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A word from the superior general

The synodal pathway demands wisdom

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. (James 1. 5-6)

Dear Betharramites,

We live in times of synodality. The Church insists on this issue. In our communities, assemblies and chapters, we meet, to listen to each other and discern together the path to follow in the coming years. It is not an easy road, and we are at the beginning.

In the previous editorial it was proposed that we *embrace our vulnerability* to let the Spirit speak in us and live a process of transformation of our religious and Betharramite life.

Today we will see -*following an article by Dr. Jessie Rogers, Dean of St. Patrick's College Maynooth, a specialist in Sacred*

Scripture, especially in Wisdom Books- that all this requires Wisdom. We Betharramites are called to act with wisdom. Wisdom, in fact, embraces the best goals and chooses the best paths to achieve them. It is what St Michael wanted from us.

According to Dr. Rogers, there are two practices that are especially important for synodality to express "wisdom":

1. To know when to speak and when to remain silent;

2. To practice hospitality.

We read these days during the liturgy of the Mass: *"There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven:... a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking."* (Eccl 3.1,7b).

Know when to speak: Wisdom consists in always knowing the right time. The synodal journey is a time of connection, of listening, of discernment and of speaking our truth with courage. But the time for speech is the time that follows deep listening. It is when we open ourselves to the other even if this means showing our vulnerability. When we speak honestly, our presence becomes authentic. Choosing the right time to speak allows our voice to place the perspective of the excluded at the centre. We must not forget to oppose the oppression or neglect of the weakest. That is why it is important to know when to speak.

The wrong time to speak: it is precisely when we speak without first having listened. It is about listening first to God, to ourselves (sincerely) and to others. Foolish speech comes from thoughtlessness but also from self-sufficiency, when we think we know everything and have nothing new to learn. *Scattergun words* can be a way of smothering in the other what we don't want to hear..., because we are arrogant or fearful, or maybe both. *The right word*, on the other hand, said at the right time creates the possibility for connection. It is a spark of the Spirit.

And silence? To remain silent when we should speak is to reject the

encounter (the connection) or to deprive others of our personal and unique insight. When a perspective on a complex issue is not heard, community discernment toward a solution can be unbalanced or incomplete. (It is often the case that we have to ask ourselves in our meetings and assemblies: that brother... why does he not speak?.... Keeping silent at the wrong time can allow evil to flourish. It can also deprive those in need of a voice to defend them. Correct silence, on the other hand, is at the service of attentive listening. It creates a space for everyone to understand each other, become and grow. Attentive silence is an act of hospitality.

Hospitality: it is a properly evangelical characteristic, especially when it is addressed to those who are foreigners or those who are passing through (Rom 12.13; Heb 13.2) Jesus is a guest and a pilgrim. He makes himself the companion of all, and makes room at the table for sinners and publicans. Therefore, «hospitality» is not only feeding the foreigner, but allowing them to occupy a space in our lives. Hospitality should be humbly received as well as offered. Recognizing ourselves as vulnerable, we realize that we all depend on the radical hospitality of others. This is how Jesus sent the 72 disciples, telling them not to take anything for the trip and to stay wherever they are received (Lk 10) Precisely for this reason, *hospitality* reminds us that *we are not self-sufficient*, it helps us *overcome division and isolation*. Hospitality is essential to synodality because it creates possibilities for transformation through encounter.

The synodal path will be long and arduous. We count on each other. On the other hand, although times change radically, it has always been this way in Betharram, because it is a small family. From the beginning, Saint Michael Garicoits, accepting that he was vulnerable and seeking the wisdom of the Spirit in everything, in imitation of an humbled and obedient Jesus, permanently offered himself to the Lord to choose the right path together with his brothers. He did not stop listening to the Bishop (who was opposed to his work) and attentive to the needs of society he deserved to patiently transform his intuition into mission.

His holiness of life was always the key. We can also imitate his example, although it seems difficult to resemble him in his multiple virtues.

Fr. Etchecopar said of him:

What wisdom was needed to conceive such a plan and strength to execute it and bring it to a successful conclusion!

How difficult it is, indeed, to transform the intelligence of enlightened people, of theologians, to the point of reducing them to the humble simplicity of the children of the Gospel!

How difficult it is to transform strong and generous wills, to the point of keeping them equally distant from the impulses of indiscreet zeal on the one hand and the hesitations of excessive prudence on the other!

How difficult it is among so many different characters and temperaments to establish one and the same spirit, so well balanced, that in all things obedience rules charity and charity animates obedience, in such just measure that there be no illusion in piety, no excess in good!

And yet, this sublime goal, the Founder pursued it until his last breath.

(Circular letter, 15 May 1890).

Becoming a Synodal Church today means that for us Betharramites that we journey together, open ourselves to others, listen and speak, reflect and discern and take steps together. The Lord invites us to walk, moreover, with all of creation, while we co-create the future, that is, God's dream for the world.

Let us dare to tell him *Here I am!*

P. Gustavo Agín scj

Superior General



General Audience • Catechesis On Discernment (3)

Saint Peter's Square, Wednesday, 28 September 2022

Familiarity with the Lord

[...] The theme of discernment is very important in order to know what is going on within us. To know about our feelings and ideas, we have to discern where they come from, where they lead me, to what decisions – and today we focus on the first of its fundamental elements, which is prayer. To discern we need to be in an environment, in a state of prayer.

Prayer is an indispensable aid for spiritual discernment, especially when it involves the affective dimension, enabling us to address God with simplicity and familiarity, as one would speak to a friend. It is knowing how to go beyond thoughts, to enter into intimacy with the Lord, with an affectionate spontaneity. [...] True prayer is familiarity with and confidence in God. It is not reciting prayers like a parrot, blah, blah, blah, no. True prayer is this spontaneity and affection for the Lord. This familiarity overcomes fear or doubt that his will is not for our good, a temptation that sometimes runs through our thoughts and makes our heart restless and

uncertain, or even bitter.

Discernment does not claim absolute certainty, it is not a chemically pure method, it does not claim absolute certainty because it is about life, and life is not always logical. It has many aspects that cannot be enclosed in one category of thought. We would like to know precisely what should be done, yet even when it happens, we do not always act accordingly. How many times have we, too, had the experience described by the apostle Paul, who says: *"For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want"* (Rom 7:19). We are not just reason, we are not machines, it is not enough to be given instructions to carry them out: the obstacles, like the supports, to deciding for the Lord are primarily affective, from the heart.

It is significant that the first miracle performed by Jesus in Mark's Gospel is an exorcism (cf. 1:21-28). In the synagogue at Capernaum he delivers a man from the devil, freeing him from the false image of God that

Satan has been suggesting since the beginning: that of a God who does not want our happiness. The possessed man in that passage of the Gospel knows that Jesus is God, but this does not lead him to believe in Him. In fact, he says, *"Have you come to destroy us"* (v. 24).

Many people, even Christians, think the same thing: that is, that Jesus may well be the Son of God, but they doubt that he wants our happiness; indeed, some fear that taking his proposal seriously, the one Jesus proposes to us, means ruining our lives, mortifying our desires, our strongest aspirations. These thoughts sometimes creep up inside us: that God asks too much of us, we fear that God asks too much of us, that he doesn't really love us.

Instead, in our first encounter we saw that the sign of the encounter with the Lord is joy. When I encounter the Lord in prayer, I become joyful. Each one of us becomes joyful, a beautiful thing. Sadness, or fear, on the other hand, are signs of distance from God: *"If you would enter life, keep the commandments"*, Jesus says to the rich young man (Mt 19:17). Unfortunately for that young man, some obstacles did not allow him to implement the desire in his heart to follow the *"good teacher"* more closely. He was an interested, enterprising young man, he had taken the initiative to meet Jesus, but he was also very divided in his affections. For him, riches were too important. Jesus does not force him to make up

his mind, but the text notes that the young man turns away from Jesus *"sad"* (v. 22). Those who turn away from the Lord are never happy, even though they have an abundance of possessions and possibilities at their disposal. Jesus never forces you to follow him, never. Jesus lets you know his will, with all his heart he lets you know things, but he leaves you free. And this is the most beautiful thing about prayer with Jesus: the freedom that he allows you. On the other hand, when we distance ourselves from the Lord, we are left with something sad, something ugly in our heart.

Discerning what is happening within us is not easy, for appearances are deceptive, but familiarity with God can melt doubts and fears in a gentle way, making our lives increasingly receptive to his *"gentle light,"* according to the beautiful expression of Saint John Henry Newman. [...] To be in prayer does not mean saying words, words, no: being in prayer means opening my heart to Jesus, drawing close to Jesus, allowing Jesus to enter into my heart and making us feel his presence. And there we can discern when it is Jesus and when it is us with our thoughts, that so many times are far from what Jesus wants.

Let us ask for this grace: to live a relationship of friendship with the Lord, as a friend speaks to a friend (cf. St Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 53). ■



*...with Fr. Beñat Oyhenart
& the community of Dabakala • Ivory Coast*

**Building a welcoming
community that is a good
place to live**

1959: Betharram arrives from the North in the Ivory Coast, to the Diocese of Katiola and the town of Ferké.

1966: We move on to Katiola.

1982: We go further East to Boniéré and Dabakala. “For a funeral” predicted many specialists. With God helping, it had been a planting and the seed sprouted! From there, Betharram saw a new branch, its African branch!

In the Central North of the Ivory Coast, the region of Dabakala is the largest of the country: 9,650km². The parish of Our Lady of the Poor covers seven of its ten sub-prefectures: it is very probably the most stretched in the country... the distances are great: and only twenty kilometres of roads are asphalted; the tracks, poorly maintained, are sometimes atrocious in the rainy season.

The population is essentially rural: the Djiminis and the Djamas are the indigenous peoples; more and more

Lobis live among them; and also some Burkinabès or some Sénoufos from Korhogo in search of rich lands that they no longer have at home. Their basic crops are yam, corn, peanuts and rice. Cashew nuts have been installed as an income crop and have allowed an improvement in housing and standard of living. Distribution networks are being organised: yam towards Burkina, semolina towards Abidjan.

New attraction: gold! The region is familiar with the rush for precious metals: often clandestine, native and non-native alike become gold panners; to the detriment of work in the fields; bringing its share of shady activities. A factory is installed at Lafigué, to the far west of the parish.

Today, most of the villages are connected to the electricity network. For water, wells and drilling sites are more abundant. Nearly all the villages have their own primary school; some “local secondary schools” are set up by area.



The urban population is small: according to the census of 2014, there are 15,000 inhabitants in Dabakala; one village alone has 4,000 inhabitants; all the county towns are below that; with 700 inhabitants, Yaossédougo is a sub-prefecture awaiting a deputy prefect... if small businesses and cottage industries are developed in the villages and health centres in the larger places, the town of Dabakala remains the largest exchange point with everything converging there for the Wednesday market.

Originally, the Djiminis and the Djamalas are of an animist tradition. Certain villages have almost entirely converted to Islam: the term "dioulasso" is added to their name. As for the Djamala people, they are considered to be Muslim. The Catholic Church came by Boniéré in 1936: Dabakala withdrew from it in 1962; the other parishes in the area in 1972 and 2020. The Baptists came to Dabakala towards 1950. Many other evangelical churches were set up in the town. Relations between

Christians seem better than in the past: mixed marriages are not rare. If Islam is more visible – there are mosques everywhere – if they seem on occasion more aggressive, yet certain Muslims choose to become Christians; others allow their children to ask for baptism.

And our community?

This year 2022-2023, there are four of us: Fr. Marius (Superior and Parish Priest), Fr. Valentin N'Guessan N'Zoré, Fr. Beñat Oyhenart and Fr. Vincent de Paul Worou.

Our mission starts with building a community that is a good place to live; brotherly communion, praying together and apostolic life, following the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the source of our Betharramite identity.

Our apostolic mission is essentially that of the Our Lady of the Poor Parish with:

- Its numerous communities dispersed in a large territory;
- Chaplains from various movements, associations and

- groups;
- Facilitation of a centre for secondary school pupils and sixth formers;
- Caring for people who come to the residential facility or the Marian Sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of the Poor;

We welcome the laity, particularly those who want to drink from the same Betharramite well;

The Migan fraternity gathers together a dozen people, participating in the Parish activities and the life of Betharram Ivory Coast.

We promote and encourage all vocations. And we accompany those who want to share our religious life.

And at the beginning of this pastoral year 2022-2023, what are our plans?

To start off, we have chosen to visit Christian leaders and catechists of all the communities in the villages, area by area. For seven consecutive days, the four of us have together listened to their expectations and their grievances: a better formation

programme for the baptised and catechumens, for the catechists firstly, a greater presence amongst them; more masses on Sundays rather than through the week. We have appreciated the forged links between Christian communities in the same area. We have still to see how, concretely, we could respond best. Already, in everyday language, the word "parish" refers to the town and its community; everyone has understood that each Christian community is part of the same parish, as much worthy of care as all the others...

After the start of the diocesan pastoral year – in the first week of October under the leadership of the Katiola diocesan administrator – we resume the same contact with the Christian communities, movements and associations of the town.

May Our Lady of Betharram and our father Saint Michael Garicoïts help us to be faithful to our religious mission of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in each of our personal lives just as in our community life. ■





Meetings of young people in Argentina

Fr. Mariano Surace scj

On the weekend of 16 to 18 September, the meeting of young Betharramites from the Buenos Aires region took place in the sports field of the "San José" College in La Plata (Province of Buenos Aires). For this meeting the young people of the educational community of Barracas, of the missionary group of the "San José" College in La Plata and the young people of the Adrogué chapel were mobilized.

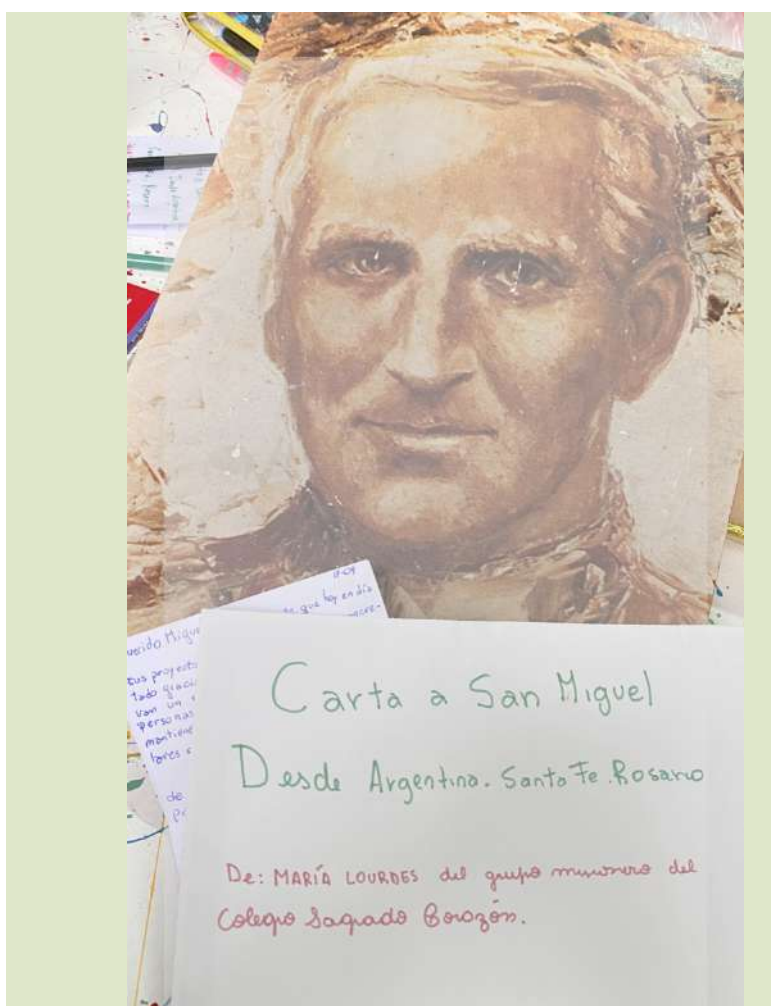
Overall, 65 young people participated in the meeting, which began on Friday evening 16 September with a welcome and an activity. On Saturday 17 September, an activity on gifts and limits took place with the help of a short film in the light of the Gospel. In the afternoon, in addition to the free time that was used by young people to play sports or for a chat, games were proposed to help

integrate what they had worked on. Subsequently we worked on a story that would invite you to «fly» with your own identity and vocation. The day ended around the bonfire and with a karaoke competition. The Sunday theme had mission and community as its object. The young people then celebrated the Eucharist together. Also in the city of Rosario, the same day a camp was organized with the missionary youth group at the Collegio Sacro Cuore. The camp began with a dinner with «asado» with the group of parents of the College called «Papuchos» during which testimonies of missionary life were shared. The boys stayed overnight at the *Sagrado Corazón* College, and the following day they started with some games to then focus on reflection and training, getting to know the life and work of our Founding Father. They composed a kind of Via Crucis,



but with the life of St. Michael, in which they reflected their own life with that of our holy Founder. Through the different stations, they traced a path that went up to the meeting room, which is the highest point of the College, comparing it to the sky that San Michele wanted to reach. While doing an analysis of the various stages of their life, the children experienced all kinds of emotions and remembered their own stages in life. It was a very emotional experience, with a lot to be thankful for. And to conclude, everyone wrote a letter to Saint Michael, telling of the fruits of the tree he planted and that he never knew in life: but which undoubtedly today is an example for them to follow and an engine that drives them to be missionaries and put everything at the service of others. There is young life

in the Church and in Betharram. This encourages us and confirms us in our mission to accompany the younger generations! ■





A journey towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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Br. Fulgence N'Guetta scj

My name is Fulgence N'Guetta. I am 37 years old, from the Ivory Coast and the eldest of seven children whose father died too soon. I encountered Christ at a prayer vigil led by the exorcist of the diocese of Abengourou. This is where my desire to be a priest was born.

After my baccalaureate, I was filled with many questions. In a dry world scarred and wounded by pride, in search of happiness, the appeals of men and women may not have been so strong. Who would respond to their cries? Certainly not atheism, nor sects, nor the powerful of this world, much less the lust for glory that drives them. Must they not return to the great mystery of the Incarnation: God made man? No path can lead them there faster than that of the Heart of Jesus.

It was in this context that I met the fathers of Bétharram at

Yamoussoukro during my university years. Their witness of life paved the way for me to love. Before God's love, so great and so powerful, all my questions have found meaning. I understood then, that the foundation of every vocation is love. And only love is capable of putting man in motion towards God; for love is the bait, which God uses to capture mankind. This is why I asked to aspire to community life to mature my calling.

As a graduate of the Polytechnic Institute of Yamoussoukro, I had two years of professional experience at the Ivorian Refining Company. This experience allowed me to understand how much money can help alleviate poverty when it is used to help the poor discreetly without patronising them. Despite this material comfort, my desire for religious life persisted. I therefore asked to enter into community to



deepen my vocation. Since 2013, the grace of God has led me step by step in the footsteps of Saint Michael Garicoïts following Christ. After three years of postulate in Abidjan, two years of novitiate in Bethlehem and in the Central African Republic, I professed my first vows on 8 September 2018 in Abidjan. At the end of the first theological cycle at the Catholic University of West Africa, I was asked to spend a year in Bétharram in preparation for the perpetual vows I professed on 28 July 2022 at the Shrine of our Lady of Bétharram.

When I relate my personal history today, I realize that Christian life is not easy. It is the same for religious life. The good news is that God's love is stronger than anything; and this is what allows me to hold on to and continue to hold on to Christ, beyond fortunate and unfortunate experiences. Human life has meaning only insofar as it is put to

the service of others. In addition, the Gospel invites me to love simply without expecting anything in return. This love in simplicity is what still motivates my commitment in the congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Bétharram.

Bétharram is for me the privileged channel through which God irrigates the Church and the world with his graces. Like the heart in the body, Bétharram is that organ in the Church, both very small and discreet, which empties itself of its vital content to communicate the life of God to the other organs of the Body that is the Church. It is therefore a great challenge that the whole Betharramite family is called to face with the grace of God. At the heart of the Bétharramite spirituality and mission, the story of the salvation of our brothers and sisters is played out. However, the gift of my life for the work of God and the service of man, the man who is the fruit of the

intimacy of God, requires me for my part to dare, with great humility, to live the courage of truth. For this is the first charity we owe to our fellow men. In this way I will be freer to bring the questions of humanity to the altar of sacrifice, where men's aspiration and God's response meet; and where God's plan comes to meet man's dream.

When I observe, for example, these men and women, the sick leaving Lourdes – this place where "Heaven touches the earth" – coming to see the weakling that I am in the land of Betharram, just to find an attentive and available ear, to hear a word that invites life in a

world on borrowed time and calls for hope in a world in suffering, it is my whole being that is challenged to what the Lord calls me: to be a facilitator of his graces among his people. I intend to take up this challenge in community with the help of my brothers, through the intercession of St Michael Garicoïts, under the benevolent gaze of our Lady of Betharram. ■



Lourdes, July 2022. Picture taken by Br. Sergio Leiva scj during the International Session.

ON THE AGENDA

■ From 10 to 26 October, the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, is making the ***canonical visit to the communities of the Vicariate of England*** (Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified), the last canonical visit until the next General Chapter.

■ Dates of the ***next meetings*** of the General Council and the Council of Congregation/Preparatory Commission of the General Chapter.

General Council: Monday 31st, October 2022

General Council: Thursday 1st December 2022

General Council: Thursday 12th janvier 2023

Council of the Congregation: From February 20 to 25, 2023 (in-person)
during which the **General Council will meet in plenary session**

General Council: Thursday 13th April, 2023

(matters for ordinary administration only)

General Council: Thursday 4th May, 2023

(matters for ordinary administration only)

GENERAL CHAPTER

9 - 29 June, 2023



■ The Superior General, with the consent of his Council gathered on 8 October 2022, decided ***to present Br Sergio Leiva (Vicariate of Paraguay, Region Fr. Auguste Etchecopar) to the diaconate.***

The celebration will be held on November 6th in Remanso (Paraguay).



In the Peace of the Lord

Ivory Coast | On Friday, October 7, ***Mrs Christine N'Zoré***, 54 years, sister of Fr. Valentin N'Zoré SCJ, of the community of Dabakala, passed away. Please let's hold Fr. Valentin and his family in our humble prayers during this sad time.

France | Former student of Betharram, ***Mr. Jean-Louis Langlés*** died at the age of 80. He was administrator, treasurer and even president of the Association "La Pyrénéenne", the association which is officially the owner of the estate of the Congregation in France. Through the time and efforts devoted to this association, he expressed his gratitude to Betharram, to which he remained faithful and about which he used to say: "I owe Betharram everything!" Betharram is also grateful for his dedication for so many years. We pray for him, for his wife Monique and son Christophe. May Jean-Louis rest in peace and enjoy eternal Life.



Canonical visit of the Vicariate of India

| *Fr. Enrico Frigerio scj, Regional Superior*
(Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified)

Over the last few months leading up to the Regional and General Chapters, Fr Gustavo Agin sent three work sheets to all religious in the Congregation, to accompany and guide their work in preparation for these important dates in our diaries. The three steps set out in these documents are: encounter, listening and discernment.

The hoped-for goal is that on several levels, the Congregation will conform to the synodal style adopted by the whole Church at this period in her history.

The Superior General's canonical visit to the Vicariate of India (5-21 September 2022) took place in strict

accordance with the characteristics of synodality.

First, this was a long-awaited visit delayed by the long period of lockdown and then by the obligation to yet again postpone due to bureaucratic problems.

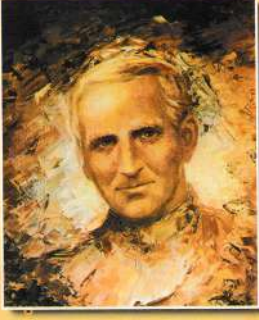
The meeting got off to a wonderful start at the airport with the welcoming brotherly embrace of those brothers who had come to meet the Superior General.

It continued in the same vein in the community of Bangalore where novices, postulants and formators created an ambience of joy and welcome, as is their custom and wont.

The encounter then continued with



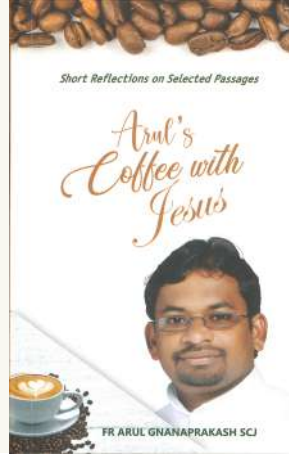
புனித. மைக்கேல் கேரிகாய்ட்ஸ்



அருடமகா. இ. ஜான் பிரிடோ ஐ.ஐ.ஓ.

■ *Biography of Saint Michael Garicoits (The Man Who Said Yes to God), translated in Tamil by Fr. John Britto Irudayam scj.*

Some editorial initiatives of our brothers in India



■ *Arul's Coffee with Jesus - Fr. Arul Gnanaprakash scj shares brief reflections inspired by Bible passages or by life experiences... to regain your strength in the company of Jesus.*

the visit to Chennai then Mangalore. Unfortunately, it was not possible to take in the other residences and communities in the Vicariate. However, we were able to meet, in person, all the religious who had come to Bangalore for the final plenary meeting, with the exception of Fr Akhil with whom the Father General was able to have a long conversation via video-conference.

The importance of the "encounter", as the first step, is highlighted by Pope Francis.

In his commentary on the encounters Jesus makes in the Gospels, he describes the closeness of Jesus in the fact of "encountering faces, exchanging glances, sharing everyone's story" because He knows that "a single encounter can change a life".

This is the style in which our Father Superior conducted every meeting

with every individual religious, giving priority to such personal meetings in the course of his visit.

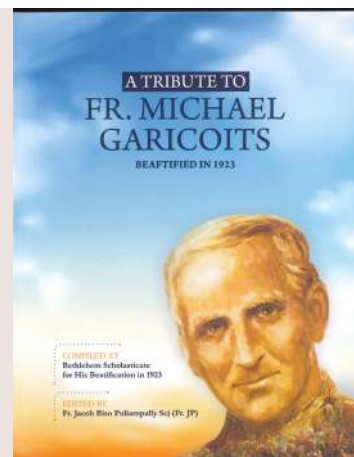
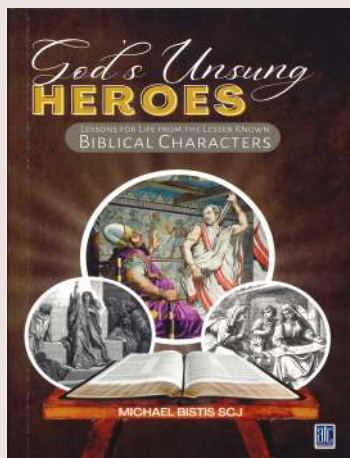
Genuine encounter occurs when there is sincere unhurried listening taking place, within a sufficient amount of time.

Having accompanied Fr Gustavo in his meetings with religious, I can testify to the patience and attention he pays to each member, taking the time needed to put his fellow religious at their ease and giving them the opportunity to express themselves, as a younger brother would to his elder brother.

Some shared the story of their vocation, of their first encounter with Betharram, the aspects of spirituality which they feel most attracted to, the joys and hardships in their ministry.

I am sure that this example will assist all religious in their own attempts

■ During the lockdown, Fr. Jacob Biso Puliampally scj found a pearl on the shelves of the library of the formation house of Bangalore: The testimonies collected by the novices of Bethlehem in 1923, taken from the Summarium of the process of beatification of Saint Michael Garicoits, translated into English. Fr. Jacob has edited them and has produced this nice book.



■ Recently published, this book by Fr. Michael Bistis scj is an invitation to discover these little-known, background biblical characters whose history and testimony can inspire even today. A second volume is already being published.

to listen to one another during their community meetings, in preparing their pastoral projects, and in organising leadership activities at community and vicariate level.

Pope Francis acknowledges that this could be a "slow maybe even a tiring exercise" and cautions against "contrived or superficial responses" and "not silencing one's heart."

Encounter and listening lead to discernment which then translates into a project for change.

Here is how Pope Francis introduces this third phase: "Encountering and listening to one another are not an end in themselves; this might leave things as they were. On the other hand, when we enter into dialogue, we turn to discussion, on the way, in such a manner that by the end, we are no longer the same as we were before, we are changed."

The Superior General helped the religious with exercising discernment,

especially during the closing Assembly, when he drew some conclusions from the numerous personal encounters he had had over the previous days, and invited us to make concrete choices in certain areas of our religious life.

First, he made an affirmation of a general nature, recalling how important it is to improve dialogue and show proof of mutual acceptance, so as to give the young men in formation a more enlightened witness and help them to grow on their journey within our religious family. To overcome personal conflicts, you have to change mentality, in itself a veritable process of conversion.

Insofar as concerns formation, there were also quite a few words of appreciation for the work that is being done on different levels. He thanked the Vicariate for having organised an "extraordinary novitiate" in spite of the fact that it had not been possible to hold an Inter-Regional Novitiate in the



Holy Land as had been planned (now scheduled to start in January 2023).

He encouraged formators to intensify personal and community encounters in the final phase of such an important period of formation that is the novitiate.

He then re-emphasised the importance of working to promote vocations.

Fr Gustavo enlarged on what was meant by obedience to the lawfully instituted religious placed in authority, in accordance with our Rule of Life. It is a matter of filial obedience, a basis on which St Michael founded his spirituality and which today is still a vital element for us in our religious life.

On this point, he invited us to make a profound examination of personal and community conscience, to maintain alive one of the most fundamental aspects of our Betharramite identity, and to be able to offer the Church a genuine witness of religious life.

Another topic he addressed was discretion, i.e. the fact of knowing how to take one's place serenely, of recognising the limits of one's position, "by practising the vastness of charity, within these limits".

Finally, he encouraged us to continue preparing for the Regional Chapter (January 2023) and the General Chapter (June 2023), inviting us to listen to one another, readying ourselves by using the work sheets he sent the communities over the first six months of this year.

Fr Gustavo concluded on a very positive forward-looking note: *"I am expecting much from you all, for I love you and am convinced you are a gift from the Lord to His Church... We are living at a crucial time in the life of this Vicariate and of the whole Congregation... We need one another... listen to the voice of the Lord, calling us to communion and participation."* ■



Introduction

from the *Supplement*
'The communities
& the mission of America'

|
Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

« The emigration of the Basques to Argentina began around 1835. It intensified between 1853-1914, and continued in the Spanish post-war period 1940-1950. Argentina was becoming a Nation and it was attractive due to the job opportunities that were lacking in the Basque Country, far from centres of industrial development. This is how, in the middle of the 19th century, many Basques began to emigrate to Argentina.

The local clergy did not look favourably on the departure of these Basques, who they viewed as endangering their own salvation in such distant places. So from the pulpit they opposed this initiative. The position of the nascent Congregation of Betharram was different: instead of fighting emigration, the priests had to accompany as missionaries the

citizens who decided to leave, to continue to nurture in them the Christian faith in which they had been baptized. This was the clear position of Fr. Simón Guimón scj.

The Bishop of Bayonne received from the Bishop of Buenos Aires a request for pastoral agents to accompany these immigrants. He proposed this request from Buenos Aires to the Missionaries of Hasparrén, who did not accept it, and then directed this request to Fr. Garicoits, who considered the possibility but without making the decision on his own.

Garicoits called the third General Assembly in Betharram between October 16 and 19, and involved all the members of the Society in the discernment of the mission that was offered to them in Argentina, with the following procedure:

1. Question:

Will the Society accept the mission offered to us to go and exercise the functions of the holy ministry which relate to our purpose in the Diocese of Buenos-Aires?

2. Each religious expresses his opinion openly and all the others listen to him:

This is the serious question on which the Society is called upon to decide. [...] The Superior and after him all the members present successively and by rank of seniority of profession explained the reasons which could lead us to accept the mission offered, as well as the reasons which could lead us to refuse it.

3. Moment of the secret ballot:

The question having been thus examined, in all respects, the assembly declared itself sufficiently instructed and, with the consent of all, a secret ballot was taken, which gave the following result:

Voters:	21 (twenty-one)
In favour:	20 (twenty)
Spoiled ballot:	1 (one).

4. Decision:

Consequently, the Superior proclaimed that the mission in the Diocese of Buenos-Aires, in America, was accepted by our Society.

5. Possibility of reviewing the decision during the meeting.

Fr. Garicoits reminds the whole Assembly that it has the opportunity to return to the theme of the Mission in the Diocese of Buenos Aires.

October 17, about 5:30 p.m. the Superior informed the assembly that each member had the right to raise during these three days a second and even a third deliberation on the question which is the subject of the minutes.¹

1) Le secrétaire des procès-verbaux de la troisième Assemblée générale était le P. Didace Barbé, 16-19 octobre 1854. Cf. Archives 4209, Rome.



accompanied from Betharram, with great devotion, the Betharramite life and mission that is beginning in Río de la Plata: The popular missions, the San José College, the correction for trying to obtain

The bishop was informed of the decision made by the Society. The difficulties were addressed, the missionary community was constituted, the missionaries were bid farewell as true heroes with festive activities for a whole day, Fr. Garicoits accompanied the missionaries to Bayonne, from where they left on August 31, 1856 on the ship *l'Etincelle* and arrived in Buenos Aires on November 4. Nobody was there to meet them. The adventurers who formed this community were the Fathers: Diego Barbé, Superior, Simón Guimón, Juan Bautista Harbustan, Luis Larouy, Pierre Sardoy; the Brothers Fabián and Joannés and the scholastic Jean Magendie. Fathers Harbustan and Sardoy were recruited for this purpose, surely by Fr. Guimón, they did a few months of novitiate and made their religious profession a few days after March 7, 1856, before embarking.

In the numerous Letters to the missionaries of America, Fr. Garicoits

the title of apostolic missionaries¹, the opposition to having their own church in Buenos Aires, their refusal to have a community in Montevideo for not having enough religious, the spiritual animation of the religious, supporting them in patience until they were recognized in the diocese... Fr. Etchecopar continues this accompaniment in his Letters, first institutionally, as Secretary and then emotionally involved as he learns how the missionaries give of themselves and value fidelity to the charism of Fr. Garicoits.

(Continued in forthcoming October Supplement, at www.betharram.net.)

1) The title of « apostolic missionary » was a certification granted by the Holy See to missionaries so that they could act freely in distant places of mission, while not taking into account the guidelines and norms of the local bishops, where the mission was carried out. It was very difficult to obtain. St Michael wanted anyway his missionaries to abide by the regulations of the bishops of the territories where they had missions.



On March 22, 1892,

Fr. Auguste Etchecopar scj
(62 years old)

wrote to Fr. Victor Bourdenne scj

from the San Juan College residence in Buenos-Aires:

*“Here, I rediscover **the beginnings of Father Garicoits** and one of the works which took up his entire life and to which God granted marvellous fruitfulness. When he was thinking of founding our Institute, he made a retreat in Toulouse, under Father Leblanc, a Jesuit, and the latter said to him: For the moment, exercise the apostolate in the chapel of Betharram, with pilgrims from all over the world, and also render the services of a chaplain to the Sisters of the Cross of Igon. He did it and what good he did within this important Congregation of Sisters, whose founders are declared Venerable and who regard Father Garicoits as their base and their foundation after Father André¹ and Sister Elisabeth²”.*

Now, **the mission of the Father has passed into the hands of his children.** He told us, he keeps telling us as our Divine Master: “As my Father sent me, so I send you. I have prepared the way for you, in the apostolate of preaching, of teaching, of spiritual direction. Here is my doctrine and my example; follow this and God will bless you as he has blessed me”. This plan of God for the Father and the children, his blessings which reward in the sons the fidelity, the spirit, the virtue of their Father, I note them here, as in San José, with a deep feeling of astonishment and gratitude.

1) André Hubert Fournet, editor's note.

2) Elisabeth Bichier des Âges, editor's note



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