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## Superior General's Message

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# Superior General's Message



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*Il Superiore Generale*

24<sup>th</sup> October 2021

To: Fr. Don McEachin, Provincial Superior, US Province

**Re: Celebration of 150 years of Spiritan Presence and Mission in U.S.A.**

Dear Fr. McEachin,

On behalf of the General Council in Rome, and indeed of the entire Spiritan Congregation worldwide, I offer you and all the members of the Province, both professed and lay, sincerest congratulations on the momentous occasion of the celebration of 150 years of Spiritan presence and mission in the U.S.A.

While the existence of the present US Province officially dates back to 1872, the graduates of the Holy Spirit Seminary in Paris, founded by the Spiritan Congregation, had already made a valuable contribution to the American Church as early as 1794/95 through the arrival in Baltimore of Fr. John Moranvillé, exiled from Guyana, who left a lasting legacy in the archdiocese. His pastoral zeal and creativity in constructing St. Patrick's Church, opening the first parochial school in the city and contributing to the creation of Catholic religious chant was indicative of the missionary spirit and inventiveness that would later become the hallmark of the US Province.

The subsequent story of Spiritan presence and mission in the US, after the Congregation officially accepted an invitation in 1872 from Bishop Toebbe, of Covington, Kentucky, thus fulfilling a desire of Fr. Libermann himself to offer the services of his Society on the American continent, is truly remarkable and gives inspiring witness to the Spiritan charism. While the initial project in Kentucky was short-lived, the first group of Spiritans, led by Fr. Joseph Strub and his companions from Germany, quickly responded to other calls from the local Church, firstly in Ohio and subsequently in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, leading to the erection of the Vice-Province of the USA as early as March, 1874. Immigrant ministry and education, as well as the establishment of local houses of formation, were quickly discerned as the most pressing needs and, with these aims in mind, the Congregation assumed responsibility for the parish of St. Mary's, Sharpsburg, as well as for the vast stretch of land near Conway, Arkansas, donated by the local railroad company in 1878 for the settlement of German immigrants.

1878 also saw the establishment by the Spiritans of the first Catholic school for the children of immigrants in downtown, Pittsburgh, which in 1911 evolved into the College of the Holy Ghost, the first Catholic institute of higher learning in Pennsylvania and reputedly the first American Catholic co-educational college. Duquesne University, as it became later known, gave clear expression to the Spiritan charism from the outset, offering quality education to the disadvantaged and excluded and promoting an inclusive vision of society beyond the boundaries of gender, color or religion. As the pastoral care of immigrants was extended to Wisconsin, Michigan, and Rhode Island, Spiritans in the US also discerned a pressing need to

minister to African-American communities in a prejudiced society and founded numerous African-American parishes, missions and schools in over a dozen States, principally in Louisiana where the Congregation had an unparalleled reputation for its ministry to this marginalized community. The Province would later expand its pastoral and educational outreach in the South and West of the country and establish further houses of formation for the training of future missionaries who would make an equally important contribution to the Church in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Ethiopia and elsewhere. The US Province would also become one of the pioneers in developing a contemporary model for Spiritan Lay Associate membership and make outstanding individual contributions to the fields of missiology, spirituality, peace studies and Congregation history.

Today, the US Province has become a truly international and intercultural Spiritan family that continues to reach out to the excluded and marginalized of our day in the footsteps of those who have gone before. As you honor and celebrate the memory and the achievements of the successive generations of Spiritans and their lay collaborators who have been part of this remarkable story, may you be inspired to continue the legacy they have left you, discerning new horizons for your ministry and outreach to the forgotten and the excluded in contemporary American society, and in the words of Pope Francis, courageously “opening up new areas to God.”

Ad multos annos!

*Alain Mayama, C.S.Sp*

Superior General



Superior General and Council