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## A word from the Superior General

### “We have seen the Lord”: His Voice resounds, ... after such a longtime

*‘The Jewish Passover drew near, and many of the country people who had gone up to Jerusalem to purify themselves looked out for Jesus, saying to one another as they stood about in the Temple, “What do you think? Will he come to the festival or not?”’*  
(John 11.55-56)

Dear Betharramites,

By the time you read this editorial in community, Easter will have come at a most unusual time. Together and alive, but alone at home ..., without our people in church or in the street ... When raising our glasses we may have tasted a different flavour... Some of us must have wondered just like the contemporaries of the Lord... will Jesus come to the feast this year...?

How good it is to be united in faith in this time of anxious waiting!

And of course the answer is yes!

The proclamation of the Risen Christ already resonates once again throughout the earth.

His Light floods the universe!

Hallelujah! It is the Lord’s Passover!

Christ secretly triumphs in the present and bursts silently from an anonymous grave. The dark night is transformed into horizons of Light. His divinity, hidden voluntarily during passion, reappears glorious after an unprecedented sacrifice. Sin is overcome ...so too the devil and death. Definitely overcome is the apparent failure of love and the possibility of being forgotten in his grave ...

*"He comes forth like a bridegroom coming from his tent, rejoicing like a champion to run his race!" (Ps 19.5)*

While the scientific world is struggling to find a cure for the emerging ills of a humanity that sees fellow human beings as disposable, we - as silent witnesses to this troubled 'common home' - return to hope in the God-made-man, who spent his life bandaging hearts afflicted by sin, curing diseases and forgiving enemies. A wounded healer, who brings into community the forgotten and invisible of society he encounters on his way.

It is the great paradox for we Christians: on the one hand temporal power and science feel powerless in the midst of trial, while on the other hand the force of the "gestures of Jesus" resonates with all its effectiveness in the truth of his Living Word, capable of healing all ills.

Perhaps because we do not live in a healthy society, nor in 'the best of all possible worlds' (the happy-go-lucky age of prosperity & calm has passed) we need now the Shalom of God. The encounter with the Risen One who

makes fears disappear. His Spirit burns in our hearts and propels us to mission. Behold the Son is coming, to do the will of God: "He is the Lord." It is the dawn of a new time. Christ breaks through the walls of our unbelief and brings us Peace.

Jesus has come to the Feast! He has communicated his Paschal Spirit to us and is now at the door waiting for us. His key was suffering. Humiliated, he accepted what the Father asked of him and he gave himself as an obedient servant to the end, unto death and death on a Cross (cf. Founding text). So he was exalted. God raised him up and raised his name above all other names, dominions and powers in this world. Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father! (cf. Phil 2, 6-11). There is our best model, our incentive, and the best means to achieve Divine love!

Today lay people and religious are part of a single community of salvation, whose head is Christ, crucified and risen. The fact of having closely contemplated the Cross (or still living it...) has made us more brothers. It is the Cross of the position that Saint Michael Garicoits teaches us not only to accept diligently, but to embrace and love. A glorious cross, with which Jesus wins the Father's forgiveness and mercy.

Pope Francis, invites us to share the joy of carrying the Easter Cross, inviting those who are in lockdown to "show a gesture of tenderness towards their next door neighbours, to the children

and especially to the elderly, in this difficult hour " From his viewpoint, he names as heroes all those who give their lives like Jesus for the good of others in the health service, in spiritual accompaniment, in social solidarity, and in constant prayer.

And what about us ... What then is the mission of we Betharramites in the present time?

Saint Michael would tell us that we should seek it in doing everything we can "*displaying an immense love within the limitations of our position.*"

This translates into uniting us more closely in filial, community and apostolic prayer (Rule of Life. 71).

The fact of spending many days together at home gives us a good opportunity to go and encounter our brother and dialogue fraternally with him. Review our community life against the Word of God. Reconcile with each other and ask for forgiveness. In a word: "*Feed one another*", just as the Risen Jesus asked Peter (cf. John 21.16ff).

The first post-paschal community lived together and everything was held in common among them (material and spiritual goods), while outside there was chaos, confusion and persecution.

Thanks to the media, we live a "virtual communion" with the faithful of the parish, the hospital, the communities of religious, schools, homes for children and the elderly, rest and retirement homes, spirituality centres, etc. . Being present in this way constitutes a sign of God in the face of

the crisis, an opportunity to show that we are able to come out with Christ from our graves.

This Easter invites us to take care of our elderly, who are certainly more vulnerable, who need to be safe in our Betharramite communities and feel the affection of the younger and healthier brothers. They can "pay" with their constant prayer, their joy and their docility towards those who take care of their health

Finally, some will have the opportunity to make room, in our extended houses (sometimes empty)... for brothers with different needs to find shelter. It is a gesture of solidarity that many congregations are making at the request of the civil and diocesan authorities. With proper discernment and precautions, we can be in solidarity as other Betharramites were in times of plagues and tempests, serving those who suffer the consequences of a world that feels sick and asks for help.

Dearly beloved, from an Italy that has been so badly hit, I pray for you all from Rome that the Good News of the Risen Jesus will renew in us the Hope and fervour of those sent to announce His Love to the ends of the earth.

Take care of each other and never stop being generous co-workers of the Heart of Jesus!

**Fr. Gustavo scj**  
*Superior General*

## Homily • Mass of the Lord's Supper, 9 April 2020



Eucharist, service, anointing.

This is what we experience in today's celebration: the Lord who wants to remain with us in the Eucharist. And we become the Lord's tabernacles, carrying the Lord with us; to the point that he himself tells us: if we do not eat his body and drink his blood, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven. [...]

Service. This gesture is the condition to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yes, to serve... everyone. But the Lord, in the words he exchanged with Peter (cf. Jn 13:6-9), makes him realize that to enter the kingdom of heaven we must let the Lord serve us, that the servant of God be our servant. [...]

And the priesthood too. Today I would like to be close to priests, to all priests, from the most recently ordained right up to the Pope. We are all priests. The bishops too, all of us... we are anointed, anointed by the Lord; anointed to consecrate the Eucharist, anointed to serve.

There is no Chrism Mass today [...] but I cannot let tonight's Mass pass by without remembering priests. Priests who offer their lives for the Lord, priests who are servants. In these days many of them have died, more than sixty here in Italy, while tending to the sick in hospital, together with doctors and nurses... They are "saints next door", priests who have given their lives in serving. I think too of those who are far away. Today I received a letter from a priest, a chaplain in a prison far away. [...] Priests who travel far to bring the Gospel and who die far away. [...] anonymous priests. Then there are the parish priests in the countryside, pastors of four, five, seven little villages in the mountains, who go from one to the other, who know the

people.[...]

Today I carry you in my heart and I carry you to the altar. Also priests who are slandered. [...] Priests who are sinners, together with bishops and the Pope who is also a sinner, must not forget to ask forgiveness and learn how to forgive because they know that they need to ask forgiveness and to forgive. We are all sinners. Priests who suffer from crises, who do not know what to do, who live in darkness...

Today you are all with me, brother priests, at the altar, you who are consecrated. I say to you just one thing: do not be stubborn like Peter. Let your feet be washed, the Lord is your servant, he is close to you, and he gives you strength to wash the feet of others.

In this way, conscious of the need to be washed clean, you will be great dispensers of forgiveness. Forgive! Have a big heart that is generous in forgiving. This is the measure by which we will be judged. As you have forgiven, so you will be forgiven, in the same measure. Do not be afraid to forgive. [...] Look to Christ [he looks to the Crucifix]. There, there is forgiveness for all. Be courageous, also in taking risks, in forgiving, in order to bring consolation. And if you cannot give sacramental pardon at this moment, then at least give the consolation of a brother to those you accompany, leaving the door open for people to return.

I thank God for the grace of the priesthood, we all give thanks. I thank God for you, priests. Jesus loves you! He asks only that you let him wash your feet. ●●●

## Easter or the Victory of Humility

The majority of people are going to live hidden, confined, alone and isolated during the week or celebration of Easter. Each and every one hoping, imploring, crying, struggling, praying for this epidemic to stop. A 'little' virus has come and has shaken up the customs and routines of a consumption society; it has come and sown the seeds of doubt or of fear; it has come and awakened the incertitude of the future; it has come with relentless force of pain and death.

Words are no longer enough for everyone to express how their whole inner being may be damaged, discouraged or destroyed as the markers of life are swept away by this 'little' virus. And a deafening, unbearable silence can overwhelm us. A silence



**Fr. Jean-Do Delgue scj**  
General Vicar - Generalate House

which may result in panic. A silence which may give rise to a solitary cry of 'why?'

And it's still silent... and the answer is long overdue in this same silence, becoming increasingly difficult to bear.

In the face of this 'little' virus, we feel 'little', 'very little' ! Who or what can we cling to? How do we fight? How do we survive?

In this silence, we can hear a little discreet voice, hardly audible. 'Yes, don't be afraid; there is life within you.'



*Pope Francis in front of the Crucifix of St Marcellus for the prayer of 27 March, St Peter's Basilica.*

Life is all around you. Look at these gestures humbly made, in silence, to fight against this epidemic, so that life is stronger! Yes, humbly... This ordeal may let us discover that humility at the heart of our lives is the strength to remain standing, to not give into fear or panic, to stay firm in the face of temptations of any sort. And if this 'little' virus helped us to discover the importance of humility so that our political and economic systems rediscover their real founding principles: to be at the service of humanity, a humanity of social justice and peace, a humanity where everyone has their right place, their dignity, their liberty, a humanity where the needs of man are given priority before any economic choice.

And in this silence, a cry joins with our cry: *'Why?'* And it's the same cry. A cry which also had no response. A cry followed by a great silence, just as difficult to bear. This cry is that of a man who agreed to give his life hum-

bly so that *'men might have life'* (John 10,10). This cry is that of a man whose burden of suffering was unbearable to take yet he gathered all his strength to move forward, to go through with the gift of himself. By dying on the cross, this man, Jesus, humbly accomplished his mission to save all men.

And in this silence of death, a unexpected rumour is spread. A rumour which gives place to a great hope. The rumour that life is stronger than death. The rumour that death won't have the last word. The rumour that this man, Jesus, was resurrected by God! He is alive! Why do we not then venture to be humble in our lives? Why do we not then dare to encourage humanity to be more humble?

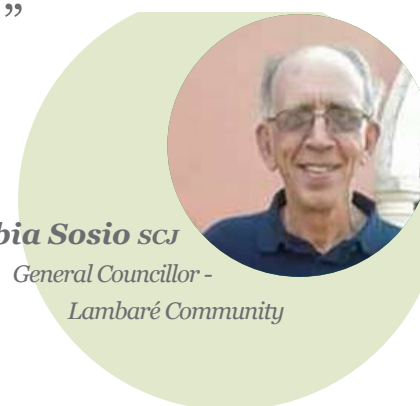
May the celebration of Easter, at this particular moment, give us the strength to believe: to choose humility is to choose life, life against all odds... and all the more against this 'little' virus. ●●●

## The missionary dimension to "Staying Home"

The virus must not deprive us of our missionary spirit. That's the warning we should be giving, to paraphrase Pope Francis. "We are missionaries or else we are not Christians", the Pope has said on several occasions.

But how can mission be reconciled

with the strict order to stay home?



**Fr. Tobia Sosio scj**  
General Councillor -  
Lambaré Community

Our Superior General set out some excellent guidelines for us on the Feast of Saint Joseph. In this article, I should like to expand on certain aspects thereof which may perhaps be of help to us to live out the theme of the year, while we are in "lockdown" at home, and to make the necessary adjustments to our apostolic, community and personal plans.

### The source of our charism

From his long quarantine in the monastery of Betharram, the "superior of four walls" St Michael contemplated the mystery of the Word Incarnate.

The house where he is in company with the Father is certainly safe and comfortable. However, profound distress is in his heart: "*I have seen the affliction of my people*" (Ex. 3:7). "*Whom shall I send? Who will go for us,*" (Is. 6:8) "*Then I said, 'Lo I have come to do thy will, O God,'"* (Heb.10:7) "*At the sight of this prodigious spectacle, the priests of Betharram were moved to devote themselves to imitating Jesus, annihilated yet obedient*": in the course of this long quarantine, the seed of our Congregation was slowly germinating and growing in St. Michael, inspired certainly by the FVD of the Virgin Mary who hastened even in those times to hold out the beautiful branch towards a needy humanity.

Fr. Gustavo invited us to turn this, our compulsory confinement, into a "*Choral Hymn to Mercy*". I have also greatly appreciated the Pastoral Letter from Mario

Delpini, Archbishop of Milan, for the year 2019-2020 entitled "*The situation is an opportunity*". And so we are called to strengthen our missionary spirit, not give in to temptation by losing courage, or even worse, by shutting ourselves away.

### I have seen the affliction of my people

This verse speaks to us of an attitude, an awareness, of an action meditated upon in the depths of a heart which loves. We are often prevented from going out physically, but nobody can confine the Spirit. Saint Therese, Saint Paul from his prison cell, the countless missionaries in the times of persecutions and many others who follow Christ or who are the courageous leaders of oppressed people, set us an example.

Jesus was pushed into the desert by the Spirit: the three temptations summarise his deep discernment.

### Contemplation for action in harmony with the Will of the Father

In the silence of our isolation many initiatives have been undertaken to bring genuine closeness: even FaceBook risks being swamped by all the pages filled by priests with masses, rosaries, and religious messages. The Spirit is certainly more alive than ever and also more effective.

Most analysts agree that this pandemic has made us rediscover values we'd cruelly overlooked: family, the pri-



we “stay home”: it’s in everyone’s interest. But our people are suffering and as their Good Shepherds, we cannot stand by, indifferent.

Every one of us, or even better, all of us in community, must come up with strategies whereby “spiritual” support doesn’t just remain a good intention but actually becomes real genuine accompaniment,

mordial importance of health in political programmes, unity and solidarity above ideologies, the person paramount over money, etc...

Since being in quarantine, we have discovered that we need constantly to form and adapt ourselves so that any situation, including the current one, can be transformed into an opportunity for redemption and sanctification, for ourselves and for our people.

### Be shepherds with the smell of sheep

From our places of self-isolation we are discovering the different ways in which the People of God are suffering: doctors, nurses, supermarket staff, parents obliged to “put up with” their offspring, teachers endeavouring to accompany and support their pupils through on-line virtual classrooms, the many poor losing the only income they had from the various casual jobs they had. Many people are worried: do we risk being infected, or do we die of hunger with the rest of the family? The authorities rightly insist that

be that in prayer, virtual celebrations, shared recitation of the rosary, through messaging or videoconferencing... without failing when the occasion presents itself to show our solidarity in concrete ways: gifts, solidarity campaigns, special attention paid to families or people in situations of particular vulnerability. We see that when people are left to their own devices, they can find ways of living with self-isolation. Thus we religious who imitate the Sacred Heart cannot and must not get left behind. On the contrary, we are called to “take the initiative” as Pope Francis would say. Would it not be timely to seize this opportunity to read, meditate and draw conclusions from *Evangelii Gaudium* which challenges us to profound renewal, be that of our pastoral styles, our church or religious structures?

In no case should this pandemic stifle our missionary effort. On the contrary, it should strengthen it, so that we are able to bring the “Good News” to places where others have brought panic. ●●●



## Chaff and gold

*From Solbiate con Cagno (Lombardy, Italy),  
3 April 2020*

We are living difficult times, a moment filled with pain, doubts and hardships, but also a time of grace. Saint Augustin used a metaphor: *“For as the same fire causes gold to glow brightly, and chaff to smoke”*. In the fire of the pandemic, which reaches everybody, we must burn all that is trifling and useless, and, in our lives, make the gold of values, prayer, fondness bonds, true love for God and our brothers shine. The best and the worst of each of us is revealed in front of the cross of pain we all live. How to live this time of ordeal? How do I live it myself?

This is what I have asked myself and I ask it everyday. Pain reveals the truth in ourselves. An obsolete word, but more than ever relevant in these calamitous times is resounding in my heart: this word is *“resilience”*. In psychology, it is *“the ability to resist positively to traumatizing events, to reorganize one’s life positively in front of difficulties. It is the capacity to build oneself again while remaining sensitive to the positive opportunities offered by life, without losing one’s humanity”*. With *“resilience”*, other words are coming to my mind, by assonance, such as patience, resistance, silence, repentance (conversion). We are called to hold up to the evil which



**Fr. Alessandro Paniga scj**

*Albavilla Community*

attacks us, to remain patient. After the storm, nice weather shall come. I am reading again what our founder Saint Michaël wrote: *“Time is not long, it is short... Crosses are daily, it is true, but they are subject to a thousand variations; they arrive drop by drop; they follow one another; they pass. Compare that with heaven, a torrent of delight, the immense ocean of God, which flows eternally, and keeps our hearts eternally flooded”*. (DS § 111)

Only a saint can say these words. In these difficult times, I don’t assimilate them easily. I feel like *“being under house arrest”*. However, I can look out of the window, make a few steps in the garden. We are called to be patient. In the retirement home where I am a chaplain, here, in Solbiate con Cagno (close to Como, Lombardy, Italy), the obscure evil of Covid-19 has not yet been detected among the 212 guests. I thank the Lord for this. I pray a lot so that this disease doesn’t reach us. My greatest regret is to be unable to visit these elderly and sick people. The Health Director and the Provincial Superior of the Hospitallers of St. John of God (the Institute where I am belongs to them) have forbidden

me, by precaution, to visit the elderly and sick from different wards. I think of them, I pray for them, I inquire about their health.

I still recall the smile addressed to me by a lady suffering from the Charcot disease when I visited her after a few days of absence. Others asked me why I was wearing a mask: they thought I was ill. I am sorry not to be able to greet them and shake hands as I used to do, specially when I visited them or met them in the church before the offices. Now, they can't even receive communion.

Every morning, I celebrate the Holy Mass with the religious and sisters who live here. Our brother, Fr. Giulio Forloni, welcomed here, fares well. I ask news about him every day. I can meet him on Sundays when we celebrate mass in the chapel with five other priests who are also hospitalized in this Home. At twelve, when I go to the

restaurant for lunch, I meet a reduced group of residents. Now I greet them while keeping the required distance and my mask. From time to time, I slip a small piece of paper with a prayer or spiritual thought in their hands. I inquire about each of them thanks to the health staff whom I cross at the entrance. But I must be patient, even if I can't celebrate mass anymore, or confess, or go to parochial and vicarial meetings.

I also feel the weight of not being able to join my Albavilla Community 25 kms away from here. Before, every Monday, I was with my brothers. Then, on Monday and Tuesday afternoons, I went to meet mental patients and visit those who are in a coma in Albese (Como) not far from Albavilla, in the *Villa S. Benedetto Menni*, a Nursing Home of the Hospitaller Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A few days ago, I have been upset to learn that



*Institute of the Hospitallers of St John of God where Fr Alessandro scj carries out his minister.*

*«Andrà tutto bene»:...Everything will be all right*

the Covid-19 had reached this Home and infected about fifty patients. I am thinking of these poor people I won't perhaps see again. My heart is heavy when I think of their near relations who visited them everyday and whom I met regularly.

My only task is to pray, to deepen the Word of God and to live the Eucharist. I pray every day for those who have been trusted to me and for those who rely on my prayer. It is so little, it seems to me. Last March, on television, on the afternoon of the 27th, I watched Pope Francis walk to the basilica under a pouring rain. I was deeply moved to watch him loaded with all the pain in the world. In the middle of St. Peter's square, desolate, empty and plunged in a surrealist silence, the Pope, a tiny giant, placed himself like a new Moses between God and the People to plead for God's mercy in the name of all believers and in favour of all the living. He prayed for all in front of the San Marcello Crucifix, in front of the icon of the Virgin "*salus populi romani*" (salvation of the Roman people) and in front of Christ Eucharist. These are our real references : prayer, the Cross, the Eucharist, the Holy Virgin. "*We are not alone if we believe in God... nobody saves himself alone... we are all rowing in the same direction ; it is the only way to save ourselves together*", the Pope told us.

Each of us is called to intercede for the others, even in our confinement,

in a trusting and obstinate supplication. I was also struck when seeing the San Marcello Crucifix. On one side, the blood sprouting and on the other side the flood of rain falling from the sky, bathing the Crucified. It looked like God weeping. God's tears. Here is our certitude : Jesus weeping for the death of his friend Lazare tells us the resurrection is possible by God's tears. God is near every being who suffers and dies. It is this certitude which gives us strength and confidence to go ahead in such calamitous times. It is the time of patience, without ever getting disheartened. It is the time of trust : after the Good Friday (time of prayer) and the Holy Saturday (time of silence) will come the Easter of the Resurrection (day of joy and thanksgiving).

A world of suffering surrounds us, but God has given us Spring again. Would it be the sign of a human Spring ? After the storm, nothing will be like before. The time of remission is coming, the time of conversion. A Japanese writer, Haruki Murakami, says this: "When the storm is over, you probably won't know yourself how you managed to cross it and survive. Perhaps you will wonder if it is really over. But there is a point which is not doubtful. It is that, once getting out of the storm, you will not be the man who entered it". Let us wait for better times with trust. Everything will happen according to God's will. So everything will be alright. ●●●



**REGION SAINT MICHAEL GARICOÏTS**

FRANCE <sup>SPAIN</sup>  
 ITALY <sup>CENTRAL AFRICA</sup> <sup>IVORY COAST</sup>  
 HOLY LAND

*Confined but connected*

In early March, facing the rapid spread of Covid-19, Italy declared the first lockdown on European soil. Since then, all the countries where our communities are located have followed suit. With the exception of Niem in Central Africa which faces a different epidemic.. measles, the fight against the coronavirus is the top priority everywhere. Similar protective measures (lockdown, social distancing) have been implemented, disrupting agendas and common life.

Almost everywhere and willingly, the "mobile camps" have adopted a form of enclosure, giving up for the time being any pastoral work in the field. In the parishes where we are engaged – (forgive me if I have overlooked them) - various initiatives make up for the impossibility of bringing Christians together: online masses (Betharram-Notre-Dame, Cerreto, Pibrac, Pistoia, Shefaram) or live-streamed (Adiapodoumé, Dabakala), blessings of the parish priest by video (Langhirano) or by email (St-Palais), dedicated pages on social networks, spiritual encouragement via instant messaging, telephone contacts with parishioners, etc.

The vicariate calendar has been disrupted: suspension of the canonical visit of the Superior General in Italy,

cancellation (Côte d'Ivoire) or possible cancellation of scheduled assemblies (France-Spain on May 14). From one video-conference to another, the Regional Council takes stock of the situation and tries to come up with plan B. On both sides of the Alps, the Secretaries of the vicariate began to work from home (same for the missionary animation Amici). In addition to the religious working in healthcare, one of the rare "out-of-doors Betharramites", in the literal sense, is Br. Émile Garat: every day he leaves the Etchécopar house to take up his position in the supermarket queue in S. Palais, food provision being an essential activity for community.

In general, the enforced stay-at-home in community favoured a more regular form of community life: praying the rosary and community Eucharist becoming the norm (and in both Bethlehem & Pau the Indian Sisters took part). There were some exceptions to concelebration: in both the Holy Land & Anglet, the chaplains continue their ministry to the enclosed nuns. In Yamoussoukro and Katiola (Ivory Coast), the Bishops prohibited concelebration for safety reasons. At Betharram in the community of the Maison Neuve (where 11 are over 90 yrs old) the Offices in the chapel have disappeared (as well as the meals in the refectory, to be replaced by room service). Our elders there are subject to the strict isolation rules imposed (by the government) on EHPADs

(accommodation establishments for dependent elderly people). Lockdown is also reinforced in Monteporzio (near Rome), where the religious coexist with residents suffering from AIDS. Finally, the schoolchildren of Betharram and Katiola & Dabakala (Ivory Coast), have been sent back to their families.

Many superiors took advantage of this situation in order to work on the questionnaire proposed by the Region. Over the course of meetings, communities shared their experience, having the next General Chapter in view. Several communities benefit from a "three star" lockdown, thanks to a green environment (Bethlehem, Pibrac, Albavilla or Adiapodoumé, to name a few). It was quite symbolic that on Good Friday our Mother House had the freedom of the whole Calvary hill ...

Let us finish with a look at our formation houses. In Central African Republic, the pre-postulants follow the general regime of the capital. Though people find it difficult to follow the regulations, the pastoral lockdown and the suspension of the inter-postulant programme ruling have refocused the



brothers on their house in Bimbo.

Some 3000 kilometres away in Ivory Coast the brothers also struggle to stay at home when it is necessary to meet daily needs. Markets are open, unlike the churches. The Seminary and the Catholic University have closed; so also St. Bernard's parish due to the ban on meetings of more than 50 people. The Tshanfeto Educational Farm is in slow motion, but activity on the other side of the road is in full swing. The formation community seems like a monastery, with about thirty members (counting perpetually professed, students unable to attend class and a couple of volunteers). Life has been organised around housework, solo, group or internet studies, and liturgical meetings. There remains a big financial worry if things were to last ...

All in all, this time is for unity and interiority, in every sense of the word. Despite the constraints, (the main ones being to celebrate behind closed doors and to be deprived of any direct apostolate), the religious have seized the opportunities of the situation: a resumption of fraternal life, an unprecedented experience of intercession and solidarity; a reassessment of our lifestyles and interaction with the world; a renewed awareness of the most fragile; a personal and community re-centering on Christ, our remedy, our model and our Hope.

*(Fr. Jean-Luc Morin scj)*



## REGION FR. AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR

ARGENTINA URUGUAY  
PARAGUAY BRAZIL

The region is living up to the recommendations of each government.

All communities respect social isolation and all religious are well.

Some brothers, together with associated lay people, carry out social assistance activities for the families most in difficulty in their communities. Some governments have also asked us to grant the use of some of our buildings to accommodate quarantined patients and health staff (e.g. our Retreat Houses, Colleges).

On the other hand, we are working on the economic impact on our educational institutions.

*(Fr. Daniel González scj)*



## REGION SAINT MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

ENGLAND INDIA  
THAILAND

In this time of Covid-19, if we launch a drone over our formation communities in India and Thailand, it would bring back this reportage.(footage)

From our community in Mangalore, which currently welcomes 4 scholastics and 5 aspirants, led by two formators:



All of us feel very sad about the unforeseen situation. Some of our brothers were planning to go on holiday some others for their summer ministry. Even if the curfew is lifted, they are worried about going out as they may be quarantined for 14 days. We use all our resources in a sensible way. If the lockdown continues we may face shortages of food and hygiene supplies.

As a community we are doing some house maintenance work, but most importantly we are praying. We have decided to have our annual retreat, led by Fr Vipin and Fr Pascal, in preparation for the renewal of vows before Easter. The theme will be *"Go out in community to meet the marginalised"*.

Moving further east our drone will soar above Shobhana Shaakha (Bangalore), where the community is composed of 2 religious, 4 novices and some philosophy students:

*'We are so sad about the situation of this lockdown due to Corona Virus. But, this time of "stay at home*

and stay safe" helps us to grow in certain areas of our community life. It is a moment of pain to see humanity suffering everywhere. It is a moment of deepening our trust and faith in our good Lord. Following the instructions of the Holy Father and the advice of our Bishops, we spend intense and solid moments in prayer: Our prayers are for the people who are affected, for the people who are at the service of the sick, for the leaders of the Church and our Countries etc... It is a moment which opens our horizons onto the world. Brothers are in fact keen on learning more about the situation through the media, in order to feel closer to the world. It is a moment to interact more amongst ourselves. It is true that we interact with one another on a daily basis. We used to be preoccupied with our personal studies and individual work but this 'stay at home and stay safe' has given plenty of time to share our joy and happiness with one another. It is a moment to focus on the cleanliness of our campus and



to do some manual work in order to produce a certain amount of fruit and vegetables for the community.'

Continuing eastward, our drone will bring us this news from Samphan (Thailand), where there are our young brothers in Philosophy and Theology (Ban Garicoits) and a group of pre-postulants (Ban Betharram).

'"He is my loving God, and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge" (Ps 144:2)

This pandemic has badly affected our plans for social and catechetical camps in Northern Thailand.

We had also some tense days, when Fr. Manop was admitted to the hospital with body pains and a sore throat; but with the blessings of God he is back in the community and recovering. As a precaution, we have locked our gates, minimised our travel, and all of us use sanitizers, masks and keep to social distancing in the chapel and refectory.

Now, as a community, we find more time for God and our brothers. In daily Holy Mass, Adoration, Divine mercy, the way of the Cross and other spiritual exercises we pray for the world and for our congregation. We also make use of this time to clean up our campus and house and learn more English every day. This is also an opportunity for us to learn cooking as our

cook is in quarantine. As a whole, we encourage each other and build confidence in God.'

Our drone flies as far as Vietnam, where three of our postulants, after leaving India, spent two weeks in isolation before being allowed to reach their respective families: one by train, one by bus and the third by plane.

These are some of their words:

*"I was in my own country but I felt as if I was alone ... I was looked after well with good food and accommodation ... It was a chance to find myself fully alive with all my worries and fears. My trust and confidence in God gave me strength".* (Br Peterson).

*"I can narrate many warm stories of human and divine love. I can not ignore my anxiety, my apprehension and my worries ... Every one was so good, energetic and enthusiastic. I walked and shared my life experiences with many in the camp ... I did some*

*service like sweeping, mopping, and cleaning the living rooms etc.. I had more time to pray"* (Br Francis).

*"I thank God for his protection. Though, I am so close to my home, I am far away from it. I appreciate the Government for looking after me so well. I am sure that my way of living here [in isolation] introduced God to many"* (Br Joseph)

Together with the news, our drone brings us the prayer and affection of our young people in formation whose message is that this pandemic can become an opportunity and that the "virus" (poison) can be turned into "virtus" (power), that is into strength for this period of uncertainty and anxiety.

*(edited by Fr Enrico Frigerio, scj)*

*Celebration of Palm Sunday with Fr Shamon scj (Vietnam)*





## The Etchecopar Cause

After having named, about a little more than one year ago, a new Postulator for the beatification cause of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar, it would be convenient to say which step we are reaching.

In the Generalate, we have had regular meetings with Don Ettore Capra, the Postulator, and Mgr. Corradini who also helps us with his expertise to go ahead, and moreover to get on with the work already accomplished before for the cause.

To this end, we took the necessary steps to the Bishop of Bayonne who wholly agrees to forward the cause. Last February, in the Generalate, we met Mgr. Aillet, Mgr. Corradini and the Postulator, to see how to proceed with the help of the Bayonne diocese Officiality. Canon Benoît Merly, the Bayonne diocese Official, also met the Postulator in Rome.

Last March, we had to question a few people to check if the *fama sancti-*

*tatis* is still alive. Thus, with the Postulator and Mgr. Corradini, we had prepared a sojourn in Betharram to collect testimonies. It is a necessary step to take up the cause again. But the pandemic situation forced us to postpone this meeting in the coming months.

The General Council is studying how to propose a small kit, easy to print, in each Vicariate : images with a prayer, a presentation of Fr. Etchecopar's life etc. Moreover, it considers studying how to propose an Etchecopar Year which would give the opportunity to know him better, to make him known, to pray him.

May Father Auguste Etchecopar help us to be humble disciples of Christ, ready to accomplish the will of God.

*(by Fr. Jean-Do Delgue scj)*



*Recalling that Fr. Etchecopar returned to the Father's house on 13 April 1897. The Chapter General after his death, proclaimed him 'Second Founder' of the Institute.*

At the meeting of the General Council on 23 March, the Superior General authorized the **suppression of the community of Great Barr - Droitwich and the erection of two distinct communities** (RSMJC - Vicariate of England).

The Superior General also approved the appointment of **Fr. Anthony Vincent Masilamani as Superior of the community of Great Barr** and the appointment of **Fr. George Mathew Korandakkatte as Superior of the community of Droitwich**, both for a first term starting from 12 April 2020.



..... *In*  
*memoriam*

April 9 - Early in the morning, Holy Thursday, Feast of Priesthood, **Fr Celeste Perlini SCJ** has died. He was 90 years of age and 71 years of religious life. He was member of the "St Michael" community of Albavilla (Como) and he had been residing, for some time, at the "Roscio", a nursing home in Albavilla. Unfortunately, given the present situation, we cannot celebrate the funeral and pay him the last respects.



We pray for him and with him on the day of the Feast of Priesthood and we entrust him to Our Lady of Betharram and to the intercession of our Father St Michael Garicoits. *We will pay a tribute to him in the next issue of the Nef.*


*We are united in prayer with our brothers who have lost a dear member of their family:*

- (.) *Mrs Clotilde Silvero*, sister of Mgr. Claudio Silvero SCJ, Betharramite Bishop and Emeritus Auxiliary of Encarnación (Paraguay), passed away on April 7. She was 90 years old.
- (.) On March 26, *Terence Gerard Sheridan* (1935-2020) died at home in Glastonbury Southwest England. He had been ill with a heart condition for some years and it was not covid-related. He had served our Congregation in England and also the wider Congregation for many years. May he rest in peace. As we are living under 'lockdown' conditions we do not yet know when the funeral will be, or where, or what type of service, or who will be permitted to attend. When conditions allow the English Vicariate will hold a memorial service for him. In our prayers, we entrust Terence to the Lord full of mercy.
- (.) On March 19, at the age of 92 years, *Mr. Pietro Pensa*, brother of Fr Alberto Pensa (Vicariate of Thailand) died in Lierna (Lecco - Italia). As members of the Betharram family we are close to Fr Alberto and his family and we pray for the eternal rest of their dear one.

## “There is another temple...”<sup>1</sup> or going out from the Heart

NOTHING MUCH OF FATHER ETCHECOPAR’S LIFE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD WITHOUT THIS INNER DIMENSION OF FAITH.

*“The interior life consists... of building a dwelling at the bottom of one’s heart... of being locked in it, closely united to God, conversing with him, listening to his voice and receiving with his paternal hand, with holy gratitude, sorrows and tribulations, anything that can increase conformity with Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>*



These words, written in 1855, before entering Betharram, will remain the foundation of his existence. The figures of Christ and Mary are decisive in the development of his spiritual sensitivity. This religious knows how his temperament can lead him to anger & impatience<sup>3</sup>. Aware of his own lack of fervour, he doesn’t deny his tendencies but repurposes these inner faults.

*“O precious faults... light which reveals my Jesus to me... yes, it is my infidelity which shows me the extent of his fidelity, my inconstancy which makes me admire his constancy, it is the bottomless abyss of*

*my sin which makes me see that his love is even more unfathomable.”<sup>4</sup> “The more sick we are, the more boldly we have to claim this medicine. We must have no greater fear than that of having too much or not enough confidence in this merciful savior.”<sup>5</sup>*

When his letters are punctuated by “Ô” (when a meeting, a landscape, or an event delights him), everything seems to vibrate in him to the extreme. The encounter with the founder and some of his expressions or certain features of his spirituality, will tame and orient the sensitivity of this disciple. He will be forever marked by the call to holiness represented by religious life:

*“The religious is a vessel of election ... (he) enlightens the world by showing it,*

1) Letter to his brothers Evariste, Maxime and Severin, 18 November 1867

2) Summarium 49

3) Letter to his sister Julie, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1871

4) Letter to his sister Julie, Sister Elisabeth, Daughter of the Charity, Betharram, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1868

5) Letter to his sister Julie..., Betharram, 25 March 1880; Letter to his sister Julie..., Betharram, 4 January 1882

mainly in actions, the most sublime lessons of the Gospel.”<sup>6</sup> A choosing which is fundamentally a love story: “by the side of Christ one quickly forgets oneself and the cares of the land and the whole world, to rest and lose oneself in the ocean of his love.”<sup>7</sup>

“Such is life. It is indeed a pilgrimage, where we put up our tent in the evening to remove it and reposition it the next day... What does it matter! If we have the will of God and God himself with his love.”<sup>8</sup> “Let us meditate on Eternity...”<sup>9</sup>

In theory one could believe in a spirituality disconnected from life. But on the contrary! Turning your life into a pilgrimage opens the door to learning from it. Several major episodes will be like founding stages which will reveal to Father Etchecopar something of his creative fidelity: the difficult politics and perspectives of exile, the first visits to the Holy Land and Argentina, the formal recognition of the Congregation in 1890, the appeal of the Pope Leo in 1892 for Catholics to back the Republican regime, the manifold citations from 1888-9. So many steps that nourish and deepen the faith of this man (not without pain).

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6) Letter to the Fathers and Brothers in America, Betharram, 4 November 1878, and see also letter Letter to his sister Julie, 16 mai 1876

7) Letter to his sister Julie..., Betharram, 25 November 1887

8) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Betharram, 19 October 1881

9) Letter to his sister Julie..., Betharram, 24 July 1866

None of this was ever foreseen or predicted for him. Born into a large family of a petty bourgeoisie, Father Etchecopar made the voluntary choice of poverty. What joy for him when this vow is made official by Rome!

“If your heart is all for God, it will carry everything else with it... just as in a fire, fire forces you to throw everything out the window.”<sup>10</sup>

Even his uncertain health, among other things, is a reminder to always remain in a state of dependence vis-à-vis the Lord: “The poor machine ... the carcass ... given up everything ... rejected what remains of precious little “me”, like the crucified one who sheds his blood...”<sup>11</sup>

How can one sustain a life, given to others, at the feet of one’s Master? It is in this perpetual learning of a deeper, higher or distant vision (as St. Paul said of his experience of the mystery in Ephesians 3:18). If the founder is exemplary by the gift received from a dazzling intuition that has animated his whole life, Father Etchecopar is just as much driven by his constant attention to mystery.

“We don’t live from what we see and hear here and there, but from what we

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10) Letter to the Fathers and Brothers in America, Betharram, 3 August 1882

11) Letter to his sister Madeleine, Betharram, 26 January 1886 | Letter to his sister Madeleine, Oloron, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1887 | Letter to his sister Julie..., Betharram, 10 April 1885

love and what makes it good and better.”<sup>12</sup>

Not without his teasing humor, the superior speaks of a thousand little occasions: someone knocking on his door, the confessional, the letters piling up, sermons and lectures to write and those who bend his ear<sup>13</sup>. Let all this “*leap from the region of the natural to the region of the supernatural...*”<sup>14</sup>.

However, Father Etchecopar mind sometimes remains closed to what is different: the Turks, the lack of attention to cleanliness, even in the way he looks at the Orthodox<sup>15</sup>: “*the rest (of Christianity) is schismatic, heretical or Muslim... they are deserve our pity since*

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12) Letter to Fr. Jean-Pierre Barbé, Rome, 19 March 1887

13) Letter to his sister Madeleine, Betharram, 25 February 1883

14) Letter to the scholastics who were studying in Toulouse, Pau, 30 October 1887

15) Cf. Letter to his sisters Madeleine and Marceline, Bethlehem, 4 January 1891 and logbook on 12/11/91

*they have not been given the same grace as us [of belonging to the Catholic Church].*”<sup>16</sup>

Is it not the observe side of a beautiful medal that makes us appreciate it more. When he shares with us on his boat journey returning from Argentina: “*With each hour there is a growing pain of separation. Yes I feel within me a pain arising in my feelings. A flame which ... once put me at ease me ... made me smile a permanent smile ... Right now I am suffering from having lost this treasure, and I console myself by thinking of the grace that God has given me to have once fully enjoyed it.*”<sup>17</sup>

...

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16) Letter to his sisters Madeleine and Marceline, Bethlehem, 4 January 1891

17) Logbook on 10/05/92





## **SAINT MICHAEL GARICOITS, FROM HEART TO HEART**

••• Who does not have a word or an expression or a phrase of Saint Michael Garicoits which often resonates in his heart like background music, like an incessant call to keep trusting in the Lord, like the signature tune of the One who wants to fill us of his presence and his love? •••

*“Say thank you in the time of trial! This doctrine is for us”. (DS § 113-115)*

Provoking suffering, a time of trial is a difficulty, a misfortune that tests someone’s courage or resistance. It also tests the faith of the believer. Everyone experiences moments of trial in which they adopt various attitudes (abandonment to God; resilience; categorical refusal of the situation, etc.). Can our world, shaken today by the coronavirus, hear and welcome these words of Saint Michael:



**Fr. Armel Daly Vabié scj**  
*Community of Bangui -Bimbo*

*“Difficulties are a gift, a grace, part of the divine plan: and it is like a grace that you have to accept disease and even death. How many people have returned to their true selves due to a time of trial, and who would have lost themselves without it!”*

Let’s take a step back to better savour these words. For my part, I believe that these words of our Holy Founder, Michel Garicoits, are carriers of life; in the sense that they invite each person to know how to welcome and discover how to adapt themselves to a testing situation. My little life experience makes me understand that an ordeal is not necessarily fatal or the end of the world. It is a path of growth, of conversion insofar as it invites me to abandon myself to God in trust. However, I do not forget the need to question myself, because

the test is not necessarily external to me. Yes! I acknowledge that I have been or that I am sometimes the author of my own evil. He "(...) *is not only outside of us: the greatest evil is within us. Let us work energetically to cure it; the rest won't cause us so much concern*". When I go through an ordeal, questioning myself puts me on the path to conversion. From there, I live differently (with an inner peace) in suffering and adversity, and I research, just doing this little thing, suitable ways for a " exit from crisis ". When I live through the ordeal not only with God, but also with my community, which becomes for me a place of welcome and comfort, I can only give thanks to God. "*You have to say thank you in times of trial. This cry must be like the natural fruit of a living faith animated by an ardent charity, or like the means to arrive there; because no one knows if he is worthy of love or hate.*" I find that before being quick to help outside, I, a religious, must act in such a way that my Betharramite brother becomes a priority for me. If in community, I am unable to provide, as simply as possible to my brothers, the happiness that motivates me, how could I share it with others (outsiders)? Every religious must have time for his brothers. Let us learn, in all simplicity to share our joys and sorrows. Therefore, extra-community activities must not hinder our fraternal life, an essential point of religious life. What a disaster ! When a religious goes through difficult times and his community does not even realize it? Even if, going through an ordeal, my brother in the community or in the vicariate isolates himself (confines himself) and we do not even care to join him in order to allow him to make progress, how then do we dare to say that we are going meet men and women on the outskirts? It is this long walk, painful but exciting, with the little and the weak that Jesus has taught us since his Incarnation. It gives meaning to everything we experience. In our moments of joy, he is with us and above all invites us to stay the course. In our weaknesses or the moments when we fall, he is there with us, reassuring us of his unwavering support and asking us above all to take the necessary step in order to proclaim with the psalmist: "*Then we will never turn back from you ; give us life, and we will call on your name. (...), Let your face shine , that we may be saved.*"(Ps 80 19-20) But such a proclamation will only become reality if, and only if, with renewed love and disconcerting selflessness, we learn, every day, to put ourselves back into the arms of the Lord! Isn't that "*Saying thank you in the time of trial*"? ●●●

## « Prayer to ask a favour by intercession of Father Auguste Etchecopar



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

People who have received favour by intercession of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar S.C.J. may inform the POSTULATOR of the Cause at Via Angelo Brunetti, 27 - 00186 Roma; Cause [EtchecoparSCJ@gmail.com](mailto:EtchecoparSCJ@gmail.com) (Cause Etchécopar Bétharram).

*Happy Easter*  
*Joyeuses Pâques*  
*Buona Pasqua*  
*Feliz Pascua*  
*Feliz Páscoa*



Societas S<sup>mi</sup> Cordis Jesu  
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