

NEF

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To the source following the path of discernment

'Although it is time for you to become teachers, you need to re-learn the basics of the Word of God: now you need milk again, instead of solid food. But, the one who feeds on milk cannot understand the word of justice, because he is no more than a child. Solid food is proper to adults, to those who by practice have developed sensitivity to discern

between good and evil'

(Heb 5, 12-14)

Dear Betharramites,

As we know, the spiritual experience is often ambiguous and even equivocal. It leads us to: 'Examine everything and hold onto what is good'; 'Not to trust any spirit but to test whether the spirits come from God' (cfr. 1 Thess 5. 19; 1 John 4.1).

When we speak of discernment it is important to ask ourselves again before the Lord our God: who are

we? Where are we going? And are we willing to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit all along the way?

The total availability that must characterise a Betharramite goes through this crucible of mediations.

If a Bishop calls us to provide a service to his diocese, we automatically think: 'we must go where others are not willing to go'. That is possible, but not quite accurate. Pastoral enthusiasm without discretion or without discernment can sometimes take us to places that God does not want! What St. Michael Garicoïts actually said was: *'willing to go, at the first sign of their leaders, to wherever they were called, including, above all, the most difficult ministries that others do not want'* (DS § 6). A diocese makes an agreement with the Congregation on the relevant mission, not with the religious in particular. The criteria of discernment, according to our Rule of Life, must always involve community (RL. 130-135).

This implies mediations, that is to say: to discern issues in the corresponding sphere.

Let's say a proposal comes to a Regional Vicar for a Betharramite community to take on a new parish or open a new residence.

- First: this vicar should deliberate on this with as much information as possible, together with his vicariate advisers in order to know their opinion (remember that the vicariate council makes

decisions only on two or three very specific matters [RL 261-267], but cannot decide, for example, on the acceptance of a new work, or on the transfer of religious).

- The second step, which constitutes the true place of decision, (though not definitive) is to debate the subject with its pros and cons in the Regional Council.
- Finally, to accept the new work, all the required information must be sent in due time and proper form to the General Council. This is not an 'external tribunal', but is part of the final discernment and it will give final approval or not, according to the information that has been sent.

For this, there is a very useful handy phrase: 'I am going to consult with my superiors'. That phrase, said *with grace*, expresses something important: our collegiality and co-responsibility in decisions, our dependence on *obedience for love*, our mutual respect, and the humility that disposes us to spiritual indifference.

At other times a proposal is made directly to the major superior. In this case the matter is no less delicate. Although the criterion of authority is a criterion of discernment, the major superior can never decide *alone* on issues that will affect the life of a community or a vicariate.

He would have to have very serious and urgent reasons to do this, which he would have to justify to his councillors (or his respective superior). All of us have known certain superiors with a reputation for holiness, others for their holy enlightenment and others for their holy imagination. Their decisions were evidenced by their fruits, and they were appreciated over the years. However, we must not forget that some decisions were taken with haste, characterised by an anxiety that led to resolving issues without giving proper space for prayer and reflection. When we let ourselves be dominated by anxiety, our discernment becomes vulnerable, and it leads us to continually make and reverse decisions made in haste.

Lastly, we are not alone in this entire arduous journey: the Spirit of the Lord accompanies us and our brothers sustain us. Yet, from time to time we meet a snake in the grass and he has been there since time immemorial to oppose the Plan of God: 'the enemy'. As he is most cunning and deceitful, he does not usually attack directly, but appears in disguise with all our justifications, inconsistencies and disordered affections. He subtly coats with an 'apparent good' that unfortunately cannot be detected at first glance. These deceptions must be discovered and unmasked

with care and analysis at the beginning, middle and end of the discernment.

The Lord also acts and dialogues with us in daily life. We live inserted in a world that is not for us as a museum to 'contemplate from the outside', but rather as a workshop where we can work together with the Lord God, as his instruments: *'We must learn to see God within us, achieving inside of us so much good, but always with our cooperation. How often we fight, to prevent this inner action! In this area, we must collaborate with divine inspiration with great discretion, because of our residual ill-will, and because there exists within us a homicidal nature that is mixed with the vivifying action of grace.'* (DS § 299)

This spirit of discernment is not the automatic result of a given method or of a mere well-informed discussion. It requires a search for God's will, a real interior disposition to do what God wants and invites us to live. The goal is to seek and find what gives *more* glory to God, here and now.

Good examples that prepare the way for discernment in community are:

- The sharing of experiences in fraternity in a prayerful environment.
- Personal review-of-life sessions.
- Times of shared reading of the Word of God (collatio).

- Sharing together in the light of faith the progress of apostolic projects, in a prayerful environment.
- Discovery of signs of life and death present in our culture that help us to serve others better.

We Betharramites also have a treasure: the method of discernment of Saint Michael Garicoits. A sure way to seek and find the Will of God and that can

not be ignored.

We know that these are times for listening, witnessing, and encountering. Let us go out without delay and take the path of discernment, happy that spiritual maturity will develop in us nourished by that solid food that springs from the Love of the Father.

P. Gustavo SCJ
SUPERIOR GENERAL



Homily of Pope Francis, Holy Mass for the closing of the synod Rome, Sunday 28 October 2018 (extracts)

The account we have just heard (Mk 10, 46-52) is the last of those that the evangelist Mark relates about the itinerant ministry of Jesus, who is about to enter Jerusalem to die and to rise. Bartimaeus is thus the last of those who follow Jesus along the way: from a beggar along the road to Jericho, he becomes a disciple who walks alongside the others on the way to Jerusalem. We too have walked alongside one another; we have been a "synod". This Gospel seals three fundamental steps on the journey of faith [...]

Bartimaeus lies alone on the roadside, far from home and fatherless. He is not loved, but abandoned. He is blind and no one listens to him; when he tried to speak, everyone told him to keep quiet. Jesus hears his plea. When he goes to him, he lets him speak. It was not hard to guess what Bartimaeus wanted: clearly, a blind person wants to see or regain his sight. But Jesus takes his time; he takes time to listen. This is the first step in helping the journey of faith: listening. It is the apostolate of the ear: listening before speaking. Instead, many of those with Jesus ordered Bartimaeus to be quiet (cf. v. 48). For such disciples, a person in need was a nuisance along the way, an obstacle unexpected and unforeseen. They preferred their own timetable above that of the Master, their own



talking over listening to others. They were following Jesus, but they had their own plans in mind. This is a risk constantly to guard against. Yet, for Jesus, the cry of those pleading for help is not a nuisance but a challenge. How important

it is for us to listen to life! The children of the heavenly Father are concerned with their brothers and sisters, not with useless chatter, but with the needs of their neighbours. They listen patiently and lovingly, just as God does to us and to our prayers, however repetitive they may be. God never grows tired; he is always happy when we seek him. May we too ask for the grace of a heart that listens. [...]

After listening, a second step on the journey of faith is to be a neighbour. Let us look at Jesus: he does not delegate someone from the "large crowd" following him, but goes personally to meet Bartimaeus. He asks him, "What do you want me to do for you?" (v. 51). What do you want... – Jesus is completely taken up with Bartimaeus; he does not try to sidestep him. ...me to do – not simply to speak, but to do something. ...for you – not according to my own preconceived ideas, but for you, in your particular situation. That is how God operates. He gets personally involved with preferential love for every person. By his actions, he already communicates his message. Faith thus

flowers in life.

Faith passes through life. When faith is concerned purely with doctrinal formulae, it risks speaking only to the head without touching the heart. And when it is concerned with activity alone, it risks turning into mere moralizing and social work. Faith, instead, is life: it is living in the love of God who has changed our lives. We cannot choose between doctrine and activism. We are called to carry out God's work in God's own way: in closeness, by cleaving to him, in communion with one another, alongside our brothers and sisters. Closeness: that is the secret to communicating the heart of the faith, and not a secondary aspect.

Being a neighbour means bringing the newness of God into the lives of our brothers and sisters. It serves as an antidote to the temptation of easy answers and fast fixes. Let us ask ourselves whether, as Christians, we are capable of becoming neighbours, stepping out of our circles and embracing those who are not "one of us", those whom God ardently seeks. [...]

The third step is to bear witness. [...] So many children, so many young people, like Bartimaeus, are looking for light in their lives. They are looking for true love. And like Bartimaeus who in the midst of that large crowd called out to Jesus alone, they too seek life, but often find only empty promises and few people who really care.

It is not Christian to expect that our brothers and sisters who are seekers should have to knock on our doors; we ought to go out to them, bringing not

ourselves but Jesus. He sends us, like those disciples, to encourage others and to raise them up in his name. He sends us forth to say to each person: "God is asking you to let yourself be loved by him". How often, instead of this liberating message of salvation, have we brought ourselves, our own "recipes" and "labels" into the Church! How often, instead of making the Lord's words our own, have we peddled our own ideas as his word! How often do people feel the weight of our institutions more than the friendly presence of Jesus! In these cases, we act more like an NGO, a state-controlled agency, and not the community of the saved who dwell in the joy of the Lord.

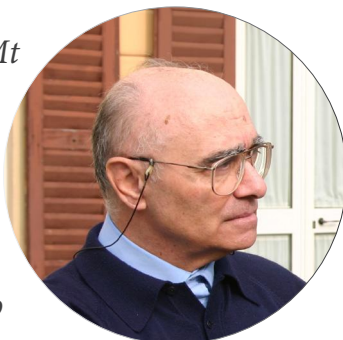
To listen, to be a neighbour, to bear witness. The journey of faith in today's Gospel ends in a beautiful and surprising way when Jesus says "*Go; your faith has made you well*" (v. 52). Yet Bartimaeus had made no profession of faith or done any good work; he had only begged for mercy. To feel oneself in need of salvation is the beginning of faith. It is the direct path to encountering Jesus. The faith that saved Bartimaeus did not have to do with his having clear ideas about God, but in his seeking him and longing to encounter him. Faith has to do with encounter, not theory. In encounter, Jesus passes by; in encounter, the heart of the Church beats. Then, not our preaching, but our witness of life will prove effective. •

Betharramites listening to the call for holiness

A six-part reading of the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exultate* by a few Betharramites. First part: an

introduction to the Exhortation by Father Ennio Bianchi scj ●●●

§ 1 --- *“Rejoice and be glad” (Mt 5:12), Jesus tells those persecuted or humiliated for his sake. The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence. The call to holiness is present in various ways from the very first pages of the Bible. We see it expressed in the Lord’s words to Abraham: “Walk before me, and be blameless” (Gen 17:1).*



So, by underlining “in today’s context”, the Pope puts us in front of ways, places, situations and styles through which we can have to live holiness.

This basic aspect emphasized so much by the Pope, according to me, confirms that our charism is actual in its very foundation: Incarnation, which has led God’s Word to share the human condition really, and goes on being present in the course of history.

When the Pope tells us to be saints “in today’s context”, he invites us to “incarnate ourselves in our time” with the immutable holiness the Christians are called for.

“To incarnate oneself” is to be among men, to make oneself visible, to understand the various cultural and social situations, to perceive the needs and tensions of the persons, in order to share their problems and hopes, and to adjust the instruments of salvation and redemption.

“To incarnate oneself” is to be in the present time of the Church and society, paying a deep, continuous attention to today’s mankind.

“To incarnate oneself” is reading again the Church tradition, enlightened by the historic, cultural context we live in, to make the

The apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exultate* of Pope Francis is a “call for holiness in today’s world”.

This precision - “in today’s context” - is fundamental, mobilizing, you can’t get away from it, you must constantly keep it in mind.

This exhortation reminds it, “holiness” doesn’t change: it is always to listen, to live, to witness Christ’s Gospel.

But we must grasp anew the eternal Gospel of Christ and live it in the reality of history, of the time we live in. There, no rule is everlastingly fixed for all, but multiple ways of living this same Gospel and witness it.

We are all called to live Christ with love, offering our testimony, concretely in the everyday life which is reserved for us.

christian experience radiate with a new light, new... as this experience will have been read again with a new sight and expressed again with a new language, in a new culture.

"To incarnate oneself" is to commit oneself to regenerate the body of the Church, that is to say God's people, in history.

Here is everything asked by the Pope's exhortation, when he speaks of "holiness", that is to say of a life devoted to listening and communicating the Gospel to today's mankind.

Saint Michael has always understood this pastoral, evange-

lizing need. In his letters to lay people, he recommended to live Christ's Word in its concrete aspects and in their daily life.

This perspective of Incarnation shows in a concrete way the form of holiness for our time. And "holiness" is living the charism of Incarnation in the cultural, social life of our time, in the various realities of the world in which we are called to live as Religious of the Incarnation.

If we want holiness, it is up to us to "incarnate today". And to be Betharramites.

Ennio Bianchi scj

CHARACTERISTICS OF HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD:

In the 4th chapter, Francis exposes some characteristics of holiness in our time. As a whole, they are "five great manifestations of love towards God and the fellow creature whom (he) considers as specially important, taking into account some risks and limits of today's culture".

The 1st characteristic has the features of enduring, patience and meekness.

The 2nd is joy and the sense of humour.

The 3rd is boldness and fervour.

The 4th is community life.

The 5th is constant prayer.

How do these five characteristics specially resound for a Betharramite who tends himself each day towards the five virtues of the Sacred Heart underlined in the *Spiritual Doctrine*:

- humility (the joy of being "great" only in God)
- obedience (committing ourselves with all our strenght, as Christ did with his Father)
- love (in communion with God and the brothers)
- devotedness (a strenght more important, in prayer, than all our fears, including that of not being equal to the task)
- meekness (in the relations with the brothers and everybody)

We will discover this in the next issues in the company of five Betharramite Religious.

To be continued...

Council of the Congregation - November 2018

'Go out to drink from the same source' which is the first Orientation & Decision of the General Chapter 2017. We had taken this as the theme of the year 2018. The Council of the Congregation gathered together in Rome from 5th - 10th Nov., to see the way how we have lived this theme in our communities, vicariates & in our regions. All the 3 regional superiors fraternally shared with trust, sincerity & in simplicity the efforts each community has taken, their joys, their hopes, their expectations & their worries. They discussed their ways & means to keep alive the Betharramite identity, Spirit, Charism & life. Then the Council reflected together & decided to propose and to live

the 2nd Orientation & Decisions of the General Chapter 2017: 'Go out to share'. This will be the theme of the year 2019. The Council feels that first of all under this theme we will be challenged to go out of ourselves. Yes, we feel that it will provoke us to have a personal conversion, conversion of heart. This theme will trigger us to open ourselves and to cultivate the art of listening in our communities. We hope that this theme will shed light on the need to improve in our personal & community prayer & to value our members in empowering them.

Secondly, this theme calls us to underline the importance of our community & Apostolic budgets and projects, in order to arrive at the



communion of economy. This communion of economy will enlighten us to open our eyes to look at the need of our brothers & to share concretely and realistically all that we are and all that we have with our brothers.

Then Rev. Father Gustavo shared with us certain points to improve our skill in discernment using the Ignatian methodology. In conclusion, the Council believes that with

this theme, our communities may become not a museum rather a workshop through our exchanges of experiences, revision of life both community & Apostolic in the climate of respect for one another.

Thus, we go out to share & become authentic witnesses of the Heart of Jesus.

Stervin Selvadass scj
Conseiller général pour la formation



A new chapel at the Generalate House dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Back in 2016 we began to think more deeply about how to better organise arrangements and accommodation in the Generalate House. Taking account of the growing economic requirements and the fall-off in financial contributions, the General Council spent some time considering a possible solution and how to implement it. ●●●

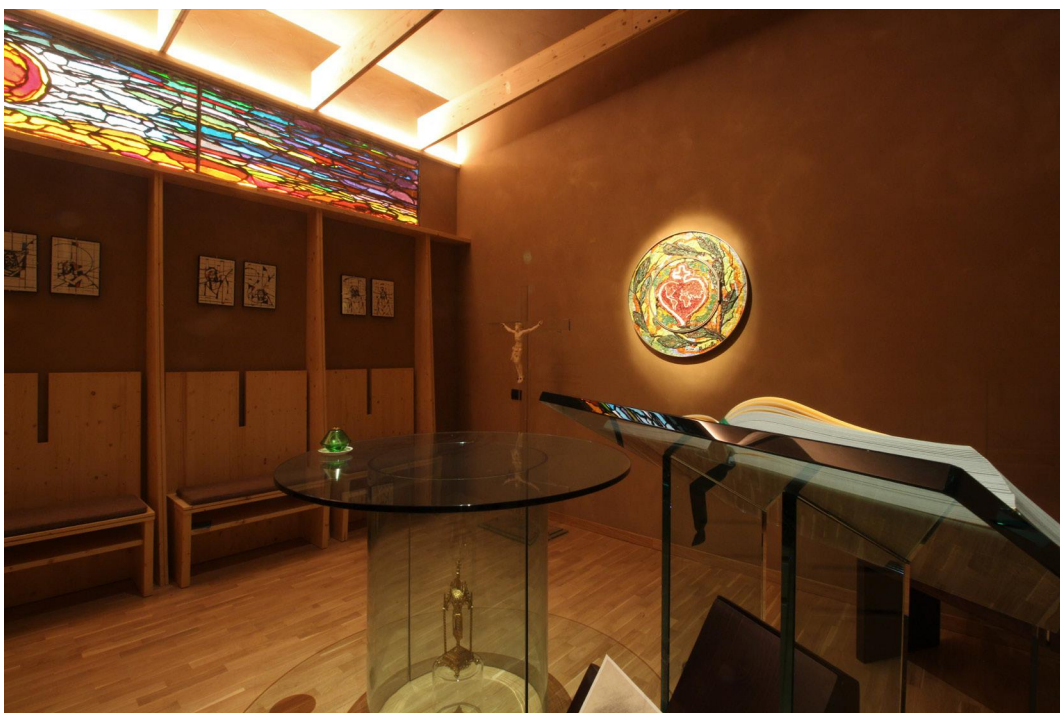
The idea of redistributing the rooms in the basement and the three guest bedrooms for those passing through, led to a plan to reorder the spaces destined in future to provide continuing hospitality but which would still be of... benefit to everyone!

Once that had been decided, we had to review the space dedicated to the chapel. The design and layout of our place of prayer was naturally a matter of particular care. We took

time to exchange ideas and discuss the new project, listening to one another and trusting the person tasked with carrying it out to work out how existing elements could be integrated as well as how the different parts would be arranged.

We naturally wished to preserve and enhance the essential elements from our previous chapel, as created by our former Superior General, Fr Francesco Radaelli scj.

But now, (using our imagination and with the help of a few photos), let's go into our new chapel. Cut out in thickness of the wood, the door to the chapel is pierced by a stylised cross. A ray of light constantly illuminates the tabernacle: "*The Body of Our Lord and the Word of God: the two tables on which is served the heavenly repast that nourishes and fortifies our souls.*" (DS § 136)



On entering the chapel the statue of Our Lady of Bétharram greets us and calls us to penetrate the mystery of Her Son. How could St Michael's prayer not come to mind? *"O Mary, here we are! Welcome us and present us to your Divine Son..."*

Switch on the lights and the chapel springs to life. First one is captivated by the large stained glass panel in the clerestory, signed by Fr Francesco scj, above one of the chapel side walls: *"Rising sun which appears above and sheds light on those in darkness..."*

One is also taken in by the vanishing line created by the columns and beams of natural wood which, combined with the colour chosen for the walls, create a gentle quiet atmosphere conducive to contemplation.

The statue of Saint Michael Garicoïts is located between two rows of seating. Thus there where the community gathers to pray, there also is St Michael, *"primus inter pares"* (first among equals); with his family, with his own. And the community invokes his aid in the fervent hope that he will watch over this *"Society conceived and formed by the Sacred Heart"*.

In the centre of everything, naturally, are the two tables of the Lord: the Table of the Bread and the Table of the Word. A crystal cross is in harmony with the glass altar, containing the urn with St Michael's relics, and with the ambo. This transparency reminds us that not only is Jesus the Crucified, but also that He is the

Risen One! The Cross is visible but does not obscure the final prospect: *"O Death, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?"* (1 Cor. 15, 55).»

Once again, the ray of light leads us back to the central point of everything: the Eucharist. Hidden from public gaze, at rest in the mosaic tabernacle created by Fr Francesco, the tabernacle shows the Congregation's logo framed by the branch, recalling Bétharram, our source.

After this fleeting visit, I should like to thank all those who, one way or another, have contributed to completing this space, which is of such importance to our community. Special thanks must go to Enzo Biffi, an "old boy" who grew up in the Bétharramite parish of the Sacred Heart, Lissone (Italy), and from which he drew inspiration for the imaginative lay-out, re-arrangement and design of the chapel as a whole, now dedicated to the "Sacred Heart of Jesus".

Now it only remains for us to live it to the full!

Graziano Sala scj



♦♦♦ In the meeting of the General Council held on November 11th 2018, the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, **admitted to final profession Brother Leandro Narduzzo** scj of the Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay (Region Father Auguste Etchecopar) (RdV 205/g); the celebration is scheduled on December 8th at the chapel of the Holy Family in Adrogué.

♦♦♦ During the same meeting, the Superior General and his Council examined the request presented on October 10th by the Regional Superior of the Region Saint Michael Garicoïts, Fr. Jean-Luc Morin scj, for a new presence of Bétharram in the capital town of the Central African Republic.

With the advice of his Council, the Superior General gave his approval to the beginning of a **missionary experience of the Central African Vicariate in Bangui**. The new residence of Bangui (Diocesan property) will be part of the community of Bouar-Saint-Michel.

Missions:

- make known the charism of Betharram to those who have a project of vocation;
- be neighbour to young people of Central Africa (students or working young people) as a vocation promotion in an urban setting;
- assume a service of the local Church and build a Christian community in the sector of Bimbo, a rapidly growing district at the periphery of Bangui which Cardinal Nzapalainga considers as a pastoral priority.

Fr Beniamino Gusmeroli scj and Fr Armel Daly Vabié scj put themselves at the service of this new project. They should be joined at the end of December by Br. Jean-Claude Djiraud (novice in the year of community placement).

Father Ermanno RASERO scj

Bugiallo (Italy), 3 April 1933 - Solbiate (Italy), 13 October 2018

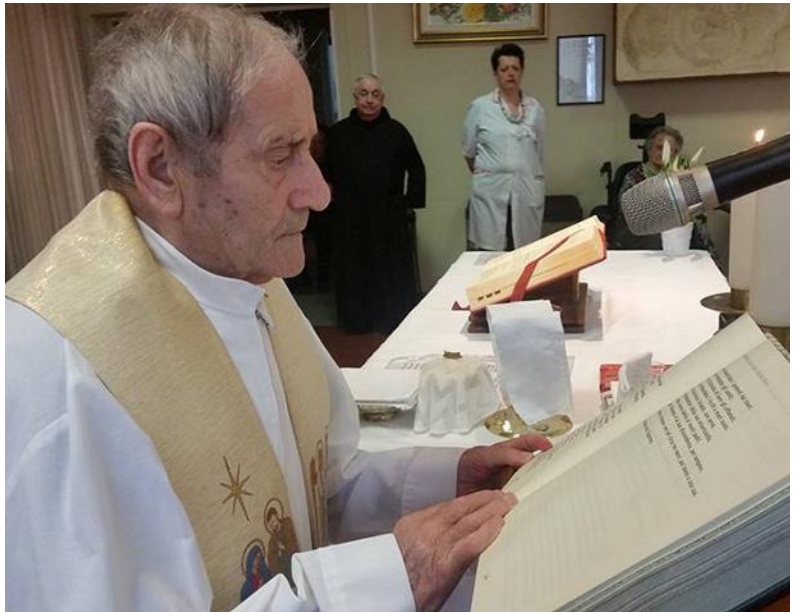
*'You have been faithful in little things ...
come and share the joy of your
master.'*

Dear Fr Ermanno, you have died peacefully just as you have lived: without disturbing anybody. You have fallen asleep and awakened in the house of the Lord.

Paraphrasing what St. Paul says to his disciple Timothy (2Th, 4: 6-7;17-18): the moment of your departure has come. You too have fought the good battle of God, you have kept your faith and now you have finished your race... The Lord was at your side, giving you the strength to bring the Gospel to the people you met; and now the Lord has delivered you from all evil and brought you safely to his Kingdom.

Following in the footsteps of our Founder Saint Michael Garicoits, you always said the Lord: *'Here I am, Lord, I come to do your will, readily, unreservedly, irrevocably, out of love'*. You were ready to go wherever the will of God - expressed through your superiors - would send you.

All loved you because you made yourself loved. We never saw you angry; you were always calm, sometimes smiling, obliging to everyone. You were always ready to push a wheelchair and to give a glass of water to a person who was thirsty. You



would ask about our brothers who were sick, reminiscing about so many things of the past with a nod or a smile.

You will always be in our minds and in our hearts. Jesus thanked the Father for revealing to the little ones his love and his mercy (see Mt 11: 25-30). We too want to give thanks to the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, because he has revealed to you his love and his mercy. You have been a generous, unassuming, meek and humble person like the Sacred Heart of Jesus, our model, and we want to thank the Lord for this.

We are sure that, when presenting yourself in front of the good Lord, you have heard him say: *'Well done, good and faithful servant, since you have been faithful in little things... come and share the joy of your master'* (Mt 25,23). You are now with your loved ones and our confreres in the

Father's house: be our help and our protection. Thank you for the good you have sown on this earth. Farewell, brother.

Alessandro Paniga scj

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF FR. ERMANNINO RASERO SCJ

Fr Ermanno was born in Bugiallo, a village near Lake Como, on 3 April 1933.

On October 1, 1945, he entered our seminary at Colico, to begin the journey of

formation leading him to the religious profession, which took place in Albiate on October 7, 1951; and then to the Priesthood in Milan on May 31, 1958.

After his priestly ordination, Fr. Ermanno lived at:

1. Monteporzio Catone (from 1958 to 1960);
2. la Caravina (from 1960 to 1963);
3. Gravedona (from 1963 to 1964);
4. Castello (from 1964 to 1984);
5. Colico (from 1984 to 1985);
6. Monteporzio (from 1985 to 1992);
7. Montorio in Valle (from 1992 to 2016).

Brother Jean-Pierre NÉCOL scj

Pagolle (France), 29 March 1930 - Betharram, 1st November 2018

Brother Jean-Pierre Nécol was born in 1930 in Pagolle, a little village on a hill like Ibarre and a lot of other villages in this part of the Basque Country. He loved these open spaces that formed the hills and the woods. He said to us : *'that helped us feed the animals. In the morning, we would open the doors of the barn, the sheepfold and the pigsty, and the animals would go and spend the day on the hills, and in the evening when they returned, there was no point in feeding them; they came back to sleep.'*

He also spoke to us about a large restaurant where his mother used to give a hand in the kitchen on Sundays, a restaurant renowned in the region and even beyond ; the most biased would say: 'Lots of people come from all over and even from Paris!' and they



dreamt of a special train, a *Paris-Pau-Pagolle* train!

It was in this simple and happy environment that Jean-Pierre one day heard the call of God and of St Michael: Ibarre was just on the other side of the hill. He wasn't the only one to hear this call ; two other young people from Pagolle became Betharram fathers, Fr Eyhéramendy and Fr Caset.

To do his Novitiate, he was sent to Balarin in Gers. It was there that he took his first vows in 1947. He was made responsible for buying in the food supplies of the Community (50 scholastics and novices). That meant going out of Balarin where there were no shops, only large farms. Mainly grapevine and wheat were cultivated there. At the break of day, he harnessed Margot, the fearless mare, to the cart and went off to Montréal (4 kms away) to get bread, and two times a week, he went to Condon (12 kms away), again with Margot, to go to the butcher's shop, the chemist's shop and other stores.

At harvest time, he went around the farms for the parish tithes. Unusual parish tithes, as they were paid in kind, that is to say, in 100-litres of wine and bottles of brandy. He knew all the farms and all the residents. *'I was well received everywhere, he told us, even by those who didn't set foot in a church.'* He loved this contact with the people who had adopted him as one of their own.

When they shut down Balarin to move to Floirac, it was with much regret that he left this region and he entered the Maison Neuve Community at Betharram. It was suggested he do a job he had never tried: construction painter!

In order to learn the job, he got on with the boss of a painting workshop at the secondary school in Betharram. He was taken on as an apprentice among the other workers.

He said to us one day that he would have liked to sit a vocational qualifica-

tion, but it was a step too far for Betharram.

But how happy people were with his work; he was in demand in several of the Betharram houses: Paris, Pau, Sarance.... And even a lot further away in Rome and the Holy Land. To tease him, people would sometimes say: *"Do you think no-one knows how to paint in these countries?"* He would respond: *"I work free of charge and I don't count up my hours."*

How many Brothers worked with only the love of God and the gratitude of the Congregation as their payment?

How many hours did he spend at the top of a ladder? But all this was already offered in the Mass he served for Fr Gillet at 6 o'clock in the morning to the One who gives us the strength to work, Jesus the craftsman from Nazareth.

Beñat Béhocaray scj

Some dates :

- Birth : 29th March 1930 in Pagolle (Soule Province, France).
- At the age of 11, he went to Etchéco-par house at Saint-Palais with about 10 other youths; through contact with the fathers, he discovered St Michael Garicoits and his spirituality.
- At the age of 16, 6 months postulate in Balarin, then novitiate.
- He took his vows on 5th October 1947.
- At the age of 21, he arrived in Betharram.
- To undertake painting work, he would go to Casablanca, Sidi-Bel-Abbès, Rome, Nazareth and Bethlehem.

Mgr François Lacroix and the “Auxiliary Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus”

How was it ever possible? Everything favoured by the Bishop Mgr Lacroix opposed the founder of Bétharram. So could the first person influence the second? Of course! Contradictions often forge characters! ●●●



In 1832, after an election retreat, it was decided: Saint Michael Garicoïts was to found a Congregation!

*'In the month of October, 1835, Bétharram's community, consisting of Michael Garicoïts, Guimon, Perguilhem, Chirou, Larrouy, and Fondeville, wished to give themselves a rule to improve their spiritual and intellectual understanding. The Rules of the House of the Missionaries of Hasparren were adopted.'*¹ These were 'priestly worshipers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus'; but the name was not adopted.

In 1838: Michael Garicoïts adapted Constitutions, quickly adopted by the community and on 6 November 1838, Bishop Lacroix encouraged him. There was still no name though for the community.² So what was to happen? Who would find a suitable name for the new congregation? The bishop? Why not?

1) Witness of Fr. Fondeville (cf. P. Miéyaa, *The Life of St. Michael Garicoïts*, p. 563).

2) Fr Miéyaa would have liked to have called them « Mary's missionaries » ... In *The Life of Saint Michael Garicoïts* (p. 1681), he confirms that the founder « sometimes called them this »; and quoted - just once, as if in passing ... - Fr. Rossigneux and his *Guide for the pilgrim to Our Lady of Bétharram* published in Pau in 1855 ; in fact on page 36 of this work we read : 'At Orthez, Mary's missionaries are bringing up around 300 [children], both at boarding school and at primary school' ...

Direct testimony

This is Michael Garicoïts speaking to his students of theology on 30 March 1858: *'When Monsignor Lacroix saw the seed of a small community at Bétharram, he went there, and his first concern was to give it a name. He spent a week thinking about one which could best suit it and he decided he could do no better than to call us Auxiliary Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a divine name, full of gentleness and charity, which would always serve as encouragement to reach our goal and a model of what we should be.'*³ The founder said so: to Bishop Lacroix we owe (at least...) the name of the Institute!

A tenacious and fruitful opposition...

It is repeated at will: the very idea of the Congregation put the Basque priest in opposition with his bishop...

On 6 November 1838, Bishop Lacroix wrote an intriguing comment in the margins of the Constitutions that Michael Garicoïts⁴ wanted: *'Take hold*

3) *Cahier Cachica* documented by Duvignau, *Spiritual doctrine, in the introduction to the third part 'The priests of the Sacred Heart'*. (Br Cachica, scholar, gathered together the precious notes on the conferences and classes of Fr. Garicoïts in 1858 et 1859)

4) Cf. Miéyaa, *The Life of Saint Michael Garicoïts*, p. 732.

of the spirit of this abridgement of the Constitutions, and observe them while waiting for the rules which will be given to you...'. The explanation did arrive. The bishop did not want priests 'devoted', 'consecrated by vows'. It was a case of replacing the Rules in use by others, which he composed; and to gather priests, in his service, without vows. The bishop was to preach the retreat to the small group; and on 8 September 1841, he presided over the feast of the Nativity of Mary; the people of Bétharram were to commit themselves according to the Monsignor's plan: who could oppose it?

The rules of Bishop Lacroix, September 1841

At Bétharram at the end of the summer in 1841: Bishop Lacroix, Sulpician, wanted auxiliary priests, diocesan missionaries, without obligatory perpetual vows; in short: as priests of Saint-Sulpice... He forgot one thing: we only validly commit ourselves to freely chosen proposals. The young community actually refused the episcopal project! For three years, it led a real religious life, with the Sacred Heart as a model becoming more and more notable.

What should they do? Debate the issues! The bishop did not need a lawyer: his position was enough but who would support Father Garicoïts? His friend from the beginning was always there and always on a missionary quest: Simon Guimon! *'He did not speak*

*French, and yet he was eloquent!'*⁵

The two priests requested an interview⁶ at night, because it was dark, as it was when Nicodemus went to find Jesus... The discussion was long and animated, with pauses and resumptions. The bishop did not feel the need for vows; the clerical promises were enough. Father Garicoïts, obedient as usual, was ready to bow down again... and yet, the passionate Guimon was also sure of it: *'We talked for a long time with the bishop; we wanted, from now on, to get him to go to Rome.'*⁷ Guimon, resigned? Never! The fight went on!

Guimon vs Lacroix: who would win? Garicoïts, of course, for whom Guimon was just the lawyer, the winner of points, after endless extensions...

During the second interview, all the priest's arguments hardened the bishop... There was just one card left to play, the major asset: silence, the supreme eloquence! The priest fell on his knees at the feet of the bishop, mute and in prayer... The bishop raised the priest up and reviewed his work! It was only a compromise; but humble victories are as valuable as brilliant triumphs!

On 9 September came a new text with some progress; the possibility of vows.

5) *This appreciation is from Fr. Combalot, great preacher and founder of the Sisters of the Assumption. Cf. Miéyaa, The Life of Saint Michael Garicoïts, p. 745.*

6) *It is not possible to name the exact date.*

7) *Miéyaa, The Life of Saint Michael Garicoïts, p. 745.*

On Friday 10 September there was a happy feast day! The Congregation had a name: the Society of Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Bétharram. For the first time and in the hands of the bishop, eight priests committed themselves through vows: Garicoïts, 44 years old; Guimon, 48 years old; Perguilhem, 41 years old; Fondeville, 36 years old; Carrerot, 35 years old; Chirou and Bellocq, both 33 years old and Cassou, 29 years old. Illico, the bishop appointed the superior (article 10): Garicoïts! A council was then elected: Guimon, Fondeville, Cassou; according to the new law, the superior chose his assistant among these three: the youngest!

Thus it was done! The staff of Bétharram was engaged before the bishop, who returned peacefully to Bayonne; a little later than expected!

Auxiliary priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

The founder said it: Monsignor could *'not have done better than to call us Auxiliary Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus'*. Nice compromise! It was enough to find a suitable title: for the bishop, it was important to be *'auxiliary priests'*; the founder would rather have had *'auxiliaries of the Sacred Heart'*!

For the bishop, the diocese only knew of, *'the Society of Auxiliary Priests of Bétharram.'*

Michael Garicoïts, on the other hand, only spoke of, *'the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus'*. Here's the proof:

'My God, do not look at my sins, but

*at the Society that your Sacred Heart has conceived and shaped. Deign to give us your peace, this peace according to your will, which alone can pacify and unite closely all those who are part of the community, with each other, with their superiors and with your divine Heart, so as to be one, like you and your Father and the Holy Spirit, you are one. Amen! Fiat! Fiat!'*⁸

In re-reading his journey, Michel Garicoïts has this lucid and terrible statement: *'In order to conquer the right to serve the Church, we had to fight against the Church'*⁹. Yet he always obeyed; it was the bishop who finally yielded.

However, in 1863, a few hours after Michael Garicoïts' funeral, Mgr. Lacroix made known *'that the vows will be optional,'*¹⁰ to which the founder's disciples responded: *'with an invincible and gentle firmness: We love these bonds with which our Father has chained us. Deign to leave them, Monsignor, and we will only serve you more faithfully and generously.'*¹¹

Obedience triumphed. Michael Garicoïts was canonized on 6 July 1947. His spirituality can be offered to all Christians.

Beñat Oyhenart scj

8) DS § 281

9) Miéyaa, *The Life of Saint Michael Garicoïts*, p. 534.

10) Miéyaa, *The Life of Saint Michael Garicoïts*, p. 1520.

11) Miéyaa, *The Life of Saint Michael Garicoïts*, p. 534.



There are things that are visible, that have happened, and that can only be grasped by faith, like the death of the Lord, his resurrection; (...). There are things that are not yet, but that must be; we believe it in the hope of seeing it, without being able to prove it, like the resurrection of the body. | M 38



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