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Message: Most Rev. Anthony B. Taylor, Little Rock, Arkansas

Anthony B. Taylor

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Office of the Bishop

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August 23, 2021

Very Reverend Jeffrey T. Duaine, C.S.Sp.
Provincial
Congregation of the Holy Spirit
Province of the United States
6230 Brush Run Road
Bethel Park, PA 15102-2214

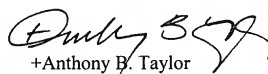
Dear Reverend Duaine:

I am pleased to send greetings and congratulations to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Province of the United States, on the occasion of 150 years of the first organized presence of the Spiritans in the United States! One of the first Spiritan missions in the United States was Sacred Heart Parish in Morrilton, Arkansas. St. Joseph Parish in neighboring Conway was also an early mission of the Congregation. Established in the late 1870s, both parishes were part of a large proposed ethnically-diverse immigrant colony, conceived by Fr. Joseph Strub, C.S.Sp.. Fr. Strub accepted the call for missionary priests by Bishop Edward M. Fitzgerald, a tireless advocate for immigrants to Arkansas. Fr. Strub not only ministered to the needs of the parishioners, he also wrote a guidebook for Catholic immigrants interested in coming to Arkansas! While the physical presence of the Spiritans left these two parishes in 2010, the spiritual impact remains in abundance.

From those ambitious beginnings, the Spiritans later branched out to administer to the needs of the Catholic community in other parts of the state, especially the African American population. In 1914, at the request of Bishop John B. Morris, the Spiritans founded the St. John the Baptist parish in Fort Smith, one of the first churches in the state specifically built for the spiritual needs of the state's Black Catholics. A few years later, the Congregation founded St. Cyprian in Helena, located on the Mississippi River. Although the Spiritans left both of those parishes in the 1960s, they returned in 2010 to the Delta where they continue to serve the communities of Helena, Forrest City, Brinkley, and Marianna, in addition to the Central Arkansas parish of St. Mary's in Hattiesville.

For over 130 years, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit has provided a steady and comforting presence in parishes across the state. The Spiritans' history is intertwined with the history of Arkansas Catholicism. On behalf of the Arkansas faithful, I wish the heartiest of congratulations on your Sesquicentennial!

With hope that God continues to bless your missionary activities, I am,


+Anthony B. Taylor
Bishop of Little Rock



