



If, in the world, human interest or a passion for material things knows neither respite nor rest, and if, all your life long, you take the trouble to give yourself over to material things that can be carried away in a breath, what happiness we have in expending our lives in the ruthless acquisition of riches and glory that are permanent!!

Oh! let us redouble our zeal at the sight of the efforts of the children of the century!

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Let us blush with shame at the sight of them risking their very lives, sweating blood in the pursuit of their fragile crown; ut corruptibilem coronam accipiant, nos autem incorruptam ((I Cor 9, 25).

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Let's throw ourselves into our noble calling with the profound conviction that what we are going through is but little compared to the glory, the honour and the peacefulness of the invisible riches that are our rewards, even here on earth; and which can convert our paltry sufferings into immense consolations; for it is a fact of experience; while in the service of the world, pleasure brings its own sufferings, in the service of God, sufferings bring unutterable pleasures.

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And so it is that I hope that lit by these lights, full of ardour for our heavenly rewards, your hearts aflame with the deepest and liveliest gratitude towards Our Lord and His most Holy Mother, every one of you will compete to be the most zealous in carrying high the sacred Standard of Holy Obedience and in spreading the fire of love and charity of Jesus and Mary; this is what I will not cease from asking for you during this Lent, at the tomb of our venerable founder.

Fr. Auguste Etchecopar scj, from the letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, Betharram, 19 February 1883



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To become like Christ in death in order to go out together to pass life on

"As everyone was in awe of what he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 'open your ears to what I am telling you now: the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men.' But the disciples did not understand this word; it was veiled from them, so much that they did not perceive the meaning and they were afraid to question him about it."

(Lk 9:43b-45)

Dear Betharramites,

Lent has always been a time of repentance and fasting, of conversion and spontaneous giving up, more generous or less generous. We know that it's never an inconvenience even if it costs us to put on the brakes to enter into the Lenten desert. It's an occasion that we appreciate as a gift of the church, a sign of participation in the paschal mystery of Christ. That is how Pope Francis expressed it in his message at the beginning of this Lenten journey, coming out of two years of pandemic : 'Let's do all the

good that it is possible for us to do' in dying to sin, in renouncing Satan and the world, in order to give Life.

We have just spent two years practically locked up at home; we have recovered some strength and that has stirred up in us the desire to go out to communicate, to meet face to face with people. However, we also feel as if we have lost our apostolic energy and chances to serve. We would perhaps even be a little used to remaining installed in a ready-made furrow...

Today, we are challenged by the disaster of a senseless war which worsens the division between peoples, multiplies the suffering of the poorest, causes violence and death of thousands of innocent people. Old anxieties resurface and new clouds build up on the horizon.

Our faith tells us that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ never abandons his people, and we believe it because we have known the love God has for us through Jesus, humbled and obedient. His *kenosis* (from Greek: emptying) brings us towards the peak of the mystery, heals hurts and frees the heart.

This is why we have to seize the vital power from the cross during this Lent 2022 so that we can meet, listen and discern together the path to follow. Jesus freely offers us through it a conversion of the heart. We are convinced of one thing: if we die with Christ, we can go out together to pass on life. The death of Jesus allowed Life to reach us, as it's the biggest sign of the biggest Love. As pilgrims at the side of the people of God, we take the cross – which continues to have a liberating power - on our shoulders. Even if the secular world tries to throw it out from its contents, the cross of the Betharramite is always raised on the journey, like the Calvary Cross of Betharram was raised before the eyes of the simple people who contemplated the miracle with amazement.

The cross still frees from the fear of death, that fear that each person, even the disciple, carries inside and that we try sometimes to show by 'symbols of immortality'. 'For any man or woman, this symbol of immortality can be: money, power, success, celebrity, sex...; or still, at a level seemingly less suspect, work undertaken, personal services given, what we create or produce, the fruits of a commitment to others, children themselves, descendants... as

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

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council gathered on February 25th, approved:

- the **carrying out of the renovations of the Mother House in Bétharram** ("Monastère") (Region St Michael Garicoits/Vicariate of France-Spain);
- the **sale of a part of the House called "Saint-Michel" in Pau to the town** (Region St Michael Garicoits/Vicariate of France-Spain).

Agenda

Council of the Congregation/Preparatory Commission for the General Chapter 2023 : • Wednesday 16 March • Thursday 17 March.

Meetings of the General Council for the first semester 2022:
• Friday 18 March • Thursday 21 April • Tuesday 24 May.



In the Peace of the Lord

We express our condolences to our confreres who have lost a member of their family, whom we remember in our prayers.

Argentina: **Mr Antonio González**, father of Fr. Daniel González SCJ, Regional Superior of the Region Fr Auguste Etchecopar, passed away on February 28, in Buenos Aires.

Central Africa: **Mr Paul Yarkai**, 68, father of Fr Marie-Paulin Yarkai SCJ, of the community of Niem, died on March 1st in Bouar.

France: **Mr. Paul Hourcade**, brother of Fr Philippe Hourcade SCJ, of the community of Monteporzio Catone (Vicariate of Italy), suddenly died on March 8th.

We also mourn the loss of **Clare Webster**, who passed away on 22 February, at the age of 58. She was an active member of the Olton Parish and a faithful Companion of Saint Michael. She was always available to give her precious contribution for the English translation of the NEF. She was particularly enthusiastic to read and translate the texts written by Fr Etchecopar, who had become for her a real inspiration in this period of her life when the illness reduced her activity. Our thought and prayers go out to her husband and her three children. **May Saint Michael, Saint Miriam and Fr Etchecopar welcome her and make her feel part of the Betharram of Heaven!**



the meeting by inviting the religious to share news from each community.

Then the assembly entered the heart of the reflection starting from the theme "Encounter" as the first step towards the General Chapter of 2023. It was also an opportunity to continue the discernment on various projects including the renovation of the Saint Michael house, the Pau project and works at the Betharram Monastery.

The Assembly took stock of the activity for vocation promotion and of the administration of the Vicariate and of each community.

» After much effort, the **Barracas** community has inaugurated spaces for a new spirituality center and a retreat house, at the ground floor of the structures of the community.

With this initiative, the community intends to offer a new opportunity in the heart of the city, for those who want to meet Jesus in solitude and silence.

The retreat house consists of two large rooms, named after two titles of our Mother Mary: the Virgin of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Luján, the first being the Patroness of Latin America, the second of Argentina.

You can also visit the chapel, the park with the Our Lady of Bétharram and St Michael Garicoïts and large galleries.

The community hopes that these spaces will encourage many people to seize this opportunity to deepen their knowledge of Jesus!



if we could guarantee that we would never die and that we would continue to live a sort of life in a substituting capacity through those to whom we 'gave life.' (cf. Ernest Beckert, *The Denial of faith*, 1973).

As disciple-missionaries of Christ, consecrated or lay, we are not sheltered from this tempting illusion, and it is often more difficult for us to find the root of it. Temptations are at the base of self-reference. These 'little idols' as St Michael Garicoïts would say hold us by the ear and prevent us from offering ourselves generously and unconditionally to accomplish the will of God.

Disturbed by '*the thorn in our flesh*', which hurts us (cf. 2 Co 12, 7-10), we want the Lord to free us each year of certain things that we don't like in order to be 'more perfect' but in our own way. However, the Lord replies to us '*My Grace is sufficient.*' You have to go out to pass on the truth of the Gospel : without reservation, without delay, without conditions. I am sending you. Do not be afraid of '*those who kill the body but rather of Him who has the power to make you perish in Hell.*' (Mt 10, 28).

We Betharrmites have been called to proclaim the Gospel, though coated in our weakness, for in it, grace is already operating and the power of the Most High '*is demonstrated fully in weakness*'... the greatest love of the Father, as St Michael teaches, was

demonstrated at the lowest point of human weakness, namely the death of the Son. This starts with the incarnation, within Mary, but reaches its peak at Calvary.

Thus, the Heart of Jesus, spreading the mercy of the Lord that annoints, heals and frees, throws out to us that great invitation this year 2022: to accept us in our helplessness, and especially to accept the others who share this condition of weakness with us.

God wanted to let himself love by making Himself little, and that's how He loves us: 'little', 'submissive', 'constant' and 'ever joyful'. Let's try to listen to the beating of His Heart, to conform to His sentiments. If these are times when we obviously experience our weakness, let's do as St Paul who exclaimed in his 'Magnificat': *'Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ's power may rest on me... for when I am weak, then I am strong.'* (2 Cor 12, 9-10). Wishing you a good Lent - and forwards always!

Fr. Gustavo Agín scj
Superior General

present "in person".

During the meeting on Sunday 20, each one introduced himself by telling about his special bond with Betharram and asking questions to improve mutual knowledge. The key word that young people shared the most was **HERE I AM**, a word from St. Michael that touched them deeply and pushed them to come closer to Betharram. The meeting ended with the promise to meet all together in Lissone during the Easter period.

» On 21st and 22nd February 2022, Members of the **English Vicariate** gathered together at Shallowford Retreat House in Stone for the first theme of 'Meet Each Other' towards to the General Chapter 2023, by focusing on Pope Francis's words *Listening, Encounter and Discern* taken from his homily on 10 October 2021.

Fr Enrico Frigerio SCJ, Regional Superior, and Fr Wilfred Pereppadan SCJ, Regional Vicar, introduced the themes, with some reflections and questions. This was a great opportunity to reflect together as a Vicariate on the first theme. The members of the Vicariate present in the meeting expressed their concerns, challenges, strengths and weakness based on the theme.

» On 27 and 28 February the religious of the Vicariate of France-Spain gathered in **Bétharram** for their first Assembly of the year. It was a fraternal moment of reflection, discernment, prayer and conviviality. Fr Laurent Bacho SCJ, Regional Vicar, introduced





•\• **Some news** from the SCJ communities •/\•



» On the afternoon of Thursday 17 February, the community of the Scholasticate of the Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region, ("Sagrado Coração de Jesus") in **Belo Horizonte**, gathered to celebrate the Eucharist.



On this day, a special reason cheered everyone's hearts. After communion, Fr Eder Chaves SCJ, together with Fr Davi Lara SCJ, blessed the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Placed in the garden of the house, the image welcomes those who come to the formation house. It is also an invitation to prayer for the community.



May the Sacred Heart of Jesus continue to be the model and inspiration of the life of the religious of our Congregation, especially of young people in formation, as Saint Michael dreamed for our religious family.



» On Sunday 20 February, the meetings of the young Betharramite laity resumed via videoconference. The *Betharramici* of **Tuscany** met with the young people of the Parish of the Sacred Heart of **Lissone**.



The moment of exchange and mutual knowledge was prepared by the young Tuscans together with two aspirants and Fr. Simone Panzeri SCJ during an evening of conviviality to relaunch the beauty of being



•\• **A message from the bishop of Rome** •/\•



Homily (2nd part), **Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, XXVI World Day for Consecrated Life**

Saint Peter'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.

(continues from NEF of February 2022)

A second question: What do our eyes see? Simeon, moved by the Spirit, sees and recognizes Christ. And he prays, saying: "My eyes have seen your salvation" (v. 30). This is the great miracle of faith: it opens eyes, transforms gazes, changes perspectives. As we know from Jesus' many encounters in the Gospel, faith is born of the compassionate gaze with which God looks upon us, softening

the hardness of our hearts, healing our wounds and giving us new eyes to look at ourselves and at our world. New ways to see ourselves, others and all the situations that we experience, even those that are most painful. This gaze is not naive but sapiential. A naive gaze flees reality and refuses to see problems. A sapiential gaze, however, can "look within" and "see beyond". It is a gaze that does not stop at appearances, but can enter into the very cracks of our weaknesses and failures, in order to discern God's presence even there.

The eyes of the elderly Simeon, albeit dimmed by the years, see the Lord. They see salvation. What about us? Each of us can ask: what do our eyes see? What is our vision of consecrated life? The world often sees it as "a waste": "look at that fine young person becoming a friar or a nun, what a waste! If at least they were ugly... but what a waste"! That is how we think. The world perhaps sees this as a relic

of the past, something useless. But we, the Christian community, men and women religious, what do we see? Are our eyes turned only inward, yearning for something that no longer exists, or are we capable of a farsighted gaze of faith, one that looks both within and beyond? To have the wisdom to look at things – this is a gift of the Spirit – to look at things well, to see them in perspective, to grasp reality. I am greatly edified when I see older consecrated men and women whose eyes are bright, who continue to smile and in this way to give hope to the young. Let us think of all those times when we encountered such persons, and bless God for this. For their eyes are full of hope and openness to the future. And perhaps we would do well, in these days, to go make a visit to our elderly religious brothers and sisters, to see them, to talk with them, to ask questions, to hear what they are thinking. I consider this a good medicine.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord never fails to give us signs that invite us to cultivate a renewed vision of consecrated life. We need to do this, but in the light of the Holy Spirit and docile to his movements. We cannot pretend not to see these signs and go on as usual, doing the same old things, drifting back through inertia to the forms of the past, paralyzed by fear of change. I have said this over and over again: nowadays the temptation to go back, for security, out of fear, in order to preserve the faith or the charisma

of the founder... is a temptation. The temptation to go back and preserve ""traditions"" with rigidity. Let's get this into our head: rigidity is a perversion, and beneath every form of rigidity there are grave problems. Neither Simeon or Anna were rigid; no, they were free and had the joy of celebrating: Simeon by praising the Lord and prophesying with courage to the child's mother. Anna, like a good old woman, kept saying: "Look at them!" "Look at this!" She spoke with joy, her eyes full of hope. None of the inertia of the past, no rigidity. Let us open our eyes: the Spirit is inviting us amid our crises – and crises there are –, our decreasing numbers – "Father, there are no vocations, now we will go to the ends of the earth to see if we can find one" – and our diminishing forces, to renew our lives and our communities. And how do we do this? He will show us the way. Let us open our hearts, with courage and without fear. Let us look at Simeon and Anna: although they were advanced in years, they did not spend their days mourning a past that never comes back, but instead embraced the future opening up before them. Brothers and sisters, let us not waste today by looking back at yesterday, or dreaming of a tomorrow that will never come; instead, let us place ourselves before the Lord in adoration and ask for eyes to see goodness and to discern the ways of God. The Lord will give them to us, if we ask him. With joy, with courage, without fear. [to be continued] ■

•\• Year of Fr. Etchecopar •/\•

A message from the "Here I am" Fraternity Group in the Gironde, France, in this Year of Etchecopar, following their meeting on 4 February 2022:



We were most touched by the lovely letter which Fr Etchecopar wrote to Evariste, his brother (24 June 1852). How can one not be affected by Fr Etchecopar's lucidity... preparing as he was to give his life with happiness, joy and peace. "I ran towards my Lord, I have given Him everything... virtue is hard to achieve without suffering...". Auguste is very aware of the life-choice he is making and sketches the following portrait of a priest's mission "To be God's intimate friend, the repository of his powers, his representative and his minister to the people, his flaming torch and the representation and model of Him offered to the faithful of God's Holy Church."

It is as well to read such remarks, because we can be all too easily critical of certain pastors. They help

us recognise the greatness of the ordained ministry. They invite us to continue to pray for our priests whom the Lord supports and to sustain them in their vocation. Neither should it be forgotten that the Lord also calls us to a vocation of love that is specific to us. And we pray that He may help us discover this vocation deeper within our "Here I am" and renew it every day. We also wish to thereby render thanks to God, for all his blessings and above all for the people he places and has placed on our path to guide us towards holiness. ■

Supplement of March

Father Etchecopar, a man of love

| R.Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

Supplement of the NEF of March 2022 available in pdf on our website www.betharram.net

News points in the "Orientations & Guidelines"

THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF YOUNG RELIGIOUS AFTER THE FINAL PROFESSION AND THE ORDINATION TO PRIESTHOOD

The accompaniment of young religious must be a priority commitment, and it is a responsibility of the Regional Superior with the collaboration of his Regional Vicars, as requested by the Rule of Life in article 237/d: "Particularly accompany the religious in his first years after perpetual profession and priestly ordination".

Although Betharramite formators of all stages have been carrying out this work in a serious and systematic way - as requested by the Ratio Formationis and the documents of the Church (cf. *Vita Consecrata* 66 and *The gift of the priestly vocation*, RFIS 80-88)-, the implementation of this resource should not be interrupted by perpetual vows or priestly ordination, even if those responsible is changed or the religious leaves the house of formation.

ABOUT THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS DURING FORMATION

There are some criteria with which we want to accompany our young people in formation (they will be listed in an attached document), regarding to the use they make of social networks. Confronting them and evaluating their behavior, especially when they have to renew their vows, we will pay special attention to this aspect of the human dimension. If a person in formation has been patiently accompanied, confronted, admonished and corrected and is not able to make proper use of social networks, he cannot profess, renew vows or be admitted to perpetual vows. His choice for disorderly use would not be compatible with his choice for Christ and his Gospel. We all have to learn to donate us for the greater good.



...with Fr. Alcides Riveros Diaz scj and the community of Paso de los Toros

The Harbustan Project: a continuity project with the past

Looking back at the past with gratitude

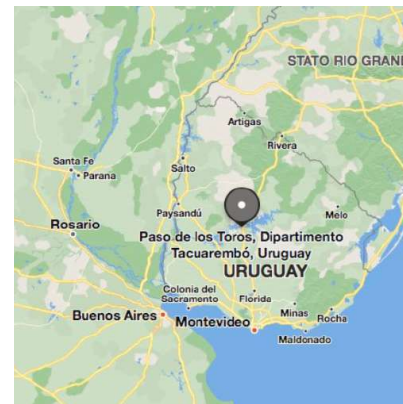
When the first Betharramites emigrated to Argentina, they had to stop in Montevideo. They stayed only a few hours in the city, but it did not take much more for Fr. Guimon to be fascinated and to dream of a foundation in Uruguay.

A few years later, this project was becoming a reality. Since then, there

has always been a Betharramite community in this country, the first place in Latin America that our religious set foot.

In the 1980s, Bétharram had three communities in and around Montevideo. Over time, the number of religious decreased. Thus, in 2012, there was only one residence in charge of the parish and the college of *Los Vascos* ("The Basques" in Spanish, because that was and still is how the Betharramites are called in Uruguay), under the responsibility of a single religious, Fr. Enrique Gavel.

At the Regional Chapter in 2011, Fr. Gustavo Agin, then Regional Superior, presented the "Harbustan Project"¹: the idea was to form a



¹) Jean-Baptiste Harbustan SCJ (1808-1873), who entered the Society at the invitation of Fr. Guimon on 23 April 1856, volunteered for the Mission of America and founded, on 1 March 1861, the residence of Montevideo, where he completed the Basque Church, started by Fr. Sarrote (Trappist, former missionary of Hasparren). On October 1, 1867, he opened the College of the Immaculate Conception.



regional community in Uruguay, with a strong missionary footprint, which was to work either in a working-class district of Montevideo or in a diocese in a rural area of the country.

In 2014, Fathers Gustavo, Daniel, Sergio and Ángel had several talks with priests and bishops to explain the project and listen to proposals. The decision was made to set up in the diocese of Tacuarembó, in the Barrio López, with 7 parish centres within a radius of 60 or 70 kilometres.

The first community was formed by Fr. Ángel Recalcati, Fr. Wagner Ferreira and Br. Victor Torales. The community project foresaw that the religious would provide funds to take care both of the College of Los Vascos and the faithful in Tacuarembó. Each

On the death of Fr. Didace Barbé in 1869, he was elected Vicar General by his fellow Religious in America. In this capacity he presided over the assembly of priests who, in Buenos Aires on 19 October 1870 and in Montevideo on the 27th of the same month, voted a petition to the Holy See in favor of the approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

month they would have three days of community life and prayer.

The pastoral work consisted of visiting villages, house by house, to arouse the interest of the people, to invite

them together to share moments of celebration. Little by little, catechetical centres were organized and, in some chapels, it was possible to set up bible courses. The chapel of the Barrio López, where the religious community resided permanently, gradually became a go-to chapel for several groups in the city.

Three years later, the proposal was made to leave this mission to take over the parish of Paso de los Toros, in the south of the diocese. This is an important parish, with several urban chapels and two rural chapels. Pastoral activities are well organized. Social pastoral care is gradually being strengthened. Close to the city, a large paper mill has been built. During the construction phase, thousands of workers from various parts of Uruguay and also from other countries were employed. Many of them come from India (the region of Kerala) and other parts of the world. Many of them faithfully participate in the celebrations and, despite

it was a moment to share about few challenges: Challenges in the affective area, Challenges of the media and social network, Formation in the area of promoting safe environment and care for minors and vulnerable people etc. We took this opportunity to review the guidelines and directives of formation too.

It was so evident that each formator is focused to take seriously the aspect of Accompaniment. It is to say that each formator or each formation house has a way, style and a strategy to deal with various matters of the formation. In all circumstances, we need to emphasize on the aspect of 'detachment' and on the value of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. When it comes to the discussion on social network and media, it is not a question to forbid or to permit or to turn back one's back to the social network and media. As they are called the means of communication, the question we ask, what does one communicate? Each one must aim at communicating one's faith, Gospel, life etc... It is not a platform for self-affirmation, self-projection and exhibitionism. Therefore, the need arises for the revival of the directives and guidelines of formation. We already have a finest set of guidelines and directives which needs to be taken seriously and to be implemented in our functioning. Then, there was a moment to plan for the international session which could take place this year. The

second day meeting confided itself to Mary with the prayer:

*Mary - at the foot of the Cross,
You are not discouraged - but
submissive,
and even happy to be there near to your
Son who suffers cruelly.
You are full of kindness even for the
executioners of your Son.
You do not complain,
you are happy that the will of God is done,
even though it makes you suffer.
Make us like you: beyond the sufferings,
make us to find in the will of God the
same happiness as you, Mary.*

(MS 306)

At the end of these two days of videoconferencing, we placed on records our sincere thanks for the total availability, generous sharing and kind service of all the members who are involved in this mission. ■

•\• **Betharramite Formation** •/\•



...with Fr. Stervin Selvadass sej
General Councillor for formation

SCJ Formation Team meeting

It was on 23 and 24 February 2022, the Betharramite Formation Team was gathered on Zoom videoconferencing with the same prayer of St. Michael Garicoits our founder & father, “O God, here we are... under the guidance of Your Holy Spirit, and of our superiors, under the protection of Jesus and Mary, our guardian angels and our holy patrons”.

This online meeting was attended by Fathers Gustavo Agín (Superior General), Jean-Dominique Delgue (Vicar General), Enrico Frigerio (Regional Superior of SMJC) Gaspar Fernández (France-Spain), Simone Panzeri (Italy), Glecimar Guilherme da Silva (Brazil), Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo (Ivory Coast) and Kriangsak Luke Kitsakunwong (Thailand). Scholastics masters Fathers Vipin Joseph Chirammal (India), Davi Lara (Argentina) and Sa-at (Vietnam) were invited to participate in the meeting.

It was a moment of fraternal sharing and briefing about our life lived in the respective missions.

Each scholastic master was asked to prepare and present in brief a short picture of our formation houses in all the three regions. As they presented the reality, our hearts were filled with real happiness for all God’s blessings especially for the 96 young brothers in formation in the Congregation in spite of the difficult moments of the pandemic. Thanks be to God & our sincere gratitude to all those who involve in the formation of the young. All expressed their joy as they shared about the restarting of the schools and colleges. After almost two years of pandemic lockdown, we are back to our normal life-style. There was another blessing to count from Italy as Fr. Simoné shared about 2 aspirants at Pistoia. The scholastics masters also shared about the way the preparation for the final vows is going on in each vicariate. Then,

the difficulty of the language, have gradually participated more.

In 2019, the bishop, His Excellency Monsignor Pedro Wolcan proposed that we take responsibility for two other parishes, also in the south of the diocese: Achar and San Gregorio Polanco. The condition was that the bishop accept the appointment of Br. Cristian as head of these two new parishes. The Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region accepted this new challenge. In the beginning, the community was formed by Fr. Éder of Brazil, Fr. Alcides and Br. Cristian of Paraguay. In 2021, Fr. Éder returned to Brazil and Fr. Angelo came back to Uruguay to complete the missionary community.

Living the present with passion

The community currently resides in Paso de los Toros. On Thursdays, Br. Cristian goes to San Gregorio accompanied by Fr. Angelo or Fr.

Alcides to ensure the celebration of the sacraments.

The mission requires a “going out”, not only a geographical move, but above all a real internal exodus, during which we go through different stages. We must reconsider what gives us a sense of security. We must review our convictions and certainties, and then embody a new ecclesial reality. It is a demanding process, but we also felt that it was necessary and urgent to reformulate our symbolic imagination. That is, to reorient, to give meaning to our presence as Betharramites in the Church and in the world.

Perhaps the hardest thing was to abandon the “asymmetrical comparisons”, which lead us to think that the best thing is “my language”, “my culture”, “my roots”, “my ecclesiology”, “my way of knowing God and others.” This “crossing” was not easy to achieve and we had to change the “software”. Now, with



Parish Council at Paso de los Toros

joy and gratitude, we recognize that it was a time of *kairos*, of learning, of growth, which made us understand that it is worth living in the logic of trust.

On the other hand, the mission in these "charrúas lands"² is an experience that encourages us to seek the essential in following Jesus, to dream of a less hierarchical Church and to try to live a more synodal pastoral life... A clear example is the experience of Br. Cristian: having him as an example (specifically, as a "parish priest") in two parishes implies an "ecclesiological inversion", which helps us to combat dominant clericalism and to see on the horizon a more synodal pastoral plan, in which the ordained minister (priest) no longer has the monopoly of the final decisions, which end up being taken by the whole parish community.

The mission in Uruguay is not the most rewarding (we do not want to delude ourselves and say that it is the best mission of the Region), but we want to draw something positive from it: the mission in Uruguay is a fertile ground that can serve as a "compass" to look to the future with hope. Uruguayan ecclesiology has taught us to dialogue with a diverse society, rich in multiple references. This particular Church has made us understand that secularization strongly permeates this land but that it is not in opposition to faith. On the contrary, we believe,

²) the name of the indigenous people who once occupied the present territories of Brazil and Uruguay.

we are convinced that it offers a unique and wonderful opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to the world that is preparing itself ...

Not everything is jubilee and positive results in the mission. In our pastoral activities, which cover a radius of 150 kilometres, we try to reach the "non-places" (cf. Marc Augé), that is to say, coming out of the walls of churches and chapels to be present to the most vulnerable people who expect from us a silent companionship, without wanting anything in return.

In this process, we realized that without the laity, mission is fiction. This society challenges us to know how to remain within the framework of our institutions, trying, for example, to avoid, in catechesis, having the sacraments as our main objective and to promote more widely the experience of the God of Jesus Christ, who is love.

Embracing the future with hope

The million-dollar question: is the mission on Uruguayan soil worth carrying out? Jarabe de Palo³ would say to us: *'Depende ¿de qué depend? Del punto de vista, de como se mire; todo depende'* (l.t.: It depends. On what? On your point of view, everything depends on the way you see things; All depends). Answering this question will help us identify our starting point.

³) a Spanish Latin rock band, from 1996 to 2020.



Youth Pastoral

If we consider the mission of Uruguay from the top of a more traditional pedestal, that's to say, by targeting a large number of faithful, a mass religion, of large processions, many children, adolescents and young people in our parish centres, seeing them as good vocational "harvests" for our institution, speaking of the conversion of sinners, of God and Jesus, to fight with (or to look with envy at?) other Christian churches... if this is what we expect from the mission in Uruguay, our presence in this country has no meaning.

But, if we consider the mission in the perspective of an active and effective presence in a post-Christian society, I believe that it can serve as a beacon for us to illuminate the path we want to follow at a moment of changing times. To dialogue with a plural and multi-religious world, we must renounce our false security and be humble companions on the road of a society that demands witness and hope.

We need a pastoral role that is free from the one goal of the sacraments, a pastoral care that is able to dialogue with the person who comes to our door from no one knows where. We need a pastoral care that considers the world as the space of the Incarnate Word.

In the Region of Fr. Auguste Echécopar, the mission of evangelizing not from works but from our lives needs to be deepened. That is why we believe that the future of the mission in Latin America is in the hands of the new generations. May we, in synodality, look together with the young religious towards a new model of the Church, which we would like to take on and embody as true missionary disciples. ■