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A Spiritan Anthology

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Preface

Christian de Mare CSSp

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Preface

A long-awaited work

In 1992, the General Chapter of Itaici “was given the responsibility of seeing to the publication of several works concerning our Spiritan history and sources”. This was to include “a collection of significant works of our founders, with an historical and theological presentation” (Itaici 41).

Six years later, in 1998, the General Chapter of Maynooth, in preparation for the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation (2002-2003), again insisted on the necessity of a Spiritan anthology. It listed the historical works that were already in progress:

- The Diary of the Congregation
- The Spiritan Anthology
- The biography of Libermann

The Diary of the Congregation, entitled “*The Spiritan Anniversary Diary*”, was finally completed and published in May, 2002, but the *Anthology* had not yet made an appearance.

The General Chapter of Torre d’Aguilha, in 2004, did not talk explicitly of the *Anthology*, but it referred several times to our duty of handing on the Spiritan charism to future generations and preserving the unity of a Congregation which is increasingly diverse. “*The Spiritan charism cannot become an integral part of our way of life and mission without knowledge of the founders, their spiritual experience and the history of the foundation. So, basic texts need to be made available to professed Spiritans and the lay people who are part of our wider Spiritan family. However, the historical gap needs to be bridged by presenting Claude Poullart des Places and Francis*

Libermann as real people, whose inspirations and actions will motivate a new generation of Spiritans. We are not just passing on theoretical knowledge, but also practical approaches: openness to the Spirit, availability, going to the poor, simplicity, community life, welcoming others and missionary witness" (T.A.1.2).

This long wait has now come to end with the publication of "A Spiritan Anthology", first of all in French and now, in English and Portuguese.

An architect and a team

The one who is largely responsible for this "Spiritans Anthology" is Fr. Christian de Mare. From 1985, when he was first asked to work in the novitiate of the Province of France, he felt the need for a collection of written texts of our founders for the study and meditation of the novices. He continued with this work of selection and presentation during the four years he spent at the inter-provincial novitiate in Ireland (Templeogue), where he gave a series of lectures on our founders. Later on, at the Generalate in Rome, he was appointed to the office for "History and Anniversaries". There also, he was involved in choosing the most important texts of our founders, checking their accuracy against the originals preserved in our archives and writing explanatory notes and introductions.

He found help for this task in many previous works and in the collaboration of experts from the three linguistic areas of the Congregation – French, English and Portuguese. Amongst these were Fr. Joseph Michel, Fr. Joseph Lécuyer, Fr. Paul Coulon, Fr. Joseph Hirtz, Fr. Alphonse Gilbert, Fr. Walter Van de Putte, Fr. Amadeu Martins and Fr. Jean-Claude Pariat. There were also useful articles in the early editions of "Spiritus" and in "Spiritans Papers". Fr. Christian de Mare modestly summarised his contribution as follows: "All I did was to capitalise on the renewal of Libermann and Poullart studies

in the French Province and the rest of the Congregation. If I can claim any merit for myself, it was that I became impassioned by the work that had been given me in the service of the formation of Spiritans, giving retreats and preparing for the Congregation's anniversaries".

An anthology for all Spiritans, professed and associate

This anthology is for all the members of the great Spiritan family. The General Council sincerely hopes that every member will have his or her personal copy. Alongside the Bible, the Rule of Life and the texts of recent General and Circumscription Chapters, this Anthology should be part of the basic personal library of each one of us. It will be most useful for personal meditation as well as for community recollections and retreats. By sharing the same basic texts, we will be able to progress towards a common vision of what it means to be a Spiritan.

An anthology for initial formation

This Anthology can play an important role in the various stages of the initial formation of our members, especially the novitiate. Our young confreres and associates, having studied and absorbed the same key texts, will find it easier to "*grasp the spirit of the Congregation*", and to integrate more rapidly into the circumscriptions to which they will eventually be assigned. Common points of reference are a great help for creating a common spirit.

An open-ended anthology

This *Spiritans Anthology* is a selection of texts from a very wide choice. In future editions, it could happen that further texts, seen as pertinent to the needs of our confreres and missions, could be added to the present collection or replace some of them. It would also be good if we could have an anthology of

texts from the later tradition, after our initial founders. This was originally planned as a Chapter 8 of this book, which would include selected writings of Laval, Shanahan, Brottier and Alves Correira, but was eventually dropped for reasons of coherence and volume. Yet there is still a need for such a collection. Our two founders were not faced with all the situations that their successors have had to confront. Moreover, our charism is not fixed for all time, like a fossil buried in a stratum of sediment; it is something alive and evolving, that must "*respond creatively to the needs of evangelisation of our time*" (SRL 2).

That it may inspire us to dig deeper

Just as the biblical texts of our liturgy do not dispense us from reading the rest of the Bible, but rather whet our appetite to go further, so this *Anthology* must not absolve us from studying the rest of our Spiritan sources but rather encourage us to seek out the very spring itself. Our hope is that it will inspire many future vocations, both professed and associates, to search for more pearls hidden in our rich Spiritan inheritance.

Fr. Jean-Paul Hoch,

Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit

