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A living mission in a time of change

*'The seventy-two returned and said to him with joy,
"Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."*

He said to them,

"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

*I have given you authority to walk on snakes and scorpions
and to overcome all the power of the enemy;
and nothing will be able to harm you.*

*However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice
rather that your names are written in heaven"'.
(Lk 10.17-20)*

Dear Betharramites:

A few weeks ago I attended an episcopal ordination in the Vatican. The presiding Cardinal was the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. And I was struck by his insistence during the homily on the impact of dramatic background change on the mission of the Church. *"Things are changing so quickly today,"* he said, *"that we no longer feel, as a Church, in a position to respond in depth, in time and in form to all issues."*

Indeed, in our mission we need to constantly update

ourselves, since our responses cannot be like recipes that are repeated, but must be the fruit of a profound evangelical discernment, carried out together, while we are on the journey. We need to entrust ourselves deeply to the action of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church without ceasing and to respond synodally to the challenges and cries of the present. Far from encouraging the immobility of a clericalist dogmatism or the anxious activism of a pastoral pragmatism, we should begin by accepting with realism this time of fragility, of inevitable confrontation, where we are faced not only with the sin of the world in a culture of death, but with the agonies of the Church itself, which have left deep wounds... that still seem open. The Church, the Body of Christ, will continue to be Holy, because it is united to Christ, but we know that this holiness does not shine in it when we, its members, hide its Light and overshadow it with our actions, depriving it of a clear testimony of life in the service of the Kingdom of God.

Could it be that we are not where we should be and are where no one calls us anymore?

Reflecting, I remembered what the Chapter members and I proposed in Chiang Mai 2023 when we reviewed the meaning of **our mission in the Church**, discerned our presences and responded creatively to the cries of the present. We must not isolate ourselves or let ourselves stagnate... because we are afraid of the future. It may cause us insecurity or uncertainty, but we have before us a world that never stops calling us to serve Life. It is a world that, although it may seem indifferent, still thirsts for God.

How can our religious family respond to these challenges in such a fast-changing world?

The Chapter told us:

'Let us be aware that we live in an age of rapid evolution, for which there are no immediate solutions, nor 'takeaway' solutions. It is important not to close ourselves off in our own business, but maintain an attitude of continuous listening, which consists above all in cultivating a sense of belonging to Christ (that is, as Christians and Betharramites) that generates new people, new relationships, new realities, beyond any

role and in any form of mission. A Betharramite presence must bear witness to the presence of God in history.' (Acts § 127)

We are a community in mission, but the evangelical fraternity that we have embraced by our consecration is at risk when worldly criteria lead us to foster divisions and discord among our brothers, even childish ones... I insist paternally to the younger ones: *let us be more united*, let us embrace simplicity, and without being over-anxious let us resist the dominant current of individualism. I ask the more mature not to be carried away by the "every man for himself" mentality, or "the last one turn off the lights" philosophy. And I ask the elderly not to be carried away by thoughts of "*ars bene morendi*" (the art of dying well). We are all valuable and necessary in our religious family, from the smallest to the greatest, and the bond that unites us is fraternal love.

The Chapter continued with this beautiful reflection: "A Betharramite religious presence, lived with courage and passion, consists of personal and community witness, discreet presence in society, constant commitment without ostentation, care for fraternal relations in the community. In the apostolic field, a courageous, open and listening attitude must be assumed in relations with local Churches and with the best aspirations of society. In many Betharramite presences "we have to live the smallness of the mustard seed". Nobody likes smallness and minority, but if it is taken not as an unavoidable 'misfortune', but as a simply accepted fact and an opportunity for change (crisis), this acceptance opens up situations of grace." (Ibid, § 128-129)

In recent times, several of our presences (even those a hundred years old) are closing. Closing a mission is not abandoning, it is not dying. It is the opportunity to regroup with realism in order to be able to serve better. It is also living the "Mobile Camp" of St. Michael when we leave our place in the Church to others, to go where we are sent, where it is most necessary.

'The Betharramite openness to any type of apostolate - in reality we are religious "free from any particular work" (Rule of Life n. 16) - retains a precious meaning. The motto of Saint Michael Garicoïts, "small, obedient, happy and constant", only seemingly banal and

naive, remains full of meaning and retains all its relevance.' (Ibid. § 130)

And the Chapter concludes:

'Considering the complex and rapid evolution that is occurring in our contemporary times, the need for constant and periodic updates becomes evident. In this sense, the personal duties of every religious must be encouraged and verified by superiors. The Chapter sets itself the objective of walking resolutely towards the formation of fraternal communities, with a clear Mission, through a patient work of discernment of persons and works. Discernment to be carried out in a synodal way, with the collaboration of individuals and communities.' (Ibid. § 134-135)

In this editorial I have tried to follow a basic inspiration: that the Holy Spirit has guided us and will continue to do so if we allow ourselves to be moved by an ecclesial reality that continues to count on our *"Here I am"*, but only if lived in truth and nourished in charity.

May God bless you.

Fr. Gustavo Agín scj
Superior General

Questions in community:

- 1. What aspects of the mission of your community are in contact with living realities or respond to the challenges of these changing times?*
- 2. What means do you use in community to avoid drifting into individualism?*
- 3. Share about some "cries" or "faces of Christ" that you have discovered in your mission in recent times and that invite discernment.*

Address on the 2nd Session of the XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Audience Hall, Wednesday, 2 October 2024



Dear Brothers and Sister,

Ever since the Church of God was “convened in Synod” in October 2021, we have travelled together a part of the lengthy journey to which God the Father constantly calls his people. He sends them to every nation to bring the glad tidings that Jesus Christ is our peace (cf. Eph 2:14) and he confirms them in their mission through the Holy Spirit.

[...]

A homily by a spiritual author of the fourth century [Saint Macarius of Alexandria, Om. 18, 7-11: PG 34, 639-642] helps us understand that the Holy Spirit is a sure guide and that our first task is to learn how to discern his voice, since he speaks through everyone and in all things. Has this synodal process made us experience this?

The Holy Spirit always accompanies us. The Spirit consoles us in moments of sorrow and grief, especially when – precisely because of our love of humanity – things are not going well, injustices seem to prevail, we realize how difficult it is to respond with good in the face of evil, we see how hard it is to forgive and what little courage we show in seeking peace. It seems in these

moments that there is nothing more to do and we yield to despair. [...]

The Holy Spirit penetrates to the part of us that so often is like a courtroom, where we launch accusations and pass judgments, mostly of condemnation. The author of our homily tells us that the Holy Spirit kindles in those who receive him a fire, a *“fire of such love and exultation that, were it possible, we would clasp in our embrace all mankind, without discrimination, good and bad alike”*.

We know both the beauty of that journey and the fatigue that it entails. We are making it together, as a people that, also in our own day, are a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race (*Lumen Gentium*, 1). We are making it together with, and for the sake of, every man and woman of good will, in each of whom grace is invisibly at work (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). We are making it, convinced of the “relational” nature of the Church and seeking to ensure that the relationships given to us and entrusted to our responsible creativity will always be a sign of the gratuitousness of mercy.

[...] ■



For a living and missionary Betharram



A religious Community within the Pastoral Community: Lissone and Castellazzo

| Fr. Giacomo Spini scj

The community of Lissone presents a truly distinct reality, not so much for the nature of the mission it is called to fulfill—namely parish pastoral work—but rather due to the unique context in which it operates, being fully integrated into the Pastoral Community of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein).

The Pastoral Community was established some 15 years ago, and our parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus became a part of it 14 years ago. I have had the privilege of accompanying this journey for the past 12 years. Today, the Pastoral Community encompasses all seven parishes within the city of Lissone, serving a population nearing 50,000.

There is a single Parish Priest who presides over the entire community, while the remaining priests serve as Assistant Parish Priests for all seven parishes. Additionally, each parish is assigned a priest who acts as its primary

point of reference. This structure necessitates close collaboration, shared planning, and a unified approach to ministry. We are called to pursue a path of communion through the Diaconia, composed of thirteen priests and four religious sisters, and we convene on a weekly basis. Moreover, there is a Unified Pastoral Council that oversees the entire Pastoral Community, while individual Consultative Bodies exist within each parish. The challenge lies in advancing pastoral activities collectively, ensuring that there is a unified journey as a Pastoral Community, while simultaneously safeguarding the life and unique identity of each parish.

This journey naturally involves not only the priests and religious sisters, but also all the lay faithful, particularly those directly involved in pastoral ministry across various fields. Have there been difficulties along the way? Certainly. Particularly in the early stages, as the

novelty of this arrangement and the changes it demanded of individual parishes presented significant challenges. Even as we progressed, the sheer size of the Pastoral Community required everyone to align their efforts in a shared direction.

What fruits have come from this journey? They are evident on multiple levels, especially within certain pastoral realms. Walking this path together undoubtedly fosters a greater sense of communion, enhances the quality of church life, improves the efficacy of initiatives and proposals, and yields positive results.

The entire religious community is integrally involved in the Pastoral Community, thus working in close collaboration with the diocesan clergy. This close relationship is a defining feature of our presence, one characterized by simplicity and discretion, by availability and support. In this way, we strive to be a visible sign as a religious community, in accordance with the charism of St. Michael Garicoits.

At present, our religious community comprises five priests, and we are eagerly anticipating the arrival of Fr Emmanuel from the Ivory Coast, who was ordained to the priesthood on the 8th of September, following a year of diaconal ministry with us.

The religious community also includes two priests who reside in Castellazzo and who are actively engaged in parish pastoral work and



the formation of lay groups following the spirituality of St. Michael Garicoits. Lissone and Castellazzo represent two distinct and geographically distant realities, yet we make efforts to maintain communication between the two.

In my view, our path resembles a synodal journey, made possible by the shared commitment of all, both within the religious community and the Diaconia, to keep our gaze firmly fixed upon Jesus. He is the one who sends us forth on mission, and He sends us together in this Pastoral Community. His Spirit works within us, and mercifully, well beyond us. And St. Michael continually encourages us, reminding us: *"Forward always, out of love more than for any other reason."* ■



Rough edges, smoothed in community

| Fr. Austin Hughes scj

Back in the 1980's a BBC TV crew made a documentary about Roscrea monastery in Ireland, a Trappist community in County Tipperary. For even though both Britain and Ireland were becoming increasingly secular, there was a public fascination with monasteries. And during a dialogue with one ageing monk who had previously been a wealthy businessman before becoming a religious, the interviewer asked: "Father were you surprised that God called you to this monastery and this way of life?" And he answered: "Not half as surprised as the fact that he also called some of these idiots around me!"

And with a touch of Irish humour he illustrated one of the key points about religious community life: we are thrown together with people that we might not have naturally chosen as friends in the outside world. But this becomes the way we grow together in holiness, and give a witness to the people around us.

Here at Olton we are a community of five who all have different backgrounds. Brother Gerard is

Birmingham born and bred, but with Irish parents. Brother Liam was brought up in Belfast in Northern Ireland but left there in the 1970's due to the increasing violence and shootings. Fr. Biju our superior (and youngest member) grew up in Kerala, while Fr. Dominic (our oldest member) grew up in Birmingham in an Anglo-Italian community. My own origins are in County Durham, Northeast England, but like many Catholics in this country I have Irish ancestry.

Our community life is simple enough, and follows the Betharramite Rule of Life, and we are blessed to be led by Fr. Biju who is younger and more energetic than the rest of us. And we all have different ministerial roles in parish, school, hospital and counselling. If there is a word that characterises our living together it is acceptance. Acceptance of gifts, acceptance of personalities and acceptance of failings.

Traditionally our Rule has used the image of Trinity for community, but personally I have always struggled to connect with this at

an emotional level. I have often preferred the image of a tumble-polisher! Jewellers who work with semi-precious stones (opal, agate, onyx etc..) first receive the stones as rough and jagged and put them into a tumble-polisher, a slowly rotating cylinder with added grit, that after 24 hours produces stones that are smooth and shiny. In community we rub against each other and smooth away many of the hard edges. We very quickly become realistic about the failings of our brothers, but this teaches us that our pious self-images (I am Tolerant...Gracious...Unbiased...Never racist...Never sexist...) are absolute nonsense, and that we stand in need of forgiveness just like everyone else. Our brothers teach us acceptance, humility and compassion. If God can love me

with all my many faults and failings then he can love my brother with all his. And if God finds my brother acceptable, then so can I.

I have often wondered if the reason why many people resist a call to religious community is that they fear losing this pious self-image.

Living close to the people to whom we minister, it is impossible to disguise some of our failings, so people in the Friary parish have learnt to accept that we are not perfect. But in very simple ways they value our witness, as they see us coping with things that every family has to address.....care of the elderly..... differences in personalities.... coping with sickness..... differences in education.....managing time



Fr. Biju (Regional Vicar), Fr. Austin, Br. Liam and Br. Gerard (who, together with Fr. Dominic Innamorati, compose the community of Olton) at their recent community retreat.

& finances and trying to remain faithful in a fast-changing world.

The old monk in Roscrea years ago had learnt compassion and acceptance. And if we can do the

same, then we give a wonderful gift to those around us, even if the tumble-polisher still has much work to do, to make us smooth and shiny.



Live from Pibrac

| **Fr. Jean-Luc Morin scj**

Like any community, ours is a sign, as modest as it is real, that people from different backgrounds and experiences can not only live together but also serve Life together.

Since 1982, the year of Betharram's foundation in Pibrac, the current community is the first not to include any religious members of Basque-Bearnese origin. What's more, we are all African by birth. Put together an educator born in Morocco, Provincial of France, General Assistant, Emeritus Archbishop of Rabat and pastor at heart, Vincent Landel; a young member from Benin, former director of Tshanfeto (the educational farm in Côte d'Ivoire) and existing superior, Vincent Worou; and myself, former Regional, a native of Algeria, raised in Limoges, and starting my first assignment as a parish priest at the age of over 63... and you will have an idea of the trio at the helm of the

Priory.

As stipulated by the Rule and as every Betharramite strives to do, our community is apostolic, and our apostolate is communal. In fact, the Diocese of Toulouse has entrusted the Congregation with the leadership of the suburban parishes of Pibrac, Brax, and Léguevin: a group rich in human resources, missionary potential... and care for priests whose simplicity and family spirit are appreciated by the faithful laity. The religious members change, but the community remains.

Here, as elsewhere, the coexistence of different personalities can create some friction. In just over a year of communal life, the two Fathers Vincent and I are learning to turn these moments into opportunities for growth. Listening and dialogue are central during our weekly meetings. They are even more so during the three key moments: the Advent and Lenten recollections and the year-end review,



The community of Pibrac: Fr. Vincent de Paul Worou Dimon (Superior), Fr. Jean-Luc Morin (on the left) and Mons. Vincent Landel (on the right).

which we do out in the middle of the Aveyron region. Stepping out of the usual setting, spending at least one night outside, taking time to share, praying in solitude, and experiencing true fraternal friendship with the nuns who host us are a necessary and even vital breath of air for community balance.

This "step aside," this re-rooting in God and among brothers, is something we also experience daily in the prayer of the hours. A special feature of Pibrac, which is not new, is that the project of life includes praying together every morning before Lauds. This time of intimacy with the Lord sets the tone for the rest of the day and strengthens our solidarity in mission. That way, the chapel is a privileged place for community cohesion and fraternal communion. As is the kitchen, in its own way, with its regular gatherings of Bétharramite confreres (thanks to

the proximity of the international airport and the Catholic Institute) or diocesan clergy (as a meeting place for local clergy).

From there, everything takes on meaning, from the most mundane – setting the table, taking out the bins, etc – to the most gratifying: celebrating in front of dynamic congregations, collaborating with

committed laypeople, supporting young people and families... *"Small things are great things,"* said Saint Michael. *"Each of our actions affects the entire community, bringing either a blessing or curse upon it."* (DS § 93) For now, it is the former that prevails, in a freely and joyfully accepted interdependence.

In the end, we can recognise ourselves in the confession of an elder: *"If I entered the community, it was to find happiness; but if I stay, it is to try to make others happy."* Which is the same as *"bringing others the same happiness,"* in the words of the Founder, by following in the footsteps of the Sacred Heart and encouraging each other to do so.

In terms of communal and personal challenges, both missionary and spiritual, I know nothing more urgent. Or more exciting. ■



In 2024, six new Betharramite priests

During this year 2024, six Betharramite religious were ordained priests – in India, Brazil and the Ivory Coast – to carry out their ‘mission in

community, as servants of the Heart of Jesus in the heart of the world’.

(Cf. Acts of the General Chapter 2023 § 30)



Fr. Stephen RAGHU scj

(Ordained on 18 January in Bangalore,

sent on mission in the Vicariate of India)

**To be a Sign of God’s Compassionate Love.
(Cf. Matt 10:5-15).**

The spiritual dream that I dreamt has come to reality, January 18 2024, is a memorable day for me as I was Ordained as a Holy Priest to continue the mission of the Lord in the footsteps of St. Michael Garicoits.

The theme: To be a Sign of God’s Compassionate Love always echoes in my life. As Jesus sent out his disciples to spread God’s love, I’m also created with a purpose to spread the Love of God through my priestly life. After my ordination I was asked to be at Shobhana Shaakha Study House, Bangalore, to help the community. Being here in Shobhana Shaakha I really cherish the past formation days that I had spent almost five years. Being part of this community I am really proud to be here in rendering my humble service to all at the community. The community is a mixed group of formees, Three Pre University students and four Philosophy students. I help the community in doing various activities like helping and accompanying the young brothers on their journey.

Being here in the community I also take many pastoral ministries in nearby parishes, specially I celebrate Holy Eucharist, hear confessions and give recollection talk to young formees. As



a priest of God I keep myself always joyful and busy in serving the community and the people of God. At this juncture I would like to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to all the Father's, Brothers and lay Betharramites for your valuable prayers and support. May God bless us all. ■

Fr. Pobitro MINJ scj

(ordained on 28 January in the diocese of Bongaigaon, in Assam,
- first Betharramite priest from Assam - sent on mission to the
Vicariate of India)

An Instrument in the Mission of Christ
"The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing
I shall want" (Ps. 23.1).

This was the theme for my Ordination. I am indeed excited and delighted to share my testimony about my first Mission as a Betharramite Priest. First and foremost, I am immensely grateful to God for His plenitude of blessings, especially for choosing me as his instrument to work in his vineyard and also to be part of his Mission. I am grateful to my Congregation for believing and trusting in me and also the unfathomable support in shaping me. My gratitude extends to my family for their priceless sacrifice and all the people who played an active role in my journey of Priesthood.

I received my Call in the year 2012 in the Congregation of



Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram and after about eleven and half years of my formation, I was ordained to priesthood on 26th January, 2024 by His Grace Most. Rev. Thomas Pulloppillil (the Bishop of Bongaigaon diocese) in my native parish (Soraibil Parish, Assam). It was a joyful moment for me, my family, and my congregation and for the entire Parish.

My first appointment as a Betharramite priest was in Betharram Sacred Heart Parish, Simaluguri in Assam (one of the northeastern state of India). This parish is situated in a remote village called Pramila, surrounded by Hindu and Muslim community far from the city. It falls under the Archdiocese of Guwahati. The Parish runs two Schools—Betharram Sacred Heart School (Pramila/Simaluguri) and St. Mary's School (Dancila). There are eight substations (catholic villages)- Borpani (adivasis), Chitalmari(garos), Dancila (garos), Tiwagaon (tiwas), Bidyanagar (garos), Baithalongso (garos), Borbil (garos) and Mynapatar (bodos).

As Jesus commissioned his disciples in the gospel of Mathew 28:19-20-*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And*



behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age". It was a great news for me, when I was told that my first mission was in Simaluguri Parish to assist Rev.Fr Sathish Paul Raj SCJ (Parish priest) and Rev. Fr Akhil Joseph SCJ (assistant) in the field of faith formation, pastoral ministry, social ministry and education ministry. My mission in Simaluguri basically is to abet the Parish

Priest in all the Pastoral ministry, and to be always available for any spiritual needs of the people. I am given in charge to look after St. Mary's School (Dancila), where poor children get their education with support of various generous people. I am also involved in teaching ministry in both the schools.

It's almost seven months of my priesthood, and all this months have brought tremendous learning and profound joyful experience. The mission here has a unique relevance. The people here live a simple life, their houses are simple and they too have a simple faith. Majority are Garos. They have high respect for the priests and nuns. All the Catholics here are tribals and come from tea estate and farming background. As a priest, I tried my best to contribute to the growth of faith among people by offering daily mass, administering the Sacraments, teaching catechism, visiting families, pastoral care for the sick and the dying. I love celebrating Mass in the villages in their local languages. There are lot of challenges and difficulties while working in this mission but all these challenges have made my foundation strong. In spite of the fact that the roads leading to the outstation are unpaved, and very difficult to travel, especially during monsoon season, yet we extend our pastoral care to our people there, and respond to their urgent needs.

As a Betharramite Priest and missionary working in Simaluguri Mission, has taught me to be humble, a life of simplicity, patience, to listen and to recognize that my role extends beyond the pulpit. I have immense joy and satisfaction working in this mission despite the challenges and difficulties. I appreciate the genuine connections with the people, their happiness at seeing their priest happy and fulfilled. And I feel exceedingly fortunate to have started my Missionary experience here in Simaluguri Parish. From my little experience, I would say that to be missionary, it demands immense resilience, adaptability and unwavering commitment



*The community of Simaluguri: Fr. Sathish (Superior),
Fr. Pobitro, Fr. Akhil*

and also it requires both heart and courage. In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the effort my Parish Priest Rev. Fr Sathish Paul Raj SCJ and the Assistant Rev. Fr. Akhil Joseph SCJ, who welcomed me and provided me with a good climate for my experience. ■

Fr. Thiago GORDIANO scj

**(Ordained on 24 August in Conceição do Coité [Bahia],
sent on mission in the Vicariate of Brazil)**



I was ordained a priest on August 24, in my hometown, Conceição do Coité, in the interior of Bahia State, Brazil. I stayed a few days in my city, celebrating in some communities that were important in the story of my life and the path of formation. For example in the parish where I had ministry before my final vows. I was able to preside over a celebration in the three main centres of the parish: Gavião, Nova Fátima and Pereira.

The following week I returned to the community of Belo Horizonte, where I had lived since the beginning of the year. I continue to take on the role of bursar of the formation house, where I live with Fr. Juan-Pablo and three other young men in formation. Sharing the life of prayer, fraternity and community life in this space helps me to live these early days of ordained ministry, further strengthening my sense of belonging and service to the Congregation. I also help Fr. Juan Pablo in the service of Vocation Ministry in the Vicariate of Brazil.

In addition to service in the formation house, I spent these first days of ministry in the Parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the Nova Granada neighbourhood, a parish under the care of our religious family since its foundation, and whose current parish priest is Fr. Francisco José de Paula. On Wednesday, September 4, I was received in the Mother Church, at a mass with the presence of representatives of all the communities of the parish.



The accompaniment of the communities, along with celebration of the sacraments, the formation (of people) in various areas that interest them, the attentive listening of those who seek advice, the challenges such as the accompaniment of the young and catechesis, are in the scope of my mission in these early days and throughout the time that the mission is entrusted to me here in this community.

These first days, just over a month, have been truly very happy days, in which I experienced that joy of which Saint Michael speaks, and I was even happier to be able to share it with my brothers and sisters and with all the people of God with whom I share this mission. ■

Fr. Hyacinthe N'CHO Akpa scj

**(Ordained on 8 September at Adiapodoumé,
sent on mission to the Vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire)**



North

After the ordination I was sent on a mission in the parish *Notre Dame des Pauvres* of Dabakala, as a vicar.

This parish is located in the Diocese of Katiola whose bishop is His Grace Honore Beugre Dakpa.

Dabakala is a town in the District of Djimini, located in the Center of the Ivory Coast.

In the Dabakala community we are four religious fathers and brothers: Father Marius Huberson Angui, Superior of the Community and parish priest, Father Habib Yelouwassi, Bursar of the Community and Parish, Brother Toussaint Tah, preparing this year the final profession and myself.

Our apostolic mission is mainly the one of the Parish, including:

- its numerous communities scattered among a huge territory (15 villages to be looked after)
- chaplaincies of the different movements, associations and groups.
- animation of the teenagers club in secondary schools and high schools.
- animation of the marial sanctuary of *Notre Dame des Pauvres* of Dabakala.
- *Saint-Hervé Home* for anyone wishing to have a time of prayers or to have a rest.

We are very happy together in the community and we live our mission with joy and devotion in spite of our difficulties to provide to all the communities of the Parish and the villages, the same happiness following our Christ in the footsteps of Saint Michael. Always forward. ■

Fr. Jean-Claude DJIRAUD scj

(Ordained on 8 September at Adiapodoumé,
sent on mission to the Vicariate of France-Spain)



‘What I am now, I am through the grace of God, and the grace which was given to me has not been wasted’ (1 Cor. 15:10). Such is

the chosen verse to accompany me all along my priestly ministry. I am Father Jean-Claude Djiraud religious priest of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram since September 8th 2024.

Ordained priest by the imposition of the hands of Bishop Jean Salomon Lezoutié in presence of all the religious people of the Vicariate of the Ivory Coast and our Superior General, the M. R. Fr Gustavo Agín and the Regional Superior, Father Simone Panzeri. I have been appointed in the



Vicariate of France/Spain, precisely in the community of Pau and also appointed as a cooperator priest in parish *Sainte-Famille* in the same town. After welcoming this mission together with my 'Here I am', I have worked on it since my coming back in Pau September 27th 2024.

After talking with Father Sylvain scj, parish priest, we realized the importance of this new mission entrusted to the Congregation of Betharram by Bishop Aillet and the work expected to fulfill this mission. I notice the joy of parishioners who are so happy to live this new hope with the Fathers of Betharram. Last Sunday, October 6th, was the first mass that I celebrated since I came back from the Ivory Coast, when we have launched the new pastoral year. I rely on God's Grace always present and ask the intercession of Saint Michael Garicoits, of Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified for this mission that the Diocese has entrusted the Congregation with through us, Fathers of Betharram. Always forward. ■

■ **Fr. Emmanuel Assanvo Agniman scj** was ordained on 8 September in Adiapodoumé, together with Fr. Hyacinthe and Fr. Jean-Claude; he is sent on a mission in the Vicariate of Italy (Community of Lissone-Castellazzo).

**We thank the Lord who gives us more missionaries for Betharram.
Let us pray that they may be Shepherds according to the Heart of
Jesus, in the footsteps of our Founder.**

- The Superior General, with the advice of his Council gathered on 26 September 2024, **approved the appointment of Fr. Sathish Paul Raj Joseph as Superior of the Community of Simaluguri** (Vicariate of India, SMJC Region) **for a second term**, starting on 26 September (cf. RL. 206/a).
- The Superior General, with the consent of his Council gathered on 27 September 2024, **authorized the purchase of a house in Olton as a residence for the religious community**, Vicariate of England, SMJC Region (cf. RL. 215 and 205/a).



In the Peace of the Lord

Ivory Coast | *Mrs Adingra Affoua Judith*, 58, mother of Fr Serge Pacôme Appaouh SCJ, of the community of Pistoia (Vicariate of Italy) died on October 3rd. We convey our condolences to Fr Serge SCJ, and we promise to keep him, his dear mother, and his family members in our prayer.

India | On 9 October, *Mr. S. Ravi*, father of Fr. Pascal Ravi, died suddenly. We join with Fr. Pascal and his family in prayer for the eternal rest of their beloved one.



A Betharramite at the service of the Pope: Fr. Jules Saubat

| Roberto Cornara, archivist

In the latest issue of the NEF, we traced the brief but intense life of Father Romain Saubatte, a 'small story' that became significant thanks to a few bars of chocolate and a packet of cigarettes... Today, it's the turn of another story, this time with a capital 'H'. Father Jules Saubat¹ is, in fact, the only member of the Betharram Congregation mentioned in history books, especially those focused on the history of the Church at the turn of the 20th century.

Born in Lembeye, a small village in the Atlantic Pyrenees, in 1867, he quickly joined the Betharram Congregation. Ordained a priest in 1891, he taught for several years at the Betharram College and at the Sainte-Marie Seminary in Oloron. In 1903, when the Congregation was expelled from France, the Superiors decided to send him to Rome to pursue a doctorate in theology at the Apollinare. Planned as a one-year stay, he ended up staying in Rome for 44 years. His presence left a mark not only on the history of



the Congregation but also, in some respects, on that of the Church.

No biography has been dedicated to him, as he wished: "*No noise, no noise, I made too much of it on this earth... No eulogy, just prayers and silence.*"²

An affable and courteous man, he knew how to make friends and build fruitful, lasting relationships. This allowed him to connect with high-ranking circles in the ecclesiastical world and the Curia in Rome. He thus cultivated friendships with cardinals, influential prelates of the Curia, and even ambassadors. He shared with them the same conservative views

1) On the right in the photo, alongside Monsignor Umberto Benigni, founder of La Sapinière.

2) NEF, April 1949.

in both ecclesiastical and political matters. Remaining in Rome after his studies, he played an important role in founding the first Betharramite community at the Church of the Holy Guardian Angels.

But he was soon called to fulfil his work and devote his greatest energy to the Curia at the Vatican. The many appointments he received are documented in his file in the Congregation's archives in Rome: he served as a consultant for the Dicastery for the Religious, the Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Dicastery for the Propagation of the Faith³, the Congregation of Councils⁴, and the Congregation for Catholic Education⁵. As a consultant, he had access to sensitive, individual cases on which he was required to provide his views and judgment. His 1910 report on ecclesiastical studies in religious institutes was of notable importance.

In addition to his role as a consultant, Father Saubat was frequently appointed as an "Apostolic Visitor" to religious institutes or dioceses experiencing crises or particular difficulties; he was also sent to places where non-conformist trends in theology and Catholic orthodoxy were seen. This work was often the most thankless, as wherever he went, he was regarded as an inquisitor to be feared,

seen as part of the militant army of Catholic integralism at the beginning of the 20th century. The futures of bishops and general superiors, some of whom were forced to resign, often hinged on his conclusive reports. During several apostolic visits in France, an extensive press campaign was launched against Father Saubat, labelling him "*the Vatican's policeman*," and "*the Pope's political agent*." Such was the climate in the Catholic world at that time, particularly in France, divided between integralists and modernists.

It is precisely for this latter aspect that Father Saubat is remembered in the Church's history. Shortly after his arrival in Rome, through mutual acquaintances and the Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val, he met Monsignor Umberto Benigni, also a member of the Roman Curia and the founder, in 1909, of the Sodalitium Pianum⁶, better known in France as La Sapinière: a religious organization primarily focused on combating modernism⁷ and its supporters.

6) *The Sodalitium, also known as the Pius X Society.*

7) By "modernism," we mean the broad and varied intellectual movement within early 20th-century Catholicism that aimed to reinterpret the Christian message in light of contemporary social needs and modern scholarship. This "revision" of Christian thought affected all major Catholic themes: understanding and presentation of the faith, biblical exegesis, Christian philosophy, studies in the history of Christianity and the Church, and religious experience. Alongside unorthodox positions and tendencies, sincere and objective efforts were also made to improve the Church's relationship with the world and with the most convincing and positive aspects of modern culture. "Modernism" was condemned as heresy by Pius X in 1907.

3) *Now the Dicastery for the Evangelization of Peoples.*

4) *Now the Dicastery for Bishops.*

5) *This Congregation gave rise to what is now the Dicastery for Culture and Education.*

Father Saubat served as its secretary from 1913 until the organization's dissolution at the end of World War I. Accused of being a secret society that used both licit and illicit means to achieve its goals, Father Saubat was called to provide critical testimony in the canonization process of Pius X, in order to support the Pope's actions and, implicitly, to justify and defend the work of the Sodalitium.

But Father Saubat was not only a significant figure within the Roman Curia; he was also a Betharramite religious, serving his Congregation. He held two fundamental roles during his long stay in Rome, those of General Procurator and Postulator of the Betharramite causes.

As General Procurator (from 1920 to 1947), Father Saubat worked closely with two Superior Generals, Father Paillas, who had boundless and unwavering trust in him, and Father Buzy. The Superiors frequently turned to this expert on the most complex Vatican procedures and an authority in legislative and canonical matters for legal issues related to the Congregation. He was entrusted with resolving serious internal problems within the Institute, to which he made a generous, competent, and almost always decisive contribution, even though his "integralist" style and strictly "legalistic" approach left little room for conciliation and charity.

As Postulator, Father Saubat was involved in numerous causes of beatification and canonization. His

tireless, exhausting work is credited with the canonization of Saint Michael Garicoïts and Saint Jeanne-Élisabeth, the founder of the Daughters of the Cross, to whom he dedicated a detailed biography. He also initiated the beatification cause for Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified. Shortly before his death in February 1949, he had been entrusted by the Servants of Mary of Anglet to revive and promote the cause for Father Edouard Cestac, their founder.

Despite his countless responsibilities, Father Saubat made time for rest and leisure, during which he enjoyed excursions to the *Castelli Romani*⁸. On one of these outings, he came across an abandoned 18th-century villa. With the permission of his superiors, he decided to purchase and restore it: it is now the Betharramite residence in Monte Porzio Catone.

At the 1947 General Chapter, he was honoured by the entire Institute for his tireless work in service of the Congregation. The Superior General, Father Buzy, publicly expressed Betharram's gratitude for his contributions. But on this occasion, he also invited Father Saubat to retire, which the latter only reluctantly agreed to do. He chose to go to Anglet, where a new mission awaited him, and where he died on February 1, 1949. ■

8) The Castelli Romani are a group of small towns and villages located in the hills south of Rome, surrounded by lush vegetation and volcanic lakes.

Vos estis lux mundi. You are the light of the world, You are the sun (Mt. 5:14): that is what each one should say to himself. And just as the sun is the light, the fertility and the life of the soul, so should we be for each other, by our works which edify, enlighten and cause fruits of sanctity to be bows around us.

Each one of us is responsible for his brothers; he has taken them on at his own risk: So let us be for them what the sun is for the earth. This comparison, although it doesn't say the whole truth, is however a very apt indication of our duties and helps us to realise our noble, sublime, and fearinspiring responsibility. (Saint Michael Garicoïts, DS § 324)

Restored chapel of the
Resurrection • Betharram



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