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A word from the superior generalBy taking care of what is fragile
and of the common home

*"And God saw all that he had made
and it was very good" (Gen 1.31)*

Dear Betharramites,

Often when we are in a good state of mind, and think we are in a healthy and pleasant environment, we say: "I feel at home here." It is an expression that reminds us that our "home" must be a pleasant place, where it is a pleasure to be; But what happens when we apply this saying to our situation as inhabitants of the earth ...?

The earth is not just an environment, **it is our common home** (*oikos*). As the Lord did with Saint Francis of Assisi, he invites us today to associate ourselves with a mission: "Go and repair my house", our house. It is a broad appeal, addressed to all people of good will, to all religions, to all of society. It asks of us a dialogue with what has been created and that we seriously ask ourselves: What is happening?

On the one hand, our common home is falling into ruins, it lacks life and therefore joy, the joy of the creatures who would praise God for his marvellous work.

Lots of factors such as climate change, the effects of

nitrogen and carbon dioxide, the loss of biodiversity, etc., put us in a situation that is already bad and which will get worse if we do nothing to prevent it. We have the next 10 years to react, or it will be too late.

We are consuming much more than the Earth can give us and the sad thing is that not everyone consumes the same ... (countries like Australia, USA, Switzerland, cover a huge spectrum of consumption, for example). Continuing in this way could put us in the face of an irreversible shortage of essential resources starting in 2030.

All this spoliation of the world around us provoked a call from Pope Francis with his beautiful encyclical *Laudato si'*.

Based on our charism of incarnation, we Betharramites identify with him, we want to do something. Caring for all creation is a way of sharing our joy. The 2017 General Chapter invited us to live a personal and community ecological conversion that involves:

- assuming a greater moderation in consumption and a return to a simplicity of living that is capable of being content with little (L.S. 222),
- becoming aware that we are all jointly responsible for the complex problems of the world today,
- becoming aware also that the excessive consumption of a few, causes poverty for the many,
- a conversion and ecological spirituality that must be present in the

life and mission of our communities, as well as in initial formation.

As we know, those who suffer the most from this global situation are the poor. They mercilessly receive the effects of the global imbalance. Suffice it to say that the Pope mentions "the poor" 59 times in his encyclical text, while when he speaks of "climate" he only does it 15 times. The consequent social impact is much broader than we think.

For the sharing of joy to be a true project among Betharramites, I think we need to become more aware of these challenges of mission. Possible droughts will cause new poor people, migrations, sadness and despair. This will be the new context for our mission. How do we prepare? We need more realism, and be more pro-active. I am glad to know that some of us are already making their contribution to alleviate this situation, with small but effective actions.

Creation is itself a Gospel. Each creature is the object of the tenderness of God who gives him a place in the world. Every creature is loved by Him. Remembering this begets joy. That is why with Saint Michael, who loved the heavens, the mountains, the animals, we say that nature reveals God to us, that nature is his epiphany. In each created being the voice of the Holy Spirit rises up, covering and probing everything.

"That inner Master hides, so to speak, under the shell of each creature; from there, he invites us to

rise to the Creator. He instructs us with the chirping of the young swallows, with the cooing of the dove: like a swallow or a crane I clamour, I moan like a dove (Is. 38. 14)." (DS § 135).

Destroying nature is a sin that almost no one ever confesses: an ecological sin. It is about rejecting the means that God has given us to help sustain Life and give us life in abundance.

Jesus, for his part, lived in total harmony with creation. He taught us that we must take care of each other, and trust in the Providence of the Father, who has every hair on our head all counted, who provides us with daily bread, who rains on the just and the unjust alike. But we know that it is not only about managing the house well, because ecological conversion also consists of sharing bread like Jesus, and doing it concretely with those most affected by the global imbalance; that gesture towards the poor and discarded that would bring a greater meaning to our Eucharist.

It is not good to ignore this work, leaving to the hands of others the task of changing the present situation. What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us ...?

The care of the common home also implies a great call to communion between us, love and respect for everything created: each creature is my brother. Neglected of this harmony of creation has caused "external deserts" and "internal deserts" that have become very large...

If we apply these criteria to the life of our religious family, we can ask ourselves: What eco-congregation do we want to leave behind to those who come after us? How do we relate to each other to share life with joy? How do we live our own community ecology: current challenges such as intercultural and intergenerational community?

We too need that harmony in our community ecosystem.

Then:

What am I doing to act against the ecological degradation described?

What is my community doing for the care of the common home?

Simple examples:

- Segregate rubbish for recycling.
- Do not waste food.
- Use renewable forms of energy instead of carbon fuels.
- Use washable or recyclable packaging, instead of plastic, etc.

Ultimately I am convinced that shared joy will arise if we become capable of taking better care of each other, abandoning exclusion, abandoning accumulation (it is much more than managing well) and, finally, opening ourselves more to share with the world of the poor, abandoned and excluded.

I warmly embrace you and unite myself with you, let us become effective agents of caring for our common home.

Fr. Gustavo scj
Superior General

Angelus, Regina Caeli, Saint Peter's Square, Sunday, 18 April 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Buongiorno!



On this Third Sunday of Easter, we return to Jerusalem, in the Upper Room, as though guided by the two disciples of Emmaus, who had listened with great emotion to Jesus' words along the way and then had recognized him "in the breaking of the bread" (Lk 24:35). Now, in the Upper Room, the Risen Christ presents himself in the midst of the group of disciples and greets them: "Peace to you!" (v. 36). But they are frightened and believe "that they saw a spirit" (v. 37), the Gospel says. Jesus then shows them the wounds on his body and says: "See my hands and my feet" — the wounds — "that it is I myself; handle me" (v. 39). And to convince them, he asks for food and eats it before their astonished eyes (cf. vv. 41-42).

There is a detail here, in this description. The Gospel says that the Apostles "still disbelieved for joy". The joy they felt was such that they could not believe that this was true. And a second detail: they were bewildered, astonished; astonished because the encounter with God always leads you to astonishment: it goes beyond enthusiasm, beyond joy; it is another experience. And they

were joyful, but a joy that made them think: no, this cannot be true!... It is the astonishment of God's presence. Do not forget this frame of mind, which is so beautiful.

Three very concrete verbs characterize this Gospel passage. In a certain sense, they reflect our individual and community life: to look, to touch and to eat. Three actions that can give joy from a true encounter with the living Jesus.

To look. "See my hands and my feet", Jesus says. To look is not only to see, it is more; it also involves intention, will. For this reason, it is one of the verbs of love. A mother and father look at their child; lovers gaze at each other; a good doctor looks at the patient carefully... Looking is a first step against indifference, against the temptation to look the other way before the difficulties and sufferings of others. To look. Do I see or look at Jesus?

The second verb is to touch. By inviting the disciples to touch him, to verify that he is not a ghost – touch me! – Jesus indicates to them and to us that the relationship with him and with our brothers and sisters cannot remain "at a distance". Christianity does not exist at a distance; Christianity does not exist only at the level of looking. Love

requires looking and it also requires closeness; it requires contact, the sharing of life. The Good Samaritan did not limit himself to looking at that man whom he found half dead along the road: he stopped, he bent down, he treated his wounds, he touched him, he loaded him onto his mount and took him to the inn. And it is the same with Jesus himself: loving him means entering into a communion of life, a communion with him.

And thus, we come to the third verb, to eat, which clearly expresses our humanity in its most natural poverty, that is, our need to nourish ourselves in order to live. But eating, when we do so together, among family or friends, also becomes an expression of love, an expression of communion, of celebration... How often the Gospels present us with Jesus experiencing this convivial dimension! Even as the Risen One, with his disciples. To the point that the Eucharistic Banquet has become

the emblematic sign of the Christian community. Eating together the Body of Christ: this is the core of Christian life.

Brothers and sisters, this Gospel passage tells us that Jesus is not a "ghost", but a living Person; that when Jesus draws near to us he fills us with joy, to the point of disbelief, and he leaves us bewildered, with that astonishment that only God's presence gives, because Jesus is a living Person.

Being Christian is not first of all a doctrine or a moral ideal; it is a living relationship with him, with the Risen Lord: we look at him, we touch him, we are nourished by him and, transformed by his Love, we look at, touch and nourish others as brothers and sisters. May the Virgin Mary help us to live this experience of grace. ●●●



With a spirit of thanksgiving

In a few days, we will celebrate the 191th anniversary of Father Etchecopar's birth.

As early as last year (for the 190th year), we had agreed to establish an "Etchecopar Year", in order to make everyone able to know, deepen, or discover again Father Etchecopar's figure. Unhappily, the pandemic obliged us to postpone this event. So the "Etchecopar Year" shall start on the next May 30th and shall end in one year on May 22nd.

So we wish to present once more such an important figure for our Congregation, to the point of having been declared by his brothers "the second founder of the Institute".

- The third Superior General was foremost St. Michael Garicoïts' disciple. He faithfully wrote his correspondence and was his personal secretary. This privileged observatory enabled him to know St. Michael well and to get impregnated with his spirituality, which he also knew how to organize in a learned way and transmit to the Congregation through his own writings, circular letters, his letters and conferences. If St. Michael Garicoïts' charism is so clear for us today, we owe it for a great part to Fr. Etchecopar.

- But Fr. Etchecopar was not only the disciple whom St. Michael entrusted with important roles in the Congregation (Master of the novices,

secretary...), it was also him who obtained from Rome the approbation of the Constitutions, so enabling the Congregation to become an Institute of Pontifical Law.

So we wish the year opening on May 30th to be a year of thanksgiving to God for the figure of Fr. Etchecopar and for his accomplishments for the Congregation. No program tied up in advance! This year shall not be filled with activities or propositions "coming down from the top", but a year open to anyone's initiative.

So, in our regions, vicariates and communities, there is room for creativity, sharing of ideas, meetings or readings of Fr. Etchecopar's writings, room for "Etchecopar events", room to the space dedicated this year on the Web site of the Congregation (betharram.net), room for the artists to draw, to paint...

In the formation communities, it would be interesting to make some research works on Fr. Etchecopar's vocation, on joy, on creative faithfulness to the Betharramite charism, on the theological virtues of Fr. Etchecopar, etc. The persons responsible for the formation houses will have at heart to exploit the tools already available on the site of the Congregation with all the young men being trained, who will also let their imagination free to create other ways of making Fr. Etchecopar known.

Above all, this year must be lived with a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving. Each community can see how to make this Etchecopar Year visible, for instance by putting forward a photo in the oratory, the common room, the parish, etc.

The worksite is opened, vast, exciting, because it will set people on the way, in communion sometimes without being conscious of it, and joyful, since Fr. Etchecopar's figure does not stop inviting, following St.

Michael Garicoïts, to taste God's happiness, a happiness to be given to others !

So, happy « Etchecopar Year » to all ! Let it be for all a time of thankfulness and discovery.

And to recollect ourselves together in a communion spirit round our second Founder and God's servant, we invite each of our communities, on the next May 30th, to say one of his prayers.●●●



*O Father may I praise you.
O Father may I honour you.
O Father may I serve you.
O Father may I love you.
O Father, I am your child!
I ask Lord that I may believe in
you.
I ask that I may be in awe of
you.
O Father may I be an obedient
child.
I submit to you. I give myself.
O Son, may I be your Brother,
Respectful and devoted.
I offer myself to you.
O Holy Spirit!
O Mary!
Help me to believe!*

What do you want me to do? Here I am

On the occasion of the feast of our Holy Founder last year, in the community of the postulancy "Our Lady of Betharram" (Vicariate of Paraguay), we had a day of reflection on some texts of St. Michael Garicoits. On that occasion I found myself meditating for the whole day on the last sentence of the prayer of availability and I share with you, with great humility, the fruit of this meditation.



Oh! If our whole being, body and soul had only one movement, one generous impulse to place ourselves under the guidance of the Spirit of Love, saying without ceasing: Here I am: Ecce Venio!"»

What do you want me to do? Here I am: the question is clear and we know who it is for. Even the desire to answer is clear for a Betharramite, who has 'Here I am' in his strings. But when we ask ourselves this question with sincerity, we realize that it is not easy to know what ***God melted in Love*** wants from us; and if we do not know his Will, how will we respond with our Here I am?

After spending an entire day asking the Lord what his desire was for a Betharramite in our time, he inspired in my heart the answers which I share with you:

**Fr. Raúl
Villalba**
Maylín sej
Community of
Lambaré



What do you want me to do? He wants us to return to contemplating the Incarnation, the Word ***who leaves the shining sky and goes to the vilest, the most unpleasant place in the world, in a stable.*** In the Incarnation we see a God completely given to humanity, who loves humanity and who assumes it in everything. He wants us to do this; that by contemplating the mystery of

the Incarnation we are urged to do the same thing that Jesus did, that is, that we assume our world, our social reality, that we commit ourselves to our environment, that we are not disembodied, but incarnated mystics. Betharramites who take on the reality, the suffering of the brother. To suffer with those who suffer, to cry with those who cry and, if possible, to help to alleviate the suffering of others and to wipe the tears of the suffering brother; to be contemplative men and women of the Incarnation and the Beatitudes.



10 December 2020:

Fr. Raul SCJ and the postulants at the formation house Our Lady of Betharram in Lambaré.

"Our baptism unites us, our call unites us, our charism unites us, St Michael unites us.

Today before the altar of the Lord we deliver all our gifts and put ourselves at the service of the Kingdom.

We conclude our year of formation with much joy and enthusiasm. We want to continue to follow. "

Today Benito Aguilera Aquino (left) and Robert Sanabria (right) are novices in Adrogué.

Where to incarnate us? Wherever we are asked, **the position does not matter, but the disposition.** Sometimes we are asked to be at the forefront of the battle, sometimes we have to remain locked up without being able to go out to carry out our ministry; we have to be with the brothers of the community or in our families, within four walls and the temptation would be to say: I'm not doing anything, the world needs me and I'm not doing anything. And, to this question, St. Michael would answer: no matter where we have to be today, **it is important to exercise the immensity of charity within the limits of the position;** do very well what we have to do: live brotherly love, respect, charity, service, common prayer, listen to each other more, share more quality time and do it very well. The place where we are today is the place where we must incarnate. But be careful not to sit down; we must be **like true chosen soldiers, ready to run at the first signal of the masters, wherever we are called; above all, even in the most difficult**

ministries that others reject.

And how to incarnate? "Even though he was in the form of God, he did not consider it a privilege to be like God, but emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death and death on the cross." (Phil 2, 6-8) The Incarnation implies stripping off. It would do us good, for example, to strip ourselves of pride, self-sufficiency, consumerism, individualism, feeling superior to others, desire to appear, etc. **We shall incarnate by being small, submissive, constant and happy; men emptied of everything and above all of ourselves.**

Once we know what we must do, where and how to do it, we can answer: **Here I am, following the example of the Divine Master.** ●●●

The joy in my life as a young religious

My experience of religious life is a beautiful love story and an atypical adventure that is both marvellous and confusing. It was strewn, as we say back home in the Ivory Coast with “ups and downs”. But beyond all these adventures, the Lord was the source of my perseverance and my interior joy.

The first signs

The formation period is that stage of continuous development of joy which consolidates our whole interior being as a religious. I was able to feel the first moments of this joy during my novitiate in Bétharram, on the banks of the Gave; where my soul was fed by the good care of our novice master (Fr. Jacky Moura), under the maternal gaze of Our Lady of the Beautiful Branch. Our good Father has, as it were, sown in my heart the first seeds of religious life. Also, having had the grace to share our novitiate next to the *Maison Neuve* (of the senior Fathers), we have physically touched the finality of all religious life. Through their edifying life testimonies, I was struck and moved by the fact that they threw themselves headlong into their career (the mission) out of love for Christ and his Church. For my part, I would say that the Fathers of the *Maison Neuve* were like a compass and a strong sign of the



first manifestations of this joy, which subsequently boosted my motivation to go further along this path.



After a morning mass at the 'Maison Neuve' (Betharram) with late Father Joseph Canton scj and Father Jean Tapie scj

A special moment, a special experience

Another highlight was that of the post-novitiate: the period of regency and mission in the heart of the remotest geographical and existential places. I also had the privilege of going to the Central

African Republic for my apostolic regency. The suffering and poverty of my Central African brothers and sisters as a result of the war moved me a lot and it gave me a glimpse of the vast field of work that should be done both at the level of hearts and at the level of people in precarious situations.



(Central Africa) A widow who wanted to build a small hut to protect herself with her four orphans

Education for the very young

In 2017, in an agreement signed with the bishop of the Diocese of Katiola, our Congregation took over the premises of the small former seminary renovated into a mixed Catholic college in order to ensure the education and training of children in the Hambol region. I have been on mission there for four years now with other Betharramite brothers. As a French teacher and College Chaplain, I share my joy through the education of these young people in search of direction. This is a real challenge for Bétharram in the north of our country. Our presence is a breath of fresh air

for those parents who watched their children leave to go elsewhere after primary school, to other areas or cities in order to find Catholic schools to continue their education. My joy with the children is the fact of sharing privileged moments: it is a meeting of give and take.



(Ivory Coast), Catholic college in Katiola, in the playground with the pupils

The formation and education of this generation of children involves several aspects including: the interest in offering them brotherly, selfless love; having time to listen to them, understand them and be with them. As the Gospel says, "There is more joy in giving than in receiving." I feel this joy from the bottom of my heart when I give my time and my being through French lessons. In return, I also receive recognition from them through the smiles that shine on their faces.

As a young priest, did this joy develop?

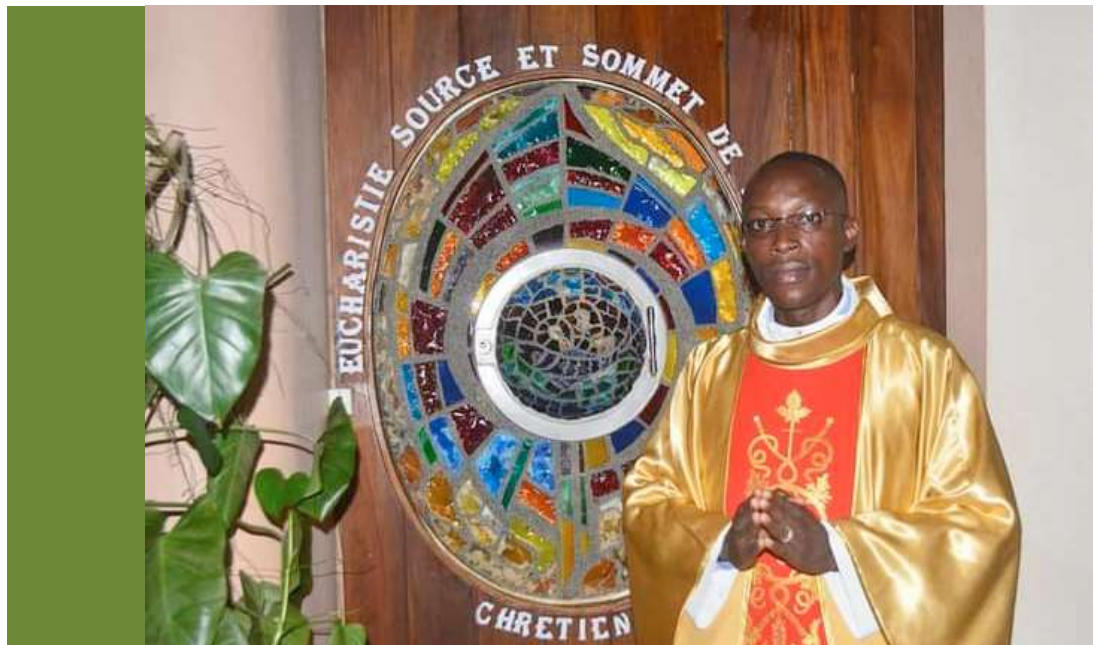
As a young priest, this joy took on a dimension that was both external and internal. I would even say that it has

evolved a lot. The priestly ministry was able to somehow transcend this joy by allowing me to go out to share this feeling: that of the disciples of Emmaus. This joy allowed me to take a new look at myself, at others, but also at the

mission, so that I could see the face of Christ, poor, small and sick, in the heart of remote areas (villages, camps and hospitals). By being with poor and vulnerable people, I feel free from everything, to be totally focussed on everyone in the joy of service and in peace of heart. I am also full of gratitude to the Lord who called me to his harvest in general, and in the Congregation of Religious of Bétharram in a special way.

How does this joy reside in my mission today?

Ordained a priest since 11 July 2020, I have already had this joy for ten months. I did not experience this joy in isolation. The community is the place of expression and manifestation of this joy. It is with brothers that the manifestation of this joy is lived and shared, even beyond the limits of our



Tabernacle in the Holy Mother of the Crucified Christ chapel of Adiapodoumé

human frailties.

It is the Lord himself who is the beginning and the end of my vocation and my joy comes from him. He sends me to my brothers and sisters in order to give them in turn the joy I receive from him: "To give others the same happiness."

Fr. Vincent-Didier Allelet scj

Community of Dabakala

Three-years initiative for Vocation Promotion (2021-2023)

*A true Betharramite loves and devotes himself to Betharram. When the dedication is there, the heart is there. He does what he can, as he can, but all he can.*¹

In the Vicariate of Paraguay, we have assumed this new impetus ...: "ALL" to give new vocations to the Church and to our religious family. In spite of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, we are launching on the pastoral project for vocations that will run over three years.

A THEME has been identified for these years of pastoral activities: "Vocations according to the Heart of Jesus" (Mt. 11, 28 - 30). It unfolds as follows:

- Theme of the Year 2021: *Come to me, all of you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.* (Mt 11:28)
- Theme of the Year 2022: *For I am gentle and humble in heart.* (Mt. 11:29)
- Theme of the Year 2023: *Yes, my yoke is easy, and my burden light.* (Mt. 11, 30)

We, thus, wish to fulfil the immense desire which animated the heart of our founder when he gave birth to our dear religious family: "The dream of his life was to give the Church a

1) Fr. Joseph Mirande scj in his article "The true Betharramite" (NEF september 1959)

**Deacon Daniel
Pavon scj**
Community of
Ciudad del Este



group of priests who were well prepared and ready to accept any mission, especially the most difficult ones and those that others would refuse".

We have inaugurated this vocational journey by organising small meetings - first with the young people who carry out pastoral services in our missions: in the parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (group of young people and servants of the liturgical teams), in the parish of St. Francis-Xavier and Tebycuary-Mi (Vocational meetings in certain chapels) and in the schools (Vocation Promotion through the internet by the pastoral team of each college).

We, then, went to meet the young people from other localities (Parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – Numi; Schools in the region of Yataity del Norte; Parish of St. Paul the Apostle-Caazapa) where former students are found dispersed, who have passed through our formation houses and who are today of a great help for the vocational accompaniment of people



who wish to know Betharram and its charism.

This process of accompaniment of vocations is designed to take place in three stages, depending on the age of the participants and the level of education they are in:

- a) 16 years : To strengthen and deepen one's call/ vocation
- b) 17 years : Called to be servants in heart of the community
- c) 18 years : Accompaniment by means of a "Vocation" guide

During this accompaniment, we also present the life of our holy founder and in particular the Betharramite spirituality, which are based on these 2 titles which characterize our consecrated life:

- "Here, I am to do your will" (FVD)
- "Without hesitation, without delay, without looking back ... all for love"

Despite this period of multiple restrictions, we have already had the first meeting at the Formation

House in Lambaré, with the young people who have felt this vocational question, coming from Ciudad del Este, La Colmena, Ñumi, Villarrica and Repatriación.

These were 3 days - filled with joy ... with a time to make known the Betharramite spirituality, sports activities and moments of prayer. It is a task that requires constant effort and dedication at a time when vocations are becoming rare.

We want to assume with perseverance this concern which animated the heart of Saint Michael Garicoits as "men prepared, constant and ready" to respond to the first call that the Church addresses to us in the pursuit of vocations. ●●●

Meetings of the General Council on April 26 and 28, 2021. With his council, the Superior General:



- **presents to the diaconate** our brother **Akhil Joseph Thykkuttathil** (Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified Region, Vicariate of India);
- **presents to priesthood** the deacons **Arnaud Kadjo N'Dah**, **Serge Pacôme Appaouh**, **Hippolyte Adjé Yomafou** and **Koffi Djeban Landry** (Saint Michael Garicoïts Region, Vicariate of the Ivory Coast) and the deacons **Thanit Panmanikun** and **Rawee Prempoonwicha** (Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified Region, Vicariate of Thailand).

On the agenda of the Superior General

After his first vaccination against Covid-19 and with the slowing down of the spread of the virus in almost all regions of Italy, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, Superior General, finally resumed **his canonical visitation to the Vicariate of Italy**. On May 15 he will travel to the communities of the North and begin his visit from the community of Lissone where he will preside the evening mass in honor of Saint Michael Garicoits.

In memoriam



- **Mrs Graciana Daleoso**, 80 years old, sister of Fr Francisco Daleoso SCJ of the Adrogué community (Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay), died on April 25. We extend our fraternal condolences to our brother and his family.

Father Massimo MOTTA scj

Monza, 2 July 1957 - Rome, 13 April 2021 (Italy)

"All through these days of mourning, the most frequently heard expression on social networks was: 'Thank you Lord for having given us Fr Massimo'.

From the purely human point of view, we could be tempted to say 'You were a bit harsh with him Lord!'

He had had polio which meant he walked with some difficulty, with callipers and crutches before eventually being forced to resort to a wheelchair. It was physically hard for him to keep pace with life and the others in the community.

However, experience tells us that You know how to turn every one of us into Your gift of Love to many other people. When we listen to You, to Your Word, You know how to endow each one of us with the gift of unexpected resources.

And so it was for Massimo. Frail yet robust at the same time, he never admitted defeat in the face of his physical handicap. While he might not have been able to climb mountains, he undertook to scale great heights nevertheless, his vision set on the Almighty, with the tenacity we came to expect of him.

Many of us here will remember his round face swimming into view behind the glass reception area of the Carate Brianza Hospital in Lombardy. With his wonderful wide smile of welcome, Massimo dispensed all the information and



help we could possibly need. It was the face of youth, of a person who from that moment onwards, spared no effort to see into a person's soul. Without doubt this was due to the fascination he had for the One who "sees deep into the hearts" of men and whom Massimo got to know better and better.

Massimo wrote the following words on his ordination prayer-card: "Lord, in the silence of Your presence, teach me to read the signs of the times and to 'slip' the seed You have placed in me into those who come to me, like Mary Your Mother who sowed it experiencing Your Son's Cross".

He was mature in age when he decided to follow more closely this Mas-

ter whose 'Presence in Silence' he first encountered at St Peter's Seminary in Seveso, then during his formation in the Sacred Heart Fathers of Betharram community in Sala-Baganza in Emilia-Romagna and lastly at Albavilla (Lombardy).

At the age of 43, at the dawn of the new millennium, on the day of his ordination to the priesthood, he also wrote these words: "Take, O Lord, the seed you have placed in me. Strengthen it by the gift of Your Spirit so that faith and courage grow in me. Scatter it where You will. Place it into the heart of the one who is suffering and who is far from Thee".

And the Lord sowed in him the seed of His Word, allowing it to germinate and grow, to nourish and to fortify the hearts of the people in the parishes of Montemurlo in Tuscany, of Santa Rosa in Rome and, then for close on twenty years, in the hospice for Aids patients at Monte Porzio Catone in the hills to the south-west of Rome.

It was over the course of these years spent close to Rome that he encountered the *"Cammino delle 10 parole"* (Walk of the 10 Words) and that he participated in this original form of catechesis which has now spread across the whole of Italy: helping people to re-read the Ten Commandments not merely as rules by which to abide, but also as the message by which they may fully achieve their life potential.

Fr Massimo found therein the deep core of his life as a priest: to share with everyone the 10 Words which help make sense of life.

During this last terrible year marked

by the pandemic, Fr Massimo was able to match the theme chosen by our Congregation (Go out and meet others, bring to them the joy of living) with commitment and urgency, recounting these Ten Commandments first handed down on Mt Sinai, then renewed and reinvigorated by Jesus.

To be an "outgoing church", a theme dear to Pope Francis, could sound like an irony of fate for Massimo, stuck in his wheelchair, as well as for each of us confined at home. However he was always determined and enterprising, and this year was in fact the year in which he used all and every means available - Internet, telephone, WhatsApp, livestreaming of services and celebrations - to visit the homes of his friends, to announce the Word, to console, encourage and to give spiritual direction. This was his particular specific ministry.

The seed of the Word, deposited in his heart, continues today to germinate and produce fruit in the hearts of many who knew him.

Again on his ordination prayer-card, he quoted these lines from Psalm 83: *"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who when passing through the valley of thirst, fill it with springs and make it into a well"*.

Thank You Lord, thank You for having given us Fr Massimo! In our valley of thirst, he was a spring of fresh crystal clear water."

From the homily for the funeral

Fr. Piero Trameri scj

Regional Vicar

Circular letter of the M. R. Superior General

F.V.D.

Betharram, 15th June 1888

My very dear Fathers and Brothers in Our Lord,

I hereby announce the acts of the last General Chapter¹. I had wanted to fulfil this duty earlier, which is of such interest to the good of the Community; but I had to let the Holy Congregation of Bishops and Regular Clergy have the time to examine this work and allow for the need to correct it.

No observation has been made to us, and as this silence allows us to act at last, here are the Chapter decisions. They are significant, given that they are intended to promote the spiritual good of our dear institute.

The spiritual good, the progress in virtues and religious perfection : such is, my Fathers and Brothers, the great purpose the Trente Council dealt with in the 25th Session.

“The Holy Synod, it was said to the first chapter, was not unaware of how much the usefulness and splendour of the Church of God were reflected in the bosom of the religious houses, piously instituted and wisely governed; from there, the necessity to restore the former discipline wherever it has fallen, to affirm it wherever it remains, by monitoring the Rule, the vows and anything that concerns common life, such as food and clothing. May the Superiors apply themselves therefore to obtain these results with all care and all possible diligence, in their visits, in their General and Provincial Chapters.”

Truly, my Fathers and Brothers, our last Chapter carried out this programme with enthusiasm and with an admirable understanding... And where did they go to look for the means to keep and increase the holiness of our condition? To the same source that our Congregation came from; they followed in this respect the recommendation of the Spirit of Truth: Drink the water from your tank, Bibe aquam de cisterna tua Prov 5,15. They were inspired by the same thoughts and words as our Founder, by what Fr Garicoits called our three holy Rules, our own obedience, our distinctive seal.

1) The General Chapter in August 1887

Oh! May this General Chapter have been inspired indeed! Oh! May they all deserve our gratitude! They showed all of us the providential way that we must always envisage and always follow, the source of light and of life, deepened for us, gushing from the Heart of Jesus and from the Heart of Mary especially for us, to immerse us continually, and the armoury where the weapons are hung that were forged by our Leader for the use of his little company and illustrated by his brave hands. Finally, they opened for future Chapters the book of the science and genius of Fr Garicoits that, placed under his blessed image, will guide research and be the decisive rule of the more careful and of the more generous resolutions.

Oh Holy Founder! Oh noble and radiant character! What virtues are you reminding us of? What benefits, what devotions, what sacrifices, but also what wisdom, what solid, practical, deep, sublime, evangelic doctrine in one word! At this thought, our souls feel softened.... At the same time, what duties impose the examples that you have given and the mission entrusted, oh our Father, to our gratitude and to our brotherly love!

My Fathers and Brothers, you see it, you feel it as I do; the most beautiful and strongest motives, press on us all indiscriminately to throw ourselves into this holy career with a big heart and a generous spontaneity: corde magno et animo volenti.

For almost two years, the Church has worked to gather witnesses to the life and the virtues of our Founder; and, from this emotional hand, she records her history in these pages which will not perish and which tell all ages of the beauty of his soul, the altitude of his views, the heroic nature of his entire life.

That is an event of an order so high, with an interest so general, that it opens a new era of light and enthusiasm for the Institute.

I say and say again with the deepest conviction: it's impossible, in front of this solemn and imposing demonstration, not to understand and taste the excellence of our vocation, not to be proud and envious of our privileges and our family honour.... Impossible, in the presence of our Leader that the Church has made reappear so alive in front of our eyes, not to shout: "It's him ! You have to stay loyal to his spirit and tell us under his banner".

Assuring you, during his blessed month, the Divine Heart of Our Lord Jesus consumes and unites us in His truth and in His love, to His greater glory and to that of his Very Holy and Divine Mother Mary! Fiat! Fiat!

May Our Lady bless you!

All to you in Our Lord.

Fr Etchecopar

Signed Etchecopar Signed Etchecopar Signed



Happy feast to all
on this 14th of May!

What I know is that, whatever we believe and whatever we say, we are on earth only to accomplish the will of God, and that, especially in matters of vocation, nothing should entice us to ignore this adorable will, and no obstacle should distract us from it.

The necessary and only way to avoid these two distractions is to address fervent prayers to the God of all light and consolation, to seriously examine what one is and what one experiences, through a faithful sharing with those whom God has appointed to lead us, and patiently and promptly and constantly follow their discernment. May our motto forever be : pray, examine, share openly and obey. I love you too much to want for you any alternative happiness that is not based on this; I will not cease praying to the Lord to protect you from it.

But I wish for you an unshakeable fidelity to this principle, from the bottom of my heart; it is our greatest and even our only happiness.

Let us devote our whole life to the search for this happiness; let us not spare anything to achieve this, neither sacrifice nor effort. Always have courage! Should we have for lodging only a stable, for a bed only a manger, for food only the bread that we would earn in a carpenter's shop, etc.? - What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? (Mt 16.26).

Saint Michael Garicoits

from a letter on January 14, 1834, to an former student at the Major Seminary of Betharram



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