

Duquesne University

## Duquesne Scholarship Collection

---

Spiritan News

CSSP Newsletter and Spiritan News

---

3-1-1981

### Spiritan News, No. 34

Congregazione dello Spirito Santo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-news-en>

---

#### Repository Citation

Congregazione dello Spirito Santo. (1981). Spiritan News, No. 34. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-news-en/36>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the CSSP Newsletter and Spiritan News at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spiritan News by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

# SPIRITAN NEWS

March 1981

No. 34

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

## IN THIS ISSUE

**EVENT:** Meeting of Spiritan Studies Group.  
**DOCUMENTATION:** Spiritan Formation Today.  
**NEWS:** Death of General Secretary - Generalate Team - Generalate Community - Appointments - French Seminary - Nigeria - Angola - Jubilarians - Our Dead.



## Event: MEETING OF SPIRITAN STUDIES GROUP (29-31 December 1980)

As the Spiritan Studies Group has its own publication (*Spiritan Papers*), *Spiritan News* does not often refer to it. But its recent annual meeting seems to warrant mention here, as several important decisions were taken at it.

Taking part in the meeting, which was held at the Generalate, were: Frs. LECUYER (President), MARTINS (Secretary), FAY, NESTI, NICOLAS, O'CARROLL, SEIXAS and SIGRIST. Frs. BOUCHAUD, KELLY, KOREN and TENAILLEAU were unable to attend. The General Assistants present in Rome at the time (Frs. GROSS, TORRES NEIVA and BEVAN) also took part.

### Assessment

The Group took stock of its activities during the five years since it was set up (it has several works ready for publication) and also of its problems (a certain feeling of isolation and of inability to 'get through' better to the Congregation).

### Decisions for the Future

These centred around three main points:

- Closer Collaboration with the General Council and the Information Service.
- More stress on animation rather than simply on research.
- Regular renewal of the Group's membership.

The following were some of the decisions taken:

Members of the Group will have a five-year mandate, at the end of which each will spontaneously offer his resignation. The membership of the Group will be revised during 1981.

A General Assistant will be a member of the Group and even on its executive committee.

Contacts with the circumscriptions will be intensified, with a correspondent (preferably a novice master or someone else connected with formation) being named in each circumscription.

*Spiritan Papers* will be renewed in both presentation and content. There will be only two issues a year: one of them devoted to articles and conferences on various themes; the other centring on a single theme - suggested by the General Council, and dealing more with animation and actual Spiritan life. This latter will include, for instance, the results of a questionnaire sent out by the General Council, a study of the Founders' thought on the theme proposed, and conclusions by the Superior General or the Council. The General Council and the Group's executive committee will work on this new type of issue in collaboration with the Information Service.

The Group will be republishing the basic texts on Spiritan spirituality, as almost all the writings of Fr. Libermann are now out of print and the new Foundations find it difficult to get copies of them. Publishers (and translators) are being contacted.

Also projected, in consultation with the General Council, are a congress on Spiritan Spirituality in 1982 and the creation of an Institute for Spiritan Spirituality which could organize courses on this for members of the Congregation, especially those involved in formation. Already the members of the Group are at the disposal of the circumscriptions for the animation of retreats.

The Group also asked that the Causes of Fr. Libermann and Fr. Brottier be given a new impulse.

The General Council has given its approval to the Group's suggestions, but their results will depend largely on how much interest and support is forthcoming from the Congregation as a whole.

## Documentation :

### SPIRITAN FORMATION TODAY

At one time the Congregation's statistics on Formation used to include junior scholastics who were still doing their secondary studies.

In the present study we include only those who have already finished their secondary studies: professed scholastics, novices, and those in pre-novitiate training, under Spiritan direction, with a view to making their novitiate.

It has not been easy to collect the figures on Formation in the 21 Provinces or Foundations. Granted, the Generalate should have such figures always up to date in its files, but there are constant entries and exits of young people, and the circumscriptions do not always immediately notify the Generalate of these.

The figures in this article have been put together by the Information Service, on the basis of the replies to its request in *Spiritan News* No. 31, Sept.-Oct. 1980, and where these were not forthcoming, the figures available in the Secretariat. We apologize if these are not completely accurate. We thank the many circumscriptions that did send in a reply to our request, making it possible to give at least a fair overall picture.

#### STATISTICS FOR SPIRITAN FORMATION (31 Dec. 1980)

	Postulants or Pre-Nov. (1)	Philos. or Univ. (2)		Mission Experience ('Prefecting')	'Post-stage' (CERM)	Novitiate		Theology	Brothers in formation (3)	Total		GENERAL TOTAL	
						Clerics	Bros.			Non-prof.	Prof.		
<b>EUROPA</b>													
Ireland . . . . .		2	7	17		5		27		7	51	58	
France . . . . .		8		4	1	4		10	Theol. 2	17	10	27	
Polska . . . . .			12			8		7		8	19	27	
Portugal . . . . .			19					2			23	23	
Espana . . . . .		6		4				8	Theol. 3	6	12	18	
England . . . . .		4		1				2		4	3	7	
Suisse . . . . .					1	1		2		2	2	4	
Deutschland . . . . .			2					2	Theol. 1		3	3	
Nederland . . . . .								1			1	1	
Belgique . . . . .												0	
<b>AMERICA</b>													
USA/E . . . . .		2				5		4		7	4	11	
USA/W . . . . .		5				1		4		6	4	10	
Transcanada . . . . .	5					3		2	Theol. 1	8	2	10	
Canada . . . . .	3					2		1		5	1	6	
Trinidad . . . . .	1							2		1	2	3	
<b>TOT. NTHN. HEMISP.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>73</b>		<b>71</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>208</b>	
<b>AFRICA/S. AMERICA</b>													
Nigeria . . . . .			34	11		14	2	24	2 nov.	16	69	85	
East Afr. Found . . . . .	9	12				5		11		26	11	37	
Brasil . . . . .	2	8		2				7	2 postul.	12	7	19	
Puerto Rico . . . . .		15				3				18		18	
Angola . . . . .	3	8						6	Theol. 1	11	6	17	
West Afr. Found . . . . .	4					8		1		12	1	13	
Fond. Afr. Centr. . . . .						3		5		3	5	8	
Mauritius . . . . .		1						1		2		2	
<b>TOT. STHN. HEMISP.</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>GENERAL TOTAL . . . . .</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>407</b>

(1) In some circumscriptions there are 'postulants' (some in studies, others in jobs) in touch with the Congregation, and with a definite intention to join it. Some circumscriptions list them as postulants, others not. To the 27 listed in the first column above, another 10 or 20 such could be added.

(2) The figures on the left side of the column are NON-PROFESSED, those on the right PROFESSED. The same holds good for subsequent columns. Novices, of course, are non-professed.

(3) The column 'Brothers in Formation' is not totalled up, because the figures are already included in the other columns, and are repeated here to show where the Brothers are and whether they are studying theology or not. There are also 10 young Brothers, professed for less than three years, who are not included in the table because they are not actually in formation, though, according to SL 176, they could be receiving specialized formation.

"God looked with displeasure on the proceedings, and he struck Israel."

I have been told: "Why must you try to classify the unclassifiable? Let life develop freely and don't try to make it fit into categories. It is since we've started counting in the Congregation that the numbers have started going down. Remember the words of Holy Scripture."

In fact, the Lord seems never to have been too keen on statistics, especially triumphalistic ones: "Yahweh said to Gideon, 'There are still too many people. . . Israel might claim the credit for themselves at my expense; they might say, My own hand has rescued me'" (Judges 7:4,2). And again: "David said to Joab, 'Go and take a census of Israel, then come back and tell me the total'. Joab said, 'Why should my lord make this enquiry? . . . God looked with displeasure on these proceedings, and he struck Israel'" (1 Chr. 21:2,3,7).

It is also true, though, that God himself at times demanded statistics: "Yahweh said to Moses: 'Take a census of the whole community . . . Every man of Israel, twenty years of age and over, must be registered'" (Num. 1:2-3).

But one can always quote Scripture to suit one's purposes. Let us rather say that we have simply tried, without triumphalism (there is hardly cause for it) and knowing the difficulties, lacunas and pitfalls inherent in the collection of statistics, to give the most accurate picture that we can of our numbers in formation.

J. GODARD

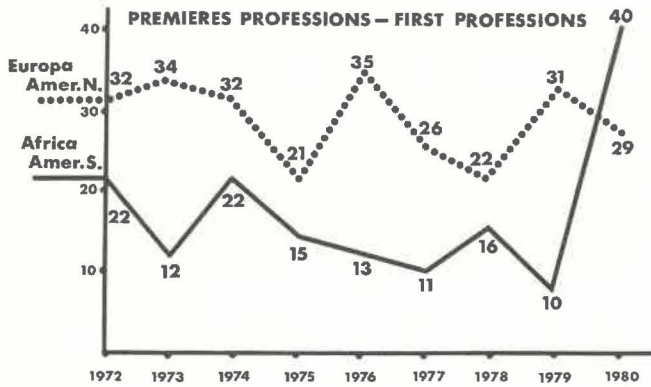
Some Provinces still begin formation with the novitiate. Others postpone the novitiate to a later stage, and consequently many of their young men in formation are not professed. As for the 'missionary experience' or 'prefecting', some Provinces do not have it at all, others have it before the novitiate, and others only after profession. Even the new African Provinces and Foundations have a variety of approaches.

The recent General Chapter allowed such latitude, but gave two important directives:

"It is the task of the General Council to give dynamism and unity to Spiritan formation. The General Council is responsible for establishing general guidelines on formation for the whole Congregation" (SL, 183).

"The overall orientation and guidance of formation at the Provincial or Foundation level lies with the Provincial or Foundation Superior with his Council, in close collaboration with the formation team" (SL, 185).

There is no question, therefore, of 'pouring' each young Spiritan into the same mould, whatever his cultural origin. But, while recognizing the importance of diversity, the



### PROPORTION OF PROFESSED MEMBERS IN FORMATION TO TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN EACH CIRCUMSCRIPTION

	Percentage	Total Number of Confreses	Number of Prof. Members in Formation
Nigeria/East . . . . .	55 %	124	69
East Afr. Found . . . . .	55 %	20	11
Espana . . . . .	48%	25	12
Polska . . . . .	39%	48	19
Brasil . . . . .	32%	22	7
Angola . . . . .	30%	20	6
Portugal . . . . .	8%	275	23
Ireland . . . . .	7%	739	51
Trinidad . . . . .	5%	37	2
USA/W . . . . .	5%	75	4
Transcanada . . . . .	4%	47	2
England . . . . .	3%	98	3
USA/E . . . . .	2,2%	184	4
Suisse . . . . .	1,8%	107	2
Canada . . . . .	1,3%	79	1
Deutschland . . . . .	1,3%	232	3
France . . . . .	0,9%	1.080	10
Nederland . . . . .	0,2%	448	1
Belgique . . . . .	-	97	-
Not counted . . . . .	-	6	6

Chapter also stressed that all Spiritan formation should have certain elements in common:

*"All Spiritans, whether aspiring to the consecrated lay state or to the priestly ministry should receive a common basic intellectual, religious and missionary formation, which will enable all to live and work together in community"* (SL, 173).

*"All basic Spiritan formation must have missionary and pastoral orientation"* (SL, 174). *"Spiritans for the priesthood should follow full and complete courses in philosophy and theology"* (SL, 175), while *"Spiritans who will be consecrated laymen should be enabled to acquire some special vocational or professional skill, and/or a special skill for religious and missionary animation in the Church"* (SL, 176). Where students attend external faculties, the Chapter suggests ways to ensure *"the Spiritan character of their formation"* (SL, 177).

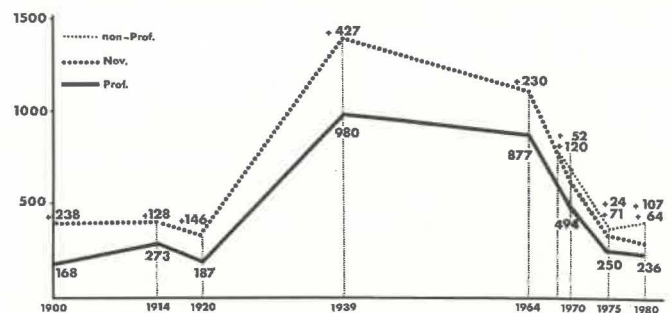
One may also note the frequent use of the expression 'religious-missionary' in the Chapter texts - occurring no fewer than 23 times. There are missionaries in the Church who are not 'religious', and there are religious congregations that are not 'missionary'. As Spiritans we define ourselves as 'religious-missionary', and this is recalled 11 times in the document on Formation.

Spiritans formation in the past was mostly 'priestly', even though there were many outstandingly competent Brothers. Will a new generation of Brothers be attracted by the Chapter's insistence on a common basic formation for all Spiritans and on the stress laid on professional training for Brothers comparable to that for priests? This will depend largely on how much the Congregation as a whole takes to heart the Chapter's declaration on the 'Spiritans Lay Religious-Missionary' (SL, 97-100).

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Of the 400 young Spiritans now in formation, 200 are from the 'Southern Hemisphere'.
- The Congregation had its highest number of scholastics in 1939: 980 (27% of the 3,629 Spiritans at the time). The 236 professed scholastics at the end of 1980 are only 6% of the total of 3,763.
- There are 9 Spiritan novitiates at present, the 64 novices belonging to 17 nationalities. Several circumscriptions have no novitiate this year but will be opening one in the coming months: Portugal, England, Spain, Angola, Brazil. (In 'Spiritans News' No. 31 we said that Puerto Rico would be opening a novitiate in 1981. Their novitiate in fact opened in July 1980, with 3 novices.) Some Provinces have a common novitiate (USA/E and W, Canada, Trans-Canada, Trinidad) (France, Switzerland), and the Foundation novitiates group several different nationalities: Ugandans, Kenyans and Tanzanians in East Africa; Congolese and Cameroonians in Central Africa; and Senegalese, Sierra Leoneans, Ghanaians and Nigerians in West Africa.
- Of the four novices at present in France, two were born on Feb. 2nd.

The statistics given here show how few young men are at present training as Spiritan Brothers (only a handful among the 400 young Spiritans), and also that several of the younger Brothers are considering the priesthood. One should note, however, that several Brothers have done and are doing theological studies without intending to go on to ordination.



The above chart shows (heavy black line) the number of professed members in formation (both clerics and Brothers), with above it (heavy dotted line) the number of novices (clerics and Brothers), and, after 1968 (asterisked line), non-professed members in formation (clerics and Brothers).

## NEWS

### Generalate Team

- Frs. TORRES NEIVA and DE BOER left for Angola on 26 Jan., to take part in the Provincial Chapter. Fr. DE BOER returned to Rome at the end of February, and Fr. TORRES NEIVA will be back by mid-March.
- Fr. GENERAL left for Holland on 13 Feb. because his

mother was seriously ill. Fr. TRÄCHTLER returned to Rome from the U.S. on the same day, as there was no other General Assistant present.

- The Generalate Team will hold meetings in Rome from 15 to 30 March.
- For the whole of April Fr. GENERAL will be in Portugal and Fr. TRÄCHTLER in France for language studies.

## Death of General Secretary, Fr. Brendan McMAHON

After the death on 7 Dec. of Fr. Adrianus VAN SONSBECK, who was to have taken over as superior of the Generalate community, the Generalate suffered another severe blow in the sudden death of the General Secretary, Fr. Brendan McMAHON, on Sun. 1 Feb., at the age of 49. He died instantaneously of a heart attack that morning, sitting in his room, and was not found until lunchtime, when he did not appear at table.

Fr. Brendan was born in Limerick, Ireland, on 28 Oct. 1931. He did his secondary studies with the Christian Brothers in Limerick, entered the Kilshane novitiate in 1949 and was professed on 8 Sept. 1950. After a B.Sc. (Physics, Chemistry and Biology) and B.A. (Philosophy) at University College, Dublin, and two years' prefecting at Blackrock College, where he trained the rugby Junior Cup Team, he did his theology in Fribourg, Switzerland, where he was ordained on 17 July 1960 and received his S.T.L. ('summa cum laude') the following year. From 1961 to 1978 he worked in Sierra Leone: first as science master at Christ the King College, Bo (1961-65); then at St. Edward's School, Freetown (1965-70); then as headmaster of Holy Trinity School, Kenema, and Chancellor of Kenema Diocese (1971-78). In 1978 he went to Paris (Rue Lhomond) for a year to perfect his French, and the following year he worked in the General Secretariat in Rome under Fr. MOLONEY. He was Secretary of the General Chapter in Chevilly last July and took over as General Secretary of the Congregation on 1 Oct. 1980.

He had had a slight heart illness once in Sierra Leone, and in November last year there were again some circulatory problems, for which he was hospitalized for a fortnight, but his death came as a great shock to all.

Fr. Brendan will be sorely missed at the Generalate and in the Congregation, not only because of his great competence and efficiency, with everything always in order, but especially because he was such a good confrere - always in good humour, never ruffled, always helpful.

The celebrations for the 2nd February in Rome were postponed to 16 Feb., and the funeral was held on 4 Feb., with several members of the McMahon family present. The Generalate thanks all those who have sent letters of sympathy and have offered prayers.

### Generalate Community

Because of the death of the General Secretary on 1 Feb., the annual commemoration of 2 Feb. was postponed to the 16th. As the centenary of Fr. Schwindenhammer's death falls on 6 March, Fr. MARTINS read a paper on the reasons that led Fr. Libermann to choose Fr. Schwindenhammer as his successor.

### Appointments

The General Council

- on 5 Jan., confirmed the election of Fr. Albert CLAU as **Provincial of Germany** for a third term, starting on 7 Feb.;
- on 13 Jan., appointed Fr. Joachim Ramos SEIXAS as **Provincial of Spain** for three years, from 1 Jan. 1981;
- appointed Bishop Agostinho Lopes de MOURA as **Postulator for the Cause of the Ven. Libermann**, succeeding Fr. Marcel MARTIN, who remains Postulator for the Cause of Fr. Brottier.

### French Seminary

Pope John Paul II visited the French Seminary in Rome on the afternoon of Sunday 11 Jan. - the first Pope to do so since Pius IX in 1868.

His Holiness was welcomed by Cardinal MARTY, Fr. TIMMERMANS and the Rector, Fr. SAVOIE, and, after celebrating Mass, at which he gave the homily, he received each of the 77 seminarians (68 of them French) in turn, asking them about their studies, their families etc. He stayed with the seminarians for supper, at the end of which Cardinal MARTY thanked the Congregation for its work for the Seminary and said that the Church of France expected it always to inculcate sound doctrine, love for the Church and a missionary spirit.

Since its foundation in 1853, the Seminary has trained more than 4,000 priests, including 60 Bishops and 6 Cardinals.

### Nigeria: Consecration of Owerri Cathedral

The imposing cathedral of Owerri, dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady, was consecrated on 29 Nov. by the Pro-Nuncio, Archbishop Carlo CURIS, at a Mass celebrated by a large gathering of Bishops and priests, including the former Bishop of Owerri, the Most Rev. Joseph WHELAN, C.S.Sp. Owerri became a Diocese in 1950, under Bishop WHELAN, and its territory at that time included that of the present Dioceses of Port Harcourt, Umuahia and

Okigwe. The building of the cathedral began in 1954, with Fr. Christopher RING, C.S.Sp., in charge of the work. The civil war (1967-70) put an end to the work at the roofing stage, and Bishop WHELAN was expelled by the Government at the end of the war, with most of the Irish Spiritans. Work was resumed in 1972 under the present Bishop, the Most Rev. Mark UNEGBU, who was consecrated on 20 Sept. 1970. The roofing was completed in 1975, and fibreglass windows were fitted, with designs by a local priest.

### Angola: More Casualties

On 24 Jan., the car in which Fr. Antonius VAN HORRIK was travelling with a Sister and three Africans near Lobito was attacked by gunfire. The three Africans were killed. Fr. VAN HORRIK, who was shot in the leg, and the Sister, shot in the stomach, were taken to Benguela hospital, where they were recovering.

At the end of June last year two Fathers (Frs. Abilio RIBAS and José CASTRO) were very seriously injured when their car was blown up by a road mine near Huambo. Both are still recovering, after several operations, in Portugal. (Fr. Manuel GONÇALVES and a local priest escaped injury on that occasion.)

### Jubilarians

#### 60 Years of Profession:

5 May: Brs. Odilon FEUERSTOSS (Gabon) and Grégoire HEILMANN (France).

#### 25 Years a Bishop:

22 May: Most Rev. Richard H. ACKERMAN (USA/E).

### Our Dead

(70 deaths in 1980)

- 8 Dec.: Fr. Patrick J. O'SULLIVAN (USA/W), 56.
- 21 Dec.: Br. Benedictus (Gerard) MULDER (Holland), 74.
- 21 Dec.: Fr. Roland COOKSON (Puerto Rico), 64.
- 22 Dec.: Fr. John O'HARA (England), 60.
- 24 Dec.: Fr. Joseph BOEGLY (France), 72.
- 25 Dec.: Fr. John KENNEDY (Kenya), 67.
- 4 Jan.: Fr. Leonardus NIJSSEN (Holland), 49.
- 11 Jan.: Fr. Heinrich HACK (Germany), 80.
- 12 Jan.: Mr. Eugene OSSAI, schol. (Nigeria E.), 22.
- 18 Jan.: Br. Fiel ROSA (Angola), 76.
- 29 Jan.: Fr. Wilhelmus BURMANJE (Amazonia), 60.
- 1 Feb.: Fr. Brendan McMAHON (Generalate), 49.
- 2 Feb.: Fr. Henri HECKLY (France), 81.