

Fall 10-1-2023

## Introduction

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**I**t was 175 years ago that the followers of Claude Poullart des Places and the members of the new missionary society led by Francis Libermann united in one collaborative response to address the needs of Catholic mission in their time. They met the challenge to “do something new” in 1848 leaving the familiar aside and forging new paths under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. 173 years later, General Chapter XXI, Bagamoyo II, (held during the Covid-19 pandemic from 3 to 24 October 2021) calls on Spiritans today to “do something new” in mission relevant to the signs of our times. *Spiritans Horizons* 2023, takes up the chapter’s theme and explores aspects of the “new scenario” and “new beginning” Fr. Alain Mayama, newly elected superior general, called for in his Pentecost letter, 2023.

**Wellsprings** presents the Congregation’s beginnings as charting an “uncommon path through the common experience of the French religious and political world of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.” Poullart des Places departed from the traditional approach to priesthood and religious life in his time, and Francis Libermann, the convert Jew from Saverne, broke out of a cultural ghetto to embrace a mission totally new for him, and uncommon in its time. Spiritans will find many signposts in their origin story pointing them toward doing something new in mission. The endeavors of one Spiritan bishop, Joseph Shanahan gives a twentieth century witness to zeal for mission.

**Soundings** suggests that many of the challenges for mission today revolve around communication, care for our common home, and development. How

are Spiritans to fully engage with the ever-changing modes of communication? How has Spiritan mission responded to the *Laudato Si’* challenge? What are the ethical issues for mission as presented by “integral ecology” (a key concept of *Laudato Si’*)? How, in a post-Covid era is the Congregation to resource its younger circumscriptions in the apostolate of development?

**Education** is “an existential and original aspect of the Spiritan charism and mission.” The often-overlooked aspect is explored in a case study of Spiritan mission in Congo Brazzaville. Duquesne University continues its historic Spiritan mission of inclusion through recognizing diversity as an institutional resource from which all can benefit.

**Lived Experience** provides a moment of personal Spiritan sharing on the intersection between life and mission. New forms of outreach to youth through music and drama give fresh expression to the Spiritan charism as lived in the present day.

**Book Reviews** on Fr. John O’Brien’s *The Qur’an and the Cross* and Fr. Willy Pierre Mbuinga-Mayunda’s *The life of Père Duparquet and the beginnings of the Church of Boma (1865-1890)* bring us, in turn to the intricacies of inter-faith research and the complexities of interpreting Spiritan mission in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Fr. Bill Cleary CSSp  
Editor.