

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

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## The approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart

After this, there wasn't any mention of the debate which some had wanted, but which now the Assembly didn't want at all. The Constitutions were voted unanimously except for one blank. After this ballot, the capitulants rose like one man; and the *Deo Gratias* launched by Fr Etchecopar was picked up by all present in a huge cry of praise. Everyone hurried to the Sanctuary of Our Lady there to chant their joy in a thunderous *Te Deum* in thanksgiving.

As one worthy witness, Father Pagadoy, remarked, "amazing, how after twelve years of doubt, discussions and sufferings, Betharram is now in a state of joy. They are all happy to be free from all uncertainties and, on the rock of Peter, to recover the heritage and teaching of their blessed Father."

8

(to be continued)

To all the Betharramite religious...



Happy Feast of the Glorious Cross!

## Note from the General Council

- Approval of the withdrawal of the Community St Joseph in Albavilla and authorization for the change of use of the house.
- Admission to Final Profession of Brothers Guido García (ARG), Narcisse Zaolo (RCA), Emmanuel Congo (RCI), Luke Kriangsak Kitsakunwong (THA).

**B**est wishes to our Brothers who are going to make on Sunday, September 14th, in Adiapodoumé, their final profession: Bro. Emmanuel Congo; and their first profession: Brothers Antoine Adamou (RCA), Hyacinthe Ali Konan, Marius Huberson Angui, Aristide Keita-N'Guebata (RCI). The celebration will give a start to the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the presence of the Congregation in the Ivory Coast.



# Family News

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



A word from the  
Superior General

## Your Word, a light for my path

In October, the Church is getting ready to celebrate a Synod on *the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church*. Like every Synod it is a time of grace to get the whole Church moving on a specific topic. Our Congregation mustn't miss this opportunity for reflection, discernment and to do what is necessary to exploit the Word of God in our life as consecrated individuals.

On reading the Manifesto and other writings of our Father St Michael, one realises the importance which he attached to the Word of God. Not only does he quote the Bible at length, but his personal meditations on Scripture show to what extent he was familiar with it. Just like St Michael we too have experienced the meeting with Christ which, according to Benedict XVI (*God is Love*, No 1) is the beginning of a life of faith through contact with a passage of Scripture and the impression left on us. God's Word is a *light for my path*, or to use the image from Father Cencini, the daily readings are just a piece of bread which the Master puts into our rucksack to help us face a whole day's march. As we make our way, we return to the Word to keep up our stamina, to advance under the sun or the cold, with a heavy or light step, like true disciples of Christ.

**1. We celebrate the Word.** Every day in community, we celebrate the Word of God like a gift from the Father of all Goodness to strengthen our faith and salvation. Our beloved Father gives us his Word at Mass, during the Office of Readings and at other times in the Liturgy of Hours.

### In this issue

- Page 4: Need for the Word, for depth, for prayer
- Page 6: Session for final profession 2008
- Page 8: Bird's eye view of the congregation
- Page 9 : 5mn with Fr. Alberto Pensa
- Page 12: + Fr. Ceferino Arce
- Page 15: The approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart (8)

106<sup>th</sup> year  
10<sup>th</sup> series, n° 30  
14<sup>th</sup> September 2008



**2. We interiorize the Word.** Just like the morning dew (Is 55,10 – 11) it is the time to assimilate the Word and make it bear fruit. Scripture will only be a living Word on condition that it becomes part of our life. The Apostle St James resumes this in his letter: *Do away with all the impurities and bad habits that are still left in you; accept and submit to the Word which has been planted in you and can save your souls. But you must do what the Word tells you, and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves. To listen to the Word and not obey it is like looking at your own features in a mirror and then, after a quick look, going off and immediately forgetting what you looked like. But the man who looks steadily at the perfect law of freedom and makes that his habit – not listening and then forgetting, but actively putting it into practice – will be happy in all that he does. (James 1, 21 – 25)* This movement of interiorization and incarnation is long and difficult; it demands efforts, method and time. It can be achieved through meditation, like the lectio divina and other methods, for example like those suggested by St Ignatius. I am quite happy here with the different stages to be found in certain books by Cardinal Martini: *lectio, meditation, oratio, contemplation, discretion, operatio.*

**3. We bear witness to the Word.** Witness is not something which can be planned. It is spontaneous when the Word of God has been understood, integrated, when it has touched our heart, directed our decisions and when it is evident from our behaviour: criteria, values, motivations, actions. It is a feature of the Christian life, typified by the virtues which are out of place in present day society and raises the irresistible question: *Why are they like that?*

**4. We proclaim the Word.** When we answer the irresistible question and when we render an account with gentleness and respect of the hope that is ours (1 Peter 3, 15-16). The reason for our style of life is none other than Jesus, the Word made Flesh. By explaining all this we are proclaim-

## Fr. Etchecopar and the approval of the Society of the Sacred Heart 8



by Pierre Mieyaa,SCJ

After this short break, the activity of Father Etchecopar became public knowledge; it was so boundless that it reached Rome. On the day after the divine intervention which surpassed all his hopes, the man of God was even more evident.

Before the General Assembly which he had summoned for the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1975 to inform them of the approval of Rome, at the beginning of the first sitting, he spoke to invite the community to bless the Lord. As soon as Father Berilhe had begun to speak, all rose to listen in silence to the reading of the decree of Pope Pius IX, placing Betharram under the authority of the Holy See.

When the reading was finished, Father Estrate added an account of his successful trip to Rome. Father Etchecopar only interrupted him to remind the community of its duty of gratitude to God and to his chosen instruments: Sr Marie de Jesus Crucifie, Mgr Lacroix, Mlle Dartigaux and Father Bianchi. Then with great emotion and seriousness, as if in the presence of a relic, he picked up the Constitutions from Rome and presented them to the Assembly. They had just arrived on that very morning of Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 1875. The parcel was still sealed just as when it left the Vatican; before opening it he asked the assistance to listen to what he had to say without interrupting him, keeping observations and remarks for later on.

When the reading was over, Father Etchecopar reached this conclusion: "The best way of recognizing God's goodness for us in the whole of this business and of adhering purely and simply to what Rome is asking of us, is to accept all the alterations made to our first text, and to set about resolutely putting these rules into practice."

UNBOUNDED ACTIVITY



2008

SEPTEMBER

16	Buon compleanno	P. Egidio Zoia
18	Buon compleanno	P. Romualdo Airaghi
19	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños 65 años de profesión enhorabuena	P. Raymond Descomps P. Constancio Lopez Morales P. Nicolas Ayerza P. José Gogorza
20	Buon compleanno	P. Livio Borghetti
25	Joyeux anniversaire Happy birthday	P. Jean Tipy Br. Anthony V. Masilamani
26	Feliz cumpleaños Bom aniversário  40° di professione, auguri 10° di professione, auguri	P. Rogelio Ramirez P. Henri Karam Amorim P. Wagner Azevedo dos Reis P. Enrico Mariani P. Romualdo Airaghi
27	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Patrick Moulié
29	60 ans de profession, félicitations, enhorabuena, auguri	PP. Luis Oteiza, Celeste Perlini, Jean Lambert, Egidio Zoia
30	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños	P. Michel Vignau P. Miguel Martinez Fuertes

OCTOBER

1	60° di professione, auguri	P. Carlo Ruti
3	Happy birthday Buon compleanno	Fr. Edward Simpson P. Tobia Sosio
4	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Enrique Gavel
5	Buon compleanno Joyeux anniversaire 45° di professione, auguri	P. Angelo Paino F. Gérard Zugarramurdi P. Angelo Recalcati
6	Happy birthday	Fr. Anthony Britto Rajan
7	Buon compleanno	P. Piero Donini P. Davide Villa, P. Mario Colombo
8	Feliz cumpleaños	P. Enrique Miranda
9	Buon compleanno	P. Tiziano Molteni
12	Happy birthday Feliz cumpleaños Happy birthday	Fr. Thomas Kelly P. Wilfrido Romero Br. John Paul Kitti Loakham
13	Happy birthday	Br. Andrew Athit Nyomtham
15	Feliz cumpleaños Happy birthday 50 años de profesión, Enhorabuena, félicitations 40 años de profesión félicitations	P. Osvaldo Caniza Br. Wilfred Poulouse Perepadan P. Julio Colina & P. Pierre Caset P. Gaspar Fernandez & P. Michel Vignau

ing Jesus and his Gospel to all those with whom we are in contact, in every situation of our existence: community, pastoral, family, work, political commitment etc.

**5. We preach the Word.** The majority of us are Ministers of the Word because of our priestly vocation; we preach it on Sundays and on other occasions. This ministry consists in establishing a relationship between the Word proclaimed and the life of the community and the Sacrament being celebrated. The community which is listening to us is as wise as it is critical; it can tell the difference between thoughts gleaned from a fashionable work and those inspired by a personal experience of Christ and nourished by the Scriptures, for they point to a way of life with the Word.

**6. We share the Word.** In the tradition of Religious Life, what is known as *collatio* has always been important. This is the action whereby a religious community assembles so that each brother can freely share with the others his familiarity with the Word, his experience of the *lectio divina* and how he was witness to God's action in the people he has met in the course of his mission. This witness, offered with simplicity, discretion and respect helps the brothers to grow in their faith and gives its real depth to the community.

*Father Etehecopar wrote... to Fr. Magendie, 4th September 1894*

*This is the month for pilgrimages to Lourdes and Betharram. There have been more than before perhaps to Lourdes, and perhaps miracles have been more spectacular than ever before. Mankind probably needed a massive shake up, having tried to sully the image of the Immaculate Virgin Mary! Father Garicoits used to say: "Lourdes will send pilgrims to Betharram". This prediction has been fulfilled beyond our wildest expectations, since pilgrims come from the Sanctuary to Calvary and even visit the beloved tomb. In one day, in the space of a few hours, the National Pilgrimage brought three train loads of pilgrims to visit the chapel and the holy hillside.*



Gaspar Fernandez, SCJ

## A need for the Word, for depth and for prayer

At the end of August, a former National President of Action Catholique preached the annual retreat to the Italian Province. Here are some extracts from the opening conference by Paola Bignardi.

*The Apostles rejoined Jesus and told Him all they had done and taught. Then He said to them: "You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while". (Mark 6, 30-31)*

This lovely episode talks about the meeting of the disciples with the Lord, on their return from their mission. It seems important to me to read between the lines. Between the meeting with Jesus and what he says to them, you can imagine the disciples telling him all about their mission, about the people they met. Such breaks are missing in our communities; we haven't places where we can talk about our mission, so it becomes the initiative taken by the individual and a solitary action. The Apostles gather around Jesus, surely to tell him what they have done and how; the people they have met, their successes and failures, the fatigue, above all the fatigue, for Jesus' answer is clear: *Take a rest!* The Lord takes care of the mental and physical state of those returning from their mission.

Our days are often like a whirlwind, full of appointments, meetings, responsibilities, work and family life; and even when they are not overloaded we are caught up in the hectic rush to the extent that life is a race, whereas things could be done otherwise. I don't know if this is what happens to you, but it is a fact that the days when I am at rest, I always manage to find something to do. Even when one is behind with one's work, there is no need to neglect prayer nor the time given to the Word of God, but it is obvious that our prayer is likely to be contaminated by our life style, to be regular but superficial, and ends up by being undertaken in a rush.

We need to recover that calm which helps us to live in depth. We need a place of solitude; perhaps the idea frightens us for it leaves us on our own; it puts us in front

Ever mobile, generous, loving to sing, to pray and ready for sacrifice as much as for fun, Father Arce accompanied his youngsters wherever they went, proudly displaying his badges and medals.

He left his dear Barracas in 1992 and stayed at different places: Adroque, the Church of St John Baptist, the College at La Plata, spending his time in the confessional, saying Mass, visiting the sick and always surrounded by his friends. From La Plata he was recalled to his dear Barracas. By now he was ill, and his ailments made him realise his limits, and the vulnerability of our human condition. He accepted all with good humour. His doctor diagnosed an enlarged heart. With a smile Father Arce commented: "So now it's wrong to have a big heart!"

God was now leading him on the way of the cross of his. He was never heard complaining neither of his pains and aches nor of anybody. He never kept any feeling of resentment; he never spoke ill of the absent, and took no pleasure in criticism. On the contrary, he always saw what was positive in a situation and never missed an opportunity to draw attention to it.

He could savour life's little pleasures; even while he was ill, he would enjoy a good meal, a glass of good wine, whisky, brandy, jam or chocolates. The approach of old age was affecting his autonomy, his memory, his speech but didn't prevent him from communicating.

He was always ready to concelebrate Mass, to take communion in his wheel chair; when the faithful saw his pass by they would caress him... On the night of 10<sup>th</sup> July he was hospitalised for bowel obstruction. The next day at 13h30, after receiving the Sacraments of the Sick he fell asleep peacefully in the Lord.

For his funeral the song which he often sang for the camps accompanied Father Arce to the "camping site where the Lord had pitched his tent and ours." *It is but an au revoir/ it is but a brief goodbye/ The Lord will gather us beside his fire.*

Francisco Daleoso, SCJ

### IN MEMORIAM

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August **Bro. Jean Casaubon** passed away in Rosario (Argentina), at the age of 91. Let us pray for him (a note in the next issue).

## IN MEMORIAM

## Argentina



Ameghino  
1<sup>st</sup> September 1917



Barracas  
11<sup>th</sup> July 2008

## Father Ceferino Arce

Father Ceferino Arce was born into a truly Christian family in Ameghino, a town in the west of the Province of Buenos Aires, on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1917. The second of a family of ten, he learned, from his youth, to heed the voice of the Lord. A visit by the Betharramite Fathers to his parish sowed the seeds of a missionary vocation in him. This led him to Barracas Apostolicate. He was 14 years of age.

In 1939 and just out of Barracas College, he was one of the first group of novices at Adrogue. Then he went to the Holy Land to continue his formation and was ordained priest in Jerusalem on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1943. His return to Argentina at the height of the war was a real odyssey!

In March 1945 he began his mission at St Joseph's College, Buenos Aires. He taught History, Geography, French and Religious Studies. In the summer of 1950 he was appointed to Barracas where he arrived with a smile and available. Such was his zeal for work that he ended up doing everything: curate of the parish; In 1951 he became Head of the school, at the time only a primary school. In 1958, he started evening classes. In 1972 he took over the Headship of the Secondary School. With his usual daring he opened a Professional College and won from the Archbishop to be the first Catholic Coeducational College in the town. With increased demands for places, he extended the buildings and fitted out new classrooms.

Despite his many occupations and the long days of work, Fr Arce still found time to accompany the young, big or small, healthy or ill, Catholic or not, by being as close to them as possible and taking their problems on board. As chaplain to the No 7 Boy Scout group – the Sacred Heart – he took in the richness of the movement, its Evangelical ethos, very Betharramite of service, and availability: *ever ready*, which is just like saying *here I am*. He adopted the method of educating the child by the child, the teenager as guardian of the small child. In 1958 he founded the Girl Guides N08 Sacred Heart so as to give the girls the same spirit and the same training.

of what is most beautiful and interesting but also what is most sensitive in our lives. In solitude we also come face to face with what is least pleasing in ourselves and about ourselves which are all the more obvious without the intoxication of all that has to be done! We need the solitude of our conscience before our Father, following the example of Jesus who used to withdraw and converse with his Father. These are the conditions to be able to hear, speak and contemplate our life in his Light, and to discover in his presence the deepest desires of our life. Finally, we need solitude so as to be able to express a sincere prayer.

We need to pray in truth so as to deepen our expectations and face our fears which often make us live our Christian life on the defensive, without passion, without courage, without joy. It can be our fault, or that of our community or of the Church. Yes, in prayer we can look at our fears which transform us into Christians readier to defend the value of their faith rather than show its beauty and relevance. We must pray to the Holy Spirit that we understand this crucial time for the world and the Church. We need to understand where the Lord is leading the world to and above all to discern the signs of his presence. Because, even in the whirlwind of our daily lives, full of prejudice and disbelief, it is not easy to recognise God's presence. Consequently, we start with discouraging interpretations which imagine the world rushing to catastrophe and incapable of seeing the signs. These lights may not be blinding but if we miss them, it means that we are looking elsewhere.

Little by little we must discover the love which surrounds us, contemplate Jesus as the image of the Father's love, and so interpret the mystery of the Lord with the key of love; but not the love which we would like to put into our dealings with him, the love which we receive from Him, and which helps us to live. This age of ours needs love.

## Session in view of perpetual vows

From June 1<sup>st</sup> to July 31<sup>st</sup> the session assembled 15 young professed religious: 3 from “Blessed Miriam” Region (2 from Thailand and 1 from India); 6 from “Auguste Etcheopar” Region (4 from Paraguay and 2 from Argentina); 6 from “Michael Garicoits” Region (2 from the Province of Italy (1 from RCA and 1 from Italy), 4 from the Province of France, Ivory Coast Delegation).

The facilitator team, appointed by the General Superior, wanted to respect the origins of the young religious and was composed of: Fr Chan Kunu for Asia; Fr Gustavo Agin in the Holy Land and Fr Angelo Recalcati in France, for America; Fr Jean Lambert in the Holy Land as guide to the Holy Places.

There were quite a few outside contributors: pride of place goes to the General Superior; Other interesting contributors were the Carmelites of Bethlehem, the Daughters of the Cross in Igon, the Servants of Mary and Bernardines in Anglet; finally the testimony of different communities...

The different stages of the session:

- Bethlehem: mutual acquaintance and the Mystery of the Incarnation (1<sup>st</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> June); Ten day Spiritual Exercises (12<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> June); The Paschal Mystery in connection with Jerusalem (22<sup>nd</sup> June-1<sup>st</sup> July).
- Nazareth: The life of the disciple and apostle (1<sup>st</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> July)
- In France: In the footsteps of St Michael (10<sup>th</sup>- 31<sup>st</sup> July).

Impressions on the Holy Land and in particular on Galilee: “At Nazareth I appreciated the God of Love made man for us, God among us”. “I am amazed at Mary’s simplicity at the moment of the Annunciation and feel invited to pay attention to the signs of God... On Mount Carmel the Prophet Elie questioned me about my passion for God”. “I am impressed by the incarnation, by God who takes on our human nature in all simplicity.” “At Nazareth I find out that holiness is to be found in every day life rather than in the marvellous”. “On Mount Thabor, I am struck by the contemplation of the beauty of the Transfiguration of which I am called to be a witness today.”

We could perhaps think of opening a school. But Catholic private education is uneasy about its future: a falling birth rate and the development of state schools. Now is not the time to embark on such a project. Another one, perhaps? It’s difficult to answer.

***In a Vice-Province in full expansion, how can you plan and finance projects and activities?*** - The mission consists in living close to the people, in adopting their simple and humble life style, not doing things in their place or carrying them in our arms: *I have it, therefore I let you have it*. In days gone by, missionary activity didn’t require vast resources. With the Seminary and the Training centres for the youth, things have changed. Personally, if I succeeded in creating Ban Pong, it’s thanks to the help from scores of people, drops of water which gave rise to a spring with a constant trickle, but only just enough. An educational project can be helped by someone either suspicious of or opposed to religion, particularly the Catholic religion. With the Seminary it’s different; if we were able to build it it’s thanks to the donations from everywhere, but there are still millions of baths to be found. Better still: we have finished paying by taking out bank loans, on the understanding that they will be refunded. One way or another, the building will be paid for.

There is no let up with the cost of the formation of the seminarians; they even seem to increase! Imagine that although living as modestly as possible, with the strict minimum, the price of formation exceeds more than 3 million baths annually. Hence the importance of letting people know as widely as possible what is happening in Thailand: a Vice-Province without a regular income, just gifts often modest, and at the same time huge expenses for an entity like ours. And yet, despite everything, forward march! If a door closes, God will open us a window. If what we have tried to do is God’s will, he will give us the means to bring it to completion. It is most important that the spirit of Betharram is never lost.

**To live sharing:**  
send your offerings  
to Bro Michael, SCJ  
Sacred Heart Mission  
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Whitnash - Leamington  
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(United Kingdom)



5 mn with...

**How is Betharram viewed by the local Church? And by society?** - I think Betharram is well observed and respected because of its own characteristics: a simple way of life, close to the poor, willingness to go where others were not ready to go. Proof of this: the foundation at Maetawar. Betharram is held in high esteem because of the image it represents at the heart of Christian Thai society, marked by the size of its colleges and hospitals. The Catholic Church is symbolic of wealth and power, even if she gives generously: *I have it, therefore I let you have it!* In Thai society our Congregation is but a grain of dust, but whoever comes in contact with it holds it in high regard and respect.

**Is the Congregation legally recognised? Why is this important?** - Betharram has no legal existence except as part of the Catholic Church. We are actually in negotiations in view of creating a Foundation, above all to protect the work at Ban Pong. The other charitable works are indirectly covered by the Foundation *The Catholic Church of Thailand*; the living quarters at Chiang Mai and the Seminary at Sampran have been built on ground belonging legally to the Catholic Church which is a security from the point of view of the administration and the law. As for our own Foundation we hope to have it all in place before the end of the year.

**What are the main challenges from the point of view of pastoral, religious and economical questions?** - The challenges are those of present day society, where everything is questioned. Once upon a time the ethnic minorities where we work formed a simple receptive society. What Father said was Gospel truth. Not so today. The young are educated, and are easily influenced by modern means of communication. The truths which the media dangle before them have a greater attraction than the mysterious and hidden Truth. From the point of view of the economy, we have always lived by having total confidence in Divine Providence. Are we disappointed? No. Worried? Yes, sometimes; without a regular income it is difficult to succeed in present day society.

“At Abelin, I am amazed at the poverty of the place and am invited to rely on simplicity to prepare myself to obey through love.” At Lake Tiberias I am like Peter by my fears, my failures and my successes.”

The time spent at Betharram and in the footsteps of St Michael was rich and intense despite the obvious fatigue. As a source of our Congregation it was greatly appreciated by all. Ibarre was an important time for reflexion despite the rain. Igon prompted a deep sense of conversion for some. At Loyola we felt what we had experienced in the Spiritual Exercises. In this Jubilee Year Lourdes was to be a special time of prayer, respect for the sick, liturgy and popular devotions encouraging us to simplicity.

There are two points to be noted during these two months:

- **The personal dimension** was most important during the experience: (1) we stressed the importance of personal prayer; the morning program took care of that; (2) time for integration in the evening (18h – 19h) was respected all along the session. (3) The meeting with the “accompagneur” was recommended.

- **The international dimension** was very important; our group was a good image of the reality of the Congregation. Some handled the languages well; others had more difficulty. We were made aware of this during moments of sharing. The Liturgy (The Office of Hours and the Eucharist) were the favoured places for the different languages, even if some regretted the lack of creativity. The different conferences were translated into the 3 languages, thanks to voluntary translators. They were the backroom workers and we are grateful to them. The Hand book “Visiting the Holy Places”, edited by Fr Lambert and brought up to date, had also been translated into the three languages.

The different realities of the congregation were also presented as had been asked in the invitations. There was great willingness to show consideration for others: listening patiently and respect of differences. (The service teams saw to that). These points were noted by several of the participants.

There was unanimity where the **Spiritual Exercises** are concerned; in the final summing up all said how much this time had been useful in the conduct of the session. All appreciated the tact and sensitivity of Fr Gustavo as spiritual guide. The daily personalised meeting produced good fruits for all. For some the experience was fundamental.

Of course in the final summing up regrets were expressed; as with all human undertakings there were failings. There were those for whom the time given to sharing wasn't long enough, the program was overloaded, and free time too short. Some admitted that their personal involvement could have been better. But all said that the time was very useful given the point at which they are in their personal commitment. The congregation has become a gallery of portraits showing the same charism of St Michael in the diversity of cultures. It was a time of grace but also a time which committed each one to greater demands.

Laurent Bacho, SCJ

## BIRD'S EYE VIEW



St Michael  
Region

### Province of Italy Holy Land

**An event in the Latin Patriarchate** ■ On past August 31<sup>st</sup>, our Congregation officially assumed the parish of the Saints-Apostles in Zerqa (industrial city with 800.000 inhabitants, close to Amman). It is the first Betharramite community in an Arabic country, exclusively constituted with Arabic religious: Fathers Elie, Eyad and Butros.

### Vice-Province of Brazil

**Meeting on the beach** ■ The Assembly of the vice-province was held from 21 to 23 August at Ubatuva, pleasant seaside resort in Brazil. Almost all the religious turned up; they found accommodation in the flat of the Querido brothers, closely linked to our Betharramite spirit, received in the days of their youth. The first day was consecrated to prayer and reflection, guided by Fr Gaspar Fernandez, the Superior General. The following days gave the opportunity to analyze the present situation and the future of the Vice-Province in the background



Fr. Etchecopar  
Region

of the regionalization. The atmosphere was friendly, fraternal and simple according to the Betharramite tradition.

### Blessed Miriam Region

**Asian seedbed** ■ On September 6th, at Mary Hill Convent, Bro. Enakius and Bro. Stervin, from the Indian Delegation, were ordained as deacons by the Bishop of Mangalore. Less than a month before, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August, Bro. Luke Kriangsak, of the Vice-Province of Thailand, made his final profession in Sampran, and was ordained as deacon on the day after at Lux Mundi Major Seminary. Together with the whole Region, we pray for them and thank God for this gift.



Blessed Miriam  
Region

## OF THE CONGREGATION

### 5 MINUTES WITH... Fr. Alberto

**Nef: Can you give us a quick portrait of your Vice-Province?** - Betharram in Thailand is something which is in full expansion. This is the impression you get when you see the statistics and read accounts of religious professions and ordinations which have been happening recently. In fact since the first two in 1999 we are now at our 13<sup>th</sup> ordination this year. But however we must be careful about the impression this gives, for the old guard is reaching the end of its tether. Two of our Fathers have returned home so as not to be a weight on the community, and a third one could easily follow their example. Actually there are seven senior Fathers who are more than 70 years old, one of whom is 87 years of age and is ill.

Thanks to the young, Betharram in Thailand is experiencing a fresh surge of vitality. As part of the regionalisation, *the mission* has been entrusted to 3 communities: Chiang, which includes Chiang Mai, Maepon, Huay Tong and Maetawar; Mekong which includes Huay Bong, Ban Pong and Phayai; and Sampran with the formators and scholastics. In view of the importance of the young (2/3 of the religious, not including the students) it is difficult to foresee the future. Life is a constant movement, growth and transformation. Space must be left to hope.

Fr. Alberto Pensa, born in Italy, has been the superior vice-provincial of Thailand since 2001. Since he made a stop in Rome on his way to North Italy, we took the opportunity of interviewing him on the mission and projects of the Congregation in this country.