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SPIRITAN NEWS

May - July 1995

N° 108

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

The Enlarged General Council

The fifth Enlarged General Council meeting opened in Dakar on May 7, 1995



*Delegates: L - R: Front Row: Frs Keane, Bobrowski, Ellison, Doran, Shao, Pochon, Vuittenez, Castriani.
Second Row: Frs Odigbo, Kwofie, Iwashita, Br J. Blanco, Frs Diemé, Schouwer, Devine, Le Quéré, Ms Beusmans, Fr Hoch.
Third Row: Frs McMahon, Pérez Gonzalez, Tabard, van den Brink, Ward, Kelly, Onwuemelie, Wijnen.
Back Row: Frs Bongo, Donnelan, Jolibois, Mullin, Dominique, White, Vieira.*

Dakar was chosen for EGC95

- to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Fr Libermann's missionaries;
- because it was the site proposed by most Superiors in the response to the questionnaire. A more basic reason was that in coming to Dakar, Spiritans came as pilgrims to where the earliest Spiritans and Fr Libermann's missionaries worked;
- as a symbol of the present and future importance of Africa in the life of the Congregation. In a short time we shall be predominantly an African Congregation and it is only right that we should reflect upon this reality in Dakar and draw profit from the consequences.

Of 767 young men in formation at present 599 are from Africa, 92 from Europe, 63 from South and Central America, 9 from USA and 4 from Australia/Oceania. It is clear that the centre of gravity of the Congregation is moving South, largely towards Africa.

Reports and Discussions

The working sessions began on Tuesday morning May 9. The Moderators, Frs John Fogarty and M. Duraes Barbosa got the meeting off to a brisk start with very little time spent on introductions.

The Superior General's Report

The springboard for the Report was a quotation from Fr Libermann ND X. p 51.

The trouble with the clergy in recent times is that they have got stuck in the ideas of the past. The world moves on...so let us welcome it with openness and bring the spirit of the Gospel to it.

It was Fr Schouwer's wish that this text should be the inspiration for the EGC.



African Major Superiors with some members of the General Council. L-R: Frs Odigbo, Kwofie, Onwuemelie, Schouwer, Diemé, Shao and Bongo.

The Report gives an overview of the world in which Spiritans must work today. We must be in touch with the world and deal with the spirit of the world while at the same time remaining true to the Spirit of the Gospel. Part I of the Report gives an analysis of the present world in which Spiritans must live out their vocation. Thinking is determined and dominated by market forces, the consumer society and the pervasive influence of the media. Many societies today are secularised and pagan. In comparison with the past, the standard of living is much improved. Yet people have a critical spirit and a strong drive to be free of authority. The awaited paradise has not been achieved. Many are disenchanted and feel themselves slaves to the system. Those outside the structures of power are led to disrespect the law, to fear, to violence and to conflict. Herein lies a challenge to living our religious life.

Part II gives a statistical analysis of the Congregation, the age groups in the different provinces and first appointments. There are 1375 Spiritans appointed to Europe, 1160 to Africa, 415 to North America, 177 to South America, 21 to Oceania and 10 to Asia. The report continues with a detailed account of the works in which the provinces are engaged, the implications of ageing for the Provinces of the North, the

varieties of circumscriptions, foundation linkages, and new undertakings.

Part III treats of the work of the General Council. The style of leadership of the General Council is one of listening and discerning where the Spirit is leading. Animation is done by visitation and by communication. Efforts are being made to improve communication within the Congregation. The Justice and Peace desk keeps in contact with confreres in situations of risk.



Working session in commission: Clockwise: Frs Bobrowski, Pochon, Le Quéré, Vuittenéz, Iwashita and Hoch.

Part IV of the Report deals with the Direction the Congregation is taking today and orientations for the future. We witness by our presence. We should promote a vision of the Church as a community of witness, giving witness by an enduring presence. We must increase our North-South collaboration and a greater awareness of the vocation of the Brothers and the Laity.



The Media Age: Frs Fradet, Perrier and Fay: problems!

The Report ends by asking how can personnel, formators and finance be found for initial and on-going formation, for new initiatives and new projects and how can we bring about a better spiritual animation based on our resources.

The report merits time and study by every member of the Congregation. Spiritan News cannot deal with it adequately. Each delegate received a copy.

Organisation and Guide for Formation

Formation and Organisation were the two main themes of the meeting and occupied most of the time in Assembly and Commissions. Two documents, Guide for Formation and Organisation had been circulated to Delegates prior to the Assembly. The Guide for Formation requested by the last General Chapter is the result of extensive consultation and dialogue between the Major Superiors, Formators and the General Council over the past two years. EGC95 aimed to give basic directives so that the General Council can finalise the Guide for Formation and prepare a Guide for Organisation as a complement to SRL. As in the case of the Superior General's Report, each delegate has a copy of these Documents. A short account in Spiritan News cannot do justice either to their content or importance.

Guide for Formation

The Guide must be read in conjunction with SRL and with other documents of the Church such as *Pastores dabo Vobis*, *Guidelines for Formation of Religious Institutes* etc

Part I dealing with General Orientations, is an introduction to initial formation and also to on-going formation. Part II deals with Initial Formation to the Spiritan Religious Apostolic life and the stages of initiation as it is lived today. Appendix A gives recommended studies for Spiritan Apostolic life and Appendix B treats of the organisation of the postulancy.



The Liturgy: L-R: Frs Keane, Mullin, Donnellan, Doran, Br. Celestin and Fr Shao.

Part III dealing with On-Going Formation had not been drafted. EGC95 was meant to furnish the basic elements so that the General Council may be in a position to begin work on drawing up the final document.

Up to 1968 almost all houses of formation throughout the world followed the same formation scheme... With the coming of the theology of the local church and the emphasis placed on inculturation...for all practical purposes, each Province and Foundation established its own programme and trained its own formators. Itaici: Superior General's Report, 1992. 3:5.1.



Assembly Hall (during sessions)

While diversity is acknowledged, yet because of our Mission, unity is a precious gift to us and therefore we need a common outline for formation. Continuity is evident in our formation programmes over the years. The I/D of April 1989 was on Spiritan Formation. Among others, there have been meetings of formators in Dublin in 1989, Enugu in 1991 and Rome in 1992. The central concept that gives unity to our life is that of our Apostolic life, the values of religious and community life. Three characteristics of mission - Solidarity with the poor and oppressed, Mission in union with the people of God and the Incarnation of Christ in different cultures - have an impact on our formation programmes.

Parts I and II of the Guide for Formation were favourably received and discussion did not take much time. On the other hand, much time and energy was given to supplying the ideas for Part III of the document dealing with On-going Formation which is to be drawn up later by the General Council.

The discussion focussed on the following:

- the objectives of on-going formation and the areas linked with it;
- ensuring that on-going formation is seen as normal for all confreres;
- the means, time and location for implementing this formation;
- stages in a Spiritan's life which call for special periods of formation adapted to his human and spiritual growth.

Organisation

As in the case of Formation, the need for an evaluation of Organisation comes from evolution within the Congregation over the past few years. We have moved from the geographical concept of the sending churches and the mission territories, to the concept of every church as missionary both *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Moreover many Churches to whom Spiritans went on mission are now sending their own missionaries and the old "Missionary Churches" are on the receiving end. Our communities and circumscriptions have also become more international.

The discussion centred on questions proposed by the General Council in the Document on Organisation. It enabled the Assembly to reach consensus on the following points:

- to encourage with discernment and flexibility the movement towards internationality of younger and older groups and districts.

- to discourage an excessive multiplication of circumscriptions and foster collaboration through dialogue, and where possible, regrouping at regional level;

- that the General Council make more use of the authority given it by SRL to appoint experienced confreres to priority works and to plan the organisation of circumscriptions and regions;

- to arrange dialogue and to set up contacts between the different provinces of origin with the aim of assuring the stability of international groups;

- to look for new sources to finance projects and commitments which cannot support themselves.

Next General Chapter

The location of the next General Chapter will be decided by the General Council taking account of the replies to the Pre-EGC Questionnaire and the feedback from Dakar. Fr General asked for suggestions on topics for the agenda of the next General Chapter e.g. evaluation of General Chapters in general, their length and frequency.

Communication

EGC95, like all meetings of this kind, was an experience for all who took part.

We learned from each other concerning what we are as a Congregation. We arrived at a consensus on the questions treated. There was genuine understanding and comprehension of the issues debated. There was great openness to what future solutions might be (Fr Schouwer).

The question is how the spirit and content of EGC95 can be communicated to those who were not there.

The information given in this issue of Spiritan News must be read in conjunction with the reports on week I and II which have either been sent by fax or given to the Delegates. Nothing of the contents of the weekly reports is repeated here. The General Council is preparing an overall document on the EGC and the conclusions which can be drawn from it. A copy will be forwarded, as soon as it is ready, to each delegate.

Participants in the EGC

General Council:

Superior General Pierre SCHOUVER
Gen. Assistants Bernard KELLY
 Godfrey ODIGBO
 Sergio CASTRIANI
 Jean-Michel JOLIBOIS
 Frans WIJNEN
 Bernardo BONGO
 Abel MOREIRA DIAS

Delegates:

Europe Zdzislaw BOBROWSKI (Poland)
 Otto van den BRINK (Holland)
 Eduardo F. Miranda FERREIRA (Portugal)
 Jean-Paul HOCH (France)
 Martin KEANE (Ireland)
 Lucien POCHON (Switzerland)
 Peter WARD (England)

North America/Caribbean Oswaldo Pérez GONZALEZ (Puerto Rico)
 Max DOMINIQUE (Haiti)
 Michael WHITE (USA/W)

Oceania Patrick DORAN (Papua New Guinea)

Latin America Javier BLANCO (Paraguay)
 Pedro IWASHITA (Brazil)

South C. Africa James DEVINE (Southern Africa & SCAF)

Asia David DONNELLAN (Pakistan)

East Africa Augustine SHAO (East Africa)
 Micheal McMAHON (Kenya)

West Africa Robert ELLISON (Gambia)
 John KWOFIE (WAF)
 Séan MULLIN (Sierra Leone)
 Michael ONWUEMELIE (Nigeria)

Central Africa Benoit DIEME (CAF)
 René TABARD (Congo)
 Gérard VIEIRA (Senegal)

Indian Ocean Gabriel VUITTENEZ (Madagascar)

French Antilles Yves Le QUERE (Guiana)

Lay Associate Ms. Marielle BEUSMANS (Holland)

(Jeronimo Cahinga, Angola, was unable to attend due to visa problems.)

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Retreat Jean-Claude PARIAT

Liturgy Jean DAVIET and R. ELLISON

Information Raymond BARRY

(8 General Councillors, 27 delegates, 16 staff)