

Teach us, Lord, to draw good from evil
when we encounter temptations,
sorrows,
or trials.

Teach us to draw good from evil,
you who drew your glory
from the shame of the cross.

Even in misfortune,
we want to bless you:
“Blessed be the name of the Lord!” (Job 1:21)

Event then,
teach us to say “Yes,”
at least with a beginning of love.
“My heart is ready, Lord, my heart is ready” (Psalm 107:1).
We are ready, Lord,
ready for anything.
“The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want”
(Psalm 23:1).

Inspired by the Spiritual Doctrine, 102-103
(From *En avant*, Fr. Beñat Oyhenart scj)



Societas Sacratissimi
Cordis Jesu

Beñat Oyhenart



Nef

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Nouvelles En Famille



In our “position” is
our mission

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FOR INTERNAL USE

Region of Saint Michael Garicoïts



Nangoh Ouattara scj during the ceremony that took place at Saint-Bernard Parish Church in Adiapodoumé. ■

Region Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified



INDIA | Ordination to Priesthood of Deacon Wilfred Stevan Rodrigues scj

On September 10th, Deacon Wilfred Stevan Rodrigues got ordained as a priest by Mgr. Peter Paul Saldanha, bishop of Mangalore, at Our Lady of Dolours Church, in Kasaragod, Kerala. ■



Region of Saint Michael Garicoïts

The pilgrimage also wants to be a convivial meeting, at first round a “friendly drink” proposed to all, then a picnic shared joyfully. Those who want it go to the chapel in the early afternoon for an adoration of the Holy Sacrament with texts of the Saint, before praying the rosary and singing vespers.

Then comes the procession to Garacoetxea (the Saint’s birthplace) punctuated by testimonies on the day’s theme : the fraternity lived in Belloc between the nuns and the monks, the solidarity shared in the agricultural world confronted to numerous crisis, the compassion expressed in accompanying elderly or isolated persons, the precious welcoming of foreigners by the teams of the Catholic Help. In front of the birth house, the benediction of the Holy Sacrament before the traditional song « Mixel Saindu handia » (Michaël, the great Saint) which closes this very fervent day, a real return to the sources for the participants.

A beautiful example of synodality in preparing and animating this pilgrimage, between the community of Saint-Palais and the Association “The Friends of Saint Michael Garicoïts”, also in charge of caring about the different places in Ibarre. ■

Closure of the school at Bétharram

On September 1, the students of Bétharram Middle School returned to school in Igon, where all the classes of the *Le Beau Rameau* school are now gathered, from kindergarten through high school.

IVORY COAST | Final Professions

On September 12th, the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, received the perpetual vows of Brothers Henri Joël Kouassi Konan scj and Antoine

In our “position” is our mission

“As servants of the Gospel, we are called above all to be faithful servants.”
(Rule of Life, no. 19a)



Dear Betharramites,

The motto that accompanies us this year, “**Artisans of Peace, United and in Solidarity**,” takes on a special meaning against the background of the 100th World Mission Day¹, which we celebrate next month. In this Jubilee Year, Pope Leo XIV proposes the motto: “*One in Christ, united in mission.*” These are not two different messages: they illuminate each other. Mission is born of union with Christ, and is carried out in unity, and has Love as its essence. “*More for Love than for any other reason...*” (SMG)

Before giving his life for us, Jesus prays to the Father for his disciples: “*That they may all be one... so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me*” (Jn 17:21). Saint Michael Garicoits made this text a proposal for life for all of us.

Now, building unity is also a mission. How can we preach mercy to others

¹) World Mission Day begun by Pope Pius XI in 1926, usually the second last Sunday in October.

when, at times, we find it so difficult to forgive each another? Being one in Christ doesn't mean we all have to think the same way, but it does compel us to always look inward and be willing to overcome the "small daily battles," to live in fraternity in our own "position," without letting differences—ethnic, social, cultural, etc.—become a cause of conflict. In short, it means putting Christ at the centre, embracing him, and recognizing that the diversity of charisms, sensibilities, and vocations can strengthen that embrace even further when it is directed toward the same mission. That is why we are called to work together, even though we are different.

And here begins our task as artisans of peace. The artisan works with patience. He doesn't work alone. He doesn't build all at once: he unites, repairs, adjusts, and waits. We too are called to work patiently for reconciliation in our families, communities, parishes, and daily relationships. None of this is foreign to our vocation as Betharramites, religious and lay, members of a community on mission.

This is one of the great challenges for all of us today: to understand that we are all responsible for proclaiming the Gospel. Mission does not belong just to those who travel to distant lands, live on other continents, or have received a specific missionary vocation. We all have a place in it. All of us, as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, are called to "unfold immense Love."

Mission lies in "our position."

Unity in mission, however, is not an end in itself. Jesus adds a direction to "Be One": "so that the world may believe." Mission is a collective action. It is at the heart of our charism. That is why we must face this paradox: *the Betharramite who settles into comfort will never find his true place in our family.*

Betharram needs renewal with priests, consecrated persons, and lay people; young people and adults; communities of origin and host communities, nourished by prayer: "before being missionaries, be men of prayer" (SMG); full of generosity, with "a big heart and a generous spirit" (SMG); open to formation: "suitable, ready, and willing" (SMG); willing to be accompanied

Region of Saint Michael Garicoïts

FRANCE-ESPAGNE | Ibarreko beila : le pèlerinage d'Ibarre, en basque, en l'honneur de saint Michel Garicoïts

The pilgrimage in Basque language took place in Ibarre, like each year, on the last Wednesday of August, the 26th. As early as 9 a.m., a mass was celebrated in the chapel by Fr. Joseph Ruspil for those who were not available during the day.

The pilgrimage unfolds like this : as soon as 9 a.m., the pilgrims live a time of personal prayer in the chapel, presenting their personal intentions by offering a light to Saint Michaël. Then it is the solemn mass, presided this year by Brother Jean-Michel Borthairie, a benedictine monk from Belloc. He told us that he had been fond of Saint Michaël since his childhood ; afterwards, he had the grace of meeting our communities in Ivory Coast, India and Argentina. Leaning on the prayer of our region « Artisans of peace, united and solidary » (the theme of the day), he shared his contemplation of the Heart of Jesus, a spring of love who wants to transform the world, as indicated in the Encyclical Letter *Dilexit* Nos.

« Only a heart able of compassion can grow in fraternity and solidarity. It clings less to himself, but it clings much more to Christ, he becomes poor in spirit. He feels himself nearer to the poor, God's beloved ones. And our role is very important, for in a mysterious way, it is the love of Jesus which is manifested by our fraternal service, and which talks to the world silently »

[...] He, who is gentle and humble of heart, shows us, along with our brothers and sisters, a joyful path for our lives, so that our lives may be lives of giving, lives of love, lives of service, and also joyful lives, filled with the joy of sharing Christ's love with others, and the joy of contemplating his Sacred Heart which helps us through everything, including our trials, with the certainty of faith that through all this, he leads us to his Resurrection.

Saint Michael Garicoits has shown us the way; may it become our way too!



and to commit: *"Always obey, more out of love than for any other reason"* (SMG).

The 100th World Mission Day in 2026 also finds us in a year of grace in Betharram's missionary history: we celebrate 75 years of missionary presence in Thailand, 40 years of presence in the Central African Republic, and 170 years of missionary presence of the Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region in South America.

These anniversaries evoke so many personalities, communities, vocations, schools, parishes, shared journeys, sufferings, and hopes... They are the living memory of a Congregation that sought to be missionary from its very beginning and that continues today to seek how to respond to the calls of the Church and the world.

We know that missionaries, thanks to their faithful witness in so many places around the world, are true artisans of peace. They accompany communities, they educate, care for the sick, support those who have lost almost everything, and because of the love of God the Father, proclaim that no life is worthless. In this way, they demonstrate that the Gospel can become a seed of reconciliation and hope, when we commit ourselves to living it wholeheartedly.

Mission is not measured solely by the passage of time, but by the capacity to remain with people and walk alongside the vulnerable and the poor. Being part of the Church's mission today means living and sharing the faithful love of Jesus the missionary. It is about showing solidarity with our brothers and sisters, demonstrating that their suffering affects us, awakens us from indifference, and that their hope is also ours.

The most urgent challenge of our time is to be united so that the world may believe: that our unity may be credible. The world needs a Church capable of showing that it is possible to live in communion with one another without trying to erase differences; to dialogue without renouncing the truth; to serve without seeking the limelight; to share without first asking what we will receive in return.

A united and compassionate Church always becomes a sign. A welcoming community becomes a proclamation. A Christian who forgives becomes a witness. A person who gives their life for others makes visible the face of Jesus, humble and obedient.

The answer is already inscribed in our history: Betharramite mission is carried out by walking with the people, sharing their joys and sufferings, and allowing the Gospel to transform ourselves as well, we who are sent.

Let us look with gratitude to the past, but let us also embrace the future with courage. For generations, men and women of Betharram have prayed, served, offered their time, and given their lives so that the Gospel might reach new places. There is a future. Today, it is up to us to keep that flame alive.

May God bless you.

Fr. Gustavo Agín, SCJ,
Superior General

Questions to share in community:

1. What kind of congregation do we Betharramites, want to be? A congregation that speaks of mission or a missionary congregation? What would be the difference?
2. Are there any attitudes in myself or in my community that have become an obstacle to mission? Do we embrace the building of peace and communion within the Congregation as our mission?
3. Are we part of a Church that contemplates the needs of the world from afar or a Church that accompanies, serves, and shares with the poor? Let us give some examples.

† P. Osvaldo CANIZA scj

Mbuyapey, 15 October 1968 • Asunción, 25 July 2026 (Paraguay)

The vocational path of Father Osvaldo Milciades Caniza scj led him to enter our Congregation in 1985 as an aspirant in Colegio Apostolico in San Jose in Asunción. The next year he started years of postulancy in the formation House Our Lady of Betharram in Lambaré (1986–89).

In 1990, he entered as a novice in Paulinia, in Brazil, where he took his first temporary vows in 1991. He made his final professional in Colegio Apostolico San Jose in 1995 and received the presbyteral ordination in 1996. He died on July 25th 2026.

His first years of sacerdotal ministry were in the parish of Sacred Heart of Jesus in Ciudad Nueva, Ciudad del Este. Then he was entrusted with the pastoral direction of the Colegio Apostolico San Jose and many other parish missions within rural communities: San Joaquin and Santa Ana (diocese of Coronel Oviedo), San Francisco, La Coleman and San Blas, Tebicuary-mi (Carapegua diocese) and also the parish of San Jose of Asunción.

Recently, he was a parish vicar of the



Sagrado Corazón of Jesus in Ciudad del Este in addition of being pastoral director of San Jose College in this very town.

Father Osvaldo scj always distinguished thanks to his generous availability, his spirit of service and his faithful obedience in every pastoral, apostolic and educative missions he was entrusted with. His life and his ministry witness an humble and constant devotion in the service of the Church and of the Congregation.

May the example of Fr. Osvaldo scj inspire to our Betharramite family to live with faithfulness and joy the vocation received.

Joined in the prayer, we ask our Lord to continue to arouse in our Congregation available men and women obedient and devoted to the Heart of Jesus.

P. Alberto Zaracho Barrios scj ■



● St Mary of Jesus Crucified Region

[Vicariate of Thailand-Vietnam]

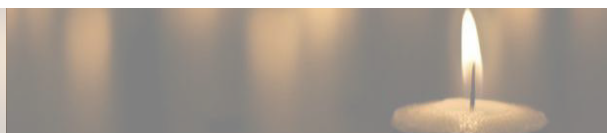
- Presentation by Br. John Baptist Boonyod Sawangthammakun scj to the diaconal ministry. The diaconal ordination took place on 8 August last in Sampran, at the Lux Mundi Major Seminary.

[Vicariate of India]

- Presentation of Deacon Wilfred Stevan Rodrigues scj to the priestly ministry. The ordination to priesthood took place on September 10 in Kasaragod, Kerala.

On March 5, 2026, by decree of the Superior General (RL. 205/p), Fr. Ernesto Consonni (Saint Michael Garicoïts Region, Vicariate of Italy) was dismissed from the Congregation.

In memoriam



Paraguay | On August 24, *Mrs Matilde Rojas de Villalba*, mother of Fr. Crispín Villalba scj, died in Curuguaty. She was 102 years old.

We express our condolences to Fr. Crispín, and we accompany him with our prayers for his dear mother and his family.

Brazil | On August 30, *Mr. Tarcísio Gordiano Sampaio*, brother of Fr. Thiago Gordiano Sampaio scj, died in a fatal car crash. He was 35 years old.

We express to Fr. Thiago and his family our condolences and we promise to remember his brother in our prayers.



From the **MESSAGE** for the
100th World Mission Day on
18 October 2026, from the Vatican,
25 January 2026

... **H**oly Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in his love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying your faithful love for all creatures.

Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope!

Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.

Celebrating the same missionary experience in three different places

170 Years of Mission in America

Fr. Sergio Gouarnalusse scj
(Community of Beltrán • Argentina)

On November 4, 1856, the first missionaries of our Congregation arrived in Buenos Aires. They were still priests of the Diocese of Bayonne, and were therefore popularly known as the Bayonne Missionaries.

This was the result of a discernment process undertaken by Fr Michael with the first community, in response to a request made by Bishop Escalada of Buenos Aires to Bishop Lacroix of Bayonne to minister to the large number of Basque and Béarnese immigrants arriving in Argentina.

For this mission, St Michael chose some of the best religious members of this fledgling family. Thinking primarily of caring for the immigrants, supporting them in the face of the challenges of displacement, and sustaining their faith, he sent missionaries and educators.

The first religious were:

- Father Didace Barbé, director of the Betharram College;
- Fathers Guimón, Larrouy, Harbustan, and Sardoy;
- the student Magendie;
- and the lay brothers Jean and Fabián.

They primarily developed two types of missions, with religious specifically trained for each:

- **Popular missions** were carried out in numerous towns where Basques and Béarnais had settled. Father Guimón, in his missionary zeal, wanted to reach the indigenous peoples, but he was reminded by Michael that one must keep one's efforts within the limits of one's position and confine oneself to the

[Vicariate of the Ivory Coast]

- **Admission to final profession of Br. Henri Joël Kouassi scj and Br. Antoine Nangoh Ouattara scj.**
The celebration took place on 12 September in the parish church of St. Bernard in Adiopodoumé.
- **Approval of the appointment of Fr. Elisée Mambo Sika scj as Superior of the Community of Dabakala** for a first term, starting from 1 September 2026.
- **Authorization given to the integration of Fr. Vincent Didier Allelet Gnaoré scj, a religious from the St Michael Garicoïts Region, in the Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region,** taking into account the agreements made by the Regional Superiors concerned. The integration has been set for five years, renewable, starting on September 14, 2026. Fr. Vincent-Didier is going to join the formation community of Belo Horizonte (Vicariate of Brazil).

[Vicariate of France-Spain]

- **Approval of the appointment of Fr. Djéban Landry Koffi scj as Superior of the Community of Pau** for a first term, starting from 1 September

ber 2026.

[Vicariate of Italy]

- **Authorization to give back the parishes around Ponte a Elsa (Bastia, Bresciana, Pino and Pianezzoli) to the diocese of San Miniato and to accept the parishes of Isola and Roffia in the same diocese.**

These last two parishes had been given back to the diocese in 2025. After the closure of the community of Ponte a Elsa in 2024, the community of Pistoia (diocese of Pistoia) had taken charge of the pastoral care of the parishes of the diocese of San Miniato, and will take care of these two parishes of Isola and Roffia, once again entrusted to the Congregation.

● Fr. Auguste Etchecopar Region

- **Approval of the Acts of the Mid-term Regional Chapter** that was celebrated in Passa Quatro (Brazil) from July 14 to 17, 2026, in which Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue scj, Vicar General, participated at the special invitation of the Regional Superior.

Circulars of the Superior General

On August 11, 2026, the Superior General issued two circulars :

- **The first circular is intended for the Formators** of the Congregation on the importance of formators' reports in vocational discernment. (Prot. Nr. 156/FR/IT/ES/EN/POR/2026)
- **The second circular was sent to all the religious of the Congregation.** It concerns exceptional travels and the application of Article 108 of the Rule of Life. The Regional Superiors and their Vicars were charged to send it to each religious of their respective Region (Vicariate). (Prot. Nr. 157/FR/IT/ES/EN/POR/2026)

Canonical visits

- **Canonical visit to the Vicariate of Brazil:** from June 22 to July 20, Fr. Jean-Dominique Delgue scj, Vicar General, as delegate of the Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, made the canonical visit to the Vicariate of Brazil.
- **Canonical visit to the Vicariate of Côte d'Ivoire :** The Superior General, Fr. Gustavo Agín scj, made the canonical visit to the communities from 22 August to 11 September. On September 11, in his presence, the Vicariate's assembly took place after a five-day spiritual retreat.

Decisions of the Superior General with his Council Meeting on August 14, 2026

- **St Michael Garicoïts Region**
[Vicariate of Central Africa]
- **Admission to final profession of Br. François Samedi Boytende scj.**

The celebration is going to take place on 6 December in the Cathedral of Saint Mary, Mother of the Church in Bouar.

mission among the local people.

- **The other mission was educational,** beginning with the San José College in 1858.

On March 1, 1861, Father Harbustan began the mission in Montevideo, with the same objective of accompanying the Basques and Béarnais; for this reason, they would be known in Uruguay as "The Basques."

In the yellow fever epidemic that struck Argentina in 1871, Fathers Larrouy and Irigaray, along with Brother Fabián L'hôpital, died as a result of their apostolic zeal.

At the end of the century, due to the need for education for children and young people and the Congregation's growing reputation, various dioceses requested its presence. Thus, the Congregation arrived in Rosario and La Plata, and was asked to take charge of a Basilica dedicated to the Sacred Heart.

Also during this time, at the request of Mr. Bogarín, they arrived in Asunción, Paraguay, in 1904. In 1937, Betharramites arrived in Brazil at the request of the Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, settling in Passa Quatro.

Betharram in America, throughout these 170 years, has made its

presence known: through missions among immigrants, through the education of children and young people, through the formation of diocesan priests (minor seminaries of Rosario and San Juan in Argentina), in parish work, and in social outreach.

Today, it continues to make its presence known, renewing its missionary spirit with lay people who embrace our charism and join in mission.

Today, there are many schools in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil, where changing times have transformed them into mission fields.

The parishes we serve are located in places where others are reluctant to go—rural and peripheral areas. We also serve urban parishes with new challenges. Our mission in Uruguay involves dialogue with a secularized society.

We conduct popular missions that encourage young lay people and carry out social outreach with today's marginalized (people experiencing homelessness and those struggling with addiction).

Responding to the calls that society and the Church make to us today, Betharram continues to give its "Here I Am." ■

Mid-term Regional Chapter of the Venerable Father Augustine Etchecopar Region

We lived the Mid-term Regional Chapter of the Venerable Father Augustine Etchecopar Region as a time of encounter, listening, and fraternal discernment. Gathered as Betharramite brothers and sisters, we were able to reflect together on our journey, give thanks for the good we have accomplished, and renew, with simplicity and hope, our desire to better serve the mission entrusted to us.

With this perspective, the inspiration of the Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* helped us remember that mission begins when we recognize, in every person, a dignity that comes from God. Looking at each brother and sister in this way—at young people, lay people, the poor, and vulnerable people—is a concrete way of revealing the Heart of Jesus: a reconciled, compassionate, humble, and ever-available heart.

We also realistically examined our regional presence. We are 14 communities, distributed among Paraguay, Argentina-Uruguay, and Brazil, serving

educational institutions, parishes, and retreat houses. In our formation houses, the young people in formation are signs of hope for us; At the same time, they remind us of our responsibility to build healthy communities and offer consistent witness.

We did not fail to mention the difficulties that weigh on our path: the shortage and aging of religious, personal crises, excessive workloads, economic challenges, the closure of historic works, and the need to discern our presence. We speak of all this, not with discouragement, but with confidence, because we believe that recognising our weaknesses is the first step toward listening better, discerning together, and sharing responsibilities.

The educational mission has once again emerged as a valuable space for evangelisation and human formation. In the vicariates of Paraguay and Argentina-Uruguay, we acknowledge the numerous efforts made by religious and lay people to keep our Betharramite identity alive in schools.

In the parishes, we feel very tangibly the joy and the duty of being close to the People of God, especially where life is most wounded by poverty, social vulnerability, and so many forms



On 8 August last, in the Diocesan Seminary of Sampran, Br. John Baptist Boonyod Sawantham-akun scj was ordained deacon, and Br. Artid Jamo was instituted an acolyte.

They were accompanied by numerous Betharramite brothers of the Vicariate, including, here from left to right: Fr. Michael Bistis, Fr. Luke Kriangsak (First Regional Vicar), Fr. Peter Nonthaphat, Fr. Peter Phichet, Fr. Alfonso Prasert, Fr. John Bosco Sommai (Master of the scholastics).

seek ways to become increasingly self-reliant while continuing to serve the poor and those most in need.

d. Mission Beyond Borders

Thailand can also become a missionary hub (cradle) for the Congregation. Having received missionaries from other countries in the past, Thailand is now able to share the missionary experience

with other local Churches.

In the future, we have to prepare quality missionaries always ready to go where we are called, trusting in God's Providence. ■

Formation of young religious. Formation is very important for the future of the Congregation. At present, there are four formation houses in Thailand: one in Phayao, two in Sam Phran, and one in Chiang Mai.

Through formation, we hope to prepare young Betharram members to continue the mission with the same charism and spirit while responding to the realities of today's world.

5. The Next Challenges for Betharram in Thailand

The challenge for us today is not simply to continue what was done in the past, we are called to remain faithful to the charism while finding new ways to respond to today's realities.

a. Social-Cultural Changes Among Ethnic Communities

Young people from ethnic communities are increasingly moving from the mountains to major cities for education and employment.

Therefore, our pastoral ministry also needs to change. We cannot focus only on traditional mountain-village ministry. We must also

accompany young people spiritually in the cities where they now live, study or work.

For example, in Chiang Mai, we celebrate a Mass in Kachin language and in Karen language once a month at Ban Betharram Chiang Mai. In Sam Phran, our seminarians, together with Lux Mundi College, accompany ethnic students and young workers who study and work in Bangkok and nearby areas.

b. Sustainability of Local Vocations

Another challenge is to cultivate and sustain vocations. Thailand is experiencing declining birth rates, which means declining of vocation too. And also, young people are increasingly influenced by consumerism and changing of social values.

Therefore, we need to create new ways to contact young people and to accompany (help) them to discover God's call in their lives.

c. Financial Self-Reliance

Financial support from Europe has gradually decreased. Therefore, Betharram communities in Thailand need to develop responsible local resource management and



of suffering. There, religious and laity are called to walk together, learning a synodality made of listening, co-responsibility, discreet presence, and daily care.

Among the challenges we face are the protection of religious identity, community life, and holistic well-being; accompanying people through personal crises; overcoming individualism; accountability; and the risk of each person walking in isolation on their own mission. Therefore, we understand synodality as a true conversion: learning to think less from the perspective of individual interests and more from the perspective of the good of the Region.

Vocation Ministry was embraced as a path we must cultivate each day. In a time marked by haste, individualism, and fragile relationships, we are called to offer young people fraternal, prayerful, simple, and missionary communities. More than just talking about vocation, we need to demonstrate, through our way of life, that it is worthwhile to give one's life for the Kingdom in Betharram.

We also assume, with seriousness and an evangelical spirit, the commitment to the protection of minors and vulnerable persons. We want to strengthen a culture of prevention, listening, and care, consolidating the vicariate teams and creating a Regional Team

composed of the Regional Superior, the Regional Vicars, and lay professionals from each vicariate.

This commitment requires common criteria, ongoing formation, clear channels for listening and referral, respect for civil and ecclesial norms, accompaniment of victims and affected communities, and transparency in all preventive actions. Caring for the most vulnerable is an essential part of our mission and a concrete expression of the fraternity we wish to live.

As markers for our continued journey, the Chapter adopted four areas of focus:

- (i) Religious life and integral health
- (ii) Evaluation of the regional mission;
- (iii) Vocation and Youth Ministry, in dialogue with initial and ongoing formation;
- (iv) Social commitment in the mission, lived by religious and lay people.

These areas reflect our main concerns and point to a process that must continue in the communities and vicariates.

At the end of the meeting, a simple certainty remained with us: we are

a small family, with limitations and wounds, but deeply marked by a fruitful memory, by so much life given, and by a hope that remains open. The Chapter in Passa Quatro helped us remember that hope is not born when we deny difficulties, but when we choose to read them in the light of the Gospel and respond to them with communion, courage, and availability.

We are therefore still called to rejuvenate ourselves through the power of the Spirit, through the active participation of new generations, through the shared mission with the laity, and through a renewed "Here I am." Inspired by *Magnifica Humanitas*, we want to continue walking together, safeguarding the dignity of every person, serving the People of God, and making visible, with humility and joy, the Heart of Jesus in America.

Fr. Davi Lara, SCJ
Regional Superior

From 1951 to 1987, the Betharram Fathers devoted themselves wholeheartedly to building the local Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (Akha followed, starting in the seventies, following about the same path, to visit newly formed villages)

During these years, faith in Jesus Christ, born, dead, and risen, took deep root in the local communities.

3. Another great blessing: the transition to local vocations

Another important sign of God's providence was the recognition of the need for local vocations and the resulting development.

As faith was gradually passed on in families, young people began to desire to follow the missionaries' example. Here the need of formators to guide the local Thai vocations. Therefore in 1987, the Ban Betharram formation house was built in Sam Phran. A truly important step indeed in the development of local vocations. In 1999, the first Thai Betharram priests were ordained. Currently, there are 27 Thai priests, one deacon, and more will follow. Of the 27 Thai

priests, three serve outside Thailand: one in Israel, one in England, and one in Vietnam.

This is another sign of God's providence. The mission, once carried out primarily by European missionaries, gradually became a mission rooted in Thailand and entrusted to the local Betharram Fathers.

The missionaries worked with dedication and sacrifice, without worrying about the future. Today, we can see that God was already preparing a future they could not even imagine.

4. Our Present-Day Ministries

Today, the mission of Betharram in Thailand continues in several important areas.

Mission Ad Gentes. We continue pastoral ministry among ethnic communities, in border areas, and in remote villages, especially in northern Thailand.

Social and Educational Ministry. We accompany ethnic and disadvantaged students through boarding houses, scholarships, education, and assistance with their basic needs.



When the Betharram missionaries arrived in Thailand, they discovered that the Karen, Lua, Akha, Lahu and Mong ethnic communities, who lived in the mountains, had a lifestyle similar to that of the Kachin people, whom the missionaries had served in China.

Thanks to their experience, the missionaries began visiting these ethnic communities. They learned their language, lived among them, evangelized them, and founded Catholic communities in remote

areas such as Chom Thong, Mae Chaem, Mae Sariang, and Mae Tho.

Although the idea of going back to China remained present for a long time, thanks to the guidance of the Providence, the hope became increasingly evanescent, and the idea of a mission in loco took root more and more. The missionaries responded with the same faith, the same enthusiasm, the same drive. Their response was, simply put, a "yes" to God's will.

40 years of mission: not a point of arrival, but a new starting line

Br. Angelo Sala scj

(Bouar • Regional Vicar in Central Africa)

In the distant Provincial Council of 1984–85 (of the former Province of Italy), the fathers began to reflect on the possibility of an opening to the *ad gentes* mission, which was being encouraged by some religious engaged in missionary animation, supported by the proximity and example of the Italian Fathers working in Thailand and Latin America. This revealed, at a time of particular life in the Province, the concern not to close ourselves within our own boundaries, but to become concretely involved in the universal mission of the Church. In this context, the idea began to emerge of a mission of the Italian Province in Africa, just as the Province of France was engaged in Ivory Coast. A profound spiritual and evangelical motivation arose among the Fathers of the Italian Province, encouraging individuals and communities to go beyond their geographical, cultural and personal boundaries.

In 1985, the Congregation responded favourably to the invitation and request for help made by the Bishop of Bouar, Mons. Armando Gianni. Fr Arialdo Urbani SCJ became the pioneer and left for the Central African Republic.

In 1986, at the beginning of the mission, a provincial councillor joined Fr Arialdo, visited the mission and reported to the provincial council the concrete proposals of the Bishop.

On 23 December, Fr Arialdo Urbani SCJ and Fr Antonio Canavesi SCJ arrived in Niem.

In 1990, the mission had grown: Fr Tiziano Pozzi SCJ, a doctor and Fr Beniamino Gusmeroli SCJ arrived, together with the sisters and volunteers. After a careful examination of the situation, consideration began on how to help the Central African population concretely. Two major needs were identified: education and health-care.

In Niem and the surrounding villages, the State schools were not functioning, and the State dispensaries did not have medicines and equipment to provide adequate care for the population.

The village-school project was born. The campaign of "distance school adoptions" was begun and immediately received the support of many friends in Italy. The schools consisted of a straw hut with logs inside which served as benches for the

God's Providence in the Mission of Betharram in Thailand

Fr. Kriangsak Luke Kitsakunwong scj
(First Regional Vicar)

From the unexpected departure to a new mission.

1. The First Call: God's Providence at the Beginning (1951-1952)

The Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram had not planned to come to Thailand. Their presence here is the result of the political situation in China, and, we believe, of God's Providence.

After the advent of communism in China, the missionaries were expelled. Some Betharram missionaries took refuge in Thailand, hoping to return to China as soon as possible.

In 1950, Father Saint-Guily, Superior of the Betharram Mission in Dali, Yunnan Province, China, contacted Bishop Louis Chorin of Bangkok, asking to be received as missionaries in Thailand. In October 1951, the bishop joyfully granted the request.

On November 23, 1951, Father Saint-Guily was the first member of the Betharram Congregation to arrive in Thailand, joined a few days later by Father Séguinotte and Father Pédebideau.

Bishop Louis Chorin entrusted the northern provinces, from Chiang Mai to Mae Hong Son, to the Betharramites as its mission territory.

The Betharram missionaries thus accepted the missions of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP), under the authority and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of Bangkok.

Looking back, we can see this as the first sign of God's providence. What initially seemed like an unexpected and difficult situation developed into a new missionary beginning for Betharram in Thailand.

2. The Second Providence: God's Plan for the spreading of the Good News



children. When the school was well established and there was an economic possibility, construction in bricks would begin, with the collaboration of the whole village in making the bricks and carrying out the construction work. With the addition of a few desks, the school was ready to accommodate the children in greater comfort.

Later, a dispensary was built, directed by Fr Tiziano, a doctor, and Sr Mary, a nurse. It became clear that there was no shortage of work. Many people came for treatment even from very distant villages.

In the autumn of 1996, the decision was taken to undertake, together with Fr Beniamino, followed by Fr Mario Zappa SCJ, a new pastoral commitment in the parish of Our Lady of Fatima in Bouar, with the

prospect of forming a new community that would welcome the first young people wishing to begin the journey of consecrated life.

A few years later, in fact, on 1 November 2008, Fr Narcisse Zaolo SCJ made his perpetual vows, and on 21 June 2009, through his priestly ordination, he became the first Central African Betharramite priest.

The welcoming of the first Central African postulants into the community created not only problems of space, but also the need to have a home of their own, land to cultivate, and concrete prospects for pastoral commitment. Therefore, an attempt was made to purchase a property on the outskirts of Bouar, near the town's large secondary school, with a view to youth ministry and to addressing the many forms of

mitment.

In the years ahead, we must commit ourselves to vocation animation, for Betharram and for the future of the Church and the country. This service could be carried out through:

1. Youth Pastoral Ministry;
2. Schools and vocational training;
3. Vocational discernment;
4. Support for young people in difficulty.

We must find a new balance between youth pastoral ministry, education and human promotion. **The challenge, therefore, is not necessarily to multiply our works**, but to ask ourselves: which works truly correspond to the needs of the Central African Republic today and to the charism of Betharram?

Another challenge is to achieve economic autonomy. This is a difficult challenge, especially in a country where economic growth is struggling to take off. There is a plan to become involved in school education through the construction of a school building on the property of the "St. Michel" community in Bouar. This project would allow us both to provide vocational and human pastoral care for young people and to generate an economic return.

Another objective to be taken into consideration is our community life. Humanitarian projects, youth pastoral ministry and parishes must not put community life and

the sharing of goods into second place.

"Attention to the poor begins with fraternal sharing among the members of the Congregation." (RdV S 32)

Forty years of mission do not represent the point of arrival, but a new starting point. If the past hands over to us a heritage made up of faces, efforts and seeds planted with courage, the future asks us to continue walking together. Today, mission is no longer simply about "bringing", but about listening, sharing and enabling autonomous communities to flourish, communities capable of guiding their own journey and, in turn, offering a testimony of hope, faith and community life to the rest of the world.

Looking back over the time that has passed, the prevailing feeling can only be one of profound gratitude: gratitude for those who have spent their lives without reserve, for the local communities that have welcomed the message and transformed it into daily life, and for all those who continue today to support this journey.

A story of faith and humanity that continues to beat to the rhythm of the heart of Africa. ■ (Pictures: "Amici" Association)

poverty.

In 2004, a French archaeologist, Mr Vidal, proposed the purchase of his large property with a house reduced to ruins in the Martineau district of Bouar. During the years 2006–2010, Fr Beniamino undertook the renovation of the old ruined house and the construction of the "Saint Michael Care Centre" and the new community residence, which was preparing to welcome young people who wished to have an experience of community life.

On 30 January 2010, Fr Mario Zappa, Fr Angelo Sala and Martial Mongba (novice) finally moved into the new Betharramite residence called "Saint Michel", and on 19 June of the same year, the "Care Centre for AIDS Patients and Infectious Diseases" was solemnly inaugurated.

The missionary commitment continued: a response was given to the request of the Archbishop of Bangui with the opening of a new community in Bimbo. This mission was entrusted to Fr Beniamino and Fr Armel Dali SCJ, an Ivorian. Our presence in the capital would thus allow a further opening to young people searching for a vocation in Bangui and pastoral ministry in the villages along the Ubangui River. Today, the Bimbo community is home to Fr Beniamino, parish priest; Fr Marie-Paulin Yarkai SCJ, the second Central African Betharramite religious priest; and Fr Valentin N'Zoré SCJ, community bursar

and person responsible for young people in formation and vocation animation. Fr Narcisse has taken responsibility as parish priest of the Parish of Our Lady of Fatima in Bouar.

Today, the Betharramite mission in the Central African Republic is part of the Saint Michael Garicoits Region and operates in a social and political context often marked by instability and poverty. Today, more than ever, we continue our mission with the same objectives that we set for ourselves at the beginning of the mission.

The village schools have increased, followed by those that have been built in the Brousse villages of the Parish of Our Lady of Fatima. As far as healthcare is concerned, the dispensary in Niem is recognised by the Ministry of Health as a secondary hospital. It has 100 beds, a well-equipped operating theatre, a delivery room and a laboratory. The St. Michel Care Centre, thanks to the help of the Mosaico Association and the professional contribution of Fr Mario Longoni SCJ, cares for approximately 1300 patients, including about 200 HIV-positive children. At the Centre, we have a dental clinic and an ophthalmology centre managed by a local ophthalmologist. These results have been achieved thanks to the volunteers who have been close to us and who, over the years, have supported us by making their professional skills available. Our AM-ICI Association provides us with financial

support and sends volunteers who wish to have a missionary experience.

Our missionary dynamic has remained that of the origins:

1. **An evangelical impulse and the sharing of faith:** at its foundation is the response to the mandate to share the Gospel and the Christian message of hope with those who find themselves in contexts of first evangelisation or strong isolation.
2. **Solidarity and human promotion:** the *ad gentes* mission is not limited to the spiritual aspect, but is concretely expressed in responding to the basic needs of the population.
3. **The choice of the periphery and of the least:** the call directs our presence towards geographically or socially marginalised places, where State structures and essential services are scarce or completely absent.
4. **Cultural encounter and a shared journey:** the opening to *ad gentes* implies an attitude of listening, adaptation and respect for the local culture. The long-term objective is to walk alongside the rural population in order to foster local autonomy and the growth of vocations and indigenous responsibilities.

After 40 years of presence, there are only two religious with perpetual vows of Cen-

tral African origin, which makes the pastoral care of vocations the number one challenge for the future of Betharram in the Central African Republic. **How can we transmit the charism of Saint Michael Garicoits to a new generation so that they can truly make it their own?** It is therefore necessary to work on vocation animation, personal accompaniment, human and spiritual formation, but also on Betharramite identity, in order to enable the charism of Saint Michael Garicoits to take on a Central African face.

What does “Here I am, O God, to do your will” concretely mean in Central African culture? How can the “Here I am” become a spirituality of availability, service, fraternity and solidarity in Central African society?

This is not only about encouraging vocations, but also about young people, who are the future of the Church and of the country.

These challenges must guide us towards a pastoral ministry directed towards young people, towards vocational discernment and towards supporting young people who live in social hardship and face an uncertain future.

The new fruits of the country bring us joy: Br. François, who will make his final profession in December, and Brs. Dieu-Bénit and Samuel, who are in the final year of preparation towards the definitive com-

