

In this issue

Sharing at grassroots level with dialogue and listening: a pathway to joy p. 1

Homily, solemnity of Pentecost 2021 p. 4

Opening of the year p. 6

Signed: Etchecopar... p. 7

New sons of Saint Michael in Latin America p. 9

Notices from the General Council p. 15

The novices of Betharram going on pilgrimage p. 17

† Dc. Daniel Pavón scj p. 22

To live in your joy p. 24

A word from the superior general

Sharing at grassroots level with dialogue and listening: a pathway to joy

“...The wisdom that comes down from above is essentially something pure; it is also peaceable, kindly and considerate; it is full of mercy and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it. The peace sown by peacemakers brings a harvest of justice.”

(James 3.17-18)

Dear Betharramites,

Among the riches that the pontificate of Pope Francis gives to us with his ongoing exhortation to dialogue and listening, there is one that has become a true call to communion and participation of the entire People of God. *It is a new style, a practice of a way of being Church in History: “In the image of the communion of the Trinity.”* To live this challenge, it is important that we see ourselves as called to start with our own religious family. Because this mystery of communion is not alien to us, religious, and it gives us the opportunity to improve and change.

Today we are preparing to live a Synod that implies envisioning ecclesial life with a new spirit, less structured, more participatory, something not so present in the times of

Saint Michael and Father Etchecopar; just as today their heroic virtues and their love for Christ and the Church, as they conceived them, are not present among us at the same level.

Experts say that synodality implies a *modus vivendi et operandi*. This way of living and acting is realised and made real in the community listening to the Word, and the celebration of the Eucharist, in the fraternity that is born from shared responsibilities, and from participation with the entire People of God. All this is lived at different levels according to the various ministries and roles, proper to the life and mission of the Church.

It is true that we all have the right to have a voice, to “nurture” that synodality. It is a joy to do so constructively and in a family spirit. Protecting integrity of the structures is a mission that not only belongs to the role of animators, but to each Betharramite who feels he is a living member of the religious family. Betharram is like a mother who suffers with her children, but she needs, at the same time, to be cared for by them. Although she is full of imperfections, her mission will continue to be like Mary at the foot of the cross, next to her Son whose Heart was pierced. For this reason, synodality implies a long and winding road that demands great mutual patience.

Pope Francis has also invited us to display higher forms of missionary communion through synodality, (walking together: *syn-odos*). He

wants a dynamic Church, centred on mercy and called to continual conversion; aspects that lead to its renewal and that are intrinsically linked.

“The Church always needs to renew itself because its members are sinners and in need of conversion” (Pope Francis, Eucharist, November 9, 2013 in Santa Marta).

Synodality carries within itself, in its practice and unfolding, the call to personal and community conversion. The Pope reminds us that we should not believe ourselves greater than anyone else, because we have a title or a position, or simply because we have an idea of ourselves far above reality. Humility and mutual respect will always be the starting point. Listen to the little ones, to those who don’t usually speak, to the “new” ones; practising asceticism among those who usually take the floor - or who like to grandstand -: these will be the foundations of the encounter between us. That free exercise of *personal and communal kenosis* will surely bear fruit and bring us joy.

For this reason, this process demands from us some attitudes, rooted in our charism, and which are basic to its essence, and are part of that *“spirituality of communion”*:

They are: **listening, dialogue, empathy, sharing, interior freedom, and freedom of speech, humility, the search for truth and above all faith and trust in God anchored in the Word and in the Eucharist.**

The experience of synodality is above all an experience of the Spirit, a journey of fraternity, rich in humanity, which transforms *the little family* into a community on the way, whose members know each other, love each other and give themselves generously for the Kingdom of God.

A few days ago we came to celebrate the great solemnity of the Holy Trinity, a mystery that inspired Saint Michael to leave us his model of communion and participation.

A certain *modus essendi*.

“Father, Son and Holy Spirit, what a model of community! ...

...These three people, perfectly different from each other, do not cease to be united and act in the same nature, in the same thought, in the same will and the same operation, thus forming an adorable, perfect society ... ” (Rule of Life. 93)

May this call inspire us.

Finally, finding ourselves on a common path asks us to make room for the poor and the little ones. They are the weak ones and the victims discovered by the pastoral sensitivity of the community. An experience of incarnation born from the cries of the world, from the needs of men and women who cry out, as well as Bartimaeus or the Canaanite woman, *who came with their voice to the ears of Jesus* who was passing by on the road.

Synodality is a spiritual process that needs to be promoted at all levels, because it will lead us to a renewed discernment of works and

people, to a lifestyle more focused on the gospel, embodied in the parameters of the here and now so that in everything God's will is accomplished.

Today, together with my collaborators, I feel in need of the constructive contribution of all of you to achieve a new style of leadership, more open and synodal for our religious family. A leadership that is collaborative and not hierarchical or clerical, that each one continues as we have proposed from the beginning, in the manner of a “general servant”, accompanying other servants. I apologise for all the times that I have not done so.

Placing ourselves at the service of freedom and responsibility for all implies in turn not allowing gossip, heartbreak, revenge or competition for “*the first places*” to take root among us (cf. Lk 22. 24- 38). Proximity, availability, trust and reciprocity. Values that cannot be lived without giving each other mutual help, cultivating good dispositions that guarantee them and that lead us to share what we call: *true joy*.

Fr. Gustavo scj
Superior General

Homily, solemnity of Pentecost, Saint Peter's Basilica, Sunday, 23 May 2021

"When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father..." (Jn 15:26). With these words, Jesus promises to send his disciples the Holy Spirit, the ultimate gift, the gift of gifts. He uses an unusual and mysterious word to describe the Spirit: Paraclete. Today let us reflect on this word, which is not easy to translate, for it has a number of meanings. Essentially, it means two things: Comforter and Advocate.



comfort.

Dear sister, dear brother, if you feel the darkness of solitude, if you feel that an obstacle within you blocks the way to hope, if your heart has a festering wound, if you can see no way out, then open your heart to the Holy Spirit.

[...]

Let us go another step. We too are called to testify in the Holy Spirit, to become paracletes, comforters. The Spirit is asking us to embody the comfort he brings. How can we do this? Not by making great speeches, but by drawing near to others. Not with trite words, but with prayer and closeness. Let us remember that closeness, compassion and tenderness are God's "trademark", always. The Paraclete is telling the Church that today is the time for comforting. It is more the time for joyfully proclaiming the Gospel than for combatting paganism. It is the time for bringing the joy of the Risen Lord, not for lamenting the drama of secularization. It is the time for pouring out love upon the world, yet not embracing worldliness. It is more the time for testifying to mercy, than for inculcating rules and regulations. It is the time of the Paraclete! It is the time of freedom of heart, in the Paraclete.

2. The Paraclete is also the

1. The Paraclete is the Comforter. All of us, particularly at times of difficulty like those we are presently experiencing due to the pandemic, look for consolation. Often, though, we turn only to earthly comforts, ephemeral comforts that quickly fade. Today, Jesus offers us heavenly comfort, the Holy Spirit, who is "of comforters the best" (Sequence). What is the difference? The comforts of the world are like a pain reliever: they can give momentary relief, but not cure the illness we carry deep within. [...] The Holy Spirit, the love of God, does precisely that. He comes down within us; as the Spirit, he acts in our spirit. He comes down "within the heart", as "the soul's most welcome guest" (ibid). He is the very love of God, who does not abandon us; for being present to those who are alone is itself a source of

Advocate. In Jesus' day, advocates did not do what they do today: rather than speaking in the place of defendants, they simply stood next to them and suggested arguments they could use in their own defence. That is what the Paraclete does, for he is "*the spirit of truth*" (v. 26). He does not take our place, but defends us from the deceits of evil by inspiring thoughts and feelings. He does so discreetly, without forcing us: he proposes but does not impose. [...]

The first advice offered by the Holy Spirit is, "Live in the present". The present, not the past or the future. The Paraclete affirms the primacy of today, against the temptation to let ourselves be paralyzed by rancour or memories of the past, or by uncertainty or fear about the future. The Spirit reminds us of the grace of the present moment. There is no better time for us: now, here and now, is the one and only time to do good, to make our life a gift. Let us live in the present!

The Spirit also tells us, "Look to the whole". The whole, not the part. The Spirit does not mould isolated individuals, but shapes us into a Church in the wide variety of our charisms, into a unity that is never uniformity. The Paraclete affirms the primacy of the whole. There, in the whole, in the community, the Spirit prefers to work and to bring newness. [...] Today, if we listen to the Spirit, we will not be concerned with conservatives and progressives, traditionalists and innovators, right and left. When those

become our criteria, then the Church has forgotten the Spirit. The Paraclete impels us to unity, to concord, to the harmony of diversity. He makes us see ourselves as parts of the same body, brothers and sisters of one another. Let us look to the whole! The enemy wants diversity to become opposition and so he makes them become ideologies. Say no to ideologies, yes to the whole.

The third advice of the Spirit is, "Put God before yourself". This is the decisive step in the spiritual life, which is not the sum of our own merits and achievements, but a humble openness to God. The Spirit affirms the primacy of grace. Only by emptying ourselves, do we leave room for the Lord; only by giving ourselves to him, do we find ourselves; only by becoming poor in spirit, do we become rich in the Holy Spirit. This is also true of the Church. We save no one, not even ourselves, by our own efforts. If we give priority to our own projects, our structures, our plans for reform, we will be concerned only about effectiveness, efficiency, we will think only in horizontal terms and, as a result, we will bear no fruit. [...]

Holy Spirit, Paraclete Spirit, comfort our hearts. Make us missionaries of your comfort, paracletes of your mercy before the world. Our Advocate, sweet counsellor of the soul, make us witnesses of the "today" of God, prophets of unity for the Church and humanity, and apostles grounded in your grace, which creates and renews all things. Amen. ●●●

Opening of the year



THAILAND | On May 30, the community of Sampran officially opened the year dedicated to Venerable Fr Auguste Etchecopar. It was a joyful event attended by young people in formation, formators and some benefactors.

The Eucharistic celebration began with a prayer in front of the image of Fr. Etchecopar.



The community intends to live this very special year as an opportunity to get to know Father Etchecopar better to follow our Founder more closely. For this reason the community will prepare each month an aid with the life of Fr. Etchecopar, some biblical quotations, the most important saints of the month and short texts to stimulate reflection.



OTHER BROTHERS marked this beginning of the year with various initiatives: masses, prayers, rosary along the way of the cross and vespers around his tomb in the chapel of the Resurrection in Betharam; in the house of the scholasticate of Belo Horizonte, a chapel has been dedicated to our two founders, and prayer cards to obtain a grace through his intercession have been diffused.

It is the beginning of a journey that unites us in love and respect for our founders, for the charism they have cultivated and transmitted with fidelity and dedication to our Congregation of the Sacred Heart in order to share their own joy.



*Father Etchecopar regarding the new priests and
to the scolastics*

To Fr. Jean Magendie

F.V.D.

Betharram, February 3, 1882

Dear Father Jean Magendie,

God is blessed by these ordinations!! These Priests are other-Christians given to the Church and to Betharram, for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls; what infinite treasures we have just acquired!!

God be blessed by the successes of this past year and the hopes of the present!

May he support you all and grant to the few the joys of fervour and the peace promised to men of good will.

I would like to write to everyone; to the elders, who are solid rocks with their perseverance in all kinds of virtue; to the young, who make themselves worthy of their predecessors by their progress in what characterises, manifests and shows forth the true members of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Excuse me, especially you who have written to me several times, (dear Fathers Buzy and Arrambide, and others, perhaps), without having received an answer. For almost two months, I have been a little weak and my work is taking what is left of my strength.

I will therefore limit myself to saying to all of you, along with Fr. Garicoïts, at the start of the New Year:

1 ° Above everything have God and his adorable will, constantly before your eyes.

2 ° And to go to God using our rule and our Constitutions as an expression of his will

3 ° Go to this end by these means, according to the full extent of your grace and the duties of your position; while respecting each other's limits with virginal delicacy.

Meditate on every word! and may Our Lady bless you!

To Her our life, for her greater glory!

All yours in Our Lord

Etchecopar



To the scholastics studying in Toulouse

F.V.D.

Pau October 30, 1887

My dear children,

I have received your kind and filial letters.

Thank you. Could there be a better joy for a Father than that brought to him by the tenderness of such children, the abandonment and the outpouring of their hearts, full of God, breathing only his love?

May he be blessed this Heavenly Father who watches over you, over your first steps in your new career, and who in Toulouse, as in Betharram, will keep you like little birds in their nest, under the wings of their Mother!

Courage therefore, dear Children! No distractions, no projections, no over-excitement ... Nothing exhausts the head and the body like these devouring appetites for knowledge and science. In the midst of strength, in moderation, in a wise discipline, in sobriety: be wise and vigilant for the adversary seeks someone to devour.

Happy is the one who is so master of his desires, that he desires little, and in this smallness, (as St Francis de Sales said) will take a small step, day by day, leaving tomorrow and everything else including success or failure, to the absolute sovereignty of divine good pleasure.

Oh! my children, this is a lofty path, so perfect, but certain to accomplish much while progressing. With a free soul, serene and lifted up, it will pass leaping and flying even without suspecting it from the realm of the natural to the realm of the supernatural and vice versa.

Thus studied St.Thomas, St.Bonaventure and other angels of piety and knowledge, covered with a mortal body.

May Our Lady grant you the same grace as you kneel before her and let her cover you with her caresses, in the Heart of Jesus! To Jesus, to Mary, all your heart, all your mind and your whole life.

I embrace you.

All yours in Our Lord

Etchecopar priest



New sons of Saint Michael in Latin America



Brother Mariano Surace (left) and Brother Sergio Leiva (right) made their final profession, respectively on 30 May, in the formation house of Adrogué (Argentina) and on 11 June in Ciudad del Este (Paraguay).

“Come and see” (Jn 1,39)

by Br. Mariano Surace scj

Hello, I am Mariano, a Brother of our religious family of Betharram, from Buenos Aires in Argentina. I just made my final vows on May 30, and I want to tell you something about my life, something about my history.

I was born into a Catholic family, where my mother and grandmother taught me how to pray. I went to the Catholic school of my local parish run by Carmelite religious, where I received the sacraments. And it was

thanks to a retreat that I did at the age of 16 with a movement better known as “Camino” where I encountered Jesus and his merciful face. From that moment on, Jesus fascinated me, and I changed in many things. We formed a group of boys and girls where we shared a little of everything and especially issues of faith, which for me was something new. Over time my commitment increased, by helping in the Youth Ministry of my diocese. On the academic side, I began to study as a public accountant and to go to work. I also

taught at the faculty, an activity that I really enjoyed.

Thanks to this movement, I also met a priest of Betharram in Adrogué -Father Daniel Gonzalez- and I did some activities, including a "vocation-retreat" in Villa Calamuchita, Córdoba, in the month of January 2009. There I also experienced a little of the charism of Betharram and it was there that I asked myself for the first time in my life "why not be a priest?" The question surfaced and I let it lie. In 2010 I gained my degree as an accountant, then in youth ministry they asked me to represent the diocese in the national assembly that year in Luján. I remember that there I had to share a room with two young priests, and one of them jokingly told me to become a priest, to which I said no, but I could not forget

the mental "itch" that his advice left within me. From that moment on I left with the certainty that God wanted to tell me something.

I had a "normal" life, with friends, family, work, church life ... and I treasured these experiences. Coming to mid-2011 I was looking for a change of company and I found a position in an accounting firm. But once I started working in that company, I realized that it was not what I expected, and I sighed saying "I want to be elsewhere and do something for people!" And I decided to ask Father Daniel to talk about what was stirring within me. I came back from the meetings very motivated, but there was something that was very difficult for me: he asked me as a condition that I had to do my best in whatever I have to do today, even



The celebration took place in the community of Adrogué with Fr. Daniel Gonzalez scj, delegate of the Superior General, Fr. Osmar Caceres Spaini, master of novices, and Fr. Francisco Daleoso scj.

if I don't like it, because God put me there for some purpose. A short time later I met a girl and started dating, and there were also new job opportunities that I liked more ... it seemed that everything I had once dreamed of had begun to happen. Until one day I accidentally heard a programme on the radio where they commented on the Gospel and prayed for priestly vocations, and "my heart burned within me". From then on I felt that life was never going to be the same, I felt a big change. Then one day I entered a church and I saw the Blessed Sacrament exposed, and something made me say to Him: "do whatever you want with me." Then I felt an incredible peace. I knew what the Lord was asking of me, and I was certain that he would never speak to me like that again, because he had already told me everything.

From that moment I had no more doubts, and I felt a beautiful joy. And I thought that if something is going to fill me with happiness "I would not want to waste another minute", knowing all that it implied: fear, leaving my family, living in a different place and style and all that sacrifice. After confirming my option with my spiritual director, there were periods of sadness, since I had to leave my girlfriend and leave my job. But I recalled everything I had experienced, and this drove me to keep going. In April 2012 I entered the religious community of Adrogué in Buenos Aires, my first place of formation

where I also began a journey into self-knowledge during that and the subsequent year. I also made a commitment to the community, enjoying the care of the elderly Fathers when they were admitted, and that helped me better know my abilities and my love for others. There the lay community was also very important, and their presence made me feel very welcome.

In the novitiate, I identified with a lot concerning St Michael, and I realised that his charism chimed with my inner self. I went through the 30 days of Spiritual Exercises, and all this prompted me to profess my first vows on December 12, 2015. There the scholasticate stage continued in Brazil. Going there was like an "exodus" but God continued to support me a hundredfold. I was able to fall in love with the Brazilian people; and the study of theology greatly enriched my life, mainly with scripture study and a formation to accompany the Spiritual Exercises.

On my return, in 2020 I returned to the community of Adrogué, with the main mission of accompanying the young people of the vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay and helping with the economy. But, like everyone else, last year the Lord challenged us all to be creative in mission, promoting, for example, a virtual Scripture workshop. In January I did my 30 days of Spiritual Exercises, where the Lord was gently prompting me to embrace religious life for life, but then

reality hit me: in the middle of the Exercises my father died. So while still in mourning, I was invited to apply for perpetual vows, where God did not stop giving me his peace and his consolation. Then another event happened that shook me: on May 30, a total lockdown was decreed, and I could not make my perpetual profession as I had planned. All this made me realise that a spiritual life has to be lived 'in the flesh', in concrete reality, as Saint Michael teaches us. I saw it clearly, and I confirmed the commitment then the Lord took care of the rest: even without a congregation, the celebration was as beautiful as if there had been one, celebrating it in full communion with everyone through the networks and living intimacy in depth.

In short, what is it that gives mean-

ing to my life and my perpetual profession? God as my treasure, and the giving of my life to make him known, living in community.

"Come and see" (Jn 1.39) was the phrase of the Gospel that I chose. I think that sums up my brief history, where the Lord speaks to us, encourages us to know him and experience him. And his 'hundredfold' reward that gives us joy will never be missing. I did not lose anything by making profession. I only made available what I had, and he gave me back the same and much more besides. I hope that this testimony encourages each one to launch into what they feel that God encourages them to follow. They count on my prayers and I on yours... ●●●

A Life - Shared and grateful

by Br. Sergio Leiva scj

On the occasion of my perpetual profession, I was asked the testimony of my life as a Betharramite religious. With great joy and simplicity, I share with you my experience ...

I take my final vows on 11th June 2021, on the Solemnity of Sacred Heart of Jesus. For me, it's a moment to look back and this return to

the road travelled fills me with sentiments of gratitude. Twelve years of formation as a Betharramite is lot. To tell about this journey and to tell the story of my vocation, it is necessary to go further back in time. It all started with the desire to "go further". I was 17 years old; I was in my last year of high school and I actively participat-



Around Br. Sergio, from left to right: Fr. Crispin, Superior of his community (Puente Remanso), Fr. Alberto Zaracho (Regional Vicar, delegated by the Superior General to receive the vows), Fr. Tobia & Fr. Raul.

ed in the life of my ecclesial community, the chapel Saint Francis of Assisi. At this point of my life, I wanted to go beyond ... beyond my personal projects (academic career and life engagements) to meet the projects of God which is always greater.

Taking into account this desire, which was not free from doubts and fears, I entered the Congregation on 4th March 2010 as an aspirant. Remembering all this, I am grateful for having taken this step and God is so faithful to me too. Then, I entered the postulancy in 2011 in letting carried by the promise of the great joy that gives life which is given to God and to others. A promise that I have often considered as an invitation to trust, sometimes blindly going where I did not want to go or without know-

ing where, as was the case in 2014 at time to go to Argentina for the novitiate. It was like I was losing control, but knowing that there was no other way to be free and to live with joy that being honest with myself and with what God was establishing at every moment. After a deep experience lived in the novitiate, by deepening the charism of the Congregation, the vows, the relationship with God and with myself - my pilgrimage continued on Brazilian soil. We were already in 2016. There, with my first vows, I continued to mature my vocation and my faith through my theological studies, the community experience, pastoral activities and retreats.

As a Betharramite, over the years, I did gradually discover little by little that the engine of my existence is to

follow Jesus, humbly, annihilated like him, on the path that he was indicating to me. With something which gives a great sense of security, knowing that this path has been travelled and is travelled by many others: companions with whom I have shared my life; some of them have already joined the Father; of good examples which are not lacking in the Congregation. Even many lay people, who are of vital importance in my journey, who taught me the different faces in which the charism can be expressed; above all, they helped me to keep my feet on the ground.

I would also like to share with you a thought living and hidden, which springs forth in me, the fruit of meetings, our assemblies, narratio fidei, talks, community outings, spontaneous meetings, etc. We, Betharramites, all do not think in the same way. Each one has his own thinking. Our opinions differ. We look at reality from different angles. So, what unites us? To know that we are disciples of Jesus; it is He who calls us to share one's path by following this imprint: To reproduce and to manifest the generous impulse of the Heart of Jesus saying to his Father "Here I am! ". We follow Jesus in trying to share his way of doing things. We are united by this prodigious spectacle that is the contemplation of God's Love for all of creation, which leads us to dedicate in the service of his Kingdom. We are so different and at the same time identical! We are one in the One who

united us together! These are the expressions that strike me positively at this moment.

To conclude, I would like to highlight one of the many gifts I have received throughout this journey as a Betharramite: it is the grace to live with a sentiment of gratitude. To live the life as a gift received, as a gift, and not as a personal property. Like that of Saint Michael who did not keep his life for himself, but always sought to share it so that others can have the same happiness. I give thanks for the people I have met who are part of my history. I give thanks for the experiences that all these people have allowed me to live and for the benefits they have produced in me. I give thanks for the life I have been given to live, as it is, by simply putting my heart in the Heart of Jesus. THANK YOU! Forward, always forward! ●●●

Meeting of the General Council on 31st May 2021. With his Council, the Superior General:



- approved the appointment of **Fr. José Larrosa as Superior of the community of La Colmena** (Vicariate of Paraguay, Region Fr. Auguste Etchecopar) for a second term, from June 1st.

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On May 14, *Br. Wichai Peter Danainitikan* (Thailand) expressed his willingness not to renew his vows, so he left the house of formation and permanently went home. May Br. Wichai remain under the protection of Our Lady of the Beautiful Branch.

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Canonical Visit to the Vicariate of Italy: The third "step" of the canonical visit of the Superior General to the Vicariate of Italy took place from 15 to 24 May. After being interrupted twice (in February / March 2020 and in October 2020) due to the Covid-19 pandemic, eventually Fr Gustavo Agín SCJ, Superior General, was able to resume and conclude the visit to the Italian communities.

After meeting the religious of the communities of Langhirano, Pistoia, Ponte a Elsa, Monteporzio and Rome-Miracoli last year, in this "step" he finally met the religious of the communities of Albiate, Lissone and Castellazzo, Albavilla and Colico.

Then, on 24 May, a Vicariate assembly was held via video link.

It was a prudent step towards "opening up", in our time marked by the lockdown and the inability to meet face to face.

Let us entrust to the intercession of St Michael Garicoïts the journey of the Vicariate of Italy.

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On the agenda of the Superior General: Visit to the religious in Central Africa

From 21 June to 7 July, the Superior General will travel to the Central African Republic to make the canonical visit - also postponed for several months - to the religious of the three Betharramite communities.



Diaconate Ordination of Br. Akhil Joseph Thykkuttathil scj

On 29 May, in the chapel of the archbishop's house of Bangalore, Br. Akhil Joseph Thykkuttathil SCJ was ordained a deacon by Most. Rev. Peter Machado, Archbishop of Bangalore. This event took place with a small number of participants because of the restrictions due to the pandemic. The Regional Vicar in India, Fr. Arul Gnana Prakash SCJ and the Superior of the community of Bangalore, Fr. Anthony Siluvai SCJ were present at the ordination.

Together with Br. Akhil, 10 other young people were ordained deacons.



On May 12, in the chapel of Ban Betharram in Chiang Mai, our two young brothers Br. Nicolas Surasak Doohae SCJ and Br. John Weerapong Youhae SCJ renewed their vows in the hands of Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong SCJ, delegate of the Regional Superior, Fr. Enrico Frigerio SCJ.

On May 14, in the same chapel, the religious of the Vicariate celebrated the solemnity of St. Michael Garicoïts, our Founder.

On this very special day for the Congregation, **Br.**

Anselm Prapas Chiwakitmankong SCJ (see picture), after completing his novitiate, made his first vows in the hands of Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong SCJ, delegate of the Regional Superior, Fr. Enrico Frigerio SCJ.

Because of the restrictions due to the pandemic, only a limited number of people could be present at the celebration.

The novices of Betharram going on pilgrimage (8 & 9 May)

On Saturday May 8th the “novitiate”¹ went on pilgrimage in the steps of our founding father St Michael Garicoits. Accompanied by our novice master Fr Gaspar Fernandez Perez SCJ and by Fr Laurent Bacho SCJ a native of the Basque country and the Regional Vicar, they visited Cambo, Garris, Oneix and Ibarre in turn.

We left Betharram about 9 in the morning and arrived in Cambo around 11 o'clock. Here our Fathers celebrated Mass and commented on a passage from the book by Fr Amédée Brunot SCJ *Michael Garicoits, the 'Here I am' saint*. Reading these words enabled us to get an idea

1) *Extraordinary novitiate at Betharram (St Michael Garicoits Region, Vicariate of France-Spain)*

of the huge task undertaken by Michael Garicoits, then the curate of an ailing parish priest, as regards the parishioners, and particularly the way he fostered devotion to the Sacred Heart and inspired many vocations through his ministry.

True, Cambo would remain his only experience of parish life, but the impression he made on their hearts and minds in such a short space of time endures to this day, with people still drawn to drink at his wellspring.

After our stop at Cambo, we headed for Garris, the village where St Michael received instruction in the catechism by Abbé Barbaste and made his First Holy Communion. The young Michael attended this parish while he was working as a farm-boy at the Anghélus. In Garris we met the parish priest from Saint-Palais who was passing through, and then we visited the



The renovated church of Cambo-les-bains, where Michael Garicoits began his ministry as vicar.

church before going on to Oneix, not far from there. Once we'd reached Oneix we visited the Anghelus' farm before going on to the village church where we were joined by Fr Joseph Ruspil. After Oneix we called in at the Etchécopar house in St Palais before completing the last stage on our pilgrimage in Ibarre, where we visited the church in the village and Garacotchea, the house where Michael Garicoits was born on 15 April 1797.

Each stage was marked by recollection and prayer. Everywhere we went we noticed how devotion to the saint of Betharram was recalled by the presence of a statue or stained glass in the church. ●●●

F. Toussaint TAH

The countryside from Cambo to Ibarre via Garris, Oneix and St Palais was welcoming us with open arms under clear sunny skies. Surrounded as it is by mountains, I almost felt I was back home in my village in

the western Ivory Coast... but no! I really was in the Basque country.

The visit to the Anghélu's house was particularly moving. The adventure lived by St Michael in this location moved from something abstract to something real for me. Quite apart from the very warm welcome reserved for us, I was also touched by the witness left behind of St Michael's life, devoted to carrying out his mission in the wake of Christ.

"Huna Ni" - this "Here I am" (in Basque) - pronounced by St Michael at his home in Garacotchea in answer to God's call, has stood the test of time over the years. By the Grace of God, St Michael overcame everything that was an obstacle to the Divine Will. Through his devotion, simplicity and love for mankind, he gave himself, body and soul, to "obtaining for others this happiness" which he had received freely. "Nothing great has a great begin-



The church at Garris, location of the First Holy Communion.

ning" the "Saindua" (the Basque word for saint) used to say. Nothing destined Michael for such spiritual attainment except his trust in God; he knew how to cultivate in himself the patience and humility needed to achieve his dream: to become a shepherd of God's flock and a founder of a religious congregation having the very Heart of Christ as its programme.

The high point of our pilgrimage was Mass at Ibarre. After following the Stations of the Cross, the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy was pleasantly accompanied by songs in the Basque language which gave a special meaning to the day's celebration. The circumstances of the current health situation did not prevent several of the faithful joining us (somewhat in advance of his feast day on May 14th) to commemorate the day our founder entered Heaven.

After exchanging fraternal greetings at the end of Mass, we departed

Ibarre under a clouded sky, as if the place was sorry to see us go. ●●● *Charles Fabian Mahan*

I was left deeply marked by the way Michael moved from the unbending, harsh God to a tender, loving God in a society that was used to preaching an awful God who inspired fear. Although Gratianne, his mother, taught him that God was harsh and severe, St Michael succeeded in freeing himself from this idea and discovered the true face of God: the face of love.

Moreover, neither suffering nor misery succeeded in him denying God's love. Indeed, it was his parents' poverty that led the young man to seek work as a servant on the Anghélus' farm. However, far from resulting in his turning in on himself, this state of affairs actually encouraged him to open out to others. Michael discovered God's love in the midst of his destitution. Henceforth he knew he was not alone. Thanks to this discovery, the young Basque was able to relativise what he was living through,



in the face of that absolute given which is the love of the Lord. Experiencing God's love is what enabled Michael to emerge from his sufferings taller and stronger. From this I have discovered that sufferings and trials can be positive elements in our growth, so long as we keep trusting the Lord. The ecstasy of Oneix is, one could say, but the result of the deep close relationship he had with the Lord and which doubtless was the event or encounter which gave his life new direction. ●●● *Hervé Constant Cheghe*

When without compelling you, the silence makes you want to stay quiet so you do, and make space for contemplation!

What an immense joy it was to live this experience! What joy there was in walking in St Michael's footsteps! My enchanted memories are in tune with this beautiful enchanted countryside... Yes, this pilgrimage in the footsteps of our father was an extraordinary journey for me. How marvellous it was to

tread the same ground as did our St Michael!

In this magnificent church at Cambo, glowing with the splendours of its newly decorated interior, St Michael burned with the flame of God's love. He found happiness in devotion to the Sacred Heart. His fervent desire to be that apostle of God's mercy cast in charity was fulfilled after the sufferings brought about by the rigours of Jansenism.

It was fascinating to find oneself in this place where St Michael served without stinting, devoting himself totally to others. Through the care he lavished on the elderly infirm parish priest Fr Hardoy, he revealed the well of tenderness and gentleness at which he drank, thereby giving meaning to every implication of his phrase, "Here I am", and serving God through others. A true disciple, he knew how to provide concrete responses to the hunger



Garacotchea

and thirst of those souls seeking the God of infinite goodness and not the God of violence.

The bright sun was casting its rays as wide as a cloak and to the tune of birdsong from the cherry tree right by the church in Garris, I relived the story of St Michael's First Holy Communion, freed from the fear of an "unkind" punishing God, not by leafing through a book this time but by being immersed in the reality of his life events.

This same indiscreet sun could not conceal my wide smile and surprise on seeing the location of St Michael's ecstasy in Oneix! I devoured this place, where our saint encountered God,

with my eyes: illuminated with God's love. At the same time, I understood with what simplicity he carried out his domestic duties in the modest surroundings of the Anghélu's farmstead.

Finally, at Ibarre, how moving it was to say Vespers in front of the humble family dwelling! What a joy it was to be at the source of our father St Michael Garicoits, on the very spot where God deigned to light the spark which from his birth, led him to his great life's work.

This journey has opened up new paths for me when reading about the life of our Father, Saint Michael Garicoits. ●●● *Touré Eric*



Deacon Daniel Pavon scj

Laguna Blanca, 27 March 1977 - Ciudad del Este, 13 May 2021 (Paraguay)

Entered the family of Betharram in the year 90s, Daniel Ramón Pavón Galeano was a young man of a worried nature. He did his postulancy in Mariano Roque Alonso (15 km of Asunción), his novitiate in Brazil and had an international experience in England. He completed his formation in the Institute of Theology of the Catholic University in Asunción.

He joined the parish of San Joaquín where he received the diaconal ordination. After a while in Argentina, he lived an experience of few years in the diocese of Ciudad del Este (Paraguay), in providing pastoral assistance to several parishes as deacon. He always nurtured the passion for scouts which led him to form and accompany several groups of scouts in Ciudad del Este.

These last two years, having started a process of returning to our religious family, he integrated himself in the religious community of Ciudad del Este, where he accompanied the Pastoral group of Health, at Divine Mercy. In recent months, he dedicated himself to the accompaniment of a pastoral



May you rest in peace, dear brother Daniel. You have transmitted to us lately so many projects, so much of enthusiasm for vocation animation and so much of life.
(Fr. Raul scj)

group of Vocations. He also animated equally the Celebration of the Word in the chapels and sometimes in the parish church.

In November 2020, severe kidney disease was diagnosed and declared. Multiple complications made necessary a complex surgery that involved the removal of a kidney. His convalescence was slow and delicate, and the health protocol prescribed to him by the doctors weighed heavily on him.

In May 2021, he suffered from further complications which were fatal on the afternoon of May 13. At his funeral, many people came to pay homage to him and underlined the quality of his spiritual accompani-

ment, his ability to be close to others and his human qualities.

Fr. Alberto Zaracho scj
Regional Vicar in Paraguay



In memoriam

- BRAZIL - PASSA QUATRO: On May 14, ***Mrs. Maria Letícia De Paula Moreira***, aged 47, returned to the Father's house. Mrs. Maria Letícia was sister of Fr. Francisco de Paula SCJ (from the community of Belo Horizonte, Parish Priest of the Parish "Sacred Heart of Jesus" in Nova Granada - Vicariate of Brazil).
We express our sympathy to Fr Francisco and his family and we promise to keep them in our prayers.
- INDIA - Kerala: On Sunday, May 30, ***Mrs. Celin Thomas***, the grandmother of Fr Yesudas Kuttappassery SCJ, of the community of Bethlehem (Vicariate of Holy Land), died in Cochin (Kerala, India). She was 89 years old.
We express our condolences to Fr Yesudas and his family and we pray for the repose of her grandmother's soul.
- ITALY - Castello Valsolda: On 10 June, ***Mr. Amilcare Tullio Manzolini***, 90 years old, father of Fr Emilio Manzolini SCJ, of the community of Albavilla (Vicariate of Italy), has died.
We express our sympathy to Fr Emilio and his family and we promise to keep them and their dear one in our prayers.



To live in your joy

Father, let me live in your joy,
May it show in all my conduct,
in my relationship with you,
in my relations with my brothers;
May it well up deep inside me.

You fix your gaze on me
to purify me,
to protect me,
and fill me with your blessings.

With Mary I say and repeat over and over:

“My soul glorifies the Lord”
“Yes, truly, the Lord is great! I sing it!”
God, my good Father, you gaze at me
and that fills me with joy.

In you, is all my faith.

In you, is all my trust.

In you, is all my love.

Make me love my brothers.

and devote myself to their service.

(from *En avant*, collection of prayers by Fr Beñat Oyhénart
scj, inspired by Saint Michael Garicoits.)



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