

NEF

Betharram

N. 137

NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE - 116TH ANNÉE, 11TH series - 14 May 2018

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A word from the superior general

The spring of the poor

Dear Betharramites,

I returned recently from my visit to the mission of Bouar and Niem in Central Africa, and I would like to invite you to live an adventure, in search of a hidden spring ... There are several of these in the mission of Betharram, but there is one which can only be attained by following the steps of the gospel and looking through the prism of mercy. Let's go out to find this Spring of the poor!

It must be admitted that in stories of the origins of our little family, references to this spring are few. A "religious society" born in a diocese like that of Bayonne was linked, it seems, to the pastoral priorities of the time, such as disobedience and de-Christianisation. In the socio-ecclesial context of the time, especially marked by a thirst for independence, new challenges raised by growing social injustice were rather side-lined. On the contrary, the Saint of Betharram was fond of evoking his roots, his poor origins, the shepherd boy of Ibarre, who had begun to think of himself as "a rather special character"; but the Lord took care to remind him of the poverty of his childhood, the misery of his



Central African Republic, less well known than the 'other' more urban Betharram, has become a prophetic presence for those who want to see the birth and growth of the 'Child'.

for this purpose... and that he had said to him: Go to found in my Church a new Institute. It has its own *raison d'être*... Here is your flag and your rallying cry: you will walk in front with the flag of the Sacred Heart by uttering the cry *Ecce venio* of my Son, and you will be the joy and the support of his church. He believed in this voice and raised the flag... and he launched himself upon

environment... and thus saved him from this delusion. Thus, living very simply will eventually belong to the lifestyle that he wanted for his own: *"He who wants to find Jesus Christ must remove from his heart the obstacles, the bias, the disordered affections. He should have positive dispositions, by which I mean a love of humiliation, of poverty, of the Cross, where one is always sure of finding Jesus Christ."* (DS § 16)

It is said that some companions left St. Michael after a few years, the day the good Father presented a new Rule and asked everyone to empty their purse and share their property, a sign of poverty of a religious community.

"In spite of his profound humility, Father Garicoits believed in a new creative venture, with its own purpose, organisation, spirit and means; he believed that the God of the little people and the poor had chosen him

the road like a hero going through with it until his last breath" (Circular Letter of V. Auguste Etchecopar, January 10, 1888)

The Superior of Betharram did not ask them to give what they did not have, or to give what they had in excess. No doubt he wanted to sense their generosity, their vocation. In accordance with the evangelical spirit, he challenged them on the material plane so that they gave of themselves: *"to the point where it hurts"* (Mother Teresa). Some opted for *"relative perfection..."*. Their availability wavered when it came to *"touching their small purse"*.

These brothers, these *"nearly-Betharramites"* were willing to give *"to the point where their souls would be satisfied"* (St. Ignatius)... but not yet to live the experience of the widow exalted by Jesus: *"All these, to make*

their offering, have given from their surplus but she, she out of her poverty: she put in all she had to live on." (Lk 21: 4)

In this respect, I confess that my last visit to the Central African Republic, the least developed country on the human and social level (World Health Organisation, 2017), challenged me... Indeed, I discovered at the mission that there are two types of people in the eyes of the poor in this country: those who are there with them and are working for their good; And the rest...

These men and women, poorest of the poor, have almost nothing. Although they struggle for a more dignified life, they cannot be integrated into a society that remains marked by ethnic divisions, violence, corruption, indifference and abandonment.

They lack everything, but at the same time they have so much! They have their humanity, their culture, the feeling of belonging to a people full of life... They sing and dance in church; they pray with the whole body: children as well as young people and adults (average life expectancy under 60). Some women, bursting with life, "shout for joy". As afflicted as they are, they implore the Lord in gladness, saying, Here I am! Unlike us, these people do not easily give up their ability to rejoice in the Lord (Ps 33). They hope to be free from their anxieties and their poverty, and rely on a God who shows his love through real people (religious or lay missionaries: health workers, volunteers, benefactors, pastors, etc.). This God has chosen them and

is manifested by concrete help, by treating pain, diseases: malnutrition, AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, etc. These poor people do not need speeches, or graduates in philosophy or theology... They need helping hands and pastors who love them, lift them up spiritually and present them to that part of the world that ignores them.

In many areas, the presence of Betharram is both sensitive and prophetic, and it must fill us with joy. The Central African Republic is the "margin of the margins".

How beautiful it would be if we were more aware of the challenge of making a Church as Pope Francis wishes it: "poor and for the poor"! Can we manage to rid ourselves of selfishness for love of them... and do it by strength of an obedience from the heart, where love cannot fail, (because without love nothing can be done.)?

"The spirit of our Society implies dedication to works that others do not want; for example, Orthez's work with poor children, on these worm-eaten benches, in this dust, and the like: these are our favourite ministries." (DS § 231)

"I had been very edified at the sight of the poverty of the Daughters of the Cross, in a parish of the Basque Country: their house was reminiscent of the manger of Bethlehem." (DS § 252)

We know that life styles in Betharram can be quite different. Those of us who live in developed countries are used to certain facilities for dressing, feeding, entertainment, communicating, "having at their disposal", travelling, etc. Others must necessarily adapt to a

more humble reality: they do not have at their disposal the same means and must have a gaze of faith, which focuses on those who have less but who are happier.

My dear brothers: how happy I am with the witness given by our brothers who work in these frontier places!

Whoever wants to be Betharramite today and feels called to this vocation cannot be insensitive to the life of the

poor. We were conceived and formed by the Heart of Jesus. This poor carpenter from Nazareth who, after having given everything for those he loved, had no place to lay his head, was thirsty, and put himself in love in place of all the suffering.

Fr. Gustavo SCJ
SUPERIEUR GENERAL

May, the month of the founders



In many parts of the world, this month of May is the month of MARY. Mother of the Lord and Our Mother!

*In May, our religious family celebrates **Saint Michael Garicoits** on the 14th, and also remembers the birthday of **Venerable Father Auguste Etchecopar**: May 30, 1830.*

I invite all Betharramites in the world to celebrate both, as Fr. Etchecopar is considered as the “second founder” of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

With renewed hope in Providence, as the 2017 General Chapter indicated in its Acts, we have taken up the valuable work done so far by our brothers for the cause of his

canonisation. We reconnected with Bishop Corradini, canonical counsellor, who encouraged us to continue, “praying and working with renewed confidence” the slow but steady process of the cause.

Further, we will propose to all the faithful some steps to follow, so that with the grace of God and the support of all those who venerate Father Auguste (including those who received graces through the intercession of this holy priest of Betharram), they send us their testimonies on Fr. Auguste (3rd Superior General of our Congregation). May the Will of God be done!

To all, a beautiful festive month of May!



Address of Pope Francis to participants in the conference organized by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, May 4, 2018

Good morning everyone!

I thought about delivering a well-prepared, fine speech.... But then I had the idea to speak off-the-cuff, to say the things that are relevant to this moment. [...]

I have wondered: what are the things that the Holy Spirit wishes to have firmly retained in consecrated life? And my thoughts have flown, wandered, spiraled about..., and the day I went to San Giovanni Rotondo always comes back to mind: I do not know why, but I saw so many consecrated men and women who were working there... and I have thought about what I said there, about the “three Ps” that I spoke of there. And I said to myself: these are the pillars that endure, that are permanent in consecrated life. *Prayer, poverty and patience*. And I decided to speak to you about this [...].

Prayer is always a return to the first call. Any prayer, perhaps a prayer in need, but it is always a return to that Person who called me. The prayer of a consecrated man or woman is a return to the Lord who invited me to be near him. A return to the One who looked me in the eye and said to me: “Come. Leave everything and come” [...]. Every prayer is a return to this. [...] It is the smile of the first steps.... Then problems arise, so many problems that we have all had, but it is always a matter of returning to the encounter with the Lord. And in consecrated life, prayer is the air that allows that call to breathe in us; it renews that call. Without this air we cannot be good consecrated men and women. We might perhaps be good people, Christians,



Catholics who work in many of the Church’s activities, but you must continually renew your consecration in prayer, there, in an encounter with the Lord. “But

I am busy; I am busy; I have so many things to do...”. This is more important. Go and pray. [...] Seek the Lord, the One who called you. Prayer. Not just in the morning... Each one must find how to do it, where to do it, when to do it. But do it always, pray. One cannot live the consecrated life, one cannot discern what is happening without speaking with the Lord. [...]

The second “P” stands for poverty. In the Constitutions, Saint Ignatius wrote this to us Jesuits [...] : “Poverty is the mother; it is the retaining wall of consecrated life”. [...] Without poverty there is no fruitfulness in consecrated life. And it is a “wall”; it protects you. It protects you from the spirit of worldliness, certainly. We know that the devil enters through the pockets. We all know this. And the little temptations against poverty are wounds to membership in the body of consecrated life. Poverty according to the Rules, the Constitutions of every congregation: it is not the same, the poverty of one congregation or another. The Rules say: “Our poverty is oriented this way”; “our poverty goes that way”; but the spirit of poverty is always there. And this cannot be negotiated. Without poverty we can never clearly discern what is happening in the world. [...] And with this spirit of poverty the Lord protects us — he protects us! — from so many problems and from so many things that seek to destroy

consecrated life.

There are three steps to pass from religious consecration to religious worldliness. Yes, even religious; there is religious worldliness; many consecrated men and women are worldly. Three steps. First: money, that is, the lack of poverty. Second: vanity, which goes from the extreme of being a "peacock" to the small matters of vanity. And third: arrogance, pride. And from there, all the vices. [...]

It takes this spirit of poverty to be able to discern what is happening. A homework assignment is: how is my poverty? Look in the drawers, in the drawers of your soul; look into your personality; look into your Congregation.... See how poverty is going. It is the first small step: if we are careful about that one, the others do not come. [...]

And third, patience. "But father, what has patience got to do with this?". Patience is important. We usually do not speak about it, but it is very important. Looking at Jesus, patience is what Jesus had in order to get to the end of his life. When Jesus, after the Supper, goes to the Garden of Olives, we can say that at that moment, in a special way, Jesus "entered patience". "Entering patience" is an attitude that every consecration, which goes from the small matters of community life or of the life of consecration, which each one has, in this variety that the Holy Spirit creates.... From the small matters, the forbearance, the small gestures of smiling when I want to swear..., up to the sacrifice of self, of life. [...]

But not just patience in community life: patience before the trials of the world. [...] And patience too in facing the common problems of consecrated life: let us consider the scarcity of vocations. "We do not

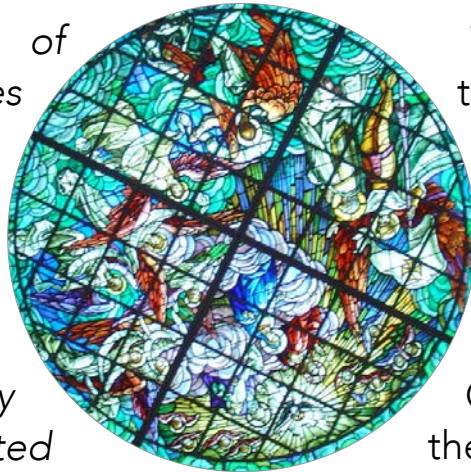
know what to do, because we have no vocations.... We have closed three houses...". This is a daily complaint; you have heard it, heard by the ears and felt in the heart. Vocations do not come. And when this patience is not there... What I am saying now has happened, is happening: I know of at least two cases, in a country that is too secularized, which concerned two congregations and two respective Provinces. The Province began that journey which is also a worldly journey, of the "*ars bene moriendi*", the notion of dying well. What does this mean in that Province, in those two Provinces of two different congregations? Closing the Noviate to applicants, while here we are growing old and dying. And the congregation in that place is finished. [...]

I can ask myself: is what happened in those two Provinces, which opted for the "*ars bene moriendi*", happening in my heart? Have I lost my patience and I go on merely surviving? Without patience one cannot be magnanimous; one cannot follow the Lord: we grow tired. We follow him to a certain point and at the first or second trial, say goodbye. I choose the "*ars bene moriendi*"; my consecrated life has reached this point; here I close my heart and survive. [...] This "*ars bene moriendi*" is the spiritual euthanasia of a consecrated heart that cannot go on, does not have the courage to follow the Lord; and does not call for help... [...]

Be mindful of these three "Ps": prayer, poverty and patience. Be mindful. I think the Lord will be pleased by choices — I will use the word that I do not like — choices that are radical in this sense. Be they personal, be they of the community. But you can bet on this. [...] •

The Chapel « Michel Garicoïts »

After the decree of acceptance of the miracles attributed to Michael Garicoïts on March 19, 1923, our founder was beatified by Pope Pius XI on May 10, 1923. Five years later on his feast day a new chapel was dedicated to him at Betharram. ●●●



The Beatification in Rome took place on an Ascension Thursday, May 10th 1923.

The next day, the question was asked: where should the chapel in his honour be built? One decides to sacrifice the old Novitiate building by pulling down a rocky slope

to build a rotunda. The advantage of this solution is that the rotunda is backed on the sanctuary of Our Lady and completes it, making its access easy. The building was built to serve as a casket for the Blessed's shrine.

An atrium led to the chapel, providing a passage between the monastery and the chapel. A statue of the Blessed was planned.

A small marble fountain with a Greek inscription being read both ways: "wash your sins and not only your face".

Two floors are planned for the chapel: the gallery reserved for the Religious and Novices, on the same level as the monastery, and the ground floor accessible to the public.

The openings, which could not be made towards the hill, were chosen on the front of the monastery, with a wide bay providing light. A circular stained-glass window, 6 metres in diameter, dominates the cupola.

Four balusters support the high-altar made of Pyrenean marble. A double staircase is contrived behind

For a beatification, the Church demands two miracles. Here are two which were recognized for the Beatification Cause :

- A Daughter of the Cross, Sr. Marie Théodard, healed on the very year of the Founder's death : as an after-effect of a badly cured whitlow, her finger had to be amputated, and even her hand. On the 5th day of prayer on the grave, her finger became flexible and covered with thin skin.
- The recovery in 1874 of a little girl aged 5 from Lestelle, Marie Labedaïs ; her body which had become skeleton-like and dried was laid by her mother on the Founder's grave. The child uttered a cry, stood up, and asked for food.

The exhumation of Father Garicoït's remains took place on February 3rd 1923. The bones were sorted out and assembled by doctors ; 9/10 of the skeleton was complete. (NEF. Febr. 1923).

the altar to give access to the shrine.

The big shrine made of engraved bronze lies on four colonnades. The Blessed's gisant, with a wax mask and hands was moulded by a sculptor in Paris. It is clothed with the ornaments of a priest.

The circular window (cupola): on the foreground, the Blessed dressed with a cope. Around him, the angels hold scrolls bearing the names of the virtues shown on the balconies. On the second ground, the Archangel Saint Michael welcomes Father Garicoïts and introduces him to Our Lady. The Son has a tiara, the Holy Spirit is in the shape of a dove. The ironwork is as follows:

- *For strength and courage, the lion.*
- *For humility, two doves "simple as doves" (Mt 10,16).*
- *For mildness, the lamb carrying the palm of martyrdom.*
- *For justice, the pair of scales and the sword to execute the sentence.*
- *For temperance, the clock and the bit to measure our actions, (sobriety, we would say nowadays).*
- *For prudence, the mirror and the compass, a good self-knowledge to regulate our conduct "prudent like snakes" (Mt 10,16).*
- *For charity, a plentiful basket of fruit for the poor.*
- *For faith, the Cross and the tiara.*
- *For hope, the anchor and the cornucopia. Hope makes our navigation in this world sure and calm before landing on the other shore.*

The Triduum in honour of the

Blessed Michael Garicoïts took place from Saturday 12th to Monday 14th by a splendid weather.

On Saturday May 12th, the Family Feast. The casket made of precious wood containing the relics was put in the ultimate shrine and the gisant laid on the casket. The chasuble with which he is clothed is a gift from the Daughters of the Cross.

Monday May 14th. Feast of the Blessed and inauguration of the chapel. The Bishop of Bayonne, Mgr. Gieuvre, celebrates the mass privately on the new altar; for the solemn mass, he will be on the throne.

The preacher finds the chapel to be in intimate harmony with the Founder's soul: *"The chapel is built on the rock, so to say incrustated in the rock, as the Blessed's life was based on the great virtue of obedience. He was the obedient by definition, or rather by vocation, by mission, in order to preach to his sons this virtue, in these times when anarchy blows everywhere and threatens to devastate everything"*.

However, everything was not achieved, since it is on March 26th 1930 that the relics of the Blessed were transferred from the temporary caskets to the final ones.

It is also at the same time, after the beatification, that the Congregation gave its attention to Ibarre. On January 10th 1929, Mgr. Gieuvre allowed to buy the church of Ibarre belonging to the Borough of Saint-Just-Ibarre, stipulating that it must be restored : it was in a dreadful state, being closed

since 1903. The restored chapel was blessed on September 29th 1931 by the Superior General, Fr. Paillas.

"And now, Oh Blessed Michael, rest in the glory of your shrine, piously draped by the grateful hands of your daughters of Igon. May your arms

stretched for the Ecce Venio lead us all on the way of sanctification". (NEF January 1931, page 29).

Laurent Bacho scj

Life and mission in Holy Land

After a few years spent in learning two new languages, in the community of Nazareth/Shafa'Amr, Fr. José Kumar scj, a Betharramite from India, went from the patriarchal vicariate to the Rachel Center in Jerusalem, where he has been entrusted with the responsibility of a community of young Hebrew Christians. He lives there from Monday to Friday. He has a pastoral ministry to the children of migrants and asylum seekers. ●●●

"Betharramite is a spiritual commando who is ready to go for any operation where no one dares to go". This exhortation of St Michael is what urges me to be where I am now and to do what I do presently.

To those of you who may not know me, let me take the privilege of presenting myself to you. I am a Betharramite priest from India, working in the Holy Land Vicariate. It has been a little more than three years since I landed in the Holy Land for missionary journey. After my initial two years of investing time in learning Hebrew and Arabic languages in the community of Nazareth under the

guidance of Fr Firmin and Fr Elie Kurzum, it was decided by the Vicariate of Holy Land that I would render my service for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in a special mission.

Since last September, I have been serving in the St James Vicariate of Latin Patriarchate. This St James vicariate takes care of the Hebrew speaking Catholics in Israel as well as the migrants and refugees. As these migrants from countries like Philippines, India, Sri Lanka and a few other African countries live and work in the Hebrew speaking Jewish milieu, the local churches (predominantly Arabic speaking) struggles to welcome them (for historic and cultural reasons).

I am assigned as the director of a Center where we take care of migrants' children. This center is full of life and brimmed with many activities. Firstly, we provide Day Care for babies whose parents (mostly single parents) have to go to work leaving their babies at home or elsewhere. We offer a quality day care for these babies aging from three months to three years old.

Secondly, we organize an After-School

program for school children who are three years to thirteen years. These children return from school by noon even though their parents have to work until evening. We welcome these children to our center where they have their meal, finish their studies and homework as well as spend time in sports and games. If we simply left these children alone, they would be roaming in the streets and vulnerable to all sorts of exploitations.

Thirdly, we also provide 'Alternative Family' facility for a few children whose parents incapable of giving proper parental care. For this we roped in two members of the *Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII* from Italy, who with devotedness acts as parents for these children ushering in homely atmosphere.

Fourthly, we conduct children camp four times in a year that allows the migrants children and the Jewish catholic children to interact and understand different cultural aspects. As part of our pastoral and religious care, I also give catechesis to Hebrew speaking catholic children and offer pastoral care to various Christian communities.

Community Life

My residential life is divided between two places due to the demand of mission. During the weekdays (Monday-Friday) I stay in Jerusalem where I work mostly. It is reasonably a big apartment where I host, more frequently, young people from different countries come to volunteer in our mission. It is also my



duty to be a parental and guiding figure for these young volunteers as they left their countries and stay with me. But in the weekend (Saturday–Sunday) I spend time with our Betharramite priests and brothers in Bethlehem Community.

Défis

My life and mission in Holy Land are not devoid of difficulties that emerge in three dimensions: personal, communitarian, and mission related.

- Since I stay alone most of the times away from the community, it takes herculean determination to nourish my spiritual needs. There is always tendency to sacrifice Office of the hour for the Office of the mission. Though my spiritual director helps me not to give into this temptation, I always notice

how these self-satisfying excuses haunt me time and again.

- Though I go back to the Bethlehem community every weekend, it extracts from me special efforts to feel part of the community due to my shorter duration of stay within the community house. However, the community members are very welcoming and understanding that drives home the belongingness of Betharramite family.
- The mission related challenges are manifold and they are exhausting and energy consuming. The workers and the volunteers with me are from various countries. There is always considerable amount tension among their working relationship, that I need to alleviate them with my careful dealings.
- The children in the After school program are completely difficult cases to be dealt with, as they come from mostly of single parents families. Their lack of parental care at home makes our job in the center harder. This extracts from me divine patience and human perseverance to care for these children.
- Not many religious men or women are willing to cooperate with this mission, as they feel this work as one of less recognition in local church and society. Sometimes I literally run from pillar to post to find suitable people who can

render their service with us. Many religious communities refused to work in this endeavor citing dubious reasons. Even the very few who readied to come, left soon because of the demands and the devotedness it requires.

To conclude, let me say that my life and mission in Holy Land is a one full of joys and excitements coupled with popping up challenges and volatilities. But the self-realization which accompanies me along these difficulties reflects the thought process that I am also a factor, as part of the Betharramite family, in nurturing and remoulding the lives of many children. In this way, I sense this mission as part of the fulfilment of Church's commitment to 'going to the periphery'.

José Kumar Johnrose scj

The Assembly in Central Africa

Saturday, April 21, at the Saint-Michael community of Bouar, Father Gustavo Agín SCJ chaired the Assembly of the Vicariate of Central Africa. Father Armel Daly Vabie scj offers us here a full account. ●●●

Fathers Gustavo (Superior General) and Jean-Luc (Regional Superior) welcomed the religious of the Vicariate of the Central African Republic & Bro. Fulgence (2nd year Ivorian novice) for an extraordinary assembly, at the Saint Michael community of Bouar, on Saturday 21st April 2018, at 10am. After the opening prayer followed by a *narratio fidei*, based on the message of Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations (29/03/2015), all expressed a sense of the missionary urgency

of a Church 'going outwards' driving them. From this free exchange, it was evident that the invitation of the Pope to go out of oneself and take an outward path touched them deeply. Each one felt called to let go of self so that, clothed with Christ and constantly following the Betharramite charism, he would learn in a dynamic way, to go towards God and men. This means, as the Pope emphasises: to proclaim the liberating truth of the Gospel, to take care with the grace of God of the wounds of souls and bodies, to raise the poor and those in need.

Following this time of sharing, Fr. Gustavo presented his report on the canonical visitation. After enjoying the fraternal welcome he received and all that had been shared communally and

individually, he thanked his brothers for their simple and sometimes austere way of life, bringing them closer to the little people. Then, he encouraged them to always be at the service of



the Gospel invoking the image of childbirth: Our mission here (where many obstacles hamper the country's development and chronic instability mars the lives of missionaries), "is to help this birthing process, as Father Tiziano does for so many baby Central Africans in the hospital delivery room."

In all humility, we can proudly say that Betharram in Central Africa manages two parishes, two hospitals, thirty-two village schools, a library, a large agro-pastoral activity, etc. This list shows that our path has been to lay foundations for a better life for the people and to ensure a better future for children and youth. We can be proud of this in a certain sense. But "will this vicariate ever be able to sever the umbilical cord that unites it to Italy in essential human and material resources?"

Looking to the future, the subjects of vocation animation and the possibility of a new missionary presence in Bangui were the subject of debate.

This missionary presence would be directed to the formation of a parish community and to the accompaniment of young people willing to undertake a path of discernment in our congregation. And to better engage in this activity, Fathers Armel and Marie Paulin will follow training sessions for formators in Cameroon in January 2019. The Vicariate will welcome some brothers, including Father Shaju (from India), at the beginning of the pastoral season to strengthen the membership.

To finish his presentation, Fr. Gustavo invited his brothers from the Central Africa to devise a new way of working that could enable them to "more fruitfully animate community life (...), and think about the development of a future mission with a more African dynamic, which meets the needs of the country and allows a certain autonomy."

This assembly took place in a frank and fraternal dialogue.

Armel Daly Vabié scj

Close up: About formation...

Staying in Central Africa... In his last letter to the religious of the Saint-Michael Garicoïts Region, Fr. Jean-Luc Morin, Regional Superior, offers a clear overview of the difficulties and hopes of education and formation in this country, areas where State is almost absent. ●●●

Niem, sub-prefecture of Bouar, on 16th April 2018 at 5:30am. Night has not yet given in to the first light of dawn. As every morning, Father Arialdo Urbani rings the bells of the Sacred Heart Church to call the faithful to the prayer of Lauds followed by Mass.

At the same moment, tens of children set out on a procession towards Gbazang. They are between 6 and 12 years of age. They live here but their parents preferred to enrol them at a school in another village. There at least, as at the thirteen other establishments monitored by the Betharram Fathers, the classes do not exceed 50 pupils and the teachers do not skip class for lack of getting paid.

As the public school of the county town does not allow competition, the families had to decide to send their little ones two hours away on foot (and the same distance back at mid-day). At least by the end of primary, they will know more or less how to read, write and count. The more gifted could continue their schooling at

the little seminary in La Yolé, 60 kms from there. Currently, there are only two Niem pupils to have passed the entry examination and take advantage of the solid education provided at Bouar. The others are scattered around. As for the public school, it hasn't even managed to get started because of the inadequacy of the state, the lack of control of the NGO over the use of granted assistance and the endemic corruption.

The situation is not any more gleaming in secondary education. The modern Sixth Form College in Bouar states numbers of 150 to 200 pupils per class, with a general absenteeism amongst the teaching staff. To pass the baccalaureat, even the best have to slip an envelope to the examiners



Community of Bouar – Saint-Michel-Garicoïts, which welcomes (pre-)postulants.

From left to right: Fr. Armel, Fr. Mario Zappa, Br. Gilbert, Christian, Samuel, François, Bourgeois, Dieubéni and Br. Angelo.

(up to 100.000 cfa francs, ie 150 euros : which could ruin you as the minimum salary has a ceiling of 20,000 cfa francs). Result : 6% success rate in last year's baccalaureat. This award for cheating demotivates the good pupils : what is the point of studying when your efforts don't pay off?

Catholic education reached record levels up to 2016 (100% successful). Jealousy, intentional discrimination in high places, or simply the sanction to refuse the purchase of diplomas, have resulted in a real shambles: out of the 15 students in their final year, all failed the first sittings in July 2017. After complaining to the National Education Ministry, only three were called back for a retake. Among them were two Betharram candidates: François and Samuel.

That is how our first pre-postulate on Central African territory came to be opened last September, nine months after the departure of the last candidate and a chaotic Summer, between hopes let down and hopes renewed. In addition to the two pre-postulants who had passed their baccalaureat, three other young people aged 21-22 years – Bourgeois, Christian and Dieubéni – are preparing to sit the entrance exam at the Great Seminary of Abadin-Kouté in the Côte d'Ivoire on 5th May and to present themselves again for the Baccalaureat at the private school where they will repeat their final year. The ambience of the St Michael Community has been profoundly renewed by the arrival of these five candidates,

shaped by eight years of schooling at the little seminary. Their goodness is only equalled by their joy of life. The two locals of the group, François and Christian, had been struck by the testimonies of the missionaries in charge of their home parishes, Bouar-Fatima and Niem, so much that they dreamt as children of becoming like them. As for the three others, when the capuchin formation house for aspirancy experienced internal difficulties, they were attracted to Betharram by the strength of conviction of one of our former members, by the influence of fathers Mario Zappa and Marius Angui (who ran their courses at La Yolé) and by the support of Father Armel Daly. *"Also, Father Garicoits would have added that our simple and united way of life is accessible to many... and allows more ministries to be used for the service of souls."* (DS § 248) In fact, underlining the desire of our candidates, the simplicity of relationships in Community, the closeness to the 'little people', and the pastoral dedication of the religious confirm them in their choice and encourage them to move forward in our family. How could we not be delighted about it, for them and with them?

Jean-Luc Morin scj



REGION ST MICHAEL GARICOÏTS

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

Ivory Coast

R.I.P.

On 1st May, the community had its outing. During this outing, the youngest pre-postulants Toussaint Jean-Philippe N'Guessan got drowned and died at the spot in the sea. He was 20 years old; he was humble, committed and passionate. He will remain a light for those who have approached him. Let us entrust him to the tenderness of the Lord. We pray for his family and for the family of Betharram in Ivory Coast who are shocked by this tragic event.



Central Africa

On May 1, the "St Michael" community of Bouar welcomed the parents of the aspirants and pre-postulants for mutual knowledge.

Taking advantage of this occasion, the community presented the dynamics of the Betharramite formation path and expressed its expectations for these young people in formation.



REGION V. FR. AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR

ARGENTINA ^{URUGUAY}
 PARAGUAY ^{BRAZIL}

Regional Novitiate

The novices of the formation house of Adrogué, during Holy Week, went to their respective countries of origin. This path was part of the formation and was called: "Experience of Nazareth".

The novices then returned to the formation house and lived the last stage of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises (third and fourth week) which took place from 3 to 13 May.



Paraguay

Some news from the Paraguay Vicariate:

We had the blessing of a canonical visit of our Regional Superior, Fr Daniel González scj, from April 10 - 28, 2018. The Superior Regional who shared his evaluation with the Vicariate Council at the conclusion of his visit.

On April 8th, we had also the joy of the consecration of Br Cristian Romero scj who made his final profession in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram.

It took place in his home town, Juan Sinfioriano Bogarín. The members of the regional council took also part in the celebration.

The regional council met before hand April 5th to 7th in Lambaré.

On March 26th & 27th a spiritual retreat took place for the members of the boards of our high schools.

This year, there are three news aspirants in our formation house.

On April 4th, the colegio San José of Ciudad del Este celebrated its 40th anniversary of foundation, hence 40 years of our Betharramite presence in this town and 40 years at the service of evangelisation through education, culture and science.

Brazil

The Betharramite family of the vicariate witnessed a time of grace with the ordination to priesthood of Deacon Iran Lima da Silva scj on Saturday, May 5th.

The ordination took place in the parish of *Nuestra Señora del Buen Suceso* in Pombal, his home town, State of Paraíba, in the North-East of Brazil, with the participation of numerous faithful of the parish and many guests from other towns of Brazil, the priests of our congregation, and also of the diocese of Cajazeiras.

Bishop Dom Francisco de Sales the local bishop presided over the celebration of the ordination, and in his homily, highlighted the dignity of the

priest as deriving from the Priesthood of the Christ, and the mission of the priest in the Church with the people of God. The rite of the ordination then took place. Through this rite, a new priest was given to our Congregation and to the Church for the greater glory of God and the salvation of humanity (as saint Ignatius of Loyola said).

Fr. Iran, newly ordained, chose as motto for his ordination a passage of the Gospel of Saint Mark (1, 11): "*You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.*" At the end of the celebration, Fr. Iran thanked all the persons present and, after the final blessing, he received the affectionate embraces of all.

The next day Sunday, May 6th in the morning, he celebrated his first mass in the church of *Nuestra Señora del Buen Suceso*. Fr. Iran recalled with



emotion his first steps on the path of his religious and priestly vocation, and remembered all those who helped him begin this journey in order to reach this stage in his life.

He identified, he said, with St Michael Garicoits as like him, he came from a humble background and might have not been able to enter the seminary. But his parish priest and a few other people insisted so that he should not give up and helped him enter the seminary. Finally, Fr Iran stated that he had welcomed God's call with joy in order to serve the Church.

The faithful, in their turn, thanked him for having responded to his vocation and expressed their best wishes for his future ministry. He is going as parish priest to the parish of the Immaculate Conception in Setubinha, Minas Gerais (Brazil). The Vicariate of Brazil gives thanks to God for the religious and priestly vocation of Fr. Iran.



REGION SAINT MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

ENGLAND INDIA
THAILAND

India

On April 13 and 14, the formation community of Mangalore welcomed Fr. Enrico Frigerio SCJ, Regional Superior of the Region "St. Mary of Jesus Crucified" who is visiting the Vicariate of India.

Fr Enrico visited the formation house of Mangalore accompanied by the Regional Vicar, Fr. Arul Gnana

Prakash SCJ. Together they had the opportunity to visit the places where the members of the community render their service in different ways.



Thailand

The young people in formation of Ban Garicoits (Samphran) are doing their annual retreat in northern Thailand, at Mae Klang Luang, a resort on the slopes of Doi Inthanon, the highest spot in Thailand.

In a climate of springtime coolness (certainly not usual in Thailand this season...) and of inner recollection, Fr Enrico Frigerio SCJ, the Regional Superior, Fr Chan Kunu SCJ, Regional Vicar, and Fr Peter Nonthaphat SCJ, met the scholastics and the postulants of the Vicariate, their formator, Fr Luke Kriangsak SCJ and the preacher, Fr Narongchai, a Diocesan priest. The celebration of the Eucharist at sunrise was particularly inspiring. Let us accompany these young brothers of ours on their journey of preparation for religious life.

On 25 April, the Holy Father has erected the new diocese of Chiang Rai in Thailand, using territory from the diocese of Chiang Mai, making it a suffragan of the metropolitan see

of Bangkok.

The Holy Father has appointed as first bishop of the new diocese of Chiang Rai, Thailand, the Rev. Joseph Vuthiler Haelom, of the clergy of Bangkok, currently vicar general of the same archdiocese.

The newly-erected diocese of Chiang Rai (Latin name Chiangraien[sis]), situated in the north-eastern region of the country, will include four provinces (Chiang Rai, Nan, Phayao, and Phrae). In the new Diocese some

betharramites communities will be joining the territory.

Our best wishes to Bishop Joseph Vuthilert Haelom for a good episcopal ministry.



NOTICES FROM THE GENERAL COUNCIL



◆◆◆ From August 1st 2018 the Superior General emeritus, **Rev. Father Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj**, after a sabbatical year, will join the community of Fontarabie, in Mendelu, in the Vicariate of France-Spain, Saint Michael Garicoïts Region (Rule of Life 198, 1).

In Mendelu, he will be equidistant from numerous Betharramite realities, so as to be able to continue his apostolate and carry out possible service in the three Regions of the Congregation.

In this respect, he will be part of the Betharramite Formation Team as a councillor for on-going formation for the whole Congregation.



Mgr Loison and his secretary

"If you, like me, had seen bishops cry!" (DS § 37). This is a quotation from a book called "Pensées" [Thoughts], published by Father Etchécopar. Father Miéyaa states that Michael Garicoïts "often" spoke about this; quoting several passages from "Pensées" in which Father Etchécopar sees the origins of the congregation in this "spectacle".



Following on from Father Etchécopar's writings, others have frequently made the link between this spirit of disobedience and the consequences of the Revolution; as if there was no precedent for it... however history is more complicated... ●●●

FRENCH CLERGY BEFORE AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION

- The ideals of the Revolution are popular : they fill a void! When Mgr d'Arche was Bishop of Bayonne (1745 – 1774), just six months at seminary were all that was needed to become a subdeacon, and three months for diaconate. Just read some holy books, learn some dogma, do a bit of writing and singing – that was enough for religious celebrations! Many young priests thought more about going hunting, playing games, or lending money with interest. Some even used sorcery in the middle of religious sacraments...
- The Revolution didn't make things better! Father Miéyaa mentions a "disgusting, ignorant, drunk priest who made use of devilries to obtain money and gifts".
- King Louis XVI never opposed the law which forced the church to be governed by civil law. There were very few juror priests in the Basque Country, and even less in the Béarn and the Hautes-Pyrénées. Several priests did not want to leave Christians unable to take the sacraments.
- On 18th brumaire of year VII (9th November 1799), Napoleon Bonaparte came to power. A practical man, the new leader wanted to calm religious conflicts; and as a second step make the Church serve him. An Accord of 17 July 1801 was issued, and approved by the Pope. Churches were opened and subsequently filled with parishioners. But, nothing was simple!
- In order to enforce the treaty, the Pope asked all priests and bishops (juror AND non-juror) to resign, in order to give them all new positions. But how could non-juror priests be treated the same as priests who had made a pact with the State? It was the only way to avoid parishes being left with no priest... And why did the Holy See allow Napoleon to nominate his own Bishops, who all had to swear loyalty to the government?
- Michel Garicoïts arrived in Bayonne to work for a Bishop and his secretary: both of them had agreed to swear loyalty to the constitution and both of them strived for unity amongst priests, for the good of God's people...



Bayonne in the time (or so...) of Michael Garicoïts

From 1811 to 1814 Michael Garicoïts studied at Saint-Palais college. At the age of 17, he took the next steps. The Bishop's staff were looking for a young man to work with them – and Michael took on the role. Farewell to the countryside, and hello to the town of Bayonne! And here were the Bishop and his secretary!

Mgr Loison, bishop of Bayonne

He did not dream about becoming a bishop! 'He did seem a bit surprised when he became a bishop', someone joked; but it was true! His confessor asked him to accept the nomination...

Mgr Loison was born in 1744 in the department called Meuse (in the Grand-Est Region of France). He became a priest in 1769, then Curé of the parish where he was born. He

showed true pastoral qualities. He swore constitutional loyalty in 1791 "to the contentment and enlightenment of all the villagers". In 1792, receiving a stipend from the state, he pledged obedience to the law: "I swear loyalty to my nation and to maintain liberty and equality, or I will die defending them". In 1794 he resigned his post, without handing back his "*lettres de prêtrise*" (documents testifying that he was a Catholic priest). When situations calmed down in 1797, he took up his post again. He shouted his "hatred of royalty", and stated 'I the undersigned, Joseph-Jacques Loison; member of the French Republic, in my capacity of former priest, hereby state that I have neither withdrawn of modified any statement of loyalty or declaration required by law. I am sincerely and irrevocably

linked to the laws of the Republic.”

On 5 July 1802 he became Bishop of Bayonne, showing some of the qualities valued by Bonaparte: dignity in life, and flexibility when dealing with civil powers. On 11 November 1802 the Pope approved his nomination.

His first duty was to unite the clergy. Upon being shown who was a “priest of the Catholic church” (those who had not sworn loyalty through the Revolutionary laws) and who was a “diocesan priest” (those who had sworn loyalty) he quickly said : *“They are all my children, and I should see them in the same way!”*. He was persuasive and patient with everyone, but a few were obstinate and action was needed. Mgr Loison was the first Bishop that Michael Garicoïts ever saw cry... and he never forgot seeing it!

At the age of 17, the young man ate at the Bishop’s table. Many years later, he remembered *“There was a supper for the Bishop, who had eaten quickly on the journey back. I was sat to his right as they served some soup. I found at least ten flies in the soup, and the Monsignor was served the same as me. He managed to put some of the flies aside, but did eat some ; and no-one said anything. What an example of a Bishop!”* (DS § 108)

The first few days of their working relationship were difficult. Michael admitted : “I was a big farmer’s boy, all I knew how to do was herd sheep. My dear master was so patient and

charitable towards me. The Bishop was impressed with the young man, and didn’t call him “tu” (familiar version of “you” in French, less formal than “vous”). He helped Michael with his homework and taught him Latin. A balanced relationship of confidence grew between them.

When the Bishop is away, Michael serves the vicars general and the secretary who is more often to be found.

Mr Honnert, the Bishop's secretary

When Mgr Loison arrived in Bayonne he chose François Honnert to be his secretary. Mr Honnert was from Metz diocese too. He served as secretary from 25 December 1802 until his death on 26 May 1822, and therefore also worked for Mgr d’Astros.

Mr Honnert was a key player in the reorganisation of the diocese. He was devoted, quiet and worked in the shadows, but was never afraid to speak out. If he saw any disorder or injustice, he always informed the Bishop, who could then decide to take action or not! Michael Garicoïts worked in the same way with Abbott Lassalle, the superior of Bétharram...

At the Bishop’s residence, Michael helped everyone: and in particular the ever-present Bishop’s secretary. He was ready to do anything, and the former shepherd even found himself walking Mr Honnert’s dog around the town’s ramparts: what a strange job! And most importantly, Michael

was still able to study and was one of the brightest students...

The Secretary allowed Michael to go to the Royal College of Aire, a seminary. For the first time, Michael spent all of his time there studying, at long last! Michael received a scholarship, and Mr Honnert paid for his board. The secretary gave him

some clothes, toiletries and some gold coins and francs for pocket money.

It is Mr Honnert again who will introduce the seminarist Michael Garicoïts to the successor of Mgr Loison: Mgr Paul Thérèse David d'Astros.

Beñat Oyhénart scj

From
"Garacotche"
to "Garicoïts"



Michael signed as "Garicoïts" in his notebooks when he was in Bayonne, writing "This notebook belongs to Michel Garicoïts d'Ibarre"; a practice that continued long afterwards. Father Miéyaa writes that "perhaps Mr Honnerts frenchified the name, changing Garacotche to Garicoïts". A "perhaps" that sounds interrogative!

One testimony: in 1811, at the baptism of a newborn child found in front of the church of Oneix, the godfather is "Michael Caracotxh from the place of Ibarre"; at the bottom of the act, Abbe Larremendy, parish priest of Garris from 1859 to 1888, specifies that this is "Michel Caracotch, whom Mr. Honnert, secretary of Mgr. Loison, made change his name into Garricoïtz"... Yet, this is a fragile testimony... Father Miéyaa himself put this question: "how many witnesses does one need to attain certitude?"

Garicoïts, French for Garacotche ? Anyone who spoke Basque would be smiling! Michael's grandfather was called "Garacoïts" when he was married. It's a bit of a joke to think that the name was changed because it sounded Spanish: at the start of the 19th century the people from the Basque Country, the Béarn and indeed many other regions of Gascony spoke their own dialects more than they did French, still less so Spanish!

One thing is for sure : spelling of surnames varies a lot ! In the Basque Country of today, from Larceveau to Cambo, from Bidassoa to Hondarribia, you can find many different parishes bearing the same saint's name, albeit with a different spelling : "Garicoïts"; "Garicoïtz" or "Garikoitz"...



In this holy society in which God has called you and me (...), we must await His grace and serve Him only with perfect fidelity. Let us think of our vocation often, so as to be able to give an account of the progress we have made and to edify our brothers. Let us devote ourselves to following all our rules. For if we do, we will reap the benefits that people cannot even imagine.

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