

3-2009

## 2009 Vol. 62: Building on a Rock

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/anima-una>

---

### Recommended Citation

(2009). 2009 Vol. 62: Building on a Rock. *Anima Una*, 62 (62). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/anima-una/vol62/iss62/1>

This Full Text is brought to you for free and open access by the ID and Anima Una at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anima Una by an authorized editor of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

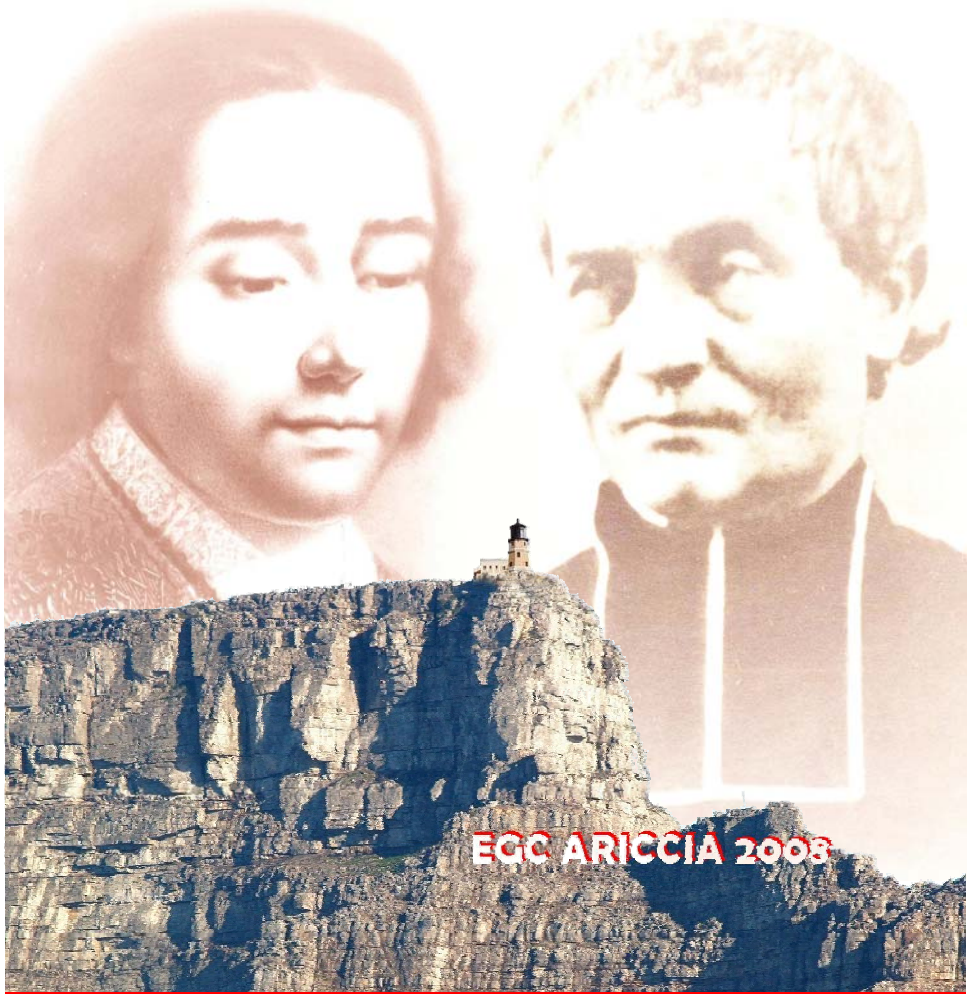
# ANIMA UNA

CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

N°62

General Council

March 2009



## BUILDING ON ROCK

# CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
<b>I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHAPTER OF TORRE D'AGUILHA 2004</b>	
1.1 A General Synthesis of Responses.....	5
1.2 Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation .....	8
<b>II. CONSOLIDATION OF THE CONGREGATION</b>	
2.1 Mission Appointments .....	11
2.2 Organisation of the Congregation: Unions of Circumscriptions, Pluri-National Circumscriptions, SRL 184.1 .....	16
2.3 Spiritan Presence in Latin America, Asia, Africa.....	18
2.4 Financial Matters.....	23
<b>III. BELONGING TO THE CONGREGATION</b>	
3.1 Spiritual Renewal of the Congregation .....	29
3.2 Spiritan Life and Vocation.....	31
3.3 Questions linked to Formation.....	36
3.4 Lay Associates.....	41
<b>IV. PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2012 CHAPTER</b>	
4.1 General Orientations.....	50
4.2 Other Comments and Ideas from the EGC 2008 .....	51



# Introduction

Our recent Enlarged General Council was celebrated at Ariccia, (across lake Albano from Castelgandolfo), from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2008.

During the EGC, information was sent out to the confreres by means of several bulletins of “Spiritan Newsflash” and afterwards in a special issue of “Spiritan News”. The delegates in their turn, on returning from Italy, will no doubt have informed the confreres of what was discussed.

The General Council, by means of this special issue of *Anima Una* (the new title for what was formerly known as *I/D*), wishes to let all confreres know about the practical follow-up to the opinions and ideas expressed at the EGC. These are not a collection of texts which have been carefully amended and voted on, as is the case for a General Chapter. Neither are they a few vague hopes and ‘pious wishes’. The aim of an enlarged council (of the Congregation or a circumscription) is essentially ‘practical’ – to make sure that our daily personal and community commitments are “built on rock”. The General Council has based this reflection on the minutes taken during the EGC and on the syntheses of topics made on the spot, so that this rich material forms a basis for the practical orientations in the next four years leading up to the General Chapter of 2012.

We considered it important that all confreres be aware of these orientations. The Congregation belongs to all of us. We all need to work together so that the poor are served better and the Gospel of Christ is more effectively proclaimed.

Fr Jean-Paul Hoch CSSp.  
Superior General

# BUILDING ON ROCK

---

## I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHAPTER OF TORRE D'AGUILHA 2004

### 1.1 A GENERAL SYNTHESIS OF RESPONSES

#### Introduction

This brief reflection represents a “synthesis” of a “synthesis” - that is, a summary of the (summarised) responses submitted to the General Council on the implementation of the last General Council (2004) in Spiritan circumscriptions throughout the world. It also represents the reactions of the participants of the Enlarged General Council (2008) to these various responses. Necessarily, this present reflection will include significant concerns, trends, and challenges of the Congregation today in a “broad view” only.

#### Mission and Spirituality

Whereas commitment to the poorest of the world remains an anchor for Spiritans, expressed in numerous forms such as ministry with refugees and displaced peoples, education, healthcare ministry, parochial apostolate, etc, the locations and forms that this ministry assumes continue to change and adapt with the “signs of the times.” Mission as expressed in inter-religious dialogue, service to victims of AIDS, focus on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation projects, consume the attention of Spiritans in many quarters of the world. New ventures in Asia and countries in Africa previously unknown to Spiritans occupy our interest and

commitment. And the particular spirituality underlying these commitments remains solid and sure; namely, a desire for “practical union” with God, expressed through prayer, personal and communal, in a fraternal life in the spirit of our Founders.

### **International/Inter-cultural Community**

These mission commitments, and their alignment with lives of prayer and fraternity, are not without challenges for us. We note that our Congregation has become deeply “international” and “intercultural,” a source of joy for us and a witness to evangelical mission. At the same time, these trends bring with them difficulties in living together, coming to agreement on style and approach to mission, formation, and theological vision. We see this difficulty often played out in the lives of confreres on “first appointment” in the Congregation. The participants at the Enlarged General Council in Ariccia noted the need for a renewed “passion for mission” in tandem with a clear understanding of the meaning and practical life of the evangelical counsels today that we all share. A commitment to continue dialogue and interpersonal respect within our Congregation was named as an important factor in our common life together.

### **Finance and Authority**

Financial matters worry us in the Congregation. Communicating in new and effective ways is a consistent challenge for our members. Understanding the implications of justice and peace in countries torn by civil strife or where such ministries are unwelcome is a serious difficulty. The roles of superiors are sometimes unclear – and are certainly demanding and often unrewarding. We strive to continually understand the dynamic of the common life and the life of



the vows in an international Congregation – and to resolve conflicts effectively and honestly.

### **Individualism as a Special Challenge**

A special challenge, noted with some frequency by circumscriptions and discussed at the Enlarged General Council, was a growing tendency towards “individualism” in the Congregation. This trait manifests itself in decision-making, regarding choice of ministry, use of money, or other factors important to religious life, apart from the Congregation and its legitimate authorities. A renewed effort towards re-commitment to the common life – as well as pastoral outreach to those confreres living and working apart – was recommended as a remedy to this troubling tendency.

### **Conclusion**

In particular, our attention will be given in the next years to reflection upon the vows of poverty and obedience, to new and expert ways to manage finances effectively, and to an organisational revision that will focus on collaboration in “Unions of Circumscriptions,” emphasising cooperation and communion in all aspects of our lives, including the important area of formation. We will continue to emphasise the particularity of our “Spiritane” legacy – the study of our Founders and our Charism – and the unique formation of “Spiritane” formators for our younger members. And, as always, the cultivation of our “passion for mission” and search for new areas of mission for the poorest will be our goal and inspiration.

### **Practical Orientations – an agenda for 2008-2012**

In its discussion of the general responses of circumscriptions to the implementation of the General Chapter decisions (2004), the participants at the Enlarged General Council

noted the following specific tasks to be accomplished during the next four years:

1. The promotion of dialogue (by the General Council) between younger and older members of the Congregation, between circumscriptions of the North and the South, and particularly regarding matters of conflict.
2. The communication (by the General Council) of a common vision of the vows; specifically, on the use of money, the sense of entitlement, and the meaning today of the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.
3. The composition of a document on the vow of obedience.
4. The promotion of new ways of communicating Spiritan documents to the membership
5. The composition of a “more clear” definition of the meaning of a “sabbatical” and post-sabbatical appointments.
6. The composition of a “Customary for Superiors.”

## 1.2 JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

The Torre d’Aguilha General Chapter documents (3.1 to 3.6) lists six directives for Spiritans in the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) area. We are reminded there that JPIC is a central element in mission in today’s ‘Areopagus’ (Acts 17: 22-31). Well in advance of the Enlarged General Council (EGC) of Ariccia all participants received a document reporting on progress made and difficulties encountered in each of these areas since the last General Chapter. A set of questions following the report of each of the areas was included to help participants undertake personal reflection and consult the Spiritans they represented in

Ariccia. During the EGC a very generous amount of time – two entire sessions, was devoted to reflection on Spiritan-linked JPIC questions.

In much of the reflection the term “Aeropagus” could easily summarise the direction that the discussion on JPIC took. In a world speedily becoming more and more complex, we are being called to new frontiers and situations of mission. Our JPIC commitment both helps us to read such challenging situations and to make a meaningful missionary response. Examples of such new areas of mission and ministry include peacebuilding, reconciliation, lobbying and advocacy, just to mention a few. There was general agreement in Ariccia that this is indeed a call of the Spirit and to answer it we need both courage and preparation. It was felt that as a Congregation we have indeed made progress in many such areas. In others – the care of creation is an example; we still need to make greater progress.

An example of Spiritan advance into today’s Aeropagus was seen to be our recent increased involvement in advocacy and lobbying. A consensus was obvious in the assembly that this is a direction we need to follow. Support for our involvement in VIVAT, which lobbies in our name at the United Nations, was very apparent. Many of the serious issues we encounter in situations of mission are larger than our resources or capacities; for this reason our collaboration with others – church or non church groups, was seen to be central to our methodology – our active participation in the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) was seen as a clear example.

Health ministry, responding frequently as it does to poverty-provoked illnesses, was also an area where we were encouraged to advance. The General Council was encour-

aged to advance in their reflection regarding the possibility of appointing a part-time coordinator of Spiritan Health Ministry.

If mission in today's Aeropagus was seen to be complex, the Spiritans assembled in Ariccia recalled the importance of being well prepared and organised for JPIC engagement in mission. Even though Torre d'Aguilha called on each circumscription to prepare a JPIC plan by 2008 (3.2), relatively few have done so. In evaluating this, the consensus at the EGC was that it is important that all circumscriptions draw up a plan as soon as possible. Such a plan helps to animate circumscriptions, to choose priorities and directions, to set aside the resources necessary, and to courageously undertake challenges in mission. To facilitate JPIC animation in general in each circumscription the importance of appointing a coordinator was stressed.

Preparation was seen to be necessary also in formation – both initial and ongoing. It was recalled that in all our General Chapters since Itaicí (1992) we have been called upon to engage in an apprentice style of formation geared to preparing young Spiritans for the complex situations of mission today. Frequently our initial formation is overly theoretical and academic, while frequently it lacks appropriate courses in areas defined as essential by recent General Chapters. More emphasis needs to be placed on acquiring pastoral methodologies throughout the entire formation period appropriate for mission today; here the social sciences are very important. That the Congregation should invest in “distance learning” via the internet to supplement this deficit was seen as a good initiative in Ariccia.

Another area calling for our attention was seen to be that of Spiritans working in difficult situations. Torre d'Aguilha 3.6

had pointed out our need to be aware that we can be wounded as we minister in demanding situations and that our congregational leadership needs to ensure that if this happens, confreres receive the necessary care and support without delay. During the discussion in plenary session in Ariccia, it was felt that as a Congregation we still need to make significant advances here. While an essential part of our mission is to struggle for justice and human rights especially for the poor and marginalised, we need constantly to ensure that within our Congregation we fraternally resolve any cases of injustice or violation of human rights as soon as they occur.

## II. CONSOLIDATION OF THE CONGREGATION

### 2.1 MISSION APPOINTMENTS

The question of First Appointment elicited animated discussion on the part of the confreres at the EGC and many felt more time could have been given to it to enable them thrash out more this very important matter that concerns all. There was a felt need that with the number that we get annually for first appointment we could organise their appointment better and in a more equitable way to assist the circumscriptions most in need of personnel especially the small groups, the fragile circumscriptions and the aging provinces.

- There seems to have been a general agreement that the question of First Appointment needs to be taken very seriously by all the parties concerned to make sure that First Appointments work.

- It was also generally agreed that it may not be possible to completely stop changes of first appointment but we need to do something to reduce the frequency and the number of changes that occur.

The discussion was focused on what can be done to stop the perceived frequent changes of First Appointments and suggestions were made on three areas and these have now been adopted by the General Council for action in the remaining 4 years of its mandate.

### **What can be done during Initial Formation:**

- Effort will be made to strictly follow the recommendations of the Rule of Life, our Chapter documents especially TA 6.10 and Guide for Spiritan Formation on Criteria for Discerning and Accepting candidates into the Congregation.
- The topic of First Appointment should be regularly treated in the formation houses using the Guide for First Appointment.
- Clerical and Career models of formation should be avoided and a Religious and missionary style of formation adopted.
- There should be an atmosphere of ongoing dialogue which is frank, transparent, and without pressure or manipulation which will enable the confreres be formed in the true spirit of the Congregation with zeal and passion for mission.
- During this process of formation, the young confrere will be helped to understand the priorities of the Congregation and will be made to understand that certain kinds of

work are not for him either as a Spiritan or because of his own ability or gift or disposition.

- The formation of young confreres will have a very strong content of interior and spiritual formation to enable them withstand the rigors of life in our contemporary world.
- A serious discernment about the attitude of the young confrere to missionary life needs to be carried out; here his real motivations need to be checked out. A prolonged trans-cultural experience (stage) would help to see the capacities of the young person to live the missionary life as well as enabling him to form part of the missionary project of a circumscription.
- Older and experienced confreres from the mission should be encouraged to visit houses of formation to share their missionary experiences with the younger ones.

#### **During the process of discernment:**

- The orientations in the Guide for “First Appointments” will always be followed.
- A very detailed and complete evaluation of the confreres for first appointment should be sent to the General Council.
- Before the actual appointment there should be dialogue and discernment between all the parties concerned in this case, the candidate himself, his superior of origin, the superior of his proposed appointment and the General Council.
- Where possible give the confrere one of the places of his choice.

- The aptitude of the young confrere will be considered side by side with the needs of the receiving circumscription.
- Avoid manipulation of the young confrere in his choices of places for his first appointment.
- When appointed the young confrere should know that his leaving for mission is for an undetermined length of time and not just for six years.

**In the place for first appointment: Welcome (Insertion/Integration)**

- The “Guide for First Appointment” is to be followed.
- The necessary communication between the superior of the receiving community and the confrere will be established.
- A welcome plan as well as a starting and settling-in plan will be drawn up for the young confrere.
- A confrere will be appointed to accompany the young confrere on first appointment on an on-going and personalised basis.
- Before taking on any work, the recently arrived confrere will be given sufficient time to get to know the reality of his new mission area.
- Regular meetings for confreres on first appointment within the circumscription and region will be programmed.
- The young confrere will be placed in a community which lives the Spiritan life in an exemplary way. The superior of the community will have patience and understanding and will know how to see the failures or



problems which may be experienced in the life and mission of the young confrere in a relative way.

- Radical and hurried decisions will be avoided in case there is a problem with the young confrere.
- The young confrere must be given a sense of belonging to the Congregation and to his circumscription of appointment.

**On whether to keep or change the expression “First Appointment”:**

*There was a unanimous support on the need to change the expression.*

**Suggested names:**

- 1) Definitive Appointment
- 2) Definitive Nomination for Mission
- 3) Place of Appointment
- 4) Circumscription of Appointment
- 5) Missionary Appointment
- 6) Consecration to the Apostolate
- 7) Consecration to Mission
- 8) Sending on Mission
- 9) Appointment at the end of Initial Formation
- 10) Obedience.

The General Council after deliberations has changed the name First Appointment to **Mission Appointment**.

These are the orientations that came from the Enlarged General Council which the General Council will follow for the next four years till the General Chapter in 2012.

## 2.2 ORGANISATION OF THE CONGREGATION: UNIONS OF CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS, PLURI- NATIONAL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS, SRL 184.1

### 2.2.1 Synthesis of the Discussions at the Enlarged General Council

Changing circumstances have caused an evolution in our organisation, which General Chapters have approved. Circumscriptions which are not directly touched remain indifferent. Lack of understanding leads to resistance. There are doubts and fears about loss of identity. In places the lines of authority seem not to be clear. Hence the need for sharing and animation. It is important that documentation received be circulated in the circumscriptions.

Situations of circumscriptions vary considerably. Some are small but with possibilities for growth. Others, small or large, do not have possibilities for growth, and some are unable to provide services of leadership and animation. Perhaps there is need for greater possibilities for the General Council to intervene when things are critical in circumscriptions. At what point should an entity cease to be a circumscription? Do we need guidelines as to how to manage this reality?

Unions are not “super-provinces” and do not have juridical status. There is a moral authority to what is accepted in common. Some have built up permanent structures over a period of time; others have adopted forms of statutes. Each Union seeks a way of working together with which the circumscriptions can be happy.

We can envisage the possibility of changing the functioning of the General Council in such a way that General Councilors would accompany the Unions in a closer way.

Organisation continues to evolve. We trust we have taken the decisions in the right way. The future will reveal if they serve mission and the confreres. Our human reality remains, therefore there are problems posed by nationalism and ethnicity, both in Unions and Pluri-National circumscriptions. We continually need to face up to, and overcome these. The lived reality and the unity of the Congregation are more important than the terms used to designate groupings.

Three attitudes emerged at the EGC: (i) a new interest about this among the confreres; (ii) some confusion about it on the part of some participants; (iii) a concern for the unity of the Congregation (e.g. common vision, common mission).

### **2.2.2 Practical Orientations for the Years 2008 to 2012**

After having listened to opinions expressed at the EGC, the General Council has adopted the following practical orientations:

- Need to accompany the evolution of the organisation of the Congregation;
- Assemble in one booklet all the recent GC documents on this topic and on other questions;
- Clarify the legal basis for the Unions of Circumscriptions;
- Define more clearly the question of the sabbatical year;
- Review the 'Guide for the Organisation of the Congregation';
- Respect the conditions for accepting new missions (e.g. China, India, Liberia etc.);

- Organise, in preparation for the next chapter, a meeting of all the co-ordinating Superiors of the Unions of Circumscriptions;
- Study the question of the harmonisation between the mandate of the Superior General (eight years non-renewable) and that of circumscription Superiors (three years, renewable);
- What can be done about circumscriptions in decline?

## 2.3 SPIRITAN PRESENCE IN LATIN AMERICA, ASIA, AFRICA

### 2.3.1 Latin America

**Torre d’Aguilha 4.2:** *“Special attention will be paid to all the circumscriptions of Latin America, keeping in mind the fragility of these groups and the potential for the growth of the Congregation in this area”.*

### ITEMS PRESENTED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE EGC 2008

#### 2.3.1.1 Spiritan Mission in Latin America Today – A Mission that Began in 1885

The young Brazilian Province, founded in 1990, is constantly challenged by situations where it is short of personnel for formation, administration and maintenance of its missionary projects.

The districts of the Centre and South of Brazil are either integrated in the Brazilian Province (Germans and Portuguese) or are headed in this direction (Dutch and Irish).

The International Groups of Mexico and Paraguay: Spiritan presence since the late 1960’s. Priorities are clear: Mission to

the poor indigenous and rural people and the formation of young native Spiritans.

The Porto Rican Foundation: Spiritans have been present in Porto Rico since 1931. Their number is much diminished today.

The Bolivian and Dominican Republic international communities were founded:

- Bolivia in 2003 by the Latin American Union (UCAL)
- Dominican Republic in 2005 by the North American and Caribbean Union (UCNAC).

### **2.3.1.2 Challenges for the Latin American Church Today**

- The Aparecida Conference/CELAM V (May 2007) diagnosed two principal challenges for the Church in Latin America: social problems and the erosion of Catholicism.
- The Amazon, the Antarctic and Ecology appear as missionary horizons that we must all face up to.

### **2.3.1.3 EGC 2008: Consolidation of the Congregation in Latin America**

The discussions were tranquil but it was very clear at the EGC that the Congregation must consolidate Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America. This means that the Torre d'Aguilha recommendation must be taken on seriously and with determination. Present for more than 100 years in the 'continent of hope' and having disinterestedly served the local Church, it is imperative that Spiritans now invest in the promotion and formation of Spiritan vocations. The appointment of confreres on mission appointment to the UCAL union is already a reply to this question but per-

sonnel must continue to be appointed (experienced confreres included), in particular to the Bolivian mission.

### 2.3.1.4 2008-2012: Building a Vision of Spiritan Presence and Mission in Latin America

The central objective of UCAL is to strengthen collaboration and solidarity between the circumscriptions around certain priorities: Mission, Formation, Mission appointments and Lay Spiritans.

Enthusiastic implementation by the Superiors of the Latin American Union's Guidelines (to be approved by the General Council).

Discussion in the circumscriptions of the Torre d'Aguilha 4.2 guideline, until the meeting of UCAL in April 2009 and an evaluation of its implementation in the missionary project of each circumscription. Some priorities must be held in mind.

**Prophetic Mission:** Evaluation of the specificity of the Spiritan mission in each circumscription; to have in mind the emblematic character of the Amazon (JPIC). By 2012, the Spiritan mission in Bolivia must have a minimum of six confreres.

**Initial and On-going Formation:** Take on and support UCAL's formation program (Novitiate and II Cycle - Theology); finish the elaboration of the UCAL Formation Directory; prepare confreres to work in formation; guarantee that vocations promotion takes place; accompaniment of young Spiritans on mission appointment; promote and animate spiritual renovation and ongoing formation in the circumscriptions; organise the 2010 'Encontro' (which will take place when the General Council is finishing its visitation of

the Union's circumscriptions) as a new moment of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America in the light of the Torre d'Aguilha 2004 and Aparecida 2007 challenges.

**Lay Spiritans:** Promotion in all our circumscriptions of the work with Lay Spiritans and their formation in the Spiritan charism and spirituality.

*Building a vision of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America* as a constant element to be present during the General Council's visitation of the Latin American Union's circumscriptions in 2009.

*Building a vision of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America*, considered as an important topic for the agenda of the UCAL meeting of Superiors in April 2009, (in Bolivia), with a view to the elaboration of concrete proposals for discussion at the 2010 'Encontro'.

The Latin American Union's Superiors in their meeting of 2009 have to elaborate a document with needs in the area of personnel, in each circumscription (experienced confreres and mission appointments) to be sought by 2012. This document, and the program of integration of confreres in mission appointment, have to be sent to the General Council.

Finances: How each circumscription sees its financial viability and how to strengthen solidarity within the circumscription and in the Union (e.g. Formation and Administration)?

### 2.3.2 Asia

There were some concerns that we have a number of groups that are very fragile both in personnel and finance and here we are talking about expansion in Asia. Some others though felt that at no point should we fold our hands from explor-

ing possibilities of mission in other areas because of personnel or finance.

At the end there was a consensus of support for the Provincial of France to explore movement into India.

### **2.3.3 Africa**

In Africa, there are many places that are demanding the presence of the Congregation such as Burundi, South Sudan, Botswana and Liberia. The EGC mandated the General Council to study these requests and take appropriate action. Discussion is already ongoing on some of these places and will continue in the next 4 years and the General Council will follow the procedures that have been used in the past that have worked for us in making appropriate decisions which will be as usual communicated to the Congregation at large.

### **2.3.4 Conclusion**

- It is the duty of the Congregation and within the spirit of our calling to expand to new commitments in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world.
- The EGC opined that whatever expansion we are going to make should be gradual and careful because we need to support and consolidate our old and existing commitments.

We should always depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us because he is the protagonist of mission.



## 2.4 FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 2.4.1 Synthesis and Programme for the General Bursar for 2008-2012

The Enlarged General Chapter of 2008 was a good occasion to assess the implementation of the Torre d'Aguilha Chapter decisions concerning finances. All the relevant questions were dealt with. The EGC was positive about them and requested further reflection on them with a view to putting them into practice. To sum up, these were the matters presented for reflection:

- General Bursar's report;
- Results of the Inventory of Movable and Immovable Goods and consequences;
- A unified Spiritan vision regarding our relations with money (I/D on Poverty);
- Responses to the proposed text on Mission and Finance (TA 7.14);
- Pension Fund;
- International Missionary Benefit Society (referred to usually in its French acronym EMI *Entraide Missionnaire Internationale*).

Following on the reflections and views expressed at the EGC, the General Council has adopted the following orientations for the next four years.

#### 2.4.1.1 In the Short Term

##### *Pension Fund*

To extend to all circumscriptions which have no system of social security, participation in the Pension Fund already existing in the Congregation. To realise this, the Fund must

be developed and strengthened. To this end it has been decided to undertake an evaluation of the Fund every three years. At the present moment there is a reduction in the contributions received in relation to the monies paid out. To keep it balanced, the annual contributions need to be increased urgently from \$USD 60 to \$USD 80 in 2009 and then to \$USD 100 in 2010.

Regarding confreres from the 'South' who work in the 'North', the European Provincials decided in 2005 to pay an annual contribution of €2,000 for each one; these contributions form the Pension Fund and are managed by the General Bursar's office.

Furthermore, it is recommended that circumscriptions which are already benefiting annually from the Pension Fund, themselves create a fund in order to meet the future needs of their sick and elderly confreres.

### *EMI*

The International Missionary Benefit Society is a health insurance scheme. The EGC of 2008 proposed that this system be extended to all confreres whose countries of origin do not have such an organised scheme. The circumscriptions of Eastern Africa are already members of EMI. It is proposed that all confreres be enrolled in option 4 of this system, which covers treatment in local hospitals for an annual contribution of \$USD40-45.

## **2.4.1.2 In the Long Term**

### *Training of Bursars*

This training, decided at Torre d'Aguilha, is now taking place and it is hoped that all circumscriptions will benefit from it. The EGC of 2008 requested that there be a Directory

for Bursars. This is something that will be prepared to help Superiors and Bursars clarify the role of Bursars in managing in a transparent manner, the immovable goods of their circumscriptions.

### *Inventory*

The disappointing results of the inventory were presented at the EGC. The aim of this exercise, as requested by TA 7.3, was to share - in a spirit of solidarity befitting the Spiritan family - what was superfluous in a circumscription with the General Council, in order for it to help the poorest circumscriptions achieve financial autonomy. This inventory had to be the first step in creating a new financial organisation in the Congregation, inspired by evangelical values in solidarity with each other and the sharing of our resources. The process already begun in drawing up the inventory will continue until every circumscription has responded to the decisions of the previous General Chapter. In the meantime, the General Council will study the idea of setting up an Investment Aid Fund.

### *What kind of Financial Organisation?*

On the question of a new financial organisation proposed by TA 7.2, the General Bursar presented a reflection at the EGC on the financial organisation model in the neo-liberal context in which we are living and whose results have become visible in the present world financial crisis.

Setting up an economic structure of solidarity and responsibility is the way to find a solution to the financial problems of the Congregation.

The EGC reflections, reproduced below, help to show that, without entering into a highly regulated and quantified vision of our relations, we do need to live out the evangelical

counsel of poverty. Without this vision of things we will never achieve a true solidarity or evangelical sharing of our resources:

- There is a need for **transparency and accountability**. Donors must know what is done with the money they give.
- We must be **credible**, or we lose people's confidence. A lot of grants have been paid out for projects which have never been realised.
- Some confreres need to change their ideas concerning the common ownership of resources – they are not interested in this because of a complete lack of the sense of **belonging** to the Spiritan family. There is too much **individualism** and concern about patrimony and personal comfort. Superiors and Bursars need to be more strict in **eradicating unacceptable practices** in their communities. We need to feel that the **resources of the community belong to all** and they are there to help the Spiritan family grow.
- Some confreres spend a lot on **electronic gadgets**. Where does the vow of poverty or any idea of the 'common fund' come in?
- How is it that some confreres can take **very expensive holidays**?
- Newly-appointed Superiors inherit difficult situations and must bear the burden of the **bad financial management** of their predecessors.
- Many missionaries bring a lot of money and other resources to their missions and ask very little from the people. At this time we expect circumscriptions to be fi-

nancially autonomous, and the bishops do too. The people continue to be poor despite all the aid that has been given to them. Confreres who spend a lot of time looking for funds, neglect their pastoral responsibilities. Projects for financial autonomy must be moral and honest – we must be careful in the efforts we make to achieve this.

Whatever the financial structures of the Congregation may be, we must always remember they are carried out, not according to neo-liberal principles, but according to principles of financial solidarity based on the evangelical counsel of poverty.

### *Authority of the General Council*

Given the fact of our decentralised Congregation, the General Council has no authority to ‘force’ the idea of solidarity between circumscriptions or to dictate amounts to be donated. But the EGC 2008 felt that, for this solidarity to be realised, the General Council needs to have **greater powers of decision**. It is obvious that there are some rich circumscriptions and others which are poor. Solidarity therefore needs to be preserved at all levels of the Congregation. In any case, this is a matter which only a General Chapter can decide.

#### 2.4.2 Examination of Anima Una no. 61 “Living the Vow of Poverty Today”

The 2004 General Chapter emphasised the difference between “poverty suffered” and “poverty chosen” (TA 1.1.4). As a follow-up to this the General Council was preparing an I/D entitled “Living the Vow of Poverty Today”. Several confreres from representative areas of the Congregation had been asked to contribute their ideas for this. The document proposes a reflection made up of four steps, each

one following the method “see, judge, act, evaluate”. The participants at the EGC looked at the draft of this document and gave some more ideas before its final publication.

- They emphasised the importance of this document in the animation of the Congregation; it will need to be studied step by step, and involve all the confreres.
- The concrete examples given in it are there to help us reflect on our own experience, and to move away from just theory to putting it into practice. This implies a real decision to give up individualism so as to be committed to greater sharing and solidarity.
- Some suggestions made in the group discussions to amend the contents of the document have been inserted into the text itself.
- According to the members of the EGC this document has come just at the right time in order to animate the year of Poullart des Places which will begin in October 2009.

### 2.4.3 Examination of a Document Proposed by the General Council Concerning “Mission and Finances (TA 7.14)”

**The proposed text of this document was presented for discussion. It is intended to give some orientations concerning questions raised by the application of TA 7.14, 7.14.1 and 7.14.2.**

Reactions to this document at the EGC were mixed; if it causes more problems than it solves then it should be dropped – but the problems still remain and how can they be dealt with? Some participants thought that with a few amendments it could be sent out. The General Council finally decided to take note of what was expressed at the EGC and amend it accordingly before sending it out.

Generally speaking, the idea of the last General Chapter to intensify the dialogue between the north and the south regarding finances must be continued.

## III. BELONGING TO THE CONGREGATION

### 3.1 SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OF THE CONGREGATION

#### INTRODUCTION

**F**our years ago at Torre d’Aguilha, capitulants at the General Chapter saw the need for spiritual renewal of our Congregation. This recognition had been prepared by preceding General Chapters, the celebration of the Spiritan Year and, more proximately, by the pre-capitular document, “Authentically Living our Spiritan Charism Today”. The theme of the General Chapter “Faithful to the gift entrusted to us” (1Tim 6, 20) helped us focus on ourselves as agents of evangelisation and identify various tasks that needed attention. The indications were clear that we were at a critical point in our history as a Spiritan family. With the establishment of the Centre for Spiritan Studies at Duquesne after the General Chapter, the General Council saw it as the organ that would prepare specialists in Spiritan spirituality and studies, publish materials for Spiritan studies, promote research into our founders and history, design a systematic programme of Spiritan studies for our communities of formation, establish a comprehensive Spiritan resource library, etc. The Centre has already laid down solid foundations on which we continue to build as individual Spiritans and as a family. At Ariccia, four years after Torre d’Aguilha, delegates at the Enlarged General Council continued with the

reflection on the spiritual renewal of our Spiritan family and identified the following tasks for the next four years.

### 3.1.1 Programme for the Next Four Years

**T**ercentenary of Poullart des Places: The Superior General will write a letter to announce this celebration which will be at Congregation and circumscription level. Special activities to mark the anniversary: hold conferences; special prayers and novenas be composed and done in circumscriptions; do special pilgrimages (Rennes, Paris); translate Volume four of 'Memoire Spiritaine'; a special issue of 'Spiritan Horizons' will be published; a CD on Poullart des Places will be produced; an internet space will be created; EGC suggested material for Poullart's centenary in three languages; one group asked for a centralised website. A special feature of the celebration will be to make the history of the Congregation from 1709 to 1848 better known and to highlight des Places' choice for poverty; one issue of 'Spiritan News' will be dedicated to Poullart des Places. Some kind of networking could be arranged to allow ideas and material to be exchanged between Provinces; create a committee to co-ordinate the whole thing as was done for 'Histories and Anniversaries'.

**Identifying confreres for special training in Spiritan studies:** EGC underlined some criteria for selection of confreres for the training; send out a second letter on this indicating the criteria for selection of suitable confreres. Other points that came up: encourage confreres to constantly update their knowledge of Spiritan spirituality and traditions; set up a mobile team to undertake the work of animating confreres and lay people who are interested in Spiritan spirituality; watch out for the continuity and unity of our Spiritan for-



mation; the possibility of distance learning on the web was also raised.

**Communicating the Spiritan charism:** The Centre for Spiritan Studies has undertaken the task of digitising Spiritan material at Duquesne University library; the first Volume of '*Anthologie Spiritaine*' has been completed in French and the translations into Portuguese and English are on the way; encourage production of publications and pamphlets in the three languages; the question is whether to do it centrally or do we ask each circumscription to do their own; use radio and television where possible.

**Beatification/canonisation of our founders:** pray through the intercession of our founders; live and make known their spirituality; introduce the life of our founders in catechetical programmes; create popular movements in their honour; send to Rome a clear presentation of favours received; be more convinced of their cause; more leadership in this is needed from the Generalate.

**Logo of the Congregation:** two groups at the EGC were in favour of having one logo only; one group was in favour of creativity; having a logo with a Marian element in it was supported by all; it is understood that the original logo will remain as the official seal of the Congregation.

## 3.2 SPIRITAN LIFE AND VOCATION

### 3.2.1 Brothers

**Observation:** During the EGC when the question of the brothers was being dealt with a document produced by Carmo, a brother, on the early history of the brothers in Libermann's time was eagerly received by the confreres. There seems to be a desire among members of the Congre-

gation to know more about the history of the brothers. In the synthesis of the reports from the work groups it also seems evident that more needs to be known about this vocation. There is much anecdotal and archive material about the brothers in the Congregation but perhaps there is a need for a more scientific historical work to be written. Could the GC commission such a work?

- The first point that seems obvious from all the work that has been done on the question of the brothers is that we want brothers in the Congregation. "Our Congregation needs brothers for its mission".
- In all of the findings including those of the EGC it is clear that a number of major obstacles prevent the flourishing of this vocation: lack of any Spiritan vocations in parts of the world, too much emphasis on sacramental, parochial ministry, lack of understanding of this vocation, strange ecclesiologies in the heads of confreres who cannot see what ministry a Spiritan who is not ordained can possibly do, lack of vocations animation in relation to the brother's vocation, lack of publicity about this way of being Spiritan, clerical exclusiveness and simply clericalism. From this list it seems obvious that a serious change of mentality is required especially if we hope to get the vocation to brotherhood off the ground in the circumscriptions which enjoy a flourishing of Spiritan vocations, but there are also practical things that can be done to improve the situation. The way forward is surely to focus on the positive suggestions coming from the EGC.
- In the first place a Spiritan brother is a Spiritan confrere, a missionary religious and this needs to be emphasised in a variety of ways:

- giving due solemnity and attention to religious profession (not only of the brothers);
  - celebrating the jubilees of religious profession;
  - suppressing high-sounding titles like “Holy Ghost Fathers”, “Peres du St. Esprit”, “Padres do Espirito Santo”.
- Vocation ministry:

It is in the young circumscriptions where we still have many vocations that we must make the greatest effort for the greater visibility of our “missionary being” which cannot be reduced to the sacramental ministry of the priest. The General Council needs to have a policy of constantly reminding the superiors and circumscriptions about the brothers and the need for constant publicity, vocation animation and general appreciation of the brothers. Since we began our dialogue with the membership of the Congregation about the brothers, the topic has certainly emerged from the darkness and been given attention and publicity (in publications and vocation leaflets etc.). The EGC also asked that “the topic of the brothers would be taken into account in debates, meetings and circumscription assemblies”. We of the GC can help with this in our visits to circumscriptions, formation communities, assemblies, chapters etc and in our own publications. Another proposal from the EGC was that the next meeting organised by the Congregation dealing with formation should be devoted to “the topic of the brother’s vocation”. It could figure as part of a wider agenda.

1. Mission: “Our vision for mission is realised under three forms of vocation: priest, brother, lay associate.” What is clear from the reports of the work

groups is that the brother is like any other Spiritan confrere at the heart of Spiritan mission which is the mission of the Church. Negatively it was said that “the parish structure based on sacramental economy does not help much to give visibility to the brother’s vocation”. Another affirmation was that “we need to be clear first of all on the preferences and options to be made for the mission of the brother in order to then envisage and propose an adequate formation”. It was also suggested to “propose certain concrete services provided by brothers at present, to inspire the formation of future brothers”. This is a bit vague, but we can imagine what people have in mind, for example brothers who are highly competent in professional fields, like medicine, architecture, engineering etc and who also bring another special dimension to their work because they are religious and Spiritans. There is a debate which was not so present in the EGC as to whether we should have works specifically manned by brothers which would give a clear visibility to the brothers. This is very much an African idea at present. Some European brothers get angry with this idea because it seems to continue the separation of the brothers and the fathers. It was also seen as desirable to have brothers in all key positions in the Congregation where they can function competently including administration and formation.

2. Formation: “We need to propose an adequate missionary, religious and professional formation.” It is true that our formation is meant to prepare us for lifelong community life and not just the acquisition of professional skills. “Redefine our cycles of formation including a common sector”. “Our formation is too

rigid, with too much insistence on direction rather than accompaniment." By "too rigid" it is not so clear what is meant but it could be that our formation is too uniform and does not take adequate account of the diversity of mission situations to which we are called nor the diversity of talents of those who are called.

3. Community life: The EGC insisted on inclusiveness and a balance of attention to the vocation of brother and father. The wish was voiced that "the brothers would know how to position themselves as full members (and not members completely apart) of the Congregation, and that they would be completely integrated with no complex". This will require us to "combat individualism and promote equality of economic treatment; mass stipends for example are not personal money, but income for the community and must be put in the common kitty". "Brothers and lay Associates should be given posts of responsibility in the Congregation. Specify what is common to all and that which is proper to the priest, brother and lay associate".
- Other suggestions:
 

Get inspiration from what other Congregations are doing to solve this problem;

As a GC we can make sure that the brother has a clear place in the preparation and realisation of the next General chapter, ensuring that there is a brother delegate at least.

### 3.2.2 Confreres in Irregular Situations (TA 1.3.8)

The document on this subject was well received; but there are still confreres in such situations and some pressure must be put on superiors during Visitations to call them to book without them embarking on a 'witch hunt'. The General Council will continue to help confreres and Superiors involved in such situations as much as it can.

## 3.3 QUESTIONS LINKED TO FORMATION

### INTRODUCTION

After taking note of the Congregation's statistics regarding initial formation, the members of the EGC 2008 reflected on the following 3 topics: the contents and evaluation of formation, 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle formation and the formation of formators. Their contribution strengthens the work of the General Council in implementing the orientations of Torre d'Aguilha 2004. This will be particularly useful for the updating of The Guide for Spiritan Formation.

#### 3.3.1 Content and Evaluation

- It is necessary to ensure that we have formation in a way that will help people to integrate themselves, outside academic work, Spiritan life, spiritual life, pastoral activities etc, formation should be wider than intellectual. *Question:* Are our formators numerous enough and equipped to provide this?
- It is necessary to use the updated Guide for Formation. *Action:* Let's do this (GC).
- Assessment is necessary for formation. *Action:* Formators need training for this.

- We should consider the criteria given by the Church for ordination (cf. Vatican documents). *Question*: Do people know what these criteria are?
- Debriefing/re-reading of *stage* experience: “the formator shall help the candidate to evaluate and re-read the programme so as to better understand the missionary life”. The formator needs the skill to do this.
- EGC stated that certain practical aspects of mission, like pastoral work are lacking in our formation. *Action*: Put in place subjects that will complement studies in consortia, universities etc. for example, missiology, practical matters etc. *Warning*: The trouble with some of these things is that they are not meant to be separate subjects so much as part of the way everything is done for example, missiology, anthropology and ecumenism.
- Evaluation and assessment are important as they focus on human development. The problem is too many students and too few formators. Divide it into ways that suit each stage of formation. *Action*: Take seriously the reports written about students.
- Spiritual formation: The GC is working on this. These formation courses need to be defined more extensively to ensure a common identity for future Spiritans.
- Initial formation gives a way of working but cannot give everything; each candidate should be accompanied in his own way.
- The council and formation team of circumscriptions must have confidence in the formation given. The formator should give a report about students during the formation at every stage.

**CONCLUSION:**

Almost all of the points listed above (from EGC) imply that in formation:

- We have an adequate number of formators in relation to the number of students;
- Formators accompany the students individually;
- Formators have acquired the skills to conduct pastoral placement reflection, one-to-one formation dialogue, systematic assessment, good and frequent communication with students and the administration, to coordinate the provision of the extra subjects, areas not covered in the curriculum in consortia etc.
- It is also implied that formators have acquired the capacity to train the students in Spiritan spirituality and use the means provided by the Congregation for this.

In brief, the challenge to the Congregation is to provide enough suitable and properly trained formators.

**3.3.2 Centralisation of Second Cycle**

The General Chapter of Torre d'Aguilha asked for a feasibility study to be done regarding the centralisation of second cycle formation in the Congregation. The information given to the participants at the EGC presented two possibilities, with their advantages and disadvantages.

1. A centralised second cycle according to the model of the Unions of circumscriptions.
2. A second cycle totally under the responsibility of the General Council.

It is the first possibility which is presently operating in the Congregation, where the second cycle communities are



gathered geographically according to the Unions of circumscriptions. The members of the Enlarged General Council were in favour of this model for the future. It is a demanding arrangement, because it means the circumscriptions have to work more closely together in sharing their finances and personnel.

- Superiors in particular need to make sure that the formation team is international in character
- The members of the EGC asked that the Unions of circumscriptions, in collaborating in this way, put together a common Formation Guide
- They also asked that new second cycle communities be opened only in case of necessity - where students are too numerous, or where there has been an evolution in the circumscriptions for example.

These arrangements in no way lessen the role of the General Council. The members of the EGC asked that the General Council continue to play its part in the matter of formation.

- The General Council must clarify the general rules for running the second cycles. In particular it needs to give its agreement on the formation orientations (SRL 105). To do this it needs to accompany the whole initial process of reflection.
- Given the fact that a large number of our second cycle students do their courses in consortia or seminaries directed by non-Spiritans, a greater vigilance is required to ensure that the elements of Spiritan formation are covered.

Visitation of these communities of second cycle formation is the privileged means used by the General Council to carry out this accompaniment and vigilance.

### 3.3.3 Formation of Formators

The members of the Enlarged General Council recognised that the formation of formators is one of the priorities of the Congregation today. The quality of the formation of candidates for the Spiritan life depends on it. Many confreres take up specialisations which demand long years of study, but very few are trained in vocational discernment and the accompaniment of our young confreres. It is precisely on this point that we now need to make greater effort.

#### *Choice of Formators*

According to SRL 105.2 it is for circumscription Superiors to choose the formators and to give them the opportunity to be trained before they begin their work. In the context of the Unions of circumscriptions, the Superiors concerned collaborate in the discernment and choice of formators for the formation communities for which they are collectively responsible.

#### *Centres of Formation*

Many circumscriptions already receive confreres for specialised studies. It would be better if they make the formation of formators a priority and offer financial help for their studies before giving it for others. The Co-ordinator for Formation at the Generalate will put together a list of centres which offer suitable courses for formators and the necessary conditions.

#### *The Role of the General Council*

It was the mind of the Enlarged General Council that the General Council gives its opinion about the choice of all formators. In practice this is something difficult to do, so it requests that all those who will be responsible for formation

communities do a course in preparation for it and in these cases the General Council will make its views known.

### *Financing the Formation of Formators*

The Enlarged General Council expressed the wish that a means be found to fund the formation of formators; this cannot be done from the funds of “Cor Unum” because this is already insufficient to support initial formation. As well as scholarships offered by some circumscriptions, the General Council will try to find extra funding from agencies which might be in a position to help.

## **3.4 LAY SPIRITANS / LAY ASSOCIATES**

**SRL 24.3:** *In some places those who are working with us wish to be associated with us. We welcome them with joy, inviting them to share our spirituality and our apostolic life. The conditions of their acceptance and their work are decided at the level of each circumscription. In every case there is a written agreement.*

**SRL 135.1:** *The Congregation also offers a formation to its associates.*

**SRL 247.1.19:** *Certain decisions require the deliberative vote of the council of the circumscription: (...) the signing of a contract with an associate member.*

**TORRE D’AGUILHA 2004:** *“New circumscriptions will be attentive to the importance of lay associates and will support their development” (4.12).*

*“To accomplish this (collaboration in shared missionary projects), the older circumscriptions rely on the solidarity of the Spiritan family, both professed and lay. For their part, they will continue, as far as they can, to give their own support to the rest of the Congregation” (5.4.2).*

## ITEMS PRESENTED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE EGC 2008

### 3.4.1 A New Direction in Church and In Congregation

- Mission is not an activity of the Church. It is its essence.
- The laity lives its mission in the world (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Christifideles Laici* (1988)).
- Mission is the way to holiness.
- At the start of the XX1 century the Spirit of the Lord is about to open new ways of sharing the mission of the Church with the laity. *"A new chapter, full of hope, is opened in the story of the relationship between religious and laity"* (V.C.56).
- Formation, a challenge for Religious and Laity.
- *"Lay Spiritans are a branch of the Spiritan tree"* (TA 11.2).
- *"The laity bring to the Spiritan community, an energy which comes from their presence in and understanding of the world."* (T.A.11.1).
- In accordance with the degree of spiritual proximity and missionary commitment, we can distinguish:
  - friends of the Spiritans who, in various ways, collaborate in our mission;
  - lay people who feel attracted by the spirituality of our founders and by our mission and belong to prayer and reflection groups;
  - "lay associates" who desire a deeper commitment in the Congregation and who, after a time and a course of specific formation, sign a contract of association.
- *"In certain contexts, the laity prefer to be called 'Lay Spiritans' in general, while reserving the title 'Lay Associates' for*

*those who sign a formal contract with the circumscription which receives them* " (T.A.11.2).

### 3.4.2 Lay Spiritans – Questionnaire November 2007

A questionnaire, about Lay Spiritans<sup>1</sup>, dated November 15<sup>th</sup> 2007, was sent to Superiors along with a letter. Among objectives outlined were: to organise a data base with up to date information regarding Lay Spiritans; allow the EGC 2008 to analyse and reflect on the actual situation of Lay Spiritans in the Congregation; provide an opportunity for the circumscriptions to take note of the present situation as regards the question of Lay Spiritans; send out a challenge to circumscriptions still far from realising that "*Lay Spiritans are a branch of the Spiritan tree*" (TA 11.2); avail of the more detailed knowledge about Lay Spiritans so as to find there inspiration to reinforce, solidify, evaluate, invent or initiate ways for lay people to take part in the life of the Congregation, in the belief that this would bring unexpected and fruitful insights of some aspects of our charism and awaken new apostolic dynamism.

Sixteen circumscriptions replied to the questionnaire.

From the debate during EGC 2008 it became clear, once more, that the presence and participation of the laity in Spiritan life is part of the patrimony of the Congregation. It is a richness marked by reciprocity in giving and receiving and by the diversity of its expressions. Lay Spiritans participated as invitees in the last three General Chapters. The acceptance on the part of confreres and of our communities of "*Lay Spiritans as a branch of the Spiritan tree*", does not seem to have met with significant disagreement.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Document 27 of EGC 2008 - Ariccia.

There is a multiplicity of forms of association within the life of the Congregation, diversity with regard to formation programs and deepening of spirituality, relationship with the communities and participation in concrete missionary programs.

One evident discovery is that it is, primarily, the older circumscriptions that are involved in this partnership with lay people in various forms. However, the General Council, through its contacts, knows that new experiences are taking place in various younger circumscriptions but these did not respond to the questionnaire, apart from some exceptions.

Torre d'Aguilha (11.2.) recognises and the questionnaire confirms that there are different levels of belonging to the "Spiritans Family", depending on the lay person's spiritual closeness and missionary commitment. If to this diversity we add the different terminology used we understand how difficult it is to classify the results or even to draw conclusions.

Names and numbers do not always point to the same reality except in the case of Lay Associates, that is, those who have a signed contract with the circumscriptions. But even then, there are lay people with a signed pledge (not a contract) and who do not consider themselves to be, and really are not, Lay Associates. There are circumscriptions which really have Lay Associates with a formation program and assignment to a mission but without a written contract. Others have all the requisites of Lay Associates but do not accept that term, preferring Lay Spiritans. Others think that to speak of Lay Spiritans is to usurp the status of Spiritan Brothers.

As for the Lay Associates, there are contracts made for one, two or three years, renewable. Is it possible to make a per-

manent contract? In some circumscriptions, yes, after six years. But what does this mean? Take an example; one lady is on mission *ad extra*, living in a Spiritan community. With a definitive contract, what is her relationship with the circumscription of origin when she returns there for good? There is also the case of associates who receive a salary from the circumscription. Could there be a possibility of confusion? And how about the cases of lay people who have administrative functions (bursars of circumscriptions or communities, provincial commissions of JPIC, members of formation communities ...) and by inherence are or should be part of juridical instances of the Congregation?

### 3.4.3 EGC 2008 – ECHOES

At present, concerning Laity in the Congregation, we have on the one hand a valuable inheritance, and on the other a diversity of understandings that somehow need to be brought together. In fact from the EGC we got more material for reflection rather than clear orientations.

Presently we have 105 Lay Associates registered at the General Secretariat who have a written contract with their circumscription. Many Spiritan Professed and Lay Spiritans do not feel comfortable with the fact the great richness and diversity of lay people sharing in the life and mission of the Congregation, is reduced to this number. On the other hand some would say that we should not be hindered by this diversity of forms of association, but only take into consideration what is foreseen in SRL 24.3, that is, a specific closer personal bond between individuals and the Congregation, through the local circumscription. But immediately a good number of people will object to this, saying that it is very unjust to alienate dozens of people, who have for many years experienced the Spiritan tradition and charism, and

have spiritual links with its mission. Collaborators without such a relationship could ask whether their manner of collaboration is somehow less valued than those with “contract of association”.

Torre d’Aguilha No.11 came to a sort of compromise by recognising various forms of association of lay people with the Congregation and members associated by formal and written contract.

### **SOME OTHER CONCERNS EXPRESSED AT THE EGC 2008**

- To encourage the creativity of the different forms of association and belonging to the Congregation, namely in the circumscriptions where the initiatives are very few. To have some inspiring guidelines from the General Council
- It is still too early to come out with a General Directory as we are still not clear what we are talking about; let circumscriptions develop their groups, otherwise we may stifle the Spirit. Perhaps we could put together two documents: on the different kinds of collaboration with the Congregation and something more precise on contracts for those in a more formal situation vis-à-vis the Congregation.
- To present a Directory of Association to the Congregation, where the multiple and varied ways in which so many lay people have been linked with the Congregation for so many years, are officially recognised as authentically Spiritan. This is a question of justice as many have done excellent work concerning Spiritan mission. This Directory would greatly help circumscriptions to see the difference between different types of association



such as moral/spiritual contracts, letters sending on mission, civil contracts or work contracts.

- To look at the legal and canonical implications of having Associates; there have always been many groups linked to our Congregation and inspired by our spirituality but the crucial point is: can a lay person be a member of the Congregation without making profession?
- A 'Contract of Association' implies a spiritual link focused on mission with no canonical or legal implications; but what does 'definitive commitment' imply? In this case it is necessary to take into consideration the legal implications in each country.
- In some Provinces they are running important missionary projects and without them they would fail; the time is coming when they will want to participate in decision-making and voting also.
- For the moment it is better to remain as we are and wait to see what guidelines the General Council will be able to put together. However, it is urgent to clarify the different meanings of belonging, to insist on a formation programme (in the case of Lay Associates insisting also on a period of probation) and to aim at a more uniform terminology.
- To work up a document for submission at a General Chapter so that it can be included in the Directory for the Organisation of the Congregation and/or SRL. The Spiritan Rule of Life will need to be changed if Associates are to be considered as members of the Congregation. Only a General Chapter can do this.
- A question of social justice supposes that the conditions of work of Lay Associates are specified: if he/she works

for the Congregation, the Congregation must offer some social covering.

- Some lay people regard themselves as ‘Spiritans’, others say this is not correct. There are some divisions among Lay Spiritans/Lay Associates themselves: some want their commitment to be more definitive, others want it to be left unclear.

The 3 lay people present at Torre d’Aguilha stated clearly that they were not anxious about the formal dimension of their relationship with the Congregation: *“We are not at the end of the journey of reflection regarding our identity and our place in the heart of the Congregation”* (TA 11.3).

### **3.4.4 2008-2012: Lay Spiritans / Lay Associates Towards a More Unified Vision**

From the EGC/2008, it became clear that what the Congregation is called to do in the next four years concerning the association of lay people with our charism, is to appreciate the rich inheritance we have, and to manage its diversity in such a way as to arrive at a unified vision

#### **Different Forms of Association**

To respond today to the pressing needs of our mission, many hands are needed. Collaboration in mission is the way we respond to this situation through complementarity of diverse calls and mutual responsibility for the mission of Christ.

This suggests that we invest in the creation of associations/groups inspired by Spiritan Spirituality. We note with joy the existence of many groups/associations (youth, adults, missionary volunteers, Spiritan alumni ...) with whom the Congregation shares a spiritual bond, the fruit of

which is mutual spiritual enrichment and service to the mission.

Torre d'Aguilha stated: *"new circumscriptions will be attentive to the importance of lay associates and will support their development"* (4.12).

#### 3.4.4.1 Recommendations for the Next Four Years

- We encourage and support, at the different levels of the Congregation and in all circumscriptions, the creation and promotion of groups/movements of lay people associated and inspired by the Spiritan charism.
- 2009/2010. Each circumscription works out a **common letter for Lay Spiritans** in order to give a common vision of identity and service to groups/associations inspired by the Spiritan charism/spirituality. The aim of this is to arrive at a Vision/Mission Statement of what it means to be a Lay Spiritan, while respecting fully the specific nature and autonomy of each group/movement.
- 2011/2012. To reach a **common letter for Lay Spiritans** at the level of each Union of Circumscriptions.
- General Chapter 2012: evaluation.

#### 3.4.4.2 Lay Spiritan Associates (with a written contract according to SRL. 24.3; 247.1.19)

- 2009/2010. Each circumscription, after approval by its Council, sends its Directory/Guide for Lay Spiritan Associates to each circumscription of its Union.
- 2010/2011 (July). The Unions work out a common **Directory/Guide for Lay Spiritan Associates**.
- 2011/2012. Working up of a single document.

- General Chapter 2012. Presentation of the final version of the **Directory/Guide for Lay Spiritan Associates**.

### **Items for this Directory/Guide of Lay Spiritan Associates:**

- *Forward: Association in Church, Congregation, our Circumscription/Union.*
- *Lay Spiritan Identity: vocation, spirituality, community, and mission ...*
- *Formation Programme. Content and Method.*
- *Criteria of discernment to become a Lay Associate.*
- *Mutual expectations:*  
  - From the Congregation*
  - From the Associates*
- *Relationship with the Congregation. Mission letter.*
- *Meaning of membership*
- *Official commitment. Nature of the contract: legal, spiritual and mission focused.*
- *Finances.*
- *Outreaches.*

## **IV. PREPARATION FOR GENERAL CHAPTER 2012**

### **4.1 GENERAL ORIENTATIONS**

The EGC was very positive about the suggestion of the General Council concerning the celebration of the next General Council. These suggestions need to be put into practice now, taking into account the opinions expressed at the EGC.

**4.1.1** The first thing is to choose the African circumscription which can host the chapter; this will have to be decided by June 2009. Method: send out a questionnaire to all African circumscriptions asking them to assess the possibilities on the level of accessibility, transport, communications, facilities etc in their circumscription.

**4.1.2** Set up a preparatory team: with two members of the GC, plus the principal moderator and the chapter secretary (this cannot be the General Secretary); a list of possible moderators to be compiled.

**4.1.3** Preparatory team to enquire from all circumscriptions topics and principal questions to be treated at the General Chapter and make a list of these.

**4.1.4** Organise election of capitulants; at the EGC it was agreed that every circumscription of appointment will have at least one delegate – larger circumscriptions proportionate to their numbers.

**4.1.5** Small booklet with photo and curriculum vitae of each capitulants to be prepared.

**4.1.6** Functionaries to be identified.

## **4.2 OTHER COMMENTS AND IDEAS FROM THE EGC**

Comments: What of the *method* to be adopted? Much material was lost at the last chapter and some subjects began with zero information. Spiritual preparation must also be taken into account and elected delegates should be asked to animate their circumscriptions both before and after the

chapter. Reports from Superior General and General Bursar also to be prepared; it will be possible also to have some echoes from the African Synod which will be held in 2009 and the implications for the future of Spiritan mission on that continent. When convenient, it would be helpful to have a meeting of the Union co-ordinators in the context of this preparation.

Need to choose an inspirational theme: mission? Unity?

Some special arrangements will have to be made for purchasing of air tickets.

How may all the members of the Congregation be somehow involved in the chapter itself, as they were during TA through e-mail? This could be done again and also a mechanism created for functionaries to make some input.



COR UNUM ET ANIMA UNA

**God's call to come and work for the Kingdom is not made to us just once for all. Our response has to be updated continually. (SRL 142)**

Congregation of the Holy Spirit

---

Clivo di Cinna 195 - 00136 ROMA - Italia

e-mail: [csspinfo@tin.it](mailto:csspinfo@tin.it) -- web: <http://www.spiritanworld.net> -- tel. +39 06 3540461 fax +39 06 35404676