

NEF

Betharram

Nr. 148

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

In this issue

Going out to share,...
without silver or
gold p. 1

About Saint Michael
Garicoits they
wrote...
p. 4

Homily, Easter Vigil
p. 6

Return to Galilee
p. 8

Un vicariate full of
promise p. 16

Notices from the
General Council
p. 20

Father Etchecopar...
p. 21

Betharram, a door
and a heart open
to all p. 24

A word from the superior general

Going out to share, ...
without silver or gold

Dear Betharramites,

*"I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have I give you:
in the name of Jesus of Nazareth: get up and walk." (Acts 3.6)*

In the middle of Easter we have decided to go out to share. As the General Chapter has shown us, this is a year in which to better organise ourselves, to bring more clarity to our accounts, and think about our lifestyle when making decisions about material things. It also asks us to: look close to our communities in search of the poor we must serve, the nearby peripheries that we often ignore.

Living poverty in a positive way requires us to reject a certain "businessman mentality", seeking only to conserve and to make profit. It is true that we must be "good and faithful administrators" (1 Cor 4.2), but today we are also called to leave aside individualism and indifference and generate structures that incorporate the other, welcoming him, and including him in a

society that marginalises. Sometimes I wonder about religious life, on the one hand, so full of guarantees to evangelise, yet on the other, so lacking in enthusiasm. Much of our daily energy is spent in procuring more and more goods that we supposedly put at the service of mission. We do it without appreciating too much the work involved in obtaining them, without much gratitude for what we have available. We have become used to "having".

Reflecting on our poverty, I recently told a lay administrator of a Betharramite house: "Please help us (religious) to live what we have to live with respect to poverty. We are grateful for your professionalism and hard work because it translates into effectiveness with the assets of our Congregation. But treat us as men called to detachment, and not as if we were members of a king's court, because that doesn't do us any good."

The Betharramite religious by the vow of poverty is committed among other things: to render account, to live in a healthy dependence on his superiors and the community to which he contributes his work, to share the gifts he has and the material goods he receives, doing this with transparency and joy, without forgetting to live with a minimum of austerity. Every month every good religious is accountable and every good bursar presents a statement of accounts to the community. Every time a donation is received for the

community, it is put in common, without monopolising what does not belong to us. We do so not by obligation but freely, because that is how we choose to live. In doing so we give glory to a God who gave us the example: "*For you already know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, being rich, became poor for you, to enrich you with his poverty*" (2 Cor 8. 9)

When we break out of the world of our own personal interests, joy is born in community. When we manage to share with our own religious family, it brings us to wholeness, to the Banquet.

They are things that we all know we should do, but we do not practice frequently. This counter-witness undermines our fraternity. On the other hand, when a brother cares for all of us who are at home and brings home the fruit of his pastoral service for the good of all, then life is born among us.

A venerable father that I knew as a child and who always lived a serene material austerity told me: "Gustavo, in our Congregation those who live by poverty are those who want to live by poverty." Over time I realised how right he was! I have seen brothers living the vow of poverty - in a materialistic context like ours - "dispossessed of everything and given to God to obey him always", just as St. Michael loved us to be. Their happiness springs from a life in which they are satisfied with "*their breviary, their Bible and their Theology*" and that leaves them

happy. (see Correspondence SMG - Letter 12).

St. Michael, who came from lowly origins, found in humility and deprivation, a sweet manna, as he tells us in this beautiful passage:

"That manna hidden not only to human reason but also to the common virtues of Christianity, is the love of humiliations solely for the love of Jesus Christ. Since our divine friend is clothed in the garb of poverty and reproach, we must seek this poverty as much as the world seeks riches: 'How, Lord; you suffer while I seek to delight in pleasures! Lord you look for the lost sheep in the snow and the mountains, in spite of the howls of the wolves, while I go to my mission, to this or that ministry, in the comfort of a train carriage!'... Those are the feelings of perfect love,... the battlefield where the saints triumph." (DS 259)

Accepting the pedagogy of manna implies avoiding "stockpiling". At all levels: personal items, clothing, instruments, tools, vehicles... everything. It is easier to store money than material goods: salaries, donations, stipends, "undeclared income". This is the temptation to avoid the community economy and get into the trap of the "private" personal economy, even justifying ourselves for legal reasons. But that does not convince, because they are not gospel reasons. We contradict the evangelical value of the community and shared economy. We do not live poverty with a realistic spirit that

would surely take us along a path of austerity, and we avoid it. It is not about looking poor, but about being really living our poverty.

Ignoring the austerity of a simple lifestyle and using assets without discernment also leads us to contradict the values of social justice and peace. We talk so much about this issue in our homilies ... This is a world in which fierce capitalism continues to wreak havoc amongst the poor. This is a social sin with which we should not collude but rather confront and oppose.

If we say that we trust in Providence, we have to accept even "not having", which means the experience of "lacking". Living as the poor, let us be like Fathers watching over their children with untiring love. Living that dimension implies, sometimes having to postpone our desires, not pretending to be 'big shots'. We must learn to be at ease with being undervalued for lacking something that the world considers indispensable. Riches, honours and arrogance are, on the contrary, the path to perdition...

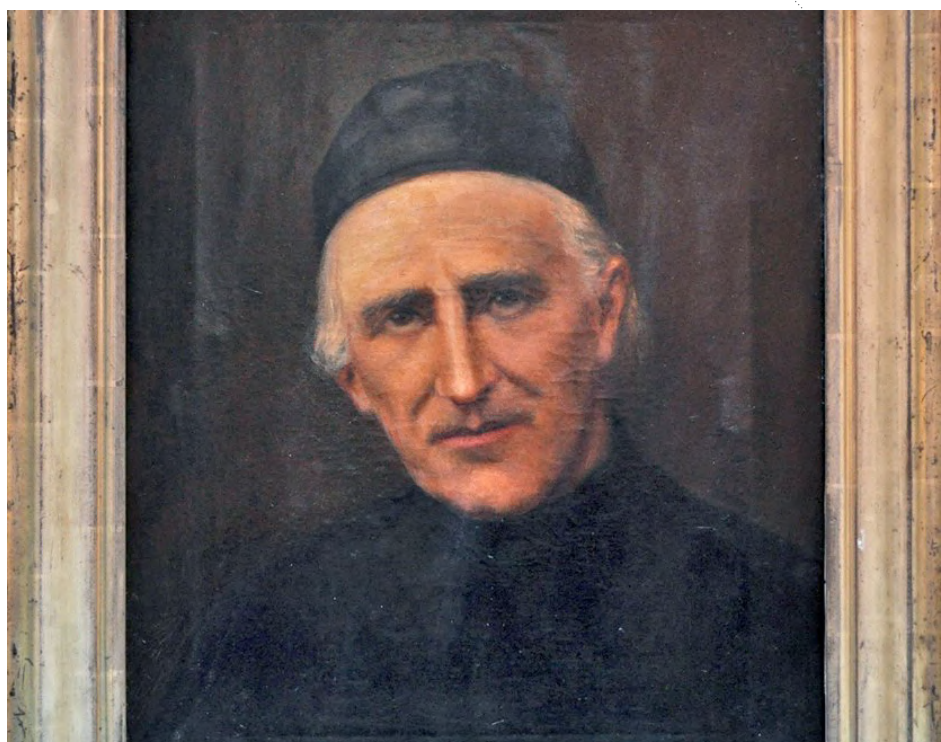
How we so need to go out to meet our fellow man with the energy of Easter! Let us do it like Peter and John did, with nothing in our purse, in the open. Transparent, without gold or silver, we will be a poor Church for the poor, healing only in the name of Jesus the Nazarene.

Fr. Gustavo SCJ
SUPERIOR GENERAL

ABOUT SAINT MICHAEL GARICOITS... they wrote:

Count Franck-Russell
wrote to me on April 24, 1879 *:

"Although my relations with Father Garicoits were only very fleeting, since I had only been there for eight days under his direction, my thoughts are frequently going heaven-wards. Three years ago, passing by Betharram, I could not help but buy his portrait, which I have been wearing ever since and always on my person, certain that this sweet and



venerable image can only produce in me feelings of confidence in God and of abandonment in his infinite mercy.

It is with a view to developing a total confidence in Providence that I contemplate this little portrait of your venerated founder, because he reminds me of the kind words he repeated to me in the general confession, which I made at his feet in the spring of 1863."

Fr. Mariotte,
assistant to Rev. Fr. Petetot,
Superior of the Oratory, wrote to me*:

"In the retreats given to me by Father Garicoits for nearly 20 years, it seems to me that what was most beneficial to my soul was, if I may so express myself, the sight of and the impact of his bearing, the features of his face, his look, his smile. He breathed and inspired simplicity, humility, kindness, peace, serenity, purity, and the elevation of feelings. His simple, familiar word, full of light and invigorating warmth, seized me deeply. It drove me to a horror of sin, to a contempt of all that is unworthy, to a disdain of all that is perishable, to a mortification governed by Providence, to a generous response to all the calls of God, and to a perfect conformity with His will, in complete submission to God and to the Holy See."

* Testimonies collected in 1886 by Father Auguste Etchecopar and submitted to the Holy See for the beatification of our founder

14 May 2019

Happy Feast of Saint Michael!!

Homily of his Holiness, Easter Vigil

Vatican Basilica, Holy Saturday, 20 April 2019

They (the women who went to Jesus' tomb) halted in amazement before the stone that was taken away. Seeing the angels, they stood there, the Gospel tells us, "*frightened, and bowed their faces to the ground*" (Lk 24:5). They did not have the courage to look up. And how often do we do the same thing? We prefer to remain huddled within our shortcomings, cowering in our fears. It is odd, but why do we do this? Not infrequently because, glum and closed up within ourselves, we feel in control, for it is easier to remain alone in the darkness of our heart than to open ourselves to the Lord. Yet only he can raise us up. A poet once wrote:



"We never know how high we are. Till we are called to rise" (E. Dickinson). The Lord calls us to get up, to rise at his word, to look up and to realize that we were made for heaven, not for earth, for the heights of life and not for the depths of death: Why do you seek the living among the dead?

God asks us to view life as he views it, for in each of us he never ceases to see an irrepressible kernel of beauty. In sin, he sees sons and daughters to be restored; in death, brothers and sisters to be reborn; in desolation, hearts to be revived. Do not fear, then: the Lord loves your life, even when you are afraid to look at it and take it in hand. In Easter he shows you



how much he loves that life: even to the point of living it completely, experiencing anguish, abandonment, death and hell, in order to emerge triumphant to tell you: "You are not alone; put your trust in me!".

Jesus is a specialist at turning our deaths into life, our mourning into dancing (cf. Ps 30:11). With him, we too can experience a Pasch, that is, a Passover – from self-centredness to communion, from desolation to consolation, from fear to confidence. Let us not keep our faces bowed to the ground in fear, but raise our eyes to the risen Jesus. His gaze fills us with hope, for it tells us that we are loved unfailingly, and that however much we make a mess of things, his love remains unchanged. This is the one, non-negotiable certitude we have in life: his love does not change. Let us ask ourselves: In my life, where am I looking? Am I gazing at graveyards, or looking for the Living One?

Why do you seek the living among the dead? The women hear the words of the angels, who go on to say: "*Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee*" (Lk 24:6). Those women had lost hope, because they could not recall the words of Jesus, his call that took place in Galilee. Having lost the living memory of Jesus, they kept looking at the tomb. Faith always needs to go back to Galilee, to reawaken its first love for Jesus and his call: to remember him, to turn back to him with all our mind and all our heart. To return to a lively love of the Lord is essential. Otherwise, ours is a "muse-

um" faith, not an Easter faith. Jesus is not a personage from the past; he is a person living today. We do not know him from history books; we encounter him in life. Today, let us remember how Jesus first called us, how he overcame our darkness, our resistance, our sins, and how he touched our hearts with his word.

Brothers and sisters, let us return to Galilee.

The women, remembering Jesus, left the tomb. Easter teaches us that believers do not linger at graveyards, for they are called to go forth to meet the Living One. Let us ask ourselves: In my life, where am I going? Sometimes we go only in the direction of our problems, of which there are plenty, and go to the Lord only for help. But then, it is our own needs, not Jesus, to guide our steps. We keep seeking the Living One among the dead. Or again, how many times, once we have encountered the Lord, do we return to the dead, digging up regrets, reproaches, hurts and dissatisfactions, without letting the Risen One change us?

Dear brothers and sisters: let us put the Living One at the centre of our lives. Let us ask for the grace not to be carried by the current, the sea of our problems; the grace not to run aground on the shoals of sin or crash on the reefs of discouragement and fear. Let us seek him, let us allow ourselves to be sought out by him, let us seek him in all things and above all things. And with him, we will rise again. •

Return to Galilee

On the occasion of the feast of St. Michael Garicoits, we asked three brothers (a Novice Master, a Master of Scholastics, a religious of long standing) and a young layman to help us return to the source of our charism. So we return to «Galilee», where the source of our spirituality and our vocation have come into being, so that we can share them. ●●●

●●● When I introduce novices to our spirituality, I always start by going back to the beginning, to the origin and source of our protagonist, St Michael Garicoits. I try to focus on the essential: contemplation of the Word Incarnate telling His Father: *"Here I am, I am coming to do your Will"* (Heb 10.9). In this founding text, I find the nugget of gold on which St Michael based our religious family's very way of life. This is not just a matter of theoretical content but is in fact grounded in how St Michael experienced God, which we should always use as our own starting point. By uniting himself to the first saying of the Word Incarnate, obedience to the Father, St Michael experienced a profound inner renewal and so discovered his religious vocation. This encouraged him to always be ready and willing to work for the salvation of mankind, right until his end. A phrase which I read a long time ago in an editorial written by our Superior General comes to mind: *"As Priest, Michael Garicoits, grasped the essence of the Gospel and took obedience, modelled on the obedience*



of Jesus, seriously to heart. He had to bear witness to this his whole life long. He died on the Cross of Obedience: torn apart by contradiction and controversy" (drawn from Editorial NEF 14 May 2010)

Then to deepen our spirituality, I suggest that novices study and, bit by bit, pray the founding text (the Manifesto) in which the essential spiritual heritage left to us by St Michael is condensed. Lectures also enable them to study the Rule of Life in more detail, together with the spiritual doctrine of St Michael, etc.

I try to get them to comprehend what is this experience of contemplation, set forth in the Manifesto, which led our Founder to become a true worshipper of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in both word and deed.

Our Congregation bears the name of the Sacred Heart and worshipping the Sacred Heart is part of our identity. Accordingly our novices devote time to analysing, studying and practising its virtues.

Our Mother Mary is, of course,



Fr. Osmar scj between the two novices: Br. Canuto Benitez (from Paraguay) to the left and Br. Leonardo Bruno Tenorio Reis (from Brazil) to the right

never very far from the pathway to formation. We pay homage to her every day in praying the Rosary and celebrate the feasts and solemnities dedicated to her.

How to get back to the beginning? There are numerous ways in which our attitudes manifest and reproduce the charism of Betharram in our lives. I often come back to this one way in particular however: if we want to return to our roots, we must strive in every way in our everyday lives to incarnate the attitude of Jesus, Mary and St Michael, i.e. obedience to the Father.

This is a fundamental virtue without which one is at risk of slipping into idolatry or becoming disposed to do only one's own will. We, religious of the Sacred Heart, "what

should mark us is the spirit of obedience... If obedience is missing, then so is our whole raison d'être" (DS 196-197, R. of L. 60).

How do we "return to Galilee"? For some unknown reason we Christians tend to get further and further away from that place! Personal or community sin, disordered affections or a cooling-off in our spiritual lives can lead us to become partially or totally detached from the love of the Father and of our brothers. That is why the Risen Lord invites us to "return to Galilee", going back along the path to the point where our vocation began. It's a matter of listening and obeying the One who called us in the beginning. The flame of love and the passion for our consecration to the Lord must be revived. If

we re-encounter this passion, we will be ready more than ever to live our community life and carry out our mission with renewed ardour.

If for any reason whatsoever some of our brothers feel they have lost something essential in their lives and that (to quote St Ignatius) they're going "from bad to worse", let them not hesitate to cast their eyes on Jesus, as did our father St Michael, a Jesus humbled but obedient to his Father, saying: *"Here I am, I am coming to do your Will"*. They will most surely find His mercy and the means to get back up and move forward. For those brothers who are going "from good to better" (ibid.) and who wish to do what gives "the most" glory to God, I invite them to join with the first saying of Jesus Christ and our Mother Mary: *"Go out and share"*.

We cannot keep all these graces and spiritual riches bequeathed to us, for ourselves alone.

We owe it to ourselves and others to reproduce and manifest the generous impulse of the Word Incarnate and, from our position, to promote "the culture of obedience and readiness to serve". In so doing, let us not forget our young people: let's give them the spaces in which to learn of the richness of our charism. Let us help those lay people who hear the call *"to share the same happiness"*. Let us offer them places of welcome, initiation and support. May they feel the joy we feel, the grace to have been led to the wellspring at which our Father, St Michael, drank.

Osmar Vicente Cáceres Spaini, scj
Master of the novices



●●● *Little children, do not love in words or speeches, but by deeds and by truth. (1 John 3.18)*

Love is not manifested in words, but in the authenticity with which we live it: this witness speaks louder than words. (See 1 John 3.18)

Throughout 17 years of contact with the life experience of Betharamites, I have heard many speeches

about religious life, community life, the feeling of belonging to the Congregation and the experience of the charismatic heritage bequeathed by Saint Michael. Many of these speeches were solidly grounded and based on excellent rhetoric; but I also heard silent speeches in which the witness was evident and spoke for itself.

Far be it from me to be or seem selective or exclusive, but it must be acknowledged that these testimonies and "silent speeches" penetrate deeper into the souls of those who

seek meaning in their lives and who, in a certain way, let themselves be seized and moulded by the charism and the way of life of the heirs of Saint Michael.

Throughout my journey in our religious family, I have had the pleasant joy of living and observing men who used this language of silent witness in all the communities where I lived. These men have fed me the desire to find my place, too, in Betharram.

Today, in the exercise of the service that the Congregation entrusts me as a formator, I try to make fruitful what I have experienced with these men. I know very well that our formation today has references which constitute the basis of our ministry and guide it, such as the Rule of Life, the Ratio Formationis and the personal skills of those who are in charge of it. But we try to put into practice in our formation community the golden rule that was given to us by the testimony of these men who, for the most part, are already part of the Betharram of heaven.

The challenge resulting from the reflection of our last General Chapter constitutes, for both initial formation and ongoing formation, a challenge and an adventure that must be tackled. It coincides in large part with the reflection of Pope Francis, in his homily of the Easter Vigil this year: *"Let us remember today the moment when*



Formators in session:
Frs Glecimar and Simone Panzeri
(memory from 2018)

Jesus called us, where he overcame our darkness, our resistance, our sins; the way he touched our hearts with his Word. Brothers and sisters, let's go back to Galilee."

Yes, we must return to the Galilee of our origins, especially the origins of our vocation, and our sense of belonging. We also believe in this regard that, for several years, the aspirations of many other religious congregations have driven them to return to the origins of their own Religious Family.

Our Region (Fr. Auguste Etcheco-

par) decided to focus on consistency, and the sincere desire to reconcile what we proclaim with the witness we give in community, valuing the virtues of some Betharramites who lived among us and of which we have been witnesses. On this challenge to live a coherence between words and actions, the bishop of Hippo reminds us that "words are convincing, but it is example that will lead others."

We thus bet on the challenge of encouraging our young religious to live the experience of our charism, starting from our humble and fragile testimony, but referring and looking

at ourselves in the mirror of those who have gone before us. We are certain that, as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI urged in his address to seminarists of the English College in Rome: *"Just as a small flame can set a forest on fire (see James 3: 5), so the faithful witness of a few can free the purifying and transformative power of God's love, so that it spreads like wildfire in a community or nation."*

Glecimar Guilherme da Silva scj
Master of scholastics

●●● When I think back to my Betharramite religious journey, and I think of the Betharramite *'Flying Camp'*, I very naturally think first about the call of God in my childhood. The well of faith, the well of self-sacrifice was already lived out in the family I was born into. The call to mission was already there when I took a look at the religious non-practice of the Christians of my village: I remember being shocked each year during All Saints' Day seeing the men gathered in great number at the cemetery when we didn't see them again all year ... the idea of the *'Flying Camp'* of St Michael was already born at that moment, even if it was still in an unexpressed format.

At the minor seminary in Betharram, I started to discover the Betharramite charism, not first in the writings of St Michael, but in the faces of the numerous Fathers and Brothers who accompanied us ; it was the religious, happy to serve, who cared for each of us and who didn't count the hours. Then came the writings of St Michael with the discovery of the love of the Sacred Heart: the Son of God pitches his tent among us, he takes the time to approach our humanity, to let us discover his face and entrust our mission to him, which resembles his own. It was the time of the great seminary, perpetual vows and then diaconal and priestly ordination. It was time to start to put



for new grace, in particular when one receives the mission to bring a province to life. I remember one of the monks of Tibhirine : The Father Abbot spoke to him and told him: "In any case, your life is given"! He stayed, he gave his life like the others and he

a foot in the stirrup even if I had already had a taste in the past years of the seminary and of youth missions in the neighbouring parishes, missions that enthused me and that were the sign that the '*flying camp*' was for me (the Superior even had to stop me as I was tempted to get involved more and more). The well of the charism started to supply strength to my life as a young person.

If I then look at the different missions I have been called to (the minor seminary in the Holy Land, 7 years; parishes in France, 25 years; Sanctuary of Betharram, 10 years), each time it was a new call for the needs of the mission. I'm not saying there hasn't been some resistance, but I was always happy to repack my case. I tried to live out the Betharramite charism by giving service out of love. This attitude allowed me to look further into hope, as it's always an opportunity

will be canonised shortly... My life, little as it is, has also been given by the grace of God: what comes first is not my preference but the need of the mission welcomed in obedience to the Word Incarnate. "*Don't ask for anything, don't refuse anything*" as a Betharram brother today sums it up! To give your life and give it again drawing on the charism of St Michael which is the spiritual well linked to the Word of God. In the parish, Father Mateo, provincial, helped us to draw from the Betharram well by helping us to read our pastoral life in the light of the Word of God. The key moment in the neighbouring abbeys, the continuous learning close at hand at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse have been an opportunity to rediscover the well: a well must be regularly dredged to free the flow that can get stuck. Whoever mentions '*flying camp*' says it must be

based on a community. That has not always been easy, however we have managed to share the pastoral experience, to pray together in order to set off again renewed in our different fields of mission.

I also give thanks for everything I have received from lay-people who let us share their commitments in the world, the church and their family. The 'flying camp' is the whole church on mission for humanity ; Betharram is like a little "commando" at the heart of the Church. This little commando has always existed at our place but 1985 (150th anniversary of our congregation) was a stage for a new awareness in this renewal of the charism: we saw it again in 2017 with the Chapter General which called us to go out towards the fringes, not to shut ourselves away but to join up with the abundant life around us.

Ordained priest in 1965, at the end of the council, I could hear the call addressed to the whole church to go "ad gentes". With my brothers, we have been part of many associations.

I give thanks to God after 54 years of priesthood and 62 years of religious life for having made some progress when it comes to the discovery of the charism, aware of all I have yet to experience, my last years will not be enough, that which allows me to grow in humility and to try to respond somehow to the wishes of St Michael: *"Give me a heart that truly loves, it grows, it tastes the things of God, it runs, it flies along the steps of Our Lord, Jesus Christ"*.

Firmin Bourguinat scj



●●● An initiative promoted this year by the Italian Vicariate has led us, young lay Betharramites (the *BetharrAmici*), to realize two first experiences of "coming out" in the Lissone and Langhirano Communities. These two first outings have left ma-

nifold impressions and new pists for reflection. We are urged by the desire to make the personality and charism known to other young people, but we are well aware that today, to be young people active in the Church, we must have courage and the will to counter the seducing proposals of the world.

Saint Michael revealed himself as an excellent travelling companion and



his motto *"Always forward!"* that has become our hobby-horse, gives us the strength to face everyday challenges. Always to go forward with a spirit of availability and service is a commitment that we, young people, have set our hearts on since the beginning. As a group, we feel responsible to feed "the Here I am charism", by meeting all the young people who may grow up in the Betharramite Family, and not only the young, but also all the Fathers who guide us and are present in the neighbouring Communities.

By our youthful spirit, we would like to rekindle the "yes" of their call, by sowing in them seeds of enthusiasm and motivation that they have themselves sown in the hearts of the children we were and who have become young adults.

We have obtained a positive return after the two first steps of this way: some young people wish to travel with us. So our heart feels questioned:

let us listen to them, let us accompany them, let us do our best so that they may in their turn benefit of the wise friendly advice of Saint Michael.

The BetharrAmici group is a concrete example of how beautiful realities may emerge, when one is brave enough to put oneself out: Three years ago, when we lost the Fathers of our original Community with their precious accompaniment, we thought everything was finished. But we are here today, stronger than before! Because we have not abandoned, we sat for a moment, looking at each other straight in the face, promising each other to go on this way whatever the cost. Without foreseeing the end of our process, we have laced our boots and we have started again, without any delay, without any reserve, without any regrets, out of love.

Alessandra Corti

A vicariate full of promise

After embracing Life's call to evangelise China in 1922, the rise to power of the Communism forced our missionaries to leave the land of the Dragon. Once exiled, our missionaries were welcomed in Siam and started embracing the same call in the northern part of Thailand since 1951. Since then they have been working tirelessly in the evangelization among the Thai, Karen, Lawa and Akha. We are grateful for God's unpredictable Providence: through their lives, the missionaries reached out to all the people over these past years.

From Mission to Formation

After working for 33 years in building the local Church in Chiang-mai Diocese, in 1984 the missionaries started welcoming young men at

Maesarieng district (North of Thailand), to experience the same lifestyle and to drink from the same spiritual source of Betharram. Without any security regarding the future, this work of formation was started by Fr Mirco (the then Superior of Thailand) and Fr Pierre Grech (Superior General at that time); a few years later, the formation moved to Sampran (west of Bangkok) and on 20 January 1987 Ban Betharram Sampran Seminary was officially inaugurated as the first formation house by Emeritus Card. Michael Michai Kitbunchu. We are grateful to the Author of life for the gift of vocations and thankful to the religious who from the beginning worked in the field of formation.

From the growing seed of vocation to the continuation of mission



Many of our missionaries have gone to the Father's house to enjoy the reward they deserve for their labour and some are still around to give us courage and strength to respond to the call in our time.

In embra-

cing life's calls, both mission and formation, continue to go hand in hand in the footsteps of our missionaries. In 1999, we were blessed with the first two ordinations namely Fr. Paul Mary Subancha and Fr. Michael Tidkham. God continues showering his blessings upon us with numbers of priests and young seminarians in different stages of formation.

We are grateful to the Author of life who has given many religious to our Vicariate which expresses its beauty through its unity in the diversity. At present we are blessed with three Italian missionaries namely Frs Carlo Luzzi (85), Alberto Pensa (79) and Ugo Donini (77). There are also 19 Thai priests, 2 deacons, 7 scholastics, 1 novice (1st year), 8 postulants and 40 young boys in the formation. We are grateful to God for the seed of faith sown by the missionaries and for the fruit, that is the vocations for

our Vicariate.

As the missionaries passed the baton of mission to us, we continue to embrace this Life's call with the same spirit of humility, simplicity, enthusiasm and we keep the spirit of the *Ecce Venio* alive in our daily journey in spite of our limitations, woundedness and fragility. As we continue our daily journey, we keep praising and thanking the Author of life who has given us the precious gift of being able to embrace and support each other in the Vicariate.

We continue sharing our lives and serving the people of God in 6 communities: in Chiang Mai Diocese (established in 1969) and in the newly established Chiangrai diocese (7 July 2018) where we have three centers, namely Mae Pon Center, Epiphany Center in Fang and Holy Family Center. We welcome the boys and girls who are Karen, Akha, Lahu



and Thai Yai and give them basic Christian education, along with human, moral and cultural development. There are three formation houses, namely Ban Betharram Sampran, Ban Garicoits and Ban Betharram Payao to welcome and accom-



pany the young to experience and drink from the same source and be ready to share the mission in the future. There are several parishes and villages where we minister the people of God irrespective of language and culture: Thai, Karen, Lahu, Akha, and Thai Yai. We help them to grow in their Christian way of life as they received the seed of faith from the missionaries.

Key points of attention for the growth of the religious life and mission in our communities:

Deepen our understanding and experience of our Religious Life:

Each religious needs to deepen and renew his own religious life according to the charism of Betharram and live in a concrete way his daily activities following our Rule of Life, with a particular attention to the ongoing formation.

Community Life and Community Project:

Since the community consists of different residences due to the distance and different nature of mission, the superior and the members of each community need to draw up a credible project in order to collaborate and strengthen each other in the spiritual life in order to bear witness among the people of God.

Sharing the resources:

We strengthen our sense of belonging to the family of Betharram by being self-sufficient in the Formation houses. This helps us not to forget our roots and we continue to work hard in this respect. We encourage each other to be responsible as individuals and as communities by sharing our resources: rice, vegetables, etc.

We are happy to deposit the salary we receive from the diocese into

the Vicariate Account to meet the general expenses and the formation expenses. Adding to that, we rely on the regular contribution from single religious and from communities.

Better communication: The responsible use of the media in our daily life is a key point in order to improve the quality of our fraternal life.

Possible new prospects that may emerge:

To take up new missions: We have accepted the mission Centre in Fang, with the presence of new tribes: Lahu, Thai Yai, etc ... It is a new challenge because this mission requires that we learn a new language and a new culture if we want to be credible witnesses among the people of God.

To prepare the members for the collaboration of the International Community: It is a challenge calling us to be ready to give our contribution to the mission of the Congregation following the example of our elder brothers.

We express our gratitude to God: He loves us unconditionally through the life of our missionaries who came to sow the seed of faith among us and He continues to bless us with the gift of vocations. We also are grateful to all our benefactors who support us in many ways. We pray that the good Lord may shower his graces upon them abundantly.

Chan John Kunu scj
Regional Vicar in Thailand



The Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, began the canonical visit to the Father Auguste Etchecopar Region with the Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay (April 8 to May 7, 2019).



On May 12, 2019, we learned from the Regional Superior, Fr. Jean-Luc Morin of the death of Mrs. Françoise Liepmann, wife of Jacques, a layman from Lille, attached to the Fraternité Me Voici of Limoges. We send our deepest condolences to Jacques Liepmann, as well as to all his relatives and friends. In unity of prayer.



Editorial News

On March 7, 1949, the book «La doctrine spirituelle de Saint Michel Garicoïts» was printed on behalf of the Beauchesne publishing house in Paris.

Precisely at the end of the seventy years, March 21, 2019, the translation into Italian of this precious text fundamental for the knowledge of the rich spiritual heritage of St. Michael Garicoïts is published.

“The Spiritual Doctrine of Saint Michael Garicoïts” in the Italian version can also be found in e-book format.

The charism: from Saint Michael to us, through Father Etchecopar

by Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

Father Etchecopar had the privilege of living in great intimacy with St. Michael Garicoïts for eight years, from June 1855 to May 1863. At the very source of the saint's heart, he was able to drink the living water inspired by the Holy Spirit and to know the Betharramite charism, which was destined to become a flowing river (see Jn 7: 37-38) and which would help many people to live as Christians.

The daily interview he had with St. Michael Garicoïts before giving his lessons to the novices, the notes he took conscientiously at each of the saint's lectures and the confidences he was able to collect during impromptu dialogues were all elements which allowed him to know the mystery of the revealed charism more closely.

Saint Michael Garicoïts was convinced that he had received the charism through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in order to found the Congregation. It is through Fr. Etchecopar that we know this. He wrote it in particular in Circular Letter No. 995 (Bétharram, 10 January 1888):

'You see, my Fathers and Brothers, despite his profound humility, Father Garicoïts believed in a work of new creation, having its purpose, its organization, its spirit and its means; he believed that the God of the poor and the insignificant had chosen him for this purpose, that he was the shepherd of the last house of the hamlet of Ibarre, he, a nobody, had been told: "Go and found a new Institute



in my Church; it has its reason to exist in these troubled times, where the great Orders are scattered and where the spirit of revolutionary independence penetrates from all sides into the Sanctuary ... Here is your flag and your rallying cry ... You will walk at the head with the flag of the Sacred Heart, uttering the cry, the Ecce Venio of my Son, and you will be his joy and the support of his Church."

He believed in this voice; he seized this flag, and with his powerful voice: "It is a craze nowadays, to substitute our will for that of God and to say to him: Take leave, so I can put myself in it ... Come to me those who surrender their will to perfect obedience and Divine good pleasure!!"

And he rushed into his field of work, like a giant, and walked there until the end of his life. Was he, my Fathers and my Brothers, the victim of a generous illusion? No, no, thanks to God ... the facts prove it; and, at this very moment when the Fama sanctitatis continues, a thousand voices proclaim that Father Garicoïts was a man filled with the Spirit of God, one of those Apostles called up in difficult times, for the consolation and triumph of his Church.'

The Holy Spirit always inspires remedies to meet the challenges which are the signs of the times. Fr. Etchecopar says so: "*[a new institute] has its reason to exist in these troubled times, where the great Orders are scattered and where the spirit of revolutionary independence penetrates from all sides into the Sanctuary ...*" (Ibid.)

Father Etchecopar uses other expressions to describe the state of

society and the Church of his time: the spirit of insubordination and selfishness (p.8, letter 11), the liberalism of the moment (p. 12, Letter 15) (circa 1887), the spirit of revolutionary independence (46, Letter 71, Letter 88). This is what St. Michael Garicoïts formulates in the Manifesto: "But we human beings are cold before God! The independence of priests had a very detrimental effect: even among the priests there are very few who say as their divine Master did: "Here I am, Ita Pater!"

Father Etchécopar testified several times to having heard the founder say these things:

"The Servant of God told me himself that having seen the difficulties and even the tears of the Bishops, and the spirit of independence which seemed to invade the clergy, he had said that it would be a very useful thing to form an Association of Priests, ready to go, at the first sign, wherever they are called by the Bishop, and especially to the most difficult ministries to be filled. (Fr. Etchécopar, witness of the founder, T.II, 135).

In the Manifesto of 1838, St. Michael Garicoïts does not name Jesus as the Sacred Heart, but as Jesus Christ and "Jesus, annihilated and obedient". It was Bishop Lacroix who gave this name to the nascent congregation in 1841, when he imposed its rules. But this name given by the Bishop pleased Saint Michael, as it also explains the charism.

Why does our Society bear the name of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

1) Because it is specially united to this divine Heart saying to His Father: Here I am,

with the purpose of being His co-operators for the salvation of souls.

Because it professes to imitate the life of Our Lord in a way that is special to us: the Society trains its members to live in a spirit of humility and charity towards each other, according to the example of the disciples of Our Lord, and to conform to this divine Saviour, principally in his obedience towards his Father, and in His zeal for the salvation of souls. (DS § 7)

Father Etchécopar often uses the expression "Sacred Heart of Jesus" to refer to the love of Jesus, the son of God made man: in one of his lectures (July 23, 1861), he describes the centrality of the love of Jesus Christ for the Betharramite religious:

"But where will we find the source of this gentleness, this obedience, which demands a continual sacrifice?

In the love of Jesus Christ.

In the Heart of Jesus Christ.

Oh! when we love Jesus Christ, we are gentle, devoted, obedient!

Oh! when one looks at his brothers in the heart of Jesus Christ who carries them, who loves them, who bears them, who looks on them favourably and who gives himself to them, we can easily bear them, we esteem them, we love them: a love that nothing can weaken.

And when we see the Superiors in the Heart of Jesus Christ, we obey with promptness and filial joy. [...]

Let's go every day to take refuge in this Heart. He is always open to everyone, but especially to us, his favourite children.

Let's throw ourselves often into this Heart, or rather let's establish our home there. Jesus permits it and desires it. And how good it is to live in his heart."

This reflection reminds us of St.

Michael Garicoïts: *"Everywhere and always alone with Jesus Christ. The will of Jesus Christ in all I do by the Rule. Jesus Christ in my superiors, whoever they are, Jesus Christ in my brothers, receiving the services I render them, as rendered to Himself."* (DS § 245/8)

We do not study the writings of Father Etchécopar which are very abundant, especially the letters. But even a very superficial reading allows us to find the vocabulary and all the expressions of St. Michael: *idoneus, expeditus, expositus, ecce venio* and *ecce ancilla*, the five Betharramite virtues. He proposes obedience as the virtue as opposed to the evil of the moment that is the spirit of independence. He says as follows:

"As to the obedience described in our holy Rules, you know that it is nothing less than the obedience of Jesus Christ, that is to say, in all his perfection.

Sincere obedience, which makes us whole, with all that we are in the hands of the Superior.

Exact obedience, which makes us submissive and eager, not only to the formal orders, but to the least desires of our Superiors.

Prompt obedience, which makes us leave everything, even a letter just started, to obey the voice of the Superior as the very voice of God.

Generous, joyful, constant obedience, which makes us undertake, continue and lead to the end of the most painful things, with the joy, the immense happiness that gives this thought: "I do the will of God!"

Finally, total obedience, which sacrifices everything to God, action, will, judgment, and offers him an infinitely precious holocaust and infinitely



pleasant. Obedience! Obedience! The perfect obedience of the son. All that will happen, that will be carried out without obedience, will be carried out *magni passus* perhaps, but *extra viam*. (*magni passus sed extra viam*: Great steps, but made on the wrong path, see St. Augustine) .

Father Auguste considers Saint Michael Garicoïts as our father because, through the gift of the charism that the Holy Spirit has given him, he has initiated us into the consecrated life. *"Thank you, Father, for everything we owe you. It was you who initiated us into religious life. It was you who grouped us with your mission from heaven.*

[...] You were our guide, our light, our perfect model, our strength and our consolation..." (Fr. Etchecopar's prayer to saint Michael) •



Thai youth from the formation house (Sampran), accompanied by Fr. Luke Kriangsak scj in the steps of the Betharramite missionaries.



“A MOBILE CAMP” to reach men where they work and where they live.

“A MOBILE CAMP” to live an availability by wanting to serve the “God melted in love for us”.

“A MOBILE CAMP” to be Sons of Saint Michael Garicoits.

Happy feast day for May 14



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