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A word from the superior general

To disconnect in order to go out,
to listen to one another in order to share

'They brought him a deaf man who also had difficulty in speaking, and they asked Jesus to lay his hand upon him.

Jesus took him apart from the crowd, put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with spittle.

Then, looking up to heaven, he groaned and said to him, "Ephphetha," that is, "Be opened."

And his ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak clearly.'

(Mk 7.32-35)

Dear Betharramites:

In this last editorial dedicated to the year of "Going out to share" I invite you to reflect a little on social media in formation. I remember that in 2007 there was an international meeting in Adiapodoumé, organized by the Congregation, attended by formators from all over the world. Its fruits: the Formation Guide was updated and enriched. Later, interesting chapters on accompaniment and discernment, etc. were added. However, it comes to my mind that the question at that time in Ivory Coast was: "Should we allow the scholastics to use the cell phone or not?" (Sic). At the time, it caused concern that young people in formation

were too preoccupied with things outside, towards what was happening elsewhere, rather than towards ordinary life. This small device came to destabilise the "Nazareth" of each day, to usurp that place where bonds grow and everything that happens can be formative. We had been taught for years that having our head and heart placed where it belongs helps us to be more present in reality, to become sensitive to a common project, to be able to feel challenged by what the brother in our house lives and to the poor man outside of it.

Now that years have passed, remembering that question, I cannot hide a smile of compassion. In reality, few expected that between 2007 and 2019 that virtual society would progress as much as it did and transform us into something like "cyber-people". This technological change imposed a trend that not only invited us to learn to use technology well, but forced us to dance at its dizzying pace.

Then the smartphone, facebook, instagram, etc. became fashionable. And we keep asking ourselves: Should it? Can it? How much? When?... Frustration increases when we feel that we are suffering from an almost uncontrollable process. The evolution of the media is a kind of "silent revolution of personal and community life" that apparently no one can stop.

Indeed, my dear predecessor Fr. Gaspar expressed it to the Chapter members at San Bernardino: *"The*

world in which we live is in continuous evolution; almost nothing has consistency" (N.R.: everything flows, incessantly, without pause to distract, or get bored ...) *"This is having a negative impact on those who want to live the values of the Gospel."* It imposes *"the widespread use of technology, with all that is good and all that is negative which can impede the inner life, silence and study ..."* (Fr. Gaspar Fernández: Final report on Congregation II, 3-c)

Faced with this reality, we must discern the Will of God, in all freedom and indifference (Ignatian). Proposing values and disabling the dynamic that apparently links many at the virtual level, but that isolates at the community level, seems to be the way. Here let us paraphrase "Going out" as: "disconnected" and "free". We do not want to become slaves of the Smartphone. But ... when we go to the dining room with phone on alert, attentive to WhatsApp ... or when we are in a meeting to share life with someone and we are carrying a cell phone in our hands... when we celebrate mass or confessions with the phone by our side, etc. ... Everyone knows well that I am not exaggerating in mentioning those examples ...!

I remember a true story: a father was in the Cathedral during the great concelebration of the Chrism Mass when he felt his cell phone ring, so he hurried to the sacristy to answer the call that "could not be put off" ... and then re-entered stealthily. Perhaps

he managed to calm his cyber-consciousness because he managed to enter the sanctuary unnoticed before the consecration.

Some have even been listening to people in pastoral distress but have left their phone on the table and don't hesitate to answer a WhatsApp while the poor distressed person tells him his sorrows waiting for empathy, understanding and even forgiveness. And we could also count those who spend between three and four hours a day dedicated to social networks... (I hope these examples do not upset...)

It is curious how this phenomenon of communication affects equally all regions and communities of Betharram in the world, as a global phenomenon, with all the good and all the risk that is entailed. Betharramites need to share in community how we feel in front of this ambiguous sign of human progress, which is not always well used according to our vocation and mission.

Let us now recognise the good. Among other things, it allows us to be in almost immediate contact with brothers, friends and pastoral groups to organise mission.

It puts us in contact with what happens in every corner of the world, helps us spread the Good News and especially our charism, so that Jesus is known and loved by more and more people. We have news instantly. We can make virtual meetings hundreds or thousands of kilometres away, etc. That is, it allows us to go out to share what we are and have. The world of the

virtual, well used, is a source of values to go out of ourselves, overcoming the deafness and dumbness we suffer. Jesus also communicated with gestures and words: he opened the ears of the deaf to hear his Word and to live it. After healing the people, Jesus taught them to proclaim with their life the joy of the Gospel. He also asked them for discretion and even "to keep it secret", although, sometimes, he could not contain them ...: *"Jesus told them not to tell anyone, but the more he insisted, the more they published it."* (Mk 7. 36)

How difficult it is to know the right time to speak and know when to keep quiet! St. Michael was a teacher in this art of spiritual discretion and wanted us all to practice it.

Brothers, we need more listening and less exhibitionism! To encourage the bereaved, to support the poor and to forgive the sinner by communicating renewed hope. Let's learn from the beginning of formation to go out to meet "face to face", let's walk "side by side" on the pilgrimage of life. This is much more important than spending our energies editing selfies and photos waiting for a "like." Where a loving silence reigns, He who is our only love will be present: Jesus Christ.

*Fr. Gustavo scj
Superior General*

Homily during the Holy Mass for the repose of the souls of the cardinals and bishops who died over the course of the year

Vatican Basilica, Monday 4 November 2019

Life itself is a constant going forth: from our mother's womb to our birth, from infancy to adolescence, from adolescence to adulthood and so on, until the day of our going forth from this world. Today, as we pray for our brother cardinals and bishops who have gone forth from this life in order to meet the risen Lord, we cannot forget the most important and difficult "going forth", the one that gives meaning to all the others: that of going forth from our very selves. Only by going forth from ourselves do we open the door that leads to the Lord. Let us implore this grace: "Lord, I want to come to you, along the roads and with my traveling companions each day. Help me to go out of myself in order to come towards you, for you are life itself".

I would like to propose a second thought, about the resurrection, drawn from the first reading and the "noble thing" that Judas Maccabeus did for those who had died. He did it, we are told, because "he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness" (2 Macc 12:45). Godliness, piety, is richly rewarded. Piety towards others opens the gates of eternity. To bow down before the needy in order to serve them is to be on the path to heaven. If, as Saint Paul says, "love never ends" (1 Cor 13:8), then love is itself the bridge linking earth to heaven. We can ask ourselves whether we are advancing along this bridge. Do I let myself be touched by the situation of someone



in need? Can I weep with those who are suffering? Do I pray for those whom no one thinks about? Do I help someone who has nothing to give back to me? This is not to be sentimental or to engage in little acts of charity; these are questions of life, questions of resurrection.

Lastly, I would offer a third thought about the resurrection. I take it from the Spiritual Exercises, where Saint Ignatius suggests that before making any important decision, we should imagine ourselves standing before God at the end of time. That is the final and inevitable moment, one that all of us will have to face. Every life decision, viewed from that perspective, will be well directed, since it is closer to the resurrection, which is the meaning and purpose of life. As the departure is calculated by the goal, as the planting is judged by the harvest, so life is best judged by starting from its end and purpose. Saint Ignatius writes: "Let me consider myself as standing in the presence of my judge on the last day, and reflect what decision on the present matter I would then wish to have made; I will choose now the rule of life that I would then wish to have observed" (Spiritual Exercises, 187). It can be a helpful exercise to view reality through the eyes of the Lord and not only through our own; to look to the future, the resurrection, and not only to this passing day; to make choices that have the flavour of eternity, the taste of love. •

Inputs to draw up a project for the Region or for the Vicariate

Council of the Congregation in rogué, 18-24 September 2019

theme for the Year 2020::

GO OUT, IN COMMUNITY,
to meet life in the margins

Points underlined in reference to this theme:

- This is the central theme of the Chapter.
- The concept adopted in Chapter: go out, in Community, even though individualism is tempting. In order to “go out” in terms of mission, you to be converted. One might be tempted to turn in on oneself. This conversion must become a possibility.
- To convert ourselves on the basis of a concrete proposal from the Congregation. Attention is given to those on the margins of life, to those who are “invisible”. Translated into Betharramite, that means “go where nobody else wants to go”.
- Do we firmly believe that conversion is necessary?
- It is important to create an option which we can focus on and which can become a sign of the attention devoted to the margins.
- Adopt three criteria:
 1. Be clear on the objectives.
 2. Graduality.
 3. Treat each event (change of religious, special situations, etc.) as an opportunity. Try not to allow events in life to dictate my decisions, but be the protagonists of the future, by planning our choices as much as possible.
- One aspect much emphasised is that of the call to personal conversion.
- Don't let yourself be paralysed by fear, try to “dare” to go out.
- Don't let yourself be tempted to adopt self-preservation but place a higher value on prophecy, in words and deeds. There is no conversion if you are set in your ways.

Concrete actions:

Going out... of yourself:

1. Let the times of community spiritual retreat and spiritual exercise be lived as an opportunity for an examination of conscience. Let reference also be made to reading NEF. It would be good, at all times, to place an emphasis on the meaning of personal conversion.
2. Why don't we help one another to achieve this? It would be lovely, as well as constructive, if a member of one community went to lead a meeting for another

community.

3. When in a community meeting, each participant should attempt to share with the others - moments of joy, the difficulties encountered in the mission (school, parish, chaplaincies) and, in particular, those experiences which have enriched him both personally and in community.
4. Harmonise personal projects and community projects; a mission conceived and planned by the community and not by or on the basis of one's personal projects.
5. A personal task. How am I living my religious life? When looking at the world: what does the cry of the world say?

Going out... of ourselves... as a community:

1. The ideal for being a community: turn your gaze on your brother to meet one another and make a community.
2. Ministry is the essential part of our lifestyle.
3. We need to change the "I" into "WE".
4. Give ourselves the time (1 or 2 days) to discern and draw up an apostolic and community project.
5. In preparing the community project, the focus should be on those events in which all members of the community are engaged.
6. Understand what the difference is between a personal project and an apostolic community project. Here again conversion is necessary. The challenge for every one of us is to unite our life in the meeting with Christ and in loving our brethren.

Going out... of ourselves... as a community... in mission:

1. Be ready and willing to take part in the missionary initiatives proposed by the Vicariate or the Region, as a community.
2. Community in discernment: the mission that has been entrusted to the community is never cast in tablets of stone. In the logic of our identity as a "flying camp", the mission must always be open to reassessment and, with due regard to discernment, we must learn how to read these signals as grounded in reality, which involve not only the community, but also a Vicariate and a Region.
3. Our reflection should be linked always to the calls made on us by particular churches. At present, relations between Betharramites and bishops are normally good.
4. Have the laity take part in the mission. Produce a missionary project that is carried out by religious and laity alike.
5. How does the community listen? And how does it approach the sufferings it comes across in the areas in which it is established (the lonely, the wounded...)? The community can be made aware thereof in order to be able to come to the assistance of any person in need.
6. Open or strengthen a community in the service of a marginalised area, an area where nobody wants to go.

7. Send our young people in formation to visit families located close to the formation house, especially those living on the breadline or in shanty-towns.
8. Launch an international voluntary scheme, by joining forces with one or two communities per Vicariate. Locate and identify a community which is willing and prepared to receive young people from another culture for a missionary experience, in close collaboration with at least one of the members of the community.
9. At forthcoming meetings of the vicariate, carry out an assessment of the journey travelled so far.

Graziano Sala scj
General Secretary



Deepening the Congregational theme for 2020

"Go outwards in community to encounter life and people on the margins": the Acts of the 2017 General Chapter subdivide this into three aspects, which certainly form the central theme of the Chapter. We want to be ready to put into practice the precious orientations of that important chapter of the Congregation, totally in tune with Pope Francis who on different occasions affirms: *"The Church must go outwards or it is not the Church."*

"For that – we read in the Acts of the Chapter n.58 –, a pastoral, personal and community conversion is needed, in all the places where we are present."

Why so much insistence on this point? Are we no longer doing it, or are we very bad at it? If Pope Francis also calls on the whole Church



and makes this a strong point of his ministry, it is because it is not easy, and we always find some resistance. It was not easy for the Apostles to launch out into world and preach the Good News, just as it was not easy to leave their nets and follow Jesus. We see, with concern, divisions and disagreements within the Church itself, when it comes to going out to the peripheries or to the Amazon: each one has his mental framework and each one feels safe in his "orthodoxy." So: do we go out, or do we stick with the way we have always done things? Let us be guided by the guidelines offered by the General Chapter:

To go out of ourselves

It is worth quoting the Acts of the Chapter verbatim:

"A change of attitude to over-

come blockages...

- a) *Renouncing comforts & false motivations (money, prestige, image, positions, etc.), mental schemes, individual projects, etc.*
- b) *Cultivating in ourselves the ability to listen, the search for the encounter, the valuing of each person (especially the "invisible"), to allow ourselves to be questioned, both in community life and in mission.*
- c) *Remembering that the first purpose of our mission is evangelisation."*

(Acts of the Chapter, 59-62)

The parable of the Good Samaritan helps us evaluate our personal attitudes: the priest and the Levite who go down the road to Jericho had their minds structured by their previous formation. Certainly they did not think of themselves as bad people. Rather they were convinced they were fulfilling the law. What concept did they have of neighbour? How did they manage to reconcile the first two commandments of the Law, in themselves inseparable? 'Who is my neighbour?' ... the teacher of the law asks Jesus. Maybe, inside, he thought: 'everyone but the Samaritans, because they are pagans!'

The same could happen to us, if we do not know how to overcome the mental framework of our prejudices: 'Everyone is my neighbour but those migrants ... those layabouts in the poor areas... those criminals in jail ... or those drug addicts'

"We want to be an outgoing

Church, moved only by compassion. Mental framework must not be an excuse to avoid the risk of mission". This is what the children of La Colmena sang with great enthusiasm, at the inaugural Mass of the General Chapter.

What then helps us to go out of ourselves?

It is surely a love of Life, the neighbour we meet every day, inside and outside of our communities. The love for our people, for our local Church. The sensitivity to the great social problems of our time. Solidarity with those who are already working and giving their lives to social development projects or the defence of human rights.... Be attentive "to the different anguished cries of life," insists the General Chapter. We cannot deny it, and we thank Pope Francis who underlines it so often: there are many unattended peripheries everywhere, and at the same time a lot of indifference, a lot of "passing by on the other side."

Going outwards is certainly our Salvation, our Pentecost: a going out prepared by prayer and discernment. I speak to Jesus and ask him: Where do you live? Where do I find you? You are certainly in this consecrated host, but how are you present in my neighbour? What keeps me from still finding you in the "wounded" by the roadside?

The last Council of the Congregation held in Adrogué (Argentina) from September 18th to 24th

has enriched this subject with some more contributions: (i) Clarity in our objectives, (ii) gentle discernment, (iii) welcoming each event or circumstance of life as an opportunity to live out my vocation, (iv) not letting ourselves be paralysed by fear, but accepting challenges (v) taking advantage of significant moments (retreats, assemblies) to examine our conscience, (vi) be in tune with the Congregation and the Church. (vii) Helping one other to share in community the joys, difficulties or challenges encountered in Mission.

We can all and should go outwards: it does not depend on age,

nor even on our state of health. As Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus, was proclaimed patron saint of the Missions, without ever leaving her cloister, the heart that loves cannot be blind or deaf.

Let us journey outwards, animated and driven by the same Spirit, by the same Charism.

Going out in community: it will be the next topic to deepen.

Tobia Sosio scj
General Councillor for the mission



Canonical visit to the Vicariate of Paraguay

with Alberto Zaracho Barrios scj, Regional Vicar

The canonical visit of the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, was a time of grace for the Vicariate of Paraguay. His presence, illuminated by the light of the Holy Spirit, has renewed and strengthened the bonds of fraternity, charity and communion between the Betharramite religious and laity with whom we offer our humble service of apostolate in our Vicariate.

In the light of the theme of the Betharramite Congregation "To go out to share", and of the current Magisterium which promotes a missionary Church which is out going, synodal, and able to take initiatives, to get itself involved and to accompany, the Superior General has left us a concil-



iatory and hopeful message; he invited us to live in the mysticism of the encounter, to give a witness of fraternal communion and to be a prophetic sign of the Kingdom, in taking the Community Apostolic Project as our spiritual instrument.

From this point of view, the Vicariate of Paraguay is a pilgrim traveling between light and shade in the contemporary culture. It is fragile, but with full of hope.

In fact, we can not ignore that the realities of the Church, the Congregation and the Paraguayan society impose on us today a new challenge which is the art of knowing how to hear the calls and to answer with a



new regard which is contemplative and merciful, in all the painful situations arising from the current context.

It is precisely in this ecclesial, congregational and socio-cultural context that God calls us, as true Betharramites, to be always the disciples of Jesus "impose ourselves" by the quality of our lives in the service of others; disciples of Jesus "credible" by our example and our testimony of life; disciples of Jesus ready to fulfill the Father's will; disciples of Jesus who make of our life a service to the most deprived.

We must now commit ourselves to

translate and concretize the exhortation of the Superior General in all our communities and in all the Betharramite educational works, in order to live, feel and experience the seed of a new time of renewed fidelity to the charism of Betharram in Paraguay.

In the threshold of the third millennium, I entrust to St. Michael Garicoits to intercede for each of us before God, and grant us the grace to live with radicality and with renewed enthusiasm our Betharramite consecration in order to be the authentic witnesses in following Jesus, annihilated and obedient. •

In the footsteps of the young boy who wanted to touch the sky

First of all, I want to give thanks to God who rescued me from poverty to make me his servant. This call remains a miracle for me because nobody could have foreseen me making such a commitment in this feast of All Saints.

Indeed, the family context in which I grew up did not predispose me towards a religious vocation. Coming from a blended family with little practice of Christian faith, I remember as a teenager, it was in an evangelical church, after an invitation from a classmate, that I first opened a Bible. But the restrictions we were subjected to quickly drove me away



from this movement, in which we were even forbidden to play football or watch television.

So in high school, invited by a student to a meeting of the Young Christian Students (YCS), I was amazed by the enthusiasm and fellowship of its members. This friend who became a brother suggested that I join catechism class in order to be baptized. It is therefore within the YCS that I discovered the figure of Christ.

In this movement of Catholic action, I met young "fools" of God. Before even hearing the theological word incarnation "these fools" made real before me the essence of Chris-

tianity, namely the love of neighbour. Without them I would not have embraced the Catholic faith.

After obtaining a bachelor's degree in 1999, and beginning a university degree in geography in Abidjan, the year 2000 became the year of my baptism (June 3), my first communion (June 4) and my confirmation (June 11). Immediately after these sacraments, I was elected YCS manager of the two university residences in Abobo (a suburb of Abidjan). As flagship actions, I organized with my office gatherings and awareness campaigns to promote peace and tolerance between two rival movements of the Federation Student and School of Ivory Coast (FESCI).

It is in such a context that the desire to go one step further in Christ was born in me. Having no spiritual accompanist, and not belonging to any vocational group, I send a letter

to a sister of the Servants of Mary to tell her of my desire to serve Christ through the priestly ministry. It was she who directed me to the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram located at Adiapodoumé at Km17.

Thus one Saturday in the year 2001, I arrived at the parish Saint-Bernard of Adiopodoumé where I was warmly welcomed by Fr Laurent Bacho. After a few months of accompaniment I joined the group of aspirants of the community. I devoured books on St. Michael Garicoits. I discovered the saint of "here I am". I was fascinated by his desire to reproduce the momentum of the heart of Christ, his youthful desire to touch the sky already inclined me to imitate him. I therefore declared my need to be at his school. In September 2002, I joined the community as a registered postulant at the Catholic University



1 November, Feast of All Saints, at the parish of St Bernard of Adiapodoumé (Ivory Coast), Br. Hippolyte scj made his final profession in the hands of Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue scj, Vicar General.

of West Africa (UCAO) in philosophy. During this year, with some young people, I launch the YCS movement at St. Bernard's parish and the parish newspaper "Echo de Saint-Bernard".

However, behind this dynamism were questions about my vocational choice. Having no concrete answers, I decided to withdraw from the Congregation to better think about my choice. Unfortunately, at the end of this period of reflection and maturing, I said "goodbye" to the community. A few years passed, and while my university studies were coming to an end, in December 2008 I undertook a pilgrimage to Lourdes and paid a visit to my friend who was in Betharram for his free year before final vows. During this short stay on the bank of the Gave, I met Father Hervé Kouamé who threw me this sentence: "Hippolyte, if you still feel the desire to be a priest, the door is open". Disarmed and fixed by this word, I knew I couldn't walk away. Is not the Virgin Mary holding out her branch again? To be sure, I made pilgrimages to Fatima, to Ars at Saint John Vianney's and to Rome at the foot of Saint Peter's to pray at the end of the year of the priesthood. My decision was made, I want to serve Christ and my brothers in humanity in the Betharramite family.

After the canonical novitiate, done with Father Jacky Moura, I was sent on an internship to the community of Dabakala. On July 28, 2015, I was allowed to make my first vows. In 2017, under the leadership of Father Dan-

sou Sylvain, I obtained my theological baccalaureate. After that I was in the residence of Katiola, attached to the community of Dabakala, and its college, directed by Fr Raoul Segla, who welcomed me. I taught history, geography, Latin and civic education.

In short, this particular journey allowed me to take the full measure of my commitment to following Christ. My vocational path was certainly long and fraught with pitfalls, but it was with a heart overflowing with happiness that I experienced my final consecration. I thank all my brothers and fathers of the community with whom I shared unsuspected joys. I remember especially Fathers Omer Koutouan and Joseph Saint-Pé. May they rest in peace.

To conclude: I implore the grace and wisdom of the Lord on my life to be a religious fully at the service of the Church and our Congregation for the glory of God. Counting on the help of our Lady of Betharram and the support of our father Saint Michael Garicoits, I will try to be a "mystic of the Incarnation" by procuring for others, without delay, without reserve, without return, the same happiness that animates me, for love. Conscious of the challenge that accompanies such a consecration, I will take care to live humbly the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity.

Hippolyte Adje YOMAFU,scj

A saint in Olton

Sunday 13 October saw the canonisation of John Henry Newman, a cause of great joy for both Catholics and Anglicans in Britain, especially around Birmingham and Oxford where Newman spent so many years. Enthusiastic pilgrims from Birmingham were sending us SMS messages from St. Peter's Square as early as 5.30 am as they queued to get a good place for the ceremony!



At Olton we had a mass of thanksgiving on Monday evening with the RCIA group, some of whom were inspired by Newman's own story but on the Sunday night Fr. Austin gave a presentation in The Friary Library¹ on the Newman-Olton connection. Why? Because Newman gave the opening address when The Friary first began as St. Bernard's Seminary on October 2nd 1873.

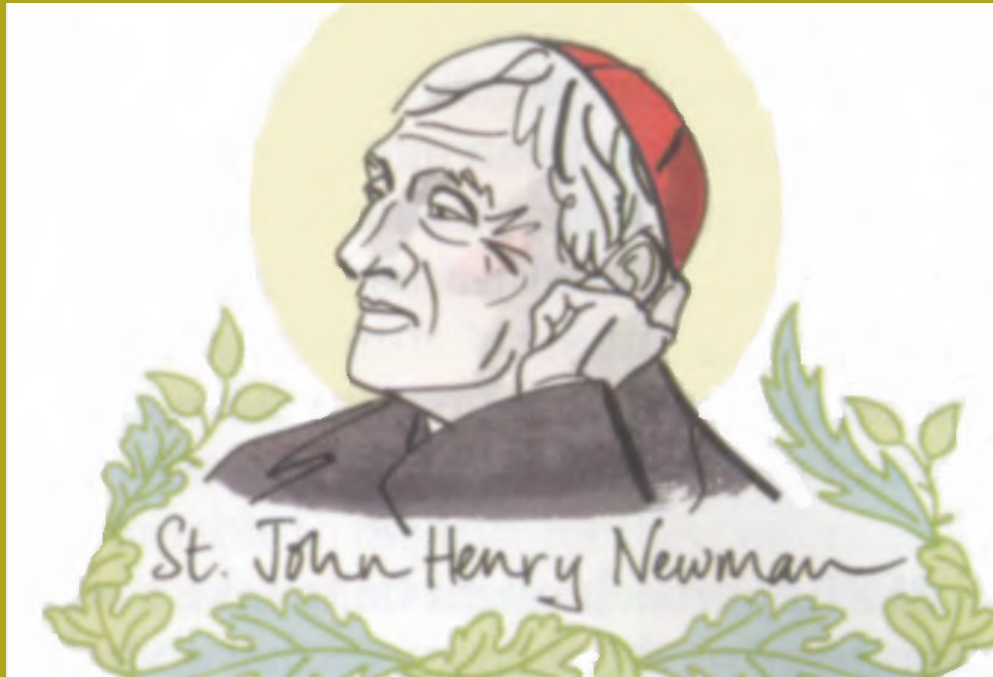
St. Bernard's Seminary was the fulfilment of a dream of Bishop Ullathorne, who longed to have a place where priests could be formed and educated in a good Christian missionary spirit. It puzzled some people though because at that time Birmingham already had a Seminary: Oscott College which had been running since 1838. But Oscott was

¹ The Friary: Parish centre where our SCJ community lives. Before we took over in 1981, it was a Capuchin Friary and this is the name by which our house is called still today.

hampered by the presence of wealthy lay students who came simply for a classical education and were not interested in the spiritual ideals of mission. Furthermore some of them openly mocked the church students who came from much humbler backgrounds. So this is why Bishop Ullathorne scraped together the money for a new Seminary.

Newman spoke of the 'Infidelity of the Future'. But by infidelity he meant a culture that had no room for the divine. He could see that in the 1870's both science and popular culture were both moving to a world view that could explain everything without any reference to God. This he saw as an entirely new situation for the church to face, and therefore a new and demanding challenge for priests.

Trials of the past were certainly there in abundance, especially when Christians were persecuted in the early centuries, or when English martyrs were put to death during Reformation times. But Newman saw the current age as presenting something entirely new: a whole world view with absolutely no space for the spiritual. Science and industry seemed to operate by reason and logic, so if religion could not justify itself by pure logic, then it had no place in the modern world. Even St. Paul when he



faced the Sceptics of Athens saw that they had a statue to 'The Unknown God'.

The Seminary would be the place where students were formed to face this new challenge, but by authentic rigorous learning and by a sincere and prayerful style of life, something that had been unfortunately impossible at Oscott College at that time. So Newman praised and blessed this new enterprise from the bottom of his heart. At that time he was not yet a Cardinal, and there were some jealous whisperings against him both in England and in Rome. But the passage of time has shown how perspicacious he was. Agnosticism and functional atheism became the cultural background to ministry and mission in England from then onwards.

At Olton last Sunday this presentation took place in the Friary Library which back in 1873 had been a temporary chapel. Fr. Austin pointed

out that Newman would have been standing roughly where the TV stands today, and the room would have been packed with students, priests and lay supporters. An 1873 report in *The Tablet*² a week later describes the enthusiasm of all those present.

Some 50 Olton parishioners were there this Sunday to learn of all this, and gave thanks to god that our new saint had blessed The Friary from the very beginning.

From Olton FRIARY, SCJ COMMUNITY

2) *The Tablet*: It is still today the most well-know catholic weekly magazine.



Next meetings on the agenda:

The **Betharramite Formation Team** is going to gather from January 22 to 28, 2020, at the Generalate House in Rome.

The participants will be guided by the **Superior General, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín scj**, and by the **General Councillor for formation, Fr. Stervin Fernando Selvadass scj**.

Participants:

- Fr. Sylvain Dansou Hounkpatin scj
- Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj
- Fr. Glecimar Guilherme Da Silva scj
- Fr. Kriangsak Kitsakunwong scj
- Fr. Simone Panzeri scj

Next meeting of the General Council: 19 - 20 November 2019

Father Eugène Lhouerrou scj

Montory, 3 July 1922 • Bétharram, 28 October 2019 (France)

« Thank you, a thousand thanks, to all those who still remember me in their thoughts, in their prayers.

I apologize wholeheartedly to those parents, brothers, Christian and non-Christian friends who have had to put up with me; my character, my faults, my timidity, my egocentricity, my limits, my weaknesses, my faults, my omissions.

Despite this, and through inadequacies and failures, I have always striven, Lord, to follow you on the path to which you have called me, trying to put the best of myself in the exercise of the mission wherever the authorities have sent me.

All those who have shared my work and my apostolic suffering, my life as a witness to Christ in a 95% Buddhist and animist environment, all those of Christian minority (Catholics and Protestants), Buddhists of tradition and conviction, all I entrust to the heart of the Lord who is victorious over death.

I entrust myself, as a faithful son, to the maternal heart of Our Lady Mary to whom her Son dying on the cross said: "Woman, here is your son ... your sons".

With a heart full of thanksgiving, I say to you all of different races and religions; "Goodbye with my eyes on God." »

Message left by Fr. Lhouerrou scj and read during the mass of his funeral



Homily for the funeral at Bétharram 31 October 2019 ; Lectures: 1 Cor. 1, 26-31. Lk. 4, 16-21

The Word of God was chosen according to what we knew about the life of Father Lhouerrou. He was born in Montory, far from the main roads, a little apart like Garicoïts in Ibarre.

Of modest origin, like many of us, he remained very attached to his roots, subscribed to the "Mirror of Soule", issued by the language of Béarn and the territory of Soule! He lived modestly, without money, dis-

creeily knowing how to stay out of the limelight. At the time of his death, we were already pondering the gospel of the next day, on the mustard seed and the leaven mixed into the dough. The comment made by Pope Francis corresponds perfectly to our father Lhouerrou: "if we want to be men and women of hope, we must be poor, poor, attached to nothing."

Poor but with eyes turned away from earthly things. Hope is humble, it is a virtue that is practised every day. Behind this commentary we can see

the face of Father Lhouerrou. It was an illustration of what our Founder Saint Michael Garicoïts recommends to us, "Expeditus" freed from all ties. The man who does not cling to anything, who stands apart from everything, is really free", "stripped above all of ourselves." A simple but not a weak man who could argue and sometimes even have the last word, which could upset his colleagues. These days I read his analysis of Buddhism which seems to have a lot of lucidity! Discretion, sobriety, humility, it is this lifestyle, this grace that we can ask the Lord for each one of us; to accompany a deceased to his last earthly dwelling is not a simple rite but a means of knowing how to welcome in this life what the Lord suggests to us by the life of the deceased.

His way of living simply meant also to have written in black and white that he did not wish any medical struggle at the end of life. On the day of his death, a text agreed at the Vatican between Christians, Jews and Muslims was written as a declaration at the end of life. This declaration recommends using all means of palliative care that makes medicine recover its mission to care for and never abandon a patient. The staff of this house provided this service wonderfully and I think unanimously we can thank the members of the association Saint Joseph and the staff of our house who provide this service to our elders with sensitivity and professionalism!

But through the choice of the Gospel, I would particularly like to stress

the 56 years of life spent in Thailand from 1952 to 2008. If Father asked to return to France it was not to leave this country because he didn't like it, but because he did not want to be dependent on the young religious of this young vicariate in Thailand. Here too lies a real self-effacement.

From the age of 30 to 86, he was a missionary in Thailand; he believed he was sent by the Spirit of the Lord through the congregation to bring the Good News to the poor, to announce freedom to prisoners. 1952 was a difficult year for the mission; driven out of China, Bétharram began to settle in northern Thailand. He was charged with going to join those who had experienced this expulsion from China. This freedom of prisoners which the Gospel speaks about, he lived alongside those cured of leprosy, that is to say, lepers who had followed medical treatment to no longer put others at risk of contamination. Even cured, they remained prisoners of the mistrust of those around them because the scars were there. It was necessary to teach these healed lepers a job first, as the Father said to make them aware of their human dignity and then to give them hope through work so that they were no longer in need of help but could reintegrate into their village through a trade, through carving wood, basketry, weaving, or raising chickens or pigs. This was the goal of the Hua Na Ken settlement near Chomthong. Bétharram had sent Father Lhouerrou in this initiative well before the encyclical of Pope Paul VI

“Populorum Progressio” on the development of peoples. When I was a young seminarist, I marveled at this Betharramite among lepers who reminded me of the man we considered a hero in humanity, Raoul Follereau.

In this extraordinary October of mission that is ending today, it is therefore a precious message that Fr. Lhouerrou gives us, for those times when we speak so much of vulnerable communities. He lived this edge of existence with the lepers whom he helped to get back on their feet. For the gospel, it is the whole man who is to be saved so that he is more in conformity with the image of God, what God wants for him. This stage of human development was very necessary in this Buddhist milieu where he lived, impervious to the Gospel. This is the encouragement that the Superior General, Fr. Joseph Mirande, gave during his first canonical visit in 1960 to the missionaries. He had

been amazed by a little girl from Laos who was retaliating against Buddhist parents who thought that the gospel statements about God were absurd: “I believe the father because he is good.”

Of course these are just a few words about the 56 years of Fr Eugene’s life.

This morning we give thanks to the Lord because one day he chose this young person from Montory to be a religious Bétharram missionary. He was not spared difficulties, having had to live as a child after World War I and as young man in World War II, then through the challenges of life at the beginnings of Bétharram in Thailand. May Our Lady of Bétharram now extend to him the saving and merciful branch of her Son Jesus. Let us each go back to living the mission that our baptism gives us wherever we find ourselves.

Laurent Bacho scj



..... **In
memoriam**

We express our sympathy and condolences to our brethren who have lost a close member of their family. Let us pray for their dear one that he or she may be welcomed in the Father’s House.

On November 11, Mr Niranjan, 35, brother-in-law of our scholastic Br Stephen R., of the Indian Vicariate, lost his life in a car accident in Bangalore.

Mrs. Ornella Corno, a lay betharramite died in the afternoon of Tuesday 29th October due to a serious illness that had struck her a few months ago. She was a person totally dedicated to the missionary promotion activities. She was also a cousin of Fr. Tiziano Pozzi SCJ of the community of Niem and Regional Vicar in Central Africa.

Father Etchecopar in the mother house of Betharram

by Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

Father Etchecopar entered the Congregation of Betharram with other members of the Society of the Holy Cross of Oloron in 1855. St Michael Garicoits asked him to be part of the community that from that year on would take over the Saint Mary College in Oloron, until the holidays of 1857, at which point he was called to Betharram to be a Novice Master. From that date his residence would be Betharram for forty years. There he would also carry out his mission as Visitor, Secretary General, Assistant General and Superior General. The latter for twenty-four years: first to replace Father Chirou who died on August 29, 1873, and then being elected Superior General in the General Chapter of August 20, 1874. He was absent from Betharram only during his travels to Rome, to the Holy Land and Argentina and Uruguay for the canonical visit.

He was the Superior of College of Betharram, and he had up to 300 students, two thirds of whom were destined to become priests. Here he presided over the principal events, he was their confessor for many years, followed their spiritual progress and concerned himself with how they were doing in the studies.

On him rested the responsibility of the mother house and the sanctuary of Betharram, the elderly priests who finished their days there, the mis-



sionaries who prepared their preaching there, the spiritual life of the teachers, the lay-brothers and their different manual activities.

Throughout the whole of Betharram he made many important adjustments: he built the chapel of the school, sanitized the rooms that were occasionally flooded with the floodwaters from the Gave, installed a special place for the novitiate, made significant repairs to the Sanctuary of the Our Lady, also installing a new clock and a third bell. As students and community numbers grew he made new buildings, repaired the house of the sisters who served in the school, enlarged the buildings of the Matéou farm, completed the missing chapels of Calvary, bought land and real estate and discovered several springs that could secure the water supply for the growing population of Betharram.

The members of his council also lived there. We have minutes of 732 meetings of this council for the whole of his 24 years as Superior General. That means an average of one meeting per week, concerning legal & economic issues with the diocese of Bayonne, to whom all the works of the Congregation in France then belonged, personnel issues such as appointments of superiors and local councils, accountability for their administration, maintenance of peace

and order in the communities, good relations between auxiliary teachers and public authorities.

As Superior General, he had the ability to lead the debates both in the councils and in the 12 general chapters that he had to convene in this busy period of the Congregation. He had what others lacked: the invaluable advantage of having in great depth the spirit of the Congregation. He had detailed information on the practice of the Holy See in laws concerning religious and had exercised flexibility in endless discussions with Mons. Lacroix

As a good disciple of St. Michael Garicoits, God's will was always the determining motive. He sought this in prayer and reflection; in the Council, he studied it in collaboration, listening to all the reasons given. Once the will of God was known, he adhered to it and wanted everyone to be docile to it.

Other activities of the Superior General were the weekly conference for all the religious who lived in Betharram, the retreats and the Sunday sermon. In the weekly conferences he took the opportunity to instruct the religious by transmitting to them the charism that he had assimilated so well from the Founder. Sometimes these conferences were to correct some public infraction, where witnesses say he could be frightening and scary. But once the conference was over, he quickly regained his gentleness.¹

1) *Duvignau, L'Homme au visage de lumière* (p. 96)

After getting the Constitutions approved by Rome, he dedicated himself to restoring in their hearts the original ideal that not all the members accepted, especially those who took advantage of the vacillation of Bishop Lacroix. There were obvious and uncompromising opponents, for whom the return to basics was nothing more than a chimera. The good thing is that he got it. With one exception, everyone made or renewed their vows according to the constitutions approved by the Holy See. They even accepted the vow of poverty, giving up keeping a portion of their goods for personal use, but keeping the ownership. He gave himself with all his soul to correct some observances that had been introduced in the years of confusion.

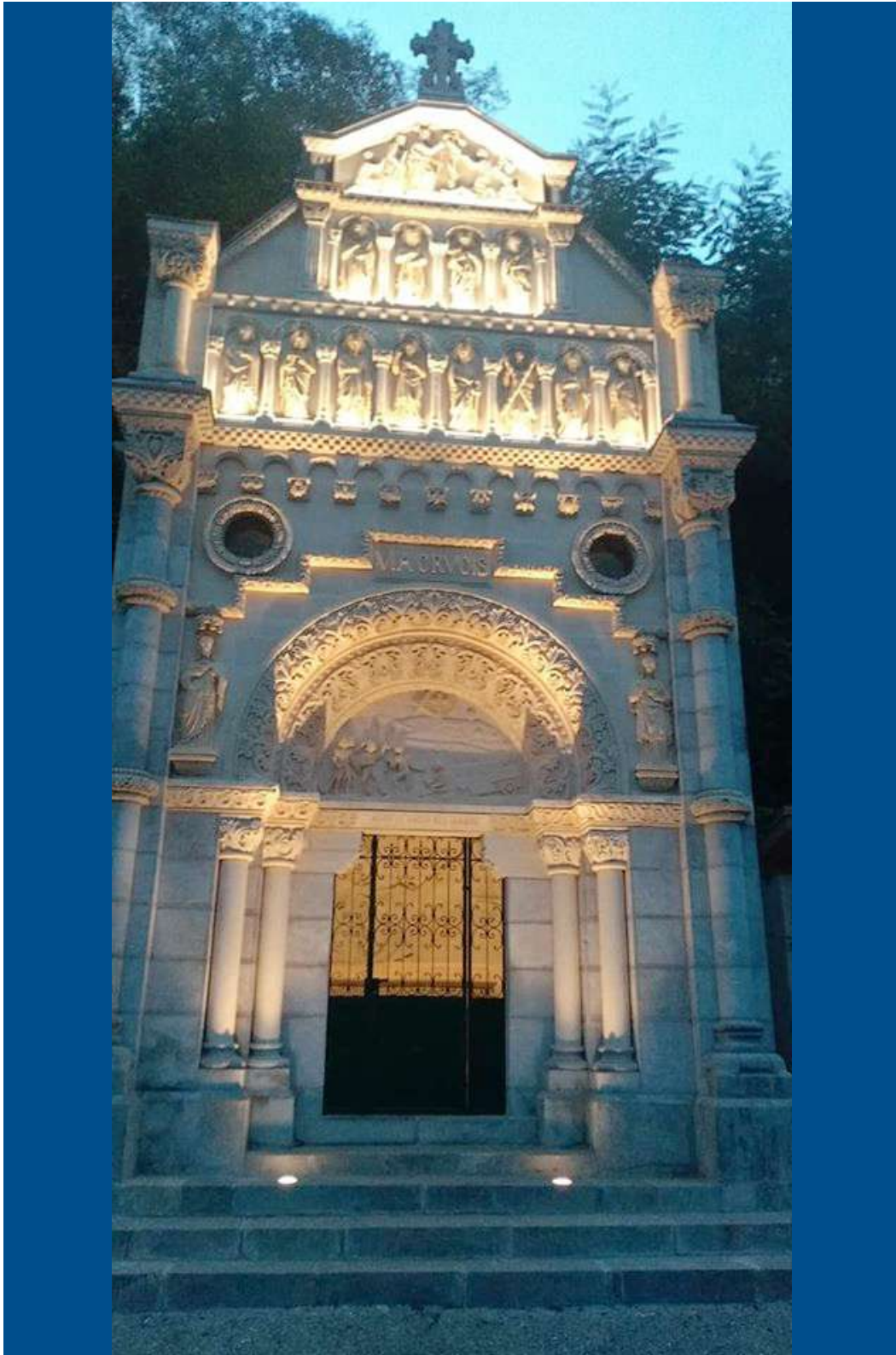
Normally it was from Betharram, among all these activities, where Fr. Etchecopar wrote most of the 1800 letters, with which he also accompanied both his family and the communities: his brothers and sisters, the Carmelites of Bethlehem, Father Jean Magendie, other religious of America and other religious of the communities of France, as well as circular letters addressed to all religious.

From Bétharram, Father Etchecopar would also follow the fate of our schools in France, threatened by the secular movements that would rise in Parliament against the educational Congregations from July 8, 1875 and until January 17, 1881. Some of these, starting with the Jesuits, would be expelled from France. Betharram was not then expelled, and the persecu-

tion petered out for the time being, to revive itself at the beginning of the next century, in the time of Father Victor Bourdenne.

At a prizegiving in Betharram, he publicly defended the Bishop of Bayonne, who was challenged by al-

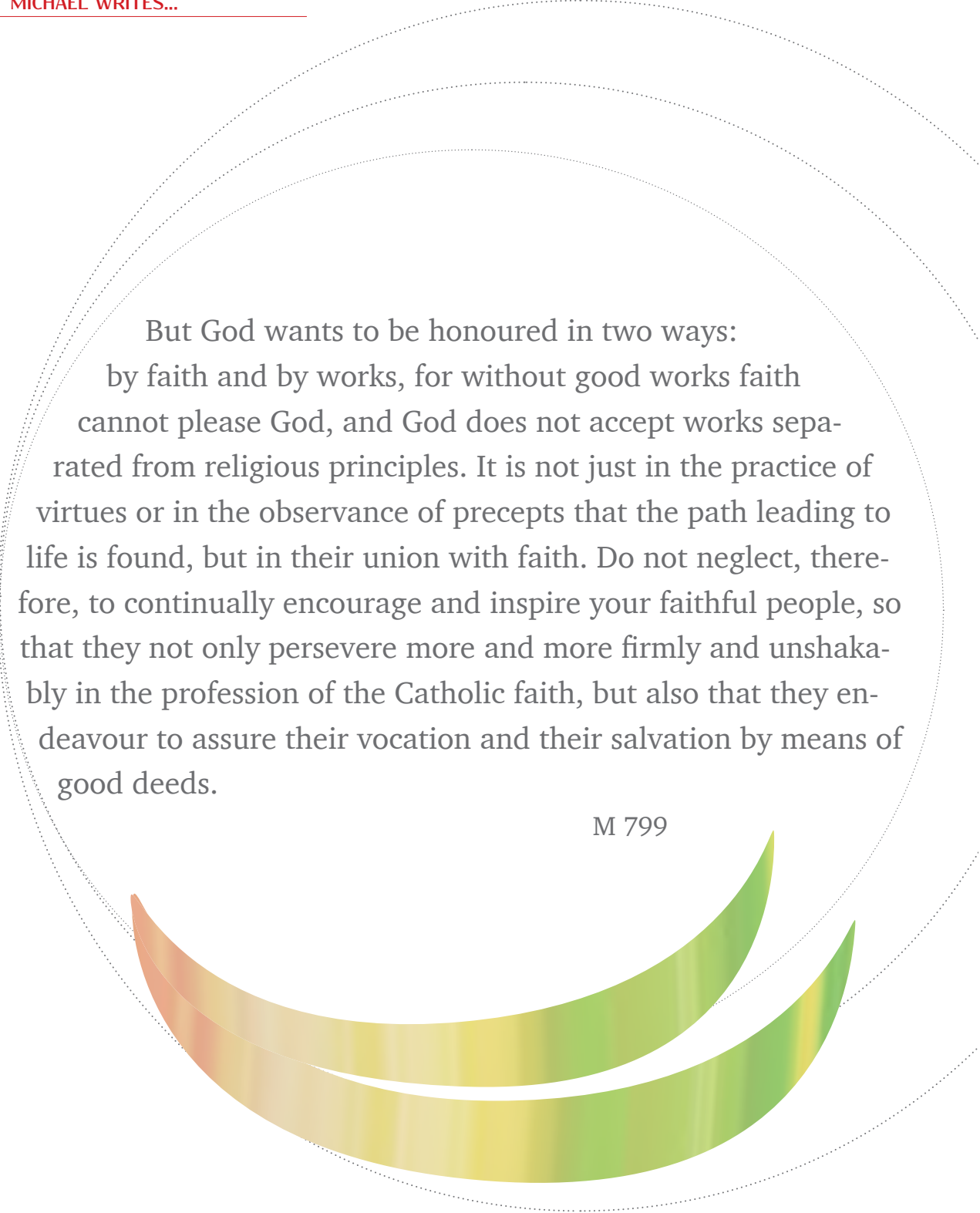
most all priests, similarly defending the Pope in a divided Church, as St. Michael Garicoits would have done. (Source: Duvignau: *L'Homme au visage de lumière*). •



A small jump in time, yet staying at the Mother House of Betharram:

Early November the restoration of the first station of the Calvary of Betharram has been completed.

LED lights highlight the beauty of this not only spiritual, but also artistic and historical heritage.



But God wants to be honoured in two ways: by faith and by works, for without good works faith cannot please God, and God does not accept works separated from religious principles. It is not just in the practice of virtues or in the observance of precepts that the path leading to life is found, but in their union with faith. Do not neglect, therefore, to continually encourage and inspire your faithful people, so that they not only persevere more and more firmly and unshakably in the profession of the Catholic faith, but also that they endeavour to assure their vocation and their salvation by means of good deeds.

M 799



Young people and scj religious in
northern Thailand



A waterfall, what's more captivating?

Water, what's more indispensable?

A wellspring, what's more precious?

To come and drink at the source is vital to the thirsty, to the one who has heard this secret in his heart: "If you only knew what God is offering!" (Jn 4,10)

Then the heart is flooded with joy that only begs to be sung and communicated to others ... with others...



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