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SPIRITAN NEWS

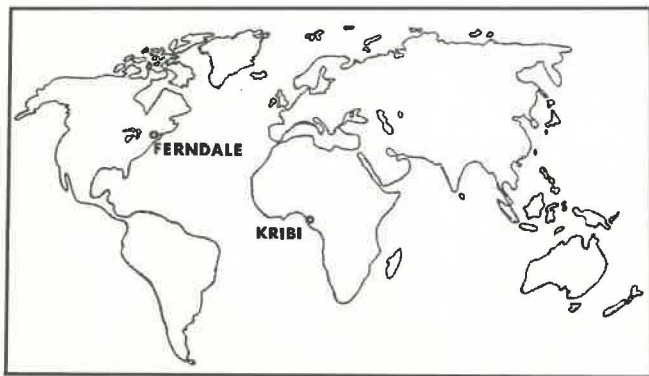
MAY - JUNE 1978

Number 14

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

SUMMARY

EVENTS : Two Important Spiritan Meetings.
DOCUMENTATION: PARAGUAY - ANGOLA - PAKISTAN.
NEWS : Official - Kenya - Kongolo - U.S.A. - France - Canada - Spain - Poland -
Jubilees - Our Dead.



Meeting of Principal Superiors of French-speaking Africa Kribi (Cameroun), February 21-24, 1978

Present were: Father You, Provincial Vicar of the Province of France, the Principal Superiors of Cameroun-Yaoundé, Cameroun-Doumé, Central African Empire, Gabon, Congo, Senegal and Zaire. Father Gross, Assistant General, represented the Generalate.

The main business of this meeting was an evaluation of the Novitiate opened in Yaoundé in October 1977 (*Spiritan News*, No. 9) under the auspices of the French-speaking African Foundation. Recently the Bishops of Africa have been stressing religious and missionary vocations, and this made the opening of our Novitiate all the more opportune. All the same, after this year is over, it will be necessary to suspend the Novitiate for two years in order to prepare an African Novice Master and because of the shortage of candidates. There are, however, 10 or 15 young men in various Districts seriously thinking of joining the Spiritans.

The French-speaking African Foundation will be held to all Spiritan requirements as to community life. After their Novitiate, the young confreres will follow the original plan and live together in Brazzaville near the International Seminary.

Other topics were brought up, such as the proposal to set up a "Spiritan West Africa" which would transcend the frontiers of language and bring together Sierra Leone, Gambia, Cabo Verde and Senegal-Mauritania. There was also some discussion as to whether to continue the Panafrican Secretariate which is supposed to unify the Spiritans of African origin. It seems that the establishment of the new Provinces and Foundations in Africa (which was aided by the efforts of the Secretariate) may now suffice, without the need of any super-structure. There will be a consultation of the African confreres on the subject.

Events :

Two Important Spiritan Meetings : French-speaking Africa - North America

In January and February there were two meetings of Provincials and Principal Superiors. Seven of them gathered in Ferndale (U.S.A.) and seven in Kribi (Cameroun). Together they represented nearly 1000 Spiritans, one-fourth of the Congregation, - which points up the importance of the two meetings.

Obviously it is not possible to do justice in a few lines to all the questions discussed, nor even to present with sufficient nuances the principal topics or the decisions arrived at. All we can do is draw out some of the more characteristic aspects, basing ourselves upon the reports received at the Information Service.

Meeting of Major Superiors of North America Ferndale (U.S.A.), January 8-12, 1978

This meeting was attended by the Provincials of U.S. East, U.S. West, Canada, Trans-Canada and Trinidad, and the Principal Superiors of Puerto Rico and Haiti. Father Walsh, Assistant General, represented the Generalate.

Last August, an inter-Provincial Novitiate (*Spiritan News*, No. 10) was opened in Ferndale. One of the principal objectives of this meeting was an evaluation of this Novitiate. After careful study of both positive and negative aspects, it was decided to keep the Novitiate in Ferndale for another year; to recommend a greater sharing between the Novitiate and the rest of the local community; to give more attention to the Spiritan life, to the History of the Congregation and to Father Libermann's spirituality; to make the prayer life more open to others, and to arrange some apostolic experience for the novices.

Several other subjects were discussed: the District of Haiti's missionary work in Brooklyn among Haitian immigrants (90% of them illegal); a proposed pre-Novitiate for Brothers, to be conducted by professed Brothers, based upon what could be learned from what is done in this area in other parts of the Congregation, especially in France; the possibility of setting up a Commission on Justice and Peace to alert the confreres to conditions of injustice and urge them to take up a position in the light of the Gospel in their communities, in their everyday life and in their ministry.

A similar meeting is foreseen for next year, when there will be further discussion of these subjects.

Documentation :

MISSIONARY PRIORITIES :

The Three adopted by the Enlarged General Council, 1976.

Formerly.

The Congregation made a foundation in Peru in 1891, the mission then furthest from the Mother-House. In 1893 the French College was confided to the Congregation but this was closed in 1897.

The same year the Spiritans went to Amazonia in the far north of Brazil. Much later, in 1945-60, they began work in the most southerly part of the country. There are almost 200 confreres in the whole of Brazil to-day.

In 1967 the Congregation started a mission in Paraguay, which was confided to our Trinidadian confreres. Nine years later there remained only two Trinidadians. Since the Enlarged General Council in 1976 there has been a gradual increase in numbers: to-day there are 8 Spiritans from 6 countries in Paraguay.

There have been Spiritans in Angola since 1866. Foundations: Cabinda, 1873; Luanda, 1887; Malanje, 1890.

In 1968 there were almost 250 Spiritans in the country but several of these are no longer there for various reasons.

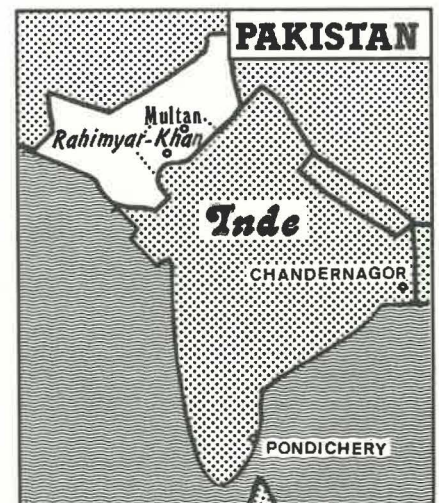
At present the number is about 80, drawn from 7 countries: 12 Dutch, 6 Angolan, 2 French, 1 Spanish, 1 Belgian; the rest are Portuguese. N.B. The new Team which arrived in 1977 is not included in this number.

The country was divided first into two, then three Districts, but since 1977 it is a single Province under an Angolan Provincial, Father Bernard BONGO.

Holy Ghost Fathers were in Southern Asia long before Father Libermann. Twenty years before the FUSION, the Prefecture of Pondichery had been given to the Congregation.

In 1862, ten years after the death of Fr Libermann, four French confreres made a foundation in Chandernagore. An Irish Brother joined them the following year. This in effect was the First Spiritan International Team. Chandernagore was to be as familiar to the Spiritans of that time as Sierra Leone, Brazil or The Camerons are to those of to-day.

As a young missionary, Mgr LE ROY spent a year teaching in our College at Pondichery, which was handed over to the Foreign Missionary Society of Paris in 1887. At the same time, the General Council decided to withdraw the Community of Chandernagore.



There are 2 Trinidadians working in Paraguay: one, aged 39, for 8 years; the other, aged 36, for 9. Since then they have been joined by: a French Father, aged 54, after 26 years in Martinique as Professor and College-Rector; a Canadian Father, aged 45, in Canada as Professor and in pastoral work since the end of his studies; a Swiss Father, aged 47, after 16 years pastoral apostolate in Martinique and 2-year Renewal Course in France; and a Spanish Brother, aged 47, after 18 years in the Province. More recently, 2 Portuguese Fathers have joined them. We should also include a young French student, spending his national service in Spiritan work and 3 Spaniards: 1, a catechist and 2 nurses. A 34 year-old French Father had to abandon his hope of being of the number because of health.

The arrival of the first Spiritan Team, requested by the Episcopal Conference of Angola, for the diocese of Malanje, was held up for a long time because of governmental formalities. They set off finally in October, 1977.

The new Team is made up as follows: 2 Frenchmen, 1, aged 36, had been in The Camerons for 3 years, in France, 4; 1, aged 30, had spent 2 years in France; 1 Englishman, after 3 years in the Camerons; 1 Irishman on his first appointment.

The members of the Team, dispersed in different missions or parishes to learn local customs and language, meet weekly to exchange experiences and share prayer.

The new Spiritan Team for Pakistan arrived there in 1977. For the first two years they are to live at Rahimyar Khan, with the Dominican Fathers who have charge of the diocese of Multan. The Team will devote itself especially to the Marwari people.

The Team consists of: 1 Englishman, aged 32, who was in Sierra Leone for 1 year and Director of the English Juniorate for 4; and 2 Irishmen, one aged 30 studied in Rome for two years, the other aged 29, takes up his first appointment. A third member of the Team, a Frenchman, was refused a visa, thus reducing internationality to England and Ireland.

New Teams.



On the Eve of Pentecost 1976, by a unanimous decision, the Enlarged General Council agreed to adopt three projects as of high missionary priority: PARAGUAY, ANGOLA, PAKISTAN. "Three projects, three Continents. Three projects undertaken in collective responsibility by all Major Superiors". - I/D. No. 7.

On the eve of the Enlarged Council of 1978, we think it useful to speak of each one of these for the information of the Congregation in general. In doing so we maintain the principle of DOCUMENTATION. That on Paraguay is based on accounts of visits made and letters received from confreres there; that on Angola is drawn from correspondence between the Generalate and the new Team; that on Pakistan is in effect a summary of a talk given by Father John O'Brien to the gathering of Spiritans and others on Libermann Day, February 2, 1978.

PARAGUAY

The Spiritans are divided into two groups: one at the capital Asunción is engaged in pastoral work in a parish and has also responsibility for the Youth work of the diocese; the other at Lima in the diocese of Concepción works in a rural area where the majority of the peasants are also young.

The birth-rate in Paraguay is very high (36 per 1000) but the standard of living of the peasants is the lowest in the whole of South America. Fifteen hundred families and some foreign companies own 98% of the land. Two hundred and fifty thousand families share the remaining 2% between them. One third of all animal stock is owned by ten families and all attempts at agrarian reform have failed. Any sermon speaking of a change of structures or the social role of capital is considered "anti-liturgical!, subversive and contrary to a representative democracy".

The life-style of the Paraguayan priest is simple. They are very hospitable and live very much with the people. With the full approval of their bishops, they seek to establish communities that are truly human and Christian.

The Episcopal Conference of Paraguay is remarkably united in its opposition to all kinds of injustice and in the energetic stance it adopts. This attitude, inspired by Vatican II and the works of Medellín, has been faithfully adhered to until now. The courage of the Church in Paraguay is remarkable, especially in the South American context.

Spiritans have also been invited to work in other Paraguayan dioceses - Caacupé and C^{nel} Oviedo - but it has been judged wiser to postpone acceptance for the present. We are so far too few and too lacking in experience to do so.

To live the Spiritan life in an international community is never easy, given especially differences of age and of previous experience. This is truer of Paraguay than of most other places where so many are in this kind of community. Some have had to be given up but have been started again. If the pattern of Spiritan missionary presence in the time to come is that of international teams, it is most important to consider these problems in training members of the teams.

ANGOLA

Malanje is a diocese of one Million people: of these 100,000 are Catholic. In two years missionaries of both sexes, African and European have dropped in number from 150 to 45, inclusive of 12 priests.

There have several meetings between the Bishop, those responsible for pastoral work and representatives of the Congregation to discuss the policy to be followed by the new Team. All recognise three fundamental and inseparable requirements, though the reconciliation of them is not easy.

- a period of apprenticeship in the local language. This is accepted as a priority and for that reason the Team have been separated for some Months.

- work and life in common. Community life is not merely something to be preserved for its own sake, it is first of all the springboard of all outside ministry because of the sharing and pooling of what each one is and has. So, it is foreseen that the group will reassemble eventually at Katépa, in the suburbs of Malanje.

- the apostolic needs and policy of the local Church. Aware of what the Bishop expects of them the Team while maintaining unity in Community are ready for the very different apostolic tasks that await them in accordance with pastoral priorities.

In order to prepare Community leaders, two members of the Team will be responsible for running the Catechetical Training Centre at Katépa.

Another will work with an Angolan priest in the training of Seminarians. This was not originally foreseen but was accepted because the local Church considered this a matter of particular urgency.

The fourth member of the Team will look after a parish in the suburbs of Malanje: this parish is densely populated and the need is particularly great.

It was felt that these three approaches would complement each other in a way that would deepen and improve the work of each member of the Team.

PAKISTAN

The Marwari are a truly poor and abandoned people. When India was divided in 1947 the majority of Hindus left the area known as Pakistan to-day. Being pagans, the Marwari remained and find themselves now strangers in their own country, without status or privilege. In a Mahomedan State, they are not Mahomedans and count for nothing. Even amongst the Hindus they had been considered untouchables, outcasts. To-day they live a precarious existence on the outskirts of villages, in conditions of spiritual and material poverty.

Libermann considered his day "the day of salvation" for the despised Blacks in the French Colonies and in "poor Guinea". In all humility, his sons in our day think this may well be the time of the coming of the Lord to the Marwari. Not merely for the Marwari but for those who dedicate themselves to this apostolate, this is a grace-filled opportunity. To integrate ourselves in the local Church we must become "Marwari with the Marwari".

Our presence as a Spiritan Team in Pakistan could not be justified on the grounds that we need alternative fields of apostolate, nor even by the fact that Pakistan is a country of the Third World. The unique reason is that here and now a poor neglected people have need of our help.

The Marwaris are a naturally religious people and have always been so; their religion is nonetheless of little help to them when it comes to examining and improving their social and economic condition. In Christian thinking, a religion which would even go so far as to deny the possibility of such an improvement would be in contradiction with the teaching of the Gospel.

This then is the spirit in which the members of the Team set out on their new mission. They have not come to Pakistan in the first place but to the most poor and most neglected in Pakistan; They have not come seeking status or privilege, nor to make a permanent Spiritan foundation. They are there only because the Marwari have none to care for them or help them improve their lot. That mission of Christian charity accomplished, they are ready to move where Providence indicates others most needing their ministrations.

NEWS

Official.

Father GENERAL, accompanied by Father Daly, returned to Rome in mid-April. As all members of the General Council are present, the rest of the month will be devoted to Council Meetings.

On May 4 and 5, Father GENERAL will be in Dakar for a Meeting between the members of the Central Committee of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar and 5 Superiors-General of Missionary Institutes. On May 6, he will join the Enlarged General Council at Knechtsteden. In the second half of June he will visit South Africa. He will spend from July to September in Brazil.

Kenya.

On Feb. 27, the Holy Father accepted the resignation of the Most Rev. Eugene Butler, C.S.Sp., the Irish Holy Ghost Bishop of Mombasa, for reasons of health. Aged 77, a missionary in East Africa all his life, he has been in charge of this diocese for 21 years. June 17 is his Golden Jubilee of Ordination.

The new Bishop is Fr Nicodemus Kirima, aged 42. A local diocesan priest, he was previously Rector of the Senior Regional Seminary of Nairobi and President of the Association of African Priests.

Kongolo.

In the town of Kongolo, in the District of Zaire, a "Spiritan Fraternity" will shortly open. A young Spiritan Father and a young Spiritan Brother will live there. The Brother, a Doctor, will work in the local hospital. An older Father or two will no doubt join the Team later: it is even possible that the Fraternity become the residence of the Principal Superior one day. The Prayer Life and witness to Community Life and welcome should make this an important centre of spiritual influence in Kongolo and possibly much further afield.

U. S. A.

This is the Centenary Year of Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, U.S.A. The University has grown gradually out of a Spiritan Primary School to its present status. It was the first Catholic University of the area and has always been under Spiritan control. There are 7000 students on the roll at the present time.

The former film-actress, Grace Kelly, who became Princess Grace of Monaco in 1956, "patron, humanist, citizen of the world", has recently received from the University the degree of Doctor in Humane Letters, Honoris Causa.

France.

The Provincial Council has decided to continue its policy of Language Courses overseas, especially in England,

Ireland and Portugal. This gives very definite encouragement to the movement towards Internationality in the Congregation.

Canada.

The Bishops of Canada have just issued a Pastoral Letter, which reflects very closely the missionary aims of the Congregation. Out of a desire for Social Reform, based on Justice, they call the attention of every Christian to the need for concern for "the poor and the abandoned". Another of their statements "Strangers In Our Midst" reflects the same concern.

Spain.

This Holy Week, as is customary for many years, a group of almost 250 young people, seeking a deeper spiritual insight, were received at the Novitiate at Aranda. Following this, the 8 novices made a round trip to Rome, Assisi, Alex and Taizé. Their stay in the Generalate brought a refreshing whiff of youthful openness and energy.

Poland.

If conditions are not always favourable to the Church in Poland, they do not seem to discourage missionary vocations, which are the highest in Europe. In 1977, there were about 450 Polish missionaries (363 Priests, 80 Sisters) working in South America.

The Oblates of Mary state that their Polish Province is the most flourishing, with 300 members. The reason: the missionary spirit of young people.

Jubilees.

DIAMOND (of Profession):
19 June Fr Walter van de Putte (USA/East).
16 July : Fr Johannes de Rooij (Holland).

GOLDEN (of Priesthood):
17 June : Mgr. Eugene Butler (Kenya), Fr James Coleman (Ireland).
22 July : Mgr. Jean Wolff (Madagascar).
29 July : Fr Alexis Riaud (France).

GOLDEN (of Profession):
21 June : Br Longinus Dreher (Bethlehem), Fr Ulrich Martin (Germany).

Our Dead.

Feb. 19 : Fr René Vrlaine (Kongolo) aged 67.
March 7 : Fr Léon Utz (France) aged 58.
March 8 : Br Wiro Rijpkema (France) aged 88.
March 11 : Fr Daniel O'Leary (Kenya) aged 70.
March 12 : Fr Brendan Russell (Ireland) aged 59.
March 15 : Fr Blaise Frétygné (Cameroons) aged 73.