

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

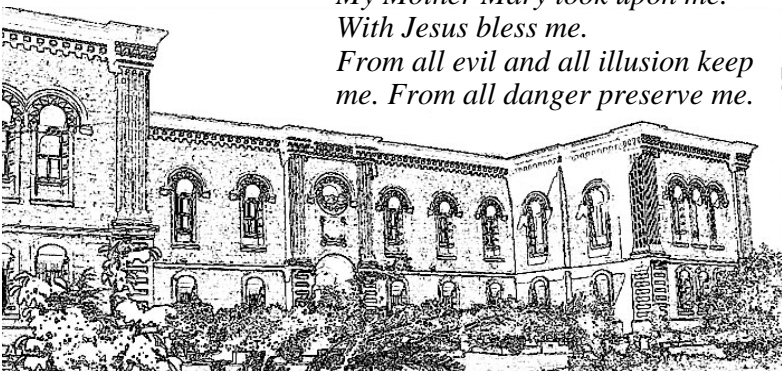
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14th - 31th May
Bethlehem



The Extraordinary Life of Sister Marie

There was also an example of bi-location in 1876, for the good of a Sister of St Joseph, Sr Josephine Rumebe. At death's door in Cyprus, she saw Sr Marie coming towards her, telling her she wasn't going to die for she still had a lot of Good to do. And thus it was with her in the Holy Land until her death in 1927, with among other activities the foundation of the monastery and sanctuary of the Arc of the Covenant in Abougosch. In 1878, Sr Josephine had the joy of recognising Sr Marie amongst the Carmelites of Bethlehem on their way to Nazareth.

Unable to read or write and without any culture, speaking only bad French mixed with Arabic, during her ecstasies she had the gift of real poetry, poems, hymns, and parables. A Sister who used to listen said: "There was something gentle, childlike and heavenly in her actions, her eyes and her tone of voice. The words which we report are dead in comparison with the life and expression she used to put into them." Her exhausted voice would then resume its normal clarity and warmth. It was during one of her ecstasies that she said this beautiful prayer to the Holy Spirit.

“ *Holy Spirit, inspire me.
Love of God consume me.
Lead me on the right path.
My Mother Mary look upon me.
With Jesus bless me.
From all evil and all illusion keep
me. From all danger preserve me.* ”

5

(Continues)



Family News

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



**A word from
the Founder**

Authentic Spiritual Life

The most noble undertaking there can be is to reach the summit of evangelical perfection and be united to God so as to become one and the same with the person with Him. We are all under obligation to endeavour to bring about this result; it is the sequel to our being raised to sharing the divine nature: "We must use our body for the glory of God" (1 Cor 6:19). So we need to know in what spiritual life consists.

Some take it to consist in a multiplicity of prayers; others in the great number of external works tending to the glory of God or the relief of our neighbour. Some identify it with continual desire to be saved; some with great austerities.

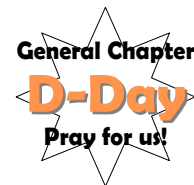
Can we say such things are an abuse? No; all these ways are good, even necessary. But it is a mistake to see in them the essential of true piety. True piety which sanctifies us and consecrates us to God consists in doing what God wants of us: My God, grant us to understand and relish something which is very simple, in the Holy Spirit! Otherwise we are making a gross mistake.

Perfect devotion consists in doing what God wants of us, precisely as He wants, at the time and in the place and circumstances where we find ourselves. We can make all the moves we like, do all the brilliant things we please, but we shall be rewarded only for doing the will of our sovereign Master.

A servant or a worker we employ may do marvels in our house, but if he doesn't do what we wish, we do not take

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109th year
10th series, nr. 60
14 May 2011



any notice of his work, and rightly complain that we have been badly served.

Perfect devotedness (*dévouement*), - from which the word 'devotion' is derived – also requires us to do God's will with love. God likes us to serve Him with joy, and in all His requirements, it is the heart he looks for.

Such a Master deserves that we should feel happy to belong to Him. Our devotedness must be sustained constantly, unchangeable, everywhere and always, even in things that shock us, or go against our view, our inclinations or plans; it must dispose us to give up our interests, our fortune, our time and liberty. Having this disposition and acting on it, there lies true devotion.

But as the will of God is often hidden from us, there is still another step to be taken in self-denial, namely, to do God's will by obedience, blind obedience, but prudent in its blindness. This condition is imperative on everyone: the one who is the most enlightened, the one who is the most capable of drawing souls to God and leading them to Him, must himself be guided by Him ...

One of the main effects of love is to make those who love each other to have the same will. It follows that, the more one loves God, the more our will must be conformed to His will, and conversely, the more intimate this conformity is, the more perfect will love be ...

Saint Paul, from the first moment of his conversion, shows himself perfectly disposed to accept whatever God wants: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). A short phrase, but all-embracing, alive, efficacious, and worthy of esteem and reward! It contains only two words, but says everything: "All God wants me to do and endure". It springs from the depth of the heart and Paul never deviates from it in his conduct. It is worth being taken up in all states and conditions, especially by religious. It contains a perfect form of life, so much so that if

The Extraordinary Life of Sister Marie

5. The prophecies of Sister Marie



There were many prophecies by Sr Marie; some were eastern metaphors and were difficult; others represented stages in her life and in her death, prior to the three years spent in Bethlehem. In 1868 she warned Rome that a military camp near the Vatican was mined. No attention was paid to the warning and the camp blew up burying some of the musicians. They remembered for other warnings which happened during the Council.

In this department I can bring a personal witness. In 1925, Fr Buzy, her biographer spoke to us about her prophecies which said that Betharram had taken charge of the patriarchal seminary. According to him this prophecy was fulfilled in 1921 when, with Fr Audin he had been giving lectures at the seminary. With my English fellow student, Fr Waddoups, we think that Father was too lenient in the affair. But in 1932 we both experienced the real fulfilment of the prophecy. The Patriarch Barlissina (1920–1947) had asked Betharram to take his seminary in charge. Refusal. But the Superior General added an unwise phrase: should there be "total bother" he would do what was possible. The Patriarch Barlissina created the "total bother" by firing the Benedictine professors from the Seminary on the 30th June. In August he renewed his request from Betharram. Fresh refusal. This time, through Fr Buzy, the Patriarch recalled the phrase of the Very Reverend Father Paillas. This time round the General Council judged that it was obliged to accept. And so it was that Betharram took the patriarchal Seminary in charge, almost by force. Fr Waddoups and myself who had been named for this foundation, were agreed this time and saw the fulfilment of Sr Marie's prophecies.

Sr Marie was also the subject of angelic possessions, first of all in Pau then in India. Possession by the devil within the limits imposed by the Lord himself, have been regarded by the two great experts in the mystical, Fr Garrigou-Lagrange and Fr Mager as a rather terrible means of purification.

by
Father Pierre
Médebielle, SCJ
1906-1995 in
"Jérusalem",
review of
the Latin
Patriarchate
(1983, p. 201-239)



2011

MAY

14	Joyeux anniversaire Buon compleanno 60th of religious profession 15th of religious profession	P. Paul Baradat, Fr Gilbert Napetien Coulibaly P. Antonio Riva Fr Edward Simpson Fr Phairote Nochatchawan Fr Jiraphat Raksikhao Fr Viravit Sasai
17	25° di sacerdozio	P. Graziano Sala P. Antonio Riva
20	Feliz cumpleaños	Hno Sixto Benitez
22	Buon compleanno	P. Gianluca Limonta
23	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Jean-Marie Ruspil
25	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños	P. André Lacaze, P. Gerardo Ramos
26	Buon compleanno 55th of priesthood	P. Mario Bulanti Fr Brian Boyle
29	Happy birthday	Br Athit D. Kasetsukchai
30	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños	P. Bertrand Salla P. Julio Colina
31	Buon compleanno	P. Emilio Manzolini
3	Bon anniversaire	P. Joseph Mazerolles
4	Happy birthday 45° di sacerdozio	P. Carlo Ruti P. Aurelio Riva
6	Happy birthday	Fr Subesh Odiyathingal
10	Bon anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños	P. Barnabé Kpéhéléfopé Bakary P. Crispin Villalba
12	Buon compleanno Happy birthday	P. Angelo Bianchi Fr Anton Madej
15	Feliz cumpleaños	Hno. Victor Torales
17	Bon anniversaire 45 años de sacerdocio	P. Jean Laclau P. Jorge Murias
18	50th of priesthood	Fr. Thomas Kelly

JUNE

we reached this degree of perfection, we would leave nothing to be desired.

Samuel provides us with another example. His words mean the same as St Paul's: "Here I am; speak, Lord, Your servant is listening." (sam3:10). Happy the soul whose one desire is to know and do what God wants! If one can find this happiness anywhere on earth, it is no doubt among religious. The will of God for them is evident. God himself gives them command by their superiors, speaks to them by their Rule, enlightens them and moves them interiorly, and teaches them by these lights and promptings what He wants from them. "Happy are we, O Israel, because God reveals to us what pleases Him" (Bar 4:4). All that remains for us to do is to put our hearts to the task promptly and do perfectly what we know God wants.



Saint Michael
Garicoïts
Père, Me Voici,
pp. 23-27

Father Etcheopar wrote... for the General Chapter 1894

Let us pray for each other: May God grant us real respect, a love of the Cross, the grace of a happy death of which Mary was named patroness at the foot of the Cross.

Let us pray for all the important intentions and classes of the Congregation.

Let us pray for the General Chapter that God will grant the delegates all the necessary lights, and help them to adopt measures most useful for the good of the Congregation.

For the sick that the Lord may grant them cure and patience;

For the missionaries, zeal and prudence;

For students, the knowledge which makes scholars, and the high class science which makes saints;

For our dear novices, subject of so much care and hope, the grace to build their spiritual edifice on the virtues and Heart of Our Lord and of his holy Mother.

The past, present and future of consecrated life

During its assembly last November, the Union of Major Religious Superiors made an analysis of consecrated life in Europe. The situation is worrying but not hopeless. New missionary fields have opened up on condition that they can be detected by reviving the particular charism and bringing them up to date. The 160 Major Religious Superiors present all agreed: the majority of the apostolic institutes were founded in the wake of the French Revolution, *in a society and for a society* in full spiritual and moral break down. Starting with the way the Congregations faced the apostolic needs of the day, let's see how today with renewed fidelity to their primitive charism, the Congregations can respond to the challenges of evangelisation in similar conditions.

The Church and society

Then: In the 19th century, after the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution, society no longer accepts guidance and instruction from the Church concerning its political, social and moral well being. At best the Church was ignored and restricted to her own territory; at worst she was persecuted. The prevailing ideas were elsewhere: liberalism, socialism, positivism, and communism. This is the beginning of secularism; the new ideologies form the bed of dechristianisation. Culture was now in the hands of an elite who weighed on the social and political life in a secular manner, and removing it more and more from its Christian roots.

Today: In Europe the separation from Christianity is something evident and massive. Civil society has nothing whatsoever to do with society of days gone by, steeped in Gospel values. On the one hand the Church recognises the autonomy of the State in the elaboration of the social and economical fabric; on the other hand this autonomy tends to marginalise the Church in the social field. Consequently, the two ages pose the same challenge: *restore the Gospel values in the social, cultural and political social life* so as to open it to the real and total dimension of mankind.

Is there any phrase or aspect of our Father St Michael which has become more relevant since 2005?

- I rather like the way St Michael used to accompany by letter the Betharram communities, for example the community at the Moncade College in Orthez or the young mission in America. Here is what he wrote to Fr Diego Barbe, director of the San Jose College: "It really beggars belief! But what can we do? When someone has fixed ideas it's hard to get rid of them! And people believe that it is a waste of time when things don't go according to our imagination! Above all it is not possible to understand, savour and accept with "corde magno et animo volenti et constanti the obscurity, fruitlessness or failures which have to be accepted by obedience. It is the manna still hidden for many of us." (Corr. I, letter 163) One would almost say that such suggestions are aimed at us. The hidden manna is our union with Christ which makes everything else important. Often problems come from our lack of faith and our commentaries which are often negative and not very encouraging, as was the case of the gossip about the college in Orthez.

To conclude have you a prayer or a wish? - As I approach the end of this mandate I can but thank God for the way in which He trusted me thanks to my brothers at the last General Chapter. First of all because He chose a modest individual, from a modest family in a small village in some unknown corner. Secondly because he chose a Betharramite from Spain which was not very involved in the history of the Congregation. Father of heaven and earth, I give you praise. Yes Father, this has been your will. I give thanks to God, for having been able to visit the Congregation for the past six years, and to have been witness of the marvels which He is doing with our brothers and through them for the salvation of mankind. For these six years of service to Betharram, I can only join my voice with that of the psalmist: O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup ; it is you yourself who are my prize. (Ps 16,5-6).





The Superior general

vinced that all this hard work has given birth to a precious document which is a reflection of our identity and is called to renew the life of our Congregation.

When you launched the regionalisation you stressed its spiritual dimension. What results can you see? - Two and a half years is too short for a trial, but there are positive signs. Some of the vicariates used the Narratio Fidei for their annual retreat. In community and amongst ourselves we ought to be able to share something on God's action in our lives and in today's world. This kind of sharing is practised by the General Council, the Council of the Congregation, in the Regional Councils and in some Councils of Vicariates and communities. Another important point is finding in all our communities a facilitator once held by the superior. The Council of the Congregation in Bangalore asked each Region to plan meetings of Superiors. Two have not yet met but it is important if we want to give greater depth to our spiritual life and to the witness of our communities.

What missionary priorities can you envisage for Betharram to be faithful to its charism and in step with the needs of our times? - For the mission the priority of priorities will be the formation of international communities. From France to begin with, the Congregation also sent missionaries from Spain, Italy and England to America, The Holy Land, China, Thailand, Morocco, Algeria, Ivory Coast, Centre Africa and India. Betharram must remain missionary while changing the destination. No question of neglecting what has been begun in Asia, Africa and America; missionaries will be needed in Europe to back up key projects and to instil a fresh vocational breather in our communities. At the same time we are keeping a close eye on what is happening in China where Betharram has been on the back burner since 1951. Not far away there is Vietnam; the Holy Spirit who entrusted the treasure of our charism to St Michael Garicoits is making eyes at us there in favour of vocations.

Then: The French Revolution undermined the Church structures: the clergy were pursued or prevented from performing their ministry which rebounded on the religious practice of the people deprived of the Word of God. Consequently there was an air of indifference, sustained by the lack of evangelisers and the declared hostility of the overall culture.

Today: Our present situation is a repetition of this plan, by exaggerating it, and with two characteristics apparently at odds: on the one hand an increasing number of people is abandoning traditional religion (in Europe, real Church goers are already in the minority); on the other hand, there is a return to religion, often expressed in an ambiguous and superficial manner, tinged by the occult, or even individualism. It is a form of religion to be measured, purified and freed of simple traditions; a form of religion to be totally *re-born* in the personal, family, social and cultural life and be solidly rooted in the Word of God.

Then: This form of religion, cut off from its roots and lacking strong convictions, has repercussions on the moral behaviour of Christians; the 19th century witnessed the birth and development of individualism and subjectivism, which led to religious and moral relativism. There was no longer room for evangelical principles upon which to draw the moral values useful for everyone. There you have the roots of subjectivism, refusing every external regulation judged to be harmful to personal freedom; in such a situation where only the individual "me" exists, the only moral code to be legal is the one which refers to the individual who establishes it.

Today: These "victories" over thought have become absolute "dogmas", acquired "truths" to be defended by the prevailing culture and adopted by crowds of people, even by good Christians. Modern culture accepts as authority the ego culture (freedom), imposing the rules for a happiness to be acquired by any means judged suitable, and the right to decide freely of one's life. Catholic morality is condemned to silence for it is suspected of being alien to mankind and in

Superficial religiosity

The moral of the "isms"

denial of his freedom. Our age is dominated by moral individualism which invades the socio-political sphere and by religious relativism; there is support for the diversity of truths and the equality of beliefs. Add to that the ambient scepticism concerning the capacity of human reason to reach truth, and the indifference for which it is useless looking for the truth and being member of some religious faction.

Social moral code and society

Then: The 19th century witnessed the advance of the bourgeoisie whose only aim was the accumulation of wealth, the encouragement of unbounded growth and productivity. From the point of view of the moral code, the consequences are the research of profit at all costs. Capitalism imposed money and wealth as hard-and-fast necessities. Social inequalities are more obvious. The most important asset was production so as to create wealth and create well-being, except that in the end only a tiny minority would be the better off.

Now: Living conditions have improved, the people have benefited from the many social advantages. However, globalisation has spoiled the 19th century culture which represents the foundations of modern mentality. For many profits, wealth, success, self affirmation represent the values of life. To get there, there is only one way: individualism without scruples or the sense of sharing. Wealth is the mirror whereby one sees and is to be seen; the culture of selfishness, of appearances, of having at the expense of being has been established as a supreme rule.

In a word, the two epochs pose the same problem: restore the Gospel values in the moral, social, cultural and political life, not with the intention of enclosing society in the Church's nets, but to contribute to the formation of an individual and collective culture capable of placing the real needs of the individual in the fore front and thus of opening him up to every aspect of human and transcendent values.

And now? How did St Michael and his companions respond to problems like ours? What direction did they take? Here are a few that could easily inspire us today.

small Congregation. Yet, when an authentic and persuasive witness is borne about the charism it rarely leaves the young indifferent. Such was the case in Thailand, in India, in Ivory Coast and in America. If only people had the courage to suggest to the young to experience meeting God for example in an Ignatian Retreat, the young would want to enter Betharram, even here in Europe.

The previous Chapter had launched two important pieces of work: the rule of life and regionalisation. How do things stand after six years? - It was the 1999 General Chapter which organised the Congregation in regions and named them. The 2005 Chapter took the necessary dispositions so that the new form of government would be adopted in the second half of the mandate. On the 1st January 2009 the new organisation in vicariates and regions became effective. To begin with it all seemed very easy, but putting it into practice made us quickly aware of the difficulties. We thought that it would be quite simple. Yet I believe that there is no going back as was suggested by the Regional chapters. The future of the Congregation lies in striving towards unity in the respect of the cultural differences of the vicariates. The Region is also a means of unifying the vicariates, the communities and individuals who compose the life of the Congregation. The General Chapter in Bethlehem is going to have to weigh up what has been done, correct what had been suggested and which turned out to be useless when put into practice.

The revision of the Rule of Life is linked to regionalisation. To put this project into practice it was necessary to adapt the Rule. This is why Fr Francesco had appointed a commission at the beginning of 2002. They haven't been idle! While being respectful of the work done in 1969 the Commission included the reflexion of the past 40 years on consecrated life and on the charism. It was thought that the work would have been finished sooner but the experience with the regionalisation made us more realist; and has led us to make minor last minute changes. I am con-



The Superior General



ramites which keeps me awake at night. Until I have proof to the contrary I have utmost trust in each religious: his choice of the Congregation was carefully considered. And I have learned to say with St Michael: “I am unable, I am unworthy, perhaps I am both unable and unworthy; but a word from you, Lord, and I shall be both worthy and able”. “Let’s live and die in the feeling of deep humility and trust full of love and abandonment.” (Corr.1; letter 46). I am convinced that I have great limits and that I can rely on the Lord; if he had destined me for this service, he will surely give me the grace to carry it out.

As Superior General what was the most painful event you had to endure? - Signing the exit decrees for two religious was very difficult for me. But the hardest was my visit to Ivory Coast in September 2009. At the end of the retreat I had to admonish by letter several of the religious whose behaviour left much to be desired. But I was at peace, for all the decisions had been thought over by the Councillors of the Vicariate. What left me all the more at peace and trustful for the future was to see how genuinely the majority of the religious and the young who are in formation are attached to Betharram and how authentic they are in their humanity and as Christians.

What has made you happy and continues to keep you happy in the exercise of your functions? - I have been lucky to have witnessed the action of God’s grace in the lives of the brothers who at times of crises and difficulties have been able to respond faithfully to their vocation, especially through spiritual accompaniment. I am equally happy to see that our Betharramite formation gets its strength from the regular discussion which the young religious has with his formator, and the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. What a joy to know that this year, the 30 Days were held in our three novitiates at Adroque, Bethlehem and Bangalore!

What is your greatest cause for hope for the future of the Congregation? - We inherited from St Michael Garicoits a charism which is both attractive and very actual. We are a

In the face of a society stunned by the Revolution, St Michael was very conscious of the mission. He founded the Congregation to be a “flying camp”, precisely to bring the Word of God to all sectors of society and culture of the day, and consequently to change mentalities and behaviour.

Today as at the time of our founder there is a burning need of wide spread evangelisation capable of penetrating the tough hides of indifference, superficiality and positive traditions; there is need for a strong and credible witness, acceptable in the historic-cultural context of a society which has lost the savour of the Gospel message, and has relegated it to the private sector. As in the time of St Michael there is need for an enlightened message (by people attentive to the signs of the times), adapted so as to reconstruct the link between faith and community (familial, social and political) and revive Christian inspiration in the multiple and complicated dimensions of existence.

St Michael had understood the need to form consciences, beginning with the conscience of individuals and institutions, for the good of society. This explains how attentive he was for the youth (through the schools and other places), for the family which was an area where many vital factors meet. He paid great attention to catechesis (for a Christian formation which was not superficial), to preaching (for a lively announce of the Word). These were all areas demanding the attention of St Michael in his time, and he has left them as a heritage to his religious so that they should engage with them according to the means and methods of each age – and it is to be done within the queries of the culture of the day.

No need to point out that today more than ever, the Church considers these spheres of activity as a priority for evangelisation; this is where the present and future of the believer and of society is played out today. “New Evangelisation” demands a whole string of spiritual propositions, of ideas, of projects as was the case in the 19th century. Which spheres are concerned? “Catechesis, the Word of God, Christian and cultural formation, the social and political engagement of Christians,

the study and application of the social doctrine of the Church, missionary activity of all the faithful. Everything that is the sphere of consecrated souls, but not only them, is to look to their formation and bring answers to these priorities.”

Our Congregation must feel the call of the Church asking us to clarify the reasons for our presence, looking for the most pressing needs in the different spheres of activity mentioned above. And this with the conscience – recalled by the Superiors General – that we are not religious for what we do but for the way in which we do it, and for the why and wherefore for which we do it. The number and quality of our works are of little importance. We must first of all watch our “way of life”.

At the beginning of the Congregation there was a thorough discernment and real courage: Betharram was placed in tune with the demands of evangelisation. With a small number of Fathers who were convinced of their mission and wishing to reduce the break between the culture (that is how to imagine the life of faith) and the Church, who brings the necessary values for a life which is totally human. This same fracture happens to be one of the dramas of modern times.

We have inherited a spirituality based on the *incarnation* (key word of the Church at all times, and especially today whenever there is talk of evangelisation) on the programme and virtues of the Sacred Heart (found in the *Ecce venio – here I am* – of his offering to his Father), on the image of Mary (united to her Son by her *Ecce ancilla* – behold the handmaid of the Lord); this is a spirituality which is attentive to history, a gift of self, a precious presence, conscious and discreet. Today we must be embedded in our reality, with the same discernment and the same fraternal and community urgency of the early days.

To my mind, our activities (including parishes) should be work places of meditation and preaching nourished by the Word of God, by catechesis, by human and spiritual formation for the youth, for adults and families. So many

stages in the history of Betharram and which the Church is showing us today.

I think that the General Chapter is going to be a golden opportunity for that deep and courageous examination of conscience which the 160 Superiors General are asking of us in the name of the Church. And all that to progress from the past to the present and thence towards the future with renewed courage.

10 MINUTES WITH... the V. R. Father Gaspar

NEF: 14th-31st May are two important dates for an important meeting. How are you looking forward to this new stage? - With mixed feelings. On the one hand I am longing to get to grips with such an important phase in the life of the Congregation, that is the General Chapter in Bethlehem, because it is an experience of fraternity, of internationality and discernment in the life of the Congregation. On the other hand I am feeling a bit nervous, for I have to render an account before the representatives of the different vicariates, on the life and mission of the Betharram family during these past six years.

How do you feel about the Congregation? - Full of life and dynamism! There too, there are two views: on the one hand it is the end of an epoch dominated by European culture; on the other hand the period is placing us before the challenges of an ever expanding multiculturalism. We have well responded to the requests of Vatican II: the mystical dimension of consecration has been better understood by the discovery of our Charism; efforts have been made to strengthen the life of our communities; the mission has been varied; formation has been pursued with great clarity and seriousness; collaboration with the laity has become more important by sharing our spirituality as well as the mission.

Can you still sleep well when the whole life of the religious reaches you? - I am not a good sleeper but I must say that, thank God, it is not the problems of the Betharram

Ennio Bianchi, SCJ



With the General Chapter about to open in Bethlehem, NEF wanted to take stock of his mandate with Father Gaspar Fernandez Perez. Open dialogue with the Superior General.