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A word from the Superior General

Let us go out to build fraternity
without frontiers

*“But a Samaritan traveller who was passing by, saw him
and was moved with pity.” (Lk 1.33)*

Dear Betharramites,

I greet you with the affection of those who know they are friends and brothers in the Lord... those who, without shaking hands (currently disallowed!) can still feel the embrace of those who love them, walk by their side and share the same horizon.

The image of the Good Samaritan in the Pope’s encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, invites us once more to renew the witness of evangelical love. It arouses the ability to let ourselves be challenged by reality and, above all, to feel compassion for the one who suffers: “with a heart that truly loves”.

It seems that the shadow side of the present world expands day by day and leaves the wounded by the side of the road, cast out and discarded. But we live in a time in which our human condition, though passing through isolation & loneliness, is trying to rebuild itself.

Let us begin with our Saint. Michael Garicoits was without

doubt a disciple-missionary of mercy. He learned early on to be close to people, to listen, and have compassion for the one who suffers. I have always been struck by the story told about the adolescent Michael, then a shepherd boy at the Anguelu farm, when he agreed to be godfather to an abandoned girl (there are records in the local Church), along with Mrs. Anguelu, who was the godmother. It was an early sign of how his tenderness showed his sensitive side.

On another occasion, as a young priest, we see him getting off his horse, to go down to pick up a man lying on the side of the road. Then he takes him on his horse to help him on his way and find healing.

Smooth in manner and strong in conviction, we observe him confronting the Mayor of Cambó to recognize the Truth and be free of his atheistic or anti-clerical ideology.

Ever merciful, he visited a man on death row, who had once previously betrayed him and let himself to be dragged into a life of crime. He rescued him from a meaningless life, and brought him peace.

As a spiritual director, he tirelessly practiced mercy in the face of so many sinners who came to him for forgiveness.

Sometimes it was the Bishops who suffered, and they came in tears before the saint of Betharram, wounded by the spirit of insubordination and the disobedience of the clergy. Ever compassionate Michael welcomes them, listens to them, treats them gently, and invites everyone to do the same.

Finally, he can be seen receiving a young girl accused of claiming false supernatural visions. After examining her with paternal solicitude, he solemnly confirms that poor Bernadette is an honest person, who tells nothing but the truth about the Immaculate Virgin, who has appeared to her.

We have a founder who is deeply moved, who reaches out, opens up and shows solidarity with those in need. There is so much in him to imitate! Who among us would not wish to be like this? Who has not met a Betharramite who has tried?

Good examples invite us to go out of ourselves. The community challenges us to follow this where the witness of some of our brothers is so eloquent. Let us all go out of ourselves!

Although the call to go out in community to the different peripheries seems to be 'on hold' in this year of pandemic lockdown, we know that it is still there. Furthermore, today it has become more important than ever!

Indeed, Pope Francis has understood this and proposed it to the whole Church. He invites us as a society to reach out to the poor, to touch the wounds of abandoned humanity, to heal with gesture and word. The Vicar of Peter invites the Church to do the same thing that Jesus did: to feel compassion for everyone, to "become a neighbour". Unafraid of defying present day shadows, we can be bearers of a love that becomes a Light.

These shadows can plunge humanity into confusion, loneliness and emptiness. Imagine we meet a stranger

on the road and he's injured: faced with this reality, there are two choices: keep going or stop; including or excluding will define the type of person or life project we are willing to assume, whether political, social or religious.

God is Love, universal Love, and as soon as we are part of that Love, we share it and then it becomes: "Universal Brotherhood", which is openness to everyone, even to those who are 'different' ... *Fratelli tutti!*

A thought of Saint Michael Garicoits comes to mind now: "One must never be biased in favour of a group, but rather be open to all men with universal love" (*Spiritual Doctrine* § 170). This teacher of spiritual life prophetically confronts us with a demand that arises from the Incarnation. He invites us with Jesus to put ourselves in the place of all the victims.

The encyclical goes on to say that there are no longer "others" or "them", there is only "us". We want with God and in God an open world (without walls, borders, exclusions, or strangers), and for this we have and want an open heart. A heart that runs, and flies in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ (SMG).

Pope Francis reminds us that Christians live a social friendship, we seek a moral good, a social ethic because we know that we are part of a universal brotherhood. We are called to the encounter, to solidarity and generosity. For an open world with an open heart, we must implement the best politics we can imagine.

How important it is to know how to *dialogue*. This is the way to open up the world and build social friendship. Dialogue respects, agrees and seeks the truth; dialogue gives rise to a culture of encounter, that is to say, encounter becomes a lifestyle, a passion and desire. Whenever dialogue is gentle, it recognises and respects the other. Dialogue allows us to go from conflict to reunion.

The different religions of the world recognise each human being as God's creature, as creatures in a fraternal relationship. Religions are also called to the service of brotherhood in the world.

We all have the same Father, and that is why we recognise our universal condition as brothers. Our actions and commitments arise from the experience of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This path of fraternity also has for us a sweet Mother called Mary, always ready and submissive to everything that God proposed to her.

So let us go out, in community, to announce with our lives that Jesus Christ stooped down to become the brother of every man who needs help. If we go out together in unity, then the fruits will be greater, and the joy of "*Here I am*" will give us the strength to lift up the poor and the helpless, who are thirsty for a gesture of brotherly love.

God bless you!

Fr. Gustavo scj
Superior General

Message for World Mission Day 2020

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). ●●●

“To live an ardent ‘Ecce Venio’ as a religious priest”

Let us recap: “The devotion of our saint to the Sacred Heart was not limited [...] to a few pious practices. It took hold of his soul and directed his whole life.” So says the introduction to the Spiritual Doctrine (Sacred Heart Programme, Part 1, “Ecce venio”).

Each religious of the Congregation tries, in his place of mission, with his gifts and limitations, to live in this spirit. While having the spirit of religious life that urges towards perfection, the religious tries to give himself the means not only to “please” God ever merciful, but also to let himself be loved, guided and transformed in his daily life through words spoken by the “Word of God”. The life experience of Saint Michael Garicoits (spiritual master, a man ready to serve, open-hearted, generous, charitable, etc.), as well as his writings to nuns show us that he was indeed a disciple of the Sacred Heart. Following him, the Betharramite is a true missionary of the mobile camp.

In September 2018, after eight years spent in Dabakala in the diocese of Katiola, in the north of Côte d’Ivoire, the Congregation allowed me to begin two training courses entitled: “The Art of Professional Counselling” and “Lis-



**Fr. Elisée
Mambo Sika scj**
Community of Yamoussoukro

tening (Counselling) marital and family mediation”, which I am completing at the ITCJ (Institute of Theology of the Society of Jesus). These courses involve work carried out in groups accompanied by experts. They require from the listener first of all a love of neighbour, then to be available to listen while forgetting oneself. In my opinion, a religious carries these aptitudes within him.

Thanks to these two formation courses, the meetings with the faithful multiply, and not only meetings but calls as well. The “Ecce venio” takes over. I still work on the notions of “availability” and “competence”, which one gradually acquires with patience.

I like this “Art of Listening” in that it makes it possible to return a smile to your neighbour ... to help save a soul ... to restore strength, courage and joy to couples.

But as with any activity, there are limitations to overcome. Some of

these limits are my own, because I forget myself in an exaggerated way, or they are limits linked to the person who came to meet me and which relate to their life situation:

- Economic (poverty)
- Spiritual (lack of hope, discouragement, lack of the presence of God in one's life, etc.)
- Social (marital, family conflict, childbirth, witchcraft, etc.)

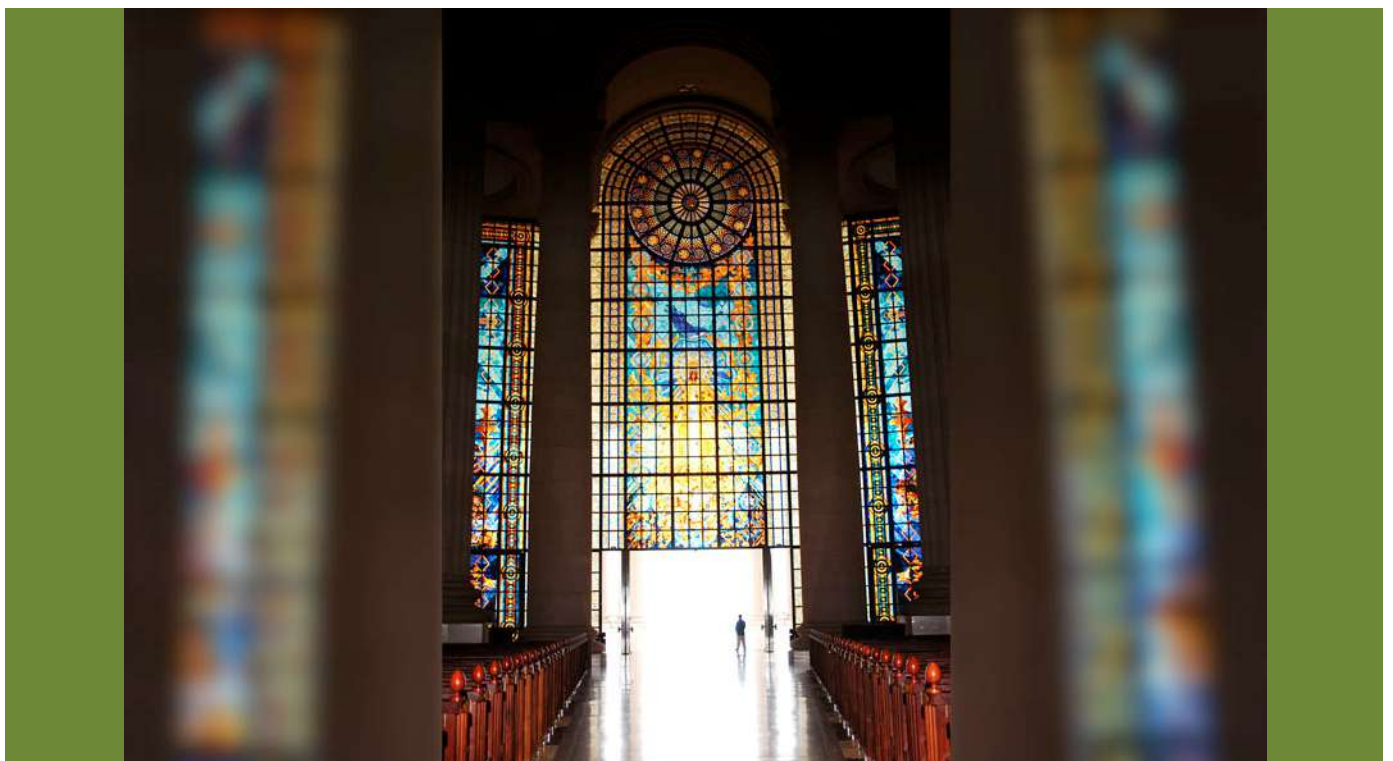
However, the thirst to help or support another remains at all times and is renewed day after day.

In his message of March 25, 2020, on the feast of the Annunciation, the Superior General, Father Gustavo Agín, reminded us of this:

"Jesus' gesture of love and Mary's gentle availability confirm us in our charism. Let us be like them: worthy bearers of hope, unity, obedience and solidarity in this world which suffers and hopes for a new dawn."

This is how the "Here I am" for me is always renewed with the grace of God. The mission continues this time in my new host community at the parish of Saint-Félix in Yamoussoukro, diocese of Yamoussoukro, in central Côte d'Ivoire.

Always forward, with a heart open to life! ●●●



The SCJ Beautiful Branch grows more and more in the Ivory Coast

Saturday 12 September, in the presence of the Superior General, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín SCJ, Br. Christian Arnaud Yao and Br. Arnaud Kadjo N'Dah, pronounced their definitive «Here I am» following Christ annihilated and obedient in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram.



**Br. Christian
Arnaud YAO scj**
Community of Adiapodoume

«...I am Brother Christian Arnaud Yao, of Ivory Coast nationality and origin. I was born on 23rd April 1985 in Cocody in the district of Abidjan. I am the youngest of my family; I have 5 brothers and 2 sisters to be exact. I grew up in Bingerville, another town in the district of Abidjan and I did my primary and secondary

studies there. After my Baccalaureate, I was guided towards Economics for my university studies where I was able to a Master's Degree in Management.

I came across Betharram for the first time in November 2011, thanks to a priest from the Diocese of Abidjan (my original diocese). It was Father Rodrigue N'sanman, who was the Director of Studies at the small seminary at Bingerville, who accompanied me on my vocational discernment. So, he introduced me to Father Sylvain Dansou, the superior of the community at the time and to whom I say thank you again for having facilitated my integration into the vocational group at the community at Adiapodoumé. During my year as

a candidate, I discovered from Father Omer Koutouan, of venerable memory¹, the joy of consecrated life. I must say, I had no idea about what male religious life was like, much less Betharramite life. I let myself be charmed by the joy and simplicity of the brothers that I met. That kindled in me the desire to go into deep waters. That is how I let myself be led into the discovery of the history of the congregation, of its founder, of his charism as well as this form of community life. The life of St Michael Garicoits and his spirituality of *'here I am'* never ceased to surprise me. I discovered a life of simplicity and poverty. A life of deep conviction which led young Michael to the point of even consenting to be a servant to finance his studies. What a lesson in humility, determination and perseverance. I understood then that only trust in the Lord could lead me in my vocational journey to a discernment and a response without delay, without reserve and without any looking back. A great love for mission grew in me.

In July 2012, I started my experience with the community at Adiapodoumé with a 2-month placement at Tshanfeto. From 2012 to June 2014, I made my postulate ; from September to December 2014, I benefitted from a 3-month placement with street children, before the novitiate at the

1) *Our young brother, Father Omer Koutouan Nanghuy scj, died in 2013 at the age of 35.*

Akwaba Centre with brothers from Christian schools in Abobo (one of the municipalities of Abidjan). From 2014 to 2016, the canonical year of the novitiate at Bethlehem followed by a placement in Central Africa in the Community of Our Lady of Fatima at Bouar. After professing my first vows on 8th September 2016, I made a start on my theological studies at the Catholic University of West Africa from 2016 to 2019. After my admittance to the Theology Baccalaureate, I was sent again to Central Africa, but this time to the new community at Bimbo in Bangui responsible for the prepostulate, for my year of preparation for the final vows.

It is sentiments of joy and gratitude to the Lord that brought me to this stage of my life where I have just professed my final vows on 12 September 2020 in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram, in the hands of the Superior General Reverend Father Gustavo Agin. It is a grace for me to feel part of this religious family where I am called by the Lord himself to become a disciple of *'here I am'*, with the virtues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as my programme. With St Michael Garicoits, I can only give thanks to the Lord for all the good he has done for me in calling me to follow and serve Christ.

This is a chance for me to say a big thank you to my formators who welcomed me, accompanied me and

who generously continue to accompany me on this path of religious life. Thank you also to my family and to all my Betharramite brothers who support me in prayer. May they continue to pray for me so that I might be a servant in accordance with the heart of the one who called me to follow him. *Always forwards!* ●●●



**Br. Arnaud
Kadjo N'Dah scj**
Community of Adiapodoume

« . . .

Of Ivory Coast by birth, my name is KADJO N'Dah Arnaud, born on February 16th 1986 in the commune of Yopougon (Abidjan). I discovered this Congregation through a friend who was progressing as a postulant to the Adiapodoume community. From this discovery was born the desire to consecrate my life to God in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram.

In fact, in 2006, during a meeting of young people of the Legion of Mary of the commune of Sikensi, (a town about 180 km away from Abidjan), I met the person through whom the Lord led my steps to himself in the Betharramite religious life, name-

ly Christian Bly. During our exchange, he told me that he was an aspirant in a community named Betharram, situated at km 17 Road of Dabou. At the time, he gave me a booklet about Saint Michael Garicoïts' life and spirituality.

One year later, in my sixth form, as I was looking for a document in philosophy, I fell on this brochure. The history of the foundation of the Congregation, and much more the life of saint Michael Garicoïts, had just upset my life. A sentence caught my attention : « *Go to any place where the other people would refuse to go, to procure the same happiness* ».

After this discovery, I lost no time to contact the Fathers of the community. I was welcomed by Father Firmin, today incardinated in the Odienne diocese in the north of Ivory Coast, as a vicar of the St Bernard parish of Adiapodoumé, and responsible for the postulants. This meeting marked my existence and was the starting point of a loving alliance with the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the footsteps of our Founder Saint Michael Garicoïts. After this period of discovery, I started to be a postulant. On October 10th 2011, I made my first steps in the formation house of Adiapodoume as a pre-postulant. 2012-2014 were the years of postulate. At the end of the postulate years, I was admitted for the canonical novitiate in Bethleem. This experience gave place to a wonderful adventure with Christ. In fact, during this period of novitiate, I had

the grace to meet Christ ; a meeting which will enable me to contemplate the true face of Christ, poor, ill and small, on the face of the children suffering from autism and cognitive handicaps in one of the communities of the Sisters of the Incarnate Word (Niño Dios) where I was for pastoral minister. From then on, I understood my attraction for the evident intuition of our Founder to *“go everywhere where the others would refuse to go, to give the same happiness for others”*. In order to test this desire to be present to the suffering of the other people, I decided, with the agreement of the Master of Novices, Father Jacky Moura, to deepen this experience in the Saint Michael Center of Bouar in the Vicariate of Central Africa. This center is famous for treating and taking care of the sick living with the VIH-Aids.

The contact with the sick people created a contagion of joy and relief, for myself as well as for the sick. For beyond their persons, I saw a glimpse of Christ suffering with

his smile and luminous face. I really touched Christ’s poverty and suffering. I always bear the painful joy of a ceaseless thirst to drink at the spring of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Today, since my perpetual profession on September 12th 2020, my wish is to be in the heart of the world, living with the same sentiments as Christ who sends us like sheep among wolves to tell his Gospel and cure the sick.

It is this suffering face of Christ in the look of the poor, the sick and small, those at the margin, humiliated by the stigmatisation of our humanity, towards whom our Founder asks us to go *« to procure the same happiness »* which seduced me, and I let myself be seduced by consecrating myself definitively to him, in the footsteps of our Founder Saint Michael Garicoïts, in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Betharram...

Hoping that the reader will find in these lines the story of an ever-fragile vocation, I entrust myself to your prayers. ●●●



How we are preparing for Serge's final profession

God knows how to write straight even on the winding lines at this time of pandemic. In fact, while the media and our own conversations lead us to focus on the many "good opportunities" that this time of precariousness and quarantine has caused us to lose, the Lord has made this beautiful gift to the Vicariate of Italy: that of living and sharing the celebration of the final profession of Br. Serge Appaouh. This is a celebration that has not been experienced in Italy for a decade; an event that no one had planned and which represents for us both a gift, an encouragement and a witness.

It is above all a gift, to understand how much God is at work, including in these times of closures and limitations. We must be attentive and vigilant so as not to experience this festive celebration in a superficial or indifferent manner. Yes, because it could be that we have become accustomed to remaining reclusive in our rooms, at the risk of not taking part in this joy which God gives us to live. This is why our Community of Pistoia offered a collection of prayers for vocations to each religious and community of the Vicariate, to be used during the week preceding the day of Br. Serge's profession. This booklet, which is inspired by Pope Francis's message on World Vocation



*Fr. Simone
Panzeri SCJ*
Community of Pistoia

Prayer Day, helps us to repeat these words of gratitude and praise to God for the wonders he is doing in us and around us.

This week can also encourage each religious to remember the beauty of their own calling to leave everything and put themselves in the hands of the Lord. It is important for us today, as we live in a time of few vocations and where our brothers are advancing in age, to live the beauty of our calling so as not to settle into routine and resignation. We feel that this opportunity is offered to us by God to encourage us to rekindle our prayer and our feeling of being called to a good life. This is why we have made sure that on Sunday 11 October the celebration of profession can be followed by all religious and lay people of the Vicariate of Italy and the Vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire through its transmission on the Facebook page BETHARRAMICI and on the Vicariate website (www.betharram.it). Our wish is that everyone can share

this joy and unite with us beyond the distances and limits imposed by anti-contagion measures.

Finally, we recognize the value of witness that this celebration has for our parish community of *San Francesco* in Pistoia and for the young Betharramite lay people who will be present and will enliven the Sunday Mass with songs and through the liturgical service. Our hope, unspoken but real, is that by seeing and experiencing the joy of a life given to God through the liturgical rite, following the example of Saint Michael, other young people will feel the desire germinating in their hearts to give themselves to Him too.

Seeing in this witness to religious life a gift for the entire Diocese, our Bishop immediately wanted to share the joy of this event by bringing it to the attention of the entire Diocese through the newsletter and the media. Thus Bishop Fausto Tardelli will be also present this Sunday alongside Br. Serge.

With God, the less we see clearly, the more confidently we walk (DS § 206): this testimony of St. Michael could not be more appropriate! We see in fact, that on the uncertain path of this pandemic, Providence has given us great joy: it is up to us to appreciate its full value! ●●●



The final profession of Brother Serge Pacôme Appaouh scj took place on Sunday, October 11, in Pistoia (Italy). The "BetharrAmici", a group of young lay associates, took the opportunity to join in this important event for the family of Betharram with great joy and much energy.



CONGREGATION

Etchecopar's Cause

Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue SCJ, Vicar General, has accompanied Mgr. Sandro Corradini and Fr. Ettore Capra, Postulator of the cause of the canonization of Fr. Etchecopar, in the footsteps of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar in Betharram, Ibarre and St-Palais from the 5th to the 8th of October.

The purpose of this visit was to ascertain how the "*Fama Sanctitatis*" of the Servant of God is still alive today.

Several people testified their devotion or their prayers to Father Etchecopar in the Sanctuaries of Betharram before an ecclesiastical tribunal, appointed by Mgr. Marc Aillet, Bishop of Bayonne.

All this testimony will then be handed in to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to continue the process of the canonization of Fr. Etchecopar. At this stage it is also important that the person of Fr. Etchecopar be known and be approached in prayer.

In 2021, the entire Congregation is invited to live an "Etchecopar Year", that is a year with events exploring the life of Fr. Etchecopar.



REGION SAINT MICHAEL GARICOÏTS

FRANCE ^{SPAIN}

IVORY COAST

ITALY

CENTRAL AFRICA

HOLY LAND

Ivory Coast

- On 28 July, the day of the solemnity of Our Lady of Betharram, while the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, at the end of the canonical visit to the Vicariate of France-Spain, was presiding over the Eucharistic celebration and receiving the final vows of Br. Landry Koffi Djéban scj (cf. Nef no. 162, September 2020), to the great joy of the whole Betharramite family, two Ivorian novices pronounced their first vows at Adiapodoumé, received by the delegate of the Regional Superior, Fr. Théophile Degni N'Guessan, Regional Vicar: Brother Salomon Bandama and Brother Aurélien Emeric Kouamé.

- Wednesday 26 August, the feast of Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified, in the chapel of the Formation House of Adiapodoumé, during the solemn celebration of Vespers, five young men: Antoine, Henri-Joël, Belmond, François and Ghislain began the novitiate.

After a five-day retreat, they entered the canonical year of novitiate in their own vicariate, as requested by the Superior General, given the difficult health situation across the world. The novices are guided by the novice master Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi SCJ,

assisted by Fr. Joseph Ouedraogo scj. Let's accompany them with our prayers.



- From Sunday 6 September to Friday 11, the religious of the Vicariate held their annual retreat, led by Fr. Gustavo Agín SCJ, Superior General, who began the canonical visit to the Vicariate with this time of prayer and silence.

In a quiet atmosphere of meditation, Fr. Gustavo highlighted the importance of *Narratio Fidei*, and each day he helped the religious to review the various aspects of their personal and community faith journey.

Italy & Central Africa

- On Sunday 13 September, the ordinary assembly of the members of the missionary association "AMICI di Betharram - Onlus" (founded in 2013 as a continuation of the Missionary Center of the then Italian Province) took place in the *Madonna del Bel Ramo* community in Albiate (Italy). During the meeting the members elected the new Governing Council that will lead the association for the next three years.

Mr. Giovanni Fossati was elected

president of the association. He will be assisted by Fr. Simone Panzeri SCJ (community of Pistoia), by Mr. Roberto Corno and Mr. Giampaolo Dassi of the «Sacred Heart» parish of Lissone, and Mr. Maurizio Garreffa. Mr. Fossati has been visiting the communities in the Central African Republic numerous times over the past 25 years, working to complete quite a few projects, and recently the "surgical unit" at the Niem Dispensary.

Fr. Piero Trameri SCJ, the outgoing president, at the end of his report expressed his gratitude to all those who have collaborated in recent years, wishing a good journey to all the members present by repeating the words of the Founder Saint Michael Garicoïts: "*Always forward!*"

Central Africa

- On Sunday 9 August, the "Saint-Michel" Care Center in Bouar (Community of Bouar - *Saint-Michel Garicoïts*) received a visit of Pierre Somse, Health Minister of the Central African Government.

Welcomed by Br. Angelo Sala SCJ, director of the Center, the minister was accompanied on a visit to the



structure and examined the reports relating to the annual activity and the results of the "Covid-19" tests. As a matter of fact, the Center, part of the Betharramite missionary activity, has been designated as a centre specialized in this kind of tests.

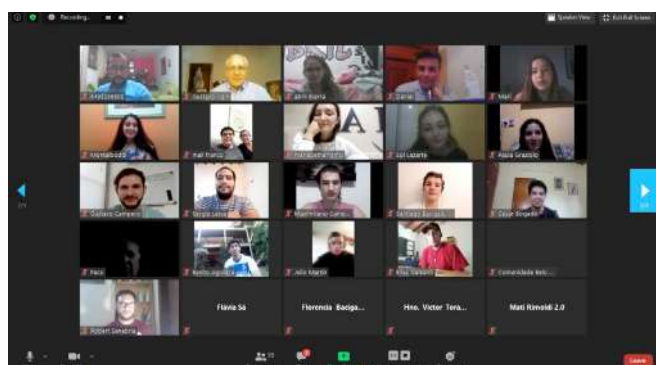
The Minister offered our religious his congratulations for the work carried out both for the care given to the HIV patients, and for the activity conducted in recent months to tackle the spread of Covid-19.



REGION FR. AUGUSTE ETCHECOPAR

ARGENTINA URUGUAY
PARAGUAY BRAZIL

- On August 2, in commemoration of the Feast of Our Lady of Betharram, we, missionaries from different communities in our Region, spent a beautiful time together, *via videoconference*, to share our experiences inspired by the missionary lifestyle that characterizes us so much. This meeting gave us also the opportunity to forge new ties. After the various missionary



testimonies, Fr. Daniel González scj, Regional Superior, offered us a space to reflect on the devotion to our dear Mary, Our Lady of Betharram who, without fear, said YES to God's plan, thus allowing his Will to be done.

During this allotted time, we benefited from the "presence" of the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín, and representatives (lay, religious, youth and adults) from Argentina (Adrogué, Barracas, Martin Coronado, La Plata, Laprida, Rosario and Santiago del Estero), Uruguay (Montevideo), Paraguay (Asunción, Ciudad del Este, Puente Remanso, Lambaré) and Brazil (Belo Horizonte, Sabará, Serrinha).

We do believe that such meetings are important because they strengthen human relationships and create new ties, knowing that we are part of the same family; a family which, some time ago now, was founded by our dear Father Saint Michael Garicoits. Moreover, this kind of activity helps us grow on our journey as missionaries.

We hope that this experience will be repeated, so that we can continue to walk together as a community.

Going out, in community, to meet life in the margins! Forward, always forward!

- From Tuesday 22 to Wednesday 23 September, the 5th meeting for the community superiors of the three Vicariates took place in the Region.



This meeting took place again *via videoconference*, just as it happens across the world for this kind of events.

On Tuesday and Wednesday morning, Mrs. Cecilia Oubel facilitated the meeting on the theme of leadership. On Wednesday afternoon, the meeting was led by Fr. Daniel González SCJ (Regional Superior) who invited us to share on various issues, starting what the Region is living: communities, Vicariate and missions areas (Parishes, Social exclusion, Education and Formation, Spirituality).

This meeting provided an opportunity of in-depth reflection allowing the Region to open new perspectives.



REGION SAINT MARY OF JESUS
CRUCIFIED
 ENGLAND INDIA
 THAILAND

India & Vietnam

- On 15 August, the community of Shobhana Shaakha in Bangalore celebrated the Assumption of our Blessed Mother, Independence Day of India and the conclusion of the Canonical Year of the Novitiate of Brother Prapas from Thailand, Brothers Peter, Joseph & Thang from Vietnam.

We had a Thanksgiving Eucharist for God's special blessings on our novices during this Canonical Year. We also prayed our mother land India... Then, our brothers joyfully danced to make solemn this auspicious day.

Thailand

- On September 19, in the Church of Saint Paul in Huay Tong, two of our young brothers, Br. Peter Raweee Permpoonwicha SCJ and Br. James Thanit Panmanikun SCJ, were

New Betharramite Deacons in Thailand:

Br. James Thanit Panmanikun scj (left)

Br. Peter Raweee Permpoonwicha scj (right)



ordained deacons, along with two Capuchins, by Mgr. Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana, Bishop of Chiang Mai.



Many Betharramite religious took part in the solemn concelebration. Several religious men and women were also present along with lay people who came from the nearby villages.

- From September 28 to October 2, the two Thai novices, Br Daniel Retanachai Paya and Br John Baptist Boonyod Sawangthammakul

attended a course of "Psycho-spiritual integration" offered by a Redemptorist religious.

Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Religious of the

Good Shepherd, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and some Salesian brothers also participated in the course.

In front of the restrictions caused by the pandemic, Fr. Luke Kriangsak SCJ, novice master in Thailand, turns to the collaboration of neighboring communities, to give a more complete formation to our young brothers.

•\• Notices from the General Council •/\•

==== RL. 205/g ••• Admission to final profession



The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, admitted to final profession **Br. Akhil Joseph Thykkuttathil**, from the Vicariate of India, SMJC Region (meeting of the General Council on October 1st, 2020).

The celebration will be taking place on December 8th in Mangalore.

Agenda :

- As we are about to publish this bulletin, we come to know that the canonical visit to Italy (interrupted earlier this year) will undergo further changes due the resurgence of Covid-19 cases. In the first place, the assembly of the vicariate scheduled on October 28 has been cancelled.
- End November, the Superior General will take part, via videoconference, in the biannual assembly of Superiors General (the 2020 May session has been cancelled).

Father Jean LAMBERT scj

Arcachon, 30 June 1930 - Bétharram, 8 September 2020 (France)

"Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord. They will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them" (Rev 14:13). Death, the *"dies natalis"*, is the day of our encounter with God. Saint Francis was right to call it: *"Death - Our sister"*.

Father Lambert was ready. He has always been a man, a faithful religious. Always a little original, discreet, loyal to duty, faithful to the life he had chosen. He was a man straight forward. He had a sense of duty. He has been faithful to the end.

Fr. Jean Lambert scj was born on 30 June, 1930 at Arcachon (close to Bordeaux), while his family, including nine brothers and sisters, were from the Ardennes (close to Belgium). He had completed his secondary education at the College of the Fathers of Betharram in Bazas, before entering the apostolic school of Betharram. After a year of novitiate, he made his first vows in Balarin on 29 September, 1948, and his perpetual profession in Floirac on 24 April, 1953. His priestly ordination was celebrated at Bordeaux Cathedral on 17 March, 1956.

After studying in Paris, Father Lambert taught scientific subjects at the college of Sidi-Bel-Abbès, in Algeria, from 1956 to 1962, then at the college of Our Lady of Bétharram from 1962 to 1973. As a conscientious teacher, he prepared his lessons with meticulous care. His former students remember it.



And with that, he was always close to his students, to his parishioners, to the poor.

He loved, for example, this home of retirement where we live. He was especially interested in the staffs who serve us, their families, and their concerns. He wanted to help them. He loved with his character, his limits, despite of his rather cold and reserved character.

In pastoral care, he always had the same delicacy, the same dedication. Always friendly, he didn't want to hurt anyone. And if he could help, he was there. He was at the service of the monks of Montaut until the end.

But, the great discovery of Father Lambert's life was the Bible - the Word of God. His stay at the Jerusalem Bible school marked him. And since then, everything about the Bible has interested him. The Word of God was the foundation of his spiritual life. It was the spring of his life. One of his greatest joys was having been a professor of

Sacred Scripture at the major seminary of Bayonne. He naturally served as a guide to the most remarkable sites of the Holy Land, during refresher courses and several sessions for young religious organized by the Congregation. Many young Betharramites today have known him in this activity.

Fr. Lambert was a just man according to the expression of the Scripture. And until the end, with his deep gaze, he questioned, he cared, he loved.

Saint John wrote the words of Christ: *"I am the Resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live"*. Dear and faithful Father Lambert, you will be missed! Your fidelity, your righteousness, your love of truth and justice, your love of the poor, will remain.

And for all this, we say thank you and we give thanks to the Lord. Amen. | ***From the homily of Fr. Pierre Grech scj***

"Father Jean spoke little of himself," says Fr. Bacho, Regional Vicar. "However, during the visit in the month of August, while being grateful for the care received at the hospital, he spoke to me about his joy that the in-charge asked him what was his secret to resist the treatment and to keep his serenity. The in-charge woman, who at first was very cold to him, had evolved after several deep conversations. He hadn't given her long sermons, but she had been won over by his gentleness. Even on a hospital bed, the mission continued. To remain a witness of this Jesus, meek and humble of heart towards a person who is sometimes far away from the Church, is to continue the mission in discretion. And beyond that, suffering will allow us to be the master of ourselves. In the last days, he too has known how to be stripped of his judgment, which is part of this extreme annihilation of our human weakness from which we would all like to be exempted".

Brother Alfredo ALFONSO VÁZQUEZ scj

Coronel Martínez, 17 November 1934

- Ciudad del Este, 20 September 2020

(Paraguay)

Br. Alfredo was an approachable and service orientated religious, who lived his vocation to the consecrated life with love and integrity. God gave him a great and generous heart to treat people with humility and simplicity. His lifestyle always attracted attention.



For some time, he closely accompanied the Marian parish group called The Legion of Mary, both in the Sacred Heart of Jesus parish in Ciudad del Este and in the San José parish of Asunción. He joyfully and enthusiastically transmitted God's presence in youth meetings and apostolic movements.

In the religious communities where he lived, he served as an infirmarian (nurse) caring for sick priests and brothers with great delicacy. I have news that he had attended a nursing course at the Paraguayan Red Cross in order to carry out a service in the Pastoral Healthcare in the best possible way.

He worked in the Betharramite Colleges providing pastoral care for the students and, at one point, he spent some time in the concierge of the San José College in Asunción, welcoming with a smile all those who came to the college. He also served as a postman

for the community, by sending and collecting letters and parcels at the central Paraguayan post office for his brothers.

For a short time, he followed the seminarians of the minor seminary when Fr. Miguel Rigual scj was the Director of the Apostolic College.

I had the pleasure to know him personally, to live with him and to share with him the last stage of his earthly life in the religious community of Ciudad del Este from 2014 to 2017. I will always remember him with great affection because he was a man who would instil peace, joy and serenity to people, fruit of a life of prayer, faith, and grace.

At the age of 85, after 68 years of religious life, as a member of the religious community of Ciudad del Este, God called him to his Eternal Home on September 20, 2020.

| **Fr. Alberto Zaracho scj, Regional Vicar in Paraguay**

In memoriam

Two of our young scholastics of the community of Mangalore, hailing from Assam, lost a dear member of their family.

Br. Pobitro Minj scj has lost his father, **Mr. Cornelius Minj**, who died on September 22 in an accident. He was 55 years old.

Mrs Madhuri R. Marak, mother of Br. Johny Marak scj, died on October 1st at the age of 62.

We extend our deepest condolences to Brother Pobitro and Brother Johny, and to their families. We accompany them with our prayers in this trial. May the Virgin Mary sustain their loved ones with her motherly love and introduce them to the Father's House.





Living authority in practice

*“If only they (the superiors) would rest their heads on the pillow of the will of God ...”*¹

Carrying important responsibilities for more than thirty years, Father Etchecopar properly enabled the family of Betharram to be born into the life of the Church.

He lived this in a spirit of friendship simultaneously mixed with a great trust in God: *“the bonds of fraternal friendship have already drawn me very strongly and on an incline as gentle as it is helpful.”*²

Resting on the pillow of God’s will gives us a peace, generating patience and compassion in response to the pressures of the moment (political events, internal decisions and the bustle of daily life): *“As regards charity, I do not think I will ever practice it enough other than by working to sanctify others... remembering sweetness in style: humility and gentleness; but firmness in purpose.”*

The correspondence with Father Magendie, his Vicar General in Argentina, will be woven into a true friend-

ship: *“you are our arms, our eyes, our treasure, our heart, our tender love...”*³, *“you are like my other self”*⁴. In the bi-weekly correspondence with Father Magendie, Father Etchecopar never wavered from his fundamental conviction: *“you know what I think of you,... in a word, my esteem, my affection, my confidence... so this little incident will have no other consequence than to offer each other the opportunity to practice the Christian virtues.”*⁵

As both friend and teacher, he shares as much as possible his experience, in mutual trust: *“Certainly, we know you,... how we have had our hand forced by events (decisions taken hastily) ... FOR ME, I try even harder to foresee things on which I must consult and follow the Rule.”*⁶ Humour is never far away: *“I see, from my experience, that I am approved when I respect the views of others and disapproved when I ask for sacrifice, even from saints ...”*⁷

His faith vision of authority is to foster in everything the psalm: *“How good,*

1) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 4 March 1881

2) Letter to Fr. Lazare, Betharram, 10 October 1877

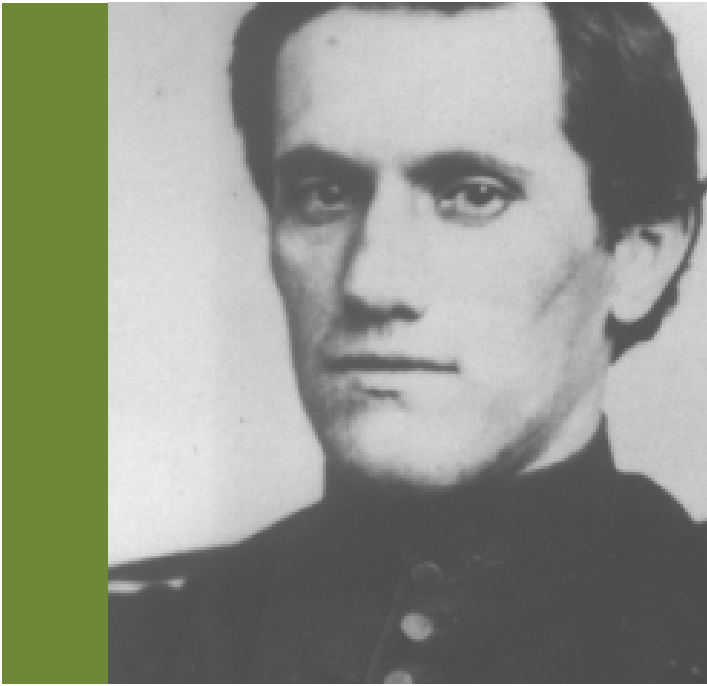
3) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 18 February 1877

4) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 17 June 1877

5) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 3 May 1880

6) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 3 April 1883

7) Letter to a “Carissime fili”, Bétharram, 4 March 1878



Father Etchecopar's correspondence with Father Jean Magendie scj, his Vicar General in Argentina, will be woven into a true friendship.

how delightful it is to live as brothers...". Thus when Rome approved the vow of poverty (1875): "*... the more the branches are pruned and united to the vine, the more they will produce good fruit... Have the spirit of obedience everywhere, always in everything with joy in small things... so that this obedience may sanctify us in truth, unify us in charity, preserve us in hope.*"⁸ His secret? The virtues are woven into everyday life! Recognition by Rome is an essential struggle; far from being a vanity project, it is the seal of brotherhood: "*(the Rules being) more assured guides and brighter lights to advance us in the virtues of our state.*"⁹ In this sense, the lives of religious as well as of communities are truly a melting pot in which discernment is experienced: "*let us all present our best selves... (to) draw*

from their source the lights that we need at this time and that will illuminate the next chapter."¹⁰

Such is the goal! Putting it into practice becomes an art of discernment. Acting wisely, the superior combines group dynamics with the practice of subsidiarity: "*the council here watches over this matter, but at this distance, it is better to deliberate with Father Magendie, his Council and the superiors of the residences.*"¹¹ The Lord manifests his will more in the twists and turns of life than in solitary inspirations! "*In practice, it is to be hoped that here we will only have to ratify what has been decided over there.*"¹² Governing requires advancing, clarifying and arriving TOGETHER, each in his place: "*You would displease the Council here if,*

8) Letter to the religious of the San Juan College in Buenos Aires, Bétharram, 3 April 1876

9) Letter to his sisters Madeleine and Suzanne, Sarrance, 17 September 1877

10) Letter to Fr. Jean-Pierre Barbé and the General Council, Rome, 6 March 1889

11) Letter to Fr. Victor Saubatte, Bétharram, 1st November 76

12) Letter to Fr. Jean-Baptiste Harbustan, Bétharram, 28 October 1872

*unless there were strong reasons, you decided on things which are within its competence according to the constitutions.”*¹³

To repeat: patience and kindness is always needed. Insist, clarify without ever going against the rule of love! Here as elsewhere, the grace of his personal sensitivity knows how to develop for the common good what might otherwise appear as weakness. Repeated abandonment (to providence) and endlessly renewed confidence in prayer.

Guarantor and servant of this *“distinctive stamp”*¹⁴, he will preserve and embed it beyond his own personal journey: *“the Chapter has shown the providential path that we must always consider and follow, the source of light.”*¹⁵

For the religious, it is as if the truth of things was being made real; every step verifying goodness. It requires a great spirit of listening and paying attention to others who should always be heard and allowed to have their say.¹⁶ Elsewhere, he specifies: *“Let us listen to all the observations with humility and simplicity, let us weigh eve-*

13) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, 19 January 1883

14) Letter to Circulaire, Bétharram, 15 June 1888

15) *id.*

16) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 29 September 1889

*rything before God in prayer, and then start again, relying on God alone to fulfil our task, to be the model for the flock ...”*¹⁷

Sometimes it is better to give up your own opinion: *“In general, put you and me,”* he wrote to Father Magendie, *“behind the council. When the latter, in the great majority, supports us, we are very strong. If it thinks differently from us, no more responsibility; therefore we are quiet...”*¹⁸ A tireless peacemaker, the superior will always have sought this union between Love and Truth for his brothers (Ps 132). Without ever ceasing to be realistic: *“We all are a burden to each other”*¹⁹ and *“when one is carrying the weight of a large community, one can fail at taking care of everything, rather than there being a shortage of things to take care of.”*²⁰



17) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 18 April 1885

18) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 21 May 1889

19) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, without date (probably February-March 1887)

20) Letter to his sister Julie, Sister Elisabeth, Daughter of the Charity, Bétharram, 20 May 1878





What do we need to attract God's blessing [...]? A sincere respect for our vocation and our mission, an inner and habitual determination to fulfil as real auxiliary priests, according to our rules, and true instruments of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,⁵⁸ all the duties of this wonderful position. With this spirit, all sorts of good things will happen. A relish for our vocation, faithfulness to our state of life, peace and contentment in our way of life.

Saint Michael Garicoits, Letter to Pierre Barbe, Superior of the College of Moncade, 11th April 1860.



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