



Grant me O Lord, a simple obedience:

One that does not argue,
One that does not grumble,
One that does not question,
One with no 'ifs' or 'buts'.

**Make me obedient like Abraham,
or like Saint Joseph leaving for Egypt.**

Grant me O Lord a prudent obedience:

One that is not reckless,
Nor indiscreet.

Grant me O Lord a selfless obedience:

That doesn't focus on me,
Or even my immediate happiness:
May obedience open my heart and let me say:
"It is the Lord! let Him do as He sees fit"

Grant me O Lord a respectful obedience:

that I may respect the one through whom you speak to me
without weighing his faults,
even if others reproach me;
grant me David's respect for Saul.

Grant me O Lord a humble obedience:

Obedience and humility support one other,
they belong together.

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



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A word from the superior general

How do we share the same joy?

"Let the Magnificat be your favourite song."
(Saint Michael Garicoits)

Dear Betharramites,

In the year 1832 the good Father Michael Garicoits was returning home after having been through a powerful experience, the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Toulouse. Michael feels called to be religious, fascinated by Jesus humble and obedient. An inner force invites him to leave behind his golden buckles, his snuff and other little luxuries, to embrace, full of joy, a life of total consecration to the Heart of Jesus. In the Chapel of Betharram, at the feet of Mary, a wonderful light enfolds him and confirms him once again in his choice.

This was not the first extraordinary sign he had received. In the previous two years he had experienced a levitation during Mass, frequent shining lights when confessing, and even a transfiguration at a Christmas Mass. What did it mean for him to become the founder of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Betharram, to follow Jesus Christ more closely, to propose a new charism to the Church in those times..., raising high the flag of the Heart of the Son: Ecce Venio?

His heart bursting with joy, he had to share it. And share it he did, with his first companions, next to a simple stove, eating the only thing they had that night, something like a sausage sandwich. But how good it tasted! These moments, and many others, will remain engraved in his memory, as well as the numerous trials that he had to overcome in order to offer himself fully, and out of love for the loving Will of the Father.

As for ourselves, called to follow Christ, we also have a history. Perhaps not as rich, but one full of signs and events that we can consider as graces: signposts which lead us to the true path, Jesus Christ. When we speak of sharing the same joy, we are referring to that joy which arises from a similar experience to St. Michael's. We are invited to follow Jesus, and change our lives for the better, placing ourselves side by side with him and with his people.

Knowing the Will of God for his life, St. Michael launched himself along the path like a hero, following it closely until his last breath. He did not keep his happiness to himself, he channelled it into a love that poured out to everyone, in gestures and words.

For him, sustaining this joy of living in the midst of many troubles was not easy. He learned to be happy with little or nothing. *Just his bible and his theology...* He was happy.

In front of the first religious, he evoked Saint Ignatius, who when attacked by some thieves - who left him totally naked on the road - said: "My

God, as long as I have your love and your grace, I am already rich enough, and I don't ask for anything more". To which Saint Michael added: "What a beautiful disposition is to be totally at God's disposal!" "Take, Lord, take all that you have given me, even if that would make me detestable, a total nothing. With your love and your grace I am quite rich: I do not ask for anything else ". That is what it means to share the same joy.

His secret? an intimate union with God in prayer and an active response from within the limits of his position. He always gave himself like this: as a grateful Son, as a faithful friend and a servant of the Father. The Word became flesh in his life. He contemplated it and lived it. He rejoiced with Saint Paul and exclaimed: This is our dignity and our happiness!: "Rejoice in the Lord, I repeat, rejoice" (Phil 4.4).

For Saint Michael, the way to achieve that joy of the heart was through a generous freedom from attachment to which he invited everyone. By becoming aware of our nothingness, even by accepting the humiliations we may suffer, we become like children, freer to surrender and lose ourselves in the joy of the Lord: *Gaudete in Domino*.

Some good advice he used to give his followers: To the introverted and timid he said: you become withdrawn because you are not being faithful to your vocation. You do not appreciate the word and the promises of God. From now on, do not seek any reward for your behaviour, simply do the will

I am advanced in age; I would like peace for the Church, I would like it to be a given for the Church to enjoy peace. This peace, I pray for it, if it is pleasing to God. But if it is His Will that the persecution continues, I accept it with the same heart. We must suffer, but without fear; for it is a consolation to suffer for the Church."

My Fathers and my Brothers, it is impossible to convey the radiance of the face of the Holy Father and the gentle majesty of his person while he addressed these words to us. It is also impossible to express to you what was happening deep in our souls. In the presence of the aging pontiff, so great in his genius, greater still in his virtues, before the worthy Successor of Peter, in front of the Vicar of Jesus Christ himself, we were no longer, so to speak, of the earth: we felt as though we had been transported to heaven. It was Our Lord we were seeing; it was his oracles we were hearing; we were saying with the Apostle: Bonum est nos hic esse. It is good and wonderful to stay here!

But already, 15 or 20 minutes had passed in this heavenly interview. It was too much honor and happiness for us. So I presented the address book to the Most Holy Father. He hastened to read the list, opened it and looked into our eyes. I told him : "Most Holy Father, these are the addresses where our Scholasticate and our Colleges express their filial love to you".

"I see!" he replied, "I will read them". Finally, I offered him our contribution for the work of St. Peter's Pence. His Holiness, by accepting it, gave me his blessing for us, for the members of the Community, our families and our works. He also deigned to give the Father Assistant a special blessing for the Fathers of Bethlehem³ and the good Carmelites.

Let us strive, my Fathers and my Brothers, to proportion acts of thanksgiving and gratitude to the exceptional favour which we have just received. Let us redouble our prayers for the Supreme Pontiff; let us make them more effective, by uniting ourselves with the admirable sentiments of Leo XIII and repeat with him and with our venerated Founder: "Forward! We must suffer! It is a consolation to suffer for the Church! "

May Our Lady bless you! All yours in Our Lord

Fr. Etchécopar

P. S. The Father Assistant embarked on his journey to Marseille on 24th. Pray for the happy outcome of his journey⁴.

³) By 1887, the work of Bethlehem had begun about ten years ago. (Editor's note)

⁴) Fr. Victor Bourdenne, Assistant General, took the boat to Marseilles to visit the community of Bethlehem. (Editor's note)

Circular by the M. Rev. Superior General

F.V.D.

Bétharram, 30 March 1887

Dear Fathers and Brothers in Our Lord,

*Deo gratias ! et Immaculae Mariae Virgini, et glorioso eius Sponso Joseph!*¹

The moment I returned to Bétharram², I rushed to share with you the graces drawn at the feet of the Supreme Pontiff. We have had the much desired audience. What an honour! What joy! What divine impressions, the memory of which will never fade from our hearts! It was on 20 March, at 6:30 in the evening, that His Holiness deigned to receive us in his chambers.

The Holy Father was seated in front of his work table, at the very place where, no doubt, he composes his immortal Encyclicals. Seeing us come in, he said with extreme kindness: "Come here, missionaries of Bétharram".

No sooner were we prostrated at his feet that he began to question us. "Where is Bétharram? What is the goal of the Congregation? Are you the Founder? When was it founded? Do you have Missions or works abroad? Where? How many?" It was mainly on this point that the Holy Father insisted, and that seemed to be his greatest interest.

After that, I told him how much we were devoted to him and that we would be happy to sacrifice our lives for his sake. "I am the Pope," he replied, "I am the Head of the Church; but



Pope Leo XIII

Pontificate 20.II.1878 - 20.VII.1903

1) Let us give thanks to God as well as to the Immaculate Virgin Mary and her glorious husband Joseph!

2) It was his 5th trip to Rome, and he was accompanied by Fr. Victor Bourdenne scj, Assistant General. (Editor's note)

of God, and joy will be given you in abundance. For now on we will receive it and will receive so much more after death. The reward will be magnificent there.

For those who wanted to accumulate knowledge upon knowledge, hoping to be happy, he reminded them that the only important thing was to discern well and do the will of God, always and everywhere, promptly and with joy. This was for him the only source of joy and peace. "Academic diplomas are paper rags!"

And so he proposed a way as did those **simple souls** in the gospel. They understood it well, as we see in the passage in John 21. The beloved disciple -whom Jesus loved so much- does not present any obstacle in the face of God's plan, no questioning, and is ready to give up anything. Different is the case of Peter who, a little earlier, wanted to share the joy of the shepherd, but is restless and anxious and inquires into what is not his business: "And what will become of him ...? 'If I want him to stay, what does it matter to you? You follow me'" (John 21. 21-22)

For Saint Michael, joy is closely associated with knowing how to keep our place. God in his place and I in mine! God is everything and I am nothing.

This "realistic joy" of Saint Michael is celebrated in his favourite song: "The Magnificat". Live the joy of the Lord and pass it on in our conduct and our relationships with the Lord, our neighbour and ourselves; just as Mary our Mother lived it. It is something

sublime for him. Saint Michael believes that God looks at us with love, nurtures us and protects us tenderly, even if we do not perceive it. He is the source of peace for the heart.

My soul glorifies the Lord, because that great God, that good Father, lowers himself and looks at me. That is the reason why Saint Michael wanted the Magnificat to be our favourite song and the faithful expression of our feelings.

Today as we Betharramites go out to meet our brothers to share our joy, let us not neglect the advice of our founder. This is how Saint Michael wanted us to be: rooted in the incarnation, and always available. Men and women with hearts bursting with holy joy, running and flying in the service of God, generous especially to the poorest and most forgotten, because there is more joy in giving than in receiving.

Like Michael, let us not worry about being loved, approved of, or propped up; rather let us dedicate ourselves to sowing. "He who sows bountifully, he will reap bountifully. Let each one give according to the commitment of his heart, not reluctantly or by force, because God loves the cheerful giver." (2 Cor 9.7).

I send you a fraternal embrace and wish you a happy journey towards Easter.

Fr. Gustavo scj
Superior General

Homily, Holy Mass for the Blessing and Imposition of the ashes

Saint Peter's Basilica, Ash Wednesday, 17 February 2021

But we can ask ourselves: how do we then proceed on our journey back to God? We can be guided by return journeys described in the word of God.

We can think of the prodigal son and realize that, for us too, it is time to return to the Father. Like that son, we too have forgotten the familiar scent of our home, we have squandered a precious inheritance on paltry things and have ended up with empty hands and an unhappy heart. We have fallen down, like little children who constantly fall, toddlers who try to walk but keep falling and need, time and time again, to be picked up by their father. It is the Father's forgiveness that always sets us back on our feet. God's forgiveness – Confession – is the first step on our return journey. In mentioning Confession, I ask confessors to be like fathers, offering not a rod but an embrace.

We then need to return to Jesus, like the leper who, once cured, returned to give him thanks. Although ten had been healed, he was the only one saved, because he returned to Jesus (cf. Lk 17:12-19). All of us have spiritual infirmities that we cannot heal on our own. All of us have deep-seated vices that we cannot uproot alone. All of us have paralyzing fears that we cannot



overcome alone. We need to imitate that leper, who came back to Jesus and threw himself at his feet. We need Jesus' healing, we need to present our wounds to him and say: "Jesus, I am in your presence, with my sin, with my sorrows. You are the physician. You can set me free. Heal my heart".

Once again, the word of God asks us to return to the Father, to return to Jesus. It also calls us to return to the Holy Spirit. The ashes on our head remind us that we are dust and to dust we will return. Yet upon this dust of ours, God blew his Spirit of life. So we should no longer live our lives chasing dust, chasing things that are here today and gone tomorrow. Let us return to the Spirit, the Giver of Life; let us return to the Fire that resurrects our ashes, to the Fire who teaches us to love. We will always be dust, but as a liturgical hymn says, "dust in love". Let us pray once more to the Holy Spirit and rediscover the fire of praise, which consumes the ashes of lamentation and resignation.

[...]

This, then, is the Apostle's plea: "Be reconciled to God" (v. 20). Be reconciled: the journey is not based on our own strength. No one can be reconciled to God on his or her own. Heartfelt conversion, with the

The Lord also called him to bring his discreet, concrete help in other fields : as a sacristine in the Sanctuary of the Caravina, near here..., as a help in the welcome house of Albiate... And think, even in a mission, far away, in a lost place of the Argentinian pampa, in El Cimarron, to back up a rough, rather severe old-fashioned-style missionary, taking care of a crowd of young children starving for bread and tenderness, and trying to educate them, where of course Fiorenzo wore with dignity the garment drawn by Saint Paul, worn since the first hour and becoming his uniform.

After sixty, Fiorenzo went on serving the Lord : first in Rome, in the General House, doing with simplicity and service spirit everything the community asked him, and especially welcoming – with all the delicate attention typical of him – all the persons – friends, brothers, parents, visitors – whom he accompanied with enthusiasm and skill to make them enjoy the beauties of the eternal town.

This mission, for which he had been called since dawn, Fiorenzo went on accomplishing it with the same style, including when the evening of his life was coming near. First in his beloved Monteporzio, where he showed himself near the AIDS sick people as much by his heart as by his smile, then in Albiate to cure his tired body and prepare himself to receive the denarius promised by the Lord to all those generous and kind like him. He abandoned himself into the Lord's arms, during the long days of his stay in intensive care, without complaining, always saying to his visitors : 'Everything is O.K.,

and you, how are you ?'

Thank you, Fiorenzo, I thank you in the name of all, specially the General Superior and the Regional Superior, and all your brothers, for your limpid testimony. It seems to me that, in you, I have seen in a most special way the virtues of the Sacred Heart so dear to our Spiritual Doctrine : 'absolute availability and obedience, perfect simplicity and unfailing mildness'. Thank you for your example.

I also thank you on behalf of your grand-nephews – if they allow me – whom I have seen so fond of their uncle.

I also thank you on behalf of the inhabitants of your native village of Bene Lario, which you have magnified so much : it seems to me I still hear you talking about these wonderful cherries ripening as early as March or April by virtue of a special fondling sun, or telling those youthful gambols on the frozen lake of the high moor. As many evidences of your love for creation and its – your – Creator.

I thank you in the name of our Missionaries, who have written to me very beautiful words of greetings, esteem and thankfulness for you.

Don't forget, at the time of the feast amidst the vineyards of Heaven : leave the tractor aside and get some rest... Remind the Lord of all those who have known and appreciated you... Remember us, your friends, for whom you always remain, « with sympathy », our « Capo¹ ». •••

1) 'Capo' is chief, a title we had given to him among us and which made him smile

Brother Fiorenzo TRIVELLI scj

Bene Lario - Grandola degli Uniti, 14 December 1940 - Carate Brianza, 23 February 2021 (Italy)

From the homily of Fr. Piero Trameri scj, Regional Vicar

We have all been called – priests, consecrated and lay people – to work in the Lord's vineyard. Each one has been called at the time which has pleased Him.

Fiorenzo was called early in the morning, at the dawn of his life, when he was 14, to work in the Lord's vineyard. First, he prepared himself, in the seminary, in Colico and in Monteporzio, to improve the technics and style of life of those working for Him. This style appeared at once nearly innate in Fiorenzo, because of the simple, strong education he had received from his family. It is the style described by Paul in the letter to the Colossians: *'Clothe yourselves with tenderness and compassion, kindness, humility, sweetness and patience'*, magnanimity of those who have a great heart. (cf. Col.3, 12-17).

Judging from the numerous messages received these days from brothers and friends, I may say that all have caught a glimpse of and underlined these features in Br. Fiorenzo. This is why, it seems to me, all remember him with so much fondness.

After the first hour, after this training period, Br. Fiorenzo went on working hard in the Lord's vineyard, at every hour of his lifetime; and not only in the spi-



ritual and communal field, but also very concretely and practically, navigating with his tractor between the rows of vine-plants and along the slopes of the olive plantation of the farm in the community of Monteporzio, which became and always remained the house of his heart. Nothing could stop him, not even a dreadful car accident, when 24, which left him with bodily after-effects. And he worked without asking the Lord more than a denarius than those who had only worked for an hour. He never pretended to special gratefulness, but showed himself happy to live in a community, to contribute by his work to the studies of his brothers preparing for priesthood. Happy to be, like Saint Francis, *'brother of all'*, also called to remind his priest-brothers with the value of community, of fraternal life, valorizing his specific vocation of *'religious brother'*, so dear also to St. Michael Garicoïts, our Founder.

deeds and practices that express it, is possible only if it begins with the primacy of God's work. What enables us to return to him is not our own ability or merit, but his offer of grace. Grace saves us; salvation is pure grace, pure gratuitousness. Jesus says this clearly in the Gospel: what makes us just is not the righteousness we show before others, but our sincere relationship with the Father. The beginning of the return to God is the recognition of our need for him and his mercy, our need for his grace. This is the right path, the path of humility. Do I feel in need, or do I feel self-sufficient?

Today we bow our heads to receive ashes. At the end of Lent, we will bow even lower to wash the feet of our brothers and sisters. Lent is a humble descent both inwards and towards others. It is about realizing that salvation is not an ascent to glory, but a descent in love. It is about becoming little. Lest we go astray on our journey,

let us stand before the cross of Jesus: the silent throne of God. Let us daily contemplate his wounds, the wounds that he brought to heaven and shows daily to the Father in his prayer of intercession. Let us daily contemplate those wounds. In them, we recognize our emptiness, our shortcomings, the wounds of our sin and all the hurt we have experienced. Yet there too, we see clearly that God points his finger at no one, but rather opens his arms to embrace us. His wounds were inflicted for our sake, and by those wounds we have been healed (cf. 1 Pet 2:25; Is 53:5). By kissing those wounds, we will come to realize that there, in life's most painful wounds, God awaits us with his infinite mercy. Because there, where we are most vulnerable, where we feel the most shame, he came to meet us. And having come to meet us, he now invites us to return to him, to rediscover the joy of being loved. ●●●



Joseph's time

At the beginning of the year, Fr. Austin Hughes scj proposed a poem written by his sister and inspired by Saint Joseph¹.

My sister Barbara Kentish who lives in London sometimes visits people in prison as part of her personal ministry.

She also works with Secours Catholique in Calais² to support those fleeing persecution.

On December 28 1996 she visited a North African man in a London prison who was being detained as an illegal immigrant.

His name was Joseph and he was seeking asylum but was not having much success, and she was struck by the parallel between his situation and the gospel of St. Matthew she had heard in church that day.

So she wrote Joseph's Time

The gospel passage tells of Joseph taking the Holy Family to Egypt to escape the persecution of King Herod.

So she saw that parallel between



St. Joseph arriving in Egypt without any papers or any right to work, with this poor asylum seeker who was very frightened and alone, unable to speak English.

Joseph had a position in society in Israel but absolutely nothing in the land of Egypt.

And she also saw this as an image of the church today.

In the not too distant past the church was very confident of its identity... to the point of being arrogant.. but now in a secular society it is almost as though the church is denied an identity or the right to be here.

It also struggles to find the right language to communicate. Might St. Joseph help us find a way here?

1) On the left on the picture, at the Hospitality House in Calais with Iranian Kurds.

2) Calais is a port city in northern France with ferries to England, where hundreds of illegal migrants, mainly refugees, asylum seekers from Darfur, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and other countries at war, The United Kingdom, in the face of terrible precariousness, expects to be able to cross the Channel at any cost in order to build a future for itself in the United Kingdom.



In memoriam

• Fr Laurent Bacho, Regional Vicar in France-Spain, informed us that **Mr. Piarra (Peter) Anghelu** returned to the Father's house on February

21st. He was 82 years old and lived with his sister Maité in the house called "Anghelia" in Oneix where Saint Michael Garicoïts worked as a farmhand.

Oneix represents an important stage in the life of our Founder: as a servant he learned obedience and submission.

At Oneix, Saint Michael experienced the sorrow for not being able to make his first communion in Ibarre, since his mother, due to her Jansenist culture, kept postponing his receiving the Eucharist. But he found in the lady of the house "l'etche-kanderia of Anghelia", an encouragement to receive his first communion in the nearby church of Garris.

When a Betharramite crosses the threshold of the "Anghelia" farmhouse, his mind goes back to the "Oneix ecstasy" in which Michael was enraptured by the God of Love. It was for the young Michael the beginning of experiencing the meek and humble heart of Jesus.

Piarra, along with his sister Maité, was able to transmit to the religious of Betharram his deep attachment to St. Michael.

Saint Michael had been an effective protector for Piarra during the Algerian war.

The Oneix stage is undoubtedly an experience the young Betharramites of the international sessions cherish and keep an unforgettable memory of the visit to "Anghelia".

We are sure that St. Michael joyfully welcomed Piarra into the eternal happiness of God's Kingdom.



Memory of the session of the scj brothers in 2013

- On February 19, **Mr. Eustache Abaï Yelouwassi**, brother of Fr. Habib Yelouwassi SCJ, of the community of "Notre-Dame" of Bétharram, returned to the house of the Father. He was 63 years old. We are close to Fr. Habib and to his family and pray for their dear one.

•/• Notices from the General Council •/•



'Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me. I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more.' (St Ignatius of Loyola)

On March 6th, **two novices in Vietnam**, Br. Peter le Ngoc Son and Francis Tran Van Hong, began their 30 days of Ignatian retreat (from March 6 to April 8) at the retreat house of the Jesuit Fathers in Trang Bom, about 50 km from Ho Chi Minh City. Let us pray for them and wish them to make a fruitful and grace filled retreat. As St. Ignatius said: to know God better, love him more surely, and serve him more faithfully.



RL. 246-251 • On February 4, **the consultation of the religious of the Vicariate of England** (St. Mary of Jesus Crucified Region) was launched for the appointment of the Regional Vicar, as the term of Fr. Wilfred Poulouze Pereppadan scj will be expiring on April 1, 2021. The Superior General will meet with his Council on March 23 to make the decision. The next Regional Vicar in England will remain in office until the General Chapter of 2023.

- The 2021 directory has been updated to January 27. Remember that this data collection is intended **for internal use only.**

In past years, the directory was printed in January at the Generalate House. The copies printed for each residence were given to our brothers who were in Rome for meetings. This year, for obvious reasons, it was not possible to do so. The printing has been entrusted to each Vicariate, both to reduce distribution times and to avoid high shipping costs. However, any religious can ask the secretariat of the Generalate House to receive the pdf format by email or WhatsApp (contact scj.generalate@gmail.com or +39 345 721 2095).



Joseph's time

How did I do it? You ask yourself Joseph;
One of a hundred questions since that first dream.
Why me? Why her? And always, what next?
As you live one day at a time in Egypt

How did I do it? You asked yourself,
As the thousand citizens converged on Bethlehem
Why now? Where now? Why in a stable?
As your wife gave birth to another's child.

How did I not ask those ordinary men,
Men like me, bemused men
Smelling of sheep, talking of angels
How did I ask them no questions?

Nor those later ones, those wise ones with their gifts:
Would a better gift have been answers?

How did I do it?
Another dream: avoid the horror,
Take them, flee, flee and ask no questions.
Which is the dream? Am I here in Africa:
Yesterday Joseph of the line of David,
Today hidden asylum seeker with no right to work?
No dream: keep asking Joseph.

Now is your time Joseph, and now is our time.
We the responsible ones searching for answers,
Once had identities futures and certainties.
Now we are like asylum seekers.

For we had dreams but are now in exile
We saw stars and angels but now we do not know.

Listen Joseph, let the memories come flooding back
With each new dawn in that African home.
With each daily light you will remember:
'Do not be afraid' and 'Peace be with you'
And even that two-edged angelic greeting:
'Peace to people of good will'
And with the memories let peace come flooding back.

How did you do it? How can we do it?
We keep asking Joseph.
'Peace be with you' and 'Do not be afraid,
peace to people of good will'
Is this the only answer?

Feast of the Holy Innocents 1996

•\• Life of the congregation •/\•

Rome, Bangalore, Bétharram, Belo Horizonte, Sampran, Adiapodoumé, Pistoia, Pibrac ... at 'SFB's time'

The Betharramite Formation Team held a meeting from 9th February–16th February via videoconference at the invitation of the Superior General Rev. Fr. Gustavo Agin SCJ to deal with certain topics concerning our initial and ongoing formation.

The meeting was participated by Fr. Stervin Selvadass SCJ – General Councillor for Formation and Coordinator of the formation team, Fr. Gaspar Fernandez Perez SCJ, Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi SCJ, Fr. Glecimar Guilherme Da Silva SCJ, Fr. Simone Panzeri SCJ, Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong SCJ, Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue SCJ – Vicar General. Big thanks to all for their availability and fraternal sharing. The Betharramite formation Team worked in detail on these days on different subjects which in deed make an impact on our formation.

Firstly, we focussed on drawing up of the directives proper to our own congregation about the care of the minors and the vulnerable persons, having Vademecum which was released on 16th July 2020 by the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith on prevention of different types



of abuses—sexual, conscience, power etc. In the Acts of the last General Chapter, we read that *"the General Chapter commits our congregation to the protection of the vulnerable"* (157-159). Since the Chapter, we are working to bring about our own document on this issue.

Secondly, we did an evaluation of the "Guidelines and Directives of 2020" (cf. NEF March 2020). We sincerely acknowledge and appreciate every effort taken by the Regional Superiors of our three regions along with their council in order to implement every guideline and directive in each community especially in our formation houses. Our experience also pushed us to reformulate the following said 2 points:

moment. Sr Elisabetta, the nurses, the auxiliary staff: everyone was present and I can say that, for 10 minutes, all the hospitalised patients, no matter what their confession or religion was, participated in their own way in this very special moment.

Maximin, with all of his spiritual and physical suffering, was before us and was asking us to help him... However, although he made errors in

his choices, it is us who must thank him as he made us understand that God does not want to lose any of his children, and that His Mercy is infinite. I'll stop here. My greetings to everyone.

Fr. Tiziano Pozzi scj



Day of the sick

Faced with the harsh reality of the Central African Republic, of which Fr Tiziano Pozzi scj testified in the previous issue of the NEF, experiences are also emerging which let a glimmer of hope filter through. Here below, Father Tiziano scj relates the experience lived in Niem on the occasion of the Day of the Sick by our brother, Father Marie-Paulin Yarkai scj, together with the entire community of the dispensary.

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Niem, 11th February 2021

On 11th February, Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Church celebrated the World Day of the Sick.

That morning, Fr Marie Paulin gave the sacrament of the anointing of the sick to Maximin, who came to us after being wounded during the confrontations which shook the whole of the Central African Republic following the disputed reelection of the President of the Republic. But I just wish to briefly give you an account here of the story heard by Fr Marie Paulin. Fr Marie Paulin says himself that when he was still a child, Maximin was one of the leaders in the parish of Mary, Mother of the Church at Bouar (where the bishop resided).

Although married with 5 children, Maximin unfortunately agreed to say

Fr. Marie-Paulin
Yarkai scj
Community of Niem



'yes' to the appeal launched by the head of the rebel movement "3R" (the rebel group who have controlled our region for 3 years) in order to invite young people to mobilise and join up with the coalition that had formed against the president. Armed with his influence on young people, Maximin had gained the nickname of "General"...

And here he is now, hospitalised at our place. It will be difficult for him to walk again normally. On the eve of Thursday 11th February, he had asked Fr Marie Paulin to hear his confession, and he had entrusted to him his backpack with his small possessions. That morning when we suggested to him that he receive the anointing of the sick, he accepted straight away. It was a very moving

1. USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MEANS

The postulancy is a privileged moment in human formation. In order to live this moment of deep self-knowledge, the candidates will be requested a psychological test at the time of postulancy, always respecting the freedom of the individual. In this way, the formators too, will have elements to know more about the postulant and to avoid that the formators of the other stages are not surprised by personal problems which may manifest itself in the later stages of formation. To prepare candidates, it is necessary to facilitate the approach of means psychological through a prior meeting with a psychologist who explains the importance of these means in formation and self-knowledge. (cf. Guidelines for the use of psychological skills in the admission and formation of candidates for the Priesthood). To perform this psychological test, we will follow the procedure formulated in the Ratio: The Gift of the Vocation to Priesthood 191-196.

1.11 SPECIALIZATIONS

After having verified the needs of the Congregation and with a view a better service of the mission, and after having collected the necessary information, the Regional Superiors with the Superior General, choose the people who have the required personal capacity, virtue and talent to acquire the skills that the Congregation needs (cf. The gift of vocation to the priesthood, 185)

For the choice of these studies, the Major Superiors will make with a lot of discretion the discernment of the people chosen. And Superiors will see the most opportune time to communicate this to the one who has been chosen.

These studies of specialization will begin only after three years of perpetual vows for religious brothers and three years later for those ordained religious priests. Religious who finish their initial formation must live during these three years, mentioned above, his vocation as consecrated persons, before starting these specialization studies.

We are grateful to God for His protection and care as we continue to live in this history of pandemic. We too acknowledge our inability to specify certain programs of the future. After having studied the current situation with regard to travel, sanitation and social distance, the team suggested to the Superior General and to his Council to suspend the international session of 2021 in Betharram. It proposed it to be held in the month of June 2022 on the occasion of the closing of the year of Fr. Etchecopar.

It was a moment for the team to

discuss about the Extra-Ordinary Novitiate in the Vicariates. We in deed count the blessings of having 22 Novices in our Congregation (9 Novices in SMG Region, 3 Novices in RFAE Region, and 5 Novices in SMJC Region, and 5 novices in Vietnam) in this time of pandemic too. Thanks to the extra work of the extra ordinary noviciate masters. Every Novice Master appreciated this special closeness and togetherness of the formees. They also expressed that, though at times, formees raised their doubt about the plan/hand

of God; sharing of one another's faith in our formation community helps one another to grow in their trust in God. The main challenges of this time are mainly two: the lack of inter-novitiate programs and lack of mission exposure in the society. But, all together, we are glad about the program. Hence, the team suggested the Superior General and his council to continue this same style of program for another year if possible and requested to begin the project of Inter-Regional Novitiate in Holy Land from September 2022.

It was an opportunity to reflect on the "Year of Fr. Etchecopar" which will be inaugurated on 30 May 2021. The team decided to collaborate closely with the Regional Superiors,

Regional Vicars and the community superiors in bringing out certain initiatives using the creativities and imaginations of our formees in formation houses. At the end, we did see the whole picture of our house in Vietnam and Vietnamese students. Thanks be to God for blessing us with a scholastic, 5 novices, a postulant and 2 aspirants. Sincere thanks to all the superiors, formators and collaborators in this mission for your availability, generosity, kindness and service. May the good Lord be our reward and let us ever go FORWARD ALWAYS FORWARD.

Fr. Stervin Selvadass scj
General Councillor for formation

Young in formation at the beginning of the year

Young in formation...	Aspirants	Pre-postulants	Postulants	Novices	Scholastics	Perpetually professed	Deacons	Total
In the Region SMG		7	10	9	6	1	5	38
In the Region FrAE	6		3	3	6		1	19
In the Region SMJC	4	3	10	5	13	1	2	45
In Vietnam	2			5				
Congregation	12	10	23	22	25	2	8	102



Simaluguri



Mgr Moolachira and Fr. Jestin scj

Betharram Sacred Heart Church which is one of the parishes situated in Simaluguri in the archdiocese of Guwahati. There are 250 families, spread across to 8 villages, a mixture of 4 tribals (Garo, Athivasi, Tiwa and Bordo).

13th February 2021 was a joyous day for the Betharram Sacred Heart Parish as it celebrated its annual Sabha in the village called Dancila at St. Mary's church. The Sabha was inaugurated at 9:00 a.m. by Rev. Fr. Reni Capuchin who also animated a day of renewal retreat for the faithful.

The celebration of the solemn Holy Mass was presided over by His grace Most Rev. John Moolachira Archbishop of Guwahati. A lot of Fathers, Sisters and faithful from the neighbouring parishes too joined in for the celebration. I am happy to announce that on this occasion on 86 parishioners was conferred the Sacrament of confirmation while 70 of them received the first Holy Communion. The Holy Eucharistic celebration was followed by a cultural programme and the Sabha was concluded with a festive meal.

Fr. Jestin Marottikkal scj



mission along with the Community Superior Fr. Edwin Jose SCJ.

We look back with humility on our humble beginning in North East of India ten years before and today with much more humility and sense of joy we acknowledge our contribution to the building of Christian community including the Education and pastoral care. We look into the spiritual treasures of our religious family: We are attentive in truly sharing tasks, putting in common the riches of each to ensure a better service. Living as brothers in community we live as brothers to everyone, keen to promote communion in the local Church, where we are present. Attentive to being faithful servants we put into effect the diocesan projects, being careful to leave to lay people their proper role. (RL 123)



Hojai mission center has evolved as mother and transit house for the Betharramites in North East and mission par excellence for other priests of the North East diocesan region in giving selfless service to "bring to others the same happiness" which lives in us.

*In the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
Fr. Michael Bistis SCJ*



Here is my testimony of joy as a religious of Betharram

After my ordination to the priesthood by Cardinal Richaud in 1952 in Bordeaux Cathedral, I found myself in the college at Betharram, where I was welcomed by a host of young people in the junior seminary as well as by some slightly older people whom I already knew.

Twelve years later, on September 4th, 1964, I left for Casablanca to join the Charles de Foucauld College, where I was again welcomed by brothers and colleagues whom I'd also known for some time.

I lived in Morocco for 9 marvellous years, alongside my brothers, pupils, their teachers and parents.

Wishing to experience life in a parish, wherever that might be, I was sent to Etchecopar House in Saint-Palais, to exercise my ministry in the parish of Saint-Palais, with the agreement of our Provincial at the time and of His Grace the Bishop of Bayonne.



At all times and in all places, throughout my mission, I have been filled with such joy to be a religious father of Betharram.

And here I address myself in particular to all the young men in our Congregation, who have responded so generously to the Lord's call.

This joy we feel springs from the word of God, meditated on every day, and also from the Eucharist, this



**Fr. Jean-Baptiste
Olçomendy scj**
Community of Betharram-
Maison Neuve

wonderful action of thanksgiving which Christ offered His Father on the evening of Holy Thursday.

The whole *Spiritual Doctrine* of our founder, St Michael Garicoits, takes its source from this word of God, starting with the "Here I am Lord".

This joy is also manifest in the presence of each person in God the Holy Trinity.

Every one of us is a temple of God and to meet Him, we must turn inwards and go into our inner selves. As St Augustine said, after his conversion: "God was within, but I outside, [seeking Him there]." Every day, we must grow more aware that the Lord is present within us. He accompanies us in all that we do. He is with us in every one of our daily activities.

We must share this joy with every person we meet, every day.

And so it is that we will live that joy, telling ourselves and others that "Life is beautiful, with its joys and its trials". ...

Betharram near the Brahmaputra River



The economy of Assam (about 31.2 million inhabitants) is based on agriculture (tea, rice, cotton, sugar cane, jute); refining of oil and processing of agricultural products are the two poles of the industrial sector.

The majority religion is Hinduism with 61.47% of the practicing population, the second confession declared is Islam (34.22%), Christians are 3.74%, other religious communities are Sikhs, Buddhists and the Jains (2011 data).

On 09.01.2021 the Parish community of Muktidata (Christ the Redeemer) Shrine, Hojai added a blessing in the pastoral service for the people of God as the second village substation chapel was blessed and dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes by Archbishop John Moolachira of the Archdiocese of Guwahati.

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The catholic community at Hojai has been present for the last fifty years. At present there are three substations comprising the tribal communities of Garo, Karbi and Adivasi.



Substations served by our two communities in northeast India: - Hatikhali (Langting's residence); - Udmari, Singaribasti (Hojai's residence); 8 villages including Dansila, where a small school was also opened (community of Simaluguri).

The first village chapel was blessed on 10.12.2018 at Udmari, the Garo Christian substation which serves the double purpose of being the place of worship and the protective shelter for the people during the seasons of flood which is common in the North East of India.



The second village chapel has been blessed for the Adivasi Christian community and will serve the purpose of worship, women development programme, young children's educational trainings. A sincere note of gratitude was placed to our Religious family by the Archbishop on behalf of the Archdiocese and the Christian community of Hojai for the pastoral service rendered by the Betharramites down the years of our service to the local church.

The third village chapel is yet to be built for the Karbi Community. For time being we have surrendered that to the Providence of God.

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Fr. Arul Gnana Prakash SCJ, the Regional Vicar inaugurated the Chapel in the presence of the Arch-

bishop John Moolachira, Fr. Michael Bistis SCJ the Parish Priest and of the prayerful presence of Betharramites as well as other priests, religious and faithful of neighboring parishes.

The evening after the chapel dedication was indeed the moment of missionary renewal for the Betharramites serving in the North East of India. The Archbishop Emeritus Thomas Menamparambil gave the inputs for mission followed by the community animation conducted by the Regional Vicar on the theme of the 2017 General Chapter: "We go out to share the same Joy". The Regional Vicar reminded the religious to have the spiritual reflection in view of the upcoming Assembly for the religious in North East. The collective and collaborated mission focus was laid for the Simaluguri mission. The Vicariate Bursar Fr. Antony Siluvai SCJ shared the vision for Simaluguri