

# NEF

# Betharram

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## A word from the superior general

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## Be open up, arise, and let us walk together!

*And, raising his eyes to heaven,  
he sighed and said:  
"Ephatá" which means  
"Be open!" (Mk 7.34)*

Dear Betharramites,

We are entering the Eastertide together, in which the door of the tomb opens, and the Risen Jesus, standing up, comes out and begins to walk., On the road to the General Chapter, we live with him this time of grace, consolidation and renewal for the entire Betharramite religious family.

In the next three NEF messages from April-May-June, I will invite you to reflect in community on the three evangelical calls that make up the motto: **"Be open, Arise, let us walk together."**

**"Ephatá" - "Be open"**

The account of Mk 7, 31-37 has, according to the exegetes, a clear symbolic meaning. It goes far beyond the reality of a man who does not hear and does not speak. He stands rather as a *symbol of the Gentiles themselves* (the people of the world) who, being unable to **hear** the message, still cannot **pronounce** it properly.

1. The *deaf-mute* (or *stutterer* – according to some translations –) is complemented by the preceding story of the Syrophenician woman (the one who insistently asked Jesus for her daughter possessed by an unclean spirit). This woman seems to have faith in Jesus; This can be seen when Jesus, while healing her daughter, tells her “*because of what you have said...*” (Mk 7.29). So too with the deaf-mute, it is said that at the end: “*he spoke... fittingly*”.

The cured deaf man thus models the route by which a person arrives at a confession of authentic faith. On the other hand, the evangelist emphasizes that we are in purely pagan territory. Hence, the “*sick*” symbolises *the pagan condition that receives faith*.

2. Mark says that the deaf man is “*presented*” to Jesus. He doesn’t say who presented the sick man to Jesus. They beg him to “*lay his hands on him*” (as if he were a healer). However, Jesus makes a correction: *he separates him from the crowd* (i.e. from the “*profane space*”). Thus, Jesus avoids all kinds of curiosity or exhibitionism in front of people. On the one hand the ‘crowd’ had typically no confidence in Jesus; but those who brought the man did. It is therefore a question of a certain faith, which although it is incipient, is expressed with great confidence, like that of the Syrophenician woman. The disciples, for their part, do not quite understand this Jesus of unexpected gestures.

3. The healing happens in two phases. Firstly, Jesus *puts his fingers into his ears*. The original Greek text uses the verb “*ballo*”, meaning Jesus thrust his fingers indicating a vigorous action, as if Jesus was upset because of the way this type of illness afflicted people. Then secondly *Jesus touches his tongue with spittle*. Saliva in that culture was pictured as a concentration of the breath, and breath represents the *vitality* of the person. The most intimate part of the humanity of Jesus then reaches the sick person.

4. Then Jesus *raises his eyes to heaven and utters a deep groan*.

This gesture expresses communion with the divine, in this case with the Father. There is no talk of prayer. The deep moan expresses Jesus' compassion for the situation he finds in that man. He, who as a Son lived in permanent communion with Abba-Father, full of Tenderness, felt his inner spirit rebel when contemplating so much suffering and sorrow in this creature. He then tells him: *Ephatá*, ("be open").

5. Immediately he asks him to keep the *messianic secret*. The reason could be that the local people, attentive in the material sense, were not going to understand the meaning of healing, that is: *the opening of the Gentiles to faith, hearing the word and speaking it*. However, the secret will be impossible to keep. The fame of Jesus spread more and more, but not as he would have liked. The people then turned him into a very popular character, with the air of a famous healer, but they failed to realise who he really was: *the Missionary of the Father, who proclaims the Good News of the Kingdom, that goes beyond the healing of bodies*. In fact, the evangelist immediately highlights the misunderstanding that will follow Jesus from now on.
6. Nevertheless, the people exclaim: "*He has done everything well, he makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak*" (Mk 7.37). This phrase recalls the creative action of the Father in Gen 1.31 "*And God saw that everything was very good*"; and the prophecy of Is 35, 5-6a: "*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be uncovered.*" "*Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy.*"

*Our religious family, like the deaf, needs to be open and proclaim that Jesus is Lord. It will be our response to the signs of God that challenge us in the present. Open our ears (sign of active obedience), the lips and the heart (traits of our missionary mission). Betharram can recover the fervour of the first Betharramites, dedicated and available to announce the Gospel, not only in de-Christianized France, but especially wherever they were sent, to the lost sheep, to those who were beyond the seas and mountains.*

*In a world sensitive to paganism like the current one, we are called to loosen the tongue and be announcers of the Kingdom*

*of God, this touches our most intimate fibre as missionary disciples. This means an openness that, thanks to the faith and work of the laity, the friends who trust in Betharram, and our benefactors, invites us to be faithful to our religious vocation. "We do not want to be a museum Church, beautiful but mute, with a long past and little future" (prayer for Gen Chap 2023).*

*The gesture of Jesus who "takes aside" the deaf-mute helps us Betharramites not to feel indispensable in the places where we are, so we don't place 'our public image' before our humble ecclesial service.*

*If we allow the Heart of Jesus to act in the depths of our hearts, even if it means accepting pain, detachment, shame..., then Life itself will recreate itself where there is closure, darkness and inaction.*

*The discernment to be carried out in Betharram will not occur if we do not open ourselves to Jesus, to his gestures and words that express Life. It is not about reasoning out loud or expressing personal interests that appear under the name of "dreams". True dreams prepare us for a much deeper process, in which Jesus welcomes, separates, raises his eyes to heaven to fill the human with the divine, heals us and always invites us to take another step together with the People of God.*

- Which people are leading my community towards the encounter with Jesus today?
- In which aspect of my consecrated life is there any deafness?
- Are we, as a community in mission, announcers of the Good News, or do we lend ourselves to 'stand out' & to personal works?
- What do we Betharramite communities need to be open to today?

***Fr. Gustavo Agín scj***  
Superior General



## Homily, Holy Thursday 2023 • St Peter's basilica, 6 April

[...]

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Lk 4:18). Jesus began his preaching with this verse, which also begins today's first reading (cf. Is 61:1). At the beginning, then, the Spirit of the Lord is present.

Dear brothers in the priesthood, today I would like to reflect with you on the Holy Spirit. For without the Spirit of the Lord, there can be no Christian life; without his anointing, there can be no holiness. He is at the centre and it is fitting that today, on the birthday of the priesthood, we acknowledge his presence at the origin of our own ministry, and the life and vitality of every priest. Holy Mother Church teaches us to profess that the Holy Spirit is the "giver of life". [1] Jesus told us: "it is the Spirit that gives life" (Jn 6:63). His teaching was taken up by the apostle Paul, who wrote that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6) and who spoke of the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:2). Without the Holy Spirit, the Church would not be the living Bride of Christ, but, at most, a religious association – more or less good, not the Body of Christ, but a temple built

by human hands. How then are we to build up the Church, if not beginning with the fact that we are "temples of the Holy Spirit" who "dwells in us" (cf. 1 Cor 6:19; 3:16)? We cannot lock the Spirit out of the house, or park him in some devotional zone, no, he has to be at the centre! Each day we need to say: "Come, for without your strength, we are lost". The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Every one of us can say this, not out of presumption, but as a reality. For all Christians, and priests in particular, can apply to themselves the words that follow: "because the Lord has anointed me" (Is 61:1). Dear brothers, apart from any merit of our own, and by sheer grace, we have received an anointing that has made us fathers and shepherds among the holy People of God. Let us reflect, then, on this aspect of the Spirit: his anointing.

[...] Yes, brothers, the Lord has not only chosen us and called us to go to that place or another: he has poured out upon us the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who descended upon the apostles. Brothers, we are "the anointed".

Let us now turn our attention to



them, to the apostles. Jesus chose them and at his call, they left their boats, their nets and their homes and so on... The anointing of the Word changed their lives. With great enthusiasm, they followed the Master and began to preach, convinced that they would go on to accomplish even greater things. Then came the Passover. Everything seemed to come to a halt: they even denied and abandoned their Master. We should not be afraid. We are courageous when reading about our life and our failures [...]

Dear brothers, something similar happens in our own priestly and apostolic lives. We too experienced an initial anointing, which began with a loving call that captivated our hearts and set us out on the journey; the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon our genuine enthusiasm and consecrated us. Later, in God's good time, each of us experienced a Passover, representing the moment of truth. A time of crisis which took various forms. Sooner or later, we all experience disappointment, frustration and our own weakness; our ideals seem to recede in the face of reality, a certain force of habit takes over, and difficulties that once seemed unimaginable appear to challenge our fidelity. For the anointed, this stage [...] is a watershed. We can emerge from it badly, drifting towards mediocrity and settling for a dreary routine, in which three dangerous temptations can arise. The temptation

of compromise, where we are content just to do what has to be done; the temptation of surrogates, where to find satisfaction we look not to our anointing, but elsewhere; and the temptation of discouragement – which is very common – where dissatisfaction leads to inertia. This is the great danger: while outward appearances remain intact – “I am a priest, I am priest” – we close in upon ourselves and are content just to get by. The fragrance of our anointing no longer wafts through our lives; our hearts no longer expand but shrivel, disillusioned and disenchanting. [...]

Yet this crisis also has the potential to be a turning point in our priesthood, the “decisive stage of the spiritual life, in which the ultimate choice has to be made between Jesus and the world, between heroic charity and mediocrity, between the cross and comfort, between holiness and dutiful fidelity to our religious obligations”.

[...] With the help of the Holy Spirit: for us as for the apostles, it is the time of a “second anointing”, the time of our second calling, to which we have to listen; the second anointing in which the Spirit is poured out no longer on the enthusiasm of our hopes and dreams, but on the freedom of our concrete situation. An anointing that penetrates to the depths of our reality, where the Spirit anoints our weaknesses, our weariness, our inner poverty. An anointing that brings a new fragrance: that of the Spirit, not of ourselves. ■



## From our Mission centres to our Formation houses

The journey of formation  
in the Vicariate of Thailand

Fr. Kriangsak Kitsakunwong scj

**“From our Mission centres to our Formation house” is a particular process of God’s plan in Thailand which has led us to what we are today. This process invites us the Betharramites in Thailand to “Remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm, and look forward to the future with confidence” as Pope Francis<sup>1</sup> said. This is because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8).**

### **Initial days of the mission of formation**

After the arrival of our first Betharram missionaries 71 years ago, collaborating with and building up the local Church for 33 years, in 1984 they started welcoming young men willing to experience the Betharram lifestyle at Maesarieng district of the diocese of Chiang

1) *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated people on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, 21 November 2014.*

Mai, without any certainty for the future. Fr. Mirco SCJ (Superior of the mission in Thailand) and Fr. Pierre Grech SCJ (Superior General) were instrumental in carrying out this project. On 20th January 1987 the Ban Betharram Sampran Seminary, the first formation house, was officially inaugurated by Emeritus Card. Michael Michai Kitbunchu of the Archdiocese of Bangkok (Cf. NEF-March 2023 p.12).

Jesus the Lord of the missions was born in Bethlehem in a particular culture to do the will of the Father and proclaim the Kingdom of God. We the mystics of Incarnation also are called to be born in our particular culture to respond to God’s call in our life accepting the invitation of our Founder St. Michael Garicoits: “*Here I Am to do the will of God*” in a particular culture. He also invites us to go “*Always Forward*” in the mission entrusted to us.



*Young people in formation in Sampran Ban Garicoits*

So, our missionaries proclaimed the Good News and sowed the seed of faith which took root in the hearts of the people in the culture of the tribal communities in the northern part of Thailand.

### **Initial formation**

When we look to the past, we are grateful to God for guiding our Congregation in Thailand and for showering so many graces on the missionaries. In our Thai Vicariate we have never conducted vocation camps or done vocation promotion. But we are still having vocations for our Congregation. It is because the members of Betharram promote vocation through their very life and mission.

What we are, and what we have today in Thailand, in the context of

the life and mission of Betharram, is the result of the inspiration, the seed of faith, the missionary dedication and the testimony of the lifestyle of our Betharramite missionaries. What we have received from our missionaries in the past, we practice in the present context and this becomes vocation promotion.

The initial formation is the first stage for our young students when they are welcomed in our formation houses. Here we teach them a method of study and we help them to deepen and practice their Christian faith. We accompany them in our mission centres and while they are still in they family; then after discernment we ask them to join our formation houses.

At present, we have three





who holds the first responsibility for saying “yes” to the call which has been received and for accepting all the consequences of this response” (Cf. *Ratio Formationis* &124)

This is a necessary and important stage of formation in our religious life. We are invited to live faithfully our Betharramite vocation by taking

care of our ongoing formation.

formation houses. One in Ban Betharram, Payao (Chiang Rai Diocese), where the boys study in a secondary school called Mathayom 1-3. The second one is Ban Betharram, Samphan (Bangkok Diocese), where they study in high school level Mathayom. 4-6. The third one is Ban Garicoits, Samphan, where they attend the philosophy and theology courses.

Mathayom 1-6 is the stage of Aspirancy. After high school is the stage of pre-postulancy for 1 year; and the period of philosophy is postulancy that lasts for 4 years. After postulancy they enter the Novitiate. Those who study theology (4 years) are called Scholastics. This is the process of the initial formation in the Thai Vicariate.

### Ongoing formation

“It is the individual religious

**Personal level:** Self-formation and personal accompaniment are very important in the process of permanent formation, after a long period of initial formation in the formation houses. In our religious life, each one of us needs to continue our formation in all the dimensions: in our spiritual activities and in our pastoral activities. Indeed “formation is the time which allows each one to develop the capacity to make the best possible contribution to the Kingdom of God, in the heart of the Congregation”. (Cf. *Ratio Formationis* 49).

**Community level:** we meet each other once a month to share our personal life, our faith and our ministry experiences and all other activities. This is a way to support

each other in our community life.

I would like to quote the African proverb on the importance of Community life: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." That is something to take note of to encourage and inspire one another for our fraternal formation in our community life.

**Vicariate level:** we gather once in two months in the Chiangmai community. We have a retreat once a year and on other special occasions. This is an opportunity for all our members to renew and deepen the meaning of our religious life as members of the Betharramite family.

We always remember the words

of our Founder St. Michael Garicoits who said "Always forward" and these words inspire and touch our hearts to encourage one another to try to go together to renew our self-formation through our community life as well as in our ministry.

### Ongoing formation: for the young priest

In our Thai Vicariate, we have begun the process of ongoing formation for the group of young priests with 10 years of ordination, Fr. Chockdee and Fr. Kriangsak, their elder brothers, being their guides. Fr. Nonthapat is the leader of the group of young priests. The programme includes meetings both online and in person once a month and sharing our experiences. We



*The retreat, an opportunity for all our members to renew and deepen the meaning of our religious life as members of the Betharramite family.*



encourage and support each other. The religious in mission abroad are also involved.

### **The challenges for the future**

The first challenge emerges from the society in which we live. Nowadays, people prefer to have a smaller family; the family has become a nuclear family. When the number of children is reduced, the vocations to religious life also decreases.

*The second challenge* is the modern mentality: materialism and social trends that attract children and the youth. The decision to choose religious life is so critical since there are multiple choices in front of the young people.

*The third challenge* is the process of formation: formation is a long process. During these years we must keep updating the process of formation to make it suitable for the young people in formation.

*The fourth challenge* is the advancement of media and information technology. Media addiction has an impact on the daily life of youth and in particular on the formation and vocation journey of our formees.

Organising vocation camps and vocation promotion activities in other dioceses, in other tribes and in other cultures: this is *the fifth challenge* for the short term.

*The sixth challenge* is the money necessary for formation. It is a

challenge for both the formator and for the Vicariate.

Though we have many challenges in our formation, we have the courage to go on and embrace the future with hope by the Grace of God.

Finally, we thank the Lord for all His blessings and for guiding our Thai Vicariate in this journey leading our young brothers from our mission centres to our formation houses. We thank all our missionaries who sow the seed of Good News and we thank all the formators for their commitment. Through the grace of the Lord, we look forward to the future with the hope that the Lord may continue to guide and accompany us. We the formators and the members of the Vicariate are single-minded about forming young people called by the Lord, walking with them, helping them to follow the programme of the Heart of Jesus according to the charism of St. Michael Garicoits: "*Here I am to do the will of God*" in all the events of our daily life. ■



### **PHAYAO • Ban Betharram Junior seminary**

After the Second World War, in 1945 or 1946, Mr. Praphit Thianvihan, a military physician and Catholic, settled in Phayao with his family. He wanted to build a school and a church. The Church agreed and made ground available. On March 9th 1991, Mr. Praphit's dream became a reality with the construction of the Ban Marina House for the Nuns of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Maria of St. Sebastiano (Spain), and opened its doors to welcome poor girls, Christian or not, teaching them sewing and giving them a basic education. Father Luzzi became their priest and pastor. September 9th 1991 saw building start on the house of Ban Bétharram. A mass of thanksgiving was celebrated by the Bishop of Chiang Mai, Mons. Joseph Sangwal, on May 1st 1994, on its completion. The Thianvihan family gave land for a church, and a training school to teach mechanics to poor young men.

On May 1<sup>st</sup> 1995, Ban Bétharram received its first secondary pupils and it became a junior seminary, with Fr Pierre Salla in charge. In 1999 Fr Raimondo Perlini replaced Fr Salla, who took charge of Samphan. Eventually, a church was built, called St. John the Evangelist, and Fr Perlini became the first priest of the new parish. Ban Betharram continued as a pre-seminary and gave training to 20 boys for the first two years, increasing to 30 the next year. In 1995, the school of vocational orientation at Phayao opened.

From the new semester (May 2023) there will be 22 junior students at Phayao.

***Fr. Bernard Suthon scj***

from the booklet *Footprints of Betharram Missionaries*, Vicariate of Thailand, 2021





## Come and See Weekend



Br. Andrew Ferris scj

**Inspired by the theme of the last General Chapter XXVII, We Go Out to Share Joy (IV) (from the Manifesto of the Founder), the Vicariate Council along with Vocation Animation Team desired that a process of discernment and renewal take place in regard to Vocation Animation.**

This strong desire to enable a deepening of our shared culture of Vocation within each Community of the Vicariate. The theme of the Chapter 2017, taken from the Visitation of Mary to her Cousin Elizabeth, invites us to both go out to serve and to share, to share the gift and beauty of the Spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. During our recent Vicariate Togetherness days, which also incorporated the Vicariate Assembly, the Religious of Vicariate reaffirmed our desire that this be an ongoing process of reflection and renewal in regard to Vocation Animation within the Vicariate.

Another important aspect from the themes of the General Chapter for Religious of the Congregation was to share more deeply our spirituality, to enable more people to drink from the same source and spring as the Religious of Betharram. A major part of this ongoing desire, and to deepen the ministry of Vocation Awareness, was to hold our first Vocation Animation Weekend.

Inspired by the words of Jesus in John's Gospel, 'Come and See', the Vicariate welcomed three young men to gently explore the gift of Vocation to Religious Life. The weekend took place at Shallowford House, the Anglican Diocese of Litchfield's Retreat Centre, and was animated by Br Andrew, the Vocation Guide for the Vicariate, along with Fr Wilfred, Br Gerard and Fr Austin. During the weekend we explored together aspects of the Spirituality of the Sacred Heart Fathers and



Brothers, celebrating especially the Ecce Venio, the Here I Am of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Those we welcomed to the weekend were also introduced to the life and mission of the Congregation, both within our Vicariate, the Region of St Miriam and the Congregation in general. We also shared important aspects of the life of St Michael, his desire to respond to the call of the Heart of Jesus. We also reflected together the treasures of the experience of St Michael's invitation to discern the Will of God in daily lives.

We were greatly supported by each Religious of the Vicariate, through promotion of the weekend, but most importantly by the gift of prayer. Each parish community where we are in Birmingham and Nottingham also invited to pray for God's blessing upon the weekend.

As the Vicariate continues this time of renewal and discernment in relation to the ministry of Vocation Animation, to share from deep source of our spirituality, we give thanks for many ways we share this precious gift of our Religious Life, through the daily living of Community Life, by the apostolate of parish and school ministry. Through our ongoing presence and participation for Vocation days within schools, often animated together with Religious Congregations.

The desire of the Vicariate was that we be dedicated to both share a culture of Vocation, to find afresh the desire to share the Spirituality of our Religious Family, to guide those who desire to discern with us the gift of Vocation to Religious, to thus within our Communities, places of welcome and prayer. ■



## The historical archives in the Mother House

Roberto Cornara, archivist

**A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity of visiting the historical archives of the Congregation in Betharram. To the request of the Superior of the Saint Michael Garicoïts Region, I took stock of the contents of these archives to have an idea about the best way of preserving and keeping this part of the Congregation patrimony.**

It is the chance to reflect once more on the meaning of the archives, on the reasons why we must preserve ancient, dusty papers. The answer is very simple, at least for me : the archives are our history, our memory ; they tell what we are, our identity. Nobody would think of preserving old dusty papers only for the pleasure of keeping them, but because, in them, we find the history of the Congregation and of each Betharramite.

The « historic » dimension is

in fact an essential component of man, together with his spiritual, social, economical and political dimension. Man, each of us, lives from history, is made of history : our recollections, our past, the memories of our grand-parents, some events lived in our family, mark our way, shape our culture, guide us in the present time and show us the road in our future, becoming future. One can't ignore the history everyone of us bears with him.

It is much more obvious if we want to deepen and know our situation today. Present, Saint Augustin said, is only a state, a dimension of the soul between past and future. The present, today's life, has a meaning because there is a lived past and a tension towards future. Our present is included between these two dimensions which precede and follow it.

So, to know and preserve





to transmit. To know, to preserve the history and memory which belongs to us, is a duty of gratitude to those who preceded us, of whom we are debtors; and at the same time it imposes the "moral" obligation to transmit integrally what we have received to those who come after us.

To my mind, the archives reflect all these thoughts. Let alone that these "papers" and "files" are a patrimony of the congregation, which must be preserved like a precious good: among the numerous files I have opened and examined (12 full cupboards!) the most important part is surely all that concerns Saint Michael. I touched the letters written by his hand and his other writings. I have been able to ascertain the great work accomplished by Fr. Etchecopar to gather tens and tens of testimonies about the Founder. I could see how much the Bishops of that time estimated the Saint of Betharram, in both parcels of postulatory letters sent to Rome to introduce his beatification and then canonization cause. It made me reflect about the passionate care and attention with which the Betharramites of the past copied all these writings in more than a hundred hand-written copybooks. And it is with emotion and marvelling that I have read both original letters of beatification (Pius XI) (see photo on the next

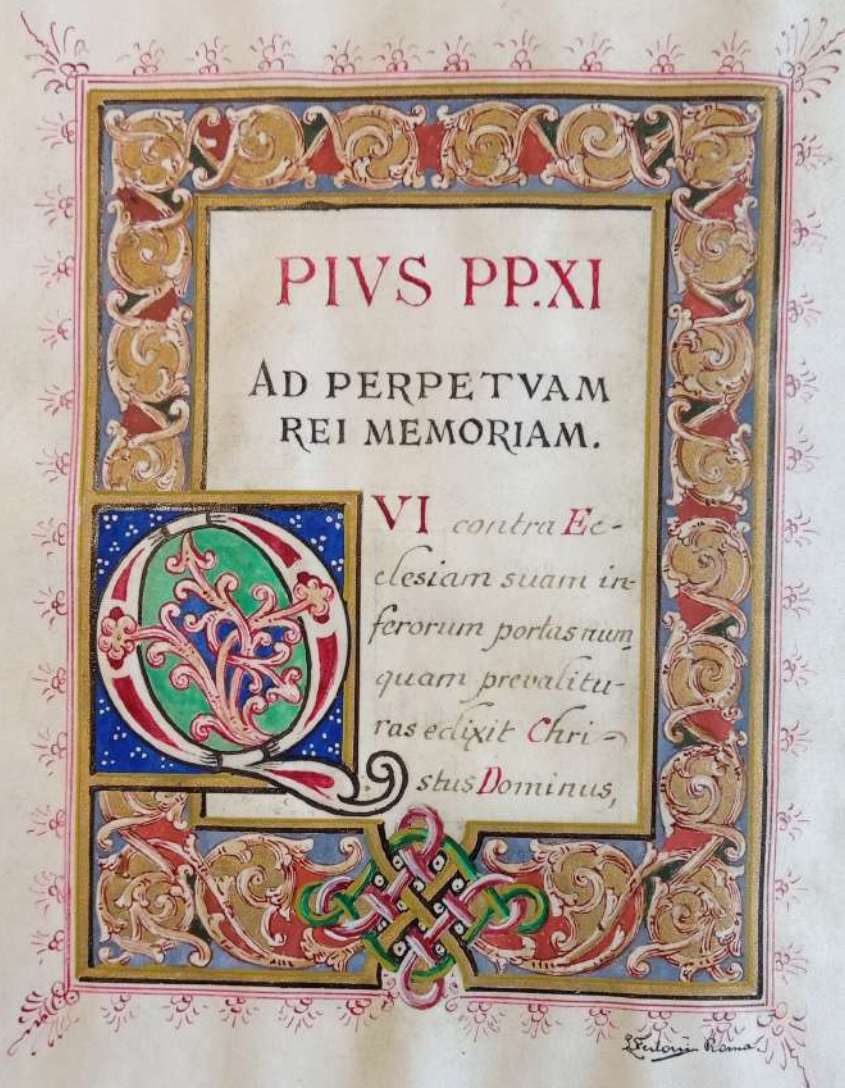
"our" history and "our" memory is essential and inevitable, in order to understand our present rightly, for a more efficient and more courageous organization, and a better conception of its own future. For us, it implies a grave responsibility: what we have received, what has shaped the Betharramite charism and spirituality, the history of the Congregation, is the luggage of our journey, which we have received and which we are called



page) and of canonization (Pius XII) of Saint Michael.

The devotion towards the Founder is expressed in numerous documents and objects kept in the Betharramite archives. I have been struck by the three metal boxes containing the earth surrounding the Saint's grave in the chapel of the Resurrection, «blessed earth » reports a yellowed paper

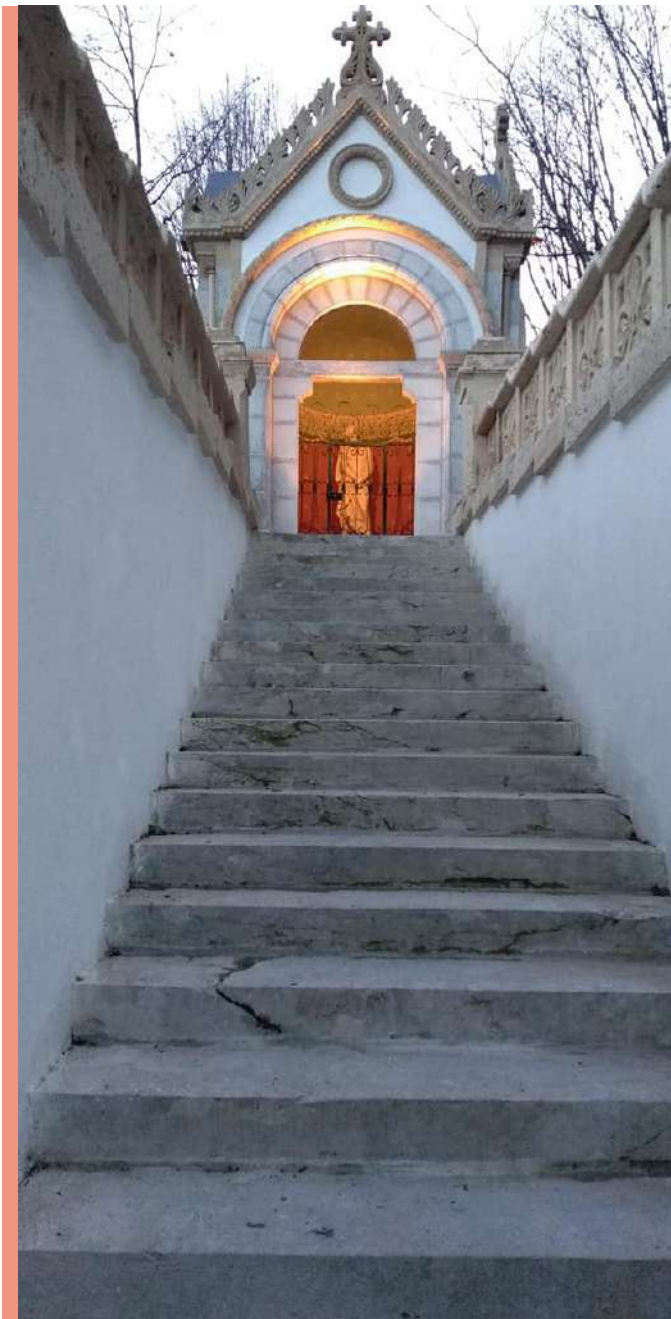
inside. Not to speak about the fabulous enormous poster of the film (1952) about Saint Michael, "the Athlete with bare hands"... All this is a good, a patrimony of the Congregation, which imposes it to take care of it and preserve it as well as possible. ■





## “The Friends of the shrines of Betharram”

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The general assembly of the “Friends of the Shrines” Association was held on Saturday 11 March in the reception areas of the “Notre Dame” community of Betharram. Fr. Sylvain Dansou SCJ (Superior of the community), Fr. Reegan Vincent Raj SCJ and Fr. Laurent Bacho SCJ (Regional Vicar) represented the Congregation. The Friends of the Sanctuaries Association has 43 actual members.

The restoration of the Calvary has been underway for 4 years. The second phase of the works is underway (from the seventh to the tenth station). The works of this second phase will presumably be completed by the beginning of June.

Only the works for the restoration of the last stations from the 11th to the 15th will remain.

In this way, the Vicariate would like to celebrate this year the 150th anniversary of the *Via Crucis* which was built after the French Revolution and inaugurated on September 14, 1873.





## ... Etchecopar House Community in Saint-Palais

Fr. Joseph Ruspil, Br. Emile Garat,  
Fr. Arsène Noba

**As the religious community at Saint-Palais, we reside and live in the birthplace and family home of Father Auguste Etchécopar... That's no small thing! When you think about it and reflect on it, that thrill is a feeling that lives in us.**

The era and the meaningful experiences that Father Auguste Etchécopar was able to live out in this family home and in this significant place, were admirably communicated by our contemporary colleagues through their writings or conferences, ie: Father Gaspar Fernandez and Father Philippe Hourcade as well as Father Beñat Oyhénart. Today, we wish to stress that Father Auguste was very close to his family and to his compatriots, as his plentifully supplied correspondence demonstrates in an admirable way.

He didn't hide his feelings of love and friendship for those close to him. At Saint-Palais, although young

himself, he looked after the younger children with dedication: His care in getting a message across began to show. Very soon, he resembled Michael Garicoïts, his future master. Besides, as you know, St Michael, virtually a neighbour in Ibarre at barely 20 kms away, was very close to the Etchécopar family, especially to Evariste.

When St Michael came by Saint-Palais, he liked to visit the Etchécopar home and the presbytery situated just opposite at the time. That way, St Michael killed two birds with one stone. He parked his carriage there where he could, like us today. How do we separate Father Auguste and St Michael? They both leave us a bright path. The new headteacher of Etchécopar School spoke with sincerity about Father Auguste and the fathers and brothers of Betharram, within her establishment, and that appeared in the local news. During the Summer of 2021, during a public

open evening, Fathers Philippe Hourcade and Beñat Oyhénart, two natives of Saint-Palais, spoke to us about Father Auguste: we listened to them with much interest.

And today, we as a community of religious of Betharram at Saint-Palais, try, like all the others, to live faithfully to the project and gospel charisms of St Michael and Father Auguste. Emile Garat by his salaried work in a supermarket, Arsène Noba and Joseph Ruspil by their pastoral activities in the parish and pastoral care of young people as well as through humanitarian associations, we want to connect with people.

This connection is expressed also in the opening of the house to a little group who come each Thursday to meditate on and share in the word of God from Sunday's Mass. Emile is committed also as chaplain accompanying the Diocesan Young Disabled Service linked to Basco-Béarnaise Hospitality and also at a local level. The community also supports the Ibarre Pilgrimage Ventures in partnership with the Association of 'Friends of St Michael'. We support and share all of that together in our exchanges and our prayer communities. As Father August pushed forward the work of St Michael, our mission here also goes in this direction, with the grace of the Holy Spirit of course.

Why such concern over connection with people, the poor, the sick, and even supporters? Fathers Garicoïts

and Etchécopar gave us the gospel passion of 'Here I Am'. The Second Vatican Council, our Pope Francis and our religious family remind us that 'the Spirit of God pre-exists in each human being who is a child of God.' It seems to us vital and essential to listen first to all of the people that we meet, and that's a priority choice for us. An aspect of truth lives in each human being, each child of God. Our mission of evangelisation and of announcing the Good News of Jesus crosses and passes through all channels of human relationships.

We want to collaborate as much as possible with local partners, at the level of society as well as that of the Church, lay people, religious, priests. The Etchécopar House was given to Betharram by an Argentinian member of the family, who had inherited it. The brothers and fathers have lived there for almost 100 years. And the first was Father Larramendy, out of the abundance of our founders. He also left an important mark; he was appreciated and loved. We are not short of leaders and witnesses who feed our faith, our hope and our enthusiasm. ■



■ On 20 February 2023, the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life granted the **Indult to leave the Congregation to Fr. Shaju Paul Kalapurakkal Paily (India)**. Fr. Shaju will be welcomed by Bishop Mar Sebastian Pozholiparambil in the diocese of Hosur.

## General Council Meeting on March 30 & 31, 2023

■ The Superior General, with the advice of his Council, **approved the appointment of Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo as Master of Scholastics of the Regional Scholasticate** of the SMG Region in Adiapodoumé, for a second term from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

■ The Superior General, with the advice of his Council, **approved the following appointments:**

- **Fr. Glecimar Guilherme Da Silva scj as Superior of the community of Paulinia-Vila Matilde** (Fr. A. E. Region, Vicariate of Brazil) for a first mandate, from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.
- **Fr. Juan Pablo García Martínez scj as Superior of the community «San Juan Bautista» de Buenos Aires** (Fr. A. E. Region, Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay) for a second mandate, from April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- **Fr. George Mathew Korandakkatte scj as Superior of the community of Droitwich** (SMJC Region, Vicariate of England) for a second mandate, from April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

■ Under the Rescript of the Holy Father of 18 May 2022<sup>(1)</sup>, the Superior General, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín Scj, with the consent of his Council, appointed:

- **Br. Ismael Cristian Romero scj Superior of the community of Paso de los Toros** in Uruguay (Fr. A. E. Region, Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay) for a first mandate, from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

(1) With this rescript, the Holy Father Francis authorized the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to derogate from Canon 588 §2 of the Code of Canon Law. According to this Rescript, it is now up to the Supreme Moderator of a clerical religious institute or a clerical society to appoint a non-clerical member as local superior, with the consent of its Council.

■ The Superior General, with the consent of his Council,

*...admitted to final profession:*



**Br. Emmanuel  
Assanvo AGNINAM**



**Br. Hyacinthe Akpa  
N'CHO**



**Br. Jean-Claude  
DJIRAUD**

(brothers of the SMG Region, Vicariate of the Ivory Coast)

*...presents to the diaconate:*

**Br. Stephen Raghu** (SMJC Region, Vicariate of India). The ordination is planned on May 31<sup>st</sup>.

*...presents to priesthood:*

**Deacon Sergio Leiva** (Fr. A. E. Region, Vicariate of Paraguay). The ordination is going to take place on July 9<sup>th</sup> in Ciudad del Este;

**Deacon Fulgence N'Guetta Oi N'Guetta** (SMG Region, Vicariate of Ivory Coast), **subject to dispensation** from the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, given that the minimum six-month period stipulated in Canon Law (§1031) between the ordination to the diaconate and the ordination to priesthood proposed by the diocese on 8 July in Yopougon (Ivory Coast) will not be elapsed.

■ The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, **authorized the purchase of a house in Nottingham as the residence of the community** in charge of the two parishes in Nottingham and of a parish in Clayton (SMJC Region, Vicariate of England).

We are approaching the 100th anniversary of the **beatification** of the Servant of God, Michael Garicoits. The first Superior of the «Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram» was declared blessed by Pius XI on May 10, 1923, the day of the ascension of that same year.

For the cause of canonisation, Fr. Auguste Etchecopar collected numerous testimonies and also submitted his own for the ordinary process in Bayonne (France). His testimony is developed in 16 chapters, including chapter 13 entitled:

## *De fama sanctitatis in vita*



*On the reputation of holiness in life*

*“[...] During the time that I spent with the Servant of God, associated with his life and his daily task, I constantly had the highest esteem and the greatest veneration for his person, for his virtues and for his extraordinary merits; I have never hesitated to believe that there was here a constant perfection above and beyond the ordinary; I am quite convinced that such was the common opinion among those who knew him. But it was only after his death, when I went over the details of his life, analysed his works and his virtues, read his letters in more depth, collected his impressions and testimonies, that I said to myself: he is a saint! I would add that, among the people whom I have since seen testifying to their admiration for the Servant of God, praying near his tomb, several have told me that, during his lifetime, they considered him a saint.*

*I believe I can affirm that during the lifetime of Father Garicoits, both within and without his Congregation, the esteem for his extraordinary virtue was widespread and even unanimous, despite some of his subordinates occasionally highlighting certain imperfections, such as his liveliness, a loud voice in the time of silence, some carelessness in the administration, even certain personal views on the organisation of the Religious Family, especially with regard to the vows.*



*It is good to point out here that the opponents of the introduction of the vows in the Congregation of Betharram, basing themselves exclusively on the provisions of the Lateran Council, without taking into account the more than secular practice of the Holy See, claimed that one could not make these vows, even on a trial basis with the permission of the Ordinary, without the prior authorization of the Holy See.*

*I have already pointed out that Father Garicoits had only accepted these Constitutions, (he told me), with the firm intention of gradually and regularly approaching the perfection of the common law, as and when circumstances permitted.” ■*



**Societas S<sup>mi</sup> Cordis Jesu**  
**BETHARRAM**

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