

Bétharram, a door and a heart open to all,
especially to the young people who look for a
meaning in their life.

Picture: Do Minh Peter Hung, Vietnamese young postulant in formation at Ban Garicoits (Thailand)



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Editorials of 2019 •

Through the monthly editorials of this year we will try to outline (from the perspective of our charism, and the perspective of faith), some implications of the motto: «Going out to share». We will build on some crucial themes from our New Rule of Life.

To go out as Jesus Christ did:
from the heart of the Father
to the breast of the Virgin Mother

'And the Word became flesh, and pitched his tent among us.'
(John 1.14)

Dear Betharramites:

During a meeting in Rome, one of our brothers shared something that moved me; He said: -I like this year's motto, because I see the Betharramites as generous people, capable of sharing, but we must also recognise: how much it costs us to 'go out'!

Indeed, when we look at the lives of so many of our Fathers and Brothers, we often find in them an almost unconditional generosity. However, it cannot be denied that in the current context, there is growing subtle tendency to install ourselves, to preserve our personal space... It is a spirit that, as has been said several times,

negates the spirit of detachment that should characterise us. And it weakens the boldness that should drive us forward in love to embrace each mission.

To aspire to a community in which everything is in order and each person and his needs receives the proper attention at the right time and place, seems to be the conventional social aspiration of this secular world.

Like this we can dedicate ourselves more calmly «to work and enjoy life without being too disturbed». We can thus live healthy risk free lives, and cherish this as a non-negotiable human right.

It seems that the Cross of Jesus Christ has ceased to be part of our daily spirituality! The gospels present us with many characters who lived «quite satisfied». For example: Matthew (Mt 9.9); Zacchaeus (Luke 19,1-2), the foolish farmer (Lk 12.16-19), the rich young man - before learning what he needed to do... - (Lk 18.18), Dives who feasted (Luke 16.19), etc.

If this is our actual condition, it will subtly transform us into inward-looking people. Individuals who had started out by leaving all things to follow Jesus Christ, but who have been insidiously side-tracked by consumer culture. So we live over-anxious about our earnings, our promotion, 'guarding our investments ...'. Some of us even end up being so busy we have no free time for others, 'so we don't know if we are coming or going' (Fr. Daleoso scj), and we end

up living unsatisfied, in a silent race towards sadness ...

How different is the hope that is born in front of the Crib! Contemplating the self-humbling of the Saviour, with Joseph and Mary around, opens us to a future of hope. The Word made flesh tells us this: it is always a good time to GO OUT, when the motive is the love of 'Here I am, to do His will'.

Those who, like Saint Michael, went out and shared the good news, did so because they believed in the incarnation of the God of Love, who was stripped of everything, and became a simple child.

A God who wanted to share our condition and accompany us in our poverty by being born of Mary in a manger.

Hence, this year it is not about going out to do big things 'with big show, haste, and doggedness' (that's not what St. Michael wanted). Perhaps, simply, it is about starting to listen more carefully to the call to mission, the 'cry of the poor', breaking down those fears that keep us reaching out to others. Why not offer our friendship to that neighbour sunk in solitude, or be close to that young man who suffers depression? Why not show patience with that old brother who seeks to be heard by someone? Why not stand next to those parents whose son is in prison, or on drugs, or simply in a bad way? Why not bring a smile to the face of that sad child whose parents have just divorced?



SAINT MICHAEL GARICOITS WROTE

In which areas of knowledge ought a priest to shine? Certainly in those that can help him to faithfully fulfil all his duties as man of God and minister of Christ. Much less important are those areas whose object is fascinating and delightful curiosity, and which focus only superficially on what is necessary, concentrating totally on transient things, and scarcely at all on the things that last.

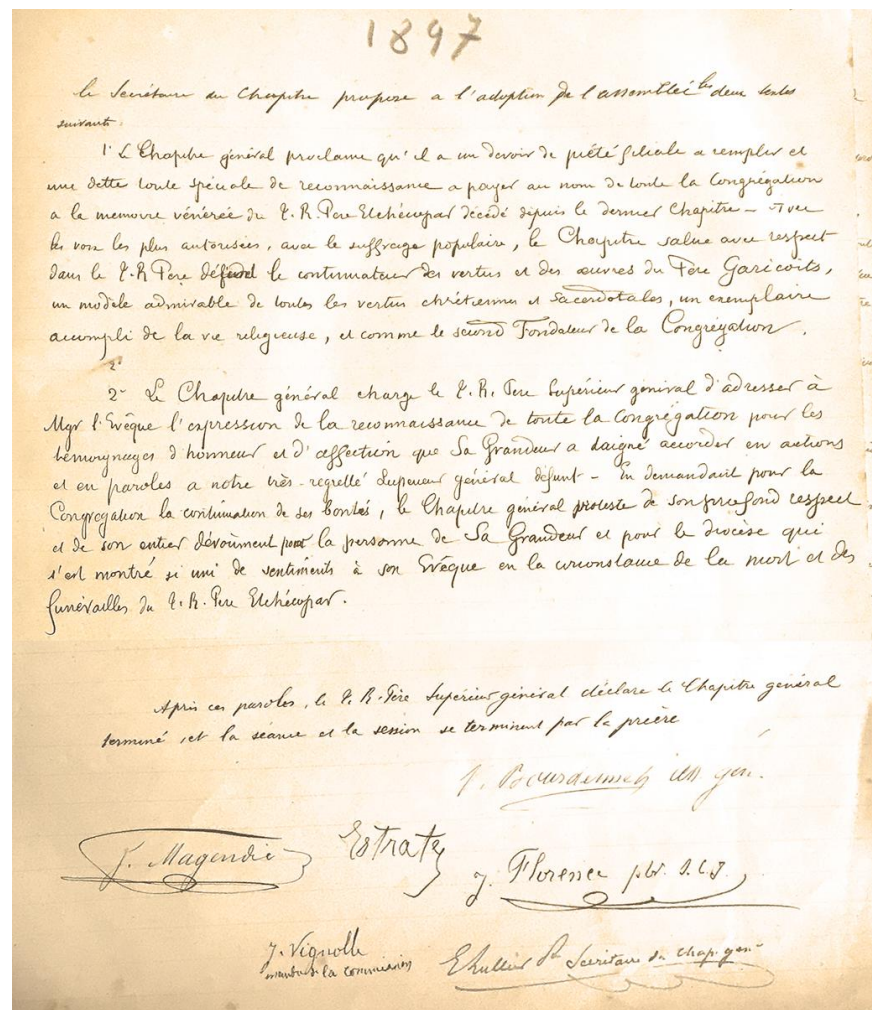
Saint Michael Garicoits
M 792

ship has been maintained through Fathers Agin, Gouarnalusse, Monzani and some lay people.

The Congregation began its cause of beatification in 1935, thirty-eight years after his death, with the collection of testimonies on his life in the diocese of Bayonne. On 4 December

1945 it was taken to Rome. Interrupted in 1964 and resumed in 1997, recent General Chapters have insisted that a follow-up be given to it. It resumes this year with the appointment of a new postulator.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj



That is the true way out to share 'a saving love', like the one St Michael spoke of when he said that 'our goal is to work for our own salvation and the salvation of others'. A 'saviour-love' will free us from solitude and bring us joy, because it inspires new hope in the person who suffers, who in receiving us feels comforted and accompanied in his affliction.

Mary is a great model of 'going out to share'. She lived her joyful expectation of Jesus in the style of the poor... She was forced to go with Joseph to Bethlehem... (Lk 2.4-5). When it was time to give birth 'there was no room for them at the Inn' (Lk 2. 6-7). She was the mother with no money but had a great heart. She gave her child a heart-warming welcome. She shared with him what she had and did it with great love: 'she wrapped the child in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger' (Lk 2.7).

God is incarnated in this child. He is offered to us in the gentleness of one newly born. When we go out to share: we go out to meet him.

Why then does it trouble us so much, to 'leave' the communities? Why, sometimes, do we give the impression to people that we are afraid to go out and meet the person who suffers? Are we afraid of a God hidden in rags? St. Theresa of the Child Jesus said: 'I cannot fear a God who has become so small for me ... I love him!'.

God became 'small' and shared with everyone, especially those not

obsessed with always having more things. God is good to everyone, but he is better understood by those who know how to love each other as brothers without cultural or generational distinctions; without selfishness, without being stuck in 'comfort zones' where the Light of Bethlehem does not shine.

As long as we live seeking the satisfaction of all our desires, oblivious to the suffering of others, we may know some degree of excitement, but we will not know the exultation of the Joy of the God of Love. Perhaps a 'reasonably and worldly joy' will be present, but we will know nothing of the 'Great joy' announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem.

Dear Betharramites, in this year dedicated to going out to share, let us contemplate the marvellous spectacle of a humble God, who says 'Yes' to his Father and stays that 'Yes', clothed with gentleness and humility, becoming ever more free for a love that gives life.

Fr. Gustavo scj
SUPERIOR GENERAL

Homily, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, Rome, 6 January 2019

[...] God's light does not shine on those who shine with their own light. God 'proposes' himself; he does not 'impose' himself. He illumines; he does not blind. It is always a very tempting to confuse God's light with the lights of the world. How many times have we pursued the seductive lights of power and celebrity, convinced that we are rendering good service to the Gospel! But by doing so, have we not turned the spotlight on the wrong place, because God was not there. His kindly light shines forth in humble love. How many times too, have we, as a Church, attempted to shine with our own light! Yet we are not the sun of humanity. We are the moon that, despite its shadows, reflects the true light, which is the Lord. The Church is the *mysterium lunae* and the Lord is the light of the world (cf. Jn 9:5). Him, not us.

The light of God shines on those who receive it. Isaiah, in the first reading (cf. 60:2), tells us that that light does not prevent the darkness and the thick clouds from covering the earth, but shines forth on those prepared to accept it. And so, the prophet addresses a challenging summons to everyone: 'Arise, shine' (60:1). We need to arise, to get up from our sedentary lives and prepare for a journey. Otherwise, we stand still,



like the scribes that Herod consulted; they knew very well where the Messiah was born, but they did not move. We also need to shine, to be clothed in God who is light, day by day, until we are fully clothed in Jesus. Yet to be clothed in God, who like the light is simple, we must first put aside our pretentious robes. Otherwise, we will be like Herod, who preferred the earthly lights of success and power to the divine light. The Magi, instead, fulfil the prophecy. They arise and shine, and are clothed in light. They alone see the star in the heavens: not the scribes, nor Herod, nor any of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In order to find Jesus, we also need to take a different route, to follow a different path, his path, the path of humble love. And we have to persevere. Today's Gospel ends by saying that the Magi, after encountering Jesus, '*left for their own country by another road*' (Mt 2:12). Another road, different from that of Herod. An alternative route than that of the world, like the road taken by those who surround Jesus at Christmas: Mary and Joseph, the shepherds. Like the Magi, they left home and became pilgrims on the paths of God. For only those who leave behind their worldly attachments and undertake a journey find the mystery of God. •

the last Chapter.

With the most authorized voices and general agreement, the Chapter recognises with respect, in the deceased Very Reverend Father, the person who carried on the virtues and work of Father Garicoïts, an admirable model of all the Christian and priestly virtues, an accomplished example of religious life and the second Founder of the Congregation.» (Acts of the General Chapter of 1897).

The intention of NEF's editorial team is to respond to the Superior General, Father Gustavo Agin's desire, to make Fr. Etchécopar better known to the new generations of Bétharramites, that they should consider him a model of a life of charism in the midst of current challenges and that they can appreciate the true value of his dedication to maintain the memory of Saint Michael Garicoïts, as well as to the unity and development of the Congregation.

I believe that by the testimony of his life and through his writings, Fr. Etchécopar gives us this:

- an immense love for Saint Michael Garicoïts whom he designates «our Father Saint Michael», because he considered him the one who initiated to our religious life;
- an immense love for the charism, as by reproducing entire expressions of St. Michael, he allowed the charism to be preserved and transmitted in all its purity. How important it is to discover and know the key points he emphasized in order to regain our identity!
- love for people and for the work of the Congregation.
- a love for the spiritual heritage of

the Congregation. «As far as I am concerned, though weak and poor, I do not cease to thank him, when I look at the glorious treasures that constitute our heritage: *divitias glorie hereditatis nostrae*,» he said. The glorious treasures of our heritage were for him: «the extraordinary virtues of those who preceded us and died. The foundation of our homes, really out of nothing. Above all the work of America, a miracle of suffering and growth, and that of Bethlehem, founded by Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified and Mademoiselle Berthe d'Artigaux, two angels of pity and charity, and who at this moment give me a image of fervor and the joys of heaven. The approval of the Holy See and the testimony of our Bishops. And to complete the cause of Fr. Garicoïts, who is one of the great subjects of the pontificate and who has been drawing the eyes of the Catholic world to him and his children ever since. (p. 62, C IX, 2/1/93)

On the occasion of the centenary of the death of Father Auguste Etchécopar in 1997, Fr. Bruno Ierullo, then Provincial of Argentina, received an invitation to the celebration organized by the descendants of the family of our religious in Tucumán. I remember that Father Bruno was undecided about what he should do. With his Council, we recommended that he did not to miss this event. He attended, accompanied by Father Miner and Father Cabero. This celebration was an opportunity for the Congregation to reconnect with the family of Tucumán that had been lost long. Since then, this friend-

Father Etchecopar, the second founder of Betharram

In the December edition of last year's magazine, Fr. Beñat Oyhenart presented Fr. Auguste Etchecopar as the person Saint Michael Garicoïts had most influenced the most. This is one of the reasons that make him a key person in the history of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, someone to whom we all feel particularly connected. ●●●

Introduction

The first generations of Bétharramites had great admiration and reverence for the rich character of Fr. Etchecopar. I knew some of these religious men in Argentina, Juan Craviotti, Darío Rodríguez, for example. Their time in the Nazareth and Bethlehem seminaries had transmitted this veneration to them. When we met them on the occasion of a Chapter or congregational meeting, they always reminded us that the importance of the figure of Father Auguste Etchecopar should be recognised.

On the initiative of these religious saints, the 1993 General Chapter stated:

*Supplementary motion
(unanimously voted)*

To respond to the wishes expressed especially by our brothers in the Province of Argentina: on the occasion of the celebration in 1997 of the Bicentenary of the birth of St. Michael Garicoïts, which coincides with the centenary of the death of Father Etchecopar, the General Chapter en-



courages all religious of the Congregation to deepen their witness to the life and spirituality of Father Etchecopar. This can contribute to renewing our Betharramite identity and our belonging to the Congregation (Gen. Chap. 1993, Part 4, B)

During a visit to a patient in Adrogué, I saw an image of Father August Etchecopar on the bedside table. I suggested that this patient say a novena with me for the attention of the Servant of God to ask for his cure. From what I know, this person has been healed. There are also other testimonies of graces received.

These are small things that add to the testimony of the one who was Michael Garicoïts' second successor, and of whom the General Chapter of 1897 pronounced the following eulogy, just after his death in the same year:

«The General Chapter proclaims that it has a duty of filial piety to fulfill and a special debt of gratitude to pay, in the name of the whole Congregation, to the venerated memory of Most Reverend Father Etchecopar, who has died since

The cause of Father Bernard Auguste¹ Etchecopar: let's catch up...

Fr. Beñat Oyhenart scj & Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue scj

A quick "Wikipedia-style" recap

Stages in the canonisation process: Being named a "Servant of God" is the first stage in the process. This leads on to being declared "Venerable" after the decree of "heroic virtue" or of martyrdom has been issued, and thereafter the Servant of God is given the title "Blessed" once his or her beatification confirms miracles attributed to the person so honoured. The final stage is canonisation, where the person thus honoured receives the title of "saint"².

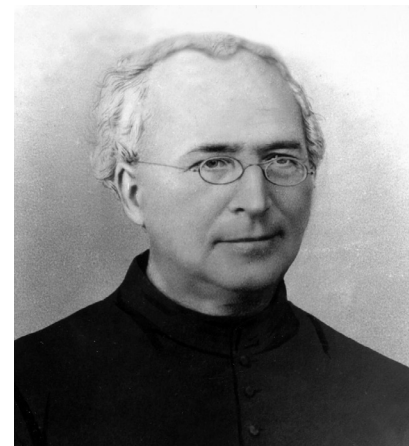
The question: what stage are we at in the cause of Fr Auguste Etchecopar?
The answer: ... making slow progress...!
●●●

The cause for canonisation was initiated in 1935 in the diocese of Bayonne, under the ordinary Inquiry procedure, i.e. testimonies relating to Fr Etchecopar were collected in the diocese of Bayonne.

1935 was thirty-eight years after his death, some three years after the authorised period of time expired... Why the delay?

The cause was received in Rome on December 14th, 1945.

On July 21, 1959, at the ante-preparatory meeting on the virtues, seven of the consultants voted in favour and six returned a "suspensive" ballot. (A "suspensive" ballot, whilst not



R. P. Auguste Etchecopar scj
(Saint-Palais, 30 mai 1830 –
Bétharram, 13 avril 1897)

negative, notes there are "objections" to be lifted). The following day, John XXIII decreed the process should continue.

Later, it was Bétharram which halted proceedings. According to the testimony of Father Marco Gandolfi, "the General Council, being under an obligation to give financial help to the seminaries in the Americas, in particular those in Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, thought it more appropriate to place the generalate house at their

1) Before "Our" Father Etchecopar, a brother Auguste had been born and died. According to the custom of the country, his name "Auguste" is given to the one who comes after him. Our Fr Etchecopar is accordingly registered with a double-barrelled first name: "Bernard Auguste"; but in the family, and for us, he is known as "Auguste".

2) As soon as the cause was initiated - and at the last General Chapter - the title "Venerable" was given to Fr Etchecopar; however according to the law of the Church, we should wait until his heroic virtues are proclaimed...

disposal. Perhaps it was better to think about the religious of tomorrow rather than the cause of an eminent religious of yesteryear. (...) In short, this was the thinking of the General Council [in 1975] which unanimously signed this decision." (Letter to Father Pierre Silviet-Carricart, dated 3 January 1998)

In 1997, Fr Etchécopar's family in Argentina celebrated the centenary of his death. On November 21, 1997, Fr Francesco Radaelli, Superior General, appointed Fr Pierre Silviet-Carricart the Postulator of the Cause of the Servant of God.

Following correspondence dated January 30, 1998, the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints ruled on March 13, 1998 for the cause to be taken up once more, at the stage at which it had been left on July 22, 1959. Much work was then undertaken at the generalate house, to transcribe (and digitise) the colossal sum of Fr Etchécopar's writings³ and renew contacts with the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints.

When Fr Carricart disappeared, Fr Jacky Moura was appointed Postulator (in 2000). He pursued this work with determination for as long as he was resident in Rome. Afterwards, however, it grew more difficult for him and he was replaced by Fr Beñat Oyhénart in 2011. The same causes produce the same effects: the new Postulator also resided some distance from Rome,

3) These are spiritual writings ("Private Notebook", notes on meditations, advice, retreats, personal notes and resolutions, spiritual counsel, sermons and lectures, prayers), a body of administrative writings and a wealth of correspondence amounting to just over 2000 letters indexed thus far.

and our cause stalled...

One of the difficulties encountered at the diocesan inquiry was that the witnesses found Father Etchécopar to have been too holy since birth; that being the case, how could it be shown that his life was one of heroic virtues?

To relaunch the cause, the General Chapter of 2017 (cf. Acts no. 165) "asks that the general council seek and appoint a postulator who would not necessarily be a religious of the congregation."

The General Council spent a year in reflection with Mgr Corradini who has worked for some considerable time with the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. He had already had sight of this case-file. It should be understood that we do not have to start over and re-do all the work we have already completed. As he said with much imagery, "the footings and first floor are built". The cause was initiated more than 50 years ago. Since then, Dicastery has made changes to the procedures put in place for the instruction of a cause. So we need to resume the cause, at the stage it is now, and apply these new procedures.

At our request, Mgr Corradini introduced us to a postulator working on causes for beatification similar to that of Fr Etchécopar. He is an Italian priest, residing in Rome⁴: Ettore Capra. Originating from the Valle d'Aoste region of Italy, he speaks fluent French. We have met them once both

4) The rules are clear: "In the Roman phase of the cause, the postulator, (...), must stably reside in Rome" (Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Sanctorum Mater, Art. 15 - Section 2).



On November 11, 2018, the Superior General, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín scj, with the consent of his Council, appointed **Ettore Capra Postulator General for the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Father Auguste Etchecopar.**

The Superior General of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín scj, with the consent of his Council gathered on 11 January 2019, **decided to present to the diaconal ministry Brother Leandro Narduzzo scj** (Region Father Auguste Etchecopar, Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay). The celebration will take place on 23 March 2019 in Colonia Simbolar (Santiago del Estero).

In memoriam

On December 23, **Mrs Marcellina Gusmeroli**, mother of Fr Giacomo Spini SCJ, of the community of Lissone (Vicariate of Italy) peacefully passed away at the age of 96, in Morbegno (Sondrio - Italy). We offer Fr Giacomo and his family members our heartfelt condolences reassuring them that we hold them and their dear one in our thoughts and our prayers.





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

England

Meet and Greet SCJ, Nottingham, UK
On 7th of December, the eve of the Solemnity of The Immaculate Conception, the English Vicariate Members gathered together with SCJ Nottingham community to celebrate our presence in Nottingham Diocese along with our Superior General Fr Gustavo Agin SCJ, Regional Superior Fr Enrico Frigerio SCJ of Saint Miriam and with the parishioners of Corpus Christi Clifton and Our Lady and St Patrick, Meadows at Blessed Robert Widmerpool, Parish Parish Primary School Hall.

Meet and Greet SCJ, Nottingham, UK
It was a lovely occasion to share our Betharramite spirit of friendship in the new mission place in UK. The parishioners were taken aback by the way Betharramite community of English Vicariate shared the stories



of our humble beginnings of our congregation, about our Founder St Michael and our mission in different parts of the world and in UK. The evening preceded with dance, music and sumptuous food and refreshments. They have all enjoyed the presence of Fr Gustavo and meeting all of the members of Betharramite family in English Vicariate.

together and subsequently invited them to attend the Council of the Congregation. The outcome of these various meetings is that the Superior General and the Council have decided to entrust him with the instruction of the cause of the second founder of our religious family.

At the same time, Mgr Corradini is encouraging us to revive devotion to Father Etchécopar by promoting him more widely, with particular focus on the younger generations. As a first step in this direction, our series in the NEF bulletin this year will devote

coverage to our religious family's second founder, under the authorship of Reverend Father Gaspar Fernández Pérez.

We should also be attentive to the testimonies which the People of God bring to our attention, on the action of Fr Etchécopar today in the lives of those who pray to him and invoke his intercession. And lastly, it is up to us, the whole Congregation of Bétharram, to continue to pray to Fr Auguste Etchécopar. ●●●

The traditional devotions of our religious family are signs of God's love for us. We celebrate in a special way; ... e) Saint Michael Garicoits, father of our religious family, and perfect model of union with the Sacred Heart in the accomplishment of the will of the Father. We also add the accomplishment of his disciple Father Auguste Echecopar, Servant of God. (Rule of Life 92)



From the left to the right: Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue scj (Vicar General), Fr. Gustavo Agin scj (Superior General), Don Ettore Capra (appointed Postulator), Mgr Corradini (former member of the Congregation of the Cult of Saints)

Regionalisation, 2009-2019

On January 1, 2009, the organization of the Congregation into three Regions (and their vicariates) by decree of the Superior General came into effect, in accordance with the orientations of the 2005 General Chapter, and in application of the 2007 Acts of the Council of the Congregation in Bangalore. A change that represents a much more radical choice than it seems for the life of the Congregation, as we will see during these first two months of the year in the NEF. ●●●

Creation and Operation of the Regions

Our Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram was founded one day in October 1835, when Fathers Garicoits, Guimon, Perguilhem, Chirou, Larrouy and Fondeville submitted themselves to the Rule of the Missionaries of Hasparren. Their intention was to glorify God, save their souls and sanctify people. They chose Father Garicoits as superior, promised him obedience, poverty, renewed their vows of chastity and donated into his hands the contents of their small purses. The Congregation grew with the arrival of new members and with the increase of missions to the Basque Country and the Béarn. In 1856, the first group of missionaries left for Argentina. Later, in 1879, a community moved into Bethlehem. In 1903, the expulsion from France led the Betharramite missionaries to reach Spain, Italy, Britain and Belgium. The Argentine mission stretched to Uruguay and Paraguay and, as the Superior General lived in Betharram, it was necessary to nom-



inate a delegate to resolve any current issues of these communities. The first regional division was the American Delegation. During the 24 years of Father Buzy's generalship, the Congregation grew in numbers and works. Hence the organisation of the Congregation into provinces decided by the Chapter of 1947.

This organisation brought lots of positive elements in regard to government, training and mission, but it slightly weakened the communion of the Congregation as each province tended to function as a Congregation completely apart. After the Second Vatican Council, certain religious left the Congregation; the lack of vocations led to an ageing of the workforce, which made it necessary to abandon certain missions. The need for a fresh organisation of the regions where we were present was felt more and more.

In 1985, for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation, a meeting took



Regional Novitiate

The Ivorian novices, Aurélien and Salomon, arrived in the vicariate of France-Spain to join their novitiate community. They went for a walk at the spring, the house of St Michel Garicoits, they made a stopover at Larceveau to greet Father Joseph Ruspil scj, and at Saint-Palais to visit the Fathers of the community, before meeting their novice master, Father Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj, since 1 January.

It was an opportunity for our Indian brother, Father Shaju scj, to visit these communities and see his SCJ brothers before leaving for the Central African Republic. We wish a good novitiate to the novices! And a good mission to Fr. Shaju! We keep them in our prayers.



REGION FR. AUGUSTE ETECOPAR

ARGENTINA URUGUAY
PARAGUAY BRAZIL

Argentina-Uruguay

On November 23rd, 24th and 25th, Fa.La.Be (Family of Lay Betharramites) gathered for a

few days of spiritual retreat in the community of Adrogué (Argentina). The great issues present in the media were addressed to highlight positive and negative aspects of them.

Reference was made to the Gospel passage of the blind Bartimaeus, who lived on the streets, marginalized, ignored. Prompted by his presence, Jesus turns to him and heals his eyes and saves his life.

The presence of Jesus encourages us, puts us back on our feet, launches us into the world and calls us to evangelize. As Pope Francis says, Jesus asks us to approach our brother, to listen to him with our heart and to truly love him. St Michael asks us to prove the authenticity of our prayer by leading a true Christian lifestyle.





REGION SAINT MICHAEL GARICOÏTS

FRANCE SPAIN
ITALY CENTRAL AFRICA
IVORY COAST HOLY LAND

Ivory Coast

The community of Adiapodoumé bid their farewell to Fr. Marie-Paulin scj.

On Saturday 8 December, on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the community of Adiapodoumé had a day of retreat to prepare the celebration of the coming of the Emmanuel, God with us.

In his reflection, Fr. Marie-Paulin Yarkaï scj underlined two key figures of Advent: St. John the Baptist and St. Joseph. He urged the community to follow their example: to be open to the action of the Holy Spirit in order to welcome the Will of God and to learn humility. This retreat ended with the Eucharistic celebration.

In the evening, the community once again gathered around Fr. Marie-Paulin, in a festive atmosphere, and thanked the Lord for all that Fr Marie-Paulin had lived with them. In fact, Fr Marie-Paulin will return to his native land, the Central African Republic, for a new mission.

France-Spain

Betharram, 2 and 3 December - The religious of the Vicariate of France-Spain held their Vicariate Assembly. This Assembly was an opportunity for them to live a fraternal event and to reflect on some issues regarding the

future of the Vicariate. We thank the Lord for all the benefits received and pray that Our Lady of Betharram and our Father Saint Michael Garicoïts will intercede for the Vicariate.

On January 5, the Council of the *Fraternité* of the lay Associates held its first meeting of the year at Bétharram: a working time, Eucharistic celebration, and a fraternal sharing in the afternoon. We wish a good mission to the Betharramite laity, following in the footsteps of St Michael Garicoïts!

Italy

Sunday 9 December - The religious and the laity of the Italian Vicariate met at Colico (Como) to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the presence of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram at the seminary of "Santa Teresa del Bambino Gesù", which would then become the "Collegio del Sacro Cuore". During the celebration of the Holy Mass - with the participation of numerous Betharramites - a relic of Saint Michael Garicoïts, recently found in the Church, was blessed.

At the end of the celebration, the local Authorities, together with the Regional Vicar in Italy, Fr. Piero Trameri SCJ, placed a plaque at the "Ca' Bepin" (Joseph's House), located near the Church of Villatico (hamlet of Colico), where the first Betharramite seminarians were accommodated in 1928.

place at Betharram for a month to deepen our charism. So that the experience could touch a greater number of religious, a similar meeting was organised at Adrogué. This was the first ELAB (Latin American meeting of Betharramites). This meeting led to other meetings of trainers, scolastics, educators and priests. The links between the religious, the communities and the mission of the four countries were reinforced. These richer connections kindled the interest of Father Francesco Radaelli, Superior General, who nominated a co-ordinator for Latin America. The latter was not chosen amongst the provincials, he didn't have jurisdictional authority, his task was simply to co-ordinate the (vice)-provincials, the trainers, the young people in training Many things were accomplished, including a missionary project in Bolivia. This service was fulfilled by Fathers Mirande (Jr), Gaspar and Bruno.

The operation of the Latin America Region was ideal. It seemed to be suited also to the communities of Europe. They tried therefore to set up another Region co-ordinated by a General Councillor, but that turned out to be more difficult. Even if certain activities common to the three provinces were carried out and even if the distances were shorter than in America, the linguistic and cultural differences, as well as the more traditional institutions, were an obstacle to a larger communion. Anyway, there was no going back due to the reasons above. It was obvious that it

couldn't be postponed, as a new organisation was not going to suddenly appear all by itself. At the 24th General Chapter of 1999, it was decided to organise the Congregation into regions, without giving them any legal value. The 25th General Chapter of 2005 modified the chapter of Rules of Life on the governance which had to be approved by the Congregation for the religious, and asked the Congregation Council, before the 26th General Chapter, to implement the changes brought and therefore to put in place the Regions and the Vicariates.

During the Congregation Council of 2007 at Bangalore, it was decided to organise the Congregation into Regions and Vicariates as from 1st January 2009, and that the clauses of the Rules of Life, referring to the governance of the Congregation, passed at the General Chapter and approved by Rome, would come into effect *ad experimentum*. A decree was issued by the Superior General and brought to the attention of all the members of the Congregation. So, the Regions, considered as such since 1999, were made official: we made sure that the communities of each country constituted a Vicariate. The Council made an effort to respect the fact that the communities of a country might form one vicariate, with two exceptions: Spain and Uruguay.

Some resistance was felt amongst certain religious used to the habits and customs of the Congregation.



Council of the Congregation in Bangalore 2007

Yet there were not many other possibilities for organisation. The two years ad experimentum (2009-2011) allowed us to figure out the difficulties and adjust certain points. The General Chapter of 2011 finally approved once and for all the new version of the Rules.

As from the Congregation Council of 2009, it seemed to us that the regionalisation could not be reduced to a territorial organisation, but that it was also an occasion for spiritual renewal. During the General Council that followed, we called upon the help of priests from the Diocese of Padua who motivated and accompanied us in the practice of the narratio fidei. This practice was also carried out during the meeting of Regionals and Priests at Bethlehem in 2012. We continued to have help during the Congregation Councils, the Regional Councils with the idea that this method was also going to reach the communities. With this aim in

mind, Father Gustavo organised a retreat in 2009 in each of the three vicariates of the Etchecopar Region. This method was also used the same year during the retreat in the Ivory Coast.

The new organisation of the Congregation into Regions and Vicariates responds to the criterion of a larger ecclesiastical communion within the heart of the Congregation. It's about guaranteeing the unity of the Congregation while respecting diversity. The unity of the Congregation has as its foundation the experience of the love of God such as it was passed to us by Saint Michael Garicoits. This experience, common to us all, is lived out by each culture and each vicariate in their own way. That's why we wished for the Holy Land and Central Africa to form vicariates despite their low numbers. The mediation of the Regions favours this unity of the Congregation by converging the authenticity of our Betharram life while enriching original inputs from the culture of each Vicariate, whether it be Arab, Kariani, Indian, French, African, American, Guarani etc. This blend of contrasts is fundamental for the unity of the Church and of the Congregation. Also, we must make sure that each Region does not become an independant congregation as we did when creating the provinces in 1947.

In addition, we are convinced that

earth to fulfil the will of God. (...) No obstacle should divert us from it. From here, we can face the challenges of the Region with realism and resolution. One can suffer from the lack of success here and rejoice in the harvest that arises there, without giving up the beauty of charism, always to offer and enrich other cultures. We can resolve to close projects that we thought were promising (Zarka and Milan in 2015), leave some places to revive elsewhere (Parma for Langhirano, Montemurlo for Pistoia in 2016), form new projects in education (Katiola, 2017) or vocational pastoral care (Bangui, 2018). You can pull your hair out to change apostolic works, maintain buildings, support formation, and admire the solidarity between Vicariates, and the Providence which never abandons us!

We exult in our hearts at each profession, at each new ordination, at every act of obedience received in joy, whether to strengthen Betharram in our old lands, or in a country at war. One often discovers on reflection that comfort favours spiritual drowsiness and success breeds individualism, while fragility pushes us to be more united, and focus on our apostolic project rather than preservation of positions. Faced with the option of openness to the future or dying, we choose to return to the essential: for whom and for what we are religious of the Sacred Heart, sent to wherever we may be.

At all levels of the Region and the Congregation, brothers meet to pray, examine, share openly and obey. They realise that prayer, sharing and mission readiness are the true path to happiness. They wish to consecrate their whole life to it, even if they only have *a barn for lodging, a manger for a bed, bread* earned by the sweat of their brow for food. What would be the use of comfort and prestige if we lost the soul of our vocation, that happiness to live and to attract in the spirit of the Word incarnate? *Farewell, my dear friend; pray for me as I pray for you. I can not do much; but if ever I can be useful to you, here I am!*

Jean-Luc Morin scj

the field ministries, accompanying families trying to discern the truth. In fact, thanks to the relationship of trust with the Superior General, to the teamwork in Council (Congregation or Region), to the interviews with the religious, I have discovered another form of pastoral care: somehow, I learn to be a pastor of my brothers.

This supposes a lot of displacement, literally and figuratively! When you change your bed and your problems several times a week; when you stop by a community to be greeted with «we never see you» or a community that welcomes you with «we are happy to see you»; when you feel everywhere like a passing visitor but never a stranger; when you feel lucky to have a 'home port' where you don't have to justify being tired and quiet, while yet having someone to

talk to; when you feel privileged to have a heart to heart dialogue with this or that brother, so happy to witness to the radiance of Betharram and to find it, and celebrate it, in exchanges with the baptised; when you are edified by the fidelity of the elders and the enthusiasm of the youngest; when you are apprehensive about the other person's reaction in a face to face encounter but do it anyway, because you put his good, and that of the Gospel, before your own tranquillity... you are never in danger of becoming 'settled'!

One accepts the discomfort of being superior, at a complicated time for the Church. We have an inner joy, because we know a God who has put himself out for us, who has identified with the 'Here I am' to inspire and support our own. This is how one becomes, by the thousands of kilometres travelled, a «mobile camp» all by oneself, but not really alone: there are all those who are behind me and with me, all those - from the elderly Fathers to the youngest of aspirants, not to mention the lay people of every generation and condition - who are giving me some space in their prayer and affection.

What I do know is that whatever we say, we are on the

the renewal of the Congregation takes place in the communities. At the Bangalore Congregation Council, it had been decided that a meeting of all the community superiors would take place in each Region. That could be done in Father Auguste Etchecopar's Region, but not in the other two Regions due to a lack of time and long distances, over these two years. It is important that this meeting take place in each Region: we must revive the role of the Superior so that our communities are what our Rules of Life demand.

With regionalisation, the work of the Council of the Congregation is a lot more efficient thanks to the reduced numbers of its members. It is a lot easier for the Superior General to be in constant contact with the Regional Superiors.

The Regional Councils are places where the life of several Vicariates can be shared. The Vicariate assemblies have been moments where religious can meet up. Even if they are not places of decision-making, they offer a greater space of freedom for exchanges, reflection, communion and participation. It is within the Vicariates that the life of individuals, religious, communities and missions unfolds!

I believe that the new organisation into regions has produced other fruits: the three noviciates who started to work in 2002 have been reinforced. In Father Auguste Etchecopar's Region, the scholasticate (put

in place at Belo Horizonte) has also been unified. The formation grew in its identity and coherence. It was also ensured that each Vicariate had at least one deputy at the General Chapter (Rules of Life St. 8). And the Region offers more possibilities when it is concerned with making changes of the religious. The regionalisation allows the mission to be more open to the universal. These past few years, several exchanges of religious took place between the Vicariates of the same Region and between different Regions. These exchanges of religious keep the missionary spirit alive which has always characterised our family: In the East and in Africa, the missionary communities are increasing. In 'old' Europe, the communities are dwindling and certain only maintain their presence thanks to the generosity and missionary spirit of the religious of the new implantations. That indeed indicates the unity and universality of our mission.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj



A Regional Council: to look further ...or higher



The seed of Regionalisation

Regionalisation was not a bright idea that suddenly came to me after my first term as Superior General. Having learnt from my experience 'in the field', it appeared to me and my Council that the Congregation had a serious fragility. It was therefore necessary to find the best way to revitalise it. I learned about religious families that had already begun a journey of renewal, especially those whose numbers and missionary experiences were close to those of our own family.

I had the opportunity to meet with the Superiors General who had already begun new concrete experiences of renewal, both as Province and as community-in-mission.

I saw that the deep reasons that led them to new Congregational choices in formation, organisation of their Provinces corresponded to our own requirements ...

At a meeting of the Superiors General on the specific theme of the renewal of Religious Families in June 1996, in the presence of Fr. Hernandez, an Official of the Congregation of Religious, (today a Bishop in Spain) we, especially the small religious families, were requested to take decisions on this subject as soon as possible.

With the General Council, we twice addressed the problem with the help of the same Fr. Hernandez, and we reached the conclusions that I presented to the 1999 General Chapter.

To tell the truth, my original idea, along with the Council, was as follows: France-Spain & Ivory Coast would form a Region; Italy, Central African Republic and Israel would be another Region; when the time was ripe Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic and Israel would be sufficiently stable to form their own Region.

However the General Chapter opted for the current situation ... which, from my point of view, is not an optimal situation for Europe.

It seems to me that it is very difficult for the Regional Superior to be in charge of the animation of Betharram in France, Italy, two African countries and Israel as well. These entities may reach towards an autonomy that deprives them of the feeling of belonging and a close and effective presence of a Superior.

I believe that this situation (here I refer to the St. Michael Region, which I know best) undermines the value of authority and all communities by the consequent poverty of their mission.

In my report for the 1999 General Chapter, I gave specific guidelines on how to animate the Regions in the areas of Formation, Community and Mission; and I recalled in my report to the 2003 Council of the Congregation in Betharram, entitled «A Family Renewing in a Changing World,» both the pitfalls and the benefits of regionalisation.¹

Fr. Francesco Radaelli scj

¹) See also several letters published in the NEF on this theme, in particular: *How to renew Together the Present by building the Future*, in which I drew up a list of seven «convictions» to refound our Family (NEF of October 31, 2003).

Did you say "Regional" ?

The life of a Region from the experience of its Superior Regional. ●●●



185 years ago to the day, January 14, 1834, the superior of Betharram informed a former student of his state of mind and his convictions (Correspondence I, letter 10). Despite enormous differences of context and holiness (!), I couldn't find anything better for this article than to paraphrase Father Garicoits (the original is in italics, my additions in normal characters).

My dear friend,

It has been quite a long time since I received your request: to reflect on my experience of the portion of Congregation entrusted to me for a second term in 2017. I have been aware of this sign of your friendship and your optimism, so I will share this ...

It has been thought fit to make me someone who has no proper name yet, unless one calls me guardian of the former Provinces of France and Italy. Nothing is more strange than the addresses of the letters that are written to me. One calls me Provincial, another the 'responsible' for Europe and Africa; it would be more exact call me Superior, not of four walls, but of a vast area open to the four winds.

You can see that I am not lacking in titles. But my only decent title, the only

one that I value and which teaches me beautiful lessons of humility and perseverance, is to exercise authority as a service. *This position simply requires more active service from me.*

The St-Michael-Garicoits Region is the first in number and seniority of the Congregation - it is first chronologically (with the mother-house) and numerically (the average age is high, despite the youthful spirit from the South). Beyond the numbers: 3 continents, 5 vicariates (Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, France, Italy, Holy Land), 124 perpetual professed, 27 houses, 32 young people in formation (all Africans, a grace and a record this year) there is a diversity of situations and people that I try to support.

Fortunately, *people of good will* (the regional vicars) *come to share my solitude* (facing the task), *my poverty* (the means) *and my work* (in Council). Four times a year, they re-engage with me in THE relationship that gives sense to everything else, listening to the Lord and the brothers through the *narration fidei*; they bring back questions and proposals from grassroots; they take their part in discernment before relaying decisions and animating daily. Sometimes my duties weigh on me. I sometimes regret having had to withdraw from ordinary pastoral care, the time spent in parishes,