

contested. It was at this difficult moment that the Church in France launched a vast programme of home missions with the aim of restoring her spiritual authority, of promoting new vocations, of reviving the faith and practice of religion.

In the Basque Country Mgr D'Astros decided in 1821 to create a "body of Missionaries under the patronage of the Sacred Heart of Jesus". These Missionaries were definitively installed in Hasparren in 1826. They visited the outlying villages, gave retreats, helped out for catechism and gave a hand to the secular clergy for liturgical feasts.

Their rule was made up of 48 articles divided into three chapters: Constitution of the Society; the spirit in which vows were to be made and observed; some special means for advancing in virtue.

In the first article the young Betharramite community thus defined itself: "The Missionaries established in the diocese of Bayonne under the title of adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have as their first aim to strive after their own perfection and the renewal of the faith and piety of the people.

In the first chapter, more than half the articles concerned the vow of poverty and its implications: "The vow of poverty made by the Missionaries obliges them to refrain from using anything as if it belonged to them personally" (Art 10)

But it is perhaps when we read articles 30

and 31 that we can be moved when we realise what this means in the mind of Fr M. Garicoits, first superior of the first Betharramite community.

"The vow of obedience is the most perfect; by this vow we sacrifice to God our will, which is nearest and dearest to us in the whole world. Obedience includes all the other virtues and aims at perfection; for perfection is nothing other than the perfect conformity of our will with that of God." Finally, a sign of the times perhaps, the Rule of Hasparren closed discretely but firmly on the value of humility with a "Prayer before entering the pulpit".

My God, I am but a child who barely knows how to utter your Holy Name. I am less able than anyone else to announce your Word. But it is with the weakest of instruments that you perform great things. All praise to you, Lord, to me confusion!

O my God, bless this talk, not that I should be praised by men, but so that sinners may return to you. I promise you, with the help of your grace, not to draw any vanity from it, not to attribute to myself any success, but to recognise that it is your grace alone, and no words of mine that will touch the hearts of all. Amen.

(to be continued)

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2013



Societas S<sup>mi</sup> Cordis Jesu  
BETHARRAM

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NOUVELLES EN FAMILLE  
NOTICIAS EN FAMILIA  
NOTIZIE IN FAMIGLIA  
FAMILY NEWS

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

111<sup>th</sup> year  
10<sup>th</sup> series, nr 78  
14<sup>th</sup> January 2013

## A WORD FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

### Betharramite Formation

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Page 15 • A History of the Rule of Life (1)

Chapter 7 of the Rule of Life has been completely rewritten. Ever since the 1960s, Formation has been the topic on which the Congregation has worked hardest. And now we have the *Ratio Formationis*, the service of Betharramite Formation prepared by Fr Bacho, the General Councillor in charge of Formation. There are now only three novitiates, and one theology scholasticate at Belo Horizonte for the whole of Latin America. We attach great importance to the formation of Formators; we have launched a preparatory service for the young religious who are going to make final vows; in 2007 in Adiapodoume there was a meeting of all the formators of the Congregation.

By Betharramite formation we mean the whole process of conversion, the integration of the feelings of the Son for his Father until final total identification with Him in his offering (VC 65). This is the work of an entire lifetime. Each step on this journey has its own importance and special points of interest, not forgetting the entire distance to be travelled. So it is that on-going formation is as important as initial formation! This is why on-going formation ought to be

planned and implemented before initial formation so as to be sure that the two formations are totally coherent. There is a danger that the demands for initial formation will be noticed only by those who have not yet arrived, so much so that the young man, at this point of his formation, will carry them out simply to reach a goal and once reached he will feel free to do what he likes.

The young man starting formation must undertake this journey. So, when seriously he begins seeking God in his heart, when he realises that it is God who is calling him and that he is being invited to respond, he is going to come face to face with truths which will make him close in on himself. The Desert Fathers used to call this the work of the Devil. These movements will be turning him in the opposite direction to God's call, a call which, on the contrary, will help him to exceed in love.

Here we are talking of a challenge thrown out to the novice; he must face self knowledge in truth and in authenticity; he must face his interior world with its angels and demons, with all its qualities, failures, possibilities and wounds. This knowledge of his interior, and of his heart, will help him to know himself better. Then one day he will cross the threshold: he will come to accept himself with his riches and weaknesses, his lights and shadows; then he will begin a work of purification helping him to exceed himself; then he will develop what helps him to grow in the art of giving and reject anything that might draw him in on himself as St Ignatius

would say.

At the core of this task of purification of his heart and of himself in reality, the young man gets to know of what he is capable, his wounds, faults and failings, he also gets to know and experiences the meeting with Jesus Christ - who loves him as he is, forgives him, takes care of him, trusts him and strengthens him in his faith -, knowing the One in whom he has put his trust (2 Tim 1,12); Jesus Christ invites him to be his co-worker, thus discovering the real dynamism of his vocation: "he has loved me and has given himself up for me" (Gal 2,20). It is at this point that the young man enters into the authenticity of his faith experience. If previously he has sought it outside himself, henceforth it is within himself that he finds it. This is going to give a new foundation and new orientation of his whole life. When we talk about the experience of faith we are talking about a key element of formation, the modal of which we must find in the charismatic experience of St Michael Garicoits. This is something which the young man cannot experience on his own, hence the importance of good spiritual accompaniment; masters of postulants, novices and scholastics have therefore an important mission: that of accompanying individuals in discovering the truth on themselves, relationship with the Heart of Jesus, the Word Incarnate. "Formators must therefore be people already well embarked on the way of perfection, so as to be able to accompany others on such a journey. Attentive to the action of Grace they will be able to point out the tiniest

### CONGREGATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS OF BETHARRAM

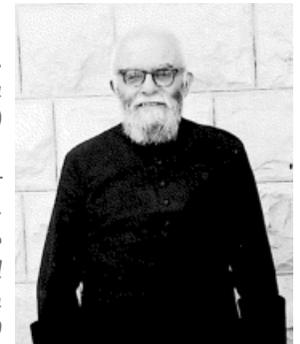
ON 22 FEBRUARY 2012 THE SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES FOR APOSTOLIC LIFE SIGNED THE DECREE RECOGNISING OUR NEW CONSTITUTIONS. THESE CONSTITUTIONS HAVE A LONG HISTORY; THEY ARE THE SIGN OF A REBIRTH, A FRESH START FOR THE RELIGIOUS OF BETHARRAM. ALL ALONG THE 177 YEARS SEPARATING US FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST COMMUNITY, OUR RULE OF LIFE HAS KNOWN MANY REVISIONS, HAS BEEN THE RICHER FOR NEW VOCABULARY, HAS BEEN COMPLETED BY UNPUBLISHED CHAPTERS SO AS TO SPEAK MORE ELOQUENTLY TO THE BETHARRAMITE RELIGIOUS IN EACH SUCCESSIVE GENERATION. YET OUR RULE OF LIFE CANNOT BETRAY ITS SOURCE AND FOUNDATION: THE CHARISM OF ST MICHAEL GARICOITS. HOW HAS IT BEEN ABLE TO EVOLVE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CONTINUE TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE INTUITION OF THE FOUNDER? IN THE COMPANY OF FR PIERRE DUVIGNAU LET'S MAKE A NEW DISCOVERY OF THE RULE WHICH THE FATHERS AND BROTHERS OF BETHARRAM GAVE THEMSELVES SO AS TO FULFIL THEIR VOCATION.

### 1- The very first Rule

After Vatican II, the 1969 General Chapter decided on the elaboration of a new Rule of Life. Fr Duvignau then suggested a short History of the Betharram Constitutions. Let's join him as we return to our origins.

"It was in 1835 that Fr Garicoits and his companions formed a community. There were six of them; one of their number, Fr Fondeville, left us an account of the ceremony, as simple as a fioretto: In October of that year 1835 the group at Betharram was made up of MM. Garicoits, Guimon, Perguilhem, Chirou, Larrouy and Fondeville. They wanted to have a Rule for their own sanctification and edification. The Rule of the Missionaries of Hasparren was chosen; and without further ado about a novitiate except their willingness to glorify God, to save souls and sanctify the population they unanimously elected M. Garicoits as their superior, promising him obedience and poverty and renewing

Fr Duvignau  
(1895-1995)  
who wrote,  
among other  
things, the Spi-  
ritual Doctrine  
of St Michael  
Garicoits in  
1949



their vow of celibacy. They then emptied into his hands the contents of their meagre purses." The first rule therefore of the Betharramites was that of the Missionaries of Hasparren, probably because three of them – Fathers Guimon, Perguilhem and Fondeville had been members of that society which was dissolved in 1830. But who were these Missionaries of Hasparren? At the beginning of the 19th century the anti-clericalism professed in France by the revolutionary bands was still alive and kicking. Throughout the whole of Europe the Church was politically weakened and her spiritual power greatly

JANUARY	
14	Feliz aniversario Ir. Glecimar da Silva
17	15 años de profesión P. Crispin Villalba
18	Feliz cumpleaños 10 años de profesión P. Antonio Cano
20	Joyeux anniversaire P. Victor Bataillés
23	Buon compleanno P. Ennio Bianchi
24	Joyeux anniversaire F. Sylvain Keita Nguebata
25	Feliz cumpleaños P. Luis Oteiza
26	Buon compleanno P. Albino Trameri P. Mario Giussani
27	Happy birthday Feliz aniversario Fr. Brian Boyle Ir. Juan Pablo García Martínez
28	Happy birthday Fr. Biju Paul Alappat
29	Joyeux anniversaire P. André Grossard
30	Buon compleanno P. Celeste Perlini P. Aldo Camesasca
FEBRUARY	
2	Joyeux anniversaire 55 años de profesión P. Jean Suberbielle P. Paulo Vital Campo P. João Batista Ribeiro
3	Buon compleanno P. Tarcisio Giacomelli
4	Feliz cumpleaños P. Angelo Recalcati
7	Joyeux anniversaire P. Firmin Bourguinat
10	Joyeux anniversaire P. Henri Lataste
12	Joyeux anniversaire P. Pierre Grech P. Raoul Thibaut Segla
13	Buon compleanno P. Mario Longoni

obstacles, but especially they will show the beauty of the following of Christ and the power of the charism on which it is accomplished. Knowledge of the spiritual wisdom will be associated with the knowledge offered by human means and which will be a help in discerning the vocation and formation of the new man so that he can become really free. The personal tete-a-tete becomes a fundamental means of formation to which one should have recourse on a regular basis for it is an effective practice both confirmed and irreplaceable." (VC 66)

The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius are another good means of accompaniment on this interior journey. As part of the tradition of Betharramite Formation they have been important and today they are being rediscovered, experienced and appreciated. Those young men who have followed the Spiritual Exercises speak highly of them and consider them to be a great help in the pastoral work of the future. They are a great help in getting to know oneself, in getting to know Jesus Christ so as to love Him more dearly and to follow Him – gifts of God. As the young man discovers the different methods of prayer in the Exercises he learns how to pray and do the Lectio Divina by placing the Word of God at the centre of his life. The Spiritual Exercises teach us how to organise one's spiritual life in the light of the Incarnation, and in openness to the mission stressing the preference for the poor.

Statute 3 links the Rule of Life with the Ratio Formationis. In this latter we



*Young brothers in formation - Bangalore (India)*

find the six most important dimensions to be borne in mind about formation, as we refer to the human-spiritual person of whom I have just been speaking: human, spiritual, community, and intellectual, missionary, socio-cultural. Sometimes we waste time adding years to formation, looking for the best Catholic study centres, or asking the young for genuine experiences. This is all pretty useless if the Master of the Interior doesn't accompany the young man in formation in the work of interiorisation of which I have been talking. It is only with the help of all this that he will continue purifying and enlightening the reasons for his vocation. The Ratio Formationis traces perfectly the outlines of Betharramite Formation by presenting it as a faith experience of which St Michael is the model. It sets out very clearly the elements of Betharramite teaching as the objects and aims of each step of the way, Formators too, will find in it chapters which will be a great help for them.

Gaspar Fernández Pérez, scj

### SHEET 3

## Contemplating the mystery of Jesus carrying his Cross

#### To begin the meeting: community prayer.

- Pray psalm 41 together.
- The hunger and thirst of God: "hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come"; "Thy Will be done on earth as in Heaven"..... "My food is to do the Will of my Father".
- 10 minutes silence.
- A moment of shared prayer.

#### Sharing with a text on the charism.

The text is chosen from *Spiritual Doctrine*, Page 175.

We feel that only one pathway is necessary:

**Self realisation, choice of the last place! What does this mean today?**

#### Rereading our Religious Life in the light of the Manifesto:

We are taking the 3rd and 4th paragraphs of the Manifesto.

"He entered upon his career by this great action to which he never put an end. From thence forward he remained in the state of a victim, obedient to God, doing nothing of his own Will, always acting under the influence of Holy Spirit, constantly abandoned to the orders of God to suffer and to do everything he wanted: Exinanivit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.

That is the extent to which God loved us. That is how Jesus Christ, our Lord and Creator has become a priceless magnet for the heart, the perfect model and powerful helper. And yet men are like lumps of ice for God! Even amongst the priests they are few and far between who say, at the example of the divine Master: "Here we are... Ite, Pater!"

Beyond the language of the day, Saint Michael invites us like St Paul before him, to make our lives a spiritual offering (Romans 12, 1): Christ's Spirit keeps us before our Father. To live thus in fraternity and in this world, what's the meaning of the spiritual struggle for us? How can we continue it or renew it in our religious life? The grain of wheat has already fallen to the ground and has given life. Like Mary, standing at the foot of the Cross, how does failure affect our fidelity?

#### Community prayer with the Betharram Stations of the Cross.

Soon this exalted place of our religious family will be celebrating the 4th centenary of the miracle which was at the origin of its construction (1616); one of our brothers, Fr Gaston Hiale, has made a simple and deep commentary on it, which I am sure, will be a help to us.

## OF THE CONGREGATION

### Vicariate of Ivory Coast

**Betharramite youth** ► Sunday, November 25 a group of 15 young betharramite lay people made a day of recollection at the Soeurs Consolatrices' house (10 Kms away from Adiapodoumé.) They were guided by Bros Katé Constant and Worrou Vincent. Fr Sylvain Dansou gave a lecture on the topic: "Saint Michael, a model for the youth".

**New deacons** ► Sunday, December 30th Bros Marius and Elise were ordained deacons by Bishop Salomon Lézoutié, coadjutor bishop of the Diocese of Yopougon, in the Parish of St. Bernard Adiapodoumé. May the Lord guide them in their ministry!

### Vicariate of Central African Republic

**Visit** ► During his visitation (5<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December), the Superior General inaugurated a new chapel, in the Parish of Our Lady of Fatima in Bouar. And on December 9, he bravely set out on a dilapidated road in order to join the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the chapel Sacred Heart of Jesus" Bogbatoyo, a village 80 km away from Niem and the first mission post of the parish. Fr Gaspar was able to feel the vitality of the Church in Central African Republic in spite of all the difficulties she has been going through recently.

### Region Fr. Auguste Etchecopar

**VIBRA, VIPAR & VIARUR** ► On December 14, Br. Osmar Vicente Cáceres Spaini (Paraguay) made his perpetual profession in the parish church of the Sacred Heart of Ciudad Del Este. One week later, Br Wagner Aparecido Ferreira (Brazil) made his

final profession too in the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Belo Horizonte, after he had spent the year of preparation at Villa La Punta, that is a new missionary post of the Vicariate of Argentina-Uruguay in Santiago del Estero. Two opportunities for the three Vicariates of the Region to share the same joy!



### Vicariate of Thailand / Vietnam

From November 26th to December 5th the Regional Vicar, Fr Tidkham, went to Vietnam to pay a visit to the parents of Tuan (the young Betharramite aspirant), to his Parish priest and the Bishop of Thanh Hoa Diocese. He met the Rector of the Seminary in Thanh Hoa along with two other candidates. It was a good opportunity for him to visit La Vang where Our Lady appeared. He visited the Benedictine Monastery and the Sacred Heart Seminary in Hue. Fr Tidkham enjoyed a warm welcome and hospitality; all this is a sign of the growing friendship between Betharram and the Church in Vietnam.



### Vicariate of France-Spain

**In the province called... Gipuzkoa**

► Like every year, the parish of San Mixel Garikoitz entrusted to the Betharramite community at Hondarribia went into action to celebrate Christmas. On 25 December, the nativity scene was animated by the songs of children, the wailing of the little baby Jesus and the bleating of sheep - without creating any problems to Fr José Gogorza, the parish priest of the place, who presided over the celebration! For this Christmas, the church, which suffered an arson attack last June and was recently whitewashed, resumed its colours. For this purpose, the Parish appealed to the Municipality to step in and help cover the expenses (€ 45.000). Another noteworthy event: the opening of the website of the parish [www.parrokiabetharram.com](http://www.parrokiabetharram.com)!



### Vicariate of Italy

**Strengthening the cooperation** ► On the World AIDS Day, November 30th, the Association "Il Mosaico", invited all its associates for a lunch in a restaurant. "Il Mosaico" has been cooperating, for more than 20 years, with the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Betharram in the running of the family house of Villa del Pino, at Monteporzio Catone (Roma) which takes care of Aids patients. The celebration of the World Aids Day is an expression of the Christian

and social values which inspire the religious and the laity of Betharram. Different items were on the agenda: initiatives of the Association, cooperation with the St Michael Centre at Bouar (Central Africa Republic). More than 150 people were present, among them the General Council (Fr Gaspar Fernandez Pérez, Fr Enrico Frigerio and Fr Graziano Sala) and the mayor of Monteporzio and some of his Council members. Fr Mario Longoni and the president of the Association, Mr Antonio Vicari, were quite happy to answer some questions raised by some of those who were present at the meeting. A raffle at the end of the lunch was once again the proof of the generosity of all those who are involved in the Association. The atmosphere was one of friendship and all those present were strengthened in their hope and in their sense of purpose in giving their cooperation.

### Vicariate of Holy Land

**Welcoming land** ► This year, the Parish community of the 12 Apostles of Zarqa (Jordan) could see reflected in the face of the Child Jesus, the face of many Syrian refugee children who found a shelter in the premises of the Parish for a seven-month-long academic year. Recently, the Italian Episcopal Conference television network «TV 2000», has broadcast a short programme to describe the situation of the Syrian refugees and, in particular, the work carried out by the Parish, in cooperation with the Polish Caritas, towards the Syrian children. In the Parish school premises 104 Syrian refugee children could attend regular classes.

## The virtues of the Heart of Jesus

**ON NOVEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup> OF THIS YEAR, THE BÉTHARRAMITE LAITY OF ADIAPODOUMÉ (IVORY COAST) GATHERED AT THE COMMUNITY OF THE FATHERS TO DEEPEN THE SPIRITUALITY OF SAINT MICHAEL GARICOÏTS. FATHER LAURENT BACHO SCJ PROPOSED THEM A TEACHING ON THE VIRTUES OF THE SACRED HEART, WHICH WE INVITE YOU ALL TO FOLLOW, RELIGIOUS AND LAY PEOPLE OF BÉTHARRAM, FROM THIS MONTH ONWARDS.**

**AS THE THREE KINGS, LET US LEAN WITH WONDER OVER THE CRADLE OF THE CHILD WHICH HAS JUST OPENED HIS EYES ON THIS WORLD AND LET US MEDITATE TOGETHER ON THIS VIRTUE WHICH HIS FACE IS ALREADY DELIVERING: SWEETNESS...**

Our Founder, St Michael Garicoits, was convinced early on that the name of the Sacred Heart would be the special mark of the Society which the Lord was asking him to found. He considered himself simply as an instrument in the hands of God and said loud and clear that the Sacred Heart was the founder of the Institute: "My God, do not look on my sins, but on the Society which your Sacred Heart has formed." This was the prayer which he asked his brothers to recite at a moment of great crisis in the Society, moments of doubt because some of the community seemed to accept the Bishop's point of view who wanted to reduce Betharram to a society of diocesan priests; St Michael left the solution to this problem in the hands of God.

When the Founder explained the reason for the title "Sacred Heart" he would explain the why and the wherefore



*During the teaching of Fr. Bacho at the lay gathering in Adiapodoumé*

saying: "Why does our Society bear the name of Sacred Heart of Jesus? Because we want to imitate the life of Our Lord in a way that is special to us, because its members are formed to live in a spirit of humility and fraternal charity, after the example of the disciples of Our Lord, and to model themselves on our Divine Saviour principally on his obedience towards his Father and in his zeal for the salvation of souls. This name is a good reminder of the charity, the humility, the

gentleness, the obedience, the dedication to be found in the first act of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: "Here I am" (DS 275). Father Auguste Etchecopar, spiritual son of St Michael, was very attached to the devotion to the Sacred Heart and even went so far as to add to the Constitutions which were being presented to Rome: "All the members of the Congregation will look on this divine Heart as their model, their treasure, their heritage, the seal with which they must mark their whole life." These four qualities are to be found in our Rule of Life; the Sacred Heart of Jesus remains our primary devotion. (No 92).

#### MEEK AND HUMBLE OF HEART

Personal declarations on himself by Jesus are rare in the Gospels – they are all the more precious! Jesus sends out a special invitation to all those who are weary and overcome; he has not come to free them from all moral obligations; his demands are as serious or even as radical as those of the law of Moses but the Master who is proposing them is "meek and humble" (Mt 11,29). The Gospel shows him as the "humble" Servant of his Father and the "gentle" brother of the whole of humanity. Already in the Old Testament gentleness was announced to be the special sign of the Messiah: "Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he. Humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the warhorse from Jerusalem" (Za 9,9). Gentleness has pride of place in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek, for

they will possess the land" (Mt 5,4). The humble soul is easily associated with the poor of heart, in its relationship with God; the second beatitude deals with close relations with others. This distinction is well realised by St Francis de Sales, the apostle of evangelical gentleness: "Have a heart meek where our neighbour is concerned and humble where God is concerned". St Michael Garicoits made these recommendations his own, and we often find traces of them in his Spiritual Doctrine. "What therefore is the particular mark of our Society? It is a spirit of deep humility towards God of great gentleness towards our neighbour and of total devotedness to both. The spirit of our Society is the spirit of the Heart of Jesus revealed by the words: "Ecce Venio" (M. S. 352). For Michael Garicoits gentleness did not come naturally; there was nothing gentle in his childhood and youth; he was a boisterous young man, even hot tempered. Thanks to the advice of his mother he succeeded in overcoming his rugged nature: "Were it not for my mother I feel I could have become a scoundrel. After God, It is to my mother that I owe to be what I am." It took a real conversion to channel his great energy. What brought about this change? He made his a spirituality steeped in the contemplation of Jesus in Bethlehem and Nazareth and which was the exact opposite to what the Jansenists preached about God, whom they considered to be a powerful judge and distant master. "What power and what gentleness in the lessons from the crib! What infinite attractions to help win the

participating in the animation of any of the groups present in the Sanctuary or in the neighbouring parishes. Indeed we know that Betharramite religious life helps to make men who are Christians after the model left by St Michael. The community has appointed times which will help in its formation work: three times of community prayer daily, a weekly community meeting, a formation meeting in which the young and the fathers are present every Thursday afternoon; weekly Eucharistic adoration and the community Mass every Friday, a time of sharing after the evening meal, the monthly retreat with the Daughters of the Cross in the north of Rome; finally a week of Spiritual Exercises for the evening and proposed to all.

*Vocational research: so important for the recent General Chapter is certainly an*

*important question for a Formation community. What are the suggestions which have been debated on this point? - We try above all to propose our Spirituality to the young whom we meet and to be a place which helps in the research of one's own vocation and proceed towards a genuine discernment. Five individuals have already come to us at different times and for different reasons. This year the community is the rallying point for different Betharramite meetings followed by all the Fathers even if Fr Simone is the spiritual animator. We have just welcomed a vocational school camp for teen-agers in collaboration with the Daughters of the Cross. The presence of Fr Le Van Cuong makes us very attentive to something new, namely Betharramite reality in Vietnam.*

#### Decisions of the Superior General & Council

- On December 6, 2012 were admitted to **final profession** Br Martin de Tour Thinakorn and Br Peter Nonthaphat Mayoe of the Vicariate of Thailand;
- On December 21, 2012 were admitted to the **ministry of the diaconate** Br Marius Angui Huberson and Br Elisée Sika Mambo of the Vicariate of Ivory Coast;
- On December 21, 2012 was approved the appointment of Fr. Francisco de Paula as **superior of the community** of Passa Quatro (Vicariate of Brazil).

#### IN MEMORIAM

Friday, December 21, **Mr. José do Nascimento Pereira**, Fr Sebastiao do Nascimento's brother, died in Minas Gerais, Brazil. We express our heartfelt condolences to our dear father and we pray for the repose of his brother's soul.

On december 26, **Mr. Edoardo Trivelli**, Br. Fiorenzo Trivelli's brother, returned to the house of the Father after a long illness. We are close to Br Fiorenzo and to his family and pray for their dear one.

ing at 9pm every Tuesday and for the Mass for the Sick at 7pm on the first Saturday of the month. The second group of Divorced Catholic Families; the members meet on the third Saturday of each month for Mass at 7pm. What is special about this Mass is the fact that the animation is entrusted to the group itself. Finally we would add that both groups use the church and the community for catechetical instruction.

*Nearly two years ago the Regional Chapter decided that the community would be a formation community. Today are there any young candidates in formation?* - The community is composed of three Betharamite Fathers (Fr Angelo Riva, Fr Mario Giussani and Fr Simone Panzeri) plus two guests: a young Vietnamese priest, Fr Le Van Cuong (Francesco Saverio) of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of diocesan rite; he is here in Rome studying Canon Law at the Holy Cross University; Giuseppe Epifani, originally from the Pouilles, in research of his vocation and at the same time is finishing his Theology at the Alphonsiana Academy.

*Even if the responsibility of formation is entrusted to one particular religious, Fr Simone Panzeri, the whole community has a role to play in the formation. What does this mean for each one to be involved in such a delicate role?* - The religious in the community are fully aware of the responsibility entrusted to the house. Consequently we know that the first and most important point about vocational

animation is the witness of our lives and our challenging meeting with the people we meet in the Sanctuary.

*How do the young participate in community life and especially in the animation of the Sanctuary?* - Our young guests participate actively with the priests in the life of the community; they collaborate to make the house welcoming; they partake in the preparation of the liturgy when the community is present in the church for times of community prayer and in the services requested.

*Animation of the Sanctuary and Formation: Is it easy to maintain the balance between these two facts? What means does the community give itself to be a "place of formation"?* - Until two years ago, the community accepting young Italians in formation was part of the parish of Bitonto (Pouilles). By opening a Formation Community here in Rome it has been possible to separate formation from a community heavily engaged in a particular form of ministry. The sanctuary allows greater use of space and the apostolic commitments of the community and the young in formation.

Even if this year he is finishing his Diploma in Spirituality at the Gregorian University, Fr Simon in charge of formation, is much freer to look after those who come to the community either to research their vocation or for formation in religious life. The result is a climate of tranquillity ideal for times of reflection, study and prayer; at the same time there is also the possibility of assuring a pastoral activity, or of

greatest number of sinners" (DS 109). By referring to the crib and the Eucharist, our Founder is seized by a similar ecstasy contemplating the gentleness of God: "The smaller our God becomes the more powerful are his attractions" (DS 262) This becomes particularly apparent in the mystery of the crib. God appears to be like a mother reduced to the size of her child" (DS 221). He shares with us the fruits of his contemplation of the God of Love in a formula which we are fond of: "A God steeped in love" (DS 110)

We are delighted at finding some writings amazing for the period and which talk of gentleness: "What does Our Lord preach? Gentleness everywhere: in his Incarnation, his infancy, his Passion, in the Sacred Heart, in every aspect of his person, in his words and in his way of looking at people. What should be the principal characteristic of our spiritual life? Christian gentleness. Without such gentleness we shall never possess the spirit of generosity with which we are to serve God. It is as necessary for our interior life and our relationship with God as for our exterior life and our relationship with mankind" (MS 200).

In the Old Testament tenderness is an attribute of God Himself: (Is 49,15; Jer 31,20). Even in the face of his people's unfaithfulness, God appears as the gentle spouse, spluttered out of course by his spouse, but trying all the while to win the heart of his unfaithful spouse by the tenderness of his love (Os 2, 15) In the Gospels, Jesus is presented as the tender visage of His Father, full of affection for all who are poor or wounded.

(Luke 7,13; 19,41; John 11,35; Mark 8,2).

#### PRACTISING GENTLENESS TODAY

If God is full of tenderness and mercy for us, we too must be generous and understanding in the face of our weaknesses, and not run away from and hate our miserable situation. This is not the same thing as laxity or an illusion through lack of clear sightedness, but there is an unhealthy form of guilt where even God's mercy has no place. Let's take a look at this message from St Francis de Sales: "Since the gentle and heartfelt reprimands of a father have greater power over a child to help him to reform rather than anger; so when we have committed some fault, if we regret it gently and peacefully, displaying more compassion rather than passion, the encouragement and amendment, the repentance which he will feel, will produce better results than would a repentance full of anger."

We have great desires; we want to progress rapidly on the way of perfection, but that cannot be done over night; let's go forward patiently, gently, regularly. "At the moment of our Baptism we put on Christ; yet in the Gospel's workshop there is nothing readymade. It is up to us to make our garment with Christ. Little by little we must sew our own perfection because there is none readymade to be found. (St Francis de Sales). St Michael is not saying any different when he asks us to perform well our ordinary tasks: "do your ordinary chores well – sweeping, doing the washing up, the simplest of tasks entrusted to you; this is what God is asking

of you, the performance of which will make you holy" 278; DS 98)

To practice gentleness towards others in a harsh world where there are so many conflicts, rivalries, and jealousy. Gentleness requires of us to review our judgements, often rash and without distinction and to make ours the willingness to have a better understanding and appreciation and not be swayed by what is being said around us. Gentleness does not mean refraining from a reprimand judged necessary and for the good of the person opposite. Inviting, suggesting, proposing, persuading which is showing the importance of a choice, is putting into practice gentleness armed with patience: "What we

are looking for is that each one should have cordial respect for everyone, and a respectful cordiality". (DS 106). Thoughtfulness, discretion, a smile are all qualities necessary for the practice of gentleness towards our neighbour.

Benevolence, understanding, sweetness and tenderness « are aspiration which live in us but whose application is difficult.

- What, in us, causes these difficulties?

- What, around us hinders in the implementation of these qualities?

- At the beginning of this year, full of promises, what orientations are we called to give to our family life (couple and children), with the neighborhood and in our work place?

Laurent Bacho, scj

*Saint Michael Garicoïts wrote...*



St Paul: At what point in time did the mystery of the Incarnation take place in the Blessed Virgin? It was only after she became aware that it was beyond her powers "ecce ancilla Domini fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum". At what point in time did St Paul become so great, so powerful, capable of performing such great deeds? It was when he recognised, confessed and loved his weakness (2 Cor. 12,10) promising divine help and which prepared him to ask for it and to use it for the benefit of the Church which he was going to found, and by which he upset human intelligence and harnessed all understanding beneath the umbrella of the obedience of Jesus Christ. Why does St Paul think that his strength lies in his weakness? Answer: He is familiar with the God humbled through love for mankind; he is familiar with the Church, the work of his weakness; with amazement, he sees there his vocation; he sees himself as the chosen instrument to cooperate with the grace of Jesus Christ in the establishment of the Church of which the Gentiles whose apostle he is are to form part. How is he going to respond to his vocation? Answer: By considering himself to be a feeble and useless instrument in the hands of the one making use of him; by consecrating to the Saviour of mankind an obedient weakness so as to become the worthy minister of a God who has become weak for our salvation. (M 399)

## the community of "Our Lady of Miracles" - Rome

THE SANCTUARY OF "OUR LADY OF MIRACLES" SITUATED IN THE CENTRE OF ROME, IS A CHURCH VISITED BY LOTS OF PEOPLE WHERE THEY WILL ALWAYS FIND ONE OF THE RELIGIOUS; THE PEOPLE THUS HAVE THE POSSIBILITY OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION, OF A CHAT WITH A PRIEST, AND MARK A HALT IN THE BUSY EXISTENCE WHICH IS THEIRS.

EVER SINCE SEPTEMBER 2011, BY DECISION OF THE REGIONAL CHAPTER OF THE ST MICHAEL GARICOÏTS' REGION, THE RESIDENCE OF OUR LADY OF MIRACLES HAS BEEN APPOINTED A "FORMATION COMMUNITY". YOUNG CANDIDATES ARE WELCOMED FOR PART 1 OF THEIR PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY FORMATION. BUT THE COMMUNITY ALSO OFFERS THESE CANDIDATES WHO SO DESIRE THE POSSIBILITY OF DISCERNING A VOCATION, THANKS TO A SPECIFIC ACCOMPANIMENT. WE PUT A FEW QUESTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY.



From left to right: Fr. Angelo, Fr. Simone, Fr. Cuong, Giuseppe & Fr. Mario

**Nef: The presence of Betharramites in this church is a historical one. How are community activities organised today?**

This church was entrusted to the Betharramites in 1915. Ever since then they have been looking after the sanctuary without interruption, adapting it to different demands, for example, during World War II it housed the novitiate; there priests who had come to Rome for studies were welcomed; then the General Council lived here from 1969 – 1975. Today, this church, faithful to tradition is one of the sanctuaries where the religious who are in charge exercise a veritable ministry;

they are attentive to the needs of those who come here asking for the Sacrament of Reconciliation; more and more there are those requesting a listening ear, or financial help because the present crisis is making life more difficult for many families. Many also are from abroad.

**Are there any constituted groups using the Church?**

- Situated as it is in the centre of Rome the Church welcomes two constituted groups: the first, a charismatic group with lots of young participants has chosen the Church of Our Lady of the Miracles for their weekly prayer meet-