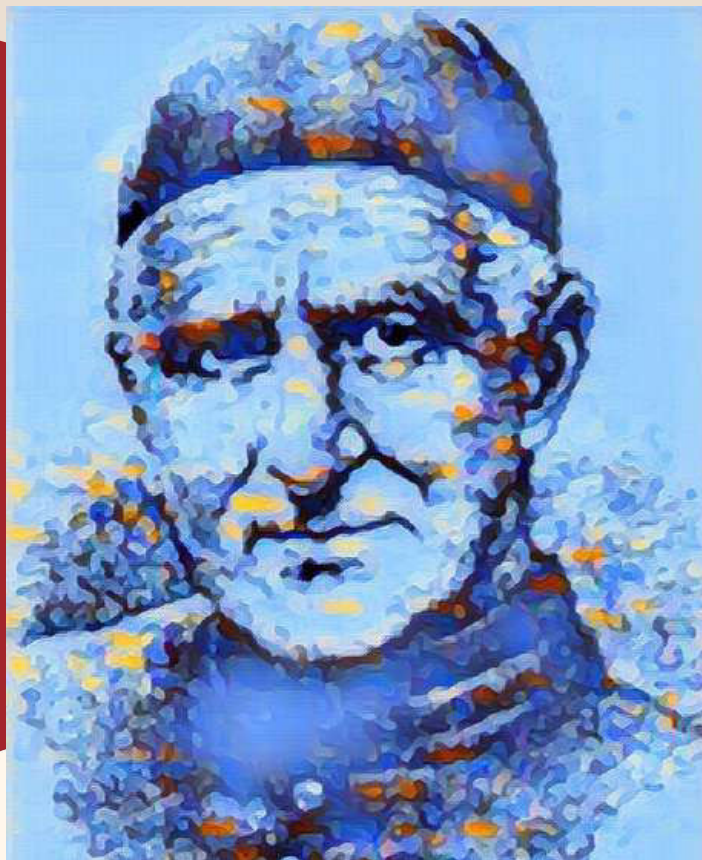


“

As we show patience in tribulation, let us show happiness in our hope of eternal happiness. 'Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship'. (Rm 12:12)

(DS § 30)

”



Nef

2025

Nouvelles En Famille



A pilgrimage with the family
of Betharram,
...charting a course
through changing
times



Societas Sacratissimi
Cordis Jesu

Betharram



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FOR INTERNAL USE



the Mamertine Prison, St. Peter's Basilica, St. Cecilia's Basilica, and the Church of St. Ignatius⁸.

By early May, the drafting work of the Constitutions was completed: *"We have made full and perhaps excessive use of the patience of these learned and kind protectors whom we came to consult. We have hope and near certainty that this work will receive a favourable note from*

*the Holy See and will give a good impression of our dear Bétharram."*⁹

Before returning to Bétharram, Fr. Etchécopar and his companions took the opportunity to visit Assisi on 9th May and the Marian Shrine of Loreto on 10th May. From there, passing through Bologna, Genoa, Antibes, Montpellier, and Toulouse, they finally arrived in Bétharram on 16th May.

Roberto Cornara

8) Letter to his sisters Madeleine and Suzanne, 28 April 1877.

9) Letter to Fr. Pagadoy, 6 May 1877.

From the Basilica of the Holy House in Loreto, Fr. Etchecopar wrote to his sisters Madeleine and Suzanne (10/May/1877):

One of the sweetest emotions of my life so far, dear Sisters (and one I would like to cherish forever) I felt this morning in the Holy House of Nazareth.

I said Mass there, in the very place where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph did so much, and sighed with so much love for us; I kissed the walls, themselves witnesses to the most ineffable mysteries of divine love on earth; I saw the window from which the angel announced to Mary her title of Mother of God and the wonder of her fruitful Virginity, the incarnation of the eternal Word and our salvation through Jesus who became our flesh and our brother.

With the faith and the love that the Lord deigned to give me, I saw, and heard, and I breathed in these incomparable mysteries of heaven and earth, of God and men, of angels and the Queen of Angels.

Oh! Dear sisters, if I have felt my unworthiness, it is here; if the weight of graces has seemed overwhelming to me, it is among these voices, these visions, this touch, this penetration of the things of heaven, aware of a wretchedness like my own, and the mud of my innumerable sins.

Help me to give thanks! Pray that this very grace may make me grateful and faithful. O Mary! May those better than I bless you for me, now and forever.

A pilgrimage with the family of Betharram, ...charting a course through changing times

**'God himself proposes to all men
the perfect model of all holiness:
his own Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ.'
(DS 348)**

Dear Betharramites,

I have just returned to Rome after my visits to India, Thailand, and Vietnam. Together with the members of the Council of the Congregation, gathered in Bangalore, we have courageously taken on board all the yearnings and crises of the Congregation. There are still many reasons to believe and hope, even where one feels that all seems lost...

Lent has begun; we walk through the desert behind the pillar of cloud.

There is a penitential tone to our journey. Our horizon is Christ's Easter, as Pilgrims of hope on the path of Peace.

Today I would like to share with you a reflection on consecrated life as we navigate this change of an era. The topic is very broad, and, as you know, I am not a specialist in this field, so I will only outline a few points here so that we can all converse in the Spirit. We could begin by asking ourselves: How are we living our consecration and mission in this rapidly changing world?



This change of era is not something up in the skies. It is here on earth; it is felt in real, everyday life. It is evident in the way we relate to one another, in a paradigm shift of culture, society, media, etc. Religious formed long ago find it difficult to find in the Church that common path, that model that characterised us and, at the same time, was open to the signs of the times. Pope Francis helps us, inviting us to express prophecy as the most proper aspect of our way of life.

Let's take a brief look back.

- The idea of consecrated life as a 'path to perfection' governed all thinking about it until the Second Vatican Council and it is now receding into the distant past. In this vision, the integration of the human being was often abandoned, because it was considered sinful. The "law" unified everything.

The Word of God was somewhat subordinated to rules and norms.

Many people found holiness within this world-view, and some still believe it is applicable...

- But consecrated Life after the Council was presented to us as a vocation of witness to the Kingdom. Grounded in baptism, (in common with all the faithful), this rediscovery of the sources of Consecrated Life is revealed in the Person of Jesus himself, configuring ourselves to him, in following him closely. He is our only love, our only treasure, our only Lord. We are all People of God, and every state of life has the same "right" to holiness. This implies a call to open ourselves to synodality and to move beyond partial schemes or privileges. A more Christ-centred relationship, one that invites us to go out and bear witness, not to pretend and flee. *Gaudium et Spes* places us in dialogue with culture, with a world that has changed and will change even more, as we enter the period of epochal change we are experiencing today.
- Meanwhile, in the 1970s, we saw how Consecrated Life would locate itself in the world of the poor. Now it would help the poor from the stance of a "long-awaited justice." Rather than speaking of the poor, it begins to recognize the impoverished, the excluded, the discarded... But it will also remain somewhat enclosed in its works, fighting against secular thinking.
- Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, a more pastoral imprint will be given to our

Estrate, his companion and personal secretary for this important work, and Fr. Salvat Etchégaray, who was tasked with obtaining the approval of the Congregation of the Servants of Mary of Anglet³. The three made stops in Montpellier, Marseille, Genoa, Pisa, and arrived in Rome⁴ on Friday, 20th April at 11:00 pm. They were hosted by the Dominicans at the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, where Fr. Bianchi resided.

The work began immediately and occupied most of their days. On 22nd April, Fr. Etchécopar wrote: *"Here we are at work, under the wise guidance of Fr. Bianchi. We have reliable guides and excellent protectors. With the help of the Lord, and if it pleases Him, the approval matter will move quickly through the ordinary channels once the Constitutions' draft is accepted by the Sacred Congregation. This is the task to which we are currently devoting all our care, eager to return with this long-awaited way of life for the entire Congregation, which must be submitted to the next General*

*Chapter, and finally to the Holy See."*⁵

On 27th April, Fr. Etchécopar wrote again: *"Fr. Bianchi and Monsignor de Luca are proving to be devoted friends and protectors. They assist us and wish to give us their most diligent attention despite their countless other duties. With the light of their guidance, many significant gaps in our Constitutions have become evident, and we are striving to make the most of this invaluable assistance. Time flies between work in the office and a few devout visits where we turn to our heavenly intercessors, asking them for the outcome that God, in His mercy, may grant."*⁶

Among these "heavenly intercessors" were several prominent figures of the Roman Curia, whom the three Bétharramites did not hesitate to visit and seek recommendations from for the good of Bétharram. On 29th April, they had a private audience with Pope Pius IX⁷. In the rare moments of leisure, Fr. Etchécopar and his companions visited Rome:

3) Letter to his sisters Madeleine and Suzanne, 15 April 1877.

4) Letter to his sisters Madeleine and Suzanne, 21 April 1877; and to Fr. Pierre Pagadoy, 21 April 1877.

5) Letter to Fr. Pierre Pagadoy, Assistant General.

6) Letter to Fr. Pagadoy.

7) Circular letter, 29 April 1877.

FATHER ETCHECOPAR'S TRAVELS

Third trip to Rome

April-May 1877

The approval of the Congregation by the Holy See, received in 1875 through the "*breve laudativum*" (laudatory brief), was only a provisional approval. It was necessary to review and rewrite the Constitutions in the style and form required by the Holy See. The two trips to Rome in 1875 and 1876 had allowed Fr. Etchécopar to become acquainted with the people and the Roman environment and to meet Fr. Raimondo Bianchi, who had been appointed the procurator of Bétharram with the Roman Curia. They had now reached a decisive stage: finalizing the definitive drafting of the Constitutions.

Since face-to-face meetings facilitate understanding better than letters, Fr. Bianchi invited Fr. Etchécopar to come to Rome: "*For the work on the Constitutions, Fr. Bianchi advises me to go to Rome in May to work with him and then present the resulting*

draft in the proper venue to the Superior Fathers, whom I would gather in chapter for the June retreat. I will discuss this project with our Superiors from the houses here [in France] whom I have urged to visit us during the Easter holidays."¹

The program was set, and the decision was made: "*The purpose of this trip is to draft a more suitable version of the Constitutions with the help of Fr. Bianchi and to prepare the various documents and recommendations which are required or are very useful for obtaining the brief approving the Institute. This trip was decided on the Wednesday after Easter, during a meeting of the Superiors from various houses here, especially convened for this purpose, after being prompted by Fr. Bianchi.*"²

On Monday, 16th April 1877, Fr. Etchécopar boarded a train to Rome. Accompanying him were Fr. Pierre

lifestyle. It will be a consecrated life "in and for" pastoral ministry.

But because of this concern for "doing," it will lose some of its "being":

Can we recall the activism of those years, the countless projects, etc. ?

- Finally, Consecrated Life begins to develop in post-modernity. It opens up to young people from this new culture. It is the encounter of a new generation with the old. The so-called interculturality, the intergenerational, emerges.

Everything is called to flow, but in an environment of crisis...

There are four models that still exist today: on the one hand,

- we have Consecrated Life of perfectionism,
- Consecrated Life of social commitment,
- Consecrated Life of pastoral projects,
- and on the other, the new young consecrated people who are more attentive to fraternity, contemplation, personal time, and social networks.

There is a shift from doctrinal or ideological considerations today to the primacy of feeling, the body, personal talents, emotions, etc. It is becoming more difficult to live fraternity as it was previously conceived, because now much greater priority is placed on caring for subjectivity, individuality, and self-realisation.

And here the issue of self-referentiality arises.

Thus, the limits of a religious lifestyle that few previously questioned as a path to holiness are exposed; its crises and inconsistencies are highlighted... Some quickly abandon consecrated life in search of greater personal freedom in the laity... Others, perhaps tempted by clericalism, prefer to engage in the practice of a ministry without community commitments...

Added to this is the issue of institutional fragility. Much growth is needed along the synodal pathway, a path that Pope Francis has outlined and that has caused concern in some. We need to move toward a synodal conversion of existing structures, and we are hesitant to make these changes, perhaps out of fear. We struggle to place more trust in the harmonic expression of the Spirit than in the "structures" that supposedly protects us. Thus, we often end up sac-

1) Letter to Fr. Jean Magendie, 3 April 1877.

2) Letter to Fr P. Jean Magendie, 15 April 1877.

rificing community life to care for works, houses, historical spaces...

We find that when our way of life is not that of Jesus, its prophetic dimension is not revealed; it is diluted. How then can we offer a more attractive Betharramite way of life without changing that old heart?

“Go away, old heart, make way for the Heart of Jesus” (SMG).

We Betharramites believe that community is a theological place. We are a community in mission, living the experience of God as an experience of freedom, charismatic animation, and discernment. Today, let us give God the place he deserves: integrating the human, the social, the ecological, etc.

A contemplative experience of the God of Love will protect us from the enemies that always lurk: spiritualism, secularism, Pelagianism, Gnosticism...

Many Betharramites have known how to discover the secret spring in every stage of their consecrated life, and for this reason, they have left their mark on us. Let us note how they have never lacked the silence, listening, and contemplation that led them to give their lives for the mission, just as Jesus did for us, whom he called friends.

May God bless you all.

Fr. Gustavo Agín scj

Superior General

Questions to share in community:

The new scenarios for Consecrated Life in 2025, as proposed by the Church, are:

- Listening to the cry of the poor
- Caring for the environment
- Promoting solidarity

1. In your opinion: In which of these scenarios is your mission community most sensitive or committed?

2. Share how they do it: with what concrete actions?

3. How could we live a greater commitment in these areas?

In memoriam...

On February 26, Mrs Lalitha Ravi, mother of Fr Pascal Ravi SCJ, of the community of Bangalore (Vicariate of India) has died. We convey our condolences to Fr Pascal SCJ, and we promise to keep him, his dear mother, and his family members in our prayer.

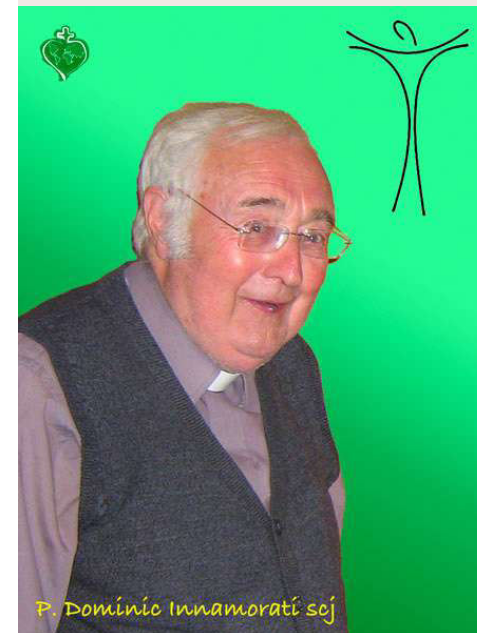
On 1st March, Fr. Dominic Innamorati SCJ returned to the Father's House.

Fr. Dominic Innamorati was part of the community of Olton (St. Myriam of Jesus Crucified Region, Vicariate of England), and was 93 years old and 75 years of religious profession.

We join the family in the prayer of suffrage for Fr. Dominic, and we entrust him to the Father's mercy.

The funeral will take place on April 7 in Olton at 11 am. Our confrere will be buried in the cemetery of Droitwich.

We will pay tribute to him in the NEF of April.





Assembly of the Vicariate of Thailand-Vietnam | 4-5 March 2025



Praying for Pope Francis

We pray for our Pope Francis.

The Lord keep him, give him life, make him happy on earth and protect him from all dangers.

Our Father.

Ave Maria.

Let us pray:

O God, shepherd and guide of all believers,
look at your servant Francis,
that you have placed to preside over your Church;

Support him with your love,
so that he may edify with the word and with the example
the people you have entrusted to him,
and so that they come together to eternal life.

For Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Press release from the Congregation, February 28, 2025

The Congregation of Bétharram is determined to actively participate in the recognition of all victims and to participate in the reparation for sexual and physical violence committed within it, as well as to contribute to the prevention of this violence.

The Congregation of Bétharram reaffirms, in line with its press release of September 2024, that it recognises the seriousness of the offences committed within the Institution Notre-Dame-de-Bétharram for several decades. This violence is unacceptable and the Congregation wishes to express its deep compassion for all the people who have been victims of it.

No words can be strong enough to describe the horror, shame and anger that this violence arouses among the members of the Congregation and its feeling of responsibility for the suffering experienced by children and adolescents within the Institution Notre-Dame-de-Bétharram. The Congregation wishes to assure them of its support and its deep regrets.

For three years, the Congregation has been working in concert with the Commission for Recognition and Reparation, so that victims of sexual violence committed by religious people can obtain recognition and reparation, in line with the work of the CIASE.

In keeping with the logic of its collaboration with the IFJD-Institut Louis Joinet, the Congregation of Bétharram has resolved today to continue its commitment through concrete actions alongside the victims, so that all can obtain the truth, justice and reparations to which they are entitled.

This is why the Congregation of Bétharram first and foremost provides its support to all ongoing or future legal proceedings so that the perpetrators of sexual and physical violence, whether religious or lay, may be brought to justice. Beyond moral support, the Congregation is thus ready to assist investigators and all judicial authorities with their inquiries and to provide all the information or documents it holds. The Congregation will also provide assistance to any victim wishing to access its premises or obtain information with a view to filing a complaint.

The Congregation is nevertheless aware that the legal route will probably not guarantee

Final professions in the Vicariate of Thailand-Vietnam



On March 3, **Br. Anselm Prapas Chivakitmankong scj** (on the right on the picture) and **Br. Peter Do Van Hung scj** (on the left) made their **final profession in the hands of Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, Superior General**, in the chapel of the community of Chiang Mai.

Bro. Peter is the first Betharramite with perpetual vows hailing from Vietnam.

The celebration was attended by Rev. Fr. Wilfred Pereppadan SCJ, the Regional Superior of St. Myriam of Jesus Crucified Region.

me to be in this" I never got an answer, silence was the only answer but now I know. I was prepared by our founder to do my ministry with a composed and smiling face, that is to say to do the ministry without fear, for that we need to pray and should not be afraid to get formed by our founder. Our founder is still active and He is the spiritual master not only for the 19th Century but for the present time. The only problem is that we do not understand or try to understand our founder and his spirituality. Let us go back to the spirituality of Our Founder. Let us not be afraid to pray. Do not be afraid to be formed by Our Founder. Silent but still very powerful are his way of forming us, if and only if we allow. Do not be afraid to say "HERE I AM". ■

compensation for all victims, particularly due to the statute of limitations. This is why the Congregation wishes to offer victims options that complement the legal route.

In addition to the compensation it provides through the Recognition and Reparation Commission, the Congregation will also create a compensation fund so that all victims of sexual violence committed within the Institution Notre-Dame-de-Bétharram can obtain compensation, regardless of the perpetrator. This fund will therefore be intended for victims of sexual violence committed by lay people, who would not be able to obtain legal compensation. The fund will be financed by the Congregation, through the sale of several real estate properties.

The Congregation has also decided to create an independent commission of inquiry, responsible for establishing the truth about the violence and its causes, to propose a system of material, symbolic and memorial reparations, as well as administrative and educational reorganisation measures intended to prevent the repetition of such violence, including the creation and/or operation of listening cells abroad.

The work of this commission of inquiry will be based on research work and access to archives, but also and above all in welcoming, listening and recording the words of the victims.

Finally, in a desire for reconstruction and repentance, the Congregation of Bétharram invites all victims who wish to participate in a day of meeting and dialogue, during which the Congregation would like to express its regrets and compassion, as well as hear those who agree to speak before it.

These decisions are part of the desire of the Bétharram Congregation to continue, but also to accelerate and deepen the steps started several years ago. After several decades of isolation, victims must now benefit from all the support they are due. After several decades of impunity, preventing further violence is our priority.

These decisions, particularly concerning the creation, composition and skills of the commission of inquiry, will be presented in more detail during the day of reflection on sexual violence organized by the IFJD-Institut Louis Joinet, in Bayonne, on March 15.

Congregation of Bétharram, February 28, 2025 ■

...Charting a course through changing times

Religious Brothers as Superiors: A Service in Fidelity and Fraternity

• Brother Victor Torales scj,

Superior of the Community of Puente Remanso (Paraguay)

The appointment of religious brothers as community superiors marks a significant change in tradition, but at the same time reaffirms the richness of consecrated life in its diversity. Assuming the service of animating a community is, above all, a call to live fraternity in its fullest expression, reminding us that authority in religious life is not a matter of ordination, but of service.

From the perspective of a religious brother, I experience this assignment as an opportunity to strengthen the identity of religious life. Being a religious brother in a leadership role implies, in certain contexts, breaking new ground. In a world where traditional models of leadership are in crisis, the witness of authority based on communion and service is a prophetic sign.

In these two years as a community animator, I recognize that this mission is not without challenges. One of the greatest challenges I encounter is balancing multiple pastoral responsibilities with the care of community life. In addition to accompanying the community, we often assume the administration of educational and social projects, which can generate tensions between fraternal life and activism.

Despite the challenges, the experience of co-responsibility with my brother priests has been enriching. Synodality, which is walking together in discernment and mission, is lived daily through dialogue, listening, and joint decision-making. It is a concrete testimony that the Church is called to be increasingly participatory and missionary. Being superior of a community is a grace because it allows us



Our presence in Bethlehem: Fr. Gaspar Fernández Pérez scj, Br. Athit, Br. Piyapol (novices), Fr. Jacob Biso Puliampally scj (in the middle), Br. Rattanachai, Br. Jjoe (novices) and Fr. Stervin Selvadass scj.

lot of experiences with me. Many of the times their experience end with sad note and there were the taste of hatred. They feel very sad because their children and grand children do not have job, and there are no pilgrims, so their financial situation is very poor. Even in their sad talks and face they taught me to pray for them and with them. We pray rosary together.

Whenever, I feel down in my spirit, I pray to St. Michael, He is the real

spiritual master; he gives me a lot of consolation and allows me to walk in his footsteps. For example he put me in the same situation as he was; "when he goes to celebrate mass or other spiritual exercises to the sisters, many times he used to miss meal in both the side that is in the seminary and convent. I used to be in the same situation, in the beginning I did not know, why he allowed me to be in the same situation. I asked God, "God what do you want from me and why do you allow

Do not be afraid

• Fr. Jacob Biso Puliamally scj
in Holy Land

Fears, anxiety, hatred, uncertainty of life are the feelings I saw in the eyes of many. I came to the Holy Land at Bethlehem on 29th January 2024. I was excited to do my ministry at Bethlehem at the Land of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I was not sure what I should do, and I was afraid due to the war and violence. Above all the unfaithful, hopeless and cheating behaviours of the people wounded me so much. I was in pain and helpless.

Everything changed when I met a family. They had very sad news to share with me. Their son who was 25 years old, young man was arrested by Israel army. The family did not have any hope that their son will come back to the family. They arrested the man because he shared some news of the violence in the social media platform. The Israel government took it too offensive against them. I could do nothing but share few minutes with them praying. I gave them a rosary and said, 'do not

be afraid pray rosary and Mother Mary will bring your son back to the family'. I did not have much faith when I said it but I prayed rosary and asked Mother Theresa sisters (MC) pray with the intention. At the same time, there was a miracle by St. Miriam of Jesus Crucified; a cancer patient was cured of his sickness. I prayed to St. Miriam of Jesus Crucified too. A week later the arrested young man came back to the family. The family members were very happy and celebrated the return of the man, in their traditional way and shared the news to others. It was the beginning of hope in the life of many. I visited and prayed with five more families.

20th November 2024 I went to Taybeh (New Name) Ephraim (Old Name, John: 11:54)) The Holy Redeemer Church, to improve my language learning. Every day I was asked to help the elderly in the elderly home. I spent three hours with them. They shared a

to witness, from our identity as brothers, a form of service born of humility, accompaniment, and love for the community. As St. Michael Garicoïts reminds us, our "Here I am" must be lived with promptness and generosity, hoping that the mission entrusted to us is, above all, an invitation to reflect the face of Christ in the community and the Church. ■



Testimony of community animation

• Brother Sixto Benitez scj,
Superior of the Community "San José" in Asunción (Paraguay)

In 2023, I was entrusted with the leadership of the religious community of San José de Asunción (school & parish), accepting the great challenge of doing so with the help of our God our Father, Saint Michael Garicoïts, and Our Lady of Betharram. It is a therapeutic community, both human and spiritual, with six members, two

of whom receive more watchful care due to life's ailments, requiring attention from the members themselves.

During my first year, the leadership was very challenging due to differences in age, formation, and ministry, and due to the presence of priests and bishops. But I could always count on the support of the Vicar, the broth-



ers of the local council, the Gospel, and the rule of life. With them, I carry out my duties as Local Superior, as an animator, an example of a good shepherd, a servant of the community, a forger of fraternal community bonds, a creator of a charismatic theological space, a guardian of the elderly and sick brothers, and I accompany each member of the community. This commitment is very demanding and challenging, following our rule of life based on the Gospel, and the inspiring phrase of our Holy Father Michael, which guides our daily life: 'Humble, simple, small, humble, these are the values of the Kingdom'; the deepest motivations and priorities that animate the com-

munity's spiritual journey.

How do you live this service and this mission as a religious brother among a group of priests?

Trying to answer this question, I turn to personal prayer, illuminated by the Spirit and the charism of 'Here I am, making the journey'; and a reflection on the mission entrusted (to me) to animate the religious community.

First of all, the community is a space to live faith and charism, sharing with my brothers the experience of being sons of Saint Michael—two theological spaces or places where God unites us and where we live as religious brothers. We have as background scenery the faith and charism that impel



ample in religious life), is that it provides a manifest service to the Kingdom. In one way or another, sooner or later, in a more or less visible way, in one area of human coexistence or another, if the charismatic originality is genuine, if the mysticism that animates it is consistent, if it is lived with inner freedom and parrhesia, it brings fruits. This means that in some way it improves the quality of life of people, environments and peoples.

9. Prophecy

Mysticism goes hand in hand with prophecy. One comes not before or after the other, but they go together. A

profound gaze at things, people and events in the light of faith necessarily produces actions, attitudes and discourses that question the status quo. When we make a great discovery in our lives, everything else becomes relative to that fundamental discovery. Prophecy is a consequence of mysticism, but the opposite is also true: true prophecy impels us to organize and harmonize the lives of people, communities and peoples in a deeper, more truthful and just way. All this is inherent to a "mysticism of incarnation."

10. Sign of hope

Finally, Christian life in general and religious life in particular are called to be a sign of hope in the face of these changing times. In these dark times, so lacking in depth, where depression becomes pandemic, theological life from one's own charismatic originality, associated with a mysticism with open eyes, and open to fraternity and a relevant service to the Kingdom in a given context becomes a sure sign of hope. ■

How do I mature, cultivate and express in myself this charism, which is my own, artisanal and epiphanic.

5. Bonding

The experience of the Christian mystery, in Him, through Him and with Him, weaves bonds, with fraternal intensity and universal breadth. Seeing God in all things means seeing Him in the people we encounter on the path of life. We bond when what we associate with is relevant and significant. There is no bond without wonder and reciprocal gratitude. Fraternity is always a gift from above that matures over time.

6. Discernment

Cultivating a profound way of seeing people, things and events leads us to discernment. We see beyond its apparent surface, and superficial appearance and see a holy history, leading us to the God of life. What seemed to be 'nothing but' or 'no more than' is actually much more than that. It is not 'just that'. Discernment nourishes a wise and theological gaze at each creature in God.

7. Inner freedom

In order to discern, "one must become



indifferent," says St. Ignatius of Loyola, already in the "Principle and Foundation" of his "Spiritual Exercises," so that what moves us does not dominate or give us bias, but rather becomes fuel for seeking a more evangelical experience of values. We all have historical conditioning, both as individuals and as communities and institutions. The will of God cannot be discovered or discerned if "past experience" limits us. Transcending our own will, we discover that "we are more" and "we live better."

8. Service to the Kingdom

The best indicator that a spiritual and community process is authentic (for ex-



us to put them into practice among ourselves, even in the small gestures we all make. This is what I value and appreciate about my brother priests.

Secondly, I could mention the ministerial life they share, always seeking space to express it in the community and through their pastoral activities. They do this with a dedication and commitment that I appreciate because it supports my own consecrated life.

Thirdly, I am impressed by their willingness to accept any suggestion or idea to be implemented within our community, despite their years of experience. They live subject to the Gospel and the charism, supporting initiatives to give life to the communi-

ty dynamic.

Every human group has its strengths and weaknesses, and community life is not exempt from these human realities. From my humble and brief experience, I can say that the light of community life is love, and we know that love is at the heart of St. Michael's charism. For me, it has been a light to find a consecrated family where we all want to live fraternally among ourselves and with all people and, amidst our differences, come to recognize that we are all brothers and sisters. A great treasure of religious life is sharing, knowing that when we arrive at the community there are brothers waiting for us, and are able to share the pastoral experience we have lived during the day. The variety of ages among the brothers in the religious community can become a shadow if it is not lived with openness and availability.

I believe the key to living an authentic relationship of fraternal life, despite the different ages of each one, lies in the way we see things. We can live with brothers of different ages and develop a fraternal relationship with

all of them, each with their own potential for understanding and comprehension, each with their own challenges. However, the most important

thing is to recognize each brother as a neighbour to be loved and cherished, to look attentively at each one, and patiently await their response.

It is important to know how to wait, open to diversity and to the new things I can receive from others, even those that collide with my own ideas. I think the most beautiful and noble thing is not to lose simplicity. When simplicity is lost and the priesthood is experienced as a status that grants us comfort and power over others, we are not living our religious vocation. Why? Because from the perspective of Saint Michael, the experience of being brothers is paramount, while the priesthood is a ministerial service.

We, as consecrated brothers, can put our charism of availability at the service of mission, where we foster dialogue with all, recognizing that we are brothers and sisters to make every human encounter valuable and possible. Even in the midst of differences, we can create the necessary means for coexistence. Fraternal coexistence helps us continue to grow among ourselves, thanks to the experience of each member.

The desire to live community life within our limitations, strengthens our fraternal relationship and our vocational journey.

With the Lord help, I strive every day to remain faithful and live my vocation with simplicity and dedication. I believe the secret lies in faithfulness to personal and communal prayer, and in the daily Eucharist, where we celebrate His presence and listen to His Word, which nourishes and instructs us. From this experience of God, which is manifested in my daily life, I find the strength to live my religious vocation, strengthening my spirit for continued availability. ■

Religious life in the face of the changing times: 10 pointers that inspire

• Fr. Gerardo Ramos scj

3. Creativity

There are no unique paths, no people, no works or initiatives, no styles or organizational methods. Everything in God's plan is unrepeatable, unique and unprecedented, and also shaped in interaction with our responsible (or irresponsible!) freedom. We must learn to encounter our own originality in an artisanal way. To discover that work of art inscribed deep within our being. To tune in with that son or daughter of God who has a unique word to pronounce, act and live it in the Son.

4. Unprecedented charismatic experience

There are as many charisms as there are people. It is true that, a posteriori, we can organize them by similarities. Thus we say that we belong to the same charismatic family. But the truth is that on the spiritual level, classifications are no simpler than in the theological field. Each person, with his or her own life experience, is the bearer of a unique charism, and any absolute association could be questionable.

What characteristics is religious life called to embody in the face of the challenges of the changing times?

1. Opening our eyes

The first thing is to cultivate an attitude of wonder before the mystery of God present in people, things and events. To marvel at creation in general and at its historical vicissitudes in particular. To learn to be moved by the small great things through which the Lord manifests himself to us and offers himself.

2. Theological mysticism

Perception is associated with intuition, which in our case is theological because we are believers. In the depths of what affects us or moves us, that which moves and stirs us, God is somehow present and active: Jesus shows us the invisible face of the Father and the Ruah (spirit) with energies of life that renew us.