

*Lord our God,*

*make us want what You want;  
make us resemble the divine Heart.*

*We want to be attentive to our brothers and sisters,  
and full of affection for them:  
teach us to turn our gaze toward them,  
so that we may come to their aid;*

*Grant us a true life of faith:  
may our speech, our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions be  
like the speech, thoughts, feelings, and actions of Jesus Christ:  
may our spirit be constantly subject to His Spirit.*

*From the Spiritual Master of St Michael Garicoïts  
(Cf. En avant, Fr. Beñat Oyhenart scj, prayer nr. 219)*



# Nef

2026  
June

## Nouvelles En Famille



Societas Sacratissimi  
Cordis Jesu

*Beñat*



**A Mission with an  
Open Heart**

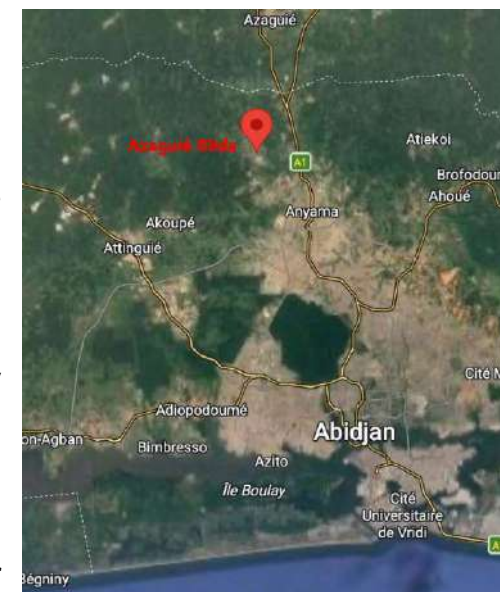
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FOR INTERNAL USE

- the closure of the **Katiola Community**, effective October 9, 2026.
- Approval for:
  - the erection of a **Community in Azaguié Blida**, in the Archdiocese of Abidjan, in response to the appeal of His Eminence Cardinal Ignace Dogbo Bessi, who stated: “Your presence would be useful for the establishment of a new parish in this place”; the opening of the community is scheduled for September 1, 2026;
  - the appointment of **Fr. Raoul Segla Thibaut, SCJ**, as **Superior of the new community** for an initial term, effective September 1, 2026.



## In memoriam

**Italy** | On March 23, **Mr. Achille Riva**, brother of Fr. Aurelio Riva, SCJ, returned to the house of the Father. He was 86 years old.

**Brazil** | **Mr. Gaspar Maria da Silva**, father of Fr. Marcelo Rodrigues da Silva, SCJ, died on May 31.

**France** | • On April 1, **Mrs. Ghislaine Le Divelec**, sister of Fr. Henri Lamasse, SCJ, passed

away. She was 83 years old.

• On June 7, **Mr. Jean-André Morin**, father of Fr. Jean-Luc Morin, SCJ, passed away at the age of 92.

*We express our condolences to our confreres and their families, and we assure them of our prayers for their beloved deceased.*

**Decisions of the Superior General and his Council**  
Meeting on June 8 & 9, 2026

The Superior General and his Council, meeting in plenary session, carried out the discernment process for the appointment of the Regional Vicars and First Vicars.

To this end, they examined the consultation ballots received by the General Secretary and consulted the Regional Superiors.

The mandate of the current Vicars (with the exception of the Regional Vicar in India) will conclude next September.

The appointments will be announced in the next issue of the NEF.

At the same session, the Superior General and his Council made the following decisions:

● **Region of St Michael Garicoïts**

[Vicariate of Central Africa]

- **Approval for the sale of one hectare of land in Bouar—where our Care and Support Center for AIDS patients (TAD) is located—to the Congregation of the Servants of the Mother of the Good Shepherd.** The Sisters' project is to build a house intended to welcome candidates for religious life and women in situations of vulnerability, in collaboration with our confreres.

[Vicariate of the Ivory Coast]

- Approval for:
  - **the acceptance of the Parish of Saint Paul in Laoudi-Ba**, in the Diocese of Bondoukou;
  - **the erection of the Laoudi-Ba Community**, effective July 1, 2026;
  - **the appointment of Fr. Luc-Martial Kouadio, SCJ, as Superior of the new community** for an initial term, effective July 1, 2026.

## Like Jesus, with an open Heart

**“One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water flowed out” (Jn 19:34).**



Dear Betharramites,

We celebrate once again the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We contemplate a Heart opened by love, obedient unto death, always ready to forgive and to give itself without reservation. From the pierced side of the Lord flowed blood and water, signs of a life offered entirely for the salvation of the world. There, the mystery of a love that holds nothing back is revealed.

Saint Michael Garicoïts dreamed of such love for his followers. He wanted to gather a group of men available for mission, ready to go wherever they were sent, obedient at the first sign, humble, persevering, and joyful. But above all, he desired to form open and generous hearts, configured to the Heart of Christ.

This ideal accompanied him throughout his life. He persevered even amidst misunderstandings, opposition, and difficulties, without ever seeing the project he so longed for fully realised. As a man of God, he learned to recognise and embrace the many manifestations of the divine will. His teaching and his witness were in agreement: everything had to be done out of love.

Faithful to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he knew how to accept with obedience the means the Church presented to him, even when these did not seem to fully coincide with his own dreams. He was a prophet in his time. He

drank from the cup of obedience on the cross of his dreams and abandoned himself trustingly into the hands of the Father.

What a shining example for us! His life reminds us that true apostolic fruitfulness springs from an open heart like his, available, capable of trusting even when it does not understand all of God's ways...

### The Open Heart that Forgives

The open Heart of Jesus remains ever ready to forgive. Sometimes it's very difficult to forgive offences, and even more so to ask for *forgiveness* for the wrong we've done... We live in particularly difficult times, in which the word forgiveness takes on a special power. Forgiveness heals wounds, rebuilds relationships, and opens paths to hope. But it always begins with the sincere acknowledgment of one's own truth.

Faced with the inconsistencies and sins of our past, we may be tempted to flee from the cross we are called to bear. Like Peter, we sometimes want to perform grand gestures to avoid confronting our fragility and our wretchedness. However, it was precisely from the Cross—treated as a criminal—that Jesus uttered those words that continue to resonate for all humanity:

*"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Lk 23:34).

Saint Michael also wanted us to be apostles of that mercy that heals and restores. He bequeathed it to his children so that it may continue to be a source of consolation:

*"Even if an angel were to come and tell me that my life has been a long list of sacrileges, I would not be discouraged by having only a few minutes left to live. I would throw myself into the arms of the Father, crying out: 'Father, Father, forgive me.' I am certain that he would receive me like the father of the prodigal son"* (DS § 34).

There is no sin so great that it surpasses God's mercy. The open Heart of Christ remains a refuge, a source of reconciliation, and a source of hope for all, but we must go to meet Him.

## THAILAND-VIETNAM |

### The Chiang Mai Community Meets the New Bishop

On May 7, 2026, Archbishop Peter Bryan Wells, Apostolic Nuncio to Thailand, expressed his congratulations to the Diocese of Chiang Mai on the official appointment by Pope Leo XIV of the Rev. Fr. Peter Suphot Roek-sujarit of the Archdiocese of Bangkok as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Chiang Mai.

The newly elected Bishop met at the Sacred Heart Cathedral with representatives of all the religious congregations to prepare for the beginning of his episcopal ministry in the Diocese. After lunch, he visited Sacred Heart School, the Chiang Mai Mission Center (the Bishop's House), and our Mother House, "Ban Betharram," in Chiang Mai. There, he expressed his gratitude for the dedication of the Congregation and promised his support for its mission. ■



### Ordinations to Priesthood

Yesterday, Saturday, June 13, at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Chiang Mai, Deacons Anselm Prapas Chiwakitman-kong, SCJ, and Peter Do Van Hung, SCJ, were ordained to the priesthood by His Exc. Most Rev. Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana, Archbishop of Bangkok. Fr. Peter Do Van Hung, SCJ, is the first Vietnamese priest of the Congregation. ■

## Region of Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified

### INDIA | Vicariate Assembly in India

The Assembly of the religious of the Indian Vicariate took place from May 4 to 7. It was presided over by Father Wilfred Pereppadan, SCJ, Regional Superior, and animated by Father Jose Kumar, SCJ, Regional Vicar in India.

In the first two days, the Reverend Father Maria Louis, a Capuchin priest, held a seminar on the theme: "Fullness in vocation and mission".

On the third day, the morning session was dedicated to sharing faith. In the afternoon, Mr. Anand, Director of Shishu Mandir, presented his experience starting a company that helps members become financially independent.

On the fourth day, Father Edwin Manavalan SCJ, Vicariate Bursar, presented the economic situation and budget of the Vicariate.

Most of the members of the Vicariate attended the assembly. ■



### A time to listen and allow ourselves to be healed.

The desert experience we Betharramites are going through today invites us to remain united and in solidarity, so that no contradiction, no divisive force, may separate us from the vocation and mission we have received.

We have a conviction that encourages us: the Lord does not abandon us. Rather, He seems *to be taking us aside* today, as He did with the deaf and mute man in the Gospel, to heal and renew us from within. To make this crisis an opportunity.

*"Jesus took him aside from the crowd and led him away from the crowd. Then he put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue with his saliva. Looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' which means, 'Be opened.' Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he began to speak plainly" (Mark 7:33-35).*

Today, too, the Lord touches our wounds. He opens our ears to hear his will and loosens our tongues to proclaim the truth of a past that leaves us perplexed. To each of us, he speaks those words again: **"Ephphatha, be opened."**

Open yourself to the truth. Open yourself to grace. Open yourself to conversion. Open yourself to the path that God continues to trace for his people, of whom he has made you shepherd.

All authentic renewal involves a transformation that is often demanding and painful, but which is always fruitful when we allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit.

### Contemplating the Pierced One

This month of the Sacred Heart invites us to turn our gaze towards Jesus, fascinated by the crucified one, whose Heart remains open even after death. From the Cross, he continues to give himself for us. Contemplating him is like becoming a child again, like learning to love anew.

Psalm 40, quoted in the Letter to the Hebrews, admirably expresses this filial availability:

*"You did not desire sacrifice or offering,  
but **you gave me an attentive ear (you opened my ear).**  
Then I said, 'Here I am.' I love your will, my God,  
and your law is within my heart" (cf. Psalm 40:7-9).*

A disciple's ear is an open ear that listens, welcomes, internalises, and obeys joyfully and out of love. This has always been the mark of a true Betharramite.

Therefore, this is not a time to deny what we are experiencing or to shut ourselves up in fear. Nor is it a time to respond with indifference to the challenges that reality presents us. At the foot of the Cross, together with Mary and the beloved disciple, let us contemplate the one who was pierced and receive anew the mission he entrusts to us:

*"Woman, here is your son... Here is your mother" (Jn 19:26-27).*

**Even in the supreme moment of his self-giving, Jesus thinks of others.** He gives us Mary and entrusts us to her maternal care, so that she may accompany the disciples of her Son, especially in the darkest hours.

A big hug to all, and let us be united in prayer!

Fr. Gustavo Agín, SCJ,  
**Superior General**

#### **For community discussion:**

1. What place does the Heart of Jesus have in my Betharramite religious vocation? Can I share an experience?
2. What does it mean for me today to hear again the words of Jesus: "*Ephphatha, be opened*"? What *signs of openness* have I seen in my mission community over the past three years?
3. In this time of fragility and purification for the Congregation, what concrete steps are we called to take—personally and as a community—to live forgiveness, reconciliation, and reparation in an evangelical spirit?

my own limitations in knowledge and ability. I simply want our community to be genuinely open with one another. I want my brothers to feel that I am one of their friends. As the philosopher Albert Camus said, "*Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.*" In community life, I should not only lead or only follow; I should know how to walk beside my brothers. This is the true spirit of an open community.

#### **To serve the local Church as we are**

I remember the canonical visitation to the residence in Ho Chi Minh City in 2022. Father Gustavo scj, Superior General, said to me: "*Be proud to be Betharramite religious. We are a small community, like a small flower. So be proud of who we are and of what we have.*" Our presence in Vietnam may not be as well-known as some other congregations, but those who know us can experience the happiness we carry.

**At present,** we celebrate English Masses for two or three congregations and sometimes at the Pastoral Center for migrants. We also celebrate Vietnamese Mass twice a month at the Center for Blind Children and in parishes whenever we are invited.

As the Chapter advises: "*In all our outreach, we can and should work in harmony with other organizations.*" (Acts of the XXVIII General Chapter, p. 75)

#### **Continuing the Community of Being Open: "Ephphatha" in Vietnam**

For eleven years, we have been present in this beautiful country, rich in faith, culture, love, and the generosity of its people. We will continue to allow Jesus to say to us, "*Ephphatha!*"—"Be opened!" and continue to let Him walk beside us and teach us the Scriptures, just as He walked with His two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

We will continue to let the Holy Spirit lead and guide us, as He guided the Church from its very beginning. We will continue to ask Our Lady of Betharram gives us a beautiful branch to our community and Vietnam with abundant grace and to help bear beautiful fruits among us.

We will continue to remain open and move forward, living our charism of openness: "***Here I am, out of love.***" Because '***Deus meus et omnia***' 'My God & my all' ■



the first place where I offer my smile to my brothers.

**Opening ourselves to drink from the same source:** As Betharramites, our source is the mystery of the Incarnation: *“Here I am, out of love.”* Through our charism we open ourselves to learn about the Church in Vietnam and to understand and embrace Vietnamese culture.

**Being ready to share the same joy and build a community of happiness:** By welcoming all those who want to come and see *“Veni et vide”*, our Betharramite way of life. Many have come and seen during these past eleven years; some have continued the journey, while others have come and gone.

Some of our brothers used to say: *“Father, I feel happy when staying with the community and with the two of you.”* I would reply jokingly: *“Only happiness, but no future!”* I do not know whether what they said was entirely true or not. But later, some of the same brothers came to ask me: *“Father, what about our future in Vietnam?”*

I did not know how to answer them, so I simply smiled and said: *“Don’t worry, be happy dear brothers.”* I hope those who once asked me this question will read these words and happily say: *“Don’t worry, be happy! ‘Rome wasn’t built in a day’”*

As I mentioned before, I am aware of



## Magnifica Humanitas, Encyclical Letter, § 211-212 · 15 May 2026

... **E**ven in the darkest nights, the Lord raises up men and women who refuse to give up, who persevere in doing good, who protect the vulnerable and open pathways to reconciliation. The memory of the saints, righteous people and the oft-forgotten peacemakers, show us that grace does not magically eliminate conflict, but instead it inspires active resistance to evil and an astonishing creativity in doing good. Christians see the darkness and acknowledge it for what it is, yet they do not merely gaze upon it passively, for they know the light and understand that the darkness has not overcome it and cannot defeat it (cf. Jn 1:5). For this reason, even when suffering seems to have the last word, Christians serve the good and are sustained by a theological hope that gives reality both meaning and direction.

*We can all do our part.*

At this point, however, a subtle temptation may emerge, namely the thought that the problems are too big and we are too small, and that our choices, therefore, cannot make a difference. This is a polite form of resignation, often disguised as realism. Certainly, not everyone has the same power to make a difference. There are those who govern, make investment decisions, lead institutions, conduct research, educate, produce or provide information, and then there are those who only seem to live their daily lives. Yet, no one is without responsibility. We all have our own areas for action, and it is precisely there – and nowhere else – that we must choose whether to fuel the mentality of force (even if only through indifference, cynicism, lies or hatred), or to preserve the mindset of peace (with truth, moderation, closeness and care).

## Missioning with an Open Heart

### Betharram Mission in Bidar: A Decade of Evangelization and Human Development

Fr. George Antony scj  
(Talmadgi, Bidar Dist.)

*“The harvest is plentiful,  
but the labourers are few.”*

(Mt 9:37)



Located in the northernmost part of Karnataka, Bidar belongs to the historically significant Hyderabad-Karnataka region. Though India attained independence in 1947, this region remained under the Nizam's rule until September 1948. During those formative years, Christian missionaries began sowing the seeds of faith among the local people.

The Catholic presence in Bidar began when Catholic trainees at an aircraft training centre requested priests to celebrate Sun-



two major elements to the world: (i) the centrality of love and (ii) the spirit of humility and gentleness. The message of Saint Michael is the Heart of Jesus, love incarnate, both gentle and humble, wounded by sin, in solidarity with humanity and passionate about its salvation.” (Acts of the XXVIII General Chapter, p. 69)

#### Community of Being Open “Ephphata”

The Chapter reminds us: “We want to renew our Betharramite ‘being’ in order to open ourselves better in our Betharramite ‘doing’: the mission in community, as servants of the Heart of Jesus in the heart of the world.”

(Acts of the XXVIII General Chapter, p. 72)

As a Chinese proverb says: “A man without a smiling face should not open a shop.” Happy and smiling people are greatly needed in this world. It is not always easy to be happy and smiling, but a community without happiness and smiles is like a community without life. We know that community life is not easy, but we must continue.

**Self-happiness and smiling within the community (being open in heart and mind):** My community should be the first place where I find happiness and

## “Being Opened” as a Community

Fr. Albert Sa-at Prathansantiphong scj  
(Ho Chi Minh City)

*“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both”  
(Proverbs 20:12)*

**Dear friends, a heartfelt welcome to all of you to our community of Ephphata in Vietnam.**

Let us first open our ears and our eyes, which the Lord has made, to know more about the Church in Vietnam. Nearly 500 years have passed since the seed of the Gospel began to be sown in the land of Vietnam in 1533. According to statistical data as of December 31, 2025, the Church has over 7.57 million faithful out of a total population of approximately 102.3 million, accounting for about 7.4% of the population. They receive pastoral care from around 50 Bishops (including 17 Bishops Emeritus) in 27 dioceses, more than 8,300 priests, and nearly 28,500 male and female religious.

### Who is a Betharramite?

Again and again, I have heard this question, and sometimes my answer

has been different each time. For example, a Betharramite is a man who always says “yes” (*Ecce Venio*), or a Betharramite is a man without ambitions. Personally, however, I prefer this description: **“A Betharramite is a happy man; he has renounced many things, but not happiness”** (Fr. Joseph Mirande scj).

This is something real that we can experience and that others can experience through us as well. This is what we try to live in our community in Vietnam. We are happy and accept ourselves according to our abilities. We are aware of our limitations and the limits of our knowledge. It is a challenge for us to lead a new community in a new country and culture.

For me, I simply encourage myself to share my happiness as I am. I do not have the talents needed to build a perfect community according to the Rule of Life, the Acts of the General Chapter, the Formation Guide, or according to other communities. Yet we try our best to build our community as the Chapter advises: *“In our way of being and evangelising, we bring*

day Mass for them. Responding to this pastoral need, priests travelled under difficult circumstances, often by goods trains. Eventually, the Diocese of Mangalore accepted responsibility for the mission, and Fr. Robert Michael Miranda was appointed as the first Episcopal Vicar.

Recognizing the immense social and spiritual needs of the people, the Church initiated various educational, healthcare, and social development programmes. Schools, hospitals, women’s welfare cen-

tres, youth employment initiatives, de-addiction programmes, and ORBIT (Organization for Bidar Integral Transformation) became instruments of transformation in the region.

As the mission expanded, the Diocese of Gulbarga was established, and Fr. Robert Michael Miranda became its first bishop.

### Betharramites Respond to the Call

Inspired by the missionary spirit of St. Michael Garicoïts and the conviction that “Betharramites dare to



**Heading to “Talmadgi”.** Just over 2 km from this village in the Bidar district, along an 850-km highway connecting eastern and western India, stands St. Lawrence Catholic Church, a small beating heart for a Christian community of about 170 families spread across eight villages.



go where no one goes,” the Congregation entered the mission field of Bidar.

The first Betharram presence was initiated by Fr. Britto Rajan, SCJ, in 2008. In 2016, Fr. Satish Paul Raj, SCJ began ministry at Talmadgi Mission Centre and served faithfully for three years.

Subsequently, Fr. Jude, Fr. Livin, and Fr. Avinash continued strengthening the mission. Today, I try to carry forward this ministry with the same enthusiasm and commitment.

### A Living Mission

The mission centre serves eight villages, providing regular pastoral care and spiritual accompa-

niment. Every Sunday, Holy Mass is celebrated in different villages, ensuring that the faithful have access to the Eucharist and the sacraments.

Throughout the week, the missionaries visit villages to conduct catechism classes, prayer services, bhajans, and Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) activities. Basic Ecclesial Communities play a vital role in nurturing faith and strengthening Christian fellowship.

### Ministry Beyond the Church Walls

Educational support for children, family visits, youth guidance, and social outreach form an integral part of the apostolate. For several years, the mission operated a



*Estefanía Mendenson, Missionary Community, Buenos Aires:*

*Some time ago, the idea arose to hold a youth celebration one Sunday a month at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Barracas. Today, we young people embrace this commitment with great enthusiasm and joy because we are not only the future of the Church, we are a living present eager to proclaim God's love to others.*

*Pope Francis made a very explicit request of us: "Please help transform the ceremonies into what they truly are, a celebration," and that is our great purpose: to spread our happiness, to live the faith united as brothers and sisters, and for others to say, "Look how they love one another," because in the end, when we do things for Jesus, joy becomes genuine, love multiplies, and faith is contagious.*

*Speaking a little more from my personal experience, in 2023 I participated in my first mission in Santiago del Estero with 15 missionaries from Buenos Aires. Over the years, the group grew, and by 2026 we were more than 50 committed young people, eager to serve, proclaim, and share the love of Jesus. This shows that faith is still alive and that there are still hearts willing to give themselves for something truly worthwhile because we don't want to be young people who follow the world, but rather invite the world to follow the Lord. This process clearly demonstrates young people's desire to seek spaces for encounter, and for Christians, that space of encounter with God par excellence is the Mass.*

*Today more than ever, we want to be young people who bring hope, who spread faith, and who can bring more hearts closer to God.*



*Fr. George Antony SCJ (below) and Fr. Avinash, SCJ (above) with some members of the parish community. On the occasion of Vanamahotsava ("Environment Day" in the local language), they planted trees to encourage the people to protect the environment for the next generation.*

hostel for underprivileged children studying at St. Mary's School run by the SMMI Sisters. Despite limited resources, the hostel became a place of care, education, and hope.

### **Looking to the Future**

The Betharram Mission in Bidar continues to be a beacon of faith and service. While much has been achieved, significant challenges remain. The mission requires dedicated personnel, generous benefactors, and constant prayers to sustain and expand its outreach.

As we thank God for the blessings of the past decade, we entrust the future of this mission to His providence. May the Lord continue to bless the people of Bidar and inspire many more missionaries to serve in His vineyard.

*"Here I am, Lord; send me." ■*

## Betharram in Gontougo: an “Effatà” mission in Northeastern Ivory Coast

Fr. Hippolyte Yomafou scj  
(Laoudi-Ba)

**Following on from missions in the dioceses of Katiola, Yopougon, and Yamoussoukro, the Congregation of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Bétharram continues its missionary work in the diocese of Bondoukou, in the heart of Gontougo, through the parish of Saint Paul in Laoudi-Ba.**

At the request of His Excellency Bishop Bruno Yedo, our congregation has agreed to place its charism at the service of the people of this border region and deeply rural area. Thus, since September 2024, Father Luc Martial and I have been sent to Laoudi-Ba to experience pastoral, fraternal, and missionary immersion within the local communities.

In this part of northeastern Ivory Coast, distances are vast, villages are scattered, and transportation and school infrastructure are virtually nonexistent. The needs are therefore numerous, but the people demonstrate a remarkable spiritual thirst and an extraordinary hospitality.

In less than two years, several projects have been completed thanks to the involvement of the faithful, the spirit of ecclesial communion, and the support of numerous benefactors: the enclosure of the rectory and the church, the renovation and tiling of the parish church, the construction of a Marian grotto, and the building of shops to support the mission’s self-sufficiency. These material



Along this path, initiatives driven by the young people themselves have emerged. One of these activities is the musical service at the weekly Mass, where they participate by accompanying with guitars and voices. The other is the monthly youth Mass at the Sacred Heart Basilica parish: a celebration prepared by them and designed to “translate” the mystery of faith into a language more accessible to the younger generations.

This process has awakened in them the desire to make the faith they have received their own, to be active participants, and to experience a personal relationship with Jesus. None of this would be possible without spaces for listening, integration, and closeness. Being good shepherds today means believing in young people, opening paths, and, above all, accompanying them with love.



which is very characteristic about us: being available for service, lived as an opening to pastoral calls, to welcoming, to confession, to listening, to visits, without letting ourselves absorbed by the bureaucracy of the pastoral secretariate (without, of course, neglecting it). In this attempt to be a good Betharramite priest, I

like to remember the few details we know about the experience of St. Michaël Garicoïts when he was the assistant of the parish priest in Cambo-Les-Bains, and how, even before founding the Congregation, he left this disponibility and opening shape his action. ■

## A Mass for Young People, by Young People

Fr. Leandro Narduzzo scj  
(Barracas)

For several years now, I have dedicated myself to pastoral accompaniment in schools. I am the chaplain for the secondary level at *Colegio San José* in Buenos Aires and a religious leader at all levels of the Sacred Heart Institute in the Barracas neighbourhood. This work has allowed me to connect deeply with young people, share their spaces, and accompany them in numerous activities. It has also brought me into active involvement with missionary work, as I know the students and they know me.

With the young people, we con-

duct formation programmes, sacramental celebrations, retreats, camps, trips, and, especially, missionary experiences. The schools organise a winter mission, and many of these young people then continue participating in a community that carries out mission work during the summer. Together with alumni and catechists, some with many years of experience of the Betharram charism, a vibrant pastoral programme has developed that now attracts numerous young men and women seeking meaning and transcendence.

achievements are not an end in themselves. Above all, they reflect the desire to build a rooted, welcoming, and missionary Church.

The pastoral vision of Bishop Bruno Yedo, however, is not limited to the purely religious dimension. His desire is also that Bétharram put its expertise at the service of integral human development, in accordance with the social doctrine of the Church.

In an African society facing the challenges of unemployment, irregular migration, and economic fragility, evangelisation cannot be separated from human development. Proclaiming the Gospel also means contributing to restoring human dignity, forming responsible consciences, and creating spaces where fraternity, work, and solidarity become paths to social transformation.

Laoudi-Ba has significant agricultural potential. The fertile lands of this region allow for integrated projects



capable of fostering youth autonomy, combating rural exodus, and promoting a more stable local economy. Our ambition is to progressively develop agricultural, pastoral, and educational initiatives that will enable young people to acquire practical skills, a sense of responsibility, and genuine hope for their future.

This mission is part of the spiritual dynamic of “Effata” – “Be opened” (Mark 7:34). Effata means opening our hearts to God, opening ourselves to the margins of humanity, and embracing missionary boldness. Laou-



di-Ba calls us to go beyond ourselves to reach out to rural communities, listen to their needs, share their realities, and spread the charity of Christ.

We believe that Bétharram's missionary future in the Diocese of Bondoukou is only just beginning. This mission needs prayers, support, fellowship, and partners capable of accompanying this work of evangelization and human development.

Gontougo is a land of hope. Laoudi-Ba is a land of mission. And Bétharram hopes to write, together with the local people, a beautiful chapter in the history of the Gospel in Africa. ■

**The Superior of the St Michael Gari-coïts Region has presented the project for the opening of the new Betharramite community and the acceptance of the parish of Saint-Paul in Laoudi-Ba.**

**The project has been approved in recent days.**

the laymen and women of our community.

It is a second point to which we must pay much attention in the reality of our parish: the responsibility must not be concentrated totally in the hands of the priest or of the religious. It is necessary to make the laymen and women wholly participants and actors of the pastoral work, by valorizing the local instances: parish councils and assemblies.

We have particularly experienced the challenge to welcome the young people and to give them voice and space in the parish community. Some fruit are already rejoicing us, such as the staging of the Holy Week, the feast of the Sacred Heart of our Lady on May 30<sup>th</sup>, as well as the growing of the FDV group of young people.

At last, I would like to remind you of a point



## A warm, open parish

Fr. Antonio Thiago Gordiano Sampaio scj  
(Belo Horizonte)

The XXIIIth General Chapter called us to an opening movement, from the “*Ephphata*” pronounced by Jesus in Mark Gospel (7,34). This opening manifests itself in our educative works, in community life, in the way towards training, but I have been asked to reflect on this opening in our parish life, and more specially in the mission of a parish priest, which I recently assumed (on February 1<sup>st</sup>) for the first time in my ministry.

The parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the district of Nova Granada in Belo Horizonte, is one of the oldest presence of Betharram in Brazil. It has more than sixty years’ history, during which numerous brothers lived in this community and left their print. It is an opportunity for me to render homage to the two brothers of whom we are celebrating this year the tenth anniversary of their entrance in the Betharram of Heaven : Fr. José Mirande and Fr. Henrique Lasuén. Both consecrated a great part of their religious life to this parish community. We can’t forget either that the postulate of the Brazil

Vicariate and the regional Scolasticate are wholly part of this community.

I assume this mission while being truly conscious that it doesn’t belong to me, for it belongs to the Congregation, knowing also that Fr. Juan Pablo scj. (a trainer and assistant priest) would be at my side, and that, together, we would integrate the training young people in the vast pastoral field of the parish. Here is perhaps the most important point for a Religious who undertakes such a mission : never to forget that the parish doesn’t belong to him, that he doesn’t act alone, but in the name of the Congregation and accompanied by it. As the n° 44 of the Acts of the General Chapter reminds us: “*It is only with the strength of a community that we can keep our enthusiasm for the mission and overcome disheartening*”. During those few months, we tried to make this idea concrete: a training youngster accompanies each of our communities; we try to listen to one another, to discern together and to be a presence near

## The care of the sick, the heart of the mission

Br. Angelo Sala scj  
(Bouar)

The “St. Michael” Treatment Centre (in Central African Republic) is a project that was conceived during my second year of novitiate in Monteporzio, Italy, in collaboration with Father Mario Longoni, SCJ.

In 2010, we began training staff with a team from Italy, and presented the project to the Central Africans themselves to determine whether the time was ripe to launch a program that would exclusively care for people infected with AIDS, taking into account the significant problem of stigmatisation.

The goal of the “St. Michael” Centre is to offer:

- a) Facilitated access to treatment;
- b) Psychosocial support for patients;
- c) Supporting HIV-positive children as they grow, giving them hope for a better life;
- d) Treatment of opportunistic infections;
- e) Raising awareness among the population, so they can be aware of the risks of engaging in risky behavior.

Today, the Centre provides care to 1,950 HIV-positive people, including approximately 200 children born to HIV-positive mothers who were not tested during pregnancy.

In the last two years, we have also decided to address other chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, and prostate cancer—the diseases that the developing world calls the silent killers. The Center also offers ophthalmology and dentistry services; people travel many kilometers to access the services we offer.

I must admit that in Africa, explaining to a patient that they have an incurable disease is not an easy task, for two reasons: first, because in Africa, treatment is sought only when symptoms appear; when a person feels well, they do not see the need to take medication. Second, because a chronic disease impacts a very fragile family budget.

In an increasingly fast-paced world, where efficiency often trumps humanity, poverty exists that demands not only treatment, but also attention, listening, and dignity.



Caring for those who suffer or need help is not simply a social duty or a medical practice, as many NGOs in Africa do, but is, first and foremost, an encounter. When you approach a person in pain with an “open heart,” an invisible miracle occurs: suffering ceases to be a number and becomes a story. In fact, we know many of our patients by name, especially those who have been with us since we opened.

True poverty today is loneliness and stigmatisation. Therefore, the first medicine is the ability to look the person in front of us in the eye, offering them support, showing openness and solidarity.

Opening your heart means accepting

being wounded by the pain of others, transforming that wound into a channel of hope, even alleviating physical pain. It means abandoning judgment, knowing how to listen to the pain of others, and practicing empathy, a force that can bring about significant change, both in the person in need before you and in yourself.

Over the years, I have lived through different experiences of the pain I encounter every day in my work. At times, I’ve let myself be overwhelmed by empathy to the point that the boundaries between myself and others have blurred; the pain of others has overwhelmed me, becoming my own suffering. If you let yourself be overwhelmed, you end up lacking the

resources needed to truly help those who suffer. The opposite experience is to withdraw behind a wall, unable to bear the emotional burden of the other. This makes you cold, hasty, and risks trivializing suffering with platitudes. These are attitudes I often recognize in myself and that challenge me every evening, when I examine my conscience.

I think the real turning point lies in the transition from empathy to compassion (in the true, noble sense of the term, from the Latin *com-passio*, to suffer with).

It means welcoming the pain of others, acknowledging it and tuning into their wavelength, but keeping one foot

firmly in one’s own reality. This protective detachment isn’t selfish; it’s what allows you to remain clear-headed, to offer a solid shoulder and be a safe haven, rather than a boat adrift in the same storm.

Healing with an open heart is, first and foremost, a daily choice. It requires patience and the maturity to embrace suffering without being overwhelmed. It means planting the seeds for a society more attentive to listening and less judgmental. Healing, ultimately, isn’t the act of someone who stands above others to dispense solutions, but of someone who sits alongside, accepts the pain, and decides to walk through it together. ■