Editor's Introduction (English)

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Introduction

The Center for Spiritan Studies, inaugurated in September 2005, is a collaborative venture between the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and Duquesne University. Its purpose is to promote scholarly research into Spiritan history, tradition, and spirituality with a view to fostering creative fidelity to the Spiritan charism in a changing world. *Spiritan Horizons* is an annual publication of the Center for Spiritan Studies that seeks to further the Center’s aims. The journal combines articles of a scholarly nature with others related to the praxis of the Spiritan charism in a wide variety of cultural settings. Special attention is given in each issue to the Spiritan education ethos, in view of the university context in which the journal is published. It is hoped that the journal will provide a wider audience than hitherto with access to the riches of the Spiritan charism and spirituality.

It used to be that it was common to come across words like “natural” and “supernatural” in descriptions of our religious experience. “Nature” and “grace” denoted contrasting realms which could mysteriously touch, provoking at once wonder and excitement, while at the same time leaving elements of contradiction to be dealt with in practice. By exploring Libermann’s idea of the role of Providence in daily life, Christian de Mare revives for us the adventure and the struggle of being involved in God’s mission. Today, the perspective is inclined to be more earthbound. It also attempts to be comprehensive by giving more attention to the personal, the cultural, the social, the sexual. The appetite for excitement is as sharp as ever but the clamor of its claim seems to work against it, to drown out the sense of wonder, which speaks only in a whisper. Pierre Jubinville struggles to share his missionary experience in Paraguay. The everyday was far from humdrum in its moments of sacrifice and sharing, but the real sparkle came only with the touching of the mystery.

This year Duquesne celebrates the centenary of its School of Law. Dean Ken Gormley tells the story in an inspiring way. From humble beginnings, the School has reached a remarkable level of achievement. There are heroes aplenty, high drama and sustaining strands of strength that come from being Catholic and Spiritan. Susan Hascall shares her observation and study of legal plurality in a very interesting essay. Her description of how much Shari‘ah Law is already in acknowledged use, sometimes in unexpected places, may surprise many.

The coming year is an important one for the Spiritans as their General Chapter, held now every eight years, will take place for the first time in Africa. The place chosen is Bagamoyo, not far from Dar es Salaam. Florentine Mallya describes the central role of Bagamoyo in the missionary thrust of the Spiritans in East Africa since the beginning, more than a hundred years ago. Adam Wasilko testifies to the
survival of the Spiritan sense of mission in the hurly-burly of university student life today. It can make itself felt in all the corners of the campus and Libermann letters can ring true across the centuries.

With the sharp eye of a theologian and the special sensitivity of a Spiritan who works in Pakistan, John O’Brien examines the reality of prayer in Luke’s writings. We are helped to discover the Lukan sense of prayer as putting ourselves unreservedly at the disposition of the Holy Spirit and struggling for a “transformed world in favor of the poor”. The poet helps us to have eyes to see and ears to hear. We welcome Desmond Egan’s contribution, born of his constant endeavor to bring light into darkness. With this in mind, he visits Duquesne each year, not as preacher but as poet.

George Boran writes from the frontlines of Spiritan mission. He is an acknowledged champion of nonformal education, with a wealth of experience especially in South America. He does not want it to replace formal education, but to take its rightful place alongside it. It can give more immediacy to living the gospel of Jesus, which is at the heart of all Spiritan education. He presents it as a discipline in its own right. It is not something that happens by accident. We will recognize our own experience in Dr Ronald Arnett’s reference to “existential homelessness”, which he describes without any wringing of hands. He even calls it “the grace of our time”. It holds the challenge to “lean into” the difficulties of life. “ Existential civility” sounds innocuous, but it will shake all life’s bystanders from their comfortable perch.

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