



สุขสันต์วันคริสต์มาส

دي عيس داليم ديع

Feliz Navidad  
*Joyeux Noël*  
Buon Natale  
Merry Christmas  
Feliz Natal

« O God I open myself in spirit and heart, ready for you to do with me as you wish.» (MS 60)



Societas S<sup>mi</sup> Cordis Jesu  
BETHARRAM

132  
2017

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NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE  
NOTICIAS EN FAMILIA  
NOTIZIE IN FAMIGLIA  
FAMILY NEWS

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

A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

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## “The definitive gesture”

Dear Betharramites,

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We live a time of Grace in the Church with the coming of the Saviour. We do this in an age when many things are unthinkingly repeated, and life-commitments are avoided. But the Incarnation, the central mystery of the Christian Faith and the inspiring source of the Betharramite charism, makes us aware that the dynamic of Christ in the Gospel goes in the opposite direction: it is born of a “decisive action”: that of the Incarnate Word. “From that moment, he gave himself entirely to fulfill the Will of God, his Father ... even unto death, death on the cross”. (St Michael's - Founding text)

As Christmas approaches we Betharramite religious and laity, are invited to contemplate the Lord and adore him in that little Child: the Emmanuel. This action of God has become a human face. Jesus touches humanity. His first expression at birth will be to illuminate the shadows of our lives.

The Son of God left the fountain of love at the heart of the Trinity to sip at the bosom of the Virgin Mother!

St. Michael marvelled to see Jesus nourished in the same human fashion as ourselves. The ever-humble Love approaches fallen humanity to redeem it, assuming its condition in everything. However, sin had not touched him and it would never reach him in his ever pure heart.

This “man-God” knew intimately the mess of our human nature. But with his gesture he opened the door to divine intimacy. *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* (Jn 1.14). He did this in the midst of a sinful people, to raise them up by lowering himself. To enrich them by his poverty, in humility.

Divine Providence humbled itself to meet the pastor of Ibarre. And just as Elizabeth asked herself: *who am I that the Mother of my Lord comes to visit me?* (Lk 1.43), so also, humbly, we should ask the same of the Lord, with Saint Michael. Having being given divine blessing, *‘while we were still his enemies’,* (Rom 5.10) we are in debt to the God of love. *“With what shall I repay the Lord for all the good deeds that he has done for me”* (Ps 115. 3). His gesture leads us to live ever gratefully, and to share the joy of feeling loved, fulfilling our word.

The consecration of a Betharramite religious is a profound act of love and humility. Several times in the past I have had the pleasure of receiving perpetual vows in the Superior General’s name. And each time I have been a privileged witness to a definitive “yes”. And I often ask myself: What has this young person discovered to give himself totally ... what is it that he has lived together with Christ ... what does he want to be ... ?:

I had in front of me:

- A newly-committed young man who has not left happiness behind, because he has discovered Jesus as the only necessary thing. This joy is his everything, and he has made an option to follow him.
- A free man, who without a second thought, loves Betharram and Betharramites, and who wants to live and die in Betharram.
- A “fool for Christ’s sake”, moved by the secret spring of love, in whom the Word burns in his heart.
- An active member in a small family, who wants to build the Kingdom not alone but in community.
- A prophetic existence in a world of constant flux, who with his very Life has something to say.

We have all been called to give a “definitive yes” like the “Ecce Venio” of the Child Jesus. We have been accompanied by a Congregation that has tried to give us the simple care and the means to grow and be happy, in the image of the Holy Family.

We were also called to live with an attitude similar to that of Mary, who did not cooperate with the redemption simply in a passive way, but actively with her fidelity and obedience to the Holy Spirit. Her “Ecce Ancilla Domini”, is the wonderful acceptance of a divine adventure, accepting by faith the dream of the Father. The “yes” to the Lord’s messenger is a perfect echo of the “yes” that the Son pronounced in the heart of the Trinity. That providential coincidence expresses a theological symphony of love no one has ever seen before.

Saint Ignatius says that the three divine

1844, other good vocations appeared. Those brothers were the joy of Michael Garicoïts: he particularly loved them! He went to meet them in their workshops. On asking him the reason for his visit, one heard the answer: «The pleasure of seeing you!»

Surely, the brothers constitute «that part of the building to which the founder attached so much importance» (Father Etchécopar). The brothers, present beside the priests, even silently, managed by their simple existence and simple life, to overcome the resistance of Mgr Lacroix: they made the birth of a true religious family possible.

Michael Garicoïts says of their place:

«Brothers are needed by the fathers of the community (...) The brothers participate in all that is highest in the community, in the priesthood itself. They are the arms, the feet of the priests. They will have, if they wish, the greater part of the fruits of preaching (...) This is how you have to see things. It is necessary to exercise, in the narrow framework of its use, the immensity of charity. But if the ideas were as narrow as the room in which you work, and the feelings as low as the worktable, then it would be better if a millstone was attached to your neck and you were thrown into the sea.»

Throughout the history of the Congregation, the brothers are present.

Even today, throughout the world, they are for their brother priests the living reminder of their common identity as religious. Since the general chapter of 2011, the title of the religious family is «Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Bétharram»; even if it is a «clerical institution», it is composed of «religious, priests and brothers» (see Rule of Life No.1).

The truth obliges us to recognize that the brothers did not always have, «just like [priests], the same bread, same wine, same meat»; differences have existed, unfortunately! In the institution, some books - such as *Spiritual Master* - do not mention the existence of the brothers ... And yet when two young Béarnais men from Hours, blood brothers, presented themselves to Bétharram, one to be a priest, the other to be a domestic, both became religious: one brother Léopold Duvignau died in 1986 in South America; the other, Father Pierre Duvignau, died in Bétharram in 1995; so how the oldest, the author of *Spiritual Master*, could forget his brother, Brother Léopold ...?

«Brothers are needed from the fathers of the community» today, as in the old days ... «Be small, submissive, content and constant; and God will bless you,» says Michael Garicoïts today, as he wrote on 21 August 1861 to Brother Joannès ...

Beñat Oyhénart scj

The 11 episodes of the series “The first companions of Michel Garicoïts” are now available in a single downloadable pdf file in the section MULTIMEDIA<Library of the Congregation website [www.betharram.net](http://www.betharram.net).

back to Father Guimon, since he had already spoken to him! Would Arnaud be discouraged? He joined the army, then gave it up just as quickly ... On 24 March 1840 he was at the door of Bétharram's superior. For Father Garicoïts, there was only one question: what should he



*Remembering a fraternal & brotherly session:  
September 2013, at Bétharram*

do with this lad given his background? First of all, he started studying at the school of Our Lady. Then a supervisor left and Arnaud's age meant he could replace him. Then the sacristan went away: with a cassock and a surplice, Arnaud provided the service instead. Later on the laundryman and the refectory manager were missing: Arnaud replaced them valiantly! Except that, carrying out so many duties, one Holy Thursday he forgot to extinguish the candles after the service ... and once, the table was not set at meal time, and Father Perguilhem, always accurate, had to wait ... and even worse, Father Bellocq, watch in hand, reproached him for any delay. The sheep, *they* were patient! «I was so happy with my flock!» he says. Even Sister Marthe at Igon, realized that he was being asked to do too much; she spoke to Father Garicoïts: «We must help this brother.

Even if he had four feet and four hands, he couldn't get it all done!" Finally, discouraged, he himself decided to leave: «I have too much work!" The superior replied: «What do you want? I too have work, ten times more than I can do. Patience! We do what we can; God will not ask

for an account of what we cannot do. Also you are getting on in years ... You know that God wants you here. Besides, I would be alone if everybody went away. I would have to hire a servant ..." And so Arnaud stayed right until the end! On his death in 1894, Father Etchécopar reported a stranger's testimony: «Who is this brother? Seeing him is good for me; he has the face of a saint", and he added, «I think he was right; for my part, I had experienced the same impression many times; and only a few days ago, seeing this valiant brother standing, at work, following every aspect of the Rule, as if in full health, always the same, despite his swollen legs, almost without sleep and without food, always busy, seemingly tireless, always serene, I felt moved and I blessed God silently seeing such gentle courage, both ancient and young." Following Brother Arnaud, in 1843 and

persons, contemplating the self destruction of the men of this world said to themselves: "Let us bring about the salvation of the human race" (Spiritual Exercises 106-109).

In the end, the incarnation challenges us and puts us to the test. It reminds us that if we are truly faithful we cannot watch people suffer unmoved, because our own hearts will burn. Jesus the incarnate Word, will impel us to reach out to them as brothers and sisters, and walk with them side by side. Bringing mercy.

Brothers: How blessed is our charism! What a wonderful mystery!

Let us dedicate our lives to announce Jesus Christ, humble and obedient! That is our reason for living! But we can't take it for granted in an apathetic or secularised world. The arrival of Emmanuel impels us to rekindle in our hearts a passion to proclaim that this Child is the Saviour of the World, who comes to be known and loved.

Sadly, we often see that people are less and less aware of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God made man, who freed us from sin and enabled us to participate in his own divine Life!

Let us tell the world that Jesus is the only true meaning for our lives. He is not just a character in the History Channel.

We must assume a way of true witnessing and refuse to adjust to 'an easy life'. We cannot be part of a comfort-zone Church, stuck with a tepid and faint-hearted image. Let us go out to meet Life.

The Lord has come out to meet us, he has crossed boundaries to illuminate our hearts, and he himself has been our companion on the road to Emmaus. He has made himself into love for our sake. How honoured we should feel as heirs of this Betharramite charism!

Betharramites, religious and laity, men and women of God, this is our motto: "Ecce Venio" - "Ecce ancilla".

At the coming of Jesus in this year 2017, may we, inspired by Mary, always be awake, watching, willing and happy to rejoice with Emmanuel. This Divine Child has won our hearts with his tenderness, and he has done so with a definitive gesture.

Eduardo Gustavo Agín scj  
Superior General





### Interreligious dialogue or evangelization?

RETURNING FROM HIS 21ST APOSTOLIC JOURNEY, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN BANGLADESH AND MYANMAR, THE POPE ENGAGED IN THE TRADITIONAL AIRBORNE PRESS CONFERENCE.

THE PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP WAS TO BRING TO THESE TWO ASIAN COUNTRIES, ONE OFFICIALLY MUSLIM, THE OTHER MAINLY BUDDHIST, A MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION, FORGIVENESS AND PEACE.

[Etienne Lorailière, «KTO» (French Catholic Television)]: Some see interreligious dialogue and evangelization as two opposing terms. During this journey, you spoke of dialogue for peacebuilding. But what is your priority: evangelization or a dialogue for peace?

Pope Francis Thank you. A first distinction: evangelizing is not proselytizing. The Church grows not through proselytizing but through attraction, that is, through witness. Pope Benedict XVI said this. What is evangelization? It is living the Gospel; it is witnessing to how one lives the Gospel: witnessing to the Beatitudes, witnessing to Matthew 25, witnessing to the Good Samaritan, witnessing to forgiveness seventy times seven. And in this witnessing, the Holy Spirit works and there are conversions. But we are not very enthusiastic about bringing about conversions straight away. If they come, they wait: you speak ..., your tradition..., you make sure that a conversion is the response to something that the Holy Spirit has moved in my heart before the testimony

of a Christian. During the lunch I had with the young people on the Youth Day in Krakow – 15 or so young people from all over the world – one young man asked me this question: “What should I say to a university classmate, a friend, a good person, but who is atheist? What should I tell him in order to change him, to convert him? This was the response: “The last thing you should do is to say something. You live your Gospel, and if he asks you why you do this, you can explain to him why you do so. Let the Holy Spirit attract him”. This is the power of the meekness of the Holy Spirit in conversions. We are witnesses to the Spirit, witnesses to the Gospel. ‘Witness’ is a word that, in Greek, means ‘martyr’: everyday martyrdom, also the martyrdom of blood, when it happens. Your question: what is the priority, peace or conversion? But, when you live with witness and respect, you make peace. Peace begins to be broken in this field when proselytism begins, and there are many types of proselytism, but this is not evangelical. I don’t know if I’ve answered.

(From the press conference, December 2nd, 2017)

### That other part of the building

AT THE END OF THE YEAR 2017 AND A GALLERY OF PORTRAITS OF MICHAEL GARICOÏTS’ FIRST COMPANIONS, WHAT SHOULD WE RETAIN? THE NEF HAS INTRODUCED THE VERY FIRST DISCIPLES AND IN PARTICULAR THOSE WHO LEFT FOR AMERICA. IN TELLING THE STORY OF THE BEGINNINGS, WE REALIZE THAT IT IS ALSO MADE OF HUMAN STORIES, SOMETIMES JUST «LITTLE STORIES».

The founder does assure us: «First God created our work, it is holy; men could not have even begun it»; and he makes pray: «My God, look not at my sins, but at the Society your Sacred Heart has conceived and formed”. Of course many also took their part in building this community. The influence of Father Guimon is striking, to name but one; even though Father Garicoïts reproached him for a few things, including at the time of deciding on the mission in America. Yet the first companions did not always get what they wanted; the Catholics of Uruguay for example wanted Father Larrouy for Vicar Apostolic, even though he thought the suggestion was inappropriate, and Michel Garicoïts refused! Not too many honours for his religious men!

“Brothers are needed for the priests of the community”. That was the conviction of the founder from the beginning; Father Etchépar tells us. He continues: «They will be looked upon not as servants, but as brothers and co-workers; they will consider themselves in a holy and perfect condition because of their vows, their works and the fruit of their works, and they will behave not out of fear, but out of love.» Brother Arnaud Gaye opened the

way for the brothers.

Arnaud too, the shepherd of Rieulhès (hamlet of Saint-Pé-de-Bigorre), was attracted by Father Guimon! In 1840 he was preaching in Peyrouse, close to Lourdes. In the confessional, the 25-year-old spoke of his idea of a vocation; the priest, in a hurry, replied: «We will see later!” A few days later, the determined man returned with his request; the missionary told him, «At Bétharram, we are looking for brothers. You will be just like us, eat the same bread and meat, drink the same wine; there will be no difference between us ...», and mischievously he continues: «If you are greedy, you must not come; you will lose, because you will have your hands full of work! «

Within the family, everyone opposed Arnaud; the best-intentioned suggested he go to Garaison or to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He made his choice: «The idea of Bétharram, the idea of being associated with the good fathers of Bétharram, that speaks to my heart!” So he went to Bétharram. There he finds Father Chirou, always warm, but unable to decide for him. Soon afterwards, the shepherd pushes on to Igon and meets Father Garicoïts; only to find himself sent

Region



India

**Ignatian month** ► November 13, in Aluva (Kerala), the Betharramite novices of the Region: Br. Joseph My (Vietnam), Br. Weerapong (Thailandia), Br. Stephen R (India), Br. Wilfred Stevan Rodrigues (India), Br. Johnny Marak (India), Br. Alwyn Crasta (India), began the 30 days of Ignatian Spiritual Exercises guided by a Jesuit, Fr Joseph Jacob. A group of Jesuit novices took also part in the exercises.

Thailand

**Spiritual Exercises** ► From 12 to 18 of November, the religious of the Vicariate held the annual retreat in the Headquarters of the Vicariate, in Chiang Mai, under the guidance of Fr. Somyot Thepsamut, a Capuchin, who helped our brothers to enter more deeply into the spirituality of the religious life: charity, chastity, poverty, and obedience.

On November 14, all the religious of the Vicariate along with a group of about 200 people, celebrated a Thanksgiving Mass to remember with gratitude the life of the late Fr. Raimondo Perlini scj, who spent more than fifty years in Thailand.

In memoriam

On November 26, **Mr Luciano Pensa**, 86 years, brother of Fr Alberto Pensa SCJ, of the community of Ban Pong (Thailand), passed away. Please let us hold Fr. Alberto and his family in our humble prayers during this sad time.

to his speech and more time to listen to the questions, to tackle the various issues and to share the positive signs and hopes of the local Churches."

At the conclusion of the meetings, on November 11, the Bishops paid a visit to the Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, who is still lucid and serene. The Bishop Claudio Silvero scj, who was unable to attend the visit, was well represented by the guaraní episcopate who returned to Paraguay strengthened by this visit to continue serving their brothers.

**Vocational Pastoral** ► From Friday 17 to Sunday 19 of November, at the Sacred Heart of Jesus' Retreat House in San Bernardino, where was celebrated the last General Chapter, twelve young people (nine boys and three girls) spent a weekend to discern their vocation. The theme of the retreat was "Come and see." This first experience will be followed by a second one addressed to those who are more determined to enter consecrated life. This second experience will be called "Come and Follow Me".

The young people were accompanied by Fr. Raul Villalba Maylin SCJ, by the youth of the FVD Group's Vocational Pastoral Team, by a couple (Cesare and Camila), by two Sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mercy of the Third Order of Saint Francis. Fr. Alberto Zaracho SCJ (Regional Vicar) and Fr. Alcides Riveros Diaz SCJ were also present. We had two days of joy and peace. Thanks to the beautiful new home and the ideal climate, we created an environment conducive to silence and reflection. Now let us continue to pray and work to develop vocations to religious and priestly life, especially for Betharram!

A community in celebration

**THIS LAST NOVEMBER 30TH, THE FORMATION HOUSE OF MANGALORE WAS DECORATED FOR A FESTIVAL BY ALL THE YOUNG MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, WITH A LOT OF GARLANDS OF FLOWERS AND COLOURFUL BALLOONS: OUR BROTHERS SHAMON AND REEGAN WERE THUS WELCOMED DEFINITELY INTO THE CONGREGATION. THEY PRONOUNCED THEIR PERPETUAL VOWS AT A SOLEMN CELEBRATION PRESIDED OVER BY FATHER AUSTIN HUGHES SCJ, WHO RECEIVED THEM ON BEHALF OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL. A DAY OF JOY NOT ONLY FOR THE COMMUNITY BUT FOR THE WHOLE CONGREGATION.**

I am **REEGAN VINCENT RAJ**, hailing from a small village in Tamil Nadu. I am the youngest of all four children to my parents. My parents are weavers by profession.

I completed my higher secondary school studies(+2) in the year 2006. I revealed my desire to become a priest to my then Parish Priest. He brought our Betharram brothers Livin and Michael Bistis (now both are priests) to my home. Those two brothers introduced our congregation and had a dialogue with me and with my parents. They accepted me joyfully.

I made my first vows in our family on 14th May 2013 and made my final vows on 30th November 2017.

The most important experiences that confirmed me in my Religious Vocation in Betharram family are the following of Christ, the joyful community life of our fathers and brothers, the deep bond of family spirit of our fathers and brothers, and praying in community.

Betharram in India is not rich but all live joyfully, fully trusting in the Providence of the Lord.



My Experiences in the Mission have given the opportunity to experience both in the pastoral and in social field. My pastoral experiences in the past such as taking catechism class for children, animating Altar servers, distributing Holy communion, conducting choir, conducting retreat for children, etc taught me to be humble and depend on others. My social - mission experiences such as teaching in the school, taking care of boarding boys, taking tutions, conducting summer camp, being home minister etc brought my experiences rich and taught me to expand my knowledge to face day-to-days reality.



I say the spirituality is rich in meaning and needs hours and hours to meditate and pray to seek the will of God and imitate the heart of Jesus.

**SHAMON**

I came to know about betharram fathers through one of my distant cousin. Thereafter Fr. Biju Antony along with three brothers came to my parish and said more about the congregation

of Sacred Heart Fathers. The love of priesthood, the deep desire to live with the poor, the love of Christ to the humanity are at the core of my vocation. I was impressed by the childhood of St. Michael, his desire to see God that prompted him to climb the peaks.

As for me our father St. Michael's spirituality is so rich and takes me to meditate and pray more to seek the will of God and obey the will of God always. The challenge St. Michael our father offers me is to have the very programme of the heart of Jesus. It is not that easy. Therefore



After their diaconal ordination, during a celebration presided over by Mgr Aloysius Paul D'Souza, Bishop of Mangalore, our brothers are to be sent on a mission: Br. Reegan to Hojai (Assam) and Br. Shamon to Tiptur. We pray that they may be faithful servants, who run to embrace life's call.

Region



**France-Spain**

**Christmas time** ► From Tuesday 26 to Friday 29 December, the Notre-Dame community is organising a spiritual retreat led by Fr. Beñat Oyhénart scj: it is an opportunity to make a personal assessment, to pray, to give thanks at the feet of Our Lady of Betharram for all the blessings received and to enter the New Year in the joy and the inner peace that come with the birth of the Saviour. (Information: [accueil@betharram.fr](mailto:accueil@betharram.fr))

Region



**Argentina-Uruguay**

**Retrait for the SCJ laity** ► On Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 of November, the Betharramite Lay Associates of the Vicariate gathered at Martin Coronado for a two-day retreat. This was an opportunity to encourage lay people to experience the presence of that "Good God" preached by our Founder and the discarded brothers of society as required by the Church.

The lay people began the retreat by meditating on the faith journey that inspired St. Michael to open schools, encourage missions in Latin America, live with love and communion with priests and brothers and spend nights in writing letters.

Taking the motto as the starting point, the group reflected on the meaning of the word "Life". It was first referred to Jesus, and then to the brothers you come across in everyday

life, brothers having a face and a heart, who sleep in our streets and question us when they walk past us.

The call of Christ, repeated a thousand times by Pope Francis, has reached the heart. Lay people are committed to choosing one of these brothers and supporting him.

**Brazil**

**Assembly** ► The religious of the Vicariate held the annual Assembly in the Passa Quatro Community, the Mother House of the Vicariate. During the meeting, they shared their experience, in communion with the whole Betharramite family. They also revised the journey of the Vicariate communities and listened to the various proposals and contributions for their common mission. On Thursday November 23, during the Eucharistic celebration with some lay people, the new community superiors made the profession of faith and took the oath of fidelity in the presence of the Regional Superior, Fr. Daniel González Scj, and of the Regional Vicar of Brazil, Fr. Paulo Cesar Pinto scj. Ahead of our Betharramite brothers on Brazilian land, a new path opens up to go out to embrace life.

**Paraguay**

**The bishops of Paraguay in Vatican** ► Last week, Pope Francis received the Bishops of Paraguay for the ad limina visit. The meetings took place in the "Santa Marta" House. Our brother, Mgr Ignacio Gogorza scj, was also present and shared with the other Bishops of Paraguay this fruitful, serene and fraternal gathering. "The style of the visit has changed - he said. There is more sharing now." "The Holy Father dedicates less time

**Camp-work in Ivory Coast in Summer 2018**

The project "Camp-work" started on 3 November 2016 in Toulouse with some young people and the members of the commission "Vocation".

The information of the project was made by a power point and an inviting leaflet to the young people of age 18-30 to go on a missionary journey.

During our regional meeting of preparation for the General Chapter, we met together among the religious to clarify the project between the Italians, Ivorians and French. All who were present invited Fr. Simone to lead the project for Italy, Fr. Davi for Spain, the Priests Herve, Raoul, Elizée for Ivory Coast and Fr. Marius and myself for France.

Following this, everyone organised meetings in his own vicariate with young people, at least for France-Spain and Italy.

The content of our week-end meetings or the camp in Mendelu with the Italians (Summer 2017) was to clarify the project of the camp and especially to make known to the young people the spirit of Betharram: place, spirituality and steps to follow up. So that young people get involved in the project.

In France, fifteen young people had been interested in the Ivory Coast project. Five among them should participate in this project. End of December is set as the deadline to commit definitively or not, in order to book the plane tickets, to define the procedures and to see the finance of the project (Estimated cost: 1065, 00 Euros per person). For this fund, we thought that each vicariate could work with associations AMICI for Italy and AU COEUR DU MONDE for France.

It is obvious that cost is a block for many young people. We have therefore thought about funds through initiatives like sales, sponsorship and information. Last summer, in Mendelu, we worked especially on the publicity of a poster. We have established a calendar of meeting around 4 July, having in mind the difficulty to meet because of the distance of some young people taken by



their studies or due to their job searching or due to their professional life. I believe it is important above all that each participant is personally involved in the project and we move together in our meetings.

A trip to Ivory Coast in November allowed Fr. Simone and myself to meet Fr. Theophile, the Regional Vicar, the brothers of Katiola, members of the Pproject as well as the youth fraternity of Adiapodoume to clarify the purpose of the project, in this case: rehabilitation of the infirmary and maintenance of the green spaces. We started to establish a budget for the whole trip including some visits and meetings around each reality. Bro. Alfred having been appointed secretary for the vicariate of Ivory Coast, it is with him that we will communicate on the progress of the project. This week of visit in November was also necessary to sensitize young people to live this project serenely, in the style of WYD: to remain humble but fruitful to live a unique sharing, in the perspective of renewing this experience several years.

In conclusion, I can say that the project is appealing to the youth of 18-30 years. They are motivated especially when they become active players. It is a project that will mark the youth as a concrete and enriching achievement following the saying "Dare to encounter, act together, live your faith" and especially as Pope Francis said, "Do not stay on the sofa". It is up to us religious to believe in these young people and especially not to disappoint them. Always Forward.

Emile Garat scj

**Orientation Nr. IV of the Chapter: to go out to share with joy**

«THE 27TH GENERAL CHAPTER THAT REUNITED US AT SAN BERNARDINO WAS AN OCCASION TO REVIEW THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR RELIGIOUS FAMILY LIFE, SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN AGAIN. FOR US, TO BEGIN AGAIN IS TO GO OUT AND TO ENCOUNTER LIFE», SO SAYS FR. SYLVAIN DANSOU HOUNKPATIN, CHAPTER DELEGATE. BEHIND THIS RE-READING, OF COURSE, ARE LONG SESSIONS OF REFLECTION, CONFRONTATION, QUESTIONING AND INSPIRATION FOR THE FUTURE, FOR WHICH OUR BROTHER OFFERS US A SYNTHESIS.

The rapid progression of today's world, the historic, sociocultural and ecclesiastical context on the one hand, and on the other hand, the grip of Pope Francis' words on consecrated life and simply on life, his encouragement to go out, to dare, to discover, his expectations and concerns, have greatly contributed to the orientations on the vocation promotion and spiritual accompaniment. Impressively, we were all in this same group, religious dedicated to education in various parts of the Congregation. The whole reflection is part of the tangible experiences we have lived through here and there. It is all part of our story, of our collective stories and not of our vague ideas or projects or even of our good intentions. Our story, our collective stories which are our experiences, did not lead us to establish a source of principles on which we might conclude consequences, rather they have been a source of examples through which we could potentially draw lessons of caution. As educators, we are more aware that education must be a major concern. To be an educator is an opportunity and a responsibility that we must make the most of right to the end and for the good of the

Church, of our religious family and of the youth themselves. To neglect this would be unforgivable on our part. That means we put our trust in God. To rely only on our own strength, our personal merits, on well-trained educators, on our structures, our meticulously prepared education projects (Ratio), is to delude ourselves. Let's believe also in Jesus ; He is the one who calls. Understanding that, defuses our anxiety and our concerns. That way, we live in peace, assured that God is there, watching over our little religious family better than he watches over the flower in the fields. Otherwise, what is there to say about the lack of vocational perseverance amongst consecrated persons ? What are we to think of people leaving prematurely after the first vows, the perpetual profession or ordination? Where do we place the responsibility? Errors in discernment and selection? Shortcomings in spiritual accompaniment?... if the heart is cluttered with invasive longings, it cannot pick up the voice of the Lord.

There is also a necessity, as much for the educators as for the community in training, to love Christ, to let Him capture our hearts. Without a real, deep, sincere love,

it is not possible to give our vocational life that higher quality, that Christ-like dynamism, where the only desire is to 'please to the Father', by totally submitting to Him until 'death on a cross'. The Chapter reminded us that vocational life is to be experienced by all religious (young and old). All the religious must go out to take part in their vocational activities. The superiors must urge the communities to do this, in the strength of the Spirit, so that they feel the problem of vocations is also their problem.

The Chapter has once again opened our eyes wide to this fundamental reality, already recorded in the spiritual doctrine of St Michael (DS 286) : 'Vocation can only come from God : woe to the man who attributes this right to himself.' We have understood in our Congregation today, more than yesterday, that God in His sovereign freedom calls when He wants and how He wants, and that in His infinite patience, He waits for the favourable moment. If God says yes, who can say no? We now speak more comfortably about 'instances of adult vocation and about candidates having had other religious experiences' when not long ago we still had an age limit to enter Betharramite religious life and we were very suspicious towards candidates having had other religious experiences. The question from now on for us at Betharram is : 'How do we make them welcome? Here, it is about everyone who knocks at the door of our Betharram family. Here, each vocation is perceived as a new and personal event and kindled by the Lord. How do we make them welcome? According to what criteria? What pathway do we

suggest to them? If the candidates have had other religious experiences, attention and serious discernment are needed. Whatever the case, it's about waking the candidates (youth and adults) up to the fact that they have to test the possibility of a calling, of the beauty of giving themselves completely to the Kingdom's cause, and to put their calling to the test under the light of the treasures of St Michael Garicoits' experience in searching for the will of God (method for knowing the will of God).

This is indeed the direction we are heading in through tangible acts. If Betharram is a little family, it is called to 'grow'. It is the mustard seed that must become a tree in the shade where birds will come to make their nests. With courage, let's promote the vocational life, so that all those who are actually called will discover the precious gift that the Lord wants to offer them, due to a special preference, within the Betharram family.

Sylvain Dansou HOUNKPATIN,scj

## Getting up from the sofa...

**"BUT IN LIFE THERE IS ANOTHER, EVEN MORE DANGEROUS, KIND OF PARALYSIS. IT IS NOT EASY TO PUT OUR FINGER ON IT. I LIKE TO DESCRIBE IT AS THE PARALYSIS THAT COMES FROM CONFUSING HAPPINESS WITH A SOFA. IN OTHER WORDS, TO THINK THAT IN ORDER TO BE HAPPY ALL WE NEED IS A GOOD SOFA. A SOFA THAT MAKES US FEEL COMFORTABLE, CALM, SAFE. [...] DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE, WE DIDN'T COME INTO THIS WORLD TO "VEGETATE", TO TAKE IT EASY, TO MAKE OUR LIVES A COMFORTABLE SOFA TO FALL ASLEEP ON. NO, WE CAME FOR ANOTHER REASON: TO LEAVE A MARK. IT IS VERY SAD TO PASS THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT LEAVING A MARK. BUT WHEN WE OPT FOR EASE AND CONVENIENCE, FOR CONFUSING HAPPINESS WITH CONSUMPTION, THEN WE END UP PAYING A HIGH PRICE INDEED: WE LOSE OUR FREEDOM." ( POPE FRANCIS, PRAYER VIGIL WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD YOUTH DAY IN KRAKOW, 30 JULY 2016)**

Getting up from the sofa to become a «mobile camp» is the experience that we would like to bring to life for young people during the planned project in Ivory Coast next summer. The idea is to give a taste of what it means to «give one's life for love,» learning from the Sacred Heart, who descended from Heaven, coming out of his «comfort-zone» (the heart of the Father) to come and give us the love of God. Young people cherish in their hearts great desires, but only support them in a fragile way: when difficulties arise, then enthusiasm wanes; their motives seem to waver and they tend to become discouraged. To grow in love, it is important to understand that in saying «Here I am», we are engaging in a life project, in which we need to face with hope and courage the challenges that exist along the road, neither being discouraged nor

losing sight of the final goal. This is what we learn by following Saint Michael: coming out of ourselves growing in love, and not being discouraged but moving forward with hope towards the goal, opening our eyes and our heart to the needs of those who are all around us, trusting in the Heart of Christ who teaches us to commit ourselves in love with constancy and dedication. This camp-project will encourage an immersion into Betharramite spirituality, not only through words, but in actions, because love lives through concrete gestures of life. It teaches us to arise, to move, no holding back... like the Son of God who «threw himself» into this world to bring us his love.

Simone Panzeri scj

## Ivory Coast project

**dare to encounter;  
act together; live your faith**

with the family of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram

