

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

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Betharram in Ivory Coast (2)

cese. They themselves took advantage of these sessions to get to know Africa better with the Brothers of Christian Schools in Toussiana in Haute Volta. Here they were in contact with specialists in education. The youngest member of the community soon got involved with “Coeurs Vaillants” in the parish; an evening’s entertainment, organised by the children on the steps of the church delighted the Christians before the Christmas Midnight Mass. In St Michael’s school the time had come to launch some educational initiatives, so the 18 pupils in Year 4 went to spend two days in Bouna Nature Reserve to learn about respecting nature.

By October 1962 the limit has been reached with the opening of a 4th class, bringing the total to 85 and the arrival of a religious-priest sent by the Province: Fr Benat Segur, recently ordained. The Congregation was counting so much on Ferke that the following year a scholastic was sent for a stage of 2 years: Brother Pierre Foueillassar...

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To continue

Father Etcheocopar wrote... to his sister Julie, 13th February 1872

Just a word. We must have great love for Our Lady, often entrusting our soul to her with all its countless miseries; we must turn our eyes to her often. She is our guiding star in storms, our plank in our shipwreck, our rainbow after our ingratitude, our stepladder after our falls, our doorway to enter heaven. Therefore, we must look to her, love her, cling to her, in spite of everything and all the time!

Oh Mary, your mercy is as great as the world, whose inhabitants you help; as deep as hell, from which you pluck so many sinners; longer than all the crimes, than all the wickedness of mankind; as high as heaven where you welcome all who place their trust in you.

NEF



Family News

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

 **A word from the
Superior General**

Announce the Wonderful Deeds of the Lord

The Council of the Congregation took place in Rome from the 21st to the 31st January, first step in the implementation of the project mentioned in the January number of the NEF. Instead of the 12 members of the preceding Council, we were only eight. And we concluded that the smaller number facilitated the work, the sharing and the decision taking.

But the most interesting was our *sharing the faith* which exercise was accompanied by two priests from the diocese of Padua. Before talking about religious, communities, works or Congregation problems, we took four days to talk about ourselves and our experience of faith. Finally this is the most important question, the foundation of our belonging to Betharram, why we are alive, act and die. I believe that the future of our religious family lies there, for what we need most it to revive in every religious the flame of his vocation. Why should we be ashamed of sharing our experience of Christ, he who is all things for us? And if we are unable to say what motivates us, two questions come to my mind: On what is our life together based? What do we talk about on our mission?

Generally, when it is a question of speaking or preaching, we have a theoretical and rational language, which, as has often been noticed, has difficulty in reaching the masses. They used to accept it in the days when everyone was Christian. Today, anyone wishing to be listened to must adopt the narrative, using examples of witness or experi-

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10th series, n° 35
14th February 2009



ences: the kerygmatic style. By rousing interest through the living account of my experience of Jesus, I amaze, I awaken, and I instil in others the desire to meet Christ too. In any case that is the way He preached: *All were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them like some one who had authority, and not like the Scribes.* (Mark 1, 22)

Experiencing Faith is not something theoretical. We meet Jesus in everyday events and the people with whom we live. Rather, God doesn't meet man in a book, an idea, not even in places reserved for the sacred; God meets man in the daily events of his life and the depth of his personal story. So, faith is the concrete experience of God in one's life. Basically, it is not a question of knowledge, but of salvation. And this is only possible when the meeting with God takes place in the living experience of a man or a woman, in time, space, in human relations, personal limitations, and death. This is where salvation occurs: God's meeting with man. The Bible is full of accounts describing such experiences, for example the call of the prophets, the psalms etc.

I have just read two accounts of a conversion which have impressed me; in a secular society, they are witness that God continues to go out to meet man, and that he *doesn't tire of arousing an unending fermentation in all hearts*, as St Michael would say. The first account is that of Maurice Caillet: *"I was rationalist, a Freemason, and an atheist. I hadn't even been baptised, but since my wife Claude was ill, we decided to go to Lourdes. While she was at the baths, the cold forced me to seek shelter in the crypt where I assisted at the first Mass in my whole life. During the reading of the Gospel, when the priest said: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find knock and the door will be opened," I was shocked to the core for they were the very words that I had heard the day of my initiation as a Freemason and they were the words I used to say, as a Venerable, to the new candidates that I received. In the*

BETHARRAM IN IVORY COAST 1959-2009 - 2. The consolidation



"Providence doesn't advance with great strides and loud acclamations. Rather she begins in a little crib with a small Child" (St Michael Garicoits, DS 184) Our three Fathers know all about it. At the end of the first year they are present at the retreat and a theology session given by one of the missionaries in the new Seminary which had just been opened at Anyama, near Abidjan, with the Eudist Fathers. On the 7th August 1960, great joy at Abidjan – the Independence of Ivory Coast has been declared!. On the way through Bouake, they deviate to visit the new Benedictine monastery, founded a few months earlier by the monks from Tioumliline (Morocco).

In October 1960, it's the opening of a second class – 5th year. Together the two classes have 52 pupils. On the 24th March 1961 came the joy of welcoming the first visitor from Betharram – Father Jean Mateo, Provincial Superior, who had been at the origin of the foundation in the first place. He is amazed at the friendly relations between the Fathers and the pupils, already after 18 months there exists a great familiarity. He is full of admiration for the commitment of the three religious in the parish of Ferke, as in the places where no parish exists yet. For the important feasts, Fr Jean Suberbielle is parish priest in the National Park of Bouna and Fr Pierre Monnot in Odienne. The Provincial encouraged them to practice great charity within the school, while at the same time thinking of those Christians who have no pastors yet and of the Animists who don't know Jesus Christ yet.

Aware that a great field of evangelisation is opening up in Ferke, on his return to Betharram, Fr Mateo appointed Fr Leo Minaberry, ordained the previous year, to join the "three founders" in Ferke. By October 1961 he had arrived in time for the opening of a 3rd class, thus bringing the total of pupils up to 70. During the holidays the Fathers organised training sessions for teachers in the dio-

A series by Fr
Bacho, scj



2009

FEBRUARY

14	Joyeux anniversaire Buon compleanno	F. Bertrand Belhartz F. Giuseppe Pozzi
17	Joyeux anniversaire	F. Hyacinthe Ali Konan
18	Happy birthday	P. Jean-Luc Morin P Serge Braga Latta
19	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños 15 años de profesión	Br. Andrew Ferris P. Henri Lamasse Hno. Raúl Villalba Maylin P. Daniel Gonzalez
20	Joyeux anniversaire 65 ans de sacerdoce 15 años de profesión	P. Mirco Trusgnach P. Henri Nadal P. Gilberto Ortellado
22	Happy birthday	Br. William Finucane Br. Charles Enakius Fr. Alberto Pensa
25	Joyeux anniversaire	F. Élisée Mambo Sika
26	Happy birthday	Fr. Chodki Damronganurak
27	Joyeux anniversaire	F. Arsène Raymond Noba
28	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños	P. Pierre Salla P. Francisco de Paula
1	Joyeux anniversaire Buon compleanno	P. André Gillet P. Albino de Giobbi
3	Happy birthday	Fr. Tidkham Jailertrit
5	Buon compleanno	P. Giuseppe Franchi
7	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Joseph Saint-Pé
8	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Henri Marsaa-Poey
9	Happy Birthday	Br. John Peter Philip
10	Buon compleanno	P. Pietro Felet
11	Buon compleanno	P. Pierpaolo Nava
12	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Joseph Canton
13	Buon compleanno	P. Natale Re
14	50 ans de sacerdoce	P. Pierre Monnot
15	Joyeux anniversaire Happy birthday	F. Paul Lamothe Br. Antony J. Livin Fernando

MARCH

ensuing silence, since there was no homily, I distinctly heard a voice saying to me: "OK, you are asking for a cure for Claude, but what are you ready to give? Immediately, certain that I had been challenged by God Himself, I had only myself to offer him



The second account is from Mercedes Araoz, thoroughbred Marxist in her youth, she campaigned in the Revolutionary Communist League. Elected socialist deputy from 1986 to 2000, date of her arrival in the Senate, she was the parliamentary candidate elected with the best score in 2004, having obtained 1, 6 million votes in Barcelona. In November 2007 she stepped down from her seat as Socialist Senator and announced her conversion to Christianity: *"I have two sons. At home I have always brought them up faithful to the values of left wing Marxism. After meeting with the Little Brothers of the Lamb the youngest converted to Christianity. It's difficult to talk about it now but my son has been an instrument of God's Grace. He took part in the World Youth Days in 2000. That summer, I had read an article by a left wing journalist who was attacking these Roman assemblies, and the crowds of young people. What was happening to the Left? What had become of their ideals? Why was the Left unable to assemble crowds like that? At the end of that year I heard God's call. Now that's enough, Mercedes! I couldn't even remember the Our Father! That's how I began my way back. I trained myself by starting everything from the beginning, and by reading Ratzinger."*

In the presence of accounts such as these, we cannot silence what Psalm 105, 1-5 sings: *O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wonderful works Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually. Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles and the judgements he has uttered.*

Council of the Congregation Rome 2009: Summary

THE SUPERIOR GENERAL'S SPEECH

On the 21st January at the Generalate, in the presence of his Council and of the Superiors of the Regions St Michael (Fr Graziano Sala), Fr Etchecopar (Fr Gustavo Agin) and Blessed Mariam (Fr Austin Hughes), Fr Gaspar Fernandez opened the 17th Council of the Congregation.

In his speech, he outlined the reorganisation demanded by the 2005 Chapter as a time of grace: “because these changes are necessary if we are to attain greater unity and communion at every level and in every situation”; because its implementation is being done according to the timetable drawn up at Bangalore and a perfect knowledge of the ground, thanks to the canonical visit of all the communities; and because it is “an opportunity of reviving the flame of our vocation and therefore of renewing the life and mission of each religious and of the entire Congregation.”

To accompany this movement, the Superior General listed several priorities: form real communities around the apostolic community Project; revive the role as animators of the Superiors; relaunch the promotion of vocations and missionary cooperation; achieve a real sharing of goods among the Religious of the Congregation, so that all have a correct standard of living and are able to work at the mission of the Congregation. Finally Fr Gaspar reminded us that in the implementation of these priorities care must be taken to listen to the Religious, to accompany the communities and show patience, respect and ability to progress. And thus our travel warrant was decided upon.

OUR EXPERIENCE OF THE SHARING OF FAITH

With the help of two priests from St Luke's Institute (diocese of Padua) we talked about our personal experience of faith before talking about the Congregation. This resulted in an interior renewal necessary for the exercise of our service of responsibility.

Father Pierino Donini

Born in Desco, province of Sondrio on 7th October 1923, Father Pierino Donini began as a Postulant in Colico in 1938. Because of the war it was not possible for him to go to France for his novitiate so he began his formation in Rome, where he made his first vows in 1942. Six years later, together with Fathers Celestino and Luigi Gusmeroli, Anselmo Ghezzi and Clemente Albusceri he would be one of the first Italian Betharramites to be ordained in their own country.

After ordination, his first ministry in 1948 was in Colico College where he was teacher and secretary. He pursued his mission of teaching in Gravedona, where he arrived in 1957 as superior of the community.

In 1962 he was entrusted with the parish of St Rose of Viterbe in Rome, where he remained until 1997 as responsible of the community and Parish Priest. In a quarter of a century Father Pierino made a deep impression on the Christian community of the district. With great constancy and energy he had a new parish church built, near to the Daughters of the Cross.

After spending a short time at the Roman residence Miracoli (1997-2000), he was named Parish Priest at Orvinio (Rieti). He devoted himself to this parish until his death. In the 1970s, Don Fernando, parish priest of Orvinio, had left to the Congregation, a piece of land on which was built the Holiday Centre “Pratarelle”. Father Pierino quickly took this work to heart, and with time transformed it into a pleasant family home.

We entrust Fr Pierino to the intercession of Our Lady of Betharram and to our Father St Michael. May they welcome him into his Father's House there to enjoy a never ending happiness.

India - On February 11th, after a long illness, died **Mr. Mariadass**, father of Br Jesuraj, scholastic in Mangalore. Pray for him and all his family

IN MEMORIAM

Italy



Desco
7 october 1923



Rome
25 january 2009

stay. Some one was needed for Monteporzio. But I have always dreamt of one day returning to Argentina.

During all those years, have you seen any changes taking place in the Congregation? - Yes, lots. Thank God, they have been positive, especially concerning human relations between Superiors and Religious and also among the Religious themselves. I notice that there is a greater family spirit. I am particularly aware of this at the Generalate where I have been living for the past six years. I find that we communicate better and that there is more joy. Another thing I find changed: the Congregation seems to me to be more missionary orientated. At the Generalate I like to see religious from all over the world (Thailand, India, Africa, America). That proves to me at what point the Betharramite family is present in many poor and humble parts of the world..

Today, would you invite a young man to become a religious-brother? - Gladly! If he were to know St Michael and the Congregation he would soon see that he wouldn't regret it. For, as a Brother in the Congregation, he would have his place and there he would be very happy.

How did you celebrate your 50 years of Religious Life? - I was overwhelmed with all the presents I received. I had always wanted to return to Argentina and above all to visit El Cimarron. It was deeply moving for me, on Christmas Night, to be in the middle of Rosario community, in a chapel packed to the door, to give thanks to the Lord for so many years of Religious Life. There are things that you cannot explain! On my arrival in El Cimarron I was also very moved, all the more so because I was meeting men I had known as children. What emotion to revisit, 40 years later, all the places where I had lived! It was equally moving to see the Brothers I had known and to visit our communities in Argentina.

Thank you, Brother. And now, a word to conclude? - By way of conclusion, I would suggest to the Betharramite Religious and Laity, to repeat often the words of St Michael: "Here I am. Forward march, forward all the time!"

Our exchanges focused on three levels: human experiences; experience of belief in Jesus Christ; experience of the Church. They helped us to clear points necessary to revive our personal faith and the faith of the Congregation.

So that each religious can advance in his vocation, certain points have been suggested, among these: accept one's humanity and that of his brothers, develop a form of prayer firmly rooted in our life; have a personal director; reinforce communion with the Superior in dialogue and community reappraisal; plan times for spiritual and human renewal, in times of reorientation and according to Ignatian teaching.

After a close inspection of the three regions and a detailed presentation of the important points of the Rule of Life, the Council entered the practical section.

WORKS AND DECISIONS

Project for a Directory. The Superior General presented a manual designed to help Regional Superiors and Superiors of Vicariats as animators. A certain number of corrections were made in preparation for the final edition which will be presented to the Regional Councils in April 2009 in Bethlehem.

Formation: Explanations were given about the year long preparation for final vows and the international session. In view of the four previous experiences, difficulties with visas, travel expenses and the risk of dispersion forgetting the essential, namely the spiritual preparation for final vows, it was decided: (1) Before final profession, a session of 40 days in Betharram in the footsteps of St Michael; (2) During the first five years in the ministry, reorientation in the Holy Land.

In reply to the desire expressed by the General Chapter, the year thus freed will be examined according to each individual and after discernment between the Master of Scholastics and the Regional Superior. During that year counselling the young man will be particularly cared for.

Promotion of vocations: This is a priority for all the Religious. The Superiors of Regions and Vicariats undertake to propose initiatives. In each Vicariate a religious will be appointed to offer vocational experiences to the young.

Missionary coordination: The Council thanks and encourages all who give of their time and possessions for the support of Betharram on mission. After Thailand in 2008, special interest this year will be focused on Ivory Coast. For the 50th anniversary of our presence we would like to make the religious and communities aware of projects in the country.* Fr Bruno Ierullo will coordinate the initiative, and each Vicariate is invited to rouse interest for the global dimension of the mission.

Meeting of the Regional Councils (21st April to the 7th May 2009 in Bethlehem): The first four days will be given over to the “sharing of faith”. Then the following topics will be tackled: the charism; the community and the apostolic community project; the role of the superior; the Rule of Life; Regionalisation; finances; promotion of vocations; formation; animation and missionary coordination.

Finances of the Congregation: Mr Pirovano and Madame Cavazzini, members of the General Financial Bureau joined our working party for a whole day. In the context of regionalisation, procedures for a greater sharing of goods at Congregation level were studied.

In the presence of the Superior General, during the Eucharistic celebration on the 30th January, the Regional Superiors pronounced their profession of faith and the oath of fidelity as demanded in the Rule of Life.

On the 31st January, M. Villelongue, director for communications and development for the St Vincent de Paul Society (Paris) was guest of the Council. He opened up some avenues of reflexion and action to reinforce support for our missions. The Council of Congregation came to an end in the afternoon, and would be meeting in Bethlehem with the Superiors of the Vicariats, next Spring.

* To be followed on www.betharram.net and in forthcoming issues of NEF

Full text Cf. XVIIth Council of the Congregation Acts

5 MINUTES WITH... Brother Fiorenzo

Nef: How long have you been in the Congregation? - I entered the “apostolicat” in Colico in 1954, at the age of 14.

Did you know the Congregation already? - Not at all. When I felt the beginnings of a vocation, I had a word with my Parish Priest, Bene Lario, but my family didn't have the means to send me to the junior seminary. One day, a priest from Betharram, Fr Giovanni Gavazzi, came to preach for Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, patron of my village; my Parish Priest put me in contact with him, and so that's how I came to enter the Betharram family.

How does the vocation of a religious-brother happen? - Quite honestly, I felt perfectly happy at the apostolicat, so much so that I began to like Betharram and the life of the clerics and priests; I understood that my place was there. While discussing it over with Fr Marco Gandolfi, and given my personality, I thought that the best for me was to be a religious-brother. Consequently, I did my novitiate at Monteporzio 1957 – 1958, and my first vows on Christmas Day. I have just had 50 years of religious life.

How have you spent those years? - 50 years, it's a lot but it passes very quickly. I have always tried to be of service to the Congregation, through the different tasks in the communities: working in the vineyard at Monteporzio – we used to make very good wine there – in the sacristy at the La Caravina Sanctuary... and other services where ever my Superiors sent me.

Is there not some particular moment that you would like to recall? - Yes, when I went to Argentina in 1969 and where I spent 5 unforgettable years. In the interior of the country – Entre Rios – Fr Trabucchi was in charge of the parish in El Cimarron, the village where the pre-apostolicat was situated. It was rural with simple country folk. I felt perfectly at ease there and I felt of use. I did a bit of everything. I was in community with Frs Rovegno, Eroaldi and Br Ascencio Dri. This was an experience which profoundly marked my life, so much so that I was surprised when at the end of my holidays in Italy, my Superiors asked me to



From 21st December to 19th January, Br Fiorenzo Trivelli left Brunetti Street, headquarters of the Congregation, of which he is a “pillar”. It was a chance for a “fraternal” meeting with him.

Storming of the Holy Spirit

In France no one is going to forget Saturday 24th January 2009, because of the hurricane with gusts of wind up to 180km/h. Seven departments were placed under red alert, one of which was Haute Garonne where a great event was due to take place – my ordination as deacon!

No need to say the pressure we were under. The wind started at around 4.00 in the morning and reached its peak at around 13h. The sight was apocalyptique: trees uprooted, roads blocked, roofs blown off. An order from the Prefect forbade all traffic and the fire brigade had to be brought in. So as not to do things by half, there was a power cut and part of Pibrac – the side where the church is - was without telephone. Some parishioners began to wonder: should we have the ordination at all?

Oh miracle!! At about 16h00 the wind began to drop (maybe the Lord with the gentle breeze, even if there were already damages); 16h15, another surprise: the delegation from Betharram had arrived. They had braved the storm. St Michael was surely proud of his sons: *Always straight ahead*, even in the face of contrary winds. 16h20, the Bishop has arrived. So things are quite simple: bishop + candidate = ordination. The essential is there. 16h45 I went to the church where another surprise was awaiting me: the Ivoirien choral from Toulouse was there with instrumentalists, Pibrac choral, as well as three deacons and a dozen or so priests. The Town Council of Pibrac very generously lent us a generator. What more could we want?

We had a very beautiful celebration, and great was our joy and emotions. The feast continued with a buffet in the Priory rooms. Thanks to the little lights and the generator everything was perfect. We sang and we danced to the music of the tam-tams on airs from Ivory Coast.

In a word, the breath of the Spirit was the most powerful. I would ask you to pray for the victims of the storm. In France four people were killed and in Spain six children. Pray for me and rest assured of my prayers for you.

Emmanuel Congo Winonga,SCJ

All for love and through love

A personal reading of No 23 of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius could present the Fundamental Principle like this: “Man has been created for love and in Love he finds his true happiness. Everything else that exists on earth has been created to help man to love. Consequently, man must profit by or renounce everything that has been created in so far as these realities help him or not to come closer to Love. Therefore it is necessary to be impartial towards everything, not setting our hearts on one thing or another, choosing only what will be of greater help in loving”.

In this first week in the existence of the Scholasticate of Fr Etchecopar Region, the liturgy offers us St Mark's Gospel, Ch 3, 13 – 19 for our meditation. In the course of my prayer, I have been questioned by the fact that Jesus took Judas Iscariot to be one of his disciples. I thought to myself: Judas was one of the Twelve, he received a personal call, from Jesus who chose whom he wanted.... so.... in a certain way Judas received a personal call from Jesus-Love. However, of his own free will, he turned it down, and handed over the Son of man to be crucified. In favour of Judas, there were persecutions already....who can throw the first stone at him?

The community of the Scholasticate is very well installed. The Sisters are full of attention The religious of the Vicariat are showing us their support in every way. We have a fine group of students, young, responsible, full of a contagious enthusiasm. However I cannot get over a certain anxiety. For me, I have only recently been ordained priest, which projects me towards an unknown horizon. The mission of formator is nothing new for me, but as from now it assumes another dimension: guiding young religious who have made a fundamental choice of life. This is a reality which invites me to less *authority* and more *fraternity*

During the retreat for the New Year, Fr Mauro, Master of Scholastics in Latin America, gave this meditation. It was on the 23rd January at the Formation Centre for Pastoral Workers in Brumadinho (Brazil).

As for the scholastics, I have the impression that they are determined, and yet I can detect a few worries. To begin with, there were the entrance exams to Theology which they all passed. Then there were the delays in fitting out the scholasticate because of the bad weather. Finally the expectations about community life, study, the apostolic work and, why not mention it, about the formator himself, have all been source of interior battles.

Ann realities are created ...in the best estimate, God has allowed us to face up to these situations. And we can but recognize His will, and see so many chances of approaching his Love. I ask only for this: May God give us the grace to respond to the best of our ability to the call received from Jesus.

Mauro Ulrich de Oliveira, SCJ



Fr Etchecopar
Region

Passa Quatro. 11th January 2009. In Brazil it is summer and the fruit is ripening. A joyous procession, accompanied by the local band, a deacon in a white dalmatic proceeds along the cobble stoned streets of the village. It's a feast! The Bishop enters the church, packed with the faithful in the midst of the clouds of incense. The rumour grows: "Yet, it's him all right; it's the Brother.

It's true, he will always be a brother, but the moment has come to say "yes", for he has been seized by Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Priest. Jesus and the Church have roused in him a priestly vocation – a surprise for some – but not for him. Mauro has let his choice mature for the past year. Obeying his Superiors, he has the deep conviction that, at 45 years of age, he can answer their call in total liberty. The adorable will of God, capable of upsetting the plans of men, inspired him with the answer full of faith and humility: Here I am!

A Betharramite remains a man – in this case, a brother having the qualities able to enrich his priestly vocation. Besides, he is an architect, has a degree in theology and holds a qualification from the School of Formators. Mauro is a young priest full of hope and a sense of service, like a good Betharramite. At this time of great changes, his availability encourages us to remain open, ready to take up the challenges of the Betharram family. Thank you, Mauro, and thank you to the Church for giving us a priest according to the Heart of Jesus, for the mission.

Gustavo Agin, SCJ

My time at St. Elizabeth's Centre

St Elizabeth's is one of the national centres for people who are affected by epilepsy and other neurological disorders. Situated near Bishop-Stortford in Hertfordshire it was founded in 1903 by the religious congregation called Daughters of the Cross of Liege. The main objective of the centre was to welcome people, regardless of their faith, culture and ethnic background and assure positive living and learning. The Centre runs a non-maintained special school for 687 boarders, an Independence Programme, for young people in the 18-25 age group and a Residential care in small group homes for adults.

My ministry was in the school for people with learning difficulties. Sr. Annette, the Principal, sent me to Class S7, which comprised seven pupils, a perfect number. Among them one student was brighter than the other students, she could speak and understand well but all other students have serious learning difficulties; some could understand what other people say but they couldn't talk, and they needed support, encouragement and love.

The first day I went with them to the sports complex for a day off. At the beginning it was not easy. My main task was to care of the boys during the day. I really enjoyed being with the group; they accepted me quickly. We are able to take them to different activities such as canoeing, swimming, and trampoline and also we were able to assist them in art class, literacy class, numeracy class and cooking. I appreciated their dedication and ability to be with the children, as they needed a lot of special attention and care. I learned and tried to adapt to the new environment with warmth and love.

I really appreciate the dedicated work of the St Elizabeth's centre. The community supported me during my stay there. My mission placement during the summer was in many ways for me an eye-opener because it helped me to rediscover my true being. These children and dedicated staff forced me to let go of my conventional self, and guided me to be open to receive and give love regardless of any events. Following the example of St. Michael, I always tried to be happy so that I may bring the same happiness to the others. I felt that it was a wonderful God given experience in my life.

At the end of his first year of studies in England, Bro Wilfred spent sometime during the summer in a special Centre.

Wilfred Poulouse Perepadan, SCJ