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Gerald Fitzgerald
Across My Desk

The most rewarding aspect of working in the *Spiritan* magazine office is receiving news from Spiritan sources all around the world on a daily basis. The longer I occupy the position of co-editor of this magazine, the more I come to admire the talents and dedication of our missionaries and their lay coworkers. Every day I get new insights into a group still inspired by the vision of its founders, yet adapting all the time to the changing conditions of the world in which they serve.

Word comes in from our team in Pakistan. Things are tense in Sindh and Rahim Yar Khan, but ministry to the Christians there and to the Untouchables, who together represent the poorest strata of society, continues.

Then word comes from Nairobi where conditions in Mukuru slum were dangerous as inter-tribal violence flared after a disputed election in Kenya. Some Kikuyu women, burned out of their shacks, gathered for safety on Church property. Maybe it was the years of total unbiased service given by the Spiritan missionaries in this massive slum to people of every tribe, to Christians and Muslims alike, that has protected these innocent people.

Then there arrives a letter from our Superior General, John-Paul Hoch. He recognizes that Spiritans no longer come from a single cultural milieu, with shared theological outlook and philosophy of mission. Today the cultures of Spiritans are varied; our ministries are more and more diverse. “How do we safeguard the unity of the Congregation?” he asks. His answer, “By renewing our common vision, the vision of the vocation to which we have been called.” The bonds between us must be strengthened by a shared priority to attract and educate candidates for membership in our group, to share finances, personnel and organizational skills with our younger and newer mission-fields and to live our Rule of Life regardless of age or function. Diverse as we are, we must always remain motivated and driven by the same vision.

Then a copy of *Outlook*, the magazine of the Irish Spiritans, arrived on my desk. In it there is a heart-warming story by Ronan White CSSp from Mozambique. His confrere Fr. Noel CSSp knocked down and killed a local boy in a tragic accident. The parish community accompanied their priest, “o nosso padre”, and the family of the boy in the customary ten-day Macua ritual used only on such tragic occasions. As Ronan writes, “Indeed it is moments such as these that have led me to realize that in the mission relationship, it is really the missionary who is evangelized by the people and not the other way around.”

Fifty-three Spiritan seminarians who have completed their studies for the priesthood in seminaries in Africa, Europe, U.S.A. and Haiti have received their first appointment to mission teams. Friends and benefactors of the Spiritans in Canada have contributed significantly to the costs of their education.

A beautiful bamboo wall-calendar arrived from our Spiritans in Taiwan/Vietnam to celebrate the tenth anniversary of our foundation there.

News of the deaths of two legendary Spiritans arrived. The brief obituaries of Fr. Lucien Deiss CSSp and Fr. Adrian Van Kaam CSSp in this issue of *Spiritan* do little justice to their wonderful careers.

Growth, death, new life, all mark the Spiritans at the beginning of their third century of existence. It is exciting to be able to be part of this ever-changing movement of evangelization and to help chronicle some aspects of it.

Gerald FitzGerald CSSp