



**para el mundo - pour le monde - for the World - para o mundo - per il mondo**



We have closed the 200 years of the Institute's mission. In 1824, Brother Gabriel experienced special events: the definitive departure from Belleydoux in search of his vocation, the decision to found a Congregation, the taking of the religious habit at Les Bouchoux and the beginning of the mission at Saint-Claude. These events are a page in the book of his life and evoke for us the decisions that guided his life. Intuitions and facts that are the seed of the various realities that took on a mature form and that are projected to this day.

We wanted to mark the beginning of the mission of this young community dedicated full time to the school and the cathedral of Saint-Claude. It was a mission at the service of the local Church, linking school and parish life like many of our present-day communities. Although he failed in his attempt, it was the beginning of the long road of missionary work lived by the Congregation up to the present day.

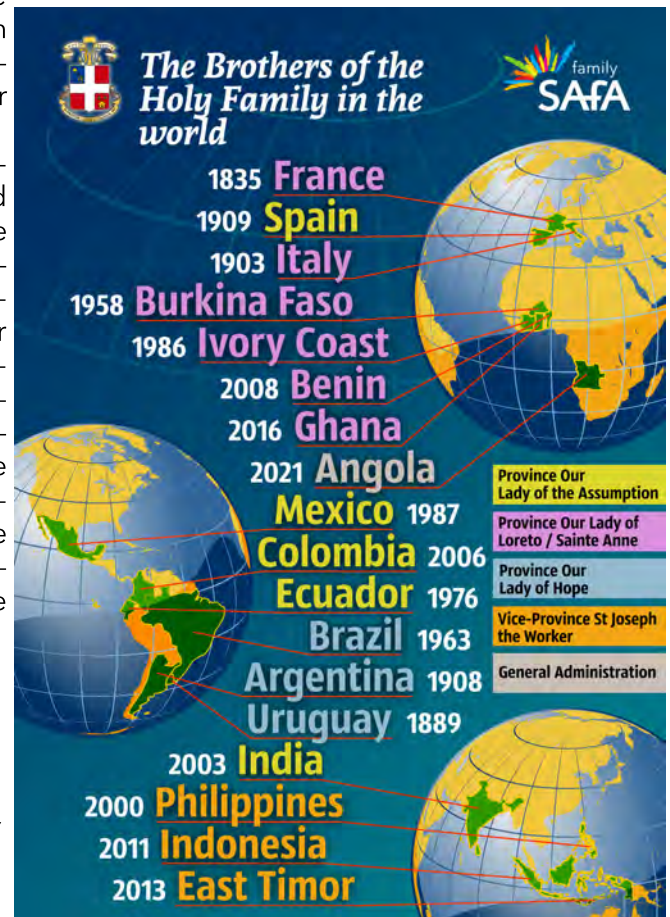
Brother Gabriel's choice of religious life implied the apostolic mission and it was Bishop de Chamon who entrusted him with the direction of a

school at 34 Rue de la Poyat in the town of Saint-Claude. He also entrusted him with some auxiliary tasks in the cathedral of this city. It is the beginning of the community mission entrusted to him by the Church, the project dreamt by Brother Gabriel: to unite education, catechesis and liturgical animation.

The fact of putting his trust in young people with little preparation, we can think that it was an imprudence on the part of Bishop de Chamon. Perhaps the same imprudence of Christ who sent out the disciples shortly after having called them.

We can imagine this group of 6 young men, led by Gabriel, enjoying moments of joy at seeing what they had achieved: the taking of the habit, the confidence of the Bishop, the confidence of the parents who sent their children to their school, the possibility of working in the cathedral, being a group of young people with a project for the future... We must think that there was an initial enthusiasm. We have been able to experience this same enthusiasm ourselves: new foundations, opening of communities and works, setting up projects... But with the passage of time, they have needed personal and community sacrifice. The grain of wheat must die in order to bear fruit. We must know how to live the enthusiasm and the overcoming of the difficulties that a work of God entails. This is the wisdom of the Gospel.

The theme chosen for this celebration was 'In mission today with Brother Gabriel'. Brother Gabriel was called to the evangelising mission as we are today. 'To consider Venerable Brother Gabriel Taborin as an inspiring model for the courageous and joyful proclamation of the Gospel, in order to respond to the needs of today's world' (PLI Identity).





# From Belleydoux...



'I was chosen, at the age of 16, to carry out the functions of teacher, cantor and sacristan in my home parish: very modest functions, to be honest; but I loved them so much that I preferred them to the scepter and the miter. I had to continue them and one day teach them to others, much more because of my long experience than because of my capability, which has always been very mediocre. Without divine assistance, I recognize that I would have been useless (...) My vocation to religious life was decided at a time when faith was much more alive than today, it was during the famous and memorable mission which took place at Saint-Claude in 1821'... The people of Belleydoux called him "Brother" before he became a religious.

**"The moment marked by Providence had come when I had to leave the world and my country village to embrace religious life: neither the tears of my parents and friends, nor the future I might have had in the world were able to stop me".**



"He went to Lyon to join the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He passed through Saint-Claude to say good-bye to his friends. He presented to Bishop de Chamon his project of founding a Congregation whose mission would be education, catechesis and liturgical animation. Gabriel and his five companions took the habit of the Brothers of St Joseph in 1824 at Les Bouchoux. His parents and many faithful were present. For Brother Gabriel it was undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and consoling days of his life. The day he took the habit, Brother Gabriel decided to give himself to God forever. He says: 'Nothing could have separated me from this state of predilection, I would have preferred to lose my life'.

**"It would be difficult for me to describe the interior joy I felt and the beauty of such a moving ceremony which I was the object of and which had never before taken place in these regions among our very religious populations. It was undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and consoling moments of my life; his memory is very dear to me and has never faded from my heart'.**



"I returned to Saint-Claude with my companions. We were immediately entrusted with the service of the cathedral and the direction of the schools. Everything was beginning to work to the great satisfaction of Bishop de Chamon, the clergy of the town and myself, as well as the good Christians, who were pleased to see the foundation of an institution very useful for religion and for the people. But, unfortunately, these happy beginnings passed as quickly as lightning. God wanted this work to pass through the crucible of a great trial, followed by many other tribulations, which have always been through the centuries the heritage and the mark of God's works".

**"At first all goes well, but four companions soon left because of the hardness of the work and the lack of preparation. Two were left. Faced with this trial, Brother Gabriel said to himself: 'If this work comes only from me, it will certainly be a dead work, but if it comes from God, he will know how to sustain it before all and against all'.**

**"Called to care for life, the environment and nature"**



# ... to Saint-Claude



## In Belleydoux: next to the site of the house and in the church, Gabriel's training places.

Brother Gabriel's mission. It is the day the Church celebrated World Mission Day. Brothers from France, Italy, Spain and India together with lay people of the Sa-Fa Family of France have walked in pilgrimage the same way as Gabriel: from Belleydoux to Saint-Claude. On October 10, 1824 Gabriel and five companions took the habit in Les Bouchoux. On November 1, they took charge of the school of Saint-Claude and the care of the Cathedral. The pilgrimage was accompanied by the reading of historical texts of Gabriel's life which enlightened our reflection and moments of prayer. From Belleydoux we were accompanied by Mgr. Pascal Roland, Bishop of Belley. The Eucharist in the cathedral of Saint-Claude was the central moment of the pilgrimage. It was presided over by Mgr. Jean Luc Garin, Bishop of the Diocese and Mgr Pascal Roland.



## Les Bouchoux:

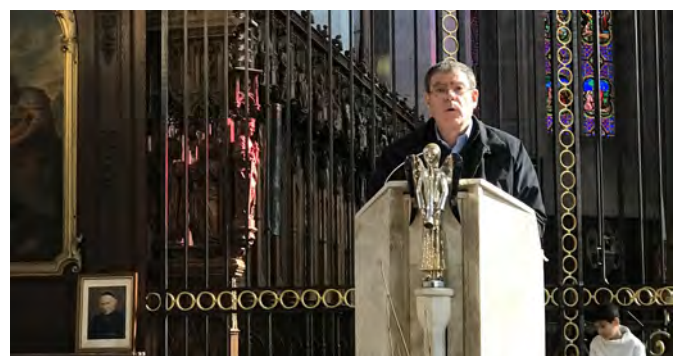
accompanied  
by a group of  
parishioners



In his homily, Mgr. Jean Luc, after a review of the important moments in the life of Brother Gabriel, emphasized four traits on our Founder. His passion for the mission, the importance he gave to education, his perseverance in his vocation in spite of difficulties and his firm will to be a Brother.

At the end of the Eucharist, the parish offered an aperitif to the participants. A fraternal meal closed the events at Saint-Claude.

To end the day, remembering the circle of our Founder's life, we had a moment of prayer at the tomb of Brother Gabriel in Saint Anne's Chapel in Belley Cathedral. The whole Institute and the entire Sa-Fa Family was present in our minds and hearts during the day and in prayer.



Eucharist at Saint-Claude: The celebrants and Br. Fco. Javier Hernando, Superior General, in the final salute

# The third departure

We have just celebrated the departure of Brother Gabriel to begin his mission. And we have also celebrated his first 'departure', when he came to the light in 1799. Now it is our turn to live the third departure, the one we are called to make with Brother Gabriel or he with us, if we want to continue to share his charism and his project.

The convocation of the next Jubilee of the universal Church invites us to set out again and to be 'pilgrims of hope'.

A first path of hope that we are called to follow is that of building peace by overcoming conflicts. To do this we do not have to go very far, this path begins at our doorstep or perhaps even inside our homes. 'Unity is greater than conflict... Conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity' (EG 228). Building peace through forgiveness is the first step in giving hope. 'Forgiveness does not change the past; it cannot change what happened in the past, yet it can allow us to change the future and to live different lives, free of anger, animosity and vindictiveness. Forgiveness makes possible a brighter future, which enables us to look at the past with different eyes, now more serene, albeit still bearing the trace of past tears (Jubilee Bull 23).

Another path of hope that is proposed to us today is to encourage and support those who are searching for meaning in their lives. Although it is not without fear and uncertainties, hope offers guidance, it is often a firm foothold to start building the future. Today there are many people today who are disoriented, perhaps more so among the young, and in search of a meaning for their existence. With the works of mercy at our disposal, with our witness and with our words, 'giving reason for our hope' (1Pt 3:15), we can help some or many to take a step towards the full happiness they long for.

One last path, among others that we could suggest in harmony with the Sa-Fa charism, is that of promoting 'universal fraternity'. Universality is not something distant or abstract, but the inclusion of all those with whom we share something in our lives. As Pope Francis says: 'Fraternity does not need theories, but concrete gestures and shared choices that make it a *culture of peace*...'. The question we must ask ourselves is not what society or the world can give me, but what I can give to my brothers and sisters. Returning home, let us think about what concrete gesture of fraternity we can make: reconciling with our family, friends or neighbours, praying for those who have hurt us, recognising and helping those in need, bringing a word of peace to school, university or social life, anointing with our closeness someone who feels lonely'.

Bro. Teodoro Berzal  
Sigüenza, October 2024

