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SPIRITAN NEWS

January - February 1995

N° 105

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

Asia: Another Frontier

When the delegates returned from the General Chapter at Itaici refreshed and enthusiastic, the grounds for their enthusiasm were not immediately evident to some Spiritans. One of the things that puzzled them was the call for an extension of our missionary activity in Asia. With everyone clamouring for personnel, is it realistic to begin new ventures?

Where did this call to Asia come from?

Was it a response to Pope John Paul II?

Population growth in non-Christian countries of the South and the East is constantly increasing the number of people who remain unaware of Christ's Redemption. We therefore need to direct our attention towards those geographical areas and cultural settings which still remain uninfluenced by the Gospel. (Redemptoris Missio 40)

Was it a Spiritan idea whose time had come?

Why Asia? The World of Asia is unknown to us.

In the time of Libermann, Africa was the unknown continent, unknown not merely to Spiritans, but to the whole Western world. Libermann was always ready to cross frontiers and to seek out unknown countries.

Nor is the Indian sub-continent unknown to Spiritan history: for 25 years, from 1862 to 1887 Spiritans worked in the Prefecture Apostolic of Chandernagor; and in Pondicherry from 1879 to 1887. Archbishop Le Roy, as a young Missionary, spent a year in Pondichery before he was appointed to Zanzibar, and Mgr Corbet who died as Vicar Apostolic of Diego-Suarez had been Prefect Apostolic of Pondicherry from 1879 until 1887. Father Barthelet, the Superior of Chandernagor, became Vicar Apostolic of Dakar. (I/D July 1977 p.3 A New Path in Mission: the Evangelisation of the Tribal peoples of Pakistan).

Was it a delayed reaction from a group of missionaries to the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) with the hope that, with domino effect, other barriers would also fall?

Was it born of an instinct to survive? A desire to expand? A need to diversify? Was the hope of Spiritan vocations the drawing power?

Maybe none of these reasons should be totally excluded but to understand what happened we should also pay attention to the proximate occasion of the call as succinctly described in "Itaici 1992" p. 11.

The presentations from Pakistan and Mauritius and the reports from the Indian Ocean Foundation drew our attention to the enormous missionary task in Asia and the relatively small response of our Congregation so far to the needs of the people in that vast area.

The call to Asia was a call to go further into an area, where already in Pakistan a pathway had been cleared. Interfaith dialogue in Mauritius had found a welcoming Foyer. As well, the Indian Ocean Foundation was already leaning in that direction.

We have already received correspondence about Asia, even expressions of interest in going there. We now make another appeal to you to send your ideas, suggestions, indications of willingness to help or to participate in the project, either to:

Fr. Jim Hurley, CSSp, Secretary General,
Congregazione dello Spirito Santo
Casa Generalizia, Clivo di Cinna 195
00136 Roma, Italy.

Or directly to Fr. Brian McLaughlin, CSSp (8 January - 17 May 1995), St. Albert Priory, 5890 Birch Court, Oakland, Ca. 94618, U.S.A.

Your interest, your ideas, your suggestions are irreplaceable. No one else can supply them.

What is the purpose? This is another frequent question.

Asia contains the majority of the world's poor and its non-Christians it is the home of all the great world religions. As yet the message of the Gospel has scarcely found a home there. These facts cannot simply be overlooked by an international missionary Congregation.

Hence the plea that the Congregation should consider another initiative in Asia. The ultimate aim of this initiative would be to contribute to making the Asian Church more missionary and self-evangelising. (Itaici 1992 p. 12).

In the process Spiritan vocations may eventually come. These will be welcomed in the belief that the Spiritan missionary charism is not just a treasure to guard but a gift to share.

There is then a challenge to believe in ourselves, relying on the resource that will not fail us, the mystery of our own call (SRL 1). God keeps his missionary promise *to be with us* in Jesus. His Holy Spirit is also at work beckoning us to places where we have not yet been.

Where is the Spirit leading us was the underlying question of the last General Chapter. It gave rise to the call to Asia but also to other calls, some of which were not very familiar; for example, the call to mission through respectful listening, in which the evangeliser too is evangelised. Others were familiar but needed to be heard again; the call to mission based on a firm faith which leads to death and resurrection and which brings strength in the midst of weakness. The full context of the Chapter helps us understand the call to Asia.

Interestingly it was also a Chapter where, more than previously, mission was recognized near at hand as well as far away.

The General Council recently appointed Brian McLaughlin to devote himself full-time from 1 September 1995 to a research project aimed at establishing the feasibility of another Spiritan initiative in Asia. This research is expected to take a year.

Bernard Kelly CSSp
2 January 1995

Meeting of the International History Commission

The General Council was given the responsibility of seeing to the publication of several works concerning our Spiritan History and Sources ... An international commission is to be established to get this project in motion. (Itaici No. 41).

An "ad hoc" commission of eight members, representing the whole Congregation met at the Generalate from Nov. 5 - 9, 1994.



L-R: Frs J.Pariat, Coordinator, Rome; A. Torres Neiva, Portugal; C. Eke, Nigeria; G. Renaud, Canada; P. Coulon, France; V. O'Grady, Archivist, Rome; J. Carrard, Archivist, Chevilly and P. Dundon, Ireland.

The year 2003 is the third centenary of the foundation by Fr des Places and 2002 is the second centenary of the birth of Fr Libermann and the 150th anniversary of his death.

The commission has set itself three objectives

- to prepare for the Third Centenary as requested by Itaici,
- to organize a Jubilee Year,
- to reconstitute the Spiritan group to work on our historical sources.

As a first step the meeting decided

- to create an anthology of Spiritan writings, texts and passages of significance, drawn from three hundred years of our history,
- to publish as soon as possible a *vade mecum* (daily readings) organized as a page-a-day for the whole year, giving dates, anniversaries, key happenings in the story of the Congregation, of a circumscription or a work plus a reading of 15-25 lines drawn from Spiritan sources. While the choice of "living texts" is primarily meant for confreres, it is hoped to make them attractive to a wider public. The choice of texts will be made by people with some specialisation,
- to challenge each circumscription to write its own history. Each circumscription must set down an account of its beginnings and how it grew,
- to publish a quality biography of Libermann taking account of the results of present day scholarship but without too much of scientific and academic jargon,
- to make available to all circumscriptions the principal sources of our history.

Feedback and reactions from members of the Congregation are welcome. Send your suggestions, comments or requests for clarification directly to the Generalate or to any member of the commission.

News from the Provinces

France/Belgium

"Mémoire Spiritaine" The French Province is planning to launch a review "Spiritain Memoirs" specifically aimed at publishing Spiritan historical data.

Are there confreres who are interested and willing to contribute? Some may even have interesting texts etc. The Belgian Provincialate is already at work collecting and putting on computer, texts, dossiers, bulletins etc. connected with the Spiritan presence in Zaire since its beginning. Should anyone have any relevant material please forward it to Joseph Burgraff.

We must guard against becoming "people who simply forget."

Algeria

The deaths of the four White Fathers brings the number of foreigners killed in Algeria to 76 since September 1993. Among those killed were eight religious. There are three Spiritans in Algeria still, Frs Raymond Gonnet, René You and Daniel Sormani.

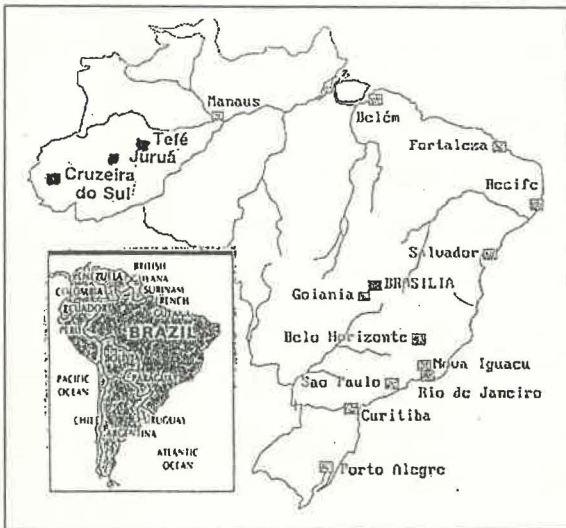
District Amazonia

The confreres of Amazonia held their first Chapter from Oct. 19 - 28, 1994. Frs Bruno Trachtler from Germany and Eduardo Miranda, the new Provincial of Portugal were the moderators. There are several confreres from many different districts working in the Prelature of Tefé. All the clergy of the Prelature are Spiritans including the Bishop. Of the confreres working in the District, 8 are Dutch, 3 Portuguese, 2 French, 2 American, 2 Spanish and one German. The Bishop, Mgr Mário Clemente Neto is a Brazilian Spiritan.

While the internationality of the group has many advantages it also brings with it its own difficulties which demand time, dialogue and faith so that what may seem a liability can become an asset. Different standards of living, sharing of finances, values, relationships, inter-community spirituality and community life were all discussed in a free, open and non-judgmental manner. Likewise inculturation and the relation between the District and the Prelature were discussed.

Formation of both the local clergy and the laity is a priority. The confreres are also working with the Indian peoples and in the defence of the poor and in creating ecological awareness. To set up a base for evangelisation is difficult; e.g. catechists who are trained often move to Manaus or the other big centres.

Amazonia is one of our most difficult missions because of the long distances involved and the distances between the missions.



District of Alto Juruá

The Chapter took place in Cruzeiro do Sul in the extreme West of the country, from Nov. 14 - 23, 1994. Fr Matias Leven was elected the new Superior. After the Chapter, members participated in a common retreat with the diocesan clergy and assisted at the ordination of a new priest.

Spiritans have been working in Cruzeiro do Sul for more than fifty years. The growth of the local clergy is one of the fruits of their work. There is also a Postulancy for Spiritan candidates.

Guadaloupe

Fr Bongo who has just returned from Guadaloupe writes:

After my interview of Nov. 23, 1994 on Radio Massabielle where our confrere, Pierre Michel works, Laila Cassubie, suggested that I visit "Maison Saint-Vincent" of which she is Director. "Maison Saint-Vincent" is a refuge for the poor and for those who are sleeping rough.

On Nov. 29 Marie Thèrese Mimi took me to this "wonderful sign of the rights of man" about which we hear so much talk and see so little action.



Laila with some of her friends.

"Maison Saint-Vincent" is a real concrete act in favour of the most deprived. It occupies the ground floor of a building in Pointe Noire.

The majority of those who come are either drug-addicts or without a home. They can have a midday meal, a shower if they so desire as well as use the social and medical facilities available. Four young volunteers, all unemployed, form the work-team with Laila, welcoming, serving the meals, looking after the laundry etc.

On arrival, I was immediately introduced to the "circle": Laila made the introduction to our nearest neighbours. There was a vacant place at the table. I was served a my meal of chicken and rice, well prepared and carefully spiced. There was plenty of fresh water to drink. We finished with yoghurt.

When a new person arrives he greets those present and indicates that he has not eaten. Those who have finished leave. They all know each other. Two came to me to thank me for my visit and when leaving some greeted with "see you tomorrow".

"The faces". They are without doubt human faces, certainly somewhat traumatized. They have a smile and a thirst to communicate. It is the challenge that remains ... What can we do to help our friends of Saint-Vincent?

District and Foundation of Puerto Rico

The District and Foundation held its Chapter from Nov. 7 - 11, 1994. The Chapter was moderated by Sr Terezita, President of the Conference of Religious Superiors of Puerto Rico. Fr Osvaldo Perez Gonzalez was elected as first native-born Superior of the group.

"Missio ad extra" was confirmed as the reason for the Foundation. The formation programme was confirmed and collaboration on a regional basis is envisaged. In addition to

the houses of formation, Spiritans work in parishes, in missionary and pastoral animation, and in the Pontifical Catholic University at Ponce where Fr Tosello O. Giangiacoimo CSSp is President. The District will continue with its work for the poor and marginalised e.g. drugs addicts, in line with the Spiritan charism.

In order that the District can continue with its present commitments and diversify, it aims to build up a solid home base. The magazine "*El Mensajero del Espiritu Santo*" which is the vehicle of contact with benefactors and the life of the Holy Spirit Sanctuary is to be improved.

News Items

Decisions of General Council

General Council

- Nov. 11, confirmed the election of Fr Gonzalez Osvaldo Perez as Major Superior of the District and Foundation of Puerto Rico for a mandate of three years with effect from Jan. 02, 1995.
- Nov. 16, appointed Fr Brian McLaughlin of the Province of Ireland to carry out research work in view of wider commitment in Asia. The mandate for this work will begin on Sept. 01, 1995.
- Nov. 20, confirmed the election of Fr Matias Leven as Major Superior of the District of Alto Juruá for three years from Jan. 08, 1995.
- Nov. 22, formally erected the Foundation of South Central Africa (SCAF). as from Nov. 16, 1994. For the present, the Superiors of the founding circumscriptions of Southern Africa, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe continue to exercise a collegial responsibility for SCAF, in their capacity as members of the Council of the Foundation.
- Nov. 22, nominated Fr James Devine, already Superior of the District of Southern Africa to be also Major Superior of the South Central African Foundation (SCAF) as from Nov. 16, 1994 until Sept. 15, 1997.

World Debt - Response of Church

A Seminar on "World Debt - the Response of the Church" was held at SEDOS on Oct. 11, 1994. Speakers were Mr Dominick Coyle, a writer for the Financial Times, London and Mr Sergio Schlesinger who works with "Pax", Rio de Janeiro.

Mr Coyle claimed that in his experience the free market system, although imperfect, was the only system that worked. Mr Schlesinger responded from his experience in Brazil, emphasizing the defects and injustice of the system and the 'stranglehold' of foreign debt. So what can be done about the world debt crisis? Mr Coyle believes that it is possible to write it off in part or completely. The total debt is relatively small but to write it off, if done without other fundamental economic, social and political changes in the countries concerned would solve nothing.

What is the thinking of the official Church whose workers encounter the evil results of the present order in their daily experience? Could these people exert influence? Why do they seem to have no impact? Mr Coyle contends their uncoordinated and amateurish efforts are to blame, coming more from sentiment than from cold reason and often displaying great ignorance of how the world's finances actually operate. Financiers are not in the main, unethical people. They recognize that ethics has a bearing on solu-

tions. They are ready to listen to reason and if convinced, will be found ready to change. If Church personnel continue to use 'church speak' and financiers continue to use 'finance speak' how can they ever work together?

The text of the lectures has been published in SEDOS Bulletin 1994, Vol. 26 No. 11 of Dec. 15, 1994.

Telephone code change for English Province

The number was 923.

The new number is: International callers 1923; National callers 01923.

Erratum Spiritan News N° 103

East Africa Province: Fr A. Shao, Fax: 255 57 82 36.
Should read: Fr A. Shao, Fax: 255 57 82 32.

Our Jubilarians

60 Years of Profession

16 May	: Br Lodewijk SCHOLTEN	Holland
15 Aug.	: Fr John R. KANDY	USA/East
15 Aug.	: Fr Joseph F. SWEENEY	USA/West
23 Aug.	: Fr Johannes BERKERS	Holland
23 Aug.	: Fr Martinus BODEWES	Holland
23 Aug.	: Fr Theodorus GOTTENBOS	Holland
23 Aug.	: Fr Antonius VAN HILLO	Holland
23 Aug.	: Fr Henricus VAN ROOIJ	Holland
23 Aug.	: Fr Wilhelmus VAN SON	Holland
23 Aug.	: Fr Andreas VERHEIJEN	Holland
23 Aug.	: Fr Andreas WOUTERS	Holland

Our Dead

08 Nov.	: Fr Michael SHANLEY	Ireland, 72 yrs
09 Nov.	: Fr Michael COURTNEY	Ireland, 70 yrs
10 Nov.	: Fr Jan Van OSTA	Begium, 73 yrs
23 Nov.	: Fr Gabriel BOURGEOIS	France, 73 yrs
24 Nov.	: Mr Augustine IJA	Nigeria, 27 yrs
25 Nov.	: Fr Emmanuel OLIGO	France, 79 yrs
25 Nov.	: Fr Emmanuel IKUBOLAJE	Nigeria, 24 yrs
28 Nov.	: Fr Frédéric HEUDES	France, 80 yrs
05 Dec.	: Fr Heinrich LUKOWSKY	Germany, 80 yrs
12 Dec.	: Fr Antonius REIJNDERS	Holland, 85 yrs
16 Dec.	: Fr Guillaume BIHAN	France, 60 yrs
17 Dec.	: Fr Gerald BOWE	England, 86 yrs
01 Jan.	: Fr Michael FLYNN	Ireland, 69 yrs
02 Jan.	: Fr Patrick GREEN	England, 77 yrs