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## The word of the superior general

**“It must not be like that among you.”  
(cf. Mt. 20.26)**

## **New servants... out of love**

*The Lord was pleased that Solomon made this request, and God said to him:  
«Because you have asked for this,  
and you have not asked for yourself a long life, nor wealth, nor the life of your  
enemies, but you have asked for the discernment necessary to judge rightly,  
I am going to act according to what you say:  
I give you a wise and prudent heart,  
so there will have been no one like you before you,  
nor will there be anyone like you after you. (I Kings 3.10-12)*

Dear Betharramites,

The month of September represents, for some of us, another period of the first half of the year (as in Asia), for others, the second half (as in South America). For others, however (such as in Africa or Europe), it is the beginning of ordinary activities, so much so that, when talking about a “pastoral year”, they always refers to the annual period “September to September”. As can be seen, guiding this multicultural Betharram, so diverse with respect to its

“times”, represents a great challenge to our ability to adapt. This is without taking into account other ecclesiastical differences, food and customs, and even the fact that some drive their vehicles on the right and others on the left.

A little seriously and a little jokingly, it will never be the task of just one person, not even a few, but a responsibility of **all Betharramites**. Each one according to his “position”.

This month of September also coincides with the appointment of authorities at the level of the three Regions and their respective Vicariates. It is an ecclesial act that evokes the testimony of Jesus, who has transformed “power” into “service”. The new leaders, traditionally called “superiors”, upon accepting their position, commit to walk together with the entire People of God, but especially to be close to their Betharramite brothers.

At that time, Jesus said to the apostles (concerned about careerism in the community): *“It should not be like this among you...”* (cf. Mt 20, 26). *“You don’t know what you’re asking for...”* he had told them shortly before..., we must have love, humility and obedience to the will of God to the point of giving one’s life.

Indeed, being a major superior or vicar in the family of Betharram today is not an easy task. You only walk with the support of everyone. It is a shared authority, although superiors have the duty to exercise it personally. In this way, at the same time, resistance to obedience is overcome (this already happened in the time of Saint Michael). So too is the growing temptation to put the role of the superior “in brackets”, as if he were a non-essential figure, not useful, not evangelical. Almost a nuisance...

But that is not what comes from the most genuine fidelity to our charism. Saint Michael Garicoits dedicated extensive expositions to delineate this figure, which he considered fundamental for the proper functioning of the religious family that he wanted to found. Today the Church, even when speaking of synodality as a space of communion and participation that helps to walk alongside the People of God, does not deny this role at all. On the contrary, it highlights the value of each minister of God, as a responsible agent, and proposes a serious reflection on a renewed evangelical leadership, so that it is appropriate to the epochal change that we are experiencing.

I invite Betharramites to meditate on these statements of our constitutions:

Christ chose to exercise in a spirit of service the authority that the Father gave him (John 17.2) *“The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve”* (Mk 10.45). That is the inspiration for authority in the Church.

In the Congregation, those who receive positions of authority are at the service of communion, of the discernment of the will of God, of the support of each one in their vocation, of the performance of the Mission of the Congregation in fidelity to the charism of Saint Michael Garicoits. It is in this sense that they legitimately receive, by election or by appointment, the service of authority, to make decisions and take care of their implementation.

By perpetual profession, all religious, equal in dignity and tasks, participate, with *“voluntary and loving,” “trusting and creative”* obedience, in the family project as defined by the authorities of the Congregation. They work, then, to build the Body of Christ, according to God’s plan, concerned with following Christ in communion with the Congregation and the Church.

The superiors govern the group of religious entrusted to them, respecting each one and their vocation according to the Rule of Life. For this, they encourage fraternal life in community where faith, prayer and goods are shared.

Communion is an essential value in the Church and in our Congregation. The exercise of authority, even if it is embodied in a person, requires the participation of each person: Chapters, Assemblies and Councils express this. (Rule of Life §§ 175-179)

I would like to add here a couple of guiding thoughts from the founder that colour the profile of the Betharramite superior:

*“The great charism of the superior consists in inspiring his brothers with a love for good; bring them to good spontaneously and not by force.... This is the way of proceeding of the Holy Spirit with people: this is the conduct of our Lord in his Incarnation... he requests, he does not force; what he wants are souls of good will”* (cf. DS § 382).

*“The government of souls is the art of arts”... “It is a task that surpasses us infinitely: it is about governing even the ungovernable. Some believe that they do not need a superior or direction. Others*

*recognize their need in theory, but in practice... they reject them. A parish priest is capable of clearly showing his penitents the duty they have to obey him, but he himself is not capable of submitting to the decisions of his Bishop!" (cf. DS § 378)*

As we see, it seems that the challenge of governing is not new...

The truth is that in September 2023 a new stage of this service of authority begins for us. It takes place in a context in which the participation of everyone is expected: religious and lay. "Times of synodality" were always the times of the Church, from its origins. For the world to believe in the announcement of the gospel, it has always been necessary to organise ourselves: "to be well what we are" (as Saint Michael would say), faithful to our vocation, lucid cooperators for the construction of the Kingdom of God.

The world can be indifferent, but that does not mean that it does not thirst for God, for his Word, for finding meaning in life, especially when it feels threatened.

By reading this edition of the NEF, we Betharramites of the congregation will inaugurate a new period with many new leaders who have been asked to put themselves *at the service of everyone*: religious and lay, even the little ones.

I especially ask each Betharramite that their response be *that obedience that should characterise us*, accepting with an open heart, to be servants of one another, in this new stage of the pilgrimage.

I embrace you *in Corde Iesu*:

**Fr. Gustavo Agín scj**

Superior General

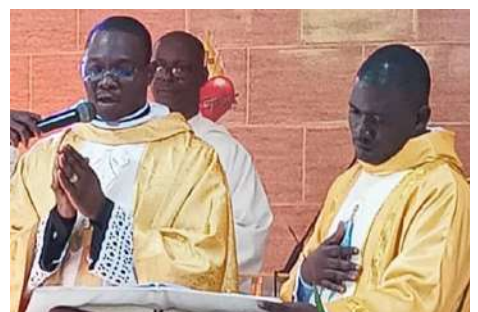
### **QUESTIONS TO SHARE IN COMMUNITY:**

- 1. Are you clear about the "limits of your position" from where you are willing to collaborate in the animation of your community, vicariate, region, congregation?*
- 2. How do you feel today about the roles that have been entrusted to you in your community on mission?*
- 3. What are your expectations about the service of the new superiors?*

### ■ **THAILAND - Chiang Mai & Sampran**

Saturday 17 June: The members of the General Chapter participated in the solemn concelebration in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Chiang Mai during which *our brothers Peter Phichet Wijunwayu SCJ and Mathew Phanupan Shaichonnsrijinda SCJ were ordained priests* by the laying on of hands of Mgr. Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana, Bishop of Chiang Mai. It was a moment lived with intensity and prayer.

Saturday 12 August, *Br. John Weerapong Youhae was ordained a deacon* and *Br. John Baptist Boonyod Saengthammakul was instituted to acolytate* by Card. Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovivanit, at Saengtham Major Seminary, in Sampran.



### ■ **PARAGUAY - Ciudad del Este**

On July 9, in the Betharramite parish of the Sacred Heart in Ciudad del Este, *Br. Sergio Leiva SCJ* was ordained a priest by the laying on of hands of the Most Rev Mgr. Heinz Wilhelm Steckling, O.M.I., Bishop of Ciudad del Este.

### ■ **IVORY COAST - Adiapodoumé**

On Saturday, July 8, at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew of Yopougon, *Br. Fulgence N'Guetta SCJ was ordained a priest* by the laying on of hands of the Bishop of Yopougon, Mgr. Jean Salomon Lezoutié.

During the same celebration, *Br. Emmanuel Assanvo SCJ was ordained a deacon.*

**May you all always be, like St Michael Garicoits,  
available and ready for the mission that will  
be entrusted to you!**

**May Our Lady of Betharram guide you and help you to be faithful!**

■ **IVORY COAST - Adiapodoumé:** On Friday 28 July, on the solemnity of Our Lady of Betharram, the Vicariate of the Ivory Coast welcomed *the first profession of Br Eugène Ishyirimbere SCJ.*

The Superior General, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín scj, gathered his Council in plenary session in Rome from 30 August to 4 September.



During this meeting, the Superior General **appointed the Regional Superiors, Regional Vicars, First Regional Vicars and Regional Bursars**, with the consent of his Council and after consulting the religious of the three Regions (RL. 205 and rescript of Pope Francis on May 18, 2022).

Their term begin on 14 September 2023.

## Saint Michael Garicoits Region



**Regional Superior**

**Fr. Simone PANZERI**

First Vicar &  
 Regional Vicar in Ivory Coast  
 Regional Vicar in France and Spain  
 Regional Vicar in Italy  
 Regional Vicar in Central Africa

Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo  
 Fr. Jean-Marie Ruspil  
 Fr. Enrico Frigerio  
 Br. Angelo Sala

*Regional Bursar*

*Fr. Gerard Zugarramurdi*



## Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region



**Regional Superior**

**Fr. Davi da SILVA LARA**

First Vicar &  
Regional Vicar in Paraguay  
Regional Vicar in Argentina-Uruguay  
Regional Vicar in Brazil

Fr. Alberto Zaracho  
Fr. Sergio Gouarnalusse  
Fr. Glecimar Guilherme  
da Silva  
*Fr. Tobia Sosio*

*Regional Bursar*



## Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified Region



**Regional Superior**

**Fr. Wilfred Poulouse Pereppadan**

First Vicar &  
Regional Vicar in Thailand-Vietnam  
Regional Vicar in England  
Regional Vicar in India

Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong  
Fr. Biju Antony Pantalukkarar  
Fr. Vipin Joseph Chirammel

*Regional Bursar*

*Fr. David Bi-Thu Pitak*



## Others decisions made during the same meeting of the General Council:



In order to respond to the request of the **General Chapter 2023 expressed in the First Motion “Our Presence in Vietnam”**, especially to point 169, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín scj, Superior General, with the consent of his Council, (in accordance with the Rule of Life n. 205/d), **suppressed the Vicariate of Thailand in order to erect the Vicariate of Thailand and Vietnam**, Region of St Mary of Jesus Crucified, from September 2, 2023.



In order to respond to the **Second Motion “Our Presence in the Holy Land”** (cf. Point 176), the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, (according to the RL. n. 205/d), **suppressed the Vicariate of the Holy Land and its communities**.

The **residences of Bethlehem and Nazareth are now under the responsibility of the Superior General and his Council**, from September 2, 2023.

Subsequently, he **appointed the Councillor for Formation, Fr. Stervin Selvadass, as person-in-charge of the Betharramite residences in the Holy Land**.

And he appointed **Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez as bursar of the residences in the Holy Land**.

### from the Acts of the General Chapter 2023

*“Having seen the fruitful collaboration between Thailand and Vietnam, the General Chapter asks the General Council:*

**169** | *1. To link canonically the community in Vietnam to the Vicariate of Thailand [...]*”

**176.** *The General Chapter requests that, for the next six years, the Holy Land depends directly on the Superior General and his Council. The Superior General will make sure to call religious people to strengthen our community there.*





## Young people, at the heart of the General Chapter

|  
Fr. Juan Pablo

García Martínez scj

Under the motto *"Be open, arise, let's walk together!"* The XXVIII Ordinary General Chapter of our Congregation met in Chiang Mai (Thailand). In the "land of smiles", the Betharramite family, (present in four continents), met to discern the steps to take over the next six years. Shortly after, in Lisbon (Portugal), young people from around the world gathered, together with Pope Francis, to celebrate the XXXVII World Youth Day (WYD). They did so under the motto *"Mary arose and departed without delay"* (Lk 1:39). Both were events of the Spirit, a spirit that unsettles us and invites us to let go of our securities, to walk in hope, forward and without delay.

Also at the heart of the last General Chapter, young people from around the world were present. As a religious family, we are aware that *"Our congregational face, which already has a few wrinkles, is being rejuvenated little by little"* (address to the General Chapter, by Fr. Gustavo

Agín, Superior General). It does so through the "yes" of those young people who, especially - although not only - in the new vicariates, follow Jesus as religious or Betharramites in formation. It also does so through so many young people who share their gifts, dreams and vitality in our parishes, schools, groups, missions and works of all kinds.

To all these young people, Betharram opens the doors, to accompany them in cordial and respectful listening, learn from them, walk together, celebrate and share the charism of Saint Michael. We are a small family, looking to the future with faith, love and hope. From our smallness, in love with the tenderness and availability of the heart of Jesus, we try to awaken in these young people the enthusiasm for the vocation to the Christian life, as happy and generous lay people and religious. Precisely because we believe that the Lord continues to call young people to discipleship



and, in particular, to embrace our lifestyle, the General Chapter exhorts each Betharramite to commit to vocational ministry. Likewise, the Chapter highlights the value of fraternal life in community, since it is in the encounter with our brothers that many have experienced the call to live a chaste, poor, obedient, simple and joyful lifestyle like Jesus and Saint Michael.

The Chapter also renewed Betharram's commitment to the peripheries: refugees, migrants, schools (in these too we find people and families on the margins), poor, addicts, homeless people, irregular unions, sexual minorities and all those who, for whatever reason, suffer stigma and exclusion. Also in these existential peripheries we find young people, thirsty for respect, care and hope. Before the faces of these young people, Betharram hears the voice of the Lord saying: "*Ephatha*" (Mk 7:34), that is, "open up." Only by opening our hearts, as Jesus did, can

we announce to the men and women of our time the tenderness, mercy and loving face of God the Father (Rule of Life § 9). That is, ultimately, what our mission is about.

Finally, the General Chapter sought to expound a Pedagogy of the Incarnation and Tenderness, which every Betharramite is called to experience and cultivate. Although the reflection is aimed especially at those who participate in the educational mission, it would be a mistake to limit its scope to our schools (or to those vicariates that have stood out in educational ministry). In fact, the human being learns throughout life and in every place. For all of us, then, Jesus is the Teacher of life, who reveals to us the good gaze of the Father, through the mystery of his Incarnation. Therefore, in all its presences and missions, Betharram wishes to: (a) accompany young people, with respect and love, in their personal process of learning and human growth; (b)

cultivate a hopeful vision of the world, recognizing its lights and also its shadows; (c) engage with the contemporary world and learn from it, to the extent that it manifests the goodness of the Creator of it; (d) prophetically analyse the cultural aspects that put the dignity of the human being and Creation at risk.

At the recent WYD, the Pope

exhorted young people to be, "for others, roots of joy." We too, Betharramites of all ages, renewed by the youngest, long to be faithful to the call that Saint Michael received. As a Betharram family, religious and lay, we wish to "seek the same happiness for others" (Manifesto, 1838).



**Do the Betharramite religious that you know listen to young people?**

**MATÍAS RODRÍGUEZ PICASSO:** My path in Betharram began in Barracas in 2005, when I was five years old, when I began my primary studies. In this journey, which spans 12 years of my life as a student and continues today in another role, I have seen an outstanding quality in the different Betharram religious that I met, which is, particularly, that

gift for listening to young people.

Always being available to offer your time to listen to others - even when they struggle to give voice - shows me your dedication to people's well-being and your commitment to emotional and spiritual support.

I had experiences with some Betharramite religious who have put themselves on the same level as young people and managed to create a safe space free of prejudice, in which they foster trust

and authenticity in communication. This virtue of listening continues to inspire me and has enriched my life beyond the classroom.

**The Church of Latin America is called to be sensitive towards the poor and towards young people. Do you feel like a protagonist alongside the religious of Betharram in this challenge?**

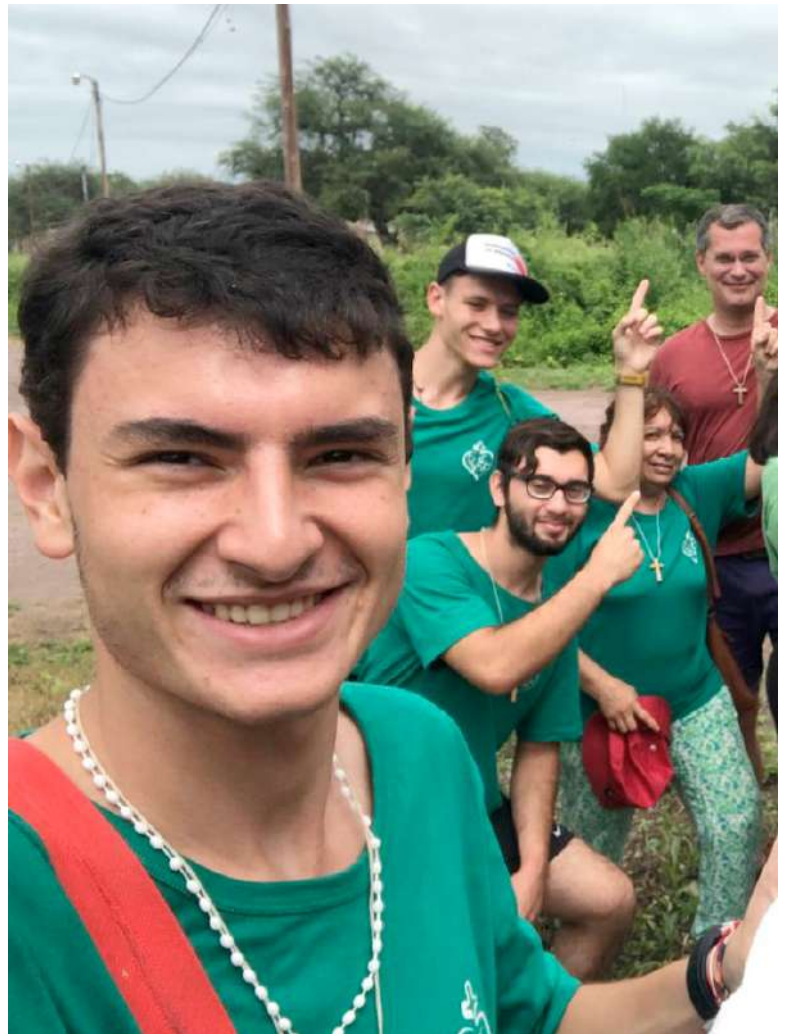
**GONZALO BACIGALUP VÉRTIZ:**  
As a young person I am constantly questioned about "how" to reach another young person. I think it is difficult. Personally, and even more so with the role that I have to fulfill today, it is one of my great challenges. There are people who have the gift to achieve that necessary confidence. In Betharram I know some lay people and also some other religious with that talent. However, not everything is rosy. Many times it can happen, (and it happens to us in some cases) that children feel more attracted to a person (a leader for example) than to God. We have to ensure, as a Betharramite family, that young people are part of it because they feel called by Jesus himself and that the projects are long-term, beyond personalities. If not, another misfortune occurs that happens to us frequently, even it seems cyclically. Someone with enthusiasm makes a lot of effort to form a group. Once he achieves it,

overcoming various obstacles, he feels alone and little supported by the Betharramite community (both lay and religious). Thus, after great wear and tear, he gets tired and decides to walk away; in the worst of cases angry with the Congregation and even with God. Years later, another group is formed. And the ending is the same...

In Latin America poverty is the big problem. In Argentina, for example, poverty surrounds us. We do not have to go very far from our environment. It is possible to affirm that near each of the Betharramite communities in our country there is poverty. Our mission as followers of Jesus, and particularly as Betharramites, is to go out to meet the poor. So, from now on I feel like I am a protagonist. But not just that, I think the important thing is that as a community we draw closer since they are also part of our community. Some of the Betharramite religious that I know are fully committed to the poor and are a great example for us young people. And this is where both issues come together, youth and poverty. Young people, due to their energy, time and sensitivity, are ideal for reaching out to the poor. And the poor, the fruit of this approach, are the ones who often end up helping young people in many aspects of their lives: to discern their vocation, to value life, to get closer to God, to open their minds... And, although as I said at

first, it is not easy, there is some truth in the phrase "a young person looks for another young person", and this beyond the external differences that may exist. These are things that go hand in hand: currently in Argentina our youth groups are missionaries, and our mission is to be available to those most in need, in this case, the poor. The challenge then - in my view - is twofold and deeply interrelated: getting young people closer and, with them, giving to the poor.

### Is the Betharramite charism attractive to a young person today?



#### **MARIA BETHARRAM**

**QUINTELA:** I think it is. Because it gives us a purpose, a meaning to our life. As we grow, we become aware of the realities that surround us, we leave our bubble. And as Saint Michael teaches us, we are available. Being happy we commit ourselves more.

When everything seems to be lost, it seems to have no meaning. Betharram renews us and transforms us. With hope and faith we see that life is there, in sharing with the other, our brother. We want to serve others, driven by the love of God. Open to facing new challenges, with enthusiasm.

Being young, we have many

stimuli in daily life that can distance us from God. But we also seek balance and carry Jesus with us. We are not indifferent, here we are. Betharram unites us.

### What formation or mission experiences have helped you mature as a young Betharramite?

**AGUSTIN MONTEODORO:** In my experience, since I have been part of the Congregation, I have participated in multiple missionary activities, among which I can mention evangelizing trips to different places in the province of Santiago del Estero, exchange activities between

different missionary groups (local and other Betharramite works), camps and overnight stays, youth retreats, visits to nursing homes and picnic areas in the city, regional meetings, among other things.

In all of them, the work of multiple missionaries, lay and religious, was notable, but above all things, the constant participation of the Lord, a living, tender and loving God who outlined the path for us to follow and love him as missionaries of the Catholic Church.

In each of these experiences that I had to share, I was forging and maturing my character as a young Betharramite, at the same time

I was getting to know and learn the history of our congregation, of our Father St Michael and his contemporaries, and discovering the traits of our charism so happy and contagious.

Each of the moments I experienced allowed me to meet different people, who brought with them a wealth of stories to tell, countless emotions to express, and lessons to transmit.

I try to remember each of those special "little people," and I realize that, in the midst of our sharing, the characteristic availability and charity that Saint Michael left us as a legacy was always present.

## Testimonies from the WYD



I was very touched by the Pope and I think his words will stay with me for a long time. The fact that God's love is free and for all, and that we are capable of everything thanks to Him,

really moved me, because he said it in such a clear and true way. I didn't expect that when I came. I thought I would find an old man who would say mass. But instead, I met a man full of

wisdom and love. We felt Jesus through his words.

And I so enjoyed the moments spent together. I went with two friends, and although I'm not very extrovert, I managed to make others little by little. I had a great time with our group, it's the best group I've ever

been with anywhere! I loved talking with people of other nationalities, they were all very nice, and I find it beautiful that we are all connected by the same faith. The moments of testimony were very touching. I remember those of the two girls who had strayed from God and who later found Him again. Thanks to them all, I found hope in God's love and trust in Him. But the Pope was the icing on the cake. When he spoke to us, I really felt God's love and closeness to Him.

Finally, I will remember this beautiful city of Lisbon for a long time. The architecture was magnificent and the places of worship were very rich. I really liked this city, maybe I will return there one day! | ***A participant***

## WYD

Since I returned from WYD, I have felt several changes. It must be said that these two weeks in Portugal



were incredible, and allowed me to receive many graces, both logistically [example: I had the chance to be with a family the first week when it wasn't planned, and it allowed me to experience very enriching encounters] and spiritually and creatively. By this I mean that the Lord allowed me to see magnificent landscapes and monuments in Portugal, which made me marvel again and again at the beauty of our world. In addition, the meetings I had in the first and second weeks have changed and will change many things in my life. Finally, thanks to the Pope's catecheses, testimonies and homilies, I was able to deepen my faith and give new impetus to my inner spiritual fire. It also allowed me to realize that a lot of things were not going well in my life and gave me the motivation to shake things up and make new resolutions.

These are memories, meetings and words that I will always keep in my heart. | ***A participant***



## WYD

WYD, World Youth Day. Or even SPA for Suppleness, Patience and Adaptation. These are the two acronyms which can sum up these two intense weeks of sharing, joy and grace, experienced in Portugal with the Pope and in the presence of God.

Why Suppleness, you ask me? Well, given that we were two million young Catholics together, suffice to say that it was necessary to be flexible, because everything was destined to change from one moment to the next. So we had to constantly adapt. And Patience, because everything comes in time to those who wait... the Pope, right? To be completely honest with you, my only motivation for going to WYD was to see the Pope, but since our Lord always has better plans for us than what we had in mind, you will well imagine, dear readers, that It was not the case.

The Pope was there, present, close to us, only a few metres away, but it was impossible to establish visual contact with him. What was a surprise was that during the pre-WYD (days in the dioceses), we were touched, in turn, by love of neighbor, the gospel put into action despite the language barrier, a Portuguese generosity which would nevertheless make it so simple to move mountains. This first week allowed us to immerse ourselves in the culture of the country of Fatima and to break down the barriers within the diocesan group, in order to remain united for the flood of crowds of the second week. But before moving on to the roller coaster of Lisbon, it is true that what struck me the most was our visit to Fatima, and particularly the open-air mass on the pilgrim's way, there in nature, at the bend of a burning bush burning with love and impatience to receive the graces of WYD. We feel a special atmosphere there like in



Lourdes.

On arrival in Lisbon, accommodation was in a high school, with the Basques and the Béarnais in a gymnasium, the Isérois and the Bretons in buildings housing classrooms. This mixing was already creating encounters, a balm for the heart and this only the beginning. An adventure which begins with the time of the French, 45,000 French people, all regions represented, the French-speaking world also with the Swiss, Belgians and Quebecois. To finish in style, the blessing by different bishops including Mgr Aillet of our diocese, of young people wishing to commit to the unity of the Church, evangelization or service to others. And to officially open these WYD, the opening mass, we see the crowd, all these flags! How beautiful it is to see so many people gathered for Christ. Beautiful, impressive and touching. Just like the stations of the cross on Friday, the vigil on Saturday evening and the Sunday mass, all presided over by the successor of St-Peter. What a beautiful Church! How impressive these young people are! The Pope's words are touching and meaningful, they give energy and inspire us to believe ever more or rather to never stop believing. I now know why I believe, this comforts me in my relationship with God, because to experience so many emotions, laughter, tears but also yawns, there must be someone behind it all. You have understood, that WYD is

intense, necessary, in short not to be missed! Rest assured, WYD is also a lot of dancing, concerts, singing, praise, worship, teaching, tourism, culture and food. In short, there is absolutely something for everyone. I hope to have convinced you to participate in the next meeting in Seoul in 2027 with these few lines, but I assure you: you must live this indelible experience. | **Marie Blando, 23, parish of Saint-Palais.**

## WYD

During WYD, what struck me the most was meeting the young people. This meeting took place in two stages: the first week, we met more than 200 young French people from our diocese, whom we did not know, and the second, we discovered pilgrims coming from 190 different countries.

From the first day, and particularly during the first mass, we all saw the immense faith that united us in these world youth days. We discovered each person in the group more deeply through moments of sharing and questioning following the catechisms, but also during meals or hikes.

We noticed that some young people had made less effort than others to meet new people, but generally we had very nice encounters. Moreover, recently I was able to see a "WYD" friend from Anglet with whom I had become friends.



our hearts thanks to all the magnificent encounters we have had, but above all deeply marked by our encounter with the Lord.

Unlike the majority of pilgrims, it was with great apprehension that I went to WYD. I

The second week was different in terms of relationships, since a particular closeness was established to the extent that we all slept nearby in a gymnasium, which created bonds. On the other hand, in the afternoons, we generally had free time, which meant that the option chosen was often the ease of staying with the friends we knew. However, if we did not necessarily stay with pilgrims from our diocese, the second week was filled with wonderful meetings, whether French, Malaysians, Italians, Portuguese, Lebanese, Americans, Spaniards, Colombians...

Moreover, during WYD a sort of barter system was established, that is to say that we would give a small object to a pilgrim we met in exchange for another small object, religious or otherwise.

We also had many very deep discussions with a number of priests and nuns, which was a great help in growing our faith.

We emerge from this fabulous experience not only filled with balm in

was going through a special time in my faith, and even though my relationship with God was intact, I needed answers. Like a "wink god", as soon as I arrived in Portugal, I felt a real connection with the Lord, which moved me throughout the fortnight. In addition, my WYD were marked by magnificent homilies, meetings and testimonies which made my faith grow, but above all pushed me to become even more involved with the most vulnerable. I think that for many pilgrims there is a before and an after WYD. Sincerely, brothers and sisters who read these words, go to WYD, they have changed my life. |

***Jeanne Tarride, 21, parish of Saint-Palais.***

## WYD

Madrid 2011. Rio de Janeiro 2013. Krakow 2016. Lisbon 2023.

How difficult it must be to reunite heaven and earth! The infinite azure and the depths of the sea! Won't the secret be in the little things? These little things that have fallen into



disuse or that we have forgotten, those that do not create a new trend, or that cause us to lose 'like's...

Like these million and a half young people, I too set out for my fourth World Youth Day. That alone can already sound cheesy. But, you see, as the years go by, there is a sort of common thread that unites the days and hours of my story and that always brings me back to the starting point, what someone dear to me called the "vanishing point", the "deepest of desires", the desire to go "further, beyond".

These words will undoubtedly seem strange, exaggerated, too utopian to you... just like the desire to unite the sky and the sea. Going for WYD means this: taking a moment, a week, a time to go to the heart of yourself - yourself and reach the hearts of others. Millions of young people come together to rediscover themselves, to declare peace to the nihilism that surrounds us, to shout to the world that we are those who believe in Love. Isn't this how the

impossible becomes possible? So I packed my backpack, set off and met my traveling companions.

I had the courage to get up and this allowed me to watch in amazement the dawn overlooking the ocean. I went to my vanishing point, I took my momentum and I arrived "further", where each word of Pope Francis traced its path in the soul, where the words "peace", "equality" and "love" no longer cause scandal, where so many young people have made the most audacious gesture of taking the Gospel in their hands. And if someone were to come and tell us that we were too romantic, that we wasted our time, that we are remarkably worthless fools..., we would answer yes, that we are among those who go in search of places where life is tasted to the bone, where the impossible becomes possible, where the sky meets the surf of the sea.

"Alex, is that the last one? You still don't want to go to Seoul?"  
"Of course, Claudio, this is the last time... Have you seen the price of

plane tickets to South Korea? I was just looking..." | **Alessandra Corti**

## WYD

What do you bring back from these WYDs? Oh, don't ask me, because it always takes me time to assimilate everything... What I certainly remember are the emotions felt before departure, a departure for which I ran out of steam due to the priorities I had set for myself.

The uncertainty about not going was what worried me the most: missing this event and not being able to give it a second chance, after the WYD in Krakow which had left so many signs, fatigue and tears. It was the last World Youth Day in which I could participate.

Finally I was sure I could go. I breathed a sigh of relief, as all my commitments were fulfilled ahead of schedule, and along with the relief, I felt joy.

These WYD were experienced with fatigue: physical fatigue, for the nights spent sleeping on the bus on the way there and back, but it was a fatigue of little importance compared to the mental fatigue. Work, the events of the past year and studies had exhausted me. I left without any particular expectations, I had even prepared myself for the worst, or at least for a sequel to WYD in Krakow (in my head, it was a horror film). Fortunately, that was not the case. The host family took care of this first fatigue. My companions and I found ourselves sleeping in a tavern, which was actually a second apartment. In the kitchen area, "mom" always made us find something to eat for our late return.

Mary's willingness to take us out to the ocean to see the sunset, telling us that the sea was usually not so calm but rougher, and that we couldn't tell the water from the sky; the precise questions of Louis, a man



of few words, but very expressive: I bring all of this together under the word love.

I take away the tears of Friday, the day I fought with myself before making peace, I emerged from last year with a few bruises but with a smile.

I bring joy home. The joy of being with my friends at Parque Tejo under the stars, although throughout the day on Saturday and Sunday we said to ourselves: "Stop, it's the last time!" "It's not for nothing that they put an age limit on being able to participate in this event! "

I bring home the phrase "get up." As well as the word "obrigado", which not only means thank you, but says something more. This extra that I cannot yet explain and that I do not know how to tell when someone asks me the question: "What are you bringing back from these WYDs?" | **Sara Benassai**

**Fr. Arsène Noba scj** | On July 25, I was filled with joy at the idea that I was going to participate for the first time in one of the biggest events in the world: World Youth Day. A day organized at the invitation of the Bishop of Rome. In our spirituality, we know the value of the call of a bishop. Happy I went; very satisfied I returned, still meditating on the testimony of all this youth present in Lisbon, capital of a country with very strong Marian devotion.

With the diocese, I went to the meeting. I met young people who, in my opinion, were hungry to find themselves. How to express their love for the Church, how to seek to understand it. All, to make present the joyful world to which we all aspire. How could anyone be indifferent or insensitive to the multiple national flags? In this world there are bishops



and the reality of prayer. This was well experienced, in my eyes, by a good number of young people in France who also wanted to experience times of silence. I, a Betharramite, sensitive to the fragile context that the Church is going through, am still touched by the prayer of young people for their bishops; also struck by



the courageous testimony of the footballer Giroud and many other people obviously very happy to be Christians, like this recidivist prisoner who became a Vincentian. There is also this testimony in private, that brought tears to my eyes, from a lady to some of our group: "My home is in bad shape, but I am holding on by the grace of faith."

Among the many teachings, the first shared at Fatima was on the Taste of Heaven. The sun eagerly invited itself to the event. But there was a determined youth. In the confessions heard, I can say it loud and clear, the young people of France have a desire for Heaven, a desire for God. From the place where the Pope was welcomed, we could see the planes

landing. At the closing mass, we saw them take off. At the end of this WYD, many of the young people are eager to take off to testify without shame and above all proud to be Catholic.

You can imagine my happiness, as I coming from the Central African Republic who had difficulty finding young people in our rural churches,

could see all these young people gathered around the wearer of the white cap. As a Betharramite, sensitive to the question of vocation, I returned from these WYDs, charged with real hope. It is a shame that, for France and the Ivory Coast, there were only three Betharramites able to go for this striking meeting with these young people who, in these very difficult times, responded massively to the Pope's call. I pray for all these young people, these future missionary disciples who in complete freedom have a taste of heaven.



## “How can we become the roots of joy?”

Fr. Simone Panzeri scj

**“How can we become the roots of joy?”** That was the question Pope Francis asked of the young people attending the vigil on Saturday evening 5 August at Lisbon’s Parque Tejo, during the 2023 World Youth Day gatherings in Lisbon. I must say that the Pope gave us quite a surprise when he said that! We had only been saying to one another when we left on the coach from Pistoia (Tuscany, Italy) the week before, and during the drive and indeed during our WYD encounters, that one question kept cropping up in our group: “Do we really ever experience true joy?” This became the constant refrain throughout our pilgrimage. And in fact the Pope asked this very question of us all, at the end of our WYD pilgrimage.

We had set off, like pilgrims, in search of this true joy. And that is how we tackled the thousand and one experiences placed by the WYD along the way. During the two-day coach journey, the 100-strong group

of young people “passed their time” in listening to their travelling companions, creating new links and networks, breaking down the barriers that separated the various different parish groups, so as to open themselves to others, to discover the joy to be found in new friendships. The stopover in Loyola, our half-way house on both the outward and the return journeys, enabled us to get to know a little more about the life of St Ignatius and to set off on the right foot to meet whatever was awaiting us in Lisbon. Thus in the sanctuary at Loyola, we asked ourselves this question: what treasure does our life hold? What makes our existence full of meaning and happiness?

Upon our arrival in Lisbon, we were welcomed with extraordinary care and devotion by the parish community of Silveira (about 60 km to the north of Lisbon). We were able to experience, first hand, the joy of the hospitableness of the many hosts who opened their doors and homes

to us and who treated us like their own children or grandchildren. The joy of receiving this love, given freely by strangers who shared their lives and their families with us, opened our eyes and we discovered the beauty of taking care of one another.

The joy of feeling so welcomed, with such affection, enabled us to cross all language- and cultural barriers and removed all traces of the difficult journey and the heat encountered while in Lisbon.

From Wednesday 2nd to Friday 4th August, we took part in the international WYD gatherings held in the afternoons: the opening Mass, welcoming address from the Pope and Way of the Cross. Mornings were devoted to catechesis with the Bishops and confessions. By so immersing ourselves in these moments of international celebration, our witness to the faith was reinvigorated. We looked at it with renewed consciousness, greater strength, stimulated by the words of the Gospel and of Pope Francis who, little by little, led us to rediscover that our faith is born of the love Christ has for each one of us.

Finally, at the vigil on Saturday the 5th and the Mass on Sunday the 6th, the Pope reiterated his message which, since the WYD in Rio de Janeiro, has been the guiding light of his reflections and thoughts on how to motivate young people, how to get them to make a gift of their life, to be missionaries, to be the "roots

of joy", to carry the love of God to all and sundry, in the places where they live and grow up. To counter the temptation to fall back on oneself and to seek out only the fragile, fleeting joy of momentarily satisfying one's own needs, the Pope suggested that the young might seek and find the joy of love, in the steps of Our Lord Jesus, by making a gift of their lives.

In all this how could one not think of "procuring the same joy for others" that we have in the words of St Michael's Manifesto? The message of this WYD echos our very own spirituality and can help the young to become genuine missionaries of God's love, so they can shine with the true love of the Transfiguration: *"Yet, I would like to tell you that we do not radiate light by putting ourselves in the spotlight, for that type of light is blinding. No, we cannot illumine others by projecting a perfect, well-ordered, refined image of ourselves, or by appearing to be powerful and successful, strong but without light. No, we radiate light – we shine – by welcoming Jesus into our hearts and learning to love as he does. To love like Jesus: that is what makes us shine, makes us do works of love. Friends, I am telling you the truth: whenever you do works of love, you become light. But the moment you stop loving others and become self-centred, you extinguish your light."* (Pope Francis, Homily during the WYD Mass, Lisbon, 6 August 2023)



## Father José GOGORZA IZAGUIRRE scj

*Ascoitia, 21 March 1926 – Fuenterrabía, 12 August 2023 (Spain, Basque Country)*

José, the 2nd son of a family of 8 children (three of whom died very young), arrived at Mendelu in 1937, at the time of the Betharramite apostolic school, when he was barely 11 years old. Here he studied until completing high school. He often reminded us that, before entering the seminary, in his home town of Azkoitia, (near Loyola) he was a member of a troop of "dantzaris" (local dancers) who went from town to town animating the festivals of patron saints.

After his baccalaureate he crossed into France through mountain passes, since the Spanish borders were closed. He spent time in Palestine, where he helped the future Fr. Victor Batailles scj in some practical activities, such as installing electricity in our house in Bethlehem.

He was ordained a priest in Bordeaux in 1949. He returned to Spain, to the Basque Country, to Mendelu, where he did his military service as a chaplain. Every day he went on horseback to celebrate mass at the military base at Our Lady of Guadalupe chapel in Fuenterrabía.

He spent 10 years in Uruguay and Argentina, where he worked in schools as a teacher, returning here to Spain, to work in the community of Zaragoza and in the school of Azpeitia, with Fr Julio Colina scj.



He returned to the Mendelu community in 1973, the year in which the Saint Mikel Garikoitz de Mendelu parish was established. Since then, he remained in this community, with various activities: religion teacher, chaplain of the Carmelites (until 2020), counsellor for Prison Ministry, parish priest, confessor of several convents of nuns, supplying for the priests of Fuenterrabia during their holidays... without forgetting the garden, the chickens and the geese (in our house). Whether it was raining, snowing or terribly hot, he was there every afternoon, around three o'clock, in the garden and the chicken coop. [...]

Father José was a tenacious, persistent man, even stubborn. Every

morning, two neighbouring brothers took him to celebrate mass at the Carmelites, about three kilometres away. One day when it was snowing, his drivers could not come, but Father José left alone on foot, at 90 years old, and without fear.

He was tenacious, determined, restless too (and reserved). Restless and with some shyness. Many knew him for his sense of humour, quick to answer everything. Recently, a religious Daughter of the Cross pointed out to him that his nails should be cut, and he replied: "It would be better if we cut out the tongue!" There are many anecdotes of this type.

Fr. José was a worker, a regular reader, with an intense interest in news from the world, Spain and the Basque Country. He was also ingenious, in his own way: his room, apparently untidy, was filled with many things, among them his practical creations such as: shelves, and his other inventions.

Father José cared about the Congregation of Betharram, about vocations. He often asked about vocations, about novices, taking it

personally, as a personal concern. He also worried about the state of the house and the Mendelu community, especially his future.

He used to be restless, dedicated, and very generous, both in his work as in charge of the prison ministry where he helped the prisoners, and the people who knocked on our door to ask for something. He has been present with many families as well, in times of mourning, or in other delicate circumstances, with his faithful presence and also with his advice.

May the qualities of Father José, e.g. (perseverance and tenacity), be a support for us, an example to persevere in life and in faith. The fruit is in perseverance. May the person of Fr. José bring us closer to God, through his smile and with his smile, which showed qualities pleasing to God such as kindness, dedication and availability. Let us meditate on Father José's dedication and gift of life so that we may follow those selfless steps offered to God.

May he rest in peace. Amen.

*Excerpts from the homily of Fr. Gerard Zugarramurdi scj at the funeral of Fr. José*

“ **Those of us who were young in Mendelu at the end of the 70s** had the great grace of being able to count on Father Gogorza. His integration into the neighbourhood was total. In addition to his pastoral work in the parish and his help to families in need and visits to the sick, his support for young people meant that we all welcomed Joxe (José) as another native of Mendelu.

*In those very difficult years, when drugs and AIDS were decimating a part of the youth, Fr Gogorza took our side. When we were still minors, he gave us a place*

to found the Garikoitz Youth Society, taking responsibility for us and supporting us in all the activities we organized.

He set two conditions for us: Organize activities for the neighbourhood and do something for the parish of Betharram. Without religious or any other impositions and without directing, he was always there when needed. From all this came the neighbourhood festivals, excursions, activities for children, the living Nativity scene, the Three Kings parade and many others.

He did a great job in prison ministry, with people who life had wrong-footed, who were marginalized, or misunderstood, who had lost all hope. He Listened to them, and helped them climb out of the pit and gave them back a little hope to move forward. [...]. [...]

He was a priest with capital letters, who gave of himself to others without asking for anything in return, and above all a great person, one of those who preached more by example than by word.

Joxe, Thank you so much for everything. We will miss you very much.

(Extract from the testimony of the former youth group)



## *In the Peace of the Lord*

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Some of our brethren have lost a dear one. In communion with the whole Betharram, we join them and their families in praying for the eternal rest of their departed.

**In France** | On August 15, at the age of 86 years, **Mr. Jean-Baptiste Ruspil**, brother of Fr. Joseph Ruspil SCJ and Fr. Jean-Marie Ruspil SCJ (of the community of Saint-Palais and Pibrac, Vicariate of France-Spain) died in St Jean-le-Vieux.

**In Central Africa** | On 9 August in Bangui, at the age of 61, **Mr. Salle Clement**, father of the novice Hubert Salle Clement, of the community of the "St. Joseph" interregional novitiate in Bethlehem returned to the Father's House.

**In Australia** | **Mr Benedict Innamorati**, aged 87, brother of Fr Dominic Innamorati SCJ, of the community of Olton (Vicariate of England) passed away on the 2nd of September.



“In the silence of the Cross,  
the uproar of weapons ceases  
and the language of reconciliation,  
forgiveness,  
dialogue,  
and peace is spoken.”

(Pope Francis)



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

**Casa generalizia**

via Angelo Brunetti, 27

00186 Roma

Telefono +39 06 320 70 96

Email [scj.generalate@gmail.com](mailto:scj.generalate@gmail.com)

[www.betharram.net](http://www.betharram.net)