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# The Annual Meeting of the Spiritan Studies Group

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## THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SPIRITAN STUDY GROUP

The Annual Meeting of the Spiritan Study Group, which usually takes place on the last three days of each year, was held this year at Blackrock College, Dublin.

Those present were: Fathers Lecuyer, Martins, Fay, Sigrist, Seixas, Nicolas (François) and Bernard Kelly. Father Michael O'Carroll of the Irish Province also attended the meetings, by invitation of the Group. Some other members of the Province, notably Father Brian Gogan, also assisted at one or other of our meetings.

We began our work at 9.15 on December 29, under the chairmanship of Father Lecuyer. Having greeted these present, he proceeded to read letters of apology for inevitable absence, from Fathers Bouchaud and Koren, in the course of which they both gave progress reports of the work they had in hand. Father Bouchaud is making a French translation of the second edition of THE SPIRITANS, by Father Koren, who is at present preparing this revised edition.

Father Lecuyer then spoke of the subjects to be discussed, according to the circular of the Group Secretary. Immediately after, a Time-Table was submitted and approved for the work of the three days: two sessions each morning from 9.15-11.45, with a short interval of a quarter of an hour in mid-morning; 14.30-18.15 each afternoon, with a similar interval in mid-afternoon.

### I

The first point to be considered was the work done by the members in the course of the last year, starting with Father Martins, the Secretary: besides his translations of «I/D» and «Spiritan News» into Portuguese and the editing and publishing of CAHIERS SPIRITANS and SPIRITAN PAPERS, he has been engaged principally in drawing up an index of Father Liber-mann's writings, which he has almost completed.

Father Lecuyer is engaged in a re-reading of Libermann, high-lighting all explicit or implicit biblical references in the writings. He has also published a series of articles on The Holy Spirit in the review, *ESPRIT SAINT*.

He is, further doing research work in Libermann with regard to his references on the Holy Heart of Mary. He has also reviewed the Writings of Poullart des Places, to be published shortly. Father Gandy of the English Province is doing an English translation of this, with notes adapted to English readers: these various writings will appear in a special issue of

*SPIRITAN PAPERS*, in the French and English editions respectively. Father Lecuyer is also working on *THE COMMENTARY OF ST JOHN*, in the hope of publishing a new edition.

Father Fay has given lectures on Poullart des Places and Father Laval. Since last October he has been in Tanzania, giving talks on the Spirit of the Congregation to the novices of the East Africa Spiritan Foundation and to those in formation in other houses in the area.

Father Ramos Seixas has given a course in the spirituality and charism of our Founders to the students of our Spanish Province. The various Communities of this Province have during the year made a study of the principal elements of the spirituality of Libermann, des Places and Laval, the object of their reflection. This which they have called «Libermann Year» will conclude with a Retreat of three days for all members at Aranda de Duero, guided by Father A. Martins.

Father Sigrist has continued to prepare his new «Directory», which he has completely recast in the light of the remarks made at last year's meeting of the Group.

Father François Nicolas has continued, as usual to give his courses to the novices of the French Province on the history and spirituality of the Spiritan Congregation (on the basis of a whole morning every fortnight). He has also preached several recollection on the themes «Libermann and the Holy Spirit» and «Does 'a Congregation of the Holy Ghost' in itself constitute a life-programme»? He also informed the meeting that the French Province would like to use the review «*Esprit Saint*» to make known the action of the Holy Spirit in the world of our day.

In the month of January, Father Bernard Kelly spent two days talking to the Irish novices at Kilshane on Libermann, and

another two days speaking to the novices of North America and Trinidad (at Ferndale) on the same subject. In February, he preached a retreat to the Spiritan missionary team in Mexico. He also spoke of Claude Poullart des Places at Woodstock, Ontario and at Edmonton (Alberta). In April he preached two retreats to English Spiritans on Libermann and also gave two talks on the same subject to the Provincial Assembly of the English Province. In the month of July, he spent a week at the Summer School at Gentinnes, speaking to the Spiritan students gathered there, on the subject of Libermann.

In the letter already mentioned, Father Koren told us of what he had been doing in the field of Spiritan studies. He continues to work on the revision of his proposed new edition of *THE SPIRITANS*. Apart from minor corrections, this is now ready up to 1896. As already mentioned, Father Bouchaud is preparing the French translation; and at the author's request, Father M. O'Carroll had agreed to review the text from the angle of English style.

From October 6 -8, Father Koren attended the Third Centenary Celebrations of the birth of Claude Poullart des Places, at Ottawa. On this occasion, he presented the French version of his *KNAVES OR KNIGHTS*, entitled *CHE NAPANS ou CHEVALIERS*: a history of the Spiritans in North America from 1732 to 1839.

On October 7, on the same occasion, he gave a lecture on «The Permanent Vocation and Perpetual Existence of the Congregation?», which constituted material for the discussion which followed. He also at this time, presented some notes on *LIBERMANN AND MARXISM*.

Besides his little biography of Father Laval, Father O'Carroll, informed us that he was preparing a pamphlet on Libermann, which was due to appear in the near future. He also had given a talk on Spiritan Spirituality.

## II - The Directory

The second matter to be treated was *THE DIRECTORY*, which it is agreed will appear under another title. The plan of the work is as follows: 1) A twenty-page introduction of an historical nature; 2) A fifty-page section on the Ends of the

Congregation; 3) Another fifty pages treating of the the missionary life of the Congregation from its beginnings to the present day; 4) A section on the Spirituality of the Congregation (following as far as possible a chronological order).

Several comments were proffered and suggestions made. If we do not report them here, it is because they would be incomprehensible to anyone who had not the text to hand.

### III – Suggestions submitted by the Group

The following suggestions were made by the members of the Group, or more correctly by one or two of them, in the course of discussion :-

1. The setting up of an Institute of Spiritan Spirituality, for Retreats Recollections, etc. Father Nicolas pointed out that he had already attempted something like this in Saverne.

2. The drawing up of a programme for an eight-day Retreat. Perhaps, something of this nature, already done by Father Tenaillau, could be used as a point of departure.

3. The establishment of a Centre of Spiritan Documentation, gathering together, at Chevilly or the Rue Lhomond, whatever was available.

The institution of a similar Centre in Ireland and the principal Provinces.

4. That great care be taken to preserve safely existing collections of Notes et Documents and also of General Bulletin.

5. That Official documents of the Congregation speak more of the priestly vocation. Training for the priesthood is part of our spiritual heritage. Poullart des Places and Libermann were above all else educators of priests, and wished to be so.

6. That attention be given to problems of formation, or rather to the problem of those who form, not only for internal training in the Congregation but also for the forming of Directors of people in the spiritual life and in the confessional, etc.

7. that Mgr Gay's biography entitled LIBERMANN, A JEW ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL should be translated into the principal languages of the Congregation, with explanatory foot-notes suitable to the different national or linguistic groups.

8. That SPIRITAN PAPERS publish a summary of the life of Bishop Shanahan, at present being prepared in Ireland.

9. That the complaint that SPIRITAIN PAPERS are not at the disposition of all the confreres in our Communities should be rectified.

10. That the Generalate be asked to publish

- a. The DIRECTORY, in course of preparation by the Group;
- b. THE COMMENTARY ON ST JOHN, at present entirely out-of-print. A special feature of the accompanying notes would be provided by quoting other passage of Libermann on the same texts.
- c. The SPIRITANS, in French translation;
- d. A SUPPLEMENT to *Notes and Documents* of the material discovered by Fathers Martins and Brasio in the Archives of Propaganda, dealing especially with our Superiors General.

### CLOSING MEETING

It was remarked that the 1978 Report had not recorded the re-election of Father Lecuyer as President, although he had in fact been re-appointed by the unanimous decision of the members present.

The Group was in agreement that three new members be admitted: Fathers M. O'Carroll (Ireland), B. Tenailleau (France) and D. Nesti (U.S.A./EAST).

On the same topic, it was further agreed that new members should be appointed by the members actually present at the Annual Meeting and not by delegation or correspondence. It should be remembered that all appointments are subject to the ratification of the General Council.

Next year's meeting will take place in Rome on the same dates, viz, Dec. 29, 30, 31, 1980.

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On January 1, all the members of the Group left by train for Limerick Junction, where they were met and taken by car to visit Rockwell College, Cashel. After dinner and a brief tour of the property, they left to take the train again, in order to visit the Novitiate at Kilshane.

May we, before concluding, express to the Irish Province our warm appreciation of the fraternal welcome extended to us. It is something we shall not forget.

A. M.