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SPIRITAN NEWS

April 1979

No. 21

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

SUMMARY

EVENT/DOCUMENTATION: The "Visit" of the Province of France.

NEWS: The Generalate Team - Meetings of Major Superiors - Appointment of Superiors - Chapters of Provinces and Districts - Germany - Brazil - Our Jubilarians - Our Dead.

Event/Documentation

THE "VISIT" OF THE PROVINCE OF FRANCE December 1978 - January 1979.

From December 1, 1978 to January 27, 1979, the French Province was visited by three Assistants-General: Frs GROSS (French), THEILEMEIER (German), and DALY (Irish). They were joined by FATHER GENERAL on January 7 and by Fr WALSH (Canadian) on January 22.

What follows is not a report on this visit. Written on the occasion of the visit, more especially for the information of members of other Provinces, it is a necessarily brief outline of the development of the Province of France over the last decade.

The "Big" Province.

● First in time in the history of the Congregation, the Province of France was for a long time the predominant one. It is easy to understand how other Provinces while genuinely interested and sympathetic, looked (and perhaps still do) with a measure of suspicion on the original Province of the Institute.

● This Province still remains numerically the strongest in the Congregation, with 1,124 confreres of French origin, of whom 483 are in the Province itself, as of January 1, 1979.

● It is extensive also in the variety of its works and its geographical limits. Unlike other Institutes, it has elected to remain a single Province, divided into four "Regions" and with houses spread throughout the area from Lille to Grasse, from Langonnet to Strasbourg.

● With about 40 "candidates to Spiritan life" (a twelfth of the number of confreres in the Province), it is among the leaders, vocation-wise, of the Orders and Congregations in France.

This makes clear why it was necessary to send three Assistants-General to visit the Province. It took them two

BRIEF FLASHES ...

... condided to us by "The Visitors".

... The Province has evolved a good balance between Local Superiors, Regional Superiors and the Provincial Team. This is not a one-man show...

... I was much impressed by the welcome extended to different groups passing through the various communities. I was conscious of the openness, and the authentic quality of the witness given...

... No other Province has been as active in the fields of Renewal and mobility of personnel. The vitality of the Province can be largely explained by this two-fold policy...

... French Spiritans are more men of the "bush" than of the suburbs. Many of their houses are enormously big, and far from the towns...

... I liked the way the Province was governed, a combination of firmness and flexibility. I was impressed by the personality both of Regional Superiors and the members of the Provincial Team...

... Many of the houses are "on a tight rein". The Province has invested heavily in personnel; but the falling number of Spiritans will very soon force them to make a choice...

... I noticed many Fathers washing-up the dishes! In some Provinces that would seem strange...

... I was impressed, not merely by the number, but especially by the quality of the young Spiritans of to-morrow. Simple and very fraternal in their attitude, they ask the right questions. Nonetheless, I was surprised that they knew little of others in Communities relatively near them...

... I met many of our older confreres, happy and at peace, truly grateful for all that has been done for them...

... Communities are very diversified and range from very big to very small. In general, there exists among them a definite desire to improve the quality of community life, though some communities remain weak in this respect...

... The Province has tried hard to assure a missionary presence amongst immigrants and in the field of missionary animation. Many Congregations are astonished by the presence of Spiritans almost everywhere and by the number of their vocations...

... Community prayer is an established reality in almost all the houses in France. More effort is needed however to improve participation and the quality of the prayer...

... The achievement of the Brothers in Chevilly is truly remarkable. This experiment should not remain limited: it is a challenge to the Congregation and should be made known...

months to meet and talk with the confreres, individually and in meetings, and even then, they had to work on Sundays! It explains also the important representation of more than half the General Council at the conclusion of the Visit.

Three Provincial Chapters.

The new impetus given to the Province of France can be said to have started with the first Provincial Chapter of 1970. Those that followed, in 1973 and 1976, simply strengthened and corrected the approaches then adopted in principle and made them more effective.

● **1970:** a Chapter of dispassionate evaluation. Facing up to the signs of the times, the Chapter also took a good hard look at the evolving idea of Mission, the changing attitudes in the Church of France and in the Congregation. The result was the declaration of a Missionary Project. This would guide the activities and influence the choices of the Province for many years, and many of what were then novel structures still endure.

● **1973:** this Chapter can be characterised as that of SETTING OUT ON MISSION. Beneath the flow of high-sounding words may be discerned a determination to encourage each Community to seriously examine its "style of life and presence in the contemporary world". It insists: "each Community, as a Community, is under an obligation to involve itself in the work of missionary animation."

● **1976:** the key-note of this Chapter is SOLIDARITY, INTERNATIONALITY. Far from showing a desire to stand aloof and wrestle with its "own" problems, the Province asserts its desire to embrace the common project of the whole Congregation, following in that the mind of the First Enlarged General Council.

A triple choice.

From 1970 onwards, the Province of France gave effect to three decisions which, as time will show, are the root-causes of the vitality evident to-day:

● The inauguration of a new system of ANIMATION and GOVERNMENT. On the one hand, the setting-up of a Provincial Team of three members, each with his own sphere of responsibility, yet all acting as one. On the other, the establishment of four Regions, each with its own Regional Superior. And, finally, the institution of a Provincial Council composed of the

Some French Spiritans of 35-45 years of age actually in the service of the Province:

Formation	35 years old;	3 years in Zaire
Biblical Studies	35 "	3 years in Gabon
Missionary Animation	37 "	8 years in Congo
Missionary Animation	37 "	8 years in Madagascar
Missionary Animation	37 "	6 years in Camerouns
African Workers	37 "	10 years in Senegal
Formation	38 "	9 years in Madagascar
Missionary Animation	39 "	10 years in Congo
Brother Mechanic	39 "	9 years in Congo
Novice-Master	40 "	8 years in Gabon
Sup. Miss. Animation	40 "	10 years in Congo
Hostel, Miss. Anim.	42 "	5 years in Congo
Formation	42 "	13 years in Guadeloupe
Miss. Animation	42 "	8 years in Congo
Hostel, Miss. Anim.	44 "	5 years in Gabon
Miss. Animation	44 "	8 years in Mauritania
Provincial Vicar	44 "	9 years in Algeria

members of the Provincial Team and the Regional Superiors. This latter meets once a month.

● In the light of Vatican II, the up-dating of the Theology and Fraternal Life of as many of the members of the Province as possible. This encouragement of long (one year) or short (two or three month) Renewal Courses has borne fruit. In ten years, almost 400 French Spiritans have availed of the opportunity, especially at Mortain, at the Catholic Institute of Paris or at l'Abresle, near Lyons.

● To assure the vitality of the Province by the TEMPORARY RECALL of young confreres from the Districts. "Every confrere should realise that after 4 or 5 years on mission, he is liable to be recalled for the service of the Province. Every confrere should also understand that his return to the mission is guaranteed once he has completed his term of service in the Province, estimated at 5 or 6 years." (1970)

Each year, anything from 5 to 10 confreres have been recalled from the Districts to the Province (60 in 10 years). This regular infusion of new blood has been highly beneficial and has been felt especially in formation and animation work.

This desired exchange of confreres was called at first "rotation." This was considered however somewhat disrespectful and too tied to a too geographical concept of Mission. Since 1976 it has been replaced by the expression: "movement of personnel."

An Answer for To-day.

The Missionary Project of the Province envisaged a re-evaluation of its so-called "traditional" works and undertook the study of new commitments. That was, and is, the constant concern of successive Provincial Teams.

Decisions taken to meet problems discerned have never been considered definitive solutions. They sought to provide, in view of the circumstances, an immediate and hopefully the least harmful answer to a matter of urgency.

Since we cannot possibly cover all that was attempted in the last decade, we confine ourselves to a consideration of three only of the more urgent matters, thought to be most typical.

● Vocations and Formation.

The decline in vocations in the late sixties, especially in the West, necessitated a review of what had for long been the principal work of the Province.

While seeking other possible ways of attracting vocations, the Province decided neither to suppress nor to abandon Junior Scholasticates: "The Province continues to back apostolic schools and postulancies" (1970). Nonetheless, Chapter after Chapter, those responsible had to consider closing some of these houses, re-orientating and re-grouping several others. They had more especially to define anew the objectives to be followed. The problem was not so much that of maintaining in principle long-established works which had proved their worth in past times. It was rather that of training Christians open to Mission, with a view to commitment at the level of the Local or the Universal Church. Even to-day, experience shows that the majority of Spiritan vocations in France come from these schools. But, the opposite tendency is growing.

Gradually too there was an evolution in the old structures of Senior Formation: Novitiate, Philosophy (First Cycle), and Theology (Second Cycle). The Province has consistently pursued a two-fold objective: to provide a COMMON training for a common project and a more DIVERSIFIED formation for the better service of the MISSION.

In the last 10 years all former centres of formation have been displaced. The FIRST CYCLE moved from Mortain to Chevilly, then to Lyons and is at present in Vanves in the Paris area. The SECOND CYCLE, long associated with Chevilly, is dispersed over several Hostels in Paris and the suburbs.

There has been an evolution also in the style of formation. As formerly, perhaps more than formerly, throughout formation the principles of personal and community support, of common life and apostolic commitment have been maintained. There are three stages in formation to-day:

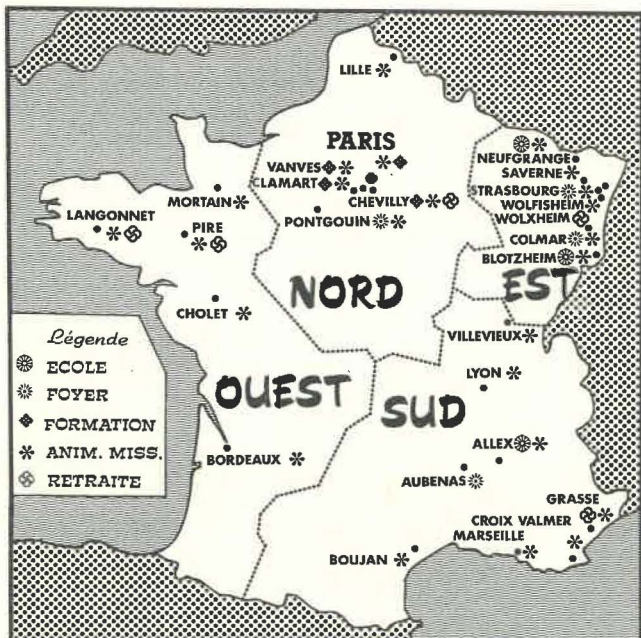
- A PRELIMINARY PERIOD, for those from secondary schools or from work. This covers one or two years and embraces either the First Cycle of formation for the priesthood or other alternatives. It is also a period of apprenticeship to the common life and the mission.
- A PERIOD OF TRAINING IN COMMON (For all future Priests and Brothers). This includes two years of service on the mission, usually outside France; then, a year of study at the Centre for Studies and Missionary Research, Paris; finally, a year of Novitiate.
- A PERIOD OF SPECIALISATION, either of direct preparation for the ministerial priesthood (3-5 Years) or of training for the other ministries (religious or profane studies), or again of professional or apostolic formation, all in the optic of the Mission.

● Missionary Animation and Work.

The large number of immigrants present in France awakened a realisation that the Mission was not confined to "those abroad". Though evidently not limited to concern for immigrants, missionary animation finds a place in this work.

Father R. YOU, Provincial-Vicar, has recently published a well-documented study of missionary animation in the Province of France from 1970 to 1978. It records the difficulty of clearly defining from the beginning the precise role of these missionary animators, known as DIAM (Delegates for Missionary Animation and Information).

They were seen at first as members concerned with "all forms of vocation" (1970); then, as dedicated to making people aware of the problems of the Third World and of the Mission (1973). Finally (1976), the title was considerably broadened to embrace the variety of missionary commitments of the Province: any Spiritan in France engaged on work for the Mission in any way was considered a DIAM! This makes it difficult to draw up a list of these: there are however about forty in the Province at present involved in this way.



IMMIGRANTS

It is estimated that there are four million immigrants at present in France. Of these, 1,000,000 are from North Africa; 800,000 Portuguese; 500,000 each Spanish and Italian; 100,000 workers and 25,000 students from Black Africa. To these should be added immigrants from Reunion and the West Indies who enjoy French nationality and Mauritians, who have no official privileged status and whose numbers are difficult to assess. Political refugees and a large number of illegal immigrants should also be included.

There also exist in the Province, other than new Communities fully geared to give witness to prayer and mission, a number of older Communities which also claim to be centres of missionary animation. Projects also that were more or less individual efforts have gradually been integrated into the system. In the category of missionary animators we must also necessarily include those in the service of various "Third World" groups, those helping homeless immigrants, chaplains to African and Portuguese workers, and students; and of course those involved in spreading missionary information (through Documentation Centres, missionary magazines and the other media, Spiritan or non-Spiritan).

Even more striking is the ubiquity of Spiritan presence in the many Missionary organisations of the French Church. The Provincial Team actively collaborates with the *Secretariate of The Episcopal Commission for Overseas Missions*, the *National Missionary Council*, the *Centre for Missionary Research and Theology*. Several Spiritans are also seconded to the service of the *Pontifical Mission-Aid Societies*.

Some whose concept of The Mission is limited to "mission abroad" are critical of this marked presence of "missionaries" in the Home Church. More realistically, perhaps, others see this releasing of members to such works as weakening the possibilities of involving the dioceses of France. We have to ask however if, left to herself, the Church in France could have initiated such ventures concerned with a field of which she has little or no knowledge or experience. It should also be mentioned that no DIAM is ever seconded as a "permanent official" to these organisations, though his term of office may because of circumstances be rather longer than shorter. Those responsible in the Province are well aware of the need of mobility, and for a more radical approach to the consideration of works to be undertaken, foundations to be made. They are also keenly aware of the urgent necessity of developing whatever will encourage vocations for the MISSION.

● The "Old-Timers"

Making provision for the reception of older missionaries returning to the Province is an important duty of those responsible. True in all Provinces, it is especially so in France, where the average age is the highest in the Congregation. This is a problem not merely of welcome but of animation also. The Province has opted for medium-sized communities, widely separated geographically: Wolxheim, Langonnet, Piré and Chevilly have already been admirably adapted to this end, but this does not exhaust other possibilities of welcome.

Some missionaries returning to Europe permanently are able to continue to carry on ministry, especially in the parishes around their places of origin. Their isolation is sometimes a worry to those responsible and at present attempts are being made to constitute regional communities.

The State of the Permanent Provisional.

The Visitors assure us that they were impressed by the vitality of the Province of France. Certainly much has been done: to create, sometimes with a

degree of audacity, something new; to preserve, always without being restricted, what could be preserved; and doing both with the utmost respect for the persons concerned.

It would be foolish however to give the impression that the Province of France, any more than any other, is sailing along with the steadiness of an ocean-going liner. There is no certainty for the future of any of its works. The Province must be open to the

challenges that present themselves now and in the future. Decline in numbers, and ageing membership will certainly make it difficult to maintain all present commitments: there will necessarily be new choices to be made. Without wishing to play the role of prophet, it can be said that it will be for the new Provincial Team of France, after the Enlarged Provincial Council of June/July next, to face many of these decisions.

NEWS

The Generalate Team.

- The dates of the Visit to the Province of Portugal remain unchanged but Father WALSH will not be able to go to Portugal as intended.
- The Visit of the Province of Ireland will end on April 8 instead of on April 11. The Visitors are as foreseen.
- Father THIELEMEIER will be out of Rome from mid-February. He will return on April 12.

Meetings of Major Superiors.

- The Principal and Provincial Superiors of NORTH AMERICA met at San Antonio (Texas) from Feb. 6 to Feb. 9. Father WALSH represented the General Council.
- The Principal Superiors of FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA met at Libreville (Gabon) from Feb. 28 to March 2. Father SOUCY was representative of the General Council.
- The Principal Superiors of WEST AFRICA (Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Cabo Verde) will meet at Dakar (Senegal) from April 25 to 27. The Provincials of Nigeria and Angola, and those responsible for the Spiritan Foundations in East Africa and French-speaking Africa will also be invited. The General Council will be represented by Fathers GROSS and WALSH.
- The Principal Superiors of BRAZIL and PARAGUAY will meet in Cruzeiro do Sol (Upper Jurua) from April 23 to 30.

Appointment of Superiors.

By decision of the General Council on:

- January 13, the election of Fr Antonio JANSEN as Principal Superior of the District of Amazonia was confirmed, with effect from that date.
- January 18, the election of Fr Antonio VAN LANKVELD as Principal Superior of the District of Central Brazil was confirmed, with effect from January 23.
- January 20, Fr Casimiro PINTO DE OLIVIERA was named Provincial of PORTUGAL for a second term of office with effect from May 20 next.

Chapters of Provinces and Districts.

● Four Provinces will have Chapters this year:

U.S.A./EAST: June 24-30
 ENGLAND: July 2-15.
 SWITZERLAND: August 19-25.
 TRANSCANADA: August 27-31.

● Two Provinces will have Enlarged Councils of the Province (elective):

FRANCE: June 20 - July 4.
 HOLLAND: end of May.

● Two Districts have Chapters this year:

AMAZONIA: January.
 GAMBIA: ?

Germany.

It is an occasion for rejoicing in the Congregation that the Province of Germany re-opened its Novitiate, after a lapse of 5 years, on March 31 at Spire. There are at present two novices.

Brazil.

- EXERCISES IN APOSTOLATE: During the last Long Vacation, several Brazilian Scholastics spent some time in different apostolic situations; some at Amapa situated at the mouth of the Amazon; others, with a Brazilian Father, went to set up basic communities among the Brazilian immigrants in Paraguay; others still, to work in parishes in São Paulo, Rio and Brazilia.
- NOVITIATE AND PROFESSION: on February 2, four novices began their Novitiate at Salete. The same day, two Scholastics and two Brothers made their Final Consecration to the Apostolate.
- FIRST AND SECOND CYCLE: At Villa Mangalot, 5 Spiritan candidates for the Priesthood began their First Cycle of Studies. The new Residence near the Presbytery of Villa Mangalot has been opened. There are five Theologians there and these follow the Second Cycle of Studies with the Jesuits.
- ORDINATIONS: one Brazilian Spiritan was ordained in December and has received his first appointment: to Upper Jurua. Two others will be ordained Deacons in March.
- MEETINGS: for five days in January and February, the Spiritans of South Brazil met at District level. Fr TRACHTLER, Superior of Southern Brazil and Co-Ordinating Secretary of all the Principal Superiors in Brazil, attended all of these gatherings.

Our Jubilarians.

Golden Jubilee of Priesthood:

May 12: Fr Louis GUILLEMIN (Cameroons)
 June 16: Archbishop Thomas BROSNAHAN (Sierra Leone);
 Frs Thomas FOX, Thomas MACKEN and Charles O'DONOGHUE (Ireland); Fr James NEVILLE (Kilimanjaro).

70 Years of Religious Profession:

June 21: Brother Ubald WEISS (France).

Our Dead.

21 Dec. : Fr Alfred NUSS (Upper Jurua), aged 55 years.
 15 Jan. : Fr Clement Leo LYONS (Ireland), aged 47 years.
 15 Jan. : Fr Joseph O'MALLEY (Ireland), aged 58 years.
 21 Jan. : Fr Adrian OLSTHOORN (Holland), aged 88 years.
 22 Jan. : Br Candide DUCRY (Switzerland), aged 67 years.
 28 Jan. : Fr Michael CORBETT (Ireland), aged 62 years.
 17 Feb. : Fr Henri MOULIS (France), aged 90 years.
 26 Feb. : Fr Louis LOTH (France), aged 88 years.
 26 Feb. : Br Henri CLAUTOUR (France), aged 78 years.
 26 Feb. : Fr Antoine WEISS (France), aged 74 years.
 27 Feb. : Fr John MC DONALD (England), aged 70 years.
 7 March: Fr Julius F. ZEHLER (U.S.A./East), aged 79 years.