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SPIRITAN NEWS

July-August, 1979

No. 23

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

SUMMARY

EVENT: Spiritan Foundation of West Africa.
DOCUMENTATION: New Spiritan Vocations in Africa.
NEWS: Generalate Team - Appointments - Ethiopia -
Books/Courses - Our Jubilarians - Our Dead.

The Event:

SPIRITAN FOUNDATION OF WEST AFRICA Meeting at Dakar (25-27 April 1979)

Life is movement. God - and the airlines - know there's no shortage of movement these days, if only to attend meetings of all kinds!

It must be said, nevertheless, that often during such meetings fresh ideas are proposed, fresh initiatives undertaken. Amongst these, for the moment, we single out just one: the birth of the Spiritan Foundation of West Africa. All those interested met at Dakar from April 25 to April 29, with the sole exception of the Provincial of Angola, who found it impossible to attend. Present were: the Provincial of Nigeria-East, the Principal Superiors (English-speaking, French-speaking, Portuguese-speaking) of Sierra Leone, Ghana, Makurdi, Kwara-Benue, Gambia, Senegal and Cabo Verde; the Superiors of the Foundations of East Africa and French-speaking Africa, the General Secretary of the Panafrican Spiritan Conference and Fathers GROSS and DALY, Assistants-General.

It was not a question of wanting to start something new for the novelty of it. Candidates to the Spiritan life exist in West Africa and it did not seem feasible to affiliate them to either of the two existing Foundations or to the Province of Eastern Nigeria. It is important to respect the cultural origins of these candidates, and any great geographical displacement would in truth be an uprooting for them.

Nonetheless, the problem is not a simple one. West Africa, certainly, has a large measure of unity, arising from a massive Islamic presence. It has also since colonial times the problem of two different languages, which makes exchange difficult. More importantly, it has been influenced by other factors, also a heritage of colonialism, which find expression in different viewpoints according to mentality, type of formation and theological approaches, often diverse.

The relatively small Christian presence in these areas makes it impossible to foresee, at least in the immediate future, the establishment of separate Provinces in each country. The juxtaposition of languages in West Africa is such that there, more perhaps than elsewhere, a bilingual Province is necessary. Such a Province would help to harmonise and integrate certain aspects of the African reality. Indeed, in the ultimate, it would appear that this problem can be resolved only at the level of internationality and bilingualism.

In No. 17 of Spiritan News we announced that this year our DOCUMENTATION would be reserved to Brazil, Holland, France, Ireland and Portugal, with special reference to the Visits made to these countries by the Generalate Team. All these have now been treated with the exception of Ireland, which we have had to postpone until September. In this issue we present, on the occasion of the Meeting of the Principal Superiors of West Africa at Dakar, a short study of Spiritan Foundations.

In the circumstances, short though the meeting at Dakar was, it marks an important watershed in the life of the Congregation in Africa.

The reports presented by each of the participants on the present position of Spiritan vocations and on the prospects for the future, make it possible for us to offer a DOCUMENTATION on this question in this issue (pp. 2-3).

Following these reports, essential questions were raised. How and where should new vocations be trained in West Africa? What were the criteria for recruiting vocations? With what in view? How were these African Spiritans to be integrated in the Congregation? Where was personnel and money to come from for such a project?

The discussions were frank and open: all were aware of what was at stake. Conclusions were limited. It was not possible to resolve all the details. There was general agreement nonetheless on three points:

That a single Conference of Spiritan Major Superiors in West Africa be established;

That, in August 1980, a common Novitiate be set up in Gambia;

That there be established a Spiritan Foundation of West Africa, for which all the Major Superiors would be responsible, but for which the Superiors of Gambia and Senegal would have special responsibility.

Problems remaining are the following: two bilingual men must be found to assume the care of this bilingual Novitiate; language courses must be set up to prepare entrants to the Novitiate; at the next meeting, in Gambia, a year from now, decisions must be reached on the post-Novitiate stages of formation.

Clearly, it will not be easy, but, as one District Superior expressed it: "These decisions are an affirmative vote of confidence in the future of the Congregation and in the Holy Spirit".

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The District Residence at Dakar where the West African Superiors were welcomed.



Documentation.

A NEW SPIRITAN FOUNDATIONS IN AFRICA

THE EVENT OF THE MONTH on page 1 stressed the importance and pointed out some of the difficulties of Spiritan Foundations in Africa. On the other hand, the pre-Capitular Document should by now be in the hands of every Spiritan. On pages 15 and 16, it sets down the context, orientations and the questions submitted for consideration at the next General Chapter. The Reports presented at Dakar make it easier to assess more clearly where we stand regarding new Spiritan vocations in Africa.

We, Spiritans, are not the only ones attracting vocations there. Several other Orders and Congregations are in a similar situation and face the same problem of finding an answer to the new challenges.

The intention of this DOCUMENTATION is to complete the information available for the consideration of our confreres and in view of decisions to be taken at the General Chapter of 1980.

Two recently-erected Spiritan Provinces.

● EASTERN NIGERIA.

The former District of Eastern Nigeria became a Province in 1976. It is the oldest Spiritan Foundation in the present sense of the word. Begun in 1952 by Irish Spiritans, it established successively: Junior Scholasticate, Novitiate, Faculties of Philosophy and Theology.

Since 1953, the new Province has trained 43 priests and 1 Brother. At the time of writing, it has 55 professed Scholastics and 5 Novices. The 1-year Novitiate is preceded by 1 year of Postulancy and is followed by 3 years Philosophy and 4 years Theology. The theology students at present live in the inter-diocesan Seminary at Enugu where they follow their course: a separate house is now being built for them.

● ANGOLA.

The Province of Angola was created in 1977 by the fusion of three existing Districts. The first Provincial is Angolan by birth.

Unlike the Province of Nigeria, where almost all Spiritans are of local origin, the Province of Angola is composed mainly of expatriates at present. Of 84 members, 53 are Portuguese, 13 Dutch, 4 French, 2 English, 1 Irish, 1 Belgian, 1 Spanish. Of the 84, 15 are Brothers. Included in this number is an "International Team" of 2 French, 1 English, 1 Irish. Significantly 16 Fathers and 4 Brothers opted for membership of the new Province. A further 8 Spiritans await their visas to depart: 5 Spaniards, 2 Portuguese, 1 Irish.

Of the 9 local-born Spiritans, 3 are Fathers, 3 Brothers, 3 Scholastics (2 of whom are priests). The Novitiate, first opened in 1975-76, started again on April 15 with 4 Novices. There are 12 young people in immediate preparation for the Novitiate and 50 Junior Scholastics at Huambo, which they share with the Senior Scholastics.

Three Foundations.

● THE EAST AFRICA FOUNDATION.

The first local Spiritans in East Africa came from Tanzania: 5 in number, all were European trained. They themselves were the first, in 1965, to raise the question of a possible Foundation. The District Chapter of Kilimanjaro, in 1970, adopted the pro-

TERMINOLOGY

The terms "Province" and "District" are well-known to Spiritans. Traditionally they signified certain clearly-recognised realities. Provinces were always places of recruitment, formation and mission-sending; Districts, places of missionary work "ad extra" without the full structures necessary for formation at the local level. Vice-Provinces (there are none in the Congregation at present) was the designation of an intermediary stage of development before a full Province was erected.

By contrast, the word FOUNDATIONS is new in Spiritan terminology. It is not referred to in any Chapter document. The nearest reference would probably be to "missionary groups" (Cf. GA, 156). Such groups do in fact exist and are generally dependent upon the Province of origin. Since the Enlarged General Council of 1976, "International Teams" have been set up and these depend on either the local Major Superior or on the General Council direct.

FOUNDATION is the term used to describe the beginning of a structure for the training of Spiritan candidates in their own area, the ultimate aim being to establish an international-type Province.

Some such Spiritan Foundations already exist and have their own proper organisation. For the most part they have been born of the initiative of the Principal Superiors after discussion between themselves. It is conceivable that sooner or later they will replace the present Districts, which will be made into International Provinces, as is common in many other Missionary Institutes. That is a question for the future, however, and the future is in the hands of God!

position. Two years later, Father Lecuyer, then Superior-General, invited the other Principal Superiors in East Africa to accept collective responsibility for the new Foundation. The first Novitiate was opened in 1973, with 6 Novices: the following year there were 5. In 1976 The first Spiritan to have received all his training in his own area was ordained and appointed to Zambia. His country of origin was Tanzania.

The situation at present is: there are 7 in the second year of pre-Philosophy and 15 are expected to join first year next July: in the Novitiate there are 6, including our first 3 Kenyan subjects: there are 15 Philosophers, 9 Theologians. In order to emphasise the international and missionary dimension of this new venture all 4 priests to receive their full training at home, all Tanzanians, were appointed to Zambia.

The success of this Foundation is due, in large measure, to the close co-operation of the 3 Districts of Kenya, Kilimanjaro and Bagamayo with the group working in Zambia; and also, to the useful half-yearly meetings of those in the Formation Team and the respective Superiors. Another important element is the definitely international and missionary orientation given to the venture from its inception.

● THE FRENCH-SPEAKING FOUNDATION OF AFRICA.

Each Foundation has its own peculiar originality and its own basic principles. At the end of the Second World War, there were in French-speaking Africa more than 20 Spiritan confreres of local origin, mostly Cameroonian: then, for a time, the flow ceased. African Spiritans incorporated into foreign Provinces had difficulty in finding their rightful place in the Congregation. Many of them desired and ultimately succeeded in striking roots in their own countries.

Two Pan-African Meetings of Spiritans were held in 1974 and 1976, in Nigeria and Yaoundé respectively.

two meetings of French-speaking Principal Superiors in 1975, at Brazzaville and in 1977, in Bangui. As a consequence it was decided to open a French-speaking Novitiate in Yaoundé in 1977. Joint-responsibility for this was assumed by the Superiors of Yaoundé, Doumé, Gabon, Bangui and Senegal: the Principal Superior of the Congo was appointed the official representative of the Foundation.

The first 4 Novices have since made Profession. There were 1 each from Gabon and Senegal, and 2 from the Cameroons. They are now reading Theology at the Senior Seminary in Brazzaville. In the absence of others immediately ready to enter the Novitiate, it has been decided to wait a year or two before re-opening. In spite of this, the prospects are promising: there are 6 requests pending from Congo, The Cameroons and Equatorial Guinea. Another 3, from Guinea and Senegal will be proposed to the new Foundation of West Africa.

There are some problems still to be resolved: more importantly, that of ensuring a genuine commitment to exercise the mission ad extra rather than expecting to return automatically to the subject's country of origin. Anything else would be a betrayal of the spirit which gave rise to these Foundations. It also remains to be decided whether a French-speaking Novitiate should be continued or whether it would be better to establish a common Novitiate with the West Africa Foundation.

● **LATEST FOUNDATION: WEST AFRICA.**

Our present EVENT OF THE MONTH has already briefly traced the development of this Foundation from the beginning till its establishment last April. It has also spoken of some of the problems, more especially linguistic, which have arisen.

It is expected that the next Novitiate, starting in 1980, will welcome some 12 Novices: 4 from Ghana; 2 from Senegal; 4 from Makurdi; 1 or 2 from Kwara-Benue.

Further prospects seem good. There is talk of 15 from Ghana, several each from Kwara-Benue and Makurdi, with one or other from Senegal and Guinea.

The "Others".

This present Documentation is restricted to what is happening in Africa. It is only right nevertheless to say a word about other experiments, not yet Foundations strictly-so-called. Thus:

- The existence in BRAZIL of a complete cycle of studies for Brazilian Spiritans. There, there are 4 Novices, 5 Philosophers (1 from Paraguay) and 6 Theologians. The first two Brazilian Spiritans were ordained in 1977 and 1978 respectively. One of these was appointed to the District of Upper-Jurua.
- The presence in MADAGASCAR of several candidates, one of whom is a theologian.
- The postulancy in PORTO RICO of 9 future Novices.

Some points of similarity and comparison.

At a time when we, Spiritans, are considering the question of religious vocations in Africa, it may be of interest to see how other Missionary Institutes have faced the same problem. Many of them have in fact vocations in Africa and in Madagascar.

By way of example and without wishing to claim absolute accuracy for figures quoted, 50% of the De La Salle Brothers working in Africa are either of African or Madagascan origin (200 out of 400); Capuchins are 28% (250 out of 885); Jesuits, 21% (300 out of 1400); Spiritans, 14% (170 out of 1200); Consolata Fathers, 14% (12 out of 300). This list is not exhaustive.

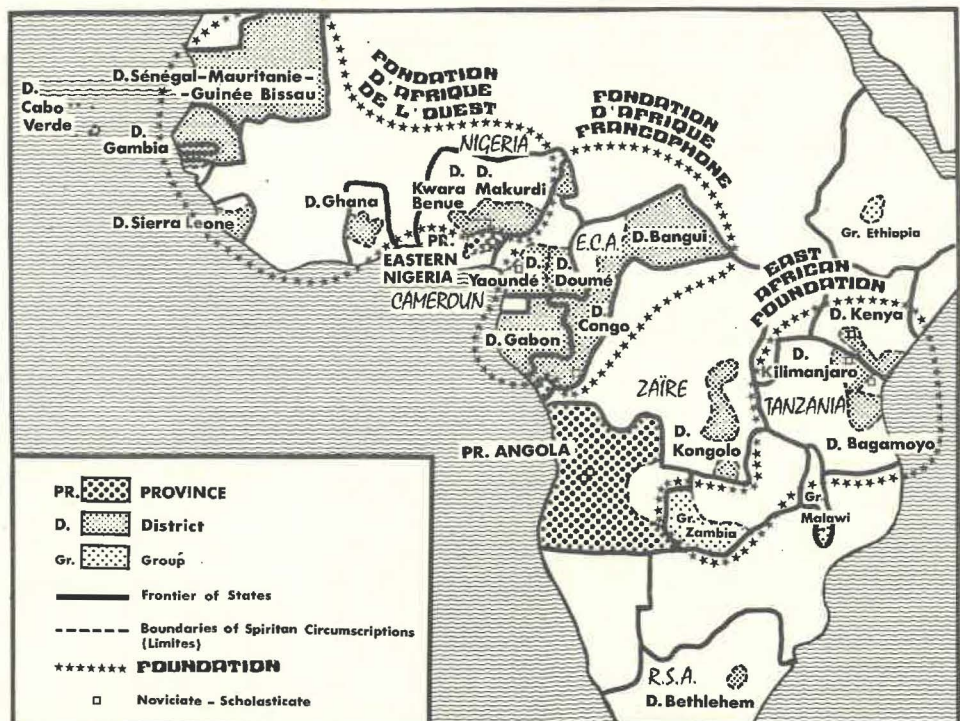
The Missionary Institutes also look to a change in nomenclature. Provinces, Vice-Provinces, Dependent Provinces, Districts, Delegations, Missions, Vicariates, Priors, Groups, ... all realise that such titles are both complex and out-of-date. No doubt, future General Chapters will consider this, more especially as the number of local candidates grows.

Our Coming General Chapter.

Foundations are the brain-children of the Districts and of those in charge of them. This is a sign of vitality and of the dawn of a new missionary era in the Universal Church. It is a contribution also to the missionary awareness of the local Churches, called in their turn to be sending Churches.

These Foundations also meet a need. It is not good for our younger African Spiritans to find themselves living isolated in a mass of expatriate brethren. They must be part of a new structure, which gives them solid assurance that one day they also will be indigeneous Provinces with the autonomy necessary to them.

These Spiritan Foundations are not limited to being projects of the Local Churches and are equally not confined to the aspirations of a group of Provinces or Districts. They are invited to play an active role in the common project of the universal mission and to be one with the whole body of the Congregation in that service.



N.B. There is a difference between some of the figures cited in this Documentation and those that appear in the pre-Capitular Document. The difficulty of obtaining exact statistics is often due to delay in the postal services - and sometimes to the over-sight of those responsible for furnishing them! The figures we give here are more recent than those in the pre-Capitular Document.

NEWS

The Generalate Team.

Father GENERAL attended the Enlarged Provincial Council in Holland from May 6 to May 14. In June, he visits Puerto-Rico, Trinidad and the Bahamas. He will be on holiday in July. From July 24 to July 31 he will assist at the closure of the International Youth Session at Gentinnes (Belgium). He will also join those visiting Germany for the final part of the visit, Sept 20-30.

Father GROSS left to attend the Blessed LAVAL Celebrations in Mauritius and to visit Reunion on May 15 and will remain until mid-June. At the end of June he will go to the U.S.A./East to attend the Provincial Chapter there and will remain until mid-July. He will be on holiday in August.

Father DALY will take part in the Enlarged Provincial Council of France from June 19 to June 30 and the Provincial Chapter of England from July 1 to July 15. He will be on holiday from mid-July to mid-August, and in Switzerland from August 19 to August 26.

Father THEILEMEIER will spend the month of July at the International Youth Session at Gentinnes. He will leave to attend the Provincial Chapter of Trans Canada on August 25 and will be there until August 31. He will spend the whole of September on a Visit to the Province of Germany.

Father van SONSBEEK will visit the Cape Verde Islands in the month of June. He will be absent on holiday in August and will spend the month of September visiting the Province of Germany.

Father WALSH left on June 1, with Father GENERAL for Puerto-Rico and Trinidad. He will attend the Provincial Chapter of the U.S.A./East from June 15 to June 31 and will be on holiday in July.

Father TORRES NEIVA will go to Portugal on July 15 and will be on holiday in August. He will undertake the Visit of Paraguay in September.

Father SOUCY will be in Rome until the end of June and will then leave for Canada.

Appointment.

On June 1, and with effect from that date, the General Council appointed Father Sebastian PLEYBER as Principal Superior of Gabon for a second mandate.

Ethiopia.

For the last five or six years two groups of Spiritans have been working in Ethiopia.

One group is composed of Irish confreres and is principally engaged in oecumenical work with the Coptic Church or in administrative work for the local Bishops.

The other group includes two American confreres and one Dutch. They came to undertake first evangelisation amongst the nomadic people known as the Borana. Difficulties have not been lacking. It took a year to get entry-permits, another to get permission to build a school for the nomads (this was a condition laid down for admission), and still another to find water. In the end, the school had to close down in a matter of months because of tribal disputes and the departure of the populace. This

"lost time" was nonetheless turned to good account. It provided an opportunity to study the language and the local traditions; to study also how best to approach the apostolate to the nomads.

March 12 last was a great occasion. The three missionaries invited the heads of family from 6 villages near Dadim; each village had between 10 and 30 families in it. The meeting took place at the house of the principal head. It passed off in the best Borana style, which includes a ritual of coffee beans and prayers. Speaking in Borana, the missionaries asked simply to be allowed to live and pray amongst and with the Borana people.

From the oldest to the youngest, all warmly welcomed the idea. Traditional Borana prayers followed. The school has now been re-opened and the Fathers have started to visit each village weekly. The Bishop himself has come to have an exchange of views with the missionaries. It was his first pastoral visit.

Books/Courses.

We draw attention to the interesting information concerning the Gaba Experimental Book Series, which appeared in the IRISH NEWSLETTER, April 1979, and to the appreciation of the Development Studies Course at Kimmage, which appeared in the same issue. It had been our intention to speak of both, as we feel they should be known about more widely in the Congregation. To avoid duplication nonetheless and given our limited space, we are content to refer to the issue in question and to encourage confreres interested to communicate directly with the publishers at Eldoret and/or the Director of the Development Course at Kimmage respectively.

Our Jubilarians.

65 Years of Profession:

Sept 3 : Fr Patrick WALLIS (Kenya)

65 Years of Priesthood:

Oct. 18 : Fr Candido COSTA FERREIRA (Brazil S/E.)

60 Years of Profession:

Oct 5 : Fr Joaquim CORREIA CASTRO (Portugal);
Fr Henri CURNOL (France).

60 Years of Priesthood:

Oct 24 : Fr Charles A. KAPP (U.S.A./East)

50 Years of Profession:

Sept 8 : Br Damiano GOMES DE OLIVIERA (Angola)
Sept 9 : Brs Eloi JAOUEN (Congo), Meriadec LE JALLE (Yaouné), Faustin KERNAFLEN, Felix GOY, Gerand ROBO, Siméon GUEGUEN (France)

50 Years of Priesthood:

Oct 7 : Fr Thomas FINAN (Makurdi), Fr Alban LE DANTEC (Martinique), Fr Alfred MARTIN (Guadeloupe);
Frs Adolphe ALTENBACH, Pierre BERTHOUE, Laurent HEBRARD, François HEIM (France).

25 Years of Episcopacy:

Oct. 28 : Mgr Hermanus van ELSWIJK (Holland).

Our Dead.

April 27 : Fr Francis CULHANE (Ireland), aged 65 years.
May 1 : Fr John HORGAN (Ireland), aged 63 years.
May 7 : Fr Alphonse BERNHARD (France), aged 91 years.