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## A word from the superior general

### “Walking together” as joyful servants of God’s people

*If I, who am your Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, you too should wash each other’s feet. (Jn 13. 14)*

Dear Betharramites,

In the previous editorial we shared the call of Pope Francis to commit ourselves to listening, dialogue, and synodality. Many times on visitation I have heard the opinions of the lay people among whom Betharramite priests and brothers serve as ministers. They say that many have a spirit faithful to that expressed by our father St Michael, that of “simple servants.” But sometimes, there is also talk of someone who governs his flock a little by force, as from a great height,... something that does not belong with our vocational ideal of ministerial life. I will deal with this topic in this editorial.

First of all, it is clear that every minister is *part* of that People of God of which he is his **servant** (first etymology of the word “minister”). He is not someone who is *above them*. And this is because, in the Church, the charism of authority always acts from within, unites and does not separate; It comes from on High (from the Holy Spirit) and at the same time it is the

basis of everything.

Although the figure of "minister" could fit all religious who work pastorally, we know that Betharramites are, in a great majority, ordained ministers. That is why I propose that we ask ourselves: *what is the figure of the minister that we are called to rediscover for these times of synodality? What religious-priests, in the image of Christ, does this Church "on the way" really need?*

We know that already in the New Testament the figure of "Jesus the Servant" frequently contrasts with that of the "Messiah" hoped for by the people of Israel. Because *"the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mk 10:45). This provocative text underlies absolutely every gesture and word of Jesus.

The Lord also chose not to work alone. He gathered those he wanted, to be alongside him, and to send them out on mission. His numerous disciples will waver between clarity and confusion about the style that they will have to assume as servants. The cross would scandalize them. To the twelve Jesus will insist: *"whoever wants to be first, let him become least of all and the servant of all."* (challenging their hunger for power and status). Jesus insists they become *like a servant* (Mk 9.35 and 10.43).

Saint Paul tells us that Jesus "... did not rely on his equality with God, but instead, he emptied himself and took the condition of a servant,

becoming as all human beings are..." (cf. Phil 2: 6-11). Paul himself in 2 Cor 4: 1-5, when he speaks of the ministry, applies to himself the figure of "deacon", as an apostle. In some way, he proposes that we overcome that vision of the priest in the Old Testament, whose model was Moses.

In 1 Peter 5.2 the author exhorts priests: *"Feed the flock of God, which has been entrusted to you; watch over it, not reluctantly, but spontaneously, as God wants; not out of self interest, but self-denial; not seeking to dominate those who have been entrusted to you, but being sincere examples for the Flock"*.

That is a synthesis of the Christological meaning of the minister in the first communities.

But as tradition developed, the Church came to maintain a more "sacral" vision of consecrated ministers for several centuries, conceiving them as *"separated from the people"*.

In the Middle Ages, this separation was further hardened into a *hierarchical-type* social order, progressively clericalised.

Later, the reform of the Church will rather encourage them to acquire the character of *preachers*.

But in recent centuries a *"distinction of dignity"* was once again emphasised for priests, (rather like when Christians were distinguished from non-Christians by their privileges - which sounds terrible today ...).

The Second Vatican Council

made great endeavours to return to the sources, presenting a vision in the light of the New Testament: **Ministers are servants.** Their Service is a true "charism", starting with the Bishops and continuing with all their co-workers, members of the People of God. Therefore, the *diakonia* of Vatican II implies recovering the biblical vision that was there in the origins of the Gospel, in the first communities. It has its foundation in Jesus himself, Servant of the Father.

To keep alive the desire to *share the same joy*, it would be good if we too begin by remembering: *what is our role in the midst of the People that pilgrim by our side?* I remember that before my priestly ordination, I did a retreat with the Benedictines of Victoria in Argentina. The Abbot at that time told me: "Gustavo, remember that, although tomorrow you will be ordained a priest, you will still be a deacon for life." Those words were burned into me, because they were very true afterwards.

I confess that it pains me when I see that, among us, there are some brothers who quickly forget their attitude of humble servants after they are ordained priests. They acquire presbyteral honours rather than preserve the humility indispensable to exercising the ordained ministry. We still continue to base ourselves a lot on a theology that tells us about the "Grace of State". And from that perspective, we continue to think of ourselves only as representatives of

Christ the Head and not so much as representatives of Christ the Servant.

Perhaps we do not insist enough during formation on this fundamental value of the Gospel, which makes us want to be servants in the manner of Jesus: "*I am in your midst as one who serves*" (Lk 23:27).

This *feeling of ourselves as servants of one another* (and not bosses or officials) is related to the Passion of the Lord. Jesus the servant, washes the feet of his disciples and voluntarily acquires the form of a "slave" out of love. In the Suffering Servant of Isaiah the meekness of Jesus is present, loving everyone to the point of giving his own life.

This is the proper trait of a minister. It was like that among the first Christians, and this is the trait we need to revive among us Betharramites. This is how Saint Michael Garicoits imagined us as "Apostles of the Sacred Heart".

Today we would paraphrase: shepherds with the smell of sheep, close to the people, merciful to everyone, exercising the mission entrusted to us with suitability and tenderness.

It is about our life, our witness as servants in the midst of the People of God, servants that lead to an encounter with Christ. Because where we meet Jesus the servant, there the same joy is shared.

**Fr. Gustavo scj**  
**Superior General**

## Catechesis on the Letter to the Galatians:14. Walking according to the Spirit

In the passage from the Letter to the Galatians we have just heard, Saint Paul exhorts Christians to walk according to the Holy Spirit (cf. 5:16, 25), there is a style: to walk according to the Holy Spirit. In effect, to believe in Jesus means to follow him, to go behind him along his way, just as the first disciples did. And at the same time, it means avoiding the opposite way, that of selfishness, of seeking one's own interests, which the Apostle calls the "desires of the flesh" (v. 16). The Spirit is the guide for this journey along the way of Christ, a wonderful but also difficult journey that begins in Baptism and lasts our entire lives. Let us think of it as a long excursion on the mountain heights: it is breath-taking, the destination is attractive, but it requires a lot of effort and tenaciousness.

This image can be helpful to understand the merit of the Apostle's words: "to walk by the Spirit", "to be led" by Him. They are expressions that indicate an action, a movement, a dynamism that prevents us from halting at the first difficulties, but elicits confidence in the power "coming from above" (Shepherd of Hermas, 43, 21). Walking along this path, the Christian acquires a positive vision of life. This does not mean that the evil present in the world disappears, or that the negative impulses of our selfishness and



pride diminish. Rather, it means that belief in God is always stronger than our resistance and greater than our sins. And this is important!

As he exhorts the Galatians to follow this path, the Apostle places himself on their level. He abandons the verb in the imperative — "walk" (v. 16) — and uses the indicative "we": "let us walk also by the Spirit" (v. 25). That is to say: let us walk along the same line and let us be led by the Holy Spirit. It is an exhortation, a way of exhorting. Saint Paul feels this exhortation is necessary for himself as well. Even though he knows that Christ lives in him (cf. 2:20), he is also convinced that he has not yet reached the goal, the top of the mountain (cf. Phil 3:12). The Apostle does not place himself above his community. He does not say: "I am the leader; you are those others; I have reached the top of the mountain and you are on the way". He does not say this, but rather places himself in the midst of everyone's journey, in order to provide a concrete example of how necessary it is to obey God, corresponding ever more and ever better to the Spirit's guidance. And how beautiful it is when we find pastors who journey with their people, who do not separate themselves from them. This is very beautiful. It is good for the soul.

This walking "by the Spirit" is not

only an individual task: it also concerns the community as a whole. In fact, it is exciting, but demanding, to build up the community according to the way indicated by the Apostle. The "*desires of the flesh*", "*the temptations*", — let us put it this way —, that we all have, that is, our jealousies, prejudices, hypocrisies and resentments continue to make themselves felt, and having recourse to a rigid set of precepts, can be an easy temptation. But doing this would mean straying from the path of freedom, and instead of climbing to the top, it would mean returning towards the bottom. In the first place, journeying along the way of the Spirit requires giving space to grace and charity. To make space for God's grace, not being afraid. After making his voice heard in a severe way, Paul invites the Galatians to bear each other's difficulties, and if someone should make a mistake, to use gentleness (cf. 5:22). Let us listen to his words: "*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*" (6:1-2). An attitude that is quite different from gossiping, No, this is not according to the Spirit. What is according to the Spirit is being gentle with a brother or sister when correcting him or her and keeping watch over ourselves with humility so as not to fall into those sins.

In effect, when we are tempted to judge others badly, as often happens, we must firstly reflect on our weaknesses.

How easy it is to criticise others! But there are people who seem to have a degree in gossip. They criticise others every day. Take a look at yourself! It is good to ask ourselves what drives us to correct a brother or a sister, and if we are not in some way co-responsible for their mistake. In addition to giving us the gift of gentleness, the Holy Spirit invites us to be in solidarity, to bear other's burdens. How many burdens there are in a person's life: illness, lack of work, loneliness, pain...! And how many other trials that require the proximity and love of our brothers and sisters! The words of Saint Augustine when he commented on this same passage can also help us: "Therefore, brothers, if a man has been caught out in some wrongdoing, [...] correct him in a spirit of gentleness. And if you raise your voice, love within. If you encourage, if you present yourself as a father, if you reprove, if you are severe, love" (cf. Sermon 163/B 3). Love always. The supreme rule regarding fraternal correction is love: to want the good of our brothers and sisters. It is a matter of tolerating the problems of others, the defects of others in the silence of prayer, so as to find the right way to help them to correct themselves. And this is not easy. The easiest path is to gossip. Talking behind someone else's back as if I am perfect. And this should not be done. Gentleness. Patience. Prayer. Proximity.

Let us walk with joy and patience along this path, allowing ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. ●●●

## *Father Etchecopar to his brother Evariste*

College of Saint-Palais, June 24, 1852

*My dear brother Evariste,*

*I am really out of touch with you: I will not invoke my many tasks as an excuse, although they are quite numerous; but I wanted for a long time to tell you news to make your heart rejoice concerning one of my most important steps; and for this purpose, I had to wait until it was made. By the mercy of God, it is accomplished and the time has come to share with you the happiness that floods my soul: how sweet it is to bring joy to a brother whom you love!*

*You have known already for a long time from my letters and those of our beloved father, that I felt called to the priesthood. For a long time I was convinced of the emptiness of the goods of this world, and recoiled from their deceptive lure and their perishable pleasures. I was eager to give undivided service to God without reserve and give back my very being which I owe to his merciful goodness. I waited in silence until this lovable voice of my God, who had spoken to me for so long in the secret of my heart, was heard distinctly. For in spite of all my forebodings and irresistible urges and the needs of my soul, I would never have dared (despite my hopes) to claim the function of being the intimate friend of God, the depositary of his powers, his representative and his minister to the peoples, his torch and his representation and model offered to the faithful of the Holy Church. But, dear brother, the Lord spoke, and in spite of my unworthiness, while glimpsing the sublimity of the burden in store for me, I ran to my Lord and gave him everything, my heart, my soul and my body. All this was his once; but I had free will, which I could use without going against his holy law;*



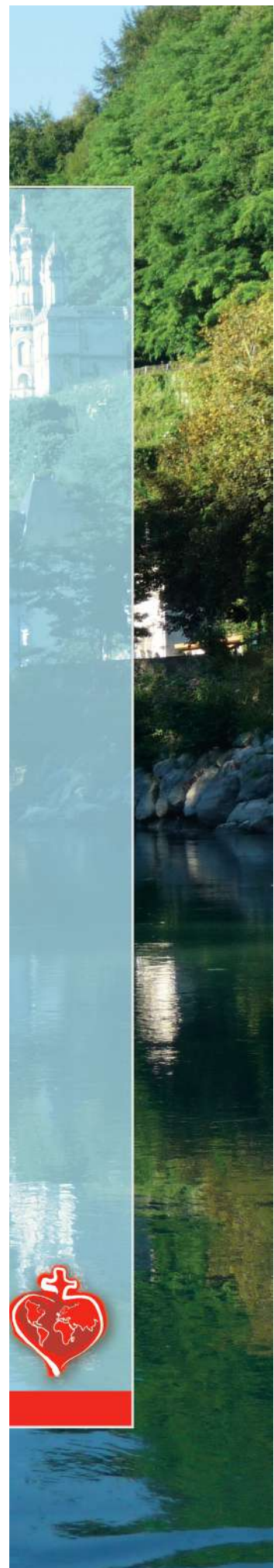
*and now I am under the gentle empire of the vow of perpetual chastity. Oh what happiness! Oh what felicity! If only the world could understand these feelings! But no... the wisdom of God is foolishness for men and vice versa.*

*So now I am a Subdeacon, my beloved Evariste, and this is what I wanted to tell you. In 2 years I will be 24, the minimum age for the priesthood. I have the sweet confidence that I will get there. Thank the Lord for me and for you for all the graces he grants me; ask him to grant you the supreme joy of seeing me on the altar.*

*We have to admit that our family is a privileged family! A father and a mother who were models of virtue, children all imbued with the most excellent principles from the cradle, which have been strengthened and engraved in souls at the school of sacrifice and work. First a religious sister and soon a brother priest; in all 12 hearts from which emanate an uninterrupted chorus of praise and thanksgiving. 12 hearts united by the same thought of trust and devotion, and all had the same starting point: the holy example of the family, all walking under the same inspiration and the same guide, the love of virtue and the eye of God, reaching for the same end: Heaven. These came through sorrows and distress, sufferings and sacrifices, which mark the path of the righteous here below, the mark of predestination and joy to come! What a sweet sight, my dear brother; don't you think? And isn't that why we should both be proud to be of the Etchecopar family?*

*You will perhaps find me a little mystical in the outpourings of my friendship. That's how it is, dear Evariste... Happiness is where you find it; and on this earth I know no other than virtue; but virtue is rarely found without suffering and without martyrdom; this is the condition on which the good Lord grants it, and this condition is indispensable. (...)*

*Etchecopar Ag.  
Subdeacon*



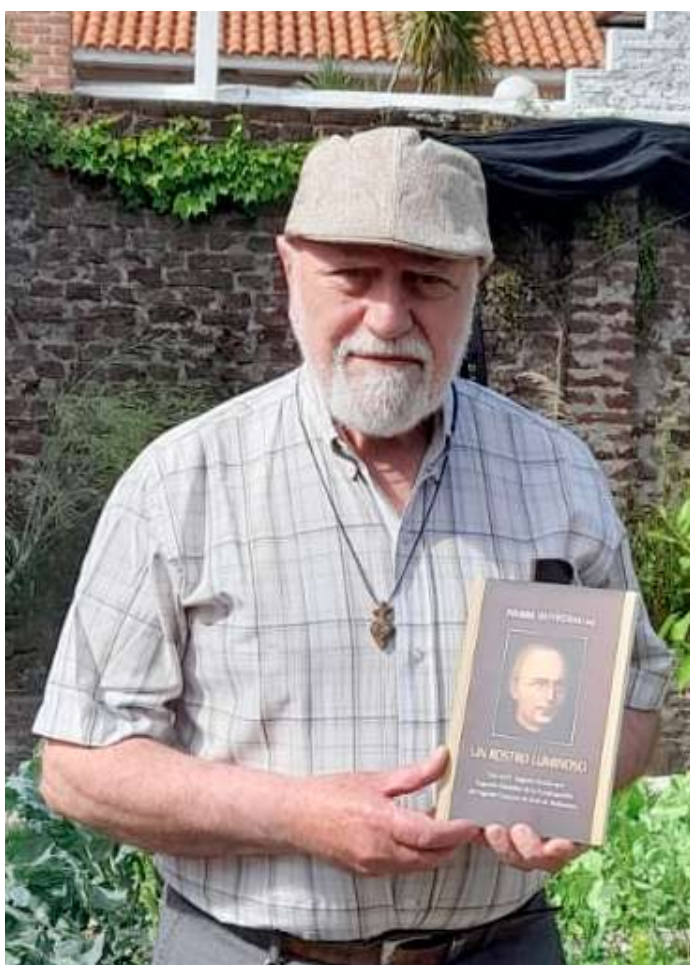
## A luminous face

On 20 September, the Vicariate of Paraguay celebrated, on the occasion of the year dedicated to Fr. Etchecopar, a virtual meeting to which Fr Angelo Recalcati SCJ was invited to present his recent translation in Spanish of the book by Fr. Pierre Du vignau SCJ, *L'Homme au visage de lumière*, on the life of Fr. Etchecopar. The text in Spanish is entitled: *Un rostro luminoso* (A luminous face).

Fr Angelo presented Fr Etchecopar starting from the three objectives that, as Superior General, Fr

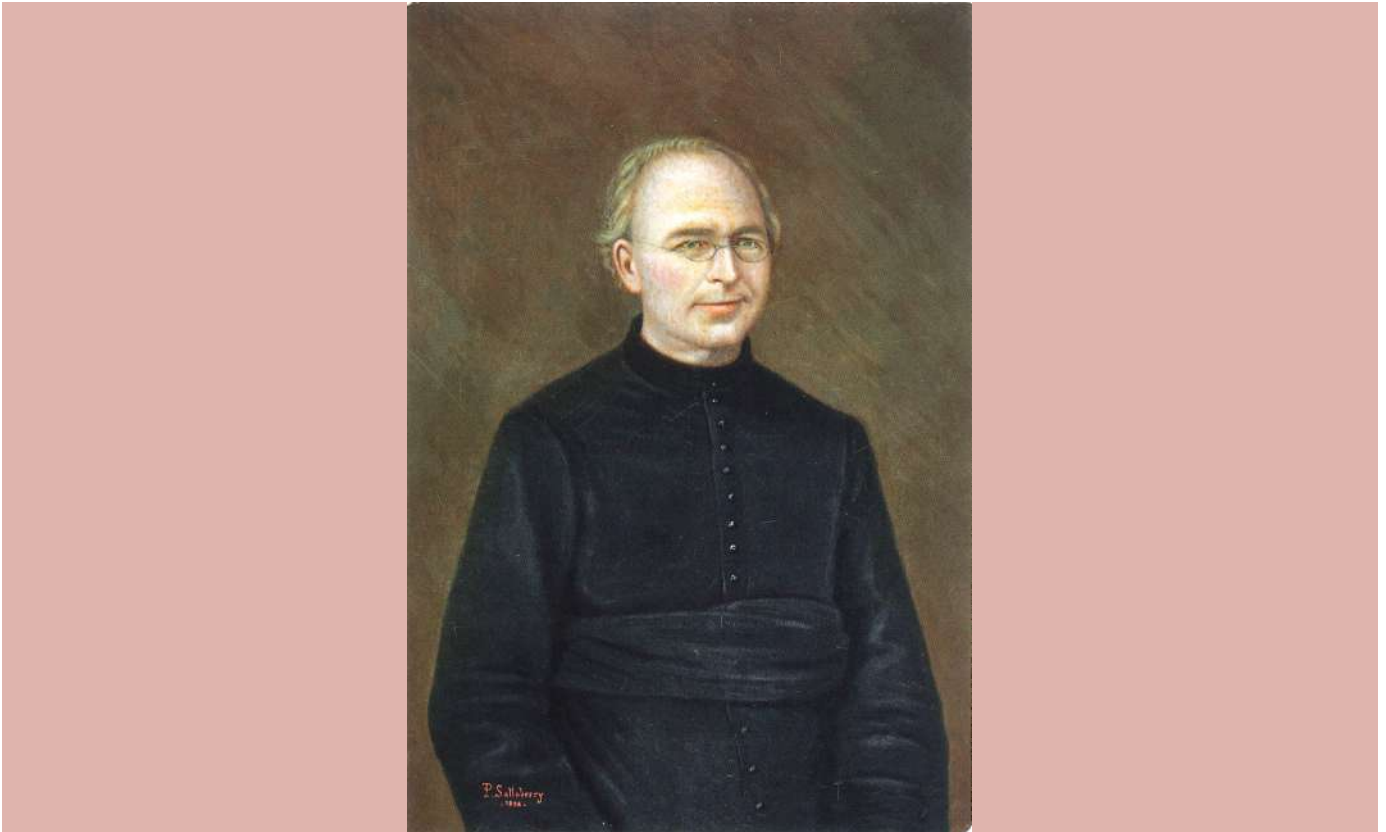
Etchecopar had set out to achieve: the approval of the Congregation by the Holy See; the introduction of the cause for the canonization of the Founder and the expansion of the Congregation, strengthening the mission in Latin America and founding the residence in the Holy Land. The translator of the life of Fr. Etchecopar underlined the trips he made to Rome, the Holy Land and Latin America, expressions of a paternal and solicitous heart, despite not enjoying good health. Excellent was the participation of the religious of the Vicariate who asked many questions, a sign of the interest that the topic aroused.

A religious asked what relationship there was between Fr. Etchecopar and Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified. Fr Angelo took advantage of the question to underline that, among the Betharramite devotions, Saint Miriam certainly deserves an important place, but another saint who is at the origin of the Congregation seems to remain somewhat in the shade: Saint Elizabeth Bichier des Ages, inspirer of the Project of Fr. Garicoits. Saint Miriam played an important role in the presentation of the Rule of Life to the Holy See for approval. In reality, it seems that the saint was closer to Fr Estrate, chaplain of Carmel and future Superior General, than to Fr Et-



Fr. Angelo Recalcati scj with a copy of his translation in Spanish of Fr Du vignau's book about Fr Etchecopar: *Un rostro luminoso*





*Portrait of Fr. Augusto Etchecopar (1830-1897) painted in 1898 by Fr. Pierre Sallaberry scj (1861-1949).*

*Today we know the existence of two examples of this portrait: one painting is at Betharram, the other is at the Generalate House in Rome.*

checopar himself. He certainly knew her and appreciated her spiritual depth. He speaks of her in several letters, but Saint Miriam intervened especially through Fr. Estrate.

Another question concerned the virtues of Fr. Etchecopar. Fr Angelo clarified that a more exhaustive answer about the virtues of the Servant of God could be found in the series of articles by Fr. Philippe Hourcade SCJ which appeared in the NEF<sup>1</sup>. However, he underlined his humility, his ability to work, despite his very fragile health, and his tenderness with everyone, which did not affect

his ability to govern and make decisions, sometimes difficult.

There was also a question as to why the title "Luminous Face", which alludes to the expression of some witnesses who speak of a special brightness on his face, on some occasions, as explained by P. Duvignau.

Subsequently Fr Angelo, grateful for the opportunity to present the third Superior General and "Second Founder", according to the expression of the General Chapter which took place after his death, invited to go through directly the correspondence of Fr. Etchecopar and the work elaborated by Fr. Fernessolle scj on his life. ●●●

<sup>1</sup>) Available on the website of the Congregation

## Extra-ordinary Novice Masters Meet, November 2021

On 8th May 2020, the Superior General had sent an official notice to the Regional Superiors in relation to the postponement of the beginning of the inter-regional novitiate due to Covid-19 pandemic emergency. The Superior General announced that the extra-ordinary novitiates in each vicariate could begin on 28th July 2020 on the feast day of Our Lady of Betharram (NEF, 14th May 2020). Having completed the first extra-ordinary novitiate, the Superior General and his council, together with the Regional Superiors, organized the meeting via ZOOM on 3rd & 5th November 2021.

The purpose of the meeting was, first of all, to share one's positive experience as well as the challenges of the pandemic time and secondly to discuss about the Betharramite program of the Novitiate as the extra-ordinary novitiate was limited within the 4 walls due to pandemic lock-down.

Remaining grateful to the Lord of Vocation for the 19 novices of the Congregation (Region of St. Michael Garicoits with 8 Novices; Region of Fr. Etchecopar with 3 Novices & Region of St. Mary of Jesus Crucified with 8 Novices), we express our sincere gratitude to the novice masters for having accepted an added extra responsibility, for their availability, generosity and selfless service especially during this difficult mo-



**Fr. Stervin  
Selvadass scj**  
*General Councillor for  
formation*

ment. The meeting was participated by Fathers Gustavo Agin (Superior General), Gaspar Fernandez (France-Spain), Jean-Paul Kissi (Ivory Coast), Osmar Caceres (Etchecopar Region), Luke Kriangsak (Thailand), Albert Sa-at (Vietnam) and Pascal Ravi (India).

As novice master, each one was glad with one's own lived positive experience in the extra-ordinary novitiate. They appreciate the full support and the countless help received from the other members of the vicariates. They sincerely value the assistance of the members of the neighbouring communities. It was a moment to remember fondly the people who pushed the novices positively, even in this time of adversity, to have a meaningful God-Experience, to know better Jesus and oneself in living the fraternal life in the community. They underlined the togetherness, fraternity and equality that existed among them as well as with the other members of the community in the novitiate. The good spirit of the novices,

their openness and the continual desire to follow and to live Jesus were appreciated. Generosity and simplicity of the novices were highly valued. Prayerfulness, creativity and innovations were simply admired. I think that this is how the SPIRIT OF THE NOVITIATE (RF 181) even in this difficult moment kept intact. Thanks to ALL.

Secondly, we too discussed together to have a Common Betharramite Novitiate Program. Generally speaking, Novice masters too had undergone their own experience as novices in the time of their initial formation and lived faithfully their religious life. Yes, we have our own Betharramite life lived. Hence, with one's experience, each novice master draws out a program (RL 148). But all emphasized the importance of having a common Betharramite Novitiate Program along with IGNATIAN EXERCISES which could be applied and implemented by the novice masters in their own style integrating the elements of their culture in each vicariate as the extra-ordinary novitiate continues. Thanks to Rev. Fr. Gaspar Fernandez who had long ago proposed a program which is systematically followed in the Region of Fr. Etchecopar. The program is meticulously planned. So, other novitiates are requested positively to see the possibility to adopt it as much as possible.

The proposed program has an introduction which will explain the ob-

jectives of the novitiate with all the dimensions of formation but stressing the human and spiritual dimensions. It is also the moment to discover that our pastoral care could be contaminated by thoughts, passions and vices that do not come from God and so on. All other subjects could be integrated rightly in the following 4 stages. The program follows the IGNATIAN EXERCISES in 4 stages which helps the novice; 1) To know oneself 2) To know, to love & to follow Christ 3) To share the sufferings of Passion, death and the joys of the Resurrection 4) To become a Missionary-Disciple of Jesus.

This is what is expected from the novice as our Rule of Life (RL 144) explains, "The novice will engage in an experience of the love of God and commit to follow Christ, HUMBLE & OBEDIENT, in order to consecrate his life to Him by religious profession in a fraternal community where the mission is lived". At the end, each novice master is invited personally to have the experience of the dynamics of the Ignatian Exercises and be convinced of this experience. Only our conviction can bring forth transformation in the life of others.

It was altogether a meeting to share and to encourage one another in our accompaniment of the novices. Once again, sincere THANKS for the availability, generosity, seriousness and selfless service. ●●●

## In these twenty years of profession

*I am Brother Sixto Cecilio Benitez Maciel, a religious brother of the Paraguay Vicariate, in the Augusto Etchecopar Region<sup>1</sup>. I come from a very humble (and not very practising!) Catholic family. I am the oldest of 7 children, (5 boys and 2 girls), but one brother is deceased.*



I entered the Congregation in 1998 after having gone through a process of vocational accompaniment in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Ciudad Nueva district, 7km from Ciudad del Este (Paraguay). I am the fruit of the Parish Vocational Ministry, having lived in this Parish all my childhood and adolescence, drinking from the charism of Betharram.

This year's Motto is GO OUT TO SHARE THE SAME JOY: The joy of sharing life, achievements, successes, sadness, anguish, despair in the day-to-day life of the journey helps to strengthen my human and spiritual life.

How has joy entered my life as a young religious? That's a rather tough question, complex, and also

very sensitive at the same time. I am reminded of the religious of the parish who shared the joy of their mission, a contagious joy that prompted me to know and to want to live the charism of the Congregation, which I saw they practiced: the text of Luke 10. 21-24 reveals the depths of the Heart of Jesus, the reason for his joy. This text presents Jesus to us in a "fit" of happiness for the success of the mission of the 72, who when they return, share with him their missionary experience. The reason for the joy of Jesus is the joy of friends and he thanks God for the way in which God's Plan works among simple people, who discover that he is capable of transforming things.

This moment reveals the depths of the heart of Jesus. Hearing the

<sup>1</sup>) Brother Sixto pronounced his first vows on the 28th of January, 2001.

experience of his disciples and perceiving his joy, Jesus also feels happy. His is not a superficial joy, it comes from the Holy Spirit. This joy is manifested in the faces of those religious touched by and attracted to the Lord, to share the joy of his Heart, a joy impregnated, sealed within Him.

As witness to the face of happiness that he has generated in my life, I continue to live it, nourishing it day by day with prayer, the sacraments, the charism, texts of our founder, and other sources, and I try to manifest this in pastoral work, in the community, among friends and brothers etc.

Moments of joy experiences. The first experience of joy came through the Vocational Pastoral Mission of the Sacred Heart parish... the precious moments of days, encounters, retreats, sharing the word of God in all these vocational activities. I was aware at the same time of the different vocations, of marriages, religious, religious that are encompassed by this Vocational Pastoral Mission.

A three-year process of vocational discernment, passionate about the charism of Betharram prompted me to want to live as they lived: the joy of being children of Saint Michael. In 1998 I decided to join the postulancy of the Congregation, which lasted two years. During those two years I felt that I had really been called to be a Betharramite

and I asked to go to the novitiate for a year, in Paulinia, in the State of São Paulo, Brazil. These were moments of joy in knowing the spirituality of the Incarnation of a God who becomes humble and dies on the Cross. Just as this event impacted Saint Michael, it also impacted me and continues to impact me.

Then came the scholasticate, which lasted more or less a period of eight years of formation and preparation for perpetual vows, visiting all the communities and helping teach Religious Education in the schools. During this process of formation and mission, I got to know Betharram much more through mission in the parishes, schools and other options of the vicariate, constantly sharing the joy with all the members of the community and with the laity.

After perpetual profession I was sent for a period to the San Joaquín district of Caaguazu, Paraguay, and for three years I collaborated with simplicity and humility contributing to the mission, sharing with simple people of great faith whose constant dedication to the service of others taught me those same virtues so valued in the sight of God.

After San Joaquín I was sent to the community of Ciudad del Este to help in the school as a teacher of Religious Education, and was then coordinator and Pastoral director of this Institution for a period of 8 years. They were moments of many

challenges between successes and errors, growing in the joy of being able to live and continue sharing the charism.

Today, I have been professed 20 years, and I am in the community of San José de Asunción, as pastoral director of the St Michael Garicoits school. It is a simple, humble, small institution (as St Michael himself would say) and I live the joy of being his son by sharing with the children, parents, teachers... always

with humility and a willingness to listen to the different situations in people's lives... joyfully accompanying the Professional Counselling of some young people who need to be listened to.

I thank God for life and for the Betharram family, which has given me and continues to give me everything. I thank Betharram because I owe it what I am.

Forward always forward. Amen. ●●●



**Meetings of the General Council on the 5th and the 8th of November. The Superior General, with his Council,.. :**



- decided to present **Br. Peter Do Van Hung**, Vietnamese scholastic, currently formee at Ban Garicoits-Betharram in Sampran (Thailand) to **the ministry of lector**.



- Admitted to final profession **Br. Peter Phichet Wijunwayu (on the left) & Br. Mathew Phanupan Shaichonsrijinda (on the right)** of the Vicariate of Thailand (Region SMJC)



- Presents to priestly minister **Deacon Akhil Thykkuttathil** of the Vicariate of India (Region SMJC).



- gave permission to **modify the building project of a Retreat Center** in Thailand. The project will be carried out on a property of the Congregation in Chom Thong, instead of Huay Tong.

- extended for a third year **the indult of exclausturation of Fr. Subancha Yindeengarm** in the Diocese of Chiang Rai.



- Approved the appointment of **Fr. Osmar Caceres Spaini as Novice Master** in the Region Fr. Augusto Etchecopar, for a second mandate.



- Approved the appointment of **Fr. François Tohonon Cokou scj as Community Superior of Pibrac** (Vicariate of France-Spain), for a first mandate.



**On the agenda:** After the canonical visitation to the Vicariate of Brazil (16 October - 6 November), the Superior General began the **canonical visit to Paraguay**. This will be interrupted from 15 to 19 November for the celebration of the Council of the Congregation, and will resume from 21 November to 1 December.



## Father Giulio Forloni scj

*Passirana di Rho, 18 December 1935 – Solbiate Comasco, 22 October 2021 (Italy)*

*From the homily of Fr. Piero Trameri scj  
for the funeral of Fr. Giulio*

We have gathered round the Lord's altar, first to celebrate Him, to listen to His word of hope, to renew our faith in his mystery of death and resurrection, and to be comforted by Him at the time of parting from a person so dear to us as Father Giulio... We are also here to gather the testimony of his life and thank God for the marvels accomplished in him and by him.

We have heard in Mark's Gospel the narration of a typical day of Jesus, who teaches with authority in the synagogue of Capharnaüm, cures a man possessed by the devil and who, at Peter's house, cures this latter's mother-in-law ; then, in the evening, once again he cures many persons sick or possessed by the devil, who crowd at the door. The next morning, he gets up before dawn to retire in a desert place and pray.

I have thought of this passage to evoke Fr. Giulio's memory, as I think he tried and succeeded to imitate this day of Jesus during his whole life, before being paralysed by this mysterious, dreadful disease which dims mental light.

Yesterday evening, his sister talked to me about Fr. Giulio as "a priest always running". (Did you hear how often Mark uses the expression "at once" when he speaks of Jesus?). The same for Fr. Giulio: at once, now, at once. The best defi-



...The best definition is of a "priest always running", from what I could see along those years I lived with him at Albiate. We wondered how he could go into a room to give help to the handicapped persons of the Brianza group, then into another room to come and offer in haste some pists of reflection to the group of engaged people, without forgetting to have a snack in the community, to go and swallow another mouthful with some members of his family coming to visit him. Like Jesus in Capharnaüm, consumed in love and zeal for the people in need and faithful to the mission trusted to him.

...He was also able to retire himself like Jesus in a lonely spot, perhaps in the mountains he loved or in the silence of the morning, to pray, think and prepare the lessons or lectures destined to the numerous youngsters he met in the

school or associative world, particularly of Comunione e Liberazione, and in the many parishes of the Brianza where he exerted his sacerdotal ministry. Ready to answer each call, able to reproduce always in facts the *"Here I am, send me"* reminded by Isaiah in the first reading and which is a pillar of the Betharramite spirituality.

Only one who had assimilated in his deepest heart the impulse of the Word Incarnate could repeat *"here I am, send me"* when, in 1991, our religious family had decided to launch an experimental home for AIDS sick persons, alone and abandoned by their families, in Monteporzio Catone, on the hills South of Rome.

I remember as if it were yesterday the day when, in a meeting of the Provincial Council, as we looked for a volunteer for this service near the last ones, Fr. Giulio said: *"I'm ready for this new call"*. As a member of the Provincial Council, he added: *"One must give the example. Here I am, I do go"*. He took a leap in the dark, only armed with his obedience and self-giving to God's will, like Abraham, and with his love for those most in need. *"God gave his life for us ; we must also give our lives for our brothers"*, John reminded us in the second reading. *"We love neither by words or by tongue, but by acts and in truth"*.

And *"the priest always running"* started without delay, with his pilgrim's bag. During twenty-seven years, he went to-and-fro between Rome and the Brianza to visit his friends, to tell the sick people's needs, to collect funds

for his work, able to carry away everybody by his enthusiasm and the energy of one who gives his whole life for the cause of the Gospel. Coming back, he had to watch the sick during the night, then, during the day, to give the humblest services, and also to serve the parish, the groups of engaged people, the patient, enlightened listening (with a capital L) of the Word for anyone who showed one's need.

Our Founder, Saint Michael Garicoïts, was dreaming of a group of priests who, like a flying camp of elite soldiers, would be ready to run everywhere necessary. I think Fr. Giulio fully realized this ideal.

These last years, ironical fate or unfathomable mystery- this priest who spent his whole life with an unthinkable vitality, serving so many needy people, faithful to the end to the received mandate, had to stop his run, like a worn-out engine the turns of which slow down little by little. Deprived from the gift to enjoy even a little the fruits of his work, enclosed in a painful silence, Fr. Giulio, however, was able to give shy smiles to his visitors.

The Lord of Life has tenderly opened His arms to him, and surely has given him back the light of mind and heart, to taste the blessings He prepares in the renewed world. We are here to thank Him and to give thanks for the precious gift He has reserved for each of us through Fr. Giulio's life, example, testimony and friendship. This gift, I am sure, will be jealously treasured by all of us in our hearts. ●●●

# Father Egidio Zoia scj

Cabiate, 16 September 1931 – 31 October 2021 (Italy)

*Excerpt from the homily of Fr Piero Trameri scj at the funeral of Fr Egidio.*

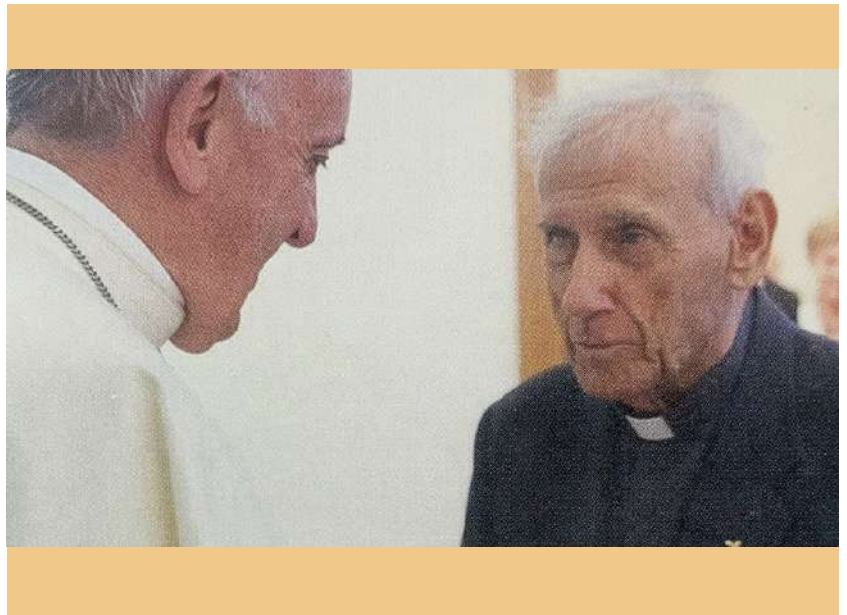
Every month, Fr Egidio would write a “thought” intended for his parishioners in Castellazzo, and afterwards he would post it online so his friends and colleagues could also read it.

The notes he had made for his November reflection were still on his computer and here is what he had written: *“November starts with the Feast of All Saints and remembrance of the dead: the men and women who have gone before us, who made history... All have passed through, leaving behind the faintest trace of a footprint, imperceptible, tiny and, for the most part, anonymous, as weightless as that of an ant. Everyone with their own personality.*

*Everyone being unique, no-one is the replica of another; everyone has the capacity to give and to share with others but also to receive. A receptacle (and man is but a receptacle, albeit with the gift of reason, but a receptacle nonetheless!) can only be filled and enriched by being open to encounter and confrontation.”*

Those were his last written words: a little testament.

And now here we are, gathered around his coffin, to examine with care and thought the footprints he has left us, to thank the Lord for his intuition and enlightenment and for the precious fruits he harvested along the way or, to use Fr



Egidio’s own words, which he gathered into his “receptacle”.

The Betharramites of my generation readily see in Fr Egidio a facet of Jesus, such as He is described in the passage of the Gospel we have just heard: “Walking alongside the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother, casting their nets into the sea for they were fishermen. He said to them: Come, follow me. I will make you fishers of men”.

This is but one of the fruits of Fr Egidio’s youthful enthusiasm. In Albavilla, he was in charge of fostering vocations and, like Jesus, when he visited families and parishes in Brianza and Valtellina, he called the young to follow Jesus. Like Him, he promised “I will make you fishers of men”.

Today, many of us, near and far, who pray for him and mourn his passing, heard that invitation and were infected by his spiritual and human energy; that

energy radiated by people who show the way to a life that although demanding, is powered by the Gospels, is full, rich and meaningful.

Fr Egidio repeatedly showed this attitude throughout his life and lived out the very heart of Betharramite spirituality: *"Here I am, send me!"*. This is the attitude of Jesus who, with filial abandonment, accomplishes the will of the Father.

That is but one very clear footprint left by Fr Egidio on his brethren's path; for the young seminarians at Albavilla in particular, and later for the clerics preparing for the priesthood and consecrated life in Monteporzio.

A footprint followed gratefully to this day, by the many priests and lay people whom he met at the cathedral in Milan, during days spent ministering in the confessional, for reconciliation and giving spiritual direction; a footprint followed also by Sisters and consecrated lay people alike, in almost every part of Italy.

Finally, he has left an indelible footprint on the hearts of his beloved parishioners in Castellazzo who lovingly listened, supported and guided him over the past years, as his eyesight (but not his desire to undertake new projects, to get on, do things and plan) had started to fail him...

Fr Egidio was a dreamer. One of those dreamers who can see a long way ahead and who are first to set off on the journey. He led from the front, steadfast but stubborn, in spite of the incomprehension and lagging footsteps of those walking by his side, be they fellow priests

and brothers, Superiors or associates.

He dreamed of an ever-closer cooperation between the consecrated life and the local Church... of more direct *"mutuae relationes"*.

To encourage these he always promoted the idea of including a course on the consecrated life in the curriculum for the diocesan seminarians.

He encouraged his fellow religious and lay people alike, as did Paul the Romans: *"I beg you, dearly beloved, by the mercy of God, to give yourselves as a living and holy sacrifice pleasing to God; that is the kind of worship for you, as sensible people."* (Romans 12:1). Worship consisting of celebrations and liturgies, but also worship shaped by reality, by commitment, through the everyday involvement in every area of social and church life.

Each one with his or her own specific areas of skill, each one developing his or her own gifts for the benefit of all, as St Paul said: *"See the body is one, even if formed by many members, but not all of them with the same function. The same with us; being many, we are one body in Christ, depending on one another. Let each one of us, therefore, serve according to our different gifts."* (Romans 12: 4-6)

I believe I can say that Fr Egidio turned his gifts into abundant profit for us all: as formator of seminarians; as spiritual director for Sisters, engaged couples and families; and for many years, as an indomitable fighter against the evil spirits which threaten fragile minds, as he exercised the difficult ministry of exorcist.

He was also a man of great culture,

book-lover and amateur collector of books on local culture.

He was both desirous of deepening and of passing on the story of his own (our own) religious family, of the Congregation he loved so much and which he always hoped would become more united and fraternal: hence his frequent visits to neighbouring communities.

Historian of the Chapters, until his strength left him, he had a dream of creating a centralised library, available to everyone. Again taking his inspiration from St Paul, who explained to the Romans that *"in a single body, there are several members which do not have the same function..."*, Fr Egidio believed steadfastly in formation, in accepting

specific responsibilities, in working together and in engaging lay people in church matters as in every area of society, and he worked tirelessly towards this end.

He lived and worked willingly with the most diverse people, without distinction or exclusion.

*"Every being is unique, no-one is the replica of another"* he said in his last notes. Let us thank God for the precious messages He sent us through him.

We will continue to follow the trace of the footprints he left in the heart of each one of us.

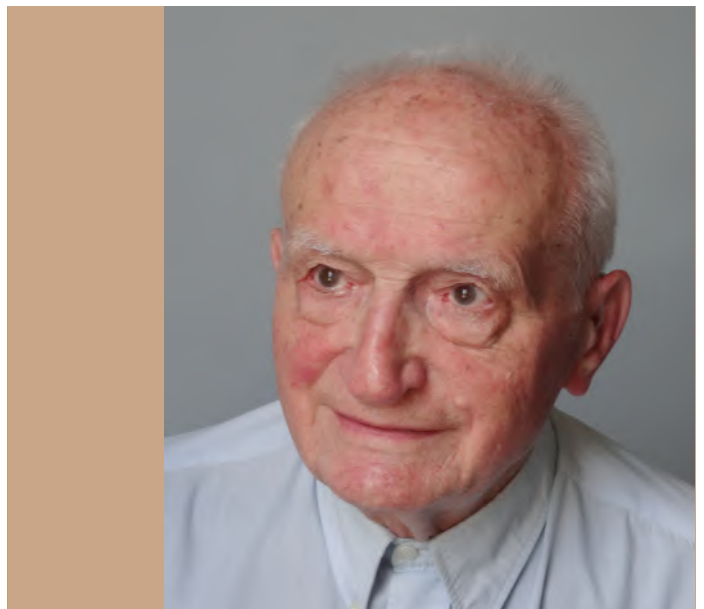
We can see him now, in the Father's embrace at last, his eyes filled with the light. ●●●

## Father Jean Tapie scj

Tarbes, 26 August 1926 – Bétharram, 2 November 2021 (France)

*From the homily of Fr. Jean-Luc Morin, Regional Superior, for the funeral of Fr. Jean*

The story of Fr. Jean Tapie is that of a man, a brother, an uncle and great-uncle, a Father of Bétharram, attached to his roots in Bigorre and even more deeply to his family. Growing up within striking distance of a court, he became a passionate listener of public hearings. He developed a taste for eloquence and a habit of learning his sermons by heart. The young Jean Léon was always going to be an advocate of the best causes: to be the representative of God with men, and of men with



God. Having become a Bétharramite, his wish was to return to his Bethany of Tarbes, to develop emotional connections.

In his religious life, Fr. Tapie was the man of fidelity and obedience. Faithful to his origins, faithful in friendship, faithful above all to his consecration: 70 years of profession, 65 years of vows, and always an enthusiasm for new starts, a capacity to never look inwardly to oneself but to constantly seek to lift the gaze, and to turn hearts to God, the Friend, the Holy One. On his bed of pain, faithful to the prayer of the Church, his breviary remained open. And when words were impossible, he pointed to the ceiling with a surprising energy. "God knows. God acts. God is everything, I am nothing, look to God instead of me," as St Michael said. Because he had a deep-rooted faith, he accepted everything, he abandoned himself to the Father with a simplicity and a jubilant vivacity.

Obedient to the end, he did not question orders, he simply carried them out: he had a sense of duty and exemplary devotion. He was where God wanted him to be. In charge of the discipline at the colleges of Bétharram and Limoges, chaplain of the MEJ (*Youth Eucharist Movement*) then of Carmel, this meant several Bethlehem Nazareth return trips. No matter what the mission, the essential thing was to serve, even in less popular roles. For in doing these, he could put more love into carrying out the less pleasant tasks: a love lived, rather than proclaimed, a struggle against selfishness. Having a precise, lively nature, he might seem sharp or fastidious at times; it was just that he was eager, more than anything,

to speak well and to do well. He had a modesty in his feelings, and an astonishing freedom from the moment he evoked the senses of God: his goodness, his tenderness, his mercy...

Since he had retired to Bétharram in 2007, Fr. Tapie had been somewhat the man of the *Maison Neuve*, the spiritual guide of the old people's care home. He drew from prayer the graces of a ministry of charity on a daily basis. He did not need to go out, to take an interest in others. In his room, we found a schoolboy's notebook filled with notes on topics as diverse as Eastern Christians, diabetes, IVF, surrogacy, divorce and remarriage... He lived his pastoral life indoors with admirable assiduity and delicacy: a born sacristan, a regular confessor, he liked to visit the sick, administer the sacraments, and honour the first Friday of the month. He had few relations outside, except his relatives who gave him one last gift, and the most beautiful: to celebrate his first baptism, aged 95, of a great-grandniece at the shrine.

"I have always been happy and I regret nothing," Fr. Tapie repeated towards the end of his life. That's how he left it, happy, in peace, despite illness. He saw his end as the return to God, the long-awaited encounter, the fulfilment of his here I am. Recently, I visited my former *Surgé*<sup>1</sup>, a catechist, discreet brother and benevolent Father. As soon as he had returned from yet

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1) abbreviation of "Surveillant général-Dean of students"; Fr. Jean-Luc was a student at the Osanam College in Limoges

another hospitalization, he confided to me, his eyes shining: "What I cannot do, God will do. Let him manage! Let's do what we can. He'll take care of the rest. Dear young people, if I don't understand, have patience! He's smarter than us. I am in good hands." What else can we ask for? His humility, his trust, this obedience through love...

So there we have it. That was our history with Fr. Jean Tapie, his holy history now revealed and celebrated.

He served passionately, he believed intensely. Now he knows, he sees, he lives in the joy of his Master. The first reading had warned us: Those who are faithful will remain with him in his love, for God grants his chosen ones grace and mercy. May he grant us, in our turn, to be men and women of faith and of real charity. Like Michael Gariçoits, Mariam Baouardy and our dear Father Tapie! ●●●

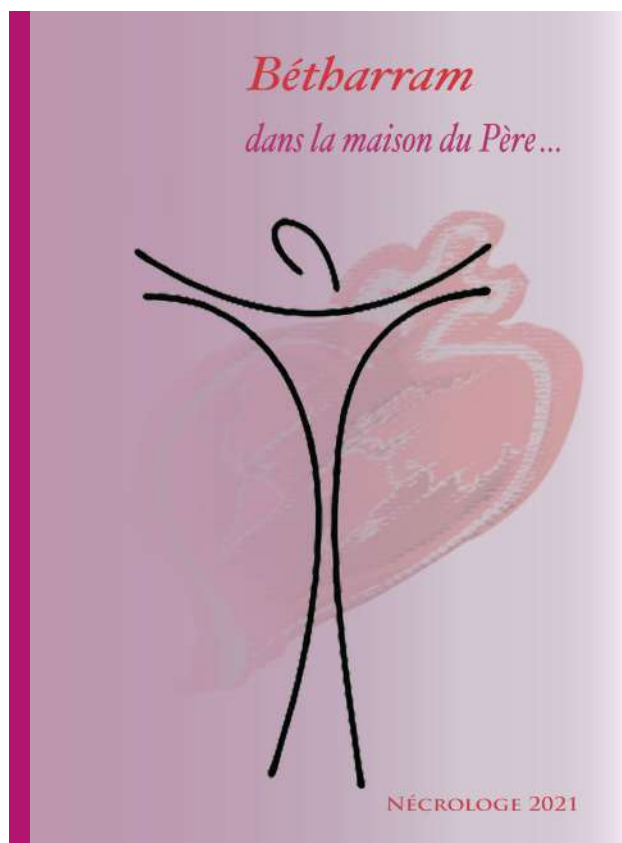
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## In memoriam



*"As we pray for the dead who have passed away in this last year, let us beg the intercession of all those who lived unassuming lives, content to prepare daily to meet the Lord. Following the example of these witnesses, (...) let us desire to look farther ahead, to the wedding banquet that awaits us. A life burning with desire for God and trained by love will be prepared to enter the chamber of the Bridegroom, and this, forever."*

*(Pope Francis)*



The **Obituary 2021** has been sent in pdf by mail to all the Community Superiors on the occasion of the Feast of All Saints and remembrance of the dead<sup>1</sup>.

It is a tool that helps us gratefully remember our brothers who have departed before us and who rest in Christ in Betharram in heaven.

***"Their fine examples will be transmitted for long years; besides shining for all eternity, as a reward for the good they have done and will continue doing: one will keep an eternal memory of the just man to bless him."*** (DS § 324)

1) The obituary is updated on October 31st 2021.

28 November 2021 •

First Advent Sunday



*« Called to co-operate with the Son of God who became one of us to save us all, we wish to share in the “joys and hopes, the sadness and the anguish of men.”*

*Thus, we remain sensitive to the needs of our contemporaries in close and humble contact with their lives.»*

*Rule of Life § 18*

Wishing you all a happy Advent time



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