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SPIRITAN NEWS

October 1996

N° 115

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

MEETING OF THE SPIRITAN ARCHIVISTS OF EUROPE

Following their first meeting at Chevilly in June 1995, the archivists of Europe held their second meeting at the Generalate from June 03 - 06, 1996.

Reports were given of recent developments in each of the archives. With the approval of the General Council, only the documents of the two preceding administrations will be retained in Rome; the rest will be transferred to the General Archives at Chevilly. The archivists held discussions with the General Council and the General Secretary, who "supervises the keeping of the archives" (SRL 210.1). Among the important points treated were:

- **Producing a Guide for Archivists in the Congregation.** A preliminary draft will be sent to the General Council and other archivists throughout the Congregation for further reflection and possible adoption.
- **Access to archives.** In contrast to public state records, our archives are private, so it is up to us as to what, when, and to whom we reveal them.
- **Professional secrecy.** The confidentiality of papers, especially that of personal papers, must be respected. This discretion, however, must be balanced by an attitude of welcome and encouragement, to Spiritan researchers. Our archives are part of our common heritage.
- **The archivist has an animatory role to play in relation to his or her circumscription.** The archivists



*Back Row: E. McCann(Eng), B. Peters(Ger), G. de Banville(Fr), P. Ward(Eur.Prov),
T. Neiva (Port), L. Layden(Irl), P. Rutten(Holl), J. Hurley(Gen),
Front Row: J.J. Boeglin(Gen), V. O'Toole(Gen).*

repeated their plea of last year for the revival of the **General Bulletin** in its traditional form. Nothing produced subsequently has come near to replacing the central role it played in the corpus of our material.

The conference was rounded off by two memorable visits. The first was to the **Pontificia Commissio de Bonis Culturalibus Ecclesiae**, the Vatican body that is responsible for church archives world-wide. The group was warmly received by Archbishop Marchisano and his assistant. They were strongly encouraged in their work and were asked to keep in touch with the Commission. The visit later in the same day to the **Vatican Archives** was an archivists' dream! Mgr. Charles Burns, a cousin of a Spiritan of the English Province, produced a whole series of priceless documents, dating from 800 AD, onwards, including letters from Voltaire, François de Sales, Lucretia Borgia, Oliver Plunkett, Henry VIII and a host of other treasures, including the Bull of Alexander VI, dividing the new world between Portugal and Spain. These visits confirmed the European archivists in the importance of their work.

Major Superiors meeting 1996

The Superiors of Brazil, S.W, WAF, EAP and of the Goma-Gofa Group, Ethiopia, met at the Generalate from September 15 - 21, 1996. Following the procedure of previous meetings, the first day was given to the reports of the circumscriptions represented. In the discussions which followed a number of questions surfaced:

- The Church in the pre and post Vatican II eras and the implications of this for our mission today,
- Spiritans in Education. Spiritans have a long tradition in Education. New Foundations in Africa could continue this tradition. It is a necessary and worthwhile apostolate at this time and will fulfil a real need in countries where we work. The Superiors from Africa emphasised this aspect,
- The meaning of Spiritan in "home base",
- Spiritan Apostolate in Islamic countries,
- The relationship between Districts and Foundations when living side by side in the same country came up again for discussion. Who represents the Congregation with external entities both ecclesiastical and civil?
- What is the financial support for new Apostolates which may be taken on by the Foundations? Are there or have there been financial arrangements or agreements between the Foundations and the Circumscriptions which have founded them?
- What is the situation of Brothers in the new circumscriptions? In most cases, aspirants to the brotherhood and priesthood follow the same initial formation programme. It is only at a later stage that they make a personal choice to become brothers.

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Organisation and regionalisation.

The document on Organisation and Regionalisation was reviewed. Following on the recommendations of EGC95, the second draft has been circulated to the Major Superiors. The General Council is now awaiting their

comments and recommendations. The inspiration of the Document comes from Itaici, the experience of the Congregation and the experience of the General Council.

The following points came up for discussion:

1. Solidarity between the New Foundations and the older Provinces both in Formation Personnel and Finance.

There is a certain uneasiness among some confreres with the term "District" because of overtones coming from the colonial past.

2. In the Congregation we have Provinces, Foundations, Districts, and International Groups. According to Itaici, Regions should now be encouraged.
3. There is a certain uneasiness among some confreres with the term "District" because of overtones coming from the colonial past. Should the term "District" be replaced with the term "Group"?

The situation in some of the older Provinces which cannot now fulfil the obligations required to be a Province was mentioned. Is another entity required?

Formation

There are three members of the Council, Frs Castriani Odigbo, and Jolibois responsible for Formation. Fr Perrier has been co-opted to work full-time with the Council.

They were given a number of tasks by Itaici:

1. **To visit all the houses of Formation in order to**
 - a) gather and circulate information,
 - b) know better the needs of the Formation Houses.
2. **Produce a Guide for Initial and On-going Formation.** The Guide for Initial Formation has been accepted by EGC95 and circulated to the Congregation. The Guide for Initial Formation has been positively received. Some concern was expressed by the understanding of the point dealing with the distinction between formators and academic staff. The understanding is that all Spiritans working in Formation Houses should see themselves as part of the formation team and help out where appropriate and when requested. However it is preferable that a member of the Academic Staff should not be Spiritual Director/Confessor of a student whom he has in class.
3. Academics are not *ipso facto* Formators. Those who have the responsibility for formation should have some training in that area.

4. **Formation of Formators.** This is being done at circumscription level. International communities for formation exist already.

The Guide for On-going Formation has been circulated to the Major Superiors. The General Council, before completing the final draft, awaits their comments.

Students in Rome

Students in Rome for further studies should have some form of Spiritan community life. Superiors of sending circumscriptions should forward in good time, details of students whom they plan to send to Rome. This is necessary for forward planning. Fr Albert Perrier is liaison person for Spiritan students in Rome.

Justice and Peace:

Fr Skinnader gave a presentation on Justice and Peace. He emphasised that students in formation should become aware of how the global economic system works and how it often works to the detriment of developing nations. Those responsible for the management of the economic system e.g. the World Bank, IMF etc. are in general, ethical people but they have a different view of what constitutes development. It is part of our brief to show them that there are alternative models of growth and development.

Preparation for the General Chapter in 1998.

Where is the Spirit leading? Following the lead of the Spirit is how we wish to prepare for the Chapter.

The document of the General Council, inviting all Spiritans to take part in a preparatory reflection for the General Chapter of 1998 has been forwarded to each circumscription. Chapters and meetings are important but a balance must be found between the need for meetings and the costs involved. Among the more important questions posed were

1. How do we go about achieving renewal within the Congregation?
2. What is your most important question to be presented to the Chapter of 1998, the one about which you feel most strongly?

The point is often made that the same confreres are repeatedly elected as delegates to Chapters. For them, the Chapter may be a wonderful experience but that experience is generally not communicated to others in a significant way. The preparation of the Chapter within circumscriptions is not purely an academic exercise. The General Council would like it to be, for each member, an experience of a mini-chapter. Reflection within the groups is as important, if not more important, than the Chapter itself. Preparation should be done not individually but as a community at group or regional level.

Although the next Chapter is not meant to be a repetition of Itaiçi, the connection with experience within the Congregation should be maintained. Lived experience should be combined with topics to be studied. A particular region or circumscription may be invited to present a topic in which it is felt its members are competent.



L-R: J. Kwofie (WAF), E. Fritsch (Ethiopia), D. Macha (EAP), Fr General, P. Kelly (Brazil, SW).

Preparation in Groups does not, however, preclude the right of individuals to forward their views in writing to the General Council at this preparatory stage. Obviously, it will not be possible to deal with views of individual confreres during the Chapter itself. Delegates present the views of their circumscriptions as a whole and indicate the weight of opposing views within their group.

Replies to the questionnaire should reach the Generalate by mid-June 1997.

First appointments.

The question of first appointments always comes up whenever students meet General Councillors as was the case at the month's preparation for final vows in Holland. It is clear that it is an important point both for students and for the Congregation.

It is the prerogative of the General Council to make the First Appointments. In making First Appointments, the General Council takes into account the Directives of SRL, the information and recommendations supplied by the Major Superiors, the wishes of the confrere, his gifts and his family. As a rule the General Council follows as much as possible the expressed wishes of the confrere. Nevertheless, students should be motivated from early in their formation to the importance of being available for the overall mission of the Congregation and the Church "where it may be difficult to find labourers".

Major Superiors when requesting personnel for a project should forward to the General Council:

- A detailed description of the project for which a First Appointment is requested,
- The real possibilities for community life,
- The time and opportunity available to study the mission reality of the country, its culture and its language.

First Appointments should not be seen as a stage. This would be pernicious and dangerous both for the First Appointees and the receiving circumscriptions. By his appointment, a confrere, *ipso facto*, becomes a member of that circumscription and thus his appointment may be for a lifetime. In order to reconcile the needs of the receiving circumscription and those of the sending circumscription to train formators or to have a strong home base, changes may be necessary.

The General Council cannot provide personnel for all the projects presented each year. Superiors are advised to repeat their requests the following year, indicating any change of emphasis which may have taken place in the meantime. Cf. both the letter from the General Council in March 1994 where the question of First Appointments is treated more in detail and the yearly document with the orientations of the Congregation and the updated requests for personnel.

Mass for the Intentions of Fr General

"We offer the Eucharist once every month for our fellow Spiritans who are dead and once for the intentions of the Superior General" (SRL 99.8)

It puts the Spiritan, whether priest or not, president of the Eucharistic celebration or not, in communion with the members of the Congregation, living and dead and, at the same time, with its major preoccupations and projects. We are building up our fraternal communion in the Eucharist, source and summit of our Spiritan living.

In the section on the Eucharist, the Spiritan Rule says, among other things: "*The Eucharist, the "sign of unity and bond of charity" (Sac. Conc. 47), builds up our fraternal communion in the Body of Christ...*"

Celebrating the Eucharist for our deceased confreres expresses our fraternal ties with them (cf. SRL 99.9). Celebrating it for the intentions of the Superior General puts us in communion with his preoccupations, making them ours.

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Our Rule also tells us that the Eucharist leads us to a genuine solidarity with the poor (cf. SRL 93). The evangelization of the poor should be the object of our apostolic action, and our greatest preoccupation. It is also the principal intention of our Superior General.

Mass celebrated by the community

Number SRL 99.8 is placed in the section which deals with community prayer. Instead of each Spiritan priest having one day a month indicated for offering mass for the intentions of the Superior General, why not fix such a day for each community so that members who are not priests will feel themselves participants in this act of communion? Or, perhaps this could be in addition to the personal obligation of each priest to celebrate Mass on a particular day for the intentions of the Superior General.

On the question of Mass Stipends

The gifts, salaries, pensions, subsidies, securities, mass intentions and all we receive from our work, belong to the Congregation (Can. 668.3).

The Spiritan, according to the Rule of Life has only to communicate to the Bursar the number of masses he has celebrated. From this moment, the money belongs to the community and should be used in line with the orientations of the budget. We do not have the right to personally, dispose of what we receive for celebrating masses.

The gifts, salaries, pensions, subsidies securities, mass intentions and all we receive from our work, belong to the Congregation (Can. 668.3).

We should avoid confusing two things: mass intentions (in the sense of stipends) and intentions for the Superior General (communion and solidarity). The Spiritan, who says mass for the Superior General's intentions, is not collaborating "financially" with the General Administration. In the case where the Superior General has received "stipends" and wishes to give them to a community or to the General Administration, he says so explicitly. This has nothing to do with the obligation to celebrate for the intentions of the Superior General.