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# SPIRITAN NEWS

November-December 1980

No. 32

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

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## Event:

## 75th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROVINCE OF CANADA

Celebrations of anniversaries tend to glorify the past while passing over the problems of the present. This was not so for the 75th anniversary of the Province of Canada. Without going into the details of its celebration here, we would like to point out some of its original aspects.

The Province at one time had 120 members and it is now down to 80. With Vatican II, the Canadian Church, which had been very traditionalist, suddenly found itself in a ferment of questioning, and for more than ten years there were no Spiritan vocations. For the past six years, however, there have been signs of rebirth which should encourage other Provinces that find themselves in similar circumstances.

Instead of marking its 75th anniversary with a single function of the traditional, rather triumphalistic type, the Province of Canada had several smaller functions, with a view to making itself better known in different parts of the country.

Over a period of a few weeks, each region organized its own celebration: Lac-au-Saumon (20-21 Sept.); St-Alexandre, where the Province began (5 Oct.); Montreal (11 Oct.) and Quebec (18 Oct.) - these last two attended by the Superior General, who also visited St-Alexandre. There were local celebrations in other houses too, including

Among the pamphlets, articles, posters etc. that the Province produced to mark the 75th anniversary was a 56-page illustrated commemorative album, whose cover (open) we reproduce here.



- 1732 : Arrival in Acadia and Quebec of the first priests of the Holy Ghost Seminary. They continue to arrive (22 in all) until 1791.
- 1905 : Sent by Archbishop LE ROY, and with financial help from Mme LEBAUDY, Fr. LIMBOUR opens an agricultural school on the banks of the Gatineau River, near Ottawa, with 3 Fathers and 10 Brothers.
- 1912 : This becomes an Apostolic School, and, in 1914, the "Collège St-Alexandre".
- 1933-63: Part of the College functions as a junior scholasticate for the Congregation, giving 46 Spiritans in 30 years.
- 1963-75: A difficult period because of Government legislation in education.
- 1975 : Frs. RENAUD and DUCHESNE start a new period of pastoral and vocations work in the College.

\* \* \*

- 1947 : The first Canadian Spiritans go to work in Nigeria.
- 1955/68: Two Prefectures Apostolic in Nigeria entrusted to Canadians.
- 1972/78: The Prefectures become Dioceses, with Nigerian Bishops.

\* \* \*

The Province of Canada now numbers 79 members, of whom 57 are in the Province, 17 in Nigeria, 2 in Zaïre, 1 in Chile, 1 in Paraguay and 1 in USA/W. There are 2 novices and 2 in the pre-novitiate.

Farnham, the new novitiate for the North American region, in the Province of Ontario. The Spiritans of each region were joined by their relatives and friends (the number present varied from 150 to 600), and there was always the Bishop of the Diocese or his representative to mark the bond with the local Church.

There was a solemn concelebration on each occasion, and also exhibitions, films and talks, not only on the past but on the present work of the Province. Stress was laid on what it means to be a Spiritan: a man of prayer and an instrument of the Holy Spirit; a man of community, both with his confreres and with his people; a religious-missionary. The growth of the Canadian Charismatic Movement has helped in the understanding of these ideals, and the new vocations are an encouragement for the future.

The renewal in the Province has not taken place without effort. The average age of the confreres is 57, and it has been necessary to call back some younger members from the missions for animation work. In any case, the renewal is a sign of hope and encouragement to the rest of the Congregation, which will certainly join Spiritan News in its good wishes and congratulations to the Provincial, Fr. Jean-Guy GAGNON, and our confreres of the Province of Canada.

## Documentation : ISLAM IN BLACK AFRICA

To speak of Islam and its new vitality in Black Africa may arouse anti-Muslim reactions and an attitude of hostility rather than of dialogue. This would be regrettable, and our purpose here is merely to give information towards a better understanding of the situation. Fr. MERTENS' booklet has seemed worth summarizing, and we present it without commentary. The views expressed are his own.

J. GODARD

Fr. Victor MERTENS, a Belgian Jesuit who has just ended a term of office as General Assistant of his Order (and Consultor of the S.C. for Evangelization), visited 14 African countries earlier this year (Feb.-May): Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Zaïre, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia, Sudan and Egypt. He is now returning to Zaïre to continue his missionary work in a parish there.

After his African tour, during which he made a special study of Islam, he published a 48-page booklet, 'Islam in Black Africa', with the help of the organization 'Aid to the Church in Need'. It can be obtained, in English or French, from: Aid to the Church in Need, Postfach 1209, D-6240 KÖNIGSTEIN 1, West Germany.

As Spiritans in Africa find themselves more and more in contact with Islam, we offer an outline of the booklet here, with the author's kind permission.

### New vitality of Islam in Black Africa

The situation of Islam differs from country to country and its position is complex and at times ambiguous, as it has a total view of society in which it is difficult to distinguish politics from religion. It is both a religion and a State, in which the spiritual and the temporal are so merged that all religious progress is political progress and vice versa.

Although Arab Muslims make up only 20% of the Muslims in the world, they enjoy special prestige as they are geographically and culturally at the heart of Islam: Mecca is in Arabia, and the Koran was written in Arabic. This prestige does not, however, mean that there is no opposition to the Arabization of Black Africa, which has not forgotten the Arab slave traders or more recent exploitation by Arabs.

But there can be no denying the new vitality of Islam in Black Africa. Everywhere it is becoming more organized. Islam's recent interest in Black Africa began in 1954 at the University of Al Azhar (Cairo), but has made itself felt especially since the first Islamic summit at Rabat in 1969. This was the beginning of the Islamic Conference, which has 43 member countries. Its general secretariat, aided by specialized secretariats, organizes common structures, such as the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Solidarity Fund, as well as conferences and congresses, in addition to the annual general meeting. At the 1974 summit there was talk not only of "organizing Islam" but of "promoting Islam"; and, after the increased importance of OPEC in 1973, Colonel Gaddafi declared: "What we have just brought about through oil is a gift of God." Thanks to its petrodollars, Islam has taken on new dynamism and is conscious of the enormous political and economic power now in the hands of the Arab countries. Money has replaced the conquering warriors, and Black Africa must be aware of this.

### Signs of this new vitality

Less strong in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, which have rather strained relations with Libya, the vitality of Islam is especially seen in Western and Central Africa. Everywhere the same means are employed, with greater or lesser intensity according to local conditions.

**1. The importance given today to schools.** Limited for a long time to the 'Koranic schools' because of its distrust of Western influence, Islam did not play a large part in education in Black Africa. As a result, even countries with large Muslim majorities found themselves at independence with Christian Presidents and Ministers, educated in Christian mission schools. Realizing their handicap in this area, Muslims are now developing the number and quality of their schools at all levels. Numerous scholarships are offered to Africans to enable them to study in Arab countries such as Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. These scholarships are one of the great means for promoting Islam in Black Africa, whereas the Church, on the other hand, seems to be disengaging from education in some African countries.

**2. The proliferation of mosques.** Nearly all the capitals of the countries visited had an enormous new mosque, constructed with Libyan or Saudi Arabian funds. This is true even of countries like Rwanda and Burundi, which are more than 50% Christian and less than 1% Muslim.

**3. The training of Muslim 'missionaries'.** At the Al Azhar University, more than 1,000 students from 22 sub-Saharan countries are receiving training in the Koran that lasts several years. These future 'missionaries' are also taught a trade or profession so that they can be self-sufficient when they return to their country. Islamic centres for the training of 'catechists' are also being multiplied, with funds from Libya and Saudi Arabia. After being trained in the Koran, the students are given a sum of money to set up a small business and become financially independent. These will be the standard model of the Muslim - a fairly well-off man, well dressed and sure of himself. Couldn't Christian catechists also learn a trade and be self-sufficient?

**4. Proselytism.** However honourable the desire to make converts, the means used are sometimes less so. To those asking for work or lodging the answer is often, "Yes, if you become a Muslim". Some Christians have gone over to Islam on the promise of financial gain. Mixed marriages with Christian girls have been another means of proselytism, the constant pressure on a young wife leading her to convert to Islam. The number of Christians becoming Muslims is not large, but on the other hand the cases of Muslims becoming Christians are much rarer. The desire to make converts seems stronger in the average Muslim than in the average Christian. Perhaps Christians think that evangelization is a task only for the clergy.

**5. The mass media.** Some African countries are flooded with Muslim pamphlets, cassettes and records. Muslim broadcasts on radio and television are now often of high quality. In many of the countries the Minister of Information is a Muslim, leading to the Islamization of information centres and their programs.

**6. Control of political and economic power.** Key positions in government, administration, army and police are frequently in the hands of Muslims. In a country like Nigeria, where the number of Muslims and Catholics is about equal, a great effort is being made to bring Muslim law into the Constitution, denying equal rights to Muslims and non-Muslims.

**7. The pilgrimage to Mecca.** The Governments of Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Cameroon etc. give large grants to Muslim pilgrims. But Cameroon, for instance, refused to give financial aid to Catholics wishing to go on pilgrimage to Rome. Why two standards in a country that calls itself a lay state?

**8. The setting up of national Islamic Associations.** These Associations coordinate Muslim activities, administer funds from the World Islamic League and send the best Muslim students to the Arab universities. In spite of their dissensions, they are preparing a more structured future for the Muslim community.

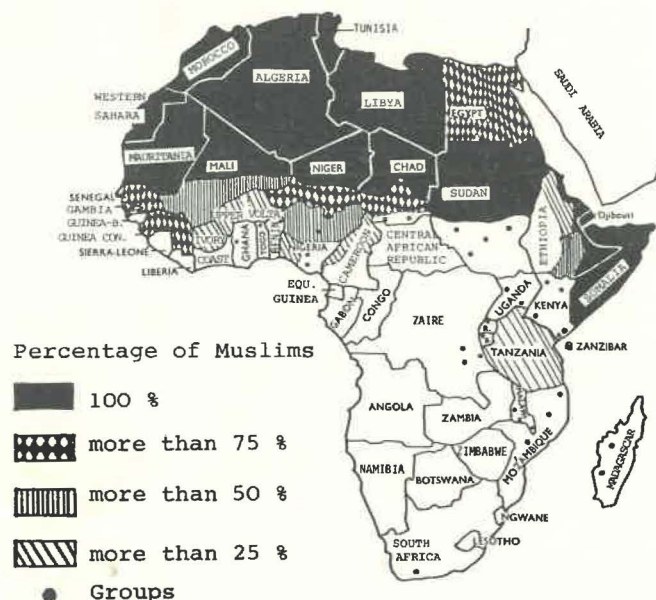
It is certain that Muslims are becoming more numerous in Black Africa, and this is due not only to natural demographic increase but also to conversions. Their political influence is also growing. On the other hand, the number of Catholics too is growing, with a deepening of the faith and an increase in priestly and religious vocations. While Islam has its limitations, it also has positive aspects: fidelity to daily prayer, the feeling of belonging to a real and large community, the zeal for making converts, the willingness to profess one's faith publicly, the training given to its 'preachers'. These and other aspects are a challenge to Christians. We can learn from Islam. Even more than in the West, the African needs to express his faith publicly and collectively.

### Reasons for this new vitality

Thanks to the influx of petrodollars, Islam is becoming increasingly aware of its political and economic leverage in Black Africa, and is outgrowing the sort of inferiority complex that it had in the face of a well-organized Catholic Church, with a supreme head, backed by considerable funds from abroad and widely engaged in the development of countries by means of schools, hospitals and social initiatives.

In several countries (e.g. Senegal, Northern Nigeria) there are small groups, especially of young people, who want to return to a more authentic form of Islam, freed from syncretism.

### Islam in Africa



But financial aid remains a strong stimulant. Conditions, of a politico-religious type, are laid down for the granting of aid: Islamic schools, broadcasts on Islam, Arabic courses at universities, even the transformation of a lay State into an Islamic Republic. Muslim candidates at elections have their expenses paid for them.

The spectacular material progress does not necessarily mean spiritual depth, but the way for this is being prepared.

### What should be done ?

The new vitality of Islam is a challenge to the Church in Black Africa.

There must be an evangelical attitude towards Islam, based on respect, listening to what each has to say and the desire to understand each other. This means, first of all, information – on what Islam is and on what it is doing in a particular country. Only a few seminaries and theological institutes in Black Africa have courses on Islam, and there are few experts with a thorough knowledge of Islam as it is lived in Black Africa. A few West African countries (Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta) have national episcopal commissions for Islam, and similar episcopal commissions should be set up in the other countries, and also in SECAM.

An evangelical attitude also means dialogue, which must be clear and without naiveté – a dialogue whose aim is not conversion but understanding and respect. It is often difficult on a strictly religious level and may have to limit itself to topics of human values, such as justice, equality of all persons, religious freedom etc. The Islamic side is often less keen on dialogue, but in spite of difficulties the effort should be made.

A particular challenge to the Church exists in the animist areas that are surrounded or bordered by Islam. The tendency now is for animists to declare themselves for one of the great religions, and Islam is an easier religion for them, as well as possibly more advantageous financially. Once these areas go Muslim they are lost to Christianity, and their immediate evangelization should be a priority for the S.C. for Evangelization, the African Bishops and the missionary institutes. The future of some 20 million animists is at stake (about a quarter of them in southern Sudan).

The community aspect of the Muslim faith is a challenge to Christian basic communities. The Muslim community is a 'visible' community, with effective solidarity, and one that is easy to enter. Especially in Islamic areas, Christians need visible communities with a strong sense of identity (church buildings, African liturgy).

To help Christians who are daily faced with Islam, it is important to give them a solid formation. Knowledge of the positive aspects and also the limitations of Islam will help them deepen their own faith. Special attention should be paid to schools and to the mass media. Ecumenism between Christians will help especially the small Christian sects that are particularly vulnerable to Islam.

Above all, the apostolic value of witness must always be stressed. In some countries it is the only means possible in the face of Islam. The presence of Christians in public life, bearing witness openly to their convictions and earning respect by their competence and integrity, has a real impact on an Islamized milieu.

### Tolerance or Intolerance ?

Religious tolerance seems to be a characteristic of Black Africa. Even in countries where there is a Muslim majority, Christian communities are accepted. But this may not always remain so, as full Islamic Republics are intolerant of all other religions.

The Christian attitude should be an evangelical one of tolerance and respect. But the Church should be on its guard, doing what it can to safeguard religious freedom and proclaiming at all times the good news brought by Christ.

## NEWS

### Decisions of the General Council

- On 28 Oct., the General Council confirmed the election of Fr. Silvio A. D'OSTILIO as **Provincial Superior of U.S.A. West**, with effect from 23 Oct. 1980.
- On 29 Sept., the General Council divided the work among the Assistants as follows:

#### CORRESPONDENTS:

- Fr. BEVAN: North America: USA/E, USA/W, Canada, Trans-Canada; Puerto Rico, Trinidad, Haiti, Mexico.
- Fr. DALY: East Africa: Kenya, Kilimanjaro, Bagamoyo, Zambia, Malawi, Ethiopia; Australia, Papua New Guinea; Pakistan; Ireland, England.
- Fr. DE BOER: Holland, Belgium; Zaïre.
- Fr. EZEONYIA: West Africa: Senegal-Mauritania-Guinea-Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria East, Makurdi, Kwara Benue; African Foundations.
- Fr. GROSS: Central Africa: Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic; Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion; Guadeloupe, French Guyana, Martinique; France, Switzerland.
- Fr. TORRES NEIVA: Angola, Cabo Verde; Portugal, Spain.
- Fr. TRÄCHTLER: Brazil (all Districts), Paraguay; Southern Africa; Germany, Poland.

#### SERVICES:

- Constitutions: Fr. DALY.
- 'I/D': Frs. TORRES NEIVA and BEVAN.
- Letters to Major Superiors: Frs. GROSS and EZEONYIA.
- African Foundations: Frs. EZEONYIA and DE BOER.
- Justice and Peace: Frs. TRÄCHTLER and TORRES NEIVA.
- Organization and Administration: Fr. DALY.
- Formation: Frs. BEVAN and EZEONYIA.
- Research and Planning: Frs. TRÄCHTLER and GROSS.
- Brothers: Fr. GROSS.
- Religious Life, New Forms of Membership, Community: Frs. TORRES NEIVA and BEVAN.

### Nigeria East

On 8 Oct., the General Council accepted the suggestion from Nigeria East that the **election of a Provincial**, to replace Fr. EZEONYIA, be held at the Provincial Chapter in the summer of 1981. In the meantime the Provincial Assistant, Fr. Anthony EKWUNIFE, will act as Provincial, handling current business and organizing preparations for the Chapter. The Province will be visited by two General Assistants before the Chapter.

### U.S.A. East: Duquesne University.

Fr. Donald S. NESTI was inaugurated as tenth **President of Duquesne University** on 3 Oct. Duquesne, with its more than 7,000 students, and Faculty of 400, is the only university run by the Congregation, and all its Presidents have been Spiritans. (For a report on it on the occasion of its centenary, cf. Spiritan News No. 16, Sept.-Oct. 1978.) The Superior General took part in the inauguration ceremonies.

In his inaugural address Fr. NESTI said:

*"We possess a rich heritage. Those who have gone before us fashioned on this beautiful hill a place of learning dedicated to certain values: the sacredness of persons, the primacy of life, the inviolability of responsible freedom as well as the cultivation of the intellect. Values have always been at the centre of life at Duquesne..."*

*"The culture of these United States does not possess all the answers to world problems. We can truly learn*



Mr. A. William CAPONE, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Duquesne University, invests Fr. NESTI (right) with the presidential medallion.

*from and be enriched by others... Given the history of Duquesne as an educational work of this Congregation, we also recognize that a vital part of our identity is to direct our professionalism toward the needs of the disadvantaged, underprivileged and poor of the world. Our service and professionalism to these people must not be limited merely to the categories which it took in the past, but must be reshaped in the light of current experiences and needs. We must seek out these persons and groups and actively address the causes of their plight... I hope that Duquesne will serve and respond to these needs by offering its finest intellectual resources to find answers which lighten the physical, social, intellectual, economic and spiritual burdens that these people as well as their counterparts in our country face. In this regard, it is my desire to develop ways to sponsor an Institute of World Concern at Duquesne. Duquesne's goal is to develop persons who will be able to work towards a new world order..."*

After inviting the faculty, students and support services to give of their best, Fr. NESTI concluded:

*"I pledge myself, as President of this University, to lead all to be prophets of hope. I refuse to let us be victimized by apathy and discouragement. I will do all in my power to avoid a climate of undue seriousness and apprehension even though we live in an anxious age. There must be room for celebration and joy, and laughter and good fun as we are about the serious task we have undertaken. I pledge to be a leader who calls forth creativity from all, who listens with an understanding ear, who seeks equity in practice, who speaks with simplicity and directness, who values the presence of all, and who can appreciate that one's greatest strength is often shown in the admission of one's weakness..."*

### U.S.A. East: Meeting of Educators.

A meeting of Spiritan educators from the U.S.A., Canada, Trans-Canada, Ireland and Trinidad was held at Bethel Park, Pa., on 5-6 Oct. The keynote address was given by Fr. GENERAL. The purpose of the meeting was to study and update the Spiritan approach to educational works, which were described by Fr. GENERAL as "fully and equally part of the Spiritan ministry". Position papers are being prepared for a similar meeting to be held in Toronto in 1981.

### Our Dead

- 8 Oct.: Fr. Edward KINSELLA (Ireland), 86.
- 13 Oct.: Fr. Walter VAN DE PUTTE, (USA/E), 90.
- 14 Oct.: Fr. Pierre ALTMAYER (France), 73.
- 16 Oct.: Fr. Armand LAROSE (Canada), 57.
- 18 Oct.: Fr. Klemens BRECHMANN (Germany), 65.
- 23 Oct.: Fr. Guillaume ROBIN (Guadeloupe), 80.
- 29 Oct.: Fr. Franz GÖDDE (Germany), 68.
- 4 Nov.: Fr. Alfredo MENDES (Angola), 69.
- 11 Nov.: Fr. Louis LE FOULER (France), 77.
- 15 Nov.: Fr. Antoine BERNHARD (Bangui), 63.