

# NEF

# Betharram

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## The word of the superior general

### Get up! One word is enough

*The centurion answered:  
"Sir, who am I that you should come under my roof?  
Say but the word and my servant will be healed."  
(Mt 8:8)*

Dear Betharramites

Can **one single word** re-orient or change our lives?

Allow me to recall four personal occasions when a word or words helped to shape me. I will do so in a more testimonial style, as one among equals.

### The word of my father:

It was after 10 o'clock on a Sunday morning, back in the 60s. My father – who worked as an officer aboard a merchant ship - came into the room where I was sleeping peacefully and called me as if I were one of his sailors, 'Come on: It's time: "Get up!"'... an invitation to which I,

(still a child), used to respond with a snore... Immediately after that a friendly threat would follow: "*What do you prefer: a soda siphon or the lash (a few hefty swipes on the bottom!)*?" - that, supposedly, was the punishment imposed for not getting up early, or rather, the one he would impose on me to urge me to do so...-. Between waking and sleeping I would say to him: "*Ok, ok, dad..., I'm coming, I'm coming...*" (in fact: I didn't always keep my word...). Even so, he returned several times always with smiles, without violence, almost playfully. (The sentence was rarely carried out)... I thank God that my Father had these gestures that educated me, with firmness and mercy at the same time. He always corrected me in his own way, with his style, very human and in few words. But those few words left a mark on me. They prepared me to know that the act of obeying contains in itself a good that is not always evident...

### **The Word of God that calls:**

As he did with Samuel, one day the Lord called my name. A call that, in my case (as in the biblical case) was repeated several times until one day, following the advice of the priest, I committed to seriously discern the vocation laid before me. In reality: *What prevented me from following it?...: Nothing, except my own resistance ...* which did little to help me to find the Will of God and follow it! Furthermore, I had to leave things and people behind; I had been comfortable with them and so I resisted...

The timely word and the good example of the formation community taught me later to discern, to walk in my own path. They took care of me and introduced me to Jesus, humble and obedient. Perhaps something similar has happened to you. What word or words of your formators revealed God to you and prepared you to be who you are today as men or women, as Christians and also as Betharramites? How did that living encounter with Jesus Christ come about ..... that experience of the Love of God that opened the path of true life for each one of us?

### **The Word & gesture of Jesus that bring us face to face with Him.**

With such authority Jesus says "follow me"! There is a beautiful stained-glass window in our Chapel of Nazareth. It is a Fr Radaelli

design: Jesus with his finger extended forward is saying: *"Follow me"*. It is the call of Matthew (or Levi): *"miserando atque eligendo"* (from the Latin: "He looked at him with mercy and chose him"), as the episcopal motto of Pope Francis says.

Yes, this is how our Lord calls those he wants at his side, with a single irresistible word: *"Follow me"*. And so Matthew, leaving the tax table, got up and followed him... What power can a single word contain to attract forever the heart of a great sinner! For us, this experience is not usually instantaneous, it takes us many years to *abandon ourselves* to His hands. It is then that we are in a position to affirm: *"I believe that this is my definitive path, I feel it internally, I only need his Grace and to give my life to him"*. The years will pass quickly, it will be necessary to be attentive and get up again every time we fall.

### **The healing and uplifting Word: Get up, take your mat and walk!**

Last year, the General Chapter of Chiang Mai called us **to be open, to get up and walk together**, evoking the passage from John 5:1-15: Jesus' encounter with the man who had been lying in the pool of Bethsaida for 38 years:

*"The paralytic lies down on his mat and waits. Jesus passes by and looks at him. One word is enough to change his life, a life rooted in his past: **get up**. He becomes aware of a new strength that comes from within him. He gets up; he takes his mat, – the object of his past... He was hoping for his well-being; now he is healed; ready to bear witness to his healing."* (Acts of the General Chapter 2023 – No. 78).

This sick man says to Jesus: "No one comes to help me..." It seems that he thought that the cause and the cure of his illness must come from outside, and yet Jesus first shows him with his question that, in order to be healed, he must look inside: *Do you want to be healed?...*

Perhaps we Betharramites are getting used to (after so many years more or less "at ease"...) responding passively, without getting involved in the healings that Jesus proposes to us; or living day to day, hoping for a miracle but without offering our cooperation... Despite this, Jesus always challenges Betharram: "Do you want to be

healed?"... He tries to arouse in us the response of faith, he invites us to take seriously our life and mission as consecrated persons. How good it is when we respond with a leap, at the first sign!

Today, we are going through difficult times, and much dedication and abandonment into the hands of the Lord are needed to create conditions for discernment that find us standing, attentive, and not as mere external spectators in the face of complex reality.

*"As religious of the Sacred Heart, we would like to look to the future with faith, love and hope. The grace of God is the human means that sustains us in our mission to be religious **idonei, expediti, expositi** ("capable, free, open" cf. DS § 83). Much has been done; however, we need to remember, to allow ourselves to be challenged on certain points of our life in order to better understand them, appreciate them and bear witness to them." (Acts of the General Chapter 2023 – No. 82).*

This is a new opportunity to evoke the Living Word: the Word that educates, the Word that calls, the Word that sets us on a path, the Word that engages us with Christ, the Word that heals and lifts us up.

As we begin this new part of the year, let us do so with courage. We are not alone. The Heart of Jesus has been, is now and will be for us "a lamp for our steps, a Light for our path."

**Fr. Gustavo Agín scj**

Superior General

***Some suggestions for sharing:***

- 1. Take some personal time and freely share with your brothers your "four words" (e.g.: a call, a teaching, a correction, a healing, etc.). Those key moments when the Lord spoke to your heart, put you on your feet and showed you the way.*
- 2. Organise a prayer or a celebration in community to give thanks for all the mediations that helped you to accept the Word of Jesus with faith and to be like him.*

Homily, Thursday, 5 September 2024

Gelora Bung Karno Stadium (Jakarta, Indonesia)



Our life of faith begins when we humbly welcome Jesus into the boat of our lives, make room for him, listen to his word and let ourselves be questioned, challenged and changed by it.







## A call that changes life



### A call matured day after day

| Br. Angelo Sala scj

In our life, words seem to have a special energy that makes us experience intense and profound emotions. Especially the Word of God. Words are the instrument and guarantee of our relationship with others, with God, and often also with ourselves. We must scrutinise their evocative meaning, to try to understand what they reveal. I think for example of the verses of Isaiah 55:10-11: *"The rain and the snow that come down from heaven do not return without watering the earth, without making it fruitful and germinating, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so my word that goes out from my mouth will not return to me empty, without having done what pleases me, without having fulfilled its mission."*

From the word must spring an action. Only in this way can the word have an effect, to accomplish what

God wants us to do. From these two factors was born my vocation, which I could define as missionary. In fact, my decision to become a religious was born on African soil, even if at first it was mainly a philanthropic choice. Later, from the community experience lived with the missionary religious, the desire was born to pray with them and to seek something deeper than a simple volunteer experience. As a lay volunteer in the Central African Republic, I resided in the minor seminary of the Carmelite Fathers, an ideal place to have the experience I had in mind. This is how I committed myself to participating in their hours of prayer. Through this association – volunteering as action and prayer as contemplation – God sowed the seed of my vocation.

From this life choice, I have matured day after day in my vocation to give myself completely to the



*On the Ubangui river (Photo: Fr. Beniamino Gusmeroli scj)*

Lord. I understood that the simple action of volunteering was no longer enough, and that to continue with perseverance in my commitment, something more solid was needed: the Word of God and an intimate relationship with Him through prayer. From the Word is born a reflection, then motivation, which is what has allowed me to grow with what it implies: the ability to move, to go out of oneself to go towards the unknown, having confidence in the One who calls and who is always close even if, sometimes, surprises are not lacking.

I am convinced that placing the Word of God at the centre of my religious life pushes me to a progressive transcendence, because its goal is a liberating work that puts my destiny as a man into play. To

be able to recognize the presence and action of God in my life, and to respond with love, I need Him to give me the light and the necessary strength.

So every day I ask the Holy Spirit to have the ability to see my days with clarity; not to stop at a superficial and secular look where God has no place. I ask for the gift of being able to perceive what is invisible to the eyes but not to the heart, in order to be able to respond to his daily calls. I find it important

to meditate every day on the Word of God, to always place it at the centre of my life, to know how to live it with commitment and without any presumption, to scrutinise its meaning to try to understand what God wants to reveal to me in order to live it daily. ■

**I ask for the gift of being able to perceive what is invisible to the eyes but not to the heart, in order to be able to respond to his daily calls.**



## A gift placed in our weak hands

| Fr. Simone Panzeri scj

*“Passing by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, Simon’s brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, ‘Come follow me, and I will make you into fishers of men.’ And immediately they left their nets and followed him” (Mk 1:16-18).*

In these stories of ‘callings’, I have always been struck by how the response given by the disciples is immediate, sudden, without hesitation and with little reasoning or time for discernment: they immediately leave everything and follow the Lord. Truly, the Word of Jesus’ call was, for these disciples, that desired word that they were waiting for to make their lives fulfilled. A Word awaited and longed for ... a word capable of giving a new meaning and direction to their existence. I believe that at the beginning of every vocation, if we also look at our personal vocational history, there was for each one of us a longed-for word, capable of attracting our desire, of fascinating us to the point of not being able to resist it.

Keeping this burning in our memory and in our hearts is always helpful in renewing our daily “Here I am”: it is in fact through this word, read in Scripture, heard during a celebration, a retreat or a personal testimony, that we decided

to leave everything and follow the Lord. This word is therefore a gift for us and it is also a gift for all those who decide to begin a journey of discernment in our formation communities. The gift of this life-changing word is however also an element of fragility because it is placed in our weak hands.

Sometimes, in fact, this word gets taken over by our ego and makes us believe that we are the “masters” and “builders” of the vocation and we forget that the gift received is that of following the Lord, not going ahead and telling him where he should lead us. In this regard, the words of Saint Michael echo in our minds: “non priere sed sequi” (not to lead but to follow). I believe this is the difficulty we have in welcoming the word that changes life and then remaining faithful to it: recognizing that it is a gift and not a right for our own use and consumption. I find that in the initial discernment process, taken by the enthusiasm of having understood what the Lord is calling us to, the risk is that of saying to God: “Okay, you called me, I understood it, now I will commit myself to building my life as a priest and religious with study, prayer, my choices ...”. This is a sneaky thought that leverages the



good intention of becoming effective collaborators and cooperators in God's plan but which also runs the risk of making one's vocation slip into the vortex of egocentrism.

The pursuit of perfectionism, rigorism, justification at all costs, personal affirmation at the

expense of community life and never presenting difficulties or trials to face are the alarm bells to pay attention to in initial or ongoing formation. After all, we know well what the continuation of the evangelical harvests is: after the first call, the disciples will have to go through the test of the misunderstanding of the Cross. Their journey in following Jesus is also a journey of purification of their deep motivations.

Those who enter a journey of initial discernment do so without having everything clear right away and it is therefore important that in the first years of formation they are helped to purify and clarify their motivations. The rebuke to Simon Peter made by Jesus helps to recognize this aspect of vocational life: "But he (Jesus), turning



*Session about final profession, July 2024 at Betharram: (from left to right) Hyacinthe Akpa N'Cho, Thiago Gordiano, Salomon Bandama, Anibal Romero Morán, Jean-Claude Djiraud, Peter Do Van Hung, Aurélien Kouamé, Anselm Prapas Chiwatkitmankong, Oscar Mendoza. (Our brothers from India could not travel).*

and looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men' (Mk 8:33)".

The risk is always the same, imagining that God thinks with our head and with our measures. What attitude can we then suggest to those in formation to avoid this risk? The virtue of docility. Once we have recognized the word of God that calls us, we must respond to it with the docility of our life. This translates, as Saint Michael teaches us, into making every moment of existence the place in which to say to God our fragile "yes" beyond the service that is asked of us and the position we occupy in the community or in the church.

This is the existential attitude that helps us to let the Lord lead our life, where he wants and how he wants, with the sole concern of living our life with love and not in the affirmation of ourselves at all costs. This docility also converts and purifies prayer which thus lives more in trust than in request. This

attitude opens, then, to hope, removing from the heart that anxiety that makes our fantasies great, guaranteeing us, instead, a more flourishing future and much closer to the reality of the life that the Lord calls us to live. ■



## Listening to the Word in the daily life of the community

| Fr. Shamon Devasia scj

*The book of the prophet Jeremiah chapter 1:5 says "Even before I formed you in the womb, I have known you."*

*Also chapter 29:11 says "For I know what my plans for you are, plans to save you and not harm you, plans to give you a future and give you hope."*

As far as the community life is concerned, I am sharing my personal experience in the mission center of Vietnam formation house with other young brothers welcomed in the community from the very beginning of their vocational path.

I have joined the community of Vietnam in 2019. After one and a half year of my ordination, I came to Vietnam to accompany some brothers in Vietnam formation house. Our Community life is obviously both interesting and challenging.

At the very moment of creation, God designed humankind to be relational. So none of us were born to

live the Christian life alone without any horizontal connection with our brothers and sisters or embrace them with our wholehearted love and support. Jesus said "love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another". (John 13:34) Scripture calls us to love one another as Jesus loves us. Therefore, it is quite challenging for us to commit ourselves to link our own life to others as a unique people of God. Having lived for few years in the mission community, I have realized that, living together in religious communities of Christians is actually a practical way of fulfilling the will of God. The religious communities are meant to be the special gifts of God, offering those who pursue their religious vocation the opportunity to live a rich, colorful but demanding life together. These communities provide a path to walk together with all people in our common life in Christ.

Our rule of life number 93 says.

*"Fraternal life in community has for its model and source the life of the Trinity itself."* The Church finds the ultimate source of its life and action in the Most Holy Trinity, three-persons, Father, Son and Spirit, existing with one mind and heart, bonded together by ultimate love. God wishes us to live and enjoy that love also. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit give Themselves to us, too, so that we might love one another as they always do. Jesus shows us that love continues to lead us. As religious, each of us has a duty to express that love as we share our common life in our various religious congregations. We live together, pray together, and do ministry together. Despite our differences and challenges, we strive to grow in holiness through friendship and fraternity, serving the people of God as we support one another.

### **Community is a house of prayer**

*On entering the city they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, all of these together gave themselves to constant prayer. (Acts 1:12.14)*

Prayer is the strength of our community. In our daily life, we normally experience that prayer strengthens us and makes us active and dynamic. One thing which has very much inspired me but also challenged me is that the parishes and the religious communities in Vietnam begin their prayers and the Eucharistic celebration very early in the morning. Prayers and the Holy Eucharist usually begin at 4.30 am and to be honest, we, the young people

find it quite hard to form a habit to get up early in the morning and do the prayers and the holy mass. However, we consider it a meaningful gift to offer our Blessed Lord on a daily basis as I remember the quotes in the Bible *"Early in the morning his heart [of the scribe] is set on turning to the Lord, his maker, and raising his being to the most high. He opens his mouth in prayer and makes supplications because of his sins."* (Sirach 39:5) *"Very early in the morning before daylight Jesus went off to a lonely place where he prayed."* (Mk 1:35)

We may all acknowledge and side with Padre Pio when he claimed that *"Prayer is the best weapon we have; it is the key to our God's heart."* We also apply various creative ways to prayers in our common daily prayer. We pray in different languages, especially the rosary, we say it in English, Vietnamese, Latine, French and Thai, since our community we have different candidates: postulants and scholastics. We pray slowly and mindfully, which helps us to go deep into the meaning of our prayers.

### **Community is a family**

Undoubtedly, Community life is a form of family life though it is not based on blood relationship, but on a relationship rooted in Christ.

Rule of life number 94 says *"Each of our religious communities is the sign of Jesus Christ's love, bringing together all men in unity of the same love."*

In fact, this is the family I have truly



learned to love, to love my vocation, my priestly and religious life. This is the place I have learned to love other brothers. It is in this formation house that I get to know more about the core meaning of my priesthood.

We respect one another, without making any discrimination of positions, ages, skin colours or cultures. As a family, we live with freedom and responsibility.

Apparently, living in a community is both rewarding and demanding, and each of our members in the community will need to compromise, adjust, forgive and be forgiven.

I have been experiencing that my community has become a place where I feel loved, accepted, and supported. It is also a place where I have experienced healing and become more resilient each day to keep going on my vocational journey.

Community life is more than living together under the same roof. It is about supporting each other and our

chosen ministry. We spend quality time together, sharing talents and resources, and dividing household duties. We also have great deal of fun together, preparing meals, going shopping, watching movies, playing sports, riding bikes. There is a special joy when we work together. There is a special taste when we cook and have the meals together.

We nurture one another by sharing and caring each other, like the first community that was mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. *"All who believed were together, and had all things in common. They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as anyone had need."* (Ac 2:44-45)

Undeniably, community is the place where we are energised. We share our joys and sorrows freely. We also share our successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses.

Apart from the positive and dynamic





aspects of the community life which we have been experiencing for the past few years, we also have encountered the risk that we are sometimes in the danger of being influenced by the media and high technology. A culture of silence has crept into almost all religious communities. Fortunately, It is not the case that very much affects our community but it may happen in the future if we do not take action now to avoid it. Many times, we have had self-quarantine and stayed alone with mobiles and computers, we have passed the sense of being afraid of talking to others. We have been afraid of opening to others as we may have been scared that we may be hurt, humiliated and rejected.

I conclude with Jesus' words "Where

two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18: 20)

After having spent several years living in the community, I can be assured to say how blessed I am to belong to Betharram, and do the mission in Vietnam. My community has become a place where I feel loved, accepted, and supported. If I fail, I will get up and have a conviction that my mistake will be redeemed. If I am somehow wounded by the secular life, I am pretty certain that my brothers will be always there for me. Eventually, I would like to wind up by a saying I really adore "*How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity*" (Psalm 133:1) ■



## Witnessing vocational awakening

| Fr. Suthon Khiriwathanasakun scj

In Phayao I welcome young people from different places. Some of them used to be with me at Maepon Centre when they were very young and some others from the remote places where I used to do pastoral ministry. In all the villages I visited, I invited the young boys to come for study especially the poor boys who were facing difficulties in their life. I did not want them to feel lonely or to live without a bright future, so I tried to help them to stay away from

alcohol or drugs which were ruining their lives.

At the beginning I just helped them to have a chance to study in the school just like their peers. I hoped that at least they could get the basics of reading and writing and be a good members of the society: that was enough for me. I didn't expect anything more from them. At Phayao I set up for them a timetable allowing them to develop their human and spiritual dimension. I hope this will



help them little by little to know more about themselves. "I Just let them grow by themselves".

During the time I spend with them I help them as much as I can. As the time went by, I notice that some young boys are ready to go forward and others decide to discontinue. I let them all free to choose.

I always accompany those who decide to continue along the path of their vocation. When they move to a new place I hand them over to the

religious who will look after them

I always keep in touch with them and occasionally I go and see them; they are always in my prayer. One way to inspire the boys to continue is the example of the brothers who are sent here and particularly the brothers who had been here before. The example of fathers living a simple life are a further source of inspiration for the young boys who desire to respond to the call of their vocation. ■



## I had forgotten "why"

| Fr. Angelo Recalcatti scj

*"Community life can be sacramental. It is not always easy, but bearing with the weaknesses of others teaches us forgiveness and compassion and humility. This is a sign to people of the unconditional love of God. In this way chastity*

*can be a prophetic sign in a world that struggles to forgive. We have a duty to nurture our gift of chastity in community living, prayer life and spiritual accompaniment."* (General Chapter, Acts n°60)

During more than 60 years of religious life, I don't know if my virtue or wisdom has grown. What I am sure of is that I have accumulated much experience, for which I have no merit whatever. Without going into the details, what I can say with certainty is that the six months which God's grace gave me to live, during the second semester of 1993, marked my life to the point of being able to say that there has been (I am not ashamed to say so) a "before" and an "after".

I want to speak of the experience shared with 48 other religious, men and women, from different congregations, offered by the CBR (Conference of the Brazil Religious) in order to revitalize all the dimensions of religious life : spiritual, intellectual, psychological, affective, charismatic etc.

Before, my life had been jogging quietly along, filled with numerous activities in which I engaged myself fully, devoting much energy, in various apostolic fields. I had met a lot of people and made a lot of great friends. I had engaged myself in various spheres by using my gifts in favour of many people, and I was happy.

But a moment came, when I realized that if I had accomplished many things, walked along many roads and gathered many experiences, I had nevertheless forgotten the "why" of all this. I was not unwell, I didn't feel "in a crisis",

but I didn't know very well where I was going in life. I was struggling in an effort to discern what my future was, and I was feeling blocked, at a loss. It was the moment when I was offered the possibility of going to Brazil to live an experience which enabled me to find the "why" again.

This is what happened: during a prepared celebration, we had divided ourselves into groups to transmit the experience of our respective charisms to the others. My turn came to tell every one at what time the Betharramite charism had dazzled me. I assure you that I had neither thought about it before nor prepared anything, but when it was my turn to speak, I more or less said this: "In fact, I was born a Betharramite and I can only live as a Betharramite". From that day, I have had no doubts, no questions or uncertainties.

It doesn't mean that since then my life has only been happiness or an easy way – community life is always a conquest – but since then I have always found the motivation for feeling well in spite of difficulties or conflicts.

I will always remember the expression of Fr. Bruno (then the Provincial Superior) a few months after I returned from Brazil: "I don't know what happened to you, he told me, but I know that – even if you are the same as before – there is something different in you, a new enthusiasm, and it is noticeable". ■



## SCJ Formators Session (1)

| Fr. Stervin Selvadass scj  
General Councillor for formation

The first council of the congregation, for this mandate, took place in Rome from 27th November – 2nd December 2023. There were many important subjects of the congregation and one of them was the International meeting of the formators. It's because the *"28th General Chapter held in Thailand asked the Superior General and his council along with the regional superiors to organize an international meeting of all the formators"* (Acts of the 28th GC, 87). After having dialogued in the council of the congregation, the superior general called the Betharramite formation team for a meeting in Rome from 29th January 2024 – 3rd February 2024.

It's here we discussed about the present realities of our formation houses and talked about our expectations and our hopes for the future. In our exchange, we noticed that there is a greater change in our present formation houses particularly *"the digital culture brings about a fundamental change in the way we conceive reality, the way we relate with ourselves, with our others, with our surroundings and even with God"* (Synthesis Report, A Synodal

Church in Mission, 2023 #17a). *"Betharram of the Third millennium needs strong, capable, free (idonei, expediti, expositi – DS 83) and generous men who love Christ, who love religious life, who love religious family of Betharram, who love to serve the people of God in sharing the same happiness"* (Conclusion of the General Chapter Report). We acknowledged the seriousness of the call of the General Chapter. Therefore, at this juncture, we were challenged and provoked to define the *"Betharramite Style of Formation - Today"* along with its pedagogical elements, Betharramite formation for regular accompaniment particularly people in vulnerable situations, formation for an integral maturity-using psychology, if necessary, as a tool for vocational growth, importance of the spiritual exercises and discernment in our formation and formation for a responsible use of the media etc.

We know well that we have 13 formation houses in our Congregation with 17 formators in function. From among them, 14 formators were invited along with the Regional Superiors to participate in the meeting at Betharram from 01st July



2024 – 06th July 2024. Betharramite formation team suggested to invite a resource person to animate the meeting. After having discussed, we decided to invite Rev. Fr. Jean Messingue SJ—a formator, Councillor, psychologist, educationist and director of the Jesuit institute in Ivory Coast. He is a well-known person among our brothers in Ivory Coast. Once, he had accepted to animate our session, we sent him our Rule of Life, Formation Guide, Orientations and directives of 2022, Documents on the safe-guarding the vulnerable and the fruits of our exchanges in the Betharramite formation team.

Due to certain difficulties in obtaining visa, he could not be present with us but he decided to animate the session via zoom. Few

formators too could not obtain visa and they too followed the session via zoom.

Having gone through all our documents thoroughly and carefully, Fr. Jean Messingue SJ animated the session. He helped us all to re-discover that our charism and our Betharramite style of formation are distinctively CHRISTO-CENTRIC. It is not a question of being configured to a 'generic Christ' rather it is a question of being configured to CHRIST HUMBLE AND OBEDIENT. It is the deep experience of the founder and father St. Michael Garicoits. The focus of the Betharramite formation is to echo the same experience of our founder. So, our formation programme must have the three-fold experience of theological life



*Formators' meeting; the regional superiors were also invited as first responsible for formation in their respective Region, Bétharram, July 2024. On the picture: Fr. Albert Sa-at Prathansantiphong, Fr. Stervin Selvadass, Fr. Juan Pablo García Martínez, Fr. Osmar Caceras, Fr. Fulgence N'Guetta Oi N'Guetta, Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo, Fr. Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong, Fr. Sergio Leiva, Fr. Simone Panzeri, Fr. John Bosco Sommai Sopa-Opaad, Fr. Gustavo Agín, Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez, Fr. Davi Da Silva Lara, Fr. Wilfred Pereppadan.*

(FG #61), without which all the other activities connected with formation are superficial:

- a) Deep Awareness of Oneself (FG #62)
- b) Deep Knowledge of the Lord my God, as revealed in Christ Jesus (FG #63)
- c) Deep Awareness of Everything Received (FG #64)

The theological experience can be achieved using the Betharramite pedagogical elements:

- (i) St. Michael's method to know and to do the will of God,
- (ii) Regular spiritual accompaniment,
- (iii) Meditation on the Word of God or the Lectio Divino,
- (iv) Ignatian Spiritual Exercises,
- (v) Ignatian Examination of Conscience,
- (vi) Narratio Fidei – Faith Sharing.

It's from this experience arises the conviction that "being a formator is a mission. A formator is responsible for making the young person responsible, if necessary, by taking the help of an expert or using the help of the psychological test and he is called to build a paternal (discipline & punishment) and a maternal (care & unconditional welcome) relationship" (Fr. Messingue SJ). It is in this experience, one discovers one's own strengths and fragilities. It is in this experience, one listens, recognizes, identifies, owns up and

accepts one's own vulnerability in order to be healed. And only the healed can assist the young in formation in the process of integral maturity.

He shared all these points taking from our own 'Formation Guide'; and he confirmed that our present documents are of quality, thoughtfully prepared, very profound and rich in conviction. He challenged us NOT to keep them as theoretical ideal BUT to make them operational and practical with fidelity and creativity. Yes, he did not want us to create another document and he was not interested to offer us something new rather he desired to offer us a re-reading or I would say that he increased our thirst to dive deeper into our own documents especially our formation guide where you find the "Betharramite Style of Formation for Today". A sincere gratitude to all our experienced elder brothers who worked hard to produce all the documents particularly the 'Formation Guide'. Thus, we have not created another document rather I would say "Thanks to Fr. Juan Pablo" who prepared the synthesis of the formators meeting which could be made available to all through the regional superiors. Bravo Fr. Juan Pablo for your detailed, whole and complete synthesis of the meeting.

I highly acknowledge and appreciate Rev. Fr. Jean Messingue SJ for his simplicity in sharing, his meticulous preparation of power-

point materials and his deep conviction on our documents to be relevant for today. A big thanks to Fr. Jean Messengie SJ.

I would like to place on record my appreciation to our participants for their spirit of availability, for their qualitative fraternal living, creativity in sharing and seriousness in following up the program faithfully. May the

fruits of this encounter bring forth a conversion and a transformation. May our re-discovering of Betharramite style of formation, across our own documents, make our formation more effective and help us to prepare religious for this third millennium. ■



## SCJ formators Session (2)

| Fr. Osmar C  
aceres Spain scj

Nocie Master (Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region)

**I had the grace to participate in the international session of formators that took place in Betharram, last month from 1st to 7th July.**

Reflecting on the place of the session, I can say that it was very timely to have done it in Betharram. There I met a community that welcomes all who pass through this place. The silence and the landscape of the place on the banks of the river Gave, helped me to make an inner and outer journey, as well as took me back to the origins of our religious family. Betharram is a privileged place, very dear to our Father Saint Michael. It is the place where he himself unfolded the essence of his religious vocation through his «great work of love» which

is education. (cf. Radaelli /97. Fathers of S.C.J. de Betharram.pg. 45).

From the point of view of the participants in the session, the presence of the Superior General, the Regional Superiors and some vicars were significant. I felt very well accompanied by them and it is a tangible sign that we walk together and that we are all co-responsible in the mission of formation.

During the session, we felt the absence of some formators particularly from India who could not come, but with those who were present in person, we could enjoy a climate of pure fraternity - at the table, during the talks, during prayers and in leisure times.

I found the methodology used during the session was excellent. We



always spent the morning listening to the resource person, then a personal moment and in the afternoon the exchange between the participants. The talks were given to us by Father Jean Messingué sj, and Father Gaspar, who did great contributions to formation.

The nine fundamental themes developed during the session were able to answer the questions that often surround the formation environments: What is our own style of formation in the Congregation? What are the fundamental elements of a qualitative accompaniment? How to manage the vulnerability of the person in formation and the formator himself? How to accompany the person in formation towards a process of integral maturation? What is the importance of the Spiritual Exercises and how can we use them in the different stages of our formation? What are the elements of Betharramite pedagogy and how

can we apply them using Ignatian exercises? How can we form ourselves in the correct use of digital media? What positions do we take when adult vocations knock at our doors?

The synthesis of all the work of the session will become a supporting material. Together with our formation guide (Ratio Formationis) and the Rule of Life, the synthesis will be a great help in evaluating this year's formation project, as well as correcting and adjusting some points.

I thank God infinitely for this great help that the session gave me. I also thank the community of Betharram, which welcomed us very well; I thank the team that was in charge of organizing the session, the speakers, the translators who helped us with much clarity to ensure that dialogue between all flows normally and the formators for the pleasant moments we experienced together during the session. ■







## Betharramites, since 120 years pilgrims in hope in Paraguay

| Br. Sixto Benitez scj

We have celebrated the 120 anniversary in presence of our congregation. A celebration day has been organized on the 16th of August in the stadium "Leon Condou" of the "Colegio San José" in Asuncion. Our goals were the following :

1- To commemorate the 120 years of the presence of Betharramite values in Paraguay.

2-To reinforce the brotherhood impregnated of the spirit left by Saint Michel Garicoïts.

3- To promote the communion between the different schools institutions, parishes and the active groups in the vicariate.

Many different institutions, parishes movements and active groups of the Vicariate attend the meeting. We have prepared for two months this event thanks to the organisation of P. Tobia Sosio and myself. We have coordinated the preparation working with the liturgic commissions and sports ones in schools. We have extended the invitation to share this event to all the religious people and to sculler groupes in the Vicariate.

We have the great joy to belong to this story which started the 21st February 1904 when the "Here I am" of the Fathers Sampay and Lhoste



allowed the Congregation of Jesus Sacred Heart from Betharram to be present in guarani territory. Today, like 120 years ago, the Ecce Venio of St Michael Garicoïts became everyone's responsibility and still echoes within use : yes, God has placed me in this place : the less I can alone the more I can in the one who comforts me.

The celebration started with a mass under the presidency of bishop Ignacio Gogorza together with bishop Claudio Silvero and the priests and brothers betharramites and the presence of the members of different schools, parishes, movements and groups of the Vicariate. An atmosphere of friendship and joy has gained all the assembly. Then, each community has presented its own evolution since the year of its creation, a way to measure its accomplishments and to tell the story of the presence of leu Congregation. The presentation of each community was accompanied with dances, songs, plays. To conclude the day, a meal was served and sports demonstrations were performed.

Thanks to the availability of people attending the celebration of people attending the celebration and "Here I am" the meeting was a real success. May Saint Michel and Notre Dame de Betharram always intercede for us in this so beautiful a task the formation of children youngster adults and families is. ■





- The Superior General with his Council **called for the next Council of Congregation to be held in Bangalore from January 28 to February 8, 2025.**

A **meeting** between the Superior General, his full Council and the three Regional Superiors will be held on the ZOOM platform on 26 September to prepare for this Council of the Congregation.

- Two formation sessions were held in Betharram in July:
  - The **SCJ formators session** from 1 to 7 July, in accordance with the request of the General Chapter 2023 (Cf. Acts § 87); Regional Superiors were also invited to participate as first responsible for formation in their respective Region.
  - The **Session about final profession** from 8 to 30 July 2024.
- After **the canonical visit** to the Vicariate of France-Spain (in June and July), the Superior General is currently visiting the Vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire (until 18 September);  
from September 30 to October 21 he will visit the Vicariate of Italy;  
from October 28 to November 15 he will visit the Vicariate of Central Africa.
- In July, Fr. Vipin Chirammel presented his resignation as Regional Vicar and Master of the Scholastics.
  - At the General Council meeting of 23 July, **the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, accepted the resignation of Fr. Vipin Chirammel as Regional Vicar in India;**  
The Regional Superior, in a letter to the Vicariate of India, has communicated, after consulting his Council, that he has accepted the resignation of Fr. Vipin Chirammel as Master of Scholastics, starting on 26 July.
  - **The Vicariate of India will remain under the direct responsibility of the Regional Superior until the beginning of the canonical visit of the General Superior scheduled for January 2025.**

## Father Livio BORGHETTI scj

*Rho, 20 September 1933 - Albavilla, 9 July 2024 (Italy)*

### A Life of Contemplation and Praise: The Legacy of Fr. Livio

*«Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, what you will wear... look at the birds of the air, the lilies of the field....» (Mt 6:25-28).*

Having lived for a long time in community with Fr. Livio, I believe I caught a glimpse in his life—in the boarding school and in the school at Colico with the boys at first, in youth, and then in the parish and in the old age—I believe that Livio lived (I use a strong word) the traits of a contemplative of the beauties of creation, to be enjoyed personally before being testified to. Throughout his priestly life, together with carrying out his ministerial service, he always sang, «Laudato sii, mio Signore (Praise be to you, my Lord) ...» for the beauty of Lake Como, Lake Lugano, and also for the beauty of the marvelous works created by man in Milan (he would visit a museum almost every day). He also praised the majesty of the Grigne and Resegone mountains and the green hills of Brianza, which he contemplated from the windows of his room in his last years in Albavilla.

He praised the beauty of the Lord's gifts with his musical talent, especially at the piano: a song of praise for pure delight, without any



temptation to show off his skill. Gifts to be thankful for... exclusively.

«Laudato sii, mio Signore...» for the ingenious works created by man, with your help: works of all kinds, about which Fr. Livio always kept himself informed through attentive and punctual reading. During long hours of pleasant reading on the terrace, every publication and magazine were, for him, a tasty meal to nourish himself with. Even his meticulous and detailed stamp collecting was an occasion for praise.

And... «Why do you worry about clothing? Look at how the lilies of the field grow!» Fr. Livio's wardrobe, opened these days, smells of simplicity, of that poverty and abandonment into the hands of the Lord, of that simplicity of life so strongly recommended by St. Michael Garicoits to his followers: «Live the virtues of the Sacred Heart:



unconditional obedience, simplicity of life, and unshakable meekness. This is the true beauty to pursue, to realize day after day with the Lord's help.»

St. Paul helps us live with hope, even in the face of death. If God is for us, if He is on our side, who can be against us? What do we have to fear?

Seventy years are the span of our life, eighty for the strongest, and today even ninety, says the Psalm, and then we place ourselves in His hands. «Who will separate us from

the love of Christ? Who will accuse God's chosen ones? God justifies» (Rom 8:33). He is a demanding Father because He wants His children to learn to live as His Son Jesus taught us, but He is a Father who walks with us, who does not abandon us.

This is the hope that gives us life! ■

*From the homily of Fr. Piero  
Trameri scj*



## *In the Peace of the Lord*

**Thailand** | On August 26, **Mrs Maria Naugeiz Kraipimonkul**, 91, mother of Fr Jailertrit Michael Tidkham SCJ) passed away. We convey our condolences to Fr Tidkham SCJ, and we promise to keep him, his dear mother, and his family members in our prayer.

**Italy** | **Mr. Natale Gorgia**, passed away on August 25th. He was a tireless animator as a lay Betharramite. He contributed to the translation of some parts of the "Correspondence of Saint Michael Garicoïts" into Italian. We are close to his family with prayer and express our condolences.



**England** | **Mrs Christine Fullard**, born in 1927, passed away on July 27th, 2024. Chris was one of the pioneer members of our lay companion group along with her late husband Brian in Olton Friary. Both of them travelled to India and since then they were a great support to our Indian mission. They both supported the mission right from the beginning and sadly we miss them. May she rest in peace.





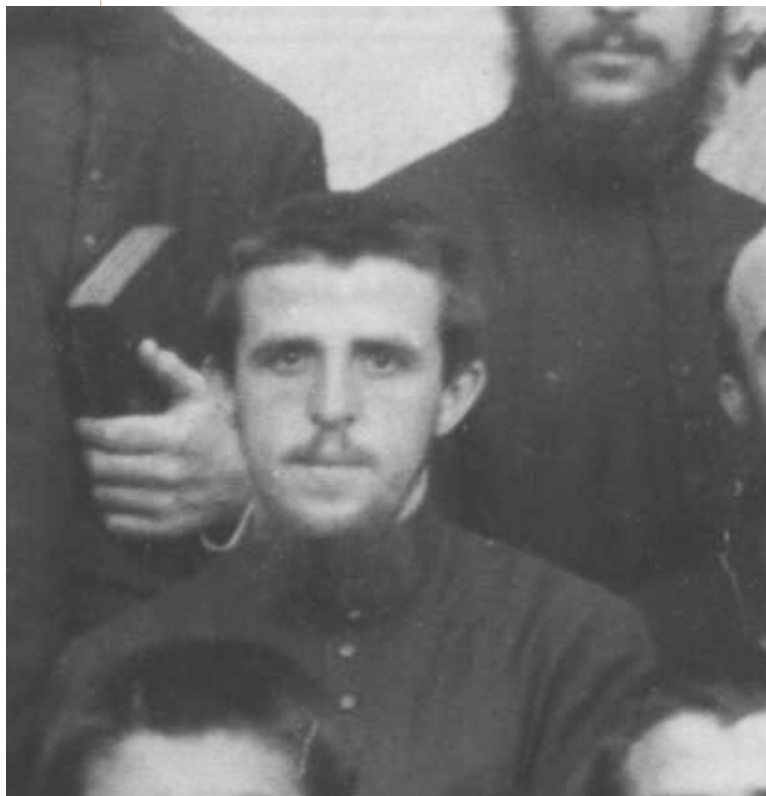
## The Apostolate of the cigarette Fr. Romain Saubatte scj

| Roberto Cornara, archivist

History, the kind worthy of our attention, is said to be the account of great events that indelibly and enduringly mark the path of humanity. But certain “little tales” often unknown, also exalt the human spirit and soul and give “meaning” to our earthly pilgrimage. Such is the case, it seems to me, with the story of Fr. Romain Saubatte.

Born in 1889 in Lestelle, just steps away from the Bétharram sanctuary, like many other young people, he followed his vocation within the Congregation, first in the apostolic schools of Bétharram and Lesve in Belgium, then at the novitiate and scholasticate in Bethlehem. He was ordained a priest in Jerusalem on 13th July 1913. After a year of higher studies in Rome, he was ready to begin his “ecclesiastical career.” But God had other plans.

The Great War broke out, the war that dehumanized peoples and consciences. Fr. Romain, like all French priests, was called to serve. He was enlisted for a few months in



*Fr. Romain Saubatte scj (1889-1915)  
Picture taken at the scholasticate at Bethlehem in 1912,  
Fr. Romain was ordained priest the year after.*

Bordeaux as a secretary to the army staff. It was probably during this time that he became acquainted with the Saint Seurin school, the Congregation of the Sisters of St Clotilde, and with Sister Geneviève Boselli, one of the school's teachers.

In early 1915, Fr. Romain requested and obtained permission to go to the front. His intentions were clear: “I myself have everything to gain from

*this school of priestly sacrifice; for, since I do not have to fight but will be in danger, I will be a priest after the heart of Jesus... I leave as a priest, not as a killer of men."*

His work was that of a stretcher-bearer, to carry the wounded and the soldiers killed in battle, lying in the fields and trenches.

But Fr. Romain was not alone. He had, for company, the many letters he wrote to his family, his confreres, the Superior General, and Geneviève Boselli. Sister Geneviève, with her class of students, *"began a correspondence with Fr. Saubatte... The young girls accompanied their letters with parcels containing, notably, chocolates and cigarettes, thanks to the money they had saved through sacrifices and mortifications. The goal was to help the priest by providing him with gifts to support his apostolate among the rescued soldiers. By its nature, this initiative became known as the 'Apostolate of the Cigarette.'"*<sup>1</sup>

His last letter, dated 21st June 1915, was addressed to Fr. Paillas, the Superior General: "I am writing to tell you that my health is good and

that I have courage with the help of God, even in a place where danger is great, for more than once shells have covered me with dust and smoke..."

On Wednesday 23rd June, Fr. Romain was stationed on the road leading from Béthune to Neuville-Saint-Vaast (Pas-de-Calais, northern France), in a shelter. It was 10 o'clock in the morning. He and his comrades were about to relieve the troops when a shell fragment struck his neck and severed his carotid artery. It was the end. *"When I asked him if he was conscious," the chaplain recounted, "he responded with a look of despair, but full of energy. Without hesitation, I gave him absolution, and all we could do was weep around his precious remains."*

His body rests in the small cemetery of Acq. A short life, that of Fr. Romain, but one filled with meaning. All it took was a little chocolate and a few cigarettes to give it its full greatness... *"I die as a priest submitted to the Holy See and all its decisions, as a religious having great esteem and love for his dear Congregation, his superiors, and his confreres..."*<sup>2</sup>. ■

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1) Ludovic Laloux, *\*The Children's Crusade: A Spiritual and Patriotic Movement Founded in 1915 at Saint Seurin School in Bordeaux\**, in: Jean-François Condette (ed.), *\*Schools in War\**, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2014, pp. 255-270.

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2) Extract from his will, probably written before he went to the front.





The cross must be shared by all the Saviour's disciples, but, the nature, the degree of the test is a secret reserved to Him.»

(Saint Michael Garicoïts, DS § 101)



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