



*The glances of children who are growing: each seeking a horizon or an attention.
The glances of children open to the future with a treasure in their hands: a heart!*

Could we read, at the beginning of this new year 2020, in these eyes the desire to remember that love remains the most important wish in life?

Oh yes, their focussed look awakens us and reminds us: "Love is at the heart of life!"

Best wishes for 2020 !



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A word from the superior general

Going out of oneself: the first requisite for going on mission

*"Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God.
Consider their end and imitate their faith." (Heb 13, 7)*

Dear Betharramites,

The third part of the six year programme of the General Chapter, which inspires this year's motto, is undoubtedly the most original and inspired of all. It begins with a discovery and follows with an invitation.

The experience of many of our communities now is that Betharram's apostolic life is inserted in the mission of the Church. However, the Chapter tells you: "We are called to be witnesses to the merciful love of God who is not indifferent to human suffering" (Acts 56).

The Capitulants tell us: "we believe that more must be done" (Acts 57).

That desire for "more" is very motivating because it excites the missionary vocation and indicates our rejection of the comfort zone and the temptation to let oneself die (that many congregations suffer).

In fact, the Christian life itself is a big "more" showed in

a journey of inner detachment: a “going out of oneself”, in the way our Lord did, in the Incarnation.

It is much to the credit of what we learned during the whole of formation that we have that ability to “get out of oneself” and truly call ourselves Betharramites.

Jesus, the incarnate Word - our founder tells us - comes out of the Father and goes to the bosom of the Virgin Mother. The eternal Light lives a great exodus: he comes to this world, man like us, from his birth he goes to Nazareth to live a hidden life for thirty years. Later he goes out to public life and, always moved by the Spirit of his Father, he gives himself to all that God asks. He frees himself from everything that would impede him from being a barefoot pilgrim. He takes on his mission joy, without setting conditions, without stopping, without hesitation. Thus, he gives himself to what his Father God desires, “*becoming obedient until death and death of the Cross*” (Phil 2, 8). He did so to save us. His life was and is a permanent going outwards; his life is mission, his death: salvation, his resurrection: new life.

The Chapter makes us aware that we, on the other hand, are as “blocked.” What does this mean?

If we truly want to convert ourselves on a personal and community basis, it is important to analyse what happens to us. I outline here some possible causes of these blockages (psycho-spiritual) that paralyse us and prevent us from going out of ourselves to meet life and the peripheries:

- The fear of taking risks, pretending to

protect life (“build bigger barns”);

- The emotional attachment that prevents us from leaving certain historical works to go out to the peripheries;
- The discouragement before growing attacks and systematic criticism of the Christian faith and the Church as institution;
- The feeling that work has become too demanding today and demands energy that we no longer have;
- The fear of delegating tasks to the new vocations and vocational sterility (especially in Europe);
- Perplexity in the face of the religious indifference of society;
- The small number of men of God with age and religious experience, especially in young vicariates (India, Thailand, Ivory Coast, etc).

How can we change our attitude?
The Chapter (Acts 60 - 62) tells us to:

- RENOUNCE: comforts, wrong motivations, pie-in-the-sky schemes and individual projects.
- CULTIVATE: the ability to listen, the search for the encounter, to value our brother, to value the “invisible”, to be questioned by reality.
- RECALL: that our essence is to evangelize. That is, we must “remember the first love” (cf. Rev. 2, 4). That can put us in the path of graces received, forgiveness, goods and people that the religious family has made available to us to form ourselves as men of God. The devil makes us forget these graces and behave like ungrateful children and,



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?

Give me a heart that truly loves. He will believe and taste the things of God, and he will run and fly in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ... (DS § 101).

This is the melody that is often given to me, in moments of doubt and solitude as well as in times of active mission to accomplish. It allows me to return to the essentials of my life which demand a response above all of love. It is out of love that the Lord called me and calls me every day. This melody becomes a force that always pushes me to go forward, to keep the faith in all circumstances and above all to cultivate the taste of God who goes before me at every moment of my life. It is He who has the initiative; it is He who is always present at the heart of events that I go along with or encounter. In the end it is a melody which gives an inner joy which enables us to share with others the taste of God, in humility. • Father Jean-Do Delgue SCJ

of others is a fiction, or we must make every effort to practice this doctrine ... first... second... third... fourth... to the hundredth degree ad infinitum!: Here I come! May your will be done in me as in heaven! Raise this standard high; it is on the battlefield and not behind closed doors that the soldiers of the Sacred Heart must walk under this standard.”⁵

What a doctrine! What virginal purity! What a high ambition! What love of God and of his Church! What noble feelings! What flashes of fire! What a flame of heroism and devotion! ... Don't you feel enlightened, moved from the depths of your soul, encouraged and electrified to think and act like true Sons of Father Garicoïts?

Oh ! Let us all ask, Fathers and Brothers, for this fidelity, this generosity for each of the members of our Institute and especially for ourselves ... Let's go back, let's go inside ourselves; recall what we have vowed, what we are by our vows, before God and before the Church. We must show ourselves to be who we really are and not give men or angels the chance to say: *'They talk the talk but do not walk the walk ; their name is high but their conduct low; a glorious banner but an easy life, without discipline, without subordination, without spirit of sacrifice ...'*

Wouldn't that be a monstrosity, a scandalous thing? Is it for this that we have left everything and begun with noble intentions? And where are we going to end up?

So is it not right and just and glorious to point out to you the holy way in which you began, for the honour of your venerated Father, for the usefulness of the desolate Church and the prosperity of this Congregation which has adopted you and given you so many good things?

Do not doubt it, my Fathers and Brothers, these salutary reflections, fertilised by a continual and fervent prayer, will obtain new energies and strength for all of us; and the year we have just entered will realise to a greater extent than ever the wishes expressed by the Angels themselves: *Gloria in excelsis Deo and in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis!* Glory to the Heart of Jesus and his Divine Mother!

Peace, glory, happiness, success according to God to the generous soldiers of the Sacred Heart, to the true imitators of Father Garicoïts! Fiat! Fiat! ... Oh my God!

Yours in Our Lord.
Etchecopar priest

P. S. Please read this letter to the Conference, and then acknowledge receipt.

5) Cf. *Correspondence of Saint Michael II*, 293.

instead of “going out in community”, we say “let's run away from the community.”

When we contemplate the symbol of the Heart of Jesus, we also perceive that movement, that secret impulse of self-transcendence that moved Our Lord and made him “go out of himself”. The Jesus of the Gospel is the living expression of a love that overflows until it delivers its last drop of blood on the Cross (cf. John 19, 34).

We know that this example motivates us to devote ourselves fully to the mission entrusted to us; besides being an incentive, a model and a means that allows us to savour the things of God (Foundational text). Obeying like Jesus, we become pleasing to the Father and announce it even without saying a single word. This witness to life that impels us becomes contagious, and when we express it with passion it becomes surprisingly meaningful, for a world that tends to ignore God. Our existence as Betharramites can become a sign of contradiction to the coldness and indifference of so many disoriented, but God-willing pilgrims. For them, we are pastors who look for and follow the “path” that transcends present difficulties to find a new horizon behind the forest.

As witnesses of a Christ who goes out of himself, we become instruments of help for men and women who today are trapped by their own desires and passions, and bored in the labyrinth of the “here and now”, saturated by a mentality of ‘been there, done that’, which has led them almost to the absence of God.

A true Betharramite religious life is transformed into martyrdom (literally, witness), when set on fire by faith, it allows itself to be led by the love of Christ and is willing to occupy the most uncomfortable and despicable places in order to make God's Will present in this world. To go out of oneself implies a firm and loving austerity, which ends up being blessed with the consolation of the God of the humble and simple.

To go out of oneself, for a Betharramite, is then a necessary and essential step for mission. With this you can say that you are happy to participate in the dream of St. Michael. That you enjoy a true identity as an “elite soldier,” even though our squad is today weakened by a hostile reality and has become vulnerable.

In this group selected by the “Sweet and Tender Heart”, the well-off, the faint-hearted, the lazy, the self-interested (“I give to get back”) are excluded. They walk with excessive weight in their backpack and get tired without having begun to walk the paths of the Holy Spirit.

In this year of the mission, if we truly believe as Betharramites that “we must do more”, then let us do as Mary in the Visitation, without being closed in on ourselves, let us go without delay to joy to all who need it.

Fr. Gustavo SCI
Superior General

Homily • Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

Vatican Basilica, Monday 6 January 2020

"We have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him" (Mt 2, 2). [...]

As we begin the New Year, may we discover anew that faith demands worship. If we can fall on our knees before Jesus, we will overcome the temptation to set off on our own path. For worship involves making an exodus from the greatest form of bondage: slavery to oneself. Worship means putting the Lord at the centre, not ourselves. It is means giving things their rightful place, and giving the first place to God. Worship means making God's plan more important than our personal time, our entitlements and our spaces. It is to accept the teaching of Scripture: *"You shall worship the Lord your God"* (Mt 4:10). Your God: worship means realizing that you and God belong together to one another. It means being able to speak to him freely and intimately. It means bringing our lives to him and letting him enter into them. It means letting his consolation come down to earth. Worship means discovering that, in order to pray, it is enough to say: *"My Lord and my God!"*, and to let ourselves be pervaded by his tender love. [...]

In worship, we allow Jesus to heal and change us. In worship, we make it possible for the Lord to transform us by his love, to kindle light amid our darkness, to grant us strength in weakness and courage amid trials. Worship means concen-



trating on what is essential: ridding ourselves of useless things and addictions that anaesthetize the heart and confound the mind. In worship, we learn to reject what should not be worshiped: the god of money, the god of consumerism, the god of pleasure, the god of success, the god of self. Worship means bending low before the Most High and to discover in his presence that life's greatness does not consist in having, but in loving. Worship means recognizing that we are all brothers and sisters before the mystery of a love that bridges every distance: it is to encounter goodness at the source; it is to find in the God of closeness the courage to draw near to others. Worship means knowing how to be silent in the presence of the divine Word, and learning to use words that do not wound but console. [...]

Each one of us can ask: "Am I a Christian who worships?" Many Christians pray but they do not worship. Let us ask ourselves this question: Do we find time for worship in our daily schedules and do we make room for worship in our communities? It is up to us, as a Church, to put into practice the words we prayed in today's Psalm: *"All the peoples on earth will worship you, O Lord"*. In worshipping, we too will discover, like the Magi, the meaning of our journey. And like the Magi, we too will experience *"a great joy"* (Mt 2:10). •

house in the hamlet of Ibarre, he, a nobody, a write-off, and that God said to him: *"Go found a new Institute in my Church; it has a reason for its existence in these troubled times, where the great Orders are dispersed and where the spirit of revolutionary independence penetrates everywhere even onto the Sanctuary ... Here is your flag and your rallying cry ... You will march ahead, with the flag of the Sacred Heart, uttering the cry, the Ecce Venio of my Son, and you will be his joy and the support of his Church"*.

He believed that voice; he seized that flag, and, in his powerful voice declared: *"It is an illness of our age, to substitute our will for that of God and to say to him: Go away ...for I want to be god myself! So I summon together the volunteer army of perfect obedience and good Divine pleasure !!"*⁴

And he launched himself on this road of destiny like a giant and walked there until the end of his life.

Was he my Fathers and my Brothers, the victim of a grand delusion?

No, no, thanks be to God... the facts prove it; and, at this very moment while the *Fama sanctitatis* process continues, a thousand voices proclaim that Father Garicoits was a man filled with the Spirit of God. He is one of those Apostles whom god raises in difficult times, for the consolation and triumph of his Church; and on all sides the Christian people repeat the imposing testimony given by Mgr Lacroix over the coffin of our Father: *"The Lord led this righteous one in straight paths; he has revealed to him the secrets of Heaven; he endowed him with the knowledge of the Saints, enriched him in his labours and crowned him in his enterprises"* (Wisdom 10.10).

So what do we have to do, beloved Fathers and Brothers? What more could I want for you than to be well directed, understanding perfectly what you are, and open about it, with a large and generous heart? And being happy with that, wishing you to persevere and always move forward following your Father, by the scent of his heavenly perfumes?

Otherwise, we would no longer be the continuators of the work established and created by him; he himself wrote to all our communities:

"At the risk of endangering our profession asAuxiliary Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of placing ourselves under the banner of Satan, everything in our deliberate conduct, must respond to the Holy Spirit and to our Superiors: Here I am, without delay, without reserve, without looking back, out of love for the will of God, with the disposition to give us wholeheartedly to all the means that our Superiors deem appropriate to employ to correct any mistakes of our foolish conduct.

Either our commitment to strive for self-perfection and devote ourselves to the perfection

4) *Spiritual Doctrine*, 212



A Circular Letter

F.V.D.

Betharram, January 10 1888

Dear Fathers and Brothers in Our Lord

On the occasion of the New Year, you sent me some very consoling words, and your love, for me, has double force at the feet of the Divine Child and his Virgin Mother. You took note of the weight which overwhelms my weak shoulders and that the danger is so much greater for a Superior, since his burden is heavier: *Quanto in loco superiori, tanto in periculo maiori versatur*.¹

Although a little late, I want to thank you all, and send you greetings in my turn, with all my esteem and all my tenderness, (and urge) this going forward and this progress to which our venerable Founder constantly invited us. He kept repeating to us with his voice and example: Forward! Let us go! But at the same time, Father Garicoïts, as wise as he was generous, urged us to orient ourselves well. By this he meant men clearly enlightened as to the purpose of their vocation, deeply convinced of the holiness of their vocation, determined and resolved to achieve all the advantages of this vocation, as brave men, as heroes: *Corde magno et animo volenti*.²

Do you wish following Father Garicoïts himself to know what a picture of these brave heroes would look like?

Betharram, February 3, 1859

My dear friend: here is what I recommend to you:

1 ° Always have before your eyes, above all, God and his adorable will;

2. Our way of life, which expresses this divine will so clearly for each of us;

3 ° Strive with all your power to reach for this end, to the extent of your grace and your position, embracing with immense charity the whole extent of your grace and your position, and at the same time respecting the bounds of both with virgin delicacy.³

You see, my Fathers and my Brothers, despite his deep humility, Father Garicoïts believed in a work of new creation, with its own purpose, organisation, spirit and means; he believed that the God of the little people and the poor had chosen him for this purpose, he, the shepherd of the last

¹) How much are those in a place of higher position in greater danger! Rule of St. Augustine 7.47

²) 2 Mac 1,3: With a great heart and a willing spirit

³) Cf. Correspondence of Saint Michael II, 426.

Final profession of two Thai brothers

On Wednesday 4 December 2019 in the Vicariate of Thailand two brothers: Br. James Thanit Panmanikun SCJ and Br. Peter Rawee Permpoonwicha SCJ. made their final profession.



**Brother
Peter
Rawee SCJ**

I came to know Betharram when I was attending high school at Joseph Upatham School, without, however, understand much about the Betharram charism.

During my years in Philosophy, after following the footsteps of the first missionaries, I started to know more and more about Betharram. I discovered the missionary work of the Betharram Fathers and Brothers by listening to the people to whom they announced the Good News. I am very happy to share about this experience because I am preparing myself to follow Christ as a Betharramite; the work done by the missionaries in the past is for me a source of inspiration.

The example of the Betharram missionaries helps me to become a good shepherd according to the heart of Jesus. At the same time I am aware that as member of the Betharram family I need courage to

be faithful to the the charism of Saint Michael.

While being in India for 2 years, I deepened the spirituality of Saint Michael Garicoïts, our founder. This helped me to grow in my spiritual life and encouraged me to go forward and do everything for the greater glory of God. •

My name is **Thanit**, and I would like to share some significant experiences that have inspired me on

my religious journey. I hail from Pangtong Village, Maehongson province. I joined Betharram Congregation in 2000 at Phayao seminary

In the years 2004-2006 I attended the courses at St. Joseph seminary and in 2007 I started my postulancy. I followed the Philosophy and religion course at Seangtham college and in 2012 I did my regency, spending most of the time with my family,





Final profession of two brothers, Thanit and Rawee, on December 4th, 2019: The celebration took place in the chapel of the community of Chiang Mai and was presided over by the Regional Vicar in Thailand, Fr. John Chan Kunu SCJ. The final profession was received by Fr. Graziano Sala SCJ, General Bursar and delegate of the Superior General. Family members of the two young professed and many religious and friends from various cities in the country also took part in the ceremony.

helping them in their work. In 2013 I had an opportunity to find a job in the town for one year. After that I went back to Maepon for another year. In 2014 I entered the noviciate in India and then I attended the Theology courses in Thailand. At present I am at Maepon.

In the 19 years spent in the Congregation of Betharram I could learn and live the charism of Saint Michael who helped me to be closer and closer to God. The noviciate, the period of my Theology studies and the year of preparation for my final vows gave me many opportunities to learn about the life of Saint Michael.

I thank God for his unconditional

love and for his providence I experience through these 19 years.

God has been guiding me through all the people surrounding me with their encouragement, love, peace and joy during my vocational journey.

The Betharram family has helped me to grow and look deeper into the spirituality of Saint Michael in order to serve God and his people. I humbly express my gratitude to God for giving me the grace to commit myself forever to the ministry of the Church and of the congregation. •

come back to Betharram.

Then from 1977 to 1981, he was the curate at St Julian's in Pau with Father Casenave, the Paris Priest. In 1981, he rejoined Betharram at the Monastery, providing the sanctuary duty with Fathers Marsaa-Poey and Verley, in this building where his uncle had spent a great part of his life.

Then from 1989, he was part of the *Maison Neuve* community here, providing secretariat services for insurance for several years.

He led a life of tact, showing himself to be a teacher close to the pupils that we were and even lenient towards the more spirited among

us. The congregation joins him in his prayer, with his nephew, Father Michel, with his family happily present all throughout his life. May he help us to obtain vocations, which we need so much, around this place of Betharram which has given so many Betharramite religious. A glorious past giving hope that we might believe we can have a radiant future.

Father Paul was buried on 30th December at the Betharram Cemetery.

Laurent Bacho SCJ



In memoriam



On December 24, Christmas Eve, Mr. Mario Grugnola, a lay Betharramite, returned to the Father's house.

With his wife Laura, he regularly attended the monthly meetings of the "Cenacolo", a group led by Fr. Ennio Bianchi SCJ (from the residence of Castellazzo di Bollate, Vicariate of Italy), where Mr Mario had delved into the life and spirituality of St Michael Garicoïts.

Thanks to his knowledge of Saint Michael and his familiarity with the French language, Mr Mario took care of the translation into Italian of the "Correspondence" of Saint Michael Garicoïts and of the volume "A spiritual master of the nineteenth century" by Fr. Pierre Duvignau SCJ.

We entrust him to the mercy and tenderness of the Father who has just made Himself visible in the Child of Bethlehem.



Father Paul BARADAT scj

Caubios-Loos, 14th May 1922 –
Bétharram, 28th December 2019
(France)

Born on 14th May 1922 in Caubios-Loos and baptised 2 days later, he was one of 9 siblings of which a sister (two years his senior) is still living and is now in her 100th year.

He was born a year before the beatification of our Founder, in the aftermath of the First World War.

He made his first religious profession at the age of 20 years during the Second World War. There were some very difficult years which impacted his childhood and youth in a deeply Christian family ; his uncle, a Betharram Father, Léon Baradat, died at 92 years old in 1971. Paul Baradat had therefore much reason to choose Betharram. His first scholastic years were influenced by the war since he made his final profession in December 1945 in Betharram - and not in Bethlehem.

On 4th July 1948, he received the Presbyteral Ordination in Jerusalem with 9 other religious brothers, several whose names resonate amongst our

elders : Prévost, Berhouet, Capblanc, Condou, Bignolles, Tipy, Casenave, Séguinotte. That same year, 14 young people celebrated their first religious profession in Balarin.

There were many vocations in the aftermath of the Second World War ! A private presbyteral ordination. The war between Jews and Arabs had started and the 50 scholastics of Bethlehem prepared to pack their cases to live out the exodus and take the boat, 'Providence', at Beirut, passing through Alexandria to disembark in Marseille. The last 9 ordained in the Holy Land returned to Betharram and the scholastics went to inaugurate the scholasticate of Floirac. Father Paul Baradat was therefore the last to be ordained in the Holy Land 71 years ago.

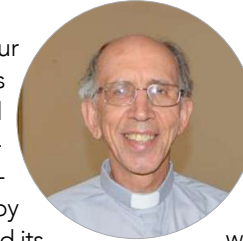
For 30 years, he was a teacher at the Notre Dame School or at the Apostolic School here in Betharram : during the Council, he followed a year of retraining in Paris in order to

Meeting life and the various peripheries

With the 2020 theme, our Betharramite family invites us to renew our spirit and missionary dynamism. During the 2017 General Chapter, we all felt challenged by the icon of the Visitation and its accompanying motto : *"Running to embrace life's call"*. As the Virgin of the FVD, we have wished to experience that same joy and urgency to set out, guided both by a certainty and a hope: there is life around us and there is also life in us. Life which comes from God, life which is God, in spite of our sterilities, in spite of our smallness. What must have been the Virgin Mary's joy when she received the news through the angel: *"your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month"* (Lk.1,36)! She was motivated enough to overcome an understandable fear and face a way anything but easy, moved by the certitude that *"nothing is impossible to God"* (Lk. 1,37).

Guided by a certitude

We may paraphrase Pope Francis's expression by asserting that the Betharramite is either a missionary, or he is not. We are all conscious that any mission answers a call, a sending. It is not only a personal taste, but a FDV, an adhesion to God's will. Our Saint Founder had a conviction: *"What is the*



shortest way to go to heaven?

To comply with God's will". He went as far as asserting that it was the third prodigy: *"The union of our will to God's will"*. The first prodigy was the union of the Word with

human nature, the second was the divine maternity. (cf. Fr. Duvignau, *Père, me voici*, chap.1).

Our Rule of Life gives us an orientation: *"By the vow of obedience... we make use of all our gifts in order to realise with the support of our brethren this will of God, as it is expressed in the community and apostolic project"* (RL 62). This surely supposes that our communities are characterized by a missionary spirit. Pastoral – in a missionary approach – means giving up the comfortable criterium of "we have always done like this". *"I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities."* (Pope Francis, EG 33) One of the first tasks in our communities for this year 2020 will thus be – if we have not done it yet – to define our missionary priorities, putting foremost the vision of the General Chapter which is certainly urgent for our time and the Church: towards the various peripheries.

It is the spirit of our Rule of Life: *"115-With men and people affected by all kinds of injustices and poverty, we contemplate the disfigured face of*

Christ, who "put himself in the place of all victims." In all our works, we should make ourselves present to all people in their different forms of poverty.

116 - Presence among the poor presupposes an authentic discernment of our position in mission. It reflects on our personal and community lifestyle. It makes us always more attentive to the most deprived.

Religious and the communities should take part in initiatives concerning human rights, protecting the environment, the quality of life, and the protection of the weakest...

Guided by a hope

We are moved by the same hope as the Virgin Mary of the Visitation, who gets out without delay and meditates the following promise during her long journey : "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end." (Lk. 32-33).

'We should choose what serves humanity best, particularly the most deprived, and "procure for them that happiness" of knowing they are loved by the Father.' (RL 131)

The General Chapter reminds us:

"There are geographical peripheries: such as rural areas and disadvantaged neighbourhoods ... There are existential peripheries: such as the woundedness of life, the sick, those who suffer from loneliness, young people or people who are weakened be-

cause of difficult situations." (Acts 75-76). But in each periphery, there is Life, there is the real presence of Christ, we contemplate the one who "took the place of all victims".

More than once, we have been surprised by the considerable evangelizing strength transmitted to us by humble people. We went out, and were enriched. We found Life.

I have been struck by a powerful expression of *Evangelii Gaudium*: "One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, "sourpusses"... If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents... In these situations we are called to be living sources of water from which others can drink. At times, this becomes a heavy cross, but it was from the cross, from his pierced side, that our Lord gave himself to us as a source of living water. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope!" (EG 85-86)

With the General Chapter "we are aware that outside our communities there is much life in the different margins. We cannot be indifferent to these cries." (Acts, Message to the laity). It is the way and hope, for there the Incarnate Word precedes us.

*Tobia Sosio scj, General Councillor
for the missions*

On the agenda

Meeting of the Betharramite Formation Team from January 22nd to 28th in Rome, at the Generalate House.

Canonical visitations of the Superior General to the Region Saint Michael Garicoits in 2020

Vicariate of the Holy Land:	From February 1st to 12th
Vicariate of Italy:	From March 4th to April 3rd
Vicariate of Central Africa:	From April 14th to 28th
Vicariate of France-Spain:	From June 24th to July 16th (and presence at the session for final profession, from July 17th to 28th)
Vicariate of the Ivory Coast:	from September 3rd to 29th



RL 206/a-b ••• Community of Bimbo and Parish in Bangui

In the meeting on 19 November 2019, the Superior General and his Council examined the request submitted by the Regional Superior of the SMG Region on November 14, 2019 on the acceptance of the parish *Our Lady of the Visitation* in Bangui and the foundation of the corresponding community (so far a missionary spot that was connected until now to the Bouar-Notre Dame de Fatima community). The Superior General with his Council approved the acceptance of the new parish and the foundation, from 1 December 2019, of this community in the capital town of the Republic of Central Africa.

The activities of this community are the pastoral animation of the parish, the spreading of the Betharramite charism, the vocation promotion and the service of a Church 'of the peripheries'.

He also approved the appointment of Fr. Armel Daly Vabié as first Superior of this community for a first term from 1st December 2019.

RL 206/b ••• New parish

The Superior General with his Council gathered in Rome on December 16th, 2019, approved the acceptance of the parish of Cerreto Guidi, as from January 1st, 2020.

This parish comprises the parishes of San Leonardo Abate in Cerreto Guidi, the parish of Sant'Andrea Apostolo in Zio and San Bartolomeo Apostolo a Streda (Vinci). The person in charge will be a member of the community of Ponte a Elsa (Vicariate of Italy, SMG Region)

RL 307 ••• Indult of exlaustration

Fr. Shaju Kalapparuckal scj asked on December 9th, 2019, for a time of exlaustration in the diocese of Hosur (in the outskirts of Bangalore); the Superior General and his Council granted him the indult of exlaustration for three years in this diocese as from January 10th, 2020. Father Shaju remains in our prayers.

Holy Land, land of formation (I)

Founded by Fr. Etchecopar, with the generous assistance of Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified and the benefactress Berthe Dartigaux, the Bethlehem residence officially opened on 27 May 1879 as the residence of the chaplains of neighbouring Carmel. From the start, it housed a small community of religious, 3 priests and 1 or 2 brothers. The majestic house, as we know it today, was inaugurated in the Spring of 1885.

In 1884, the French parliament adopted a new law which, from 1890, also called clerics and religious into military service for two years. The same law provided, however, that if a young person had not yet reached the age of 20, he could be expatriated and be exempted from military service, provided that he did not return to France for 10 years. To offset the inconvenience that such an engagement could cause to young Betharramite recruits and the damage that it could cause to religious life, the General Chapter of 1890 decided to found a scholasticate at the Bethlehem residence and a novitiate at the college of San José in Buenos Aires.

Thus in December 1890, Father Jean Bergez arrived in Bethlehem to direct the scholasticate, made up of four Betharramite scholastics, the Brothers Charles Larraillet, Hippolyte Loste-Salle, Jean-Baptiste Hontaa and Louis Arriulou, to which Brother Eustache Encasteig was added the following Spring. Theology was taught in these



early years by Fathers Bergez and Roy, and by the Superior (and future Superior General) Father Pierre Estrate. Until 1903, about sixty young people were trained in the community of Bethlehem.

In 1903, the suppression of the Congregation in France and the expulsion of the religious led to a considerable expansion of the scholasticate in Bethlehem. In fact, the Superiors decided to make the Palestine residence the seat of the Congregation's novitiate. The increase in the number of religious, which involved the presence of nearly 50 people including fathers, brothers, scholastics and novices, led in 1910 to the division of the scholasticate into two groups: theology students remained in Bethlehem, while the students taking two years of philosophy and their teachers were installed at the Nazareth residence, open from 1905.

The life of the scholasticate in Palestine during these first years of existence (1890-1914) was punctuated not only by the courses and study, but also by the weekly "promenades (walks)," which took the character of real archaeological excursions, during which the young Betharramites came into contact with the biblical and religious history of the Holy Land. There are many accounts of these walks, preserved in the general archives of the Congregation and immortalized in various group photos.

When the First World War broke out (1914), the two houses in Palestine were

forced to close and all the Betharramite personnel withdrew to Europe. The scholasticate and the novitiate were transferred at the time to the Mendelu residence in Spain; the novitiate was to have a new seat in Balarin, in France (in the department of Gers).

The time spent in Spain lasted until 1922, the year when, under the direction of Fr. Denis Buzy, future Superior General, the scholasticate of Bethlehem was reopened, while in 1926 the one at Nazareth was reopened for students of philosophy, led by Fr. Alexis Médebielle. Thus the life of the scholasticate in the Holy Land resumed, interrupted only momentarily by the Great War. The two Palestinian scholasticates welcomed between the two wars a large number of young people of all nationalities:

French, Italian, Spanish, English and Argentine. During this period, great figures of teaching and education stood out, among whom we cannot forget the fathers already mentioned, Father Buzy and Father Médebielle, known in the academic world for their biblical exegesis work and authors of various important Bible studies; Fr. Armand Audin, versed in the ancient languages of the Middle East, was known to students for his high-flying philosophy courses, which very few managed to understand and follow; Father Pierre Duvignau was the author of historical studies on the Patriarchate and the Patriarchs of Jerusalem. The preparation, gravitas and professionalism of the Betharramite teachers were so high that in 1932 the Patriarchate itself entrusted the Con-

but see how our individual behaviour affects or interferes with caring for the Creation. At what point do we feel truly responsible for that?

The *virtue of prudence* must govern all human decision-making. Prudence, insofar as man's relationship with the Creation is concerned, means first and foremost striving to gain sufficient ecological knowledge to match the level of responsibility entrusted to us as individuals, so that, based on that knowledge, we can make coherent choices on a day-to-day basis. Christian prudence is also this awareness we have of the effect of sin on our world; it exercises caution with regard to actions marked by egoism. Prudence calls us to ongoing conversion: what actions, ways of living, can we change so that our daily lives express this "caring concern" for the Creation and do not result in its "exploitation"?

The *virtue of fortitude* in today's world should above all mean civil courage, genuine commitment, continued confidence in our ability to convert our actions and ongoing commitment towards greater responsibility in our ecological choices. Sometimes you have to go "against the flow" in the choices you make in order to open new ways, this requires strength in front of the Creation. Are we up to adopting a more sober balanced way of life in using the natural resources at

our disposal?

In this regard, the *virtue of temperance* is important, not only in terms of an ascetic effort, but also in accepting the fact that mankind and the world as a whole have their own limits. That is why we must avoid waste to also preserve our world for future generations. How much of what we produce do we "waste" in the course of a day? Can we limit this waste? What are we building to create opportunities for a better future around us?

Simone Panzeri scj



The Carmel and the house of our religious family in Bethlehem (Betharramite community and pilgrims center) on the top right

These duties are translated by the words “*subdue*”, “*have dominion over*” (Gen. 1:28), but also “*till it*” and “*keep it*” (Gen. 2:15). There’s no denying that the Creator has placed duties on us towards the world He has created. We are told this is a duty of “*care*” to be exercised towards that which is not ours, but which has merely been entrusted to us by God. From God we received the created world, it is at our disposal and we enjoy its fruits and benefit from its resources. What care are we giving it? Are we using or rather abusing our power over it, or do we show it the respect due to the “*things*” of God? Are we aware that while Creation suffers, so also are we suffering? Can Creation become a way to live out our gratitude to God?

As religious, plunged in the problematics of our times, we are called to respond prophetically to these questions. The witness of our lives, placing God in the centre of things, must say something to our brothers and sisters, including about the way we relate to the Creation. Acknowledging both our dependence on and our gratitude for the gifts which God in His providence has given us is part of why we chose a life of poverty.

Far from being a minor aspect of our spiritual life, this calls us to live a more coherent lifestyle including in the area of ecology and the care and attention we pay to the Creation. How can we do this? What individual and community witness can

we offer to today’s men and women?

What conversion do we need to adopt in our lifestyles to act responsibly in caring for Creation? On this topic, the moral theologian and until 2016 Bishop of Bolzano (Italy) Karl Gosler, suggests we take the cardinal virtues as a model for our lives in ecological terms, in the knowledge that the Creation is not just for our disposal but is a reminder for each one of us that to gaze on the face of Creation is to be able at last to catch a glimpse of the Creator Himself. In the light of the virtues according to this “*ecological*” method, each individual, each community can adopt a pattern of behaviour which better corresponds to a more caring and attentive attitude towards the Creation.

If *justice*, in the full biblical meaning thereof consists of taking a world order into account whereby everyone has his or her place, and of justifying every dimension thereof, its purpose in the first place, is a religious relationship with God and a respectful relationship with all other creatures including those who might come after us, as well as with all the other components of this great universe whose networks of interdependence we are continuing to discover through our study of contemporary natural sciences. Creation calls us to reconsider our lifestyles by renouncing individualism and self-regard: since we all live within the same Creation we cannot



“Community walk” around the 1930s

gregation with responsibility for the patriarchal seminary of Beit-Jala for the philosophical and theological training of the young seminarians of Palestine.

The outbreak of the Second World War was the first alarm signal of the definitive closure of the Palestinian scholasticate, which took place ten years later. The newly professed could no longer travel to the Holy Land and, for those who were there at the start of the war, a long period of hardship and deprivation began. The two communities were united to form a single residence, in Bethlehem, under the direction of Fr. Joseph Mirande, future Superior General. Palestine being an English protectorate, the Italian scholars were considered as enemies and under house arrest among the Salesians, unable to leave the Holy Land.

The Argentines who attempted to leave did not return to their homeland until after months of travel in Africa and

the crossing of seas. The material difficulties did not prevent the regular progress of the lessons, the religious life in community or the celebration of several ordinations: at the end of the war, there were about twenty young priests waiting for their first destination.

Once the war ended, from February 1946, the arrival of the scholastics in Bethlehem resumed, without however the presence of the South Americans, for whom a scholasticate had been opened the year before in Adrogué, and without the Italians, who remained at the Colico scholasticate opened during the war. But now political events in the Middle East and the great internal changes in the Congregation changed things forever. Indeed, the general chapter of 1947 decided to divide the Congregation into Provinces and Vice-Provinces, each being autonomous from the point of view of the formation of its scholastics.

On 21 May 1947, due among other things to the clashes between Palestinians and Israelis, the General Council decided to transfer the scholasticate, composed only of young French, Spanish and some English, to Floirac in France. A year later, in April 1948, the

first group of religious, around fifty fathers, brothers and scholars, left for France; the rest, about twenty religious, followed them the following September.

Thus after 58 years, the Betharramite scholasticate in the Holy Land closed. The two houses that had housed dozens and dozens of young people from around the world continued their lives with small communities of few fathers, responsible for the two Carmels of

Bethlehem and Nazareth. The educational community of the Beit Jala seminar remained active; it was in this residence that in the 1960s and 1970s, several French and Italian scholastics were called upon to carry out internships lasting one or two years in cooperation with the teaching community.

Roberto Cornara

The Creation

All creation is groaning, enduring even now the pangs of childbirth.
(Rom. 8:22)

In everyday life, it's the things closest to us which we overlook first. Such forgetfulness is not deliberate but means we take such and such a thing, or person, or situation, for granted... that we think it or they will always be there, to hand, at our disposal. When do we take notice of it? Only when the thing, person or situation we need is missing; it's only then that we appreciate its value and how precious it is to us.

This is also what is happening to our "common home", Creation, where we live and grow, which feeds and nourishes us and which we tap into every day just to go on living. Creation has been part of us since



forever, it's part of the "things" we need to live. It enables us to be fed, to move around, to breathe. It makes a gift to us of all that we need to keep us alive. It's always to hand, but we are not always aware of how inestimably valuable it is.

And then one fine day, we are unable to use our cars because of a spike in pollution levels and a whole section of humanity finds itself deprived of certain consumer goods. It is only at these times, when we are missing something, that we remember something isn't quite right with our planet. We no longer think of the "ecology problem" as just a passing phase: it affects our very existence, indissolubly linked to Creation, to the work of God, and brings

us face to face with our responsibilities.

In Chapter 8 of the Letter to the Romans, St Paul reminds us that the "whole" of Creation suffers from climate change, pollution and from the environment being exploited. The first act in developing any "creation spirituality" consists precisely of re-establishing a lively conscious contact with this aspect of our human life and our life of faith: solidarity with the Creation in which we, men and women, form a living responsible part.

In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, we are told that Creation is the work of God and that we are part thereof, in the same capacity as all creatures. It was also from God that we received the gift of life, which calls us to worship every aspect of life: the life of other men and women, life in all its forms and dimensions. The Creation which surrounds us is also a life which we must cherish and respect: after all it was not we who created it, we received it as a gift from God. The theological scope of showing such loving respect towards life in all its forms is profound: it is love shown to God the Creator, to His work, to



that which the Creation offers each of us so that we can exist and stay alive from day to day.

The way we treat Creation can, on the contrary, reveal a spirit of pride, wherein we believe that whatever God gives us is ours exclusively, to be exploited for our egotistical needs, not in a logic of survival, but in a logic of egocentricity leading us to think that "so long as I'm all right..."

To overcome this predatory attitude, once again it is Genesis (chapters 1 and 2) which reminds us that man "created in the image and likeness of God" was given duties towards Creation by the Creator.