

Region



ELECTED DELEGATES AND SUB-
STITUTES FOR THE SAINT
MICHAEL GARICOITS REGION
TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER 2017

Deputy by right:

Fr. Jean-Luc Morin, Regional Superior

Deputies and substitutes elected during the Regional Chapter

For the Vicariate of France-Spain

Deputies:

1° Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue

2° Br. Emile Garat

3° Fr. Gérard Zugarramurdi

Substitutes:

1° Fr. Beñat Oyhénart

2° Fr. Michel Vignau

3° Fr. Davi Lara Da Silva

For the Vicariate of Italy

Deputies:

1° Fr. Aldo Nespoli

2° Fr. Simone Panzeri

3° Fr. Mario Longoni

4° Fr. Piero Trameri

Substitutes:

1° Fr. Aldo Camesasca

2° Fr. Gianluca Limonta

3° Fr. Alessandro Paniga

4° Fr. Ercole Ceriani

For the Vicariate of Holy Land

Deputy:

Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo

Substitute:

Fr. Pietro Felet

For the Vicariate of the Ivory Coast

Deputy:

Fr. Sylvain Dansou Hounkpatin

Substitute:

Fr. Hervé Kouamé Kouakou

For the Vicariate of Republic of Central Africa

Deputy:

Fr. Tiziano Pozzi

Substitute:

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Supplement | Regional Chapters

REGIONAL CHAPTER I

SAINT MICHAEL GARICOITS REGION

19-24 JANUARY 2017 AT BETHARRAM



Thanksgiving of a Brother | Great is my joy for having participated in the international session in July 2016 and in the Regional Chapter in January 2017. Twice I found myself at the source and origin of Betharram to discuss the life of our family and I thank the Lord for it. Through the prayers of the Church celebrated with our elders, the recollection, the reports of the Vicars and the Regional Superior, the group work, the discussion/debates in the assembly, the meeting with the laity, we exchanged in full freedom and in fraternity. I take away the urgency of reappropriating the charism, of living fidelity to the prayer, of having greater openness to the other in the congregation. In the midst of all these, I felt the love of each one and the willingness to bring Betharram high in time and against time. This is for what we are invited to, priests and brothers, religious and lay people. May God, through the intercession of our Father St. Michael, help us. Forward always!!

Hermann Bahi Djison scj

THE REGIONAL CHAPTER

The Saint Michael Garicoits Region one chapter to the next

AS A TOPIC FOR THE DEBATES AND REFLECTIONS, THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR SHARED HIS REPORT ON THE REGION. HE SENT TO THE NEF A SUMMARY OF IT. WE TAKE THIS OCCASION TO LET YOU KNOW THAT, IN THE SUPPLEMENTS OF THE NEF ON THE REGIONAL CHAPTERS, WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO PUBLISH THE PROPOSALS THAT WILL BE TAKEN TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER. AT FIRST THEY ARE RESERVED TO THE DEPUTIES TO THE CHAPTER.

Spread over three continents, seven countries and five vicariates, the Saint Michael Garicoits Region remains the first in the Congregation both in seniority and numbers. A few weeks before the big meeting at San Bernardino, it is a good opportunity to look at the path we have travelled. The previous General Chapter had set itself five priorities: permanent formation, fraternal life and community, internationality and missionary cooperation, vocational animation, economy of communion. Six years later, how does all this look in our Region?

1. ONGOING FORMATION |

In presenting the 2011 Acts of the Chapter, the Superior General insisted on the treasure found in the charism and the vocation of each person; hence the burning obligation to find all means to «renew the gift received by religious consecration and the laying on of hands». (Acts p.3) If the institutional component (Regional plan, three year formation plan, etc.) has not emerged, the proposals closer to home have borne fruit, i.e. the personal and community efforts to take renewal on board, the revised Rule of Life; Participation in the various jubilee years (Consecrated Life, 150 yr jubilee of our founder, Year of Mercy); Translation and re- editing of St. Michael's writings. In total,

these initiatives have contributed to a better knowledge of our sources. In addition the faith sharing (narratio fidei) is established in the spiritual landscape of communities and lay groups. The Chapter of Bethlehem drew attention to brethren with fewer than ten years of perpetual vows. A workshop functioned in the north of the Region in 2012-2014; It should be taken up again in another form. Finally a session for religious brothers was arranged in Betharram from 9-13 September 2013: this opportunity for encounter and renewal was extended to the other Regions of the Congregation. As for the regional formation service, it met every two years in Adiapodoumé: a « bonus » for the exchange of experiences, for reflection and for future planning. Other places for ongoing formation were: the annual retreat, with varying degrees of success according to the place, including an exceptional experience in Betharram in the summer of 2013 (animated by the Superior General, with religious throughout the Region); The vicariate assemblies, which meet regularly everywhere but could go deeper in the subjects treated; The accompaniment of the religious. What was affirmed in the 2011-2012 regional action plan is more valid than ever: the right of everyone to a personal accompaniment in his life and mission.

opening our eyes and our hearts to hope. This climate is, I am sure, the propitious ground that God gives us so that we can focus with confidence on the path that beckons us.

We learnt once more that by opening ourselves to listening, sharing in our Region, and broadening our horizons with better fraternal communication and by letting ourselves be challenged by the example of the laypeople who wish to walk with us, we will be better disposed to make room for the hope which the Lord gives us. This is the richness that I retain from this Chapter.

I also carry in my heart a memory of eleven years ago, of being with my companions during the session of preparation for perpetual profession: Brother Gilbert and Fathers Gérard, Gabriel and Raoul, were all present at this Chapter. One more reason to give thanks to the Lord.

Of course there is no shortage of reasons for concern for the future of our Region, which, especially in Europe, has been marked by a lack of vocations to Betharramite religious life for the last ten years. I believe that it is necessary to accept this time of «smallness» as a trial of faith that God sends us to strengthen our trust and fidelity in Him: a «challenge» not to our pastoral creativity (many initiatives have been carried out in recent years), but



to the credibility of our witness as religious and our perseverance in fidelity. To focus on these future steps in the Chapter has been an opportunity to regain momentum, to emerge from being bogged down by daily problems which tend to make us lower our heads and distrust the future, aware of our failure to face it. God encourages us through St Michael and through a fraternal and confident sharing to go out again into deep waters. This impetus does not consist in living in the illusion that everything will go «according to plan» but rather living according to the teaching of Saint Michael, being ready to say Ecce venio to what God calls us to live today, not sheltering behind barriers but opening ourselves to His Providence.

Simone Panzeri scj

BACK HOME AFTER THE REGIONAL CHAPTER

The views of an elder

I lived the Regional Chapter in preparation for the General Chapter; I discovered:

- * The New faces and behind these faces the communities, the missions, the vicariates well different;
- * The Projects: the construction of an operation block in the Central Africa, the opening of a college in Ivory Coast, the reflection on the reception of aspirants in the RCA and a regional mission to the "peripheries";
- * We have all underlined the hope that animates our Region: we take our future into our own hands, for example through the organization of a camp-site in Ivory Coast (to provide help, to enable the young people to realize a project, to make them interested in the life of Betharram);
- * Everyone has the concern to call for new Betharramite

vocations with the young and the laity, along with all the religious.

Returning to my community, I retain:

- * The importance of the Community Project: it is the yoke, the tiller and the ploughshare to seed our mission land;
- * That we must live a better community life; this is so important because we are one family and we must bear witness to it;
- * That prayer is more than necessary; it reconsecrates us every day;
- * That joining the poor and the sick is not an addition in our mission in community, enlightened by the messages of Pope Francis, by the charism of Betharram and by our personal commitment.

Firmin Bourguinat scj

Planning the future

Though at present we are in an era where borders are being shut for fear of being invaded by those who hurt us, at Betharram we have just experienced a prophetic moment of opening of horizons. Delegates from Europe, Africa and the Middle East gathered as one Betharramite family to take stock of the situation and to look with hope for the future. This contrast between closure and openness struck me during the Chapter: we hear about the closing of borders, the fear of terrorism, the mistrust of anyone who is different from me, mistrust that destroys any spirit of encounter or dialogue, and on the other hand (at our Chapter) the tales of different

experiences ... brothers who live in distant places with a different culture or tradition, but who are united by the link of the Ecce venio of the Sacred Heart who calls us «to be one» (the Chapter took place during the week of prayer for Christian unity). In addition to meetings, group work and common prayer, what touched me deeply was the climate of fraternity that we experienced during the Chapter. We were also realistic about all the weaknesses and difficulties facing our communities in the world today. All the more wonderful that we were struck by the discovery of things we did not know about our Betharramite family, which grow quietly here and there,

2. FRATERNAL LIFE AND COMMUNITY |

The 2011 Chapter emphasised the importance of the community project, an invaluable tool for building fraternity and defining our mission. Currently, more than half of the communities in the Region have adopted it: good progress, and a real help in moving us from a conservation mentality to a project mentality.

Fraternal life also involves taking our elders into account. Faced with an ageing demographic, the European vicariates have made the necessary provision, without losing sight of the fact that old age is also a human, spiritual resource for the Family. You have only to participate in the prayer at the Maison Neuve, or make a visit to Albiate or Albavilla, to realise this.

This aspect of « living memory » was highlighted during the 150th anniversary of our founder's return to the Father. In general, the sense of belonging to the Congregation emerged even more strongly. There may still be a feeling of fatigue and decline in the old Provinces, due in part to the lack of new members and the new mode of government. At the same time, apostolic devotion, and the desire to come together and rejuvenate, are not lacking.

After a painful start, and with improvements still to make in communication and subsidiarity, regionalisation slowly emerges as a reality and as an opportunity. A key figure in this regard is the local superior, in his role of facilitator and interface between the religious and the vicariate. The Region hasn't really offered much formation to superiors to assist them in their task. What supports them basically

is the sense that everyone at his own level feels responsible for his religious vocation and the community where it unfolds. Some things happen (inter-community meetings, recollections, outings, etc.) and others remain to be done, to prioritise the aims of our Betharramite sources before others.

3. INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SPIRIT |

Betharram has always been missionary and will always be missionary, but only by adapting: we must bring a new life to the older presences. (Acts p.3) The international dimension is an achievement in the Region: today 2 out of 2 communities in the Holy Land, 2 out of 3 Central Africa and Côte d'Ivoire, 5 out of 6 in France-Spain, and one in 9 in Italy are made up of religious of several nationalities. No vicariate, however rich in skills, can do everything by itself. Far from being a sign of weakness, this interdependence - with religious coming from elsewhere (as with the laity) - is an opportunity facilitated by regionalisation. The proof? In 2017 all vicariates benefit from the presence of at least one Ivorian brother, from Bouar to Pibrac and from Bethlehem to Monteporzio via Betharram. What was new in the wish of the 2011 Chapter was to promote communities that explicitly integrate the international in their project. Two historical places were chosen for the Saint Michael Region: Pau and Nazareth, in faithfulness to the past and also to assure them a pastoral and missionary future. Here, although the timetable was kept, perhaps the vision was not so clear. In Pau first: agreement on the letter of a project did not guarantee everything. There had to be a community that believed



in it, and felt capable of implementing it. There were language difficulties (especially for those from Asia), cultural gaps and generation gaps, the clarity of the project, the possibility of a fruitful ministry, accompaniment by superiors, and several unforeseen issues such as collaboration with the local clergy or with the Sisters. Numerous initiatives have been launched since 2012, with varying degrees of success. At present, the material constraints and the diocesan context are leading us to rethink the project, reaffirming the potential of Maison St-Michel, in union with our 'birth place': Betharram. As for the other « international community» chosen six years ago, it was not until the end of 2014 that the community of Nazareth

was strengthened and its mission was defined. Based on the parish of Shefaram, the three Fathers (An Israeli, an Indian and a Frenchman) found their own apostolic style, while planning the construction of a community house in Nazareth. This matched the vision of the Superior General for the Holy Land, during his last visit: a form of presence linked to the Carmelites, which can radiate from there to the Arab or Hebrew world.

A word about our presence in Spain: its consolidation, desired by the 2011 Chapter, resulted in the appointment in Mendelu, in 2013-2014, of two religious, French and Brazilian. The community and apostolic redeployment is underway, with goodwill and challenges similar to those beyond the Pyrenees.

Internationality also includes missionary animation. In our Region, the two missionary associations – *Au Coeur du Monde* and *Amici di Betharram* – have a clear legal and financial status, which makes them credible partners in development. Nevertheless, beyond reciprocal information, there has been little progress on the request for co-ordination between vicariates and in the whole of the Congregation, as formulated by the last General Chapter.

For a long time, the idea of a foundation in a third African country has been buzzing in our heads. Insistent calls came from Benin, the occasion of a reconnoitre in March 2013. Shortly after, the Central African Republic was in an unprecedented crisis. The choice was quickly made: to support our brethren there, rather than use the available reserves elsewhere. However, a

Congregation and its message.

The other discovery, I will call « the footsteps of Saint Michael Garicoits »: his village, his native house, the room where his mother taught him catechism, the liturgical objects with which he practised the priesthood, the church where he was ordained a priest, the encounter with Pierre and Maité Anguélou, on the farm where their ancestors received the young boy Garicoits as a servant, their fervent devotion to Saint Michael in this family and throughout the region ... Lourdes is always a discovery: how to communicate what one feels in body and spirit when one is before the grotto where the Virgin appeared to Saint Bernadette? And I kept repeating: « It's a pity that many do not believe in the beauty and goodness of this woman who knew how to say *Here I am* all her life and still today when we call to her ». Thank you, Mother, for your great love of humanity!

Participation in this Chapter will give a new impetus to the laity of Côte d'Ivoire: exchanges with the religious, sharing with the lay groups of France and Italy, the organisation of the *Fraternité Me Voici*, have given us inspiration to improve our own life project. Presented

to the Superior General last August in order to formalise our approach alongside the religious, this text has already been welcomed. Thus we feel more committed to the Congregation, and encouraged to leave the safe shore behind to put out into the deep.

During those few days, we learned a lot from the life of Saint Michael. Through his prayers, as lay people associated with the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Betharram, may we put our little steps into his footprints. And may we rededicate ourselves, following our Master and Lord Jesus Christ: « Né Mè, Mi Yè, Mi Gan, aquí estoy, here I am, hier bin ich, eccomi, Me Voici ! » In all the languages of the world.

Henriette N'Dri N'Guessan



Representatives of the lay associates in the Region gathered on occasion of the Regional Chapter

My impressions on the Regional Chapter

When I was asked to give my impressions of the Regional Chapter which took place from January 18th to 23rd 2017 in Betharram and to which the fraternities of Cote d'Ivoire were invited, I was afraid that I could not be faithful to all that I had experienced, along with other members of the Ivory Coast delegation.

Before submitting these impressions, I would like to say thank you for the invitation, and to thank the laypeople of France who ensured our care during our stay: warm clothes, accommodation, visits to the cities we passed .. Toulouse, Bordeaux, ... The birthplace of Saint Michael Garicoits, Lourdes, the Religious Priests and Brothers, who spared no effort to join the laity of France in making our stay fruitful.

The Regional Chapter was itself a discovery: I wondered what a «Chapter» was and I had the answer with the explanation of Father Grech. I understood that this is an encounter during which lay people and religious will answer two questions: What do lay people and religious want to live together? What are they going to do together?

Inviting lay people to a meeting with religious, giving them the floor to express their point of view, seeing how to collaborate, is a novelty for me who had previously seen the Congregation as a closed circle. Although I have been a lay associate for a few years, I had a lot of trepidation when I approached the community. I dared not ask what



is contained in the Rule of Life of the Congregation; I have now learned that lay people can have access to it, that there are even windows open to them. We, the laity, must know the Rule of the Religious so as not to overstep the boundaries, each one in their proper place, but all for the one mission.

The question before us was: "You share the spirit of Betharram, to what extent do you share your mission with the religious? How can we better develop it, each according to his own vocation? If the religious of the Sacred Heart recognise this collaboration (even on a small scale), the laity are thus invited to stand beside them in a more concrete and practical way to succeed in a common mission: to announce the Good News and advance the Kingdom of God. In other words, we must take our share of the mission, in fidelity to our vocation and to the charism of Saint Michael Garicoits. This will undoubtedly require going to the « peripheries » to make known the

new openness to the « great continent » still remains, given its vocational growth, its human and spiritual needs and the balance of the St-Michael Region.

4. VOCATIONAL ANIMATION |

The statistics are cruel: in the last six years, 14 religious members of the Vicariate of France-Spain have joined Betharram-in-the-sky, and no members recorded. In Italy, when we were forced to close the house in Milan, and the houses of the Brianza were filled with elderly clerics. Since 2012 the residence of the Miracoli no longer hosts a postulant - one year after being designated as an initial formation house.

It is not for lack of willing religious nor a vital youth pastoral ministry: e.g. the *Betharramici* group, accompanying young people to WYD, etc. Undoubtedly, vicariate vocation directors may have felt a little alone; Our communities are struggling to reach the Generation Z (the 15-25 year olds) ... Rather than theorise about the cause of

lack of vocations in Europe, the Region has embarked on a twofold direction: firstly to emphasise the internationality of Bétharram to show another face, promoting dynamic projects (summer camps, voluntary experiences); secondly putting resources into youth pastoral care through communities that make it their priority (in Pistoia or Langhirano, for example). The basic conviction is always the

same: community and apostolate are the pillars of our consecrated life, and they must be the basis of a vocation ministry. This pre-supposes prayerful, fraternal, open communities; And this must lead us to unite, in our proposals to young people, the fact of our missionary experience.

The situation in the rest of the Region is mixed. In 2014, the withdrawal from the parish of Zarka (Jordan) ended a project envisaged with a vocational perspective. The departure of the two Jordanian Betharramites (Fr. Butros in 2011, Fr. Eyad in 2016) seemed to close the door to a local succession; The novitiate in Bethlehem opens another: the closer ties with the Patriarchal Seminary, the recent arrival of an Arabic-speaking novice master, the parochial community in Shefamar go in the right direction, even if, as elsewhere, perseverance, humility and above all, the witness of lifestyle attracts.

Further to the south, vocational animation has its ups and downs, with an intensity



peculiar to the dark continent. In countries where half the population is under the age of 18, the work of discernment and accompaniment is very important. In the Central African Republic, the last six years have been marked by a strong investment of Betharram (arrival of Ivorian religious, setting up an aspirancy project, etc.) but matched by the number of candidates leaving equal to the number professed (departures of three scholastics and a perpetual professed). All this, against a background of political crisis and bankruptcy of the education system. Result: our last aspirant left the community of Bouar at the beginning of 2017. It is another reason to encourage the vicariate in its search for new and more audacious paths, more adapted to the youth of the Central African Republic.

Côte d'Ivoire presents a completely different reality. The work of the religious, who went there with sweat and tears, bore fruit. First in terms of commitment: since 2011, the Vicariate has ten new perpetual professed and ten ordained priests (+ 4, if all goes well, within six months). Currently, the Formation centre welcomes 19 young people in initial formation (including 8 temporarily professed). With a total of 26 members, it is now the largest community in the Region, ahead of the retirement home of Betharram! The move to an annual postulancy (rather than every 2 years), the seriousness of the formation project and the follow-up of the aspirants in a favourable context undoubtedly fostered this growth. To avoid overloading and overheating, the Region needs to better prepare and support formators. The future of everyone



depends on their mission, as exciting as it is demanding.

5. ECONOMY OF COMMUNION |

Overall, the period 2011-2017 has continued and amplified the general movement towards an economy of communion. The establishment of the new accounting system of the Congregation was intended to «*establish greater transparency and a truer sharing.*» (Acts p.3). Without direction from above, without the sense of responsibility at grassroots and without ... the promptings of Providence, the Region would have been unable to continue its mission. Two main trends emerge from this: 1) The increasing use of outside experts for the management of our property: in Italy for a long time, both for accounting and for the management of works (e.g. the home for AIDS patients, Villa del Pino); in France

with the creation (on the initiative of the Superior General), of a study commission for the site of Bétharram (2012-2013), plus the taking back of our property from *La Pyrénéenne Association* and the creation, in September 2014, of an Economic Council dealing with substantive issues.

2) The essential role of an economy of communion in supporting formation: on the one hand the income from rubber intended to finance the community of Adiapodoumé, was cut by 75% over this period; on the other hand, the whole of the ordinary revenue of the Region does not meet even half the running expenses of the Formation House. Under these conditions, external contributions (exceptional grants from vicariates, the General Fund for training since 2014, donations and legacies) helped to square the budget. The desire to generate additional income,

the determination of the Superior General and his Council, and the solidarity of the whole Congregation, was evident in the beginning of 2015 with the inauguration of the Our lady of Bétharram House of Welcome on the property of Adiapodoumé. We cannot thank the donors enough, and we must redouble our efforts and discipline to keep good accounts and move towards a minimum of autonomy.

All this serves to reinforce the option for our education mission, made by the Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire at the end of 2013. Both at the *Tshanfeto* educational farm, at the *Dabakala* campus or at the future college of *Katiola*, the principle is the same: to allow the communities that work for human development, and evangelisation of young people, to live from their work. And to give inspiring vision to those who aspire to become religious of the Sacred Heart. In the economy section, as in the other four (permanent formation, fraternal life, internationality, vocations), though at present Betharram is full of challenges, its future is full of hope.

The conclusion is clear: It is signed by our father St. Michael: «*Always forward, through everything God lets us do, to instruct, to exert, to manifest His elect! To pray, to cry for mercy, for help! And then, to act within the bounds of our calling, always small, submissive, content and constant. May it be our motto, the goal of all our efforts, and God will not fail to bless us.*» (DS § 183).

Jean-Luc Morin scj
Regional Superior