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SPIRITAN NEWS

Nov.- Dec. 1992

N° 94

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

Together or Apart?

Dear Spiritan Brothers,

What will Christmas mean to us this year, three months after our General Chapter? At this time of the year we expect our hearts to be filled with the deepest joy, as we await the signs of God's love coming amongst us. As missionaries, we know that we celebrate the real Christmas to the extent that we advance the cause of justice and peace on the earth.

But how shall we express the dynamism of our congregation as we experienced it at Itaici in a world where the wealthiest nations quarrel bitterly about the division of markets while the poorest nations are less and less capable of extricating themselves from poverty? What value does our fraternal unity have at a time when nationalist and racist emotions are erupting everywhere?

Despite our manifold weaknesses, we as a body represent the strength that comes from faith, faith in God and in humankind. In the abandoned child, the man or woman cast aside, the appalling wars and acts of revenge, we see the face of the child born in the manger, fleeing into Egypt with his parents, the face of him who suffered and died a shameful death.

This faith of ours leads us to protest against all forms of exclusion. With many other people of goodwill we represent a countervailing force for turning around or at least influencing the direction of the relations between our contemporaries. Many people today live in fear of deprivation, of other people. They want to protect their own interests, preserve their racial purity, the integrity of their values or their religion. But for us Christians a peaceful world cannot be found behind barriers. Our Lord *"has broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them...so as to create ... a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace."* (Eph. 2,14 - cf. Phil. 2,6-14)

This is the approach we wish to make our own. We want to ally ourselves with human beings in distress in order to serve them, we want to be open to others, even though this requires a certain dying to ourselves. We all know from our own experience that from this we will receive a hundredfold.

Our whole Congregation is in a state of transition, like one of the Provinces which so described itself at the Chapter. A modern author has written: *"History wears a mask as it unfolds; it arrives onstage wearing the mask of the preceding age and we no longer recognize the play"*. Our Congregation comes on the contemporary stage clad in its traditional works and methods. These are the masks of the previous scene which, like African masks, continue to bring us the voices of our predecessors



The General Council: evaluation and inspiration

and instruct us in their way of thinking. Our language jars with that of the world around us; we are still searching for specific forms of action, still a bit awkward in the midst of new cultures.

But Itaici put before us new, unheard of experiences, marked by total, gratuitous openness to others, by a willingness to get to know them, to dialogue with them, to enter into their lives. Each of us saw in this an evangelical inspiration for today. Surely here is one of the new characteristics of the Congregation. The Lord is calling us to a new respect for every human being. He invites us to speak to others rather than about them among ourselves, to join with them in order to work together with them, rather than to do things for them.

When the time comes for talk, let us never fail to speak in favour of solidarity and against all movements and groups which provoke fear and hatred and make the problem of the huge and formless migrations all the more insoluble. Let each of us take an interest in the outsider, who may be nearer to us than we think. Don't let us have within the Congregation closed groups which pass judgment on others or look down on them. Let us set our face resolutely against all nationalism and racism. This is a great challenge. Our brotherly solidarity will be a powerful witness to the Gospel.

This Christmas letter is intended to express our solidarity with all of you. Together with all the members of the General Council and the community of Clivo di Cinna we pray that you will know a Christmas of great joy and hope.

Rome, November 30th 1992
Fr Pierre Schouwer, Superior General

Mission and The Road to Emmaus

Christ provides us with a model for every missionary approach. We see it in his encounter with defeated and despairing people, as he listens to and shares their concerns, as he warms their hearts with his word, gathers them together for the breaking of bread and sends them on their way filled with joy and hope. This is the substance of the significant experience carried out in the inner city of Sao Paulo which was presented at our recent Chapter by our confreres Hugh Boyle and Pat Clarke and in a dramatised version by the members of a base community.

The mission of the Church, in a Continent of the humiliated and the handicapped has taken up a pastoral line of incarnate solidarity in a concrete way in the last 30 years. It has truly been a time of grace, of conversion, of martyrdom.

This pastoral action is born of a life situation which is perceived as evil, from centuries old and scandalous slavery of human beings which cannot be tolerated by those who believe in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. It is born also of the conviction that the God of Christians is gratuitous gift, mystery, unconditional love that subverts all man's scheming.

This two-sided view means that the Church in Brazil views herself as a pilgrim church, a sent church (*missa est*), a church which seeks out the fallen on the foot-paths, in the gutters, on the hills and hollows of favelas, in the fields and valleys of the immense land of the disinherited. And so in its turn the Church assumes the suffering features of the negroes, the Indian, the women, the children, the day-laborers, the workers - features simultaneously exploited and profoundly mystical.

The Church: a people traveling, praying and celebrating

The pastoral work of the Church is done against this backdrop. The situations demand creative and concrete replies which are addressed both to the conditions of socio-economic misery and to the situations of hunger of beauty, of the word of God, of the bread of life. One of these replies in Brazil is the basic Christian community as presence of the Church born in this dual source (material misery and religious mysticism): It is the Church, pilgrim people, in the heart of the world; church which is also at prayer, peni-



The base community in a moment of celebration

tent and celebrative. Another form of being church is expressed in the simple being present on the street, in the favela, in the jails, in the red-light district, wherever there are broken people, be they rural or urban.

From separation to togetherness

What we wished to present to the Chapter were some lived experiences which capture a little of what it is to be Church today, in the city of São Paulo. In the Basic Christian Community from Leme we experienced a situation of moral and social breakdown in which it seemed impossible to create any form of Eucharistic fraternity. It seemed that a breakdown in the material world must lead inevitably to a spiritual breakdown. There was of course some leadership present. But it was with the arrival of the priest that this leadership became aware of its socio-economic need (water) alongside the force of faith (Eucharist). In that way the Word becomes incarnate, but without a confusing of the kingdom of the world with the world of the Kingdom.

All of this was clear in the dramatization presented by the group which started off with scenes of dispersion with each one sweeping his bit of street but with no one interest in his neighbor; a parable of the fragmentation lived by the humiliated. In the second scene when the community problems were discussed (water, creche, public transport, etc.) the conclusion that something had to be done became clear. Even then, some were not willing to join in the struggle. But with time and leadership incentivated by the priest, participation grew until a victory was achieved and water flowed.

Water is a strong liturgical, mystical and religious symbol. It is clear that the victory had to be celebrated in the context of faith, fidelity and fraternity; a Brazilian celebration... with song, dance and a profound hope in the Lord of History.

At the end a poem was read, 'The Way of Emmaus', the way of desolation, the way of the encounter, the way of the table of reconciliation.

(Presented by Fr P. Clark)

The Congregation and the Media

"The Christian faith is enhanced by the act of communication. If it is not shared, it grows weak." (Redemptoris Missio)

The recent General Chapter of the Congregation emphasized the importance of communication today. No longer are faith and communication obviously linked together; rather the two are in danger of being separated. Simultaneously religion seems more and more to lose its importance in today's society while communication and the mass media become more and more the focus of interest.

How many Spiritans are aware of this? Have they tried to be missionaries using the modern means of communication? The Superior General and his Council are aware that such efforts are being made, but they have no clear idea of what is being done. Wouldn't it be a good idea to share our efforts in this area?

To evaluate the possibility of some kind of meeting or convention, the General Council would like to obtain the names of all those who are actively engaged with the media: editors of Spiritan or missionary newsletters, brochures and leaflets about the Congregation, audiovisual presentations, music and song cassettes, videocassettes. Similarly, we want to hear from those who work with press, radio and television, whether in particular groups or not, whether full time or as a hobby. Let us know what you do, what resources you have, to whom you direct your work, etc.

It used to be customary for confreres who had produced a book or an article to send a copy to the Generalate (this is still desirable). Such a procedure does not seem to exist regarding audio or videocassettes. The General Council is very interested that such a practice should come into being.



Fr Frans Wijnen, General Assistant.

News Items

Decisions of the General Council

The General Council

- on the 15th of October 1992 confirmed the election of Fr Gérard GUILLEMOT as Principal Superior of the District of Mauritius, for a period of three years, from 31 October 1992.

- on the 19th of October confirmed the election of Fr Bernard COURANT as Principal Superior of the District of Bangui, for a period of three years from 19 October 1992.

- on the 10th of November 1992 the Superior General, with the agreement of his council, appointed Fr Abel Moreira DIAS of the Province of Portugal as General

Bursar of the Congregation for the duration of the term of office of the present General Council, from 15 December 1992.

- on the 10th of November 1992 appointed Fr Ko GRADUSSEN of the Province of Holland as Assistant General Bursar of the Congregation for three years from 15 December 1992.

- on the 10th of November 1992 extended the term of office of Fr Ferdinand AZEGHE as Superior of the Central African Foundation to 30 June 1993.

General Council: Schedules

The annual Retreat of the General Council took place from December 1-4 at Villa Cavaletti outside Rome.

Fr Schouwer: Bangui (14-24 Nov.); meeting of the union of Superiors General at Arricia (25-28 Nov.).

Fr Kelly: Italian course in Perugia (November); Meeting of Major Superiors of North America in San Francisco (12-15 February 1993).

Fr Odigo: Meeting of circumscriptions of Southern Africa in Blantyre (16-19 Nov.); EAP Chapter (2-15 Feb. 1993).

Fr Castriani: Meeting of European formators at Carcavelos (5-11 November); English course in Ireland (January 1993); meeting of Superiors of Latin America in Paraguay (9-13 March 1993); holidays in Brazil (20 March-20 April 1993).

Fr Wijnen: Meeting of European Provincials at Gemert (23-28 November).

Fr Jolibois: CAF Chapter (27 March-2 April 1993).

The annual meetings of the General Council will be held from:

- 1st to 15th of March;
- 1st of May to 15th of June;
- 15th of September to 15th November.

The new General Bursar, Fr Moreira Dias



Fr Abel Moreira DIAS has succeeded Fr Joseph De BOER as General Bursar. As director of IMSAF in Fribourg, Switzerland since 1988, he is already a member of the General Administration. Born in Portugal in 1936, he was ordained in 1960 and did pastoral work in Angola for several years. Returning to Portugal in 1965 he fulfilled

various functions in formation and missionary animation, becoming Provincial Bursar from 1979 until his transfer to Switzerland in 1988. By virtue of his appointment, he becomes a member of the General Council.

He will be assisted in his duties by Fr Ko Johan GRADUSSEN who has been appointed Assistant General Bursar. Fr GRADUSSEN has already been a member of the Generalate Community for more than a year. He was born in Holland in 1943 and ordained in 1968. He did pastoral work in Brazil from 1970 to 1990. He will work with confreres responsible for finances in the circumscriptions.



Spiritane Centre for Research and Animation

Fr Jean-Claude PARIAT, who succeeds Fr Maurice GOBEIL, took up office on Sept 1st. Born in 1938 and a member of the Swiss Province, he has taught theology and liturgy and has been responsible for formation in the Congo, in Switzerland and at Chevilly (1980 to 1986). He has studied at the Institut Supérieur de Liturgie in Paris. He recently spent two years at Duquesne University, studying English and taking courses in Theology and Sacred Scripture. Fr PARIAT is preparing a number of "Spiritane Life"



devoted to the recent Chapter. He works together with Fr John SKINNADER (already introduced in SN n°. 90) who has particular responsibility for Justice and Peace.

A New District: Cameroun

On the 2nd of October the amalgamation of the Districts of Yaoundé and Cameroun East took place. The amalgamation, prepared by preceding chapters, is intended to facilitate a more effective Spiritane presence throughout the circumscription and a higher profile for the Spiritane charism in the works with which we remain involved. It will contribute to a greater unity and openness to the future at a time when many young Camerounians are joining the Congregation.

Centenary of the birth of Eugénie Caps

The Spiritane Sisters celebrated last June the centenary of the birth of their Foundress, born in 1892 in Lorraine (France). In 1919 she established a project for Missionary Sisters and discovered the writings of Fr Libermann. Provisionally, in 1920 Mgr Leroy was looking for women religious for Cameroun. Eugénie Caps lived a hidden life and died in obscurity in 1931. Today the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit number 415 made up of 13 nationalities. Their most recent foundation dates from 1991 in Guinea-Bissau amongst the "Manjaque".

Our Jubilarians

50 years of Profession

- 19 March :Fr.René DENU (France)
- 19 March :Br.Tiago Francisco OLIVEIRA (Portugal)
- 19 March :Br.José Franco VICENTE (Portugal)
- 25 March :Br.Everhardus HEUVEN (Nederland)

50 years of Priesthood

- 10 March :Fr.Xavier BRAUN (France)
- 25 March :Fr.Christianus Van den BOSCH (Nederland)
- 25 March :Fr.Jacobus COMMANDEUR (Nederland)
- 25 March :Fr.Lucas COMPEN (Nederland)
- 25 March :Fr.Josephus DAVITS (Nederland)

25 years a Bishop

- 19 March :Mgr André LOUCHEUR (France)
- 19 March :Mgr Anthony PANTIN (Trinidad)
- 29 March :Mgr Donald Joseph MURRAY (Makurdi)

Our Dead

- 04 July :Fr.Thomas MAHER (Ireland), 89.
- 07 Oct. :Fr.François CADREN (France), 86.
- 12 Oct. :Fr.Franciscus HOOGERS (Nederland), 72.
- 26 Oct. :Br.Tharcisius WERKER (Nederland), 84.
- 04 Nov. :Fr.John JORDAN (Ireland), 86.
- 06 Nov. :Fr.Joseph POELL (Nederland), 84.
- 06 Nov. :Fr.John O'NEILL (Ireland), 85.
- 17 Nov. :Fr.John BANKS (England), 80 ans.
- 18 Nov. :Bish.Richard ACKERMANN (USA/East), 89.
- 21 Nov. :Fr.Frederic WOODS (Makurdi), 67.
- 26 Nov. :Fr.Ernest REY (Guyane), 76.