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CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY



SUPERIOR GENERAL'S REPORT

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XVIII GENERAL CHAPTER

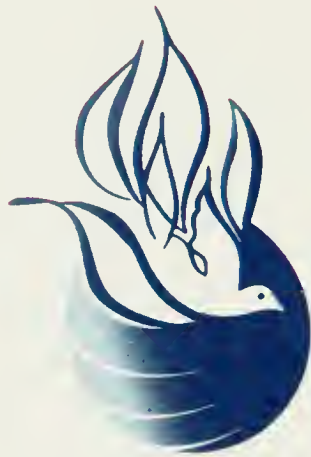
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Congregation of the Holy Spirit
USA Eastern Province

Rome, 22 March 1998

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Report is principally for the benefit of those of you who will be delegates or invitees at the General Chapter. By the time you receive it, you should still have three months in which to study it. It can be read by all Spiritans who wish to do so. It was produced in collaboration with the General Council and thanks to the patient work of the translators and secretaries.

It should help the Chapter to carry out its task as described in the Spiritan Rule of Life:

- *“to check that the Congregation has remained faithful to the mission that it has within the Church;*
- *to augment the apostolic and religious vitality of the members of the Institute;*
- *to evaluate the effect in practice of measures taken by previous Chapters;*
- *to decide objectives in missionary activity for the coming years;*
- *to examine the financial state of the Congregation”* (SRL 214).

The Report reminds us of what has been lived and achieved by the Congregation since the Chapter at Itaiçi. Above all, it tries to communicate the impressions gained of the Congregation by the General Council during its mandate. Your own experiences of the Congregation and that of the groups that you represent must not remain hidden under a bushel. You are urged to try to formulate them so that they also can be shared with the Chapter. In no way would this Report claim to be the last word; its aim is to provide information and an overall view.

The first section situates our mission in the context of the contemporary world and Church, the better to appreciate its meaning and significance: *“Our Congregation on pilgrimage with the human Family of our Day”*.

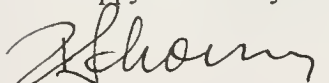
The second part presents each of the circumscriptions and their context (country, region, continent), to help us to be aware of the variety to be found in spiritan life and mission: *“The Diaspora of Circumscriptions”*.


In the third section, the principal characteristics of our spiritan life are highlighted under four headings, corresponding to the four main themes foreseen for the programme of the Chapter. This presentation also includes an evaluation of the Congregation and of the work carried out by the General Council: *“General Features of the Life and Work of the Congregation”*.

Basing itself on this appraisal of our Institute and the signs of the Spirit that we discern in it, the final part draws out some points of reference for the decisions and orientations for the future to be decided by the Chapter: *“Horizons and Paths for the Future”*.

In the course of our mandate, we have had the privilege of seeing the many ways in which the Spirit is acting through the varied gifts, and even weaknesses, of Spiritans in the many parts of the Church and the world where they are working, including situations of injustice and violence. This experience widens our hearts and our vision. Despite many worries, our assessment of the Congregation has become more positive *a posteriori*. Our conviction that the Spirit is working through and with our religious family has grown during the last six years. We want to share this conviction with you at this paschal time. *“Christ, our Hope, is alive, and so we will live”* (*The Message of the Synod for Africa*).

A happy Easter to you all!


Pierre Schouver, CSSp.



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PART I

OUR CONGREGATION ON PILGRIMAGE WITH THE HUMAN FAMILY OF OUR DAY

1.0.1 *“The trouble with the clergy in recent times, is that they have got stuck in the ideas of the past. The world moves on, and our enemies have adapted their armoury to the spirit of the age while we are left way behind! Without abandoning the spirit of the Gospel, we must get up to date, do good and combat evil in the world as it is today.” (Fr. Libermann in 1848. N.D. 151)*

1.0.2 Our Congregation is not a separate planet. Nothing human is foreign to us. We are a microcosm. Each of us has roots firmly planted in a particular human soil. Throughout life, we carry our inheritance with us which continually gives us the personal vitality with which we tackle our Spiritan commitments. We also have our Church of origin, which formed us and continues to inspire us.

Our Congregation has likewise entered fully into the story of our times, for better or worse. We arrived at different times. Some were born more or less with the century. The contemporary world writes our agenda; it is not just the setting of our existence, it is also part of us.

Many of us were born and entered the Congregation before Vatican II. We live in the ambience of this Council, which was absorbed into Spiritan life at the *aggiornamento* Chapter of 1968-1969. Our ministry continues to be strongly influenced by the insights of the Council and by recent documents addressed to the whole Church. We live with the rhythm of the local Churches to which we are appointed - the Churches which have the primary responsibility for mission.

This is why this report begins by situating the life and mission of the Congregation amongst the changes of the World and of the Church of our day.

1.1 NEW APPROACHES TO FAITH AND EVANGELISATION IN SECULARISED SOCIETIES

1.1.1 Human Autonomy, the Mastery of Nature, Disenchantment and a Return to Sources

Secularisation is spreading everywhere, but it first developed in the industrial societies of Europe, above all in the towns.

Our societies are built on non-religious foundations. Religion is no longer the basis but just one of many components. All our experiences develop in a context of human autonomy, a spirit of criticism, the liberty of the individual, and the mastery of nature. Living conditions for men and women have been generally improved, although not equally in all countries, and we have witnessed a growth in the phenomenon of exclusion which we will return to later.

Despite all the progress, many people no longer feel at ease in a society which, in a certain sense, was made for them; they feel that somehow, important things have been forgotten. We have ended up with a life with less meaning and less beauty. In trying to make ourselves richer, we have ended up by becoming poorer.

People speak of 'disenchantment'. Things have less charm when they are seen divorced from the beauty of nature, from the symbols and rites of traditional society. People feel as though they are imprisoned by a system; Parisians sum it all up in their saying "métro, boulot, dodo" (tube, work, sleep).

Our relationship with nature has changed. It used to be something sacred, but now it is being sacrificed to human industry - shamelessly exploited and polluted. Thanks to various ecological movements, we are coming to realise that, for the quality of our life and future, we must respect nature as a resource. Nature is being exhausted, polluted and disfigured by the demands of industrial society. The 'green' movement is trying to protect it.

People are turning back to their roots to look for meaning, identity, and something to hang on to. They refer back to them, but without wanting to return to them.

Secularised society has allowed people to free themselves from the yoke of tradition, with all the narrowness and oppression that it dragged along with it. It has raised their standard of living. But now they are looking for ways to escape from the new restraints that this society has itself produced. Out of their global experience they seek a meaning to life, a mutual support and solidarity that goes beyond purely economic considerations.

1.1.2 New Types of Faith and Evangelisation

1.1.2.1 Secularised societies have brought into question the whole idea of religious authority. We no longer automatically presume adherence to the tenets of Christian faith and morality. The fall in religious practice and the dearth of 'vocations' is a consequence of secularisation. This is partly the reason why we find it so difficult to get involved in good works, why we feel so fragile, why there is a lack of dynamism in our communities. Our ways of thinking, our life of prayer and faith have all been affected. And this does not just apply to the northern hemisphere.

Secularised society poses a **challenge to our spiritual life and to the whole area of formation** in our Congregation. It could turn out to be a way towards greater authenticity: it could, on the other hand, lead to a dead end. We have learnt to recognise its mirages.

At the second Vatican Council, the **Church opted for openness and going back to our sources**. She tried to get rid of all from the past that was cluttering things up while at the same time seeking inspiration from a re-assessment of what had gone before. Many Christians were successful in unhooking themselves from the past, but far less so in seeking a new way of relating to their tradition.

Those who have continued to walk with the Church have found a different way of living their faith. They have learnt how to interpret their experiences in the light of the Gospel. Obedience is now seen as a communal search for the will of God.

1.1.2.2 The missionary approach is also changing. The transmission of the Good News depends above all on the authority of the witness, a concept that is rooted in Scripture: *“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses”* (Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, p.42). Parents, out of love for their children, have had to find new ways of using parental authority, of passing on the essentials of their faith without being tied to the letter of tradition.

Rather than speaking today in terms of internal and external mission, it is perhaps more relevant to distinguish two different approaches:

- There is that of the “new evangelisation”, which aims to give new life to our own Church, to make its witness more dynamic, more capable of attracting back again those who are seeking God.
- Since the Chapter of 1968-1969, we Spiritans have felt called to take up, once more, mission that crosses frontiers. This approach means being with people, sharing their lives, learning from them. If it is done in the spirit of Jesus Christ, it is itself a witness. It creates a climate of confidence which leads to a sharing of faith and perhaps joining the Christian community.

These two approaches are not opposed to each other as long as they are not made exclusive. They can provide mutual balance and enrichment.

1.2 INCREASED DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH AND AN URBANISED WORLD

1.2.1 Demographic Data

During this century, the world population has tripled, the number living in towns has increased at an incredible rate and cities have grown enormously. These approximate figures are quoted:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Africa | 670,000,000 |
| Asia | 3,335,000,000 |
| Europe | 728,000,000 |
| North America | 442,000,000 |
| South America | 309,000,000 |
| Oceania | 28,000,000 |
| Total world population | 5,512,000,000 |

It is reckoned that in the year 1800, the population of the world was a thousand million, and that in 1900 it was two thousand million. The forecast for 2025 is:

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Africa | 1,400,000,000 |
| Latin America | 500,000,000 |
| Asia | 4,500,000,000 |

At the start of this century, one person out of every three was of European origin. By 2025, the figure will be reduced to one out of seven.

In the middle of this century, there were twice as many Christians as Moslems; soon there will be less Christians than Moslems.

1.2.2 Accelerated Urbanisation

By the year 2,000, half the world's population will be living in towns, and two fifths will be in towns of more than a million inhabitants. Today there are 18 times more towns of a million inhabitants than at the beginning of the century and 28 times more towns of two million. Urbanisation should not increase any further in Europe, but it is estimated that such a growth will continue in Africa and Asia until the middle of the next century.

Today, the existing mega-cities continue to grow but those which are being born now are developing rather as large inhabited spaces with a varying density of population: some parts which are very crowded and others with free spaces.

1.2.3 Urban Civilisation: Freedom, Diversity, Communications, Bonding, Loneliness and Disorder

Urbanisation is not just a question of a large number of people living in the same place; a town is a place of transformation and communication which produces a new kind of civilisation.

Modern towns are not enclosed in protective walls. They overflow on all sides into suburbs which multiply and coalesce. While the towns of a hundred years ago grew as a result of industrial development, those of today appear where there is an expansion in communications and trade without there necessarily being any industrialisation. This creates an imbalance between a growing population and static resources. The local governments are incapable of creating the necessary administrative structures and facilities, above all in the suburbs.

In the towns, people come together from everywhere. They live in an atmosphere of diversity, change and disorder. Complex social networks are created which favour the freedom of the individual, a freedom which can be very attractive. Some communities integrate very quickly, others retain their separate identity over a long period. But gradually the boundaries become blurred as, for example, the division of work and social position according to sex. From the religious point of view, there is a multiplicity of cults from which people can choose the one that best answers their needs. In their search for new points of reference, town-dwellers often turn back to their religious roots of long ago: "*The gods are migrating into the cities*". Religion provides a new link for the individual to a community. Some join fundamentalist groups.

Ultimately, everybody has to fall back on his or her own resources. Some find their feet, creating a world for themselves where their physical, psychological and emotional needs are catered for, where, in short, they are able to personalise their existence. But many others are completely disorientated. In the process of acclimatisation and integration into a city, there are so many pitfalls. Many end up living not only without religion, but also without any moral standards or order. The ensuing frustration leads to conflicts and violence.

1.2.4 What Room Is There for the Christian Faith In The Lives of Town-Dwellers?

In a secular and cosmopolitan context, faith no longer finds any fixed and objective points of reference. Each person looks to his or her personal experience; faith becomes privatised. What emerges from this bedlam of religions is not so much a temptation to un-belief as a type of deist attitude. The existence of a Divine Being is accepted, above all human vicissitudes, a source of life and harmony: *“The rumours of the death of God are highly exaggerated!”* (Peter Berger). In some ways, urbanisation can produce a reversal of the secularisation process: it can create a new type of religious need.

Those who do settle well into town life often have a religious commitment that is profound and militant. The experience of loneliness and vulnerability can make some people more open to Christianity. Pastoral efforts must be concerned with individuals, with the setting up of social help. The challenge for the Church is not so much that of unbelief as the need to *“adjust to a proliferation of beliefs which she does not control, even within her own ranks”*. Parishes have to meet so many different needs. Many associations are set up. Pastors try to open diverse paths, to create, as it were, a multiplicity of ‘foundation courses’ that will lead to an authentic faith. But what is ultimately decisive is the lived witness of Christians, priests and lay people, which puts the seal of credibility on all the rest.

It is important that this witness should be communitarian. In a human context that is producing so much loneliness, people are searching both for human contact and contact with God. In the Scriptures, God is not so much the God of the individual as the God of a people or an assembly. This is where he reveals himself most fully.

- 1.2.5 **Spiritans** are working in large cities in various continents - with the people of the shanty towns, displaced and immigrant peoples, with young unemployed, in the hostels of South Africa and with everybody else coming into the parishes. This is where our mission is: to face up to multiple types of poverty, abandonment, injustice and conflicts.

1.3 MOVING TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

1.3.1 Democracy In Various Guises

Democracy is not a modern phenomenon; it has existed in different forms in the past. The emergence of a modern idea of freedom and equality started a

movement towards the recognition and universal declaration of the rights of men and women. Adapted versions of this Declaration of rights are worked out for continents like Africa, for different social classes, or for age groups (e.g. children).

One of these rights is the right of people to govern themselves (this is the meaning of 'democracy') and thus create their own history. A more precise definition of modern democracy would be a society where everybody, on reaching maturity, has an equal right to choose representatives for government. This ideal is not found everywhere. There are still many societies where power is not born of the will of the people: one finds hereditary power, domination by religious leaders, domination by the male sex, domination by the army taking power by force, imposition of a one-party system.

1.3.2 Paths and Obstacles Towards Democracy

Starting from widely differing situations, various paths are sought that will lead towards democracy. A number of forces are helping to push in that direction: pressure from populations that have been conscientised by the media, the development of political parties, the participation of women in the elective process, pressure from international political and financial bodies.

There are many obstacles along the way. Sometimes the democratic institutions only have the appearance of power, while the real control is in the hands of the army or those with economic muscle; for example, a significant share of power can belong to petroleum or diamond companies or even drug cartels. The movement can easily be blocked or reversed. Some fall back into dictatorship: coups d'états, return to a one-party system, imposition of one ideology or one religion.

Countries with less resources depend on the most powerful, who also control the international bodies. Economic forces and the World Bank impose other constraints. During a meeting of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) it emerged that African countries have no policies of their own, because they have no alternative but to act under the influence of all sorts of exterior demands and pressures.

1.3.3 Attitude of The Church and Spiritan Commitments

Vatican II and other subsequent pontifical documents have tried to clarify the elements and duties of a State where rights are respected. The Bishops and Episcopal conferences in different countries have taken up the cause of democracy, trying to conscientise the Christian people and all those of good will. They remind lay people of their particular vocation in the city and encourage them to enter the political arena if they feel capable. The present Canon Law forbids clerics to take on any public office that involves participation in political power.

Some confreres who are involved in defending the rights of people are occasionally obliged to get deeply immersed in movements of a political nature. Our contribution can perhaps be that of forming lay Christians, of watching over the rights of the poor, of encouraging popular movements and denouncing

the violation of rights and democracy. These are the ways we can help the most neglected to stand up and struggle for justice and peace.

1.4 THE MEETING OR CONFLICT OF CULTURES

1.4.1 The Conference of Bandung

This took place in Indonesia in 1955, a meeting of 24 independent countries, 16 of which were ex-colonies. The countries taking part wished to stress that henceforth, they were masters of their own history. The final text affirmed, amongst other things, *“the equality of all races and all nations”*.

The West had made this planet unified and uniform under its domination. It had exploited indigenous populations for its own economic interests, even going as far as establishing the slave trade and annihilating whole populations.

Bandung symbolically brought about the emergence on to the world stage of a diversity of peoples, free, responsible, and all equal. Its dream was to put an end to dominant relationships and arrogant attitudes, and to replace them with mutual respect and dialogue amongst peoples. Forced unity must give way to a unity of diversity and sharing. Poets have spoken of a universal banquet where each nation would bring along the riches of its own culture.

1.4.2 The Present Situation

There is a large gap between this declaration and the present reality of things. Economic domination continues, as well as imposed cultural uniformity. Many who belong to dominant cultures simply do not believe that the cultures of minorities have any future. The poorest countries, and especially the most neglected social categories, cannot get anywhere near the banquet. So these people turn in on their own culture and stress the solidarity of their own group. This changes the whole nature of political and economic interplay and sometimes leads to war.

The colonisers not only uprooted people from their culture, but also tore them away from their history and exercising their own responsibility. The history into which they were dragged was not theirs, and they had neither the preparation nor the means to adopt any sort of role in that context. In Africa, human resources have never really formed a serious part of development projects. The latter, managed in the interests of the dominant system, have left no room for any other kind of project to emerge.

This situation continues. Enormous numbers of young people are going around in circles in Africa, unemployed, responsible for nothing, and therefore powerless. There is no place for them in the corridors of the world economic system, which alone moves money around and creates employment.

However, some new ways are opening up. Experts, both foreign and local, are working together in co-responsibility. Cultural realities are taken into account in the plans of NGOs. The people themselves take part in decisions. Will the general policies of countries follow this same movement? Will economies be worked out in the light of the needs, the means and the wishes of the people?

1.4.3 Affirming Cultures and Peoples: A New Stress On Their Individuality

The Church was not unconnected with this domination by the West, but the creation of dioceses headed by local bishops was a sign of the coming of a new era. The Synod for Africa proposed an evangelisation which would be also inculturation and dialogue. But there is a long way to go before local cultures find their true place in the Church and full trust is placed in local leaders.

The fact that economic domination continues, along with a tendency to standardise cultures, is making people all the more sensitive to what focuses attention and respect on their individuality. Thus those who witness to the Gospel are obliged not to skate over these differences but to ensure that their communication respects the culture and liberty of others. As missionaries, we feel that we have no right to impose ourselves and our own world, or to assimilate other people. We must approach them with a pure heart, bringing a mission without any trace of domination; authority will reside uniquely in the Lord himself. The desire for dialogue and inculturation will add a conversion of heart to the methods adopted.

1.4.4 Our Congregation Is A Meeting Place of Many Peoples

Members have been welcomed into the Congregation from many different races and cultures with total equality. Structures have been established for Spiritans in different countries to assure their own identity, their own organisation, leaders and formators. Concretely, we find ourselves in international groups with our cultural differences, but all equal before the Word of God, and all completely 'at home'. We still find it difficult to avoid the tendency to dominate, to make judgements flowing from our personal prejudices. But a great deal has already happened in the whole area of trust and brotherhood.

1.5 THE DOMINATION OF MARKET FORCES

1.5.1 Capitalism and Marxism: The Triumph of the Liberal Society

The West imposed itself on other peoples by means of its technical know-how and military force. Its power has been maintained by the strength of its economy (production, market). This domination was opposed by revolutionary movements. For decades, two blocks confronted each other, capitalist countries and socialist countries. The poorest countries were seen as prizes to be won and benefited from the attention of the great powers. Since the fall of communism, everybody seems to be rallying to the neo-liberal society. As a result of the destruction of the wall between the two blocks, the poorest countries no longer have the same role as during the cold war. The law of the market accentuates the cleavage between poor and rich peoples.

Market forces tend to worsen the conditions of workers. For example, in the Asian countries which are so often singled out as examples of economic dynamism, some firms impose a quota-system which forces employees to work for up to 14 hours per day. In Japan, legislation is being prepared that would suppress the current laws protecting female employees. Such a step is a logical

expression of the capitalist logic: *“If women insist on equality with men, it is only right to suppress their special privileges.”* They forget the special respect that society owes to those who carry all the country’s workers for nine months and then bring them into the world. Nothing else matters apart from the demands of productivity.

1.5.2 The Church in the Struggle for Justice

The social encyclicals came out with precise ideas on peace, the development of peoples, and justice. They denounced the limits and faults of both systems, liberal and Marxist. They presented commitment to justice and peace as a constitutive element of evangelisation.

Throughout the Church, a movement of active research began into justice, people’s rights, and the liberation of exploited social categories. The churches of Latin America made a preferential option for the poor, but lay people, religious and priests who made a clear commitment on the side of the poor were often suspected of being Marxists. The Church authorities openly and vigorously denounced injustice, but remained very wary of solutions that did not fit in with their own Christian vision. Perhaps at times they identified the wrong people as enemies, a temptation that Francis Libermann warned us about in the quotation above (p.1). When the triumphant neo-liberal society challenges the dream of a society built on solidarity, the preferential option for the poor loses something of its strength.

1.5.3 Spiritans, Sent to Bring the Good News to the Poor

We are deeply involved in countries which continue to get poorer, as well as with an increasing number of groups of excluded people. We have inherited from our founders a deep concern for the poor. We realise more clearly today that it is not sufficient simply to organise aid; we have to struggle with the poor for their dignity against all the forces which oppress them. What means have we got to block these forces? We have chosen involvement in works of Justice and Peace as an essential part of our mission. This choice challenges not just the society where we live but also ourselves.

1.6 GLOBALISATION

1.6.1 What Is It?

It is, first of all, a world organisation of economic production. Instead of producing merchandise in a particular country, based on know-how and often a long tradition, companies from different countries collaborate to produce a common product, where each, according to its speciality, makes a part of the whole. The final phase is one of assembly. In place of different companies manufacturing completed articles in competition with each other, the aim is to produce a single product which is the best possible as regards quality and price. Globalisation entails a movement of production to those countries where labour is cheap and social protection at a minimum.

There is also a globalisation of capital, made easy today by instant communication and the disappearance of currency controls. Investments of all types are juggled across the planet so as to produce maximum returns. The profitability of investments attracts capital that produces yet more profit. The brokers are people whose skills are in great demand and are thus able to sell themselves to the highest bidder.

Commercial competition today is not so much between States as between multinational enterprises on a world scale. The options they make are based on economic and financial interest. Under the guise of normal personal relations, their decisions are hidden by a cloak of anonymity, so that it is impossible to tell who is responsible for what. Meanwhile, State governments, whose duties include the avoidance of disorder and the assurance of decent living conditions for their people, find themselves caught between two apparently contradictory priorities; on the one hand they are obliged to provide employment and consequently increase productivity and diminish social provisions so as to remain competitive, and on the other, they have to guarantee their citizens their social rights.

1.6.2 Evaluation

Globalisation results in the domination of market forces at the level of the planet. It is the law of the strongest, not the right of individuals, which prevails. It conditions the lives of people without taking into account the totality of what it means to be human. The state should watch over the totality of life for all, but in the logic of the market-place, it is seen as an anachronism.

There is much discussion about the effects of globalisation. Some think that its effects, at least in the long term, will be positive, involving all countries in this spiral of growth and abundance. Statistically, the developing countries are growing more quickly than the rich. Slowly, the economic centre of gravity is moving and changing continent. At present, North America is responsible for 21% of global production; by 2030, that figure will have fallen to 12% while Asia and Oceania will grow from 38% to 55% in the same period.

The same experts would hold that the bad effects are limited. For example, the location of enterprises will not always be determined by where the cheapest work-force is to be found; for quality products, one would look for the most qualified personnel and the nearest countries for quick delivery. Globalisation also encourages people to look to financial constraint when taking out a loan, to produce quality work and, in short, to act responsibly instead of relying on social guarantees.

But the negative effects are evident. Even if the overall revenue of countries is increasing, it only benefits a minority of the population who are lucky enough to be personally involved. The rest simply become poorer. In the so-called 'rich' countries, the implacable laws of competition eliminate the less profitable enterprises, resulting in the emergence of newly created poor and excluded people. As one commentator put it, "*All this is taking place as if the 'third world' can only be reduced world-wide at the expense of creating more 'third worlds' within each nation*". In the United States, poverty (defined as an income half that of the average wage) has risen in twenty years from 14.8% of

households to 19.2%, and in England from 6.7% to 13.1%. And all this in a period when these countries have experienced a significant overall growth.

Globalisation generates misery. It destroys social rights, such as access to health care and education. It is said that all will benefit from this new order in the long term; this may be true of those who are lucky enough to survive.

The market also dictates interest rates according to the needs of profitability. Who will protect the investor, the borrower, the debtor? The banks were keen to offer loans to developing countries when they had plenty of spare capital. It was a trap. Today, enormous debts are crippling most poor countries.

1.6.3 The Attitude of the Church and Missionary Involvement

The Church has often called for a regulation of globalisation in favour of the rights of the individual. Apart from an in-depth discussion on the value of globalisation, we can only register its existence and try to deflect its bad effects. What we can do as defenders of the rights of the poor is to expose the perverse results of globalisation by all the means at our disposal, recalling the dignity of each person and the expectations of life in society. Society must be preserved from chaos.

Today, the means of social communication and the movements of population spread information about the problems throughout the world and create relations amongst peoples. It is a factor that could have a gradual influence on the power of the market which benefits from working anonymously. As missionaries, we could help its victims to emerge from their anonymity and defend their rights. The Faith and Justice networks between Africa and Europe or America, Justice and Peace information exchanged by electronic mail, are all contributing in this direction.

In this area of the global market, which aims at efficiency at any price and concrete results as quickly as possible, we look like samples of a world that has passed its sell-by date. We try to be with people, to get to know their real needs and to move forward with them at their pace.

Finally, it is clear that globalisation needs to be controlled by something more than the invisible and implacable hand of market forces. What authority is capable of guiding it for the benefit of all the inhabitants of this planet? *"In our days, the universal common good raises problems of a world-wide dimension. They can only be solved by a public authority whose power, constitution and means also extend world-wide... The moral order itself demands the setting up of a public authority with global competence"* (John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 137).

1.7 THE NATURAL WORLD UNDER THREAT

1.7.1 A Threat to the World We Live In and the Air We Breathe

Serious consequences for our earth and atmosphere are flowing from the development of industry, the frenetic forces of the world market and the need for currency for poor countries. As industrial production continues to grow,

more and more basic materials and sources of energy are needed. The mineral resources of the planet are being exploited almost without restraint.

Consumption in rich countries, urged on by advertising, results in a massive demand for products with an inevitable impact on nature. The consumption of meat calls for an increase in cattle production with the consequent deforestation of large areas to create more pasture. The trade in expensive timber brings in huge profits. The governments of developing countries, which are always looking for cash to pay off their debts, allow companies to destroy vast areas of forest so as to get hold of a few tree trunks. Illegal groups use the same methods of felling.

Industrial growth is producing enormous amounts of waste, which not only defaces the countryside but also pollutes rivers and soil. Cars and lorries pollute the atmosphere. The nuclear power stations, which are sometimes constructed and maintained without sufficient supervision, can represent a threat to life in large areas.

1.7.2 The Ecological Battle

The ecological movements are rightly concerned to draw our attention to these dangers and to struggle against the sources of this pollution. People in the richer countries are becoming more involved. But the poorer countries are in no hurry to listen to the exhortations of the rich, to economise their natural resources and watch over their environment for the benefit of the whole of humanity, because these rich countries have already wasted and polluted their own resources!

The Rio de Janeiro summit in 1992 drew the attention of the world to these problems. But changes in policy regarding the management of natural resources and the protection of the environment are slow in coming, because such changes would be a move against free market forces.

1.7.3 The Christian Vision and the Involvement of Missionary Institutes

Christians, and those in authority in their Churches, have taken up this challenge. For them, respect for creation which was made by God for men and women, is all part of their faith. It is a labour of love for our contemporaries and our successors to fight against the degradation, pillage and pollution of the earth.

More and more, this commitment, along with justice and peace, is becoming one of the objectives of our missionary Institutes.

1.8 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATIONS

1.8.1 Policies of Blocking and Control

Globalisation is increasing the movement of peoples and is creating new type of migration: those who work for limited periods in other countries, traders, technicians, scientists, artists working abroad, not counting the tourists, immigrant workers and their families, exiles and refugees. According to the

World Bank, in 1993, 100 million people were living in countries that were not their own. There are migrations between developing countries. If we include refugees, people recently naturalised and the illegals (an estimation!), there are probably around 170 million migrants in the world today, i.e. 3% of the total population.

There is a contradiction between the globalisation of the economy and the closing of the old countries against the flow of migrants. The northern countries barricade themselves against certain categories of migrants, especially the poorest. They use strategies that are both simplistic and ineffective: the blocking of frontiers, and ever more annoying checks. Restrictive legislation and repressive measures against immigrants are on the increase. They are based on the supposed danger of an uncontrolled invasion which will threaten the rich and stable societies.

The result is humiliations, sub-human conditions of life for the illegals, separation of families, exploitation by those who claim they can get you across frontiers and by unscrupulous employers who take advantage of the situation.

1.8.2 Another Approach to Migration

Migration cannot be curtailed simply by addressing the movement from poor to rich countries; migrations also occur in the opposite direction. What right have countries to take unilateral action? The principle of free movement of peoples between countries is generally accepted with certain formalities. Barricades cannot be erected that are directed at only certain categories of people, for fear that they will remain in the country visited. In trying to control migrations, it is not right to employ brutal and disagreeable methods to bar access.

Why can more respectful and intelligent methods not be chosen, by studying the present migratory phenomenon with its causes and setting up discussions between the countries concerned, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the problems involved and eventually produce some agreements? A policy should be worked out, by representatives of politicians, associations, trade unions and Churches, based on a study of the causes and, ultimately, on the rights and liberties of individuals. The legal situation must be made perfectly clear and commitments must be observed.

Some experts hold that by choosing the path of human dignity, of the careful study of migratory movements, and by appealing to a sense of responsibility and discussions and agreements between countries, conditions will be created which will regulate immigration where unilateral measures of simply closing frontiers have been singularly unsuccessful. If it becomes too difficult to enter a particular country, there will be a temptation to stay put once having entered, whereas if movement in and out is made more easy, people will not hesitate to return to their country of origin. A policy of blocking access puts migrants into a state of frustration, anger and irregularity and can easily lead to violence and disorder. The foreigner feels he is under suspicion, threatened by sanctions.

1.8.3 A Time of Mobility for the Human Race

Apart from the large scale migrations, mobility is set to become an increasingly important element in the lives of individuals. After ten thousand years of ever-growing stability, are we now returning to the nomadic state? Certainly not in the same way as in the past, but communications have become so quick and easy and prices have tumbled; the price of boat and plane tickets has halved in the last thirty years and international telephone calls have dropped to a tenth of the former cost.

This mobility is not just geographical; it is also professional, social and cultural. In France, one worker in four changes his job every five years. A type of nomadic existence has hit the family unit: the number of divorces has tripled in France in the last twenty years. The same is true in politics, where electors swing from one party to another, from one end of the political spectrum to the other, with such apparent ease. *“Every commitment is temporary. Fidelity is always conditional. The disappearance of manual work has accentuated this freeing of the individual who is becoming increasingly un-rooted. Humanity seems to have passed from the solid to the liquid state and is heading for the gaseous. Volatility is becoming our natural environment”* (J. Boissanat, *Etudes* 1997, p. 444).

Our species could end up in a state of fear and panic. A settled trade acquired after a long apprenticeship, an assured role in the social organisation and hierarchy, a stable matrimonial situation, ...all these things gave a specific identity to the individual. Today, the need to be recognised and to have some sort of ties is leading people back to the family. It seems that in European societies, the new-found family connections are becoming the basic social link once again. Kinship is becoming the counter-weight to the mobility that is being accelerated by globalisation. A qualification is needed for a job but, in fact, it is through the family network that one gets it. It is within this network and other networks built on the same lines that the individual experiences relationships which are really human. This is where one finds values and affection. This is where people can treat the wounds inflicted by a constant rhythm of competition.

1.8.4 Some Spiritans Are Working With Migrants

In many countries and in different continents, Spiritans are helping in the welcoming, counselling and training of immigrants. Some are involved with studies, initiatives and the defence of the rights of immigrants.

They also come up against this phenomenon of human mobility, not only for others but also for themselves. The network of relationships created through basic ecclesial communities and the movements and associations respond to a social need of our times. We find there the same ecclesial forms that existed in the early days of the Church. The analyses of European sociologists recall the stress laid by the African bishops at the Synod in 1994 on the family and on the Church as the family of God.

1.9 CONSUMER SOCIETIES

1.9.1 A Pervasive Attitude

Prosperity improves people's lives and can make the world a better place to live. But when possessions are accumulated, it is a sign that excessive importance is being attached to well-being and pleasure. It shows that a society is **dominated by consumerism**. Finished products are within arm's reach, including cultural products. It is an atmosphere that encourages neither creativity, growth of individual liberty nor mutual concern.

1.9.2 A Witness to Freedom and Mutual Support in a Consumer Society

Religious and missionary life is **directly challenged** by the dynamics of this type of society. Our traditions and formation should help us to discover those things that cannot be bought or consumed to become free and close to the poor. We are called to look again at our life-style. Confreres who live in countries which have an abundance of things are not at ease. They feel they should react against the excesses, the temptations, the injustices and the destruction of the environment that the consumerist society produces. They consequently make deliberate choices as regards their food, their means of transport, their leisure and their relationships, and so adopt an alternative life-style that is simple, modest, fraternal and open to the voice of others.

Some of our confreres experience real hardship, living in situations of real poverty. They accept it because it is the lot of those among whom they live. They take the side of the poor and look for ways to help the people to get out of this poverty. It is important that help coming from outside leads to production and careful management rather than just more things to consume.

1.10 MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIETIES DOMINATED BY THE MEDIA

1.10.1 Developments in the Means of Communication Are Breathtaking

They are part of the movement of globalisation that they, in their turn, make possible. Information about the whole world is available at any point on the globe. Instant communication is assured. As equipment becomes more perfected and easily handled, these means of communication become available to an ever-greater number of people.

However, it should be realised that these media are firmly in the hands of those who have the enormous funds needed for the material investment and the necessary research. In particular, television and radio have captivated people throughout the world. Television is financed by advertisement, which is attracted according to the size of the audience. Hence the companies produce programmes that appeal to the most elementary instincts of viewers, who are often stressed and deprived, to make sure that they remain riveted to the screen.

1.10.2 Media-Dominated Societies

We run the risk of being reduced again to a state of childhood if we allow ourselves to be led by the emotions and appearances created by the communicators. We remain passive, we are simply being fed. The media are often at the service of people who use them to indoctrinate, dominate, neutralise and manipulate. So political, economic and social decisions are in danger of being the products of a public opinion that has been manipulated. We are in danger of being reduced to uninvolved spectators of the life of our world. The media can so easily encourage dependence, assimilation, and a climate of consumerism.

1.10.3 Ethical and Missionary Implications

This raises the whole questions of the **ethical power of the media**. Instead of being a steamroller that crushes humanity into uniformity, the media can be an extraordinary vehicle of real communication, making known the witness of the lives of men and women, revealing through their faces the secret strength behind their witness. The media can mobilise people into acting for justice and peace.

As witnesses to the Kingdom, we must learn the meaning and the use of the media. It is not so much a question of content as aim and direction: to allow people's voices to be heard, to make known the multiple witness given by their lives and their appeals.

1.11 SOCIETY WITHOUT ORDER

1.11.1 The Sources of Disorder

The breaking-up of traditional cultures, the rapid growth in population, the violent intervention of market forces, the media and the seductions of the consumer society: all this leads to a people without solid points of reference, to societies without order.

Many people have lost confidence in study and reflection and just swim with the current. They feel impotent in the face of the complexities of society and become passive and loose any desire to influence its future.

Those who profit from this abundance want the party to go on for ever. Many of them are quite prepared to bow to the state, to put a certain trust in political leaders and experts. Others show a bored indifference. But try to interfere with their ease and well-being and they will react violently and make sure that heads roll. They will look for a scapegoat.

The poor resort to resignation, even despair. They feel they are victims of a great injustice, of a curse. The scourge of AIDS is yet another terrible affliction. It often strikes worst in poor countries or amongst those who are already marginalised.

1.11.2 Ways of Escape

This stressful situation leads some people to seek escape in drugs or alcohol. It seems that no matter what is done, drug abuse continues to grow, almost as if it flows from some deep-seated disorder which is beyond the control of everybody.

The fundamental religious sects find a very fertile ground in these situations. They offer a simple diagnosis and remedy for all evils. They relate everything to another mysterious world on which all things depend. So it is not surprising to hear the claims that some political and financial interests are prepared to finance these sects, because they can become the opium of the people. In this way, one can avoid the unnecessary expense of revolutions and their repression!

1.11.3 The Catholic Church

The Church is sceptical in its attitude to the enthusiasm generated by the sects. She has always rejected fideism and put her trust in reason. She certainly plays an important role in contemporary society by giving responsibility to lay people and helping them to prepare to apply the Gospel to the problems of their day. The serious and competent contributions of the Pope and bishops to solving the great human problems of our time open up alternative perspectives. However, the language used and the manner of presentation make it difficult for them to have an impact.

Although the morals of today are hardly in conformity with Christian tradition, they are, to a certain extent, what makes our societies work according to reason and human dignity. Christians challenge society by pointing to what is of value in it, even if it is far from sufficient in their eyes. We must safeguard and develop those "habits of the heart" which are present in society; they must be evaluated and applied. We have a great need for people who will study, reflect and communicate, who will fight against a sort of brutalising of the masses in our societies.

Others choose to launch crusades for a restoration of the moral order. They try to re-introduce from outside, like ready-made products, the traditional principles of morality.

1.11.4 Spiritans

We are very much involved in the training of lay people. Our traditional commitment to education must continue, offering an alternative vision of society, and giving the opportunity to the poor to integrate themselves into society and take on their responsibility.

We Spiritans attach a great deal of importance to the formation of our members, despite the big investment that this represents. We need confreres who will devote themselves to an analysis of the realities of society, the Church, and the Congregation today. They could make a valuable contribution to the discernment of our future Spiritan undertakings.

1.12 A SOCIETY OF FEAR, CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE

1.12.1 The Sources and Forms of Conflicts, Violence and Insecurity

The state of lawlessness, the rapid growth in population, the influence of forces that seek to dominate, the attempts by some of a conservative bent to put back the clock in the hope of rediscovering our unsullied origins, and, above all, the aggressive quest for money and power... all this results in situations of conflict and feelings of great insecurity. The new problems exacerbate old national and tribal conflicts. When you talk to people in countries afflicted by war, you can see that violence is often born out of fear. The other person is no more seen as a brother or a genial host; he no longer has any sacred claims to our help, but has become the enemy who threatens us.

1.12.2 Wars Break Out and Drag On - Often Civil Wars

If wars often begin within a country, political and economic interests from outside soon interfere. The arms trade and competition for access to the natural resources of the country all play their part. Conflicting groups are formed and one war seems to lead to another elsewhere. One can see how the conflicts in the horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia) led to the establishment of opposing camps (for or against Islam, the Islam of Saudi Arabia and the Islam of Iran) and provoked cascading reactions, with the resulting intervention of the parties at war in Sudan and Uganda and the eventual involvement of the region of the Great Lakes and Francophone Central Africa.

1.12.3 Rupture and Exclusion

In looking at the proliferation of violence in most countries north and south, you find that it often takes the form of a rupture between rich and poor, between the affluent and those who have nothing. Modern communications show world-wide a picture of a divided planet. The rich get frightened when they see the movements of the poor, while the poor are irresistibly attracted by the abundance enjoyed by the rich. The two sides find themselves facing up to each other. The masses of neither side are in a position to analyse the problems or to improve the situation in a reasonable way.

This is a dream situation for **extremists**. On the one hand, they are able to supply the rich with simplistic excuses to justify the exclusion of others and maintain their own privileges; on the other, the leaders give similarly simplistic explanations of the degraded situation in which the poor find themselves. The scapegoats are external to themselves, whether they are other races, nations, religious groups or social classes.

1.12.4 The Drama of Refugees and Displaced Persons

The 20 million refugees throughout the world and the crowds of displaced people who have piled into the cities are the result of wars and conflicts. They are the poorest people in the world, depending on humanitarian organisations and the UNHCR and on the good will of the local people. They live a life of insecurity and estrangement.

1.12.5 How Is the Challenge of Wars and Violence To Be Dealt With?

The sufferings of those caught up in conflicts, the refugees, the displaced people, are a challenge to Christians and all men and women of good will. The extraordinary organised help for the millions of exiles is a great cause for hope. As regards examining the causes of these situations and looking for solutions, many political leaders, organisations, civil and religious individuals are continuing to search for ways to intervene and mediate.

But as for tackling the social rupture, there is often a lack of analysis of the situations and no first hand experience of what the victims and the marginalised are going through. Politicians are becoming aware of the threat that this rupture represents. They realise that we will have to override the old political alignments, the accepted economic and social categories, and get to grips with the world-wide phenomenon of exclusion which threatens to blow everything apart.

1.12.6 Spiritans

Our rule sends us to those who are excluded. We have come to realise that it is the point of departure from which we must try to understand things and rectify what is wrong. On the one hand, the poor teach us with their human riches and their needs and sufferings; on the other, our involvement can give them courage to commit themselves, because their greatest deprivation in the past has been their inability to take responsibility for themselves.

By opting to ally ourselves with the victims of violence and exclusion, we are swimming against the tide. It is not a comfortable commitment. Caught up in wars and violent situations, serving the refugees and having to witness the destruction of our buildings and equipment, we are asked to place on the line our comfort, our security and even our lives. Our mission cannot be reduced to carrying out a well-defined function in society and in the Church. It supposes a strength of inspiration by which our vision of the world will be changed and the forces of love will be freed within us.

PART II

SPIRITAN GROUPS IN EVERY CONTINENT THE DIASPORA OF CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS

2.1 THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA AND THE ADJACENT ISLANDS

In 1991, the peace accord of Bicesse was signed between UNITA and the MPLA in Angola; in 1992, a similar accord took place in Mozambique between RENAMO and FRELIMO. War started again in Angola in 1992 until new peace agreements were agreed to at Lusaka in 1994. Civil wars have been going on for several years in the Sudan, Somalia, Algeria and Sierra Leone. Calm seems to have returned to Liberia after years of chaos. These events gave birth to large-scale humanitarian actions and an infinite number of personal acts of courage and brotherhood that are known only to God.

The policy of structural adjustment imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have had very serious social consequences in many African countries. At the same time, there seems to have been a significant economic growth in some countries if one looks at the overall figures.

Although the movement towards democracy got off to a good start a few years ago, more recent events seem to indicate a step backwards from civil rights in several areas. But everywhere, the people are reacting against dictatorship and the violation of human rights.

Two contrasting events had a great impact throughout the world in 1994: the genocide in Rwanda, with a huge flight of refugees, filled Africans and their friends with a feeling of helplessness, while the first multi-racial elections in South Africa, with the election of Nelson Mandela as President, seemed almost miraculous.

It is clear, then, that since the Chapter at Itaiçi in 1992, a number of large and small events have left their mark on the recent history of the African continent, which is also our own history. Some countries and their peoples have lived through, and sometimes suffered from, the consequences of radical social and political changes. In the spiritual context, the Synod for Africa has had its effects on the lives of the Churches. Our Spiritan family has shown great generosity, and our African circumscriptions have presented 223 young confreres for first appointment over this period, an average of 37 each year. A Continental Congress was organised in 1996 by the Spiritan International School of Theology in Nigeria, on the theme: "*Africa: Towards priorities of mission*".

So if we hear of much violence in Africa, we can also detect the working of the Holy Spirit; the harvest is producing many good things.

Our original inspiration continues to push the Congregation towards the Africa of which Libermann speaks so prophetically: "*The slaves will continue to be delivered from their captivity and they will even share in all the rights of*

citizens. They will elect their deputies for the National Assembly. Is this not a wonderful thing that God has done? What joy these poor people are going to experience!"

2.1.1 In The Maghreb: The Algerian Group

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Algeria | | Illiteracy: 47% (1990) |
| Population: 29.8 million (1997) | | Religions: Islamic |
| Life expectancy: 66 years | | Independence: 5 July 1962 (from France) |
| Infant mortality rate: 4.4% | | GDP per capita: US\$ 1,700 |

Spiritans presence: 2 professed members.

We have been in this predominantly Moslem country, with a population of around 30 million, since 1901. Spiritans, along with the Algerian Church, have had to re-adjust their type of presence several times over the last 20 years, in the wake of social and religious changes. Each time this presence has become more "discrete". At present it consists of modest initiatives of human development (sewing workshops, libraries, health care...), informal friendly contacts, and pastoral service to the tiny Christian communities, which are often made up of several denominations.

The insecurity coming from the wave of assassinations which has killed more than 100,000 people since 1993 (including 20 religious between 1994 and 1996), has led to a big fall in the number of foreign religious. The number of Spiritans has dropped from 6 to 2 in two years. But there are signs that seem to indicate this Christian presence, which continues courageously despite everything, is bringing a clearer picture of the true sense of evangelical mission to the Algerian Moslems.

The General Council fully supports the continuation of this commitment in Algeria. As long as the present climate of great insecurity persists, we do not think it wise to send confreres there for their first appointment. But we are fully in favour of reinforcement by experienced confreres, making it possible for two to live in each community, at least temporarily, allowing one or the other to get away for a sabbatical.

The confreres of Algeria and Mauritania are presently considering a possible rapprochement between the two groups, in the form of joint reflection and mutual help. This co-operation could perhaps also embrace the whole of the francophone region of West Africa, in the context of the present District of Senegal.

2.1.2 Francophone and Lusophone West Africa

2.1.2.1 The District of Senegal

Spiritans presence: 55 professed members (2 bishops, 45 priests, 5 brothers, 3 young professed).

The District covers works in four different countries: Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry and Senegal. It is very international (Europe, Africa and America), and in the last two years it has been renewed by the arrival of confreres (official appointments or 'stage') from FAC, WAF, Nigeria, East

Africa and Angola. There were 64 members in 1992; in 1997, the number was 55.

One part of the work concerns first evangelisation, largely in areas of traditional religion, but also in Moslem parts. It usually takes the form of development, education and health works, with a catechetical approach where this is possible. Other works are with more organised Christian communities, especially in the towns: training of laity, work in the media, with young people, vocations work etc.

Several Spiritan houses have been built recently (Ziguinchor, the Postulancy at Dakar) or are still being built (Conakry). Agreements have been drawn up with bishops for a partial or total use of buildings by Spiritans (Saint Louis, Nouakchott, Bissau).

Due to its size, the District is more like a whole region with a unified government. This means that it is important to define clearly, with the Superior of the District, the responsibility of those in charge of the "sectors". Good communication between the different parts is crucial.

The confreres realise that they still depend greatly on finance from outside, both for their up-keep and their works, so they are trying to develop the internal sources of revenue or initiate new ones.

Regarding Spiritan vocations, the District was first of all a member of WAF in 1979, and then FAC in 1982. A dozen professed members of FAC come from the District. The District Chapter in 1997 decided to work towards an autonomous foundation vis-à-vis FAC, while retaining common formation structures for the time being. The reason for this is the great distances involved and the different cultural and religious context of the area.

Closer regional relations, with a view to common projects, are to be recommended with other circumscriptions that are geographically close (Cape Verde, The Gambia, Sierra-Leone, Ghana); but the linguistic and cultural affinities of these circumscriptions must be born in mind, as well as the network of relationships built around the WAF.

We will now look at what is distinctive to each of the four large sectors that go to make up the District.

2.1.2.1.1 Mauritania

Mauritania

Population: 2,400,000

Life expectancy male/female: 50/53 years

Infant mortality rate: 132 ‰

Illiteracy: 61%

Religions: Islamic

Independence: 28 November 1960 (from France)

GDP per capita: US\$ 530

This is a desert country with a rich economic potential. It has one foot in the Arab-Berber world, the other in the Negro-African: this is the source of some ethnic and cultural tension, sometimes violent.

In this Islamic Republic, the Church represents a small foreign minority that has to remain unobtrusive. It is made up basically of Europeans and Africans from other countries. The missionary presence in the Moslem world consists of informal meetings, works for health, education, the advancement of women and

support for some development projects. Co-operative ties (exchange of personnel) are being suggested with the Churches in the Middle East.

Spiritans are working in three places, ministering to the small Christian communities and assuring a presence in the Moslem world. As well as acquiring an indispensable knowledge of Islam, they have concentrated on getting to know the Arab-Berber world; there is a need also to get to know more about the languages and cultures of the Negro-Africans.

Two confreres were attacked and seriously injured at Nouakchott in 1993, so the group became smaller. Community life became a possibility once more with the arrival, in October 1997, of four new confreres. Consideration is being given to a closer solidarity and structural attachment to the confreres in Algeria, perhaps as part of a large, de-centralised circumscription of West Africa.

2.1.2.1.2 Senegal

Senegal

Population: 8.8 million
Life expectancy male/female: 48/50
Infant mortality rate: 67‰

Illiteracy: 62‰

Religions: Muslim 84%; Catholic 6%, Animists 7‰
Independence: 20 June 1960 (from France)
GDP per capita: US\$ 730

Spiritans presence: Since 1845.

This is a country of 8 million inhabitants with a degree of economic dynamism and a relative social and political stability (apart from troubles connected with an independence movement in Casamance). The Church makes up about 5% of the population which is 90% Moslem. The secular clergy are fairly numerous relative to the number of Christians.

The Spiritans, who have been in the country for more than 150 years, have, amongst other engagements, a certain tradition of involvement in the media. The *Centre Brottier* at St. Louis (cinema, radio, video etc.) offers good possibilities for the training of young confreres; this would pre-suppose that it is well organised and that the cost would not be underestimated.

In 1993, the new bishop of Ziguinchor asked us to increase our presence in his diocese. The result has been a parish ministry and work with young people at Ziguinchor itself.

A Spiritan fraternity was set up at Dakar following on the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Spiritans in Senegal. As a result, a good number of lay people have come to know the Spiritans better and have acquired a taste for some elements of our Spiritan tradition.

2.1.2.1.3 Guinea Bissau

Guinea Bissau

Population: 1,096,000
Life expectancy: 39 years
Infant mortality rate: 140‰

Religions: Animists 55%; Muslims 30%;
Christians 7‰

Independence: 10 September 1974 (from Portugal)
GDP per capita: US\$ 230

The idea behind this first Spiritan mission in this small, Portuguese-speaking country was to establish a presence in this area where the Mandjaque people, who are spread over West Africa, have their roots. It is principally a work of first evangelisation and often very difficult.

There were 8 confreres there in 1994, but now there are 5, as a result of various difficulties. The ministry calls for a special aptitude for languages. Being lusophone, the area needs special attention from the District Council because the rest of the District is francophone.

2.1.2.1.4 Guinea Conakry

Guinea Conakry
 Population: 7.5 million
 Life expectancy male/female: 43/47 years
 Infant mortality rate: 136‰ (1997)

Illiteracy: 27% (1992)
 Religions: Muslim 75%; Animists 20%; Christians 5%
 Independence: 28 September 1958 (from France)
 GDP per capita: US\$ 550 (1995)

After the expulsion of foreign missionaries by Sékou Touré in 1967, the Church had no help from outside for many years. Finally, the Spiritans were invited to return to the Diocese of Conakry to work in difficult areas, largely first evangelisation. They are now working in five centres, of which the most recent are Dalaba (diocesan centre for formation) and Conakry (urban parishes and radio). In 1994, the new bishop of Kankan invited them to work in an area of first evangelisation and with refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. There are now 15 confreres in the country.

2.1.2.2 The District of Cape Verde

Cabo Verde
 Population: 403,000
 Life expectancy male/female: 64/66 years
 Infant mortality rate: 65‰

Religions: Catholic 90%
 Independence: 5 July 1975 (from Portugal)
 GDP per capita: US\$ 960

The islands of Cape Verde, two hours flight from Dakar, make up a country which is very dry and therefore very poor. The population is growing all the time and the country can only feed itself with the help of imports. There are 380,000 people living in the country and another 700,000 abroad. To an extent, the people are able to survive because of help sent back by those who have emigrated.

The events which led to independence from Portugal in 1970, the Marxist campaign and the subsequent social changes, have introduced a new morality, especially amongst the young. Most of the people are baptised, but there is a need for a much deeper evangelisation. The local clergy is coming along slowly, but there is a relative abundance of vocations for women's orders.

Spiritans have been in Cape Verde since 1942. Most of them are working on one of the larger islands, Sao Tiago, of which the largest town, Praia, is the capital of the whole country. Two confreres are on the nearby small island of Maio. Altogether, there are 15 Spiritans in the circumscription: 13 Portuguese and 2 Cape Verdians, including the bishop of Sao Tiago. Two young Nigerian confreres have just been appointed to the District.

Spiritans are working at evangelisation from parish bases. They look on themselves as co-responsible for the building up of the local Church. They have many varied activities: the building of small Christian communities, the formation of lay leaders, evangelisation of young people, small development projects, vocations work, formation of the clergy and missionary animation. One confrere has founded a group of women called "*The Missionary Animators*"; they are not religious, but they are consecrated to an evangelical life in community and to the evangelical animation of people and groups.

The confreres are planning a new missionary project with street children and other young people. It is with this in mind that the two Nigerian confreres were appointed to the District.

The group tries to give everybody the possibility of living in community and they nearly all come together each week. They are looking for Spiritan vocations and are anxious to give them a good accompaniment in the initial stages of their training.

2.1.3 Anglophone West Africa

2.1.3.1 District of The Gambia

The Gambia

Population: 1.2 million

Life expectancy male/female: 43/47 years

Infant mortality rate: 90‰

Religions: Muslim 85%; Animists 8%; Prot. 5%;

Cath. 2%

Independence: 18 February 1965 (from Great Britain)

GDP per capita: US\$ 320 (1995)

Spiritans presence: 14 professed members - 1 bishop, 13 priests.

The Gambia is a country of about 1.5 million inhabitants. Over 85% of these are Muslims with approximately 4% Christians. Even though the Christians are in the minority, they have much influence in the society because of the involvement of the church in the social institutions such as schools and hospitals. This has helped also to create generally good relationship between the Christians and the Muslims.

History

The first Spiritans arrived in Banjul in 1848 and for a long time the history of the local church was almost synonymous with that of the District. There is only one Diocese and the Bishop, Michael Cleary, is a Spiritan. The local church is in a process of transition as the number of the local clergy and of the local religious increases and the number of Spiritans decreases. The Spiritans are in the process of handing over positions of responsibility to the indigenous local clergy. A lot of the catholic laity also are taking up places of responsibility both in the church and in the public offices in the social and political life of the country. A few other religious congregations and missionary institutes are now present in the Gambia since the last few years.

Statistics

The main source of personnel for the District has been the Irish Province. The District is in the process of transition. The number of Irish confreres is diminishing while the presence of WAF is gradually growing. Presently there are altogether 14 permanent members of the District (8 Irish and 4 WAF confreres) and 2 WAF students on pastoral experience programme.

Mission engagements

Most of the members are involved in parish work especially in areas of first evangelisation among some tribes that are not Muslims and are open to Christianity, e.g. Mandiagos. There has been enormous growth of small Christian groups in areas where there had been little or no Christian presence

through the promotion of small Christian communities. Particularly interesting is the famous Christian village development project in Kunkujang. The District has been traditionally involved in:

- works of education;
- social and development work, Justice and Peace;
- inter-religious dialogue;
- animation and administration in the local church through the pastoral centre and the diocesan secretariat.

The Spiritans run the minor seminary for the diocese.

Formation

The District is one of the founders of WAF and welcomes vocations to the Congregation for WAF. The candidates are sent to Ghana for their pre-novitiate. The first WAF priest from The Gambia was ordained in 1997 and there are four students in formation.

Community life

There is good community spirit and regular community meeting is promoted. As most of the missions are not self supporting each confrere receives a regular allowance from the Diocese which depends very much on external aid for its projects and maintenance of its structures.

The future

The District sees its future in closer collaboration with WAF. It intends to give attention to:

- education;
- promotion of small Christian communities;
- inter religious dialogue;
- gradually hand over most of the positions of responsibility to the local clergy;
- setting up good home base for the District and WAF.

2.1.3.2 District of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone
Population: 4.4 million
Life expectancy male/female: 33/36 years
Infant mortality rate: 195‰

Religions: Muslim 75%; Animists 15%; Christians 10%
Independence: 27 April 1961 (from Great Britain)
GDP per capita: US\$ 180 (1995)

Spiritans Presence: since 1864; 10 professed members - 1 bishop; 8 priests; 1 scholastic.

History

The Spiritans have worked in this country since 1864. They have been involved in education, parish ministry, pastoral centre, formation of priests and catechists and lay leaders.

The country has been devastated by a very bloody civil war since 1991 which has brought a lot of untold suffering for the people especially after the overthrow of a democratically elected government in May 1997. This has

attracted economic sanctions and blockade from the rest of the world. The war has cost a lot of lives including that of one of the Irish confreres, Felim McAllister. Almost one third of the population has been displaced as refugees.

Statistics

- Although the number of Catholics is estimated to be 3% of the overall population of 4 million people, the catholic church has great influence and respect in the country. This has been brought about through the many catholic schools which were set up by the Spiritans many of which have now been destroyed by the civil war.
- The main source of personnel for the District has been Ireland. There have also been confreres from the English Province. The future hope of the District now lies with WAF. In the space of 9 years (1988-1997) the District has lost 33 confreres.
- In 1994 they were 26, 21 from Ireland, two from the English Province 3 from WAF.
- Presently they are 10 (5 Irish, 1 Bishop + 4 priests; 5 WAF, 4 priests + 1 scholastic.).
- There has been steady growth of the local clergy (up to 40) in the last years. Most of the responsibility has gradually been handed over to them. This transfer can sometimes result in tension, but relations between them and the Spiritans are in general quite good.

Formation

The District is one of the founders of WAF. Its present Superior is a member of WAF. There are already 5 priests, 8 scholastics, 1 novice and 2 postulants belonging to WAF who come from Sierra Leone. The District is arranging a postulate to prepare candidates for the novitiate in Ghana. It is hoping to get a home base for WAF in Sierra Leone.

Community life

Presently most of the confreres are living on their own. Because of the insecurity on the roads it has not always been possible to visit the confreres or hold group retreats and meetings. Like the rest of the people in the country, the confreres are going through difficult times as a result of the stress and pressure of the war situation.

Mission engagements

Confreres continue to do their ministry in very precarious circumstances. The ministry includes:

- relief work;
- rehabilitation of child combatants;
- parish work;
- education - teaching /chaplaincy work in the Teachers' Training College.

The Future

It is hoped that WAF will invest more personnel in the District in the future when things settle down. The following are the projections for the next years:

- the main priority in pastoral work will be to help the people in post war reconstruction, resettlement and reconciliation programmes. Attention will be given to the youth and those affected by the war;
- the District would also like to be involved in retreat work, formation in the major seminary and pastoral centre;
- continued commitment to teaching and chaplaincy in the Training Colleges and secondary schools;
- it would like to explore the possibility of a special Spiritan project in secondary education;
- it would like to get another Spiritan parish in Kenema diocese, to serve as a home base for the District and WAF.

2.1.3.3 District of Ghana

Ghana

Population: 18.1 million
Life expectancy male/female : 54/58 years
Infant mortality rate: 66‰

Religions: Animists 38%; Protestants 29%, Muslims
15-20%; Catholics 14%
Independence: 6 March 1957 (from the UK)
GDP per capita: US\$ 480 (1995)

The District was started in 1971 by some Irish confreres who left Nigeria after the civil war. The District has already celebrated the silver jubilee of its presence in Ghana in 1996.

Statistics

Currently the District is composed of 8 members (7 Irish and 1 WAF who is doing vocations ministry). Five members are involved in parish work in three dioceses of Obuasi, Kumasi and Sunyani. One is working in the National Catholic Secretariat. All except one are over 65.

Mission priorities

The priorities of the District have been to be at the service of the local church:

- to build up parishes, particularly in rural and undeveloped areas;
- works of education in informal way;
- vocations' ministry both for the Spiritans and the local church and catechetical work.

It is trying to work out the establishment of a Spiritan work in education in Kumasi.

Formation

As one of the founders of WAF it works very closely with WAF. It has set up a pre-novitiate in Bantama where candidates from Ghana, Sierra Leone and The Gambia are welcomed for one year before the novitiate. It is the main supply of vocations to WAF. The District holds meeting regularly with WAF and the two circumscriptions are committed to minimise the difference between them as much as possible.

Community life

With the exception of Bantama, the confreres live alone in their missions. They meet regularly in Bantama with WAF confreres in Kumasi for socials and relaxation.

Finance

The District depends very much on aid from outside. Some of the parishes are self-supporting. It gets grants from the Cor Unum to subsidise the running of the Postulate.

2.1.3.4 West African Foundation (WAF)

History

The beginning of West African Foundation was in 1979 during the meeting of the West African Superiors (Senegal, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Makurdi, Kwara-Benue, Nigeria) in Dakar, Senegal. The founding Districts were Senegal, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Makurdi and Kwara-Benue. Later Senegal joined FAC and Kwara-Benue opted to collaborate with the Province of Nigeria. The first novitiate was opened in 1980 in Bwiam, The Gambia. The first priestly ordinations took place in 1988.

The Foundation developed under the collegial responsibility of the founding District Superiors with special responsibility given to those of The Gambia and Senegal. In 1982 one of the Superiors was named the Director of WAF. In 1983 there was a new Director who formed an executive council with the Superiors of Senegal and The Gambia. In 1988 a Superior of WAF was named and in 1992 he became a Major Superior with an independent Council separate and distinct from the Superiors of the District. It held its first Chapter in Ejisu in 1995.

Statistics

Members by origin: 116 (43 priests, 1 finally professed Brother, 72 junior professed);

From other circumscriptions: 6 (5 Irish, 1 Swiss).

Formation

Two of the founding Districts have set up postulates (Yola for Makurdi, Bantama in Ghana which serves Ghana, Sierra Leone and The Gambia). All the Districts have Directors of vocation. After the postulancy the novitiate is followed by the first cycle and both are done in Ejisu, Ghana. The pastoral experience programme is done both in the member countries of WAF and in other circumscriptions in Africa and Europe. WAF has welcomed students from FAC for pastoral experience programme. The second cycle is done in collaboration with the Province of Nigeria in SIST, Enugu in Nigeria. A few of the students do their second cycle in the structures of EAP, FAC, and the Provinces of France, Ireland and England.

Mission

a) Within the Foundation

- The Foundation works in close collaboration with the founding Districts and most of the first appointments have been made within these Districts. These appointments were made with a view to helping to build a solid home base which will assure the identity and rootedness of WAF as well as the continued presence of the Spiritans in these countries. They have also been intended to help promote missionary awareness in the local churches where the Districts are working.
- Parish work especially in areas of first evangelisation in northern Ghana.
- Education.

b) Outside the Foundation

- Malawi (3 confreres) since 1992: two are in parish ministry and one vocations' ministry and formation work as Director of Postulants;
- Senegal (1) since 1997: in refugee ministry;
- Paraguay (2) from 1998.

Finance

The Foundation depends very heavily on external aid for running its formation programme and for the administration. Main sources of aid are the Cor Unum fund. There are efforts to set up projects for self-reliance. For this the Foundation has a farm in Ejisu. It has sent a confrere for full-time fund-raising in USA. There is a circle of local Spiritan friends in Ghana who are contributing towards the mission of the Foundation.

Vision of the Future

- Consolidate the ground work for the passage of the Foundation to the status of a Province;
- Get solid home base in each of the countries of the Foundation;
- See the possibilities of undertaking new mission projects outside the Foundation and founding Districts in collaboration with other circumscriptions;
- Train people to staff the houses of formation and for involvement in education;
- Build a Spiritan house in Accra for the administration and for welcoming members.

2.1.3.5 District of Makurdi (Nigeria)

Spiritans presence: 17 professed members - 16 priests, 1 brother

History

The mission in the area where the District is working in Nigeria was founded by the German Spiritans in 1931. At the end of World War II they were

subsequently replaced by the confreres from the English Province in 1940. The District was working initially only in the Diocese of Makurdi. But in response to the invitation of the Bishop of Yola the District extended its ministry to the Diocese of Yola in the early 1980s. Presently, the members are working in two new Dioceses of Oturkpo in 1996 and Jalingo in 1995 carved out respectively from Makurdi and Yola dioceses. The two major tribes in the area of work are the Tivs and the Idoma people.

Statistics

In the course of the recent years confreres from other Provinces (France, Switzerland and Brazil) and WAF have worked together in the District with the confreres from the English Province. Its main source of personnel now is WAF as no first appointments can be expected from the English Province. The number of confreres from the northern Provinces has gone down considerably in the last few years because of age, sickness, withdrawals and death etc.

Presently, there are 17 permanent members (11 from the English Province, 1 from Trinidad 5 from WAF).

Mission engagements

The District is involved in:

- parish work mainly in areas of primary evangelisation;
- education;
- Justice and Peace;
- community development and rural farming scheme;
- vocations' ministry for WAF.

Formation

The District co-operates with WAF in the vocations' ministry and it has a Postulate in Yola for the candidates that come from its area of work. The postulants spend one year here before they are sent to Ghana for the Novitiate and first cycle.

Community life

A number of the confreres live alone in their missions and the missions are spread out because of distances. There are at times problems with the reception and accompaniment of the WAF confreres in the District.

Finance

The District depends on grants from the English Province and other sources of financial help from abroad especially from the United Kingdom. It gets some grant from Cor Unum for the running of the Postulate.

Future

The District sees its future in close collaboration with and eventual integration into WAF. The District is working hard to set up home base for WAF in the form of parishes in Wukari, Yola and Aliade.

2.1.3.6 Kogi District (Nigeria)

History

The District which was formerly known as Kwara-Benue dates back to 1947. It celebrated the golden jubilee of the arrival of the first group of Canadian confreres in Nigeria in July 1997. The members are working in two Dioceses of Lokoja and Idah among two major tribal groups, the Igala and the Igbira, in situations of traditional religion and Islam.

Statistics

The number of the Canadian confreres has gone down very much in the past few years because of problems of health, age, withdrawals for services in the home Province. There are presently 4 Canadians and 2 Nigerian Spiritans working in the District.

Mission of the District

The District has been very much committed to the service and accompaniment of the local church that it founded. It does this through:

- parish pastoral work in difficult areas of primary evangelisation;
- the accompaniment of local clergy;
- financial administration of the local church;
- vocations' ministry;
- pastoral and liturgical publication.

Vocations' ministry and ongoing formation

The District works in collaboration with the Province of Nigeria both in the promotion of Spiritan vocations in the area of the District and also in the pastoral ministry. As a result of this ministry in the District, there are now over 24 candidates in the formation houses of the Province. There have already been over five priestly ordinations. There is a plan to build a new postulate for the Province near the new District house in Okura.

The members go home regularly to Canada for renewal courses and sabbatical.

Community life

Almost all the confreres are living alone except in the District house. The District has built a Spiritan house where the confreres can retire for rest and meetings, etc. The members gather regularly for community meetings and social get-together there.

The future of the District

The District sees its future in the close collaboration with the Province of Nigeria. However, with the continued decrease in the number of Canadian confreres questions are being asked about the continued existence of the District as an autonomous District or group.

2.1.3.7 The Province of Nigeria

Nigeria
 Population: 107,100,000
 Life expectancy male/female: 53/56 years
 Infant mortality rate: 130-160‰

Religions: Muslim 43%; Christians 34%; Animists 19%
 Independence: 1st October 1960 (from the UK)
 GDP per capita: US\$ 295 (1995)

History

The first Spiritans arrived in Eastern Nigeria in 1885 from the French Province. They were followed later in this region by the Irish confreres. The foundation of what is now the Province of Nigeria was laid in 1952 with the establishment of Holy Ghost Juniorate Ihiala in 1952. The Holy Ghost Novitiate Awo-Omamma was erected in 1958. With the departure of the Irish confreres at the end of the civil war in 1970 the Nigerian Spiritans continued as members of the District of Nigeria-East which became the "Province of Nigeria-East" in 1976. This became the "Province of Nigeria" in 1983 embracing the entire country with the Districts of Makurdi and Kogi as autonomous circumscriptions within the boundaries of the Province.

Statistics

The Province has 320 members: 2 Bishops, 168 priests, 7 Brothers, 143 junior professed in formation.

Formation programme

The Province is one of the fastest growing Provinces in the Congregation. This can easily be seen in the teeming number of young people in the different formation houses which are full. There are many young people in the country who want to join the Spiritans.

All the structures for formation are in place in the Province. The pre-novitiate is at Akabo, the novitiate is at Awo-Omamma. The first cycle takes place after the novitiate at Spiritan School of Philosophy, Isienu, which is an affiliate of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. For the second cycle the Province collaborates with WAF in the Spiritan International School of Theology (SIST), Enugu, which was founded in 1987. SIST is also an affiliate of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the University of Duquesne, Pittsburgh. SIST welcomes students from FAC and from four religious and missionary institutes in the country (Claretians, Benedictines, Dominicans, Brothers of Jesus the Saviour). It has a special programme for the formation of religious men and women and lay people in theology.

Serious efforts are being made to ensure proper balance between intellectual formation and the pastoral and missionary aspects of Spiritan formation in the various houses of formation in the Province.

SIST has been approved in 1997 as a Spiritan Centre by the Pan-African Meeting of Spiritan Superiors and Formators.

With the exception of SIST, all the Spiritan personnel in the houses of formation come from the Province. Even though the Province has invested much in the formation of teachers and formators, it still has great need of trained formators.

Mission engagements

a) Within the Province

Even though the Church in Nigeria is growing rapidly with a relatively good number of local clergy and religious, many parts of the country are still in truly missionary situations. The Province has tried to respond to some of these needs especially in those areas where the Bishops are finding it difficult to get workers. Since the Province became the Province of Nigeria to embrace the entire country there has been a deliberate option in the Province to take up missions outside Eastern Nigeria, especially outside the church in Igbo land. This has resulted in an enormous spread of the Province in the country. The Province has about 54 members working in 18 dioceses out of the 38 dioceses in Nigeria (5 in the north, 5 in the west, 8 in the east). There is the impression, however, that the Province has spread itself thinly.

Types of ministry: Some of the pastoral commitments within the country have been dictated by the need to build up a strong home base in the form of Spiritan parishes and some self-help projects as well as by the needs of the formation houses. These include:

- parish pastoral work some in areas of first evangelisation;
- Education: teaching, administration and chaplaincy in all levels of educational institutions;
- youth ministry;
- retreat and spiritual animation ministry for various groups;
- foundation of new religious Congregations by a few of the members.

b) Outside the Province

The Province has always remained open to the general mission of the Congregation outside its boundaries. It has manifested great readiness to work in the spirit of the new movement in the Congregation which encourages north-south, south-south collaboration among the circumscriptions. There are a lot of requests for personnel coming from various parts of the Congregation to the Province to which it tries to respond as much as possible.

Presently 70 Nigerian confreres are working in 19 different countries: Zimbabwe, Gabon, FAC, South Africa, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Congo Kinshasa, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, Senegal, Guyana, Papua New Guinea, France, Belgium, USA, TransCanada, Rome, Philippines.

The last Provincial Chapter in 1996 has pronounced itself on the danger of over-spread of the Province both within and outside. While not wishing to put a stop to new missions, it has given the Provincial Administration a directive to give serious attention to consolidating the present missions with a view to ensuring community life and team work at home and abroad. Further expansion in response to vital and urgent needs of the Congregation has to be done in consultation with the General Administration.

Community life

Because of the demands created by the apostolate and missions in different parts of the country, many of the confreres are living alone in their places of work. It is also said that some of the missions have great difficulty in maintaining more than one person. This fact of living alone is creating some problems especially in some of the difficult missions in transcultural situations in the country. A number of people are overworked and have little time for relaxation and personal reading and reflection. The spread of the Province is also making communications difficult within the Province. Efforts are being made to revive the zonal/regional communities. The general meetings which are held every two months are well attended.

Finance

As a fast growing Province with houses of formation full of students, the problem of finance continues to be a major headache and preoccupation. The poor economic situation in the country, as in many other African countries, does not help the situation. The Province depends heavily on the Cor Unum fund and direct aid from some Spiritan Provinces in the north and also on donor agencies for running the cost of the formation houses and for major development projects. However, the Province has been making serious efforts to take some measures and set up projects that can generate income with some degree of success. Some of these are:

- farm project and feed mill in Okija;
- Winery;
- Spiritan book-shop;
- Holy Vocation Movement;
- Spiritan Mission and Shanahan movement;
- contribution from members from their work in parishes and salaried jobs.

Organisation

The growth and the spread of the Province in Nigeria have made the administration and communication within the Province quite difficult. In response to this problem, the Province is searching for an organisational structure that will respond more effectively to the present and future reality of the Province. A study is being presently done of a regional structure that allows some powers and autonomy to the regions and the regional superiors while maintaining one central Provincial administration.

2.1.4 The Region of Francophone Central Africa

For the last twenty years, the setting up of the FAC has been a focus of collaboration for the francophone central African region. But the founding circumscriptions, Gabon, Congo, Bangui, Yaoundé and Doumé, were already in contact with each other before 1977. As well as the common language and the geographical proximity, several other things in common drew them together.

During the last years, the four countries of the region (Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon and the Central African Republic) have gone through similar experiences. There has been a positive movement towards multi-party systems, a greater freedom of expression and an increased political awareness amongst the people. But on the other hand, this movement has been accompanied by many difficulties, often mixed with ethnic conflicts. The latter have been violent and frequent in Central Africa and the Congo.

In January 1994, economic stagnation or recession joined together with certain negative effects from the devaluation of the CFA franc. The cost of imported goods doubled, notably medicines. As a result, the health of the poorer people greatly deteriorated. This was made worse by the spread of AIDS and the appearance of resistant strains of malaria. A lack of responsibility on the part of some civil authorities, and an increase in armed robbery and insecurity added to the miseries of the situation. Standards of education have dropped all round. There is a great increase in sects and gambling; this seems to be built on a feeling of helplessness that many people are experiencing in the face of so many sad, uncontrollable events.

Throughout the region, the Spiritans are working mainly in parishes. Centenaries are being celebrated in some of these Churches; they have achieved a certain autonomy, but they still rely heavily on foreign missionaries, especially Spiritans to whom their history is closely linked. The priorities of the Spiritan Districts are mostly the same, with a few local variations: religious formation of lay adults, vocations' work for the priesthood and religious life, various types of human advancement (literacy campaigns, rural development, health), work with young people, especially in the towns.

The Spiritan life of the Districts has been influenced by the arrival of African confreres from different places (FAC, Nigeria, East Africa, Angola). The ties with the FAC are becoming steadily stronger, above all through the presence of young confreres from FAC appointed to the Districts and others sent to them for their "stage". In answer to the request of the Chapter of FAC in 1993, several "witness communities" have been created to bring some members of FAC together (although not exclusively), giving them a better chance to look for their own way of being African Spiritan missionaries. For the last few years, the Spiritan area meetings and the annual general assemblies of the Districts have been more appreciated and better attended.

The growth of the local Churches has corresponded to a parallel diminution in the number of Spiritans, and this has led the Districts to redefine their priorities and regroup the remaining confreres. It is important for this to be done in conjunction with the FAC.

2.1.4.1 The District of Gabon

Gabon

Population: 1.2 million

Life expectancy male/female: 52/55 years

Infant mortality rate: 94‰

Religions: Animists 49.5%; Catholics 40%;

Protestants 10%; Muslims 05%

Independence: 17 August 1960 (from France)

GDP per capita: US\$ 3,850 (1995)

Spiritans presence: since 1844; 32 professed members (1 bishop; 26 priests, 3 brothers, 2 scholastics).

With hardly more than one million inhabitants, Gabon has considerable economic potential (above all from oil), and this has attracted a large African immigration (about one fifth of the population).

The Church celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1994, but unlike the neighbouring Churches, there are still very few experienced diocesan clergy. One of the four bishops from Gabon was succeeded by a French Spiritan in 1997. Following the suggestion of the Spiritan General Council in 1991, a diversification of foreign personnel is taking place; after the arrival of Claretians and Salesians, others have followed them in recent years: Piarists, Josephites, Premonstratentions and African "Fidei Donum" priests.

Some of the priorities adopted by the District 15 to 20 years ago are now bearing fruit. The accent put on the formation of the laity has encouraged a spiritual renewal and a greater involvement in the life of society. There has been a significant increase in the number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the last few years as a result of a more active concentration on this area.

In the four dioceses, a re-organisation of the Spiritan presence is under way. In agreement with the FAC, the long term-projects are bringing confreres together into communities in some urban parishes (Moanda, Libreville) or in the difficult rural areas (Makokou-Mekambo, Ndendé-Lémbamba). The number of confreres living alone has been greatly reduced in the last 6 years.

Most of the Spiritan communities are able to live largely from their work (i.e. from the support of the people in the parish) or from various enterprises (pharmacies, kindergartens, brick-works, renting rooms). The District also gets a large part of its income from the renting of rooms and houses. It should be possible to follow up, and even increase, this relative financial independence.

Between 1992 and 1997, the Spiritan District dropped from 47 to 38 members. French confreres still form the big majority. The youngest are all Africans (8), coming from FAC and Nigeria. The arrival of these men is still not sufficient to compensate for the departure of a large number of more experienced confreres. Bearing in mind also the insufficient number of secular priests, fatigue and over-work is the lot of more than one confrere. Two meetings of confreres beginning their ministry took place over the last two years, one of which was combined with those in Congo Brazzaville.

Only a few young people from Gabon have joined the FAC so far (in 1997, there were 3 in temporary vows). The presence of the first cycle formation community and the principal house of the Foundation at Libreville has encouraged vocations in the local Church. The small number of candidates would not justify the starting of a postulancy for the District: candidates were first sent to the Congo, then to the Senegal Postulancy, which is presently in the Cameroon.

Regarding the attachment of their District to the future Province coming from FAC, the confreres decided in favour in November 1997 with a big majority.

2.1.4.2 The District of Bangui (RCA)

Central African Republic
 Population: 3.3 million
 Life expectancy male/female: 47/52 years
 Infant mortality rate: 97‰
 Illiteracy: 62% (1990)

Religions: Catholics 25%; Protestants 25%;
 Animists 24%; Muslims 15%
 Independence: 13 August 1960 (from France)
 GDP per capita: US\$ 365 (1995)

Spiritans presence: since 1884; 28 professed members (1 bishop, 23 priests, 2 brothers, 2 scholastics).

The Central African Republic has a population of around 3 million, with few economic resources. The socio-political problems that recurred in the last years (successive mutinies by a part of the army) have made the economy even more fragile. There is a growing religious, social and economic influence from Moslems coming from Chad.

The Church celebrated its centenary in 1994. Many Christians are showing a thirst for formation and a deepening of their spirituality, especially amongst the young. For the last 15 years, there have been many vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The local clergy are relatively young. Two new local bishops were appointed in 1995.

Spiritans are working in five out of the eight dioceses in the country (Bangui, Mbaiki, Kaga Bandoro, Bambari and Bangassou). There were 48 in the District in 1992 and that number had dropped to around 30 by 1997. There were several deaths and a number of departures, mainly for health reasons. Our presence in the rural areas suffered the most, particularly in the dioceses of Bambari and Kaga Bandoro. Most of the confreres are Europeans (mainly French and Dutch) but recently, their origins have become more varied with the arrival of 5 confreres from FAC and an Angolan.

Their work is principally centred on parishes and Christian communities, the formation of laity and of candidates to religious life and the priesthood. In the parish context, the priorities are the same as in the region as a whole. Particular stress is put on work for the improvement of health conditions.

The unforeseen departures of the last few years have greatly hampered the carrying out of the District priorities. The bishops still expect very much from the Spiritans: they stress particularly the area of education where the standard of teaching has fallen considerably. The two main thrusts of the Spiritan apostolate are the neglected rural areas (dioceses of Mambari and Mbaiki) and the young people in the capital and the towns of the interior.

The District has suffered more than most from sickness and old age. This has led, at times, to a feeling of uncertainty, and great difficulty in foreseeing and planning the future. The socio-political problems have had their effect on the life of the District; the rhythm of meetings has been greatly disturbed. On the other hand, they have also resulted in a real solidarity, not just amongst Spiritans but on a much wider scale. The service given by the radio in the central house has been greatly appreciated. The cultural differences within the District have sometimes been a source of tension; the diversification that is under way should bring about a more peaceful atmosphere.

There is a Postulancy for Spiritan candidates. Ten Central-Africans had made profession in FAC up to 1997.

In November 1997, the District voted in favour of a fusion with the new Province of Central Africa when it comes into existence.

2.1.4.3 The District of Cameroon

Cameroon

Population: 13.9 million

Life expectancy male/female: 53/56 years

Infant mortality rate: 10..3%

Religions: Animists 45%; Catholics 21%;

Muslims 20%; Protestants 14%

Independence: 1st January 1960 (from France)

GDP per capita: US\$ 710 (1995)

Spiritans presence: 55 professed members (2 bishops, 45 priests, 2 brothers, 1 scholastic).

With 13 million inhabitants, the Cameroon is the most heavily populated of the francophone countries in the region. Stretching from the Sahel to the great forest, it has more than 150 different ethnic groups. The varied economic possibilities gave a period of relative prosperity until the 1990s.

The Church celebrated its centenary in the South in 1990. Its can boast of a vibrant Christianity, a large number of priests and religious, with good structures for their formation (e.g. the recently opened Catholic Institute in Yaoundé). With some priests and seminarians, one detects a degree of clericalism. In the North, evangelisation is only 50 years old.

The Spiritans arrived in 1916. They were most numerous around 1960, and still numbered 85 in 1992 when the two Districts of Yaoundé and Doumé joined together. In 1997, there were around 50. Most come from 8 different European Provinces, above all France and Holland. There are also 10 confreres from FAC and Nigeria.

In the Centre and the South, the parochial apostolate is the same as in the rest of the region; special emphasis is put on spiritual direction of individuals, human advancement and rural development, and the struggle against injustice and corruption. In the North, the confreres are no longer concentrating exclusively on people of traditional religion, but are also turning their attention towards the Moslems. Development works are also given much attention.

The priority commitments of the District are those of primary evangelisation: in the Sahel region of the North, with the Pygmies in the East, in an area where communications are very difficult in the diocese of Bafia. Under the same heading must come the ministry in the large towns (Yaoundé, Douala, Maroua), with special attention given to the young people. The appointment of young confreres and the availability of those who are more experienced remain indispensable if these works are to continue.

Following the repeated wishes of Chapters, there has been a re-grouping of confreres, but a good number are still living alone.

Several confreres say that they can now live almost exclusively on the financial support of the people. The main income for the District comes from the renting of rooms in the three houses at Yaoundé, Douala and Bertoua, which welcome people who are passing through, above all, apostolic workers. This service creates and helps maintain many important contacts.

More than 30 members of FAC come from Cameroon. Many confreres in the District are actively engaged in the vocations apostolate for our Congregation

and for others. Spiritan vocations work is co-ordinated from two centres: Essos (in Yaoundé) and Bertoua. The Postulancy is run in collaboration with several other institutes at Otélé. There are frequent contacts with the novitiate at Mbalmayo.

2.1.4.4 The District of Congo Brazzaville

Congo Brazzaville
 Population: 2,665,000
 Life expectancy male/female: 44/48 years
 Infant mortality rate: 11‰

Religions: Catholics 53.9%; Protestants 24.4%;
 Animists 19%; some Muslims and other.
 Independence: 15 August 1960 (from France)
 GDP per capita: US\$ 710 (1995)

Spiritane presence: since 1880; 39 professed members (35 priests, 1 brother, 3 scholastics).

Half of the two million inhabitants live in the two towns of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. Oil has become the largest part of the national wealth. The various political currents correspond mainly to regional or ethnic loyalties, so political life is very unstable. Tensions between the different factions have resulted in bloody confrontations from 1993 up to the recent war (June to October, 1997).

The Church is more than 100 years old and is made up of lively Christian communities in different milieu. There are many vocations to the secular clergy and religious life. But the Church has also suffered at times from the political and ethnic tensions and divisions.

Numerically, there has been no change in the Spiritane District since 1992: there are around 40 members, French and other Europeans being in the majority. There are ten African confreres from FAC, Nigeria, East Africa and Angola.

In their parochial work, the confreres concentrate on the sick and most abandoned; they particularly stress house visiting, both in towns and villages. During the recent troubles, they took an active part in support of people in distress. The bishops are very appreciative of their pastoral approaches and they have asked the confreres to receive diocesan seminarians on 'stage'.

Various projects have been started, above all in Brazzaville and Dolisie, to help young people who are in prison or who have been released, offering them a professional agricultural or technical training. They also support young people who are trying to start a business. Some of these schemes were the result of collaboration with others (e.g. Auteuil-International and the Brothers of St. Gabriel).

The areas given priority in the District are the more remote rural zones, like the immense territory of first evangelisation in the Likouala region in the North, and large rural parishes in each of the dioceses of Nkaï, Kinkala and Owando. Another priority is the urban ministry in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, with particular attention to young people in trouble.

The aim is to have communities made up of at least three confreres. The rhythm of community life is more regular in the countryside than in the towns. Each year, the confreres come together for an assembly that lasts 4 or 5 days. Another meeting, for those recently arrived, was begun in 1996.

The communities have few local financial resources. The District has some limited possibilities, but external help has been necessary several times to meet the expenses of the Postulancy.

More than 25 professed members of FAC come from the District, and each year, many more candidates apply for entry. Various confreres in the District help in the Spiritan scholasticate at Brazzaville with teaching, spiritual direction, and, occasionally, with the management. There are anglophone Spiritans from Nigeria and WAF doing their 'stage' in the District.

Because of the civil war, the District has not yet been able to get together to take a decision on entry into the new Province of Central Africa.

2.1.4.5 The Central African Foundation (FAC)

This Foundation was born in 1977 from the collaboration of 5 francophone Districts in central Africa; Senegal joined later, having been initially a member of WAF. After a period of collegial management by the Districts, FAC received its own superior in 1986. It held its first Chapter in 1993.

There were 44 professed members in 1992, and that number had risen to around 100 by 1997, more than half of whom were in perpetual vows. Apart from those coming from the Districts directly linked to FAC, there are also members from Congo Kinshasa and Equatorial Guinea.

Formation in general

The formation communities are mainly international. This diversity is generally appreciated by the young men, despite occasional inevitable tensions. The increase in numbers over the last years has meant that some houses have had to be enlarged. The cost of this was partly borne by the Districts.

Gradually, members of FAC have become the majority amongst the formators. It is good, however, to continue to have formators from elsewhere to produce a fruitful diversity. The formation of formators and the direction of the young students remain an on-going concern.

It is important that the formators remain open to the vocation of Spiritan brother, above all in the Postulancies and the First Cycle, and that suitable structures be set up. A community has recently opened in Yaoundé for this purpose, from which young professed will be able to follow a professional training.

The Houses of Formation

Since about 1990, each District has had its own **Postulancy** (with the exception of Gabon which has too few candidates). It has helped in the motivation of young people, in their introduction to community life, and in allowing them to reach the required academic level.

The **First Cycle** in Libreville collaborates with the inter-diocesan seminary of Gabon for studies. The **Novitiate** at Mbalmayo (Cameroon) joins with other institutes for inter-novitiate sessions.

The four-year **Second Cycle** is in Brazzaville. It works together with other local houses of formation (inter-diocesan seminary, other institutes), and occasional help also comes from visiting professors from Kinshasa. There is a one-year pastoral "stage" at the end of the first year. Two groups of lay friends of the Spiritans ('*Amicale Brottier*' and '*Chorale Paul Ondia*') give material help, as well as help in direction. As a result of the war in 1997, the scholasticate has moved temporarily to Yaoundé.

Finance

The Foundation depends on external help for 70% of its running expenses, and even more for extraordinary expenditure (buildings, assemblies, chapters). Cor Unum remains the primary source. In the formation communities, the students are able to produce something from rearing animals, gardening etc. Some members of FAC will need to have a more specialised training in management and finance.

Missionary project

It mainly consists in continuing the projects of the founding Districts. But the 'witness communities' should make it possible for the members of FAC to put the accent on a search for an 'inculturated' missionary presence and on certain areas of the apostolate (e.g. the apostolate to young people). The assessment of these communities has been generally positive, but they should not become systematic for all the confreres of FAC nor exclusive of other confreres.

Works 'ad extra' (i.e. beyond the Districts linked to FAC) have been started in Angola, Congo Kinshasa, Europe (France and Spain), Algeria, Brazil and Madagascar. They should be followed up and developed as far as possible.

The Future

Since 1996, there has been serious reflection on the common future of the Foundation and the Districts linked to it. A meeting at Kribi, in February 1997, considered the idea of a Province of Central Africa in the not too distant future. Each region of the new circumscription (corresponding to those of the present Districts who wish to join) would enjoy a relative autonomy. After all the interested parties have been consulted, a decision will be taken, no doubt in 1998. Senegal has decided to move towards becoming a separate circumscription.

2.1.4.6 The District and Foundation of Congo Kinshasa

Congo Kinshasa
Population: 47.4 million
Life expectancy male/female: 50/54 years
Infant mortality rate: 95‰

Religions: Catholics; Protestants; Animists;
Kinbangists; Muslims.
Independence: 30 June 1960 (from Belgium)
GDP per capita: US\$ 120 (1995)

Spiritans presence: District since 1880; Foundation since 1986.

The country, which was called 'Zaire' for 26 years, has now reverted to the name of 'The Democratic Republic of the Congo'. With an area of 2,345,000 km², it has 40 million inhabitants of whom one half are catholic. It has many natural resources, above and below ground (copper, cobalt, diamonds) and a

variety of sources of energy (hydraulic, coal, oil, natural gas). The demands that these riches have created have been one of the causes of the trouble that has shaken the country over the last few years.

After independence in 1960 and the ensuing troubles, Mobutu took power in 1965 and held on to it until 1997. The democratic movement led to a national conference in 1990, presided over by the Archbishop of Kisangani, but all real power remained in the hands of Mobutu. The country was disintegrating, the civil servants went unpaid.

The armed opposition movement to Mobutu in the East of the country brought to the fore L. D. Kabila. The presence of armed ex-soldiers from Rwanda amongst the refugees who had fled from that country led to the destabilisation of the whole Eastern part of Zaire. Soldiers from Rwanda and Uganda, who were trying to eliminate the armed refugees, joined forces with the Zairian opponents of Mobutu. They rallied round Kabila for the conquest of the whole country; a few months later, Kinshasa was captured and Kabila declared himself President. The estimate is that at least 200,000 refugees 'disappeared' during this period; in pursuing the opposing armed Rwandans, the supporters of Kabila did not make much effort to discern who was who amongst the refugees. The reconstruction of the country must now start. The new authorities are showing a dictatorial and doctrinaire character.

In the past, the Church made a great contribution to the life of the country in many ways: education in the catholic schools (nationalised at one point and then given back to be managed by the Church under the name of '*écoles conventionnées*'); research work on cultural traditions with a view to an inculturation of the faith; development of basic Christian communities and formation of lay leaders; making a public stance, by means of the pastoral letters of the Bishops' conference, against injustice and corruption.

In May 1997, the Secretariat of the Bishops' Conference published a document entitled, *Get up and walk!*. This letter put forward basic proposals for the Church and society (and therefore missionaries) to work for a deepening of the faith through inculturation, and to share in the reconstruction of national unity. The letter was taken up again by a meeting in Rome of Superiors of Missionary Institutes working in Congo Kinshasa, with the theme: "*What mission after the recent events?*" Amongst other things, it was said that the missionaries who had been "Founding Fathers" (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*) are now invited to become collaborators within the local Church. They should change their approach and no longer set up projects without the people, but work with the basic Christian communities and collaborate with the local clergy and other Congregations.

The Spiritans first arrived in the country in 1880 and set up at Boma on the coast. They subsequently moved inland to Kindu (1907), Kongolo (1909), Manono (1922), and Lubumbashi (1966). In 1994, the Spiritans of FAC took charge of the parish of Saint-Esprit in Kinshasa and the following year they bought a property on Mount Ngafula for the First Cycle of the Foundation. The Postulancy is at Lubumbashi, but it is going to be transferred to Kongolo. Candidates from the Kinshasa region spend some of their postulancy in the Spiritan parish. A novitiate will begin at Lubumbashi in 1998 and theology will

continue to be done at Brazzaville. The Foundation of Zaire was set up in 1986, and it still remains joined to the District.

The number of Spiritans has diminished greatly in the last 30 years, and the remaining group has become very international. The present number of confreres is 29. They have handed over some parishes to the dioceses, but they have retained at least one in each of the dioceses mentioned. They also work in remote missions, where they are often obliged to move around on foot. They run Christian communities, work in the formation of catechists and other lay people, and some are involved in a special way with young people. One confrere, who is also a doctor, has been in charge of health needs throughout a whole region. Present conditions make it difficult to carry out projects. Their most important ministry is surely their faithful presence in these difficult times.

2.1.5 Portuguese Speaking South-Western Africa: Province of Angola

Angola

Population: 11.6 million

Life expectancy male/female: 45/48 years

Infant mortality rate: 143‰

Illiteracy: 80%

Religions: Catholics 43%; Protestants 12%;
Animists 45%.

Independence: 11 November 1975 (from Portugal)

GDP per capita: US\$ 920 (1995)

Introductory note

In the year 1997 the Spiritan community which lives in Angola celebrated twenty years of existence. Founded in 1977, it is the fruit of the labour of many Spiritans - some dead, but all present in the actual missionary and pastoral dynamism of the Angolan church.

2.1.5.1 The Country

Angola is situated in the southern African zone, with 1.274.400 km² and an estimated population of 11 million inhabitants. The prolonged civil war (1961-1995) which the people had to bear, limited flourishing in every way. But this war offered little intervals of peace which bear witness to the will of the population to live, and to the decision to serve on the part of the Church. At present, the construction of democracy has come up against difficulties which the international community has had difficulty in controlling.

2.1.5.2 The Church

Administratively, Angola has three ecclesiastical provinces and a total of 15 dioceses. Many religious institutes and missionary congregations have enriched the pastoral engagement of the Church.

2.1.5.3 Spiritans

The Spiritans complete 132 years of presence in Angola this year, 1998. The missionary contribution of many countries and provinces of Europe has to be acknowledged and God has to be thanked for it; they founded the greater part of the missions.

At present the province has 85 confreres: 1 bishop, 64 priests, 5 brothers, and 15 professed students. Vocations are abundant and deserve a greater number of

formators for a proper and necessary vocational discernment. One of the greatest problems has been the economic-financial maintenance of the houses of formation. Thanks to the solidarity of some provinces, it was possible to maintain the rhythm of formation.

2.1.5.4 Projects for the future

During the visitation by the General Council (1997) it was possible to get a sense of the hopes and anxieties of the confreres and of the communities which they assist and evangelise. The work is being done with much dedication, despite limitations of the present moment and the personal situation of some confreres. In many areas there is need for renewal.

Besides commitments with Spiritan circumscriptions of Guinea-Bissau, Congo, Mozambique and Central Africa where the province has members, first evangelisation in Angola is a continuing priority. That idea will continue to be the revitalising spring of vocations. To this end work has been done to enlarge the physical structures of the communities. In the areas of Justice and Peace the Province gave an example of courage and availability, especially during the years of war. Many of the confreres now working in Angola, arrived during the time of combat.

2.1.5.5 Conclusion

Pray God through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, patroness of Angola, that the missionary spirit of our founders, Poullart des Places and Libermann may continue.

2.1.6 The East Africa Region

2.1.6.1 Ethiopia: The Gamo Gofa Group

| | |
|--|---|
| Ethiopia: | Illiteracy: 40% (1987) |
| Population: 56.7 million | Religions: Christians 40-50%; Muslims 40-50%; |
| Life expectancy male/female: 46/48 years | Christian Jews; Animist Jews; Orthodox. |
| Infant mortality rate: 212‰ | GDP per capita: US\$ 140 (1995) |

Spiritane presence: 8 professed members (6 priests, 2 brothers).

In 1997, this Group celebrated the 25th anniversary of its ecumenical work in Ethiopia. This represents 25 years of continuous effort to convince the ecclesiastical authorities, both catholic and orthodox, of the validity of their work.

The Group wanted to put the ecumenical teaching of the Roman Catholic Church into practice. The speeches of Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of the visits of various Patriarchs, have reinforced their conviction that they must continue along this path.

It has always been a difficult mission. Being on the defensive over 25 years has left its mark; one sees its influence in the way they think and behave, and sometimes also in the judgements they make.

This mission is very important, but also very special, very specific; it is not every Spiritane who could take it on. So it is difficult to find replacements or

reinforcements and as a result, the group is quite fragile at present. There is a great need for new blood, above all of experienced confreres with a strong ecumenical spirit.

A lot of progress has been made during these 25 years. A certain number of doors have opened, or partly opened. It would be very sad for the two sister Churches if the Congregation felt obliged to close this mission through lack of personnel.

The famine which has hit the region several times has led the Spiritans to get involved in aid work. They have built up a development organisation for the region that continues to grow in importance. The confreres feel obliged to give much of their time to this service. It is thanks to this kind of work that they are in the country at all; officially, they enter the country as members of an NGO.

2.1.6.2 Ethiopia: The Boranaland Group

Spiritans presence: 5 priests.

The history of the 'Borana' Group in Ethiopia, previously known in the Congregation by the name 'Sidamo', has seen its ups and downs at different levels - personnel, political and missionary. The Group survived for several years with only two members; because they were fully convinced of the importance and potential of this mission, they kept going despite the setbacks. They have kept to their commitment while trying to persuade other confreres to join them.

From the start, they made use of the lessons they had learnt in previous missionary experiences. They decided to take as long as necessary to learn the language and customs of the people, and to wait for an invitation to preach the Good News from the Borana people themselves. This approach was not always understood by the local ecclesiastical authorities.

Eventually, the situation changed. More confreres arrived and invitations multiplied from the Borana to come to their villages. To be able to profit fully from so many years of patience, the Group needs reinforcements.

Confreres can only enter the country as members of an NGO. They will get a visa when they can show that they will be involved in development work. This in itself is no great problem, because the missionary work has always taken an integral approach to the human person. So the confreres began with schools; people from nomadic tribes need education in order to gain respect and find their place in Ethiopian society. Our confreres, in collaboration with Sisters, have works in other areas, especially in health and preventative medicine.

The Group celebrated its Silver Jubilee in 1997.

2.1.6.3 The District of Kenya

Kenya

Population: 28.8 million
Life expectancy male/female: 53/55 years
Infant mortality rate: 6.7‰
Illiteracy: 49% (1991)

Religions: Catholics 50%, Animists 25%; Muslims 7%;
Other 14% Hindu Sects 1%.

Independence: 12 December 1963 (from the UK)
GDP per capita: US\$ 300 (1995)

Spiritans presence: since 1862; 43 professed members (40 priests, 1 brother, 2 scholastics).

The District has diminished numerically, but that has not blunted its dynamism. Over the last few years, the Spiritans have launched into several new works: first evangelisation amongst the Pokot people, the re-opening of missions in the very difficult Garissa region, and pastoral work in the poor quarters of Nairobi.

The confreres have always been very much involved in education. They no longer have the same responsibilities in that area, but they still have a direct or indirect involvement. One very important work for the country and the diocese is St. Mary's College, Nairobi. The Spiritans direct the work and they recently took some important decisions regarding the future. They have separated the school and community accounts, and after a suitable preparation, a lay accountant is looking after the financial side.

The Spiritans are continuing other works to which they have been committed for a long time: chaplaincies and religious teaching in schools and the University, parishes, chaplains to hospitals and convents, professors in the senior seminary, work in the pastoral centres and involvement in inter-religious dialogue.

The majority of confreres live in communities of at least two people. Most have periods of prayer in common. Those in charge of the District are also trying to develop the regional communities.

Kenya enjoys a good climate and several confreres would like to spend their old age in the country. The District bought a house in Mombasa for this purpose, but it did not measure up to their needs. The Cardinal gave a piece of land to the Spiritans very close to St. Mary's and a house has been built there that will serve both as a Spiritan centre and a retirement house.

The territory is also covered by the East African Province; this has given rise to some misunderstandings but a collaboration has gradually developed. The recent District Chapter, at which representatives of the EAP were present, has done much in this direction. The country has given many candidates to the Spiritan missionary life.

The District has always been happy to receive young confreres on 'stage', and has given much attention to this service to formation.

Statistically, the District still has a large number of confreres on its books, but many have been outside the country for several years. This creates considerable confusion and it is time to try to clarify the situation.

2.1.6.4 The Bagamoyo Group

The circumscription still had 27 members in 1979 and 18 in 1984. The number has greatly diminished since then; by 1997, there were only 6. As there seemed to be no prospect of continuing as a District, the confreres asked to change their structure; the General Council agreed and they are now a Group depending directly on the General Administration. They preferred not to join the East African Province, above all because of their advanced age, but also

because of a different approach to pastoral work and organisation. They help the EAP financially.

The members are all past the age of retirement; the one younger member remaining has gone to Kenya to teach in the Inter-Congregational Institute at Tangaza. But this does not mean that the others are doing nothing. They do not have the same responsibilities as before, but they are still very active within their capabilities: administration, building, technical and pastoral work, chaplaincies, publishing and catechesis. They continue to be at the service of the local Church and people.

The Group is called "Bagamoyo", but the town of Bagamoyo is now looked after by the EAP. The Province also has a parish at Morogoro.

2.1.6.5 The East African Province

History

The foundations of the Province were laid by the Superiors of the Districts in East Africa, namely, Kenya, Kilimanjaro and Bagamoyo, who worked in collaboration with the General Council to begin the East African Foundation in 1970. The Foundation covered the three countries, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The Foundation became a Province in 1989. In 1993 the District of Kilimanjaro ceased to exist and fused with the new Province. Its members joined the EAP. The Districts of Kenya and Bagamoyo still exist on their own but collaborate in many ways with the Province.

Formation programme

The members of the Province do vocations' ministry in each of the three countries. Each country has a full-time director of vocation. Plans are underway to set up postulancies in each of them. The first cycle is done at Spiritan Seminary in Njiro Hill which is an affiliate of Urban University, Rome. This has so well developed that a number of missionary institutes (about five) have joined the Spiritans in sending their own students to it. These institutes have built their own communities near the Spiritan Seminary and also supply some academic staff. The Spiritan community has welcomed people from other Spiritan circumscriptions, such as, Papua New Guinea. The novitiate is done after the first cycle in Magamba in Tanzania. The pastoral experience programme is done during the second cycle period of formation. The second cycle is in Langata, Kenya, where the students attend lectures in an inter-congregational consortium in Tangaza. The Spiritan house in Langata welcomes students from other circumscriptions, FOI, SCAF, WAF, Province of Nigeria.

There is need for more Spiritan formators in first and second cycles especially in the second cycle.

A number of EAP confreres have been given the opportunity for sabbatical and long term ongoing formation.

The Pan-African Meeting of Spiritan Superiors and Formators gave its approval in 1997 for the establishment of a Spiritan Centre in Bagamoyo.

Statistics

Members by origin: 96 (1 Bishop, 76 priests and 19 junior professed in formation).

Members by appointment: 84 (3 Bishops, 61 priests, 2 Brothers and 18 junior professed).

Mission engagements

a) Within the Province

The Province sees its mission within the Province in the three countries as the following:

- to strengthen the identity and manifest the presence of the Province in the three countries;
- to conscientise and animate the local church to its mission responsibility;
- to attract new vocations to the Congregation.

In order to achieve these goals, the Province is engaged in the following ministries:

- parish pastoral apostolate in areas of first evangelisation especially with nomadic people such as the Maasai in Tanzania and Pokots in Kenya (in collaboration with the District of Kenya);
- evangelisation in the parishes for the building and strengthening of Christian communities;
- services for ordinary human and social development of people especially in the area of medical services (clinics and Flying Medical Services) and education (formal and informal);
- special and new pastoral initiatives in response to urgent needs of the countries around them: AIDS victims both in Uganda and Tanzania, refugee ministry among the people of Burundi and Rwanda. The refugee ministry had an international team of 4 confreres (2 EAP, 1 French and 1 USA-East). Presently the two EAP confreres and one USA confrere belonging to the Province are continuing the work.
- inter-religious dialogue in Bagamoyo and Zanzibar;
- collaborative ministry with lay associates from USA and Germany in collaboration with USA-East and German Provinces .

b) Outside the Province

This has been one of the main thrusts of the Province in the last few years. Outside its two traditional areas of mission in Zambia and Congo Kinshasa the Province has manifested great openness to mission in collaboration with other circumscriptions in Congo Brazzaville, Senegal (Guinea, Guinea Bissau) Germany, France, USA-East. Over 28 members of EAP are working outside the Province. A number of scholastics have done their pastoral experience programme in Ethiopia, WAF, Senegal. The Province is very much committed to the Zambia International Group which was its first mission outside and it has remained its main source of personnel.

Finance and self-sufficiency

It has always been one of the big problems of the Province to have enough financial resources for its formation programme and for its administration as well as for pastoral work of its members at home and abroad. The Province depends on external aid for over 80% of its annual budget. This help comes from the Cor Unum Fund, direct aid from the northern Provinces, donor agencies. However, much is being done to generate funds from within through a number self-reliance projects: farm, travelling agency, investments etc.

Community life

With the exception of a few cases the members generally live at least two in one community. The Province appreciates the necessity of community life and is making efforts to renew and promote it. It is also working hard to improve communication with all the members of the Province.

2.1.7 South Central African Region

2.1.7.1 Zambia International Group (ZIG)

Zambia

Population: 9.4 million

Life expectancy male/female: 43/45 years

Infant mortality rate: 103‰

Religions: Catholics 75%; Animists 25%;
some Muslims

Independence: 24 October 1964 (from the UK)

GDP per capita: US\$ 300 (1995)

History

The first group of Spiritans arrived in Zambia in February 1971. They were 6 Irish Spiritans who left Nigeria after the civil war in 1970. They were joined by nine others in the next few years. The life of the group reached a turning point in 1976 when the members of the EAP joined the group. From 1980 the number of the Irish confreres began to decrease while that of EAP kept increasing. The group was constituted an international group depending on the Generalate in 1982. The Superior of the group was made a Major Superior in 1996.

Present statistics

Zambia is a country of 9 million people sparsely distributed. About 75% are Christians and the rest practise African traditional religion with small Hindu and Muslim minorities. Education, health-care and other basic facilities are insufficient.

There are presently 12 Spiritans (11 from EAP and 1 from the Irish Province) working in the two dioceses of Monze and Livingstone. The group belongs to the South Central African region.

Missionary engagements

- Confreres are working in parishes in areas of primary evangelisation;
- One confrere is the secretary of the Bishop of Livingstone;
- Promotion of Justice and Peace, especially prison ministry;

- Community and social development work;
- Relief and rehabilitation programme for the surrounding local communities.

Drought, bad harvest and the bad shape of the national economy have created a lot of suffering and poverty among the majority of the population especially in the areas where the Spiritans are working. This has necessitated appeal for relief material from outside the country. The Spiritans are involved in the distribution programme.

Formation programme

The group is one of the founders of the South Central African Foundation (SCAF). It does strong vocations' ministry and has a Postulate in Pemba with one of the confreres as the Director of Postulants. After one year's postulancy the candidates go to Balaka in Malawi where the members of SCAF do their first cycle in an inter-congregational consortium in collaboration with other religious congregations. The group is presently the main source of vocations for SCAF.

Community Life

In the recent years the group has had serious problems with community life because of personal problems among some of its members. This led to the withdrawal of a number of the confreres to the EAP, the home Province. This problem and the lack of personnel made the group very fragile. However, the group has made efforts to regroup itself by giving back to the Dioceses some of the parishes under its care to ensure that the members are living in twos. This has helped to stabilise the community life in the group. The main source of personnel is EAP but plans are underway to make the group more international by getting more people from other circumscriptions especially in Africa.

Challenges and problems

The main difficulties facing the group are:

Lack of personnel:

- to reinforce and stabilise community life;
- for formation house;
- to enable members to do their sabbatical and on-going formation for some length of time.

Finance:

The economy of the country is in bad shape and the group is working in one of the poorest parts of the country. The group has not got any internal financial resources for the life of the group and for its apostolate. It depends completely on external aid especially on the Cor Unum for its survival.

Pastoral:

Some elements of the traditional belief system and practices of the people present a lot of challenges for evangelisation and pastoral work in the

country. The socio-economic conditions have created among the local population an attitude of dependence on external help.

Future plans

- The group hopes to open another community in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia to enable it have a base there and be involved in urban ministry especially with the youth;
- Expansion of the postulancy complex which could also serve as a Spiritan centre;
- Further internationalisation of the group.

2.1.7.2 District of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe

Population: 11.4 million

Life expectancy male/female: 50/52 years (1995)

Infant mortality rate: 67‰

Religions: Anglicans 36%; Catholics 15%;

Presbyterians 12%; Methodist 9%, Animists.

Independence: 18 April 1980 (from the UK)

GDP per capita: US\$ 510 (1995)

History

The Spiritan mission in Zimbabwe was started by a small group of Spiritans from the Province of Nigeria in 1984 in response to an appeal for help by the Diocese of Mutare. As the group grew the Spiritans have been invited to open new missions in the Archdiocese of Harare in 1994 and the diocese of Gokwe in 1995. The group was raised to the status of a District in 1995.

Statistics

Zimbabwe is a country of about 11 million people, 97% Africans, 3% coloured and white people. 55% are Christians (9% Catholics with 7 Dioceses). Many people are adherents of African Traditional Religion.

Presently there are 12 Spiritans in the District. The Province of Nigeria has been its main source of personnel. A South African confrere who belongs to SCAF worked in the group for some time before returning to South Africa. There is some effort being made to internationalise the membership of the group by the presence of confreres from other circumscriptions.

Missionary engagements

- Parish work in areas of primary evangelisation;
- Education - as teachers, chaplains and administrators in secondary schools. They hope to get involved in a tertiary institution;
- The promotion of local vocation: one of the confreres is the Diocesan Director of vocations;
- The promotion of financial self reliance to cut down the dependence of the parishes and the dioceses on external aid;
- Administration: one confrere was the secretary of the Bishop of Mutare;
- Youth ministry;
- Refugee ministry till the end of the civil war in Mozambique.

Finance

This has continued to be one of the major problems for the maintenance of the District and its missionary projects because the Diocese is very poor and Spiritan missions are in the poorest part of the country. The District depends heavily on grants from the Cor Unum for its life. Help comes from some external funding agencies for specific projects. However, there is serious effort towards self reliance to raise some of the resources from the place of work in the schools and parishes and through the establishment of self-help projects.

Community life

In a number of the missions confreres are living alone. This is partly because some missions cannot maintain more than one person. The tight immigration policy of the country also makes it difficult to get new members easily. Because of the demands and style of apostolate many of the confreres are overworked and have insufficient time for rest, reading and personal reflection.

Formation programme

The group belongs to the region of South Central Africa and is one of the founders of SCAF. There was initial hesitation on the part of the Bishop of Mutare to allow the Spiritans to accept candidates for the Congregation. This permission has been granted them now.

The Future

- The District wishes to be international.
- It plans to build a postulate and begin a postulancy programme in the near future.
- With more personnel it hopes to consolidate the existing communities and works and expand in an area of great need in the southern part of the Diocese of Mutare.

2.1.7.3 Malawi International Group

Malawi

Population: 9.6 million
Life expectancy male/female: 41/42 years
Infant mortality rate: 134‰

Religions: Animists 3,000,000; Catholics 1,200,000;
Protestants 1,200,000; Muslims 700,000.
Independence: 6 July 1964 (from the UK)
GDP per capita: US\$ 165 (1995)

History

The group started as a relief mission by eleven ex-missionaries of Nigeria from the Irish Province to respond to the needs and request of the Archdiocese of Blantyre in 1971. The Archdiocese had asked for help in pastoral work and teaching in the minor seminary. The group was joined in 1973 by three other Spiritans from TransCanada who arrived in response to the appeals for help by Chikwawa diocese. With time the group started to decrease because of sickness, age, withdrawal or death.

In 1993 the first group of WAF confreres joined the group mainly to help in the vocations' ministry and to take care of the candidates from the country and also reinforce the number of personnel in the group which had diminished

drastically. The group was made an international group with the Superior raised to the status of a Major Superior in 1996.

Statistics

Malawi has an estimated population of 9.6 million. The country has 7 dioceses and the Spiritans are working in two, Blantyre and Dedza.

There are presently 8 members (4 members from the Irish Province, 1 from TransCanada, and 3 from WAF).

Mission engagements

The group has been involved in:

- parish pastoral ministry in areas of primary evangelisation;
- chaplaincy to migrants and foreigners; vocations' ministry;
- community and social development;
- work with AIDS victims;
- In the last few years some of the members retired from teaching in the minor seminary and chaplaincy in the hospital.

Formation

The group is one of the founders of SCAF and has a postulate which was opened in 1996 for the candidates coming from the country. A WAF confrere is the Director of postulants. The group also hosts the first cycle of SCAF which is in Balaka.

Community life and finance

The group had some problem in integrating the new arrivals from the WAF into the old established community. Efforts have been made to resolve this problem. Because of the economic problems of the country, especially in the place where the Spiritans work, the group depends on external help from Ireland, TransCanada, and the Cor Unum allocation for its life.

The future of the Group

As three of the Irish confreres are over seventy years of age the survival of the group depends on younger member from WAF. WAF is committed to the mission in Malawi as one of its major areas of priority.

2.1.7.4 South Central African Foundation (SCAF)

History

The Foundation was founded by the circumscriptions of the South Central African Region, namely, District of South Africa, District of Zimbabwe, Zambia International Group and Malawi. The foundations of SCAF were laid in 1985 when the District of Southern Africa started a formation programme to receive candidates from the District who were interested in joining the Congregation. Structures for the various stages of formation were put in place. Later the Superiors of the other circumscriptions of the region who were getting

vocations agreed to have a common formation programme with the District of Southern Africa. In dialogue with the General Council, SCAF was formerly established in November 1994 with Fr. James Devine as its first Superior.

Formation programme

Each of the founding circumscriptions, except Zimbabwe, has built a postulate for the reception and accompaniment of the candidates from their countries in their first year. After the postulancy the first circle is done in Balaka in Malawi where the Foundation has built two hostels. The students attend lectures and share many other things in common with other students from other religious missionary institutes in an inter-congregational consortium. The novitiate is done in South Africa after the first cycle. The second cycle is done with EAP students in Tangaza in Nairobi.

The Foundation has great need of formators. It has depended on the Provinces of Germany, Ireland and Nigeria for its formators.

Statistics

The Foundation has altogether 4 members (1 priest, 3 junior professed in the second cycle). It has 12 students in the first cycle in Balaka. Most of the students in the first cycle come from Zambia. The first member of the Foundation did his first appointment in Zimbabwe. He has since returned to do parish work in South Africa after some short period of work in formation.

Finance

The District of South Africa has so far financed the cost of the formation programme. The Cor Unum Fund and the German Province have helped in the construction of the new structures for the first cycle in Balaka.

2.1.7.5 The District of South Africa

South Africa
 Population: 42.5 million
 Life expectancy male/female: 54/58 years
 Infant mortality rate: 53‰

Religions: Christians 76.97%; non-Christians 23.03%
 (Hindu, Muslim, Jews, Buddhists, others).
 Independence: 31 May 1910 (from the UK)
 GDP per capita: US\$ 3,080

Spiritual presence: since 1923; 23 priests, 2 brothers.

Statistics for 1991 reveal that the Catholic Church makes up 7.5% of the population, of which 80% are black. It has 30 dioceses and is the second largest in the country. The District was originally German but it is now very international: in 1997, there were 25 members coming from 9 different countries. They are nearly all working in the dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban.

The District has always paid much attention to community life, but it has not been easy to find the right balance between pastoral (or other) work and community life, with time set aside for prayer and meeting together.

The principal focus of the District has been pastoral work in parishes, in farms, in schools and in the hostels for migrant workers. They have also conducted retreats and chaplaincy work for communities of sisters. The District has built

several schools in the black townships as well as kindergartens. The confreres have done a lot of vocations' work, although this was not always fully understood by the diocese of Bethlehem; the idea grew up that the Spiritans were taking away vocations from the diocese, but this was hardly borne out by statistics.

Because of the apartheid laws, the Spiritans were forced to live in white areas, but as close as possible to the black townships where most of their work was done.

The District started receiving candidates for the Congregation quite some time ago, but at present, there is only one South African in perpetual vows. The District has been training candidates from other countries in Southern Africa: the novitiate, philosophy and theology were all done in the country. Out of this has grown the South Central African Foundation (SCAF), in which several confreres have already made profession.

The great change came about in 1994 with the ending of apartheid. It called for a big adjustment from the confreres: instead of doing as much as possible for the people, it was now a question of doing as much as possible with the people. Such an approach was neither permitted nor possible in the past. The arrival of new confreres who had never known the old system was an important help for this evolutionary process. The training of lay people has now become a major work.

Spiritans have also been involved in the search for peace between the different groups, particularly through their work in the hostels for migrant workers.

2.1.7.6 The Mozambique Group

Mozambique
Population: 18.4 million
Life expectancy male/female: 44/48 years
Infant mortality rate: 118‰

Religions: Animists 40%; Christians 30%; Muslim 30%.
Independence: 25 June 1975 (from Portugal)
GDP per capita: US\$ 120

Spiritans presence: since 1996.

The start of this Spiritan commitment in Mozambique will be treated later as an example of a new missionary initiative in the Congregation.

The Group is made up of two teams: one has two members (waiting for reinforcements) at Ihazonia in the diocese of Chimoio, and the other is made up of three confreres at Natia in the diocese of Nacala. Both teams are looking after a large number of Christian communities spread over a vast area of countryside. They are still at the stage of learning the language and getting familiar with the ecclesial and social situation.

2.1.8 Indian Ocean

2.1.8.1 District of Madagascar

Population: 14.1 million
Life expectancy males/females: 55/58 years
Infant mortality rate: 111‰

Religions: Animists 52%; Catholics 20.5%;
Protestants 20.5%; Muslim 7%
Independence: 26 June 1960 (from France)
GDP per capita: US \$230 (1995)

Spiritans Presence: Since 1898; about 27 professed members; International Group (France, Switzerland, FAC).

The principal missionary focus is in the two northern dioceses of Mahajanga and Antsiranana. This year they celebrate 100 years of the Church there, which corresponds with the centenary of the arrival of the Spiritans. Now there are local bishops and an array of local clergy, as the Spiritans are diminishing in number and advancing in age. If the Spiritans are necessarily in a mode of disengagement, they are maintaining a high profile and a reputation for successful service to missions in difficult places. There is a Spiritan formation house at Antananarivo as well as an important apostolate to street kids. Centre Energie is a very creative enterprise aimed at helping delinquent kids to recover their sense of self-worth, and in their turn to enable other kids to break free of their dependencies and to get off the street. Another specialised ministry is the centre for rural advancement at Amborovy which involves running an exemplary farm with a view to improving farming practice in the area. A Spiritan is in charge of the Apostolate of the Sea at Mahajanga.

Because of the great distances and the difficulty of communication, regional community takes on capital importance. A concerted effort is made to ensure that Spiritans live in community.

The District has lived through the growing pains of the IOF and has contributed greatly to its development. As well as Foyer Laval in Antananarivo, Foyer Brottier in Antsiranana is a centre of Spiritan activity and holds out promise for the future. This is an encouragement to those who, over the years, have been faithful in a missionary task fraught with hardship. Another promising sign for the future is the arrival of two Spiritans from FAC. A third will join them this year.

2.1.8.2 District of Mauritius

Mauritius

Population: 1.1 million (1990)

Life expectancy males/females: 66/74 years

Infant mortality rate: 19.7‰

Religions: Hindu 52%; Christian 32%; Muslim 16%.

Independence: 12 March 1968 (from the U K)

GDP per capita: US \$3,600

Spiritans Presence: Since 1841; about 14 professed members; International Group (France, Ireland, Poland, England); associate programme at Pont Praslin.

Last year the diocese of Port-Louis celebrated its 150th anniversary. Blessed Jacques Laval arrived in Mauritius in 1841 and he is looked to as the apostle of the island. His tomb is a centre of pilgrimage and prayer for Mauritians of all creeds. Spiritans work in the adjacent parish of Sainte-Croix and in five other parishes on the island under the leadership of Mgr. Maurice Piat, CSSp.

While the parish involvement creates a fabric of Spiritan presence, Spiritans also contribute greatly to the local church through specialised ministries. The interfaith centre at Pont Praslin, with its exceptional library, is a source of discovery and understanding in areas of everyday living for all believers. Tabor is a place of varied ministry to students and young adults, as well as being the source of an extensive catechetical programme. At Centre Père Laval a Spiritan ministers to the many pilgrims. Another is chaplain at l'Hospice St-Jean de Dieu.

The District has played an important role in the development of the Indian Ocean Foundation. The Novitiate is located in Mauritius and this year began with nine novices. Efforts have been made to receive appointments from African circumscriptions. Hopefully they will be successful.

2.1.8.3 District of Reunion

Reunion

Population: 700,000

Life expectancy males/females: 69/79 years

Infant mortality rate: 7‰

Religions: Christian (majority); Muslims (7000);
some Hindu and Buddhists.

GDP per capita: US \$8,800 (1992)

Spiritans Presence: Since 1842; about 23 professed members; International Group (France, Switzerland).

The Spiritan connection with Reunion goes back to Levavasseur. Those working there at present have a certain aura of venerability. Their average age is 70. Of 23 Spiritans, four are under 60. This is a major factor in the life of the group but it is not the only one. The missionary instinct is still strong but the energy is not at the same level. The last District Chapter (April 1997) decided on a new missionary project. Its implementation will be a struggle, worth the effort.

Spiritans make a valuable contribution to the local church through parish work: also through some specialised ministries such as school chaplaincy and the communications apostolate (radio). Regional meetings play an important part in keeping a community spirit alive. The lack of mobility of some Spiritans means a regular newsletter is greatly appreciated. There is some disappointment that the District has no vocations to the Indian Ocean Foundation. Its contribution to Foyer Monnet was crucial, as is its continuing task of contact with the community of the foyer. Also important is the preparation of communities to welcome Spiritans on OTP where good accompaniment can be assured.

2.1.8.4 Indian Ocean Foundation (FOI)

Spiritans Presence: Since 1982-83 (first novitiate St. Gilles-les-Hauts, Reunion); 16 professed members (Madagascar 11, Mauritius 5); 3 members appointed from other provinces; 21 in formation.

The Indian Ocean foundation held its first Chapter in 1994. Last July (1997) all its members gathered at Foyer Brottier, Antsiranana, Madagascar, for an elective Enlarged Council of the Foundation.

It is very encouraging to see the steady increase in membership. Even though the numbers are still small there is a maturity of approach in evidence. A wealth of experience of formation has preceded the present programme, which is spread over the three islands: first cycle (Reunion); Novitiate (Mauritius); second cycle (Madagascar and also Kenya). Two salient features of the vision of the foundation are the insistence on community life and the importance of transcultural mission, which normally means leaving one's country. Prominence is also given to ongoing formation especially in the area of preparing formators. The orientation towards Asia is still firmly in place. At the moment there are two members working in Pakistan and four (including one on OTP) in Papua

New Guinea. When circumstances allow, the foundation would see itself also involved in the new initiative in Asia.

The foundation has been a unifying factor in the region and especially since the Chapter (1994), the District Superiors have worked very well together. There is mention of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The circumscriptions are complementary rather than equal partners. Reunion has not been able to contribute vocations but an earnest of its participation and interest was the opening last year of Foyer Monnet, with accommodation for 8 Spiritan students.

2.2 LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The dream of a land without ills

Countries in transition

Most of the countries of Latin America are living through the consolidation of the transition from military regimes to democracy, as the judiciary, police, access to all the basic services still need reform. Corruption is still an endemic reality in many countries. In a continent marked by five centuries of oppression and violence, a true democratic culture, with a Latin American face, is emerging.

With greater or lesser success, the new governments, elected by the people have sought to integrate the different countries in the market economy. This integration implies, openness to foreign capital and consumer goods, stopping inflation, the privatisation of state-run companies, even in strategic areas such as communication and transport, as well as other elements of the recipe prescribed by the I.M.F. The result is that the distance between the rich and the poor has increased, and investment in the social areas, such as education and health has decreased.

Historical socio-economic problems, like the unjust distribution of land, the non-recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, the lack of work and housing in the big cities, consequences of the colonial history, or of the economic policies of recent authoritarian regimes are not addressed, in the hope that economic development will resolve them by itself. Even with the increase in consumption, which generates a false sense of progress, the phenomenon of the exclusion of a great part of the population persists.

To face up to the process of economic globalisation some countries organised themselves into economic blocks, as is the case of Mercosul, among the countries of the Southern Cone, or they integrate themselves into the North-American economy as is the case of ALENA. The economic integration of the whole continent is a target, although there are different conceptions as to the strategy by which to arrive at it.

One of the afflictions of the Latin American continent is organised crime, especially drug trafficking, which in some countries is linked to guerrilla or lives alongside it. In the big cities organised crime reached the stage of being completely beyond the control of the state. This criminality generates a spiral of violence fed by situations of extreme poverty and misery. Child prostitution,

abandoned children and even their physical elimination, are signs of an excluding and violent society.

A sign of hope are popular movements which persist and which become stronger as is the case of the Movement of the Landless and indigenous organisations throughout the continent.

There is also a growth in the consciousness of citizenship, which leads to a greater participation in political, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, a greater recourse to judiciary power. This consciousness is the best guarantee of no return to dictatorship, no matter what type.

Indigenous and African cultures, considered marginal and to be overcome by civilisation, are increasingly considered as fundamental elements of the Latin American identity. Various popular movements are organising themselves along these lines.

Paths followed by the Church

The Church in Latin America, for a long time conniving with the oppressing power, made in Medellin an option for the poor and for youth. That option, made in fidelity to the God of Life was paid for by the blood of many martyrs and changed the way of being of the Church in the Continent. The poor are the judges, and to them one has to be accountable, not to the political, religious or economic power. In an exclusive society, the Church wishes to be a sign of the Kingdom, promoting within herself, greater communion and participation, along the lines of the theology of the People of God and of the pastoral and dogmatic institutions of Vatican II.

The option for the poor radicalises itself in the desire to evangelise cultures, giving them the right of expression which they were denied, and leading them to acknowledge what is positive in the others, in a process of reconciliation with history, which is not forgetting, but acknowledging the errors of the past in order to construct a present and a future closer to the ideals of the Kingdom.

A continent with a catholic tradition could not but hear the call to go beyond its frontiers and give of its poverty, participating in the mission of the Universal Church. Missionary awareness and the desire to live solidarity with other peoples and other Churches are increasing more intensely.

The Catholic Church is present in Latin America, since the arrival of the first Europeans. Closely linked to the civil power it faced no competition for centuries. The constitution of diverse independent countries and the consequent separation of Church and State made possible the rise of other expressions of Christian faith. Today, in countries which were one hundred percent catholic, a good part of the population moved to other Churches, especially Pentecostal. One also notices the re-emergence of African and indigenous traditional religions. What is most striking, however, is the increase in the number of those who have no religious affiliation, not belonging to any Church or cult.

Sects, seen initially as a phenomenon arising out of people's ignorance, have led the Church to a pastoral review, making it more welcoming and more attentive to the needs of the individual and his/her religious needs.

The life and action of the Church today happen through the renewal of the parishes, base communities and through the different ecclesial movements. The effort and investment in the formation of the clergy have caused the clergy today to be younger, more Latin American and more diocesan.

The participation of laity in the life of the Church is intense and without it, its very existence would be in danger, because of the small number of priests. At the same time it is necessary that catholic laity take on more and more their role in society, to transform it from inside.

The great question which remains is: Preoccupied with maintaining itself as an Institution which counts in society, preoccupied with its own renewal and with the formation of its leadership, will the Church in Latin America remain faithful to its option for the poor? It would be sad, if the poor, already excluded from society, were also excluded from the love and pastoral effort of the Church.

The Spiritans in Latin America, Latin Americans or otherwise, participate actively in the history of the Church of the Continent in this century, mixing our own history with it. It is this experience which Latin America can offer the Congregation, giving of its poverty. Even if all classification is relative and depends on the criteria used we can divide up the circumscriptions of Latin America in the following manner:

2.2.1 At The Service of the Local Church

Districts which continue to serve the local Church in traditional ministries or in specific tasks.

Personnel in these districts has diminished drastically in recent years, and in general, they have not received first appointments. The confreres all come from the same province of origin, with some rare exceptions. They are the following: Guadeloupe, Martinique, Brazil Central, Brazil Southeast and Brazil Southwest.

2.2.1.1 District of Guadeloupe

Guadeloupe
Population: 400,000
Life expectancy male/female: 71/78 years

Infant mortality rate: 12‰
Religions: Catholics; Protestants Sects.
GDP per capita: US\$ 8,600 (1992)

Spiritans presence: since 1912.

The Spiritans, who were 50 in 1974, are today 14, all at the service of the local Church, the majority in parishes, but also in some diocesan services. Some of the confreres are already retired.

We could say that the Spiritan mission in Guadeloupe was a success, because, the local Church, despite its limitations, is implanted. The question which remains in the air is about the validity and the type of presence which we wish to have in this Church. Mgr. Cabo, bishop of Guadeloupe, many times expressed his wish that the Spiritans would give it a missionary spirit. This spirit will come as much from our commitments as from the witness of a religious life lived in community.

In fact, Guadeloupe is a country with many mission situations, with youth making up more than half of the population. At the present moment our presence with them is very limited. The Spiritans in Guadeloupe would like to receive young people on first appointment, who would dedicate themselves in a special way to this apostolate. Taking up this new apostolic task would show a different face of the Congregation to young Guadeloupans, which could result in a re-launch of a Spiritan vocational programme, although this is not the immediate objective.

From the point of view of the organisation of the Congregation in the region, there is still need for greater collaboration, especially with Martinique and Guyana, closer because of the language, the same political status and the same culture. But one could also think of greater contacts with the other circumscriptions of the Caribbean zone.

2.2.1.2 District of Martinique

Martinique

Population: 400,000

Life expectancy male/female: 73/79 years

Infant mortality rate: 9‰

GDP per capita: US\$ 9,500 (1995)

Spiritans presence: since 1854.

The history of this district is mixed with the history of the Church in Martinique, especially between the years 1912 and 1960. Since 1972 the district has received few young Spiritans and the number of confreres has not ceased to diminish, reaching 23 at present. In the meantime the average age increased. At the same time the diocesan clergy increased (around thirty), reaching a number which while insufficient is fairly big and of quality.

Besides parish work which still occupies the majority of the active confreres, the Spiritans are involved in an orphanage connected to Auteuil, several chaplaincies, running a hostel (Foyer de Charite) etc. A group of laity interested in Spiritan spirituality meet regularly, and are in contact with "Esprit et Mission", France.

There are two Spiritan local communities: the district and retirement house, and the François community. The other confreres live alone or in communities of another type. The regional communities allow the confreres to meet each other regularly, and three times a year a meeting gathers all the confreres during half a day.

Also in Martinique the bishop manifested the desire that the Spiritans would participate actively in the development of the missionary spirit *ad intra* (with the most abandoned people, and in certain sectors of social life still a long way from the evangelical spirit) and *ad extra*. The ordination of two young Martinicans and the presence of another one in formation, are signs of this openness to universal mission. Others could follow them.

The same observation made about regionalisation with regard to Guadeloupe can be made for Martinique.

2.2.1.3 District of Brazil Central

Brazil:

Population: 160.3 million
 Life expectancy males/females: 64/70 years
 Infant mortality rate: 44.4‰
 Illiteracy: 17.6%

Religions: Christian 106 million; Protestants 7.9%,
 Spiritists 1.5%, Oriental churches 03%,
 Jewish .1%.
 Independence: 7 September 1822 (from Portugal)
 GDP per capita: US \$3,590 (1995)

Spirititan presence: since 1885.

The confreres of the District of Brazil Central are practically all involved in parochial ministry. These parishes were taken on when the District was involved in the formation of Spirititans, the reason for the foundation of the District in 1948. When in 1968, all the students left, the district began to collaborate with formation again with a view to the Brazilian Province, from the financial point of view as well as that of personnel, but without direct responsibility for the houses. On many occasions the Province has expressed its appreciation for this solidarity and how important the witness and friendship of the elders are for the new generations.

The number of confreres has diminished drastically and the average age is high. In consequence of this various parishes have been handed over to the local Church. Despite the limitations, the work done in the parishes is immense. In general it is a question of parishes in a truly missionary situation. Integrated in the pastoral life of the diocese the Spirititans are respected and well loved. One of the confreres is still a full time member of the staff of Santana college in Itaúna, a former junior seminary, a witness to the Spirititan tradition in the area of education.

The group remains faithful to its annual meeting, an opportunity to strengthen the ties of the Spirititan family. Even if the majority of the confreres live alone, a re-discovery of the values of community life is being experienced. Some of the confreres have opted to stay in Brazil, even as retired. A house belonging to the District in Belo Horizonte could be used for this, should other arrangements not have been made.

2.2.1.4 District of Brazil Southeast

Spirititan presence: since 1972.

The district of Brazil Southeast is the most recently created district in Brazil (1975). Because it did not receive any more first appointments and by the fact that some of its members returned to Portugal or went to other districts or even died, it is reduced to a small number of confreres (9), who nevertheless keep the missionary flame alight, with commitments in Baixada Fluminense, on the outskirts of the city of Rio de Janeiro and in Catanduva in the interior of the State of São Paulo. The general atmosphere and spirit of the group are good. Spirititan friendship reigns among all and all help one another.

Given the reduced number of confreres and some health problems, it is right that the confreres ask themselves questions about the future of the District. Taking into account the good relationship which there has always been with the Province, whatever the solution, it will be taken in agreement with it, but also with the Province of Portugal from which all its members originate. It would be interesting that the Spirititan presence in Baixada Fluminense should not end

for lack of personnel. A reinforcement of the district should not altogether be dismissed.

2.2.1.5 District of Brazil Southwest

Spiritan presence: since 1973.

The members of the District work mostly on the periphery of the great cities, especially São Paulo, Rio and Recife, to which there is a big migration from the Northeast of Brazil, devastated by drought. Two of the confreres work in projects of the Brazilian Province, one in the Brazilian north-east and another in a house of formation.

If the average age of the confreres in 1971 was 33 years, today it is 58. Five of the members are over seventy years of age. This can signify a change as much of the place as of the type of work. Nobody expressed the desire to leave the district to retire. In recent years the district received three first appointments. All the members of the district are Irish.

The confreres have taken up specific pastoral works such as Youth, Favelas, Counselling, Retreats, Justice and Peace, Indians, etc. All of these works are undertaken in dialogue with the district and have the support of the group. Not wishing to be disconnected from the work with base communities, all make an effort to be connected with a little parish, with at least two or three small communities. This combination is beneficial, not only for the confrere, but also for the small community or the parish in question.

Those who work full time in a parish make a contract with the bishop for three or five years, which can be extended to ten or even twenty years. This contract means that we do not have Spiritan parishes as such.

The group normally meets twice a year. Despite ageing, the group still has much energy and vitality, and sees its mission in the local Church, in the first place, as a sign of hope for the forgotten and the excluded, a presence which is a sign of hope and life.

The group is aware that the future of the Congregation in Brazil is in the hands of youth, in the vitality and energy of the Province of Brazil, and is ready to collaborate with this new Province in every possible way.

2.2.2 Responsibles for the Local Church

Districts which are still responsible for the implantation and functioning of the local Church

These received first appointments in recent years, and benefit by a special attention from the General Administration and from the provinces of origin of the confreres. They are the following: the District of Amazonia and of Guyana.

2.2.2.1 District of Amazonia

Spiritan presence: since 1897.

The District of Amazonia is in fact an international group. In the Prelature of Tefé there are 5 Dutch, 2 Brazilians, two French, one German, one Portorican,

and one Capeverdian. Two of the Dutch live outside the area of the district, one in Belem do Para and the other in Fortaleza, state of Ceara. Of the fifteen confreres working in the prelature, seven arrived in the last six years. Ten years ago only six of the present members were present in the prelature, which demonstrates an excessive diversity and mobility of personnel, especially if we take into account that the clergy of the prelature is composed basically of Spiritans. For this reason provinces of origin should be careful when they ask confreres to come back.

The construction of a Spiritan identity faces particular challenges in Tefé: the almost total identification with the local Church, the internationality of the members and the great difference of age, which brings with it differences in theological formation and different life-styles. The group is open to receiving possible candidates for Spiritan life, and has received students on OTP from various provinces in recent years. We think that first appointments should be continued when they are asked for by young people who finish their initial formation, on condition that these young people are received satisfactorily.

After a hundred years since the arrival of the Spiritans in Tefé the district reaffirmed in chapter that the group is at the service of the Prelature, and that this is its missionary commitment. The priorities of the Church in Tefé are the priorities of the district. Among these priorities, impressive in Tefé is what has been invested and continues to be invested in the formation of the lay people, side by side with an increasing engagement in vocation animation and in the formation of a local clergy. All pastoral action is marked by the justice and peace dimension, since the construction of the Christian community is to form citizens who know how to fight for their rights and above all, defend the environment, which in the Amazon is of particular exuberance, but constantly threatened.

Although participating fully in the region Brazil-Paraguay, for reasons of distance and because of having a very specific mission, the group of Spiritans in Tefé will probably still continue to be an independent circumscription for a very long time to come.

2.2.2.2 District of Guyana

Guyana
Population: 150,000 (1995)
Life expectancy males/females: 60/66 years

Infant mortality rate: 63‰
GDP per capita: US \$590

Spiritans presence: since 1764, 1924.

The diocese of Cayenne takes in the whole territory of French Guyana. The population of more or less 140.000 inhabitants is extremely heterogeneous (Creole, Europeans, Amerindian and Haitian immigrants, Brazilians, Surinamians, West Indians, Asians...) so many distinctions and divisions in such a small population make certain apostolic activities difficult. Two other demographic observations: the concentration of the population in Cayenne and the excessive growth in recent years (in 1975 the populations was only 50.000 inhabitants).

The Spiritans want to concentrate on three types of pastoral activity:

- first evangelisation, especially on the banks of the two border rivers, the Maroni (Suriname) and the Oyapock (Brazil). In Maroni mission a team of young Nigerians are working, so diversifying the composition of the district, formerly only French.
- urban pastoral work, linked to a diocesan pastoral project of renewal of the parishes.
- pastoral work with immigrants, who do not cease to increase and diversify. The Church in Guyana, and therefore the Spiritans, is not prepared to cope with this situation. Could this not be a priority for Spiritans? In Guyana two thirds of the population is foreign.

Relations with the bishop have always been cordial, but certainly, it would be necessary that the Church of Guyana have its local clergy, which would allow the Spiritans to devote themselves to more specific missions. The last ordination of a priest in Guyana was 17 years ago.

The arrival of the Nigerians in the District, as well as that of a Martinican confrere, who had to leave for health reasons, and the consequent internationalisation, did not happen without difficulties, but at the same time has shown itself to be a source of renewal. Our service to the Church in Guyana is still essential; new first appointments should continue to be made.

2.2.3 Defined Missionary Projects - Welcoming Candidates:

Groups and districts which serve the local Church in clearly defined projects and at the same time receive candidates for Spiritan life.

Some of these received first appointments and are strongly international. Almost all of them need more personnel and financial aid. They are Mexico, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Paraguay and Alto Jurua.

2.2.3.1 Mexico Group

Since the beginning of its presence in Mexico, 28 years ago, the Congregation has been at the service of the local Church in a very particular situation; parishes with a predominance of indigenous communities. In this service the Spiritans showed themselves to be very close to people and they invested a lot of their time, their talents and their material resources with help coming from benefactors. The Congregation today, has its place in the Mexican Church, which is a great Church, very well organised and with a great history, and is part of it with its specific charism.

The second area of work, in the port city of Tampico was undertaken because of the formation of candidates to Spiritan life. There the confreres offer a ministry to the local church, undertaking services such as teaching, mission animation and finally the parochial service in a poor zone of the city.

The Mexico group is an example of the transformations in the organisation of the Congregation. From a missionary community of a Province it became an international group. The internationalisation of the group happened because of

the mission and its continuity, but is also lived as having a value in itself and the Spiritans give witness of fraternity and conviviality in a society often marked by racism and intolerance.

Further, as an international group it began to receive candidates to Spiritan life and in fact functions as a foundation. By receiving candidates the Congregation gave unequivocal notice that it is in Mexico to stay.

The future of the group lies in fidelity to its initial mission and in the continuity of the service given to the indigenous communities. This service can be developed outside the parishes as well, which however will always be a point of departure and of rooting in the local Church. The Mexican confreres, also participate in the mission of the Congregation and consequently are open to mission outside the country. The group is a circumscription which receives and sends missionaries.

Its integration in the Latin American region strengthened with the participation in the international novitiate in Puerto Rico.

2.2.3.2 District of Haiti

Haiti

Population: 6.6 million
Life expectancy males/females: 48/52 years
Infant mortality rate: 48‰
Illiteracy: 53%

Religions: Catholic 80%; Protestants 10%;
Baptists; Adepts of Voodoo.
Independence: 1st January 1804 (from France)
GDP per capita: US \$260 (1995)

Spiritan presence: since 1840.

The recent history of Haiti is known to all and was presented at the last General Chapter as one of the significant experiences of the Congregation. In the last six years, what is new in terms of the Congregation was the return of the Spiritans to Saint Martial College, and the strengthening of the work of Spiritan formation with the opening of a novitiate. Besides this, the District continued its missionary work in Pont-Sonde, which continues to be a priority.

Besides a Canadian confrere who came to help with formation, a young Martinican, came, on first appointment to strengthen the team. The group however, needs more personnel.

The return of the Spiritans to Saint Martial was a question of justice. For the Congregation this return opened up new possibilities, but also constituted a big challenge. Fr. Antoine Adrien, who took over as Director at the beginning, had to retire for health reasons. A team, to which some lay-associates belong, is giving continuity to the difficult task of recovering the quality of teaching of the College and at the same time keeping it accessible to the poorest layers of the population. The financial balance of the institution is not easy either.

The Spiritans of Haiti were always involved in the integral development of the people, this means participating in their struggle for more justice, and at the same time developing projects where the people themselves would be protagonists of their history. The work of conscientization is done through a free and popular press, as well as through an education which requires material accessible to all and produced with a view to a liberating educational process. On these lines is the newspaper *Liberté* and the Audio-visual Centre in which two confreres are involved.

The District receives candidates to Spiritan life. In recent years, structures were put in place in order that all the formation could be done in the country, from the postulancy, passing through the novitiate, to the theological studies. This does not mean that the co-operation with the other circumscriptions of Latin America has reached an end. There are Haitian students in several of them, following different stages of formation, and especially doing OTP.

Haiti is continuing its process of democratisation, in a world dominated by the logic of the market and globalisation. The comings and goings of democracy are a challenge for all. Our confreres who had a big participation in the re-establishment of an order which makes this process possible, continue faithful to their engagement with the Haitian people.

2.2.3.3 District of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico
 Population: 3.8 million
 Life expectancy males/females: 70/79 years
 Infant mortality rate: 11.5‰

Religions: Catholic 85%
 Independence: 31 August 1962 (from the UK)
 GDP per capita: US \$7,664

The foundation of Puerto Rico was born of the District founded in 1931 by the province of the United States East. At present there are 14 members, nine of them originating in the foundation. Of these four are still young professed.

The last chapter reaffirmed:

- the importance of having members working in mission *ad extra*, and for this reason one of the confreres is at present working in the District of Amazonia. Two of the young professed are doing their OTP in other countries of Latin America. It should also be noted that all the members of the foundation had an experience of missionary work outside of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico, however is ready to become part of a new missionary project of the Congregation in the Caribbean region, together with other circumscriptions of the region;
- the desire to continue to serve the local Church, which is being done through a parish, a shrine, and a centre of mission animation;
- advance on the way of having lay associates and along these lines a Brazilian lay woman has associated herself with the group.

The principal difficulty is the scarcity of personnel. The Puertorican confreres, although young, have had to undertake all the responsibilities for formation and for the administration of the circumscription. Vocations are few, despite the vocational work which never stopped. There has also been a certain instability among the confreres themselves. The solidarity of other circumscriptions will be fundamental in order that the foundation may develop.

From 1994 to 1997 the international novitiate for Spanish speaking candidates and those from Haiti, functioned in Puerto Rico. This has been an extremely positive experience. The novitiate, as well as giving more quality and a new impetus to formation, was a concrete experience of internationality and helped in the process of regionalisation. At the moment the novitiate has no candidates. The Haitians are doing their novitiate in Haiti, and one Mexican candidate went to Portugal. The idea, however stands and it is hoped to re-open it in the future.

2.2.3.4 Paraguay Group

Paraguay

Population: 5.1 million
 Life expectancy males/females: 66/71 years
 Infant mortality rate: 43‰

Illiteracy: approx. 40%
 Religions: Catholic 85%
 Independence: 14 May 1811 (from Spain)
 GDP per capita: US \$1,640

Spiritan presence: since 1967.

The Paraguay group, has already completed thirty years of life. It is a relatively small and international group (9 confreres, 6 nationalities). It has however a presence of quality in the country, due to the engagements undertaken in the local Church and fidelity to the missionary charism of the Congregation. The experience of internationality has sometimes been difficult, but always enriching, which leads the group to remain open to receiving reinforcement from other circumscriptions.

The mission of the group happens in two sectoral communities one in the countryside and the other in Asuncion.

The country community devotes itself to parish work which is based mainly in the assistance and development of base communities. The city community is involved with aspirants, a heavily populated peripheral quarter, and Laval house, the centre of the life of the group. Besides these works, the Spiritans are involved in mission animation and indigenous pastoral work.

The group of Paraguay, a country situated at the heart of Latin America, tries to nourish itself with the spirit of Vatican II, Medellin, Puebla and Santo Domingo. It was the Paraguay group which gave the impulse for the creation of the novitiate in Puerto Rico and continues very united to the Spiritan circumscriptions of Brazil.

Despite its limitations, the group accepted the challenge of receiving and forming candidates for Spiritan life. Two young professed are at present doing their theological studies in Brazil, after having done the novitiate in Puerto Rico. Other candidates are in the formation house in Asuncion. For all that, it counts on the solidarity of other circumscriptions. Canada sent a formator, but at least one other is doubtless necessary.

2.2.3.5 District of Alto Jurua

Spiritan presence: since 1897.

The Spiritans came to Alto Jurua to look after the evangelisation of the indigenous and rubber gatherers, completely abandoned in this part of Amazonia. The intention was to implant the local church and perhaps the Congregation. Other religious congregations especially feminine, and German *fidei donum* priests joined with the Spiritans as time went by and at present the diocese already has seven native diocesan priests. The presence of the Spiritans is still important, and a source of admiration are those confreres, already advanced in age who continue at their post, giving time to the younger clergy to mature and prepare themselves for specific functions.

The District has always sought to form diocesan priests and Spiritans. The results, although modest, are little by little creating the hope of an autonomous local clergy. At present the Spiritan candidates follow the first cycle of studies

in Cruzeiro do Sul and go to the south of Brazil for the novitiate and theological studies, then becoming members of the Province of Brazil. Exactly because of this, after much insistence, the district succeeded in getting a Brazilian confrere appointed as director of the house of formation. In Cruzeiro do Sul, almost all of the confreres collaborate with the diocesan seminary, where our own also study.

As regards pastoral work, we serve immense parishes. Access to the communities is only possible along rivers, or on roads which only function precariously during the dry season, which means long unending journeys. A great part of these parishes is still served by Spiritans, who live isolated from one another, with the exception of a few communities. The difficult living conditions of the peoples of the forest, led the missionaries to undertake a big number of social and educational works, as well as catechetical and sacramental work.

In recent years only one confrere received his first appointment to the District, and is already returning to his province of origin. On the other hand two of the older ones, returned definitively to Germany last year. It is urgent that other appointments be made, especially if we wish to recruit candidates to Spiritan life in this part of the country.

2.2.4 Missionary Provinces:

Two provinces work within the country and at the same time are open to mission *ad extra*: Brazil and Trinidad.

2.2.4.1 Province of Brazil

The Province of Brazil was born in 1990 and continues to develop itself inserted in a Church which wants to journey with the people in the construction of a more just and fraternal society. Its growth has been slow but constant. It continues to count on the solidarity of the other Spiritan circumscriptions of Brazil, especially with regard to formation, as much in the area of personnel as of finance.

Within the country, besides the houses of formation, always situated in an area of pastoral action, and some traditional works, the province has two missionary projects, Juazeiro in Bahia State, in the north-east region of Brazil, and Vilhena, in Rondonia State, Brazilian West Centre and entry door to the Amazon region. The two projects are very distant from each other and from the administrative centre of the Province which is in Sao Paulo, in the south of the country. However, they correspond to the desire for an action in favour of the integral liberation of the human person, giving special attention to specific pastoral works which harmonise with the Spiritan charism. Special attention is given to the possibility of working in a local Church which has a pastoral plan which facilitates a common approach.

Wishing to give of its poverty, in recent years the province has sent some members on first appointment outside the country, thus inserting itself in the life of the Congregation and participating in its missionary projects. To fulfil its commitments in the country, and even expand them, and at the same time

continue to send out missionaries, the province must continue to receive first appointments. This process will have the consequence of continuing internationality at the heart of the Province, which is a reality since its birth.

Within the dynamic of regionalisation which in Brazil has a long history, the province continues to promote the Assembly (incorporating the Spiritans living in Brazil and Paraguay all of whom are invited), the council of formation, different bulletins etc. Exchange of personnel between the different circumscriptions as well as undertaking works together, involving two or more circumscriptions is a reality, as for example Juazeiro, and in the formation communities of Jardim Planalto and Vila Mangalot. The major superiors of Brazil are also invited to deal with questions like formation, formators and first appointments in their meetings.

2.2.4.2 Province of Trinidad

Trinidad

Population: 1,320,000

Life expectancy males/females: 68/73 years

Infant mortality rate: 13.8‰

Religions: Catholic 33.6%; Hindu 25%;

Anglican 15%; Muslim 5.9%;

Presbyterian 3.9%; Other 16.6%.

Independence: 31 August 1962 (from the UK)

GDP per capita: US \$3,770

Spiritans Presence: District since 1863; province since 1968; about 32 professed members plus 4 appointed from other provinces; there are 3 professed members in formation.

The traditional involvement in the educational apostolate is still an invaluable contribution to the people. It may be in the evening of its existence as Spiritan personnel becomes increasingly scarce. Over the years, however, the concentration of Spiritans involved has been a seed bed of exciting developments. The considerable talent in the province is now engaged in a great variety of service to the people and to the church: human development; care for the poor; formation; lay leadership education; bible reflection; journalism; historical research; secretarial service to the Caribbean Bishops' Conference as well as building up Catholic communities in parish work. In this spectrum of service, SERVOL has been outstanding. There is also a telling contribution being made in other countries, especially in Mexico and Nigeria. In some individual cases the links with the Province are tenuous.

The members are ageing and for a while have steadily been retiring from teaching. This has reduced the income of the Province and put a strain on its finances. It is a sign of quiet strength that the Province has maintained a formation programme with a steady trickle of candidates. The programme has welcomed novices from other circumscriptions and from other Congregations. Archbishop Anthony Pantin, CSSp., has been giving inspirational leadership to the diocese since 1968. Malcolm Galt, CSSp., became bishop of Bridgetown, Barbados in 1995.

2.3 NORTH AMERICA

The recent Synod for America in Rome (November-December 1997) gathered the bishops from North, Central and South America. From the midst of their great difference, they nevertheless succeeded in proclaiming their solidarity.

Even in the Church of North America there are huge differences. Native peoples, Hispanics, African Americans, a great variety of immigrants and descendants of immigrants make up a cultural mosaic that brings into play several languages (mainly English, Spanish and French) and a diversity of pastoral practice.

There is a democratic approach to church organisation. Bishops' conferences and their commissions are taken seriously. The bishops try to listen to their people and their documents reveal a sensitive social conscience. Lay people have a prominent part in church life and the role of women is taken seriously. There are divisions in the church. For example, some propose a *seamless garment* approach to respect for life which calls into question the arms trade, nuclear deterrence, pollution of the atmosphere, abortion. Others go for the jugular and concentrate on one issue as the best way to change something. Many other differences are tolerated to advantage. The church is hurt principally by the extreme positions - those of apathy and violence.

An African priest working in North America said that one of his greatest surprises was to find that there were poor in the US. Unemployment, homelessness, marginalisation, racial discrimination leave wounds in North America as elsewhere. Market forces can be cruel. Globalisation can see your job go south to Mexico or farther afield. However, the prevailing way of life in North America is comfortable.

If it is comfortable, this does not mean that it is untroubled. There is a healthy restlessness in the church and among the Spiritans that is trying to come to terms with an unfamiliar feeling of weakness, largely brought about by institutional diminution. This moment of weakness can be a call to conversion. St. Paul's experience of conversion involved a Copernican change of perspective: "But what were once my assets I now through Jesus Christ count as losses" (Philipians 3; 7).

2.3.1 Province of US East

United States
Population: 267.7 million
Life expectancy males/females: 73/79 years
Infant mortality rate: 7.3‰

Religions: Roman Catholic 38%, Protestants; Churches of the East; others (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhists)
Independence: 4 July 1776 (from England)
GDP per capita: US \$26,980

Spiritans Presence: In 1794 and since 1872; about 72 professed members; plus 10 appointed from other provinces; 4 associate members; 3 in formation (2nd cycle).

The traditional mission outreach has been to East Africa and Puerto Rico. There are still some members of the province in Tanzania, in Ethiopia, in South Africa and in Puerto Rico. Within US there is parish ministry in African American parishes, and especially in the area of Pittsburgh. A parish near Washington has had close connections with the National Office for Haiti. While Spiritans have withdrawn from nine parishes in the three years prior to the Provincial Chapter of 1997, there have also been new parochial initiatives in North Carolina and Pittsburgh. The disengagement from parishes has been only partly due to lack of Spiritan personnel. In many US dioceses there are radical programmes of consolidation of parishes.

In recent years the involvement in the educational apostolate is enjoying a new lease of life. Duquesne University is in full expansion and it is developing a global network of educational partners. It is careful to give the Spiritan charism full play. Holy Ghost Prep. is proud of its reputation as a school but just as insistent on its Spiritan character. The Spiritan lecturers of Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, are held in high esteem.

The 1997 Provincial Chapter placed great emphasis on corporate identity. Those working inside and outside US seem to have drawn closer to each other. Within the US there are some large communities: Bensalem, Sarasota, Trinity Hall and Bethel. Hard work on the basics of community is rewarded with a good spirit. Distance creates difficulties, especially as the idea of regional community has lapsed. New efforts are being made towards more effective communication.

There has been attention given to planning. Vision statements have kept the Spiritan perspective alive. Spiritan retreats are organised and prayer is the centrepiece of Spiritan occasions. Efforts are ever renewed to try to attract Spiritan vocations. At the moment there are three in formation (second cycle). The associate programme has changed style once or twice but has achievements to point to.

The Province is remarkable for its openness and generosity in welcoming students from other circumscriptions to Duquesne University. Facilitating this can involve labyrinthine arrangements. Ultimate credit must also go to the University itself.

2.3.2 Province of US West

Spiritans Presence: Since 1964; about 44 professed members plus 8 appointed from other provinces; 8 associate members; 3 professed members in formation.

For years, the mainstay of the mission in Mexico, the province has still two members in the international group there. Another is part of the team that left recently for the Philippines.

Within the US, the missionary activity focuses on parishes, especially those that serve African Americans and Hispanics. The educational apostolate is not extensive but it is thriving notably in the Faith and Culture Institute in Houston. Spiritans are involved in chaplaincy at high school and university level where justice issues are prominent.

Community life must overcome the challenge of distance. The importance of good communication is evident and the news and documentation emanating from the provincialate is impressive. Some consolidation of the province took place recently involving the almost complete withdrawal from San Antonio. The annual retreat is an important event in the life of the province and is well attended.

A significant development in the last few years has been the welcoming of Vietnamese immigrants to the US as candidates for the congregation. The first to be professed, Fr Binh Thè Quach, has already helped a lot in the exploratory visits to Vietnam. Three Vietnamese were professed last August and there are

others in the pre-novitiate programme. This eruption of new life in the Province is a blessing and a challenge. It is the experience of God's favour and it is a transcultural challenge for a new integration of the province. Spiritans from other provinces are helping with the formation programme. Without disturbing this arrangement the possibility of more collaboration with US East should be re-examined.

This year the province celebrates 30 years of independent existence. A young province open to new initiatives, it nevertheless pays attention to basics: for example, taking good care of its retired members, notably at Casa Laval in Hemet, California. Lay associates have been part of its life for years. On-going relations with the province of US East remain very good. Among other examples of this is the close collaboration in the Spiritan Foundation Inc., a fund-raising agency for Spiritan missionary work.

2.3.3 Irish In the US

Spiritans Presence: Spiritans arrived from about 1969; recognised by the General Council in 1976; about 60 professed members (Long Island 36, New Orleans 6, San Francisco 18).

The members of the Irish Province working in the US retain a clear link with their province of origin. They keep a lively interest in its mission activity, in its provision for retired missionaries and especially in its Marian House project.

There are three communities: Long Island, San Francisco and New Orleans. In Long Island and San Francisco there are annual retreats organised as well as days of recollection and regional meetings. The opportunities are there to develop a good sense of community. Most avail of them though some neglect the Spiritan aspect of their life. In general the contribution made to the local church is greatly appreciated by bishops, fellow priests and people. Not surprisingly, there is a missionary thrust to the ministry of these Spiritans and this is also seen as an enrichment of the local church.

The origin of the Irish presence was connected with the expulsion of missionaries from Nigeria more than 25 years ago. Over the years there have been some difficulties with the North American provinces, especially concerning continuing appointments and fund-raising. The presence of an Irish representative at the North American and Caribbean Superiors' Meetings contributed greatly to alleviating these difficulties. The good relations existing at present augur well for the future. Nevertheless it has been necessary to establish firm guidelines about particular matters and some more are required.

2.3.4 Province of TransCanada

Canada:

Population: 30.1 million

Life expectancy males/females: 75/81 years

Infant mortality rate: 6.2‰

Religions: Catholic 12,584,789; United Church 2,000,000;
Anglican 2,300,000; Jewish; Greek Orthodox;
Lutheran; Presbyterian; Baptists; Muslims.
Independence: 1st July 1867 (from the U K)
GDP per capita: US \$19,380

Spiritans Presence: Spiritans arrived in 1954; province since 1976; about 35 professed members; plus 9 appointed from other provinces; 11 lay Spiritans; no one in formation.

In the early days of the circumscription, most of its energy was concentrated on Neil McNeil High School. The Spiritan contribution to education went quickly far beyond a single school in Toronto's east end. It was felt throughout Southern Ontario and further to the West in Edmonton. Four schools in Toronto have Spiritan founding principals. In the 1970s, some Spiritans with missionary experience in Africa arrived and contributed to an impetus for mission outside Canada. A successful collaboration with Calgary diocese in Malawi began and later (1980) a project in Papua New Guinea. Now there are two members of the province in Papua New Guinea, one in Malawi and one in Brazil.

Spiritans from six provinces work in TransCanada (Ireland, England, Portugal, Trinidad, Nigeria and TransCanada). Many are in parish work. Some minister to Portuguese or Caribbean immigrants. There are school, university, prison and hospital chaplains. Since the arrival of the boat people in the seventies, there has been a tradition of helping refugees. For over 25 years VICS (Volunteer International Christian Service, a lay missionary movement founded and sponsored by the Spiritans) has been arranging that lay Canadians do missionary work abroad for a period of two years. Some have gone several times. Their contribution to the church continues when they return to Canada. Spiritan life in the Province has been enlivened by the presence of lay Spiritans. Their contribution is too manifold to describe unless to give one example: service to Native peoples. The missionary contribution of "Spiritan Missionary News" is recognised and acclaimed far beyond the province.

There is a good spirit in the province as evidenced, for example, at the Provincial Chapter last July (1997). This is nourished by regional meetings, days of recollection and an organised Spiritan retreat every two years. Nevertheless, community life is struggling to overcome serious problems. These have some roots in geography and differences of age and background. No division has developed that praying and working together won't heal.

There is a real effort to face the future with realism. Ongoing formation is taken seriously but initial formation has disappeared, at least temporarily. The absence of vocations is a body blow, but it draws attention to the fundamental moment when a vocation is God's gift. There are so far six Canadian members of the province. The future will depend on the depth of their commitment and the quality of their leadership. At the moment there is a fresh call for a simpler lifestyle as a way to greater Spiritan authenticity. There is a search for a new missionary outreach in Canada. There is not a sense of going 'gentle into that good night'.

2.3.5 Province of Canada

Spiritan Presence: (1732 first arrivals from Séminaire du Saint-Esprit.) Spiritans arrived in 1905; province since 1947; about 45 professed members; 2 appointed from Nigeria expected in 1998; 5 associate members; no one in formation.

The longest missionary commitment has been in Nigeria, even if others are also important. There are no longer members of the province in Congo-Kinshasa or

Mexico but the interest remains. At present there are still five in Kogi, two in Paraguay and one in Haiti.

At home in Canada, there is a concentration on youth ministry especially at Collège St-Alexandre where the headmaster is now a lay person and the Spiritan ministry in the school is principally in terms of chaplaincy. Centre In'Afu, a centre for spiritual animation of students and their teachers, also has a lay director as well as a community of three Spiritans. At Maison St-Denis some lay people are enabled to seek the spiritual sense of their life by living in community with a Spiritan and a lay associate. Another important ministry is that of chaplaincy to the psychiatric hospital Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine. The parish of St-Pascal Baylon is largely at the service of immigrants.

The province of Canada takes good care of its retired members at Maison Le Roy. This year it will welcome two members of the Nigerian province to Canada in order to better present the Spiritan face of mission. It faces up to its weakness in an honest and refreshing way. It does not build frustration by concentrating on what it can't do, but turns its attention to what it can do.

Each year annual retreats are organised. There is regular communication of news and also of various articles composed by Spiritans. There is a Centre of Spiritan Documentation. *Mission-Air* is well-known in the congregation. The partnership with lay associates is deepening as they become more visible at meetings and chapters.

Last year the provincial house was sold and the provincial administration moved to SPES (Service de Pastorale et d'Echanges Spiritains). This consolidation of services was mainly to reduce expenses.

2.3.6 Region of North America and The Caribbean

This region has just celebrated its Silver Jubilee. It was the first example of regional collaboration in the congregation. The great benefit it brought was that through annual meetings Superiors got to know each other, they began to draw strength from each other, to carry one another's burdens. As mutual trust developed, projects became possible and working together was a very significant step: the common novitiate in Farnham, the support of Haitians that was more than repaid by the example of their courage and most recently the two weeks Spiritan animation at Duquesne University 1996. All these have helped build Spiritan life in the region.

Since the beginning, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, Haiti and Mexico have been considered part of the region. They regard as a bonus that they are also part of the Latin American-Caribbean region.

2.4 EUROPE

Bordered by the Arctic Ocean to the North, the Atlantic Ocean to the West, the Mediterranean and the Caucuses to the South, and the Caspian Sea and the Urals to the East, Europe covers an area of 10 million km² and has around 730 million inhabitants. It can no longer claim first place in the political, military or economic order. It is developing into one of the three great economic zones,

the other two being the American and Asian zones. Because of its low birth rate and despite an increase in longevity, it is becoming a reduced proportion of the total world population.

A hundred years ago, Europe still looked upon itself as the most advanced section of humanity, a lighthouse of civilisation for all peoples. Today, it has a lower profile, asking itself questions about its specific place and role in the contemporary world on the threshold of the third millennium. What has she got to offer? The Churches, which share the same destiny with the peoples of the continent, and the Spiritans who are working there, are asking themselves the same questions. The answers they are looking for will not just arise by chance or necessity, but from their dynamism and faith, from the way they will work out their unity and their relations with the other peoples of the planet.

The European Union

Europe is working towards a unification that is economic, monetary, social, and, to a certain extent, political. The 12 countries, which have now become 15, have recently decided to welcome another 3 into the European Union, with the prospect of a further enlargement later on. In moving North and East, the Union is becoming more and more diverse in its cultures and socio-economic systems.

The European Union continues to attract more members because it is seen as an alternative route to the dead ends that the globalisation of the economy is bringing with it. Will it prove itself to be so in the long run? In some countries, the raising of low salaries encourages the development of a middle class, but also leads to an increase in unemployment and exclusion. In others, the continuation of low salaries leads to a growth in social inequality and the number of households living below the poverty line. In both cases, social cohesion is threatened. World-wide competition seems to make it impossible to maintain a high level of employment at the same time as a decent minimum wage. It also leads to migrations of poor people looking for work and a policy of closing borders by the rich countries.

New technical advances, the superabundance of products flooding into the market and the exaltation of the liberty of the individual - all this involves a risk of losing sight of reality. One often hears speeches from political demagogues that arouse completely unrealistic expectations. So frustrations and tensions are added to poverty and inequality, leading to violence and insecurity. To get out of this vicious circle, Europeans must rid themselves of their illusions and find in their cultural patrimony the know-how and the ethical principles that will help them to develop their real resources as far and as well as possible.

One of the greatest assets of Europe today is Democracy, both as an idea and as contained in its institutions. Gradually, over the last thirty years, it has triumphed everywhere. Its almost unanimous recognition as the only acceptable form of state and society is a priceless treasure. It is not just a dream, a good intention; it has a concrete content of values and practices. Europe has a patrimony of convictions, customs and ways of acting which are enshrined in texts and inscribed in legal codes, laws and treaties.

But despite this, the triumph of democracy seems to have left people unsatisfied, because they expected more in the way of economic fall-out and they wished to see some more direct forms of democracy. As it depends totally on the support of the people for its existence, this disenchantment can put democracy itself in some danger. It is not just an institution but a culture, made up of experience and ways of doing things; democracy is a workshop. It needs an education and an apprenticeship to appreciate it. This need is met by many parties, clubs, and seminars.

One point should be stressed. The sense of democracy in Europe supposes an insistence on equality and mutual support: the social good and the fruits of prosperity should be made available to all citizens. There are various ways of doing this - for example, one finds different degrees of social protection, which itself is part of the European democratic patrimony. It is along the lines of this patrimony that Europe can find its way out of its present frustrations and also bring its own contribution to the lives of other peoples, beginning with those who come to ask for hospitality on its soil (cf. R. Rédmond, *Études*, December 1997).

A mission in Europe for the Congregation?

Europe (including European Russia) has around 552 million Christians, of whom 271 million are Catholics, 130/150 million are Orthodox, 50 million are Protestants and 30 million are Anglicans.

Today it is perhaps the most secularised continent, having passed through anti-clericalism and Marxist dictatorships. Disenchantment with the traditional Churches seems to have left a void that is being filled by all sorts of religious movements, sometimes weird and even dangerous. After what has been said about social problems and migrations, we should mention a sort of spiritual vacuum where we can detect a call for the announcing of the Gospel. Europe seems to us today to be a mission territory.

At their meeting at Gemert in 1992, after the General Chapter of Itaiçi, the Provincials of Europe, while retaining their other commitments in their Provinces, announced that they wanted to play a part in the special mission to Europe, in the new evangelisation of the continent. They decided to give their joint support to the Province of Germany for a missionary project in the ex-German Democratic Republic. This became a reality at Rostock. Another commitment of Spiritans in the different countries of Europe is the service given to migrants, for which a greater co-ordination is desirable.

The Spiritan European Region has set up its permanent Secretariat at Brussels, where there is also an office to help Spiritans with requests for grants from different organisations.

Christianity built the foundations of European civilisation a long time ago. The Church sometimes found itself out of step with some of its subsequent evolutions. "*Will she know how to espouse, transform and humanise this new world as she did with those in the past? One can only change what one loves*" (J. Boissonnat).

2.4.1 Province of Ireland

Ireland

Population: 3.6 million

Life expectancy males/females: 73 /79 years

Infant mortality rate: 6.3‰

Religions: Catholic 3,228,327; Presbyterians;
Protestants; Methodists.

Independence: 6 December 1921 (from the U K)

GDP per capita: US \$14,710

Spiritan Presence: Since 1859; about 285 professed members; 1 appointed from the province of France; 14 in formation.

In the December 1997 Newsletter there was a list of the members of the province involved in formal ongoing formation. There were 14 at 13 different institutes. It is important to have Spiritans spiritually and theologically renewed at the service of the province in these days when it is becoming difficult to find Spiritans willing to take on positions of responsibility. Amidst the rapid change in the country, in the church and in the congregation, personal spiritual renewal leads to the discovery of the only reliable place to stand.

The colleges in the province continue to prosper. They value the Spiritan connection. Even if the Spiritan presence is continuing to diminish, the Spiritan charism is finding expression in new initiatives by the students in favour of the disadvantaged. As the hand-over to lay direction intensifies, so the definition of the dividing lines between the schools and the Spiritan community becomes more important.

Kimmage retains its place as the focal point of the province despite the sale of a lot of the land. The House of Studies has integrated first and second cycle and become very international. The Development Studies Centre has a lay director, and the Mission Institute has opened its doors and is now in its third year. Marian House continues to offer excellent medical care and the Mission house is being renovated. To help it to face up to its responsibility, the provincial financing system is undergoing readjustment.

Spiritans continue in the Dublin area parishes of Bawnoge, Greenhills and Kimmage. Throughout the country MIDs (Missionaries in Irish Dioceses) serve in a variety of parishes where they bring their missionary experience to bear. Lack of suitable and willing personnel forced the withdrawal from Fatima Mansions. Hopefully this excellent but demanding ministry will resurface in another form elsewhere. Ardraccan (An Tobar) is gathering momentum.

During the last six years, there was good support for the provincial team who worked in an atmosphere of openness to the Spirit and confidence in his action. The enlarged provincial council (July 1997) gave them a strong vote of confidence. Those on the bursar contributed visible means of support. Those on mission animation, the editorial team of *Outlook* showed the people the missionary face of the province. This was greatly enhanced by the impressive achievement of Spiritans in other works: the Pontifical Mission Society, Concern, World Mercy, and Refugee Trust, each achieving wonders in his own right.

The Committee for History and Anniversaries is certainly making its presence felt. Business is brisk at Newlands Counselling Centre. European Spiritan interaction is on the increase. The International Novitiate in Dublin is closed at the moment but expects to reopen this summer with eight novices. About half

the members of the province work outside Ireland in more than twenty different circumscriptions, eleven of which are in Africa.

2.4.2 Province of England

England
Population: 59 million
Life expectancy males/females: 74 /79 years

Infant mortality rate: 6.2‰
Religions: Christian; non-Trinitarian Churches; Other.
GDP per capita: US \$18,700

Spiritan Presence: Since 1904; about 38 professed members; 6 members appointed from other provinces; 6 associate members; 2 in formation.

A remarkable feature of the province is the prominence it has given to youth ministry, where an interest in evangelisation and the awakening of vocations combine. It has been possible through a rotation of missionaries. It is an example of collaborative ministry and a point of contact with a lively group of lay associates and lay workers.

Parish involvement remains an important contribution to the local church as well as a reliable network of Spiritan influence. The outstanding ministry to down-and-out people with chemical dependencies at Clapham gains by involving a small Spiritan community. The community at Bickley has celebrated yet another Golden Jubilee, this time of the house itself. The prayer and daily offering of the community is a precious resource in the missionary work of the province.

The formation programme is being courageously maintained despite its considerable demands. At the moment there are two professed, one of whom will take up his first appointment in Cameroon this year. It is foreseen that in future there may be greater collaboration with other provinces, especially in this area of formation.

At the Provincial Chapter last summer, the priorities of the province were restated, including the commitment to Justice and Peace which has been spearheaded recently by the lay associates. The province has long been the backbone of the District of Makurdi, where there are still nine members of the province.

2.4.3 The Province Of Belgium

Belgium
Population: 10.2 million
Life expectancy males/females: 74 /81 years
Infant mortality rate: 6.1‰

Religions: Catholic 79%; Protestant 125,000;
Israelites 35,000; Anglican; Orthodox.
Independence: 4 October 1830 (from the Netherlands)
GDP per capita: US \$24,710

Spiritan presence: since 1900.

2.4.3.1 Personnel

In 1994, there were 44 confreres from the Province in Belgium itself and 18 working abroad. The Province still has four communities in the country. The house at Nijlen is primarily for retired confreres who speak Flemish.

At one point, there were a few candidates for the Congregation, all of whom already had a certain experience of life. When they were inserted into the usual formation circuit they all left us but continued elsewhere. This raises the

question of whether the Spiritans should not look for a style of formation more adapted to this type of candidate.

The Province followed the example of France and began '*Fraternités Spiritaines*'. They are developing slowly and seem to have taken root.

2.4.3.2 Characteristics of the life of the Province

The main themes that come up at assemblies are the following: spiritan life, government and finance, missionary presence in the country, contacts with the families of Spiritans, relations and collaboration with lay people. The Province has put a great deal into the Kongolo Memorial and contacts with the families and friends of the confreres who were assassinated. To maintain these contacts, a confrere has been freed full-time in order to visit the families of confreres and friends of the Province. There are several Provincial publications: "*Postiljon*" (4,500), "*Joyeux dans l'esperence*" (500) and "*Infopro*" for the confreres. Five hundred people subscribe to the revue of the French Province.

Community life and prayer are well observed.

2.4.3.3 Activities of the communities and confreres

The Province has been historically linked to the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire). This gave it a specific identity but it also had limiting effects: the Province went well when its mission territory was going well.

The Procure for the missions is at Blanden, which also serves to welcome confreres arriving at Brussels. Because of the recent problems in Congo-Kinshasa, the Procure had to work hard to try to maintain contacts and to send letters and materials.

The small community at Namur receives students. The confreres who live there have varied activities in the city: chaplaincies, work with young people, projects for the missions in Cameroon.

Gentennes has two communities: one for the retired confreres, the other called '*Fraternité*' which receives groups for retreats and days of reflection. The Provincialate is also situated at Gentennes.

There are still several confreres working in parishes as parish priests or curates. Others are chaplains in old people's homes or convents. The Provincial is the National Director of the Pontifical Missionary Works. Another is secretary to the organisation of religious Institutes.

"*Lumen Vitae*" is very popular and attracts students from other circumscriptions. The Province welcomes and helps them, a service that is very much appreciated. The Province also helps other circumscriptions and Cor Unum according to its means, and sometimes even beyond them.

It is hoped that the European Region will develop in such a way that it will be possible to continue these works which are so important for the Congregation.

2.4.4 The Province of The Netherlands

Netherlands

Population: 15.6 million

Life expectancy males/females: 75/80 years

Infant mortality rate: 5.5‰

Religions: Catholic 31%; Protestant 22%;

Other religions 6%; None 41%.

Independence: 1648 (from Germany)

GDP per capita: US \$24,000

Spiritual presence: since 1904.

In 1987, there were still 372 members in the Province, of whom 208 were working in Europe. In 1994, the total number was 272, with 111 of these outside Europe. At the time of the Provincial Chapter of 1997, there were 237 professed members (197 priests, 40 brothers) and 4 associates. Of this total, 90 were working outside Europe. The average age is over 70. At the end of the 1960s, the flow of vocations began to dry up, and since that time, there have been no new professions, resulting in a rapid decrease in the size of the Province. Recently, some new candidates have presented themselves.

2.4.4.1 Confreres returning from missions abroad

As the Province always concentrated on missions abroad, no works were ever developed in Holland itself. Only in the 1970s did confreres begin to return home before the age of retirement, because of health, political situations or other reasons. This caused a problem as nothing was prepared from them at home so they looked for parishes in Germany, Belgium and Holland. This dispersion led to a cooling in relationships with the Province or the Congregation.

From this was born the idea of regional communities, which was a real possibility in view of the short distances involved. This initiative had a very good effect and relations were re-established.

In the Netherlands, the Missionary Institutes started many projects for the support of their missionaries: Raptim, MIVA, Memisa, CMBR, MCM, the 'Missionary Week', a reading centre, Cebemo. The overall number of Dutch missionaries has greatly diminished and these organisations have undergone changes. They are now run by lay professionals, many of whom have a secularised outlook. The aid given continues to be very large, but it is now more difficult for missionaries to make themselves heard.

Most of the confreres are now old and the Province has been preparing for this situation for a long time. A retirement fund was set up and houses were prepared. The majority live in community. The Province has a house with nursing facilities for 28 confreres; aid for running this house is received from the government but the Province has to supplement it. A few confreres are in public nursing homes, near their families, where they receive professional care.

There are 5 communities in all, and the social life in them, with a big majority of old confreres, is well developed. Some find community prayer difficult. When they have passed all their lives in different countries with different languages, they often prefer to continue to pray in the language they have always used - French, Portuguese, English, German or Dutch. They no longer feel at home in another language.

Every confrere over 65 receives a pension from the State. Not having any formation programme, the financial situation allows the Province to help other circumscriptions. It prefers to do this normally by direct aid, but the Cor Unum Fund is not forgotten.

In the past, members of the Province were scattered everywhere, mixed in with Spiritans of other nationalities in many different countries. There were only a few Districts which were confided to the Province. Today, because of old age, the majority of confreres are in Holland.

2.4.4.2 Activities of confreres in the Province

The Province is still very active in many areas. A good number of confreres continue to serve in parishes and for these, the Province arranges days of study and reflection so that they will be able to keep abreast of their pastoral work which is ever more demanding. They continue as long as possible in their posts because of a lack of priests and because many of the young diocesan clergy have a pastoral vision which is totally opposed to their own.

The Province took on pastoral work amongst immigrants and those seeking asylum. At one point, it was running anglophone, francophone and lusophone parishes, but unfortunately, due to lack of personnel, only the lusophone parish has been retained.

A team for missionary animation was set up in the 1980s, which has had a considerable influence on the Province and the local Church, but it is becoming very difficult to find replacements for this team. There are also differing views on the value of the work accomplished and the vision for the future.

The way this team worked put it in touch with young people, whence came the idea of organising visits for them to experience other cultures and Churches. As a result, some young people have associated themselves with the Congregation. The Province set up an associate scheme called the '*Medestanders project*', which is aimed at missionary work and contact with the marginalised and foreigners.

Thanks to the African Museum and the Centre for Missionary Information, new forms of missionary animation have appeared in the country.

The Province has always preferred to work in teams. Since the early 1970s, the Provincial administration has been run by a team, and recently, because of the difficulty of finding superiors for houses, Gemert has a team as 'Superior' of the community.

To share the work and to involve as many as possible in the process of decision-making, various working-groups have been set up to cover the following areas: mission, finance, religious life, social life and publicity. These groups meet every two months.

Twice a year, there is a meeting of local and regional community superiors. The same thing happens for the 'functionaries'.

The greatest problem today is to convince the confreres that the Province is still very much alive, even though it is smaller than it was. They have to learn to value what can still be done and the influence that can still be exerted. It is

important to believe that the Holy Spirit does not abandon his Church, even if it means continuing without Dutch Spiritans. But as long as we are still there, we are at the service of the mission and the Congregation.

2.4.5 The Province of Germany

Germany

Population: 82 million

Life expectancy males/females: 73/80 years

Infant mortality rate: 5.1‰

Religions: Protestant 34.6%; Catholic 34.2%;

Others 31.2%

GDP per capita: US \$27,510

Spiritans presence: since 1863.

2.4.5.1 A new animation

As with many of our Northern circumscriptions, the average age of the Province is quite high. In July 1997, the overall average was 65.77: in Germany itself it was 66.76 and in the 'missions' it was 64.29. The total number in the Province was 106. The number of candidates is very small, and of those who persevere even smaller.

Many confreres are worried about the future of the work in which they laboured and in some cases, which they started and developed. Because they cannot see the possibility of Spiritan successors in that job, they jump from there to thinking that there is no future for the Province as a whole.

Some houses and communities have had to be closed and the number involved in education has gone down, one of the works in which the Province takes pride. Ways are being sought of maintaining the Spiritan ethos in the last remaining college run by the Province.

The provincial authorities have worked hard to encourage confreres to broaden their vision, looking at the Province, the European Region and the Congregation as a whole. Without making confreres lose sight of reality, this open spirit has helped them to be more available and more generous in their service. Efforts have been made to get rid of the idea of two categories of German Spiritans: those who remained at home and those who left for the 'missions'.

The Provincial and his Council have set up commissions so that they can get a better idea of what is happening in the Province. To maintain relations, the Province publishes letters of the Provincial and *Nachrichten*.

The Provincial or one of the members of the Council take part in community meetings. They are able to give news and sometimes act as moderator. This presence has helped communities to move forward with their projects, and has been greatly appreciated.

The regional communities of the Province do not all function with the same degree of success, but they have been a means for the confreres to meet together quite regularly.

There is a General Assembly of the confreres once a year. It discusses themes that are important for the whole Spiritan group.

2.4.5.2 New initiatives

For a long time, Spiritans have been working closely with different groups of lay people. These groups do not know each other very well, but for several years now, they have also had a general assembly, which has led to a better understanding and co-operation between them.

The Province was cofounder of MAZ (*Missionaries for a time*) and the community of Stuttgart is particularly involved with this work. The Province continues to put much money and personnel into the scheme. Many young people have been able to give some years of their lives to helping the confreres in their mission, and at the same time, getting to know another culture and another Church.

There are still a certain number of confreres active in parishes. Having given over the responsibility to others, they continue on as assistants. There have always been some confreres who move around the country giving retreats. Knechtsteden continues to be a place of pilgrimage and over recent years, much restoration work has taken place. The year 1996 saw the 100th anniversary of the Spiritans' arrival. Libermann House on the same compound receives groups of people for meetings, classes and retreats. Finally, there is a section for retired confreres; a floor has been adapted for their needs and a confrere has been appointed full-time to look after them.

In Rostock in Eastern Germany, there is a joint work of the European Provinces which has been international since its inception. After some doubts about its continuation, it now seems to be well established with confreres from Germany, France and Ireland.

There is a well organised Procure for the missions, which gives a valuable service to the whole Congregation. Through its help, many confreres have received grants that have allowed them to proceed with projects for the help of poor people.

The Province works closely with other missionary and religious Institutes, one result of which is the review '*Kontinente*'. Each Institute can produce its own insert and the publication is highly appreciated by tens of thousands of Germans. At present, the Institutes are also working together to set up a branch of AEFJN.

2.4.6 The Province of Poland

Poland

Population: 38.6 million

Life expectancy males/females: 68/76 years

infant mortality rate: 12.4‰

Religions: Catholic 95%; Orthodox; Protestant;
Polish Catholic; Jewish; Mariavite.

GDP per capita: US \$2,790

Spiritans presence: since 1921.

2.4.6.1 A period of change

The recent history of the Province is disturbed from every point of view: political, cultural, ecclesial and Spiritan. They are all linked together. The situation points to a certain lack of communication and much individualism.

The Province was not prepared for these changes or the subsequent consequences. The team of professors at the Seminary changed four times in five years. The climate in the country as a whole found its reflection in the seminary; this led to the loss of vocations. The Province has suffered from the lack of a whole middle aged generation. In 1997, there were 51 members.

The Chapter of 1993 was a key moment because of tensions between two different tendencies. A re-adjustment began after this Chapter and the spirit of the Spiritan groups began to improve.

The Chapter of 1996 found a way to move away from these problems, but because of the uncertainties that remained, it will need some time for the members to get in step once more with the international Congregation.

For very many years, contact with the exterior world was practically impossible apart from a few fortunate individuals. The confreres could not go to missions abroad and the developments in missiology and ecclesiology did not have much influence in the seminaries. The Church had become a fortress in opposition to communism and this attracted people into the Church. But the fall of communism changed the situation: Christians became much more critical of the clergy and the number of vocations diminished.

2.4.6.2 Present orientations

The changes allowed the Province to send members abroad, and after a few years, some of them were recalled for service in their own country. The experiences of these missionaries outside Poland had a considerable influence on the pastoral work carried out at home. The search for a balance between those who had worked outside and those who had stayed in the country became very necessary.

But because of the absence of a whole generation in the Province, the Chapter of 1993 insisted greatly on the need for a solid Spiritan base in the country - for vocations, for missionary animation and for fund raising. In Poland, religious Institutes can own parishes. Parishes are the centre of many different activities: missionary weeks, catechesis, religious teaching in the schools, vocations' work, summer camps.

The Province has shown an appreciation of the importance of communications. It began a newsletter for its members to communicate decisions of the General Council, appointments etc. A missionary magazine was started for the country, made possible with the help of other European Provinces. The number of subscribers is rising all the time.

Finance remains a problem. It is said in Poland that, in the past, there was money but nothing to buy: now there is plenty to buy but no money. But Poland is now developing and the problem is to help the people understand that they are responsible for their own Church. The confreres are also adapting to the changes and feel responsible for the whole of their Province.

In 1996, the Province celebrated its 75th birthday. A congress was organised to mark the occasion and several people were invited to give conferences. It was

very successful and provided an opportunity to make the Congregation better known.

In 1997, Poland held a Eucharistic Congress at which the Pope was present, and some of our confreres were very active in organising the event.

2.4.7 The Province of Switzerland

Switzerland

Population: 7.1 million

Life expectancy males/females: 75/82 years

Infant mortality rate: 5‰

Religions: Protestant 40%; Roman Catholic 46.1%;

Israelites; Muslim, Orthodox; other Christian communities; others or none.

GDP per capita: US \$40,630

Spiritans presence: since 1891.

Personnel

At the heart of Europe and influenced by important sociological changes, the Province has experienced the same fall in numbers as all the other European circumscriptions. Since 1992, there have been no candidates in initial formation. The house at Bouveret has been altered to cater for retired confreres and there is place for others at Fribourg.

Missionary project and vocations work

There are around 30 Swiss confreres abroad, working mainly in francophone Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.

In Switzerland itself, the main centre of missionary activity is the old College of Bouveret, converted 10 years ago into a house of welcome. The 1966 Chapter confirmed its recent move towards a more specific centre offering spiritual and missionary animation in collaboration with competent lay people.

Involvement in Justice and Peace has been strengthened by the active participation of two confreres in the new Swiss branch of the AEFJN network and support for the lay initiative '*Project for Peace*'.

Various other undertakings have led confreres to take part in ecclesial and ecumenical initiatives aimed at the Third World and mission (material and financial help, sending young people for short stays etc.). Like France and Belgium, the Province makes use of the review *Pentecôte sur le Monde* for missionary animation.

The reception of guests and spiritual animation has started again at Montana, where the house was renovated in 1996 by selling a piece of adjacent land. Spiritans are still working in the francophone parish in Bâle and in the Diocesan Pastoral Centre at Delémont.

Starting from the existing network of friends and relations, the Province is trying to encourage the launching of *Fraternités Spiritaines* which could lead to new forms of commitment in the Church and in mission; it is seen as an opportunity for community renewal.

Solidarity

The Province provides a great service to the Congregation by giving accommodation and financial help to Spiritans from elsewhere who are studying at the francophone Catholic University of Fribourg.

A question

Is there a danger that the emphasis given to welcoming activities could relegate work with the poorest to second place? The fact that one confrere has taken on so many commitments will not encourage the rest to rally around a project undertaken by the whole Province.

2.4.8 The Province of France

France

Population: 58.6 million

Life expectancy males/females: 74/82 years

Infant mortality rate: 5‰

Religions: Catholic 90%; Protestant 2%; Jewish 1%;
Muslim 1%; no religion 6%.

GDP per capita: US \$24,990

Spiritans presence: since 1703, 1856, 1906.

Personnel

Since 1992, the total number of confreres belonging to the Province has fallen from just over 800 to just under 700. The average age continues to rise; it now stands at 67.5, and about half are over 70. The percentage appointed to the Province (60%) is much higher than the percentage working abroad (40%).

In recent years, the Province has received confreres from elsewhere to help it continue working from international communities. They come mainly from Poland, Nigeria, FAC and East Africa, and several are on their first appointment.

Missionary Project

Within the Province, the principal works are: education (Auteuil, secondary schools), work with immigrants and foreign students (mainly Africans) and helping people in difficulty (those coming out of prison). Justice and Peace involvement is largely through the branches of AEFJN at Strasbourg and Paris. Confreres are helping the French Church by teaching and religious formation, notably at the French Seminary in Rome.

Outside France, the Province continues to support its commitments with personnel and material and financial aid, above all in francophone circumscriptions. Some of these are of long standing, but there are more recent engagements in other linguistic areas: Croatia, Pakistan, Paraguay, Mexico, Taiwan.

Vocations' work - missionary influence

Despite the small number of young people in France who answer a missionary calling today, the Province continues to invest heavily in vocations' work. Through four reviews, a concern for mission is shared with the general public. The Province works with an organisation for sending young 'co-operators'

abroad (DCC), and in the setting up of a network of young people who want to deepen the missionary dimension of their faith (*Jeunes et Mission*). Another scheme sends people for a short stay with a missionary team abroad ("*Amos*"). There are co-operative schemes with diocesan vocation services, and students are received into two hostels. The number actually joining the Spiritans averages two per year.

Several communities have developed their service of welcome in order to have a wider spiritual and missionary influence, as for example, the Libermann Centre at Saverne.

The Fraternities *Esprit et Mission*, which bring lay people together who want to share our spirituality, have increased remarkably since 1992; today, there are around 250 members. In 1996, their status was more clearly defined and they were henceforth recognised by the national apostolate of lay people as one of the Groups of Evangelical Life. The Spiritan sisters take part in their accompaniment. Recently, three people have asked to become 'Spiritans Associates', committing themselves to a particular work of the Province and having ties with a Spiritan community.

Animation of confreres and communities

Since 1995, the animation of the Province has been marked by the launching of a Programme for the 'Animation of Confreres and Communities', based on the spirituality of the Founders, the writing up of the community project and community discernment. The creation at the same time of the review *Mémoire Spiritaine* aims at stimulating confreres to research into the roots of the Congregation and its living spirituality.

The young confreres on first appointment in France meet together regularly.

Solidarity

The French Province has made a big contribution to the many forms of regional co-operation at the European level. Since 1992, it has taken part in the inter-Provincial novitiate in Dublin. Financial solidarity with the Congregation is above all through a considerable annual contribution to *Cor Unum*.

Difficulties

One of the greatest difficulties at present is making the inevitable choices resulting from the declining number of active confreres. They are faced with the needs of commitments both inside and outside the country as well as the maintaining of the essential services of the Province: running several communities for the older confreres, administration, formation (including one international community). Three small apostolic communities have had to be closed in the last few years; it is possible that others may follow. A call to confreres working abroad to come and work in the province of origin often leads to tensions with the circumscription concerned.

2.4.8.1 The French Seminary

The Pontifical French Seminary, which was confided to the Spiritans from its foundation in 1853, prepares priests for the Church of France. At present, there are between 70 and 80 students, of whom a few are not French. The students follow courses in the Roman Universities. They are guided by the formation team in the seminary for community, spiritual and apostolic life, and are given some help with their studies. Recently, the formation team has been composed of four full-time Spiritans (including the Bursar), helped by another confrere and two secular priests, engaged part-time for spiritual direction.

Regular Spiritan community meetings, including both formators and Spiritan students, should be possible without harming the normal duties of the formators or threatening the unity of the whole formation community.

Although aware of the difficulty of finding formators for this work, the General Council, after consultation with the French Province, has confirmed the commitment of the Spiritans to this work for the coming years, because of the important service that it gives to the Church in France in a spirit of openness to the universal mission. This decision supposes a team of at least three confreres and the assurance of regular help from at least two or three secular priests.

2.4.8.2 Saint Pierre and Miquelon

St. Pierre et Miquelon
Population: 6,598 (1995)

Religions: Catholic 99%
GDP per capita: US \$10,000

Spiritans presence: since 1763.

The 6,500 inhabitants of this archipelago are nearly all descendants of French settlers. The islands are administered by France with the status of *Collectivité territoriale*, and the local economy, founded on fishing, is presently in a state of crisis.

Spiritans have been on the islands since 1763 and even today provide most of the clergy for this Apostolic Vicariate; at the moment, three confreres are working there. The present lack of vocations from the islands calls for a concerted effort in that direction, as well as a greater sharing of responsibility with the lay people of a Christian community that has been traditionally practising.

Regarding community, the isolation of one confrere on the island of Miquelon poses a problem. While still maintaining the understandable ties with the Province of France, a degree of closer co-operation between this little circumscription and those of North America would lead perhaps to an enlargement of the very limited contacts with that continent.

2.4.9 The Province of Spain

Spain
Population: 39.3 million
Life expectancy males/females: 73/81 years

Infant mortality rate: 5.6‰
Religions: Catholic; Protestant; Jewish; Muslim.
GDP per capita: US \$13,580

Spiritans presence: since 1951.

This youngest province of Europe currently has 18 professed members, 6 of whom are working on mission abroad. Three Portuguese confreres are

appointed to the Province and have been giving faithful service for many years. There are two lay associates.

The Province has remained small; there was a good number of candidates in the early years, but this has not continued. One young man has just finished his novitiate in Portugal and a few aspirants are living in the formation community at Madrid. These are signs of encouragement for the confreres who continue to work for vocations. Vocations are a constant preoccupation for the Province and remain one of the main priorities.

One of the strengths of the Province is the network of lay friends, the *Familia Espiritana*, whose members want a Christian missionary formation and who collaborate in provincial projects, especially missionary animation and vocations.

Much effort is put into missionary animation. Sometimes, the confreres work with other missionary institutes on projects for the local Church: at present, the Spiritans are co-ordinating Vicariate IX of the diocese of Madrid. They also have their own schemes, based on the communities of Madrid, Cordova and Barcelona.

The Provincial Chapter of 1993 decided that the Province should accept responsibility for two parishes so as to have a greater insertion into the local Church and a more solid base for work of missionary animation. But so far, lack of personnel has not allowed this idea to be followed up.

What used to be the novitiate building has been used as a centre for drug rehabilitation for many years. The centre is run by an Association called 'Adroga'. There was a Spiritan community at the Centre which worked in collaboration with the teachers, but once again, the lack of personnel has made it impossible to maintain a permanent presence. Some confreres continue to take part in the activities during the regular sessions.

A centre called 'Karibu' has been set up in Madrid for the welcoming of African immigrants. It is run by one confrere, the students of the formation house and members of the *Familia Espiritana*.

The confreres sometimes express their disappointment that there are not many tangible results from their work of animation; this is a frustration shared by all the European countries today. Those in charge of the Province are doing their best to build up hope in the long term prospects of the circumscription.

This hope is not without foundation. One can point to:

- the persevering commitment of the confreres in Spain and their lay collaborators;
- the candidates who are coming forward;
- the sharing of the Province in the meetings and projects of the European Region;
- its members working in the missions of the Congregation in Africa and Latin America, who maintain the strong missionary orientation of the Province; they will be able to return to play a direct part in the animation of the Province when the right moment comes.

2.4.10 Province of Portugal

Portugal

Population: 9.9 million

Life expectancy males/females: 72/79 years

Infant mortality rate: 7.4‰

Illiteracy: 20.3%

Religions: Catholic 90%; Jewish.

GDP per capita: US \$10,420 (1995)

Spiritane presence: since 1867.

a) Introduction - The Country

Portugal is situated on the extreme west of Europe and with Spain forms the Iberian peninsula. It has at present 9.860.000 inhabitants, but in the same socio-political unit are the Azores islands (pop. 237.800) and Madeira (pop. 253.400), autonomous regions. The Church has 18 dioceses, including a military Ordinary.

b) The Spiritane

- The six years gone by since the last General Chapter (1992-1998) were for this Province a time of grace, characterised by a search for new ways of participation, in communion and in collegiality in the internal activities of the Province and in the continuing effort of solidarity with mission *ad extra*, both at the level of missionary personnel and at the level of material goods.

- **Three great events marked the life of the Province:**

The provincial chapter celebrated in Torre d'Aguilha in 1994, the visit of the General Council in 1997 and enlarged provincial council in this same year. Various studies were done with the aim of animating the communities, looking at the way of thinking and sense of living of the confreres *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Inquiries at various levels and on diverse subjects were held in the Province. Besides this, worthy of note are the efforts of the Provincial and his council to animate all the sectors of the life of the province, as well as modernising the provincial secretariat and the provincial publications.

- **Growth of the province in personnel:**

At present the Portuguese Spiritane community has 201 members, of whom 124 are on mission in the province and 77 on external mission. In formation one notes a generous presence of young people. As regards missionary dynamism, the province lives an increasing sensitivity to the demands of mission, although the age of some confreres and the appearance of few vocations translate into a certain numerical decrease. In comparison with other former epochs, to be very obviously noted is an improvement in the planning and organisation of the province, an increase in the participation and involvement of the confreres, a strengthening of the faith, charism and Spiritane identity, which appears in prayer, greater concern for initial and ongoing formation, an improvement in personal life styles, and everything indicates a better quality of community life. As in any human community, problems have not been lacking. The report done after an inquiry sent out to the province in preparation for the enlarged provincial council (1997) offers this living and life-giving dimension which the Spiritane community in Portugal is going through. Highlighted were aspects of a Mission re-dimensioning which relies especially on human resources whose dynamism

resides in the quality of community life projected to mission and which supposes a specific vocational animation, going through the challenging demands of organisation, communication and solidarity without frontiers.

- **Areas of work *ad extra***

The Province has 26 members in Angola, 12 in Brazil, 16 in Cape Verde, 8 in the rest of Africa (with 2 in Mozambique), 7 in America, and 8 in the rest of Europe, totalling 77 members in mission *ad extra*. It has been possible to gather with some of them in “meetings of missionaries on vacation”. Along the same lines of animation we think of organising meetings with the family members of confreres *ad extra* and *ad intra*.

- **To make our vocational ministry dynamic**

This has been a constant concern in the province. The councils, provincial and that of formation, have devoted careful studies to the question with the aim of stimulating reflection with adolescents, to create what one might call ‘missionary seminary in the family’, to involve all the confreres and Christian communities in the ministry of cultivating vocations.

- **Lay people and the Spiritan mission**

The province formulated an animation plan along the lines of ‘sensitising the Christian communities for the universal mission of the Church’, role of the laity, in close collaboration with other institutes of mission *ad gentes* (IMAG). But mission awareness in the province comes from a long way back and witnesses to this are LIAM, JSF, ASES, VOLUNTARIADO MISSIONARIO, MOMIP. Of significant help have been the efforts, even though costly, made for a long time by the Spiritan written press with the specialised publications of the review *Encontro*, the newspaper *Accao Missionaria*, and other publications by Spiritan authors.

- **The service promoting justice and peace**

It has relied on the new-born but already known structure of CEPAC (Father Alves Correia Centre) which untiringly tries to be a sign and a relief for many African emigrants scattered in the Country.

To finish. Life does not fit into words. We accept the challenge which the life of our Founders Poullart des Places and Libermann continues to give us: mission to the most abandoned and the tasks for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers!

2.5 ASIA

The continent of Asia, excluding Russia which has a foot in both Asia and Europe, covers an area of 31,000,000 square kilometres and has a population of around 3,335,000,000. Its global economic influence is increasing all the time.

The “*Lineamenta*” of the Synod for Asia reminded us that this huge area has been the mother of a number of different peoples and the “pantheon” of many of the world’s great religions. Some of the most profound and developed

religious, philosophical and social movements have come from the wise men, saints and religious visionaries of Asia.

It is estimated that in Asia there are 775 million Hindus, 760 million Moslems, 320 million Buddhists, and 36 million adherents of the "popular" religions. There are other smaller groups like Sikhs, Chamanists, Confucianists, Jews and Shintoists. Estimates of the number of Christians vary between 100 and 300 million ("QUID" for 1998 gives a figure of 45 million Protestants in China). There seems to be agreement on a figure of around 90 million for Catholics.

"Plurality of religions has been a constant factor in the history of Asia. Despite occasional tensions and even wars, Asia has shown a high degree of religious tolerance" (Lineamenta). Today, the advance of secularisation is a considerable threat to many of the traditional moral and religious values.

Asia has a very young population. Despite big differences, one can still find common attitudes and practices. Everywhere, peoples (including ethnic minorities) are becoming more aware of their rights and their power to change unjust structures. They are looking for means to become agents of change in their societies.

However, the degree of socio-economic development is very uneven: alongside some highly developed countries one finds others which are among the poorest in the world. Even in those countries which have experienced an extraordinary economic growth, a section of the population can remain excluded and be living in inhuman conditions.

At the 5th Plenary Meeting of the Federation of Episcopal Conferences of Asia, Pope John Paul II saw the situation in these terms: *"I think about the exploitation of workers, of the exclusion of a great number of people from the advantages of an advanced society, of the lack of social protection, of illiteracy, of the use of drugs and other 'artificial paradises', of the spread of gambling and violence, of the corruption to be found in the big cities and of the inhuman living conditions that people are forced to accept in the overcrowded suburbs of the urban centres"*.

Our Congregation played its part in the spreading of the Gospel in Asia in the 18th century. After an absence of a century, we are now committed in Pakistan and are undertaking a new initiative in Taiwan and the Philippines.

2.5.1 Pakistan

| | |
|--|---|
| Pakistan | Illiteracy: 65% (1995) |
| Population: 137.8 million | Religions: Muslim 97% |
| Life expectancy males/females: 61/61 years | Independence: 14 August 1947 (from the U K) |
| Infant mortality rate: 91‰ | GDP per capita: US \$500 (1995) |

Spiritans Presence: Since 1977; 10 members; International Group (Ireland, FOI, France, England); 1 first appointment to arrive in 1998.

The Spiritans in Pakistan live in a predominantly Muslim state where consideration is not lavished on minority groups (Catholics are about 1% of the population). Their missionary life is largely one of witness. They have a parish in Rahim Yar Khan where they are at the service of Punjabi Christians who are at the lowest end of the social scale. This provides the base for the missionary

approach to the Marwari Bhils, a nomadic people with traces of Hindu spirituality. Because of lack of personnel, the group had to disengage from another parish in Sukkur last year while at the same time starting a community at Sadiqabad near Rahim Yar Kahn. This was a consolidation of resources in favour of ministry to the Marwari Bhils and of Spiritan community life.

The language is very difficult. The Muslim atmosphere is all pervasive and requires maintaining a constant state of alert to simply survive. Outlets for recreation are hard to find. The group has put its faith in living an intense community life with a strong emphasis on prayer. Community meetings are highlights of mutual encouragement as well as times of important decisions. There is a sabbatical programme in place (2 are currently on sabbatical) and holidays are taken after two years.

The group has always felt handicapped by lack of personnel. The decision to disengage from the parish of Sukkur was long delayed in the hope that it would not be necessary. Suitable candidates for this specialised mission are not many. The fostering of vocations in Pakistan itself has been in the shape of directing them to the local clergy. Last year the group decided that the time had come to encourage the appointment of African Spiritans to Pakistan. There is good contact with other religious Congregations and close collaboration with the FMM Sisters.

Over the last six years, the internationality of the group has been strengthened. There are now four circumscriptions represented in the team of ten. Another Spiritan on his first appointment will arrive this year.

2.5.2 Group of Taiwan-Philippines (Cf. 3.1.3)

2.5.2.1 Taiwan (ROC = Republic of China)

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|--|---|
| Surface: 36,000 km ² | Life expectancy male/female: 72/78 years |
| Population: 21.5 million | Infant mortality rate: 5.1‰ |
| Density: 596 per km ² | Religions: Mainly Asian (Buddhism, Taoism, Popular religions, Confucianism); |
| Minimum salary: US \$560/month | Christians: 4.2%; Catholics: 1.4%. |
| GDP per capita: US \$18,583 | Independence: 1949 (from Pop. Rep. of China) |
| Chinese people: 98%; Aboriginal people: 2% | |

Spiritans presence: since 1997; a team of 4 appointed to the diocese of Hsinchu, learning the language.

2.5.2.2 Philippines

| | |
|--|--|
| Surface: 298,000 km ² | Religions: Roman Catholics 85%; Protestants: 3%; |
| Population: 73.4 million | Aglipayans 4%; Iglesia ni Kristo 2%; |
| Density: 246.3 / km ² | Muslim 4%; some Buddhist and Taoist. |
| Life expectancy male/female: 65/68 years | GDP per capita: US \$1061 |
| Infant mortality rate: 34‰ | |

Spiritans presence: since 1997; a team of 4 in the dioceses of Iligan (Mindanao).

2.6 OCEANIA

In April of last year (1997), there was a significant gathering in Perth of all Spiritans working in Australia (10) and Papua New Guinea (8). The Superior General, the provincials of Ireland, Nigeria, TransCanada and the present superior of the Indian Ocean Foundation also attended. Perth was chosen because Libermann's missionaries had landed there 150 years previously. The story was retold and celebrated on the initiative of the local people, who extended a warm welcome to the Spiritans as well as an invitation to return. It was a time to recall the existing solidarity between Australia and Papua New Guinea which is the lifeblood of Oceania. There was a commitment to multi-cultural mission, which in Australia would involve ministry to aboriginals, immigrants and refugees.

While it will first have to give attention to its own organisation, Oceania will maintain a strong orientation toward Asia and to Spiritan initiatives there. Mike Doyle will be co-ordinator of the region initially. Later the two Major Superiors of Australia and Papua New Guinea will exercise this function alternately.

2.6.1 Australia

Population: 18.5 million
Life expectancy males/females: 75/81 years
Infant mortality rate: 5.8‰
Literacy: 99 % (1995 est.)

Religions: Catholic 27.3%; Anglican 23.9%; Other Christians 24% ; Other or non-religious 24%.
Independence: 1st January 1901 (federation of U K colonies)
GDP per capita: US \$19,328 (1995)

Spiritans Presence: 1846-48, 1888-91 and since 1971; 10 professed members; International Group (Ireland, England); 1 associate member; 1 in formation.

Spiritans in Australia are principally in parishes: in Queensland (2), in New South Wales (2), and in Western Australia (2). From the beginning there has been a missionary thrust in all these parishes. In particular the first parish in Strathpine has been very involved in Spiritan mission work in both Kerema and Aitape dioceses (PNG). In this the only lay associate in the group made a heroic contribution. In Port Hedland there is call for ministry to aboriginals and to Asian refugees.

The distances involved are immense and this puts a strain on communications. The annual meeting and retreat take on a high importance in building consensus and in refreshing the spirit of *Cor unum et anima una*. A regional council now meets twice a year.

The group is to be congratulated in persevering with its formation programme. Even though the results have been meagre, a step into the future has been taken. The first Australian Spiritan has been ordained and there is a candidate in formation in Ireland. Libermann House in Melbourne is the only house in Australia owned by the Spiritans.

2.6.2 Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea
Population: 4.4 million
Life expectancy males/females: 56/57 years
Infant mortality rate: 63‰
Literacy: 52% (1990)

Religions: Protestant 52%; Catholic 28.4%; Animist 4.2‰
Independence: 16 September 1975 (from UN trusteeship under Australian administration)
GDP per capita: US \$1,200 (1995)

Spiritans Presence: Since 1971; 9 professed members; International Group (Nigeria, FOI, Ireland, TransCanada); 1 on OTP; 2 first appointments to arrive in 1998; 1 in formation.

As in Australia, Spiritans are principally involved in parish work but like Australia this involves a broad commitment to evangelisation. The building up of a community of believers calls for a variety of skills and good personal equilibrium. Justice issues are a constant ingredient of pastoral life, especially those relating to land rights and government services (for example, health).

Spiritans have contributed at the Pastoral Centre in Aitape, have participated in diocesan commissions, and a couple of years ago accepted chaplaincy of a Teachers Training College in Wewak diocese. Of the group working in Kerema diocese only one Irish Spiritan remains, but to great effect.

With representatives from 4 circumscriptions the group is eminently international. The challenge that this represents is now recognised and accepted but previously it contributed to some misunderstanding. People had expected the main transcultural challenge to come from outside and not inside the group.

Missions are not easily accessible and are in contact daily by radio. Communication, especially across diocesan boundaries, remains difficult. Community life is a continuing struggle but it is receiving constant attention. Here prayer is the only sure foundation. All Spiritans meet three times a year and make the most of this opportunity for recollection and prayer together as well as for business.

The group has been reluctant to begin a Spiritan formation programme but it looks as if the continuing interest of the Melanesians will not be deflected. At the moment there is one candidate with the East African Province at Arusha. Meanwhile the house for postulants at Aitape, part of an earlier plan, is still maintained and ready for use.

PART III

GENERAL FEATURES OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE CONGREGATION

This part of the report will attempt to draw out the general characteristics of Spiritan life and mission today. It will deal with the work of the General Council in the various areas presented. The consideration of these areas and the action taken by the General Council will include an evaluation.

3.1 OUR MISSION

Having presented it according to circumscriptions, we will now try to draw out some of the general characteristics.

3.1.1 Witness to the Gospel Beyond the Frontiers of the Church: A Wide Range of Different Commitments

"We go especially to peoples, groups and individuals who have not yet heard the message of the Gospel or who have scarcely heard it" (SRL 4).

One of the focal points of our mission is first evangelisation. It is an evangelisation which begins beyond the frontiers of the Church. When the Gospel has been planted in a particular place, it can continue to be carried beyond frontiers by targeting individuals and groups who have not so far been touched or very little. We will look at some of the different ways in which Spiritans are engaging in this work.

For the last thirty years, particularly since the General Chapter of 1968/69, teams of Spiritans have been striving to make contact with new peoples to give a first witness to the Gospel amongst them. Consequently, we now have two groups in Ethiopia, two in Kenya, and one each in Tanzania, Cameroon and Pakistan.

In many other countries, in areas where the Church is already established, confreres are announcing the Gospel from parishes and Christian communities to groups in the area who have not yet heard it or scarcely heard it: Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Zimbabwe, Papua New Guinea.

In some cultural contexts, where the dominant religion or ideology makes the birth of new Christian communities difficult and changes of religious affiliation unlikely, mission takes the form of a witness to the Kingdom, a sort of dialogue of life. The spirit of the Gospel lived out by Christians (humble presence amongst the people, friendship, readiness to help, interest taken in the life of the people and the country and the problems of the less fortunate, quality of life, prayer) communicates itself and changes people even if they do not change their religious affiliation. This is how our vocation is being lived amongst the Moslem people of Algeria and Mauritania and with Moslem and Hindu groups in Mauritius and Pakistan.

In the secularised countries, some people have forgotten or have never really heard the Christian message, particularly in the cities and in difficult areas. Some confreres are making contact with them out of parishes or through movements, associations, or social initiatives. A certain contact is established in this way with the spirit of Christianity and a link is made with the Church. Perhaps after a considerable lapse of time, some will enter the Christian community. This slow communication of the Gospel through the witness of proximity and collaboration is rather like the first evangelisation amongst the nomads of southern Ethiopia, or a dialogue of life in an Islamic milieu.

With young people, it is as though they are living on another planet. Some Spiritans who were appointed to vocations work in a European country soon realised that the young people simply did not have that basis of faith that such a ministry supposes, so their work developed into an evangelisation of youth. The same thing is experienced in the various forms of education in which many of our confreres are involved. The schools run by the Congregation are open to children of other religions.

Many Spiritans are working at the setting up and consolidation of Christian communities and the strengthening of Churches that are still young. They are involved in what Vatican II refers to as the 'second stage' of missionary activity (Ad Gentes no. 5), following on the witness of presence and preaching. Many men and women have already responded to the Word and the missionaries can build on that response to set up the catechumenate, to deepen the formation of the new Christians and to walk with them as they assume their responsibilities.

Many are working in parishes that are just starting, parishes with migrant or inter-cultural communities, parishes that are very poor or far away from the centres, in short, in those "*tasks for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers*" (SRL 4). When we put out feelers to begin a missionary work in Rome (probably a parish), the Cardinal Vicar of Rome said, "*If you will accept a parish in the poor suburbs, there will be no problem in finding one*".

Our confreres are working in parishes all over the world. In some particular Spiritan districts, they have taken on the responsibility of running the Christian communities that they founded. It is also the work of many in the provinces of the North. They are trying to make the Christians more aware of the universal mission of the Church. In the young Provinces and Foundations, parishes are taken on as a specific Spiritan commitment or sometimes with a view to providing a home base in the Church of origin of the confreres. Parishioners often tell visitors that in the parish setting, our confreres have a simple and open approach in the way they relate to the people and are sensitive to the social problems with which they are living. In one town in Africa, parishioners told the visitor: "*The Spiritans have brought along something different: they do not distance themselves but get involved in our problems and our social life, way beyond the limited concerns of the parish*".

In the West, as in Africa and Latin America, we see that the culture and style of life of many of the baptised have scarcely been influenced so far by the Gospel. Spiritans working in areas where the majority are baptised Catholics are again setting out along the road of evangelisation. They start listening to the people, trying to get a better idea of their traditions and present worries so that faith

will penetrate into their real lives. This is the idea, for example, behind the work with the Indians in Mexico and Paraguay, as well as other projects in Africa, Madagascar and Oceania.

Dialogue becomes a feature of all our mission work if we do not claim to be bringing with us the whole and entire truth but are ready to learn from others. But still too often, inter-religious dialogue is considered to concern only the world-wide 'great religions'. The Synod for Africa recalled the need for a similar dialogue with the leaders of African traditional religions, even if they are deeply tied to particular cultural groups and their exterior practices are less evident. It is difficult to know to what extent Spiritans have this attitude and practice.

Since the Council, our Church has been urging us to collaborate with other Christian Churches. One gets the impression that ecumenical collaboration does not get much attention from Spiritan missionaries, with the exception of such groups as Gamu Gofa in Ethiopia.

Finally, and this is far from being the least important, many Spiritans in recent times and up until today have been called to witness to the Gospel in chaotic situations. In countries ravaged by civil war, violence and total disorder, they stay to give support to the people, even those who are not Christians. Sometimes, there is very little they can do, either in the Church or in society. But it is their simple presence, sharing the discomfort and the risks, which expresses the love of God and creates links which last for ever. This touches upon another essential point of our mission which will be presented further on (3.1.4).

3.1.2 Crossing Frontiers: The Mozambique Project

3.1.2.1 Origins and preparation of the project

The Mozambique project was worked out during the Enlarged General Council at Dakar. We had received persistent requests from the Bishops of Chimoio and Nacala for Spiritans to be sent to help them. A preliminary exploratory visit had been made by Fr. Jeronimo Cahinga in March-April 1995 at the end of his mandate as Provincial of Angola.

The EGC Dakar meeting gave the superiors of circumscriptions who were presenting men for the mission, an opportunity to meet with members of the General Council. The Provinces of Angola, Portugal and Nigeria offered two men each for the project, some as a first appointment, others having already gained a certain experience elsewhere. The Provincial of the East African Province said they would be willing to send members eventually.

It was decided to set up two international teams of three persons, one for each diocese. The two teams would form one group which would be part of the South Central African Region (SCAR). Thus the Superior of the District of South Africa, who was also the Superior of the new Foundation (SCAF) and the co-ordinator for the region, was asked to look after the launching of this new mission. At the Generalate, Fr. Bongo would be responsible for following up this initiative.

At their meeting on 16.06.95, the General Council took the formal decision to begin the Spiritan mission in Mozambique in the two dioceses mentioned above, and subsequently, six confreres were appointed to the project. In January-February 1996, Fr. Benedito Cangueno, one of the six appointed, and later on, Fr. Jose Manuel Sabença, representing the co-ordinator of SCAR, visited the two dioceses and worked out a draft contract with the bishops. We had agreed beforehand that a final contract would only be signed after a trial period.

In August 1996, Fr. Bongo visited the two dioceses to finalise a few details regarding the arrival of the Spiritans and to prepare himself for the meeting with the six appointed confreres, which finally took place in Lisbon at the beginning of September. One of the Nigerian confreres was already in Lisbon studying Portuguese: the other would go directly to Maputo having failed to obtain a visa for Portugal. They all finally reached Mozambique in November-December, 1996.

3.1.2.2 The Mozambique Mission: Reasons for its choice and characteristics

Mozambique seemed to us to be a mission “for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers” (SRL 4). The country is 800,000 square kilometres, with a population of 18 million, of whom 30% are Christian and 10% Moslem. In 1992, a thirty year war came to an end which had begun as a war for independence and continued as a struggle between rival parties. The leader of the independence movement, who subsequently came to power, was a Marxist and led a direct campaign against the Church and all other religions. All church buildings, including the churches themselves, were confiscated. It would not be an exaggeration to say that as a result of the war years, both the country and Church were devastated.

An apparently lasting peace resulted from the accord between the two parties, FRELIMO and RENAMO, signed in Rome in 1992 at the St. Egidio community consequent to the their mediation. The local Church had managed to survive the dark years, despite a great shortage of priests, thanks largely to the generosity of catechists and other lay people. It now courageously set about re-establishing the buildings and communities. It chose the path of small Christian communities and put much effort into the training of lay leaders. There is a variety of lay ministries, including social ministries. Through the initiative of the communities, there are plans to establish primary schools in the more remote areas and begin a programme of primary health services.

In both dioceses, the bishops have confided large rural areas to our confreres. Their work is varied, but consists primarily in serving the communities and training their leaders. There are also areas of primary evangelisation.

3.1.2.3 The Mozambique Mission: the present situation

The beginnings have not been easy for the two teams. The bishops did a good job in rehabilitating the mission buildings, and the other religious and missionaries in the dioceses were most welcoming and helpful. But there was still a great deal to be done. The many communities (more than 100 in each

mission) are scattered over a large area so there is much journeying. Also, the pastoral approach takes some getting used to; the Christians had to survive for a long time without priests, so the priest is no longer the centre of things in a pastoral system where there are lay animators and co-ordinators at all levels. Our confreres could get the impression at times that they are just ministers of cult, sent by a co-ordinator to baptise or marry people whom they have never even met. They will have to find their own place gradually, without harming the responsibility of the laity.

Unlike most of the missionaries in that area, our confreres are getting down to learning the local languages - Chibaru in the diocese of Chimoio and Emacua in Nacala. They will need much patience.

They are also having to learn to live together in an intercultural team. The distance between the two teams is considerable. When we took the decision to go to Mozambique, we had already been in contact with these two bishops over several years, and we felt obliged to answer the needs of both. In living in two different zones, the teams can enrich each other from their varied experiences. We appointed three members to each team to begin with and we are now trying to reinforce both.

Several other bishops are pressing us to come to their aid, but for the moment we can do no more. The Bishop of Nacala would like the Spiritans to be in an Islamic milieu in his diocese after they have acquired some experience of the country.

3.1.3 Crossing Frontiers: A New Initiative In Asia

3.1.3.1 Origin and preparation of the project

Our mission in Asia is not just beginning today. In the 18th century, the missionaries of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit did great work in Asia up until the last members of the Congregation left India in 1888. Following the Enlarged General Council at Carcavelos in 1976, some Spiritans left for Pakistan. Their principle commitment is a first witness to the Gospel amongst the Marwari Bhils, a people who used to be nomadic, influenced by Hinduism. They also work in the service of the poor Christian minority of the Punjabis.

The Chapter of Itaici saw the emergence of the idea of a new initiative in Asia which had been brewing for some time: *"The presentations from Pakistan and Mauritius and the reports from the Indian Ocean Foundation drew our attention to the enormous missionary task in Asia... Hence the plea that the Congregation should consider another initiative in Asia..."* (Itaici no. 7)

The General Council took a first step in this direction by asking Fr. Brian McLaughlin to make some preliminary investigations. He gathered information from various contacts in North America and Europe of Congregations already working in Asia. He then talked with the General Council and together we drew up criteria to choose what countries should be visited for a possible involvement. We decided that he would visit Thailand, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan. He would also visit Vietnam, even though it is impossible to go there as missionaries; amongst the reasons for such a visit was

the fact the young men from Vietnam, living outside their country, are joining our Congregation. He would also slip into Macau and China.

For 18 weeks, starting in January 1996, Fr. Brian visited the selected countries, making many contacts and gathering much information. On his return, he drew up a detailed and well-documented report, comparing the places visited to the criteria that we had previously established. Basing itself on this report and subsequent conversations with Fr. Brian, the General Council decided that three of the countries should be visited again in August-September, 1996: Taiwan, Philippines and Vietnam. This time, he would be accompanied by the Superior General.

During this second visit, five dioceses in the Philippines and three in Taiwan were contacted, where the bishops were pressing us to come and work with them. In these dioceses, specific areas were visited which seemed to correspond to the criteria of our Spiritan mission.

We told the bishops that we would come with the intention of evangelising and helping the local Church to become more missionary. Our choice was to work with the poor and excluded, to contact people who live on the margins of the Church and to share our faith with believers of other religions and cultures. We would be prepared to work in a parochial context, at least to begin with, because we are foreigners and new to the country. Subsequently, we would like to make ourselves available to the local Church for more specialised ministries. We reminded the bishops that community life is an integral part of our life-style. All these points were accepted by the diocesan authorities.

On our return, a new report was drawn up, giving detailed information about the dioceses visited and the discussions with the bishops and other members of the local Churches. The criteria for making a choice between the various alternatives was spelt out. Finally, at the autumn meeting in 1996, the General Council decided that sufficient research had been done and that the time had come for decisions.

3.1.3.2 Criteria, discernment and decisions

In deciding on the criteria for choice, we turned to our Rule of Life, above all chapter 2. We looked again at our initial criteria and refined them in the light of the experience coming from our two exploratory journeys. The General Council finally decided on the following criteria to guide its choice:

- We are certainly going to Asia to learn and to be enriched by the cultures and religions of Asia and by meeting the peoples of these countries.
- But we are not just going for our own sakes. There must be a real need for help wherever we decide to go and our preferences, according to SRL 12, are to go:
 - to first evangelisation or to a specific service to be given to the local Church or society;
 - to those who are oppressed or excluded, as groups or individuals;
 - to those places where we can help the local church to be more missionary.

- We want to collaborate with the local Church by bringing it a significant contribution, according to SRL 18 and 18.1.
- In some circumstances, our mere presence is a witness and service, in the name of the Gospel, for the Kingdom (SRL 15.3).
- We want to have contact with Asian religions and cultures.
- We want to be able to invite people to the missionary life, even if our primary end in going to Asia is not to find vocations.
- We want to be able to live a real community life.
- Our African confreres will have to be welcomed by the local population since their numbers are becoming ever greater in our Congregation.
- The dioceses chosen should have a clear pastoral approach and defined priorities.

On the basis of the above criteria the General Council proceeded to the following decisions:

- We will undertake a new initiative in Asia.
A first group of four will be appointed to the diocese of Illigan in the Philippines.
It is foreseen that we will have a presence in Manila in the future.
Another group of four will go to the diocese of Hsinchu in Taiwan.
The search for confreres for these groups will get under way.
We will continue our research into a future insertion in Vietnam.
- We will look for confreres who volunteer and have the necessary aptitudes to go to China as teachers.
- We will try to create a network of confreres and circumscriptions who have a special interest in Asia, to circulate information, reflections and proposals.

Regarding Vietnam, we are looking into the possibility of a work of education in collaboration with Auteuil International, to be set up, perhaps, in Ho-Chi-Min City.

3.1.3.3 The present situation

The teams for Taiwan and the Philippines have now been established. The confreres come from the West African Foundation and the Provinces of Nigeria, Brazil, USA East, France and Ireland. Six of them left at the beginning of December 1997, after a joint meeting at the Generalate and Assisi that lasted for more than a week. The other two will travel to Taiwan in the autumn of 1998.

Those for the Philippines will follow a course in the Cebuano language for six months, then each will have a brief period of pastoral initiation in separate parishes. After that, two will begin a new parish in the mountains beside Illigan and the other two will have pastoral duties in the town. They will make up one team which will come together for a day each week.

Those going to Hsinchu will have to spend a longer time learning the Chinese language - some Mandarin, others Taiwanese. The nature of their apostolate

will be worked out during their time of language study in dialogue with the bishop.

3.1.4 'To Bring the Good News to the Poor' Our Different Forms of Social Ministry

"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. It is the other great focal point of our mission. The forms that this type of ministry takes are many:

- development work in rural and urban areas, agricultural or trade schools, farmers' organisations, commercialisation, apprenticeship, helping to start small enterprises, credit systems, education in the regulation of births;
- formal and informal education;
- involvement in justice and peace, 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; producing publications on the formation of the citizen and instruction on rights and duties, by circulating information regarding attempts to curb the rights of people and by bringing pressure to bear on the authors of injustice;
- in serving refugees, immigrants, prisoners, aids victims, drug addicts, young people without training or work in the cities, rural populations in remote areas.

Here is some more information on three important types of our service to the poor: education, work for justice and peace and the service of refugees:

3.1.5 Education

The meeting of Spiritan Educators which had taken place in 1991 at Duquesne University gave impressive witness to the extent, the variety and the achievements of Spiritans in education. The General Council felt that our service to them would take the shape of trying to encourage a sense of solidarity among them, as well as a fidelity to the Spiritan charism.

3.1.5.1 Taking the pulse

A questionnaire (October 1993) about Spiritan involvement in education and its way of dealing with current challenges, drew a good response and helped establish an agenda for the meeting of a Representative Ad Hoc Education Committee at Blackrock, Dublin, in April 1994. This committee produced a statement (15 April 1994) that reflected its experience of working in education today. It mentioned realities familiar to all educators: evangelisation of alienated youth; collaboration with lay people; mission statements; handing over responsibility; concern for the disadvantaged; and lack of Spiritan personnel.

The General Council responded encouragingly to the statement, giving special mention to two aspects:

1. The importance of exploring fresh ways whereby our schools can become centres of real service to the poor and disadvantaged.
2. The need to design training programmes in education that would welcome Spiritans in formation (OTP, PEP); also the need for detailed requests for first appointments (letter to all Superiors, 05 September 1994).

In the report to the Enlarged General Council at Dakar, the aim was to encourage Spiritan educators to continue in their many excellent programmes while giving constant attention to the sign of Spiritan authenticity, concern for the poor and disadvantaged. On 25 May 1993, we welcomed to the Spiritan Generalate in Rome, the President and the President of the Board of Directors of Duquesne University. Duquesne University, with an active Spiritan participation, is in full development. This has included the introduction of a new course in conflict resolution. The university is also engaged in affiliations around the world: extensively in Asia and notably with SIST in Nigeria. Auteuil is also acting globally. Auteuil International has become its extension for projects in more than twenty countries.

3.1.5.2 Solidarity among Spiritan educators

The directory (data base) of Spiritan Educators is as complete a list of Spiritan Educators as the General Secretariat, with admirable patience and perseverance, has been able to assemble. Its aim is to encourage Spiritan Educators to be in touch with each other and with us. This encourages mission projects, facilitates sharing of good ideas, as well as the tackling of problems together.

The European Educators now meet every two years: in 1994 it was in Ireland, in 1996 in Germany and next year the meeting will take place in Portugal. These are all countries where education is clearly associated with the Spiritan tradition. Formal meetings do not take place elsewhere, but real collaboration has made exciting developments possible, for example the reopening of College St. Martial in Haiti.

In Africa, communication is not always easy and the networking among Spiritan educators is not extensive. Nevertheless, there are several outstanding schools. There is also excellent work being done in an informal way, for example with street kids in several cities. In South America there is an emphasis on youth ministry and on adult education. In Oceania, an initial involvement is in teacher training.

3.1.5.3 Beyond regions

While the collaboration within regions is the most frequent and fruitful, much is to be gained by going beyond regions. To encourage this, a modest *Spiritan Educators' News Sheet* has been published. It has been edited in turn by different schools in Africa, Europe, North America, the Caribbean, with the final issue coming from the Generalate last September (1997).

Of course, Spiritan educators collaborate mainly with non-Spiritans. Many of the meetings they go to are determined by professional interest. Our intention is not to interfere with this dynamic. However, our responsibility is to care for our Spiritan educational heritage. This does not mean jealously guarding institutions that we are increasingly incapable of managing. It means maintaining certain commitments; it means choosing; it means not withdrawing in disorder; it means disengaging with a concern that the Spiritan charism be carried into the future.

3.1.5.4 The future

We must acknowledge that the centre of gravity of the Congregation has moved to the south. There the social situation cries out for educators. If we are to answer this call, we must listen carefully to it and prepare our educators well. It is not simply the resumption of an activity that was interrupted when various governments took over schools managed by missionaries, even if it is motivated by the same concern for quality of life and giving people a stronger appreciation of God's world.

There is an interest in education among young provinces and foundations, especially in Africa. The generous help being offered from Europe and North America to develop this interest is very welcome. It enriches him who gives and him who takes. It is an enterprise that requires respect, trust and the determination to overcome the frustrations that inter-cultural projects imply.

Many retired Spiritan teachers continue on in schools. Instead of teaching they turn their attention to more pastoral concerns that benefit both students and staff. For those who still have the energy and a little inclination, a second career in education is available on internet.

3.1.6 Work in the Area of Justice and Peace

"We see many of our brothers committed in situations of trauma, war, exile, and looking for special care and support from the General Council. We ask the Council for specific encouragement to all in the area of justice and peace" (Itaici 33.2.1).

Following up these directives from the General Chapter, 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, encouraging circumscriptions and supporting confreres who are in dangerous situations, collaborating with other congregations and various other organisations. He has worked in close collaboration with the General Council, particularly with the Councillor with special responsibility for this area of our mission.

The Co-ordinator is going to give his own account of his initiatives and activities. In this report, along with the Co-ordinator himself and the General Council, I would like to be a little more precise on where the Congregation stands regarding this challenge whose limits are ever more difficult to define. We are becoming increasingly convinced that we will be judged, not just by

posterity but also by the Lord himself, on the seriousness with which we make ourselves *“the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them”* (SRL 14).

3.1.6.1 Where are we in our commitment to justice and peace?

Today, there is certainly a very wide agreement in our Institute on the importance of this ministry. The problem has always been to translate our good intentions into positive action. What is needed now is not to convince Spiritans and other religious of the value of this ministry in the Church, but rather to help us all to learn how to integrate this type of ministry into the totality of our work. Many Spiritans see clearly the problem of contact between faith and justice but nevertheless find it difficult to insert this perception into their pastoral works and give it concrete expression.

So some Spiritans stick with the traditional pastoral practice rather than trying to face the challenge of Justice and Peace, either in the form of a new direction given to their work or in taking on new specific engagements. At the level of the Generalate itself, it is difficult to define adequate guidelines to help Spiritans get involved in this type of ministry. The questions involved are complex, and there are also limitations in circumscriptions as regards finance and personnel. The concrete challenge is to see:

- how to move on from a direct service of the poor and oppressed to the defence of their rights and the denunciation of those factors and persons who are the cause of their sufferings;
- how to denounce the economic/political neo-colonialism of the great powers of our day;
- how to integrate the global questions of poverty, refugees, war and ethnic struggles into a local ministry;
- how to make a global analysis of our ministry and use the results to plan our pastoral ministry.

The ‘why’ of work for Justice and Peace has been widely explained: what is needed now, in many cases, is the ‘how’. The steps necessary to help us move from passivity to an active ministry are not clear. In any case, the information and competence needed for a fruitful social ministry are things that have to be acquired and on-going formation in this whole area is crucial.

At the international level, there has been progress in the appreciation of what is at stake and in the campaigns to change unjust structures. Congregations have co-ordinated their research and efforts regarding the major injustices of our time: the questions of anti-personnel mines, the world debt, the ethics of commercial practices, the preservation of the environment, support for missionaries who are in conflict situations. In the area of the defence of human rights and lobbying, it seems that the religious congregations have made progress in the last six years.

3.1.6.2 The main areas where our initiatives are progressing

Solidarity with peoples in conflict:

Spiritans in Angola, Sierra Leone, Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville and Algeria continue to risk their lives to stay with the people as they go through a period of unspeakable suffering. The support from confreres of other circumscriptions, through aid and friendship for those who are living and working in these conflict zones is another sure sign 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.

A recognition that the Justice and Peace ministry is a part of our mission to the world of today:

Very few Spiritans would be unwilling to recognise the necessity of this type of ministry today, in the face of rampant capitalism, globalisation, the debt of developing countries, changes to the environment, sinful structures and the arms race. Yet we always find it difficult to get actively involved because our training for the religious and priestly life was aimed rather at the more traditional forms of ministry. However, the Spirit inspires us to keep going forward.

Many appreciate the importance of launching formation programmes like the one for resolution conflict and action for peace at Duquesne University and its extensions in Africa. Action for peace and training for peace are turning out to be priorities of our missionary engagement.

Through visits by the General Council and by correspondence, we encourage confreres to take up new initiatives. We have appealed to circumscriptions for a greater involvement with refugees and displaced persons.

A spirituality is developing:

A fresh reading of the Scriptures, of the prophetic documents of the Church and of our Spiritan tradition is giving birth to a spirituality which shows how our social and political commitments are in harmony with our work for the Kingdom of God. We find as Spiritans that when we take new steps towards those who are beyond the reach of parishes and ecclesiastical structures, we somehow discover a new vitality. For many Spiritans, preaching Christ crucified has come to mean helping people to hope in situations that are apparently hopeless, and to struggle forward with them in the search for a better existence.

3.1.7 Serving Refugees

The phenomenon of refugees and displaced persons has grown to an unprecedented dimension. In the different countries where we work, especially in Africa, confreres are faced with huge numbers of people in a state of great distress and insecurity, and they try to help them materially and morally even though they are so busy with their normal missionary work. Since the 1960s, such urgent situations have existed in Nigeria and Ethiopia, and more recently in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Angola, Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic.

Some confreres have started or contributed to the work of various organisations and aid networks, sometimes on a very large scale: Concern International, the Christian Relief and Development Agency in Ethiopia, the International Refugee Trust.

3.1.7.1 Pastoral ministry in the refugee camps of Tanzania

The deaths of the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi in a mysterious plane crash on April 6, 1994, was the occasion of terrible massacres which quickly developed into planned genocide. Hundreds of thousands of refugees trekked into Tanzania.

Our East African Province quickly took up pastoral work in the Rwandan camps in the diocese of Rulenge, between Lake Victoria and the Rwandan border. Their appeal for volunteers and material help was backed up by the Generalate. The result was an international team that worked from the end of 1994 to the end of 1996 in very difficult material and moral circumstances. The events in eastern Zaire resulted in a massive return to their country of the Rwandan refugees in Zaire. This in its turn sparked off a similar, but not very spontaneous, migration of Rwandan refugees in Tanzania back to their own country.

Three confreres of the East African Province, who were consequently no longer needed in the diocese of Rulange, answered the appeal for help from the diocese of Kigoma where there are still refugees, above all from Burundi and the East of Zaire. Our confreres are doing pastoral work in three camps: Mtabila I, Mtabila II and Muyovozi. A fourth camp will soon be opened. The three existing camps contain about 110,000 people and the refugees are in great need of a fraternal presence, words of faith, hope and advice and a ministry of reconciliation. The UNHCR and the other big organisations take care of the material needs. But Spiritans are taking initiatives in areas that are not covered, like the need and the desire for education of the young people. They have sent another appeal to the Congregation for further support.

3.1.7.2 Mission and refugee work in Guinea Conakry

More than a year ago, an international group of three Spiritans re-opened an old mission in Guinea on the Sierra Leone border so as to give pastoral help to refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. It was not easy to fulfil their two-fold task: to serve the Christian communities of Guinea as well as the refugees.

Through the experience and contacts with confreres working in Sierra Leone, there are plans for the refugees to be looked after when they finally return to their own country. Thanks to the links that have been established, our confreres will be able to help them in the difficult process of settling once again in their own country.

3.1.7.3 The question of structures for the Spiritan refugee service

From the start of these projects, the question of support has been there. On that occasion, the General Council set up an Account for Refugees and then, with a wider scope, a Special Account for Missionary Projects. A generous gift from

one of our European Provinces formed the basis of the fund, then other amounts came from several circumscriptions as a result of an appeal made in Spiritan publications.

The question was raised of setting up a special structure for the refugee service in the Congregation. We decided to work within the diocesan structures, but we would now like to raise the question once again:

- Should a new structure be set up at the Generalate level for confreres involved in the care of refugees? Or should we use the structures already created by confreres? The latter do not correspond exactly to the type or service which is presently being given by Spiritans, which is a service of proximity to those in need. This calls for confreres who speak the language of the refugees and preferably have some experience of the country from which they come.
- A structure could be interesting for the organisation of formation for certain specific ministries in the service of refugees, to communicate to others the experience of those who have already provided this service, to draw more attention, within the Congregation, to refugees and displaced persons and to collaborate with greater ease with other institutes and organisations.

3.1.8 Some Questions Regarding the Management of Spiritan Mission

At every level of the Congregation, we come up against a problem of the management of our Spiritan mission. It concerns personnel in the first place, but also finances. Here are a few aspects of the problem:

- Many of our traditional works have been taken over by the local clergy. So we have looked for a new missionary role in the same country with projects aimed at first evangelisation or helping the most abandoned.
- The current needs of mission call for a missionary congregation like our own, firstly in the places where we have been for a long time and where some bishops have urged us to go (as, for example, Mozambique), but also in other areas which seem to be great priorities for today's mission, e.g. Asia.
- Some mission appeals have a special interest for particular foundations or provinces of our Congregation and we see this as a call of the Spirit and a source of inspiration for these circumscriptions; for example, Asia for the Indian Ocean Foundation, a new initiative in Central America for the circumscriptions of North America and the Caribbean, a possible new project in South America for the circumscriptions of that continent.
- It seems to be a necessity for a missionary congregation to take on new works in a world that is changing ever more quickly if it wishes to remain alert and available for commitments that seem to be the most urgent, and ready for new approaches which are more in line with the present realities.
- Despite passing on many of our works to diocesan clergy or other religious, we have not had many additional members available for new undertakings. In some cases, confreres have aged very quickly and their health has proved to be worse than was imagined, and in others, confreres did not feel ready or

suitably trained to move into untried projects. Many districts have experienced a rapid fall in active membership.

- Another reason for this fall in numbers available has been the return of confreres to their province of origin, or the appointment of young members from the South to provinces in the North to assure essential services. Both northern and southern provinces need fit men to be animators and formators, in charge of communities or involved in local missionary projects. There is no lack of missionary needs in the North as, for example, caring for migrants from those countries where Spiritans are working. Also, it is no longer effective for those involved in missionary animation and vocations work simply to point to Spiritan missions far away: people want to see with their own eyes the sort of mission that Spiritans are involved in.
- We now have many vocations and candidates for first appointment from the southern hemisphere, particularly from Africa. But for new projects, we need leaders, mature people with a good missionary experience. These are not very numerous: there was a considerable gap between those years when the North was producing large numbers and the arrival of significant numbers from the South.
- All circumscriptions, both old and new, must face up to this problem of lack of personnel. First of all, it is not simply a mathematical problem which could be solved by saying: “we will take so many confreres from this old work and put them in the new one”, or “we will not take on any new works so that we can put the young confreres in the old ones”. For the confreres in the traditional works would not feel ready for the new ones, and the young would not be keen on being used to fill gaps in the old.
- We are never totally independent in our missionary choices. We are working in local Churches where the bishops have the prime responsibility for evangelisation. We are often collaborating in common works with the secular clergy, other religious and lay people and we cannot simply walk out on them without warning.
- We can look forward to an improvement in the number of confreres who are experienced yet still young. Some circumscriptions are reluctant to abandon significant works in hoping for these better times.

3.1.9 Direction and Animation of Spiritan Mission by the General Council

3.1.9.1 Some general orientations regarding the management of our mission:

- Each year, we send out a list of the general orientations of the Congregation to the superiors of circumscriptions and houses of formation. These lists should help to focus the interests of young confreres who are preparing for a first appointment and those who are ready for a change. They also help the General Councillors when they enter into discussions during the course of a visit or by correspondence regarding the choice of missionary engagements for a circumscription.

- We have also encouraged circumscriptions to take on new projects or to participate in joint projects of the Congregation, and we support them in their efforts to bring them about: e.g. works for refugees, Mozambique, Taiwan, and Philippines. At other times we have applied the brakes because of insufficient personnel to make community life possible.
- We did not want to construct a whole new programme of commitments for the Congregation. We feel it is good for each circumscription to work out its own missionary projects, in dialogue with the Generalate. We also feel that the starting point for any project should be the real needs expressed by the people of that area or by those in charge of the local Church, and confirmation of those needs by those in charge of the local Spiritan circumscription. These local superiors are invited to send us a list each year of their projects and personnel needs and these are used to draw up another list, sent to superiors and houses of formation, to let them know about these appeals, as long as we feel they are in conformity with the ends of our Congregation and our present orientations.
- We have tried to keep a balance between our old works and new commitments. It seems wise to continue some of the traditional works in fidelity to our commitments, because it is there that many confreres are able to give of their best. It also gives the Congregation a solid anchor.

Many of these works are still very much alive and the confreres are involved in a wide variety of activities. They are very dedicated and they have often made a long journey of *aggiornamento*.

We are also taking on new works in line with our major priorities: mission beyond frontiers, option for the poor, inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue. These commitments give a new dynamism to the circumscriptions.

- One of the main ways in which the General Council directs our missionary engagements is through first appointments.

3.1.10 First Appointments

Making first appointments has been a positive experience for the General Council. We have been able to witness at first hand the generosity and availability of young confreres, many of whom, having expressed their personal wishes, add to their letter something like this: “...but I am ready for any other appointment”. We have also been able to appreciate the work done by formators and superiors. The latter set up missionary projects for their Province and support their members who are posted far away.

First appointments have a decisive influence on the missionary life of Spiritans. We have tried to find ways and means to answer the different demands, some of which are almost contradictory. For example, SRL 158 says that “*the first appointment of confreres to particular circumscriptions is a right belonging to the Superior General, with the consent of his Council*”. SRL 158.1 adds: “*This appointment is made in understanding with the confrere concerned and his major superior*”. But following the logic of SRL 177 and 182, first appointments should help provinces and districts to follow up their own

missionary decisions and plans, which have often been defined by their local chapters.

3.1.10.1 How long do first appointments last?

The Administrative Guide of 1988 talked of a minimum of three years. We realised that this phrase had been interpreted as if after three years, the confrere concerned was available for another appointment elsewhere, for example, at the request of his province of origin. Some circumscriptions understood these three years as a sort of 'stage' to round off the period of initial formation.

But this was in no way the meaning of the Guide. On the contrary, the aim of the former Administration was precisely to assure continuity in missionary engagements; they were reacting against the practice of some Foundations and Provinces of recalling newly appointed confreres after only one or two years. So they fixed a minimum time before which a change would not be considered and only the General Council itself could dispense from that minimum.

In fact, a Foundation or Province of origin has no right to recall an appointed confrere. A request can be put to the superior of the circumscription of appointment and it is he who would make the change. The Rule of Life gives this authority to superiors in order to safeguard the importance we attach to a missionary commitment. A first appointment is for an undetermined length of time and can only be interrupted with the consent of the local superior. He would dialogue with the superior of the circumscription of origin or with another superior with the agreement of the superior of the circumscription of origin and, obviously, with the confrere concerned.

It is true that circumscriptions have their needs, but SRL lays down the way to go about things: request, dialogue and availability. There is no right of recall.

There were many unfortunate consequences from this misunderstanding, principally for the young confreres themselves; it is difficult to find the motivation to set about learning the language and customs of a people if one is almost sure that it will only be for three years. Moreover, the receiving circumscription is unable to make any long-term plans. In fact they may well ask themselves if it is worth investing a lot of time and money to prepare a newly appointed confrere for his work if he will have to leave a short time after his initiation is completed.

The new edition of the Administrative Guide (1996) clarifies in no. 4.2.4 that, following the spirit of SRL, the length of the first appointment is not limited to three years. It states that in order to provide the young confreres with an opportunity to give themselves fully to the mission that is entrusted to them, it should last for at least six years, and often more, in cases where a particularly heavy investment is required to become familiar with the local cultural context. Three years represents an absolute minimum which can only be changed with the permission of the General Council.

3.1.10.2 How is a request for first appointment to be made?

The General Council asks Major Superiors to send the Superior General a file containing the following: a written request from the young confrere to the

Superior General; a letter from the superior of the circumscription of origin giving an appreciation of the qualities and capabilities of the confrere and indicating, with supporting reasons, the suggested appointment. It is taken for granted that this suggestion is made after consultation with the formators and the council of the circumscription.

This system has worked reasonably well over the last years, although sometimes things have not been done quite in the spirit of the procedure, which has been worked out in the interests of the young Spiritans and the mission of the Congregation.

3.1.10.3 The receiving circumscriptions

To keep abreast of the development of different circumscriptions, the General Council asks for a description of the project for which a young confrere is being requested. If the request cannot be granted immediately, the description should be updated if presented again at a future date.

The Council will also wish to know if a genuine community life and adequate accompaniment will be available to the young person joining such a project. It is important that a suitable time be set aside for learning the local language and for gaining an appreciation of the society and its culture.

During our visitations, we have sometimes come across abnormal situations as, for example, when a newly appointed confrere finds himself in sole charge of a large mission. Unforeseen situations can arise, but putting a young confrere on his own should be the very last resort and should not be allowed to continue beyond what is absolutely unavoidable. We all know how strict Fr. Libermann was on this point: if mission is our aim, religious life is the means 'sine qua non'. Young people are not prepared to live alone but ask for community life with insistence. We must not place them in an impossible situation from the start. The witness of community life is of great importance; people are struck by the example of confreres from different places living together.

In some cases, the welcome given to these young people leaves much to be desired.

In general, international communities have not been set up as a matter of principle; they are rather the result of situations where the circumscriptions are no longer able to provide sufficient personnel for a particular project on their own. So one has to ask if the confreres concerned have been prepared with this in mind. Today they learn languages and many have had an experience of internationality during their formation. Ultimately, it is possible to learn community life wherever one lives. The basic demands are the same everywhere, even when one is in one's own environment.

3.1.10.4 Commitment and motivation

The General Council tries to marry together the needs of mission and the desires of the young confreres. These desires often seem to be conceived by hearing about a particular missionary experience. That is why, each year, we draw up a list of projects for which first appointments are being requested, with a short description of each. This list is sent to superiors of circumscriptions and

houses of formation so that the young people in formation (not just theologians) can be fully informed. It will help them to get to know the different commitments and needs of Spiritan mission, enlarge their vision and ensure that it is realistic.

Another way in which the Council tries to reconcile the needs of circumscriptions and the desires of young confreres is to ask some circumscriptions to direct their proposed appointments towards other circumscriptions which have very pressing personnel needs, or towards some of the new projects of the Congregation. But they remain requests, not directives.

Amongst the needs put to us was that of building up a home-base in new foundations and provinces, by taking on works that would help to make the Congregation known and attract local support. This could include missionary initiatives that would show the local Church and society what is involved in Spiritan mission. We accepted some appointments of this nature on the understanding that provinces of origin can also have mission situations.

Sometimes, people wonder if some appointments are made just to 'fill gaps'. I think we must be clear on this. We cannot start a new work for each appointment; there must be continuity because evangelisation needs plenty of time. We cannot just place young people with other young people of the same culture. Experience shows that a range of ages can give balance to a community and we have already referred to the witness value of international communities. As long as we continue to appoint confreres to works that are genuinely Spiritan, we are not just 'filling gaps', they are appointments made for a real purpose. We would be 'filling gaps' if we made appointments simply to prolong a work for its own sake.

Conclusion

We do not appoint confreres with a view to giving them an interesting experience: we appoint them so that they will become real missionaries, preparing for the coming of the Kingdom of God. We try to find places of serious commitment in a variety of contexts. We take into consideration the capacities, skills and health of the confreres concerned. None of this can be done without the close collaboration of the circumscriptions.

3.2 OUR SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

As was said at the end of the first part of this report, the decision to be witnesses to the Gospel in the world of today supposes a great inspirational strength by which our vision of the world is changed and the forces of love within us are let loose. Let us now look at some of the channels by which we receive inspiration for our Spiritan life.

3.2.1 Communications

3.2.1.1 Animation by information

“The exchange of information is the most important instrument for animating both individuals and circumscriptions. Following the line used by this General Chapter, we would like to encourage all Spiritans to share their own experiences” (Itaici 33.2.2). The last Chapter asked the General Council to look for new forms of communication and information that would help encourage such a dialogue.

The numerous bulletins of circumscriptions publish letters and articles which are modest personal witnesses to the varied mission of Spiritans. It is an extension of the sharing of experiences that takes place more and more in our meetings at all levels. It is there that we find that inspiration, of which we have such a great need, that comes from the living out of mission in practice. The meaning of our missionary commitment is not always clear, theoretical arguments are hardly convincing and we are wary of what is excessively emotional. But what does interest and stimulate us is the narrating of lived experiences and witnessing.

New Spiritan missionary reviews have been launched in Poland and Nigeria and some older publications have taken on a new look. The editors sometimes meet together, at least in Europe. These publications reach a large number of people; they are a form of evangelisation. They bring the good news of a dynamic mission to Christians committed in their local Church or society.

Other publications serve to encourage reflection, like *Spiritus* (which is not an exclusively Spiritan publication and which now has a Spanish version for Latin America), *Mémoire Spiritaine* in France, *Forum* in Ireland, and *Inter Nos* in the United States. These publications also give much space to lived experiences and history.

3.2.1.2 Publications at the level of the Generalate

The first initiative of the new General Council was to invite all confreres engaged in communications to make themselves known and describe their activities. Around forty replied. When they were subsequently asked if they would be interested in meetings of Spiritans involved with the media, there were far fewer replies. The ‘material’ to be studied in such a meeting would be too disparate. It was suggested that there could be separate meetings for different kinds of communication - the press, audio-visual - or for confreres at different levels of specialisation. Some suggested a simple sharing regarding the new communication techniques. Finally, the plan for a meeting was abandoned.

Spiritan News

It was decided to produce 8 or 9 issues of the Generalate news bulletin each year instead of 5 or 6, so that the information published would be more up to date. After a delay due to the changing of personnel, this target has now been attained. The news seems to be appreciated. Confreres are interested in what is being done by our confreres throughout the world and the difficulties that they

are having to face. We should all get into the habit of making a written record of our experience of mission and religious life.

As well as this news bulletin, our information office intends to send out a 'news flash' each week to those who have given us their electronic mail address. It will be no longer than one page and it will contain the latest news from the Congregation, such as first appointments, death notices, and the agenda of the General Council (cf. below for more about electronic mail and Internet 3.2.1.3).

Spiritan Life

To begin with, the editor was a member of the '*Spiritan Centre of Research and Animation*', but as the direction of this group changed, the editor was asked to co-ordinate the historical research in the Congregation and the preparation for the anniversaries of 2002 and 2003. As this work of research and animation took up all his time, another editor had to be found for *Spiritan Life*.

After an evaluation, the General Council, aware of the importance of this publication, decided to make some changes to its orientation. It would henceforth be produced in the three official languages of the Congregation. The contents of each number would follow a particular theme and would consist mainly of reflections on Spiritan experiences by those who had lived them. An editorial committee was set up with a member from each of the three language groups plus a General Councillor. The first issue, *The Missionary in the Parish* was well received. The fact that not all the members of the committee are living in Rome has slowed down the work.

Information/Documentation (I/D)

The General Council took some time before producing its first I/D. In the past, it had consisted of a detailed synthesis of a particular subject. It was a good format: one professor in communications told us that he was still using the first I/D on Communications (no. 9). But after some reflection, it seemed more in keeping with our aims to adopt a somewhat different format. The I/D would be presented in a stimulating way and the reflection would be based on examples and events to gain the interest of all our confreres. The first edition of the new series (no. 51) was devoted to *Social Communications*. Subsequent numbers dealt with *the Enlarged General Council at Dakar*, *the New Initiative in Asia*, and *Three Hundred Years of Spiritan Life and Mission*. A further edition on *Different Faces of the Spiritan Vocation* is now ready for publication.

Books

The Generalate regularly asks confreres who have published books to send them a copy. These books are listed and sometimes reviewed in our publications.

3.2.1.3 New forms of communication

MultiMedia International

Some members of the Generalate are taking an active part in this organisation, which aims to give advice and training in the whole area of information

technology. It is run by qualified religious for the benefit of religious congregations in Rome. Gradually, MultiMedia has acquired better equipment: projectors, books, slides, large screen televisions sets, tape recorders, video recorders and cameras, a semi-professional installation for video editing, a video projector and a projector for computers.

Courses are offered in the use of this material. MultiMedia is linked to the Internet, giving members the chance to experience the possibilities available with the present technology. They are thus able to get to know the Internet before deciding whether to get connected themselves.

At the beginning of our mandate, we were concerned that there was much inaccurate information in the media regarding events in Angola. We decided to call a meeting of congregations working in that country and together we explored the possibility of setting up an alternative news agency. The MultiMedia office took on the project, but eventually, after consultations with the director of a Belgian catholic news agency on all that is involved in the verification of news items, and after a few trials, the project was not followed up. Representatives of different Generalates were worried about the possible consequences of certain denunciations for their members on the ground.

Videos

A video recording was made of the General Chapter at Itaici, and the General Council made another in various languages. This means of communication has not subsequently been used very much. More and more confreres throughout the world are producing videos and the General Council has started to make a collection of them which is available at the Generalate.

Electronic Mail and Internet

The Generalate has been connected to the Internet since 1996. At first, we waited for other communities and circumscriptions to join it before taking this step, but now the list of confreres and circumscriptions connected is growing rapidly. It is a very cheap and useful means of communication, much quicker and cheaper than Fax. We are now able to be in contact by Internet with confreres throughout the world.

So far, only a handful of confreres and circumscriptions have Internet Web sites. Several people have asked us to set up such a site on the Congregation as a means of making ourselves known. This will involve a lot of work, but we will do it as soon as enough time is available. It will be a way of communicating general information on the Congregation and will allow those interested to get in contact with the Spiritans in their own country.

Satellite Telephone

During recent troubles in various parts of Africa, we came to realise the usefulness of satellite telephone for keeping in touch with confreres who might otherwise become completely isolated. Information on this subject was sent by Internet to all confreres whose electronic address has been given to us.

3.2.2 Formation

Regarding formation, the General Council endeavoured to work within the guidelines of the General Chapter, following its own style of working and allowing for the reality that it found in practice. Above all, it tried to continue along the lines that had already been followed for several years.

3.2.2.1 The guide for Spiritan formation

Following the directions of the General Chapter, the Council drew up a Guide for Spiritan Formation. In its compilation, the Council took account of the reflections of international meetings of formators that took place prior to 1992. Based on a first draft, a wide consultation took place at all levels. The reactions were incorporated into the text and a second draft of the section on initial formation was presented to and approved by the Enlarged General Council at Dakar. The EGC also gave orientations for the second part concerning on-going formation, and in November 1996, after further consultations, the General Council published the definitive text.

The Guide was well received and was used as a basis for reflection on formation in the Congregation and for the drawing up or revision of various formation directories in the circumscriptions. On the occasion of visitations by the General Council, formation programmes were evaluated in the light of this Guide. The Guide repeats the conviction expressed at Itaici that it is from the viewpoint of on-going formation that we can perceive the importance of initial formation. At the same time, it presents an attitude of 'listening' as the very foundation of mission. This attitude has to be developed throughout the course of formation which originates from the desire to allow oneself to be transformed by and into the Lord.

3.2.2.2 Internationality; international communities

Whereas the postulancy and first cycle take place in the country of the candidates or in their cultural area, (as is the case for the Foundations), from the novitiate onwards, many of our formation houses are international. If the novitiates of Foundations are largely international, two experiences have attracted our particular attention during the past six years: the International Novitiate in Puerto Rico (in which Haiti took part as well as Spanish-speaking circumscriptions) and the International Novitiate in Dublin. Both were looked upon as positive. But it is preferable, where possible, that the novitiate be done in the cultural and, above all, linguistic context of the candidate.

Many of our theology formation houses are international: for example, the large theological centres of Enugu (SIST), Nairobi and Brazzaville which are international by their very nature. SIST covers the circumscriptions of West Africa. Other examples are the communities of Clamart in France, Kimmage in Ireland and Planalto in Sao Paulo. In the last three examples, the communities come under the jurisdiction of a particular Province but receive candidates from elsewhere. Regarding third cycle, some experiences have been better than others. The General Council has insisted that if students are sent abroad, Provinces and Foundations must pay special attention to three points: community life, accompaniment, and the possibility of some pastoral activity. It

is not easy for the General Council to co-ordinate this aspect of Spiritan life because it can only make suggestions and give help when asked.

An international experience during the time of formation is becoming ever more necessary in view of the directions that the Congregation is now taking. It is a demanding experience, both for those who receive and for the students themselves. But we feel it is the course that must be followed for the future and we fully support the exchange of students between circumscriptions as well as that of formators, which is already being done in some places.

3.2.2.3 Meetings of Formators

These meetings have continued on the regional level. In South America and the Caribbean, they have been centred on the international novitiate. Europe has continued with its meetings that have now taken place over a long period. Three meetings were held for the whole of Africa, to which Superiors of circumscriptions were also invited. Whenever possible, a member of the General Council took part in these assemblies. For a variety of reasons, there was no meeting of formators at the level of the Congregation during the last six years. Emphasis was put rather on strengthening the regional meetings and going deeper into the suggestions made at Enugu (1991). Economic considerations also played their part. However, it would be good to arrange such a meeting in the coming years.

3.2.2.4 General Councillor for Formation

Three of the General Councillors, each from a different continent and with experience of formation, formed a team that dealt with questions relating to formation. During visits to circumscriptions having formation houses, we tried to ensure that at least one Councillor would give these communities special attention. In fact, the co-ordinator of the team visited nearly all the formation communities. We felt it would not be good to limit one Councillor exclusively to the area of formation; this would lose sight of the fact that formation is an integral part of the total life of the Congregation and must be seen and evaluated with this reality in mind.

The suggestion of the General Chapter, that one General Councillor should have authority to co-ordinate the programmes of formation in dialogue with the Major Superiors and formation teams (Cf. Itaiçi 36.3.3), proved to be non-viable because it goes contrary to the Rule of Life and the style of work adopted by the General Council.

For three years, the General Council was helped by Fr. Albert Perrier as Secretary for Formation. His work consisted largely in carrying out the requests of the General Chapter: the drawing up of the Guide, the diffusion of information, making a list of needs of formation personnel, contact with other Institutes etc. There is no longer a Secretary as such, but the Secretariat continues as the responsibility of one of the Councillors. Another Secretary may prove to be necessary, depending on what is expected of the General Council in the area of Formation.

3.2.2.5 Mutual support

In the first place, one must put the solidarity that exists regarding finance. Many of our formation programmes depend almost entirely on external help and Provinces which are in a position to do so have helped considerably.

Mutual support is also important regarding personnel. For example, there is one Canadian helping in Paraguay, another in Haiti, a Portuguese Spiritan in Mexico, Irish confreres in WAF, FOI, Brazil and SCAF, French confreres in FAC and Angola etc. These are just a few examples. And we should not forget the help given by those who receive confreres for special studies, as in France, Duquesne University, Ireland, Switzerland, Belgium and many others.

This solidarity demands accurate information, clarity of objectives, contracts etc. Many difficulties could be avoided if there were better planning and understanding between the circumscriptions concerned. The General Council can give considerable help in this area if it is asked and briefed well in advance, which unfortunately is not always the case. Usually we are only told when there are problems and it is then too late to intervene.

3.2.2.6 On-going Formation

On-going formation was the principal theme of the Enlarged General Council at Dakar, showing how important it is considered to be. The second part of the *Guide for Spiritan Formation* spells out the directions that we would like to see it take. We feel that slowly we are coming to recognise that without on-going formation the quality of our religious missionary life would be seriously compromised.

If, on the one hand, sabbaticals and renewal courses are seen as important, we are also appreciating more clearly the importance of community life, seeing that it is in our daily living that formation takes place, slowly transforming us into the image of the One who has called us.

The Spiritan month in Europe (now transformed into weeks) continues to be well supported and produces good results. A similar experience has taken place in North America. Tentative plans have been drawn up for a centre of Spiritan formation in Africa.

3.2.2.7 A period of pastoral experience

Such a period is foreseen in all our formation programmes, the aims and objectives of which vary according to the time at which it comes in the programme. In some circumscriptions, the small number of candidates and the funds available make it possible for students to go to far off countries and experience different cultures. Elsewhere, the large number of candidates and financial constraints means that this 'stage' has to be done in their own country but efforts are still made to find an area where a new cultural milieu can be experienced. In all cases, finding suitable communities and '*accompagneurs*' remains a problem.

3.2.2.8 The formation of Formators

A big effort has been made by the different circumscriptions to prepare teachers and formators. Sometimes, circumscriptions strongly resent the fact that young confreres are re-called to train as formators. Courses are available for formators but we still do not have a course for Spiritan formators as such. The increase in vocations in some countries means that the number of formators is insufficient so we must take care that the quality of formation offered is not compromised as a result. Sometimes it will even be necessary to sacrifice a mission in order to complete a formation team, so as not to lose the favourable moment.

Even though Itaici recognised the responsibility of the General Council regarding the distribution of formators (Itaici 36.3.2), the structure of the Congregation reduces its possibility for intervention to suggestions and pressure in the case of an evident necessity. The preparation and appointment of formators are the responsibility of Provinces and Foundations. Also, there are not as many formators available as one would imagine.

3.2.2.9 Programme of studies

We do not always have control of the programmes followed by our students because they are studying in institutions that do not belong to our Congregation. Even in our own institutions, candidates for the priesthood have to follow the official curriculum laid down by the universal Church or the local Church where they happen to be.

But it is noteworthy that the missiological element is receiving more emphasis in our programmes, and in this respect, the pastoral experience exerts a considerable influence in that it demands reflection and analysis of the lived experience on the part of the candidate. The same applies to the area of Justice and Peace.

In general, we can say that our students receive a good academic formation and for those destined to the priesthood, we try to give a professional training in accordance with the demands of mission today. However, the first years of missionary life show that if a good academic formation is essential, the other aspects of formation are just as important or even more so.

3.2.3 Spiritan History - Anniversaries (*cf. I/D no. 54*)

The strength of a tree is in its roots, invisible and easily forgotten. Each generation of Spiritans has to reflect again on its identity and try to be faithful to it in a creative way. Living as we do in a period of multiple changes, many of us seem to feel instinctively that one of the sources of clarity and energy is to be found in our own particular tradition. Perhaps this is the moment to mark out the signposts which indicate the path we should take through the maze of events.

Some of our confreres have dedicated a large part or even all of their lives to examining the signs from the past which help us to interpret the signs of our own day. Perhaps we have come to appreciate their contribution more than we did in the past, which is so necessary for throwing light on our charism, i.e. on the special gift that the Spirit gives us for our particular mission.

3.2.3.1 Our patrimony, a source of inspiration

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3.2.3.2 The opportunity offered by our Spiritan Anniversaries

There are special moments in time which are particularly apt for making an inventory of our history; our anniversaries are surely such a moment. In several circumscriptions of the Congregation, groups have been set up to promote historical research and some confreres have already published the fruits of their personal investigations.

To capitalise on this moment, the General Council named a Co-ordinator, Fr. Jean-Claude Pariat. In 1994, he organised a meeting of historians from different parts of the Congregation. It was a useful meeting and it resulted in the creation, with the approval of the General Council, of a commission called the International Group for History and Anniversaries (GIHA). Its mandate was to prepare for the anniversaries of 2002 and 2003 and, more extensively, to encourage all confreres to dig deeper into their Spiritan traditions (cf. Itaiçi 41).

3.2.3.3 The work of the 'GIHA' commission and an appeal for the collaboration of all

The Commission began to tackle the works requested by Itaiçi (no. 41). It invited circumscriptions to collaborate in writing the history of the Congregation and to collect texts and a list of events for a Diary.

Three meetings have taken place since 1994, the latest being a two week session at Chevilly in September 1997. Here is a list of the projects started in response to the wishes of the Chapter of Itaiçi. They involved the collaboration of many confreres throughout the world.

- **An Album**, aimed at the general public, describing the 300 year history of the Spiritan missionary service. If they so wish, circumscriptions will be able to insert some pages which outline their own particular history. This Album should appear around Easter 1998.
- **A Diary**, which each day recalls the anniversary of significant events in the history of the whole Congregation or particular circumscriptions, with a short text from our Spiritan heritage. A sample will be submitted to the General Chapter of 1998.

- **A collection of Significant Texts** which have forged our Spiritan identity and are foundational to our missionary service. It could also be the nucleus for a future Spiritan anthology. The texts will be accompanied by a commentary putting them in their historical context. It is hoped that some examples will be available for presentation to the General Chapter.
- **A new biography** of Francis Libermann.
- **Further ideas** will be presented to the General Chapter regarding the commemoration of our anniversaries, both at local level and for the whole of the Congregation.
- **Local Celebrations.** Another task of the Group is to encourage old and new circumscriptions to write their own histories, and to draw up their programmes for the local celebration of the anniversaries. This could include a spiritual preparation (including retreats and Spiritan pilgrimages), new pastoral projects based on the commemorations, local exhibitions, assemblies and colloquia, etc.

3.2.4 Our Spiritan Archives

3.2.4.1 Protecting our inheritance

If we are aware of our history today, it is largely thanks to our predecessors who took care to record and preserve what was happening - the great events as well as the small. Each community kept a daily journal, missionaries wrote up their trek books, letters were carefully filed away, personal documents of deceased confreres were kept as well as photos recording the development of missions. They felt it was their duty to record these things for future generations of Spiritans. Somehow, today, we seem to have lost many of these good habits. Perhaps the ease of communication that we enjoy with each other has diverted our minds from the duty of communicating with those who will come after us. We are in danger of losing much of our history simply because of our failure to record and preserve, and this in a period when so many new provinces, foundations and projects are coming to birth (Cf. I/D 54).

3.2.4.2 The service of the General Archives: to protect and make accessible

The General Archives are the deposit of a major part of the history of our Congregation and its members. The General Council has been very conscious of this fact during its mandate and has taken steps to improve and enlarge the place where the documents of our past are kept. It has also looked at plans for the computerisation of the archives to make them accessible to a larger public both within and outside the Congregation.

The Province of France has kindly made more space available for the archives at Chevilly, for which we are very grateful.

A plan for the possible computerisation of the catalogues of our archives was sent to the Abbey of Maredsous for examination. Their estimate for the work (around 60,000 US dollars) was discussed by the Council and was considered

to be too high. A further problem is that once the programme is completed, it remains the property of the Abbey which would have control of access, additions and modifications. A sub-committee, composed of Spiritans expert in computerisation and of some constant users of the archives, was set up by the General Council to discuss alternative methods. Their proposals are awaited. There was an official visitation of the General Archives in December 1994 by James Hurley, the General Secretary, and Jean-Michel Jolibois, a General Councillor.

A meeting of European Archivists took place at the Generalate in June 1996. Following a session with the General Council, it was decided that these archivists would draw up a short directory, approved by the General Council, for the use of archivists throughout the Congregation. This work is still in progress.

Because the General Council is very much aware of the importance of languages in the General Archives, it approved the nomination of Fr. Henry Pass as an occasional assistant to the General Archivist, Fr. Ghislain de Banville, for the classification of documents in English and to render help to anglophone researchers.

During this Administration, some of the archives which were kept in Rome have been transferred to Chevilly, and arrangements are being made for the gradual transfer of many more. The Council decided that, henceforth, only the documents of the last two preceding Administrations would remain in Rome.

Conclusion

In concluding this part of the Report devoted to our sources of inspiration, we must stress that there are many more sources that have not been mentioned. We are thinking particularly of our daily Spiritan life, contacts in our apostolate, personal prayer and liturgy. But one of the most important is our life together, a source of both great joys and great sufferings which can all prove to be very precious.

3.3 OUR LIFE TOGETHER; *COR UNUM ET ANIMA UNA*

“In keeping with our ideal of a life that is both fraternal and apostolic, we take for our motto the words used to describe the early Christian communities: ‘One heart and one soul’” (cf. Acts 4: 32) (SRL 7).

The motto of our Congregation is not outmoded: it remains, more than ever, a reality and a challenge to our Congregation. Our life together is one of the principal fields for carrying out our creative fidelity. It is a large and complex workshop where there are both macroscopic and microscopic elements. It includes our life in community, but also our life in circumscriptions and in the Congregation itself. It realises itself within the framework of an organisation set down in the Rule of Life; it also depends for its practical expression on solidarity in many areas, including that of finance.

3.3.1 How Do We Live Together in the Congregation of Today?

3.3.1.1 Our Community Life: a wide range of situations, some good and some not so good

“The Congregation has adopted life in community as its founding principle. Its members shall all live in community at all times” (The Reglements of 1849, quoted in SRL 27)

There are many large communities in the Congregation. They are the administrative centres like the Generalate and provincial headquarters (which sometimes include Procures), houses of formation and houses of retirement for our older confreres. Some Provinces, like Portugal, have opted for large communities that include several works. In some of these large communities, one can find good relations, a lively liturgy, an atmosphere of work in the service of the Congregation and the mission, an openness to the exterior world through hospitality and the many different relationships stemming from our work and our friendships.

But sometimes the atmosphere, relationships and the liturgy are not so good when, for example, confreres cannot agree on a style of liturgical prayer, or each gets on with his work without much communication with the others. In fact, it is not enough to live in large numbers under the same roof in order to have a community life. Sometimes, several communities are created on the same property in order to concentrate attention on particular works. Elsewhere, confreres live in one community but they sub-divide into smaller teams which meet regularly to discuss their life and prayer in a more personal way. It is something to be recommended for the larger formation communities. During our visits, some students have remarked on the lack of communication among themselves as well as between themselves and their formators.

There is always the danger in big communities that one can live in an organisation that is working well without communicating very much, getting on with one's work without feeling much responsibility for the whole. Some people shut themselves up in such communities, which become, for them, mini-societies. The ideal Spiritan is not somebody who stays as much as possible within his community; a Spiritan community must be open to the world around it.

Is it possible to dream of a normal Spiritan community? One could see it as a community of three, four, five confreres where they get to know each other well, live together as brothers, speak to each other every day about their missionary work, work out a common missionary project, welcome together the friends and helpers of each one, pray together in a way that is both simple and creative. Such communities do exist and it is a blessing for the members and those living round about.

But there is no community that does not experience some difficulties. The motto, ‘wash your dirty linen *within* the family’ is not always followed. Some confreres suffer a great deal without saying anything, while others impose their own wills without realising it. A community that really cares about itself will adopt a certain style of life. There will be times when they will sit down

together to listen to each other. This will give a person the opportunity and the courage to point out deficiencies, to reveal those things that he finds difficult to bear. Such occasions of mutual listening and evaluation should exist in every community.

Some communities consist of two confreres. This is sufficient for the Lord to be in their midst: "*When two or three are gathered together...*" But it is not the ideal because one of them will often be on trek or on holiday or at one of the numerous meetings which are ever on the increase.

Finally, there are far too many confreres who are not living in a Spiritan community. We can flick through the *Etat du Personnel* and see all those missions where there is only one name, or the long list at the end of each Provincial entry indicating those who are living alone. How has this come about? There are many different reasons: the organisation of parishes or missions in the local Churches, the shortage of personnel. One hears it said, "*This is a parish for one priest*", or "*There is nobody to replace Father so-and-so who has had to go home, at least for the moment*".

Some say they have lost the habit or even the capacity to live in community. They are frightened or are not keen to try it when the possibility arises. Some European missionaries, when they return home after a long period because they are sick or tired, prefer to look for a parish in their country of origin rather than enter into the network of communities and the missionary engagements of their home Province.

Our Rule of Life speaks of the possibility of regional Spiritan communities, but the conditions and the form that it requires hardly seem to exist in practice. In some cases it is a support for confreres, in others it is just a fiction.

3.3.1.2 The challenge of international, inter-cultural and inter-generational communities

We must not imagine that the difficulties of community life begin with heterogeneous communities. It often happens that homogeneous communities, living continually under the same roof, do not get on together. One superior said of two confreres: "*I will have to separate them so that they can live together!*" Nevertheless, it is true that certain differences can create special difficulties.

Most of our circumscriptions today, including the Provinces, are international and inter-cultural. It is not primarily the result of an ideological or theological choice, or a part of mission strategy; it is rather the evolution of the situation of Spiritan mission that is the prime cause. The document on Organisation shows some aspects of this evolution. The majority of confreres are ready to live in inter-cultural communities, but some have reservations because they do not feel it is necessary, or they feel ill-prepared for the experience, or simply that they do not believe in looking for trouble!

Some circumscriptions have been drawn quickly into internationality, while others have remained rather homogeneous, and some national groups try to keep things as they are. In a different context, one sometimes finds that confreres who come from the same country try to maintain a special

relationship between themselves within a larger circumscription. The General Council can appreciate the value of relations between those from the same country or culture. We have tried to avoid appointing a young confrere to a circumscription if there is nobody else there from his own country or culture. But it is good if these national groups, who meet together from time to time, let the others know something of their discussions and their ideas. Diversity is a richness provided there is also communication.

These cultural differences often go together with differences between generations. Some young African Spiritans, appointed to a mission with an older European confrere, feel that they are still regarded as children, and that little space is made for their ideas and creativity. When this is pointed out to the older confrere, he is usually astonished; the last thing he wants is to prevent the young people from taking initiatives. This shows how important it is in community to communicate and to set aside time for things like that to be said to each other.

A very important point in international communities is the question of finance. Our Rule of Life asks us to share our goods. Some confreres say, *"It is not possible to have everything in common; we do not have the same system in our Provinces of origin; we do not have the same attitude to money"*. So they use money individually, especially the money that comes from their own country or their Province of origin.

This is why the General Council has asked Provinces to look again at the way they support their members on mission abroad; that financial support should not be given to individual members but rather to the circumscription or the work. We have often reminded people, by writing to all circumscriptions and orally during our visits, that any money we receive belongs to the community and that all our possessions belong to our circumscription.

These questions are raised elsewhere in this report, regarding formation, organisation, finance and solidarity.

3.3.1.3 Living and working in a circumscription

Our circumscriptions vary greatly as regards their size and their nature. Different forms are evolving. They are an essential element of our life and work in the Congregation. It is at this level that decisions are taken and structures established for our collaboration with the local Churches. It is normally the superior of the circumscription who signs the contract with the bishop, and who discusses appointments of confreres with the same Ordinary. It is also at this level that a Spiritan project is drawn up for a particular country, with an organisation of services, finance and exterior support. Finally, it is at this level that relations are established with the rest of the Congregation.

One promising development in the life of circumscriptions has been the establishment of periodical meetings where confreres can share experiences with each other in an atmosphere of fraternity and celebration. During our visits we have realised how much these meetings can be a real source of inspiration for the confreres and the Congregation as a whole.

3.3.1.4 Some aspects of relations between circumscriptions

Relationships and structures do not evolve automatically, yet an evolution is sometimes necessary if the organisation is to correspond with the new reality of Spiritan mission. Quite apart from the more technical questions regarding organisation, it is good to remember that our life together as Spiritans is at stake when it comes to the way we face up to these changes.

The General Council has intervened in several instances to encourage a harmonious evolution. We have already referred to our reminders and directives regarding the sharing of goods.

At the moment, a new Province of Central Africa is being prepared which will probably bring together the present members of the Central African Foundation (as their Province of origin) and the confreres in the four districts of the region. The superiors of these circumscriptions met together and reached a consensus for a single province with one provincial, but with regions in each country having a certain degree of autonomy. They have also foreseen that the goods of all the circumscriptions will become the property of the single province. The confreres of these circumscriptions were then consulted and it seems that the plan worked out by the superiors will be ratified by the members. The reality of the project will then have to be lived out in practice, but there are already indications that we have here an important example of a creative evolution of our *Cor unum et Anima una*.

In Malawi, there was a group of confreres who had worked in Nigeria and who had answered the request of a bishop to help the local Church. The former General Council asked this Spiritan group to welcome local Spiritan vocations. Eventually, young confreres from WAF were appointed there, a Postulancy was opened and a First Cycle formation community for the SCAR region. But the Malawi group and the WAF team were still distinct entities, even though relations between the two were good. Then, at the suggestion of the visitors from the General Council, the confreres agreed to form a single international group for Malawi. One of the principal reasons for accepting this change was the need to give the right signals to the candidates for Spiritan life who were being trained in the country, to assure them that the *Cor Unum...* was not just an empty phrase.

Several circumscriptions exist in Nigeria. The problem for the General Council and the Province of Nigeria fifteen years ago was not the existence of this triple structure but the fact that vocations from the region of Makurdi were joining the WAF. Despite several meetings, things remained as they were. It seemed to the present General Council that this was a possible source of tensions and that the arrangement could be seen by the local people as a counter-witness.

A consensus was reached after two meetings between representatives of the WAF, the Province of Nigeria, the Districts of Makurdi and Kogi, the Superiors of the region of anglophone West Africa and members of the General Council. All agreed that in the future, a new kind of Province of Nigeria would be set up, more decentralised and with regions with their own superiors, somewhat like the Province of France or the projected Province of Central Africa. All future Spiritan vocations in Nigeria would enter this Province. Those from

Nigeria who are already members of WAF will be free to choose to stay there or join the newly constituted Province. But so as not to disturb the welcome rapid growth of the WAF, all accepted that the change would not take place immediately.

Meanwhile, joint missionary projects and vocational work will be launched by Nigerian members of WAF and the present Province of Nigeria. A commission has also been formed of representatives of the two circumscriptions to elaborate further the plan for a new type of Province in Nigeria.

In the United States, some Irish confreres are organised into groups which depend on their Province of origin. The situation originates from the dramatic events at the end of the Nigerian civil war when a large number of confreres suddenly had to leave the country and many looked for a new pastoral engagement in the New World. Once the structure was in place, they were joined by other Irish confreres. It seems that difficulties arose because of new methods of fund-raising, creating confusion between the networks of the Irish confreres and those operated in common by the two Provinces in the United States. The General Council referred to the orientations of Itaiçi and the more precise guidelines of the document on the Organisation of the Congregation to propose the following lines of evolution.

The Irish groups responded to particular needs in a difficult period, but it does not seem desirable that a special structure based on nationality should continue in the United States outside of the existing Provinces. Any appointments in the future should be made to one of the Provinces of the country. Plans for the collection of funds should be discussed with the Office of the two Provinces. Apart from the operations run by the two Provinces, there should be no other fund-raising in the name of the Congregation by the method of lists of addresses and letters. The superiors concerned have accepted a series of guidelines which correspond to the suggestions of the General Council. More dialogue will be needed for their concrete acceptance by the confreres.

It seems that the Spirit is breathing today in the Congregation so that we will be both faithful and creative in the living out of our motto. The result is not just the emergence of unity but also of confreres coming to accept new perspectives. Many, particularly the younger members, are longing for an authentic community life. This feeling finds an echo in our mission which wants to see itself as a witness to unity. Without any doubt, the Spirit is inviting us at this moment to take decisions regarding our community life and our life together in the Congregation.

3.3.2 Organisation

3.3.2.1 Recent developments

The way we organise ourselves must take into account the changes in the life of peoples and the Church, and certain concrete evolutions in our Congregation.

- Most of the Churches that we helped to found and to grow in the past have now greatly developed: we leave the leadership to people from those

countries and try to adapt our presence to one that is less weighty in numbers and more specific as regards the tasks undertaken.

- At the same time, many of these Churches are becoming missionary themselves: their young people are knocking at the door of the Congregation, diversifying the origin of our members and encouraging the growth of new Foundations and Provinces. We are no longer present in these Churches simply as foreigners, but also as the place where we have our origins and our roots, thus leading to a new type of presence (e.g. works of formation).
- The Churches of the North, from which we nearly all came originally, are becoming more and more mission areas to which we feel called. Our traditional presence in these areas - that of missionaries training people and sending them abroad - is now expanded to a more explicit commitment to missionary work ad intra.
- We are getting calls to undertake new missionary engagements, both in geographical areas from which we have so far been absent (e.g. Asia), and in special sociological situations (national and international political bodies, networks of mass communication, refugees etc.). Our places of missionary involvement are becoming more numerous, more diversified and geographically more extended.
- Because of these developments and the increased mobility of people beyond national and linguistic frontiers, our communities and circumscriptions have become more international and inter-cultural.
- The strengthening of regional trans-national solidarity, both on the politico-economic and ecclesial front, are pushing us to look again at the links between circumscriptions and particularly to find a new balance in the area of support and mutual help.
- Our circumscriptions of appointment (Districts and Provincial, Apostolic or International Groups), have all followed a similar evolution: they are limited in number and have an increased internationality. But, until now, they have still retained their different types of status.

3.3.2.2 The requests made at Itaici

Basing itself on these changes, which are pressing us to modify our system of organisation, the General Chapter of 1992 identified some tasks to be addressed:

- A decentralised Congregation, like our own, calls for a special type of leadership and animation from the General Council in certain areas (formation, choices to be made by evolving circumscriptions, solidarity between North and South etc.) (cf. Itaici 33.1).
- *“Because the times are changing and there are new situations in our fields of activity, an evaluation of our management system seems to be needed”* (Itaici 33.4).

- *“In our decentralised Congregation”*, an important part of the collaboration and solidarity amongst ourselves takes the form of a movement towards regionalisation that the General Council will strive to promote, especially favouring collaboration around Foundations and new Provinces (cf. Itaici 39).
- *“The General Council was asked to prepare a complete revision”* of Chapter 7 of the Spiritan Rule of Life (Itaici 40).

3.3.2.3 Developments since 1992

a) In the Foundations

The official birth of SCAF (South Central African Foundation) came from the efforts of four Districts or Groups (South Africa, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe), and its erection was the occasion for a close dialogue between these circumscriptions and the General Council, both in looking for suitable organisational structures and in taking the decisions of implantation.

FAC and the founding Districts have moved closer to the creation of a new Province; in the near future, a Province of Central Africa should be born, made up of several regions, each having a certain autonomy.

Some foundations with a degree of autonomy (WAF and FOI) continue to consolidate; others are still structurally dependent on their founding District (Puerto Rico and Congo Kinshasa), There are Groups or Districts which are accepting young people while not yet having the formal title of ‘Foundation’ (Mexico, Paraguay, Haiti).

The FAC and WAF Foundations have made considerable progress towards autonomy regarding formation personnel. With others, the progress has been slower. Financial self-sufficiency remains very limited everywhere, above all in those regions experiencing economic hardship or where the growth of the Foundation has been very rapid. The solidity of a Foundation's growth depends partly on this self-sufficiency, helped by the solidarity coming from the rest of the Congregation.

The support of Districts for their Foundation is seen particularly in personnel for administration and formation, and in financial and material aid (buildings). The future co-operation between Districts and Foundations with an autonomous status (WAF, FAC, FOI, SCAF) is assured by the regular meetings (annual) of the superiors of the circumscriptions, but also by the permanent presence of representatives of the Districts on the Council of the Foundation, as well as confreres from the Foundation on the Councils of the Districts: this facilitates agreement on common projects.

b) In the life of the regions

Some regions have clearly deepened their relationships as a result of the birth of a Foundation or its consolidation: e.g. the region around the SCAF, as well as those around FOI and FAC. The meetings in Nigeria regarding the Spiritan presence and vocations policy in that country have led to closer relations between the WAF, the Province of Nigeria and other anglophone Districts involved, in pursuit of a future vision which is both unified and diversified.

Several other formation projects have led to closer relations between circumscriptions: the hispanophone novitiate in Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico, Mexico, Paraguay, Haiti), the inter-provincial novitiate in Dublin, the preparatory month for perpetual vows in Europe, the periods of spiritual renewal organised in Europe and North America.

Other needs and projects that have drawn circumscriptions together are connected with the apostolate: the missionary project in Rostock (Europe), support in Guinea for the work with refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia (anglophone circumscriptions of West Africa), support for the undertakings in the Philippines and Taiwan (Oceania), a new plan for work in the Dominican Republic (North America). These initiatives are the ideas of the regions themselves or are in response to suggestions from the General Council.

The structures for decision-making in the regions are, above all, the annual meetings of the superiors of the circumscriptions involved (with the addition of meetings of bursars, formators and other functionaries, particularly in the northern hemisphere). The setting up of more permanent structures has proved difficult and has made slow progress: the region of Oceania (Papua New Guinea and Australia) has established a permanent 'Co-ordinator', while Europe has given itself a permanent secretariat. In any case, important decisions involving the circumscriptions have to be referred to their respective Councils in conformity with SRL. Our experience so far remains too limited to be able to propose a unified structure for the administration and animation of a whole region. Perhaps the projects under way in Nigeria and Central Africa will lead to progress in this direction.

There seems to be a growing feeling throughout the Congregation that regionalisation is an important way forward for the future. There are some circumscriptions that seem to be without 'natural' partners (Angola, Algeria, Pakistan). Others feel affinities with several different 'worlds', each having a special interest for them; this is the case with North America and the Caribbean.

3.3.2.4 Some basic principles for a suitable organisation

The guidelines from Itaiçi, along with the advice from the Enlarged Council at Dakar and the experience of the General Council, have led us to stress the following principles regarding organisation (most of which are already operative):

- We favour the autonomy and responsibility of the new circumscriptions of origin (Foundations and Provinces), both as regards their apostolic orientations and their human and financial resources; this autonomy is based on that of the local Churches to whose missionary responsibility they give expression.
- Each Spiritan retains permanent ties with his circumscription of origin because of the roots he has in a particular family, people, Church.
- Living in circumscriptions and communities that are mainly international and inter-cultural seems to be a clear 'sign of the times', in accordance with the Gospel and our own mission: a witness to fraternity and communion (SRL 199.1), and a stimulant to respecting the different cultures that we meet. But

the difficulties involved in international living underline the necessity to approach it without ideology or rigidity, and to prepare carefully for it both on the individual and collective level.

- With a view to solidarity between circumscriptions and the support for new circumscriptions of origin and new apostolic undertakings, we favour the building of relations between entities that are geographically close, building on those foundations that already exist at the human level (peoples, languages) and the ecclesial level (Episcopal conferences, apostolic regions).
- When circumscriptions of appointment are international and of a modest size, it helps our missionary commitment to be more dynamic, inventive and flexibly adapted to different and changing situations. The unification of the status of these circumscriptions is desirable (Districts and various types of Groups): a simplification of the situation will encourage responsibility and solidarity.
- Unity and solidarity within the Congregation remain crucial: a sharing of our spiritual, human and financial resources, under the direction and with the support of the General Council. The areas where this attention is most needed are those of initial formation and new undertakings which are largely international or particularly difficult.
- A complete revision of Chapter VII of the Rule of Life does not appear to be possible or necessary for the moment. Particular points of the Rule can be modified if necessary to ensure coherence between the Rule of Life and the decisions of the 1998 General Chapter.
- The most useful course for the moment would be to highlight the directions that recent changes and events seem to indicate we should take in fidelity to our vocation. For the circumscriptions being born or in a state of transition, we need, above all, criteria to guide the present and future evolutions. This is the idea behind the pre-capitular document presented along with this report: *The Organisation of the Congregation*.

3.3.3 Finance And Solidarity

3.3.3.1 Analysis

The global economic environment

It is evident that the economic and financial situation of the Congregation is a part of today's world which itself is going through a very troubled period. There have been recessions in several Western countries, difficulties and quasi-bankruptcy in the social systems of the more developed countries, recent falls in interest rates and crises in the stock exchanges (for those who live off interest) and a continuation, or even worsening, of the gap in wealth and development between the North and the South.

On the other hand, the endemic problems which have continued in Africa (where we have most of our Foundations and young Provinces) have derailed all the plans, calculations and efforts that have been made with a view to a achieving a certain degree of financial autonomy.

The Development of the Congregation

The development of our Congregation in Africa is well known. That is where most of our Foundations and young Provinces are to be found, with a large number of vocations. There are expenses for formation, for necessary buildings and for the maintenance of our confreres. Many groups have also grown - Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Oceania, Pakistan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Mexico and Paraguay - for which a part of their running expenses comes from solidarity.

On the other hand, we have seen the ageing and progressive reduction in numbers of confreres in the so-called 'Western' circumscriptions and in their traditional Districts.

This means, in financial terms, that the places where we can find financial help are getting less and the places where it is needed are becoming more. Faced with these two divergent tendencies, it is not difficult to foresee grave financial difficulties ahead.

Community life and style of life

We must give praise here to the great generosity of so many circumscriptions and confreres who, in the silence of their lives and work, give an outstanding example of poverty and simplicity of life. They are very many and are to be found everywhere. It is to be hoped that their example will be followed by all those others, in the North, South, East and West, whose style of life is not very helpful in giving an evangelical response to the difficulties of today (SRL 70-73).

3.3.3.2 The search for an answer

The General Administration has tried to find an answer to these difficulties, especially by setting in motion the recommendations of the last General Chapter.

Solidarity

We have made a big effort to increase our solidarity. Between 1993 and 1997, we have almost doubled the amounts distributed by Cor Unum, with the help of many people. Some give everything they have to spare to Cor Unum. There are others who make a contribution but who also maintain their long-standing commitments to particular circumscriptions. Each year, all are informed about the gifts and requests, the latter growing proportionately far quicker than the former. It looks as though we reached the peak during 1997; we have reason to fear that the income from solidarity will now begin to decrease while the requests for help will continue to augment. So the problems are obvious.

Retirement and health funds

A retirement fund has been established in accordance with the request of the last Chapter. This does not represent a total and definitive solution but a beginning and a help. This fund has been functioning since January 1995.

A study has been undertaken by the association of General Bursars in Rome of the problems of a health fund for developing countries. A group of experts was involved. The first reply was negative, i.e. that it is simply not possible to create a fund capable of meeting all health needs: an enormous capital would be needed. At the moment, they are investigating the possibility of trying to cover exceptionally high health expenses (above 50,000 dollars).

Reserve Funds

Following the request of the Chapter, a few circumscriptions have begun to set up a reserve fund, but with great difficulty. All available resources are needed simply to meet the normal yearly budget.

The last Chapter suggested that Cor Unum help the circumscriptions to set up reserve funds. This seems to us to be unrealistic and quite impossible, because Cor Unum only manages to reply to 60 % of the ordinary needs of circumscriptions. So how could it possibly set up reserves?

Moreover, reserve funds as they are understood (investments in securities or liquidities) can in no way be looked upon as a panacea. For a fund to be of any use, it needs a constant injection of capital in order to keep up with inflation and the needs of a growing circumscription. Otherwise, it will soon become a drop in the ocean.

A meeting of Bursars and Superiors of circumscriptions: A Finance Council

The General Council organised a meeting with bursars and superiors of circumscriptions to study the needs of the new circumscriptions. Throughout the week, we looked at the problems and possible solutions. Several ideas emerged, like attention being given to the possibility of small local enterprises, an appeal to the local Church, the creation of a network of friends and benefactors, salaries from confreres, rent from property, fund-raising etc.

The Office in Brussels and the *Spiritan Foundation* in the United States

The plans for an Office in Brussels and the Spiritan Foundation in the United States were examined in depth and their establishment was greatly encouraged.

We also looked at the question of a Finance Council. Frs. Noel O'Meara, the Provincial Bursar of Ireland, and André Loos, the procurator in Paris, were named members of this Council by the General Council.

3.3.3.3 The challenge for tomorrow

We can say that, with the help of everybody, the economic and financial situation is still under control so far. We have no debts and we have not touched the funds, apart from the interest. The capital of our funds has even increased in value. But the future outlook is more somber: our financial resources do not seem to be adequate to keep up with the rhythm of development and expansion of the Congregation.

The desperate search for money by many of our confreres, for well known and understandable reasons, can easily create a very negative atmosphere where the preoccupation will always be money, money, and more money...

3.4 DIFFERENT ECCLESIAL TYPES OF SPIRITAN VOCATION

3.4.1 Spiritan Brothers

3.4.1.1 Some statistics

The percentage of Brothers in the Congregation in 1992 was 10%. In October 1997, it was around 9% (5% for those in temporary vows). Ten Brothers have made perpetual profession since 1990.

The number of candidates to be brothers is still small in the African Provinces and Foundations, but in the last years, there has been an increase in some of them. Five members of FAC have chosen this form of vocation, four in the WAF, one in the FOI and four in Nigeria; they are specialising in the areas of health, teaching, building, mechanics, catechetics, the media, management...

3.4.1.2 Implementation of the requests of the Chapter of 1992 (Itaici No. 34)

"Importance should be given to the formation of brothers", not just on the professional level, but also their religious and missionary formation (theology, languages...).

- *The Guide for Spiritan Formation*, both initial and on-going (published in 1997), gives directives which apply to every Spiritan or future Spiritan, whether he is called to live his religious missionary consecration as a priest or as a brother (GSF 1). The level of education demanded for entry into the postulancy is the same in both cases: the completion of secondary school (GSF 47). The initial formation of brothers is no less exigent than for Priests; there are just a few extra precisions made regarding the latter (GSF 69).
- In practice, the directives of the Guide are generally applied. Some circumscriptions ask candidates who wish to be Brothers to complete, with future priests, not just the novitiate (in conformity with SRL 135) but also a postulancy stretching over several years and including an intellectual formation that is both religious and secular. Others send them to centres of human and religious formation that are not clerical. Spiritan Brothers are invited, like the others, to set time aside for a serious period of on-going formation.

Young professed have been able to attain a high level of professional competence in different fields (health, agriculture, catechetics...) as well as a good knowledge of a foreign language.

One of the big difficulties regarding initial formation is that the centres of professional or religious training suitable for Brother candidates are often far away from other formation communities, making it difficult for them to receive

community formation and personal direction from Spiritan formators. The few candidates in a given circumscription makes it impossible to create a formation community adapted to their needs. It is often a question of planning for each case as it comes.

3.4.1.3 “Sharing responsibilities”

- In several provinces, foundations, groups or districts, Brothers have been elected or named as members of the Council of the circumscription. For a long time now, Brothers have been bursars of circumscriptions or communities. Rather more unusual, one Brother was appointed superior of a large community and two others were elected as superiors of apostolic groups.
- The Chapter of 1992 asked “*that an approach be made to the Congregation for Religious with a view to allowing Brothers to become major superiors*”. Two years later, the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod on religious life (1994) posed the same question: “*The Synod is asked to resolve the question regarding the participation of Brothers in the government of clerical or mixed Institutes...*” (no. 32). In March 1996, the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, recalled that, according to Canon Law, so-called ‘clerical’ Institutes (SRL 148) are normally ‘*governed by clerics...*’ (VC no. 60). A special commission was set up to examine the question of mixed Institutes (no. 61).

3.4.1.4 United in the same mission

The requests of the 1992 Chapter sprung from the conviction that the vocation of Brother is essential to Spiritan life. For its part, the General Council has observed that the projects of circumscriptions and the requests for personnel which come to it each year contain many kinds of service which correspond perfectly to the vocation of a Brother (education, health, rural development, communications, management, etc.).

This is why we have tried to stress the relevance of this vocation for our Spiritan mission. In 1995, we asked superiors of circumscriptions to gather different testimonies showing that this vocation is a response to particular calls of mission today. No doubt for many good reasons, there were not many replies. Nevertheless they provided some of the material on which I/D no. 55 is based: “*Different Faces of the Spiritan Vocation*”.

Our visits and meetings have led us to believe that the different types of Spiritan vocation remain a great asset, and that this is generally appreciated. We are convinced that the calls to mission today invite us to encourage this diversity. The fact that we are a “Clerical Institute” has certain juridical consequences, as we are reminded by *Vita Consecrata*. But this must not result in us being locked into a narrow clericalism - by compromising the fraternity amongst all Spiritans or by preventing each one from developing his own identity and playing his part in the communal reflections and orientations. It demands that we look to the quality of the initial and on-going formation of everybody and that each of us takes a full part in it.

3.4.2 Lay Associates

3.4.2.1 The extension of our spirituality and charism to lay people

The Chapter of Itaici marked a significant step forward in our relationship with the Associates. For the first time, Lay Associates were invited by the General Administration to assist at a General Chapter. They had a very positive impact on the Chapter as a whole. In the final document of Itaici, the words 'lay person' appear 30 times and a whole chapter was devoted to them.

From the start of our mandate, we were convinced of the value that Spiritan spirituality could have for people who are not professed members of our Congregation. We were equally convinced of the importance of the development of the Associates for the mission of the Congregation itself. We have looked for ways to convey this belief to confreres and associates alike. We were convinced that the Spirit was behind this movement of the extension of our charism and spirituality to other non-professed groups. It was decided to send the Generalate publications to Associates and likewise to publish news of their own activities. The names of Associates who had a written engagement with the Congregation were included in the *État du Personnel*.

A General Councillor was given the special responsibility to follow the development of the Lay Associates, in accordance with the wishes of the Chapter.

3.4.2.2 North America

Thanks to the good organisation of the Associates of North America, their delegate to the Chapter was able to share the experience of Itaici with his colleagues. They thus got a good idea of what happened at the Chapter concerning themselves. During the visit to USA West, the Councillor responsible for the Associate programme was able to visit the various groups in USA East, TransCanada, Canada and USA West. These contacts helped to improve communication between themselves and the General Council. During the visit of USA East, a meeting was organised for delegates from these same Provinces. It was amazing to see how the spirituality founded on the charism of the Congregation was able to bring together all these people from such different socio-professional milieu. The non-Spiritan moderator of the meeting, a man of wide experience, could not get over it.

The different groups of North America agreed that an Associate is a person who is committed in a formal way in the Congregation.

Some News

- USA East: the Chapter gave its support to the Vision Statement of the Associates and decided to offer them an on-going formation in Spiritan spirituality.
- USA West worked out its own definition of a Spiritan Associate, with its orientations and methods. Associates are involved in the formation programme of Spiritans.

- In TransCanada, the movement continues to develop with an orientation towards the marginalised. In Canada, there are no new members for the moment.

3.4.2.3 Europe

The Associates of Europe were less well informed about the Chapter of Itaici than were those of North America. The groups which grew up in the different circumscriptions had not yet created common structures which would facilitate contacts between them. Also, their delegate to the Chapter left the movement with no further communication on her part.

The General Council suggested that there would be just one Associate delegate at the Enlarged Council of Dakar, and that the delegate would be elected from Europe to help advance the setting up of some sort of European structure. A delegate was elected, but there has been little progress in the establishment of more structured relationships in Europe.

The General Councillor for Associates was able to meet the members of a Fraternity in France during the visit of the Province. He met most of the Associates in Germany during the visit and Chapters and he took part in a general meeting of associates in Holland. While visiting England, a meeting was set up with some Associate candidates who were in London at the time.

Some News

- **In Portugal**, there is much co-operation between lay people and Spiritans in several organisations. Recently, some lay missionaries left to work in Africa, amongst whom was the first Associate.
- The '*Fraternités Spiritaines*' are developing rapidly **in France**. The members are not considered as Associates because they make no formal engagement with the Congregation. Their aim is to deepen their baptismal commitment and thus participate in the universal mission of the Church, collaborating closely with the Spiritans. The *Fraternités* offer their members the chance to live their Christian life with the help of Spiritan spirituality. Some members would like to have a closer association with the Congregation and the French Province is setting up a programme for them.
- The same directions as in France are being followed in **Belgium and Martinique**.
- The **Swiss Province** sees the Associates as an opening for the birth of new types of involvement in the mission of the Church. The witness of Spiritans could be stimulating and the Congregation with its various undertakings throughout the world could open new horizons.
- The Associates in **England** have published their handbook called '*Spiritans Associates Way of Life*'. The first members made their formal commitment in 1993. A training programme has been set up and new members are presently preparing to join them.

- **Ireland** is working on a plan for Associates. They have arranged a meeting for interested lay people and a Dutch Associate has been invited to speak to them.
- General meetings of all lay people closely associated with the Province have been organised in **Germany**. The result has been a better understanding between the different groups, and between these groups and the Province.
- **Holland** has had a General Assembly of Associates. Some are presently on mission in Zimbabwe.

3.4.2.4 Other continents

- In Australia, an Associate has been working as a missionary for several years with the Spiritans in Papua New Guinea. For him, it is clear that this type of engagement has its own special character in comparison to that of other missionaries and Volunteers.
- Spiritans are working closely with lay people in **Mauritius** in a programme of inter-religious dialogue. They are working together on a Rule of Life.
- The Spiritans of the **East African Province** have clarified the meaning of Associate for themselves, and how they see those whom they are anxious to welcome to Tanzania.
- **Cameroon** has asked for information on the various programmes for Spiritan Associates.
- A programme has begun in **Brazil**. An Associate has been sent to Puerto Rico.

3.4.2.5 Development

The General Council has made a résumé of the initiatives taken so far by different circumscriptions in order to help in the search for plans of life, programmes and structures. The Councillor responsible for Associates in the last Administration used his sabbatical to write a doctoral thesis on Spiritan Lay Associates (Michael Doyle: *“Don't forget the candles”* 1994). This work has helped the General Council to get a better appreciation of all that is involved in the movement. Meanwhile, other circumscriptions have worked with lay people on different types of organisation. Most of the existing groups have received new members; none of them is very large, but they have grown in depth. Slowly, the place of Associates in the Congregation is changing: in two circumscriptions, Associates are co-ordinating the Justice and Peace work, one Province asked Associates to be moderator and secretary of the Provincial Chapter, and in another, Associates are directly involved in the formation programme.

Conclusion

From our contacts with the Associates, it is clear that spirituality is at the root of their existence. They take seriously their membership of the Church through their baptism which makes them co-responsible for mission. In looking for some way of expressing this mission, they have been attracted by Spiritan

spirituality. This also implies a solidarity with the apostolic mission of the Congregation, which in turn received its orientation from the Universal Church. For many Associates, this leads to a clear commitment to the Congregation and its mission. This can be realised in two directions: community and pastoral action.

To extract the full benefit of this commitment for the Associates and the mission of the Church, it is important that they have a contact person, preferably formally named as such, and a community with which they are associated. The contact person can let the Associates benefit from his experience so that they can enter more fully into Spiritan spirituality. The *Guide for Spiritan Formation*, aimed primarily at professed members, is much appreciated as a help towards the training of Associates. But some adaptations need to be made; the Associates have their own style of life and they must maintain its character distinct from that of the professed.

3.4.3 Spiritan Priests

At this time when the different faces of the Spiritan vocation are being renewed, Spiritan priests should also take another look at the way they are exercising their ministry.

3.4.3.1 Examples

A group of lay associates, who had a very enjoyable experience sharing the life of a Spiritan missionary community, were nevertheless surprised to find a lot of domination still existing in Spiritan life, in the relations between priests and laity, men and women.

A Spiritan bishop confessed that at the start of his ministry, he saw it as his duty to march out ahead of his flock, with them following behind. He subsequently learnt, not without suffering, that it was sometimes better for him to take up his place in the rear, following the lead of the people, encouraging them and helping them to keep to the right path.

Fr. Joseph Lécuyer, our former Superior General and an expert at Vatican II on the episcopacy, priesthood and diaconate, always insisted on one point: that by his ordination, a priest does not receive a 'power' but a 'charism', a spiritual gift with which to serve the people of God in the charity of Christ.

3.4.3.2 Experience and the search for a Spiritan missionary way of being a priest

Some Spiritan priests try to listen to the people and respect their initiatives. They trust them and allow them to develop their own cultural riches, human experience and faith. These priests learn from them. On some days, they are supporting lay people and other religious; on others, they are being supported themselves by these other people. When they bring people together, they do not put themselves above others; they are amongst the people and will only use their formal juridical authority when it is really necessary.

This attitude is especially relevant when we are in the service of the Gospel beyond frontiers, where the institutional ecclesiastical authority is hardly

recognised. The priest will call on the grace of his special vocation to bring together the members of the missionary team and the people with whom they are in contact, in the spirit of Christ.

Spiritans are certainly in the right place according to their vocation when they are trying their best to understand people in their particular culture and situation, and when they are sharing their faith by getting as close as possible to them. The official universal formulations of faith will also come, perhaps later or in another context. They will not simply be brought in from outside as something rather exotic, which try to make them acceptable by force or seduction.

As Spiritan priests, we no longer use a sort of sacred authority in relating to the people to whom we have been sent to announce the Good News of liberation, nor in relating to our confreres in the community and other collaborators. Francis Libermann told us to relate to Africans "*as servants do to their masters*". Our Rule of Life asks the superior to use his authority according to the words of Jesus in Luke 22:25: "*The greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves*". It must never happen that, following a false interpretation of the theology of "*ex opere operato*", we adopt a style diametrically opposed to the spirit of the Gospel and look for a ritual efficacy, thus running away from the call for conversion to the Gospel.

PART IV

HORIZONS AND PATHS FOR THE FUTURE

The aim of the last part of this report is to bring out the characteristics of our mission and our Spiritan life which are the basis of our hopes and direct our choices for the future - that future which we could not build alone starting from scratch.

4.1 HOW THE SPIRIT HAS BEEN LEADING US: OUR RECENT PAST

What changes can a Chapter bring about? What sort of creativity can one look for in a Congregation like ours? A rapid review of the last few decades may shed some light on these questions that are being asked in this pre-capitular period.

4.1.1 How Have We Changed?

In his *"Testament"*, Abbé Pierre says about the work that he founded, *"Emmaus is not so much what we have done as what has happened to us"*. We could say the same thing about our Congregation today.

A look back over the last thirty years brings home to us the enormous changes that have taken place in the different missionary institutes. Many of these changes were not planned: they were dictated by events. We have all experienced the same sort of breakdowns and successes, as if our evolutions were echoing those going on in the world and in the Church. We have not just changed in isolation; there have been crises and dramas in our institutes, sparked off by political events or wars, by social changes like secularisation and by some of the changes in the Church since Vatican II.

So there have been unavoidable changes. But others can be ascribed to the initiatives of individuals (e.g. some of the experiences presented at Itaici), or those of groups and circumscriptions (e.g. the starting of Foundations in Africa), or those of meetings at the level of the Congregation, like the opening towards Asia [Pakistan] at Carcavelos in 1976.

We have sometimes come up against paradoxes. There have been surprises, despite projects being well prepared beforehand. Some failures have led to very fruitful lessons; some apparent successes turned out to be Pyrrhic victories. The opposition to certain projects by lay people and African priests has sometimes proved to be a valuable lesson for European confreres. Some young confreres, who had been carefully trained, have left us a short time after their first appointment. Vatican II itself could be seen as a failure because it has not been able to fill the Churches; but on the other hand, it has produced a new style of Church life and mission that would seem to be ultimately more fruitful than the passing glory of favourable statistics.

Radical questions have been asked. There have been confreres who have questioned their commitment, and even their faith. *"For me, Jesus Christ is now no more than a beautiful dream"* wrote one confrere in a circular letter in which he announced he had decided to follow another path. The Gospel

conversation is no doubt often repeated: *“Are you also leaving? - Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life”* (John 6: 67-68). In the secularised atmosphere of the northern countries, vocations have diminished rapidly.

The changes have had an effect on our institute at all levels. They have touched the very foundations of our vocation and our Church; “Are missionary congregations going to change radically? Are the old institutes going to disappear? Is there any future for the missionary vocation?”. We have had to dig deep into our Spiritan resources as well as our Christian resources. Des Places and Libermann have proved to be good guides in the present situation. We have not just been victims of circumstance; pushed around by events, we have come to realise that we need to be shaken up by the Holy Spirit.

4.1.2 A New Coherent Vision of Spiritan Life

Thirty years of change, which sometimes seemed to be out of control, have led the Congregation to discover a new coherent vision of Spiritan life.

A Chapter of aggiornamento and an expression of our charism:

In the ‘aggiornamento’ Chapter of 1968-69, the Congregation re-thought its life and mission in the light of Vatican II, following the key concepts of openness and a return to our sources. We became aware again of our primary aim and we tried to rediscover the inspiration of our founders and our tradition.

The Congregation has taken another look at its charism. It was not just rediscovered in some archive, but it also revealed itself in the lived experience of Spiritan life. It put its own stamp on the changes. The historians who have drawn it out with the greatest clarity are those who are also fully engaged in the mission of today. Confreres meeting together in a Chapter, sharing their experience, the memory of their tradition and their prayer, formulate it in the name of all for a new stage in the life of the institute.

Our Rule of Life and its missionary orientation

The General Chapter of 1986 gathered together *“what had happened to us”* as a result of these changes in the form of a new Rule of Life and under the inspiration of our founders.

Our Rule of life begins with a quotation from Luke 4:18-19. Each chapter of the Rule starts from a missionary perspective. Spiritan life is presented in a narrative style, bringing together concrete human experience and spiritual meaning:

- Our vocation, one amongst many other vocations, is a call by the Father to announce the Good News of the Kingdom.
- This is immediately followed by the chapter on our mission, inspired by the desire to see the love of the Father established in the hearts of people, with an insistence on openness to the Spirit and the radicality of our engagement: *“The Spirit calls us to a continual conversion...and prepares us to make the total gift of ourselves for the Kingdom”*.

- The Congregation has taken community life as its fundamental rule, *“to bring the apostolic life - for which Spiritan life is intended - to its perfection”*.
- The commitments of religious life are a reply to the call of the apostolic life; they are seen as witnesses *“for the Kingdom”*.
- Spiritan formation *“is the continual deepening of our apostolic life under the influence of the Holy Spirit”* (cf. SRL 3).
- *“To carry out its mission and build up communion within, the Congregation gives itself various structures. Central to all these, however, is community living. It is practised differently in response to differences both in the members themselves and in the work they are doing”* (SRL 151).

4.2 HORIZONS AND PATHS OF OUR MISSION

4.2.1 A New Departure?

“The Chapter should examine how far maintenance and consolidation have displaced mission. The future of the Congregation will depend on its loyalty to its specific mission” (Reply of one group to the pre-capitular questionnaire).

The starting point for the initiatives of our founders and the great witnesses of our history was a strong awareness of the needs of the poor and most abandoned. The General Chapter is the right moment to fix our eyes on the needs of today, and to meditate again on SRL 12: *“We give preference to an apostolate that takes us to those who have not yet heard the gospel or who have scarcely heard it, those oppressed and most disadvantaged, where the Church has difficulty in finding workers”*.

Because of the difficulties that we experience in our mission and because of our own weaknesses, there is always a danger that we will become too wrapped up in our own Congregation. The large number of our undertakings and the new means of communication should help us to identify the “needs of evangelisation” at this time: poverty and injustice, the spiritual void or the limitations and distortions of the spiritual, conflicts and violence. We feel again the call to abandon our entrenched positions and free ourselves for what is most urgent and corresponds best to our vocation, to use all means and realistically evaluate our possibilities, always leaving room for the power of faith. Our hope is that a renewed availability will bring us unsuspected strength and support.

4.2.2 Universal Mission In The New-found Unity of The World

The unification of our planet today gives us a new opportunity to open ourselves to all people. With our presence in the various continents, we are in a position to use the new possibilities of exchanges and movement, of interaction between continents, of the international networks which influence the life of the whole planet.

This is one of the reasons for our new initiative in Asia which was suggested at Itaici. Without implying any criticism of other engagements, past or present, particularly in Africa, we feel that at this time when there is so much interaction between all the continents, it is good and significant for our mission to have a presence in South East Asia, even if it is on a small scale.

We are not looking for dispersion, and each new initiative must receive careful study. But in the light of the possibilities for the Gospel opened up by the new-found unification of the world, an *a priori* policy of limiting the geographical spread of our engagements would not seem to be right at this time.

The first unification of the planet came about from the XV to the XX century, when the world was conquered by the nations of Europe, which were theoretically Christian. Quite understandably, the Christian mission used the paths opened up by this movement, while distancing itself in various ways from the conquerors themselves. The new unity of the world is once again the result of a conquest: this time it is due to the force of globalisation. Christian mission can be tempted to follow the logic of this movement; 'Evangelists' arrive in Africa like representatives of world commerce, with all the power that money and publicity can bring.

One of our confreres in a mission of first evangelisation in Africa, witnessing the crowd that spent the whole night listening to the preaching of a newly arrived evangelist whose decibels rent the night air, admits to having felt somewhat guilty at the moderation with which he himself was preaching the message of Christ. But the following day, after a bad night, the village returned to normal in the wake of the departure of the preacher and his P.A. system. Our confrere changed his mind and decided to continue doing things in his own way.

To ensure that our work of evangelisation has solid roots, Spiritans must continue to make themselves part of the places to which they are sent. Their proximity and perseverance makes their witness irrefutable. By this sort of presence amongst other people and especially amongst the most abandoned groups, we experience a mutual affirmation and enrichment. This is what gives flesh to our sense of universality. We join in a banquet to which all are invited, which is not one for the rich and powerful; it reminds us of the banquet of which the Gospels talk. We get a taste of a future joy.

At the same time, it is good for the Congregation to join those groups which are evaluating and seeking to influence the phenomenon of globalisation, and the type of development and unification of the world that it produces. We must be at the service of all people and the whole person.

4.2.3 The Need for Many and Varied Types of Evangelisation

In the past, the perceived need for evangelisation was placed firmly in the so-called 'mission countries', situated beyond the limits of the so-called 'Christian' world. The Christian countries were the rich world, while the newly-conquered countries were seen as those with an inferior development. The vocation to "take the Good News to the poor" always involved going to far-off places

beyond the frontiers of the Church. So the whole idea of mission was a simple one.

This is certainly no longer the case today. Even if Spiritans are still going to other countries, the frontiers across which the Gospel must be brought are no longer exclusively geographical. The old 'Christian' countries have themselves become missions. The poor waiting to hear the Good News are to be found everywhere. The places for which the Church has difficulty in finding members would now have to include the big cities. The needs of evangelisation which fall within our mission are many and varied, and our commitments are in fact very diverse. Should we reduce their extent?

Our engagements can complement each other. Those working for migrants and refugees have a big advantage if they have already spent some time in the country of origin of these same people. To work in a city, it is useful to have had experience of a rural milieu or to have close ties with other confreres who are working in such areas. A long stay with a particular group of people is a priceless preparation for a more specific ministry in defence of their rights or for a temporary commitment in an urgent situation. In choosing the place for our first mission in the Philippines we opted for a people living in the mountains not far from a large city. We thought it was good for the Spiritan team to get involved with both types of situation.

It does not seem to be the time to adopt a principle of reducing the spread of the types of our missionary commitment. If we withdraw from certain works and begin new ones, our decisions are taken according to the "needs of evangelisation", according to the criteria of our specific Spiritan mission, and depending on the availability of personnel.

4.2.4 Our Mission to the Oppressed and Most Abandoned

The meaning of our work with the poor

We can see more clearly today that mission to the poor is not primarily about strength and means but rather about the quality of presence and relationships. We hold that the poor, contrary to appearances, play a decisive role in history. According to the Gospels, our own salvation depends on our attitude towards them, and they, in turn, show us the meaning of this world and point us in the direction of real life. They testify through the freedom, courage, humility and solidarity to which their condition of life leads them. They show up what is vanity, slavery, egoism and injustice in contemporary society. We are so fortunate to be called to live with them. We believe that our presence and our action with them introduce a new vision and a new force into the course of history.

In the degree to which we share the condition of those who are weak and of no consequence, we also come up against situations of injustice and violence. We then realise our own weakness and we could be easily tempted to undertake nothing more. But in fact, some of our confreres in exactly this situation continue to face up to things, risking failure or even their own lives. For those who act like this, between the forces of death and their own fragility, we are

surprised to witness the strength of the Spirit coming in response to their availability.

Getting involved with the poor and the excluded, the victims of injustice and violence, is an integral part of our mission. It is a witness for their sakes, a witness to the world of the dignity of every person, even the least significant. It announces to the poor and to the rest of world the Good News of the love of God. It is an option that is common to all missionary institutes. At this time of Chapter, we must remake this fundamental choice.

Making concrete choices for the direct service of the most abandoned

There are so many ways we can do this, according to the situations in which we find ourselves and the possibilities available to us. Some of us are at the service of rural populations, often abandoned or exploited by the government; others care for people on the margins of the great cities or the young who are without schooling or work. Some confreres are working with drug and AIDS victims, or peoples caught up in conflicts and violence, in situations of oppression and exploitation. Our 'civilisation' is responsible for all this, which does not exclude the personal responsibility of each one of us.

We are well placed, with members spread throughout the world, to identify the different kinds of need being experienced by the poor and the excluded: every community, every circumscription has its own experience and the Congregation itself, with its involvement in every continent, has an experience that can influence its undertakings at the level of the whole institute.

The particular ministry to defend the oppressed and abandoned

Some of our members feel called to be 'watchmen' in a special sort of way. They try to view things from a wider and deeper perspective in order to pinpoint the needs of the poor and the dangers which threaten them. They try to analyse the causes, show what is involved, alert public opinion, make contacts and prepare programmes of action with others. Every Spiritan can do something along these lines, depending on his position; he can train himself for it and train those around him.

The ministry of peace and reconciliation

The many and recurring conflicts that the present world situation is producing are surely calling us to be more engaged in working for peace and reconciliation. We can be so by having peace in our own hearts and in our international and inter-cultural communities. Some of us, at least, should get further training for this ministry and take it up in a more specific way.

In the context of the Continent of Africa

The Congress at SIST in 1996 proposed a series of priorities for action for social justice, for conflict resolution, for liberation from interiorised forms of oppression, a series of study priorities, of evaluation and transformation of the way that missionaries are trained, of the development of new missionary methods.

4.2.5 Ways of Inculturation and Dialogue In The Diversity of Religions and Cultures

At the same time as many people are feeling that their cultural and religious identity are under threat from globalisation, the approach being taken by missionaries is one of inculturation and dialogue. By making the effort to inculturate, we get closer to people so as to improve mutual understanding and communication. With our world-wide communications, we now have a certain access to the diversity of cultures and religions in which is hidden the spiritual treasure of the human race.

In contrast to contemporary commerce which sells the same products everywhere to a completely anonymous public, our ministry aims at meeting people in their one-off individuality. In this we are following the spirit of the Gospel, which brings out the unique character of Jesus and the unique character of each of his disciples. The community of disciples was built on their diversity; Jesus gave a personal invitation to each - "If you want to...". He never used prestige, seduction or outward appearances to attract the crowds. The cutting edge of evangelisation is a unique movement of the heart, an act of esteem and admiration, which touches the heart of the other person with the love of Christ.

A great effort is called for today, to swim against the insidious current of depersonalisation that mass communication brings in its wake. In the footsteps of those who went before us, using new methods, we try to learn the language and culture of other people so as to maintain a dialogue of life with them. To do that, it needs perseverance.

In some contexts, the witness of the Gospel is given through a prolonged contact. The dialogue continues as mutual trust grows.

In many countries, we are in contact with Moslems. In view of their number and influence in the life of the world today, it is important for some members to make an in-depth study of Islam, and that we try to establish relations with the Moslem world around us.

The Synod for Africa encouraged us to penetrate further into the world of African traditional religions, which are so profoundly linked to the cultures and social life of that continent. In this way we will communicate with the people at a much deeper level. This opening will also encourage a special contribution of our African confreres to mission and Spiritan life.

Fidelity to our vocation should also lead us to take an interest in Amerindian religions and cultures, in cultures and religions in Latin and North America which have their roots in Africa, in the cultures and religions of minorities as well as those of the great religions of Asia.

4.2.6 A Mission of Witness In A World That Is Ever More Secularised

Testing the truth

The contemporary critical spirit and sense of individual freedom means that what is claimed to be truth is now carefully scrutinised. We can no longer get away with hiding any ambiguities or domination in our proposal of the Gospel

4.3 OUR SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Our mission as source of inspiration

This report has already underlined several times the need for a force of inspiration to live our mission in situations of conflict. In those places where the Church is not really present, Spiritans live as though they were crossing a desert. And yet experience has shown that in this "mission impossible", one seems to discover new forces. The former Superior General of the Jesuits, Fr. Arrupe, summarised the experience of being in a war situation like this: "*Perhaps the Lord has never been so close to us because we have never before experienced such insecurity*". As in the Bible, the desert can be a place of purification and of a more intimate experience of God.

In much the same way, our places of mission beyond frontiers become so many places of pilgrimage where we meet the Lord. The Irish monks who set out to announce the Gospel described themselves as on a "*peregrinatio pro Christo*". The Churches that receive us, the communities and movements where we are enriched, are also places of pilgrimage for us.

We can feel rather limited and a bit enclosed in our socio-cultural context, even as members of the Church. We are also looking for the Spirit, the one thing that we cannot give to ourselves. We need, and we are conscious of receiving, inspiration from others; this is a major characteristic of our present experience. For this to come about, it is not enough to be mere spectators or searchers; we have to live in contact, to experience. Inspiration comes attached to people, to personal relations.

When we welcome the witness of simple people and those who are suffering, we feel driven to live a more simple and modest kind of life ourselves. There is no doubt that this is a major call for all Spiritans. But it is not easy to hear this call in the atmosphere of today's world.

We consider ourselves to be men who are attentive to the signs of the times, to the action of the Spirit. In inviting us to choose a mission that is more spirituality than strategy, the Chapter of Itaici concluded: "*It seems that mission today consists far more in listening than in talking*" (no. 11).

Inspiration received in our Church

The attention we give to the world throws us back on ourselves, to our dialogue of life with the Lord, to our life in the Church and in the Congregation.

To live a mission which is above all a witness to the Lord, we need to return to his school, under the guidance of the Spirit, in the Church. We must look to the quality of our personal prayer and of our liturgy. Some confreres are using *Lectio Divina*, which is a way of rediscovering Christ in our tradition. It is in the Christian community that the unique figure of Christ remains living for us; the characteristics of today's mentalities encourage religious attitudes, but not the recognition of the place of Christ in our faith.

We need the double inspiration of our missionary experience and our experience in the life of the Church if our attitude is to be changed and we are to become like Christ himself. Jesus accomplished his own mission in the world by an “emptying”, as Philippians 2 puts it. The Church today is living through a significant period of weakness, and we are also invited to accept to live an “emptying” to be able to launch a new liberating action in the world.

“The apostolic life...is that life of love and of holiness lived on earth by the Son of God in order to save and sanctify people. By it, he continually sacrificed himself, thereby glorifying the Father and saving the world.”
(SRL 3)

The role of formation

The General Council had in mind this necessity of a renewal in our religious missionary life when it chose On-going Formation as the principal theme for the Enlarged Council of Dakar. It consists in always trying to renew and develop our openness and availability. It is a condition for the institute to be able to form new members for contemporary mission; as one confrere put it, *“If our new members are badly trained, it is not so much the formation that needs to be changed as the Congregation”*. The Guide for Formation is planned with this in mind; it remains for these orientations to be implemented throughout the Congregation.

4.4 LIVING COR UNUM ET ANIMA UNA TODAY

A major task for our Congregation today is to live together in fraternity and to teach ourselves how to do it

4.4.1 That Which Brings Us Together

What unites us together at all levels, ‘*cor unum et anima una*’ is a common inspiration. Before being an organisation for work, the Congregation first of all is a place where we receive the riches that the Spirit has put into the diversity of nations. It is the place where this experience is gathered together. The experience of each individual must be purified: personal prayer is a decisive place of discernment, and the community continues the process. The inspiration of each one is refined and enriched by being shared. This is especially true of inter-cultural and international groups.

It is of great importance that we share our experiences with each other, at the level of the community, the circumscription, the region and the Congregation. The various assemblies are increasingly taking on this character. They are a source of inspiration and fraternity.

One young confrere on ‘stage’ complained at a regional meeting that the agenda was nothing but practical arrangements: fixing of calendars, how to make requests for grants, the question of vehicles etc. etc. He felt disappointed that there was no sharing of experiences, of missionary visions.

Another thing that binds us strongly together is our common service of the poor. It is the meaning behind our solidarity. We do not come together simply

out of concern for each other, although that is important: our solidarity is built rather on a sense of corporate responsibility.

We must not allow this feeling of shared responsibility at the level of the whole Congregation to be put in danger by the decentralised nature of our institute. Even if each circumscription has its own missionary projects, its own formation programme, its problems of personnel and finance, we are still part of one large family. As a General Council, we have tried to develop this sense of our unity and the idea of a global missionary project in the 'global' world of our time.

4.4.2 Living Solidarity In the Congregation

The document on Organisation submitted to the Chapter aims at helping the Congregation to live a life of brotherhood and mutual support at all levels.

4.4.2.1 Solidarity with our circumscriptions of origin and appointment

Something rather unique about our Congregation is that we all have a double affiliation throughout our lives: we have a circumscription of origin and a circumscription of appointment. It is our circumscription of origin that receives us at the beginning and gives us our training. When it offers us to the Congregation for our universal mission at the time of our first appointment, it continues to follow us with interest and is ready to intervene when necessary and to welcome us back when we have to leave our place of appointment, because of old age or perhaps other reasons. It holds an important place in our lives; it is where we have our roots, where we have our first experience of human and ecclesial support on which we rely so much in the future. In return, this circumscription has a right to our own solidarity and that of the circumscription where we are working.

After initial formation, we become members of a circumscription of appointment, which is normally different to that of origin. This is where we live out our missionary vocation and enter into the solidarity of the field of mission. We enter into a different fraternity with our Spiritan brothers who are working in the area. We find a new support in another group and another local Church.

It is clearer today that this new appointment brings a different sense of belonging and solidarity in comparison to that of our province of origin, of which it is no longer a simple prolongation. Our circumscription of appointment has an autonomy vis-à-vis that of our origin. It is nearly always made up of confreres from different places. We are called to take our share of responsibility in this mission field and to put our trust in this new group of confreres.

The circumscriptions of origin are themselves invited, beyond their own direct responsibilities, to contribute from what is superfluous, and even from what is necessary in their personnel and finance, to the universal mission of the Congregation. In the past, each circumscription thought more about its own members who continued to depend on them. Today, each is asked to direct its help to the whole of the Spiritan mission and to other circumscriptions which cannot find sufficient support in their missionary area.

At certain times in our history and in certain parts of the Congregation, there was a tendency to neglect our duties of support for our province of origin.

Today, perhaps the tendency, for a whole variety of reasons, is rather to neglect commitment and solidarity with our circumscription of appointment and its missionary responsibilities.

4.4.2.2 Two major areas that call for our mutual support

Mutual help with personnel

This is particularly called for where Districts and Provinces have an ageing membership, where the future of small groups are threatened by the departure of two or three members, and where formation houses are looking for qualified and experienced formators.

More of this help is taking place than we realise. It gets publicity when it concerns new projects, but there are many continuing examples that are done quietly and without any fuss. Such solidarity is essential for our Congregation in view of the structure it has been given by the Rule of Life and the way it has evolved in the present missionary context.

It takes place within the limits of our present personnel situation as regards numbers and qualifications. We can hope for an improvement in this situation.

Financial help

This is crucial for groups working in a mission that is not self-sufficient. It is even more so for the large houses of formation. The needs of these houses far outstrip the financial possibilities of their circumscriptions and even those of Cor Unum. When we add to that the building projects, the limitations of the internal solidarity of the Congregation become all too obvious.

A solution must be sought in two directions:

- New sources of finance must be found. The second part of the report refers to this.
- We must adapt our style of life, of mission, of formation and animation to our possibilities, while trying to avoid changing anything which is essential to our mission and our Spiritan lives.

We must all help to carry the burdens of those in the Congregation who have the most difficulties, remembering the widow in the Gospel who gave away even what she needed herself.

4.4.3 Community Life

Many of the replies to the pre-capitular questionnaire see a renewal of community life as one of the major subjects to be faced. The idea of the General Council was to make communities with a minimum of three persons so that community life could be effective. We are still far from this ideal, but we believe that we must continue to strive for it. It remains true that it is not sufficient to simply re-group confreres together under the same roof, even if that is important.

We have to learn how to communicate in heterogeneous communities. According to St. Bernard, religious life is a school of charity. Our communities

are schools of charity in the difference of cultures, nationalities and age. It is there that we learn to appreciate each other, to receive the special inspiration of the place of origin and different experiences of confreres. We learn to communicate with different peoples and to bring them together because we have already experienced such differences in our communities. Life together is not just adopted as a discipline that will produce more efficient work, or a more pleasant atmosphere; inspired by the Gospel, it is itself a missionary movement that will bring unity and reconciliation amongst peoples.

4.5 COLLABORATIVE MISSION

4.5.1 Different Levels of Collaboration

Today, we collaborate far more with the people of the area where we are announcing the Gospel. From the beginning, we invite them not just to a conversion but also to a collaboration in the service of the world.

We collaborate with the local Church to make it more missionary. We bring a challenge to it regarding the new needs of mission. Some bishops, not all, ask for this. The last assembly of SECAM made an explicit request for it.

We work more and more with other missionary institutes of men and women, in the context of the conferences of religious, in joint formation projects, and in undertakings that are aiming at a global impact on a large scale.

It is important for us to develop collaboration with religious women in a mission that impacts on the social problems of the people and invites men and women to become involved. We work with the Spiritan Sisters and we could investigate if this collaboration can be further developed.

Some Spiritan groups are giving an example of ecumenical missionary collaboration. It is an area where we have much progress to make, along the lines of the insistent appeals of Pope John Paul II.

We are working alongside many different groups. We try to avoid duplicating the large public services but rather to help them in this work. We are taking part in other movements which are working along the same lines as ourselves. Our aim is not to make all such works our own.

At all these levels, we hope to share with others something of the spirit which is behind our work. This is one of the things that people who join us are looking for.

4.5.2 Collaborative Ministry With Lay People

The lay people who collaborate with us can help us to get closer to the mentality and daily problems of people. This applies to those who are looking to us for an inspiration for their own various commitments, but even more to those who formally affiliate themselves to us as lay associates. They bring their expertise and experience to a mission which has become less clerical and takes many different forms. They bring with them their own witness of life and

spirituality. They help us rediscover the depths of our spirituality and the inspiration that runs through our history.

CONCLUSION

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* shows how religious life begins with a joyful experience of the beauty of the Lord. The "Icon" of it in the Gospels is the Transfiguration. We also live these moments, thanks to prayer, the fraternal life, and the proximity to the people to whom we are committed, especially the poorest. "*It is good for us to be here*". Despite the difficult situations, one meets a great deal of joy when travelling around the Spiritan circumscriptions across the world.

We hope that, by the grace of the Lord, this joy will remain with us and will become contagious in a world which often seems so sad.

APPENDICES

STATISTICS

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I The Congregation from 1977 to 1997

as of 01 January

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1977 | 3985 | |
| 1978 | 3907 | (-78) |
| 1979 | 3847 | (-60) |
| 1980 | 3782 | (-65) |
| 1981 | 3739 | (-43) |
| 1982 | 3690 | (-49) |
| 1983 | 3634 | (-56) |
| 1984 | 3581 | (-53) |
| 1985 | 3541 | (-40) |
| 1986 | 3491 | (-50) |
| 1987 | 3499 | (+8) |
| 1988 | 3455 | (-44) |
| 1989 | 3417 | (-38) |
| 1990 | 3361 | (-56) |
| 1991 | 3340 | (-21) |
| 1992 | 3295 | (-45) |
| 1993 | 3270 | (-25) |
| 1994 | 3224 | (-46) |
| 1995 | 3170 | (-54) |
| 1996 | 3143 | (-27) |
| 1997 | 3109 | (-34) |
| 1998 | 3106 | (-3) |

From 1997 to 1998 : decrease of 879 (in 20 years - approx. 44/yr)

From 1992 to 1998 : decrease of 189 (in 6 years - approx. 31/yr)

From 1995 to 1998 : decrease of 64 (in 3 years - approx. 21/yr)

Average age: 58,3 years.

III ETAT DU PERSONNEL by circumscription of origin
as of 01 January 1998

| | <i>Circ. of Origin</i> | <i>Bp.</i> | <i>Priests</i> | <i>Brothers</i> | <i>Y. Prof.</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----|------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ANG | ANGOLA | 1 | 35 | 1 | 20 | 57 |
| BEL | BELGIQUE | 1 | 48 | 4 | | 53 |
| BRP | BRASIL | 1 | 21 | 4 | 3 | 29 |
| CAN | CANADA | 1 | 42 | 5 | | 48 |
| CKF | CONGO-KINSHASA F. | | 4 | | 6 | 10 |
| DLD | DEUTSCHLAND | 2 | 82 | 20 | 2 | 106 |
| EAP | EAST AFRICA | 1 | 75 | | 29 | 105 |
| ENG | ENGLAND | 1 | 58 | 2 | 2 | 63 |
| ESP | ESPANA | | 15 | 3 | 1 | 19 |
| FAC | FOND. AF. CENTR.. | | 37 | 2 | 59 | 98 |
| FOI | FOND. OC. INDIEN | | 6 | | 8 | 14 |
| FRA | FRANCE | 10 | 564 | 103 | 9 | 686 |
| HAI | HAITI | | 3 | | 5 | 8 |
| IRE | IRELAND | 3 | 489 | 22 | 11 | 525 |
| MEX | MEXICO | | | | 6 | 6 |
| NED | NEDERLAND | 2 | 186 | 39 | | 227 |
| NIG | NIGERIA | 2 | 177 | 3 | 165 | 347 |
| PGY | PARAGUAY | | | | 2 | 2 |
| POL | POLSKA | | 47 | 5 | 15 | 67 |
| POR | PORTUGAL | 2 | 150 | 35 | 12 | 199 |
| PRI | PUERTO RICO | | 5 | | 4 | 9 |
| SCA | S.C.A. FOUND. | | 1 | | 3 | 4 |
| SUI | SUISSE | | 74 | 2 | | 76 |
| TRC | TRANSCANADA | | 41 | | | 41 |
| TRI | TRINIDAD | 2 | 32 | 1 | 3 | 38 |
| USE | USA/EAST | 2 | 89 | 1 | 3 | 95 |
| USW | USA/WEST | | 45 | 2 | 4 | 51 |
| WAF | WEST. AFR. FOUND. | | 38 | | 85 | 123 |
| | TOTAL | 31 | 2364 | 255 | 456 | 3106 |

IV ETAT DU PERSONNEL by circumscription of appointment

as of 01 January 1998

| | <i>Appointment</i> | <i>Bishops</i> | <i>Priests</i> | <i>Brothers</i> | <i>Y. Prof.</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----|------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ADG | General Administration | | 21 | 3 | | 24 |
| ALG | Algeria | | 2 | | | 2 |
| ALJ | Alto Jurua | 2 | 11 | 1 | | 14 |
| AMA | Amazonia | 1 | 14 | 1 | | 16 |
| ANG | Angola | 1 | 62 | 4 | 21 | 88 |
| AUS | Australia | | 9 | | | 9 |
| BAG | Bagamoyo | | 6 | 1 | | 7 |
| BAN | Bangui | 1 | 23 | 2 | 2 | 28 |
| BEL | Belgium | 1 | 44 | 3 | | 48 |
| BRC | Brazil Central | | 23 | 1 | | 24 |
| BRE | Brazil Sudeste | | 9 | | | 9 |
| BRO | Brazil Suoeste | | 28 | 1 | 1 | 30 |
| BRP | Brazil (Province) | | 24 | 6 | 5 | 34 |
| CAB | Cabo Verde | 1 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 16 |
| CAM | Cameroon | 2 | 45 | 7 | 1 | 55 |
| CAN | Canada | 1 | 36 | 6 | | 43 |
| CKD | Congo-Kinshasa Distr. | | 18 | 2 | | 20 |
| CKF | Congo-Kinshasa Fond. | | 3 | | 6 | 9 |
| CON | Congo | | 35 | 1 | 3 | 39 |
| DLD | Deutschland | | 57 | 13 | 1 | 71 |
| EAP | East African Province | 3 | 62 | 2 | 29 | 96 |
| ENG | England | 1 | 54 | | 3 | 58 |
| ESP | España | | 15 | 2 | 1 | 18 |
| ETG | Ethiopie/Gamo Gofa | | 6 | 2 | | 8 |
| ETS | Ethiopie/Sidamo | | 5 | | | 5 |
| FAC | Fond. Afrique Centrale | | 14 | 1 | 49 | 64 |
| FOI | Fond. Océan Indien | | 3 | | 6 | 9 |
| FRA | France | 4 | 345 | 78 | 9 | 436 |
| GAB | Gabon | 1 | 26 | 3 | 2 | 32 |
| GAM | The Gambia | 1 | 13 | | | 14 |
| GHA | Ghana | | 7 | | | 7 |
| GUA | Guadeloupe | | 14 | | | 14 |
| GUY | Guyane | 1 | 19 | 1 | | 21 |

| | <i>Appointment</i> | <i>Bishops</i> | <i>Priests</i> | <i>Brothers</i> | <i>Y. Prof.</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| HAI | Haiti | | 13 | | 3 | 16 |
| IRE | Ireland | | 261 | 15 | 9 | 285 |
| KEN | Kenya | | 40 | 1 | 2 | 43 |
| KOG | Kogi | | 6 | | | 6 |
| MAD | Madagascar | | 21 | 4 | 2 | 27 |
| MAK | Makurdi | | 16 | 1 | | 17 |
| MAL | Malawi | | 7 | | | 7 |
| MAR | Martinique | | 21 | 2 | | 23 |
| MAU | Mauritius | 1 | 13 | | | 14 |
| MEX | Mexico | | 11 | | 7 | 18 |
| MOZ | Mozambique | | 5 | | | 5 |
| NED | Nederland | | 119 | 30 | | 149 |
| NIG | Nigeria | 2 | 129 | 3 | 165 | 299 |
| PAK | Pakistan | | 7 | 4 | | 11 |
| PGY | Paraguay | | 7 | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| PHT | Philippines-Taiwan | | 6 | | | 6 |
| PNG | Papua-New Guinea | | 8 | | | 8 |
| POL | Poland | | 32 | 4 | 15 | 51 |
| POR | Portugal | 1 | 93 | 30 | 11 | 135 |
| PRI | Puerto Rico | | 11 | | 3 | 14 |
| REU | Reunion | | 22 | 2 | | 24 |
| SCA | South Central Afr. Found. | | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| SFR | Séminaire Français | | 6 | 1 | | 7 |
| SGL | Senegal | 2 | 45 | 5 | 3 | 55 |
| SEL | Sierra Leone | 1 | 8 | | 1 | 10 |
| SOA | Southern Africa | | 23 | 2 | | 25 |
| SPM | St-Pierre & Miquelon | 1 | 2 | | | 3 |
| SUI | Suisse | | 41 | 3 | | 44 |
| TRC | TransCanada | | 44 | | | 44 |
| TRI | Trinidad | 2 | 30 | 1 | 3 | 36 |
| USE | USA/East | | 83 | | 2 | 85 |
| USI | USA/Irish | | 62 | | | 62 |
| USW | USA/West | | 50 | 2 | 4 | 56 |
| WAF | Western Africa Found. | | 32 | | 81 | 113 |
| ZAM | Zambia | | 11 | | | 11 |
| ZIM | Zimbabwe | | 12 | | | 12 |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>31</i> | <i>2364</i> | <i>255</i> | <i>456</i> | <i>3106</i> |

V Entries to the Congregation from 1992 to 1997

| | Total | Africa | N. Am | S. Am | Asia | Europe | Oceania |
|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1992 | 61 | 50 | | | | | |
| 1993 | 54 | 42 | | | | | |
| 1994 | 49 | 37 | | | | | |
| 1995 | 70 | 47 | | | | | |
| 1996 | 86 | 69 | | | | | |
| 1997 | 94 | 76 | | | | | |
| <i>Total</i> | 414 | 321 | 20 | 8 | 4 | 60 | 1 |

VI Deceased Confreres from 1992 to 1997

| | Total | Bishops | Fathers | Brothers | Scholastics |
|------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1992 | 68 | 2 | 58 | 8 | |
| 1993 | 76 | 1 | 57 | 17 | 1 |
| 1994 | 84 | | 66 | 17 | 1 nov. |
| 1995 | 79 | 1 | 64 | 13 | 1 |
| 1996 | 82 | 2 | 68 | 10 | 2 |
| 1997 | 84 | 2 | 74 | 7 | 1 |
| | 473 | 8 | 387 | 72 | 6 |

VII Confreres who left - from 1992 to 1997

| | Leaving total | Fathers and Deacons | | | | Brothers | | Scholastics | |
|------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | incard. | laici- sation | civ. marr. | other | temp. vows | perp. vows | temp. vows | perp. vows |
| 1992 | 30 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 abs | 1 | 1 disp. | 16 | 1 disp. |
| 1993 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 abs | | | 24 | |
| 1994 | 23 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 abs | 1 | 1 disp. | 12 | |
| 1995 | 24 | 1 | 2 | | | | 1 d., 2 disp. | 17 | 1 disp. |
| 1996 | 19 | 4 | | 1 | 2 disp. | | 1 disp. | 11 | |
| 1997 | 12 | | 4 | 2 | 2 disp. | | | 4 | |
| | 138 | | 44 | | | 8 | | 86 | |

abs = absent ; disp. = dismissed ; disp. = dispensation

**VIII First Appointments according to origin
1992 to 1997**

| | <i>1992</i> | <i>1993</i> | <i>1994</i> | <i>1995</i> | <i>1996</i> | <i>1997</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| ANG | | 2 | | 6 | 3 | | 11 |
| BRP | | 2 | 3 | | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| CAN | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| CKF | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| DLD | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| EAP | | 14 | | 10 | | 5 | 29 |
| ENG | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| FAC | | 6 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 27 |
| FOI | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| FRA | | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 13 |
| HAI | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| IRE | 2 | 1 | 4 | | 2 | 1 | 10 |
| NIG | 12 | 6 | 12 | 28 | 8 | 15 | 81 |
| POL | 12 | 1 | 2 | | 2 | | 17 |
| POR | | 2 | | 1 | | | 3 |
| PRI | | 1 | | | | 2 | 3 |
| TRI | | 2 | | 1 | | | 3 |
| USE | 3 | | | | | | 3 |
| WAF | 6 | 2 | 10 | 5 | | 20 | 43 |
| Total | 36 | 48 | 36 | 60 | 24 | 58 | 262 |

IX First Appointments according to destination (1992 à 1997)

| | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | Total |
|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| ALG | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| ANG | | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 14 |
| BAN | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| BEL | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| BRO | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | 3 |
| BRP | | 2 | 1 | | 2 | | 5 |
| CAB | | | | | | 2 | 2 |
| CAM | | 1 | 4 | | 1 | 3 | 9 |
| CKD | 1 | 1 | | | 3 | | 5 |
| CKF | | 3 | | | | 1 | 4 |
| CON | | 3 | | 2 | 1 | | 6 |
| DLD | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| EAP | 1 | 4 | | 6 | | 2 | 13 |
| ETG | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| ETS | | | | 2 | 1 | | 3 |
| FAC | | 2 | | 3 | | | 5 |
| FRA | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 3 | 8 |
| GAB | 2 | 2 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| GAM | | 1 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | 5 |
| GHA | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 |
| GUY | 2 | | | 3 | | | 5 |
| HAI | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 3 |
| KEN | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | 4 |
| KOG | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| MAD | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 3 |
| MAK | 1 | | 3 | 2 | | 2 | 8 |
| MAL | 2 | | 1 | 1 | | 2 | 6 |
| MAU | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| MEX | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | 5 |
| MOZ | | | | 3 | | | 3 |
| NIG | 8 | 3 | 3 | 11 | 4 | 5 | 34 |

| | <i>1992</i> | <i>1993</i> | <i>1994</i> | <i>1995</i> | <i>1996</i> | <i>1997</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| PAK | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | 3 |
| PGY | | 1 | | | | 2 | 3 |
| PHT | | | | | | 5 | 5 |
| PNG | | 1 | 3 | | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| POL | 7 | | | | | | 7 |
| POR | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| PRI | | 1 | | | | 2 | 3 |
| SGL | | 4 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 16 |
| SLE | 2 | | 2 | | | 3 | 7 |
| SOA | 1 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | | 6 |
| TRI | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| USE | 2 | | | | | | 2 |
| USW | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| WAF | | | 4 | 1 | | 8 | 13 |
| ZAM | | | | 2 | | 2 | 4 |
| ZIM | | 2 | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| <i>Total</i> | 36 | 48 | 36 | 60 | 24 | 58 | 262 |

X SPIRITANS BY CONTINENT OF ORIGIN

01 January 1998

| Continent | Bps. + Priests | Brothers | Y. Prof. | TOTAL |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|
| AFRICA | 9 + 380 | 7 | 377 (16 Brs) | 773 |
| NORTH AMERICA | 5 + 213 | 9 | 21 (1 Br) | 248 |
| SOUTH AMERICA | 1 + 21 | 4 | 5 (1 Br) | 31 |
| ASIA | 1 | | 3 | 4 |
| EUROPE | 16 + 1749 | 235 | 49 (4 Brs) | 2049 |
| OCEANIA | | | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL CONGREGATION | 31 + 2364 | 255 | 456 (22 Brs) | 3106 |

SPIRITANS BY CONTINENT OF APPOINTMENT

01 January 1998

| Continent | Bps. + Priests | Brothers | Y. Prof. | TOTAL |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|
| AFRICA | 17 + 735 | 44 | 377 (16 Brs) | 1173 |
| NORTH AMERICA | 4 + 343 | 9 | 22 (1 Br) | 378 |
| SOUTH AMERICA | 4 + 168 | 15 | 8 (1 Br) | 195 |
| ASIA | 13 | 3 | 1 Br | 17 |
| EUROPE | 6 + 1088 | 184 | 48 (3 Brs) | 1326 |
| OCEANIA | 17 | | | 17 |
| TOTAL CONGREGATION | 31 + 2364 | 255 | 456 (22 Brs) | 3106 |

BALANCE 1997

(01 January 1998)

CHANGES DURING THE YEAR

| <i>CHANGES</i> | <i>ENTERING</i> | <i>LEAVING</i> | <i>TOTAL</i> |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Data as of 1 st January 1996 (corrected) | | | 3119 |
| 1 st Vows | 86 | | |
| Deceased | | 84 | |
| Scholastics and Brothers Leaving | | 4 + 0 | |
| Fathers Leaving | | 4 | |
| Previous changes corrected this year | | 7 | |
| <i>TOTAL</i> | 86 | 99 (92) | |
| <i>RESULTS</i> | | -13 | 3106 |

OTHER CHANGES

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| PERPETUALS VOWS | 49 |
| DEACONS | 8 |
| PRIESTS | 29 |

COMPARIISON 1994 - 1997

| <i>CHANGES</i> | Year 1994 | Year 1995 | Year 1996 | Year 1997 |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 st Vows | 42 | 70 | 85 | 86 |
| Deceased | 83 | 78 | 82 | 84 |
| Schol. + Brs. leaving | 10 + 2 | 13 + 3 | 7 + 1 | 4 + 0 |
| Fathers leaving | 6 | 0 | 2 (+ 17) | 4 (+ 7) |
| Perpetual Vows | 37 | 41 | 22 | 49 |
| Deacons | 38 | 18 | 6 | 8 |
| Fathers | 41 | 26 | 34 | 29 |

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