

# NEF

# Betharram

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## A word from the superior general

### Missionary conversion: return to Jesus

"When the apostles returned to where Jesus was, they told him everything they had done and taught." (Mk 6:30)

Dear Betharramites:

This February editorial will find many of you, surely, fully immersed in the mission entrusted to you. In Asia, Africa and Europe, the communities are in the middle of the pastoral year, while in South America they are about to start their activities. The truth is that mission involves us all as baptised. That is why here I propose to take a moment to return to Jesus.

The "Here I Am" that we once pronounced has been an obedient "yes". We did not enter religious to have a good time (recreating, appearing on Facebook, eating well, having a car, Smart Phone and computer and taking a good nap every day). While all this is useful - if put at the disposal of mission (that is to say, a big "if") - it has never been considered indispensable according to our Evangelical spirit. On the contrary, we have been

invited to go out without purses or and knapsacks. (Luke 10.4)

Why were we sent? Because the mission of the Church counts on us Betharramites. We go out in community to meet life and the various peripheries with a simple style, which implies joy, humble availability, responsibility and industriousness. We were always appreciated for it. If we have forgotten this, then we need to convert from the heart.

To help us, Pope Francis shakes our lethargy by calling us: "*a Field Hospital Church*"; "*Faithful and Holy People's Church of God*." For him, mission must become "*the paradigm of the life and daily work of the Church*" (EG 15) and requires an authentic missionary conversion of the disciples of Jesus. He also calls for the structures of ecclesial communities to be converted (cf. EG 25 and 27).

In order for us to respond as St. Michael said with one impulse: that of the Will of God, we have to live in a permanent state of intimate missionary communion with Christ, of frequent and personal encounter with a living Jesus in his Church, in its members. Intimacy with Christ is not standing still, but roaming: it casts us onto the road, because it is above all on the road and not in the sacristy where those thirsting for God meet the missionary Jesus.

We Betharramites, although today few and fragile, are part of a great missionary communion. The mission of Jesus placed in the Heart of the

Church, thus becomes a criterion of spiritual discernment to evaluate the effectiveness of our pastoral structures. It measures what are the true results of our apostolic work, takes the pulse of fertility that we have as ministers and watches if we are able to communicate joy. "*Without joy we cannot attract anyone*" "*Always happy*"! (Philippians 1.4)

We have to learn to arouse joy in a time of crisis: what a task! Often the ecclesial mood about mission goes through moments of discouragement (even with the mission *ad gentes*). There is a certain missionary fatigue that is often hidden behind certain "postures". Here self-referentiality abounds. "Clericalism" is a perversion in the Church (says Pope Francis), and there is no shortage of those who stagnate in bureaucratic-clerical mode causing many Christians not to venture into mission, but to dedicate their efforts to the maintenance of what already exists simply because "it has always been done like this". Some live anaesthetised. Others are driven by an inconsistent idealism. What a diversity of peripheries! And all are in need of conversion.

We must accept that we are no longer present in society in the same manner we used to be. And when a high-tech world sees us as irrelevant we are prone to take refuge in the glory of the past, with a certain nostalgia, pessimism and consequently sterility. As Christians we no longer feel ourselves to be accepted (since we are not commercially attractive to

today's world), so we let ourselves fall into a kind of "drowsiness." Religious and laity become victims of worldliness and adapt to the new laws of the media, losing Christ as a point of reference towards the transcendent, and thus the fire goes out, first becoming lukewarm, and then cold ...

The gospel which is certainly intrinsically a tradition (oral and written) of the Church, is also essentially new, a force that bursts into history, a living Word that motivates, because it is Good News! Pastoral conversion then implies being driven by the fire of the Spirit of God, who ferments incessantly in the hearts to meet those who wait at the door, especially the poorest.

Let us share with joy the treasure of our charism, our experience of God, our passion for Christ, our selfless love given to the poor. Let us be new wine in new wineskins.

We know that the Gospel responds to the deepest needs of every person in this world, because we have all been created for this: friendship with Jesus, fraternal love (towards friends and non-friends, near and far, of any race or culture, young or old). We have known the love that God has for us and we have believed in him! (John 4,16)

Let us communicate the beauty of the gospel that responds to the deepest longing of the heart. As Pope Francis says: *"The missionary is convinced that there already exists in people and nations, by the action*

*of the Spirit, a deep longing, (even if unconscious) to know the truth about God and man, and the way which leads to freedom from sin and death. The enthusiasm for announcing Christ derives from the conviction of responding to this hope"* (EG 265). Saint Michael repeated: *"Oh, if I could gather a group of missionaries...!"*

We are not alone in this task. Jesus cares for us. But how much more there is to do!

This morning, celebrating Mass in the Carmel of Bethlehem, the Word of the Gospel resonated in me: *"Jesus said to them: 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat.'"* (Mk 6:31) They paid attention to him, but immediately: *"When he disembarked, Jesus saw all these people, and felt compassion for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them at some length."* (Mk 6:34)

Once again we return to Jesus and he urges us in to go out in mission, giving our all, giving ourselves without reservation, without turning back, more for love than for any other reason. An authentic Betharramite would not expect to pay any other price.

**Fr. Gustavo scj**

*Superior General*

# Homily • Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Eucharistic concelebration with the members of CIVCSVA, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020



*"My eyes have seen your salvation"* (Lk 2:30). [...] But among all at the temple that day, he alone saw Jesus as the Saviour. What did he see? A child: a small, vulnerable, simple child. But in him he saw salvation, for the Holy Spirit allowed him to recognize in that tender newborn *"the Lord's Christ"* (v. 26). Taking him in his arms, he sensed by faith that in him God was bringing his promises to fulfilment. And that he, Simeon, could now go in peace: he had seen the grace that was worth more than life (cf. Ps 63:4), and there was nothing further to wait for.

[...] Religious life is this vision. It means seeing what really matters in life. It means welcoming the Lord's gift with open arms, as Simeon did. This is what the eyes of consecrated men and women behold: the grace of God poured into their hands. The consecrated person is one who every day looks at himself or herself and says: *"Everything is gift, all is grace"*. Dear brothers and sisters, we did not deserve religious life; it is a gift of love that we have received. [...]

My eyes have seen your salvation. These are the words we repeat each evening at Night Prayer. With them, we bring our day to an end, saying: *"Lord, my salvation comes from you, my hands are not empty, but are full of your grace"*. Knowing how to see grace is the starting point. Looking back, rereading one's own history and seeing there God's faithful gift: not only in life's grand moments, but also in our fragility and weakness, in our insignificance. The tempter, the devil focuses on our *"poverty"*, our empty hands: *"In all these years you hav-*

*en't got any better, you haven't achieved what you could have, they haven't let you do what you were meant to do, you haven't always been faithful, you are not capable..."* and so on. [...] We can ask ourselves today: *"To whom do I turn my gaze: to the Lord, or to myself?"* Whoever experiences God's grace above all else can discover the antidote to distrust and to looking at things in a worldly way.

There is a temptation that looms over religious life: seeing things in a worldly way. This entails no longer seeing God's grace as the driving force in life, then going off in search of something to substitute for it: a bit of fame, a consoling affection, finally getting to do what I want. But when a consecrated life no longer revolves around God's grace, it turns in upon itself. [...] We no longer see the Lord in everything, but only the dynamics of the world, and our hearts grow numb. Then we become creatures of habit, pragmatic, while inside us sadness and distrust grow, that turn into resignation. This is what a worldly gaze leads to. [...]

To have the right kind of view on life, we ask to be able to perceive God's grace for us, like Simeon. [...] If consecrated life remains steadfast in love for the Lord, it perceives beauty. It sees that poverty is not some colossal effort, but rather a higher freedom that God gives to us and others as real wealth. It sees that chastity is not austere sterility, but the way to love without possessing. It sees that obedience is not a discipline, but is victory over our own chaos, in the way of Jesus. •



## Meeting of the Betharramite Formation Team 2020

BETHARRAMITE FORMATION TEAM WAS GATHERED IN ROME FROM 22ND JAN 2020 TILL 28TH JAN 2020. FRs. GASPAR, GLECIMAR, KRIANGSAK, SIMONE AND SYLVAIN WERE PRESENT ALONG WITH REV. FRs. GUSTAVO AND JEAN-Do.



We inaugurated the meeting with the reflection of Fr. Gaspar. He presented us his reflection from the VII chapter of Ascent of Mount Carmel by St. John of the Cross. Here follows few lines from the chapter: *"God alone must be the object of our search and attainment. God must be loved above all. We must desire to enter into complete detachment. True spirituality seeks for God. Deny oneself truly... Give oneself up for Christ's sake"*. With these thoughts, Fr. Gaspar reminded us that a formator is called to be detached of everything. Only then, he can attach himself to God and to the so called spiritual. It exactly resounds the word of St. Michael, *"It is necessary to have a soul and heart empty of the things of the earth to be filled with God"*.

Then we shared about the formation in each Region. We discussed about the daily lives of our communities and the challenges of our communities too. We appreciate the joyful living of the community prayer and the sacraments. We value our fraternal sharing, brotherho-

od and celebration. We consider important our living together as a witness. But at the same time affected by the modern technologies, materialistic world, the use&throw culture, makes our presence sometimes "alone". Due to lack of witness and testimony our younger ones say: "What I study is not what I see in our vicariate".

These are the few positive points and the challenges in our communities. But I must say thanks to our younger ones for their openness, sincerity and even, at times, the spirit of challenging the elder ones.

We thank God for everything. Particularly thanks be to God for blessing us with good vocations. We have 95 young people in formation without counting the 50 plus aspirants. At this juncture, I place my sincere word of gratitude for all who work selflessly for the vocation animation in each vicariate.

Preparation for final profession is an important moment in the congregation. It is a time to enrich, to share and to deepen our convictions with one another. We evaluated the session 2018. We take into consideration the appreciation of our brothers for them methodology of the fathers involved, the arrangement of the session and internationality among the brothers. We appreciate also their

saying that language was not a block to live to the full of their experience, rather the spirit of Betharram and love leads us forward. They also suggested that they need at least Sundays free in order to interiorize what they have learnt during the week.

Taking into consideration also their suggestion, the formation team meticulously put their heart and mind in order to prepare for the next international session which will take place in Betharram from 24th June 2020 till 28 July 2020. We sincerely keep our 11 brothers who are going to participate in the session in our prayers (SMGR: 4; RPAE: 2; RSMJC: 5).

Following the theme of the year of the Congregation "Go out to share, in community, to....", we introduce a new subject : mission of the consecrated people in the world and in the Church of today.

Fr. Jean-Do shared with us about

the *Ratio Funtamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (RFIS)<sup>1</sup>. Through which he reminded us that every formator is a disciple of Christ - a disciple called and sent to shape other disciples. Therefore, we are once again challenged and invited to focus on the maturity and corresponding aptitudes of the person. Thus arises the necessities of certain orientations. One of the orientations proposed by the Church in all the recent documents is the psychological test. Our *Ratio Formationis* clearly states about it too. It becomes so necessary today that we make this test obligatory in the initial stage of formation in order to know the aptitude of the person. The other orientations are of initial formation as well as permanent formation. The echos of these orientations, I am sure, will reach you later from the Superior General. Along this

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1) See page 8



line, Fr. Graziano Sala pointed out to us the importance of maintaining the dossier in each stage of formation as each stage of formation is equally important. He also insisted on the point that we need to train the formees to be accountable and help them to own up the responsibility. Then, we also profited the moment in sharing about the cause of Fr. Etchecopar. I like what the postulator said regarding the cause which is *"like a car parked in the garage for long time. It takes time now to restart in order to run it."* We are happy to hear that the cause of Fr Etchecopar is going ahead. The team suggested to have a special daily prayer to be prayed in our communities for this cause, especially in our formation houses.

We thought together to focus a bit more on Fr Etchecopar by proclaiming a year "Year of Fr Etchecopar": it could be a time to deepen our knowledge on Fr Etchecopar and celebrate him in a particular way in the Congregation.

We also reflected on the practicality of ecology which is well explained by Fr Simone in the last NEF. It is a high time to make our brothers aware of this particular subject, of taking care of the "common house".

Thanks for the fraternal atmosphere. It is how the formators meeting ended. All the formators returned joyfully as disciples of Christ to shape other disciples.

●●● **Fr. Stervin Selvadass scj,**  
**General Councillor for formation**

## Formees in the Congregation - early 2020

29 January 2020:

|                            | Region St Michael |                | Region V. A. Etchecopar |          |        | Region St Miriam |       |          |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------|--------|------------------|-------|----------|
|                            | Ivory Coast       | Central Africa | Argentina/<br>Uruguay   | Paraguay | Brazil | Vietnam          | India | Thailand |
| Aspirants                  |                   |                |                         |          |        |                  |       |          |
| Pre-postulants             | 3                 |                | 3                       |          |        | 4                | 13    | 11       |
| Postulants                 | 15                |                | 11                      |          |        | 3                |       |          |
| Novices (1 <sup>st</sup> ) | 4                 |                | 1                       |          |        | 3                | 0     | 1        |
| (2 <sup>nd</sup> )         | 2                 |                | 0                       |          |        | 0                | 0     | 0        |
| Scholastics                | 9                 |                | 6                       |          |        | 1                | 9     | 6        |

# The missionary conversion of the formators

*Sharing from the course given by the Congregation of the Clergy on the Ratio Fundamental<sup>is</sup> Institution<sup>is</sup> Sacerdotal<sup>is</sup> (RFIS) (Gift of the Priestly Vocation).*



I became acquainted with a French priest working on a report at the Congregation of the Clergy at the Vatican. He offered me the opportunity to participate in a course on the 'Ratio' where the aim was partly to understand the content and project and partly to be questioned by different members of the 'Ratio'. This course allows for a review of human and spiritual life at the heart of the life choice which is the priestly life. At every session, each person is invited to consider their experience and background. Some of the times of sharing are sorted into language groups. About a hundred priests and some deacons, from 29 countries and 5 continents, follow this course. It is a moment of sharing with the Universal Church.

This course was introduced with two images which bring to mind the priestly ministry. The first was of a chalice and paten; the other image was of the washing of feet. Those preparing for priestly ordination think more about the first image and lose sight of the second. Now, training must cover the whole lot as we are called to be disciples of Christ.

And all training involves the experience of being a disciple, a constant disciple, conforming to Christ. It's a mystical path.

Also, there is no end to priestly training; it's a process. The initial training and continuous training are two points of a single reality.

Thus, a trainer who is not himself committed to a continuous training pathway cannot be a trainer. A trainer is a disciple on the journey, a disciple called and sent to make other disciples, a disciple becoming like his master. And the disciple/master relationship is not a balanced relationship – *'the disciple is not greater than his master'* (Matt 10, 24-25) – but a challenging relationship: *'He who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.'* (Luke 14, 27).

I feel reminded and invited to always refocus my life on Christ's life, day after day, to be more and more his disciple and at the same time to have the rule of life and the guidance of the Congregation as background music, helping me to be on the right track with Christ: this assumes availability, humility and abandon, so dear to St Michael.

Another aspect underlined: the importance of growing in maturity. It is still such a challenge for me always to teach, correct and cleanse all the



emotions that can dwell in me so that I can work to pull my life together. It is a daily challenge a fortiori when one is also called to be a trainer.

I have to train myself each day, appraise myself, experience a conversion, and this is the daily challenge of each mature person.

In a training process, the most important thing before anything else is the witness of the trainer. With this in mind, we must contemplate the way Christ teaches, his style of being a teacher. Jesus is not a master who teaches theory but one who introduces a relationship with the Father. And here, how do we highlight the strength of the words of St Michael in his founder's text: 'He has given it to us to attract others to the Divine Love, the model which shows us the rules of love and the means to attain Divine Love'. We must not forget that Jesus lived a normal, simple life: 30 years of his life to prepare himself in silence for 3 years of public life. And his educative style comes from his manner of presenting himself as a

model of life, a guide. He is a credible educator because he is a witness. He knows how to meet the individual in a normal, human way. He knows

how to proclaim the Kingdom of God. He teaches and can recognise faith in the person he is speaking with.

The teaching skills of Jesus always start with the tangible life of the person he is speaking with; he listens to and thus guides the disciples. Jesus questions, corrects with clarity and respect, and

has his disciples facing the Truth – something to urge me to meditate more on the attitudes, gestures and words of Jesus. (*I urge you to beware of training that is too intellectual!*)

Each trainer is called to train candidates for the priesthood to be disciples and pastors. It is also important, in training for the priesthood, to detect characteristics of immaturity which can cast a shadow over the identity of the disciple and pastor. It is also important to develop the inner man and his natural values, to develop his pastoral caring, to develop his



personal witness of the Gospel which transfigures the inner being. It is also important to keep reviewing the personal project of Christian Life and of priestly ministry. A great maturity is required to be a priest! You need to always be on track. Priestly ordination is not the final point of training.

So, we understand the importance of training the trainers well. Is there a perfect profile for trainers? Probably not. There are imperfect trainers, who remain sons and also brothers of the Risen Christ. They are called to serve Christ, to be humble co-workers with the Holy Spirit to give a form (to shape). To be a trainer demands a human and spiritual maturity, pastoral experience, competence, stability, a genuine capacity to collaborate with others in a training team, an authentic attentiveness, a true and unambiguous way of speaking, a non-judgmental, serious and coherent expression, a capacity of being a leader – these are the qualities required for trainers to promote a true commitment in a candidate to follow Christ.

In a vocational path, one of the first issues is to shape the inner man – a large and delicate task for the trainers. Because the inner character is a sanctuary at the heart of the complexity of every person, we have to be able to see what is happening, to teach to integrate different emotions. That demands the attention of every trainer who must himself be able to stay on track.

A candidate wants to be a priest.

But this desire is not enough. Again, he needs to have the aptitude for it! (*The importance of a training process is to check the aptitudes of candidates in order to call mature and suitable individuals.*) These necessary aptitudes or qualities can be described in 3 points:

- Good physical and mental health;
- A recognised morality in the candidate: good self-esteem, principled habits and customs, an aptitude to practise the ministry;
- Ecclesial integration (sound doctrine, a sincere piety, an honest faith).

I would also like to emphasise some points:

The training for the priestly ministry happens at the heart of a community in a seminary. Community life is an advantageous place for putting the candidate's motivations and intentions to the test and for verifying his ability to live in a community, to collaborate with others and to open up to others.

It is not the chancellor, vice-chancellor or bursar who are the trainers. The trainers work in a team. Each trainer must have the awareness that he is one of the trainers within a team. That brings me back to our training communities where sometimes the teacher of the scholastics feels alone in the training process. Each priest or religious belonging to a training team is himself a trainer and also has a word of discernment to say.

I was also struck by the insistence of Monsignor Patron Wong, Secretary for the Seminaries of the Congregation of the Clergy that the trainers should be full time, without any outside responsibility and must live in the seminary. There is an issue in accompanying seminarians where there are seminaries with a large number of young people. Monsignor Patron Wong reminded us by asking how many times a month a seminarian had an in-depth personal meeting with a trainer. Good when the spiritual accompaniment is regular, but does the chancellor or another trainer take the time to personally meet each seminarian freely, each trainer staying in his role or position? It is the team that is invited to decide on the motivations and aptitudes of the candidate. This invitation from the Bishop also seems to be apt for us, the religious, to review how we accompany in the training process in the heart of our different formation communities.

In terms of family relationships, I am the son of a father and also a brother in a fraternity. The relationship with a father cannot be experienced in the same way as a relationship with brothers. In a diocese, in a congregation, there are older priests that I think of as a father, and there are other priests with whom I have a friendship, a brotherly relationship. With the Bishop or Superior, there is a certain distance, as I think I owe him a certain respect, being my superior. It follows that the trainer must also be

like a father to the young people he accompanies. The trainer becomes as a father with the sensitivity of both a son and a father. To live out this paternity, a trainer must be attentive to some significant attitudes. Pray for the person, in a spirit of humble service, to want to do good, as Christ was sent to do good, with a big priestly heart, by loving the seminarians, have a balanced and free relationship, a capacity to face difficulty, the respect of people...

These are some imperfect points that I wanted to share to perhaps help us to review how we live out our training service, how we are as trainers: a disciple on track with Christ? A witness trying to 'bring happiness to others (to young people)? A father who can help discover the will of God?...

●●● Fr. Jean-Do Delgue scj,  
Vicar General

## Holy Land, land of formation (2) : Permanent Betharramite training in Nazareth and Bethlehem

Last month, at the end of his article, Roberto Cornara told us how the Nazareth and Bethlehem residences emptied themselves of the scolastics for three reasons : the Second World War, the conflict between Jews and Arabs which culminated by the creation of the Israel State in 1948, and the creation of the Provinces in the 1947 General Chapter, which enabled each one to organize the training. The service for the Carmelite communities of both places has been maintained until today, according to the desire of Sister Mariam of Jesus Crucified.

The house of Nazareth was occupied for twelve years, first by 200 Polish women, then by 91 Arab refugees whose presence was not welcomed but who did not want to move. With much eagerness, Fr. Jeangrand faced the numerous difficulties and succeeded in recovering the places. Then, the same Father undertook to restore them, and with Brother Jacques Uhart, devoted himself to welcoming pilgrims, a service which meanwhile developed itself.

The house of Bethlehem followed different paths. First, it was occupied by the Egyptian army, then by refugees. It escaped expropriation thanks to the Sisters of the Rosary who installed their postulate and novitiate there, about fifty Religious,



from 1951. Those Sisters left our Bethlehem house in 1965. Soon after, half of the house was rented to the Mercedarian Sisters who kept a school of domestic arts there until 1982.

In Bethlehem, Fr. Pierre Séré kept the house. The keeper of Emmaüs, the house built in 1930 to be a holiday house for the scolastics, was Brother Jacques Nolan. In 1960, three bedrooms were rented to UN observers. Afterwards, Emmaüs was rented to the Community of the Beatitudes. Stable communities were present only in Beit-Jala and Nazareth.

The mission of the Beit-Jala community was the Patriarchal Seminary of Jerusalem, where it trained most of the Patriarchal priests since 1932. A training mission led by great Betharramite names : Fr. Buzy, Fr. Duvignan, Fr. Medebielle, Fr. Bataini, Fr. Mirande, Fr. Grech... Until Betharram, in 1990, handed over the rectorate of the Seminary to a diocesan priest.

Among the 1975 General Chapter proposals was the project of creating a home for the scolastics in Bethlehem, which did not take shape. However, during the third Congregation Council, it was decided to organize two months of recycling, in 1978, for a score of Religious aged between 45





*SCJ Nazareth House*

and 50 years, in Nazareth. The recycling session was indeed organized : all the participants met in Rome from June 22nd to July 1st, before going to Nazareth where they stayed until July 31st. From August 1st to 16th, they were welcomed in the Beit-Jala seminary before going back to Nazareth until August 22nd. This experience was concluded in Rome from August 22nd to 24th. Fr. Gaston Hialé and Fr. Mario Zappa, General Councillors, with Fr. Grech, the General Superior and great promoter of these experiences, coordinated this session.

The experience was renewed in 1979, from July 8th to August 22nd, with the coordination of Fr. Gandolfi and Fr. Landel, and the collaboration of Fr. Brunot sjc and Fr. Simpson of the White Fathers. "This recycling formula is organized every year in

the Holy Land"... This is why it should be necessary to free our Bethlehem house, still occupied by the Mercederian Sisters. The sessions followed one another, "Nazareth 1979", "Nazareth 80" and so on...

During the "Nazareth 82" recycling, from June 30th to August 14th, the participants profited by the improvements of the Naza-

reth house and by the new building besides the big house of Bethlehem. Thus, the experience could take place in our two houses of the Holy Land. These recycling activities went on, in 1983 (from June 30th to August 10th), in 1984 (from July 1st to August 10th), the Rule of Life was being studied. In 1985, there was no recycling, but a meeting in Betharram of Religious from the whole Congregation, about St. Michael Garicoïts and the Congregation Spirituality. Another recycling took place between July 6th and August 6th 1986 in both residences of Nazareth and Bethlehem.

In his report, at the 1988 General Chapter, Fr. Sheridan scj said that during his mandate which was ending, 3 recycling happened in the Holy Land, including one for the « less young » religious who appreciated it a lot. He pointed out two difficulties : the lack

of available Religious, and the problems of not being able to use a common tongue. Let us point another problem : the unsettled political situation between Palestine and Israël.

Fr. Francesco Radaelli scj also gave a great impulse to the training in the Congregation. As soon as the Congregation Counsel of 1988, it was decided to create the Holy Land Delegation, aiming especially the international character of the Palestine houses. As he had been trained as an architect, he encouraged the renovation of the houses and dreamt of devoting them to training for the whole Congregation, because of their privileged situation in this Land of the Incarnation. During his mandate, I participated in at last two meetings of trainers in Bethlehem and Nazareth.

The first one coincided with a Congregation Council in July 1995. We made a rough shape of the *Ratio Formationis*, which is now used both by trainers and by the young Religious being trained. (The second meeting was in the summer 2000). The next year, in 1996, a meeting of all those responsible for the Youth Pastoral of the Congregation ended with a *Project of Youth Pastoral for Betharram*. One or two sessions of continuous training were also organized for young Religious.

Initiated by Fr. Radaelli, the sessions of training for preparing the perpetual vows also began in the Holy Land in 2001, with a second part in Betharram. Betharram was the oth-

er side of the training in Fr. Radaelli's dream for the Congregation. From 2003, the St. Michael Garicoïts Region novitiate is in Bethlehem, when the novitiates of the other regions take place in Adrogué and in Bangalore.

The Bethlehem novitiate has lasted until today ( but was exceptionally in Mendelu in 2019). In 2009, a meeting was held in Bethlehem with all the Regional Superiors and their Vicars to plan the strategy for the creation of regions. In 2011, the XXVIth General Chapter was held in Bethlehem, receiving a special inspiration from this very place where the Incarnate Word was born.

**To sum up :** after being emptied, with the final departure of the scolastics, both houses of Bethlehem and Nazareth were occupied, during the Israël-Arab conflict ending with the creation of the Israël State, to accommodate refugees, victims of unjust expropriations. The Nazareth house was recovered in 1952. From then on, after a period when the building was restored, a service for accomodating pilgrims was settled. Bethlehem was only available a little later, and rented from 1956 to the Sisters of the Rosary who filled the house with 50 Religious. When they left in 1965, half of the house was rented to the Mercederian Sisters. The recycling project accelerated their departure, the 1982 recycling could be realized in both houses. Since then, the new building in Bethlehem has also been

used to accomodate pilgrims. Since that year and up to now, both houses are destined to this mission. But they are also used for the Congregation activities.

And life goes on. The need for training is increasing and our presence in Bethlehem as in Nazareth is a gift from Heaven. Everybody was opposed to this presence. However, Leon XIII had authorized Betharram to have a community in Bethlehem to serve the Carmel. Berthe Dartigaux, the benefactress, had made a

donation, allowing to buy the land to build the house. Fr. Etchecopar was the founder, in 1879, of the first Bethlehem community, which settled in 1885 in the big house we know today. We have the priviledge of being present in the Holy Land, where geography helps us to create a place where we meet the heart of Jesus, the Incarnate Word.

●●● **Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj**

## Formation gatherings for community bursars: in Thailand and India

In part two of "Orientations and decisions of the Chapter", we read: "*... In this phase we can plan how to organise a meeting with the bursars of the communities in each vicariate*" (Acts of the XXVIIth General Chapter, nr. 43). The phase to which the Chapter refers, concerns a project planned and structured by the Chapter Fathers to support & promote the service performed by bursars at all levels: regional, vicariate and community.

So I responded with pleasure to the request to participate in the meetings of community bursars sent me by two "young" vicariates: the Thai Vicariate (December 2-4 2019) and the India Vicariate (February 5-8, 2020), where I am at the time of writing.

Firstly, I would like to thank the two Vicariates for the availability of their bursars to get to work to serve the community. It is a service that requires self-sacrifice, time, attention to the brothers and above all humble learning to learn the basics of accounting (something which doesn't come easy, especially if like me your forte was literature).

During these meetings, we wanted to keep in mind the values underlying this service, which we find in the Rule of Life.

We asked ourselves: why are we doing all this work? Is it to keep control? To judge how money is used? To be free in the use of community money? No, we do it to help us respect a vow, that of poverty, which one day we freely chose to make.





within the community, if we really put goods at the service of mission, if we have lived in a style of sharing at all levels (Vicariate, Region, Congregation, with the poorest...), if we have made choices consistent with moderation...

Essentially, bursars are called to help develop "a simple lifestyle like that of the most humble in our area". (Rule of Life 48). Their task must translate this aspiration, and help the whole community to make choices that go in this direction.

But the purpose of a poor lifestyle is not just to seek moderation as an end in itself. Our communities have goods and these goods must be used "in the measure that they are necessary for our mission" (Rule of Life 49). A bursar must therefore always remember the reasons why a community is present in a particular place, and particularly he must always remember the mission that has been entrusted to the community. He must, with the Superior, be a "constructive conscience" within the community, in order to develop the community and apostolic project. He is therefore not a burden, but a builder.

For this, and this is my last point, monthly accounts are the tool of the bursar. It helps us to understand if what we profess is actually operative

We have been trained in the use of the Congregation's online software for keeping accounts. Regular and honest accounting (personal and community) is another way of saying "poverty": it also means "transparency" and "dependence". We are poor when, and above all, we accept to be dependent, even though we could avoid it: *"the holding of all things in common obliges us to depend on our superior for their use"* (Rule of Life 49).

It is therefore not so much the accounting exercise that interests us (others do it better and faster than us) rather than the choice of using a tool that can promote and support the promises that long ago we solemnly professed.

And that, more than anything else is what drives us...

●●● **Fr. Graziano Sala scj**  
*General bursar*



### **Father Bi-Thu Pitak scj, Bursar of the Vicariate, in Thailand**

On 2nd-3rd December 2019, the gathering of the bursars of each community was held at Ban Betharram, Chiangmai. Fr. Graziano Sala, the Bursar General of the congregation, was kindly present among us. The main purpose was to learn "How to" in managing the accounts of the communities. There were 9 members, namely Frs. Chan, Pensa, Tidkham, Kriangsak, Hiran, Manop, Banjerd, Prasert and Pitak, participated in this assembly and the atmosphere of this program was very friendly and meaningful. The first day we came to know about the introductory aspects of taking accounts because some of us are new to it. And the second day we came to know more details in proceeding this project. Though it has more complicated details, we all enjoyed learning and trying to put it in practice. I, as in charge of Thai Vicariate bursar, am very grateful to Fr. Sala for his encouragement and enthusiasm. I would like to say that it is very important for the religious and the communities to keep doing accounts in action strenuously. I come to reflect that doing



On 2nd-3rd December 2019, the gathering of the bursars of each community was held at Ban Betharram, Chiangmai

my personal account or community account helps me a lot to have discipline in doing account faithfully and to manage monetary matter in order. Finally I would like to give thanks to Fr. Graziano Sala for his kindness in giving us the new thought of doing accounts and we will keep forward in doing account in action. Thank you very much. •

### **Fr. Antony Siluvai scj, Bursar of the Vicariate, in India**

« A blessing in disguise » ...

Our General Bursar Rev Fr. Graziano Sala Scj came to visit Indian Vicariate and teach us the bursars of India, their responsibilities and the ac-

counting system of our congregation. We four bursars of India namely, Fr. Siluvai Antony Scj, Fr. Edwin Jose Manavalan Scj, Fr. Xavier Vipin Chirammel Scj and Fr. Jacob Biso Puliampally Scj along with the Regional Superior Rev Fr. Enrico Frigero Scj and the Regional Vicar Rev Fr. Arul Gnanaprakash Scj came together to discuss about the administration of India.

Fr. Graziana Sala insisted on reading the articles of rule of life. Article numbers 49 to 55 were read. He gave more importance to article numbers 50, 51 and 52. He gave emphasis on the following sentences; "in imitation his poverty the consecrated person recognizes Christ as Son who receives everything from the Father and gives to him everything out of love". By stating this point he asked us to do the administration of each community and the vicariate out of love towards the congregation because we received everything from the congregation. Secondly "in a fraternal community we avoid all that smacks of luxury excessive gain and the accumulation of wealth. The practice of the vow of poverty demands humility simplicity,

recognition of the gifts of the others, respect for hidden sacrifice, the valuing of the lowliest, and the devotion to causes unrewarding and unfashionable". He taught us the need of living a life of humility, simplicity and respecting. Thirdly "no one called anything his own, but between them everything was held in common". He told us to have the attitude to consider everything and keep everything in common.

Keeping the above mentioned three points in our mind, he created Id and password for each one of us; with extreme care and patience he taught us the accounting method. He made us to do the accounts easily and faithfully.

I gave the title "A Blessing in Disguise" because he is very strong when it is time to criticize and at the other hand very kind to understand and very compassionate to help us to do the things for the congregation. We all the four bursars in India, with one

voice say that we received a lot of energy and enthusiasm to do the accounts with the spirit of our Congregation. Everything for the greater glory of God. •



*Frs. Antony Siluvai, Edwin Manavalan, Jacob Biso Paliampally*



## Father Auguste Etchecopar, one of us

ANY INTUITION CARRIED BY A FOUNDER CALLS FOR A CONVEYOR TO MAKE IT LIVE IN REALITY, HERE AND NOW. THIS WAS FATHER ETCHECOPAR, AN INSTRUMENT OF PROVIDENCE FOR THE GROWTH OF OUR RELIGIOUS FAMILY.

However, there is no question of comparing him to Father Garicoïts; through his personality and actions, he became a Betharramite. It was through and in his own appearance that Father Etchecopar conveyed and ensured the spiritual heritage from the founder to us.

Nearly 1960 letters make us know him both in his intimate life and his life of connections! Step by step, we recognize the slow crystallization of the gifts received in companionship with the founder. He was indeed a disciple! His holiness, if it is recognized one day, cannot however be summed up in this single aspect. Above all, he was himself first! Gentle but impetuous, he grew up in a family environment which will forever remain for him the "school of the soul"<sup>1</sup>. At the beginning of his spiritual life, he noted, "*I chase the esteem of men: a hundred times I get confused, I get*

*sad, I get indignant.*" He was to work constantly to let his deep vocation as a beloved creature of the Father shape his temperament. "*Between seeing and doing, there is a medium: prayer.*" While still a member of the Oloron Cross Society, his ordination retreat notes give us the major key to understanding his spiritual path: "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*" (Ga 2, 20). He remained deeply aware of the struggle between his nature and the supernatural until the day of his death. Realizing thus the words of Psalm 130: "*My heart is not proud Lord, my eyes are not haughty; no, I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother.*" A mother! This man will be forever marked by his discovery of Mary at Bétharram: "*To want to take a step without her, is to try to fly without wings.*"<sup>2</sup> "*Man is from God, to God and for God!*"<sup>3</sup>. He will not receive his religious vocation by violating his nature, on the contrary, he will find it in gentleness and vigilance, by letting it express all human potential and interconnectedness.

2) In « Resolutions made during the retreat on June 16th, 1882 ».

3) Letter to his brother Evariste, 30 October 1847.

1) Letter to his brother Evariste, 2 November 1856.



The awareness of the fragility of existence, of its precariousness will forever imprint in it, the aspiration to join the true homeland, Heaven. "*The chest is the chink in the armour*"<sup>4</sup> he confides. He can be criticized for having been too attentive to this dimension of human life. Why wouldn't it be an opportunity to observe better and see how he made it a springboard for his fraternal life for example. He certainly did not lack courage! His concern for the physical led him to always measure the realism of the mission and its limits as well as to marvel, unceasingly, at the way in which others lived their relationship to the world and to death<sup>5</sup>. Be, before you act! The letters in which he speaks of the deaths of the

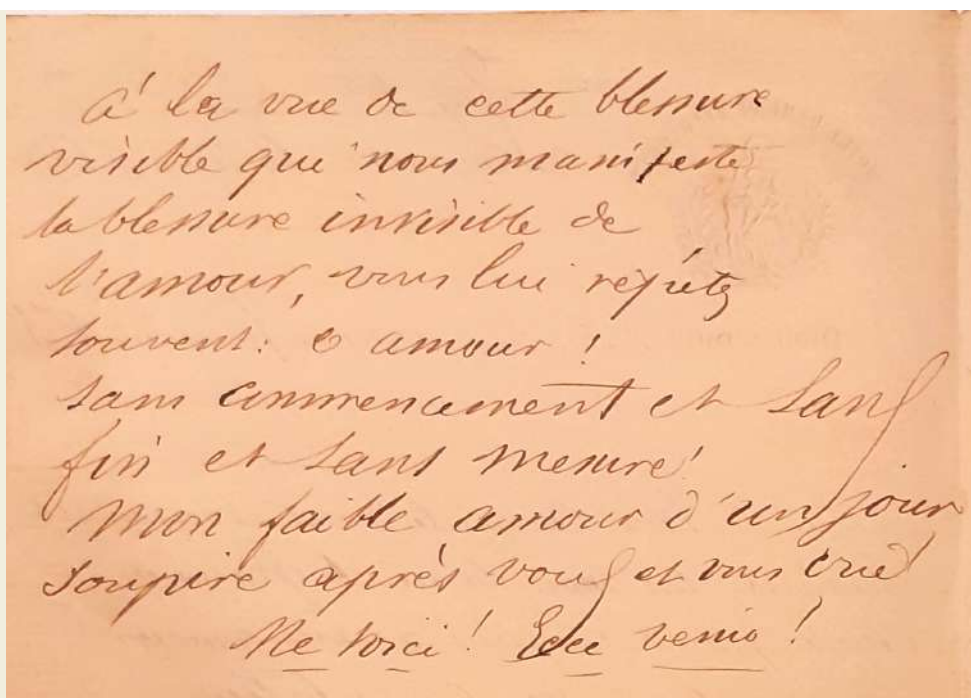
4) Letter nr 911 to his sister Madeleine, 17 December 1886.

5) Cf. Letter to Fr Jean Bergez, 16 July 1881.

founder's first companions are astonishing in this regard. This, moreover, is the intuition of the founder: to train men, religious, capable and available priests before anything else. In this, as in all dimensions of his life, we can see a dual spirituality: attention to reality, and an invitation to a view that sees beyond it. Speaking of Providence, he wrote to his brother who had emigrated to Argentina: "*I feel it (Providence) every day, I see it, so to speak, through the veils of events which relate either to me or to you*"<sup>6</sup>. Later, he was to evoke the same reality: "*the visible wound which manifests the invisible wound*"<sup>7</sup>. Our current living conditions in the West should not make us forget the trau-

6) Letter to his Evariste, 30 October 1847.

7) Letter to the community San José in Buenos Aires, 18 June 1882.



«At the sight of this visible wound which manifests to us the invisible wound of love, we keep on repeating to him: O love! Without beginning and without end and without measure! My weak love of just one day sighs after you and calls out to you Here I am! Ecce venio!»

From the letter to the religious of the San José community in Buenos Aires, 18 June 1882.



ma that epidemics and climate still caused between 1850 and 1890!

The articles that will follow will talk in more detail about certain aspects of his human and spiritual personality. Let us note at the outset: he was a man who was the incarnation of the charism. He accompanied each breath with it, each step during his 30 years of service as Superior General. In this role again, he displayed all the treasures of a personality formed of prudence and respect, without ever departing from a sensitive humor: *"We are all burdens to each other."*<sup>8</sup>. *"It is about having a cool head in the fire, unwavering courage, firmness and prudence to steer the boat through the thousand pitfalls"*<sup>9</sup>. Political turmoil raged in France as in Argentina threatening the very freedom to live as a religious, a complicated management of people and works! Far from hardening him, these difficulties spurred on his desire to join the most distant brothers through his first canonical visits. So many

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8) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, without date, but written probably in February 1887.

9) Circular letter to the residences in America, 18 April 1885.

times these words of the psalmist come into his writing: *"It is good and sweet for brothers to live united and together."* (Ps 132). His deep joy to have seen his brothers, to have lived daily life with them, provided peace to his soul of responsibility. How beautiful and great it is to read his enthusiasm and joy during the official recognition of the congregation by Rome! Such moments were a grace for him, the sign by which he recognized the good direction and presence of the Founder. His story shared with us did not stop shaping his brotherly heart: *"I take with me (the scholastics of Bethlehem) because they have become part of me"*<sup>10</sup> •

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10) Letter to Sister Euphrasie, prioress of the Carmel of Bethlehem, 17 July 1891.





## 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?*•••

### Long live joy, peace in God!

I have a mania: I love to stick the walls of my studio with writings, sayings, quotes; here are some: UNDER THE WINGS OF GOD I WILL FIND REFUGE; HE LIVES... AND HE WANTS YOU ALIVE; LORD JESUS CHRIST SON OF GOD HAVE MERCY ON ME A SINNER etc. Words that give feelings of trust and optimism in my heart. But this morning I had a jolt caused by a strange surprise! Two words have stood above my computer monitor: PEACE & JOY; I don't remember when I placed them in that position. For a long time they were there as reminder to announce the new day, they were there to accompany my daily use of Internet, they were there especially in the evening, as watchman to accompany my rest of the night. These two words always resounds in my spirit when I started the day, when I read, when I stopped for a short break. Words that easily invited me to an attitude of prayer. God for me was the source of joy and peace. God alone could give me full, complete, eternal, lasting joy. I have tried many times in my life moments of joy, but the desire for happiness was never completely satisfied, always unsatisfied. Let's not talk about peace! What a mess in the heart. Disappointments, bitterness, expectations! I then got used to paying particular attention especially in the moments of the Breviary prayer to the announcements of peace and joy recurring in the liturgical texts.

Nothing extraordinary! Only a ray of light, an invocation, a flash that gave me a sentiment of serenity. But why did I choose these two words? Who suggested them to me? Who carved them in my mind before I decided to put them on top of the monitor? Well I want to reveal my little secret! These two words threw their bright light into my heart when I was a teenager! Those were the distant days when I began to know St. Michael. Then there were no translations of the life of St. Michael. Since the beginning of my gymnasial studies, I had started studying the French language, and how strange if not to learn and practise the language through the Life of St. Michael? Thus it was that the large volume of Father Basilide Bou-

rdenne entitled: *The life and work of the venerable Michael Garicoits* came into my hands. And my curiosity was drawn to the final part of the volume entitled: Letters of Fr. Garicoits. At the end of one of those letters were the two words that enchanted me: *Vive la joie et la paix en Dieu!*, exclamation that bewitched me. That page 489 with that exclamation no longer abandoned me. I wanted to carefully read the letter that ended with that simple exclamation.

I was struck by the style in which St MICHAEL suggests joy and peace to her correspondent. A fresh, lively, vigorous, spontaneous, surprising style! I can not help remembering an excerpt with the underlining, the capital letters that indicate the urgency and importance that he wanted to give to his advice:

*"I must urge you with every fibre of my being to LIVE CONSTANTLY in the joy of the Lord, and let it shine through everything you do, in ALL your relations with God, your neighbour and your innermost self as Mary did. I say: constantly, in all positions, ALWAYS, even if you were guilty! Because GOD ALWAYS, GOD keeps his gaze fixed on you to purify you, protect you and fill you with benefits. At the sight of this salvific, protective and benevolent gaze, shouldn't you constantly be aware that you possess this happiness and always make it obvious to others?"...*

Don't you think we can hear here Ben Sirach when he transmits his warnings, his exhortations?

Yes. St. Michael was for me a wise man who turned on a bright light in my soul, who gave me a message to live, to conquer every day: Joy and Peace.

A gift, an exhortation, an advice that St. Michael wants to transmit to me even today. A life plan: to announce joy, to be a peace worker.

Yes. Dear St. Michael, now I hear a background music:

*Nada te turbe, Nada te espante, Solo Dios, only God is enough !*

• Father Ernesto Colli SCJ



*Welcome to three new postulants from Vietnam!  
Betharramite Formation House in Bangalore, India.*



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