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A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

A sip from the spring: obedience

Dear Betharramites,

The water from the fountain that we drink helps us love what an authentic Betharramite loves: the Will of God, that generosity and joy that leads us to fulfil what the Pope has spoken of: "*Wherever there are religious: there is joy*" (Pope Francis' Letter to Religious for the Year of Consecrated Life II,1). The true Betharramite, even if he has already experienced 'the cross' in his life, will still rise to the challenge of accepting "the works that others refuse to do" and "always go forward", obedient to every demand before him. He will be strong enough to deny himself and faithful enough to make the love of Christ prevail in mission. True Betharramites like this constitute a band of brothers who fly the flag of our religious family: obedience out of love.

St. Michael knew how to be clear and firm with his brothers. He did it so that they would welcome obedience from the bottom of their hearts and that they would come to love it above all else.

«Our Lord obeyed, but did so willingly; he gave his life, and did so freely. No one could take it from him; he took it and gave it up just as he wanted. What willing obedience, even to death, death on a cross » (DS §202).

He suffered when he saw bishops weep because of the new fashion of the "spirit of the revolution". A clergy avid for autonomy, that claimed freedom without limits other than free will. Our Founder called this a "Spirit of insubordination", so contrary to a true "religious spirit".

Times have changed, but those seeds still remain ... The good along with the bad ...

Today Betharram lives in a world more attentive to personal freedom, to social, cultural, and religious diversity. Dialogue leads to relationships along the pathway of Encounter. Hence, an important value such as obedience must be relearned, re-appropriated and adapted to the reality that surrounds us. This value, if it is lived well, is a bold prophetic witness against the so-called freedoms of our age, which sadly lead to an inner anarchy.

On the contrary, many of our Betharramites continue to give witness to availability, without reservation, with admirable

generosity. I remember very well an elderly Argentine father, who had lived 53 years in Brazil and who had recently returned to Buenos Aires. At 86, I had to propose another community to him and he said: "I thought I was going to die in my homeland ... but if you ask me, I will go where you need me the most". That father, at his age, left his homeland again, lived eight more years in Brazil and was the soul of the formation community.

I can say the same of several young religious who went abroad on a mission to another vicariate or region. Like our old missionaries, who received obedience (often on a small piece of paper, slipped under the door, at the end of a retreat), they offered themselves happy to leave at the first signal, with prophetic gratitude, passion and dedication.

There is a rather more complex institutional angle, which comes into play with the opening of a new work, the acceptance of a parish, or the foundation of a new community, etc. These actions are reserved for the approval of the Superior General, with the vote or opinion of his council (Rule of Life 205, 206). This allows us to maintain an order of priorities in the apostolic dynamic of our religious family and to offer to the local Church a consistent missionary service, taken up by a community.

There are many churches that lack priests to serve their

parishes (especially those located in peripheral areas). And Bishops sometimes make proposals for certain religious to assume responsibilities, compensating for the lack of diocesan clergy. This pressure is like a centrifugal force for some unsuspecting Betharramites, who end up confusing their apparent personal availability with Betharramite availability. But the true availability of our Congregation must be the result of a mission, discerned and taken up in a synodal fashion.

Our charism is not based on indiscreet availability. Availability and discernment are always closely linked in Betharram. Some may object that this or that particular work was begun in a haphazard manner ...not much discernment there! True, we are not the "Owners of Divine Providence". The Lord has his mysterious ways which ultimately prevail...even when particular works came to be born in a seemingly random fashion. But that does not exempt us from the duty of making a serious discernment.

Sometimes a crucial phrase is often omitted: "I will consult about all this with my major superiors". In addition, it is important that a religious ask himself:

- What are the obligations of my position today?
- That is to say: what is the mission entrusted to me by my superiors in the community to which I belong?

- Can I afford to take on something else, without affecting what I already have in hand?
- What does my community think? To what extent will my attention to some new plan affect the life of the religious brothers that I have by my side?
- How would this option affect the lives of the laity I have care of, or who are my collaborators in mission?

Proposals which have been considered in the Vicariate Councils must be taken by the Regional Vicars to the Major Superior and his Council.

One great obstacle is anxiety (the first enemy of discernment!), which leads to precipitate or ill-considered action.

In fact, the management of personal projects in our time is one of the things most jealously guarded by some individuals. When a vowed religious presents his superiors with a *fait accompli*, even if he himself did not propose it, he becomes truly disobedient. It is a subtle way to manipulate authority. It is the expression of an indiscreet autonomy: "because he was anxious, he couldn't wait ...", "he didn't consult ...", "he needed an urgent response ...".

Our Bishops know the law of the Church and, normally, ask religious superiors for their opinion before an appointment. This is because, if

a problem with a religious were to arise in the future, those who have to answer for him are his superiors. The Congregation and the local church must stipulate agreements. It is insufficient to simply go with the unilateral will of the Bishop, or with the autonomous will of an individual religious or even a superior. But accords must be properly made with mutual ecclesial respect.

There are bishops who appoint religious as Deans, Episcopal vicars, etc., without hearing from the religious: "I will consult my superior first". It could be that in the following year the superior needs that religious for another work, but he has to factor a new obstacle into his discernment: the religious has committed himself to the Diocese without asking his superior, so now he is less free to leave that position. In this way it is not easy to be faithful to an identity, vocation and mission.

Saint Michael said that we must obey at the first signal of our "Bishop or superior", and today we could ask ourselves "which comes first, the bishop... or the superior...?" What our founder seemed to suggest as an either/or was based on the obedience of a Religious society under construction, not the fully fledged Congregation we are today. It reappears every so often among us as a dramatic dilemma: which of the two do I pay attention to: the bishop or the superior? Undoubtedly every good Bishop will immediately tell

you: "to your Regional Superior". Because this is how it is: we have our Ordinary (Regional Superior), and our meetings. But are our meetings a priority in our busy agendas? Happy the Betharramite who prioritises them. Because that is also obedience.

We know that this faithfulness will shape our future, because it is "our very reason for being" (Saint Michael Garicoits).

Fr. Gustavo SCJ
SUPERIOR GENERAL

From the homily of February 2nd, 2018, Feast of the presentation of the Lord, Holy Mass for the consecrated persons

Let us look to our own lives, dear consecrated brothers and sisters.

Everything started in an encounter with the Lord. Our journey of consecration was born of an encounter and a call. We need to keep this in mind. And if we remember aright, we will realize that in that encounter we were not alone with Jesus; there was also the people of God, the Church, young and old, just as in today's Gospel. It is striking too, that while the young Mary and Joseph faithfully observe the Law – the Gospel tells us this four times – and never speak, the elderly Simeon and Anna come running up and prophesy. It seems it should be the other way around. Generally, it is the young who speak enthusiastically about the future, while the elderly protect the past. In the Gospel, the very opposite occurs,



because when we meet one another in the Lord, God's surprises immediately follow.

For this to occur in the consecrated life, we have to remember that we can never renew our encounter with the Lord without others; we can never leave others behind, never pass over generations, but must accompany one another daily, keeping the Lord always at the centre. For if the young are called to open new doors, the elderly hold the keys. An institute remains youthful by going back to its roots, by listening to its older members. There is no future without this encounter between the old and the young. There is no growth without roots and no flowering without new buds. There is never prophecy without memory, or memory without prophecy. And constant encounter. ●



Vatican Basilica, Holy Mass for the Consecrated persons, XXIIth World Day for Consecrated Life, February 2nd 2018

A stable presence in Vietnam

As years go by, our discreet presence in Vietnam slowly gains stability, following in the footsteps of Providence, with faith, perseverance and availability.

●●●

It's been 3 years now since I came in Vietnam to fulfill the Congregation's project for the training of young boys of Vietnam for the future mission in Vietnam and elsewhere. It has been a privilege for me to be part of this mission that the Congregation entrusted to me.

We began our community in Ho Chi Minh City in the archdiocese of Saigon on July 4, 2015. I along with Fr. Albert Saat started the mission here. After a month 6 young boys had joined us. After a year one could go to India for his novitiate and the year after another boy went to Bangalore for his philosophy studies. Meanwhile, thanks to God's providence, Mrs Chi Dung who is settled in USA, offered her house for our use without any rent. The Congregation has been officially accepted by the diocese.

On August 29, 2017, we began our new academic year with 6 young boys who are very active. It's been a blessing that in such a short time we could get young boys and develop our presence in Vietnam. It is God's blessing that many people also are appreciating our spirituality and our mission.

I believe in the loving care of



God and God is faithful to his promises. These are our daily activities: morning meditation and morning prayer, holy mass, English class, spirituality of St. Michael, spoken English and liturgy, evening work, sports (football and table tennis); evening prayer and night prayer. Our brothers now actively participate in the daily activities. We do also commit ourselves in pastoral and social ministry. We go for Saturday mass in the international chaplaincy in the pastoral center of the archdiocese and on Sundays we go and help in the old age home and the AIDS center. God always keeps opening doors for us.

Yesudas Kuttappassery SCJ

(IN THE PICTURE, WITH MGR. BUI VAN DOC, ARCHBISHOP OF HO CHI MINH CITY, WHO RECENTLY DIED IN ROME, DURING THE VISIT AD LIMINA. MAY HE REST IN PEACE.)

"Mission impossible"... This is what came to my mind after I had received an appointment from the Superior general to start the mission in Vietnam. I was really worried about many things: about my age (too young to start this mission), about my experience as a priest (just only one year in my priesthood), about the language (I am very poor in English: it is very difficult to speak and to teach the boys; adding to that I had to study Vietnamese, a new language for me); about the visa; about my religious life (How to live and



the religious and Vietnamese faithful); the Vietnamese Catholics have a deep and strong faith (For example they have early morning Mass every day at 4 or 5 o'clock. On Sunday they have Masses for old people at 4.30 am, for the workers at 6.00 am, for students or children at 8.00 am. For all the masses the church is packed;

to teach the boys: they are more or less my age and some of them are even older than me); and about the culture: each country has its own culture. But with faith and obedience my answer to the Superior general was "Here I am".

After two years in Vietnam, I can say that the mission would be impossible if I lived and carried out this mission without faith; but everything is possible for God. Through God's work, He opens my heart and my mind to see and to accept in this wonderful culture (they respect the priests and the priests are friendly and kind towards

this is what I can see). I really appreciate this. For the beautiful culture, for the friendly and kind Vietnamese people I really want to give special thanks to Mary Nguyen Thi Kieu Dung and her family again. And thanks to all the benefactors who support our mission.

My mission is to continue to help the boys to absorb the real charism of Betharram in their daily life and in their whole life if they wish to be part of our religious family. Please do continue to pray for us that we may carry out this mission with faith. cảm ơn, (thank you)!

Albert Sa-at Prathansiphong scj

«I continue to believe that this work will succeed... because you have neglected nothing in order to go forward more effectively, and will never have the insolence, or the regrettable misfortune of substituting your ways of acting in place of the divine ways of action». (St Michael Garicoïts, letter nr. 209) ...



Since 2015, the year when our presence in Vietnam officially began with the arrival of two religious, Father Yesudas Kuttappassery (from the vicariate of India) and Father Albert Sa-at

Prathansantiphong (from the vicariate of Thailand), God's hand has been evident in solving the problems which at first sight seemed insuperable.

Thanks to the missionary spirit of

initiative of our two Brothers, some solutions were found and new ways have been opened. In such circumstances, how couldn't we evoke the first steps of a great number of our missions? From Argentina to China, From Africa to Thailand, and at last from India to Vietnam? The "style" is always the same: an obedient, active availability coupled with personal talents and spirit of initiative mixed with a right dose of thoughtfulness...

Let us happily underline that this new opening has been possible thanks to two young vicariates: India and Thailand. A sign that, if the "old continent" is more and more ageing and does not offer vocations anymore, the adventure of Betharram charism is far from reaching its end... on the contrary!

I am happy to remind you here of the words recently pronounced by Father Chan John Kunu scj, the regional Vicar in Thailand, during the perpetual professions and priestly ordinations of four young men of the vicariate (January 2018): "I can't forget the missionaries who, more than 60 years ago, came to Thailand, and I wish the gratitude we owe them would be shared. These Fathers sowed "the seed of faith" among us, but all were not able to taste the fruits".

It also seems to me that through this new missionary opening in Vietnam, we foresee the fruits evoked by Father Chan. And this is true today for both vicariates of India and Thailand.

We can't forget as well the "signs" sowed by Providence during these last

years: in many countries (France, Italy, England, Paraguay, Argentina) numerous benefactors have decided to support this new mission; in the same way, even if they have not known us for a long time, many Vietnamese benefactors have helped and supported us, and go on sustaining our presence.

But the most beautiful sign given by Providence is these young men accompanied by the community during these last years and who have begun discerning their vocations. About fifteen young men have been received until now. Two of them are now in the formation house in Sampran (Thailand): Joseph Vũ Văn Tuấn and Peter Đỗ Văn Hưng (both in their third year of philosophy); one (Joseph Phạm Văn Mỹ) is in his first canonical year of novitiate in India, while another young Vietnamese (John the Baptist Nguyễn Văn Thắng) is in the Mangalore formation house in his first year of philosophy. Other young men will soon leave Vietnam to follow a course of initial formation in the formation house of Mangalore.

The Fathers' work has precisely been to make the Betharramite charism known in Vietnam. For this, they have visited the parishes, meeting the youths and proposing Saint Michel Garicoïts's spirituality.

Someone could wonder: is everything all right in the best of worlds? Can everything be so easy?

No, it isn't. It wasn't easy yesterday, and won't be tomorrow as well. Any activity, any mission accomplished for the Gospel and the announcement of the Good News must

be focussed on the Cross.

The Cross has been present all along this way, for two and a half years, and shall still be there in the future. But its presence makes us certain that

And from Ban Garicoits, Sampran, in Thailand, our two Vietnamese postulants, hailing from the diocese of Thanh Hoa, tell us about the beginnings of their spiritual journey. ...

Joseph Vũ Văn Tuấn



When I was young, I used to go to church to pray, to help the Parish priest in some activities.

The time passed very fast under the blessing of God who is taking care of my family and of those who are coming to help me grow in faith. Jesus Christ sowed a good seed in me. I attended different parishes from 2007 to 2010, trying to answer God's call. I tried to listen and do his will. I had chosen to spend time in helping some priests and training myself to be a seminarian and discovering my vocation. During this long time I prayed and worked with catechists and lay people who were helping me to fulfill my vocation.

They helped me with food, clothes and prayers to God. I considered that God called me but I did not know

"because of our insolence or unhappiness, our own action must never take the place of God's action".

Graziano Sala scj

how I could answer his call. I prayed a lot and this put me close to God. Eventually a Father came along: his name is Fr Jean-Luc, from France. He visited my diocese and some of his friends in Viet Nam, on 8th September 2010. With the kind help of Father Khan and Father Ching I managed to meet Fr Jean-Luc. He talked about Betharram community. What was Betharram? Where was it? What to do in order to be a member of his community? What was the history of Betharram community and of the founder, Saint Michel Garicoïts? At that time I wondered whether I could be a member of this community, I was not sure what would happen to me in the future; I could not speak a foreign language; I had not been abroad before; I was scared, but at the same time I felt that a mysterious power was taking possession of my heart. I told father Jean-Luc that I wanted to join the community of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram and he agreed wholeheartedly.

What attracted me towards religious life, was the example of the missionaries who came to Vietnam to bring the Good News; the sacrifice of the 177 Vietnamese Martyrs who offered their life to God; saint Michael Garicoits, a simple man hailing from

a humble family who spent his life serving God in his brothers and sisters. These are the words that I always remember: "Père me voici, sans retard, sans reserve, sans retour, par amour".

Now I am in Thailand; I am happy to stay here with my community, I am in the third year of philosophy.

Peter Đỗ Văn Hưng

After completing High School, I had a chance to meet Fr. Jean-Luc and Fr. Jeeraphat in my Church. They gave me some literature about the Betharram Congregation. I could see some pictures of the mission work of Fathers and Brothers with the poor. The life of St Michel Garicoits touched my heart and I felt the desire to consecrate my life to God by being a religious priest in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram and by following the footsteps of St Michael Garicoits.

I joined the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram in 2013. I have been living in Ban Garicoits community since I came to



I have experienced many things here, Thai customs, Thai people and society and especially the Betharramite spiritual life in my community. God is always at my side and He leads me.

Thank you so much! May God bless you. *Merci !*

Thailand. In the first year I started to study the English language. In the second year Fr. Jeeraphat asked me to study the Thai language in a language school for six months. After this course, Fr. Jeeraphat allowed me to join the Philosophy course in Saengtham College. Now I am attending the third year of Philosophy in the same college.

This year Fr. kriangsak sent me to do some ministry with poor children in some villages of the Bangkok diocese. I am very happy to live in Ban Garicoits house. I am having an enriching experience here. I thank God for all his blessings especially for giving me the opportunity of being a Betharram brother in formation. I thank you so much for accepting me into the family of Betharram. I am sure that I can rely on your prayers for me. God bless you all.

How to carry on sustaining the community of Vietnam? With free offerings at mass. The fathers of the community celebrate mass every morning remembering your intentions.

A donation of €. 60,00 allows us to sustain the monthly expenses (room and board) of a young Vietnamese who desires to start a journey of vocational discernment in our religious family.

People on the edges

In Paraguay last year our General Chapter enthusiastically embraced the option of Betharram for people on the margins. These peripheries are variously defined, and Betharramites around the world have identified them as the tribal poor, the alcoholics, the disenfranchised and the uneducated etc... Recently Mgr. Patrick McKinney bishop of Nottingham invited the England vicariate to take up a mission for the marginalised, and work in a parish in his Diocese.

The location Clifton is literally on the periphery of the city of Nottingham, and though in most English cities the outer suburbs are places of affluence, Clifton is full of people who struggle to survive. Added to the city of Nottingham only in 1950, it prospered half a century ago as a home for workers in traditional local industries like textiles, chemicals and coal mining. But now the coal mines have long since gone, and the fine textile mills have migrated to Manila and Mysore. Those who can find employment in Clifton today work mainly in service industries, often on low wages with little job security. There is a rich mix of ethnicities, and recently arrived immigrants seeking freedom from poverty in their homeland or even freedom from civil war. The local catholic schools work well to effect racial harmony.

Fr. Wilfred who has served as parish priest in Olton for five years was one of the inspirations for this mission. Aware that Solihull was a relatively comfortable area he felt moved to ask the vicariate whether we should locate ourselves in an area that was closer to the poor and marginalised. This coincided with a desire in the vicariate to have a foothold in another diocese, as currently we are all confined within the Birmingham Diocese. So after consulting Bishop Patrick McKinney who has been a friend of Betharram since his seminary days in the 1970's, we accepted his invitation to come to Corpus Christi parish Clifton Nottingham, which has a house large enough for a small religious community. Corpus Christi together with its smaller daughter church Our Lady & St. Patrick has a regular weekly mass attendance of around 350, and a committed parish council.

A new Betharramite community will be attentive to the needs of the have-nots as well as simply being a sign of that love and prayerful simple living that is a characteristic of our charism.

Our Lady & St. Patrick's church, a small inner-city church hosts a proud independent community who are the inheritors of the traditions of the Irish who arrived in Nottingham in

large numbers 100 years ago. The two churches are connected by the Nottingham electric tram system, which also connects to the cathedral and the railway station.

The theme of our General Chapter was the Visitation: Mary went to visit Elizabeth to share good news, but she found that God had already been

at work in Elizabeth when she got there. So it is with us in the England vicariate. We go ahead in faith to a new mission to share good news, but we are confident that God has already been alive and active among the people to whom we will minister, and that many will dance for joy when we share with them the good news of the presence of the Lord.

Austin Hughes scj

Nottingham: facts and figures

- East Midland City by the river Trent: population around 330,000 but part of a conurbation of about 1 million. The Trent, not one of England's great rivers like the Thames or the Tyne, drains a huge area of the English Midlands and meanders for over 250 km to reach the North Sea near Hull.
- City is linked to 13th century legends of Robin Hood, who famously robbed the rich to help the poor. His opponent was always the Sheriff of Nottingham.
- Birthplace of author D.H. Lawrence in 1885, chronicler of working class hardship in industrial Britain.
- Nottingham Forest Football Club was famously taken from obscurity by Brian Clough 40 years ago to twice win the European Cup. Also home of Trent Bridge the County and international cricket ground. Asian people from Nottingham, Leicester and Derby turn out in great numbers if India or Pakistan are playing.
- Nottingham city centre has many old buildings of character, and looks and feels like a Northern town rather than a Midlands town.
- Home of the Little Company of Mary, a Congregation founded by Mary Potter in 1877 to care for the casualties of the industrial revolution... especially poor immigrants who worked long hours in dangerous and filthy conditions.
- Nottingham Diocese covers the largest area of any catholic diocese in England (13,000 km²). The region has 4.5 million people of whom 3 ½ % are catholic. Its variety includes the hill country of the Peak District, the plains of Lincolnshire, the seaside resorts of Skegness & Mablethorpe, the large ports of Grimsby and Immingham, the medium sized cities of Derby, Leicester & Nottingham, as well as smaller industrial towns like Chesterfield and Scunthorpe.



REGION ST MICHAEL GARICOÏTS

FRANCE ^{SPAIN}
 ITALY ^{IVORY COAST}
^{CENTRAL AFRICA}
 HOLY LAND

France-Spain

On Sunday 11 February 2018 the Sanctuary of Lourdes celebrated **160 years of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary to Saint Bernadette Soubirous**. We know that between Betharram and Lourdes there was a very strong bond, because St. Bernadette would come to Betharram to meet St. Michael Garicoïts.

The religious of Betharram made a point to be present at this great event; Fr. Jacky Moura SCJ was one of the 500 priests who concelebrated the Eucharist in the Basilica of St. Pius X, in the morning. In the afternoon Fr. Henry Marsaa-Poey SCJ and Fr. Habib visited the grotto: after some personal prayer, they went to the Basilica St. Pius X for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

In the large nave of the Basilica of St. Pius X there are blow up pictures of a few saints, including that of St. Michael Garicoïts and St. Mary of Jesus Crucified.

May Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Betharram intercede for us before Jesus her Son, and obtain for us all the graces we need to be religious according to his Heart.

Italy

Since February 23rd, the Superior General has been making **the canonical visit in the communities**

of the Vicariate (until March 23).

In these days Fr Gustavo has been making contact with the daily life of the Betharramite communities living their Here I am in day to day ministry made of joys, difficulties and hope. On the evening of March 1, Fr. Gustavo also met the youth of the "BetharrAmici" group.

Central Africa

The three Betharramite communities present in the Diocese of Bouar shared a great joy with the whole community of the diocese: after two years of waiting, **the diocese of Bouar has a new Bishop**.

Mgr Miroslaw Gucwa, a Polish priest who was formerly the vicar of the diocese, was consecrated bishop on February 11, by Mgr. Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Cardinal of Bangui.

Mgr Miroslaw Gucwa succeeds Mgr. Armando Gianni (ofm cap.) who remained at the helm of the diocese since its creation in 1978.

During the recent conflict, Mgr Miroslaw Gucwa contributed to the religious dialogue promoted by Catholic, Protestant and Muslim authorities.

Many religious working in the diocese attended the ceremony. All the religious of the Betharramite communities were present at this meaningful moment of the life of the local Church.

After the celebration, the Betharramite religious had the opportunity to personally meet Mons Miroslaw in the premises

of the Betharramite parish of Our Lady of Fatima along with Cardinal Nzapalainga, the Bishops of Bangassou, Mbaiki and Alindao and the Apostolic Nuncio Mgr Santiago De Wit Guzmán.

Mons Gucwa explained that he will dedicate his ministry to the care of the poor and the sick, who are present in large numbers in the diocese also because of armed conflicts. This is why "many people have to leave their homes and villages and need both material and spiritual help".

Holy Land

From February 12th to 19th, Fr. Jean-Luc Morin scj, Superior Regional, made the canonical visit to the Vicariate. During the **Vicariate assembly**, the religious had the opportunity to pray, to reflect and to discuss about the mission of Betharram in Holy Land. Various points from the General Chapter were stressed for helping our communities to go out and embrace life's call.

"*Belles histoires de Bétharram*" is the name of a new Facebook page. These "lovely stories", so explains Fr. Firmin Bourguinat scj, concern the religious of Betharram or the lay associates of Betharram: **old and new stories**, which are at times edifying, and often amusing. A beautiful way to foster the sense of family!

Send your finest anecdotes to Fr. Firmin Bourguinat (pfirbour@wanadoo.fr) or to Fr. Jean-Paul

Kissi (nonkro1@yahoo.fr) who have decided to collect them and offer them to everybody through Facebook.

Little story nr. 3:

Saint Michael & new entries

At Betharram, St. Michael Garicoïts once received the visit of a local religious superior who came to introduce a young applicant: "Father, may I entrust this young boy to you for the discernment of his vocation?" Father Garicoïts welcomed the young boy and helped him to settle in. Some time later, the religious superior came back and asked about his protégé: Fr. Garicoïts answered him: "I am sorry: I have been overwhelmed with work, so I have not been able to have a serious meeting with him; what I can say so far is that he closes the doors... softly."

Côte d'Ivoire

From Friday 23rd to Saturday 24th of February, the community of Adiapodoumé took a time of **prayer, silence and meditation** to strengthen the journey towards Easter.

Father Yapi, a Marianist religious who guided the retreat, gave a talk on the value of fraternal life in community.

On Saturday, the lay associates too, led by Fr. Marius Angui scj, had a day of recollection. They reflected on the importance for Christians to carry the Cross.

Finally religious and laity together spent some time of adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament. The day ended with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.



REGION V. FR. AUGUSTE ETCHEPAR

ARGENTINA URUGUAY
PARAGUAY BRAZIL

Betharramite Novitiate

The community welcomed Benítez Canuto (from Paraguay) and Leonardo Tenorio (from Brazil), the **two new novices** who recently arrived in Adrogué (on the left, in the front row on the picture here below).

A significant moment also took place at our formation house in Adrogué: **Fr Subesh scj came from the Indian Vicariate** just over two weeks ago. Now he is adjusting to the new environment and studying the language, in view of a mission in the Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay.



He shared with the community the life of the Vicariate of India, a country with 1.8 billion people. The Christians - of all denominations - present in the country just reach 2.3%.

It was very interesting to learn from him a little about history, culture, religion of India and about the mission of Betharram among the poor in this country. This is the beauty of religious life! We thank you Lord for this richness and we are grateful to Fr. Subesh for his availability.



REGION ST MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

ENGLAND INDIA
THAILAND

India

On the 28th February 2018, the community of formation of Mangalore had its monthly recollection along with the sacrament of Reconciliation. It was a **Lenten Recollection** based on the message of Pope Francis for Lent 2018. Our scholastics and postulants were invited by Fr. Milton from the Jeppu St. Joseph Seminary neither to imitate the false prophets nor to be cold hearted, but rather to be filled with the "Fire of Easter" through Prayer, Penance and Alms-giving.

NOTICES FROM THE GENERAL COUNCIL

♦♦♦ During the session of the General Council on February 22nd, the Superior General and his Council **gave their approval to the opening of a community** in the diocese of Nottingham (Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified, Vicariate of England) and the acceptance of two parishes : Corpus Christi (Clifton) and Our Lady & Saint Patrick (Nottingham) [R. of L. 206/b].

♦♦♦ They also **approved the appointment of Fr. Firmin Bourguinat as Superior of the community of Bethlehem** (Region St Michael Garicoits, Vicariate of Holy Land) for a 1st mandate from February 22nd 2018 [R. of L. 206/a].

As a pilgrim in Europe

Fr Gerardo Ramos scj, one of our brothers in Buenos Aires, is proposing here a brief summary of a book he wrote recently: "Peregrinando Europa: Cambio de época y cultura del encuentro"¹. ●●●

For a little over a month, I travelled about fifteen countries as a pilgrim from Central- Eastern Europe, from southern Scandinavia to north-central Italy, with my travel-bag on my back , staying in hostels and moving around in buses. I visited, in total, about twenty cities which, for one or another reason, were or are significant in the cultural history of Christianity and evangelization: cities and regions that, from the time of Charlemagne, with the birth of what we today call Europe, formed medieval Christendom and (or) the Papal States.

Every day, I tried to be attentive to the people, the places and to all the small events. Alone and on foot, I travelled mainly through the historic centres of the cities, conversing with those who were waiting for the bus or travelled in the same that of mine, who walked in the street, who returned at night to the inn or were preparing to go out to spend the evening to amuse themselves. All these encounters allowed me to make a discernment on the theological life in the present European and to optimize the pastoral gesture directed towards each person. I start from the conviction that, contrary to the appearances, the mysterious presence of God always seeks to manifest itself. Even and especially in those countries whe-

re, because of the secularism, it might seem more elusive, but which, from a social and technological point of view, are more developed, and have a more tangible ethic.

In this way, the new domains and spaces of the "global village" and the "flowing times" have been transformed into "universities" of dialogue and the creative transmission of culture, into "an assembly of the learned" for a new evangelization and into an "icon" of encounter, communion and life. From my regular collaboration with the National Sanctuary of Luján (Argentina), I became a "pilgrim". As part of my teaching at Pontificia Universidad Católica, I did a field job around the "changing of era", in linking it to a "culture of encounter". Thus, I have discovered in hostels and in the buses the best European universities of the present time. I dialogued with many people from many countries, people whose life experiences, occupations, ideology and religion are very different and far away from that of mine.

The circumstances, the places and the concrete encounters which nourished my reflection in a pastoral-cultural-missionary style are thus commented on in the volume quoted, as well as the spiritual discernment that I tried to make, in the hope to open a way for a new evangelization in the old world.

Gerardo Daniel Ramos scj

1) This volume can be downloaded at: https://www.academia.edu/36094270/_TEOLOGÍA_DEL_CAMBIO_DE_ÉPOCA._Peregrinando_la_Vida_contemplando_el_Icono_comunicando_la_Palabra_03_2018_-_ISBN_978-1-986-28153-9

Communion and enlightenment: «God loves us!»

For every baptized person, the Eucharist is part of the sacraments of initiation. Michael Garicoïts prepared twice for his first holy communion. Before the blessed day, as a teenager, he received the revelation that shaped his whole life. ●●●

First preparation in Ibarre

Father Jean-Baptiste Bidégaray, the priest of Saint-Just and Ibarre was certainly no Jansenist! Michael was eleven years old. Because he recognized the values of a very advanced child, the priest prepared him for first holy communion, without waiting for him to be fourteen as was usually required. The date was fixed; the process of confession began: the rigorous process of the time meant that it was necessary to return several times before receiving absolution!

Gratianne, his mother, learned to be particularly rigorous. Despite the choice of priest, she told the story of a sacrilegious communion and concluded: "Take care, my son; you will never understand such a misfortune. Michael, a confession is a thing of the utmost importance. If you do it badly, the first communion will be sacrilege, and those that follow, too ... In this case, you can only go to hell."¹

1) P. MIÉYAA, *La vie de Saint Michel Garicoïts*, p. 66. This fact was recounted by Father Garicoïts



The result? Michel was scared. The communion? It was postponed!

Second communion preparation

At eleven years old, custom was to leave the house. Every boy learnt his trade by putting himself at the service of another family: Michel was a domestic at Anguélu², in Oneix, about twenty kilometers from Ibarre.

There, the hostess, Marie, continued the education started by the mother. She was very close to the boy being from his home area. Coming from Hosta, the neighbouring village of Ibarre, she spoke the same Basque dialect. Being of humble origins, she was a servant when Jean, the master, became a widower. In order to educate his children, he had to remarry and he, the nobleman, was going to marry her, the commoner, whose greatest fault was to be ugly, very ugly!

Mary helped Michael grow in his Christian life. One day, she called him over: "You are a fully grown, big boy; you'd better do your first holy com-

during a lesson; Brother Cachica took note of it in his exercise book.

2) Even though a few biographers incorrectly write « Anghélu », the correct form is « Anguélu », which has always been used by this family...

munion!»³ And this communion - which he would have received two or three years previously, had it not been for the fear inspired by his mother's warning - Michel really wanted it!



Was that enough? By the look of it, certainly not! Michel remained terrified! So, God intervened...

Biographers believe that Michael had a refusal from Father Barbaste, priest at Garris, on which Oneix depended. For others, the memory of the immense pain felt at Ibarre was enough to cause great sadness. All agree: Michel was feeling dejected. One fact is undisputed however: God intervened!

Enlightenment!

It is certain: mysteriously (as it should be ...), God's love showed himself to Michael. Definitely, the fear subsided ... Some biographers are silent about the episode; Fathers Bourdenne and Miéyaa transmitted it, while indicating nuances in the differ-

3) B. BOURDENNE, *La vie et l'œuvre du Vénérable Michel Garicoïts*, p. 11. Quite curiously before recording this statement, Father Miéyaa states that Marie Anguélu noticed a relaxation in the spiritual life Michael Garicoïts, even though he stayed faithful to mass, Sunday vespers and confession (P. MIÉYAA, *La vie de Saint Michel Garicoïts*, p. 77-78) ; but contrary to his custom Father Miéyaa does not furnish his account with any document...

ent relations; Father Jean-Luc Morin emphasizes its paramount importance: "*The extreme emotion felt that day was to reorganize Michel's whole existence around a new center of*

gravity: the revelation of God's love at the heart of his life."⁴

What happened ? Michel Garicoïts spoke very little of it until the evening of his life, and as in confidence, to the young people in formation.

"In the very midst of his flock, he was suddenly visited by such a sweet and penetrating consolation, that it gave him a sort of ecstasy, and coming out of it, he stumbled into the field gate."⁵

In testimonies for the canonization there are the expressions: "an extraordinary light ... a great feeling of confidence", an "inner light", a full heart "of joy and confidence".⁶

"Father Garicoïts himself was content to call the flash of bliss that burst upon him a "reverie."⁷ "This is what happened to a man one day," con-

4) J.-L. MORIN, *Le Cœur de Jésus chez Saint Michel Garicoïts, mémoire en vue de la licence en théologie*, Rome, 1994, p. 16

5) B. BOURDENNE, *La vie et l'œuvre du Vénérable Michel Garicoïts*, p. 544-545, recording the words of Father Etchécopar.

6) Expressions drawn from the Summarium, received from witnesses to the beatification

7) Cf. Summarium



Church of Garris

fided Father Garicoïts: "in the ardour with which he felt he was consumed, he was delighted in such clarity that it seemed to him that he was going to burn up and be reduced to nothing. It was necessary that God should temper these ardours in him so that he could bear this light."⁸ »⁹

Now everything could happen; Michel was sure of it: God loves us! He revealed himself to the humble servant. The conviction was anchored in him; nobody would be able to divert it: it is forever!

Communion at Garris

Comforted, by God himself, Michael finally received the authorization of his priest: for the first time, he

8) Écrits n°805 in P. MIÉYAA, *La vie de Saint Michel Garicoïts*, p.79.

9) J.-L. MORIN, *Le Cœur de Jésus chez Saint Michel Garicoïts*, p. 16-17.

received communion at Garris, on Holy Trinity Sunday 9 June 1811. What great happiness! An unforgettable day! In the afternoon at vespers, publicly, Father Barbaste congratulated him; he rewarded him and offered him a book: the one that Abbot Lopez, the old venerable priest of Ibarre, translated in Basque! It has a

long title: "Alphonse Rodriguez, Jesusen companhaco Aitaren, giristhino perfectionarem praticaren pharte bat, Heuzcarala itçulia Heuzcara be-cic eztakiteren daco » ; in translation: "Alphonse Rodriguez, Father of the Society of Jesus, Abridged account of Christian perfection, translated into Basque for those who only speak Basque"! ...

Soon Michael would leave Anguélia. To return to Ibarre? Or to venture on new roads, following the heroic priests who served his little village? He would always be able to return to Oneix: in this house all remember that a saint lived with them!

Beñat Oyhénart scj



God does not treat us like slaves, imposing his will on us in domineering tones. He treats us as his beloved children, stooping to share with us even his counsels and his plans. And he says to each one of us, "If you love me, keep my commandments". Who would be so hard as not to feel cared for, to hear everything with a great and joyful heart, echoing the one who speaks to him like this, and with such extraordinary, incomparable sweetness?

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