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Nouvelles En Famille



In search of the fruits of
the Jubilee of Hope

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In search of the fruits of the Jubilee of Hope

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Mt 24:35).



Dear Betharramites,

“Pilgrims of hope, on the path of peace” is the motto of the Jubilee for Consecrated Life, celebrated in Rome on October 8 and 9, 2025.

We religious and lay Betharramites wish to reflect together with the entire Church and society on the great need for peace, so urgent in our time. Responding to the call of the late Pope Francis and under the pastoral staff of Pope Leo, we long to create, through the Jubilee journey, a climate of hope and trust as the sign of rebirth that humanity needs.

We must also make this climate our own in every Betharramite community. 2024 and 2025 have been difficult years for the Congregation. We have felt our limits and our miseries firsthand. We have discovered dark pages of our past. We have faced community crises that we are still trying to address. But life also continues to be reborn in some parts of the Betharramite world. Several young vocations have embraced the diaconate, the priesthood, and consecrated life.

In recent years, new missions have been taken up in service to the poor. We have left behind works where our presence was no longer needed.

Thus, the Jubilee call of the Heart of Jesus repeats to us once again: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Mt 11:28-30). It is the Love of Jesus that seduces us with its bonds of tenderness and realism.

In our itinerary for this Jubilee year, we will now pause to observe the path we have taken in seeking the fruits of this time of grace.

Where are the fruits of the Jubilee of Hope?

Sometimes I think that perhaps the time is not yet ripe to gather them. Looking at the trials of our present, I am reminded of the parable of the fig tree in Luke's Gospel (Luke 13:6-9). Jesus tells of a man who asks his vinedresser to cut down the fig tree because, after three years, it has not borne fruit. But instead of cutting it down, the vinedresser asks for another year to care for and fertilise it, hoping that it will bear fruit, or then it will be cut down. I have discovered in these years that we must never tire of turning the soil of hope, of aerating and fertilising the earth, of caring for the roots and watering them patiently so that everything may grow and mature. Religious life in general faces great trials, but it always knew how to be reborn from the Spirit and needs to unite its forces to face the many challenges of the present. It requires constancy and *"hypomoné"* (ὑπομονή = active perseverance to the end), just as the Love of Jesus' Heart for us has always been. Sometimes we can be prodigal sons and other times older brothers, or sometimes discouraged apostles and at other times inattentive servants. My novice master, Fr. Daniel Martín SCJ, used to tell me a phrase I've never forgotten: "Gustavo, because I'm bad..., God loves me." His mercy and faithfulness are eternal. The Jubilee is like abundant

honey for the salvation of the world, which comes to heal the bitterness of meaninglessness and the harshness of life.

I propose a historical leap and that we engage in dialogue with our “new digital friend,” AI.

If we ask her about the Jubilee of Hope, she answers:

“The Jubilee of Hope is an invitation to spiritual renewal and trust in God, based on the fact that **hope does not disappoint because it is grounded in divine love and the certainty of salvation in Christ**. It is proposed as an opportunity to leave the past behind, embrace forgiveness, and translate that hope into concrete actions of mercy, solidarity, and the pursuit of peace in a world marked by war and the climate crisis.”

Today like yesterday, we have been journeying in hope. We are called to reproduce that magnificent gesture of the Son who gives himself completely to the Father’s will, to suffer and do whatever God wills (SMG). Our spiritual heritage (which we call charism, a free and precious gift), deeply centred on the Heart of Jesus, has inseparably associated us with the offering of the Son of God. To achieve this, we cannot allow ourselves to be drawn into a world that lures us with promises of a paradise for a few, as if we were the offspring of a greedy, indiscreet, and all-encompassing freedom. We must avoid this convulsive, individualistic, bellicose, disruptive world that cries out for peace but takes no steps to make it happen.

In 2025, our hearts must yield to the Heart of Jesus, Prince of Peace, because we know that if we do not clothe ourselves in his virtues, we will remain at the mercy of that overwhelming force that corrupts our freedom and drags us into sin. Thanks to his crucified Love, we are free and willing children, not slaves. We are Betharramites who have placed all our trust in the One who can save and “*know in whom we have trusted*” (2 Tim 1:12). In this trust lies our hope.

By tracing the pathway of mission of so many religious and lay people who give their lives today for the Kingdom of God, the hope of God's children will be strengthened and increased. To this meaningful commitment, I add the Church's call to walk together, a challenge we still struggle to express clearly. This challenge is the task of integrating others and rejecting all "ambition for power", or subjugation of those whom God has given us as brothers and sisters. It is a synodal journey, which is difficult because it demands self-emptying and humility.

Lastly, this Jubilee of Hope has placed us before a great need: that of returning to our first Love (cf. Rev. 2:4-5). It is a conversion that encompasses all spheres, but it begins at the personal level, in the depths of our Heart, where only God speaks to his Creature as a father to a son, as a friend to another friend, as a good master to his faithful servant. Let us take advantage of all these opportunities the Church gives us to begin anew from Christ. We have the opportunity to make this Jubilee a time of recognition of the Love of God, who has done and continues to do so much for us to love him. We know that only Jesus has words of Eternal Life.

May God bless you.

Fr. Gustavo Agín scj

Superior General

TO SHARE IN COMMUNITY:

1. How am I living this Jubilee Year? Do I perceive any change in my life, any fruit in myself or in the community?
2. What signs of hope do I recognize in today's challenging world?
3. Have we already celebrated the Jubilee of Hope as a community? Resonances of the celebration?



Dear friends, you have come as pilgrims of hope, and the Jubilee is a time of concrete hope, in which our hearts can find forgiveness and mercy, so that everything can begin anew. The Jubilee also opens up the hope of a different distribution of wealth, to the possibility that the earth belongs to everyone, because in reality this is not the case. In this year we must choose whom to serve, whether justice or injustice, whether God or money.

To hope is to choose. This means at least two things. The most obvious is that the world changes if we change. The pilgrimage is made for this reason, it is a choice. The Holy Door is crossed to enter a new time. The second meaning is deeper and more subtle: to hope is to choose because those who do not choose despair. One of the most common consequences of spiritual sadness, that is, acedia, is not choosing anything. Then those who experience it are seized by an inner laziness that is worse than death. To hope, however, is to choose.

From the General Audience, 4th October 2025

A few experiences of the Jubilee of Hope

Hope: a gift to be shared

Fr. Sebastián García scj

Community of Barracas

A few days ago, during a live stream from the Catholic University of Argentina, I was asked if hope was worth it, in the context of today's world,. I quickly replied 'no'. Because hope isn't worth it; life is worth it.

We have often confused hope with optimism, even in initial formation ongoing formation. We must return again and again to the Czech writer and playwright Václav Havel: "Hope is not the conviction that things will turn out well, but the certainty that everything has a meaning."

In this way, the Jubilee invites us to rediscover hope as a gift that God offers to his people. It is not a naive illusion or a passing consolation, but a certainty born from the heart of the Gospel: God walks with us, especially with those who bear the

cross of poverty, loneliness, or lack of land, shelter, or work.

That is why hope is incarnate: it does not remain in pretty words, but becomes a concrete gesture, shared bread, patient listening, a fraternal embrace; it is lived communally, in encounter, in the conviction that no one is saved alone; it opens us to trust that God can make all things new, even in the midst of the most terrible darkness.

Today we can share signs of hope not with distant speeches, but with closeness and tenderness. The poor have heard too many unfulfilled promises; what they await is a presence that will not abandon them. Hope is best announced with bare feet that sit beside them, with hands that offer a hot meal, a shower, a clean change of clothes, a hug, a conversation that does not

judge or discriminate, with a gaze that recognizes dignity where others see only discarded food and garbage.

It means repeating again and again that no one is condemned to remain on the streets, that God's mercy always opens new paths. And it means allowing ourselves to be evangelised by the poor, who so

often teach us to hope against all hope.

In this Jubilee, the poor remind us that hope cannot be bought or imposed: it must be shared. And when it is shared, it multiplies. And it opens up more paths to dignity and rights. ■

A Betharramite Pilgrimage in the Jubilee Year of Hope

Fr. Hiran Thomas Klinbuakaew scj

Community of Chiang Mai - Huay Tong

During this Jubilee year of Hope, I feel blessed to share my thoughts on the theme: A Betharramite Pilgrimage in the Jubilee Year of Hope. As for me, hope is more than a fleeting wish; it is the deep conviction that what we long for can genuinely come to pass, even when shadows of doubt or difficulty loom ahead.

Our beloved late Pope Francis issued the papal bull to convoke the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025, titled *Spes Non Confundit* meaning "Hope does not disappoint." This calls Christians everywhere to rekindle hope in their hearts. In a world

beset by turmoil and strife, this invitation is more vital than ever. It is precisely in these troubled times that reconciliation, forgiveness, and love become the wellspring from which our hope flows.

Consider St. Michael Garicoïts, our founder, whose youthful hope drove him to scale mountain after mountain in search of God. Though he did not find God atop those peaks, he discovered a new path: following Jesus as a priest. In this journey, he uncovered the true meaning of hope. In the same way, Jesus becomes the wellspring



of hope for all who believe in Him. This hope sparks transformation, inspiring His followers to leave behind their old ways and embrace the teachings of goodness, love, and compassion.

Hope in Bloom:

During this Holy Year, in the mountain village of Huay Tong, where Betharramite missionaries once planted seeds of faith, Christians have made hope visible through their daily lives. Their pilgrimage to Mae Pon and Muang Ngam church-

es became more than a ritual; it was a chance to rekindle their spirits and renew their faith. Through the Sacrament of Penance, they found reconciliation with God and entered a new life filled with hope.

Beyond the pilgrimage, priests and catechists brought Communion to the elderly in their homes, making God's love tangible and real. These visits reassured the elderly that they remained cherished members of the Church, offering comfort and encouragement when frailty prevented them from at-

tending. This Holy Year also saw couples with irregular marriages guided gently toward the Sacrament of Matrimony, helping them find their rightful place within the faith.

As a result, these families regained their sacred standing before God, experiencing genuine peace and wholeness in their homes. Such stories reveal that, across Vietnam and Thailand, the Betharramite congregation unites people of diverse cultures and languages

through love and mutual support, just as Jesus taught. One example is a Thai priest sent as a missionary to Vietnam, planting seeds of hope and inviting new seminarians to discover life within the Betharramite community.

When these seminarians joined the community in Thailand, they immersed themselves in the traditions of the Karen and Akha people, following in the footsteps of

earlier missionaries. Through these experiences, they witnessed firsthand how God becomes a living hope, revealed through the actions of others. Each of these moments is hope brought to life.

"Hope in God is not about waiting for a miracle, but about walking with Him to create a miracle of change in our own lives and in the lives of others." ■

The Jubilee is a gift to rekindle hope

Fr. Alberto Zaracho Barrios scj
Regional Vicar

In the Vicariate of Paraguay, we have experienced a special time of grace during this Jubilee Year, called a Time of Hope.

We have experienced it particularly through the Latin American Gathering of the Betharramites of the Fr Auguste Etchecopar Region, held at San Bernardino in July of this year, and through the Betharramite pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Miracles of Caacupé, where we passed through the Holy

Door and solemnly celebrated Holy Mass within the framework of the Holy Year.

These two Betharramite ecclesial events are signs of hope and life, inviting us to rediscover the joy of encounter and faithful following of Jesus Christ. They call us to spiritual and communal renewal, to strengthen the bonds of trust, communion, and charity between religious and lay people, with whom we share and experience



the apostolic mission. They also commit us to the transformation of the world in the light of our founding charism and the Word. Furthermore, they outline the theological, pastoral, and spiritual path we are called to follow to live in harmony with synodality. In this sense, both the religious communities and the Betharramite parishes—with their movements and apostolic groups—and the educational communities of the Vicariate located in the different dioceses of the country have participated with joy and faith in the various pilgrimages organized by the local Bishops, demonstrating a profound sense of belonging and ecclesial communion with the

Church. In this way, we bear witness to a fraternal life in community and an active communion in mission alongside the laity: a life shared and lived, cultivating the culture of humanity. We know that celebrating the Jubilee is joining Jesus' mission: to proclaim that, thanks to hope, all things are renewed in Jesus Christ. Mercy is actualized in the search for personal and communal fulfillment, through the renewal of all human relationships oriented toward the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, we are called to rediscover hope in the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel, in order to respond to the perennial

questions of humanity that emerge from the contemporary situation... questions about the meaning of life in the present and future. Indeed, Christian hope challenges us to firmly seek harmony between our consecrated life and our apostolic community projects. That is, it challenges us to examine the coherence and witness of our consecrated life:

- Is our Vicariate, community, and our apostolic projects understood and lived in the light of hope? Are we truly supportive in the family, social, educational, and pastoral spheres? Do we promote in our apostolate a culture of hope, good treatment, listening, fraternity, and mutual aid? Do we authentically foster and live the "here I am" among religious and lay people? Do we promote projects that respond with generosity and commitment to the Church's call?

These questions profoundly challenge the identity of our Betharramite vocation and impel us to transform our lives into a visible sign of hope through authentic witness. Let us remember that we are missionaries of hope, called to journey

together to be prophetic signs in a world marked by discord, hatred, and war. May the God of Hope infuse the synodal spirit in our hearts and enkindle hope in our lives, so that we may sow seeds of love, peace, joy, and hope throughout the world. ■



The Youth Jubilee: Meeting with Pope Leo

Flor, Isabel, Margherita, Mattia, Alessandra
Pistoia

Returning home after taking part in the Youth Jubilee and, in particular, having experienced the special days in the Roman district of Tor Vergata, the vigil and Holy Mass with the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, the young people of the parish of San Francesco di Pistoia, accompanied to Rome by Father Simone Panzeri and some young Betharramite lay people, offer us a precious sharing of their personal experience as “pilgrims of hope.” The young people were welcomed by the Generalate and the Roman community of the Shrine of *Santa Maria dei Miracoli*. Together they were able to experience the joy of fraternity and sharing.

«**Flor:** Being able to meet, see, and hear the Pope speak was a very moving time for me. When he arrived on the first day in Tor Vergata, on Saturday evening, I was literally overcome with emotion. We had been waiting for him for so many hours! We were immersed in a climate of general joy. Everyone was running after him to keep up, to get as close to him as

possible... And Pope Leo knew how to play the game! He didn't have bodyguards, in a situation where he would have had every right to protect himself...! It was an act of courage and trust on his part. For our part, we were able to respect him and welcome him. Obviously, we were tired, but it was worth it. These are the days that make an impression on you, and which, you know already you will think of with nostalgia, because it is a time that you dedicate to Him, to yourself and to being in relationships of true friendship. It was extraordinary to see so many young people like me, who came from all over the world, from countries where I didn't think there were Catholics. In our daily lives, we feel like we're the only ones who believe, but these days have shown us a completely different reality. And we were all wonderful. I hope all this love will stay with me for a long time.

«**Isabel:** This Youth Jubilee was a very moving event. I had never seen anything like it. Finding myself surrounded by all these enthu-



siastic young people filled me with joy and made me feel less alone. At a time when many people have prejudices about the Church, I hope our liveliness will change their minds.

«**Margherita:** What emotional days! We were welcomed with love everywhere we went. Meeting again, after the World Youth Day in Lisbon, all these young people of our own age, who had come from all over the world, armed only with a sleeping bag and hope, gave me back some confidence in the future, and a renewed will to live.

«**Mattia:** I experienced the Youth Jubilee with a heart filled with faith, hope, and fraternity. Those

were luminous days, which left an eternal mark on my soul. Seeing young people come from all corners of the Earth, united by a single love, that of Jesus, was like witnessing a miracle of unity and grace. In those moments, I felt heaven touch earth, and my heart was transformed, forever.

«**Alessandra:** In Rome, a message of hope and peace: the Youth Jubilee that moved the world.

The heartbeat of a million young people marked the hours and moments spent in Rome, at Tor Vergata, in those days of special grace and hope.

The eyes of the world stopped, al-

most in disbelief, to admire the joyful witness of so many young people from 146 countries (some of them in conflict and at war). Beyond any written theory or mathematical formula that could anticipate the attendance, the numbers, and the new developments at this Jubilee, the hours spent on the esplanade of Tor Vergata wrote a page of history that will remain forever in the hearts of many, a peace treaty that awakened consciences and hearts.

Many have wondered what drove a million young people from around the world to gather under the blazing sun and the night rain for an event that, at first glance, might have seemed simply a gathering of the few believers still in circulation.

The answer came from the concrete witness of those hours, made up of friendship, solidarity, shared words, mutual help, and shared projects.

The answer was given by the silence of a million young people before Jesus in the Eucharist during the night vigil of Saturday, August 2.

The answer was that of Pope Leo, who said: "True friendship can truly change the world. Friendship is a path to peace." There is, in fact, a perennial novelty that spans centuries and millennia and will never

cease to tire or bore: God's ability to draw everyone to Himself again and again, young and old, children and adults, in the name of true friendship, the courage of encounter, and the peace that is achieved in an embrace.

During the hours at Tor Vergata, the words "war" and "death" gave way to "gift" and "love." Perhaps, then, the world needs to start again from here, from this "silent noise" that builds community, that succeeds in shaking walls, that knows how to look to the future with hope. At Tor Vergata, we saw young people sprinting after a popemobile just to feel embraced by a Pope they already feel close to as a father. Then we saw them walking from one part of the large esplanade to another, exchanging bracelets, selfies, flags, and "free hugs," returning home still wearing the "garment of joy." "We are made this way: we are made for this," Pope Leo told young people during the concluding Mass of the Jubilee: "Not for a life in which everything is acquired and fixed, but for an existence that is constantly regenerated in giving, in love. And so we continually yearn for a 'more' that no created reality can give us; we feel an immense and burning thirst, so much so that no drink of this world can quench it."

Young people responded to this thirst with enthusiasm and without fear. They went to the source of what can truly quench their thirst; they arrived where the powerful of the world have not yet had the courage to go. Thank you, then, to this marvellous million young people who, at the end (or at the beginning of everything), beyond all predictions, whether war ends or not, have already won, because they had the courage to be peace.

The first words spoken by the Risen Christ. The last wonder of this world.



May the Lord Jesus welcome the deepest desires of these young people and fulfil in them the plan of love and a full life conceived from eternity. May this Jubilee grow seeds of hope within them. ■

Being Reborn to Hope in the Land of Jesus

Fr. Stervin scj, Fr. Gaspar scj & the novices

Holy land, as we know, is the site where took place the divine encounters between God and human person. It is here where God revealed Himself to us in the Person of Jesus Christ and performed many miracles. At the same time, it is this land which has faced various challenges over the years, significantly last 2 years. Though it was in fact a difficult, hard and a perplexed moment, "Thanks be to God" for the signs of Hope already present in Holy Land. God once again proves that he does not abandon his people (Ps 94:14).

The Church - through the jubilee year 2025 - invites everyone to be "Pilgrims of Hope". In union with the Church, our congregation directed every Betharramite to walk together as Pilgrims of Hope in this jubilee year. The carefully chosen theme of the jubilee year could be applied to all walks of life. As the Councillor for the formation, let me share with you the significance of this theme in the formation particularly in our novitiate in Holy Land. A pilgrim is someone who is on a journey; who is on a movement, and we're all on a journey. Journey is in search of



making a better experience...better God experience. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for, cherishing a desire with anticipation, expecting something with confidence.

So, "Pilgrims of Hope" means we're on that journey together, supporting each other and looking towards a brighter future. It's about finding hope within ourselves and sharing it with others. It brings to me a conviction that the theme of the year is so Betharramite. In the novitiate, we are reminded of the secret spring that must be discerned in the postulants and novices (DS § 112) in order to work wholeheartedly and to share

the same happiness with others (The Founding Text). Formation is a journey, a journey in search of renewal and of better self-knowledge. It is a journey of allowing oneself to be immersed into the ocean of God's love, of deepening one's faith, of becoming a beacon of hope for others in the "*sequela Christi*" (Formation Guide 1)

One of the aims of the Jubilee Year is to encourage everyone to live better lives...to be the joyful people and "*the aims of formation is to make the young better in order to be educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to one's*

«We, those of us who have the grace to live in the Holy Land, always live in a situation of pilgrimage because we tend to participate in the celebrations of the holy places like the Grotto of Bethlehem, Calvary, the Holy Sepulcher, Mount Tabor, the Basilica of the Annunciation... In all these places, the graces of the jubilee could be earned. During these two years of war, when visiting the holy places there was no need to queue, pilgrims were missing. This has lasted too long. We are glad

that there are already some signs, that the pilgrims make it a little more difficult for us to access the holy places. The Holy Land needs pilgrims to return. They are the ones who give life, joy, work and desire to live to many families, who during these years have not had a good time. Pilgrims are the hope for those of us who have the grace to live in the Holy Land. For pilgrims and residents, Jesus is our Hope»

R. FR. GASPAR FERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ SCJ

word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and especially to be balanced in judgement and behaviour" (PDV 43). To achieve this purpose, the St. Joseph inter-regional novitiate takes seriously the Betharramite pedagogy particularly to assist the novices to have a sincere and genuine "experience of a personal meeting with Jesus, humble and obedient as proposed by St. Michael Garicoïts" (FG 66; RL 144) and "to have a soul and heart empty of the things of the earth and filled with God" (DS § 286).

On the day of Jubilee of the Sem-

inarians, Pope Leo XIV insisted on these points saying, "Your first job, then, is to work on your interior life. Keep in mind Saint Augustine's constant invitation to return to the heart, because it is there that we will find God. [...] Without an interior life, no real spiritual life is possible, because it is in the heart that God speaks to us." ¹ He reminds us that no one is alone in this journey by saying, "each seminarian is the protagonist of his own formation [...] and is called to a journey of ongoing growth in the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral areas" (Congregation for the Clergy, *The gift of*

1) Jubilee of the seminarists, 24 June 2025

priestly vocation, § 130); but protagonists does not mean soloists! Therefore, I invite you always to cultivate communion, first of all with your seminary companions. Have complete trust in your formators, without reserve or duplicity"². Listening to this talk of Pope Leo XIV, I said to myself that he is so close to the Betharramite formation and its pedagogy insisting on the interiority and exteriority that St. Michael

talks of and the regular spiritual accompaniment that emphasized by our *Ratio Formationis*.

Having initiated the canonical year of Novitiate on 14 September 2025 and having completed a month of working with them, I was curious to know from the novices their understanding. I asked the novices to express the significance of novitiate during this jubilee year. They said:

The Jubilee is that time of grace when God calls us to return to what is essential: to rediscover the beauty of fraternity and re-establish communion with Him. It is a year when the Lord opens before us a path of conversion; a year when each of us is invited to re-examine our lives, to allow ourselves to be purified, and to ask God to guide our steps toward holiness. The Jubilee is the year of justice and peace, a year of joyful commitment in the service of God and our brothers and sisters. But above all, it is the year of encounter: a true and transforming encounter with the living Christ.

For us novices, this Jubilee is a special time. It is an opportunity to experience God's tireless love, practicing to live in humility and obedience, in the footsteps of our founder, Saint Michael Garicoits. He transmitted to us this burning desire: to seek from the source of the Heart of Jesus the strength to love and hope. Yes, the Jubilee is that door that opens onto a hope that never disappoints, never deceives, and never confuses. Carried by this grace, we, as novices, want to offer to others the treasure we receive: the love of Christ. This is what we try to experience with the children of Niños Dios - these disabled children who so need tenderness and

2) Speech by Pope Leo XIV to the seminarians of the Diocese of Triveneto, Wednesday 25 June 2025



The six novices of the Interregional Novitiate of Saint Joseph 2025/2026 in the Holy Land: (from left to right)
 above: Br. Van Khoat TRUONG scj (Vietnam), Br. René Salomon ASSI scj (Ivory Coast),
 Br. Kouakou Marcel Xavier OUFFOUE scj (Ivory Coast);
 below: Br. Francis Boris BAZIRA SAMBA scj (Central Africa), Br. Hitler MARAK scj (India),
 Br. Worachok CHEAHAE scj (Thailand)

presence, and with the children of the crèche - orphans who await a loving gaze and a fraternal hand. Thus, in this Jubilee year, we choose to walk with hope, giving ourselves unre-

servedly to these little ones who are the very face of Christ. For in loving them, we discover true love, the love that comes from God and leads to perfect joy”.

Indeed, It's joy to see that the novices are well prepared and focused to encounter Jesus, humble and obedient, who gives the strength and the joy to communicate the Gospel to everyone. Thanks to the formators of the different vicariate who

meticulously prepared them to enter to this stage of life. May this Jubilee Year push us to move forward, with a heart open to God's surprises. It means trusting that the One who called us will continue to lead. ■

- From 23 October to 23 November, the Superior General, Fr. Eduardo Gustavo Agín SCJ, will travel to the Holy Land to visit the religious in Bethlehem and Nazareth, who depend directly on the Superior General and his Council.



- At a meeting on 23 September, the Superior General with his Council took the following decisions:

Region of Saint Michael Garicoïts

- Approval of the **Closure of the Colico community** (Vicariate of Italy), Article 206/f of the RL., and authorisation, in accordance with Articles 205/t and 295 of the RL., to put immovable property located in the same town up for sale.



After many years of presence, the Fathers left the community of Colico on 1st October. The pastoral area of Colico wanted to accompany this passage with two days of profound gratitude, memory and prayer.

Region of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar

- The Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay was granted **authorization for an act of extraordinary administration**, in accordance with articles 205/t & 295 of the RL, in order to cover the expenses deriving from the closure of the “Colegio y Liceo de la Inmaculada Concepción” of Montevideo.



In memoriam...

On Saturday, October 11, **Fr Ennio Bianchi SCJ** returned to the Father's House. Fr Ennio was 85 years of age and 68 years of religious life. He was a member of the community of Lisone-Castellazzo (Vicariate of Italy).

We express our sympathy to his family and to the members of the Vicariate of Italy. We entrust Fr Ennio to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that He may welcome him with the Betharram of Heaven.



Central Africa |

On Saturday, October 11, in Ngabula, **Mrs. Madeleine Mondong**, mother of Fr. Narcisse Zaolo scj, of the community of Bouar, returned to the Father's

house. She was 70 years old. May the merciful Lord welcome her into his home and make her share in the joy he gives to his friends.

The Journey to South America ^(1/3)

3 November 1891 – 27 May 1892

This journey was one of the most important in Father Etchecopar's life. For the first time, a Superior General visited the Betharramite communities and projects in Argentina and Uruguay, founded at the time of Saint Michael.

A VISIT PREPARED FROM AFAR

For a European, Argentina is a very distant country. But that was not the case for Father Etchécopar. Argentina was a land particularly dear to him. It was to that country that his brothers Evariste, Maxime, and Séverin had emigrated. Times were hard, and many Basques left for South America, in search of work and a way to support their families back home. Auguste too was drawn to that great land. *"Sometimes it seems to me that I am called to follow you to those distant shores..."* he wrote to Evariste,¹ his elder brother who had left a few years earlier for Bolivia before settling in

Tucumán, in northwestern Argentina.

We know that Auguste ultimately chose another path; to devote himself entirely to the service of God and the Church. *"I believe I was born for this. And at this moment, they would have to roll me down to the depths of the Cordillera ravines before persuading me otherwise. I leave to Jean-Baptiste, dear brother and friend of virtue, the mission of sharing your labours."*² Jean-Baptiste also left for America but chose instead to settle in North America, first in Mexico, then in California; the Etchecopar family would never hear from him again.

At the beginning of 1855, the other two brothers, Maxime and Séverin, joined Evariste in Tucumán: *"These two sons are hardworking and obedient; they will always show you the submission and respect that good sons owe to a beloved father. They will obey you in everything, convinced that you will*

1) Letter of 26 October 1842.

2) Letter to Evariste, 27 April 1849.



Fr. Auguste (left) and one of his brothers, Maxime Etchecopar, who emigrated to Argentina.

guide them well in all things."³ Father Auguste followed his brothers from afar, especially the two younger ones, keeping in touch through letters and advice. He even left Séverin a small notebook full of spiritual guidance, preserved today in the archives of Rome.⁴

When Father Etchecopar became Superior General (1874), America was no longer just a pious wish but a religious duty. Since 1856, three Bétharramite

communities had been founded in that beloved and distant land, and according to the Constitutions, they had to be visited regularly: the chapel of St John Baptist Church in central Buenos Aires, the St Joseph College in the same city, and the Basque Church of Montevideo with its Immaculate Conception College.

He therefore thought about travelling to South America, but time and his health did not allow it. He followed the

3) *Letter to Evariste, November 7, 1854.*

4) *When they left for Argentina, Séverin was 17 and Maxime only 14. Evariste died in 1869 without children. Shortly afterward, in 1871, Séverin suffered the same fate. It was Maxime who gave the Etchecopar family its numerous American descendants: he was the father of 8 children and the grandfather of at least 35 grandchildren—and countless great-grandchildren.*

projects, dedication, and the successes of the Bétharramites there from afar, through correspondence:

*"Since I cannot come to see you myself and hold you close to my heart, beloved sons, I am sending you all my thanks, my wishes, and my hopes. My thanks for all you have done over these 20 years, for being the true sons of Father Garicoïts, the honour of the Congregation, devoted helpers of our Lords the Archbishops and Bishops of America, who are so full of praise for you. My wishes and hopes are that you persevere and show yourselves to be ever more true religious men, through the observance of the vows and rules."*⁵

In 1885, it was his assistant, Father Victor Bourdenne, who first made the canonical visit to Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Then the time finally came for Father Auguste to take this great step himself. It was 1891. From Bethlehem, where he was at the

beginning of the year, he informed his brother Maxime⁶ and Father Magendie, his delegate superior for America,⁷ of his plans. During the year, those plans took shape. By mid-August, everything was decided⁸.

THE OCEAN CROSSING

The departure was set for the first days of November. On the 3th November, he left Betharram, and on the 5th, at four in the afternoon, he boarded the *Portugal* in Bordeaux. He was accompanied by Father Romain Bourdenne and three young postulants who were to begin their novitiate in Buenos Aires.⁹

For the outward journey, we have a long and detailed correspondence from Father Etchécopar¹⁰ and a kind of logbook that he himself titled: *"Little Words from the Heart Aboard the Portugal."*

On the 8th November, the *Portugal* stopped in Lisbon. *"The morning*

5) Letter to the religious in America, 1 November 1876.

6) Letter of 22 February 1891.

7) Letter of 17 March 1891.

8) Letter to Father Magendie, 16 August 1891: *"My health holds, and I keep working; if the good Lord deigns to preserve my strength, I shall embark on the 5th November. I am quite resolved to do so."*

9) To avoid the obligations of French military service, the General Chapter of 1890 had decided to open a novitiate at San José College in Buenos Aires.

10) Father Auguste's long and detailed letters were read aloud during the meals at the Bétharram community; indeed, the Rule required that meals be taken in silence, while a religious read spiritual or edifying texts. At certain times, young priests used these occasions to practise giving sermons or homilies.

passed quickly as we contemplated this city, seated like a queen upon her seven hills..." He celebrated mass in his cabin. At four in the afternoon, the ship set sail toward Africa.

On the night of the 12th November, the ship entered the port of Dakar. While several passengers went ashore to visit the city, Father Etchecopar remained on board; he had received letters from France and America to which he had to reply.¹¹ In the afternoon of the 13th November, the *Portugal* departed once again.

On Sunday, the 15th November, Father Augustewasinvitedbytheship'scaptain to celebrate Sunday mass on the main deck. In his fascinating and somewhat romanticstyle, he wrote: *"This morning, at the cry of my unworthy lips and poor heart, the Trinity descended into our ship, amid the vastness of the waves, and the sacred body of Jesus Christ appeared among his children, floating in the desert of the ocean like a sure guide, like an ark of the covenant, like the harbour of salvation..."*

During this nearly month-long voyage, with about 600 people aboard—passengers and crew alike—encounters were inevitable. A Brazilian

lawyer, a former Jesuit student, praised his great country and the faith of his compatriots. A Holy Ghost Father, parish priest in Dakar, told him colourful stories about missionaries and monkeys... A distinguished Argentine gentleman, Castillo, was bringing back to Argentina his two sons who had studied at the Bétharram College. An engineer spoke to him of his studies and his knowledge of the ecclesiastical world. Abbé Duclos, who had been the right-hand man of the founder of the Sisters of Anglet (Father Cestac), was travelling as a missionary to Montevideo. And there were other religious passengers, as well as the Belgian consul to Buenos Aires...

On the 21st November, the ship reached Rio de Janeiro, and on the 28th it arrived at Montevideo. However, the Argentine government imposed quarantine on all ships that had stopped in Brazil. On the 29th November, the *Portugal* dropped anchor off the island of Martín García, in the estuary of the Río de la Plata. They remained there motionless for five days. Finally, after the quarantine ended, on the 3rd December, the ship entered the port of Buenos Aires. ■

11) Father Paillas sent him a book; Father Mouthes, a telegram of good wishes from Igon. From America, Father Magendie informed him that preparations were being made in Buenos Aires for his arrival.

“ We must never have greater hope than when all seems lost. It is then we should redouble in fervour for the accomplishment of the Will of God. Even if you see someone throw himself into the river, never say, ‘There goes one who is lost forever’. There is a long way from the bridge to the River. ”

(Saint Michael Garicoïts, DS § 36)



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