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## NEWS FROM CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS

### The South-Central African Foundation: 20 years of growth

The beginning of the *South-Central African Foundation* (SCAF) sprung from two sources. The first was the rather severe isolation from which the confreres in South Africa suffered under the impact of the apartheid regime. That isolation was understood by the General Chapter of 1986 and a first step towards easing it was taken during the Chapter in the course of private discussions. Because of the political situation at the time, it was felt that South Africa should co-operate with the Nigerian confreres living in Zimbabwe and with the Irish and the Canadian confreres living in Malawi. The second source was that since 1981, the South African District had started a programme of animation and formation. Things developed well so that by 1985 the General Council was already considering the District of Southern Africa becoming a Foundation. By 1988 these efforts came to fruition when Fr. Michael Sibeko, the first South African Spiritan, received his appointment to Zimbabwe. The confreres in Malawi approached the District as to whether it could assist them by accepting students from Malawi to study with the South African students in Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu Natal). The District naturally gave a positive answer. And so this three-cornered constellation of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi gave birth to the future Foundation of SCAF.

The first step towards the formal recognition of this new Foundation came about through practical reasons.

An Enlarged General Council met in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1989; what was then known as the "Southern African Region" was asked by the Generalate to send its own delegate to the meeting. After several phone calls across the

region and with the Generalate Team in Rome, Fr. Titus Chilaka, the superior of the Nigerian group in Zimbabwe, was chosen as our representative. The second step took place at the first formal meeting of the superiors of the three Spiritan groups (South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Malawi) in Blantyre (Malawi) in December 1991. Fr. James Okoye represented the General Council. Meanwhile, two other important developments had taken place: firstly, the General Council encouraged the West African Foundation (WAF) to take an interest in the development of the animation and formation work in Malawi; secondly, the group of EAP confreres working in Zambia had started their own vocations work and also wished to be part of the emerging Foundation.

This international composition of the Region was well reflected in the participants at that meeting in Blantyre: Fr. James Okoye (Rome), Fr. David O'Connor and Fr. Conor Kennedy (both from Malawi), Fr. Titus Chilaka (Zimbabwe), Fr. Clement Temba (Zambia) and Fr. Heinz Kuckertz (South Africa). Also present were Fr. Paddy Donovan (Assistant Provincial, Ireland), Fr. Loughlin Flanagan (delegate for the Province of TransCanada), Fr. (now Bishop) Augustine Shao



Country	sq km.	Population	Life Expectation (years)	
Malawi	118.484	(1994) 10.032.600	Males 45	Females 46.2
Mozambique	799.380	(1995) 17.423.000	M. 44.9	F. 48
South Africa	1.219.080	(1994) 40.436000	M. 60	F. 66
Zambia	752.614	(1991) 8.023.000	M. 48	F. 49.7
Zimbabwe	390.759	(1994) 11.150.000	M. 52.4	F. 55.1

(Statistics from "Africa South of the Sahara" 26th edition. London 1997)

Fr. James Okoye (Rome), Fr. David O'Connor and Fr. Conor Kennedy (both from Malawi), Fr. Titus Chilaka (Zimbabwe), Fr. Clement Temba (Zambia) and Fr. Heinz Kuckertz (South Africa). Also present were Fr. Paddy Donovan (Assistant Provincial, Ireland), Fr. Loughlin Flanagan (delegate for the Province of TransCanada), Fr. (now Bishop) Augustine Shao

(Provincial of EAP), Frs. John Hogan and Peter Eshun-Rhule (delegates from the WAF). During this historic meeting, it was suggested by the Generalate representative (and subsequently adopted by the meeting) that the name "South Central African Foundation" should be adopted in view of a future Province of origin for the young confreres coming from the region. The report by the Superior General to the Chapter at Itaiçi in 1992 showed that the General Council was fully in support of these initiatives.

During those years, Heinz Kuckertz was not only the superior of the District of Southern Africa, but also (more by co-incidence than by formal decision) the coordinator of the fledgling Foundation. For health reasons, he resigned in 1994. Fr. Jim Devine, who at that time was working in Malawi, became his successor. Soon after assuming office in South Africa, the third important step in the formal establishment of SCAF took place: Fr. Devine was appointed the first major superior of SCAF, while still retaining his duties as District Superior of South Africa.

During the first few months of Fr. Devine's office, the General Council took an important decision which initially had nothing to do with SCAF. The Generalate first received requests for help from the Mozambican bishops of Nacala and Chimoio in 1993. Nacala is a coastal town of the province of Nampula, and Chimoio is to the far south-west of Nampula, in the province of Manica, only about 100 km east of Mutare, in Zimbabwe. The Provinces of Angola and Portugal examined the requests during their Chapters and gave a positive response. So in June, 1995, the General Council decided that two groups of Spiritans should work in those dioceses. Work began in 1996. At first, it was unclear to which region the confreres would belong, but it was finally decided that Mozambique should become part of SCAF. I am not sure what the reasoning was behind this decision. Perhaps practical considerations were behind it. During the civil war in Mozambique, many people fled into the neighboring countries of Malawi and Zimbabwe. One of our young confreres, soon to be ordained, originated from such a family; they fled from Tete, in Mozambique, to the west of Malawi and came to live in one of the refugee camps in the diocese of Dedza, where Fr. Conor Kennedy worked. Other refugees came to live in the area of Chimanimani, south of Mutare, on Zimbabwe's eastern border with Mozambique. The Nigerian confreres, who had been working in the diocese of Mutare since 1984, did their best to help these people.

The second important development during Fr. Devine's term of office was the opening of Spiritan House for our candidates of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle studies in Philosophy at Balaka in Malawi. Already in 1986, the Comboni and the Montfort Fathers had started an *Inter-Congregational Seminary* known as ICS. Soon after the opening, the Carmelite Fathers joined the two founding communities. For several reasons it became clear to us that we should shift our

Spiritans from the Seminary of Cedara, outside Pietermaritzburg (KwaZulu-Natal) to a different place of study, preferably outside South Africa. The places, which suggested themselves were Langata (Nairobi), where the students of the East African Province followed their theological studies, and ICS, near Balaka (Malawi), which offered the philosophical courses of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle studies. ICS appeared to be an ideal solution since it was within the region of SCAF itself. But at that point, there was no established Spiritan community in the area. It was the energetic animation and postulancy work by Fr. Mike Walsh and his team in Zambia which made Spiritan House in Balaka necessary. Eventually, in 1998, Fr. Roddy Curran,



*Philosophy students at Balaka Spiritan House, Malawi*  
**Back row, third person from L: Fr. Lucas Tilisho, Rector**  
**Back row, person on the far right: Fr. Anthony O'Boyle**

whose term of office as Superior in Sierra Leone had ended, became the founder director of the new Spiritan House. He was assisted by Fr. Anthony O'Boyle (also a former missionary in Sierra Leone) who at that time was working in a parish in Dublin, Ireland. Fr. Roddy retired in 2000 and Fr. Lucas Tilisho from the EAP assumed the directorship, also assisted by Fr. Tony. The Balaka project started almost without funds (Fr. Roddy's starting capital was 1,300 Pounds) but the Montfort Fathers and Brothers rescued the project and helped Spiritan House to get off the ground. Two years after the house was officially opened (October 1998, with 8 students), it had already become too small; an additional block was built, but once again accommodation is becoming a problem. There are currently 21 students in the house.

Several other important developments took place over the last 6 years. The novitiate was re-opened in 1999 with Fr. Paul Mbav (from EAP) as the novice master. In 2000, three young confreres were professed and moved on to Langata (Nairobi) and two novices are presently in the second half of their course. It is hoped that another three will follow them in July 2001. Meanwhile Malawi (1995) and Zimbabwe (1999) have set up Postulancies, thus joining hands with South Africa (1981) and Zambia (1993). It is the policy that the first level of formation should take place in the countries of the young men who present themselves.

At present, SCAF has 7 professed members: 1 ordained, 3 soon to be ordained and 3 in temporary vows. There are 2 novices and 21 unprofessed students of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of philosophical studies. The "patriarch" of our SCAF community is Michael Sibeko, as mentioned before. He is parish priest at Claremont, a densely populated suburb of Durban (KZN, South Africa) which includes a hostel for more than 25.000 working men and women.

Apart from the confreres for whom SCAF is the Circumscription of origin, there are three appointed members: Lucas Tilisho (EAP), the rector of Spiritan House for Philosophy (Balaka, Malawi); Paul Mbay (EAP) the novice master in Laval House (Pietermaritzburg, SA), and Heinz Kuckertz (from SA) the superior, residing in Vrede (SA). Besides Fr. Anthony O'Boyle at Balaka, there is Fr. Charles Odeny (from EAP), the Rector at Spiritan House for Theology (Langata, Nairobi). Fr. Charles and his assistant formators have accepted under their care the SCAF theology students.

The most recent step in the establishment of SCAF is that since 1<sup>st</sup> December 2000, it has a major superior who is no longer also one of the district superiors. This development took place because Fr. Devine came to realize that his double task was too heavy a burden. However, this development has the important advantage that now it is not only possible to highlight the difference between SCAF and its member circumscriptions, but also to underline that solidarity which is necessary for SCAF as it works through its council, consisting of the superiors of the five circumscriptions.

From the above it can be seen that SCAF is moving from strength to strength. But the difficulties should not be underestimated. First of all, there is the size of the region - 3.260.317 square kilometers, stretching over five countries. The internationality is not only an opportunity for cooperation among the formators and the administration, but it is also a learning process for our students at all levels of formation. Originally SCAF was made up of Anglophone countries, but with Portuguese as the official language in Mozambique, the difficulties for the future students have increased. Apart from that, the size of the region makes the working of the council very difficult. It puts a heavy financial burden on the Foundation, particularly with respect to travelling costs for councillors, students and staff alike. The postulancies are in the respective member countries, the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of philosophy is in Malawi, the novitiate is in South Africa and the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of theology is in Nairobi, which is not even within the SCAF region. While the generous efforts made by the Generalate, the EAP and the District of Southern Africa are gratefully acknowledged, there remains the serious problem of SCAF's understaffing. We lack formation staff at every level of formation and qualified lecturers in philosophy. Moreover, the living conditions of our students in Balaka need urgent attention. The existing space is simply too small. Nevertheless, the development of SCAF, from its humble beginnings in South Africa in 1981 until the present day, gives rise to still more hope and confidence for the missionary future of the local Churches.

H. Kuckertz. (Vrede, SA)  
heinz@intekom.co.za

## NEWS ITEMS

### Representatives at the Enlarged General Council 2001

<p><b>EUROPE (6 representatives)</b> Fr. Christian Berton (France) Fr. Patrick Palmer (Ireland) Fr. Jean-Claude Pariat (Switzerland) Fr. Kasimierz Knap (Poland) Fr. José Lopes de Sousa (Portugal) Fr. Jean-Pierre Gaillard (Belgium)</p>	<p><b>WEST AFRICA Anglophone (4 representatives)</b> Fr. Luke Mbefo (Nigeria) Fr. John Kwofie (WAF) Fr. Daniel Osei-Yeboah (Sierra Leone) Fr. Moses Dzever (Makurdi)</p>
<p><b>NORTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (3)</b> Fr. Donald McEachan (US East) Fr. Peter Conaty (Mexico) Fr. Joseph Harris (Trinidad)</p>	<p><b>ANGOLA (1)</b> Fr. Armando José Livamba (Angola)</p>
<p><b>FRENCH WEST INDIES (1)</b> Fr. Edward Okorie (Guyane)</p>	<p><b>EAST AFRICA (2)</b> Fr. Gerard Nnamunga (EAP) Fr. Sean McGovern (Kenya)</p>
<p><b>SOUTH AMERICA (2)</b> Fr. George Boran (Brasil South-West) Fr. Pierre Jubinville (Paraguay)</p>	<p><b>SOUTHERN AFRICA (1)</b> Fr. Michael Walsh (Zambia)</p>
<p><b>NORTH-WEST AFRICA (1 Representative)</b> Fr. Gérard Meyer (FANO)</p>	<p><b>INDIAN OCEAN (1)</b> Fr. Wenceslas Pierrot Rabe (FOI)</p>
<p><b>CENTRAL AFRICA Francophone (2)</b> Fr. Oscar Ngoy (Congo-Kinshasa) Fr. Jean-Marie Ombe Essomba (PAC)</p>	<p><b>ASIA (1)</b> Fr. Sean O'Leary (Taiwan)</p>
	<p><b>OCEANIA (1)</b> Fr. Edward Chinua Okeke (PNG)</p>
	<b>TOTAL 26</b>

### STUDENTS (7 representatives)

Benedict Iheagwara (Nigeria – W. Afr. Region)  
Hugo Castillo Salinas (Mex. – N. Am./Carib.)  
David Mwaura Thuku (EAP – E. Afr. Region)  
Yvon Edward (France – Europe Region)  
Leonardo da Silva Costa (S. America Region)  
Alain Boubag (Central Africa Region)  
Zacarias Camulele (Angola Region)

### LAY ASSOCIATES (1 representative)

Marie Reine Guilmette (Canada)

### GUESTS FROM VIETNAM (2)

### H&A CO-ORDINATORS (3)

Fr. José Altevira da Silva (S. America)  
Fr. Bernard Ducol (Europe)  
Fr. Casimir Nyaki (E. Africa)

The Enlarged General Council will take place in the University of Duquesne, Pittsburgh, in the province of USA-E. It will start on Sunday 24 June and end on 7 July 2001.

There are three major themes proposed for discussion: Formation in relation to our mission today, Inter-

dependence (collaboration and solidarity) and our Inspiration.

During the sessions, we shall send a number of "Newsflashes" to all confreres with email addresses (over 450). We would urge them to share this news with as many confreres as possible when they receive it.

## Decisions of the General Council

Following consultation of the members of the circumscriptions of Kogi and Nigeria, and in keeping with SRL 249.3.1, the General Council canonically suppresses the District of Kogi, as from the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2001, and those who up-to-date have been members of the District are appointed to the Province of Nigeria.

The General Council nominates Fr Noel O'MEARA as assistant General Bursar for the service of Fundraising for one year, with effect from 19<sup>th</sup> March 2001.

The Superior General with the consent of his Council nominates Fr. Pierre CHERY as Superior of the Foundation/District of Haiti for a mandate of three years, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2001 (SRL 167.1).

Following the consultation carried out among the members by origin of the West African Foundation, and in virtue of no.157 of the *Spiritane Rule of Life*, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, decides that the Foundation of West Africa (WAF) becomes the Province of West Africa (WAP) with effect from 02 October 2001. All those confreres who are members by origin of the WAF will become members by origin of the new Province, except those who have explicitly chosen to belong by origin to the Province of Nigeria. All those confreres appointed at this date to the WAF will be automatically appointed to the new Province.

The Superior General in agreement with his Council, appoints Fr Christian Cortinovis of the province of France, previously appointed to the province of East Africa (EAP) to the province of France (SRL 249.2.4).

## Spiritane publications

Mémoire Spiritane No 12, *Histoire – Mission – Spiritualité*, Approches des cultures africaines de Mgr Le Roy à aujourd'hui, Paris, 2000.

André Vigneault, *Pour autant que je me souviens*, Québec, 2000.

Joaquin Ramos Seixas, 2<sup>nd</sup> Volume of *Antologia Espiritane*, "Francisco Libermann de Judío a Padre de Missionero", Madrid, 2000.

David Regan, *Religious Life in the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries in Latin America*, RLD, May-June 2000.

Roland Bugnon, *Ce Dieu qui nous invite au voyage*, Saint-Maurice, éditions Saint-Augustin, 2000.

Lucein Ody Favre, *Témoignage sur relations Nord/Sud illustré par le drame du peuple du Congo/Brazzaville*, 2000.

P. Franciszek Mientki, *Bóg i Ojczyzna*, Bydgoszcz, 2000.

P. Zbigniew Warcholik, *Ojciec Franciszek Libermann*, Krakow, 2000.

Myles L. Fay, *Jesus through Jewish eyes, A spiritual commentary on the Gospel of St. John, Part II, Chapter V-VIII*, Francis Mary Paul Libermann CSSp, Dublin, Paraclete Press, 1999.

Kuha Indyer *Think before you act, Bolgatanga*, 2000.

## Need Past copies?

We have a limited number of past copies of Spiritane News (nos. 123 to 135) and Information Documentation (nos. 56 and 57). If you would like to have any of the mentioned numbers let us know which number(s) and language(s) and we shall post them to you.

## OUR DEAD

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