Superior General's Report 2004

The Spiritan Congregation

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CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

SUPERIOR GENERAL’S REPORT

GCh.04/18E

XIX GENERAL CHAPTER

20 June – 17 July 2004
INTRODUCTION

Rome, 6 April 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This report is primarily for those who are delegates to the next General Chapter. Once you have received it, you should still have two months to study it, taking time out from your usual occupations. It can be read by all those Spiritans who would like to do so. It was drawn up with the Councilors and collaborators, each one producing the parts dealing with the circumscriptions and aspects of Spiritan life for which they have a particular responsibility. I want to thank them for their exceptional collaboration during this six year mandate. I would also like to thank the translators (some of whom are joined to us by internet) and the secretaries, to whom we are indebted for their long and detailed work of preparing this Report.

This Report should help the capitulants to carry out their task as explained in our 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 tries to give an account of the life of the Congregation since Maynooth and to share with the Chapter the experience of the Institute that the General Council has acquired during its mandate. You are also invited to gather the experiences of the circumscription that you represent and share it with the other capitulants.

The first part gives a short presentation of what characterises our contemporary world so as to place our missionary orientations into context.

The second part treats briefly of the circumscriptions, one by one.

Part three focuses on the main characteristics of our apostolic life in this moment of Spiritan history.

The last part draws attention to the authenticity of our life together in the Congregation, at a time when our mission has spread throughout the whole world and our members are coming from every continent, especially Africa. This short section
introduces the central theme of the Chapter: "Authentically living the Spiritan charism today".

During our mandate, through our visits and the subsequent reports made to the whole Council, we have seen the fragilities of our Spiritan family, to which this report draws attention. But with each visit and each report, we have been able to experience even more the generous commitment of confreres and their determination to remain faithful to our Spiritan tradition. In their missionary life, we have read the signs of the Spirit of the Lord which have become our own hope.

Our wish is that the Chapter of Torre d’Aguilha will renew the hope of the Congregation at the start of the third millennium.

While looking forward to meeting you in Portugal, we wish you all the joys of this Paschal time.

Pierre SCHOUVER, CSSp.
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APPENDICES
PART I

SPIRITANS AT THE START OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

1.0 HOW HAS THE WORLD CHANGED SINCE MAYNOOTH?

1.0.1 In the introduction to the Report to the Chapter of Maynooth in 1998, our Congregation was seen to be on pilgrimage with the human family of the time. As we approached the end of the second millennium, we looked at the prevailing characteristics of the contemporary world and their repercussions on our life of faith and our mission. Let us recall the subheadings used in the document:

- New Approaches to Faith and Evangelisation in Secularised Societies
- Increased Demographic Growth and an Urbanised World
- Moving Towards Democracy
- The Meeting or Conflict of Cultures
- The Domination of Market Forces
- Globalisation
- The Natural World Under Threat
- International Migrations
- Consumer Societies
- Means of Communication and Societies Dominated by the Media
- Society Without Order
- A Society of Fear, Conflict and Violence

1.0.2 This diagnosis of 1998 is a good reflection of what we are still experiencing today and of the daily menu fed to us by the media. But a brief updating on what has changed since Maynooth will help to remind us that the contemporary world is our mission field and we must therefore try to read correctly the signs of the times. As our Rule of Life puts it, we are sent beyond the frontiers of the Church “to those who have not yet heard the gospel message or have scarcely heard it; to those oppressed and most disadvantaged, as a group or as individuals, where the Church has difficulty in finding workers” (SRL 12). We cannot forget Libermann’s advice: “We have to follow the world while remaining firmly rooted in the spirit of the Gospel” (1848 ND X 151).

For the Chapter of 2004, we feel there is need for a serious study of the changes that are taking place within our Congregation; but we must be careful to view them in the context of the contemporary world, so that our response will be valid and in line with our vocation.

A diagnosis of today’s world will reveal tendencies and accelerating movements rather than stable situations. How have the characteristics we identified in 1998 developed or changed direction? How have the Church and our Congregation responded to these? Are there new phenomena and new questions in our society?
1.1 THE CHALLENGE OF SECULARISATION

1.1.1 In the Western World

In the western world, especially in Europe, secularisation continues to advance. Less people practise their religion, vocations to the priesthood and religious life continue to drop in varying degrees in different countries. In France, many parishes no longer have a Sunday Mass; Sunday Meetings without a Priest (ADAP) are becoming more common. The number of Christians who pay the religious tax in Germany has greatly diminished in the dioceses and parishes have consequently been forced to cut back drastically on salaried lay personnel. In the Netherlands, they are examining what to do with churches that are no longer in use.

But there is more than just the figures for the practice of religion and the personnel. The esteem in which priests are held by the people has diminished, aggravated as scandals are denounced and given wide publicity in the media. The idea of secularity is growing stronger, especially in Europe. People are increasingly aware of their dignity and responsibilities in many areas, including those which used to be seen as the preserves of ministers of religion – as with marriage and education. Sometimes today, even cult is laicised: non-practising parents arrange a celebration for the birth of their child which is a sort of lay baptism, with a couple of friends fulfilling the role of godparents. There are some countries (e.g. France) where secularity is occasionally pushed to extremes, seeking to eliminate all religious signs and symbols in society. Secularity also appears in an insistence on freedom of religious choice: no religion is imposed and State religions are becoming a thing of the past.

As a result of immigration, there is an ever increasing influx of adherents to other religions, particularly Islam, in countries that were formally Christian. In France, in industrial areas, Muslims are sometimes in the majority in small towns.

1.1.2 Secularisation and the Religious Situation in Other Countries

- In some countries of the old communist block, the Marxist regimes had a profound effect on religious life. Atheism attacked the very roots of the faith. When these regimes came to an end, most people found themselves without any faith or religion. A team of Spiritans is involved in a work of first evangelisation in the former German Democratic Republic, while other small Christian communities are led by priests who were veritable “confessors of the faith”. These priests real- ise that their ministry must now follow new paths and they are happy that our missionaries are opening up other possibilities.

- In Africa, where the Gospel was received with enthusiasm, a type of secularisation is sometimes found in the wake of a critical attitude to the style of mission in the past and under the influence of today’s globalised world. In several countries, injustice and violence have left their mark on the population, making them less receptive to the message of the Churches. The Churches themselves have suffered from the wars, in their personnel, their structures and infrastructures. In this context, new communities and Churches of a charismatic nature are emerging, with an emphasis on emotion and sometimes showing sectarian tendencies.

- In Latin America, this phenomenon of emotional and sometimes sectarian communities is likewise progressing, partly in reaction to a style of Church which is ill-adapted. Liberation theology and basic Christian communities were an attempt to respond to social injustice; this approach was heavily criticised by some
of the more conservative elements but the Holy Father himself has declared that, with certain clarifications, liberation theology is not only acceptable but necessary. This orientation has not been abandoned but seems to have lost some of its radicalism. In another development, which surprised many, the Conference of Latin-American Churches (CELAM) decided to make a priority of a new pastoral approach to the indigenous populations. In countries where the people have been Christian for 500 years, this is a clear statement that the communication of the gospel must always respect local cultures. As Libermann put it, nothing will last unless it is rooted in the local context.

- **In Asia**, the strong, dynamic Churches of the Philippines and South Korea, as well as the robust minority Church of Vietnam, which has persevered in the faith in spite of Marxist persecution, are in a category of their own. Elsewhere, Christian Churches are small minorities. They try to be involved in dialogue with the traditional religions of their area and witness to their faith in the context of their fragility. In China, the small groups of Christians in this immense country are striving to reconcile those who reject the almost total control of the Church by the government and those who follow a more flexible approach. How will this giant, rough-handled by Marxist violence, react in the years ahead? In Taiwan, where our confreres are working, the number of Christians has hardly increased since their arrival from mainland China with Chang Kai Cheh. Traditional religions are still very present in the family and social life of the Taiwanese people, in the context of a European/American style economy.

- **In Oceania**, there are large, solidly-established Christian Churches, but some are being strongly affected by secularisation (as in Australia) and others by the violence of fanatical Muslim groups.

### 1.1.3 The Challenge of Secularisation and the Changing Role of Christianity

Many factors are contributing to the changing place of Christianity in the secularised west and in other parts of the world. How are the Church and our Congregation reacting to this weakening of the role of Christianity?

**The Shock of our Frailty**

The almost complete drying up of spiritan vocations in the circumscriptions of the west represents a sort of scandal for the confreres of the south and a discouragement for those in the north. But in some ways, the changes in the world are also having the effect of reawakening the Churches. They are becoming renewed and more authentic, in line with the vision of Vatican II. Many initiatives, particularly a more serious training and commitment for lay people, are producing a new vitality that is a counter-balance to the vanished numbers of the past.

Cardinal Martini spoke recently of the new developments in Christianity, stressing that the health of the Church and Christian (or religious) life should never be assessed simply by statistics. The fresh understanding of the faith in the light of cultural insertions, the new ecclesial and social commitments by lay people, priests and religious are a sounder pledge for the future of the Church (and our Congregation) than the crowds of adherents that were the source of our assurance in the days prior to Vatican II.
A Century of Movement Towards Greater Authenticity

In a variety of ways, the changing world is pushing us towards a greater authenticity. In considering the dechristianisation of Europe (which has been with us for a long time now – cf. the working class of the 19th century), some historians have stressed that it was not so much a weakening of Christianity as a gradual realisation of the shallowness of its roots. There is surely something of this in the changes that Europe experienced in the wake of the second world war: universal secondary education, the impact of atheistic ideologies, the urbanisation and displacement of peoples that were tied to economic changes. The breath of truth that came with Vatican II and a certain reassessment of the role of structures and rites all contributed to a decline in regular religious practice.

So during the last 60 years of dechristianisation, we have experienced many moments of truth which have helped us to see this as a time of grace rather than calamity. These trials have led us from a Christianity bolstered by a strong sociological element to a deliberate and personal Christian commitment. The present situation in the world, of which we will examine certain traits a little later, confronts us all with a similar challenge.

Christianity in the past was often seen as a family or social inheritance, which was handed on to us almost automatically. Tertullian said long ago, “We are not born Christians – we become Christians”. Now is the time to bring out or unearth a treasure that we are in danger of losing for ever (cf. the insistence of the Pope that the source of so many good things that the West has produced should not be passed over in silence). In fact, if the statistics of practice and religious vocations continue to show a drop, we must not lose sight of the many efforts that have been made to revitalise the flame. Many intellectual, charitable, communitarian and sociological initiatives are drawing attention to the living riches of the Church that are at the service of the world.

One characteristic of this Christian renewal is the wide variety of forms that can annoy and scandalise even some Christians. Coming from a Catholic Church which is still largely uniform, we need to be educated into diversity. While continuing to appreciate structures and traditions, Christians in today’s world are obliged to make their own personal choices, just like the people in the Gospels who came face to face with Jesus. This gives birth to real Christian communities, united in and by their differences. If we have smaller crowds of Christians (although they still turn out on occasions), we have a multitude of witnesses coming from all points of the compass, just as at the first Pentecost. Believers and missionaries from all the nations on earth are part of this new Pentecost.

While working on this report on the feast of Christ the King, the thought struck me that in the poverty of our mission today – with our new missionary enterprises and international community life still being constructed and researched – we may be better placed to appreciate our true riches that we are in danger of forgetting when we feel strong. Maybe in our poverty we are more acceptable to the people we meet, more open to them and to the Spirit of the Lord.

1.2 THE CHALLENGE OF A GLOBALISED WORLD

By our spiritan vocation, we are not just interested in the evolution of the religious dimension of our planet; we are concerned with every aspect of the social life of the
human race. We are committed to the service and defence of the poor, "the oppressed and most disadvantaged, as a group or as individuals" (SRL 12). We are particularly concerned with the progress of the globalised world, because it is there that the fate of the 'disadvantaged' is decided: "We must make ourselves the advocates, the supporters and defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them" (SRL 14). Let us look at some of the ways the globalised world is progressing.

1.2.1 Demographic Growth and an Urbanised World

The rapid growth of the world's population and urbanisation has produced a different type of humanity to what we knew in the past and therefore another challenge for our mission. The towns attract people with the promise of light, beauty, riches and an enhanced social life. But many who in the past orientated their lives by their culture and religion now find themselves in huge cities with others who come from all over the place. Deprived of the ambience to which they were accustomed, they often feel a void within, they are in danger of going to places where they will find no real community or any meaning to their lives. The great cities also have areas of great poverty; new arrivals often end up in the outskirts, with families piled in together wherever they can find somewhere to live.

It is important for us to be in such places, even if we have to grope around to find some way to help and defend these unfortunate people. We have set up some missionary communities in towns and cities, often in the suburbs: Brussels, Rotterdam, Rostock, Paris (Blanc-Mesnil), São Paolo, Dakar, Douala, Port-Harcourt, Kinshasa, Luanda, Kampala, Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, Hsinchu. We often feel inadequate to answer the needs of those living in towns. In getting close to them we can try to find, with them, some guidelines for their lives, some hope for the future and some ways to defend their rights and live in peace.

Activities and needs vary greatly: inter-cultural parishes, often with many immigrants (sometimes illegal); chaplains to students, prisons, hospitals; helping the families of those who are hospitalised, working with AIDS victims; service and defence of the most abandoned.

1.2.2 The Road to Democracy?

To take up a journey towards democracy for all is one of the great ambitions of our time. It is a journey of hope but its realisation is far from easy. Even in our countries of the West, which we like to describe as 'democratic', the media and other channels of influence can sometimes perversely effect our judgement at moments of democratic choice. There can be many reasons for this. It can be the same with political parties and trade unions which can take advantage of the lack of education or information amongst the people in order the achieve their aims. In some countries (as in Africa) where the European style of democracy is something new, some leaders profit from the lack of information and organisation to monopolise and hang on to power. Education in politics and democracy is an area where we must be involved in the struggle for justice and peace.

1.2.3 Meetings and Conflicts Between Cultures and Religions

This is something which has a particular concern for us as missionaries. The value of all cultures has been recognised but the convictions do not always go very deep.
Some believe that traditional cultures will disappear and that we have to rebuild on other foundations. But cultures are vital; they allow human beings to grow and surpass themselves. Their degradation or loss impoverishes the lives of people and groups. There are still conflicts between cultures, even within the same country. This makes it even more important that in our inter-cultural communities we recognise and appreciate our brothers with all their differences and strive to inculturate our spiritan charm into the cultures present in our Congregation.

Other more menacing conflicts are raising their heads today, particularly those which set religious groups against each other. Religious fanaticism is on the increase in some regions. Our mission is very pertinent to conflict situations: in our approach to traditional religions or to those which are more widespread, like Islam and Hinduism, we try to understand, to come close and show our respect. Some young confreres are showing interest in the study of Islam. We are becoming increasingly aware that our mission includes inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, as well as reconciliation within society.

1.2.4 The Domination of the Market and Globalisation

The global market is dominating the life of this world, but at the same time, it continues to provoke reactions of various kinds — sometimes with large scale demonstrations calling for radical changes. The G7 or G8 meetings are regularly confronted by enormous crowds of protestors, some of whom become violent. Such reactions point to the negative side of our globalised world; they are trying to indicate other ways of living together and of directing the world economy.

As Spiritans, we are opposed to violent conflict but we encourage research and peaceful demonstrations which turn the spotlight on values other than economic power. And we are even more keen that such demonstrations should point a finger at the poverty of the countries of the southern hemisphere and the injustices of which they are the victims. They are showing new paths towards justice and peace and the integrity of creation. Doubtless, there is a degree of utopia mixed into this type of public protest, but we can also see in it a sign of the Spirit of God.

1.2.5 The Integrity of Creation

The integrity of nature is under increasing threat. However, many groups, and even many countries, are aware of the degradation that the globalised world is causing. More and more movements are developing and policies are being integrated into the political programmes of some countries (e.g. Germany and many others) to counteract this destruction that the world economic system is producing.

1.2.6 International Migrations

Migrations have developed in a very negative way over the last six years. Poverty, violence and the lack of security are pushing people more and more towards the richer and more democratic countries. They desperately look for ways to get to Europe or North America and unscrupulous networks are willing to help in exchange for huge sums of money. Many die en route, many are returned to their countries; in either case, it is always a catastrophe.

We must try to intervene where we can to change the policies of immigration. We must help the victims of these policies and traffickers, as is being done, for example, by the English Spiritan Associates at Manchester airport. These clandestine migra-
tions prove that the world of today needs fundamental changes to make this earth more inhabitable.

1.2.7 Consumer Societies?
The societies of the north are consumer societies. However there are increasing signs that human beings feel other needs and other expectations. They are turning to other aspects of life, they are searching for deeper meanings. Individually or in groups, many of our contemporaries care deeply about the preservation of the environment, about justice and peace in the world, about life in community - and this is where they find meaning and fraternity.

1.3 NEW CHALLENGES
In preparing this report with the General Council, at first we felt there were hardly any new elements to add in a presentation of the contemporary world. But in the course of our discussions we realised that there are new phenomena and new challenges. Here is a short list of what we feel is important:

1.3.1 New Threats to Our World

- The AIDS pandemic can now be halted by retroviral drugs. Thanks to this treatment, it seems that there are almost no Europeans and North Americans now dying of AIDS. But it continues to ravage Africa and deaths are counted in millions. The community of Sant'Egidio has launched a programme in Mozambique, that it wishes to expand to other countries, which is called DREAM (Drug Resource Enhancement against AIDS in Mozambique). A confrere working in the Central African Republic has begun to help the people in the same way. First of all, the medicine has to be found at the lowest price: this works out at 1 dollar per day, 30 per month, 360 per year. It is still a lot of money in the African context. It should be possible to reduce the price further. It calls for a co-operation between Spiritans, for example, and doctors. It is also important that those who start the treatment should come together regularly to give mutual encouragement.

- The events of September 11th, 2001 have given rise to a preventative policy for dealing with terrorists. Terrorism and this new policy are having a very disruptive effect in those countries most closely concerned. Terrorism uses the lethal weapon of suicide bombers. The suicide of young people (also in more prosperous countries), including a bishop in Pakistan, starkly illustrates a radical refusal to accept an unjust world.

- The question of paedophilia has been given wide coverage by the media. Priests and religious have been accused and found guilty. It is a great challenge for our "civilisation", for our Church and for our Congregation. One can also note the cruelty of the media in dealing with the accusations. To this can be added the exploitation of children in work and sexual tourism.

- There is an increased awareness that many people on this planet are lacking sufficient water. This is a central element in the context of protecting the environment and international justice.
1.3.2 New Signs of the Times

- The growth in peaceful demonstrations in favour of important humanitarian causes and against corruption and the blockages and injustices that go hand in hand with the present global system.

- The civilian population is emerging as a new force for changing the world. South Africa has given a fine example (*people power*).

- There is an increased insistence on integrity and responsibility.

It is in this world on the move, with its good and its bad side, that we have been called to witness to the Gospel, together and in collaboration with others, to the ends of the earth.
PART II
SPIRITAN GROUPS IN EVERY CONTINENT
THE DIASPORA OF CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS

2.1 THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA AND THE ISLANDS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

2.1.1 THE MAGHREB: Algeria International Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Algeria</th>
<th>Literacy: 58%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: 32,000,000</td>
<td>Religions: Muslim 99.5%, Christian 0.5%,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy m/f: 68/70</td>
<td>Independence: July 5th, 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality: 3.5%</td>
<td>GNP: $1,550 per inhabitant.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Five confreres are currently serving in our three centres in the diocese of Oran: Sidi Bel Abbès, Mascara and Ghazaouet. The three French Spiritans are all over 60. There are also 2 young confreres from West Africa doing their stage. Another French confrere belonging to the group is presently away on recyclage.

Over the last 30 years, the number of Christians in this predominantly Muslim country has continued to fall. The dreadful wave of assassinations in the 1990s (more than 100,000 killed, including 20 religious) contributed to the shrinking of the Spiritan group to 2 confreres for many years. For the Church, this trial was an opportunity to show the Algerians the evangelical meaning of the Christian presence: a gift of oneself in the service of others. Today, our confreres are pursuing small-scale initiatives to help the people (libraries, language courses, health care, professional training), seeking informal contacts and giving pastoral service to the tiny Christian communities.

An important event in recent years was the celebration in 2001 of the centenary of the arrival of the Spiritans in Algeria. It took place just after the terrible events of September 11th, underlining the importance of this small presence in the context of the huge challenge to relations between the Christian and Muslim worlds. Another milestone was the arrival of reinforcements after many barren years when it had been impossible to send young confreres to the country. Two experienced Spiritans, who had worked in Mauritania, joined the Group, as well as several other confreres on stage who were experiencing this special type of mission for a limited period.

The question for the future is the continuity and stability of the Group. With the drop in young confreres from the North, some sort of structural ties with the FANO were investigated but without any concrete results. The Group then turned to other African circumscriptions, suggesting Algeria as a place for their stage. This experiment, which is still under way, has been encouraging, but it has also underlined the difficulties, especially for Anglophones, of taking on an apostolate where the work is not clearly defined and where a large dose of creativity is called for. At present, the General Council is inclined to send confreres who already have some experience, or younger men who have done their stage in Algeria and ask to return for their first appointment to this rather special apostolate.
2.1.2 FRANCOPHONE AND LUSOPHONE WEST AFRICA

2.1.2.1 North-West African Foundation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Life expectancy m/f</th>
<th>Infant mortality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>9,500,000</td>
<td>51/54</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>2,700,000</td>
<td>52/55</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Conakry</td>
<td>7,500,000</td>
<td>46/47</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
<td>43/46</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profile

The number of confreres in the circumscription has remained steady around 55 for the last 6 years, but the Europeans who used to form a large majority are now only half of the total, the rest being from Africa. They come from 14 different countries. With the arrival of many young confreres on first appointment, more than half of the Spiritans are under 40; the average age of the whole group is around 50.

In 1999, the circumscription changed from being a District (Senegal) to a Foundation (FANO); at the same time, the formation structures became autonomous vis-à-vis the FAC (which became a Province). This change was in view of the steadily growing number of professed Spiritans from the region (Senegal and Guinea Conakry). Today, they number 20: 13 in temporary vows, 4 in perpetual vows working abroad and 3 at home. There are more non-professed young men who have started their training.

Missionary Project

The members of FANO are scattered over a huge area covering 4 different countries: Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry. So in a sense, this circumscription is a sort of “region with a unified administration”. In the 3 most populated countries there is a very large Muslim presence: Guinea Conakry 85%, Senegal 92% and Mauritania 100%. But in this whole area, stretching from the forests of Guinea to the deserts of Mauritania, there is enormous variety, giving rise to a multiplicity of Spiritan missionary commitments: first evangelisation, inter-religious dialogue with Islam and Traditional Religions, development work (health, access to water, agriculture etc.) and education at all levels. Confreres are present in isolated rural spots and in the multicultural towns and cities. They minister to established Christian communities, refugees and displaced persons, they serve young people from infancy to university level, they are involved in the media and in the formation of lay people, priests and religious and candidates for our own religious family. The diversity is a great help in encouraging a real missionary dynamism throughout the Foundation. There are 3 Spiritan Fraternities in Dakar, where lay people can deepen their knowledge of the Spiritan spiritual tradition.
In taking on works, various needs have to be borne in mind: e.g., the establishment of a home base for local Spiritans, proximity to houses of formation. While being ready to hand over developed parishes to the diocesan clergy (as already done at Dakar and Ziguinchor), the group has to assure the continuity of missionary works that are still pertinent and remain open to further requests from the bishops to open new missions (as is currently happening in both Guineas). So the Spiritan presence in Senegal has been reduced, with disengagement from some rural areas and parts of Dakar, but our numbers have been strengthened in Guinea Conakry where we have been able to answer some requests of the bishops. A new insertion is foreseen for Guinea Bissau.

Community Life

Most of the communities are intercultural and are often made up of older European confreres and young confreres from Africa. This obviously poses a challenge. Many of the communities accept this diversity as a blessing, living in an atmosphere of trustful sharing and mutual support. Others have difficulties, especially regarding material and financial questions. Many feel that the aim should be communities of at least 3 members.

The unity and solidarity of the four areas of the Foundation remains a problem, with a tendency to concentrate exclusively on one’s own back yard; the situation is not helped by the poor means of communication. On the bright side, there is a good attendance at the yearly meeting of all the confreres (for a retreat or a seminar). There are other smaller meetings – those on stage, those on first appointment, those working in first evangelisation. An on-going problem is the integration of Guinea Bissau into the circumscription: confreres on the spot and those in charge of formation have an important role to play here, trying to create an atmosphere of better communication and involvement with the whole. Although it is predominantly Lusophone in a largely Francophone circumscription, it is difficult to see how this area could be profitably attached to any other grouping.

Formation

Since the circumscription became independent from Central Africa as regards formation in 1999, they have been building up their own structures, sorting out the financial side and setting up a team of formators. The Postulancy was transferred from Dakar to Ziguinchor, the first cycle was established at Dakar and the novitiate at Boffa in Guinea. There is a move to create a theological consortium with other religious orders at Dakar, but the difficulty in finding competent formators means that the emphasis for the moment is on consolidating the existing teams. Meanwhile, the students continue to follow theology courses at Yaoundé and elsewhere. It is important that, as soon as possible, suitable confreres who come from the FANO countries (or from elsewhere in Africa) should join the formation teams. The Chapter of 2003 decided that henceforth it is essential that a formator should serve on the Foundation Council.

FANO has good relations with several circumscriptions which actively support its project, especially PAC, WAP, France etc. An attempt was made to achieve some sort of structural proximity with the Algerian group; although nothing concrete has happened so far, it is hoped that a real collaboration may become possible. For several reasons, there is not much in the way of relationships with neighbouring circumscriptions (Gambia, Cape Verde); the problem of language is a factor here.
The Future
In view of the growth of the Foundation, three main tasks will be important for the future. First of all, the Chapter of 2003 stressed the need to strengthen the communications and unity between the different areas of FANO, and to increase the proximity of the regional superiors to the confreres in their area. Secondly, special attention must be given to the formation teams and the development of a training programme adapted to the regional context. Finally, it will be increasingly important to reduce FANO’s financial dependence on external sources; financing the internal services of the Foundation and the support of confreres engaged in ministry must become more and more a local responsibility.

2.1.2.2 District of Cape Verde

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cape Verde</th>
<th>Religions: Catholics 90%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy: 65 years</td>
<td>Foreign debt $597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality: 54%</td>
<td>Independence: 05 July 1975 (from Portugal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy: 31%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Cape Verde Islands are situated a two hours’ flight away from Dakar. This is a country which is severely affected by drought and as a consequence is poor. The population has been increasing: if only 418,000 live in the country a further 750,000 live abroad. The country depends on rain and the local population survives in large part due to the solidarity of emigrants. However, despite the difficulties there is no hunger in the country.

The Spiritans are in Cape Verde since 1942. At the moment there are 18 – 14 work on the larger island, São Tiago, whose principal city, Praia, is the capital of the country. Two Spiritans work on the Maio island and also 2 on the S. Antão island. Of the group 2 are Cape Viridians including the bishop, 2 are Nigerians and the remainder are Portuguese. Seven of the confreres there are over 70 years. To continue the Spiritan presence and to further internationalise the group, the district is requesting more first appointments from other regions. The following have been the principal events during the last six years:

- Because of the lack of local clergy and of a request coming from the bishop, the group took on responsibility during the Spiritan Year for the two parishes on the S. Antão island. The possibility of continuing here is being studied.
- The arrival of 3 first appointments of which 2 came from Nigeria.
- The ordination of 2 Spiritans from Cape Verde who are now on mission elsewhere.
- The District Chapter of 2002.

Spiritans are involved in evangelisation and feel that they are co-responsible for the construction of the local church. In the parishes, activities are varied: the building of small Christian communities; the formation of lay leaders; youth evangelisation; small educational projects; missionary animation and the raising of vocational awareness both Spiritan and diocesan. Alongside the Spiritan house in Praia, the community accommodates young people who are preparing for Spiritan membership. Following their secondary education, their formation takes place in the Portuguese Province. This work has been showing good results and the Congregation has 9 professed Cape Viridians including 4 priests and the bishop who have Portugal as their province of origin.
The group tries to give everyone the possibility of living in community and those who live on the São Tiago island usually all meet each week in the Spiritan house in Praia. There is a monthly meeting for all of the group. Spiritan fraternities are beginning to appear in the Spiritan parishes and some years ago a Spiritan founded a group of mission animators (consecrated but not religious) which share the Spiritan spirituality.

2.1.3 **Anglophone West Africa**

The foundation of this region was laid during the meeting of superiors of Africa that gathered in Dakar, Senegal from 25 to 27 April 1979. The meeting was also the occasion that gave birth to the West African Foundation that is now the Province of West Africa. At this meeting it was agreed that a single conference of Spiritan Major Superiors in West Africa be established. The reason for the establishment of this body was not only for the superiors to share with each other their problems and seek solutions, but more so for a common approach to Spiritan vocation and formation of those who are joining the Spiritans in the sub region. This was what necessitated the birth of the West African Foundation which at the initial stages was a bilingual Foundation because within the sub region there are Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries.

As time went on, Francophone West Africa pulled out of the new Foundation and joined the Foundation of Central Africa which is Francophone, leaving only the Anglophone countries of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The regional meeting continued with the same vision and purpose though this time the number has dwindled due to suppression of some circumscriptions and the merger of others.

The countries of the region have witnessed a lot of turmoil in terms of wars and military coups. Presently all the countries have civilian governments and they are experimenting with democracy. They still have a long way to go to achieve stability in most of the countries of the sub region. The countries that have come out of war are in the process of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation. The peace is still very fragile. The economies of these countries are still suffering from the effects of war and military rule and life is hard and difficult for the common people. The situation is worsened by the global AIDS epidemic which is more acute in sub Saharan Africa.

This is the context in which Spiritans in this region are living and working. The region used to be home to a large number of Spiritan missionaries from the northern hemisphere in the past but presently there are very few left in the region. Even though the region is still a mission area, it has become a sending mission because many Spiritans from this region are found in almost all parts of the Spiritan mission world-wide. It is one of the regions with its houses of formation full to such an extent that they are struggling to cater for them. One of the biggest challenges in the region is funding for their formation houses and giving confreres in initial formation a sound Spiritan formation that is holistic. Apart from this, there are the issues of formation of formators and self-reliance. Most of the fragile economies in the region do not allow for proper planning and budgeting.

Another major challenge facing the region is the new style of organisation introduced in 2001. The two Provinces that make up the region, Nigeria and WAP, became regionalised Provinces in 2001. This is something new in the Congregation and the experiment is having a lot of hiccups. There is some element of frustration and discontentment in the region as regards the working of the regions vis-à-vis the Province.
Maybe it is too early in the day to judge. Could time resolve the problems and difficulties?

There is a good spirit of co-operation and collaboration in the region in the area of formation. The second cycle formation in SIST Nigeria is a collaborative effort of the region and they have made a success of that common project. They have not been as successful in collaborating in the area of common apostolate but they have not given up further attempts. They have confreres working in each other’s circumscription. As the fastest growing region in the Congregation in terms of membership, the Congregation needs to pay particular attention to this region in order to enable it to achieve more for the entire Congregation.

### 2.1.3.1 District of The Gambia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gambia</th>
<th>Life Expectancy: 54.38 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: 1,501,050</td>
<td>Independence: 18 February 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions: Muslims 90%, Christians 9%, Indigenous beliefs 1%</td>
<td>Infant mortality rate: 74.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GDP per capita: $1,800.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spiritan Presence:** 10 professed members – 1 bishop, 7 priests and 2 students on pastoral experience.

**History**

The history of the Catholic church in the Gambia is synonymous with Spiritan history. The first Spiritans who were French arrived Bathurst now Banjul in 1848. The mission in Bathurst was an outpost of Dakar. It became a mission “sui juris” confided to the Spiritans in 1932. It became a prefecture Apostolic in 1951 with Fr Moloney as the Prefect Apostolic. In 1957 it became a diocese, the only one in the country and Fr Moloney became its first Bishop in 1958. In 1981 he was succeeded by Michael Cleary who is still there. In the recent past, a few other religious Congregations and missionary institutes have come into the Gambia.

When WAF was founded in 1979, its novitiate was opened in Bwiam in the Gambia in 1980 and it continued there until it was transferred to Ejisu Ghana 9 years later. The first group of WAF confreres on first appointment joined the Irish confreres in the district in 1988. Presently there are 5 WAP confreres: 3 priests and 2 students on pastoral experience in the district, and the others are Irish confreres, some of them on active retirement.

**Mission Engagements**

Spiritans have been in the forefront in education in the Gambia and most of the country’s elite today owe their education to the Spiritans.

Members of the district work in pastoral ministry, in inter-religious dialogue, justice and peace, social development and a few have continued in education. There are a few vocations from the Gambia in WAP, but the district has no programme of formation like the postulancy. The discussion is on to see the possibility of opening one.

**The Future**

Most of the Irish confreres are either actively retired or nearing retirement while the young ones from WAP are few. There is an ongoing discussion about the district joining the new arrangement in Anglophone West Africa and becoming part of WAP.
2.1.3.2 West African Province (WAP)

The Province is made up of two Regions: Ghana (and Benin Community) and Sierra Leone.

Ghana
Population: 20,244,154
Religions: Christianity 63%, Traditional beliefs 21%, Muslims 16%
Life expectancy male/female: 55.66/58.51 years
Infant mortality rate: 55.64%
Independence: 6 March 1957
GDP per capita: $2,100 (2002 Est)

Sierra Leone
Population: 5,732,681
Religions: Muslims 60%, Indigenous beliefs 30%
Life expectancy male/female: 40.33/45.42 years
Infant mortality rate: 146.86%
Independence: 27 April 1961
GDP per capita: $580 (2002 est)

History

The idea of the circumscription comprising some countries on the West African coast was agreed to in 1979 in Dakar Senegal at the meeting of West African Superiors of the districts of Senegal, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Makurdi, and Kwara-Benue. All of them were to become the Founding members. The new circumscription was known as West African Foundation with headquarters in Ghana. The first novitiate opened in Bwiam, the Gambia in 1980. Later the district of Senegal pulled out and joined FAC while the district of Kwara-Benue pulled out and joined the Nigerian Province. The new Foundation continued to develop and in 1988, it had its first ordination to the priesthood. In 1992 the Foundation Superior became a major superior and the Foundation held its first Chapter in Ejisu Ghana in 1995. The founding districts remained autonomous operating alongside the Foundation.

Following the recommendations of the Maynooth Chapter on Regionalisation, the General Council initiated discussions with the founding districts of the Foundation and with the members of the Foundation on the process of becoming a Province with regions. On October 2, 2001, the Foundation became a Province comprising the districts of Sierra Leone and Ghana, while Makurdi became part of the new regionalised Province of Nigeria. The district of the Gambia opted to continue as an autonomous district outside the new Province for the mean time.

Statistics

The Province has a total membership of 134 made up of 62 priests, 4 brothers, 53 professed members in formation and 13 novices. Of the 134 members, 119 are members by origin and 15 are by appointment in the circumscription.

Formation

Each of the regions has its own postulancy. The region of Ghana has its postulancy in Kumasi Ghana while Sierra Leone has its own in Bo. The novitiate follows right after the one year postulancy and the common novitiate is situated in Ejisu Ghana as well as the common philosophy also in Ejisu Ghana. Pastoral experience of a year or two follows at the end of the first cycle formation. WAP collaborates with the Province of Nigeria in a common second cycle formation in SIST, Enugu Nigeria. WAP does send some of its students to other second cycle formation houses in other parts of Africa and Europe.
Mission

WAP has missions in the countries that make up the Province as well as other missions ad extra. Presently there are 16 members of the Province working in 8 countries; Malawi, Paraguay, USA, Canada, Ireland, Nigeria, Guinea Conakry and Guinea Bissau.

Challenges

The Province like many young provinces in the South is facing a big financial burden mainly due to the numbers in the formation house. The Province depends a lot on Cor Unum allocation and it does not go far enough to take care of their needs. Because the primary objective is to cater for those in formation, investing in self reliance projects is very difficult. Training of staff for the formation houses is also a major problem due to lack of funds.

The new regionalised structure is still not clearly worked out and will take a while to adapt to the system.

2.1.3.3 Province of Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Independence: 1st October 1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: 133,881,700</td>
<td>Infant Mortality rate: 71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions: Christians 46%, Muslims 44%, Indigenous beliefs 10%</td>
<td>GDP per capita: $875 (2002 Est)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy male/female: 50.9/51.1</td>
<td>Literacy rate: 68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Country

Nigeria is a Federal Republic in Western Africa, bounded by Cameroon to the east, Chad to the north-east, Niger to the north, Benin to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Until 1991, the capital was Lagos but now Abuja is the new Capital.

Nigeria is by far the most populated of Africa’s countries. Its many ethnic groups give the country a rich culture but also pose major challenges to nation building. After many years of military rule, the country now enjoys a democratic government in a Presidential system of government. Nigeria covers an area of 923,768 sq. km.

The Church

The first wave of contact with Christianity under the protection of Portugal was between the 15th and 18th centuries. Mainly Capuchin and Augustinian missionaries from Portugal, Spain and Italy were involved. This was in the area of Warri Kingdom. The second wave of mission in the 19th century started in the Yoruba area of Nigeria with the SMA. They were closely followed by French Spiritans who landed in Onitsha in 1885 led by Fr Lutz. The Irish Spiritans took over from the French and the indefatigable Bishop Joseph Shanahan and his men carried on the work of evangelisation up to the Lower Benue and Calabar area. Today there are 48 dioceses and 9 provinces in Nigeria. Almost all the Bishops are indigenous and there is a steady growth in vocation to the diocesan clergy and the Religious life. Nigeria is reputed to have the largest diocesan seminary in the world with as many as 700 seminarians in one of the seminaries.
The Spiritans: Background History

The Province of Nigeria is ironically among the youngest circumscriptions in the Congregation. It was born on 2nd October 2001. Although the name “Province of Nigeria” entered our parlance from October 12, 1983, when the former Province of Nigeria East (until 1976 a District of the Irish Province) became known simply as the Province of Nigeria, the circumscription did not acquire total belonging by all Spiritans in Nigeria. It denoted the geographical area of Nigeria formerly manned predominantly by the Irish confreres till they were expelled by the Nigerian Government in 1970. They were charged with supporting Biafra. On the other hand two other circumscriptions co-existed with the Province under the one Nigerian nation. These were the territories run by the English Province, the Makurdi District, and the Kwarabenue later Kogi District run by the (French) Canadian Province.

The confreres of Makurdi District aligned themselves since 1979 to the West African Foundation while those of Kogi aligned with the former Province of Nigeria. Following the policy of Regionalisation encouraged by the Congregation since the Itaici Chapter of 1992 and Maynooth 1998, the General Council under Pierre Schouveier propelled the unification of all Spiritans present in Nigeria. This process began in 1996 through intense consultations and dialogue with all concerned. This resulted in a new Province with 4 regions made up of all Spiritans originating from Nigeria who chose the new Province as province of origin and those appointed to Nigeria from other circumscriptions. Each of the regions has its own Regional Superior and a council with certain powers but under one Provincial. All the regional Superiors are members of the Provincial Council. The new Province held its first Chapter from 16 to 27 July 2002. Presently the Province is engaged in the process of putting down its orientations as a new and united Province that brings together all Nigerians from different ethnic backgrounds including those from other Provinces working in Nigeria.

Statistics

The Province has 476 members: 1 Bishop, 289 priests, 6 brothers, 181 professed members in formation. Of the 289 priests, 10 are members of other circumscriptions on appointment to Nigeria.

Formation Programme

The Province is one of the fastest growing Provinces in the Congregation with large numbers in formation. All the structures of formation are in place in the Province. It is one of the two circumscriptions in the Congregation that still does the first cycle formation right after the novitiate. The second cycle formation takes place in SIST founded in 1987. It is jointly owned by the Province of Nigeria and West Africa Province. Apart from Spiritan students from these two circumscriptions, there are Spiritans from EAP and PAC, as well as students from other Religious Congregations, like the Claretians, the Benedictines and Brothers of Jesus the Saviour studying in the school.

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

The major challenges in the houses of formation are lack of adequate finance and formators.
Mission Engagements

The Province is engaged in works in Nigeria in pastoral ministry in areas of primary evangelisation, home base parishes, education, inter-religious dialogue and justice and peace. They are also engaged in missions outside Nigeria. Presently they have 95 confreres working in 28 different countries outside the circumscription. Their members are found in almost all the circumscriptions and new ventures of the Congregation. The Province is already asking itself if it is not spreading itself too thin.

Challenges

The Province is still grappling with the new regional structure it has embarked on. Many things are not clear and there are conflicts between the regional and Provincial administration. It will take time and patience for things to work out.

Another major challenge is finance and self-reliance. As a growing Province with all the houses of formation and a large student population, the Province is preoccupied with looking for resources to look after the formation of the young confreres both in initial and ongoing formation and the training of formators. Because everything they get goes into looking after the houses of formation, engaging in any meaningful project for self-reliance is still a mirage. There are though a few projects but these are not bringing in the kind of financial help that will be meaningful to the needs in the formation houses.

The cost of administering the Province is another big challenge. A lot of money is spent on confreres going on First Appointment not just for their travel and visa but for other needs like health. Because of the big number of members of the Province working in other countries (and are even spreading more as more first appointments are made), the cost of the Provincial or his delegate going to visit these confreres is enormous for the Province.

2.1.4 THE REGION OF FRANCOPHONE CENTRAL AFRICA

2.1.4.1 Central African Province (PAC)

After many years of preparation the Foundation of Central Africa at it’s Chapter of 1999 under the guidance of the General Council became a Province to be known as the Province of Central Africa. The result was the fusion of the old Districts of Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Republic of Central Africa and Cameroon. This vast area had a population of around 20 million people.

After the fusion each region retained its own identity, creating a sense of solidarity with the provincial administration. The fusion created a sense of belonging to a new circumscription, which became one of the priorities of the Province.

PAC has 239 members:
- 159 are from the PAC jurisdiction, coming from 7 countries (the 4 countries that comprise the Province, Democratic Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Senegal);
- 80 from PAC (59 from the northern and 20 from the southern hemisphere);
- 93 are students (69 professed, 9 novices and 17 postulants).
Mission

a) Ad intra

PAC assumed all the missionary commitments made by the old districts that constituted the actual Regions. These works constituted pastoral involvement in the cities and rural areas; the promotion and animation of specific social commitments (for example, the social rehabilitation of marginalised groups and minorities; street children; care of the sick, collaboration with NGO’s). We will now present each region and identify their missionary commitments.

Region of Cameroon (and Community of Equatorial Guinea)

Cameroon
Population: 14,710,000
Life expectancy m/f: 53/56
Child Mortality: 94%

Religion: Catholics 21%, Traditional Religions 45%,
Protestants 14%, Muslims 20%.
Per Capita income: $510 (1998)
Literacy: 63%
Independence: 1st January 1960

The first pastoral priority of this Region is first evangelisation: in the north - Seal, with the Pigmies in the east, and the area of Bafia which is difficult to contact. In the north Spiritans are not only working with traditional religious practice but are entering into dialogue with the Muslims. Development work is also seen as a priority. In the centre of the country and in the south, parochial work remains similar, with special attention to the spiritual accompaniment of people, human promotion, rural development and the fight against corruption and injustices. The ministry in the big cities such as Yaoundé, Douala, etc. is focused on youth ministry and other missionary priorities of the Province.

The Region of Congo-Brazzaville

Congo-Brazzaville
Population: 2,864,000 (1999)
Life expectancy m/f: 46/51
Child Mortality: 81%

Religion: Catholics 53.9%, Traditional Religions 19%,
Protestants 24.4%, Others 2.7%.
Literacy: 74%
Independence: 15 August 1960 (from France)

Congo-Brazzaville is a country that has just come out of a war that has nullified all the efforts at development that had been engaged in with much sacrifice. Even yet there is instability in the Pool region where there has been guerrilla warfare until recently.

In this region of PAC we can highlight the area of Likouala which has recently been named as an Apostolic Prefecture with Father Jean Gardin nominated as Prefect Apostolic. Here pastoral ministry is exercised in conditions of great difficulty. Here journeys are made by canoe, communities visited only once a year, difficulties are experienced in the adequate formation of catechists, etc. Recently in this region many refugees have come from Rwanda and the Congo, which creates a very deep problem: the co-existence of diverse populations, their social, religious and economic integration. CEMIR, a Catholic NGO group have given very good humanistic service.

In the Diocese of Owanda, the Region proposes to work in the area of economic and social development especially with young people, and listening to mothers. As the education system has been totally destroyed there is a great effort to rebuild it. In Sala Ngolo, the Spiritans have opened a social centre whose objective is to prepare young people socially and economically for life. In the centre they will focus on civic
education, spiritual formation and the rehabilitation of youth. To achieve these objectives the centre offers courses in farming methods, carpentry, sculpture, auto-mechanics, arts, trades and computer science.

In the urban areas, along with regular pastoral work (Caritas, visits to the sick, preparation of catechists, community animators, youth work that includes libraries, schools and literacy programmes), the Region is attentive to the formation of basic Christian Communities. The Region also runs a crèche for street children where they strive to look after medical needs, nutrition, education and the reintegration of children into their families.

**Region of Gabon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gabon</th>
<th>Religion: Catholics 40%, Traditional religions 49.5%, Protestants 10%, Muslim 0.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy: 63%</td>
<td>Child Mortality: 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence: 17 August 1960 (from France)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy m/f: 51/54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are 42 Spiritans working in the region of Gabon spread over 4 Dioceses: Libreville, Mouia, Oyem and Franceville. The focus of their ministry is spiritual renewal with a view to greater involvement in vocational work to the religious and priestly life in the coming years. Recently the Apostolic Prefecture of Makokou has been established in Ougou and Fr Joseph Koerber has been named as Prefect Apostolic.

**Region of RCA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central African Republic</th>
<th>Religion: Catholics 25%, Traditional Rel. 24%, Protestants 25%, Muslim 15%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy: 40%</td>
<td>Child Mortality: 113%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy m/f: 43/47</td>
<td>Independence: 13 August 1960 (from France)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The life of Spiritans in this country, especially in Bangui, has been marked by social, political and military instability. This situation has generated much suffering and in many cases the people were barely able to survive.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, Spiritans continue to animate communities and develop specific initiatives. In the rural areas (e.g., Pissa and in Seko), they continue with visits to communities in the countryside, the formation of catechists and leaders in the different sectors; the work of human promotion and development. In Seko they are involved in inter-religious dialogue with Muslims.

In the cities, in particular Bangui and Bangassou, the pastoral initiative of Spiritans is focussed on the animation of basic Christian Communities (CEB), youth movements and the animation of the leaders of movements and fraternities.

**b) Ad extra**

PAC wishes to remain faithful to the charism of the founders of the Congregation and living out this desire will lead to its survival. So, since the foundation of the Province (and already as a Foundation), PAC has based its missionary project on sending conferences to other missions in Central Africa. At the moment PAC has 24 of its members working in Angola, Philippines, Guinea, FANO, Zambia, EAP, FOI, CKF, France and Italy (Rome).
Given the rapid diminution of the members of the Province due to the reality of confreres returning to their provinces of origin in Europe, the last meeting of the Enlarged Provincial Council of Angola requested the General Council that confreres from PAC receiving their first appointments in the next five years be appointed in greater number to their Province of origin.

Formation

After many ups and downs and difficulties provoked by the Congo-Brazzaville war, the seminary was closed. Now with a certain stability in Yaoundé a new scholasticate has been built in Ngoya.

2.1.4.2 Congo Kinshasa Foundation

| Democratic Republic of the Congo (RDC) | Religion: Christians, Protestants, Traditional, Muslim, Animists. |
| Life expectancy m/f: 49/52 | Independence: 30 June 1960 (Belgium) |
| Child Mortality: 128% | |
| Literacy: 77% | |

After a ferocious war that lasted five years, which destabilised, balkanised and completely ruined the country, with more than a million killed, the Congo is now trying to emerge from this morass, setting up a transitional national government of reconciliation.

Until 1999 the Foundation coexisted with the District of the same name. In agreement with the General Council, the Chapter of December/January 1999/2000 decided to fuse the two circumscriptions creating the new foundation: Congo-Kinshasa. It would never be too often to remember that Congo-Kinshasa is historically one of the most significant places in the Congregation’s history. It was in this area that 21 confreres gave their lives 43 years ago in Kongolo.

Mission

The Spiritans in Congo-Kinshasa are confronted with many problems, the fruit of many years of war and assault on their country: whole families completely dispersed (including some confreres that live in extreme difficulties); the poverty of the population and the marginalisation of the villages and the food producing areas; the means of communication and transport. All of this is a headache for the people and the pastoral teams. Many schools are also closed and basic sanitary arrangements are lacking.

In addition, the foundation has just returned to the old mission of Kongolo (where there is already a community and the Postulancy). They also plan to move back to the missions of Kindu and Manono which are preparing to celebrate the centenary of their evangelisation by the Spiritans. So it is important for the Spiritan to return to this region.

Formation

The foundation has already set up all the necessary structures for training candidates for the spiritan life. The first cycle is at Mont Ngafula (Kinshasa), from where the students follow the classes of an inter-religious consortium. The novitiate is situated at Lumbubashi. The scholasticate is at Kolwezi, where accommodation for the students is being prepared; they will study theology at the inter-congregational theological consortium. This is run by the Franciscans and uses the buildings of their semi-
nary. The first community, consisting of 5 scholastics and 2 formators is already installed in the newly acquired house. The rest of the building is well under way.

2.1.5 LUSOPHONE SOUTH-WESTERN AFRICA: Province of Angola

Angola
Population: 12,475,000
Life expectancy: m/f: 45/48
Per Capita income: $380 (1998)

Child Mortality: 170%
Religion: Catholics 43%, Traditional Religions 45%, Protestants 12%
Literacy: 42%
Independence: 11 November 1975 (Portugal)

For more than three decades of war, the people of Angola have suffered in a catastrophic fashion. 78% of the rural population have been exposed to extreme poverty. The war has caused the uprooting of 3.8 million people. There are trustworthy figures that indicate that 70,000 to 90,000 people have been mutilated; even so, hope has not diminished. The cessation of arms, since February 2002, and the peace accords that were celebrated in April of that year, between the warring factions has brought a spirit of relief and opened a new horizon of hope for people who were martyred and suffered greatly since the dark days of colonialism. New challenges have appeared for the Church in Angola and the Congregation.

The Church

The Church in Angola may be proud of its martyrs and those who gave witness to their faith. During the long years of war the Church was, and is, at the side and service of the people. Now as peace appears to be leading towards stability, the Church as a priority has taken up the enormous challenge of reconciliation, to develop fraternity between Angolans, to create an Angola that is just, democratic, peaceful and free: a country where each person feels at home, respecting party and religious affiliation, racial and ethnic-tribal difference, where there is an absence of superiority and inferiority in the different sections of the country.

The Congregation

The Province of Angola celebrated its 25th birthday in 2002, although Spiritans have been in Angola for the past 138 years. At the moment there are a total of 110 confreres in the country. The Congregation as the Church in Angola has given testimony of their faith. Six members gave their lives, while another number were seriously injured by mines or were ambushed. The mission of the Congregation never weakened for one moment even in the light of the great difficulties that they encountered.

Mission

Ad intra

Within the country the major missionary challenge, is and will continue to be, the reality of broken families (Christian or otherwise), abandoned children, whole families who live in extreme poverty, the cost of living and its consequences (organised corruption, prostitution, drugs, delinquency and crimes of all types). Psychological depression, the innumerable number of sects, the alarming number of traditional religious practices (the lack of religious assistance and of sanitary arrangements which cause epidemics and great suffering for the people) are also issues to be addressed. Also the Province receives a large number of requests from Bishops to take on work
in their dioceses. It will be remembered that a great number of Spiritan Missions had to abandoned because of the war that took hold of the country.

Ad extra

Responding to the missionary appeals of the Congregation throughout the world, the Province recognising it’s slow growth and the extension of its work in the country, has still responded by sending Confreres to work outside its frontiers. At the moment some of its members are working in PAC, FANO, Mozambique, Brazil, Mexico, Portugal and France.

Formation

Spiritan formation also suffered the horrors of war: The Minor Seminary, and the Theologate had to move at least once by force of circumstances; one year the novitate had to be suspended and another year it had to be delayed for three months. The maintenance and accompaniment of our candidates was a great challenge during the war. This reality did not put off the young people from their desire to continue the mission of Christ within the Congregation. Trying to give an international formation to our young Spiritans the Province sent some students to other circumscriptions for 2nd Cycle. Along with the students that were in Huambo (Angola) there were students in PAC, Portugal, Spain, England, Ireland, France and EAP. This was possible only because of the great spirit of solidarity that continues to grow in the Congregation.

Community Life

A good number of our communities are international in their personnel. In these and in others there is an effort to live a life of regular prayer, a spirit of unity, solidarity, confidence and mutual listening. A number of confreres live on their own. This is not always of their own making but because of difficult and unforeseen circumstances. The Province is trying to guarantee community life for all its members.

Syntheses

The fundamental challenge of the Province is to continue to serve the People of God in Angola and beyond, to announce the Gospel to the poor and consolidate the Christian Communities entrusted to it. At the same time, it is called to play a part in the construction of a society that is fraternal and just in the aftermath of war.

2.1.6 THE EAST AFRICAN REGION

2.1.6.1 Ethiopia International Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethiopia</th>
<th>Religions: Orthodox 60%, Islam 30%, traditional beliefs 10%.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area: 1,127,127 sq. kms</td>
<td>Population: 66,557,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality: 103.22%</td>
<td>Life expectancy: 41.24 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy: 42.7%</td>
<td>Population below poverty line: 45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spiritan Presence

Spiritans came to Ethiopia in 1972 in two groups and established themselves on two fronts. One group with confreres largely from Ireland opened missions in the Province of Gamo-Gofa in the South-west of Ethiopia. The second group consisted of American and Dutch confreres who were sent from Kilimanjaro District in Tanzania.
and settled in the South in Dadim Province towards the border with Kenya. In 1997 in a joint undertaking, the two groups celebrated together the silver jubilee of the Spiritan presence in Ethiopia.

Since two years ago, the groups merged together and became one group under one Major Superior. It was agreed at the time of the merger that each region would keep its particular vision of evangelisation although not exclusively.

Statistics: 10 priests, 2 scholastics on PEP.

a) The Gamo Gofa Mission

The group which settled in the South-west chose to do a joint evangelisation with the Orthodox church something which caused a lot of tension with the authorities of the Catholic Church. On the other hand they had to convince the validity of their work to the authorities of the Orthodox Church who were very suspicious of the motives of these Catholic missionaries. The Group wanted to put into practice Vatican II’s teaching on ecumenism and the speeches of Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the visits of various Patriarchs of the need to work together in the work of evangelisation.

The situation worsened two years ago when two confreres were obliged by the Church authorities to leave the Vicariate and transfer to somewhere else, something which caused a lot of pain to everybody. That departure weakened considerably the Group which was until then very vibrant. This area was once served by 8 Spiritans; today there remains only two confreres. Despite those frustrations, it is evident that the mission is very important, special and specific. It needs people who have a certain experience and who believe in the ecumenical spirit and approach to evangelisation.

During this period of 31 years, one can notice a lot of progress and remarkable achievements. There exists a high degree of trust from the Orthodox deacons, priests and Bishops including His Beatitude the Patriarch in Addis Ababa. Many doors of dialogue and joint evangelisation are open or are partly open. Given the importance of ecumenism, one would wish that this work does not come to an end or be forced to terminate. But the fact that the Ethiopia Group is now one, helps in balancing the radical approach with which the Gamo Gofa Group had been identified. This left it in a position of defence for over 25 years.

The famous famine that 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 (ICDP). All the confreres have given a lot of their time to this organisation and it has perhaps grown out of proportion. Over the last two years they have restructured their establishment and have cut down its size in a manageable way. As one cannot get into Ethiopia as a missionary, it is thanks to this NGO that confreres can get work permits to work there.

b) Borana Mission

Formerly it was known as Sidamo. The second group of Spiritans chose to work among the Borana people, an area in Southern Ethiopia towards the border with Kenya. The first Spiritans who settled there had previously worked in northern Tanzania and so they wanted to use their previous missionary experience to do evangelisation in a new style. They laid emphasis on learning the peoples’ language, cultures and customs before doing any evangelisation. So, they decided to take as long as it was necessary and to wait for an invitation from the Borana themselves in order to
preach the Good News to them. This process took a long time and was not always understood by the authorities of the local Church.

After spending a substantial number of years in waiting and building confidence and trust among the people, the situation changed. More confreres arrived and invitations multiplied from the Borana, inviting them to go to their villages to talk about the Gospel. A lot has been achieved. To be able to profit fully from so many years of patience, the mission has been receiving reinforcements from Nigeria and now from the EAP.

To get to Ethiopia as a missionary is almost impossible. One condition for obtaining a work permit is by proving that you would contribute to the development of the country by bringing in foreign currency and expertise. One can only get a visa and work permit when one verifies that he would be involved in development work and must have certificates to prove his/her respective qualifications. That is why the confreres began with schools in all the three missions they founded. Apart from schools they have collaborated with the MMM Sisters in the area of health and preventive medicine.

One has to ask what will the future look like? The older confreres who started the mission are still there but will soon return to their Provinces of origin as they are approaching the retirement age. What will happen to these missions? What is the financial arrangement?

The Spiritan group in Ethiopia has reflected on the possibility of accepting candidates to the Spiritan Congregation. So far there is only one confrere doing his second cycle studies at Lang'ata, Nairobi. The group is thinking of starting a postulancy programme in Yabello. In dialogue with the General Council and the EAP it was agreed that for the moment candidates from Ethiopia will follow formation in the EAP and will become members of the EAP.

2.1.6.2 District of Kenya

Kenya
Area: 582,640 sq. km
GDP: $370 per capita (2003 est)

Population: 31,639,091
Life expectancy: 46 yrs
Religion: Protestants 35%, Catholics 30%, Islam 7%
African religions and others 29%

Spiritan Presence

The history of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Kenya is essentially connected with the arrival of the first Spiritans in Zanzibar in 1862. It is from Zanzibar that they sent expeditions to the coastal towns of Bagamoyo and Mombasa and later penetrated the hinterland of Tanzania and Kenya for the purpose of evangelisation. For many years the church in Kenya depended on the Vicariate of Zanzibar.

The District of Kenya has helped to found and accompany the development of the dioceses of Mombasa, Nairobi and Machakos. Today, these churches have an abundant number of local vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Likewise the District is one of the founding fathers of the East African Province (EAP). Until 30 years ago the District used to have up to 150 missionaries but the numbers have diminished significantly with most of them in retirement or semi-retirement in Ireland.

New Frontiers

Despite limited resources and an ageing, diminishing personnel, about 20 years ago the District embarked on new missionary frontiers, namely, first evangelisation in
East Pokot and more recently the projects in Bura Tana and to the slum dwellers of Mukuru in the city of Nairobi. The District still continues to work in the traditional ministries as well. The leadership of St. Mary’s school is now in the hands of the Archdiocese with a lay Headmaster in place. The Spiritans have accepted to assume a pastoral role as chaplain to the school.

Challenges

The principal challenge facing the District is the sustainability of the new projects in East Pokot, Bura Tana and Mukuru slums in Nairobi. At the moment all these projects are fragile from the point of view of personnel and finances. In the view of the General Council this can only be assured if the EAP and the District of Kenya are more closely integrated on a structural level. The way forward would seem to be that adopted recently in a number of other circumscriptions, namely the establishment of a decentralised Province with semi-autonomous Regions in each of the three East African countries. It would assure the future of the works of the District and would consolidate a home-base for the growing number of Kenyan members in the EAP.

A number of the commitments of the District are continuing at the expense of community life, in the sense that they are dependent on a single confrere.

The territory is also covered by the East African Province; this has given rise to some tension and misunderstanding between the two circumscriptions but a good spirit of collaboration has gradually developed. At the moment, there are 7 members of EAP who are appointed to the District and work in the frontier missions. The District Chapter of 2000 voted in-favour of a merger with the EAP at a time when both parties deem it appropriate. However, a certain degree of hesitation was expressed at the Assembly of the District in April 2003 which opted to retain the present status quo.

In our view it is imperative that a time frame for integration be put in place and that the primary focus of the regular meetings of both councils (in consultation with their respective members) should be to plan this process of integration and articulate a realistic mission project for the future.

The District has always been happy to receive young confreres from the EAP on pastoral experience programme (PEP) and has given much attention to their formation. Over the years the District supplied several confreres to the formation houses in the EAP.

2.1.6.3 East African Province (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Infant Mortality</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>GDP/Capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>945,087 sq. km</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>$270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>236,040 sq. km</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religion: Christianity 45%, Islam 35%, African religions 20%, Zanzibar is 99% Muslim.
Population: 35,922,454
Life expectancy: 44.56
GDP: $270 per capita (2003 est)

Religion: Catholic 41%, Protestant 40%, Islam 5%, the rest are African religions, etc. 14%
Population: 25,632,794
Infant mortality: 47%
Literacy rate: 62.7%

Spiritans Presence in East Africa

The EAP began as a Foundation in 1973 being a common project of the Districts of Kilimanjaro, Kenya and Bagamoyo. Its territory covers the three countries of East
Africa, namely, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. At the beginning it also received vocations from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Foundation has been blessed by a steady growth of vocations and in 1989 it was raised to the status of a Province. Today it has 155 members, about one-third of them working in overseas missions. In 1993 the District of Kilimanjaro made a major shift and set a precedence in the Congregation when it merged with the EAP. Recently there has been an agreement between the confreres in Ethiopia, the EAP and the Generalate that candidates from Ethiopia will do their formation in the EAP and would consequently become members of the EAP.

At the moment the Province has 158 members of whom 98 are priests, 2 Bishops, 12 deacons and 46 scholastics.

Missionary Engagements

Ad Extra

Right from the beginning mission ad extra has been the main thrust of the former East African Foundation. It sent its first members to the mission of Zambia which has become its main commitment to-date. With the expansion of its membership, the Province sent confreres to foreign missions in DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Cameroon, Senegal, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Nigeria, Seychelles, Australia, South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Germany, France, Ireland, England, Philippines and USA. Moreover, its scholastics have done Pastoral Experience Programme in many other countries including Mauritius, Reunion, Madagascar, Algeria and Mauritania.

Ad Intra

As the geographical territory of the Province covers the three countries of East Africa, its mission ad intra is spread over the three countries with special accent on the nomadic tribes of the Maasai in Tanzania and the Pokot in Kenya. In several of its Chapters the Province took the position of strengthening Spiritan presence and Spiritan identity in the three countries. In its last Chapter of 2002, the Provincial Administration was asked to find ways of expanding Spiritan presence in Uganda.

Although for many years emphasis was put on “home-based parishes” in the three countries, not much success has been achieved as bishops are reluctant to sign contracts and entrust parishes to the Congregation. Those parishes would be places for attracting vocations, as well as conscientising and animating the local churches about the meaning of the church’s missionary imperative.

The Province is engaged in the following ministries:

- Apostolate in the areas of first evangelisation among the nomadic peoples especially the Maasai in Arusha diocese and the Pokot in Nakuru diocese (in collaboration with the District of Kenya).
- Quite a good number are working in some parishes to build and strengthen Christian communities.
- Social and human development of peoples especially in the areas of Medicare (dispensaries, flying medical doctor) and Education (vocational and secondary schools).
- Interreligious dialogue in Zanzibar and Bagamoyo.
- One of the most courageous apostolates that the Province responded to was the pastoral care to the Rwandan refugees in Rulenge diocese and now the Burundian and Congolese refugees in Kigoma refugee camps. This ministry has an international face where 5 confreres are engaged in it: 2 EAP, 1 USA-E, 1 Paraguay and 1 Congo Brazzaville (PAC).

- Special attention in creating awareness and assisting AIDS victims in Uganda and the recent collaboration with CVM (Italy) programmes in Zanzibar and Mbezi in Dar-es-Salaam.

- Collaborative ministry with lay associates from overseas and especially the German MaZ programme, pilots and doctors for the flying medical services.

- From the orientation of its Chapters, the Province has invested a lot in the field of education. It owns a Secondary school for girls in Bagamoyo as well as a schools for the blind in Kampala. Likewise, it collaborates with the District of Kenya in the Chaplaincy of St. Mary’s school and with the diocese of Kigoma in an agricultural Secondary school at Kasumo.

**Formation Programme**

Formation is perhaps one of the greatest challenges of the EAP. With the construction of the Postulancy at Nnamugongo in Uganda, the Province has in place the structures for all the stages of initial formation. Recruitment of vocations is done by the vocation Directors resident in all the three countries. First cycle is done at the Spiritan Missionary Seminary in Njoro. The institute is affiliated to Urbaniana University in Rome in which successful students are awarded B.A. in Philosophy. A good number of religious institutes like the Missionaries of Africa, Passionists, Assumptionists have joined the Spiritans in sending their students and teaching Staff to it. After their three years in Njoro they join the Novitiate programme in Magamba. The professed students go to Lang’ata Spiritan House, Nairobi for their theological studies. They attend lectures at TANGAZA College which is a constituent College of the Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA). At the end of the second year of their studies they are sent on a one or two year Pastoral Experience Programme (PEP) after which they continue with the last two years of their studies. The successful students are granted a Bachelor’s degree in Divinity and/or Religious Studies.

The house of formation in Lang’ata has an international character with students from other circumscriptions, Nigeria, WAP, FCK, SCAF, FOI, and Portugal.

The Province is in the process of implementing the construction of the Spiritan Centre at Bagamoyo. The idea of building this centre came from the meeting of Pan African Superiors and Formators for the purpose of mission research and renewal courses for confreres mainly from Anglophone Africa.

**Finances and Self-Sufficiency**

Although the great part of the finances for running the Province come from Cor Unum and external aid, the EAP has put a lot of effort and imagination in starting projects within the region in an attempt at financial self-sufficiency. It has a large coffee and livestock farm in Tengeru, Arusha, and a sugar plantation in Kakamega (Kenya). It runs a health centre and it has investments.
Community Life

All the members with only a few exceptions live in community. The Province has embarked on a campaign for renewal in the Spiritan life and mission. The recent Special visitation of the Province by the Generalate team called for special efforts to be made by everyone in order to improve relationships in the Province but especially among the confreres of the three countries of East Africa and with the District of Kenya. A committee was proposed to take this question on board.

Bagamoyo Group

There are only two confreres remaining in the Bagamoyo Group. The Dutch confreres are considered co-founding fathers of what is today the EAP. They gave so much to ensure the growth and development of the EAP. Likewise they have given a remarkable service to the Church in Tanzania especially in Morogoro and Same dioceses and they are still appreciated for their continued contribution. At the moment there are only two confreres remaining. Both have agreed that it is meaningless to maintain the Bagamoyo Group in the present circumstances. Dialogue is in progress with a view to them joining the EAP.

2.1.7 South Central African Region

The South Central African Region is made up of five countries: Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All but Mozambique are former British colonies while Mozambique is a former Portuguese colony. All the countries except South Africa have very serious economic problems which have been exacerbated by the drought that has ravaged the whole region. It is also plagued by the scourge of AIDS that has contributed to the worsening climate of death and despair in the region. In some of the countries, especially Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe to a lesser content, countless numbers of children have been left orphans and this has posed a great challenge to the Spiritans working in the region. People have no food, no medicine, no shelter and no work. They flock to the missions and the confreres who are struggling to maintain themselves have to find ways and means of taking care of the teeming number of poor, sick and jobless people that come to their doors on a daily basis. The ongoing political crisis in Zimbabwe has turned a country that was once the pride of Africa and the region to hell on earth. Not only is there poverty, hunger and no jobs, there is also insecurity of life and property. This is the atmosphere in which the confreres in the region live and work. The majority of them are from the younger circumscriptions that do not have easy access to funding agencies nor do they get support from their home circumscriptions that are looking for ways and means to keep their houses of formation going. But the confreres are doing very well by devising ways and means of being with and assisting the people they live and work with. Spiritans have a very good name in the region because of the way and manner in which they live and work.

One other major challenge in the region is its vastness. This poses a big challenge for cohesion and administration even though for now they are autonomous circumscriptions. But the fact that the Foundation of SCAF covers all five countries makes it difficult to co-ordinate for the superior of SCAF. Mozambique poses a peculiar problem because it has a different language from the other four countries.

There is a good spirit of co-operation and collaboration in the region. All the superiors of the five circumscriptions form members of the council of the Foundation of
SACF and they all contribute in different ways in supporting the Foundation. They all collaborate in the first and second cycle formation of SACF students in Balaka and Langata. They are hoping to join a consortium in Zimbabwe for second cycle formation in the near future. This will help minimise expenditure as the formation house will be within the region. The superiors in the region hold meetings twice a year, one of which deals specifically with formation matters, and formators from the houses of formation in the region are invited to this meeting.

2.1.7.1 Zambia International Group

**Zambia**

Population: 10,307,333  
Religions: Christianity 75%, Muslim and Hindu 24%, Indigenous beliefs 1%  

**Life expectancy male/female**: 35.25/35.25  
**Independence**: 1964  
**Infant mortality rate**: 106.58%  
**GDP per capita**: US$ 890 (2002)

**History**

One effect of the Biafra war in Nigeria in 1970 led to the arrival of Spiritans in Zambia. The first group of 6 Spiritans arrived in 1971 and another ten followed them the next year. Some others followed in subsequent years. They came to the southern part of the country at the invitation of Bishops James Corboy SJ of Monze diocese and Phelim O’Shea OFM Capuchin of the diocese of Livingstone. Some of the Spiritans engaged in teaching in the seminary and secondary schools while others were involved in pastoral work. They were just there to help the Bishops and as such, they had no working agreement with them and were free to go at any time. In 1976, the East African Foundation at the suggestion of the General Council took Zambia as its mission and the first group of three from the young Foundation joined the Irish confreres that year. In 1980 the Province of Nigeria East sent some Nigerian confreres to open a mission in the North Western part of Zambia at the request of Bishop Potani SJ of Solwezi diocese. They opened three parishes in the diocese with 6 priests but after a number of years left the mission due to difficulties with the Bishop. In the year 2000, two confreres from the Province of Nigeria were appointed by the General Council to join the Group. The following year a confrere from the Province of Central Africa was appointed to the group. Presently, there are 12 Spiritans in the Group from 5 different countries working in the two dioceses of Monze and Livingstone. ZIG is a founding member of SACF. The group is doing well as an international group.

**Formation Programme**

ZIG has a strong vocation’s ministry and that has yielded results in the number of Zambians that have joined the Congregation. It has by far the biggest number of confreres in formation in all of SACF. They have a Postulancy in Pemba, Monze diocese. Those who finish here go to Balaka, where members of SACF go for first cycle formation.

**Missionary Engagements**

The main work the confreres engage in is pastoral ministry in the area of primary evangelisation. They are also involved in social development work, AIDS ministry, feeding the poor and hungry due to the acute famine and the consequent hunger in Zambia. One confrere is secretary to the Bishop of Livingstone and another confrere is responsible for catechists and lay leaders in the diocese.
Challenges

One of the major challenges facing the group is stability of personnel. Many of those who come to work in Zambia stay for just a few years and they are withdrawn or for some reasons go back to their province of origin. This has resulted in leaving the mission with young confreres. Another problem is finance. The economy of Zambia is not good and the people cannot support their pastors with the result that confreres depend heavily on Cor Unum with assistance from European Provincials and other external sources for their existence. In the pastoral field, some of the traditional practices of the people continue to present a great challenge to evangelisation and pastoral work.

2.1.7.2 District of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe
Population: 12,576,742
Religion: Anglicans 36%, Catholics 15%, Presbyterians 12%, Methodists 9%, Traditional beliefs 26%

Life expectancy male/female: 40.09/37.89 (2003 est.)
Independence: 18 April 1980
Infant mortality rate: 66.47%
GDP per capita: $2,400 (2002 Est.)

History

Spiritan mission in Zimbabwe was started in 1984 by members of the Nigerian Province. The first group started in the diocese of Mutare. From there they opened up in the Archdiocese of Harare in 1994 and the diocese of Gokwe in 1995. The group was made a district in 1995. The District is one of the founding members of SCAF.

Statistics

Presently there are 18 Spiritans working in the district. Out of this number 16 are from Nigeria and 2 from Tanzania. Two confreres, one from Malawi and another from Mozambique who were sent to this mission for first appointment were withdrawn to Malawi due to the urgent need in Malawi. It is hoped that more confreres from other circumscriptions will soon join the district.

Formation

For a long time the Bishops did not want the Spiritans to begin their own formation programme in spite of assurances from the Spiritans because they were afraid the Spiritans will draw most of the vocations. Moreover, most of the vocations in the dioceses with Spiritans come from the parishes where the Spiritans are working. Recently the Bishops have given permission to the Spiritans to begin their own formation programme. Because of the fear of the Bishops, the Spiritans have started in a small way and they have a number of candidates who have joined the SCAF formation programme in Balaka after going through the postulancy in Marange, Zimbabwe.

Missionary Engagements

The primary focus is pastoral work in the area of primary evangelisation. They are also heavily involved in the education apostolate. A number of them are teachers, chaplains and administrators in secondary schools. They have just built and opened a Spiritan secondary school in Marange in Mutare diocese and there is a plan to build another in Chipinge in the same diocese and a vocational school in Harare. They are very active in promoting vocations to the diocesan priesthood and religious life, and one of them is the Director of Vocations for the Diocese. Because of the worsening political and economic situation in Zimbabwe, many people are homeless and hungry.
and the Spiritans have set up an organisation to help the hungry, the poor, the jobless and the orphans. They are involved in the area of Justice and Peace which is a very dangerous area to work in now in Zimbabwe.

Challenges

Political and economic life is deteriorating day by day in Zimbabwe and so is the risk of working as a missionary in the country. The people are hungry, traumatised and harassed. They are getting poorer by the day and the situation brings with it desperation and death. The confreres are suffering with the people who come to them asking for assistance but the confreres themselves are finding it difficult to make ends meet for their own survival. In the face of the great challenge of hunger and poverty, confreres are seeking assistance for their people. Speaking out against injustice carries a big risk of not just being expelled from the country but of being maimed or killed outright so one has to be very careful. Personnel is a big challenge in the district. Living in community has been jeopardised for some in the district because many live alone due to lack of personnel and thus are overworked. Also due to lack of personnel, a number of confreres due on sabbatical leave cannot go as there is nobody to take over the mission. The district depends heavily on Cor Unum with assistance from European Provincials and other external sources for its life and works and raising funds locally is impossible due to the terrible economic situation of the people.

2.1.7.3 Malawi International Group

Malawi
Population: 11,651,239
Religion: Protestants 55%, Catholics 20%, Muslims 20%, Traditional religion 3%, others 2%
Life expectancy male/female: 37.98 years
Independence: 6 July 1964
Infant mortality rate: 105.15%
GDP per capita: $670 (2002 Est)

History

The Spiritans came to Malawi in 1971. They were 11 in number from the Irish Province. Theses were confreres who had worked in Nigeria and were expelled from the country after the Nigeria-Biafra war. The sole aim of the group was to help particularly in parish ministry in the Archdiocese of Blantyre that was in acute need of personnel on a temporary basis and in the diocesan minor seminary. The number has dwindled to just one (who is 80 years of age) at present as a result of sickness, retirement or death.

In 1973, three Spiritans from Trans-Canada Province accompanied by a diocesan priest from Calgary diocese came to the diocese of Chikwawa in response to an appeal to the diocese of Calgary for help from Chikwawa diocese. There is only one left of that group who had gone back to Trans-Canada for some years and returned to work in Blantyre diocese last year.

In 1993, the then West African Foundation which at the request of the Generalate had accepted Malawi as its mission field sent two confreres to join the Malawi group. Since then, there has been a lot of going and coming among the young confreres for a variety of reasons. Presently there is only one confrere from WAP in Malawi. Another is expected to join the group on first appointment before the year runs out.

In October 1995, the Spiritans joined the Inter Congregational Seminary in Balaka Malawi for the first cycle formation of the students of SCAF. One confrere from the Irish Province was appointed to the seminary staff. He was later joined by another
Irish confrere who died two years ago while still working as Spiritual Director of the Spiritan students. Presently there is one confrere from the EAP who was working in Zambia before he was appointed to SCAF as the formator of the Spiritan students.

In 2002, one confrere from the EAP on first appointment was appointed to Malawi. Two other confreres, one a Malawian and the other a Mozambican, both members of SCAF got their first appointment to Malawi and joined the group. Presently there are 6 Spiritans in all working in Malawi.

Mission Engagements

The group is involved in pastoral work in the area of primary evangelisation. They operate a home based care for AIDS patients and they are involved in food distribution. Many people in the country are malnourished because of the failure of their harvest due to drought in the region and AIDS.

Formation

They have a postulancy in the diocese of Blantyre with a number of postulants. Malawi is one of the founding fathers of SCAF and the 2nd priest of SCAF comes from Malawi. They also have a number of Malawian confreres in formation in the various formation houses of SCAF.

Challenges

Personnel and community life are major challenges for the group. There has been a lot of going and coming among the young ones sent to Malawi. The root cause has got to be addressed. The challenge is for the older and more experienced confreres to integrate the younger ones and make them have a sense of belonging.

2.1.7.4 South Central African Foundation (SCAF)

History

SCAF was founded through the collective effort and collaboration of the circumscriptions of the Region of South Central Africa namely; the Districts of South Africa and Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi International groups. In 1985, the District of South Africa began receiving candidates to the Spiritan way of life. Structures were then put in place for receiving candidates. The superiors of the other circumscriptions in the Region got together and agreed to have a common formation programme for candidates from the Region. In dialogue with the General Council, the Foundation of South Central Africa was established in 1994 with its own major superior. The superiors of the circumscriptions of the region became members of his council. In 1996, the Spiritan mission in Mozambique was started and it also became part of SCAF even though it is a Lusophone country.

Formation Programme

All the circumscriptions of the region except Mozambique have their own postulancy for the reception and accompaniment of candidates who want to become Spiritans. It is a one year programme. The postulancy is followed by the first cycle in a consortium in Balaka, Malawi. The Congregations that make up the consortium are: The Combonis, the Capuchins, the Montforts, the Carmelites and the Poverreli Sisters who send in a few of their candidates from their convent to come for studies in Phi-
losophy. The Spiritans have built a number of houses for the accommodation of their students outside but near the compound of the consortium. The Spiritan students attend lectures with the other students in the consortium and have meals and a number of other activities with them in common. The first cycle formation is followed by the novitiate which is located in Bethlehem, South Africa. The novitiate is followed by a year or two of pastoral experience outside one’s country of origin. The second cycle formation is done with the EAP in Tangaza College Kenya. There is a move to join a consortium with the Franciscans and Carmelites in Harare, Zimbabwe. The discussion about when and how to begin this is ongoing with the General Council.

Statistics

The Foundation has 13 professed members. There are 8 priests and 5 students in their second cycle formation. Of this number, 8 conferees are members by origin and 5 are members by appointment.

Finance

Their main sources of funding have been Cor Unum and the German Province. A lot has been achieved in the Foundation within its short time of existence but there is still a lot to be done and finance and personnel continue to be major sources of concern. The first Chapter of the Foundation will deal with the question of self-reliance and the composition of the Foundation.

2.1.7.5 The District of South Africa

South Africa
Population: 42,768,678
Religion: Christians 68%, Muslims 2%, Hindu 1.5%, Indigenous beliefs 28.5%.

Life expectancy male/female: 46.56 years
Independence: 31 May 1910
Infant mortality rate: 60.84%
GDP per capita: $10,000.00 (2002 est)

Spiritans Presence

The Spiritans of German origin arrived in South Africa in 1924. Their area of work started originally in the Prefecture of Kroonstad carved out of the Apostolic Vicariate of Kimberley. In 1935 the Prefecture became a Vicariate which developed into two Vicariates in 1948. The Vicariate of Bethlehem in the West was confided to the Spiritans. In the recent past some Spiritans moved out of the Orange Free State into Durban Archdiocese to take up specifically Spiritan works that are more in keeping with our charism. Thus Spiritans work in two dioceses: Bethlehem where the work is more the traditional parish apostolate, chaplaincy to religious communities and some retreat work and Durban Archdiocese where they work in the hostels, refugee ministry, chaplaincy to religious communities and migrants, youth apostolate and work in areas of primary evangelisation. In the recent past, the district has withdrawn all its members from the Orange Free State.

The district is a founding member of SCAF and the first priest of SCAF, the late Michael Sibeko came from the district. The district has been giving great support to the Foundation since its inception. Recently it moved its district headquarters to Durban to allow SCAF take up the Orange Free State as its own headquarters. It then made available its house in Bethlehem as the new Novitiate of SCAF.

Membership of the district is quite international. It has conferees from the German, Nigerian, Irish, English, Polish and Belgian Provinces. There are a total of 19 con-
freres in the district. The district has its postulate in Pietermaritzburg in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal area.

2.1.7.6 Mozambique International Group

Mozambique
Population: 19,286,000 (1999)
Life expectancy m/f: 44/47
Child Mortality: 120%
Literacy: 38% (1995)

Religion: Christians 30%, Traditional 40%,
Muslims 30%.
Independence: 25 June 1975 (Portugal)
Per Capita income: $210 (1998)


In the beginning there were many difficulties of adaptation for the two communities in Chimoio and Netia. These arose out of a certain instability of some confreres and some misunderstanding with the Bishop in Chimoio. The confreres were never put off by these difficulties. "They pulled up their sleeves and began a process of assiduous evangelisation".

In Chimoio, the Bishop is asking for more Spiritans so that he can open a second parish in his Diocese. In Netia, after a few years, the confreres had sufficiently organised the parish. Hence, in agreement with the General Council, they decided to leave the parish as it did not correspond to our Charism. As a consequence a new area was taken on, Itoculo, which is in great need of missionary assistance. The works of the foundation are well on their way to being inaugurated shortly.

It is hoped that soon a new community will be opened in Nampula. This will depend on the availability of personnel and the right moment, meaning that the urban areas are not neglected.

Formation

Recently, some young people have presented themselves wanting to join the Spiritans. A project is presently being studied to open a postulancy. For the moment these candidates are being accompanied periodically in Spiritan Communities while some are continuing their intermediate studies. It is to be noted that at present there is one native Mozambique Spiritan working in SCAF.

2.1.8 INDIAN OCEAN

2.1.8.1 District of Madagascar

Malagasy
Area: 587,040 sq. km
Infant mortality: 80.21%
Literacy: 68.9%

Religion: Traditional religions 52%, Christianity 41%,
Muslim 7%.
Population: 16,979,744
Life expectancy: 56.14 years
GDP: US$ 290 per capita (2003 est)

Spiritan Presence

Spiritans arrived in Madagascar in 1898 and were entrusted with the evangelisation of the Northern part of the country in what was known as the “Vicariat Apostolique de Madagascar-Nord”. Most of them came from France and Switzerland. Presently they are regrouped in the dioceses of Mahajanga, Antsiranana, Fénérive Est and Port-Bergé.
The District used to have more than 100 Spiritans stationed in the Northern Vicariate but at the moment there are only 20. However, at a time when Spiritans have diminished in number and are advancing in age, the local churches are vibrant with many believers, a strong clergy and many vocations to the religious life. These dioceses are under the leadership of the local bishops. 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.

One of the exemplary works of the District is the apostolate to street children and the vocational school (NRJ) at Antananarivo which is also known as “Centre Energie”. It is a very creative enterprise aimed at helping delinquent and street children to recover their sense of self-worth, and also to enable other children to free themselves from the vicious cycle of poverty and other dependencies and hence to get off the streets.

Because of the long 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 is one of the founding fathers of the Indian Ocean Foundation (FOI) and has contributed greatly to its development in terms of personnel for formation and finances. The District is in-charge of foyer Brottier in Antsiranana which serves as a postulancy for Malgache candidates.

The District works in close collaboration with the FOI by supplying personnel for Foyer Laval at Antananarivo for second cycle studies. In its last Chapter, the District voted unanimously to merge with the FOI and the other Districts of the Region to form a single Province of the Indian Ocean.

2.1.8.2 District of Mauritius

Mauritius
Area: 2,040 sq. km
Infant mortality: 16.11%
Literacy: 85.6%
Religions: Hindus 52%, Christianity 28.3%, Muslim 16.6%, Others 3.1%.
Population: 1,210,447
Life expectancy: 71.8
Unemployment: 5%

Spiritual Presence

The first Spiritans arrived there in 1841. Presently the District has 15 members but 3 other Spiritans work in the formation house belonging to the Indian Ocean Foundation. The District is quite international: French, Irish, Polish, and Mauritians. There is an associate programme at Pont Praslin.

Blessed Jacques Laval arrived in Mauritius in 1841 and dedicated his life to the service of the Creoles populations who had just been freed from slavery. He is venerated popularly by Mauritians as the apostle and saint of the island. His tomb is a centre for pilgrimage and prayer for Mauritians of all creeds and walks of life. Spiritans work in the adjacent parish of Sainte-Croix and in the parishes of St. John, St. Michel, St. Julien, St. Sauveur Bambous, and Coeur Imaculé de Marie. Others work at the interdiocesan seminary. The local bishop Mgr. Maurice Piat is also a Spiritan.

While the parish ministry creates a fabric of Spiritual presence, Spiritans also contribute greatly to the local church through specialised ministries, such as the interdiocesan seminary where the director is a Spiritan. The inter-faith centre at Pont Praslin, with its exceptional library, is a source of discovery and understanding in ar-
eas of everyday living for all believers. Thabor is a diocesan formation centre for the laity as well as the source of an extensive catechetical programme.

The District is one of the founding fathers of the Indian Ocean Foundation and has played an important role in its development. The house of Philosophy is located in Mauritius (previously, it used to house the novitiate which has now been transferred to Reunion). For several years now, the District has been receiving scholastics from the IOF and EAP for pastoral experience.

In its recent Chapter the District made a decision to establish a Spirituality centre on the grounds of Centre Père Laval in order to cater for the spiritual needs of the many pilgrims who visit Laval’s tomb and seek spiritual nourishment.

2.1.8.3 District of Reunion

Reunion
Area: 2,517 sq. km
Infant mortality: 8.13%
Religions: Catholics 86%, Islam, some Hindus and Buddhists.

Life expectancy: 73.4 years
Population: 775,171
Literacy: 89%
Unemployment: 36%

Spiritans presence
The beginning of Spiritans activity in the island dates back to 1842, when Le Vavasseur was appointed there. Other renowned Spiritans who worked there was Alexander Monnet (last Superior General of Poullart des Places’ society). The Congregation contributed enormously to the development of this diocese.

At the moment the District has 21 members, most of them approaching or already in retirement. This renders the District quite vulnerable. Nevertheless the missionary zeal is still high but the energy is not at the same level. Already in their Chapter of 1997, the confreres decided on a new missionary project although its implementation was quite slow. In its last Chapter (April 2003) the District made very bold decisions regarding its future and its missionary work. It voted in favour of joining with the Indian Ocean Foundation plus the Districts of Madagascar and Mauritius to form a Province of the Indian Ocean (P.O.I.). It recognised the need and importance of community living.

It voted to review the contract with the diocese to take charge of the parishes of La Trinité, St. Paul and Rivière des Pluies. Apart from the parish ministry Spiritans are engaged in specialised ministries such as school chaplaincy, apostolate to sea travellers, formation of the laity and the communications apostolate (radio).

One recent feature of the groups is that it has begun receiving first appointments from the Indian Ocean Foundation and PAC and more recently from the EAP.

The District is one of the founding fathers of the Indian Ocean Foundation and has contributed to the construction of Foyer Monnet which now houses the Novitiate. However, there is a disappointment that the District has no vocations to the FOI. In its last Chapter, a new call was made to promote and nurture Spiritan vocations in the places where Spiritans are working.
2.1.8.4 Indian Ocean Foundation (FOI) + Seychelles Community

History

The FOI was founded as a common project of the three Districts of the Indian Ocean Region of Madagascar, Mauritius and Reunion in order to prepare indigenous Spiritans missionaries. The first Novitiate was opened in 1982/3 at St. Gilles-les-Hauts (Reunion), although it was later transferred to Mauritius (Maison Libermann). In the last two years it has returned once more to Reunion (Foyer Monnet).

Present Statistics

The Foundation has not experienced the abundant harvest the founding fathers had hoped for. After 23 years of existence it has 23 professed members with perpetual vows and 6 professed with temporary vows. Among them 16 are ordained priests, 2 Brothers and the rest are still in initial formation programme. Presently there are 5 novices and the number of first cycle students is 10. The majority of these come from Madagascar and a few from Mauritius. As yet, nobody has come from Reunion. However, this year there are two candidates following the postulancy programme in view of joining first cycle studies.

Mission

Despite its small numbers the Foundation laid a focus on mission ad extra and sent its first members to Papua New Guinea, Pakistan and recently to the Philippines. However, in the Chapter of 2000, the need was felt for establishing missionary bases at home (in the Region of the Indian Ocean). Places like Northern, Southern and Eastern Madagascar are real missionary fields which are in line with the Spiritan charism. So, the IOF has its members in the missions of Antsiranana and Mahajanga in Northern Madagascar and at the NRJ centre in Antananarivo. Others are working in Reunion and in Mauritius. There is a project for commencing a parish in the suburbs of Antananarivo in collaboration with the District of Madagascar but because of shortage of personnel this project has not been realised.

As one of its home-bases, the Foundation, in dialogue with the General Council, accepted the request of Mgr. Xavier Baronnet of the Seychelles and started Spiritan implantation there. When Mgr. Baronnet retired our confrere Denis Wiehe was nominated Bishop of the Seychelles.

Formation Programmes

The bulk of vocations come from Madagascar and very few from Mauritius. Despite this reality the founding fathers decided to spread the different stages of formation in the three islands with first cycle in Mauritius (Maison Libermann), Novitiate (Foyer Monnet) in Reunion and second cycle in Madagascar (Foyer Laval). While in Mauritius and Reunion the postulancy is done in conjunction with the dioceses. In Madagascar there is a full fledged postulancy programme in Diego. Some of the second cycle students do their formation in the EAP and follow their theological studies at Tangaza College in Nairobi.

Community Life

Two salient characteristics of the vision of the Foundation are the insistence on community life and the importance of intercultural mission with insistence on de-
parture to mission *ad extra*. Together with the founding Districts it voted unanimously to evolve from the present status towards the Province of the Indian Ocean. Already, the three District superiors are part of the Foundation Council. Again a committee was established by the Enlarged Council of the Foundation in order to prepare a timetable and to define the implications of such a merger into a Province.

The two most pressing problems of the Foundation are: personnel and finances.

(a) Although the Foundation has all the structures of initial formation, it finds it difficult to supply formators who would constitute the Staff: professors, Superiors, Spiritual directors etc. This prevents the Foundation from serious long-term planning, with the result that it is forced to live on a day to day basis.

(b) Regarding finances, the FOI depends on solidarity from various circumscriptions and from Cor Unum. It is important to mention that over the years the District of Reunion in particular contributed generously to the financial needs of the FOI. During its recent Enlarged Council, the confreres of the Foundation spoke openly about financial problems and created an awareness for the need of self-sufficiency in the long term.

### 2.2 NORTH AMERICA

Current statistics put the population of the USA and Canada, the two largest countries on the North American Continent, at 291.8 million and 30.8 million people respectively. Both countries are ethnically very diverse and have a population growth of almost 1%. Official statistics indicate that some 1.7 million people now enter the USA annually, two-thirds of whom are foreign-born; the average new immigrant arrival in Canada has been about 210,000 per year over the past 5 years, with some 62% coming from Asia. The cultural and ethnic composition of both nations continues to evolve, therefore, impacting on both society and the Church.

An interdisciplinary dialogue organised by the Centre for the Study of Religious Life at the onset of the new millennium to address the question of the *mission of Religious Life in contemporary America* identified a number of current trends and the challenges they present. It acknowledged that the USA, in view of its considerable power and resources, has a disproportionate influence on the direction of globalisation. By way of illustration it noted that 6 people in 100 possess 59% of the world’s wealth and that all 6 come from the USA. This power is exercised through investments, technology, telecommunications, military equipment and foreign aid. The USA dominates the world internet scene and exports its culture through television, music, advertising and business philosophy. Religious are challenged, therefore, to work for systemic change on behalf of the disadvantaged - especially through influencing government policy - to strengthen their ministry of education, to harness the potential of the internet for the deprived and marginalised and to use Mass Media for the promotion of evangelisation and faith development. In the USA today, almost thirty-five million people are below the poverty line, with this figure reflecting the inequality of the various ethnic groups in the population: while 8% of non-Hispanic whites are poor, 24% of Blacks and 22% of Hispanics fall into this category. Some 30% of the poor have no health insurance, the highest proportion (32%) being in the Hispanic community.

The *positive values of American culture* - democratic philosophy, participation in decision-making, free expression and free exercise of religion - are counterbalanced
by its shadow side of individualism, materialism, cultural prejudice and “classism”. As American society becomes increasingly diverse one of its greatest challenges lies in dealing with pluralism and related issues: gender, intercultural, inter-religious and intergenerational relationships. Religious are challenged to move from being multicultural, to being counter-cultural and, finally, transcultural in their thinking and in the way that they live. On the positive side, while in the past all newcomers were expected to assimilate to the dominant culture and language, today people of different origins are proud of their primary culture and try to maintain it. Although the traditional Catholic infrastructure of American society reflected in education, health and social services has considerably weakened of recent years, Catholics have acquired a new understanding of Church, with a greater sense of participation of the laity at parish level and in the running of Catholic institutions. Interestingly, the Catholic population in the U.S. almost 50% of which is Hispanic, continues to grow annually and average Sunday Mass attendance is estimated at about 35%. The number of seminarians nationally has actually risen slightly after years of decline and contemporary seminarians are generally older than their counterparts of a generation ago and ethnically more diverse. Lay people are trained for ministry today in virtually all of the major seminaries in the country and in many cases outnumber their clerical counterparts; this augurs well for a more collaborative approach to ministry in the future.

Organisations such as the Conference of Bishops, Conferences of Major Superiors, the African faith and Justice Network, The US Catholic Mission Association, Catholic Relief Services are very committed and often quite effective in influencing US Government policy in favour of the poor and disadvantaged, both at home and worldwide. Interestingly, although North American missionary history has traditionally been associated principally with Latin and South America, the US Bishops’ Conference has recently produced an informative and challenging statement on Africa – “A Call to Solidarity with Africa”, November 2001 – and an international conference was subsequently held in conjunction with Notre Dame University in 2003 by way of follow-up. Coincidentally, there is a new focus on Africa also at the level of the US Government itself but for very different reasons pertaining to oil reserves and national security issues.

Since the above interdisciplinary dialogue took place other developments have occurred that have deeply marked American society and Catholicism. After a period of considerable economic growth and an unprecedented rise in the stock-market, driven in part by the “new economy” of information technology, a decline has set in over the past three years with the value of stocks dropping significantly and the dollar losing over 20% of its former value. Unemployment has risen from a low of about 4% to almost 6%. This situation was exacerbated by the tragic events of September 11th 2001 and by the subsequent revelations of a series of major business scandals and accounting malpractice affecting some of the largest and best-respected firms in the country.

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and on the Pentagon shook not only the USA but the world itself and gave rise to a new war on terror that has profoundly affected subsequent American foreign policy. The threat of war in Iraq, consistently opposed by the Vatican, by American Bishops and Conferences of Religious and by leaders of all the main world religions in the USA, eventually became a reality. The absence of UN support and massive public protests against the war both within and outside the country failed to convince the political leaders of the
USA and Britain and their allies that the war was unjustified. The protests continued to a lesser degree after the initiation of hostilities while media polls indicated ever increasing public support for President Bush's handling of the war as it initially progressed. Nevertheless, quite a number of people would now appear to share the view expressed in the recent book of Gore Vidal "Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace" that the root causes of the hatred that led to the terrorist attacks were not addressed and that perhaps American liberty itself is one of the victims of the subsequent government action.

In Church circles both clergy and laity have been demoralised by a series of scandals pertaining to the sexual abuse of children by clerics and religious, which continue to come to light. The general situation has been compounded by evidence of apparent cover-up and mismanagement on the part of those in authority, resulting in the resignation of Cardinal Law of Boston and of a number of other Bishops. Extensive and relentless media-coverage has done much to undermine the confidence of the clergy and the faithful. While it is undoubtedly a period of radical change for the Church, nevertheless, the present situation is seen by many Catholics as a call and an opportunity for a more humble presence and for greater authenticity as a community of faith.

2.2.1 REGION OF NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

This was the first example of regional co-operation in the Congregation and, over the years, has done much to foster mutual support and collaboration. The Region now comprises the two US Provinces, Canada, TransCanada, Trinidad, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Mexico and the Irish Regional Communities in the US. For the past few years invitations have been extended to the Superiors of Guyane, Martinique and Guadeloupe to attend the annual meeting; so far, only the Superior of Guyane has responded. The Region has evolved structurally with the appointment of a permanent Secretary in 1998; this ensures a well-prepared annual meeting and facilitates communication and follow-up to decisions. Recent collaborative ventures within the Region include a one-year Anglophone Novitiate in Trinidad, the current Novitiate at New Braunfels and the Formation House at Chicago, a renewal program in Trinidad and a new mission project in the Dominican Republic, due to commence in 2004 after a lengthy period of gestation. Spanish speaking novices from the Region go to Paraguay for the Novitiate, which opens up the challenge of inter-Regional collaboration. Financial support within the Region for formation and for the living expenses of the confreres in Mexico and Haiti provides invaluable assistance to both these groups and is a concrete expression of the missionary commitment of the circumscriptions involved. Although the Region does not have formal Commissions, as in Europe, for example, there have been occasional meetings, as the need arose, at the level of the formators and the bursars of the Region. A meeting convened in 2002 of the Directors of the Spiritan schools in the Region with a view to closer collaboration, particularly regarding the continuation of the Spiritan educational ethos, resulted in the establishment of SENAC (Spiritan Educators of North America and the Caribbean). It also produced practical results in the form of financial and material assistance for College St. Martial in Haiti. Further avenues for co-operation between the Spiritan schools in the Region are currently being explored. As the Region evolves it faces a number of challenges: the co-ordination of action for Justice and Peace with a view to influencing international policies; the raising of awareness of regionalisation among the members of each circumscription; the identification of future Spiritan missionary
projects within the confines of the Region, in the light of its resources, and the appropriate structures to underpin this mission. This will demand leadership, creativity and courage.

2.2.2 Province of US East

USA
Population: 291.6 million
Area: 9,372,610 sq. km
Life expectancy males/females: 74.6/80.4 years

Religions: Catholics 28%, Protestants 56%, Jewish 2%, None 10%.
Independence: 4th July 1776 (from England)
GDP per capita: $34,940

Profile

The Province of USA East dates back to 1872. The present situation reflects the overall picture in the older Provinces of ageing and decreasing personnel resources with little success in vocation animation of recent years. At present there about 75 professed members in the Province of USA East and 16 Associates, 2 of whom are overseas. In addition, there are 15 confreres from other circumscriptions working in the Province (4 Irish, 3 WAP, 2 Nigerian, 2 English, 1 IOF, 1 TransCanadian, 1 Portuguese, 1 USA West). A small number of other confreres pursue various study programs at Duquesne. Since 1996 the professed membership has dropped from 105 to 75 and the average age now stands at 71 years. Some 16 members of the Province (18%) are involved in mission ad extra – 10 in the EAP, 3 in Puerto Rico, 2 in South Africa and 1 in Ethiopia.

Mission

The focal points for mission in the home Province have traditionally been education and parish ministry and the circumscription continues to make a significant and very valuable contribution to the local Church in both of these areas. The Province continues to own two prestigious educational establishments – Duquesne University in Pittsburgh and Holy Ghost Prep in Bensalem, Philadelphia – both of which are now administered and staffed in a close collaboration between Spiritans and lay people. Care is taken to ensure a Spiritan character to each institution and to give a Spiritan orientation to the education imparted to the students. Founded in 1878, Duquesne is now ranked among the top ten Catholic universities in the nation. The new President, Dr. Charles Dougherty, is committed to strengthening the Spiritan character of Duquesne University and to placing its resources at the service of world-wide Spiritan mission. A proposed establishment of a Spiritan Centre at Duquesne offers considerable potential for the resourcing of Spiritan mission in a variety of ways: specific programs in the area of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Inter-religious Dialogue etc., as well as for research into Spiritan history, spirituality and tradition. All of the above presents both an opportunity and a challenge to the Congregation to closer collaboration with Duquesne University with a view to ensuring that the vision can become a reality.

The Province has had a long and fine tradition of parish ministry and a number of parishes date back to the early years of the Spiritan apostolate in the USA. For the most part these were established to cater for the spiritual needs of small and poor immigrant communities of various ethnic backgrounds and they have evolved over the years into vibrant modern multi-ethnic parishes. Many of the parishes retain a strong missionary dimension, expressed in different ways: ministry to minority groups, an emphasis on social action, an outreach to mission overseas etc. In general,
they are characterised by a strong sense of community, lay collaboration and closeness to the people. Of recent years, declining personnel resources have necessitated the withdrawal from a number of parishes traditionally staffed by Spiritans; this has been a source of regret for some confreres but it is an inevitable development in the light of the evolving reality of the Province.

**Collaboration** with the wider Congregation is expressed in a variety of ways, notably through financial support for Haiti, Mexico, Ethiopia and the East African Province and the collaborative program with Duquesne University for the specialised training of confreres from other circumscriptions, preferentially orientated towards the priority needs of the Congregation. A policy recently elaborated conjointly with the Province of USA West and in dialogue with the Generalate for the reception of confreres from other circumscriptions into the USA is another positive development. Within the context of the local Church the Province actively participates in a number of key organisations concerned with mission at home and abroad: the Conference of Major Superiors of Men’s Institutes (CMSM), the United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA), the African Faith and Justice Network and Catholic Relief Services.

The renewal of **community life** was one of the focal points of the last Provincial Chapter and the efforts of leadership in this direction have been reasonably successful. In general, there is a good community spirit throughout the Province despite evidence of different theological and ecclesiological viewpoints, which make it difficult to come to agreement on a common vision for the future. The Province has invested considerably in the provision of excellent facilities for its sick and retired members and the two retirement homes at Bethel Park and Sarasota are a credit to the provincial administrations, past and present, who are responsible for their existence and organisation. The recent sale of the former residence at Sarasota and the construction of the new facility nearby was a wise decision ensuring financial gain for the Province and better quality accommodation for the residents. Both communities have a perceptible vitality about them and every effort is made to ensure interaction of the confreres with the wider local community.

**Future**

The present challenge facing the Province in the light of its diminishing resources is to establish criteria for its future involvement in the service of the local Church and to identify a realistic number of commitments for the years ahead. It can do so in the knowledge that confreres from other circumscriptions can assist in serving the mission project of the circumscription, as is the growing practice elsewhere in the older Provinces. Careful attention to the provision of suitable pastoral and cultural orientation for these confreres is an obvious pre-requisite for their successful integration into contemporary pastoral ministry in the US. It is important that this process of discernment be as inclusive as possible of all the members of the Province, if the missionary project that emerges is to have maximum ownership. Ultimately, the future of Spiritan presence and mission in the USA will probably have to be a collaborative venture undertaken together by all existing Spiritan circumscriptions in North America. A new structure for North America may emerge in due course but structures are at the service of mission and the primary responsibility is the identification of the mission to which we are called.
2.2.3 Province of US West

USA
Population: 291.8 million
Area: 9,372,610 sq. km
Life expectancy males/females: 74.6/80.4 years

Religions: Catholics 28%, Protestants 56%, Jewish 2%, None 10%.
Independence: 4th July 1776 (from England)
GDP per capita: $34,940

Profile

The Province of USA West, founded in 1968 when both USA East and USA West became separate Provinces, currently comprises about 50 professed members and 16 Lay Associates. Four conferees work in mission ad extra, (Mexico, the Philippines and USA East) and four conferees from other circumscriptions (EAP, Trinidad and Canada) are appointed to the Province for ministry. The Province itself covers a vast geographical area, stretching from the State of Louisiana to the State of California, and is divided into four Regional Communities: Arkansas, California, Louisiana and Texas.

Mission

The Province of USA West has a long and very fine tradition of ministry among ethnic and marginalised groups. At one time it had some 35 parishes and missions in the State of Louisiana, principally among Afro-American communities, where it has contributed in no small measure to the growth and pastoral orientation of the Church in the State. This commitment to marginalised groups is still very much in evidence in the Province today, despite its limited resources in personnel. The current works of the Province, reflecting a variety of ministries include: parish ministry (African-American, Latino and Anglo communities), hospital chaplaincy, university chaplaincy, formation ministry, high-school teaching. The Centre for Faith and Culture in Houston offers an important missionary contribution to the Church in the diocese and indeed outside. A significant development of recent years has been the unexpected growth in the number of candidates joining the Province, principally from the Vietnamese immigrant community. Four of these have already been ordained and there are some 15 students currently at various stages in the formation program. This, together with the growing interest in Lay Associate membership, has given rise to a new optimism in the Province and augurs well for its future. Collaboration with the wider Congregation continues to be a priority and is expressed in a variety of ways: support for the conferees and the formation program in Mexico, the welcoming of conferees from the EAP into the mission project of the Province with financial benefit to the sending circumscription, the acceptance of students on stage from Paraguay and Haiti and of novices from other anglophone circumscriptions into the recently opened novitiate at New Braunfels. Optimal care for the retired and infirm has been a principal concern; the investments of the Province were restructured with this in mind, a former retirement home at Natchitoches was sold and an excellent facility, Casa Laval in Hemet, was constructed for independent and assisted living. In general, the community spirit among the conferees, a focal point of recent Provincial Chapters, is quite good and the annual retreat is a strong moment in the life of the circumscription. However, geographical spread is obviously a limiting factor and requires that ongoing attention be given to ensuring that the regional communities conform to the vision of recent general Chapters.
Future Orientations

Against the background of the new developments in the area of recruitment and the growing increase in Lay Associate membership, the Provincial Team has articulated a vision for the future, centred around four constitutive elements: the young, the elderly/infirm and retired, long-term pastoral commitments (three have been identified), the Province in relation to the North-American/Caribbean Region. In doing so they sought to reinforce the Province’s rootedness, stability, and potential for growth and to strengthen its sense of community, in a spirit of fidelity to the orientations of the recent Provincial and General Chapters. Criteria underlying their choice of pastoral commitment include the strong historical links that exist with the Congregation, the potential for vocation animation, the support of the mission ad extra, the pastoral service of the people and service to minority groups. It is clear that for the vision to become a reality the Province will depend on extending the existing spirit of collaboration with the wider Congregation, particularly at Regional level. Formation and retirement have made significant demands on the Province’s limited financial resources and it now finds itself in serious financial difficulties, which it is seeking to address.

2.2.4 Irish Regional Communities in the US

Present Profile and Mission

The presence of the Irish confreres in the U.S. dates back to the time of the civil war in Nigeria in the late 1960’s when a large number of Irish Spiritans were expelled from the country and forced to seek re-deployment elsewhere. Although they were joined in the years that followed by various confreres from other mission Districts, it is now an ageing group and their number has declined steadily of recent years. At present there are some 35 confreres divided into two regional communities, one based in Long Island on the East Coast, the other in San Francisco on the West Coast. Each community has its own Regional Superior, who maintains close links with the Provincialate in Ireland and who is invited to attend the annual regional meeting of the North American/Caribbean Major Superiors. Almost one third of these confreres are now retired while the remainder work in a wide variety of ministries, commensurate with their age and health, in the service of the local Church. The Regional House for the Long Island Community belongs to the Diocese of Brooklyn and has been placed at the disposal of the Congregation on the understanding that it will supply 6 confreres for pastoral ministry in the Diocese. The confreres recently accepted responsibility for a parish in Woodside and reassigned 3 confreres already working in the U.S. to live in community there. On the West Coast there are two parishes committed to Spiritan care, St. Dunstan’s in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, and St. Athanasius, in the Diocese of San Jose. Both parishes function as focal points for the regional community and offer accommodation to retired confreres. With the exception of a few confreres who have rather tenuous links with either group, there is a very good community spirit among the confreres and they get together regularly for regional meetings, social occasions and an annual retreat. Both regional communities have a reputation for hospitality to confreres from different circumscriptions visiting the U.S., for facilitating mission appeals and for the financial support they channel towards various mission situations.
Relationship with USA Provinces

The relationship between the Irish confreres and the Provinces of USA has been a troubled one over the years. Various agreements were reached between the Provincial Councils of Ireland, USA East and USA West, pertaining, in particular, to the appointment of Irish confreres in the U.S. and to fund-raising. Harsh memories of the early years, however, tended to make collaboration difficult. Following a meeting of the three Provincials with the General Council in Rome in 1995, a series of guidelines was approved by the General Council pertaining to the wider issue of Spiritan presence in the USA. In particular, it was pointed out that, in future, any Spiritan working within the U.S. in ministries under the sponsorship of the Congregation, or in works committed to the Congregation, should be assigned to the USA East or USA West Provinces. This principle has been re-endorsed in a more recent policy document elaborated jointly by the Provincials of USA West and East in dialogue with the General Council. This document also stipulates the prior arrangements necessary between the parties concerned, as required by the recent Dallas Charter of the U.S. Conference of Bishops. While it is intended that this policy will apply to all confreres who henceforth wish to enter the USA, the General Council believes that it is an opportune moment to address the irregular situation of the co-existence of two national Spiritan groups – one from Ireland, the other from Nigeria – alongside the two American Provinces. It has accordingly requested the four Provincials concerned – USA East, USA West, Ireland and Nigeria – to enter into dialogue with a view to elaborating a process and a timetable for the regularisation of the situation.

2.2.5 Province of TransCanada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Life expectancy</th>
<th>Religions</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>GDP per capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>30.8 million (1999)</td>
<td>9,970,610 sq. km</td>
<td>76.2/81.8 years</td>
<td>Catholics 46%, United Church of Canada 7%, Anglicans 8%, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Jews,</td>
<td>1st July 1867 (from the UK)</td>
<td>$22,370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profile

The Province of TransCanada dates back to 1954, when the Province of Ireland, at the request of the Generalate, sent a small group to open the District of Ontario. At present there are some 38 professed members in the Province of TransCanada and 13 Lay Spiritans. In addition, there are 7 confreres from other Provinces working in the circumscription and a number of others pursuing various study programmes. Four confreres are involved in mission ad extra: 2 in Malawi, 1 in Australia and 1 in U.S.A. East. The Province, like all of the older circumscriptions, is conscious of declining numbers and ageing personnel. Since 1996 the professed membership has dropped from 43 to 38 and the average age has increased from 65.5 to 70.6.

Mission

The Province of TransCanada can rightly be proud of its short history. It can look back to the pioneering of a very successful Lay Spiritan movement that continues to grow and is still a point of reference and an inspiration for other circumscriptions. It can equally look to the establishment of a fine organisation for lay missionary volunteers (VICS) that is operative up to the present day. The confreres have also made a significant contribution to the field of education in both the Ontario and Edmonton regions and, in general, Spiritans have left their mark on the parishes they have
served in, in terms of their relationships with people and their outreach to marginalized groups.

While the recent past has seen the withdrawal from several parishes there is still a perceptible missionary vitality in the Province very much in line with the orientations of the last General Chapter. Despite declining and ageing personnel resources, professed and lay members of the Province continue to be involved in a wide variety of ministries in the service of the local Church: parish ministry, refugee ministry (Brotier House), pastoral care of immigrants, justice, peace and reconciliation work, outreach to First Nations communities, school chaplaincy etc. Quite a number of retired confreres are still engaged in various pastoral activities to the extent that their age and health permit.

A small committee set up in the Province after the Maynooth Chapter to reflect on the future of the circumscription and its commitments has contributed significantly to the creation of a new sense of purpose in TransCanada. In particular, decisions were taken to adopt a more positive approach to recruitment, with a special focus on the newer ethnic groups that have entered the country of more recent years – over 60% of which have come from Asia (India, China, the Philippines and Vietnam, in particular) - and to place a stronger emphasis on justice, peace and reconciliation and on communications. This new and creative approach to vocations, which involves a team comprising professed and lay Spiritans, has already resulted in the re-establishment of a pre-novitiate program and a modest intake of candidates. In the area of communications, the excellent Provincial magazine, Spiritan Missionary News, continues to be widely appreciated throughout the Congregation for its presentation of the lived reality of Spiritan life and its contributions on contemporary Church and mission. The celebration of the Spiritan Year provided an occasion to produce an impressive professional video on the past and present Spiritan reality in TransCanada, and to update the creative website inaugurated some years previously.

The Province has a fine record of collaboration with the wider Congregation, both within and outside the Region of North America/Caribbean. It has offered students from African and Caribbean circumscriptions the possibility of pursuing further studies for the needs of their circumscription and of the Congregation. A recent policy document drawn up by the provincial administration in this regard is a very positive expression of its willingness to continue to welcome, support and integrate into the Province Spiritan students from overseas. This has created close and lasting relationships with confreres who have benefited from this program, some of whom have subsequently worked in pastoral ministry in the Province. Confreres from the Provinces of Portugal and Trinidad have also been invited to minister to the different ethnic communities in Canada with considerable success. TransCanada continues to support generously the missions of Papua New Guinea, Mexico and Haiti and has also responded to requests for financial assistance from other circumscriptions.

**Future**

While there have been many successes there have been disappointments too. Investment in the vocations ministry over the years did not yield the hoped for results and only a small number of native Canadians have entered and remained with the Congregation. Memories of past failures and hurts, ageing personnel and the gradual closure of several long-term commitments dim hopes for the future. Although the new approach to recruitment is already indicating positive results, it is clear that
Spiritan presence in TransCanada will be more modest and humble than in the past. However, the Province does not face this future alone and it can rely on the collaboration of the wider Congregation. The identification of a realistic number of priority commitments, based on criteria in line with recent General Chapter orientations and on the assurance of community life, opens up possibilities for the appointment of confreres from other circumscriptions to be part of its missionary project. The long history of inventiveness and creativity on the part of its members could indicate avenues for a re-alignment of forces and, possibly, for the undertaking of a new missionary venture at home. The “Chapter of the Heart” in September 2003 was an important step in this direction.

2.2.6 Province of Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population: 30.8 million (1999)</th>
<th>Area: 9,970, 610 sq. km</th>
<th>Life expectancy males/females: 76.2/81.8 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religions: Catholics 46%, United Church of Canada 7%, Anglicans 8%, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Jews.</td>
<td>Independence: 1st July 1867 (from the UK)</td>
<td>GDP per capita: $22,370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profile

Dating back to 1905, the Province has about 38 professed members by origin and 8 by appointment (from Nigeria, Poland and France); there are currently 8 Lay Associates. Five confreres are involved in mission ad extra: 2 in Nigeria, 1 in Paraguay, 1 in USA West and 1 in Mexico. The average age is close to 70 and only 2 confreres belonging to the Province by origin are under 50 years of age.

Mission

The Province is acutely conscious of its ageing personnel and diminishing resources. With the closure of two houses in two consecutive years it has now withdrawn from its commitments in the Diocese of Quebec. Spiritan presence is therefore reduced to four dioceses, Montreal (4 communities), Gatineau-Hull (St. Alexandre Community), Joliette (In’Afu community and parish ministry) and Saint-Jean-Longueuil. The confreres are also involved in the service of the local Church in these dioceses in various ways: parish ministry, hospital chaplaincy, socio-pastoral work (St. Alexandre College), youth ministry (In’Afu Centre), ministry to the African community (L’Œuvre des Noirs au Québec, which incorporates an excellent library). Both the In’Afu Centre, which continues to provide invaluable service in youth animation, and the College of St. Alexandre have been handed over to lay administration and Spiritan involvement is principally at a pastoral level. Regrettably, the Province had to withdraw recently from its commitment to the multi-ethnic parish of St. Pascal-Baylon; however, it has subsequently undertaken responsibility for three parishes in Joliette diocese and supplied a confrere for pastoral ministry in Gatineau-Hull.

There is quite a good and prayerful spirit in the local communities and facilities for the retired confreres are impressive. Collaboration with the wider Congregation is expressed in a variety of ways: financial support for mission, within the North American/Caribbean Region and outside, provision of a confrere for formation ministry in Mexico, welcoming of confreres from other circumscriptions for pastoral ministry in Canada or for studies, sabbaticals etc. Following one or two negative experiences in this latter area a policy on the matter was approved at the Provincial Chapter in 2002. A number of publications keep the members of the Province and the Congregation abreast with the developments in the circumscription: the Provincial

Against the general background of decreasing and ageing personnel, the theme chosen for the 1999 Provincial Chapter was "Revitalising ourselves in view of the Mission that has been given to us". While this Chapter did not actually achieve its objective, namely, the articulation of a clear vision with which all could identify, some clear lines of convergence emerged. These express a common desire to continue existing commitments, in so far as resources permit, with a special accent on the following aspects: collaboration with other Provinces and with laity at all levels, mission animation, work for Justice and Peace, renewal of community life. It was also agreed to increase the subvention of the Province to the In'Afu Centre during the years immediately ahead. The Chapter in 2002 re-affirmed its financial commitment to this Centre and the current Provincial Council is exploring ways for closer collaboration between the Spiritans and the Centre, in response to a request from the Director to this effect. The challenge presented by the theme of the 1999 Chapter, however, remains the crucial one to be faced. This can only be done in collaboration with the wider Congregation, both in the North American context and outside; it also requires a collective approach to the identification and ownership of the mission of the Spiritans in Canada today, based on the conviction that the Spirit continues to call us to respond creatively to the needs of evangelisation of our times.

2.3 CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

2.3.1 District of Guyana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guyana</th>
<th>Infant mortality: 6.3%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: 180,000</td>
<td>GNP: $9,000 per inhabitant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy m/f: 60/66</td>
<td>A Department of France</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For reasons of age and health, there have been many departures from the District. The make up of the group has changed greatly in the last 6 years; the total number has dropped from 22 to 12 (plus two on stage), but the average age has also plunged - from 60 to 55. Until recently, the group was largely French, but now there are as many again from elsewhere: 7 from France (all over 63) and 7 from other countries (4 Nigerians, 1 Gabonese and 2 Haitians on stage - all under 43). There is nobody between 43 and 63 years old. For the first time, in 2000, an African confrere became superior of the District. The arrival of other religious orders has brought a welcome diversification to the clergy of the diocese, who previously were all Spiritans. But this does not make up for the lack of local vocations: there has been no ordination of a local priest for the past 20 years. However, the new bishop of the diocese of Cayenne originates from Guyane.

The people of Guyane come from many different backgrounds: Creoles, Amerindians, Europeans, as well as those descended from Africans, Haitians, Brazilians, Asians etc. More than half immigrated within the last 30 years. This is the context in which our confreres are working at Cayenne, on the banks of the Maroni and Oyapock rivers, in parishes and in chaplaincies (hospitals, youth). Work on the Maroni river is largely first evangelisation; in the towns, the context is the type of modernity to be found in Europe.
A good number of confreres are living alone in their presbyteries. The District house of Stellina also houses a few retired confreres. Once a week, those working in the Cayenne area come to the house to share a meal, and three times a year, all the confreres of the District have a meeting there. There is a degree of financial solidarity amongst the group and help is also given to the Province of Nigeria. Even if it is true that the wide dispersion of confreres does not help meetings and sharing at all levels, there is still room for improvement regarding solidarity between confreres.

The years ahead need to see a continuing introduction of young people to the group and, if possible, a greater internationalisation. Even if the total number goes down to 8/10 active confreres, the missionary work of the group, alongside that of other congregations recently arrived, should continue to be significant in the context of Guyane. Their contribution should be in line with the priorities laid down at the District Chapter of 2001: first evangelisation, youth work, training of lay people and the seeking of vocations.

### 2.3.2 Mexico International Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Illiteracy: 12%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy: 72 years</td>
<td>Religions: Catholics 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality: 28%</td>
<td>Independence: 16 September 1821 (from Spain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita: $3,840</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Since their arrival in 1971 the Spiritans have served the local Church in a clearly defined way: they have worked in parishes where the majority of the communities are indigenous (huastecas). In their work the Spiritans are close to the people who receive a significant part of their time, their talents and the material resources which they receive from benefactors. In the huasteca region of the Diocese of Ciudad Valles the Spiritans work in four parishes and they have a formation house in El Pujal which receives young people who have finished their secondary education.

Another aspect of the Spiritan’s work is formation. In order to receive young candidates to Spiritan life, they went to Tampico where they had a house for 11 years. Here the Spiritans took on a parish in one of the poor neighbourhoods. They work as well at the welcoming and helping of poor families to Tampico to receive medical treatment. To answer this need a confrere took on the chaplaincy of the hospital which attends the poor families and started a small company (“Talleres del Espíritu Santo”) to make candles. The income from this helps families buy medication.

In order to offer a better academic formation to our young members in formation, the Spiritans recently (2003) left the formation house in Tampico and moved to the city of Mexico where formation possibilities are better. The Spiritan group took on a parish in the city. The remainder of formation is done with the rest of the Latin American region: the novitiate in Paraguay and theology (or part of it) in São Paulo.

Formation work has given results and there are already 6 Mexican Spiritan priests. Five of this group are on ad extra mission in Paraguay, Bolivia and Mozambique. This growth leads to a definite conviction that the Congregation has come to stay and put down roots in this huge country. This has led to the search for new pastoral commitments but always within the framework of the initial proposal: the service of the indigenous communities. Thus in 2003, the group took on a new parish in the Diocese of Tuxpan, in the region of Vera Cruz and not far from Tampico. This makes
it easier for the group to hold meetings, the diversity of missionary projects enriches the group and services another of its objectives, that is vocations promotions.

The Mexican group is an example of organisational transformation in the Congregation and also of internationality. Beginning as a missionary community of one province it has become an international group. In turn the continuation of Spiritan mission was made possible by the internationalisation of the group. Internationalisation (there are Spiritans from 11 countries in Mexico) is being lived as something valuable which mutually enriches and the Spiritan group tries to witness to fraternity and living together as they strive to deepen more and more links of friendship and unity between its members.

2.3.3 Province of Trinidad

Trinidad
Population: 1.3 million
Area: 5,126 sq. km
Life expectancy male/female: 72/76 years

Religions: Catholics 29%, Hindu 24%, Anglican 11%, Pentecostal 7%, Muslim 6%, SDA 4%, Presbyterian 3%, Baptist 3%.
Independence: 31 August 1962 (from the UK)
GDP per capita: $4,430

Profile

Spiritan presence in Trinidad and Tobago dates back to 1863, when Frs Guilloux and Sunhauser arrived to found St. Mary’s College. The Province currently comprises about 45 members, 8 of whom belong by appointment (Irish Province 2, Nigerian Province 4, District of Haiti 1, Dutch Province 1). Eight confreres work outside their Province of origin: 1 in Nigeria, 1 in Haiti, 1 in Mexico, 2 in Barbados, where Malcolm Galt CSSp. is Bishop, 1 in England and 2 in TransCanada. The recent arrival of four confreres from the Nigerian Province - two experienced confreres for parish ministry and two on first appointment for school chaplaincy - and one from Haiti has been greatly welcomed by the Province.

Mission

The confreres in Trinidad have made a very significant contribution to the growth and development of the Church in the country since their arrival and continue to do so within the limitations imposed by ageing personnel resources. The primary focus of their involvement, and indeed the ministry with which they are spontaneously identified, has been that of education. Under a Spiritan Board of Management they continue to run three colleges, St. Mary’s, Fatima and St. Anthony’s, which are rated as among the finest schools in the country. First-rate State examination results each year continue to bear testimony to the academic excellence that has been a hallmark of these schools over the years and many prominent citizens are products of these colleges. Although direct Spiritan involvement in the schools has declined over the years there is a fine spirit of collaboration with the lay staff. Both staff and students reflect the broad cultural and religious diversity in the country and there is a very good climate of mutual respect and acceptance at both levels. Spiritan Education has not been confined to the communities served by the above schools but has reached out to the poorer and less-privileged in Trinidadian society, notably through the remarkably successful SERVOL and through the more recent community school at Matelot.

The confreres are also involved in a wide variety of other ministries at the service of the local Church: parish ministry in urban and rural areas, secretarial service to the
Caribbean Bishops’ Conference, seminary teaching, formation of the laity, lectio divina, social communications, pastoral ministry to new Church movements, personal accompaniment etc. As in the field of education, lay collaboration is a feature of all of these works, opening up possibilities for the development of the Lay Associate membership. Many older confreres continue to make themselves available for a variety of ministries with zeal and generosity, despite the limitations of age and health.

Current and Future Orientations

One of the challenges now facing the Province is to ensure that the Spiritan ethos continues in its educational establishments as direct Spiritan involvement in administration and teaching diminishes. Chaplaincy has been singled out for special attention and three young confreres from other circumscriptions have recently received their first appointment to the Province with this in mind. The establishment of a centre for the rehabilitation of former prisoners is currently under negotiation with the government. Numerous pastoral demands and shortage of personnel in the diocese require that confreres often live alone; efforts to redress this situation are currently in train at diocesan level through the combination of parishes at regional level. Vocations to the Spiritan way of life have been scarce of recent years but there is a renewed emphasis on recruitment in the Province at the moment. This has already borne modest fruit in the re-opening of the postulancy for a small number of interested young men. In a spirit of collaboration with the wider Congregation, the Province has welcomed students from other circumscriptions into its formation programme over the years and it made its facilities available within the North-American/Caribbean Region for the international novitiate that took place in 2000-2001.

The Province held its first Chapter in many years last October, focused on the renewal of community life and the articulation of a much-needed vision for its future life and mission. The multi-ethnic and religious composition of Trinidadian society, the changing political scene with its attendant ethnic and religious overtones, the increasing gap between the richer and poorer sections of the community, the high levels of unemployment and violence all offer particular challenges to Spiritans on the island today.

2.3.4 Foundation of Haiti

Haiti
Population: 8,000,000
Life expectancy m/f: 51/56
Infant mortality: 9.1%
Literacy: 44%

Religions: Catholic 65%, Protestant 25%, Practising Voodoo
Independence: 1st January 1804 (France)
GNP: $410

Profile

Over the last 10 years, the entry of a good number of young Haitians into our family and the departure of several expatriate confreres has renewed and rejuvenated the Spiritan group, which is now almost totally Haitian. There are 25 professed from the country: 6 are working abroad, 10 are in Haiti and 9 are students. At least 19 are under 40. There remain 3 confreres from abroad. In 2001, the status of the circumscription was changed from that of District to Foundation.
Missionary Project
The work must be seen in a context of great poverty, widespread illiteracy and a political instability that is fed by corruption (particularly drug-trafficking). The Chapter of 2001 outlined the main thrust of the current priorities, in line with the previous 15 years: education and formation at all levels (rural schools, St. Martial, higher level education); human development in town and country (economic, health); Justice and Peace (conflict resolution, struggle against injustices); Christian formation of lay people and the inculturation of the faith. Apart from St. Martial, the Foundation is responsible for 2 parishes, one in the countryside, the other in Port-au-Prince.

Material and Financial Situation
Steps have been taken recently to increase the local contribution to the financing of the Foundation, without abandoning the commitment to live and work with the poor. Help has been sought from past students of St. Martial to open the doors of the school to those who are less affluent; administration has been tightened up; rooms in the college and other properties have been rented; confreres and communities have been urged to act responsibly in these matters. Moral and financial support also come from some Spiritan circumscriptions in North America and the Caribbean.

Initial Formation
The dedication of past Spiritans to the poor and the promotion of an integral human development has attracted young people from different parts of the country. A complete formation structure has been in place for some years, but at present, there is no novitiate because of the lack of a suitable place and a confrere qualified to direct it. Spiritans have contributed to the setting up of a consortium for theological studies open to pastoral questions (CIFOR). Community life is notable for the easy relations between students and those in charge.

The Future
The task for the future is to consolidate and build on the reconstruction that has taken place since the return of Spiritans to Haiti in 1986; the missionary vision and the pastoral commitments (parishes and works of education), formation structures and teams, the local contribution to the financing of the Foundation and the openness and exchanges with other circumscriptions, near and far.

2.3.5 District of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico
Population: 3,958,000 (1999)
Life expectancy: 76 years
Infant mortality: 9.3%

Illiteracy: 11%
National per capita income: $11,094
Religions: Catholics 85%

The Puerto Rico Foundation came to birth from the District of Puerto Rico which was linked to the USA East Province which was founded in 1931 Spiritans had a significant pastoral input in various regions of the island. At the beginning of the 1990s the Foundation looked to the future with hope. Soon after, it experienced a number of difficulties: some members died, others left and vocations are few. At the moment the Foundation has 9 members: 5 from Puerto Rico, 3 from the USA and 1 from Haiti. During the last five years 2 confreres from the Province of Nigeria worked in Puerto Rico and then left for studies in the USA. Despite the difficulties
the group has not lost courage and strengthened with faith in God and in collaboration from the Congregation it moves forward. There are a few young Spiritans in formation.

Since the beginning, the Foundation of Puerto Rico has shown a great willingness to participate in mission ad extra. In the beginning all its members had a missionary experience in Brazil. At the moment the group has given one member to the Spiritan missionary project which is starting in the Dominican Republic. It hopes that this project will help the missionary dynamism of the group to grow.

The Spiritan project on the island of Puerto Rico has the following elements:

- Missionary and vocational animation as a service to the local and universal churches. The Spiritans are the only Missionary Congregation present in Puerto Rico and they are in contact with a large network of friends and helpers. The construction of the recent centre alongside the Dorado sanctuary will help to promote a Spiritan spirituality in the spiritual and missionary formation of the laity.
- Formation work: even though few youth come forward there are people to welcome them, to accompany them and to help them with vocational discernment.
- Pastoral work in two parishes (Orocovis and Arecibo) is clearly stamped with the Spiritan charism.

The Foundation is open to receiving and needs Spiritans willing to help in working on its consolidation. This demands and implies a necessary pastoral experience (for linguistic and cultural reasons) and a willingness to work within the objectives of the Foundation. Contacts with neighbouring Spiritan groups from the region and with Spiritans with the same linguistic background could help here.

### 2.3.6 District of Guadeloupe

**Guadeloupe**
- Population: 450,000
- Life expectancy m/f: 71/78
- Infant mortality: 1.2%
- GNP: $8,600 per inhabitant.
- A Department of France

Over the last few years, the Spiritan group has remained steady at around 15 members. A few deaths have been compensated by the arrival of 2 young Haitians on first appointment and some French confreres in their 60s. The average age is around 68 and most of the older confreres are still active, even though some are not in the best of health.

The confreres work in parishes, chaplaincies (hospitals, prison) and various other ministries (media). In answer to an appeal from the bishop, two Haitian confreres have joined the group to strengthen involvement with the young people who make up more than half of the total population of 450,000. A Fraternity was started several years ago. The District has recently acquired some land for building a Spiritan residence and a centre for spiritual guidance; the latter will be used to receive individuals and groups, especially young people.

The confreres are living either in the local community of Massabielle (belonging to the District) or in a regional community. They all come together informally each Monday, and once a month, this meeting is more extended. The last Chapter of the District took place in 2002.
Contacts with the other Francophone circumscriptions in the region are few (Martinique, Guyane, Haiti), partly because of the high cost of travel. But since the arrival of the 2 Haitian confreres, a special relationship has grown up with the Foundation of Haiti; the District gives it special financial support (aside from its contributions to Cor Unum).

Future Spiritan presence in Guadeloupe will depend on the ability of the District to develop its pastoral outreach to young people, to establish its centre for Spiritual Animation and to continue to renew its membership. The recruitment of local Spiritan vocations to the Congregation will be an important element in this future.

### 2.3.7 District of Martinique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Martinique</th>
<th>Infant mortality: 0.9%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: 415,000</td>
<td>GNP: $9,500 per inhabitant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy m/f: 73/79</td>
<td>A Department of France</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of Spiritans has remained around 20 over the last few years. Several deaths and departures have been compensated by the arrival of some confreres who are in the prime of life, but the average age remains high (about 72).

The confreres who are still active work mainly in parishes and chaplaincies. The Autenil establishment where two Spiritans were ministering has just closed down. The District has no missionary project as such, but it is true that the absence of any serious diocesan pastoral plan would make this difficult. Two of our Fraternities have been in existence for some years, one of which is directed by a Spiritan sister.

The house at Didier, which belongs to the District, is an excellent place of retirement for eight older confreres who have been working in Martinique or who originate there. They can keep in touch with old friends and do supply work when needed. Most of the other confreres are living alone, although some would prefer to live in a local or regional community. All gather together for half a day three times a year, and those who are able attend a yearly retreat. The District gives financial support to the rest of the Congregation.

Three confreres from Martinique have made perpetual profession in the last decade but there has been no first appointment there for around 30 years. The future Spiritan presence in the island will depend, to a large extent, on the ability of the District to come up with at least a modest missionary project (in collaboration with the local Church) that could attract young confreres from elsewhere and encourage local vocations.

### 2.4 SOUTH AMERICA

**The Situation Today**

The majority of Latin American countries are trying to consolidate their democracies. Some important components such as democratic order, the autonomy of the judicial system, social justice and access to basic services need to be put in place. Corruption is still a widespread practice in many countries. In a continent which has been marked by five centuries of oppression and violence a democratic culture with a Latin American face is beginning to appear.
The governments elected by the people have tried to integrate their countries into the market economy. At times this integration led to situations which penalised the poorer classes, diminishing social investments which increases the gap between the rich and the poor. Some decisions which were made by governments were at times imposed by the International Monetary Fund and were devoid of the necessary social concerns; examples are the cases of Argentina and Bolivia. Such decisions led to a situation of generalised poverty and impoverishment and generalised social turmoil.

Socio-economic problems such as land distribution, the denial of rights to indigenous peoples and lack of work and housing in the large cities have not been addressed and continue to provoke social exclusion for a large part of the population. One of the gaping wounds of the Latin American continent is organised crime, especially drug trafficking which in some countries works hand in hand or lives comfortably side by side with guerrilla groups. In large cities the state is not able to control crime and this causes a spiral of violence which is fed by extreme poverty and misery. Child prostitution, abandonment of children and even their assassination are indeed indications of a violent and excluding society.

Signs of hope include the popular movements which are becoming stronger such as the Landless Movement, indigenous organisations, trade unions, NGOs and anti globalisation movements such as the Porto Alegre Forum. Consciousness of citizenship and human rights is a reality in Latin America and indigenous and African cultures are increasingly considered as fundamental elements of Latin American identity. Little by little the popular classes are making themselves heard and the election of the present president of Brazil, Lula, gave a new impetus and hope to all of Latin America.

To face up to the process of globalisation of the economy, some countries have organised themselves into economic blocks, for example MERCOSUL, taking in the countries of the southern cone of the region. The project to economically integrate the Americas – ALCA, is a goal but the ideas and strategies of how to arrive there are different. Some countries, led by Brazil, demand more just commercial exchanges, especially with the largest of the North American countries – the USA.

The Church Situation

The Church in Latin America, which for a long time was linked to the power of the oppressor, made an option for the poor and for youth in Medellin. This evangelical option was paid for with the blood of many martyrs and changed the style of being Church on the continent. The option for the poor becomes concrete in the evangelisation of cultures, giving them the right to self expression which had been denied to them. It helped them through a process of reconciliation with history to recognise what positive elements they have and to accept the errors of the past in order to construct a present and future which are closer to the ideals of God’s Kingdom.

The life and action of the Church happens in the context of the renewal of the parishes, in the basic ecclesial communities (CEBs), in the different Church organisations and through the participation of the laity without whom the very existence of the Church would be in a precarious situation since the clergy numbers are so low. At the same time lay Catholics are also encouraged to take on more fully their role in society, transforming it from inside. The investment made in formation means that the clergy are younger, more Latin American and more diocesan.
A continent imbued with a Catholic tradition cannot but hear the call to go beyond its frontiers, to give from its poverty and to participate in the universal mission of the Church. Mission consciousness and the desire to practice solidarity more intensely with other peoples and other Churches is increasing. The number of Latin American missionaries on other continents is impressive.

In recent years some changes have preoccupied the Church: the increase in sects—people who previously had been Catholic and have made other religious options; the appearance of traditional African and indigenous religions and the very obvious fact that the number of people who do not have a religious affiliation is on the increase. On the other hand, even though the fundamental pastoral options of the Church have remained the same, a significant change can be seen in the Church: bishops tend to be more conservative; the growth of the Charismatic Renewal is impressive and a new model of Church is on the rise which places more emphasis on praise, personal conversion and less on community and on social problems. Many of the priests ordained in recent years have made a clear option for this pastoral line.

**Spiritans in Latin America**

Spiritans in Latin America have participated in the history of the Church in this continent and frequently have been caught up in it. They arrived in Latin America in 1885. Brazil (Amazonia) was the first country to welcome them. The first Spiritans were French. Since Brazil because of its huge size seems more like a continent, other Spiritan groups arrived over the years. From Tefé the Spiritans moved on to Alto Juruá. During the 1940s Spiritans from the Netherlands took on responsibility for the district and prelacy of Tefé and Spiritans from Germany took on Alto Juruá. During the 1950s with the idea of looking for vocations, the district of Central Brazil (Dutch Spiritans) started in the State of Minas Gerais. In the 1960s the Brazil Southwest district (Irish) began and in the 1970s the district of Brazil Southeast (Portuguese) came into existence. This latter group is now integrated into the Province of Brazil which came about in the 1990s with the suppression of the district of Brazil South (German).

**Regionalisation:** In the 1970s there were various Spiritan groups working in Brazil. On the other hand the Spiritans had begun to work in Paraguay (1970). This latter mission experienced a significant growth in the 1990s. In all of South America there were 7 groups. In the 1980s, in order to favour and encourage contact and collaboration between the groups, annual meetings were begun amongst the superiors. At the same time a three yearly meeting ("Encontrão") bringing together all Spiritans in the region was begun. These meetings promoted a process where the different groups got to know each other better and led to a reflection on priorities and concerns. This dynamic helped promote a greater collaboration and integration.

The "Encontrão" of 2000 gave rise to a number of common projects which has helped this process. Some of the projects included: the celebration of the Spiritan Jubilee; common Spiritan formation in Latin America; a missionary project in Bolivia and vocation promotions. At the moment the Spiritan groups in Brazil, Paraguay and Mexico have a common formation project; the novitiate in Paraguay, second cycle (theology) in São Paulo and each group takes on responsibility for its own first cycle. In order to strengthen and widen the Spiritan presence in Latin America the three groups started a missionary project in one of the poorest Latin American countries — Bolivia (Sta. Cruz de la Sierra). Amongst the Spiritan groups in Brazil there is an increasing emphasis put on greater collaboration in pastoral areas.
and in vocational discernment. It is always difficult to forecast the future but the hope is that the groups in the south of Brazil will move in a direction which will ensure that at the opportune time, they will join the Province of Brazil. Because of distance and their specific mission it is certain that the groups of Tefé and Alto Juruá will retain their autonomy.

2.4.1 Province of Brazil and Bolivia Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Illiteracy: 17%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy: 67</td>
<td>Religions: Catholics 85%, protestant, sects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality: 37%</td>
<td>Independence: 7 September 1822 (from Portugal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Province of Brazil came into being in 1990 and continues to develop as a part of a local church which wishes to be with the people in the construction of a more just and fraternal society. The Province is growing slowly and has the support of the other Spiritan circumscriptions in Brazil, especially in the areas of formation, Spiritans appointed there and finances. Recently the district of Brazil Southeast was integrated into the Province.

Apart from its formation houses and a number of long term commitments in places such as Belo Horizonte, Salete and the Rio de Janeiro region, the Province has taken on two missionary projects: Juazeiro in the State of Bahia and Vilhena, in the State of Rondônia. This latter town is in the central western region of the country and is the entry point to southern Amazonia. Both projects are a long distance from each other and are also quite a distance from the central administration of the Province which is in São Paulo, in the south of the country. Both of these projects fit well into the Spiritans charism but because of a lack of members to work in them, the Province at the moment is in a process of discernment to see if it can continue with both of these missionary projects. In mission ad extra the Province had members in Taiwan and Guinea Bissau and recently with the circumscriptions of Latin America, began the new Spiritan project in Bolivia in Sta. Cruz de la Sierra. In order to maintain its missionary activities within the country, to develop and to continue to send members on mission ad extra, the Province needs to receive confreres on first appointment. This already has been happening. This practice will ensure that internationality is central in the Province.

In the area of formation the Province is part of the Latin American region. By this arrangement, the common novitiate is in Paraguay and theology in São Paulo. Apart from this arrangement the Province has an initial course (Belo Horizonte) and two philosophy houses (São Paulo and Cruzeiro do Sul). This arrangement is necessary because of long distances and cultural diversity within the country. The structure of existing formation is not easy and the Province as well as the Latin American region have some difficulties in finding good formators. Along with formation, vocational promotion presents itself as a significant challenge for the Province and for the other Spiritan groups. Without any doubt, the growth of the Congregation in Brazil depends on formation and on vocational promotion.

There is a strong bond of friendship between Spiritans and a strong feeling of belonging to the group. The annual meetings (assemblies or chapters), the visits of the provincial and the different newsletters are the means which help to maintain this friendship between all members of the Province despite the significant danger of geographical dispersion. Even though almost all confreres live in community there is
a need for an improvement in the real sense of Spiritan community: prayer together, a sharing of faith and life, and work.

The Province and the other Spiritan groups continue to strengthen their links forging unity and collaboration: formation, the common projects and frequent meetings of the superiors have encouraged this exchange between Spiritans. Without any doubt this is how the Spiritan future in Brazil will be shaped.

### 2.4.2 District of Brazil South-West

The District of Brazil Southwest began with the arrival of six confreres from the Province of Ireland in late 1963. Their arrival came about as a response to the appeal of Pope John XXIII asking that missionaries not neglect the evangelisation of Latin America. The first Chapter of the district, in 1971, took place in a context where the Brazilian Church was trying to implement the documents of Vatican II and of the Medellin Conference. The Chapter reflected on all these contexts very seriously and this in turn led to radical changes in the activities of the district. Apart from this the group followed the orientations of the General Council of that time that in Brazil emphasis would not be put on Spiritan works but in first place we should respond to the more urgent needs of the local church and listen to the requests of bishops. These changes have had an effect on and characterised the group until the present day: a participative style of leadership, an option for the poor, a liberationist vision of the Church and of its role in society, the importance of the laity, as well as the necessity of ongoing formation and specialisation of confreres.

Despite the age situation (almost half of the group are over 65), the group still has a significant amount of energy and vitality. The work of the confreres of the district is carried out especially on the urban peripheries of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Normally the work is parish based and two periphery parishes were chosen as priorities for the district. Some of the confreres, availing of sabbatical breaks specialised in different areas: alternative health, youth ministry, justice and peace, spiritual direction, theatre, dance, slum (favela) work ... If the specialised work brings a quality to pastoral activities on the one hand, on the other it can cause a certain tension between daily parish work and specialised work. If the group had a common project instead of time bound contracts with bishops, this could enhance even more the talents and the many interesting activities of the confreres.

Two group meetings each year is an important factor which has helped in creating a feeling of belonging to the group and in building a common spirit and involves the confreres in a process of on-going formation. The practice of involving all the members of the group in decision making has contributed to building a spirit of tolerance and the acceptance of a certain pluralism within the group. Both regional communities (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) help confreres to meet and to build up friendship. Since almost half of the confreres live alone, it is necessary to make efforts to build up true Spiritan communities.

The group is conscious that the future of the Congregation in Brazil is in the hands of our young members and will come about through the vitality of the Brazilian Province. The group has always collaborated in some of the Province’s projects: at the moment this collaboration takes place in Juazeiro (Bahia) and in one of the formation houses (Mangalot). But with a wide, realistic, hopeful vision and following the present orientations of the Congregation, it is important to accept the necessity of uniting
our efforts and work together having a vision of a more unified presence of the Congregation in the southern region of Brazil.

2.4.3 District of Brazil Central

During the 1960s Spiritans from the Dutch Province were numerous in the Central Brazil district (Minas Gerais, Goiás and the Federal District). The initial objective of their arrival here in 1948 was vocations. They took on parishes in poor regions where clergy were scarce. With the decrease of vocations some focused on education (secondary schools) but the majority worked in parishes. Later the district collaborated in the setting up of the Province of Brazil helping with finance and members. On many occasions the Province has expressed its appreciation for this solidarity.

At the moment the number of confreres has decreased significantly and the average age is very high. For this reason many of the parishes where confreres worked have been given over to local clergy and two such parishes were taken over by Spiritans from the Province of Brazil. Despite difficulties caused by age and limits imposed by health problems, practically all make an effort to continue working. The majority have chosen to spend their retirement in Brazil in the areas where they had worked. This is possible due to the traditional affection and friendship which Brazilian people have for their former priests along with the possibility of doing some work, of feeling useful, of a pension from the Netherlands and in not being a burden for the parishes. Even though the majority live alone the group is faithful to the annual meeting which strengthens contacts with the Spiritan family.

Because of the advanced average age it is difficult to foresee the future of the group. But according to a wider vision of Spiritan presence in Brazil, the desire that the Congregation continue in some parishes in the central region of the country seems to be a consensus. We could maintain a presence if possible in the N. Sra. De Lurdes parish in Valadares, in Expansão (Ceilandia) and in one or two parishes in Belo Horizonte. The reasons given for such a presence include the fact that this region is a source of many vocations; that it would be important to continue a Spiritan presence of more than 50 years and that we should continue to be known in this vast region of the country. Without a doubt this presence will depend on dialogue, on the involvement of other Spiritan groups in the country and on the collaboration of the entire Congregation.

2.4.4 District of Amazonia

In this great missionary region where the enormous distances between parishes are calculated in the number of days and nights a journey will take by boat, works the Spiritan group of the District of Amazônia. For the last few years this has been an international group. At the moment we have Portuguese (3), Brazilian (3), Spanish (1), Polish (1), Dutch (1), Capo Viridian (1) confreres apart from the bishop (Brazilian) working here. Two Dutch confreres live outside this area (in Belém, Pará and in Fortaleza, Ceará). In recent years with the arrival of the new bishop, Dom Sérgio Castriani, a process of diversification of the clergy has taken place. In the past practically all the clergy were Spiritans. Now, apart from Spiritans, there are 4 Holy Family priests in the region of Caruari and a further 2 diocesan priests elsewhere who have come from other parts of Brazil. Despite this diversification and the work of vocational promotion, the clergy is 100% from outside the region.
One aspect which at the same time is a challenge and a preoccupation, is the question of the high mobility of Spiritan missionary personnel. During the last six years 10 Spiritans left the prelacy. Fortunately these departures were compensated for with five new arrivals and also the arrival of the bishop. This mobility has been generally caused by the recall of Spiritans by their own provinces. In order not to weaken ongoing pastoral commitment, dialogue and prudence are necessary components of such decisions.

The Spiritans have worked in Tefé for over a hundred years (since 1897). During many years both the prelacy and the district were the same. The pastoral priorities of the Church of Tefé have been and are the priorities of the district. The group wants to continue in many ways in the service of the local church. Recently in the redefinition of its presence and mission, the group took on vocational promotion once again as well as pastoral responsibility for the parishes of Fonte Boa, Jutai, Missão Boca de Tefé as well as collaborating with pastoral activities in the urban area of Tefé.

With the diversification of the clergy and the arrival of other pastoral workers (lay missionaries) the Spiritan group felt the need to build and affirm their Spiritan identity. They also felt the need to meet in Tefé as a Spiritan community. This process led to a progressive separation and distinction between the prelacy and the Spiritan district as well as to the strengthening of community life, to the building of a Spiritan house in the town of Tefé and to the transformation of the old house of the “Tefé Mission” into a spirituality centre.

Even though they are fully part of the Latin American region, the Spiritans in Amazonia because of distance and because of the specific nature of their mission will, without doubt, continue for a significant time as an autonomous circumscription. Spiritan vocations are sent to the Province via the Spiritan formation house (philosophy) in Cruzeiro do Sul. The group is small and needs and requests more personnel.

2.4.5 District of Alto Jurua

The Spiritans came to Alto Juruá to work with the first evangelisation of the indigenous people and rubber-tappers who had been abandoned in this part of Amazonia. The plan was to implant an autonomous local church and also the Congregation. At the moment the diocese has 9 diocesan priests from the country. However the Spiritan presence is still necessary. Even though the Spiritans are old, they remain at their posts and dedicate their time to clergy formation, to parish animation and to the formation of the laity.

The formation of diocesan priests, and if possible Spiritans as well, was always in the plans of the Spiritans in Alto Juruá. The results, even though they are modest, are visible: a moving towards local clergy autonomy (9), some local Spiritans and a promising future. At the moment Spiritan candidates do their philosophy in Cruzeiro do Sul (3 years) and later are sent to the novitiate in Paraguay and to theology in São Paulo. Those responsible for formation in Cruzeiro do Sul are members of the Province of Brazil.

In the pastoral area Spiritans are working in huge parishes. Visits to the communities only is possible by river or by roads which can only be used during the dry season. With the arrival of the new bishop, Dom Mosé Pontello, who is also a Spiritan, the district according to its possibilities and in dialogue with the bishop, is attempting to redefine and resituate its presence and mission in the diocese. Thus, apart from the
formation house in Cruzeiro do Sul where there are approximately 15 students, two parishes (one in Cruzeiro do Sul and another further inland – Tarauacá), are regarded as part of the district project for the future. The bishop has requested that we help in the formation of local clergy. The Spiritan group wishes to strengthen community life.

The district which initially was made up of German Spiritans is getting old. At the moment two Brazilian Spiritans work in Cruzeiro do Sul; some Spiritans have come from this region. The situation of vocations promotions is good. The diocesan clergy are few for the pastoral needs. In a Church which was started by Spiritans, our presence is desired and necessary as witness to the missionary and religious life. For this reason the district needs and requests first appointments to continue and intensify the work.

2.4.6 Paraguay International Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paraguay</th>
<th>Illiteracy: 8%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy: 70 years</td>
<td>Religions: Catholics 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality: 27%</td>
<td>Independence: 14 May 1811 (from Spain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP: $1,770</td>
<td>Debt:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Spiritan presence in Paraguay began in 1967. Some of the striking characteristics of the group include its diversity (a total of 15 members come from 10 different countries); its youth (half of the group are on first appointment) and also the phenomenon of transition is a feature of the group – the rural parishes are staffed totally by confreres on first appointment. This situation which shows Spiritan mission being renewed, even though it is a reason for joy and thanksgiving also demands some attention so that the Spiritan work can continue to be carried out in the inculturated and liberating manner which has always characterised the Spiritans in Paraguay.

The group’s mission is found in two regions: the first in the diocese of São Pedro Apostolo. This is a rural area, very poor socially, economically and from the point of view of local clergy numbers. Here we have two large rural parishes. Pastoral work consists in forming, accompanying and strengthening the rural communities and the formation of Christian leaders. The other region is on the periphery of Asunción where the formation houses are situated: the Latin American novitiate in São Lorenzo, the postulancy in Fernando de la Mora and the central house (Laval House) in Asunción. Recently, following a request from the local bishop the group took on the parish where the Spiritan novitiate is situated.

The Spiritan group is conscious that it is at the service of the local Church and its activities are varied. These range from work in parishes, to formation of base ecclesial communities, to the formation of laity, the formation of youth for religious life, support in the struggle for land ... The group shares Spiritan spirituality with a lay missionary group – “Ave Maria” and in Asunción it animates a group which has been supporting the Spiritans.

In its last Chapter the group pointed to its central objective as being “to strengthen living in communities which are welcoming, formative and apostolic”. In order to reach this objective and to facilitate the integration of each confrere, the group made a number of suggestions. Each community should have a community project which makes explicit the objective of the community and the function of each member. A period of daily community prayer will be identified and times of meetings and re-
laxation together will also be defined. In the area of finance the common community fund will be followed and each community will have a bursar and superior who will give attention to the confreres. These proposals are now in the plans of the group which functions in the two regions (rural area and Assunción) and there are four meetings each year – one of these meetings is the annual retreat.

Despite difficulties and results which at times are not encouraging, formation continues to be one of the priorities of the group. For a number of years now the Spiritans have been receiving candidates in the formation house in Fernando de la Mora. Until now the candidates have come from the rural parishes. Perhaps with a greater presence now on the periphery of Assunción, candidates may come from other sources. At the moment a Paraguayan Spiritan brother is working in Tanzania and some students (professed and non professed) are studying in Assunción and São Paulo. The Latin American novitiate which was built in 2002 on the periphery of Assunción (São Lorenzo) receives novices from Brazil, Mexico and Paraguay. The group needs formators.

2.5 EUROPE

2.5.1 REGION OF EUROPE

The continent of Europe is still one of the influential regions of this planet because of its demographic concentration (about 750 million inhabitants) and its economic activity. The European Union (EU) accounts for more than half the population of the continent, containing as it does some 25 countries already on the way towards economic, fiscal, social and, to a certain extent, political union. New candidates continue to be attracted by what the Union has to offer: a voluntary membership, based on the rights of individuals and the values of democracy, is the principal pillar on which the partnership is founded. The absence of any significant armed conflict between member states for more than 50 years can be considered as one of the most welcome fruits of this drawing together of nations. Practically all the Spiritan circumscriptions in Europe (with the exception of Switzerland and Croatia) are now found in the EU.

Calls to Missionary Action

While this global coming together is indeed positive, certain aspects of European society constitute a challenge for a new Christian mission in Europe. Here are some signs which cannot leave Spiritans indifferent to such a call. Many of them by their very nature invite us towards collaboration across national and even continental boundaries:

- If Europe undoubtedly bears the mark of Christianity, it is also marked by signs of unbelief and, more and more, by the phenomenon of growing secularisation. This latter can be seen as something positive insofar as it implies a respect for different religious affiliations and, in the context of its secularism, a concrete step towards peaceful co-existence in a pluralist society. However, very often it leaves a religious and spiritual void in which the most fragile individuals, when left to themselves, go astray and fall into error, especially the young. More and more Europeans declare that they have no religious affiliation (see the statistics below). This becomes a call for us to present an understanding of our faith in a way that responds to the needs of the contemporary society.
• The enrichment of some implies the economic and social marginalisation of other less competitive persons and groups. This refers in particular to those who have little access to education or an adequate professional formation, or those who have a poor mastery of language and other means of communication... This is a call for us to give such disadvantaged youths an appropriate education and formation.

• The material wealth of the European Union and its political and economic stability attract a large number of immigrants coming from the South, from the East and from Eastern Europe. Because of national immigration policies which are often restrictive and show little respect for the human person, many of these immigrants live precariously while also experiencing situations of conflict that can arise between very different cultural and religious traditions. Such situations call upon us to provide an evangelical presence in those milieus affected by immigration.

• The global enrichment of the countries of the Northern hemisphere often contributes to the stagnation or even the impoverishment and, finally, the marginalisation of the peoples of the South. Many of the decisions affecting the economies of the countries of the South are taken in the North and notably in the European Union. This becomes a call to make a better analysis of these realities, to inform public opinion in the North, and to put pressure on decision makers, both national and supra-national, in order to introduce a more equitable dimension into their economic and fiscal policies.

Spiritans in Today’s Europe

Apart from two exceptions, namely Poland, with its noticeably different background, and Spain which only recently became a Province, the European provinces are today experiencing major changes: the almost total absence of demographic renewal, the problem of ageing (the average age of native members is often 70 years or more), and the rapid decrease of personnel. One of the major concerns of the Provinces is to provide a place of welcome for the sick and the aged confreres, to care for them in an appropriate manner, and to set up adequate facilities for their accommodation and health in conformity with present civil requirements.

But alongside that, the calls for a new missionary commitment in Europe open the prospect of a new challenge. Thanks to the significant numerical growth in the circumscriptions of the South and also to the availability of lay people on the spot who are ready to take part in this missionary venture alongside our confreres, and in new developments in collaboration with the local Churches, a new Spiritan missionary project in Europe is slowly taking shape (see below). One begins to see that the evident decline in numbers in the “large” Spiritan provinces does not necessarily mean an end to a Spiritan missionary presence in the continent.

However, these changes come at a price. The provincial administrations are subject to many pressures not easily borne, especially at a time when European confreres who are still strong and active have become very few in number (due to age). Examples of this would be: responding to the calls for ongoing support of our commitments, both new and old in the South, and at the same time trying to support the requests for new undertakings ad intra, without neglecting the indispensable needs of administration and animation of the province. This includes the need to welcome into formation the frequently a-typical and not very numerous European candidates for
the Spiritan life, as well as looking after the young candidates sent from the South for pastoral work or studies; welcoming and accompanying confreres from the South taking up first appointments in Europe, while at the same time helping the older confreres returning home from places of mission to reinsert themselves into a milieu which has become somewhat strange to them; investing prudently for the future life of the circumscription and the Region of Europe, while also showing solidarity with the circumscriptions of the South in their financial needs! In order to address these challenges more effectively, the European Provinces began twenty years ago to increase their contacts with each other and to strengthen their solidarity.

The Construction of a Region

Since before 1980, but certainly from that date onwards, European international meetings began to take place, generally on an annual basis, between confreres having similar duties in their respective provinces: Formation Directors, Provincial Bursars and Superiors. In the 90’s, these types of meeting began to multiply to include also those responsible for Justice and Peace, Vocation Directors, Lay Associates, those responsible for Publications and Communications, Educators, Archivists and young confreres appointed to Europe. In addition to providing mutual support in the face of similar challenges in each of the provinces represented, these meetings made it possible to set up concrete initiatives which were common to several or indeed all of the provinces, as for example: the month’s recollection in preparation for perpetual vows, the Dublin novitiate shared by 4 provinces, the meetings of young people in formation, a common understanding of the welcome to be given to foreign Spiritan students, the month of missionary and spiritual renewal for active confreres, the new Spiritan presence in former East Germany, the international meetings for young people interested in the missions, a Guide for Archivists, a certain co-ordination of solidarity with Spiritans in the South, the project of an international European novitiate due to begin in 2004, etc.

For about a decade now, the Provincial Superiors, each in their turn on an annual basis, have undertaken the co-ordination of these meetings, with the aid of one confrere or another for the secretarial work. Since 1997 a new service has been created: that of Permanent Secretary for the European Region, responsible to the assembly of Provincial Superiors for the Secretariat and the regular co-ordination of European meetings and initiatives. At the same time, at the request of the General Council, a service called CSECD (le Centre Spiritaine Européen pour la Coopération et le Développement) (see below) was organised to help confreres working in the South in applying for financial help from European aid organisations. Two confreres, one French and one Portuguese, were nominated for this service and a house was rented in the Rue des Drapiers in Brussels, capital of the European Union. Recently an Irish confrere has joined them to provide various services, particularly translation work and correspondence in English. In 2003 a new residence was purchased, more spacious and functional, situated in the Rue de Merode, in an area of Brussels which is easy to reach.

How the Region Functions

After various developments from 1997 onwards, it became organised as follows since 2003. The commissions (that is to say each of the specific groups of Spiritans involved in the same work) meet together every year (or every 2 or 3 years) in the presence of a Provincial Superior (different for each commission). Each commission is
presided over by one of its members chosen by his peers. The permanent Secretary helps in the co-ordination. The meetings take place in each of the provinces that are capable of hosting them (on a rotational basis). The agenda includes the sharing of news, experiences and points of view; elements of formation specific to the particular work; the follow up of common projects and collaboration. These reunions provide contact each year among 100 to 200 Spiritans with different responsibilities.

The Annual Assembly of the Provincials follows up on all these activities and decides on the main orientations of the region. Its real authority is limited by the fact that, according to the present Spiritan Rule of Life (247), most of the important decisions are taken by the Provincial Councils, and therefore most of the orientations for the Region have to pass through these Councils in order to be ratified. In the interest of efficiency, the co-ordinator for the bursars has begun to assist at the Provincials’ meetings. One of the Provincials takes the role of Chairman for one year at a time (each in turn) and is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the life of the Region. He is assisted by a Co-ordination Commission which meets twice a year between each assembly of the provincials to see to the follow up of decisions taken and to prepare for the next assembly. This commission consists of the Provincial Coordinator, the one who presided at the preceding year’s meeting and the one who will preside at the next year’s meeting, a delegate from the bursars and procurators, and the Permanent Secretary.

Among the specific services provided by the Region, which also fall under the responsibility of the Provincial Superiors, and in understanding with the permanent secretariat, two services are mandated to the financial and material help of confreres working in the South:

- **CSECD (le Centre Spiritain Européen pour la Coopération et le Développement)**, which has as its goal the assistance of confreres looking for finance or funding for ecclesiastical or development projects in the South. It is above all a question of directing them towards organisations, confessional or otherwise, capable of responding positively to their requests, and of assisting them in preparing a dossier for their project. To have easier access to European Union financing, a public company according to Belgian law has been created (on the lines of the ASBL), with the help of Belgian Spiritans, both professed and lay, and a little magazine (Kibanda Projects) is now available giving information. This form of association allows us to ask for gifts from benefactors in Belgium and to set up a small fund which will permit the CSECD to finance certain limited projects and to have a minimum participation (required in certain cases) in the financing of certain projects submitted to the European Union. In the long-term, the idea is to solicit donations from benefactors in the rest of the European Union.

- The **Compte Européen de Solidarité Spiritaine (CESS or European Account for Spiritan Solidarity)**, is a way of co-ordinating financial aid which each European Province can engage in, over and above its participation in the Cor Unum fund, for the benefit of circumscriptions from the South which make an express request for this. The requests which are favoured most are those which present precise projects, particularly building projects, or those which work towards financial independence. This account is sustained each year by contributions from the Provinces of Europe, which would otherwise have given these donations in the form of direct aid from a Province to a Circumscription. It is managed by the director of the CSECD and it is under the responsibility of the Assembly of Provincials.
The allocations are made by an administration committee of 5 persons acting in direct consultation with the General Council which is in a special position to evaluate the relevance of the requests.

**Future Perspectives and Questions**

The question has been coming up for years: what will be the future of the “old Provinces” of Europe, numerically in decline, and how can we prepare for that future? What form will the Spiritan presence take in the Europe of tomorrow?

Following on the General Chapter of Maynooth which noted that “the frontiers of mission are being moved” (Introduction 2.5) and after sharing a reflection with the General Council, the Provincial Superiors of Europe, at the end of 1999, took the option of giving a definite priority to the question of Mission in Europe with regard for its structures. They began by drawing up a *Spiritan Missionary Project in Europe*. This does not mean in anyway abandoning European support for new or old commitments outside Europe. However, faced with the cries for missionary help in Europe (cf. supra), and in the name of a creative fidelity to the Spiritan tradition which has led generations of confreres to mission in far off lands, it is now a question of finding a unified response to this new missionary challenge. Such a missionary undertaking can only be implemented little by little, with the help of confreres from other Provinces and especially young confreres from the South, and with the support of lay persons prepared to take part. It will entail a certain number of concrete projects which already exist or have yet to be created, which will be capable of attracting other collaborators in the future, and possibly even other “vocations” in various forms. In this way, it will offer the best chance of giving a long term future to the Spiritan presence in this continent.

This work is already in progress: that of identifying in each Province those commitments which are in keeping with Spiritan priorities and which also help to fulfil the needs of local Churches. Without wishing to exclude others, the emphasis would be especially on projects which cross national frontiers (either in the European context or even wider) and which could be served by international and intercultural communities. By the end of 2003, about fifteen precise projects or commitments were identified: some are already a living reality, others are being set up, and others still have not yet begun (some of these are mentioned in the presentation of the European Provinces which follows). The confreres responsible for some of these projects held a meeting in November 2003 to evaluate them with a view to a greater regional collaboration.

Even if the question of the organisation of the Region is not the most fundamental of all, we still need to prepare practical ways forward as regards the structures of a Spiritan Europe, such as it is evolving. The European confreres more directly involved in this work hope that the General Chapter of 2004 will give some pointers on this question. Perhaps it would be possible to envisage the definition of two levels of co-ordination and of responsibility: at local level (more or less that of the actual individual Provinces), and at the wider level of a Regional nature.

Perhaps for example this Regional level could concern itself with matters having a clear supra national dimension: for instance certain aspects or stages of initial formation, particularly in international communities; the broad vision and the implementation of specific missionary projects having a European or even Intercontinental dimension (like projects promoting justice in relations between North to South); or
again, ways of supporting faraway missions (i.e., CSECD or CESS in Brussels), and perhaps others as well. Other projects do better, it would seem, from continuing to be managed at local level. According to some, a European Regional authority should be able to take certain decisions without waiting for them to be ratified by a Provincial authority (Provincials and their Councils), as is currently required by the Rule of Life (247). The General Chapter of 2004 would be a good opportunity to open (at least for a trial period) new possibilities of regional organisation, always at the service of the Mission, along the lines already indicated by the Chapter of Itaici when it recommended "the promotion of regionalisation" (39).

2.5.1.1 Province of Ireland

Ireland
Population: 3.8 million
Area: 70,282 sq. km
Life expectancy males/females: 74.4/79.6 years

Religions: Catholics 89%; Presbyterians, Methodists, Jews.
Independence: 6 December 1921 (from the UK)
GDP per capita: $24,740

Profile

Membership of the Province has recently dropped below 400. Of these about 240 are resident in Ireland, 90 (22% approx.) in developing countries overseas and some 66 are in Australia, Europe and the U.S.A. The average age is 69.8 years and less than 15% of the Province is under 55 years. Approximately 60% of the confreres resident in Ireland are retired. In 1988 there were 635 members in the Province, 242 (38.1%) of whom were working in the developing countries. While this decline is in line with trends elsewhere in the older Provinces, one particular concern is that an average of two younger confreres per year continue to seek laicisation/dispensation from perpetual vows.

Mission

Although the last two decades have seen significant changes in the numbers and the nature of the ministry of Irish confreres working in developing countries – only three of the Irish Districts, Kenya, The Gambia and Brazil South West, now remain – the Province continues to make a very significant contribution to the contemporary mission commitments of the Congregation. Irish confreres are working in 8 of the International Groups in the Congregation and are involved in a supportive capacity in a number of the newer Provinces and Foundations. A primary focus of this support is in the area of formation, and this spirit of collaboration is extended also to the home Province, which continues to welcome students from several circumscriptions into its own formation programme.

In the home context the Province still owns and administers five prestigious secondary schools and three junior schools, although many of the responsibilities for the day to day running of these establishments have now been handed over to lay people. The Province also has a number of third-level and community education commitments, notably Kimmage Mission Institute (which is now incorporated into the Jesuit Institute at Milltown), Development Studies Centre and SPIRASI (Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative). The single most important development in the area of education of recent years has been the establishment, in 1999, of the Des Places Educational Association. Comprising 8 Members, all of whom are Spiritan, and a Board of Directors composed largely of voluntary lay people of various walks of life, the DEA has the responsibility of securing the development and implementation of the educa-
volutionary role, taking the lead in coordinating, supportive and supervisory work. With a lay Executive Director it is
structured to ensure future decision-making in regard to the colleges is a shared
process in a spirit of partnership between Spiritan, parents, DEA, school staff and
students. It is currently addressing issues such as the Spiritan Education Ethos, manage-
ment structures and the pastoral and catechetical dimension of the schools. While sev-
eral projects have been undertaken in the schools in favour of the disadvantaged sec-
tions of the community, the use of the considerable resources of these schools for the
educational benefit of the poor and marginalised remains an ongoing challenge. Ways
in which the educational establishments in Ireland could possibly resource the newer
educational works being undertaken in Africa and elsewhere could also be explored.

The vision of the 1988 Chapter that “action for justice” must become an integral and
unifying aspect of all the works of the Province” continues to move closer to reality.
In addition to consolidating existing works, several new projects in the area of jus-
tice, peace and the integrity of creation have been recently initiated: Riverside Coun-
selling Service and Suicide Bereavement Support provide invaluable assistance for
the poor and the excluded in contemporary Irish society; SPIRASI, seeks to meet un-
catered for needs of refugees and asylum seekers, among the most vulnerable in Irish
society today; the parishes of Bawnoge and Deansrath in a deprived area of Dublin
were accepted as Spiritan commitments and are effectively mission situations in
contemporary Ireland. A number of confreres are involved in a meaningful way with
various NGO’s that serve the needs of the poor beyond the frontiers of Ireland. A
Justice and Peace Group has been re-established in the Province involving confreres
in all of the above ministries.

Parish ministry and chaplaincy work continue to be important contributions to the
local Church and there are four Spiritan parishes in the Province all within the con-
fines of the Archdiocese of Dublin. The confreres involved in these parishes meet on
a regular basis to share ideas on creative ministry in the increasingly complex context
of contemporary Ireland. In addition, there are some 34 confreres working in various
chaplaincies and parishes around the country and 5 others in England. Recent Chap-
ters point out the necessity that confreres returning to contemporary Ireland from
abroad be given some reorientation programme prior to taking up their work. Already
one Bishop has decided not to accept any further priests from outside into his diocese
with a view to realistically preparing for the Church of the future.

The 2000 Provincial Chapter directed that a collaborative mentality be fostered in the
Province, and a document on Collaborative Ministry prepared by a committee of
Spiritans and lay-people was approved at the Enlarged Provincial Council in 2003.
The Irish Associate Programme is relatively new compared with some other Prov-
inces; at present, they number 7 and their future is still evolving.

In general, there appears to be a good community spirit in the Province with con-
freres in all the local communities having a sense of belonging, of mutual support, of
a prayerful atmosphere and of participation in the decision-making process. Regular
gatherings of the Provincial Council with the leadership in each community, with a
view to improving the quality of community life in the Province, have undoubtedly
made a positive contribution, as have the many events organised to celebrate the
Spiritan Year. The Province, on the basis of actuarial studies, has invested consider-
ably in the provision of excellent accommodation and medical facilities for the retired.
The recently constructed Shanahan Apartments at Kimmage and the refurbished St.
Joseph’s House at Rockwell ensure that adequate living space is provided for those who will retire in the coming years. Marian House, a well-equipped medical clinic with qualified and committed lay personnel and a Spiritan Director, is one of the finest facilities of its type in the Congregation. A recently elaborated policy document on retirement has been very well received in the Province. Some concerns have been raised however, by the fact that about one quarter of the Province is now residing in the Kimmage complex.

Future

It is clear that, as in the case of the other European Provinces, Ireland is called to face the future in the broader context of the Region and of the Congregation itself. This necessarily involves realistic planning for the future in terms of commitments, property and personnel. As vocations remain scarce and numbers continue to decline it seems clear that it will not be possible to maintain all existing communities in the Province on a long-term basis. Ireland has made a start in welcoming confessers from other circumscriptions and involving them in its missionary project. This needs to be extended if the Province is to bear effective witness to the contemporary international reality of the Congregation and to secure the future of its missionary projects.

2.5.1.2 Province of England

United Kingdom
Population: 59.4 million
Area: 242,534 sq. km
Life expectancy males/females: 75.7/80.7
Religions: Protestant 53.4% (Anglican 43.5%, Presbyterian 4.5%, Methodist 2.2%), Catholic 9.8%, Muslim 2.6%, Orthodox 1%
GDP per capita: $23,680

Profile

In 2004 the Province celebrates the centenary of Spiritan presence in England. As elsewhere in the older Provinces, numbers have declined significantly of recent years. At present the professed membership stands at 44, 11 of whom work in a wide variety of ministries in other circumscriptions around the globe. There are 10 Lay Associates, all of whom have followed a period of formation, have made a formal commitment and contribute appreciably to the life and mission of the Province. Approximately 25% of the Province is officially retired. In addition, 5 confessers from the Irish Province and 2 from the Polish Province work in England; only one of these is assigned to an English Province ministry.

Mission

Despite its limited resources, the Province continues to contribute significantly to the local Church through its traditional commitment to parish ministry and through a number of more recent undertakings in line with the Spiritan charism. Two of these initiatives – the unique “Just Youth” project for the evangelisation of youth and the recently established “Revive”, a service to refugees and asylum-seekers – have been identified by the European Provincials as projects in line with the agreed criteria for future Spiritan commitments in Europe. The latter was an initiative of a Lay Associate couple who sought to respond to the evolving needs of refugees and asylum-seekers in an increasingly unwelcoming European context. The Province saw its establishment as an appropriate way to mark the Spiritan Year and the project has already achieved recognition from the Home Secretary and attracted financial support from the local diocese. The “Kairos” project for the rehabilitation of alcoholics and
drug addicts, in which Spiritans have played a dominant role from the outset, continues to provide a remarkable service to the marginalised and the homeless in the spirit of the charism of the Congregation. It has grown significantly and gained a unique reputation over the years and is an outstanding example of collaboration with people of other Christian, and indeed non-Christian, convictions. Both the “Just Youth” and “Kairos” projects have now been legally established as charities, with governors and trustees to oversee their efficient functioning, and so their future is ensured even in the absence of direct Spiritan involvement.

Discerning the Future

The single most significant event in the recent life of the Province was the Provincial Assembly, convened at Aylesford, Kent, in July 2000, with a view to coming to a common agreement on the life and mission of the Province in the light of declining numbers and the absence of vocations. A lengthy and carefully planned process of preparation and of inclusive consultation involving every member of the Province led to a profound level of sharing on the issues of leadership, community and mission, in a spirit of openness and mutual acceptance. Although the meeting did not achieve its initial aim, namely to articulate a common vision for the future of the Province and a commitment of thereto, it proved to be an essential first stage in this process. Personal stories were told, expectations and hopes were honestly shared in a spirit of reconciliation with the past and a climate was thus created for further discernment at a future date. Some of the points that emerged repeatedly in the discussions – the need to make mission the centre of Spiritan existence, to evolve new models of community living, fostering faith-sharing and mutual support, to collaborate with laity, to support the new Foundations and Provinces, to be involved with youth, and to create a sense of belonging to a wider Congregation than the Province – already indicated the broad lines of a common path forward for the future. Two confreres from the Province of Nigeria, who have since been appointed by the General Council to England in view of its projects with youth and with refugees/asylum-seekers, have recently arrived after a lengthy period of waiting for the necessary visa. A third from the EAP is expected shortly. The Province has also withdrawn from its commitment to parish ministry on the island of Jersey.

Recent Orientations

The Provincial Chapter, convened three years later at the same venue, gave concrete expression to some of the above aspirations. The commitment to “Just Youth” and “Revive” and to the promotion of Lay Associate membership was reaffirmed, financial support for younger circumscriptions was endorsed in the form of scholarships for the training of formators and the arrangement of annual mission-appeals, openness to receive confreres from other circumscriptions for stage or on first appointment was re-emphasised, the commitment to the Region of Europe was restated, the appointment of a Promotions Co-ordinator with a view to fostering vocations was agreed, as was a property assessment in the light of the missionary needs of the Province. Teamwork, consultation and communication were seen as essential components of leadership; a new Provincial leadership team was elected with this in mind and the annual Provincial Assembly was restored. The new team has been entrusted with the responsibility of furthering the process initiated at Aylesford in 2000 in regard to the discernment of the future life and mission of the Province.
2.5.1.3 Province of Belgium

Belgium
Population: 11,000,000
Life expectancy m/f: 74/81
Infant mortality: 0.6%

Religion: Catholic 75%, no religion 10%, Muslim 1.5%, Protestants 1%, Others 12.5%.
GNP: $25,380 per inhabitant

Profile of the Province

There are about 40 members by origin of the Belgian Province. Four of them are under 60 and 6 are working abroad (Africa 3, France 2, Studies in Portugal 1). Ten years ago, there were four communities: - 2 in Walloon country (Gentinnes and Namur) and 2 in Flanders (Nijlen and Blanden). There are now two new international communities in Brussels, one in the Rue de la Mérode, the other in the Matonge quarter. The older and sick confreres are mainly in the communities of Gentinnes and Nijlen.

Recent Developments

The missionary work of the Province has undergone considerable changes in the last 10 years:

- **Ad extra:** The large commitment in the past to Congo Kinshasa has been reduced for reasons of age, health and the unsettled state of the country. Today, there remains only one confrere, but the moral and financial support for the Spiritan foundation and the Local Church is still considerable.

- **In Belgium:** It has been decided to take on a missionary commitment in an international community in Brussels, the capital of Europe. The Province now has responsibility for the parish of St. Boniface in an area which contains many immigrants from Africa. It is also a base for a Justice and Peace project on a larger scale to which one confrere has already been appointed. A few years ago, another community was established in Brussels – an international community at the service of the Spiritan European Region. Through this office, the Province makes a significant contribution to the solidarity of the European Region with the circumscriptions of the South.

- The Provincial Chapter in 2003 decided on a gradual withdrawal from Gentinnes, a house which has a long Spiritan history and which is the site of the Kongolo Memorial. Because of the difficulty of the upkeep and running of this centre and in order to find more suitable premises for the older confreres, the Province is looking for people or groups who would take on the responsibility for this work.

**Community Life:** The main Provincial services have now been transferred to Blanden – the procure, bursar’s office, provincialate and secretariat. Steps are being taken towards creating a regional community for several confreres in various ministries in Walloon country. Likewise, the authorities are looking into the situation of several confreres from abroad who are working in parishes in Belgium without having been appointed to the Province; it is hoped to bring them into line with the prescriptions of SRL.

Several **candidates** have shown interest in joining the Congregation over the last 12 years, but they subsequently decided to move in other directions. One persevered and is currently concluding his formation in Portugal. Two groups of **Fraternités spiritaines** exist and some of the members have taken on responsibilities in the life of the
Province and the European Region. Belgium has always made a generous contribution to Cor Unum throughout the years, and the Province is intimately tied in with some projects of the Spiritan region through the services at Brussels.

The principle challenge for the years ahead is to follow up the new apostolic openings at Brussels in collaboration with the other Provinces of Europe and the circumscriptions of the South, while continuing to supply the necessary support and services for the older confreres.

2.5.1.4 Province of The Netherlands

Netherlands

Population: 16,000,000
Life expectancy m/f: 75/81
Infant mortality: 0.5%

Profile of the Province

No new member has joined the Province for the last 30 years. The average age is about 75; by the year 2006, all the confreres will be over 60. The numbers have diminished significantly in the last 15 years: in 1987, there were 370 members, in 1994 there were 270, and in 2003 there are 170. Slightly more than 40 are working abroad, 30 of whom are in Africa or Brazil.

There are 7 local communities of differing size (Gemert, Gennev, Weert, Berg en Dal, Halfweg, Eindhoven and Rotterdam) and 5 regional communities of those living alone, which meet together 4/5 times a year.

Recent Developments

Missionary work ad extra has greatly diminished but the Province continues to give active support to those who are still abroad. Since many years, several active confreres have committed themselves to missionary work within the country. The Province has withdrawn from the Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone parishes in Amsterdam, but there has been a strengthening and internationalisation of the community at Eindhoven, ministering to the socially marginalised, those estranged from the Church and young people searching for moral and spiritual guidance. Community members are also involved in ecumenism and inter-religious relations. Another community was set up 4/5 years ago in Rotterdam for a parochial ministry in a multi-cultural and multi-religious area of this great cosmopolitan maritime city. The future of these two projects depends on whether confreres from abroad (European, African) can take on this work with a degree of stability, thus assuring a continuing Spiritan presence in the Netherlands. From a different angle, the African Museum at Berg en Dal (now administered by professional lay people in collaboration with Spiritans) gives a large number of people the chance to experience the real Africa of yesterday and today.

The care of older confreres and the communities which are dedicated to them remains one of the major concerns of the Provincial administration – this in a context where most of the Dutch confreres have already reached retirement age. The large and purpose-built modern house at Gennev, run completely by the social and health services, caters for 30 confreres who are dependent and another 10 who can look after themselves. Other older confreres live either alone or in communities which are not exclusively apostolic, particularly Gemert. For the necessary administrative
work, the Province is turning more and more to lay people, both salaried and volunteers, and this is bound to increase in the future. Already they are helping in general administration and advising on social legislation and investments. For the larger communities, they will surely have to find lay bursars and, probably, administrators (this is already the case in Gennep); but there still remains the need for Spiritan superiors to help guide the community and religious life of the confreres. The Dutch Conference of Religious (KNR) gives valuable help in the whole area of problems arising from numerical decline as well as in other fields: it strengthens the solidarity of the religious orders in the country, most of whom are also facing the problems associated with an ageing membership.

Community Life is characterised by a family atmosphere (taking responsibility for some domestic chores, time set aside each day for spontaneous meeting) and a balanced lifestyle. Confreres living alone appreciate the five regional communities that meet regularly with a member of the provincial team. Some confreres take part in one of the six commissions, each dedicated to a particular subject, which try to help the provincial administration in its orientations and decisions.

Through lack of candidates, it is now a long time since there was a programme of initial formation. But each year, the Province hosts a meeting of young confreres, studying in Europe, as they prepare for their final vows in the Congregation. It is an opportunity for them to come into contact with the missionary needs of the secularised and multicultural societies of Europe, of which the Netherlands is an important example.

About twenty lay Spiritans (“Medestanders”, or companions on a journey) have permanent ties with the confreres, particularly those of Eindhoven. Half of them have a formal commitment of association. Their aim is to commit themselves to mission either in Holland or abroad and to deepen their spirituality. Their presence gives an opportunity to live the Spiritan tradition in a new way in the Netherlands. Several confreres are also involved in the “Mission and Young People” movement, an inter-Congregational organisation which prepares around 50 young people for a missionary experience abroad for a few months.

The Future

The challenge for the future will be to continue to care for the old confreres and prepare the necessary structures to meet the demographic changes under way, while at the same time channelling energy towards a Spiritan missionary presence in the Netherlands for the future. This can only be achieved with the help and co-operation of other Spiritans from the south and the support of the European Provinces.

2.5.1.5 Province of Germany

Germany
Population: 82,543,000
Life expectancy m/f: 75/81
Infant mortality: 5%

Religions: Catholic 32.29%, Protestants 32.05%, Others (+ no denomination) 35.66%
GNP: $29,638 per inhabitant

Context

Of the 82.3 million inhabitants of Germany, 66.9% are registered as Christians (55 million). Even if there are still solid Christian elements, the context is of a country moving towards secularisation. Of the 27 million Catholics, 15.9% are practising.
Each year, about 100,000 people officially leave the Church. The motivation could be connected with paying less tax, but these defections show a lack of conviction and a feeling that they are no longer at home in the Church. Those from the former East Germany were brought up in a culture without any Christian reference. The number of children being baptised is on the decline and few are interested in religious life or the priesthood. Over the last 30 years, the number of professed religious has dropped by nearly 48%. The decrease in the number of faithful leads inevitably to a drop in financial income, necessitating a more modest lifestyle.

**Personnel**

There are 88 confreres in the Province with an average age of 68.9 (July 2003). For those in the Province it is 69.9; for those abroad, 66.1. There remain few confreres to take on posts of responsibility; only 9 are under 60. The result is that those who can still work are overburdened. The Province has only one person in formation (a novice with the FOI). Two confreres from other provinces have been appointed to Germany and help also comes from some competent and devoted lay-people. There are several groups of lay-people interested in Spiritan mission and spirituality.

**The Missionary Project**

The Province is trying to carry out its missionary vocation, both at home and abroad:

1) **Mission Abroad**

Despite the increase in age, there is still a considerable investment in mission ad extra: of the 88 confreres in the Province, 29 are still active outside. They are working in the areas traditionally confided to the Province: Brazil – 17 (Province, Alto Jurua, Cruzeiro do Sul); South Africa – 6; EAP – 2; Croatia – 2; Madagascar – 1 (FOI).

The Province realises that this collaborative missionary work is just a help given to the Local Church; confreres who withdraw cannot be replaced. But the decision has been taken to help in this way as long as possible, even if the return of some confreres would be very desirable to fulfil the needs of the Province.

The **Mission Procure** is doing wonderful work for increasing mission awareness. It continues to support confreres in the missions with material help. It works closely with the Spiritan European Centre for Co-operation and Development (CSECD) in Brussels.

The **MAZ Project** (Missionar auf Zeit) prepares and guides young people who take on missionary work for a limited period. (This is the main orientation of the Stuttgart community). Through this scheme, the Province is rendering an important service both to the Local Church of Germany and the young Churches of the South. As a result of their insertion, these young people are permanently effected by their acts of generosity and emerge as committed Christians. They are often deeply involved in their parishes, working for increased justice for the victims of our globalised world.

The review **Kontinente**, run in conjunction with 23 other religious congregations, gives the Province access to 73,000 families to help increase their interest in mission. The plan to join with the review **Missio** will do something to compensate for the falling number of subscribers and to continue the efforts of the Province to keep the Church’s mission in the forefront of people’s minds.
2) Mission in Germany

Several confreres are involved, part-time or full-time, in pastoral work (chaplaincies, parishes). Apart from their apostolate, they ensure the presence of the Congregation and its concern for external mission. As well as this classical involvement, there are other specialised commitments:

- **NOTE** is a sort of hotel for those who are in distress. It is in the centre of Cologne and each night, around a dozen people dependent on drugs are able to find there a hot meal, friendship and a bed for the night. In this way, the Province is trying to witness, like our founders, to the love of Our Lord for the poor.

- The **Heiligeist Gymnasium** at Broich is a secondary school belonging to the Congregation with more then one thousand pupils. A team of lay people, working in close collaboration with confreres in the Spiritan tradition, provides teaching and Christian formation of a high standard. The young people are invited to commit themselves to the Christian faith and build their lives upon it.

- **Rostock** is a project of the European Region, situated in the old East Germany. The international missionary community is composed of four confreres, living on the outskirts of the city in an old presbytery. One confrere is chaplain to two hospitals. Another teaches ethics in a police college. A third is involved in pastoral work with many holidaymakers and tourists who visit the Baltic while a fourth looks after the community house and the church.

- **Knechtssteden** is the Mother House of the Province of Germany. Its activities are varied:
  - The Basilica is a place of pilgrimage where many people come for Sunday Mass and for special Marian and Spiritan celebrations. Popular exhibitions are put on in the cloister. So retired confreres who are fit enough can still do some ministry in liturgical celebrations and spiritual guidance.
  - The *Libermannhaus* is a centre for spiritual renewal where there used to be sessions, recollections and retreats. As a result of cuts in the diocesan budget, the centre has had to run down its purely spiritual activities; the property is rented to a school for opticians, but it is still possible to hold days of recollection on the premises.
  - The *retirement house*: the Province has made great efforts to provide a suitable place of retirement for the older confreres; the community life centres around prayer, fraternal sharing and encouragement and an atmosphere of missionary spirituality suitable to old age. Some confreres have asked the Province to study the possibility of alternative places for retirement. The last Chapter agreed to this proposal, stressing that the elements of Spiritan life should not be lost sight of.
  - The *large property* and the agricultural amenities of the past are used for various activities which contribute to making known the Congregation and missionary commitment: the Norbert Gymnasium, the school for opticians, the House of Nature, a children’s garden in the forest, a place for work and exhibitions for artists, a workshop for the long-term unemployed. The activities of the House are becoming so complex that the Province is trying to hand over the management to an administrative organisation.
The Future of the Mission, Thanks to Europe and the Whole Congregation

At its last Chapter, in 2003, the Province showed a clear openness to Europe and the Congregation as a whole. The members were asked to look to the future in the perspective of a Spiritan mission in Europe, led by confreres from both Europe and the countries of the South. In this context, the Province is counting on the help of the Congregation, particularly regarding the project at Broich (the school and the surrounding region).

2.5.1.6 Croatia International Group

Croatia
Population: 4,477,000
Life expectancy m/f: 69/77
Infant mortality: 8%

Religions: Catholics 76%, Orthodox 11%, Muslims 1%, Others 12%.
G.N.P.: $4,485 per inhabitant

This Group, which comes directly under the authority of the General Council, was born on March 1st, 2002; before that, it depended on the German Province. There is only one community and the superior of the community is also the co-ordinator of the Group.

Our presence in the country dates from 1981. We went in response to the request of some bishops who wished to increase the missionary orientation of their Churches. The Congregation also had hopes of finding Spiritan vocations there.

At present, a small international team (2 Poles, 1 German, 1 Croatian) is running the parish of Podvinje, made up of about 10,000 people. They are also in charge of missionary awareness in the deanery and the diocese.

While the Group is financially self-sufficient for ordinary expenditure, the Province of Germany is willing to help out if there are major expenses.

The Group is planning to open a second community, which would concentrate on arousing missionary interest in the diocese of Djakovo.

2.5.1.7 Province of Poland

Poland
Population: 40,000,000
Life expectancy m/f: 68/77
Infant mortality: 1%

Religions: Catholic 95%, no religion 2.5%, Orthodox 1.5%, Others 1%.
G.N.P.: $3,910 per inhabitant.

Profile of the Province

There are slightly more than 70 members (including those in temporary vows) with an average age of just over 40. About 40 confreres are living in Poland and 30 abroad, including some working in other countries of Europe. Over the last few years, there have always been around 20 in initial formation.

Apart from the Novitiate at Chelmszczzonka and the large community at Bydgoszcz (first and second cycles, the Provincialate and other provincial services), the five other communities are involved in parish work: Glinki, Puszczykowko, Chojnice, Cieladz and Zbyszyce.
Recent Developments

The context in which this Province finds itself is quite different to the other Provinces of Europe. Until 1980, it was characterised by the resistance of the Church to the Polish communist regime, under the influence of the USSR, and a certain isolation from the ecclesial changes in the West in the wake of Vatican II. This resulted in a struggle for material and spiritual survival and a strong attachment to tradition. This period was followed by an opening to the western world which is continuing to grow. The whole of society, and particularly the Church, has experienced 20 years of strong tension between the values of a tradition which is linked to Polish identity and those of modernity, with its emphasis on individual freedom and cultural diversity. These tensions have also affected the Spiritan family and community life. A certain number of confreres who were experiencing personal difficulties have been helped to overcome them and to render a valuable service to the Province.

Mission commitment outside the Province has been a feature of the last 15-20 years. After initial difficulties stemming from the novelty of the experience, things have now settled down. Some confreres have had a very good missionary experience and have taken on positions of responsibility in the circumscriptions to which they were appointed (Africa, Latin America, Europe). This will doubtless prove to be a great benefit in the years to come to their Province of origin, especially in the area of formation.

Apostolic engagements in Poland itself have traditionally been directed towards a structured ministry in parishes, as well as works with young people, in chaplaincies and in the media (the review Posłaniec and the Catholic radio of Bydgoszcz). The Province is now feeling the need to launch a missionary project ad intra, combining the heritage of the past (parishes) with new needs that lie beyond the strict context of the parish: young people who have drifted away from the Church, different types of neglected people etc. Several confreres have stressed the interest the Province would have in setting up one or two international Spiritan communities for this purpose; it would attract confreres from abroad, help in spreading missionary awareness and give an added impetus to the search for vocations.

Initial formation has benefited from the restructuring of study courses through affiliation to the faculty of theology at the State University of Poznan, giving qualifications recognised at the European level. The classes, which take place in the seminary of Bydgoszcz, are supplemented by some courses proper to the Spiritans and their missionary orientation, as well as obligatory studies of English and French. Language courses are also arranged in western Europe during the holidays. There are two aspects of the formation programme that are still in need of attention: an extended pastoral experience outside Poland (which could take place, if necessary, in another European Province) and a part of the studies that would be followed in an international community. An element of internationality in the formation programme is essential for those preparing for mission ad extra.

The Future

The 1990s saw a real opening of the Province to the life of the Congregation, the achievement of financial autonomy and the arrival in the Spiritan mission fields of a significant number of young Polish confreres. The main challenges for the years ahead will be to consolidate this movement, adopting measures to respond to new pastoral needs in a changing Poland, and to offer a quality of formation to young
people who wish to join us that will better prepare them for the challenges of mission abroad in a different culture to this own.

2.5.1.8 Province of Switzerland

Switzerland
Population: 7,300,000
Life expectancy m/f: 75/82
Infant mortality: 0.5%

Religions: Catholic 42%, Protestant 35%, Muslim 4.5%,
no religion 12%, Others 6.5%.
GNP: $40,000 per inhabitant

Profile of the Province
There are just under 60 members of whom half are over 70. There has been nobody in initial formation since 1992. Until recently, half the members were working abroad, but today, there are only about one third. All three of the communities (Fribourg, le Bouveret and Montana) have retired confreres who are still capable of independent living.

Recent Developments
For many years, the missionary thrust of the Province for most confreres has been towards circumscriptions in Francophone Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. There are still about 15 working in these areas. Mission ad intra has developed in recent times with varying success in the following directions:

- Alongside the retirement community, from 1997-2001 the house at le Bouveret welcomed a mixed community of Spiritans and lay people directed at spiritual and missionary animation of resident groups. It was discontinued in the wake of various difficulties. At the same period, a group from Canada involved in spiritual animation in the region was living in the Bouveret complex. This also came to an end after six years. At present, groups are received in the old school buildings as happened in the past. There is an abundance of this type of receiving community in the area.
- The house at Montana, recently refurbished (1996), continues with its role of welcome and spiritual help. They are now looking for a lay person to direct the house in collaboration with the Spiritans and a religious sister.
- The Spiritans have withdrawn from the Francophone parish in Bâle after 30 years of service. As a result of the administrative policy of the diocese, there was no longer enough space in the presbytery to house a Spiritan community.
- There are other interesting apostolic commitments in Switzerland: secondary and tertiary education, training of laity etc. One problem is that these works are taken on by individual confreres, making it difficult to set up a provincial missionary project which would have more chance of continuity in the future. This problem is avoided in the case of those involved in work for Justice and Peace because such confreres are working with larger organisations, e.g. the Swiss network of AEFJN.
- The Province has recently tried to make a significant community response to requests from the local Church in Geneva and Fribourg; they are searching to provide pastoral help for foreigners and neglected people, something very much in line with the Spiritan charism.
Community life is taken seriously by many confreres – fraternal care, mutual help, genuine friendship. However, for some, the community ties are more tenuous – for example, as regards material and spiritual sharing, recreation, etc.

Solidarity with the rest of the Congregation continues to be seen in financial support and in the welcome that is given to confreres from abroad who are studying at the Francophone Catholic University of Fribourg. Recently, a considerable contribution has been made to Cor Unum. The Province is playing its part in the building up of the Spiritan European Region and its special solidarity with the Congregation in the South.

Questions and Challenges

The missionary project of the Swiss Province today is found principally in providing accommodation and facilities for events (Bouveret and Montana). This certainly gives opportunities for outside contacts but does not involve a specific outreach to people. Most of the other apostolic commitments (parishes, chaplaincies, places of formation) are undertaken by individual confreres. This gives rise to fears that if things remain like this, the provincial project would be lacking a long-term future plan because the Spiritan mission would not be rooted in a community where young confreres from outside the Province could be invited to work.

2.5.1.9 Province of France

France
Population: 60,000,000
Life expectancy m/f: 74/82
Infant mortality: 0.5%

Religion: Catholic 66%, No religion 20%, Muslim 9%, Protestant 2%, Others 3%.
GNP: $24,940 per inhabitant

Profile of the Province

At the end of 2003, there are about 540 Spiritans who originate in the French Province. A third (185) is working abroad, two thirds in France. There are 20 confreres from other countries working in the Province and 7 lay people who have made a contract of association. The average age of the total membership is over 70. Over the last decade, there has been an average of 25 deaths per year and one or two taking perpetual vows.

There are 24 communities in all. A few of these are large – Chevilly, the Mother House, retirement communities – but there has been an increase in smaller communities (with 3 or 4 confreres), normally directed to an active ministry. Recently, two new communities have been born (Blanc-Mesnil and Strasbourg-Meinau) in properties which do not belong to the Congregation. The community at St. Lô has been closed down and St. Pierre and Miquelon has become a community of the Province. Two communities have changed their purpose: Marseille and Forêt-Noire.

Recent Developments

There is still a good number working abroad, even if the figure has dropped; more than half of these are in Africa and the Indian Ocean. Some are working in old missions, others in recent international communities and groups: Mexico, Pakistan, Taiwan, Seychelles, Mozambique, Republic of Benin, etc.
Mission within France has two main focuses. One is education, especially the Oeuvre d’Auteuil which helps young people from many different places; there are 20 Spiritans involved here, a good proportion of whom are African and European confreres from other countries, as well as 3 lay associates. The other focus is parochial or chaplaincy commitment in areas of heavy immigration with a multitude of cultures and traditions; the presence of foreign confreres in these works is vital. Several bishops have made similar requests to us in recent years. Other confreres are working in the areas of information and Justice and Peace, either through the media (especially reviews) or larger organisations, like AEFJN. Two reviews of the Province (Pentecôte and Echo de la Mission) have a common theme for each issue. Some confreres are working with the marginalised, released prisoners and travelling people; others are in religious teaching at university level.

Several confreres are involved in vocations work, full-time or part-time, collaborating with other missionary institutes and Christian organisations in meetings and various activities, short periods of missionary experience abroad (Amos), etc. Some young people are living with us at Valence and Chevilly, but as with all the other missionary institutes, those undertaking a lifetime commitment are rare – 0, 1 or 2 per year.

The formation structure of the Province consists of 3 international houses: Lille, for those in 1st cycle or doing language study; Clamart, for 2nd cycle students studying theology, nearly all from abroad, guided by an international team; Strasbourg Forêt-Noire, a hall of residence for foreign students doing 3rd cycle studies. In 2002-2003, the community of Rennes had a French novice. The Province has spent a considerable amount of money on these communities and on confreres from abroad doing stage, language studies or recyclage. Recently, a budget has been drawn up to ensure that this service falls within the financial possibilities of the Province.

Community Life: there is an increasing number of international and inter-cultural communities, especially amongst the formation houses and those concerned with an active apostolate. In general, this is working quite well. Looking after the retirement houses involves a considerable number of personnel. Those who are at the service of confreres who are no longer independent need to be trained in two particular areas: a certain competence in dealing with the psychological problems of old age and a knowledge of legislation regarding the care of old people (health and security needs). The help of professional health workers at this level is indispensable. The AMA group (help for retirement houses) continues to assist superiors and bursars to improve their service in this domain.

There was much emphasis on the spiritual animation of confreres during the Spiritan Year; the initiatives undertaken were sometimes on a large scale in view of the French origins of the Congregation: e.g. the international pilgrimage in the steps of Poullart and Libermann in May 2003; the historical colloquium at the Institut Catholique de Paris in November, 2002; an exhibition that took place in the four regions of the Province; the publication of “Prier 15 jours avec Libermann” by Arsène Aubert, etc.

In collaboration with the Spiritan Sisters, about 20 Fraternities of people interested in Spiritan spirituality continue to meet; in all, there are about 160 lay members. The numbers have dropped in recent years and the reasons for this are being looked into. The number of Lay Associates remains small; three have been given a mission and
are connected with a community of professed Spiritans, all three in the Oeuvre d'Auteuil.

The **solidarity** of the Province with the rest of the Congregation is seen by the number of students and those doing stage who are being hosted in the country, as mentioned above. The contribution to Cor Unum has been maintained as at previous levels, despite the deteriorating financial state and the demands being made on resources through the European Region and direct aid given to Circumscriptions in the South.

The **years ahead** will doubtless see an increased tension created by trying to answer needs and requests while the number of able bodied confreres diminishes. On the one hand, there will be continued appeals to support and renew the personnel in mission ad intra and ad extra; but there will also be a need of confreres to look after the sick and retired and administer the work that has been handed on to us from the past (property, networks of friends and benefactors through the reviews, relations in the local Churches etc.). This tension was one of the subjects looked at by the expert visitors in 2001-2002: a lay doctor and a non-Spiritan religious. Their report was discussed at the Chapter of 2003. This Chapter helped the Province look to a future which offers a real chance of renewal. But questions remain; whatever shape the future takes, it will not be possible without various forms of collaboration with other Spiritans from North and South and with other partners, whether from the Church or elsewhere.

### 2.5.1.10 Province of Spain

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<th><strong>Spain</strong></th>
<th><strong>Infant Mortality:</strong> 6%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy: 3%</td>
<td>Religion: Catholics 95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life expectancy: 78 years</td>
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Spain is the youngest Province in Europe (1951). There are 16 professed members who have Spain as their province of origin; of this total 6 are on mission outside of the country. At the moment there are 15 Spiritans in the Province who come from the following countries: Spain 8, Portugal 3, Poland 2, Mexico 1 and Angola 1. There are also two lay people who are associate members.

The Province has remained small. The entrance of Spiritan candidates which was an initial feature (decades of 70s and 80s) did not continue for various reasons. Even though vocational promotion has been one of the priorities of the Province, results have been few. In recent years in the hope of encouraging the Spiritan vocation among Spanish youth, the Province opened its formation house in Madrid to young Spiritans coming from other circumscriptions. At the moment five young people are in formation in Spain; one of them is a Spaniard.

In places where Spiritan communities exist (Madrid, Córdova and Aranda), confreres are involved in missionary animation. This is organised and carried out together with other missionary institutes. From this work there emerged one of the sources of energy in the Province, that is the network of friends, collaborators and benefactors as well as the "*Familia Espirituana"*. The Spiritans help in the missionary and Christian formation of members of this network. The members help with provincial projects especially in missionary and vocational animation. The former novitiate has for many years been used as a centre for the recuperation of drug addicts in the region. The centre is administered by an association called *Adroga*. A Spiritan community lives in the centre; it works with the animation team; it carries out missionary and voca-
tional animation in the region and it accompanies youth groups with days of reflection, study and prayer.

The Province is trying to implement its Provincial Chapter of 2000. With a view to a greater presence in the local church and because of requests from various bishops, the Spiritans have taken on two parishes. One is on the periphery of Córdova and the other which includes five small villages, is in an impoverished mountain area near Madrid. The reason for taking on these new pastoral activities has been motivated by a search for a greater pastoral commitment and for an opportunity to share with the local church our charism and spirituality which will facilitate on the spot vocational promotion. Recently the Province restarted a community in the house in Aranda de Duero. In order to staff these new activities the Province received three new first appointments and is open to receiving other Spiritans. Recently, in order to provide better living conditions to elderly and ill confreres and to be able to welcome groups as well as personal friends and to unite different services, the Province has been considering the possibility of selling the present provincial house which is situated in an affluent area and building another house near Madrid. It is thought that such a house would more adequately answer the present needs of the Province. In spite of difficulties and its small membership, the Province of Spain has not folded its arms. It faces the future with confidence and hopes for the support of the entire Congregation.

2.5.1.11 Province of Portugal

Portugal

Population: 10,500,000 (2002)
Life expectancy: 75
Infant mortality: 8%

Illiteracy: 10%
National per capita income: $10,670 (1998)
Religions: Catholics 90%

Spiritans Presence: since 1867.

Country Background

Portugal is situated in the extreme west of Europe and with Spain makes up the Iberian Peninsula. The archipelagos of Azores and Madeira also are independent regions of the country. At the moment almost 4.5% of the population is made up of immigrants who have arrived from Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea, Brazil and eastern countries, especially from the Ukraine. There are 18 dioceses in the country as well as a military Vicariate.

Important Events in the Province

The last six years were characterised by an effort to put in place new experiences of communion and participation by the confreres throughout the Province. Also characteristic of this period was the sharing of missionary responsibility with lay people and solidarity with mission ad extra.

The important events in the Province during this period were:

- The 2000 Provincial Chapter which took place in Torre d’Aguilha.
- The visit of the General Council to the Province.
- The celebration of the Spiritan Year and the different activities associated with this event.
The Missionary Project of the Province

The Province has 195 members. Of this total 70 work outside the Province and almost a half are over 70 years of age. In recent years, without cutting back on its historic missionary activities (Angola, Cape Verde, Amazonia, Guinea-Bissau, Paraguay) the Province has made an effort to answer the mission calls of the Congregation. In this way its *ad extra* missionary commitment to other countries was increased (Mexico, Mozambique, Guinea-Conakry, Taiwan). Missionaries on holidays report that they have been well received and the Province organised an annual meeting for such confreres where sharing of ideas and living together were important elements.

Justice and Peace is an important element of the mission and life of the Province. Thus there has been an increase in finances allocated and in the number of people released to work in the welcoming and support centre for immigrants – CEPAC (Centro Padre Alves Correa), also in prison chaplaincy (1), in hospitals (3) and in the setting up of a new parish near the Torre d’Aguilhã community where there are many immigrants. There also has been a greater involvement in justice and peace questions at national level and the publications of the Province gave exposure to such questions.

Spiritual and Community Dynamism

Various initiatives were taken to encourage a new spiritual and community dynamism among the confreres. These included:

- The "Pro Anima" program which provided texts for personal and community reflection.
- The annual provincial consultative councils with all superiors and bursars.
- Thematic reflections for Christmas and provincial assemblies at Easter.
- The different activities of the Spiritan Year which helped to create amongst members of the Province significant enthusiasm and joy about being Spiritans.

Missionary Animation and Mission Shared

The work of mission animation and of creating an awareness in Christian communities of the universal mission of the Church is traditional. In recent years a significant improvement was noted in this activity in the way that the laity took on much more responsibility for reflection, decisions and for a deeper knowledge of Spiritan mission and spirituality. The Portuguese Bishops’ Conference approved the statutes of missionary movements financed by the Spiritans – LIAM (which has 300 parish groups) as well as MOMIP (150 teachers) and of Jovens Sem Fronteiras (Youth without Borders); this latter organisation has 45 groups. New Spiritan fraternities were started, the youth missionary volunteers is becoming more and more a reality and a centre for Spiritan spirituality (CESM) was set up. The purpose of this centre is to offer support and missionary formation to the different lay groups linked to the Spiritans. Our missionary publications – "Acção Missionária", "Encontro" and others have accompanied and supported this work in favour of mission. Recently a magazine "Missão Espiritano" was launched which offers a deeper reflection on mission.

Vocations Promotion and Formation

Vocations were always a priority of the Province. As in other European countries there has been a decrease in priestly and missionary vocations. Despite the difficulties, the Province invests in vocation promotions and there is a small group of adoles-
cents and youth at different stages of formation: accompaniment at family level, the Spiritan Vocational Centre, the postulancy (philosophy), noviciate and theology.

In recent years the second cycle formation house (theology) began to accept international students and a small group of Spiritan youth, Portuguese and others coming from different African countries, are in formation there preparing themselves for the international and intercultural life style of the Congregation.

Solidarity and Material Goods

During the last six years the solidarity of the Province with the mission of the Congregation (Cor Unum and apostolic projects) has increased. As well, in recent years an attempt has been made to renovate some of the Spiritan houses: Fraião in Braga, Torre d’Aguilha in Lisbon, Silva and others. Because of urban spread the Province was forced to sell some of its rural properties and invest in other assets. The patri-mony was reorganised in a way that it would serve as an alternative source for income to support Spiritan mission. Some of our houses were given over to social projects which would help the poorer part of the local population (Godim and Espadanido - Braga). In the Braga community, through an agreement with the Association of the Saint Tiago Nursing Home, which functions in a Spiritan house, an extension of facilities to benefit the old and sick confreres of the Province was possible.

2.5.1.12 Presence in Italy

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<th>Italy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population: 58,000,000</td>
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<td>Life expectancy m/f: 75/81</td>
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<td>Infant mortality: 0.6%</td>
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<td>Literacy: 98%</td>
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<td>Religion: Catholic 95%; Muslim 3% etc.</td>
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<td>GNP: $20,100 per inhabitant</td>
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Up until recently, the Spiritan presence in Rome was not directly connected to the life of the local Church. We were there to serve the Church of France through the French Seminary (since 1853) and the Congregation through the General Administration (since 1966) and the training of Spiritan students preparing for their future service to world-wide mission. Our presence now has a new dimension by taking on responsibility for a Roman parish since 1999. Towards the end of 2001, there was a brief meeting of the 33 Spiritans working in Rome which looked at this new reality within the European Region and examined ways of strengthening the contacts and co-ordination between the three communities.

The Parish of Palmarola

From 1994, contact was made with the authorities of the diocese of Rome with a view to a possible pastoral engagement in the local Church. The general idea was to develop a specific commitment in line with the Spiritan charisma (the marginalised, immigrants) to be carried out by an international team with a parish base. It was hoped that this work would help to make us better known in Italy and perhaps attract Spiritan vocations from the country. In 1999, the Vicariate of Rome confided to us the parish of St. Brigit of Sweden, a young parish still lacking some basic structures, made up of people of modest means in the suburb of Palmarola, next to the orbital motorway in the north-west area of Rome. A community of three confreres was set up (1 French, 1 Tanzanian, 1 Polish). After three years getting to know and revitalising the parish, our confreres have now begun to work on a project in line with the original vision. It will probably be directed towards helping newly arrived people
who are running into difficulties, either from Italy or immigrants from Eastern Europe and other continents. Support will come from the laity of the parish and charitable organisations. At the start of 2003, the Tanzanian confere was replaced by another from Cameroon.

The French Seminary

At the close of 2003, the seminary celebrated its 150th anniversary. It was set up in 1853 as a Pontifical Seminary, confided to the Spiritans for the training of priests for the Church in France. At present, there are around 60 students, of whom a few are non-French: these seminarians and young priests follow courses in the different universities of Rome. To meet the needs of community life, spiritual and apostolic formation and guidance in studies, there is a team composed at present of 3 Spiritans full-time (Rector, Vice-Rector and Bursar) and 3 secular priests, one of whom is full-time.

Since 2000, the small Spiritan community has its own superior, apart from the Rector. At times, the community includes professed Spiritan students; at present, there are 3 young African confères. This arrangement allows for a degree of freedom for Spiritan meetings within the larger framework of the seminary, which has its own agenda.

So far, the Province of France has supplied nearly all the formators for the seminary, but in recent years, it has become ever more difficult to find suitably qualified confères who are willing to take on such a task. The problem is being discussed with the General Council, in conjunction with the French Province and the Episcopal Conference of France, to evaluate the possibilities of continuing this commitment.

2.6 ASIA

Asia is the largest of the earth's continents and lies almost entirely in the northern hemisphere. With outlying islands, it covers an estimated 44,391,000 sq. km, or about 30 per cent of the world's total land area. It's peoples account for some three-fifths of the world's population; in 2000 Asia had an estimated 3.73 billion inhabitants, a figure that is expected to rise to almost 7 billion by the year 2025. The economic situation on the continent of Asia varies considerably and, as such, defies classification. Some countries are highly developed economically, with a new generation of skilled workers, scientists and technicians; others are in the process of developing through effective economic policies; others still live in abject poverty and are home to the poorest people on the globe. Asia is also the cradle of the world's major religious Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism - and the birthplace of many other spiritual traditions - Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism etc.

As the 1998 Asian Synod of Bishops reminds us, it was in Asia that the Judeo-Christian God revealed and fulfilled His saving purpose from the beginning and it was on Asian soil that His Son took flesh for our salvation. Yet Jesus Christ remains relatively unknown on Asian soil. The latest available statistics (1998) estimate that in Asia there are some 775 million Hindus, 760 million Muslims and 320 million Buddhists, with Catholics numbering about 100 million. These ancient religions and traditions enshrine many values which can enrich the Christian faith: contemplation, harmony, non-violence, detachment, the spirit of hard work, frugal living, respect for life, closeness to nature, a highly developed sense of community, a thirst for learning. Thus the Synod identifies the issue of the encounter of Christianity with local and
ancient cultures and traditions as particularly pressing for the coming millennium and as presenting an enormous challenge for evangelisation.

In addition, contemporary Asia is a place of rapid change with materialism and secularism gaining ground and undermining its rich traditional and cultural values. Areas singled out for concern at the Asian Synod included urbanisation, with its problems of organised crime, prostitution and the exploitation of the weak; migration with its exposure to economic, cultural and moral difficulties and its destructive effects on family life; industrialisation with little attention to human dignity or the integrity of creation; tourism with the resultant degradation of women and children; social communication with its negative effects on traditional values in an increasingly globalised world; poverty, illiteracy, political corruption, exploitation of women and the isolation of indigenous peoples. All of these concerns speak to the Christian tradition and challenge it to respond; they do so in a particular way to the Spiritan family in the light of our charism.

Our Congregation played its part in the spreading of the Gospel in Asia in the 18th century. After an absence of almost a century we have undertaken to return and now have modest commitments in Pakistan, Taiwan and the Philippines.

2.6.1 Pakistan International Group

Pakistan
Population: 152,330,000 million
Area: 803,940 sq. km
Life expectancy males/females: 61/61 years

Adult literacy: 43.2%
Religions: Muslims 97%, Hindus 1.6%, Christians 2%
Independence: 14 August 1947 (from the UK)
GDP per capita: $450

Profile

Founded in 1977 in response to a request from the Episcopal Conference of Pakistan and Propaganda Fide for personnel to work among tribal peoples, the Group celebrated its 25th anniversary in December 2002. Although it was intended from the outset that the Group would be international, almost all of the personnel in the initial years were from the Irish Province, due principally to the privileged position enjoyed by Irish citizens in obtaining visas to enter the country. The situation changed in the late 1980's and gradually the composition of the Group altered as confreres from France and from the Indian Ocean Foundation arrived. Today there are 10 confreres in the Group, 4 from Ireland, 2 from France, 2 from the IOF and 2 recently arrived from Nigeria. Another IOF confrere is currently awaiting approval of his application for a visa/work permit, a long-drawn out and tedious process. The appointment of African confreres to the Group marks a new and welcome departure. This was considered inappropriate for several years owing to the strong caste system in Pakistani society but the recent experience of other missionary Congregations in regard to the integration of African members in Pakistan has been encouraging.

Mission

The predominant Islamic culture, the oppression of women, the mere tolerance of minority groups, their consequent marginalisation, poverty and sense of insecurity, all contribute to a climate in which it is difficult to work as a minister of the Gospel. Although relationships are quite good on a daily basis, religious feeling can be very quickly whipped up if any slight against Islam is perceived. The sense of fear and insecurity on the part of the minority Christian community has increased of recent years with the introduction of the death penalty for remarks considered to be de-
rogatory to Islam and with the violent attacks against Christians in the wake of wars with Afghanistan and Iraq. Against this general background, Spiritans continue to work with two minority groups, the Punjabi Christians, considered inferior by their Islamic counterparts, and the Marwari Bheels, who are looked down upon by all, even by the Punjabi Christians. The latter are a tribal people of Hindu background, confined to live on infertile land on the outskirts of towns and to work for Muslim landowners in what is basically a feudal system. The confreres live in three separate communities in the cities of Rahim Yar Khan, Sadiq Abad and Mirpurkhas, which is the most recent undertaking. Ministry to the Punjabi communities in Rahim Yar Khan and Sadiq Abad is multifaceted, involving the youth work, adult faith development (especially through Training for Transformation workshops), school supervision, hospital and home visitation and advocacy in cases of injustice, in addition to catechesis and the celebration of the Sacraments. The Marwari apostolate at Sadiq Abad and Mirpurkhas includes primary education, health ministry, the training of female community health workers, loan schemes with a view to economic advancement and inter-religious dialogue through bhagti (religious devotional singing). The emphasis is on accompaniment where development is concerned and on respectful dialogue in the area of religious belief. All of their ministry has a collaborative dimension as the confreres work closely with the FMM Sisters and with several lay collaborators. The confreres are aware that there may be few tangible results for their efforts in the foreseeable future but see their ministry in the light of the vision of mission articulated by the Maynooth Chapter and draw inspiration from it. A small number of Marwari people have in fact become Christians but many show interest in the person of Jesus and his way of life. The excellent results achieved by the students of the parish school, who recently sat for the matriculation examination for the first time, the moderate success of the school hostels in building bridges between the Marwari and Punjabi communities and of the joint efforts with government officials and local representatives to acquire housing sites for several deserving families, are all encouraging developments. The confreres attach considerable importance to community living, centred on faith-sharing, prayer and reflection and draw strength, inspiration and mutual support from their bi-annual meetings together.

Future

The recent beginning of the third community at Mirpurkhas, which has the greatest concentration of Marwari Bheels in Sindh province, is indicative of the hope and faith of the confreres in the future, despite their limited resources. It is also a clear testimony to their courage in the present difficult circumstances in Pakistan. Lengthy consideration has been given to accepting local vocations to the Congregation against a background of some negative experiences on the part of other international Congregations. The confreres are open to this possibility but indications to date suggest that not many are ready for a ministry to the poorest and most abandoned. They are also actively considering the possibility of some form of lay association with people who would be willing to share their simple lifestyle and their commitment to the marginalised and the outcasts in a spirit of respect and love.
2.6.2 Philippines-Taiwan International Group

Profile
The Philippines-Taiwan Group was inaugurated in December 1997, when 6 confreres from different circumscriptions left to take up their new assignments in the two countries, following a period of preparation together in Rome and Assisi. They were joined by two others in the autumn of 1998, forming a community of four in each of the two new missions. In dialogue with the confreres themselves it has been decided that they should retain the status of a single Group for the meantime, as this appears to be the most appropriate structure for their particular situation. The Group consists of two Communities, one in the Philippines and one in Taiwan, each with a local Superior. The latter is responsible for dealings with the local ecclesiastical authorities in matters pertaining to the life and work of the Community, in understanding with the General Council. One of the Superiors acts as overall Co-ordinator for the Group which, in the absence of a Major Superior, depends juridically on the General Council. At present there are 13 confreres in the Group.

2.6.2.1 Taiwan Community (Republic of China)

Taiwan
Population: 22.5 million
Population per sq. km: 622
Area: 36,179 sq. km

Religions: Mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism (93%), Christians 4.5%, others 2%.
Life expectancy males/females: 72.6/78.4 years
GDP per capita: $13,950

The community comprises 5 confreres – 2 French, 1 Irish, 1 Senegalese and 1 Portuguese- working in the diocese of Hsinchu, some 70 km south of the capital Taipei. Proficiency in the Mandarin Chinese language is essential and this requires a basic minimum of two year's full-time study and patient perseverance on a daily basis. However, the experience of the confreres to date has been quite positive in this regard and they are now well-integrated into life and ministry in the local Church, where they have excellent relations with the local Bishop and clergy. The ministries confided to them are clearly in line with the orientations of the Congregation. These include pastoral ministry to the local Taiwanese community of Holy Spirit parish, for which they are responsible, chaplaincy to university students, rectorship of the Junior Seminary, ministry to Filipino immigrants, chaplaincy at a re-education centre for adolescent delinquents and prison ministry. While there have been one or two small initiatives in the realm of inter-religious dialogue, it is effectively an area yet to be explored. Although the confreres live in three separate locations, the community spirit is strong and they get together on a regular basis for prayer, reflection and social interaction. The current reality of the relatively affluent, well-educated and consumerist Taiwanese society, where the Christian message has been scarcely heard, and of the contemporary Catholic Church in the country, comprising largely elderly and conservative clergy and laity from mainland China, present formidable challenges for our Congregation. Taiwan will also provide invaluable experience should it be possible one day to enter mainland China, where a significant percentage of the population of the world resides. In the city of Hsinchu foreigners are few and Africans are very rare; this can give rise to reactions that surprise a newcomer, particularly from the African continent, and needs to be taken into account in the choice of the individual confrere, as does his capacity to face the demands of a lengthy period of language-learning in a radically different culture.
2.6.2.2 Philippines Community

Philippines
Population: 75.7 million
Area: 300,000 sq. km
Life expectancy males/females: 68/72 years

Adult literacy: 95.3%
Religions: Christians 83%, Protestants 8%, Muslims 5%, Angliayans 3%
GDP per capita: $990

With the arrival of the latest confrere from the EAP on first appointment, the number of confreres in the Philippines community has increased to eight. As in Taiwan, the community is very international comprising confreres from Nigeria (2), PAC (2), Ireland (1), USA West (1), IOF (1) and the EAP(1). An initial 6-month language course in Cebuano is a pre-requisite for effective ministry in the diocese of Iligan, on the southern island of Mindanao, where the confreres live and work. The confreres, like their counterparts in Taiwan, are now well settled into their ministry and have very warm and friendly relationships with both the people and the local Church. They have responsibility for the mountain parish of Digkila-an, where the poverty of the people, the wide dispersion of the small Catholic communities and the difficulty of the terrain present considerable challenges. In accordance with the original understanding with the Bishop, they have also been confided with a number of specialised ministries in line with the Spiritan charism: university chaplaincy, hospital ministry, chaplaincy at a prison for young offenders, pastoral ministry to female victims of abuse, spiritual direction and teaching at the diocesan seminary and pastoral responsibility for the sizeable Chinese community in the diocese. All of these latter ministries are located in or around the city of Iligan, where the confreres have their central house. They have a good community spirit and meet on a regular basis for reflection, discernment, prayer and social purposes. As they have already exceeded the five-year minimum period stipulated by the local Episcopal Conference before accepting local vocations, it has been agreed, in understanding with the General Council, to begin to accept candidates to the Congregation. A small number of young men have already expressed an interest in joining the Spiritans. Plans have been drawn up for the construction of a building suitable for this purpose on the understanding that it may also serve in the future as the central house for the Community. The details of the overall formation programme are currently being worked out in dialogue with the General Council and the possibility of regional co-operation with other Spiritan circumscriptions is being explored. Security has been a major consideration of recent years on the island of Mindanao, where kidnapings and random acts of violence have been perpetrated by Muslim rebels. However, this has not seriously affected the morale of the confreres who are still reflecting as to how their initial aspiration of promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue may be realised in such an environment.

2.7 OCEANIA

2.7.1 Australia International Group

Australia
Population: 19,731,984
Religions: Catholics 26%, Anglicans 26%, Christians 24%, non Christians 11%, others 12.6%

Infant mortality rate: 4.83
Independence: 1 January 1901
Life Expectancy male/female: 80.13 years
GDP per capita: $27,000 (2002)

Spiritan Presence

The Congregation has an early history of heroic missionary labours in Australia by the first members of Libermann’s society of the Holy Heart of Mary from 1846 to
1848 in Western Australia. There was another brief interlude of Spiritan educational endeavours in Ballarat, Victoria during the 1980’s. The present circumscription began in the early seventies when a group of Irish Spiritans expelled from Nigeria after the Biafran war, arrived in Brisbane Australia and Mt. Hagen Papua New Guinea.

The Archdiocese of Brisbane entrusted to the Congregation the pastoral care of Dorrington and the founding of the parish of Pine Rivers. Later Ringwood parish in Melbourne was entrusted to the group though they declined to accept responsibility for the large secondary school in the parish that was offered to them. Libermann house, a contact community for aspirants and a residence for first cycle Spiritans began in the early eighties. A decade later North Parramatta parish in the Sydney area in the diocese of Parramatta was taken. At the same time there was another start in Western Australia in 1992, this time in the Northwest: Port Hedland parish in the diocese of Geraldton and later South Hedland. Northampton nearer to Geraldton was also entrusted to the Spiritans in 1996. They also took up a parish in the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic area of Broadmeadows and another one in Albany. Now the Spiritans have left some of these parishes and taken on other parishes that are more in keeping with Spiritan charisma, more specifically ministry with the Aboriginals. Specifically they have made great strides in the Aboriginal ministry in Woorabinda. At the cutting edge of the meeting of aboriginal culture and modernity Woorabinda offers a challenge of first evangelisation in a place where the church indeed finds it hardest to get volunteers to go and a Spiritan confrere is very at home there! They are also in the Aboriginal apostolate in Beagle Bay.

The group held their first ever Chapter last March and in the Chapter they defined their vision and took a new orientation for aboriginal ministry and reaffirmed their support for the mission in Papua New Guinea, which forms the Oceania region with them. With the Chapter they are set to go to new heights in their mission.

The group has become internationalised with the arrival of confreres from England, Nigeria, EAP and Papua New Guinea. Presently there are 19 Spiritans and 1 lay associate in the group.

2.7.2 Papua New Guinea International Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Papua New Guinea</th>
<th>Life expectancy Male/female: 64.19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population: 5,295,816</td>
<td>Independence: 16 September 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions: Catholics 22%, other Christian Denominations 44%, Indigenous beliefs 34%</td>
<td>Infant mortality rate: 54.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP per capita: $2,300 (2002 est.)</td>
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Spiritan Presence

Following the end of the Biafran war, 7 Spiritans from the Irish Province who had worked in Nigeria arrived in Mt. Hagen area of Papua New Guinea in 1971. They were followed by confreres from the Province of Trans-Canada in 1979 and those from the Indian Ocean Foundation in 1988. Confreres from the Province of Nigeria joined the group in 1995. Presently only 9 confreres from the Nigerian Province and Indian Ocean Foundation are working in Papua New Guinea, with two of them on study leave in the USA.

Missionary Engagements

The mission of Papua New Guinea is one of the most difficult missions of the Congregation because of the nature of the mission and other factors. The Spiritans are
engaged in pastoral work in areas of primary evangelisation. They are into education, Justice and Peace issues, social development and community building. One of them is the Vicar General of one of the two dioceses where Spiritans are working. The group is well integrated and emphasis is placed on community life. This goes a long way in helping them to keep together as a group and thereby survive the difficulties encountered in the mission. As an international group they have come to gel so much together after the initial difficulties that they can be said to be one of the groups that is a stable international group.

The major challenge they face is that with all in the group coming from young circumscriptions in the South, finance is a major problem in spite of the support from the Province of Trans-Canada and Cor Unum.
PART III

OUR APOSTOLIC LIFE: WHERE ARE WE AT?

"The apostolic life is at the heart of our spiritual vocation" (SRL 3). In speaking of the essence of our vocation, the General Council decided to return to the expression "apostolic life". This implies above all a witness through life and action (SRL 3-5). Our mission is both a spirit and a style of life, as well as a commitment to multiple and varied actions to bear witness to the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

3.1 OUR PRESENT MISSIONARY COMMITMENTS

Let us begin with an overall look at our present missionary involvements as presented according to circumscription in the preceding section (2).

3.1.1 Our mission in Africa and the Indian Ocean

3.1.1.1 An evolution

Over the last 12 years, the appeal launched by Pope Paul VI to the Church in Africa has become ever more of a reality: "Africans, be your own missionaries" (Uganda, 1969). In 1974, there were 102 professed Spiritans from Africa; in 2004, there are 1,054, considerably more than a third of the total number in our Congregation (2,881, according to the statistics prepared for this General Chapter). They are in charge of the spiritan mission in most of the regions of Africa. They are also playing a significant part (sometimes in leadership) in our mission on all the continents: Oceania, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Europe. They have outrun the wishes of Paul VI.

This is the most important development in our Congregation in the recent past. There is still progress to be made as regards a just and harmonious integration of our African brothers into the totality of our Institute, so that they will be able to enrich our family with the human resources and creativity that are proper to Africa.

The overall picture of our presence in Africa shows a significant diminution of our traditional activities and, at the same time, an effort to deepen the work that has begun and to commit ourselves in a variety of new activities and orientations, in accordance with the signs of the times.

A Deepening of Evangelisation

Since Vatican II, along with other missionary Institutes, we have been trying to deepen the level of communication of the Gospel in Africa, in line with the insights of the Council. We have continued our work in parishes and catechumenates to strengthen and deepen the work that was already started.

At this time of our Chapter in Torre d’Aguilha, we are still working in established Churches. In most countries, we run some parishes as a source of vocations and moral and material support. We contribute to the development of evangelisation in different ways: catechumenates for adults and young people, the creation of communities in villages and regions, animation of various groups, chaplains in hospitals,
prisons and schools, a renewed evangelisation in areas where the Christians received an inadequate initiation in the past.

In these countries and regions where the Church is well established, our confreres are also engaged in some social activities: rural and urban animation with a variety of initiatives in the area of health (AIDS victims, generic medicines) and education.

3.1.1.2 New Developments in our Mission in Africa and the Indian Ocean

We are now working in some new countries:

- **Mozambique** was devastated by the war of independence and the civil war. We are in two dioceses: Chimoto, where a fresh evangelisation is called for, and Nakala, where our confreres are starting a new parish. A community for initial formation is also planned.

- **Benin**: We have a community in the diocese of Natitingou as a base for first evangelisation in different areas.

- In the **Seychelles** in the Indian Ocean, we have been asked to help the small number of local clergy for a time.

- **Equatorial Guinea**: We are going to set up a community which has been planned for some time. As the country is close to Gabon and the Cameroon, those working there will be part of PAC (Cameroon Region?).

Elsewhere, we have been asked to help by various countries and dioceses - in particular, the dioceses of Gbarnga and Monrovia in Liberia; the Archdiocese of Gitenga in Burundi, as a follow up to the spiritan presence in the Burundian refugee camps in the diocese of Kigoma. In a more general way, we have received a circular that makes an urgent call for missionary help in the Sudan (one confrere has been working with refugees in Sudan for many years).

Changes to Structures: Completed or Being Prepared

Until recently, Spiritans in Africa have been working within the structures of Districts, of which only a few now remain. As a result of the diminution or almost complete absence of new personnel from the West and the ever-growing number of African Spiritans, the principal structures have rapidly become Foundations and Provinces.

In some cases, these Provinces and Foundations cover several countries. The Districts are often integrated into these larger entities, normally retaining a certain autonomy as regions or even countries, their Superiors being members of the Provincial Council. The Provincials with their Councils draw up the overall missionary orientation of the circumscription; they are also responsible for the formation of their members, because of the considerable resources in personnel and finance that this calls for.

The smaller circumscriptions are the same as new groups or groups that are too distant from an existing circumscription. In these cases, they form part of a large Region made up of several circumscriptions whose superiors meet on a regular basis. The General Council pays particular attention to these smaller entities.

As most candidates for spiritan life are coming from Africa, a good number of houses of initial formation have been opened. This task has absorbed many specialised personnel and much finance, to the temporary detriment of practical missionary commitment.
For several years now, the need has been felt for centres of spiritan spirituality to maintain and enrich the charism of our founders and to help us live our spirituality in the often difficult conditions to be found in Africa. One such centre is already functioning in Nigeria (SIST), a building in Brazzaville has been designated for this purpose and a third centre is under construction in Bagamoyo.

Some communities have been created for new engagements:

- **In Algeria**, at Ghazaouet, there is a Christian presence for inter-religious dialogue;
- **In FANO (at Atar, Mauritania)**, a community of presence and study for dialogue with Islam has been set up. In the diocese of Kankan (Guinea Conakry), there is a community at Mongo which serves refugees. In the diocese of Bafata (Guinea Bissau), there is an area of first evangelisation;
- **In the WAP, in Ghana**, there are communities for first evangelisation in the dioceses of Navrongo-Bolgatanga, Tamale and Damongo;
- **In Nigeria**, a secondary school has started Amaokpala (Anambra State); a Centre for Self-Realisation has been launched at Awka and a centre of Catholic Prayer Ministry of the Holy Spirit at Elelle;
- **At Dolise, in Congo Brazzaville**, there is a technical school (Sala Ngolo);
- **At Kinshasa**, the community of Livulu is directing two parishes where there is much development and ecumenical collaboration;
- **In Tanzania**, the community of Nyakitonto (Kigoma Diocese) is serving Burundian refugees and an agricultural college has been set up in the same diocese. A community in Dar-ès-Salaam is at the service of AIDS victims;
- **In Zimbabwe**, there is a secondary school at Marange;
- **In South Africa** (Durban), a centre for Francophone refugees has been inaugurated in the area where Spiritans started a ministry to the hostels for immigrant workers some years ago;
- **Two Apostolic Prefectures have been created and confided to the Spiritans**: Likouala in North Congo and the Makokou area of Gabon.

### 3.1.1.3 New Missionary Orientations in Africa and the Indian Ocean

Alongside the new initiatives and changes of structures in recent years, our spiritan missionary vision has also developed along new lines. This flows both from our past heritage and from our reading of the signs of the times.

- **The prospect of first evangelisation** filled Spiritans with enthusiasm after Vatican II and the General Chapter of 1968-69 and it still remains the most popular choice for those requesting a first appointment. But sometimes, there is a misunderstanding: first evangelisation is not primarily a question of travelling to a far off spot but rather of a journey towards people and groups who do not know the Gospel. It is above all a movement of trust and friendship, a discovery of the culture and religion of others, a desire for mutual service. Perhaps in this way they will welcome the Gospel.

This approach includes an inter-religious dialogue. In Africa, it means we must get to know the traditional religions. The Synod for Africa in 1994 insisted on this
point and the African bishops often remind us of it. In many countries, we are meeting Islam. Some young confreres are studying Islamology and even Arabic.

In many situations where we find ourselves today, especially in countries where other religions are strongly rooted or secularism is very advanced, the only way forward is through a long-term dialogue. This is becoming more and more the case so we need an initiation to learn how to study the cultures and religions of other peoples. Humility and a solid spirituality are also essential requisites. This is sometimes lacking, with the result that confreres get discouraged and start looking for another kind of ministry. But any ministry that is well done is going to be demanding. As mentioned above, some young confreres are setting out on this road, studying Islam and learning Arabic. It is a fine sign of the times.

This type of sharing the Gospel teaches us never to judge results solely by the number of baptisms. It moves us to put the accent in our ministry on a genuine communication. When we are living in this way in the midst of people, practising a “dialogue of life”, the Spirit of the Lord is upon us and creates a new spirit, even if those who question us will perhaps remain in their religion or their secularised style of life until their death. They may not get further than ‘the outer court of the Temple’, but Jesus told us never to underestimate those who are only on the margins.

* Work for Justice and Peace

Social engagement is a part of our missionary witness. This does not mean that we give or do things in the place of others; we fulfil our role in a spirit of collaboration. Involvement will come after the creation of a relationship and a co-responsibility. The diminished number of missionaries coming from more affluent countries should reduce the temptation for us to jump precipitously into grandiose schemes (even if the temptation is not totally extinguished). Our service and defence of the poor must go beyond the giving of aid and a transient collaboration. The way the world is today makes it possible (and therefore desirable) to undertake a large-scale action that can influence the way that society, politics or economics function. We have much progress to make in this area even though some efforts have already been made.

Wars and violence in many African countries have made Justice and Peace work difficult, but the conviction has increased that this type of commitment is essential. A Justice and Peace Manual from the General Secretariat has just been printed; it brings together the inspiration of our founders and concrete suggestions and methods of procedure.

Here are some examples of initiatives undertaken in our globalised world. Instead of just distributing medicines, some missionaries, in co-operation with the people, are trying to develop networks that will give access to cheap generic drugs. Rather than just giving out money, some are setting up simple schemes for saving and giving loans. Instead of simply helping victims to overcome the results of injustice, they are working with the people to destroy the injustice itself. Some confreres have begun to make retroviral treatment against AIDS available. Others are struggling with the people for fair elections. The AAFIN and AEFLN networks should be given more support by confreres working in Africa. We can also point to action taken in large towns and cities to promote the cleaning up of slums and *favelas*.
Initiatives for peace at all levels should be given the highest priority. Some confreres are committed in this area, alongside the local Churches, in countries where violence has been a part of daily life for a long time (e.g. Angola, Congo).

The service of refugees is another important area. Some confreres are working full-time, others are coming for “stage” in Tanzania, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Central and Southern Africa.

Ecumenism makes an important contribution to peace. Confreres are aware that when faced with inhuman situations, we have to rise above the disagreements between Christians. The two Congos have given a good example here; for more than 25 years, some of our brothers have been striving to make their mission deeply ecumenical. Elsewhere, much progress remains to be made.

In Africa, nature is threatened, for example, by the abusive exploitation of the forests, the slaughtering of elephants for their tusks, the deliberate setting fire to the bush. Some missionaries are drawing attention to this but they have little power to do anything about it.

Our relations and work with young people are a vital part of our mission; with our young African confreres, this ministry is spreading everywhere. As the young are often the most wounded in countries ruined by war, our ministry in this area must extend beyond the sphere of religion. There are some good examples of this to be found.

A major contribution is that of education, either informal (street children e.g. the Centre in Antananarivo) or formal. Spiritans are working in schools, colleges and universities as chaplains and teachers, sometimes setting up communities near universities and schools. Schools recently opened have been mentioned above (3.1.2.c). To these we can add education in the rural context. There are farms with agricultural training (Majunga), rural and urban animation (e.g. Central Africa) and aid for modernising agricultural methods; all these help to bring new possibilities to agriculture in Africa.

To conclude, we can say that our Congregation is more than ever committed in Africa, through our African Spiritans and through the old and new paths that our apostolic life is taking.

3.1.2 Missionary Work in North America

The Provinces and Groups of North America continue their mission for the education of young people in different ways. The Province of United States East has developed the University of Duquesne and the Preparatory School of Bensalem (Philadelphia), two establishments that are not only prestigious but also anxious to be faithful to the inspiration of our founders. Duquesne University helps in the higher education of young confreres from different parts of the world. In Canada, the Spiritans have put the administration of Collège St Alexandre into the hands of lay people, but they retain their links with the young as teachers and pastoral ministers. TransCanada has been involved in education from the start, at Neil McNeil college amongst others. In US West, confreres are committed to chaplaincies and teaching and many other places in North America are keeping alive the mission of education and the evangelisation of young people. One could also point to the In’Afu centre in Canada, which gives training and retreat sessions for young people.
Another major involvement of Spiritans in North America is that of parishes. The four Provinces and the Irish Groups are announcing the gospel in this way. Often, the parishes are poor, often they cater for different ethnic groups. In USA West, confreres have been responsible for many Black parishes (e.g. Louisiana); others that are served by our brothers in both the east and the west have become increasingly Spanish-speaking or cater for those of Polish origin. This ministerial experience with peoples from different backgrounds have led confreres towards inter-cultural projects, like the Caribbean Centre in Toronto.

The circumscriptions of North America benefit from the help of Spiritan Lay Associates and others inspired by the charism of our founders. Those in TransCanada have founded an association to help countries which are lacking teachers and administrators (VICS). North America is also helping the universal mission in other ways: financial support, higher education, assisting formation centres in Africa (SIST) and sending missionaries to other continents.

In view of the many needs and resources of the continent, particularly in the United States, we are running the risk of scattering Spiritans around the new world, spread over vast areas without much in the way of fraternal support from their confreres. The Chapter must study this situation and add its authority to the efforts made by the last two General Councils to ameliorate this state of affairs.

### 3.1.3 Our Mission in Central America and the Caribbean

Some of the circumscriptions in this area are very old (e.g., Trinidad in 1863) but all are still very much alive, as can be seen from the initiatives they are undertaking in line with the signs of the times and the means at their disposal. Thanks to the arrival of young Spiritans, above all Nigerians, the District of Guyane has been able to continue its evangelisation along the Maroni river.

These new confreres are ministering to young people. In Haiti, the tradition of quality Christian education continues today in the Collège St. Martial. In Trinidad, Spiritans are running three renowned secondary schools. A new type of education – SERVOL – is also undertaken: it is more technical, and gives an opportunity to many from poorer backgrounds, using a pedagogy that forms characters and tries to overcome the effects of trauma. Elsewhere, efforts are made to initiate young people into agriculture – for example, in the Artibonite area of Haiti – and in the mountainous region of Fondoies, there is a rural development that includes an alternative credit bank. In all these countries, Spiritans are chaplains to youth; a particular example is Guadeloupe where young Haitian confreres have been appointed and where a spiritual centre is being set up for young people and others.

Throughout the area, lay people are collaborating in the ministry and in social action. In Trinidad, lay Christians are directing the spiritan schools. In Puerto Rico, they are making an important contribution to the mission and the initial training of candidates for our religious family; for example, they are running a spiritan centre at Dorado. The association of past students of St. Martial in Haiti gave a wonderful help in renovating the school when it was returned to the Spiritans. Spiritan Fraternities are helping lay people to live their lives under the inspiration of our founders (e.g. in Martinique and Guadeloupe). Other confreres are helping immigrants, particularly in Guyane (Cayenne, Kourou).

The mission in Mexico, where our confreres have been working since 1971, is a new evangelisation amongst poor Indian peoples living in the countryside and small
towns. To help the poor, one confrere has set up a workshop where those who have accompanied sick people to the hospital at Tampico can be gainfully employed while they are waiting. They have recently moved into a second diocese and into the suburbs of Mexico City; the first cycle formation has been transferred there and a parish has been confided to us.

3.1.4 Our Mission in South America

With the Church in Latin America, Spiritans have made an option for the poor, for young people and for ministry to indigenous people. The General Chapter at Itaici in Brazil inspired our Congregation in this direction. As in Africa, our confreres have had to examine themselves and accept changes which involved a reconciliation with peoples who needs were not sufficiently taken into account in the past. In the context of basic communities, all Christians are invited to play an active part in their Christian and social life. Making Christians aware of the missionary dimension encourages them to get involved beyond their own frontiers.

Having arrived in Amazonia in Brazil in 1885, and later moving into Alto Jurua, Central Brazil and other regions, the Spiritans eventually formed six separate circumscriptions. The young Brazilian Province chose two mission areas to begin their apostolate: Vilhena (Rondonia) and Juazeiro (Bahia). The style of mission is to involve the lay people in the framework of communities. Social action is added to liturgy and catechesis. In the south-west District, confreres have specialised in a variety of engagements – in the favelas, parishes in the outskirts of São Paulo, working with youth etc. Amazonia and Alto Jurua are in a different category: evangelisation is undertaken through long journeys by boat. In the villages, trained Christians continue the ministry, but the people are continually on the move because the courses of the great rivers change so they often have to begin again from scratch. In these two northern circumscriptions, efforts are made for the protection of nature, which is under constant threat from deforestation on a huge scale.

Today, there is a movement towards a unification of the circumscriptions in the south. Two have already attached themselves to the Province and a third is planning to do so. Frequent meetings help collaboration within the country and even beyond. At one of the large meetings (Encontrão), where all Spiritans in South America are invited to come together every three years, it was agreed to identify the priority missionary commitments in each country: all will be responsible for these projects and the circumscriptions will give help in personnel and finance. A new missionary project was adopted as a result: a team of three is already at work at Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia, the poorest country in Latin America.

Our work in Paraguay began in 1967. After many trials, an international team (including Paraguayans) is working in two areas. In the diocese of San Pedro, a rural mission has developed, where some of the confreres have managed to learn the local indigenous language, Guarani. Christian life is based on small communities, sometimes having parish radios. Spiritans are working side by side with the people for justice and peace in their relations with the great landowners. In Asunción in the south, where the novitiate for Latin America has been opened, the confreres are responsible for a parish and various other ministries.
3.1.5 Our Mission in Europe

If in the past we used to set out from Europe for mission countries, we now realise that Europe is also a place for mission. "There is a mission in Europe" one report said in 1990. In recent years, the European provincials and the General Council have reacted strongly against the view that through lack of personnel we are slowly dying on that continent; in fact, many confreres from the South, above all from Africa, have been appointed there.

Through their arrival, a real spiritan missionary commitment in Europe has become a reality. Each European country has been invited to discern missionary areas and projects within its territory. These are regarded as priority targets for help in personnel from other countries in Europe and other continents. When we add to this the collaboration of lay people linked to the Congregation in a variety of ways, we can see a future for spiritan Europe, united by what is our reason for existence — mission.

Without entering into the details of all our activities in European countries, we can indicate commitments and projects which must continue to develop whatever the cost. The face of spiritan Europe is to be seen less in new structures than in the variety of experiences of mission, in collaboration between Provinces and with confreres from other continents.

Ireland: Leaving aside external mission, we can point to the five prestigious colleges that are now being directed by lay people according to the spiritan ethos. To those we can add the Kimmage Mission Institute, the Development Studies Centre and SPIRASI (Spiritans Asylum Services Initiative). The "Des Places Éducatives Association" (DEA) supervises all the Colleges and helps to preserve our style of education. Some qualified confreres are bringing psychological help to poor people. SPIRASI comes to the aid of refugees in a variety of ways. The concern for collaboration and a spirit of community is giving an added strength to the activities of the Province. For the future, to continue with even a part of the present engagements, Ireland will need the help of other circumscriptions.

England: The Spiritans here have always been involved in parishes, but they have launched several new initiatives in the last 15 years. Two works have been recognised as European projects — "Just Youth", for the evangelisation of young people, and "Revive" for the service of refugees. Another project, "Kairos", works for the rehabilitation of those dependent on alcohol and drugs. The Lay Associates are deeply involved in these works.

Belgium: As well as supporting the mission of Congo-Kinshasa, an international community is being set up in the parish of Saint Boniface, situated in a multi-ethnic quarter of Brussels. The international Secretariat of the European spiritan region is moving into another building that is more convenient and spacious.

The Netherlands: Their external mission is continued by a number of professed and lay Spiritans. Two projects continue at home with the help of confreres from Africa. At Eindhoven, a community is helping young people and immigrants in a variety of ways and is also a centre for temporary lay missionaries (Medestanders). At Rotterdam, another community is involved in parochial ministry in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural part of the city.

Germany: The Province continues to contribute to universal mission through the work of the Mission Procure, the MAZ project (missionaries for a time) and the review "Kontinente" (along with other missionary congregations). The NOTEL is at
the service of drug addicts in the centre of the city of Cologne; the college at Broich is run by Lay Spiritans; the work of first evangelisation at Rostock (in the former East Germany) is an undertaking of the European Region. The complex of Knechtsteden continues with its multiple commitments: a centre for spiritual renewal, a cultural and religious centre of animation in the beautiful church and other renovated buildings, a College with a Spiritan chaplain. One part of the buildings is set aside for retired confreres.

Croatia: An international community that was set up to promote missionary awareness is running a parish. A second community is foreseen for missionary animation and perhaps a healing centre for the many people traumatised by the violence of war.

Poland: After the fall of the Iron Curtain, some confreres, mostly young, were able to move abroad. Presently, they are working in several European countries, in North and South America and in Africa. In Poland itself, they are involved in traditional parochial ministry and work with young people. They also run a radio and a missionary review. Confreres are re-examining their ministry at a time when religious practice is on the decline, stressing the need to meet the people in the environment where they are living. Some are in contact with young people in their educational establishments.

Switzerland: Confreres from the Province are still working in Africa, the Indian Ocean, South America and the Caribbean. At home, there are two centres for spiritual renewal — Le Bouveret and Montana. Other confreres are involved on an individual basis in education and various other ministries. The Province is actively engaged in the AEFJN network and there are plans to open a community in Geneva to minister to foreigners.

France: There are far less Spiritans working abroad than in the past, but the total is still considerable and widespread. In France itself, there are 24 communities although there are plans to reduce this number. Mission at home has two main orientations. Education is still a priority, above all in the work of Auteuil where 20 confreres are engaged (many from Africa and elsewhere) and 3 Lay Associates. Another thrust is the ministry to immigrants, often through chaplaincies; here also, the help received from confreres from abroad is vital. Apart from these, others are working in the area of communications (3 reviews and other publications) and Justice and Peace (AEFJN). There is an organisation called “Amos” which invites young people to a commitment of several weeks in foreign countries.

Spain: The formation community is catering for some students from other countries. There is also a work for missionary awareness. The one-time novitiate houses a centre for the curing of drug addicts (ADROGA) and a spiritan community collaborates with the team in charge. There is a network of friends who help the Province (Familia Espiritana). The Province has also accepted responsibility for two parishes — at Cordova and in a mountainous region near Madrid.

Portugal: Its involvements abroad are still extensive. There are 70 members working in the Province, half of whom are no longer young. Justice and Peace work is an important element of the apostolate. Two monthly reviews are published for making mission work known and the LIAM association plays a similar role at parish level (there are 300 such groups). There are other more specialised associations that cater for teachers and young people (“Young People without Frontiers”). A new reflection review has just been launched (Missão Espiritana) and a centre for missionary spirituality.
Italy: Spiritans have been working in Rome for the last 150 years in the French Seminary; much later a spiritan house of formation was established and in 1966, the Generalate moved there from Paris. In 1999, the Vicariate of Rome confided the parish of Palmarola to the Congregation; the plan is that it will develop a ministry to the poor and the numerous immigrants in the city.

3.1.6 Our Mission in Asia

Pakistan: In an Islamic environment that is not without tensions, the Spiritans are working with two groups of people. The Punjabi Catholics are considered as inferior by the Moslems and the Marwari Bheels are looked down on by all, even the Punjabi. Spiritans are living in three communities. Their ministry to the Punjabi is varied: work with young people and adults, house visits, catechesis and liturgy, the defence of victims of injustice. With the Marwari, they are involved in primary education, health work, the training of women in hygiene for the communities, organising systems for loans and savings, inter-religious dialogue. Some Marwari have become Christians and many more are showing an interest. A parish school is a meeting point for Punjabi and Marwari.

Taiwan: The community of 5 Spiritans is working in the diocese of Hsinchu. The first work for all is learning the language (Mandarin) and the culture. Their missionary work includes: parish ministry, university chaplaincy, junior seminary, ministry to immigrants from the Philippines, chaplaincy work at a centre for the rehabilitation of young people in difficulty.

Philippines: There are 8 Spiritans making up a very international community. They are responsible for a parish established by themselves in a mountainous area where there is a strong Muslim presence: the people are very poor and there is little comfort. The bishop has confided a variety of ministries to them: university and prison chaplaincies, helping young victims of sexual abuse, spiritual direction and teaching in the diocesan seminary. With the agreement of the bishop, a spiritan Postulancy is going to start.

3.1.7 Our Mission in Oceania

Australia: The first Spiritans went there from 1845 to 1848, even before the fusion of Libermann’s missionaires with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. The present mission was started by Spiritans expelled from Nigeria at the end of the civil war. There are now 20 confreres of different nationalities spread throughout the country. At their Chapter in 2003, they chose as a priority the mission to the aboriginal peoples in the West and the North-East. They also support the mission of Papua New Guinea. Many confreres are engaged in parish ministry.

Papua New Guinea: was also started by Irish confreres after the Nigerian civil war. Today, there is an international groups of 9 confreres working in the dioceses of Aitape and Wewak; they have a difficult apostolate amongst poor people, often involving first evangelisation. They are also involved in health education.
3.2 A FEW ESSENTIAL POINTS OF OUR MISSION

3.2.1 FIRST APPOINTMENTS

Implications for Mission
First appointment is one of the most important moments for a young Spiritan and can have immense implications in the way he lives the rest of his life as a Spiritan. This is one of the reasons that the Rule of Life entrusts making first appointments to the Superior General and his Council (SRL 158; 249.2.3). The General Council also uses first appointments to give effect to the missionary orientations of the whole Congregation as well as to assure interdependence and continuity of the works of the Congregation (Maynooth 2.33-2.38).

The Enlarged General Council reaffirmed that First Appointments must always be for the good of our mission and this should be inculcated into the young confreres from early on in their formation. This is necessary because the kind of formation they get determines the way they will work in the field. The EGC insisted that there should be early exposure to mission and that the acquiring of advanced degrees should not be given more prominence during initial formation.

A Welcoming Community
Most confreres requesting a first appointment explicitly emphasise the vital importance of community in their lives as Spiritans. This is consistent with our Rule of Life (SRL 27, 28) and with our General Chapters (Spiritan Life 1980: 85, 170, 171 and Maynooth 4.3). The Enlarged General Council was convinced of the crucial necessity of this dimension, and therefore recommended that we should not run the risk of assigning a young confere to an appointment where community life and support are inadequate, even when the “imperative necessities of ministry” are at stake. Community support implies that the newly arrived confere will be guided, especially at the beginning, by a fellow Spiritan who is seriously interested in encouraging authentic communication and that the young confere is given a sense of belonging in the community and is not simply used to fill gaps. It implies sharing equally in the life and goods of the community.

Acquiring the Necessary Tools for Work
The early months of a new mission appointment should be devoted essentially to acquiring fluency in the local language of the place and becoming acquainted with some degree of local realities (Maynooth 3.3). Without knowledge of the language and culture of the place there are bound to be difficulties. It was therefore recommended at the EGC that a “Guide” be prepared by the General Council containing the details of all that is expected of the sending and receiving circumscriptions as well as of the confere himself. This is to be given to all confreres going on first appointment. The General Council has published this document and it was well received all over the Congregation. It is hoped that the recommendations of this document are being implemented in the receiving and sending circumscriptions as it will go a long way in alleviating the many difficulties encountered by the various parties concerned in the area of first appointment.
The Duration of First Appointment

In its discussion the Enlarged General Council noted that there is a common misconception that a first appointment lasts for three years. If such were the case, the first appointment would then be regarded as a sort of practical training course in pastoral work, at the end of which conferees would again be available to their circumscriptions “of origin” for further appointments. Maynooth (3.3) clearly insists that the first appointment is for an extended period of time. The first appointment is no different from other appointments, and is intended to provide young Spiritans with an opportunity to give themselves fully to the mission which is entrusted to them. This goal requires a period a long period of commitment, especially in cases where a particularly heavy investment is required, to become familiar with the local cultural context. The Enlarged General Council realised that there is an urgent need for human resources in some circumscriptions, especially in the area of formation. These circumscriptions intend to call back some of their conferees, who are now on their first appointment, at the earliest possible time. However, when young conferees leave on their first appointment with the clear understanding that they are only going for a short time, the very quality of their first apostolic commitment is at risk; this can have serious implications for their future life as missionaries.

In the spirit of the Rule of Life and Maynooth Chapter, the Enlarged General Council recommended that the General Council take action to dispel the misconception that first appointments are for three years. In particular it suggested an extension of the period of time in the Administrative Guide (4.2.2) which set the minimum period for a first appointment as three years during which a change of appointment would need the agreement of the General Council. The General Council has decided in the light of these discussions to extend this period from three to six years. Even after the minimum period of six years, the province “of origin” cannot call back the conferee on its own authority; this can only be done with the consent of the superior of the circumscription to which he has been appointed. (SRL 156 and 159.2; Directory for Organisation no. 65). The General Chapter is called upon to look into this very important area of solidarity in personnel and see what further measures it can take to make sure that the various problems experienced by the various parties in the area of first appointment are fully addressed and dealt with. It could also deal with the issue of the posting of experienced personnel because this is also an area in which there are problems and misunderstandings.

3.2.2 FORMATION

Formation, initial and on-going, has been and still remains an important part of our Spiritan life and mission. It is during the early stages of formation that we are introduced to the Spiritan charism and are moulded into our future missionary life. This process of learning continues throughout our life. Thus, formation is an on-going process and it does not finish with the end of initial formation. During the time of sabbaticals we make a deep reflection of our experiences and of our style of doing mission in the context of today’s world. This means that on-going formation is the deepening of the knowledge we acquired in basic formation. In its reflection in I/D 56 the General Council underlined the fact that there is a close connection between initial formation and what is happening in the mission field. To a great extent, it can be said that the quality of our missionary commitment depends therefore on the quality of our formation. But it is equally true that the quality of our formation depends on the quality of the missionary commitment of the whole Congregation.
3.2.2.1 Maynooth Chapter, Six Years On

We all know that although the theme of formation was not explicitly dealt with in the Maynooth Chapter, it was nevertheless present in an informal way in the thinking and discussions of the delegates throughout the four strands, which summarised our Spiritan life. Formation was repeatedly mentioned as a very important time in which our missionary vocation is taking shape and developing. The Maynooth Chapter laid great emphasis on a new style of doing mission which is people-oriented: namely, being with the people, living with people, listening and sharing of one’s faith with them (Maynooth 2.1). This new understanding of mission requires a new approach to the training of our young confreres. Likewise the new style of doing formation requires a new style of being formator. Maynooth said that our training programmes will adopt more of an apprentice style, giving students the opportunity of having a personal experience of the reality of missionary life today (Maynooth 2.25).

Our experience shows that although formation is the responsibility of circumscriptions, we have noted that, increasingly, people are seeking more direction and guidance from the General administration. Many formators and students feel that the General administration is not doing enough in fostering unity and cohesion into the reality of Spiritan formation around the Congregation. The fact is that it is not immediately possible to change the structures of formation. They are linked with our understanding of mission and of our Congregation itself. New structures should not damage the insertion in to the cultural origin and missionary experience. Changes should also take into account the experiences made in the different circumscriptions and houses of formation. They should emerge from these experiences as well as from the need for a more rational organisation of our personnel and finance resources.

Perhaps that is what triggered the Maynooth Chapter to give the General Council more authority in matters of formation. It should make sure that the orientations of the Congregation regarding formation are followed and it would intervene when this was necessary (Maynooth 9.1, SRL 106.3). The immediate responsibility for formation remains with the circumscriptions. From the progress of candidates and from new challenges, they take initiatives and make local changes. Until now, the General Council’s responsibility has been to evaluate initiatives and changes, and to accompany them, rather than to initiate and lead a new Spiritan formation. Such a decision belongs eventually to the General Chapter, regarding which a new project will be prepared.

The General Council, after a long reflection, has already made a step in that direction. It decided to re-instate the secretariat for formation at the Generalate and appointed a confrere with the task of co-ordinating formation on the level of the Congregation. Part of his job is to be in regular contact with the formation houses and assist them in the evaluation of their formation programmes. It is envisaged that he will initiate an electronic page on our Website as a forum for formators to share experiences and to inform the rest of the Congregation of the good things, which are happening in the formation houses.

Maynooth underlined that the training of formators was an urgent priority in the Congregation and must be one of the main preoccupations of all those in positions of responsibility (Maynooth 2.31). In the past thirty years the Congregation has witnessed a great expansion. Formation houses have been opened in all the new Provinces and Foundations. During the same period we have noticed a rapid ageing of the confreres from the North who supplied personnel to those formation houses. Not
many young confreres were prepared to take over the responsibility of formation. Questions have been raised: Shouldn’t there be long term planning to ensure adequate training of our formators? Shouldn’t every Spiritan consider himself a formator? Since our last Chapter a good number of confreres have been sent for specialisation in the skills of accompaniment and discernment. During the same period the Pan African conference of Major Superiors organised two short courses for formators at SIST in Nigeria. Many of the participants commended the courses as they found them very formative.

With all these important initiatives to prepare programmes and to train formators, we cannot forget that formation is basically in the order of witnessing and inspiration. More and more, the circumscriptions choose confreres who have special qualities for formation and send them to places which have been tested. Still in the recent past, formators have been rather trained more as professors.

Meetings of formators should also involve experienced missionaries. Formation should be evaluated from experience in the field. Such mixed meetings have taken place regularly in some countries in the past.

3.2.2.2 Meetings of Formators

a) Regional Meetings

All the major Regions of the Congregation continued organising meetings of formators at the regional level to enable formators to meet and share their experiences and their concerns with one another.

Every year the formators of the Region of Europe meet to share experiences and propose ideas to the group of Provincial Superiors. One of the fruits of these meetings was the adoption of the proposal for establishing a common Noviciate for the whole of Europe. The policies for welcoming 2nd and 3rd cycle student confreres from the circumscriptions of the Southern Hemisphere developed from such meetings.

The Region of Africa continued with its meetings of Formators and Superiors, held every two years. It has proved to be a forum for sharing Regional issues and concerns of the African region (despite absences due to problems of documents, and despite a weak secretariat). It is from such a forum that the idea of establishing centres for renewal and mission research was born. Such centres are SIST in Nigeria, Bagamoyo in Tanzania and Kinsoundi in Congo Brazzaville (the last two not yet functioning). One of the problems that has hampered contact among African Formators and students is communication.

The formators of North America and the Caribbean come together on an annual basis. They have showed solidarity with Haiti and Mexico in the area of personnel and finances.

In South America, the formators come together once every year to share experiences and propose common strategies to the respective Superiors. One of the fruits of their meetings has been the establishment of a common noviciate in Paraguay which is a collaboration between the Province of Brazil and the international Groups of Paraguay and Mexico. Their students do their theological studies in Brazil (San Paulo). As elsewhere in the Congregation, the Region is experiencing a serious shortage of formators.
b) *International Meeting*

After 11 years since the last international meeting of formators at Enugu in 1991, the General Council organised another meeting of formators at Chevilly during the Spiritan year (14 to 27 July 2002). It was a precious moment for representatives of formators from around the Congregation to meet and share experiences, discuss problems relating to formation and to plan common strategies for the future. It was an opportunity to evaluate the Guide for Spiritan formation (GSF) and the new style of doing formation today. There was a strong recommendation at the meeting that the General Council should organise regular international meetings of formators at least once in every six years.

### 3.2.2.3 Questions for Reflection

**a) A centralised model of formation?**

Before the Maynooth Chapter, according to SRL 105 it was the superior of a circumscription with his council who had the ultimate responsibility of formation in the circumscriptions. At the Maynooth Chapter there was a modification to the rule which gave the General Council the authority to see that the orientations of formation are followed by circumscriptions. What is lacking is a process by which the General Council can verify the implementation of those orientations of the Congregation in formation houses. Strictly speaking there has not been a proper general policy for ensuring a proper formation and making use of the resources of personnel and finances.

We have witnessed a growing outcry for personnel and finances virtually in all the circumscriptions of the South where vocations are abundant but the financial means are scarce and often times unavailable. The Provinces of the North have the means but have very few vocations. As members of the same family we should be more challenged by the great disparity that exists between our circumscriptions, especially between the North and the South. Most formation houses in the South exist on the minimum, with poor facilities, while the picture is completely different in the houses in the Northern hemisphere. What is the rationale for maintaining, in some instances, very costly structures with a handful of vocations? Is there a better way of organising our resources of personnel (formators) and finances?

This gives rise to the appropriateness of our present organisational structure given the increasing diversity of our communities and commitments. Is it time to consider a more centralised model of formation? The number of local formation programmes around the Congregation has increased but there are an insufficient number of confères with the necessary missionary experience to train for these posts. Is it time, as some suggest, to put formation and its personnel and financial requirements, directly under the General Council, with the appropriate juridical mandate to source finance and transfer trained formation personnel to where they are most needed?

**Strained Financial Resources**

Generally all the members of the Congregation are aware that good formation is costly in terms of good formators but also in terms of good conditions for study. Formation should therefore be considered the responsibility of each and every Spiritan. Contributions to Cor Unum are the ordinary means of ensuring solidarity in the training of future members. At the moment Cor Unum is grossly inadequate and overstrained. It hardly caters for one third of the real expenses of running our formation houses and the up-keep of students. Most of the circumscriptions in the South
have minimum facilities (poor libraries, computers, transport, internet, etc.). In most cases instead of the formators concentrating on the accompaniment of students and young confreres, they use a great part of their time and energy busy with fund-raising efforts in order to make ends meet. There is a certain amount of frustration, especially when these formators compare with their counter-parts in Europe and North America. Have we perhaps unnecessarily multiplied the formation houses without measuring our financial capacity? Should we not consider a better method of realising our Cor Unum solidarity?

b) Second Cycle International Houses

Often times confreres have aired concerns that the way formation is organised in the Congregation does not favour unity and internationality. Internationality is not just an idea but also a value which we must be trained for. In the conclusions of the international meeting of formators at Chevilly in July 2002, it was recommended that the General Council examine the possibility of opening international houses of formation that would come directly under the Generalate. The content of this project would have to be thought out very carefully and presented clearly (Chevilly 4.1). Although several of the houses have an international character, they however belong to particular Provinces or Foundations and students from other circumscriptions may have the feeling that they are “guests” only. Much depends on the goodwill of the circumscriptions owning those houses of formation. Even with the present system where houses are becoming more and more international, new challenges emerge. Most formators are not equipped with the dynamics of dealing with students from other cultures and nationalities vis-à-vis accompaniment and discernment.

c) Some aspects which should not be forgotten:

- A candidate for the Spiritan way of life should begin his formation in his own culture. We should plan to centralise the formation of our members only at second level (after first cycle, pre-noviciate and noviciate).

- It would be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to create new Spiritan second cycle international houses. At present, we are often part of a consortium, with our own community houses. Some of these consortia appear not to be sufficiently oriented towards “mission beyond borders”, and we do not have the authority to change that orientation.

- Some European houses of formation have become true international houses of formation, making it possible for young confreres from the south to “inculturate” into European countries and later to become involved in the mission in Europe.

d) Spiritan Spirituality

The Formators meeting of Chevilly noted that the Congregation is lacking a systematic programme in Spiritan charisma and spirituality. Each formator is left to struggle on his own and without co-ordination with the other formators in the various stages of formation. In many places reference materials on Spiritan spirituality are very scarce or unavailable. The meeting called upon the General Council to prepare a manual, which would give general outlines of Spiritan spirituality. One way of achieving this is by asking a team of confreres with expertise in this area to work on a programme of spirituality that would take into account all the stages of initial formation. Circumscriptions would profit from such a project in order to prepare their own programmes in the light of the Guide for Spiritan Formation (GSF).
Incidentally, during the meeting of the Pan African Conference of Major Superiors and Formators in Cameroon (2002) the urgency to compose a manual for Spiritan Spirituality was proposed. If we are to ensure the effective transmission of the riches of our charism to our young generation, it is crucial to prepare a systematic programme of Spiritan spirituality and propose it to formation houses. Such a programme would give students the opportunity to learn in a systematic way the heritage of the Spiritan charism and history of our founders and other Spiritans who left us with an indelible inspiration. The General Council through the Secretary for formation is in contact with the formation Directors in the Congregation in order to constitute a committee, which would study the way of implementing this proposal.

e) Criteria for Discernment

One of the themes dealt with at the international meeting of formators at Chevilly was the criteria for discernment of Spiritan vocations. When considering accompaniment and discernment of the missionary vocation we are faced with the question of the criteria for discernment. Imbued by our missionary call, the participants of the Chevilly meeting called upon the Congregation to define clearly the criteria for accepting vocations to the Spiritan way of life. What type of vocations do we accept? At a time when vocations are very few in some parts of the Congregation the temptation is to take anybody who presents himself. Where vocations are plenty, we are inclined to accept everybody as a gift from God. What are the criteria we must use in determining genuine Spiritan vocations? You will see in a separate document the reflection of the General Council after the Chevilly meeting, for your own reaction.

3.2.3 The Spiritan Year

Introduction

In the wake of the Itaici Chapter, an international commission was established by the General Council to set in motion the publication of a number of works concerning Spiritan history, in preparation for the forthcoming anniversaries in the Congregation in 2002 and 2003. Under the direction of Fr Jean-Claude Pariat, the then Coordinator for History and Anniversaries at the Generalate, this commission (GIHA) accomplished an extraordinary amount of work, giving rise to the publication of an Album, the setting in motion of a critical biography of Fr Libermann and a Spiritan Diary and Anthology. The commission contributed in a significant way to the animation of the Congregation in regard to the forthcoming anniversaries and was responsible for the preparation of the orientations and decisions approved by the Maynooth Chapter in regard to the Spiritan Year (cf. Maynooth 8).

Following the Maynooth Chapter, the General Council decided that GIHA had fulfilled its role and that a different mechanism was now needed to carry forward the orientations and decisions of the Chapter. In particular, it was clear to the General Council that preparation for these important events could only be done effectively at

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1 Itaici 41 The General Council was given the responsibility of seeing to the publication of several works concerning our Spiritan history and sources. In particular:

- A collation of significant works of our founders, with an historical and theological presentation;
- A critical biography of Francis Libermann;
- A lectionary proper to the Congregation.

An international commission is to be established to get this project in motion.
the local level. Consequently, every circumscription was requested to appoint a co-ordinator, on the understanding that a small team would assist him. Every Region was also requested to appoint a Regional Co-ordinator who would be responsible for co-ordinating events at a regional level. The Council also considered this as an important contribution in the movement towards regionalisation endorsed by Maynooth: rediscovering and celebrating one’s story is an important step in the creation of a sense of identity. Certain Regions already had a very clear identity; others were created in such a way as to ensure all circumscriptions were included in the regional preparations for the Spiritan Year.

Fr Christian de Mare, appointed Generalate Co-ordinator in 1999 to replace Fr Pariat, continued the work begun by the latter and oversaw the preparations that took place throughout the Congregation for the celebration of the Spiritan Year.

Meeting of Regional Co-ordinators in Rome

A meeting of the Regional Co-ordinators was held at the Generalate from 18th to 25th January 2001, with a view to preparing a programme for the Spiritan Year to be presented at the forthcoming Enlarged General Council at Duquesne (Maynooth 8.3). This meeting, which brought together 11 conferes from different corners of the Spiritan world, effectively set in motion the immediate preparatory phase for the celebration of the anniversaries. It also proved to be a very useful forum for the sharing of ideas and the articulation of common hopes and expectations. In line with the directive of Maynooth that those involved in the preparation of the Spiritan Year would participate in the Enlarged General Council (8.3), three of the participants at the meeting in Rome were invited to attend the Enlarged General Council in Pittsburgh.

The Spiritan Year: A Unique Opportunity

In accordance with the decision of Maynooth (8.1), the Spiritan Year was celebrated throughout the Congregation, beginning on 2nd February 2002 and ending on Pentecost Sunday 2003. The aim of the Spiritan Year was twofold: to encourage a renewal of the Congregation and to make our Spiritan missionary spirituality better known.

The General Council was convinced from the outset that the occasion of the celebration of our anniversaries offered us a unique opportunity for spiritual renewal in the Congregation at a time of a new departure in our missionary history. The principal challenge of the Spiritan Year was to rediscover our spiritual inspiration - the intuitions and charism of our founders - with a view to actualising it in our day, to “responding creatively to the needs of evangelisation of our times” (SRL 2). This has sometimes been referred to as “refounding” a religious Congregation. The spirit of this movement is well captured in the cover picture on the documents of the Maynooth Chapter: a boat modelled on a similar vessel constructed many centuries previously, setting out on a similar goal – a pilgrimage for Christ – but in a different era, in different waters, with a different wind and a different crew.

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2 The following were considered Regions for the purposes of the preparation of the Spiritan Year: Europe, Indian Ocean, North West Africa, Anglophone West Africa, South Central Africa, East Africa, Angola, Francophone Central Africa, North America/Caribbean, South America, French Antilles, Asia and Oceania.
Need for Renewal and Conversion

While there have undoubtedly been many positive developments in the Congregation of recent years, the need for renewal and conversion was openly acknowledged at the EGC in Duquesne, if we are to be faithful to the mission entrusted to us. Responses to the preparatory questionnaire for the present General Chapter continue to echo similar sentiments emphasising the need for greater authenticity in our life and mission, a renewed commitment to the poor, and a more simple lifestyle. This applies to many areas of our life and ministry:

- **A new style of mission**, of presence, of proximity, and solidarity with the poor, requires a new spirituality/inspiration. This is evident from the very terms used to describe mission in the text of Maynooth: pilgrimage, contemplation, and discovery of the action of the Spirit (2.3 Introduction). It is also clear from the context of contemporary mission: the lack of a supportive faith environment in many of the older circumscriptions, violence and conflict in several countries where our confreres live and work.

- It was acknowledged at Maynooth and reiterated in the replies to the precapitular questionnaire that **international living** presents particular challenges and difficulties (Maynooth 4.6 Introduction). Living in international communities from the point of view of witness is a test of the authenticity of the mission we preach to others: respect for the profound dignity of every human person and the fundamental equality of all, openness to other cultures in respect and love. This requires the ability to transcend human limitations and to see with the eyes of the Spirit.

- The quality of **formation** imparted to our younger confreres depends to a very significant extent on the quality of the formators themselves, who “should have experience of and embody the characteristics of mission”.

- There is a growing realisation in the Congregation that, in so far as **vocations** are concerned, perhaps the single most important consideration is the authenticity of our lifestyle and witness.

- We need to rediscover a simple **lifestyle** (Maynooth 6.1 Introduction); perhaps too much money rather than too little has contributed to a growing individualism in the Congregation and an emphasis on self-fulfilment. There is a need on the part of all of us for a change of mentality, a need to learn how to live simply again if we are to be really close to the poor whom we are called to serve (SRL 24.1). A call for the sharing of resources in a badly divided world must be accompanied by a similar sharing within the Congregation itself between those who have and those who do not have.

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3 Draft document on Mission, Maynooth Chapter.

4 It is often said nowadays that the present century thirsts for authenticity. Especially in regard to young people it is said that they have a horror of the artificial or false and that they are searching above all for truth and honesty. These “signs of the times” should find us vigilant. Either tacitly or aloud – but always forcefully – we are being asked: Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live? The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching. [Evangelii Nuntiandi, 76]
Spiritan Historical Pilgrimage

Maynooth requested that a feasibility study be undertaken by the Province of France in conjunction with the Generalate into the possibility of a Spiritan Historical Pilgrimage in the steps of our founders, which would be open to the friends and benefactors of the Spiritan family, and adapted to the linguistic needs of the different groups (8.7). The results of this study were presented at the EGC and, in view of the general support expressed at the meeting, the General Council decided to proceed with a seven-day pilgrimage for up to 120 participants, in three separate language groups. The itinerary would take in Paris, Saverne, Pinterville, Amiens and Rennes, and be arranged in such a way as to ensure a time together at Chevilly at the beginning and at the end.

We saw it as an important event to mark the Spiritan Year, symbolic of the missionary pilgrimage of the entire Congregation in fidelity to the spirit and intuitions of our founders, offering the possibility of spiritual renewal to those who participated and through them to the various circumscriptions they represented. Participation was on a regional representative basis, the participants being designated by the sending circumscriptions. In order to minimise the financial difficulties that participation might pose for some circumscriptions, it was agreed that the expenses be shared by all circumscriptions on the basis of perequation, as is the current practice for General Chapters and other such meetings. Visa problems and other difficulties meant that, in practice, only 62 people were able to participate in the pilgrimage but it proved to be a very positive and memorable experience for all who had the opportunity to do so. The Congregation owes a particular debt of gratitude to the Province of France for the organisation of the pilgrimage, which entailed a considerable investment in time and energy for those who accepted this responsibility.

Publications

In accordance with the directive of the two previous General Chapters (Itaici 41; Maynooth 8.4) a number of Spiritan publications were undertaken with our anniversaries in mind. A pictorial Spiritan Album covering 300 years of Spiritan history was produced in three languages and a Diary for the Congregation was completed and circulated to all confreres in time for the celebration of our anniversaries. The latter indicates events of historical significance for each day of the year and includes a short inspirational text for reflection, taken from the writings of various Spiritans over the years. A critical biography of Francis Libermann was commissioned but the unusually busy schedules of the two confreres who accepted to co-author this production have prevented the realisation of this project to date. In addition, a thesaurus of some 55 texts relevant to the personality and work of Francis Libermann has also been compiled. It is intended that the anthology in its final form will include extracts from the writings of Claude Poullart des Places and other significant figures in our history and be presented in thematic form. At the suggestion of the EGC, a booklet comprising liturgical suggestions and texts for the celebration of the Spiritan feast-days was also circulated to all circumscriptions. A CD-ROM, produced by the Region of Europe, with information and photographs of historical sites associated with our origins was also made available to the wider Congregation.
With the Power of the Spirit

The General Council sought to capture the spirit and the challenge of the Spiritan Year in a logo designed by a young Portuguese confrere, accompanied by the following slogan: “With the Power of the Spirit”. A letter from the Superior General to the entire Congregation at the beginning of the Spiritan Year invited each one of us to embark on a journey of personal renewal and a search for greater authenticity of life and witness. Another letter at the close of the year drew attention to the weaknesses and failures in our relationships and called for more integrity in this domain.

Congregational Events

Most circumscriptions embarked on the Spiritan Year with enthusiasm and creativity and several events were organised at local level, generally involving the local Church and our many Spiritan friends and collaborators. Seminars, retreats, local pilgrimages, promotional literature, prayer leaflets, press-releases, souvenirs etc. were planned; history was relived in a wide variety of ways that brought renewed inspiration and courage for the future that lies ahead. In certain circumscriptions new projects focused on the service of the poor were initiated; in others, priorities were realigned to express more clearly Spiritan commitment to the marginalised. An historical seminar at the Catholic Institute in Paris, a concluding liturgy on Pentecost Sunday at St. Etienne du Mont near rue Lhomond and a concelebrated Eucharist in Yaoundé on the same day, widely diffused by Euro-television, were among the many events that brought our anniversaries to the attention of a wider audience. An audience with Pope John Paul II for the confreres resident in Rome on the day prior to our actual 300th anniversary, in which a simple but challenging message was presented by His Holiness, brought the Spiritan end to a fitting conclusion.

Success of the Spiritan Year

The purpose of the Spiritan Year was not so much to recall a glorious past as to prepare ourselves to face the future with a renewed inspiration after the mind of the deepest intuitions of our founders. While many of us will carry inspiring memories of the events of this unique occasion for years to come, the success of the Spiritan Year, in the final analysis, will not be measured by the quality or quantity of the celebrations but by the degree to which this renewal has become a reality. This remains a permanent challenge for all of us.

3.2.4 Lay Associates

3.2.4.1 Lay People at the Maynooth Chapter

The presence of some lay associates at the Chapters of Itaici and Maynooth had a very positive impact. Itaici stated that their presence was a gift which enriched the Spiritan family, a sign of the richness of our spirituality and a challenge to be lived out with courage and confidence. Maynooth stated that their presence was a grace and a blessing; a source of mutual enrichment, reciprocal inspiration and a renewal of the spiritual, missionary and community life of the entire Congregation.

The Maynooth Chapter noted that some lay people participate in our life and mission and form part of the great Spiritan family. Following on their spiritual closeness to us as well as their involvement in our apostolate, we can make the following distinctions:

- friends of Spiritans – collaborators in our missionary apostolate;
lay people attracted to the spirituality of our founders who belong to prayer and reflection groups. These are the members of Spiritan fraternities and missionary groups. They participate in our spirituality and also in our mission;

finally, certain lay people look for a deeper involvement with the Congregation. After a period of specific training (formation) they express their commitment through a written contract of association which may be renewed every three years, in a particular circumscription which accepts them. These are lay associates. They commit themselves to live the following three aspects of our charism: defenders of the poor and weak (problems of Justice and Peace); a life of prayer and community according to terms outlined for each particular case; and a precise involvement in the mission of the Congregation in keeping with their conditions of life.

To complete and strengthen the part undertaken by the lay associate in the mission of the Congregation, Maynooth gave some guidelines which we recall:

• to be attentive to and particularly accepting of those lay people who find themselves drawn by our spirituality and mission and aid them to discern their vocation in the Church (5.6);

• to encourage the lay people to form their own structures in keeping with the particular needs of each group (1.20, 4.20);

• to encourage different forms of being linked to the Spiritan family; that our communities will be welcoming and collaborative with our lay brothers and sisters (4.21);

• that a professed Spiritan be appointed to accompany the lay associate in each circumscription where they exist (4.23);

• when requesting lay personnel for mission, circumscriptions will identify posts which could be filled by competent lay people (5.8).

3.2.4.2 In the Footsteps of Maynooth

As a follow-up to the impetus of the Maynooth Chapter the General Council published an I/D 57 on Spiritan lay associates. The following are the salient points of this document:

• to recall the inspiration given at Maynooth on lay associates;

• to present to all the Spiritan family this aspect of the life of our Congregation;

• to give the opportunity to lay people to challenge the professed members;

• to uphold and reinforce the movement of lay people linked to the Congregation;

• to present a reflection on lay associates to the Congregation.

To establish this I/D we sent out a small questionnaire: the essential elements of the replies were encapsulated in the I/D.

Support, following the reflection, for the participation and birth of lay groups:

In the course of our mandate, on the occasion of visitation of Spiritan groups a meeting with lay associates generally formed part of the program of the visit; in so far as it was possible we visited groups and assisted at regional meetings. To arouse and unify the reflection on the identity of the lay associate in Europe we sent a short text to the groups to aid their reflection, in which we drew up a synthesis of the iden-
tivity of the lay associate, based on four basic aspects: vocation, Spiritan mission, Spiritan missionary spirituality, a feeling of membership of the Spiritan family.

At the ECG of Duquesne the presence of a Canadian lay associate made concrete this aspect of the life of the Congregation. Convinced that the solidity of the participation in our spirituality and mission depended on formation, we sent out a questionnaire on training (formation): implementation and themes. In a general way the different circumscriptions tried to achieve one of the objectives of the Spiritan Year: "to make Spiritan spirituality known".

### 3.2.4.3 Lay Associates in the Different Continents

**North America**

Since the 80s representatives of different groups of lay associates gathered at the level of the different Provinces: a common guide (orientations) was drafted for several groups of the region. Regional meetings became the occasions for sharing and deepening ideas on the organisation and the diverse missionary involvement undertaken by lay people: they were involved in activities related to Justice and Peace: refugees, migrants, young and adults in precarious situations, inter-religious dialogue. They occasionally produced a bulletin called "Feather". Even if the General Counsellor with responsibility for lay associates did not always have the opportunity of meeting the groups of the region, the other Counsellors did so on the occasion of their visitations and testified to the vitality of the spirituality and missionary outreach of these groups.

**Some Items of News**

**USA/E**: Through the university of Duquesne and the schools the Province has a long history of lay associates. Keeping count of their needs, the Province is currently developing a program which includes the missionary needs of the country.

**USA/W**: In these latter years the Province has developed a program of training (formation) for lay associates, designed for middle aged people in the Houston area. They collaborate with the Congregation in different ways: one couple is involved with the training (formation) of professed Spiritans.

**TransCanada**: The Province has a long history of lay associates and the movement continues to develop; several couples have made a definitive commitment. Almost all are involved in works of Justice and Peace; refugees, indigenous problems, education for peace and reconciliation. One lay associate is responsible for the Justice and Peace desk of the Province. They take responsibility for the publication of "Feather".

**Canada**: In the last years the group of "Spiritan Associates" renewed itself; at the moment it counts 8 members, among them 2 couples, being a sign of life and hope to the Province. There is also one Spiritan fraternity.

**Europe**

Since 1997 the European Provinces organise regional (European) meetings for the associates; one of the Provincials takes responsibility for these meetings which generally deal with sharing, deepening of the organisation, involvement in Spiritan spirituality and mission and a search for the identity of the lay associate. While respecting the different approach of each Province and their diverse situations these meetings try to identify the common strands that unite the associates. The approach of some
Provinces has been irregular and the expectations of different groups do not always coincide.

**General Information**

**Germany:** There are four groups of lay associates in the Province: one strives to guarantee the Spiritan ethos of a college; another is engaged in looking after the house of support for drug addicts at Cologne (NOTEL); two collaborate with Spiritans (Knechtsteden and Stuggart). A lay associate translated into German the book “Led by the Spirit”.

**Belgium:** There is a Francophone Spiritan fraternity and a lay associate.

**Spain:** Alongside a sizeable group of lay people gathered as Spiritan family who help us in our work, there is a group in Madrid who have made a commitment; two associates have made a formal commitment.

**France:** There are actually 20 Spiritan fraternities, comprised of persons who wish to deepen their baptismal commitment and to be nourished by our Spiritan spirituality; they are known as “Evangelical Groups”. The Provinces strives to enliven them so that they can participate further in our mission. There are also three associates who work in Auteuil with a formal commitment.

**Netherlands:** A group of lay associates collaborates with the Spiritans in different projects; a lady associate is a missionary in Tanzania.

**United Kingdom:** There is a group of lay associates, ten of whom have made a formal commitment. Two of these established “Revive” which accepts and supports asylum seekers; others work with “Just Youth” at Manchester. They are updating their Rule of Life and participate in all the reunions of the Province.

**Ireland:** In addition to the many friends and those who work in several ways with the Province, this latter has started a program of training (formation) especially linked with the Spiritan parish of Kimmage. Currently there are eight associates who have made a formal engagement.

**Portugal:** The Province has a long history of lay people who have collaborated in the Spiritan mission. They have organised themselves into missionary movements recognised by the Episcopate: LIAM, JSF, MOMIP with around 350 groups for reflection and missionary involvement. In latter years we have tried to communicate our Spiritan spirituality; three fraternities have been started and four lay people have made a formal commitment.

**Africa**

In these latter years the sharing of our spirituality and mission with lay people develops in several regions of Africa, be these Spiritan fraternities or associates. Let us examine some countries:

**Mauritius:** For several years now a group of lay associates works in Pont Praslin Centre in the area of inter-religious dialogue.

**Madagascar:** There are two lay associates with a formal commitment.

**Cameroon:** There is one associate and one Spiritan fraternity.

**Senegal:** There is a Spiritan fraternity.

**Congo-Brazzaville:** There is a Spiritan fraternity.
Latin America

The Spiritan Year presented the opportunity of awakening the interest of lay people in our spirituality and mission. So, in Brazil groups of lay people have established themselves in areas where Spiritans work: a lady associate is a member of the missionary team in the Spiritan mission of Bolivia. It is likewise in Paraguay. There are two Spiritan fraternities in Martinique and one in Guadeloupe and one in Guyane. In Puerto Rico there are several lay people in contact with Spiritans. There is a growing interest in Trinidad and Mexico.

3.2.4.4 The Future and Its Challenges

The emergence of the laity in the Church is without doubt one of the most fruitful intuitions to emerge from Vatican 11. It is the hope that the laity will be a line of force in the third millennium. One of the domains which is actually developing in the Church is the closer relationship between religious and lay people. The laity, men and women, celibate or married, desire to be nourished by the richness of the charism of the consecrated life in its three dimensions: spiritual experience, specific mission and community life. In the document “Consecrated Life” the Pope speaks of the “sharing of gifts” and the “sharing of charism”: a new chapter rich in hope opens in the relationship between consecrated persons and the laity (N. 54). A mutual enrichment emerges from this relationship; and we believe that new aspects of the Spiritan charism can emerge from this sharing; the Congregation will come to know a new spiritual and missionary upsurge, thanks to the contribution of the laity.

Some Concrete Problems

- Some clear and well-defined proposals: There seems to be a certain incertitude regarding proposals, expectations and nomenclature. Lay people who are in relation with us and who are attracted by our charism, adhere and become involved in the measure that we offer them clear and attractive proposals for their spiritual progress and missionary involvement, even if these are demanding. As for the name, in certain European countries the lay prefer to be called globally “Lay Spiritans”, keeping the name associate for those who have made a formal commitment; already in North America they are called “lay associates”. This problem even though secondary can create some difficulties.

- Training of laity (spirituality and Spiritan Mission): The future of lay associates in the Congregation depends greatly on training understood as the affirmation of Christian formation, an in-depth knowledge and sharing of the spirituality of our founders and of our mission. It would be desirable that each circumscription should have its own training (formation) program.

- Common Orientations: Some Provinces have their own orientations. Certain Groups of North American lay associates have already drafted a “common directory”. The Maynooth Chapter asked that “Lay Spiritans will be encouraged to form their own structures according to the needs of each particular group” (N. 4.22). Some Spiritans have expressed a desire that there should common general orientations for the entire Congregation.

- Reception of lay associates in Spiritan communities: In general relations with professed Spiritans are good. This does not mean to say that there are not some areas of mistrust; indeed it is not all Spiritan communities that have the capacity to receive; to live together with and share with the laity; it is not always easy to
find somebody willing to accompany the lay. A certain making aware and some concrete orientations seem necessary.

- *The laity and mission ad extra:* Formerly, to travel abroad on mission was one of the great attractions for associates. Nowadays, this aspect seems to be missing. To what does this change-about challenge us?

### 3.2.5 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

#### 3.2.5.1 Up to Maynooth 1998

For the past number of years, each Spiritan has received one copy each of four publications.

- **Spiritan News:** Five editions per year, on A4 paper (four of four pages and one of eight pages)
- **I/D (Information and Documentation):** an organ of reflection: normally one issue per year.
- **Letters of the Superior General:** two issues per year (Christmas and Pentecost) of two pages in A4 format.
- **Spiritan Life:** a review of both information and reflection on Spiritan apostolic life. A booklet of around eighty pages in A5 format.

More recently:

- **Spiritan Life,** was modified in 1996, at the request of Itaici (3.2.2.) which asked to encourage interactive communication between Spiritans coming from different backgrounds and a sharing of their experiences both missionary and spiritual. A small committee was formed to be responsible for this publication. It aimed to publish two issues per year. Only one edition appeared from 1996 to 1998 (no. 7).
- Since February 1998, under the title *Notitia Flash* and from 1999 under the title *Spiritan News Flash,* one page of recent news was published between two and five times per month, depending on what was judged worth communicating. It was sent by email to all Spiritan addresses, individuals and communities.

The Maynooth Chapter made the following requests:

- A more regular publication of Information and Documentation and Spiritan Life (3.6);
- Consider the revival of the General Bulletin which would include, perhaps, certain publications of the General Council (3.6);
- A suggestion of having our own website which would have certain texts of our founders, Poullart de Places and Libermann, in current, non-technical language (3.6);
- A call to give particular attention to the formation of our young confreres in Media and Communication in accordance with the Guide for Spiritan Formation (2.30).
3.2.5.2 What Has Been Achieved Since Maynooth 1998

Information and Documentation (I/D)

We have not succeeded in increasing the number of issues of I/D; four issues since Maynooth (Nos. 56 to 59): Preparation for Mission today, Spiritan Lay Associates, Enlarged General Council of Pittsburgh, International and Intercultural Community Life. There have been other publications under other headings on the occasion of the Spiritan Year: Message for the Spiritan Year and To love in Truth.

Spiritan Life

From 1999 to 2002 under the editorship of Vincent O’Toole, Spiritan Life was published on a regular basis of two issues per year or seven issues in all (nos. 8 to 14). It was not published 2003 because a key member of the editorial board had to withdraw from the team, the publication of the manual “Justice and Peace” and also the work load in preparation for the General Chapter. The feed back from the conferees on the content and the style since 1996, has been very positive.

General Bulletin

Since 1985, the General Bulletin stopped publishing reports on the life of the circumscriptions and of the Congregation. The Superior General in his report for Itaici explained this development. He explains, in his report, that what was contained previously in the Bulletin is now in large measure to be found in Spiritan News. Moreover, that same report gave an account, in a rather detailed manner, of life in the Spiritan regions and circumscription. This was also the case in the report of 1998.

The present General Council did not believe that it was obliged to follow to the letter, the suggestion of Maynooth (to restore the General Bulletin in its ancient format) for the following reasons:

- The main objective of giving a written description of how we live our Spiritan life should not be to cater for the needs of researchers in the future. It is, rather, to give information and be an inspiration for the present. A text written to respond to the needs of today can also be useful for research in future.
- We have at our disposal today new means of communication which can replace, at least in part, some of the means which were useful in the past. Electronic communication can carry a great diversity of information which can be printed directly for our archives (cf. 2.4 below).
- The financial and human resources are limited: it is better not to disperse our energies too widely but rather to prioritise the means of communication.

The General Council has taken other initiatives to preserve and transmit our Spiritan history:

- The decision to continue to publish in the General Bulletin (the remit of the Secretary General) administrative decisions and the statistics of the Congregation.
- Information both historical and descriptive on the Spiritan life in the missions and circumscriptions, will be communicated especially on the Generalate Spiritan web site.
Internet Site

A Congregation site has been created: The intranet site (mission-cssp.pcn.net) has now been running for many months: The internet site has yet to be constructed and developed. It is managed by the general administration and has links with existing Spiritan Provinical sites. Its objective, wider than what was suggested in Maynooth, can be summarised under two headings.

- Make available to the public at large (internet site) our vision and how we understand what is happening in today’s world and how we envision the reality of our mission and our way of being present and involved. Give a bird’s eye view of our history, our living and our living heritage. This is considered under three headings: Who are we? Where are we? What do we do? A fourth heading gives links to other sites, Spiritan or non-Spiritan which have an orientation towards mission. A fifth offers the possibility for electronic communication.

- Communication within our Spiritan family on the life of the Congregation. This is done on the protected intranet site which can be entered only by a password. It gives information on the life of the Congregation and in our circumscriptions, reproduction of extracts from our publications (cf. supra), decisions of the General Council, current affairs, General Chapter, Ordinations and Professions, Etat du personnel, exchange of views on certain specific aspects of our mission, etc.

As far as is possible, all the information on the site is in the three official languages of the Congregation. It is brought up to date regularly. That involves a lot of work. The construction of the site was begun in 2002 by Jean-Yves Urfié. Its development and management will be the responsibility of Gaudence Mushi, the person who will be responsible for the Information Service. He will be helped by other confreres to gather and translate information. In the coming years, without doubt, this system of communication by internet, will become more and more important in relation to our printed material which, at present, is sent by post. However, it will still be necessary to continue to print our more important publications for confreres who cannot access internet or only with difficulty.

Training in Social Communications

As Maynooth has underlined, our concern for communication should not be limited solely to communication among ourselves within the Congregation. It is important that our confreres should invest more time and resources in social communications in view of our Mission and of Evangelisation. With this aim in view, the General Administration had, at the beginning of their mandate, set themselves some objectives. These objectives have been realised in part only:

- To facilitate in our houses of formation, particularly in Africa, the organisation of seminars of introduction run by professionals, Spiritan or others. Giving the names of Spiritan who are capable and available and, possibly, financial support. To our knowledge, only one such seminar has taken place— in Yaoundé for the students of PAC (the Province of Central Africa). In a circular letter of October 2002, some useful information has been sent to all formators.

- To collect and send to the superiors of circumscriptions and of houses of Formation, information on places and centres which specialise in training in social communications. That was partly done in the circular in October 2002 and it will continue on the Spiritan web site.
• To examine the possibilities for selected Spiritan students to do their perfecting or “stage” in a location which can offer an introduction to social communications. This should not exclude other pastoral activities. To communicate to formation personnel a list of possible centres. This project has made very little progress. It was found that its realisation is very difficult in practise.

Other Initiatives Taken by the General Council

• Each circumscription has been asked to appoint a contact person who would liaise with the Director of the Information Service (Philip Ng’Oja since 1998). This will assure a personal and better communication. Around forty contact persons have already been appointed. All superiors of circumscriptions have been asked that, wherever possible, they should have an email address. Apart from a few exceptions, this is now a reality. Fifty eight superiors can now be contacted by internet. Almost eight hundred Spiritans and communities have email.

• A plan to communicate yearly, based on the calendar of visits of members of the General Council. Each circumscription has been invited to prepare, once every six years on the occasion of the visit of the General Council, a report on the life and the activities of the Circumscription.

3.2.6 EDUCATION

Since the foundation of the Congregation, education has featured as part of its raison d’être. The work of education has always formed part of both its evangelical strategy as well as the spiritual apostolate. In the past it has been a feature of some Provinces and Districts more than others, more striking at certain historical periods than others.

The entire Congregation, however, has been reminded to re-focus on the importance of the education apostolate by the Maynooth General Chapter, 1998. We are told that “Formal and informal education is not something on the margins of the apostolate but is an integral part of our mission of evangelisation” (p. 102). In the same section Maynooth continues, “...we will further involve lay people in the administration of our institutions, while retaining a Spiritan presence as a witness and a source of inspiration... we will try to share the spirit of our tradition with them” (2.14). The particular missionary thrust of the Congregation, which includes our education outreach, is well supported by our Rule of Life where we are reminded that the General Council is asked to “…encourage(s) initiatives towards an openness to and interchange between different cultures” (SRL 106.2). The role of Catholic education is of critical importance in the evangelisation of cultures and the inculturation of the Gospel, which, at the insistence of Pope John Paul II, is energising the whole Church at the dawn of the third millennium.

During the past 6 years there is ample evidence of this new drive and impetus in the Spiritan education apostolate. Here it is only possible to take a summary glance at recent initiatives. By simply highlighting a few examples, this may help to illustrate both the geographical diversity of our efforts and also the variety of educational initiatives, which include the strictly formal, and also the informal and community-based ones.

Both primary and secondary level schools flourish in Zimbabwe. Spiritans are spearheading the establishment of a new agricultural secondary school in Tanzania, while in West Africa a new secondary school has been opened in Nigeria while one is also being planned in Ghana. As well as continuing its long tradition of involvement in
formal education, Trinidad is stretching its outreach into the informal education sector. Both Europe and North America are now witnessing greater collaboration in the education apostolate with the involvement of lay people in the running of our schools and colleges. The Des Places Educational Association (DEA) in Ireland is a good example of this with one of its principal objectives being to secure through the management of the colleges, the development and implementation of the educational policy of the Congregation. Duquesne University in the United States has provided and continues to provide invaluable opportunities to several Spiritan circumscriptions for the specialisation and further education of its members. It is to be hoped that Duquesne’s unique position as the only Spiritan university in the world, may even develop programmes that apply the Spiritan missionary and ecumenical charism to its apostolate.

It is surely a comment on the catholicity of the Spiritan education apostolate to witness Spiritans involved at all levels and in all types of education, from the simple setting of a local primary school to the stature of thriving third level institutions.

Trends

From the examples highlighted above, it is obvious that many of our younger circumscriptions are interested in developing initiatives in formal education. Schools and other institutions of a high quality are viewed as serving important needs of local communities. However, sufficient resources to equip and maintain these institutions are often sadly lacking or inadequate and so, as well as efforts at self-reliance, there is still the continued need for supporting these initiatives in terms of material resources, finance and personnel.

In older circumscriptions there has, for some time, been a move towards diversification. With diminishing numbers of Spiritans available to manage and teach in schools and colleges, there is a growing involvement of laity. This collaboration is very much in line with our work in the apostolate and has the added value of freeing Spiritan personnel for work as chaplains and counsellors. While in this scenario material resources are generally not a problem, there is, however, the growing need of personnel where there is an ageing Spiritan population and where aspirants are few.

For our unified efforts in the education apostolate, at whatever level and in whatever setting, we take hope from the realisation that the singular contribution of Catholic education is to bind together in the same moment and in the same process the acquisition of knowledge, the development of freedom and education of faith. We speak much of our ‘Spiritans ethos’ – a concept that is both elusive and difficult to define, but from the lived experience of people who come into contact with our institutions of education, it is a reality that transmits meaning and value. However we conceive it, our ethos must demonstrate the permanent value of the Gospel attitudes of openness of heart, respect for individuals and love of the poor. Our challenge is to strive to implement the ideal of a faith integrated into human culture. This ideal respects the differences in the faith of our students, their parents and their teachers. It also takes into account that essential characteristic of authentic faith which is the freedom of one’s personal response to the questions raised by the Gospel.

Challenges and Recommendations

With this perspective we are faced with some hard questions. In our education institutions what values should we affirm most strongly and what gives our mission sig-
nificance and relevance at the present time? Our commitment to a practical plan of action might include:

- Incorporating outreach as a strand in the mission of all institutions of education;
- Seeking to develop and promote a contemporary spirituality that is inclusive and mission-oriented;
- Ensuring the ongoing spiritual development of our teachers and other collaborators;
- Encouraging the development of a Christian sense of service in our school communities.

How are we as Spiritans facing these challenges? Are we using our resources wisely and most effectively?

- As groups, have we an overall development plan that has been prioritised?
- Are we focused? Are we trying to ensure that we have adequate resources when undertaking a particular project? Is there a sustainable development plan to see its completion?
- Are we investing enough resources to provide appropriate training for our members, personal, social, developmental, academic, spiritual?
- Is there a strong enough effort made to ensure that courses undertaken feed into the mission and apostolate of the Congregation and are not simply a personal project?
- Can we further explore the possibilities of ‘partnership’ between Circumscriptions in order to support projects in newer circumscriptions?

The practical difficulties of implementation will always pose difficulties but our inspiration is the call of the Gospel which is powerful enough to inspire people, dedicated to the formation of the young and the weak, to take initiatives capable of transforming institutions, which might be tempted to restrict their horizons, into heart-warming communities open to welcoming the Word of God.

3.2.7 SPIRITAN COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JPIC)

"The members of the Chapter noted that an awareness of Justice and Peace issues has greatly increased in the Congregation but much remains to be done in clarifying the type of action to be undertaken. It is not just a question of denouncing abuses, but also of wise action and encouraging what is good." (Maynooth: Introduction to 2.17-2.24)

The 1998 General Chapter in Maynooth was very explicit on how central a JPIC commitment is in the life and mission of Spiritans. The relevant experiences presented during the Chapter gave very concrete examples of confreres engaged in such situations. The directives given by the Chapter pointed to very specific tasks we decided to undertake. The following report evaluates how we have carried out such tasks; highlights areas where we could have done better and points to JPIC areas and questions which will need our attention in the near future.
Missionaries for the Poor

The Maynooth Chapter stressed that indeed our mission is to the poor and the Chapter documents identified clearly who the poor are for us. On the list were refugees, migrants, women, the abandoned, the excluded and oppressed as well as youth. The homeless, landless, unemployed and the victims of ethnic strife and corruption were also highlighted. Maynooth (2.19) emphasised that our JPIC commitment could be made in very concrete ways in the ordinary daily contexts in which we work. Over the intervening years, the presence and work of Spiritans with such poor is clear. In recent years many such examples were given in the Generalate Justice and Peace Newsletter and in Spiritan Life while others were recalled at meetings and during visits to circumscriptions. Indeed some categories of poor and situations of poverty not listed in the Maynooth Chapter documents have received special attention from numerous Spiritans since 1998. Here we remember confreres working with people with HIV/AIDS; numerous confreres who have worked in situations of war and conflict in recent years; ever growing violence of so many different kinds which have frequently influenced the work options of Spiritans, as well as confreres who work in situations, which for different reasons, can be classified as difficult.

Our Work with Refugees

Maynooth (2.20, 2.21 and 2.38) called on us to give special attention to refugees and migrants and asked us to study the possibility of establishing a Spiritan centre in Africa to co-ordinate our work with refugees in that continent. This ministry has been perhaps the JPIC item which has received most attention from the General Council since the Maynooth Chapter. In 2001 we carried out an extensive survey to help the General Council reflect on how we might establish the centre called for by Maynooth. As a result a small team was named to work together with the co-ordinator of the Generalate JPIC office on refugee issues. Representative confreres working with refugees and internally displaced people in Africa were invited to participate in a meeting in the Generalate in late September 2003. The General Council has also accepted that we organise a meeting for Spiritans working with refugees, displaced peoples and asylum seekers world-wide in 2005. As this report is being prepared, the General Council is also examining the possibility of appointing a part-time co-ordinator for refugee ministry among Spiritans. Our internal networking in the area of ministry to refugees, internally displaced people and asylum seekers is also steadily growing.

Collaboration with Others

The 1998 General Chapter asked us to work for justice and peace in a number of specific ways and contexts. We should take part in networks, influence national and international political decisions on issues affecting the poor; on the level of circumscriptions serious efforts should be made to analyse and interpret situations in which we are living; we were called upon to influence local Churches to draw attention to local questions and solidarity was called for as an distinguishing feature of our identity. We have increasingly become engaged in such tasks. At Generalate level and at the level of many circumscriptions we are actively participating in and supporting various organisations which can make a serious contribution to peace and justice building. Examples include the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) and various inter-congregational projects. Maynooth (5.11) asked us to investigate the possibility of establishing NGO status for the Congregation at the United Nations.
A significant amount of work has already been done here and as this report is being prepared we are actively investigating the possibility with approximately ten other congregations of having such a joint status at the UN. Tasks such as networking, advocacy and lobbying offer new possibilities in today’s world for mission. We need to ensure that an adequate number of confreres are trained and appointed to work in these areas. Other new JPIC areas of evolving mission which Maynooth called to our attention such as reconciliation and conflict resolution (2.23) also require an ongoing and more serious investment on our part.

Formation for Justice and Peace

Maynooth called for a solid grounding for our members still in formation on JPIC questions, methodology and commitment. It also emphasised the importance of ongoing formation as a time for preparing our confreres to engage more intensely in JPIC ministry. The recent publication of the JPIC manual by the Generalate office will give an important contribution here outlining as it does our spirituality and methodology in the area of JPIC as well as the centrality given by our founders to this aspect of our lives. In general terms, formators are clearly anxious to have a solid input of JPIC in formation programs. This is very encouraging. Some very successful attempts have been made in some of our formation houses to ensure that JPIC is presented as a priority to Spiritans in formation. Frequently however, our formation programs critically lack serious JPIC academic content as well as a training in JPIC spirituality. Furthermore, experiences of stage and pastoral activity during the formation period are frequently not structured to promote a process of learning and reflection in this important area. Significant difficulties seem to have arisen in organising the apprenticeship style of JPIC formation advocated in Maynooth (3.4).

In the area of ongoing formation events such as short courses, assemblies or days of reflection on JPIC issues promoted by circumscriptions have been helpful. Some confreres have also benefited from such events promoted by the local Churches or conferences of religious in countries where they work. Since the Maynooth Chapter a number of confreres have been sent for specialist studies in the general area of JPIC. However this number has been small and would need to be significantly increased. Here we could recall Spiritan resources at our disposal such as the conflict resolution course in Duquesne University and the Development Studies program in Kimmage, Dublin.

A very valuable contribution coming from the Maynooth Chapter was the directive that each circumscription draw up its JPIC program (2.17). The process of drawing up such a program, with the participation of the confreres, would ideally provide a framework in each circumscription to analyse the reasons for specific injustice in contexts where Spiritans work, to plan responses and priorities on the basis of such an analysis and to direct our personnel and resources into arising pastoral needs. Unfortunately in general this directive seems to have been forgotten since the 1998 General Chapter. Should we not give serious consideration to the importance of this directive at the 2004 General Chapter?

In September 2000 a new JPIC Co-ordinator was appointed to the Generalate office. The Co-ordinator has been at the service of the confreres by visits, by offering courses, by inputs into formation programs, by helping confreres network with individuals and organisations working on various issues, by indicating resources and in general maintaining contact with confreres working in diverse JPIC situations. The
office has published a newsletter at regular intervals. A significant amount of time and energy was devoted to the publication of a Spiritan JPIC manual. The Coordinator has devoted a considerable amount of his time to inter-congregational projects. In this way many issues which would be too large for our Congregation to undertake on its own (international debt forgiveness, human trafficking and ecology concerns being examples) have had a significant Spiritan input at Generalate level.

Justice and Peace Challenges Today

Our confreres have been working in situations of injustice and violence since the beginning of our history. In many ways however in the years since the Maynooth Chapter violence has become more blatant and injustices are becoming more explicit. This has significant JPIC implications for our mission and ministry in the immediate future including the following:

- We need to continue to develop a spirituality which will help to sustain our ministry in such difficult situations.
- Reconciliation is more explicitly becoming a model of mission in today’s world.
- A JPIC commitment is not something haphazard; it needs an understanding of appropriate methodologies. A JPIC program at circumscription level is a necessity today.
- Working and collaboration with both Church and non-Church groups and organisations in the promotion and building of peace should be a priority for Spiritans. Networking, advocacy and lobbying offer us new possibilities in mission today.
- Increasing violence, injustices and conflicts provoke profound human suffering. We need to be aware that Spiritans engaged in ministry to such victims can become traumatised. How we support and minister to such confreres needs to be addressed with urgency.
- Dialogue as a process, and training in skills of dialogue are more important than ever.
- Violence and injustice have environmental implications which will be felt for generations. Our Spiritan documents and specifically the 2004 General Chapter need to address this question.

APPENDIX

The General Archive, Chevilly

The central archive of the Congregation at Chevilly is constantly growing in importance, not just as regards the history of our own religious family but also the religious and political history of the many countries throughout the world where Spiritans have lived and worked over the last 300 years. The number of visitors, mainly non-Spiritans, continues to grow; in 2003, there were around 400 researchers who came to consult.

But for many of our confreres, the archive remains largely unknown and unused even though its scope is far wider than in the past, containing a considerable amount of material on our more recent missions and foundations. Serious Spiritan researchers should be encouraged to make use of this ‘hidden treasure’.
PART IV

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

"How good, how delightful it is to live as brothers, all together!" (Psalm 133.1)

The first section of this report looked at the state of our Congregation at the start of its third millennium. Part two gave a brief description of each circumscription while part three showed the current state of our apostolic life, with the evolution of our missionary engagements and a certain number of important points concerning the quality of our mission and our spirituality.

This fourth section will speak mainly about our life together and introduce us to the principle working document of the Chapter, entitled "Authentically living the Spiritan Charism today". The document focuses our attention on our Spiritan community life and our growing internationality; it calls on us to maintain the unity of our increasingly diversified Congregation.

4.1 THE ORGANISATION OF OUR LIFE TOGETHER TODAY

We all belong to a circumscription of origin, which reflects our insertion into a family, a people, a Church. It is central to our initial formation and our retirement and we also turn back to it when we need a break or some on-going formation. When we change our circumscription of appointment, our circumscription of origin has the priority for the choice of a new appointment. When, on the other hand, it comes to our missionary life, our special allegiance is to our circumscription of appointment.

Our Spiritan Rule of Life and our Directory for the Organisation of the Congregation stress the responsibility of even small circumscriptions (Groups, Foundations) in all that regards their orientations and resources. But they combine this autonomy with the solidarity of the Congregation under different forms. Nearly all these circumscriptions belong to a larger Region, whose superiors meet at least once a year to evaluate their missionary commitments and their collaboration. The General Council gives special attention to Groups which are new, small or far away from any other Spiritan presence. If, in the past, we used to make a distinction between Christian countries (where circumscriptions of origin were located) and mission countries, we have now created Foundations and Provinces where, for example, some young African professed members have their circumscriptions of origin.

These new Provinces and Foundations, the fruit of our mission, have in their turn become missionary. And the countries of the North, which existed principally to gather vocations and to prepare and dispatch missionaries, now have very few candidates and have themselves (especially Europe) become places of mission. We are now sending confreres from the South to their aid, with the result that there are presently countries which are both sending and receiving missionaries!

So it can be seen that our present network of circumscriptions is not the result of a carefully thought out study at a given time; it has rather emerged from our history and thus retains the marks both of a past which is still very much with us and a present with its own particular demands.
Different Factors Responsible for this Change

Once Churches had been established in the old mission countries with their own clergy, the need for personnel from outside diminished. In places like Cameroon and Nigeria, which at one time had more than 200 and 300 external Spiritans respectively, there are still calls for missionaries but they are far less and for a specific task. Even in smaller and more recent Churches to which we are invited, it is often just for one or two communities. One bishop said to me, "I would like to have another Spiritan community - just one". In our huge Districts of the past, northern missionaries are diminishing rapidly, sometimes being replaced by confreres from the south, above all where formation structures have been set up.

Another factor which is changing our organisation is the great variety of missionary commitments that we have today - as opposed to the past, when they were all of a similar nature. The General Council makes first appointments taking into consideration the type of mission that the candidates suggest (with the advice of their superiors and formators) and the particular requests that the Council has received from around the Congregation.

The Congregation has answered new appeals from other continents - from Asia, Oceania and new countries in Latin America; this has added important new experiences to our network of missions but it has not altered the basic organisation of our Congregation.

All these elements have given birth to smaller circumscriptions, perhaps giving the impression that we are scattering all over the place. In a sense, it is true that the Spiritan family is scattered, highly varied and very mixed. But we can look on these wide-ranging commitments as an enrichment for our Congregation; we see them as a new blessing that came to us as a result of our renewal after Vatican II, when we examined once more the spirit of our Founders so as to follow more closely in their footsteps.

Four Types of Circumscription

There are Provinces, Groups (the most recent), Districts (the oldest, although they have also developed); and Foundations (which are transitory). Nearly all these circumscriptions are international. There are 2 Groups in Asia (Taiwan and Philippines are one Group), 2 in Oceania, 2 in Latin America and 5 in Africa - a total of 11 Groups. There are 7 Districts in Latin America and the Caribbean and 8 in Africa - a total of 15 Districts. Several of these Districts will shortly be joining together with Provinces. There are 2 Foundations in the Caribbean and 4 in Africa - a total of 6 Foundations, one of which will shortly become a Province. There is 1 Province in South America, 1 in the Caribbean, 4 in North America, 10 in Europe and 5 in Africa - a total of 21 Provinces. So in all, there are 53 autonomous Circumscriptions with their own Major Superiors.

There is a continuous interaction between communities (and also of them with their circumscription), between circumscriptions and with the Generalate. This interaction takes the form of visits, many meetings at different levels, bulletins and magazines, letters and the internet - all of which communicate news and decisions, express solidarity and testify to and share our faith.
4.2 **ONE BIG FAMILY**

How well do we live together in this great and complex organisation which is the Congregation? It is not just somewhere where we carry out our duties on working days: it is the place where we have committed our whole life, to live as brothers and sisters in one big "rainbow" family. We come from all the continents: 12 countries in Europe, 9 in the Americas and the Caribbean, 2 in Oceania and 2 in Asia. To this great diversity of origins, nationalities and cultures, we must also add that of age (our age "pyramid" is fat at both ends!), education, qualifications and differing experiences throughout our lives.

Amongst Spiritans, you can find those who are super-active and others who are rather people of listening, of contact and dialogue, of contemplation. Some have been marked by the trials of life; perhaps they have made them more human, more serene and open to others. Others carry the wounds of contradiction and incomprehension. Sometimes we can feel weighed down by the burden of our differences, of the complexity of the Congregation spread across the continents and fashioned by so many cultures, religions and visions of the world. Some believe that our Institute has become too complicated and that we go looking for difficulties.

But can we not perhaps see in this a reflection of the sending out of missionaries at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, the words of Jesus becoming a reality: "You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you and then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ...and to the earth's remotest end"? (Acts 1:8).

Being members of a world-wide organisation, we must live in this world, body and soul, each in his own way, not for ourselves but for the mission to which we have been called. Perhaps we have set out for life, even if it is far from our origins. It is a characteristic of the Spiritan family which has welcomed us that we forget ourselves so as to meet the people of the world, to share those things which we most treasure and to give all, even our lives: "The Spirit calls us to a continual conversion, shapes our personal and community lives, makes us partakers in the death and resurrection mystery of Jesus and prepares us to make the total gift of ourselves for the Kingdom" (SRL 10).

It was precisely to live such a vocation and to be faithful to such a commitment that we entered this religious family. The Congregation lives by the charism of our founders; they certainly set the bar very high but they have continued to inspire us for the last 300 years. Their spirit is passed on to us through our life together. Thanks to the spirituality they left us and the communion between ourselves in our work and prayer, we live a life which is quite extraordinary but which, without this help and support, would be completely beyond us. We are given the strength of unity in a world which is perturbed by individualism, egoism and terrorism. This is the profound meaning of our religious family and our spiritual history – to make us, by these means, witnesses to the love of God.

4.3 **THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY LIFE** (cf. Maynooth 4.1 - 4.20)

Community is the key to the running of our international organisation; it is what enables us to persevere in the new and difficult forms of mission in the world of today. It is an appropriate place for listening carefully to the Spirit of the Lord, to discern together what he is asking of us. In our life together, we must learn to love in sincer-
ity. Writing in "Spiritan Life", one confrere said that the community of his first appointment threw a light on the whole of his subsequent missionary life.

Community should bring about honest relationships, even true friendships. But sometimes, especially in large communities, we do not know each other particularly well. A good community will help us to remain confident in difficult missionary situations, to avoid becoming bitter, preoccupied with ourselves and perhaps searching for compensations elsewhere. In another direction, a good community life will produce quality relationships in our pastoral work. As already noted, the style of Spiritan communities has changed: works of first evangelisation, for justice, peace and the protection of creation oblige confreres to break out of the regularity of a parish-based community and open themselves up to many different forms of collaboration.

Gradually, many communities are becoming international and intercultural; this calls for a new awareness and a clear determination to maintain the effort of community building. We can easily be drawn in to the atmosphere of individualism, and modern means of travel and communication make it too easy to escape from our community responsibilities. If we are very different, our unity can easily remain at a superficial level. At the meetings of Superiors of Congregations in recent years, we have studied the situation of such communities. We have talked about the inculturation of charisms; confreres from different cultures should gradually bring to the community their particular ways of living out the same charism.

The changes in our community life and the difficulties that flow from them made us decide to propose to the Chapter for its reflection the document entitled: "Authentically living the Spiritan Charism today". There are three core areas: Re-discovering Spiritan apostolic life in the contemporary world; The changing face of the Congregation – our increasingly international membership; Maintaining unity in an increasingly diversified Congregation.

During this Chapter, it is very important to put the accent on the authenticity of our apostolic life and, more precisely, on our life together at all levels, with a very strong insistence on community life.

**Some aspects of the present reality of community life in the Congregation.**

- Despite the insistence of our Spiritan Rule of Life and our Chapters, too many confreres are still living in isolation. Let us hope that the Spiritan Year, the testimonies, the reflections at Assemblies and Chapters have deepened the meaning of community life for us. Our approach to mission today, built on authentic relations with the people, calls for an apprenticeship and a deep understanding of this approach in a fraternal community life. This is a source of strength for many where the mission is difficult and apparently fruitless.

Those in charge at every level must provide all Spiritans a real community life and not just the fiction of being “attached” to a community which can be far away.

But some confreres have deliberately placed themselves at a distance. They were challenged on this during the Spiritan Year and the call is repeated on the occasion of this Chapter. In the present world, we must be prepared, more than ever before, to row against the current. In all circumscriptions, those in charge should take the steps proposed a few years ago by the Province of Ireland as regards confreres living alone and at a distance from the Congregation. If the proposals were
refused, these confreres who had chosen to live apart were asked to accept the consequences and seek to leave the Congregation.

- In many cases, the absence of a real community life results from the fact that there are not enough people available to take on, in a serious way, the tasks confided to us. We sometimes calculate too narrowly the number of confreres needed for a mission or a group of responsibilities; as a consequence, when somebody is sick for a long period or withdrawn to attend to another urgent task, confreres can end up on their own. With the dynamic of the Spiritan Year, and the call, which cannot be denied, to live our lives authentically, it would be irresponsible not to change the current practices which leave too many confreres too often living on their own. Too many Spiritans are running parishes alone, without other confreres to help evaluate, in an on-going way, the manner in which they relate to the people.

- We have an ever increasing number of international and intercultural communities. This is not the result of a systematic policy: we have been led to this by the reality of our mission and the sources of our Spiritan personnel. We talked about these developments earlier in this report.

But the opening of our Congregation and communities to international and intercultural living is an undoubted benefit for our mission and our life together in the contemporary world. It is a help in our openness to others, it is a witness that points to the universality of the Gospel message. To prepare for this new challenge, a period of initiation is called for during initial or on-going formation.

- To create relationships that are sincere and friendly, we should take an interest in the life of our confreres, their difficulties, their qualities, their families. We should also be ready to talk in a simple way about ourselves. Periods of relaxation together are important. We often lack something that is recommended for families – some times when each member is invited to say what he thinks is going wrong, the difficulties he is experiencing or the problems he sees in others. For example, in our communities, money is not always really shared in common. If a confrere receives money from his family or from his circumscription of origin, it becomes the property of the community (unless the donor has indicated a precise use outside the community). If a confrere keeps his money and becomes the “benefactor” of the other members of the community, this can easily lead to problems.

- It is essential for a community to pray together, to share its prayer. Unfortunately, there are some communities which rarely, if ever, pray together. But shared prayer places community life on its true level. When one has the opportunity to visit and get to know communities, one soon realises that those which pray regularly together enjoy a special kind of solidarity.

A life in common that is inspired by prayer makes it possible to persevere with a difficult missionary work. It also prepares its members to be open to unsought changes of appointment. A certain level of spiritual experience helps us to have confidence in Spiritan mission and in the Congregation. When some young people do not find such a community life, or when they fail to adapt to it, they can sometimes give themselves up to wavering and even abandoning their commitment.
4.4 

"...SO THAT MY OWN JOY MAY BE IN YOU AND YOUR JOY BE COMPLETE" (John 15: 11).

Our mission is a great pilgrimage that we make together: "How good, how delightful it is to live as brothers, all together!" is what the pilgrims used to sing as they arrived at the temple in Jerusalem after a long journey (Psalm 133). Joy follows us as well in our apostolic life, and especially when we get towards the end of our journey. After all our efforts on the road in meeting others and the Lord himself, we become more aware of the friendship that we have lived over the years, not forgetting the difficult times, of course. Many of the older confreres to whom we send greetings for their jubilees tell us how happy they have been in their missionary life. If we ever became sad missionaries, it would be a very bad sign.

But perhaps our joy today is somewhat different to that in the past. The big celebrations with perhaps hundreds of newly baptised surrounded by their friends and relations, the large gatherings of tens or hundreds of Spiritans of the same origins – these are often replaced today by moments of humble joy which are nevertheless just as strong.

Before living brotherhood in its fullness, we first of all live it in faith. The Spirit of the Lord helps us to discover and appreciate the qualities and generous initiatives of our companions who are different to us, despite some things in them which may annoy us. It helps us also to appreciate the value of our own efforts of fraternity, even if they are mixed up with some turning in on ourselves, some reticence and antagonism. In prayer, these obstacles are overcome. Then we live in relationships that are true, at the level of what the Bible calls "the heart", the centre of our decisions, under the breath of the Spirit.

We also try to live our apostolic relationships in the same spirit, in a humble way (Maynooth 2.1-2.4). The Spirit guides us towards the truth of these relationships; we discover his presence in the very midst of our own weaknesses, rather than in our own fine words.

Let us believe the testimony of our older brothers: there is great joy waiting to be found in our widespread mission and in our international and intercultural communities!
APPENDICES

STATISTICS

I. The Congregation from 1998 to 2004 (as of 01.01.2004)
II. Confreres According to Age (as of 01.01.2004)
III. *Etat du Personnel* by Circumscription of Origin
IV. *Etat du Personnel* by Circumscription of Appointment
V. Entries to the Congregation 1998-2003
VII. Spiritans by Country of Origin
VIII. First Appointment According to Circumscription of Origin
IX. First Appointments According to Destination (Continent)
X. Spiritans by Continent
I. The Congregation from 1998 to 2004

as of 01 January 2004

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From 1984 to 2004: decrease of 613 (average 33/year).
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as of 1 January 2004

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Average age: 56.9 years (as from 01.01.2004).
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(as of 01 January 2004)

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(by circumscription of origin)

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**1 January 2004**

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N.B. The figures refer to the year when the confere is due to take up his appointment.
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N.B. The figures refer to the year when the conferee is due to take up his appointment.

## X. Spiritans by Continent (01 January 2004)

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