

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

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Note of the G^{ral} Council

On June 26th
were approved
the appointments of

- Fr. Élie Kurzum as superior of the new community of Zerqa (Jordan)
- Fr. Piero Trameri as superior of the community San Michele of Albavilla (Italy)

The approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart

months later on the 30th of July 1875, the decree was approved which placed the Institute of the Fathers of Betharram under the authority of the Holy See.

All the requirements taken under the influence of the humble Carmelite sister were not unnoticed by the Superior General, Reverend Father Etchecopar. But he remained silent about it and scarcely mentioned it. Not once did he mention sister Mary of Jesus Crucified. After a letter that Fr Estrate wrote to him from Rome, he conveyed his delight to the two the communities in South America: “we hope that within two or three months we will soon have approval from Rome.”

During that time they indicated to him the modifications of the rule, he asked the fathers in Buenos Aires and Montevideo to accept them. “What I know already is that the spirit which animates you is the true religious spirit, and that you have all kept it in all its purity and with fervour from the beginning, and that you are ready to accept whatever the Holy Father will judge useful for the good of the Congregation.”

On the sixth of August 1875, on the feast of the Transfiguration, the decree came to him at Betharram, without revealing the secret intervention of sister Mary of Jesus Crucified. He could only express this cry of admiration: “To obtain such a decree seems like a miracle!”

Schedule of the Superior general

20th July-3rd August: at **Bétharram** for the end of the session for perpetual vows, the feast of Our Lady, the Provincial assembly and the meeting of the Formation team

8th-31st August: in **Brazil** for the canonical visitation

1st September-7th October: in **Paraguay**

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(to be continued)



Family News

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



A word from the Superior General

The joy of living obedience

In this issue

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Psalm 118 which we pray nearly every day at midday vividly expresses the freedom, the fulfilment, the joy and the happiness of those who strive to know and practice what God wishes. This divine wish is expressed in many ways: *your law, your precepts, your word, your truth, your prescriptions, your commandments, your decisions, your decrees, your promise, your will, your judgements...* for example: “if I take no pleasure in your law, I will perish miserably.” (Ps 118:92).

To pray daily expresses a way of life. It is to acknowledge that whatever one is and whatever one has received from God, must be returned to Him some day, and that everything in our life must respond to the Creator's plan for us. So we must be ready to listen to God, attentive to his will; to love what God asks; and to be happy to respond by our behaviour to what he expects of us. Such is the prayer of those who are obedient, of those who do not seek their own pleasure, who are not focused on themselves, but who regard and listen, for they know that they live by God's grace, their Creator and Redeemer, and should be pleasing to him.

During the last assembly of Superior Generals, after the presentation of the the new instruction of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life; *Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram* - the ministry of authority and obedience, we had worked on that document. The heart of the instruction is the person of Jesus: his obedience and his authority. The gospel presents Jesus to us continually referring to the Father, concerned with pleasing Him in all things. In the Manifesto,

106th year
10th series, n°29
14th July 2008

Michael Garicoits writes that Jesus never did anything for himself, but always acted through the spirit of God, to suffer and to do whatever His Father willed. Another aspect is the figure of Jesus, the master who teaches with authority (Mk 1:22) and that as his disciples, we have chosen to recognise, listen, love and follow.

In the religious life, everyone must obey, listening to the word of God, watching to discover his will

The instruction presents obedience as a fundamental Christian disposition. In the religious life everyone must obey, superiors included. To obey supposes listening to the word of God, watching to discover his will in everyday life. The obedience of every religious and the ministry of those who have authority consists in discerning, searching and finding the will of God, as Saint Michael says. It is the objective we propose to ourselves in consecrating our life to the Lord. This explains the title of the document taken from Psalm 26 verse 8: *it is your face, O Lord, that I seek*. To move away from our comfort zone we must commit ourselves to someone, like Jesus, whose moral authority inspires confidence and trust. *At your command, I will throw out the net's* said Peter (Lk 5:5) or like Abraham: *the Lord said to him: "go out from your country... go into the land that I will show you."* Abraham left as the Lord had told him (Gen 12:1-4).

It is certain that knowing and putting into practice the will of God is fundamental for anyone who has taken the vow of obedience, as well as the one who exercises authority in the community. The will of God can only be understood through intermediaries, from others with authority. St Michael Garicoits speaks of it: how can you know the will of God? By our vows, our rule, the will of our superiors, the duties of our position and also by all fortunate or unfortunate events that Providence places in our path. (Spiritual Doctrine 93).

The intermediaries do not identify themselves as the will of God, they are imperfect, limited, fallible... so what of

Fr. Etchecopar and the approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart 7



by Pierre Mieyaa, SCJ

Berthe thanked Monsignor with some emotion. She asked him to inform the superior general of Betharram immediately, so that he comes from Notre Dame of Refuge to thank Monsignor with herself. The Superior General arrived. When he learns from Berthe that everything has been completed, he falls on his knees, eyes full of tears, and thanks God for this great and unexpected grace. They pray together for some time.

They return to the Bishop. Father Etchecopar thanks the Bishop in his name and in the name of all the community. He responds with great joy: "for some time I have wanted to do what I have just done; but I didn't know how to do it. God has his times and he has chosen to use this child."

With these precious documents, Fr Estrate who was very happy and Canon Bordachar, who was not happy, set out on the 18th of May for Rome, where they arrived on the evening of Saturday 22nd. On their arrival they met at the church of the Dominicans of the Minerva the Very Reverend Father Bianchi. They told him the reason for their journey: the approbation of the constitutions of Betharram.

"Give me your letters of delegation, your constitutions and customs," he said to them. "And you won't have to worry any more about it; I will take this business in hand. I happen to be one of the consulters of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Religious, I will examine them and will be your promoter." Fr Bianchi was true to his word. The day after at eight o'clock, he presented the eight exercise books annotated in red ink. Fr Estrate and Canon Bordachar had only to put brief observations and rewrite the constitutions and customs with his important corrections. Having completed this work, they left Rome on the 12th of June. Fr Bianchi was appointed promoter by the Sacred Congregation, and two



2008

AUGUST

16	Buon compleanno	P. Celestino Gusmeroli
17	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Gustavo Agin
18	Buon compleanno	P. Ernesto Consonni
21	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Joseph Domecq Fr. Martial Mengué
25	Joyeux anniversaire	Mgr Vincent Landel
26	Joyeux anniversaire 25th of profession, congratulations	P. Jean Tapie Br. William Finucane
28	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Alexandre Berhouet
29	Happy birthday	Br. Gabriel Phonchai Sukjai
31	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Dominique Etchéverria

SEPTEMBER

2	Bom aniversário	P. Paulo Cesar Pinto
3	Joyeux anniversaire Happy birthday	P. Michel Vignau P. Suthon Khiriwathanasakun
4	Happy birthday Joyeux anniversaire	Fr. Austin Hughes P. Luc-Martial Kouadio
6	Buon compleanno	P. Giovanni Trameri
8	Bom aniversário 55° di professione, auguri	P. Dante Angelelli P. Guido Pradella P. Romano Martinelli P. Albino Trameri
10	20° di professione, auguri 20 ans de profession, félicitations	P. Tiziano Pozzi P. Gianluca Limonta P. Jean-Luc Morin
13	Bom aniversário Joyeux anniversaire	P. Paulo Vital Campos P. Philippe Hourcade
16	Buon compleanno	P. Egidio Zoia
18	Buon compleanno	P. Romualdo Airaghi
19	Joyeux anniversaire 65 años de profesión enhorabuena	P. Raymond Descomps P. Constancio López Morales P. Nicolas Ayerza, P. José Gogorza

authority? In spite of this, we can only know the will of God through intermediaries. In searching for the will of God, the ministry of authority is indispensable. The superior, aware of his limitations and of his tendency to impose his own will, must seek dialogue and the advice of others, favour the participation of all the brothers of the community, and be convinced that the gospel is the final criteria for government. On the other hand the religious who obeys must take into account the gospel criteria, the limitations of superiors, and seek dialogue with others, and be aware of his own personal feelings of resistance in order to live up to the truth of the Gospel. Did not God choose the weaknesses of the flesh to enter into a relationship with us through the mystery of the incarnation, and did he not choose to reveal himself in the weakness of our human condition?

In our days, difficulties met by obedience and by authority can be of a psychological nature: resistance that tests each individual as he depends on his brothers in the community and those who hold authority. There is also, in today's society, an over emphasis on autonomy and independence. A third difficulty, with those who hold authority when giving orders realise the weakness of his own theological experience through deficiencies in initial formation, in excessive activity and the insidious undermining of it in the present environment.

One cannot admire the obedience of Jesus to his Father up to his death on the cross, one cannot have decided to live in constant reference to him, and refuse to obey in the moment of truth. Just like chastity, poverty, forgiveness, love of one's enemies and goodwill, so must obedience be understood not from a purely human point of view. These are the values of those who've made only the gospel their norm of life.

Gaspar Fernandez,SCJ



*The Sacred Heart, seen from Rabat***Unconditional love**

On this feast of the Sacred Heart, we, men and women religious, and priests are invited to pray for each other so that we may be opened up to this merciful love which brings so much sense into our lives.

The feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus offers us the opportunity to let ourselves filled with the unconditional love of God.

- He who can bypass the sentimental aspect of this devotion to the Sacred Heart can discover that this feast is **the manifestation of the liberating love God**.
- He who allow himself be touched by his love experiences that the love of God can free us from what brings death.
- He who abandons himself to the love of God, can entrust to the Lord all these seeds of death. His heart is broad enough to embrace them all. His love gives us strength to overcome them. So he becomes our Saviour and Liberator. He allows us to open up ourselves to his disinterested love.

Despite all our wounds, all our obstinacy, all our failures... **let us run towards the love that never dries up.**

The heart of God invites us not to hold back by failures, a wounded heart which become an obstacle to love. A new life in love is possible. Disinterested love is offered to us, love stronger than death.

The adoration of the Heart of the Lord sends us to the place where true life is possible, there where love can be born-again.

Mgr Vincent Landel, SCJ
29th May 2008

14	Bom aniversário	P. Joachim Soares Moreira
16	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Enrique Lasuén
18	Buon compleanno Happy birthday	P. Giovanni Duca Fr. Mongkhon Charoentham
20	Buon compleanno Happy birthday	P. Carlo Antonini P. Beniamino Gusmeroli Br. Patrick Leighton
21	Happy birthday	Br. George Anthonyswamy
23	Bom aniversário	P. Sebastião do Nascimento Pereira Ir. Mauro Ulrich de Oliveira
26	Happy birthday	Br. John Britto Irudhayam
28	Feliz cumpleaños Joyeux anniversaire 10 ans de profession, félicitations	Mons. Ignacio Gogorza P. Jean-Dominique Delgue P. Théophile Degni N'Guessan
29	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Gaston Gabaix-Hialé
31	Buon compleanno	P. Carlo Sosio
1	Buon compleanno Bom aniversário	P. Enrico Mariani Ir. Jair Pereira da Silva
2	Buon compleanno Feliz cumpleaños	P. Graziano Sala P. Miguel Angel Cardozo
4	Feliz cumpleaños Buon compleanno	P. Julián Miguel P. Eyad Salameh Bader
6	Feliz cumpleaños	Ho. Juan Cazaubon
10	Bom aniversário	P. Vicente de Menezes
12	Buon compleanno	P. Maurizio Vismara P. Damiano Colleoni
14	Joyeux anniversaire Bom aniversário 15 anos de sacerdotio, felitações	P. Robert Daquo P. Antonio Scarpa P. Wagner Azevedo dos Reis
15	Joyeux anniversaire 70 ans de profession, félicitations! 55 ans de profession	P. Bernard Béhocaray P. Henri Nadal P. José Mirande

2008

JULY

AUGUST

IN MEMORIAM

Italy



... Our hearts will be at peace in God, even if our own feelings condemn us. God is greater than our feelings and knows all thing (1Jn 3,19b-20)

Father Lino Gurini

When the news of Fr Lino's brutal and tragic death was made known to us, we were left speechless, asking ourselves one question: why?

He was born on the second of July 1931 at Isolaccia in the province of Sondrio and was among the first group of religious who established the presence of Betharram in Italy.

Fr Lino began his novitiate on the seventh of September 1948 at Albiate where he took his first vows in 1949. Since his ordination in Milan 26th of May 1956 he remained at Colico most of his religious life, with two exceptions when he was in Rome to gain his licence in theology 1958 and when at Lissone where he gained a diploma in literature at the The University of Milan.

And the College of Colico Fr Lino had been in turn, teacher, headmaster, superior of the community. He approach so many young people and he had helped so many young people and so many recognized this. Even after the closure of the College, the old boys (now adults and professional people) came to the community house to visit, give news, seek encouragement, advice and counsel.

The parishes within the region of Colico benefited from his ministry in his capacity as headmaster of the College. During the last years Fr Lino put all his energy into the parish ministry. He embodied the motto so dear to St Michael, our founder: Here I am, Lord.. without delay, without reservations, without return, through love rather than through any other motive.

We have accompanied him by our prayers. We now place him in the hands of God and his mercy who alone can judge his life.

Graziano Sala, SCJ
Superior provincial

- Let us pray also for
- Mrs Giuseppina Restelli, mother of Fr. Giuseppe Franchi (Montemurlo) who died in Cislago (Italy) on June 25th
 - Father Ceferino Arce died at 90 in Barracas (Argentina) on July 11th - an homage will be paid to him in the next issue of the Nef

A voice from Rome

A saintly heart in Unison

When our culture speaks of the heart it is usually linked with feelings, affection, love... above all from the point of view of heartfelt sentiments. (*Go where your heart takes you*, was a very successful book recently); you have only to listen to the ditties which chant heart, love, for ever!

On the other hand, when Scripture speaks of the heart, it is something totally different; for Scripture the heart represents the *centre of man*, where I express my deepest being, my hopes and choices, through my intelligence, my will as well as my feelings and affections.

In this respect Scripture recognises two types of *heart*; on the one hand there is the *double-dealing* heart of the wicked, the false heart which thinks one thing and says another, the good preacher who does the opposite, the false heart of the ever anxious, the uneasy, attracted by thousands of things, who trusts no one, not even himself. maybe!

On the other hand, Scripture talks about the *unified heart* of the good man, who has built his entire life on one hope and strives after it with all his might; it's the heart of the individual who doesn't make lots of plans, but puts his intelligence, his will and his affections to the service of God's plan for him, so as to do His Will in all things.

Such was the heart of Jesus; *united* and focussed on his Father's plan for salvation, taking care to make his whole life one great act of love for Him and for us.

Today's feast speaks to us about the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our Religious Family came into being on the spirituality of the Sacred Heart, with the motto *Fiat voluntas Dei* – may God's Will be done! This means that our entire life must be in unison with God and His Will.

Homely for the feast of the Sacred Heart - Notre-Dame des Miracles, 30th May 2008

I haven't checked the Gospels from start to finish, but it seems to me that Jesus never uses the word *sacred*, but rather the word *holy*: *Be holy as I am holy*. Actually, if I use the word *sacred*, I am referring to something specifically belonging to God; and I mean that there exists something *secular* which has nothing to do with God. But if I distinguish the difference between the *sacred* and the *profane* I am in danger of having a divided reality in which certain things are God's and others not.... And then I can quite easily be distracted from the direction leading to His unique plan. In any case I am in danger on undermining His plan for me, and of limiting it according to my programmes, my hesitations and lack of confidence.

So, in order to shape my heart, I prefer to look towards Jesus' *holy Heart*- that is a heart set aside for God - a heart which helps me to see the will and presence of Christ in every part of my life.

It is a heart in which there is no place for worldly pursuits, selfish plans, etc. It is a "pure" heart, not in the moralistic sense of the word: a heart which makes no "impure" things, making its own a strictly coherent attitude according to the Gospel and no longer sinning. This heart is "pure" insofar as it is no longer "mixed": like material made of "pure wool" or like "pure water" including no other substances... Thus where my life is concerned I look for nothing other than God's Will and I refuse to complicate the issue nor confuse it with other wills.

Come to think of it, is it not there that the deepest desires are to be found? Avoiding complicating issues and being distracted by a multitude of obstacles and projects. Better to run free and unencumbered towards the unique plan.

So on this feast of the *Holy Heart of Jesus*, let's try to trust his call: *Learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest.*

tion of souls. We are therefore associated to God's plan for all mankind and for the whole of mankind, sharing his joys and his hopes, his sadness and anguish. Now God is a God of life and not a God of suffering and death. If He himself underwent suffering and death, he didn't remain prisoner of the evils which are a trial for man. Jesus Christ showed us the way of life. Following the example of St Michael Garicoits humanity is part of the Betharramite mission. St Michael's heart was open to all men for he had a heart which loved God, and he was ready to do his Father's will.

We too must be educators, formators, and companions of life. Sickness and suffering not only effect the physical aspect of a person, but also the spiritual and socio-somatic aspects. I believe that the Betharramite religious must be a bearer of hope for the hearts of the wounded and suffering.

For the past eight months you have been here at the very heart of catholicity. Has this in any way changed your outlook on the Church? The Church is one as we say in the Apostles' Creed. Whether it is in Africa or Europe or anywhere else, it is still the same Church of Jesus Christ. The only difference resides in the cultural differences; that is the strength of the Church. My religious culture is based on African values, particularly on the culture of the Atchan people to the south of Ivory Coast. Today I am simply deepening what I learnt during my theology studies, namely a section of the rich history of the Church. If I have grown in my faith since I've been here, I've still got a long way to go.

What is sure and certain is that I am full of a joy which makes me want to train for the care of the sick. Such a formation is a great opportunity for me and I believe also for our community, and for the Church in my country. In a word it is not just the pastoral care of the sick but a Pastoral for Life.



5 mn with...

how I am in Rome studying in a specialised institution and residing at the Generalate. I can say that for me it is a rich experience. The cadre is totally different from my last community; there is no comparison. Each community has its own character. As a missionary Congregation we are called to spread the Good News beyond our own frontiers. And for me it is an opportunity of starting off on solid foundations.

What aspects of your studies are the most uplifting? Your main discoveries? I am enrolled in the pastoral theology of Health at the Camillianum, an institution part of the Pontifical Faculty of the Teresianum. To begin with, I was going for something highly specialised, but thanks to the lectures, I soon understood that Pastoral for Health is not just the Pastoral Care of the Sick. It's a Pastoral for Life, for the sick and for their families; for those who have a disability, are excluded, or are old, for those who care for them at home or in an Institution; for those who nurse, accompany, listen to and all who devote their ability in medical research and reflexion.

The modal for this Pastoral is the very mission of Christ himself who cures and at the same time announces the Kingdom of God: *"I have come for the sick, and not for the healthy; I have come so that men may have life and have it in abundance."* Suffering is the evil against which we must strive. Sickness, disability, old age are trials at the heart of which the Church announces tirelessly salvation in Jesus Christ. In such situations, we must be signs of the tenderness of God and of the presence of Christ, the one and only Saviour.

From what you know of St Michael and his message, what is the place for a presence with the sick and "life's wounded"? Our Rule of Life tells us that a Betharramite religious must be very united to the Heart of Jesus saying to his Father "Here I am", to be his helpers for the salva-

What repose can our heart desire? The repose of the man who trusts Christ's Word, and plans his life on the sole thing that counts: to be loved by God so as to be able to love Him and all mankind.

Is that not God's Will? Is it not the way to holiness and happiness for each one of us?

Massimo Motta,SCJ

Sacred Heart of Barracas (Buenos Aires)

Prayer for the 100th anniversary of the basilica

Jesus, most humble of heart, we thank you

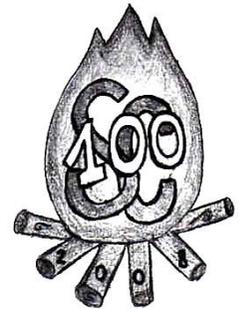
For a hundred years, when your basilica's lofty dome
Has been a familiar silhouette for Barracas and its park
You have not ceased to bless our quarter and the town
For a century of love, for a hundred years, we thank you, Lord.

Jesus, most humble of heart, teach us...

- To pray each day
 - To be humble and forgive.
 - To serve without fuss or recompense
 - To love each other as you loved us
 - To be truly one as you are in the Father
 - As a parish, and a church to believe in spite of differences we should be one, with each other and our pastors
- For a century of love, for a hundred years, we thank you, Lord.*

Jesus, most humble of heart, help us

We want to bring your kindness, your warmth, your smile to our neighbour
We wish to be disciples and missionaries, proclaiming without fear
Your blessings, of yesterday and today which we have received,
We wish to do whatever you ask like Mary, your Mother and our Mother.
For a century of love, for a hundred years, we thank you, Lord.



Mary's Faith fostered in silence

On June 11th 2008 at Bethlehem, the General Councillor for formation gave a teaching to the future fully professed of the running session.

14 days before the feast of Our Lady of Betharram, we propose this meditation.

I. MARY'S SILENCE

At the nativity, Mary does not speak, she stays silent whereas everything around her is "speech": the angels sing, the shepherds speak, Mary remains silent: "But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19) Everyone is filled with awe; Mary takes these things inside "Mary's Faith seems to be a growing spiritual quest, a memory open to a future: "Mary's Faith is a silent quest, not a possession. Luke 1: 29 1: 34: 2: 19. Mary is questioned by the shepherds: she listens to them as, later on, she will listen to the one who will proclaim he is the Good Shepherd (John 10: 4.14.16 and Luke 8:21). Mary is the one who teaches us silence that should "favour the normal union with God through the Holy Spirit". She can teach us as she taught her Son.

In Nazareth when Jesus' birth was foretold, we shall please to hear Mary's words. In Ain Karem, we shall marvel at Mary's Song of Praise. In Bethlehem, we are surprised by her silence: does that mean she is passive? Mary is not the focus of the story of the Nativity, it is the announcement made by the shepherds (Luke 2:10-12), so they play an important part. Mary is in the background, even Joseph, seems to be more important: "*Joseph went up... with Mary*" (v. 4 and 5). We are under the impression that the mighty have taken God's place; they are the masters of history, since they organize a census. God seems to be reduced to being determined by the time of the mighty of this world, at least at first sight. In the end, those circumstances will work in favour of God's plan! There is a striking contrast between the political power and the weakness chosen by God...

Whilst everything around the newborn baby is bathed in joy, Mary is silent, she is deep in thought. She is in the background unlike the shepherds who are crying out with admiration, yet she is not absent. She is aware of the slight-

ticular of the Betharram Fathers who have trained the clergy of the Patriarchate before, and given birth, thanks to their work, to local Diocesan vocations. In itself, communities made up of foreigners are not a problem. Jerusalem is for the universal Church. It is the roots of us all, Christians from all over the world. But I will call for other communities to be integrated into the diocesan pastoral work."

Vice Province of Paraguay

Brother Deacon ■ On June 28th, on a rainy day, in the chapel Our Lady of Fatima in Saint Michael Garicoits School, the Betharramite bishop Claudio Silvero ordained as deacon Br Mauro Ulrich de Oliveira. The celebration was simple, well prepared by the students, the teachers and the management team of the School. The postulants, scholastics and some aspirants prayed for their formator, and the religious priests concelebrated the Eucharist. A reception followed, in a warm and family atmosphere. The whole Congregation rejoices by Mauro's availability for answering the call to the priestly ministry, for the greater good of the Church and his religious family.



Fr. Etchecopar
Region

5 MINUTES WITH... Father Theophile

Nef: You are one of the first from the Delegation to be living Via Brunetti. How did you come?

When I was a postulant I felt attracted to the sick; with the help of my brothers in Adiapodoume, I used to accompany them to the hospital. This was more evident at the time of my ordination as a deacon, with special help from Caritas. Since 2003 I am in contact with a Dutch Foundation (Fondation Liliane) which strives for the social insertion of the disabled and the promotion of their dignity. Last year, my Provincial Superior in agreement with the General Superior suggested that I should train for the Pastoral Care of the Sick while at the same time having an experience of life in community. I accepted and this is



On the 10th July Fr. Theophile Degni N'Guessan will be celebrating ten years of religious profession, not on the banks of his native lagoon but on the banks of the River Tiber. This is a conversation with a Betharramite from Ivory Coast, now in Rome.

Father Etchecopar wrote... to his sister Julie, 10th September 1876

“What are human beings that God has set His heart on them”! I read it in Job: “the life of man is a struggle: when night comes, I cry for day: and when day, I long for darkness.”

So you have struggled before us.. so always go ahead through joys and sorrows. Go-ahead towards the heart and in the heart of Jesus which is entirely open, and is never closed; how could he reject or refuse to receive us, he who has not rejected, but calls the iron of the lance decide?

Go forward always! He knows our wretchedness. He is Father, he is mother! He is the host! He is victim! He is sweetness and humility!

O God of goodness! It is only in death that we will know and proclaim all his tenderness, hoping against all hope; in imitation of the men of great faith, and in receiving with his Eucharistic kiss on our failing lips, the pardon of a life quite unworthy and full of mysteries. Then we will cry with a prophet: even if he cuts me down in death, I will trust in him and I will not be confounded. Amen! Amen! Amen!



*St Michael
Region*

Betharram, the magazine ■ The first edition of the magazine of Betharram, in French and Italian, has just been issued: 48 coloured pages presenting our Congregation, its roots (the ancient sanctuary, Saint Michael Garicoits, his message) and its developments (testimonies and reports). In the months to come the other versions should follow for each Region. A good means to know and to make a religious family known.

Province of Italy Holy Land

Words of a former student ■ When taking up his new function, the new patriarch of Jerusalem, Mgr. Fouad Twal, was interviewed by a journalist. Questioned about the religious life in his diocese, he gave the following reply: “I have told you how much I value all these communities. Yet, I would like to see more religious involved in the present pastoral activities of the diocese. Unquestionable many of them have worked and sowed in the past. I am thinking in par-

est detail paying attention to each of them, one after the other and letting them sink in. Everything takes place in her heart, not in her mind. Christian meditation originates from Mary. Drawing a comparison between what she sees and what she hears, while confronting them and pondering them in her heart, that is how Mary proceeds in her meditation.

Mary's silence is the silence of someone who is aware of being full of the Holy Spirit. She is deeply grateful for it. She also gazes in contemplation at these events and at the world. She recognizes God's presence beyond appearances that could lead her to have doubts. Are such poverty and humility worthy of God's Son? She has heard from the mouth of the angel: “He will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David...” (Luke 1:32 and 33). The reality seems to contradict what the angel announced. God always surprises us. How can we recognize him if we are not silent the way Mary is?

God often chooses to work his way into this world at the height or in the depths of human tragedy: “*The Saviour was born in the night – in the darkness, in the silence and poverty of the cave of Bethlehem. “This is a place that has known “the yoke” and “the rod” of oppression. How often has the cry of innocents been heard in these streets; The Crib of Jesus lies always in the shadow of the Cross. The silence and poverty of the birth in Bethlehem are one with the darkness and pain of the death on Calvary. The Crib and the Cross are the same mystery of redemptive love.*” (John Paul II, speech in Bethlehem, March 2000)

God present in a baby! Bethlehem becomes the place where God reveals his affection and the mystery of love of the Holy Trinity. God's presence in our world will always be a surprising one: *The manger already prefigures something of Jesus' tomb in Jerusalem...* In the Magnificat Mary sang that what appears weak in men's eyes becomes the place where God displays his almighty love. God lies in what is fragile: “*Bethlehem is love given in God's hands.*”

By making himself so defenceless, so gentle God calls out to us: trust me and know me! Don't be afraid of me" (Charles de Foucauld). It is through weakness that God chose to meet mankind and to show his love. Only a heart in the silence of meditation can welcome God who reveals himself in such a striking way... as Mary.

II. A CONTEMPLATIVE SILENCE

Mary proposes an attitude that we can develop in our life. Our Founder invites us to such a contemplative attitude. *"Bethlehem's stable, the crib, how small that place is and yet how significant for the whole world! A small child, a poor woman, an ordinary worker and yet they appear so important to the world before God and before men. Is there anything greater before God and men than this little piece of bread that the priest holds every day in his hand! However all we see is a small piece of bread. That's how the greatest things lie hidden in the smallest ones."* (DS 245).

Mary pondered over these things in her heart; here, we are not confronted with unreasonable things but we go beyond what is reasonable in the intelligence of the heart. To understand the mystery of God we need more than our minds, which are unable to make us understand God's choice of weakness and fragility in Bethlehem. That is why our Founder said *"God wants to be called the God of our heart and not the God of our mind"* (DS 154).

"Here he is, in the crib and under the Eucharistic veils. It is a revelation for all those who have eyes to see and ears to hear... What a school! What a Master! What strength and what gentleness in the teachings of the crib! What infinite appeals they have, to win the hearts of the greatest sinners!" (DS 109) This implies meditation in the contemplation which leads to the intelligence of the heart : *"The Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, the shepherds receive in their heart Jesus Christ and his divine life, because in their heart, they meditate, they go over the Holy word, ruminate over it and savour it: such is the fruit of a devout and constant prayer..."* (DS 111)

Taking Mary as a model, we are invited to adopt such a contemplative attitude for ourselves, before God and with the others.

1) All that we are, all that we have, is a gift from God. We often know our limits and our faults better than our skills and qualities because we lack this contemplative attitude. We, too often know ourselves through the image we receive from the others, but it is a reduction and a caricature of ourselves too.

2) Our relationship with God can't be reduced to what we experience through our senses. To reach God, an act of faith made in a contemplative silence is always necessary. It is, in the absence of what is tangible, that I can discover the true God.

3) We always want to find in others what is a resemblance to ourselves ; the discovery of differences is always a trial, which first, drifts us apart from the others. But if we accept a contemplative silence, we will discover in the differences, a revelation of our shortfalls so as to respect differences as a source of enrichment: *"The difference of the other, is what I lack to be truly human"* a wise man said.

To be Christian, is indeed acting according to the teachings of the Gospel: our Christian life can't come down to a few statements and invocations. (Mt 7:21) However before acting, one has to interpret the daily reality in the light of the Gospel, to perceive its sacramental dimension, which is invisible with a simple human look. Without a contemplative look, we only perceive appearances; our Founder invites to see *"everywhere as sacraments"* (DS 294.) To be capable of looking this way, silence in prayer is required. Mary's contemplative silence far from being passive, is necessary to enable us later, to become God's partners in what we do, instead of thinking we can take his place, to be *"auxiliaries"* as St Michael enjoyed saying... Silent contemplation will make us discover God is at work before we are.