

He advises him not to concentrate solely on work and to be concerned only with the immediate: *“Don't look too far into the future, there the eye of man finds only doubt and apprehension; leave it all to Providence, it is she who will best manage events and things. Be preoccupied only with the present.”*

How wise are the counsels of Fr Etchecopar, and how topical are his concerns! Were he among us today, he would doubtless be more worried than ever... so absorbed are we by the day-to-day grit and grind. Are we setting aside time for spirituality, for reconnecting with God and giving priority to what is really important? Or are we quite simply living in this busy, noisy world, enslaved by our work and material things, projecting our lives into the future without living fully in the present? Let us entrust our life to the Lord, let us live the present in full. Let's plan our life by placing it into His hands, and everything will be better, assuredly.

Let us be like Fr Etchecopar asked Evariste to be: let's turn to our neighbour, let us be an example by our words and actions; may our lives be a witness of faith, may we pass onto others that which is really important, that which leads us to fulfilment, to happiness and above all that which brings us peace and hope, to make our way guided by the hand of God.

Fr. Giancarlo Monzani scj
in «Betharramitas», August 2021, Vol. 6, p. 4

We recommend you:

Father Etchecopar, a man of Hope
| R. Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

Supplement of the NEF of february 2022 available on www.betharram.net



Societas S^{mi} Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

Generalate House
via Angelo Brunetti, 27
00186 Roma
Phone +39 06 320 70 96
Email scj.generalate@gmail.com
www.betharram.net

NEF

Betharram

NR. 178

NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE - 121TH YEAR, 11TH series - 14 February 2022

In this issue

Leaving all behind... to
find ourselves p. 1

The first step p. 5

Prayer for the General
Chapter 2023 p. 7

Homily, 2 February
2022, 1st part p. 8

A pastoral and
missionary
experience of SCJ
Community at
Nottingham p. 10

Fr. Akhil
Thykkutthathil, 32nd
SCJ priest in India
p. 13

In Côte d'Ivoire, some
'Lay Betharramites'
want to live in
'Fraternities'... p. 14

A beautiful story
of missionary
audacity of a
hundred years
ago... p. 16

Some news from the
scj communities
p. 18

Notices from the
General Council
p. 22

Year of Fr Etchecopar
p. 23

A word from the superior general

Leaving all behind... to meet each other

“So that our community life is real and bears witness, all members of the community must feel themselves responsible for the climate of brotherly charity, necessary for the harmony and the development of each religious member.”
(RdV 101)

Dear Betharramites:

“Meeting, listening and discerning together”..... this is the path to follow towards the 2023 General Chapter. With the Preparatory Commission we have proposed an experience of synodality so that in 2022 all Betharramites can share their hopes arising from their our vocation and mission. The Regionals and Vicars already have, for each community, material to help you hold your first bimonthly meeting. In addition, in each NEF you will find a brief section called “HEADING TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER” as support.

The first step to take is an invitation: **to go out to really meet our brothers**, an essential condition to better communicate, in a more positive and frequent way.

Frequently, I find Betharramites who live very worried about “their own little space”. It is true, we are *men and not angels* (SMG), but this should not be an argument to

justify ourselves and refuse to change. On the contrary, it should be a stimulus to really 'humanise' one another. We are both a *gift and a work in progress* to the extent that we open ourselves to give the best of ourselves and accept the gifts of others and of God.

What then gets in the way and prevents us from truly reaching one another?

The first thing I see is that we can't manage to leave things behind for a while. The world today lives an individualism based on liberal ideology, where the centre is "me". What St. Michael and Fr. Etchecopar called revolutionary individualism (a 19th cent. expression), is still very present in our postmodern society. Saint Michael used to say that the "I" has come to replace (usurp) our Creator God and also our brothers. Yes, my "I" wants to evict those who could enrich me with their dedication and welcome...

When the "I" reigns more and more in my decision making and I simply do not notice it, then a situation that we could call "*semblance of good*" (cf. Spiritual Exercises.EE. 332) occurs. My activities become "the important thing for me" because they reward me and make me feel good. That is the apparent good, to which I dedicate myself with all my strength and which I use (unconsciously?) to prevent myself from being challenged by what disturbs me, what questions me or makes my life uncomfortable. Probably I am only looking for success and, when I have a failure, I don't know what to do..., maybe because I have been getting used, "little by little", to live in fun, dispersion, to always be "busy" and never stand back from things to see what really helps me in community, makes me mature, truly humanises me, and makes me a better brother.

Saint Michael once told the Superior of the mission in America, speaking of those who asked him for more apostolic freedom:

"When you have fixed ideas, it is hard to lose them especially if we think we are wasting our time when things do not conform to the schemes of our mind. But we do not know everything! So understand, love and embrace with 'corde magno et animo volenti et constanti' (generous heart and willing spirit) the darkness, or sterility, or the failures to which we are subjected by obedience. This is the manna that unfortunately is still hidden for many..." (Corr. c. 163, around September 1858, To Fr. Diego Barbé, Superior of the Colegio San José).

•\ • **Year of Fr Etchecopar** •/\ •



A man of hope

The signs of affection and the spiritual support which Fr Auguste bore towards his own brothers and sisters, even before his ordination, are a matter of common knowledge; in his letters, he advised them not to get so involved in their daily tasks that they strayed away from God.

You only need read a few pages of his correspondence before you come across phrases like: **"... You see, dear Evariste, I have infinite confidence in the Good Lord and in the Virgin, His most Holy Mother. I have entrusted you into their hands with the utmost abandon; serve the Good Lord with love, He is the beginning and the end of every success and of all things."** (Letter dated 27 January, 1853).

His brother, Evariste, had emigrated to Argentina and settled in Tucuman, (a town some 1,200 km north-west of Buenos Aires). His being so far from the family, in the New World and his initial economic difficulties, were a constant worry nagging at Auguste's heart, and the concern that Evariste might abandon the way of faith and their father's teachings was never far from his thoughts.

So he often repeated these words to Evariste: **"... your hope above all should be founded on Providence, on the Holy Will of God, from whom everything comes and to whom everything goes back, as to the one and only beginning and the one and only end..."** (To his brother Evariste, written from the Collège de St. Palais, 3 August 1853).

•\• **Notices from the general council** •/\•

- The Superior General had to cancel his **canonical visit** to the Vicariate of India (Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified Region), scheduled from 13 January to 4 February 2022 due to inconveniences occurred at the last moment (cancellation of flight, visa refused, health status).

Despite this, the Superior General attended the Vicariate assembly and some individual meetings in videoconference with our confreres of India; these meetings took place in the presence of the Regional Superior, Fr. Enrico Frigerio SCJ.

- The Superior General, with his Council gathered on 19 December 2021, authorized the sale of the holiday home in **Teggiate** (Vicariate of Italy, Saint Michael Garicoits Region).
- The **directory** of the Congregation 2022, updated to December 31, 2021 (except for some changes occurred at the beginning of 2022) is available in pdf, for printing or "online" consultation, for the attention of our religious. It is always better to remember that **this document is for internal use only**.

Agenda

Meetings of the General Council for the first semester 2022:

- *Friday 18 March* • *Thursday 21 April* • *Tuesday 24 May*.

Meeting of the Betharramite Formation Team (videoconference):

- *23 - 24 February 2022*.

Council of the Congregation/Preparatory commission for the General Chapter 2023 (videoconference):

- *Wednesday 16 March* • *Thursday 17 March*.



Today, it is strange to see that, in some communities, there is never time or space to live fraternity, beyond mealtime...

Jesus has taught us that living the gospel means "lowering yourself", putting yourself at the level of the other, going out to meet him, becoming close. Making time for each other means humbly walking together, helping each other to grow in humanity, in fraternity. This requires an *interior openness* that makes us generous and welcoming with the other. It makes me a better person and a better religious.

An individualistic religious life instead of opening paths, rather undermines them, and makes everything revolve around "me", my pastoral work, and even my academic degrees...; Instead of using all the skills that I have received and nurtured **to serve in community**. The *medals* I wear become a shield around me.

Fraternity becomes more real when we put ourselves on the same level as our brother, renouncing the belief that we are superior, preparing to shoulder him, feeling responsible for his maturation as a person, as a child of God. This is the **real good**.

Let's not let activities, by themselves, become an excuse to continue living superficially. This would prevent us from entering the *sanctuary of conscience, where we are what we truly are and where God dwells 'who is closer to us than we are ourselves'* (St. Augustine).

To communicate, we Betharramites must freely go out of ourselves to encounter our brother. The current climate of social relativism still has a great influence on our religious life. Everything is allowed and we become worldly; "everything is OK", if it seems "OK" to one. Thus we justify a certain lifestyle without tensions, even if it is dissonant or even opposed to the Gospel. Today many things are justified in community with the excuse that it is *out of respect for the person*. Sometimes the chance to help a brother to escape from a double life or a dishonest situation is avoided (despite knowing that we are called to live in the truth of the Gospel). And I think that's because each one lives *in his own little world*...

Listening to each other leads us to rediscover the need to dedicate ourselves to the practice of the Gospel, of forgiveness, of fraternal correction.

By "*listening to each other*" it will be possible to "*encounter each other*", we will be able to walk and discern God's will together.

That is the work that we propose to do this year in community. Without these dispositions we could still possibly meet, but once there we will try to impose our ideology on others (the one that sustains our lifestyle...) which instead of making us live like brothers, will transform us into rivals.

The Holy Spirit, as Inner Master, teaches us to be docile to Him and to share the same happiness with all those who drink from the same Source.

God bless your work in the communities! I end with these holy words quoted by Fr. Etchecopar in his letter to Fr. Magendie (from Bethlehem, February 21, 1893): "*My God, what can I give you in exchange for this proof of your presence among your children? What can I give them for this signal mark of their love for you and their tender affection for us? For our part, Lord, we are only impotence and an obstacle. So let yourself be the reward for this entire community. And, since it is but one heart and one soul in you, be more and more, their heart, their life, their strength, their joy; consume them in your union with the Father and the Holy Spirit: 'So that they may be one. So that they may be consummated in unity'*".

In Corde Iesu.

Fr. Gustavo Agin scj
Superior General

Finally, he invited the Christian faithful to encourage and support vocations in general and vocations to the religious life in particular.



» On January 29, in **Mangalore**, two of our brothers, Br. Stephen R. and Br. Alwyn Crasta, were instituted, respectively, Acolyte and Lector. The ministries were conferred by Fr. Enrico Frigerio scj, Regional Superior.



» On February 10, the Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Chiang Mai, **His. E. Mgr. Joseph Sangwal Surasarang** returned to the Father's house. Bishop Joseph Sangwal Surasarang was titular bishop of the Diocese of Chiang Mai from 1987 to 2009 and ordained several of our Betharramite brothers who will take part in the funeral.



In the Peace of the Lord

In France | **Mr. Joseph Caset**, brother of Fr Pierre Caset SCJ (community "Maison Neuve" of Betharram) died in Saint-Palais on February 6, at the age of 81 years.

We are close to Fr Pierre and his family and we pray for the eternal rest of their dear one.

» With some sadness our Congregation has decided to end our presence at Holy Name Parish **Great Barr**, as we could no longer find a priest from our own number to tend the parish. Last weekend Bishop Stephen Wright along with Fr Enrico conveyed the news to the parish. Naturally many are sad at the news. Over the years many of our priests and brothers have served there, including Fr Dominic, Fr. Austin, Fr.Cyril, Fr. Brian, Bro.Liam, Bro.Andrew & Bro. Gerard.

In spite of the distance from Solihull to Great Barr several Friary parishioners have connections with Holy Name parish, and will continue to keep them in prayer.

» On February 2, the liturgy celebrated the Fest of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple of Jerusalem by Mary and Joseph: "they offered him to the Lord." This same date was chosen by the Catholic Church to celebrate the Consecrated Life. Therefore, the community of **Adiapodoumé**, accompanied by some parishioners who had come for the occasion, celebrated this feast with joy and gratitude.

The celebration started with the candlelight procession, symbol of the light of Christ. This was followed by the Eucharist presided over by Fr. Jean Paul Kissi SCJ, Superior of the formation community.

During the homily, Fr Jean-Paul reflected on the importance of consecrated life in the mission of the Church. He also invited all the consecrated persons to live with joy, despite the limitations.



The first step

The presence of the Betharramites in the Church today is subject to the surprising evolution of a time that offers incessant challenges. Every six year, we look at ourselves in order to confront ourselves, to evaluate what we have lived and to draw new horizons together with the people of God. Let us prepare to do so not by routine, but under the inspiration and effectiveness of the Spirit.

We come from two very hard & difficult years, for reasons we all know...Therefore, in the Elective Assemblies and Regional Chapters of this 2022/23, we ask you to present your proposals, suggestions and contributions to the General Chapter of 2023.

As we know, new representatives will be elected there, and later the authorities in all the regions and vicariates will be renewed.

We believe that it is a key

ecclesial moment in our history.

This journey to accomplish together will express our communion and our participation as a religious family. That is why in each NEF we will dedicate a short section to talk about the subject.

Today **synodality** offers us the opportunity to participate more, being able to know us better and enrich our vocation and mission as Betharramites throughout the world. It is an invitation **to encounter each other, to listen to each other and to discern** - under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Hence, we have proposed to all the communities that, every two month, there must be a meeting, to prepare the Elective Assembly, which will be held (according to each vicariate)

between the months of July and

September 2022.

- At the first meeting, the motivating theme is to meet.
- the second will be on listening.
- And the third will be on discerning.

What things in our life concern us, encourage us, challenge us, bring us hope?

The synthesis will be presented to the Regional Vicar. With which, he will prepare the Assembly together with his council of the Vicariate. It will be a rich material to which other important topics will be added.

If all the elective assemblies prepare well for their meeting, if they listen well to each other, if

there is discernment, then we will surely see the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

It is the opportunity to live a prophetic experience, but it requires us to be responsible, and not to repeat the usual excuses: "The superiors have decided this and that".

Brothers, this is the way to travel together. We will propose it from this month until the General Chapter. We hope that it will help us to make a more synodal preparation in the communities, always trying to seek and find the Will of God for the present and for the future of our family. ■

Preparatory commission

Let us pray together for the General Chapter:...

This prayer is available in pdf for printing on our website www.betharram.net

community of Paso de los Toros, Uruguay, to join the meeting.

- » Last October, the Betharramite community of the San Francesco parish in **Pistoia** (Italy) welcomed two people who have chosen to live an experience of community life for one year. Their purpose is to learn more about the Betharramite spirituality and to make a discernment for a possible choice of religious life. One of them made the acquaintance of the Betharramite fathers in Montemurlo, where the religious attended the parish of the Sacred Heart for decades; the other met them in Langhirano, one of the recent communities opened in the Vicariate. Both are currently attending the preparatory course at the Theological Faculty of Florence.

- » From the evening of January 23 (Sunday) until noon on January 29 (Saturday), the annual Spiritual Retreat of the Betharramite Vicariate in Brazil took place in **Passa Quatro**. The course of spiritual exercises was animated by Fr. Luiz Eustáquio dos Santos Nogueira, of the archdiocese of Belo Horizonte. Fr Luiz is a full professor at the PUC - MINAS (Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais) and visiting professor at the FAJE (Jesuit College) in Belo Horizonte. For quite some time now, he has been dedicating himself to spirituality. During this privileged time, the religious have benefited from the text "The Mystique of the here and now. Time and Promise" by Cardinal José Tolentino Calaça de Mendonça.



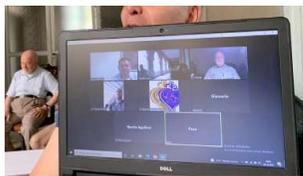
•\• Some news from the sej communities •/\•



» Last December 28, the religious of the Vicariate of Argentina and Uruguay held an Assembly in the community of **Barracas** at the end of the canonical visit of the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín SCJ.



Sharing life experiences and celebrating their faith, the religious were able to physically reunite after almost two years. The religious present in Uruguay still participated in the assembly through teleconference, because of the restrictions due to the pandemic.



It was a beautiful occasion in which the religious were able to shake hands again, embrace each other and continue to dream, with the help of the Superior General and thanks to the echoes of his visit, the desire of God for this portion of Betharram in the south of the world.



Then, from January 24th to 28th, in the stillness and beauty of the mountains of Cordoba, the traditional Meeting of SCJ Religious took place. They lived these days of prayer and rest, reflecting on synodality, poverty, the projects for 2022, the echoes and resonances of the canonical visit.



With great joy, the religious celebrated the birthday of Fr. Juan Pablo García Martínez SCJ.

Unfortunately, the backlash of the pandemic made it impossible for the confreres of the



“Going out to communicate: to meet, to listen, to discern... together”

Prayer for the General Chapter

Come, Holy Spirit!
You inspire new tongues
and place words of life on our lips:
keep us from becoming a “museum Church”,
beautiful but mute, with much past and little future.

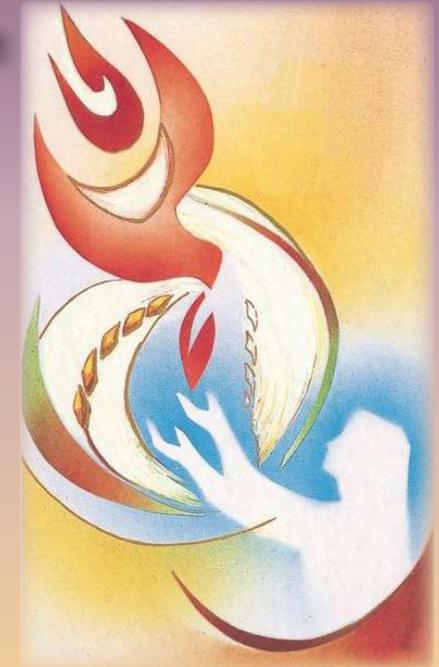
Come among us, so that in this synodal experience,
towards the general chapter,
we will not lose our enthusiasm,
dilute the power of prophecy,
or descend into useless and unproductive discussions.

Come, Spirit of love,
open our hearts to hear your voice.

Come, Spirit of strength:
renew and ferment the hearts of the men and women
who drink from the same source of Betharram;

Come, Spirit of light:
grant us to discern your will
so that we may be at the service of the poor,
of the little ones and those who suffer.

Come, Spirit who creates Communion:
let us mature in the construction of fraternal,
prayerful and missionary communities.



Come, Spirit of Unity,
grant us to work together
and despite our differences
at bringing to others the same happiness
that comes from you.

Come, Spirit of holiness,
renew the holy and faithful People of God!

Come, Creator Spirit,
renew the face of the earth!

Amen.



Homily, Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, 26th World Day for Consecrated Life

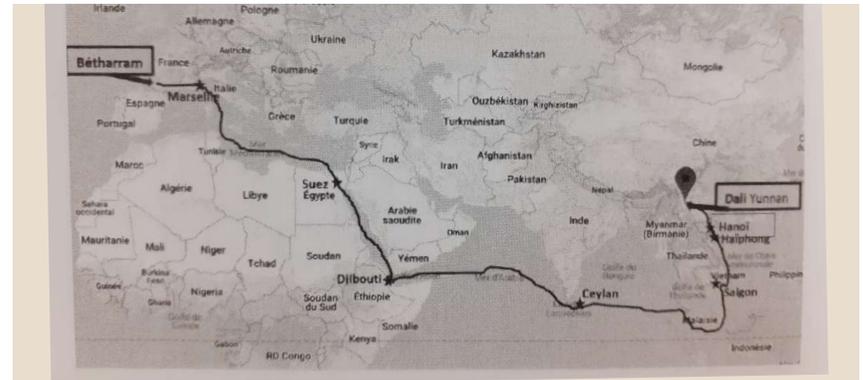
StPeter's Basilica, Wednesday, 2 February 2022

Two elderly people, Simeon and Anna, await in the Temple the fulfilment of the promise that God made to his people: the coming of the Messiah. Yet theirs is no passive expectation, it is full of movement. Let us look at what Simeon does. First, he is moved by the Spirit; then he sees salvation in the Child Jesus and finally he takes him into his arms (cf. Lk 2:26-28). Let us simply consider these three actions and reflect on some important questions for us and in particular for the consecrated life.

First, what moves us? Simeon goes to the Temple, "moved by the spirit" (v. 27). The Holy Spirit is the protagonist in this scene. He makes Simeon's heart burn with desire for God. He keeps expectation alive in his heart: He impels him to go to the Temple and he enables his eyes to recognize the Messiah, even in the guise of a poor little baby. That is what the Holy Spirit does: he enables us to discern God's presence and

activity not in great things, in outward appearances or shows of force, but in littleness and vulnerability. Think of the cross. There too we find littleness and vulnerability, but also something dramatic: the power of God. Those words "moved by the spirit" remind us of what ascetic theology calls "movements of the Spirit": those movements of the soul that we recognize within ourselves and are called to test, in order to discern whether they come from the Holy Spirit or not. Be attentive to the interior movements of the Spirit.

We can also ask, who mostly moves us? Is it the Holy Spirit, or the spirit of this world? This a question that everyone, consecrated persons in particular, needs to ask. The Spirit moves us to see God in the littleness and vulnerability of a baby, yet we at times risk seeing our consecration only in terms of results, goals and success: we look for influence, for visibility, for numbers. This is a



ter was read that the young Fr Erdozaincy-Etchart SCJ had sent to his parents. In the letter, at the age of 15, he insistently asked his parents that he be granted permission to go to Argentina as a missionary.

A grand-nephew, Piarrès Erdozaincy Etchart, presented us the biography of his great uncle in artistic form. After the meal, organized by the family, the round table on the beginnings of the Betharramite mission in China took place.

Franck Lopépé, his great-grand-nephew, showed a very well documented thirty-minute film, made by himself about the first nine years of the mission in China, Fr Erdozaincy Etchart having died in 1931, nine years after his arrival. An amazing movie.

After the documentaries, the participants (about eighty) kicked off a debate that lasted about an hour and a half. Fabienne, great-grandniece of Fr Jean-Baptiste Magenties SCJ², who is

² In China since 1928 and until the expulsion in 1951,

writing a book on the mission in China, also made a presentation. The family of Fr Oxibar SCJ and the grandnephew of Fr Toucoulet SCJ also gave their testimony. Several letters sent from China were read. Thus Fr Erdozaincy-Etchart became more familiar.

It was a beautiful day because the participants got excited by listening to the missionary audacity of a hundred years ago.

The two books by Fr Beñat Oy-hénart SCJ were also very successful.

The extraordinary film deserves to be presented in the various meetings that the Vicariate (but not only) will hold during the year.

It was a busy and enriching day. It was a very joyful experience to meet the great Erdozaincy family, the community of Saint-Palais, the Association of "Friends of Michel Garicoits", various diocesan priests, local people and families of our missionaries. ■

Fr. Magenties scj was appointed Vicar Apostolic there.

understand that in 2020-2021 meetings were rare, indeed non-existent.

And today?

Assembled in Yamoussoukro on 28 December 2021, the religious of the Vicariat of the Côte d'Ivoire decided to do everything they could so that, within the same Betharramite family,

drinking from the same well, religious and lay people, we mutually enrich each other and experience better the energy of the charism (cf Rule of Life number 3). We don't forget however that these fraternities bring lay people together: if we want to help them, it is for them to make their own decisions!

Onwards! ■



A beautiful story of missionary audacity of a hundred years ago...

A page in the history of Betharram was honoured on January 23 in Larceveau (France), 100 years after the departure of the three volunteer Betharramites for the new mission in Yunnan (a mountainous region in China, between 2000 and 4000 m of altitude).

This historic anniversary of the Betharramite mission in Asia was first marked by a mass celebrated at the Shrine of Betharram: Fr. Reegan Vincent Raj SCJ concluded the Sunday Eucharistic celebration with the presentation of some photos of the three missionaries and with the comment of

Fr. Pierre Fernessolle SCJ who had delivered the homily on January 22, 1922 the day before the departure of the three Betharramites for China.

While in Larceveau (birthplace of P. Pierre Erdozaincy-Etchart scj¹) Fr Laurent Bacho scj (Regional Vicar) presided over the Eucharistic celebration and gave the homily. Some priests concel- ebrated. Among these the head of the missionary delegation of the diocese, Fr Jean Michel Barnetche.

At the end of the Eucharist, a let-

1) In the centre of the photo, with his two mission companions, Fr. Etchart scj and Fr. Palou scj.

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in our community of Adiapo-doumé



temptation. The Spirit, on the other hand, asks for none of this. He wants us to cultivate daily fidelity and to be attentive to the little things entrusted to our care. How touching is the fidelity shown by Simeon and Anna! Each day they go to the Temple, each day they keep watch and pray, even though time passes and nothing seems to happen. They live their lives in expectation, without discouragement or complaint, persevering in fidelity and nourishing the flame of hope that the Spirit has kindled in their hearts.

Brothers and sisters, we can ask, what moves our days? What is the love that makes us keep going? Is it the Holy Spirit, or the passion of the moment, or something else? How do we "move" in the Church and in society? Sometimes, even behind the appearance of good works, the canker of narcissism, or the need

to stand out, can be concealed. In other cases, even as we go about doing many things, our religious communities can appear moved more by mechanical repetition – acting out of habit, just to keep busy – than by enthusiastic openness to the Holy Spirit. All of us would do well today to examine our interior motivations and discern our spiritual movements, so that the renewal of consecrated life may come about, first and foremost, from there. ■

(Continuation in the next issue)



...with Fr. Wilfred Pereppadan
& the Community of Nottingham • England

A pastoral and missionary experience of SCJ Community at Nottingham

Last general chapter in Paraguay invited all of us to reflect on the options for our SCJ communities to be upfront in missionary work for people on the margins. SCJ English vicariate after much reflection and thought made consultation to extend our wings in another diocese. In 2017, Mgr. Patrick McKinney, Bishop of Nottingham Diocese invited us through Fr. Austin Hughes our Regional Superior at that time to work in the Parishes of Corpus Christi, Clifton and Our Lady & St. Patrick's, Meadows Nottingham. They both are city parishes and also, they are home to vibrant, multi-national and growing congregations.

Our mission in both parishes involves first and foremost ministering to the spiritual needs of the faithful in our care and preparing individuals and groups for the sacraments. And also providing chaplaincy provisions for secondary schools and primary schools. During the

three and half years we have been in Nottingham, we have seen the encouraging growth and maturity in the Faith of parishioners, in an integral way, many of who have come forward to help us to establish our mission here in Nottingham. Before we came here, parishes and parishioners were going through a difficult situation because of the scandal created by the former parish priest. Our community mission here in Nottingham began with a short, and medium pastoral project by initiating and grouping the members for this new mission project.

In March 2018 we started with Fr. Wilfred and Br. Gerard to begin the project of pastoral care of the Parish. A couple of months later Fr. George Mathew joined the community and he also operated the Sacred Heart Mission Centre works for a short period. In October 2018, Br. John Dawson came to Nottingham to work in the parish and also as



The Betharramite Laity of the parish of Our Lady of the Poor of Dabakala, gathered in the MIGAN Fraternity (Here I am, in the local language), benefited last month from a teaching by Father Beñat, on the "place of the betharramite laity in the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram".

treats or any other means of spiritual, human and professional formation. They share this joy of life with others.'

What is done?

First response, without doubt the truest: whatever one can! And sometimes one can only do a little! It was all created in 1997 in Abidjan (Adiapodoumé) ; without doubt from the friendship of some religious with lay people. The other fraternities are more recent. Finding members in the immense Abidjan is surely easier than in Yamoussoukro and especially in Dabakala...

Pentecost 2019 : Dabakala welcomed, fraternally, a meeting open to all Lay People. During exchanges, particular features of each group were noticed ; consequently, and to ensure unity, it was decided that each fraternity should appoint representatives to

build a 'project of a Côte d'Ivoire Lay Betharramites Fraternity' ; that way no group will be above the others.

This was done in Yamoussoukro on 9th November 2019.

Then? It gets more complicated!

As for so many meetings, under the heavens..., the minutes were sent out late ; then, without warning, Covid-19 came along, with its lockdown... At the beginning of November 2020, in the Baoulé Country, around Yamoussoukro, the troubles of the post-electoral crisis of the last presidential election, prevented a return to the reflection of the year before.

Add other elements to that – the death of the leader of Né Mè, the retirement of the president of Miyè, the obstructions in Abidjan which made travel difficult and onerous, the increasing insecurity, etc – and you will



In Côte d'Ivoire, some 'Lay Betharramites' want to live in 'Fraternities'...

Fr. Beñat Oyhénart sej

They have chosen to call themselves 'Fraternities' and say 'Here I Am' in their local languages : 'Né Mè' in the South, in Greater Abidjan ; 'Miyè' in the Centre in Yamoussoukro ; 'Migan' in the North.

These fraternities are 'made up of faithful Catholics, baptised or on the journey to baptism, who desire to follow Christ by following in the footsteps of St Michael Garicoits'. Rather than 'Lay Associates', they call themselves 'Lay Betharramites' ; which is preferred as it makes a specific reference to our religious family...

To explain who they are, Lay Betharramites of the Côte d'Ivoire refer to article 3 of our Rule of Life : *'Through Saint Michael Garicoits, the Holy Spirit has also called lay people to live their baptismal vocation, enlightened by the charism of the Incarnation...'* and they continue : *'The Betharramite Lay Person must be a person of the 'Here I Am' (cf Heb 10, 7), of the 'What do*

you want me to do, Lord ?' (cf Ac 9, 6). He is in a perpetual state of offering ; he has a spirit of simplicity and discretion, the fruit of forgetting self, and he lives out the philosophy: *'Here I Am, Lord, without delay but without haste, without provision but without waste, without going back but without wilfulness, through love, to do your will.'*

The goal and the objectives of the Fraternities?

- 'The fraternities commit themselves to following Christ and to the school of St Michael Garicoits to share and live out the message of love through the virtues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Church and in the world.'

- 'Lay Betharramites desire, in union with the religious of the Congregation, to live in the light of the Gospel by taking inspiration from the model of life of Saint Michael Garicoits, through meetings, teaching, re-

a secondary school chaplain to St. Mary's, Leigh. In December 2019, Fr. Peter Phairote from Thai Vicariate came to us and helped the pastoral project until July 2021. The Nottingham Community recently welcomed Br Andrew as he moved from Holy Name in Great Barr. Br Andrew observed that moving on 5 January (Vigil of the Epiphany of the Lord) and arriving just in time for the evening Mass, felt as if he had been guided by the presence of a star, along with a warm welcome from Fr Wilfred, Br John and the Parish Community!

Br Andrew has spent all of his Religious Life in the West Midlands (the Friary Community, Solihull and Holy Name, Birmingham), before that living at home in Congleton, Cheshire; so moving to Nottingham was not only moving to a new Community, but also a new Diocese (Nottingham). He will continue to be Chaplain to the Catholic College of John Henry Newman, on a Monday and Friday to Chelmsley Wood (Birmingham).

From the beginning, the SCJ community started to share who we are, such as our Religious Vocation, Our Charism, Our Spirituality, Our

Congregation and St. Michael Garicoits. Pope Francis' words are true when we reflect back over these three and half years and more *"Wherever there are religious: there is joy"* (Letter to Religious for the Year of Consecrated Life II,1).

When we organised, our first SCJ meet and greet during the canonical visit of Fr. Gustavo Agin, our Superior General on 7th December 2018, it was a very beautiful occasion to share our Betharramite spirit of friendship to our mission place. The SCJ Vicariate Annual sponsored walk for Missions held in Clifton woods, Nottingham in September 2019 was very generously supported by our parishioners and this continues each year. It shows their willingness to be part of the mission activities not only in Nottingham but also our congregation missionary activities internationally. The past two years have been very difficult



for our pastoral ministry due to the COVID restrictions yet we were still able to connect with and contact the parishioners with the help of the volunteers through various projects such as food bank donations and Harvest Festival donations.

Since our small community lived its Faith quietly, especially to pray together and live together as members coming from different nationalities, it is a great witness for the evangelisation and our SCJ mission in Nottingham. It is a tremendous effort on our part to abandon self and move towards a witness-oriented pastoral mission of the community where we encounter and minister different nationalities and ethnic minority parishioners. And so, we discover that around every believer a little group gathers, grows and encourages one another. Our International nature of Congregation and our SCJ Community allows us to choose a missionary path to create an atmosphere for our faith sharing to those who are in our care. Since we are Betharramites, seeing that our charism impregnates structures of our Pastoral mission of our community.

SCJ along with the parish communities have started seriously our Synodal Journey called by Pope Francis. The outcome of the first phase of synodal reflection brought us working towards a Church that is inclusive and welcoming of all



people, that engages with local and global issues; that reaches out to exercise with compassion, justice and mercy to all. Our SCJ community is joined with parishioners to work towards this dream with the help of the Holy Spirit.

After these three and half years of our mission and our life in the community contrary to expectations, it persevered, discovered the true sense of Faith, and opened the way for forming the awareness of evangelisation and religious witness. In both parishes we have placed in a banner one of the sayings of St. Michael Garicoits, it reads, *"O my God, You have loved me so much!... You so much have wanted me to love you! Here I am, My God, Here I am."* May the faithfulness of God's Love continue to shape our community life in Nottingham so that we will be able to say Here I am whenever and wherever the opportunities arise. ■



Fr. Akhil Thykkuttathil,
32nd SCJ Priest of India

Fr. Akhil Joseph Thykkuttathil SCJ was ordained priest on 17th January 2022 by H. E. Mgr James Raphael Anaparambil, Bishop of Alleppey, at Our Lady of Health Church, Saude, in Kochi (India).

In his homily the Bishop said about the importance of becoming one with Jesus through the symbiosis of the vine and the branches. Being the member of a family which is very attractive and beautiful in its charism, he shared about the full potential of a Betharramite priest to become one beautiful branch in the Church. The only focus is to get deeper in the main branch of vine which is Jesus...

The duty of the priest is first to listen to what God says and then to do his will. That is the only and primary mission of the priest... and be faithful to it.

Representatives of the diocese attended the ceremony, as well as members of our Congregation: Fr Enrico Frigerio SCJ, the Regional Superior, and Fr Arul Gnana Prakash SCJ, Re-

gional Vicar, Fr Stervin Selvadass SCJ, General Councillor, Fr Biju Paul Alappat SCJ, who presented the candidate to the Bishop in the local language (Malayalam) and other Fathers of the Indian Vicariate and also Brothers from Mangalore and Bangalore formation communities.

On January 28th the community of the SCJ Formation House in Mangalore celebrated the thanksgiving mass of our newly ordained priest. The celebration began with a thanksgiving Eucharist presided over by Fr. Akhil Joseph himself. The Regional Superior, Fr Enrico Frigerio scj, the Regional Vicar, Fr Arul Gnana Prakash scj, the Master of Scholastics, Fr Vipin Joseph Chirammel scj and the Seminary Professor Fr Milton Jacob concelebrated with Fr. Akhil.

Also present were benefactors, teachers, sisters of neighboring communities and lay faithful.

After the celebration of the Eucharist, the feast in honor of Fr. Akhil began with a very rich program. ■