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## A word from the Superior General

In the meantime, let's take care  
of each other...

*"Towards midnight Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God,  
and the other prisoners listened to them". (Acts 16:25)*

Dear Betharramites,

The present moment, frequently experienced enclosed within the walls of the community, puts us in front of that paradox of having to go out, and at the same time unable to do so. Like Paul and Silas, imprisoned by the Lord, our praise is raised to heaven and many hear it.

An old popular adage says: "Man proposes and God disposes.» Our founder was the man "made for everything" who loved to fulfil the Will of God, he proposed it and lived it until the time of his death. This year we had proposed to "go out to meet life and its different peripheries in community". Perhaps, if we had had some clairvoyance, we probably would not have chosen such a bold slogan for the confinement of the "2020 lockdown", wearing a mask!

Christians know that there is no time - difficult as it may be - that cannot be considered "God's time". Jesus, in the Gospels, without forcing anyone, invites those who want to follow him to "die to be born", "lose to win", "make

themselves smaller to make the Kingdom grow". The disciple by faith transforms the monotony of the *kronos* into *kairos*.

St Michael also spoke of *"Manna, hidden from many ..."*. Obedient in any situation, he challenged us to serve everyone at all times, especially the little ones; fighting against our own *"fixed ideas"*, individualism and stubbornness, which become obstacles to discernment and action. To some he said: *"... they are not able to understand, appreciate and embrace corde magno et animo volenti et constanti (with great heart and a willing and constant spirit), moments of darkness, of sterility, even failures that are revealed by obedience. It is the manna that, unfortunately, is still hidden for many..."* (DS. 185)

Today as we live subject to intense confinement, rapidly changing and frequently strict, something forces us to change our plans. Our situation is similar to that of Paul and Barnabas and we have to discern well: *"As they passed from city to city, they passed on the decisions taken by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and exhorted them to observe these. These Churches grew stronger in faith and gathered more people every day. They crossed Phrygia and the region of Galatia because the Holy Spirit did not allow them to go to preach the Word in Asia. Being near Mysia they tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow it. Then they crossed Mysia and went down to Troas"*. (Acts 16. 4-8)

Although we are forced to be *"inside"*, the global crisis reminds us

that we continue to be the object of God's love, of his paternal and maternal care, which he never abandons ... Ours is a God who cares, restores and offers his mercy. The mission is transformed, but it does not decrease, nor does it disappear. We can do something... Wherever we manage to make Love present, God will be there.

Saint Paul said in the second letter to Timothy: *"Preach the Word, insist upon it in season and out of season"* (2Tim 4.2). He taught his disciple to face all conditions creatively. I confess that it amazes me to see the healing initiatives that Betharramite religious and laity have taken to be close to their flock. Intensifying local services for welcoming the poor, founding new virtual prayer groups, celebrating Masses online, producing messages and videos, posting debates on theological issues, etc.

When we re-invent ourselves, then we say *"here I am"* by virtual means, and the life of our communities continues there in that new space. On the other hand, the call to *"get out of oneself"* is still in force, to *"not cut ourselves off"*, but to go out in community. The objective is the same as the General Chapter of 2017, although the conditions have changed, that desire for synodality remains in force.

I warmly encourage those who are doing their best to assist those affected by the health emergency, people who do not have the necessary means of subsistence: food, clothing, medicine, etc.

Just to give a few examples (... and

forgive those that I do not mention): the People's Pots of Paraguay, the Meats of the parish of Barracas, the parish Caritas service (in so many places), Betharramites -especially lay people- who work in the *Hogar de Cristo* (in Argentina), the service to the social suffering in the four continents, etc.

I suggest that this missionary context be well used in initial formation. We have the opportunity to learn better what it means for a Betharramite to "go to meet the brother", the suffering, the real actual person who cries out from his confinement, his impotence or exclusion. New generations and adult religious must be motivated to better live the spirituality of the encounter. We want to be Betharramite shepherds and not functionaries, stripped of everything and committed to always and above all fulfil the Will of God.

I am convinced that those who feel this thirst for mission will be better heralds and witnesses of the gospel, inside and outside the home. Not everything is outside. We also have to take care of ourselves and take good care of the most vulnerable in our communities.

The General Chapter in 2017 also invited us to discern, choose, sustain and establish missionary communities. Perhaps few have noticed that this year, several parishes have been opened, such as: Phanaseree (Thailand); Gavião-Nova Fátima (Bahia, Brazil). In addition, the missionary community of Beltran (Argentina) has been opened.

In Niem, Central Africa, starting this

year a new operating theatre has been inaugurated: an invaluable missionary health service, in the midst of the poorest of the poor.

It is important to value these efforts at a time when we believe that "nothing is happening", or that this is "a lost year"... Finally, there are several religious and laity on mission in different countries, peripheral areas or few ministers or of religious communities.

I have the feeling that this core proposal of the 2017 General Chapter should continue to be considered in the next triennium as a priority: "*Go out to meet the different peripheries in community*". That remains the challenge: Betharram going out, in a Church going out!

Although initially we are full of difficulties, I invite you not to lose the courage that should mark us. Let us raise our eyes to heaven and imagine a Saint Michael who tells us: "*These trials in the beginning could be a sign of predestination, God wants it. Courage! Always forward! You never have to wait any longer than when everything seems lost*".

**Fr. Gustavo scj**  
**Superior General**

## Catechesis: “To heal the world” - 1. Introduction (5 August 2020)

Dear brothers and sisters,  
good morning!

The pandemic continues to cause deep wounds, exposing our vulnerability. On every continent there are many who have died, many are ill. Many people and many families are living a time of uncertainty because of socio-economic problems which especially affect the poorest.

Thus, we must keep our gaze firmly fixed on Jesus (see Heb 12:2): in the midst of this pandemic, our eyes on Jesus; and with this faith embrace the hope of the Kingdom of God that Jesus Himself brings us (see Mk 1:5; Mt 4:17; CCC 2816). A Kingdom of healing and of salvation that is already present in our midst (see Lk 10:11). A Kingdom of justice and of peace that is manifested through works of charity, which in their turn increase hope and strengthen faith (see 1 Cor 13:13). Within the Christian tradition, faith, hope and charity are much more than feelings or attitudes. They are virtues infused in us through the grace of the Holy Spirit (see CCC, 1812, 1813): gifts that heal us and that make us healers, gifts that open us to new horizons, even while we are navigating the difficult waters of our time.

Renewed contact with the Gospel of faith, of hope and of love invites us to assume a creative and renewed



spirit. In this way, we will be able to transform the roots of our physical, spiritual and social infirmities and the destructive practices that separate us from each other, threatening the human family and our planet.

Jesus's ministry offers many examples of healing: when He heals those affected by fever (see Mk 1:29-34), by leprosy (see Mk 1:40-45), by paralysis (see Mk 2:1-12); when He restores sight (see Mk 8:22-26; Jn 9:1-7), speech or hearing (see Mk 7:31-37). In reality, He heals not only the physical evil – which is true, physical evil – but He heals the entire person. In that way, He restores the person back to the community also, healed; He liberates the person from isolation because He has healed him or her.

Let's think of the beautiful account of the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum (see Mk 2:1-12) that we heard at the beginning of the audience. While Jesus is preaching at the entrance to the house, four men bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Not being able to enter because there was such a great crowd there, they make a hole in the roof and let the stretcher down in front of Him. Jesus who was preaching sees this stretcher coming down in front of Him. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Child, your sins are forgiven’ ” (v. 5). And then, as a visible

sign, He adds: "Rise, pick up your mat, and go home" (v. 11).

What a wonderful example of healing! Christ's action is a direct response to the faith of those people, to the hope they put in Him, to the love they show that they have for each other. And so, Jesus heals, but He does not simply heal the paralysis. Jesus heals everyone, He forgives sins, He renews the life of the paralyzed man and his friend. He makes him born again, let's say it that way. It is a physical and spiritual healing, all together, the fruit of personal and social contact. Let's imagine how this friendship, and the faith of all those present in that house, would have grown thanks to Jesus's action, that healing encounter with Jesus!

And so we can ask ourselves: today, in what way can we help heal our world? As disciples of the Lord Jesus, who is the physician of our souls and bodies, we are called to continue "His work, work of healing and salvation" (CCC, 1421) in a physical, social and spiritual sense.

Although the Church administers Christ's healing grace through the Sacraments, and although she provides healthcare services in the remotest corners of the planet, she is not an expert in the prevention or the cure of the pandemic. She helps with the sick, but she is not an expert. Neither does she give specific socio-political pointers (see St Paul VI, Apostolic Letter Octogesima adveniens, 14 May 1971, no. 4). This is the job of political and social leaders. Nevertheless, over

the centuries, and by the light of the Gospel, the Church has developed several social principles which are fundamental (see The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 160-208), principles that can help us move forward in preparing the future that we need. I cite the main ones which are closely connected: the principle of the dignity of the person, the principle of the common good, the principle of the preferential option for the poor, the principle of the universal destination of goods, the principle of the solidarity, of subsidiarity, the principle of the care for our common home. These principles help the leaders, those responsible for society, to foster growth and also, as in the case of the pandemic, the healing of the personal and social fabric. All of these principles express in different ways the virtues of faith, hope and love.

In the next few weeks, I invite you to tackle together the pressing questions that the pandemic has brought to the fore, social ills above all. And we will do it in the light of the Gospel, of the theological virtues and of the principles of the Church's social doctrine. We will explore together how our Catholic social tradition can help the human family heal this world that suffers from serious illnesses. It is my desire that everyone reflect and work together, as followers of Jesus who heals, to construct a better world, full of hope for future generations (see Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, 24, November 2013, no. 183). Thank you.

[to be continued in the NEF]



## On a mission, in the same spirit as the founder

| **P. Tobia Sosio scj**  
Community of Puente Remanso

The month of September takes on a particular significance in the life of our religious family, especially for Betharram.

It is with great solemnity that we celebrate the feast of the Cross, with the Way of the Cross at Calvary.

It is also the occasion to remember the date when St Michael and his first seven companions officially took their vows before the bishop, Monsignor Lacroix, who approved the Founder's project by recognising the Society of Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and developing the first Constitutions. Incidentally, it was not exactly what he had asked for, but it was nevertheless an important step and a clear sign that the divine Providence supported this inspiration that our saint had felt rise up in his heart in the course of his long times of discernment before Our Lady of Betharram. Let's quote verbatim the acts of that first Consecration as reported by Father Brunot in his biography: *The Saint of Here I Am*.

*'Minutes of the Society of Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the year 1841 on*

*the 10th September, during the Holy Mass celebrated by Monsignor Lacroix, Bishop of Bayonne, in the chapel of Betharram,*

*the following made their annual vows in accordance with the constitutions of the Society of Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: Messrs Garicoïts, Guimon, Perguilem, Fondeville, Chirou, Bellocq, Cassou, Carrerot.*



*In faith of this, we*

*have written the present report in the days, months and year above, and have signed.'*

Nine years had already passed since Father Le Blanc SJ had confirmed to St Michael his desire to embrace the religious life: 'God wants you to be more than Jesuit; you follow your first inspiration which I believe came from heaven and you will be the father of a family which will be our sister.'

The path remained difficult, but St Michael had a clear conviction deep down inside: Here I Am; May God's Will be done. Father Brunot offers us a good interpretation of the spirit of St Michael: 'Here I Am, not with the resignation of someone who is ill and waiting for the doctor and his prescription, but with the momentum of an athlete who rushes forward into

*the stadium to win the race. Not with the gloom of a fatalistic old man but rather with the skipping of children on the Ibarre hills, the sunrise each morning on the slopes of Betharram cutting across the sky: Here I Am! The joyful shout of a child running towards his father who is calling him. The shout of a soldier of God.'*

It is the same spirit which must characterise our missionary outings to which one of the orientations of the General Chapter invites us this year. Although "superior of 4 walls", the heart of St Michael beat in unison with the heart of the Word Incarnate. The future was uncertain but he continued to dream and to

respond to the multiple needs and circumstances that God showed him, in obedience to the established authority and acting charitably, within the limits of his position.

Today the pandemic is reappearing here and there ; elsewhere it is at its highest point : it is in these moments that we feel most urgently the desire to be Apostles of the Sacred Heart.

*'Oh! If our whole being, our body and our soul, had only one action, a generous desire to put itself under the direction of the Spirit of love continually saying: Here I Am, ecce venio! ...' (DS §129) ●●●*

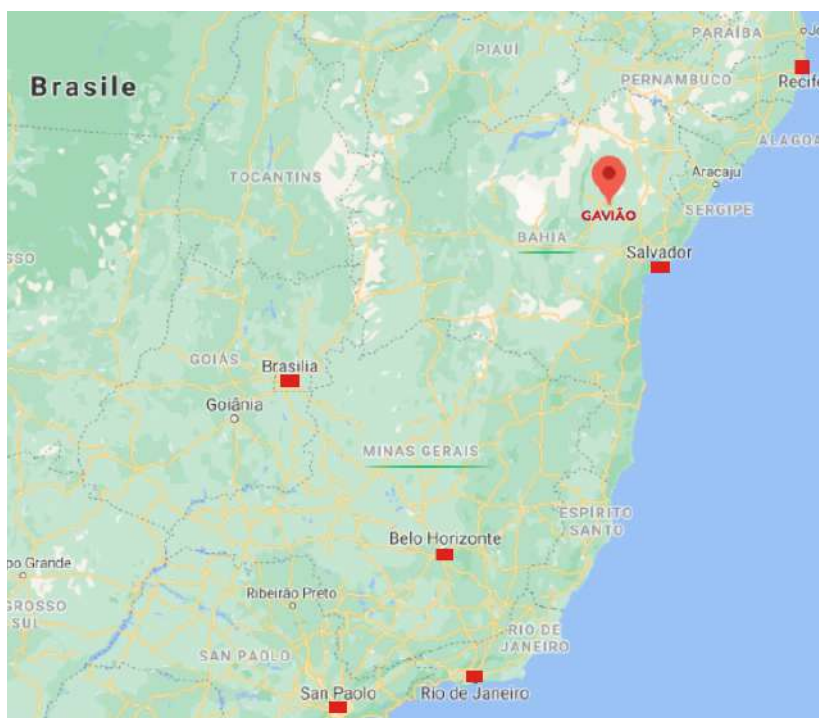
## Bétharram beyond borders on a continent called Brazil

At the beginning of 2015, the Betharramite Vicariate in Brazil took an important step towards the realization of a dream which was to go beyond the confines of the southwest region of the country. In fact, at the request of Bishop Ottorino Assolari, pastor of the local church of Serrinha (in the North East of Brazil), we accepted as our mission, ad experimentum, the pastoral care of the parish of the Good Shepherd, located at the edge of the town of Serrinha (Bahia). This parish had 61 ecclesial communities, most of them located in rural areas. At the end of 2017, to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the discovery of



the statue of Our Lady of Aparecida, patroness of Brazil, the parish of the Good Shepherd was divided to create the parish of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Aparecida, which was entrusted to the Capuchins.

The Betharramite Vicariate in Brazil thus responded to the request of



of Santaluz) also depends. This new mission represents thirty ecclesial communities, the vast majority of them rural, comprising a population of just over 23,000 inhabitants. This territory located in the western periphery of the diocese is characterized by great poverty. The small towns are however pleasant and well maintained. These localities are located on the main road that connects Feira de Santana (the second most important and populous

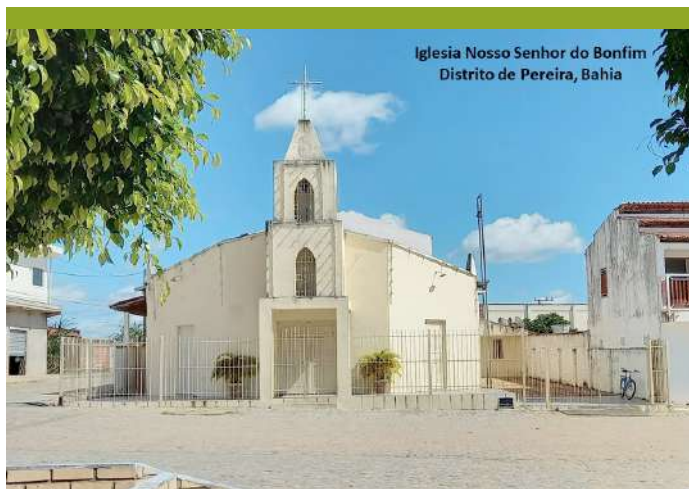
the diocesan bishop by giving from its poverty. The beginnings were difficult, it took continuous changes of religious men, coming from all over the region and Fr. Auguste Etchécopar to ensure a presence and pastoral service to the People of God in this part of the diocese of Serrinha. Once we succeeded in putting in place a certain organization and a community and parish stability, the diocesan bishop wished to take over the parish of the Good Shepherd in order to offer us the parish of Our Lady of the Conception in Gavião and Nova Fatima (in the state of Bahia), on which the pastoral zone of Pereira (district

city in the state of Bahia) and Petrolina (an important city in the state of Pernambuco).

According to the information given to us, these communities have suffered greatly from inconstancy of pastoral care and from difficulties encountered on a human level by previous parish priests. There is much to do, a strong witness to offer on a daily basis, based on the formation provided by the local church and the parish community, as well as on personal formation, which is so necessary and sometimes neglected. It is not really organization that these







communities lack, but rather more definite and coherent training.

We may have given out of our poverty to this local church, but we have been blessed with vocations. Feeling welcomed and listened to, some young people wished to be accompanied in vocational discernment. One of them has already professed vows and is currently studying theology; another is in postulancy and studying philosophy; two others share some of common life with the religious, beforehand in the community of Serrinha, and recently share in the new mission. One of them

has already started to prepare for the entrance exam in philosophy. Some others are accompanied virtually by our brothers. We took up a mission and the Lord has blessed us with vocations... ●●●

*The community of Gavião today: Fr. Gilberto Ortellado Maldonado scj (parish priest), Fr. Iran Lima Da Silva scj (parish vicar and bursar of the community) and two aspirants, João Francisco Silva De Jesus (22 years old) and Ademir Dos Santos Santana (16).*



## Final Profession, at the foot of our Lady of the Beautiful Branch

Greetings to you all! First of all, let me start by introducing myself. My name is Koffi Djeban Landry, born on 31 October in 1984 in Arrah, a village in the east of the Ivory Coast. In the congregation, I belong to the Region St Michel GARICOÏTS, vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire. I am of Ivorian nationality. As the youngest of seven children of whom five boys and two girls, I grew up in a Christian family where my parents themselves are being practicing Catholics. My father is a teacher at the Catholic Mission Centre and it was in Catholic education that I took my first steps in.

After my college and high school, I had been admitted in 2006 in the University for Studies in Modern Letters (three years). My desire to consecrate myself to the Lord dates from my childhood. We are in 1996, a schoolboy in class CM2. One evening, when I got back from hospital after a traffic accident, speaking to my father, I let my deep desire to swell up to the surface: «Daddy, I want to become a priest.» At these words, remained silent for a moment, he said to me: «When you grow up, we'll see». It was the start of an adventure with the Lord.

I received Baptism and first Holy Communion on 25 June 1994, then confirmation two years later. I spent most of my time in the Catholic mis-

sion, sometimes in school, sometimes in church, or in the presbytery, or in the group

of altar servers. I was fortunate to associate with several priests on mission in our cathedral parish. I remained so much attached to one of them. We became very good friends. I saw and listened to him regularly. At times, he invited me to pray with him. He gave me gifts to encourage me in order to work and to discipline. Even after leaving our parish for other missions (he became bishop of a diocese), this priest continued to follow me. It pleased me and comforted me in my desire to become like him one day. I continued to live like other young people of my age while being assiduous in the parish activities. In the second year of faculty, I expressed my desire to enter the diocesan seminary. He encouraged me to personally walk my path with the Lord. In 2010, I joined the vocational group in my parish to discern my call. In this group, I was given responsibility of two commissions: the spirituality commission and the communication commission. I carried out these responsibilities in a spirit of service and openness.



**Br. Koffi  
Djeban  
Landry SCJ**  
*Community of Pau*

That year, our group was expected to visit a religious community. Our choice having fallen on the community of Betharram fathers present in Adiapodoumé (Abidjan, Ivory Coast), I was responsible for making contact with them. I met Father Laurent Bacho with whom we were finalizing the program for our visit. It was my first contact with the religious of Betharram. I was fascinated by their simplicity, their joy of living and their different missions. By meeting them more closely with the aspirant's stage, I was attracted by the richness of the charism of their founder which was summed up in the offering of our life: "Here I am without delay, without reserve, without return, by love to do your will Lord". Against all expectations, this life program corresponded to my aspirations.

So, on 10 October 2011, I began

my vocational journey through the pre-postulancy stage in the Adiapodoume formation house. Then two years of postulancy (with philosophical studies), two years of novitiate (including the canonical year in 2015 in Bethlehem), three years of scholasticate (with theological studies), and a year of preparation for perpetual vows at St Michael community at Pau in the Vicariate of France-Spain. On 28 July 2020, during the solemnity of Our Lady of Betharram, I professed my final vows in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram in the hands of our Superior General, Father Gustavo Agín. Today, I rejoice at the different stages of formation that helped me to gradually grow and become better. It is a grace to have signposts in one's life, the various superiors, formators and elders who have accompanied me.



*On July 28th, at Betharram, the Superior General, Fr Eduardo Gustavo Agín scj, received the perpetual vows of Br. Landry, surrounded here by Fr. Gabriel Verley scj, Fr. Hervé Kouamé Kouakou scj and Br. Constant Cheghe, novice.*



I learn a lot from fraternal life lived in community. It shapes me always - giving me a taste for daily prayer, both personal and community, the joy of living with brothers, the happiness of being able to share what I am and what I have but also to enrich myself from the experience of others. All are richness for me, because it is the place where my vocation takes root and flourishes, my «*sequela Christi*». I continue to drink in the spirituality of the mystic of the Incarnation, of the annihilation of the Son of God, advocated and lived by our Founder Father. For me, this is the leitmotif that always leads me to better live

the dynamism of our charism and to better appropriate the sentiments of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. All these enrich my desire to serve God and my brothers and sisters in humanity. May the intercession of Our Lady of Betharram, of Saint Michael GARIOÏTS, of the Betharramites of heaven and earth help me always to be faithful to my commitment. *Forward! Always Forward! ●●●*

## Priest for 50 years and a religious for 46

«*Dum omni modo Christus annuntietur*» which, roughly translated, means: In all and every manner, so long as the Christ is announced (cf. Phil 1:18). This is the motto at the heart of my identity and life as a priest, to be within a church that is missionary, to be at the service of mankind, to love them, go out and encounter them, heart in one hand and the other outstretched to offer help in every way possible. If 50 years ago this was an ideal, today I thank the Lord for what he has enabled me to be and to accomplish, in spite of life's ups and downs. The Lord took me by the hand and led me where He wanted me to be. Here I am today, with no regrets,



priest of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, integrated into a culture that differs from my own, open to the missionary dimension, ready to serve always and everywhere.

The image of the Sacred Heart was enthroned in my family home; the First Friday monthly devotions were inculcated into me by the family; Eucharistic adoration was a longed-for moment on Sunday afternoons, in particular





*Fr. Felet scj (on the right) during a celebration with Mgr Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem (2017, at Magdala, feast of Saint Mary Magdalene)*

during the forty days of Lent - I took my turn in watching for an hour and stood in for my grandpa when he was unwell.

As a child and then a teenager, I used to go from house to house to collect donations for the missions. When a pupil at the diocesan seminary, I spent my summer Sundays with the Parish Priest visiting the sick and the elderly. Along the way he taught me the basics of pastoral life: openness to others, respect for others, faithful commitment to prayer and to the mission entrusted to us, a genuine love of poverty which never allows itself to be dazzled by the "latest thing" or by symbols of material wealth.

His byword which he often repeated to me was: "We are useful but never indispensable"; this has stayed with me and come back to me at opportune moments, times when I've been tempted to believe I was someone im-

portant or think that without me, things would not progress. These principles for life have been such a help to me during my 50 years as priest and as a religious.

My vocation came in response to an appeal from the bishop of Vittorio Veneto (Venice, Italy). At the end of a mass he was celebrating in a cement works, the bishop turned to me and, out of the blue, said: "I'm waiting for you at the seminary". I did not know what a seminary was! but on the other hand,

I did know that on that date, 21 June 1857, we were celebrating the feast of the Sacred Heart. In September that year, I entered the diocesan seminary, all the while feeling myself greatly attracted to missionary work. And so it was, in 1962, that I set off the Holy Land to continue my preparation for the priesthood. My formators were Betharramites, priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This was the first time I had ever encountered a religious community. More than a community, I saw a religious family, made up of different people who nonetheless were close and committed: genuine witnesses. At that time, it was thought immodest to talk about oneself and one's family so I didn't get to know much about my formators' past or backgrounds, but I did feel that they were inhabited by something new: a profoundly religious

human and priestly essence.

Three of my formators tried every which way to convince me that I should choose the religious life. I was unaware of what that was and of what it meant; I saw them living day-to-day, praying together, helping one another and yet knowing how to spend their leisure moments relaxing and enjoying being together. After my ordination to the priesthood, I lived in community with them even though I was actually serving the parish of Beit Jala. Father Joseph Mirande often repeated that my faithfulness to duty back then was an asset which ensured my commitment in future. After putting up strong resistance for some seven years, I gave in to "temptation". Temptation not being a sin, however I have never regretted responding with *"Here I am"*.

As I was already a priest, my noviciate year in Albavilla (1973-4) was a pastoral year rather than a year devoted to deepening the Betharramite spirituality. But in no way was that year wasted or useless.

In anticipation of my return to Beit Jala, I started a degree in moral theology at the Alfonsian Academy in Rome (1974-6). These were difficult but wonderful years, where I was called to abandon the casuistic formation received in the seminary and turn my eyes to new horizons: that of Jesus Christ as model for life and the rule being solely an instrument to achieve this life, and to see others not in any abstract or impersonal way but as true travelling companions, and build the Kingdom of God

with passion, devotion, with an open heart and mind.

Years teaching in the patriarchal seminary and the University of Bethlehem (1976-80) were followed by years devoted to direct or regional pastoral ministry: as a *fidei donum* priest in Kuwait (1981-84) and pastor to an inter-ritual community of around 15,000 Catholics, then re-creator of the parish of Saint'Ilario in Milan (1986-89), pastoral assistant to the Pilgrims Chaplaincy Service (Opera Romana Pellegriaggi) (1985. 1989-1992). Each step along the way had its own special moments: nurturing the joy of being a Christian in a Muslim environment, bolstering the feeling of belonging to the Christian parish community, giving people a taste of the Word of God.

When I was engaged in pastoral activity, I was then asked to make a complete change: leave this area of the priesthood and work in an office. But was this proposal really in line with the Betharramite charism and the priorities of the Congregation? In the face of my doubts, the Superior General at the time told me: "When the Church calls, the true Betharramite always says 'Here I am'".

So since 1992 I've have been closeted in various administrative posts: employee of the Apostolic Delegation to Jerusalem for economic affairs and development of Catholic Schools in Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Cyprus (1992-2008), secretary of the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land and the Conference of Latin Bish-

ops in Arabia (since 2008). Apart from all the paperwork, the preparation of two Apostolic Visits (Benedict XVI in 2009 and Pope Francis in 2014) to maintain good relations with the Holy See and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, my principal assignment was and still remains to create a sense of unity between the Ordinaries of the different churches sui iuris and to maintain fraternal relations with the Latin Bishops scattered across the 23 countries of the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

Meanwhile, I continued to lecture in moral theology, first at the Salesian Student House and then at the Franciscan School: an exciting experience and an opportunity to keep in good shape, intellectually and spiritually.

But that wasn't enough. The Patriarch insisted that I fulfil the duties of Master of Ceremonies. This was yet

again a grace. I understood that it was not just a question of sticking to the liturgical rules but more a matter of preserving an atmosphere of faith: to pray and get others to pray. Decorum and movement ought to express harmony and beauty.

All this have I lived as a priest of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharam: "*idoneus, expeditus, expositus*". "*Here I am*" required preparation, promptness and courage. This was of help when I was asked to prepare an initial draft revision of the Rule of Life, to take on the responsibility of formator and superior of the community in Bethlehem for 10 years and finally to become Provincial Councillor and Regional Vicar in the Holy Land for a further 18 years. ●●●

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

### ==== RL 248-251 ●●● Appointment of ten Regional Vicars

The General Council, gathered by the Superior General from August 3 to 8, proceeded to the examination of the consultation of the religious, launched with a view to the appointment of the Regional Vicars for the next three years. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, not all Councillors could travel to Rome. Therefore, the Superior General requested and obtained the authorization of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life to carry out this Council using the new technologies of communication.



The Superior General, with the consent of his Council and after consultation with the respective Regional Superiors, reappointed for three years the ten regional vicars whose mandate was expiring, with the exception of the Regional Vicar of the Holy Land, whose first term was extended for one year:

**Region Saint Michael Garicoïts:** Fr. Laurent Bacho scj (France-Spain) ; Fr. Piero Trameri scj (Italy), Fr. Pietro Felet scj (until August 31st, 2021, Holy Land), Fr. Tiziano Pozzi scj (African Central Republic), Fr. Théophile Dégni N'Guessan scj (Côte d'Ivoire); First Regional Vicar: Father TIZIANO POZZI SCJ

**Region Father Auguste Etchecopar:** Fr. Sergio Gouarnalusse scj (Argentina-Uruguay), Fr. Paulo Cesar Pinto scj (Brazil), Fr. Alberto Zaracho scj (Paraguay); First Regional Vicar: Père SERGIO GOUARNALUSSE SCJ

**Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified:** Fr. Arul Gnana Prakash scj (India), Fr. John Chan Kunu scj (Thailand); First Regional Vicar: Father JOHN CHAN KUNU SCJ

*The first term of the Regional Vicar in England will expire only in 2021.*

### ==== RL 206/a,b,f ••• Opening & closure of a house; appointment of the community superior

The Superior General, with the advice of his Council (meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, 2020) gave his approval to the closure of «Monteporzio [Monteporzio, Pozzaglia Sabina, Montorio]-Miracoli » community , giving back the parishes of Pozzaglia Sabina and Montorio to the diocese of Tivoli, and the **opening of two separate communities: Community of Monteporzio and Community of Rome-Miracoli** (approved also the **appointment of Fr. Ercole Ceriani as superior of the Community of Rome-Miracoli and of Fr. Mario Longoni as superior of the Community of Monteporzio**), from September 14, 2020, (Region Saint Michael Garicoïts, Vicariate of Italy).

### ==== RL 206/b ••• Acceptance of a parish and opening of a house (here residence)

The Superior General, with the advice of his Council (meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, 2020) gave his approval to the **acceptance of the parish of Phanaseree (Diocese of Chiang Rai) and the opening, in the same village, of a new residence** which will depend on Ban-Pong-Phayao community, from August 15, 2020. Ban-Pong – Phayao Community is now **Ban-Pong – Phayao – Phanaseree community**, composed by three houses (Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified, Vicariate of Thailand).



## On the agenda:

- The Superior General is currently on a canonical visit to the Vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire (September 5 to 26). The visit will end with the assembly of the vicariate which will take place on September 22 and 23 in Dabakala.  
On the occasion of his visit, Fr. Gustavo received the perpetual vows of Brothers Arnaud N'Dah Kadjo and Christian Arnaud Yao on September 12, 2020 in Adiapodoumé.
  - The canonical visit to the Vicariate of Italy (interrupted at the beginning) is still scheduled from October 3<sup>rd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>.
- .....

## In memoriam :

... In the past two months, our Congregation has lost two friends. **Mrs. Henriette N'Guessan** (Ivory Coast) and **Mr. Michael Goïcoéchéa** (France).



... **Henriette N'Guessan** has died after a long illness. She joined the «Nê Mê» Fraternity of Adiapodoume in 2007, after a spiritual retreat she made within the Community. Chosen as leader of the association, she was able to lead the group with dedication until her last days. We pray for her and for her family. May she rest in the peace of the Lord.

... Permanent deacon at the Parish of St Jacques d'Amikuze in Saint-Palais, **Michel Goïcoéchéa** was a member of the association "*Les Amis de Saint Michel*" (the Friends of Saint Michael) which takes care of the maintenance of Ibarre and of the organization of the annual pilgrimage to Garacotchea.

Former apostolic of Betharram, Michael had remained close to Betharram, particularly in enlivening the pilgrimage to Ibarre and in enriching his spiritual life by drawing on the spirituality of St Michael Garicoits. We assure his wife and children of our support and our prayer.



## Father Pierre SALLA scj

*Juxue, 28 February 1927 - Bétharram, 4 September 2020 (France)*

PIARRA, you leave us a beautiful testimony : a rich legacy as a man, as a religious and as a priest.

In your family first, in Juxue, "Otsania" house, with your relatives, you knew and experienced poverty and happiness at the same time. Betharram too, your second family, was very dear to you.

Your long service as a missionary in Thailand has left a deep mark on you in many respects. There, the difficult conditions of the first fifteen years or so seasoned you: you did not lack courage and determination to remain faithful to the missions entrusted to your good will and to your determination to always do good.

You were totally committed to Jesus Christ and to the proclamation of his Good News. Prayer played a big role in your life, both personally and in community. You liked to withdraw and take time for yourself on one of the beautiful hill tops of Juxue, in this wonderful corner of «Jaunabordetan» to meditate and make your retreat as a person consecrated to GOD. To meet with your religious brothers was a joy for you. Your loyalty to your family in Otsania, in the village of Juxue, in the Basque Country, was a constant.

I had the opportunity and the blessing to live a few years with you, in community, in Saint-Palais. Your discretion, your availability to listen, your fraternal attention, your good sense of humour, all did us a power of good. The living



footprints of older brothers like you remind us of what is essential: being close to God and being close to people are totally intertwined. Piarra, you experienced this reality intensely and very seriously. Prayer and work, action and contemplation, these were the realities in your life. A big thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your kindness and your radiant smile live on in us. Piarra, we love you.

**Fr. Joseph Ruspil SCJ**

«... We entrust and recommend Peter to God, our Father of tenderness. We give Him thanks, for Peter, for what he is in himself for us, for all the good, beautiful and great things he achieved, during his life on earth, especially in Thailand where, as a missionary, he spent his life in the service of Jesus Christ, of the Christian communities and of his religious brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram. » | **Fr. Bertrand Salla scj**, his brother



*In all the centres where Fr Pierre Salla did his missionary work, the Vicariate of Thailand celebrated a Mass for our dear deceased brother.*



Pierre, 4th in a family of twelve children, was born in Juxue, Otsarania house, on 28 February 1927. From his childhood, he expressed the desire to become a priest. After a year spent at the Etchecopar house in Saint-Palais, he joined Bétharram, in class 6, for a six-year cycle of studies. After that, he entered the scholasticate of Floirac, near Bordeaux, for his studies in philosophy and theology.

Six years later, he was ordained as a priest in the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Bétharram, by Cardinal Richaud, in St-André Cathedral in Bordeaux, on 29 June, 1953.

Eager to work in a mission country, he joined other Betharramites in Thailand where he worked for 52 years.

At the age of 80, he preferred to return to France to allow his younger brothers to carry on the missionary work. He retired to the Betharramite community of Saint-Palais in 2007. He joined the retirement home in Bétharram in 2017.

For those who knew him well, he leaves a memory of a discreet religious, deeply attached to prayer and to the spiritual life.



... On 8 September, in the afternoon, at the Maison Neuve in Bétharram, **Fr. Jean Lambert scj** also died; he was 90 years old. Let us pray for him with his family, his many friends and the whole family of Betharram.

We will pay tribute to him next month.



“We will be as second brothers to them...”<sup>1</sup>

*“Let us contemplate Eternity<sup>2</sup>... for as eternal life is a life of love, we must love here on earth...”*<sup>3</sup>. The

ideal of religious life is crucial for Father Etchecopar; he gradually evaluates the affect on the world of this type of holy life desired by the founder.

*“Everything here smiles upon me”*<sup>4</sup>; The decisive experience in Argentina shows him that between the moment of founding and that of present rooting, *“the connections are true”*<sup>5</sup>. A real thunderbolt! A true confirmation of the impression left by the first trip to Bethlehem: *“I had barely taken the path to the Holy Land, when I was transformed...”*<sup>6</sup>. Finally, the various encounters with the Pope help to forge in him the consciousness of a universality,

of a participation in this solicitude of the Pope for the whole Church, well beyond the birthplace of the family, with its routine and organisational concerns. He realises that an authentic *“bringing to birth”*<sup>7</sup> must necessarily incorporate a missionary dynamic. In fact, in the 19th-20th century, apostolic religious life was in practice a monastic life without a cloister. In the writings of Father Etchecopar, this life is about becoming a saint by praying and working; the outside world seems to have no connection with this way of life. The outside world has no impact on him. But rather than becoming a form of escapism, the work and the visitations of the Superior outline for him a pattern of a way of life conducted according to other rules, as yet invisible and unsuspected. For him it is obedience to life as it is given: *“I see no other way to judge and make decisions things than through the Fiat of our adorable Master. Other things may influence me but when we do what we can with the modest resources of our poverty before God, on reflection, I only esteem obedience.”*<sup>8</sup>

Here again with sensitive to fraterni-

1) Letter to his sister Madeleine, Bétharram, 22 January 1879

2) Letter to his sister Julie, Sister Elisabeth, Daughter of Charity, 24 July 1866

3) Letter to his parents, Bétharram, around 1859

4) Letter to Fr. Victor Bourdenne, Buenos-Aires, 15 March 1892

5) Letter to the Fathers & Brothers of America, Bethlehem, 12 December 1892

6) Letter to Sister Euphrasie, Prioress of the Carmel of Bethlehem, Buenos Aires, 16 December 1891

7) Letter to his sister Julie, Sister Elisabeth, Daughter of Charity, Bétharram, 30 July 1877

8) Letter to Fr. Ernest Lullier, Oloron, 1<sup>st</sup> August 87





ty and humility, the foundations of the inner spiritual life, he makes himself an apostle among others and a source of pastoral action. Referring to the dispensation enjoyed by Betharramites in the Holy Land, he wrote: *“our dear Franciscans may have cause to be unhappy with this breach of their privilege. But since God speaks through the mouth of his Vicar, let us hope that, far from harming them, we will be like second brothers to them, while they in turn will be our holy protectors.”*<sup>9</sup> Strengthened and encouraged by his first trip to the East, Father Etchecopar felt a profound transformation: *“(these graces) now permeating my whole life have given my life increasing strength ... I feel a sap, a flame that I did not know, which revives and energises my direction, my*

9) Letter to his sister Madeleine, Bétharram, 22 January 1879

*work... as though I had wings.”*<sup>10</sup> Before it is a theory, missionary impetus is an experience. This man feels himself a *«citizen»*<sup>11</sup> of Bethlehem as well as of Argentina. Used to analysing life in France from a political angle, sharing the life of the brothers for a long time elsewhere makes him understand that life itself is a religious issue. Though by nature he will always be sentimental he sees realistically how much here and there, *«there is a lot of religious evil and indifference but also a lot of good»*<sup>12</sup>. Without ever departing from his spirit of faith: *“It suffices that his will be done and his kingdom come”*<sup>13</sup>; *“Though the storm clouds gather outside,*

10) Letter to Sister Euphrasie, Prioress of the Carmel of Bethlehem, Bétharram, 17 July 1891

11) Letter to au P. Pierre Estrade, 21 december 1891

12) Letter to au P. Victor Bourdenne, Buenos Aires, Colegio San José, 11 December 1891

13) Letter to Sister Euphrasie, Prioress of the Carmel of Bethlehem, Rome, 9 May 1891

*you have more consolations inside than ever.*"<sup>14</sup> In Argentina, he admires the creative pedagogy implemented, a move away from simply repeating what is done in France. In Bethlehem, the local community is at the source of the very spirit of the congregation: poverty, simplicity and availability of Christ<sup>15</sup>! Thus emerges the pattern of a diversity which, far from impoverishing, will become the crucible of vital energy. Recognise that far from the birthplace (of the Congregation), and the first bonds, these brothers have *"become part of myself..."*<sup>16</sup>.

Of course we can't forget the difficulties! And Father Etchecopar, in his journey of discovery, is nonetheless marked by his *"world"* and his cultural assumptions. The *"Mohammedans"* find little favour in his eyes even if, in a flash of openness, he notes: *"Oh my God, if only these poor Turks had the Faith .. they would honour it with same reverence and devotion as they do their current beliefs."*<sup>17</sup> Likewise the Orthodox whom he calls *"heretics"*, *"schismat-*

*ics"*<sup>18</sup>. It sounds harsh to us. For him, they express the awareness of a truth held by the Catholic Church alone. During a stopover in Africa on the way to America, he will not go down to the city: too much dirt! But Father Etchecopar is not simply a prisoner of his own opinions. In Argentina, he is not fooled by what he observes socially: *"We imagine that we meet, alongside the multitude starving for fortune, only big capitalists, rich traders and landowners! This is a mistake, because there are also educated men of sound science."*<sup>19</sup> If we want perfection, we will not find it in Father Etchecopar! If, on the other hand, we want to discover how a man, marked by his time, has agreed to let himself be moved, wrong-footed and sometimes bowled over by what he was experiencing while remaining fixed on his essentials, then we have in him the man that we need!

●●●

14) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Bétharram, 4 July 1891

15) (Letter 1231)

16) Letter to Sister Euphrasie, Prioress of the Carmel of Bethlehem, Bétharram, 17 July 91

17) Letter to Fr. Victor Bourdenne, Bethlehem, 27 December 1892

18) Letter to the religious of San José College of Buenos Aires, Bétharram, 19 February 1885

19) Letter to Fr. Victor Bourdenne, Buenos-Aires, 15 March 1892





## **SAINT MICHAEL GARICOITS, FROM HEART TO HEART**

••• Who does not have a word or an expression or a phrase of Saint Michael Garicoits which often resonates in his heart like background music, like an incessant call to keep trusting in the Lord, like the signature tune of the One who wants to fill us of his presence and his love? •••

[ Jesus gives me the example... He emptied Himself in the Incarnation, to be my model. God wants me to be holy. God wants us to be holy. He makes it a precept. (MS p. 150) ]

*This will be accomplished through the Mass, through a humble and constant prayer, and through sacrifice and supporting the ups and downs of life.*

*From an interview of Fr. Pierre Salla scj (1927-2020)  
published in the NEF in October 2007*



«He is the Beginning, the first-born from the dead, so that he  
should be supreme in every way;  
because God wanted all fullness to be found in him  
and through him to reconcile all things to him, everything in heav-  
en and everything on earth, by making peace  
through his death on the cross.»  
(Col. 1,20; cf. 2,13-15)

In union of prayers on September 14<sup>th</sup>  
**Feast of the exaltation of  
the Holy Cross**



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