

which he had left.

The chapters presided by him are witness of his willingness to revive the spirit which had been the driving force in all the work St Michael had undertaken. Two decisions were taken showing us the love which Fr Etchecopar had for the Congregation namely the opening of the two seminaries (called scholasticates) in Betharram and Bethlehem to assure a good future for the Institute and a thorough theological formation for future Betharramites.

Don't let's forget – this too was part of his mission – that Fr Etchecopar was a tireless traveller: every year he visited all the communities in France; on seven occasions he went to Rome to look after the affairs of the Congregation; three times he went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land; and finally, as long as his health allowed, he visited the community in South America.

Fr Etchecopar died 13th April 1897; according to one witness his final words were: "Open the window; I want to see the sky". Finally, he had come to accept the goal of his journey; this Heaven which he had sought all his life and which he had taught to love.

In reality Fr Etchecopar had changed nothing in the choices made by St Michael: it can be said that like a good disciple he had followed in the footsteps of his master. Yet his work had been fundamental in the history of the Congregation, in so far as, to the visage and soul of the Founder, he had added the legs for walking.

In 1897 there was an extraordinary Chapter for the election of a successor to Fr Etchecopar. This Chapter completed its mission by giving him the title of "Second Founder". With the votes of the Chapter members and by popular demand, the Chapter paid homage to the Reverend Father, now deceased, as the model of the virtues and mission of Fr Garicoits, an admirable model of all Christian and Priestly virtues, the perfect example of Religious life and the second Founder of the Congregation.

by Roberto Cornara

To be continued ►

A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

Consecration through the Vows.

By choosing us Jesus wants us to get to know his Father's love and to keep us for Himself. We answer God's love for us by consecrating our lives to him. To him who gave his life for us, to him to whom we are configured through Baptism, we give the best of ourselves through the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience by which we participate in the life style of the very person who chose us (Rule of Life, 6).

Consecration is not only the expression of the individual. It is a grace, a free gift from God who looks on us with love, chooses us, consecrates us to himself and makes us partakers in his mission. This consecration becomes a reality in Baptism by the gift of the Holy Spirit which transforms us into sons through divine grace. Through the seal of Baptism and Confirmation we are associated with Jesus, the Beloved Son of the Father, the Messenger and the Consecrated. Through our association with him, we too become disciples and messengers. This consecration seen as a gift from God is very well expressed in the celebration of Final Vows.

The very foundations of the life of a consecrated

CONGREGATION OF SACRED HEART OF JESUS OF BETHARRAM

2 - The Chapters of Fr Etchecopar (1878-1897)

person are his relation with Jesus, the Incarnate Word, our sole love, our sole richness and Lord (RoL 25). As we contemplate him in his consecration to his Father we discover to what extent he was concerned only with the relationship and obedience to his Father, when he exclaims "Where your treasure is, there too is your heart" his feelings as a human being are not indifferent, and his answer: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2, 49) allows him such ease and freedom that he has nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9,57).

Here we are talking about a consecration which absorbs the whole of the individual. It creates a certain life style showing our place in the Church and the world as consecrated souls. It is manifested through the three fundamental dimensions of our existence: dependence on God the Father through obedience, equality with others through chastity and self-control in the use of this world's goods through poverty. It is interesting to note to what extent these three dimensions are interconnected. Sometimes this unity of life can be noticed when a brother is being asked for a change of community or a change of mission after several years in the same spot. Then his reservations could seem disobedience when in reality on closer inspection he is only expressing his attachment to people and a certain security. Perhaps the individual doesn't realise

how all this reduces his aptitude, his availability and his freedom to respond generously to the calls which are the direct consequences of living situations.

Poverty as lived by Jesus doesn't consist solely in the absence of goods. Jesus is also poor because he is attached affectively to no human being. He has neither wife nor children and he keeps nobody locked in a relationship: "After this all deserted him and fled" (Mark 14, 50.) Furthermore he doesn't think that he is master of anything; all that he is, has been received from his Father. To the very point of considering his death as the failure of all his projects and thus his Father's projects are made evident. Jesus' chastity is to be seen in his freedom and independence in relation to people; he loves them as his Father loves them; his freedom and independence in the presence of material goods are his reply in total obedience and availability to his Father's plans. As Betharramites we consider obedience to be our particular characteristic; through our obedience we live out our chastity and poverty by avoiding the break-up of the individual. (R.of L 22) The unity of a life through consecrated poverty, chastity and obedience has its roots in the Gospels: "Unless the grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it

The Constitutions which had been approved, thanks to the hard work put in by Fr Etchecopar, Superior General from 1873, had made provisions for Chapter meetings every three years. So, on the 2 August 1878 and for the first time, the Congregation celebrated its first General Chapter presided over by Fr Etchecopar who had been confirmed in his charge; there were to be five other chapters: 1881, 1884, 1887, 1890 and 1896.

Superior of the Congregation for 24 years, Father Etchecopar had settled on three aims; he had already achieved the first one even before becoming Superior General: the approval of the Congregation and the Constitutions by the Holy See. It had not been easy but he finally succeeded thanks to the intervention of Sr Marie de Jesus Crucifie.

Once the approval by Rome had been obtained, Father set his sights on the second point of his programme: the reconnaissance by the Holy See of the sanctity of the Founder. He asked Fr Basil Bourdenne to prepare a biography which appeared in 1878; afterwards he himself collected and published part of our Founder's correspondence and writings known today under the title "Thoughts". Finally between 1878 and 1879 he



P. Auguste Etchecopar

began preparations for introducing the cause for beatification of our Founder.

The third point of his programme, and the most important, was to consolidate the spiritual life and different works of the Congregation. After years of disappointments and confusion, it was necessary to resume the path laid down by the Founder and rebuild the spiritual heritage

FEBRUARY		
14	Joyeux anniversaire Buon compleanno	F. Bertrand Belhart F. Hyacinthe Ali Konan Fr. Giuseppe Pozzi
17	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Jean-Luc Morin P. Serge Braga Latta
18	Happy birthday	Br. Andrew Ferris
19	Joyeux anniversaire Feliz cumpleaños	P. Henri Lamasse Hno. Raúl Villalba Maylin
20	Joyeux anniversaire	P. Mirco Trusgnach
22	Happy birthday	Fr. 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 55 años de profesión	P. Pierre Salla P. Francisco de Paula Mons. Claudio Silvero P. Daniel Martin
MARCH		
1	Joyeux anniversaire Buon compleanno 30 años de profesión	P. André Gillet P. Albino de Giobbi P. José Larrosa
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
10	Buon compleanno	P. Pietro Felet
12	Joyeux 102 ans	P. Joseph Canton
13	Buon compleanno	P. Natale Re
15	Joyeux anniversaire Happy birthday	F. Paul Lamothe Br. Antony J. Livin Fernando

for eternal life. If a man serves me he must follow me, where ever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him". (John 12, 24-26) It is to be believed that the consecrated person can renounce goods which in themselves are good because God has loved him first according to the Ignatian principle "for the greater glory" or as St Paul says "For me to live is Christ". The consecrated soul focuses his entire life on Jesus. He is not bothered with the management of goods nor has he a wife and children to occupy his mind. He is not even preoccupied with his own projects since his are those of Jesus and his Church. Besides even marriage is built on the Gospel principle that "losing one's life is to find it again". There is a need to forget one's own projects, of being focussed on self so as to be attentive to one's wife, with all that that could involve. The husband or wife receives everything from God through the husband or wife. The consecrated soul bears witness to the importance of relationships with God. Both states of life are complementary; the religious is witness that God is the unique necessary excluding all other links, learning thus to transcend the link. Marriage shows that there is no stopping at good intentions but must be confirmed by love of the neighbour. Consecration is a life style, an existence, an activity defining our conduct, the way of life in relationships marked by



P. Gaspar

a great simplicity, facility and liberty as much in relation to people as in relation to goods and to life projects. As for marriage it expresses otherwise how to be in relationship with God, the neighbour and goods.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, SCJ

THE LIFE OF THE COUNCIL

IN JANUARY, WAS HELD IN ROME THE COUNCIL OF THE CONGREGATION, WHICH "EXAMINES THE GENERAL STATE OF THE INSTITUTE; IT SUPERVISES THE IMPLEMENTING OF THE DECISIONS OF THE LAST GENERAL CHAPTER; IT DEFINES THE PRACTICAL MEANS OF HELPING TO POOL RESOURCES FOR MISSION; IT ASSESSES THE DECISIONS, WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE AT ALL LEVELS IN REGARD TO THEIR GENERAL OBJECTIVES FIXED BY THE CONGREGATION IN THE ACTS OF ITS CHAPTERS" (R OF L 217). WHAT FOLLOWS IS THE REPORT OF ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

Rediscovering.

Rediscovering our roots so as to live out what is fundamental to our Religious Life today, by our consecration, our community life and our mission, such was the guiding principal of the Council of the Congregation held in Rome at the Generalate from 11th to the 21st January. Along with the Superior General and Councillors living in Rome, there were the other two councillors from abroad – Fr

Tobia and Fr Laurent Bacho, and the Regional Superiors: Fr Jean Luc Morin, Fr Gustavo Agin and Fr Austin Hughes.

This 18th Council of the Congregation was meant to carry out the decisions discussed and voted during the General Chapter held in Bethlehem last May.

In a report like this, it is difficult to talk about the quality of the exchanges, the depth of the reflection, the atmosphere, as well as the open comparisons where each one was able to state



Saint Michael Garicoits wrote...

Why should we obey our rules?

There are several reasons: but the principal one is our love for Our Lord Jesus Christ and the desire to serve him and to please him, and not through fear. He who loves in truth makes no distinction, when it's a question of carrying out an order, whether the dearly beloved is ordering or simply asking. The good son has only to know the wishes of his Father. It is pleasing to God to have willing servants. Our interest since it is in this that our perfection consists; the rules are our plan of action in our pursuit of holiness and perfection; they are providential means for working with God's grace for our sanctification and perfection.

All our rules are great, important, even the smallest of them.

Because coming from God who inspired them, they can only be important.

Because they cost so many meditations, tears and prayers to St Ignatius.

Bursar, helped us to gage the efforts being made by the Congregation to assure formation and the responsibility which this demands of each religious.

- We barely touched on the reflection concerning the talents to be developed in the service of the Congregation and the responsibilities incurred in the sense of this service without being overwhelmed by our own importance.

- We also discussed the importance of our links with the Congregation, which neither failures nor misunderstandings can undo. Consequently solutions like Exclaustration or definite departure can only be envisaged with utmost gravity.

In all our discussions we were totally trustful of each other; our trust was built essentially on the Eucharist, the Office and the *narratio fidei* on St Michael's letters (Letters 81, 92 and 145). We are always discovering how our Founder's words are an invitation to us to regard our Betharramite vocation as a precious gift from God. Our weaknesses are solely there to help us better appreciate God's



Laurent Bacho

grace.

We are going away now with the desire to share more and more with our brothers the movement of the Heart of Jesus at the heart of the world.

Fr Laurent BACHO, scj.

THE SERVICE OF FORMATION

IN ROME, IN THE WAKE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CONGREGATION, THE NEW TEAM OF THE SERVICE OF FORMATION HELD ITS FIRST MEETING. AFTER SHARING THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, THE MEMBERS OF THE TEAM DREW UP A DETAILED PROGRAMME OF SOME INITIATIVES REGARDING FORMATION, CONTAINED IN THE ACTS OF THE LAST GENERAL CHAPTER.

The Service of Formation.

The Betharramite Service of Formation, totally renewed since the General Chapter, was summoned by the Superior General to a meeting at the Generalate on Sunday 22nd January.

The whole week was given over to sharing our experiences as Formators in the three regions of the Congregation. With clear sightedness and Faith we explained our difficulties and our joys. Listening to others and reflecting on what was said set us on the path of trust.

The specificity of our team is to include On-going Formation in our reflection, as requested by the Chapter. We have been able to exchange ideas on the aims of the International session planned for mid-June 2015 for the religious more than 40 years of age.

We must admit that we have been contemplating the urgency of the International session planned in preparation for Final Vows 11th April – 16th May 2012 at Betharram. An exact programme has been drawn up and tasks assigned to several religious. The important number of

participants taking part (6 Indians, 5 Thais, 5 South Americans, and 3 Africans) will be asking us for serious accompaniment. We have been promised help by Fr Jean-Luc and Fr Enrico Frigerio.

We were able to tackle some very important themes for reflection and are including them in our programme:

- Personal accompaniment has become a very precious means and is being used regularly. This is something we wish to pursue.
- The educational elements included in the Ratio Formationis (No 61 – 118) two years ago, add an important dimension in the configuration of the young man with Jesus, humble and obedient. We want these elements to be better known and used in both Initial and On-going Formation.
- We took another look at the 2007 reflection on formation for poverty; there too the example of our Seniors is very eloquent for the young in formation. Fr Graziano, the General

his point of view and his difficulties in helping his confreres to accept the decisions taken at the General Chapter.

One aspect of the agenda dealt with the historic roots of our Congregation: the 150th anniversary of the death of our Founder (1863 – 2013) which will be celebrated with a minimum of fuss, as was said at the General Chapter. We had a look at the different suggestions to celebrate the event, and the results will be published in future editions of the NEF and at the Regional Councils which are to take place in the coming months. The different celebrations will be held between May 2013 and May 2014; the theme will be the motto: "From the Heart of Christ to the Heart of the world".

Here are a few projects taken from the most important: at Congregation level the procession of the relics of St Michael and the Eucharist at the Church of St Louis des Francais (Rome); participation of young laity in the World Youth Days (WYD) in Rio de Janeiro in July 2013; Solemn Mass in Betharram composed in honour of St Michael, a competition to decide the official logo for the 150th anniversary.

Another important theme, in response to a request from the General Chapter, concerns on-going formation. Here a few projects:

- At Congregation level: an assembly of the religious under 40 years of age (2015).
- For the St Michael and Blessed Miriam (England) Regions, a meeting for the religious brothers at Betharram, Lourdes and Ibarre.
- At Vicariate and inter-Vicariate level: a session for the Religious with fewer than 15 years of Final Vows.

The topic of Vocations was also approached and a few pointers were stressed: where

prayer is concerned, pursue the initiative of the St Michal Region, namely a monthly prayer prepared by the young in formation and throw it open to the Betharramite religious and laity in view of the 150th anniversary, making use of St Michael's texts. These prayers will appear in the NEF from September 2012. It is also to be desired that on the 8th of each month the entire Congregation should pray for the Vietnam project. The next WYD in Rio will obviously offer a fresh chance to re-launch the Pastoral of Vocations for the young and groups of Betharramite laity and generally speaking for those religious who are in contact with the young.

Where community life is concerned, the Superior General gave some suggestions to the Regional Superiors to help each community create an apostolic community project.

Next came the question of an international community; a few steps had to be taken to realise the creation of such a community in Pau and Nazareth, retained as important for relaunching the cooperation of the Regional in a truly missionary spirit.

Discussing the presence of the laity in the different topics studied during the Chapter, it was decided that it was necessary to involve them in the celebration of the 150th anniversary. It was also noted to what extent the spirit of Betharram is alive in the different groups, with different ways of expressing it but always in reference to the intuition of St Michael. The desire of some laity to experience the Founder's charism by making a commitment by "promise". This is something being done actually by a young couple of Argentineans connected with Betharram.

The presence of the Regional Bursars on the last days of the Council plus, the following

morning, the presence of a few lay persons who help us with treasury problems allowed us to reflect on certain aspects gathered during the Chapter under the heading "An Economy of Communion". Here are some topics:

- How are we to provide the resources necessary for Formation, to help Formation Houses having problems with financing the education of the young. There were a few suggestions which are entrusted to the General Council to make them workable.

- Another important point: invitation to all the community bursars to draw up a Provisional Budget with the Vicariate Bursar.

- Finally we made a study of the management of resources which will allow more flexibility and better results at every level within the Congregation.

Another important outcome: the creation of a commission responsible for making useful suggestions so that Betharram, heart and cradle of our Congregation shall be appreciated as the depot of our patrimony, as the Maison d'Accueil for all the religious and laity who wish to deepen their links with St Michael, finally as a centre from where the richness of our spirituality may extend over all. All this work is the result of the quality of attention and prayer provided by the three moments of the narratio fidei. To begin with we prayed and shared our experiences making use of Psalm 66.

By contemplating God who "put us to the test; refined us like silver", we re-lived the spirit that the Chapter of Bethlehem presented us with the image taken from Saint Paul: "This treasure of ours we carry in pots of clay". And the words of the psalm "you have led us out to breathe again" helped us to discover and emphasise the signs of hope also present in our

Congregation and in our personal experience as religious. The other two periods of the narratio drew inspiration from as many letters of Saint Michael: the letter No 10, to a former student of the major seminary of Betharram. In this letter – in which he calls himself 'superior of four walls of a vast building' – Saint Michael announces some relevant points of his method to know the will of God. Then the letter No 69, to Sr Saint-Jérôme, Daughter of the Cross. In this letter, after giving some spiritual advice to the religious sister, Saint Michael asks for hints about how to organize the laundry, the kitchen, the cellar, the linen room ... This letter sheds light also on the greatness of the human side of Saint Michael, so concerned about the smooth running of the community in the daily life. By going back to our roots – immersed in the word of God – we can live the radicality of our consecration in our prayer, in our community life and in our mission

The Council of the Congregation experienced a meaningful moment on 12 January, during the visit to the Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, the newly appointed Cardinal Mons. João Bráz de Aviz and to the General Secretary, Mons Joseph William Tobin. At the end of the visit the Prefect promised to come in a near future for a dinner with the community in the Generalate.

We let Saint Michael have the last word: "Let our motto be: pray, reflect, communicate and obey. I love you too much to wish you a happiness which is not based on this ... Give your life to seeking this happiness. Spare neither sacrifice nor effort to attain it. Always have courage".

Enrico Frigerio, scj.

of Jesus of Betharram in 2000. Its aim is to give dignity back to farm work and offer professional and human training to the village youth and help them to build their future in freedom and responsibility. This meeting, marked by rich cultural exchanges, was held in the multipurpose hall of Pibrac.

Vicariate of Thailand

Best wishes, Monsignor! ► On 26th January 2012, in the Ban Garicoits community (Sampran), Fr. Jeerapaht scj (Superior of Ban Bétharram) and Fr. Boonlert (Priest of Chiang Mai diocese) organised the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Mons. Joseph Sangval Surasarang's ordination.

On this special occasion Mgr. Francis Savior Veera Aumphonrat (Bishop of Chiang Mai Dioceses) and Fr. Tidkham scj, joined this celebration.

Some people from Chiang Mai Diocese present in Sampran area and some come from Chiang Mai were happy to join our community for the occasion.



IN MEMORIAM

France - Bosdarros ► Monday, January 16, the funeral of Mr Leopold Daqo (80 years old) was celebrated. He was twin brother of Fr Paul Daqo, of the Maison Neuve community in Betharram, and brother of Sr Etienne-Saint-Jean, Daughter of the Cross, who was for a long time headmistress in Igon. He was very close to Betharram and he spent his professional life in the administrative secretariat of the "Notre-Dame" College, when his brother Robert was secretary of the Director. Let's pray for the repose of Mr. Daqo and express our sympathy to his family.

England - Newcastle ► On January 1st 2012, Mr Arnold Warents, 72 years old, brother-in-law of Fr Austin Hughes (Regional Superior of the Blessed Miriam Region) died in Newcastle. We express our sympathy to Fr Austin and we promise our prayer.



Rome

Guests ... ► On January 12th, the members of the Council of the Congregation paid a visit to the Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life,

the newly appointed Cardinal H.E.Mgr João Bráz de Aviz and to the Secretary of the same Congregation, Mgr Joseph William Tobin.

The fraternal atmosphere of the visit strengthened the bonds of unity between our Congregation and the Congregation for Consecrated Life and gave the opportunity to the members of the Council of the Congregation to meet personally the Prefect and his Secretary of this Vatican Congregation.

... Hosts ► The Generalate community, after the visit of Mons Vincent Landel scj, Archbishop of Rabat, had the privilege to welcome other friends of Betharram.

► On January 24th His Excellency Mons. Enrico Solmi, Bishop of Parma, the Diocese in which Betharram is present with a community. On Saturday 28th His Excellency Ignacio Gogorza scj, Bishop of Incarnación

(Paraguay). On January 30th the community invited for lunch His Excellency Mons. Edmundo Ponziano Valenzuela Mellid, sdb, Archbishop Coadjutor of Asunción (Paraguay), along with the Ambassador of the State of Paraguay at the Holy See, His Excellency Mr. Esteban Kriskovic.

Vicariate of Ivory Coast

A Bishop's busy day ► Sunday, January 22, Archbishop Vincent Landel spent a day in the community of Adiapodoumé. Bishop Landel was attending, in Yamoussoukro, the meeting of the Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone Regional Episcopal Conferences of West Africa. On the agenda of this busy day: Bishop Landel presided over the Sunday Mass, visited the laboratories of Tshanfeto, met with the Betharramite youth. Then, after lunch, he paid a visit to the community of Adiapodoumé. A meaningful experience of communion so much appreciated by the Betharramites and by the parish community.

Vicariate of France - Spain

In Pibrac for Tshanfeto ► On Sunday, January 22, "The Friends of Tshanfeto" organized a dinner in order to collect funds for the agricultural training center Tshanfeto (meaning "stand up" in the Ebrie language), in Côte d'Ivoire. The "pedagogical farm" was started by the Congregation of the Sacred Heart

... the Community of Yamoussoukro

THE COMMUNITY OF YAMOUSSOUKRO CONSISTS OF THREE RELIGIOUS IN FINAL VOWS (FR. JEAN-MARIE RUSPIL, FR. THÉOPHILE DÉGNI N'GUESSAN AND FR. ARSÈNE NOBA) AND A YOUNG RELIGIOUS IN HIS PERIOD OF PLACEMENT (BR. ARMEL).

THE SUPERIOR, FR JEAN-MARIE RUSPIL, ALONG WITH THE COMMUNITY, HAS AGREED TO ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS.

NEF: What were the origins of your community? What needs did it answer?

- In 2005/2006, seeing that the young brothers were finishing their initial formation, the religious of Ivory Coast Delegation decided that it was necessary to open a new community. The two communities already in existence in Dabakala and Adiapodoume were 500 kms apart; so as to favour relationships, it seemed important that the new community should not be too far away from them. We had thought of Yamoussoukro, situated exactly half way and as it is the political capital has a bright future. Mgr Joseph Ake, the local Bishop, who was contacted first by the Delegate and then by the Provincial, was happy from the moment of our contact and of our arrival.

What is the Community mission?

- The Bishop has entrusted us with a parish which he had erected when we arrived at the end of September



The community of Yamoussoukro

2007 called St Felix's. In the Sinzibo (fertile land in Baoule tongue) there was already a small lively community assembling the Christians of three cities. There were teachers who would meet on a Sunday under a shelter in the yard of one of the families. When we arrived we were asked to accompany this community, two villages (Djahakro and N'Gbessou-Allangoua) as well as the diocesan chaplaincy for the young of the two student communities at the National Polytechnic (INPHB).

You are a religious community at the heart of a parish. When you first arrived there was absolutely nothing, how did you manage to do all that exists now?

- When they gave their consent for the foundation of this community, our Provincial and General Superiors were clear when they told us and the diocese that Betharram had not the means to build a church and a presbytery. For three years we had to lodge in a house in town, which means that we had rent to pay: there the Province didn't hesitate as the community needed a minimum of autonomy. Right from the beginning the local community helped us greatly, materially. We soon saw that they wanted our meeting and prayer place to be autonomous, likewise our living accommodation. Thanks to the money which they collected and thanks to the help of a religious community a big chapel was built which we inaugurated at Easter 2009 less than two years after our arrival. Then, thanks to a grant from OPM at the end of September 2010, a four bedded house meant that we could leave the rented accommodation.

Tell us something about the life of your community

- The four members of the community have not been the same during these first years: there has been a succession of trainees, second year novices, future deacons and deacons. But the community has always tried to observe the Rule of Life: community life

marked by community meals, a time for community prayer with the Office, a common cashbox, leisure moments spent together at the TV. In view of the fact that we are all involved in the same pastoral activity, we are working together, consequently when we meet in community there are always the two aspects, religious and pastoral.

During the recent wars what problems did your community have to face?

- The city of Yamoussoukro wasn't very affected by the recent events, except for a few upheavals. This allowed our community to keep in contact with the exterior and to report especially on how the brothers in Adiapodoume were managing confronted as they were with the results of the conflict. Here, the cities and villages of the parish were invaded by the displaced families from Abidjan; the N'Gbessou community was multiplied by three!! More than 1000 students from the INP found themselves blocked in their city without their canteen. The community worked in collaboration with the parish Caritas to get food for them. They also provided pastoral accompaniment for these young people disturbed by the crisis and anxious for their families in Abidjan.

Tell us something about the important moments in the life of the community (prayer, retreats, rest).

- The community has had some great moments, for example the

final profession of the two Brothers Omer and Arsene, or meetings of the delegation and of the Vicariate. Normally the community takes time off for days of recollection at the Basilica. But we don't always manage to visit the community at Dabakala, nor visit the religious communities in the diocese as we had planned in our community project.

The laity of the parish discovered the originality of the community, that you are Betharramite religious. How did the Lay Associates originate?

- Used to being catered for by diocesan clergy from the Cathedral parish the laity soon discovered that we were another type; they were aware of female religious, but the masculine counterpart escaped them! Very discretely they tell us how much they appreciate the difference, our community life, our solidarity and pastoral closeness, a special way of celebrating the liturgy with sobriety and recollection, our openness in financial matters. They also find us available and present with them.

A delegation of Lay Associates from Abidjan came one week end in 2009 to meet us and tell us briefly during Sunday Mass what they are doing with the Betharramites. Afterwards a few of the faithful prolonged the discussion with them. That is how, little by little, a group of laity, associated at Yamoussoukro, has adopted the name "Mi ye" (Here I am, in Baoule). Some of them already knew Betharram

thanks to the retreats given at Adiapodoume.



We were reminded by the General Chapter that "Promotion of Vocations is the responsibility of every religious. We mustn't be afraid of the youth; they keep us on the path of conversion, so that our witness is always coherent and we look to the future positively". Does the community consider that it is a challenge for the young? How?

- There are a lot of young people in our parish; the two communities at the INP are made up of 800 youngsters from 18 – 25 years of age! Country wise more than half of the population is under 18. The young are all mobilised by their school work or superior education, consequently they are not always as available as we would like to be present at the different movements and groups that are proposed. The community is actively engaged in accompanying these youngsters, and this without hiding our religious identity. Vocational groups exist in the parish and the INP; we tell them who we are and we invite them to get to know us better. So far, one young student, Fulgence, has said that he would like to share our life, at the end of his studies. He is therefore an aspirant. We hope that others will be attracted to the Betharram way of life which we are happy to live together here at Yamoussoukro.