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TOWARDS A GREAT MISSIONARY CONGREGATION

Logically, with the premature deaths of Poullart des Places and his first collaborators, their work should also have disappeared. It is amazing that it survived such an inauspicious beginning. But in less than six years, this young clerical student had set up a seminary and laid the foundations for a new religious institute. The work of his successors, Louis Bouïc (1710-1763) and François Becquet (1763-1788) was one of conservation rather than innovation; but it was through preserving Poullart's ideal of spiritual poverty and dedication to the most abandoned that they became the first architects of the evolution which would transform the small community of the Holy Spirit into a great missionary Congregation.

In 1702, young Claude was dreaming of being a missionary and martyr. God accepted the generous and total gift of himself, but it was not in preaching the Gospel to pagans in far-off lands that he would lose his life; it was through his dedication to poor, young men who wanted to be priests. And before he died, he started a religious family of priests which, across the centuries, more than fulfilled his missionary dreams.

Adrien Vatel was the only Spiritan we know of who went to an overseas mission before 1730. The College of Louis-le-Grand was the home-base for the Jesuit missions in Canada and the Far East and this must have had a certain influence on the students of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit who were studying there. The same college collected reports from their missions which were eventually published under the title of *"Letters édifiantes et curieuses"* and they triggered a considerable interest. So from the start of the work for poor scholars, the students would have been exposed to an interest in the missionary outreach of the Church; this could well have been the case with Fr. Allenou de la Ville-Angevin who set out for Canada in 1741, at the age of 54.

However, up until 1730, it would have been almost impossible for a priest trained in the Seminary of the Holy Spirit to go to an overseas mission. The religious orders, such as the Jesuits, Franciscans and Capuchins, provided nearly all the missionaries at that time; it was certainly not the custom for secular priests to undertake this ministry. Any who wanted to go to Canada or the Far East would have been obliged to pass through the Seminary of the Foreign Missions (Les Missions Etrangères de Paris). The famous disagreement over the Chinese rites¹, which had begun back in 1635, took on a new lease of life at the beginning of the 18th century, with the Jesuits and the Missions Etrangères on opposite sides of the argument. Fr. Le Gobien and other Jesuit authors resident at Louis-le-Grand played a leading role in the dispute. To make matters even worse, the Jansenists, as usual, supported the opponents of the Jesuits.

¹ The Chinese Rites controversy was a dispute within the Catholic Church from the 1630s to the early 18th century over whether Chinese traditional religious rites could be adapted to the Catholic liturgy. At first, Rome approved such an adaptation, but Pope Clement XI decided against it in 1715 and this greatly reduced Catholic missionary activity in China.

The young students of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit understandably followed the opinions of their Jesuit professors, who were very suspicious of several of the lecturers at the Seminary of the Missions Etrangères in the rue de Bac because of their Jansenistic leanings. But the situation changed when the Council of the Missions Etrangères decided in 1725 that they would no longer accept *“directors, missionaries or any other ecclesiastics who did not sincerely follow the directives of the Holy See regarding Jansenism and the constitution ‘Unigenitus’.*¹

But an agreement still had to be set up between the Seminaire du Saint-Esprit and the Seminaire des Missions Etrangères, and Bishop Dosquet was largely responsible for making this possible. He had been trained at Saint-Sulpice and entered the Missions Etrangères in 1724. Five years later, Mgr. de Mornay, the bishop of Quebec, asked him to be his coadjutor. Canada was greatly lacking in priests, so the new Prelate asked the Seminary of the Holy Spirit to help. Unfortunately, in 1665, there had been an agreement between Mgr de Laval, the first bishop of Quebec, and the Society of the Missions Etrangères; they had decided that *all* secular priests recruited for Canada would have to pass through the rue de Bac. The first Spiritan to do so was François Frison de la Mothe in 1732 and his arrival opened the way to Canada and the Far East for his fellow Spiritans studying in the rue des Postes.²

The following year, Guillaume Rivoal set sail for Asia. Several others followed in quick succession, as can be seen from a letter written by the superior of the Missions Etrangères in 1738 to Cardinal de Fleury:

*“In the past, some Cardinals suspected that a few of our missionaries had not fully accepted the constitution ‘Unigenitus’, but there are none like this nowadays. For several years, we have only admitted students to our Seminary who were formed either in Saint-Sulpice or Saint Esprit, or a few others of whom we were equally convinced of their orthodoxy.”*³

Even more striking is a letter of 1752, written by Fr. Pierre Kerhervé, a Spiritan working in Siam, to Fr. Darragon, another Spiritan who had joined the staff of the seminary of rue de Bac:

*“I was delighted to hear that you are now on the staff of the seminary. I am sure that your presence will greatly enhance the unity and friendship between the seminaries of the Saint Esprit and the Missions Etrangères. Try to go to the Saint Esprit from time to time to solicit others to join you. As you spent many years of your formation in this seminary, they will trust you more than they would another. Those from this seminary who went to the Missions have not disappointed. Not long ago, of the six bishops we had in the missions, four had come from the Saint-Esprit seminary.”*⁴

¹ Archives of the Missions Etrangères, volume 79, p. 3.

² Since January 1st, 1732, the Seminary of the Holy Spirit had been installed in a house in the rue des Postes, the present-day rue Lhomond.

³ Archives of the Missions Etrangères, vol. 20, p. 645.

⁴ Archives of the Missions Etrangères, vol. 885, p. 419 (a letter of June 2nd, 1756).

These four bishops were: Bishop Armand Lefebvre, Vicar Apostolic in Cochin from 1741; Bishop Louis Devaux, Vicar Apostolic of Tonkin from 1746; Bishop Edmond Bennetat, coadjutor to Bishop Lefebvre from 1748; Bishop Jean-Baptiste Maigrot, Vicar Apostolic of Setchoan from 1753.

Later, two other Spiritans were made bishops: Guillaume Piguel who succeeded Bishop Lefebvre and Bishop François Pottier, who became Vicar-Apostolic of Setchoan. Pierre Kerhervé, whose letter to Fr. Darragon was quoted above, was appointed Vicar Apostolic in China, but was forced to decline because of his incipient blindness. We can also add Pierre Blandin to the list: he was the nephew of François Becquet, the Superior of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit; after a period in Tonkin, he was appointed director of the seminary in the rue de Bac.

Other names that appear in the letters of Fr. Darragon addressed to Cardinal de Fleury, would seem to indicate that there were many more Spiritan missionaries in the Far East, but we can only be sure of a dozen.¹

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Unknowingly, Bishop Dosquet was also instrumental in the departure of several Spiritans for the Far East. When he was appointed auxiliary bishop of Quebec in 1733, he asked the help of the directors of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit to provide him with suitable priests for his diocese and was delighted with the results. Before leaving France, he asked Abbé Pierre de la Rue de L'isle Dieu to be his representative in Paris and to recruit priests for Quebec. This proved to be a great help to both Canada and the work started by Poullart des Places.

But Bishop Dosquet was not happy with the necessary link between his seminary and that of the rue de Bac. Almost as soon as he arrived in Quebec, he wrote frankly to the Minister of the Navy:

*“This connection (between the two seminaries) is very annoying because it prevents me approaching other communities directly.... particularly that of the Holy Spirit, which is in a position to provide us with several good subjects”.*²

Knowing the mind of his bishop, where possible the Abbé of L'isle Dieu would seek personnel from the Seminary of the rue des Postes. He now had the role and title of *“General Chaplain of the Colonies of New-France”*, and he continued to exercise this during the episcopacy of Bishop de Pontbriand (1741-1760).

Before 1752, in order to qualify for a free passage on board the ships of the King, as well as expenses incurred for their trousseau and general installation, the Spiritans going to Canada had to spend a few months in the Seminary of the Missions Etrangères, because they were the only ones recognised for such purposes by the Ministry of the Navy. But from 1752 onwards, candidates could also be proposed by the Abbé de L'Isle Dieu. In conjunction with the Seminary of the Holy Spirit, he planned to create a clergy for the colonies who would be independent of all religious societies. The subsequent loss of Canada prevented him from

¹ They have all been listed above, apart from Jacques Corre, Jean-Charles Perrin and Pierre Pansut. But almost certainly, there were others.

² Quoted by Fr. A. David c.s.sp., in *“Les missionnaires du Saint-Esprit à Québec et en Acadie au XVIII siècle »*. 1926. P. 30. .

completing this project: when the British took over the colony in 1763, they refused to allow any French missionary to enter.

Several Spiritans recruited by the Abbé of L'Isle-Dieu taught theology in the Quebec seminary. Even more were missionaries in Acadia; Fr. Pierre Maillard, the apostle of the Micmacs, and Jean-François Le Loutre played an important part in the struggle which ended so tragically for France.¹

The Abbé of L'Isle-Dieu was most impressed by the Seminary of the Holy Spirit which had formed such devoted missionaries and this was to play a decisive part in the future destiny of the work of Poullart des Places. In 1769, the former Vicar General of Quebec wrote to Cardinal Castelli, the Prefect of the Propaganda Fide:

*“During the 38 years that I was Vicar General for all the French missions in the vast diocese of Quebec, I only accepted priests who had been formed in the Seminary of the Holy Spirit; they all exceeded my expectations”.*²

When in 1765 the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, until then part of the diocese of Quebec, were given the status of an Apostolic Prefecture, he recommended to both Rome and Versailles that they be confided to care of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. So it was thanks to him that Fr. Becquet, a successor of Poullart des Places, found himself for the first time directly responsible for a colonial mission.

Ever since the government of Louis XV had decided to replace the religious orders (Jesuits, Dominicans, Carmelites and Capuchins) with secular clergy in the French West Indies and Guyana, the Abbé of L'Isle-Dieu had pointed out to the authorities the advantages of confiding Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint-Domingue³ and French Guiana to the Seminary of the Holy Spirit:

*“In view of the large number of personnel who would be needed for such a project, the only institute in the whole Kingdom of France which could meet such demands would be the Seminary of the Holy Spirit. Their numerous students are given an excellent formation with a view to taking on works which are the most difficult and abandoned and the least lucrative”.*⁴

For various reasons, this plan was only partially successful. In 1775, Fr. Becquet undertook to supply priests from the Seminary of the Holy Spirit for pastoral and educational works in the colony of Cayenne (French Guiana). To begin with, he placed 20 priests under the authority of the Apostolic Prefect for these works, but the evangelisation of the Galibi Indians, which began a few years before the French Revolution, would need many more.⁵

¹ Cf. Henry Koren: *“A history of the Spiritan Missionaries in Acadia and North America, 1732-1839”*. Pittsburgh, 1962.

² David, op cit. p. 44

³ Present day Dominican Republic.

⁴ The life and ideas of the Abbé de L'Isle-Dieu are given extensive coverage (pp. 51-58) in the work of Fr. David quoted above.

⁵ Letter of Fr. Becquet to M. Micquignon, July 7th, 1788 (Archives of the Company of Mary).



Up until 1778, the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (as opposed to the students who passed through their seminary) had remained in France, teaching in the seminaries of Paris and Meaux. But in that year, two of them, Dominique Déglicourt and Jacques Bertout, set sail for Cayenne. They left Le Havre on April 24th, but their ship went aground on the sands of Arguin, near Port-Etienne on the West Coast of Africa, where the *Méduse* was also to sink 39 years later. They were taken prisoner by the Moors and sold to the English governor of Saint-Louis-du-Sénégal who put them on a ship bound for England. But they were intercepted en route by a French corsair and so returned to Paris on September 26th, where they gave an account of their adventures to the Minister for the Navy. A month later, they were told to report to Lorient and set out once more for Cayenne. Fr. Bertout was sick, so he was replaced by a priest from Brittany. Their ship was part of a squadron of French vessels and when they got as far as the coast of Mauritania, they were told that the aim of the expedition was not to go to Cayenne but to retake Senegal from the British. After the surrender of Saint-Louis, Déglicourt was appointed Prefect Apostolic for the African Coast and thus, a third mission was officially confided to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.



For the sons of Poullart des Places, these new responsibilities opened up a whole new world. When he was young, Fr. François Becquet had dreamt of being a missionary in the East Indies¹, but he eventually found a substitute in his dedication to the mission of Cayenne. He sent out many priests and worked hard in preparing all the details of their journeys and their subsequent support. He asked the Daughters of Wisdom to give these missionaries a special place in their prayers and told his sister, a Visitation sister at Saint Denis, to do the same in her community.

Fr. Becquet had a similar concern for the mission of Senegal.² He commissioned François-Joseph Duret, a renowned Parisian sculptor, to make a bas-relief over the main door of the spiritan chapel in the rue Lhomond. Seven metres long, it depicts missionaries preaching the gospel to black people, and a further group of Indians who also seem anxious to join in. He commissioned a painting of missionaries preaching to the pagans; today, it hangs in a chapel of the church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris.



After the French Revolution, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit was restored by Fr. Jacques Bertout. In 1817, Louis XVIII asked the seminary to train future priests for all the French colonies. It would be a very difficult task. There were still plenty of priests in France, but the average age was very high: in 1808, 32,000 out of 33,000 were over 40, and 1,800 had passed 75. So the primary concern of the bishops was, understandably, to rebuild their own diocesan clergy.

Prior to the Revolution, nearly all the missionaries came from religious orders; without exaggerating, one could say that the evangelisation of pagans hardly entered the minds of

¹ Letter from M. Blandin, the nephew of Fr. Becquet. (Archives of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.)

² Letter to M. Micquignon.

the secular clergy. The generation of priests in the second half of the 18th century were unlikely to inspire their successors to worry about the state of the Church in far off countries. These young priests, brought up during the Revolution and the Empire, looked rather for a soft and tranquil life than the adventures and sacrifices of missionary life.¹

In deference to the spirit and traditions inherited from Poullart des Places, Jacques Bertout changed nothing at the Seminary of the Holy Spirit. The studies still extended over six years, which was most unusual at that time. The house in the rue des Postes did all it could to regain the prestige of former years, but many of its most capable students were recalled by their bishops and appointed as lecturers in their seminaries. Nevertheless, between 1817 and 1832, Bertout was able to send 97 missionaries to the American colonies (Guiana, Saint Pierre and Miquelon), to Africa (Senegal) and to the Indian Ocean (the island of Bourbon – present-day Reunion, and Pondichery in India). During the same period, the Seminary of the Missions Etrangères in rue de Bac could only manage 64 priests for their vast missions in the Far East. Guiana

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The successor of Jacques Bertout was his nephew, Fr. Amable Fourdinier (1832-1845). Throughout his time as superior, the recruitment of priests for the colonies continued to be very difficult. Even for those few dioceses in France which had sufficient priests for their immediate needs, the prospects were not good. A law of June 16th, 1828 limited the number of students in junior seminaries to 20,000 and this seriously slowed down the recruitment of future priests. This was true of the whole country; in many dioceses, the number of ordinations fell by more than 50 %.

The Seminary of the Holy Spirit was affected by this situation and by its repercussions on the dioceses. Young clerics who wanted to transfer to the Seminary were often prevented from doing so by their bishops. Fr. Fourdinier increased his appeals to the French clergy in the "*Ami de la Religion*", but their applications were either blocked by their bishops or enthusiastically supported if the diocesan authorities were anxious to get rid of them! At the death of Fourdinier, there were 145 priests in the colonies, of whom half had passed through the Seminary of the Holy Spirit.²

Once the superior of the Seminary handed over these young priests to the Apostolic Prefects (none of whom were Spiritans), he no longer had any authority over them. These Prefects were regarded by the Government as ecclesiastical civil servants so neither did they have much authority over their clergy. Nobody gained from this situation - neither the priests, the people confided to their care nor the prestige of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit in Paris. The sons of Poullart des Places suffered as much as anybody. Their devoted work in the Seminary was reduced, in the words of Francis Libermann, to "*real and terrible drudgery*".³

¹ Letter from J-M de la Mennais to L'Abbé Bruté de Rémur, 1815 : « *What is the point of talking to young men about the wider world when they are afraid of crossing a stream to bring religious help to the poor peasants who need them on the other side?* »

² Cf. "*Simple observations et renseignements exacts sur le Séminaire du Saint-Esprit et les Missions Coloniales par M. Guiller, Préfet Apostolique de la Guyane française* », Paris, 1845. Cf also J. Janin C.S.Sp. : *Le clergé colonial de 1815 à 1850* », Paris, 1936.

³ Letter of April 27th, 1847: "*Notes et Documents*" Volume IX, p. 134.

The Spiritans drew up a plan to improve the situation of the apostolate in the overseas territories, based on their experiences in Guiana in South America. In 1807, they wrote a report on their activities to the Minister for Cult:

*“The Community of the Holy Spirit, which has been put in charge of the missions in the West Indies, believes that the Superior and his confreres should have the exclusive right to appoint those whom they consider fit for these important responsibilities ... All the priests sent will be members of the Congregation and, therefore, will remain subject to their superior ... Missionaries who return sick or exhausted will all report to the house of the Congregation in France”.*¹

René Bertin from Rennes, who had completed his earlier studies with the Eudists, had entered rue des Postes in 1827. He was very surprised to learn that the Seminary of the Holy Spirit had been founded by “Father des Places, of the diocese of Rennes, with the help of Frs. Le Barbier and Garnier of the same diocese.” He greatly admired the work of his compatriots and decided to try to restore their establishment after its devastation during the French Revolution of 1789 and the disturbances that followed:

*“To strengthen its dedication and fervour, and to avoid being isolated from each other on the missions, I formed an association with two or three like-minded priests, guided by the advice of the venerable Fr. Mollevaut whom I visited quite frequently when he was Superior of the Eudist “Solitude” at Issy. By 1830, there were more than 20 of us and we were ready to incorporate ourselves into the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, which by then had only five or six members. But for the Revolution of 1830², this Congregation would have been certainly re-established by the addition of so many new members”.*³

Evidence of this short-lived project can be found in the Archives of the Spiritans at Chevilly-Larue: under the title of “*The Association of the Holy Heart of Mary*”, there is a list of its members. Unfortunately, the Seminary of the Holy Spirit was scattered once more by the July Revolution of 1830. René Bertin returned to Rennes where, encouraged by Fr. Louis de la Morinière, he joined the Eudist Fathers.

But the realisation of the plan of 1807 mentioned above became something of an obsession for Fr. Fourdinier. He wanted to set up “a real novitiate”, at the end of which, without taking vows, the priests heading for the missions would make a formal dedication of themselves to the Superior of the Congregation.⁴ He received encouragement for this plan from the

¹ Janin, op. cit., p. 253.

² The **French Revolution of 1830**, also known as the **July Revolution**, saw the overthrow of King Charles X of France, the French Bourbon monarch, and the ascent of his cousin Louis-Philippe, the Duc d'Orléans, who himself, after 18 precarious years on the throne, would in turn be overthrown. It marked the shift from one constitutional monarchy, the Bourbon Restoration, to another, the July Monarchy; the transition of power from the House of Bourbon to its cadet branch, the House of Orléans and the substitution of the principle of popular sovereignty for that of hereditary right. Supporters of the Bourbon would be called Legitimists, and supporters of Louis Philippe Orleanists.

³ René Bertin: “*Autobiographie*”, which can be found in Volume III of the “*Fleurs de la Congrégation de Jésus et Marie* (The Eudists)”.

⁴ Janin, p. 255.

Propaganda and the Archbishop of Paris, but that would prove to be insufficient. Fourdinier wrote in a letter in 1842,

*“Far from supporting me, the Apostolic Prefects of Martinique, Guadeloupe and Bourbon openly opposed my plans, so I was forced to postpone them without abandoning them”.*¹

But Fourdinier died at the beginning of 1845 without having accomplished his objectives to restore the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and improve the quality of the clergy that were sent to the colonies.²

His successor, Fr. Le Guay, was a man of action. Once again, he took up the plan to integrate the colonial clergy into the Congregation. He made some concessions on the practice of poverty in the hope of it being accepted more easily by the ecclesiastical authorities; he even set up a type of second order so that the members would be tied to the Mother House by spiritual bonds. He drew up new statutes which were approved by the Propaganda and was optimistic that this time, the plan would succeed. But once again, the efforts to restore the work of Poullart des Places were ruined by yet another revolution and the events of 1848³ which obliged him to hand in his resignation.⁴ Men had done their best, but they had failed; it was now up to Providence to intervene!

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At the time when René Bertin, the founder of the *Association of the Holy Heart of Mary*, was visiting his Eudist friend in the *Solitude*, he must have bumped into a young seminarian in the corridors; he was four years older than René but the onset of epilepsy had excluded him

¹ Janin: p. 256.

² The Congregation of the Holy Spirit had very few members: *“Their great priority was to rebuild the number and quality of the clergy working in the colonies, so they paid little attention to recruiting for their own institution after its restoration. According to their old constitutions, an associate could only be received after completing three years of theology and having spent two years probation in the seminary. But because of the pressing needs of the colonies, they could not keep a student in the seminary for that length of time. They felt they had to send out their best seminarians as quickly as possible to take up their duties. On the other hand, neither Fr. Bertout, who had seen the glory of the old temple, nor Fr. Fourdinier felt they could change the conditions for admission that had been laid down from the early days”.* (Dom Pitra: *“Vie du R.P. Libermann”*, p. 558).

³ The **1848 Revolution** in France was one of a wave of revolutions that year in Europe. In France, the February Revolution ended the Orleans monarchy (1830–1848) and led to the creation of the Second French Republic. The February Revolution was really the belated second phase of the Revolution of 1830. The Revolution of 1830, also called the July Revolution, was the event that had brought Louis-Philippe of Orleans to the throne of France as a constitutional monarch. Following the overthrow of Louis-Philippe in February, the elected government of the Second Republic ruled France. As time passed, this government steered a course that became more conservative. On 23 June 1848, the people of Paris rose in insurrection. There was a bloody but unsuccessful rebellion by the Paris workers against a conservative turn in the Republic's course. On 2 December 1848, Louis Napoleon was elected President of the Second Republic, largely on peasant support. Exactly three years later he suspended the elected assembly and established the Second French Empire, which lasted until 1871.

⁴ Janin, op. cit, pp 258-262.

from ordination to the priesthood. His name was François Libermann, son of an Alsatian rabbi. In 1837, he was living with the Eudists in Rennes; on the recommendation of the same Fr. Mollevaut, he had been appointed novice master of the Eudists. Two years later, despite the pleading of Fr. Louis de la Morinière, he left Brittany for Rome where he sought approval for a “*Work for the Black People*”, a missionary society that he would place under the protection of the Holy Heart of Mary. He was finally ordained priest in 1841 and immediately opened a novitiate at La Neuville-les-Amiens. Very soon, the premises proved to be too small so they moved to the former Cistercian Abbey of Notre-Dame du Gard.¹

Seven years after its foundation, this new Society already numbered 34 priests, 28 Brothers and 40 novices and students; 21 of its priests and 9 of its brothers were working for the evangelisation of black people in Mauritius, Reunion, Gabon and Senegal. These Missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary found that the sons of Poullart des Places were already installed in Reunion and Senegal. From the early days of the foundation, Libermann had had the feeling that, one day, it would be joined to that of the Spiritans: *“I have always had the feeling that the union of our two societies was in the plan of God. They have the same work and move in the same direction. It would be strange if divine Providence had brought two societies into existence for the same work, which could easily have been done by one.”*²

On the feast of Pentecost, June 1848, the union was accepted in principle by both sides. The Holy See gave its approval on September 4th, stipulating that the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary would cease to exist and its members would be incorporated into the Society of the Holy Spirit. Finally, on November 23rd, by 10 votes out of 11, Libermann became the 10th successor of Poullart des Places; it was *he* who would restore this congregation.

¹ Both La Neuville and Notre-Dame du Gard are close to Amiens.

² Letter to the communities of Mauritius, Bourbon and Dakar: *Notes et Documents*, Vol. X, p. 339.

In a homily given at Notre Dame des Victoires on November 20th, 1948, Mgr. Chappouliè gave an excellent commentary on these words of Libermann:

“For the Christian who, by the light of God, sees the missionary posterity of Poullart des Places as a natural development of his spirituality, the fusion of 1848 would not come as a surprise. ... Despite their initial reluctance, Libermann was able to convince his companions to accept a rapprochement with the Society of the Holy Spirit because his understanding of priesthood and the apostolate was very close to that of Poullart des Places. With his sensitive vision of the supernatural, he could see that the grafting of his young family onto the old Spiritan trunk would succeed because they both drew their life from an identical sap. They shared the same love of the neglected and abandoned, a desire to be poor and self-sacrificing priests and a total trust in the Heart of Mary. It was true that the Propaganda greatly favoured such a union and common sense seemed to indicate that this was the way to go; but it would be dragging down the things of God to the level of purely human affairs if we did not look for an explanation at a much higher level for the great success of the union and the magnificent work that the Congregation is still doing today”.