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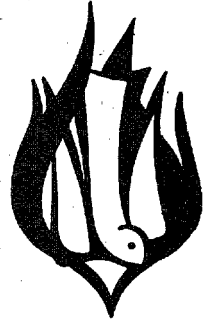
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**LIBERMANN
SPIRITUAL
GUIDE**



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LIBERMANN SPIRITUAL GUIDE

PREFACE

This is number twenty one in the series of SPIRITAN PAPERS. We have been asked by various circumscriptions for the whole set of the first twenty issues. Many houses of Formation, particularly in the young Foundations, have asked for them. Others ask for back numbers to make up a complete set. These requests and others that come to us will be looked after in the near future.

Many societies of Sisters that were founded by Spiritans draw their spirituality from ours and look to Father Libermann as their inspiration, the wellspring of their spirit. In addition to the SPIRITAN SISTERS, the count stands now at twelve. All these are eager to have publication or literature that deals with the subject. They see themselves as being closely joined to the Spiritan family and they look for help from time to time for their chapters, retreats, meetings, in the different languages they use.

The growth in the number of Archconfraternities or Fraternities of the Holy Spirit has also served to spread Spiritan spirituality to numberless lay people. In many places there are groups motivated and inspired to action by the spiritual teaching of Libermann: parish groups, SPIRITAN ASSOCIATES, missionary animation communities-as the LIAM in Portugal -, associations of sick people, even one grouping of medical professionals. In recent times, some lay people who, through a friend or a book, have become interested in this spirituality, are starting to take an interest in what we are publishing. As an example of this, there are in Saverne about 150 FRIENDS OF FATHER LIBERMANN who are subscribers to SPIRITAN PAPERS.

In Africa, Spiritans who put the teaching of Libermann before deeply committed christians or lay spiritual leaders or local clergy or sisters are finding something that Libermann

surely would have savoured: "this priest has written these pages for us; we are the ones he was writing to". Libermann had written in 1848: "my heart is with the Africans, devoted to the Africans».

In other continents reached also by an anthology of his writings, the same response has been provoked. The latest such echo is from Asia, where the path that Libermann maps out towards holiness seems to answer precisely the demands and inborn spiritual instincts of those people.

This issue LIBERMANN SPIRITUAL GUIDE is an attempt to respond to this interest. We have pressed into service for this purpose three people who are well-versed in Libermann.

The article SPIRITAN AFTER LIBERMANN'S HEART was written by Father Joseph Hirtz, CSSp. He was a missionary in the Congo before being a general councillor and then Provincial Superior in France. He is now working in the community at La Croix Valmer, beside St. Tropez in Southern France. There he serves as a spiritual counsellor to people or groups who come to stay in the house. He throws a particular light on the concrete means, inspired by experience, for living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Mgr. Jean Gay, CSSp., former bishop of Guadeloupe, has left us an unpublished article entitled FATHER LIBERMANN'S MESSAGE OF MODERATION, EQUILIBRIUM AND PEACE. This was a preliminary study towards the book LES CHEMINS DE LA PAIX, which Mgr. Gay wrote. In this text, he painstakingly spells out, with a multitude of quotations, a message he holds "to be still urgently in need of recall for our days, touching equally upon the interior life and apostolic activity". What cannot be denied is that Libermann wrote letters to all manner of people each with his own character, problems and path in life. Yet overlying these variations something we may liken to a constant pattern emerges—a consistent shape, a message—that is, in the circumstances, the echo and the outcome of Libermann's own experience. This pattern may easily be detected throughout his work, before he founded his Congregation and afterwards, by anyone who thinks over what he has written. Mgr. Gay's great achievement is that he developed his study deeply. English speakers may find a version of Mgr. Gay's work in the Spiritan Centre LIBERMANN JEW ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL (Beauchesne, 1977), edited by Duquesne University.

Where french is spoken, the biography of Father Libermann, *A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES*, by Father Adrian van Kaam, CSSp, (Duquesne University Press, 1959) is hardly known at all. Yet it is the most successful biography in english-first published in dutch-and is now running through its eighth edition. Fr. van Kaam is the founder and director of the *INSTITUTE OF SPIRITUALITY* at *DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY*, which currently had four hundred students and gives university qualifications in spirituality studies. He has published thirty works in the field of spirituality and despite frail health is currently engaged on a series of volumes entitled *FORMATIVE SPIRITUALITY*; several have already been published. He presents an article entitled *FIRMNESS AND GENTLENESS IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN* in which he explores these twin fruits of the Spirit about which his mentor so very often wrote. In particular, he brings out this idea of gentleness which so fascinates the English speakers and strikes them as the key both to the personality and the spiritual teaching of Francis Libermann.

We would very much hope with this issue to provoke their own reflections from those of our readers who are already appreciative of the treasure lying hidden in Libermann's teaching. They know about and they are drawing upon this treasure. If they would send us their thoughts, we, at the Research and Animation Centre, could communicate them world-wide, to each in his own tongue.

It is striking to see to what extent even to-day-and it is something that is going to go on-Spiritans of different tongues, cultures, personalities are finding their way along the same road, a highway to holiness to which the Holy Spirit calls them in the steps of the Founders who laid out the route (cf. *SPIRITANS TO-DAY*, n. 2 and n. 4). Herein surely lies the true and lasting link that makes us all one . . .

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