II. Consolidation of the Congregation
ITEMS PRESENTED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE EGC 2008

3.4.1 A New Direction in Church and In Congregation

- Mission is not an activity of the Church. It is its essence.
- The laity lives its mission in the world (Evangelii Nuntiandi and Christifideles Laici (1988).
- Mission is the way to holiness.
- At the start of the XXI century the Spirit of the Lord is about to open new ways of sharing the mission of the Church with the laity. “A new chapter, full of hope, is opened in the story of the relationship between religious and laity” (V.C.56).
- Formation, a challenge for Religious and Laity.
- “Lay Spiritans are a branch of the Spiritan tree” (TA 11.2).
- “The laity bring to the Spiritan community, an energy which comes from their presence in and understanding of the world.” (T.A.11.1).
- In accordance with the degree of spiritual proximity and missionary commitment, we can distinguish:
  - friends of the Spiritans who, in various ways, collaborate in our mission;
  - lay people who feel attracted by the spirituality of our founders and by our mission and belong to prayer and reflection groups;
  - “lay associates” who desire a deeper commitment in the Congregation and who, after a time and a course of specific formation, sign a contract of association.
- “In certain contexts, the laity prefer to be called ‘Lay Spiritans’ in general, while reserving the title ‘Lay Associates’ for

had pointed out our need to be aware that we can be wounded as we minister in demanding situations and that our congregational leadership needs to ensure that if this happens, confreres receive the necessary care and support without delay. During the discussion in plenary session in Ariccia, it was felt that as a Congregation we still need to make significant advances here. While an essential part of our mission is to struggle for justice and human rights especially for the poor and marginalised, we need constantly to ensure that within our Congregation we fraternally resolve any cases of injustice or violation of human rights as soon as they occur.

II. CONSOLIDATION OF THE CONGREGATION

2.1 MISSION APPOINTMENTS

The question of First Appointment elicited animated discussion on the part of the confreres at the EGC and many felt more time could have been given to it to enable them thrash out more this very important matter that concerns all. There was a felt need that with the number that we get annually for first appointment we could organise their appointment better and in a more equitable way to assist the circumscriptions most in need of personnel especially the small groups, the fragile circumscriptions and the aging provinces.

- There seems to have been a general agreement that the question of First Appointment needs to be taken very seriously by all the parties concerned to make sure that First Appointments work.
• It was also generally agreed that it may not be possible to completely stop changes of first appointment but we need to do something to reduce the frequency and the number of changes that occur.

The discussion was focused on what can be done to stop the perceived frequent changes of First Appointments and suggestions were made on three areas and these have now been adopted by the General Council for action in the remaining 4 years of its mandate.

**What can be done during Initial Formation:**

• Effort will be made to strictly follow the recommendations of the Rule of Life, our Chapter documents especially TA 6.10 and Guide for Spiritan Formation on Criteria for Discerning and Accepting candidates into the Congregation.

• The topic of First Appointment should be regularly treated in the formation houses using the Guide for First Appointment.

• Clerical and Career models of formation should be avoided and a Religious and missionary style of formation adopted.

• There should be an atmosphere of ongoing dialogue which is frank, transparent, and without pressure or manipulation which will enable the confreres be formed in the true spirit of the Congregation with zeal and passion for mission.

• During this process of formation, the young confrere will be helped to understand the priorities of the Congregation and will be made to understand that certain kinds of communities do a course in preparation for it and in these cases the General Council will make its views known.

**Financing the Formation of Formators**

The Enlarged General Council expressed the wish that a means be found to fund the formation of formators; this cannot be done from the funds of “Cor Unum” because this is already insufficient to support initial formation. As well as scholarships offered by some circumscriptions, the General Council will try to find extra funding from agencies which might be in a position to help.

**3.4 LAY SPIRITANS / LAY ASSOCIATES**

**SRL 24.3:** In some places those who are working with us wish to be associated with us. We welcome them with joy, inviting them to share our spirituality and our apostolic life. The conditions of their acceptance and their work are decided at the level of each circumscription. In every case there is a written agreement.

**SRL 135.1:** The Congregation also offers a formation to its associates.

**SRL 247.1.19:** Certain decisions require the deliberative vote of the council of the circumscription: (…) the signing of a contract with an associate member.

**TORRE D’AGUILHA 2004:** “New circumscriptions will be attentive to the importance of lay associates and will support their development” (4.12).

“To accomplish this (collaboration in shared missionary projects), the older circumscriptions rely on the solidarity of the Spiritan family, both professed and lay. For their part, they will continue, as far as they can, to give their own support to the rest of the Congregation” (5.4.2).
3.3.3 Formation of Formators

The members of the Enlarged General Council recognised that the formation of formators is one of the priorities of the Congregation today. The quality of the formation of candidates for the Spiritan life depends on it. Many confreres take up specialisations which demand long years of study, but very few are trained in vocational discernment and the accompaniment of our young confreres. It is precisely on this point that we now need to make greater effort.

Choice of Formators

According to SRL 105.2 it is for circumscription Superiors to choose the formators and to give them the opportunity to be trained before they begin their work. In the context of the Unions of circumscriptions, the Superiors concerned collaborate in the discernment and choice of formators for the formation communities for which they are collectively responsible.

Centres of Formation

Many circumscriptions already receive confreres for specialised studies. It would be better if they make the formation of formators a priority and offer financial help for their studies before giving it for others. The Co-ordinator for Formation at the Generalate will put together a list of centres which offer suitable courses for formators and the necessary conditions.

The Role of the General Council

It was the mind of the Enlarged General Council that the General Council gives its opinion about the choice of all formators. In practice this is something difficult to do, so it requests that all those who will be responsible for formation work are not for him either as a Spiritan or because of his own ability or gift or disposition.

- The formation of young confreres will have a very strong content of interior and spiritual formation to enable them withstand the rigors of life in our contemporary world.
- A serious discernment about the attitude of the young confrere to missionary life needs to be carried out; here his real motivations need to be checked out. A prolonged trans-cultural experience (stage) would help to see the capacities of the young person to live the missionary life as well as enabling him to form part of the missionary project of a circumscription.
- Older and experienced confreres from the mission should be encouraged to visit houses of formation to share their missionary experiences with the younger ones.

During the process of discernment:

- The orientations in the Guide for “First Appointments” will always be followed.
- A very detailed and complete evaluation of the confreres for first appointment should be sent to the General Council.
- Before the actual appointment there should be dialogue and discernment between all the parties concerned in this case, the candidate himself, his superior of origin, the superior of his proposed appointment and the General Council.
- Where possible give the confrere one of the places of his choice.
The aptitude of the young confrere will be considered side by side with the needs of the receiving circumscription.

Avoid manipulation of the young confrere in his choices of places for his first appointment.

When appointed the young confrere should know that his leaving for mission is for an undetermined length of time and not just for six years.

**In the place for first appointment: Welcome (Insertion/Integration)**

- The “Guide for First Appointment” is to be followed.
- The necessary communication between the superior of the receiving community and the confrere will be established.
- A welcome plan as well as a starting and settling-in plan will be drawn up for the young confrere.
- A confrere will be appointed to accompany the young confrere on first appointment on an on-going and personal basis.
- Before taking on any work, the recently arrived confrere will be given sufficient time to get to know the reality of his new mission area.
- Regular meetings for confreres on first appointment within the circumscription and region will be programmed.
- The young confrere will be placed in a community which lives the Spiritan life in an exemplary way. The superior of the community will have patience and understanding and will know how to see the failures or

gathered geographically according to the Unions of circumscriptions. The members of the Enlarged General Council were in favour of this model for the future. It is a demanding arrangement, because it means the circumscriptions have to work more closely together in sharing their finances and personnel.

- Superiors in particular need to make sure that the formation team is international in character
- The members of the EGC asked that the Unions of circumscriptions, in collaborating in this way, put together a common Formation Guide
- They also asked that new second cycle communities be opened only in case of necessity - where students are too numerous, or where there has been an evolution in the circumscriptions for example.

These arrangements in no way lessen the role of the General Council. The members of the EGC asked that the General Council continue to play its part in the matter of formation.

- The General Council must clarify the general rules for running the second cycles. In particular it needs to give its agreement on the formation orientations (SRL 105). To do this it needs to accompany the whole initial process of reflection.
- Given the fact that a large number of our second cycle students do their courses in consortia or seminaries directed by non-Spiritans, a greater vigilance is required to ensure that the elements of Spiritan formation are covered.

Visitation of these communities of second cycle formation is the privileged means used by the General Council to carry out this accompaniment and vigilance.
CONCLUSION:
Almost all of the points listed above (from EGC) imply that in formation:

- We have an adequate number of formators in relation to the number of students;
- Formators accompany the students individually;
- Formators have acquired the skills to conduct pastoral placement reflection, one-to-one formation dialogue, systematic assessment, good and frequent communication with students and the administration, to coordinate the provision of the extra subjects, areas not covered in the curriculum in consortia etc.
- It is also implied that formators have acquired the capacity to train the students in Spiritan spirituality and use the means provided by the Congregation for this.

In brief, the challenge to the Congregation is to provide enough suitable and properly trained formators.

3.3.2 Centralisation of Second Cycle
The General Chapter of Torre d’Aguilhã asked for a feasibility study to be done regarding the centralisation of second cycle formation in the Congregation. The information given to the participants at the EGC presented two possibilities, with their advantages and disadvantages.

1. A centralised second cycle according to the model of the Unions of circumscriptions.
2. A second cycle totally under the responsibility of the General Council.

It is the first possibility which is presently operating in the Congregation, where the second cycle communities are problems which may be experienced in the life and mission of the young confreere in a relative way.

- Radical and hurried decisions will be avoided in case there is a problem with the young confreere.
- The young confreere must be given a sense of belonging to the Congregation and to his circumscription of appointment.

On whether to keep or change the expression “First Appointment”:

There was a unanimous support on the need to change the expression.

Suggested names:
1) Definitive Appointment
2) Definitive Nomination for Mission
3) Place of Appointment
4) Circumscription of Appointment
5) Missionary Appointment
6) Consecration to the Apostolate
7) Consecration to Mission
8) Sending on Mission
9) Appointment at the end of Initial Formation
10) Obedience.

The General Council after deliberations has changed the name First Appointment to Mission Appointment.

These are the orientations that came from the Enlarged General Council which the General Council will follow for the next four years till the General Chapter in 2012.
2.2 ORGANISATION OF THE CONGREGATION: UNIONS OF CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS, PLURI-NATIONAL CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS, SRL 184.1

2.2.1 Synthesis of the Discussions at the Enlarged General Council

Changing circumstances have caused an evolution in our organisation, which General Chapters have approved. Circumscriptions which are not directly touched remain indifferent. Lack of understanding leads to resistance. There are doubts and fears about loss of identity. In places the lines of authority seem not to be clear. Hence the need for sharing and animation. It is important that documentation received be circulated in the circumscriptions.

Situations of circumscriptions vary considerably. Some are small but with possibilities for growth. Others, small or large, do not have possibilities for growth, and some are unable to provide services of leadership and animation. Perhaps there is need for greater possibilities for the General Council to intervene when things are critical in circumscriptions. At what point should an entity cease to be a circumscription? Do we need guidelines as to how to manage this reality?

Unions are not “super-provinces” and do not have juridical status. There is a moral authority to what is accepted in common. Some have built up permanent structures over a period of time; others have adopted forms of statutes. Each Union seeks a way of working together with which the circumscriptions can be happy.

We can envisage the possibility of changing the functioning of the General Council in such a way that General Councilors would accompany the Unions in a closer way.

- We should consider the criteria given by the Church for ordination (cf. Vatican documents). Question: Do people know what these criteria are?
- Debriefing/re-reading of stage experience: “the formator shall help the candidate to evaluate and re-read the programme so as to better understand the missionary life”. The formator needs the skill to do this.
- EGC stated that certain practical aspects of mission, like pastoral work are lacking in our formation. Action: Put in place subjects that will complement studies in consortia, universities etc. for example, missiology, practical matters etc. Warning: The trouble with some of these things is that they are not meant to be separate subjects so much as part of the way everything is done for example, missiology, anthropology and ecumenism.
- Evaluation and assessment are important as they focus on human development. The problem is too many students and too few formators. Divide it into ways that suit each stage of formation. Action: Take seriously the reports written about students.
- Spiritual formation: The GC is working on this. These formation courses need to be defined more extensively to ensure a common identity for future Spiritans.
- Initial formation gives a way of working but cannot give everything; each candidate should be accompanied in his own way.
- The council and formation team of circumscriptions must have confidence in the formation given. The formator should give a report about students during the formation at every stage.
3.2.2 Confreres in Irregular Situations (TA 1.3.8)

The document on this subject was well received; but there are still confreres in such situations and some pressure must be put on superiors during Visitations to call them to book without them embarking on a ‘witch hunt’. The General Council will continue to help confreres and Superiors involved in such situations as much as it can.

3.3 QUESTIONS LINKED TO FORMATION

INTRODUCTION

After taking note of the Congregation’s statistics regarding initial formation, the members of the EGC 2008 reflected on the following 3 topics: the contents and evaluation of formation, 2nd cycle formation and the formation of formators. Their contribution strengthens the work of the General Council in implementing the orientations of Torre d’Aguilha 2004. This will be particularly useful for the updating of The Guide for Spiritan Formation.

3.3.1 Content and Evaluation

- It is necessary to ensure that we have formation in a way that will help people to integrate themselves, outside academic work, Spiritan life, spiritual life, pastoral activities etc, formation should be wider than intellectual. Question: Are our formators numerous enough and equipped to provide this?
- It is necessary to use the updated Guide for Formation. Action: Let’s do this (GC).
- Assessment is necessary for formation. Action: Formators need training for this.

Organisation continues to evolve. We trust we have taken the decisions in the right way. The future will reveal if they serve mission and the confreres. Our human reality remains, therefore there are problems posed by nationalism and ethnicity, both in Unions and Pluri-National circumscriptions. We continually need to face up to, and overcome these. The lived reality and the unity of the Congregation are more important than the terms used to designate groupings.

Three attitudes emerged at the EGC: (i) a new interest about this among the confreres; (ii) some confusion about it on the part of some participants; (iii) a concern for the unity of the Congregation (e.g. common vision, common mission).

2.2.2 Practical Orientations for the Years 2008 to 2012

After having listened to opinions expressed at the EGC, the General Council has adopted the following practical orientations:

- Need to accompany the evolution of the organisation of the Congregation;
- Assemble in one booklet all the recent GC documents on this topic and on other questions;
- Clarify the legal basis for the Unions of Circumscriptions;
- Define more clearly the question of the sabbatical year;
- Review the ‘Guide for the Organisation of the Congregation’;
- Respect the conditions for accepting new missions (e.g. China, India, Liberia etc.);
• Organise, in preparation for the next chapter, a meeting of all the co-ordinating Superiors of the Unions of Circumscriptions;

• Study the question of the harmonisation between the mandate of the Superior General (eight years non-renewable) and that of circumscription Superiors (three years, renewable);

• What can be done about circumscriptions in decline?

2.3 SPIRITAN PRESENCE IN LATIN AMERICA, ASIA, AFRICA

2.3.1 Latin America

Torre d’Aguilha 4.2: “Special attention will be paid to all the circumscriptions of Latin America, keeping in mind the fragility of these groups and the potential for the growth of the Congregation in this area”.

ITEMS PRESENTED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE EGC 2008

2.3.1.1 Spiritan Mission in Latin America Today – A Mission that Began in 1885

The young Brazilian Province, founded in 1990, is constantly challenged by situations where it is short of personnel for formation, administration and maintenance of its missionary projects.

The districts of the Centre and South of Brazil are either integrated in the Brazilian Province (Germans and Portuguese) or are headed in this direction (Dutch and Irish).

The International Groups of Mexico and Paraguay: Spiritan presence since the late 1960’s. Priorities are clear: Mission to rigid, with too much insistence on direction rather than accompaniment.” By “too rigid” it is not so clear what is meant but it could be that our formation is too uniform and does not take adequate account of the diversity of mission situations to which we are called nor the diversity of talents of those who are called.

3. Community life: The EGC insisted on inclusiveness and a balance of attention to the vocation of brother and father. The wish was voiced that “the brothers would know how to position themselves as full members (and not members completely apart) of the Congregation, and that they would be completely integrated with no complex”. This will require us to “combat individualism and promote equality of economic treatment; mass stipends for example are not personal money, but income for the community and must be put in the common kitty”. “Brothers and lay Associates should be given posts of responsibility in the Congregation. Specify what is common to all and that which is proper to the priest, brother and lay associate”.

• Other suggestions:

Get inspiration from what other Congregations are doing to solve this problem;

As a GC we can make sure that the brother has a clear place in the preparation and realisation of the next General chapter, ensuring that there is a brother delegate at least.
groups is that the brother is like any other Spiritan confrere at the heart of Spiritan mission which is the mission of the Church. Negatively it was said that “the parish structure based on sacramental economy does not help much to give visibility to the brother’s vocation”. Another affirmation was that “we need to be clear first of all on the preferences and options to be made for the mission of the brother in order to then envisage and propose an adequate formation”. It was also suggested to “propose certain concrete services provided by brothers at present, to inspire the formation of future brothers”. This is a bit vague, but we can imagine what people have in mind, for example brothers who are highly competent in professional fields, like medicine, architecture, engineering etc and who also bring another special dimension to their work because they are religious and Spiritans. There is a debate which was not so present in the EGC as to whether we should have works specifically manned by brothers which would give a clear visibility to the brothers. This is very much an African idea at present. Some European brothers get angry with this idea because it seems to continue the separation of the brothers and the fathers. It was also seen as desirable to have brothers in all key positions in the Congregation where they can function competently including administration and formation.

2. Formation: “We need to propose an adequate missionary, religious and professional formation.” It is true that our formation is meant to prepare us for lifelong community life and not just the acquisition of professional skills. “Redefine our cycles of formation including a common sector”. “Our formation is too

the poor indigenous and rural people and the formation of young native Spiritans.

The Porto Rican Foundation: Spiritans have been present in Porto Rico since 1931. Their number is much diminished today.

The Bolivian and Dominican Republic international communities were founded:

- Bolivia in 2003 by the Latin American Union (UCAL)
- Dominican Republic in 2005 by the North American and Caribbean Union (UCNAC).

2.3.1.2 Challenges for the Latin American Church Today

- The Aparecida Conference/CELAM V (May 2007) diagnosed two principal challenges for the Church in Latin America: social problems and the erosion of Catholicism.
- The Amazon, the Antarctic and Ecology appear as missionary horizons that we must all face up to.

2.3.1.3 EGC 2008: Consolidation of the Congregation in Latin America

The discussions were tranquil but it was very clear at the EGC that the Congregation must consolidate Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America. This means that the Torre d’Aguilhà recommendation must be taken on seriously and with determination. Present for more than 100 years in the ‘continent of hope’ and having disinterestedly served the local Church, it is imperative that Spiritans now invest in the promotion and formation of Spiritan vocations. The appointment of confreres on mission appointment to the UCAL union is already a reply to this question but per-
sonnel must continue to be appointed (experienced confreres included), in particular to the Bolivian mission.

2.3.1.4 2008-2012: Building a Vision of Spiritan Presence and Mission in Latin America

The central objective of UCAL is to strengthen collaboration and solidarity between the circumscriptions around certain priorities: Mission, Formation, Mission appointments and Lay Spiritans.

Enthusiastic implementation by the Superiors of the Latin American Union’s Guidelines (to be approved by the General Council).

Discussion in the circumscriptions of the Torre d’Aguilha 4.2 guideline, until the meeting of UCAL in April 2009 and an evaluation of its implementation in the missionary project of each circumscription. Some priorities must be held in mind.

Prophetic Mission: Evaluation of the specificity of the Spiritan mission in each circumscription; to have in mind the emblematic character of the Amazon (JPIC). By 2012, the Spiritan mission in Bolivia must have a minimum of six confreres.

Initial and On-going Formation: Take on and support UCAL’s formation program (Novitiate and II Cycle – Theology); finish the elaboration of the UCAL Formation Directory; prepare confreres to work in formation; guarantee that vocations promotion takes place; accompaniment of young Spiritans on mission appointment; promote and animate spiritual renovation and ongoing formation in the circumscriptions; organise the 2010 ‘Encontrão’ (which will take place when the General Council is finishing its visitation of

- giving due solemnity and attention to religious profession (not only of the brothers);
- celebrating the jubilees of religious profession;
- suppressing high-sounding titles like “Holy Ghost Fathers”, “Peres du St. Esprit”, “Padres do Espirito Santo”.

Vocation ministry:

It is in the young circumscriptions where we still have many vocations that we must make the greatest effort for the greater visibility of our “missionary being” which cannot be reduced to the sacramental ministry of the priest. The General Council needs to have a policy of constantly reminding the superiors and circumscriptions about the brothers and the need for constant publicity, vocation animation and general appreciation of the brothers. Since we began our dialogue with the membership of the Congregation about the brothers, the topic has certainly emerged from the darkness and been given attention and publicity (in publications and vocation leaflets etc.). The EGC also asked that “the topic of the brothers would be taken into account in debates, meetings and circumscription assemblies”. We of the GC can help with this in our visits to circumscriptions, formation communities, assemblies, chapters etc and in our own publications. Another proposal from the EGC was that the next meeting organised by the Congregation dealing with formation should be devoted to “the topic of the brother’s vocation”. It could figure as part of a wider agenda.

1. Mission: “Our vision for mission is realised under three forms of vocation: priest, brother, lay associate.” What is clear from the reports of the work
gation to know more about the history of the brothers. In the synthesis of the reports from the work groups it also seems evident that more needs to be known about this vocation. There is much anecdotal and archive material about the brothers in the Congregation but perhaps there is a need for a more scientific historical work to be written. Could the GC commission such a work?

- The first point that seems obvious from all the work that has been done on the question of the brothers is that we want brothers in the Congregation. “Our Congregation needs brothers for its mission”.

- In all of the findings including those of the EGC it is clear that a number of major obstacles prevent the flourishing of this vocation: lack of any Spiritan vocations in parts of the world, too much emphasis on sacramental, parochial ministry, lack of understanding of this vocation, strange ecclesiologies in the heads of confreres who cannot see what ministry a Spiritan who is not ordained can possibly do, lack of vocations animation in relation to the brother’s vocation, lack of publicity about this way of being Spiritan, clerical exclusiveness and simply clericalism. From this list it seems obvious that a serious change of mentality is required especially if we hope to get the vocation to brotherhood off the ground in the circumscriptions which enjoy a flourishing of Spiritan vocations, but there are also practical things that can be done to improve the situation. The way forward is surely to focus on the positive suggestions coming from the EGC.

- In the first place a Spiritan brother is a Spiritan confrere, a missionary religious and this needs to be emphasised in a variety of ways:

the Union’s circumscriptions) as a new moment of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America in the light of the Torre d’Aguilhia 2004 and Aparecida 2007 challenges.

**Lay Spiritans:** Promotion in all our circumscriptions of the work with Lay Spiritans and their formation in the Spiritan charism and spirituality.

*Building a vision of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America* as a constant element to be present during the General Council’s visitation of the Latin American Union’s circumscriptions in 2009.

*Building a vision of Spiritan presence and mission in Latin America,* considered as an important topic for the agenda of the UCAL meeting of Superiors in April 2009, (in Bolivia), with a view to the elaboration of concrete proposals for discussion at the 2010 ‘Encontrão’.

The Latin American Union’s Superiors in their meeting of 2009 have to elaborate a document with needs in the area of personnel, in each circumscription (experienced confreres and mission appointments) to be sought by 2012. This document, and the program of integration of confreres in mission appointment, have to be sent to the General Council.

**Finances:** How each circumscription sees its financial viability and how to strengthen solidarity within the circumscription and in the Union (e.g. Formation and Administration)?

### 2.3.2 Asia

There were some concerns that we have a number of groups that are very fragile both in personnel and finance and here we are talking about expansion in Asia. Some others though felt that at no point should we fold our hands from explora-
ing possibilities of mission in other areas because of personnel or finance.

At the end there was a consensus of support for the Provincial of France to explore movement into India.

2.3.3 Africa

In Africa, there are many places that are demanding the presence of the Congregation such as Burundi, South Sudan, Botswana and Liberia. The EGC mandated the General Council to study these requests and take appropriate action. Discussion is already ongoing on some of these places and will continue in the next 4 years and the General Council will follow the procedures that have been used in the past that have worked for us in making appropriate decisions which will be as usual communicated to the Congregation at large.

2.3.4 Conclusion

- It is the duty of the Congregation and within the spirit of our calling to expand to new commitments in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world.

- The EGC opined that whatever expansion we are going to make should be gradual and careful because we need to support and consolidate our old and existing commitments.

We should always depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us because he is the protagonist of mission.

mation; the possibility of distance learning on the web was also raised.

Communicating the Spiritan charism: The Centre for Spiritan Studies has undertaken the task of digitising Spiritan material at Duquesne University library; the first Volume of ‘Anthologie Spiritaine’ has been completed in French and the translations into Portuguese and English are on the way; encourage production of publications and pamphlets in the three languages; the question is whether to do it centrally or do we ask each circumscription to do their own; use radio and television where possible.

Beatification/canonisation of our founders: pray through the intercession of our founders; live and make known their spirituality; introduce the life of our founders in catechetical programmes; create popular movements in their honour; send to Rome a clear presentation of favours received; be more convinced of their cause; more leadership in this is needed from the Generalate.

Logo of the Congregation: two groups at the EGC were in favour of having one logo only; one group was in favour of creativity; having a logo with a Marian element in it was supported by all; it is understood that the original logo will remain as the official seal of the Congregation.

3.2 SPIRITAN LIFE AND VOCATION

3.2.1 Brothers

Observation: During the EGC when the question of the brothers was being dealt with a document produced by Carmo, a brother, on the early history of the brothers in Libermann’s time was eagerly received by the confreres. There seems to be a desire among members of the Congre-
reflection on the spiritual renewal of our Spiritan family and identified the following tasks for the next four years.

3.1.1 Programme for the Next Four Years

**Tercentenary of Poullart des Places:** The Superior General will write a letter to announce this celebration which will be at Congregation and circumscription level. Special activities to mark the anniversary: hold conferences; special prayers and novenas be composed and done in circumscriptions; do special pilgrimages (Rennes, Paris); translate Volume four of ‘Memoire Spiritaine’; a special issue of ‘Spiritan Horizons’ will be published; a CD on Poullart des Places will be produced; an internet space will be created; EGC suggested material for Poullart’s centenary in three languages; one group asked for a centralised website. A special feature of the celebration will be to make the history of the Congregation from 1709 to 1848 better known and to highlight des Places’ choice for poverty; one issue of ‘Spiritan News’ will be dedicated to Poullart des Places. Some kind of networking could be arranged to allow ideas and material to be exchanged between Provinces; create a committee to co-ordinate the whole thing as was done for ‘Histories and Anniversaries’.

**Identifying confreres for special training in Spiritan studies:** EGC underlined some criteria for selection of confreres for the training; send out a second letter on this indicating the criteria for selection of suitable confreres. Other points that came up: encourage confreres to constantly update their knowledge of Spiritan spirituality and traditions; set up a mobile team to undertake the work of animating confreres and lay people who are interested in Spiritan spirituality; watch out for the continuity and unity of our Spiritan for-

2.4 FINANCIAL MATTERS

2.4.1 Synthesis and Programme for the General Bursar for 2008-2012

The Enlarged General Chapter of 2008 was a good occasion to assess the implementation of the Torre d’Aguilha Chapter decisions concerning finances. All the relevant questions were dealt with. The EGC was positive about them and requested further reflection on them with a view to putting them into practice. To sum up, these were the matters presented for reflection:

- General Bursar’s report;
- Results of the Inventory of Movable and Immovable Goods and consequences;
- A unified Spiritan vision regarding our relations with money (I/D on Poverty);
- Responses to the proposed text on Mission and Finance (TA 7.14);
- Pension Fund;
- International Missionary Benefit Society (referred to usually in its French acronym EMI Entraide Missionaire Internationale).

Following on the reflections and views expressed at the EGC, the General Council has adopted the following orientations for the next four years.

2.4.1.1 In the Short Term

**Pension Fund**

To extend to all circumscriptions which have no system of social security, participation in the Pension Fund already existing in the Congregation. To realise this, the Fund must
be developed and strengthened. To this end it has been decided to undertake an evaluation of the Fund every three years. At the present moment there is a reduction in the contributions received in relation to the monies paid out. To keep it balanced, the annual contributions need to be increased urgently from $USD 60 to $USD 80 in 2009 and then to $USD 100 in 2010.

Regarding confreres from the ‘South’ who work in the ‘North’, the European Provincials decided in 2005 to pay an annual contribution of €2,000 for each one; these contributions form the Pension Fund and are managed by the General Bursar’s office.

Furthermore, it is recommended that circumscriptions which are already benefiting annually from the Pension Fund, themselves create a fund in order to meet the future needs of their sick and elderly confreres.

**EMI**

The International Missionary Benefit Society is a health insurance scheme. The EGC of 2008 proposed that this system be extended to all confreres whose countries of origin do not have such an organised scheme. The circumscriptions of Eastern Africa are already members of EMI. It is proposed that all confreres be enrolled in option 4 of this system, which covers treatment in local hospitals for an annual contribution of $USD40-45.

**2.4.1.2 In the Long Term**

*Training of Bursars*

This training, decided at Torre d’Aguilh, is now taking place and it is hoped that all circumscriptions will benefit from it. The EGC of 2008 requested that there be a Directory

Generally speaking, the idea of the last General Chapter to intensify the dialogue between the north and the south regarding finances must be continued.

**III. BELONGING TO THE CONGREGATION**

**3.1 SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OF THE CONGREGATION**

**INTRODUCTION**

Four years ago at Torre d’Aguilh, capitulants at the General Chapter saw the need for spiritual renewal of our Congregation. This recognition had been prepared by preceding General Chapters, the celebration of the Spiritan Year and, more proximately, by the pre-capitular document, “Authentically Living our Spiritan Charism Today”. The theme of the General Chapter “Faithful to the gift entrusted to us” (1Tim 6, 20) helped us focus on ourselves as agents of evangelisation and identify various tasks that needed attention. The indications were clear that we were at a critical point in our history as a Spiritan family. With the establishment of the Centre for Spiritan Studies at Duquesne after the General Chapter, the General Council saw it as the organ that would prepare specialists in Spiritan spirituality and studies, publish materials for Spiritan studies, promote research into our founders and history, design a systematic programme of Spiritan studies for our communities of formation, establish a comprehensive Spiritan resource library, etc. The Centre has already laid down solid foundations on which we continue to build as individual Spiritans and as a family. At Ariccia, four years after Torre d’Aguilh, delegates at the Enlarged General Council continued with the
one following the method “see, judge, act, evaluate”. The participants at the EGC looked at the draft of this document and gave some more ideas before its final publication.

- They emphasised the importance of this document in the animation of the Congregation; it will need to be studied step by step, and involve all the confreres.
- The concrete examples given in it are there to help us reflect on our own experience, and to move away from just theory to putting it into practice. This implies a real decision to give up individualism so as to be committed to greater sharing and solidarity.
- Some suggestions made in the group discussions to amend the contents of the document have been inserted into the text itself.
- According to the members of the EGC this document has come just at the right time in order to animate the year of Poullart des Places which will begin in October 2009.

2.4.3 Examination of a Document Proposed by the General Council Concerning “Mission and Finances (TA 7.14)”

The proposed text of this document was presented for discussion. It is intended to give some orientations concerning questions raised by the application of TA 7.14, 7.14.1 and 7.14.2.

Reactions to this document at the EGC were mixed; if it causes more problems than it solves then it should be dropped – but the problems still remain and how can they be dealt with? Some participants thought that with a few amendments it could be sent out. The General Council finally decided to take note of what was expressed at the EGC and amend it accordingly before sending it out.

for Bursars. This is something that will be prepared to help Superiors and Bursars clarify the role of Bursars in managing in a transparent manner, the immovable goods of their circumscriptions.

Inventory

The disappointing results of the inventory were presented at the EGC. The aim of this exercise, as requested by TA 7.3, was to share – in a spirit of solidarity befitting the Spiritan family - what was superfluous in a circumscription with the General Council, in order for it to help the poorest circumscriptions achieve financial autonomy. This inventory had to be the first step in creating a new financial organisation in the Congregation, inspired by evangelical values in solidarity with each other and the sharing of our resources. The process already begun in drawing up the inventory will continue until every circumscription has responded to the decisions of the previous General Chapter. In the meantime, the General Council will study the idea of setting up an Investment Aid Fund.

What kind of Financial Organisation?

On the question of a new financial organisation proposed by TA 7.2, the General Bursar presented a reflection at the EGC on the financial organisation model in the neo-liberal context in which we are living and whose results have become visible in the present world financial crisis.

Setting up an economic structure of solidarity and responsibility is the way to find a solution to the financial problems of the Congregation.

The EGC reflections, reproduced below, help to show that, without entering into a highly regulated and quantified vision of our relations, we do need to live out the evangelical
counsel of poverty. Without this vision of things we will never achieve a true solidarity or evangelical sharing of our resources:

- There is a need for transparency and accountability. Donors must know what is done with the money they give.
- We must be credible, or we lose people’s confidence. A lot of grants have been paid out for projects which have never been realised.
- Some confreres need to change their ideas concerning the common ownership of resources – they are not interested in this because of a complete lack of the sense of belonging to the Spiritan family. There is too much individualism and concern about patrimony and personal comfort. Superiors and Bursars need to be more strict in eradicating unacceptable practices in their communities. We need to feel that the resources of the community belong to all and they are there to help the Spiritan family grow.
- Some confreres spend a lot on electronic gadgets. Where does the vow of poverty or any idea of the ‘common fund’ come in?
- How is it that some confreres can take very expensive holidays?
- Newly-appointed Superiors inherit difficult situations and must bear the burden of the bad financial management of their predecessors.
- Many missionaries bring a lot of money and other resources to their missions and ask very little from the people. At this time we expect circumscriptions to be financially autonomous, and the bishops do too. The people continue to be poor despite all the aid that has been given to them. Confreres who spend a lot of time looking for funds, neglect their pastoral responsibilities. Projects for financial autonomy must be moral and honest – we must be careful in the efforts we make to achieve this.

Whatever the financial structures of the Congregation may be, we must always remember they are carried out, not according to neo-liberal principles, but according to principles of financial solidarity based on the evangelical counsel of poverty.

Authority of the General Council

Given the fact of our decentralised Congregation, the General Council has no authority to ‘force’ the idea of solidarity between circumscriptions or to dictate amounts to be donated. But the EGC 2008 felt that, for this solidarity to be a realised, the General Council needs to have greater powers of decision. It is obvious that there are some rich circumscriptions and others which are poor. Solidarity therefore needs to be preserved at all levels of the Congregation. In any case, this is a matter which only a General Chapter can decide.

2.4.2 Examination of Anima Una no. 61 “Living the Vow of Poverty Today”

The 2004 General Chapter emphasised the difference between “poverty suffered” and “poverty chosen” (TA 1.1.4). As a follow-up to this the General Council was preparing an I/D entitled “Living the Vow of Poverty Today”. Several confreres from representative areas of the Congregation had been asked to contribute their ideas for this. The document proposes a reflection made up of four steps, each
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