



# Nef

2025

Nouvelles En Famille



The Pedagogy of  
the Incarnation

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FOR INTERNAL USE

# THE PEDAGOGY OF THE INCARNATION

To pedagogically present  
Jesus Christ,  
the Incarnate God



**“Have the same mind as Christ Jesus.**

**Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,**

**but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness.**

**And being found in human form, he humbled himself, in obedience, accepting death even death on a cross” (Phil 2:5-8).**

Dear Betharramites,

The General Chapter of Chiang Mai 2023 reminded us of our mission to communicate faith through the “Pedagogy of the Incarnation” (Acts of the Chapter, motion nr.3 ). This is not just a smart word, but a unique style that is not limited to the educational sphere, but must be present in the mission of all those called to teach with flair Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man.

Our goal as a Betharramite family—as Saint Michael said—is to work for our own Salvation and that of all those entrusted to us, but not in any random way. We commit to do so in the incarnate style of Jesus. Many of our predecessors have internalised this style in various places and stages of our history. In some of our brothers, this pedagogy has not only been lacking, but has been completely disfigured and sullied. But all this does not prevent us from

remembering here what a high vocation and mission we were called to from the beginning.

***What does it mean to pedagogically present Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God?***

- 1) **It is to provoke or facilitate an encounter with him.** Above all, it is to make him credible. To help people encounter him and discover the meaning he can have for their lives. To provoke a personal and transforming encounter with him and make him present in the lives of Christians.
- 2) **It is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.** We present him authentically when we present him as the *gospel*, as *good news*. When we help people discover all the richness, the saving, transforming, and liberating power contained in his person and his message. That is, to present Christ as someone capable of responding to the aspirations, longings, and questions of the third millennium.
- 3) **It is to bear witness to our experience of faith in Jesus Christ.** To proclaim Jesus Christ is to be a witness, to know how to spread—to communicate—one's own experience of faith in Christ to others. Today's world needs *witnesses* more than Christologists, believers who can speak about what they have experienced in faith about Christ, Saviour, brother, and friend, who lives with us and among us.

**By adopting God's pedagogy for us, we Betharramites can apply it to our mission as a Pedagogy of the Incarnation.**

How can this pedagogy be expressed:

a) It is found in **a pedagogy of "divine condescension."** This begins in the Old Testament with God's benevolent presence with the patriarchs, prophets, and his people: «*I will be with you*» (Ex 3:12), «*You will be my people, and I will be your God*» (Ez 36:28); it continues with the promise of the Messiah, Emmanuel, «*God with us*» (Is 7:14), which is fulfilled in the incarnation of the Son of God in Mary of Nazareth: «*He dwelt among us*» (John 1:14), and reaches its fullness with the death and resurrection: «*I am with you always, to the end of the age*» (Mt 28:18-20). This pedagogy of condescension is related to the divine pedagogy of solidarity. The Lord shows himself in solidarity and comes to walk with us. Before us.

b) It is found in **a pedagogy of “revelation in history.”** The «economy [plan] of salvation» has a historical character, for it is realised in time: it began in the past, developed, and reached its peak in Christ; it deploys its power in the present, and awaits its consummation in the future. This historical character of saving revelation is very important for the pedagogy of the incarnation. The incarnation could be contemplated within the mystery of Christmas; but this is only the starting point. The incarnation, on the other hand, is understood especially as *a mystery of God’s manifestation among us*. All the mysteries of Jesus’ private and public life bear signs of his incarnate divinity. Present today in our history, we can encounter this living and saving Christ today.

c) It is **a pedagogy of “gradualness.”** The Gospel message must be presented in its entirety, but *little by little, following the example of divine pedagogy, through which God has revealed himself progressively and gradually. Integrity must be combined with the adaptation of the message.*

d) It is the **pedagogy of “mediations and signs.”** God «dwells in unapproachable light» (1 Tim 6:16). But if God cannot be known in person or directly, he makes himself known through mediations: «*God, after having spoken [made himself known] at many times and in various ways to our fathers through the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son*» (Heb 1:1-2). He, having become one of us, is the Mediator—the great mediation—for knowing the Father and reaching his saving encounter. He himself has revealed to us—as a personal mediation—the mysterious reality of his incarnation. And it continues to do so through the deeds and words of the Old and New Testaments, both in its original historical time in Palestine and through its members throughout the history of the Church.

Following these principles of God’s pedagogy, our «Pedagogy of the Incarnation» must be attentive to everything that helps us **to know the people entrusted to us, to love them, respect them, and care for them delicately as God the Father does with us, his children, in the Person of Jesus, his Beloved Son.**

Our Father Saint Michael expressed it this way in his founding text.

*This is how God has loved us. Thus, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Creator, has become an ineffable incentive for the heart, a perfect model and sovereign*



*help; men, on the other hand, stand like ice floes before God! And even among priests, there are so few who say, following the example of the divine Master: «Here we are... Ita, Pater» (Yes, Father)...!*

Let us pray to God that every Betharramite may never lose sight of the great vocation to which they have been called and may know how to honour it through the paths and with the pedagogy that our charism points out to us.

May God bless you and I wish you a happy and holy Easter.

**Fr. Gustavo Agín scj**  
Superior General

**To share in community :**

1. How do you self-evaluate your personal style of presenting Jesus Christ, in light of the Pedagogy of the Incarnation? What strengths and weaknesses do you find in your daily pastoral work?
2. What would be the great challenges we must take on as Betharramites to present Jesus Christ with renewed fervour in this particularly complex and changing society?
3. Share a testimony of the conversion of a faithful person that you have witnessed.



## From the homily for the EASTER VIGIL IN THE HOLY NIGHT OF EASTER

St Peter's Basilica, Holy Saturday, 30 March 2024

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is our Pasch. He is the One who brings us from darkness into light, who is bound to us forever, who rescues us from the abyss of sin and death, and draws us into the radiant realm of forgiveness and eternal life. Brothers and sisters, let us look up to him! Let us welcome Jesus, the God of life, into our lives, and today once again say “yes” to him. Then no stone will block the way to our hearts, no tomb will suppress the joy of life, no failure will doom us to despair. Brothers and sisters, let us lift our eyes to him and ask that the power of his resurrection may roll away the heavy stones that weigh down our souls. Let us lift our eyes to him, the Risen Lord, and press forward in the certainty that, against the obscure backdrop of our failed hopes and our deaths, the eternal life that he came to bring is even now present in our midst. ■



# The Pedagogy of the Incarnation

## Incarnation in the daily life of a parish priest

• Fr. Jean-Luc Morin scj (Pibrac)

The editors of La NEF offered me some unexpected Lenten homework: to write about the pedagogy of the Incarnation in pastoral ministry. This subject caught me off guard, given the main characteristic of my ministry: the urgency of everyday life. After all, isn't this one of the most immediate forms of the Incarnation?...

Rather than look at my own spirituality as a priest, we can look at the Lord's "manner of service": *"It pleased God to be loved..."* This is where it all began, according to our founding text. When we love, we want to come out of ourselves, reach out to the other on their own ground, be close, give our best, and give of ourselves, even if it means forgetting ourselves, taking up the cross... Allow me to express this impulse of the Incarnate Word according to Saint Michael (DS§1), in my own way as a parish priest. In summary:

When we love, we want others to grow, to take their own place, to

flourish, to *"give them the same happiness."* Hence the need to listen, to share, and to support lay people, from the very young to the elderly, from large families to the isolated, from the healthy to the ill-fated, from the right-thinking to the ill-regarded. When we love, we seek unity—*unum sint* (*May they all be one* John 17:21)—while remaining different, united but different, united because they are different (we do not unite like, we clone them).

The privileged place for this communion of minds and hearts is the renewal of Eucharistic adoration, every week, in every church. When we love, we desire the good of others, we seek to give them God's life, hence sacramental pastoral care, marked by the celebration of birth and marriage, the gift of forgiveness, and the anointing of strength. With the help of the Pastoral Animation Team, I am laboriously but gently trying to become a pastor in the school of the Good Shepherd. I









After years of itinerancy for the Congregation, my “*here I am*” now fits within the boundaries of a given perimeter. The Courbet Cluster is made up of three parishes, corresponding to the communes of Pibrac, Brax, and Léguevin, with a population of 23,000, west of Toulouse. A territory limited in space but unlimited in terms of personal circumstances and people’s expectations. At well into my sixties, I experience a form of happy sedentary lifestyle, even if I rarely stay in one place. I discover that a priest is consulted on everything: theological, liturgical, and political questions, individual advice, family disputes, the sensitivities of florists or choir members, the size of the hosts, the color of the curtains, etc.

am practising dialogue and collegial discernment, not to say synodality! I am learning to offer myself to the Father, to suffer for the faithful, and to rejoice for them too. All this while managing fatigue and the limits of my condition and character, a path of humility and conversion.

*“You formed a body for me, so I said...”*

Hence the importance of knowing how to refer to those who are wiser and greater than oneself. Above all, do not confuse “father” with “expert,” and modestly strive to be a point of reference. The pedagogy of the incarnation also means connecting the local community to the will of the Eternal Father and, through it, to the wider world. It means cultivating

the relationship with the diocese, entering into a vision of the Church that is both particular and universal, and continuing the tradition of this priory as a place of exchange and fraternity, with the priests of the deanery. Here, I discover how much pastoral spirituality is of a spousal nature, to use a strong word. For it is about embracing the portion of the Christian people entrusted to Betharram since 1982; embracing its joys and sorrows; seeking to become together the Family of God, open to all, especially those who do not believe themselves to be part of it; feeling deeply brothers while being called fathers; to allow oneself to be constantly challenged by life, moved by the Spirit, animated by the inner Master to “*unfold the immensity of charity*” wherever one is sent; to not take oneself for God—even if the priest is sometimes awaited as the messiah—nor for the devil—when you are struck in the face or in the unspoken by horrors of the past, that could make you doubt your vocation... I evoked a spousal spirituality: to marry is to take responsibility. Not to give in to the temptation of flight or denial in the face of bereavement, illness, failure, or breakup. It means rediscovering what it means, today, to “*put oneself in the place of the victims,*” to “*imitate Jesus, humbled and obedient*”—so many beautiful phras-

es that pierce you when they begin to take shape, to leave theory behind for the violence of reality. To marry is also to experience the presence of God, including physically, in the community at prayer. During Sunday Masses, by saying “*this is my body... this is my blood,*” the celebrant cannot help but embrace the assembly in this sacrament of the Presence, to feel the Body of Christ vibrate there, body and soul, sufferings, sadness and joys mixed together, transfigured... What a blessing also to know the sheep by their name, to be able to greet them at the church door or to present the host to them: “*Lucienne, Nicolas, Céline... the body of Christ*”!

The pedagogy of the Incarnation is, finally, placing oneself on Mary’s side: learning to meditate on all things—the unspeakable that overwhelms you, the mystery that pierces you—in her heart, holding together the Ecce, the Fiat, and the Magnificat in rereading the mission entrusted to you, giving birth to Christ within oneself to bring him to the world...

Ah! Funeral directors are calling me now about funerals. When you love, you don’t delay.

Happy Easter! ■



## That is the way God loved us sending his only son

• Roxana Flores (Argentina)

It is thanks to my parents that I have got in touch since my childhood with the Sacred Heart of Jesus Congregation of Betharram, first in kindergarten and in primary school then joining the parish group of youth, still in the same city of Martin Coronado (in the big metropolis of Buenos Aires).

That is where I met Jesus who invited me to love each day more “within the limits of my position”. He called me to be happy and to announce it to everyone “beyond my borders”.

There was the first summer mission in Santiago del Estero in 1985. Many others have followed until the day when a

teacher diploma in hand I settled in the far away province of Catamarca with eight other four young missionaries and with the one who was to become the father of my children. In 2000 we have replied to the appeal of the Archdiocese of Santiago del Estero then in September 2005 I joined the educative community of Sacred Heart in Barracas in the city of Buenos Aires.

It has not been easy to say the first “Yes” but after this first moment of inspiration-motivation which has been followed with a concrete support and has been interrupted by the religious and the secular of the ViArUr (Vicariate



of Argentina-Uruguay) I adopted "mission as a way of life" and to "share the same happiness with the others". To give reasons of my faith and of charism of Betharram had brought me to watch always to deepen my spirituality, my identity and my belonging to this family. Of course we go on walking until the Lord calls us to him, because the challenges never stop. The project goes on!



The idea is to announce Jesus in order for others to be fascinated by him and allow them to live his teaching attracting the others, still others, and everyone. To work in parishes and in schools with everyone, young children and adults has always been motivating and giving impulse as to work in teams in community, thinking and building many ways to make people know the Lord for them to follow him and love him.

Meetings and retreats with young people and teachers, reunions of parents, patronal celebrations, marial celebrations, rural missions, all these initiatives are registered in the organisation of the missionary pastoral of the young peo-

ple. The strength and the enthusiasm, the creativity and the joy of the youth enrich us. For their part adults are here to listen, to encourage and to accompany their faith path, in order for the young not to get discouraged and to allow them to offer to society the best of themselves. Nothing replaces prayer and confidence. The work and the silence must be what feed us to guide them and educate them into the pedagogy of Incarnation in order for them to be other Lords, loving with humility and tenderness, serving with ease and an absolute availability, always attentive to make people listen to the voice of those who need us particularly the poor and the young. ■



## Pedagogy of the Incarnation and Formation: Three Elements for Reflection

• Fr. Juan Pablo García Martínez scj (Belo Horizonte)

The charism of Saint Michael is based on the Mystery of the Incarnation, in which the tenderness of the Father, who “chose to be loved,” and the willingness of the Son, who responded with “Here I am!” are revealed. This is evidenced by the life of our founder, the imprint left by many Betharramites after him, and the documents of our Congregation. Therefore, Betharramite formation, to be true to its charism, must also be incarnated. Without intending to exhaust the notes on a Pedagogy of the Incarnation – which was the focus of the most recent General Chapter – I will focus on three implications of this pedagogy in formation: namely, the gradual nature of formation; the context of the formation community; and the freedom of the one in formation.

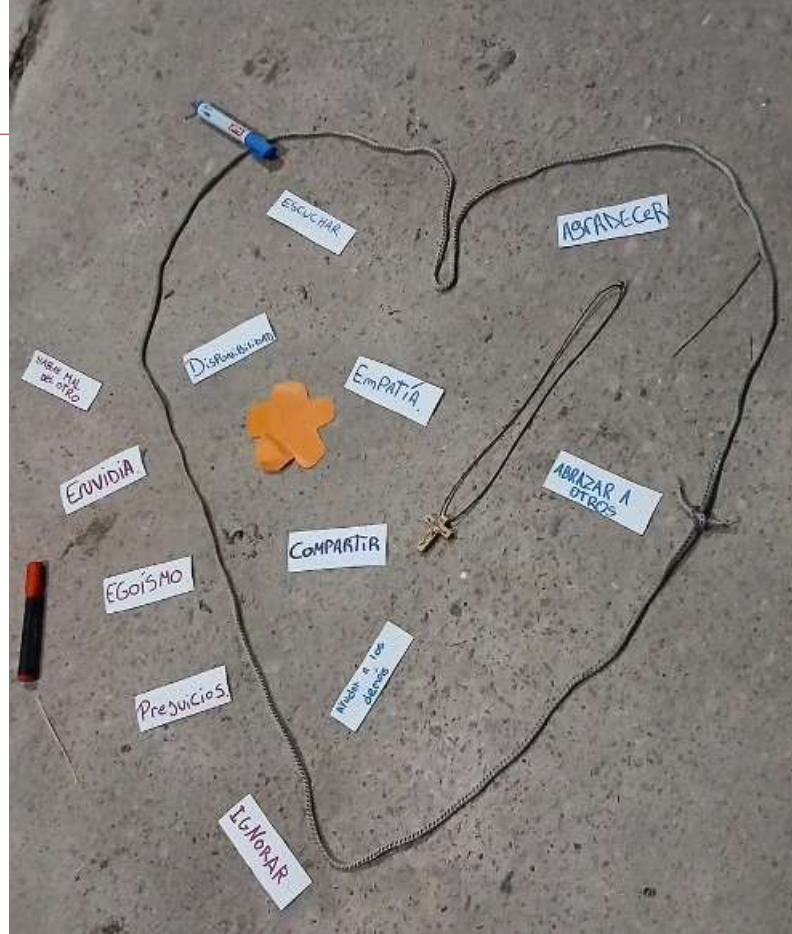
It is important to remember that no one is born complete or fully prepared, but every human being is born with the irreplaceable and unpostponable task of completing their unfinished being. And this does not happen overnight, upon crossing the

threshold of the house of formation, but begins beforehand and continues afterward, step by step. Therefore, a Pedagogy of the Incarnation must consider the gradual nature of formation. It is a process to be followed, in which there can be steps forward, steps back, and moments of uncertainty. The mission of the formator, then, is primarily to accompany the journey with respect, patience, and hope (cf. Acts of the General Chapter 2023).

We must also be aware that no one can grow, mature, and incarnate by disregarding their surrounding environment. Although religious communities, like any family, need a space of privacy, appropriate protection should not turn the house of formation into a bubble or an artificial island. On the contrary, it is crucial that the religious community interacts with its context, especially by coming close to simple people, who edify us with their example of faith, humility, solidarity, struggle, and love. For this to be possible, the standard of living in our houses of formation must be

modest, avoiding reducing the vow of poverty to a farce. Moreover, religious and those in formation often come from humble families. If we lose touch with our roots, we will soon forget who we are and become disembodied religious.

Finally, for the Pedagogy of the Incarnation to be true, the formative community must be a space that recognizes and promotes the dignity and responsible freedom of those in formation. Indeed, the pedagogy of Betharramite obedience seeks to *"build a free and responsible personality, one that knows how to transition from what the person wants to what the Father wants"* (cf. Jn 8:29). Obedience, far from diminishing freedom, offers it the opportunity to *live true fidelity and full realization*" (Ratio Formationis § 32). As Fr. Jean Messingué SJ warned at the International Formators' Meeting (Betharram, July 2024), environments characterized by arbitrariness, control, and surveillance dehumanize, overwhelm individual conscience, and prove counterproductive. On the other hand, clear rules and community agreements, the result of discernment in the light of the Spirit, facilitate the development of a mature and authentic personality. Without these essential conditions, the one



in formation may adapt to a hostile environment, but at a high cost. That is, they may try to do what is expected of them - "fit into the mold" - but will hardly be able to incarnate, because they will (rightly) feel that their integrity and their path are being threatened.

If the Incarnation teaches us anything, it is that God did not choose the instant fascination, but the slow journey of history, the patient time of growth. As Betharramites, we are called to follow the same path: accompanying and promoting journeys; interacting and sharing with the environment; and conquering the responsible freedom of God's children. ■

## My Ecce venio in the World of Education

• Fr. Koffi Djéban Landry scj (Katiola)

*"One of Saint Michael's primary roles was that of a teacher. If we set aside his years of formation and the twenty-two months of ministry in Cambo, his life was dedicated to teaching. For thirty-eight years, from 1821 to 1824 in Larressore and from 1825 to 1863 in Betharram, he taught literature, sciences, mathematics, philosophy, sacred scripture, and theology. With his immense capacity for work and remarkable intellect, he acquired a vast cultural knowledge for his lessons."*<sup>1</sup> For our founder, education meant *"shaping the person and preparing them to lead a useful and honourable career according to their status. Intellectual education instils beauty, refinement, politeness, and greatness. It is an inspiration of life, grace, and light."*<sup>2</sup> These brief quotations of our founder strongly attest to his great commitment to the mission of education. He was convinced that education should be directed toward the common good, forming responsible and engaged citizens.

That is why he always emphasized the importance of Christian education, which allows young people to discover their identity and mission in life.

It is in this spirit that I embrace my mission as a teacher of French and Latin at the Private Catholic Secondary College Saint Jean-Marie Vianney in Katiola (north central Ivory Coast).

Obedience, love, and dedication—paraphrasing our founder, Saint Michael Garicoïts—are the key sources that the heart of every Betharramite missionary should continuously strive for. These three virtues seem essential to my role as an educator. In my daily life as a teacher, I seek to live the *Sequela Christi*, thus generously responding to the Lord's call, inviting me to be *"his co-worker for the salvation of souls."* Following Saint Michael's example, I am constantly called to turn to the Lord, to express my love and total availability.

1) Pierre Miéyaa in *Correspondence of Saint Michael Garicoïts*, Vol. 1. Introduction p. 21.

2) Manuscripts of the Saint (nr. 992), quoted by Pierre Duvignau scj in *A Spiritual Master of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century*, p. 90.

ty to Him. In my intimate encounter with the Sacred Heart, and in the various Church services entrusted to me, I find the strength to live out my priesthood within my religious community. By accepting the mission of educator, I humbly strive to echo the impulse of the Incarnate Word, saying to His Father, *"Here I am."* Doing God's will, *"out of love above all else"* commits me to carry out my teaching mission with professional integrity, which means ensuring that I fulfil my educational responsibilities with regularity (diligent, meticulous, and punctual work), zeal (dedication, self-sacrifice), and initiative (a spirit of creativity, critical thinking, and innovation). I am able to live all this fully thanks to God, who constantly grants me the necessary strength, the unwavering support of my brothers in the community, and the close collaboration with the school's staff.

Understanding that good pedagogy is essential for effectively carrying out the teaching profession, I actively participate in various meetings of our region's teacher association. This is truly an opportunity to seize, as the experience of my colleagues greatly helps me in my work.

I constantly keep in mind that an educator bears the immense responsibility of transmitting to students the

meaning of life, helping them grasp the greatness of human love, and awakening in them the desire to encounter and follow Christ. I strive to embrace and carry forward Saint Michael's insights, teaching my students to know Christ, love Him, and follow Him according to their unique vocation. And as a shepherd of souls, I continuously renew my *Ecce venio* by assisting and supporting parents—often discouraged by life's hardships—in their educational mission.

Our father, Michael Garicoïts, strengthened his interior life and refined his pastoral sense through the frequent study of philosophy and theology. He reminds us of the necessity of constant formation to become true educators, as for him, study was an essential element for every missionary of the Gospel. By combining priestly ministry with education, I am able—through God's grace, my religious formation, and my university studies—to transmit knowledge to young people, who are in search of guidance and meaning.

I keep nothing for myself. Everything I have learned from various sources, my knowledge and skills, are at the service of the youngest, my students, my little brothers and sisters in learning. My two years of study-





ing literature at the University of Pau are a valuable asset for my students. I patiently instil in them a love for the French language, which is, after all, the official language of our country. The examples I use in my lessons are based on real-life experiences, having spent some years in France, and this serves as a source of motivation for my students.

However, despite its demanding and time-consuming nature, the education of young people is a remarkable apostolate. By helping each student cultivate their talents, a true teacher fosters their personal growth, leading them to discover the Lord's merciful love, encouraging them to believe

in themselves, and inspiring them to serve others.

Witnessing the wonderful transformation of my students fills me with great joy. Is this not what it means to, *"bring others the same happiness"*?

By drawing inspiration from Saint Michael Garicoïts' teachings, we can contribute to building a more just and united world, where every individual can reach their full potential. I am deeply convinced that the future of both the Church and society depends largely on the education given to young people today. I believe that the caring and warm presence of mature, well-balanced educators is a great blessing for students. They



will learn to build their character through human formation, spiritual and moral education, so that they may become strong adults, capable of assuming responsibilities in society and being faithful disciples of Christ.

Aware of the challenges currently facing our congregation regarding the “Betharram Affair”, with the revelations of previous cases of sexual abuse and violence, I constantly

ask the Lord for strength to uphold my commitment, by immersing myself in the principles of love, compassion, and Christian charity, and by respecting the code of conduct that every adult must observe towards minors. My humble contribution at Katiola College is thus aimed at shaping young people who will be equipped to face the challenges of their time. ■

## My experience in Langting mission

- Fr. Peter Valan Kanagaraj scj (Langting)

St. Mary’s School, Langting (Assam, India) was founded 25 years ago. The Jesuit Fathers had begun this Mission invited by the Bishop John in 2003. At first the Jesuit fathers Valerian, Asshuli, Owan, and later the Betharramite fathers Jesuraj, Jestin and Jacob carried out their mission in this school. Currently I myself, Fr. Valan Scj, together with the religious of the Congregation of the Franciscan Clares (Franciscan Clarist Congregation), continue this mission.

It is a wonderful opportunity to work in this district Dima Hasao (Assam) for the cultural and economic growth

of people through education.

Our mission work in this non-Christian place is only through education. People are very rich in their culture. They celebrate life. They are simple and hard working. After our presence over here by means of education there are evidences of improvements in the life style of people by exploring themselves to various fields. But to be frank with regard to their religious life they are pagans, nature worshipers, believing in spirit and universe. The people of Dima Hasao are strict to their practice to protect their tribe and their culture.

As for as my understanding, for them we are simply educators and that is the purpose for which they have invited missionaries to found a school.

*At this point, what is our inspiration to spread the Charism of Incarnation in everyday life in a non-Christian territory?*

The school is like a harbor where we load the ship: people, luggage, cargo etc. But staying on the harbor is not the destination of a ship but reaching the other side. But before reaching the destination the ship has to go through deep water, hard waves, heavy wind, etc. The ship is prepared at the harbor to face all the hardships on its route before it reaches the destination. School is the same, it prepares the students to face the reality of life through teaching, sports and various activities. In my understanding, for the last few years the people of this land have realised that education as is a powerful instrument to improve their lives economically. People are proud to be part of our educational institution.

Our daily life begins with the Holy Mass as a source of our strength to bear witness to the people we meet in everyday life. Every day I take up the challenge of the Incarnation, of the God who becomes man, and I

am called to show the various aspects of the face of God in my actions and words. What would God do in my place? I failed many a time to be so. As in office I meet number of parents with different needs, some of them are single parents. Chronically ill, struggling for their daily bread, broken family; guardians of students who have no parents, economically not sound and also people with different kinds of needs. On one hand I need to manage the school and on the other hand I need to take into consideration the different needs of parents and students.

Every day I am called to exercise compassion and at the same time be right. In spite of all this I stand as a witness to the fact that "God provides" He has never deprived me of being generous and considerate and attend to every day's needs.

In our Dima Hasao District there is a mixture of tribes. Namely Dimasa, Khelma, Kuki, Bengali, Bihari, Napali, Naga, Karbi, Garo & Adivasi. In order to facilitate unity in diversity among teachers and students, we have teachers from various tribes and maintain English as a common language in our school. All share their knowledge, ideas & experiences in order to strengthen the bond and to understand each other. Once



a week, students of each tribe come with their traditional dress to enrich and cherish their culture. We appreciate the work of God by acknowledging the richness and uniqueness of every human being.

Personally I am learning a lot from this mission experience. I am learning how to respect various kinds of people and their opinions. Learning to know how little I am and how much I still have to learn. Learning that life is beautiful: make it simple and lovable. Learning to ignore negativity that doesn't help to grow. Learning to consider the opinion and situation of the other person before my own opinion. Learning to be at peace with myself at the end of the day so that I can start a new day with new ener-

gy. Learning that I am weak and unworthy but still God's grace is great. Learning to cry or worry less unless my cry or worry can bring solution. Learning to focus on my health, my happiness and my satisfaction in doing good for people. In all this I feel that I am learning to be more human towards my brothers and sisters and help them in their needs.

I am grateful to the family of Betharam that in my unworthiness, has found me worthy to lead this mission and glorify God in all we do. God bless us all.

Your Brother in Christ

Fr. Valan Peter Arasu SCJ ■



THE SUPERIOR GENERAL, FR. EDUARDO GUSTAVO AGIN SCJ, WITH THE CONSENT OF HIS COUNCIL, PRESENTED BR. ALWYN CRASTA FROM THE VICARIATE OF INDIA (SMJC REGION) TO THE DIACONAL MINISTRY (MEETING ON 13 MARCH IN ROME).

On March 31, 2025, the Indian Vicariate joyfully celebrated the Diaconate Ordination of Brother Alwyn SCJ. The momentous occasion took place at the Kristu Jyoti College Chapel.

The ceremony was led by Archbishop

Peter Machado of the Archdiocese of Bangalore, who served as the principal celebrant.

Following the Mass of Diaconate Ordination, the festivities continued at Shobhana Shaakha Study House. The celebration was attended by Brother Alwyn Crasta's family members, who had traveled from Kasargod to Bangalore to witness this special occasion. The gathering was a testament to the joy and pride that filled the hearts of all those who were present.



THE SUPERIOR GENERAL, FR. EDUARDO GUSTAVO AGIN SCJ, WITH THE CONSENT OF HIS COUNCIL, PRESENTS DEACON OSCAR MENDOZA OF THE VICARIATE OF PARAGUAY (FRAE REGION) TO THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY

(MEETING OF 20 AND 21 MARCH IN ROME).

Ordination is scheduled for 10 August 2025 in San José de los Arroyos (diocese of Coronel Oviedo).

## Fourth Journey to Rome

### November 1878 – January 1879

This journey to Rome is perhaps the most significant for the history of the Congregation. Indeed, it concerns the foundation of the Bethlehem community and the beginning of the cause for beatifying Father Garicoïts. But let us proceed in order, as the story is long.

In August 1875, a group of Carmelite nuns from Pau set out to establish a Carmelite convent in Bethlehem, in the Holy Land. This foundation was desired by Sr. Marie of Jesus Crucified and supported by a generous benefactress, Miss Berthe de Saint-Cricq



Berthe de Saint-Cricq Dartigaux

Dartigaux<sup>1</sup>. Betharram had close ties with the Carmelite Convent of Pau, where its priests served as chaplains. In October 1876, Fr. Chirou<sup>2</sup> was chosen to accompany a second group of Carmelites to Bethlehem. Upon his return to Betharram in January 1877, he conveyed to the General Council a proposal from Fr. Belloni<sup>3</sup> founder of an orphanage in Bethlehem, to send a Betharram priest to serve as chaplain to the Carmelites and as a teacher in their schools.

The Council decided to take time to study the matter. Father Etchecopar took a personal interest in the project,

1) Born in Pau in 1835, only daughter of the president of the court of Pau and niece, through her mother, of the Count of Saint-Cricq, minister of King Charles she also financed the construction of the Carmelite Convent and the residence of the fathers in Bethlehem. She died in Bethlehem, where she had retired, at the beginning of March 1877. She is recognized as the “founder” of the Carmelite Convent, while the Congregation of Betharram recognizes her as a “very distinguished benefactress”.

2) Father Prosper Chirou (1837-1932) was the nephew of Father Jean Chirou, superior general of Betharram after the death of St Michael. Father Prosper was then chaplain of the Carmelite Convent of Pau.

3) Father Antonio Belloni (1831-1903), priest of the diocese of Albenga (Liguria), missionary party in the Holy Land, founded several works. According to the archives, his intention was, it seems, to give the Bethlehem orphanage and his other works in the Holy Land to the Fathers of Betharram. The project did not come to fruition and in 1891 everything he had founded passed to the Salesians, of which he had become a member.



writing to Fr. Raimondo Bianchi, prosecutor of the Congregation in Rome, to ask for his opinion, and to Sr. Marie of Jesus Crucified, who became the main supporter of the foundation. Finally, in the month of July 1877, the General Council and Fr. Etchecopar decided to send Fr. Chirou to Bethlehem on a temporary basis to assist Fr. Belloni and oversee the construction of the new Carmelite Convent.

Fr. Prosper Chirou scj



to withdraw his consent: in fact, for a religious pontifical congregation to be able to enter the Holy Land, authorisation from the Holy See was required.

Father Etchecopar did not give up - he wanted to establish this foundation at all costs, even if his Council was perplexed and hesitant due to the small number of Betharramite religious. On 10th December 1877, he organised a very discreet

meeting at Betharram. We know that Fr. Etchecopar, Fr. Pierre Estrate, superior of the Pau community and confessor to Miss Dartigaux, Berthe Dartigaux herself, and Monsignor Gaspard Mermillod, a Swiss bishop then exiled in France, took part. The details of their discussion are unknown, but they certainly planned the next steps for the Bethlehem foundation. Indeed, five days later, Monsignor Mermillod wrote to the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide*<sup>4</sup> to express Miss Dartigaux's wish to establish at her own expense the chaplaincy of the Betharram fathers in Bethlehem and to request the necessary authorisation. This

4) The Congregation of the Holy See, today known as the Dicastery for Evangelisation, on which all decisions in mission lands depended, including the opening of the Betharramite residence in Bethlehem.

letter was the first in a long series of correspondence among the key figures involved.

*Propaganda Fide* sought the opinion of the Franciscans, who had managed the Custody of the Holy Land for centuries, and they opposed the foundation. The correspondence of Sr. Marie of Jesus Crucified was insistent on the subject: she wrote to everyone, the Pope, the Vatican Secretary of State, and the Prefect of *Propaganda Fide* to plead Betharram's case.

As *Propaganda Fide* refused permission for the Betharramites to enter the Holy Land, Miss Dartigaux decided to aim higher and wrote directly to Pope Leo XIII in early June 1878. Father Etchecopar was in favour of the foundation but, as he wrote to Miss Dartigaux, the project could only come to fruition *"by the decision, the will, and the mission granted by the authority of the Vicar of Jesus Christ."*<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, Sr. Marie of Jesus Crucified passed away on 26th August 1878, without seeing her dream fulfilled. At the news of her death, it was decided to send Fr. Estrate and Miss Dartigaux to Bethlehem, officially on

a pilgrimage. They left on 1st October 1878. In her will, the saintly Carmelite had expressed as her last wish that her heart be removed and brought back to the Carmelite Convent of Pau. This would be done.

What happened next is somewhat mysterious. We know that at some point in October (or perhaps earlier), after another rejection from *Propaganda Fide*, a decision was made to appeal to the Pope again about the foundation, but this time not by letter but by speaking directly with him, in Rome. On 2nd October, Fr. Etchecopar wrote to Fr. Magendie: *"If Heaven allows, I will go to Rome towards the end of November... This is not simply a pilgrimage goal. It concerns the good of the Congregation; later, clarity will come on this matter, and we will be able to speak more knowingly about it."*

The departure was scheduled for 25th November. On 29th November, at 11pm, the train Fr. Etchecopar was travelling on arrived in Rome, but he decided to continue to Naples. Indeed, a ship from the East was scheduled to arrive at noon the next day, carrying Fr. Estrate and Miss Dartigaux, who was bringing the heart of Sr. Marie

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5) Unfortunately, we have not (yet) found the letters written by Fr. Etchecopar during this period. I remember reading that he had ordered Fr. Chirou to burn everything that came from France, after reading.

of Jesus Crucified with her. While waiting for 'the pilgrims' coming from Bethlehem, Fr. Etchecopar gazed at Mount Vesuvius and wrote to his sister Madeleine:

*"As I write these lines, I do so with a view of Vesuvius, which constantly releases its puffs of smoke from three or four half-open mouths. Last night, these same points looked like the windows of a house illuminated by bright, flickering lights! What a marvel! What a wonder, this furnace that bubbles and burns so near to us, only three leagues from this great city, smiling like a blooming flower along the beautiful sea under such a pure azure sky!"*

The group arrived in Rome on 30th November and immediately got to work. Miss Dartigaux, and perhaps also Fr. Etchecopar, met with various people from *Propaganda Fide* to discuss the foundation of Bethlehem. On 6th December, Dartigaux once again put into writing her wish to found and maintain the chaplaincy of the Betharram fathers at her own expense. But things did not proceed as expected. Father Etchecopar wrote to Fr. Pagadoy, his assistant: "Seeing Rome's slowness

and caution, and having regard to the difficulties raised by Propaganda concerning our introduction into the Holy Land, the matter seems to be postponed or at least adjourned for a long time...". He also wrote later: "Very great obstacles opposed our foundation in the Holy Land."

But, as Sr. Marie of Jesus Crucified had predicted, the foundation was already decided in Heaven, and so it would happen on Earth. Around 10th December, Miss Dartigaux obtained a private audience with Leo

XIII. According to Fr. Estrate's memoirs, who was probably with her, the discussion centred on introducing the Betharram Congregation into the Holy Land. The Holy Father requested the foundress to put everything in writing and send him the letter through *Propaganda Fide*.



Fr. Pierre Estrate scj

For the umpteenth time, Dartigaux repeated what she had been asking for a year, but this time, she ended up obtaining it. On Sunday, 15th December, the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide* submitted the request for authorisation to found a Betharramite Community in Bethlehem to the Pope, and Leo XIII gave his consent. It was done. On

Christmas Day, Fr. Etchecopar announced the news to the whole Congregation: *"The Sovereign Pontiff has himself just authorised, directly and immediately, the establishment of our Institute in Bethlehem, to serve the Carmelite Convent and undertake any works that the Patriarch of Jerusalem may entrust to us. I have the rescript in my hands... Betharram in Bethlehem, by the express order of the Holy Father - is this not a great privilege and a source of great joy?"*

But Fr. Etchecopar was in Rome not only for the Bethlehem foundation but for another purpose, another dream, as well: the cause for their founder's canonisation. On 12th December, he wrote to Fr. Magendie: *"Some very influential men have committed me to begin the canonical process for our venerable founder. They say they are hopeful of at least reaching the declaration of veneration. Let us pray and sanctify ourselves!"* On Wednesday 18th December, he too obtained a private audience with Leo XIII, at which he submitted the idea of introducing the cause for the Founder; and on the same day he presented this project to the prefect cardinal of the Congregation of Rites. We were

facing the first step of a very long journey, which Fr. Etchecopar would not live to see through to the end... which was only completed in 1947 with the canonisation of Father Garicoïts.

Father Etchecopar's return from Rome had been planned for late December 1878, but the foundation of Bethlehem required further opinions, meetings, and consultations. He would not leave the Eternal City until mid-January, returning to Betharram on 18th January with all his travelling companions.

On 20th January, with the permission of the Bishop of Bayonne, the heart of Sr. Marie of Jesus Crucified was solemnly placed in the Carmelite Convent of Pau: *"If one had to take care some day of the cause for beatification of this very pious Carmelite, they would find a heart that was a burning furnace of divine love..."* <sup>6</sup> ■

Roberto Cornara

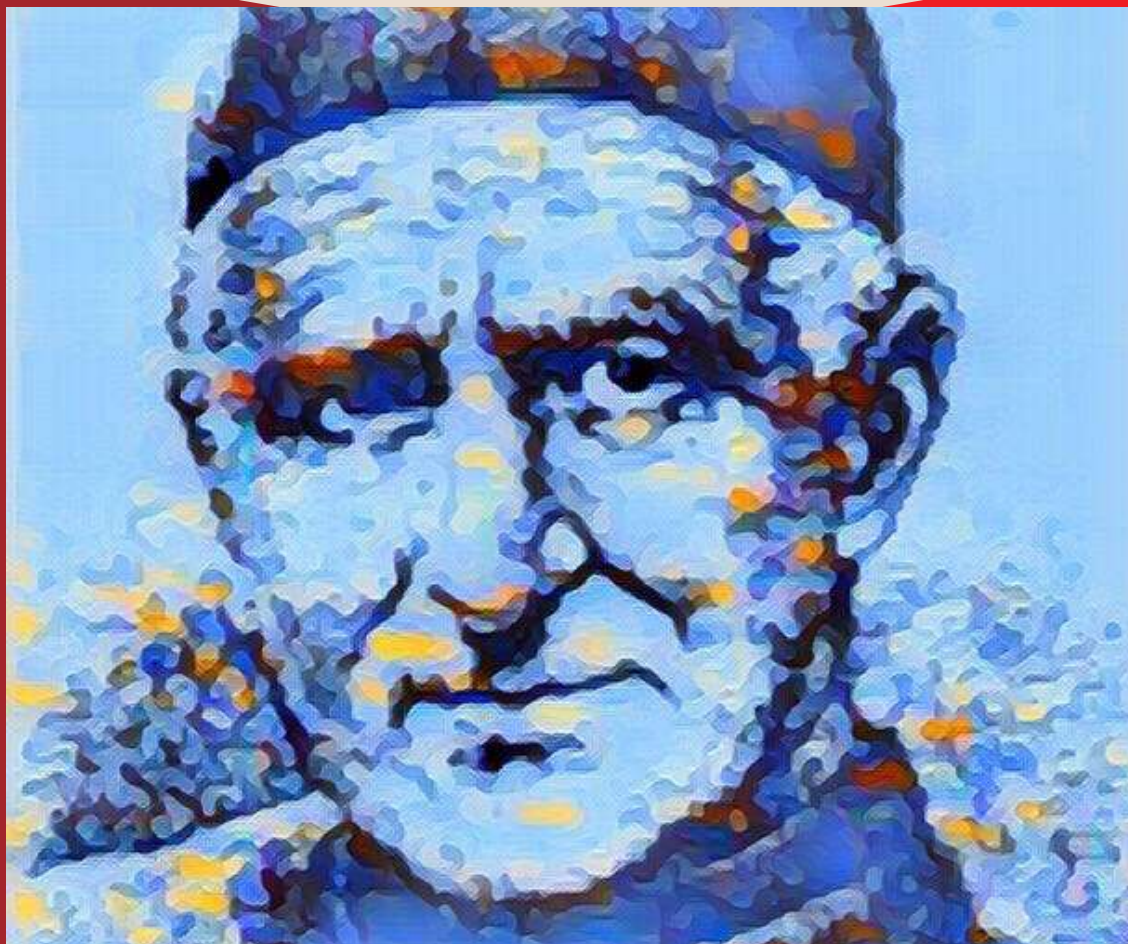


6) Letter to his sister Madeleine, 22nd January 1879.



“ Our divine Lord wished to submit to the common law and reach His glory through suffering. *‘Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these, things and enter into His glory?’* (Lk. 24, 26). It is as if he was saying *‘It’s quite simple, the law is for me, just as it is for others.’* He does not complain of His trials. He does not blame the Jews or Judas. *‘No one,’* He says, *‘can take My life from Me’* (Jn. 10, 18). He invites us to follow Him. Where to? To Cana, to Mount Thabor? No. To Calvary, carrying the Cross, every day of His life’ ”

*Thoughts of Saint Michael Garicoïts,*  
collected by Fr. Auguste Etchecopar



Societas Sacratissimi  
C o r d i s J e s u

*Betharran*