

NEF

Betharram

Nr. 172

NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE - 119TH YEAR, 11th series - 14 July 2021

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The joy of serving in the midst of the poorest

“When he saw her, she felt sorry for him and said: Don’t cry!” (Lk 7.13)

Dear Betharramites,

The Joy of the Gospel is heard from the world of the poor. Its cry is louder in the midst of a cruel social reality, which hits everyone without distinction, but more intensely those who are beloved of the Kingdom. On four continents, our religious family has missionary communities in deprived environments. Perhaps the presences of the Vicariate of the Central African Republic are the most eloquent, although I am not sure that all Betharramites know them well.

The first missionaries have come to CAR (Central African Republic) thirty-five years ago, ‘they pitched their tent’ (cf. John 1.14) next to the poorest and they did it to share the joy of the Gospel. Back then there was practically nothing of what exists there today, only abandonment and a thirst for God. They did not need a year dedicated to “sharing the joy of the gospel”, they simply did it and continue to do so out of a sense of calling and conviction, without attracting attention. This gesture keeps people’s hope alive and becomes a healing factor, even in the midst of great socio-political upheaval. Working with love for the

People of God, making mercy sprout in the most difficult environments, nourishing it with the wisdom of the charism, all this makes new shoots of life grow, trees that will bear tasty fruits in due time.

On my last visit here, in 2018, Fr. Tiziano, 1st Regional Vicar in CAR, took me on a tour of the Niem Hospital, built by our fathers with the help of many benefactors: a wonderful work (in which Fr. Marie-Paulin scj is now involved). Contemplating this reality, the word "Niem" reminded me of "Naim", the town that Jesus was approaching when a widow went out with the local people to bury her deceased only child. Jesus was to bring him back to life, a bit like what happens here, where everything is scarce, where there is violence, alcoholism, drugs and neglect of the most basic rights. The struggle for life is part of the everyday.

Mission is about protecting the weak, serving them, dignifying them, providing sustenance for the destitute, educating children who barely have enough to eat, sustaining the lives of many anonymous faces, who thus come to feel worthy children of God. It is to shake the indifference...

Thanks to this, our missionaries can cross the "rebel barriers on the roads" without being detained or attacked. The Gospel speaks for them. With concrete gestures, as indispensable as treating and curing the illness of a faithful Christian, a rebel, a Muslim or a Russian, without rejecting anyone, they earn the respect of all.

The missionary animation and the associations that organize the financing of the projects, especially AmiciOnlus (an Italian NGO), contribute with the ordinary material support. A family that contributes 60 euros annually to rural schools, ensures the education of a child throughout the year. After decades it can be said that without this support thousands of children who are young today would be illiterate.

There are volunteers who come to CAR to provide all kinds of services: from an electrical installation or computer system, to their collaboration as health or pastoral workers in Niem or in the St Michael Garicoits centre for the prevention, diagnosis and management of HIV patients and other sick people. They work in Bouar, encouraged by Br. Angelo scj. I thank those people sensitised by the human promotion of these brothers who usually thank us in their mother tongue: "*Singuilá*" (Sango).

The pastoral work of the religious is equally important. The celebrations I have participated in here are the most festive I have ever seen. The choirs, the elaborate offertories with dances, the dialogue with the people. Parish communities have catechesis, Caritas and other institutions.

The Sacred Heart parish in Niem is something like 10,000 sq.km. in size (with 14 chapels and 13 schools). The most remote villages and places can only be reached with special vehicles. Today, unfortunately, the roads are mined by the rebels. In May an anti-

personnel mine exploded near Niem as a vehicle with three people passed by. It took the life of one of those who were traveling, injured the others and destroyed the truck of Father Arialdo Urbani scj, who was driving but was miraculously saved. Fr Arialdo, 82, is in charge of visiting the schools in the area and managing the support of all of them. After the accident the Bishop of Bouar, Mgr. Mirek Mirosław Gucwa, asked Br. Gilbert scj to take him by motorcycle to visit Fr. Arialdo in Niem. Today he is already very well, ready to "go out" again ...

The 27 chapels and 19 primary schools of the Parish of Fatima in Bouar can only be accessed by motorcycle, since the roads are impassable for a vehicle. Fr. Narcisse and Fr. Arsène are good motorcyclists-shepherds, with "the smell of sheep" about them. While Br. Hermann, acts as Saint Joseph, and contributes to the community in his profession as a specialised carpenter.

The Bishop and the religious of Bouar expressed their condolences for R. Fr. Mario Zappa scj, who died a month ago on June 14. Brother Gilbert took me to visit his grave in a beautiful and peaceful setting. Father Tiziano leaves us in this NEF a beautiful testimony of his character.

The Cardinal of Bangui, Mgr. Dieudonné Nzapalainga - considered the most respected person in the country, for his social commitment and honesty - expressed to me with humility that he was grateful for our presence in his diocese and valued the

Betharramite fathers who work in the Parish of the Visitation (Beniamino and Armel), which includes 15 chapels and 5 schools.

In this apparently poor land where there are only 10 Betharramite missionary religious - two Central Africans, four Ivorians, and four Italians - the ground is fertile: we have two novices (at Adiapodoumé), five philosopher postulants (also at Adiapodoumé) and three aspirants (in Bangui). In addition there are six boys who are in the diocesan minor seminary of Bouar, who will be accompanied by the congregation.

While I was on a pilgrimage there I asked myself ... What world is this, that despite everything that happens, they continue to smile? Perhaps it is because the Church is the voice of those who have no voice; she is a healer of wounds and restorer of the dignity of God's children. Although Christians are only 40% of the population (20% are Catholics), from their poverty they collaborate with what they can. They participate massively in the Eucharist, they feel that they are members of the People of God.

This is the source of joy, that of a community gathered in the midst of the poor that does not need to be noticed in order to live the Gospel. It only needs to be faithful and constant, sent by Him who pointed the way. Go and announce to all peoples that Jesus Christ is Lord!

Fr. Gustavo scj
Superior General

Angelus, Saint Peter's Square, Sunday, 4 July 2021

Dear brothers and sisters,
buongiorno!

This Sunday's Gospel (Mk 6:1-6) tells us about the disbelief of Jesus's fellow villagers. After preaching in other villages in Galilee, Jesus returned to Nazareth where he had grown up with Mary and Joseph; and, one sabbath, he began to teach in the synagogue. Many who were listening asked themselves: *"Where does he get all this wisdom? But, isn't he the son of the carpenter and Mary, that is, of our neighbours that we know so well?"* (cf. vv. 1-3). Confronted with this reaction, Jesus confirms the truth that had even become a part of popular wisdom: *"A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house"* (v. 4). We say this many times...

Let us reflect on the attitude of Jesus's fellow villagers. We could say they *knew Jesus, but they did not recognise him*. There is a difference between knowing and recognizing. In essence, this difference makes us understand that we can know various things about a person, form an idea, rely on what others say about that person, we might perhaps meet that person every now and then in the neighbourhood; but all that is not enough. This is a *knowledge*, I



would say ordinary, superficial, that does not *recognise* the uniqueness of the person. We all run this risk: we think we know so much about a person, even worse, we use labels and close the person within our own prejudices.

Jesus's fellow villagers knew him for thirty years in the same way and they thought they knew everything! *"But isn't this the boy we saw growing up, the son of the carpenter and Mary? Where do these things come from?"*. The distrust...in reality, they never realised who Jesus truly was. They remained at the exterior level and refused what was new about Jesus.

And here, we enter into the true crux of the problem: when we allow the *convenience of habit and the dictatorship of prejudice* to have the upper hand, it is difficult to open ourselves to what is new and allow ourselves to be amazed. We control: through attitudes, through prejudices... It often happens in life that we seek from our experiences and even from people only what conforms to our own ideas and ways of thinking so as never to have to make an effort to change. And this can even happen with God, and even to us believers, to us who think we know Jesus, that we already know so much about Him and that it is enough to repeat the same

things as always. And this is not enough with God. But without openness to what is new and, above all – listen well – openness to God's surprises, without amazement, faith becomes a tiring litany that slowly dies out and becomes a habit, a social habit.

I said a word: *amazement*. What is amazement? Amazement happens when we meet God: "*I met the Lord*". But we read in the Gospel: many times the people who encountered Jesus and recognised him felt amazed. And we, by encountering God, must follow this path: to feel amazement. It is like the guarantee certificate that the encounter is true and not habitual.

In the end, why didn't Jesus's fellow villagers recognise and believe in Him? But why? What is the reason? In a few words, we can say that *they did not accept the scandal of the Incarnation*. They did not know this mystery of the Incarnation, but they did not accept the mystery: they did not know it. They did not know the reason and they thought it was scandalous that the immensity of God should be revealed in the smallness of our flesh, that the Son of God should be the son of a carpenter, that the divine should be hidden in the human, that God should inhabit a face, the words, the gestures of a simple man. This is the scandal: the incarnation of God, his concreteness, his 'daily life'. And God became concrete in a man, Jesus of Nazareth, he became a companion on the way, he made himself *one of us*. "You are one of us", we can say to Jesus. What

a beautiful prayer! It is because one of us understands us, accompanies us, forgives us, loves us so much. In reality, an abstract, distant god is more comfortable, one that doesn't get himself involved in situations and who accepts a faith that is far from life, from problems, from society. Or we would even like to believe in a 'special effects' god who does only exceptional things and always provokes strong emotions. Instead, brothers and sisters, God incarnated Himself: God is humble, God is tender, God is hidden, he draws near to us, living the normality of our daily life.

And then, the same thing happens to us like Jesus's fellow villagers, we risk that when he passes by, we will not recognize him. I repeat that beautiful phrase from Saint Augustine: "I am afraid of God, of the Lord, when he passes by". But, Augustine, why are you afraid? "I am afraid of not recognising him. I am afraid that when the Lord passes by: *Timeo Dominum transeuntem*. We do not recognize him, we are scandalised by Him, we think with our hearts about this reality.

Now, in prayer, let us ask the Madonna, who welcomed the mystery of God in her daily life in Nazareth, for eyes and hearts free of prejudices and to have eyes open to be amazed: "Lord that we might meet you!", and when we encounter the Lord there is this amazement. We meet him in the normal: eyes open to God's surprises, at His humble and hidden presence in daily life. ●●●

Celebrating the year of Father Auguste Etchecopar in the Samphran community

The whole world has come to know Socrates, one of the greatest philosophers of all time, through his beloved disciple Plato. Similarly, the congregation and the world have come to know our beloved Father Michael Garicoits through the zealous works of Father Etchecopar. Based on my readings and reflection I would like to say that no one has a better understanding of St Michael Garicoits than Father Auguste Etchecopar. He could understand the magnanimity and greatness of our founder and he fell in love with the holiness and simplicity of this loving father who was rooted in devotion to Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Mother of Betharram.

Father Auguste Etchecopar recognized Father Michael's clear vision for the congregation and his remarkable patience and the virtue of obedience to authority. God was everything for him and he had complete obedience and trust in God's



**Fr. Rojo
Thomas scj**
Community of
Ban Garicoits -
Sampran



time and action. This was the reason why Father Auguste Etchecopar did his level best to make Father Michael and his greatness known to the world.

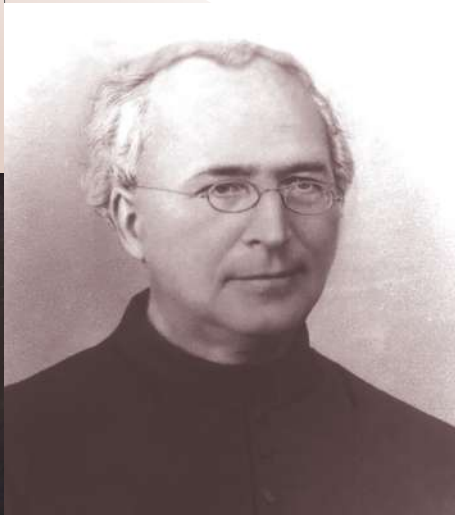
'Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up' (St James 4:10). We find a humble priest in the

person of Father Etchecopar. Despite being the Superior General of our congregation for 23 years, he never projected

himself as authoritative or great;

rather his sole aim was

to rediscover the mind and Charism of Father Michael and reveal his holiness and simplicity to the world. It shows that Father Etcheco-





The community of Samphran Ban Garicoits: scholasticate and extraordinary vicariate's novitiate
 2nd line from left: Bro Peter Hung (2nd Theology, from Vietnam), Fr Rojo Thomas, Fr Luke Kriangsak, Bro John Weerapong (4th Theology), Bro Anselm Prapas (2nd Theology)
 1st line from left: Bro. Paul Artid (3rd Philosophy), Bro Peter Phung (2nd Philosophy, Vietnam), Bro Stephen Worachot (1st Philosophy), Bro Gabriel Thinnakorn (2nd Philosophy), Bro Mathew Kittikhun (1st Philosophy), Bro John Baptist Boonyod (novice).

par was a person with integral personality and extra-ordinarily humble. All through his writings and talks, Father Etchecopar instructed the members to love Father Michael and follow him closely by showing perseverance and dedication in our mission and spiritual life. Previously, a member of Society of Holy Cross, a society of elite priests with excellence in education and other areas of governing, who always focused on intellectual excellence to spiritual rootedness, it was an unforgettable moment for Father Etchecopar to meet the saintly priest Michael at Betharram and it is equal to say that he found a treasure in Betharram. Being with Father Michael for seven years, Father Etche-

copar was fortunate enough to enrich his spirituality by the words and humble examples of Father Michael. He also witnessed the joys and sorrows of our founder. All these first-hand experiences made him more humane and spiritual. I believe it is because of this deep knowledge of our founder, Father Etchecopar worked hard to fulfil the dreams of him; first of all, in getting our constitution approved by the Holy See and getting our congregation the pontifical status. The second task for Father Etchecopar was to begin the process of cause for canonization of Father Michael to share to the world the holiness of our founder. For this reason, the biography of Father Michael was

prepared in 1878 and in years 1890 and 1894 he published the thoughts and life of virtue of Father Michael. Once the process for the cause of Father Michael started, his third task was to bring unity among the members and their missions. For this reason, he travelled far and wide, visiting communities especially Latin America and Holy Land and encouraging

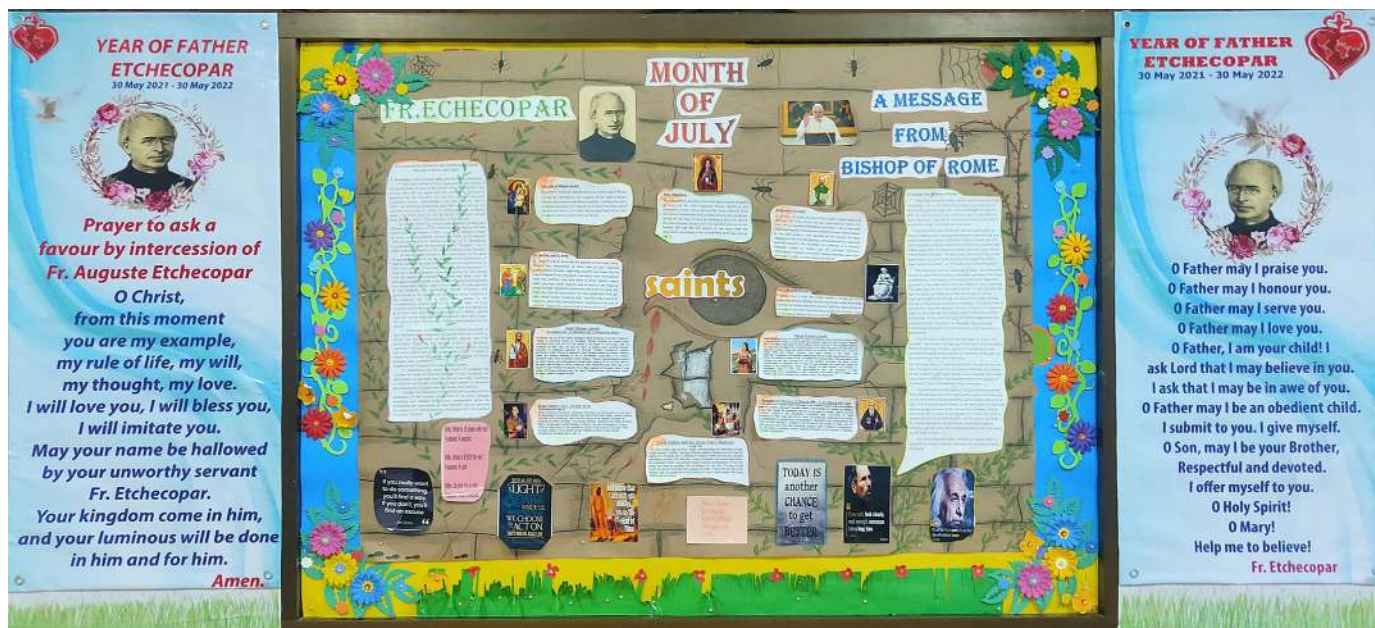
*E*ver since I began my ministry in Samphran community, Thailand, collaborating with Fr Luke and Fr Manop in forming the young seminarians and creating an English atmosphere for the better future of the vicariate and members, we have been trying to increase their knowledge of the church, liturgy, Bible and the congregation. For this reason, we have conducted quizzes, elocutions, loud reading, chart preparation etc. on various topics in English. On Wednesdays, we read and share the rule of life and NEF too. We have also divided the formees into two groups to involve them in the above-mentioned literary activities. When the congregation declared 2020-2021 as the year of Father Etchecopar remembering 190th birth anniversary of him, our community shared the desire to get to know Father Etchecopar better as he is called 'the second founder' of the congregation. Therefore, we collected all the possible information about

the members. Acknowledging these selfless and dedicated service, the chapter of the congregation in 1897, which was held soon after the death of Father Etchecopar, proclaimed him with respect and filial love 'The Second Founder of the Congregation.'

him published in NEF and elsewhere (mainly the NEF series by Fr Gaspar¹) and compiled them into a book and circulated a personal copy to each of the community members. Each day after the dinner it is a habit for us to read this text and share its content. This exercise has helped us greatly and provoked our thoughts to follow the articles in the NEF closely.

Due to the spread of Covid 19, the congregation as a whole couldn't organize anything in special to honour and show our respect and gratitude to Father Etchecopar last year; so, this year is dedicated to Father Etchecopar again. Our community has decided to celebrate this year meaningfully to show our respect and admiration to Father Etchecopar. We had a grand opening of the year of Father Etchecopar on 30th May 2021 in the presence of some of

1) Since then, the collection of articles by Fr. Philippe Hourcade scj published in the NEF in 2020: «Fr. Auguste Etchecopar through his writings» is available on the website of the Congregation.



our well-wishers and the whole community. Following are the steps we have undertaken to spend this year meaningfully:

First of all, we have decided to prepare a chart with an article on Father Etchecopar every month which we have already begun. Secondly, we recite the prayer to make Father Etchecopar a saint each day. Thirdly, we have also begun the translation of a short biography of Father Etchecopar into Thai language to circulate among our benefactors, well-wishers and association of Legion of Mary in view to spread the holiness, spirituality and fame of him. Fourthly, we have decided to conduct monthly online prayer meet with the pious associations to share about Father Etchecopar. Fifthly, we have also planned to conduct Drawing, Article writing and a Quiz competition among our seminarians on Father Etchecopar to deepen our understanding on

him and his greatness. Much more plans are underway to make this year memorable.

Father Etchecopar is a gift from God to our congregation, a gift rooted in the Charism of "ecce venio," who showed remarkable maturity and dedication at the young age itself. He was the mediator between bishop and members of the congregation; he is the one who followed and waited patiently for the plan of God; He closely followed the directions of St Miriam and led our congregation forward in accordance with the will of Father Michael. He remains as the model of humility, perseverance, dedication, obedience, piety, maturity and holiness to us, the disciples of Father Michael in the twenty first century. May God recognize his holy soul and grant us the necessary graces through the intercession of Father Etchecopar and raise him to sainthood. ●●●



Father Etchecopar to the religious of San José college in Buenos Aires

F.V.D.

Betharram, June 18, 1882

Dear Fathers and Brothers in Our lord,

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus fill you during his blessed month with wonderful graces, for his greatest love and his sweetest consolation !! For, oh ineffable prodigy! He is delighted to be with us. Our fidelity and our efforts to please him are a delicious delicacy and a joy which compensates him for the greatest outrages.

I am quite convinced, dear Fathers and Brothers, that during this beautiful month, you make him feel the gratitude and the holy pride that you feel in bearing the name of his divine heart, and in being the ministers of his mercies. At the sight of this visible wound which shows us the invisible wound of love, you so often imitate it: O love! Without beginning or end and without measure! My weak love of the moment sighs for you and cries out to you: Here I am! Ecce venio!

This is the grace for which we never stop asking for the whole Institute, and very especially for the dear work of America and for San José College... And we are certain that Our Lord will sanctify us, will advance us in his service, (always Forward) through these graces which are powerful fruits, both solid and mysterious, of the devotion to his Sacred Heart.

So, dear Fathers and Brothers, I urge you to have recourse to this divine Heart, to take it as a model in its humility, its spirit of charity, obedience and zeal and to say nothing, and do nothing so to speak without consulting him through the intercession of the Heart of Mary. Satan angrily tries to deceive us with false security, if he cannot destroy us with violence.

You have just won a fine victory over him in the Pedagogical Congress, by courage full of wisdom; and you have completed

the triumph and you have dragged the enemy into the dust, remaining silent amid taunts and insults. Blessed be God a thousand times!

Here, the whole Community has given thanks for it. But the enemy will seek revenge, transforming himself for each individual into an angel of light, and under the pretext of virtue, bringing one to fall and then another.

With this great seducer, who can be both sweetness and light or both lion and dragon, we may have to put less faith in our virtues than in our faults!. Let us be vigilant and pray.

Here, we touch with our finger the criminal intentions and the secret projects of Satan; but at the same time the action of Our Lord and of his Blessed Mother who thwarts his dark plots and supports all the members of the Community in the painful designs of persecution that accumulate every day and every hour. Always forward!

I am sending you a small image of the Sacred Heart which was placed on the tomb of venerable Father Garicoïts. Pray that his cause for canonisation will open soon, if it is the will of the Lord.

All yours in Our lord

Etchecopar

Pray that we keep the fruits of our retirement; As for me, I am very happy to know that your health is recovering. Here, nothing new.



Journeying towards the priestly ordination

Saturday, July 3, 2021, S. E. Mgr Jean-Salomon Lezoutié, Bishop of the diocese of Yopougon, in the cathedral of Saint-André, ordained priests our brothers of the Vicariate of the Ivory Coast: Serge Appaouh, Koffi Landry, Hippolyte Yomafou and Arnaud Kadjo.



**Fr. Arnaud N'Dah
Kadjo scj**

Community of Adiapodoumé

Ordained deacon on 9 January 2021, my diaconate sprung naturally from my clear desire to serve Christ, not only at the altar or through the Gospel, but also rather more from the desire to accompany and relieve the suffering of men and women disfigured by sickness.

My love of Christ found a home in His gaze, disfigured by His suffering and passion. The total gift of His life is what appealed to me, won my

heart and to which I succumbed.

As a deacon-brother and a student, my diaconate was divided between studying for a degree in nursing sciences and carrying out pastoral duties in the parish.

Won over by the love of Christ I saw in the suffering faces of the men and women broken by illness, I also found in the spirituality of our founder St Michael Garicoits a very important aspect which has been the pillar of my life as a Betharramite religious and which, moreover, guided my steps towards the priesthood: "Procuring the same happiness for others". An invitation to leave my comfort zone, my personal visions, my apprehensiveness and shortsighted judgments, to live with others, in the

heart of their realities, the very life of Christ, that is to say, to share their suffering.

Contact with the sick in the medical centres and hospitals and with the elderly to whom I take communion, has fostered in me the charism of compassion and love. Virtues for which our founder St Michael Garicoits as the core of the reality of my life, is sending me, as an apostle of the Gospel to bring the good news of the Resurrection. That is why my life as a deacon and religious within the hospital and parish environment has been one of an instrument of

Just as some sorrows are too painful to express, there are joys too which are indescribable and too great to put into words. If I had to give witness or write about the feelings which invade me, I think I'd need the whole of NEF in which to open up! However the duty placed on me here is to be brief and concise.

Still, since no-one is obliged to achieve the impossible, I should like to dedicate my first words to the Triune God who deigned to cast His marvellous gentle gaze on me, calling me to follow in His footsteps. Yes indeed my journey was long and difficult, but it remains the place where I was schooled, grew up and became mature.

Throughout the whole course of

Love, Joy and Hope.

This wish to procure the same happiness for others, in the model of our founder, has moulded my religious life as a deacon in such a way that my relationship with others is not so much one in which I seek my own happiness but rather one which seeks to show to others the loving face of Christ.

I give thanks to God for what he may achieve through me of our founder St Michael Garicoits' spirituality. May I be a priest of the model defined by His Sacred Heart! ●●●

**Fr. Hippolyte
Yomafou scj**

*Community of
Dabakala*



my albeit atypical journey, I was aware that my "Here I am" was motivated by a love of God and of Humanity. Despite my weaknesses, doubts and fears, I was guided by this secret source of love so sought after by our father St Michael Garicoits. It is this spring (not always sweetly flowing I must confess) which bade me accept the mission at the college in Katiola, where I had to adapt to the level of language and comprehension of the pupils.

For the rest of my diaconate, I considered this to have been a service rendered at the altar of course, but also the occasion of joyful fraternal communion. This communion allowed me to share the happiness of a consecrated life through Ministry of the Word (proclaiming the Gospel and Homilies), that of teaching (college and university) and one of closeness to the poor and the sick, in the light of Christ's passion.

Although newly ordained priest, I am still, in my mind's eye, a deacon since I am in the service of God, the Church and Humanity. I hold this truth from our Superior General, Father Gustavo Agin, to whom I owe a great debt of sincere thanks for hav-

ing proposed me for the priesthood.

I would like to finish by saying that I keep in my innermost thoughts all my formators and all those priests and brothers, in heaven and on earth, who have helped me steer a straight course until I reached my ordination to the priesthood. Thanks also to our Heavenly Mother for her loving maternal support.

I am counting on your prayers! I remain a joyful Betharramite with his lips and pen at the ready to give grace to God and sing the praises of His Son Jesus Christ.

"Conquered by the Love of God and of Humanity",

Your brother, Hippolyte Yomafou scj



To do, little..., but with love

In 2010, the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus opened a Global Assistance Centre for AIDS patients in the Central African Republic. This project, which is still operational, ensures the follow-up of more than 1,000 patients, including around 100 young orphans living with HIV. The Centre takes care of the patient in a holistic way: in addition to looking after health needs, it takes care of all the psychological and social aspects of the person. At the same time, it carries out awareness-raising actions in schools and organizes various preventative initiatives throughout the year, over a large area.

After years of service in the city of Bouar, we realized that many villagers were beginning to arrive from surrounding areas, not hesitating to walk dozens of kilometres in order to be treated. Antiretroviral treatment is life-long; also to avoid creating resistance to treatment, efforts should be made to be faithful to the appointments given regularly to the patient. For their part, the patient will have to attend our institution for the rest of their life. This implies that they travel from their village to the Centre at least every three months, provided that their physical condition and financial means allow.

Tens of kilometres from large in-

**Br. Angelo
Sala scj**
Community of
Bouar Saint-Michael-
Garicoïts



habited centres, the villages have no sanitation facilities. So when a person falls ill, the result is that reaching the nearest hospital that has basic equipment and a pharmacy becomes quite a problem. First of all, you have to find a means of transport, a motorcycle in general; then you have to raise the money to pay for the fuel, and finally pay the health costs. These conditions are difficult to fulfill for someone who usually lives a poor life of subsistence farming.

This state of affairs prompted us to think about a system capable of meeting the needs of marginalized people, the forgotten people of an almost non-existent state. Out of this situation the project of a mobile unit was born, in this case an all-terrain vehicle equipped with the minimum essentials to treat the most common diseases in the countryside.

The on-board staff consists of two laboratory technicians, a sociologist, a nurse and myself, as driver and coordinator of the mission. Our objective is to raise awareness and carry out



Il wrote: "*Human suffering inspires compassion, it also inspires respect and, in its own way, it intimidates. Because it carries within it the greatness of a specific mystery.*" (*Salvifici Doloris*, 11/02/1984) Not only to see, but to touch the plight of tens of thousands of Central Africans, whose health and development is

HIV tests among populations without easy access to a health clinic, and thus to achieve an early diagnosis, before the appearance of opportunistic infections. In addition, we do rapid malaria tests, and try to cope with whatever comes our way.

Our field of action is vast. The villages served are located on three axes: Bouar-Niem, Bouar-Bangarem and Bouar-Baoro. The day before going there, a nurse from the team contacts the village chief. It is then up to him to inform the population that the mobile team will be present on a specific day to test and provide treatment. On Saturday morning, we load the vehicle with all the necessary equipment, and the working day begins! It won't end until the very end of the afternoon.

During these missions, I became aware of the limits we come up against, in the face of so much pain and misery. As John Paul

of no concern to anyone else, this is something to make you feel overwhelmed. The fate of these unfortunate people remains for me a mystery - and a challenge – that is unpreventable.

I realize that what we do for them is very little. If it were not for the inhabitants of the villages we visit, who encourage us to continue because we give them some comfort, I would have already given up on this project. However, I draw the strength and enthusiasm to move forward from our founder. His example invites us to make ourselves close to our human brothers living on the margins of society. The spirituality of Saint Michael Garicoïts nourishes the charism and the mission of Bétharram. Thus are we sent to bear witness to the love of God, serving the poor and the sick in the name of Christ. To say "here I am" to those who are suffering, is this not reproducing the spirit of the Incarnation, from the Heart of Jesus to the

heart of the world?...

Our Rule of Life reminds us: *"Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor 8: 9). He healed the sick, freed the oppressed; he went everywhere doing good."* Following him, the religious of the Sacred



Heart of Jesus that we are, want to engage in *"actions that promote the development of the person, [by taking] initiatives to favour the excluded, providing emergency relief in a timely way, for example through work to fight disease, insecurity, injustice and poverty."* (RV no. 125) This is how I was led to open my eyes to the sufferings of so many dignified brothers and sisters, and also to open my ears to their cries for help.

What drives an aid project is love, in the words of our founder: *"Give me a heart that loves ... Love is what leads mankind."* In a project, the important thing is not just to give something, but to empathize with the people that we meet in pain. We are reminded of this so well in the document entitled *Identity and Mission of the Religious-Brother in the Church*, *"And you are all brothers"* (Mt 23,8): *"The mission of the brother [is], on the one hand, the fruit of a heart that lets itself be touched by the needs and miser-*

ies of humanity; he feels in them the call of Christ who sends him to satisfy hunger in different ways; his charism will make him especially sensitive to some of them. But that's not enough; the brother, whose ultimate vocation is that of identifying himself with the Son of Man, feels urged to become like him, a brother of the little ones. This is how the gift of brotherhood he received and lives in his community is now given to others in mission. The ultimate recipients of this gift are the little brothers with whom Christ identified himself. The mission is not "what he does", but his very life which has become a communion with the little ones: "so that the gift does not embarrass the other, I must not only give him a part of me, but give my very self; I must be part of the gift as a person" (Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 34 in n ° 28, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 12/09/2016) ●●●

**Meeting of the General Council of 21 June. With his Council,
the Superior General...:**



- approved the **creation of the community of Katiola and the appointment of Fr. Raoul Thibaut Segla SCJ as Superior** for a first term from 1 September 2021 (Saint Michael Garicoits Region, Vicariate of the Ivory Coast);
- approved the **appointment of Fr. Marius Angui as Superior of the community of Dabakala** for a first term from September 1, 2021 (Saint Michael Garicoits Region, Vicariate of the Ivory Coast);
- approved the **appointment of P. Gerard Zugarramurdi as Superior of the Community “Côte basque” and P. Joseph Ruspil as Superior of the Community of Saint-Palais**, both for a second term and from 1 July 2021 (Saint Michael Garicoits Region, Vicariate of France-Spain);
- considering the continuing pandemic situation, the Superior General **erected the extraordinary novitiate house in Vietnam for another year**, starting from 1 July 2021, and **appointed Fr. Albert Sa-at Prathansantiphong SCJ as Novice Master, Fr. Shamon Devasia scj and Fr. Stervin Selvadass scj as his collaborators**.

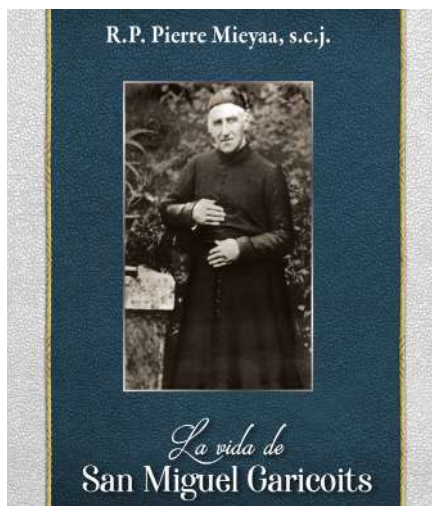
In memoriam



- **INDIA** - Harobele (South of Bangalore) | After 2 weeks in hospital in ICU, **Mr I. Joseph**, aged 80, father of Fr Joseph Sathish Paul Raj SCJ, of the community of Simaluguri (Vicariate of India), passed away on June 17. We extend our condolences to Fr Sathish and to all his family members and we pray for the repose of the soul of their dear one.

A new volume in our library

Last May, the month of the anniversary of our founder, Fr. Angelo Recalcati scj, tireless translator, made available in Spanish the biography of Saint Michael Garicoits completed in 1977 by Fr Pierre Miéyaa scj. "More than a translation, it is - precise Fr. Angelo - a rereading o rewriting". He explains why in his Translator's Note...



a lot of subjectivism that others would not share. In addition, I took into account Latin American readers who could get lost in the maze of names and places and not necessarily immediately grasp some of the allusions. I tried to simplify and I hope not to betray these allusions, in an attempt to make them more under-

standable.

'The reader who is not interested in the details, the background, the uses and customs of the time and place, the notes of names and people... won't trouble to read this Life of St Michael Garicoits. There are others that are simpler, and full enough.

Father Miéyaa certainly went to great lengths to document this history (even if we don't always know the source of all his documents) and he took every chance to speak of the time, of the stories (in miniscule!), and the customs of the place.

Reading it can be a bit difficult. So I tried to facilitate it by summarising, synthesising and at some points, deleting parts of the story. Father Miéyaa had a penchant for, (almost a cult for) footnotes! [...] So in order to facilitate reading and avoid tasking the reader the effort of continually jumping from the text to the notes, some were integrated into the text itself. Other parts of the text were modified and edited, taking care, however, not to lose the essential meaning. As the translation progressed, it seemed appropriate to modify some excessively bombastic expressions, some tinged with

The truth is that for those who do not know the Basque country, apart from sporadic visits, this work allows them to know something about the country, its customs and its history. Furthermore, (and this is the most important thing) this work has the virtue of bringing us closer to Michael Garicoits, and hopefully we can have a sense of having shared his life, his adventures, his anguish, his searches and, most importantly, his spiritual life.

A very critical reader, Javier, who was kind enough to correct this translation, commented: "*I was very impressed by the level of thoroughness ...the details, the rigour of the sources, the citations, etc. a work that ... could not be more complete and encompassing.*

It seems to me that this work will be of vital importance to all members of the congregation. Something like the ABC in the formation of those who make up the community of the Sacred Heart, I would say compulsory reading". My personal thanks for his work and for this observation.' ●●●

Father Mario Zappa scj

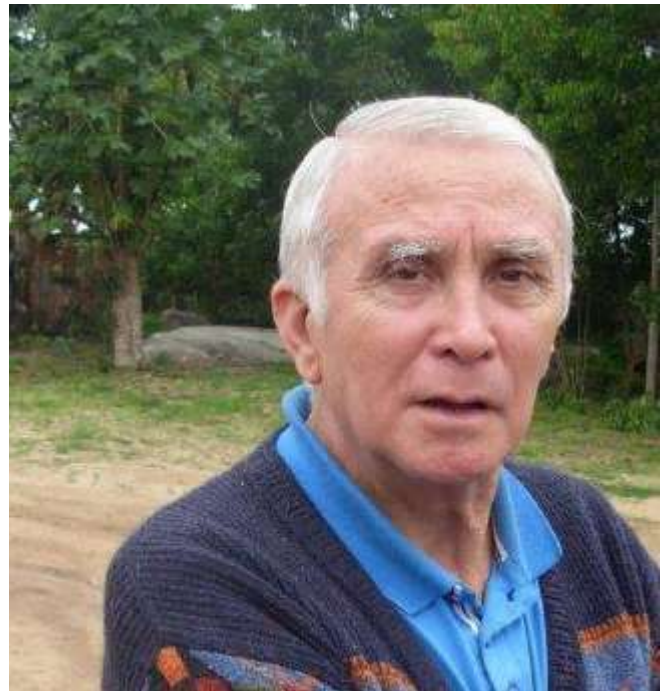
Triuggio, 10 April 1940 (Italy) – Bouar, 14 June 2021 (Central African Republic)

This piece does not aim to be a page of memories intended to fade with time. No, Father Mario is a continuous presence; he is and always will be with us.

Father Mario was a true man of God, as he was a man of prayer before anything else. When I went to Bouar, if I didn't find him in his room, I only had to pop straight across to the chapel. He was always there, in front of the Lord. His faith was tremendous.

Fr Mario loved to read and study. He always had a book or a journal in his hands. His main concern was to be able to receive his philosophy periodicals that he loved so much, such as the "Catholic Civilisation" which he read from cover to cover. He taught for many years in the seminaries of the diocese and the convent schools. He loved this work and considered it a real mission. No sooner had the June exams finished when he immediately began to prepare for the following year's classes. Even if it was for lessons he had been teaching for 15 years, he always had something new to deliver to his pupils. Additionally, in our diocese of Bouar, he was much loved as a confessor and preacher of spiritual exercises.

Fr. Mario loved Betharram, our religious family. He was certainly one of the religious who best knew St Michael Garicoits and the history of the Con-



gregation that he had always served to the best of his ability, dealing incidentally with important duties. For several years, he was responsible for the formation of lots of Italian Betharramites. This evening, many of them will be inundated, no doubt, with memories and will feel like sending him a huge thank you. When we wanted anecdotes and interesting facts, he always had a suitable story to tell us, to which he added a colourful commentary.

Fr Mario lived out the vow of obedience to the end. When we suggested to him, in 1994, to come to Central Africa, he accepted straightaway. Here too, he changed communities several times, always giving the best of himself, for he was a religious who loved the brothers who lived with him.

Fr Mario was always a curious man



into the car and drove him to hospital, taking care of everything. Did he have to redo a poor widow's thatched roof? Mariò, with the emphasis on the 'o' as people here pronounced his name, was there. He was a man of charity in the little things, the every

- not that sort of curiosity that takes pleasure in gossip. Rather, he wanted to be kept informed, to know how things went. When he came to Niem, he always asked me how many ill and hospitalised people we had and how many women had given birth. He asked Fr Arialdo, his seminary and ordination companion, how the village schools were and – I can't help smiling – he went as far as asking the number of hens we had at the mission, when he didn't count them himself. He was interested in everything.

But beyond these character traits, Fr Mario was a charitable man. It was his most beautiful quality, the most precious, the most authentic. His heart was simple, huge and generous. Always ready to help, particularly the poorest. In Bouar, he went to the neighbourhoods to find himself among the people he loved, and when he happened upon a sick person who had no means to care for himself, he got him

day kind of charity which perhaps does not change the state of the world but which has an immense value in the eyes and heart of God; he really put into practice the works of mercy.

Fr Mario loved Central Africa and Central Africans. He especially loved going to celebrate mass in the most remote villages, taking tracks impossible to cross... I confess that I had been surprised when his sister Pinuccia told me, while he was still in good health, that he wished to be buried here.

Then there were these two last months lived out with him. The illness which sneaked up on him. A little after Easter, Father Mario started to display strange symptoms. We decided therefore to have him return to Italy for a period of rest and for medical examinations, but the situation took a turn for the worse suddenly. It was impossible to leave. And a few days later came the diagnosis of Covid-19... Together with Brother Angelo, we spent a month at

the Covid Centre in Bangui, the capital of the Republic of Central Africa. He was put on oxygen for 24 hours a day. Then there was a slight improvement; Father Mario started to breathe on his own again and the doctors told us they had done as much as they could do and it would be best to take him home. We went back to Bouar but unfortunately Father Mario refused to eat. We tried everything but nothing could be done. Here, parenteral feeding does not exist. He would always say that everything was fine and he would eat later... so, we arrived on Monday 14th June. In the morning, while we were setting up a drip, he told us in Sango,

the local language: "Aita, awe!" which means "My brothers, that's enough"... Then towards 8:00pm, the Lord called him home and he went to Paradise.

Dear Father Mario, I would like to have you read and listen to the messages that your loved ones have sent during this period and which you already understood, but that you can now enjoy in Paradise. We could sum them all up in one simple phrase, the most beautiful, that which each one of us would always like to hear. "Good-bye, Mario, we love you lots". Your sister, Pinuccia, on behalf of all your loved ones, told you so a thousand times during this period. And I am sure

Member of the General Council from 1987 to 1993 together with Fr. Mario, **Mgr Vincent Landel scj** remembers:

"Before 1987, I did not really know you too well, other than that you were an Italian brother about my own age, who was involved in the formation of our youngest brothers.

But it was in 1987 that for you and for me our roads converged. For six years, we worked along with Father Terry Sheridan scj (then Superior General, here below in the picture with Fr. Mario) for the communion of the Congregation, living in Rome as the General Council. You had been elected by the General Chapter as the first Assistant General, and it was then that we got to know each other.



At the General Council, as Terry was of fragile health, you had the role of replacing him often, especially during his stays in the hospital.

With you, one of our first activities was to organise an annual meeting of the General Councils of the Daughters of the Cross and the Servants of Mary. We wanted to demonstrate in this way the importance of these two Congrega-

that this is the thought of all those who are here to say goodbye this evening.

And by these words, I too pay tribute to you: Goodbye Father Mario. Thank you for having been a real example for us, for all the affection you have shown us. And now in Paradise, pray for all of us and, in your way, continue to protect the poor that you loved so much and for whom you gave your life.

I embrace you always.



Burial place of Fr. Mario Zappa in La Yolé (10 km from Bouar), in the minor seminary of the Carmelites.

Fr. Tiziano Pozzi scj
Regional Vicar

tions for our existence as religious.

And then, we reflected together on our foundation in India, following the commitment of the General Chapter. Even though I went (to India) on my own, you were still beside me. You meticulously followed this foundation, even in those difficult times.

You were content to be in the background, and it was thanks to Indian nuns that we were able to move the project forward.

And then it was with you that we reflected on the future of the Congregation in Thailand. And in order that you could be by Terry's side in those difficult times, you asked me to go and receive the first vows from the First Thai religious. These were pronounced in Thai, but it seems that the Holy Spirit understands all languages!... A new chapter of the Congregation was opening.

Thanks to your knowledge of how things worked in the Vatican, we were able to obtain subsidies from the PMW (Pontifical Missionary Works) to build our seminary at Adiapodoumé. Again, it was as if a new door had opened, even if we had been knocking for some time.

You also had a care for South America and became the linchpin of our youth gatherings in America.

Thank you Mario! By your discreet presence you worked tirelessly to make the Congregation what it is today.

Mario, we are so proud of what your presence at the General Council has meant for the future of the Congregation."



Happy Feast of *Our Lady of Betharram*

O Mary, here we come!

Accept us
and present us to your divine Son.
Hail, Mary...

In conclusion, St Michael sings of his happiness:

*What munificence ! He gives us His Father and by the same bounty
He gives us also His mother. He wants her to give us birth in the
Spirit as she gave Him birth on the flesh, and to be at the same
time His mother and ours, so that He is our Brother in every way.
O my Brother, Your Father is my Father; Your mother is my mother.*

(From A Spiritual Master of the XIXth century...)



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