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SPIRITAN NEWS

March-April 1991

No. 86

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

Centenary of the Church in Cameroon

The Church in Cameroon opened the celebration of its centenary year at Marienberg, the first Catholic mission in the country (in the Archdiocese of Douala), on 8 December 1990, and will close it at Mvolyé, the first mission in the capital, Yaoundé, on 8 December 1991. During its hundred years the Church has grown to represent about one quarter of Cameroon's population of 11 million, with 17 dioceses, headed almost entirely by local bishops, and about 500 local diocesan priests and 600 local sisters. In this first article we will cover only the early years of its history, leaving the rest for a later article.

More than 10,000 people were present at Marienberg for the opening Mass of the centenary year, at which Cardinal Christian Tumi, Archbishop of Garoua, was principal celebrant. The Holy See was represented by the Pro-Nuncio to Cameroon, Archbishop Santos Abril y Castello, and, apart from the Bishops of Cameroon, the Archbishops of Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea also took part in the concelebration, along with some 200 priests. Among those who addressed the crowd after the Mass were Fr. Seamus Freeman, Vice-Superior General of the Pallottine Fathers, who were the first missionaries in the country; the Vicar General of the diocese of Limburg, the home diocese of the first Vicar Apostolic of Cameroon; and Mr. André Ngangué, grandson of Andreas Mbangué, the first Cameroonian to be baptized.

Most of the African Churches whose centenaries *Spiritans News* has reported on in the past have had Spiritans as their first missionaries, but Cameroon is an exception to this. Though for the past 75 years it has been one of the most flourishing Spiritan missions, the honour of planting the Church in the country and fostering it through its first 25 years goes to the German Pallottines. We are happy to pay tribute to them here, for their pioneering work was as heroic as any.

Cameroon did in fact form part of the original Vicariate of the Two Guineas, which was entrusted to Fr. Libermann in 1845 and included the whole of the West African coast from Senegal to Namibia. However, it was not until 1883 that two

Spiritans from Gabon visited Cameroon with a view to starting a mission there. Their project had to be abandoned as, the following year, Cameroon was declared a German colony and the German government made it clear that French Catholic missionaries would not be welcome. It was only when Germany lost Cameroon in 1915 that the Spiritans were called upon to take over from the Pallottines.

For the following account of the early years of the Cameroon mission we are indebted to three books that Fr. Jean Criaud, C.S.Sp., a missionary in Cameroon since 1948, has produced for the centenary: *Ils ont planté l'Eglise au Cameroun: Les Pallottins (1890-1915)*; *Les premiers pas de l'Eglise au Cameroun* (a French translation of Bishop Vieter's own chronicle in German); and *La Geste des Spiritains (1916-1990)*.

The Pallottines (1890-1915)

Catholic missionaries were not the first to arrive, as British Baptist missionaries were at work in Cameroon from 1843, American Presbyterians from 1879, and Swiss Protestants (the Basel Mission) from 1886. At the beginning of 1890, the Holy See asked the German Pallottines to undertake the mission and appointed Fr. Heinrich Vieter as Prefect Apostolic. Fr. Vieter had had to train as a carpenter to help support his family, and it was only at the age of 30 that he was able to join the Pallottines. He was ordained at the age of 34 and was sent the following year (1888) as superior of a mission in Brazil. Two years later came the call from Rome, and he returned to Germany to leave from Hamburg with one other Pallottine Father and six Brothers, arriving at Douala on 25 October 1890.

After some initial difficulties with the government authorities and Protestant missionaries, Fr. Vieter was able to buy a plot of land on the Sanaga river, about 40 kms from the sea, and started the first mission, which he named Marienberg. On 8 December, he celebrated Mass in their hut there, entrusting the country to the protection of the Blessed Virgin. A school was soon opened, and at Christmas 1891 15 students were admitted to baptism. By then, two more Fathers and two Brothers had arrived from Germany and two new missions had been opened: one at Edea, an important settlement further up the Sanaga, and the other at Kribi, on the coast to the south.



The Pallottine mission at Kribi.



The Pallottine missions in Southern Cameroon.

However, on 12 November 1891, Brother Josef Höfer died at Kribi, the first of the Pallottines to give his life for the Cameroon mission. A few weeks later, on 2 December, Brother Klosterknecht died at Marienberg. As two other Brothers had already had to return to Germany because of illness, the original group of eight was reduced to four in little over a year. As with the early Spiritan missions on the west coast of Africa, malaria and other tropical fevers took a heavy toll, and in the first 11 years 18 Pallottines died (7 priests, 10 brothers and a sister). However, reinforcements kept arriving, and Fr. Vieter himself proved a remarkable leader, founding new missions and travelling constantly in spite of regular attacks of fever. Pallottine Sisters arrived in 1892 and were able to give great help with the teaching of girls in domestic schools known as "Sixa", from the German word "Schwester" or Sister. As in other countries, local catechists also played an important role in the development of the Church.

In 1894, a new mission, Engelberg, was founded at Bonjongo, west of Douala, and in 1898 one was started in Douala itself. This was followed by Batanga, on the coast south of Kribi, and then an important step was taken with the opening, in 1901, of a mission in the interior at Mvolyé, Yaoundé. The Ewondo people here were particularly welcoming and the Church grew rapidly among them. In 1904, the Holy See raised Cameroon to the rank of a Vicariate Apostolic and Fr. Vieter was ordained Bishop. New missions continued to be founded: Ikassa, Einsiedeln and Victoria (Limbe) in the west; Dschang and Ossia further north; Ngovayang, Minlaba and Andreasberg in the interior eastwards; and Deido, near Douala.

In 1912, priests of the Sacred Heart Congregation (Dehonians) arrived to help in evangelizing the northern part of the country, and in 1914 the Prefecture Apostolic of Adamawa

was erected in the north and entrusted to them. In this year too, Bishop Vieter's health deteriorated sharply and, in April, Fr. Franz Hennemann was ordained Bishop in Douala as his Coadjutor. Bishop Vieter died on 7 November in Yaoundé, at the age of 61, worn out by constant illness and his incessant labours during 24 years at the head of the mission.

The statistics for the end of 1913 showed 16 missions, staffed by 34 priests, 37 brothers and 31 sisters (all Pallottines), with 223 catechists and 28,179 Catholics. Nearly half of the Catholics were in the Yaoundé mission. But disaster was about to strike for the Pallottines. With the declaration of war in 1914, the country was invaded and taken over by French, British and Belgian troops, and by April 1916 all the German missionaries had been arrested and deported.

The Spiritans

It was not easy to find replacements for the missionaries. Of the seven chaplains with the French forces in Cameroon, four were Spiritans, and one of these, Fr. Jules Douvry, was named Pro-Vicar in 1916. Later that year, the Superior General, Bishop Le Roy, was able to send him seven Spiritans who had been released for that purpose from military chaplaincies in France. With this handful of priests, Fr. Douvry was able to keep some, though not all, of the mission stations going, though naturally the population regretted the departure of their former missionaries, including all the Brothers and Sisters. They also found it difficult to learn a new language, French, instead of German.

Even at the end of the War in 1918, the situation did not improve immediately. Numbers were down in the Holy Ghost Congregation as a result of the War, and there were requests for men from many other missions apart from Cameroon. There was also some uncertainty as to whether the Pallottines would be allowed to return. In 1917, Fr. (later Bishop) Joseph Shanahan of Nigeria was named Pro-Vicar for western Cameroon, which was under the British and where five of the Pallottine missions were located, and in 1918-19 he made a 1,200-km trek on foot from Onitsha to visit them. In 1920, Fr. Douvry fell ill and Fr. Louis Malessard replaced him as Pro-Vicar. Two years later, Fr. Malessard died, and Bishop François-Xavier Vogt, who since 1906 had been Vicar Apostolic of Bagamoyo, was transferred to Cameroon, becoming its Vicar Apostolic in 1923. In that year also, the Prefecture Apostolic of Buea was set up in western (British) Cameroon and entrusted to the Mill Hill Fathers, while the Prefecture of Adamawa was renamed Foumban and remained under the Sacred Heart Fathers, who, unlike the Pallottines, had French members who could replace the Germans. When Bishop Vogt took over, he had only 13 Fathers and 4 Brothers at his disposal, but from then on Spiritan reinforcements began to arrive more regularly, and these were all the more needed as the early work of the Pallottines and their catechists was bearing fruit in ever growing numbers of catechumens.

(To be continued)

News Items

Fr. Maurice Piat named Bishop

On 4 March, the Holy See announced that His Holiness the Pope had appointed Fr. Maurice Piat as Coadjutor Bishop to Cardinal Jean Margéot, Bishop of Port-Louis, Mauritius. He is to receive episcopal ordination on Pentecost Sunday, 19 May, in Port-Louis.

Bishop Piat, 49, was born in Mauritius on 19 July 1941 and

did his secondary studies at the Holy Ghost College there. He entered the Congregation in 1961, going to Ireland for his novitiate at Kilshane, where he was professed on 8 September 1962 as a member of the Irish Province. He studied philosophy in Kimmage and did a degree in French and English at University College, Dublin. He obtained a licence in theology at the Gregorian University, Rome, in 1972, after his ordination in Mauritius on 2 August 1970. He then worked



Mgr. Piat

for three months in a parish in Bangalore, India, to have an experience of Indian culture, and, on his return to Mauritius in 1973, was appointed to the Holy Ghost College, where he taught for four years before going to Paris for a two-year course at IFEC (the Institute for the Formation of Educators of the Clergy). In 1979 he was named episcopal vicar in Mauritius for ongoing formation and pastoral renewal, and since 1983 he has been in charge of the centre at Thabor, where he has trained many groups of young people as lay leaders.

Bishop Piat is the fourth Spiritan to be Bishop in Mauritius, the others having been Bishop John T. Murphy (1916-26), Archbishop James Leen (1926-49) and Cardinal Margéot's predecessor, Bishop Daniel Liston (1949-68). Port-Louis was made a diocese in 1847, and, before Bishop Murphy, all but one of the Bishops were Benedictines.

Decisions of the General Council

The General Council

- on 28 January, confirmed the election of Fr. Antonius van LANKVELD as District Superior of **Brazil Central** for a second three-year term, as from 21 January 1991;
- on 15 February, confirmed the election of Fr. Frans AUGUSTIJNS as District Superior of **Zaire** for a second three-year term, as from 9 January 1991, and appointed him Superior of the Zairean Foundation for the same period;
- on 15 February, appointed Fr. Bernard RENEIERS Superior of the **Indian Ocean Foundation** for a second three-year term, beginning on 26 February;
- on 15 February, in agreement with the Postulator, Fr. Maurice FRÉCHARD, appointed Fr. Gérard GUILLEMOT, of the District of Mauritius, as Vice-Postulator of the **Cause of Blessed Jacques Laval**;
- on 6 March, appointed Fr. Gérard VIEIRA District Superior of **Senegal** for a three-year term, beginning on 1 June 1991;
- on 13 March, appointed Fr. Victor CABEZAS YAÑEZ Provincial Superior of **Spain** for a third three-year term, beginning on 1 June 1991;
- on 15 March, prolonged the term of office of Fr. José de CASTRO OLIVEIRA as Provincial Superior of **Portugal** from 20 May to 1 August 1991, because of the Enlarged Provincial Council to be held in July.

First Appointments

The General Council has made the following First Appointments:

From Angola:

Felisberto SAKULUKUSSU	Senegal (Guinea-Bissau)
Br. Tito BERNARDO	Senegal (Guinea-Bissau)
Maurício Agostinho KAMUTO	Angola
João FRANCISCO	Angola
Armando José LIVAMBA	Angola
Carlos FREDERICO	Angola
Lourenço NDJIMBU	Angola

Puerto Rico

On Sunday, 3 February, the new house of philosophy of the Puerto Rican Foundation at Bayamón was officially opened and blessed by the Most Rev. Hermín Negrón, Auxiliary Bishop of San Juan. The blessing was preceded by an open-air concelebrated Mass in front of the building, with Fr. Manuel Gonçalves, of the General Council, as chief concelebrant and Fr. Charles Connors as homilist. (Fr. Connors in the past has been Provincial of USA/E, General Councillor and District Superior of Puerto Rico, and now, at the age of 78, he is still active as District bursar and editor of the quarterly magazine *El Mensajero del Espíritu Santo*, which has a circulation of 12,000). Also among the concelebrants was Fr. Norman Bevan, Provincial Superior of USA/E. The more than 300 friends who were present were invited to the meal which followed the blessing.



The new house of philosophy.

Bayamón is a suburb to the south-west of the capital, San Juan, and is about 10 kms. from the city centre. The Dominicans run a Catholic university here, and the new house of philosophy is a short walk from the university. On the other side of the university is the Foundation's house of theology. The new building can accommodate 10 students on a permanent basis and up to 30 for occasional sessions. It will be the residence of Fr. Neil McQuillan, who is District and Foundation Superior as well as director of the first-cycle students and the aspirants.

The blessing of the new building served also to mark the 60th anniversary of the Spiritans in Puerto Rico, as it was in January 1931 that the first group of four Spiritans arrived from the United States. A plaque was unveiled in the chapel, listing the deceased confreres who have served in Puerto Rico. In the main entrance, a striking painting of Fr. Libermann by a local artist was also unveiled.

On 2 February, the day preceding the blessing, the Spiritans gathered in the village parish of Carozal for the perpetual profession of Orlando Camacho Torres, who was back from his two years of overseas training in Brazil. It was a joyous celebration, which unfortunately was followed shortly after by the news of the death in Brazil of one of the Foundation's first missionaries there, Fr. Alvaro Quiñones Zuñiga, who died of cancer in Brasília at the early age of 41. This was indeed a blow for the young Foundation. Another blow has been the death in Ireland on 14 March, at the age of 55, of Fr. Noel Banahan, who had been director of theologians at Bayamón.

The Puerto Rican Foundation at present numbers eight professed members. Four of these are priests, of whom three are working in Brazil. Fr. Quiñones had been parish

priest of Brás Cubas, São Paulo, which had been entrusted to the Puerto Ricans, but this parish has now been given up, and Fr. Ivan Serrano has moved from there to Ceilândia, Brasília, where Frs. José Alamo and Osvaldo Pérez were already working. In Puerto Rico, Fr. Félix Abreu is director of the theologate, where Orlando Camacho and Luis Colón are doing their studies and attending the Dominican university. One professed member, Eddie Cordero, is doing his theology in Brazil, and Brother José Angel Ramírez has just returned from his overseas training there. At the new house of philosophy there are two students, and a group of four aspirants meet there from time to time. Two Puerto Ricans are doing their novitiate this year in Brazil.

The numbers in the District, as distinct from the Foundation, are diminishing and the average age is getting higher. Apart from Fr. McQuillan, there are only eight Americans now and three Germans. They are responsible for three parishes (Orocovis, Salinas and the island of Vieques), while Fr. Tosello Giangiacomo is president of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, at Ponce, and Fr. Robert Graves is national director of the Pontifical Missionary Societies. The District House is at Dorado, but the parish of Dorado was recently handed over to the Archdiocese. As with the Foundations in Africa, the missionaries who have worked in Puerto Rico during the past 60 years can take pride in the fact that they have handed on the torch to local young Spiritans who will keep the missionary ideal alive among their people.

Statistics of the 20 largest Congregations

In the recently issued *Annuario Pontificio* for 1991, the membership figures for religious congregations are those of 1 January 1990. It is interesting to compare these with those of the 1966 *Annuario Pontificio*, giving the figures of 1 January 1965, which was the time when most congregations were at their highest level of membership. In the 25 years since then, most congregations have dropped considerably in membership, some more than others. The Society of the Divine Word (SVD) has dropped by only two per cent, partly because of their vocations in Indonesia, India and the Philippines. Congregations of Brothers seem to have lost the most, some being only half as large now. The following are the figures for the 20 largest congregations of men, with the third column indicating the percentage of membership now as compared with 25 years ago:

	1965	1990	%
Jesuits	36.038	25.594	71
Franciscans	27.009	19.214	71
Salesians	22.042	17.107	78
Capuchins	15.838	11.717	74
Benedictines	12.500	9.094	73
De la Salle Brothers	17.926	8.437	47
Dominicans	10.191	6.899	68
Redemptorists	9.450	6.213	66
Marist Brothers	10.356	6.024	58
S.V.D.	5.773	5.648	98
O.M.I.	7.609	5.485	72
O.F.M. Conventuals	4.650	4.308	93
Vincentians	5.992	3.682	61
Discalced Carmelites	4.022	3.682	92
Spiritans	5.200	3.390	65
Augustinians	4.531	3.203	71
Claretians	3.770	2.995	79
Trappists	4.211	2.718	65
Passionists	4.135	2.713	66
White Fathers	4.013	2.610	65

Changes of address

The **English Province**, while keeping the community house at Bickley, has transferred its Provincialate to: 26 Eastbury Avenue, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 3LN, England (Tel. 09274.29655).

The District Superior of **Puerto Rico** will be living at the new house of philosophy: Calle Zaya Verde 44, Bo. Hato Tejas, Bayamón 00619, Puerto Rico (Tel. 809.786.8231).

Jubilarians

70 Years of Profession:

- 16 July : Br. Baldomir HERMANS (USA/E).
- 05 Aug. : Fr. Alphonse J. FAVRE (USA/W).
- 15 Aug. : Fr. Francis J. SMITH (USA/W).

65 Years of Profession:

- 08 Aug. : Br. Nova BRULOTTE (Canada).
- 26 Aug. : Frs. Bernard KEANE (Ireland), Thomas CLERKIN, Frederick FULLEN and Brendan TIMON (Irish/Long Island).

65 Years of Priesthood:

- 28 Aug. : Bishop Richard H. ACKERMANN and Fr. Michael F. MULVOY (USA/E).

60 Years of Profession:

- 25 July : Frs. George A. HARCAR (USA/W), Joseph P. LUCEY and Stephen A. ZAMBORSKY (USA/E).

60 Years of Priesthood:

- 12 July : Fr. Mauritz VERSTRAETE (Belgium).

50 Years of Priesthood:

- 06 July : Frs. Roger BESSELING (Belgium), Antoine DUCHENE (France) and Albert SCHMITT (Yaoundé).
- 19 July : Frs. Martinus van de BURGT (Bangui), Nicolaas VEEN (Gabon), Albertus van EIMEREN, Antonius van HILLO, Leonardus KERSTENS, Johannes KOEKOEK, Henricus KORNIPS, Cornelius van UDEN and Julius VEENBOER (Holland).
- 27 July : Frs. Francisco Manuel LOPES (Portugal), Christopher MEAGHER (Ireland) and Conor MURPHY (Kenya).
- 10 Aug. : Bishop Georges GUIBERT (France), Frs. Michel CHAVEROT (French Seminary), Piotr PILARSKI (Poland) and Georges RATZMANN (France).
- 20 Aug. : Fr. Fernand BUSSARD (Switzerland).
- 24 Aug. : Frs. Louis LEDIT and Albert TRITSCHER (France).

Our Dead

- 02 Feb. : Fr. Alvaro QUIÑONES ZUÑIGA (Brazil), 41.
- 05 Feb. : Fr. Lucien VAULOUPE (France), 88.
- 11 Feb. : Fr. Gabriel KRUMMENACKER (France), 83.
- 20 Feb. : Br. Gerwich RECK (Germany), 70.
- 01 March : Fr. Wilhelmus KRIJNEN (Holland), 80.
- 02 March : Br. Engelhard WILMES (Germany), 90.
- 03 March : Fr. Jean SELS (Belgium), 83.
- 14 March : Fr. Noel BANAHAN (Ireland), 55.