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GUIDE FOR CONFRERES GOING ON FIRST APPOINTMENT

1. IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSION

One of the most important moments in the life of a Spiritan is that of first appointment. Past experience has shown that these early years have a decisive impact on his future commitment, and indeed on his whole life.

Our Rule of Life entrusts to the Superior General and to his Council the task of making such appointments (SRL 158; 249.2.3). In this way, the General Council gives concrete expression to the Congregation's missionary orientations and priorities and it also enables the General Council to assure solidarity and continuity (Maynooth 2.33-2.38).

First appointments must therefore be prepared and decided upon with the greatest care.

2. PARTICIPATION OF THE VARIOUS PARTNERS

If a decision for a first appointment is to be made and carried out in a satisfactory way, after adequate preparation, a concerted effort by all the parties involved is essential. This effort must involve the Superior General and his Council, the Spiritan in question, those in charge of his formation, the major superiors who represent him and those who will be receiving him, the Spiritan community which he will be joining.

2.1 The Goals and Objectives of the Circumscription

Through the commitment of new confreres, first appointments are intended to assist in the implementation of the apostolic goals and objectives defined by provincial chapters for each circumscription, within the framework of an overall vision for the future (SRL 177;182); their purpose cannot be merely to "fill a gap". Therefore, goals and objectives must be constantly updated, and must be communicated to the entire Congregation through the General Council.

2.2 Definition of Priorities by the General Council

As set forth in the Rule of Life, it is the task of the General Chapter "to select and to clarify the more important mission objectives of the Congregation as a whole" (SRL 26). The 1980 General Chapter established "Guidelines and Priorities" (Spiritan Life 55-61); the 1992 Chapter attempted in turn to answer the question, "Where is the Spirit leading us?" (Itaici 10-18).

The General Council has been asked to clarify these guidelines and their implications for the present time, and to ensure that they are implemented in a spirit of solidarity, unity and faithfulness to the Spiritan calling (SRL 199.1).

The General Council must evaluate and co-ordinate projects and orientations arising from circumscriptions and must define operational priorities. The last General Chapter in Maynooth reaffirmed the role of the General Council in setting priorities for the Congregation (Maynooth 2.26-2.28).

2.3 Applicants' Attitudes and Qualifications

The confreres who apply for their first appointment are one of the greatest riches of our Congregation and a key factor in the implementation of its mission. The attitudes and qualifications of every new Spiritan must be carefully weighed; the manner in which he feels he is called to respond to his vocation will allow us to read the signs of the Spirit.

It is also true that the personal dimension of each vocation must be combined with and enriched by that which the Spirit is also saying to us through the goals and objectives defined by each circumscription. To this end, young Spiritans must be informed – at each stage in their formation programme and on a regular basis – of these goals and objectives, and given the opportunity to discuss them with their formators. The concrete demands and challenges of mission can broaden their horizons and help them to express their personal aspirations of consecration to the Apostolate in full awareness of particular circumstances. Many of our young confreres express certain preferences in their request for a first assignment, but they do so in a spirit of openness and availability which is consistent with our Rule of Life (SRL 77.1).

2.4 The Host Circumscription

Most confreres requesting first appointments explicitly emphasise the vital importance of community in their lives as Spiritans. This is consistent with our Rule of Life (SRL, 27,28) and with our General Chapters (Spiritan Life 1980: 85,170,171 and Maynooth 4.3). The General Council is convinced of the vital importance of this dimension, and cannot run the risk of assigning a young Spiritan to an appointment where community life and support are inadequate, even when the "imperative necessities of ministry" are at stake.

Community support implies that the newly arrived Spiritan will be guided, especially at the beginning, by a fellow Spiritan who is seriously interested in encouraging authentic communication. The early months of a new mission appointment should be devoted essentially to acquiring fluency in the language and becoming acquainted with local realities; the first five years should provide opportunities for appropriate on-going formation with other Spiritans in the same circumscription (Guide for Formation no. 134).

3. CONCRETE EXPECTATIONS FROM EACH PARTNER CONCERNED

3.1 What is Expected of a Confrere Going on First Appointment

- a) He should realise that he bears the prime responsibility to avail of every means to make a good preparation for his first appointment.
- b) He should do this through reading combined with a broad-spectrum consultation of sources of information pertaining to his mission.
- c) Having been appointed, it is expected that he arrive at his mission not later than three months after the date of his ordination or final vows unless there is an agreement between the sending and receiving circumscriptions.
- d) When in his mission, the confrere should realise that he is an integral part of the group, identifying with its life and works and participating fully in the life of the circumscription.
- e) He must apply himself wholeheartedly to learning the language and culture of the place to which he is appointed.
- f) Aspiring to live the Spiritan life and apostolate as fully as possible is the ideal to which all matters of a personal nature should conform.
- g) Attention to one's spiritual life is essential and the advisability of a spiritual director is strongly counselled.
- h) It is to be understood that a confrere sets out on his first appointment for a minimum period of six years.

3.2 What is Expected of the Circumscription of Origin

- a) It should ensure that the confrere has all necessary documentation, legal, health and ecclesiastical, in good time before his departure.
- b) On receiving his first appointment, the confrere should be facilitated and encouraged to take it up without undue delay.
- c) Confreres should be given an adequate orientation regarding the place of their first appointment. Language and cultural studies are particularly important, in so far as circumstances permit.
- d) Receiving circumscriptions should be sent details of the confrere's *curriculum vitae* together with any other relevant information.
- e) The material needs of the confrere should be seen to, including ticket(s), travel expenses, clothes, etc... It is understood that flight tickets will be reimbursed by the receiving circumscription unless the sending circumscription offers to pay for them.
- f) All details regarding the confrere's arrival at the place of his first appointment should be forwarded to the receiving community well in advance, so as to ensure a good reception.
- g) While the confrere is on first appointment, it is particularly important that he be kept in touch with his home province through information and visitation, in understanding with the superior of his place of appointment.

- h) The superior or his delegate is responsible for helping the confrere on first appointment to acquire all necessary documents for his travel.

3.3 What is Expected of Receiving Circumscriptions

- a) The superior or his representative should write to the newly appointed confreres welcoming them to the circumscription and informing them of immediate items of practical importance.
- b) It is essential that there be a fraternal Spiritan community into which new confreres will be received.
- c) New confreres are helped to feel welcome when they are given all necessary information about the place, the people and culture where they have come to make their home. In this regard there should be information on the life and works of the circumscription including common acceptable practices of behaviour particular to the area. It should not be left to new confreres to find things out by themselves.
- d) There should be discussion and provision made for holidays, both home and local leave.
- e) Frank discussions on finances and how confreres are to be maintained should take place. These should include matters of health care and relevant insurances.
- f) The question of transportation for the apostolate and the community should be clarified.
- g) A suitable mentor should be appointed by the superior to accompany confreres on 1st appointment for at least six years. As well as being the contact person between confreres and the Superior and Council of the area, he will also help support them in their life and work during these initial years.
- h) Where possible, the Superior should not be the mentor.
- i) Regular meetings between the mentor and confreres on 1st appointment should be held where discussions on their life, work, plans, difficulties and hopes may take place.
- j) Sufficient time must be given to confreres on 1st appointment to learn language and culture, before becoming involved in the apostolate. This is a "conditio sine qua non."
- k) Proper planning of the apostolate to enable confreres on 1st appointment to know what is expected of them is very important. Where possible, job descriptions should be provided.
- l) Periodic evaluation with mentor or Superior and Council, or both, ought to take place.
- m) It will be important to maintain contact with the Superiors of origin. This will facilitate ongoing communication and may help offset potential problems.
- n) Confreres on 1st appointment should be given time to adapt to their new environment and hasty judgements about their suitability for the work or the place should be avoided.
- o) It is desirable that meetings with other confreres on 1st appointment within the region should be organised. This

will help promote the exchange of ideas and experiences and foster mutual support.

p) During the early years of first appointment, confreres are

not expected to be engaged in Spiritan formation work in the receiving circumscription.

Mike Obi Onwuemelie, On behalf of the General Council

The General Council has approved the following First Appointments

| NAME | FROM | TO |
|------------------------|--------|--------|
| KALUKEMBE, A. B. Maria | Angola | Spain |
| ERNESTO, Alfonso Gomes | Angola | Angola |
| MANUEL, André Paulo | Angola | Angola |
| MATIAS, Antonio Luis | Angola | PAC |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------|----------|
| KAMULELE, Zacarias | Angola | Brazil |
| MAQUINA, V. Miguel Damico | Angola | Angola |
| LARRAGA CRUZ, Marcelino | Mexico | Brazil |
| SALINAS, Hugo Castillo | Mexico | Spain |
| DIMBA, John Luis | SCAF | Zimbabwe |

ANOTHER SPIRITAN YEAR CELEBRATION AT THE GENERALATE: 22nd May

For some years now, the Generalate community has held a garden party in the grounds of the house for friends and members of other congregations around the time of Pentecost. This year, it took a somewhat different form as part of the celebrations for our Spiritan Anniversary Year.



Garden party after the liturgical celebration

We started with a liturgy of the Word, held in the beautiful chapel of the Ausiliatrice Sisters next door, our own being too small for the occasion. The ceremony was presided by Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria, President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue here in Rome. Also present was Archbishop Robert Sarah, Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, known to many confreres from his time as Archbishop of Conakry in Guinée. There were two Spiritan bishops present: Benedito Roberto, bishop of Sumbe diocese in Angola, and Augustine Shao, bishop of Zanzibar.

After the guests were welcomed by the Superior General, Pierre Schouver, two members of the General Council, John Fogarty and Michael Onwuemelie, gave an overview of the life and orientation of the Congregation as it is today. While stressing our continuity with the visions of Poullart des Places and Libermann, they laid particular stress on the way we are trying to answer the evangelical needs of today in the same way in which our two great founders faced the challenges of their own time. Michael put it like this: "*Scientists*

tell us that the human body changes completely every seven years, yet we remain the same person and, apart from a few extra wrinkles, we look much the same. In a similar way, we are a very different Congregation to what we were 100 or even 50 years ago - our self image, our outlook, our

methods of evangelisation, our theology of mission, our places of origin. Yet despite the differences, despite being a completely new generation of Spiritans, we are undoubtedly still the same family of Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann".

In his homily, Cardinal Arinze, in recalling the missionary vision of Vatican II, pointed out how "*the missionary charism of the Spiritans is in full tune with the nature of the Church*". This is why "*the Church rejoices with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit at this multiple celebration. The Church thanks the Spiritans and all missionaries worldwide*".

The liturgy was punctuated with readings from scripture and our founders as well as liturgical songs lead by a choir from the Spiritan parish of Santa Brigida on the outskirts of Rome. As the ceremony came to a close, we sang the Magnificat together, exchanging lighted candles to express our solidarity and our shared joy for the countless blessing the Lord has given to our religious family over the last 300 years.

We returned to our garden where a wonderful buffet had been prepared by the bursar and the kitchen staff. As usual, our guests showed a marked reluctance to leave - a sure sign that they had enjoyed the evening as much as we had!



Card. Arinze (R) and Bishop Shao



Celebration in the Chapel

DECISIONS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

The Superior General, with the consent of his Council,

- nominates Fr. Edward Chinua **OKEKE** as Major Superior of the International Group of Papua New Guinea, for a second mandate of three years, with effect from 3rd April 2002.
- transfers the novitiate of the South Africa Central African Foundation from Laval House, Pietermaritzburg, to Glen Ash, Bethlehem, with effect from 1st July 2002.
- decides to prolong the mandate of Fr. Ferdinand **AZEGUE** as Superior of the Province of Central Africa until the Enlarged Provincial Council of July 2002.

The General Council

- prolongs the mandate of Fr. Christian **DE MARE** of the French Province, as coordinator for Spiritan History and Anniversaries, until 31st August 2004.
- nominates Fr. Robert **ELLISON**, of the Province of Ireland, as Secretary General, for a second mandate of three years, with effect from 1st September 2002.
- nominates Fr. José Ribeiro **MENDES** of the Portuguese Province as Procurator of the Congregation to the Holy See for a second mandate of 3 years, with effect from 1st September 2002.
- appoints Fr. Joachim **ABELLAN** of the French Province as bursar of the Spiritan Community of the French Seminary in Rome for a mandate of 3 years, beginning on 1st September 2002.
- nominates Fr. Robert **METZGER** of the French Province as Assistant General Archivist at Chevilly for a second mandate of 3 years with effect from 1st September 2002.

In conformity with SRL 149.1.1, the Superior General, with the agreement of his Council, approves the plan for a Spiritan mission in Bolivia in the Diocese of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. This project is the responsibility of the South American Region; the Major Superior will be the coordinator of the superiors of the South American Region.

Postscript: The General Council had also requested an audience for all Spiritans in Rome with His Holiness the Pope for the week after Pentecost. Owing to the Pope's failing health and a visit to Azerbaijan and Bulgaria, which he pre-arranged for the same week, he was not able to grant the Council's request for the dates in question. However, he sent a personal message to the entire Congregation on the occasion of the Spiritan Year recalling some aspects of our history and missionary contribution to the Church and exhorting us to be faithful to the charism and intuitions of our founders in the context of the contemporary world. **The text of the Pope's message is included with the current issue of Spiritan News.** The General Council intends to submit a request for an audience at a future date to coincide either with 2nd February or with Pentecost 2003.

Place and dates of the General Chapter of 2004

Following the suggestions made at the Enlarged General Council of Pittsburgh, the General Council asked 5 circumscriptions if they were interested in hosting the General Chapter of 2004 and what would be their capabilities, reminding them of some of the important criteria which the Enlarged General Council of Pittsburgh had identified. (cf. I/D 58 p. 8).

Before long, the Province of Nigeria informed us that, for various reasons, it would not be possible for them to host the General Chapter, at least this time, although such an event would have been especially significant for them. A chapter in the Region of East Africa would also have been significant and, for a while, the research undertaken in Kenya and Tanzania seemed to offer a real possibility; but the limitations of hosting facilities finally proved too difficult to overcome.

This left two other Provinces which had declared themselves ready to consider hosting such an assembly: Portugal and France. From the point of view of costs, ease of access and facilities, there was little to choose between the two options. Regarding significance, it was recalled that France has already hosted many General Chapters in the past and that it is going to receive a lot of Spiritans in 2002 and 2003 on the occasion of the Spiritan year. So finally, Portugal was chosen. The Chapter will take place at Torre d'Aguilha (close to Lisbon) with dates yet to be finalised but approximately between mid-June and mid-July, 2004. We thank the Province of Portugal for having accepted this responsibility, which it sees as an opportunity for renewed missionary inspiration.

During this month of June, the General Council will start a preliminary reflection on the nature of this Chapter of 2004, the method and the style that it could take and the ways in which all confreres could be involved in its preparation. Further details will be given on this subject before the end of this year.

OUR DEAD

| | |
|----------|--|
| 15 April | Br. Christophe LINCY France 87 |
| 18 April | Fr. John N. AHERNEIreland 82 |
| 24 April | Fr. Armand LUX France 78 |
| 14 May | Fr. William L. O'CONNOR.....Ireland 83 |
| 18 May | Fr. Arsène R. MALONGA..... P.A.C. 34 |
| 21 May | Fr. Edward BUSHINKI..... US/E 77 |
| 25 May | Fr. Jeremiah O'SULLIVAN.....Ireland 83 |