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# From Ginkgo Biloba to the Almond Tree in Blossom: Spiritan Spirituality in Portugal



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*Peace in the Catholic Church's Interventions, 1989–2002 (2012); Lusofonias—From Rome to the World (2020); and The Mission to Serve II—From Rome (2022).*

## INTRODUCTION

CARDINAL TOLENTINO MENDONÇA, in the retreat he preached to Pope Francis and the Roman Curia in Lent 2018, said in his fifth sermon on "Jesus's thirst":

In his commentary on the Gospel of St John, Francis Libermann writes: "he calls those who thirst and he is himself parched with thirst. The difference is that those he calls are thirsting to drink from his fountains of grace... Jesus, on the contrary, thirsts to give to drink through the super-abundance of his love."<sup>1</sup>

This is one of the sources from which the spirituality of the Portuguese Spiritans in the twentieth century drank to its fullest. Fr. Francis Libermann (1802–1852) was the second Founder of the Congregation and the one who gave it the missionary thrust *Ad gentes*, forming and sending many Fathers and Brothers to Africa and the Caribbean.

The original source is Father Claude Francis Poullart des Places (1679-1709) who founded the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in Paris in 1703. From these

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1. José Tolentino Mendonça, *Elogio da sede* (Lisbon, Quetzal, 2018), 82. English Translation: *Jesus through Jewish Eyes: A Spiritual Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Part II; translated by Myles Fay; Dublin: Paraclete Press, 1999), 125.

two sources much missionary sap has flowed and it is impossible to understand Spiritans today without knowing the charism of their founders and the inspirational force of their already long history of mission.

Poullart des Places left few writings, but much has been written about him. The most emblematic sentence from his pen served as the theme for the jubilee celebrations of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation, celebrated in 2003: "I am determined to follow the path that you will show me."<sup>2</sup> The Lusophone magazine, *Spiritans Mission*, published a double issue on him in 2009/2010.<sup>3</sup>

The society he founded prospered until it suffered the setbacks of the revolutions and political and social instability which marked France towards the end of the eighteenth century. When Francis Libermann came on the scene, the Spiritans were in a deep crisis. Libermann, together with Eugene Tisserant and Frederick Le Vasseur (both of whom were from French colonies) had established the Work of the Blacks (1840), which would culminate in the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary (1841). It would merge with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in 1848. Libermann became the first superior general after the merger. He would be the one to give the missionary dimension to the new family born out of this merger of two religious families.

Unlike Poullart des Places, Libermann wrote a great deal. Let us say his Complete Works are the *Notes and Documents* which bring together his entire life's writings (8,614 pages in XIII Volumes).<sup>4</sup> Libermann focused the mission of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit on the liberation of slaves and the evangelization of Africa and the Caribbean. "Become Negro with the Negroes" is one of the guidelines Libermann gave to missionaries sent to Africa. It became the most emblematic statement of Spiritan spirituality and led to a spirit of inculturation. In the Preface to the work of Paul Coulon and Paul Brasseur, Léopold Senghor, Senegalese intellectual and politician, said that he was the son of Libermann and the Spiritans who came to evangelize his homeland. He emphasized the importance of the expression, "Become Negro with the Negroes." A former

2. Claude François Poullart des Places, *Écrits* (Rome: Spiritan Center, 1988), 41.

3. Various authors, Cláudio Poullart des Places 1709-2009, *Escritos, Estudos, Testemunhos*, Revista Missão Espiritana, 16–17 (2019/2010).

4. *Notes et Documents, relatifs à la vie et à l'œuvre du Vénérable François Libermann (1802-1852)* (XIII Volumes; Paris: Maison Mère, 1929-1941). Henceforth *ND*. Many theses and articles have been published, especially, Paul Coulon, Paule Brasseur, *Libermann 1802–1852, une pensée et une mystique missionnaires* (Paris, Cerf, 1988).

pupil of the Spiritans in Senegal, Leopold Senghor, wrote that "the thought and mystique of Father Francis Libermann helped me a great deal, not only in my life as a Christian, but also in my life as a black African intellectual and writer."<sup>5</sup>

The Holy Spirit is essential to Spiritan spirituality. But equally important is the place attributed to Mary. The foundation of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit by Claude Poullart des Places and his eleven companions, took place in Paris on May 27, 1703 in front of the image of Our Lady of Good Success. And the foundation of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary, with Libermann, Tisserant and Le Vavas seur, took place on the September 25, 1841, also in Paris, before the image of Our Lady of Victories.

Their followers have inherited the same convictions and missionary commitment to this day.

### THE SPIRITAN PROJECT IN PORTUGAL

Let us jump back a few years to 1866. The first Spiritans arrived in Angola, a former Portuguese colony disputed by other European powers of the time. The local authorities were afraid that other interested parties might follow in the wake of the French missionaries. The news reached the Mother House in Paris that Angola needed and wanted Spiritans, but they must be Portuguese in order to avoid mistrust and political ambiguities.<sup>6</sup> Faced with this scenario, the superior general decided to found a Seminary in Portugal to form missionaries with the sole purpose of going to Angola. This is how it came about: the Spiritans established a residence in Santarem in 1867. This is the official date of the beginning of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in Portugal.

Then the Republican Revolution took place in 1910. This led to the confiscation and nationalization of all the goods of the church and the imprisonment and expulsion of all Spiritans. Some of them fled to France to join their French confreres, others disguised themselves and went to live with relatives in their home villages. A great page was turned in the history of Spiritan spirituality and mission. During these ten years of clandestinity and exile, Fr. José Maria Antunes fought with every means possible to obtain permission from the republican government for the Spiritans to return to Portugal. He is "the face of

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5. Leopold Senghor, Préface, in Coulon-Brasseur, *Libermann 1802–1852*, 9–11, here 9.

6. Tony Neves, «Espiritanos em Angola, 150 anos (1866-2016). O papel dos Espiritanos de Portugal,» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 28-29 (2018), 23-36, here 23.

the refoundation.”<sup>7</sup> Finally, and officially, on February 2, 1921, the canonical establishment of the Portuguese Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit took place.

This investigation will therefore focus on the period between 1921 and 2003. Two important dates: the first refers to the return of the Spiritans to Portugal, after the Republican Revolution; the second marks the celebration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation, a jubilee which prompted us to revisit the sources of our charism and our history, thereby helping us to rediscover the essential features of Spiritan spirituality in twentieth century Portugal.

Fr. José Manuel Sabença (1960–2016), Provincial of the Spiritans in Portugal (2003–2012) and Assistant General in Rome (2012–2016), presented the history of the Congregation in Portugal as a tree shaken by the wind, thanks to which it was forced to put down strong roots in order to survive. He referred especially to the critical period between 1910 and 1921, when the Congregation was suppressed after the Republican Revolution: “The little tree did not die. It grew stronger. After a decade, it blossomed into a new spring.”<sup>8</sup> But this shake-up would be repeated, in a different way and with a different impact, after the Second Vatican Council and the Revolution of April 25, 1974.

On the commemoration of the 150th-anniversary of the arrival of the Spiritans in Portugal, Fr. Pedro Fernandes (Provincial elected in 2018) presented the main features of this Spiritan missionary project:

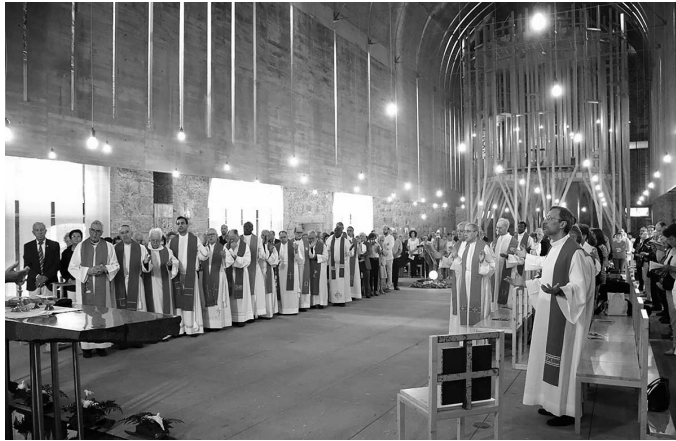
1. The service of the mission *Ad gentes* (first in Angola, then in various countries of the world);
2. The commitment to young people (in seminaries, schools, parishes, missionary animation, Youth Without Borders);
3. Openness to the laity, with particular relevance for the work with LIAM (since 1937) and, later on, with other Movements, leading to the Spiritan Fraternities and the Spiritan Lay Associates;
4. Insertion in the local church, first through educational institutions, then through parish and missionary animation;
5. Contribution to culture and science, through the search for excellence;

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7. Casimiro Oliveira, «P. José Maria Antunes. O rosto da refundação,» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 30 (2021), 119.

8. José Manuel Sabença, «Prefácio. A aventura da semente espiritana», in Adélio Torres Neiva, *História da Província (1867–2004)* (Lisbon: Congregation of the Holy Spirit and Immaculate Heart of Mary, 2003), 7.

6. Social involvement and theological innovation, with figures like Frs. Joaquim Alves Correia (one of the fathers of Portuguese democracy), António Brásio and Adélio Torres Neiva (History), José Maria Antunes (Botany), Francisco Lopes (who introduced the Legion of Mary in Portugal), José Lapa (who introduced Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Portugal);
7. Option for the very poor and simplicity in our way of relating to others, showing itself in a simple life style and closeness to the poor, in the pastoral dedication to the most fragile and in the pastoral closeness to people in the humblest communities.<sup>9</sup>



Pentecost at Braga: 150 Years Celebration, June 13, 2017

## MISSION "OUT THERE," ON THE PERIPHERIES AND MARGINS

For the Spiritans, mission is the essence of their charism. Their *Rule of Life* states

The evangelization of the “poor” (cf. Luke 4:18) is our purpose (cf. N.D. XIII, 170). Therefore, we go especially to peoples, groups and individuals who have not yet heard of the message of the Gospel or who have scarcely heard it, to those whose needs are greatest, and to the oppressed (cf. N.D. II, 241). We also willingly accept tasks for which the Church has difficulty

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9. Pedro Fernandes, «Alegres na Esperança. 150 anos a interpretar a identidade Espiritana,» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 28–29 (2018), 105–121, here 110–115.

in finding workers.<sup>10</sup>

For the Portuguese Spiritans, the path was clear: directly to Angola! The major objective was also defined from the beginning: to be at the service of the local church and to help it establish structures. Thus, "the formation of the Angolan clergy is, without doubt, the jewel in the crown of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit."<sup>11</sup> Mgr. Belmiro Chissengueti, Bishop of Cabinda (and former Provincial of the Spiritans in Angola) praised the Spiritans' missionary method, based on responsibility and accountability, which focused on the formation of clergy and lay leaders, helping to build Christian families and committed communities. "This allowed the foundations to be laid for a church which survived the forced departure of many missionaries due to the armed conflicts which have devastated Angola and many other African countries."<sup>12</sup>

After the Missionary Agreement, which followed the 1940 Concordat, Faustino Moreira dos Santos, a Spiritan missionary working in Angola, was appointed Bishop of Cape Verde. With him, three more Portuguese Spiritans would arrive in these islands. Thus began a new missionary front in 1941. The evangelization of the islands of Santiago, Maio, and Boavista was entrusted to the Congregation.<sup>13</sup>

D. Agostinho de Moura is considered the founder of the Spanish Province, in 1953, one of the daughters of the Portuguese province. The first Provincial was Fr. Joaquim Ramos Seixas, appointed in 1969.<sup>14</sup>

Portuguese Spiritans were also part of the founding teams for the Congregation's missionary presence in Guinea-Bissau (1980), in S. Tomé and Príncipe (1985), and in Mozambique (1996). The presence of two Portuguese Spiritans in the first Mixed Missionary Team (two priests and three lay people) sent to the Guaraní interior of Paraguay in 1976 is also worth noting. In recent years, Portuguese Spiritans have been sent to Brazil (including Amazonia), Mexico, Puerto Rico, Bolivia, Guinea Conakry, South Africa, and Taiwan. Other Spiritans have accompanied Portuguese communities in the USA, Canada, France, and Germany.<sup>15</sup>

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10. *Spiritans Rule of Life* (Rome, 2013 Edition), no. 4.

11. Neiva, *História da Província Portuguesa*, 765.

12. Belmiro Chissengueti, «Missão em África,» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 28-29 (2018), 194-196, here 194.

13. Neiva, *História da Província Portuguesa*, 769-776.

14. Neiva, *História da Província Portuguesa*, 899-904.

15. Neiva, *História da Província Portuguesa*, 777-808.

Many Spiritans have lived and are living in high-risk situations. Seven lost their lives in Angola due to violence. Several others were kidnapped or were victims of attacks, ambushes, robberies and landmines.<sup>16</sup>

#### DEEPENING OUR SPIRITUALITY AND SHARING IT

Adélio Neiva maintains that "the spirituality of an institution is the sum total of various components: an original inspiration, the historical path followed by the institution, the influence of the contexts in which it is lived out, the ecclesiastical framework, the currents of thought, the surrounding culture, etc."<sup>17</sup>

Spiritans in Portugal have been committed, from early on, to training and education. Their colleges and seminaries were centers for radiating culture and knowledge. In a research project on education in the seminaries of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, coordinated by the historian António Luís Pinto da Costa, he reaches the conclusion that few of the young men became professed Fathers and Brothers, but many received a thorough training enabling them to become competent in the professions they embraced and well committed to the family and social life they established.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the Spiritans have invested in integral education, both in their seminaries and colleges and in their pastoral missionary work. They have invested in quality. This is evident in the need they have felt always to keep up to date as they reflect, write, and disseminate missionary spirituality.

Decisive for the deepening and dissemination of Spiritan spirituality was the creation of the magazine *Spiritan Mission* in 2002, which is a "Magazine of the Portuguese-speaking Spiritan Circumscriptions," that is, involving Portugal, Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde and Mozambique, as well as the Spiritan Sisters. For this reason it has become one of my bibliographical sources *par excellence* for this research. Aristides Neiva, author of the text of the Album of the 150 years of the Spiritan Mission in Portugal, says that it was "within this missionary animation effort that instruments of diffusion were created, some of which re-

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16. Neves, *Missão de alto risco, in Portugal Católico. A beleza da diversidade* (Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 2017), 684–686.

17. Neiva, *História da Província Portuguesa*, 737.

18. António Luís Pinto Da Costa, *Levados por um sonho. Vida quotidiana e educação nos Seminários Espiritanos Portugueses 1919–1984* (Braga: Uniases, 2012).



main until today.”<sup>19</sup>

Two Colloquia stand out in the reflection on Spiritan spirituality and mission in Portugal. The first, which was held at the Seminary of Torre d’Aguilha, Cascais, from June 7th to 9th, 2002, had as its theme: "Mission in an uncertain World." It was organized within the framework of the commemorations for the Jubilee of the 300 years since the foundation of the Congregation. The Minutes were published in the recently created magazine, *Spiritan Mission*.<sup>20</sup> Alfredo Teixeira, sociologist and theologian, a member of the organization, writes in the Editorial:

Thinking about mission in a context in which the factors of social uprooting and cultural relativization are multiplying is certainly a challenging task. The Spiritans, in celebrating the 300 years of their foundation, have chosen not to dwell simply on the past or on evoking their heroes, but have decided to face the challenge of reflecting on the present conditions of the mission, in a world which is experienced as full of uncertainties.<sup>21</sup>

The commitment to more training and education of a high quality in all areas of missionary activity is the hallmark of the Spiritan missionary spirituality.

#### A STORY OF SHARED MISSION

The charisms of Institutes of Consecrated Life are not the exclusive property of their professed members: they are the church's. Thus, all those who identify with and are attracted by a particular charism have the right to share it. It is because of this conviction that an increasing number of lay people now share the spirituality and mission of the Spiritans.

The Father Alves Correia Center (CEPAC) was founded in 1992 to support immigrants and, in 1993, the NGO Sun Without Borders (*Sol Sem Fronteiras* or SOLSEF in Portuguese) to establish, coordinate, and accompany development and solidarity projects.

The connection with the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit, who share a common Spiritan spirituality and mission, has always been important, as Sister

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19. Aristides Neiva, *Missionários do Espírito Santo, 150 anos de Missão (1867–2017)*, Álbum Jubilar (Lisbon: Liam, 2017), 12.

20. *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 2 (2002).

21. Alfredo Teixeira, «Editorial. Um mundo incerto: desenraizamento e relativização cultural,» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 2 (2002), 6.

Ana Cândida explains:

The missionary spirituality that Libermann outlined for his Congregation is what Eugénie Caps wanted and adopted for her young Congregation. They are two distinct Missionary Congregations, but nourished by the same sap. [...] The same charism identifies them; the same spirituality nourishes them.<sup>22</sup>

The provincial chapter of the Spiritans, which took place in 1990, decided to create the Center of the Holy Spirit and Mission (CESM) in order to help lay people deepen their understanding and practice of the Spiritan charism. The Director of CESM, Fr. Eduardo Ferreira, presents the history of the relationship between the Laity and Religious Institutes with regard to the sharing of charism and spirituality. He concludes: "As members of a church which goes out to others, the Spirit inspires lay people to live out their Christian vocation and to cross borders, sharing the charism, spirituality, and mission of a particular Institute."<sup>23</sup>

Pedro Valinho Gomes, a layman who has drunk (and still drinks) from the Spiritan fountain, states that: "There is a church which takes on the Spiritan style: the radical option for the poorest of the poor; the Gospel incarnated in the real life of the world in order to transform it by a commitment to justice and peace; community as joyful sharing of life and faith; ministry understood as service in simplicity."<sup>24</sup>

After many years in our houses of formation, a novitiate and a formative and pastoral experience in Kenya, Pedro Valinho mentions other values which he discovered in Spiritan spirituality and mission:

The audacity to row against the current and to be fully committed to the world even though one is not of this world; the simplicity of a self-effacing mission. There are many in Portugal who share this spirit of self-effacement, either because they belong to an ecclesial movement linked to the Congregation, or because they have done voluntary service in one of its missions, or because they have attended seminars, or because they ded-

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22. Ana Candida, «Irmãs Missionárias do Espírito Santo em Portugal. Sua relação com os Missionários do Espírito Santo,» *Revista Missão Espiritana* 30 (2021), 207.

23. Eduardo Miranda Ferreira, «Missão partilhada: Religiosos e Leigos juntos pela Missão,» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 28-29 (2018), 186-194, here 193.

24. Pedro Gomes Valinho, «Têm os Missionários Espiritanos algo a dizer aos Leigos Portugueses,» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 30 (2021), 109.

icate themselves to work, as one in heart and soul with the Spiritans, in their mission, or because, in one way or another, they have been touched by this self-effacing way of being church.<sup>25</sup>

Spiritana missionary animation is based on Lay Movements and their dynamics. All these have already been mentioned, but I would like to add a brief description of each of them. The Lay Associates make a written commitment to the Congregation which entrusts them with a specific mission. The Fraternities are groups of lay people who reflect and pray according to Spiritana Spirituality. LIAM (League for Intensifying Missionary Action) is a missionary Movement with the purpose of involving adults in the mission. It is the oldest in Portugal, having been a precursor of the Second Vatican Council concerning the mission of the laity. It has dozens of parish groups, spread throughout mainland Portugal and the Islands. Since the very beginning, it has formed, informed, campaigned, stimulated, awakened and even carried out some missions in Africa. MOMIP (Missionary Teachers' Movement) is dedicated to the missionary animation of school teachers and students. The ASES (Former Students of the Holy Spirit Seminaries) since 1958, brings together those who have passed through Spiritana seminaries and have been marked by this experience, which they want to share and deepen. They publish the bulletin UNIASES. The organization, Youth Without Borders, is committed to mission in Portugal (they have held ninety-nine Missionary Weeks up to 2020) and abroad (they have "built" thirty Bridges, that is, missionary experiences with groups of young people during the summer holidays).<sup>26</sup> Missionary Volunteering has already sent thirty-three lay people abroad on missions lasting at least one year.<sup>27</sup> CEPAC (Father Alves Correia Center) accompanies and supports immigrants, especially the undocumented, from its headquarters in Lisbon. The Chaplaincy of Africans in Lisbon accompanies immigrants in their neighbourhoods. SOLSEF (Sun Without Borders) has launched, monitored, helped finance and evaluated dozens of development and solidarity projects, mainly in Portuguese-speaking Africa and Latin America.

Pedro Quintans, with an experience similar to that of Pedro Valinho, presents the portrait of the Spiritana family in its lay version and concludes:

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25. Valinho, "Tem os Missionários Espiritanos," 110.

26. Salomé Peixoto, «Ao perto e ao longe somos Igreja: Jovens Sem Fronteiras,» *Revista Missão Espiritana* 30 (2021), 185-192.

27. Ernestina Falção, «Voluntariado Missionário,» *Revista Missão Espiritana* 30 (2021), 193-202.

In this short review of all that the Holy Spirit has brought to the church through the Spiritans in Portugal, it is clear that there is a need for missionaries with a flare and and thirst for the future. Restless men, consumed by zeal to build the Kingdom, rooted in prayer and in the spirituality of Libermann and Claude Poullart des Places, themselves laymen in their own time and creators of the two Congregations which would later merge.<sup>28</sup>

## JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

The Spiritan mission is based on these great evangelical values. It is enough to look at the radical document, the *Rule of Life*, to realize this.

Our purpose is the evangelisation of the “poor” (cf. Luke 4). Therefore, we go especially to peoples, groups and individuals who have not yet heard the message of the Gospel or who have scarcely heard it, to those whose needs are the greatest and to the oppressed.<sup>29</sup>

Further on: "We are participating within the church in the mission of Christ, proclaiming a salvation that is a gift from God, liberation from all that oppresses people,"<sup>30</sup> and "We give preference [...] to the oppressed and most disadvantaged as a group or as individuals."<sup>31</sup> In the following number, it says:

We count the following as constitutive parts of our mission of evangelization: the "integral liberation" of man, action for justice and peace, and participation in development. It follows that we must make ourselves "the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them."<sup>32</sup>

Later, it says, "We consider the following to be especially important tasks for our times: work with refugees, with immigrants and with those who are on the margins of society."<sup>33</sup>

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28. Pedro Quintans, «Os Espiritanos e os Leigos. Percursos e futuro», *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 30 (2021), 113.

29. *Spiritan Rule of Life* (Roma, 2013). Henceforth SRL 4.

30. SRL 11.

31. SRL 12.

32. SRL 14.

33. SRL 18.1.

The expression "Justice and Peace," in the Portuguese Spiritan documents, is mentioned in the provincial guidelines for the three-year period, 1988–1991. The fifth point reads: "greater sensitivity to the dimension of justice and peace."<sup>34</sup>

The last two great documents of the Congregation came out of the Chapters. The Twentieth General Chapter took place in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, in 2012,<sup>35</sup> where the option for the poorest of the poor was strengthened:

While continuing to recognize the potential and real benefits of ongoing globalization, we are aware that this phenomenon, unfortunately, has also contributed to the emergence of new forms of poverty. Concretely, among these who are 'poor' today are young people in difficulty, migrants and human groups that are discriminated against and oppressed and people marginalized by the phenomenon of globalization.<sup>36</sup>

Bagamoyo is symbolic of the trafficking of black slaves that lasted for centuries. But it is also a symbol of their liberation by the first Spiritan missionaries who came to evangelize East Africa. For these two reasons, the Spiritans gathered there in General Chapter in 2012 decided: "We reaffirm with conviction our mission to witness in word and deed to the Gospel of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation, with renewed attention to education as a means of integral liberation of the persons and peoples to whom we are sent."<sup>37</sup> The Chapter pledged: "We feel a call to radically renew our commitment to our vows and our option for the poor. Education as a means of liberation, JPIC and interreligious dialogue cut across all dimensions of our identity."<sup>38</sup>

As for Portugal, the last official word is that of the Provincial Chapter<sup>39</sup> held in 2018. The entirety of chapter seven of the Global Mission Project approved there is on "Justice and Peace. A Common Home." A decision was made and put into writing: "At the request of the General Chapters of Maynooth (2.17) and Torre da Aguilha (3.2), the Portuguese Province elaborated its JPIC plan in the

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34. José Castro Oliveira, «Memória agradecida. A história tem um coração que bate connosco,» *Revista Missão Espiritana* 28-29 (2018), 61-64, here 62.

35. Congregation of the Holy Spirit, *Documents of the Twentieth General Chapter, Bagamoyo 2012* (Roma: the Generalate, 2012). Like the Spiritan Rule of Life, this chapter document is organized in numbers. Henceforth *Bagamoyo*.

36. *Bagamoyo* 1.3.

37. *Bagamoyo* 1.4.

38. *Bagamoyo* 2.5.

39. Capítulo Provincial de Portugal, Documentos Capitulares 2018. Projeto Missionário Global, (Lisbon: Spiritans, 2018). Henceforth *PMG* 1.

Chapter of 2006 and in it the following dimensions are listed: ecology, prison ministry, health ministry, refugees, ethnic minorities, sustainable development, human rights and networking with other institutions."<sup>40</sup>

Moving from texts to commitments, it makes sense to begin by citing the example of Fr. Joaquim Alves Correia, CSSp (1886–1951). Fr. Francisco Lopes, CSSp studied his life,<sup>41</sup> after having "forced" public figures, such as D. António Ferreira Gomes, President Mário Soares, Frei Bento Domingues and Professor Braga da Cruz, to speak publicly about him. The latter, Emeritus Rector of the Portuguese Catholic University, wrote: "Fr. Joaquim Alves Correia is rightly, and without exaggeration, one of the fathers of the Portuguese democracy in which we now live."<sup>42</sup> Anselmo Borges, professor of Philosophy at the University of Coimbra, considers him "the most dignified and far-sighted personality of Portuguese Catholicism of the first half of the twentieth century."<sup>43</sup> Bishop António Ferreira Gomes, former bishop of Porto, considered him "an authentic forerunner of the Second Vatican Council."<sup>44</sup> In summary:

He confronted the regime of Dr. Oliveira Salazar with multiple interventions in books and newspaper articles, challenging the lack of free speech and the poverty in which the country was steeped. He paid a high price, as he was exiled to the USA (1947) where he died and was buried (1951). "Of what Spirit are we?" and "The Largeness of the Kingdom of God" are his best known and most prophetic works."<sup>45</sup>

President Mário Soares awarded him, posthumously (April 25, 1990), the decoration of Grand Officer of the Order of Liberty. A street in Lisbon was named after him and there is a statue of him in his hometown, Aguiar de Sousa, Paredes. The Spiritans gave his name to the Center that welcomes and supports immigrants in Lisbon (CEPAC).

Attention to groups that tended to be excluded led the Spiritans to work in solidarity with Cape Verdean immigrants who arrived in Lisbon after the

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40. *PMG* 985.

41. Francisco Lopes, *P. Joaquim Alves Correia (1886-1951). Ao serviço do Evangelho e da Democracia* (Lisbon: Rei dos Livros, 1996).

42. Manuel Braga da Cruz, Prefácio, in Lopes, *P. Joaquim Alves Correia*, 13.

43. Anselmo Borges, ed., and Joaquim Alves Correia, *Cristianismo e revolução* (Lisbon: Sá da Costa, 1977), ix.

44. Borges, *Cristianismo e revolução*, 3.

45. Neves, «150 anos de Missão sem fronteiras,» *Revista Missão Espiritana* 28-29 (2018), 126-149, here 133.

prolonged droughts and consequent famine which afflicted the archipelago between 1965 and 1970. Fr. José Vaz would go to the airport to meet some of them, find them shelter, food and work and help them send money to their families in Cape Verde. He also provided pastoral care. This resulted in the establishment of the African Chaplaincy in Lisbon, a pastoral project still today run by Spiritan missionaries and now extended to immigrants from other African countries.<sup>46</sup>

The 1990s was the decade in which the largest number of immigrants came to Portugal. Many arrived without documents while others let the validity of their papers expire. The Spiritans began to provide support to some of them, but soon realized that this work required structures, means, and professionalism. This gave birth to the Father Alves Correia Center (CEPAC), by decision of the Spiritan provincial council on March 26, 1992. The Patriarch of Lisbon, Mgr. José Policarpo, approved the Statutes on October 9 of the same year. On July 17, 1993, the declaration of registration by the General Direction of Social Action was published in the Official Gazette. In this way, all the legal requirements for skilled support to immigrants were met, with services established at the headquarters (Estrela—Lisbon) and in many of the neighborhoods where immigrants live, mainly in the outskirts of the capital.<sup>47</sup> This Private Institution of Social Solidarity (IPSS) tries to find solutions to the many problems that victimize immigrants, adjusting its work to the demands of the times. Aristides Neiva sums it up like this: "It is a Spiritan undertaking that supports immigrants in the areas of health, literacy, employment, training, documentation, clothing and food."<sup>48</sup>

#### OFFICIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The twentieth century was a golden one for Spiritans in Portugal. They started it fearful of the consequences of an anticlerical republican revolution which was already looming on the horizon. Their worst expectations were confirmed and, with the revolution of 1910, Congregations of religious were abolished and their goods confiscated. Spiritans were expelled from their religious houses, some were imprisoned and others took refuge in villages or fled to France, the mother country of the Congregation. These were ten long years of trampling on a missionary

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46. Neiva, *História da Província Portuguesa*, 887-890.

47. Neiva, *História da Província Portuguesa*, 877-885.

48. Aristides Neiva, *Missionários do Espírito Santo*, 13.

past which had sent out dozens of Fathers and Brothers to Angola and which, in continental Portugal, had founded Colleges and Houses of Formation. But with the restoration of the Portuguese Spiritan Province in 1921, the Congregation quickly got back on its feet, built several seminaries and sent out hundreds of missionaries, especially to Angola.

Miguel Torga (1907–1995) visited Angola in 1973, almost on the eve of the independence of this former colony. A great name in Portuguese literature and a confirmed agnostic, he was deeply touched by what he found in the famous cemetery of the Mission of Huila (Lubango). He wrote in his *Diary XII*, on May 27:

After seeing the magnificent massif of Chela and the awesome abyss of Tundavala, I experienced a rather different emotion on visiting the cemetery of the Catholic mission of Huila. "Here lies ... here lies ... here lies ... Names of all nationalities, Portuguese, Belgian, French, German, inscribed side by side on humble identical slabs, followed by a tragic inscription: deceased at the age of twenty-four, at forty-five, at thirty-two... Names of men who came to face a certain and premature death for the sake of God and neighbour. All because of their faith, hope, and charity."<sup>49</sup>

Thanks to their contribution to the study of history, Fathers António Brásio (1906–1985) and Adélio Torres Neiva (1932–2010) were made members of the Portuguese Academy of History. But the most outstanding Spiritan figure in the twentieth century was Fr. Joaquim Alves Correia (1886–1951), celebrated both within and outside the church, as we have already mentioned.

The end of the twentieth century was marked by the preparations for the 300<sup>th</sup>-anniversary of the Congregation (1703-2003). Pope John Paul II paid tribute to this jubilee with a Message which he entitled: "Concern for the Poor and the Proclamation of the Gospel."<sup>50</sup> After evoking the option for the very poor made by the founders, the Pope praised:

The great work that your Congregation has carried out for three centuries, especially in the field of evangelization in Africa, the West Indies, and South America, urging you to remain faithful to the double heritage

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49. Miguel Torga, *Diário*, Publicações Dom Quixote (Vols IX-XVI, 1964-1993; 2nd edition, 1999), 1251-1252.

50. John Paul II, «Mensagem 'A atenção dos pobres e o anúncio do Evangelho' (20.05.2002),» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 2/4 (2003), 125-127.



of your founders: attention to the poor and to all people who are socially needy or disadvantaged, and missionary service, that is, the proclamation of the Good News of Christ to all, especially to those who have not yet welcomed the message of the Gospel.<sup>51</sup>

That is a summary of the essential elements of Spiritan spirituality. The Pope also insisted on the centrality of the consecration to the Holy Spirit, the protagonist of mission. John Paul II also mentions another strong point of the Spiritan mission: the formation of priests and other pastoral agents of the local churches. Finally, he mentions the importance which the Immaculate Heart of Mary has in Spiritan spirituality.<sup>52</sup>

The 300th-anniversary was also the occasion for the Portuguese Episcopal Conference (CEP) to write a Pastoral Note, entitled "Put out into the deep with the power of the Spirit."<sup>53</sup> The Bishops said:

The Church in Portugal and in Portuguese society as a whole, which for over a hundred years has benefited from the abundance of [the Congregation's] work, cannot remain as simple observers of the celebration of this anniversary [...] The Bishops underline how up-to-date their charism is and encourage them to continue consecrating their lives to proclaiming the Gospel and to working for the human development of those who are most disadvantaged.<sup>54</sup>

They describe Spiritan spirituality and mission as springing from profound intuitions: "Man as the way to mission; mission as an encounter of cultures; the foundation of local churches."<sup>55</sup> The Portuguese Episcopal Conference also mentions various names and movements, as well as the lands where the Portuguese Spiritans have exercised or still exercise their mission. It praises their "presence which has been particularly active in missionary animation, in the press, in pastoral assistance to African immigrants, in the field of justice and peace and in the promotion, sharing and renewal of missionary spirituality in our country."<sup>56</sup>

If 2003 was the 300<sup>th</sup>-anniversary year, 2017 was the time to commemorate

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51. John Paul II, "Mensagem," 126.

52. John Paul II, "Mensagem," 127.

53. Portuguese Episcopal Conference (CEP), «Fazer-se ao largo, com a força do Espírito (08.05.2003)», *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 2 (2003), 128-130.

54. CEP, «Fazer-se ao largo," 128.

55. CEP, «Fazer-se ao largo," 129.

56. CEP, «Fazer-se ao largo," 130.

the 150<sup>th</sup>-anniversary of the arrival of the Spiritans in Portugal. On this occasion, the Bishops of Portugal once again wrote a Pastoral Note.<sup>57</sup> They spoke of the Spiritan mission, particularly as carried out in the twentieth century, projecting it into the new millennium that had just begun. It spoke of how Angola was the priority until 1974. It mentioned the difficulties caused by the revolution of 1910 and, later, the civil war in Angola after independence in 1975. They recalled with gratitude the insertion of the Spiritans in the local church, through their activity in parishes, and, above all, through the movements founded by them to promote missionary awareness and give witness to the universality of the church and the rich contribution to the local churches of the meeting of peoples and cultures.<sup>58</sup> Finally, the Bishops asked the Spiritans in Portugal for special help:

We count on your contribution to make concrete what we proposed in the Pastoral Letter "Do to others as I have done to you" of 2010: that our Church in Portugal may have a missionary face, in open, fraternal communities and always moving forward, in mission from heart to heart, following in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd.<sup>59</sup>

The 150 years since the arrival of the Spiritans in Portugal also received a Congratulatory Vote from the Assembly of the Republic.<sup>60</sup> The text of the Vote states:

The Spiritans have contributed to culture in Portuguese society, especially with works published in the fields of history, ethnology, linguistics, anthropology, theology and missionary pastoral work. Examples of this are Fathers António Brásio and Adélio Torres Neiva, both members of the Portuguese Academy of History, and Joaquim Alves Correia, considered one of the fathers of Portuguese democracy, who was a man of culture, freedom, and the option for the poor, and who died in exile in the USA.<sup>61</sup>

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57. CEP, «Missão sem fronteiras. Nota Pastoral sobre os Missionários do Espírito Santo nos 150 anos da sua presença em Portugal (10.11.2016),» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 28-29 (2018), 219-222.

58. CEP, «Missão sem fronteiras,» 220-221.

59. CEP, «Missão sem fronteiras,» 222.

60. Assembly of the Portuguese Republic, «Voto de Congratulação nº 411/XIII (12.10.2017),» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 28-29 (2018), 224.

61. *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 28-29 (2018), 224.

The year 2021 was the centenary of the Restoration [of religious orders] after the Republican Revolution—yet one more occasion to recall Spiritan spirituality and mission.

FROM *GINKGO BILOBA* TO THE ALMOND BLOSSOM

In times of integral ecology, the Spiritans have borrowed two symbols from nature to mark significant dates. They are the hallmarks of a spirituality which, in Portugal, has already been put into practice, deepened and shared for more than 150 years. In 2017, the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit celebrated the Jubilee of the 150<sup>th</sup>-anniversary of their arrival in Portugal. The symbol chosen was the Ginkgo biloba, better known as the Japanese walnut tree. It is a tree that has survived for millions of years, and so serves as a symbol of the longevity of our Spiritan life and mission. It is also the botanical icon of peace and hope, having survived the atomic bombs in Japan. The Almond Flower takes us far back into the history of the Bible. The biblical scholar, D. António Couto, drew attention to its importance when he chose it as his episcopal motto. The prophet Jeremiah, living in a very difficult context, was tested by God on his ability to face difficulties and look to a bright future with hope. When God asked him to describe what he saw around him, in the winter time in Israel, he managed to catch a glimpse of the only sign of joy and of a future: the flowering branch of the almond tree, the only tree that blooms there in winter. God told him: “You have seen well” (Jer 1:12). This way of looking to the future with hope, despite all the difficulties, marked the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Restoration of the Portuguese Province of the Spiritans (1921–2021).

Pedro Fernandes, provincial of the Spiritans since 2018, summarized the main axes of Spiritan spirituality and mission in Portugal:

Mission of proximity, by giving importance to being with people, sharing their situations, challenges and missionary calls; mission of dialogue and hospitality, by valuing cultures, differences and the way God speaks to us today through other people.<sup>62</sup>

This theologian, with missionary experience in Guinea-Bissau and

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62. Pedro Fernandes, «Modelos de Missão num século de transformações: o caminho Espiritano,» *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 30 (2021), 27-53.

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Mozambique, adds: "Mission of proclamation and clarity about what we believe, following Christ in an unequivocal and radical way, giving a clear witness as we proclaim the salvation that only He can offer."<sup>63</sup>

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63. *Revista Missão Espiritana*, 30 (2021), 27-53..