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11-1-2000

Spiritan News, No. 134

Congregazione dello Spirito Santo

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Congregazione dello Spirito Santo. (2000). Spiritan News, No. 134. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-news-en/141>

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SPIRITAN NEWS

November/December 2000

N° 134

CONGREGAZIONE DELLO SPIRITO SANTO - CLIVO DI CINNA, 195 - 00136 ROMA

SPIRITAN PROJECT IN ROME: ONE YEAR AFTER

Just over a year ago, three confreres set out to insert themselves and the Spiritan charism for the first time in the very heart of Rome. Jean-Jacques Boeglin, Maciej Sierzputowski and Peter Kilasara had not known each other before, nor did they know what was in store for them (the life and challenges facing the Christian family in this eternal city). They had nothing to rely on but each other. Below, they tell us how things have gone so far.

St. Brigit of Sweden: our parish in Rome

A year has now passed since we officially moved into this parish and, no doubt, many of you are wondering how we are getting on. For us Spiritans, it is a new adventure in Italy, but the parish that has been confided to us has been in existence since 1983. Jean-Jacques Boeglin (France) arrived first at the beginning of September, 1999; Maciej Sierzputowski (Poland) and Peter Kilasara (Tanzania) came in November of the same year. At first, we "cohabited" with the former parish priest, although he had already received another appointment in the diocese. Finally, on Holy Thursday, 2000, the Bishop of the area, Mgr Vincenzo Apicella, formally installed Jean-Jacques as parish priest and put us in complete charge of the parish.

The parish is 10 km from the Generalate, on the edge of the diocese and the city of Rome and in the north-west corner of the circular motorway (which passes under our windows!). It is a parish made up of ordinary people who are not very well off. It still operates out of three different centres, a kilometer apart. Our flat (rented by the diocese) is about 300 meters from the Church, which is on the ground floor of a block of flats, turned into a chapel to hold 120 people. The oratorio, which includes the parish offices and rooms for catechesis and scouts, is 1 km in the other direction; it occupies the two lower floors of another block of flats. The oratory and the church are owned by the diocese. The fact that the properties are small and scattered does not make life any easier, either for us or for the parishioners who are never quite sure where to find us. Consequently, many of them go to other churches which are larger and have better facilities for parochial activities.

So the building of a parish centre is a great need. Things are moving in this direction; we are looking to acquire more land around the site already designated for the building. Unfortunately, as in many of the suburbs of Rome, there is a singular lack of planning in this urban expansion and many illegal buildings are sprouting up all around. And no provision is made for the infrastructure of schools, churches, supermarkets etc.

The taking over of this parish was the realisation of a desire of the General Council and a decision of the General Chapter of Maynooth in 1998, although the first contacts to this end with the diocese of Rome goes back to 1994. It was felt that after 35 years since the Generalate moved to Rome, the Congregation should have some pastoral involvement in the local Church. The idea was to look for a place on the outskirts of the city where we could become involved in the services of immigrants and the marginalised, in line with our charism. This would also help us to become better



Jean-Jacques, Peter and Maciej

known in the country and possibly attract vocations. The Vicar General of the Diocese, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, was happy to accept our project and eventually asked us to look after this parish of St. Brigit.

For the process of getting installed in this parish, we are grateful to the diocese for agreeing to pay the rent for our apartment and to the General Council which took on the responsibility for the furnishings.

Since our arrival, we have devoted much of our time to the systematic visiting of families in the area. It is a well established custom here, particularly during Lent and Easter, when the priests go to bless the houses and the families. It has given us the chance to get to know the people of Palmarola and the geography of the parish. On top of that, we have the normal routine of running a parish, in collaboration with a pastoral council, setting up times for prayer, vigils, and pilgrimages as this is the Holy Year. We also have catechism groups, scout troupes, a youth club, a choir etc.

Our community life is the force that leads us on joyfully in the service of the people. It has been a good experience,

learning to live and work together. It is difficult to say, at this point, how successful we have been. An elderly confrere once said, "To know somebody well, you have to have emptied a sack of salt with him" (He did not say how big the sack had to be!). After a year, we have learnt how to live together. We work and pray together, sharing our plans and our achievements and accepting the challenges that each day brings. We are still growing in our knowledge and love

Coming as I do from Africa, I found a very different Church here in Rome. I had worked in the Pokot area of Kenya, a place of primary evangelisation, and then in Tanzania where the Church is still young compared to Europe. I have found the people here in Rome to be very generous, but I come across many cultural surprises and difficulties. After only two months of studying Italian, I found myself working in a parish. I am gradually mastering the language with much patience and effort. I have been struck by the fact that although this is such an ancient Church, the generation with whom we are working is very different to those who have gone before them. The faith in Europe has lost much of its strength, especially amongst the young, and the Church in Rome is no exception. Despite the large Catholic population, the number of those practising regularly is low. The reasons given are many – lack of time, too much work etc. I can now appreciate what people mean when they talk of the need for a re-evangelisation of Europe. This project is a challenge for us Spiritans and I am happy to be part of it.

Peter Kilasara

for each other, making use of our diversity in the service of the Gospel without losing the initial vision of this Spiritan project.

Jean-Jacques, Maciej and Peter

NEWS ITEMS

Meeting of the Spiritan European Commission for Justice and Peace

Representatives of the 10 Spiritan provinces of Europe were at this annual meeting which took place at Torre d'Aguilla in Portugal, from 5th – 11th October. Also present was the new Co-ordinator of the Justice and Peace office at the Generalate, Fr John Kilcrann.

As last year, the theme for the meeting was "Welcoming immigrants, especially asylum seekers", underlining the seriousness of the problem within the European Union. To highlight this, Mike Begley of the Irish province made an interesting comparison between different countries which make up the European Union regarding the immigrants they have accepted: Germany is the most welcoming country (96,000 in 1998, 95,000 in 1999). In relative figures, Belgium has 3,5 for every 1000 inhabitants, Netherlands 2,9 and France 0,52. The average percentage in Europe is 0,98.

The delegates gave reports on the various activities undertaken in their circumscriptions: in Ireland, SPIRASI (Spiritans Asylum Seeker Institute) has been functioning for

the last two years; in the Netherlands, a parish has been set up in the centre of an immigrant area; in Germany, there are centres for asylum seekers in Knechtsteden and for victims of drug abuse in Cologne; Poland has established a centre for alcoholics and Portugal has one centre founded by Spiritans and another run by an association in conjunction with the State.

John Kilcrann gave an interesting talk on "Spiritans spirituality of Justice and Peace", based on the documents of the last General Chapter of Maynooth. Identifying some key words and phrases (sharing, dialoguing, profound respect for people, being with people, solidarity, our role as servants and disciples, remaining with and being available to the people), he showed how a Spiritan spirituality of Justice and Peace is emerging.

The next meeting of the European co-ordinators will take place in France, 11th – 17th October 2001. The exact venue is yet to be decided.

Criteria used by the General Council for first appointment of our confreres

One of the most important moments in the life of a Spiritan is that of his first appointment. Past experience has shown that these early years often have a decisive impact on his future commitment, and indeed on his whole life.

Our Rule of Life entrusts to the Superior General and his Council the task of making such appointments (RVS 158; 249.2.3). In this way, the General Council gives concrete expression to the Congregation's missionary orientations and priorities and it also enables the General Council to assure solidarity and continuity (Maynooth 2.33-2.38).

It is in pursuance of this objective that the General Council seeks the opinion of the Superior and Council of circumscriptions of origin of young confreres for first appointment, the choices of the young confreres themselves as well as the needs for first appointment from the different circumscriptions of the Congregation. All these factors are taken into account by the General Council in making first

appointments, as well as the possibility of a supportive community environment, which it regards as of vital importance.

In making the appointments the General Council sometimes posts confreres to their circumscriptions of origin, following the recommendations of the Itaici Chapter (Itaici 17; and 37.4). This is on the understanding that the circumscription is engaged in a truly missionary situation at home and that the young confrere is appointed to a cultural environment significantly different to his own. Special consideration is also given to countries experiencing violence and war.

The General Council realizes that not all circumscriptions who apply for personnel receive a confrere on first appointment. Please renew your application for the coming year as the Council will continue to make efforts to meet the various needs for personnel as more confreres become available for first appointment.

Mike Obi Onwuemelie (For the General Council).

FIRST APPOINTMENTS - 2001

NAME	FROM	TO
DAMIAO Antonio	Angola	PAC
LUBONGO Jeronimo	Angola	Angola
MAQUIDY Jose	Angola	Angola
NTAMBWE Paul Venance	CKF	CKF
TSHIVUILA Camille	CKF	South Africa
KINYUA Simon	EAP	FANO
MSAKY Appolinary	EAP	EAP
MUTUA Alfonse	EAP	EAP
NJOROGE George	EAP	Madagascar
CAMARA Moise	FANO	FANO
DIAFFATE Pierre	FANO	FANO
DIAME Jean-Pascal	FANO	Philipp.-Taiwan
TIPHAIGNE Tanneguy	France	PAC
JOSEPH Raynold	Haiti	Guadeloupe
KEARNS Fran	Ireland	Mozambique
MURRAY Jonathan	Ireland	Pakistan
AGBER Philip	Nigeria	Haiti
AGU Bartholomew	Nigeria	Nigeria
AGU Stanislaus	Nigeria	Haiti
AYENI Francis	Nigeria	PAC
AYIKA Philip	Nigeria	Pakistan
EGEMONU Erasmus	Nigeria	Nigeria
EKE Vitalis	Nigeria	Mozambique
IBEH Vincent	Nigeria	Nigeria
IKWUKA Ugochukwu	Nigeria	Nigeria

NAME	FROM	TO
IRO Emmanuel	Nigeria	PAC
KAMALU Aloysius	Nigeria	Zambia
NWANUNOBI Stanislaus	Nigeria	PNG
OKORO Damasus	Nigeria	Pakistan
OKORO Michael	Nigeria	South Africa
OSIGWE Athanasius	Nigeria	Nigeria
UDEMBA Livinus	Nigeria	Nigeria
ANGOULA Jean-Claude	PAC	FANO
BANGUI Jonas	PAC	PAC
ETHO Ferdinand	PAC	PAC
KIYINDOU Gaetan	PAC	PAC
MALONGA Roland	PAC	Madagascar
MEDJO MVOMO Henri	PAC	Philipp.-Taiwan
MOKAMANEDE Barthelemy	PAC	FANO
NKODIA Bruno	PAC	Angola
NYANTABANA Roch	PAC	PAC
OGBABO Rigobert	PAC	France
BARBOSA Raul Viana	Portugal	Portugal
AGYEMANG-PR. Thomas	WAF	WAF
AKPAGHER James	WAF	Nigeria
AYOO Boniface	WAF	Zambia
BAKA Geoffrey	WAF	Paraguay
MENDY Louis	WAF	Sierra Leone
SEVALI Anthony	WAF	Sierra Leone

Decisions of the General Council

The General Council

- nominates Fr Gérard MEYER as Superior of the Foundation of North-West Africa for a mandate of three years, with effect from 15 September 2000.
- nominates Fr Etienne OSTY as Superior of the Spiritan Community of the French Seminary in Rome for one year, with effect from 20th October 2000.
- confirms the election of Fr Peter CONATY as Major Superior of the Group of Mexico for a mandate of three years, with effect from 1st December 2000.
- nominates Fr Edward O'FARRELL as Secretary for Formation and Education for a mandate of three years, with effect from 12th October 2000.
- suppresses the District of Saint Pierre-et-Miquelon as from 30 October. The Confreres who are appointed to the former District as of this date will henceforth constitute a community of the Province of France.

Spiritan Jubilee pilgrimage in Rome

The Spiritans resident in Rome, from the Generalate, the French Seminary and the new Spiritan parish, held their own day of pilgrimage on October 19th this year. It was designed by Christian de Mare and commemorated both the Holy Year and the period that Francis Libermann spent in Rome when he was trying to found his congregation. We started in the atrium of one of Libermann's favourite churches, St. Maria Maggiore where we listened to extracts from chapter 10 of the Gospel of St. John, followed by Libermann's commentary on the passage – Jesus the gate of the sheepfold. We then passed together through the Holy Door, the symbol of Christ through whom all must pass to the Father. After mass in the chapel of the crucifix, we walked for thirty minutes to the church of Sant'Agostino where we assembled before the statue of La Madonna del Parto, a place where Libermann went most days to seek enlightenment when he was composing our Rule;

"As I worked on the details of the Rule, I sometimes came up against difficulties; when that happened, I would rush round to one of my favourite churches and I could be sure that when I got back home and took up my pen, all the difficulties would evaporate and things would become clear again. This never failed to work".

He lived in a small attic just round the corner from this church, but the house was demolished in the 1930's to make way for a new road that runs beside the Piazza Navona. The pilgrimage finished with a visit to the attic of Libermann which was re-constructed on the roof of the French Seminary when the old building was pulled down. There, we listened to extracts from witnesses when his cause was introduced in the 19th century, describing his life of obscurity and poverty as he waited for his project to be approved by the Vatican. When he ran out of money, he would sometimes join the beggars outside various religious house in the locality in the hope of getting something to eat.

The pilgrimage finished with lunch with the staff and students of the French Seminary. It was a day of grace for all who were privileged to take part, and many prayers were offered up for our confreres scattered throughout the world who are continuing to make a reality of the seemingly impossible dream that haunted this poor man a hundred and sixty years ago.

Services at the Generalate

Fr Edward O'Farrell has been nominated as Secretary for Formation and Education. He was born in Woodford, Co. Galway, Ireland in 1946. He entered the novitiate in 1965 and was ordained in 1973. He was awarded the B.Soc.Sc., B.D. and H.Dip. in Education degrees from the National University of Ireland. In October 1974 he began work in Kenya where he continued until 1990 in the pastoral and education ministries. On his return to Ireland he studied at the Irish School of Ecu-
menics and gained an M.Phil. from Trinity College, Dublin. He was subsequently appointed to the staff of Blackrock College as teacher/counsellor. He served in St. Michael's College as Bursar and before coming to the Generalate he completed an M.Sc. in Business Administration Management at Trinity College.



Spiritan publications

André Vigneault, *Pour autant que je me souviens*, Québec, 2000.

Gérard Meyer, *Contes du pays Malinké, Gambie, Guinée, Mali, Sénégal*, Éditions Karthala, Paris, 2000.

Gérard Meyer, *Contes du nord de la Guinée*, Éditions Karthala, Paris, 1999.

Spiritans in Seychelles: Address

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Lucien Pochon: **Paroisse St Joseph, Grand Anse Praslin, Seychelles.** Tel 00 (248) 23 30 70.

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