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### Spiritan News, No. 20

Congregazione dello Spirito Santo

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# SPIRITAN NEWS

February-March, 1979

No. 20

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

## SUMMARY

EVENT/DOCUMENTATION: Spiritan Holland.  
NEWS: Decisions of General Council - Northern Nigeria - Senegal - Congo - The Cameroons - Spiritan Studies Group - Books received - Our Jubilarians - Our Dead.

*From December 1 to December 29, 1978, the Dutch Province was visited by two Assistants-General, Fr A. van SONSBEEK (Dutch) and Fr A. SOUCY (Canadian). They were joined by Father General for the second half of the visit: Dec. 15-29.*

## Event-Documentation

### SPIRITAN HOLLAND

The « Visit » of December, 1978.

#### WHAT CAN WE SAY?

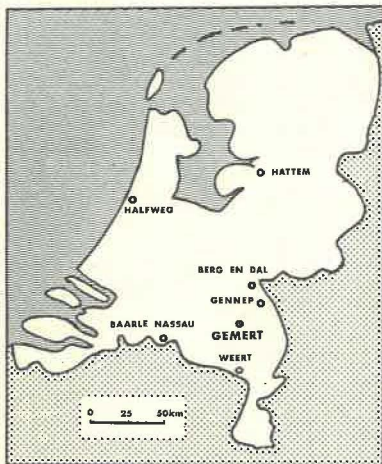
**HOLLAND!**... It is hard to believe that this charming little country should have such a bad press: but, it must be understood that journalists make their bread and butter out of the unexpected and unusual. The World Press is usually more interested in "tit-bits" than in solid food. Their delight is in the "blessed bread" of Moluccan revolts, problems of the Royal household, Lockheed scandals, differences with the Roman Curia, and so on. Perhaps I myself reflected a little the same spirit when I asked: "And what about your visit to Holland"?

Evidently, the question was put to one of our three Visitors on his return, a Dutchman to boot! I was just trying to be friendly but with his typical humour he queried: was my question "professional" "sympathetic" or simply "naive"? In fact, he had so much to say that he scarcely knew where to begin! It was, according to him, somewhat unjust to attempt a brief report on what all three had seen and lived in the course of a month in a country which, despite its size, was distinguished by its past history and present position. Indeed, the welcome received was so warm that, he said, only those who have experienced it can appreciate it: a welcome so concerned that our Dutch confreres, which is not always the case elsewhere, put themselves out to speak the language of their guests!

Our Dutch confreres remember other "official visits" of the past, very friendly... on the spot! The "Re-

ports" that followed them however were those rather of "supervisors", not to say of "inquisitors"! There are also those Spiritans throughout the world, always curious, always well-informed on good and evil, who have their minds made up already! These are likely to nod their heads gravely and look at this visit through the "coloured spectacles" of those who know!

In the light of all that, what CAN we say?



## FIRST OF ALL, TRY TO UNDERSTAND:

### A Church with its own genius.

Holland was for long considered to be a Protestant country. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that Dutch Catholicism benefitted from the Reformation, in the sense that it was tested and purified by it. Later, war against the common enemy would bring Catholics and Protestants together. These two factors - the old confrontation and the new pacific spirit of solidarity - were both to contribute to the growth of an oecumenism which explains much in contemporary Holland.

In those times, there was no laxity. More than others, Dutch Catholics were by tradition strict observers: laws and decrees of the Church were rigidly enforced.

There was a time when Catholics in Holland were only half of the total population of 8 million and yet could the country pride itself on having 9,000 missionaries in the field. Even to-day they number 6,000, relatively old it must be admitted. But they were and are among those great apostles to whom the Universal Church is deeply indebted.

Religious Institutes generally looked to Holland, where vocations abounded. Dutch Catholic parents considered it an honour to give some of their many children to the service of God and the Church in the priesthood or the religious life. The diocese of Bois-le-Duc alone, in the years 1950-1960, offered hospitality to 20 Senior Seminaries, each of which ordained between 10 and 30 priests a year!

Is it to be wondered at that a Church of such importance should become the target dreamed of by the World Press when things began to change: before, during and after Vatican II? Here was a country that lived intensely the great drama of the Council, more indeed than others, in its preparation, its development and in the application of its Decrees.

### A Prosperous Country.

Once rich because of its Colonies, then impoverished by war and the end of the colonial era, Holland was to achieve a new prosperity by building up a balanced economy of industry and agriculture. Aware of its financial possibilities, it was to establish a perfect system of Social Security for all its citizens, without exception: unlike other countries, even clerics were not excluded!

## A Flourishing Spiritan Province.

Like other Congregations, the Spiritans were quick to establish a foot-hold in the country in the early years of this century. After 30 years existence, the Province of "Belgium-Holland" could already count 200 members with 500 aspirants. (Cf. Sp. News, No. 19.)

Another 30 years and a Dutch Provincial, head of a strong and well-organised Province, with 650 missionaries at work, could justly say he was "the happiest of men", and could devote all his time and attention to the missionaries and their missions. That was in 1963.

In those days, there were 200 Junior Seminarians at Weert; an intake of 15-25 Novices each year; while the Senior Scholasticate at Gemert housed 100 Scholastics. In Baarle Nassau twenty Brothers were in training in a setting admirably equipped for that purpose. There was a Seminary for Late Vocations at Hattem; a Mission Procure at Halfweg. The Provincial House at Rhenen was a lively centre of missionary propaganda, while at Berg en Dal, the Africa Museum was sufficiently important to merit Government recognition.

Dedicated exclusively to the missions, the Province had no local commitments other than these. All was directed to training Missionary Priests and Brothers and ALL in fact went to the mission-field. Those whose health was not sufficiently robust for the tropics were appointed to other countries but all went abroad. Moreover, in the days when Holland still had colonies overseas, no Dutch Spiritan was ever appointed to these. Indeed, many years would pass before the Congregation conceded to the Dutch, Districts of their own. The proof of this is evident to-day in the wide-spread diaspora of Dutch throughout the Spiritan world.: at the present moment they are to be met in some 13 different countries of Africa or America.

## THE TIDE TURNS.

Another 15 years pass. It is 1978. By comparison with its "golden age", the Dutch Province is reduced to a third of its members. In this it is not alone, and if some of the older Provinces do not seem to have been as badly hit, perhaps it is that they did not experience or have not yet experienced, those changes in society which are less a consequence of developments in the Church and more a consequence of evolution in the world.

It is easy to reflect ironically on an evolution we consider "retrograde", on lack of missionary vocations as a result of a lack of generosity, on so many problems which "didn't exist in our day"! We would only comment: are the answers to the world of to-morrow those which met the problems of our yesterdays? To

call in doubt God, the Christian, man himself, is that not lack of faith?

Evidently we cannot wipe out the past with the stroke of a pen. Neither can we build a future on fatuous expressions of hope.

*The three maps on the middle pages indicate the number of Dutch Spiritans, each indicated by a point, in the various parts of the world. Evidently, the points do not indicate the exact position in each country.*



## THE PAUSE BETWEEN OUR YESTERDAYS AND OUR TO-MORROWS.

### A time of necessary re-adjustment.

With the decline in numbers, the one-way movement for so long, perhaps too long the policy, from Holland to the missions, has been reversed and almost as fully in the opposite sense. Because of age, health, political situations and so on, men are returning to the home-Province: indeed, at the moment almost half are in the Province. This is necessarily obliging the Province to take a serious look at old structures and situations and to create new orientations for the future.

The great material structures of a missionary era now past are still there although the Junior Scholasticate at Weert is in course of being demolished. Only one house will be left standing, for those confreres working in the town. Gennep, the former Novitiate, is now a house of retirement for older confreres, for whom it has been admirably adapted. Berg en Dal continues as the Africa Museum but the house now is only a residence for confreres whose work is elsewhere. Hattem has become a Spiritan parish and the lovely house built by our Brothers at Baarle Nassau is up for sale, or letting.

All that remains are: the Procure at Halfweg, functioning fully, and the house at Gemert, now the Provincial centre, where the Provincial Team live, and where confreres from the Province or overseas are welcomed, meetings and celebrations held.

It was difficult to re-insert in the Province so many confreres returning from abroad. Since the whole politic of the Province had been directed to the overseas missions, the Spiritans in Holland had no parishes or other apostolic outlets: moreover, other missionary institutes had the same problem, and the Dutch Church had sufficient priests of its own.

There was too the difficulty of planning: how was one to know who would be returning to the Province, or when, and which of them would be fit for work, and what kind of work would suit them? It is to the credit of the Province of Holland that in this pause between their yesterdays and their to-morrows, they did build up a policy: at first, piece-meal to meet individual cases, then by gradually establishing a list of priorities, according to the needs of the local Church and the possibilities of each individual: missionary work, work for immigrants, parishes and chaplaincies.

### An entirely missionary local Church.

Few countries have shown such an awareness of the problems of the Third World and The Mission as Holland.

- The Government gives considerable grants each year for Third World Development, and much of this money is transmitted through the official organisations of the Church in Holland.

- The Dutch Church was quick to show its determination to make the population generally aware



of the problems of the missionaries by presenting an "overall" view of The Mission: quick also to set up single structures for all missionaries, whatever their religious affiliation. The Hierarchy re-organised on a national basis all missionary efforts, including those of the various religious and missionary Institutes. Besides the official bodies created for this purpose, there is an annual collection which brings in 3 to 4 million florins for missionaries on leave: to pay their health insurance like everyone else and, especially, to meet their personal expenses.

- The Protestant Churches have parallel organisations but these co-operate very closely with the Catholic ones in their activities and research.

### The place of the Spiritans.

The Spiritans of the Dutch Province are actively involved in all the varied official structures. They are to be met with at every level in these organisations: Information and Documentation Services, Study-Circles, even at top level in the Central Commission for the Missions, equivalent to a National Missionary Council. This seeks to inspire and encourage all Dutch missionaries, especially by its Review "I/D" (InformatieDienst). A Spiritan is also Director of the Catechetical Centre at Niemegeen and has given a definite missionary dimension to Catechetics generally. Spiritans are also at work in the Mission-Aid bodies like CEBEMO (for distribution of common funds from Government sources), MISSIO, RAPTIM, and MIVA (for providing means of transport on the missions). They are also engaged in missionary animation at ground-level in the different dioceses.

As Co-Ordinator and Animator of this missionary activity, the Church in Holland willingly accepts this precious collaboration of those, whose age, experience and training fits them so well to face the new situations arising.

There remains only those "who can't". They too must be provided for: the solution is not one of the least problems for the Provincial Team.

Many Dutchman still on mission abroad could indeed find a place and realise valuable work in the home Church but they will not be recalled: the number of those who return is already sufficiently high.

There remains the problem of the wide-spread dispersal of our confreres, on the missions and inside Europe itself. Our members are to be found in many parishes not only in Holland but throughout Germany. To remedy this scattering of forces, "Regions" have been established, which should become truly regional Communities in time.

### The Originality of the Organisation of the Province.

To try to meet current problems, and especially to take fraternal care of our sick and aged is laudable but it must not distract our attention from preparing for the world of to-morrow: in this winter pause we must prepare for the new Spring. We are undoubtedly living through the last days of one era of missionary history, but not at the same moment in all places. Though half of our Spiritans have returned, the other half are still continuing in the field. These too must be objects of our solicitude and help. To this end the Province has adapted its structures. It is manifested in the effort made to interest as many Spiritans as possible in the running of the Province,

and in the seeking of solutions by the Provincial Team. They are not working in isolation. Four working-groups, each of 10 confreres help them in their task of animation.

These groups cover the whole field of concern in the Province: both in their interest in the individual confreres and in the apostolic witness of all. One group handles all matters concerning missionaries at home or abroad. Another deals with social problems, in order to extract full advantage from what Government offers in favour of the sick, the old, and the various assurances. A third specialises in the finances of the Province. The fourth devotes its energies to orientating and animating the Communities. Regular meetings, and the presence of at least one member of the Provincial Team in each group, makes this a practical system of government adapted to the context of to-day and much appreciated.

### By this shall men know: the fraternal dimension.

Another characteristic of the Province is the special concern for each member and for his family, which is deeply appreciated by all.

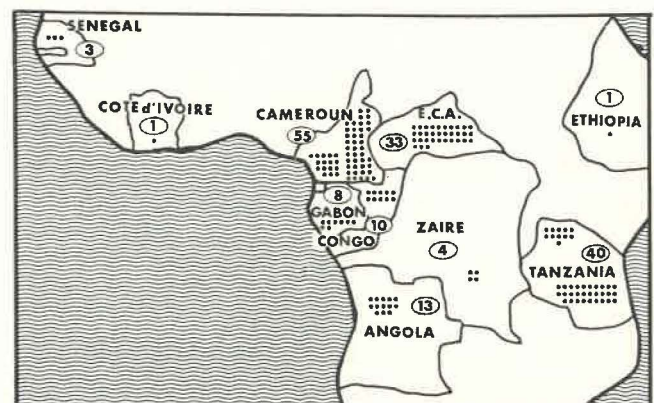
Even more striking, the absence of tension between confreres, the lack of criticism or factions is witness to a fraternal spirit, which is one of the primary considerations when one speaks of a truly religious life.

That is not to say that all is perfect! As yet an answer has not been found to the problem of an acceptable form of community prayer and regular celebrations. There seems to be a fear of "restoring" an old order of past "practices" which had been deliberately dropped and without regret. There is, alas, an all too clear contrast between pastoral commitments of spiritual worth and the quality of some Spiritan community celebrations. This should not be read as a failure but a challenge. There is a searching, a discussing, a desire on the part of many to try new approaches, in small groups, without forcing anyone to participate.

This is leading to a wish to establish small communities whose members would share both life and work. There perhaps, with the help of some younger Dutch Spiritans at present on the missions, is the opening of a window on the wider perspectives of to-morrow.

In that context, the ordination, for Brazil, of a Dutch Spiritan on December 17, 1978, may be hailed, not as the last of a past missionary era but the first of a new era about to begin: the first dawning of a second Spring.

J. Godard, C.S.Sp.



# NEWS

## Decisions of the General Council.

- On November 10, 1978, the Portuguese Spiritans working in Brazil were re-grouped to form a new District entitled Brazil South-East.
- On December 4, 1978, and with effect from that date, Father Martin van MOORSEL was named Principal Superior of the District of Doumé (The Cameroons).

## Missionary Development in Northern Nigeria.

On October 9, 1978, a very significant ceremony took place in the District of Makurdi. Father V. O'Toole, the Principal Superior, that day presided at the Final Profession of two English Spiritans and the First Profession of two Nigerian confreres: Philip Marsh and John McFadden; Fidelis Odum and Joseph Nietlong. The two English students will shortly receive the Diaconate; the latter will continue their studies in the Seminary at Jos. Fr Joseph CARROLL, C.S.Sp., has recently been appointed a Lecturer there and so will help to provide a nucleus of Spiritan community life for our new Nigerian confreres. It is good to see the members of the younger and older Churches coming together to share the inspiration of LIBERMANN.

## Senegal.

In November 1978, the Church of Senegal celebrated two 150th anniversaries:

- That of the Church of Gorée, where the celebrations were presided over by Cardinal THIANDOUM. All the Bishops of Senegal were present and many members of other faiths, notably the Saudi Arabian Ambassador.
- That of the opening of the Cathedral of Saint-Louis. Mgr SAGNA presided the Liturgy, attended by several Bishops, the Christian Community and their friends.

## Congo.

Twenty months after the tragic death of Cardinal Emile BIAYENDA, the Holy Father has appointed Mgr Barthélemy BATANTU to be Archbishop of Brazzaville (Oss. Rom., 24 Nov. 1978). The new Archbishop was previously Parish Priest of Our Lady of Baongo Parish and Diocesan Director of Catechetics. The new Archbishop will receive Episcopal Ordination on Feb. 11.

## The Cameroons.

On the same date, the Holy Father appointed Mgr Thomas KUISSI, Bishop of Nkongsamba: he had previously been Apostolic Administrator of the diocese "sede vacante".

## Spiritans Studies Group.

The Annual Meeting of the Spiritan Studies Group was held at the Generalate from Dec. 29 to Dec. 31. A full report will appear in SPIRITAN PAPERS in due course.

Meantime from among the many questions discussed we retain the following:

- The examination and discussion of Fr SIGRIST's work: SPIRITANS PAST AND PRESENT;
- The exchange of views on the Spiritan Apostolate to the poor and most abandoned, both direct and indirect (e.g. through science and research into improved standards);
- The tributes paid to one of the Group, Fr B. KELLY, TransCanada, who recently defended his thesis at the INSTITUT CATHOLIQUE DE PARIS on "The Second Conversion of Francis LIBERMANN".

## Books Received.

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD. This is the second volume of the excellent collection of Sunday Services and Catechumenate Course for Adults by FR J. CARROLL, C.S.Sp. and SR B. MURDOCH, H.R.S. which we reviewed last year. It has already had a wide sale in Nigeria and outside and is published by Geoffrey Champman, London.

ONE BREAD ONE BODY, by Brian Hearne, is No. 54 in the Spearhead series of Gaba Publications (Afer), P.O. Box 908, ELDORET, Kenya (Subscription rates for 1979: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda: 55 Shgs; other African countries, U.S. dollars, 9 approx; outside Africa, 9.50 U.S. dollars approx.). This is a clearly written and highly readable work on the significance of the Eucharist in building up Christian Communities. It will prove a useful addition to the libraries of all, clerical or lay, who have responsibility in this field. The presentation is attractive, the footnotes listed at the end provide a useful reading list. The number of pages (80) is no indication of the amount of concentrated wisdom in this booklet.

## Our Jubilarians.

### Golden Jubilee of Profession:

- March 18 : M. Edmond THEVENIN (France)
- March 24 : Br Marie-Pierre RIMLINGER (France)
- April 19 : Br Gabriel CORNICHTET (France)

### Golden Jubilee of Priesthood:

- March 31 : Fr Joseph LE BORGNE (France)
- April 7 : Frs Heinrich GOERGEN and Richard KREUTER (Germany)
- Fr Gottfried THELEN (U.S.A. West)

## Our Dead.

- Nov. 6 : Br John-Berchmans CASSLÉY (Ireland), aged 76 years.
- Nov. 20 : Mgr Joseph KILASARA (Kilimanjaro), aged 62 years.
- Dec. 4 : Fr Martinus WILSON, sen., (Holland), aged 56 years.
- Dec. 12 : Fr Léon FUHRMANN (France), aged 84 years.
- Dec. 13 : Br Verissimo ALVES (Portugal), aged 72 years.
- Dec. 20 : Fr Michael C. O'CONNOR (Kenya), aged 86 years.
- Dec. 21 : Fr Albert GIMMIG (France), aged 60 years.
- (Total, 1978:56)
- Jan. 4 : P. Johannes Fr. BENDE (Holland), aged 73 years.
- Jan. 5 : P. Louis LAVOLE (France), aged 71 years.
- Jan. 8 : P. Eugène HABLITZ (France), aged 74 years.
- Jan. 8 : P. Pierre HAAS, sen., (Guyane), aged 64 years.

*Confreres who wish to stop at the Generalate are most welcome, within the limits of the accommodation available. We would ask them however to make our task easier by contacting the SUPERIOR of the Community sufficiently in advance. Given the unreliability of the postal service here, and especially if no reply has been received from us, prospective visitors are asked to phone or cable in good time the date, hour and flight number of their arrival.*