

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

Generalate House  
via Angelo Brunetti, 27  
00186 Rome (Italy)

Telephone  
00 39 06 320 70 96  
Fax  
00 39 06 36 00 03 09  
E-mail  
nef@betharram.fr

Visit us on our website  
www.betharram.org

## The approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart

The Constitutions of 1870 were not perfect but they offered a solid base for religious life. After seven long years of agitation and doubt, they seemed to every one concerned like a miracle from Heaven, and a definite sign of the powerful protection of their saintly Founder.

In such troubled times, what part did Father Auguste Etchecopar play? The very soul of discretion, he became very important. Together with the very Reverend Father Chirou, and increasingly, although the latter was still under a cloud of suspicion, he became the General Council's secretary and kingpin. Not only did he edit the letters from the Council, but was often the inspiration behind them, as he was of several initiatives.

4

(to be continued)

*Father Etchecopar wrote... to his sisters Madeleine and  
Suzanne, 15th April 1876*

*Alleluia! Joy in Heaven, to the adorable Trinity, to the whole  
Heavenly Host; joy to our Saviour's Divine Mother and all his  
friends; joy to the whole world, to prisoners, the oppressed, and  
all kinds of sick people, all because of the happiness, the joy and the  
resurrection of Jesus, our all, our health and our life, our strength  
and our consolation, our resurrection, our happiness and our bliss  
for time and for eternity!!!*

*All the little upsets which befall us, are only tiny drops from his  
chalice but which are all the more bearable because they bring us  
priceless treasures of merit and blessings; they are like pricks of a  
divine vaccination, protecting us from ever forgetting  
God. Therefore forward march, full of trust,  
of gratitude and self abnegation.*

SHF



# Family News

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



**A word from the  
Superior General**

## **Betharram is small, Betharram is poor, Betharram is missionary**

Betharram has always been missionary. St Michael Garicoits, who was always keen on education, was also very interested in missionary work. When in 1854 he received a call for help from Buenos Aires, he assembled all his religious and at the end of community discernment the mission to America was decided. In 1877 we went to Bethlehem and then to Nazareth. In 1903, after our expulsion from France, we were - as Fr. Estrate put it - "scattered so as to be better sown" in Spain, Belgium, Italy and England. In 1922, Betharram responded without delay to the appeal from Pope Benedict XV for missionaries for China. When, in 1951 we were expelled from China, the missionaries withdrew to Thailand where today they continue evangelising the poor.

Today, Betharram has never been so missionary. The French Province has founded in Africa: Casablanca in 1940, Sidi-Bel-Abbes in 1948. Then it was Ivory Coast where we shall be celebrating 50 years presence next year. Since 1986 the Italian Province has been supporting Central Africa. It is now 15 years or so since we arrived in India. Here too the formula "scattered so as to be better sown" is valid. It is also a law to be found in the Gospels: "For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, that man will save it" (Luke 9,24).

The missionary spirit spread in other ways. The Province of San Jose del Rio de la Plata, in collaboration with de-

### In this issue

- Page 4: Choukran Abouna!
- Page 5: On the road to Emmaus
- Page 7: Santiago in our thoughts
- Page 8: Bird's eye view of the congregation
- Page 10: Reservation of the Karen identity
- Page 11: 5mn with Fr. Natale
- Page 15: The approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart (4)

**106<sup>th</sup> year  
10<sup>th</sup> series, n°26  
14<sup>th</sup> April 2008**



voted laity who had been captivated by the charism of St Michael Garicoits embraced places of materiel, human and spiritual poverty. Not losing sight of their commitment to education, they took the brave decision to found a religious community at Nueva Esperanza in the Province of Santiago del Estero, on a piece of territory the size of a diocese, with scattered dwelling places and marked by poverty, illness and injustice (landless peasants).

Without abandoning its commitment to education, the Vice-Province of Paraguay has been responsible for two missionary parishes for several years: San Joaquin and La Colmena. The Vice-Province of Brazil has caught on too: every year with aspirants, postulants, students and some Betharramite Associates, they organise a missionary week in places where we are not present.

Earlier on I quoted Father Estrate who had interpreted our expulsion from France as an act of the Holy Spirit for the good of the Congregation. Here is a passage from his letter from Rome on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1909: "I had an envelope in my hand. The Holy Father thinking it was asking for another favour said: 'What's that?'. I answered 'Holy Father, this envelope contains the humble offering of our Congregation to your Holiness'. He took it and placed it on his desk. Then with a smile he said: 'are you that well off?' With a smile I answered: 'Holy Father, thanks to our colleges in America we are' ".

Today I couldn't give an answer like that to Benedict XVI. I would have to say what I heard Fr Juan Craviotti say in a sermon at Adrogue: "**Betharram is poor, Betharram is humble, Betharram is devout**". Betharram is poor and this for me is a consolation. Our Generalate is small and simple. The General Council lacks the means to have great projects. The expenses of each Congregation activity are covered by the sharing of the (Vice) Provinces of the par-

## Fr. Etchecopar and the approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart 4



by Pierre Mieyaa, SCJ

By now the Prelate was over 65 years of age and had been bishop for 30 years. At that age outbursts are to be avoided. Instead of spoiling everything, he showed a great spirit of understanding. From the beginning of April 1869, he informed the Fathers at Betharram that he was ready to present to the Holy See, the Rules they were going to adopt.

Immediately after this, the General Council invited the community to name the members of a commission charged with the writing of the new constitutions. There were 15 members. In the space of a week, from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1869, a new text was written.

Presented in Rome by Mgr Lacroix, during the Vatican Council, the text was rejected by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for two reasons: it was not the work of the whole community and the General Superior had not been elected by his fellow religious.

On his return from the Eternal City in July, the Bishop gave the news to Betharram by his Vicar general, M. Inchauspe. Soon afterwards a general assembly was summoned and met from the 17<sup>th</sup> August to the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1870. In less than three weeks and after the three previous failures, the members of the general assembly, wearied by so many useless efforts, were more and more convinced of the need to be placed under the authority of the Holy See.

To obtain this they made essential sacrifices; they banished from the society a certain comfort, and gave up the salaries which little by little had crept in, choosing to return to the spirit of the early foundation by returning to the rules laid down by Father Garicoits.



2008

A P R I L

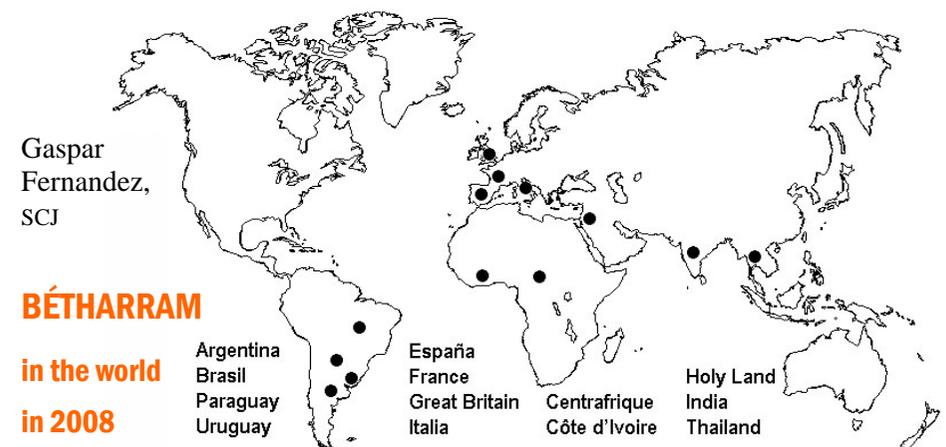
16	Happy birthday	Fr. Chanchai Tamaroonrung
17	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Mario Sosa
19	Feliz aniversario 45 años de profesión, enhorabuena	P. José Antonio da Silva P. Bruno Ierullo
20	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Gaspar Fernández P. José Rovegno
21	Buon compleanno	P. Pietro Villa
23	Buon compleanno	P. Simone Panzeri

M A Y

1	20° di sacerdozio, auguri	P. Emilio Manzolini P. Aldo Camesasca P. Damiano Colleoni
2	Happy birthday	Br. Thinakorn Damrongusasin
3	Buon compleanno	P. Ernesto Colli
4	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Elie Kurzum
5	Buon compleanno	P. Antonio Canavesi
7	Happy birthday	Br. Jose Kumar Johnrose
10	Feliz aniversario Buon compleanno Happy birthday	P. José Mirande P. Guido Pradella Fr. Shaju Kalappurackal
11	Feliz cumpleaños	Hno. Guido Eugenio Garcia
12	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Pierre Leborgne
14	Joyeux anniversaire Buon compleanno Joyeux anniversaire	P. Paul Baradat P. Antonio Riva Fr Gilbert Napetien Coulibaly
22	Joyeux anniversaire Buon compleanno	P. Henri Nadal P. Gianluca Limonta
23	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Jean-Marie Ruspil

ticipants. Many of our missionary projects are financed, not by the Congregation's money but by the solidarity of organisms and worthy individuals who think of others: the benefactors of Thailand, friends of Tshanfeto, sponsorship by pupils and our collaborators in the hospital in Central Africa, and all who, in Great Britain, support our missionary activity in India. Only our Heavenly Father will be able to repay them. There again it is a law written in the Gospels "I tell you most solemnly, in so far as you did this to the least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Mat 25,40).

Betharram is poor, so it is perfectly at ease as a missionary. Betharram is poor; this is why lots of people practise solidarity through us. Betharram is poor; for us it is a grace and an opportunity. But it is also our commitment to be faithful witnesses, practising what we profess and not deceiving those for whom the mission is intended nor those who help us, because they trust us and our activity. Father Juan said: *Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified loved Betharram because Betharram is poor, Betharram is humble, Betharram is devout. Today is Betharram still poor enough, humble enough and devout enough to draw down God's blessings on us?" May the light of the Holy Spirit help each one to get to know the state of his soul*".



## Choukran Abouna! \*

On Monday 7th April at 6.00pm in the lounge at Notre Dame, Jerusalem, a farewell reception took place for Fr Pierre Grech on the occasion of his retirement from his duties at the Patriarchate and departure to Lourdes. The Bishops of the Patriarchate as well as men and women from Religious Orders were present; all expressed their gratitude for the work he had accomplished throughout those years in the Holy Land.

One recalls that he was eight years teaching in the Seminary at Beit Jala, then Rector for eleven years; after his mandate as Provincial of France and Superior General in Rome, he spent twenty one years in Jerusalem as Secretary to the Assembly of Bishops and Religious. He was rewarded for his devotion with the highest honour from the Pope: the Pro Ecclesia and Pontifice Cross which he received from the Papal Nuncio to Israel, Mgr Antonio Franco.

In the address which followed, the Patriarch Mgr Sabbah, who is also about to relinquish his post in the Church in Jerusalem, thanked Fr Grech for the years they had worked closely together. He hoped that he would not forget this suffering land and invited him to return when he wished. Then the representative of the Melchites of Galilee expressed their respect for Fr Grech and added; 'As the Son of God came here to the Holy Land, then returned to his Father, you are returning to Lourdes. He gave him this request for Our Lady; 'What is she doing in Lourdes? Let her return to her house in Nazareth!'

It was in the simplicity of this festive yet emotive atmosphere that Fr Grech took his leave from the Holy Land... on tip toes, as he put it.

\* Thank you, Father!  
(in Arabic)

Pietro Villa,SCJ

- Until recently when we only had responsibility for the parish of Mariotto the presence of the community was very solid and was recognised by the people. Actually, I couldn't say how we are seen; probably as a family living under the same roof and managing a definite apostolate. Of course we are faithful to the two moments of community prayer and community meals, but the distance separating our two parishes makes community life difficult. Times for sharing are restricted, all the more so as each parish community has its own problems. Consequently mutual help in the ministry is not as evident nor as forthcoming as that.

### *What constitutes your happiness as a Betharramite priest today?*

- My joy of belonging to a caring and thoughtful community, a real family. I have faith in the community for it enriches your ministry, supports you in times of deception and loneliness and helps you to get going again! Then there is my joy of being a Betharramite; I feel this every time when I can rush to the help of some lonely priest calling for help or for a pastoral emergency. St Michael's words come to my mind then: "without delay, without reserve, without looking back, for love's sake". Although I have been parish priest for the past 8 years I have never forgotten our Founder's wish: *to be an army of priests, freed from all personal activity, and ready to go where ever there is need.*

### IN MEMORIAM

Let us pray for **Mr. Mario Colli**, Fr. Ernesto Colli's brother, from the community of Castellazzo, who died at 73 in Colico (Italy), on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March... and for **Mrs Sylvia Mirande**, Fr. José Mirande's mother, from the community of Sao Paulo, who died in her 101<sup>st</sup> year in Artiguelouve (France) on March 24<sup>th</sup> 2008.

- The parish comprises about 1500 lower middle class families, composed principally of labourers, employees and shop keepers. The total population is about 5000, the majority of whom live in cheap rented accommodation. Many of the households have financial difficulties. For some their income is from the seasonal work of one of the family, for others there is a supplement from the women's work who spend their days in workrooms for poor salaries. Some have their husbands in prison, others their husbands are on the dole. With the result that the children are left to their own devices, in open revolt against the schools, discipline, and respect for others. Absenteeism, because of the distance from the schools, is worrying. The young spend hours, hanging around in the street and inevitably they are accosted by gangsters and end up in organised crime, the sort which is becoming more and more familiar in urban areas. Side by side with these problem families, there are others who are well off.

*As a religious from the North, what was it like moving down to the South?*



- Different cultures, different ways of doing things, different language. You can well imagine the people and their expectations! We had a good reception, even with consideration from the local clergy. They quickly appreciated our willingness to work together, and to be involved in their social tissue. Our priority was cultivating a family spirit, having a house open to all without exception.

*The community was given two parishes to care for, Mariotto and Bitonto; how did you manage to combine ministry and community life?*

## On the road to Emmaus

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today, Easter Monday, we are assembled at the very spot where the wonderful mystery of Emmaus took place. How can we not stop a moment to meditate on this mystery? It is not possible not to be deeply touched by the Gospel event that we have been remembering and by the many lessons that we can draw from it.



Never perhaps in the whole Gospel was Christ so close to us, becoming our companion for the journey, answering our difficulties and finally leaving us his Presence.

We too have followed the road to Emmaus, the road to Emmaus where we want to meet the Lord. **“Jesus himself came up, and walked by their side.”**

The road to Emmaus becomes **the route of my life**. There I must meet the Lord, recognise him, forge friendly relations with him, listen to his Word, and finally recognise his Presence. That's the big problem in life!

Road to Emmaus, route of my life, the way of Easter, the way of the Risen Christ.

“Jesus himself came up and walked by their side”. On our way through life he is by our side. He pays special attention to what is happening in us, in our life. He is the Friend who asks: “What's the matter? What are your thoughts, your projects, and your sufferings?”

Christ on the road to Emmaus, the route of our life, is present; he questions us, and he listens.

It is important to be able to meet him, to recognise him. Be able to recognise the signs of his presence. Then open up,

listen to him, listen to His Word, the Word of God. Then let his Word be a light for our route, as it lit up the route of the two disciples. We must listen to him, even when the Lord whispers gently “You foolish men! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his Glory?”

It doesn't matter in what state of soul we are, our meeting on the road to Emmaus can be like a fire which inflames us, and transforms us, just like the disciples. In moments of temptation and struggle, let's not forget that he is that travelling companion willing to transform us by his Word and his Presence.

On the road to Emmaus the traveller must have explained all this to the two disciples with such conviction that when they reached the village, they pressed him to stay with them and the traveller accepted. They sat down to table, he took bread, blessed it, and broke it. They then recognised him. *Dominus est*. It is the Lord! The disciples are completely changed. Their heart is on fire. They rush back to Jerusalem. With what joy they announce the good news to the Apostles, in a sense the only good news. “Yes, it is true. The Lord is really risen!”

We too, on our way through life, we are transformed by the Word of God and his Presence. We must become witnesses to the Risen Lord. We must live out faithfully the Easter experience from the Cross to the Resurrection.

Let's keep in mind the lesson of Emmaus. On our way through life let's meet the Lord; listen to his Word, recognise His Presence. Learn to say: “*Dominus est*.” It is the Lord!

And to-night let us also say: **Stay with us**, Lord, when the road is long, when trial saddens us and night begins to fall. And the Presence of the Lord will renew our joy of our Hope.

Pierre Grech, SCJ  
Sermon at Amwas, March 24<sup>th</sup> 2008

away. At the end of the Mass, Fr. Rodrigez gave a message: “If Karen lose their language, they come to an end”.

After mass, visitors could go into model houses and receive some explanations. After the cultural programme was presented the Karen way of life: work in the field, cooking, welcoming of the guest, tea making, discussions, work planning, meals in the family, preparing herbs, making tools for agriculture and visiting each other... On the 1<sup>st</sup> December we wound up with the mass and sent the guests home following the Karen tradition.

Mongkhon Charoentham, SCJ

## 5 MINUTES WITH... Father Natale

In 1986 Betharram made a foundation in the southeast of Italy, at about 1000 kms from their traditional scene of action in Lombardy. Father Natale Re was part of that community. After Holy Week we were interested to speak to a religious in Parish activity (which is the case of most of our Italian brothers).

*Nef: Formerly you were in charge of apostolic communities; how did you cope with the passage from the formation of the young to life in a parish?*

- For 9 years I was at the minor seminary as educator, animator and teacher, but I was always in contact with the parish. Parish ministry and accompanying junior seminarians have always gone hand in glove. I therefore had no problem in fitting into parish life full time when I was asked. To tell you the truth I have been involved in parish life for the past 10 years. My pastoral service has always brought me towards the young, in religious lessons as in parish life.

*Can you tell us something about your pastoral activities and their socio-economical context?*



**Thailand****Reservation of the Karen identity**

From 29<sup>th</sup> November to 1<sup>st</sup> December 2007 Fr. Rodrigez and Fr. Chanchai conducted the Karen language and tradition reservation programme for the first time at Maepon. The purpose of this get-together is to preserve Karen language and tradition, put at risk by technology and development of the wide world, which changed the life style of Karen people especially of the youngsters who are beginning to lose their language and traditions. Hence the importance of the Karen Dictionary by Fr. Séguinotte; reservation of Karen language and traditions; emphasis on the identity of Karen people; the link between being Karen and catholic faith mainly among the youth; make the government aware of the catholic faith among Karen people; make the government know that we love our country and we are part of the country.

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, we saw the traditional house, in the typical Karen style [pgaz k'nyau], Karen agriculture tools, Karen music instruments, handicrafts, history of Karen, beginning of catholic faith among Karen, Herbs in Karen's life, Karen uniform and cooking. There were five houses showing the Karen lifestyle. On the night the function began with the talk of bishop Joseph Chusak from Chorot diocese. Then a cultural program was presented by the children of the centre and by different Karen singers: all enjoyed it very much. On that night about 600 peoples came from near and far.

On 30<sup>th</sup> we began by paying our respect to the King - the bishop stated the merits of the king. Then we started the mass, presided over by bishop Joseph Chusak. 30 priests joined the celebration and 600 people attended the mass. The day was a success and all participated in the mass in prayerful silence, with music and Karen songs sung by the children. Fr. Mongkhon and our postulants made the mass lively with songs and music. During the homily the bishop focused on catholic faith and reservation of Karen tradition and language. If you lose your language, the Karen tribe is doomed to fade

**Santiago in our thoughts**

After years of presence, there are no more Betharramites in the parish of San Roque in Santiago del Estero (Argentina). On Easter Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the community handed over the parish to a diocesan priest.

It wasn't easy parting with all those people and the pastoral work: so many memories, so many links with the laity who grew up with us. It's hard to abandon a work where you have spent all your life.

This time, the diocesan clergy were with us and thanked us. We haven't left the diocese, only a parish to take on another, 200 kilometres from Santiago. The place isn't very hospitable; it's a dust bowl, a temperature to put you off (45 in the shade) and is called Nueva Esperanza, and is the size of Lombardy.

Wednesday of Holy Week, 19h30. The Bishop was excused on grounds of health. During the Thanksgiving Mass, with us were Father Walter de la Iglesia VG and a few diocesan clergy. On the one hand there was Father Gilbert, on the other Fathers Giancarlo and Serge. There was a great feeling of suffering in the air. It was Holy Week. Our Cross and that of the Parish Community had to be offered to God. We were putting into action what had been matter of discernment for many years. The falling numbers of religious, the abundance of activities demanded a radical change. Our colleges had been handed over to the laity, and then the parishes. Now it was Santiago's turn.

May God bless the efforts of so many religious who gave their lives to the mission. May Christ strengthen the hearts of our laity who have come to learn God's Will and how to put it into practice. And may the Holy Spirit gather up what has been sown and make it bear fruit.

A heartfelt thanks to the Diocese of Santiago del Estero for letting us live out the *fiat* so dear to St Michael.



Saint Michael  
Region

## Province of France Delegation of the Ivory Coast

**Preparing the future** ■ On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March the General Assembly of the Provincial Delegation was held in Yamoussoukro. All the scj professed in the Ivory Coast were present, together with the Provincial Superior. The debates ended, among other things, in two decisions: studying a possible collaboration with the Ursuline Sisters of Sion, for the future Faith School of Yamoussoukro (Christian formation course for adults aiming at development); diversifying incomes, with the project of jatropa plantation (oleaginous plant used for biofuels) in a 10 hectares ground given by a family of the djimini country.

**United in prayers** ■ Br. Raoul Thibaut Ségla will be ordained as a priest on coming May 3<sup>rd</sup> in St Bernard church of Adiapodoumé. A further sign of vitality for Betharram in Ivory Coast, and a reason for thanksgiving for all the Congregation.

## Province of Italy

**Enhancing communication** ■ There is something new in the Villa del Pino, home for AIDS patients entrusted to Betharramite religious and associated laypeople: a new formula of *Il Mosaico*, a quarterly colour news bulletin, enriched by reflections and life experiences; a DVD containing the life of the association during its 16 years of existence (photo albums, various initiatives, current projects). More than ever our house of Monteporzio appears to be a "workshop of solidarity, spirituality and culture".

**A liturgy for the family** ■ Fr. Angelo Pajno, member of the diocesan liturgical committee of Milan, has just published a brochure for the family prayer: "Via caritatis". To compose the 10 stations inspired by the mysteries of the Rosary, the author drew inspiration also from the texts of the Betharramite spirituality.

**End of the visit** ■ On April 3<sup>rd</sup> all our religious of the Holy Land gathered in Bethlehem with the Superior General. As a conclusion of the canonical visit, Fr. Gaspar encouraged them to pursue their service in favour of the local Church and shared with them his orientations. The Provincial Council of Italy, gathered on the spot to study the situation of our communities, participated in the meeting. They also took the opportunity to celebrate Fr. Pierre Grech who is soon going back to France.



Fr Etchecopar  
Region

**Towards a Regional scholasticate** ■ The formators of Fr Auguste Etchecopar Region (Argentine, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) gathered in Brumadinho from 3<sup>rd</sup> till 7<sup>th</sup> March. Warmly received by Fathers Dante, Aurelio and Cesar, the participants worked on the project of regional scholasticate, which will open in 2009 in Belo Horizonte. Three aspects held particularly their attention: a decent and simple house; serious studies (hence the interview with people in charge of the St Thomas Aquin Theological Institute); a team of well-trained formators.

## Province of the Rio de la Plata

**Way of regionalization** ■ From 8<sup>th</sup> till 11<sup>th</sup> April in Adrogué, the Argentina and Uruguay Religious gathered to study the implementation of the new communities (cf. *Family News*, in March, 2008, p. 8). This meeting joins in the logic of the organization in vicariate towards the horizon 2009.

## Vice-Province of Brazil

**Betharramite spring** ■ On March 24<sup>th</sup>, Easter Monday, the Vice-Provincial Superior Father Vicente de Menezes gathered, for the first time, all the Betharramites students: the 5 aspirants of Paulinia, the 6 postulants of Passa Quatro, the 5 novices of Adrogué and the 5 scholastics of Sao Paulo accompanied by their respective formators. The Betharramite laity of Passa Quatro joined this nice **day of conviviality** as well as Dom Frei Diamantino, bishop of Campanha, who made a surprise visit. During the meeting, each one spoke about the place of the *here I am* in their vocation. And all together had the opportunity to experience the joy of belonging to Saint Michael's family, for the good of the Church and the world.

## SAMPRAN PROJECT 2008 Thailand

**Solidarity video** ■ A slide show presenting the Sampran house of formation, its members, its activities and its projects, has just gone out in 4 versions (French, Spanish, English, Italian). This is excellent material in order to promote the "main cause of the congregation" for 2008: just click on [www.betharram.org](http://www.betharram.org) (heading Missio) or order it at the General Secretariate.



Blessed Miriam  
Region