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A word from the superior general

Meet, listen, discern... together with Saint Michael and the mission of America

*« We ought therefore to be a mobile camp, of auxiliaries, unconstrained by any particular work, ready to go anywhere... »¹, “ready to run wherever we are called...”².»
(Rule of Life, 16)*

Dear Betharramites,

As I write this editorial, it is the 75th anniversary of the canonisation of our founding father: Saint Michael Garicoits, a saint who knew how to listen, go out to meet his brother, always ready to discern everything that God asked of him, to obey him out of love.

All congregations go through profound experiences of community discernment at a certain moment in their history. So with us. The paths taken by the religious family, once God's Will was discovered, were decisive in making his "Here I Am" more fruitful. Betharram, when she was docile to the call of the Spirit, grew and took hold, but she also experienced more

1) DS § 234

2) DS § 6

than one crisis when she became infatuated or closed in on herself...

As regards the "America Mission", this was accepted in a meeting that gave rise to a serious discernment, applying a very simple method: listen to everyone with respect and without prejudice. The founder, present there, was the guarantor of the work carried out, once again inspiring fidelity to the charism in those first religious who accompanied him.

On **October 15, 1854**, at 10.00 in the morning, Saint Michael Garicoits gathered in Betharram the assembly of some twenty Betharramites who made up the Congregation at that time and put them into a mode of communal discernment with this question:

Will the Society accept the Mission that has been offered to it of going to exercise the functions of Holy Ministry, which are related to its purpose, in the Diocese of Buenos Aires?

This is the serious question on which the Society is asked to make a judgement.

And, a little later, the Minutes of that meeting of the Assembly say:

The Superior and after him all the members present, one after the other and in order of seniority of profession, explained the reasons that could bind us to accept the Mission offered, as well as the reasons that could incline us to reject it.

After having examined the problem in this way and from all points of view,

the Assembly declared itself sufficiently informed and with the consent of all, a secret ballot was held, which gave the following result:

- **VOTERS:** 21 (twenty one)
- **IN FAVOR:** 20 (twenty)
- **BLANK OR VOID:** 1 (one)

Consequently, the Superior proclaimed that the Mission in the Diocese of Buenos Aires, in America, had been assumed by our Society.

Here we find several interesting elements that show the nature of the

spirit that moved the discernment led by Saint Michael Garicoits.

The record adds:

On October 17 around 5:30 p.m.

... Ordinary prayer was said and the minutes were read and approved.

The Superior informed the assembly that each member had the right to call for a re-vote during these three days and for a second and even a third deliberation on the matter covered by the minutes.

After which, the report of the 'pros and cons' commission was read, against which no objection was raised.

This is how the decision was made to undertake the so-called "America Mission", through serious community discernment. Even, as can be seen, they were invited to review what was decided and to deliberate freely and with (Ignatian) indifference, in order to later confirm the decision.

That gesture of synodality would bring many consequences. Those early fathers and brothers were not only boldly taking on a new mission, they were also saving the future of the congregation—albeit unknowingly—from possible demise. Successive institutional crises arose and years later the expulsion of all religious from France would also come.

On the other hand, imagine what it meant then to leave for the other side of the world. Leaving the homeland, family, customs, companions. The difficulties of that trip and those of the beginning of the mission were innumerable, in a Buenos Aires in turmoil, which was not then viewed as "the Queen of La Plata", but rather just a colonial port with an incipient town in a country crossed by political problems, of its own. of the American nations on their way to full independence.

However, the missionary ardour of the first years was stronger. The humble and obedient service to Jesus Christ in the person of the emigrated Basque people, and the dedication to education led those first "Bayonese" fathers and brothers (as they were called) to stand out in those fields. Pioneers in education during the first half of the 20th century, they trained those first generations of Argentines, Uruguayans, Paraguayans and Brazilians, founding educational institutions that still exist.

Many material resources also strengthened the empty coffers of post-

war European communities as a result of the work in those lands of Río de la Plata.

Native vocations arose, leaving Buenos Aires for the seminaries of Betharram, Bethlehem and Nazareth, until the second war forced the plan to be halted and a local seminary was opened.

After the creation of the Provinces in 1947, the European religious began returning to their home countries. In South America, the Vice-province of Brazil (1951) and much later that of Paraguay (1982) were created. The Second Vatican Council was followed by a vocational crisis that lasted for years, but we witnessed a discrete flourishing in the 80s and 90s up to the present.

Over time, some parishes were taken over and others were left behind. The religious presence in schools was reduced to a minimum. In 2009, Regionalisation took place to renew our religious family, rich in experience and in the fruits of evangelisation.

Today, we Betharramites are becoming younger in average age. We are becoming more polychromatic and multicultural, and we continue to be a charismatic and missionary proposal that works in four continents. In a time of major change, a new “kairos” challenges us in service.

We owe all this, in part, to that discernment of Saint Michael and his first companions.

The Church invites us to meet in a **synodal style** in the assemblies of all the countries of the world where Betharram is inserted. We are still like a planted seed that germinates and sprouts in the ground, destined to bear more fruit.

Also today, heading towards the Regional Chapters and the General Chapter, we have the opportunity to discern many things, to see to what extent the choices, orientations and methods of our various ministries remain adapted to the Mission that the Church expects of us.

Fr. Gustavo Agín scj

Superior General



Angelus

Saint Peter's Square, Sunday, 3 July 2022

[...]

It was the disciples' task to go ahead into the villages to prepare the people to receive Jesus; and the instructions he gives them are not so much about what they should say, but how they should be: that is, not on the "phrasebook" of what they should say, no; on the witness of life, the witness to give rather than the words to say. Indeed, he defines them as workers: in other words, they are called to work, to evangelise through their behaviour. And the first practical action with which the disciples carry out their mission is precisely that of going two by two. The disciples are not "free agents", preachers who do not know how to yield the word to another. It is primarily the very life of the disciples that announces the Gospel: their knowing how to be together, their mutual respect, their not wanting to prove that they are more capable than the other, their concordant reference to the one Master.

Perfect pastoral plans can be drawn up, and well-designed projects implemented, organised down to the last detail; one can summon

crowds and have many means; but if there is no openness to fraternity, the evangelical mission cannot advance. [...] The evangelising mission is not based on personal activism, that is, on "doing", but on the witness of brotherly love, even amid the difficulties that living together entails.

So, we might wonder: how do we take the good news of the Gospel to others? Do we do so with a fraternal spirit and style, or in the manner of the world, with self-promotion, competitiveness and efficiency? Let us ask ourselves whether we have the capacity to collaborate; whether we know how to make decisions together, sincerely respecting those who are alongside us and taking into account their point of view; whether we do so in community, not by ourselves. Indeed, it is above all in this way that the life of the disciple allows that of the Master to shine through, truly announcing it to others.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, teach us to prepare the way for the Lord with the witness of fraternity. ■



Societas Sacratissimi
Cordis Jesu
BETHARRAM

Superior General

Prot. n. MG 117 / EN / 2022

+
F V D

8 July 2022

For the attention of
**all the religious of the Congregation of the
Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram**

Subject: convocation of the ordinary General Chapter in 2023

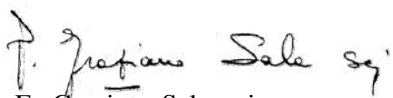
After listening to the proposal of the *Preparatory Commission* – appointed on November 21 [Prot. n° MG 164 / 21] in compliance with Statute 10 of the Rule of Life – about the venue and the date of the next ordinary General Chapter, and with the consent of my Council gathered on July 7th 2022 (cfr. RL. art. 205, a)

I CALL
the XXVIIIth ordinary General Chapter
from June 9th to 29th, 2023
in Chiang Mai, Thailand.


“the General Chapter [is] the sign of unity and charity for all religious of our Institute, it is an ecclesial event” (RL. 180).

I invite all the religious of Betharram and lay associates to pray to the Lord so that we may live this meeting of the Congregation guided by the Holy Spirit, in communion with a Synodal Church that proposes to us to "walk together" on the new paths of mission.

In Corde Jesu,

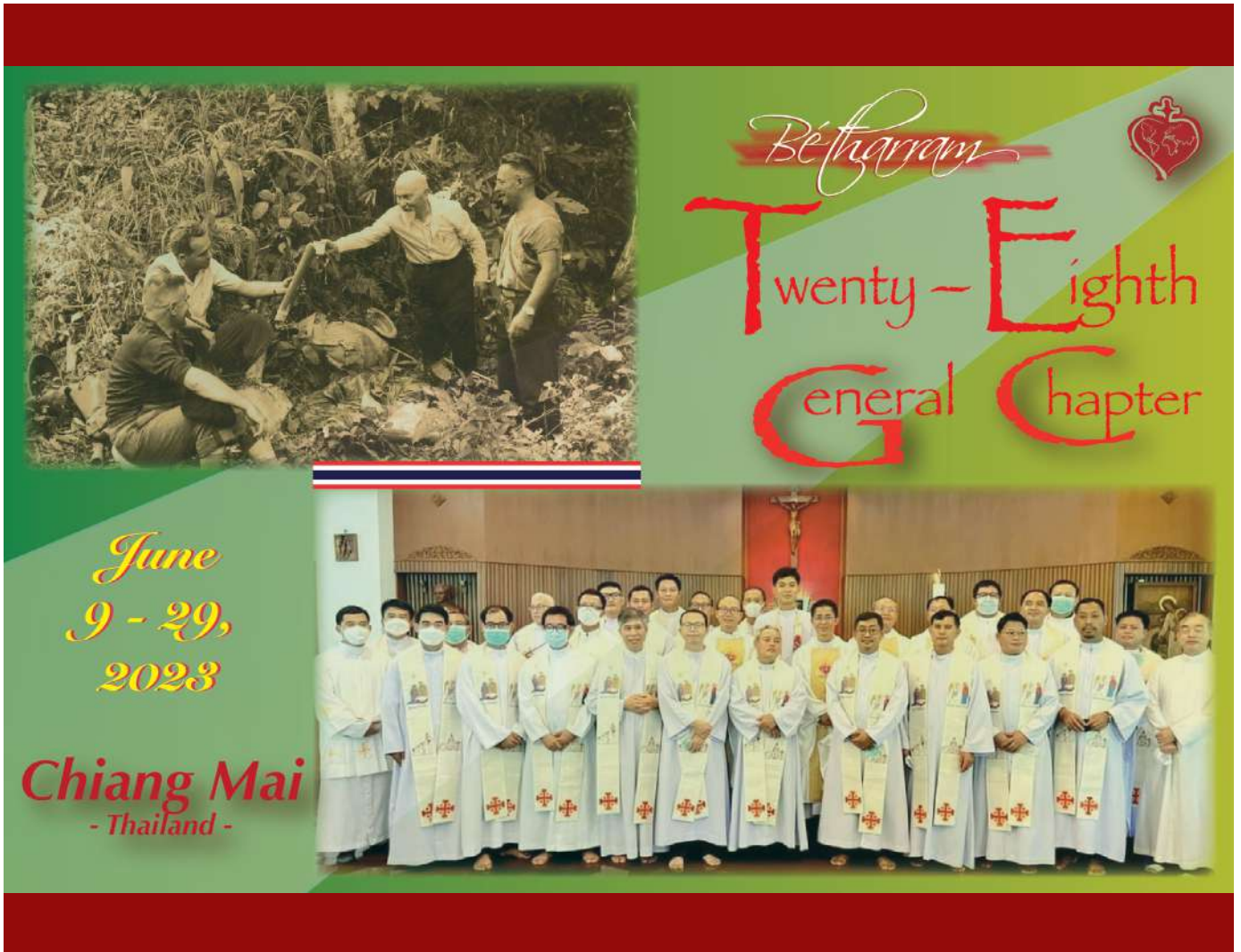

Fr. Graziano Sala, scj
Secretary General




Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín, scj
Superior General

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This document is addressed to all the religious of Betharram.



Some news that perhaps everyone has been waiting for is that of the time and place at which the XXVIII General Chapter of 2023 will be celebrated... It has now been agreed!

The Preparatory Commission for the General Chapter, after mature reflection, proposed to the Superior General and his Council¹ to celebrate the next General Chapter in the Vicariate of Thailand.

The recent canonical visit of the Superior General to Thailand

¹) The decision to indicate the place and date of the ordinary General Chapter lay to them, cf. RDV 205, a.

confirmed this proposal (which was ratified by the General Council).

But... why Thailand?

On the occasion of the XXVII General Chapter in Paraguay, we wanted to remember a group of religious who, in the month of August 1856, had left the security and family serenity of known places to go to the edges of the "new world". Betharram had responded generously to this great missionary call.

The same missionary spirit that animated the first sending to South America also characterised the

(more recent) missionary presence in Thailand.

The records tell us that Betharramite presence in Thailand stems from the expulsion of missionaries from China in the early 1950s. In 2021 we recalled the centenary of the missionary presence in China. From a project whose features had also taken on a dramatic tone (think of the imprisonment of some missionaries, including the Betharramite Bishop, Mgr Lucien Lacoste scj), a new life was born: the presence of Betharram in Thailand, which celebrated its 70th birthday in December 2021.

It is in this spirit that we have chosen to celebrate the XXVIII General Chapter in Thailand. Attention to this missionary spirit

which has characterised and still characterises our religious family is to be expressed in a gesture of gratitude for what the first missionaries did and above all for the work of evangelisation and human promotion that the Betharramite religious continue to accomplish today.

The seed sown seventy years ago in the soil of Thailand, bears fruit.

This is the dynamic of the Gospel.

There, we want to “meet, to listen and discern....together!”

Fr. Graziano Sala, scj
Secretary General

You may wonder...

what about the theme of the next General Chapter?

We know the venue, the date, but... what about the theme?

No. It's not an oversight. The path that communities, Vicariates and Regions are taking is a genuine synodal path. We listen to each other, to the men and women of our time, to the Church... to discern the choices that will shape the future path of the Congregation.

The Commission deliberately did not want to point to any theme just yet. They did not want to steer the path before time. On the contrary, they have decided to wait for what will emerge from the various meetings in order to come up with a theme that can express and recap at best what will result from reciprocal listening.

This theme will be identified and shared next year (2023) in February.



Community Meetings in preparation for the Assembly of the Vicariate

|
Fr. Ercole Ceriani scj

The Santa Maria dei Miracoli Community of Rome and the Community Villa del Pino of Monteporzio (suburb of Rome) met in a spirit of communion at the three Community Meetings planned for the preparation of the assembly. We gave ourselves up to the challenge posed by the three working sheets suggested by the General Chapter Preparatory Commission. Here is a schematic summary of the comments which arose therefrom.

1 - Meeting. A rich man ran after Jesus when He was just about to set off on a journey (cf Mk 10:17). Every one of us, in our own way, in our own personal circumstances, feels we are also "on a journey" - exposed to the occasional encounter, in a non-family situation, more often indifferent and sometimes downright hostile, where the encounter (including liturgical) takes the form of a first evangelisation.

If each one renews his openness to the possibility of encounter, we recognise that such an encounter needs to be recalibrated in the style of

the Master.

It is important to be able to do this, it was observed, not in isolation (acting alone), but with the support of a community (with someone else).

Insofar as the encounter between brothers is concerned, we noticed how new IT resources increasingly facilitated frequent contacts in novel and surprising ways and use thereof should be promoted, including within communities themselves.

2 - Listening. Our reflection focussed on the experience of listening to God (an experience judged arduous and incomplete). To welcome and make our own His plan for salvation is neither a given nor an easy task.

Indeed, tension remains between the feeling of personal fulfilment and the Lord's call. An underlying opposition, and difficult to resolve, between these two projects persists in the life of every one of us.

To understand following Jesus

as being merely a case for personal enhancement and human development is a misunderstanding that goes back to the first disciples and which endures (...what will be our lot? - Mt 19:27). Our plans pass before God's (... but first, let me... - Lk 9:61).

This constant (daily) risk requires an availability to listen which in itself amounts to continuing (daily) conversion.

This conversion does not so much require a change of course but more of taking a step back. For the disciple, it is not enough to recognise Jesus as the Son of God; He has to be followed (i.e. listened to) and not "taken aside" (Mk 8:32).

Sr Laura Mainetti: To convert is to change mentality: not just by renouncing the material things, but by detaching yourself from your own life, denying the self, renouncing defending oneself or speaking highly of oneself. Leave it to God to defend us, as did Jesus during His passion.

Listening is the very opposite of seeking, inventing, discovering new roles, for example, "what which would suit me best" ... (role - task - responsibility of the superiors).

Listening is constructing a way of belonging to Christ (= being a Christian) which involves new people, new relationships, new realities, which go way beyond the role, whatever that might be.

The disciple who listens does not

seek to promote himself or to defend himself.

The disciple who listens has nothing to lose.

Be Christian, not selling or promoting yourself, but being with, listening and allowing yourself to be saved by Christ. Make the thinking of Christ present in society (the world).

3 - Discerning.

In the guide text suggested ("Religious life: from chaos to Kairos"), our being Betharramite religious finds us very much a part of the "chaos" which for some time now has impacted and continues to impact on all forms of society as a whole (not just religious).

Let us take formal note: being part of a confused situation and of widespread disorder (of an epoch) means that there is no longer a case for laying blame, fault or responsibility at the feet of such and such a person or persons (brothers). We live a common experience. It is important to be clearly aware of such established facts from which there is no immediate way out and for which there are, it would appear, no tailor-made solutions but which most certainly are the heralds of change. It is important not to shut ourselves away in our stories, trials and tribulations but, on the contrary, we should stay continually alert and in listening mode.

In the first paragraph of the Codina proposals (Return to the littleness and minority of our beginnings), the following phrase stood out for us: "It is up to us to relive the littleness of the tiny

mustard seed and of the leaven". The words "it is up to us" gives the idea of constraint and absence of alternative: a bitter pill which the sick have to swallow. Lowliness and minority appeal to no-one. However, if not lived as an unavoidable "alas!" (a misfortune), but accepted consciously and serenely as a condition before embarking on a new path, the proposition leads to states of grace (be that only in immediately freeing us from the anxiety of success or the frustration of failure).

Indeed, in no way should the fact of being (Betharramite) religious come down to a problem of figures and even less to a problem of survival, as we are pointlessly and too insistently being reminded. Coherence with one's own faith cannot be reduced to a question of size or success. Nor even of roles.

In this context, St Michael's motto of "humble, content and constant" is only superficially banal, on the contrary, it remains full of meaning and currency.

The Betharramite openness to all types of apostolate (and thus to any type of role) has a meaning of which the significance seems to elude the majority: no route is barred.

To be a (Betharramite) religious is to be loyal to one Person, loyalty which goes beyond all "action". This destiny (this end-purpose) of the religious life cannot be changed or confounded with any other means, nor reduced to questions of mere roles, calculations, statistics, numbers, prospect or outlook.

Final Questionnaire

This provoked many reactions, of which three in particular:

- fundamental importance was attributed to the feeling of being part of a community; to the fact of striving to discard all forms of individualism; to the search for a balance between achieving something alone (not considered a good thing) and achieving something together.
- the promotion of mutual encouragement by all means, (matching the service performed), building up esteem and trust.
- a persistently defensive attitude was thought to be negative, stifling and fruitless and incapable of generating new ideas: maybe we don't need to do something new or something more, but rather find and adopt a new way of doing things. *We are lacking wings.*
- in the apostolic field, we ask everyone for greater courage and openness in how they relate to local Churches and other religious institutions.
- in all choices governing the managing of assets, we are looking for greater courage, clarity and freedom so as over time, to divest ourselves of all irrelevant ties and burdens.
- taking account of the complex and rapid developments currently underway in our contemporary world, it was thought right and proper to promote ongoing and periodical refresher courses for all religious (personal duty). ■



What I treasure from the past year with Fr. Etchecopar

...in a few words.

Discovering Fr. Etchecopar, through the reading of his correspondence was not easy. At times, I was in the presence of a verbose narrator in detail about landscapes, events and situations. A little further, I had in front of me a mystic given to flights of fancy, in which it was difficult for me to distinguish between the truth and the depth of an experience on one side and a kind of hallucination on the other. It also seemed to me that Fr. Etchecopar was changing his glasses and his viewpoint according to his addressees: to religious showing enthusiasm for their mission; to discouraged religious; to his sisters and other family members; to those he met occasionally during his travels. It was not easy, but it was exciting. | A. R.

Sanctity according to Etchecopar involves doing ordinary things right: doing nothing out of anger, avoiding hasty actions, be good and cheerful. | F. M.

I would just like to share this meaningful sentence to meditate on.

“Oh! when we look at our brothers and sisters in the Heart of Jesus Christ, who holds them, who loves them, who sustains them, who looks on them favourably and gives himself to them, then we can easily support them, we esteem them, we love them with a love that nothing can weaken.” (July 23, 1861) | J.-P. K.

“Anticipation and audacity”. This is what I learn from our father Etchecopar. | H. Y.

The peace of Christ! This year, the company of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar, allowed me to know him deeper. Indeed, I walked in his company with the book of the late Reverend Father Pierre Duvignau, entitled *The Man with the Face of Light: Father Auguste Etchécopar*. In my meditation on this book, I liked the fact that “before going to the novitiate to teach classes, Auguste Etchecopar used to go to the chapel to meditate a quarter of an hour before the Holy Sacrement”. This means that before starting any activity, he would put everything in the hands of God, and that what mattered to him was the will of God in everything.
| D.-B. C. S.

Very much attached to his family, Father Etchecopar tried to transfer this style of family affection into the Congregation. After the death of the founder, the latter had to face strong disagreements, some of which resulted in the departure of several religious. He is therefore the good saint to be invoked in difficult times, as ours is in many respects.
| R.B.

The year ‘Father Etchecopar’, launched by the Superior General and the Council of Congregation, ended on May 30.

The NEF, the official bulletin of the Congregation, will nevertheless continue to propose the writings of our second founder and the reflections of our brothers on his faithful and meaningful testimony.

This year, Fr. Etchecopar gently impressed himself on me as the equivalent, for our founder, of what Saint John was for Christ: the beloved disciple, who grasped the Master’s intuitions and pursued his mission, after leaning on his heart... | J.-L.M.

To be continued in September

Supplement of July:

Fr. Etchecopar confidant and secretary of Fr. Garicoïts

| Rev.Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

Soon available in pdf on www.betharram.net



Our roots

Fr. Mariano Surace scj

To return to the place where we were born, where we grew up, and where we learnt the most elementary things in life is something that revitalises us and connects us to the deepest part of our being.

In a book about the life of St Francis, I came across a sentence that speaks about the loss of naïvity of man and I have reflected a lot on this. It said that man was losing what connected him to natural and rural wisdom, contact with the Earth (and even more so in urban settings). In this simplicity is hidden our deepest roots and that is where the secret of our happiness lies. It is what I experience each time I return to our family home, or when I pass the house my grandparents used to live in, or when I go back to my childhood parish, or to my school. And at the time of writing this article, I am in Betharram, the birthplace of our charism.

Last April, I was invited to celebrate the Word at Our Lady of Carmen College, where I had studied. On 22nd May, a week after I was ordained to the priesthood, I had the opportunity to preside over the Eucharist for the first time in my childhood parish, next to my school. In the homily, I spoke precisely about the importance of origins. This experience left its mark on me since now, as a priest, I can be on 'the other side' to speak about God to make him known and to serve the people (which is what the word 'liturgy' means), serve these same people that allowed me to know God. A most beautiful way to return the favour. All this in the same place as I was baptised and where my mother, my uncles and my grandparents grew up as a family, and where my father now rests. This place and this district of Villa Galicia de Lomas de Zamora is the birthplace of my family and of my own life too. Not to mention the joy I feel when

a friend comes to ask me for prayer or to celebrate a sacrament. It is not just about remembering and enjoying oneself, but also about honouring, that is to say to look back towards the past which shaped what I am now.

That reminds me of St Michael when he said he had forgotten his origins as a shepherd and that he thought of himself as 'a somebody'. Now, I am touching on the origins of our charism, on the occasion of the International Session at Bétharram. A charism that I have been soaking up for a good ten years and, according to which, I devoted myself to God forever last year to live out the Gospel. Next, I will continue to go back towards my personal roots by visiting relatives of my maternal grandmother who live in Italy, where my mother was born.

What can I take from all this? Firstly, we must not forget our origins or our identity and we must respect them. For some, this will bring back bad memories, but our experience good or bad remains our roots and our story, and we have to welcome them.

And secondly, I think that pushes us to stop taking refuge in a den but to go out, to go to new horizons, following the example of Jesus who left Nazareth so that others could



*During the celebration of the Word in my former
highschool*

draw close to God, by means of our witness, like a tree that doesn't stop stretching and growing.

Everyone has a place, a district, a house... somewhere that embodies his/her birthplace. I invite you to 'look over' your origins and respect them. And as our founder teaches us, to do it in an incarnate way, wherever we are, and with humility, that is to say by touching the ground, the mud of which we are made. The roots of the tree are unseen but they are there under our feet. How good it is to give thanks for them!! ■

Talking about roots...

Since last Thursday 29 June, seventeen young religious have been living a meaningful experience in the footsteps of St. Michael Garicoïts, our Founder, in the 30-day International



Session. They come from the three Regions.

From Saint Michael Garicoïts Region:

Br. Emmanuel Agninam scj, Fr. Serge Appaouh scj, Fr. Landry Koffi scj, Br. Fulgence N'Guetta Oi N'Guetta scj and Deac. Christian Yao scj (Ivorians).

From Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region:

Fr. Mariano Surace scj (Argentine) and Br. Sergio Leiva scj (Paraguayan).

St Mary of Jesus Crucified:

Fr. Rawee Prempoonwicha scj, Fr. James Thanit Panmanikun scj, Br. Peter Phichet Wijunwayu scj, Br. Mathew Phanupan Shaichonsrijinda scj, Br. John Weerapong Youhae scj and Br. Nicolas Surasak Doohae scj (Thailand); and Fr. Joseph Akhil

Thykkuttathil scj, Br. Packiaraj Kurush scj, Br. Avinash Sahayaraj scj and Br. Pobitro Minj scj (India).

The animators of this experience are: Fr Stervin Selvadass SCJ, Fr Gaspar Fernández Pérez SCJ and Fr Simone Panzeri SCJ.

Other religious will speak during the session: Fr Laurent Bacho SCJ, Fr Jean-Luc Morin SCJ, Fr Austin Hughes SCJ, Fr Gustavo Agín SCJ, Superior General, and Sister Isabelle Lormon, Superior General of the Servants of Mary.

From Monday morning, July 4, to Wednesday afternoon, July 6, all the participants went to the Basque Country, with a heart full of enthusiasm and curiosity, to drink at the source where everything, for our Founder Saint Michael Garicoïts, began.

These three days were marked by a visit to Ibarre at the birthplace of Saint Michael, "Garacotchea", where a time for prayer and sharing, was followed by the Eucharistic celebration.

Then the group visited Oneix, where the celebration of the Eucharist was followed by a prayer around a cross illuminated by candles that each brothers placed after a thanksgiving in the very house of our Founder.

Finally the group went to Saint-Palais. The visit offered the opportunity to share with the members of the community (Fr. Joseph Ruspil SCJ, Fr. Arsène Noba SCJ and Br. Emile Garat SCJ) who are carrying out their mission there

and who live in the house of Fr. Etchecopar.

Let us pray for these young SCJ religious so that, while they joyfully experience the interculturality of our family, they may take in more and more the spirituality of Betharram.

(www.betharram.net) ■



Father José ROVEGNO scj

Rosario, 20 April 1932 - Buenos Aires, 12 June 2022 (Argentina)

Homily

for the burial mass of Fr. José Rovegno

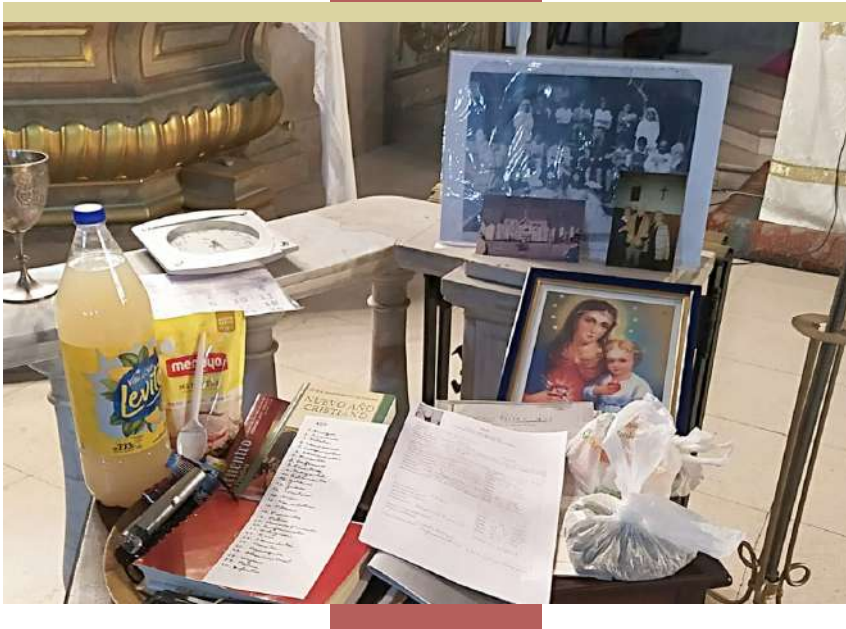
“... Yesterday evening, in the feast of the Holy Trinity, Fr. José Rovegno, religious and priest of Betharram, celebrated his Passover in peace. At the age of 90, he rejoined the Father’s House. Those who knew him understood at once why we proclaimed Saint Mathew’s verses 25,31-40 during the farewell mass. These are the words of Jesus which, with their lights and shades, always oriented Joseph’s life. *‘I was hungry and you gave me food ; I was thirsty and you gave me drink’*, our brother recited. To which he added: *‘At the end of our lives, we shall be judged on love’*. (Saint John of the Cross).

Joseph also often said: *‘The translation of the second commandment should be corrected in all the Bibles. Instead of saying : “you shall love your neighbour as yourself”, we should say “you shall take care of your neighbour”. For “to love”, it is a little abstract ; “to take care” is much more concrete’* ; He was very serious when saying this... To recollect Fr. José’s memory better, we have placed on a table the objects which characterized him most. Better than words, they illustrate what this Betharramite understood by



‘loving’ or rather by ‘taking care’. Let us see what José’s treasures were, one by one :

- Small bags of ‘yerba for the poor’ as he called it. He always kept a store of this typical Argentinian herb tea, ideal against cold and solitude, especially when one has no other roof than the top of a tree or the eaves of a building.
- ‘Flavoured water for Manuel’. Manuel has lived in the streets of our district for years, and Fr. José always offered him this drink. ‘If he rings, give him some Levité Pomelo’. It was Manuel’s favourite brand.
- Another little bag containing soap, a comb and a razor, for those who live in the street, so that they can wash themselves.
- A small bag of mayonnaise, with a plastic spoon fixed by a rubber band. Each week, Fr. José bought



endars. He used to put them in each room of the Community. Maybe they reminded him that time flies and must not be wasted. Moreover, every day, he prayed for a different intention. (He even made the saints pray for this intention). *'On the 1st, for the friends... on the 6th, for the unemployed... on the 19th, for the poor... on the 23rd, for the rich... on the 31st, for the prisoners'* (For

some bread for the poor, and so that it would not be stale, he toasted it on a stove in winter, or on the terrace in Summer. Moreover, he gave them mayonnaise to put on the bread.

- Photocopies, a lot of photocopies. I confess this devotion for photocopies was driving me mad, but for José, they were very important. During one of his last stays in hospital, he had explained to me that photocopies were his apostolate. A word can change a life or incite a person to reflect, he had told me with a light in his eyes. Then I had understood that each time José distributed a photocopy, he felt himself like Saint Paul announcing the 'Unknown God' to the Athenians. (Acts 17, 22-34).

- A book on the life of saints. *'Do you know who is the Saint of the day'*, he asked. He admired these disciples of Jesus, who lived the Gospel heroically, and found in them an example to follow.

- Clocks and photocopies of cal-

them, nobody prays, he said).

- At last, some things to sell, such as biros, paper fans and tea towels. He gave them to humble people, so that they might earn a meagre bank-note or a coin by themselves. His last will was transmitted to Orlando, a person he trusted in San Juan Bautista, by a nurse: *'Tell him to bring me tea towels'*. To whom did he intend to give them, we wondered?

This was Father José. So yesterday, at sunset, he would surely have heard, by the voice of Jesus himself, the thankfulness of the poorest in this town, whom he helped with devotedness, even when his strength abandoned him.

**Fr. Juan Pablo
GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ scj**



Children of Mary, what do you see on this altar?

Our Lady of Betharram, which means beautiful branch, raised by the faith of ancestors. Here is the legend of this expression so full of grace.

A young girl wanted to pick a flower on the steep slope of the river that flows in front of some deep, silent walls. Her foot slips, she falls, she is about to perish. But in her desperation she calls on the Most Holy Virgin. Mary runs up and holds out a tree branch to her. It was the lifeline of salvation. It was the “beautiful branch” of hope and of life!

Our Lady of Betharram, Our Lady of the Beautiful Branch, I beseech you, grant your sweetest smiles, your most motherly consolations and the most powerful help of your victorious arms, so that struggling against the torrents of the world and its passions, sustained by the tree of the Cross, [we] reach at last the firm shores of the blessed homeland.

Fr. Auguste Etchecopar, in « Sermon to the pilgrims of Marseille » (10 September 1882), illustrated by some of the drawings of the children who participated in the contest launched by the Region Fr. A. Etchecopar during the Year dedicated to the Servant of God.



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