

“I bless you, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth ...

Ita, Pater, Yes Father...

“I bless you, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father for that is what it pleased you to do”. (Matt. 11, 25-26)
Father Garicoits believed that the God of the humble and the poor had chosen him for this purpose; he, the shepherd from the last house in the humble village of Ibarre, he, a bungler, a good-for-nothing, and that he had said to him: “Go and found a new Institute in my Church; in these troubled times it will have its use, at a time when the Major Orders are scattered and where the revolutionary independent spirit is finding its way even into the Church. You will walk at the head of this Institute, carrying the banner of the Sacred Heart and you will shout out the Ecce venio of my Son, you will be his joy and the support of his Church”. St Michael believed in this voice; he seized the banner and like a giant strode ahead till the end of his life. My dear Fathers and Brothers, was he the victim of a generous illusion? Of course not, thank God. Events are there as proof.” (Round robin from Fr Etchecopar 10/01/1888)

St Michael Garicoits is our Father who has begotten us to Religious Life. The charism which was the gift of the Holy Spirit to him is our treasure. This is what gives meaning, joy and courage to our lives and the passion for our mission. By charism we mean that experience of faith which the Holy Spirit had inspired in St Michael Garicoits and which is given to each religious whose membership of the Congregation was discerned according to the Rule of Life. It consists in knowing, loving, being and acting like Jesus *humble and obedient* who always says *Here I am* to his Father and who lives to serve and save the whole of mankind. This faith experience is characteristic of our consecration, how we live out the brotherhood as well as the mission. Spirituality, consecration, fraternity and mission are the key words of our charism. It is a gift from God which we must protect, cultivate and develop in these times in which we live.

“Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all the blessings of heaven in Jesus Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ....determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ”. (Eph. 1, 3-5) predestined to be part of this Congregation, for it is God who has made our work and it is holy; men couldn’t even have started it. What feelings should divine intervention not arouse in us! What affection and what respect for the Society! What amazement at the thought of being called to it! What joyous and unending devotion at the thought of being called to work for its interests, to train men worthy of this Society who are **idoneos, expeditos, expositos**, men ready for anything, freed of everything, and totally open for whomsoever it may concern! (DS 271-272)

We have another treasure in each individual called by the Lord to experience the charism. Every vocation, every individual who feels attracted by our life style is a gift from the Lord. By this gift He gives us to understand that he wants this charism to continue. Every one with all his ability, all his capacities, his human, moral and spiritual gifts. Anyone who freely and conscious of his vocation has decided to consecrate his life to the Lord. Anyone who renounces his projects, and freely chooses to enter the Congregation who will assign him a ministry to be performed so as to participate in the life and the mission of the Church.

Anyone who, with his vocation, the gift of the charism, his consecration and mission, feels called to share in this experience with others, in community. Anyone – his vocation, his charism, his consecration and his mission – is worthy of the concern of the entire fraternity and superiors whether local, vicariate, regional or general.

Blessed be the Sacred Heart of Jesus for each one of the **248** religious in perpetual vows and for each of the **35** in temporary vows forming our religious family today.

Blessed be the Sacred Heart of Jesus for each of the **40** young brothers who made their final vows and the **29** religious who were ordained during these past 6 years.

Blessed be the Sacred Heart of Jesus, beloved Son of the Father, for the **60** young candidates who have begun their novitiate during these past 6 years and for the **44** young men who arrived at profession.

Blessed be the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the **46** Betharramite religious who have been called to the Father's House.

Blessed be the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the brothers who are having an experiment with Exclaustration, for the brothers who have left the Congregation, and for those we had to send away...

Blessed be the Sacred Heart of Jesus who continues to draw more vocations to his Heart. May you be praised for every candidate for every postulant who has spoken to some of our brothers to tell them about the Lord's call.

Blessed be the Sacred Heart of Jesus for every lay person who, seeing us living and working in the Lord's vineyard, is impressed by what this Sacred Heart is doing in his life. May you be blessed for all the laity who are collaborating with us and putting up with the fatigue and heat of the day in the mission.

(...)

Conclusion.

On day Fr Juan Cravioti said that "Sister Marie de Jesus Crucifie loved Betharram for Betharram was small, Betharram was poor, and Betharram was devout." These are evangelical characteristics. Ever since the convocation of this Chapter we have wanted to keep this evangelical look. Betharram is small but it is missionary; we are few in number and are scattered over 15 countries. Like nearly all the Congregation we have taken to heart the renewal demanded by Vatican II in *Perfectae Caritatis*. We have suffered from the excesses and faults in the life of the postconciliar Church. We have been purified and have recovered the mystical and prophetic dimension of our lives.

Besides our ordinary but faithful life, I have wanted to point out our zones of shadow so that no one can boast except in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 6, 14), so as not to forget that we are not a group of supermen, that there is sin not only within the Church but in the Congregation and in each one of us. It is when we are fully convinced of this fact that we are ready to respond to the call of Pope Benedict XVI to more prayer more penance and to a constant processus of conversion. So it is evident that "*we are only the earthenware jars that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us.*" (2Cor 4, 7).

But the fact that we are aware of our sin must not be an excuse for not changing, by justifying certain modes of conduct which are obviously in contradiction with the life style of consecrated souls, and which I have happened to hear sometimes. On the contrary we ought to examine ourselves under every angle of our life as St Michael Garicoits once said to a Daughter of the Cross: "*You are not justified*

by recognising the good which the Lord is doing in you and through you, at the same time as you recognise the evil which you are doing. Admit the first and say: Lord, I am most unworthy but I shall thank you all the more; grant me to take advantage of it, love and serve you with ever greater zeal. Admit the second and say: Here are the fruits from my garden. But only say a word and all will be changed... (CTL. C114, page 243). That is the Betharram that I love, which I believe in and to which I commit myself every day to be more loving. Betharram has no future wherever our *raison d'être* is an ideology no matter what is its colour or its middle class status. Betharram has a future for the majority of the religious love Jesus Christ and are enthusiastic for mankind and their salvation in the mission. The future of Betharram is to be found where there are religious marked by their meeting with the Risen Christ and who follow Him by practising meditation on the Word of God, spiritual readings, personal accompaniment, frequent confession, daily communion, fidelity to the accomplishment of their personal duties, and community and apostolic duties. The future of Betharram is to be found where ever the religious, through love for Jesus, humble and obedient, live like him so that every human being may have a better life. Betharram has a future for we are adults and we are coherent with the commitments we have taken freely. In the face of the problems with the Moncade College in Orthez, St Michael Garicoits said: "Moncade isn't going to ruins through lack of French but through lack of obedience and religious spirit."

That is the Betharram which I love and it is my reason for finishing on a note of gratitude and praise for the real Betharram: *"We have heard and we know what our fathers have told us; we shall tell it to future generations, hiding nothing from our descendents: the glory of the Lord, his power and the marvels he has wrought for us. (Ps. 77, 3-4).*

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