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A word from the Superior General

Towards the peripheries of the "four walls": listen, be compassionate and be faithful

*"Maria stayed with her for about three months,
before returning home" (Lk 1:56)*

The Virgin Mary, full of the New Life in her womb, comes to the help of Elizabeth. She does it without thinking too much about herself. She is the prototype of Christian charity. Undoubtedly, she has and will have some difficult conversations with Joseph that could well lead to loneliness and anguish: but she has answered: "*Ecce Ancilla*" to the angel of the Lord and begins to live out the consequences of her "yes". She is not afraid, and without hesitation goes out towards the periphery... to the hill country, and with her cousin has a profound momentous without parallel in the whole New Testament. Like Saint Luke we can imagine ourselves in that house at Ain-Karem and listen for ourselves. There Mary the Mother comes, carrying Jesus in her womb, and greets Elizabeth, who can feel John the Baptist kicking in her womb. We can even perceive the sonorous and contemplative silence of Joseph and Zechariah (struck dumb) both present, but in the shadows. It is a scene of a

unique encounter that brings joy and exultation not only to the participants, but also to those who contemplate in faith. Magnificat! What privileged witnesses! Let us fill ourselves with that joy, we who live in a time of so much distress! Let us communicate it to the brothers!

Jesus is the source, and Mary the interpreter. Even hidden in the womb, the Incarnate Word arouses the joy of the restless John, already yearning to raise his Voice 'that will cry out in the wilderness'. We know that life in pregnancy is frequently a way in which God speaks to his people, a way in which he blesses them. Today, too, the Father looks his servants in their lowliness to "cast the mighty from their thrones and raise the lowly", confused by a sudden weakness. The world in search of a New Light is reunited with Jesus Christ, who comes to take care of us.

We, too, wonder about the meaning of what is happening "out there" in a pandemic world. Without knowing it, we associate ourselves with the mission of Mary. "Care" is a word that surfaces at a time when examples of neglect and mistreatment of creation abound. It is a mission that cannot be sub-contracted at this time when all of humanity feels shaken by so many unexpected challenges. Caring for our brothers and our common home means (a) bringing life, joy and hope to our environment. (b) Putting ourselves on the side of the suffering. (c) Dedicating ourselves to listening, without justifying ourselves. (d) Letting go of unwelcome reproaches.

Do not give in to the temptation by trying to solve old arguments, which will never find a clear answer in the midst of the crisis. We are "in the middle of the earthquake", so let us live the "here and now". It is the time for gestures of support. Let us keep before our mind: the glass of water, the honest crust and the outstretched hand.

Hence the figure of Mary in Ain Karem reminds us: of tenderness, understanding and empathy for the brother who suffers and needs to be welcomed and understood in his difficulty. The present moment is a propitious time to support, to ease and make more gentle the lives of our brothers, especially the most vulnerable: the elderly, the youngest and the simplest people in the community. Even making the lives of those with responsibilities to carry bearable, is of great help, it alleviates their burdens.

Caring for our brother, as Mary did with Elizabeth, is to feel the pulse of the current moment, when we need to transcend the limiting factors we are living under, and all work together. Take advantage of the contemplative spaces of silence that already exist in community and that lead us to reflect together. No one need hog the limelight: we must consider the word of "little people" to be valuable, and allow the conditions for the Holy Spirit to freely manifest itself in our family. This will lead us to create the conditions for a healthy community discernment, illuminated by the Word.

All this listening leads us to

rediscover the meaning of our mission, the proper evaluation of our structures, our presences and absences ... Above all, to preserve fidelity to our charismatic identity and the value of our people as consecrated in mission.

There are many aids that we can receive virtually, but: how much more are we able to share in the community where we spend a lot of time together today (more than usual!). There will be the test of or witness as good Betharramites.

Today everyone can create their own "audience" (virtual or not). And that can seem more rewarding than making the effort to meet the brother in our own community, since in the attempt we must give up a bit of ourselves, and try to find a respectful dialogue, accepting our own and others' limits.

However, not everything is a challenge, lockdown together has led us to something very good: by concentrating and expressing our solidarity at the local level, (whether in a small circle, or a larger one), we have rediscovered our neighbour. How beautiful is this path of recovery of the significance of the presence of our "neighbour", of a visible proximity not so much in large structures, but in concrete gestures of mutual help! It is similar to the beginnings of Saint Michael in Betharram, where gestures and words were born from a small community of men with a shared dream and from the edifying relationships that arose around the holiness of that man of God.

On the other hand, in its social dimension, we must recognize that some brothers, due to this pandemic, will lose not only their work or property, but perhaps also the will to rebuild. It is a time of holy restlessness. Some have been deprived of projects, assets, and the power to manage their own lives. We feel it in our works and missions. We, too (in Rome?) have felt powerless. But we must be faithful under duress. This poverty and uncertainty pushes us to truly trust God, to accept that insecurity educates us to a more intense search for God, to abandon our hearts to Him, as Saint Michael did.

Something beautiful is that in our Eucharistic celebrations in community we have shared lived experiences of prayer that we had perhaps a little neglected ... An Upper Room of the Word and the shared bread with Jesus and Mary. We feel in communion with so many people who live this time in great need of tangible responses. We have come out at least virtually to the peripheries.

For this reason, missionary Mary gives us an example. She had to take care of Jesus, and let herself be taken care of by Joseph, but she did not want to forget to take care of Elizabeth. As a good mother, she encourages us to "launch ourselves" on mission, to console and proclaim with our lives that Betharramites belong to the Heart of Jesus, the One who has called us to follow him with an ever new "Here I am".

Fr. Gustavo scj
Superior General

Homily on the solemnity of saints Peter and Paul

Saint Peter's basilica, Monday, 29 June 2020

On the feast of the two Apostles of this City, I would like to share with you two key words: unity and prophecy.

Unity. We celebrate together two very different individuals: Peter, a fisherman who spent his days amid boats and nets, and Paul, a learned Pharisee who taught in synagogues. When they went forth on mission, Peter spoke to Jews, and Paul to pagans. And when their paths crossed, they could argue heatedly, as Paul is unashamed to admit in one of his letters (cf. Gal 2:11). In short, they were two very different people, yet they saw one another as brothers, as happens in close-knit families where there may be frequent arguments but unfailing love. Yet the closeness that joined Peter and Paul did not come from natural inclinations, but from the Lord. He did not command us to like one another, but to love one another. He is the one who unites us, without making us all alike. He unites us in our differences.

Today's first reading brings us to the source of this unity. It relates how the newly born Church was experiencing a moment of crisis: Herod was furious, a violent persecution had broken out, and the Apostle James had been killed. And now Peter had been arrested. The



community seemed headless, everyone fearing for his life. Yet at that tragic moment no one ran away, no one thought about saving his own skin, no one abandoned the others, but all joined in prayer. From prayer they drew strength, from prayer came a unity more powerful than any threat. The text says that, "while Peter was kept in prison, the Church prayed fervently to God for him" (Acts 12:5). Unity is the fruit of prayer, for prayer allows the Holy Spirit to intervene, opening our hearts to hope, shortening distances and holding us together at times of difficulty. [...]

The second word is prophecy. Unity and prophecy. The Apostles were challenged by Jesus. Peter heard Jesus' question: "Who do you say I am?" (cf. Mt 16:15). At that moment he realized that the Lord was not interested in what others thought, but in Peter's personal decision to follow him. Paul's life changed after a similar challenge from Jesus: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). The Lord shook Paul to the core: more than just knocking him to the ground on the road to Damascus, he shattered Paul's illusion of being respectably religious. As a result, the proud Saul turned into Paul, a name that means

“small”. These challenges and reversals are followed by prophecies: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (Mt 16:18); and, for Paul: “He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Prophecy is born whenever we allow ourselves to be challenged by God, not when we are concerned to keep everything quiet and under control. Prophecy is not born from my thoughts, from my closed heart. It is born if we allow ourselves to be challenged by God. When the Gospel overturns certainties, prophecy arises. Only someone who is open to God’s surprises can become a prophet. [...]

Today we need prophecy, but real prophecy: not fast talkers who promise the impossible, but testimonies that the Gospel is possible. What is needed are not miraculous shows. It makes me sad when I hear someone say, “We want a prophetic Church”. All right. But what are you doing, so that the Church can be prophetic? We need lives that show the miracle of God’s love. Not forcefulness, but forthrightness. Not palaver, but prayer. Not speeches, but service. Do you want a prophetic Church? Then start serving and be quiet. Not theory, but testimony. We are not to become rich, but rather to love the poor. We are not to save up for ourselves, but to spend ourselves for others. To seek not the approval of this world, of being comfortable with every-

one - here we say: “being comfortable with God and the devil”, being comfortable with everyone -; no, this is not prophecy. We need the joy of the world to come. Not better pastoral plans that seem to have their own self-contained efficiency, as if they were sacraments; efficient pastoral plans, no. We need pastors who offer their lives: lovers of God. That is how Peter and Paul preached Jesus, as men in love with God. At his crucifixion, Peter did not think about himself but about his Lord, and, considering himself unworthy of dying like Jesus, asked to be crucified upside down. Before his beheading, Paul thought only of offering his life; he wrote that he wanted to be “poured out like a libation” (2 Tim 4:6). That was prophecy. Not words. That was prophecy, the prophecy that changed history.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus prophesied to Peter: “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church”. There is a similar prophecy for us too. It is found in the last book of the Bible, where Jesus promises his faithful witnesses “a white stone, on which a new name is written” (Rev 2:17). Just as the Lord turned Simon into Peter, so he is calling each one of us, in order to make us living stones with which to build a renewed Church and a renewed humanity. [...] ●●●

Two Years of our Presence in Nottingham

| Fr. Wilfred Poulouse Pereppadan scj

Regional Vicar • Community of Nottingham-Clifton

Presence seems an appropriate title to share our journey of Betharramite life in Nottingham. Presence (witness) is an affirmative quality, and being is as important as doing. We say one of the attributes of God is being 'omnipresent'. His presence is often felt in our everyday life of praying, supporting, encouraging, teaching, challenging, etc... From our beginning in Nottingham, we decided it would be better for us to gently share our presence of SCJ community. The Parish of Corpus Christi, Clifton and Our Lady and St. Patrick's Meadows didn't previously have a Religious Community looking after their pastoral needs. Before our arrival, the parish community were going through a difficult situation, they shared the shock and hurt the former parish priest caused. The parish communities were served by priests from the denary. St. Michael's words of wisdom and inspiration were evident when we accepted the invitation from the Bishop of Nottingham to open our community in Nottingham. The community to have the programme of the Heart of Jesus, and nurture our

community with generosity, filial obedience, with simplicity and with gentleness. The Vicariate of England were ready to begin to say yes to their leaders, where ever they would be called, even and above all to the most difficult ministries, unwanted by others! The parish community were happy to see our arrival in these difficult circumstances. Our focus was to show God's love, to heal the wounds of the past and shepherd them with gentleness.

In December 2018, during our Superior General's canonical visitation to our communities in England, Nottingham community organised a 'Meet and Greet SCJ' where our parishioners were able to see our members along with Fr. Gustavo, and Fr. Enrico. The outcome of the meeting allowed us to share our story of the congregation and our vocation as a religious. The story of our presence

has an authenticity and power to communicate.

We truly felt it when people communicated their appreciation of our internationality and our presence in other countries.

The parishioners are a lively community of people whose fam-





The next steps

To begin our lay associates of Betharram in both parishes. A banner of St. Michael with his own words is prepared to be installed in both Churches. The parishioners were happy when we shared our humble beginnings in Betharram, France, and they are ready to make pilgrimage to Betharram, Ibarre and Lourdes. Our everyday life is the most powerful and effective means of witness. On

Our community in Nottingham (South & Southwest periphery) Br John, Fr. Peter Phairote, Fr. Wilfred.

ilies have lived here for some time, along with those who have settled in the area from all over the world. We, as a community along with them mirror the international nature of the Church. John Paul II's speaks in Veritas Splendour no. 106, "New in its ardour, methods and expression." It allows us to welcome and embrace all who come to gain strength for their journey of life.

Going out to share our life

Betharramite life of the community in Nottingham affirm that Christian discipleship is lived and the possible way of sharing the spirituality of St. Michael. We spread the devotions which are the heart of our Congregation, such as Devotion to Our Lady of Betharram in the month of May, to celebrate the life of St. Michael.

behalf of and for the whole community and by being ourselves we offer to God through our community prayer: adoration, praise, gratitude, penitence and intercession. Our reaching out to the community in acts of grace, love and kindness are model of Sacred Heart of Jesus. Devoting ourselves to the humblest tasks, without seeing anything extraordinary or unusual in doing so, but rather as something perfectly normal; and, without looking for it, our lives shine with joy and peace. As a result, sharing the joy and happiness may the spirit of the Congregation continue to bring fruitfulness to those who are in our care.

I have asked couple of Parishioners from both parishes, How they think of our Fathers and Brothers, especially the parish ministry here at Nottingham. They are as follows;



Ann Finlay

Catechist OLSP

When the Sacred Heart Fathers first came to Our Lady and Saint Patrick's parish two years ago, we were in a sorry state. We had been left for some months without a parish priest as our previous priest, who I liked and respected, had been abruptly removed after being arrested by the police. This caused great distress. A further challenge was the problem of drug users' needles left round the church perimeter and the seemingly endless struggle with police and council over trying to get the problem resolved. Meanwhile Bishop Patrick had assured us that he was arranging for an experienced priest to come and take the parish on but we had no idea who it would be. So when we were sent the Sacred Heart Fathers, whom we had previously no knowledge of, there was great relief. As the weeks went by it became not just relief but increasing happiness for the kindness and pastoral concern shown to all, including the drug addicts, and not least the efficient running of the parish. As a result our parish cannot thank God enough for sending the Sacred Heart Fathers to us. I pray that we will always have them with us.



Austin Bryan

PFC Member, Bell Ring

Master, Clifton

The SCJ have brought Spiritual Direction, enthusiasm and joy to our parish. The parish was in need of being reinvigorated and energised before the Order's arrival. The priests and brother set about this task by investing time and energy in getting to know the parishioners and their needs. We are living in strange times with the Coronavirus pandemic but the team have found ways to reach many of the parishioners with the use of digital technology. We, the parishioners, are blessed and privileged to have the SCJ as our Ministers.



Mike Heining

PPC Chair

When Father Wilfred and his colleagues from SCJ arrived in our parish, we had been without a parish priest for several months and were uncertain about our future. We were delighted when we heard that a parish priest would be arriving, but slightly anxious that things would be "different" since he would be coming as a member of an order, along with colleagues. And of course things were "different", in a very positive way. We soon realised that mem-

bers of SCJ went out of their way to be cheerful and positive; found ways to refresh our customs and services; were grounded in the real world, including financial arrangements and local sporting events; and provided a reassuring spiritual presence for all parishioners. At a practical level, we are pleased that the abnormally large presbytery is now being used to its capacity; and that we have met, and welcomed, other members of the order when they come to say mass in Father Wilfred's absence.



**Caroline
Beaumont**
*PPC Vice Chair
Nottingham*

When Bishop Patrick informed us, a couple of Easters ago, that the Sacred Heart Fathers & Brothers would be coming to found a small community in our midst and minister to the people in The Meadows and in Clifton, I wrote him a thank you letter, telling him that he had just given his people the best ever Easter present. Time has gone by and my gratitude has grown yet greater. From fearing that Our Lady & St Patrick's in The Meadows might be closed forever and we would have to find alternative places to worship, our community has healed and grown stronger thanks to the presence of not one, not two, but three members of SCJ. What a gift they are! Fr Wilfred, Fr Peter and Br John each contribute in their own special ways to the work of bringing us home, back from the margins where some felt we had been pushed. They help us stay true to our Catholic faith: indeed, the mere fact of their varied backgrounds and cultures reminds us daily of how universal is the Church and how global is the need for the love and compassion of a merciful God.

"Global" brings me neatly to the coronavirus pandemic which has caused closure of our church and a ban on gathering for worship. Undaunted, they set about finding ways to ensure our community remains connected even while being physically separate due to self-isolation and lockdown; their willingness to continue to serve, albeit "virtually", has brought huge comfort to those of us with the resources to follow online masses and prayers – I worry that those who do not have the money to acquire a computer or a smartphone may be feeling left behind and back on the margins again... things have changed so much and I believe will continue to do so, but we have been able to rely on the unchangingness of God's message of love and compassion, brought to us by the faithful service of Fr Wilfred, Fr Peter and Br John. ●●●

Going out with the heart of God

| *Fr. Tobia Sosio scj,*

GENERAL COUNCILLOR FOR THE MISSIONS:

Our Congregation not only bears the name but also wants to live according to the Spirit of the Sacred Heart. This stimulates us to put this year's motto into practice in a particular way. God himself, his Heart open to us, constantly inspires us and surely doesn't leave us alone in 'furlough' or spiritual inaction. Saint Michael constantly experienced the action of God in his heart and he testified to it in his letters and thoughts: "I know that God does not stop speaking to us in the depths of our souls, to possess them, enlighten them, fertilize them, making them live a divine life. I also know that, at the bottom of these souls, there is an incessant ferment, aroused and nurtured by a creative hand, which demands, even from an infinite distance, and in the midst of a sleepy darkness and noise of all kinds, a response, an abandonment to the action of God ... Why don't the two movements (the ferment & the response) coincide? If

In December of last year, I completed my theological studies in Belo Horizonte - Minas Gerais, Brazil. By then, the Congregation proposed that I do the year of preparation for perpetual vows in my native country (Paraguay), specifically in the community of Casa San Miguel Reman-

they did, we could say: God will provide us with everything; we shall live from the same life ... God has become the owner of hearts, and to make us happy with his own happiness, he continually fires us with his inspiration. We must listen to the Master within, we must put ourselves under his guidance." (DS ch. VIII, The Love of God).

The pandemic situation has not paralysed love, rather it has stimulated movements of beautiful closeness towards men & women, who for different reasons, live on the periphery, physical or existential. Beautiful testimonies have already been published in different media. I would like to take advantage of this space to better publicise an experience of solidarity that is very widespread here in Paraguay and which commits lay people and religious to live the Here I Am of the Heart of Jesus. These are the well-known "popular pots", difficult to translate into a foreign language, but easy to understand in their deep motivations. I give you the testimony of Brother Sergio, a member of our religious community:



Br. Sergio Leiva scj

Community of Puente Remanso

so located in the city of Mariano Roque Alonso, in the metropolitan area of Asunción. This community has taken the option of working with people in vulnerable situations. I felt quite motivated in returning to my own country and becoming part of this community that enabled me to contribute, from what I have and am, to our biblical option for the most vulnerable. Moreover I am aware that our Congregational slogan this last year has embodied a call to “go out, in community, to meet life and the different peripheries”. To this I add the expectation generated by the International Session and the 30-day spiritual exercises. A promising and challenging 2020 was coming! I still had not finished settling into my new community when the Covid-19 pandemic suddenly took us by surprise. This health emergency, as

we well know, compels us to isolate. Everything seemed to go against the call of our slogan and the option of my new community. Then I began to realise that this 2020 would confound my expectations and become even more promising and more challenging.

Enlightened by the Holy Scriptures we know that God has always manifested himself in the midst of great crises, and this crisis is no exception. Quickly, in the most vulnerable neighborhoods and settlements of Paraguay, the famous “popular pots” emerged, where in each neighborhood or settlement there is a group (or more than one group) of people who dedicate themselves to cooking lunch for all the families of the neighbourhood. The supplies for this lunch come from different donations either from private com-



panies, from the state (almost always absent), from a sponsor and from the residents themselves, who share what little they have. Our religious community is next to a neighbourhood called Villa Bétharram, where the religious have been accompanying the inhabitants with a pastoral ministry of listening and prevention. There is also another, more remote settlement, called "Cora Kué", which also belongs to the pastoral area of the community. In these settlements people promptly manifested their intention to make the "popular pots", which began immediately. Three stations of popular pots were erected, where they currently cook three times a week, reaching about 100 families. On behalf of the religious community, Brother Victor and I closely accompany these "popular pots" knocking on doors to seek donations, contacting godparents and also helping to cook. Our Congregational motto and the option of my community was acquiring its face, its meaning ...; In this pandemic we were discovering in light of our spirituality, that 'going out in community', occurs even within the confines of our current position.

On the other hand, the spirituality that is lived within each group that cooks is very interesting and profound. One of the groups called themselves "God's pot", because they feel that the motivation they have to cook for others is aroused by God himself. This same group how-

ever had at one point expressed the intention of ceasing their involvement with the popular pot for very understandable safety reasons. The families, upon learning of this, expressed great sadness and concern, since, thanks to the popular pots, these families managed to save a little money and so manage to pay their bills at the end of the month, since the majority have lost their jobs & livelihoods because of this crisis. This concern manifested by these families was seen by this group of cooks (of God's pot) as a call to continue cooking and helping these families, that is, to continue going out with the heart of God who lets himself be moved by the need of the other.

As we said, God manifests himself and acts in the midst of this crisis with gestures and concrete actions and simplicity; and will continue to do so...●●●



Rule of Life 198, as an exception to Articles 147, 148 and 244 § c.

••• Decree for the Extraordinary Vicariate Novitiates and for the appointment of the corresponding Masters of the Novices

[...], Having examined the matter in its entirety and with the consent of my Council, I the undersigned Fr. Gustavo AGÍN scj, Superior General,

D E C R E E

today, by this document, that the Extraordinary Novitiates of Vicariate, in the Regions and Vicariates which have joined the Project of Inter-regional Novitiate for the year 2020-2021, will be established as follows:

A. Region Saint Michael Garicoits

Extraordinary Novitiate 2020/2021 in the Vicariate of France-Spain:

- House of the Novitiate: Bétharram - Community "Notre Dame"
- Master of novices: Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

Extraordinary Novitiate 2020/2021 in the Vicariate of Ivory Coast:

- House of the Novitiate: Adiapodoumé
- Master of novices: Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi scj

B. Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified

Extraordinary Novitiate 2020/2021 in the Vicariate of India:

- House of the Novitiate: Bangalore
- Master of novices: Fr. Stervin Selvadass scj

Extraordinary Novitiate 2020/2021 in the Vicariate of Thailand:

- House of the Novitiate: Sampran "Ban Garicoits"
- Master of novices: Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong scj

C. [...]

By the present act are erected the houses of extraordinary novitiates and appointed the new Masters of Novices for the year 2020/21.

RL 206/a-b ••• Community Superior

At the Council meeting on 25 June, the Superior General, with his Council, approved the appointment of Fr. Edwin Manavalan as Superior of the community of Hojai-Langting (Region SMJC, Vicariate of India).

RL 311 ••• Indult of leaving

The Superior General, with his Council, held on June 25, granted the indult of leaving the Congregation to the scholastic of temporary vows, Br. Joshua Ponpondian (Region SMJC, Vicariate of India).

RL 307 ••• Indult of exclaustation

Last May, Fr. Elie Kurzum scj submitted a request for a time of exclaustation in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The Superior General, with his Council held on June 22, and taking into account the availability of Bishop Pizzaballa to welcome Fr. Elie in the Diocese of the Patriarchate, granted him an indult of exclaustation for one year from July 1, 2020 (Region SMG, Vicariate of Holy Land).

RL 206/b ••• Community

At the request of the Bishop of the Diocese of Serrinha (State of Bahia, Vicariate of Brazil), addressed to the Regional Superior of the Region P. Auguste Etchecopar, the Superior General, with his Council held on June 17, 2020, approved the closure of the community of Serrinha and the return of the parish of the Good Shepherd to the diocese, on the one hand, and the opening of the community of Gavião-Nova Fatima, in the parish entrusted to our brothers and located in the same diocese, on the other hand.

Agenda

The Superior General had to interrupt and deprogram his travels and displacements due to the pandemic. Here is the new calendar of his canonical visits to the Region *Saint Michael Garicoits*.

- The Superior General is currently on a canonical visit to the Vicariate of France-Spain from 5 to 27 July. The visit will end with the assembly of the vicariate on July 27 and with the Solemnity of Our Lady, during which Fr. Gustavo scj will receive the perpetual vows of Br. Koffi Djéban Landry.
- Vicariate of the Ivory Coast: the visit is now scheduled from September 5 to 26. On this occasion Fr. Gustavo will receive the perpetual vows of two Brothers, Arnaud N'Dah Kadjo and Christian Arnaud Yao in Adiapodoumé.
- The Superior General will resume his visit to the Vicariate of Italy (interrupted at the very beginning) on October 3rd, until October 28.
- Vicariate of Central Africa: the visit is planned from January 3-21, 2021.





REGION ST MICHAEL GARICOÏTS

FRANCE ^{SPAIN}
 ITALY ^{IVORY COAST}
 ^{CENTRAL AFRICA}
 ^{HOLY LAND}

- After months of “lockdown” caused by Covid-19, some of the Vicariates of Europe start again to take small steps by organizing the first meetings of the Vicariate Councils.

On the 3rd June, the Vicariate Council of France and Spain met in Betharram for a togetherness day, to pray together again, to take an overview of the situation of the various communities and to plan projects for the future.



Italy

- On 25 June, Fr Andrea Antonini scj, of the community of Albiate, the eldest of the Betharramite religious in the Vicariate of Italy, celebrated the 70th anniversary of his priestly ordination. This is what Fr. Andrea shared on this occasion: “Seventy years ago there was a spiritual marriage between God and me. Forever. That is why my whole life has been a never-ending thank you. 70 years of priesthood, 70 years of wonderful love with God... I have enjoyed it to the full because I feel that

Jesus is in my heart: he is my life, he is my everything. The ordination put me in someone’s hands and in the hearts of many brothers.” Congratulations, Fr. Andrea!

Central Africa

- On 22 June, with the birth of the little Jeanette, the inauguration of the new surgical unit took place at the dispensary of Niem (Central African Republic).



Fr Tiziano Pozzi SCJ, Regional Vicar in Central Africa and director of the dispensary, through a letter wanted to retrace the phases of the project, created thanks to the missionary association AMICI Betharram Onlus and thank all those who supported the work by completing it.

The construction of the surgical unit was completed after five years of work, not always easy given the situation of perennial political instability that has affected the country since the coup d’etat of 2013.

France • Spain

- On July 6, the religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram and the

Daughters of the Cross celebrated the 73rd anniversary of the canonization of their founders, Saint Michael Garicoïts and Saint Joan Elisabeth Bichier des Âges.

On this occasion, during the celebration of Vespers, Constant, Toussaint, Eric and Fabien entered the canonical year of novitiate, welcomed by their Master Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez SCJ and in the presence of the brothers of the community and lay people.

The community also celebrated the first anniversary of the priestly ordination of Fr. Habib Yelouwassi SCJ.

May the Lord grant everyone, through the intercession of our Father St. Michael Garicoïts, the joy of always responding: Here I am readily, unreservedly, irrevocably, for love.

- On Wednesday 8 July, the "Notre Dame" community of Betharram organized a walk from Betharram to Lourdes.



The youth and adults of Lestelle-Betharram, Nay, Peyrouse, Poitiers and the brothers of the community took this opportunity to spend the day in prayer, in sharing, in the Eucharistic celebration in the Church of Saint Joseph, and in praying the rosary at

the Grotto.

They rounded off the day by lighting candles to remember and pray for those affected by Covid-19, for those who are on the mend and for those who across the world are making gestures of solidarity.



Ivory Coast

- On Saturday 11 July, in the Cathedral of Yopougon, Mgr. Salomon Lezoutié (Bishop of Yopougon), ordained priests Br Joseph Ouedraogo SCJ and Br Vincent Didier Allelet SCJ and ordained deacon Br. Hippolyte Yomafou SCJ.

The next day, Fr Joseph and Fr Vincent celebrated their first Mass together in the Betharramite Parish "Saint Bernard" of Adiapodoumé surrounded by our Betharramite brothers, family members, friends and numerous faithful.





REGION FR. AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR

ARGENTINA URUGUAY
PARAGUAY BRAZIL

Brazil

• On June 22, the scj community on a mission to the Diocese of Serrinha, welcomed two young aspirants for a few days of experience: João Francisco Silva de Jesus and Ademir dos Santos Santana. The first hails from a rural community in the “Bom Pastor” parish, entrusted to our brothers Fr. Gilberto Ortellado Maldonado SCJ and Fr. Iran Lima da Silva SCJ, and the second hails from the nearby parish, in a community in the urban area. Both have approached our community to seek guidance on their vocational discernment, thanks to the warm welcome received from the Betharramite religious community.



REGION SAINT MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

ENGLAND INDIA
THAILAND

Thailand

• On May 13, Br. Nicolas Surasak Duhae, Br. Peter Pichet Wijunwayu and Br. Panuphan Mathew Shaichonsrijinda renewed their



religious vows in the formation house of Ban Garicoits, Sampran.

The ceremony was presided over by Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong scj, Superior of the community, Master of Scholastics, delegated by Fr. Enrico Frigerio scj, Regional Superior, for accepting the renewal of the temporary vows. Following the example of St. Michael Garicoits, may our three brothers grow ever more fervent imitators of the Son of God who says to his Father: “Here I am!”

England

• The English Vicariate organised a live streamed, virtual novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus from 11th of June 2020 to 19th of June 2020 for our parishes in England, that we are serving at present. This virtual novena was made available to our parishioners, companions, family and friends. Parishioners found joy and prayerfulness while joining the Novena and it was a very special time of prayer and reflection. As following the footsteps of St. Michael we, SCJ communities were keen to spread the devotion to the Sacred Heart. We all drew strength and hope from the Sacred Heart of Jesus especially in this unprecedented time in our lives.



« A portion of my soul and my life... »¹

RELIGIOUS FRATERNITY COUNTED FOR ALMOST EVERYTHING IN FATHER ETCHECOPAR'S LIFE.

There are many occasions in the letters where Father Etchecopar repeats this sentence from Psalm 132: "How good it is, how sweet it is for brothers to dwell together in unity". It was a refrain of his whole life! Craftsman of our charism at its birth, he was above all a member of the same body. Father Garicoïts immediately made him take on a role of formation, recognizing in him that 'impulse of the heart' which desires to give itself without hesitation to the Lord. The gradual appropriation of the Rule of life of the Congregation makes it possible to live a "a life more surely safe and solid"². It is about learning to discern the signs of the goodness of the present moment in the dark, and the unexpected things of life, "deep down in our heart"³.

While the elders are called to give

witness to fidelity and an example of the ideal in practice, the young remain the primary concern of Father Etchecopar, as he accompanied many of them as novices. To them, he reveals the secret: "*Without prayer, life is simply human ... but sanctified by prayer and regulated by obedience, your work will be a fruitful apostolate. Apostles of the divine heart of Jesus, we must be the light of the world by knowledge and the salt of the earth by piety.*"⁴. "*Be good scholars ... it is very helpful for the salvation of souls; but this is not the absolute mark of the chosen of God. Be united, be of one heart and one soul.*"⁵ Unity, close union, mutual dependence are the guarantees of the future. The more so as the family strengthens in Argentina and launches out in the Holy Land.

To the young people of Argentina, he delivers this key to understanding life: "*In my eyes, and in the eyes of everybody, your past is a guarantee of the future.*"⁶ Thanksgiving for the gift of

1) Letter to Fr. Augustin Abadie, Pau, 8 March 1886

2) Letter to Fr. Pierre Pagadoy, Sarrance, 16 September 1877

3) Letter to Fr. Augustin Abadie, Pau, 19 February 1886

4) Letter to the scholastics of the 'San José', Pau, 18 March 1886

5) Letter to Fr. Jean Vignolle, Pau, 28 October 1887

6) Circular letter to the houses in America, Bétharram, 18



divine life, gratitude for the gift of the charism, rooted in fidelity to the Church through the person of the Pope: these are the 3 axes of Father Etchecopar's religious ideal. *"Getting closer and closer to the spirit and practices of our revered founder.⁷ ... for wise uniformity.⁸"* *"It is therefore clear that it is not enough for us to be good Christians and good priests... but that we must also carry in everything the character of true religious... by inserting this Ecce venio of humility, 'obedience and love ...)'".⁹*

His sensitivity will continue to be expressed after the first canonical visit to the Holy Land (1890-1) and to Argentina (1891-2). The joy he felt in sharing times of relaxation (with the community) keeps coming back to him; he doesn't hesitate to speak of an *"injury... a sorrow that rises from my affections. Yes, I feel a flame which ... thrilled*

me ... made me happy with a perpetual smile and which now touches each strand of my feelings producing there a material burn ... right now I am suffering from having lost such a treasure, I console myself by thinking of the grace that God has given me to have fully enjoyed it."¹⁰ Not ceasing to talk about what touches him, he will confess: *"with all these endless details, you must think that I have fallen in love with the people and things of this country and that I've put down roots there You may well be right: everything here smiles upon me."¹¹*

Having been able to contemplate these places (Argentina and the Holy Land) where our religious family puts out its branches, is the opportunity for him to appreciate the deep bond that unites all those who are dear to him: *"thus extending as much as possible my mind and my heart to all those I love and whose I am loved."¹²* He never trav-

April 1885

7) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 3 January 1887

8) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 3 April 1885

9) Circular Letter, Bétharram, 12 April 1889

10) Diary, 10 May 1892

11) Letter to Fr. Victor Bourdenne, Buenos-Aires, 15 mars 1892

12) Diary, 1st November 1892

els alone: "there" always brings him back to "here", Betharram whom he deeply loves, and "here" is now full of sounds of relaxation, cries of joy or the beauty of the holy places! "Tell everyone that they are in my heart, that I feel them in my heart"¹³ He has a very beautiful expression: "the prison of love"¹⁴ Deeply touched by the visit to Bethlehem, he recognized: "Yes, we felt that (the Christ child) loves our little institute, precisely because of its smallness, that is to say the simplicity which is the hallmark of our family."¹⁵ After many years of serving as a superior within the limits of south-western France, suddenly, Father Etchecopar discovers the universal dimension of his family, as of his service.

It is very touching to read many times his hand-written appeals to

13) Letter to Fr. Jean-Pierre Barbé and to the community of Bétharram, Rome, 5 March 1889

14) Letter to the religious of San José College in Buenos Aires, Sarrance, 18 December 1888

15) Letter to Fr. Victor Bourdenne, Bethléem, 27 December 1892

write to him. "Write to me with an open heart: it will do you good and bring great joy to me"¹⁶ For him, there is also the safeguarding of the fraternal bond between the members of the dispersed family: "despite the distances hearts are always close and united by a frequent and very affectionate memory."¹⁷ Here again his extreme sensitivity to sounds, people, atmospheres allows him to put his whole person at the service of this common ideal of fraternity. He will never cease to maintain a cordial correspondence, always sensitive and affectionate towards the other. It is really surprising to read how his affection comes into play in all dimensions of life, even obedience! It operates in him, in this dimension as in so many others, as a transfiguration. ●●●

16) Letter to Fr. Jean-Jacques Mouthes, Bétharram, 3 January 1884

17) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 18 August 1882





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? •••

The “Here I am” of a Shepherd Boy to another Boy who tends buffaloes

A twelve year old boy went to his parish priest (father Ugo Donini) and asked “Father, I would like to become a priest.” The parish priest went back to his room and brought him an application form for the diocesan seminary. The boy read the form and gave it back to his parish priest and said “I want to be a priest like you not a diocesan priest,” despite the fact that he had no knowledge about the difference between a religious priest and a diocesan priest. He just wanted to become a priest like his parish priest, a European man who had come to a village to serve the tribal people from a far away country. His parish priest answered him, ‘I have only two choices for you, one is to have you study in the nearby village, the second to go to a diocesan seminary.’ The boy replied to his parish priest, ‘Father, in that case I think I will join the Buddhist monk school.’

As our founder said... “O my God, You have loved me so dearly; O God

you have done so much to win my love; You have desired so much; You desire so

much that I should love You; Here I am O my God, Here I am; My heart is ready. I will not deny You anything to prove my love for You. What do You wish me to do? Here I am.” (DS § 74)

Two weeks later the parish priest visited the boy and said, ‘Be ready, tomorrow I will take you and your cousin to Chiang Mai to meet Father Peter Sala (the superior of Phayao, the minor seminary of the Betharram congregation in Thailand).’ From that day until now, he has been living in the congregation for more than 20 years: a boy who was pasturing buffaloes twenty years ago has



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Residence of Ho Chi Minh-City

become a religious and a priest in the congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram. His dream has come true, but he keeps dreaming, he strives to fulfill his dream with the reality: his 'Here I am as a Betharramite.'

What is 'Here I am' for him as a Betharramite? For him, being a Betharramite means to live according to the inspiration of our founder:

"Oh! If only we could gather together a society of priests having for their programme the very programme of the Heart of Jesus, eternal Priest, Servant of the heavenly Father: absolute dedication and obedience, perfect simplicity, unfailing gentleness! These priests would be a real mobile camp of elite soldiers, ready to hasten at the first signal of their leaders, to go wherever they were called, even and above all to the most difficult ministries, unwanted by others."

For him, this is the 'Here I am' to practice in his Betharramite life. And his duty is to teach his young brothers how to love and to practice this availability in their daily lives. This is the only way for us as Betharramites to be close to our founder and to fulfill his Charism.

Now, whenever he feels tired or bored, he always looks in the mirror and asks himself, 'How is this? Are you alright with 'Here I am'? And he always answers

to himself, 'If I had known, I would have said 'Here I am' to my parish priest on that day'.

Of course, he is always proud to be a Betharramite, proud to have St. Michael Garicoits as his father, proud to practice the 'Here I am' and proud to teach others to learn and practice the 'Here I am' in their lives too.

Let us consider this letter written to Fr Didace Barbé, as addressed to us and we will understand what our father St. Michael Garicoits is asking us to do.

When will we understand that of all our duties, the first and most indispensable, and at the same time the most precious, is to present ourselves constantly to God and His representatives, while being aware of our nothingness, and surrendering ourselves to them, humble and devoted while saying - 'Here I am.' O God, give us this spirit of your divine Son, Our Lord.

My God, here I am! Here we are! Make us truly wise and ever rejoice in the consolation of your Spirit.

(Saint Michael to Fr. Didace Barbé, Letter 163, 1858)

As Pope Francis reminds us in an Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* -(The Joy of the Gospel), "An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that delightful and comforting joy on evangelization" (EG10).

Dear readers kindly pray for this boy who pastured buffaloes; so that he may not only know how to say 'here I am' but also how to practice it in his daily life with joy. ●●●



'Missionary Mary gives us an example. She had to take care of Jesus, and let herself be taken care of by Joseph, but she did not want to forget to take care of Elizabeth.

As a good mother, she encourages us to "launch ourselves" on mission, to console and proclaim with our lives that Betharramites belong to the Heart of Jesus, the One who has called us to follow him with an ever new "Here I am".'

Happy Feast of Our Lady!



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