

News bulletin of the  
Congregation of the  
Sacred Heart of Jesus  
of Betharram

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## Michael Garicoits, God's shepherd (4)

Bayonne. The new problem over fees was resolved by the parish priest of Saint Palais. Michael would work in the bishop's palace so as to be enrolled in the school course of St Leon. At Bayonne just as at Saint Palais, Michael made many friends through his kindness, respect and hard work.

Then he had to take the course in philosophy at Aire; and eventually theology at the major seminary of Dax. Some time before the end of his own studies, they sent him as an invigilator and teacher to the junior seminary of Larressore. He completed his studies by earning his priestly spurs. Look at this young teacher: invigilating in the Hall of studies... Brrr... he was strict in the study, but in recreation he was quite different: a friend to all, goodness itself, carrying three infants on his shoulders like Hercules, with 10 others at his heels; consoling one, teasing another, encouraging a third.

On the 20th December 1823: Michael was ordained a priest.

(to be continued)

## Schedule of the General Council

11<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> May

Fr. Gaspar Fernandez to  
Betharram (meeting with the  
ex-students of Bel Sito) and  
to Fuenterrabia



**Resurrexit  
sicut dixit!**

**A happy Easter time  
to our readers!**

IN MEMORIAM

On April 5th, during the celebration of the Last Supper of the Lord, **Br Arnaud Ampo** (1914-2007) passed away peacefully and returned to the Father. He is now sharing with the Son in the joy of the Kingdom. (cf. next issue)



# Family News

News bulletin of the Congregation of the  
Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram



## A word from the Superior General

On the 13th of  
April 1897,  
Fr. Auguste  
Etchecopar joined  
Betharram in  
heaven. 110 years  
later, St Michael's  
successor is still a  
relevant figure...

## The road of Fr. Auguste Etchecopar's vocation

Among all the first letters that we have of Fr Etchecopar, he recalls the development of his vocation to his brother Evariste who went to Argentina in search of a new life. This is how we have come to know the path of his vocation. Personally this account always impresses and moves me.

He was eight when he tells us about the first intimations of a vocation: *I am asking God continually to direct me towards my vocation; if he listens to my desires, I will be consecrated to the ministry of the altar* (Correspondence of Fr. Etchecopar, letter 1). Already he had established a fine distinction between what he wanted and what would be the will of God.

When he was scarcely twelve, he made us aware of two possibilities: *Sometimes it seems to me that I am called to follow you on those distant shores where nature seems so different. At other times it seems that God destines to me to sing his praises and be among his ministers* (Letter 2).

At 17 he went beyond the alternative of seeking a fortune in Argentina and remaining in France to be a priest. He had a clear view. He chose it with conviction and was sure that *God, dear brother, had desired otherwise. In his Providence and his wisdom, he calls me irresistibly to his service* (Letter 3).

His vocation became certain. I believe that I am called to that (Letter 6). He was convinced that God loved him, that he was chosen by him, and that he was asking him to become detached from certain things, that he was asking

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**105<sup>th</sup> year, n. 15**

**14<sup>th</sup> april 2007**



him to devote himself entirely to God and to his call, to the praise of God, the celebration of the sacraments, to preaching. By that he required his collaboration for the salvation of men, his intercession for all, especially for the members of his family. *I reserve to myself to pray for you, to do something for the salvation of your souls, and I'm proud of my mission* (Letter 4).

He conveyed his experience of discernment between what he wanted and what God wanted. He was aware of the obstacles and forces against his vocation. He considered what he had given up by responding positively to the Lord; this would create his true worth. He was grateful to Him who had chosen him to live very closely in his friendship. He also saw this special choice by God when he noted and singled out by the Bishop of Bayonne: he dispensed him from some years of formation in the seminary to teach mathematics at Saint Palais; he directed him towards the priests of the Society of the Holy Cross at Oloron to give him experience one year before his ordination.

When he recounts how he lived his commitment to a life of celibacy undertaken since his subdiaconate, he gives proof of great enthusiasm and assurance. He conveys his happiness, joy, conviction and human equilibrium. *Dear brother, the Lord has spoken and in spite of my wretchedness... I hasten towards my Lord, I have given him everything, my heart, my soul and my body... Oh! What happiness! Oh! What joy! If only the world could understand these feelings!* (Letter 6). He was 22.

A  
communion  
with God  
which  
extends to  
all areas  
of life

Quite evidently he conveys to us the importance of prayer in order to understand and to choose his vocation, but one understands that the experience of the call overflows beyond times of prayer when it requires clear vision and determination in making a decision. He bears witness to communion with God which extends to all areas of his life. *You know already for a long time from my letters and those of our beloved father that I felt myself called to the priesthood. For a long time I have been urged to give to God without holding on to anything and without any conditions*

## Michael Garicoits, God's shepherd (4)



**Towards priesthood  
as a student and  
servant**

"What's going to become of us, Michael, if you leave us to study for the priesthood? The farm needs strong arms to provide for the family." "I want to be a priest, mother! "God is calling me. Can I say no?"

He was upset to impose such a sacrifice on those he loved dearly. But Michael never hesitated in responding to God, not in the face of sadness or of difficulty. But God helped him. His grandmother found a solution for him to go to college without paying fees. He would work for Fr Borda, the parish priest, earning his bed and board in wielding the broom, the duster, the dish cloth and shopping basket. He would look after the horse, wash up and serve at table.

But what about his studies? Well, he would go like the others to the College, and do his domestic work between the classes, at times when the others were playing, learning the lessons and doing their homework. Lessons and homework were done at night and very often in place of sleep. He had quite a difficulty, this little peasant boy only spoke Basque! French was quite different and so was Latin! Besides this, he was 15 and his companions were 11. It was enough to pull one's hair out!

Fortunately God found him on his way to college a true friend. Evariste was only 10, but he was advanced in both his studies and in his friendship with God. It was he, during the evenings, at the presbytery explained and unlocked the unfamiliar structures of Latin, for Michael a revelation! He began to understand! From then onwards he sped through his studies like an arrow.

In three years Michael had learnt everything the College could teach him. Now he must continue his studies in

Continuation of  
the little story of  
St Michael.

The priesthood  
is always closer  
while the tale is  
speeding up.

Many thanks to  
the author, Rose  
Dardennes,  
published in  
1967 in the  
*Fripounet*  
magazine!



2007

A P R I L

16	Happy birthday	Fr. Chanchai Temaroonrung
17	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Mario Sosa
18	55 anos de profissão, felicitações	P. Joachim Soares Moreira
19	Feliz aniversario	P. José Antonio da Silva
20	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Gaspar Fernández P. José Rovegno
21	Buon compleanno	P. Pietro Villa
23	Buon compleanno	F. Simone Panzeri

M A Y

2	Happy birthday	Br. Thinakorn Damrongusasin
3	Buon compleanno 10 años de sacerdocio, enhorabuenas	P. Ernesto Colli P. Roberto Amarilla
4	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Elie Kurzum
5	Buon compleanno 5 years of profession, congratulations !	P. Antonio Canavesi Br Anthony Livin Fernando Br Arul Gnana Prakash Br Xavier Abraham Irudayaraj Br G. Varghese Korandakkatte Br Wilfred Poulouse Perepadan Br John Peter Sundar Raj
7	Happy birthday	Br. Jose Kumar Johnrose
8	Happy birthday	Br. Peter Krtisada Songsi
10	Feliz aniversario Buon compleanno Happy birthday Joyeux anniversaire	P. José Mirande P. Guido Pradella Br. Shaju Kalappurackal F. Arnaud Richard
12	Feliz cumpleaños Joyeux anniversaire	P. Domingo Miner P. Pierre Leborgne
13	Feliz cumpleaños	H. Guido Eugenio Garcia
14	Joyeux anniversaire Buon compleanno	P. Paul Baradat P. Antonio Riva
16	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Juan Antonio Morales

concerning this way of life that I have received from his merciful goodness, I have waited in silence for this loving voice of my God to make itself heard clearly which has spoken to me for so long in the secret of my heart; for despite all my presentiments, my irresistible leanings, the needs of my soul, in spite of my hope, never would I have dared by myself to take on the role of being the intimate friend of God, the depositary of his powers, his representative and his minister to people, his torch and his representation and model proposed to the faithful of the Holy Church (Letter 6).

His brother Evariste was a witness and confidant of the joy which overwhelmed him when he was a teacher, before his ordination, since his diaconate at 23 and the priesthood at 24, whereas he expresses his anxiety over the preparation of his homilies. The call of Fr Etchecopar didn't end on the day of his ordination. He concerned himself in studying how to live his priestly life and his religious consecration throughout his life. His witness helps us to call to mind the road of our vocation, urging us to live with always more devotion our identification with Christ.



Gaspar Fernandez Perez, SCJ

*Fr Etchecopar writes...*

to his brother Evariste, 17 April 1849

*Your heart loves uprightness and justice. In your opinion virtue is the balance on which mankind is to be weight up. God granted you an indomitable courage which, thanks to his grace, triumphed more than once over despair.*

*This, dear Brother, makes one strong; by this one places all his confidence solely in God and does well; the reason is simple. "If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labour" (Ps 127,1). Without the powerful arm of God man's work dies just as it starts.*

*You will come back to us some day! When the Lord wants it for his glory. Ah! When this glorious day will be shining, whom will you find in me, whom will you embrace? A priest, I hope, a minister of the king of heaven and earth. I believe that I was born for that. And for the time being one would make me throw myself off the edge of the Cordillera rather than persuade me of the contrary.*



Raul Cossio and Jorge Paez de la Torre have recently come to Rome for a few days. They come from Tucuman in Argentina, and are descendants of Maxime, Auguste Etchecopar's brother. They are turning a few pages of the family album...

### *The fama sanctitatis of Fr. Etchecopar*

### Argentine tales

My grandmother on my father's side, Lastenia Etchecopar Molina, was proud of the pieces of advice on matrimonial life which Fr. Augusto gave to her, short before her wedding, in a letter in Spanish. My father used to have a portrait of Fr. Auguste on the bedside table and in his study, near to a picture of St Michael Garicoits. He would often quote Fr Etchecopar and speak of him as a saint.

I had forgotten all this when I read in 1996 in a weekly religious newspaper that the Virgin of Betharram was worshiped at the San Roque Church of Santiago del Estero. As I made one day a stop in this town, I took the opportunity to visit the church where there was the Virgin dear to Fr. Etchecopar. We met there Fr. Eleuterio Cabrero who knew quite well his life... My wife started to take an interest in the Servant of God and met Marco Avellaneda who was trying to commemorate the centenary of the death of Fr. Augusto. From then on, I have been trying to spread his reputation of sanctity. His image is in the hands of all my friends and colleagues who do not hesitate to invoke him.

I can bear witness of two graces, among others, received from Fr. Etchecopar: Pablo Carriza was travelling in the middle of the desert with his little son when his car broke down, at the peak of the heat. In desperation, just as he was about to start walking, with his child in his arms, and call for help he picked out the image of Fr. Etchecopar and invoked him. Then help arrived.

A few years ago Claudia, my sister-in-law, came to settle down in Spain. But she hardly could integrate into the country. My wife proposed to her to pray Fr. Etchecopar at the same hour, before the Blessed Sacrament. Claudia had just started when a lady came to her asking why she was wiping. The lady invited her home and introduced her to

support a Providential project for an aids centre in Bouar in the Republic of Central Africa.

*In view of these daily contact with patients, with the personal care, with the volunteers... what challenges can you see for religious life?* - Certainly to work in the house of the family with people with AIDS is a different way of translating the programme of the Sacred Heart in becoming "a flying squad" of priests in the church as Saint Michael wanted: "selected soldiers ready to go at the first signal of their superiors wherever they were called, particularly to the most difficult ministries and those which others do not wish to do." (DS p. 43) And certainly this is the particular view of the Italian Province concerning this project. In effect it seems to us a very practical application of the rule of life. "To have a heart for the poor, we must adopt a particular interest with the world of the poor, accepting to let ourselves be summoned and also to bring the gospel to them." (RofL 43). I believe the Family House through those with AIDS will stand as a sign of what that availability is, which the congregation has promised to the church and to the world. "Let us make the options of the church in favour of the poorest, by assigning in certain cases the creation of a community that totally shares the life with the poor." Statute 22.

*Finally, what is your greatest joy and your dearest wish for your mission?* - My greatest joy is certainly that of living in an enlarged community. I am convinced that the need and the greatest wish even for a religious is that of feeling oneself belonging to a family, living in a house with one's own loved ones, to rejoice and to suffer with those one loves. We have defined Villa del Pino as a family house, capable indeed of supplying a service but raising it to a personal social health service. It is my greatest desire that this model becomes an institution in the sense of obtaining official recognition from the State and becomes a sign in the church in the context of religious life.







Fr Mario Longoni is responsible for the Villa del Pino, a house opened 15 years ago on the hills of Rome. Today 5 religious, 13 workers and more than 30 volunteers live side by side with 10 aids patients. But let us listen to him...

## 5 MINUTES WITH... Fr. Mario Longoni

**Nef - How did you come to work with people on the margins of society?** - On the day of my first mass I met some companions from my school days who had become drug addicts who asked me to help them and with them I joined a community of rehabilitation in Milan and worked there for three years. I could have stayed and become responsible for it but I preferred to approach my own companions since the Providence was considering opening a community to share with the poor. When the decision was gradually made, we found ourselves confronted by the drama of AIDS and had assigned the Villa del Pino for it, to become a family house linked with a religious community.

**Who are the patients welcomed at Villa del Pino?** - There are normally four patients who need total care and besides them another four who need partial care which requires less help and finally two patients able to look after themselves and at present can stay at home but are unable to work, have financial problems, and cannot be placed in suitable work or accommodation. We offer help and support to another three extern patients that have been referred to our house. The Villa del Pino is in the course of transition and re-organisation from giving basic assistance to those who can't look after themselves, limited help to those who are partially able and guidance to those who are capable of looking after themselves in their daily needs.

**What are the prospects for the house in future months?** - Developments in support and new projects require by necessity a change in role, function and tasks of the priests and workers which inevitably will require adaptation to achieve this kind of support. There are some categories of people with AIDS who are still helped; for example foreigners, those in prison. For that reason the Providence in collaboration with the Association *Il Mosaico* intends to acquire premises to realise these projects and be able to assist them properly. The Association *Il Mosaico* will also

another lady who was the wife of the director of the greatest Spanish company of green areas. My sister-in-law, trained as a landscape architect, got hired by this company where she is still working. Convinced that Fr. Etchecopar helped her, Claudia continually gives thanks to the Servant of God and makes his sanctity known.

## Focus on the postulation

The cause of Fr. Etchecopar is in progress. Lately, research into the Archives of Betharram and the Archives of the Departement in Pau allowed to find about thirty letters in addition to the 1941 letters listed until now. Moreover when I was in France, I could analyse several *animadversiones* (critical comments) raised in the past. A big deal of the work will consist now in studying the huge amount of writings of the 2nd founder of the Institute, in particular his correspondence, in which new arguments can be found for the cause.

(Roberto Cornara, archivist of the Congregation)

## Betharram accross the Channel

## Visit to England

It was my first time in England. I found there a different society from the one I expected. Prejudices are bad! It seems in the end that globalisation makes us always more similar one to another.

I found that the Catholic Church is meaningfully present within the society. I could see lively parish communities, proposing many activities and still paying attention to meeting time which strengthens communion: after the Sunday mass, and even during the week, parishioners can come and gather around a cup of tea. In our parish of Olton, I was impressed by the number of mass participants every morning, adults of course. At the same time, I was impressed by the presence of young people at the celebrations.

**Vitality of the Church**

Father Dominic made me note the missionary dynamism resulting from the presence of emigrants from all over the world. I could read in some newspaper that the Catholic Church was about to be in the majority in Great Britain because of the presence of the Poles, of people from Asia and Africa.

Close collaboration and good understanding with the Anglican Church are commendable. The Anglicans have taken benefit from the renewal of the Catholic Church. On the other hand, the Catholic Church does not consider favourably the ordination of women, and experiences an influx of Anglicans who are hurt by the positions of their Church.

#### Solidity of Catholic education

There is something in particular which impressed me and made me envious, when I think of all the efforts we have to make in other places, especially in Latin America: the solidity of Catholic education. It has a meaningful presence within the society. It is known for its reliability, responsibility, and devotion to the human growth of the children and young. It is in great demand by the parents for their children. It has a real Catholic identity and it promotes it. It proposes to the children an initiation to prayer, to the sacraments, to the Christian virtues. It is ecumenical. It welcomes children from other confessions and religions, with the condition that the parents accept the Catholic identity of the educative project and its implementation. It is based on modern pedagogical resources - both material and technical. The teachers work in the framework of the educative project to which they have adhered and for which they have been hired. The State provides funds, not only for the teachers' salaries but also for the maintenance of the buildings and the teaching equipment.

When I was in Olton, at the end of a week, the bishop of Birmingham was making his pastoral visit. He told me about the Catholic schools of his diocese that they are true centres of evangelisation, very much attentive to its pastoral projects. Yet, the State threatens to cut the funds to the colleges which oppose the forms of couples which are

him, he reached several regions of Italy, Latin America, Africa, even the border areas of terminally ill aids patients.

As a confessor and spiritual guide, he made a lasting impression on many people, including lay people. And even if in the last years, he had the feeling of being a "lazybones", as he used to say, he has made a huge work through prayer: "I pray so that you do well". Besides, Fr Alessandro was a chaplain, and he cared very much for the hosts of the retirement house *Pia Roscio*. But the most genuine pilgrimage of Fr. Alessandro happened in his inner life which was characterised by four main features:

- **gentleness**: he used to handle people with kindness. Lately, at the hospital, he was continually saying: *Be kind... Be kind...* These words say how much Fr. Alessandro respected the others, so much that he would think of the others before thinking of himself.

- **smiling and welcoming**: he always welcomed people with a smile; he never closed his door to anyone. Father Alessandro was content, pleased with the gift of the vocation for which he always gave thanks to the Lord.

- **simplicity**.

There is a gold thread which has weaved his life, and drawn a pattern: the Incarnation. This is how the Oriental tradition considers the Annunciation: the Angel, in front of Mary with open arms, holding a ball in her right hand; from that ball, the blood red thread reaches the womb of the Virgin in order to *weave* the Son of God, Eternal and Divine life. Moved by his profound desire to respond to the call to sanctity, even in the humility of his being and his experience, Fr. Alessandro has tried to follow in the footsteps of the Mystery of a God who becomes man so that we can be similar to Him, and who is called Jesus saying « Father here I am », of the Mystery of eternal, tender, merciful and faithful Love, inherited from saint Michael Garicoits: To be Saint. The fact is that Fr Alessandro had a very high ideal of life...



**Mary said:**  
*"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; May it be done to me according to your word"*  
(Lk 1,38)

LET US PRAY  
ALSO FOR

**Mr. Robert Roussille** of the Betharramite lay group, who died on March 29th in St-André de Cubzac (France)

**Mrs Hebe**, mother of our Brothers Sebastian and Guido Garcia, who died on March 29th in Buenos Aires (Argentina)

## IN MEMORIAM

## Italy

Just as we are sure that Our Lady of Betharram, whom he deeply worshiped and loved, has welcomed him in the House of the Father, and with the Son Jesus, reached him the little branch, sign of the full and eternal life which he hoped and which he can now enjoy to the full.

Graziano  
Sala,SCJ

## Fr. Alessandro del Grande (1914-2007)

At the dawn of the 25th of March, the pilgrimage of Fr. Alessandro del Grande in this world came to an end. Hospitalized for a stomach tumour, he peacefully passed away surrounded by members of the community of Albavilla. Born on February 3rd 1914, Fr. Alessandro was one of the first young sent to Spain (Mendelu), then to France (Betharram, Balarin where he pronounced his first vows in 1932). He studied theology in Bethlehem, where he was ordained a priest in July 1938.

Fr. Alessandro was an important figure of Betharram in Italy: he was related to the very beginnings of Betharram in Italy and its organisation into a Viceprovince in the 50ies. Above all, Fr. Alessandro trained several generations of Betharramites. He started with the service of formation as the master of novices in Albiate in 1948, then in Monteporzio, and finally at the minor seminary of Albavilla for which he was responsible for over 40 years. It is there that his journey came to an end, in the past ten years, at the Saint Michael House where he could see with regret that there was no relief of young in formation. His funeral took place in the church of Albavilla on March 27th, the day after the Annunciation. (P. Graziano Sala, Superior provincial)

by  
Pietro Villa,SCJ

Let us let the Lord act. Father Alessandro often said this. Even when he was asked about his feelings before the empty seminary, he would answer: "Let us let the Lord act". Words of faith, not of disengagement. On the contrary it was the expression of his total availability and his abandonment to God who guides everything by his loving hand. Like the patriarch Abraham, fortified by his faith, he went to Betharram at 10 to study... In 1938, he came back to Italy from Holy Land as a newly ordained priest.

His journey as a founder started with nothing, from Colico to Albiate, Monteporzio, finally Albavilla. He settled down there, even though, through the numerous priests trained by

different from marriage-free union of a man and a woman—which the Parliament wants to get approved and which the Church cannot accept as such. The bishop told me also that the Church in England does not have to face the same attacks as in Spain or Italy, for she has never had the same power as she once had in those countries. Finally, he made me a confidence which filled me with hope: there are vocations in the diocese, enough to cover the needs.

Betharram in England is a *small flock*. There are 14 religious, including 6 brothers. There are all involved in pastoral activities in the diocese of Birmingham, except Fr. Box, retired in Hants Po, in the South. They run five parishes, including a pastoral accompaniment of the Catholic schools of their areas. They all live seriously their vocation, including the Brothers who are very much involved in pastoral activities, and even offer spiritual guidance.

I was happy enough to take part in the gathering of all the religious at Nympsfield. They all arrive around 5 pm. Someone accompanies and guides them for a time of spirituality which results in a sharing of experiences of faith and mission. On the day after, there is another meaningful moment about spirituality and they celebrate together the Eucharist. After lunch, each one goes back to his mission place. This has nothing to do with a work session, I assure you, but rather an experience of communion. A time for meeting and sharing about our life of consecrated persons. These meetings have brought life to the Betharramites of England. The pastoral for the youth and the vocation promotion are the great challenges for our Brethren of England. They are ready to organise it seriously, with the help of three scholastics from India who are going to study theology and continue their Betharramite formation in Olton. England has always given vocations for Betharram, and will continue to do so. This is in what we trust.

Reality,  
fraternity and  
hopes of  
Betharram in  
England

Gaspar Fernandez Perez,SCJ





St Michael  
Region

**Land of Incarnation** ■ In Bethlehem, the 4 novices from Africa and the master of novices have very busy days: course on religious life, the story of Betharram, meditation personal research, manual work, prayer time and celebrations, pastoral experiences, visits to the holy places... "In community, did they write, the atmosphere is fraternal, marked with simplicity, cordial respect and constructive sharing." Betharramites in visit have imparted their experience of faith and apostolate to the juniors... So, each one has plenty to *incarnate* their vocation.

### Province of France Delegation of Ivory Coast

**"Jubilate, servite Deo"** ■ In Adiapodoumé, on April 14<sup>th</sup>, Mgr Laurent Mandjo ordains deacons Bakary Barnabé Khéhéléfopé and Braga Latta Serge. Congratulations to our brothers!



Fr Etcheopar  
Region

**An American breeding-ground** ■ The students of the regional novitiate of Adrogué (in the outskirts of Buenos Aires) are all gathered. Three brothers in the 1st year have arrived to join Osmar, novice in the 2nd year (three compatriots from Paraguay: Rolando, Victor and Raul), and five Brazilians (Glecimar, Davi, Eudes, Wagner and Rodrigo). Gathered for a time of adaptation by the master of novices, they will be starting their canonical year around the feast of the Sacred Heart... A well-chosen day for a good vintage of Betharramite applicants!



Blessed  
Miriam Region

### Province of England Delegation of India

**Human chain** ■ On the 10th of April, Fr. Enrico Frigerio took over Fr. José Mirande in the study houses of India. During his stay, he will visit the communities, provide spiritual teachings and help our Brothers Stervin, Enakius, Valan and Subesh to prepare themselves to their perpetual vows: this is a further example of solidarity towards the young Delegation affected by the death, last autumn, of her first superior and the first Betharramite father from India, Fr. Xavier Ponthokkan.

### Vice-province of Thailand

**Father, here I am!** ■ On 29th May, Gabriel Phornchai Sukjai will pronounce his perpetual vows in the hands of the Superior general. On this occasion, St Michael will be celebrated in Chiang Mai, with two weeks delay... but a life-long lasting "here I am". Let us be united in prayer for our young brother.

## Fr. Anselmo Ghezzi (1924-2007)

### IN MEMORIAM

Italy

On March 24<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Anselmo Ghezzi returned to the house of the Father. In fragile health, he had asked two years ago to live with his family. His funeral took place on March 26<sup>th</sup> in Lesmo, near to Milan.

Fr. Anselmo belonged to the first generation of Betharramites who have grown up with the first steps of Betharram in Italy and the beginning of the Vice Province. Born in Lesmo, region of Milan, in 1924, his Betharramite adventure started in 1937 in Colico where the small group of Betharramites had opened a school. He pronounced his first vows in Rome in 1942 and was ordained a priest in 1948.

The experience of Fr. Anselmo developed in two communities: Colico and Monteporzio. Invited in Colico after his priestly ordination in 1948, he remained there, for a first time, until 1953. As a matter of fact, he came back two other times to Colico: from 1958 to 1962, and from 1967 to 1973. He lived in Monteporzio from 1953 to 1958, from 1962 to 1967, and finally, from 1973 until the end of his life.

His family background led him to develop a great passion for woodwork to which he dedicated himself (as a "hobby"), by building even valuable pieces of furniture. In his opinion, he could find in this activity many opportunities for his "apostolate", since it made him meet various persons, believers or not, who turned to him for different kinds of work.

He loved singing. We remember him in Monteporzio, then study house, in occasion of the feast of St Michael: he could not but sing the words of the hymn "*Ove nel bel ciel*"... It was a question, if I dare say so, of *life or death*!

Certainly, Fr. Anselmo was not an "easy" fellow. Often in a prickly mood, he looked like as if he had something against everyone and everything. But if you would come to him with simplicity, he would give the best of himself, strike up constructive relationships and let large smiles light up his face... And this is how we want to remember him: with a smile which, for sure, will never leave his face.

