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## THE HOLY GHOST FATHERS IN U.K. 1904 - 2004

As the Province of England completes one hundred years officially in the United Kingdom, it is very interesting to realize that the Holy Ghost Fathers have had a connection with the country since 1731. The present Mother House in rue Lhomond, Paris, was actually built by a Scotsman, Charles Davison in 1669. This house was bought by our then Superior General, Fr. Louis Bouic. Of course many changes and additions have been made to it since then. During the French Revolution, Fr. Jacques Bertout went to England to escape the guillotine. In those days, England was a real mission field. Fr Bertout travelled from place to place in Yorkshire, serving the Catholics he could find. Half a century later, Blessed Jacques Laval spent a few weeks in London waiting for a boat to take him to Mauritius, where he was to spend the rest of his life. During the second half of the nineteenth century various contacts were made between the Congregation and England, but none of them came to any positive conclusion.

### A FOOTHOLD AT LAST

The early days of the twentieth century were fraught with danger for the Congregation as violent anti-clericalism was rife in France. It looked as if all the seminaries and houses there would be seized by the government. Happily, a large property at Prior Park near Bristol was found as a suitable place for the French and Irish novices and senior seminarians. Staff and students moved in on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1904.

*Castlehead*



Three years later, however, it was found to be too expensive. Providentially, the property of Castlehead in the north of Lancashire came on the market and was snapped up. The Holy Ghost Fathers moved in there on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1907 and were to remain there until its closure in 1978. In 1912, Patrick Coffey of the Irish Province, took over the parish of St. Joseph at Peasley Cross near Liverpool. Apart from the pastoral care of the people, this parish served as a departure point for missionaries setting sail for the foreign missions. This parish eventually died as the closure of the pits meant

that the population of the area faded away by the middle eighties.

In 1920, England became a Vice-Province. This official status had a great effect as witnessed by a letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1921, written by an undersecretary of State, one Winston Churchill, stating: "*His Majesty's Government is willing to recognize the Congregation of the Holy Ghost as responsible for the missions in the Colonies and Protectorates in East and West Africa.*"

### CONSOLIDATION

With help from members from Ireland and France, the new Vice-Province began to flourish. Prominent among those who went there was Brother Alphonse from Alsace. He went to Prior Park in 1904 and remained there until his death in 1963, much loved by all who knew him.

Castlehead was the junior seminary and students from there were going annually to the noviciate in France and onwards to their senior seminary studies and ordination to the priesthood. By 1926 there were 6 priests of English origin. The Holy Ghost Fathers became much more widely known through the continuous support given to them by the Hierarchy and diocesan clergy throughout England. Then, at Christmas 1936, the first edition of "Africa Calling" was produced. This magazine was immensely popular. As the missionary work continued to spread, the name was changed to the present day "Missionwide."

In 1937 the Parish of Mary Immaculate and St. Peter, New Barnet, was confided to the Congregation and Spiritans continue to serve there to this day. In 1938, the famous Rose Garden at Castlehead was opened by the Bishop of Lancaster. The beautiful statue of Saint Theresa of Lisieux, patron of the Missions, remained there until the closure of the seminary. This statue now stands in the shrine at Knock in Ireland.

### FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The war of 1939-1945 meant that the students from England had to leave France. Makeshift arrangements were made at Castlehead, putting the novices in Sandy Bridge Lodge and the scholastics on Holme island. Things soon became very cramped, so in 1942, the senior students moved into a section of Sizergh Castle, near Kendal. When the war ended, the philosophers and theologians moved at last into Upton Hall in Nottinghamshire whilst the novices returned once again to France. During this war, many confreres from the

Province served as chaplains with the forces, some of them being posted to various parts of Africa.

The house in Bickley was obtained in 1947 and has served several important purposes since. At this time England was raised to the status of a Province and immediately this house became the headquarters for the administration. Quite a few "late vocations" came from those whose studies had been interrupted by the war. These men prepared themselves at Bickley to go to the novitiate. As members grew older or became sick, Bickley developed into the principal retirement home of the province.



In the late fifties, the first house was opened in Scotland at Uddingston. Later, the confreres moved to Carfin where Spiritans are still serving the local community and fostering a strong missionary spirit. From the start there had been a good number of vocations from Scotland and the generosity and support from the local people was outstanding.

The present Provincialate is at Northwood in Middlesex. In addition to the parish in New Barnet, spiritans also serve in several other parishes in England.

## SOME CURRENT PROJECTS

### "Just Youth" Project, Salford

Inaugurated some 15 years ago, the *Just Youth* project at Salford evolved from a Provincial Council initiative in 1976 at Helmshore, some twenty miles away, with a view to the promotion of vocations. However, as elsewhere in Europe, the faith context changed significantly in the years that followed and vocations to the priesthood and religious life declined accordingly. Salford, a city on the outskirts of Manchester, was eventually deemed a more central location for the apostolate and the focus of the initiative changed from recruitment to youth ministry in the light of the changing circumstances.

The confreres saw the growing need to address the area of evangelisation of young people directly, both as a missionary contribution to the local Church and an alternative and more realistic approach to fostering future vocations. Drawing inspiration from the Papal Encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and espousing the Covenant of the Diocese elaborated for the Jubilee Year, the team has elaborated a wide range of programmes aimed at the human, intellectual and spiritual development of young people, the promotion of justice and equality and the fostering of leadership skills. They cultivate

a simple open-house policy, offering sessions, retreats and workshops to young people in the spiritan community as well as in several schools in the locality. Two confreres from Nigeria have recently joined the team on first appointment. The project has now been identified as a European Spiritan Project by the Provincials of Europe.

### "Revive" Project, Salford

*Revive* is a joint project of the English Province and the Catholic Diocese of Salford. It was initiated by Lay Associates, **Anne-Marie** and **Peter Fell**, with a view to providing support for the influx of asylum seekers to the Manchester area in the wake of the 1999 Government Immigration and Asylum Act, which introduced the forced dispersion of new arrivals to various parts of the country. They approached the Provincial Council in August 2001, seeking support for the establishment of this service to refugees and asylum seekers on a more professional basis. The Province readily agreed to underpin the project financially for an initial two-year period, seeing it as an ideal way to mark the Spiritan Year.

Working in collaboration with a number of other agencies, *Revive* provides a support system for vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers in a wide variety of ways: assisting them in their application for refugee status, liaising with the National Asylum Support Service on their behalf, providing them with information as to their legal entitlements, helping them with problems related to accommodation, accompanying them to solicitors, hospitals etc., visiting them in their homes, organising social events etc. It also assists them and the members of their families in the settlement process if refugee status is granted.



The work of *Revive* is clearly in line with the Spiritan charism; it recently received recognition by the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, who referred to *Revive* as an example of the positive contribution that faith communities can make to the excluded in society.

### The 'Kairos' Project in London

When the formation community was at Hendon in the 1980s, Fr. John Kitchen and some of the students used to go out into the streets to meet homeless people and assist them. The work developed into a collaborative effort with a local Anglican parish. Eventually, the project had its own

**Centenaries:** In 1997, Auteuil celebrated the centenaries of the deaths of Sainte Thérèse and of its founder l'Abbé Roussel. To celebrate the occasions, 800 youth of Auteuil produced a show in Lisieux before an audience of 6000. The programme, which had both an educational and pastoral dimension, was prepared during the previous year. The theme was later treated in catechetics and as a spiritual reflection.

### **African Collaboration (MAC) : Meeting**

The African Collaboration Group held their meeting in Cairo with the Permanent Committee of SECAM from 14 - 20 March 1998. Fr General was among the six Superiors General who represented the Unions of Superiors General, men and women.

He describes the meeting as follows.

*"We discussed the question of Justice and Peace in Africa at our last meeting in Tunis in 1996. We presented our report on the subject to the plenary assembly of SECAM in Johannesburg in 1997. SECAM paid tribute to the work of the missionaries and hopes that they will continue to challenge the local churches.*

*The following points were discussed:*

*1. Africans in Europe: Discussion was based on a memorandum drawn up after consulting the members of our Institutes. The following points were underlined:*

- \* *Distinguish between legal and illegal immigrants. Because illegal immigrants are the most vulnerable they should be our priority.*
- \* *Is it possible to influence our governments*
  - a) *to find a global solution?*
  - b) *To dialogue with the governments of countries of origin of immigrants to discover the causes of immigration and solutions?*
- \* *The Bishops in Africa must challenge their governments on Justice and Peace issues. The local churches must also do their part by conscientising the christians and sending chaplains to work with immigrants.*
- \* *Work for immigrants in Europe needs better organisation and coordination.*

*2. Towards a more missionary African Church: We spoke about the African members of our Institutes who are missionaries in other countries.*

*3 Diocesan Congregations in Africa: Their particular problems".*

### **European Educators : Meeting**

The third meeting of European Educators was held in Porto, Portugal, from 10 - 18 April 1998. Twenty representatives, including five laymen, came from Ireland, France, Germany and Portugal.

A final statement gathered the salient features:

- \* Appreciation and encouragement of General Council for the contribution of education to our Mission (Dakar 95),

- \* Sharing our Spiritan inspiration with lay educators, giving special attention to those in leadership roles without neglecting the others,
- \* Communication and collaboration among Spiritan Schools,
- \* Collaboration in promoting information technology in spiritan schools,
- \* The involvement of a Spiritan community adjacent to the school,
- \* Seeking ways to help Spiritan educators in young provinces and foundations by creating a way for them to communicate their needs and achievements.

### **Archivists : European Meeting**

This was the third meeting of the group, the previous meetings having been in Chevilly (1995) and Rome (1996). All the European Provinces sent representatives, apart from Spain and Belgium. Fr. Joseph Carrard (Switzerland) could not attend because of illness. The final version of the *Guide for Spiritan Archivists*, now approved for the whole Congregation by the General Council, was presented and discussed. The *Guide* was an initiative of this Group, most of the work being done by Miss Belinda Peters of Germany. **Copies have been sent to each Major Superior with the recommendation that one be sent to each spiritan community.** Amongst the important subjects discussed was the danger of European Community legislation for archives being imposed on us if we do not have our own internal legislation. A committee of three was set up to investigate the matter and make recommendations to the Provincials.

### **Spiritay Lay People and Lay Associates : European Meeting**

From 7 - 10 May, representatives of different groups of Spiritan lay people or associates met in Gemert, Holland. It was the first meeting of its kind in Europe. Earlier efforts had been made to meet on a European level but without success. The most probable reason for this failure was that those concerned believed that the structures and ethos of the groups in the various provinces were so different from each other, that a meeting would achieve very little.

The meeting in Gemert showed clearly that the unity based on the same Spiritan inspiration is much stronger than the differences in the structures, thinking and organisation. All those who took part felt that it was a great pity that all the provinces were not represented.

Discussions centred on responses to a questionnaire which was previously sent to participants:

- \* What kind of people do you look for?
- \* Where and how do you get in touch with them?
- \* What is the target of the group?
- \* What motivates those who contact you?
- \* What can you offer them?
- \* What is going well in the group?
- \* What are your points of concern?

This reflection gave rise to another important question:

Who, in your opinion, can be considered a Spiritan Lay Associate?

Participants were asked also to make concrete suggestions on the Lay Associate program to be submitted to the General Chapter in Maynooth.

Because the meeting was such a rich experience for all and

so important for the further development of the whole Spiritan Lay Movement in Europe, the participants would like to have another meeting next year in Knechtsteden. Meetings, after next year, will take place only before or after the General Chapters and Enlarged General Councils.

It was decided also that there will be a European Spiritan lay bulletin

## NEWS ITEMS

### Decisions of General Council

March 23 1998, confirmed the election of Fr Myles FAY as Superior of the District of the Gambia for a mandate of three years with effect from 15 June 1998.

01 April 1998, established the single group of Papua New Guinea and named Fr Patrick DORAN as Major Superior until 15 Jan. 1999.

01 April 1998, established the Group of Australia and named Fr Walter McNAMARA as Major Superior until 01 Sept. 2000.

24 April 1998, confirmed the election of Fr George BORAN as Superior of the District of Brazil SW for a mandate of 3 years from 28 April 1998.

24 April 1998, extended the mandate of Fr René TABARD, Congo Brazzaville until 22 Sept. 1999.

29 April, 1998, renewed the mandates of Br Robert GUENO, and Fr Vincent O'TOOLE, Generalate, for three years and extended the mandates of Frs J SKIN-NADER, Jean-Claude PARIAT, Domingos da CRUZ NEIVA, Generalate, until 31.08.1999.

01 May 1998, confirmed the renewal of the mandate of Fr Donald NESTI, USA/W for three years.

04 May 1998, named Fr Gérard VIEIRA, as General Archivist and Fr Ghislain de BANVILLE as Assistant, for mandates of three years, from 01 Sept. 1998.

19 May 1998, confirmed the election of Fr Leonard EKEANYANWU as Superior of the District of Zimbabwe for a mandate of three years from 28 April 1998.

25 May 1998 made the following **First Appointments**

BARROS J-B Frederico (Portugal)..... Senegal  
BALESI Domingos (Angola) ..... Angola  
DOS REIS Damasceno (Portugal) ..... Mozambique  
FLAMM Paul(USA/E) ..... EAP  
SAMPAIO Antonio Carlos (Brazil)..... Brazil  
MONTEIRO JOSÉ Maria (Angola) ..... Angola

### New Snippets

The Congregation for the Evangelisation of peoples has appointed Fr E.GRIMES as National Director of PMS, Ireland in succession to Fr S. GALVIN who is retiring.

Fr J. Savoie has received the decoration "*chevalier de l'ordre de la Legion d'Honneur*" for his work with Auteuil.

The Spiritans in Mahajanga, Madagascar are celebrating the centenary of their presence this year.

### Congregation for Bishops : Nominations

27 May 1998, The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II nominated:

Fr Sérgio Eduardo CASTRIANI CSSp., General Councilor, as Coadjutor Bishop of the Prelature of Tefé, Brazil.

Fr Mosé João PONTELO CSSp., as Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Cruzeiro do Sul, Brazil.

### Journées Romaines

The XXI session of "*Journées Romaines*" was held in Rome from Sept 03 - 09, 1997. The theme was "*Young Christians and Muslims Facing the Crisis at the End of the Century*". Fr Guy Daniel, our confrere from Mauritania participated. "*Journées Romaines*" is aimed at missionaries and church workers in muslim countries. A session is held every two years. The next session is scheduled to take place at Ariccia, outside Rome, from July 14 - 21, 1999. The languages will be French and English with simultaneous translation. For further information please contact, Secrétariat des Journées Romaines, Viale di Trastevere 89, 00153 Roma, Italy. Tel. (39.6) 588-2676: Fax (39.6) 588-2595.

### Anniversaries 1998:

10 Sept. Fr Tom MEAGHER, Ireland, 60 years professed.

08 Sept: Fr Thomas CUNNINGHAM, Ireland, 50 years professed.

### Recent Deaths

24 Mar. Fr Paul REPOND ..... Switzerland aged 80

25 Mar. Fr Michel KIEFFER ..... France aged 72

30 Mar. Mgr André LOUCHEUR ..... France aged 87

07 Apr. Fr Louis GUEGUEN ..... France aged 88

08 Apr. Fr Thomas Patrick FLYNN .. England aged 75

08 Apr. Fr John J. MCDONAGH ..... Ireland aged 63

15 Apr. Fr Mortimer F. KANE ..... USA/E aged 68

17 Apr. Fr Josef WEHNING ..... Germany aged 89

19 Apr. Fr Joseph KERGUENOU ..... France aged 75

01 May Fr Robert LEROND ..... France aged 75

03 May Fr Joseph WINAND..... Belgium aged 89

04 May Fr Henri PERRITAZ ..... Switzerland aged 72

09 May Br Johannes de KORT..... Netherlands aged 72

12 May Fr Petrus de BOER..... Netherlands aged 88

13 May Br L SCHOLTEN..... Netherlands aged 81

19 May Fr Julian WROBEL ..... Poland aged 80