"When the Spirit of God Inspires a Work..."

Amadeu Martins
"WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD INSPIRES A WORK . . ."

Father LUQUET was a spiritual disciple of Libermann at the Seminary of St-Sulpice and one of the first to become enthusiastic about the "Project for the Blacks". He did not join it, however, but went rather to the Missions in India. In 1845 he wrote in his "Eclaircissements sur le Synode de Pondichery": The founders of the various clerical or religious societies in the Church received special graces from God, along with a spirit adapted to the special work for which they were destined. That spirit and those graces are a patrimony and a trustworthy guide for their children. This is so true that the degree of success they can look forward to is always measured by their fidelity in following that spirit and in corresponding to those graces. This is what forms the specific character of each congregation. It can even be said to constitute their raison d'être, because surely no clerical or religious society comes into being without having some special purpose to fulfill within the Church . . .

Indeed, every founder has his own spirit and is called, along with his congregation, to imitate a particular aspect of the Incarnate Word. Consequently, the first requirement for the adaptation of a religious family is that its essential character as a congregation be thoroughly understood.

It seems evident enough that it was into the mystery of Christ the Poor Man that both Poullart des Places and Libermann were called. The work for which they were destined was the evangelization of the poor: Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.

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1 April 9, 1845. Archivio di Propaganda Fide, Acta, Vol. 208, fl. 137 r.
Poullart des Places thought that the poor should evangelize the poor. He began his work with a small group of poor students whom he was helping materially and spiritually.

Shortly after the official opening of the Holy Ghost Seminary on May 27, 1703, Poullart des Places preached a retreat to his little band of poor students on the same Gospel Text: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.*

A similar text, *Pauperes evangelizantur ad revelationem gentium et gloriari plebis suae,* was placed on the cornerstone of the foundations of the chapel of the Congregation at 30 rue Lhomond in Paris on October 3, 1777. The words give good expression to the purpose and spirit of the Congregation and summarize its activity during the almost three hundred years of its existence.

When Poullart des Places founded the *seminary for poor students,* could he have foreseen the future development of his project? Certainly not, for when the Holy Spirit inspires a work, He almost never gives advance notice of its full development, but only gradually as the occasion presents itself. However, the entire development is contained in the initial impulse He gives to the one He inspires to begin it. There is a certain unity in all the diversity of its history.

These words of Libermann are fully realized in the Congregation of the Holy Ghost which he carried forward, grafting onto the old trunk the vigorous branch of his Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary.

The spirit of the Congregation, placed by God in the heart of Poullart des Places like a tiny mustard seed can be seen developing, becoming ever more explicit, in his work and in that of his successors,—especially the Superior Generals whom God chose for that purpose. Some of them, like GARNIER and WARNET, seem to be scarcely more than links between the Founder and those extraordinary men who governed the Society for many years before Libermann’s time; e.g. BOULIC, BECQUET, and BERTOUT. Still others, even though they were in office only for a short time — like DUF-

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4 Archives of the Motherhouse, rue Lhomond, Paris.
5 Libermann’s Letter to Tisserant dated February 18, 1843, about the proposed union of the Congregation with the Congregation of the Holy Cross. *N.D.,* III, p. 158.
WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD...

LOS and MONET — are well worthy of our attention. Perhaps a future issue of Spiritan Papers will be able to deal with them.

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Poullart des Places was at the head of his Society only for a short time. Less than two years after his ordination to the priesthood, God called him to Himself on October 2, 1709. He was only about 30 years old. The words of Scripture were realized in his case: Vivens brevi tempore, explet tempora multa.6

He was a man of God and he tried to share with his seminarians the dominant aspirations of his own life: a strong attraction to a life of poverty, a great desire to serve the Church in the missionary endeavor and by means of a total sacrifice to serve the preaching of God's love.7

There is a brief collection of the letters of Father BOULIC and his immediate collaborators (a copy exists in the General Archives of the Motherhouse). In number 22 we read: The late Father Desplaces (sic) Poullart, of Rennes, a man of exceptional virtue, after having renounced all worldly ambitions, began in 1703 and continued until his death this establishment (the Holy Ghost Seminary). It is three of his students8 who are continuing it and striving to make it more and more a service to the public...9

They had great poverty and humility of spirit, those men who wanted nothing for themselves but gave themselves totally to the task of providing both corporal and spiritual nourishment for some 80 poor students. They had no resources other than the alms they begged for or which Providence sent them from time to time. They lived on the occasional alms Providence sent them.10

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6 Wisdom 4: 13.
7 Spiritan Papers, No. 3, p. 17 and No. 4, p. 12.
8 Fathers Bouic, Thomas and Caris.
Their best beggar was M. CARIS, who came to be known all over Paris as the poor priest or the Father Provider for the Seminary, as Father POTIER called him.11

In the letters this student wrote to his family during his time at Holy Ghost Seminary we find items which tell us a good deal about life in the Seminary before the French Revolution. For example:

*The Superiors of Holy Ghost Seminary sacrificed themselves entirely to the education of young men whom they could feed and maintain only by going out and begging. Think of what it takes to keep 70 or 80 people for a year without any resources and you will realize how they had to wear themselves out...* 12 That's the kind of priests I had as teachers...13

M. CARIS often walked through the streets of Paris looking for provisions.14

It was a fact that Holy Ghost Seminary had no resources and that there were already about 70 students when Father BOULIC was named Director. From that time until the French Revolution, the number varied from 80 to 100, including the Directors and the hired staff of whom there were always at least two — the cook and the tailor.

In spite of this poverty, the Seminary Directors were all well aware of the importance of good health and did their best to make it possible for their students. The Founder had passed on this advice as a legacy to them: *I wanted to reserve* [Footnote references]

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11 Letters of M. Potier, pp. 38, 58, 66. This Potier was a student at Holy Ghost Seminary from 1748 to 1754 and became an outstanding missionary in the Far East from 1754 to 1792, the founder of Catholic missions in the immense Province of Szechwan where he was Vicar Apostolic from 1769 to his death in 1792. During his episcopate, about 100,000 souls were baptized in his immense vicariate. *cf. H. Koren, The Spiritans, pp. 45-50.*

12 This was the origin of a two-hundred year old tradition at the Generale: the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on January 31 every year. *In the meeting called by Father Becquet on July 21, 1778, ... he said that the heirs of Miss Luiquel had given the Seminary in perpetuum the revenue from 50 pounds ... with the onus of having in the Seminary every year Benediction and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on the last day of the year. We, the undersigned, have accepted this onus for ourselves and our successors ..., July 21, 1778. Signed: Becquet, Lars, Rupalet, Duflos, Roquelin.*


for myself no temporal goods except my health and that I wanted to present to God as a sacrifice in the work of the Missions...  

The same sentiments are attributed to Father THOMAS (cf. the Archives of the Motherhouse, rue Lhomond, Paris, BOUIC dossier).

The preoccupation with the health of the students was enshrined in the Rules the Founder wrote for the Seminary. The food was to be simple but solid.

Father BOUIC's letters show that he had the same ideas: The food is simple, but nourishing: a little meat at dinner and at supper on non-fast days; almost always vegetables on fast days, half a pint of wine per day. The bread is excellent, the meat and the wine are fair, and hunger makes it all taste good.

Father POTIER wrote to his family giving interesting details of the Lenten menu:

We have no extraordinary fast days in the Seminary except the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception... We are well fed. I fasted all during Lent; we had good food...; two or three times a week they gave us either jam and walnuts, or stewed prunes, or cheese, or apples. (April 1749).

We were well fed during Lent this year. We often had fish: cod or herring, vegetables, salmon, — always two different dishes and something to vary the diet every day (March 1752).

There were hard times, as we can see from the following comments in one of POTIER's letters:

The revenue has decreased; our people are in constant difficulty. They have many debts and no money. The baker has had to come several times looking for his money, and six weeks ago we almost had to go without bread because we could not pay for it... Every day at morning prayer and at evening prayer we are asked to pray for the pressing needs of the house...

This situation weighed heavily upon the minds of those responsible for feeding so many people without any money coming in M. CARIS speaks of the problems during the years 1731-1734:

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15 Spiritan Papers, No. 4, pp. 11-12.
16 Letters of Father Bouic, letter No. 15, Dossier Bouic, Archives of the Motherhouse.
17 Letters of M. Potier, December 1748. Archives of the Motherhouse.
18 Letters of M. Potier, p. 28, Archives of the Motherhouse.
I am doing my best to pay my debts, but I can't manage it. The times are very hard, alms are rare and not very generous. I do not complain of Divine Providence,—I believe it is better for us to be poor than to be rich. As long as we have what is strictly necessary — some might call it starving-to-death — I am satisfied. Jesus Christ, our Master, was content to live as a poor man. If, after resembling Him in this way, we are given a share in His Kingdom, we shall be well rewarded. That is the hope that keeps us going... P.C.\textsuperscript{19}

During those difficult times the Directors of the Seminary might have been tempted to take certain easy measures to improve the situation, such as accepting students from rich families. But they did not, because it would have been against the spirit of the Congregation: Preference must be given to the poor.\textsuperscript{20} 

"We take in students from the different dioceses of the Kingdom, nobles or commoners, as long as they are poor".\textsuperscript{21}

In the "Council Book of the Holy Ghost Seminary and Community," we read of the meeting of July 25, 1758 making the following decision: We, the Superiors and Consultors, ... have decided that, in spite of the current difficulties, in accord with the spirit in which our Rule has always been observed, we shall give preference to the poor in admitting students for next year.\textsuperscript{22}

There were no exceptions to this rule. If a rich man wanted to be admitted, he first had to become poor. This unusual gesture was made by M. DUFLOS who was destined to become the fifth Superior General.

Young DUFLOS came from a rich family. He wanted very much to enter the Holy Ghost Seminary but could not. He gave all his possessions to the Seminary, and, thus becoming poor, was able to be admitted. In 1750, after he had finished his studies, he became a member of the Congregation.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} Letters of Father Bouic, No. 27, Dossier Bouic, Arch. of Motherhouse.
\textsuperscript{20} Spiritan Papers, No. 5, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{21} Letters of Father Bouic, No. 24, Archives of the Motherhouse.
\textsuperscript{22} "Registre des Déliberations ...", Dossier Bouic, Arch. of the Motherhouse.
\textsuperscript{23} Cf. H. Koren, The Spiritans, p. 31.
Love of poverty develops fraternal charity or love for our neighbor, even at times when it would be natural for one’s own needs to cause forgetfulness of the needs of others. The Council of the Seminary and Community met on December 18, 1740 to consider a legacy left to the Community and Seminary by Mr. Jean Perron. . . Said legacy was studied in the light of the poverty of the other heirs and it was decided to give it up in their favor . . . 24

**TRAIN THE POOR TO EVANGELIZE THE POOR**

The students at Holy Ghost Seminary were poor and were destined solely for the evangelization of the poor. With that purpose in mind, it was important to develop in them the spirit of poverty, zeal, love of work, self-denial. To train good priests who will be zealous, hard-working, capable and unselfish, who will cheerfully undertake the hardest and least desirable posts in the Church such as service in hospitals, missions, assistanthips and pastorates25 in country places.26 Seminaries and other works for which Bishops have difficulty finding suitable people;27 The missions in France and the Colonies (of France and of other countries), the direction of Seminaries 28 and teaching in coun-

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24 “Registre des Délibérations . . .” (1732-1789), Dossier Bouic, Arch. of the Motherhouse.
25 Letter No. 63 of the Bouic collection makes clear which were the worst pastorates: “les pires cures”.
26 Letters of Father Bouic, No. 18, Archives of the Motherhouse.
27 Letters of Father Bouic, No. 24, Archives of the Motherhouse.
28 As a matter of fact, by a decision of the Council on April 17, 1737, the Holy Ghost Community had taken over the direction of the Senior Seminary of Meaux. It was to direct it up until the French Revolution. The first Director was Father Jacques Lars.

In the same year, by a Council decision of September 15, the Congregation also undertook the direction of the Seminary of Verdun. As we shall see, they kept this work for five or six years.

In addition, the direction of the Seminary of Aleria in Corsica was offered to it in 1777, according to the minutes of the Council for January 14, 1777: Father François Becquet told us of the desire of the Bishop of Aleria in Corsica to join his Seminary of Aleria to our Community in perpetuity for its direction and the administration of its goods, for the greater good and advantage of his diocese . . .

Even though the Council unanimously authorized the Superior General to accept the direction, the Congregation did not undertake it. We do not know the reason. “Registre des Délibérations”. Archives of the Motherhouse.
try towns, the direction of women religious, and other similar works.\textsuperscript{29} Others help in Seminary direction, teach philosophy and theology; some are Vicar-Generals... \textsuperscript{30}

The specific end of the Seminary was to be like the mustard seed. At the beginning, M. POTIER writes, our men took on the lowliest positions in the dioceses of France. As the number of seminarians increased, priests were sent to evangelize the old colonies of Acadia (in Canada) and St. Pierre and Miquelon... The Acadians, the Blacks and the slaves in French Guiana, as well as the Negro inhabitants of Senegambia... But that was not all... This establishment furnished missionaries for as far away as the Far East... \textsuperscript{31}

In the \textit{Projet de Placet au Roy en 1763}, we read: The Holy Ghost Seminary has as its objective to educate gratis poor clerics who will be ready to fill the most abandoned posts in country places, in the missions of the Kingdom, of the Colonies and of the Indies.\textsuperscript{32}

In his letter to the Archbishop of Rheims, the Grand Almoner of France, M. BERTOUT, writes from rue du Bac, Paris, on November 23, 1816: His Excellency the Minister of the Navy is thinking now of placing (the Holy Ghost Seminary) in charge of all the Colonies still belonging to France since the most recent treaty... I beg Your Grace to draw His Majesty's attention to our situation, assuring him... of our wish to be helpful to his unfortunate subjects in the Colonies,\textsuperscript{33} who are almost completely without the ministrations of Religion... \textsuperscript{34}

\section*{THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THEY WERE TRAINED}

Destined as they were to live and work among the poorest in places where others did not want to live, the students of the Holy Ghost Seminary were prepared for a hard life, for giving up everything that men naturally want to have.

\textit{V.A.E. knows better than anybody how useful it is for the Church that there be such an establishment in which people be-}

\textsuperscript{29} Letters of Father Bouic, No. 63, Arch. of the Motherhouse.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Idem}, No. 15.
\textsuperscript{31} Letters of M. Potier, Arch. of the Motherhouse.
\textsuperscript{32} Dossier Becquet. Arch. of the Motherhouse.
\textsuperscript{33} Italics by the author of this article.
\textsuperscript{34} Dossier Berthout B. Folder B, Arch. of the Motherhouse, Paris.
come accustomed to a hard and laborious life, where they are helped to acquire deep piety and sound capabilities, and where they are prepared to take on the most difficult and least sought-after clerical posts. Such are the objectives of the Holy Ghost Seminary...  

They are all students of the hard-working and frugal life which will be demanded of them in the posts they will have to fill.  

In order to acquire that spirit, they needed great piety. Fortunately, this was not lacking in the Seminary. The seminarian POTIER wrote: Our seminary is an example of virtue. Almost every day we are instructed in the dignity of the priest by impressing upon us the inescapable obligation of working constantly for the sanctification of the souls confided to us...  

On free days we meet to talk about God and the clerical state, and we give one another a spiritual conference as well as we can... This is done at Gentilly... This activity has been approved by the Superior whose agreement we requested. Far from disapproving, he urged us to go ahead...  

As we read this, we cannot help but think of the meetings of the «pious groups» at St. Sulpice organized and directed by Libermann.  

There really was an atmosphere of piety at the Holy Ghost Seminary. The rules of the house must be respected as commandments of God... when we break the rules, we offend God... It is rare that one violates the rule in small matters without violating it in greater matters and coming to despise it altogether.  

A seminarian who keeps the rule exactly has peace of mind... He lives happily and serves God in such a way as to draw heaven’s blessing upon him... our seminary is an example of virtue... One would have to be completely hardened not to be turned towards God...  

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35 Letters of Father Bouic, No. 4.  
36 Letter to the Bishops of France concerning the state of the Holy Ghost Seminary, 1769, Dossier Becquet, Arch. of the Motherhouse.  
37 "Un Serninariste du St.-Esprit au XVIII siècle", François Potier, 1748-1753.  
39 Ibid., p. 23.  
40 Ibid., p. 23.  
41 Ibid., p. 14.
Father BOUIC's letters describe the same atmosphere almost twenty years before. He wrote in one of them:

*Thanks be to God, we take more care of the soul* (than of bodily nourishment). *Piety is fostered by daily meditation, general and particular examen, spiritual reading, conferences and the frequent reception of the sacraments... The result is that, by the mercy of God, we don't have any voluntary attachment to venial sin. Most work carefully at acquiring the virtues proper to their state in life...*  

This fine understanding and fraternal charity existed among the students, as well as among the Seminary Directors. Among other testimonies to this, there is a document concerning the election of Father BOUIC's successor in 1763. Father GUILLEBERT, and probably the confreres working with him at the Seminary of Meaux, found that his right to vote was being challenged, even though he was a member of the Congregation. In order to avoid causing a division among the members of the community where mutual understanding had always reigned, he renounced his right for that occasion *for the sake of peace and in order not to disturb the unity and good understanding which reigns and must always reign among us...*  

### DEVOTION TO STUDY

Father DES PLACES *used to say that, while he worried about the blind zeal of a priest who was pious but ignorant, he feared for the faith and obedience to the Church of a priest who was learned but lacking in virtue.*

Both piety and knowledge received their proper development among the students at Holy Ghost Seminary.

We have just seen what an atmosphere of piety there was. Now, let us read in one of Father BOUIC's letters: *This application to piety only sanctifies and gives life to the study of the subjects we need in our kind of life. The result is that — thanks*

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42 Letters of Father Bouic, No. 15.  
43 Dossier Bouic II.  
44 *Claude Poullart des Places*, by J. Michel, p. 205.
be to God! — we have never had a student refused ordination; on the contrary, we almost always hear them highly praised for their achievements. 45

The students who applied for admission to Holy Ghost Seminary had to have finished their secondary studies and be ready to begin philosophy. If they had already studied philosophy, they had to pass an examination on it before being admitted. It was not at all rare to repeat the course of philosophy at Holy Ghost Seminary, either because it was not thorough enough at the seminary previously attended, or because it was a philosophy (e.g. Cartesian philosophy) which was not accepted at Holy Ghost Seminary. That was what happened, for example, to young POTIER, as he says himself: My philosophy... I had done it at Loches, but, when I arrived at the Seminary, I had to begin it all over again... The studies at Loches... bear no comparison to those at Paris. 46

The same POTIER tells us in another letter about his arrival at Holy Ghost Seminary and the assurance he was given by the Superiors concerning the studies to be done there: The Superior welcomed me... promised me that I would not leave the house without being filled with knowledge and capability, provided I was willing to apply myself... 47

M. CARIS, the Superior who welcomed him, added: When you leave this house, you will not be a Doctor of the Sorbonne, but you will perhaps be as well prepared as those who are. All our people are respected everywhere and we are often asked for men to teach philosophy and theology without their having to undergo any prior examinations. The type of training they have had is well known. 48

Not to seek academic degrees was a part of the objective of the Seminary and of the spirit expected of the seminarians. Here we do not aspire to academic degrees, so that the students... will be better disposed to go to places for which it is hard to find priests... 49

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45 Letters of Father Bouic, No. 15.
46 "Un Séminariste au St.-Esprit...", pp. 115-117.
47 Ibid., p. 3.
48 Ibid., p. 3.
49 "Lettre de M. Becquet aux Évêques de France sur l'état du Séminaire du St.-Esprit", 1769, Dossier Becquet.
The important thing was not degrees, but the ability to give good service. In order that these clerics may acquire the ability to work well in all sorts of posts, we have them study philosophy for two years and theology for four years. In the fourth year we have them ordained priests if they are old enough... After that, we permit them to stay two more years in the house so that they can do further courses in Moral, strengthen their piety, and prepare themselves better for the ministry. This latter project has not yet been well carried out, both because of lack of space and resources for their subsistence and because of the need of their ministry...

They followed the courses at the College... twice a day at the Jesuits... of Louis-le-Grand, from 8:15 to 11:00 and from 2:15 to 4:40.

At the house there were conferences, i.e. repetitions twice a day upon the matter seen at the Jesuits... Every Sunday there was the defense of a thesis.

On Mondays and Wednesdays they study Sacred Scripture. On Thursday — a free day — they go to the country house at Gentilly.

It is not surprising that such fine men come out of the Holy Ghost Seminary. Work and study are everybody's principal recreation. Nothing pleases them as much as study.

However, there is no doubt that good conduct was the most important thing at the Seminary. This is demonstrated by the fact that at the end of the school year the students had to undergo an examination of their conduct. This examination is only established so that we can let you know whether we are pleased or displeased with you, said the Superiors. Usually it took place the day after the academic examinations and included a report on them. M. POTIER adds: It does not require enormous faults to be sent away... a seminarian who breaks the rule can be expelled...
LOYALTY TO THE CHURCH

In one of his letters, Father BOULIC makes this comment: *Of all those whom we have had as students, not one has joined the 'appellants';* 59 *on the contrary, almost all have spoken and written strongly against them. The credit for this must be given to God alone. You are the only person to whom we have said even this much. Pray to God that He may maintain His work and perfect it more and more...* 60

From the very beginning, the Congregation of the Holy Ghost was the object of the Jansenist’s fury. Their attitude reached its worst in 1737 and the following years when the Congregation was given the direction of the Senior Seminary of the Diocese of Verdun which up to then had been a hotbed of the heresy.

The Holy Ghost Seminary was hated by the Jansenists because it resisted their pernicious teaching. Not one of the priests trained there became a Jansenist, and now one of the channels of Jansenism was being given over to that Congregation. What impudence!

Father BOULIC put Father THOMAS in charge of this difficult mission, with Father François BECQUET, one of the best theologians at Holy Ghost Seminary, as his assistant.

The Jansenists did everything in their power, even going so far as to publish in 1741 an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Lettres à M. BECQUET* which had reference to a thesis defended by one of his students the previous year. In this

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59 “Appellants” was a name given at the beginning of the 18th century to bishops and priests who appealed to the next Council against the Bull *Unigenitus*, the constitution promulgated on September 8, 1713 by Clement XI condemning as heretical or suspected of heresy 101 propositions taken from the “Réflexions morales sur le Nouveau Testament” by the Oratorian Quesnel, which presented again the errors of Jansenius. Cardinal de Noailles, the Archbishop of Paris, and seven other prelates refused to accept the decision, and this was the beginning of a struggle between the Jansenists in the clergy and in the Parliament and the Jesuits. In 1752, Christophe de Beaumont forbade the giving of communion to anyone who could not present a note from his confessor to the effect that he accepted the Bull *Unigenitus*. This stirred up a real hornets’ nest, which did not quieten down until just before the Revolution. (Larousse du XXe siècle).

60 Letters of Father Bouic, No. 15.
pamphlet we find sentences like the following which, far from being offensive, constitute the highest praise the Jansenists could give their opponents. Here are some samples:

To call somebody a Placist is worse than to call him a Jesuit, if it be possible for there to be anything worse. Everybody knows that the Jesuits... were badly shaken up when they found their schools empty. They have found a way out of their terrible isolation. They corrupted the mind of M. Desplaces (sic) and they got him to put all his money into the purchase of a hostel for poor students,—but on the condition (Good God!) that those students never take any courses elsewhere but with the Jesuits...

Then the pamphlet turns on Father BECQUET and goes on:

It seems that you are faithful to your vocation and that you do honor to those who chose you to come into our Diocese and spread all the worst teaching you received from them. 'Venenati filii de venenatis parentibus' (S. Greg. Hom 20 in Evang.).

Let us quote another passage: ...if it were possible for a Placist to feel shame, you ought to blush with shame for making your young clerics lose so much precious time and for filling their heads with ideas about imaginary heresies and ridiculous speculations.61

This pamphlet was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books.

From another point of view, the Holy Ghost men could not agree with the Jansenists because they were resisting the Pope and it has always been taught at the Seminary that whoever resists the decision of the Pope accepted by all the Bishops, or at least the majority of them, resists the voice of the Teaching Church... and is a rebellious son, one to be avoided.62

Similarly, during the French Revolution, when there were so many defections from the ranks of the clergy of France, Father DUFLOS, the Superior of the Seminary, and all his associates remained loyal to the Faith and faithful to sound principles. They devoted themselves to teaching those principles to their students.63

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62 "Un Séminariste...", p. 53.
63 Dossier Bouic.
During the French Revolution, Dom J. de la MARTINIÈRE, a Benedictine, wrote to M. Breillard, the President of the Committee on Church Affairs in the National Assembly:

*There are three kinds of preachers of pharisaism in the Church of France. This must be stopped, so that the Church can purify itself from the old yeast and renew itself. These preachers are the Sulpicians, the Eudists and the Bouicists... a breed of ignorant scoundrels, hypocritical, superstitious and fanatical. Their two great war-horses are the Formulary of Alexander VII and the Constitution of Clement XI. These scandals must be cleaned out of the sanctuary.*

Clearly the "Bouicists" were not Jansenists. They preached the devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Conception!

This absolute rejection of Jansenism remained strong in the Congregation up to the time of Libermann, who, in turn, called the Jansenists *the most dangerous of heretics.* This was because he had drawn his love and loyalty to the Church from good sources: the Sulpicians and the Eudists.

**FAMILY SPIRIT IN THE SEMINARY**

Even to the present day, family spirit is one of the characteristics of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. That spirit dates back to its origins. M. POTIER is a witness to it:

Upon his arrival at the Seminary, he wrote: *Father Superior... received me graciously with a smile... and a handshake...*

This spirit was evident in all circumstances. *If there is some problem in a seminarian's family, he recommends it to the prayers of the Community in which he places great confidence. All our relatives share in the petitions of a large number of confreres who have promised to pray for them... If someone in the family is sick, he is recommended to the public prayers of the Community by the Superior and Fr. CARIS...*

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64 Dossier Poullart des Places.
65 Letter to Miss Guillarme, August 9, 1843. *N.D., IV*, p. 299.
66 "Un Séminariste...", pp. 13 and 21.
67 *ibid.*, pp. 29 and 90.
About twelve years ago, I followed a short course given by the Movement for a Better World. It was attended by Provincial Superiors and Bishops. One of the things which impressed me was the evening gathering for recreation during which these venerable prelates took part in children's games, such as imitating an orchestra by pretending to play various instruments, etc...

It made me think of the reference Father POTIER makes to the Carnival in Holy Ghost Seminary. . . . with the Superiors as leaders . . . Father Superior said that he had never seen any kind of people except those who were foolish and those who were too stupid to be foolish. So that everybody could enjoy the innocent fun, everybody took part in it, with the Superiors in the lead . . . Those who took it all in good humor — both Superiors and others — were greatly appreciated, because it showed their good disposition. It was quite different for those who became annoyed . . . We called it the "baptism of the new recruits" . . .

APPRECIATION OF THE SEMINARY AND THE PRIESTS IT TRAINED

It was not surprising that after leaving the house they (the priests trained at Holy Ghost Seminary) quickly found assignments . . . A good priest is a treasure which everybody wants to have. In the official documents of the Holy See there are frequent references to the esteem in which the Seminary was held. In an Istruzione per Mgr. Dugnani, nuovo Nunzio in Francia, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda wrote on May 24, 1785: In Paris there are two remarkable seminaries which are well known at Propaganda. They are the Seminary for Foreign Missions and the Holy Ghost Seminary . . . When the 1734 Rules of the Congregation were presented for the Holy See's approval in 1821, Father MARZETTI, a Consultor at Propaganda, wrote: We have made a careful examination of these rules. We find them quite suitable for the training of good missionaries both from the religious, moral

68 Ibid., p. 33.
69 Letters of Father Bouic, No. 15.
and scientific point of view, and in the poor and mortified life they propose, and in the real striving for the practice of charity in the apostolic ministry. We have not found the slightest point which could militate against their goodness and wisdom.

In addition to these merits, we must add that this pious establishment has already produced many valiant missionaries and worthy bishops...  

The Nuncio in Paris had already written in April 1764 to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda concerning the proposal to replace the religious missionaries in the French Colonies in America with Fathers from the Holy Ghost Seminary:

I begged His Grace (the Duke de Choiseul) to choose for the missions priests of genuine merit as to their teaching and good example. Since he has replied that he hoped to find them at the Holy Ghost Seminary, I believe we shall have reason to be very satisfied if he follows this plan...

A few months later, on October 15, 1764, the same Nuncio wrote again concerning the same subject: I suppose that the Minister at Versailles has decided no longer to use religious in those regions. It is certain that there could be no better choice than the clerics from this Seminary, — it is an excellent one. This Seminary, by its very foundation, is obliged to furnish the men needed in the missions, and these, as a result, have to be devout and well educated in the fields required for such work. They are trained for a sober, modest and hard-working life...

In 1788 this project began to be realized when the missions in French Guyana were given over to the Holy Ghost Seminary. On that occasion — April 1, 1788 to be exact — the Nuncio in Paris wrote to Propaganda: It was with great joy that I read the Letters Patent in which His Most Christian Majesty provided for a Prefect, a Vice-Prefect, and 18 missionaries for the mission in the Colony of Cayenne. These men will be drawn from the students of the Holy Ghost Seminary. This circumstance is consoling indeed and is an even greater sign of this Mon-

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73 Ibid., vol. 2, fls. 62r-63r.
arch's outstanding piety and zeal for the propagation of the Faith...\textsuperscript{74}

Ten years later, the Congregation of Propaganda wrote to Father BECQUET, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost: The reports of the Count de Villebois, Governor of Cayenne, ... concerning these missionaries, always praise their genuine zeal for religion and holiness that is the inspiration of your Seminary. I rejoice in this with all my heart and I pray the Lord to grant you always more abundantly His choicest blessings and ever increasing success in your work.\textsuperscript{75}

It was a fact that the missionaries profited by the zeal and holiness they found in the Seminary and that they carried it with them to their fields of apostolate. There are many documents which witness to it.

Between 1731 and 1734 Father BOULC wrote:

\textit{Thanks to God’s mercy, we have already trained a good number (of priests) who are working zealously and giving a good example.}\textsuperscript{76} Every day we receive good reports about most of them to the effect that they are very edifying and are doing fruitful work for the salvation of souls. Several of them, in less than three years, have re-established many parishes, restoring faith and piety and the frequentation of the sacraments. They learned here the importance of these things; now they are communicating it to others...\textsuperscript{77}

The Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon were confided to the Congregation in 1765 and two Fathers from Holy Ghost-Seminary, PARADIS and BECQUET, went to work there. This was a nephew of the Father BECQUET who became the fourth Superior General of the Congregation. There are many reports about them in the archives of Propaganda: very good priests, filled with piety and zeal,\textsuperscript{78} two excellent missionaries ... who leave nothing to be desired from the point of view of zeal, or intelligence, or unselfishness, or good example\textsuperscript{79} The two missionaries working on these two rocky islands, writes Father de LISLEDIEU, give a very good account of

\textsuperscript{74} Lettere e Decreti, vol. 232, fls. 271rv.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., vol. 252, fls. 141rv.
\textsuperscript{76} Letters of Father Bouic, No. 19.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., No. 15.
\textsuperscript{78} Father de Lisledieu’s Letters to Propaganda, S.R.C. America Settentrionale, Canada..., vol. 1, fls. 229r-230r. Arch. of Propaganda.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., vol. 1, fls. 304v.
themselves, their zeal and the edification they give seem to increase every day.80 Father BECQUET... an educated man, strong and correct, but also prudent, wise and moderate... Father PARADIS, a man of excellent habits and piety,81... in a word, two outstanding men.82

Father BECQUET, the Superior General of the Congregation was referring to these and other comments of Father de LISLEDIEU when he wrote on October 2, 1774 to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda: Your Eminence knows the priests who have studied at our Seminary. Father de LISLEDIEU, the Vicar-General for the Colonies, who is noted for his prudence and his zeal for religion, has more than once reported to the Sacred Congregation about these men whom he has seen at work for forty years in the missions of North America, as well as those sent by the Seminary for Foreign Missions to work and suffer in the Greater Indies.

We hope, Monsignor, that, under the protection of the Holy See, those whom we hope to send to South America will cause religion to flourish in those lands so long unhappy abandoned, whose leaders have asked the Minister of France to send them some of our priests...83

A year later, on March 17, 1779, Father ROBILLARD, Vicar Apostolic of the Missions of Cayenne and Guyana, had the following to say about these missionaries: I must give witness that all the priests I left in Cayenne are beyond reproach in their conduct and are able to do a great deal of good...84

The Congregation of Propaganda was good enough to pass on to the Superior of the Seminary the good news received about the missionaries and the satisfaction they were giving. One cannot but praise the zeal the missionaries in Cayenne have for the conversion of the run-away slaves from Surinam.85 We were greatly consoled by your letter of February 8 telling us about the great hopes there are for the Missions in India...86

80 ibid., vol. 5, ffs. 422rv.
81 ibid., vol. 1, ffs. 250v-253v.
82 ibid., vol. 2, ffs. 318r-323r.
83 ibid., vol. 2, ffs. 271r-272r.
86 Letter from Father Becquet, March 1788, ibid., vol. 252, ffs. 92v-93r.
The following year, just after Father BECQUET’s death, Father DUFLOS wrote: Our missionaries (in Guyana) continue their work with edification and good results. The Chiefs and the people have the highest praise for their splendid conduct and their zealous activity.87

A report made to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda at the beginning of 1790 contains these words: There are now twenty French missionaries in Guyana, all outstanding for their zeal, good conduct and regularity.88

After the restoration of the Congregation by Father BER-TOUT, the spirit of the Seminary continued the same as before and the Fathers were still praised by their former students.

In a report made on July 5, 1823 by Father MINOT, a missionary in Bourbon, we read: Of the six other missionaries who have come since my arrival, two were sent by Father BER-TOUT (Fathers W. WARNET and M. SULLIVAN). These two missionaries give good example of clerical virtues. Others have not all followed the same line...89 Father WARNET was to be Temporary Superior of the Congregation from the beginning of January to the end of April 1845, “having resolved, in agreement with his colleagues, to offer the superiorship to Father Alexandre LEGUAY.”

Bishop COLLIER, the Vicar-Apostolic of Mauritius, wrote about the mission in Bourbon in 1841: The Holy Ghost Seminary in Paris continually furnishes a sufficient number of excellent men for the Island of Bourbon.91

Father MONET was destined to become Superior General of the Congregation and, along with Father LIBERMANN, the architect of the fusion of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary. Mgr. PONCELET, the Prefect Apostolic of Bourbon, wrote about him on May 18, 1845: Father MONET is the finest priest in the

88 S.R.C. America-Antille, vol. 3, ffs. 28r-30r.
89 S.R.C. Isole dell’Oceano Australe, Capo de Buona Speranza, vol. 1, ffs. 597r-599v.
91 S.R.C. Isole dell’Oceano Australe, Capo de Buona Speranza, vol. 3, ffs. 31r-32v.
Colony. His zeal, his unselfishness, and his activity are beyond adequate praise.\textsuperscript{92}

The priests trained at Holy Ghost Seminary underwent enormous difficulties at the time of the French Revolution. They were then not numerous enough to take care of the vast areas confided to them by the Government, and other priests had begun to work there also, — some had been sent by the Superior, others were real adventurers who went to the Colonies to get away from their Bishops, ambitious and ignorant men who scarcely deserved the name of priests. Here is what M. N. BROGLIE wrote on March 15, 1847: \textit{There is no way to defend the present-day colonial clergy. With few exceptions, they are an ignorant lot of priests, insolent and sometimes dissolute. There are several reasons for this:}

\ldots They look upon themselves as the clergy of the white people exclusively \ldots For some time now, a different outlook is beginning to appear: some attempts are being made, but they are weak, irregular, and without much fruit...\textsuperscript{93}

The worst thing for the good reputation of the Congregation was that all these priests claimed to be Holy Ghost Fathers. It is easy to understand the reaction of Father LAVAL and his confreres in Mauritius: Father THIERCE has declared himself totally opposed to the union (of the "Holy Heart of Mary" with the "Holy Ghost") and said proudly that it might be something else, but never the Congregation of the Holy Ghost...\textsuperscript{94}

In the same document, M. BROGLIE continues: \textit{The Congregation of the Holy Ghost needs new blood and new life; but such an undertaking is beyond human power...}\textsuperscript{95}

True enough, the "undertaking" was beyond human power, but God did not want to let perish that admirable Work which for a century and a half had done so much good. To give it that new blood it needed, God raised up LIBERMAN and his Work for the Blacks. Since 1841, some of his disciples were already at work among the black slaves in the Colonies and were drawing the same kind of praise as the

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., vol. 3, fl. 472.
\textsuperscript{93} S.R.C. America-Antille, vol. 8, fls. 18r-22v.
\textsuperscript{94} Letter from Father Thévaux to Father Libermann, January 2, 1850. \textit{N.D.}, XI, p. 588.
\textsuperscript{95} S.R.C. America-Antille, vol. 8, pp. 18r-22v.
missionaries trained at Holy Ghost Seminary for more than a century. Speaking of Father LAVAL, Bishop COLLIER wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda on October 25, 1845: *The Blacks especially have profited from the ministry of a zealous cleric, a true "apostle"...* 96 Already on February 19, 1842, one year after Father LAVAL's arrival in Mauritius, Bishop COLLIER said of him: *I still rejoice in the ardent zeal of my dear Father LAVAL whom I regard as the greatest treasure in my Vicariate Apostolic...* 97

In 1848 the Congregation of the Holy Ghost was united to the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary. In this way the old tree received new vitality and its fruit continued to be abundant and precious. Towards the end of 1851, M. DONALD wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda: *The former slaves — second class citizens — are being cared for so well by the well-known Father LAVAL and his four confreres (all five of them priests of the Holy Heart of Mary from Amiens) that throughout the country it has merited for Father LAVAL the honorable title of Apostle of the Blacks...* 98

Similarly, on September 5, 1851, Bishop COLLIER wrote: *In my diocese I have five religious priests of the Order of the Holy Ghost and the Holy Heart of Mary. Their Superior is Father LIBERMANN and their motherhouse is the Holy Ghost Seminary in Paris. I cannot sufficiently praise the zeal and piety of these excellent religious. My only regret is that I don't have fifty of them instead of only five.* 99

It was by its fusion with "The Holy Heart of Mary" that "The Holy Ghost" recovered its former vigor and regained the full spiritual bloom that Poullart des Places had given it.

The words LIBERMANN wrote on March 23, 1850 are the most perfect synthesis of what the fusion of the two congregations meant: *We have always placed our confidence and our happiness in the Heart of Mary filled with the superabundance of the Holy Spirit, and, if we did not express that plenitude of the Holy Spirit in the Heart of Mary, nevertheless it formed the es-

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sence of our devotion to the Most Holy Heart of Mary. We are not making a change! What was understood and pre-supposed before we now make explicit.\textsuperscript{100}

The Holy Ghost men too could say: \textit{We are not making a change; what was understood... we are now making explicit.} "When the Holy Spirit inspires a work, He almost never reveals at once its whole development...".

Neither one of the two congregations changed; neither one took the place of the other; they completed one another. LIBERMANN did not take the place of POULLART DES PLACES; he represents rather the full development of his spirit and his work. All that was implicit in POULLART DES PLACES becomes explicit in LIBERMANN. To both of them, more than to any other member of the Congregation, our motto applies: \textit{Cor unum et anima una}.

Amadeu MARTINS, C.S.Sp.

\footnote{\textit{N.D.}, XII, p. 133.}