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## A word from the superior general

### Prophets ready to go out in mission

*"Peace be with you.  
As my Father sent me, so I am sending you "  
(John 20:21)*

Dear Betharramites,

We are reaching the end of the 'go out to share year' 2019. We are part of that outward-looking Church proposed by Pope Francis, as apostles of a missionary community that will never tire. At the beginning of this new year 2020, we propose: 'Go out, in community, to meet life and the many peripheries.' Let us savour the flavour of being apostles of the Sacred Heart! It is a great challenge that reveals a genuine aspect of our Betharramite charism: our missionary identity.

Many of you have been planning next year and others have already begun (as is the case in Europe when everything starts in September). So it is now time to give a generous

new impulse to the project we have in hand for 2020.

The General Chapter of 2017, in part three, (on mission), develops the theme with three points: Go out from ourselves; Go out as a community; Go out in mission. In its own special way the Chapter members invite us to embrace the style of a prophetic church that wants to leave behind the burdens of clericalism, comfort and a tendency to apathy (letting oneself die ...), so that we can go out to meet Life inspired by the Incarnate Word who says to his father Here I am and bravely leaves his comfort zone with a joyful spirit. The witness of happy religious will make this mission real for Betharramites of the 21st century. That will be a great attraction for young people who want to see us opt for Jesus Christ in our vocation, and want to join us to serve and dedicate their lives.

This year we will present, month by month, the different points (titles) of this third part of the Chapter to facilitate community reflection. It will be a little different from last year in that we followed a pathway linked to the chapters of our rule of life.

To begin, let us listen to Pope Francis who tells us that what should characterise religious life is not so much radicality - shared with other vocations - but prophecy. We are prophets for a new world, willing to go on mission, and all of us received our call when the Lord "*took us out from working with the flock*" (cf. Amos 7:15) and brought us with St. Michael Garicoits to the small family of Betharram.

We all know that being a prophet implies being transformed into a powerful presence in the midst of the world and Church, that questions and disturbs. A presence that feeds on divine love that has the courage to condemn oppression, and reject whatever blocks us from fulfilling the Will of God in ourselves and in others.

St. Michael invited his followers to embrace all kinds of sacrifices for the good of souls, and also asked them to obey their superiors and operate within the limits of their position. He did it in a context of insubordination and cold rationalism, and he asked for absolute confidence in those in authority looking at them with the eyes of faith in a way that changes one's own life.

Today our stance is not static. Paradoxically it calls us to move: to "go out", and not stagnate or trap oneself in indifference to the poor and the suffering. We must serve, but on the move, seeking synergy and not anarchy.

Pope Francis adds that in order to discover the shape of Consecrated Life in the 21st century, we have to "trek", which means doing what those mountain guides do, when they seek trails in the mountains or in the mountain scrub. Religious must go out today to "open paths", trusting that beyond the forest and its difficulties a new horizon will become visible.

The prophet who goes on mission must also have imagination to conceive and propose an alternative, hopeful and more just future. It is not good for a Betharramite to simply walk the path of sycophancy, bowing before an immobile

Church that thinks only of itself. The prophets, according to the scriptures, came to challenge complacency. They wanted to put people on notice about the ruin to which the kings and priests (who saw themselves as an elite and apart from the people) would take them. They criticised, not to destroy but to infuse hearts with new energy. And all this because they were people impregnated with the love of God for all created beings as well as passionate for justice.

Being religious today does not exempt us from prophecy, that is, from having the courage to face up to what others do not pay attention to, for example, the care of the earth "our common home." Let us not remain immobile in the face of an unsustainable society that ends up oppressing the poor and which has forgotten how to show compassion (Pope Francis).

Going out in community, with this prophetic style, is a great challenge for Betharram worldwide. The years have settled us elsewhere ... Our engine does not start as before ... But we still have young forces to achieve it, and the wisdom of the elderly to accompany and sustain it in time. Let's stop being distracted by apparent obstacles, worried about our lack of credibility that we have because of clerical scandals, depression because we are so few, too old or too young, or culturally different, or even too invisible ... Let us regain our strength and the freshness of our living charism!

St Michael Garicoits was a true prophet for his time marked by

Jansenism, ecclesial disobedience, socio-cultural inequality, abandonment of faith, etc. He announced with his own life's witness to the God of Love, motivated frequent communion, lived and died in the chalice of obedience and never departed from perfect simplicity, the one who makes Jesus present, humble, a source of joy and mercy to everyone.

It is true that many institutions today seem close to collapse. We live in times of great fragility. And it is precisely there that it is necessary to walk alongside the People of God. Necessary to know their anxieties, share their religious practices (seeds of a nascent faith), open in mind and heart. If we are faithful and creative, we will build an alternative, life-giving future, inspired by the living Word that never leaves us trapped in a religious, individualistic or moralistic ritualism.

Exceptional religious will build exceptional communities, capable of "path-finding" guided by the Holy Spirit, because they have lost their fear of meeting life and the peripheries.

May God bless you all and grant you a Merry Christmas and a fruitful New Year full of Peace.

*Fr. Gustavo scj  
Superior General*

## Admirabile Signum, the meaning of the Nativity Scene

Apostolic Letter, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019

The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him. [...]

Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God's tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realize that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.

Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels remain our source for



understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts.

In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to "feel" and "touch" the poverty that God's Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. Mt 25:31-46). [...]

The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, "*gentle and humble in heart*" (Mt 11:29), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod's palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can

give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the out-cast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized. [...]



appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath we a k n e s s and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is

true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all. [...]

Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, "*Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word*" (Lk 1:38), show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God's will. By her "fiat", Mary became the mother of God's Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. Jn 2:5).

At Mary's side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary.

When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God

Standing before the Christmas crèche, we are reminded of the time when we were children, eagerly waiting to set it up. These memories make us all the more conscious of the precious gift received from those who passed on the faith to us. At the same time, they remind us of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren. [...]

The Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. And to realize that in that knowledge we find true happiness. [...] •

## Go out... in community

Going on a mission, or being a Betharramite on a mission, does not mean that we should neglect this essential aspect of our religious life, which is our Community. A missionary is no solitary adventurer: Jesus Christ wasn't nor were the Apostles and neither is the Church Missionary to which Pope Francis calls us....

St Michael asked the question and explained this to his first companions: *"Why is our Society called The Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Because it is specially united to the Divine Heart saying to His Father: 'Here I am' so that we are His co-operators for the salvation of souls"*. (DS § 7)

*"It is also clear that we have the inescapable yet sublime duty of justifying before God and mankind, our name of PRIESTS AND APOSTLES OF THE SACRED HEART, by fighting unceasingly against any contrary spirit and in particular, the invasive spirit of independence and egoism that is currently prevailing from all parts, by substituting this ECCE VENIO of humility, obedience and love which one day saved the world and which, at the present time, must regenerate it."* (Circular Letter of 12 April 1889). These orientations, from the venerable Fr Etchécopar, help us to find this sometimes delicate balance between Community and Going Out.

I think it is of fundamental impor-



tance that we focus on implementing the two orientations proposed to us by the Chapter General for 2020. Not solely for 2020 of course but paying especial attention to this coming year.

### 1. Community Discernment

This implies that mission be thought about and discerned and that there is an apostolic project in existence, taking account of the gifts of each one, the situations of marginality and the characteristics peculiar to our spirit of mission. Thus, we avoid the risks of individualism, the sudden stoppage of projects, improvisation and lack of identity. (Acts 64)

Sometimes I get the feeling that for us religious brothers, the community meeting or the apostolic project presents the same difficulties as does dialogue between couples. In fact, it turns out on reflection that what should be the easiest, most obvious thing is actually lacking. During retreats and encounters on marriage, so often we hear people say "Our problem is a lack of communication". How can we discern, think about and plan a mission if we are neglectful or fail to give enough time and serious thought to the community meeting? How can we avoid reverting to individualism or being tempted to escape and seek a refuge?

If you analyse it a bit deeper: how can we recover that first Love, which goes back to the time we were first called to Jesus and when we were filled with enthusiasm and felt that with Him, we were “fishers of men”?

To experience the Missionary Jesus, in my community, the humble, obedient and loving ECCE VENIO: that cannot be just a youthful dream but a daily challenge and effort, which gives meaning to our identity as religious men with an apostolic life; this should act as a vocational attraction. If a young man were to ask me today why are you together? What is your life plan? A religious community can attract vocations where it acts as spokesman or echoes the call of Jesus to work with Him in His mission, and where it bears witness to a living, praying Jesus, aware of the needy, the marginalised and the areas of social exclusion of our time.

To discern in community allows us first to plan something possible and

effective, something which can make us feel that we are the living joyful instruments of Jesus’ loving Heart. Furthermore, it also enables us to respond to actual situations, apostolic priorities or challenges as they arise. Today, like in the time of Jesus, “the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few”. When the internal Master accompanies us in seeking our common goal, the *Ecce Venio* of the Son is one and the same as the *Fiat Voluntas Dei* of the Mother.

We could conclude with Pope Francis’ words: “Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!” (EG 109).

## 2. In communion with the laity

It also means going out and working with the laity who share our life, our charism and our mission. We are the Betharram family in the Church, called to discern and carry out the mission together. That’s why we need



to look for ways to discern and plan together. (Acts 65)

We are aware that [...] without laypeople our responses would be limited and insufficient. Closeness to suffering will not be possible without a deep conversion and spiritual formation, respecting the vocations of each one. (Acts, Message to the laity)

We have all known moments of great joy and a renewal of hope, brought about by the encounters we have on many occasions shared with lay people close to us. Now we are called to go out, to take the lead in discerning and planning together this new missionary departure, a departure which the Church and these present times demand of us with such insistence.

*'I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably*

*bly channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.'* (EG 27). While the scarcity of vocations, the advancing years of many of our religious and perhaps other conditions do not stop us dreaming, they do, on the other hand, make us humbler and more realistic. Sitting down together at the same table, sharing a day, uniting ourselves in prayer: so many beautiful responses can arise from these moments. We will discover how full of life these varied suburbs and fringes of society are and we will be rewarded by an abundance of life in return. There is life in us, and there is life in many of the lay brothers and sisters who work with us.

Let's make a reality of article 3 of our Rule of Life: *"[To share our] spirituality with the laity... leads us religious and laity in the same family of Betharram, to a mutual enrichment and to better live the dynamic of the charism."*

*Tobia Sosio scj*

*General Councillor for the missions*

## A Region on the way

with Fr. Daniel González scj, Regional Superior

In this year 2019, the Region of Fr. Auguste Etchécopar received the memorable visit of Fr. Gustavo Agín, Superior General, child of this earth; in this regard, each vicariate has already had the opportunity to tell a part of its story through the NEF, the link that helps us to communicate and makes

us brothers.

In view of what has already been shared by each vicar in previous issues, I will limit myself to briefly outlining the process we are experiencing as a Region.

The Lambaré Regional Chapter







in 2016, held after a few pre-Chapter days (to which all the religious of the Region are invited and, on average, 9 lay people per vicariate), had indicated to us three axes on which to work:

- Our lifestyle (fraternal life in community)
- Ongoing formation in all dimensions (for religious and laity)
- Shared Mission (between laity and religious)

Along the way, we received the Guidelines of the General Chapter San Bernardino 2017, which we have incorporated and tried to deepen, giving particular importance to the theme proposed for each year.

In 2018, "Go out to drink from the same source": at the regional level, we tried to deepen this theme to reinforce our identity and sense of belonging; our identity has its roots in the choice of Christ made in Bétharram, that we choose ourselves to live

in community and in the service of the Kingdom. The community superior has a fundamental ministry which is that of animation; for this reason, we have found it necessary to devote a meeting time with all the community animators, who can help us to rediscover, value and measure the role of the animator, and who can also train us in this art that is the service of animation, taking into account the characteristics of our charism. This was the aim of the third EAC (*Encuentro de Animadores de Comunidad* - Encounter of Community Animators) held in Passa Quatro (Brazil).

In 2019 "Go out to Share": taking into account the spirit of the Chapter, (going out of oneself to meet brothers) and the two salient points (government and economy), we are working to create the best conditions for living according to our fraternal lifestyle in community for mission; to this end, we work to:

1. Consolidate communities of at least three brothers living in the same house, with a community and apostolic project, taking into account the particular gifts and needs of the particular Church.

2. That each community is organized around an annual budget that responds to the reality in which it finds itself and to the lifestyle we have chosen to live.

3. To deepen our charismatic identity, as well as our integration into and contribution to the Church of America. The Latin-American Bétharramite Meeting (ELAB), 3 days of life shared between religious and laity, in July this year in San Bernardino (Paraguay), allowed us to work on:

a. spirituality: Betharramite kindness

b. ecclesiology: for a new Ecclesiology, a New Religious Life

c. Mission: to live it in a spirit of collaboration

At the same time, the young people of the Region experienced an intense week during which they deepened the Betharramite charism and carried out a mission to the rural communities of the parish San Francisco Javier of La Colmena (Paraguay) supported by the Betharramites.

4. The formation of the Community Animators (IV EAC): 2 days of meeting with all the community animators and vicars, assisted by a Betharramite

lay professional, we worked in workshops on the art of meeting and learning, listening, in line with the orientations of the third EAC, because we are convinced that we must train to animate according to the new style of fraternal life in community.

5. Ongoing formation: with the collaboration of brothers from different communities, three documents were prepared for community meetings (1. New Ecclesiality, 2. Theological Spirituality, 3. Fraternal Life in the Community) and a document for the formation of Community Animators (communities led by the Spirit).

We know that human processes do not progress in a linear but in a spiral manner, like the itinerary proposed by the General Chapter. Also, for the year 2020, we will liberate, as best we can, the Breath of the Spirit, which will invite us to "Go out to the Meeting of Life and various peripheries in the Community". That's why we will continue:

- to deepen our identity and sense of belonging (Drinking at the source);
- to consolidate our communities, so that they, with the presence of the laity, are significant in the Kingdom; (Go out to share)
- to be attentive to the life of religious and laity, listening to the Spirit who speaks in each of us.
- to promote meetings between representatives (lay people and religious) of the various Bétharram missions in the Region (parishes,

education, people in vulnerable situations, formation-spirituality), in order to reinforce the work done in each vicariate and to give rise to new regional options.

By following this rhythm, we think we are better prepared to celebrate,

next July, the Pre-Chapter and Regional Chapter 2020 (religious and laity), with the desire and confidence that it will be a time of the Spirit whom we want to love, to discern and to obey. •

## Betharram in Vietnam...



### *Departure and arrival time*

On Wednesday, November 27, during a solemn concelebration, Fr. Yesudas Kuttappassery scj bid farewell to many friends and benefactors who helped the presence of Betharram in Ho Chi Minh in these early years.

Father Yesudas, at the request of the Superior General, made himself available to leave for a new mission in the Holy Land.

The celebration was attended by Fr. Albert Sa-at Prathansantiphong SCJ, now priest in charge of the residence of Ho Chi Minh City and Fr. Graziano Sala SCJ, General Bursar and General Secretary on a visit to the fathers and young students.

Several religious and diocesan priests were also present.

On this occasion, they all welcomed Fr. Shamon Devasia Valiyaveetil SCJ, who is joining the "community". Friends and benefactors gave him a warm welcome!

To Fr. Yesudas who, with Fr. Sa-at, started the Betharramite presence in Vietnam, we wish all the best for the new mission that awaits him.

We wish Fr. Shamon to continue the work done so far and to play his role with courage and enthusiasm.

## ...gives shape to community life

*"If you want to be my disciple, renounce yourself, take up your daily cross and follow me." (Lk 9:23)*

This is how we lead our life together in our community in Vietnam. First of all, our community in Vietnam is the place for young people who "come and see", live learn and practice, to be ready to take the next step in following their vocation.

Our community should become a school of love, a school of service and a school of welcoming. The only way to be happy in the community is to renounce ourselves, take up our daily cross and follow our Lord. Our duty is to help our brothers in formation *"to know themselves, to accept themselves and to develop in clarifying the motives of their vocation"* (RL140). *"When a person presents himself as called.... We must help the postulant with the grace of God."* (DS286)

The first lesson is

- Learn to love God, *"God first loved us"* (1Jn 4.19) and He calls us to love Him in Christ (RL5). It is the place for them to learn to love God, learn to live and to listen to God's call. And we as formators are called to help them to respond that call. Let our community be a place for listening to God's call, just like



Samuel. The LORD came and stood there, calling for three times, *"Samuel! Samuel!"* Then Samuel said, *"Speak, for your servant is listening. "We, the formators, are like Eli who said to Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'"*

-Learn to love each other and learn to love humanity. It should be a community of brotherhood; the young people have to learn to live together, even though they are from different places, families, background and belonging to different age groups. Our community should be the place for them where to love and to share with each other. Through the love towards each other in the community, they are called to bring this love to all humanity.

As Saint John Bosco advises: *"Young people should not only be loved, but should also know that they are loved"*.

The second lesson is to learn to serve.

*"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mt 20:28).

The purpose of our vocation is not to dominate, but to serve.

Studying English with  
Fr. Shamon Devasia scj



Service is characteristic of true discipleship. Our community is the place where the young are helped to develop interest for serving the least among their brethren (mentally challenged, physically challenged), the aged and the abandoned children. It is the place where they develop the sense of belonging and always have this question in their mind, "What more can I do for my community, for my brothers, for my formators and for my congregation?"

The third lesson is to learn acceptance and self-acceptance.

To be a good religious in the future is important to learn to accept our own mistakes and the mistakes of others; accept that we are differ-



*The whole SCJ "community" in Vietnam - among which the three young people making vocational discernment - as guests for dinner by a family of well-wishers.*

ent from each other.

We have to accept everyone as they are, with their own limitations and work as a team in formation. All this will teach them how to accept the will of God and accept the

needs of the congregation in the future when they become religious.

The first important step to live in community life is to renounce myself, my egoism and learn to accept others. This is a cross that we have to carry and through this we will understand how to live a meaningful

life in the community.

I conclude by sharing this quotation "Your life today is the result of your attitudes and choices in the past. Your life tomorrow will be the result of your attitudes and the choices you make today."

*Albert Sa-at scj  
Vietnam*



*We entrust this new stage of the journey in Vietnam to the Virgin of Betharram and to Saint Michael Garicoïts! Always forward!*



**REGION SAINT MICHAEL GARICOÏTS**

FRANCE SPAIN  
 ITALY CENTRAL AFRICA  
 IVORY COAST HOLY LAND

**France-Spain**

• On November 16 and 17, the young people from the parishes of Colomiers and Pibrac went to Betharram to make their first retreat as a preparation to receive Confirmation. They were accompanied by Fr. François Tohonon SCJ.

They had meetings and prayer sessions. They visited the site of Betharram: the Sanctuary, the chapel of St. Michael Garicoïts and the Museum.

May the Holy Spirit, the "Interior Master" (St. Michael Garicoïts), support them on their journey in following Jesus.

• The newly-appointed Cardinal of Rabat paid a visit to Mgr. Vincent Landel SCJ, his predecessor. On Tuesday 5 November, His Eminence the Cardinal Cristobal Lopez Romero SDB, Archbishop of Rabat (Morocco), honored the community of Pibrac by visiting his predecessor Mgr Vincent Landel scj, as a token of friendship and fraternity.

It was an opportunity for sharing about the life and mission of the Church in Morocco and in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, which is a topic of study and reflection in the Country.

**Italy**

• On 27 October, World Mission Day was held at the Sacred Heart Parish of Lissone. The day was organized by the

Parish Missionary Group. It had began with the celebration of Mass presided over by Fr. Tiziano Pozzi SCJ, of the community of Niem and Regional Vicar of Central Africa, who has come to Italy for a short holiday, with the Superior Fr. Giacomo Spini SCJ.

The celebration was animated by the choir "Sahuti wa Afrika".

The day was ended with a community lunch in the oratory.



**REGION FR. AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR**

ARGENTINA URUGUAY  
 PARAGUAY BRAZIL

**Brazil**

• On November 15, in the community of Passa Quatro, a meeting of the Betharramite laity of the Vicariate began with a Eucharistic concelebration. These lay associates came from different parts in the country.

The meeting was aimed at preparing the pre-Chapter and the Regional Chapter to be held in 2020.

The theme for reflection, study and prayer was the following: "Going out, as a community, to meet life and the multiple peripheries".

The meeting ended at noon on November 17th.



**REGION SAINT MARY OF JESUS  
 CRUCIFIED**

ENGLAND INDIA  
 THAILAND

**England**

• 22 years of faithful and selfless service. The parish community of

Saint John & Martin in Balsall Heath (Birmingham), during a solemn concelebration, bid farewell to the parish priest, Father Dominic Innamorati SCJ, who after 22 years of faithful service ended his active ministry in the Parish and joined the Olton Friary community.

The brothers and fathers of the Vicariate of England, the dean, the permanent deacon of the parish, many parishioners and friends, participated in the solemn concelebration presided over by Fr Dominic himself.

In his homily, Fr. Enrico Frigerio SCJ, Regional Superior, briefly recalled Fr. Dominic's various appointments from Caerleon to Droitwich, from Worcester to Great Barr, from Leigh to Balsall Heath where Fr Dominic spent 22 years as a parish priest. He also recalled Dominic's translation into English of the letters of St. Michael Garicoits and the texts published on our spirituality and on the history of the early fathers who brought and spread Betharram in the land of Shakespeare.

Taking as a starting point the liturgy which proposed the reading of the Mass in honor of the Sacred Heart, Fr. Enrico highlighted some features of the good shepherd according to the Heart of Jesus: the relentless care for the marginalised, the search for unity and joy, recalling the tireless activity of Father Dominic in ecumenism and in the inter-religious dialogue.

Speaking of the first English Betharramites, Fr Dominic wrote:

"They were not perfect ... but they won the affection and sometimes the admiration of those they served by bringing a ray of love and even hope in their lives ... Two outstanding features seemed consistent in their lives: qualities reflected in St Michael's life. Service and joy".

We offer Fr Dominic our congratulations and we ask him to continue his valuable service by praying for our religious family.

### Thailand

- On Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 December, the community of Chiang-May hosted a meeting of the community bursars with the General Bursar, Fr. Graziano Sala SCJ. The meeting was promoted by the Regional Vicar, Fr. Chan Kunu SCJ, who wanted to offer two days of intense training on economic and administrative issues concerning the Vicariate.

The participation of all the community bursars of the Vicariate showed their availability and their desire to live these moments as a privileged opportunity for their formation.

On December 3, during the morning Eucharistic celebration, the religious of the Vicariate paid their tribute to Father Eugène Lhouerrou SCJ, who died last October 28 after spending many years in Thailand and to Father Carlo Antonini SCJ (of the Vicariate of Italy), who returned to the Father's House on Sunday 1st December.

Now is the time to continue the mission...Always forward!



• On Wednesday 4 December in the Vicariate of Thailand two brothers: Br. James Thanit Panmanikun SCJ and Br. Peter Rawee Permpoonwicha SCJ. made their final profession. The celebration took place in a festive atmosphere in the chapel of the community of Chiang Mai and was



presided over by the Regional Vicar, Fr. John Chan Kunu SCJ. The perpetual profession was received by Fr. Graziano Sala SCJ, General Bursar and delegate of the Superior General.

It was good to see the participation of many Betharramites in this significant moment for the life of the Vicariate.

Family members of the two young professed and many religious and friends from various cities in the country also took part in the ceremony.

At the end of the celebration, Fr. Graziano conveyed to Br. Thanit and Br. Rawee the wishes of the Superior General and encouraged them to have Jesus as a model who says to the Father "Here I am, I am coming to do your will!".

Following the example of our Father Saint Michael Garicoits, may they know repeat every day: "Here I am!", "Fiat Voluntas Dei".

Readily, unreservedly, irrevocably, out of love.

### ..... In memoriam

*We express our condolences to five of our brethren and their families who have recently lost a dear one, whom we entrust to God's mercy.*

† On November 19, **Mrs N'Goran Ahou Suzanne**, mother of Br Hippolyte Yomafou SCJ (of the community of Dabakala, Vicariate of Ivory Coast), died.

† On November 25, in Muangnam (Thailand), at the age of 68 years, **Mrs Rosa Naueiv Charoentham**, mother of Fr Charoentham Camillo Mongkhon SCJ, of the community of Chiang Mai, Vicariate of Thailand, returned to the Father's House.

† On December 5, **Fr Peter Kelly**, 98, of the Menevia Diocese, brother of Fr Tom Kelly scj, of the community of Droitwich, has died. He retired from his ministry only three years ago and moved into a nursing home.

† On December 8, **Mr Sebastian OL Odiyathinkal**, 65, father of Fr Subesh scj, of the community of Barracas (Argentina) has died.

† On Tuesday, December 10, **Mr. Thierry Yarkaï**, 40-year-old, brother of Fr. Marie-Paulin Yarkaï SCJ, of the St. Michael community of Bouar (Central African Vicariate), returned to the Father's house.

# Father Carlo Antonini scj

Rho, 20 July 1931 • Albavilla, 1st December 2019 (Italy)

## Homily of Fr. Piero Trameri scj for the funeral of Fr. Carlo Antonini

You might think that Father Carlo deliberately chose this first Sunday of Advent for his ultimate meeting with the Lord who had called him.

The beautiful metaphor of a monk, in a reflection about the time of Advent, enlightened me : Advent, he says, is like a door wide open in front of us, which we are called to cross in order to venture on a path which will lead us to an encounter. A door wide open... a path... an encounter ! This image depicts as well Fr. Carlo's life, his whole life and above all his last years. I recall him sitting in his armchair, in front of the wide open window giving on the house gate, watching who was ringing at the door, waiting... continuously waiting.

Waiting, yes, but after hearing the bell, he ventured, with his fresh, candid enthusiasm, beyond this door to meet the persons who were waiting for him, whom the Lord entrusted to him one after the other.

After the seminary and his studies in Colico and Albiate, after the consecration to the Lord in the family of the Sacred Heart of Betharram, and once he had reached the sacerdoce on May 31st 1958, he had devoted himself to the formation of the small seminarist in Albavilla. So to say, he had become their idol because of his passion for motorbiking, for sport, for football,



and also because of his abilities in engines and also in maths.

Enthusiastic, even impetuous, he did not remain a long time inside the closed doors of the seminary, he often opened them wide to go in haste and animate the oratories and parishes of the neighbourhood. He rushed to organize catechesis, sport tournaments, courses for engaged young people, to celebrate weddings, to take photos (his passion), bringing everywhere his irrepressible enthusiasm, his impetuous human warmth and his natural sympathy.

Many young people, nowadays grown-ups, still remember his friendly pats on their cheeks. Fr. Carlo wanted, in the middle of his life, to obtain first the licence in theology in the Angeli-

cum in Rome, then the doctorate, also in theology, in the Latran, with a thesis on our Founder which he was always proud of.

To venture for meeting the young people and every person, to announce the Gospel accurately, added to enthusiasm, he felt the need for listening to the Word and meditate it attentively, for a personal deepening, for a strong cultural and theological preparation. Assets which, added to his everlasting enthusiasm, enabled him to live the most various personal experiences :

- a well-loved teacher during many years in the scientific High School of Erba (Lombardy) and the headmaster's right hand in the years of students' contestation.

- called afterwards to found a new parish in Giussano (Lombardy).

- assistant to the parish priest in Santa Rosa da Viterbo in suburban Rome.

- parish priest in Carcano, near Albavilla (Lombardy).

- and at last, for more than fifteen years, parish priest in Sant'Ilario al Gallarate (suburb of Milan) where he accompanied lovingly the parochial community and embellished the new church without sparing his efforts, and where his strong constitution began to show the first signs of weariness.

After having reluctantly left the responsibility of the parish, and remembering the words of Jesus we have also heard today : *'He who wants to walk after me, let him renounce himself, take his cross everyday and follow me'*, he

lived his last six years in Albavilla, never sparing himself, and crossing again, at the smallest opportunity, the wide-open door of his heart to meet the people he had known along the years, whom he found again with happiness. Every morning, he made his daily walk to the newspaper seller's, walking with difficulty but happy to meet old friends in the bar, venturing in a pastoral ministry while the faithful often had to hold their breaths, since they were not used to his frequent falls precisely at the altar during the celebrations... like Jesus on the way to Calvary. A Calvary becoming for Fr. Carlo harder and harder, and exhausting the last years. Anyway, he faced it smiling and without any complaint.

During these ultimate days, waiting for the last and most true encounter, surrounded and taken care of by his family, was arduous. I suppose he once more watched, with his heart's eyes, the wide-open door in front of him, waiting...

He did not need to move and venture on other paths of life, he did not need to go out, nor to go and meet Him... the Lord Himself came to meet him ! He came ahead of him, with Mary, the true 'star' of his life, to welcome him in His paternal embrace. We believe he is now clasped in strong arms which 'sustain' him, and the arms of an immense tenderness which protect him, in a hug which is the truest encounter. •

## Fr. Etchecopar: what about the man?

*Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj*

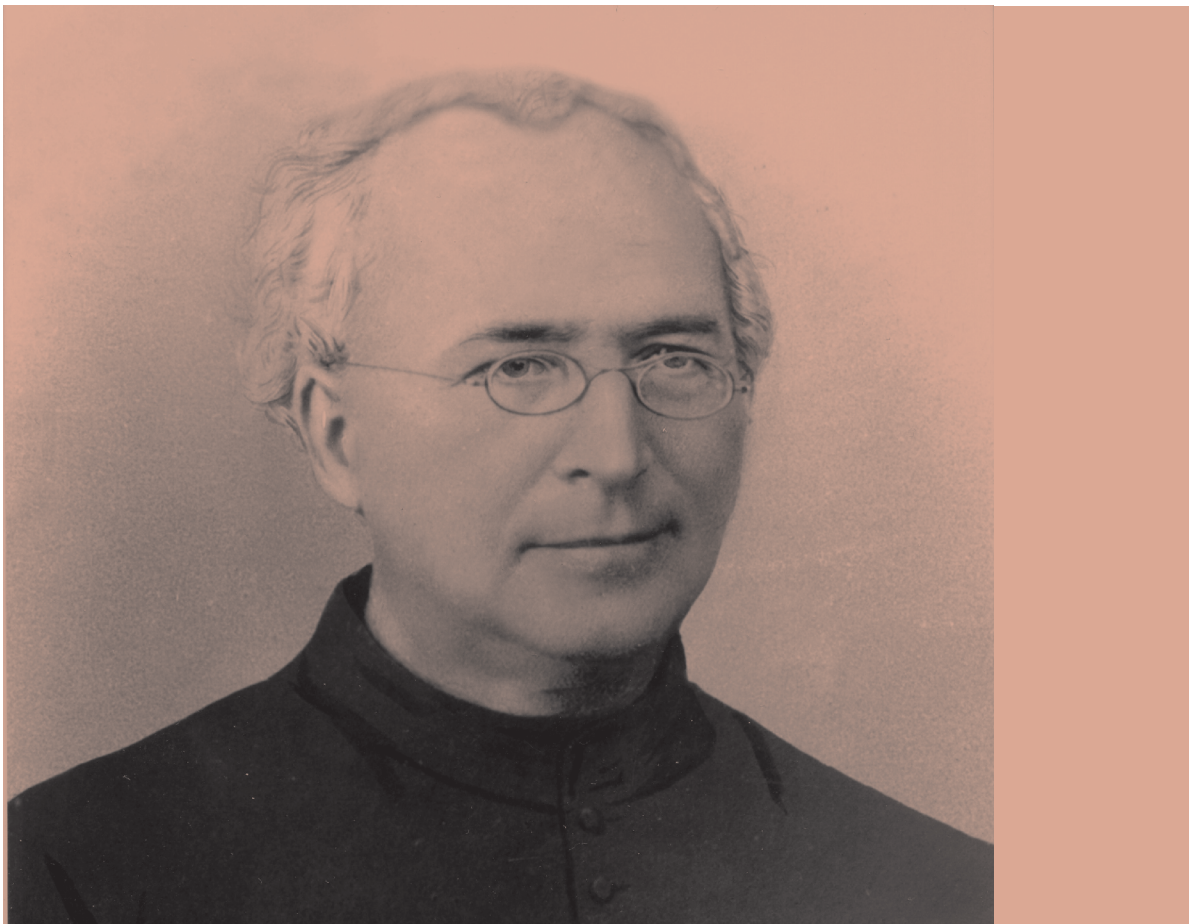
Throughout the year, we have been looking closely at the energy that Fr. Auguste deployed in the service of the Congregation in order to surely build upon the foundations of the charism left by Fr. Garicoits and to ground it on that particular rock who is the successor of St. Peter. But it is also important to take an interest in his person.

Father Etchécopar was tall in stature. He had harmonious, regular and fine features; a colourful face, a clear and frank look, and a golden voice. He moved those who attended his sung masses. His whole person radiated an air of majesty, of a natural and sovereign dignity, tempered by a gentle and cordial simplicity ... He

fully put the gifts of a first rate personality at the service of his mission: an easy and penetrating intelligence, supported by a broad humanist culture; a very sure practical judgment, formed by a fine subtle understanding of faith and reason, open to all the issues of his age and mastering them with ease. He had no university degree. So it has been said that he never had to regret an untimely decision or step.<sup>1</sup>

The nobility and the warmth of the affection of his heart impress even more. He never had any trace or tendency towards bitterness or ha-

1) *Duvignau, L'Homme au visage de lumière, p. 7 and following*



tred<sup>2</sup>. For him, people came before things. His gentleness towards the little ones, the poor, the sick, especially his family, was expressed both on the family level and the religious level, and often in new creative ways. But, here again, his tenderness was always fired by the Heart of Christ or that of Our Lady and thus penetrated all human activity. He was also sensitive to the turbulent political situation in France and the difficulties facing the Church. He was a man very attached to his family: fathers, brothers and sisters from America.

By nature, he could have been violent, but helped by his family and his school, he acquired great self control. He sometimes reacted vigorously to defend the rights of God or faithfulness to the Rule or duty. He knew how to reconcile strength and gentleness.

Given the circumstances of his life, he could have imposed his own ideas in the search for serenity on the Congregation, but the veneration he had for Saint Michael Garicoïts and the knowledge of his project did not allow it. He had the merit of understanding better than anyone the excellence of the charism of Saint Michael Garicoïts almost as soon as he got to know him. His greatest concern was to assimilate it fully and to communicate it to all religious.

But the most astonishing is this: the more he tried to fade and disappear into the background in order to

highlight his model whom he never ceased praising, the more his own personality expanded and impressed itself on all. All considered him a disciple of Garicoïts, both in the diocese and in the Congregation. One of his almost daily activities was to go up to the Calvary, to prostrate himself before Fr. Garicoïts' tomb in the chapel of the resurrection and to entrust to him the people and the great projects of the Congregation.

He was a man of God. He celebrated mass with great dignity and spent long periods of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. He presented there before god the serious issues of the Congregation and there renewed his imitation of the Founder to discover and put into practice the will of God as the great objective of his life. He maintained his union with Christ all day long, which, in prayer, continued in the accomplishment of daily tasks.

Hence the luminosity of his face which several witnesses say they perceived: it was "a light which seemed to come out from inside and made the face of Fr. Etchécopar translucent"<sup>3</sup>. Many others joined the testimonies of Father Buzy and Father Fernessole. The phenomenon occurred very frequently and varied in intensity depending on the situation in which Fr. Etchécopar found himself. Here is the testimony of Fr. Buzy: "He always produced for me, like all my fellow students, an impression of radiance which made me consider

2) Cf. *Fernessole*, *Le Très Révérend Père Auguste Etchécopar*, pp. 256-264

3) *Duvignau*, *L'Homme au visage de lumière*, p. 164

him as a supernatural being”<sup>4</sup>.

In 1862 he had his first pulmonary embolism. The other eight caused by a simple cold or draught, did not give him much respite until 1869. In 1872 he relapsed and the doctors ordered him to rest for three months. Consequently the pulmonary congestion attacks recurred every year, increasing his state of weakness. Doctors forbade him to travel to South America in 1876 due to his heart condition.

This condition was his personal cross and he accepted it as a sign from God. The total self-control resulting from the great struggles from his youth, and his constant meditation on the mystery of the Cross (especially after his stay in Oloron) helps explain both the friendly welcome he always had for the suffering and the

apparent ease with which he adapted to his permanent disability.

Witnesses to his life unanimously declare that he had never been heard to complain. Those closer to him even go further; they say that he saw sickness as a great gift from the Lord. He cared about the health of others and comforted them with chosen words. He himself confided his ills only to his sister Madeleine.

If Fr. Etchécopar expended his life in tireless labour, if he lived his illness as an offering, until the total exhaustion of his strength, it is because, on the day of his religious profession, he had given his whole life to the Lord without any conditions. If he had taken away from God’s will any part of his activities, he would have felt that he was denying something of his love for Him. •

4) Duvignau, L’Homme au visage de lumière, p. 167



## « Prayer to ask a favour by intercession of Fr. Auguste Etchécopar

*O Christ,  
from this moment you are my example,  
my rule of life, my will,  
my thought, my love.  
I will love you, I will bless you, I will imitate you.  
May your name be hallowed  
by your unworthy servant.  
Your kingdom come in him,  
and your luminous will be done  
in him and for him.*

*Etchécopar F. Etché*

All things were made by the Word; therefore the Word itself has not been made, concludes St. Augustine. This Father also adds: the Word was from the beginning; he was in God, he was God. Yes, all things have been made by the Word; for omnipotence belongs to him as well as the Father. He is the thought of God, the image that God forms of his being, he is the divine model on which all creatures have been, so to speak modelled. What conclusions should we draw from this?

R. 1. Recognise the features of the divine Word in all creatures; 2. Apply ourselves especially to recognising and honouring these traits within ourselves; 3. to pay homage to him in all that we do and all that has been created for our use.

M 185

San José Highschool,  
Asunción



*Drawing a heart is never trivial!*

*Dare to represent, on the ground, the heart of Jesus is not neutral.*

*It is sufficient to observe the look of these young girls: look of grace, look of inner joy and peace. Do they prepare for the coming of Emmanuel: God-with-us?*

*Christmas is the feast of God who becomes man. Yes, God takes a child's heart to say only His Love...*

*So, we can understand their silence to draw this heart.*

***Happy Christmas to all!***



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