



*“With courage, trust and holy joy. This is how
the good Master wishes to be served.”*

(St Michael Garicoits, Correspondence, vol 1, Letter nr. 6)

Happy New Year!
2021



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A word from the superior general

The Year of Saint Joseph, obedient out of love

“He named him Jesus” (Mt 1:25)

Dear Betharramites,

Pope Francis initiated a year dedicated to Saint Joseph, on the 150th anniversary of his declaration as *Patron of the universal Church*. Thus, he will accompany us on our pilgrimage until December 8 2021.

When going through the writings of Saint Michael, there are very few occasions in which Saint Joseph is explicitly mentioned. In his letters, for example, the word “José” is cited more than a hundred times, but always referring to the “*Colegio San José*” in Buenos Aires, founded in 1858 (during the life of St. Michael). On the other hand, Fr Duignau, in the *Spiritual Doctrine*, mentions Saint Joseph about three times; while in *A Spiritual Master of the XIX century*: only once.

What does Saint Michael say of Saint Joseph? Very little, but even so, it is interesting to see how the gospel picture of Joseph reveals – among many other virtues, of course – the qualities of an authentic Betharramite.

I invite you to make a simple approach, without trying to

encompass in this brief editorial, all the richness of his vocation and mission as adoptive father, custodian of the Redeemer and husband of the Virgin Mary.

THE JUST AND OBEDIENT MAN, WHO ACCEPTS GOD'S WILL:

St. Joseph appears in the Gospel (especially that of Matthew) as someone who shows us how to face the great challenges of life and how to respond to them. His "drama" begins when the God of Israel himself confronts him with a dilemma that will affect the great project of love that he'd imagined for his life: settling down with his fiancée, Mary of Nazareth forever. Being a just man, he will accept Mary, and he will also cope with no-one offering hospitality for him and his pregnant wife when she is about to give birth in Bethlehem, his own town. After the Child is born, he will accept to flee at night with them both, braving risk of persecution, injury or death. He will do all these things out of a faith that does not waver. He will flee then but return later, always at the right time. He will settle in Nazareth. His dreams reveal the Word of God, what God wants of from him, and he obeys.

When he presents Jesus in the temple, he listens silently to the prophecies of Simeon and Anna. Twelve years later he will be distressed at having lost sight of Jesus, who stayed behind in the Temple, to "be about his Father's business." In this way, Saint

Joseph will always be the humble man who accepts the Will of God, which for him will not be a law imposed from outside, but a source of joy.

For this reason, St Michael will tell his religious that Saint Joseph accepts God's will in exemplary obedience: "without 'how' and without 'but'...". "Without pretending that the 'superior' agrees with him, without cunning or fraud" (MS Ch. III, 2 - Pierre Duvignau) With his actions, St Joseph today challenges us (so jealous of our own autonomy!) to strip ourselves of everything that prevents us from surrendering ourselves to a God who calls us, without tailoring our response to the service he asks of us with excuses. I have met Betharramites who quietly lived this virtue, never boasting of a "proclaimed availability." It is a way of working that, like a "precious pearl", expresses what is most genuine about ourselves, our reason for being: **obedience out of love.**

THE JUST ONE, WHO OBEYS OUT OF LOVE, WITHOUT DELAY:

You cannot live this obedience by nurturing resentments or in a servile or dehumanising way. I have sometimes heard that 'claim' from some... but the problem is that the indispensable ingredient - which we sometimes lack - is: LOVE. St Michael already said it in his time. Obey out of love. This means expressing with our "Here I am" the joyous belonging and gratitude towards a family that has

He is everywhere, attacking us with fury; we must always resist it. There is only one way to be strong against him: it is the life of faith, the spirit of Our Lord, his humility, his obedience, his charity: cui resistite forts in fide.

Do you want to have no fear of any humiliating, scandalous, ruinous defeat for you and for the Congregation? Obedience, observe the rule, follow the direction of your superiors in everything; and in the words of Fr. Garicoïts, you will be blessed from heaven, on condition that you do not have the misfortune or the insolence of substituting your will for that of your creator.

Here are some points to which you should attach sovereign importance and which [I] urge you to follow:

1 ° do not call pupils to the rooms, without the permission of the superior;

2 ° when reproaching students, do not use offensive and hurtful terms such as lowlife scum, thug, etc., etc., words unworthy of a priestly mouth and fatal to health;

3 ° in reproaches, never allude either to the position of the family or to the morals of the students; that would be to provoke just and terrible reprisals;

4 ° use both a lot of reserve and cordiality with assistant teachers... instead of examining them in a curious and indiscreet way, set them an example of punctuality and dedication in everything;

5 ° never speak to students against the Government or the authorities; what' good would it do? Who gave us grace and mission in this regard? One such imprudence would suffice for the house to be closed;

6 ° finally, never lay hands on any student ... A father communicated to me the complaints of his son who said he was bullied and even beaten by one of the teachers at the college in Oloron ... Is it true? I don't know... but I always [illegible] on this point, my prayers and my orders if necessary.

May Our Lady reward you a hundredfold for your labours for her glory.

Yours in Our Lord

Etchecopar

*Circular letter
from the Very Reverend Superior General*

F.V.D.

Bétharram, 5 January 1881

Dearest Fathers and Brothers of Our Lord,

You have all taken the trouble to express your wishes to me verbally or in writing: I was deeply touched by them. I come now to thank you and return my wishes to you with my pen, in anticipation of doing so by mouth, if God gives me the grace.

It is from the Heart of this divine Master that I ask for all the graces you need to be the faithful dispensers of the ministry which he has entrusted to you; and it is through the Heart of Our Lady of Calvary that I present my request to her, taking care, moreover, to place it on the tomb of our venerated founder.

Almost every day for the last fortnight, I have gone to prostrate myself on this venerated tomb; and there, holding in mind all your hearts, all your needs ... O Our Father, I said, you who gave birth to our sublime religious vocation, who enrolled us under the banner of Ecce Venio, and Ecce Ancilla Domini, you who were our model, our strength, our consolation in the paths of the purest, of the most heroic dedication, continue, from heaven above, to instruct us, to form us, to ignite us with your ardour, to train us with the perfume of your virtues.

I hope, dear Fathers and Brothers, that you will imitate him more and more, as he himself imitated Our Lord Jesus: the past is a guarantee of the future; and your efforts and your successes and the spirit of unity and harmony which animates you prepare and promise excellent results.

But dies mali sunt: the one who is called by Scripture serpent and lion, multiplies his tricks and his violence against the servants of God.

given us everything we need so that today we call ourselves religious and priests of Betharram (in this editorial I refer especially to them, but I do not exclude the laity). Thus, "love" is necessary to obey with joy and inner peace (even if it hurts us to do so!). It is born from an experience to which the Lord has called us simply because He wanted it to be so: so that we can be his witnesses.

Contemplating the manger, we see how Joseph and Mary treat the Child in their dignified poverty and with their tender simplicity. We see that Child always clean, pure and well presented. Jesus is worthy of love for himself as the Son of God, but also because his parents know how to make the tenderness that springs from Immanuel – God is with us – radiate around him.

St Michael notes that when Joseph is faced with a new warning in a dream:

"He gets up, takes the Child and his Mother and leaves straightaway. What promptness! Joseph does not wait for dawn to follow his orders. He gets up immediately and tells the Virgin." What a shock the Virgin must have felt within when she woke up the Child and when she heard the cry of that divine Child! Yet she acts in loving submission to the first fruits of pre-announced suffering. With what confidence they accept exile and set out! (DS § 102)

Saint Joseph and Mary will be models of prayer and contemplation for thirty years in Nazareth together with "their Son": What a privileged witness! What bond consolidated in an

exchange of love that echoes the Trinity itself! Saint Michael said that *"love is what leads a man forward."* He was inspired to do so by the Holy Family, with their hearts enlarged, capable of anticipating heaven on earth:

"The Virgin, Saint Joseph and the shepherds keep Jesus Christ and his divine life in their hearts because in their hearts they meditate, contemplate, savour and digest the Holy Word. This is the fruit of deep and constant prayer. Those who only hear the word of God, will perhaps experience some feelings of admiration as they contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation. But in practice they will not go beyond pleasant feelings and will not accomplish anything good or lasting in their life or in their habits. But show me a heart that really loves. He will believe and savour the things of God. Let him run, let him fly in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ...." (DS § 101)

These are a couple of aspects of the rich personality of St Joseph that can serve as reflection. May this be a year, in which we see ourselves in Saint Joseph and in our Mother the Virgin Mary. May our love and our imitation of the Heart of Jesus be renewed. In this way we will be able to share, with contagious joy, the experience of having felt called by God to be witnesses of his Love in the midst of the poor and excluded of the world.

Fr. Gustavo sej
Superior General

Patris corde, *Apostolic letter on the 150th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church (extract)*

[...]The history of salvation is worked out “in hope against hope” (Rom 4:18), through our weaknesses. All too often, we think that God works only through our better parts, yet most of his plans are realized in and despite our frailty. Thus Saint Paul could say: “To keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me: ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Cor 12:7-9).

Since this is part of the entire economy of salvation, we must learn to look upon our weaknesses with tender mercy.

The evil one makes us see and condemn our frailty, whereas the Spirit brings it to light with tender love. Tenderness is the best way to touch the frailty within us. Pointing fingers and judging others are frequently signs of an inability to accept our own weaknesses, our own frailty. Only tender love will save us from the snares of the accuser (cf. Rev 12:10). That is why it is so important



to encounter God’s mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we experience his truth and tenderness. Paradoxically, the evil one can also speak the truth to us, yet he does so only to condemn us. We know that God’s truth does not condemn, but instead welcomes, embraces, sustains and forgives us. That truth always presents itself to us like the merciful father in Jesus’ parable (cf. Lk 15:11-32). It comes out to meet us, restores our dignity, sets us back on our feet and rejoices for us, for, as the father says: “This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (v. 24).

Even through Joseph’s fears, God’s will, his history and his plan were at work. Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that amid the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture. [...]

Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, may the good Lord deepen in me the sense of being humble, obedient and always be available at the disposal of God’s mission in the footsteps of St. Michael Garicoits. Let the joyful memories and the joyful atmosphere be surrounded always and until the last breath of my life. As Pope Francis states

“Where there is a Religious, there is joy.” Through the various acts of my life, may I share the joy in the community and go out to share the same joy that I have received in my life.

Br. Stephen Ragu scj

Community of Mangalore



Our young community of Mangalore

joyed in doing small service in the community. These acts triggered in me to do the same: "forward always forward." The aspects of humility, availability and being transparent made me to be more joyful and these brought in me many changes. I always loved to take part in community prayers and Holy Mass that



Founder and the Congregation. As I look back my past days, my life in the community still today is always happy and a valuable one. At every aspect I always enjoy the accompaniment of my formators, the care and support of my community members and moreover brotherly love from all. Through the guidance and

was something very vibrant, at the same time I was able to cultivate my personal relationship with the Lord during my personal prayers, sharing the word of God, by reading spiritual books, letters of St. Michael and the news of our Congregation. Serving in the community and outside the community is a great mission for me. I strive to put myself into it and enjoy doing it always. There were happy and unhappy experiences, but everything was for my growth. As the days and years passed, I came to know more about the life style of our Holy

support of the formators, I have tried to grasp the spirituality of St. Michael Garicoits and willingly say yes to God's will without any delay, without reservation, only out of love for God's will. My religious vocation is full of joy and happiness; there were sad moments too, but many hands made these sad moments into a joyous one. I strongly believe that these joyful moments which I am enjoying will bring in me more and more love for the Congregation and for the charism of our Founder. As I have committed myself to God through the vows of

"Yeast" and "salt" in any time and in any place

Mons. Sandro Corradini :

The heritage of the saints is a heritage which must not be lost; we should always be thankful for it and we should renew our resolve to imitate it. » (Novo millennio ineunte, n.7). However, the notions of "holiness" and "saint" – ie that traditional and uninterrupted practice of the Church to recognise and proclaim some of its most exemplary children as 'saints' – often stir up objections. Some see this as an expansionist strategy of the Catholic Church, others a marketing operation, aimed at assuring the leadership of the papacy, others still a residue from the past of religious triumphalism, a stranger to Vatican II which had insisted so much on the universality of vocation and holiness. This reading of sociological order is reductive and even misleading if one wants to understand this phenomenon so characteristic of the Church.

At the end of the Jubilee Year 2000, John Paul II wrote this: In the "great host of saints and martyrs, [...] holiness has emerged more clearly



Mons. Corradini is a priest of the Diocese of Camerino - San Severino Marche (Italy).

In 1972 he was employed by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints as a study assistant in the Hagiographic Historical Office and after two decades was appointed by Pope John Paul II "General Promoter of the Faith". He is basically the so-called "devil's advocate" in canonization processes.

Mons. Corradini has long known the dossier relating to the process of canonization of Fr. Auguste Etxecopar, since he had been involved in this matter by Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez SCJ during his mandate as Superior General and now by Fr. Gustavo Agín SCJ, who has asked him to be even more involved.

We thank him for what he is doing for the Congregation in collaboration with the Postulator of the cause, Don Ettore Capra.

as the dimension which expresses best the mystery of the Church. A message that convinces without the need for words, is the living reflection of the face of Christ." (Novo Millennio Ineunte 7) The Church must proclaim saints in the name of this God who makes her the instrument of holiness and shows men the face of Christ, "to which we are strongly drawn"

(cf. LG, 50). Apart from her mission to preach and sanctify, the Church, in offering to us the saints as models of life, shows that holiness is accessible to everyone: the Gospel message and new life in Christ, she tells us, are not a utopian dream; holiness can be 'yeast' and 'salt' in any time period and in any place around the globe. These exemplary brothers will continue to accompany men in the difficult journeys of their lives. The Church recognises and proclaims the blessed and the saints at the end of a sensible and meticulous procedure which is strengthened and renewed over the course of time. The blessed and the saints are recognised by a movement going from the bottom to the top; it's the Christian people who, by an intuition of faith, fuel their

'reputation of holiness' and it is also them who bring the candidates to the attention of their bishop, in the first phase of the process, then to the dicastery of the Holy See, which is responsible for it.

At a time when utopian dreams fall to the ground, in these times marked by indifference and apathy for all that is theoretical and ideological, a new attention is given to the saints, unique characters in whom a life plan came into being, that we can discover by study, love by devotion and achieve by imitation. The terse words of Blaise Pascal are still topical: *"Grace is needed to make a man into a saint, and if any man doubt this he knows not what is a saint, nor what is a man."* (Pascal, Thoughts, VII, 508. 25 . ●●●

The Year of Etchecopar : 30 may 2021 - 30 may 2022

In these troubled times and in the upheaval caused by the pandemic, a change in date is a lesser evil. Initially planned from 30 May 2020 to 30 May 2021, to coincide with the 190th Anniversary of the Servant of God's birth, the Year of Etchecopar was finally programmed to run from January to December 2021. However in November last year, in the face of the continuing difficult situation, Fr Gustavo SCJ and the Council, enlarged to include the whole Council



of the Congregation, were forced to revisit their schedules and new dates

•\• Theme of the year •/\•



Joy of being a religious

by Br. Stephen scj

First and foremost I thank the almighty God for choosing me to be in the family of Betharram to follow the Lord in the footsteps of St. Michael Garicoits, our founder, who wanted his family to be 'always happy.' I also take this opportunity to wish all our Dear Fathers, Brothers and Lay Betharramites a prosperous New Year 2021.

The theme "We go out to share joy" brings to my mind the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the arms outstretched and an open heart welcoming his followers to be part of his mission. This same welcoming was given to me in the Congregation of Betharram when I entered the Aspirancy in the year 2013.

Being a young Betharramite I have been a joyful person at every aspects of my life, especially during my Aspirancy, Potulancy, Novitiate and at present in my Scholasticate. To be frank these different stages of formation have made me a true son of St. Michael Garicoits and always a joyful person. My memory goes back to the first experience in the community. I had not a clue about the Founder and the history of the Congregation. For the first time in my life I was stepping out

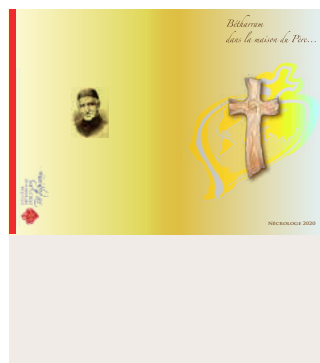
of my home for a new place, new atmosphere, new people and an advanced culture. I still remember my first class on the short life history of St. Michael Garicoits which made me to realize my own vocation. I used to speak to myself [this chap Michael was called crook but now he is a Saint wow!] I always compare myself with St. Michael's life, his words – "God will take care of everything" which still burns in my heart and I always repeat to my friends and relatives that "God will take care of everything" – in all situations and circumstances, until today my constant prayers are same, "Lord, please, take care of everything". During my initial days I was very much taken up by the acts of my senior brothers, who were always available and ever ready for any mission in the community. I too joined with my companions and en-



RL 206 • The Superior General and his Council have approved the following **appointments of community superiors**:

Region/ Vicariate	Community	Superior	Mandate
Region SMG	Italy	Fr. Piero Trameri	General Council 25 Nov. 2020
			1 st mandate from November 25 2020
	Central Africa	Fr. Narcisse Zaolo	General Council 25 Nov. 2020
			1 st mandate from January 1 st 2021
Region PAE	Paraguay	Fr. Osvaldo Caniza	General Council 22 Dec. 2020
			2 nd mandate from February 1 st 2021

RL 205/t, 295, 297 • The Superior General and his Council, meeting on 22 December 2020, have approved **the implementation of the project to build a retreat center** on a land belonging to the Congregation and located in the parish of Huay Tong (Community of Chiang-Mai-Huay Tong, Vicariate of Thailand, SMJC Region).



On December 31, the **NECROLOGY** of the Congregation was sent in two pdf formats with cover (for digital reading or printing) to the Regional Superiors, Regional Vicars and all the superiors of communities who have an e-mail address.

The General Council entrusts the Regional Superiors and their Vicars with its diffusion to all religious and with the printing of copies for those who may request it.

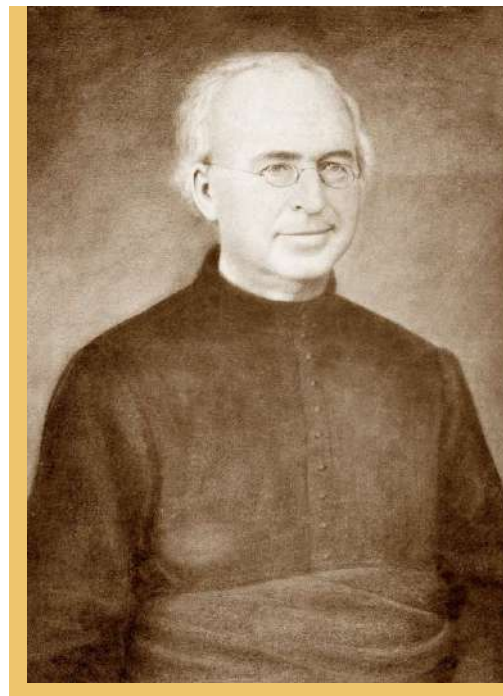
From now on the necrology will be updated every year and not only on the occasion of the General Chapters as it used to be.

were fixed: from 30 May 2021 to 30 May 2022. As these long months of uncertainty and worry have shown, inventiveness and creativity are our allies in the face of «unforeseen possibilities». Without doubt, one of Fr Auguste's virtues was that of patience... and, we are told, he was not without a certain sense of humour.

So, «what's one more year» you might say. Especially as on December 8th, Pope Francis decided to declare 2021 the year dedicated to Saint Joseph, to whom us Betharramites have a particular devotion: 'St Joseph, special protector of the Church and the Institute' (RL 92 § d). 'The aim, announced by the Pope in his Apostolic Letter, is to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal.'

Saint Joseph and Fr Auguste Etchecopar, could you dream of a better pair of mentors? A new thread for reflection is being spun as I write. Our revered Father was often wont to finish his letter with the exclamation: «Long live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!», thereby giving voice to his adoration of the Holy Family.

Our Servant of God is not yet one of the cohort of saints and martyrs referred to in the preceding pages



by Mgr Corradini, but the idea of fostering a growth in love of our second founder, and to achieve this, by first fostering a deeper knowledge of this admirable model of all the Christian and priestly virtues¹, becomes increasingly important day by day.

1) Thus was he described by the members of the Extraordinary General Chapter convened in 1897 a few months after his death: "With the most authoritative voice and with popular suffrage, the Chapter respectfully salutes in the person of the Very Reverend Father deceased, the continuator of the virtues and work of Father Garicoits, an admirable model of all the Christian and priestly virtues, an accomplished exemplar of the religious life and the second founder of the Congregation".

The more one goes into his biography, interior life and work, the more is revealed of his rich and complex personality, as much a source of inspiration in his day-to-day actions and his relationships with his neighbour, as in his passion for the religious life and his unswerving loyalty to the theology of the Incarnation.

He is an important figure in the history and life of our Congregation. The fact no longer escapes anyone: our institute owes him a great debt of gratitude. Some people see him as the one who knew how to organise the thinking and the charism of St Michael Garicoits. Others are particularly sensitive to his fidelity to the founder's project. And yet others are appreciative of his constant wish to unite the family of Betharram. In sum, whatever the angle of approach adopted to learn about him and grow to love him, there are still whole chapters of his life dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram to be discovered and made known.

Today we pray to Father Etchecopar and ask graces of him. His «*fama sanctitatis*» is spreading. As we were able to see for ourselves in October last with the Postulator, people are coming to pray before his tomb, in the Chapel of the Resurrection in Betharram. His reputation for saintliness is certainly very lively in Argentina, for example.

It is up to the Congregation, to all religious, to disseminate and

make known the «*fama sanctitatis*» of Father Etchecopar. To deepen one's knowledge of his life and of the work he accomplished so that the Congregation was able to continue to grow after the founder's death, is to give oneself the means of raising awareness of him in our various different missions, to pray to him and ask him for graces.

To expand devotion to him a «Year of Etchecopar» will be inaugurated on 30 May 2021, the anniversary of his birth. The General Council will be launching further actions subsequently, including events and reflections on his life and will supply material in several languages, such as in serialised issues of NEF involving him in one way or another, prayer-cards with his image and extracts from the wealth of his correspondence, etc.

Each region, each vicariate and each community, in conjunction with the General Council, is invited to contribute the support necessary to ensure this «Year of Etchecopar» will be lived to the full by everyone. All religious are called upon to play a part. Accordingly, all testimonies and all ideas are welcome!

The Congregation certainly has a wonderful figure of faith, man of the Church and faithful religious to present and offer today in the person of Fr Auguste Etchecopar. So, onwards for the «Year of Etchecopar»! ●●●

The pandemic struck him brutally : he fainted during the mass celebration, which was attributed to Covid (he had been tested positive before). Fr. Emiliano remained unconscious for a few days, then the doctors finally found that a malignant tumour had provoked a strong cerebral haemorrhage, leading him to death.

It is sad and cruel to see him pass away like this. His remains were incinerated (due to sanitary laws) and given to his family in a cardboard box. For the last farewell, I could accompany a few participants to the prayer

for the defunct. Struck so brutally by this bereavement, his brother and some of his nephews who were present did not succeed in letting their tears flow.

We believe in the Resurrection : not only it comforts us, but it also makes us sure that Fr. Emiliano will certainly go on listening to our sorrows and our dreams, and intercede for a deeper spiritual life of our Vicariate and of the whole Paraguay.

Fr. Tobia Sosio sjc



Father Emiliano JARA scj

Limpio, 11 September 1948 - Asunción, 21 December 2020 (Paraguay)

Father Emiliano is one of the first priests I have known when arriving in Latin America, in November 1976. He had been ordained to the priesthood that very year, in May, by the Betharramite Bishop who had been recently consecrated, Mgr. Claudio Silvero sjc. Sent to the High School of San José in Buenos Aires, Fr. Emiliano began his sacerdotal ministry in the educational field, which would remain his main mission all along his life. He has always liked to accompany the young people, either in courses of religion, during spiritual retreats or training the seminarists. He inspired and founded the « F.V.D. », the well-known group of youngsters, still very active up to now. I was told that one day, the idea of this group was born during a night of prayer and reflection, with a handful of young people, in the tower of the San José High School. At the time, Fr. Emiliano was the pastoral director of the School, a task he fulfilled during twelve years. He also enjoyed going for missions. Thus, he visited the rural communities of La Colmena several times, surrounded by many volunteers.

Those who were lucky to know him more intimately remember him as an excellent spiritual director and confessor. He could be defined as the Apostle of interior Life : it was ob-



vious that it was his foremost preoccupation when he took care of someone. Perhaps it was also one of his weak sides, because he had to face a modern culture which does not favour spirituality.

In his last years, he had spent some years in the parishes of the Sacred Heart in Ciudad del Este and of San Joaquín (Paraguay). Many people came to him for confessions, a ministry he has always appreciated and to which he consecrated himself with great generosity. It also probably exhausted him : in these last times, he had fallen in a state of depression and stress which he finally overcame not without difficulty. As a member of the community of the San José School of Asunción, he helped in the parish, in the school, and as a chaplain of the Theresian Sisters, without bearing the weight of great responsibilities.

Reflections on a Ruby Jubilee – 10th January 2021

On September the 15th 1980 Father Sheridan our then Superior bumped into Archbishop Dwyer in the doorway of Worcester cathedral at 7.05 pm. They were both slightly late for a special service to mark the 1500th anniversary of the birth of Saint Benedict - the cathedral being a Benedictine foundation. The big attraction for both was the appearance of Cardinal Hume who was to speak for the occasion. Archbishop Dwyer was surprised to see Fr Sheridan and said 'Ah Terry, good to see you how would like to move your community to Olton? The Capuchins are moving out at the end of the year.'

Fr. Terry was totally surprised and stammered in reply 'I would have to consult my Council and my Superior General first'. 'Well don't take too long about it' said the Archbishop, 'you have three weeks to decide.' And so it was decided after a very speedy discernment with our Superior General Fr. Grech who was due on visitation the following week, and four months later we took up residence at the Friary on January 10th.



Fr. Austin Hughes
Community of Olton

The Capuchins left the day before, to go to Pantasaph & Erith, after 90 yrs in Solihull. For them The Friary had been important as their House of Formation but less so after that role was ceded to other houses. They were greatly loved in the parish, and many mourned their going.

As a community we were quite overawed at first, as we were following in the venerable footsteps of Capuchins, and we also found the sophistication of some parishioners a little daunting! But we should not have worried, as firstly people are people everywhere and secondly our secret weapon was

Brother John who broke down many barriers for us with his natural, jovial



Card. Hume (1923-1999)

and unassuming way with people. The parish soon started to warm to us and took us to heart and we in turn adopted them.

Fr.Ted became parish priest and served faithfully in that post for 33 years. At his 90th birthday mass in 2019 several generations expressed their gratitude for his service.

Those heady days of the 1980s are very different from our present age. For a start there was no pandemic, then secondly we had a good number of students then, a factor in moving from a settled formationhouse in Worcester to The Friary. The students gave energy and impetus to our community & our parish mission. Three of them founded a new parish youth group Lumen Mundi (light of the world) which continued for some 15 years and did much good. Although like all youth groups it prospered and then declined, those who belonged to it (now in their 50s) look back on that era as a Golden period in their lives, as do their parents.



The next 25 years were the age of Pope John Paul II (now saint) and as a community and as a parish we tried to follow the lead that he gave as we encouraged lay leadership at all levels in the parish. We also tried to reach out to the local community, and many people commented that they had never seen the Parish Hall so much used. And whether it was for parish concerts, children's playgroups, judo, choir practice or weight watchers the hall was never empty.

Several figures from those early days who gave loyal service to the parish and the community have now gone to their eternal reward. We think of Jack Carney who acted as our loyal doorkeeper and of Pauline Padley our first parish secretary. Both served so loyally for so many years without asking any reward. And there are so many others who are now with the Lord while their graves are in our cemetery.

Besides developments within the parish, events happened in

and the climate in this area is favourable for habitation.

From the outset, this project was shared with our parishioners, who immediately encouraged us and offered their collaboration. Not only did they support us financially in the purchase of the land, but they were also open to contributing to the cost of the construction of the house and to taking care of it with us once it were opened.

Thinking about the management of the house, it will not be difficult to appoint a local person as caretaker, but it will require more thinking to prepare one of our religious to animate with his presence the groups that will be welcomed in this retreat house.

The start of the work by the Vicariate is suspended due to pandemic.

The religious of the Vicariate



express their gratitude to the General Council who, after having analyzed the various aspects of the project, gave his authorization for its implementation... In this year dedicated to *going out to meet others to share our joy*, we, the religious of the Vicariate will all be committed to giving our contribution in different ways to carry out this project through which we can transmit the joy of our belonging to the family founded by Saint Michael. ●●●



A retreat center in Thailand

From 2008 to 2017, the Vicariate of Thailand, thanks in part to the help of various benefactors, purchased, in successive stages a plot of land in the parish of Huay-Tong, which is entrusted to the missionaries of Betharram. It is a 10 rai plot (16,000 sqm) on which a small retreat center will be built consisting of four accommodation units (for a maximum of 16 people).

For some time now, the need has been felt to create an environment in which not only our young people in formation but also the religious of the Vicariate could establish an atmosphere of silence and recollection within a structure belonging to Betharram without always having to rely on the use of buildings belonging to other religious groups, and also to create



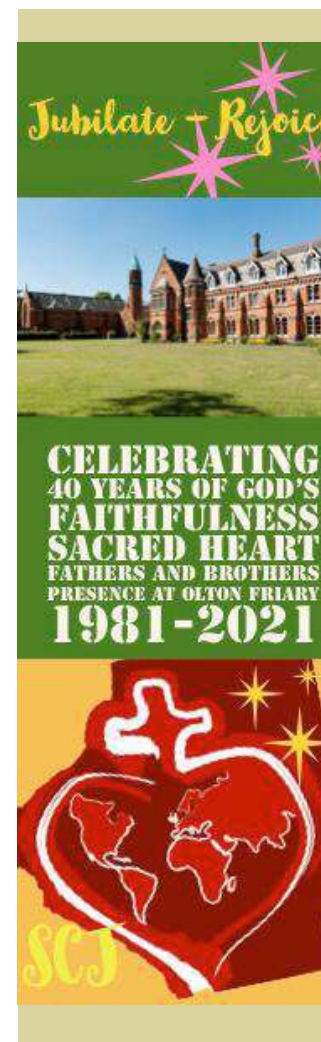
a further opportunity to cultivate our sense of unity and belonging.

This house will primarily host our scholastics for the annual spiritual retreat; but it is also intended to welcome various parish groups for pastoral activities - spiritual direction for young people and families, spiritual retreats of other congregations or organizations - since the parish has no existing suitable space for these activities.

Several factors contributed to the choice of Huay-Tong as the location of the house: it is a large village, the locals are all Catholics and they were immediately willing to support us with maintenance work and donations in kind; the position of the house, outside the town, helps to create an atmosphere of silence and concentration;

our Congregation worldwide. In 2000 we became united with communities in India and took over responsibility for them, so regular visits from Fr. Xavier to Olton became a feature of community and parish life. Many parishioners will remember too that we had a hand in the formation of several overseas students who went on to take up important roles in our Congregation. First of these is Fr Xavier who came as a student in 1989 and later became the first head of the Indian delegation. With him was a young student from Thailand called Tidkham who later became the first Thai superior of our communities there. We also had Bro. Sylvain in 2004 who became head of Formation in Ivory Coast and more recently head of the mission community in our mother house at Betharram.

Also in 2004 we hosted a young



student called Bro. Biju who now 17 years later is our parish priest and Superior at The Friary. Then in 2007 we received three young Indian students Brothers Pascal, Vincent and Wilfred. Fr. Wilfred is now in charge of our communities in England and Fr. Vincent in charge of our parish at Great Barr while Fr. Pascal is in charge of the formation house in Mangalore.

One of the shadows never far away was the question of the Friary building. In 1980 under Archbishop Dwyer it had been understood that the Capuchins were gifting the whole campus to the Diocese but when the new Archbishop Maurice Couve de Murville came along, this agreement was deemed void by the

Capuchins and a wrangle then followed for nearly 40 years, only solved in 2018 under Archbishop Longley.

But this did not stop us using the Friary for pastoral purposes. Youth retreats and increased use of the library and ground floor rooms for first communion programmes, Journey in Faith, Knights of St.Columba, SVP and adult retreat groups became common. The Friary also hosted many visiting priests, religious and bishops over the years, including Fr.Frank Carr a retired Diocesan priest who liked the ambience so much that he stayed 6 years in retirement until he died.

In 1990's & early 2000's we also hosted Iranian refugees, various asylum seekers and people with no shelter. Sadly this ministry had to come to a halt as new national safeguarding rules came into play, as we were unable to vouch for the background of many of our guests. Another factor was the deteriorating condition of some of the upstairs rooms. The planning blight that haunted us from the beginning meant that serious refurbishment was sorely needed.

As a parish we have always been blessed with a fair number of teachers, both those who work in schools & colleges and those who simply act

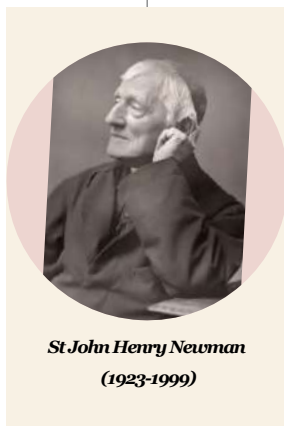
as catechists. This has meant that for 40 years the important work of teaching the young, preparing engaged couples and inducting adults into the Christian community has been done by lay people in the parish. Visitors sometimes comment on how blessed we are. Many parishioners also have a ministry to the poor and the lonely in their work as housing managers, social workers and therapists.

The canonisation of John Henry Newman in 2019 generated huge interest in Newman's Olton connection and the history of St.Bernards Seminary founded by Bishop Ullathorne in 1873. Newman's opening address on October 2 of that year predicted a time when Christians would have to

minister in a world that seemed to operate without any reference to God or the life of the spirit.

Today in the age of the pandemic we face the challenges that Newman predicted but there is also much hope and opportunity as the awareness of human frailty has generated a fresh search for the spiritual.

Pope Francis in what would be twilight years for most people has helped the world look ahead to life



St John Henry Newman
(1923-1999)

after Covid and invited us to dream of what kind of world we want to shape. His message to the world *Fratelli Tutti* and his recent book *Let us Dream* co-authored with British journalist Austen Ivereigh has spelled out hopes for a world in which a more honest form of politics does not create 'enemies' to be scapegoated or manipulate the media.

Our feeling is that in The Friary parish there are many who share this dream and yearn for a world such as our Holy Father imagines. Our sense is that in our parish we have so many people who are generous, who are prayerful and who long for a world in which the great prayer of Mary our Mother, the Magnificat can become a reality.

Today we keep a Ruby anniversary in a world very different from that of 1981, with challenges never imagined back then, but also with resources and inspirations never

thought of back then. We have treasured memories of 40 years to sustain us with the love and the prayers of people past and present to urge us on.

It is a privilege to be keeping a Jubilee in The Friary parish, and we hope that everyone will feel that the prayers we offered on Sunday 10th, and the Jubilee flame we lighted will be a sign of God's blessing for them.

We are fond of citing one of the sayings of our founder St.Michael: "*Forward, always forward*" and we see a jubilee as an occasion not simply to look back at the past with gratitude but to go forward in faith trusting in the God of surprises who always plans a better future than anything we could imagine.

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