

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Spiritan News

CSSP Newsletter and Spiritan News

3-1-1999

Spiritan News, No. 126

Congregazione dello Spirito Santo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-news-en>

Repository Citation

Congregazione dello Spirito Santo. (1999). Spiritan News, No. 126. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-news-en/132>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the CSSP Newsletter and Spiritan News at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spiritan News by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

NEWS FROM CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS

Mexico: The first Spiritan Priests

The spiritan presence in Mexico started in this way: three Spiritans, who were working in Peru, decided one day to head for Mexico. When they reached the capital, they celebrated Mass in the basilica of Our Lady of Guadeloupe with a definite aim in mind: to find a mission field that corresponded to the spiritan charism.

They were welcomed by Mgr José Melgoza Osorio, the Bishop of Ciudad Valles, a diocese set up in the State of San Luis Potosi, and he showed them several parishes that were in need of priests. They returned somewhat discouraged, because they felt they had not found the sort of people they were looking for. The Bishop, not wanting to lose these missionaries, finally sent them to look at the parish of Tanlajás which also had no priest. It was a Wednesday, market day (the traditional "tinaguis"), when the farm produce is sold. When they saw the local people going to market, bent almost double under the weight of the huge sacks and baskets they were carrying, with a supporting band around their heads, our confreres knew that their search had come to an end: "These are the people we have been looking for".

So on Wednesday, February 22, 1971, the three Spiritans took charge of the parish of Sant'Ana at Tanlajás, situated in the Huasteca region of the legendary Sierra Madre, in the State of San Luis Potosi. Their names were George Reardon, Patrick Townsend and Charles Coffey.

The spiritan presence in Huasteca soon expanded. With the arrival of more confreres, above all from USA-West and Canada, they moved into San Antonio, El Pujal, Tancanhuitz and Coxcatlán. Later on, Spiritans from other Provinces arrived. Today, the Group is made up of confreres from France, Portugal, Trinidad-Tobago, Poland, Ireland and Puerto Rico. They have taken responsibility for a parish in the suburbs of Tampico in the State of Tamaulipas, and a work has been set up there to give medical help to sick people from Huasteca.

All these activities are in line with the vision of the first Spiritans to arrive in Mexico: "These are the people we have been looking for". We want to be with those who are

considered to be of no value, those who are surplus to needs in a competitive society, those who have no voice and are set at nought, those who are seen as an obstacle for the nation in its march towards neo-liberalism, those who are constantly threatened with annihilation. Our way of being present in Mexico is to be as close as possible to the people, to listen carefully and to accompany them, to try to learn their language, to take time to sit and eat with them, to promote the training of lay people and set up Christian communities.

As is the case in so many missions where Spiritans have tried to live and work in the spirit of Libermann, the confreres in Mexico were anxious, right from the start, to work for the formation of a local clergy, especially from the people amongst whom they were living. As a result, several secular priests and sisters have been helped in the discernment of their vocation in our parishes. It is a way of helping the local Church.



Concelebration after the Ordination

But we felt we could go further. In 1984, the question arose for the first time of accepting and training local people for our own Congregation. Not all were in agreement, but nevertheless, the project went ahead. In the parishes run by Spiritans, young people were asking about the life-style of their parish priests and expressing the wish to live like them and with them.

Having overcome some problems, we managed to open a house for our candidates near to the seminary of Tampico. The Bishop of the diocese had just opened his own faculty of philosophy so that his seminarists could have a university education. Four young men, all Huastecan, began their studies with us: amongst them was Juventino from Coxcatlán. The following year saw the arrival of Victor who comes from Aquismón.

On the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 1999, the first two spiritan priests from Mexico were ordained, Juventino Hernandez Flores and Victor Martinez Martinez.

The religious ceremony was held in the square in front of the parish church, suitably decorated for the occasion. We had had several days of extreme cold because of the wind

from the north, but this day turned out to be brilliant. The spring sunshine picked out the colours of the traditional Huastec dress in the vestments of the priests and the altar cloths. More colour came from the garlands of flowers that were placed on all the priests as a sign of welcome.

The whole assembly took an active part in the proceedings, especially in the traditional dances in the processions, the presenting of water for the penitential rite and the offertory, together with the fruits of the earth and work of human hands. The readings were proclaimed in the languages of the two ordinands, and there was much spontaneous applause as a sign of welcome and agreement. The enthusiastic singing, in Spanish, Téenek and Náhuatl, was accompanied by a variety of musical instruments.

One of the key moments of the celebration was the handing over of insignia to the new priests by elders. An elder from each of the ethnic groups presented them with sand, representing work and the opening up of new roads, with a sack for food, for the fruit harvest and the carrying of seed, and a staff as a sign of authority. Then the elders, in a low voice and at some length, gave their advice to the young priests.

Before the ceremony came to an end, Fr Christian Choquereau, the Superior of the spiritan Group in Mexico, talked of the missionary charism of the Congregation and announced that, despite the needs of the Church in Mexico, the two newly-ordained would be sent on mission abroad: Fr Juventino will work with the local Church in the Dominican

Republic and Fr Victor with the Church of Tefé in Brazil. The assembly burst into applause, showing its approval for this missionary outreach.



The elders give advice to the new priests

Finally long queues formed to receive the blessings of the new priests; this took a long time, for everybody wanted to greet them and their parents personally. This was followed by a feast, punctuated by various groups of dancers. A glorious page of our spiritan history in Mexico has now been written, pointing towards a future full of promises. We give thanks to God!

António Laranjeira,
Mexico

Meeting of Philippines/Taiwan Group

A joint meeting of the confreres appointed to Taiwan and the Philippines was held at Tinago Falls, some 30 minutes drive from Iligan City in Mindanao, from 29th to 31st December 1998. The meeting provided an opportunity for a sharing of experiences after the initial year in each country.



Group meeting at Iligan

The Philippines Community

In the Philippines, **Brian McLaughlin**, **Martin Okafor-Ilozue**, **Haroldo Evaristo Alves**, and **Daniel Sormani** were all in agreement that the 6-month language course at Davao

and the subsequent pastoral stage were very positive experiences and provided a good introduction to the language, culture and pastoral scene. With varying degrees of fluency, all four confrères already seem to have a reasonable mastery of the Cebuano language; they are well settled in to their ministry and clearly have warm and friendly relations with the people among whom they live and work. Brian and Daniel live in the central house which has only recently been completed, in Iligan City; Haroldo and Martin join them once a week from their mountain parish in Digkila-an for a community meeting and to spend the day together. Daniel is Spiritual Director and lecturer at the local diocesan seminary and ministers also to the Chinese community in Iligan; Brian has a number of part-time pastoral involvements with various groups, including week-end ministry with a basic community, and expects to take up an appointment shortly in charge of the formation of lay ministers in the diocese.

The parish of **Digkila-an**, where Martin and Haroldo live and work, is some forty minutes drive from the central house in Iligan. The pastoral work is quite demanding, as the roads are very poor, the distances long and a number of communities difficult to access, especially in the rainy season. Their living conditions have been basic to date, with both sharing a single bedroom in a small rented house. Their new house, built of local materials, has just been completed. It is on the periphery of the town and they will not be

able to occupy it until hopefully in the very near future.

Further Spiritan Engagements

Bishop Bataclan would welcome further Spiritan appointments to Iligan in line with the initial understanding, namely the undertaking of a parish as a base for specialised ministries in which, for one reason or another, the diocesan clergy are not involved. One indication of how easily the confreres have adapted to their new surroundings and how well they have been accepted by the people is the fact that a few young men have already expressed an interest in joining the Congregation. However, the confreres will not contemplate accepting any candidates until 2003 at the earliest. *The confreres continue to be committed to the original ideals, namely specialised assistance to the local church in line with the Spiritan charism: evangelisation of the poor communities, formation of the laity and lay leaders, youth ministry, dialogue with Muslims and assistance in the local Seminary.*



Group photo with Bishop Bataclan (front standing row, third from left)

The Taiwan Community

The confreres in Taiwan, still involved in the demanding task of learning Mandarin, are also quite pleased with their experience so far. All are in agreement that although the language is very difficult it is not impossible to learn. It requires discipline, regularity and patient perseverance, with two years full-time study as a basic minimum. **Séan O'Leary**, who has just completed his first year of language learning, already has quite good conversational Chinese, which is a source of encouragement for the other three who arrived later: **James Sandy**, **Jean-Paul Hoch** and **Jean-Pascal Lombart**. Throughout this two-year period they will continue to live with Bishop Liu and a number of other priests at the Diocesan offices at Hsinchu where they have already managed to create a community structure and spirit within the context of the larger community in which they live. The possibility for ministry with vibrant Filipino communities in various parishes at weekends provides a welcome break from language study and enables the confrères to have a minimum of pastoral involvement.

Society and Church in Taiwan

Society in Taiwan has seen an enormous transformation over the last 30 years or so with the number involved in

agriculture dropping considerably over this period. Effectively there are three generations in contemporary Taiwanese society who really do not understand each other: the grandparents who worked on the land and were poor, the parents who worked extremely hard to make Taiwan the developed country it is today, and the young people who are enjoying the fruits of an affluent and consumerist society. Unemployment is particularly low despite the size of the population, viz. 21 million. Most young people are well-educated, competitive and fairly affluent; however, they have little training in values. It is only in the last decade that Taiwan has started to become aware of its identity and that the people have come to consider themselves as an independent political subject.

Prior to 1949 the Catholic Church in Taiwan was a very small Church, numbering only some 5,000 members. With the arrival in that year of the National Party (KMT) who fled from the mainland, the number increased to about 300,000 and so the majority of Catholics, including clergy and religious, have their origins in mainland China. As the vast majority of Catholics came to Taiwan with the KMT, their relationship with the governing body was naturally good; however, it has been argued that this effectively prevented the Church from fulfilling its prophetic role. Consequently the Catholic Church is perceived as a foreign Church, associated with the people who ruled Taiwan under martial law for almost forty years.

While Catholics number some 0.8% of the population, their religious instruction has left them ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of contemporary society. The average age of the clergy is quite high and the parishes are generally small comprising mostly elderly people. There is a tremendous challenge in elaborating an adequate pastoral approach for contemporary Taiwanese society.

In dialogue with the Bishop of Hsinchu and the Vicar General, the process of discernment in regard to the future pastoral involvement of the Spiritans in the diocese is ongoing. In accordance with the original understanding, our desire is to be of service to the diocese in the context of its current needs and our own requirement that we live in community. The probability is that a parish will be allocated to us in an area that is earmarked for development and where there is a high population density. With this as a base for a central house, the confreres will be in a position to serve a number of existing parishes while, at the same time taking on a number of more specialised ministries in line with the Spiritan charism. *The focus will be on the formation of an active and outward-looking laity, on responding to the spiritual hunger in a materialistic society, especially among the youth, and on inter-religious dialogue.*

Administrative Structures

Following consultation with the confreres themselves, the General Council has decided that the confreres in the Philippines and Taiwan will continue for the meantime to form a single Group, known as the Philippines/Taiwan Group. The Group will consist of two Communities, one in the Philippines and one in Taiwan, the Superior of each being appointed by the General Council (see decisions of the General

Council in this newsletter) after written consultation with the confreres in each Community. These Superiors, although they will not be Major Superiors, will be responsible for dealings with the local ecclesiastical authorities in matters pertaining to the life and work of the Community, in understanding

with the General Council. The Group will have an overall Co-ordinator who will be one of the two Superiors and this role will alternate between the Superiors on a yearly basis. Fr. **Jean-Paul Hoch** will be the **Co-ordinator** for the initial year.

John Fogarty

NEWS ITEMS

Corrections

Our attention has been drawn to some inaccuracies that crept into the article on 100 years of Spiritan presence in Madagascar that appeared in the last *Spiritan News* (no. 125). Please note the following corrections:

- The first Madagascan priest was ordained in 1929 in the diocese of Diego-Suarez. The second, Fr Augustin Hevitra, was ordained in 1941. .
- The article stated that so far 38 Madagascan priests have been ordained. This is the figure for the diocese of Majunga, but there are also 59 in Antsiranana and around 30 in Ambanja and Port Bergé.
- In talking of the foundation of congregations of sisters, there was an important omission : the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CIM) were founded by a Spiritan, Bishop Jean Wolff. Their early development was guided by the Salesian Sisters, so they continue to live according the spirituality of St. François de Sales. Today, they number more than 100.

We would like to apologise for these errors.

Decisions of the General Council

The General Council confirms the election of Fr Theodorus WINKELMOLEN as Superior of the Bagamoyo Group, for a mandate of three years, with effect from 3rd March 1999.

The General Council nominates Fr Brian McLAUGHLIN as Superior of the Philippines Community, for a mandate of three years, with effect from 1st March 1999.

The General Council nominates Fr Jean-Paul HOCH as Superior of the Taiwan Community, for a mandate of three years, with effect from 1st March 1999.

New Spiritan Publications

Gérard Vieira: *SOUS LE SIGNE DU LAICAT, L'Eglise Catholique en Guinée, TOME II: Le temps des prémices 1925 - 1958.*

Fr José Martins Vaz: *Celebração Diária da eucaristia, II Volume, Quaresma e Semana Santa*, Editora Rei dos Livros, Lisboa 1999.

BOLETIM da Província Portuguesa da Congregação do Espírito Santo, II Série – N.º 154, Janeiro – Dezembro de 1997.

Cornelius van der Poel: *Wholeness and Holiness*, Sheed and Ward, 1999.

Bernard Ducrot: *Contos e Provérbios do Evangelho: AS PARABOLAS*, Malanje, 1996.

Spiritans, Our Lady of Fatima Parish: *Misa sa Katilingban*, Iligan City, 1998. (Prayer book for Mass).

Letter to the Superiors of Circumscriptions

On 15th February, 1999, a letter was sent to Superiors of Circumscriptions. The following points were mentioned in the letter:

- (1) The General Council recommends, where possible, that each Superior of circumscription install for his office an electronic mail (e-mail) facility.
- (2) In the future we shall send *Spiritan Newsflash* only to Superiors of circumscriptions who, in turn, are requested to forward it to their communities or confreres.

However, if Superiors of circumscriptions wish us to continue sending *Spiritan Newsflash* to a limited number of addresses – communities as well as individuals - this could be arranged and they should let us know.

- (3) Linked with the above proposal, the Superiors were informed about the OCIC project.

This is an interesting project for confreres working in remote areas where telecommunication is unreliable and difficult.

- (4) It was further recommended by the General Council that each Superior nominate a person within the circumscription who will attend to the above-mentioned matters and supply information to the Generalate for diffusion through the *e-mail* or *Spiritan News*. Please communicate the name and address of the contact person to the office of the Information Service at the Generalate.

Our Dead

09 Feb.	: Br Adelphe OSTERMANN	(France), 84
11 Feb.	: Fr Jeremiah GODFREY	(Ireland), 76
16 Feb.	: Fr Manuel LIMA CAUPER	(Brazil), 79
19 Feb.	: Fr Joseph MEYER	(France), 69
20 Feb.	: Fr Vitor VALENTE	(Portugal), 84
28 Feb.	: Fr Ian KNOX	(Trinidad), 72
06 Mar.	: Fr Théophile MENORET	(France), 89
08 Mar.	: Br Timoleon PETIZON	(France), 87
14 Mar.	: Fr Joseph KAHEMA	(EAP), 41