

NEF

Bétharram

Nr. 134

NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE - 116TH YEAR, 11th series - 14 February 2018

In this issue

Let us go out to drink
from the same
source p. 1

Message of the Pope
for Lent p. 4

Council of the Congre-
gation, 1st round: the
life of the Regions p. 6

Council of the Congre-
gation, 2nd round: an
option for 2018 p. 11

Formation, a constant
priority p. 12

Council of the Congre-
gation, 3rd round:
continuation &
conclusion p. 14

Notices p. 15

History of a spiritual
journey (2) p. 20

A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Let us go out
to drink from the same source

Dear Betharramites,

In the dining room of the Betharramite community of St.John the Baptist, in Buenos Aires, is a statue that beautifully reproduces a scene from the Bible. It depicts the moment when Rebecca gives some water to Eliezer, Abraham's servant, who ran to her, exhausted, after crossing the planted fields (Gen. 24, 18). The small marble sculpture conveys all the sweetness of service rendered, in the female features of the young woman. She reveals herself by this gesture as the "worthy wife of the master Isaac" that the servant has been looking for everywhere. On several occasions I have stopped in front of this statue to contemplate it because the scene came alive before my eyes and often inspired in me a strange devotion.

In fact, water is the element that brings us back to our baptism, where the love of Christ has sealed us with the paschal seal, giving us, within the Church, the gift of the Faith. This experience consists of immersing oneself

in the source, which springs up to eternal life.

The garden of Eden was watered by a river that split into four branches (Gen 2: 10), and those waters irrigated the garden, like so many sacraments of Life: sources of life for a creation the Father has given to us all so that we may "take care of our common home". These streams are conducive to the fertility of man and woman in a creation desired by God, and given to man so that he may grow, multiply and become the master of the created world. But, above all (Saint Ignatius reminds us) Man was born "to praise, reverence and serve God", who created him and who is "Our Lord", and so "save his soul". (Spiritual exercises. 23)

Reflecting on where we came from and to where we are going is a very powerful tool! Just like returning to drink from this source of truth that is creation! The Lord has given us all of it, to us who were "his enemies", a "nothingness", "almost nothing" (St. Michael Garicoits), pilgrims in an expanding universe, where life and being vibrate.

Throughout his pilgrimage through life, man is a seeker of sources, even in humanity's darkest moments, and he builds his own story, because he knows he must feed on the living water that springs constantly from these sources. He will quench his thirst for eternity only if he succeeds in finding in himself and in creation that secret spring which engenders Love. For this he must be

guided by his inner Master, day and night, never ceasing to seek what he yearns for passionately with deep longing: to become another Jesus.

This Passion for Christ and for humanity is what directs our hearts towards mission. It is not an anarchic or indiscreet impulse, but an obedient and generous one. To say that we go out to drink from the same source means that we have known Jesus Christ humble and obedient and that we now want to recognize him in all those who suffer. It is a thought that must animate us when every morning at daybreak, we wash our faces so that our eyes can see more clearly. Our mission is not to follow any old purpose blindly. It is the fruit of an exalting and liberating experience by which we are freed from our blindness to see, believe, and follow Christ (Mk 8, 25 and 10, 52, John 9, 7 and 9, 37).

Spring water quenches us and opens our eyes to life. It is necessary today to have an inner life and to commit to cultivating it every day. This makes us more lucid and clear in our way of thinking and acting; more able to welcome, to share, to be reborn with the poor who calls us as Jesus did from the Cross: "I am thirsty!" (John 19:28), or as the "foreign pilgrim" to the Samaritan woman: "Give me something to drink!" (John 4, 7).

Why "at the same source"? For Betharram, to speak of the same source is to refer to our charism. This is what a Betharramite can share that

is authentic and original. For our charism is the source that not only distinguishes us from others, but also makes us creative, joyful in sharing, and fruitful despite our apparent infertility. Our charism affirms our belonging in a unique family with a rich diversity. This experience makes us the members of a People of God on the move, able to turn away from the 'murmurs' that accompany the troubles of the desert. It defends us from the individualism of fashion, by which some are gradually lost, and against isolation in the quicksand of success, media exposure and personal glory.

Beside the well, "we share the cup," drinking at the same source as the laity, called by our common Father to the Betharram of St. Michael Garicoits. We are united by the dignity of our baptismal vocation, so in mutual respect, we savor the elixir of a Betharramite life well lived, transfigured and engaged in the mission. Why? Because the waters of our Charism are not insipid, but delicious. They regenerate and strengthen our Christian life. We must re-write this story, update it in fidelity, as young Betharramites ask us.

But we will not do it by reducing our charism to simple slogans (let alone to individual interpretations...), but "*by leaving our peaceful comfort zone where we may be content with mediocrity*" (Acts of the Chapter 2), and being "*faithful to our inner life*" (cf Acts of the General Chapter 3: 4; 5).

Thus we express it "*with the features of Betharram and the traits of [our] own culture*" (cf. Acts of the General Chapter, report by Fr Gaspar). And having drunk at this source, we must not impose on others a forced march, but we must listen to the brother who walks in community, so we take to the road together, and don't leave behind at the well the broken or weary brother.

We know that to reach the goal, we need each other. The ancients knew the way, they have already traveled several times: we have to listen to them more! And young people have the strength, the desire, the feet to walk, the arms to lift those who have been left behind.

Let's go out to drink at this same spring in this year 2018. This will lead us to a firm commitment of the heart. Let us help one another and show that it is the Father himself who walks with us and wants us to have life and life to the full. Let us find the joy with which Michael Garicoits, the little shepherd of Ibarre with his crook, led the little sheep of the Anghelu flock to the waters of a secret brook in the mountain, thinking of all the love that God had for him and what he himself could do for Him.

Fr. Gustavo SCJ
SUPERIOR GENERAL

Message of Pope Francis for Lent

With this message, I would like again this year to help the entire Church experience this time of grace anew, with joy and in truth. I will take my cue from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: "*Because of the increase of iniquity, the love of many will grow cold*" (24:12).

These words appear in Christ's preaching about the end of time. They were spoken in Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, where the Lord's passion would begin. In reply to a question of the disciples, Jesus foretells a great tribulation and describes a situation in which the community of believers might well find itself: amid great trials, false prophets would lead people astray and the love that is the core of the Gospel would grow cold in the hearts of many.

False prophets • Let us listen to the Gospel passage and try to understand the guise such false prophets can assume. They can appear as "snake charmers", who manipulate human emotions in order to enslave others and lead them where they would have them go. How many of God's children are mesmerized by momentary pleasures, mistaking them for true happiness! How many men and women live entranced by the dream of wealth, which only makes them slaves to profit and petty interests! How many go through life believing that they are sufficient unto themselves, and end up entrapped by loneliness!



False prophets can also be "charlatans", who offer easy and immediate solutions to suffering that soon prove utterly useless. How many young people are taken in by the panacea of drugs, of disposable relationships, of easy but dishonest gains! How many more are ensnared in a thoroughly "virtual" existence, in which relationships appear quick and straightforward, only to prove meaningless! These swindlers, in peddling things that have no real value, rob people of all that is most precious: dignity, freedom and the ability to love. They appeal to our vanity, our trust in appearances, but in the end they only make fools of us. Nor should we be surprised. In order to confound the human heart, the devil, who is "a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44), has always presented evil as good, falsehood as truth. That is why each of us is called to peer into our heart to see if we are falling prey to the lies of these false prophets. We must learn to look closely, beneath the surface, and to recognize what leaves a good and lasting mark on our hearts, because it comes from God and is truly for our benefit.

A cold heart • In his description of hell, Dante Alighieri pictures the devil seated on a throne of ice, in frozen and loveless isolation. We might well ask ourselves how it happens that charity can turn cold within us. What are the signs that indicate

that our love is beginning to cool?

More than anything else, what destroys charity is greed for money, "the root of all evil" (1 Tim 6:10). The rejection of God and his peace soon follows; we prefer our own desolation rather than the comfort found in his word and the sacraments. All this leads to violence against anyone we think is a threat to our own "certainties": the unborn child, the elderly and infirm, the migrant, the alien among us, or our neighbour who does not live up to our expectations.

Creation itself becomes a silent witness to this cooling of charity. The earth is poisoned by refuse, discarded out of carelessness or for self-interest. The seas, themselves polluted, engulf the remains of countless shipwrecked victims of forced migration. The heavens, which in God's plan, were created to sing his praises, are rent by engines raining down implements of death.

Love can also grow cold in our own communities. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I sought to describe the most evident signs of this lack of love: selfishness and spiritual sloth, sterile pessimism, the temptation to self-absorption, constant warring among ourselves, and the worldly mentality that makes us concerned only for appearances, and thus lessens our missionary zeal.

What are we to do? • Perhaps we see, deep within ourselves and all about us, the signs I have just described. But the Church, our Mother and Teacher, along with the often bitter medicine of the

truth, offers us in the Lenten season the soothing remedy of prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

By devoting more time to prayer, we enable our hearts to root out our secret lies and forms of self-deception, and then to find the consolation God offers. He is our Father and he wants us to live life well.

Almsgiving sets us free from greed and helps us to regard our neighbour as a brother or sister. What I possess is never mine alone. How I would like almsgiving to become a genuine style of life for each of us! How I would like us, as Christians, to follow the example of the Apostles and see in the sharing of our possessions a tangible witness of the communion that is ours in the Church! [...] I would also hope that, even in our daily encounters with those who beg for our assistance, we would see such requests as coming from God himself. When we give alms, we share in God's providential care for each of his children. [...]

Fasting weakens our tendency to violence; it disarms us and becomes an important opportunity for growth. On the one hand, it allows us to experience what the destitute and the starving have to endure. On the other hand, it expresses our own spiritual hunger and thirst for life in God. Fasting wakes us up. It makes us more attentive to God and our neighbour. It revives our desire to obey God, who alone is capable of satisfying our hunger.

I would also like my invitation to extend beyond the bounds of the Catholic Church, and to reach all of you, men and women of good will, who are open to hearing God's voice. [...]

1st round of the Council of the Congregation: the life of the Regions

A special overview this month. Indeed, on the occasion of the Council of the Congregation (meeting in Rome from January 29 to February 2), the Regional Superiors offered us a brief synthesis of their own view of their respective regions. •••



REGION ST MICHAEL GARICOÏTS
 FRANCE SPAIN IVORY COAST
 ITALY CENTRAL AFRICA HOLY LAND

From a spiritual, human and missionary point of view, Europe is the matrix of the Region and of the Congregation. The devotion of the Bétharramites commands respect, when it is known that the average age is 80 years old in France/Spain and 72 years old in Italy (for the 44 and 50 perpetually professed respectively). At the same time, due to a lack of succession, the forces are diminishing and prospects are reduced : from both sides of the Alps, the latest ordinations date back more than 10 years. The supply of new blood is however indispensable for bringing significant projects, for instance, to the place of foundation.

Outside help does not excuse (quite the contrary) the work of caring for the elderly religious, managing the estate which is not a burden on the mission, and the promotion of prayerful, fraternal, intergenerational and intercultural

communities. Hence the insistence on community projects and the leadership role of the superiors ; the choice of Pistoia as a host community for young people who are searching ; the meeting at Bétharram of the youngest religious at the end of December, to exchange views and organise (a meeting of young people at the international session in July, the Katiola camp in August etc) ; the organisation of a round table combining religious and lay people to remobilise the Italian Bétharram on the question of vocations. So that these initiatives are not a flash in the pan, the communities must rebuild themselves on prayer and the sharing of faith, a consistent, brotherly life, a renewed feeling of belonging and an apostolic discernment directed to the « way out » towards others and with others (lay partners), rather than to conserving positions.

Further East, the Vicariate of the Holy Land finds itself at a crossroads. On the one hand, it attracts religious from emerging countries; Bethlehem is a chance for the novitiate and the novitiate a chance for Bethlehem; the learning of local languages progresses. On the other hand, the impact on community life is not be easy to manage. How do we reconcile the necessary pastoral openness with the traditional ministries (Carmelite Chaplaincies,

patriarchate duties)? How do we secure the cohesion of communities when the new missionary options oblige us sometimes to be apart. So many questions asking us to reinvent our presence with a limited (6 perpetually professed) and mixed workforce, from the point of view of age and culture.

Africa is the continent of the youth (75% of sub-Saharan are under 35 years old). That is the same for our family: Apart from 122 religious Fathers and Brothers, the Region has 29 trainee Bétharramites, scholastic pre-candidates, all African. This great hope doubles up as great responsibility : the quality of training (preparation and support of the trainers), the care in savings and the management of work, the commitment in all priority sectors (education, health, development). With the unity which is evident everywhere, our brothers from the Ivory Coast and Central Africa, accompanied by their elders, are capable of rising up to meet these challenges.

Much is already being experienced – what appearance and what future would France, the Holy Land and the Republic of Central Africa have without the backing of Ivorians? But we have a long way to go. Also, by way of a roadmap, each Vicariate is invited to provide a plan which identifies its priorities, and expresses the reality on the ground, the solutions of the General Chapter and the calls of the Church. That is the way the St Michael Garicoïts

Region intends to go forward in order to do the will of God and serve men. With humility, confidence. And determination.

Jean-Luc Morin SCJ

SUPERIOR REGIONAL



REGION V. FR. AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR

ARGENTINA URUGUAY
PARAGUAY BRAZIL

During these first months of service, I had the good fortune to travel through almost the whole Region, to meet the religious, the communities and the diversity of the apostolates that compose it. To witness this reality of Betharram gives me cause to give thanks for the devotion of our brothers and the road travelled; it gives me fresh energy to view the future with hope and to discover the reservoir of possibilities that allows us to live the present with fervour, creativity and joy, in the middle of difficulties and fragilities which is the lot of all humanity.

At this particular moment in my life, some verbs come forcefully to my mind: animate, consolidate, accompany, facilitate, support, confront, accept ... These are now key words to help me better serve and love. And I strongly feel this call to Serve and Love, in which I believe.

...I believe in the strength and vitality of our call and in our charism lived by religious and laity; I believe in what everyone has to offer.

I believe in our Bétharramite

communities that meet this challenge: they live today the consecration, the fraternity, the service and to awaken all sorts of vocations, including that of consecrated Betharramites.

I believe in the service that must be performed by those who have an animation role.

I believe in the richness of complementing each other in life and mission; I believe in teamwork when accompanied by a project.

I believe in the good that will come from the Regional Meeting of Community Superiors that we will experience in July in Passo Quatro.

I believe in the work of Vocations Teams, and in those who help us - especially young people - to discover Life and live it with intensity.

I believe in the vitality of the laity, who stir themselves to organise themselves and share and nourish themselves with the Charism of Betharram. Inspired by the Spirit they will embody, the "same joy", in their own homes.

I believe in the missionary spirit which today, just like before, commits us to bring the Good News to the geographical peripheries (neighbourhoods of big cities and villages).

I welcome the new Betharramite presences in the middle of the existential peripheries (among alcoholics or drug addicts, the homeless, people in precarious social situations) and I believe in this presence.

I believe in the courage and compassion of those who seek out and serve in the peripheries the many

children and adolescents who populate our schools.

I believe in the potential that lies in each of these realities, and I believe that openness, communication, and networking can be the spark that will make it flourish.

I believe in the enthusiasm, creativity and ability of young religious in our communities who are growing in number.

I believe in the dedication, fidelity, and wisdom of our older religious, who are already becoming less in number.

I believe in the variety of resources that Betharram has in our Region for sharing and service.

What a life! What good things to live for! Always forward! Without delay, without reserve, without return, for love more than for any other reason!!

*Daniel González scj
SUPERIOR REGIONAL*



REGION ST MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

ENGLAND INDIA
THAILAND

Saint Miriam Region is a young vibrant Region that has doubled in size since the 2011 Chapter, augmenting the family of Betharram. The young vicariates are moving from a focus on formation to a focus on mission, and if there are some aches and pains they are mainly 'growing pains'.

All the growth has been in India

& Thailand where we have been blessed both with vocations and dedicated formators. Like much of Europe, England has suffered a vocations famine for much of the last 30 years but the religious there are still trying to give faithful witness and plant seeds for the future.

Formation: strong efforts have been made to train formators and establish good formation communities, and the work of the formators at Sampran & Mangalore & Bangalore has been an example of dedication and devotion. This hasn't been achieved without some headache, heartache and financial stress, but the formators are the quiet heroes of the Region and they deserve our gratitude.

The Regional Novitiate at Bangalore has had some growing pains... visa problems, language & cultural difficulties, lack of clarity about community purpose or direction of the house etc. But despite all difficulties the two Novice masters so far have done excellent work in introducing young religious to community living and Betharram spirituality. Specific highlights? The Ashram experience.. Ignatian retreat .. mission placements. One big change since 2011 is that now we have our own Betharram mission stations in Assam where we can send young novices. Even when this was not possible (for the Thai novices) the Novices do very well in pastoral

placements in Kerala and Karnataka.

Regional spirituality: all three regions have taken steps since the last Chapter to renew our Betharramite spirituality. The pathway that began a couple of decades ago was pursued with vigour in the period of Fr. Gaspar's time as Superior General. Though generally speaking the sense of Betharramite identity and the grasp of our charism is still a weakness Region-wide. But here the Preparation Sessions for final vows have been a great success for the young religious of India & Thailand. It has connected them with their Betharramite roots, and helped them deepen their grasp of Ignatian spirituality. It has also helped the younger generations from different continents to meet one another and get to know one another.

Mission: In both Thailand and India new missions are appearing every year, with a flourishing of the India vicariate in Assam among tribal peoples, and a willingness of the Thai religious to go to the neglected villages of the hill country. Even in England the Vicariate is planning a new mission in a poorer district in the Nottingham Diocese. If there is a weakness in all this it lies in accidentally overlooking our Betharramite Community identity as bishops eagerly make use of the great talents of our young religious, compounded by a Diocesan practice of paying only for one priest. This is

an area for ongoing discernment.

Internationality: An aim of the 2011 Chapter was to create international communities, and I am very proud of my brothers in the St.Miriam Region who have made this a reality in practice.

This international Betharramite witness is one we need to treasure and guard, as so many forces in our world are set on dividing nations and creating ethnic division. It is always a temptation for lazy politicians in

every continent to blame foreigners for their own shortcomings. I am proud of my brothers who have tried to make the words of St.Paul a reality: *In the kingdom of heaven there is neither Jew nor gentile, neither male nor female, neither slave nor free man, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* (Galatians 3.27)

*Austin Hughes scj
SUPERIOR REGIONAL*



The Superior General and the Council of the Congregation: from left to right, Fr. Graziano Sala, Fr. Enrico Frigerio (Regional Superior from 1st April), Fr. Stervin Selvadass, Fr. Tobia Sosio, Fr. Daniel González, R. Fr. Gustavo Agín, Fr. Austin Hughes, Fr. Jean-Luc Morin, Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue.

Council of the Congregation, 2nd round: one option for 2018

When you do something for the first time you are always a little anxious to know how it will work out.

We three members of the General Council resident in Rome had learned afresh how to manage the work of the Council of the Congregation that meets once a year. This was the first Council after the last Chapter. It wouldn't be too much to say that it was above all a spiritual experience because everyone was there not in his own name but there for the service the congregation has entrusted to him. A climate of prayer and fraternity accompanied the work of the Council where all members of the Congregation were present. All in all, a family meeting.

The family of Betharram is invited to continue to live, to go forward, to "without delay, to go out to embrace life" with the new orientations and decisions of the last General Chapter. It is on this matter that the council has based all its thinking.

These orientations are 6 in number:

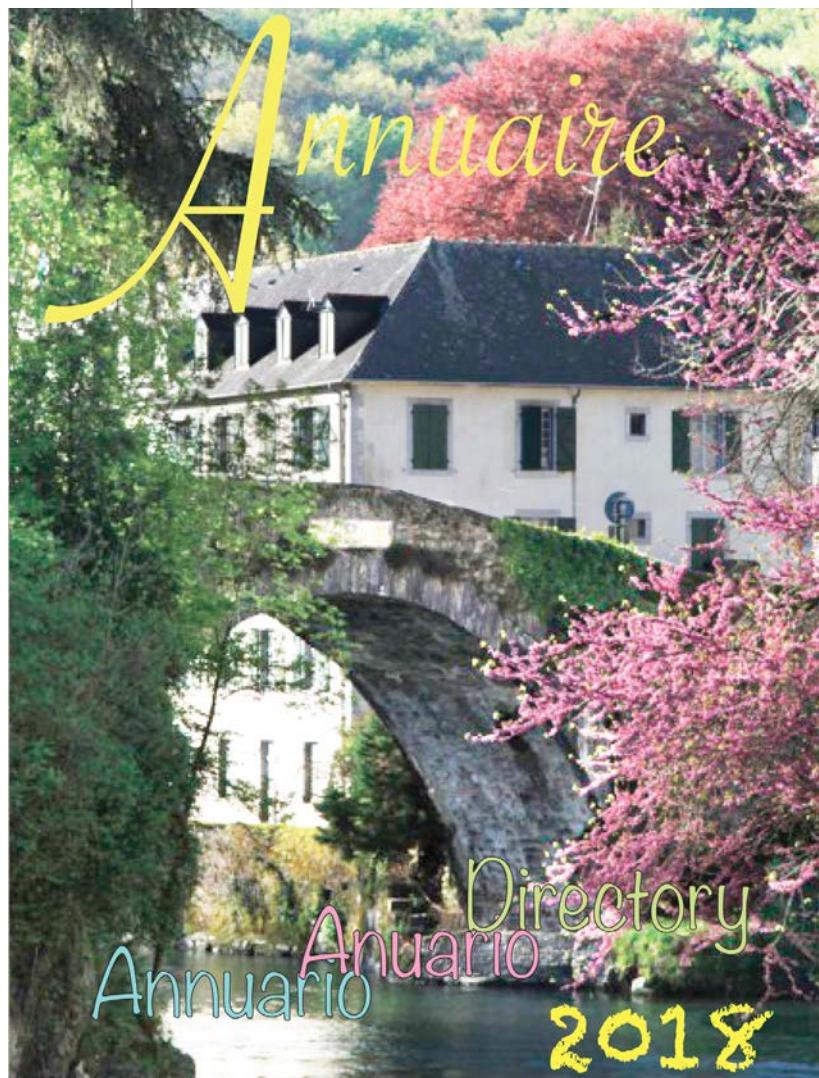
- Go out to drink at the same source;
- Go out to share;
- Go out, in community, to meet life and the many peripheries;
- Go out to share the joy

(The Founder's Manifesto);

- Get out of ourselves to communicate;
- Betharram: the place where everything began.

The Council of the Congregation proposes that each year the whole Congregation takes one of these six Chapter orientations. For this year 2018, the Council proposes the orientation: "Go out to drink at the same source."

In line with this first orientation, the



The 2018 edition of the directory of the Congregation has just been printed (one copy for each residence for internal and private use only)

Council has defined three priorities and concrete actions for this year that each region and vicariate will implement.

- a) Put yourself in a "state of permanent conversion": an authentic spiritual life, based on the Eucharist, nourished by daily prayer is the condition of union with Christ and joyful perseverance in the mission. Superiors encourage religious to this fidelity in prayer and ensure that everyone can live with spiritual accompaniment and the sacrament of reconciliation.
- b) The importance of the community project and the vicariate project. By the end of 2018, each community should draft a community project that guarantees fidelity to our consecration, and includes missionary commitments attentive

to the underprivileged, accepted with proper community discernment. Each vicariate, starting from the reception of the Acts of the General Chapter will draw up a vicariate project to be submitted to the Regional Council.

- c) To share our spirituality with the laity: religious must be keen to share to the laity what animates them, through all the appropriate means (days of recollection, invitation to a retreat, time of conviviality ...).

It is in this dynamic that the whole Congregation is invited to move forward, each Region and each Vicariate at its own pace, to always bring to the world the happiness of God.

Jean-Dominique Delgue, scj
VICAR GENERAL

Formation, a constant priority

From February 5 to 10, the Formation Service convoked by the Superior General met around Fr Stervin, General Councillor for Formation, at the Generalate, after the Council of the Congregation. •••

"Where there are religious, there is joy." With these words of Pope Francis, we began our formator's meeting in Rome on 05 February 2018. The new team comprises of Fathers Sylvain Dansou Hounkpatin,

Simone Panzeri, Kriangsak Kitsakunwong, Gleciimar Guilherme da Silva, gathered under the leadership of Rev. Fr. Gustavo Agin and in the presence of Rev. Fr. Jean Dominique Delgue and Fr Daniel Gonzalez. Thanks be to God for all the 142 young men who are in the care of our formators across our three region. It is fitting to say that a sincere heartfelt gratitude is due to all who worked in the formation and to all who are joyfully committed in the discernment process of



these young men.

In the 'Narratio Fidei', all the formators expressed that they find the profound joy of the Lord in the community in living their religious life with their brothers. It does not exclude difficulties and problems. Therefore, we noted some of the challenges that we face today in our formation houses. They are as follows; the over use of mobile, internet and media, the problem of alcohol, increasing individualism, inappropriate use of money, prolonging the submission of sincere accounts, transparency and honesty in relationship, sensitivity to the poor, acceptance of cultural and social difference and so on. In the face of these challenges, formators felt the need to be an effective and joyful witness to the younger ones. We all see how important it is to have clear criteria and to educate our brothers to grow in wholeness through the personal accompaniment.

Following the demands of the General Chapter 2017, we all seri-

ously studied the document, *The Gift of Priestly Vocation: New Ratio Fundamentals Institutionis Sacerdotalis*. This document made us to recognize the preciousness and depth of our *Ratio Formationis*. It also helped us to draft the clear

criteria to accept the mature (adult) vocation.

We too carefully reflected and prepared the program for the upcoming International Session which will focus on the first chapter of our Acts of the General Chapter "To Go Out to Drink from the Same Source". After a week of serious reflection and working together, the team left to their respective missions with a renewed enthusiasm, vigour and zeal, to continue their task of forming, as Pope Francis says, missionaries-disciples who will be in love with the Master, who will know the smell of the sheep and who will in every way possible show the tenderness of God to His people.

Stervin Selvadass scj
GENERAL COUNCILLOR FOR FORMATION

Council of the Congregation, 3rd round: continuation and conclusion

Other points discussed by the Council of the Congregation and decisions made by the Superior General and his Council. ...

The Council of the Congregation, during its working sessions, also discussed various themes and gave its opinion to the Superior General. We can summarise the fruit of these discussions: above all, the Council, after almost ten years of Regionalisation (January 2009), considers it useful that the meetings of the Congregational Council should take place in places other than the Generalate in Rome. This would allow the Regional Superiors and the General Council to know better the many realities of the Congregation and also respond to the desire of the General Chapter to "go out and meet life". The Council of the Congregation expressed the hope that the next meeting would take place at the same time as the planned meeting of the Regional Bursars, in accordance with the request of the General Chapter (see Proceedings of the General Chapter, No. 42). The best period would be the second week of November 2018. This desire was submitted to the decision of the Superior General and his Council.

The programme of the first canonical visits of the Superior General



in each of the three regions was then discussed. The Superior General agreed with the Council of the Congregation on a summary programme that he later specified in the General Council.

Finally, but no less important, as requested by the General Chapter (see Acts of the XXVII General Chapter, No. 52), the Council fixed the sums of ordinary contributions that each Region will have to pay to the Congregational fund. This work has been done with mutual respect, with a view to the common good and following the criteria of co-responsibility and subsidiarity.

Graziano Sala scj
SECRETARY GENERAL

◆◆◆ In the session of the General Council held at the Generalate House in Rome on February 3rd, 2018, the Superior General, **admitted to final profession**

Br. Cristian Ismael Romero (Region Ven. Fr. Auguste Etchecopar - Vicariate of Paraguay) and

decided to present to priesthood the Dn. Iran

Lima da Silva (Region Ven. Fr. Auguste Etchecopar - Vicariate of Brazil).



◆◆◆ In the session of the General Council held at the Generalate House in Rome on February 13th, 2018, the Superior General with his Council took the **following decisions:**

- The **next Council of the Congregation** is going to take place from November 5th to 13th, 2018, in Rome. Precisely as follows:
 - from Monday 5 to Friday 9 November : Council of the Congregation;
 - November 10th: Full General Council;
 - From Monday 12 to Wednesday 14 November: meeting of the Regional Bursars with the participation of the General Council and the Regional Superiors.
- The Superior General fixed, with the consent of his Council (in conformity with the Rule of Life nr. 205 n) the amounts of the **ordinary contributions** to be sent by the Regions to the fund of the Congregation. These amounts will be communicated to the Regional Superiors and the Regional Bursars by a decree. These amounts concern the current year and the whole year of 2019. The Council of the Congregation will subsequently reassess these ordinary contributions to the fund of the Congregation (cf. Acts of the XXVII General Chapter, nr. 55).
- He also fixed the dates of the first canonical visits of his mandate (these dates are subject to variations in case of particular or unforeseen events):

<<< On the agenda

Canonical visits in the Region Saint Michael Garicoïts

- in Italy: from February 23rd to March 23rd (Friday before the Palm Sunday).
- in Central Africa: from April 10th to 25th.
- in Holy Land: from June 8th to 17th.
- in France and Spain: From June 22nd to July 29th (during the session of formation for perpetually professed).
- in the Ivory Coast: from September 12th to October 6th.

Canonical visits in the Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified

- in Thailand: from Dicember 1st to 21st.
- in India: from January 15th to February 5th, 2019.
- in England: from February 10 to 20, 2019.

Canonical visits in the Region Fr. Auguste Etchecopar

- in the three Vicariates: in July, August and September 2019.

DATES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL'S MAIN SESSIONS

March 26, 27 & 28
May 2, 3 & 4
July 31, August 1 & 2
October 8, 9 & 10

Maternal legacy

"After God, I owe who I am to my mother!" Michael Garicoïts admits it himself: he owes a lot to his mother. •••



The maternal family

Ordokia: the house belonged to a solicitor. Guillaume Etcheberry was a farm worker: he worked the land and shared the fruits with the owner. Widowed and father of a two-year-old daughter, he married Catherine Etchéto in his second marriage. On 13 October 1775, Michael Garicoïts' mother was born. She was baptized "Engrâce"; most documents name her as "Gratianne"; in Basque, she is "Guérachané". Guillaume, the father, died on 23 March 1784. Bravely Catherine worked on the farm with five dependent children.

In 1789 the Revolution came! In 1793, the church of Ibarre was looted, but little taken: the priests hid everything, including themselves! Having been a priest for ten years, the owner's brother knew Ordokia and those who lived there ... Here all were faithful to their word: they never betrayed a man, especially not a priest!

Having received an excellent education, courageous and full of faith, Gratianne is described as "an angel"! In a civil ceremony, she married Ar-

naud Garicoïts on 3rd Fructidor, year IV (on 20th August 1796). And the religious marriage? All say that it took place on the other side of the Pyrenees. "France," said Gratianne, "has separated from the

Pope, we must remain on the side of the Pope". Father Miéyaa places the nuptial blessing after the civil ritual. Due to the lack of documents and accurate witness accounts, we could wonder if the trip to Navarre took place before or after 20 August 1796. In France, the law of 20 September 1792 required a civil marriage; without having to go to the town hall before going to church. The celebration of the sacrament could be done before, or after, the civil ceremony... Between 20 August 1796 and 15 April 1797 there were just eight months...

Birth and baptism



Michael was born on 15 April 1797; on 26th Germinal year V, according to the revolutionary calendar. His parents' duty was to have him baptized as soon as possible. But here there is no written record of baptism. The most reliable sources say that the child was baptized in the neighbouring village; and that he reacted to the cold water by tearing a page of the order of service! However, if Father Bourdene and most of the biographers place the baptism six months after birth, the research of Father Miéyaa assures us that, the persecution having calmed down between 6 November 1796 and 4 September 1797, the baptism would have been possible at Ibarre: a letter from the bishop of Dax, dated 11 May 1797, attests that Mr de Bord, the priest, was at Ibarre then; Father Miéyaa asks: "Michael's parents were too Christian to deprive their child of this sacrament for such a long time. How could they not have done it?"; his response is: "An unknown circumstance escapes us."

The education given by his mother

Immediately the child's education began. Subsequent childbirth never distracted Gratianne from the attention due to the elder son: as a mischievous child, Michael needed it! In return, the boy got on really well with his mother.

There is always certain pleasure in reporting these episodes:

- aged four he threw a stone at a lady who spoke ill of his mother; his

mother told him off;

- when he snatched an apple from his brother Paul, she asked him: "Would you like us to do the same thing to you?";

- she made him return the garlic stolen from the neighbour, and the bird caught in the trap laid by another...

During a philosophy class, he told this story himself:

"I was five years old. A merchant hawker came to visit us. From among the things he displayed, I stole some of his needles. My mother, being aware of it, told me that the good Lord punishes children who commit sin. Because of this, I conceived a great fear of theft."

Intelligent and full of faith, Gratianne took her role as mother seriously, responsible for education and as first catechist. She passed on what she had learned from the priests of the time: it could not be otherwise. Michael Géricoits, in his teaching, will remember his mother:

"From my earliest years, she applied herself to inspire me with a horror of sin, and at the age of four, I trembled from all over when she said to me in a grave voice, in front of flames crackling in the hearth: 'My son, God throws children who commit mortal sin into a fire far more terrible than this one'."

Among the priests of the time "oozes Jansenist venom," writes Father Miéyaa; and many biographers speak in this way. It would be more accurate to speak of "rigorism". Above

all Jansenism leads people to dread evil; forgetful of God's love for men, it leads to deep pessimism. Gratianne was not a Jansenist however! She was faithful to the pope - and anchored this attachment in Michael - when "*the clerics supporting the French Revolution and the civil constitution of the clergy are Jansenists for a large part*" (Wikipedia) ...

Above all: Gratianne, the humble peasant, finds many signs of the goodness of God: "*Near a fountain fed by a spring, the wild refuge of amphibians and reptiles, she gave her son this to think about: 'Do you see how much this water is clear and good! ... And yet it comes out of such a dreadful place. This is the image of the word of God, it is always holy and respectable, whatever mouth it comes from, and worthy of our attention whatever instrument announces it to us.'*"

The episode of the child climbing the mountain to touch the sky is well known:

"He himself told how one day, wishing to admire more closely the sky his mother spoke to him about so often, he climbed to the top of the neighbouring mountain, and then, as the sky was still far away, to the top of the next. He was surprised when night fell and did not return until the next day, a little confused, and very worried about the fate of his sheep who had scattered. He was fortunate enough, however, to find them all again by way of a tiring search."

All biographers do not report the

incident in the same way: it does not matter! There was a mountain climb! Father Basilide Bourdenne, the first "official" biographer, specifies that the mother's way of speaking aroused the child's desire for heaven, something to look for at all costs! By the grace of Gratianne, Michael wanted to take all the steps to climb to the sky: the ascent which the child began in Ibarre, stayed with him until this morning of Ascension Thursday on 14 May 1863, in Bétharram ...

Before reaching the final stage, he has to go through the First Communion and climb all the steps of the ladder to become a priest.

Beñat Oyhénart scj





It is usually said that in order to command well one must have known how to obey for a long time. I believe that one could reasonably add that in order to obey well it would be useful (some would say) to have been a superior at least for a while. For who among us did not have, at some point, subordinates to lead, who reminded us of the way we once behaved (as grumblers or rebels) just when we wanted to be respected and obeyed? And what could be more unjust and unworthy than to want to be respected and obeyed by subordinates, and then not to obey our own superiors?

| MS 366



**Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
B E T H A R R A M**

Generalate House
via Angelo Brunetti, 27
00186 Rome (Italy)
Telephone +39 06 320 70 96
Fax +39 06 36 00 03 09
Email nef@betharram.it

www.betharram.net