

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

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Other decisions of the General Chapter | Bethlehem, 14-31 May 2011

A single Vicariate for Italy

The General Chapter accepted to proposition of the Saint Michael Region and decided that the communities in Italy should be assembled in one single Vicariate.

Opening in the direction of Vietnam.

The General Chapter rejoices at the calls coming from Vietnam; it sees there a sign of the Holy Spirit and a challenge for our Congregation. They therefore ask the General Council in close collaboration with Blessed Mariam Region to watch over the accompaniment of the actual candidate, to extend the proposition of Betharramite religious life and to study

The Extraordinary Life of Sister Marie

what had happened in Pau in 1868. Taking advantage of an unwary breaking of enclosure by the sister, it was decided to send her back to Pau. "God's Will" said her heavenly friend, Mathilde de Nedonchel, in a vision. With two Carmelites, she arrived in Pau 5th November 1872.

In Mangalore, the Bishop, at his wit's end, was full of regrets and died on 10th April 1873. By now the Sisters felt freer and they too wrote their regrets, including the Novice Mistress, repentant. The Prioress was inconsolable and was of the opinion that Sr Marie, who had already found a benefactor for the Monastery, by her sufferings, both physical and mystical, was the real Foundress of the Carmel of Mangalore. Warmly welcomed back by all in Pau and by Mgr Lacroix, Sr Marie lived out the rest of that terrible year 1872 full of consolation. She called this second stay in Pau as her "holidays" before another project which the Lord was going to ask of her.

6

(Continues)

the possibility of an opening in that country between now and 2020.

The Cause of Father Etchecopar

The Chapter asks that the instruction of this cause be pursued and that everything should be done so that it reaches a successful conclusion as soon as possible.

The mandate of Superiors to be prolonged

Reminder: Each superior and his administration are to continue their community service until their successor has been appointed.
(RofL²⁰⁰⁸ 234* 2).



Family News

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



A word from the Superior General

Letter from Bethlehem

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

It is the Holy Spirit, through the intermediary of the Chapter Delegates, who has chosen me to continue leading our dear Betharram family for the next six years. I trust in the vocation and understanding of all my brothers. I promise you that I will do as best I can with the help of Fathers Enrico Frigero, Graziano Sala, Laurent Bacho and Tobia Sosio.

As we reach the end of this 26th general chapter, we have many reasons for thanking God for all that we have lived through with all the delegates in the surge of vitality which he is going to rouse in our family.

We began with the Church celebration of the feast of our holy Founder in the Carmelite chapel in Bethlehem where many of our seniors made their final profession and were ordained priests. Mgr Antonio Franco, Papal Nuncio for Israel and Apostolic Delegate to the Palestinian Authority, presided over the Eucharistic Celebration, concelebrated by two auxiliary Bishops from the Mother Church in Jerusalem. The Carmelite Community and the Superiors of congregation friends in the Holy Land joined us.

It is a great grace to have celebrated this chapter in our house in Bethlehem where the novitiate community of the St Michael Garicoits Region lives and who made us feel that we were really at home. It was here that Jesus was born – the Almighty who made himself known in the

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109th year
10th series, nr. 61
14 June 2011

Our treasure is the charisma left to us by St Michael Garicoits. This treasure is also each member of our family with all his qualities, his talents, his generosity, his enthusiasm to be faithful to his vocation and his passion to carry out his mission. The clay is just our limits, our infidelities, our withdrawal on ourselves...

weakness of our flesh. This treasure is the charisma left to us by St Michael Garicoits. This treasure is also each member of our family with all his qualities, his talents, his generosity, his enthusiasm to be faithful to his vocation and his passion to carry out his mission. The clay is just our limits, our infidelities, our withdrawal on ourselves, and our selfishness which are preventing our communities from being more meaningful.

We highlighted the Regionalisation put in action during these last years in our Congregation. It has helped us to develop greater unity in an authentic sharing of our goods and in recognising the richness of our different cultures. We know that communion is the result of the synthesis of a paradox: the unity of the entire Congregation around the unique charisma of our Father, St Michael Garicoits, in the respect of the cultural diversity of the vicariates and countries. Regionalisation becomes, therefore, the chance for spiritual renewal.

We are happy to have approved the Rule of Life in a real consensus which shows the new type of government required by Regionalisation and the originality of our life style. We must now present it to the Congregation for Religious for final approval. But it's not enough to have a good document; we must do our utmost so that each religious receives it, reads it, accepts it, prays with it, adopts it and puts it into practice. It will become the ideal tool for the Regionalisation to be a favourable opportunity for interior renewal for our family.

Once we had become aware of the situation of our family and had analysed it, we fixed the following priorities for the next six years:

- **On-going formation** - Convinced that the Charisma is a treasure as well as each religious, it seemed to us that we must protect the vocation of each one of our brothers "who is suffering the weight and heat of the day"

The Extraordinary Life of Sister Marie

6. Founding of a Carmelite Monastery in India

The founding of a Carmelite monastery in Mangalore was Sister Marie's achievement; it was an adventure and, as the Lord had warned her, it was a terrible trial.

In 1868, returning to the Carmelite Monastery in Mangalore (India) Mgr Marie-Ephrem, about to form a Carmelite tiers order for Indian women, with Sr Veronique (Leeves), called in at Pau and asked for the foundation of a Carmelite Monastery in his diocese, with that extraordinary novice called Sr Marie. The latter found a generous benefactor in the person of the Belgian Count of Nedonchel. The group of six Carmelites, together with Sr Marie, still a novice, embarked at Marseilles in August 1870. But as was foretold by Sr Marie, three of the religious died at sea, two were buried in Aden and the Prioress at Calicut. On the appeal of Mgr Marie-Ephrem, the Carmelites in Pau and Bayonne sent reinforcements, among them were the Prioress from Pau and the Novice Mistress from Bayonne. On arrival at Mangalore, Sr Marie obtained permission to be a lay Sister.

The beginning was idyllic till the day of her final Profession, 21st November 1870. At the moment of her profession, Sr Marie had to be wakened from her ecstasy!

Her trials began the next day. The Lord had instructed Sr Marie to report everything only to the Bishop and her confessor. "Not a word to anybody else!" But the Prioress and the Novice Mistress wanted to know everything, despite their constitutions. They even succeeded in getting the better of the Bishop and got him to send the novice's director away from Mangalore. From then onwards the unfortunate novice was accused of being under an illusion. The Bishop informed the Religious officially and wrote to Mgr Lacroix in Bayonne, who didn't believe of word of it.

On top of this trial, which was really terrible, came something even more terrible – a new possession by Satan, similar to



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



2011

JUNE

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|----|--|---|
| 15 | Feliz cumpleaños | Ho. Victor Torales |
| 17 | Joyeux anniversaire 45 años de sacerdocio | P. Jean Laclau P. Jorge Murias |
| 18 | 50th of priesthood | Fr. Thomas Kelly |
| 20 | 40 años de sacerdocio | P. Angelo Recalcati |
| 24 | Joyeux anniversaire | P. Dominique Etchépare |
| 25 | Bom aniversário | Ir. Marcelo Rodrigues da Silva |
| 26 | Joyeux anniversaire | P. Jean Couret, F. Marius Angui |
| 27 | Bom aniversário 10th of priesthood | Ir. Robson Antonio Leite Fr. Chanchai Temaroonrung |
| 28 | Bom aniversário Feliz cumpleaños | Ir. Pedro Waldomiro Merlo P. Milciades Ortigoza Acosta |
| 29 | 60 ans de sacerdoce félicitations | P. Victor Bataillés, P. Bernard Béhocaray P. Dominique Etchepare |
| | 55 ans de sacerdoce | P. Henri Lamasse P. Robert Daquo |
| | 50 ans de sacerdoce | P. José Mirande |
| | 50 años de sacerdocio | Mgr Ignacio Gogorza |
| | 45 ans de sacerdoce | P. Pierre Caset P. Henri Marsaa-Poey |
| 30 | Joyeux anniversaire | P. Jean Lambert |
| 1 | 60* di sacerdozio, auguri | P. Mario Bulanti |
| 2 | Buon compleanno | P. Massimo Motta |
| 3 | Joyeux anniversaire | P. Eugène Lhouerrou |
| 4 | Buon compleanno Feliz cumpleaños Joyeux anniversaire | P. Carlo Ruti, P. Enrico Frigerio P. Fulgencio Ferreira P. Hervé Kouamé Kouakou |
| 5 | Joyeux anniversaire | P. Jacky Moura |
| 6 | Feliz cumpleaños 35 ans de sacerdoce | P. Gilberto Ortellado P. Michel Vignau |
| 7 | Feliz cumpleaños | P. José María Ruiz |
| 8 | Joyeux anniversaire | P. Pierre Caset |
| 11 | Buon compleanno Joyeux anniversaire | P. Arialdo Urbani P. Joseph Ruspil |
| 14 | Bom aniversário | P. Joachim Soares Moreira |

JULY

and give him the means of renewing the grace received by religious consecration and the laying on of hands.

- **Missionary internationality** - The missionary courage displayed in the East and in Africa helps us to rejoice in the recent professions and ordinations. Betharram has always been missionary thanks to the availability given by an adult obedience, and accepted as a treasure. Betharram must always be missionary, but must change direction: a new lease of life must be instilled into older situations. The Chapter has decided on three international communities in Pau, Nazareth and Olton.
- **An economy of communion** - Thanks to Regionalisation we have made progress in the sharing of our goods, but better in some places than in others. We must continue to make progress. We realise that the vicariates where there are most vocations are the ones which are most destitute. So, we have decided to open a common cash account for formation since that is a worry for the whole Congregation. The implementation of the new Accounts, as proposed by the General Council will help us to build up greater transparency and a veritable sharing.
- **The Pastoral of Vocations** - In some Vicariates there is a real job being done; in others less. The Chapter asks, especially in the older vicariates, that there should be greater efforts in this sphere, and not be reconciled to disappearing in the face of difficulties of working with the young.
- **Community life** - During these past years of Regionalisation some communities have set up their community project. The Chapter asks the Superiors to take to heart their ministry of animation and accompaniment of the religious. All the religious are asked to play their part in constructing the community by sharing the life, the faith, the mission and the goods.

Betharram must always be missionary, but must change direction: a new lease of life must be instilled into older situations.



I want to thank Fr Jean Luc Morin for all the work he has done during these past six years so that communication within the Congregation is of the highest quality and for his contribution at management level. I also want to thank Fr Bruno Ierullo for his generosity and devotedness in successfully finishing the various missionary projects each year: the Seminary at Sampran, the campus at Dabakala and the Shobhana Shaakha Well. Only the Sacred Heart knows what they have done; only He can reward them.

Forward march! Forward march always! It is with joy and full of hope that we will prepare the 150 years since the death of our beloved Father St Michael Garicoits, because we can see that there is a future for our family.

There is a future for Betharram because there are many brothers who take their spiritual life seriously, their consecration by their vows, the community and the mission.

There is a future for Betharram because we are all determined to make our witness shine and to propose by word the beauty of the life left to us by our Father St Michael Garicoits.

There is a future for Betharram because there are many lay people, attracted by our life style, who want to share the spirituality and the mission with us.

There is a future for Betharram because it wasn't invented by human hands; it is the Sacred Heart who begot it and shaped it.

There is a future for Betharram because countless priests, religious (men and women) and laity are praying for us as we have noticed during these last few days.

There is a future for Betharram because an army of witnesses has preceded us and is interceding for us in heaven with Our Lady of Betharram, St Joseph, St Michael Garicoits, and Blessed Mariam and with the servant of God, Fr Etchecopar.

overcome by joy and pain; *"O Jesus, my beloved, I am coming, I am looking for you!" she said.* She couldn't live without Jesus, and yet Jesus pierced her heart. When the Sisters removed the dressing which covered the wound, they discovered the initials of *O Jesus Saviour, OJS* in letters of blood, surmounted by a Cross. Remember the talk just now: *May my name be engraved in your heart; love is strong as death.* It is even stronger still, stronger than all the good reasons for being withdrawn and despairing. On the third day, he rose again from the dead! Are not our hearts too on fire?

A final cause for joy which I would like to share with you on the anniversary of the piercing and after the Gospel which is the same as for the Mass for St Michael; right now our discussions are all about the approval of our new Rule of Life. The Chapter is asking that the Congregation of *the Priests of the Sacred Heart* should be quite simply known as the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is a name which will simplify and unify at the same time; may this name be engraved in our hearts! It is the name of Him who catches up with us and speaks these saving words to us:

Come to me! Do not be afraid! Accept your share of the shadows, your weaknesses. Accept them so as to traverse them, to grow in humility, in daring, in gentleness; there you will find a treasure! Shoulder the burden which you find heavy. I assumed all that on the cross. I am carrying it with you every day. If you return to the truth and your deepest desire, if you choose Life then your burden will be light. Become my disciples and learn from me how to love. With love you will be able to accomplish the unimaginable, the unbearable. My commandment is to love. Give your weight of love, that tiny little particle which is so necessary, then I will bless you, and through you I will bless the world. For I AM: I am God with the big heart, I am God at the heart of your being and of your struggles, I am a wounded heart but not broken, a heart which beats for your happiness. In this Eucharist and by the offering of your lives, gently, humbly, I shall make of you men and women according to my own heart.

Jean-Luc Morin, SCJ

The joy of the open-hearted

Here is the sermon preached at the Carmelite monastery, Bethlehem on 24th May, anniversary of the piercing of the heart of Blessed Mariam of Jesus Crucified.

Readings:
Ct 2,8-10.14.16.
Mt 11,25-30

The text which has just been read is placed under the sign of joy. It's the least we can do on a day like today: the joy of our meeting; 10 days after the feast of 14th May; the joy of sharing the Word and the Bread as brothers and sisters; the joy of celebrating a longed for meeting both intense and burning like that of the Beloved in the Canticle, and like the mystical experience which we are commemorating; the joy of making Betharram rhyme with Mariam right here, the joy of a link which has its roots in heaven and spreads its branches into India; the joy of a General Chapter which is a first for us here in Bethlehem, a foundation longed for by the young Arab and realised by Fr Etchecopar; the joy of a Chapter slowly wending its way towards its end in a studious, cordial and universal atmosphere.

All joys are but a distant echo of the cry of Jesus in the Gospel: *Father, I proclaim your praise....* When under the action of the Holy Spirit he exults, the Son turns our eyes and hearts towards the Father. He leads us to the source of all graces. But to receive salvation and taste the joys there is one condition: feel the need for it, not to rank ourselves with the wise and the learned, the self sufficient who are all that is needed; be humble and ask for the grace.

Salvation is not merited. Salvation is earned because we have let our soul be modelled as the soul of a child, the soul of a son or a daughter awaiting everything from the Other. To get to know the Father we must pass by Jesus. To be reborn from on high and become more brotherly, we need the help of the Holy Spirit. We must accept his load and march forward to find on our way the gentleness of a presence and the power of the gift. For nothing is impossible to Love, not even exchanging our stations of the Cross for a station of faith.

In her flesh Blessed Mariam experienced this radical humility. She had the marks of Love made flesh. In her body she bore the wounds of Jesus like so many openings to others and to her Lord. On the 24th May 1868 in the Carmel of Pau, in the hermitage where they were reciting the Rosary, she is

From the Hill of David in the City of Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, we send our fraternal greetings to each religious living in community the mission entrusted to him. A very special greeting goes to each religious – whether senior or sick – who whatever his position offered to the Lord, partakes of the mission of the Church and the beauty of Betharram. A special greeting also to each formator and to each youth in formation whom we consider to be the hope of our family.

Gaspar Fernandez, SCJ
31st May 2011



Father Etchecopar wrote... Circular letter dated 15th June 1888

With this letter I wish to promulgate the Acts of the last General Chapter [August 1887]... Where did they go looking for the means to preserve and increase the holiness of our state? To the very source from which our Congregation has sprung; there, they followed the recommendations of the Spirit of Truth: "Drink from the waters of your source" Bibe aquam de cisterne tua (Prov, 5,15). They took inspiration from the very thoughts and words of our Founder, from what Fr Gari-coits used to call our Holy Rule, our special obedience, our distinctive character.

Oh! This General Chapter has been well and truly inspired. Oh! How deserving it is of our gratitude! It has shown us the providential route which we must always envisage and follow, source of light and life, worked out for us, flowing for us from the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary, in order to immerse us again in the arsenal where hang the arms wrought by our Chief to be used by our little Company...

My dear Fathers and Brothers, you can see it and feel it just as we do: the most exalted of motivations encourage us all, without exception, to enter this saintly enterprise with a great and generous heart: corde magno et animo volenti...

Bethlehem 2011 | Chronicle of a chapter

Saturday, 14 May ■ Today, feast day of St. Michael Garicoits, is the opening of the 26th General Chapter in our residence in Bethlehem. During 17 days, 31 members from 4 continents (with an average age of 52 years) will work about the present and the future of the Betharram Congregation.

On the morning, the Carmelite chapel hosted the Mass in honour of St. Michael Garicoits. Our Betharramite delegates were joined by the priests of patriarchy and Carmelite community. Mgr Antonio Franco, apostolic nuncio in Israel and Palestine, presided over the celebration, assisted by Monsignor Giacinto-Bulos Marcuzzo, auxiliary of Nazareth, Mgr William Shomali, auxiliary of Jerusalem, Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Custos of the Holy Land, and Fr. Gaspar Fernandez, our Superior General. The beauty of the setting, the spiritual aura of the place, the fervour of the participants, the liturgy, sober and beautiful, the heart-felt homily of the main celebrant, the cocktail and lunch that followed, was enjoyed by everyone. Thus, this feast of St. Michael was a highlight of church and brotherhood... and an excellent start to the work ahead!

Sunday, 15 May ■ The second day of the General Chapter, we had a day of recollection. During the morning session, Fr David SJ, a Israeli Jesuit priest and expert on the Bible, helped us to reflect on our life from the text of 2 Corinthians 4: "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." We discovered that our own frailty is not an impediment, but an opportunity to let ourselves be recreated by the grace of God. The opposite attitude, that is, we close in on ourselves, leads to death. With this message we entered into the meditation on the Word of God. In the afternoon, we had adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the climate of silence, and continued our personal reflection on the Scripture. We concluded with the celebration of Mass as the crowning of a day in which the Lord led us to the desert and spoke in our hearts.

Tuesday, 17 May ■ The members of the General Chapter celebrated the 25th anniversary of priesthood (Silver Jubilee) of Fr Graziano Sala. During the Mass which he celebrated with all the brothers, especially Fr. Guido Garcia,



sons of St Michael, where ever we are called upon to live and work.

In a few days time I am going to resume my ordinary everyday life in Italy. I am very aware that this is where I shall have to make my contribution so as not to bury the treasure brought back from this General Chapter. It's not a personal extra but the result of a conviction: Betharram, the family to which I belong is the ideal place for my personal growth in the following of Christ and in the spirit of the Gospel.



On-going Formation, "Openness to God's action"

Introduction to the work of the group to which Fr. Gianluca belonged

We thank God for the "treasure" which we are carrying, while at the same time we are conscious of being "vessels of clay". We live through different realities; several of our religious are getting on in years, but at the same time they are models of fidelity. Others are putting up with discouragement and fatigue. However, in the majority of cases, thanks to meaningful communities, these religious assume their vocation, through good discernment and a mission shared with the laity.

In the course of these last years we have seen the discovery of our Betharramite identity and of our charisma; with many religious we have seen a deep desire for spiritual growth which strengthens them in their vocation and prepares them better for their mission. Some realities grow deeply in the vocational ministry and there is genuine enthusiasm. Betharram is assuming new colours with the different cultures: Betharram is alive! It is spreading in different missions: education, parish activity, awareness of the new forms of poverty, response to the needs of the local Church. We are present in 15 countries. So as to favour unity in the diversity of cultures, the Congregation is now organised in Regions and Vicariates.

In the light of this analysis, we esteem that on-going formation is an act of God; it ought to help us to value the gift of life and our Betharramite consecration, like Jesus Christ "humble and obedient", (Manifesto of our Founder), called to live in community and be open to the mission. And so, the General Chapter insists on the priority to be given to on-going formation, based on the personal accompaniment of each one which favours the experience of God and the deepening of our vocation.



Consequently, the suggestions made by Fr David during the recollection, were like a light showing us the way.

What distinguishes a General Chapter from other assemblies and gatherings? - Concerning the 26th Chapter held in Bethlehem, I would say first of all that there was a spirit of communion among the religious and the angle from which it was approached. Instead of passing judgement of the difficulties and problems of the others as if they were no concern of ours, we were able to take on board a view which was known so far but which seemed far removed from *my world and my life*.

Has this experience been somehow a time of personal renewal? - I can only say yes. It may seem strange but what really helped me was the ability to share with the brothers the ordinary, simple moments of our daily life, for example praying, rejoicing, working together in a friendly and fraternal atmosphere. That is where I appreciated and discovered in depth those who, otherwise would have remained unknown quantities for me.

After 17 days of sharing and debating what image of the Congregation has emerged for you? A quality? A failing? - From my point of view, its strength lies in the richness and diversity of the angles of its unique reality: the Betharram family is invited to be more daring in its witness to fraternal life and to the mission entrusted to it by the Church. A failing? There are probably plenty, but I would stress how difficult we find it to share the hidden treasure in each vicariate, each community and each religious.

When there is a gathering of 31 religious from different countries, not necessarily knowing each other and not speaking the same language, how come that there is still a feeling of belonging to the same family? - Thanks to the difficulties inherent to the difference of languages and cultures; to my mind what is fundamental to our feeling of belonging is the spirit which is our specific: the availability and humility to witness to our willingness to act as the



who yesterday recalled the 2nd year of ordination, Fr Graziano thanked the Lord for the "surprises" with which he has filled his life as a priest: the years of Mariotto, those dedicated to meeting and animation of youth groups and those dedicated to the service of the Congregation as Provincial Superior and then Regional Superior. The party then continued with the evening and the final surprise that of cutting of the cake. The Lord God who chose him as his minister may continue to shower his blessing upon him in his ministry.

Wednesday, 18 May ■ After a day spent in groups of vicariates and regions, we devoted 17th and 18th May to the sharing of our gifts, realities and talents of each of the vicariates in the congregation. By audiovisual aids and computers, the delegates made up in a lively and creative way the life of each vicariate: men, missions, ongoing challenges. After that, the Regional Superiors gave their report on the activities of each region. There then followed a question and answer session. For these two days, the Chapter has conducted a world tour of the reality of a congregation with nearly 300 members in 12 vicariates covering 15 countries. This human, cultural and apostolic diversity is an invitation for to give thanks... and to more commitment to be what we are: Sacred Heart Fathers and Brothers.

Thursday, 19 May ■ In the morning the Superior General Fr Gaspar Fernandez presented his report on the state of the Congregation since the last general chapter of 2005. The report was very detailed and gave an honest, and at the same time challenging, evaluation of the congregation throughout the three regions: the Region of St Michael (Europe, Africa and Holy Land), the Region of Fr Etchecopar (South America) and the Region of Blessed Miriam (England and Asia) - in which Betharram Fathers and Brothers work and minister in. At the end of the report the whole chapter clapped in appreciation of the presentation.

In the afternoon, in the wake of the Superior General's report, Fr Enrico Frigerio drew attention to the participants of the resolutions of the last Chapter of 2005, which requested the General Council to produce a brief collection of spiritual elements to lay associates. After presenting the work of the last six years as the general councillor in



charge of the case, he pointed out the issues to be discussed during the workshops in the following days.

In the second part, Fr Jean-Luc Morin presented the report prepared by the General Bursars Office: this was a good example of collaboration between religious-laity since such a record would have been unthinkable without the skill and dedication of a few lay people, specially Ms. Mariagrazia Cavazzini, Accountant of the Generalate House (and his son Paolo, computer expert, Mr. Luigi Pirovano, economic consultant of the Congregation, and his assistant Ms Elisa Sala). This exercise in transparency, and the debate that followed, helped to make the point and stay on track to achieve a real "economy of communion".

Friday, 20 May ■ The delegates identified the lines of thought and action to look at over the next six years for the Congregation. After personal time and meeting by region during the morning, the assembly discussed at length this substantive work. Late afternoon, the delegates finally agreed on the topics to be worked by the Chapter: 1/ Ongoing formation (charism, mission, laity, Rule of Life) 2/ Internationalism (and missionary cooperation, laity, Rule of Life) 3/ Economy of Communion (projects, Rule of Life) 4/ Vocation promotion (and initial formation); working with and for young people 5/ Community (role of the superior, individual and community project, laity)

Saturday, 21 May ■ The Chapter had a break in its works for relaxation and pilgrimage. The first stop: was the Jericho desert, for a time of prayer. The delegates reached Nazareth at 10 am, we directly went to the Basilica of Nazareth to meditate in the very place of the incarnation; we then travelled to the Betharram Monastery for a very good meal presented to us by the community: with Fr Damiano Colleoni and Fr Philippe Hourcade; and afterwards we had the chance to visit the Carmel for fraternal sharing: the community of 14 sisters coming from 12 nationalities. Then we travelled to Emmaus-Nicopolis, by coach. The central part of our day was the celebration of the Mass, where Jesus, according to the Blessed Mariam, broke bread with two disciples. After this time of grace, we returned to Bethlehem where a meal of pizza was waiting for us. Sure, such a program will fill us with the energy before tackling the second part of the Chapter!

5 MINUTES WITH... Father Gianluca

Fr Gianluca, 43, is Director of Catechetics in the diocese of Parma. He was one of 13 religious delegates to the General Chapter for whom it was a first. Here are the first impressions of this "newcomer".

Nef: Your brothers elected you to represent one of the 12 vicariates of the Congregation at the recent General Chapter. How were you feeling about all this as you stepped down from the plane on the 13th May? - When I arrived at Tel Aviv I was divided between emotion and curiosity, at discovering new horizons outlined by an international gathering, like the General Chapter. When I was preparing for this experience by reading and studying our Rule of Life, I came to realise that I was face to face with a heavy duty which would give a fresh surge to the Congregation of which I am a member.

How did you get through this 26th General Chapter? - I must admit that before the start of the work, I was imagining that I was going to take part in an event which was institutional and formal, with a point of view which restricted personal contributions and the experiences of the delegates. In actual fact I entered into the spirit of the Chapter - and with what joy! - with the real spirit of fraternity, of collegiality and of co-responsibility which were present among all the delegates; every word said was greeted and listened to with respect. Every delegate had the common good at heart for a Congregation which is small but very much alive.

Point blank what impressed you most? - As the proverb says "Well begun is half done", to have started the Chapter by the solemn celebration of the feast of St Michael revived our feeling of belonging to the Congregation of the Sacred Heart; this feeling was strengthened by the approval of the Rule of Life. It became a reality through the capacity, shown by the 31 delegates to assume responsibility for the treasures and weaknesses, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle constitute our vicariates and communities.





Jean-Luc Morin (former Secretary-General Bursar) and Fr Bruno Ierullo (former councillor in charge of missions). Our wishes and prayers are with the new team in the service of the Congregation. "Forward always, by Love!"

To celebrate the elections, the chapter decided to learn more about the local culture of the area, especially its culinary delights. All members of the Chapter, with the novitiate community in Bethlehem and the staff of the house, went to dinner at the "shepherds Tent", a Bedouin-style restaurant in Bet Sahour (the "Shepherds' Field" where the shepherds heard the message about the birth of Jesus.) The menu was typically Arabic, and some chapter member dared test 'narghile'... A fraternal and joyful night to celebrate an important day.

Sunday, 29 | Monday, 30 May ■ These two days were devoted to drafting and the approval of the motions which will be the heart of the Acts of the XXVI Chapter. There were lengthy discussions which were proportional to the emphasis on the matters elaborated: the Acts of the Chapter are calling the congregation to be faithful to its charism and to hold firm to its implementation until the next chapter in 2017. The official closing of the General Chapter was celebrated in the late afternoon during the Eucharist, at which the participants renewed their religious profession. At the very end of celebration, Fr Gaspar gave each member a "baby Jesus", a symbol of the divinity (our treasure) hidden in humanity (our weaknesses). Such was the touching conclusion of the work of the Chapter over the last 16 days, which was a great gift of the Spirit.

Tuesday, 31 May ■ The Chapter delegates made their last common trip to celebrate the Visitation in Ein Kerem, on the very site of the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth. They joined the Holy Land Franciscan communities celebrating on that day the institution by the Father Custos of 11 lectors and 7 acolytes. Praise and joy were the dominant notes of a liturgy animated by the beauty of Gregorian Song, the depth of the homily and the dynamism of the procession. And so, the thanksgiving of Betharram Fathers and Brothers expanded to religious life in its universal mission. The last word of this 26th General Chapter? – Magnificat, of course, and always forward !



Sunday, 22 May ■ The Chapter Assembly began rereading and discussing the Rule of Life for its final adoption. There are 9 years since was launched the revision of our basic text: re-elaborated by the commission ad hoc (Fr Ierullo, Fr Felet, Fr Moura, Fr Oyhénart and Fr Fernandez), enriched with the comments of religious and communities, it is presented in its Reference version in French. Voting procedures were precisely defined and approved. Given the importance of the topic, each chapter or subchapter (depending on its importance) is solemnly read, open to any amendments, debated and voted en bloc. Beyond the legal aspect, it is a true spiritual reading which can grasp the depth of our charism, and its impact on our lives and our mission.

Late Sunday afternoon, the delegates celebrated Mass at the Grotto of St. Jerome, in the basement of the Church of the Nativity. They have not failed to entrust their work (of scribe!) to the Lord, through the intercession of the saint who has made available the Word of God.

Work schedule on the Rule of Life

May 22 > Chapters 1-4: charism, mission, consecration, prayer | May 23 > Chapters 5-7: fraternal life, church service, formation | May 24 > Chapter 8: Government | May 25 > Chapters 9-11: administration, outing, special cases.

Tuesday, 24 May ■ At the Carmel of the Sacred Heart in Pau, 24th May, 1868 - the heart of Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified was wounded by love for Christ (the mystical phenomenon named Transverberation). 143 years later in Bethlehem, the Betharramite participants of the General Chapter celebrated this event with the Sisters of the Carmel of the Infant Jesus (cf. Homily, p. 16). A good opportunity to say the beautiful prayer of the sisters inspired by Mariam's prayer.

*Holy Spirit, inspire the Chapter;
Love of God, consume the Chapter;
To the true path, lead the Chapter;
Mary my Mother, look at the Chapter;
With Jesus, bless the Chapter;
From all evil, all illusion, all danger,
preserve the Chapter.*



Wednesday, 25 May ■ Today, is the National Day of Argentina and Feast of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, a contemporary of St. Michael and founder of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. The General Chapter adopted our new Rule of Life at 12:34 minutes 25 seconds, "the hour of the prayer of the Muslims". Father Graziano Sala the moderator of the meeting gave results of voting. Then Fr. Gaspar Fernandez congratulated the delegates on the work done and expressed his satisfaction for carrying through the tremendous work started by his predecessor, Fr Francesco Radaelli; on behalf of participants and of the whole Betharramite family, he thanked the commission of revision made up of Father Bruno Ierullo, Fr Jacky Moura, Fr Pietro Felet and Fr Beñat Oyhénart, the untiring secretary who worked from 2004, they all worked hard to reshape this fundamental document with 340 articles, enriched by elements of the "Betharramite treasures", the recent Magisterium and the Code of Canon Law. The Rule of Life of Bethlehem will soon be submitted for approval to the Roman Congregation for Religious and institutes of apostolic life. Now, it's up to us to change our lives to this rule of life: it is a "means of cooperation with grace, a right way to go to God and put ourselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." (DS 221)

Thursday, 26 May ■ The members of the General Chapter were divided in various study groups for the development of headlines for the Congregation for next six years. On Thursday 26th in the morning was entirely devoted to the studying the issues of the Chapter in the different groups: ongoing formation, internationalism, economy of communion, vocation animation and community life. In the afternoon, the Chapter gathered to hear the report of Fr Jean Luc about the call of the congregation to Vietnam. Currently, a young man, Joseph Tuan, has been accepted as a candidate in our family: we all have responsibility to pray to the Holy Spirit for this gift - for the seed of a new Betharramite mission. Afterwards, we started hearing the reports of the groups. On the following day, the delegates continued to work by small groups or in assembly on the same five great topics.

Friday, 27 May ■ The members of the Chapter were invited by Fr Adib Zoomot, the rector of the Latin Patriar-



chate of Jerusalem Seminary, to share dinner with the priests and seminarians of this institution. The seminar is located in Beit Jala, a village near Bethlehem. The links of our religious family with the Patriarchal seminary has always been very close. Until 1980, Betharramite Fathers were trainers in Beit Jala, so many generations of seminarians -including the current Patriarch- have been formed as priests by Betharramites. In a fraternal atmosphere, the rector thanked for the visit, reminded the rich Betharramite tradition that marked the life of the seminary, and capped his words with a tribute to Fr. Luigi Speziale who still continue to dedicate himself to this work.

Saturday, 28 May ■ At 9:47, Fr. Gaspar Fernandez Perez was re-elected for six years as our Superior General of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram. The proclamation of the vote was acclaimed by a lengthy standing ovation. Immediately after the session of the General Chapter was suspended to allow the religious to go in procession to the chapel lead by the novices, followed by the Dean (Patriarch) of the meeting, Fr Alberto Pensa, carrying the relic of our father St. Michael Garicoits. During the celebration, full of fervour and deep joy, Fr. Gaspar washed the feet of twelve religious representing the twelve Betharramite vicariates around the world. This gesture and this image is truly a sign of service between brothers... Let us give thanks to the Sacred Heart and entrust Father General to Our Lady of the Beautiful Branch!

In the afternoon, we completed the elections in Chapter for the new General Council; they are as follows:

- Vicar General: **Fr Enrico Frigerio** (re-elected)
 - Secretary-General Bursar: **Fr Graziano Sala** (previously Regional Superior of Saint Michael Region)
- Both reside at the Generalate House in Rome.
- General councillor in charge of formation: **Fr Laurent Bacho** (re-elected, in the Vicariate of Ivory Coast)
 - General councillor in charge of missions: **Fr Tobia Sosio** (Bursar of the Region Fr Etchecopar, in the Vicariate of Paraguay)

At the end of the meeting, Fr. Gaspar warmly thanked both the outgoing Councillors for their cooperation: Fr