



Nef 2025

Nouvelles En Famille

“
Jesus Christ wants us to live and die in peace.
Be without anxiety,” he tells us. “Since his
coming, peace is the reward of souls of good
will. Did not the angels sing it over the cradle
in Bethlehem? Glory to God and peace to
people of good will! For them, salvation is
assured!”
”

(Saint Michael Garicoïts, *Spiritual Doctrine* § 77)



Merry Christmas!
& Best wishes for the year
2026!



Societas Sacratissimi
Cordis Jesu

Bethlehem



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FOR INTERNAL USE

26th, he reached Bordeaux. The next day, at one in the afternoon, Fr. Etchecopar arrived by train in Montaut: all of Bétharram – fathers and students of the college – were at the station to welcome the return of their Superior.

At the end of this long journey, Fr. Etchecopar summed up in a few lines the meaning of his visit and the impressions he had gathered during the various encounters⁴:

⁴) Letter-diary, 10-18 May 1892.

"I am reaching the end of my distant journey among my children. God had placed this plan in my heart; He allowed me to accomplish it: blessed be His holy name! I wanted to see this work of which so much good had been said, conceived by saints, founded by saints, continued in the spirit of Father Garicoïts and Father Barbé. I have seen it; indeed what was said was true. Yes, I have seen the work of saints; I have seen it animated by the spirit of saints. God has granted me this grace; may He be blessed a thousand times!

"I wanted to encourage my sons at the post of honour where they show great and unshakable dedication; and for that, to help them know better the common Father from whom we all come, Father Michel Garicoïts – to reveal to them the treasures of his intelligence, the virtues of his heart, the heroism of his holiness, and above all to bring to light the words, deeds, and wonders through which his mission as founder of our little Institute is revealed before our eyes...

"Finally, I wanted to tighten even more the bonds of obedience and affection that have always been so strong despite the distance, and which constitute the essence, the merit, and the infinite sweetness of the sublime life we have embraced. Have I succeeded?..." ■

holy religious women devoted to great austerity and a life of continual contemplation, they never cease to act outwardly upon souls, through preaching, confession, and catechism."¹

On 28th March, he left Buenos Aires and traveled to Montevideo for the official visit of the community. As soon as he arrived in the Uruguayan capital, he visited the benefactor families of the Betharramite work: the Jacksons, the Héberts, the Buxareos. His presence was a source of joy for the entire community and an opportunity to carry out a little apostolate as well. *"I was asked for a few small services: a short address in Spanish on the First Friday of the month at the Church of the Immaculate Conception; another in the same language at the Dominican Sisters; and finally a sermon in French for today, Passion Sunday, at the Church of the residence – all in poor language, laboriously composed, and requiring great indulgence... But are we not in a land of generosity and kindness?"*²

He spent the entire Holy Week in Montevideo. There were many

engagements at the church. On 17th April, Easter Sunday, he presided over the solemn celebration in the Church of the Basques and preached in French. *"I sang the Masses of Holy Thursday and Good Friday, presided over Matins and Lauds for those two solemnities, and preached in French on Easter Day before the crowd that filled the nave, facing the men who occupied the vast galleries..."*³

In the afternoon of 21st April, he left Uruguay and returned to Buenos Aires.

FAREWELLS AND THE RETURN TO FRANCE

The hour of departure approached. Towards the end of April, his brother Maxime, his wife Lastenia, and their older children arrived from Tucumán to greet Fr. Auguste. It was the last time the two brothers would see each other.

Departure was set for 5th May aboard the Brésil. In Montevideo, the whole community hurried to bid him farewell. On 10th May, he arrived in Rio de Janeiro; on the 19th, he was in Dakar; and finally, on the

"Artisans of Peace":

A mission for all times and places

**"Maranatha!
Come, Lord Jesus!"**

(Rev 22:20)

Dear Betharramites,

"Come, Lord Jesus!" Thus concludes the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. This final plea of Scripture is not an evasive, static desire, but *a call to action*.

Those who await the Lord actively collaborate with Him: they work, discern, and build, sowing even now the spirit of the Beatitudes that makes justice, solidarity, forgiveness, and true peace possible.

A few days ago, I returned from a visit to the Holy Land Community, which includes the St. Joseph of Bethlehem Interregional Novitiate and the Nazareth residence. I went there to accompany them for a month. I wanted to be with them at a time when our brothers and sisters are witnesses to the Kingdom in an environment still subject to armed conflict and social discord. The Betharramites of the Holy Land go out each day with courage and hope to encounter Jesus of Nazareth, who is cherished at all times and is present in all places. They walk in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace in an environment wounded by violence. In the Gospel, It is surprising and moving that, as Jesus approached Jerusalem, he **"wept over the city"** (Lk 19:41). His weeping was not condemnation, but sorrow: the beloved city did not

1) Letter to Fr. Bourdenne, 22 March 1892.

2) Letter to Fr. Magendie, 3 April 1892.

3) Letter to Fr. Estrade, 21 April 1892.



know how to recognize what leads to peace. It did not understand that peace is not the absence of conflict, but **the living presence of the Son**, who brings reconciliation. He taught us that peace comes from within.

In our vocational journey, we too have experienced how Jesus brings us inner peace—by reconciling us with God and with ourselves—and how this inner peace becomes fruitful outwardly: those who have been made pacified become **sowers of peace** wherever they live, “from within the limits of their position”. However, building peace encounters resistance, not only among nations but also within ourselves. New idols promise quick solutions: power, success, ideological polarization, the temptation to fear or indifference. These forces seduce us and lead us astray from the logic of the Gospel. Therefore, the Christian life will always be **a spiritual struggle**. It requires vigilance, discernment, strength, and a daily decision: to choose Christ. It is precisely this struggle—free, humble, and persevering—that leads us to true peace.

Pope Francis and his successor, Pope Leo, insist that peace is built *like an artisan who works with wood or clay*: with patience, creativity, and perseverance. It is not born from grand one-off gestures, but from nurturing relationships, dialogue, forgiveness, renunciation of all forms of violence, and the pursuit of justice.

For Christians, peace is **a gift that calls for hands**, hands capable of shaping it each day.

This vision deeply resonates with the spirituality of Betharram, marked by the “**Ecce venio**” of the Son, who came into the world to do the Father’s will, that is, to reconcile the world to Himself. For us Betharramites, this means being available for reconciliation, being a humble and approachable presence, learning the meekness of the Heart of Jesus, and offering our lives as a bridge between wounded people, cultures, and realities.

The Betharramite religious life is a call to live life as in “a workshop of Peace.”

The journey to South America (3/3)

3 November 1891 - 27 May 1892

SAN JOSÉ, SAN JUAN BAUTISTA, MONTEVIDEO

After a stay in Caseros, the Betharram Fathers’ country house on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Fr. Etchécopar set off again for the capital. The day after his return, the school year began. On 4th March in the college chapel, Fr. Magendie presided over the official opening ceremony of the academic year, and Fr. Etchécopar was invited to address a few words of welcome to the students. On the 19th, the feast of Saint Joseph, the patron of the college, he presided over the solemn celebration in the college chapel.

On 20th March, he left San José College and went to the residence of the church of San Juan Bautista, where he stayed for a week. Besides providing the religious services of the church, the community was also responsible for the chaplaincy of the Poor Clare Capuchins, whose convent was adjacent to the fathers’ residence. “Here I find again the



San Juan Bautista Church of Buenos Aires in its original appearance and as Fr. Etchécopar saw it.

beginnings of Father Garicoïts and one of the works that occupied his entire life and to which God granted wonderful fruitfulness... While our Fathers nurture the spirit of sacrifice at its highest degree among the

Meeting of the General Council on 24-25 November

● **Region of Saint Michael Garicoïts**

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council, approved:

- the **presentation to the diaconate of Br. Fabian Mahan, Br. Cheghe Constant, Br. Eric Touré, Br. Tous-saint Tah Kouamé**; the ceremony is scheduled for 18 January 2026 in Dabakala (Côte d'Ivoire).

Also were approved, with the advice of the Council:

- the appointment of **Br. Angelo Sala scj as Superior of the Community Saint-Michel of Bouar** (Vicariate of Central Africa), from November 24th 2025, for a second term.
- the **acceptance of the parishes of Saint Peter in the Orchard and Christ the King in Massa Marittima** (Diocese of Massa Marittima-Piombino, Vicariate of Italy); the pastoral care is entrusted to two religious who will form part of the community of Pistoia.

The Superior General granted to the Regional Superior a derogation from article 227 authorizing him not to hold the intermediate Regional Chapter and to replace it with an alternative itinerary of reflection involving all the

communities.



● **Region of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar**

The Regional Superior communicated the admission to the **first profession of two Paraguayan novices, Br. Fredy Trinidad Alcaraz and Br. Osvaldo Cristaldo Gimenez**.

The brothers pronounced the vows for one year on December 13 in Adrogué (Argentina). ●

In memoriam

Benin | **Mrs Lucie Assé**, 81, mother of Fr Sylvain Hounkpatin Dansou SCJ passed away on November 21. We convey our condolences to Fr Sylvain SCJ, and we promise to keep him, his dear mother, and his family members in our prayer.

When I was a novice (many years ago), we used to sing a song to St. Joseph that I always remember: *"Tell us what you feel, Joseph, tell us what you think about in that workshop; no angels sing like they did in Bethlehem, only your hammer sings in Nazareth."* The religious community, like that Nazareth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, is the first place where this art is learned. There, diversity becomes an opportunity, and common life a space for daily conversion. The Betharramite tradition invites us to live a simple, helpful fraternity, marked by the tenderness of the Heart of Christ.

In this "workshop of peace," we Betharramites respond from our special consecration, which is manifested in our vows:

- **Poverty** opens us to sharing and frees us from the desire to possess that divides.
- **Chastity** purifies bonds and creates healthy and hospitable relationships.
- **Obedience** makes communal discernment possible and defeats individualism.

Furthermore, Saint Michael Garicoïts recited this prayer every day: *"My God, do not look upon my sins but upon the Congregation... deign to grant it your Peace, ...according to your will, ...the only one that can bring it peace."* How he longed for his sons to become docile and available religious, "without reservation," ready to go wherever the Church needs them! This **availability** is also a craft of peace: *it implies renouncing one's own securities in order to be instruments of unity, in the style of the pierced Heart of Jesus.*

We know that the Betharramite charism unfolds wherever our superiors call us to serve the Kingdom, especially in educational, pastoral, and social missions. There, religious and lay people—who draw from the same source—encounter the wounds of the people: violence, family breakdowns, poverty, despair, divisions... *To be artisans of peace means to accompany with patience, promote respect and justice, defend the vulnerable, teach forgiveness and dialogue, enlighten with the Word,*

and sustain hope.

The world today needs such witnesses: people who, with the discretion and approachability characteristic of a good Betharramite, know how to unite instead of divide, build instead of destroy, heal instead of judge. Artisans who do not seek the limelight, but rather serve with simplicity; who do not impose, but accompany; who never tire of building bridges, even where they seem impossible.

The peace we, the sons of St. Michael Garicoits, wish to build, springs from the open side of Jesus, where we learn that true strength lies in selfless love. From this Heart flows the Betharramite mission: to be a humble, reconciling, and approachable presence; to live and teach the art of peace.

May the Lord open our eyes to recognize what leads to peace and make us true **artisans of his Kingdom**, available and fraternal, in the style of the true disciples of Jesus, humbled and obedient.

May the Child of Bethlehem bless you!

Fr. Gustavo Agín scj
Superior General

For Community Reflection

1. What internal or communal obstacles prevent us from recognizing today "what leads to peace"?
2. What examples of "peacemakers in difficult times" have you encountered in your experience as a Betharramite (whether lay, religious, etc.)? Share them with your brothers.
3. What simple steps could we practise in the daily life of our mission to transform our communities and works into authentic workshops of peace?

tifying myself as Indian, the people of Jerusalem say "Pray for Jerusalem" (Psalm: 122:6). They repeat it because they are convinced that when there is peace in Jerusalem; there is peace all over the world. When there is no peace in Jerusalem; there is no peace in the world. Yes peace in Jerusalem offers hope - in the year of hope - offers hope for hope for the whole world.

These are the indications that the people of Holy Land always desire God and His Peace. They wish to be safe from all complications, dangers, worries etc.

Peace is so important.

Peace allows the people of differ-

ent religions in Holy Land to worship freely and undertake safely the pilgrimages.

Peace respects life; protects the innocent children, families and communities; provides secure jobs and elevates the standards of living of the people of Holy Land.

Peace permits various developments in trade, technology, education, tourism etc...

We prepare ourselves for the birth the "Prince of Peace - Is 9:6"; let us continue to pray for peace and make every effort to live in peace with one another. My wishes to you all from the birth place of Jesus. May the Peace of Christ reign in your hearts. ■



God that one day joy and peace will prevail in this Holy Land again.

From the community of Bethlehem, we, together with the fathers and all the novices, wish you all a peaceful and a joyful Merry Christmas. May each of us be a manger of peace, nurturing that peace for ourselves

and transmitting its warmth to those who have yet to find their peace. May the flame of peace shine brightly in the hearts of every member of our congregation so that we may welcome a peaceful and holy Christmas with the Prince of peace, Emmanuel.

■

Let us pray for our six novices and their formators in the Holy Land. Together they have begun the First week of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (from December 10th to the 20th).

May Jesus of Nazareth reveal his merciful face to them and encourage them to give themselves to Him wholeheartedly.

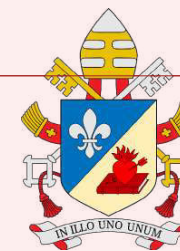
Shalom | Fr. Stervin Selvadass scj, Master of novices

I am in Holy Land since 3 years. Whenever I go out of our community, I meet the people of the places like Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth and other places. We, in our culture, greet each other saying "hello, good morning, have a good day" and so on. But, the people in Holy Land irrespective of their faith, greet each other saying, "SALAM ALAYKUM (Arabic) - PEACE BE UPON YOU" or SHALOM (Heb) - PEACE. What a wonderful traditional greetings.

I am fascinated by many more cul-

tural aspects of Holy Land. I would like to mention three particular aspects which really open the heart of the people of Holy Land.

1. Greetings of Shalom means completeness, wholeness, harmony and well being...
2. Whenever we propose something or when we talk about the future, they say "IN SHA ALLAH" - means if God wills or if God desires or if God wants. It shows the deep rooted desire for God...God of Peace. *"For our God is not a God of disorder but of peace"* (1Cor 14:33).
3. During these moments of conflicts, whenever I visited Jerusalem, iden-



TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA(12 May 2025)



Peace begins with each one of us: in the way we look at others, listen to others and speak about others. In this sense, the way we communicate is of fundamental importance: we must say "no" to the war of words and images, we must reject the paradigm of war.

Artisans of Peace

From the Patriarchate of Jerusalem

His B. Card. Pierbattista Pizzaballa

Extracts from His Beatitude's letter of October 5th to the entire Diocese of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Dear brothers and sisters,

May the Lord give you peace!

For two years, the war has absorbed most of our attention and energy. By now, everyone is sadly aware of what has happened in Gaza: continued massacres of civilians, starvation, repeated displacement, limited access to hospitals and medical care, lack of hygiene, without forgetting those who are being held against their will.

For the first time, anyway, the news is reporting a possible new positive development: the release of Israeli hostages, of some Palestinian prisoners and the cessation of bombing and military offensives. [...]

[...] The cessation of hostilities is only the first—necessary and indispensable—step on a treacherous path in a context that remains problematic.

[...] The lack of clarity about future prospects, which are still to be defined, also contributes to the sense of disorientation and increases feelings of distrust. But it is precisely here that, as Church, we are called to speak a word of hope, to have the courage to offer a narrative that opens horizons and builds rather than destroys, both in the language we use and in the gestures we make.

We are not here to make a political statement or to provide a strategic analysis of events. The world is already full of such words, which rarely change the reality. Instead, we seek a spiritual vision that will help us remain steadfast in the Gospel. This war challenges our consciences and prompts reflection, not only



sin? For a long time, the people here have been seeking their own rights and freedom. It is not easily attained, but it is possible when justice, security, and human dignity are prioritized for all people. It is our hope that the flame of peace, which is silently burning within them, will ignite brightly so that they may recognize the value of peace. This presents a challenge for the Catholic Church to bring the peace Jesus offers to the people. While this task is challenging and difficult, the Church has stood strong and courageous in calling for true peace. The spirit of a peacemaker never fails in the ministry of the Church here.

We see our founder, St. Michael,

who faced many conflicts and problems. He had to obey the orders of the bishops who had different opinions in establishing the congregation. He himself was deeply troubled by this. But ultimately, he accepted God's will and waited humbly with an attitude of peace, and God made everything happen.

Many lessons in our lives are like this. Sometimes the path to peace seems to disappear from our lives. But if we accept things with humility, we will find peace. Peace that comes from submitting to God's will. The Patriarch of the Latins of Jerusalem urges us to seek relentlessly the path of justice, truth, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Put our trust and hope in

artisans of reconciliation, capable of drawing others towards God through our way of living, loving, and forgiving. Thus, the Holy Land, the place where God's love was incarnated, remains the sign that peace is truly possible, not only on this wounded land, but in every heart that welcomes the divine gift.

Therefore, dear Betharramite brothers, this Christmas when Jesus comes to offer us his peace, we wish you to receive it as our founder Saint Michael Gari-

Let the light of peace rise and prevail over the Holy Land | Cho, Marak, Peter & Piyapol¹

Each of us is not too unfamiliar with the Holy Land. Having been here for three months or a year for some, we have seen the different challenges and tragedies taking place here. From our experience, we would like to share some of the problems, tensions, and the different challenges which have become the barriers that hinder the peace and joy for the people here.

As we know, the Holy Land is the

coïts loved to transmit it: with a simple, joyful heart... and for the good! May the new year find us united, fraternal, capable of laughing at ourselves, and always ready to do good, to do it well, and with all our heart. May the peace of the Sacred Heart accompany us in every step, even the most tiring ones.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all! ■

promised land where the Savior was born, a place also called the cradle of peace. And it is here that the first announcement of the Angels to the shepherds took place. As we see in the Scriptures: *"Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to people of Goodwill."* (Lk 2:14). Christ came to bring peace to mankind. And when Jesus appeared to his apostles after his resurrection, he said, *"Peace to you"* (Lk 24:36). Christ intended for his apostles to continue carrying his peace to all nations. But is this peace truly recognized by men in Jesus, or do men remain immersed in the darkness of their own

political but also spiritual. The disproportionate violence we have witnessed so far has devastated not only to our land but also to the human soul of many, both in the Holy Land and around the world. Anger, resentment, distrust, hatred, and contempt too often dominate our discourse and pollute our hearts. The images are devastating and unsettling, confronting us with what St. Paul called *"mystery of lawlessness"* (2 Thess. 2:7), which is beyond human understanding. We risk becoming accustomed to suffering, but it need not be so. Every life lost, every wound inflicted, every hunger endured remains a scandal in God's eyes.

Power, force, and violence have become the main criteria on which the political, cultural, economic models, and perhaps even religious ones of our time are based. In recent months, we have often heard that force must be used and that only force can impose the right choices. Only by force, it is said, can peace be imposed. Unfortunately, it does not seem that history has taught us much. Indeed, we have seen in the past what violence and force produce. On the other hand, in the Holy Land and around the world, we also have witnessed the outraged reac-

tion of civil society to this arrogant logic of power and force. The images from Gaza have deeply wounded the common consciousness of rights and dignity that lives in our hearts.

This time has also tested our faith. Even for believers, living in faith during difficult times like these is not easy. Sometimes we feel within ourselves a strong sense of distance between the harshness of dramatic events and the life of faith and prayer, as if they were far apart. The use of religion, often manipulated to justify these tragedies, does not help us approach people's pain and suffering with a reconciled spirit. The deep hatred that invades us, with its consequences of death and pain, poses a significant challenge to those who see in the lives of the world and its people a reflection of God's presence.

Alone, we will not be able to understand this mystery. By our own strength, we will not be able to stand before the mystery of evil and resist it. That is why I feel an ever more urgent call to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (cf. Heb. 12:2). Only in this way will we be able to bring order within ourselves and look at the reality with new eyes.

Together with Jesus, as a Christian

1) Br. Piyapol is novice of 2nd year.

community, we want to gather the many tears of these two years: the tears of those who have lost relatives or friends who were killed or kidnapped, those who have lost their homes, jobs, countries, or lives – innocent victims of a conflict whose end is not yet in sight.

The dominant narrative of recent years has been one of clash and reckoning, inevitably leading to the deeply painful reality of polarization. As a Church, reckoning does not belong to us, either as logic or as language. Jesus, our teacher and Lord, made love that becomes gift and forgiveness His life's choice. His wounds are not an incitement to revenge, but a sign of the ability to suffer out of love.

In this dramatic time, our Church is called with renewed energy to witness her faith in the passion and resurrection of Jesus. Our decision to remain, when everything urges us to leave, is not a challenge but an act of love. Our denouncing is not an offense to any party but a call to dare a different path from the reckoning. Our dying took place under the cross, not on a battlefield.

We don't know if this war will truly end, but we do know the conflict will continue because its root causes

have yet to be addressed. Even if the war were to end now, all this and more would still constitute a human tragedy that would require significant time and energy to recover from. The end of war does not necessarily mark the beginning of peace, but it is the first essential step toward building it. We have a long road ahead to rebuild trust among ourselves, to make hope tangible, and to free ourselves from the hatred of these years. But we will strive for this, together with the many men and women here who still believe it is possible to imagine a different future.

Christ's empty tomb – at which, more than ever in these past two years, our hearts have paused in anticipation of resurrection – assures us that pain will not last forever, that waiting will not be in vain, and that the tears watering the desert will make the Easter garden bloom.

Like Mary of Magdala at that same tomb, we want to keep searching, even if we are stumbling. We want to insist on seeking paths of justice, truth, reconciliation, and forgiveness; sooner or later, at the end of these paths, we will encounter the peace of the Risen One. And like her, on these paths we want to urge others to run and help us in

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM THE INTERREGIONAL ST. JOSEPH NOVITIATE (HOLY LAND) NOVICES AND THEIR MASTER

The Challenge of Peace in the Holy Land | Boris, Martial & Salomon

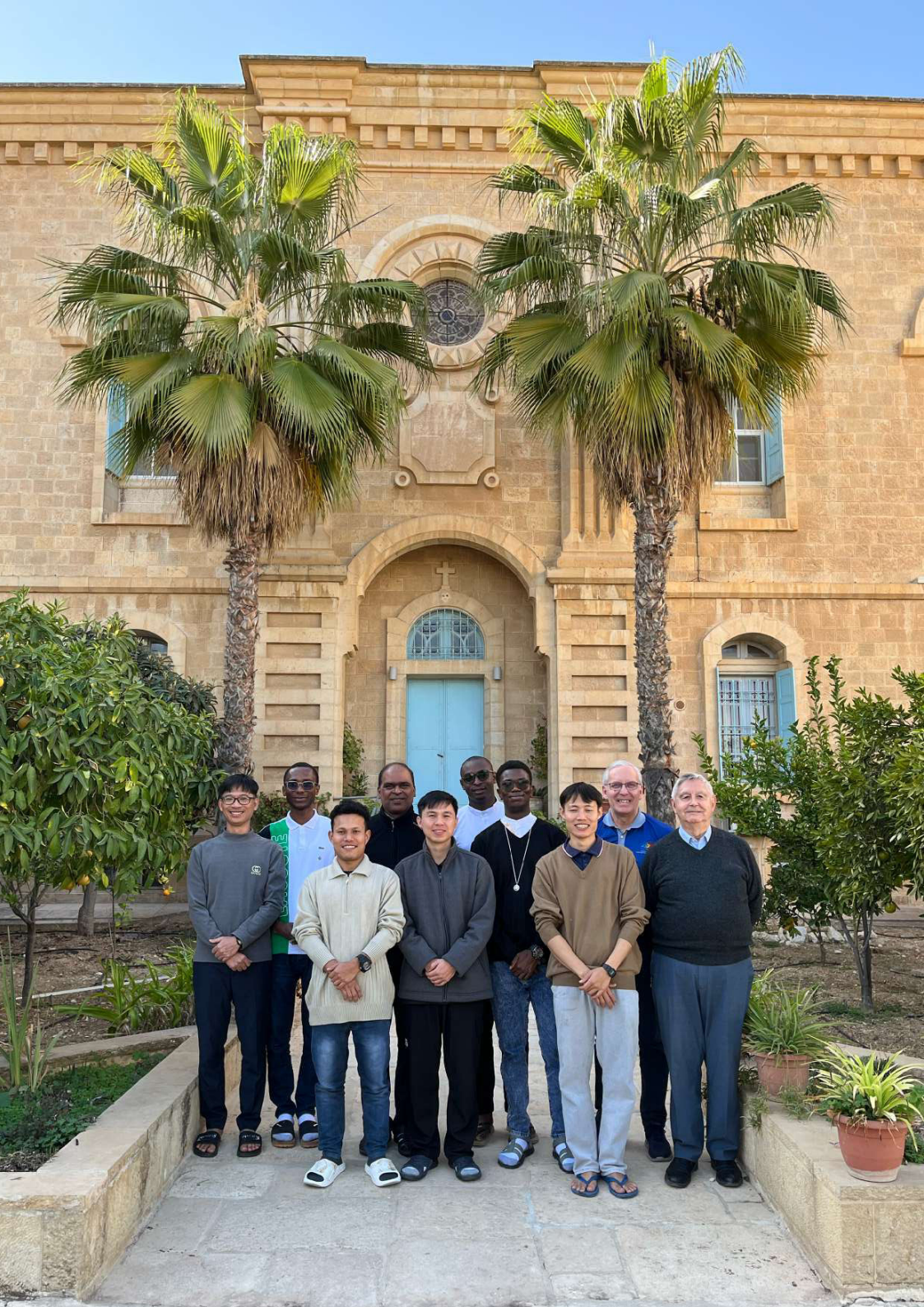
Speaking of peace in the Holy Land cannot be limited to a simple analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Certainly, political and social solutions are necessary and urgent, but they remain insufficient to lead, on their own, to true reconciliation. In fact, human peace, always fragile and limited, cannot take lasting root unless it is nourished by a deeper, spiritual, inner, and divine dimension. Thus, the Holy Land, cradle of the Incarnation, constantly reminds us that authentic peace surpasses human strategies and diplomatic agreements. It is first and foremost a received gift, even before it is a project built by our efforts.

On Christmas night, the announcement made to the shepherds proclaims: *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace for those he favours"* (Luke 2:14). This proclamation reveals that peace is first of all a divine gift offered to humanity at the moment the Word becomes flesh. Thus, Christian peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but a profound harmony be-

tween God and man, between heaven and earth. In other words, peace is not a concept, but a person: Christ himself, the one who reconciles and draws us towards true unity.

This peace translates concretely into concord and unity, as emphasized in the founder's prayer: *"My God, look not on my sins but upon this Society which your Sacred Heart has conceived and formed. Deign to grant it your peace, that peace according to your will which alone can pacify it and unite more closely all its members with each other, with their superiors and with your divine Heart, so that they may be one as you and the Father and the Holy Spirit are one. Amen! Fiat! Fiat!"* (DS § 281). This prayer highlights that authentic peace is always embodied in just relationships, in lived reconciliation, and in unity among brothers. The Holy Land, the place where God's love became flesh, reminds us that peace is never a disembodied ideal: it takes shape in respect, mercy, and justice lived daily. It thus calls for real harmony in families, in communities, and among peoples.

Christ, the source of all peace, calls us to become ourselves witnesses and



our search. When everything seems to divide us, we declare our trust in community, dialogue, encounter, and solidarity that matures into charity. We want to continue proclaiming that eternal life is stronger than death with new gestures of openness, trust, and hope. We know that evil and death, though powerful and present in us and around us, cannot eliminate that sense of humanity that survives in every heart. There are many people in the Holy Land and around the world who are putting themselves forward to keep this desire for goodness alive and are committed to supporting the Church of the Holy Land. We thank them, bringing each of them into our prayers. *"Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith"* (Heb. 12:1-2).

In this month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, we pray for this intention.

[...] ■



Peace illuminates Courage

Fr. Jacob Biso Puliampally scj
Residence of Nazareth

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased (Lk 2:14).

Peace is the first gift that human beings received at the birth of Jesus. A very precious gift that human beings have been searching for centuries. The reason is that the inherent and deep-seated fear makes them lose peace. After arriving in Bethlehem, I went and visited the birthplace of Jesus where everything began. Each time I walked through the streets, I looked at the faces of the people and observed that there was fear, anxiety, and hatred. The fear was because of the possibility of getting attacked and losing life at any time; anxiety because of the uncertainty of financial and social life; hatred because of different religious values, understandings, and practices. I was also affected by them. I was afraid to move around freely. The fear accelerated one night when we witnessed a missile attack against Israel, and all of the missiles were intercepted and destroyed by the Iron Dome above

the sky of our house in Bethlehem. The sound and the vibrations made by all these blasts took away all the courage and peace from me. I tried many methods to regain courage and peace, but nothing happened. Then, there was a turning point.

I went to Ephraim/Taybeh parish for pastoral experience. It is one of the villages mentioned in the Gospel of John 11:54. The atmosphere was almost peaceful and serene, but there were some talks, incidents, and chaotic situations. With a shock, I realized the fact that I was trying to hide or run away from the century-old truth: I am afraid, "Fear has taken me over." I wished for consoling words or a sign from God. I got none. I thought about the people of Gaza and started to pray for them. I prayed for the innocent children who are suffering and starving. I always wanted to do something for them, but I was afraid, and fear pulled me back from doing anything for them.

There was a small fight between two tribes and rite people in Tay-

ways being and showing yourself to be, in all things, humble, gentle, patient, bearing the most difficult characters with charity, working with infinite care to preserve the unity of one spirit through the bond of peace!" (§ 340)

Loving our vocation and our mission in the fulfillment of our duties also leads us to peace and joy. *"A sincere appreciation of our vocation and our mission; a true and habitual interior disposition to fulfill, as true auxiliary priests, according to our rules, and as true instruments of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, all the duties of this beautiful position. With this spirit, all good things will come: a taste for our state, fidelity to all the duties of our state, and finally, peace and contentment in our state."* (340)

Peace and joy in the mission to which obedience has sent us. *"Thus, the aim of the Society is to strive to form capable men, free from all constraints, always under the gaze and at the disposal of the superior, idoneos, expeditos, expositos [Men ready for anything, free from all constraints and entirely open to proper authority], to work for the mission, at the appointed time and place; working then in the field of obedience, with energy, without*

counting the cost; and then, the mission completed, returning in peace and happiness to prepare for new labours. What a misfortune if one departs from this path, if one gives oneself a mission!" (§ 237)

Saint Michael assures peace if we practice discernment of spirits, with his *"method for knowing and doing the will of God."* *"Never stray from these practices, and I promise you that you will be as happy as you can be both now and in eternity. This is also the great means, the most effective way to make others happy. The means to make you happy and to make others happy is what your devoted servant wishes for you."* (Cor. Vol I, letter nr. 44).

The spirituality of Saint Michael Garicoïts takes into account both the inner and outer dimensions. Peace in our external relationships with others, whether in community or on mission, will always be an extension of inner peace, the peace of the heart. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.* (Mt 5:8-9) ■

(§ 38). If we manifest this calmness in our conduct, we are well guided. (§ 38) We must see *"the great lesson written in the very heart of history, namely, that there is only one thing to do, the will of God, in everything, everywhere, always, promptly, joyfully, and that this is the sole source of peace and goodness."* (§ 77) Saint Michael Garicoïts points us to attitudes that dispose us to receive the gift of peace: First, to know the humility of Jesus, who emptied himself, saying: *"Father, here I am! like nothingness worthy of being crushed, crucified!"* *"The full knowledge of his nothingness keeps him immersed in deep humility and allows him to taste, in his self-emptying, peace and happiness."* (§ 56)

Secondly, seek and embrace the humiliations of our Master, the source of peace, honour, and power!... By bearing the providential crosses, *"the trials attached to every office, which God allows and wills in every position"* (§ 108). Avoid the impressions and reasonings of our imagination that only trouble us, and renounce the inclinations that degrade us (§ 294).

Thirdly, it is in this state of love and devotion to the divine will hidden beneath even mortal appearances that we must seek joy, peace, and

success (§ 207). *"What happiness then, what a foundation of peace, however things turn out!"* Then, our character, our humanity, our conduct will have rock as their foundation, not sand. (Cf. § 242)

Saint Michael Garicoïts becomes very concrete and points out situations in life where we can find peace:

Peace is a guarantee of unity, which is expressed in his prayer for the Congregation on the verge of disappearing a year before his death: *"Deign to grant it your peace, this peace according to your will, which alone can pacify it and unite closely all those who compose it, among themselves, with their superiors, and with your divine Heart, so that they may be one, as you and your Father and the Holy Spirit are one."*

We must seek peace in the position in which we live and not elsewhere: *"Oh! my Sister, how important this position is! Poor instrument!"* *"What good you will do if, faithfully following the movement of the hand that deigns to employ you, without anticipating it, having no confidence in it but with boundless confidence in this divine hand, you walk in a manner worthy of your vocation and your mission, that is to say, al-*



Fr. Chan Kunu SCJ, General Councilor, (left) arrived from Thailand in November and will accompany Fr. Jacob SCJ on the mission until February 2026.

beh. We fathers gathered and spoke and were able to resolve it. This incident gave me a little courage to speak and make some communication with the people. My interaction with the children, youth, and elderly started to show some signs of peace. I was also very happy to do ministry for the elderly people at "Bethil Musanneen," the elderly home in the parish. I started to smile happily and sing with the people until it happened.

July 2025, the first week, was a heartbreaking week. One of the

young boys from the settlers group, who came to pasture the sheep, happened to set a fire that spread and destroyed three to four olive trees. The fire also spread to the sacred remains of the 4th-century church. It was interpreted as a deliberate attack by the settlers. The anger, hatred, and the intensity of violence doubled. Two days after the incident, as I was walking to the elderly home, which is 2 kilometers away from the church, a vehicle stopped in front of me and asked me to enter inside. I was shivering with fear seeing the pistols in their

hands. I entered, and they asked me: "Who are you? Why are you walking here? What are you doing here?" No words came out of my mouth because of my fear. I thought that was the end of my life. After much struggle, I told them, "I am from India, and I do social service for the elders here at the elderly home." After ten minutes of asking and answering in the vehicle, I prepared to be a martyr; it is at this moment I started to enjoy a kind of peace and courage. The vehicle stopped at a deserted place all of

a sudden, and to my surprise, they asked me to get out of the vehicle and walk away without looking back. I walked slowly with peace and courage in my heart. I still continue to walk my life. I am not sure of anything. Will the war end? Will the political, social, and economic situation change? Above all, will the hatred among the people end? I do not know anything about it, but I know one thing: God's promise of peace is a sure gift, and peace illuminates courage in us. Courage to give our life for Christ. ■

Saint Michael Garicoïts and the Gift of Peace

Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj

Residence of Bethelhem

Peace is one of the twelve "fruits of the Spirit, which are the achievements formed in us by the Holy Spirit as a foretaste of eternal glory. The Church's tradition lists twelve of them: 'charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, propriety, self-control, chastity'" (Gal 5:22-23; Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 1832).

Following the reflection of our Father Michael Garicoïts on this gift

of peace, we discover this: grace "makes us aware of our needs...; [it] makes us think of the Father who never ceases to fix his gaze upon us and (makes us) run to him, and find calm and peace in him." "(God Loves Us, Spiritual Doctrine, § 294) We also discover that abandonment to Providence is the sole, but infallible, condition for merit, steadfastness, and peace" (§ 38) and for acting in the service of God and humanity. "Without this condition [of



abandonment to God], [...] one has only the peace that the world gives and one receives all one's reward here on earth" (§ 38), and there is nothing more to expect. Finally, we discover that "Jesus Christ wants us to live and die in peace. Be without anxiety," he tells us. "Since his coming, peace is the reward of souls of good will. Did not the angels sing it over the cradle in Bethlehem? Glory to God and peace to people of good will! For them, salvation is assured!" (§ 77).

Peace consists in maintaining calm amidst tumultuous situations. It is to redouble our zeal for our daily

duties, surrendering ourselves to Providence, waiting in calm and peace for what Providence wills to happen. This disposition will make us peaceful, happy even in this life, and spreading happiness everywhere (Mt 5:9). Thus we will be in the arms of our Heavenly Father like true children, doing our duty, to the degree and in the manner that He wills... (cf. § 77). Peace will show in our conduct that we walk and persevere in the path laid out by God Himself, without worrying about what may happen to us or what other people may do, "provided only that we do what God wills, and provided that God is pleased"