

“ Lord, grant us the joy of truly loving one another!  
May we practice total charity  
simply by staying where we are.  
May we be able to get along  
with all kinds of people,  
without distinction.  
May we succeed in working together toward a single goal.  
May we fulfil Jesus’ prayer:  
“That they all may be one,  
just as we are one!” (John 17:11).

*(En avant, toujours! Fr. Beñat Oyhénart scj,  
prayers drawn from the writings of St Michael Garicoïts)*

”



# Nef

2025

## Nouvelles En Famille



Societas Sacratissimi  
Cordis Jesu

*Betharram*



A journey of Interculturality  
with Betharramites  
of the African continent

## In this issue

- A Journey of Interculturality With Betharramites of the African Continent  
- Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín, Superior General PAG. 3
- 
- The role of a brother and a sister  
- Pope Leo XIV PAG. 7
- 
- Synodality and Interculturality in Daily Community Life  
- Fr. Vincent-de-Paul Dimon Worou scj PAG. 8
- 
- The Family in Africa: A Path Toward Synodality  
- Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo scj PAG. 10
- 
- Integration at the service of the Church in Côte d'Ivoire  
- Fr. Raoul Thibaut Segla scj PAG. 12
- 
- To enlarge the space of our tent in Africa  
- Fr. Habib Cossi Yelouwassi scj PAG. 13
- 
- A Snapshot of the Vicariate of Central Africa  
- Bourgeois, Samuel, Dieu-Bénit, Central African Scholastics PAG. 15
- 
- † Fr. Ennio Bianchi scj  
- Fr. Enrico Frigerio scj PAG. 21
- 
- † Fr. Ernesto Colli scj  
- Fr. Piero Trameri scj PAG. 23
- 
- Notices  
- General Council PAG. 26
- 
- Father Etchecopar's journeys: The journey to South America (2/3)  
- Roberto Cornara PAG. 28

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FOR INTERNAL USE

F. B. S.

Nous soussigné Supérieur Général de la Congrégation du Sacre-Coeur de Betharram, France, déclarons avoir accompli, en ce jour, dans la joie de notre âme, notre pèlerinage à l'antique et très illustre sanctuaire de la très Sainte Vierge, Mère de Dieu, notre Dame de Luján, avec le Père Magendie, Vicaire général de notre colonie américaine, le Père Bourdenne, Romaine, notre socius, les professeurs du Collège San José, les scolastiques et les novices de notre maison de Buenos-Aires.

Nous sommes venus en ces lieux mille fois bénis où la divine Marie fita un trône de grâces infinies; ubi steterunt pedes ejus, pour lui consacrer nos personnes et nos œuvres, la remercier de ses bienfaits passés et implorer, pour l'avenir, ses faveurs les plus maternelles.

Et avons signé cette déclaration dans les élans de la plus vive gratitude et en priant la toute Puissante et toute Bonne Vierge, Mère de daigner nous inscrire dans son cœur et au livre de l'éternelle Vie.

a. Etchecopar sup. Gen

Procurator

J. Magendie

J. Gastambes

A. Sammit

J. Lacroix

L. F. Tourret

Normidon

J. Lacroix

L. Lacouste

Humant

J. Lacroix

L. Etchecopar

J. Lacroix

L. Etchecopar

Procurator

J. Lacroix

L. Etchecopar

divided into two groups.<sup>8</sup>

*"The first retreat was attended by the Superiors of the three houses, some other Fathers, and brothers also taken from our residences – about twenty members in all; the rest of the religious are at work now, about thirty in number; everyone is eager to benefit from my presence – even the Novitiate and the Postulancy..."*<sup>9</sup>

On 24<sup>th</sup> January, at the end of the two spiritual retreats, he presided in the Caseros chapel over the ceremony marking the beginning of the novitiate for some postulants and the renewal of vows for some scholastics. In the same church, on 25<sup>th</sup> February, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Mons. Aneiros, conferred the minor orders on other scholastics.

The stay in Caseros was briefly interrupted on 13<sup>th</sup> February by a community pilgrimage to the national Marian shrine of Luján. *"In that place so filled with divine favours, our souls experienced that sweet and profound emotion produced by contact with the supernatural. Yes, as in Lourdes, as in Betharram, we felt*

*drawn toward the Most Holy Virgin, and prostrate at her feet, we felt the infinite tenderness of the little child pressed to his mother's breast."*<sup>10</sup>

Before leaving Luján, Father Etchécopar wrote a few lines signed by all the Betharramite pilgrims in the visitors' golden book, in remembrance of the day.<sup>11</sup> (See illustration on the opposite page)

Despite the intense heat and the irritating presence of a few mosquitoes, the days at Caseros went by pleasantly. *"The holidays are passing very pleasantly at Monte Caseros; when we cannot go out, we talk with enthusiasm and in a family spirit that delights me; then the Office; then horse racing, fishing, bathing in the river; soon we will go bird-hunting with nets..."*<sup>12</sup>

Fr Etchécopar also received numerous visits from distinguished figures of the country's cultural and political circles.

But it was time to leave. On 2<sup>nd</sup> March, he opened the Lenten season in the Caseros chapel with the ceremony of the ashes. Then, together with all the "holiday-makers," he made the journey back to town. ■

8) This tradition was still documented in the 1960s.

9) Letter to Fr. Bourdenne, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1892.

10) Ibid.

11) This written record was rediscovered recently through research by the shrine's archivist.

12) Letter to Fr. Bourdenne, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1892.

## A Journey of Interculturality With Betharramites of the African Continent

**"In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, among them were Barnabas, Simeon called 'The Black', Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (a childhood friend of Herod the tetrarch), and Saul.**

**One day, while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, he Holy Spirit said to them, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:1-2)**

Dear Betharramites,

Africa is the region where the catholic faith is growing most rapidly, with millions of new converts in recent years. The African presence in Church hierarchy has also grown, especially under the pontificate of Pope Francis, with a record number of African cardinals. For several years now, our religious family has been enriched by the gift of African Betharramite vocations. New African priests and brothers are enlivening their vicariates, while others are going on mission to sister vicariates. Among them, many are striving to integrate themselves into a Church that needs them as true witnesses of the Kingdom, available and obedient men, apostles in community, who embody the Betharramite charism with generosity and without seeking their own glory.

Every Betharramite is called to adapt the Church's message to local cultures



through a process of inculturation. This process has not been easy in the past. Without questioning the dedication of our missionaries, they often followed paths of inculturation that only succeeded in replicating the pre-established patterns of a very different distant land. Perhaps, having grown up with a European mindset, the evangelizers spread the faith, unaware of the subtle colonial undertones, unconsciously hidden in a corner of their ideological hearts. This brought forth many Christians, but it also created dependencies.

With successes and failures, the evangelizing witness of many of those missionaries who arrived in Ivory Coast and Central African Republic has been and continues to be the great driving force behind an increasingly vibrant and active Betharramite life in Africa. The Betharramite family has recently celebrated numerous African professions and ordinations. Today there are a total of 27 perpetual religious in Ivory Coast and the Central African Republic. There are also 8 scholastic brothers in both countries. In the "St. Joseph Novitiate" in the Holy Land, there are two Ivorian novices and one from Central Africa.

Several Betharramites work as missionaries in different parts of the St. Michael Garicoits Region (seven in France and Spain, and two in Italy). Some have even had missionary experiences in Latin America and the Holy Land.

In the Church, African customs, spirituality, and ways of life are being valued as a bridge for the new evangelization. And this appreciation does not overlook the faithful witness of our African brothers and sisters and their capacity for integration into Betharramite communities, according to the perspectives of the Congregation and the local Church. Leaving their homeland, leaving behind families and customs, they become incarnate in a new reality, "losing themselves to find themselves," and this is part of the process experienced by an African missionary abroad and is a fundamental element for effective inculturation.

Betharramites, from Ivory Coast, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Central Africa, have embraced a fundamental challenge in the unfolding of their vocation of service: their "Here I Am." They are seen sharing mission with Italian and French Betharramites, managing a hospital (Niem), health and AIDS

*in the alleys lined with pear trees laden with fruit and vines heavy with long clusters of already-formed grapes that the heat of the coming month will bring to perfect ripeness; the sun was setting; a cool breeze stirred the branches of the trees and bent the flower clusters, while a multitude of birds with crimson throats fluttered about, uttering a thousand joyful cries."*<sup>4</sup>

On 14th December, he attended the solemn prize-giving ceremony at the San José College, "an edifying event marked, if I may say so, with the seal of our religious apostolate."<sup>5</sup>

### STAY AT CASEROS

In Argentina, the prize-giving ceremony marks the end of the school year and the beginning of the summer holidays. During this period, Father Etchécopar withdrew to Caseros, the priests' second holiday residence, in a locality now called Martín Coronado, in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. The property, covering several dozen hectares, included a large house and a small church.<sup>6</sup>

The small church was inaugurated by

Father Auguste on Christmas night: "On Christmas night, there was a lovely crowd of people, especially milkmen – lecheros – who truly represented the shepherds of the Gospel."<sup>7</sup>

From 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> December, he went to Montevideo to greet the community, make a brief visit, and attend the prize-giving ceremony at the College of the Immaculate Conception.

He then returned to Caseros, where he spent the next two months; the house was also the usual vacation spot for the priests, who spent the year teaching in the colleges. Father Etchécopar was far from alone. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1892, he celebrated the solemn Mass; shortly beforehand, he heard the confession of an old woman who wished to confess to a priest who spoke her native language, Basque.

During the month of January, he preached the spiritual retreat to all the Bétharram Fathers present in Latin America, who, according to an old tradition, used to gather in this house for the spiritual exercises, usually

4) Letter of 17<sup>th</sup> December 1891.

5) Ibid.

6) Both buildings still exist today. Because of its distinctive architecture, the house is nicknamed "el castillo" [the little castle].

7) Letter to Father V. Bourdenne, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1892.

## The Journey to South America (2/3)

3 November 1891 - 27 May 1892

### THE FIRST WELCOME

At the port of Buenos Aires, Fr Auguste was greeted by Father Magendie, SCJ – delegate of the Superior General for America and local Superior of San José – and by his nephew, Evariste, the eldest son of his brother, Maxime Etchécopar, who would join them a few days later<sup>1</sup>.

But the real welcome took place three days later, on Sunday, at the San José College, with a celebration prepared by the alumni.<sup>2</sup> In the morning, he celebrated Mass in the college chapel in front of about forty people; the homily was preached by Reverend Father Terrero, a former student of Father Didace Barbé scj and future bishop. In the early afternoon, the ceremony took place in the college's great hall, in the presence of about 300 people. Several speeches were given, including one by Pedro Goyena, an alumnus, politician,

and prominent figure in Argentine Catholicism.

*"I will say nothing of the words I tried to respond with, and which brought that beautiful, intimate celebration to a close. I had prepared myself as best I could; but my emotion, so to speak, overwhelmed me and carried me away without order or restraint into metaphors, praises, and declarations of gratitude and devotion that may have somewhat astonished even Argentine enthusiasm itself."*

After a few days of rest, Father Etchécopar visited the country house of the San José College – the *quinta*<sup>3</sup> of Almagro. He wrote to Father Bourdenne: *"You know this magnificent garden, where our teachers can enjoy pleasant walks every Sunday – the only day they are free to go out – in the neighborhood of the college. I recited the Divine Office*

prevention centres (Bouar and Monteporzio), and schools (Katiola-Niem-Bouar-Bimbo), as well as formation houses. But fundamentally, they serve the local Church today, leading various parish communities (Adiapodoumé, Dabakala, Yamoussoukro, and Bonduku; Niem, Bouar, and Bimbo). Some serve outside the African continent, such as Fr. Sylvain (Episcopal Vicar in the Diocese of Bayonne and parish priest in Pau), Fr. Vincent de Paul, Superior of the community in Pibrac, and Fr. Fulgence, rector of the Shrine at the Mother House, among others. Fr. Jean Paul is a Major Superior (1<sup>st</sup> Regional Vicar, in Ivory Coast – SMG Region) and closely accompanies the life of the Region. Br. Gilbert Napetien is the bursar of the Vicariate of the Central African Republic. The participation of African religious in strategic positions within the family is also complemented by the valuable presence of some of them in the communities of the Central African Republic, Italy (Rome), and France-Spain (Basque Country and Béarn). I apologize for not naming them all here.

These examples tell us that the "African insertion" in the Congregation is growing and needs not only to be welcomed but also planned, so that we can help one another to experience this phenomenon (growing throughout the Church) as a collaborative process (fruitful and not conflictive) with a renewed and synodal style. It is clear that these changes cause us all some unease, as we were accustomed to a more monochromatic Betharram. This "community metamorphosis" demands great resilience and creativity from us, as well as great honesty in our coexistence, in addressing pastoral challenges, and in safeguarding an authentic way of life according to our constitutions.

Interculturality implies an equitable exchange of gifts in which cultures recognize, respect, and enrich one another, without any desire for domination.

While African religious are helping to fill the shortage of priests and religious in European dioceses, especially in areas with fewer members, this cannot be the only objective of sending Betharramite religious to any diocese or community. We must always carefully discern how these brothers and sisters can live a way of life in accordance with that desired by Saint Michael for his own. It would also be detrimental for them to feel like a mere "stopgap solution" but rather they should feel that they humbly and joyfully experience

1) This would be the third time Fr. Auguste met his brother Maxime; the first two times were in Madrid, where their sister Julie, a Sister of Charity, was living at the time – from 1875 to 1877.

2) Fr. Etchécopar described the entire day in his letter of 11<sup>th</sup> December 1891, to Fr. Victor Bourdenne.

3) In Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, a *quinta* refers to a property generally used for weekends or vacations, away from the city. That Almagro property, which was home to the Argentinian scholasticate and novitiate from 1898 to 1907, no longer exists. The entire "manzana" – an urban block of about 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> – bounded today by Díaz Vélez, Medrano, Potosí, and Francisco Acuña de Figueroa streets, was subdivided and sold in 1908.

their integration into a missionary community. This is a responsibility for everyone.

Religious life requires specific formation in interculturality so that our leaders and members can manage communities and projects in a healthy and inclusive manner. Mutual respect and dedication are also essential, as is a constant vigilance in safeguarding the dignity of all people, especially minors and those in vulnerable situations.

The next chapters of Betharramite history—far from any appearance of idyllic goodness—will surely be more multifaceted, but the most important thing is that they be written in communion and fidelity to the Charism entrusted to us by the Heart of Jesus.

May God bless you.

**Fr. Gustavo Agín scj**

Superior General

#### FOR COMMUNITY DISCUSSION:

1. How do you experience the integration of Betharramites from the newer Vicariates (Ivory Coast, Central Africa, India, Thailand-Vietnam) into the community?
2. What human and Gospel values have you discovered during your experience working with them? What are their strengths and areas for improvement?
3. Do you think there will be a new Betharramite Region in Africa or Asia in the near future? Under what conditions?

#### Were also approved...:

- the closure of the two Communities of Tiptur and Adigundanahally-Yadavanahally) and the opening of the Community of Adigundanahally-Yadavanahally-Tiptur;
- the opening of the Community of Chennai-Salem (Diocese of Madras and Mylapore) ;

#### ...the following appointments of Community Superiors:

- **Fr. Jesuraj Mariadas :**  
Community of Adigundanahally-Yadavanahally-Tiptur;
- **Fr. Valan Kanagaraj :**  
Community of Chennai-Salem ;
- **Fr. Jose Kumar Johnrose :**  
Community of Bangalore ;
- **Fr. Biju Paul Alappat :**  
Community of Mangalore ;
- **Fr. Jestin Marottikkal :**  
Community of Hojai-Langting ;
- **Fr. Pobitro Minj :**  
Community of Simaluguri ;

#### ...and the appointment of

- **Fr. Pascal Ravi as Master of Scholastics.**



On September 30th, the **Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life** granted **Brother Alfred Christian Nandjui**, a

perpetually professed member (Saint Michael Garicoïts Region, Vicariate of Ivory Coast), **an indult of departure from the Congregation.**



Meeting of the General Council on the 20th & 21st of October

● **Region of St Mary of Jesus Crucified, Vicariate of India**

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

- the presentation to priesthood of Deacon Alwyn Crasta ;



- the presentation to the diaconate of Br. Stevan Rodrigues ;



**and granted**

- an indult of departure from the Congregation with the dispensation of the temporary vows to George Sebin.



Often, we think that **the role of a brother, a sister**, refers to kinship, to being related, to being part of the same family. In truth, we know well how disagreement, division and sometimes hatred can devastate even relationships between relatives, not only between strangers.

This shows the need, more urgent today than ever, to reflect on the greeting with which Saint Francis of Assisi addressed everyone, regardless of their geographical, cultural, religious and doctrinal origins: *omnes fratres* was the inclusive way in which the Saint placed all human beings on the same level, precisely because he recognized them in their common destiny of dignity, dialogue, welcome and salvation. Pope Francis repropounded this approach of the *Poverello* of Assisi, emphasizing its relevance after eight hundred years, in the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

That “*tutti*”, everyone, which meant for Saint Francis the welcoming sign of a universal fraternity, expresses an essential feature of Christianity, which ever since the beginning has been the proclamation of the Good News destined for the salvation of all, never in an exclusive or private form. This fraternity is based on Jesus’ commandment, which is new insofar as He accomplished it Himself, the superabundant fulfilment of the will of the Father: thanks to Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us, we can in turn love one another and give our lives for others, as children of the one Father and true brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, St Peter’s Square, Wednesday, 12 November 2025  
 To full text: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/audiences/2025/documents/20251112-udienza-generale.html>

## Betharramites of the African continent

### Synodality and Interculturality in Daily Community Life

Fr. Vincent-de-Paul Dimon Worou scj  
Community of Pibrac

**To live the interculturality and the synodality daily concerns a central stake for religious life. In the context of my community in Pibrac, and of the France/Spain Vicariate, diversity is both a challenge and a wealth.**

Two continents for three or four nationalities, the Pibrac community is a fine example for interculturality to become a value really lived and not only a theory. In fact, in an intercultural context which reigns in Pibrac and all the communities of the France/Spain Vicariate, listening actively and participation of all the members to the mission and the community life is very important.

I am living an experience where there are regular community meetings to express oneself freely.

Differences are valorized as gifts for our community, never as obstacles. It is why each one is invited to understand the cultural differences, and to a non-violent communication. We learn from one another to go further. We take moments of common recollection outside the community, relying on the actuality of our Congregation. They are also the opportunity of knowing one another.

The synodal style is also lived in our way of praying the offices together, in the Eucharist, in celebrating our diversity.

Synodality is also to sit down round a table, with members of my community, with the lay people, with voluntary people, to decide together about the mission, about subjects related to our community and pastoral life. The deci-

Thank you, Lord, for the many talents generously bestowed on Fr. Ernesto, which he knew how to distribute and make fruitful with particular creativity.

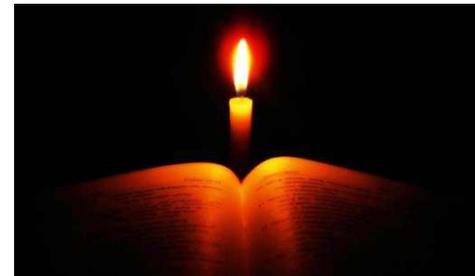
Thank you, Ernesto, for your witness of life, for your mission, for your deeply personal "Ecce Venio",

for your kindness and joy... you, a man, a Christian, a priest, fully a child of our time, whom we now imagine seated with your loved ones and your confreres at the table of Wisdom, in the house of the Lord of life and love. Amen. ■

### *In memoriam*

**Spain** | On November 11, **Mr. Martin Miguel**, brother of Br. Teodoro Miguel SCJ, of the Betharram community, returned to the house of the Father.

We express our condolences to Brother Teodoro and his family and promise to remember their dear brother in our prayers.



erous with good grades for his/her students, *editor's note*]. He was a shrewd and prudent bur-sar in many of our communities. He also chose to live a missionary experience of nearly three years in Uruguay, and later spent some time in Thailand, always remaining close to his missionary confreres by every possible means, thanks especially to his technological skills and curiosity, first as a radio amateur, then as a computer expert and user of social media with the ease of those born in the digital age.

A valuable collaborator and translator of our magazines, thanks to his knowledge of languages, he always knew how to say "Yes" to the most varied requests, "Ecce venio," "Here I am, send me", as our Founder, St Michael Garicoits, taught us. He was fully aware of the many talents the Lord had given him and of the call to place them at the service of others.

He did so as a refined and creative pastoral collaborator in Rome, at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Miracles, then at the Sanctuary of Caravina, at Castellazzo di Bollate, and later for seventeen years at the Parish of the Sacred Heart in Lissone - close to people with

discretion, capable of celebrating with deep attention the ministry of consolation.

He was always very close to his family, both in moments of pain and misfortune and in times of rebirth and renewed life.

If you will allow me, I would like to say something in particular to his numerous nieces and nephews, and grand-nieces and grand-nephews, and in truth, to all of us. Fr. Ernesto gave you, gave us, through his life, the example of how one can live in a lively, creative, imaginative, and enterprising way, even amid the tumult of so many things to do, in every field of this time of chaotic transformation - yet always preserving one's own identity as a creature guided by someone who distributes talents to all, to be placed at the service of others, to be offered and made fruitful: for the good of all. And to remember always this mission, which belongs to everyone, we must never forget to frequent the "house built by Wisdom" (of the Lord), the table prepared in His house, where we can always rediscover the joy of living, the consolation of forgiveness, and the joy of being together.



*Betharramite community of Pibrac (from left to right): Fr. Vincent-de-Paul Dimon Worou scj (Superior), Fr. Jean-Luc Morin scj, Fr. Emmanuel Agniman Assanvo scj, M<sup>ons</sup>. Vincent Landel scj.*

sions, if they are taken in a collegial way, strengthen the trust and transparency between the members of a religious and parochial community.

On the other hand, cultural differences may sometimes produce tensions for lack of knowing the culture of the other person. We must not minimize those tensions/conflicts, but approach them as an opportunity for growth. It is suitable to listen and accompany the members who feel difficulties,

to find ways of reconciliation and peace.

At last, to live synodality and interculturality in my reality, is to be a visible sign of a community which is walking together in spite of the differences of age, culture, nationality, vision. It is to commit oneself to live the common project which goes further cultural barriers ; it is to live in the Church, by relying on our Congregation spiritually and having a Master, Christ. ■

## The Family in Africa: A Path Toward Synodality

Fr. Jean-Paul Kissi Ayo scj  
Regional Vicar

**The Church's invitation to live synodality is an urgent call for all Christian communities; it is a necessity that opens us more deeply to communion, listening, and solidarity.**

In our African context, this new dynamic is far from being irrelevant to us. A fundamental aspect to emphasize here is the spirit of family, so characteristic of our religious communities and mission settings. Synodality in Africa is inextricably linked to the family, for the family remains the foun-

ation and root of all life. It is where everything begins.

In the following lines, I would like to share how family life influences community life—particularly in formation—and how synodality is lived concretely through listening to families. For several years now, the formation process has included the contribution of families. The great majority of young people in formation remain very attached to their families of origin. A young person who enters our



## † Fr. Ernesto COLLI scj

Villatico di Colico, 3 May 1928 •  
Albavilla, 20 October 2025 (Italy)

*Excerpt from the Homily of Fr. Piero Trameri SCJ:*

The Book of Proverbs reminds us that the Wisdom of the Lord has built for us a house, raised upon seven columns, a symbol of the perfection with which He builds, and has prepared a banquet to which He invites all to participate, to learn how to live and to attain Wisdom.

It is at the table of the Word of God that Fr. Ernesto sat with enthusiasm, to be nourished personally and to nourish the many people he met in his priestly ministry — breaking the bread with the wit and creativity that characterized him both when he taught languages to the students of the Sacred Heart College and when he enchanted the elderly ladies of Lissone with his catecheses, affectionately calling them “my little girls.”

The Gospel we have just heard once again invites us to reflect on the well-known parable of the talents that the Lord entrusts



to everyone, though in different forms, attentive to the abilities of each person and desiring to see all work together for the building of His Kingdom. What differs above all are our responses to His invitations to life, to His gifts. [...]

I believe that Fr. Ernesto gave us, with his life, an example of how one can make fruitful the talents given by the Lord, here and now, in our own time, in the pastoral, spiritual, economic, educational, and technological fields. Fr. Ernesto was first an educator in the seminary, then at the college in Colico, known and affectionately remembered as “Padre très bien” [a teaching Father who was gen-

hospitality, and later Superior of the community of Albavilla until 2004, remaining there until 2009. During those years, he was also director of the newspaper “*La Piazza*” in Erba, continuing to put his skills at the service of communication and evangelization.

From 2009, he lived in Castellazzo, where he continued his pastoral ministry with simplicity and dedication. He was also a collaborator of *Radio Mater*, a

### Excerpt from the remembrance of the parish community

“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you.” (Lk 22:15)

[...]

In the gesture of the broken bread, Jesus opens the hearts and minds of his disciples so that they may understand the meaning of his entire life: to make of himself a gift.

This same word illuminates the life of every religious and the ministry of every priest. The long priestly journey of Fr. Ennio was like a lived Eucharist: receiving life from the hands of God, giving thanks for it, breaking it, and offering it as a gift.

ministry he shared with deep passion and spirituality.

Sixty years of priesthood are not merely a chronological milestone, but the visible sign of a life lived with passion, perseverance, and depth in the service of the Gospel, of people, and of the Betharramite family, always guided by the fatherly counsel of St Michael Garicoïts.

■ Fr. Enrico Frigerio scj

Fr. Ennio did exactly this in the school, where for years he accompanied and formed generations of young people, transmitting not only knowledge but also a passion for truth and a love for the Gospel. He lived it in preaching, and also through radio, where his voice continued to proclaim the Word even when his physical strength was fading. In this way, he reached many people, perhaps far from the Church, but still seeking, eager to hear the Gospel and to rediscover a Christian reading of reality.

Like the Master who served at table, Fr. Ennio lived the priesthood as service: not as a privilege, but as a daily availability. ■

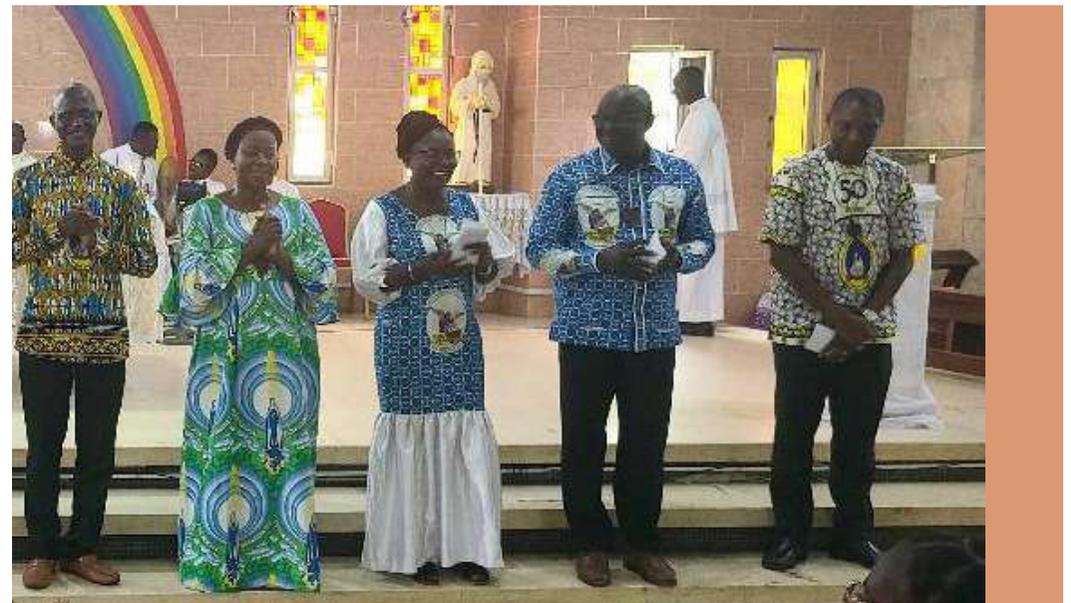
community needs the “blessing” of his family—that is, their approval—to begin his journey, since he may give up his vocation if his parents oppose it.

Given this strong family presence in the life of the young person, formators generally request written consent from the family to be included in the candidate’s file. While this procedure may raise questions about the candidate’s full freedom, it serves as an essential foundation for consensus within our cultural context. Beyond this initial agreement, a close relationship is established between the family and the formation house. The

formators take care to communicate with the families to better understand the young person, to know his family background, and to determine how they can assist in the formation of their brother or son.

The formators make family visits to listen and understand, in order to ensure better accompaniment. This process, profoundly synodal in nature, requires attentive listening and particular sensitivity to the young brother’s family situation, and it proves to be of great help when lived out properly.

Each year, we organize an “Open House Day,” during which the parents of the young men are invited to spend



a day in community. This event allows them to discover the brothers' daily reality, to become familiar with their environment, and thus to better understand their vocation and their journey. It should be noted that this activity is very successful, as families respond in great numbers to the invitation. It is also an opportunity for them to expe-

rience a time of sharing and fraternal communion, contributing by bringing food to be shared in common.

We have found that it is essential to give special attention to families in the spirit of synodality, for this fosters deeper communion, greater solidarity, and more attentive listening within the religious community. ■

## Integration at the service of the Church in Côte d'Ivoire

Fr. Raoul Thibaut Segla scj  
Community of Katiola

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” (Mt 28:19-20)*

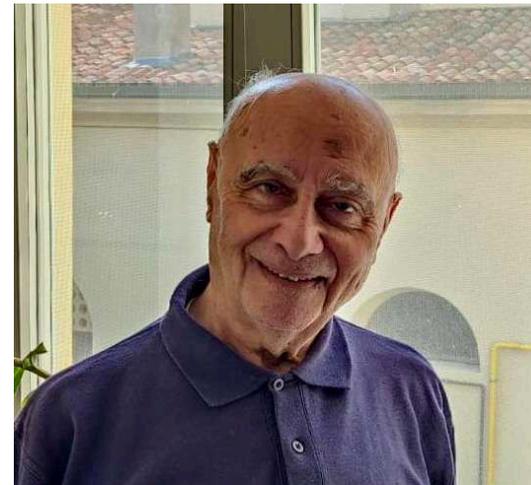
**To this request from the Lord, the response of the Religious of Betharram is magnificent: “Here I am, without delay, without reservation, without turning back, out of love...”.** This response from the founding father, Saint Michael, still resonates in the hearts of valiant disciples committed to giving their all for the propagation of the faith. A propagation lived as a team. Like Abraham (Leave your country...), predecessors full of apostolic zeal

cleared hostile forests so that today we may have many fields to tend. The integration of Betharram into the service of the Church today remains for me a beautiful legacy stemming from the ardent pastoral work of our forebears, a legacy that deserves to be honoured. Our Congregation has its rightful place in the concert of the propagation of the faith.

In Côte d'Ivoire particularly, at the heart of local pastoral work, I rejoice in the shining star of SCJ Betharram, whose radiance reaches far and wide. Our religious family is being called upon by a great number of bishops. The brothers are living their

## † Fr. Ennio BIANCHI scj

Casorezzo, 21 January 1940 • Milan, 11 October 2025 (Italy)



ordained a priest in Milan on 12 June 1965. Around the same time, he also began his academic pursuits, obtaining a Doctorate in Literature from the Catholic University of Milan, where he studied from 1966 to 1971.

From the teaching point of view, his first assignments included serving as Latin teacher for the scholastics in Albiate (1965–1967), then teacher of literature at the Apostolic School of Albavilla (1967–1970), and assistant priest in the parish of Arcellasco (Erba).

From 1970 to 1988, he was a teacher of literature at the Scientific and Linguistic High School of Bormio, where he left a deep and lasting impression on generations of students.

In 1988, a new chapter of his ministry began when he became Director of the Office for Social Communications of the Diocese of Pistoia, a role he held until 1995, while also serving as Provincial Councillor. In the following years, he took on leadership roles within the communities: Superior in Albiate (1995–1998), with responsibility for

Sunday, 22 September 2025, in the Church of St William at Castellazzo, the community gathered around Fr. Ennio Bianchi to celebrate an important milestone: the 60th anniversary of his priestly ordination. Less than a month later, on 11 October, Fr. Ennio passed away after a severe heart attack.

The religious formation of Fr. Ennio began on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1953 in Colico, continued with the novitiate in Monteporzio, where he made his first profession, and was completed in Albiate, where he studied philosophy and theology until his perpetual profession. He was

we choose to see it as a grace: that of a call to respond with our frailties, for a work that surpasses us.

We dream of a family where the word fraternity is not a concept, but a lifestyle. Where the elders reach out to the young, not to impose on them, but to transmit to them. Where young people listen, learn, but also dare to propose, build, dream aloud. We dream of a Betharram that truly speaks Sango, that shares again the table and the dusty roads of our villages. These dreams are not a luxury. It is our way of responding to the call,

it is our prayer and our commitment.

If God is willing to use us, even in our smallness, then we will say with faith: Here I am. So that Betharram may live.

May Saint Michael Garicoïts who knew how to listen to the call of God in a wounded Church, help us to advance on this path, humbly, and with faith. For what is small today, can under the action of the Spirit, become a source of life for tomorrow. ■



From left to right: Br. Bourgeois Kongue N'Gbalet scj, Br. Dieu-Bénit Sembona scj, Br. Samuel Monkerembi Doua scj, scholastics in 3<sup>rd</sup> Theology (Community of Adiapodoumé).

mission to the fullest, and new works are emerging, taking into account the realities of the moment. The needs of God's people are giving rise to new pastoral approaches. The spirit of initiative is flourishing and marking the lives of the brothers on mission. From Dabakala, Katiola, Yamoussoukro, and Adiapodoumé to Lao-Diba (Bondoukou), the SCJ star of Bétharram is invited, or invites itself, wherever human dignity calls for the comfort of faith and the warm closeness of our brothers and sisters ("Who has been a neighbour to humankind..."). This growth in the number of our presences in Côte d'Ivoire clearly testifies

to the integration of our Charism into the heart of the Church in Ivorian soil, notwithstanding certain difficulties we encounter.

We are engaged in parish, social, educational, and healthcare ministry, as well as in formation. These various areas of action make us understand the necessity of our presence at the heart of these calls that emerge either our loud or in silence. In this regard, I am happy and proud to be a religious of Betharram: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35). ■

## To enlarge the space of our tent in Africa

Fr. Habib Cossi Yelouwassi scj  
Community of Dabakala

**The third part of the 28<sup>th</sup> General Chapter held in Chiang Mai gives a new dynamic, a new breath to the Congregation with its three strong expressions: «Open up!», «Rise up!» and finally «Let us walk together!».**

**With this in mind, the "flying camps" of our Father St. Michael Garicoïts, that**

**we make in Africa, renew this opening field.**

But we have to rediscover the importance of our fraternal, community life; the gift of my brothers, a gift from the Lord through St. Michael.

And thoughts about some elements of the Chapter remind us of what follows:



“... It is important to know one another better, to accept each other.”<sup>1</sup> Such is the first challenge, which is a permanent challenge for the whole Congregation, like also for us in Africa. It allows us first to know how to rely on each other within Synodality; and to live the same happiness to be a Betharramite with our brothers of the communities. Then, to provide the same happiness to God’s people towards whom we are invited to bring the Good News of the Lord.

After the challenge of the fraternity, the flying camp will be able to answer “Here I am” to the first signal of the Superior to open up to today’s world with all its challenges. Yes, we have to rise up, we have to develop more the

virtue of daring and not to let discouragement and the monotony of daily life overcome us. Jesus said to Simon: “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” Simon said in reply, “Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.” (Luke 5:4-5). Simon gives us the example: let us also lower our nets towards other horizons. Our Betharramite fathers, the elders, animated by this impulse of the Incarnate Word, came to Africa to bring us the Good News of the Lord and the beautiful Michaelian spirituality.

In the thanksgiving of the jubilee in the 65 years of the presence of Betharram in the Ivory Coast, a pilgrimage has

souls in the parishes.

That is why, for the durability of works such as hospitals, schools, parishes, we dream of a well-formed succession likely to continue the work of their predecessors. Today, one of the words that comes up with insistence in our community exchanges and reflections is that of autonomy. And rightly so. This aspiration, which we welcome with kindness, takes on a particular resonance in the context of the Vicariate of Central Africa.

Indeed, to think of autonomy is to dare to look to the future: it is to build today works that will bear tomorrow the hope of the Gospel, not only for the subsistence of the vicariate, but for its missionary fruitfulness. An authentic autonomy also implies that the durability of the missions does not depend on the goodwill of a few, but on a shared vision, a common project, a dream carried by all.

To do this, the vicariate could think of agriculture and livestock farming as a source of income: if so it might be appropriate to send religious to specialise in this field. Another proposal is to allow religious to pursue studies in various fields (philosophy, theology, sociology, psychology, economics, etc.) for better management of our present and future works.

Above all, as young people in formation, we dream of a vicariate that first builds fraternity: in the truth of relationships, in trust, in the commitment of each one to the service of the whole. Then, perhaps, autonomy will come not as a sign of isolation, but as proof of spiritual and community maturity. All in all, we dream of a Betharram in Central Africa that rises again, not in the noise of great works, but in the inhabited silence of those who still believe in the power of the simple and true gift.

We dream of a vicariate where each brother, young or old, feels concerned, carried by the spirit of the same vocation, gathered around the same ideal: “Here I am, I come to do your will.” We dream of a Betharram that dares to look itself in the face, without fear, without a mask. Yes, we are struggling. Yes, we lack strength, vocations, sometimes common visions. But this lack can become a call.

We dream that this void will become a space of welcome for the Spirit, a place of revival for a mission deeply rooted in the virtues of the Sacred Heart. We dream of a vicariate that believes in its youth, that does not look at it only as a distant future, but as an active presence today. We already carry the weight of expectations, we hear it in the looks, in the silences too. And yet,

1) Acts of the XXVIII General Chapter, Chiang Mai 2023, Report of the Superior General.

*the noises that distract us; then make people notice it and, once well known, make them accept it despite the world and the devil*" (DS § 286). Therefore, we believe that this project of building a house of formation, conceived as a space free from all parish or apostolic pressure, is a decisive and beneficial step for the vicariate.

There is no doubt that offering young people in formation a stable, adapted environment conducive to prayer, studies, fraternal life and discernment is sowing in good soil. It is a project to be carried out together, in faith, prayer and hope. In addition, it would be desirable to separate the different houses of formation and make them stable. For the distinction of houses could

help those being formed to fully live their stage of formation without confusion with another stage. And the stability of the houses of formation could make the formation process (without disorientation) of those being formed more effective.

Then another question is that of the Formators. Today, it is urgent to train Central African religious, capable of responding to endogenous missionary requirements. We want to continue the mission of Betharram in Central Africa, following in the footsteps of our elders who have spared no effort, dedicating all their strength, their time, their lives to the service of the sick, to the education and formation of children, young people, to the service of



been organized in the first places of the mission of our fathers: the different villages and towns where they stay to sow the seeds of the Good News of the Lord, whose heirs we are today. They had the desire to provide us with the happiness of St. Michael's spirituality. And filled with this joy, we will have to, through a synodal discernment and with the help of the «Inner Master,» to perpetuate the achievements: be it by strengthening our present missions and by opening new Betharramite communities in other dioceses of the countries in which we are present; but even more in other African coun-

2) *Ibidem.*

tries, trusting in the Lord and keeping in mind the love for the Congregation which pushed our eldest Betharramites, as well as the conditions in which they had announced the Gospel to our Brothers and Sisters in Africa.

Our Father St. Michael Garicoïts invites us, within the spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to bring the same happiness to others. May we be able to respond to the invitation of the General Chapter which says: *"Let us enlarge the space of our tent, let us expand without hesitation the canvas of our dwelling."*<sup>2</sup> ■

## A Snapshot of the Vicariate of Central Africa

Bourgeois, Samuel, Dieu-Bénit, scholastics from the Central African Republic

**On January 4, 1896, Father Auguste Etchécopar wrote in a letter to Father Jean Magendie: "Forward! Not only in days calm, but in every day! Through all difficulties and according to the word of Fr. Garicoïts: Always forward! He began to build on the nothingness of human resources... but he believed that God could create something with this nothingness... And behold the fruits of**

**invincible Faith. Forward then, everywhere!"**

From Bouar, where our first steps in Betharram were taken, to Abidjan, where we are pursuing our theological training, a question silently occupies us, (from the limits of our position and according to what this position allows us to glimpse and conceive) what does the future hold for Betharram in

Central Africa? As members of this still young vicariate, but charged with a history marked by beautiful presences and generous missionary commitment, we feel both the richness of the gift received and the weight of the challenges to come.

For several decades, the religious of the Vicariate of Central Africa have spared no effort to fulfill the mission of Christ in the peripheries and especially where no one would want to go. Thus, their mission in this country until now essentially revolves around the creation and management of schools (education), the creation and management of health centres (health), and the management of parishes. This mission is lived with zeal and devotion, and we can only thank them and encourage them.

However, our presence in Central Africa, it must be admitted simply and clearly, is at a crossroads. The Betharramite ideal is sometimes misunderstood, even in the circles where we are established. Perhaps we ourselves, sons of this mission, are still struggling to fully embody its soul. And yet, we believe that Betharram in Central Africa has a future. But a future that will not come without effort, conversion of heart, without a serious re-reading of our presence and our mission.

We must rekindle the fire, give new breath to our commitments, dare to dream together, young and old, brothers and priests, of a Betharram sown in the depths of hearts, at the service of the smallest. This deep desire is within our reach, because despite the sometimes heavy missionary challenges, joy remains: that of belonging to a family which, even in the poverty of means, remains turned towards the love of God and the service of the people.

As young people in formation, this joy is nourished by hope, by the desire to build, to participate humbly in a more beautiful work. It is the joy of giving oneself, even in a small way, so that the mission may live. In Central Africa, the field is vast, the harvest is rich, but the labourers are few, and sometimes tired. Sometimes, a religious finds himself alone in the management of pastoral works. But beyond the numbers and visible shortcomings, a deeper question arises: do we today have a strong sense of belonging to the Vicariate of Central Africa?

Is there in us a real desire to unite around a common ideal, that of Christ obedient to the end, humble and missionary? Sometimes, the impression is that of a solitary march, or at best in small groups, while we are called to become one body, to move forward



together, in a living and fraternal communion.

### Dreams and Proposals

Moved by the Spirit of the Lord and faithful to the Charism of our Congregation, we desire to see the mission of Betharram in Central Africa strengthened.

In this pathway of growth pursued by our Vicariate of Central Africa, the formation and pastoral care of vocations appear not only as necessary foundations, but above all as a missionary urgency. Indeed, our houses of formation are marked by a silence that only hope can inhabit. Today, vocations are rare or at least they fall away overtime. This calls into question our

way of calling, witnessing, accompanying. This lack of vocations naturally leads to a lack of brothers available to carry out the missions entrusted to us.

The welcome and accompaniment of the small number of young people who still come forward must take place in a climate favorable to the blossoming of a true Betharramite vocation, nourished at the source of "Here I am." Indeed, *"we must help discern the voice of God, make it more real, work through the obstacles that arise: and, for that, what holiness is necessary!"*

*We must have a heart and soul detached from the things of this world, and instead full of God; the soul and the heart familiar with hearing his voice, and hearing it, in the midst of*