

NEF

Betharram

Nr. 160

NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE - 118th YEAR, 11nd series - 14 June 2020

In this issue

We owe everything to him p. 1

190 years : 30 May 1830... p. 4

Message of the 31st of May, 2020 p. 6

14 May • Betharram p. 7

Betharram, 14 May & the following days p. 10

Zoom with the 'Betharramici' p. 13

Going out, moved by the Spirit p. 17

'And He pitched His tent in Beltrán' p. 19

Notices from the General Council p. 22

Father Etchecopar... p. 24

Saint Michel Garicoits, from heart to heart p. 27

Happy Feast! p. 28

A word of the superior general

We owe everything to him

'... and immediately blood and water flowed out.'
(Jn 19:34)

Dear Betharramites,

It was the Sacred Heart of Jesus who 'conceived and formed' our Congregation. So firmly believed St. Michael Garicoits, and his phrase was immortalized in prayer by the Congregation. The founding text of 1838 – without mentioning the word 'heart' – left us as a tradition, a certain vision of Jesus Christ who, obeying his Father out of love, was humbled, 'and took the place of all victims'.

Transformed into a humble silent but challenging presence, Jesus Christ challenges everyone in the midst of a society that still refuses to recognise him as the saviour of the world. He offers a Heart that understands and provokes at the same time; he does not want anyone to be lost, and he never tires of loving, healing and forgiving.

In our daily experience of pain, anguish, uncertainties, and contradictions, his presence sustains us and comforts us. Still rejected and buffeted, Jesus' heart knows what it

means to love both friends and foes to the end. He knows what it is like to feel the pain of love... The pedagogy of the cross has taught him ... *'And though he was the Son of God, he learned through his own sufferings what it means to obey.'* (Heb 5:8)

Jesus also knows how to be sweet and gentle, suffering with us and calling to himself those who suffer and are overwhelmed (cf. John 11.28). That is his *'permanent mission'*. He invites us to imitate him in this year dedicated to mission.

But who is this Heart of Jesus who so attracted St. Michael?

He is the privileged icon of Redeeming Love. An Icon and not an idol. Christians do not worship statues. Their image reminds us of a being, who we know from experience, loves us. The mystery of Love that Jesus Christ reveals becomes for us a symbol full of meaning: His Divine Heart. He is the perennial reminder of a God who creates us out of love, the one we often disobey and yet who never abandons us: Instead he reiterates his covenant, a new covenant: he gives us his son.

Sacred Scripture presents the Covenant to us as a covenant of Love, not fear. The main commandment says: *'Listen Israel, you will LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart...'* Our God wants us to love him not to be afraid of him. He desires our friendship, which implies a mutual, gratuitous gesture that becomes tangible in Christ, more precisely in the mercy of the Son. The love of Jesus bears the imprint of a full

love: that is both paternal (Hos 11, 1.3-4); and maternal (Is 49, 14-15) and even conjugal (Song of Songs. 2,2; 6,3; 8,6). This complete and pure love that we cannot measure in its width and length then becomes a 'symbol': the Heart of Jesus.

When the teenage Michael discovers such a great love (during the revelation at Oneix) he no longer doubts, no longer fears, he throws himself irresistibly into the arms of God

The Heart of Jesus not only speaks to us of Redeeming Love, but expresses the human affectivity of the redeemer within a body, His sacred body. Jesus the beginning and end of the Incarnation loved all things and everybody with a human heart. The looks, words, attitudes of Christ reveal to us a true human heart, like ours, but one that did not know sin.

Contemplating this spectacle, St Michael told us: *'Love is the thing that drives a man...'*, *'if it is not there we can do nothing'* (SMG). Hence the Betharramite vocation invites us to acquire not only the virtues of the Heart of Christ, but to be people rich in humanity, just as Jesus himself experienced it with his own body. The founding experience consists in sensing the beating of the heart of Jesus like the beloved disciple experienced leaning on the breast of the Lord. Without this experience, it will be very difficult for us to vibrate with love like the Word made flesh. It is this inner experience of his Love 'become heart' that we must bring to life in

ourselves, not mere proclamations of slogans and values.

Although two thirds of the gospel texts tell us the mysteries of the Life of Christ, we follow Saint Michael Garicoits, in seeing that the heart is, above all, the image that presents in the Letter to the Hebrews 10, 5-7 (*Ecce Venio*) together with the story of Luke 1. 38 (*Ecce Ancilla Domini*). Our charism evokes and represents his entry into the world and his selflessness for love. The Greek text of Hebrews says: '*You did not want oblations and sacrifices for sin, but you gave me a Body*' (5.7); (the body) that Jesus offers in the place of all victims. In the Hebrew text of the cited Psalm 40. 7 it says: '*You opened my ear*' ... just like a disciple who listens and obeys does.

Now, this gift from the Father to the Son has only one answer: '*Here I am, I come to do, O God, your Will!*' (Heb 10.7). Meanwhile, the sweet and humble Mary gives to the Angel: her 'Yes'; she bows reverently, only to be exalted, elevated among the little ones. She expresses her virginal innocence with a permanent state of docility to the Spirit of God, who has chosen her as wife and mother.

In these texts we see how we go from useless external offerings (sacrifices of animals) to a single offering of the Victim, which will be effective and definitive. Jesus Christ makes his inner offering, offers his 'heart', that is, he offers himself, in total (that is the biblical meaning of the word).

St Michael says his gesture will be definitive. An existence surrendered to the Will of the Father, forever. It is this '*Generous Impulse*' that we can translate as an affectionate desire into the intimacy of the heart that marks all the acts of life and that must identify us.

Today, so many need witnesses who can bring to them the merciful Christ, who comforts and encourages in affliction. Let us be bearers of that impulse, a living example of his Heart.

The culmination of the Love of the Lord, we can contemplate in the Passion, and on Calvary, fixing our eyes on him (John 19:34). Faith puts us before a great paradox, because the One who saves is just one among so many poor people of his time: '*Jesus the Nazarene*'. The weakness and suffering of his pierced heart is transformed into an Icon of the Glory of God. Thus we can contemplate it in every brother who suffers, if we are able to discover in the poor of today the wounds of Christ, and say with Thomas: '*My Lord and my God*' (Jn 20:28).

When a Betharramite manages to make present even a small amount of this divine love, then afflicted and overburdened hearts will find rest. Jesus said: '*Come to me*'; so we can say: '*Here we are*', send us, because you have healed us; and we have experienced for ourselves that your yoke is easy and your burden is light.

Fr. Gustavo scj
Superior General

190th anniversary: 30 May 1830 – 30 May 2020

Rome, 30 May 2020

Dear Betharramites,

We do not have a liturgical feast yet to celebrate the Venerable Fr Auguste Etchecopar scj. This Saturday, May 30, we remember the 190th anniversary of his birth at Saint-Palais.

He is a figure that needs no introduction for us. We all owe him a lot!

I propose that we remember his person, his work and his holiness at the service of the Church in our little family.

It is an excellent opportunity for a simple celebration in our communities on the eve of the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Let all of us pray in this period of unprecedented challenges, that the Lord may grant us the grace of Fr Etchecopar's canonization.

He was instrumental for the re-birth of our Congregation and for the fulfilment of the will of God in a period when Saint Michael's project seemed to fall through.

Receive my fraternal embrace In Corde Jesu.

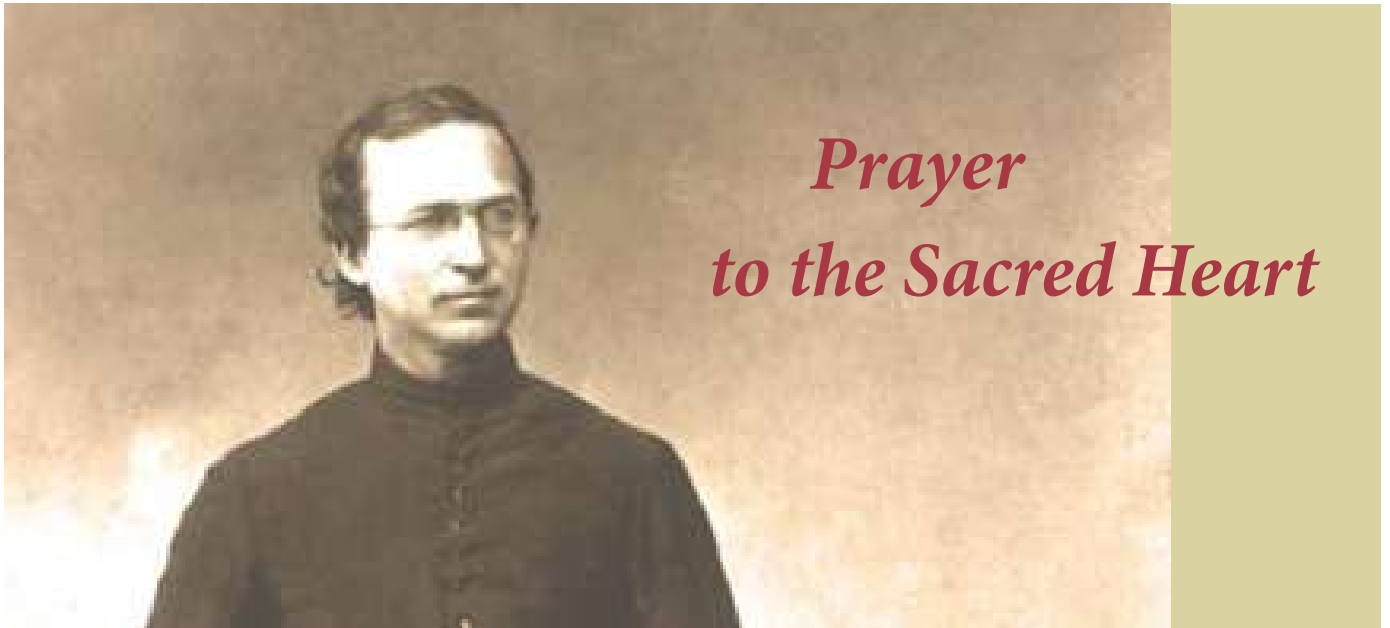
*Fr. Gustavo scj
Superieur General*

190

Anniversaire de la naissance du P. Auguste Etchecopar
Anniversario della nascita di P. Augusto Etchecopar
Anversario del nacimiento del P. Augusto Etchecopar
Anniversary of the birth of Fr Auguste Etchecopar

On the occasion of the anniversary of the birth of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar, the Superior General and his Council have opened **a 'Year of Father Etchecopar' from January 1st, 2021 to December 31st, 2021** in order to celebrate the virtues of the 'second founder' of our Congregation, to make him better known and to ask for his intercession.

In this month of June, let us pray with him the Sacred Heart, let us entrust him with the life of our world marked by the pandemic, by invoking his intercession so that our Betharram Congregation continue to remain faithful in carrying out the Will of God, and by asking him to intercede with the Holy Spirit to give strength to young people and adults to respond to the call of the Master of the harvest.



*Heart of Jesus, tender as the heart of a mother,
the most tender of all hearts,
fill me with sweetness, patience, kindness, charity.*

*Heart of Jesus, humble like a child's heart,
free me from pride,
teach me the humility of heart and spirit
that makes us worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Finally, sweet and tender Heart,
we bow down at your feet;
receive us all from the hands of our good
and revered Founder St. Michael.*

*Divine Heart, you inspired the idea of this work,
you entrusted him with the hard task of starting it,
of continuing it despite all the obstacles.*

*Receive us, bless us,
fill us with your strength and your tenderness,
fill us with your Spirit, fill us with your love.*

Message for World Mission Day 2020 (extract),

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 31 May 2020, Solemnity of Pentecost

[...] Mission is a free and conscious response to God's call. Yet we discern this call only when we have a personal relationship of love with Jesus present in his Church. Let us ask ourselves: are we prepared to welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to listen to the call to mission, whether in our life as married couples or as consecrated persons or those called to the ordained ministry, and in all the everyday events of life? Are we willing to be sent forth at any time or place to witness to our faith in God the merciful Father, to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, to share the divine life of the Holy Spirit by building up the Church? Are we, like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, ready to be completely at the service of God's will (cf. Lk 1:38)? This interior openness is essential if we are to say to God: *'Here am I, Lord, send me'* (cf. Is 6:8). And this, not in the abstract, but in this chapter of the life of the Church and of history. [...]

Understanding what God is saying to us at this time of pandemic also represents a challenge for the Church's mission. Illness, suffering, fear and isolation challenge us. The poverty of those who die alone, the abandoned, those who have lost their jobs and income, the homeless and



those who lack food challenge us. Being forced to observe social distancing and to stay at home invites us to rediscover that we need social relationships as well as our communal relationship with God. Far from increasing mistrust and indifference, this situation should make us even more attentive to our way of relating to others. And prayer, in which God touches and moves our hearts, should make us ever more open to the need of our brothers and sisters for dignity and freedom, as well as our responsibility to care for all creation. The impossibility of gathering as a Church to celebrate the Eucharist has led us to share the experience of the many Christian communities that cannot celebrate Mass every Sunday. In all of this, God's question: *'Whom shall I send?'* is addressed once more to us and awaits a generous and convincing response: *'Here am I, send me!'* (Is 6:8). God continues to look for those whom he can send forth into the world and to the nations to bear witness to his love, his deliverance from sin and death, his liberation from evil (cf. Mt 9:35-38; Lk 10:1-12). [...] ●●●

14 mai 2020 • Betharram

'You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to little children.' Saint Michael Garicoïts perfectly illustrates this revelation that Jesus makes to us. Michael was of very humble origins, born in a village deep in the Basque Country, still away from the main roads of the Basque Coast, but nevertheless, like Betharram, on a path on the way to Compostela. In his teachings to the community, he defined himself as, *'a small countryman, walking barefoot, working hard in the fields and eating only local grains (métude)'*.

As a young priest, he was tempted to upgrade by putting on *'buckled shoes to replace the shepherd's boots'*, but influenced by Saint Jeanne Elisabeth Bichier des Ages, he realized that he was *'on the wrong track'* and he adopted poverty and sobriety: *'I have never been happier than today. The closer I get to my origins, to my former simplicity, the happier I am'*. It is just this conversion that is asked of us all. The current situation makes us all think and presents us with the impasse of this consumer society that a small virus has managed to challenge. As indicated in the declaration of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* five years ago, *'happy sobriety'* seems to be the inevitable solution to get out of the crisis.

This pandemic has called

Fr. Laurent Bacho scj

Community of Betharram

Notre-Dame



everything into question, including our Holy Week and our liturgical assemblies. This deprivation has brought suffering to many lay people and priests, while also allowing discoveries around the Word of God and a rather amazing pastoral creativity, thanks to social media. New solidarities have been experienced. But all these shortcomings have nothing comparable to the dramatic consequences of the French Revolution for the faith lived in Michael's family. Michael was born in the period when logic and anticlericalism wanted to replace the popular piety lived by many families in Garacotchea. The clergy had suffered a deep division between the *'jurors'* (favorable to the Revolution) and *'refractory clergy'* (choosing obedience to the pope). The latter had to abandon their parishes and take refuge in Spain; the houses of Ibarre served as a hiding place for these priests on their way to exile in Spain. So many masses were celebrated in secret! Michael's parents had to cross the border to pronounce their marriage vows in front of a priest loyal to the Pope. Michael was baptized in hiding in a house in



Ibarre

a neighbouring village, Hosta. This proved a puzzle for his ordination: his baptismal certificate could not be found and a sworn statement had to be made. It was in this atmosphere that Michael lived his childhood: *'I was barely four years old and my grandfather took me on his knees and sang verses to me about murderers who had killed priests.'*

The church in Ibarre was closed for worship for ten years and Michael was five years old when it was officially opened for worship. It was during this first celebration at the church in Ibarre that he first felt the desire to be a priest. But it was a providential time; he could begin studies at Saint-Palais while being in domestic service at the presbytery: the parish priest remembers the hospitality received from Saint Michael's grandmother, when he was fleeing the guillotine

and celebrating mass in secret at her house. During preparation for his first holy communion, at the age of 14, the parish priest of Garis told the story of the parish priest of Cambo who was guillotined because he had taken communion to a sick person; a testimony that could only inspire overflowing zeal from the young adolescent.

This is also what we are called to live

through in the various circumstances of our life, and today in this health drama which has reached half of humanity. Many of our certainties are undermined and we are faced with our fragility. Even politicians and scientists tell us about their doubts.

Our Founder also experienced these dramatic journeys. In 1846, famine killed a million people in Europe. The new community founded in Betharram was only ten years old but already had 60 members, and 100 students to feed, in addition to the poor who flocked to Betharram where Fr. Garicoïts welcomed them, to the great despair of the bursar. He did in fact receive donations from a generous miller from Lourdes, Soubirous, who ran Boly mill. His confidence in Providence did not disappoint him, but he also knew how to put himself out, buying the Sainte-Marie farm

in Montaut to feed the community. Garicoïts was pragmatic, a 'contemplative' who chose a spirituality of the Incarnation by doing the will of God, not just contenting himself by proclaiming it: *'The great means of sanctification is to do ordinary actions well, not neglecting the least important details.'*

Ten years later he was faced with an even more dramatic situation; cholera at the end of '55, famine in '56 and typhus in '57. He could no longer count on the generosity of Soubirous whose generosity to charity failed and led him to bankruptcy. He was not presumptuous, he was cautious and he agreed with the advice of the doctors: *'As for the evacuation of the children, if the epidemic persists and the doctor judges it best, it should be carried out, there are no two ways about it: patience is needed for a month or 6 weeks.'* He didn't have the solution for everything; he was humble in his decisions. He even dared to express his fragility in the face of these dramatic situations: *'Thanks to divine providence, so far we have not lacked anything; but I will admit it frankly, I dreaded this year. God forgive me if I offended him with this fear that worried me too much, I think.'* (Letter 135). His dismay is all the more understandable since in the midst of a crisis, he had to organize the departure of eight religious for America. To a Daughter of the Cross, he entrusted this ambitious but thankless task in this period

of austerity: *'Pray for poor Bethar-ram, especially these days when we are preparing to send six priests and two brothers to Montevideo. Ask the Good Lord for a little physical support and a rich spiritual journey for them.'* (Letter 118) In this time of famine the physical support could not have been abundant.

Three months after this departure, came the typhoid fever epidemic: *'I am well, but our community has been very distressed by this epidemic which has taken away from us a priest, a theology student, two brothers and two pupils.'* (Letter 135) The Founder was overwhelmed but not beaten; a few months later, he began building the Notre-Dame school.

Saint Michael Garicoïts is a precious help to us in our present situation. We who are wounded in our flesh, experiencing our fragility more than ever, are also invited more than ever to trust in providence, enriched by this time of retreat which has could have been for us a time of reflection and contemplation, whereas usually our plans and our forecasts could make us believe that everything depended on our will. Today we are invited to believe more in the action of God: *'God is embroidering a magnificent tapestry above our heads. Look up, you only see the back of the work and it presents you with a lot of confusion. But when you are given the opportunity to consider the work on a higher plane, you will see it as it is; and then you will be surprised*

and delighted with admiration at the sight of what your ignorance dares to censor today.' (Brunot p. 47)

The example of Saint Michael, faced with many trials, can help us today to live this health and social crisis more calmly. Pope Francis in *Lauda- to Si* told us this: *'The disappearance of humility in a human being, unfortunately excited by the possibility of dominating everything without any limits, can only end up damaging society and the environment. It is not*

easy to develop this healthy humility or way of living simply if we exclude God from our life and our own self takes its place.' (224) In a way, this ties in with this concise formula of Saint Michael: God is all, I am nothing. Let us ask him for the grace, for ourselves and for the world, of knowing how to better welcome this truth which seemed very abrupt to us but which now seems so current. ●●●

Betharram, 14 May 2020 and the following days

An un-imagined, unimaginable May 14th, is keeping us 'locked-down'. I take advantage of it to tell you my encounter with saint Michaël Garicoïts !

Nothing, nothing, as I was a 'chti'¹, attracted me towards the Bigorre, Lourdes and Betharram! Everything happened in a single minute, on September 1st 1939: the war was declared ; farewell to the North, good-day to the Pyrenees! Nothing? And yet! Now that I read my life over again... In a nut-shell : born on March 22nd, christened on the 23rd, the feast on my patron Saint on the 24th² ready

1) 'Chti' means native from Picardie in the North of France. Fr. Verley was born in Haubourdin (59) near the Belgium frontier.

2) Before the Council, the feast of Saint Gabriel was on March 24th.

Fr. Gabriel Verley scj
Community 'Maison Neuve'
Betharram



to celebrate the Annunciation, there was a marvel in this... I would only discover it slowly as a whole : a great triduum: Mary-Gabriel-Annunciation (Incarnation).

Sent to the Betharram Boarding-School (1942-1943) in the 3rd form, I entered the 'apostolate' in the 4th form. A way opening towards priesthood. In the prep-room, we faced two escutcheons which made me wonder: 'God everything, me

nothing' and on the other side 'FVD *Fiat Voluntas Dei*', unknown to me !

But everything changed when- by which hand? – the biography of Saint Michael Garicoïts by Fr. Croharé sjc, *A strong soul*³ found itself in my hands ! A strong life which has marked me. Some quick pages to present Michael, others which went over my head... This Betharramite biographer, Fr. Urban Croharé, was a philosophy teacher in the Betharram Boarding School and his book dated from 1922, so before the beatification. I found much impulse in it, those small phrases with punch in them: 'Forward the cart', the 'without' (without delay, without reserve, without return).

In the class-room, a pupil sent to the blackboard might hear the teacher say : 'Wipe out' but you had to answer 'Never whine'! Our Betharramite teachers did not spare play on words!⁴ Fr. Léon Bur's flying camp invited us to go forward, 'small, obedient, happy and constant'. I found there a joyful liveliness, the trainers themselves being the first to give us an example. Apparently unconcerned... this state of mind made me understand concretely what a Betharramite was.

1947. A very great year: Fr. Etchecopar's grave opened in the canonization process⁵, St. Michael Garicoïts canonization in Rome on July 6th, the September feasts included the triduum of thanksgiving, and on top of this I was sent to train a group of 20 novices in Balarin.

1947 also saw the surge of publications about, or around St Michael, or *The Saint of Betharram* by Fr. Buzy, a delight of many anecdotes... including those about the horse 'Cambronne'⁶ and its rider, Fr. Michael !

Other treasures were being prepared: the *Spiritual Doctrine*, the three volumes of the Letters, and at last the four volumes of the Saint's life! Working, Fr. Duvignau, Buzy, Brunot, Mirande... and above all Fr. Mieyaa !

Myself named in Saint-Palais in 1955, no better grace could have been proposed to me ! In fact, from 1955 to 1963, the great project concerned Ibarre. The Centenary of St. Michael Garicoïts' death on Ascension Day. What to do? What to do there? What to do on our level? Yes, there was much to do, and quickly ! In Garacotchea, in the church, multiply the place for the festive celebrations

5) The canonization process of Fr. Etchecopar started relatively late, in 1935, 38 years after his death, with the 'Ordinary Information Process', that is to say the collect, in the Bayonne Diocese, of the testimonies concerning Fr. Etchecopar. The cause was introduced in Rome on December 14th 1945. Fr. Verley participated in the opening of Fr. Etchecopar's grave 50 years after his death. The body was found intact.

6) Bearing the name of one of the bravest and more determined generals of the Napoleon Empire, our Founder's mare could show herself stubborn and freakish, and unhorsed him many times on his way.

3) Une âme forte, le vénérable Michel Garicoïts by Urbain Croharé. Ed. Lesbordes 1921.

4) The teacher said 'Effacez' (wipe the blackboard) but it sounds like 'effacé' (humble, unobtrusive). The young pupil had to answer 'dévoué' (devoted). The translation is a poor attempt to respect the play on words!



Lockdown or no lockdown, Fr. Gabriel scj may sit astride his peaceful mount.

tenfold. The men from Ibarre lended their arms and carriages : we picked up cobblestones nearly everywhere to launch the building of the sustaining wall, above the vale. To build, not a basilica, but a shelter (twice damaged by tornadoes in 1960 and 1962).

In Garacotchea, some fifteen vicars from the neighbourhood were meeting, to listen, delighted, to Fr. Mieyaa talking about St. Michael ! What proximity with the child of the house! Fr. Mieyaa was a fine storyteller... on a Thursday every other month during two years.

Another house, another family, another church : all that was Oneix, Anguelia, Les Anghelu for me every Sunday ; the eldest and the young-

est and everybody met in Garris : *'Here Saint Michael Garicoïts made his first communion'*. The vicar of Garris was very handicapped and on Sundays I gave him my legs and my bike !

First meeting in Ibarre, 1955- two months of sacerdoce ; Oh, Fr. Pascal Partarrieu! Oh! Garris! In that place also there was a great grace.

And here we are in 1959. The two volumes of Letters are published in Tarbes. The notes, with the places known and the learned researches of Fr. Mieyaa⁷ were a delight for me, more than a diversion.

But... I was too small a sponge to be impregnated with such richness ! So, I came back to *A strong soul*; various formulations from the same source : Ps. 39, Heb.10,5... *'So I said: I'm coming... here I am... Ecce Ancilla... Fiat... Eamus... Idoneus...'* and *'the immensity of charity in the limits of its use'*.

Am I going to reach the end of this article in a few words? How everything I received enabled me to exercise a Betharramite mission? Many communities, in the Province, have welcomed me, arriving there like a spare wheel, literally: to replace, to replace answering my various Superiors (once in the Training College of St. Michaël Garicoïts, in

7) These researches were made in the archives of three departments (Hautes-Pyrénées, Pyrénées Atlantiques, and Landes).

Ferké⁸. Nothing predisposed me for it. 'Forward!' ... And I had no taste whatever for adventure! The solid Betharramite, Fr. Prévost, who was leaving the house, had totally filled his students with his fondness for Michael Garicoïts.

At the time of the Council, I was in the Holy Land. It was Fr. Buzy who presided- ten days before his death- the feast of May 14th 1965. In a moment when he focussed his attention again, he told me 'I wanted to put myself in front of them', accentuating each word! These were his last words!

8) Ferkessédougou, one of the big cities in the North of Ivory Coast. Following the Encyclical Letter *Fidei Donum* by Pious XII in 1957, it was the first Betharramite mission with the opening in September 1959 of a Training College ('Ecole Normale') aiming to train primary school teachers for Catholic Schools (cf. *Feuilleton of the NEF*: 2009 '1929-2009, Betharram in Ivory Coast').

This is how, from Brothers to Brothers, I have felt a Betharramite living (without forgetting Fr. Amédée Brunot, what a death!⁹) Love was burning in them! And so many witnesses, striving, for the poor religious I was, disarmed but not absentminded, 'Send me!'

'Forward, always... as far as Heaven, we must go to Paradise'.

Once more effort! ●●●

9) Fr. Verley refers to the death of Fr. Brunot, who died from cancer in the hospital of Pau on January 29th 1981.

ZOOM with the 'Betharramici'

On the occasion of the feast of St. Michael, the Communications Centre of the Vicariate of Italy published on the internet, a special greeting from the group 'Betharramici' (young friends of Betharram). 'Together with the religious they wanted to create something beautiful to be treasured and shared': each one of them, from home – abiding by the strict rules of

the lockdown - shared what 'Here I am' meant for them, walking in the footsteps of our founder.





- *'Here I am'* can be described as having two aspects: the first one is an inner dimension, a deep friendship with the Lord. You say to him, *'Here I am'*, as St. Michael taught us And the second *'Here I am'* is witnessed in a response to the demands of our day to day lives. In everyday events we are called to repeat our *'Here I am'*. Nothing happens by chance, and what happens is not the fruit of blind destiny. It is always God who calls, the God *'of surprises'* who challenges us to constantly renew ourselves. Whatever happens does not happen to drive us to despair but to give us the chance to be open to renewal... The *'Here I am'* boils down to this: it makes us open; be available.
- For me, *'Here I am'*, means sharing other people's problems and being ready to help those in need at any time.
- *'Here I am'* is to be ready to journey ... to set off ...in order to ...

follow Him.

- For me it means being aware of and accepting our own talents which are a gift from God, because it is thanks to them, even in a small way, that we can do something great for ourselves and for others.
- For me it means being available without limits, without prejudices, without any kind of preconceptions. Being there... regardless and despite adversity, through thick and thin. I kind of associate *'Here I am'* with the notion of resilience which means always being there, always having the strength to go on. Always saying *'Here I am,' 'Here I am'* in my life and for the lives of others and also ... with faith in the Lord.
- For me, saying *'Here I am'* means accepting and welcoming what is given to us in our daily lives, like those servants who at the wedding at Cana followed the indications of Mary who said: *'Do what-*



ever he tells you'.

- 'Here I am' ... I realize that the more I go on, the more I feel the necessity to voice my 'Here I am' in everyday life. I am often at church or at the chapel, in front of the tabernacle and I always say 'Here I am Lord', but I feel that I have to say my 'Here I am' in a concrete way to flesh and blood people. Real availability..., real presence ..., and taking care of real persons.
- For me, 'Here I am' means making myself available...
St. Michael's 'Here I am' was a pure, sincere insight; without *ifs*, without *buts* and without any *perhaps*. Let us pray to St. Michael to help the world through this difficult crisis and to help us say our 'Here I am' together.
- In my opinion, 'Here I am', means being available ... I spent many years in a parish and the faithful themselves used to reply to me: 'Father, I am available!'
- It means never shrinking from the challenges in front of us.
- *Here I am* is when the heart frees itself from all ties to make itself available to another heart. This is what being available means.
- For me it means not backing away from the challenges ahead of me on my journey.
- For me it means living a life ready for service... in the Congregation.
- For me, it means listening in order to understand where I can be useful.
- 'Here I am' is a tiny word. It is short but at the same time carries immense weight. It is a puny fraction of the infinite touching our small hearts and opening them to God, for whom nothing is impossible, even to break into our lives, to churn them up and create a masterpiece from them.

- *Here I am...* I'm sure this word will take on many different meanings along the path of my life. But right now it means learning with good will and patience, with humility, ... in order to bring this knowledge to fruition and to make it available to others.
- For me, it is the beauty of walking together and knowing my neighbour, who walks this stretch of the journey along with me. And above all it is discovering the beauty of love that has no boundaries and makes no distinctions.
- Living the '*Here I am*' of Saint Michael, in my life, means always aiming high, not giving in to depression and always going forward with joy in my heart and living my life to the full.
- St. Michael left us his charism as an invitation to live the '*Here I am*' in our lives. This means to be totally

giving of oneself but above all to surrender oneself into the hands of God. So our lives are lived according to the model of the life of Christ, and this requires great effort on our part. We can only live by being united every day to the Lord through prayer; through this intimate relationship with him which we are called to maintain everyday.

- For me, saying '*Here I am*', as St. Michael did, means making myself available to that plan of love that God has devised for me.
- '*Here I am*' is a lifestyle, a participation, in obedience, in the love of Jesus for the Father. Now we too share in this love and make it present whenever we are called. In a nutshell, this is the meaning of being Betharramite.



Going out, moved by the Spirit

We are living in the time of the Spirit while preparing to celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart. The quarantine restrictions are gradually being relaxed, in some countries more than in others. Now it appears we can see the faces of those on the margins more clearly. In many areas, the coronavirus pandemic provoked a pandemic of hunger and the world over, it has led to an economic crisis, of which the knock-on effects on the mental health and wellbeing of people and families are a matter of concern.

What inspiration can we get from the Internal Master in these circumstances? Where is the *'Here I am'* of the Sacred Heart taking us? *'I know too that deep down in these same souls, there is so to speak an incessant fermentation, roused*



Fr. Tobia Sosio scj

Community of Puente Remanso

and maintained by God's creating hand, which seeks, as from afar off, midst the darkness of the unconscious and noises of every kind, to respond and to yield to the divine pursuings of God' (Fr. Duvignau, *Un Maître spirituel*; DS § 128)

This reflection by St Michael on the action of the Holy Spirit within us is raising many questions in my mind and also stirring me to action. In the current environment, it seems to me to be so very 'of-the-minute' and real. Bombardment by the media, often amplified by politicians, has brought about genuine malaise in the public paralysed by irrational panic. Others have had the opposite reaction, thrown caution to the winds and given up worrying about any risk which their behaviour might cause to other people, including their nearest-and-dearest.

This is a time for discernment. What can we do? what can't we do? How can we stay true to our religious and apostolic vocation? How can we live charitably within the limits of our particular circumstances? How can we remain faithful to the guidelines of



'You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end' (Acts 1,8)

the Church and our Congregation calling on us to 'go out into the margins'? Who, what and where are these 'margins' in need of our apostolic devotion and missionary care? How does one live by our rule of virtue while meeting the obligation to exercise caution in places where the risk of picking up the disease remains a threat?

Recently the Superior General messaged us via FaceBook encouraging us to continue in the way of solidarity, as undertaken by the religious and the laity working together in the different realities of our Congregation. That is most certainly the clear voice of the Holy Spirit resonating within our innermost being. Community discernment will help us to give a face, a name and then a concrete response to the different realities there are in the marginalised areas surrounding us. We have found ways of communicating with our faithful and with our co-workers, using social networks to meet the hunger and thirst for God. We have learned and trained others to use technology and apps to set up virtual meetings, share experiences, projects and strategies with teachers and pastoral support workers. This has kept us alert and ready to tackle things in new way, new actions with which the Merciful Love of God has inspired us. The moment has probably come to gird ourselves up and 'go out' a bit further, while exercising all necessary caution. Economic pressure is pushing many people into going back to work, in particular in the informal labour market, which for some is the only means of subsistence

and survival; it is certainly a risk but one which it seems is necessary to take in their circumstances. As religious we are not driven by economic concerns. What drives us is Love of God and love of one's brothers. *'You have loved me so much, my God... What would you have me do? Here I am.'* I have often been struck by the manifestations of life of the many people, lay and religious alike, who are genuinely engaged in acts of solidarity, as well as by the manifestations of a deeper more religious spirit in the countless faithful who, regretting the impossibility of being physically present at the Eucharist, have found other ways of filling that void spiritually.

Many groups have been set up by people to pray the Rosary every day, via Zoom or Google Meet. One might have said that these were driven by fear or by the fact people had more time on their hands. Be that as it may, they bear witness to the benefits which this initiative has produced in people, both in terms of their personal lives and of strengthening the group. The many volunteers who have signed up to help at food banks or soup kettles (some call these 'God's Kettles') are proof of truly heroic devotion. Thousands of meals have been prepared and distributed free of charge, on a community-led basis, to those living in deprived areas and shanty-towns. People are making donations, sharing their household goods and, above all, their gifts and talents in preparing and distributing food. This explosion of activity, albeit rather ad hoc in the face of such an emergency, is with-

out doubt an indication of the path genuine Christianity should follow, going as it does beyond doctrine and becoming a work of charity. Our doors have also been opened to receive those who are in positions of vulnerability. We have visited and cared for those sick with the covid-19 virus. There are doubtless other initiatives which have not been made public, but which God sees and which He inspires. That is the kind of life which gives meaning to our consecration.

Going out, to meet Life: that is our watchword of the year, and it is also a wonderful opportunity. Sharing actions

of solidarity, lay people and religious alike, united; giving one another mutual support in our religious fervour so that it is always God's Love which drives us; encouraging one another in community to bear witness to our '*Here I am*'. There's no doubt that the younger among us do so with more energy and creativity; the rest of us, older and thus classed as an 'at-risk' group, more cautiously: but each of us has our eyes turned and our hearts attuned to the '*incessant fermentation*' of ideas the Holy Spirit is brewing in us. ●●●

'...And He pitched His tent in Beltrán'

Betharram's missionary presence in North-West of Argentina is more than 40 years old. It has the characteristic of being a '*Flying Camp*' at the service of people and the Church for the building up of the Kingdom. In some places, Betharram planted its tent to ensure the permanent presence of a religious community or lay missionaries; in other places, it offers a periodi-



cal presence with an accompaniment. The places of mission have been the following:





- Parish St Roque in the capital in region of Santiago del Estero (1975/2008)
- The Banda (1985/87)
- Catamarca: Saujil-Pomán (1988/94), Valle Viejo (1995/98) et La Paz (1999/2001),
- Santa Victoria Este dans le Chaco Salteño (1995/2000),
- Yuncharádans la puna de Tarija en Bolivie (1997/2000),
- Nueva Esperanza (2002/11) et
- Choya (2012/16) à Santiago del Estero.

In all these places, we work on the evangelisation – promotion - consolidation of small communities, on the organisation of the parish, on human promotion (neighbourhood centres, formation of co-operatives, documentation, collaboration in education, organisation of round table and peasant associations, etc). Once the task is accomplished and the discernement

has been made in community and with the local Church, we set up camp to go towards a new place.

Today, Betharram pitched his tent in Beltran, a town of 5,000 inhabitants, situated around 30 km from the regional capital of Santiago del Estero, in the Robles, a department of around 44,500 inhabitants over 1,424 km². The city finds itself in the diocese of Santiago del Estero, which is short of pastoral care takers (7 parishes have no parish priest). It is the region of the country hit by the highest rate of chronic poverty. We are present as a missionary community that lives the impulse of the Here I am, in this poor reality, serving from our charism and taking into account the personal gifts in order to put them at the service of the mission.

We radiate around Beltran in collaboration with Fr. Vicente Avellaneda (Diocesan Priest-Parish Priest of Fernandez and Brea Pozo) on the whole

of the pastoral zone. We accompany them on the pastoral plan to the cities of Beltran, Forres and Colonia el Simbolar (each about 5,000 inhabitants). Smaller villages like Villa Robles, Vilmer, Estacion Robles of around 1000 inhabitants and around 20 small rural communities.

Our mission is to try to form small communities. We accompany with particular attention all expressions of popular religiosity. We are engaged in the training of pastoral in charges especially catechists, in the accompaniment of the people. We equally accompany the public schools whenever they need our services. We participate in the diocesan work within the deanery and also we equally collaborate with our neighbouring parishes whenever they need us. We carry out popular missions with the lay people from various Betharramite communities, other groups who come to the region and local communities.

Santiago del Estero is the place where we receive young people from our educational communities (Betharramite colleges and lycées) who come to live an experience of sharing with local communities and the children of the region. These experiences often have a very significant impact on these young people. These meetings with their brothers question them about their own projects of life. It is also an enrichment for the educational communities which work on sending missionaries to these young people and who find themselves projected into a dynamic missionary community.

In this particular year, after three years of presence, we propose ourselves to go to the peripheries of Robles, where our Church is less present. The coronavirus surprised us, as with everyone, but we tried to pursue our mission within the limits of our position. ...





2021 : Year of Fr Etchecopar

The Superior General and his Council, gathered with the Council of the Congregation by videoconference, wanted to give start to a Year of Fr Etchecopar on the occasion of the 190th anniversary of his birth – 30 May 1830 – precisely from his birthdate, until 30 May 2021. Yet, given the current health emergency, and the restrictions and complications imposed by the pandemic, it has been decided to propose ***this year of memory in honour of Fr. Etchecopar from January 1, 2021 to 31 December, 2021.***

The Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, with the consent of his Council gathered on June 3rd-4th, 2020,

RdV 205/g ••• Admission to final profession

- admitted to **Final Profession in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram**
four brothers of the Vicariate of the Ivory Coast,
RSMG:

***Br. Arnaud N'Dah Kadjo,
Br. Christian Arnaud Yao,
Br. Djéban Landry Koffi,
Br. Serge Pacôme Appaouh***





- presents to the priestly minister the **deacons Vincent-Didier Allelet scj and Joseph Ouedraogo scj** (Region SMG, Vicariate of the Ivory Coast).



- presents to the diaconate **Br Hippolyte Adje Yomafou scj** (Region SMG, Vicariate of the Ivory Coast).

RdV 206 ••• Appointment of the Master of scholastics •••

- approved the appointment of **Fr. Kriangsak Luke Kitsakunwong as Master of the scholastics in the Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified (in the Formation House of Sampran)** for a second mandate, from June 1st 2020.



In memoriam

- (.) Let's be united in prayer along with Fr. Arun Kano scj, who lost his beloved dad, **Joseph Doobau Kano** who was born on March 2, 1926 and passed away on May 29, 2020. May his soul rest in peace!
- (.) On May 28th, **Mr. Andreas Marak**, 61, Br Johnny Marak's father, of the community of formation of Mangalore (India), died suddenly. We express our sympathy to Br Johnny and his family and we keep their dear one in our prayers.



'Mary our Alpha and Omega, after Jesus...' ¹

IN THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH OF FATHER ETCHECOPAR, MARY IS MORE THAN A COMPANION!

Thy Kingdom come!
This could be the summary of the Marian spirituality of the religious... an amazing statement! Mary, for him, is like the perfect manifestation of the Christ-like life. In fact, from the very beginning of his religious life even before being in Betharram, Mary occupied an essential place: **'O Mary, after Jesus, you are everything to me!'** **'Omnia per Maria! In Maria! Cum Maria!'** Can be read in the notes of his first retreats. Entering Betharram will only seal an already committed love story, the origins of which would remain to be found in his personal history: Mary is **'mother of the work of Betharram'** ² and **'To try to take a step without her help, it is to try to fly without**

wings'. We read elsewhere, **'The Most Holy Virgin will watch over this work, we are only her instruments.'** ³ The inner and particular impulse that brings Father Etchecopar to Mary is not a 19th century fashion. Was there a subconscious influence of the feminine in the family environment? Without a doubt! However, not everything can be explained by family. His own life experience shaped his devotion to Mary. Between 1880 and 1890, at the height of the storms, the name and the love for Mary were mentioned less! And if the intuition of this religious is different from that of the Founder (the *'Here I am'*, for example, is less present), Mary remains the treasure from which to draw the virtues necessary for life. Mary is really the heart of the work as much as Jesus!

From the encounter between this man and this mother at Betharram, it occurs as a kind of chemical precipitate:

1) Letter to the religious of the College San José de Buenos Aires, Betharram, 18 May 1878

2) Letters nr. 308, 310

3) Letter to the religious of the College San José de Buenos Aires, Betharram, 4 July 1878



plenitude that the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, especially the enlightened journey to Mont Carmel will rekindle: *'what a mixture like everything that is of Mary, of grandeur and sweetness (all the elements of nature) form the various traits that charm and delighted and who is called Mary! She was, she is, she will be ... I want to take with me your image and your perfume which is the image of my mother and the perfume of her heart.'*⁴

In the great freedom of tone with which the superior expresses himself in his letters, we can measure how immediate and real Mary's presence was in his life. Here is one of his prayers, from his own pen, the fruit of his sensitivity: *'O very humble and loving Mother,*

*lend us this bouquet which embalms heaven and earth, disarms the wrath of God and trains the people of the Chosen, may our hearts steeped in selfishness and pride be converted and become with you and for you, conforming to the one who is meek and humble of heart, to the one who loved me and gave himself up for me: love, so humble, humility so loving...'*⁵ Mary, like the Mother who gives birth again and again to the faith of the disciples of Christ, gives birth to Father Etchecopar in a life of

'In all things, look at The Star, call on Mary

*By following her, you will not go wrong
By praying to her, you will not despair
In knowing her, you will not make mistakes*

*In holding fast to her, you will not fall
She protects you, you will not fear
She directs you, you will not tire
She favours to you, and you will reach your goal.'* (in 1882)

'Unless my heart deceives me, ... you can always hope in her.' It is as if the piety of this man, sensitive to the extreme, receives strength, power and security from obedience to this Mother. A

4) Letter to Sr Euphrasie, Prioress of the Carmel of Bethlehem, Nazareth, 16 April 1891

5) Letter to his sisters Suzanne and Madeleine, Betharram, 1st October 1868

hope and charity: *'I belong to you, I belong neither to myself nor the earth, but to you who called me to your work. Make me less unworthy of you.'*⁶

However, the mother does not take the place of the Son. *'She is our everything after her Son. We will lack nothing from her; everything will turn to her greatest glory and our greatest good because all are animated by the best feelings in the spirit of dedication to the dear work which is our treasure, our love and our life.'*⁷ In the prayer which is often the refuge of the superior, Mary is there: *'No pain should be banished from an encounter with Her.'* 'To work with and for her is to be in deep union with her Son. To let yourself be formed by her, is to accept to be born by her to the life of faith: *'May this Mother be for you, next to Jesus, to form him in your mind, your heart and your life because she is our mother for that'*⁸, he wrote to his sister Julie, a nun. Mary, mistress

of life: *'(she) will lead us to Jesus, because she is the shortest, sweetest, easiest way to go to this divine saviour... let us go to her with increasing respect and love. She is so holy and so good at the same time. Blessed are those who know how to combine these two dispositions in the service of this divine Mother.'*⁹

Mary is truly the architect of the growth of faith in the believer's life. Marie comes as a substitute for him to show him how to live: *'Be my heart through this communion!'*

How not to finish this little article on the tender and strong Marian faith of Father Etchecopar without citing this little invocation of which he had the secret in the impulse of his heart ignited with love: *'O Mary, mother of sinners, I need you for me. O Joseph, guide of inner souls, I need you for others. O Mary, O Joseph, I need you for me, because as a priest, I am another Joseph, I am another Mary.'* (Epiphany 1870?).

6) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Betharram, 4 May 1883

7) Letter to the religious of the College San José de Buenos Aires, Betharram, 5 November 1880

8) Letter to his sister, Sister Elisabeth, Daughter of Charity, Betharram, 15 January 1884

9) Letter to his sister Madeleine, Aire-sur-l'Adour, 22 July 1883





SAINT MICHAEL GARICOÏTS, FROM HEART TO HEART

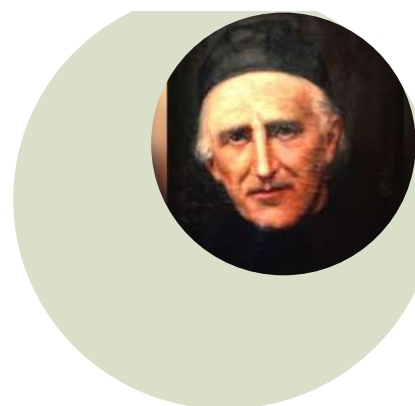
He dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). What made Him come down? Love. What kind of heart will He have given to His human nature, in which He has come to cloak himself, if not a heart steeped in love, whose every movement He controlled?

What will the Divine word have done, on becoming man, if not given Himself a heart marked with the infinite love which brought Him into this world? This Heart of our Saviour King, ever in the hand of God, that launched Him on His career with this cry: Here I am. There we have the Heart of Jesus: there is the core of Christianity.

To believe in the love God has for us is the core of our faith. Such is the profession of St. John: I believe in love (Jn 4:6). That is saying all. He became man: I believe. He loves, and who loves does everything.

But if we believe, we must imitate him. The Heart of Jesus embraces all the faithful; in it we are all gathered and consummated in unity. Let us have a heart of Jesus, and extended heart which excludes no one from its love.

(MS 65-66)



*United in prayer and with joy
for the feast of the Sacred Heart,
together with all the Betharramite communities
in the world,
with the Betharramite laity and the friends of
Betharram !*



*Give me a heart that truly loves!
It grows, and tastes the things of God,
its leaps and runs along the path of
Our Lord Jesus Christ.*



Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

Generalate House
via Angelo Brunetti, 27
00186 Rome
Phone +39 06 320 70 96
Fax +39 06 36 00 03 09
Email scj.generalate@gmail.com
www.betharram.net