

NEF

Betharram

Nr. 145

NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE - 117TH YEAR, 11^a series - 14 February 2019

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A word from the superior general

Going out with the programme of the heart of Jesus

We want to share "the joys and hopes, the sorrow and anguish of all peoples "

Dear Betharramites:

While Father Satish takes us in the Jeep to Hyderabad, after having visited the Bidar mission in India, I intend to go out and share this February editorial with you. The pathway of mission is always a bit long. There are routes of all kinds in which there is no shortage of pitfalls, dust and mud; but when you reach your destination, everything is pleasant. Something similar happens in our own pilgrim journey.

Right now the faces & the expressions of affection and the looks of the children of the Kingdom come to mind: *Jesu Narason! Jutai Jesù! Jai Jesù! Jai Christ!* Four different ways of saying: Praised be Jesus Christ! This is how the brothers of the communities of the Northeast and of Bidar greet the Christians, joining their two hands in front and smiling; the Christians greet also by touching their chest, bowing and asking for the priest's blessing.

Sandals are removed at the door of the church and people are very attentive to serve and receive everyone with a warm welcome: with garlands, stoles and mantles ("Shawls"). They like to sing and dance a lot.

In return, they need someone to announce that Jesus Christ is the Lord (without proselytising, or a hidden agenda). They wait for that close God who loves them and has freed them from all evil, from all anguish, giving them new Life.

Only a few will come to baptism, the village leader must be the first, and then others will follow so that they can assume the Christian faith. They need to be catechised and so missionary work becomes "a wager of love". In the schools animated by the sisters and the priests, they are educated for tomorrow. The Holy Spirit will silently do his work. It is the Kingdom that grows day and night, and nobody knows how ... (cf Mark 4.27)

Mission is the fruit of sending out. *'As the Father has sent me, so I send you'* (Jn 20:21); *'Go, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves, therefore be as cunning as serpents and meek as doves'* (Mt 10,16). This is a non-Christian country. It is not easy to be a witness in these lands though the Christian minority venerates the Apostle Saint Thomas as the first evangelist and martyr. Soon 25 years of Betharramite presence will be celebrated here. A premature sowing was asked by the Lord, with the offering of the life of the first Delegate Superior of India: Fr. Xavier Pontokkan

(2006). Today there are 20 members in the vicariate, plus another 10 in mission in four different continents: Africa (Central African Republic), America (Argentina), Europe (Italy, France, England) and Asia (Vietnam). All of them have taken on challenges, collaborating and giving witness that we are called to go out and share. How I wish that other Betharramites, of any age, would so offer themselves to be sent in our missionary congregation!

Mission always requires inculturation, and perhaps this is the greatest challenge. It takes time and a generous willingness to lose everything to win Christ among the brothers of other cultures. Sometimes we arrive at our mission without being aware of it. St. Michael said to the first missionaries: *'Be men of God, stripped of everything, surrendered to Him, always obey your superiors: without reservation, without delay, without turning back, more for love than for any other reason'* (Letter to the missionaries of America at San José School)

It is also necessary that there be a clear project when we receive a mission.

Sometimes, we have improvised a bit, thinking that the 'newcomer' had an obligation to adapt and that the 'missionary state grace' would easily allow it. This is an illusion. We must take the time to prepare a good Community Apostolic Project, because –although it sounds repetitive– the community and the apostolate are essential components

of religious life. The C.A.P. is a basic tool with which to accompany and integrate our brothers, and promote pastoral effectiveness in all forms of mission to which Betharramites come from other vicariates. Pastoral improvisation does not work anymore in a critical and demanding society like ours. We may have abundant communications media, but they are not 'magical'; They are at the service of mission itself and depend fundamentally on our witness of faith. Of course, if we have a project, but we lack the missionary fervour, the desire to announce Christ *'with all our religious life'* (Rule of Life 13), we will lack the essential, even if we use the most modern technology.

Mission is above all motivated by an impulse, the generous impulse of the Heart of Jesus saying to his Father: *Here I am, to do your will!* This is an impulse that perseveres, that dedicates time to people, to the arduous and complicated mission, because it is an impulse of love. The blood and water that springs from the heart of Jesus after his death are the expression of a heart that has given everything. That is our model, the one who is willing to spend everything for love serving the brothers, giving their lives for them.

The sign of a life given are those drops from His side, because throughout his mission, Jesus Christ, the Apostle of the Father, *'made springs of living water flow from his side'* (John 7. 38), for the salvation of the world.

Mission is also the fruit of material sharing, because it could not be carried out without the help of benefactors and the communion of goods of the whole congregation. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for their solidarity with the poorest in India. For example, the house of Simaluguri has a small parish with 12 Christian families. The church is made of reeds and some land is being bought to build a school attended by children from Muslim, animist and Hindu families and a few Christians.

'Taste and see that the Lord is good, how happy is he who puts his trust in him' (Ps 33.9).

The Love of the Betharramites opens doors here and works miracles. Two vocations from the Northeast and two from Bidar have already emerged, and are being nourished in our houses in Mangalore and Bangalore. *'What have they seen in our family to feel called to come to be with us?'* From apparent sterility emerges a *'manna hidden to many'* (St. Michael). While we are here, let gratitude flow freely. The Betharramite who gives himself in mission manifests that he feels loved by God.

This year we want to go out to share, let us put all our effort into announcing Christ despite the limits of our position. Let us do all we can with missionary fervour, and leave the rest to the Lord, as always.

Fr. Gustavo SCJ
SUPERIOR GENERAL

Homily, Feast of the presentation of the Lord, XXIIIth World Day for Consecrated Life, Vatican Basilica

Today's Liturgy (February 2 2019) shows Jesus who goes out to meet his people. It is the feast day of encounter: the newness of the Child encounters the tradition of the temple; the promise finds fulfillment; young Mary and Joseph encounter the elderly Simeon and Anna. Everything, therefore, meets as Jesus arrives.

What does this mean for us? Above all, that we too are called to welcome Jesus who comes to meet us. To encounter him: the God of life is to be encountered every day of our lives; not now and then, but every day. To follow Jesus is not a decision taken once and for all, it is a daily choice. And we do not meet the Lord virtually, but directly, we encounter him in our lives, in the concreteness of life. Otherwise, Jesus becomes only a nice memory of the past. When we welcome him as the Lord of life, however, as the centre and the beating heart of everything, then he is alive and lives anew in us. And what happened in the temple also happens to us: around him everything meets, and life becomes harmonious. With Jesus we find again the courage to carry on and the strength to remain firm. The encounter with the Lord is the source. It is important then to return to the source: to retrace in our mind the decisive moments of encounter



with him, to renew our first love, perhaps writing down our love story with the Lord. This would be good for our consecrated life, so that it does not become a time that passes by, but rather a time of encounter.

If we call to mind our original meeting with the Lord, we become aware that it did not arise as something private between us and God. No, it blossomed in the context of a believing people, alongside many brothers and sisters, at precise times and places. The Gospel tells us this, showing how the encounter takes place within the people of God, in its concrete history, in its living traditions: in the temple, according to the law, in the context of prophecy, in young and old together (cf Lk 2:25-28, 34). It is like this too in the consecrated life: it blossoms and flourishes in the Church; if it is isolated, it withers. It matures when the young and elderly walk together, when the young rediscover their roots and the elderly welcome those fruits. When we walk alone, however, when we remain fixated on the past or jump ahead in trying to survive, then the consecrated life stagnates. Today, on the feast day of encounter, we ask for the grace to rediscover the living Lord amid a believing people, and to allow the charism we have received to encounter today's graces.. [...] •

Betharramites listening to the call for holiness (2)

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

Secont part : *Signs of holiness in today's world: PERSEVERANCE, PATIENCE AND MEEKNESS (§§ 112 to 121), with Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj.* ●●●

Gaudete ed exsultate

§ 110. *Within the framework of holiness offered by the Beatitudes and Matthew 25:31-46, I would like to mention a few signs or spiritual attitudes that, in my opinion, are necessary if we are to understand the way of life to which the Lord calls us. [...]*

§ 111. *The signs I wish to highlight are not the sum total of a model of holiness, but they are five great expressions of love for God and neighbour that I consider of particular importance in the light of certain dangers and limitations present in today's culture.*

'The hidden manna: perseverance, patience and meekness...' this is the title Saint Michael Garicoïts would doubtlessly have given to the articles of the recent apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exultate* (GE) of Pope Francis about sanctity (nr. 112 to 121). Saint Michaël Garicoïts was writing to Father Diego Barbé, the Superior of Saint Joseph school in Buenos Aires, in these terms : 'But what do you want? When one's ideas are blocked, it is difficult to accept it. Then one believes that one is losing time when things are not going according to the inventions of our own imaginings. One does not know how to understand, appreciate,

and embrace the disposition; corde magno et animo volenti et constanti: obscurity, sterility and lack of success is what one sees oneself reduced to, by obedience. This is the manna unfortunately hidden from so many'. (Saint Michael Garicoïts' Letters, Tome I: from 1825 to 1859, edited, published with notes by Pierre Miéyaa, scj; letter nr. 163)

According to Pope Francis, our contemporary culture is characterized by dangers and limitations, and especially by a sense of anxiety, sometimes violent, that distracts and debilitates (GE 111). We have to be saints in our fast-paced, noisy and aggressive world (GE 112). This social climate leads us to answer instinctively by aggressiveness and violence, which is not a christian way of reacting.

We have to struggle against our aggressive and self-centered inclinations, and to remain vigilant so that they do not become rooted: 'Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger' (Eph 4:26) (GE 114). We may sometimes happen to react in such a way on the Web. We allow us to behave in a way we would not allow ourselves in reality. Even if it is verbal and not physical, aggressing an other person, for instance, can be very serious, since where the other person's image is ruthlessly destroyed, one's tongue is 'a world of evil' and 'set on fire by hell, sets all things ablaze' (GE 115).

For us, to be saints is to reproduce

in today's world the attitudes and behaviour of Jesus, the Incarnate Word, meek and humble of heart, who passed in the world doing good and freeing from evil. He founded his life on his trust on the faithful Father who never ceased to love. In front of difficulties, the features of his face hardened, a sign that he endured ; he patiently adapted himself to the timing of people, he withstood unjust aggressions.

The way following Christ can't be followed halfway, we must go as far as... remaining faithful to God and to our brothers even among the small humiliations which are the share of everyday life, even if, seen from a human point of view, it means losing. *'Humility can only take root in the heart through humiliations. Without them, there is no humility or holiness. If you are unable to suffer and offer up a few humiliations, you are not humble and you are not on the path to holiness. The holiness that God bestows on his Church comes through the humiliation of his Son. He is the way. Humiliation makes you resemble Jesus; it is an unavoidable aspect of the imitation of Christ. For "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21).'* (GE 118)

The reason why we remain faithful to the Gospel is a life solidly centered on God (the Father) who loves us and sustains us, as was Jesus' life. The one who trusts the loving God who is always to our side is also able to remain near the brother facing difficulties (cf GE

112). For us who want to be christian saints, this asked from us: *'Give the same consideration to all others alike. Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people on their own terms. Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom.'* (Rm 12, 16)... ; *'Do not be mastered by evil, but master evil with good.'* (Rm 12, 21).

Saint Michael Garicoïts' proposal for us to be real disciples of Christ goes as far as that, and could not be another. Nevertheless, it is a "hidden manna" for those who have not yet reached this effort of looking like Jesus, *sine glossa* (without gloss, without commentary). Saint Michaël says that we must accept humiliations to look like Jesus, as Pope Francis says in the straight line of what Saint Ignatius recommended in the Spiritual Exercises, however reluctant we may be, and to be sure that our *sequela Christi* is authentic. *'Here we have some very precious rules: 1. Not only wish for the humiliations of Our Lord, but actively seek them with all one's heart, solely when God will be better glorified. 2. Prefer humiliations to honour, when God will be equally glorified. 3. And if God will be less glorified by our humiliation, then fear more the honour attached to our duty, than the humiliation which has been denied us.'* (DS § 12)

We must not forget that, for Saint Michael, meekness is one of the virtues of the Heart of Jesus and of the Betharramites. This virtue is very typical of the christian lifestyle, as it allows to hope, to be patient and to answer to evil by goodness, instead of firing up

aggressively. Two expressions of this meekness:

First in the heart of Jesus: 'O You my model, what calm, what oblivion of self. What delicate attention, what exterior, what interior above all, what Heart, what love, what meekness, what patience in the midst of an ocean of sorrow.' Saint Michael transmit us a written meditation of what happened in the Cenacle, after the institution of the Eucharist and the departure of Judas (DS § 11).

In his letters, as in other writings, Saint Michael speaks of *'the spirit of Our Lord Jesus'* which is the spirit of meekness. He opposes it to *'the spirit of rigour'* of John the Baptist and Elijah, and that whom *'the children of thunder'*, James and John, proclaim when they ask for the fire to fall from heaven to destroy those who did not want to accomodate them on their way to Jerusalem. (cf Lc 9, 51-55). The *'spirit of rigour'* eliminates the problem by destroying the enemy. Out you get! Thus he is sure to defeat the enemy. *'The spirit of meekness'*, on the contrary, takes its time, risking to loose, and accepts to live with the problem. He bears, he beleives that the enemy may react in another way and he offers him a new chance: *'he does not break the crushed reed or snuff the faltering wick'* (cf. Is 42,3).

'Elijah was right in following the spirit of his position, but the apostles would have been wrong to follow him, because it was not the spirit of their vocation. The spirit of their vocation was the spirit of the Lord, a spirit of

gentleness, of humility and dedication, to draw sinners gently to repentance and to His imitation. (M. 1124)' (MS 203).

Once, preaching a retreat in a Vicariate of the Congregation, I was speaking of these elements as being an integral part of christian spirituality which Saint Michael has transmitted to us. A religious made me this observation: *'These attitudes and behaviours, we had to live them before the Concile, but not anymore today'*. We were in the 90's of the last century. In the name of a renewed christian life, we attach a great value to the imitation of Christ in what pleases the citizens of our society of well-being, without taking into account what accompanies the *sequela Christi*: *'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.'* (Mk 8, 34-35)

Jesus Christ was the same yesterday, today and for ever. In the same way, christian life is an imitation of Christ yesterday, today and forever. In the past, there were some wrong intrepretations of sanctity and rigorist representations which did not help the persons to free themselves, but also there has always been beaming saints who put forth all their abilities and followed their way in the infinite love of God, renouncing themselves and following Christ with all the consequences it implies. It is the same for us today. •

Mangalore: 20 years dedicated to formation and evangelization

For twenty years now, Betharram has been present at Maria Kripa, Mangalore (India). An online journal of Mangalore has just devoted two long articles to this anniversary and to the presence of our religious among the local population.●●●

Initially founded for the formation of seminarians, the community of Mangalore is increasingly involved in evangelization in urban areas. Today the charism of St. Michael Garicoïts spreads through celebrations and parish missions. The young theology students make the experience of pastoral ministry, as in the center «White Doves», a center for socially disadvantaged children and a retirement home for the elderly.

To celebrate these twenty years of presence, the community, which is currently composed of three fathers and twenty seminarians, took the opportunity of the visit of the Superior General to organize a

ceremony under the aegis of Fr. Arul SCJ, Regional Vicar, and celebrate the event with many parishioners and friends.

Thus, on January 21st, a Thanksgiving Mass was celebrated, presided over by the new Bishop of Mangalore, Mgr. Peter Paul Saldanha. Fr. Gustavo Agín SCJ, Superior General, Fr. Enrico Frigerio SCJ, Regional Superior, and many other Betharramite and diocesan priests participated in the celebration.

The new house of formation, inaugurated on 10 September 2014, was dressed up for the feast. After the mass, the youths linked to our community offered biblical performances, dances and pantomime to all the guests: in the first row were the Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel who, in 1999, made available to the religious of Betharram the house of Maria Kripa. Also many lay people, parishioners and diocesan priests, were invited to



SCJ Formation House in Mangalore, on the inauguration day in 2014 and today.



the festivities.

The ceremony, placed under the sign of gift and gratitude, marked a strong moment of sharing in joy and in the promise of a fruitful future. Forward! Ad multos annos! With an open heart, ready to receive and full of gratitude! •



Regionalisation, 2009-2019 • Vicars' experiences

Paulo Cesar Pinto scj, Regional Vicar in Brazil ••• If I trust my memory, our way of approach and fraternal collaboration truly goes back to more than ten years. At the time when I was a novice, my group had the grace of participating to the first ELAB (Latino-American meeting of Betharramites) in Adrogué, in Argentina. The next step had been the inter-provincial Novitiate (Brazil-Paraguay) in Paulinia, in Brazil. Afterwards, there had been the meeting of Latino-American Betharramite students in Lambaré, in Paraguay. All those meetings were organized and accompanied with a lot of diplomacy by a man of God, a great mystic, who at the time had received the title of coordinator for Latin America, namely Father José Mirande. The meetings followed one another and aroused the desire of knowing and



deepening our history which is so rich, and the spirituality which is a gift of God to our Betharramite Family.

In Brazil, setting regionalization has offered little resistance, taking into account what we had already lived. Our way of mutual aid was already solidly paved. Perhaps the experience was at first marked by a few difficulties concerning the relative powers in government matters, but little by little, helped by practice, those difficulties found a solution and the organization got better and better. If there was a loss of local autonomy, it was made in favour of a greater visibility in communion and unity.

The process goes on step by step: today we have a Paraguayan Master of Novices, a Brazilian Master of Scolastics, and we have lived our third Regional Meeting of Animators of Com-

munities (Superiors) ; we are preparing for a next ELAB which will be followed by another meeting for the Animators of Communities; the regional Mission in Paso de los Toros, in Uruguay, is led by a Brazilian, Father Eder, and a Paraguayan, Father Alcides. As for Father Francisco (Kito) he is preparing to spend a year in Betharram. Four new professed, two Paraguayans and two Brazilians, will join our Scolasticate in

Belo Horizonte (Brazil) this year, to start studying theology.

Life is growing under our eyes and is multiplying around us. In the Betharramite tree, the Latino-American branch has found a new vitality and strength. As children of Saint Michael, 'small, constant and happy', we are building history in our time. 'Forward, always!' •

Tiziano Pozzi scj, Regional Vicar in Central Africa ••• Ten years on from instituting the Regions, I have been asked the following question: What does the word 'Regionalisation' mean to you? What follows will not be 'proper' reply in the formal way which addresses every aspect of the matter in a strictly academic manner. Nor will it be a complete, neatly packaged set of answers. Just a few flashes, a few thoughts to help each one to reflect on this topic.



Well, the first word which comes to my mind is 'openness'. Yes, I believe that's the right word. Let us remember for a moment how the Congregation was organised in the past! Autonomous Provinces and Delegations connected to the Generalate House through different statutes. Basically everybody was happy in their little domain: the Italians with the Italians; the French with the French, etc. Yes we met up from time to time but, with the exception of the Chapter meetings, that was on an informal basis.

Regionalisation has obliged us to talk to one another and develop our sense of responsibility and feeling of belonging to

the Congregation. Remember how it was in the days of the Provincial Councils? All religious brothers from the same country... In the Regional Councils nowadays, it's a totally different picture. Beforehand, there were exchanges between the Provinces, we did talk to one another (and not always on the nicest of terms) but that was on the basis of news passed around or a special friendship with a member of another Province. These days, within a single Council* (*the Regional Council), we are kept abreast of the joys and hardships of a Region as a whole and all the members of the Council are stakeholders in the process of arriving at the best, most timely decision. It is true that the responsibilities for each member of the community have increased. Just think about the Economy of Communion, the small and the large gestures made between Vicariates, Regions and the Congregation... In the past you applied to 'who you knew', you appealed to the generous hearts of a few brothers... In those areas we call 'mission lands' everyone concentrated on ensuring success for his particular project. These days,

there is more sharing, at least that's been my experience!

Also let's think about training and the formation of our young brothers. In our Region, all the Vicariates are involved in some way or another. There clearly is a greater participation.

True, the Regional Superior can seem a long way away. Mine is 6000 km away... The Regional Vicar may seem a person of little importance. Sometimes a brother does not know who to turn to: the Vicar or straight to the Regional Superior directly. True, there may be problems related to the character of the person involved, particularly if the Vicar has a strong personality and tends to want to be the one taking decisions. There may also be awkward questions which are better addressed directly to the Regional Superior. However, first and foremost I believe it is a question of frankness and honesty. You need to have the courage, when the time is right, to tell your own Vicar that what he did or the decision he took was not right... I don't think it would be the end of the world! Our Rule of Life provides for Superiors at all levels and I think it is right and salutary to respect the hierarchy who, don't forget, are not the owners of our religious family but are properly and rightfully at its service.

One of the Vicar's major responsibili-



Jean-Dominique Delgue scj, General Vicar, former Regional Vicar of the Vicariate of France-Spain. ●●● Region-

ties is to try always to live and act in the most impartial manner possible. That is particularly difficult in vicariates where the membership is highly international... Hence the importance of the Vicariate Council.

My greatest concern or, to be completely truthful, my most serious fault, is not devoting enough time to the Vicariate and above all, to the priests and brothers, taken as separate individuals. For some of them a phone call is enough; others require more attention... and not just the younger members...

What's important for a Regional Vicar is to always feel at home, wherever that may be. Fatima and St-Michael Garicoits in Bouar, and now Bimbo near Bangui, these are my home. I must always remember that.

I am pleased to conclude my thoughts, simple and surely incomplete as they are, in the company of our Rule of Life: *'By their perpetual profession, all religious, equal in dignity and their activity, participate in obedience "willingly and lovingly" confident and creative in the family project as defined by the authority of the Congregation.'* (Rule of Life § 177)

There you are, 'regionalisation' has shrunk the distances... let's make the most of it!

Your brother in Christ, Fr Tiziano scj ●

alisation celebrates its 10th birthday this year. At its creation, I was nominated Regional Vicar of France and Spain. This step pushed me to read over the experience I have lived through, simply and without pretention, in the work

of the vicariate council for 8 years, to share some beliefs on the importance of this council in the activity of the vicariate.

Every vicariate has its richness, its difficulties and its inadequacies. I admit, sometimes, I used to question myself on the usefulness of this vicariate council which has no decisions to make. In the course of the meetings, I discovered how much the council is first and foremost a life-giver! An item on the agenda which has never been omitted is sharing in the life of communities. Each community superior took the time needed to share joys and difficulties that his community might have experienced or gone through, to potentially warn on the advisability of considering a change for a brother. And this could take more than half the time of the council.

Together, we experience the strength of sharing and of listening in order to welcome life, the whole life of the vicariate transforming with the reduction of the number of religious, with important issues concerning the mission

places, administration... This moment of council has always touched me and given me a prod. Whatever the age of the religious, life is there. Life is always a gift. Life is always to welcome, to accompany, to make use of. And a profound call resonates to dare to contemplate this gift of life experienced by the brothers in the gift of their life with their joys, their difficulties, their questions. An invitation to contemplate the whole life of the vicariate, which is so rich, first and foremost by the different members which make it up.

This sharing of the life of communities can allow the local superior to take some space, some distance while expressing what matters to him to communicate to the council and knowing he will be listened to, supported. And it is the experience of the collegiality that each member of the council lives to hold together the life of the vicariate to motivate it. Proposals came from this sharing that the regional vicariate passed on to the regional council, the body of decision ; motivation meetings got going, like a session on reli-



First Council in 2019 of the Vicariate of France-Spain: the Regional Vicar, Fr. Laurent Bacho scj, with the community superiors.

gious life, a day of pilgrimage during the holy year of Mercy, the year of St Michael Garicoits; the agenda of the Vicariate Assembly was established together.

This sharing also gave rise to in-depth exchanges which allowed us to draw out important factors for discernment to bring about such a mission, such a possible change; so the regional vicar could present them to the regional council for a decision or a choice to make.

Do we dare say that the Vicariate Council is the privileged witness of the 'beating heart' of the body which is a vicariate? I believe so. That way, any

Vicariate Council allows us to contemplate life which is so rich and so diverse, experienced by all religious, to keep hope in the face of difficulties, to not be afraid to discern new paths, new responses with humility, to go forward together in faithfulness to the plan wanted by St Michael Garicoits: *'Following the Incarnate Word, whom "the Father consecrated and sent into the world" (John 10.36) we in turn are consecrated and sent to be in the world, by our whole religious life, a sign proclaiming Jesus Christ.'* (Rule of Life 13) •

Betharram : the first scaffolding has been erected

In October the first phase of restoration works has finally begun in Betharram (see Photo). The Calvary, our heritage, is also the heritage of an entire region. This is why the financial package was put together by the Joint Municipalities of the Nay District (delegated by the municipality of Lestelle-Betharram) thanks to the fundamental contributions of various communities and partners, including



our Congregation, through the association Les Amis Des Sanctuaires. However, this funding relates only to this first phase of work that will

restore the first four stations and the footpath of the Way of the Cross. ●●

The Calvary of Betharram is a monument in danger. Eroded stones, fractured bas-reliefs, roofs topped with dry twigs and overgrown branches, faded paintings, etc. Here is a summary of current estimates for the work: €609.000 excluding taxes, surveys and fees. The grants from State, Region and Department will cover € 455,813, plus € 22,000 from the Bern mission (a French Lottery fund begun in 2018 for safeguarding historic buildings in danger). The total renovation will cost € 2.2 million and works will last until 2021/22.

The complete inventory of the important and urgent work required by a senior architect of historical monuments provides for the structural repair of some buildings which will necessitate the dismantling and reconstruction of some stations.

Also included is the restoration of the surrounding site (e.g. pruning,...), natural drainage channels for rainwater flow, covers and replacement of all galvanised metal rainwater goods.

The whole collection of artistic components: paintings, sculptures, stained glass, bas-reliefs, vaults, grids, will require special treatment. For some this means removal to a workshop, for restoration, painting and added protection, anti-corrosion treatment and stripping.

This work is fitting for a place that welcomes 60,000 pilgrims a year, as

well as hikers who have the chance to appreciate a meditative climb to the esplanade of the Resurrection as part of the GR (long distance footpath).

'The Calvary of Betharram is unique,' says Fr Michel Vignau in the video promoting restoration work¹. 'It is evangelical with its fifteen stations, with their different levels of architecture and of course bas-reliefs made by Alexandre Renoir...'

'We have a duty to restore it. Why? Because there is a real heritage value, a real artistic and architectural value. We owe it to future generations ..., so that they can continue to admire and enjoy it. If we do nothing, then like any building and heritage, it will deteriorate more and more...' concluded Mr. Berchon, Mayor of Lestelle-Betharram in this same video.

It is therefore a relief to see the first chapels surrounded by scaffolding and tarpaulins, ready for the most caring and expert care. In a few months we will be able to rediscover the beauty of this heritage, so dear to so many. ●

1) See Youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Soi9-sLmDfo> (distributed by the Heritage Foundation).

See also the interview with Fr. Laurent Bacho scj: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gp1euJt57V4>



CONGREGATION



On February 3rd, at 7.00 am, Fr. Jean Couret scj returned to the Father's House.

Jean Couret was a member of the community of

the 'Maison Neuve' at Betharram (Vicariate of France-Spain). He was 82 years of age and 62 years of religious profession.

For some years he had not been able to speak, but he could communicate with his eyes. He lived his ministry at his workplace, having been a worker-priest for many years.

Along with his family, his friends and the whole family of Betharram we pray for him.

We will pay a tribute to our brother in the coming days.



REGION SAINT MICHAEL GARICOÏTS

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

Ivory Coast

On the occasion of the World Day of Consecrated Life, celebrated on 2nd February, the religious men and women of the diocese of Yopougon, wishing to mark this day

with a spiritual activity, have given themselves as a means to share with Christ a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, in Yamoussoukro, around the theme: 'Love - the key of the evangelization'. In the joy and desire to go with the Lord, the community of Adiapodoumé responded to this meeting through some of its members who had the grace to animate the Eucharistic Celebration.

France-Spain

The new year began with fraternal meetings in the family. On 21 January, the Council of the Vicariate of France-Spain met at Betharram.

It was an excellent opportunity for our brothers to gather together in order to continue the journey together and to entrust the new year and the projects of the Vicariate to our Father Saint Michael Garicoïts and to Our Lady of Betharram.

The Izards –the association that deals with the management of our reception center of Betharram–, held its annual meeting a few days ago. It was an occasion for us to listen to the moral and financial balance and to see together the future prospects. We remember that the center welcomes visitors: individuals, groups, associations, families for a weekend. Let us know more about this calm and peaceful center at the foot of the Virgin Mary, which always offers the saving branch with her Son



Jesus! (Reception center: +33 06 73 09 91 70, accueil@betharram.fr)

Italy

The lay association *Fraternité Me Voici* (France) had a travel in Italy from September 29 to October 8, 2018, with the theme 'Go out and meet the Betharramite communities of the Vicariate, from north to center'. This was the program of ten French lay persons accompanied by their Italian counterparts or by other Betharramites: they went from visits to discoveries, from meetings to exchanges, and from cappuccino to fraternal meals...

'What affected me or touched me,' Pascale Ameil says in the last bulletin *Fraterne*, 'is the conviviality in the parishes, going from the "Eucharistic table" to the "fraternal table". Many lay people are attached to the fathers or to their missions, thanks to the spirituality of Saint Michael - the welcome, the discretion and the smiles in the communities - and in our group, a lot of kindness and attention between us.'



**REGION SAINT MARY OF JESUS
CRUCIFIED**
INDIA
ENGLAND
THAILAND

India

Fr Gustavo Agín SCJ, Superior General, started the canonical visit to the India Vicariate taking part in the Regional Council, held in Bangalore from 15 to 19 January.

The beginning of this important event for the Region Saint Mariam of Jesus Crucified, coincided with the celebration of a very popular festival: Pongal, 4 days of celebration for the abundance of the rice crop and other cereals, of sugar cane and turmeric. The visit of the Superior General continued until February 8th and ended with a Vicariate Assembly. This is an important event in the life of the Indian Vicariate where our young religious are called to respond generously to the challenges the Church is facing in India, today.



The seed that sprouts in good soil *by Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj*

Like Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier and Michael Garicoits..., Auguste Etchécopar was Basque. He was born in Saint-Palais (*Pyrénées Atlantiques*), on the banks of the Bidouze, on 30 May 1830. He was baptised with the name Bernard-Auguste on 1 June 1830 by Father Salaberry, parish priest of Sainte-Madeleine of Saint-Palais. His parents, Jean-Pierre Etchécopar and Ninette Sibas d'Etchécopar, had fifteen children: five died in infancy, two of them in the year of their birth, and ten reached their thirties: Evariste, Séverin, Maxime, Jean-Baptiste, Susanne, Madeleine, Marceline, Eugénie, Julie. Auguste was the eighth of those who survived.



gave him numerous descendants in the well-known families of Tucumán: Etchécopar, Nougues, Terán, Cossio, Avellaneda... Jean-Baptiste went to the United States, where we lose track of him.

The correspondence of Fr. Etchécopar enlightens us on the peculiarities of all the members of the family, their family virtues, and the very deep affection which united them to each other. The family lived in a comfortable position until 1847, when debts caused a setback. The three brothers mentioned earlier went to try their luck in Argentina. Father Fernessole makes some assumptions about the possible reasons for falling into debt:

The causes have remained unknown to us; but it seems, according to some of the seminarian's discreet allusions (Auguste Etchécopar), that Mr. Etchécopar suffered from some injustice on the part of the Administration, and that some financial investments were unfortunate; it must not be forgotten that the salary of a postman or even a postmaster was not enough for such a large family.¹

The abundant correspondence of Fr. Etchécopar with his family shows that he had very deep bonds of affection with each of his parents and that he frequently visited his sisters who had remained at the family home:

It must be admitted that our family is a privileged family. A father and a mother,

1) Pierre Fernessole : *El Venerado Padre Augusto Etchécopar*, Editorial "F.V.D", Buenos Aires 1949, p.46

models of virtue; children, all imbued with most excellent principles drawn from the cradle and fortified and engraved in souls at the school of sacrifice and labour ... Twelve hearts from which an uninterrupted concert of praise and thanksgiving is exhaled. Twelve hearts united by the same thoughts of confidence and acceptance, all having the same starting point: the holy examples of the family, all walking under the same inspiration and the same guide: the love of virtue and the eye of God; tending to the same end: the heavens, through pain and difficulty, sufferings and sacrifices which form the path of the just on earth, the mark of predestination and joy to come. (Letter to Evariste, 24 June 1852).

Auguste was a dynamic boy. His excessive sensitivity drove him to quick reactions, and his impulses were prone to violence which could take over the ardent affection he had for his family. Thanks to the serious education received from both his parents and his school teacher, Mr. Castet, he was able to master his temperament and cultivate his relationship with his family wisely. But he could not afford to lower his guard over his reactions, which even in adulthood, 'we see reappearing during his life, when the situation will require it, but never out of the blue.'

After primary school, Auguste joined the municipal college of Father Eugène Ségalas: 'The most tender father, the most enlightened guide, the surest support of my youth' (Letter of 27 January 1853). Auguste Etchécopar was very attentive

to his guidance. The boy was good at music and had a lovely voice, which he will always kept. These qualities did not prevent him from concentrating very seriously on his studies. He was sent to Aire to study rhetoric and received several end-of-year awards. He communicated his last achievement to his brother Evariste in this way: 'I am writing to let you know that I am a Bachelor of Arts. I underwent my exam on 10 August, and my name was proclaimed the first among the accepted candidates.' (Letter of 30 October 1847)


Here is the portrait that Father Duvignau traces of the young Auguste:

A rich nature. A tall figure, harmonious proportions, regular and fine features, a clear and frank look, a golden voice, a heart full of delicate and deep affections, such is the young Auguste Etchécopar. Later, he had a kind of majesty; at 17, his appearance was clearly attractive. He was, to say the least, without reserve, the fruit of grace and early self-control.² •

2) Pierre Duvignau: *L'homme au visage de lumière*, Editions "Marie Médiatrice" Edit Genval 1968, p. 18.



Frs. Joseph, Jean-Baptiste and Bertrand, faithful Betharramite guardians of Etchecopar House in Saint-Palais.



What is the easiest
intention, the most perfect of
all intentions? The one that contains,
so to speak, all the others that are good?
Answer: The intention which Our Lord offered
himself, saying, Here am I, to do your will: my
food is to do the will of him who sent me. This
intention would make us avoid so many mistakes!
We would enrich the world with so much good,
and make ourselves so useful to ourselves and
our neighbour; it would make us capable of
the greatest things. (Ps 115,12)

M 398

2 February 2019: Day for Consecrated Life celebrated by a few young members of the community of Adiapodoumé by a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Yamoussoukro (Ivory Coast).



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