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Congregazione dello Spirito Santo
Clivo di Cinna 195
00136 Roma

INFORMATION - DOCUMENTATION

New Series, n° 2

January, 1977

NEWS OF THE CONGREGATION

(Note: From now on, I/D Information-Documentation written by the Generalate Team will appear independently of the "News of the Congregation" written by the Information Service. I/D (with the red letter-head) will continue in its present form, whereas "News of the Congregation" will be printed at the Generalate itself. We shall try as much as possible to have it appear monthly. On the contrary, I/D cannot come out with the same regularity. I/D n° 8 on Chapters in the Provinces is now at the printers and can be mailed early in January 1977. I/D n° 9 on the Venerable Father is still in the editing stage and will appear late in January, if all goes well.) --December 24, 1976.

FROM THE GENERALATE:

Newly Professed:

The first three Angolan novices made their Consecration to the Apostolate at Huambo on November 23, 1976. Seven novices of the Eastern African Foundation made their first vows at Usa River, Tanzania, on December 16.

Adding these ten newly professed to the forty-one already listed in our November issue, we reach a total of 51 newly professed for the year 1976, a number we have not attained for several years.

The Generalate Team:

For the most part, the members of the General Council are absent on the visits announced in our last issue. Just now, only Fathers Walsh, Torres-Neiva and Soucy are in Rome. The first two of these will leave early in January, Father Walsh for the Chapter in Makurdi and Father Torres-Neiva for Spain and Portugal. Father General just came back from Zaire in time to spend the Christmas holidays with us.

Father Timmermans has just been elected as a member of the 1977 Synod of Bishops. (The Synod includes 10 Superiors General, elected by the Union of Superiors General and confirmed by the Pope.)

Since June, Father Timmermans is also President of SEDOS. (SEDOS: *Servizio di Documentazione e Studi*, is an association established in 1964 by several missionary institutes with a view to making their apostolate more effective by means of an exchange of documentation and study about contemporary missionary

problems. The Congregation has been a member of SEDOS since the Chapter of 1968.)

The Spiritan Ordo:

No doubt the Spiritan Ordo for 1977 is late in reaching you. The printer had the corrected proofs by September 10 and hence could have gone ahead with printing and mailing as usual. However, there was some misunderstanding with the Mission Procure in Paris and the work was delayed for two months. We apologize for this unfortunate inconvenience.

Our Dead:

- December 8: Father René Lefebvre, France (aged 73)
December 15: Father Petrus Johannes Reumers, Holland (aged 65)
December 16: Father George Courrier, Senegal (aged 63)
December 20: Mgr James Hagan, former Bishop of Makurdi, England
 (aged 72)
December 21: Brother Géry Breton, France (aged 65)
December 23: Father Charles Mittelberger, Lubango (aged 80)

FROM THE DISTRICTS AND GROUPS:

DOUME: The Church and the Pygmies:

In the Diocese of Doumé (total population: 325.000), there are 25.000 to 30,000 Pygmies, scattered in small groups through the forests of the South. For the past 10 years, the Government of Cameroun has launched a project "Integration of the Pygmies into Society", with a view to getting them to settle down and become full citizens, whereas up to now they have been living on the fringe of society, with scarcely any relations with the local population.

However, this process of settling down is not free of risks. If they settle near a village, there is the danger that they will enter into a sort of servitude to the benefit of the other ethnic groups who will use them as very cheap labor in exchange for food, clothing, etc... Even if this arrangement were to remain very paternalistic, the Pygmies would lose their freedom and their dignity. They must be protected from this danger and made autonomous and independent... This is not easy. They have no tools; they are not capable of having their own food plantations (up to now, they lived by hunting and by picking fruit), nor of working at a trade. They need clothing and shelter of a less primitive type: they feel ill at ease in houses which require a minimum of hygiene and upkeep. They need to get out of the barter economy and into a money economy. There is need for a new kind of education for their children... Health problems are numerous and urgent (ignorance, lack of hygiene, malnutrition). Infant mortality is high. It is hard to get the children to school because their rhythm of life cannot coincide with the rigid school time-tables. The youth problem is crucial: the young people are like the hinge between two life-patterns: the nomadic life of their parents which they don't appreciate any longer, and a more settled life directed towards agriculture and the

trades which for most of them is still at the experimental stage. In brief, the Pygmy problem is one of passing from one life-style to another, from one civilization to another. This passage must be made in a harmonious way and must safeguard their own culture and special values.

In this process, the Church has joined forces with the Government. Four teams are working in the areas where the Pygmies are beginning to concentrate. There are Holy Ghost Fathers, Holy Ghost Sisters, Little Brothers and Little Sisters of the Gospel, young girls of the "New Land" Fraternities, lay missionaries... Their role is to be with the Pygmies as much as possible, to share their life in an atmosphere of trust and friendship, respecting their freedom, exhibiting patience too, because account must be taken of their rhythm of life, their slow pace, their indecision... They have to go along with them, help them by teaching them to read and write, by teaching them good sanitation and the management of a household, by giving the young people a technical training and an introduction to farming. They have to help them to remain themselves, while still finding a balance between what they were like in the forest and what their new kind of life has to offer, its advantages and its disadvantages.

As far as evangelization is concerned, there is nothing well studied out or structured. It is too soon for that. We must let the desire take root, start to grow and ripen. The Pygmies see the teams praying, hear them speak about Jesus. They believe in God the creator; with time the Gospel, lived out before their eyes, will prepare them to desire and to receive the whole Christian revelation.

Let us note that these teams are financially supported by Misereor and by a subsidy from the Government of West Germany.

GABON: New Bishop of Mouila:

By a decree of October 28, 1976, published November 30, Pope Paul granted the request of Bishop Raymond de Lamoureyre to be relieved of his charge as chief pastor of the Diocese of Mouila, and named the Vicar-General of Libreville, Mgr Cyriaque Obamba as Mouila's new Bishop.

Bishop de Lamoureyre was born in 1911. Ordained a diocesan priest in 1934, he made his profession in the Congregation in 1936 and was sent to Congo-Brazzaville. He served there as Diocesan Director of Education, Director of "*Semaine Africaine*" and Parish Priest of the Cathedral and Vicar-General. In 1959 he was made Bishop of the newly created Diocese of Mouila in Gabon.

Bishop Cyriaque Obamba was born in 1918, and ordained priest in 1946. He studied in Europe and then worked in several parishes of Libreville, became Rector of the Junior Seminary and Parish Priest of Saint-Pierre. He has been Vicar-General since 1970.

GUADELOUPE: The volcano La Soufrière:

Ever since the beginning of July, there has been uneasiness in Guadeloupe because of the renewal of activity of the volcano La Soufrière on the island of Basse-Terre. In mid-August, the threat became so serious that a complete evacuation was ordered. It was a wise move, for the symptoms resembled those which preceded the eruption of Mount Pelée in Martinique in 1902 which brought death to 40.000 persons, among whom were 13 Spiritans. The evacuation involved 70.000 persons and affected the most fertile areas as well as the administrative Capital and the center of the Diocese. Fortunately, the whole thing was carried out without panic or accident. On subsequent days, they organized the recovery of cattle and permitted people to go back and get their most precious belongings. Then there began a long period of waiting. 50.000 of the refugees found shelter with relatives and friends, some rented apartments, about 20.000 were taken in by shelter centers. The situation for everybody was precarious. The parishes which took them in--several of them Spiritan parishes--did their best to create an atmosphere of mutual help and solidarity. But, people got restless. They did not understand why they had been evacuated since nothing was happening. The experts on volcanoes did not help to put their minds at rest with their public expressions of divergent views. There was a danger of politics getting mixed up in it.

Since there was no immediate danger, they began by giving passes by the day so that people could go and work in the fields and the banana groves. Then they authorized return to the sectors farthest removed, and finally, on December 1, the evacuation order was revoked.

Even if, thank God, we don't have any victims to mourn, the economic consequences of this affair are very serious. The banana crop, which, along with sugar cane, is the biggest resource Guadeloupe has, is seriously affected, since it is right in the evacuated zone. Both these crops suffered from lack of sufficient cultivation and from the layer of ashes which fell on them. The vegetable crop, usually abundant in the very fertile volcanic soil, is down considerably, and poses a food problem for all of Guadeloupe. Many evacuated workers--builders, unskilled laborers, clerks in small businesses, household help--were unemployed for more than three months. Even though the volcano is quiet again (who knows for how long?), the region of Basse-Terre is still greatly affected. Farm life and administration will get going again, but many people whose work does not require them to return will not do so. The population is going down and business will have a recession. The permanent threat from the volcano will keep investments from coming in and creating new jobs.

(Source: 6 circular letters Fr Maurice Barbotin, C.S.Sp. wrote about La Soufrière)

MAURITIUS: Father Laval:

In Mauritius, everybody was expecting Father Laval to be beatified soon. Unfortunately, this was announced prematurely, and there was great disappointment among the people. At present, it is not possible to give any date...

nobody knows whether it will be in 1977 or later. However, the postponement can be taken as an occasion to prepare for it better and to get better acquainted with Father Laval's message so as to live according to it.

Devotion to Father Laval is very real in Mauritius. His tomb is a place of constant pilgrimage, especially on Fridays (the day he died), on Sundays, and on September 9, the anniversary of his death. It is worth remarking that non-Christians (Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc.) make up half the number of visitors. It is estimated that 4,000 persons come to the tomb every week. On September 9, the crowd varies from year to year between 40,000 and 60,000. They line up for hours to pray at his tomb for a minute or two. In 1976, 45,000 people filed past the tomb during the night of September 8 to 9 alone. This devotion is absolutely spontaneous. Everybody, Christian or not, feels that Father Laval is one of their own, that he is close to them and ready to listen to their prayers. There is no lack of reports of favors granted: peace between married couples, problems with children settled, reconciliations, employment found, success in examinations, various cures... There is scarcely a Mauritian family which does not have some example to report.

But Father Laval is not just a miracle-worker. He left a message. During his life he was one who brought people together. For more than 100 years he has been bringing people together around his tomb, --people of every race, every religion, every color. Is there a danger that all these people may pray side by side and then return home without getting to understand one another any better in every day life? Father Laval trained his first converts to be apostles, to devote themselves to their brethren and to be models of the Christian life by their integrity and their generosity. It took patience, because opposition was strong in the beginning, but he succeeded little by little in building up a fraternal pattern of getting-along-together between liberated slaves and their former masters. He must still be a creator of unity today among these communities of the Mauritian nation which are so varied as to origin, religion and culture.

The civil authorities came to understand the contribution Father Laval was able to make to national unity. The principal feast days of each religion are public holidays, and they have just added a 24th to the list: September 9, anniversary of Father Laval's death. On April 6, 1976, the Permanent Delegate of Mauritius to the United Nations, himself a Hindu, offered to the nation a bust of Father Laval made by a highly-regarded Italian artist, Domenico Mazzone. In his speech delivered for the occasion in the presence of all the civil and religious dignitaries of the island, the donor paid tribute to Father Laval as "that man who during his lifetime and since his death has never ceased to give us a lesson in humility, in love for our neighbor and in the dignity of man." He took particular pleasure in recalling how Father Laval was ahead of his time and how the basic ideas in some of the texts adopted by the United Nations can be found in the letters and sermons of Father Laval. "I can't help thinking that we (members of the United Nations) are only poor individuals trying to mouth what was said before us by our noble predecessors, and that Father Laval was without doubt one of the noblest of all." At the end of his talk, he expressed his fondest wish that Father Laval may make us understand that "unity, mutual respect, charity, love of neighbor are examples which we can still offer to the whole world and which ought to continue

to be the meaning of life for every Mauritian." The Premier accepted the bust and then turned it over to the Catholic Church: for safe-keeping.

PAPUA-NEW GUINEA:

(Very little is known in the Congregation about the work of our Irish confreres in the "Groups", such as those in Ghana, Malawi, Zambia, Ethiopia, Australia... We would like to write about them if we had more documentation to base ourselves on. Fortunately, the September issue of the Irish Newsletter gives some interesting information about the Mission in Papua. We have used it in preparing this article.)

Most confreres know very little about our "Mission in the clouds" in the Wahgi Valley, more than 5.000 feet up in the rugged forest-clad Western Highlands of Papua-New Guinea. There is no road from the Capital, Port Moresby, to this remote area. You must go by plane, flying over great swamps and awesome ravines. If you go on to Karap, then you go to one of the loneliest missions in the world, climbing 2.000 feet and descending again by an unforgettable "road" which will haunt you in your nightmares.

The Mission in Papua-New Guinea was undertaken on the recommendation of the Irish Provincial Chapter of 1970. At that time, the Province was anxious to find a field of apostolate for the many confreres who had come from Nigeria. Negotiations with the Bishop of Mount Hagan led to six missionaries being sent out in 1971.

The six Holy Ghost Fathers are working in five parishes. There are about 90.000 Catholics in a total population of 320.000. The Catholics in our parishes number 20.000.

In general, the people are responsive but their knowledge of religion is very weak. Our Fathers believe that they have been spoiled by the paternalism of both the Australian Government and the Church and have not been trained to give financial support to the Church. Our men disagree with the system of support by trade stores, coffee plantations, tea plantations, petrol stations, cattle projects, etc.--all of which absorb time and lead the people to believe that the Church is rich. The Irish confreres would also like to have their own Catechist Training Centre as they believe they could improve on the present catechetical approach. They feel that if an area were confided to us, our men, while working within the diocesan structure, could be contributing something as Spiritans and not just as so many individual priests. If another parish in the Wahgi Valley were given to u.s.--and this is possible--then they would propose to phase out trade stores, etc. in that area and train the people to contribute. Help from the Home Province might be required at the start of the change-over from the old system.

SENEGAL: Arrival of Oblate Missionaries:

During the past year, about 100 Oblate missionaries were expelled from Laos. When it came to re-deploying them, attention was paid to the SOS sent out by

Senegal because of the great need there: only 4 % Catholics as against 76 % Muslims in the population, the remainder being Animists. The O.M.I. Information Bulletin notes with some humor that the former missionaries of Laos feel at home in Senegal: same range of temperature (from 32° to 41° Centigrade), 8 months of dry weather followed usually by torrential rains for the rest of the year. Nine Italian Oblates left for Senegal in November and are working in 3 teams: 2 in the Diocese of Kaolak, and the third is taking charge of the District of Ngéniène in the Archdiocese of Dakar. It is interesting to notice the youth of these missionaries: an average of 37 (the average age of the Spiritans in Senegal is 51).

During January 1977, two other Italian Oblates will go to work in Pikine, a new city which has sprung up 10 kilometers from Dakar to house the inhabitants of the shanty-towns around the Capital.

The Spiritans, as well as the whole Church of Senega], can only rejoice at the arrival of these reinforcements in missionary personnel, and wish them welcome and assure them of fraternal cooperation.

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