external aspects than its inner motivations: to seek the face of God, to see further than what is presently seen, to reach that which is unseen and in the future.

After the Vatican II the Magisterium began to speak of the prophecy of consecrated life in the *instruction Religious and human growth* in 1980. At the synod in 1994 the theme of the prophecy of consecrated life emerged strongly from the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the debate in the assembly. Remarkable in this respect is the intervention of Cardinal Ratzinger, who emphasises three elements: every authentic prophecy pro-

ceeds from an intimate friendship with God; The task of the prophet is twofold: "to make known the will of God" and "to interpret the Word of God in concrete circumstances"; "Every authentic prophetic action reveals Christ and introduces us to his paschal mystery." Saint John Paul II published in 1996 the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, which abounds the allusions to the prophetic character of this life. Today, when we speak of the prophecy of consecrated life, we refer to the specific relationship to history that characterises this state of life, both in the Church and in the world. The exhortation provides elements for establishing three prophetic models.

First model: by the profession of evangelical counsels. Prophecy consists in testifying to a way of living and acting which is an alternative to that of the world and of contemporary culture. A clear, visible and recognisable sign; The risk to the advocates of this kind of life would be to yield to moralism and to think oneself better than others; As all that comes from the world is not negative, the important thing is not to oppose but to dialogue, to promote a culture of encounter.

Second model: through the relationship of intimate friendship with God. Prophecy consists in the ability to interpret history in the light of the experience of God. It is a question of identifying the calls of the Spirit in the situations of today's world, in order to "then translate them with courage into coherent choices, both with the original charism and with the demands of the historical

situation" (VC 73) It is not said that the consecrated persons, by virtue of their vocation, the formation received and the activities they usually carry out, are the best placed and best able to fulfil this function in the Church.

Third model: the prophecy of the consecrated life is based on its eschatological tension (VC 26-27): virginity understood as anticipation of the world to come and eschatological tension make the Kingdom grow here and now. This model puts at the centre the proper element of the consecrated life, which is at the same time a means of both inner and outer renewal. Eschatology is an essential dimension of the Christian faith. It is a matter of restoring the divine and transcendent origin of faith, and consequently of recognizing the primacy of God's action in history.

The three models can exert a strong prophetic appeal. The third seems to better account for the originality of consecrated life. The religious is the one who lives, not from a presence, but from an absence, relying less on the visible than on the invisible. There is a "not seeing" and a "not knowing" which constitute the way of being of religious in the world. It is the "already there" and the "not yet" which are expressed by paradox and oxymoron.

In this sense, prophecy is a way of looking ahead, of seeing beyond the terrestrial reality, towards the promised and expected promise. This does not mean disinterest, let alone contempt of reality, but freedom with regard to the patterns of this world: "let those enjoying

new superior of Betharram. Thus, his first support is formed, more than a friend. As planned, the seminary of Betharram was empty after the ordinations of December 23, 1833. Eventually, Abbé Guimon took up a hectic schedule of parish ministry. Michel Garicoits however didn't travel further than the convent of Igon: four kilometres! But what a spiritual journey!

In contact with the nuns, Michel Garicoits felt called to create a congregation; A retreat with Fr. Leblanc, a Jesuit, confirmed it: "You will be the father of a family that will be our sister". At the end of 1832, after an animated discussion, he convinced Simon Guimon to become the first Companion, the ardent defender of the foundation. Bishop d'Arbou was less enthusiastic: while he approved the formation of a Society at Betharram; He was slow to accept that priests (from his diocese) would enter.

Michel Garicoits thought that Simon Guimon was at one with him. Yet one day he discovered a letter: four pages of insults. The paper was signed: Guimon! An explanation was quickly forthcoming. On reading the letter, the presumed author looked troubled; He reread and exclaimed: "It is my writing, my signature. But It was not I who wrote it; It is the devil! He hugged Michael's neck, and they stay embraced for a long time, with moist eyes ...

In 1841, Mgr. Lacroix Bishop of Bayonne for three years, arrived at Betharram with a Rule for Auxiliary Priests. With fervour, Simon Guimon demanded religious vows; And when he thought he had lost the battle, he fell at the feet of the Bishop, vowing to rise only when he was heard. The

silence was long, very long. The Bishop gave in and granted to the small group the vows and the Rule chosen by Michael Garicoits. Father Guimon had a fiery personality, sometimes given to odd behaviour. He was sometimes criticised for this, but each time he accepted correction and asked forgiveness, often on his knees.

Beñat Oyhénart scj

Correspondence of Saint Michael, published and introduced by Fr. Miéyaa scj In 1855, when cholera spread through the countryside, St Michael sent almost all his missionaries to the parishes to help the parish priests to help the sick. The epidemic was widespread, and much worse, the misery so great that many died for lack of care. Fr. Guimon had been given some money from some Basque priests, and apparently also from Bishop Lacroix. Because of his vow of poverty, he did not dare to dispose of it without proper authorisation. He asked his superior. St Michael Garicoits answered him by this brief letter (Nr. 113 bis).

.....

My dear friend, why are you asking me? When you sacrifice yourself for souls, give, give all that you have. Assist all these unfortunates; Do whatever you can to relieve them.

.....



We shall meet Father Guimon and his missionary zeal sometime later, at the time of the great departure for America. Meanwhile, in 1833, a third companion joined the first two members of the small congregation: Father Jean Chirou.

THE FIRST COMPANIONS OF MICHAEL GARICOITS

DO WE REALLY KNOW THE FIRST COMPANIONS OF ST. MICHAEL WHO SHARED HIS DREAM AND HIS EFFORTS TO FULFIL IT IN THE CHURCH OF HIS TIME? PROBABLY WE DO: WHO HAS NEVER HEARD OF FR. GUIMON, FR. CHIROU, FR. LARROUY, FR. PERGUILHEM, FR. FONDEVILLE, FR. D. BARBÉ, FR. SARDOY? BUT WE MAY NOT KNOW THEIR PERSONALITY, NOR HOW THEY MET SAINT MICHAEL, HOW THEY DECIDED TO FULLY DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO A PROJECT WHICH WAS INSPIRED BY GOD AND DREW THEM TO BE THE PILLARS OF THE EMERGING CONGREGATION, DESPITE ALL THE WORKS AND THE OBSTACLES, THE DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES. THERE ARE SOME BEAUTIFUL STORIES TO TELL.



Simon Guimon, a fiery temper

Bishop d'Arbou, appointed to Bayonne in 1830, wanted to continue the project of Bishop d'Astros: bring all the seminarians back to Bayonne. The old superior of Betharram, Pierre-Procope Lassalle, died on July 5, 1831. He was succeeded by Michael Garicoits. Appointed to the Convent of Igon, was Simon Guimon, a former

missionary. He didn't last long: the rigor of the new chaplain discouraged young religious and postulants. Jeanne-Élisabeth Bichier des Ages, the founder, was upset by it and so Michael Garicoits took the road to Igon; For 30 years! Far from being discouraged, Simon Guimon put himself under the guidance of the

the present life act as if they were not enjoying it. For the order of this world is vanishing." (1 Cor 7,31)

"Let nothing trouble you ... patience obtains everything ... God alone is enough". Here, patience does not mean resignation, but the acceptance of reality in expectation and hope of divine intervention. This is the meaning of the word *hypo-moné* which means etymologically "to stay under", to carry the weight of the reality that is ours but in the expectation of a change, a liberation worked by God.

The eschatological tension that marks the consecrated life is a form of radical love of the world and of history. The consecrated person, in the image of Christ and in union with Him, takes people and carries them with Him in the effort and hope of attaining together the purpose of the Kingdom. The consecrated person is



The Prophet Isaiah

thus the bearer of a diversity which should neither lead to a detachment from the other nor to absorption into the other, but a "taking in charge", an acceptance of the other as a weight on the shoulders, carried by the love of a good Samaritan or a good pastor.

Rather than courageous decisions, we need a logical coherence, which presupposes more inspired thinking than a bold will. At present we live with a consecrated life that does a little of everything. Such a situation, is neither prophetic nor tenable, and should be extinguished or transformed.

We need to replace conservation strategies with formation strategies that allow consecrated people, at least to the healthiest and most adaptable among them, to question the meaning of their vocation. They must do serious discern-

ment and implement concrete lifestyle choices. The desire to maintain often leads us to neglect the care to grow and mature our identity as consecrated, a condition for a renewal that can transform our living spaces. It is easier to arrange spaces than to set in motion historical processes capable of bearing fruit in season.

This requires “clear and tenacious” convictions because, as Pope Francis said, “time is superior to space”. Consecrated life must first revive its eschatological dimension. We must develop a theology and a spirituality of expectation. We must be able to go further than the works, the priestly ministry, the social function ... and refocus on our being religious as such. Thus we will rediscover the capacity to last in history without escaping, and without losing ourselves thereby, “taking charge” of suffering and unanswered questions. In a world where everything is discontinuous and ruptured, we cannot confine ourselves to a logic of conservation and clerical-institutional continuity. Prophecy passes through this “dark valley” (Ps 23: 4), this exile, this path through the desert that abounds in the promises of God insofar as they do not correspond to purely human projects. We need to pause to reflect, we need to pause, because we have to “reverse and demolish”, “build and plant” (Jr 1,10), even though for the moment we do not know how, where and When to do it. The break is in history: we can choose to let ourselves be led by history or decide to anchor to recalculate the course to follow. There are times when the only possible form of

prophecy is to stop and wonder (Is 29,9-12). It is time for patience, time to “stay under” load and wait. And by that, to be radical in the prophecy.

Isaiah 29: The blindness of the people

⁹ Be irresolute, be stupefied, lose your sight and remain blind! Be drunk but not from wine, stagger but not from beer.

¹⁰ For Yahweh has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep; he has shut your eyes - the prophets; he has covered your heads - the seers.

¹¹ The revelation of all this has become for you like the words of a sealed scroll. When someone gives it to another who knows how to read and says, “Read this,” the other one answers, “I cannot; it is sealed.”

¹² When the scroll is given to one who doesn’t know how to read,” he answers, “I do not know.”

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
Superior General

¹ This reflection is the summary of the conference given by Fr. Saverio Cannistrà ocd, Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, at the USG assembly in May 2016

Minor Seminary. He had the reputation of being a good vocational animator and “he himself drove the minibus to bring the candidates to the seminary.” In 1957 he was appointed Master of Novices to form candidates for religious life at Passa Quatro. That year, he assumed the office of Superior Vice-Provincial of Brazil. In 1961 he inaugurated the house of the Scholasticate in Belo Horizonte, Nova Granada, for philosophical and theological formation of the Betharram family. Not only was he rector of the scholasticate, he was also the first parish priest of the new parish of Our lady of the Beautiful Branch, also entrusted to Betharram. He remained there ten years as parish priest. From 1993 to 2002, he worked in pastoral ministry at the parish of Santa Lucia in the suburbs of Belo Horizonte. In 2002 he accepted this challenge of returning to his native Argentina to become part of the new Regional Novitiate community of Adrogué as ‘elder statesman’. He remained there until December 2008, before finally returning to his beloved Brazil, to continue his service as a formator. From 2009 to 2016, he was member of the regional scholasticate team (Argentina-Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil), at Nuova Granada, Belo Horizonte. Father Enrique (“Pitchuleco”) returns to the House of the Father, leaving unshakable impressions among Betharramites and many who have had the grace to know Him. He was a religious with a good character. He was joyful, pious, dynamic in his activities and also courageous in the face of the difficulties he encountered on his way. His sensibility, even in the dark and painful

moments, inspired him with serene words for all. He was loved by his brothers, by scholastics and novices, and by many lay people. Everyone teased him and took care of him with tenderness. Wherever he exercised his pastoral ministry, people still remember his deeds. We can see everywhere works that he founded, such as the construction of churches, parish houses, social works etc. Someone who knew him well retains a memory of his optimism, his strong and decisive spirit: He was able to face a corrupt administrator or a street thief, without any fear. He had a generous hand for the needy and a compassionate heart for the penitent. Through his patience, he caught a glimpse of the Light even in the most obscure tunnels of life. In the administrative field, he was audacious and certainly full of confidence in Divine Providence ... God bless him! Now that he is close to God, he will certainly intercede for his religious Family and for all those friends whom he won over during his passage through this world. In heaven, near Our lady of Betharram and St. Michael Garicoits, Father Enrique knows the true joy and the reward that the Lord reserves for his faithful servants.

Paulo Vital scj and P. Gustavo Agín scj

Father Enrique Lasuén scj

Pontaut (Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina), 16 July 1922 - Belo Horizonte (Brazil), 20 December 2016

Father Enrique Lasuén is a Betharramite of the Etchecopar Region, who died on 20 December 2016 at Belo Horizonte. Reaching the age of 94 after having had a fruitful pastoral ministry, this man of God saw his health decline. After a brief hospitalisation, he fell asleep in the arms of Our lady of Betharram Betharram, at 7 am.

He was born on July 16, 1922, in *Pontaut*, in the Coronel Pringles district of the province of Buenos Aires (Argentina). He had entered the religious family of Betharram

at a young age. A vocations promoter discovered him in the church of his village, where he was a choirboy. As a boy he had worked as a herdsman watching cattle on horseback, accompanied by dogs, and also other pastoral tasks. Ordained at Adrogué in 1948, he has celebrated 68 years of priestly life. From 1948, he had been destined for mission in Brazil, where he worked generously for 61 years. He started at Passa Quatro, for three years; Then he was transferred to Conceição do Rio Verde to lead the Congregational



Fr. Enrique Lasuén surrounded by Fr. Glecimar, Br. Mariano, Br. Iran and Br. Leandro in Belo Horizonte

Happy New Year to you all!



From the refectory of the community of Sampran, painted by Fr. Martin de Tours scj



St Michael Garicoits: It has pleased God to make himself loved...
Pope Francis: God chose to be born a little child, because he wanted to be loved...

...Blessed Paul VI, on Christmas 1971, said: "God could have come wrapped in glory, splendour, light and power, to instill fear, to make us rub our eyes in amazement. Instead he came as the smallest, the frailest and weakest of beings. Why? So that no one would be ashamed to approach him, so that no one would be afraid, so that all would feel close to him and draw near him, so that there would be no distance between us and him. God made the effort to plunge, to dive deep within us, so that each of us, each of you, could speak intimately with him, trust him, draw near him and realize that he

thinks of you and loves you... He loves you! Think about what this means! If you understand this, if you remember what I am saying, you will have understood the whole of Christianity". God chose to be born a little child, because he wanted to be loved. Here we see, as it were, how the logic of Christmas is the reversal of worldly logic, of the mentality of power and might, the thinking of the Pharisees and those who see things merely in terms of causality or determinism.

**FROM THE ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE ROMAN CURIA, 22 DECEMBER 2016**



followed independence: no successor having been appointed, a crisis of governmental instability broke out, and finally the Congress of 1841 established the *Consulate* as a form of government, composed of Mariano Roque Alonso and Carlos Antonio López. Lopez was elected Constitutional President of Paraguay at the congress of 1844. During his tenure, Paraguay continued to develop into an independent country. His son, Francisco Solano, succeeded him and was elected at the Congress of 1862. The first rulers helped make the country the most prosperous nation in South America.

During the presidency of Francisco Solano Lopez, the most devastating war in American history broke out; Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay joined together in a triple alliance against Paraguay (1865-1870). This conflict left Paraguay in ruins, demographically, territorially, politically and economically. However, the temper, courage and will of those who survived this harrowing experience enabled the country to be reborn like a phoenix which is reborn from its ashes. The majority of the survivors were women, and it was with their courage and determination that they rebuilt the country.

The proclamation of the National Constitution at the Congress of 1870 inaugurated a new phase for Paraguay. The elected president was Cirilo Antonio Rivarola. This period was characterized by repeated armed uprisings, with various political groups struggling for power. As a result, a 'Liberal Rule' was established, which was maintained until the explosion of the Chaco war. In 1932 a war broke out between Paraguay and Bolivia for the possession of the Northern Chaco. It ended with the signing of the Protocol of Peace (1935), which marked the end of hostilities. Paraguay

retained three-quarters of the territory at the origin of the conflict, the fourth part returning to Bolivia.

After the Chaco war a new era of internal revolutions developed. Among these are the Febrerista (February) revolution (1936) and the "pynandi" revolution (barefoot, 1947), which marks the beginning of "Colorado Rule". On August 15, 1954, Alfredo Stroessner took over the presidency of Paraguay. His dictatorship became an 'iron fist' regime against the opposition. The repression used during his tenure took the form of torture, kidnappings and political assassinations. At the same time, corruption increased. A coup d'état (2 & 3 February 1989), led by General Andres Rodriguez, father of his daughter-in-law, overthrew the dictatorial government of Stroessner after 35 years of absolute power.

Paraguay has since embarked on a new path by trying out a process of transformation in all sectors. The National Constitution, adopted in 1992, laid down the rules for the democratic life of the country. Many events have demonstrated since, the will and popular determination in the struggle for the respect for individual and collective freedoms, and in particular what is called the *Paraguayan March* (1999). (When a popular vice president was murdered there was a big demonstration of people power) Since the overthrow of the dictatorship there have been various key figures. The country's presidency is currently exercised by businessman Horacio Cartes. Pope Francis who in 2015 made an apostolic visit to Paraguay, evokes this country in the following terms: I take my hat off to Paraguay. This country is incredible. It is not surprising that these brothers have risen from their ashes."

Mónica Silvia Gadea

THE NEXT GENERAL CHAPTER WILL LEAD US INTO THE HISTORICAL CULTURAL SOCIAL AND ECCLESIAL CONTEXT OF PARAGUAY. FOR MANY OF THE DELEGATES TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER, THIS WILL BE THE FIRST VISIT TO THIS PARTICULAR COUNTRY. THEIR PRESENCE WILL BE MORE THAN THAT OF A TOURIST OR OF A PASSING GUEST.

THE ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE MONTHS TO COME WILL HELP US TO KNOW A PEOPLE, ITS HISTORY, ITS CULTURE, ITS FAITH, ITS SOCIAL CONFLICTS, HIS EXPECTATIONS AND ITS CHALLENGES...

Paraguay, a country rich in history

Before the arrival of the *Conquistadores* Paraguay was populated by different native groups, among which are the Amazonian *avá* (guarani), who, thanks to their numerical superiority and advanced culture, came from northern South America and settled in this territory. The first Europeans to arrive in this land, which later became known as the 'Great Province of the Indies', were firstly in 1524 the Portuguese explorer Alejo García, who was credited with discovering Paraguay, and secondly in 1528 Sebastiano Caboto who in his travels on the river Paraguay, reached as far as the Pilcomayo river, and so became the first to navigate these waters.

The foundation of the fort of Our Lady of the Assumption, described by Domingo Martínez de Irala in 1541 as a "noble and loyal city", was the starting point of Spanish conquest in the Rio de la Plata. From here most of the foundation expeditions in America were launched. As a prelude to the independence of the country, there were two popular revolts, one called 'The Common Revolution'. The motto of the rebels "Vox Populi, Vox Dei", marked the growing desire for good government. The second revolution is known as "The precursor of American Independence". Many events then led to the independence of

Paraguay (1811): Guaraní wars, during which the natives and the Jesuits joined forces to fight the Portuguese invaders; The expulsion of the Jesuits, which began in 1767; The creation in 1776 of the Vice-Kingdom of Rio de la Plata, of which the province of Paraguay would form part. In parallel with the Napoleonic invasions of the Iberian Peninsula, the Council of Buenos Aires, in rebellion against the metropolis, attempted to annex the province of Paraguay by a military expedition under the command of General Manuel Belgrano, which ended in defeat for the *Porteños* (inhabitants of the port of Buenos Aires). After this belligerent act, the uprising of the national heroes of Paraguay against Spanish domination, on May 14 & 15 1811 led to the independence of Paraguay and the institution of the first Independent Republic of the South at the Congress of October 12 1813. This first period of transition saw a succession of temporary governments: Triumvirate, Junta, Consuls; until the day when José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia was elected at the Congress of 1814 as 'Temporary Dictator' of the Republic. At the Congress of 1816 he was appointed 'Supreme Dictator for Life'; a position he held until his death in 1840.

After the death of the "Supreme Dictator," there was a period similar to that which

An overview of the St Michael Garicoïts Region

WITH THE VISIT OF THE VICARIATE OF HOLY LAND IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2016, THE SUPERIOR GENERAL, FATHER GASPAR FERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ SCJ, CONCLUDED THE LAST VISITATION OF HIS MANDATE.

LET US DISCOVER WITH HIM THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIVE VICARIATES OF THE ST. MICHAEL GARICOÏTS REGION, KEEPING IN OUR PRAYER ALL THE RELIGIOUS WHO ARE ABOUT TO GATHER FOR THE REGIONAL CHAPTER FROM JANUARY 19TH TO 24TH, 2017.

Formed by the vicariates of France-Spain, Italy, the Holy Land, Ivory Coast and Central Africa, the St Michael Garicoïts Region is the most complex of the three in the Congregation. France, Spain and Italy already have a great diversity between them. The Ivory Coast and Central Africa are also very different countries, even if they are both in Africa. And what can be said of the Holy Land? Moreover, France is our place of origin (founded in 1835). The Holy Land came next (1879), then Spain and Italy (1903-1904); the Ivory Coast and Central Africa are more recent additions (1959 and 1986). It is nevertheless the Region which today counts 131 religious compared with 56 religious in the Etchécopar Region and 61 in the Mariam Region. Because of its diversity, it had difficulty in forming a united front as a Region. The Council met in a different vicariate each time and it's a good thing. But, following the example of the Mariam Region, it did not meet the intermediary regional chapter, or organise other kinds of meetings, due to increased travel costs and to the high number and dispersion of its religious.

It is in THE FRANCE-SPAIN VICARIATE that our

place of origin is to be found, where St Michael Garicoïts was born, lived and died, and where he experienced the love of God, which led him to found the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram, in order to bring the same joy to others. What indeed is the emotion of the young participants of the preparation sessions for perpetual vows, when they visit Garacotxea, Ibarre, Hosta, Oneix, Bétharram, Igon or Bayonne? This source is the vocational reference point for all the Betharramite religious of the eleven vicariates of the Congregation. This veritable treasure has far more value than all the vicariates' property. There is little economic value in the grounds of Ibarre and Betharram.

The France-Spain Vicariate has a glorious missionary history in Argentina, Uruguay, the Holy Land, Spain, Italy, Britain, Belgium, China, Paraguay, Brazil, Morocco, Algeria, Thailand, Ivory Coast and India. Until 2014, the French missionary religious had dedicated their life to, and had reserved the assets of the vicariate for, the Ivory Coast mission. Today, some of these fervent missionaries are taking a rest, due to this generous devotion, at the Betharram retirement home, where the

community is made up of 18 religious. But this historic heritage represents an administrative burden which demands a lot of dedication from the Regional Vicar and other religious. Not having the means to finance the restoration of the chapels of the Way of the Cross, we had to make a donation for it for 20 years to the municipal council, as the council was able to receive more grants from the State. The integration of the Betharram retirement home with the St Joseph Association of the Daughters of the Cross also demanded lots of time and effort. Finally, the goods which « La Pyrénéenne » Association had protected since 1907, were returned to the Congregation. We can count five communities on mission in the France-Spain Vicariate. In the residence of St Palais, where five religious live, four of them are more than 89 years old, and Fr Joseph Ruspil, 70 years, is in charge of two parishes in the area of Ibarre. The religious of this residence make a community with those of Anglet, where Fathers Oyhénart and Moulier ensure the spiritual accompaniment of the Servants of Mary, Blessed Father Cestac's daughters. Father Cestac was himself a friend of St Michael Garicoits. The Community of Our Lady of Betharram, tasked with the organisation of the Sanctuary, of the reception house and of the college founded by St Michael in 1837, is made up of four religious: the Regional Vicar, a religious from the Ivory Coast, the Sanctuary supervisor and a religious who guides the college activity. At Carmel de Pau, where St Mariam lived, another spring in which we can

get soaked, the five religious forming the community deal with the students' residence, receive groups for meetings, work together in the parish, while other priests have various irregular pastoral activities. This community includes a young Thai religious, Father Pornchai, and has also benefited for several years from the presence of Father Stervin, who has come from India. The Community of Pibrac has, as a mission, the organisation of two parishes in the suburbs of Toulouse. There are three religious there: the Regional Superior, the Community Superior and Parish Priest, and other religious from the Ivory Coast.

Finally, the Mendelu Community (Spain) has responsibility for the organisation of the St Michael Garicoits Parish and for the chaplaincy of three religious communities. The Community Superior is the last religious to have been ordained in France, in 2007; he is 55 years old. This Community also has a young religious who has come from the Vicariate of Brazil, Father Davi Lara.

Such is the fragile reality of the France-Spain Vicariate. Full of life and missionary zeal in the past, it consists today of 46 religious of which 30 are more than 80 years old, 13 are between 55 and 78 years old – and there are those that bear the weight of the life and mission of the Vicariate: 4 religious being between 31 and 39 years old, coming from other Vicariates.

THE ITALY VICARIATE. This is the Vicariate which at present has the largest number of religious with 53 people. Many amongst them

at Vicariate level. The “Nè Mè” group has been together for several years, organises monthly meetings, an annual retreat and some members of the group have experienced an Ignatian retreat. By accompanying the religious community and always joining in the Bétharramite festivals, they felt the need to organize themselves and created a “Project of life of the Bétharramite lay fraternities of the Ivory Coast”. In Italy, many lay people share the spirituality and mission, but find it difficult to organize themselves. The Association Il Mosaico collaborates with the religious of the *Casa Famiglia* of Monteporzio and the Saint-Michel Centre at Bouar and at their meetings they always lead a reflection around the

writings of Saint Michael Garicoits. The religious of Castellazzo accompany a small group of lay people who are very interested in St Michael Garicoits and provide them with some elements of formation. In the Central African Republic, Father Beniamino tried to gather lay people around the Bétharramite charism, but there was no follow-up. In the Holy Land, I recently met one of our former novices who was interested in the idea. It would be good to encourage it.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
Superior General



Oratory at the community of Bethlehem

were entrusted with the seminary of Beit-Jala. The two houses have been organized for the reception of pilgrims until today. Today, the community of Bethlehem welcomes the Novitiate of the region, namely the novice master and three Ivorian brothers, as well as a Filipino deacon who wishes to enter our Congregation. After the painful closure of the community of the parish of Zarqa in Jordan, because of the departure of the Congregation of two Arab brothers, the Patriarch entrusted to us the parish of Safar-am, where our three brothers from Nazareth live. We view our presence in the Holy Land with hope. In the shadow of the two Carmels, a new perspective emerges for our communities. Young people who are attracted to the Holy Land learn Arabic and Hebrew when they arrive in order to integrate into the two environments of the mother church: the Arab world and the Jewish world.

Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi, a new novice master, studied Arabic, as did two other Ivorian scholastics who were interested in the language during the novitiate. Fr. José Kumar of India studied Hebrew and Arabic and began pastoral integration with Indian immigrants who speak Hebrew. While waiting for the transition to take place, we thank Fathers Henri Lamasse and Firmin Bourguinat, originally from the Vicariate of France, who at 86 and 81 years respectively, serve the chaplaincies of the Bethlehem and Nazareth Carmels. We have an important heritage in this vicariate. In addition to the use of the land and the house of Nazareth, we have our properties of Bethlehem and

Emmaus. We have rented the house of Emmaus to the Beatitudes Movement. In order to leave the house at Nazareth fully available to welcome pilgrims, we plan to build a small house for the community behind it, with the income from the sale of some apartments we own in front of the house at Bethlehem. The organization of lay companions who wish to share the Bétharramite spirituality and mission with the religious community, is diverse in each vicariate. In France, the "Fraternité Me Voici" consists of several lay groups, always accompanied by a religious brother, who meet once a month and organize an annual retreat and renew their commitment to Bétharram during the Feast of Our Lady. They follow a "Charter" in their commitment which they drew up a few years ago. They also publish the bulletin "Fraternel", which we make available on the Congregation website. There are other lay people, the "Friends of Bétharram", who are not the same as the "Fraternité Me Voici" but who also share our spirituality and our activities. The collaboration of the laity from the "Fraternity" or "Friends" as volunteers to welcome the pilgrims to Bétharram during the summer proved to be very effective. The organization of lay Fraternities around the three communities of the Ivory Coast is also very interesting: in Adiapodoumé, "Nè Mè", in Yamousoukro, "Mi ngan", in Dabakala, "Mi yè". There is also a group of "Bétharramite Children" in Dabakala and a group of "Young Bétharramites" in Adiapodoumé. They have appointed a "Coordinator of the three adult groups"

were themselves missionaries in China, Thailand, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, India and the Holy Land. There are some religious from this Vicariate who founded the current Vicariate mission in Central Africa. This Italy vicariate is nevertheless full of life. Six communities are in charge of eight parishes: Lissone, Castellazzo, Langhirano, Pistoia, Ponte a Elsa with Brusiana, Isola, Pozzaglia with Montorio, Albonico with Dascio. One community accompanies the sick suffering from Aids to La Casa Famiglia in Monteporzio. Certain religious dedicate themselves to the pastoral care of health. One community facilitates the Santa Maria dei Miracoli church in Rome. The mission is centred on parish activity. It would be suitable to open up to other types of ministry, less institutional and more missionary. The Vicariate gives the impression that it has suddenly grown old: In Solbiate, two religious needing special care form a community with Father Paniga. The Colico Community maintains its pastoral activity despite the advanced age of its three members (83 to 89 years); same thing for the Castellazzo Community (77 to 86 years). The Albavilla and Albiate communities have grown with the arrival of religious who have left their ministries because of age and with the successive closures of Bormio and the Sant' Ilario parish in Milan. The Italy Vicariate lost at least three young religious over the past few years. In 2007, Father Simone Panzeri was the last religious ordained. Instead of having a religious available for pastoral care for vocations and training, they preferred

to reinforce pastoral effectiveness within a parish. The choice ultimately fell on training two communities to take charge of two new parishes more in line with our strength. We left Montemurlo, and the Bishop, still in the Diocese of Pistoia, handed a smaller parish over to us. In the Diocese of Parma, the Bishop released us from two mountain parishes and also the parish of Sant' Andrea in town in order to entrust us with the Parish of Langhirano comprising extensive land and numerous chapels and in which there is also a Community of the Daughters of the Cross. The common points between the France-Spain Vicariate and the Italy Vicariate: both lean on associations for missionary facilitation: "Au Coeur du monde" in France and "Amici di Betharram" in Italy. "Amici" gathers together lay people who, with Father Piero Trameri, make it possible to maintain the projects of the Central Africa Vicariate. "Au Coeur du Monde", presided over by Brother Emile and with the collaboration of numerous lay people, supports projects in the Ivory Coast, Thailand, Central Africa and Vietnam. The two Vicariates maintain communication through their webpages: www.betharram.fr and www.betharram.it. They each have their own magazine: In France, "En avant" with a more accessible appearance; In Italy, "Presenza betharramita" with a more selective content. Both try to make known community and missionary life. In the two Vicariates, pastoral care for vocations is a big problem. There have been no young people in training since 2007. It is difficult to suggest religious vocation

to the youth of the three countries concerned. I don't know if we have done everything we could. In the France-Spain Vicariate, there have been some initiatives. A proposition of voluntary work has just been launched and it is also intended to ask Italy to participate: *Go on a missionary voyage – Ivory Coast Project*.

The vitality of **THE VICARIATE OF THE IVORY COAST** is a source of hope for the region. Each of the three communities - Dabakala, Yamoussoukro and Adiapodoumé - is in charge of a parish. The formation community, made up of 15 religious (4 priests, 2 deacons, 1 religious brother, 8 religious brothers who have taken temporary vows, and of 6 postulants and 5 pre-postulants) is located very close to the parish church of Adiapodoumé. It is only in this community that there is still a French missionary, Father Jacky Moura. A few years ago the pre-postulancy was established. It is a year without academic objectives, a year of initiation dedicated to character formation and preparation for entry to philosophical studies at the Catholic University. It is an initiative that is paying off. During my last visit (2016), I was able to observe that the young people were more mature, that their vocation had become clearer and that they were open to the formative accompaniment. I was struck by the enthusiasm and love that some consecrated Bétharramites have for their vocation. Another missionary field is education, with two different strands: the Tshanfeto training farm in Adiapodoumé and the "campus" of Dabakala. The latter is a

home for schoolchildren coming from inland areas to facilitate their access to studies. A religious brother is appointed to accompany them. The Tshanfeto training farm is a centre offering qualified training in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry. Since its start, around a hundred young Ivorians have benefited. It has been recognized as a place of national interest, thanks to the prestige acquired by the high standard of work accomplished there. Three religious brothers take care of the management, leadership, the character formation and the supervision of activity. The Vicariate plans to open the Saint Jean-Marie Vianney College in the town of Katiola in September 2017. The Bishop of this diocese, Bishop Ignace Bessi Dogbo, entrusted a Bétharramite community with the management and pastoral work of the college. The new community will be housed in the premises of the establishment. The building is the one where our missionaries used to run the minor seminary. Having inherited this missionary spirit, the Vicariate of the Ivory Coast has sent three brothers to the Central African Republic, two to France and one to Italy.

THE VICARIATE OF CENTRAL AFRICA is a small vicariate that has existed for only 30 years. Eight religious are gathered in three communities: five are Italian missionaries and three come from the Ivory Coast. It must be acknowledged that once the initial difficulties had been overcome, the two nationalities integrated well. If the Italians have more experience, the

Ivorians have a greater ability to adapt, because they are Africans. They all carry out the valuable work of evangelization and promoting social welfare in the two parishes of Niém and Bouar, in the village schools of the two parishes, in the health centre at Niém and in the Saint-Michel Garicoits centre for people with AIDS in Bouar. The social work done by Fr. Beniamino with Caritas of Bouar is also very important. As far as pastoral vocations are concerned, the past few years have been very difficult. There has been a lot of suffering and disappointment. Four religious who had completed their studies, left the Congregation. One of them left after just a month of his first profession. Two religious who persevered are currently in the Ivory Coast, one is a religious brother and the other a deacon. Perseverance is proving very difficult for a

number of reasons: education is not at a sufficient level, the Christian faith has little root in the culture or in people's hearts, the opposing values of local culture greatly influence the hearts of young people, complicating the internalization of Christian values. We must touch the hearts of children before they are marked by the local culture. In the light of these sufferings and disappointments, added to by other material, human and cultural difficulties, the lack of transport... our missionaries certainly have much merit. They give everything and harvest little fruit.

The **VICARIATE OF THE HOLY LAND** is also charged with history. We have been there since 1876, when Father Chirou arrived accompanying the second group of Carmelites, to remain there as chaplain at the Carmel of Bethlehem. The Bétharramites have been their chaplains since then and also chaplains to the Carmel of Nazareth since 1910. Shortly afterwards the formation of the Bétharramite theologians in our Bethlehem house and the philosophers in the Nazareth house began. In 1932, we



Carmel of Nazareth: the chapel