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General Chapter 1998: Maynooth

The Spiritan Congregation

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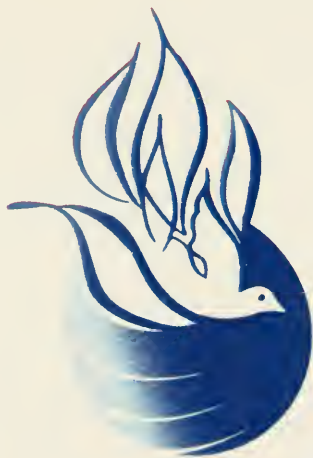
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MAYNOOTH 1998



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*Congregation of the Holy Spirit
USA Eastern Province*

Cover design recalls Saint Brendan the Navigator, Irish missionary of the 6th century.

THE CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**THE GENERAL CHAPTER 1998
MAYNOOTH – IRELAND**

“LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP”

**The Generalate
Clivo di Cinna 195
Rome**

BX 3582

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1999

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“LAUNCH OUT INTO THE DEEP”

Rome, 08 December 1998

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Here are the texts which will tell all of you, professed Spiritans and Lay Associates, about the witness given by the General Chapter, which assembled at Maynooth in Ireland from July 2 to August 8, 1998, and the challenges that it presents. Following the directives of the Chapter, the General Council has taken responsibility for this final editing of the texts.

Somebody said they were afraid the Chapter might lay a rubber egg – from which no amount of hatching would produce anything! My feelings are that we are not sending out still-born texts: they were produced by a meeting which was very much alive, made up of confreres coming from every part of the Spiritan world. It is now up to all of us to make sure they are properly “hatched”! If we just put this booklet on a shelf, or in a drawer to keep the dust off it, it will certainly remain dead; but it can bring us new life if we take the time to read it and discuss it in community.

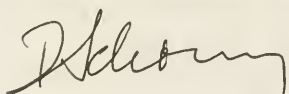
The document does not replace the Rule of Life, which the Chapter did not want to touch, apart from a few details. It is rather an actualisation of our Rule: it restates the meaning of our Spiritan vocation in the context of the world today. It helps us to evaluate what we are doing and why we are doing it. If we take it seriously, it is like tuning in to the voice of the whole Congregation; so it can become an instrument for building up the unity of our dispersed and diversified Congregation in its spirit and its organisation.

As we reflect on these texts, we can also hear the voice of our Spiritan ancestors, as though they were present at the Maynooth gathering as invisible delegates. Our founders were quoted many times and the Chapter gave its approval to a programme for making us more aware of our tradition. This was in answer to an increased desire, felt throughout the Congregation as we approach our anniversaries, to rediscover our original inspiration.

Under each of the four main headings of the Chapter programme, we detected signs of vitality in what Spiritans are experiencing today, as if they were promises which invite us to have trust, to give ourselves completely to today's mission, to be converted. The General Council hopes that in reflecting on these texts, listening to what the delegates had to say and exchanging our own ideas and intuitions amongst ourselves, we will receive a new breath of life from he who is "the Protagonist" of our mission.

We believe that at the Chapter, the Spirit helped us to hear what the Lord wishes to say to our Congregation at this point in our long history, somewhat along the lines of what He said to Simon Peter who had been working hard all night and had caught nothing: "Launch out into the deep" (Lk 5:4). We felt that we were being called to new and radical options (not necessarily spectacular) in the service of the most abandoned, to a greater co-operation with others, to a fraternal life lived in our Institute and, through all this, to an authentic spiritual life.

Yours fraternally,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P. Schouver', with a stylized, flowing script.

*Pierre Schouver, CSSp.
Superior General*

0. INTRODUCTION

THE CONGREGATION AS A SAILING SHIP

This image, used by Libermann in a slightly different sense (ND VII, 148), can be taken as a metaphor for the direction the Congregation has taken over the last few years, and can help put the Maynooth Chapter into context.

0.1 What happened at Maynooth?

0.1.1 From day to day: the signs, the testimonies, the spirit

At the opening Mass on the evening of July 12, 1998, delegates from different continents symbolically poured water from the great rivers of the world into the fountain at the entrance to the chapel. Each person taking part brought with them something of their country and their Church, something of which they were not previously completely aware but which they would discover in their contact with the other delegates coming from different backgrounds. The Maynooth meeting was a discovery of the multiform riches of the Congregation and of where exactly the Spirit is at work amongst us and where we are called to commit ourselves over and above superficial agreements.

The festive atmosphere of the first evening could not be attributed solely to the final of the football World Cup that we watched on television; it continued throughout the whole Chapter. It was certainly helped by the beauty of the surroundings, the warmth of the welcome from the Province of Ireland and the quality of the preparation and organisation which gave us the

assurance that all would go well. But the joyful feelings undoubtedly came, first and foremost, from the attitudes of confidence and availability towards each other, under the action of the Spirit of the Lord. There was a perceptible climate of prayer, not just in the liturgy - sometimes solemn, sometimes simple - but also in the ways in which experiences were related and attentively listened to.

The next day, the spiritual input for the first day of the retreat came from Africa, from the Rector of Spiritan International School of Theology (Enugu), who was one of the 15 African delegates to the Chapter (out of a total of 63). During the opening Mass, the lighted candles that were given to each delegate, to the members of the General Council and the guests, were an image of the simple light that the Spirit gives to each of us to be passed on to others.

The three Sunday outings showed us something of the prehistory and history of Ireland: Rockwell, with Holy Cross Abbey and Cashel, Armagh in Northern Ireland and the Navan Centre, and finally a pilgrimage to Knock in the West. A series of exceptional speakers brought us into contact with the society and the Church in which they are working, treating subjects that had repercussions far beyond the boundaries of their own country. What was said to us by the President of Ireland, Mrs. Mary McAleese, Archbishops Connell of Dublin and Brady of Armagh, the economist Dr. Peter Sutherland and Fr. Enda McDonagh the theologian, resonated within us like an echo of what the Spirit seemed to be saying to us in our discussions.

Friendly relations were created from the beginning despite all the differences that there were between us. The confreres came from all points of the compass, from all age groups and cultures and were blessed

with a variety of different skills. Yet the welcome given to the reports of the Superior General and the General Bursar and to the presentation of experiences, and the speed with which the elections were completed, all revealed a sort of unanimity amongst the participants. We recognised the action of the Spirit amongst us in this impressive unity.

0.1.2 An experience of the Congregation today

What we lived together was not a euphoria coming from the pleasant atmosphere; we saw in it the expression of a real movement of the Congregation.

We are living at a period when some circumscriptions have come to realise that they will not survive as they are at present, but that they still have within them their Spiritan dynamism. Simultaneously, a new Spiritan life is developing elsewhere, sometimes with all the pains of childbirth. Like Abraham, we are travelling forward because of a promise, without knowing where we will end up.

We are becoming aware of where our real hope lies and, on the other hand, of the risk we run of sinking like the Titanic. It is not the moment for us to be divided by disagreements on matters of minimal importance or by personal sensitivities. Perhaps the unanimity experienced at the Maynooth meeting came partly from a feeling that we had arrived at a time for making crucial choices.

In a sense, we had a concrete spiritual experience of what the Congregation actually is today. We were able to experience for ourselves the four important areas in the Chapter programme. We found there the places of creative fidelity and the directions upon which the future of our Spiritan charism depends.

We expressed the wish that all Spiritans could take part in the movement of the Congregation as it emerged clearly during our meeting. At different moments the Chapter pointed out that all, no matter what might be their particular job, would be able to live out the main guidelines arrived at in Maynooth. The Chapter also asked that, in the different circumscriptions, attempts would be made to re-establish ties with confreres who have distanced themselves from the Congregation.

0.2 The Period leading up to the Chapter of Maynooth

0.2.1 Time for a new missionary start

Over the last thirty years, our mission has changed greatly with responsibility passing to the local Churches, our older circumscriptions growing weaker and the newer ones developing. At the same time, the Congregation has come to a new realisation of its particular charism and has given this understanding concrete form in the new *Rule of Life*. This was the beginning of a period of discernment accompanied by a feeling of instability. We are looking again at our old works and considering new projects so that our commitments will correspond to both our specific mission and our resources.

As the time for the Chapter approached, the realisation of the difficulty of our mission and our fragility were in danger of focusing all our attention on the maintenance and management of our existing works. Whence the question posed by one group: *"The Chapter should consider how far maintenance and consolidation have taken over from mission. The future of the Congregation will depend on its fidelity to its specific mission"*.

The point of departure for the initiatives of our founders and predecessors was the realisation of the needs of the poor of their time. So that our Congregation would not lose this dynamism, the Chapter would have to look at the most urgent needs today. Once more we were hearing the call to abandon our accepted positions and to make ourselves available for what is most urgent and what best corresponds to our particular vocation.

Our more modest role in the local Churches and in increasingly secularised societies helped us to realise that our missionary relationships could contain an element of domination. The desire for a new missionary start also implied the need for a new style, for new relationships with the people.

The experience of a more diversified Congregation, spread throughout the world in smaller groups than before, also brought home to us the importance of the quality of relations amongst ourselves in community, in our practise of solidarity, in the exercise of authority. Unless we can trust each other, organisation will not get us very far.

As we come up against complex challenges, especially the need to do something about the causes of the suffering and injustice which oppress the most abandoned, a greater collaboration is developing. It is being set up with the leaders of the local Churches, with other institutes and numerous associations and, in a very special way, with the lay people who are close to us.

In this way, some aspects of Spiritan life have been given more prominence:

- the authority of witness, so different from institutional power;

- the fruitfulness of a spirit that is communicated and an education that is given, which helps people to take action themselves and which is worth more in the long run than direct and rapid efficiency;
- the message that is implicit in a proffered friendship, which is much more powerful than words;
- the commitment which can go as far as giving one's life;
- the relationships born of collaboration which mean more than just an increase in efficiency.

The type of missionary and communitarian relationship that is emerging is one of sensitivity, which is perhaps a sign of the action of the Spirit. A real gesture of friendship is neither invasive nor possessive. The simpler and more respectful it is, the greater impact it will have on the hearts of others. A deep adherence to the Gospel will depend on the quality of the relationship rather than the intensity of the wooing or the strength of the arguments proposed. This quality comes to us from the breath of the Spirit.

This leads us on to another feature of our experience.

0.2.2 The need to tap sources

The Itaici Chapter had been remarkable for the emphasis it put on Spiritan experience as a source for seeing where the Spirit was leading us. It is in experience that we also find a new vitality for a mission which is a spirituality before being a strategy.

It was not a completely new step. Spiritan experience had already been integrated into the drawing up of our *Rule of Life*. Some religious who read our Rule found it very good. Comparing it to the older one of their

Congregation, one of them said: *"Our Rule is dry and juridical. Yours has been watered"*.

At the Enlarged General Council at Dakar, on-going formation was seen to be vital at this stage of our history. The *Guide for Spiritan Formation* expresses what is at stake:

"In submitting each aspect of our vocation to on-going formation, a spirituality emerges that brings a unity to our commitment; a wisdom which is both "human" and evangelical, personal and communitarian; a gift received and a task to be carried out." (GSF 106)

In Senegal, we also took note of the increasingly African character of the Congregation, not just because of the number of African members but also because of a special style and spirit. At Dakar, we found inspiration in a lively local Church and in a history that a visit to the island of Gorée brought home to us in a special way. The Enlarged General Council of 1989 took place at Arusha in Tanzania, another key site of the origins of our mission on the continent. It was likewise in search of some sources of our inspiration that we went to Brazil in 1992 and to Ireland in 1998, and we were not disappointed.

Gradually, it dawned on us that the most important thing for the Congregation is to tap into the living sources where it is once more seeking meaning and energy for a difficult mission. At present, the majority of new members are coming from continents different from the one where our religious family was born. At Maynooth, we spoke of *"sources of inspiration"*. Before being a body organised for action, our Congregation is, and must be, a body organised for capturing inspiration, like a large ship which lets out all

its sails to catch the wind, whose crew is united together for better or for worse.

These concerns also emerged during the preparation of the Maynooth Chapter.

0.3 The Preparation of the Chapter

Rather than drawing up a programme and identifying the subjects for discussion from an office desk, the General Council, in line with the vision outlined above, tried to draw from its own experience of six years moving around the Congregation and from the experience of all the members. A summary of the experience of the Councillors, along with their questions, was sent to all confreres in order to spark off their own experience and their own questions. The joint replies from 49 out of the 69 circumscriptions, as well as the replies from individuals, were studied, synthesised and summarised by an ad hoc committee.

The replies reflected a clear awareness of our present limitations in personnel, despite the development of new Provinces and Foundations. The confreres who replied to the consultation insisted on the need for a sound and prudent use of the personnel and finance available. But despite that, the dominant desire was to press ahead, with the feeling that if our worries were to prevent us from being open to new needs and new perspectives, we would risk losing our inspiration and, with it, life itself.

So starting from this preparatory work, the General Council, with the help of the Secretary General of the Chapter, drew up the document called *"Four Strands of Spiritan Life"*, an expression of the essence of the Chapter programme. The following is a summary of this document, given as a background to the discussions and guidelines of Maynooth.

0.4 Working Document: Four Strands of Spiritan Life

The question put to the Chapter at Itaici was *"Where is the Spirit leading us?"*. The answer to this question is found in the Bible, in our Spiritan tradition, and also in our present experience as reflected in the replies to the pre-capitular questionnaire. Basing itself on these replies, the General Council suggested four main themes for the Chapter: Our Mission – Our Sources of Inspiration – Our Life Together – Collaborative Ministry.

The replies revealed the reality underlying our life: the need to be firmly rooted in the life of the Holy Spirit. This is the source of the dynamism of our inner being which lies beyond our superficial experiences and all administrative and organisational questions. Without this breath of the Spirit, we are nothing but *"a gong booming or a cymbal clashing"* (1Cor. 13.1). At the same time, we recognise that Libermann established his Congregation starting from the needs of the world of his time.

In fidelity to Libermann, a few basics seemed to us to be non-negotiable: evangelisation of the abandoned through apostolic community, personal holiness, a life of prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit. It is for us now *"to check that the Congregation has remained faithful to the mission that it has within the Church"* and *"to augment the apostolic and religious vitality of the members of the Institute"* (SRL 214).

0.4.1 Our Mission (cf. Jn. 20.21-22 and Acts 1.8)

Our experience is of a mission which totally transcends human power of achievement and which directs us to the need of empowerment by the Holy Spirit. This help is given in the Church where Jesus continues his mission to which we are called in a special way.

To God's poor

The Spirit leads us to be at the service of all people, especially the poor, the excluded and the marginalised, to support them, to live and work with them, to bring about a realisation of the Kingdom of God in works of justice, peace and reconciliation.

Called to dialogue

The call of the Spirit is incessantly revealed in the witness of our own Church, but also in the witness of individuals and groups of diverse cultures and spiritual experiences. We feel the need of dialogue with these other witnesses to the revelation of God. Such experiences are found especially in situations of first evangelisation which remain our first priority.

Inculturation of our charism

Young Spiritans are coming above all from cultures other than those where the Congregation was born. The Holy Spirit is inviting us to inculturate our Spiritan charism. He opens us to new forms which reflect the cultures of origin of these confreres. From our history, we inherit a special orientation towards mission "*ad gentes*" and a particular interest in Africa.

In the new Churches, we feel called to encourage missionary dynamism and promote concrete support for the mission of the Church.

Particular points

We are witnesses to the transforming power of the Gospel to bring about conversion, renewal and reconciliation, firstly in ourselves. Within the local Churches, the thrust of evangelisation will often be

through parish ministry. This ministry must be done in community and according to Spiritan criteria.

New missionary initiatives are welcomed, yet there is need for proper communal discernment to ensure solidarity and continuity and to avoid unnecessary dispersion. We are engaged in works of education and we are receiving new requests for involvement in this area. Education is also a place for announcing the Gospel.

Initial and on-going formation must prepare Spiritans to make a creative response to the present and future realities and challenges of mission. The realities change, so a constant evaluation of our training programmes is necessary.

Our missionary commitment involves all phases of our life. Even in retirement and sickness, we still persist in living *“that life of love and holiness lived on earth by the Son of God...”* (Rule of 1849 and SRL 3).

0.4.2 Our sources of inspiration (cf. Romans 8.26 and SRL 85 & 89)

We draw our strength and sustenance from our prayerful familiarity with God’s word and regular celebration of the Eucharist. As Spiritans, our life of prayer is intimately linked with our apostolic life; we have a special relationship with the Holy Spirit, the fountainhead of all authentic mission, and with the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We draw our particular inspiration from the charism of our founders and our history.

We are strengthened by this charism, shared with other confreres, bound together by a creative fidelity to a common Rule of Life and rooted in our experience of the Gospel and our vocation. A simple community

life, fraternal and authentic, in solidarity and fidelity, is a source of human maturity lived in peace and joy. Our life together is further invigorated by the cultural diversity in which our charism is being expressed in the world of today.

Our contemporary experience is a symbiotic relationship with those to whom the Spirit sends us. We become aware that we ourselves are being evangelised. In evangelising the poor, we are seeking in turn to be evangelised by them. Our friendship and dialogue with all those, believers and unbelievers, who have been touched by the Gospel through our witness, inspires and encourages us.

A life which is truly inspired by insight into the ways of the Holy Spirit in history does not admit of any long-term pessimism. This encourages us to have a positive attitude to the challenges of our world. It is the same Spirit who provides the insight to interpret the "signs of the times" (cf. SRL 86).

0.4.3 Our living together

Called to life in community

The same Spirit who calls us to mission also calls us to community. We live our vocation in the large community of the Congregation or circumscription and in the local Spiritan community. Many of our communities are now inter-cultural, international and inter-generational, witnesses to the possibility of a new kind of society. We hope to see them develop further, helped by a suitable formation.

Witness and discernment

In a fragmented and individualistic world, community is a witness to evangelical communion. Each one of us is called to integrate his personal journey and apostolate into the Congregation. In doing this, we discover the sense of our vow of obedience: community becomes a special place for discerning the divine will. It is also a corrective challenge to a narrow self-centredness in our work.

Solidarity

Community life breaks down when the individuals do not have a genuine openness to one another. In difficult situations it is not sufficient to appeal to cultural differences. There are irregularities that have to be addressed, such as the use of cars, personal accounts and other aspects of lifestyle that conflict with the ideal of sharing. Our life in common must improve the channels of solidarity to support the various needs of individuals.

Living alone: a call to fidelity

If sometimes a Spiritan has to live alone, it must be clear that this situation can never be the normal one. It is disturbing to see so many confreres living alone. It is becoming difficult to see the "regional community" as a credible alternative. These communities rarely display the characteristics enunciated in SRL 32.2. The Congregation must take up a position regarding this problem.

0.4.4 Collaborative ministry (cf. *Vita Consecrata* 56 and SRL 24.3)

The generosity of many lay people who want to share our mission and our spirituality is a gift to our Congregation and the mission entrusted to us. We remain open to new developments in lay collaboration. This attraction testifies to the richness of our tradition and the depth of our commitment. The tradition of Poullart des Places and Libermann is sufficiently broad to accommodate varying degrees of involvement in our mission and spirituality. Such collaboration can ensure the continuation and expansion of the Spiritan ethos in works from which we decide to withdraw.

In many circumscriptions there is already an effective collaboration with other institutes, especially in the field of formation. This collaboration in common projects should be encouraged at all levels; it serves our mission and makes the best use of our resources.

0.5 A More unified vision of Spiritan Life

The vision of the Maynooth Chapter gives greater unity to the four dimensions of our commitment: missionary, communitarian, spiritual and open to collaboration. These elements of our missionary life reinforce each other like the plaited strands of a rope.

A mission of proximity and witness calls for a genuine spiritual life and is, at the same time, a source of inspiration. A change of heart is indispensable for a real fraternal life and this in its turn is a great source of dynamism and purification of heart. Our unity as Spiritans supports our missionary engagements and, in return, these commitments, in line with our vocation, hold us more strongly together. Collaboration can strengthen

the inspiration proper to each of the partners and at the same time create a deeper unity between them.

To use an image quoted at the Chapter, our missionary life is like a great pilgrimage to meet the peoples of this world, giving preference to the most abandoned. At the same time, it prompts us to undertake a pilgrimage to meet our confreres and collaborators in all their uniqueness. At the end of so many encounters, we are led to make a sort of pilgrimage into our own inner being. Our whole life becomes a journey led by the Spirit, with Jesus, towards the Father.

The image of the ship can give us an idea of what is at stake in the vision of our organisation that was approved by the Chapter. The ship has set out into the deep of the history of these times, without any intention of returning to port. It moves forward by the strength of the wind in its unfurled sails. The cosmopolitan but united crew make the delicate adjustments to the rig and the rudder which are needed to make the best use of the wind and steer a steady course in a rough sea, surrounded by a flotilla of partners, propelled by the same wind and setting out on the same adventure.

1.1 EVANGELISATION AMONG THE NOMADS OF BORANA LAND Ethiopia

A vast expanse of land

Borana land is the southernmost region of Ethiopia, bordering on the northern part of Kenya, and covers some 120,000 sq. km. The people, comprising several ethnic groups (the Borana, who form the majority, Guji, Gabra, Gburji etc.) are semi-nomadic pastoralists. They trek across the vast expanse of land looking for grass and water for their livestock on which they depend for survival. At the moment we are 6 Spiritans in Borana land, 2 from U.S.A. East, 3 from Nigeria and 2 from Holland working in 3 centres: Dadim, Doqolle and Yavello. In Dadim we work in close collaboration with 3 Medical Missionaries of Mary who form a single apostolic community with us. Each group maintains its identity and independence while enjoying the advantages of mutual support, shared experience and team work.

Profound respect for the people

From the beginning our emphasis has been on a profound respect for the people and their way of life. Starting from their standpoint we have always tried to preserve the best of their culture and way of life, with a view to its eventual incorporation into our methods of evangelisation and our Christian religion. This process is a very slow one, particularly if one is tempted to measure success in terms of numbers of baptised Christians. In fact, the numbers themselves are not encouraging for a mission that has recently celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its beginning: about 250 Catholics in Dadim, 30 in Jijiddu, 60 in Doqolle and 30 in Yavello. Our hope is that our approach, being with people in times of peace and

trouble and sharing their life, dialoguing and sharing with them the good news of Jesus Christ in the context of their culture and way of life, is bringing them closer to the realisation of that fullness of life that Jesus brings to all. One discovery which we have all made is that the Borana themselves have helped us through their sharing and dialoguing to understand our own faith better and grow stronger in it.

The Coffee Ceremony

Our main process of evangelisation is through village teaching. Sometimes the initiative is from us, sometimes it is from the people who, having heard about us or our work, invite us to come and visit them. The context of sharing the good news is always that of the coffee ceremony, which is at the heart of the people's ritual. We all gather in one of the houses in the village and coffee beans are passed around for each one to take a handful and crack them. The cracked coffee is then gathered and fried with oil or butter. Before adding the milk to it, some of the oil is passed around for the people to anoint themselves. When the coffee is prepared, it is poured into a large wooden bowl for an elder to bless it before distribution. The coffee is then distributed to all present, beginning with the eldest man and ending with the youngest girl. During this time a passage from the Gospel is read, questions are asked and explanations given. The ceremony ends with a closing prayer made either by the catechist or the priest. Eventually, after a period of about 2 years, individuals who have followed this teaching are invited to enter into the catechumenate, a programme aimed at joining the Christian community. Of course, the nomadic way of life involves following the people – often not an easy task - as they in turn search out new pastures and water for their herds.

Incorporating symbols

In the Christian community we have sought to inculturate our celebration of the Eucharist. Animal sacrifice is an important ritual for the Borana people; during this ritual those present pass their hands over the animal, praying for peace, rain, security and so on, for their society. This symbolism has been incorporated into our offertory where all are invited to pass their hands over the gifts while praying for peace etc. We have also tried to put some of the Eucharistic prayers in dialogue form, the traditional method of praying among the Borana.

Giving the people new options

Education has been seen as an important part of our apostolate from the beginning with a view to giving the people who, as pastoralists, are effectively marginalised, new options in life and enabling them to take their due place in the economy of the country as the main providers of beef. Education is also aimed at building bridges between different ethnic groups who have a tradition of animosity and hostility among themselves. The policy of accepting children from the various ethnic groups into our three schools and of teaching religious education as a basis of morality and good living has been particularly effective in this regard. The international composition of our own community has also played a part. It fascinates people to see a group of men and women of different colours and nationalities living together in peace.

Development has likewise been an important element of our overall approach to evangelisation. Initially centred on food relief, it is now focussed on community-based development programmes. These are inspired essentially by the DELTA programme and are aimed at helping people to identify their problems and seek solutions to

them. Again, this has contributed to building trust among members of different ethnic groups.

A bright but insecure future

Although slow in terms of bearing measurable fruit, there are clear signs of hope that suggest an even brighter future. Our staying with the people, particularly during times of trouble, has formed a basis of trust and goodwill which makes them more receptive to what we say about the Gospel and education. At present there are two young Borana men in Kenya for catechetical training and another is in the Spiritan house of Philosophy in Tanzania with a view to joining the Congregation. Our biggest problems derive from the insecurity surrounding the necessary finance and personnel for the future. What is called for in the Congregation is a willingness to pool our financial and human resources to give a solid structural status to international groups such as ours in order to guarantee personnel and continuity.

Peter OSUJI

1.2 OVERVIEW OF FIRST EVANGELISATION Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Algeria

It could be suggested that first evangelisation is above all else a missionary development which finds its realisation in contexts where the Good News is not known, where the Church is not present through its institutions. This stage of missionary development is one which first of all requires the creation of links, of listening, of "sowing the Word," of beginning the road together. Prototypes of this kind of presence would be the address of Paul to the Athenians and the encounter between Peter and the centurion Cornelius.¹ This broad definition includes also those of our confreres who work in a more specifically Islamic milieu, such as Mauritania or Algeria. First evangelisation is a living process - a presence with people, a concrete solidarity with them. This stage implies a double conversion - that of the missionary and that of the people whom he encounters.

Being-with, in a learning situation

First Evangelisation, where it takes place, is first of all a privileged moment of being with a people, a willingness to share that people's life. This would be impossible if it were not placed resolutely in a situation of learning, of something that is beginning. There are many different paths of learning:

- Learn first of all the language;
- While this is being done, enter also the cultural world of a people, in that which is traditional (major rites of

¹) Claude Tassin, *The Conversion of Cornelius and the Conversion of Peter*, Spiritus, No. 141, pp. 465-475.

life, oral traditions, history) as well as in that which is in the course of development;

- Enter the religious culture of a people. This requires a great deal of time. Penetrate the traditional world, its myths and its rituals, its numberless sacrifices, its masks, and in all of that, search for a deeper level of life, of fruitfulness and of good relations with one another and with God. Enter the world of Islam, with its Holy Book, its theology, its practices - even its extremist-side;
- Enter into the history of a people, its ancient history. History is often painful, whether it be the history of colonisation, or the contemporary scorn and disregard towards certain ethnic minorities;
- Develop every aspect of each one of us. This entails a capacity for empathy, for sharing with people. It is achieving a sense of being at ease with a people, sharing in their daily life, accepting to live somewhere, to feel at home there.

In networks of Solidarity

First evangelisation is expressed also in action, in networks of concrete solidarity. The important thing is what one is, not what one does:

- The patient toil of struggling with minority people to achieve their recognition. There are cultures and languages that are despised within a much wider whole. When confreres help the people to defend themselves against the kind of injustice inflicted on "the little ones" and when they struggle so that human rights might be respected and so that a culture of democracy be born, this connects with a work of Justice and Peace.
- The work of development: especially the sinking of wells.

- The work of education, working towards bringing into existence schools and places of training in conscientisation.
- Helping towards an awareness of inescapable changes - the destruction of languages and customs, and values, the fracturing of village connections, helping a culture, linking it with others, and entering into dialogue with others - this is a task calling for great sensitivity.
- Participating, in areas which have been affected by war, in a culture of reconciliation and of peace.

A double conversion

Being with people and living with them, expressing solidarity with them in their efforts to improve the quality of their lives - all this leads to a double conversion, that of the missionary and that of people. The conversion of people can proceed to entry into the Church after a first announcement (of the Good News), but first evangelisation presupposes and implies the conversion of the missionary. There are many instances which require this:

- To enter into another language and another culture, a work of self-abnegation, a spiritual experience in the sense that Libermann understood it: "Dépouillez-vous..."
- To give great importance to attitudes of listening and of understanding, to conduct oneself as a guest of a people. This is very striking amongst our confreres in Mauritania. It is St. Paul who looked at the inscription "To the Unknown God" and who quoted the Greek poets.
- To learn the grace-filled nature of occasions of visiting, of words exchanged. I was told somewhere about a

particular missionary: "He works all the time. You can't talk to him."

- To witness, sometimes by simply being present with courage, like our confreres in Algeria. This kind of presence is already word and solidarity.

There is no doubt that conversion also involves a different way of seeing the place of the missionary, different from the one that one learned at home : to get away from clericalism, to become, in humility, a brother, to enter into that which people are looking for, their questions, their customs, the meaning that they give to their lives. This is possible for us only if we ourselves are faithful to the Spirit who teaches us to pray, to call God "Father", the Spirit who groans in us in a great act of giving birth to a world renewed.

The places of conversion are many - but to undergo conversion in this context is perhaps fundamentally "to go towards others", to "go out", to dare to live on the frontiers of the Church so that each people might re-live the wonders of that first Pentecost when each heard in his own language the wonders of God.

Gérard MEYER

1.3 EDUCATION IN THE SPIRITAN MISSION USA East

Continuing the Spiritan charism

In the USA, we have been engaged in a good number of educational endeavours over the years. These institutions were stamped with the Spiritan character in a similar way to our own formation as Spiritans, by 'osmosis', the milieu of the institution and the lived witness of Spiritans engaged in the particular ministry of education. Their values were experienced on a daily basis by the students and passed on subliminally.

As Spiritans grow fewer at Duquesne and at Holy Ghost Preparatory School, we have been concerned about continuing the Spiritan charism at these institutions. There is a need for us to attempt to make explicit what constitutes a Spiritan educational institution in this age and place. The approach we have taken is part by plan and part by inspiration. The process involves a considerable collaboration with the laity at these institutions.

Mission Statements

There is a parallel development at the two institutions. They both began with a process of composing a Mission Statement for each school.

Duquesne's statement speaks of five concerns: Academic Excellence, Moral and Spiritual Values, an Ecumenical Atmosphere, the Spirit of Service and World Concerns. Composed by a totally different faculty and student body, we find similar concerns expressed in the Mission Statement of Holy Ghost Prep: Academic Excellence; moral, intellectual and spiritual formation; service to the poor; development of community and

cultivation of unique gifts. Both statements look upon education as formation of the person and not just the intellect.

The Mission Statements really have no import in and of themselves except that they are the basis of constant reflection over the years by the various constituencies of the institutions. So it is the process of developing a mission statement, of continued reflection on the meaning of that statement by all engaged at the institutions, and of implementing the implications of that statement that are the foundation on which we have been 'institutionalising' the Spiritan charism at these institutions.

The developments

For us, then, a Spiritan educational institution must take into consideration the Church which calls us to serve, the world which we are called to serve, and the needs of the peoples we encounter in those two milieus. The mission statements have helped us focus on this call. Both institutions have developed strong reputations for academic excellence recognised by external review boards. We have come to realise that we are called not just to educate the youth but to form them morally and spiritually as responsible, mature adults. Finally, education, in the context of faith, is not merely a good in itself but enables the students to recognise and respond to their vocation to be involved in the world and to be concerned for others. So there is a great emphasis on service.

Duquesne University: A new vision

We invite you assembled in General Chapter to look at Duquesne with a new vision. First, we look at what has been. Duquesne has granted degrees to over 225

Catholic religious men and women from not less than 32 countries. Of those, 25 students from Africa have been involved in the Ph.D. program at Duquesne, most of them being diocesan priests and a few sisters. In only the past 12 years, 60 Spiritans have acquired degrees at Duquesne. Currently, 12 Spiritans from 5 countries are pursuing 6 disciplines at graduate level.

We believe offering tuition scholarships at Duquesne is only one way whereby it is of service to the Church and to the Spiritan Mission to the world. We have barely touched the area of research and training for specific concerns of Spiritans world-wide such as the Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies program. How do we bring the various social studies, theology and other disciplines to bear on our mission? What does a university have to offer in the area of Justice and Peace vis-à-vis globalisation and the resulting social and geo-political concerns confronting the Church and ourselves in our mission? In what other ways can Duquesne be of service to the local churches around the world? How can Duquesne help us develop a deeper collaboration with the laity?

Planning for the future

We are concerned about our continued ability to keep a solid Spiritan presence at the University without the concerted help of the Congregation world-wide. At a time of crisis, we are forced to look anew at what we have and to assess Duquesne's contribution to our mission.

I call upon this Chapter to ask the General Council to establish some structure which will enable us as a Congregation to develop a plan on how best to utilise Duquesne for our Spiritan mission. The Congregation has used this resource and we are thankful. It is time for

the Congregation to see this as not only a resource to draw from but as a commitment to assign members to Duquesne from many of the circumscriptions throughout the world.

Chris PROMIS

1.4 INFORMAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Bangui

I have worked for many years in the Central African Republic at the heart of a movement known as *Aita Kue* ("*Brothers and Sisters Together*"). This involvement has been at both national level and in the city of Bangui. The movement is one of Catholic Action among young people (7 to 14 years) and it is linked to many similar undertakings across the world by means of co-ordination carried on at international level (MIDADE).

Able to decide and to act

The pedagogical principle underlying this movement is the apostolate of young people by young people. This has originated from a conviction shared by many other movements - children are capable of taking initiatives, of getting together to take action at their own level, of transforming interpersonal relations in the light of the Good News of the Gospel. At the very heart of *Aita Kue* is the weekly meeting in groups of 10 to 20 members under the direction of a leader. They discuss, take decisions and act together.

An example from many similar ones. Arnaud has no father. He has been entrusted to a female relation by agreement. However, he is not happy with her. He is reproached for eating the family's food for which his own family have paid nothing. He returns to his mother but she sends him back to the female relation. In the end, he runs away. He heads for the big market in the town and works for a trader beside a bar in order to earn a little money and some food. This situation lasts for two years. Children from his area are members of *Aita Kue*. On learning of his whereabouts, they decide to make contact with him in an attempt to reconcile him with his

family. They succeed in convincing him to return to his mother. But first, they bring him to the leader of the group so that he might get cleaned up and put on fresh clothes. His mother thanks the members of the group and is astonished to see that it was children who succeeded in bringing her son back to her.

We are convinced that children are capable of acting with their own resources, however limited they may be. There are certain conditions necessary to promote an initiative by the children of the society:

- To be near them so that they feel able to express themselves in confidence (orally, in writing, by drawing, by a poem, a prayer...);
- To seek with them what action can be taken when faced with a difficulty;
- To be alert in identifying potential future leaders;
- To support initiatives that are taken and to assist the young people to see a particular course of action through to the end.

Do not talk down to them

Efforts are made to form the leaders so that they can see projects through to completion. Some bad habits to avoid are: deciding where children belong and talking down to them instead of allowing them to speak.

This kind of training takes time and will suffer set-backs. But it does produce fruit - in the group of young people, in society, in the Church and for the leader himself. So that the action be may solidly-based and not lack coherence, it is important to work in a network, i.e., to establish links with other groups within the country and with other movements abroad.

A world to be discovered

Working with these children and young people is exciting. It can also be a disturbing experience for us because it permits us to see more clearly the difficulties and the obstacles which they encounter. With enduring confidence in God and in human persons, we continue to hope that all is not lost and that love is still capable of making "something move" in this world.

Emmanuel MEAUDRE

1.5 WHERE ARE WE IN OUR COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE AND PEACE?

Generalate J&P Co-ordinator²

Present engagements for Justice and Peace

Following the directives from the General Chapter at Itaici, the Co-ordinator for Justice and Peace has been very active in many different directions, trying to clarify the meaning and methods of work for Justice and Peace, engaging in a work of formation in this sense even beyond the confines of the Congregation, collaborating with other Congregations and various other organisations. He has worked in close collaboration with the General Council, particularly with the Councillor holding special responsibility for this area of our mission. Our present engagements can be seen in:

Solidarity with peoples in conflict

Spiritans in many parts of the world continue to risk their lives to stay with the people as they go through times of unspeakable suffering. The support from confreres of other circumscriptions, through aid and friendship, to those living and working in difficult situations, is another sure sign of the work of the Spirit in our lives. At the Generalate, although painfully aware that we are powerless to change anything in these situations, we do our best to maintain contact with these confreres by post, fax and telephone.

Networking

There is more and more collaboration in all areas related to Social Justice, hence we are networking with the African Faith and Justice Network, with the Union

² This presentation was made using a visual colour display from the PowerPoint program on the computer.

of Superiors General, SEDOS (A Service of Documentation and Studies for Mission), other Congregations and lay institutes on social justice issues.

Training for Peace

Many Spiritans appreciated the importance of launching formation programmes like the Conflict Resolution Program at Duquesne University and its extensions in Africa. Bringing different ethnic groups together at the Sunday Eucharist is another form of peace-making in today's world as are catechetical programs with a specific peace-making dimension. Action for peace and training for peace are turning out to be priorities of our missionary engagement.

Social ministry related to Justice and Peace

"We go to those whose needs are the greatest and to the oppressed" (SRL 4). "We must make ourselves the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them" (SRL 14).

We are doing this today either in specific projects or from a parish context. The forms that this type of ministry takes are many:

- **Education:** formal and informal education, defending the rights of people, helping people to organise themselves for the defence of their rights, training people in the idea and the practice of justice and peace;
- **Development work** in rural and urban areas: agricultural or trade schools, farmers' organisations, effects of commercialisation, apprenticeship, helping to start small enterprises, credit systems, education in the regulation of births;

- **Refugees:** serving refugees, immigrants, prisoners, aids victims, drug addicts, young people without training or work in the cities, rural populations in remote areas.

Future perspectives

1. Many of the above mentioned forms of *social ministry* are closely linked to Justice and Peace ministry. However, for the future, more emphasis still needs to be put on direct Justice and Peace ministry through the building up of the Justice and Peace Commissions and Groups in dioceses and parishes respectively.
2. Strengthening of the networking that has already begun among Congregations and lay groups.
3. Deepening of our spirituality for Justice and Peace ministry.

John SKINNADER

1.6 A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

Brazil

Abuse of Human Rights

Brazil has received a significant amount of international attention in recent years because of human rights abuses. Children, indigenous peoples, street-people, the landless, women, the environment are but a few groups and categories which have been victims of such abuses. Most of the victims are voiceless and powerless. Since the end of its military dictatorship in the mid 1980s, Brazil has signed practically all of the international human rights agreements. This obviously provokes many questions, especially: "Why do so many human rights abuses continue to happen and can anything be done to stop them?"

An opportunity for action

Such concerns were very much present in 1989 during a meeting of Justice and Peace co-ordinators of several Congregations organised by the Spiritan Brazil South West District. Participants at the meeting recalled that Brazil was a country of huge riches – the eighth strongest economy on a world scale. Yet it was seen to be also a country of glaring social inequalities, injustices, violence and exclusion. Little detailed information was available on such situations outside the country. Still it was recalled that when such facts became known and attention called to them, the reaction of the Brazilian authorities was to do all in their power to right the human rights abuse being committed. In short, Brazil was seen to be extremely self-conscious of its international image. The reaction to international attention on many occasions was seen to provoke publicity within the country. This

publicity and the ensuing discussions helped to conscientise many people about the issues involved.

During the meeting it then became clear to the Justice and Peace co-ordinators present that here we had a new opportunity to work for human rights and social justice. It was decided to set up an intercongregational project which literally would give a voice to the voiceless.

SEJUP and its functions

The project was named SEJUP (Serviço Brasileiro de Justiça e Paz) and I became its first co-ordinator. Representatives of the Congregations involved held monthly meetings. SEJUP was given three important functions in its job description:

1. Denouncing injustice

One of its chief functions was to denounce injustices and make 'action calls' where individuals and representatives or organisations were asked to send protest messages to Brazilian authorities demanding that they act to end specific abuses of human rights. Much attention was given to building up an infrastructure where human rights and grassroots organisations would supply their denunciations of reports on such issues.

2. Building solidarity

A second important function attributed to SEJUP since the beginning was that of contact and solidarity building. Over the years it has invested in helping Brazilian human rights groups in building contact and solidarity and in information-sharing with similar organisations in other parts of the world. Most such Brazilian organisations only use Portuguese as their working language. SEJUP has used English as its language of international communication and so has

enabled Brazilian human rights groups to communicate with their peers in other parts of the world.

3. Resourcing researchers

Brazil has a rich history of grassroots struggle. Much of the material, such as books, articles and reports, is not easily available to researchers in this area, again because of language difficulties, and so the importance of such struggles receives relatively little attention internationally.

SEJUP's homepage (<http://www.oneworld.org/sejup/>) is now one of the richest sources of such material readily available in English to researchers anywhere in the world.

Using the Internet to 'Defend the Weak'

Over the years SEJUP has used printed newsletters, videos and especially the internet to give a voice to the voiceless in Brazil. An interesting example of the use of video in this area was with Miryam Productions in California whose director is Paul Moran CSSp. Both organisations co-operated in the production of a 28-minute video called *"The People of the Quilombos"*. It deals with the struggle of Afro-Brazilian communities to maintain their lands and culture in the face of the threat of mass expulsion. The video has been shown on a number of television stations in North America and Brazil.

The internet has been the chief instrument used by SEJUP over the years to call attention to the violation of human rights in Brazil. A long mailing list receives a weekly newsletter on such questions by e-mail. All material prepared over the years is also available on the homepage. Those who receive the material use it in

several ways. Apart from protest-message campaigns to Brazilian authorities, examples of how the SEJUP material is used include school projects, academic research, specialist newsletters and radio shows.

The Spiritan Rule of 1849, as well as number 14 of our current Rule of Life, describe us as *"the advocates, the supporters and the defendants of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them"*. The SEJUP project has endeavoured to carry out this role.

John KILCRANN

1.7 REFUGEE MINISTRY IN THE EAST AFRICAN PROVINCE

A challenge on our doorstep

The East African Province had long been concerned about the situation of refugees in nearby countries. Chapters had made suggestions that we should go into this ministry but it was not until 1994, after the sudden influx of hundreds of thousands who had fled from the genocide in Rwanda into the north-western part of Tanzania, that the step was taken. The diocese of Rulenge was overrun and the local church could not cope with the problem of pastoral care for these shattered people. The Bishop and the Episcopal Conference called for help.

The EAP felt that having such suffering on our doorstep was a challenge that could not be ignored. We had no personnel to spare but we had a number of deacons who were to be ordained. Two of them volunteered to work among the refugees and to work along with the local church. This approach of responding to the needs of the local church and working within its structure has always marked the ministry of the EAP. Joined by the members from the US-East and France, this marked the beginning of the refugee ministry for the East African Province.

A heart to listen

Refugees are people who have been uprooted from their ancestral land and home. They have been forced to make irrational choices in their lives as they face the prospect of going into a foreign land. However, the agencies could not give what the refugees most needed – a heart to listen to the pain, to share the remembered vision of family members massacred before their eyes, to care about their little ones who could no longer go to

school and the youth who had nothing to occupy their time, to find some little bit of clothing to replace the rags that were all they had left, to give some assurance that they were persons with a worth and a dignity that all the destructive forces against them could not take away, and to offer them the consolation of celebrating the Eucharist and the other sacraments. Working as much as possible with the diocesan team, our confreres struggled to provide some education and, for older youth, some training skills.

Sheep without a shepherd

The plight of refugees and asylum seekers is one of the signs of the times most clearly crying out for a pastoral response. This pastoral need has dimensions that are material, psychological and spiritual. The ministry is hard, demanding constant self-giving. Our confreres see the deprivations, misery, confusion, the hopelessness, and they listen to the cries of distress. The trauma experienced by the refugees is not only physical. Even more devastating is the emotional suffering and psychological anguish. Most have lost all their belongings and often their loved ones. The shock is numbing. They know the reality of Luke's words: *"Jesus saw the crowd and had pity on them for they were like sheep without a shepherd."* Spiritans are actively present among the refugees, searching for ways to bring about changes in the lives of these afflicted people. Presence is the essence of the ministry.

Advocacy

But presence is not enough. It demands follow-up. Living conditions in the camps are sometimes dehumanising and extremely stringent and often enough bring problems that require help from the priests to resolve the difficulties.

Many families have been separated from one another – husbands, wives, children, members of the extended family. The work is to see the possibility of at least some of them being reunited with their families who might be in other camps or even in another country.

Education

Needless to say, when a refugee leaves his or her country, one of the many things that become disrupted is education from primary to third level. Secondary school and third level education are strictly prohibited in the camps since it is something that could lead to permanent settlement in the country which offers protection to the refugees. Despite the restriction, Spiritans have been requested to assist in this area. Many of the refugees badly need education. In fact depriving them of education has been cited as one of the greatest injustices that have been done to them.

Reconciliation and healing

Another ministry that is offered to the refugees is reconciliation, healing, and trauma-counselling. The church in Burundi and Rwanda and the refugees themselves have been wounded and have lost hope. The only vestige of hope that remains is to turn to the Church for such hope and reconciliation. Our confreres are convinced that pastoral care among the refugees must take on a new orientation which caters for the life-situation of the refugees. It necessitates a change from a sacramental to a new way of being a new church, a new people. Local catechists are trained to assist in this ministry of healing and reconciliation.

Why are there refugees?

Let us always remember that refugees are people. While it is important for the Church to provide care and be present among the refugees, we must ask ourselves the question: "Why are there refugees?"

Philip MASSAWE

1.8 JUSTICE AND PEACE IN DAILY LIFE

Cameroon

In Cameroon as elsewhere, Spiritans are resolutely involved in the struggle for justice and peace. They participate in Justice and Peace Committees at both parochial and diocesan level. I refer to their own experience in order to make some more personal comments.

Facts and realities

- In September 1997, *Amnesty International* published a report: *"Cameroon - Flagrant Abuse of Human Rights"*, a document which received a very hostile reception by the authorities of the country. The document listed actions taken against hundreds of individuals who were opposed to the government, victims of hassle, aggression, arrest and imprisonment.
- On February 14th, 1998, a hundred people were burned to death when a fuel tanker exploded accidentally. People had come to collect fuel with a view to re-selling it when the fire broke out. The fire authorities did not intervene until hours had passed. The people were unaware of the danger handling the petrol as if it were water.
- Corruption is general and widespread. One has to pay for the slightest service. Everyone tries to eke out a living for himself. *"The goat grazes where she is tethered..."* There is also a struggle for power. The powerless are to be found in ever increasing numbers on the side of the road.
- There is a climate of insecurity, the consequence of unemployment and of a move towards the cities.

Initiatives and actions

...for prisoners

YAOUNDE At the Central Prison (2300 detainees, of whom 70% are awaiting trial), the Justice and Peace Commission is instrumental in speeding up the completion of dossiers and contacting lawyers with a view to obtaining a sentence which will not involve imprisonment.

MBALMAYO Spiritan novices spend two mornings per week listening to prisoners and helping them to resolve different problems, especially by establishing contact with their families.

BAFOUSSAM A team of male and female religious and lay people regularly visits the detainees. They say: "The prison situation is degrading - over-crowding, mal-nutrition, sickness. One feels powerless in the face of so many needs."

MAROUA The visiting team has succeeded in mobilising the wardens to see to the provision of showers and toilets.

BERTOUA A hospitality centre has been created to welcome minors coming out of prison.

...for young people from disadvantaged areas

DOUALA A Spiritan Sister is engaged in the development of an entire marshy area. The people are gathering in groups to build schools, roads, markets and bridges. Young people and women have undertaken themselves the organisation of a centre for handicapped children, co-operatives (drying of vegetables and fruits, sculpture, jam-making, soap-making...). Even the young street-sellers have organised themselves into a co-op!

YAOUNDE A committee of unemployed people, created by the Young Christian Workers, has undertaken the creation of "Small Works" and job-creation. A number of young people have found stability within its embrace. The *Foyer de l'Esperance*, established 15 years ago for street children, has developed today three different types of action: a team meets children in the street to help them organise themselves for survival activities; an outreach at the Foyer itself which attempts to reunite these children with their families; a presence with imprisoned minors (Noah's Ark).

BAFOUSSAM The *Youth in Difficulties* Committee runs a formation centre in the following trades - building, masonry, carpentry, welding. In many parishes, almost everywhere, a *Caritas* Committee organises sharing with those most in need, especially people in hospital who cannot pay for their care.

Projected tasks

- Activities are often the result of initiatives on the part of individuals. In general, they do not work together nor are they co-ordinated, except perhaps at Yaounde, with the Justice and Peace Committee.
- The Episcopal Conference has frequently taken a stand for Justice and Peace. However, these declarations do not seem to have been followed up with action. For instance, there was no follow-up to their demand for clarification from those in positions of power after a series of murders of priests, sisters and a bishop.
- Religious Superiors have difficulty moving from words to real action. Nevertheless, a bulletin has seen the light of day. Entitled "Solidarity in Justice and Peace", it gives information on prisons, the plight of widows,

those suffering from AIDS. Since 1998, a publication "Faith and Justice Africa/Europe" has appeared and has drawn up a first document on the projected oil pipeline between Tchad and Cameroon, asking questions about the cost of the project, the risk it poses for the environment and its possible effects on the areas that it will cross.

- Our actions in prisons or on behalf of street children can only mitigate the inadequacy of government services. The question is how to obtain from these same government agencies a greater degree of effectiveness.
- Trying to involve the entire population is essential for maximising the struggle for justice and peace. We therefore strive to motivate the greatest possible number of Christians to adopt an attitude of active engagement instead of the usual sense of helpless resignation. This is done by recourse to scriptural texts in homilies and training sessions. But are we able to see what the people can do by themselves?
- Is our solidarity with the people authentic? On one occasion in North Cameroon, when I was insisting with the catechists on the necessity of concerted action, one of them said to me: *"We are to the fore, but where are you?"*

G rard SIREAU

1.9 A SITUATION OF CONFLICT: A TIME OF GRACE Angola

A mine field

For practically the last 37 years, the Congregation in Angola has been working in a minefield of the horrors of war and with a population marked by a wide variety of sufferings. All levels of social life were affected by this situation especially the economy which is particularly characterised by a corrosive greed for wealth and power. This is fed by the interests of the rampant capitalism of large multinational companies who totally dominate the economy especially in the areas of oil production, diamond production, the timber industry and other raw materials of great value. It is these 'godfathers' who dictate the laws in Angola. They set the boundaries and rhythm of the implementation of the Lusaka peace protocols signed on 20/11/94.

To pray and stand by the people

The Church in Angola is aware that evangelisation today means consolidating the existing fragile peace and promoting reconciliation among Angolans. The NGOs and the mass media, are informed fundamentally of the need to avoid what can only be described as national suicide, a return to war. This is done through the bishops' Pastoral Messages, through witness and through appropriate actions taken by priests, missionaries and lay people in favour of justice and peace, and above all through prayer, and the pastoral action of the Church, in collaboration with her sister Churches.

There has been a variety of circumstances and situations created by war and a corresponding variety of responses

and witness given by the Church: help given to the street children; help given to refugees, the displaced and to wounded soldiers; protection of military and political people from the opposition; vehement calls to those who control the mass media; publication of books, even the actual risking of lives in witness to the Good News; attending sacramentally to those in hopeless situations. There are missionaries who gave witness by the simple fact of remaining with and sharing in the conditions of their people (the apostolate of presence). They stayed when everyone advised them to leave and to flee.

Convinced that peace among people is above all a gift from God, the Church has been strong on the power of prayer. Campaigns of prayer for dialogue and peace emerged as permanent commitments of apostolic movements and of some religious Congregations in the country.

God writes straight with crooked lines

The love of God is above all present in situations of human misery and greater still when this is caused by human sinfulness. Through its apostolic commitments and its interventions down through these long disturbed years in Angolan history, the Church has done nothing more than keep alight the flame of hope, convinced that God writes straight with crooked lines and that people's destiny is in His hands. The 'weapons of peace' employed by the Church, such as solidarity, the presence and action of missionaries and other pastoral agents, the constant intervention in support of life, justice and human rights, and principally prayer, have been concrete signs of hope for the people.

In an atmosphere of war, faith, hope and fraternity constitute the secret that explains the great capacity for suffering and the overcoming of difficulties which one

finds in people who have shared times of tragedy. These attitudes among the people have evangelised, stimulated and inspired many of the evangelisers. These are lessons in detachment and an invitation to simplicity of lifestyle. They are concrete expressions of divine providence and the action of the Holy Spirit evident in gestures of pardon and attitudes of love towards the less well off.

A place to hear the word of God

A situation of conflict is a true test of one's faith. It is a test also of the transforming power of prayer, of hope and of one's capacity to respond with love. Evangelisers have to think twice about their options, about their pastoral methods of evangelisation and programmes of action. They have the opportunity to show themselves to be servants of the Gospel, of the centrality of love, of life, of bringing together ethnic groups and reconciling of all people with sensitivity to the suffering of the people they are called to serve. The real issue at stake is which side one is on: on the side of the culture of death or on the side of the culture of life and society based on love.

What one lives through in a situation of war becomes material for reflection, for prayer, for seeing in it the realisation of the Pascal mystery. It is the 'Gospel of the Holy Spirit' to the Church of today, an evident sign of fidelity to Christ and to His Gospel and to the people of our time. The situation of war is where one listens to the Word of God in the book of life, in the history of a people and of individuals. It allows baptised persons to translate the life of Christ into their own lives, to see the history of the liberation of the Israelites and their own history.

A situation of conflict can be a time of grace, of conversion and a source of inspiration as we try to live our Spiritan charism.

Gabriel MBILINGI

1.10 AN AFRICAN EXPRESSION OF THE SPIRITAN CHARISM West African Foundation

Charism and culture

The specific expression of our Spiritan Charism is stated in our Rule of Life (SRL 12), in terms of giving preference to an apostolate that takes us to:

- those who have not yet heard of the gospel message or who have scarcely heard it;
- those oppressed and most disadvantaged, as a group or as individuals;
- where the Church has difficulty in finding workers.

As members of the Spiritan family, we are all challenged by these three strands of our missionary commitment. However, we know from experience that the expression of this same charism varies with cultures and even with circumscriptions. It is, therefore, with this in mind that one can speak of an African expression of our Spiritan charism.

The African context

The lived experience in Africa, in which we are called to live the Spiritan charism, is a very fluid one, marked by many basic problems, such as the general lack of basic social services, the exploitation of the poor majority by the very rich few, the collapse of political authority, rebel and tribal conflicts causing displacement of people and intolerable refugee conditions. All these are, no doubt, an affront to the human and Christian dignity of our people. It is in such a situation that we are called today, as Africans, to mission. We respond not only because we are affected by them, but because we feel called by God to minister to them as Spiritans.

Our inspiration

We young Africans joining a missionary Congregation today, such as the Spiritans, are also aware of by the changes that have taken place in the Church since the Second Vatican Council. We know that the image of mission has changed from the concept of a "sending church and a receiving one", to that of "missionary collaboration", by which the evangelised are invited, at almost the first contact, to become partners in mission with those who evangelised them. This invitation is a welcome inspiration in Africa where Spiritan missionaries from overseas have worked for over a century. The birth of the Province of Nigeria, and of the West African Foundation, two of the fastest growing circumscriptions in our Congregation today, is a result of this inspiration.

With the growing number of Africans in the Congregation, the prospect is that Africans will sooner or later be the main agents of Spiritan missionary activity, not only in Africa but also elsewhere. This is an awakening to a new reality which could have only been implicit in a Congregation whose main mission was work for the "Poor Blacks", whether in Africa or in the colonies (N.D., XIII, 170; 1851). This emerging reality calls for a new orientation on the part of both the Congregation and of the African members.

Our desire

Our desire as African Spiritans is to create an African Spiritan missionary identity which is relevant to the reality of our African situation and at the same time faithful to the inspiration of our Founders. As dictated by the place and time we live in, and in solidarity with our Spiritan family, we commit ourselves to collaborate in ministry with the local churches as well as with our international Spiritan communities. Our ministry, therefore, takes us

to areas of first evangelisation, parish pastoral work, involvement in formal education, care for displaced people and refugees, and work with street children which has become a feature not only of Africa but of almost every large city in countries that are developing.

Our model: The African Family

Since we respond to our calling in community, we have always cherished the basic traditional qualities of our Spiritan community life, which are simplicity of life style and a welcoming hospitality. So we make our communities places of welcome to all people, and maintain close ties with our families who continue to play a vital role in our lives.

The best model we have in Africa, which inspires our expression of community life, is the family, our extended family. The experience of the family as extended characterises the total mode of behaviour of the African. We "are" because of the family, and the family "is", because it is extended.

Our membership in the Spiritan Congregation gives us and our people, a true sense of family, of a definite participation in the mission of the Church, and of the sharing of human resources which is a cherished value in Africa.

Gabriel LUSENI

1.11 THE EVANGELISATION OF A MISSIONARY Amazonia

I have spent thirty nine years in pastoral ministry with the people of Amazonia, in the Prelature of Tefe in Northern Brazil. I have no special skills nor a gift for profound analysis and reflection, but as a missionary I can tell you where I get my inspiration to live the Spiritan Charism.

To walk with a people

I set out to understand the reality lived by the people and to walk with them. I want to underline some aspects of this inculturation:

- a need to observe, to see and understand how to evangelise in the Brazilian context and more specifically in Amazonia;
- the need to understand and speak Portuguese well and especially in the way the people speak it, so that I can understand and be thus closer to the Amazon people. This clearly demands a listening and a permanent contact with the local people;
- to adapt oneself to the slower rhythm of daily life among the people, understanding that this slow rhythm is a fruit of the culture and of its geographical location;
- to live a simple lifestyle close to that of the people: the scarcity in food variety (fish and flour), immense distances to travel and places of difficult access;
- to be conscious that gross injustices are the result of a secular oppression exercised by 'godfathers', business, timber-merchants and politicians where corruption is normal;
- learning, however, that despite these situations of extreme misery, with an uncertain tomorrow, the

people demonstrate a profound faith and admirable hope with a sense of sharing, of welcome and an extraordinary hospitality.

To be of the Father and of the people

These situations, lived in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, inspire us:

- to be sources of human solidarity;
- to take on the causes of the people and to take their side;
- to share ourselves and our possessions and to share in the sufferings as well as the joys and hopes of the people.

The missionary takes on the role of being servant, of being a disciple, chosen to serve and to understand. This demands intimacy with God and proximity with the people. A bishop said: *"I need to be of the Father, and thus to be prayerful and of the people, to love the people, to love the ground"*.

The plan of God (the law and justice) is disfigured. We are at the service of life and against the causes of death. In the Movements and in the different pastoral outreaches of the Church, we discover the transforming power of the people who become the authors of their own liberation.

Just like the 'Servant of God' in the Bible, the missionary opts to carry the sin and hurt of the people. However, nourished by the Word of God, he/she overcomes the temptation to self pity, overcomes the fear of loneliness and the search for power. Being with and among the people is an invitation to personal emptying and the discovery that the grace of God comes to us through the poor, the great sacrament of God. Giving of oneself to the service of our brother and sister, assuming the

attitude of a servant, admitting to weakness and failure (a kind of martyrdom) creates in us patience, respect, fidelity and compassion.

Sustained by these attitudes, we learn from the people. From our faith experience we celebrate hope. Sharing our gifts we celebrate joy. Who better than the people to teach us joy and hope!

With the Church in Brazil

The journey of the Church in Brazil, with its innumerable pastoral documents, is a source of inspiration for all pastoral agents. These speak of evangelisation, of a preferential option for the poor, of human development and action of the laity. We could characterise the Church thus:

- a Church which announces with care and courage the transforming power of the Word of God;
- a Church which welcomes all without prejudice or discrimination;
- a Church which supports with love the excluded and the marginalised in the service of their liberation.;
- a Church which maintains and glows with hope amidst the struggles of the people.

In one's own community

Even though the reality of isolation is part and parcel of missionary life in Amazonia due to the enormous distances, the local or regional community is of paramount importance for evangelisation. As a district we meet twice a year. Personally, I have the joy of having lived most of my life in community. Lately, I have lived with young Spiritans in formation from different cultures. It is always a challenge which demands self-emptying and "fraternal correction". However, community life without

doubt enriches one's apostolate and leads us to maturity of faith.

Religious Life: A Journey of conversion

The religious consecrated life ought to be first and foremost a journey of permanent conversion. Someone said: "we need the faith of Jesus and not just faith in Jesus". Jesus' faith led Him to empty himself of everything, to be obedient unto death. We need to centre our lives in Jesus and humbly and joyfully welcome his Spirit so that He in us and through us may bring to fruition the project of the Father.

Antonio JANSEN

1.12 NEW BREATH IN AN AGEING PROVINCE Germany

Accept decline with resignation?

If we take the personnel situation as it is at present, it has to be admitted that the Province of Germany is nearing its end. Many confreres experience a sense of frustration and a sense of resignation when confronted with this situation of ageing, of decline in numbers, of the dearth of those seeking entry and the halting of many activities.

A question of faith

Only faith can follow such a reaction. That is why spiritual animation has been one of the priorities of the leaders of the Province. We have striven to state clearly that in the final analysis, before God, the important thing is not whether we live in a Province that is flourishing or in decline. The important thing is to make authentic choices when faced with our actual situation, to do our best and to believe that God can bring "life" out of "death". As part of a series of exchanges, each community has given its attention to a three-fold question: Where are we in our communal life, in our prayer and in our community activity? To facilitate these exchanges, each community has asked for a moderator from another community.

From these fraternal exchanges a group of confreres emerged seeking answers to the following questions:

- How do I live out my vocation in the Province as it is at present?
- What do my faith and Holy Scripture say to me in this context?
- How do I view the future?

- How can we arrive at common perspectives that are realistic for the future?

A question of communication and of participation

A second priority for us was to achieve the participation of all the confreres in the decision-making process. We formed commissions which each confrere was free to join. A Provincial Assembly was held annually and each confrere was personally invited to it. These meetings were sources of information, of expression, of preparing for coming Provincial Chapters and of discussion on Chapters that have already taken place.

Transparency, information communication and esteem for each confrere are all necessary to obtain the participation of the confreres in Provincial events. Those in positions of leadership at Provincial level have taken care that visitation is of sufficient length and frequency. The well-being of each individual confrere is of great importance to them. In the Provincial News Bulletin, confreres living alone are invited to attend meetings and to speak of their activities. Our policy vis-à-vis the confreres is, in cases of disagreement, to place the well-being of the confrere above the needs of the Province. Confreres are assigned to specific tasks only with their full agreement. We have sought transparency and have justified our decisions. Each confrere is entitled to consult the financial reports. Each community acts as host, once a year, for the monthly meeting of the Provincial Council - in this way the Council remains in contact with the communities.

Another highly significant aspect of our work is the attention given to lay Spiritans. We think that it is a source of encouragement for our confreres to realise that there is an entire group of lay people who regard themselves as being actively involved with our Institute, who

think and act with us. Thanks to their presence, it is now possible for many of our activities to continue and more than one can be carried on without us in the future.

A confidence that has become stronger

What has been the fruit of our efforts? There have not been any miracles - we are still on the way. Quite a number of reflections have not reached their hoped-for goal. However, taking the whole picture into account, the confreres are happy with their membership of the Congregation and with the work that they are doing. The level of participation in the various meetings has been good. The atmosphere prevailing at these meetings has been positive, characterised much more by confidence than by frustration or resignation. Objectives are becoming clearer and small perspectives are opening up:

- We hope that the "Missionary for a Period" Project will be successful;
- We place great hope in the "Lay Spiritan" Movement;
- We believe in diverse forms of missionary animation, in collaboration with lay people;
- We have high hopes of our involvement in Croatia. There are three candidates in formation and two Polish confreres getting ready to open a house of formation, in the hope that it will one day become an autonomous circumscription;
- Our Mission Procure will be able to render many services to young Churches and to Spiritan Foundations for many years to come;
- We believe in collaboration within the Region of Europe;
- We seek new fields of apostolate which will enable us to help confreres in the young Provinces.

To clarify our outlook

All of this means that the time has not yet come for us to give up and we see no reason to do so for the present. Our task is simply to do what is still possible. And there is still a great deal that we can do. Our outlook becomes clearer and remains open to what is new. And I think also that when we have exhausted our possibilities, God will be able to take over.

Konrad BREIDENBACH

1.13 TOGETHER FOR MISSION

Paraguay

Enthusiasm and trials

The post Conciliar Church lived times of great vitality, of creative fidelity, a source of enthusiasm and hope. New initiatives in evangelisation and a new ecclesial climate emerged everywhere. It was in this context that the Congregation gathered for the 1968 chapter which initiated a time of reflection that culminated with the new Rule of Life in 1986. It was during this time of renovation and change that the first two Spiritans arrived in Paraguay from Trinidad. Thus began what is today known as the International Group in Paraguay which has been present and working there for thirty-one years, faithful to the spirit of our founders, to Vatican II, to Medellin, to Puebla and to our Chapters.

In a Church with a big shortage of priests, it is our duty to give back to the laity the exercise of all of their responsibilities. Working through pastoral teams made up of lay people, religious and diocesan clergy and supporting the bishops' pastoral plan, our confreres were very successful in the formation and organisation of the 'campesinos' in basic Christian communities. However it was not long before a strong repression ensued against these communities, being accused by their arch-enemies of being 'probably supporters of guerrillas'. Our confreres, with the exception of two, had to leave the country. The General Council made an appeal to the circumscriptions for its mission in Paraguay.

The joining of forces

With the arrival of confreres from France, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Canada and the United States, the Group took on an international character. In September,

1987, we celebrated our first Chapter and formulated our Community Project. The birth of the Group created the conditions for an harmonious growth which, though slow, permitted the appearance of new projects such as the Spiritan Formation Programme, collaboration with the Pontifical Mission Societies and ministry to the indigenous population.

With renewed energy from the General Chapter in Itaici, the Group celebrated its second Chapter to evaluate its work and to renew itself. It gave new emphasis to the Community Project, highlighting the following elements: vocational and missionary animation, ongoing formation, the indigenous mission of St. Peter's, a project to reach out to and welcome the many rural people drifting towards the city to solve their problems, initial formation, the promotion of the Spiritan family and Justice and Peace.

One thing is clear in a group such as ours: the effort spent in organisation and common planning was well worth while. Even-though initially weak, we managed to grow in strength as an International Group. Always maintaining our initial inspiration to work with the poorest in Paraguay, the rural people, the 'landless', we started new projects such as Initial Formation and Mission Animation.

We are conscious that the Community Project commits and obliges us to work together in all the stages of our journey. We are also conscious of great difficulties in the near future: growth in new members and the scarcity of finances.

Contemplatives and pilgrims

Our meetings, both at a local and regional level, have helped us greatly. Apart from our retreat, we have three

meetings a year. Each community meets every Monday for the Eucharist and a meal. Our only formator is also the Group bursar and secretary. The Group co-ordinator also accompanies the formator. The availability of the members, shown by their commitment to the Community Project, creates a fraternal atmosphere which certainly attracts others to join the Group.

A group such as ours, bonded by the power of the Spiritan Charism and seen from the perspective of Latin American theology, allows us to understand the phrase: *'make yourselves Africans with the Africans'* we understand this from the perspective of evangelisation as a walking together with this suffering people, a following in the footsteps of Jesus who is the light to guide their exodus.

The dual aspect of being contemplatives and pilgrims living a life of 'practical union' illuminates and strengthens our faith, hope and love for the Christian people on the move.

Javier BLANCO

1.14 DIFFERENT NATIONS, ETHNIC GROUPS, CULTURES... IN COMMUNITY Congo-Brazzaville

Why live in an international community?

In April 1998, all the members of the District gathered for a General Assembly. Out of 15 communities, 12 are international, with confreres originating from 9 African and 3 European countries. The confreres were invited to respond to the following question: "What interest do you see in living in an international community?" The reflections which follow are the result of a group sharing on the different responses to this question. Passages in italics are direct quotations.

"A Mission which is beyond my strength"

An international community is, first of all, a community. And to live in community is something which *involves both mind and heart*. That presupposes in each confrere a conviction: *I need the others to better fulfil my mission, a mission which is beyond my individual strength!*

- There is a need to be around the same table. The confrere who is always absent thereby excludes himself.
- There is a need for common prayer. This provides support for each confrere and is a witness for the Christian community.
- There is a need to organise the apostolic work in community planning, confrontation, evaluation.
- There is need for sharing our resources for subsistence and for activities (finances, travel...).
- There is a need to accept transparency in the management of our goods and in the justification of our expenses.

As Missionaries, we are sent to meet others. *How do I meet those who are entrusted to my care if I do not reach out the others in my community?*

Internationality - A source of enrichment

- Internationality provides enrichment for the community. It offers a complementarity in the way we look at things, in the methods of action we adopt. Each member brings his own values, his culture, his personal relations (relatives, friends, financial resources...). Pooling these resources increases the community's effectiveness.
- Internationality increases the value of witness. The Congolese bishops stress the importance of the witness of religious for the Congolese people who tend to become locked within the boundaries of tribalism and regionalism. Religious live beyond the limitations of nations and race.

...The demands

- Internationality makes demands. The need to learn a language, to learn forgetfulness of self, to learn how to reach out in empathy towards the other. In three communities, the normal language used is Lingala, the local language.
- Before bringing one's own traditions, one must learn the traditions that are already there.
- A minimum number of three members is desirable.
- Preparation for living in international community should begin with formation. This type of community becomes *natural* for those who have lived it since their days in formation. An aptitude to live with confreres of other nations, races and ethnic groups ought to be a basic criterion in the discernment of a Spiritan

vocation. *'Whoever wants to eat the food of his own village should remain in his own diocese!'*

In joy and in sadness

To know how to rejoice in the gifts which I find in others, gifts which I do not myself possess. It is not a question of simply supporting one another but of loving one another.

Difficulties can arise from differing cultural backgrounds - the way in which our goods are administered, our ideas of time, our liturgical sensitivities... But more often than not, difficulties can emanate from individuals' character, age... Spending time together is of the utmost importance. *Sharing our hopes* - that is the acid test.

One feels the need to stand in solidarity with a confrere who suffers a severe setback. In fact, one must ask oneself, *"If my confrere were to commit suicide, would I not be responsible?"* But in the case of personal problems, one often feels powerless.

Without introspection

Internationality is of no value in isolation. If it does not lead us to improve our relations with others, the effort has been worthless. We do not live together simply to look at each other, but each one with a different approach to create relationships with the people to whom we are sent. Community introspection is dangerous. We must learn *'not to look too much at ourselves on the cross of internationality!'*

Opening our communities to diocesan priests and seminarians is desirable. Working in favour of common links and projects amongst neighbouring communities helps us to see our internal difficulties in a more balance

light. Inter-community solidarity is something that should always be promoted.

The evolution of the Congregation has led us progressively to live in international communities. We are aware of this movement which we welcome. Let us not over-exaggerate the difficulties.

René TABARD

1.15 AN EXPERIENCE OF LIVED SOLIDARITY

Zimbabwe

A helpful experience

My early experience as a teacher in Zimbabwe was of particular help to me when I was asked to prepare this presentation. At the request of one of the lady teachers I prepared a speech in 1996 on the topic of the "International Year of Women", concluding with a song which I composed myself with the following words: *We are all in solidarity (thrice) with our mothers and with other women.* The song was an immediate success with the teachers and the students and a slightly changed version has since become an official school song, sung on various occasions: *We are all in solidarity (thrice) with our school and with all our teachers.* While I cannot recall the content of my speech, I can vividly recall the experience of solidarity to which my song gave rise; it was truly a great experience. The words can quite easily be changed to suit the context of our Chapter: *We are all in solidarity (thrice) with all the Spiritan confreres, with all the lay associates.*

Solidarity

... with the universal Church

The Congregation's mission is basically the mission of the Church. Thus SRL 4 in part states: *"We also willingly accept tasks for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers"*. One recent example of solidarity with the universal Church in line with SRL is our acceptance to send Spiritans to work in the Asian continent, in Taiwan and the Philippines. The Gospel of Christ must reach all nations and all peoples.

... on the Congregation level

Our solidarity as members of the Congregation takes its point of departure from our motto: *Cor Unum et Anima Una*. Serious efforts are made today to ensure proper use of the available personnel and material resources so that no community, circumscription or Province lacks the basic needs and what we have is pooled together at the service of our common mission. The Generalate has a particular responsibility in this regard and much has been achieved through the current policy on first appointments and through the Cor Unum Fund.

... on the Regional level

The family spirit that binds us together also unites us at the regional level. In our own context, SCAF (South Central Africa Foundation) has pooled resources to establish two houses of formation, a novitiate in South Africa and a house of philosophy in Malawi. In this way limited resources are maximised and all are enriched by the encounter of different cultures. SCAR (South Central Africa Region) meetings are held once a year on a rotational basis in the various member countries. This offers an opportunity for confreres of different circumscriptions to come to know each other, share ideas and experiences. When any circumscription is holding a Chapter or celebrating an anniversary, all the others are invited. For example, when Zambia celebrated 25 years of Spiritan presence in that country all the other circumscriptions participated in the celebration. In the preparation of this presentation, confreres from the other circumscriptions supplied information on their own experience of solidarity.

... in our Circumscription

Those of us in Zimbabwe come together three times a year for a meeting. On the zonal level, we come together much more often to pray, to share personal, spiritual and emotional problems; we also gather to review pastoral programmes and map out strategies for future work. We gather to celebrate our joys and our sorrows together. A recent example was when one of us lost his father in Nigeria; we joined together to pray with him. While some prepared his travel documents, others ensured that he got to the airport. Again, when one of us celebrated his tenth anniversary as a priest, the rest of us gathered to celebrate with him and contributed what was necessary for the celebration.

When a confrere is sick or on leave, the pastoral work in that mission is continued by other confreres. Those in the cities render services for those in the rural areas while the latter provide farm produce for the former. Confreres donate domestic animals to our small farm at the District house. We leave open our doors to our parishioners who join with us to celebrate our Congregation feast-days. Our diocesan co-workers in the Lord's vineyard also attend our celebrations and they in turn invite us to theirs.

Our solidarity extends also to non-Catholics in our celebrations; we take particular care to be with them in times of bereavement. The drought of 1991/92 which impoverished so many, offered us an opportunity to share the little we had with the people among whom we live and work. Lived solidarity is not without its problems, particularly in so far as distance and finance are concerned. However, these difficulties have not hampered us in Zimbabwe and we have gained much in terms of mutual trust, collaboration and unity in the District.

Anthony AMADI

1.16 DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY LIFE

France

Diversity

Of the approximately 700 confreres who claim the Province of France as their province of origin, about 400 live and work in the Province of France. There is a very wide diversity in forms of community life. Mention must first be made of the hundred or so confreres who, for various reasons, do not live in a Spiritan community. The "Regional Communities" of which these confreres are members are themselves very varied - sometimes, simple fraternal meetings and exchange of information, at other times meetings of greater depth involving the sharing of the spiritual life and concerns of the apostolate.

Of the 23 local communities, six of them are composed of retired confreres. For all of them, in so far as health permits, retirement is active - ministry, hospitality, maintenance of the house, various forms of service. Since France began to participate in the Inter-Provincial Novitiate in Dublin in 1992, the Province only has two communities of initial formation - first cycle at Lille and second cycle at Clamart, the latter community being largely international. The nature of "active" or "apostolic" communities depends to a large extent on the work to which each community is devoted - education, missionary animation, pastoral care of migrants, service of Mission, animation of the Province, hospitality etc.

The size of the communities can range from simply a few members to more than fifty. With very rare exceptions, the communities live in huge houses which the Province has inherited from the hard work of our predecessors and which require non-stop maintenance, restoration and

adaptation to new needs. Very often, other people, to differing degrees, share in our community life - those on sabbatical, Sisters in our houses for retired confreres, Spiritan lay associates, members of Spiritan Fraternities, young people discussing their vocation, etc.

Actual and hoped-for developments

Community life is far from being a fixed reality. Developments, already in existence or projected, modify the appearance of the communities from one year to the next. In the first place, hospitality offered on an ever wider basis to confreres of other circumscriptions contributes to rejuvenating a Province whose average age is 70 years and makes it possible for it to remain active and creative. Moreover, the discernible progress of the "Esprit et Mission" Fraternities has permitted us to rediscover the great spiritual and apostolic riches of Father Libermann and make us more open to the dynamism and the needs of the Church in France. As a result of the ageing process and the lessening of our own effectiveness and also as a result of the profound changes of the social and religious life of our human milieu, it has been found necessary to redefine the apostolic projects of many communities.

These developments do not always take place in the calm serenity which is proper to those for whom immutable convictions avoid the discomfort of questions and of doubts. There is a need for a great deal of searching, of consultation, experimentation, of healthy self-questioning, of failure, of change so that in a given time and place, the community will find, or perhaps rediscover a stable and coherent apostolic project. Since the Province takes deeply to heart the necessity of remaining as much at the service of the Mission *ad extra*

as well as *ad intra*, it does not wish to sacrifice either aspect. If it is merely a base for far-away activities, it could run the risk of rapid disintegration. If the Province were to become completely preoccupied with the field of the interior apostolate, it would be unfaithful to the mission of the Congregation.

Sources of unity

Where do our communities which are so diverse and are in such a constant process of change, find a stable point for their unity? In the first place, in the spiritual depth of each confrere and of each community. Our origins, our past experiences, our theological views and pastoral opinions are too diverse to really unite us. Only the Holy Spirit, living and praying in us, can bring about this astonishing miracle of keeping in unity a group of men, prone to weakness and to sin, which, left to itself, would be more likely to fall apart. It is for this reason that the Provincial Council has, for a number of years past, proposed a "Programme of Animation of Confreres and Communities (PACC), which aims at conditions favourable for this deepening of the spiritual life.

In a more immediately visible manner, the unity of the Province rests also on a type of organisation which, while remaining flexible, allows each community to live in profound unity with the entire Province and the Congregation as a whole. The elaboration of the "community project" is at the very heart of this organisation. The work of unity and of animation (undertaken by local and regional superiors, bursars...) allows this community project to become a living reality.

Confreres who devote themselves specially to the pastoral care of young people and the fostering of vocations have noted for many years that these young people are looking for three things: the service of the

poorest, an authentic spiritual life and a fraternal community life. Neither Poullart des Places nor Libermann would have disowned them! We continue today, in France as elsewhere, to try to live out this ideal, so ancient and yet so new.

Jean-Paul HOCH

1.17 MISSION IN AN AGEING PROVINCE England

The dilemma

The English Province is an "Ageing Province" whose numbers are diminishing. Despite this, the Province wants to carry out its Spiritan Mission. How to carry out this mission in the present circumstances is the dilemma which affects every part of the Province's life.

Looking outwards

The ordination of Derek McCartney this year, our first ordination for some years, is a sign of hope, encouragement and joy for the Province. His appointment to Cameroon underlines that the main focus for the work of the Province has been, and remains, the mission "*ad extra*". Today more confreres are coming home to retire than are appointed overseas. Nevertheless, one third of the Province is still working outside the Province. Looking outwards has kept the Province dynamic. However, shrinking numbers make us wonder how long we can continue to send people to mission situations. One of the ways in which we tried to resolve this was by "rotation" of personnel.

Optimising resources

In order to attract vocations and continue a vocations programme, confreres have been withdrawn from work overseas. We tried to ensure that those brought back from the missions would, after a period in the home Province, return to the circumscription from which they had been withdrawn. It also allowed those returning to renew contact with the home Province and to up-date their theological and pastoral outlook. However, the Province and the circumscriptions were often looking for

the same people. Rotation worked better in theory than in practice.

Collaborating with Others

Our search to continue our mission has lead us into collaboration with others. In our "Youth Ministry", many of our helpers are themselves young people. They organise the retreat programmes and the youth animation work. The intention is that they will take on the running of the youth ministry. Spiritans might still contribute to the work, but its continuity would not be dependent on professed Spiritans.

There has been close collaboration with "Lay Associates". They have taken responsibility for "Justice and Peace" in the Province. A lay associate is the Province's representative at the "Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network-UK". Another associate is involved in work for "Immigrants and Asylum Seekers".

We have been in collaboration with other Spiritan Provinces. We have been helped by the Nigerian and Irish Provinces, and by the West African Foundation. We are grateful for their support and help.

Different forms of community

The KAIROS COMMUNITY PROJECT is for homeless people and those with drug and alcohol addiction problems. The Spiritan confreres involved in this project live in community with those who come in off the streets. Part of the therapy is bringing people into a welcoming community. Not every confrere is willing or able to live in such a community.³

³ This is not a Spiritan project, but one in which Spiritans are involved. It is run as a Charitable Trust.

The "Youth Apostolate" has meant opening up our communities to lay youth workers who live in community with Spiritans. Again, not all the confreres are willing to live in such communities. While not wishing to exclude confreres from their "homes", we do not want to jeopardise the work with the young.

Problems blocking growth

There are fewer people to take on the responsibilities of the mission or administration of the Province. For the first time we have no students in the Province, though we do have one student on apostolic work in Kenya.

Two or three confreres live outside community. Others have cut themselves off from Provincial meetings and activities. Others again are reluctant to take renewal courses, fearing perhaps the need to face themselves and change their outlook and attitude.

A New Form of Existence?

How to cope with our diminishing numbers is our main worry. Will we be able to continue to exist as a Province? By the time the next General Chapter comes around we will be fewer than our present sixty members. It will not be possible to exist in the same way that we exist today.

Brain FULTON

1.18 PROFESSED SPIRITANS AND LAY ASSOCIATES General Council

Continually interpreting the Gospel for our world

The presentation of missionary experiences during the course of this Chapter has confirmed my conviction that our Congregation is very much in touch with a host of questions which have to do very closely with the actual situation of the world. In our missionary agenda, we do not take our starting point from our desks or from some high-blown theories. We try to base our agenda on real questions, questions which rise from contact with people. For that, we have some marvellous advantages. First of all, our faith, which gives us access to a Gospel capable of giving meaning to life. Then, we have our long history, dotted with experiences of "translating" the Gospel into highly diverse cultures. We are convinced that this Good News is still real.

Our missionary undertakings and our pastoral programmes have to be adapted to the situation of the people to whom we are sent. The answers to the questions which have been put to us come from their experience and also from our own, by means of study and reflection on the "translation" of the Gospel in the contemporary world. This translation or interpretation is never a once-and-for-all fixed thing. Rather, it needs to be constantly incarnated in new life situations. To help us in this, we have the inspiration of our founders, that of Spiritans of the past and of today, their particular way of reacting to particular situations.

With eyes open to the future of Mission

Faced with the current world situation, some are asking if mission still has a future. But the Spirit is at work. Instead of allowing ourselves to be locked in by this question, is the Spirit not leading us, through the very situation of the world today, to a change of outlook, to an opening to other horizons? I am convinced that God continues to call labourers. Fortunately, it is not up to the Spiritan alone to become involved. It is no longer the Spiritan alone who possesses the charisms necessary for this immense task of evangelisation. Every baptised person is called to share his experience with others, to bring the specific riches that have come to him from the faith. He fulfils his mission by his presence alongside others and by his involvement in the building of a better world, the Kingdom of God.

Let us pool our heritage and our expectations

Why do Spiritans not allow others to profit from their experience, their spirituality and their enthusiasm for the mission of following Jesus Christ? There are many signs which encourage us towards this. For a number of years now, in an increasing number of countries, lay people have been expressing an interest in our Spiritan family. Some are more attracted by our life in common, by our sources of meditation and by our prayer, others by our actual work, others still by the two, with differing emphases.

How can we be faithful to the spirit of our founders? We see that lay people and professed Spiritans are in a way being pushed towards each other. On the one hand, the Congregation seeks to enhance its identity, its charisms, its spirituality, its tradition as a useful resource for the future of the world, for the setting up of the Kingdom of God. It is in this spirit that it offers what it has to the

world. On the other hand, many people are looking to religious traditions, as they seek for meaning for their lives. Many are looking for companions who will work with them with a view to building a better world for all.

For us, it is not merely a question of giving of our riches, of our 300-year old experience. We also receive from lay people. The witness of three Associates which follows shows clearly what it means to "receive a lot from them". The Congregation can become greatly enriched by this striking offering of the experience of their Christian and social lives. When their experience is put side by side with our own, it can provoke a kind of chemical reaction, a source of new energy and of pro-active enthusiasm.

Faithful to the creativity of our Founders

In the 1980's, in the Dutch Province, young people were asking to be linked in some way with the Congregation. We said to ourselves : "It is not at all certain that it is the Holy Spirit who is urging us to become involved in this adventure of association. But we do not see that any other procedure is possible for the moment. If we do not make a positive response today, we may miss out on one of the "signs of the times" offered by the Spirit. Let us try at least to do something. If it is not of the Spirit, it will break up of its own accord."

Together with the Associates, we have to find again the enthusiasm, the creativity and the imagination which our Founders had when they began their new adventure. With the Associates, we must become involved in an effort to bring new answers to the questions and the needs of today. The history of mission is rich in inventiveness and in wide visions. Spiritans, whether professed or non-professed, have to follow in this way to try and find God's way in the human reality as it is lived today. Let us together have the courage to face the world

as it is. Our religious involvement in solidarity can bring about liberation, can bring into existence new forms of unity. History gives us abundant evidence that this is possible.

In the service of the Kingdom

The General Council is convinced that this course is well worth following. Our Associate brothers and sisters are companions along the way and we believe that we can find mutual enrichment in each step that we take together. What is of the greatest importance is not our Institute but the coming of God's Kingdom. For the sake of the Kingdom, it is definitely worth the effort to respond positively to the signs of the times and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. To travel along together with the Associates is perhaps the strongest sign of this present time.

Frans WIJNEN

1.19 AN EXPERIENCE OF COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY TransCanada

Lay Spiritan Associates exist in each of the four North American Provinces and despite some differences in how we conceive of our role there are many commonalities. Annual regional meetings of North American delegates have provided a forum to share experiences and shape common goals. This report focuses on the TransCanada experience as a specific illustration of the Lay Spiritan relationship to the Congregation and the meaning of collaborative ministry in a North American context.

Our story

Dermot and Deirdre McLoughlin became the first Lay Spiritans in TransCanada in 1975, forming the nucleus of a Toronto-based group that developed around them. Their home was for many years the meeting place of the TransCanada Lay Spiritans, until they moved to Sioux Lookout in Northern Ontario in 1997. My wife, Joy, and I made our first formal commitment as Lay Spiritans in 1991, about a decade after our first introduction to the Toronto-based group. My first contact with the Spiritans was as a student, and briefly teacher, at St. Mary's College, Trinidad. As a couple, we renewed this relationship in the mid-1970s as members of the Spiritan-run Roman Catholic community at McMaster University, Hamilton. With the relocation of two of the Toronto families, the TransCanada group currently consists of 5 couples divided into two clusters, a Toronto-Hamilton grouping and a more dispersed Winnipeg-Sioux Lookout grouping.

Our Life

The handbook of the Lay Spiritans of the Province of TransCanada refers to a Lay Spiritan as *"a person who is committed to the Spiritan Congregation and has been accepted to work with the Congregation for the building of God's Kingdom of Love, Justice and Peace."* As Lay Spiritans we try to live these three fundamental aspects of our commitment – personal prayer life, community and defence of the weak and marginalised – bearing in mind the context of our life situations. The Toronto and Hamilton Lay Spiritans each has a prayer community, which includes a monthly home Mass, and we travel to meet together on a regular basis as well. In spite of distance, the Winnipeg-Sioux Lookout group meets by telephone conference call and in person when it is feasible. We treasure the support of Fr Pat Fitzpatrick who accompanies us.

Our Ministry

All are involved in a wide variety of Justice and Peace activities, such as working with First Nations communities, teaching and providing support to immigrants, legal aid, active involvement in advocacy work of the Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace, helping to prepare volunteers for their overseas placement with Spiritan-run Volunteer International Christian Service (VICS), teaching religion and serving on a school chaplaincy team, and working as a Clinical Ethicist. In a more general way, the everyday world of family, work and civic interactions is a unique site of lay ministry and witness, which can draw inspiration from Spiritan spirituality. As Lay Spiritans we work for the building of God's Kingdom of Love, Justice and Peace by the vision we bring and the choices we make in our family, professional and social lives.

Attracted by the Spiritan charism

Not all lay people who work with Spiritans overseas or in Canada wish to become Lay Spiritans. Some of us have made this choice because we are attracted by the Spiritan charism, particularly as we have seen it lived by specific confreres whom we have come to know as friends or whose work we admire. We are also attracted by the potential to deepen our spirituality and by the international community with which we can identify ourselves. We have found great encouragement in TransCanada from a succession of most supportive Provincials. Their unfailing support and the familiarity with the confreres in the Province that comes from accumulated interactions at Chapters, retreats, funerals and social gatherings have neutralised any scepticism felt, initially at least, by some confreres regarding our participation as Lay Spiritans.

Forging new patterns of collaboration

We do not come empty-handed – we bring valuable experience, talents and skills to the Congregation. As lay people we can work with you to forge new or deeper patterns of collaboration by supporting or taking responsibility for specific Spiritan works, by initiating new areas of ministry, and by bringing Spiritan spirituality to some areas of secular life which we can access more easily than our professed confreres.

Gary WARNER

1.20 A LAY ASSOCIATE FROM EUROPE

England

Though representing European Lay Spiritan Associates, the following is mainly from my own experience as a Lay Associate of the English Province.

My background

A war refugee as a child, later working in N. Ireland with Hungarian refugees in 1956/57, an education by missionary sisters and the influence of a loving family, naturally led to a strong feeling for an ideal of justice, in the centre of which is my marriage to Tony, who comes from India.

Spiritans influences

Meeting the Spiritans for the first time in England, in 1990, I was impressed with their approach to youth with an open house and a non-judgmental attitude. Invited to join the Youth Ministry team in 1991, I've since worked with the youth teams in various ways, being involved for five years in the 100-mile pilgrimage youth walks in England, Scotland and in Ireland, and since 1996, as Justice and Peace Co-ordinator for the English Province. I wonder, did the Spiritans know what a great gift they've given me?

English Spiritan Lay Associates

In 1992, six other lay people and myself, after varying periods of involvement, followed a formation programme, making our first formal commitment to the Congregation for three years, on 2nd February 1993. We have since renewed this commitment and have been joined by five more Lay Associates who made their formal commitment in March 1998.

So who are Associates?

At the first organised meeting for European lay people connected to the Congregation, in May 1998, lay Spiritans and Associates from five countries in Europe met in Gemert, Holland, enriching each other by an exchange of experiences. Together with several European professed Spiritans, questions relating to different forms of lay involvement were discussed. Some felt the definition of the name 'Associate' needed clarification as different European Provinces have different forms of associateship.

Many lay people wish to involve themselves with the professed Spiritans, in work, in prayer, or more often both. In Europe we call these Lay Spiritans.

Some feel drawn to strengthen their inner spiritual self by following more closely *'the vision and objectives of the Congregation, in the Spirit of its founders and the Christian Gospel, recognising our baptismal call to allow our gifts and talents to bear fruit'* (Spiritans Associate Way of Life – English Province). After a period of structured formation, they make a deeper commitment to the Congregation with a mutual contract, adopting the missionary spirituality of the Congregation and uniting specifically with the work of the province. It is these that we in Europe call Lay Spiritan Associates.

The terms 'Lay Spiritan' and 'Lay Spiritan Associate', as used in Europe, may not coincide with their use in other circumscriptions.

In the English Province many Associates earn a living in paid employment outside the Congregation and do not, as yet, go out to mission situations abroad. In some European Provinces, mission abroad is often the beginning of lay contact, which leads to becoming Spiritan Associates. The primary commitment in the

English Province is to living out a Spiritan spirituality in our daily lives. In our contract in the English Province we have the words *"I am prepared to offer a free outpouring of myself in my commitment, loyalty and support as a Spiritan Associate in an atmosphere of true love and faith."*

What do we do?

We are included as members of the Province. Some of us are involved with work that reaches out to those on the margins of society, for example, in organisations supporting asylum seekers and empowering the people who live their daily lives on the streets of our cities. Other Associates are involved with the Youth Ministry team.

In 1995, the Lay Associates of England were offered and accepted the Justice and Peace portfolio for the Province. This has led to an Information Centre, networking with other justice and peace-based organisations; also to regular contact visits to asylum seekers in detention at Manchester airport. At present we, in England, see our mission in the places where we are.

Proposals to the Chapter

The following are points which came out of the Meeting of European Associates at Gemert to be presented to the Chapter:

1. Lay Associates in each Province need to form their own structures suitable to their group/s and to have a professed Spiritan as a linkperson, appointed by the Province and agreed by the Associates.
2. We see ourselves as part of the Spiritan family, hoping that this can become a concrete reality in each Province.

3. We wish Lay Associate involvement to be further promoted throughout each Province, both by lay and professed Spiritans.
4. There has been a request from Associates in some European Provinces that each Province should have a special fund for Associates.

Maureen SOARES

1.21 A PILGRIM FOR THE KINGDOM

Brazil - Puerto Rico

Baptismal Vocation

I was born in Valadares, (Minas Gerais) where I got to know a few Dutch Spiritans. As a good pilgrim, I moved to Belo Horizonte. There I began to work in catechesis and later in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. What is called "assisting" families touched me deeply. As a result, beginning by bringing families together in the 'favelas' where they lived in order to know them better and to help them and to celebrate 'life', we began to celebrate birthdays as well as helping out in the registering of children and civil marriages. We initiated the celebration of Easter vigils, Christmas, the 'Junina' feast and Carnival in the community hall. In 1964 we began a course in adult education. The priest and all the local parish community helped out at the meal marking the end of the course. It was such a positive experience that other courses emerged such as gardening, block-laying, etc.

A people that creates its own history

In order to work in a job in a governmental department of education, I was transferred to Brasília. At that time the workers who were working in the construction of the new capital lived in 'Vilas' or slums. When they arrived they would build their little wooden huts beside a family they already knew but there was no security. These people were in the majority from the north-east of the country. Having built the capital, the government planned to move all the workers to a site about 30 kilometres from the centre of the city. The change was good in principle but the manner of its execution was brutal. This new city, this 'promised land', numbered 90,000 inhabitants which

they called Ceilândia - a city for the eradication of the 'invaders' from Brasília. I went to work in this city (Brasília) and seeing the attitudes of the students I began to visit their families.

The Dutch Spiritans also worked here and they invited me to join in the parish pastoral team in the Parish of the Resurrection. The team comprised three priests, three religious and two lay people, one of whom was a nurse. In order to be more effective, we moved to Ceilândia. Our pastoral methodology was to visit the families to get to know the reality of their lives better with a view to a pastoral outreach. Each week, the team met to share ideas and to plan the work for the following week. Beginning with courses in crochet and knitting for the children, teenagers and adults, we were able to identify people to train as future catechists, to begin work with young people, to initiate a basic health service. Bible groups were held in houses with reflections on the social conditions of their daily lives. Each victory was commemorated, such as the coming of electricity, water and transport. We would all get together to celebrate - Catholics, Pentecostals, macumbeiros - and we would sing and give thanks to God.

Through the light of the Word of God, we discovered our dignity and this was what gave us energy for further action. We began to think of setting up an entity with greater legal force. We called it 'The Association of the Indefatigables'. The OAB gave us the necessary legal help. In 1979 we produced our first 'Directory' that included for the first time the inhabitants of Ceilândia. We did this because at that time the government was charging elevated prices for housing sites and the speculators were taking advantage of the less knowledgeable who, frightened that they would lose their piece of ground, would sell their right to live there and

move to Goiaz or would go to live in a rented house. Those who kept their feet on the ground and trusted in God, the Good Father, are there to witness to the fact that it is with faith, hope and charity that one builds the Church, the People of God that moves ahead and creates its own history.

To be where the workers are few

On returning to Porto Rico, the Porto Rican Spiritans, who continued the work we were doing in the Parish of the Resurrection, invited me to work with them in their Mission Animation Centre. The work consists of animating lay people to assume their role in the Church; Christians motivated by faith put themselves at the service of their abandoned brothers and sisters, excluded from a society corrupted by the desire for power and possessions. I see the Church as a common roof under which all are welcomed.

Lay people are Christians who, fired by the Holy Spirit, put the gifts received at baptism at the service of others and desire to take part in God's project. Spiritan Lay Associates are those who, committed to the Church, wish to live out the Spiritan charism and to make theirs the project of the adopted sons of Libermann which is to go to and be there where the Church finds it difficult to find workers. I am a Spiritan Associate because, living with a happiness that only those who abandon themselves completely to the hands of God know, I got to know the Spiritans and with them I want to live with one heart and one soul. My work is to promote the growth of this big family in wisdom, grace and sanctity.

Maria Lucia ANDRADE

1.22 PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LAITY

Central African Foundation

First Experiences

From my parents and my relatives and from my family background in Senegal, I learned hospitality, mutual aid and solidarity. On the occasion of my ordination, I received this message from them: "You are a priest and a religious. Do not forget that you are not alone in the Church. We are your friends, your brothers, your kin." In the course of the exercise of my ministry as a young priest in Cameroon, I made a conscious effort to live among the laity in Spiritan simplicity, a priest for them, a brother with them. These were my first experiences of collaboration.

The 'Brottier Amicale'

Towards the end of the 1980s, I found myself at the Central African Foundation House of Studies in Brazzaville in Congo. With the other formators, we made a decision to try and experience a community-family with lay relatives and friends in the vicinity of the scholasticate. Their question to us was: "What do you expect of us?" In 1991, on the occasion of a meeting with a large number of friends, both Congolese and from other countries, the idea of founding an 'amicale' was born. In 1992, this took definitive form as the "Father Brottier Amicale" and it set before itself the following objectives:

- to deepen our knowledge of Spiritan spirituality and the Spiritan charism;
- to support the Scholasticate community, to remain close to it in its joys and sorrows;
- to promote links between the laity and Spiritans working in the Congo, with our focus on mission;

- to initiate development projects that would favour disadvantaged people.

For the laity, the question was: "How to live effectively with Spiritans in the service of God." In close collaboration with the Spiritans of the Congo concrete actions were proposed:

- "Open Door" days at the Scholasticate and fraternal welcome in our respective houses;
- Family meals with the members of the Amicale at the beginning of each academic year;
- Sponsorship of students and participation in ordinations to the diaconate and the presbyterate;
- Periods of reflection and prayer in common;
- In 1993-1994, when Brazzaville was in the centre of a war zone, the links between the Amicale and Spiritans made possible, gestures of solidarity with sister members affected by the war and members of other families in the immediate vicinity.
- A non-Governmental Organisation for women was created in 1994. It has seen the development of many examples of social and medical assistance in favour of orphans and AIDS victims. It is supported by Spiritans.

The Paul Ondia Chorale

Paul Ondia was the first Congolese Spiritan and religious priest. After his death in 1994, as the result of an accident, a Chorale was formed amongst his former students and lay friends. It aimed at perpetuating his memory by means of the singing he loved so much. Its members also wished to co-operate with the work of Spiritans. Paul Ondia used to say: "The authentic family rises above racial considerations and makes all of us universal brothers."

Many young aspirants for the missionary life have been accompanied and presented for entrance to Spiritan formation by this Chorale.

Links woven at Kinshasa...

During contacts that were made in Kinshasa as part of the process of the undertaking of a new parish by Spiritans of the FAC (Central African Foundation), we discovered a vast family: The National Union of Former Students of Spiritans. Its members, amongst whom can be numbered many who hold responsible positions in Congolese society, desire that the links woven between them and our Congregation be continued. On the occasions of Spiritan feasts, a bridge has been built between these lay people of Kinshasa and those of Brazzaville...

...and at Libreville

Three girls of the Grands Lacs Region were experiencing missionary life with our confreres amongst the Bakas pygmies in the south-east of Cameroon. The question was raised by them of possible collaboration and association with the Spiritans. Developments brought one of them back to Libreville and led her to ask for a more formal commitment in this sense. This has raised many different questions and challenged us to reflect and discern. One of the questions still facing us is: How do we help a lay African woman to realise her missionary vocation?

The Challenges of Partnership

Religious vocations in Africa are becoming more and more plentiful and the financial needs of our houses of formation are growing ever larger. By means of the Cor Unum fund, the solidarity of the rest of the Congregation

is strong. But since these resources are being greatly stretched at the moment, what is our future?

The creation of a network of African friends and benefactors is a matter of urgency. It is a matter of bringing our own families to help us rather than looking to us for help. This partnership is possible. Lay people are disposed to put into practice their baptismal commitment in our regard. However, this presupposes our facing certain challenges:

- that our community life not be a counter-witness, but truly a place of prayer, of solidarity and of sharing;
- that our mutual relations be truly inspired by fraternal charity, that we seek to save others rather than judge them without pity, we who, according to Libermann, "are all poor people ourselves", that we acknowledge the presence of lay people is a call to our own conversion and that they can renew our dynamism in times of difficulty;
- that we truly live in solidarity with the poor and the most abandoned in our missionary commitments as well as in our houses of formation;
- that we be ready to become involved with lay people to promote the development and the dignity of abandoned peoples.

Benoît DIEMÉ

1.23 CONTINUING THE SPIRITAN CHARISM IN OUR COLLEGES Ireland

A strong commitment

The Irish Province has had a strong commitment to education since its foundation. Almost 4500 students attend the Province's 8 Secondary and Primary schools. Twelve Spiritans are engaged full-time in this apostolate, and an additional 20 render services within these schools as chaplains, administrators, and so on. Approximately 275 lay teachers are employed in them in addition to a substantial number of domestic and maintenance staff.

Lay collaboration

Collaboration in the context of Irish schools has always existed. Even though few in number at the beginning, there has always been a strong association between the Spiritans and their lay colleagues. This association has generated in the laity a strong bond of loyalty and pride in the work of the Congregation and its schools – a loyalty which is not confined to the teaching staff, but extends equally to the domestic and maintenance staff. In their own distinctive way, they play a significant part in the generation of the spirit of the colleges.

What is our Ethos?

Faced with reducing Spiritan members, the colleges have had to ask themselves: what is it that we have in these colleges which we consider to be of value and which we would like to see preserved? What is our ethos? What elements in our educational tradition are so important to us, that we believe that failure to ensure that they are passed on to future generations would be a loss

to the country, to the Church and to the missionary work of the Congregation?

Mission Statements

In each of the colleges, reflection on its "Mission" has taken place. These discussions involved not just the Spiritans themselves, but the lay staffs, past pupils and others. Reflection days took place; position papers were formulated, discussed and modified. Finally "Mission Statements" emerged, with which each could identify and to which each could lend support.

School Mission Statements are only of value to the extent that they influence the lived situation within the school. It is easy to draw up a beautiful statement which is then confined to the top drawer of one's desk but which has no influence whatever on what goes on within the school. The implications of the Mission Statement have to be addressed.

Laity in pastoral work

It was evident to the schools that with the level of Spiritan presence diminishing, many of the activities which were traditionally performed by Spiritan personnel could no longer be sustained in the same way. Of particular concern was the religious/pastoral side of the work. Qualified lay catechists had to be recruited, and counsellors had to be trained or engaged. Today in most of the schools the majority of these positions are occupied by lay men and women. While in many cases the social awareness programme has been initiated by Spiritans, the fulfilment of its aims is now dependent on lay personnel.

Laity in Administration

Many of the administrative positions within the Colleges are held by lay people – only one of the eight Principals is a Spiritan. Where Spiritans are still engaged in administration, their role is primarily one of support. Regular meetings of Spiritan Principals take place – probably not enough, however – with the intention of fostering a bond between them and encouraging them to work for the achievement of the missionary aims of the colleges as articulated in the Mission Statements.

Assuring the future

The schools and colleges are owned by the Congregation. The Province has been addressing the situation where there will be few, if any, Spiritans present in these institutions. In such a situation, how will the Congregation know what is going on in its colleges? How will they be able to influence the achievement of their aims? To address these issues, the Provincial Administration is investigating, with its legal advisors, the idea of establishing a company whose task would be to look after the educational work of the schools. The company would not be just a watchdog, but would also lend encouragement and support where and when needed. It is envisaged that the membership of the company will include both Spiritans and lay men and lay women committed to the Spiritan philosophy of education.

Brendan HALLY

2. OUR MISSION

Our recent missionary experience was a frequent point of reference for the Chapter, inspired particularly by the first eight presentations by Capitulants and the ensuing discussions.

Mission, seen as the announcing of the Good News of the Kingdom, has always been at the very heart of our Spiritan life (SRL 1). But recently, a certain style of Spiritan approach to mission has emerged more clearly: more emphasis is put on being close to people, on the quality of our life and presence, on solidarity, on opening up to new horizons and a greater collaboration with others. The missionary adventure gives us the chance to share a journey with many other people which stimulates us to spiritual growth and a renewal of the meaning of our own commitment.

The reflection of the Capitulants on this style of mission will be our inspiration for the years to come. It will also have repercussions on certain aspects of the way we train and organise ourselves.

GUIDELINES AND DECISIONS

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITAN MISSION TODAY

These characteristics apply to all situations where Spiritans are living and working: work in a non-Christian context or with ecclesial communities, in social, educational or parochial engagements etc. They can be described under several headings:

Being present

We go to people not primarily to accomplish a task, but rather to be with them, live with them, walk beside them, listen to them and share our faith with them. At the heart of our relationship is trust, respect and love.

2.1 To achieve a better communion with the people, each circumscription and community will commit itself to a serious effort to analyse and interpret the situations within which it is living.

Solidarity

Solidarity is an essential dimension of the way the missionary relates to different peoples and neglected groups.

2.2 We are called to a practical solidarity with the people amongst whom we live, especially those who are most poor, vulnerable and excluded from society.

Spirituality

The Spirit goes ahead of us on the path of mission, and signs of His presence accompany our work. Mission is therefore a pilgrimage, an adventure, contemplation and discovery of the work of the Spirit. It is, above all, a witness through the quality of our lives. We are called to conversion and transformation by a process of kenosis.

2.3 Our present understanding of mission means that we must look again at our personal and community life as regards the kind of relationship we have with God, our life-style and the way we look at the world around us.

2.4 We will take care to keep older members informed about what is happening in the Congregation so that they can make it a part of their missionary prayer.

Crossing frontiers and openness to new horizons

Mission is not to be conceived primarily in geographical terms but as a crossing of cultural boundaries and a reaching out to groups of people who are abandoned, excluded and oppressed. As these frontiers and situations change, the front-line of mission must also move. A balance has to be found between the consolidation of works we have already started and an openness to new horizons.

2.5 The guidelines laid down in SRL 4 will be used to evaluate the works we have already undertaken and to make choices for new missionary commitments, within our possibilities.

2.6 To prepare members of the Congregation for a transcultural mission and a greater openness, the capitulants encourage the movement towards international communities and stress the importance of exchanges, above all of personnel, between Spiritan circumscriptions.

Collaboration

Collaboration at all levels is a necessary part of mission today: collaboration with local Churches, other Congregations, other Christian Churches and other religions, NGOs, national social and administrative structures, etc.

2.7 Each circumscription is asked to examine its current areas of solidarity and to enlarge its spheres of collaboration (cf. chapter 5).

Dialogue and proclamation

Respectful dialogue is a constitutive element of contemporary mission. It is not in opposition to the proclamation

of the Good News but rather gives it a dimension of respect and esteem for others.

2.8 The capitulants emphasise the need to be open to believers of other religions and to respectful dialogue as essential attitudes for an authentic mission.

2.9 Religious indifference and unbelief are new challenges which question our missionary assumptions and strategies.

A call to local Churches

Our role in the local Churches where we are working is to make them more aware of the universal mission, of justice and fraternity amongst peoples.

2.10 Circumscriptions are encouraged:

- to make Christian communities more conscious of their missionary obligations;
- to work for Spiritan vocations;
- to encourage missionary awareness, presenting temporary missionary volunteers and lay associates as possible forms of missionary involvement.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF OUR MISSION

From the beginning, our mission has favoured the poor. In the course of our history, the accent has been placed on different areas. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to the poor, singling out three particular fields (which often overlap):

First evangelisation

First evangelisation is at the heart of our Spiritan charism in the service of the Kingdom. There are many confreres

involved in this area and fresh appeals continue to be made to us.

2.11 The members of the Chapter stress that first evangelisation needs a protracted learning-period, which would include acquiring a deep knowledge of the history, languages and customs of the people to whom we are sent.

2.12 It also implies a prolonged period of commitment by the personnel concerned. This has consequences for first appointments and the transfer of confreres which must be borne in mind by those responsible for such decisions.

Education

Formal and informal education is not something on the margins of our apostolate but is an integral part of our mission of evangelisation (Cf. Ecclesia in Africa nos. 93, 102, 115). This conviction is based on two considerations: on the one hand, this social ministry to the poor brings them freedom and promotes the dignity that is theirs as children of God; on the other, the contact it gives with the world of young people provides an opportunity for passing on the Good News, above all through the witness of the life of the educator.

2.13 We will make a point of making young people aware of the problems of poverty and unjust structures in their society and the world at large.

2.14 Where it is desirable, we will further involve lay people in the administration of our educational institutions, while retaining a Spiritan presence as a witness and a source of inspiration. In collaborating with lay people, we will try to share the spirit of our Spiritan tradition with them.

2.15 The training of educators is a priority for us.

2.16 We will put greater emphasis on the training of some confreres as specialists in education, especially for the service of the poor. This presupposes a prior assessment of their needs and will take into account the resources available.

Justice and Peace

The members of the Chapter noted that an awareness of Justice and Peace issues has greatly increased in the Congregation but much remains to be done in clarifying the type of action to be undertaken. It is not just a question of denouncing abuses, but also of wise action and encouraging what is good.

2.17 Each circumscription will draw up a programme for Justice and Peace.

2.18 We will take part in different information networks and look for ways of influencing national and international political decisions (refugees, arms trade, problem of world debt, ecology...).

2.19 Each Spiritan will look for opportunities for action within his grasp (homilies, catechesis, training of lay people, Justice and Peace groups) in order to become the voice of the voiceless (the homeless, landless, unemployed, victims of ethnic strife and corruption...).

2.20 Over the next six years, a practical concern for refugees will be an important part of Spiritan mission.

2.21 Confreres working in the countries of the North are urged to give active support to the cause of refugees and migrants who are seeking entry into their countries.

2.22 Over the next six years, we will also pay special attention to the role of women in the Church and in society.

2.23 Reconciliation and conflict resolution will be given a special place in the life and work of Spiritans.

2.24 We will encourage the training of personnel to act for Justice and Peace.

TRAINING FOR CONTEMPORARY MISSION

This new style of mission, with its three specific aspects (first evangelisation, education, justice and peace), has consequences for the initial training of young people who will have to meet the challenges involved. It has been noted that some confreres seem to have lost their enthusiasm for mission, whence the need to give special attention to our motivation in both initial and on-going formation.

2.25 Our training programmes will adopt more of an apprentice style, giving students opportunities to have personal experience of the characteristics of missionary life today (cf. 3.4).

2.26 Students will be kept fully informed of the life of the Congregation and its priorities (cf. the annual circular of the General Council, which gives details of requests and priorities).

2.27 Students will be helped to clarify their own motivations during their training and their personal gifts will be identified and developed with a view to future mission.

2.28 From the beginning of the second cycle, a dialogue will be set up between those concerned (students, formators, General Council) with a view to

directing the students towards a priority mission situation.

2.29 In certain cases, students will be given the opportunity to do their theological studies in the area to which they will eventually be appointed.

2.30 Those in charge of training will pay special attention to the following areas:

- Training for Justice and Peace;
- The media, communications;
- Linguistics.

(Cf. Guide for Spiritan Formation *nos. 31 and 146*)

2.31 The training of formators is a priority and must be one of the main preoccupations of all those in positions of responsibility over the next six years.

2.32 The University of Duquesne will be one of the centres for research and specialisation for further Spiritan training with a view to the needs of the Congregation.

RESOURCES AND CO-ORDINATION

We can see a clear movement in the Congregation towards groups that are smaller and progressively more international. At the same time, we are aware of the fragility of some of our priority commitments because the groups lack resources in personnel and finance. Hence the need for a type of solidarity that will avoid creating a new dependence and will leave groups with their own dignity and autonomy.

2.33 The partnership that exists between some Provinces and International Groups will be consolidated, and organised under the responsibility of the General Council where it does not already exist.

2.34 In all relevant situations, the directives of no. 65 of the Directory for Organisation⁴ will be applied, especially that which concerns the responsibility of the General Council and its possibilities for intervention.

2.35 There will be co-ordination at the level of the General Council between the needs of personnel and finance in the circumscriptions and the resources that are currently available.

2.36 When a Province is no longer able to appoint confreres to a priority Group which depends upon it, the General Council will take over the responsibility of supporting that Group with personnel.

2.37 The General Council will decide how best to ensure some co-ordination at Generalate level for the areas of formation, education and justice and peace.

2.38 It will make a study of the possibility of a Spiritan centre in Africa to co-ordinate our work for refugees in that continent.

⁴ *Directory for Organisation*, no 65:

"In international Groups, especially when they are small, it is difficult to maintain the stability of personnel. The general rule is that the return of a confrere to his circumscription of origin will not depend simply on the decision to recall him by his Superior: it must also include an expressed decision of the Superior of the circumscription to which he has been appointed until then (SRL 156, 159).

As well as this, for such Groups a structure of consultation is necessary between the circumscriptions of origin of the members of the Group, especially if there are many such circumscriptions involved.

The General Council has also a particular responsibility in this area. One way of exercising it is to use the possibility of intervention foreseen by SRL 159.1"

3. OUR SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

In the light of the related experiences and the subsequent sharing, the Chapter stressed the need for us to get in touch once again with our sources of inspiration if we are to revitalise our missionary-religious commitment in the contemporary world. The sources are many and may differ from person to person, but for all of us, the primary source will always be the Holy Spirit, the “Protagonist of all mission” (Redemptoris Missio). The Spirit implants in us the desire to serve the poor and oppressed and shapes our hearts to respond to this desire. The Spirit is behind all the sources of encouragement and inspiration that have directed and sustained the members of our missionary family over the centuries – Sacred Scripture, personal and shared prayer, our life in communion with our confreres and with those to whom we are sent, the example and writings of those Spiritans who have gone before us. Discerning the action and inspiration of the Holy Spirit infuses the whole spirituality that was handed on to us by our founders and predecessors and is an integral part of being a Spiritan.

GUIDELINES AND DECISIONS

The Holy Spirit and Mission

3.1 The very name “Spiritans” means that we are people dedicated to following the ways of the Spirit; our spirituality must therefore be based on discernment, availability and a practical union with God. Mary is a model to be followed in her docility to the action of the Spirit in carrying out her own unique mission. In her example, we can rediscover the contemplative dimension of all mission, the guarantee that we will be

instruments of the Spirit of God rather than relying on our own imagined strengths.

Our intimacy with Christ must continually deepen; he who was sent by the Father to bring the Good News to the poor and who in turn sent his Spirit among us so that we could complete his mission. To this end, we should rediscover Sacred Scripture as a fount of personal spirituality and mission, by a prayerful and contextualised reading in which God's word encounters human experience and the events of the day.

3.2 Those in positions of leadership in the Congregation have a special role to play in helping confreres to build their mission on these solid foundations. They will encourage them to adopt a balanced and regular rhythm of life where the Spirit can be heard. Retreats can be arranged based on our sources of inspiration. Those in authority will try to make confreres aware of their need for self-knowledge and direct them to on-going formation as urged in SRL 142, 145.3 and GSF 125. A "soul-friend" or spiritual companion is most helpful for seeing our spiritual state objectively and getting things into perspective.

Mission as a source of inspiration

Several times, those presenting experiences pointed to the people amongst whom they were sent to live and work as a fundamental source of their driving inspiration. The presence and action of the Spirit can be discerned in the lives of these people, especially the poor and oppressed. They inspire us with their hospitality, simplicity, generosity and deep faith. The closer we identify ourselves with them and their suffering, the more insights we receive into the Gospel that we preach (cf. SRL 24.1). It challenges us to re-evaluate our own lifestyle and to work with them against oppressive structures. In this

service and brotherhood we feel drawn closer to Jesus and his Good News of the Kingdom. We find ourselves becoming part of a new and much larger family, receiving unexpected energy in times of difficulty by turning to those amongst whom we live and work.

3.3 For every new appointment, but especially first appointments, the importance of immersion in the history, language and culture of the people to whom we are sent can hardly be exaggerated. Consequently, first appointments will normally be for an extended period. The action of the Spirit is more easily discerned in a context that is well known and understood (Cf. 2.11 & 2.12).

Those in positions of leadership have a special responsibility in this area of inculturation and in assisting confreres to read aright the signs of the times, recognising the movement of the Spirit in the world.

3.4 This proximity will be more easily achieved if formation is modelled on a type of apprenticeship where students remain very close to the lived reality of the people, especially the poor. The more Spiritans experience and understand other cultures and religions, the more prepared they will be to perceive the action of the Spirit (Cf. 2.25).

3.5 Ways will be found to pass on the significant mission experiences of those confreres who have given their lives to the service of mission. Too often, we are not aware of such experiences that could be both encouraging and instructive to others who find themselves in similar situations.

The inspiration of our Spiritan tradition

A knowledge and love of our Spiritan roots and tradition, of the vision of our founders and the living out of that

vision by our ancestors, has always been an important source of our inspiration. In this context, the Spiritan Rule of Life, the writings of our founders and the documents of the Congregation at various levels were all singled out for special mention in this Chapter. Likewise, a familiarity with the documents of the Church, both universal and local, has helped us to see our missionary family in its ecclesial context.

3.6 The Chapter called for *Information/Documentation* and *Spiritan Life* to be issued on a more regular basis. The latter could make use of articles from other publications in the various circumscriptions. Thought should be given to reviving the General Bulletin, perhaps in a form which will include some or all of the publications of the General Council.

The spiritual teachings of Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann need to be made available in a popularised form and in contemporary language. Perhaps a web-site could be used to this end.

3.7 Research of our Spiritan sources and the history of the Congregation will be encouraged at all levels, including local circumscriptions. But it is important that it be inspirational in style and content so that it can be acceptable to all members, both now and in the future. In preparation for the forthcoming centenaries, each circumscription is to set up a programme of reflection and renewal based on our sources and our call to mission today (Cf. 8.6).

Our life together as a source of inspiration

The Chapter recognised that in order to carry out our mission, we ourselves are in need of those very things that we strive to bring to others – friendship, respect, mutual help, a readiness to challenge and be challenged

when necessary, encouragement, love and joy. We should be able to find all these things in our communities, for this is how Libermann saw Spiritan community life – not as an end in itself but as a source of strength and encouragement in continuing the mission of Christ to the whole human family. We draw inspiration from each other, especially from the courageous faith of confreres who live and work in difficult situations, sometimes in conflict and war, putting their very lives at risk; but also from the faithful and undramatic example of others with whom we share a home, living out their religious and missionary commitment day by day. The quiet witness of our older retired confreres, frequently lived in suffering and with a feeling of isolation, can also be a powerful inspiration.

3.8 Confreres should frequently remind themselves that far from being a simple arrangement of convenience, community life is an essential source of inspiration for the fulfilment of their mission. We strengthen ourselves and each other through personal and communal prayer, faith sharing, friendship and support. Today, the possibilities of community support have widened; with the advent of Lay Associates into the Congregation, professed and lay Spiritans are able to build up one another, each bringing their own particular type of charism.

3.9 No one should ever feel alone or unappreciated in a Spiritan community. Too often, talents go unused or undetected. Confreres will take a genuine interest in each other's work and those working together will do so as a team and not as individuals. The community is where we reflect and discern together on our mission, reviewing what we have done and planning for the future. Above all, it is a place for mutual encouragement, especially for those confreres who are going

through a difficult period; they have every right to expect sympathy and practical support from their brothers.

3.10 But communities are not just work-oriented structures; they are the home of a Spiritan family. As in any family, we will take a genuine and sincere interest in each other's friends and relations, celebrate birthdays, patronal feasts, and anniversaries. In some places, the relationship between the community and the extended family of its members will be of particular importance.

3.11 Friendships can be a powerful source of support and inspiration. As SRL 59.2 puts it, *"The true friendships we have are signs of the love of Christ amidst his disciples. Such friendships bring our personality to its full development and support us in our apostolic life"*. A good community will promote the emotional life of confreres which finds one of its expressions in a joyful and positive dedication to chastity.

3.12 Retired and sick confreres need a special kind of support from their community, which will help them to see this stage of their lives as a continuing part of their mission. Wherever possible, they should be encouraged to take on appropriate tasks as, for example, ministry to ageing people, research and translation of Spiritan sources etc. In some cases, it is more supportive for them to retire in their place of work where they could provide a sense of continuity and identity for younger Spiritans.

3.13 Inspirational meetings will be arranged within circumscriptions and between circumscriptions that are close to each other.

3.14 Confreres will be helped to derive inspiration from certain documents of the Church, both universal and local.

3.15 Finally, our predecessors are still, in a very real sense, part of our communities and we can continue to be helped by their prayers and inspired by their example. An updated necrology will help us to remember them and develop this feeling of unity with those who have gone before us.

4. OUR LIVING TOGETHER

Spiritan Community

The different experiences shared in this Chapter showed how much support confreres receive from community life. Several spoke of the benefits they had personally gained from life in common, such as friendship, mutual support and an acceptance of our differences. It also helps us in living our witness of chastity.

It was recalled that community life is the norm for Spiritan living. Libermann's clear directive in the Rule of 1849, that "all members of the Congregation will live in community at all times", is repeated word for word in the Spiritan Rule of Life (SRL 27). In our Rule, we pledge ourselves to live in community, either local or regional, in order to support each other in living out the evangelical counsels and in responding to our call to mission (SRL 27, 28).

Some confreres are living outside community for a variety of reasons and so, unfortunately, they are deprived of the support and enrichment that come from life in common. The capitulants asked that the Congregation ensure a genuine community life for every Spiritan.

GUIDELINES AND DECISIONS

- 4.1** All confreres will make a sincere and genuine response to the call to live in community.
- 4.2** As far as possible, a Spiritan community will be made up of not less than three confreres, as indicated in SRL 153.1.

4.3 Confreres on their first appointment will be assured of a genuine community life and the necessary fraternal advice and guidance.

4.4 Circumscriptions will try to make existing regional communities conform to the model described in SRL 32, 32.1, 153.2, 247.1.1.

4.5 In future, the Congregation will not accept works that require confreres to live outside community on a permanent basis.

Preparation for community living

While stressing the benefits we draw from the common life, it was acknowledged openly at the Chapter that living in community can be difficult. The fact that confreres live together under one roof is no guarantee that they are living an authentic community life; a quality of presence, of communication and sharing is called for. Some confreres find living in international and intercultural communities particularly challenging, so the Chapter stressed the need of preparation for such community living, as an important way of responding to some of these challenges.

4.6 During the period of formation, students would be expected to show an aptitude for community living and a genuine commitment to the ideal, bearing in mind the current trend towards smaller and more international communities.

4.7 As far as possible, the period of 'stage' (OTP) and second cycle studies will be done in an international and intercultural milieu as a preparation for the different types of community living that may lie ahead.

4.8 Over the next six years, circumscriptions will place a strong emphasis on programmes of renewal,

to re-vitalise and ensure the authenticity of our community life.

Community building: A permanent challenge

Community building can never be the responsibility of just one person; the Chapter stressed the essential role that every confrere has to play in this delicate area. It is a work that is never finished. Any structures erected will remain empty and lifeless if each member of the community is not prepared to give himself fully to the spirit and ideal that lie behind such structures. It demands no less than a daily conversion.

4.9 Provincial teams and local Superiors will look upon community building as a vitally important part of their ministry of service.

4.10 Each community will hold regular meetings that will have the following objectives:

- Organising our fraternal life together;
- Building mutual trust and faith-sharing;
- Planning and evaluating our shared apostolate;
- Sharing responsibilities and managing our resources;
- Listening to each other with respect.

We will try to extend a spirit of sharing and solidarity to every aspect of our community life.

4.11 An element that is essential to authentic religious life, but one that is often neglected or ignored, is the whole area of the relationships that we have with people outside the community, especially as they relate to our commitment to a life of evangelical chastity. The atmosphere of the community should be such that problems arising in this delicate area can be shared in an open and trustful way between confreres.

4.12 Those who are called to the service of leadership in the Congregation will be helped to develop a pastoral approach in caring for confreres in difficulty.

4.13 The following elements are characteristic of Spiritan community life: a regular rhythm of prayer and shared meals, discussion and reflection on our religious and apostolic life, periods of common recreation, being prepared to challenge each other in a caring and loving way, and reconciliation where the need arises.

4.14 Each member of the community will be treated with the same respect, and given the necessary space for his personal growth.

4.15 Any work undertaken by a Spiritan will be seen as part of the common project and thus will need the approbation of the community.

The witness of Community Life

Conflict, racialism and the cult of the individual are all too prevalent in the world of today. By coming together from so many different places and cultures, we are saying to our brothers and sisters that the unity of the human race is not just an impossible dream. In this way, our community life is an integral part of our mission and a powerful witness to the message of the Gospel. In the same spirit, we will integrate the apostolic work of our communities into the life and pastoral plans of the local Christian community.

The witness of our ageing and sick confreres is another way in which we proclaim the values of the Kingdom. Their prayers and sacrifices are simply a continuation of the missionary work they accomplished when they were younger and fitter. The Chapter pledges that the

Congregation will continue to show them genuine love and a practical concern for their well-being.

4.16 We are prepared to live in international and intercultural communities as a witness to the Gospel. But before appointing a confrere to such a community, care will be taken to see that he has an aptitude for this style of life, and a suitable preparation will be provided. Special attention will be given to this point over the next six years.

4.17 A Spiritan community will take care that its apostolate is integrated into the pastoral work of the local Church, rather than operating as a completely separate entity.

4.18 Superiors of circumscriptions will encourage and help older confreres to prepare themselves for retirement. They will do their best to ensure that retirement communities are places of deep faith, hope and joy.

Living at a distance from the Congregation

The experiences shared in the Chapter reminded us of the sad reality of a number of confreres living at a distance from the Congregation. We wish to extend the hand of friendship to all these brothers and invite them to rediscover their bonds of life with their circumscriptions and the whole Congregation.

4.19 The General Council and the leadership of circumscriptions will seek forms of contact and dialogue with confreres who are currently living at a distance from the Congregation.

4.20 Those confreres who persist in living apart in this way will be helped to discern their future relationship with the Congregation.

Lay Associates

We thank God that the Spiritan way of life, its mission, spirituality and community, is now attracting lay people who see it as a way of living out their own special lay vocation. The personal experiences shared by the Lay Associates who attended the Chapter spoke of this attraction in a most inspiring way. We joyfully welcome this association as a gift from the Spirit of God and encourage the Congregation to develop it throughout the Spiritan world.

4.21 We will encourage and continue to investigate different ways of being linked to our Spiritan family (such as collaborators, Spiritan fraternities, associates with formal commitment, etc.). Our communities will be welcoming and collaborative with our lay brothers and sisters.

4.22 In co-ordination with the General Council, Lay Spiritans will be encouraged to form their own structures according to the needs of each particular group.

4.23 A professed Spiritan will be appointed to accompany the Lay Associates in each circumscription where they exist.

Mutual Help and Support (Cf. 6.24-6.26)

An encouraging development in the carrying out of our mission has been the growth of collaboration at regional level. This mutual help takes many different forms – collaboration between major superiors, formators, justice and peace co-ordinators, archivists, bursars, editors, joint programs of initial and on-going formation etc.

Our help for each other at the level of the whole Congregation must never be seen simply in terms of a North to South aid; help should come from and go to all

points of the Spiritan compass. Within regions, circumscriptions can help and encourage each other in a variety of ways. The ideal can be stated simply and unequivocally: those who have – whether it be personnel, expertise or finance – will share with those who have not.

The Chapter felt that there is an unacceptable disparity in the standard of living between various Spiritan groups. Some communities and circumscriptions have more than they need, while others have only the barest necessities of life. Despite many examples of great generosity and unselfishness, there is still a need for greater sharing and support.

4.24 The Chapter asks that we re-examine our current life style in the light of the spirit of poverty and simplicity envisaged by our Founders. Superiors will insist on accountability in matters of finance.

4.25 We will look for ways to increase our solidarity both within and between regions. This sharing in personnel and finance, which is the basic expression of our Spiritan solidarity, comes from our mutual concern and respect for each other as brothers and sisters sharing the one mission.

4.26 Over the next six years, the Chapter would like to see an increased collaboration between the new Provinces and Foundations, as well as between the regions of Latin America and Africa.

5. COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

The Spiritan Charism

The Chapter experiences underlined how collaboration is an essential dimension of contemporary mission. Such is the complexity of mission today that we cannot effectively accomplish it in isolation. Working with others strengthens us in our commitment and also benefits those with whom we collaborate in the pursuit of common objectives. In the past, Spiritans often found themselves in situations where there was little alternative to self-reliance, where the individual or the Congregation on the spot had to rely largely on their own resources. Today, this would rarely be the case, so there is a need for a radical change in our outlook and approach.

While discretely maintaining our own particular charism and identity, we will be eager to collaborate wherever possible with other persons and groups, whether this be the laity, local and non-Catholic Churches or other religious groups, NGOs and other development agencies, or any other bodies with similar objectives.

GUIDELINES AND DECISIONS

Collaboration with local Churches

It is the local Church that has primary responsibility for mission. Spiritans become members of the local Church to which they are sent and they bring to it their own special charism and world-view as a gift to that Church. They participate in its activities in line with their own specific vocation (SRL 13).

5.1 We will assist the local Church to fulfil its missionary vocation, particularly through working for

the development of missionary awareness (cf. SRL 18 and 19; cf. also 2.10 of this document)

5.2 When requested to do so and under a prior agreement with the local Ordinary, we will welcome diocesan seminarians to work in parishes confided to the Congregation and will be ready to accompany them in developing their vocation to ministry. In the same circumstances, we will joyfully accept diocesan priests in our communities for pastoral reasons.

5.3 Where it has not yet been done, we will take steps to draw up a contract with the local Ordinary, in accordance with SRL 19 and 235.

5.4 If the need arises and after discerning together and with the local Ordinary, we will not hesitate to be a prophetic voice in the local Church.

Collaboration with the Laity

There has always been a certain degree of collaboration with lay people in Spiritan mission, but the Second Vatican Council, with its vision of the Church as the people of God, started a movement that is restoring to lay people their own personal and irreplaceable role in the life and mission of the Church – their participation in leadership and initiatives, their special ministries in the ecclesial family, their missionary responsibilities to society at large.

With the coming of lay people into our Spiritan family, it is no longer unusual for them to take part in our important gatherings for reflection and decision, and the Maynooth Chapter was blessed with presentations from three Lay Associates, two women and one man, from three different continents. Their presence and their contribution influenced our thinking and decisions and helped us to

realise the essentially collaborative nature of our own Spiritan vocation in the Church.

5.5 Wherever Spiritans are working, they will respect and encourage the ministry of lay people in the local and universal Church and in their special mission to the wider society in which we live.

5.6 A special attention and welcome will be given to those who feel attracted to our spirituality and work. We will help them to discern their personal vocation in the Church.

5.7 The fact that we now have women members of our Spiritan family makes us more aware of our duty to work for the recognition of the dignity and rights of women wherever we are, both in society and in the Church. We will help them to discern their own unique participation in the mission of the Church (Cf. 2.22).

5.8 When requesting personnel for mission, circumscriptions will identify posts which could be filled by competent lay people.

Collaboration with other Churches and Religions

There were times in our history when other religions, and even other Christian denominations, were seen as obstacles to our mission of evangelisation. With a different concept of mission and models of the Church, we now look upon them as brothers and sisters and agents of collaboration.

5.9 The General Administration will continue to encourage and support Spiritans who are working in close collaboration with other Churches and religions.

Collaboration with NGOs and Other Development Agencies

Non-Governmental Organisations are a growing phenomenon and a number of them take their inspiration from values that we would also hold as important. Even if they are not Christians, those involved in this kind of work are frequently driven by the highest ideals and bring to their work a professional competency. Our common objectives can be furthered directly and indirectly by our collaboration and by the relationships that we establish with them.

5.10 We are ready to collaborate with any organisations with whom we share common objectives. We will take care to ensure that our alignment with specific NGOs will not be misconstrued.

5.11 The General Administration will investigate the advantages and disadvantages of establishing NGO status for the Congregation with the United Nations Organisation.

Collaborating with other Institutes

5.12 We will develop collaboration between Spiritan institutes and institutes in which we participate, especially in the areas of training, justice and peace and missionary awareness. The role of the General Administration will be important in extending this type of co-operation.

5.13 We will continue to put particular emphasis on the sharing of formators, not only within the Congregation, but also with other religious orders and local Churches.

Training for Collaboration

5.14 Opportunities to practise various types of collaboration and to develop the necessary skills should be built into our formation programmes. The theology of the vocation of the laity should be an integral part of our initial and on-going studies and occasions will be provided to put the theory into practice (GSF 38). The same applies to gaining a knowledge of NGOs, how they relate to our mission and how we can collaborate with them.

5.15 Clericalism is an obstacle to any kind of collaborative ministry. Attention should be focused on the eradication of this form of domination in both initial and on-going formation (GSF 38).

6. FINANCE

Financial Demands and Missionary Engagements

While listening to different confreres talk of their missionary undertakings, we became more aware of the importance of financial considerations for our common project: these frequently condition our initiatives and limit our actions. At the level of the whole Congregation, we realise that all the technical means already foreseen cannot resolve our basic financial dilemma: our regular income is getting less and we will find it increasingly difficult to meet our needs.

*On the other hand, our poverty is a form of weakness that we have deliberately chosen. It allows us to abandon ourselves totally to the Father as Christ did (SRL 63). It becomes a sign and a means of **proclaiming the Kingdom** which is at the very centre of our commitment and it moves us to opt for a simple and moderate style of life. This in turn brings us closer to the poor, the disfavoured, the uprooted and gives us greater solidarity with them. Personal and community poverty gives credibility to our proclamation of the Gospel (SRL 70; 71).*

The most urgent call that the Capitulants welcome and want to carry away with them is the invitation to a poorer and more moderate life-style in the midst of the poor whom we wish to serve (SRL 71). And we remember that the primary evidence of a spirit of poverty is the whole-hearted acceptance of the rule of work (SRL 72.1). Without adopting such a spirit, we will make little progress in the future.

Financial solidarity is also essential for us; it is one of the most important ways of expressing our concern for further justice and fraternity within our missionary family. Genuine solidarity implies a transparency in the

management of the resources which are put at our disposal, but which still belong to the Congregation and remain at the service of its total mission. Amongst us, there can never be rich and poor: our vocation commits us to an authentic sharing (SRL 65, 70.1, 72.5, 230).

ORIENTATIONS AND DECISIONS

Responsibility and stringency in our practice of poverty

Being true to our missionary message, we opt for a life-style characterised by moderation and evangelical poverty.

6.1 The simplest way of putting the spirit of poverty into practice is to eliminate bad administration and waste at all levels.

6.2 The goods that are put at our disposal (vehicles, office materials etc.) are to be considered as belonging to the community.

6.3 As individuals, communities or circumscriptions, we accept the duty of giving a responsible account of the goods and finance that are confided to us.

6.4 For this, we use very ordinary means:

- Keep careful accounts;
- Make budgets with periodic evaluation;
- Involve the whole community in the management of its finances: accounts and budgets will be communicated to the confreres on a regular basis; they will be presented by the Bursar and discussed by the community;
- These ordinary means for the practice of poverty in a responsible way have to be learnt during initial

formation. Our students will be kept informed of the financial situation of the houses of formation. They will take part, as far as possible, in their management, even in a limited way. They will be taught a simple but rigorous method of accounting. Care will be taken to ensure that all houses of formation maintain a simple life-style (Guide for Spiritan Formation nos. 28 –32).

6.5 Each circumscription will have a finance council and will choose a bursar with real competence in the area of management. It will look for means of self-reliance and train confreres capable of taking initiatives which can be sources of revenue.

Solidarity and Autonomy

In recent times, the need to share has taken on different forms as relations between circumscriptions have evolved. The Chapter of 1968-1969 said that "the surplus funds of houses shall be sent to the Provincial or District Bursar, and those of Provinces and Districts to the General Bursar" (no. 317). The Rule of Life of 1987 goes further: "When budgets are being drawn up at whatever level, account should be taken of the needs that exist beyond the confines of our community or our circumscription..." (SRL 72.4). So the Rule asks that we should not just share our "surplus" but also that which we need. We will consider solidarity not just when we have provided for everything else, but while we are actually engaged in drawing up our budget.

Our Rule of Life foresees a considerable autonomy for the different circumscriptions at the same time as a great degree of solidarity between them.

6.6 Our solidarity is neither juridically imposed nor levied as a tax; however, we hope it will be more effective and better organised.

6.7 The General Council is asked to supervise, organise and direct the solidarity between all circumscriptions. To this end, for the good of the whole Congregation, it will manage:

- The *Cor Unum Fund*, which is destined for the needs of formation; exceptionally, it can be used for other needs of the internal life of the Congregation.
- The *Special Fund for Apostolic Projects*. This fund aims to support new projects and undertakings that have no other sources. It will need to be topped up regularly by voluntary contributions and other means. It would be preferable if this fund could eventually become an investment fund.
- Each year, when addressing a call for solidarity to all circumscriptions, the General Bursar will give an account of the evolution of these funds.

6.8 When a partnership exists between circumscriptions in the sense envisaged by chapter 2 of “*Our Mission*” (cf. 2.33; 2.34), the total amount of direct aid given should figure in the annual financial report that each circumscription sends to the Generalate. Each year, at the same time as he publishes contributions to *Cor Unum*, the General Bursar issues a complete list of direct aid given.

6.9 The financial autonomy of each circumscription is something to be aimed at; it is the responsibility of both the circumscription itself (SRL 232.4) and the whole Congregation.

- For Foundations and new Provinces, this objective must be pursued insistently by the General

Administration in collaboration with the Superiors of these circumscriptions.

- Small Groups should be supported in such a way that they will not be paralysed by financial worries; this help will be organised in conformity with the guidelines laid down in the *Directory for Organisation*, particularly nos. 36, 63 and 64.

Our special means for sharing: The *Cor Unum Fund*

The Cor Unum Fund is designed to help circumscriptions which lack funds to assure the formation of their students. This is where there is the greatest need of mutual help within our Congregation today. Our future depends upon it.

6.10 The *Cor Unum Fund* is replenished by the contributions of circumscriptions, who thus enter into solidarity with each other. All circumscriptions will contribute to the fund, even if it is only a symbolic amount in the case of those of modest means. Each year, the General Bursar will publish the results of the fund gathered and distributed, mentioning the type of subsidy given, whether it be for formation, building or extraordinary needs.

6.11 As regards distribution over these three areas, the General Council will share the money available by keeping approximately to the following proportions:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| - ordinary subsidies (for ordinary formation) | 70% |
| - subsidies for building (formation) | 20% |
| - extraordinary subsidies | 10% |

6.12 The General Council will establish a fair and objective system of distribution for formation subsidies. If formation is very expensive in a given area, the situation should be studied and alternatives sought:

e.g. collaborate with other centres of formation, a change of location, limit the number of candidates accepted etc.

6.13 Building projects for formation will be managed separately. This will help in proposing the financing of a particular project to a circumscription or a benefactor who may wish to support a concrete scheme. They will receive an account of the use made of the subsidy.

6.14 The contribution from *Cor Unum* will never cover all formation expenses. Circumscriptions must fall back on their own means and look for other sources of finance.

Other Directives and Decisions

6.15 The General Bursar will offer training to all Bursars of circumscriptions on a regional level and to all those who hold important managerial positions. We also ask Bursars to take advantage of technical training that may be available in their countries. It would be useful to organise a sharing of experiences (successful or otherwise) in matters of autonomy and self-reliance.

6.16 During their visits to different circumscriptions, the General Council will check the state of the account books and enquire into the financial situation of the circumscription visited.

6.17 The Superior of a circumscription has the duty to encourage confreres to live the life of poverty to which they have committed themselves and to check on the manner in which this is lived in practice.

6.18 The Bursar of a circumscription will be helped by a group of advisors, including, if possible, non-Spiritans.

6.19 In the dioceses where we are working, we will try:

- To separate clearly the accounts of the works from those of the Congregation (SRL 235.4).
- To draw up a contract which will fix the limits of our responsibilities as well as the responsibilities of the local Church which receives us (SRL 19, 235).

6.20 We would like to see an agreed procedure throughout the Congregation for requesting funds for our works and projects:

- Requests to Provinces or to the General Administration will be presented by the Superior of the circumscription. Requests made to non-Spiritans organisations should be presented by the one in charge of the work and signed by the relevant ecclesiastical authority (usually the local Ordinary).
- Accounts will be given of the use of funds received.
- Funds destined for particular projects must never be placed in private accounts.

6.21 To increase the income of the General Administration, the contribution asked for each year will be modified as follows:

- The age limit is raised to 70.
- The amount to be paid per person will be augmented: the General Council will decide on the size of the increase.

6.22 Fund-raising will be encouraged. The General Council is asked to supervise such fund-raising when it concerns the whole Congregation.

6.23 The General Council is asked to study the best way to reduce the costs of the general assemblies of the Congregation: General Chapters and Enlarged General Councils.

7. DIRECTORY FOR ORGANISATION

Because of its length, it is not possible to reproduce the whole of the Directory here; what follows is only an introduction. It will be published as a separate booklet, and the text will include the three minor amendments which the General Chapter requested, as mentioned in 7.4.2 below.

7.1 The birth of this document

This document originated in the request of the General Chapter of Itaici for “*a complete revision of Chapter 7*” of the *Rule of Life* (Itaici 40). It seemed to the General Council that it was not the time to make such a revision. In a period of evolution, we would risk having to re-write Chapter 7 yet again in the future.

It was felt that it was better to suggest how the changes could best be dealt with, giving general directions, types of structure that were not definitive, guidelines for an institution that is still changing. This is the aim of the present Directory.

The Enlarged General Council at Dakar in 1995 agreed with the idea that a revision of Chapter 7 was not necessary unless the orientations decided during the General Chapter would necessitate some modifications.

7.2 The idea of the Directory: Changes need new structures

The aim of the document is to guide decisions about the organisation of the Congregation in evolving situations. Here are a few examples of changes and the way in which the Directory deals with them.

7.2.1 Small circumscriptions on the front line of mission

Circumscriptions are developing that are smaller than in the past. There are many of them, spread over all continents, and they are nearly all becoming international.

Groups and Districts

Some Groups were set up for new missionary engagements. They were small at the start and the type of evangelisation they undertook, often slow and discrete, did not need large numbers. By choice or by necessity – because of the difficulty of finding enough willing and suitable confreres in a single Province – these groups were often international.

The Districts are tending to become smaller, works having been handed over to the local clergy. The Spiritan presence, taking up tasks that are more specifically in line with our charism, is understandably reduced. The Districts are also shrinking as a result of the ageing of confreres and the lack of vocations in the Provinces of origin of their members. To find at least a minimum of new personnel, District Superiors are knocking on other doors, particularly those of Foundations and new Spiritan Provinces. Thus the Districts are nearly all becoming international.

For the moment, these circumscriptions are keeping the name of “Group” or “District”, but there is no fundamental difference between them. Later we could use just one name for all - for example, the word “Group”.

Real Circumscriptions

These Groups and Districts are, or should progressively become, real circumscriptions, with a Major Superior. Therefore, no more Groups will be created that used to be called "Provincial Groups", dependent on a far-off Province, if only for the reason that they are becoming international and their missionary commitment needs the status of an autonomous circumscription.

In fact Groups and Districts, which are often a long way from the Provinces of origin of their members, are the front line of our mission, a mission which calls for a creative fidelity, initiative, a great deal of discernment and the taking on of various responsibilities. These circumscriptions need to be given some consistency. They have to have a certain degree of authority over their personnel, who should not be liable to recall by their Province of origin at any moment.

Solidarity of the Congregation

What is needed for the Groups, and more and more for the Districts, is solidarity without domination. This solidarity should be built on confidence and generosity, but be well organised, stimulated and guided by the General Council.

These Groups and Districts must also assume various responsibilities that flow from this autonomy. But they are generally fragile and the missions they undertake call for men who are fit and well motivated. The departure of one of them can upset many things and finding a replacement can mean knocking on many doors.

Generally, the type of engagement of these circumscriptions and the regions where they are working

makes it impossible for them to arrive at a state of financial autonomy or even to envisage it in the near future.

As a consequence, both in the area of finance and personnel, they need the support of the Congregation. This solidarity should not be allowed to produce a state of dependence; it must promote rather than undermine relationships of confidence and generosity. Therefore we do not want to enshrine it in a juridical contract where a circumscription will help, knowing that it will receive something in return. Nor do we want a system that depends on contributions levied by the Generalate. We will rely instead on the spirit of our tradition of "*Cor unum et Anima una*" to spark our solidarity into action.

The Groups and Districts themselves have the primary responsibility for their personnel and finance. The support they need will come from the solidarity of :

- the Generalate, by way of appointments and by allocations from the *Special Fund for Apostolic Projects* and, exceptionally, from *Cor Unum*;
- the Region to which they belong; the regional meeting will give the opportunity to assess the needs and the possibility of giving aid;
- the Circumscriptions that are linked to them in one way or another of which some, for example, could provide personnel and others, regular financial aid.

If these forms of solidarity are well organised, it will save the small circumscriptions from constant worry about the lack of essential resources.

7.2.2 Foundations and Provinces for today's Vocations and Formation

New Foundations and Provinces

While we have only a few candidates in the older Provinces, which were constructed with a view to the recruitment and training of young people, Spiritan vocations are coming from the Groups and Districts on the front line of mission. We have no intention of turning them away simply because these small circumscriptions were not set up for the training of candidates. This reality leads to the setting up of Postulancies which form the embryos of Foundations.

When they have completed their postulancy, the young people move on to a house of formation in a Province or a Regional structure. Later on, a first cycle, noviciate and second cycle could be established. At a certain stage, if various criteria are fulfilled, a new Province may come into existence.

It is clear that these Foundations and new Provinces need the help of the whole Congregation to get things going and to follow up the rapid growth that some of them have experienced. This is the central focus of our solidarity, managed through the *Cor Unum* Fund.

The future growth of our Spiritan family depends upon such mutual help.

Older Provinces

Some Provinces are becoming increasingly weak and lack the personnel to continue their commitments. They need the help of the Congregation. They could get this from the other older Provinces in their Region and likewise from the support of new Provinces and

Foundations. In this way, even these older Provinces are also becoming international.

They are realising that Spiritan mission is also in their own back yard, so, for example, they are taking on commitments in the service of immigrants, refugees and young people. They take part in action for the support and defence of the poor. These undertakings can show people what Spiritan mission is all about and attract vocations (professed and Lay Associates) more easily than stories about our work in far off lands.

7.3 A certain vision of the Organisation of the Congregation

All this is why the Congregation is giving itself new forms and new ways of working. Our *Spiritan Rule of Life* leaves room for innovations, because, above all, it seeks to convey a spirit and does not define details. The *Directory for Organisation* gives new directions and points of reference which add to the Rule without contradicting it.

We allow ourselves to be led by experience, after discernment and common reflection. By this, we try to discover where the Spirit is leading us. Systems of organisation are born from concrete needs and interior calls before they are systematically elaborated.

The *Spiritan Rule of Life* assimilated certain evolutions and Itaici invited us to continue the process of evaluation. The proposals in the *Directory* were made in the light of movements which are already under way. In these movements we can see the Spirit leading us towards a Spiritan mission that is without domination, that is lived out in a shared responsibility, testifying to the unity in diversity at the heart of a world that is torn apart.

The *Directory* gives guidelines to accompany this evolution and to organise Spiritan life in a way that is more practical and meaningful. It encourages relationships characterised by confidence, responsibility and solidarity. It invites the setting up of new relationships between circumscriptions for their mutual support: the fusion of circumscriptions where they are working alongside each other with the same human communities which have a real unity; the integration of Districts into a Foundation that has become a new Province; regional collaboration.

The *Directory* does not foresee any extension of the juridical powers of the General Council. In its ministry of direction, it is invited to make more use of the possibilities of intervention that are already given by the *Spiritan Rule of Life*, to use its moral authority and to rely on the generosity of the members. In this way, it will help to achieve a better distribution of personnel, particularly for new projects and for formation. It will stimulate and give further organisation to solidarity with the most fragile and needy circumscriptions.

Thus the *Directory* is faithful to the *Spiritan Rule of Life* and our Spiritan tradition, putting trust in the action of the Spirit within the heart of each of us and in our missionary and communitarian relationships.

7.4 Decisions of the Chapter

The General Chapter of Itaici asked the General Council to prepare a “*complete revision of Chapter 7*” of the *Spiritan Rule of Life* (Itaici 40).

Although the *Directory for Organisation* drawn up by the General Council does not correspond exactly to the request of the General Chapter of Itaici, it is nonetheless

faithful to its spirit and to the precision given by the Enlarged General Council at Dakar.

The document takes into account the fact that it is not desirable to fix the organisation of the Congregation in our changing situation; it gives satisfactory global orientations for the organisation of the Congregation in the six years to come.

After insertion of the amendments, it will be used until the next General Chapter as a practical Directory of organisation and administration. In cases where particular provisions of this Directory are found to be contradictory to those of the *Spiritan Rule of Life*, the Rule of Life will be followed.

The Chapter asks the General Council to set up a juridical commission to study the possibility and the manner of integrating the *Directory for Organisation* into Chapter 7 of the *Spiritan Rule of Life*. This commission will submit the results of its work to the next General Chapter.

8. HISTORY – ANNIVERSARIES

There is a growing interest in our history within the Congregation. Undoubtedly, it is the development of mission and the orientations of Vatican II that have led us to look for sources which could inspire a new creativity in our missionary life. Particularly important amongst these sources are our origins and our Spiritan tradition which some of our historians have brought into focus in recent years.

In the years ahead, we have a unique opportunity to celebrate two important anniversaries of our Congregation. The year 2002 will be the 200th anniversary of the birth of Libermann and the 150th anniversary of his death and in 2003 we will celebrate the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation. We will look back on all that the Spirit has accomplished in the Congregation throughout its history, not forgetting the darker side which is not of the Spirit's doing but which serves to keep us vigilant. Our celebrations in the Local Churches where we are working will focus on all this heritage.

DECISIONS

A Spiritan Year

8.1 The Chapter asks the General Council to prepare for the organisation of a Spiritan Year, in collaboration with the different circumscriptions; it will begin on February 2, 2002 and end at Pentecost, 2003. The aim of this Spiritan Year will be to encourage a renewal of the Congregation and to make our Spiritan missionary spirituality better known.

8.2 The General Council and the circumscriptions will collaborate in the preparation of these anniversaries; they will take care to simplify the organisation and to avoid unnecessary expense.

8.3 The preparatory work of both Generalate and circumscriptions will be presented to the next Enlarged General Council in 2001. The Enlarged Council will bring together those involved in the preparation of the Spiritan Year and give the subject prominence when drawing up its agenda.

8.4 The historical works that are in progress – the Diary of the Congregation, the Spiritan Anthology and the Biography of Libermann – will be completed (cf. Itaiçi 41).

SUGGESTIONS

8.5 The members of the Chapter make the following proposals to the General Council:

- to prepare various materials that can be used in the circumscriptions, such as a leaflet giving a short presentation of Spiritan life, aimed at vocations; a press release; an outline for a radio or TV interview; a selection of historical photos of the Congregation etc. From time to time, to suggest themes for reflection to confreres, based on documents on Poullart des Places and Libermann and material concerned with mission;
- to look into the possibility of one or several seminars on Mission, open to the general public, focusing on the contemporary Spiritan vision of mission, in the light of its tradition;

- to use the different technical possibilities that are available today to communicate news of the activities connected with the anniversaries to all Spiritans;
- to set up an “ad hoc” committee to co-ordinate the preparations and activities of the Spiritan Year.

8.6 The members of the Chapter make the following proposals to all circumscriptions:

- to organise, without delay, a large meeting in the circumscription to plan the local activities for the Spiritan Year and to appoint a co-ordinator; several circumscriptions could organise some events at regional level;
- to set up a programme of events according to local possibilities: conferences, celebrations, seminars, pilgrimages etc. Some activities could be arranged in collaboration with the local Churches and the works in which we are involved. Centres of missionary awareness could integrate elements of the history and spirituality of the Congregation into their programmes;
- if it has not been done already, to write the diary and history of the circumscription; prepare a press-release for the local media; encourage communities to keep their journals;
- to encourage everybody - young and old, professed and associate – to take part in the preparations for the Spiritan Year (testimonies, memoirs, audio and video tapes, music, theatrical presentations etc.);
- to revive interest in local founders and the places connected with local Spiritan history; one example of this would be the old Spiritan cemeteries of the early missions;

- to invite confreres who are well versed in the history of our founders to make themselves available for giving retreats in different circumscriptions.

8.7 A Spiritan Historical Pilgrimage

*Several of our major historical sites are in the same area: Rennes, Paris, Saverne, Amiens etc. They could form elements of a Spiritan **pilgrimage In the steps of Poullart des Places and Libermann.***

The Chapter asks the General Council that a feasibility study be undertaken by the French Province in collaboration with the Generalate and perhaps also the other Provinces of Europe, and that the results be presented to the next Enlarged General Council. Such a pilgrimage would be open to friends and benefactors of the Spiritan family, and be adapted to the linguistic needs of different groups.

Another study could be made, in co-operation with the circumscriptions and regions concerned, of the possibility of pilgrimages to other places that are important in our Spiritan history: Rome-Assisi-Loreto, Dakar, Haiti, Reunion, Mauritius, Bagamoyo, Gentinnes etc.

9. CHANGES TO THE RULE OF LIFE

The General Chapter decided to make two sets of changes:

9.1 To give the General Council more weight in matters of formation.

- In SRL 105, *"in dialogue with the General Council"* will be replaced by *"with the agreement of the General Council"*.

The new no. 105 will now read as follows:

"It is the superior of the circumscription with the consent of his council, in collaboration with the formation team and with the agreement of the General Council, who decides the orientations of formation."⁵

- A new no. 106.3 is added:

"It makes sure that the orientations of the Congregation regarding formation are followed in the circumscriptions and it intervenes when it considers it necessary".

- The former 106.3 remains unchanged but it now receives the number 106.4.

9.2 Because of the new situation of Provinces and the consequent difficulties of organising Chapters:

⁵ This change to no. 105 of the "Constitutions" of our *Rule of Life* was approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on October 30, 1998.

- In SRL 180.1, the words *“from the province”* are to be omitted.
- The former nos. 180.2 and 180.3 are entirely deleted. They are replaced by a new no. 180.2:

“Care is taken to ensure an adequate representation of confreres appointed to other circumscriptions”.

The following task was given to the General Council:

9.3 Regarding SRL 213 and concerning the frequency of ordinary General Chapters and its consequences for the mandates of the members of the General Council:

The Chapter asks the General Council to study this question and its implications and to present the result of its research to the next General Chapter.



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CONGREGAZIONE DELLO SPIRITO SANTO
CASA GENERALIZIA
CLIVO DI CINNA, 195
00136 ROMA