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A word from the superior general

Walking together, embracing our vulnerability and its ability to transform us

"For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor 12.10)

Dear Betharramites,

While preparing the Assemblies for next year's General Chapter we came across a text that, according to what several of you have told me, has helped you a lot to reflect: "*Religious life from chaos to kairos*" by Fr. Victor Codina SJ.

Here I share with you a brief reflection based on the reading of some interesting articles on religious life, discussed with the UISG (International Union of Superiors General). In this case, I base myself, above all, on that of Dr. Ted Dunn, a North American lay psychologist, dedicated to accompanying religious communities and other organizations for more than thirty years, in the United States and in other parts of the world.

We start from a conviction: *embracing our vulnerability, living the fullness of our humanity with an open heart is what "transforms"*.

We are going through a time in which we feel *tested*, and experience the need to take stock, to see who we are, what we want to live together and where we are going. Life in this world, as we have known it (and so also religious life) is changing in such a dizzying way that it is beyond our control or understanding. Something in our world is coming to an end, and there is no going back. It is no longer about refashioning things as they were before... The current crisis has put us *at a crossroads* and we have a choice ahead of us: (1) As religious we can choose to strengthen our defences, fend for ourselves, and stay as comfortable as we can for as long as possible; (2) Or, we can choose *to embrace our vulnerability*, seek the good (solid) path, and together dare to bring to birth a new way of being. However, this new way of being religious, -that is faithful to being Betharramite, without losing creativity- challenges us and it seems that we have still not dared to begin it...

However, many of us do not stop searching and searching... We are meeting in assemblies and chapters, to listen to each other with respect (I hope so!), dialogue and choose what we need to deploy, strengthen or change. This is meant to express our deep wishes and urgent longings, to plan the future of our communities, in every country and region. It is a responsible and urgent synodal act.

Life becomes darker when we stop wishing and dreaming. Our religious life is always linked to a future that we call *eschatological*, but which is concretised *in making the Kingdom of God present with its demands here and now*.

On the other hand, I have the impression that many of us still live this transition period under the temptation of, *"Why should I worry if I can get by doing things my way..."*. It is not a wise position. I confess that it is sad to see some Betharramites who seem to have lost all gratitude towards the Congregation and renew "their reasons" to argue for their passivity and indifference to any renewal proposal.

Others, on the other hand, spend a lot of time analysing how to take care of themselves, optimally manage assets and obtain the highest and best use of land and buildings. **But what about the best and greatest use of Betharramite talents, time and energy? What about updating the charism, being faithful and creative in mission?** Whether we like it or not, Betharramite communities are

(and will be...) subject to numerous changes in this time of transition, but there is also a deeper invitation than simply "change" and that is the possibility of **a real "transformation" together with the appearance of a new and better religious life in our communities.**

If we cling to the present, or to the past, we must recognize that we are failing to cultivate hope, we have probably neglected it, or we have traded it for financial security... Perhaps we are being overwhelmed by the social, ecclesial or planetary threats that we feel after two years of suffering from the pandemic. Many of us have the impression that the men and women of our time have not learned anything. But that's where our own identity comes in.

- Could it be that we Betharramites no longer have anything to announce today to the pilgrim People of God who journey by our side overwhelmed and afflicted?
- Have we forgotten to share the joy of the gifts received in our religious family?
- what has happened to our 'Always be happy'? (Phil 4.4)

Let us find our courage! If the heart is vulnerable but we keep hope, our weakness will make us more disposed to interior transformation in Christ. Because with that hope we will be willing and joyful as we collaborate to take the next leap of growth towards that fuller religious lifestyle, which beckons.

The good news is that religious life is not dying, but it is being transformed, just as it has through many changes in its long life-cycle since the time of Jesus. Jesus said: "*I am the resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?*" (Jn 11.25-26).

A good Betharramite community, walking alongside the laity, will always find the means and will be ready to listen to a deeper invitation. You will seek to transform your ordinary life (or routine...) and discern God's call to a new life. Betharramites will plan not only the outward changes that they will have to make (for example: economy, medical attention and the basics of living), but they will also open their lives to an inward journey, "the inner ocean".

That will help us to avoid decisions driven more by fear than by courage, decisions that, sooner or later, will end up guaranteeing our disappearance...

Religious life will resurface. But there are tough decisions ahead and

not quick fixes or “off-the-shelf” solutions. **All the options we have will require hard work. There is no way to escape this.** Even if a community, a Vicariate, a Region, or the Congregation itself comes to an end one day, we always have the conviction that *God is with us and it is his fidelity that counts.*

This is how Saint Michael thought, moved by an unshakeable hope, aware of the vulnerability of the men who embodied the “Betharram project”, he put everything in the hands of the Good God who had *loved him very much and longed to and continued to long to be loved.*

Fr. Gustavo Agín scj
Superior General



General Audience • Catechesis On Discernment (I)

Paul VI Audience Hall, Wednesday, 31 August 2022

What does it mean to discern?

Discernment is an important act that concerns everyone, because decisions are an essential part of life. In all [choices], a life project is realised, and even our relationship with God is concretized.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of discernment with images taken from ordinary life; for example, he describes the fishers who select the good fish and discard the bad ones; or the merchant who knows how to identify, among many pearls, the one of greatest value. Or he who, ploughing a field, comes across something that turns out to be a treasure (cf. Mt 13:44-48).

In the light of these examples, discernment presents itself as an exercise of intelligence, and also of skill and also of will, to seize the opportune moment: these are the conditions for making a good choice. [...] And there is also a price required for discernment to become effective. To perform his trade to the best of his ability, the fisherman reckons with hard work, long nights spent at sea [...]. [These are] unexpected,

unplanned situations, where it is crucial to recognise the importance and urgency of a decision to be made.

Everyone has to make decisions; there is no one to make them for us. At a certain point, we adults can freely ask for advice, reflect, but the decision is our own. [...]

The Gospel suggests another important aspect of discernment: it involves the emotions. The one who has found the treasure feels no difficulty in selling everything, so great is his joy (cf. Mt 13:44). The term used by the evangelist Matthew indicates a very special joy, which no human reality can give [...]. It is the joy of the wise men when, after a long and arduous journey, they see the star again (cf. Mt 2:10); the joy, it is the joy of the women who return from the empty tomb after hearing the angel's announcement of the resurrection (cf. Mt 28:8). It is the joy of those who have found the Lord. Making a good decision, a right decision, always leads you to that final joy; perhaps along the way you have to suffer a bit of uncertainty, thinking, seeking, but

in the end the right decision blesses you with joy.

In the final judgement God will exercise discernment — the great discernment — with regard to us. The images of the farmer, the fisherman, and the merchant are examples of what happens in the Kingdom of Heaven, a Kingdom that manifests itself in the ordinary actions of life, which require us to take a stand. This is why it is so important to be able to discern: great choices can arise from circumstances that at first sight seem secondary, but turn out to be decisive. For example, let us think of Andrew and John's first encounter with Jesus, an encounter that stems from a simple question: "Rabbi, where do you live?" — "Come and see", says Jesus (cf. Jn 1:38-39). A very brief exchange, but it is the beginning of a change that, step by step, will mark their whole life. Years later, the Evangelist will continue to remember that encounter that changed him forever, and he will even remember the time: 'It was about four o'clock in the afternoon' (v. 39). It is the hour when time and the eternal met in his life. And in a good decision, correct, there is an encounter between God's will and our will; there is an encounter between the present path and the eternal. Making the right decision, after a path of discernment, is to make this encounter: time with eternity. [...]

Discernment — as I've said — involves hard work. According to the Bible, we do not find set before us, pre-packaged, the life we are to

live. No! We have to decide it all the time, according to the reality that comes. God invites us to evaluate and choose: He created us free and wants us to exercise our freedom. Therefore, discerning is demanding.

[...] God gives man a precise instruction: if you want to live, if you want to enjoy life, remember that you are a creature, that you are not the criterion of good and evil, and that the choices you make will have a consequence, for you, for others and for the world (cf. Gen 2:16-17) [...]. A fundamental teaching: it is no coincidence that this is the first dialogue between God and man. The dialogue is: the Lord gives the mission [...]; and with every step that people take, they have to discern which decision to make. Discernment is that reflection of the mind, of the heart, that we have to do before making a decision.

Discernment is demanding but indispensable for living. It requires that I know myself, that I know what is good for me here and now. Above all, it requires a filial relationship with God. God is Father and He does not leave us alone, He is always willing to advise us, to encourage us, to welcome us. [...] To learn to live, one must learn to love, and for this it is necessary to discern: what can I do now, faced with this alternative? Let it be a sign of greater love, of greater maturity in love. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to guide us! Let us invoke Him every day, especially when we have choices to make. ■

From China to Thailand

- A message of Rev. Fr. Denis Buzy scj (1883-1965), Superior General at that time

“This demonstration of a missionary spirit surely characterises our Congregation”. It is with this definitive sentence that Fr. Denis Buzy scj, Superior General, concluded a message published in the NEF on March 20, 1952 and which we offer you below. He informed all the members of the Congregation of the events that had led to the expulsion from China, then paved the way to a possible new missionary adventure in northern Thailand (this missionary opening in Thailand had not yet been decreed).

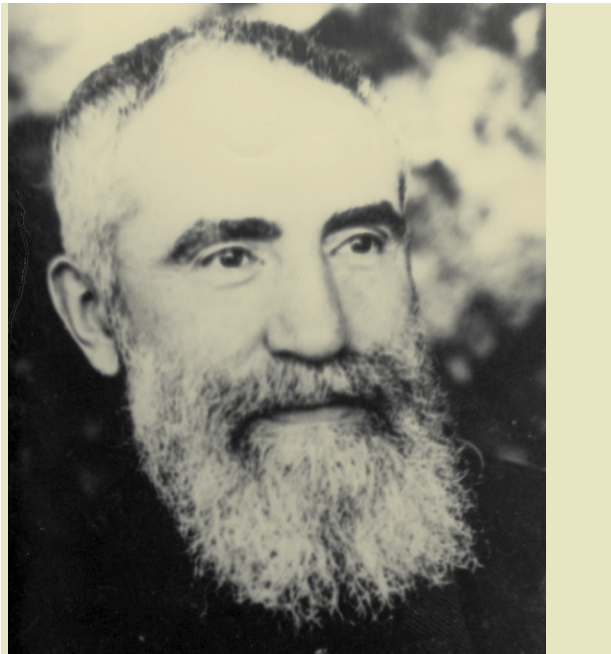
Indeed, at the beginning of this communication to the Congregation, Fr. Buzy was careful not to be over enthusiastic too soon: **“Today,”** he said, **“it would still be premature for a peal of bells about the birth of a new Betharramite mission in Siam...”**. Nevertheless, he noted: **“Whatever the result of the steps in progress, I do not want to delay in proposing (...) a beautiful initiative of the missionary spirit in the Congregation.”**

The beauty of what we are bringing to your attention lies, it seems to us, in this: at a historic moment when there might have been reason to lament the unexpected closure of the mission in China; at a time when the temptation could be that of withdrawing into oneself between the four safe walls of Betharram, Fr. Buzy elevates his outlook.

Isn't this what is asked of us for the General Chapter to come? Our goal is not to offer a “revival” of this historic moment, nor to be complacent about the past. On the other hand, we want to strongly reaffirm that this missionary spirit, which marked the experience of the Congregation in the past, also shapes for us today, in a definitive way, our religious family! We want to remind ourselves that our concern must be to encounter, to listen and to discern.

It is only in this way that we will know how to listen to the Spirit who urges us to “seek the doors that open” rather than “worry about the doors that close” (Fr. Victor Codina sj).

Fr. Graziano Sala scj
General secretary



F. V. D.

**A wonderful example of the missionary spirit
taking the initiative**

My very dear Fathers and Brothers,

In our previous newsletter we heard the bell tolling for the demise of our Mission in Tali.

It might be just a bit too early to start ringing the bells today heralding the birth of a new entity in our Betharramite family, a new mission in Siam (Thailand), as officially, it hasn't yet seen the light of day and maybe it never will.

However, regardless of the outcome of the present proceedings, I do not want to delay in asking you to join your prayers with mine in thanksgiving, and in brotherly pride, at the wonderful initiative undertaken by our Congregation in true missionary spirit.

Over the past couple of months we have had to caution our friends in the Yunnan not to raise their hopes too high of seeing our apostles in Betharram any time soon. We did say that we thought one of two things would happen: either the S.C. (Sacred Congregation) for the Propagation of the Faith would stop them on their way back and dispatch them to a new field of action; or Mgr Lacoste would take the initiative of finding a new "battlefield" for his troops himself.

Neither of these predictions has come to pass. The "Propaganda Fide" did not intervene and Mgr Lacoste is still detained in his beloved Tali, perhaps even now being held prisoner there.

However, what the Bishop has been unable to do, his Vicar General, the depositary and interpreter of his thinking, has done in his stead.

It is therefore right and proper that the whole Congregation be informed thereof.

Removed from his mission in China where he had been working for 17 years, then expelled from Burma after only six months, Father Jean Saint-Guily, Mgr Lacoste's Vicar General and religious Superior of the Mission in Tali, did not stop to contemplate returning to France as he and all his brothers from Tali were being hounded across the border out of China.

He had had the providential inspiration of seeking asylum as well as the right to work with Mgr Chorin, of the MEP (Paris Foreign Missions), Bishop of Bangkok in Thailand (the contemporary name of Siam). Having received a favourable response from Mgr Chorin, Fr Saint-Guily went to Siam in the hope that his transitory stay

would turn into permanent residency...

Meanwhile, here again is something which fills us with joy. In not wishing to return to the mother country, in not wishing to interrupt the contribution Betharram was making to the work of the Missions, that is to say, evangelisation of the pagan and the salvation of souls, Fr Saint-Guily found he was not alone; a group of our brothers who had also been expelled from China immediately gathered around him.

It must all be part of God's ineffable plan, that having initially welcomed us, the Yunnan wherein our Fathers laboured, suffered and indeed of whom seven died, now rejects us, turning itself inwards and closing the door on us, but Siam, on the other hand, welcomes us in with open arms! Long live Siam!

The first arrival, Fr Séguinotte, received the order to rejoin his superior. Accordingly he left the Burmese regions close to his former post where he had hoped to remain for a while longer, placed his trust in God and his representative, and moved to Bangkok. Thus Frs Saint-Guily and Séguinotte are the first Siamese Betharramites.

Shortly afterwards, Frs Laulom, Bignolles and Pédebideau, who had reached Hong Kong after a difficult exodus, received the same orders. On receipt of the letter, they jumped for joy and hastened to Siam while Brs Dimas and Bertrand made their way to Marseille.

Since then, Frs Sablayrolles and Lanusse have joined the apostolic group.

For their part, Frs Fognini and Jean Saubatte, after a few months rest at Betharram and with their families, they made haste to prepare to return, impatient to be reunited and get back to work with their brother priests and convert the pagans.

Nine Betharramites already! More than one third of the whole workforce from the Tali Mission! And the number may well increase once our detainees are released and the tired and weary have regained strength.

This generous impulse of our Congregation is an historic event, the importance of which cannot be overstated. More than thirty years ago, when the Holy See deigned to entrust us with evangelising the Yunnan, the Very Reverend Father Paillas asked for volunteers: such a crowd came forward that the Superior General was spoiled for choice; the three chosen were Frs Etchart, Palou and Pirmez.

Today, after personal experience of life in the Missions, knowing the truth of what that costs in terms of privations, endurance and sacrifice, when these fellow priests could have regained their freedom and returned to normal lives as religious, they turned down the chance as an unwanted gift. They are happier not coming back. They are going to remain. Willing volunteers for a second time. Ready to face all the risks entailed in setting up a new foundation in another Mission.

This demonstration of the missionary spirit is the definitive mark of our Congregation. Dear Missionaries, may you be blessed!

Yours devotedly in the Sacred Heart,
D. BUZY, S.C.J., sup. gen.



What I treasure from
the past year with Fr.
Etchecopar

...in a few words.

|

It is with joy that I wish to
share with you my happiness
to have been with Father
Etchecopar all this year.
What I take away:
It only takes a simple
reading, not a study, to find
entirely, through the writings
of Father Auguste Etchecopar,
the expressions proper to Saint
Michel Garicoits. There is no
doubt that, having drunk from
the very source of the Founder,
he knew how to drink the living
water that brought forth the
Holy Spirit, and subsequently
became a discreet channel for
the believing posterity that we
form. Walking this year in his
company was a real journey into
the Betharramite universe.

Etchecopar model of fraternal service.
| A.K.

Father Etchecopar allowed me
to appropriate again the three
dimensions of love: the love of
God, love for God and love of
neighbour. | S.B.

Fr. Auguste Etchecopar, a model for
today's society: humble, faithful,
obedient, persuasive while being a
benevolent listener. | D. M.

Fr. Auguste Etchecopar : a man who has placed his trust in God never ever doubted God's plan. He has inspired me to abandon oneself to God's will no matter what may come. He will make a way where there seems to be no way.
| P.R.

“ Etchecopar was a man of interiority”. He was called the man with a radiant face. Indeed, during his lifetime, a light seemed to come from within and make his face translucent. This irradiation was seen at moments of spiritual occasions: mass, prayer, preaching or private conversation. He was inhabited by the Spirit of God.
| E.I.

“ There is happiness on this earth and it consists in practicing the virtues”.
Fr. Auguste Etchecopar SCJ's sentence |
M.I.A.

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.

Following the thoughts of Fr. Etchecopar over this last year, I had some mixed feelings.

Firstly he was a man who was very much in love with the Lord, and this is surely what our world needs.

It was also fascinating to see how he discerned and nurtured the growth of our infant Congregation according to how he understood the mind of St. Michael.

I did feel that we had to penetrate a large quantity of devotional enthusiasm to get to the inner core....hard work for an Anglo-Saxon mentality!

Also for a 21st century mind there is a further discernment to be made.

His stress on obedience and humility needs careful sifting when today there is often confusion between humility and low self-esteem. They are not the same thing!

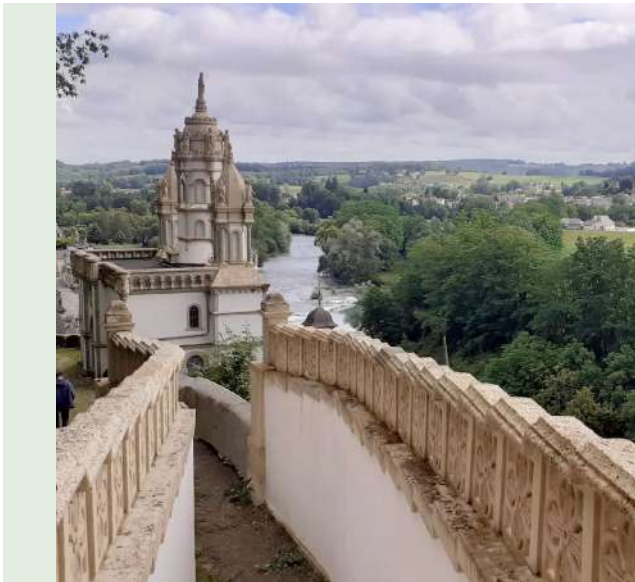
| A.H.

September supplement:

Fr. Etchecopar | *Fr. Garicoïts*

| Roberto Cornara (archivist)

Soon available in pdf on www.betharram.net



Fruits of the International Session at Betharram

Happy to have come to the source of our spirituality. Our belonging to the Congregation asks us:

- to be good religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
- like Saint Michael Garicoits,
- following in his footsteps.

Every encounter I had, helped me to deepen my love and passion for this family and challenged me to be more convinced and a committed Betharramite. These experiences brought to light the struggles and hurdles our founder faced in his life and mission and how he tackled them with the help of God. This spirit of our founder motivated me to face and overcome the challenges I will have to face in my own life and mission with courage and hope completely trusting in the divine assistance.

Until now we knew about Betharram only through images; now everything has become real and is part of our life.

Joy to share life in Betharram with all the brothers.

Very concrete teachings: about life and appropriate behaviours.

Teachings aiming at making us more aware of the challenges of this world. We must be cautious, in the spirit of the Ecce Venio.

We had the opportunity to hear about the charism, fraternal life, etc... from different points of view. Always as a love story.

We brought all that we have lived in our prayer in order to integrate our lives.

We have come very close to the paths of conversion of Saint Michael Garicoits (the encounter with Saint Elizabeth), Saint Ignatius and Saint Francis Xavier.



We were able to experience the incarnation of the charism in other cultures and experiences.

The session gave us the opportunity to approach very closely the founding experience of Saint Michael Garicoïts through the five senses: touching, tasting, feeling, watching, hearing.

We are more aware of belonging to a large family.

Happy to have met with the communities of the Vicariate of France-Spain.

The house of Saint Michael Garicoïts in Ibarre made us discover a simple and poor life; we could identify ourselves with him. The life of Saint Michael Garicoïts is very close to ours, which is not the case of Saint Ignatius and Saint Francis Xavier.

The international session was a true encounter of faith, of cultures, of shared riches. One realizes how the Gospel and the Charism of the Congregation are incarnated in the different realities by which each one is enriched. Likewise, it was a synthesis of what is essential for our consecrated life: the charism and spirituality of the Congregation, community life, synodality, personal project, visits and pilgrimages to the holy places marked the 30 days of the session. Thank you for so much gift!

What was seen in the books and what was heard about from others during the formation became a tangible reality as the participants gazed at BETHARRAM IN ITS TOTALITY.

«What a privilege to be here» - these were the words of everyone. All filled with amazement and wonder at the same time sense of gratitude to God and to the family of Betharram for having come to drink from the source of the founder. Walking to Lourdes as the emmaus disciples, we gained strength to live the days.

After having passed the initial days in Betharram, we went to IBARRE. There was a deep sentiments of emotions when everyone looked at Garacotchea - the house of St. Michael Garicoïts. Poverty & humility are the two strong words flowed from everyone's mouth. This poor and humble home offered to the Church a 'Saint'. In this home, he learned to be disciplined. In this home, he was educated with values of life. What a joy to be in his birth place. Though they had also visited the places of St Ignatius of Loyola & St. Francis Xavier, they admired at the poor and humble origin of St. Michael Garicoïts. After going through the experience of IBARRE, Hosta, Oneix, Garris; most of the participants expressed that they identify their lives with the life of St. Michael.

Everyone appreciated the subject handled by Fr. Gaspar Fernandez, Fr. Austin Hughes, Fr. Jean Luc & Fr.

Gustavo. Meeting with elderly fathers in the Maison Neuve triggered our energy to go forward with fresh enthusiasm and at the same time for the elderly fathers it was a moment reassuring their hope of the future of the congregation.

Thanks to Frs. Bacho, Sylvain and Reegan for their availability, committed service and being there for everything. Sincere gratitude to Frs. Gaspar, Simone, & Chan the animators for their meticulous planning and achieving the program. The participants were of a mixed group: 6 priests, 3 deacons, 4 finally professed and 4 brothers preparing for the final vows. We had our own preconceived ideas about the group. But, they proved to be fraternal, friendly, committed, jovial & matured. Thank you brothers & keep going ahead in your missionary spirit. We remain ever grateful to the communities of Pibrac, Mendelu, Anglet, the communities of Sisters at Igon as well as Servants of Mary for their generosity and service.

Thanks to everyone for your full pledged support.

Fr. Stervin Selvadass scj

General Councillor for formation

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

» On 9th May to 11th May 2022, the **English Vicariate** members gathered together at Shallowford Retreat House in Stone (about 50 km north of Birmingham) for our second meeting of preparation for the 2023 General Chapter by reflecting the theme of Listening which continued from the First preparatory meeting in last February.

The animator, Sr Anna O Connor (Sisters of Charity of St Paul) who is well versed in Counselling and spiritual guidance, led all of us to a deepening of our listening to each other. This togetherness and reflections brought us together as members of the Vicariate in preparation for our Vicariate assembly and Regional Chapter before the General Chapter.

At **Droitwich**, on 24th June, on the occasion of the celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Fr George Mathew SCJ, Superior of the community, welcomed companions of Betharram, guests and parishioners. Fr Wilfred Pereppadan SCJ was principal celebrant and Fr Austin Hughes SCJ break the word of God by sharing the spirituality of the Sacred Heart according to St. Michael Garicoits. The Novena to the Sacred Heart was led by Fr. George Mathew SCJ. At the end of the Solemn Holy Mass, Fr. George, Br. Patrick and Fr. Brian along with parishioners arranged a wonderful meal.





» In our community of **Bangalore** (India), on the auspicious day of our Founder, 3 of our Brothers namely Br. Sagayaraj Avinash SCJ, Br. Packiaraj Kurush SCJ & Br. Pobitro Minj SCJ made their final commitment and 2 novices Br Immanuel Budu SCJ and Br David A. SCJ made their first profession.

Rev. Fr. John Rose (Parish Priest of "Ascension Church") was the main celebrant of the Eucharist. In his homily he highlighted the theme of Discipleship and quoted our founder saying "Jesus is our mirror".

Members of the family of our brothers had come for the program. Our Betharramite priests and brothers and neighbouring community religious too participate in the event. After the short felicitation and fellowship meal the program came to an end.

» On Thursday 12 May, in the chapel of the community of Ban Betharram, **Chiang Mai**, the religious of the Vicariate of Thailand concelebrated the Eucharist, during which Br. Nicholas Surasak SCJ renewed his vows in the hands of Fr. John Chan Kunu SCJ, First Regional Vicar in Thailand who presided over the celebration.

On May 14, the Betharramite religious concelebrated the Holy Eucharist on the feast of St. Michael Garicoïts, during which Br. John Baptist Boonyod Sawangthammakul SCJ made his first vows here again in the hands of Fr. John Chan. Some priests of the Diocese, Religious, family members of Br. John Baptist, benefactors and friends were also present.



» This year the community of the formation house of **Adiopodoumé** wanted to associate the feast of St. Michael Garicoïts with another annual event, that is the day of families.

This opportunity allowed the religious to introduce St. Michael and to make families known him with the help of a video, which was commented by the Superior of the community, Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi SCJ. Through this session, the parents of the scholastics and the guests could see what it is like for a young in formation to live in the community. After the video, the Eucharist was celebrated, presided over by the Regional Vicar, Fr Theophile Dégni N'Guessan SCJ. After lunch, the families, as well as the brothers of the community introduced themselves. It was a lovely feast, and our guests ended the day happy to have spent a few hours with the community.

On 13 June, Br. Jean-Claude Djiraud SCJ was instituted Acolyte by Fr. Jean Luc Morin SCJ, Regional Superior.

On 26 June, it is the Regional Vicar, Fr. Théophile Degni N'Guessan SCJ, delegated by the Regional Superior, who received the first vows of Br. Henri Joël Kouassi and Br. Antoine Ouattara.



» During the canonical visit to the **Vicariate of Thailand**, Fr. Gustavo Agín SCJ, the Superior General, Fr Enrico Frigerio SCJ, Regional Superior, and Fr Chan Kunu SCJ, Vicar in Thailand, payed a courtesy call to the Bishop of Chiang Mai Mgr Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana.

During the brief meeting, the bishop thanked





Fr. Gustavo for the presence of the Betharram fathers who continue the ministry begun seventy years ago by the first Betharramite missionaries, who, expelled from China, evangelized the tribes in northern Thailand, laying the foundations of the current dioceses of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai.

At the end of the canonical visit, Fr Gustavo and Fr Enrico had a series of meetings with the religious of the Vicariate: on June 22, they met the members of the Vicariate Council with whom they shared their impressions of the visit; in the afternoon in a meeting with the formators, Fr. Gustavo stressed the importance of following the guidelines that the Betharramite Formation Team published in February 2022.

On June 23 the work of the Vicariate Assembly began with a Eucharistic celebration. In the meeting that followed, Fr Gustavo presented his report on the state of the Vicariate. All the religious followed with interest and greatly appreciated the remarks and the encouragement of Fr Gustavo.

On the morning of June 25, the bishop of Chiang Rai, Mgr Joseph Vuthilert Haelom, ordained deacons two Betharramites, Br Phanupan Shaichonsrijinda SCJ and Br Phichet Wijunwayu SCJ, and a religious of the Identes Congregation.

» Still in June, on the 8th, Fr. Gustavo, with Fr Enrico and Fr Chan, paid a courtesy call to Fr Joseph Tran Hoa Hung SDB, Episcopal Vicar for the Religious Life in the diocese of Ho Chi Minh City ([Vietnam](#)).

The meeting took place in a very cordial



atmosphere. Fr. Joseph thanked Fr. Gustavo for our presence in the diocese, also offering some suggestions for further steps to be taken regarding our presence in Vietnam.



» On July 15, 16 and 17, the Betharramite laity in Brazil, coming from various places where we are or were present, gathered in **Passa Quatro** for the first face to face meeting since the beginning of the pandemic. Fr Francisco de Assis dos Santos SCJ coordinated the work, with the participation of Fr Paulo Vital Campos SCJ and Fr Sebastião do Nascimento Pereira SCJ. The laity adapted the material prepared by the Congregation for the preparation of the Vicariate Assemblies in preparation for the Regional Chapters and the General Chapter: *Meeting, Listening, Discerning*.



» During the Eucharistic celebration on Sunday, July 24 at the Shrine of Notre-Dame in **Betharram**, Fr Gustavo Agín SCJ, Superior General, instituted acolytes our Brs. Aurélien Kouamé SCJ and Salomon Bandama SCJ. Four days later, on the occasion of the feast of Our Lady of Betharram and at the conclusion





of the international session, Fr. Gustavo received the perpetual vows of Br. Fulgence N'Guetta Oi N'Guetta, SCJ. In this solemn celebration, Br. Fulgence was accompanied by his fellow session members, by the brethren of the Vicariate of France-Spain, by numerous lay Betharramites and friends of Betharram. A happy moment of communion in the beautiful shrine of Our Lady, as well as the cradle of the Congregation.

» On September 3rd, at St Bernard's parish of **Adiopodoumé**, Br. Christian Yao was ordained a priest by the laying-on of hands of Mgr. Bruno Yedoh, Bishop of Bondoukou. We wish Fr. Christian to be a priest according to the Heart of Jesus!

» On Sunday, September 4, in the Church of the Sacred Heart in **Lissone** (Italy), the two novices from the Central African Republic, François Samedi Boytende & Bourgeois Ghislain N'Gbalet, made their first religious profession in the hands of Fr. Jean-Luc Morin, Regional Superior of the St Michael Region. After spending their 2nd year of novitiate in Italy, the two young betharramites will join the community of Adiapodoumé (Ivory Coast) to carry on their theological studies.



In the Peace of the Lord

India | On September 7, **Mrs Jane Maria Pias**, Mrs. Jane Maria Pias died at the age of 53. She was the mother of Br. Stevan Rodrigues SCJ, scholastic of the community of Mangalore. We entrust Br. Stevan's mother to the Lord and we promise to give him and his family members the comfort of our prayer.

- On August 1st, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, decided to **present to the diaconal ministry Br. Pobitro Minj, Br. Avinash Sahayaraj, Br. Joseph Packiaraj Kurush Michael of the Vicariate of India** (Region SMJC).
Our brothers will be ordained deacons on 15 September 2022 in the chapel of our formation house in Mangalore by Mgr. Gerald Isaac Lobo, Bishop of the Diocese of Udupi.
- On the same day, the Superior General granted **the indult for leaving the Congregation and the dispensation from temporary vows to Br. Johny Marak** of the Vicariate of India (SMJC Region).
- On August 10, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, decided to **present to the ministry of the Acolyte Br. Peter Do Van Hung, a Vietnamese brother**, currently in formation in Sampran Ban Garicoits, Thailand.
- The Superior General, with his Council gathered on 10 August in Rome, authorized the Regional Superior of the Saint Michael Garicoits Region to derogate from Article 228 and from Statute 22 of the Rule of Life as regards the representativeness of the Vicariate of the Holy Land at the next Regional Chapter.
Since the number of brothers in perpetual vows in this Vicariate is currently very small, there are no conditions to proceed with the elections as indicated in statute 22.
Consequently, the Vicariate of the Holy Land will be represented by its Regional Vicar, a member by right.

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ON THE AGENDA

The Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, **is visiting the communities of the Vicariate of India** (from September 5th to 21st, 2022).

Dates of the **upcoming Regional Chapters** in view of the General Chapter :

- **Region Saint Michael Garicoits**: from October 19 to 23, 2022, at Betharram;
- **Region Fr. Auguste Etchecopar**: from November 7 to 9, 2022 (with a pre-chapter from 4 to 6) in San Bernardino (Paraguay);
- **Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified**: from January 23 to 27, 2023, at Ban Betharram / Chiang Mai (Thailand).

Father Victor BATAILLÈS scj

Barzun, 20 January 1927 - Betharram, 29 August 2022 (France)

Homily for the funeral

1 Cor 1 :26-31 and Luke 15 :1-7

The choice of this reading was made from what we know of our brother who accompanies us today in prayer. He was a religious Betharramite priest, a special religious like each of us, having lived right up to the end in faithfulness to the vows he took 78 years ago at the end of his novitiate in Balarin. Faithfulness to his priestly ordination 71 years ago in Bordeaux Cathedral at the end of an initial formation disrupted by the war. The Second World War, which was not finished and which forced him to start his scholasticate in Balarin, before leaving for Bethlehem. The exodus of 1948 following Israel's War of Independence which forced him to continue in the new formation house at Floirac. After his ordination, he was sent to Casablanca to the Charles de Foucauld School ; for three years he built relationships with people who were still appreciative of him up to recent times. Then came the posting to Thailand where he remained for 34 years until his return here in 1988. Like many among us, the Lord chose him not because he came from a great family or was of noble birth but because the Lord shows his



preference for the 'little' people. A modest family but one of solid faith and of real commitment to Betharram, in this lowland of Nay which has seen so many Betharramite vocations rise up and flourish.

His family were particularly privileged in this respect. He had two Betharramite uncles: Jean, born in Barzun in 1887, having lived his whole life in Argentina and Uruguay, came back to die here on 1st October 1972; Auguste, born in Barzun in 1893, enlisted in the Great War, became a Trappist monk in 1933 at Our Lady of the Desert Abbey (next to Toulouse)! The two uncles also had an initial formation which was very split between the Holy Land, Mendelu and Buenos-Aires.

No, among us, 'not many were wise by human standards, not many

were influential, not many were of noble birth.' (1 Cor 1:26)

Victor was a missionary in his own way and, in saying that, there is no value judgment. He was of that lineage of worker priests who put the emphasis on work and professional apprenticeship. He was not on the front line of missions but, thanks to his know-how, he set up a garage in Chiang-Mai to train some young apprentices. He allowed missionaries, in particular Monsignor Lacoste, to travel without worrying about mechanical problems. He wasn't great when it came to the statistics that pointed to advances of the church, which Rome asked for each year, but he helped to give another style to the mission. That is why I chose this reading about the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 good sheep to go and look for the lost sheep. A very modest percentage, perhaps even ridiculous, but so necessary. God doesn't do things as we do, but as St Michael Garicoits said : *'It's not about doing a lot, but about doing what God wants. It's the method of doing much by doing little and often looking as if you are doing nothing. Like Christ for 30 years...'*

I can easily imagine that he was happy to welcome St Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* pointing out that the development of people was part of Jesus Christ's salvation, like the sacraments. During a trip you made with him in Thailand 15 years ago, you noticed that his presence left an important mark and

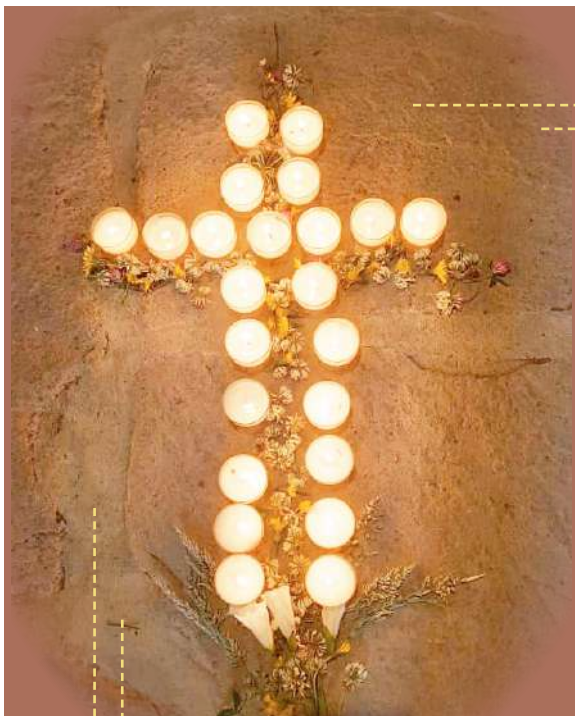
that the Thais were still grateful to him! We can say, as Pope Francis likes to highlight, that he was more of a 'facilitator' than a 'controller' of grace. I was witness to this openness of heart during a retreat for priestly ordination.

We rejoice in these lovable human qualities which gave joy to his family for these past 30 years, and also to the district of his place of residence in Lourdes, also to us here in Betharram. His last stay here allowed him to find peace and serenity with the congregation which he had been distant from! The lost sheep was brought back into the fold in this wonderful but short declaration : *'I have refound fraternity'*.

Here we were helpless to sustain him in his ordeal but were witnesses of much professional empathy from the staff we admire, and he was accompanied respectfully and affectionately by his family. He who had been so proud of his independence, had to experience a great dependence by adopting this physical and human frailty which brought him closer to this 'crushed and obedient' Jesus that he had chosen to follow as a son of St Michael.

We give thanks to Our Lady of Betharram for this missionary face that Victor had been in knowing how to stretch a lifesaving branch to those people who had an ease in their relationship with him, being sensitive to those who had gone astray.

Fr. Laurent Bacho scj



Fr. Auguste Etchecopar • To his sister Julie,
Sister Elisabeth, Sisters of Charity (31 July 1865)

For a Christian, there is no pain, according to St. Paul, which is not followed by consolation, just as the body is inseparable from its shadow. And why does sorrow engender joy in the truly Christian heart? Well, the reason is that it is part of the Cross of Jesus and therefore the foundation of the hope of Heaven. What greater motive, what better source of consolation can therefore our heavenly Father grant us than by sending us the Cross of Jesus, and with it, if I may say so, a blessing from on high, telling us: come my child, come and accompany my son to Calvary, come and help him carry his Cross, and make you part of this little flock that has chosen for its part the tears of its time and the joys of Eternity. [...] Let us therefore, O my God, O God of love, be patient in the present tribulation in order to be joyful in the hope of future joy.

It is therefore necessary that we accustom ourselves to looking at the Cross as a grace, to accept it with the most humble gratitude possible and to carry it courageously, with our hearts foremost, turned towards the eternity that is near: *Sursum corda*. [Our hearts on high].

Photo: Cross illuminated by candles that each participant in the international session lit after a thanksgiving in the house of our Founder.



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