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# SPIRITAN NEWS

January/February 2001

N° 135

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

## Meeting of the Regional Coordinators for History and Anniversaries

### Introduction

In the wake of the Itaici Chapter, an international commission was established by the General Council to set in motion the publication of a number of works concerning Spiritan history in preparation for the forthcoming anniversaries in the Congregation in 2002 and 2003 (cf. Itaici 41). Under the direction of Fr Jean-Claude Pariat, the then Coordinator for History and Anniversaries at the Generalate, this commission (GIHA) accomplished an extraordinary amount of work, giving rise to the publication of an Album, the setting in motion of a critical biography of Fr Libermann and a Spiritan Diary and Anthology. The commission contributed in a significant way to the animation of the Congregation in regard to the forthcoming anniversaries and was responsible for the preparation of the orientations and decisions approved by the Maynooth Chapter in regard to the Spiritan Year (cf. Maynooth 8).

Following the Maynooth Chapter, the General Council decided that GIHA had fulfilled its role and that a different mechanism was now needed to carry forward the orientations and decisions of the Chapter. In particular, it was clear to the General Council that preparation for these important events could only be done effectively at the local level. Consequently, every circumscription was requested to appoint a coordinator, on the understanding that he would be assisted by a small team, and every Region was requested to appoint a Regional Coordinator who would be responsible for coordinating events at a regional level. The Council also considered this as an important contribution in the movement towards regionalisation endorsed by Maynooth: rediscovering and celebrating one's story is an important step in the creation of a sense of identity. Certain Regions already had a very clear identity, others were created in such a way as to ensure all circumscriptions were included in the regional preparations for the Spiritan Year.

### Meeting in Rome

A meeting of the Regional Coordinators was held at the Generalate from 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January 2001, with a view to preparing a programme for the Spiritan Year to be presented at the forthcoming Enlarged General Council at Duquesne (cf. Maynooth 8.3). The participants included Frs **Bernard Ducol** (Europe), **Bernard Hym** (Indian Ocean), **Jean Daviet** (North West Africa), **Myles Fay** (Anglophone West Africa), **Paul McAuley** (North America/Caribbean), **Paddy Dundon** (South Central Africa), **Casimir Nyaki** (East Africa), **Altevir da Silva** (South America), **Louis Makong** (Francophone Central Africa), **Aristides Torres Neiva**

(Angola), **Maurice Barbotin** (French Antilles), **Christian de Mare** (Generalate Coordinator), **John Fogarty** (General Council). Two confreres were unable to be present: Frs Gerard Gogan (Oceania) and Michel Protain (Asia).

### Unique Opportunity

*The aim of the Spiritan Year will be to encourage a renewal of the Congregation and to make our Spiritan missionary spirituality better known (Maynooth 8.1).*

The participants at the meeting concurred with the sentiments expressed by the capitulants at Maynooth, namely that the forthcoming occasion of the celebration of our anniversaries offers us a unique opportunity for spiritual renewal in the Congregation at a time of a new departure in our missionary history.

The experiences shared at the meeting revealed that plans are already in place in most of the circumscriptions and Regions to celebrate the Spiritan Year along the following lines:

Personal and Community Renewal: *We speak more by what we are than what we do.*

- Spiritan retreats at different levels (Confreres, Lay Associates, young people), conferences....
- Familiarisation with SRL, with our various Spiritan sources, integration of our spirituality in our personal and common prayer
- Pilgrimages to places of historical significance
- Recording and celebrating the lives of significant Spiritan figures of the past
- Fostering the participation of all confreres including the elderly.

Diffusion of our Spiritan charism (in collaboration with other Congregations who are close to us). *In making ourselves better known we also invite others to join us in our mission.*

- Involvement of families, youth, children at parish level, especially around the Word of God and prayer
- Focussed gatherings of young people
- Expositions, colloquia, symposia, brochures, posters, magazines, prayer-leaflets, radio, television, press-releases, web-sites, CD-Roms etc.

## Principal Challenge

There was unanimous agreement that the **principal challenge** of the Spiritan Year is to rediscover our spiritual inspiration - the intuitions and charism of our founders - with a view to actualising it in our day, to "responding creatively to the needs of evangelisation of our times".

With this in mind it was recommended that we focus on **one issue** throughout the Congregation during the Spiritan Year, related to our service of the poor e.g. *Displaced People*. This issue should be one that involves and challenges us individually and as a Congregation e.g. *Our presence among the poor*. Care should be taken to ensure that the issue is relevant to all circumscriptions.

We should seek to find a way of marking the events **in solidarity with those Spiritans who have given their lives** in the service of the Gospel and those who are living the reality of the Cross today.

We should include the **local Church** in the celebrations as much as possible, care being taken to exercise due sensitivity.

## Pilgrimages

*"...our missionary life is like a great pilgrimage to meet the peoples of this world, giving preference to the most abandoned. At the same time, it prompts us to undertake a pilgrimage to meet our confreres and collaborators in all their uniqueness. At the end of so many encounters, we are led to make a sort of pilgrimage into our own inner being. Our whole life becomes a journey led by the Spirit, with Jesus, towards the Father." (Maynooth 0.5).*

It was agreed that the principal purpose of the various pilgrimages should be the spiritual renewal of the members of the Congregation and of all who participate. They should be as inclusive as possible involving in some way older and infirm confreres, the families of confreres, our lay collaborators and members of other religious congregations with whom we are more closely linked. For this reason the primary focus should be on the pilgrimage in the local circumscription and every effort should be made to include at least one pilgrimage in each circumscription during the course of the Spiritan Year. The use of videocassettes of the lives of the founders and of our principal historical sites during local pilgrimages can ensure communion with the wider Congregation.

The meeting expressed its support for the proposal that a Spiritan Historical Pilgrimage be organised with participation from the whole Congregation at Pentecost 2003, if the current study being carried out by the Province of France shows that such a pilgrimage is feasible.

All confreres visiting Europe should be encouraged and facilitated to visit places of historical significance in the Congregation. Particular encouragement should be given to young Spiritans in formation and to formators to participate in pilgrimages to the historical sites in France.

## Seminars and Symposia

Seminars, symposia, congresses have already been planned in a number of Regions (Europe, North America-Caribbean, FANO, South America, East Africa). It was agreed that all Regional Coordinators, having contacted the coordinators in each circumscription, would draw up a calendar of events envisaged within their Region for the Spiritan Year and forward this to the Generalate for presentation at the Enlarged General Council.

Summaries of these seminars etc., together with any presentations given, will also be forwarded to the Generalate for diffusion to all circumscriptions.



**L to R (Front)** C. de Mare, P. Dundon, P. McAuley, A. da Silva, M. Fay  
**(Back)** V. O'Toolc, B. Ducol, A. T. Neiva, J. Fogarty, B. Hym, C. Nyaki, M. Barbotin, L. Makong, (*absent*: J. Daviet).

## Material Resources

It was noted that many of the materials produced or envisaged in different Circumscriptions/Regions, though referring principally to the local context, could be beneficial for the wider Congregation.

In collaboration with the Regional Coordinators it was agreed to compile lists of the different material resources available throughout the Congregation (videos, brochures, posters leaflets, press releases, CD-Roms etc) and to circulate this information to all circumscriptions from the Generalate. It was noted that the 3 CD-Roms in preparation by the Region of Europe - containing historical photographs, material for animation and details on some 50 significant Spiritan sites in Europe - could be an important resource for all circumscriptions in the preparation of the Spiritan Year. When completed a copy of these will be sent to the Generalate with a view to circulation to all circumscriptions.

## Other Suggestions for Spiritan Year

It was suggested at the meeting that the Spiritan Year should be availed of to:



- encourage community journals to be kept throughout the Congregation
- encourage more substantial obituaries of confreres to be published than is currently the case in a number of circumscriptions
- encourage circumscriptions to keep/update necrologies and to ensure that they are used in the communities
- reprint certain texts of our Founders, e.g. Letters of Fr Libermann; make them available also on CD
- bring archives, libraries, house-journals, histories up to date
- rehabilitate Spiritan cemeteries
- encourage young Spiritans to undertake studies related to our history and spirituality
- find ways of familiarising ourselves with our history.

Several other practical suggestions were put forward for consideration by the Enlarged General Council with a view to deriving maximum benefit from the forthcoming anniversary celebrations.

### Opening and Closure

It was agreed that the opening of the Spiritan Year should be primarily a Spiritan event i.e. an event for the members of the Congregation and our Associates. It was suggested that the dominant theme should be one of **hope** in the knowledge that, for different reasons, it was not possible to celebrate the two past centenaries of the Congregation in 1803 and 1903 (cf. I/D 54, May 1997). It will be an occasion to raise awareness throughout the Congregation of the inauguration of the Spiritan Year and of its importance.

It is recommended that there be a solemn Eucharistic celebration in every celebration to mark the close of the Spiritan year on Pentecost Sunday 2003.

Evaluation of the Spiritan Year at personal, community and circumscription level was seen as essential to its overall success. Suggested questions for this evaluation are the following: *What has the experience meant for me, for the community, for the circumscription? What did we learn? Where do we go from here? What are some of the highlights for me/us?*

The fruits of this evaluation could possibly be used in the preparation of the next General Chapter.

### Pilgrimage in Rome

The meeting provided an occasion for the participants to undertake a pilgrimage themselves within the city of Rome, visiting some of the churches frequented by Fr Libermann during the time he spent in the city. The itinerary took in St Mary Major's Basilica, The Church of St Augustine, The Church of St Mary in Trastevere and the attic where he lived, now at the French Seminary. It was an inspiring few hours of prayer and reflection and a fitting way for the Regional Coordinators themselves to enter into the spirit of the forthcoming Spiritan Year.

## Annual Meeting of the European Provincials

For their meeting in November 2000, the Provincials gathered at Saverne, the birthplace of Francis Libermann. There was an exposition in progress in the town entitled "From Saverne to Africa", reminding the provincials and the townspeople of one of their most illustrious inhabitants.

There were five newly-elected provincials present so a considerable time was spent on getting to know one another. They each reported on their province and it was evident that they are taking seriously the need to renew their circumscriptions for today's mission and to support the wider concerns of the whole Congregation.

They looked at proposals coming from their various European commissions:

**Communications:** They approved the idea of a computerised photo-library and a common calendar for the year 2002.

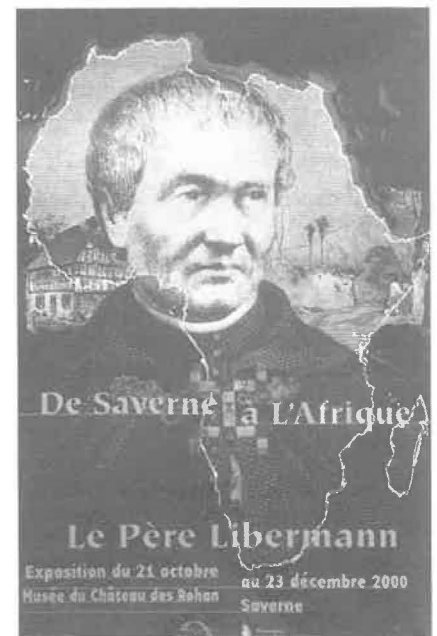
**Formation:** They stressed that young Spiritans should be trained in the light of the contemporary understanding of mission. Their future approach to mission will depend greatly on the type of formation they receive. The provincials agreed that the idea of one novitiate for the whole of Spiritan Europe had not yet been sufficiently elaborated.

On the other hand, they asked the formators' commission to study whether it is really necessary to have four different places for second cycle formation in Europe

**Justice and Peace:** The provincials reaffirmed their commitment to issues of justice and peace. It is a constitutive part of our Spiritan mission, and the problems associated with refugees, immigrants and ethnic minorities are still with us.

**Lay Spiritans:** Lay Spiritans are becoming an integral part of our Spiritan family. The provincials would like to see further development in the area of their formation; they accepted the proposal that each province should draw up a report of their own particular training programme.

**Bursars and Procurators:** The subject of aid from the provinces to other circumscriptions was discussed. Because of the large number of requests, the provincials will study the possibility of setting up a European fund so as to



co-ordinate the help given. A working-group was set up to this end.

**Other points:**

**A European missionary project:** A year ago, such a project was submitted for the consideration of each province. With the encouragement of the General Council, the plan will be pushed further. The provincials agreed on the following:

- ◆ They will work towards a meeting of young and more experienced confreres who are working in their provinces in Europe. The date is not yet fixed, but it is doubtful if it can take place before the Spiritan year in 2002-2003.
- ◆ After reflecting on the European projects already underway, the provincials felt they should be rather more courageous. For example, the commitment of Germany

in Croatia could be widened to the other provinces so that it becomes a European project.

**Administration:** The idea of a "super provincial" for Europe was rejected. But to increase the momentum of the life of the Region, a standing committee of the provincials' conference was set up, consisting of the secretary and two provincials (Rémi Peeters and Peter Marzinkowski for 2000-2001). This arrangement was preferred to having a second full meeting of the provincials each year.

**Enlarged General Council:** the following were chosen as representatives for the meeting at Pittsburgh (24 June – 7 July): Christian Berton (France); Jean-Pierre Gaillard (Permanent Secretary to the European provinces); Casimir Knap (assistant provincial of Poland); Pat Palmer (Ireland); Jean-Claude Pariat (Switzerland); José de Sousa (provincial bursar of Portugal).

## NEWS ITEMS

### Decisions of the General Council

- The General Council confirms the election of Fr Karl Heinz **Schader** as Superior of the District of Alto Jura, for a mandate of three years, with effect from 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2001.
- The General Council confirms the election of Fr Peter **Lafferty** as Major Superior of the District of Southern Africa for a mandate of three years, with effect from 5<sup>th</sup> February 2001.
- Following the consultation of the confreres of the District of Makurdi, the General Council decides to prolong the mandate of Fr Moses **Dzever** as acting Superior of the District until 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2001.

### Spiritan Apostolic Prefect

On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2000, Pope John Paul II nominated Fr Jean Gardin as first Prefect Apostolic of the newly-created Apostolic Prefecture of Likouala through the division of the diocese of Ouessou, Congo-Brazzaville.

Fr Jean Charles GARDIN was born at Saint Pois in the diocese of Coutances (Manche) in 1941, was professed in 1961 and ordained priest in 1969. In 1970 he was sent to work in Congo-Brazzaville until 1994 when he was called back to work in his province of France. In 1999 he became the Superior for the Western Region of France, until his recent nomination as Prefect Apostolic.



### Père Laval Pilgrimage

Fr Louis Verchère would like to inform confreres interested in preparing Jacques Laval pilgrimages that he has a video cassette (in French) of the play by M. Houbert, "Le Mission-

aire de Septembre". The video can be ordered from Fr Verchère in the parish of Ste Croix in Mauritius, for 60 FF plus postage.

### Spiritan publications

Gérard Meyer, *Contes du pays Malinké, Gambie, Guinée, Mali, Sénégal*, Éditions Karthala, Paris, 2000.

Gérard Meyer, *Contes du nord de la Guinée*, Éditions Karthala, Paris, 1999

*Le Père Maurice Ramaux (1907 – 1981)*, written by his nephew, Fr Dominique Ramaux, Paris, 2000.

Jorge Boran, *Os Desafios Pastorais de uma nova era, Estratégias para fortalecer uma fé comprometida*, SP Brazil, Paulinas, 2000.

Mémoire Spiritaine No 11, *Histoire – Mission – Spiritualité. Du mont Kilimandjaro au fleuve Congo*, 30 Rue Lhomond, Paris, 2000.

### OUR DEAD

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