

# NEF

# Betharram

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## A word from the superior general

### Go out to communicate: meet, listen, discern... together

*What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing this to you to make our own joy complete. (1 Jn 1, 3-4)*

Dear Betharramites,

We are coming to the end of one more year. The People of God continue to walk illuminated by the flame of a faith that does not go out; we struggle between pandemics and cloudy horizons, but the pilgrimage does not stop. Christ leads us through the desert towards the Father.

We Betharramites walk alongside the People. We show solidarity with their pain and we want to serve them better in all our missionary presences.

The Council of the Congregation met by video from November 15 to 19. In these days we spent time listening and discerning together some paths to follow, taking account of the current context and in tune with what our communities are experiencing today, in their different local Churches.

2022 will be a special year, first of all, because it will be the year of preparation for the General Chapter of 2023; But we will also continue with the year of Father Etchecopar until May 30, and then we will begin the centenary year of the first arrival of the Betharramite missionaries to China. These two celebrations mark the institutional dimension of the religious family, the communication of the charism, and the missionary outing to the peripheries.

We goes out to communicate when we have lived an experience that we cannot keep to ourselves, that burns in the heart. Paths are discerned, and we opt for the one that is most conducive to fulfilling God's will, then we go out as a community. That is why we have proposed as a theme for the year 2022, and as a motivator for the next General Chapter:

**« TO GO OUT TO COMMUNICATE: MEET, LISTEN, DISCERN... TOGETHER. »**

We want to give continuity to the proposed itinerary according to the Acts of the 2017 Chapter, which invite us to go out of ourselves to communicate (Chap. V. Acts Chap. Gen 2017).

In them we read :

"It has pleased God to be loved ..." Because He is Love, God came out of Himself to speak directly to us. In Jesus, God became Word, incarnate Word. He founded the Church to continue to unite all humanity. His vocation is to communicate the life of God."

(Acts, nr. 112)

"Following St Michael Garicoits, we were seized by the "Here I am" that the Son says to his Father to praise him, and to men to save them. This good news spreads through our personal radiance, our community witness, and by a word that must reach until the existential peripheries."

(Acts, nr. 113)

"As a family of Betharram, we are born of this exchange of Life which is expressed in a double movement, inward and outward. This is how God loved us. This is how communication leads to communion."

(Acts, nr. 114)

Just as the Acts of the Chapter speak to us of "communicating", Pope Francis frequently expresses these three verbs in his messages:

**encounter, listen, discern.** It is not by chance that he does so. His proposal shakes us up and awakens us.

Do we live times of synodality? Do we want the life of Betharram to walk a self-referential or parallel route? Do we want to walk with the church and, above all, do we want to walk more closely with one other?

We know that the mission of the Church is to **communicate**. The message of salvation is Good News. Therefore, to achieve this, we must try to communicate more and better. As “positive communicators”, we will build synergy and renewed enthusiasm and bear witness by our way of living our consecration, vocation and mission.

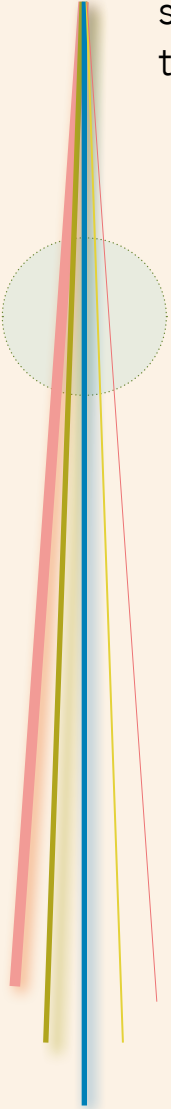
### **What does it mean to be a “positive communicator”?**

In essence it is very simple.

- Communicate for unity, for mutual understanding of people, for dialogue, for the construction of friendly and positive relationships, and not for division that is born of hatred and conflict.
- Communicate through the truth, and know how to communicate well, using the right words to help others find the right path, the true, the positive; and let us not be defensive about our own interests to the detriment of others.
- Communicate to enable the spread of hope for the world, helping to discover positivity, the good, the presence of the Good at work (the Spirit of God ever at work in secret).
- We have to be able to see and to make visible this truth, this goodness, this beauty; and not just catch the negative. The negative certainly exists, and we have to identify it to make sure it is not the direction in which we are going, because our conviction of faith tells us: only Jesus is the “way” that leads to the Father.
- Communicate in the end to spread beauty, not only material beauty but spiritual beauty as well. The beauty that speaks to us of the dignity of the person, of the heroes of our age, of the saints, the great models that we must present to people to give them courage and renewed enthusiasm for life. We

Betharramites have the grace of being surrounded by men and women who have dared to live a holy life and who have been part of our story past and present, but we do not always make them visible. Communicating the beautiful illuminates the present.

*Hence, in 2022 we will have a shared path*, in which we will make several steps to communicate: meet, listen and discern together. This is our roadmap:

- 
- Three preparatory meetings in the communities of the different vicariates (1st semester).
  - The Vicariate Assembly, to elect delegates to the Regional Chapter (in the middle of the calendar year).
  - And finally the same Regional Chapter to elect the delegates to the General Chapter (in the second semester).
  - We hope that the General Chapter will be the crowning of this time of dialogue and preparation, with a more synodal and participatory style (it will be held in mid-2023 in a place yet to be designated).

Here is a whole itinerary of hope, which we want to carry out out under the constant guidance of the Spirit, in the same context of synodality that the Church proposes to us, but faithful to our roots.

That is why it is important to open our doors and windows for everyone. In particular, for the laity who work with our communities, who share the same charism and drink from the same source. They were already cited in the last General Chapter and help us reflect more deeply and grow.

Dare to live this challenge with *"with great heart and generous encouragement"* (SMG) I think it will do us a lot of good, to build a future that is faithful, bold and shows solidarity at the service of the People of God.

**Fr. Gustavo scj**  
Superior General



## Listen...

Just as Pope Francis invites the Universal Church to a synodal process, the Betharram Congregation also calls for its members to make their way towards the General Chapter in 2023. This coincidence must be experienced as a time of grace in these times of great difficulty and even incertitude. It is a spiritual experience, before all, that we are called to live out.

In order to do this, one of the first attitudes to particularly work on is that of listening. So, let us dare to conjugate the verb 'to listen' for all time and in all ways, whether they be passive or active. Pope Francis set the tone during a time of reflection for the beginning of the synodal process in these terms: *'I am certain the Spirit will guide us and give us the grace to move forward together, to listen to one another and to embark on a discernment of the times in which we are living, in solidarity with the struggles and aspirations of all humanity.'* (Address, 9 October

2021). Listening must be at the heart of the synodal process just as in the preparation for our General Chapter.

I don't know if you have ever had the following experience. When someone is asked what the first commandment is, the response which springs to mind automatically is often this : 'You shall love...'. The response of Jesus to the same question when asked by a scribe was this : *'Here is the first : Listen Israel : The Lord our God is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul and with all your strength.'* (Mark 12 : 29-30) The first word every practising Jew says seven times a day is indeed : *'Shema, Israël !' 'Listen, Israel !'* Is *'Listen !'* the first call that we try to meet each morning ? *'Listen !'* Is it a joy to hear this invitation, at any moment ? *'Listen !'*

***How do we open up our hearts to be available to listen ?***



***How do we allow this appeal to listen to resonate at the deepest level of our hearts ?***

The pathway offered to us is not an insignificant path. It's about starting to listen to the Holy Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit act in our hearts as the path towards the Chapter is a moment of purification in order to discover what the Gospel and its

message wants to say to us today. St Michael also had faith in this God who acts *'like a continual purifier, fervent, maintained by the creative hand, and who asks, as from an infinite distance, from amidst the darkness of lethargy and of noise of all kinds, to reply, to surrender to the divine pursuits of God...'* (DS § 128).

To listen to this 'continual purifier' demands taking time, some times of silence... In this world of noise, in our community and missionary lives often full or hectic, sometimes scattered, in the face of a frantic pace of life, we end up lacking the space for silence and listening can make one as afraid as the silence.



Picture Fr. Philippe Hourcade scj

Because the silence exposes us before our weaknesses, our fears, our selfishness, our isolation. However, the silence is a source for surrendering oneself, for trusting, for delivering ourselves into the merciful gaze of God as we are, with what we are; the silence to let ourselves be purified by the action of the Holy Spirit. On

this journey towards the General Chapter, we can encourage each other to find silence to listen to and contemplate the Holy Spirit at work. The silence must become the music of our inner being, our inward character and our being.

Personal prayer, liturgical prayer, a time of desert, a spiritual retreat are many means at our disposal to sharpen this attentiveness : *'Let's not close our ears to the divine artist. He is the one who will instruct us, if we bend our ear with a perfect docility ; he will train us like an eagle trains her offspring.'* (DS § 153).

This listening to the Holy Spirit also invites us to listen to the lives of

people. Pope Francis, in his opening homily at the Synod, insisted that we always listen to the lives of people : *'The Spirit asks us to start listening to questions, anxieties, hopes of each Church, of each people and nation, but also to listen to the world, the challenges and the changes that present themselves to us. Let's not soundproof our heart, let's not harden ourselves in our certainties. Often, our certainties close us off. Let's listen.'* (10th October 2021.)

At the heart of our customs, our ways of working, our pastoral responsibilities, our various commitments in the service of others, we have to allow the lives of people to disturb our ears just like our hearts. More than ever, we have to welcome with care the trust we are given, the cries of suffering heard, the calls for help like projects to construct the future expressed by those close that we could accompany on the journey, whether they be human, pastoral, friendly or brotherly. Neither are we lacking any reasons for contemplating the lives of people which often transpires from this 'continual purification' of which the Holy Spirit is the craftsman. Furthermore, listening to the lives of people calls us to wholly love this, to allow it to disturb us, to let it scrutinise us. Listening to the lives of people demands that we are not afraid to face different realities that all people can experience –

people we walk with or who are in the margins. Listening to the lives of people puts us on a path of conversion, sometimes radical, as it never leaves us unscathed. It invites us to a deep change in the way we welcome someone as they are, without judging but always trying to enter into a dialogue. Listening to the lives of people can also teach us a bit more about just how much life is a gift from God, how in the impossibility of certain human situations, life can be stronger and love can be more genuine. By walking regularly in the local area or the neighbouring park, I am always struck by a couple that I pass when they go out each day to have an ice-cream together. The wife is in a wheelchair. The husband feeds his wife some ice-cream and eats some himself with the same spoon, in the middle of a crowd, without any hang-ups. Or like the father who accompanies his son every day in a wheelchair in the park. These situations which compel the passerby to watch and which stir up a contemplation of the love and loyalty of this husband or of this father for their handicapped loved one. This listening to the lives of people comes to disturb us, upset us, jostle us, just as it makes us grow because we meet the Spirit at work.

Listening to the Holy Spirit compels us particularly to listen to the lives of our religious brothers living in community. Reciprocal

listening at the heart of our cultural differences remains a daily challenge. It demands a lot of attention, respect, compassion so that each may walk at his own pace while being attentive to the dynamics of the community which is to walk together following Christ. Listening to our religious brothers, is also to recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit who fills the heart of our brother with life. It is to learn how the Holy Spirit is the source of communion in this walk together in community and the source of discernment to respond personally and together to the will of the Father to bring his happiness to the world. Is this not the project of any General Chapter ?

So, let's set off together, giving time for silence to listen to the Spirit at work at the heart of our community and missionary lives. Let's be attentive to the fruits of the Spirit. That way, we will advance on the path of discernment in preparation for the General Chapter. More than ever, let's make the words of the young Samuel our own : 'Speak Lord, your servant is listening.' (1 Sam 3:10) in order to become more 'listening missionary disciples'.

**Fr. Jean-Do Delgue scj**  
General Vicar



from the homily of Pope Francis, St Peter's basilica, Sunday 10 October 2021, Holy Mass for the opening of the synodal path

- *Let us ask ourselves frankly during this synodal process: Are we good at listening?*
- *How good is the "hearing" of our heart?*
- *Do we allow people to express themselves, to walk in faith even though they have had difficulties in life, and to be part of the life of the community without being hindered, rejected or judged?*



## Joy, with Fr. Antony Siluvai scj

***“Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day”,***  
Henri J. M. Nouwen.

I consider this to be true, and I firmly believe that joy is a choice which happens within us and is not due to what is outside us. Often in our life we mistake joy as happiness. While joy is our interior disposition happiness is exterior. Without knowing it we are in pursuit of joy outside us. Many things can give us joy but I would consider my vocation – my inner call as the JOY of my life.

Ever since my formation and quite often now as a priest, I recall how God chose me, an insignificant person, coming from a very remote village. My journey up to this day in the vineyard of the Lord is a proof that God favours the humble and raises them on high. This is a true fact that makes me joyful. God's call and His presence in my life is the essence of my life, this is my conviction. At the same time, as I move on in the hustle and bustle



of life, the sense of belonging to the congregation gives an identity to my joy. Being addressed as Fr. Antony SCJ is a great honour for me. I am privileged to be part of this great family, being a Betharramite is my joy.

I do share this joy in my priestly ministry wherever I have an opportunity to offer my service, especially the Eucharist. In fact I believe that Eucharist is a symbol of self-giving which brings joy in others' lives. As a religious, I share this joy in my community with my Betharramite confreres. As I value my vocation, I do value the same in them. My joy doubles whenever I am in their company even if we

have different opinions.

Joy is not something we receive in sitting patiently in great expectation, but comes while we are carrying out our responsibilities. This will bring lots of joy not only in the life of an individual but also in other people's lives: that's how we share the same joy. Here I like to quote the beautiful parable of the Talents (Mat: 25:14-30). "*For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even that they have will be taken*" (Mt: 25: 29). Here, I understand that Jesus is inviting me to have joy within myself and share it with others: this is the ultimate goal of my priestly life. I also like to quote two sentences from the Manifesto of our founder "*It has pleased God to make Himself loved, and while we were still his enemies, He loved us so much that he sent his only son*". I understand here that the ultimate aim of God is to love us, though we are sinners, and this love for us is the source of his joy. "*He sent his only son*"-it simply shows how God shared His love with you and me.

Then I said "*Here I am, I have come to do your will, O my God*"- This is where I feel that I am called to love. That love must be shared through fulfilling my daily responsibility which brings joy to

me and to the people with whom I live. It's very much visible in the life of our father St. Micheal Garicoits: fulfilling the responsibility with love brought joy to him, even though life was not easy for him. "*It is more for love than any other motive*"- This is what inspires me to walk in the footsteps of our founder and makes me fulfill all my very minor responsibilities. With a heart full of gratitude for His call, I can share my joy in my religious life as a simple Betharramite. It's not just for a day, but throughout my priestly life. I always believe in the words of St. Augustin "*God does not call the qualified. He qualifies those who are called*". And this happens because of His unconditional love for me. ●●●

## Fraternal Visit

*The canonical visit of the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agin scj, to the Region of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar,* was advanced by one year for the questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Betharramite Vicariate of Brazil inaugurated this event which Fr. Gustavo himself described as a fraternal visit, which was indeed.

On 20 October 2021, Fr. Gustavo arrived at the **São Paulo Community** and devoted himself to the individual meetings of mutual listening. He also equally spent time with the *Nossa Senhora do Belo Ramo* Parish Social Action Group, in accompanying his brothers on the streets to bring food to the homeless, whose numbers have increased in these times of fierce liberalism. This solidarity action is carried out every week in the parish.

On 22nd, it was at the **Community of Nova Fatima**, about 2,000 km from São Paulo, in the northeastern part of the country, which finds itself to be the poorest region of the state of Bahia. It is a dry region with high temperatures. The population is particularly cordial and warm. Our community welcomes young people from this region who want to get to know us and experience "come and see". A young person currently lives with our brothers has already been admitted to the



postulancy for the next year. As the Parish of Nossa Senhora da Conceição was celebrating the Missionary Week, Fr. Gustavo was invited to present the presence and the mission of the Congregation in the world.

On 25th, the meeting with the **Community of Sabara** (State of Minas Gerais), on the outskirts of the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte. It is a place characterized by a lot of material poverty, but also, on the other hand, by a great human wealth. During the visit of our Superior General, the inauguration of the *Núcleo de Acolhida e Articulação da Solidariedade Paroquial* (NAASP) took place in





the presence of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Belo Horizonte, Don Walmor Oliveira de Azevedo. These centres are set up in parishes on the initiative of the Episcopal Vicariate for Social and Political Action of the Archdiocese, in collaboration with the parish communities. In these centres, volunteers provide various services to poor communities in several areas.

On 26th, the **Regional Scholastic Community in Belo Horizonte** (Minas Gerais) received its illustrious brother. During this visit, Fr. Gustavo conferred the ministry of reader to the brothers Anibal, Oscar and Thiago, one of the steps towards priesthood. He participated in the program of vocation animation in a series of «Online meetings on vocations», monthly meetings coordinated by the houses of formation and reception (Paulinia, Belo Horizonte and Nova Fatima), where he was invited to present the Congregation to the young participants who had questions

about their vocation.

On 30th, he was at the Community of Postulancy in Paulinia (São Paulo). As the new needs have arisen, the community also welcomes aspirants: life is sometimes more dynamic than our projects!

On 2nd December, the **Betharramite Community of the Mother house in Brazil, in Passa Quatro** (Minas Gerais), received Fr. Gustavo. They were days of conversation and rest in a privileged natural setting. This community evangelizes through its presence, without having any other specific mission. Our brothers respond to the demands and needs as soon as they are solicited by the parishes of the local Church (diocese of Campanha), as in the early days of our presence there.

On 4th morning, the **Assembly** was held for the closing of this Fraternal Visit in which the Betharramite Vicariate of Brazil was motivated to grow more in the integration into the life of the Church, enabling itself to Communion

and Fraternity, Participation and Subsidiarity, and in faithfulness to which he proclaims, staying beside the poor and the least, and to lend to them his voice. The needs of *Proximity* - *Compassion* - *Tenderness* have been indicated as catalysts and promoters of this possible reality.

The wind of hope gently blows over our Vicariate with the arrival of young people interested in our spirituality and our lifestyle. Next year we will have two aspirants and five postulants. In general, there is an interest in vocational animation. The management of assets

is progressing slowly and despite the difficult time we are going through, this area presents good prospects in the short and medium term. This is not optimism, but utopian realism. "May the Will of God be done" and "Always Forward" are at the heart of our journey and our history. Step by step these mottos bear their fruit.

**Fr. Paulo Cesar Pinto scj**  
Regional Vicar in Brazil

## Music is my way of "reaching out"

From the age of ten I studied music. When I started breaking up stools and armchairs in my house to use them as drums, my parents enrolled me in a (classical) music school to play, but on a real drum. I studied percussion until I was twenty and musical composition until I was thirty. I wanted to be a movie musician.

But in reality taking an honest look at myself and my surroundings, I found a niche for myself as a musician writing songs. I was always sure that the lyrics were as important as the music and that the short format was clearer and more forceful than the long, so I choose songwriting. It matters a lot to me that art has

**Fr. Leandro Narduzzo scj**  
Community of Beltrán



something meaningful to say; otherwise, I'd prefer not to write anything.

When I entered the Congregation, Father Gaspar (then superior general) asked me during the novitiate to write a song for the 150 year jubilee of the death of St. Michael. This was a blessing but also a challenge, because before that, I had not written any religious songs and was uncomfortable with the language.



But I got down to work and ***“From the Heart of Jesus to the heart of the world”*** came out, which can still be found on YouTube<sup>1</sup>.

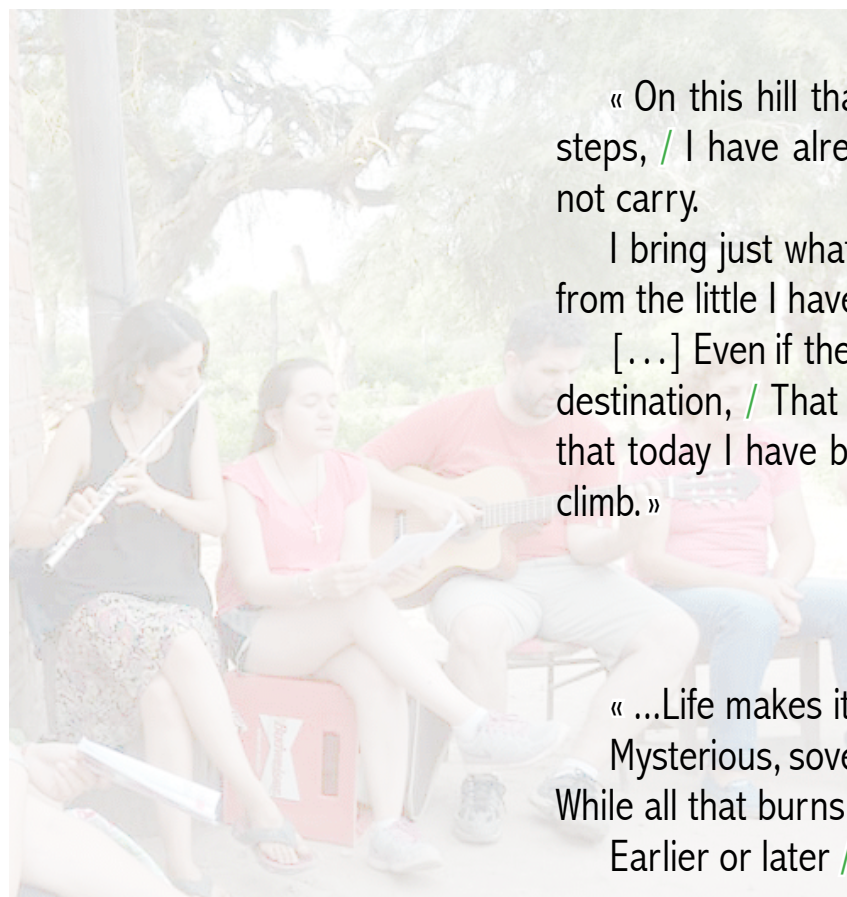
From there, you might think that I carried on writing religious songs. Well no, they don't come easily! And I've often wondered why. I will try to sketch answer: In the first place, history is full of great Christian authors, with insights much finer than mine. They represent an invaluable service to the Church. But the world today is bigger than the Church, and in our Latin American environment there are many people who do not live or communicate in categories of faith. There is a kind of mistrust of

institutions, and that makes people shy away from religious issues, even if it is plain that so many would love to believe.

So taking advantage of the call to synodality that the Pope has made to us, I believe that God touches people on the margins, the edges, the peripheries more easily through artistic works of a universal and non-sectarian nature.

For this reason, I write songs that contain my faith and my testimony but without a religious vocabulary (which often can act as a barrier between those of us who profess the faith and those who do not). I do so in the hope that, inside and outside the Church, it will touch some hearts. I give you some examples:

1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eG4hfPtyrtM&t=28s>



« On this hill that I climb / with firm and measured steps, / I have already left on the road / what I could not carry.

I bring just what is useful / to keep going up, / And from the little I have / much remains to be released

[...] Even if the climb costs / I am driven by a single destination, / That yesterday I thought was lost / and that today I have been found again / on this hill that I climb. »

« The hill »<sup>2</sup>

« ...Life makes its way...

Mysterious, sovereign, breathes out a fine perfume / While all that burns

Earlier or later / It is consumed. »

This other example is *«Life makes its way»*, which talks about how life in the Spirit, Life with a capital letter, prevails in the midst of the passing and the vicissitudes of everyday life.<sup>3</sup>

There is an interesting theological reading of that song, (for those who speak Spanish), made by Fr. Gerardo Ramos, SCJ<sup>4</sup>.

I write because I can't stop writing. If I read something interesting, or if something emerges in prayer, or if I have a stimulating talk or experience, a verse always comes up that contains some reflection, generally of a sapiential tone, which over time becomes a song. And I always do it with the desire and the hope that some heart will ignite, or be prepared

2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9U9Afji-fb4> (last song, 1:15:36)

3) At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAanT7FC20w>

4) At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n46FoPugT7s>

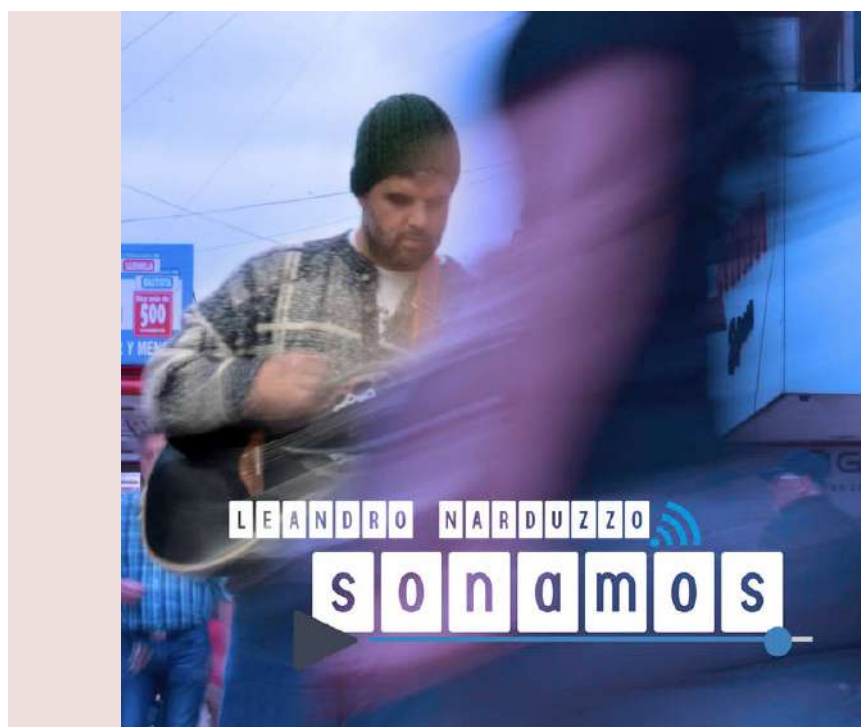
for an inner path of knowledge of the Truth. If that leads someone to Jesus, I am very happy.

For this Advent I leave you a few more verses, from another of my songs, with the hope that it may help prepare us for a heart-to-heart encounter, free of prejudices or rigidities; prepare the heart by filling it with tenderness of the desire to meet:

«...I want the time it takes for your hug /  
to have hundreds of others that I have already  
invented,

Time of waiting, with verses and lines, /  
happy, without a clock, without after... »

**A Happy Advent and a Merry Christmas to you all!**



*“... Quiero que el  
tiempo que tarda Tu  
abrazo / tenga otros  
cientos que ya me  
inventé,*

*Tiempo de espera,  
con versos y trazos,  
/ feliz, sin reloj, sin  
después...”*

## December 1951, the first betharramites arrived in Chiang Mai

In an article of 1982<sup>1</sup>, Bishop Lacoste, scj, wrote:

*“[Saint Michael] wanted the priests gathering around him to be auxiliaries... Within the Church, ‘auxiliary priests’ means: those who accept the most urgent tasks, which are sometimes the most thankless, the least wanted, the most humble. Within the Mission, this term means: those ready and able to till, to prepare the land for crops, ready to carry on ready to disappear when it is time to go...”*



*Mgr Lacroix by a young in formation in Thailand (from a picture)*

Bishop Mgr Lucien Lacoste, who in 1959 was appointed apostolic administrator of the newly erected apostolic prefecture of Chiang Mai, was then elevated to the rank of diocese in 1965, experienced this missionary spirit firsthand and passed it on to his brothers. This spirit guided the first Betharramite missionaries from the beginning who, expelled from China, arrived in Bangkok in November 1951. However, in December of the same year, the first Betharramites arrived in Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand. And this area still remains the field of action of Betharram in Thailand, where alongside the Thai religious, three Italian religious are still present who are a living testimony

of the contribution that Betharram has offered to Thailand since the beginning of the mission.

After 70 years of Betharram in Thailand, this spirit is more alive than ever in our missionaries, who carry out their mission in the dioceses of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, exclusively among the tribal populations, keeping alive this characteristic of being “auxiliary priests” that even the bishops of Thailand recognize as due to Betharram.

Several times in the NEF we got to appreciate the activity of our missionaries and also the spirit with which they carry out their mission. To celebrate this anniversary, some Thai religious will share their experience

<sup>1</sup>) In « L'Écho de Bétharram », nr. 331, July-August 1982

talking about how the missionary style from the beginning, despite inevitable difficulties, is still alive among the missionaries and in the houses of formation.

In this regard, I know that the formation communities of Sampran have a collection of texts in the pipeline, entitled "In the footsteps of the Betharramite missionaries", with reflections, prayers and testimonies with which they want to celebrate this seventieth anniversary of our mission in Thailand.

This anniversary will help all of us Betharramites, lay people and religious, to live out the three aspects that characterize the synodal journey that we have just begun at the local church level according to missionary principles.

The first aspect is communion: the presence of the Betharramites in mission areas reminds us that God in his plan of salvation gathers different peoples, through «a covenant» offered to all. This communion, a theme so dear to St Michael too, finds its deepest roots in the Trinity and this should be expressed in openness and mutual listening in our communities.

The second aspect is participation. All of us, lay people and religious, are involved in this activity of listening which for missionaries involves learning new languages, and knowing the nuances of different tribal cultures. This sounds like an invitation for all of us to listen to each other attentively

and respectfully in our Christian communities, as although we speak the same language, we are not always able to understand the needs and difficulties of those who live next to us.

Finally, the third aspect of the synodal journey: the mission, which is the natural outcome of communion and participation: the church, in fact, exists to evangelize. Proclaiming the Gospel is not a task reserved for some, but a mission to which all are called. In this, the celebration of the seventy years of our presence in Thailand can be of great help because it brings us back to our promises related to baptism, religious profession, priestly ordination, the sacrament of marriage.

Let all of us express a great sense of gratitude towards our confreres in the Vicariate of Thailand and together we promise to be close to them with prayer in this particularly significant year of their history.

***Fr. Enrico Frigerio scj***

Regional Superior, Region Saint Mary  
of Jesus Crucified



## *Father Etchecopar to his brother Maxime*

F.V.D.

Betharram, 19th December 1886

*My very dear brother Maxime,*

*May the grace and peace of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus be upon you!*

*Months pass, almost years, and we remain silent.*

*But here come the holy joys of Christmas and New Year's greetings.*

*Happy birthday and a happy new year, dear Brother! May God-made-flesh in the manger, embrace you with his love and make you holy and perfect; he is our Creator and our Redeemer; to him, therefore, to his holy law, to his infallible word, to his Church, to the lights and inspirations of his grace, we give our minds, our wills, our heart and our whole life!*

*These are the wishes that I will place in front of the Nativity scene, for you, your wife and your children. Tell them that I will ask for them that they grow in wisdom and piety and that they be, through their respect and obedience to parents, the image of the Holy Child Jesus, subject to Mary and Joseph.*

*How are you, dear brother; and is your health solid? Do you have in your business the success required for a modest and honourable existence?*

*As for me, I am quite well, thank God, at this moment; my energy has returned; and if it holds up, I will be able to work a little. Besides, non mea voluntas, sed tua, O my God!*

*I made (you may know) a little stop in St Palais, last October; I hadn't stay there long enough... My visit lasted one day and two nights. Twice, at sunset, we went to the cemetery, Madeleine and I, to pray at the graves of our beloved parents and our former teachers of the College; then, alone, with the lay brother who accompanied me, I went near the college, next to the*





plane trees, still standing at the entrance and which brought back so many memories to me. Above all, I would have liked to visit the chapel, where, in 1841, I had the pleasure of making my First Communion; I did not dare to enter: I should have called the primary teacher who lives in the college with his wife; but I wanted to go unnoticed.

This, dear brother, is the memory of those early years which will always charm of our soul and be like a safe haven in the storm of life's troubles, especially for us, when each day at home or at school, was marked by the finger of God and the touch of his love.

Otherwise, everything passes, and time takes us towards eternity ... But God be blessed in these stages, where we take comfort, to continue our course better and to sing more happily in memory of so many blessings: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*

Marceline is still in Camou, quite well, worried about the land to be exploited by incomers; among these properties is our former property in Chevré, in Masparraute.

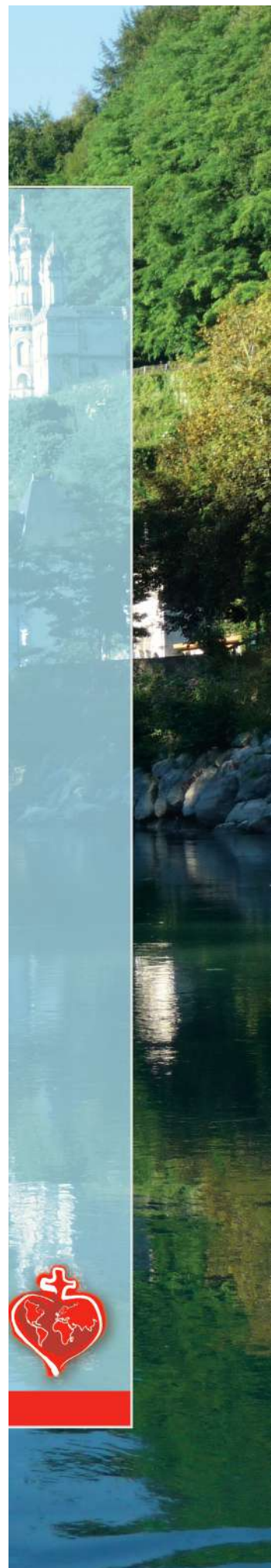
Julie is in charge of a work that is starting up in Biarritz, 10 Rue des Basques: it is a Crèche; she is there with 2 other daughters of Charity; beginnings are always hard, but softened by the thought that we are there by will of and for the love of God.

Father Lesconte died in Bayonne; Father Etchégaray is still in Anglet, chaplain of the Servants of Mary, with Father Simonet; Father Castet is still priest of Luxe, Father Pagadoy is in Bétharram.

Farewell, my very dear brother. Madeleine writes to you... Write to us often; it is good for everyone. May the Blessed Virgin bless you! I kiss you.

Your brother

Auguste



# Happy Christmas to all !

My God,  
you are love, everywhere and always present.  
And yet many of us forget about you:  
    we live as if you don't exist.  
So to help us remember you,  
and make us love you,  
        you our Creator,  
you give us Jesus Christ Our Lord:  
In becoming a man,  
    your Son allows us to see you,  
        and even touch you.

In the crib,  
or in the Eucharist,  
    he is the god who shows his love  
        and save all human beings.  
«This love teaches us to reject  
        evil and worldly desires;

so we can live on this earth  
        an honest life, a just life, faithful to our God.» (Tt 2, 12)  
Through your Son Jesus  
    we can all see and hear,  
        and discover the path to follow.

We thank you  
    for this Teacher that you give us  
        and who always draws us to you.



« En Avant », prayers based on lines from Saint Michael Garicoïts, Fr Beñat Oyhénart scj



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