Spiritan Horizons seeks to further research into the history, spirituality, and tradition of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. In line with the aims of the Center for Spiritan Studies at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, its overall goal is to promote creative fidelity to the Spiritan charism in the contemporary world. The journal includes articles of a scholarly nature as well as others related to the praxis of the Spiritan charism in a wide variety of cultural contexts. Special attention is given in each issue to the Spiritan education ethos, in view of the university setting in which the journal is published.

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Contemporary Spiritan Mission

Wellsprings

“Black lives matter” is the call challenging police violence in the USA that echoed across the world in the summer of 2020. Gerard Nnamunga, C.S.Sp., in his article, Libermann’s Theological Anthropology and the Contemporary Context, connects today’s struggle with Libermann’s l’Œuvre des noirs (project for the Blacks) in the context of the nineteenth century with its prejudices against Africans. Étienne Osty, C.S.Sp., memorializes one who connected many with the humanity of Francis Libermann probably because he was himself, as Osty puts it, “a spoiled child of the Good Lord.” Father Alphonse Gilbert (1921-2020): Animated by the Spirit of God for a century is a fitting tribute to a much-loved Spiritan Scholar.

In keeping with the theme of this issue, Pedro Fernandes, C.S.Sp., reflects on contemporary Spiritan mission in Major axes for Missiological Models after Vatican II: Rereading Spiritan mission from the Portuguese Perspective. He summarizes the axes of Spiritan mission as closeness to people; dialogue and hospitality that appreciates different cultures; and proclamation and confessional clarity rooted in a radical following of Christ. Marc Whelan, C.S.Sp., weaves together a tribute both to Brottier and the work he helped establish in his article, Apprentis D’Auteuil: A Place of Spiritan Mission. Ensuring the continuation of traditional Spiritan works in the older provinces of Europe may benefit from the kind of innovation employed by Daniel Brottier who initiated a Church-State partnership for Apprentis D’Auteuil.

Two Spiritans in formation, Kenneth Ofoma, C.S.Sp., and Matt Broeren, C.S.Sp., from the provinces of Nigeria South East and the United States respectively, share a different and complementary perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic and its challenge for Spiritan mission. The former, in Libermann’s Understanding of Suffering and the Challenges of Covid19 Pandemic in Africa provides an intriguing application of Libermann’s positive understanding of human suffering to coping with the pandemic in Africa. The latter, in his article, Spiritan Mission Post-COVID-19 as Healing the World: A Possible Framework? interrogates the role for Spiritan mission in analysing the underlying conditions that exacerbated the consequences of the pandemic for some more than for others, and the radical action needed to heal a broken and divided world.

Soundings

Jeff Duaime, C.S.Sp., acknowledges the continuing need for renewal to meet the challenges the contemporary world holds for the missionary. In his article, Spiritan Mission Today and Tomorrow: New Wine in New Wineskins, he looks to General Chapter XXI as a moment for the congregation to find new and creative ways for doing mission. From an Asian perspective, Pat Palmer, C.S.Sp., understands Spiritan mission as sharing poverty and insecurity in the search for justice and liberation. His article, Spiritan Mission in Asia, highlights active involvement with people as core to Spiritan mission. Andrzej Owca, C.S.Sp., Vivar International representative at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, takes up this theme. His article is entitled, A Human Rights Approach to Spiritan Mission for Today. Dialogue is a communication between interlocutors. Jean-Claude Angoula, C.S.Sp., documents the importance of the concept of interlocutor for progress in interreligious dialogue in his article, The Current Perspective of Interreligious relations in Senegal: Dialogue Proportionatate to the Interlocutors.

Education

Drs. Steven Hansen, Anne Marie Witchger Hansen, and Maureen O’Brien in Pedagogy in Practice: Academic Excellence through Solidarity with People Experiencing Poverty, report on their ongoing research project recording ways in which Spiritan educators integrate Spiritan values with academic excellence. Drs. Norman Conti, Rick McCown, and Maureen O’Brien of Duquesne University, share an educational program within a correctional setting that brings together “outside” university students with “inside” incarcerated students. Spiritan Mission and Restorative Justice at Duquesne University: The Elsinore Bennu Think Tank for Restorative Justice, shows how the Spiritan approach to mission and Freirean methodology can come together to bring about the Kingdom of God. Dr. Luci-Jo DiMaggio provides a summary of her recent doctoral thesis focusing on the importance of a critical service-learning model for community learning programs at Duquesne to ensure transformative relationships between students and the communities they serve.

Curricular and Co-Curricular Community Engagement at a Spiritan University is the fruit of eighteen years’ experience of accompanying Duquesne students in community-engaged learning.

Lived Experience

Kuha Indyer, C.S.Sp., in Evangelization and Development, shares the story of his commitment to the education of the young and to development work beginning in 1994 with his mission experience in The Gambia to today as founding Principal of Holy Ghost College, Sankera, and as Director of the Spiritan Office for Mission Development of his province, Nigeria North East. Dr. Dennis Ranalli benefited greatly from growing up in a Pittsburgh parish served by Spiritan priests. He pays tribute to these Spiritans of his youth in A Century of Spiritan Commitment: Saint Ann’s Parish Millvale, PA.

Reviews

Reviews of recent publications by Spiritans, John O’Brien and Cardinal Nzapalainga, and by Religious Sister of the Sacred Heart, Maria Cimperman, addressing issues of women’s ordination, peace building, and religious life respectively, bring this issue to a conclusion.

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The Center for Spiritan Studies is a resource facility for the Spiritan Congregation (through research on its charism and history, tradition and spirituality) and Duquesne University Community (in re-imagining its Spiritan legacy for a new era).

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*Spiritan Horizons* is a journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit, Pittsburgh.

Published annually by the Center for Spiritan Studies at Duquesne University, the Journal combines scholarly articles on Spiritan history, spirituality and mission with others related to the praxis of the Spiritan charism in a wide variety of cultural and life settings.

Special attention is given in each issue to the ethos of Spiritan education (including service learning) and especially the interface of faith and reason in the setting of higher education.

Past issues of the journal can be accessed online at the Spiritan Collection at [http://www.duq.edu/spiritancollection](http://www.duq.edu/spiritancollection)

The Center for Spiritan Studies is a collaborative venture between the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit.

The Center was founded in 2005. Its purpose is to foster and disseminate research into Spiritan history, tradition, and spirituality. It serves the Congregation throughout the world and Duquesne University by making resources for the Spiritan charism available for ministry, learning, and teaching.

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LIBERMANN’S THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

“Black lives matter” is a very common slogan today. It has enlivened the struggle to see that Africans live dignified lives. It is amazing to note that Fr. Libermann had initiated this struggle in the 19th century when racial prejudice against Africans was very ripe, the lives of Africans blighted by the scourge of the slave trade and the dignity of the Africans trodden underfoot. This article evaluates Libermann’s theological anthropology of l’Œuvre des noirs (project for the Blacks) in the context of the nineteenth century with its prejudices against Africans which can also be easily discerned from Libermann’s writings. L’Œuvre des noirs was Libermann’s missionary endeavour aimed at ameliorating the lives of Africans.

As we evaluate Libermann’s theological anthropology, we are advised by Paul Kollman that any missionary work, the judgment of that work, and indeed of people who lived centuries before us is “a cautionary tale in a double sense.” First, as missionaries, we ought to be cautious of helping other people on terms set by ourselves. There was a danger that Libermann’s missionary project would be paternalistic. Second, the challenge facing the one making the judgment on people who lived in the past runs the risk of being anachronistic. Kollman calls this “presentism,” thus judging the past with present-day perspective or with condescension, “a particular temptation in a study of missionary activity with slaves.”

LIBERMANN’S LIFE EXPERIENCE

Libermann’s concern for the Africans can be traced back to three fundamental moments in his life experience. First, he was born a Jew at a period of Jewish emancipation in France. Jews were looked down upon by wider society. Libermann’s Jewish background and experience had a substantial impact on his attitude to those whose freedom was curtailed. Libermann made a distinction between freedom and independence. People ought to be free but cannot be independent because we are necessarily dependent on each other. Independence may lead to egoism and individualism. Libermann wanted the Africans to have freedom and at the same time be inter-dependent with others.

Second, Libermann’s conversion experience was sparked off by realizing that God is not confined to an ethnic group or to a culture or to a religion. God is for all people and had to be worshipped in freedom. God is manifested and revealed in every culture and religion. Libermann realized that God was for the Africans as well.

Third, Libermann experienced physical suffering. He suffered from epilepsy, which impeded his ordination to priesthood. Suffering has an educative value. Libermann was not only sympathetic and empathetic with the suffering of the Africans but also was in solidarity with them, at the same time, trying to imitate the suffering of Jesus Christ.

THE AIM OF L’ŒUVRE DES NOIRS

Jewish experience, conversion, and suffering transformed Libermann’s life into a unique mission dedicated to the poor and marginalized Africans. The driving force behind l’œuvre des noirs, the direction it took, and the challenges it faced will be better understood by looking at what Libermann calls the dessein or motive behind this project expressed in his writings. It is clear that Libermann had a dessein, “design” or “intention” for his mission. At the beginning of his mission, on December 20, 1841, he writes to Firm-Régis Gamon, a trusted confidant, explaining to him the dessein of his mission.

Our intention [dessein] is to come to the aid of the black daves or those who have been freed in the French and English colonies. These poor people are the most miserable on earth. They are totally ignorant of anything concerning religion. They have no idea of what ought to be done to be saved. Because of their ignorance, they are steeped in all kinds of vice…The vast majority are not married, but live like dogs and change their women at will.

Libermann had a good dessein, but the language he used and the understanding he had of Africans particularly at
the beginning of his project can be questioned. When Libermann and his companions conceived their project, l’œuvre des noirs, they had what Edmund Husserl calls the “natural attitude” against the Africans derived from the Western mentality at the time. Traces of the “natural attitude” can be read in the language Libermann used to describe West African society. Today, Libermann’s language gives an impression of condescension and racial overtones. Expressions like, Africans “are not married,” “live like dogs,” and “are steeped in all kinds of vice,” show that Libermann was influenced by racial Western stereotypes against African society.

The expression “natural attitude” was coined by Edmund Husserl who noted that when human beings perceive things, they bring to their experience their biases and preconceived ideas to bear upon the phenomena, which he calls a “natural attitude” operating at the level of the subconscious. It darkens and blurs us from perceiving phenomena in their pure mode of “givenness.” Hence, this “natural attitude” has to be removed. He calls such a removal a “phenomenological epoché or suspension of the natural attitude.” For Libermann the “phenomenological epoché” enabled him to see the world through the eyes of the poor because “the epoché of the poor” enables us to unmask the political and social structures that oppress the poor. 6 We notice here that any reading of Libermann is reiterated and developed in his third Mémoire. In it, he and his companions knowing that there was much suffering, humiliation, and contradictions that awaited them, resolved to give themselves to the Lord, “for the salvation of Black People, who are the most unfortunate, the furthest from salvation, and the most abandoned in God’s Church.”7 They would be open to mission among the “Blacks” anywhere in the world, but in the beginning, their primary focus would be Haiti and the Island of Reunion. They were to live in community and by community life inspire vocations for the local clergy.

To say that Africans are “furthest from salvation” is an idea not tolerated today because it has racial overtones and exaggerates the misery of Africans. Nevertheless, Libermann used it to build a case that there was an urgent necessity to take on this mission of evangelization. The slave masters and those who participated in the slave trade would be the ones who were “furthest from salvation” because by their acts of injustice, they had distanced themselves from their fellow human beings who were created in the image and likeness of God, and at the same time, they had alienated themselves from God.

A more positive outlook to Africans is found in Libermann’s second Mémoire of November 1844, in which he calls for the training of indigenous clergy. The formation of the indigenous clergy is reiterated and developed in his third Mémoire dated 15 August 1846. It is by far the longest and most important one, calling for the establishment of schools so that Africans may be trained as teachers, farmers, catechists, and artisans in a number of trades. This Mémoire proposed that catechists should receive minor orders, an idea which some have interpreted to show that Libermann was ahead of his time.

LIBERMANN’S RULE OF LIFE

In 1840, Libermann wrote a Provisional Rule of Life after receiving the good news that he could start to work on his project. This Rule underwent several revisions until the 1845 Rule which was then used in the formulation of the 1849 Règlements (Rules) after the merger with the Spiritans. The 1849 Rule became the foundation of future Spiritan Rules. Three important elements in Libermann’s Rule were the hallmark of his understanding of human beings,
particularly those marginalized and enslaved. First, the sanctification of missionaries is important for the ministry. Evangelization begins with the evangelizer. As a Latin axiom says: *Nemo dat quod non habet* (One cannot give what he or she does not have), a missionary must first preach to himself/herself. Conversion like salvation is for every person. We all need God’s grace.

Second, missionaries should do their ministry out of charity. This means that they had to respect the people whom they evangelized.

Third, missionaries should be humble. There was a danger of missionaries seeing themselves as superior to Africans, going to Africa to assist “poor Africans.” This approach often generates paternalism. In addition, Libermann discouraged a *tabula rasa* approach to mission that was so common during his time. Libermann had come to know that the condition of slaves was a human tragedy. He had sympathy and pity for them. He noticed that although slaves had a right to baptism and, indeed many were baptized, they *needed to practice their religion in freedom*. They needed emancipation not only *in law* but *in fact* as well. They needed liberty that would restore their true human dignity as children of God. Libermann anticipated that the emancipation of slaves in French colonies was close at hand; but this emancipation he argued would be detrimental to them if they were not prepared morally.

It was also very clear to Libermann at the beginning of his mission that this work was a work of the Holy Spirit. He was aware that the Holy Spirit does not give straightforward answers to all our questions. “When the Holy Spirit inspires a project, hardly ever does He give the whole scheme from the outset. It is only as the work develops that this is given. However, the whole project is enshrined in the principle by which he inspired the author of the project.”

Inasmuch as the crucial anthropological question is the nature of a human being in search of God’s salvation, Libermann’s primary focus was God’s salvation for the marginalized Africans. He realized that a human being is a social and cultural being who has to relate and interact with others. This then widened his scope of salvation to that of service. As Bevans points out, “salvation is ultimately about service, about identifying with God’s saving mission in the world.” He continues: “Such an understanding of salvation implies an anthropology that is certainly holistic but places its main emphasis on human beings’ transcendent, spiritual dimension. Full humanity is achieved not only through economic security or political autonomy, but also and most fundamentally through communion with God in Christ and transformation by the Gospel.”

**LIBERMANN’S MISSION ANTHROPOLOGY**

The nineteenth century understanding of the human person dichotomizing body and soul eventually influenced the outlook on mission and people at the margins. The purpose and value of the body was to be a “vehicle of the soul.” This dualistic anthropological understanding was closely connected to the ecclesiological notion of an ideal person. An ideal person was one within the visible Catholic Church outside of which there was no salvation, extra ecclesiam nulla salus. This led to a twofold missionary anthropological strategy, “to save souls and establish the church.”

Mission today aims at holistic human liberation. Mission is not just to save souls for heaven or to establish churches, but as Koren points out, “to announce Christ the Saviour whose whole life was a revelation: it showed that it is really possible for us human beings to begin to live together as God’s loving sons and daughters…” Libermann’s mission was basically a mission aimed at establishing a strong bond of relationship with Africans enslaved by various forces.

At the time when Libermann and his companions were planning *l’œuvre des noirs* in 1839, slave trading in France was still governed by the *Code Noir* or “Black Code” which was issued by Louis XIV in 1685, revised in 1724, and implemented until 1848 when slave trading was outlawed in France after a Socialist Revolution. “Code Noir” gives the slave owners total power over the slaves, including branding, mutilation, and using the lash. Libermann and his companions anticipated that the emancipation of slaves in French colonies was close at hand, but this emancipation they argued would be detrimental not only to the slaves but to wider society as well if the slaves were not prepared morally. They did not want a repeat of the experience in Haiti where emancipated slaves vandalized French property.

Paul Kollman says that Libermann was a “committed abolitionist,” but the Catholic Church in France tended to be against abolitionists because of their anti-clerical outlook. He notes that many of Libermann’s missionaries in French colonies advocated abolition, linking “worldly freedom and the possibility of eternal life.” It is true that Libermann was against slav-
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ery, but his abolitionist stance has to be qualified. Arsène Aubert argues that Libermann was not an abolitionist but rather encouraged his missionaries to be prudent in dealing with slave masters. In 1840, Libermann composed a Rule for his society in which he wrote:

The missionaries will be the advocates, the supporters, and the defenders of the small and weak against their oppressors. When faced with such situations, the love and strength of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, must increase in them. But their actions must be inspired by a gentleness and prudence which their Master will give them if they are faithful.

We can notice here that Libermann calls for prudence in dealing with situations of injustice. He continues in the same Rule:

They will do all they can to establish this Christian charity between the rich and the poor, the whites and the blacks, so that all will see one another as brothers in Jesus Christ and overcome the disdain and indifference on the one side and the jealousy and hatred on the other. But this requires great prudence or all could be lost.

Libermann was more of a pacifist than an abolitionist. Even though we can say today that by not confronting the slave masters, Libermann kept a blind eye to the structural injustice of slavery. At the same time, we have the practical situation he had to deal with. He realized that conversion was for everyone. The evangelizers needed metanoia (change of heart) to have the Spirit of Christ so that they could minister to the afflicted with love. The slave owners needed metanoia to treat slaves with brotherly and sisterly love and eventually set them free. The slaves too needed metanoia first, to the light of Christ, and second, to desist from carrying out vengeance on the perpetrators of injustice.

Libermann believed that the hour had not only dawned to preach the Gospel to Africans, but also the time had come for the perpetrators of injustice to realize that Africans were children of God. On 2 November 1846, he wrote a long and important letter to Pierre Northum Percin whom he was sending to Haiti where Eugène Tisserant had tried unsuccessfully to establish a mission for the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary between 1843 and 1845. Libermann outlined the vision of the mission in Haiti. One of the objectives was to expose the injustices done to African Haitians.

There was an even stronger reason why I was keen to undertake this work: if we could have made a foundation in the Republic, I am sure it would have been very successful. After a few years, we would have been able to expose to the world the calumny and bad faith of those who were designating such a large number of people. We could have destroyed the ridiculous prejudices of a handful, who only think of their own ambitions and interests, to the detriment of millions of people created in the image of God and redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. I am convinced that we could have proved to the detractors of the African race that not having a white skin does not mean that they were any less the children of God, that their souls are less noble, that they are less capable of receiving the faith, Christian morality, and the principles and practice of civilization. In other words, we would have shown them that the colour of one’s skin in no way denotes any inferiority.

Libermann proposed the establishment of a local church as one of the ways to destroy the prejudices of those who looked down on Haitians. The church in Haiti should no longer be considered a missionary church but rather an official and regularized church with a resident bishop like the churches in Europe.

LIBERMANN’S CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

During the time of Libermann, French Catholic missionary zeal had drawn on nationalistic pride to generate an obsessive urgency to reclaim the lost souls for the salvation of souls (le salut des âmes). Libermann was aware of a nationalistic pride that influenced French missionaries to consider their culture as the “standard” one, and at the same time, to look down on other people’s cultures. The French system of assimilation encouraged people in the colonies to adapt to French culture and language in exchange for French citizenship. Libermann, on the other hand, called on his missionaries to assimilate African culture.

Libermann is widely known for his teaching on inculcation even though his cultural identity kept on changing. He grew up in a Jewish ghetto, began learning Hebrew as early as five
The relationship which Libermann had within the African context widened his horizon and his outlook on culture and spirituality.

years of age, and reading the Torah, and later the Mishnah, and Talmud commentaries on Jewish laws. He spoke Yiddish, which he wrote in Hebrew characters. Libermann engaged with European culture when he was twenty years old and at Metz studying to become a Rabbi where he secretly learned French, Latin, and read the Classics. After his conversion, Libermann acclimatized to French culture and devoted a great deal of his private time improving on his competency in French. During his seminary and novitiate experiences, Libermann imbibed the spirituality of the French School with its dualistic tendencies that influenced his outlook on life.

It was after Libermann’s seminary and novitiate experiences that his earlier “Jewish spiritual attitude became again predominant in his outlook.”24 The relationship which Libermann had within the African context widened his horizon and his outlook on culture and spirituality. As Koren points out, Libermann was both Jew and Christian. As a Jew, he could see God in each and every event of his life, and as a Christian, he “wished to live under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, manifesting himself in the concrete situations of life.”25 Holiness was to be sought in the real situations of life, not by shying away from them in some secluded places. The real situations of life presented themselves in the missions where structures of injustice thrived and people’s rights were abused and denied. All these sad situations had to be challenged by the Gospel message.

Libermann’s teaching on inculturation outshines the mentality of many of his contemporaries. He respected all cultures and invited his missionaries to be flexible in adapting to each and every culture. Libermann’s teaching on culture shows that he was transformed by his experience of the African mission. He found himself in the position of responsibility when he was visited at the Eudist novitiate by Maxime de la Brunière, one of the initiators of l’Œuvre des noirs, to convince him to take leadership of this project. In his acceptance letter to Le Vavasseur of 28 October 1839, Libermann referring to de la Brunière says: “de la Brunière is all black,” and goes on to say, “I will offer Holy Communion for our dear Black people on the feast of all the Saints.”26 This is a clear indication that Libermann was beginning to be influenced by the African mission that would transform him for the rest of his life. He too, like de la Brunière, became “black” and instructed his missionaries to be “black with the Black.”

In a long letter to his missionaries in Dakar, Libermann outlined the attitude of his missionaries to those they sought to evangelize.

Do not act according to what you see in Europe nor according to European customs. Get rid of Europe, its customs, and its spirit. Become black with the Blacks, and then you will know them as they should be known and not the way they are known by the Europeans. Let them be themselves. Become their servants. As servants, adapt to their customs and their way of life. Do all this with the aim of improving them, sanctifying them, ennobling them, and finally forming them into God’s people. That is what St. Paul means by becoming all things to all in order to win all for Christ Jesus.27

This is one of the most quoted statements of Libermann’s writings. It is indeed a very strong statement at a time when what was “black” was demonized. Libermann’s missionaries were to rid themselves of French nationalistic pride that often looked down on other cultures. Libermann called upon his missionaries to learn and be immersed in the culture of the people to whom they were ministering. The purpose of inculturation is to ennoble people and make them aware that they are God’s people. It makes them aware of their human dignity. Those who were evangelized needed ennoblement, which would help them to become self-regulating, self-reflective, autonomous individuals, whose commitments derive from voluntary choices.

Christy Burke points out: “People are not, must not be thought of, as ‘objects.’ Hence, to know a person is to establish a relationship with such a person … In the final analysis, the missionary is concerned with helping, but those who are being helped are never the ‘objects’ of his care.”28 As already noted, there is always a danger that a good work of charity may become paternalistic. That is the reason why Libermann calls upon his missionaries to be servants of those they are called to minister thus imitating Jesus who came not to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28). As servants, they were to listen to the other and allow themselves to be transformed by the other. To a missionary who took pride in resisting a French military officer he wrote, “Those who are charged with the salvation of people should know how to adapt to others without, however, being broken or breaking others.”29
Libermann’s attitude on inculturation was part of his general attitude of tolerance and prudence noted earlier concerning the liberation of slaves.

LIBERMANN AND THE FORMATION OF THE LOCAL CLERGY

Libermann was aware of the value and importance of seminaries for the Church. He had lived in seminaries for twelve years. He had assumed charge of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit in Paris at the time of the fusion of his congregation with that of the Holy Ghost in 1848. He knew that his missionaries were doing a commendable ministry on the missions. However, for him, the success of the missions depended not on expatriate missionaries but on the establishment of the local clergy. According to Paul Coulon, the origin of this idea can be traced back to Libermann’s friend, Fr. Jean Luquet (1810-58), a member of the Foreign Missions of Paris and missionary in Pondicherry, India. Luquet was secretary of a diocesan synod of Pondicherry which produced a document entitled Éclaircissements sur le synode de Pondichéry. This document has striking similarities with Libermann’s 1846 Mémoire.

Luquet was chosen by Propaganda to be the principal editor of the Pontifical Instruction, Neminem Profecto which called for the establishment of local episcopates and the training of local priests in the missions. Libermann knew of many flourishing missions in the past that collapsed because they depended almost exclusively on expatriate clergy. There were already ruined missions in Angola and Congo where the Capuchins alone had more than four hundred missionaries in the sixteenth century. His 1846 Mémoire referred to Angola.

The formation of local clergy was for Libermann a sine qua non for the success of the West African Mission. In his 1844 Mémoire to Propaganda, Libermann proposed that Africans would be brought to Europe for instruction. Luke Mbefo points out that sending Africans to Europe to study may be seen by some nationalists as ‘colonial arrogance enshrined in their self-given task of showing the Blacks how human life is to be lived, the so-called ‘white man’s burden,’ the colonial policy of the British, or to ‘moralize’ the noble savage as the French articulate it.” Despite this reservation, Mbefo is of the opinion that it was necessary for Africans to learn “European ways” to master their own destiny.

CONCLUSION

Far from being a hagiology, this study of Libermann’s theological anthropology has tried to situate him in the Sitz im Leben of the nineteenth century with its prejudices against Africans. Some of Libermann’s teaching give an impression of condescension. However, our main purpose was to substantiate that despite the racial prejudices Libermann had against Africans, his relationship with Africans through his missionaries transformed him to see them as children of God in need of God’s salvation. Libermann realized that humanity shines brightly in the poor and abandoned. They are a sign that being human is not a matter of what a person has but rather what kind of person he or she is. The face of abused Africans offered Libermann an indelible character to his mission, and convinced him that the culture of Africans is of great worth. As Elochukwu Uzukwu points out, Libermann was “penetrated and grasped by the humanum; this led to his profound trust in the value and giftedness of each human group, especially the most oppressed Blacks.” The humanum of Africans touched him and converted him to dedicate his life to the oppressed.


Spiritian Theologate, Nairobi.

ABBREVIATIONS

During retreats I have conducted about Libermann, I have encountered serious dissatisfaction and lack of interest in Libermann when I give disturbing quotations in Libermann’s writings. I believe that the truth should stand out and Libermann should not be judged using present day standards. We are also living in an age of racial and gender sensitivity as far as language is concerned. Yet racial prejudice continues to exist.


9. ND II, 69.

10. LS III, 158.


16. What Libermann and companions were endeavoring to do also served French colonial interests. A violent revolution similar to the one in Haiti was detrimental to French colonial interests, so they wanted a “smooth” transition from colonial occupation to independence but on French terms.

17. Kollman (2005) 62, 65. Kollman is also critical of the first Spiritan missionaries to East Africa for departing from Libermann’s abolitionist approach to slavery. Kollman analyzes the strategy of these missionaries which he says was “morally dubious” because among other reasons, they never declared the ex-slaves free and used slavery as an opportunity to win converts to Catholicism.


20. ND II, 256. Cited by Arsène Aubert, “Libermann in Conflict with Authorities.” 4. Règle Provisoire, First Part, Chapter IX, art. VI. This article is repeated in Libermann’s 1849 Rule (ND X, 517) and in the present Spiritan Rule of Life, 14.

21. ND II, 256. Règle Provisoire, First Part, Chapter IX, art. XIV.

22. ND VIII, 334.


25. Ibid.

26. ND I, 661.

27. ND IX, 330. My Italics.


FATHER ALPHONSE GILBERT (1921-2020): ANIMATED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD FOR A CENTURY

In his final book, Aventurier de l’Esprit Saint, a sort of spiritual autobiography, Father Alphonse Gilbert has made the task of his biographers easier. This rereading of his life allows us to follow the unfolding of his life. He was born on September 11, 1921 into a very loving and Christian family of four children in Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon. His father was a fisherman, “like the apostles,” he said, who worked hard during the cod-fishing season from spring until the end of September, on the banks of Newfoundland. The rest of the year, he was a carpenter “like Jesus.” His mother was a kindergarten teacher.

His vocation, he says, dates back to when he was ten years old, but already at the age of seven or eight, he had established an intimate contact with the Lord through prayer. He recalls his conversations with Jesus on Sundays when he arrived at the Spiritan school of Cellule in the Puy-de-Dôme, Auvergne region of France. It was a huge shock for this young boy. The priests maintained a strict distance from the students, addressing him as “Mr. Gilbert.” The very rigid life in this little seminary weighed on him enormously, all the more so because without a family in France, he had to remain there during vacation time. Fortunately, he was a gifted student. Every week a letter from his parents provided him with solace in his emotional solitude. At the end of three years, after eighth grade, he returned to his native island for a holiday.

Following the holiday, on his return journey to France, so as not to burden the family budget, he travelled on the boat de-Dôme, Auvergne region of France. It was a huge shock for this young boy. The priests maintained a strict distance from the students, addressing him as “Mr. Gilbert.” The very rigid life in this little seminary weighed on him enormously, all the more so because without a family in France, he had to remain there during vacation time. Fortunately, he was a gifted student. Every week a letter from his parents provided him with solace in his emotional solitude. At the end of three years, after eighth grade, he returned to his native island for a holiday. His last years in the minor seminary of Cellule were less daunting for him. He grew up and became accustomed to the harsh regime of a minor seminary of that time. Sports, particularly basketball, and later tennis, helped him to remain healthy.

He came to know in an intimate way, as he said, the first person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father.

With his baccalaureate in his pocket, he wanted to be a missionary like the priests of his island. He chose to become a Spiritan and, in 1940, was admitted to the Spiritan novitiate, which, because of the war, was situated in Piré-sur-Seiche, near Rennes, the birthplace of Claude Poullart des Places. They had to share the house with German soldiers, although they were already overcrowded with ninety-five novices.

Even if it was surprising to him during his novitiate year, he came to know in an intimate way, as he said, the first person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father. He also discovered Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, thanks to a pamphlet written by Fr. Liagre. This reading attenuated the rigidity of the teachings on hell and purgatory during the first so-called “conversion retreat” of the novitiate. He already discovered there how to live under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. On September 29, 1940, he took temporary vows in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Alphonse then followed a course of philosophy at Langonnet in Brittany followed by his entry into the Senior Scholasticate of Chevilly-Larue near Paris. There, he injured his foot one day while playing basketball. The infection worsened, and he was confined to bed for several months without any improvement. One of his friends, Paul Libman, secretly applied to the wound a relic of Father Brottier, who had died in the odor of sanctity in Auteuil a few years earlier. Alphonse found himself healed almost instantly and recognized Brottier as a miracle worker. His devotion to Fr. Brottier dates from this period, and he would later become postulator for his beatification.

To escape the CLS (Compulsory Labor Service) established by the Vichy regime and the Germans, he left Chevilly and became a tutor for a time to a family in the North of France. After the liberation, he returned to Chevilly. He was ordained a priest there at twenty-four years of age on July 8, 1945. No family member was able to attend from St. Pierre et Miquelon. His two brothers, then soldiers in the French army, arrived the following day. The return to his island on a fishing boat the Duguay-Trouin was quite incredible, with a passage through Gibraltar where the authorities imprisoned him for a while. On release, he enjoyed...
two months fishing every day for tuna off the coast of Newfoundland. Finally, he returned to Saint Pierre on a smaller boat, the Joseph Duhamel and was reunited with his family. His first mass in Saint-Pierre was a moment of great celebration. He would even hear his father’s confession and have the boat’s crew participate in the family’s joy. His way of living the priesthood was greatly influenced by this boating experience. The Holy Spirit inspired his future pastoral method, which he summarized as follows, “First of all, to love those around me, to go towards them, and to know them personally ... to be close to them and to be good to one another.”

His first appointment was a great disappointment. He dreamed of Africa but was appointed to Saint Alexander College in Ottawa instead as a professor and spiritual director. There he taught French literature, Latin, and Greek for fifteen years; he became a purist of the French language, as his numerous publications testify. He played many sports with the students and was involved in other ministries with the scouts and the YCS (Young Catholic Students). He found himself entrusted with a mission to the Algonquin, the aboriginal people of Canada, west of Quebec, whom he joined on weekends and at vacation-time.

Alphonse felt that this call was for him.
Here again he was a teacher and spiritual director.

Historian of the Generalate community in Clivo di Cinna, Rome.

a teacher and spiritual director. He also visited the shantytowns where extreme poverty reigned and made friends. He would stay only for a short time. As in Guinea a year earlier, he had to leave in solidarity with his confreres expelled by the president of the country, “Papa Doc” Duvalier. This was another terrible uprooting for him!

The new Superior General, Joseph Lécuyer, sent him to Gentinnes, Belgium, where the Spiritan apostolic school has just closed and where, with his Belgian confreres, he opened a new center of spirituality. During this year, he learned of the death of his mother on June 22, 1969. A few months later the sad news reached him that his father had died on January 16, 1970. He was unable to attend either funeral.

In the summer of 1970, the French provincial invited him to preach the month of preparation for perpetual vows at Pire-sur-Seiche to young Spiritans preparing for the diaconate. Following this retreat he was appointed director of the theological scholasticate at Chevilly-Larue. This invitation greatly surprised him, as he was little known by the French confreres.

The Senior Scholasticate at Chevilly-Larue had become the “Consortium of Missionary Studies” at the service of Spiritan students, the Foreign Missions of Paris, the African Missions of Lyon, as well as religious sisters and some lay people. It served about one hundred and thirty students. Fr. Alphonse spent five years there from 1970 to 1975. I knew him and lived with him during my last two years as a student there. I began to pray there. I interpreted these words as an invitation for me to pray in all circumstances. He shared with me many adventures of his travels. He recounts that, on a mission to Zambia, how he was bitten by a tarantula. The antidote from a pagan Indian guru saved his life.

During his Roman years in Rome, particularly in Via Tito Livio, a parish served by Spiritans. He shared a beautiful collaboration born in Via Tito Livio, a parish served by Spiritans. He shared this beautiful collaboration with Pierre Goursat, and a collaboration was born that would remain until 1988. During that time, he published Tu as mis sur moi ta main which proved very popular. This presentation of Libermann quotations associated with particular periods of his life, was a simple handout translated into several languages which, like most of his publications, became bedside reading for many Spiritans. In 1990, he took to writing again. This time it was a book to make known to the Foundation Apprentis d’Auteuil the source of Blessed Daniel Brottier’s spirituality, Dieu est tout, François Libermann. In 1985, the work was supplemented and developed for the general public by another publication, Le feu sur la terre. One can regret, along with Paul Coulon, that Alphonse did not rigorously follow the historical method in his work. Nevertheless, his simple and pleasant writings on Libermann were a welcome change from the usually austere way in which Libermann was presented in works such as Coulon’s books on Libermann and Poullart des Places, or those of Fr. Christian de Marc. Alphonse collaborated with another Spiritan scholar, Fr. Joseph Lécuyer, the former Superior General, who specialized in study on our founder Claude François Poullart des Places, publishing his writings in a critical edition through the Spiritan Center. The Center continued the publication of the Cahiers Spiritains (twenty-two issues) and Spiritans Today (five issues), so valuable at the time for the formation of young Spiritans.

During his Roman years, Gilbert traveled extensively to Spiritan communities throughout the world to provide animation, especially through retreat work. I had the opportunity to meet him at Yaoundé for a retreat on the Holy Spirit. On that occasion, he came to visit the missions of North Cameroon and my mission in Mokong. He slept there one night. The mission was built in the middle of large granite rocks. In the early morning, he said to me, “Jesus would surely have liked to pray in your rocks!” He himself had got up early to pray there. I interpreted these words as an invitation for me to pray more. He shared with me many adventures of his travels. He recounted, on a mission to Zambia, how he was bitten by a tarantula. The antidote from a pagan Indian guru saved his life.

Alphonse was admired during his time in Rome, particularly in Via Tito Livio, a parish served by Spiritans. He shared a good balance between work, spirituality and sport, tennis in particular. His ability to pray in all circumstances helped him cope with life’s challenges. He once said that he lived “what the mystics call a definitive union with God... One experiences an incredible inner strength, certainty, and serenity.” In 1988, he was appointed Director of the Daniel Brottier Spirituality Center at Orphelins Apprentis d’Auteuil in Paris. Before that, en route from Rome, he had the great joy of spending five months in the Holy Land following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Alphonse was Director of Pastoral Animation in Auteuil. In 1990, he wrote a 600-page book on the life and mission of Father Brottier, En confiance, Daniel Brottier. As postulator for the cause of Brottier’s beatification, he processed the miracle culminating in Brottier’s beatification on November 25, 1984. Alphonse is one of the best interpreters of Fr. Brottier, particularly on how he was influenced...
A synthesis of his teachings given during his numerous retreats in some forty countries.

by the spirituality of Father Libermann and that of Thérèse of Lisieux. Brottier was convinced that it was Libermann and Thérèse who protected him for more than four years during the Great War when he was a volunteer military chaplain.

In 2000, Alphonse published another book for the general public on the blessed, *Le bienheureux Daniel Brottier.* Later, in 2003, his popular retreat with Brottier was published, *Prier quinze jours avec Daniel Brottier.* Here we can see some facets of the impressive holiness of this Servant of God reflecting the essential aspects of his way of apostolic holiness. In each of these facets chosen for these fifteen days of prayer, Alphonse could recognize himself and apply them to himself.

From 1995 to 2002, Alphonse was again in Rome as spiritual director at the French Seminary, Procurator of the French Bishops to the Holy See, and Postulator of several causes of saints. In 2000-2001, I had the opportunity to spend a year with him there. I was able to see how much at home he was in Rome, knowing many people and speaking “Italian better than many Italians themselves,” according to the seminary housekeepers.

In 2002, he returned to France as chaplain of Maison Africa at Nogent sur Marne (Retreat House of the Spiritan Sisters and some Spiritans). In 2008, he returned to Chevilly to retire. In 2013, he published a book on the Holy Spirit, *Animés par l’Esprit de Dieu.* This is a synthesis of his teachings given during his numerous retreats in some forty countries. On the back cover, we read,

“All who are led by the Holy Spirit are sons of God” (Rom 8:14). This phrase of Saint Paul seduced Father Alphonse Gilbert from the beginning of his religious life and placed his apostolate under the sign of life in the Spirit, left as an inheritance by Christ. Who is the Holy Spirit? What is his nature and his role in the Trinity? How does he act in our lives or how can we let him act? Since he makes us sons of God, it is crucial, if not vital, to get to know him in order to listen to him on our way to the Father. This book, the fruit of a rich personal and apostolic experience, allows us to better understand the reality of the Holy Spirit and gives us the keys to let him do his work in our lives.”

He was a spoiled child of the Good Lord. He was a spoiled child of the Good Lord! First by his Christian family, neither rich nor poor, but loving and united. This modest but very protective family environment allowed him that priceless gift, to experience God from his earliest childhood. He would know the affection of his parents, his father in particular, but also that of his brothers and especially of his sister, whose death at the age of eleven was an immense family trauma. His was a childhood spoiled by the Good Lord also by the simple and careful education he received in his family, in his school, and in his parish where the priests lived closely with their little flock.

He was a spoiled child of the Good Lord still by his intelligence and the culture he developed in himself from his youth and throughout his life. Alphonse was a cultured man, with a very faithful memory. He knew many poems by heart since his time as a professor of literature but probably before that, since his high school years. His was a prodigious memory in everyday life as well. Many marveled at his ability, from the first day of the new school year, to spot and remember the names of all the new seminarians who had just arrived. He became fluent in English and Italian, which proved invaluable in preaching retreats in English-speaking countries.

He was a spoiled child of the Good Lord best with a very fine artistic sense. In Canada, he was familiar with many artists, poets, and singers such as Félix Leclerc. In Paris, at the Théâtre de la Ville in 1971, he brought a group to a Gilles Vigneault concert. He had also written plays and acted himself and, despite his weak voice, he had an extraordinary presence in front of the public and knew how to capture the attention of his listeners in his speeches and his homilies.

He was a spoiled child of the Good Lord again and especially as far as his life as a religious priest and Spiritan missionary was concerned. Like everyone else, he went through various stages, first as a simple teacher, then as director of minor and major seminaries without any specific formation that I know of for these difficult functions. How was he able to do this? How could he become a preacher appre-
He had the gift of empathy and was capable of compassion in the face of human suffering and misery.

As a young man, Alphonse had given his life to God, and he never took back his promise.

However, I believe that the secret of his life is simpler than that and lies elsewhere. As a young man, Alphonse had given his life to God, and he never took back his promise. God accepted this gift and refined throughout his life this arrow of choice that goes straight to the point without deviation. He had a faith anchored in his body without ever letting the slightest doubt show through. The secret of his life lies there. He lived under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as he often said. As a Spiritan, he had consecrated himself to the Holy Spirit. He lived his life in abandonment to this Holy Spirit, as the founders of his congregation, Poullart des Places and Libermann, whom he knew well, had known how to do. He lived his life in intimacy with Jesus joining with him in daily prayer and in trusting obedience to the Father. He was therefore able to show great freedom in all aspects of his life. Probably this is why he was the man of wise counsel for others; able to listen to everyone in confidence, even the most wounded of people, able to accompany many people. The Lord had given him the gift of discernment. He inspired confidence in those who met him, and his presence brought calm to troubled souls.

Two testimonials conclude this tribute to Fr. Alphonse Gilbert, C.S.Sp. The first coming from André Revert, a former student of Saint-Alexandre in Canada. He wrote, “I had seen in Alphonse Gilbert, a mentor, a beacon of light that was both brilliant and soothing, an inspiring being, so balanced and complete on the intellectual, spiritual, moral, social, artistic, and athletic levels. His memory will long live on in the hearts of the people who met him at some point in their lives.” The final testimony comes from one of my Spiritan confrères from Reunion Island. On learning the news of his death, he wrote, “He was a beautiful soul. I visited him every vacation. I interviewed him many times. He had a way of being, as if he was always accompanied. He was more than just his books.”

Étienne Osty, C.S.Sp.
Chevilly, Paris.

ENDNOTES

In the missionary journey of the Spiritans, as in the whole Church, models of action and self-understanding have varied according to political, social, and cultural circumstances and, at the same time, in permanent expression of the missionary thought of the Church, in inevitable revision and re-élaboration, inscribed in the occasionally troubled rhythms of history. The social, cultural, and ecclesial relations between Europe and the other continents also reflect these variations and developments. In each concrete case, we can find specific elements that nevertheless corroborate a common process of renewal of missionary thought and the evangelizing action of the Church. The following reflection will take a concrete case, the mission of the Spiritan province of Portugal, to present a series of aspects common to the evolution in missiology following Vatican II.

The emergence of a new European and world order in the second half of the twentieth century, brought about profound changes (from which Portugal will only benefit much later) that saw the birth of a new thinking about the Church, about the place of evangelization, and about the relationship between the Church and the world. These changes had immense consequences for the theology of mission and for a new ordering of the presence of missionary institutes in the world, and, specifically, for the Spiritans. From this new model (or new models), whose outlines have been developing, it is perhaps possible to outline the great axes of this new missiological model.
I. FROM MISSIONS TO MISSION

One of the most important missiological insights, with immense pastoral consequences, is the transition to a new theological focus from an emphasis on the functional aspects of missionary activity, with an understanding centered on the places, “the missions” and the missionary activity in those places. In this new focus, mission emerges as the very source of the Church’s being and action and is rooted in the inner dynamism of the Blessed Trinity, and in its divine missions. The Father sends the Son, in the Holy Spirit; the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit; in the Holy Spirit the Son sends the disciples, from His filial relationship with the Father: “As the Father sent me, so I send you: receive the Holy Spirit.”¹ This eminently theological approach recalls the theology of Missio Dei, as it has become known, which completely transforms all understanding of mission and missionary activity.² Without expanding on the extraordinary complexity of this understanding it is suffice to note the emergence of an ecclesiology rooted in the discipleship of Christ, Redeemer of all, and in the gift of Baptism.

On the other hand, in its widest extent, the theology of Missio Dei, relativized the geographical dimension of mission, which is everywhere. It occasioned multiple articulations between religious, cultural, and human situations, and not only in the bipolar articulation between “Christian countries” (in a concept of “Christianity” that the secularity of the state and the separation of registers had long put in crisis) and “mission lands.” God is everywhere and the theater that the secularity of the state and the separation of registers had long put in crisis) and “mission lands.” God is everywhere and the theater for mission is in every human heart.

From this geographical relocation of the mission, comes a new crisis: that of the very concept of “mission ad gentes.” Who are “the peoples,” if all peoples are agents of mission and recipients of it? Other designations have been rehearsed, with that of “mission ad extra” (that mission is about going out...) or, from the new Asian theologies, that of “inter gentes” mission (which also presupposes a precise Asian context, in which the Christian community, a minority, feels sent to its people in the midst of its people - inter gentes).

Pope John Paul II, in the encyclical Redemptoris Missio, located the dimension of first evangelization, within the missionary vitality of the Church as a whole.³ This vitality caused the pope to call for a resurgence of missionary activity. “Today the Church must face other challenges and push forward to new frontiers, both in the initial mission ad gentes and in the new evangelization of those peoples who have already heard Christ proclaimed.”⁴ Based on its theological source, missionary activity is freed from an institutional or merely functional reductionism.

2. FROM INSTITUTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION TO COMMUNAL DYNAMISM

Mission, therefore, becomes less a strategic process of implanting the Church, through the gradual expansion of institutional structures, and more a vital dynamism from an experience of discipleship and sending in the Holy Spirit by which the gift of life in Christ is communicated through witness, proclamation, service, and dialogue. This experience – based on God’s Mission and a common baptismal commissioning – is led by Christ, in the Spirit, through the Church as the Sacrament of Salvation. It is thus an experience of all Christians, each according to his or her own vocation, and it is truly fused with the very being of the Church, in which mission and ecclesial identity are, deep down, different designations for the same unique reality. Mission and communion thus refer to a common dynamism: Trinitarian communion is essentially dynamic, made up of the sending relationships within the bosom of the Trinity and, in the work of creation, as a kind of shining forth, out of love, of divine life. To accept the gift of the Spirit, given by Christ, from the Father, is to accept to graft oneself into this eternal movement of going out and meeting. To follow Jesus is to accompany Him in his mission. To commune in Him in the life of God is to become Church and this is, by definition, a dynamic shining forth; a participation in the one Mission, which is of Christ and is Christ.

Expanding the Church is understood as welcoming and radiating communion in a dynamic process that we call mission. Thus, missions, as places of presence and activity of the Church (expert missionaries sent “on mission”) become relatively secondary, a practical consequence of Christ’s Mission, by Christ and with Christ, which we celebrate in the Eucharist, proclaim in the Word, and serve in the community. From this comes a new emphasis given to all Christians: not only priests, men and women religious, but also the lay faithful, the multitude of disciples who, by their own and not subsidiary title, accept themselves as active members of an ecclesial body that is missionary.

Spiritual movements were invited to absorb this new way of situating themselves: in Portugal, the Liamists (Liga Intensificadora da Ação Missionária), and later the Youth Without Borders (Jovens Sem Fronteiras), like all the other members of the other move-

This communitarian model clearly opens the way to the emergence of an important expression of contemporary mission.

3. FROM THE COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS TO THE CENTRALITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The theocentric, Christological and pneumatological dimensions of the mission returns it, as has been said, to the core of its ecclesial identity, removing it from a reductive and restrictive status of a functional and geographical nature, attributed to a specific sector of activity within the Church, reserved for institutions specialized in this functional area. Located at the very heart of the Church, the Church becomes its rightful holder and, therefore, the functioning of the mission becomes dependent, by definition and theological requirement, not on specialized institutions, but on the whole Church, according to its charismatic and hierarchical character. Therefore, bishops have the first responsibility for the missionary action of the Church, in their role of leadership service within the Church.

Religious institutes, taking their proper place, are inscribed in the ecclesial fabric, and are not, therefore, entities parallel to the particular Churches, but part of the constitution of their internal dynamism. In “mission lands,” the superiors of missionary institutes, as agents of evangelization in a certain territory, have, in some instances, superseded local bishops. Such subjugation is foreign to the dogmatic structure of the Church. In this renewed understanding of the place of the bishops in evangelization, without excluding first evangelization, that tension loses all meaning.

To this renewal and theological deepening, of which the Council was the bearer, must be added the effective development of the local churches founded by Spiritans. From the beginning, the Spiritans, in line with their own spirituality, assumed as a sine qua non to their commitment to the growth of the local church, the creation of structures at the service of the local churches and the formation of an indigenous clergy. This urgency, underlined long before the Council by the Roman Magisterium, finds an interesting example (among so many others) in the Spiritan presence in Angola. The bishops of Angola, from the creation of the three dioceses in the early 1940s (Luanda, Nova Lisboa and Sá da Bandeira - today Huambo and Lubango), were at the beginning, all Spiritans and then local priests formed by Spiritans. With the successive developments of the dioceses, which reached the rich profusion of local churches in Angola, as we have today, this Spiritan mark has perhaps become more explicit. Until independence, by very conscious choice, they had committed themselves, with regard to priestly formation, only to the formation of the local secular clergy, so that the first house of Spiritan formation proper only opened in 1977, more than a hundred years after the arrival of the congregation in the country.

This primacy of the local Church, promoted by the Council, but already present, therefore, has always gained not only ecclesiological support, but also political, cultural and social impetus from the awareness in African societies of the fundamental right of a people to self-determination. As mentioned above, the missionary model adopted by Spiritans resulted from an intertwining of ecclesial and pastoral motivations with European nationalist and ethnocentric motivations, combining “evangelizing work” with “civilizing work” with a view to the cultural assimilation of the African peoples to the supposedly Christian western culture. This relationship was challenged at the same time as the African peoples were becoming ever more aware of their rights and the legitimacy of their claims, for which they began to organize and free themselves from the colonial yoke. From the 1940s and especially during the 1950s, African reflection and militant activism were leading to an organized and well-founded discourse that demanded liberation.

This primary of the local Church, promoted by the Council, but already present, therefore, has always gained not only ecclesiological support, but also political, cultural and social impetus from the awareness in African societies of the fundamental right of a people to self-determination. As mentioned above, the missionary model adopted by Spiritans resulted from an intertwining of ecclesial and pastoral motivations with European nationalist and ethnocentric motivations, combining “evangelizing work” with “civilizing work” with a view to the cultural assimilation of the African peoples to the supposedly Christian western culture. This relationship was challenged at the same time as the African peoples were becoming ever more aware of their rights and the legitimacy of their claims, for which they began to organize and free themselves from the colonial yoke. From the 1940s and especially during the 1950s, African reflection and militant activism were leading to an organized and well-founded discourse that demanded liberation, which, in the absence of any other alternative, gave way to armed struggle. In the case of Portugal, the fascist ideology of the dictatorial regime that prevailed in Portugal until 1975 labelled this liberation struggle as “terrorism” and, initially, most missionaries of European origin adopted this language and attitude.

However, the evolution of history and the erosion of the regime gave way to a new attitude, which resulted in the independence of Portuguese-speaking African nations in 1975. In this context, the
missionaries (including some Spiritans, but not they alone) who were unable to transition to this new social and political order, found themselves caught up in a crisis of identity regarding the raison d’être of the foreign missionary presence itself: if it was no longer Portugal, why stay? On the other hand, this was also the time for the protagonists for a local Church to question the presence and action of religious institutes. These questions, which reflected a deep crisis of meaning and demanded a reconfiguration of motivation, had the benefit of provoking a purifying and clarifying process, giving a new impulse to authentic missionary motivation as illuminated by the Council and subsequent theological and pastoral thinking.

In those troubled times, many missionaries left their place of mission, not only because of their disenchantment with the situation at the time, but also because, although, wishing to stay, they were expelled. There were those who wanted to remain, but found it impossible to manage the unbearable conditions and extreme violence caused by Marxist-Leninist regimes (which succeeded with a new oppression in place of the colonial one) and by the war that ravaged Angola and also Mozambique, where the Spiritans would only arrive later, in a completely different context. The missionaries who managed to stay had the privilege of participating actively in building a local Church in this, its new and decisive stage, marked by persecution and trial of all kinds as it grew in maturity. The dioceses multiplied, the local clergy consolidated and, in several cases, became capable of solidarity by sharing human resources with the neediest churches. Thus, a situation arose by which these young Churches went from being “founded” to being “founders,” manifesting an evolving missionary dynamism, both locally and with increasing engagement with other places (including the mother churches of Europe), and with other cultures.

4. FROM CIVILIZING WORK TO INCULTURATION

It has always been very clear, in any model of mission, that closeness between missionaries and the people to whom they are sent is essential. As was said before, the Spiritans have always guided their presence and action by a strong commitment to learning the local languages and cultures of the people, which, in the case of evangelization in Angola and Cape Verde, was particularly effective. This real effort of the missionaries over the centuries to integrate and adjust to the reality of each people (through language, access to cultural symbols, affective closeness) could be generically called acculturation, referring, therefore, to individuals and their way of adapting, more or less narrowly, to local realities.

As for the content and form of the proclamation and content of evangelization, the priority given to language and translations, as well as the effort to make the Gospel message intelligible to each person, has always been present. These processes of approaching the message could be called adaptation: the proclamation is essentially extrinsic to the recipients, but it is presented to them in a format adapted to their linguistic and cultural codes, to become perceptible and acceptable. However, because of the way the Church understood herself, her message, her liturgical practice, and her expression of the faith, the way of being and practicing Catholicism among the peoples to whom the Spiritans went on mission remained unchanged. The liturgical forms, language, and catechetical models largely followed the European model. Attention to cultural paradigms, worldviews, and ethical codes did not go so far as to allow for a dialogue with the Christian proclamation, allowing it to reorient them while emptying them of what was incompatible.

In 1962, in the Nouvelle Revue Théologique, Joseph Masson SJ published an interesting article identified as one of the founding texts for what came to be known as inculturation. In the following decades, with abundant theological and pastoral writing in this area, the theme of inculturation developed strongly, not only at the theological level, but especially in the pastoral field. Inculturation is not understood as the superficial form of communication of the Gospel, but rather as the process of integrating the Gospel into the heart of cultures, transforming them from within and thus producing the personal and social metamorphoses that make possible the formation of an authentic Christian community, generated in a people and from a culture. Inculturation is not only a question of producing an expression of faith with the elements proper to culture, but the articulation of “an inspiring, normative and unifying principle that transforms and recreates this culture, giving rise to a new creation.”

Inculturation therefore refers much more to the Gospel and the Church as such than to the agents of mission alone. It is not exactly the foreign missionary who becomes “inculturated,” but the Gospel which, by penetrating cultures, generates a new reality which, rather than being syncretic or hybrid, is the expression of an authentically Catholic and authentically local Church. Consequently, inculturation refers not only to the initial process of evangelization (as in first evangelization), but to all its stages, in all contexts: it implies a permanent dialogue between faith and cultures, since faith always uses...
cultural support as its vehicle for expression. A “pure state” of faith, in which this cultural support is dispensed with, simply does not exist, since faith is lived by humans who invariably only know themselves in their cultural context. All this supposes a very dynamic, progressive way of understanding mission in all its aspects, including the transmission of faith.

Although it may seem mainly theoretical, this approach to mission, as a process of evangelization, is practical and has immense consequences for the way missionaries situate themselves in relation to the society in which they are inserted, in relation to the Church to which they belong, in relation to the people with whom they establish countless interactions. The mark that this passage has left on the Spiritans is indelible and deserves at least some brief comment.

Spiritans have contributed significantly in their places of mission to the formation of a local clergy, as well as the formation of a mature laity, which is already, in itself, a first and indispensable condition for the development of the process of inculturation. It is through the formation of members from each culture that the integration and maturing of the Christian faith in that culture becomes possible. The growth of a local clergy and lay agents of evangelization in the African Churches (and beyond) is thus the decisive basis for the emergence of an authentically local and authentically Catholic Church. In the case of Portuguese Spiritans regarding the mission ad gentes in the pre-conciliar period, this investment focused mainly on Angola and Cape Verde.

The missionary commitments assumed by the Spiritans after the Council already had, on their horizon of priorities and central missionary values, the need to bring about the maturing of the local Church according to this fundamental principle of inculturation. The case of Guinea Bissau, as an international project, with an international team of Spiritans, is of particular interest. The Spiritans who went to Guinea Bissau committed themselves to an evangelization that would bring about the gradual emergence of a local Christian community, based on the local culture. The Gospel, in its originality, received from the local culture its own original configuration, creating within that culture a new and essential reformulation. This effort, present since the beginning of the Spiritan presence in Guinea-Bissau, produced the undeniable fruits of an evangelization of the regions where they were located, initially only among the Manjak (Manjaco) people. In this case, as in others of earlier missionary efforts, the radical change of approach is very evident: integral service to the human being, in which growth is sought in all aspects of individual and collective reality that does not involve the transmission of European cultural categories, as if Western civilization were part of the evangelizing proposal. Helping the human being to be himself, each people to be themselves, is a condition for the proclamation of Jesus Christ to become relevant in this process of “integral development.” Being a Christian does not mean, therefore, to change one’s culture, but rather to change oneself within one’s own culture.

With this understanding, the ad gentes work of missionaries allowed for the inclusion of elements extrinsic to culture and it is accepted that the people, with their culture, are the holder and protagonist of their own process of growth in the Christian faith. The recognition that culture is a dynamic reality in continuous interaction with otherness creates the favorable conditions necessary for an encounter with the difference that enables the Gospel to take root in different environments in different ways according to different cultures. The subject of this process is certainly the local Church and the people of God, rather than the foreign missionary who does what he can to the extent that he really integrates himself into the new Church and society that welcomes him.

5. FROM MONOLITHIC DISCOURSE TO INTERCULTURAL AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The development of the Church’s view of culture and cultures is important in the transformation of its attitude towards other religions. The perception of the intrinsic value of each people and its culture (within the realm of spiritual, aesthetic, artistic, technical, and literary values, etc.) leads to the recognition of the essential presence of the Good in each culture, including the spiritual and religious element. At the Second Vatican Council, the theology and spirituality of the “seeds of the Word” of which St. Justin spoke (in the second century) was recovered, referring to expressions of truth and God’s presence in all religious traditions, thus functioning as a preparation for encounter with the Gospel. In the Ad Gentes decree, the Council invites Christians (and, therefore, all missionaries), with regard to the different human groupings, to become “familiar with their national and religious traditions; let them gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden among their fellows.” The encounter with religions then becomes, not a strategy for proclaiming the Gospel, but a valid place for evangelization. This is a recurring theme in the document. "Just as interreligious dialogue is one element in the mission..."
The Church recognized the “seeds of the Word” in other religions.

of the Church, the proclamation of God’s saving work in Our Lord Jesus Christ is another... There can be no question of choosing one and ignoring or rejecting the other.10

The document *Dialogue and Proclamation*10 of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue identifies five major pillars of the Church’s mission: witness, service to social development, liturgy, dialogue and proclamation. The importance of proclamation in the transmission of the faith is of such importance that it can even eclipse the other four elements, which are also important. However, the successive reaffirmation by the magisterium of the importance of dialogue by providing elements for its definition and understanding leaves no room for doubt about the importance of this theme.

The recognition by the Council and the Magisterium of the spiritual and religious validity of many aspects of other religions has certainly generated a difficult, even turbulent, crisis that required a deepening of some Christological and ecclesiological principles related to faith in Christ, the only Savior, and to the ecclesiological principle that outside the Church there is no salvation. Without undermining the role of Jesus as only Son of God, and as the only savior, and maintaining the centrality of the Church as “sacrament of salvation,” the Church recognized the “seeds of the Word” in other religions. This recognition not only legitimizes, but also demands, a missionary approach full of humility. It is the way of pilgrimage in contemplation of the truth with which God has imprinted all peoples and cultures; and full of closeness and hospitality, welcoming the difference of the other as a place where God speaks and makes possible “a dialogue of salvation” necessary for the encounter with Christ and the integration into the community of his disciples. It was from this experience that Paul VI spoke in his Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*.

Youth Without Borders (Jovens Sem Fronteiras) movement (JSF), founded in the Patriarchate of Lisbon in 1983, is an eloquent example of this: missionary insertion in the midst of young people, starting from young people, valuing their forms of cultural and spiritual expression, and empowering their witness in their own process of Christian maturity. Here too, Libermann’s maxim becomes concrete: “Make yourself blacks with the blacks,” as a principle of identification and empathy with the actual people with whom one is called to walk.

Another eloquent case is the Liga Intensificadora da Ação Missionária (LIAM), founded in Fatima in 1937 and which would come to be the defining mark that Spiritans imprinted on the Portuguese Church in the second half of the twentieth century. The parish and diocesan base of LIAM, later also followed by the JSF, fully assumes the smaller Spiritan presence in Paraguay and other Latin American countries, and in Mozambique, which came later.

6. FROM SPECIALIZED AND EXCLUSIVE MISSION TO SHARED MISSION

All that has been said above regarding the new theology of mission, which integrates the importance of inculturation and interreligious and inter-spiritual dialogue, enhances the path, begun well before the Council, of inclusion of the laity in Spiritan mission, taking this inclusion to much deeper levels. Indeed, the overcoming of a monolithic attitude towards truth and towards mission not only opened the way to another attitude towards peoples and their different religions, but also fostered a position of humility, self-reliance and inclusiveness that made possible and natural a much greater proximity also towards other vocations and identities within the Church and within the Spiritan family. Thus, the path of inclusion and shared mission, long begun, gains here a new possibility of appreciation. The “Youth Without Borders” (Jovens Sem Fronteiras) movement (JSF), founded in the Patriarchate of Lisbon in 1983, is an eloquent example of this: missionary insertion in the midst of young people, starting from young people, valuing their forms of cultural and spiritual expression, and empowering their witness in their own process of Christian maturity. Here too, Libermann’s maxim becomes concrete: “Make yourself blacks with the blacks,” as a principle of identification and empathy with the actual people with whom one is called to walk.

More recently, the emergence of lay associates is another strong expression of shared Spiritan mission. Portuguese Spiritans in the 70s were forced to leave Angola and chose to go to Brazil, their way of mission was always about being close to and among the poorest people, taking up with the local Church the cause of the integral liberation of the people. We can say the same for the smaller Spiritan presence in Paraguay and other Latin American countries, and in Mozambique, which came later.
There are no foreigners in the Congregation and there is more than one experience of mission.

Horizons

There are Pedro Fernandes, C.S.Sp. of mission.

IN JUSTICE AND PEACE

equal partners in a common vocation.

more than one experience of mission. All are equally entitled; all are increasing presence of members from other cultures in Europe is both

ers are not auxiliaries, but together we are holders of a common mission. The “we” is made of “others.” Communion presupposes diversity and the one cannot exist without the other.

8. FROM NATIONAL MISSION TO INTERNATIONALITY IN MISSION

The broadening of horizons on the conceptual and theological level, has led to a progressive overcoming of the understanding of mission defined by national parameters. Just as in the Church there are no foreigners, there are no foreigners in the Congregation and there is more than one experience of mission. All are equally entitled; all are equal partners in a common vocation. The former bipolar character of mission (between “Christianity” and the “mission lands”, identified with “overseas”), has morphed into a much more complete unitive vision in which exchange and dialogue, openness, and unity in diversity, constitute the preponderant paradigm.

These structural evolutions thus lead to the realization that, regardless of the reduction of the active number of European Spiritans (and this reduction, accompanied by marked aging, is very real), the increasing presence of members from other cultures in Europe is both a spiritual and ethical requirement. The witness of dialogue, universal brotherhood, and evangelical witness absolutely needs this variety of Spiritan personnel and the experience, lived ad intra, of the joys and sorrows of cultural diversity. It is for this reason that the dimension of “internationality” or “interculturality” is an integral part of the current model of mission increasingly practiced in the congregation. The others are not auxiliaries, but together we are holders of a common mission. The “we” is made of “others.” Communion presupposes diversity and the one cannot exist without the other.

8. FROM PATERNALISM TO PARITY: NEW APPROACHES IN JUSTICE AND PEACE

The dimension of justice and peace in the mission of the Church is omnipresent and transversal. The option for the poor, essential to the Spiritan charism, has always been a pillar of everything that

Prioritized projects related, in a broad sense, to justice and peace, and to development.

Solidarity is understood less and less as acting out of charity, and more and more as a duty of justice.

Spiritan Hori zons

Spiritan efforts to evangelize, in their dimension of service and witness, has always prioritized projects related, in a broad sense, to justice and peace, and to development. Schools, hospitals, agricultural and craft projects, works of economic development, defense of the vulnerable, empowerment of women, etc., have always been strong components of Spiritan mission. It is interesting to see how the people keep not so much the memory of competence, eloquence or fruitfulness in action, but above all, they keep the memory of the missionaries who defended their rights, who walked alongside them. Names of Spiritans, such as Fr. Cretaz or Fr. Campos, in Cape Verde, are associated with countless stories, sometimes almost legendary, related to caring for the poorest and most in need.

The long journey, in its various aspects, described above, and the successive initiatives that Spiritan mission has been making have given way to a new approach with regard to the defense of the poorest.12 “Being the advocates and defenders of the poorest” Spiritans came to perceive the poor, as the totality of the people with whom they worked, as subjects of their own process of growth and liberation from poverty and not as objects of charity from others, or as recipients of social action from specialists. Solidarity is understood less and less as acting out of charity, and more and more as a duty of justice, which places the option of love, always present, in its most appropriate register. Commitment alongside the victims of injustice or the weak is not an optional extra, but an evangelical and missionary imperative. Thus, projects of development and social solidarity have become fewer and fewer actions of the rich to help the poor and more and more about human projects with people cooperating with each other to build a more just society aligned with evangelical values. This implies more demanding undertakings conceived with ever-greater professionalism and rigor, and carried out with total and non-negotiable transparency and accountability.

The NGO Sol sem Fronteiras (“Sun Without Borders”), born of the Spiritans and the Spiritan family in Portugal, embodies this approach of solidarity in service to development in everyday life. CEPAC,13 in Lisbon, had its first embryonic expression in the work of Frs. José Vaz, Figueira, Afonso Cunha and others who, at the time of Cape Verde’s independence and beyond, committed themselves to protecting and welcoming Cape Verdians who arrived in Portugal without the minimum requirements to succeed here with dignity. With
simple beginnings, it grew to become a social support organization with a considerable number of employees and dozens of volunteers. These two Spiritan institutions in Portugal, although geared to different objectives, are consolidating the missionary action of the Spiritan family and generating great synergies between Spiritan missionaries ad intra and ad extra, the Spiritan family movements, and many people of good will who identify with Spiritan causes.

CONCLUSION

Over the last century, spiritual, theological, and pastoral acquisitions have been added to the long road travelled by Spiritans in Portugal, converging on what is today the dominant model of the Spiritan presence in this country. In this model, and concluding from what has been described above, we could summarize some central axes:

• a mission of closeness, by the appreciation coming from being in the midst of people, sharing their situation, challenges and missionary calls;
• a mission of dialogue and hospitality, by the appreciation of cultures, differences, and the way God speaks to us today through others;
• a mission of proclamation and confessional clarity, pursuing a following of Christ that has to be unequivocal and radical, witnessing and announcing the Salvation that only He can offer. This proclamation and witness take place within that process of closeness and dialogue, deeply respectful of differences and deeply consistent with one’s own identity.

In all this, what is at stake is always more than strategies or theological systems. It is the life and the practice of a Christocentric spirituality that transcends everything and integrates everything in the light of the Gospel.

It is a Christian praxis coming from a concrete experience of God in the midst of His people.

It is this spiritual vitality and this existential experience of God that makes the journey possible, traveled in the last century, and taken up in the present century, in constant fidelity to a call that has always been present, and renewed in today’s challenges.

INTRODUCTION

On the feast of Saint Joseph, March 19, 2021, the Foundation Apprentis d’Auteuil celebrated its one hundred and fifty-fifth anniversary. Founded by Father Louis Roussel in 1866 as “The Work of Our Lady for First Communion” in the village of Auteuil, then a suburb of Paris, Apprentis d’Auteuil soon became an orphanage with the intention of giving street children not only a shelter but also training, and the possibility of obtaining an apprenticeship. The name of the work changed to Orphelins Apprentis d’Auteuil – Orphans and Apprentices of Auteuil. Fr. Roussel was to direct the work for over thirty years. However, over time, and especially after the First World War, the work was often in severe financial difficulty. In 2023, the Foundation will mark one hundred years since the Spiritans, with the appointment of Daniel Brottier and Yves Pichon, took over its direction from Father Mullet.

Auteuil has since entered the annals of the history of the congregation as a major educational work of the French province inspired by the example of Blessed Daniel Brottier. However, despite the presence of fifteen Spiritans currently ministering in the foundation, Apprentis d’Auteuil is not, strictly speaking, a Spiritan work. The Fondation Apprentis d’Auteuil is a catholic work of education of the Archdiocese of Paris and placed by the Archdiocese under the canonical, pastoral, and spiritual guardianship (tutelle) of the French province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. The foundation also has the unique status of being not only an ecclesiastical work of the Archdiocese of Paris, but also a Public Service Organization (Fondation Reconnue d’Utilité Publique) recognized by the French State which appoints a commissioner to represent the state’s interests at the highest level of the foundation’s governance.

Currently the state provides for roughly fifty percent of the foundation’s annual operational budget while fundraising and philanthropy provides the other fifty percent. The Spiritans, therefore, have a significant role to play in the mission of the foundation which, while often identified as a specifically Spiritan work within the congregation is, in fact, a partnership of different actors who bring together their competence, resources, and gospel commitment. This partnership ensures that young people, whose educational opportunities are being blocked by failure and other obstacles, can be accompanied and given the appropriate training and skills to enable them take their place in society with confidence and dignity. In recent years, the foundation has enlarged its role to include accompaniment and support for families, the provision of childcare services in disadvantaged communities, and the provision of supports to enable young people to transition from professional training to the workplace.

The purpose of this article is to explore how this model of mission, at work in the Fondation Apprentis d’Auteuil, can be of real significance for how Spiritan mission engages in works of education whether they be formal or informal.

DANIEL BROTTIER: COURAGE AND UNITY

It is, therefore, not the purpose of this article to detail the life of Daniel Brottier. We can rapidly trace his life from childhood in La Ferté Saint Cyr to the seminary of the diocese Blois. He was ordained for the diocese of Blois and appointed as teacher to the diocesan school at Pontlevoy. Having experienced a call to the missionary life, he entered the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. His first mission brought him to work in St. Louis in the north of Senegal. After a very brief stay in the monastery of Lerins in the south of France to help him discern a possible vocation to the Cistercian life (which he soon realised was not for him) he was tasked with the mission of raising funds for “Le Souvenir africain” in Dakar.

This project to construct “Le Souvenir africain” gave Brottier the opportunity to display his creativity and business acumen by mobilizing different interest groups and donors in order to finance and build the new cathedral in Dakar. However, this project was abruptly interrupted by the First World War.

The outbreak of hostilities put an end to Brottier’s fundraising. From the moment the French nation was mobilized on 2 August 1914, Brottier was resolutely committed to serving as a priest on the front lines. A French government noted for its anti-clericalism had only recently legalized military chaplains. While Brottier could have joined the military chaplaincy with its extremely formal and rigid command structure, this was not the path he wanted to go. The principal reason being that the chaplains were not allowed at the front lines and therefore inaccessible to the soldiers in the trenches.

His first mission brought him to work in St. Louis in the north of Senegal.

Brottier was resolutely committed to serving as a priest on the front lines.
Instead, Brottier chose to form with other like-minded priests the “Voluntary Chaplain’s Corps” which allowed for a greater mobility and flexibility in the movement of chaplains on the battlefields. At thirty-eight years of age, Brottier was no longer subject to conscription. However, despite the anti-clericalism that was rife in the French Republic and that he had already experienced in faraway Saint Louis in Senegal, he decided that there was something greater at stake, and he wanted to be present and minister to the thousands of men conscripted to fight the brutal and murderous war in the fields of northern France.

Brottier’s correspondence during this time remained relatively sober despite the horrendous situation in which he and his fellow troops found themselves. He was cited many times for his courage and bravery and was awarded France’s highest award – the Legion of Honour. Because of his devotion to his ministry and helping soldiers maintain contact with their families, the troops held him, not only in high esteem, but also with great affection. His unflinching service earned him the nickname “the varnished chaplain” because, despite his constant presence in the trenches of the front line and the constant danger and horror of a merciless war, he escaped any harm. Brottier himself attributes this protection to Thérèse of Lisieux, the recently canonized saint who would be a major figure in his work and mission at Apprentis d’Auteuil.

Brottier’s concern for the enlisted service men did not end with the Armistice in 1919. He recognized that they would need help and care after being demobilized, but there was very little in the form of support coming from the military. To this end, he founded the National Union of Veterans (UNC) with the help of the head of government and notoriously anti-Catholic Georges Clemenceau.

The latter part of the nineteenth century in France was marked by a radical split between conservative Catholicism and radical left politics culminating in the anti-Semitic Dreyfus affair engineered by right wing Catholics and the eventual separation of Church and State, the confiscation of church property, and the expulsion of religious orders in 1905.4 French politics was polarized between the Curé (parish priest) on one hand and the Maire (Mayor) on the other; not unlike Don Camillo and Peppone across the Alps in Italy. Nevertheless, these opposing sides were brought together in the trenches of the First World War, where diehard anti-clerical republicans found themselves to be comrades in arms with seminarians preparing for ordination. Out of the carnage that was the First World War, one positive effect was a certain healing in the rift between the Catholic Church and the Republican State. Daniel Brottier played an important role in this reconciliation by his, not only faithful presence and ministry to the troops on the front line, but also by establishing the UNC as a support group to help the veterans of the war. His motto was “United as on the Front Line!”

Even Georges Clemenceau, known as the Tiger, recognized this priest for who he was, and both became friends. When Clemenceau died, Brottier had the honour of blessing the coffin of this avowed anti-clerical politician.

Why is this part of Daniel Brottier’s life so significant for us today? Whatever about the possible justification for the war, Daniel Brottier, supported by the then superior general Mgr. Le Roy, saw the importance of being present to provide pastoral help and support to those condemned to fight in the trenches. Despite different political views and sometimes a mistrust built on years of prejudice, Brottier recognized a common humanity and the need to attend to the needs, not only of the foot soldiers, but also their families back home. Brottier was not driven by rigid ideology but rather by faith and confidence in his fellow humans. He knew that despite political and religious differences, shared values and convictions could bring people together to work for the common good.

A CHURCH-STATE PARTNERSHIP IN THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

No doubt, Daniel Brottier would remember this experience of a shared common cause when six years after his arrival at Auteuil he sought to establish the work formally under French Law as a Public Service Organization (Fondation d’Utilité Publique). This was a significant, if not controversial, move as it placed this Catholic work within a formal legal framework that was subject to approval by the Council of State of the French Republic. This meant that while remaining a work of the diocese of Paris the status of Foundation would ensure a continuity of mission for the work according to the spirit of its founders and, at the same time, provide it with a solid juridical framework.

By adopting this legal structure, Daniel Brottier was aware that he was strengthening the role of the board (Conseil d’Administration), while limiting somewhat the control of the diocese of Paris (and the Congregation of the Holy Spirit). Positively, he recognized that the net effect was setting in stone the religious and ecclesial nature of the work. Brottier’s expert networking skills allowed him to employ the
The work of Auteuil was never an exclusively Spiritan work.

As already mentioned, the work of Auteuil was never an exclusively Spiritan work and the congregation was never ultimately responsible for its financial well-being. Yet the initiative taken by Brottier to establish the work of Auteuil within the legal framework of a Public Service Organization anticipated the direction the congregation is currently taking with regard to its educational apostolate. The Guide for Spiritan Education, promulgated after the 2012 chapter at Bagamoyo, insists on the fact that “(educational) works will be established in such a way that they are not unduly dependent on the circumscription, but are legal entities in their own right that are financially self-sustainable” (5.5).6

There is no such thing as free education. Education, like the provision of all social services, requires investment, human and financial resources, and time. The economic model of religious life is no longer tenable in the provision of social works. Salaries have to be paid and plant requires maintenance. The change in the economic model that seeks to sustain these works can lead to a change in the fundamental mission for the founding of these works in the first place. Educational and health institutions founded by religious have often become privatized to ensure financial stability but with the result that the institutions are preserved but not necessarily the guiding inspiration that founded them. The Guide for Spiritan Education underlines this point very clearly when it states that certain institutions have fulfilled their mission and that it is sometimes necessary to move on.7

Part of the problem here is also the categorization by religious groups of the works they have founded with a certain proprietorial possessiveness that inhibits necessary change. Surely when religious groups talk about “our works” and assets they do not just mean items on a financial spreadsheet.

This is not to say that close involvement with the state does not involve huge risk. It can lead to a dilution of the ecclesial character of the work and seek to remove any reference to gospel or religious values. Accepting significant amounts of public funding can also leave the work vulnerable to the acceptance of certain conditions alien to the religious group’s understanding of the human person.

Despite many obstacles and crises over the years, the fact that Daniel Brottier insisted on a structured legal framework that placed Apprentis d’Auteuil under strict oversight by the state it has also ensured that it remained faithful to its founding mission still inscribed in the statutes of the foundation:

The Foundation Apprentis d’Auteuil is a catholic work of education of the Archdiocese of Paris placed under the pastoral responsibility of the French Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit ….

It is animated and motivated by:

- the demands of justice that call it never to leave young people and families by the side of the road;
- the ties of solidarity and fraternity that are essential to its relationship with young people and families;
- the willingness to cooperate with other actors, here in France or elsewhere, (to create) a more just and humane society that is welcoming of all young people;
- a sense of confidence in young people, families, benefactors, and partners that ensures transparency and a qualitative response in all its actions.8

AN EVOLVING MISSION IN CREATIVE TENSION WITH ITS ORIGINS

In France, and elsewhere, Apprentis d’Auteuil is often referred to as Orphelins Apprentis d’Auteuil. When Daniel Brottier arrived in Auteuil, the work was still composed mainly of orphans. This would remain the case for the next few decades. However, as society evolved so too did the mission and outreach of Apprentis d’Auteuil.

In 2002, the name of the foundation was changed to Fonda-
tion Apprentis d’Auteuil. This reflected the fact that only 10% of the young people then cared for by the foundation were actually orphans. The majority of the young people within the foundation were present because of family or social difficulties, had dropped out of education, or found themselves excluded from the educational system. In 2010, the name changed again to Apprentis d’Auteuil to underline the different apprenticeships that are necessary to grow into adult life.

Today, Apprentis d’Auteuil, inspired by its founders, continues to seek creative and practical responses to the situation of young people in difficulty.
**Horizons**


**Ninety-thousand young people exit the education system each year without any diploma.**

In 2020 in France, one in ten young people are born into a family that lives below the poverty line. Ninety-thousand young people exit the education system each year without any diploma. This leaves 1.6 million young people unemployed.

The current response of *Apprentis d’Auteuil* to these challenges is to focus its field of action around four major activities:

1. **The care of young people (including many non-accompanied minors who have been trafficked into the European Union) confided to the work by family courts or social services.**
2. **First and second level educational establishments that are directed principally toward young people who have given up or been given up by the school system. This involves a particular expertise and often the need for very small class sizes.**
3. **Professional training centred on apprenticeship and ongoing training accompanied by supports to aid the young person find their place in the workplace and in society.**
4. **Family support systems in areas of social disadvantage.**

**A PASTORAL OUTREACH FOR ALL**

French legislation does not allow the collection of personal information based on religious criteria, so it is difficult to ascertain in detail the religious makeup of the young people accessing the foundation’s services. However, it is clear that from its inception in 1866 as the Work for First Holy Communion, it was destined to provide religious education for street children in Paris. Today, the foundation has evolved into an outreach where the presence of Islam and other religions is a significant reality for its different establishments. This is due to migration patterns and current demographic trends. Many of the young people are without any religious culture or background. Sacramental preparation involves a very small number of young people.

So what does it mean for *Apprentis d’Auteuil* to be “a work of the church”? It certainly does not mean that Auteuil provides a Catholic education for Catholic students but nor does it hide its Catholic identity. All young people are welcomed without regard to their religious conviction. While there is catechetical instruction provided for those who seek it, this is not the main thrust of its pastoral outreach.

The current response of *Apprentis d’Auteuil* to these challenges is to focus its field of action around four major activities:

1. The care of young people (including many non-accompanied minors who have been trafficked into the European Union) confided to the work by family courts or social services.
2. First and second level educational establishments that are directed principally toward young people who have given up or been given up by the school system. This involves a particular expertise and often the need for very small class sizes.
3. Professional training centred on apprenticeship and ongoing training accompanied by supports to aid the young person find their place in the workplace and in society.
4. Family support systems in areas of social disadvantage.

**The foundation employs pastoral workers in its different sites.**

What brings unity to the diversity of *Apprentis d’Auteuil* is its educational project or mission. No matter what type of outreach is involved, the age group of the young people, or families engaged in this outreach, four fundamental pillars articulate the project or mission of *Apprentis d’Auteuil*:

1. **The PERSON:** *Apprentis d’Auteuil* takes into account the person in all the dimensions that make up their humanity.
2. **An ENCOUNTER:** The educational approach is a dynamic one that allows each person to experience the rich diversity of their humanity through encounter with others.
3. **A PATH:** Journeying together on a path through different educational possibilities allows each person to discover the value of their own lives and that of the lives of their companions on the journey.
4. **The COMMUNITY:** Fostering an educational community that thinks and acts together – youth, young adults, families, professionals.

Working in relationship with these four pillars is the “Pastoral Orientation” given to the Foundation by the Spiritan Congregation. It is currently under review and elaboration according to the methodology of “Thinking and Acting Together” which grounds all the activities of the Foundation. This involves a time of listening and observing the signs of the times, engaging with young people and families, educators and social workers, managers, pastoral assistants, chaplains, and other organizations of Christian outreach. This work of listening will result in a pastoral orientation that grounds and gives meaning to the educational project. It is a pastoral outreach for all irrespective of religious convictions but grounded in the Gospel and the core values of Spiritan education.

The Foundation employs pastoral workers in its different sites. However, the primary responsibility for pastoral care in any establishment lies with the director of the site. Each director receives from the Spiritans a Letter of Mission exhorting them to live their work and commitment to the mission of Auteuil according to the Light of the Gospel. This means, of course, that directors must have the faith, the capacity, and the willingness not only to receive the letter of mission but also to apply it to their work at the service of those confided to their care.

*As Apprentis d’Auteuil* has evolved and developed this has also
AUTEUIL IN A TIME OF GLOBAL CRISIS

On March 17, 2020, the French state entered into lockdown in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The social residences of the foundation and the structures that house young people at risk have remained operational, as did the crèches and educational works attended by children of health care professionals. All the other activities of the foundation continue their mission through distance learning.

There is no space in this article for an exhaustive treatment on how the COVID-19 virus has affected the Foundation. Indeed, at the time of writing, the crisis is still ongoing, as the measures France introduced to slow down the spread of the virus seem to have little effect on the number of infections.

Since the start of the crisis, the way the Foundation functions has adapted to the new situation. The use of social networks, distance-learning programs, and videoconferencing have helped to keep us all connected and in touch. Contacts have increased and intensified with families of our students through social media and internet. The pastoral outreach of the Foundation has continued in our residences to keep the students active and occupied while also accompanying them in their anxiety and loneliness. Although our family support structures have closed due to health guidelines, daily contact with the families through telephone and visits has ensured continuity of service. During the crisis, the Foundation is able to mobilize its staff, donors, students, and families to stay focussed on the mission.

While we have learned to be creative in our responses and to use technology to our advantage, there is no denying the fatigue and uncertainty now prevalent among staff and students. In a recent survey of young people in the Foundation, the two main causes of anxiety as we face into the future are the fear of poverty and loneliness and the fear of illness and another pandemic.

It is still too early to evaluate what the impact of this crisis will have on the Foundation, how well prepared we will be to face into a post COVID-19 world, and the challenges that it will bring to our young people and their families. We can draw strength from knowing that global crises and pandemics are not new for the foundation. The newsletter for January-March 1920 related that since the outbreak of the influenza pandemic in 1918, two adults and one young person in the Foundation had died. Also in the archives, there is a photograph dating from 1939 of a Spiritan confrere with a group of students all wearing facemasks. It was an exercise in defence preparation at the beginning of the Second World War. We go forward encouraged by the memory of Daniel Brottier and the long history of Apprentis d’Auteuil in meeting challenges and overcoming difficulties.

CONCLUSION

The mission of Auteuil continues to be lived each day according to the rhythm of the enormous transitions and transformations that are happening in the world. Mission – “to be sent,” and Education – “to go forth from,” are the two movements at the heart of Pope Francis’ exhortation, The Joy of the Gospel. The actuality of our Spiritan Rule of Life remains ever relevant to us today as it seeks to guide us, in the living out of the Gospel, to accomplish two especially important tasks for our times. These are (1) the youth apostolate, because the present situation of young people is crying out more than ever for social and educational works; and (2) work with refugees, immigrants, and those who are on the margins of society.10 These are two core components of the mission of Apprentis d’Auteuil.

Nicolas Truelle, the Director General of Apprentis d’Auteuil relates an encounter he had during Holy Week when a mother told him, “My son and I were at the bottom of a hole. Auteuil got us out. You saved us.” This living out of the paschal mystery is the fruit of a covenant of relationships and partnerships by many people of different religious convictions (or none), different political colours (or none), and different backgrounds and origins. In this daily weaving together of different strands and threads, a seamless garment is woven that seeks to protect the most vulnerable from the terrible social fractures that even today, one hundred and fifty-five years after Father Roussel, continue to confront us and our world in 2021.

ENDNOTES


3. The "Souvenir Africain" is the cathedral of Dakar in Senegal and was built to honour the memory of all those "heroes" who died in Africa in the service of France: explorers, missionaries, military, sailors, administrators, traders.

4. The Spiritans were able to claim legal privilege dating back to the time of the monarchy, along with three other French congregations – the Eudists, Sulpicians, and Lazarists (Vincentians) and thus were spared the excesses of expulsion and confiscation.


7. Ibid., No 5.9.


9. In 2020, approximately 30,000 young people and 6,000 families accessed the services of Apprentis d'Auteuil. The Rapport d'Activité de la Direction de l'Animation Pastorale of the Foundation indicates that within the Foundation there were fifty-nine baptisms, forty-seven celebrations of First Communion, and fourteen confirmations for the years 2019–2021.

10. SRL 18.1.

INTRODUCTION

The inevitability of suffering as a human experience calls for the need to reflect on its phenomenological, social, spiritual, and redemptive implications for humanity. We read the biographies of figures like St. Ignatius of Loyola, who in their thorny moments, received the insight that enlightened their gaze towards the most profitable path. The powerful quote of Tertullian “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church” captures the facilitating role of persecution/suffering in the growth of the Church. In a way, suffering announces the limitations of earthly life even as it compels us to seek solutions to the happy state or fulfillment we always wish. Nevertheless, afflictions abound even in our greatest wish to be happy. Some people consult psychologists and read books that recommend ways to happiness. Yet we all continue to suffer. Can we now say that life is a drama of endless episodes of tragedy? The problem is that the incessant pursuance of happiness and the psychological inclination to resist suffering make us think of suffering as absolutely opposed to happiness. But the art of happiness is also and at the same time the art of knowing how to suffer well. If we know how to use our suffering, we can transform it and suffer much less. Knowing how to suffer well is essential to realizing true happiness.1

This essay presents the reader with Francis Mary-Paul Libermann as a model for understanding human suffering. This French Jewish convert to Christianity, first had to face rejection and excommunication by his father. After embracing Catholicism with the thought of becoming a priest growing naturally in his mind, he had to suffer the sting of epileptic seizures, which prevented his ordination for nearly fifteen years. Libermann, whose health was always fragile, was able to transform his condition into an opportunity of being a helpful companion to sick persons. Like Job, Libermann was not just patient in suffering, he was steadfast. His entire life and the wealth of insights garnered from his epistolary spiritual direction provide us with abundant evidence that he was never
a novice in the school of suffering, especially in relation to practical union with Christ. Like Jesus, Libermann did not spend time trying to know why he suffered, rather he lived it. The major concern of this paper is to recommend Libermann’s theology of suffering as a healing remedy for Africans, who were already bedeviled by poverty, bad governance, and corruption before the harsh wind of the current pandemic heightened the misery of their lives. Were Libermann to be alive today, his message to the Black Continent in the midst of the dreadful pandemic would be “There is nothing wrong in feeling pain, so long as we place our soul at the disposal of the divine Master. So long as the sorrow and pain which we feel at the sight of tribulation is not inspired by resistance to the will of our divine Master, there is nothing wrong with it.” What a hard but curative teaching for a people whose lives have been plunged into the darkness of uncertainty, illness, and death. True, life was not so unproblematic in the Black Continent (socially, politically, and economically) before the dawn of the dreadful and unexpected Covid-19 pandemic.

AFRICA BEFORE THE PANDEMIC: A RELIGIO-POLITICAL ACCOUNT

With the sudden appearance of Europeans around the coast of Western and Central Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries, a large-scale slave trade strategically crept in and left a transformative impact on the many institutions of the “virgin” continent. The “conquest mania” of some tribes doubled as soon as they received guns and ammunition from the Europeans in exchange for slaves. “By 1730 about 180,000 guns were being imported every year just along the West African coast, and between 1750 and the early nineteenth century, the British alone sold between 283,000 and 394,000 guns a year. Institutions, even religious ones, became perverted by the desire to capture and sell slaves.” This massive shift from a convivial society to factional belligerent units was heightened by the adverse schemes of colonization which produced exquisitely detailed imperial power politics with tragic implications for the whole of the Third World. Colonization and globalization were essentially tools of manipulation. It is quite pitiful how Africans were quick to learn the subjugating and bourgeois tendencies that were part and parcel of the western colonization approach.

Since their independence, the political scenery of most multi-tribal African states is colored by successive bloody coup d’etats, power struggles, serial ethno-religious wars, poisonous sabotage, bad governance, looting of public funds, near irreversible austerity, and survival of the fittest. The most shameful part of the story is that our present political leaders exhibit signs that suggest a woeful lack of the knowledge of history. “Nigeria, since her independence in 1960, had been ravaged by an ethnoreligious crisis which has kept the nation in a state of coma.” Restructuring has not been achieved in Nigeria because the Muslim ruling class would never allow it, on the grounds that it would make them loose their grip of the country that they believe is “Allah’s gift to their grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio and his descendants.” Furthermore, proper education, good health systems, and balanced nutrition are not within the reach of the majority of the African populace. Many Africans today cannot afford good medication for malaria. “Africa continues to carry a disproportionately high share of the global malaria burden. In 2019, the region was home to 94% of all malaria cases and deaths.” On the whole, the African problem was a mountainous one before the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, most Africans are tempted to believe that the yoke is unbearable and has to be cast aside by any means possible.

Nevertheless, as God’s children who are solely dependent on his grace for survival, “we must be ready to suffer a thousand times more if such is the will of the divine Master.” To this Libermann adds, “But you may ask God for relief for the good of the souls that are dear to you.” This altruistic option is captured by St. Paul who said, “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.”

Libermann returns to this theme in another letter to depict the true meaning and purpose of human suffering for the Christian disciple. “Be fully subject to the Divine Will – suffer with humility and love all that He sends you; it is not you who are suffering, but Jesus.” He continues: “He is in you and suffers with you; abandon your soul to Him; His divine grace is there; it will render your sufferings very profitable for the sanctification of your soul.” A very significant step towards Christian maturity is to recognize the truth of the cross as the point of departure for Christian faith. This is because Jesus made suffering a normal part of his life. Christ, the Redeemer of all, became a slave (doulos) in order to restore humanity to a glory that supersedes the pristine splendor of Eden. Libermann reasoned that if God could descend as low as this for our sake, then “we are a thousand times blessed because we are able to suffer with Jesus and the peace of Jesus.” After all, “He (God) will not abandon us (Africa).”
THE DAWN OF THE PANDEMIC: THE UNTOLD HARDSHIP

In a circular of February 2020, the Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Dr. Alfred Adewale Martins confirmed that “In December 2019, a cluster of pneumonia cases was reported in the city of Wuhan, China. Investigations found out that this was caused by a previously unknown virus now named 2019 novel Coronavirus (nCoV).” This cautionary circular was released when only one case had been officially recorded in Nigeria, and that was in Lagos. By the end of the first quarter of 2020, several African countries had confirmed their first cases of Covid-19. At the time of this writing, “there have been 116,874,912 confirmed cases of Covid-19 globally, including 2,597,381 deaths. As of 9 March 2021, a total of 268,205,165 vaccine doses have been administered globally.” The total number of confirmed cases in Africa at that time was 2,909,543. In the midst of the pandemic, Africans faced several trials in their social, political, economic, and spiritual life. Social distancing as one of the cardinal preventive measures enforced by governments and health agencies dealt Africans a grievous blow and left a deep impression on the psyche of many. Social distancing and the lockdown meant closing economic centers and schools, quarantining, travel restrictions, and so on. Some must have been killed not by the disease but by hunger and frustration as they lacked resources to support life in such a dehumanizing condition.

The outbreak of the pandemic exposed the insufficiencies in the healthcare systems of African states. The unavailability of world-class hospitals and other essential infrastructure denied affected persons access to adequate health care. It is a shame that the blindness and ineptitude of our leaders combined to worsen the effect of the pandemic. There was no depth in the reasoning, actions, and plans of African governments and leaders to combat the disease. In Kenya, for instance, “the measures to curb Covid-19 precipitated a humanitarian crisis of great proportions among the poor as people lost their jobs, were faced with hunger, lacked adequate face masks, sanitizers, among others.” Apparently, the pre-existing state of affairs in Africa worsened the effects of the pandemic.

THE NEED FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF SUFFERING

For the Africans whose lives were compounded by the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, Libermann’s approach towards suffering stands as a healing remedy. The best of options is not to rebel and revolt against God, neither is it sensible to comprehend suffering pessimistically, as the ultimate lot marked out for humanity. We all have to look inward in order to hear God speaking to us through this hard time, and like Libermann, be able to say in our disappointments, “Our Father in heaven will know what to do with me as I belong wholly to him, body and soul.” What other choice is there apart from submitting to God’s will that can grant us unrestrained access to hearing the voice of God? If all that fill the ears of our minds are the echoes of oppression, political injustice, and the woes of a deadly pandemic, then we would soon begin to perceive little or nothing about the sublimity and profitability of suffering. Hence, Libermann counsels that it is essential for us, in the time of suffering, “to remain prostrate at the feet of the Divine Master.” The transformation of suffering begins the moment we are able to lift the weight of our afflictions to God, and even more, recognize the hand of God working in our life. Libermann appropriated his experience of illness as a gift to help him counsel others who suffer pain. His condition gave birth to a mission. The pandemic has frustrated the designs of great nations and crippled the plans of countless persons, yet there are still remedial options towards a meaningful life, and we can find examples in the writings of Libermann. “Live only for His Divine Will, preserve peace in the midst of your pains. Jesus is in you; what more can you desire?” “And if you suffer, it is in Jesus crucified who is in you. Oh! How happy is the soul which possesses Jesus crucified within it!” Suffering is not absolutely opposed to happiness. We only need to bring our afflictions along the path of transformation so that they can assume their proper meaning and purpose. We are most fortunate in our afflictions because the soul that suffers with Christ “possesses the treasure of all graces and the source of all love and holiness.”

SUFFERING, GRACE, AND SANCTIFICATION

“You suffer, so much the better; the greater are your pains, the greater will be your treasures of sanctification.” Libermann emphasized the conscious effort of the individual in the transformation of suffering as he wrote, “It is up to you to profit from them (sufferings).” “Joys, delights, and good-living nourish the body; afflictions, privations and sorrows nourish the soul and fill it with graces.” “These temptations and crosses are so many rungs by which we ascend to God; they are so many knots by which we bind ourselves to him.” We find sentiments similar to this Libernmannian exhorta-
The cross as the means through which the Lord establishes holiness in us.

The holy cross continues to do its work so long as our nature is not dead: it fights and crushes it until all life has gone out of it. Once it has accomplished this, once it has exterminated all human affections and desires, it will begin to unfold the wonderful presents that it possesses. It raises the soul to a divine union, consummation and transformation. Then the soul no longer seeks to have the cross removed: on the contrary, it cannot live without it.27

In another place, Libermann employed the same tree analogy used by the evangelists28 and set himself to weave around it a sort of theology of the cross, bringing out the hidden dimensions of the words of our divine Master. “The cross is a beautiful tree, a good tree, planted in your soul and it is now producing beautiful flowers; at a later date it will yield some wonderful fruit.”29 “A good tree can only produce good fruit as our Lord said. What kind of good fruit? Those which he bore on Calvary; Jesus himself will be formed in your soul by means of the cross.”30 Jesus desires to have a dwelling in our souls through the sanctity of his ways and the truth of his virtues, but this cannot be ultimately grounded in us if we live in repudiation of the crosses he sends us. A basic fact of Christian experience is discipleship after the example of the King of martyrs – Jesus Christ. Hence, the materialization of a practical union with Christ begins with the acceptance of the cross, matures around the cross, and comes to fruition as far as the seed of suffering remains implanted in our souls, as was the tree of the cross in the soil of Calvary hill. What else will the cross implant in our souls if not the whole weight and essence of the Lord of Love, which it bore and raised unto us as an invitation to redemption and sanctification? Our current predicament is a call to gaze unto Jesus who comes to us as a bridegroom, “trying to attract us by the sweetness of his grace, the beauty of his light and the balm of his peace.”31 He comes to heal, renew, sanctify, and lavish love on his spouse – the new Africa.

A NEW AFRICA

The virus, perceived by many at the beginning as having something of a short-lived effect, has turned the state of affairs in most nations upside down (medically, politically, economically) – and we will likely be dealing with the pandemic’s impact for some time to come. Now, Africa stands in dire need of God’s intervention and sanctification, just as much, and probably more than medical experts, political activists, and pressure groups. It is true that even a day old African can feel, as it were, the sting of the pandemic, but in our quest to undo this yoke, “we must avoid a zeal which is only a product of the imagination or of natural ardor.”32 “True zeal does not come from our nature, but comes from grace alone. Its source is the Heart of Jesus. It is from that source that we must draw it through an intimate union with him.”33 “Hence our zeal must be divine and supernatural as was his.”34 We should not set before ourselves the schemes of economic emancipation and social welfare as the ultimate goals of life. Before proceeding to secure temporal needs like good health, democratic dividends, justice and equity, sound education, and the rest, we must first take to heart the word of our Lord, “Bread alone does not suffice.”35 Our desires as individuals and as nations must be guided and inspired by the dictates of the preeminent word – the Incarnate Word.

Any careful reader of the gospel of John will immediately come to terms with the centrality and role of the logos in creation – the Incarnation. St. Paul leads us to understand that what we ultimately encounter in the Son who became flesh is the self-emptying (kenosis) of God.36 As the prophets wrote, the Messiah who comes to us is not Deus impassibilis, but rather “a man of suffering and one acquainted with infirmity.”37 Thus, from a Christian perspective, a new Africa is possible only by being espoused to the crucified Christ. Interestingly, the custom of the newly wedded maiden adopting her husband’s surname is ingrained in traditional African societies. The new status becomes the honor and pride of the woman – a treasure she could not easily trade for anything else. The voice of the prophet echoes: “You shall be called by a new name bestowed by the mouth of the Lord.”38 This new name signifies honor and honor derives its value from the dignity of him who bestows it. The voice continues: “But you shall be called ‘My Delight is in her,’ and your land ‘Espoused’.”39

Africa stands in dire need of God’s intervention and sanctification.

A new Africa is possible only by being espoused to the crucified Christ.
This is yet a greater honor considering the fact that Africa had been espoused to corruption, bribery, hedonism, individualism, ethnic/political bigotry, and hate. Certainly, many embraced ungodly means of survival as the hardship, economic hibernation, lockdown, social distancing, and the death toll occasioned by the pandemic increased exponentially. At the same time, the land cries out for a healing remedy. Nevertheless, those who go out in search of a cure, without paying attention to the sinful state of “the soul which still has many imperfections, attachments and unworthy desires,”40 cure, without paying attention to the sinful state of “the soul which still has many imperfections, attachments and unworthy desires,”40 “will be given nothing except the sign of the prophet Jonah”41 – repentance and faith in Jesus. The gospel of Mark does not include “the sign of Jonah option,” but it does express Jesus’ impatience with the desire for a sign when the heart is far away from repentance. This is captured in the expression: “And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, why does this generation ask for a sign?”42

Espousal to Christ entails healing, goodness, and graciousness, but there is no healing greater than true repentance and spiritual conversion – metanoia. “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”43 A greater honor which is symbolized by their new name will be bestowed upon them. But what kind of honor can be derived from being espoused to the ‘Afflicted One’? Paradoxically, admittance to the honor of Christ means submitting to his pattern of humility, and a spiritual configuration to his self-emptying mission. If we are truly configured to Christ, we would yearn all the time to sacrifice ourselves for him. The condition for this hallowed espousal is laid bare by Libermann.

You want to be the spouse of Jesus, but this could take some time. It is a great king whom you want to marry. He chose you and attracted you to himself and placed his love in your soul. It was he who took the initiative. But Jesus asks a dowry, not of silver or gold as some might imagine; the gift he wants is the complete sacrifice of yourself. He bears the cost, he takes charge of executing his designs; he plants his cross in your soul and immolates you to his love. Abandon yourself into his hands.44

To bear this new name and honor which Jesus bestows, we have to be worthy of him. We belong to Jesus, for all intents and purposes, “by those sufferings in which your soul has to conquer itself constantly, renounce and humble itself and submit and generously immolate itself.”45

CHARITY IN THE MIDST OF AFFLICTION

The choice and position of this last theme are symbolic of Libermann’s last words before he died – “charity above all...” In a September 2 2020 tweet, Pope Francis gave a very important message to the world: “The pandemic has shown us that we cannot live without one another; we are linked to each other, for better or for worse. Therefore, to come out of this crisis better than before, we have to do so together, all of us, in solidarity.” On December 20 2020, he uploaded again what seemed like a sequel to the above tweet, “Instead of complaining in these difficult times about what the pandemic prevents us from doing, let us do something for someone who has less: not the umpteenth gift for ourselves and our friends, but for a person in need whom no one thinks of!” The Pope’s tweet fits in well with the last words of Libermann as quoted in the Spiritan Rule of Life, “above all charity...charity above all...charity in Jesus Christ. Charity through Jesus Christ...charity in the name of Jesus Christ; fervor...charity...union in Jesus Christ...the spirit of sacrifice....”46 “Let us love with that spirit of sacrifice and we will be capable of doing anything and everything.”47 We are sons and daughters of God whose nature is infinite charity. Any nation or system that fails to recognize and imitate God’s unsurpassed gratuitousness is bound to be ruled by confusion. The people that make up such a system can neither discover the true foundation of their existence; neither can they realize the very purpose of life. As God’s ambassadors in a pandemic stricken world, we must put on “the love of generosity which consists in forgetting oneself so as to think henceforth only of God’s interests and to act only for them. If we are animated by that love we will not fear anything; we will be disposed to suffer everything in order to make our divine Master live and reign in souls.”48

A misery more deplorable than the pandemic is the one occasioned by the expulsion of charity from our communities. The hoarding of palliatives meant for the suffering masses during the lockdown phase of the pandemic is nothing but the utter abnegation of charity. In Nigeria, for instance, many individuals enriched themselves with the fund for the fight against the pandemic. In addition, massive deposits of food items were discovered in warehouses where they were hoarded, rather than distributed to the masses.
The repudiation of charity is ipso facto a rejection of God. *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.* The sullying of human dignity we experience in the 21st century is the direct result of the massive neglect of charity which is the most sublime gift of God to humanity, for the principal purpose of harmonizing creation. Calvary becomes for us the perfect university and formation house of love; the potter’s field where we are molded and remolded until Christ (Infinite Charity) is formed in us. In our confusion, sickness and hardship, we have to draw strength and inspiration from the cross that bore the weight of the Eternal Logos – the meaning that comprises us all and by which we are all sustained.69 Jesus is the reason to keep hope and charity alive in all circumstances. He is the panacea and elixir for all human ills – the standard for the reign of love in the hearts of all persons in the world.

CONCLUSION

Theodicy is quite a pretty business, but we come to a mature understanding of the divine-human relationship through a practical union with God consisting in accepting wholeheartedly the trials intended to transform us from within. What is more important is not the theology Libermann developed, but rather a new experience of the relationship – between him and God – in which he had participated throughout his life. He embraced afflictions as the little crosses he had to bear, in imitation of Christ, in order to align his life with the will of God. His affliction theology beats ordinary human imagination and values. Utilitarian socialism, for instance, would not support the idea that suffering (as in the case of the pandemic) has any advantageous effect for the people. However, Libermann’s stance reminds us of how the Passion and Death of Christ seem absurd in the face of the “ordinary” compass of logical reasoning, especially when the latter assumes absolute control over the mind and the heart. The cross, as the point of departure for Christian faith, is a sign of contradiction in the world. It is the sign we must embrace in order to merit the title “Christian.” It is a title believed as well as lived. It represents a perfect harmony of creed and deed. Love leads to suffering, but as Christians, we take the risk to love because it is a divine mandate – our principal vocation.

Libermann’s theology of suffering speaks so meaningfully and honestly to pandemic stricken Africa, inviting the people to realize that love and suffering can triumph together in their hearts, making a lasting impression in the world. There is no doubt that suffering divested of love leads to vicious agony. However, true love in the soul makes us constantly desire to immolate ourselves for the glory of our adorable Master and to make continual sacrifices for the good of others. Apart from being the ultimate ground for common good, true love is necessarily concerned with questions about the eternal destiny of the human person. Libermann’s affliction theology is neither antiquated nor alien to African sentiment. It is not correct to view it as a pessimistic or nihilistic approach to the current condition of Africans. We can, with good reason, perceive that each of Libermann’s admonitions is instructive and revealing. We are privileged as well as gifted with the availability of his epistolary spiritual direction that reveals the admirable nature of the cross/suffering to readers enriched not only by his theology, but also by the practical examples he sets before them. The spiritual guidance of this saintly figure who cherished and facilitated missionary activities in the 19th century Africa is still relevant for us today.

ENDNOTES

7. Libermann’s Letter to Miss Sainte-Bécel, 186.
8. Loc.cit.
10. Libermann’s Letters to Miss Rouillard, 250.
11. Ibid., 250-251.
13. Libermann’s Letters to Miss Rouillard, 251.
INTRODUCTION

Summoned by the Father in the Spirit of the Divine Physician, Spiritans are called to continue the healing mission of Christ, who initiated the emergence of the healed community of persons called the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15, cf. Spiritan Rule of Life (SRL) 1, 11).

For this healing mission today, Spiritan mission in the contemporary world finds itself in the context of a global sickness from both COVID-19 and the far-reaching impacts thereof. By no means are we unique in finding our mission amidst COVID-19, as its effects have been felt by everyone, especially by the poor and marginalized. Nonetheless, as the incarnation required that, “the physician of our souls and bodies,” undergo a kenosis and enter the socio-historical context of First-century CE Judea (cf. Philippians 2:7), Spiritan mission too must reframe itself to fit our new socio-historical context of COVID-19.

Every exposition on the meaning of mission requires a methodological framework, i.e. a certain way of presenting and elaborating upon the contemporary, missional task. One possible framework comes from Pope Francis, who began to use a particular phrase amidst this global aporia: Healing the World. While this phrase has been taken up by others in recent days, he used it to describe the task of the Post-COVID Church, especially in light of Catholic Social Teaching, Tradition, and Thought.

The idea of healing within Christian thought is not new, as it has a significant place in the history of theology and the Church Mothers and Fathers works, as well as roots in the historical Jesus. Thus, it is, perhaps, worthwhile to discuss ‘Healing the World’ as a possible framework for considering contemporary Spiritan mission. In order to explore this possibility, we shall explore three things: why the world is sick, healing perspectives in Spiritan mission, and pathways forward for Spiritan Mission as global healing.
FRAMING THE CRISIS: WHY IS THE WORLD SICK?

Prior to any discussion about healing any ailment, one must elaborate on the illness. However, in the case of the world, there are, in fact, several ailments from which the world is suffering that have been made more evident. Of course, these ailments are not merely bio-medical, as health refers to the “dynamic state of well-being of the individual and society,” with “emotional, physical, social, and spiritual” aspects, especially in a biblical understanding thereof.6 These ailments can generally be divided into five categories: (1) Old Dynamics, New Conditions, (2) Necropolitics, (3) Ideology and the Post-Truth Era, (4) The Church, or the Lack thereof, and (5) The Interconnectedness of these Pathologies.

Old Dynamics, New Conditions.

For starters, COVID-19 is by no means an evil entity attempting to deliberately wipe out humanity and ruin its societies. As Žižek writes, “[COVID-19] is not an enemy trying to destroy us—it just self-reproduces with a blind automatism.”7 Simply put, although responsible for much of the ravaging of the world (especially for the poor and marginalized), the COVID-19 virus itself is not introducing any new dynamics. Instead, conditions which were already oppressive reached their critical limits during the pandemic. In this sense, what has occurred is old dynamics being placed under the stress of new conditions,8 amplifying inequalities, exacerbating differences in the social determinants of health, and continuing the “exploitation, extraction, and expansion” already rooted in the contemporary world system.9

Nonetheless, these new conditions within old dynamics still create an immense amount of damage. It was written from the Philippines that, “the problem of poverty coupled with the health crisis rose to an international scale and has become an immediate global concern, affecting not merely individuals but entire nations,” particularly damaging poor and marginalized communities.10 Take the example of recent migrants from Venezuela in Trinidad, specifically those who found work as laborers under informal agreements. Several now struggle to find work due to the economic impact of COVID-19 while facing issues like obtaining legal status, wage theft, etc. Another particularly vulnerable group, LGBTQ+ persons, suffer the after-effects of COVID-19 due to previously existing conditions of discrimination.11 World reports suggest that half a billion people worldwide will fall below the poverty line because of COVID-19; this particularly affects women.12 Numerous pre-existing factors (e.g. healthcare capacity, social services, ecology, etc.) are leading to various levels of death and economic damage to countries.13 This is not to even mention the long-term effects that have occurred and will continue to occur in the ever-widening gap in educational outcomes between the rich and poor.

What has been unique to COVID-19, even if unspoken, is the understanding of its relationship to ecological issues.14 At the economic level, it is ironic that we are compelled to participate in an ecologically unsustainable, consumption-based economy, disrupted during lockdowns, to ensure the economic survival of others.15

Further, given the way that industrial food production is moving to satisfy global demands (particularly for meat) and the rate of deforestation (particularly in the Amazon), many more viruses will appear and/or be able to infect humans causing an unpredictable amount of wreckage. What is more shocking is that these conditions are not unforeseen.16 However, various diseases that served as precursors in the past simply did not create a sufficiently severe economic impact to garner attention. Indeed, “diseases make history, but only as epidemiological vectors bound to commerce and empire.”17

Necropolitics.

Secondly, political agency in the world today tragically “resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die… To be sovereign is to exert one’s control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power.”18

Within the crisis of COVID-19, who survives and who suffers and dies, especially in the long run, is made by those with sovereignty in the society (i.e. those with wealth and power), who are increasingly alienated from the rest of society.19 Those without sovereignty are simply left to the whims of the Pandemic and its after Effects. Take, for example, the American context, where Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities often suffered from worse COVID-19 outcomes than their white counterparts, and face inequitable vaccine distribution.20 This is directly linked to centuries of racism, whereby whites in power have tried to have control of the lives of persons of color, through legal and violent measures.21 One can also look at South Africa, where many people had to choose between death from COVID or from starvation. In other words, unlike the wealthy and powerful, they had no agency over their own life and death.

Unable to find agency by other means, those who live without significant sovereignty (i.e. the poor and marginalized) must

Half a billion people worldwide will fall below the poverty line because of COVID-19
either uphold, “the work of death” or suffer from a state of fear of the Other. In this, “the fear of death compromises our ability to love each other fully, deeply, and sacrificially,” and encourages the development of forms of psychological anaesthesia.

Therefore, it is increasingly the case that the achievement of subjectivity in necropolitical frameworks stands contrary to the Gospel, demonstrating that many societies today are in the process of losing the notion that all human life and all living things are gifts that come from the Lord (Romans 6:23). Granted, it is the same Lord, who by virtue of the crucifixion, suffered under the Necropolitics of the Roman Empire (John 19).

Ideology and the Post-Truth Era.

Thirdly, every society has used or currently is using a variety of ideologies to justify its existing conditions, especially its inequalities and structures. In creating a pre-interpreted view of the world, these ideologies are not as obvious as they might seem. They often blend into the very Lebenswelt of a given society and, thus, pass without criticism (e.g. indifference and radical individualism). Take, for example, how the relationship between science and developmentalism goes hand-in-hand. When critically examined, it becomes clear that the logic de-played is heavily based in a colonial, militaristic, and/or sexist attitude, which problematizes that which is non-Euro-American and non-male (i.e. women, persons in developing nations, and the environment).

The most evident ideology of the world today is globalization, by which, “the god of free market capitalism… propagates a ‘soteriology’ of ‘saving’ the world through creation of undue wealth and prosperity.” On the other hand, one cannot ignore the rise of “nativist” and “nationalistic” ideologies (especially when tied to inegalitarianism), which by virtue of creating, “grand mythological schemas,” leads to a justification of rights based in nationality or ethnicity. Nonetheless, in the midst of COVID-19, the reach of ideology has worsened as, “a vast epidemic of ideological viruses which were lying dormant in our societies: fake news, paranoiac conspiracy theories, explosions of racism,” have exploded.

Even when one has the ability to deconstruct an ideology, we have reached a world where truth itself is challenged when it does not attune to one’s ascribed ideology (e.g. climate change). In the long run, however, to discuss the post-truth character of our postmodern era (separate from ‘postmodernism’ as a philosophical movement) still fails to understand who is the exact victim of this vacuum of truth. Indeed, “[t]o speak of the ‘postmodern world’ is a superficial response, and of little help,” as, “the poor,” remain, “the bearers of truth,” suffering at the receiving end of the results of such ideologies.

The Church, or the Lack Thereof.

Fourthly, while the pandemic has posed existential and religious questions, the Church is proving itself to be a vehicle of both hope and danger. While serving as a means for coping with the effects of the pandemic, providing material assistance to those in need, and disseminating important public health information, there have also been occasions where the Church has been a, “tranquilizer in the whole medical response,” to COVID-19, as one Ugandan professor put it. The negligence by some religious leaders caused one pharmacy professor, although speaking in the Pakistani context, to say quite a profound truth: “the clergy needs to… convince the public to keep the faith not the germs.” While part of this stems from an attitude of clericalism, where hierarchical and religious matters take precedence, the effects are still felt by the broader populace.

On the other hand, the Church is in decline, absent, or irrelevant in some parts of the world. While there is varying data surrounding religiosity during COVID-19, there are also serious concerns about the acceleration of religious disaffiliation. While solutions have been proposed (notably a relationship-based model of religious leadership), enacting such models proves difficult even under conditions where it is possible (i.e. under non-lockdown conditions). Nonetheless, even if Christianity is itself popular in a given society, this does not necessarily mean that the Gospel is preached and lived.

The Interconnectedness of these Pathologies.

Lastly, unsurprisingly, all the issues listed above interact with one another, reinforcing and contributing to the perpetuation of the sickness of the world. Ironically, it is, perhaps, our connected world, something perceived so often as good in itself, that leads to a local disaster triggering a global catastrophe. In the same manner, it is ironic that the separation for the sake of public health (e.g. social distancing, quarantining, etc.) has become part of the solidarity necessary to reduce the spread of COVID.

While signs of hope exist on the horizon (e.g. COVAX), one cannot deny the world’s sickness. Nonetheless, our ability to recognize the suffering of the world should not overwhelm and paralyze us, making a collective response impossible. In other words, we find...
Healing pilgrimage

SPIRITAN MISSION AND HEALING: PERSPECTIVES

Unsurprisingly, our *modus operandi* as Spiritans is mission (SRL 2). However, its exact ability to respond to the sickness of the contemporary world is uncertain. Thus, it is necessary to develop a perspective which shows how Spiritan mission is related to the idea of healing itself. Generally, healing is a missionary act, rooted in the witness to and proclamation of the Kingdom of God by Jesus Himself. It is this same healing Lord who entered into the socio-historical context of ancient Israel to initiate the Kingdom, redeem the entirety of humanity, and begin the healing of the world (Romans 1:3): “[I]nvi
ted to witness,” Christ’s own incarnation, i.e. taking it as our norma normans non normata, Christ calls us to enter into a particular socio-historical context and proclaim the Kingdom, the on-going healing of the world begun in Christ. Thus, the beginning of all Spiritan missionary activity is an incarnation, a kenosis of sorts, by which we find the meaning of our created being and purpose within history (i.e. charism) (SRL 16).

This *kenosis* allows us to become fully a part of a wounded community and join the people we serve to journey through life, which cannot be reproduced in secular ideologies (cf. SRL 15, 16.1, 1 Peter 2:24). Of course, despite our *kenosis*, the process of healing is not ours (cf. Deuteronomy 32:39). Instead, as the Spirit, “is the mission strategist,” that, “precedes us,” healing is revealed through the Spirit’s presence in the community and within the community’s concrete pilgrimage of faith (cf. Galatians 5:25). Further, as with Libermann’s psycho-spiritual approach in spiritual direction, the applied healing is particular, requiring specific remedies rather than broad stroke miracle cures. Therefore, engaging in a *theopraxis*, the Spiritan healing mission proceeds as a common journey of a people to follow the life-giving path of the Divine Physician, who beckons us to participate in the on-going creation of a healed world in the Holy Spirit (John 14:6, cf. Ephesians 2:22).

It is within this healing (and liberating) experience of the Spirit that a healing self-creation takes place (John 6:63), gaining critical importance in a world where the sickness thereof often turns one away from such. In Spiritan terms, we call this integral liberation (SRL 14), which summarizes Libermann’s doctrine. Integral liberation, of course, presupposes three things: (1) the preferential option for the poor, (2) ideoloclasm, and (3) its integral nature.

First, integral liberation presupposes a certain ideoloclasm, i.e. a deconstruction of ideology as such, especially those which would be oppressive or otherwise inequitarian. Pointing principally towards experience, Libermann himself was quite ideoloclasic. One only has to look at his harsh critique of, “that middle-class aristocracy,” that was, “refusing... any semblance of justice and sweeping aside the interests of the poor,” during the Paris Revolution of 1848. Thus, our missiona
al healing, from this perspective, also has the task of unmasking the wound covered up by ideology (cf. Matthew 10:26, Luke 8:17).

Third, integral liberation presupposes its own integral nature. That is, it supposes a holistic transformation of reality, allowing for the liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressor. In order to complete such transformation, integral liberation allows for the emergence of a new reality, overcoming the previous problematic dynamics and creating a new set of social, personal, and ecological dynamics under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:19-25). Indeed, one must always, “find the pulse of the Spirit to give impetus, together with others, to dynamics that can witness and channel the new life that the Lord wants to generate at this concrete...
moment in history. In other words, integral liberation as a healing praxis involves the healing of all persons, both the oppressor and the oppressed, leading not necessarily to a return to previous conditions, but leading to a (re)creation of a healed reality.

It is, perhaps, this direction towards the integral liberation of a community on its pilgrimage of faith that Spiritan mission, in deploying critical analysis, cannot understand history as accidental, i.e. as a chance development (cf. SRL 14.1). Nor can Spiritan mission understand history as merely farcical, as a process that is leading nowhere. Instead, oppressive socio-historical constructs (i.e. social wounds) appear by the real actions of people, perpetuated by those who benefit from them. Liberation, thus, comes from human cooperation in the mission of the Holy Spirit of the horizontal expansion of the Good News, the redemptive healing wrought in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18, 2 Thessalonians 2:13). However, critical analysis and engagement with the present does not necessarily lose focus on the final coming of the Kingdom of God, i.e. the complete healing of the world. Although human history has meaning in the Spiritan idea of mission, any present-oriented discussion on the contemporary missional task must constantly reflect, “its eschatological nature without annulling the dialectic of this age and the age to come, the uncreated and the created, the being of God and that of man and the world.”

Thus, the advancement of Spiritan mission has very little to do with institutional expansion, but far more with fidelity to the Gospel. Nonetheless, simply because wounds can be healed, that does not mean that they should be simply forgotten. Stated differently, the history of human suffering should never be lost. Instead, it impels us towards specific and concrete commitments as, “[t]he memory of suffering… brings new moral imagination into political life, a new vision of other’s suffering which should mature into a generous, uncalculating partisanship on behalf of the weak and unrepresented.”

In this sense, Spiritan witness to healing unto, “the ends of the earth,” (Acts 1:8) cannot be a theodicy, especially since all theodicies fail to stand up to the critique of the depth of human suffering. Nor is such a theodicy even theologically valuable, since, “Christ’s curing sick people had a cosmic significance,” and, thus, cannot be contained within mere anthropocentric categories. Hence, an eschatological defence of a just God despite the presence of human suffering misses something about mission both in the present and even in the eschaton. In avoiding these pitfalls, Spiritan mission must con-}

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of Spiritan mission has very little to do with institutional expansion, but far more with fidelity to the Gospel.

Spiritan mission as healing begins with a kenosis that allows us to partner with the healing work of the Holy Spirit.

creatively proclaim that the Spirit is working in the world towards the eschatological reality of the Kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 5:5). It is proclaiming that the healing of the world has begun by virtue of the incarnation (Galatians 4:4-5) and will be completed in Christ in the fullness of time (Colossians 1:19-20).

As we enter into the socio-historical contexts of communities, solidarity becomes the healing mode by which we live this history with the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13), drawing us, “closer to people among whom we live, especially those who are the most vulnerable, poor and excluded from society,” (cf. SRL 24.1). However, solidarity is never a good unto itself, but merely the mode by which good, as well as evil, can be accomplished (e.g. many bishops and religious superiors were in solidarity with their accused and guilty clergy/members when covering up abuse). Solidarity, in this way, is much like any medicine, whereby an incorrect dose can be fatal, while a correct dose can be life-saving.

In summary, we might say that Spiritan mission as healing begins with a kenosis that allows us to partner with the healing work of the Holy Spirit who, present in the community, leads us towards integral liberation. Integral liberation, in its historical dimensions, points to the historical character of healing itself, with constant reference towards the final healing event, i.e. the eschaton, towards which we walk in solidarity with the community.

TOWARDS GLOBAL HEALING: PATHWAYS AND OBSTACLES

Finding a missional sense of “hope, joy, and… a radical meaning of life in the midst of existential absurdities,” we are strengthened to continue our mission and boldly proclaim the Risen Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:20, Acts 4:31). However, as elaborated on earlier, Spiritan mission is not about a maintenance of the status quo. Especially when placed side-by-side with the world’s sicknesses, we recognize that, “nothing can remain the same,” and that we must, “create new spaces and reinvent a future worth living for,” directed towards the healed future of the Kingdom.

Naturally, we assume that Spiritan mission has a part to play in building this future, though perhaps not as a universalized treatment. Suggesting treatments for various ailments is certainly within the bounds of scripture and tradition. We can reflect on Paul’s suggestion to Timothy to take a little wine for the stomach (1 Timothy 5:23) and Thomas Aquinas’ remedies for sorrow or pain of tears,
If Spiritan mission is to be a viable option in the process of global healing, it cannot assume a hegemonic, universalized approach. Yet, it is clear from the analysis above, if Spiritan mission is to be a viable option in the process of global healing, it cannot assume a hegemonic, universalized approach. In fact, it may be downright reckless to suggest a consistently universalized approach. Thus, it is preferable to understand the Spiritan mission of healing as a diagnostic tool that suggests a variety of pathways forward that require discernment to apply concretely and eventually develop into practical commitments in particular contexts. These pathways include solidarity, options within the Church, academia, and intersectional fronts.

Pathways.

The first direction to take is towards solidarity, without which there is no healing. By encouraging a renewal of social relations through concrete relations with each other, we can bring communities together in a liberative and non-ideological way, building solidarity to progress along the path of healing. This solidarity within communities requires that we learn to relax and celebrate amidst the fear, and so deepen bonds of friendship with one another. As our bonds deepen, the healing Spirit will emerge within the community setting, creating a horizontal (rather than vertical) expansion of mission. That is, rather than a purely descending mission, the development of the community towards healing is a process of collective ascent.

Second, as healing is part of the essence of the Church and is “placed at the heart of all activity,” thereof, one can also consider initiatives within the Church as a possible pathway. For example, the Vatican has called for “an alliance between Catholic and non-Catholic educational institutions in order to confront the challenges stemming from or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.” Especially as Spiritan education involves, “responding to the most pressing educational needs of the people of their times,” the possibility of having a particularly Spiritan missional approach suggests that an ecclesial pathway for healing in a post-COVID world can and, perhaps, should exist.

Third, Spiritans engaged in academic settings have a unique opportunity to engage in critical analysis. Here we follow the example of Fr. Libermann who “included the tasks of fostering conscience of the duty to work and to understand the working of tools (‘how things operate’) as integral parts of a missionary’s work.” We cannot separate academic education from praxis, that is, the ability to dissect the critical issues at hand in order to consider what direction one can take to bring about healing. Such praxis provides an invaluable asset for the Congregation’s mission. Healing itself is a concrete phenomenon and, thus, all academic work needs to be linked to practical commitments to the process of healing.

Last and most important, we can discern intersectional fronts by which our work can more fully contribute to the healing of the interconnected woundedness of our world. Three examples stand out. First, there are the links between Inter-Religious Dialogue and Service/Liberation through a Dialogue of Life or Action, by which, “universal basic consensus on basic convictions,” can be practically built, despite being in a world of increasing scepticism towards collaboration with the “other.” Second, as healing in its fullness entails a reconciliation between humanity and creation, the healing mission extends to include ecological justice, which itself cannot be separate from other issues such as economics, conflict, and disease (including COVID-19). Third, one can look at the intersections between liturgy, social psychology, and social structure. As liturgy, “immerses us in a larger reality that bursts the limits of our social imagination,” the chance for persons to build relationships and develop a greater communal consciousness through the liturgy creates an opportunity to consider a theopraxis for social rebuilding. While all of these fronts present interesting paths, one’s context is often the main key that shapes it, e.g., Diane Jagdeo suggests that “healing land and healing lives (ecology and human well-being),” is best for the Caribbean context. Indeed, it is only within the missionary’s context that exact fronts can be discerning and developed that will advance concrete commitments for a common journey of the people and achieve the end goal of integral liberation.

Obstacles.

While the above pathways may seem straightforward, they are not without obstacles. First, in our articulation of the healing, a balance is needed between being too rigid about the categories we use and being too vapid. Both extremes would result in meaningless articulations and/or refusal to appreciate particular contexts for mission. Further, if we assume that all answers to the need for healing in our present context can be articulated within the Spiritan tradition (even covertly), we run the risk of a baseless triumphalism.
Unless we come to understand how we are preventing the healing of the world, “we will continue to resist our own conversion.”

CONCLUSION

If the above research and reflections show anything, it is that the concept of “Healing the World” has a legitimate place in Spiritan mission in the contemporary world, or perhaps a necessary one. Spiritan mission has the ability to respond to the call of the contemporary world in a healing way and, despite obstacles, provides pathways for the future. Granted, this study is by no means the final word on the topic, but rather serves as the beginning of a conversation on both academic-theoretical and practical-pastoral levels. Though, more generally, it is my hope that this research positively contributes to the study of Spiritan mission.

Nonetheless, despite any progress that will be made in healing the post-COVID world, we must admit that ce n’est pas la lutte final. It is quite likely that other pandemics will emerge, but, if we do not learn how to create healing now, the wounds of the world will only become worse. Indeed, “[t]he most important thing we have to nurture, now, is hope: hope that we can make something great and beautiful in the future.” We are not abandoned in this task, as the Divine Physician, “offered us his Spirit as a lasting source of vitality, holiness, and liberative action in every age.” Let us pray that we might have the strength to continue Christ’s healing mission in the world today.


Brazil.


34. E.g., there was a seeming increase in the experience of faith in the U.S. vis-à-vis a stagnation in religious participation, while in Colombia there was a no change in the experience of religious faith. See White, Christopher, “Study Finds Young Strong in Faith amid Virus, but Increasingly Lonely.” Crux, April 20, 2020. https:// cruxnow.com/burch-in-the-ua/2020/04/study-finds-youth-strong-in-faith-amid-virus-but-increasingly-lonely/, and see Meza, Diego, “In a Pandemic Are We More Religious?” 224-228.


38. See Laudato Si’ 117.


40. See Žižek 42.


47. See Mor Coorilos 44. Cf. Koren, Henry C.S.Sp., “Our Spiritan Charism,” in Essays...


57. ND X, 148. See ND IX, 42.


59. See Freire 44-8, 56.


71. See Fratelli Tutti 36, 150.

72. See Temelkuran, Ece and Srecko Horvat, “Corona-Neo-Facism: A Deadly Combina-
tion,” in Everything Must Change!, 88.


74. Pope Francis created the Vatican COVID-19 Commission, which has proposed several solutions to date.


76. Duaime, Jeff C.S.Sp., et al., “4. The Heartbeat of Spiritan Education in the United

77. For references about a particularly Spiritan approach, see *Guide for Spiritan Education*, 2.1-2.9


79. Cf. Gutiérrez, “Theology: A Critical Reflection,” in *A Theology of Liberation*, 3-12. A great example would be understanding vaccine distribution and hesitancy theologically, sociologically, psychologically, medically, etc., especially as the main way out of the pandemic is through broad vaccination. One can study vaccine hesitancy, certainly, but one must also practically work towards (1) equitable vaccine distribution and (2) reducing vaccine hesitancy.


French journalist and critic Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr is well known for saying “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.” It is a familiar experience in many organizations no matter what language. The more we talk about changing things for change sake, the more they stay the same. As we continue to prepare for the twenty-first general chapter of the congregation (GC XXI), the Holy Spirit dares us not to fall into a comfortable way of thinking. Rather, the Spirit challenges us to open our hearts and minds to the movement of what is new, waking us up from the comfortable way of doing things and embrace God’s plan for our congregation.

PREPARATION FOR GC XXI

There has been much preparation and significant reflection for GC XXI, a graced moment in the life of the congregation. The preparation for and participation at a general chapter is a time for intentional reflection and renewal. In addition to the election of the Superior General and the General Assistants, “the General Chapter has the responsibility:

• To check that the Congregation has remained faithful to the mission that it has within the Church;
• To augment the apostolic and religious vitality of the members of the Institute;
• To evaluate the effect in practice of measures taken by previous Chapters;
• To decide objectives in missionary activity for the coming years;
• To examine the financial state of the Congregation.”

The preparation process is just as important as the actual gathering of the delegates in chapter. The General Council (GC) began facilitating a process three years ago by seeking input from every member of the congregation through consultations conducted in 2018 and 2019. Based on this input and the experience of the GC since 2012, it has prepared the Superior General’s Report and asked a committee of confreres to prepare the Instrumentum Laboris, a working document, for the chapter delegates to consider as they come together for the gathering.

SUPERIOR GENERAL’S REPORT

It is important to note that the Superior General’s Report (SGR) makes two significant references in its introduction to the document, New Wine in New Wineskins (NWNW), published in 2017 by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL). This seminal document warns us that, “allowing ourselves to be destabilized by the life-giving provocations of the Holy Spirit is never painless.” The SGR reminds us that renewal is not easy and never simple. It is challenging us to move from maintenance to mission. Meeting this challenge requires courage and a willingness to interrogate the status quo by opening our eyes and ears to the “signs of the times.” To highlight this challenge, the SGR quotes a letter from Francis Libermann to M. Gandon after the Paris revolution of 1848, which is of particular relevance as we look forward to GC XXI.

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The SGR quotes Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation, Christus Vivit, which challenges us to “meet our culture with realism and love and fill it with the Gospel. We are sent today to proclaim the
Good News of Jesus to a new age. We need to love this time with all its opportunities and risks, its joys and sorrows, its riches and its limits, its successes and failure.\textsuperscript{64}

CICLSAL: NEW WINE IN NEW WINESKINS

With this in mind, it behooves all members of the Congregation to consider more deeply the bold suggestions that CICL-SAL puts before us in \textit{New Wine in New Wineskins} (NWNW). These suggestions are situated within the context of “an exercise in evangelical discernment…” advocated by Pope Francis in “The Joy of the Gospel.” The goal of this exercise in ecclesial discernment is one in which consecrated men and women are called to blaze new trails so that ideals and doctrine can be incarnated in the systems, structures, ministries (\textit{diakonia}), styles, relationships, and vocabularies of their life.\textsuperscript{65}

NWNW invites every Congregation to find the proper way to embody the new wineskins that would receive the new wine brought about by the “accomodata renovatio” (i.e. the adaptation and renewal) of consecrated life within the church after Vatican II, and the revitalization of the charisms of each religious institute or society of apostolic life.

The boldness of NWNW lies in its assertion that whatever worked according to the “old paradigm” of consecrated life does not fit into the new paradigm. “Old and new do not go together because each one pertains to its own season.”\textsuperscript{6} What CICLSAL is asking from consecrated persons then is quite revolutionary – we have to shift from the old paradigm of consecrated life to the new paradigm as we strive to meet the needs of the world today. A paradigm shift entails a fundamental movement from one model of understanding and practicing the consecrated life (the old paradigm) to another (the new paradigm). CICLSAL invites consecrated persons, following the guidelines of NWNW, to assess “with parrhesia” both the wineskins of the post-conciliar consecrated life and the wine produced by their Congregations since the council. Parrhesia means to speak candidly, boldly, and without fear. Parrhesia is the Greek word used to characterize the post Pentecost fearless preaching of the apostles.\textsuperscript{7}

CHANGING PARADIGMS

NWNW provides an analysis rooted in various church documents of the different elements of religious life that have evolved since Vatican II.\textsuperscript{8} To understand this new paradigm however, we must comprehend the old paradigm of consecrated life before Vatican II – characterized by NWNW as the “old wineskins of centuries-old religious schemes which are incapable of opening themselves to new promises.”\textsuperscript{9}

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Identity

From “State of Perfection” to being prophetic. Consecrated life in the past was understood as something special, and its members as individuals “set apart” for a life of perfection. Consecrated life today fearlessly denounces – even at the risk of martyrdom – “all that is contrary to the Divine Will, explores new ways to apply the Gospel in the present world, and manifests a way of living that anticipates and points to the coming Kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{10}

Radicality

From “little to no reference to origins or founders” to being charismatic. From operating without any consideration for their origins and founders, consecrated persons today are guided by the unique inspiration of the Holy Spirit that was recognized and lived by their founders. Moreover, they should always be rooted in their Congregation’s foundational charism which they are called “to live, safeguard, deepen and constantly develop.”\textsuperscript{11}

Spirituality

From “routine” to being contemplative. From engaging in a life of prayer that is routine and lifeless, “consecrated men and women today are called – possibly now more than ever – to be prophets, mystics and contemplatives, to discover the signs of God’s presence in everyday life, and to become wise interlocutors who know how to recognize the questions that
God and humanity ask in the furrows of history.”12

Orientation
From “institutional stability” to being liminal. From being obsessed with institutional stability, consecrated persons, because they are not part of the church’s hierarchical structure (can. 207 §2), are called to “settle” and “move” like the People of Israel during the Exodus. They respond “to the unpredictable movement of the cloud, and to preserve faith in God’s protective presence when stops became lengthy and the final destination seemed to be indefinitely postponed.”13

Scope
From being “functional” to going to the periphery. From locating itself in the centers of societies engaging in traditional ministries, consecrated life today is called to embrace “new perversities” and to have “the peripheries in their heart” where it becomes a messenger of the joy of the Gospel to those who dwell there. Consecrated persons witness “in situations of misery and oppression, doubt and discomfort, fear and loneliness, showing that God’s tenderness and his grief for the suffering of his children knows no limit.”14

Self-understanding
From “generic” to non-generic living. From living their life of consecration and the common life in the same way, that is, through “a colorless lowest common denominator,” consecrated persons live the vows and fraternal life “in accordance with their Congregation’s proper identity.” They do this to manifest to the church and society-at-large “the beauty and fruitfulness of the many and various charisms inspired by the Holy Spirit” within their religious family.15

Governance
From a “pyramidal” organization to authority as service. From seeing themselves as mere decision-makers and administrators, persons “in the service of authority” are “to cultivate in themselves an openness to listening” to those they are leading. They are to give “attention to each member of the community and to his or her growth.” They do this by “nurturing sincere affection towards all” and by inspiring “courage and hope in the midst of difficulties” through helping them “in accepting the difficulties of the present moment.”16

Relational Dynamics
From a “stratified” to a post-clerical way of life. Because the consecrated life is essentially not clerical (can. 588), it recognizes “the evil of clericalism and its ugliness,” refusing to be seduced by it or to form its members in a clerical mindset. Instead, the consecrated life today “aims to establish among its members a way of relating based on equal dignity” enabling them to become “experts in living in communion” with each other.17

CHALLENGES FOR SPIRITAN CREATING NEW WINESKINS
As we prepare for GC XXI, Spiritans are called to embody this new paradigm – these new wineskins – of the consecrated life. It is in these new wineskins that the new wine of post-conciliar consecrated life is to be poured, and become manifest in renewed congregational practices. One cannot ignore that the time between Vatican II and 2015 represents fifty years of experience and experimentation that continue to affect us today. NWNW asks us to discern whether what our Congregation is currently savoring and offering to drink is “new wine that is full-bodied and wholesome” or if “notwithstanding good intentions and praiseworthy efforts,” what we are imbibing is wine that is “watered down,” the consequence “of a bad harvest or poorly pruned vines.”18 NWNW encourages us to ask these questions “with simplicity and parrhesia, without giving in to guilty feelings which risk bringing further impediments.”

We should not be afraid to honestly recognize that, despite a series of changes, it is difficult for old institutional schemes to give way to new models with decisiveness. The entire constellation of vocabularies and models, values and duties, spirituality and ecclesiology to which we have become accustomed have not yet allowed space for the testing and stabilization of a new paradigm born out of inspiration and the post-conciliar praxis.19

We carry out this self-examination because “we are living through a phase for the necessary and patient re-elaboration of all that constitutes the patrimony and identity of the consecrated life within the Church and in front of history.”20 NWNW provides this vital imperative, “We must indicate and read that stubborn resistance which has remained below the surface for a long time but has now openly reappeared in many contexts as a possible response to an undisguised sense of frustration.”21
SPIRITAN STRENGTHS AND GIFT TO CONTEMPORARY MISSION

The signs of the times call for a new paradigm for mission that responds to the different realities facing us today. We are called to reach out to the peripheries in fidelity to our charism, where necessary freeing ourselves from existing engagements to respond to new and different calls of the Spirit. The traditional image of the missionary, which it must be acknowledged was the image familiar to many of our younger members who have joined the Spiritan family in recent times – a priest living alone, committed to his people, self-reliant and dependent on a network of external friends for financial support – can no longer be upheld in view of our renewed understanding of the essential role of community life today, in line with the spirit of our Founders.

The signs of the times call for a new paradigm for mission that responds to the different realities facing us today. While the world in which we live is more connected than ever thanks to technology, the division and separateness that we experience is growing as the chasm between the haves and the have-nots is enhanced. Tensions that come from issues related to secularization, globalization, living in a post-truth society, climate change, migration, urbanization, the sexual abuse crisis in the church, and violence, are just a sample of the challenges that call us to shake things up. At the same time, the role of women in the church and society, the dynamism of youth, the potential for creative change, and the power of the Holy Spirit are signs of hope for a church engaged in evangelical activity.

The founding vision of the Congregation rooted in the “evangelization of the poor” is the core element of any renewal and commitment to the work of the church. “New Horizons of Spiritan Mission” reminds us of the ongoing relevance of the Spiritan charism in the world highlighted by the increasing number of lay people who seek to be associated with our spirituality, our life and mission. Lay association gives us great hope as we look to open new and exciting horizons for the Spiritan charism in the world today.

Hallmark characteristics that mark many Spiritan commitments around the world are our ability to work in difficult circumstances with dedication and closeness to the people we serve. Dedicated to improving the dignity and quality of life of the people we serve with creativity and generosity, Spiritans are known for their simplicity and availability. “We continue to be involved with many ministries around the globe that correspond to the priorities of our Spiritan Rule of Life and recent general chapters: first evangelization, work with indigenous peoples, inter-religious dialogue, migrant and refugee ministry, youth apostolate, and various JPIC initiatives.”

Our Spiritan witness as an international community has the potential to be an inspiration for the local churches and people that we serve. We have a tremendous opportunity to live the spirit of Pentecost where “people from many lands speaking a multitude of languages” give witness to the mission of the church to proclaim the saving power of the crucified and risen Christ. The international and intercultural dimension of our community life is a gift to a world growing more divided each day. Intercultural Spiritan community life is a “response to the call of the Holy Spirit to all of us, to witness to a new quality of human solidarity, surpassing individualism, ethnocentrism and nationalism.” This intercultural community living is an important element of our Spiritan life which cannot be taken for granted and requires a lot of work.

Spiritans are called to build truly intercultural communities, places where we are genuinely at home together, where there are no “insiders” and “outsiders,” where no single culture dominates but where each one’s cultural identity finds expression and affirmation, where the dignity of difference is cherished and enriches our common vision.

Simple goodwill is not enough to live this reality. It requires commitment and conversion of each member of the community based on a gospel love that is rooted in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

GC XXI INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS

The Instrumentum Laboris (IL) prepared for General Chapter XXI notes that “the major concern underlined in the responses to Spiritan mission in the contemporary world is the unity between the proclamation of the Gospel and human life, a procla-
Mission is calling us to move beyond our comfort levels and to create new wineskins to receive the new wine of mission today.

**THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES**

The preparation, reflection, and documentation for GC XXI demands an openness to the movement of the Spirit challenging us to go beyond the normal, comfortable way to which we have become accustomed. We are called to read the “signs of the times” and respond prophetically to the needs of mission today with boldness and an openness to a new way of living the Spiritan mission. Mission is calling us to move beyond our comfort levels and to create new wineskins to receive the new wine of mission today. We need to be in dialogue with each other and with the world in which we live. We are challenged to welcome and encounter those we live and work with to allow the Spirit to be revealed. We have to let go of previous assumptions and allow the Spirit form us as we respond to the current and future needs of mission.

In the European and North American context, mission has quickly changed. Secularization is increasingly impactful on the countries in the northern hemisphere. A recent Gallup report in spring 2021 indicates that Americans’ affiliation to houses of worship continued to decline last year, dropping below 50% for the first time since Gallup began measuring it in 1937. In 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999. The decline in church membership is primarily a function of the increasing number of Americans who express no religious preference. Over the past two decades, the percentage of Americans who do not identify with any religion has grown from 8% in 1998-2000 to 13% in 2008-2010, and 21% over the past three years.

The issue seems to be growing with the generation gap. Church membership correlates strongly with age, as 66% of traditionalists – U.S. adults born before 1946 – belong to a church, compared with 58% of baby boomers, 50% of those in Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979/80) and 36% of Millennials (born between 1981 and 1994/6). The limited data Gallup has on church membership among the portion of Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012/15) that has reached adulthood are so far showing church membership rates similar to those for Millennials. Currently, 31% of millennials have no religious affiliation, which is up from 22% a decade ago. Similarly, 33% of the portion of Generation Z that has reached adulthood have no religious preference.

**A NEW PARADIGM FOR MISSION: EMBRACING NEW WINE AND NEW WAYS OF DOING THINGS**

With this increasing secularization in the northern hemisphere, many local churches are facing the challenge of moving from maintenance to mission. Dioceses where Spiritans are collaborating with the local church have been re-configuring and re-imagining their mission priorities for some time now. In the south, and southwestern part of the United States, a large influx of immigrants from Latin America and Asia has led to the need for a greater pastoral outreach to the new arrivals. In some areas, churches are not large enough and there is a need for more ministers who can speak the language of the new communities and respond effectively to their pastoral needs. It is not just a matter of personnel and providing sacramental ministry, but more importantly, establishing a whole range of pastoral services that focus on encountering and welcoming the newcomers in their current situation. Engaging and embracing a new way of being church is the foundation for meeting the needs of the people.

In other parts of North America and Europe, the experience is too many empty churches and not enough outreach to meet the needs of those who find themselves outside. Cardinal Gérard Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec, called on the church in Quebec not to struggle to hold on to what it has left, but to see itself as a mission church moving outward.

We must reorient our pastoral teams toward a more intensely missionary activity, turned toward the people and groups that we join too little. In places where the institutional church is...
becoming less relevant, we are called to become a prophetic church, taking care of the poor in light of Jesus’ mission. A prophetic church like (the one sought by Pope Francis) highlighting the social justice and solidarity with the destitute and the persecuted, has the potential of closing the chasm between the church and the modern, secular culture of Quebec.37

Other local churches, faced with the need to re-imagine what it means to be church in today’s secular world, are increasingly shifting from maintenance to missionary language to define themselves. They recognize the need to look beyond the diminishing numbers that are coming to church and seek to shift the focus to the evangelization of those who do not identify as members of any church. The Archdiocese of Detroit has launched an evangelism program called “Unleash the Gospel,” with the goal not of re-structuring, but focusing on the need to become more missionary with church members sent forth as joyful missionary disciples to meet people where they are. It is a call to focus on “going out” as opposed to “staying in.” The Archdiocese of Baltimore is calling all members of the local church to be “Missionary Disciples,” by becoming “a light brightly visible” to call people to Christ. The Archdiocese has initiated an Institute of Evangelization that uses the Emmaus experience as a model for discipleship. The Diocese of Pittsburgh is using a model known as “On Mission for the Church Alive.” It focuses on re-establishing viable faith communities rooted in evangelization and outreach ministry with the clear goal of sharing the good news in new and creative ways.

SPIRITAN MISSION TODAY AND TOMORROW

As a missionary Congregation, Spiritans have a unique and valuable contribution to make as evangelization takes on a new urgency. We cherish the opportunity to meet people where they are and walk with them as we encounter the Risen Lord on the overlapping journeys of faith. Our history is full of taking on challenges, and sometimes, even impossible situations. The mission needs of the communities we are called to serve are great indeed. The new paradigm of mission and consecrated life are full of possibilities if we are ready to create new wineskins to receive the new wine.

The sexual abuse crisis challenges us as Spiritans to recognize the personal sins of our brothers and the institutional crisis of leadership within the church. Learning from our mistakes, we need to acknowledge the harm done and make concrete efforts to become instruments of hope and healing. Responding pastorally to survivors, and implementing effective changes in the way that we live community and support one another is an evangelical response to a critical need of the people we serve today.

Another pressing need in our day that will call for a creative missionary approach is the post-pandemic path that is upon us and the cry for racial healing and reconciliation in the society in which we live and work. We can never return to what we call “normal” and the old way of doing things. A return to normal would be a disaster unless we recognize that we are going back to a world desperately in need of healing. The missionary call is to bring light to the brokenness of our world and offer the opportunity for healing and renewal. The work that Jesus left his followers to do includes showing compassion and forgiveness and working for a just society. It involves the ever-present offer for all to begin again with new vision rooted in the reign of God.

As we focus on the challenges and needs for contemporary Spiritan mission in preparation for GC XXI, it is clear that the “signs of the times” are calling us to think differently and more creatively about how to be faithful to the original charism of our founders. Despite many obstacles and great sacrifices, Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann stayed true to the vision and mission that God placed in their hearts. GC XXI is an opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit challenge us to reflect on the needs of the mission for today and tomorrow. Rather than remain comfortable with the way we have always done things, the Spirit is challenging us to embrace the needs of God’s mission today. Are we ready to create new wineskins to receive the new wine which God’s mission is calling us to today?

Provincial, USA.

ABBREVIATIONS

CICLSAL Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.
NWNW  New Wine in New Wineskins. Approved by Pope Francis on 3 January 2017, it was published by CICLSAL.

ENDNOTES

1. *Spiritan Rule of Life* (SRL), 213.
5. *New Wine in New Wineskins*, Introduction.
6. Ibid., 56.
10. *Vita Consecrata*, 84.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 1.2.
24. Ibid., 1.3.1.2.
25. Ibid., 1.3.1.3.
27. Superior General’s Report, 1.3.2.3.
29. Ibid., 1.2a.
31. IL, 1.2f.
32. Ibid., IL 3.2f.
33. Ibid., 3.2h.
35. Ibid., 2021.
36. Ibid., 2021.
SPIRITAN MISSION IN ASIA

Asia is still a relatively new mission for the Spiritans. For much of its history the focus of Spiritan mission was Africa and then South America with the missionaries coming from Europe and North America. This focus began to change, or rather expand, in the early 1970s when a group of Spiritans arrived in Papua New Guinea and in 1977 when a Spiritan mission was established in Pakistan. This turn towards Asia was supported by the publication of Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter of 1994, “Tertio Millennio Adveniente.” The letter set out the prepa-rations for the Jubilee Year of 2000 and the challenges facing the Church. It spoke of the need to engage with the great monothe-istic religions and the need for interreligious dialogue. In 1997, Spiritans opened missions in the Philippines and Taiwan. These missions anticipated the recommendation of the Synod of Bish-ops for Asia in 1998 when Pope John Paul called on mission-ary institutes to look to Asia in the new millennium. Further Spiritan missions were set up later in Vietnam in 2007, and in India in 2010. The Spiritan missions from the beginning were international in make-up with members coming from Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia itself.

Of all the continents, Asia is the most diverse culturally and religiously. It is the birthplace of all the great world reli-gions. Pope John Paul reminded us that Jesus took flesh as an Asian; despite this, Christianity is still seen as a foreign religion by many Asians. Periodic attempts at evangelization in Asia, for example the Jesuits in China and Japan, had little success. But the small, and in some cases tiny, Christian communities which did emerge, managed to survive over the centuries despite intense persecution. The only country where Christianity took root is the Philippines, a Spanish colony for over 300 years and an American one for 50 years. India is also different. Despite its strong Hindu/Buddhist culture, a significant Christian pres-ence, both Catholic and Protestant, grew thanks to the work of missionaries. Something either not known, or forgotten, is that Spiritans worked in India in the 19th century. Confreres from France and Ireland ministered in education and parish work in the French enclaves of Pondicherry and Chandernagor. The Congregation withdrew them in 1888 to concentrate its efforts on Africa.

I wish to thank the fol-low-ing for their advice and guidance in this article:
Fr. Seán O’Leary, C.S.Sp., (Taiwan),
Jim O’Connell, C.S.Sp., (Pakistan),

ECCLESIA IN ASIA

The document, which emerged from the Synod of 1998, “Ecclesia in Asia,” attempted to set out an approach to mission-ary work in Asia. Because of the sheer diversity of cultures and religions in Asia, it is difficult to make generalized statements that apply everywhere. But we have to start with our basic beliefs and with what we wish to do as missionaries in Asia. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Kingdom of God and Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God. We proclaim Jesus as Savior and Redeemer; however, proclaiming Jesus as Savior in an Asian context needs careful working out. The document states clearly, “Christ is the one mediator between God and man and the sole Redeemer of the world to be clearly distinguished from the founders of other great religions.” This is not a starting point for dialogue. Some of the followers of the great religions have no difficulty in seeing Jesus as a manifesta-tion of the Divine but not as the only one. The cult of the “holy man” and “holy woman” or guru is very strong, and Jesus can be seen as another version of this “…the effort to share the gift of faith in Jesus as the only Savior is fraught with philosophical, cultural and theological difficulties, especially in the light of the beliefs of Asia’s great religions, deeply intertwined with cultural values and specific world views.” The document proposes that it is therefore better to present Jesus in his relational, historical, and cosmic perspective, and also as the defender of the lowly, the weak, the outcast. It is here that the Christian message becomes central, challenging the casteism, nationalism, tribalism, and elitism which are found in Asian societies.

INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Two words describe a missionary approach in any culture-dialogue, more specifically inter-religious dialogue, and inculcation. In Asia we can add a third word, inclusivism. Pope John Paul said, “dialogue is a characteristic mode of the Church’s life in Asia.” Inter-religious dialogue aiming at mutual understanding and acceptance. It must also include mutual learning. Even the document “Ecclesia in Asia” of 1998 saw Asia as a recipient, not as a communicator of theological ideas. It underestimated the depth of influence which the ancient religions of Asia had and has on culture and outlook. Throughout history these religions have played the role of guardians of culture in critical times. The Church needs to be more aware of what other world religions can teach us and what Asian Christian theologians are saying. This is vital now...
when a new culture of materialism, technology, and secularism is affecting these traditions.

Inter-religious dialogue presupposes a strong belief in God, but this is not always so obvious in dialogue. Dialogue with Buddhists can focus more on issues such as the environment and psychological questions and not theological issues. Dialogue also presupposes, on the Christian side, a belief in the action of the Holy Spirit in all people of faith. This type of dialogue can and does take place on an institutional and formal level, but also on an individual and informal level. It does not always lead to positive results. An experience of dialogue with a Buddhist monk in Vietnam left me with the belief that the two religions had not so much in common apart from our humanity. The other type of dialogue has been called the “dialogue of life,” describing the daily life of a missionary in his or her interactions with people. This is where missionaries come into their own, establishing connections and friendships with the local people. It is here that we realize our common humanity, that we, the missionaries, are not the “other,” the stranger, or the foreigner. This dialogue of life frequently involves sharing poverty and insecurity and, when it is politically possible, searching for justice and liberation. It is also where “the option for the poor” becomes central. “Such an option frequently brings its own rewards: a deeper awareness of the bonds of humanity which unite all men and women, a deepening of one’s own faith, and liberation from a ghetto mentality.”

**INCULTURATION**

Pope John Paul II asked how we can enable the cultures of Asia to grasp the universal significance of the mystery of Jesus and the Church. Inculturation is always seen as a necessary approach: inculturation of the liturgy, Scriptures, and formation of laity and of future priests. But even here, Asia presents special challenges. Spiritans in Pakistan encountered two different reactions among the Christians to adaptations of the liturgy – one group enthusiastic about the changes and the other group more anxious to keep to the more traditional and socially-accepted liturgy. The Spiritans discovered that the poor were more open to changes; those on a slightly higher social scale were more interested in fitting into what was familiar. In Vietnam, adaptation of the liturgy was limited during the years of oppression; in such circumstances sticking with the known and the universal was the best policy.

In a Buddhist culture such as Vietnam and less so in secularized Taiwan, contemplation is central to their religious practice, and it is here that cooperation between religions is possible. “Mission is contemplative action and active contemplation,” but it is more in the process of contemplation or prayer rather than the object of the exercise that the sides can dialogue. When I asked a Buddhist monk what he meditated on, the answer came back immediately, “nothing.”

**INCLUSIVITY**

The third approach to mission in Asia focuses on the idea of inclusivity. Missionaries coming from the Western Church have imbibed the notion that one size fits all when it comes to being a Catholic. In Asian religious thinking, “the boundaries are not rigidly marked, structures not rigorously fixed and conditions of belonging not strictly laid down.” “What is important to most people is not so much external religious identity but the deeper religious experience and the path you take to attain it.” This can be seen in the structure of a typical Buddhist monastery which can include fulltime, celibate monks and nuns, temporary members, married people, and people who come and go. In Vietnam, the only locally-founded religion is Cao Dai which has three major prophets, Buddha, Jesus, and Victor Hugo, with a strong dose of Confucianism thrown in. Its headquarters is called the Holy See. In India, this approach can be seen in the large number of Hindus who attend regular lectures on Jesus and the Scriptures. They have no intention of converting, but they are interested in different spiritual ways. Missionaries have to be open to different levels of commitment, an idea that needs to be taken up in the Western Church.

**Missionaries have to be open to different levels of commitment, an idea that needs to be taken up in the Western Church.**

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) at its meeting in 2018 spoke of a triple dialogue; culture, other religions, and the poor, and set out a five-point roadmap for evangelization in Asia.
1) Evangelization/building the Kingdom of God in the 3rd millennium belongs to the Asian Church. While this may be an acknowledge-ment that the era of missionaries from the West is over, it also implies that Asians need to be missionaries to each other. This is already happening with missionaries from Vietnam, Philippines, India, and other countries working throughout the continent. There is always the inclination of a church to become inward looking, especially where there has been persecution. One of the tasks of Spiritans and other missionary groups is to develop a missionary outreach in the local church.

2) Economic and environmental justice are central to our proclamation. While the economies of Asia are developing rapidly, many people are being left behind. In India, the high-tech industry exists side by side with poverty. Environmental degradation, air pollution in the cities, and the dreadful damage being done to the seas are daily issues for people and have to be concerns for the Church. Vietnam has a long coastline with the busiest and most polluted sea in the world, the South China Sea. There is a real clash between the desire to develop industry and technology while at the same time trying to protect the environment. A recent major fish kill underlined this.

3) The rights of indigenous peoples must be supported and defended. One of the features of many countries in Asia is the presence of large populations of indigenous groups who have a different culture and language, and sometimes, religion, to the majority population and who have suffered discrimination in their own countries as a result. This is true in Pakistan, India, Philippines, and China and, to a lesser extent, in Vietnam and Taiwan where the groups are more integrated. Minority ethnic groups have always made up the bulk of poor and uneducated people and are a source of cheap labor.

4) The Church must enter into dialogue with poverty, culture, and other religions. The poor have always been found among the ethnic minorities but now increasingly they are found among migrants. Migrants are an increasing phenomenon in the countries where Spiritans work. In Vietnam and India, it is internal migration, from the rural areas to the cities. In Taiwan, it is foreign migration, mostly from the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia to work in the factories and houses of the Taiwanese. They are the strangers in a foreign culture and can experience hostility, loneliness, and a disconnect from society. In a society like Taiwan, it can be difficult to identify who are the poor in the general population. It is not the poverty of lack of finances but of loneliness and lack of meaning in life.

5) Mainstreaming reconciliation in areas where racism, casteism, and violence, especially against minorities and women, are present. Violence against women and religious minorities is still a feature of life in Pakistan and India. It is in this area that the Christian message is at its most relevant. Catholic social teaching, with its emphasis on equality, human rights, and liberation from unjust structures, challenges not just political entities but also religious entities. It is where Christianity can differ from other world religions. The difference has been described as the difference between anthropomorphic and cosmic religion. For Christians, God is the incarnate One who has come among us and is concerned for the sufferings of the people. This goes against the strong element of fatalism and predeterminism found in other religions.

THE SPIRITANS

This is the world in which Spiritan missionaries are called to serve. They are a small element in what is already a minority Church, except in the Philippines. The Spiritan way of mission is characterized by active involvement with people, witness in their community and personal life, unity in diversity, collaborative ministry, closeness to the poor, and a prophetic voice in society. This is their identity and charism and is relevant to the world of Asia just as the Gospel never ceases to be relevant in their lives, in their communities and in society.

The Spiritan charism is a call to work with the “poor and abandoned,” the marginalized and excluded.
of Asia, many young people can experience isolation, loneliness, and a lack of deeper connection with their society. They may have many friends on social media, but often they do not have a deeper connection with others resulting in isolation, boredom, and loneliness. At the same time, discovering a deeper meaning and goal in life is more difficult with the declining influence of religion and traditional values.

**Papua New Guinea**

The first Spiritan mission was to Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the early 1970s. Confreres from the Irish Province were invited to work there and were followed by confreres from the Province of Trans-Canada. Now the Spiritan missionaries come from Africa and, in particular, from Nigeria and Madagascar. PNG has a significant percentage of Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, but is also a center of traditional, tribal beliefs. Parish ministry is the main work of the Spiritans. Difficulties in travel because of the terrain and a high level of violence are part of the challenge for missionaries. PNG and Australia form what is now called the Oceania community.

**Pakistan**

The work of the Spiritans varies greatly in each of the countries where they live. In Pakistan, Christians have always been treated as second-class citizens and unimportant. The Spiritans work with two groups, the small Christian community and the tribal Hindus. Because of the overwhelming presence of Islam, whatever dialogue takes place is not with Islam as such but with individual Muslims. Living with people who are discriminated against at the level of race, religion, gender, and caste, the Spiritans work to bring a sense of dignity to the people and a conviction of God’s love for them. This is where the Christian beliefs in equality, brotherhood and sisterhood become central.

**Philippines**

In the Philippines, Spiritans minister in parishes,chaplaincies to hospitals, schools and prisons, and in formation of future members of the congregation. They are challenged by the huge inequalities in a society where the power and the money are controlled by a handful of families which are often Catholic. They work with minority groups within an already poor society.

They also have to cope with an increasing presence of evangelical and Pentecostal groups who attract many young people to their churches. Spiritans and the Church have to respond with a more Scripture-based catechesis and an openness to laity involvement in church structures. Two young men have already been ordained as Spiritans and appointed to mission outside their country.

**Taiwan**

In Taiwan, the Spiritans are often torn between responding to the requests of the local dioceses to maintain parishes and their call to work with particular groups. They have their own parishes, but also have taken on chaplaincies to prisons, universities, and youth, as well as to migrant workers. One of the challenges for the group is to reach out to the ethnic groups living in the mountainous interior of the country. Ministry in a rich, materialistic, secular society which has an increasingly weak Buddhist/Taoist tradition, demands the witness of a life of prayer, contemplation, and active charity.

**India**

Spiritans in Vietnam and India have common priorities in their ministry arising from the political situation in the two countries. Their presence in both countries is semi-legal and, as a result, they occupy a marginal area in an already marginal church. Their usual environment is within the Catholic community and contact with non-Catholics is of an informal kind. The Church in India has to cope with an increasingly aggressive Hindu nationalistic movement which believes that to be Indian is to be Hindu. This impacts on the very large populations of Muslims in India and the smaller population of Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, and other religions. Foreign missionaries are officially not allowed in India, but the Indian Church sends out many Catholic missionaries all over the world. The Spiritan apostolate in India is in formation. It is training young Indian men to become Spiritan missionaries, and already three members have been ordained and gone on mission to Kenya, Zambia, and England.

**Vietnam**

The Church in Vietnam has, in its 400-year history, had to cope with periods of strong persecution and oppression. This has largely ceased, but it is still eyed with some suspicion by the political authorities. Despite these difficulties, or maybe because of them, it is
strong and dynamic. At present, Vietnam has twenty-six dioceses, approximately eight million Catholics, and six senior seminaries, all of which are full to capacity. Relations between Church and State have improved and a modus vivendi worked out. The Church looks after its affairs and is not involved in politics, but occasionally there are tensions over property and justice and peace issues. There is a real challenge for the Church to know when it should speak out on these issues.

Catholics in Vietnam are proud of their identity and attached to their traditions. While the liturgy is “very Roman,” it is enhanced by a myriad of prayers, hymns, and devotions that are part of the expression of the people’s faith. Devotion to Mary is central to their faith, as well as devotion to St. Joseph. Marrying outside the group is not encouraged, and many foreigners with Vietnamese brides find they also have to get a new religion. Also central to them is the veneration of the martyrs; since the arrival of Christianity in the sixteenth century, an estimated 100,000 people have died as martyrs. Martyrdom remained an issue until the middle of the last century. In 1988, Pope John Paul II canonized one hundred and seventeen Vietnamese martyrs.

The main work of the Spiritans in Vietnam since their arrival in 2007, is the formation of future members of the congregation. Vietnam has been experiencing a vocations boom for the last twenty years that has resulted in dozens of religious institutes, both women and men, coming to the country looking for vocations. When the Spiritans arrived in Vietnam, they were blessed to have Vietnamese ordained members already in the group. These are men who had done their formation and studies in the US. They already spoke the language and had family connections in the country. This was a major advantage when the group took on the vocation’s apostolate. Because of their semi-legal status, the Spiritans do not have their own parishes but, from the beginning, they made themselves available informally to help out in parishes in retreat ministry, the expatriate Catholic community, and counselling services. Their charity outreach involved providing scholarship for children to attend schools, funding water purification systems, and building simple houses for the poor.

Since formation is the main occupation of the Spiritans, one of the first decisions made by the group was not to accept candidates who had just finished High School. They had to have worked for some time or done third level studies before they would be accepted. From the beginning, the Spiritans emphasized that they were a missionary Congregation and anyone wishing to join them had to be ready to leave their own country. This is a challenge for a people who love their own country and their own language, but many generous young men decided they were ready to accept this challenge. There are now fifty in the formation program. The first cycle of formation takes place in Vietnam. The novitiate also takes place here, but it is international with novices coming from India, Hong Kong and, in the future, from the Philippines. After that, all newly professed members spend two years on apostolic experience in a Spiritan mission, usually in West or East Africa or in the UK. The students study theology in Manila and live in the Spiritan International Community house. In 2020, the Spiritans had their first six candidates ready for ordination, but this was postponed until 2021 because of the pandemic. Every year from now on, more students will make final profession, be ordained, and sent on mission.

CONCLUSION
It is difficult to make generalized statements about Asia, but what can be said is that cultures and societies are changing and there is a danger that the ancient religions and traditions will be undermined by the new technocratic and consumeristic subculture. Materialism and secularism are as much parts of society there as they are in the West. As one writer has pointed out, the most dangerous ideology in the world today is to imagine that there is but one way of knowing or interpreting reality, one model of human progress, one way of living and being human. Religions in Asia have always played the role of guardians of culture, especially in critical times. Today the ancient religions of Asia, including Christianity, are called to work together to resist this cultural imperialism.

Spiritans in Asia, small in number though they may be, are called to be part of this work and should see it as part of the work of evangelization. “Thus, the task of proclaiming Jesus in a way which enables the peoples of Asia to identify with him while remaining faithful both to the Church’s theological doctrine and to their own Asian origins is a paramount challenge.” This task emphasizes a witnessing Church, witnessing in an Asian way through prayer, contemplation, love of silence, harmony with creation, and a simple lifestyle; and in a Catholic way through its witnessing in an Asian way through prayer, contemplation, love of silence, harmony with creation, and a simple lifestyle.
works for charity, justice and peace, and through the witness of the life of the missionary, the Christian family, and the ecclesial community which reveals a new way of living - always keeping in mind that “There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord.”

2. Ibid., 2.
3. Ibid., 20.
4. Ibid., 4.
8. Wilfred, Felix op. cit.
11. Ibid., 19

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**INTRODUCTION**

Since the beginning of 2016, I have been working in Geneva (Switzerland) representing a faith-based, non-Governmental Organization (NGO) – VIVAT International! – to which 12 religious congregations (female and male) belong. The Spiritans became full members in 2009. VIVAT International has special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and is associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI). Members can work with the organization to bring the attention of the U.N. to situations of injustice experienced in their place of mission. They can speak up for those who are voiceless at the international arena of human rights, engaging with the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms. In this way, Spiritans can be what Fr. Libermann asked for, and as our Rule of Life (SRL) directs, “the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them.”

That is, we are to help people at the grassroots to live with dignity and respect and to help make their voices heard in the forum of world opinion so that all their fundamental rights are acknowledged and acted upon.

I would like to take a look at a human rights approach to Spiritan mission today from the perspective of my experience here at Geneva and as a Spiritan with a central European background. I do so in the context of the forthcoming Spiritan General Chapter due to take place in my home province of Poland. It is not my intention to give a list of possible answers to the world’s human rights issues and challenges or to analyze or judge the current situation of the world. While the range of views from different parts of the world is significant (political, social, cultural, religious, etc.) I suggest that we should look at human rights issues from the perspective of history rather than from the context of current political disputes.

**HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION**

As I begin, allow me to acknowledge that the area of human rights is very complex. There is an ever-growing library
of international documents describing, protecting, and understanding human rights since the establishment of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights after World War II in 1946, and its replacement by the Human Rights Council in 2006. The question is: what should we choose to include in our essential library of documents to help us find our way through the world of human rights so as not to lose its essential elements?

Certainly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on December 10, 1948, was “a true milestone on the path of humanity’s moral progress.” This declaration guarantees the fundamental rights of every person on the planet. In 1950, the Council of Europe, with forty-seven member states, drafted the European Convention on Human Rights that came into force on September 3, 1953. Then, the Organization of American States adopted the American Convention on Human Rights on November 22, 1969 “to consolidate in this hemisphere, within the framework of democratic institutions, a system of personal liberty and social justice based on respect for the essential rights of man.”

African States have created their own the (Banjul) Charter of Human and People’s Rights (1981), and Islamic States have created the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI). The Asian Human Rights Commission founded by a group of jurists and human rights activists in Hong Kong in 1986, initiated The Asian Human Rights Charter. The charter is described as a “people’s charter,” because no governmental charter has been issued. We should not neglect the Beijing Declaration adopted by the First South-South Human Rights Forum on December 8, 2017.

As we can see, every region of the World – at different times – has felt a great need to have its own convention on human rights and certainly each one of them has had its own reasons to introduce it: due to the diversity of culture, climate concerns, its own understanding, background, etc. I would not like to open this Pandora’s Box of conventions, but we could pose a courageous question: is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights not universal? If it is, then why did every region of the world come up with its own convention? We can go further and ask, “Is it possible to make a worldwide agreement and understanding on human rights that could be universal in practice?”

Pope Francis, in his message for the 2018 Human Rights Day (December 10) wrote,

The fundamental rights of all human beings, especially the most vulnerable, must be respected and protected in every situation. … While a part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees their dignity denied, ignored or infringed upon and their fundamental rights ignored or violated.

Such a contradiction caused him to ask,

… whether the equal dignity of all human beings – solemnly proclaimed 70 years ago – is truly recognized, respected, protected and promoted in every circumstance.

As we can presuppose from the above-mentioned documents, certainly, some elements can act as a starting point to debate the issue.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHARITY AND JUSTICE

One of the biggest challenges in taking a human rights approach to Spiritan mission is to look at an issue as a human rights issue. The starting point to address this challenge is to distinguish between charity (direct service) and justice (systemic change). Charity I understand as the giving of help to answer people’s immediate needs with immediate solutions. It provides direct services like food, clothing, shelter, talks, etc. Charity is directed at the effects of injustice and addresses problems that already exist. Very often, we identify charity with individual acts of kindness.

I understand Justice as a response to long-term needs and a look for long-term solutions to people’s problems. It promotes social change in institutions and political structures. Justice analyses the root causes of social, political, economic, and religious issues that cause injustice for people. A famous quotation from Dom Helder Camara illustrates the tension between charity and justice. He said, “When I feed the poor, they call me a saint, but when I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist.”

We can say that both charity and justice, are two feet of the same action, therefore, in a human rights approach to Spiritan mission, it would be inappropriate to ask ourselves, “which one should we choose?” While both are important, they are not at the same level and are not applied in the same way. Charity and justice are not either necessarily under the auspices of the same person or organization. However, in a human rights project, it is essential to
In the human rights field it is very difficult to measure effectiveness and demonstrate positive results.

distinguish between the two and see how to relate them in a particular context. In this article, I focus on the importance of the quest for justice as central for Spiritan mission today.

ARE WE ENTITLED TO SPEAK ABOUT SUCCESS STORIES...?

When I talk with others and try to explain what I do, they often ask me about the results of my work; the success stories I have to share. To give an adequate, honest, and fair answer is not easy because in the human rights field it is very difficult to measure effectiveness and demonstrate positive results. Therefore, I need to explain a few components of a human rights project.

As I already said the human rights approach is more about justice than charity, however, both are present. A human rights approach focuses primarily on structural change, rather than on the immediate situation. This is a more demanding task than simply providing for the immediate needs of a particular situation and takes time. Advocacy for human rights requires great patience, adequate methodology and decent resources, human and financial. Put simply, there is no quick fix.

However, in some places, where Spiritans have worked for many years, the human rights situation of the people among whom we live and serve is not only not improving, but, on the contrary, it seems that there is a deterioration in their rights. In such a situation, we can rightly ask ourselves, “Does the work we do make sense?” Sometimes I ask our partners on the ground about this. Surprisingly, I have always heard from them that it is very important that we continue to work with them to create an awareness that they are not abandoned, that they are supported, and that their lives and their struggles to improve their lives matters to us. This dimension is often overlooked, but it is very important and crucial when we speak about human dignity, the sustainability of projects, and about efficiency.

BEING SPIRITAN FOR THE MISSION

The first and most important orientation in a human rights approach to Spiritan mission is to see the beauty of the Gospel as “the way of life” offered to every person. This is the fundamental motivation of our Spiritan life and work, which is so good, beautiful, great, and true that it makes sense to commit our entire lives to it. Our vocation prompts us to live according to the wisdom of the Gospel and show others the way to that wisdom so that they too can discover and follow it as a way of life for themselves in communion with others. I am convinced that our Spiritan founders felt and understood the Gospel as their “way of life,” and in their time realized a “program” on how to extend this motivation into the future. Therefore, we are also very much motivated by our Spiritan tradition expressed in our Rule of Life, “The charisms of our Founders, Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann, and fidelity to our tradition urge us to respond creatively to the needs of evangelization of our time.”

At the heart of this motivation is the conviction that the way of justice and love is God’s way for humanity. “To act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly in the way of God” (Micah 6:8) comes to full fruition in the mystery of the incarnation. In Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who is the Christ “went about doing good ...” God utters God’s word of justice and love. Christians believe him to be the Son of God, the incarnate God. In order to know what this means, we need to be clear about what God wants from us as recounted through the Judeo-Christian tradition in, for example the Decalogue of the Old Testament and, most importantly, with the New Testament commandment of love. What do these commandments mean to us, what do they mean to me?

For me it is clear that with God becoming man, he would surely do as he commands us to do. Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the full realization and demonstration of the commandment to love and fully confirmed in his death and resurrection. Both Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann had intimate experience of God’s love for them realized in Jesus. They radically followed his way of love as expressed in their commitment to the most neglected and deprived in the world of their time. They lived and acted as Jesus lived and acted. As Libermann wrote in his instruction to missionaries,

A Missionary who has been sent by Jesus Christ, and who does not make his sufferings holy cannot make others holy in the truth. This holiness must have its foundation in the depths of his being and show itself in the way he lives, works and suffers. This is the way the missionary gives birth to souls for God in the truth, after the example of Jesus Christ, because he gives to them the Savior’s life already present in himself.
Here is the crucial line of questioning for all Spiritans. To what extent are we convinced about God’s commandment of love? How have we adopted and placed this conviction at the heart of our “way of life”? What is our radical (intimate/personal and social) fidelity to the Gospel as our “way of life”? How do we show this in everything we do and in the way that we do it? Going from the knowledge, awareness, and conviction of the commandment of love, to concrete forms of action in line with a preferential option for the poor (those that nobody thinks of) is determined by the particular context of time, society, culture, and circumstances. Here it is crucial to observe the inevitable tension between the evangelical motivation on the one hand and the particular actions taken in response to that motivation in the concrete circumstances of our mission.

In any vocation, motivation is recognized as a decisive factor in the quality of a person’s work. This is even more true for the religious vocation of the Spiritan missionary. A person will not do a job well unless, for whatever reason, he wants to do it well. This is basic anthropological reasoning. The evangelical motivation is the crucial factor that distinguishes the work done by religious from those who are not. In ministry, such as the human rights and/or JPIC activities, with its variety of approaches and objectives (profane and/or religious), the religious person (the Spiritan) contributes with their own reasoning and motivation. While personal aptitude is necessary, our motivation must go beyond this. Our rule of life expresses this idea well. “The ‘apostolic life’ is at the heart of our Spiritan vocation. It is ‘that life of love and of holiness lived on earth by the Son of God in order to save and sanctify people. By it He continually sacrificed Himself, thereby glorifying the Father and saving the world.’”\textsuperscript{13}

There is often an impression that social commitment is the principal and exclusive agenda for activities in the field of “Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation” (JPIC) and/or human rights for many religious institutions, including the Spiritans. The primary evangelical motivation is either neglected, or, at most receives only lip service. For example, it is a topic reserved to official documents, or it only receives mention at the annual spiritual retreat. Without a practical application of a human rights approach to mission then JPIC and human rights fail to animate Spiritan mission and are reduced to institutional ideology.

It is not my intention to criticize or even less to condemn, but the main question remains: how is the personal evangelical motivation of life and behavior of every Spiritan reflected in their social, pastoral, socio-cultural, and leadership work?

The Spiritan missionary is required to be creative in his work and life. He needs to be affective and progressive, dynamic and vital, participating actively in mission as a “two-way street” that happens between him and the people he serves. The Spiritan missionary not only gives but also receives. John Kilcrann refers to this dimension as a “mutual endearment.” This he described as, “A strong bond and relationship grows between us and the people we serve.”\textsuperscript{14} It is through such relationships that we become aware of the impact of the Holy Spirit in our work and our lives as Spiritans.

The fact that our congregation is called the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, means that the Holy Spirit has an important place in our mission and in every Spiritan life. Therefore, the appropriate question to ask is, “How does the Holy Spirit work?” Certainly, he manifests himself in true communication and in connecting and re-assembling all that the Diabolos, “a liar, and the father of all lies” (John 8:44) displaces, dismantles, scatters, and thereby destroys. The Holy Spirit is the creator, the source of inspiration and strength for what every new situation requires from us in order to fulfill our mission of bringing people together and building a better world for all.

“The evangelization of the poor is our purpose. 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.”\textsuperscript{15} This quotation from the Spiritan Rule of Life offers the guarantee for the evangelical motivation for the work of JPIC and human rights.

As Spiritans, we are sent to the most neglected, poorest, and oppressed. In going, we take up the work inspired by the Holy Spirit showing those to whom we are sent that we think
Spiritan mission is about supporting those most in need in their efforts to survive by helping them get out of their misery.

**The Spiritan, as advocate for human rights, is called to be the “master of communication,” connecting people and creating possibilities for all to live together.**

The Holy Spirit through Spiritans shows those with whom they live and work that they are not only important to God but also important to the missionary. They come to see or feel themselves as people with rights and recourse by legal means to redress the injustices they face. The missionary’s personal presence and advocacy for the acknowledgement and action for human rights strengthens the observance and respect for human rights in general and, in particular, the claims by those they serve to just resolution using legal institutional mechanisms to secure their rights. Through sensitivity to individual human rights and an ongoing struggle to ensure their recognition and acceptance, a new norm of behavior and interaction develops from the basic human right that all are free and equal. Therefore, the social work and the human rights commitment gradually become a way to persuade every one of their importance and uniqueness as made in the image and likeness of God endowed with inalienable rights by the Creator and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spiritan practice of silent and consistent mediation not only honors the place of the Holy Spirit in the name of the congregation, but also deepens the Spiritan charism of connection and revival enabling a new quality of communication and a greater capacity of listening to others in their need. This is very important in the continuously individualized world in which human rights have increasingly become the rights of individuals.

Grégor Puppinck in his book, *Droits de l’homme dénaturé*, explains historical reasons for the contemporary shift from universal human rights to those of the individual.16 This shift overlooks the fact that the individual person can be human only if he/she is a person-with-others. The word “individual” means “being-undivided-in-self-being + being-separated-from-others” (meaning for itself). Therefore, the individual’s primary focus is on himself/herself while observing others mainly through the prism of usefulness to self. This, Puppinck suggests, promotes a world of individuals interacting with one another without real human communication. The Spiritan, as advocate for human rights, is called to be the “master of communication,” connecting people and creating possibilities for all to live together in mutual respect.

Such advocacy requires the gifts of the Holy Spirit to give shape to how the Spiritan communicates with others. As the Sequence for Pentecost Sunday proclaims,

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... Come, Father of the poor, Source of gifts that will endure
    Light of ev’ry human heart,
    You of all consolers best, Of the soul most kindly Guest,
    Quick’ning courage do bestow.
    In hard labor You are rest, In the beat You refresh best, And solace give in our woe.
    O most blessed Light divine, Let Your radiance in us shine,
    And our inmost being fill.
    Nothing good by man is thought, Nothing right by him is wrought, When he spurns Your gracious Will,
    Cleanse our souls from sinful stain, Lave our dryness with Your rain, Heal our wounds and mend our way.
    Bend the stubborn heart and will, Melt the frozen, warm the chill, Guide the steps that go astray.
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Experience teaches us that human sadness decreases as it is shared, while joy increases as it is shared. Therefore, it seems to me that the Spiritan charism expresses itself through the skills of communication, connectivity, and the creation of communion or unity among those deprived of their human rights. Through loving communication, those individualized in their misery tasting only the bitterness of sadness come to the joy of life God wills for them. The Holy Spirit is the source of this communication that inspires, strengthens, and empowers persistence in the pursuit of human rights. The Spiritan, thus engaged, lives his entire life in accordance with the logic of the wheat grain, “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of...
COMMITMENT TO THE TRUTH

There are many kinds of truth and many ways truth is given or, can we can say, is revealed to us. There is the truth that things are as they are because they cannot be otherwise. This is the truth of internal necessity, as in mathematics, or a logical syllogism. There is also the truth of direct experience and the truth that we come to know through scientific methods in relation to our experience (scientific knowledge in various sciences). There is then a way of truth that appears to be on the sidelines of all this, namely, a truth that reveals itself to us and gives itself to us – a truth to which a person can only attain through the testimony of someone else. Testimony, therefore, is one, perhaps particularly privileged, approach to truth. First it is about truth on a personal level (we leave aside the mathematical and logical ones). When a person does a service to another person, this means that ‘I’ respond positively to what ‘YOU’ need right now and vice versa. In this way of truth all analytical methods, all checking and calculation fail us; as does the method of human aesthetic pleasure.

The unforced freedom of the “I-AM” of the other person, requires my equal and free “I-AM,” which means, my trust and confidence, my respect and contribution in the shared encounter. If I were to leave aside this way of truth on the personal level, I could never meet another person so there would be no authentic “I – YOU” relationship. It is through personal attentiveness and engagement with the other that the wholeness of the truth of who I am – the entire and real “ME” – is discovered and committed. Only with my unconditional readiness and openness will the truth open up to me and help me deepen the awareness of my existence in a specific time, according to specific conditions, with concrete people, drawing me into living life in its fullness (John 10:10). The way of truth is confirmed and experienced through one’s full and personal commitment of one’s whole life “to the end.” This is the learning through blood (blood as a symbol of life). Ultimately, this is the way to encounter God as the Bible, Christian faith, and Spiritan tradition testify.

CHALLENGES

The work I do with the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms in Geneva alerts me to the importance of initial and ongoing formation for all Spiritans. Holistic human development integrating the Spiritan vocation with personal spiritual identity constitute the necessary elements for the maturity required for Spiritan mission that incorporates JPIC and advocacy for human rights. Working at the international level of human rights, I see that without such a formative experience a Spiritan will feel uneasy and at a loss to cope with the variety of approaches, ideologies, and human rights concepts mentioned at the beginning of this article.

Spiritan formation (initial, specialized, and ongoing) is an opportune time to study one’s own spirituality, to deepen knowledge of the Spiritan tradition, and assess necessary tools for personal growth. From my experience, I can say that there is still a gap in the congregation between academic formation with its emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, and personal formation with its emphasis on personal maturity. Spiritan formation programs should strive to achieve an equilibrium/balance between the academic and the personal to ensure a more effective and fruitful life for future Spiritan missionaries.

Looking at our commitment in the areas of JPIC and human rights, I know that individual Spiritans and groups engage well as the advocates and supporters of the little ones in the areas of the world in which they live and work. A lot is happening. However, I cannot get rid of the impression, or the feeling, that this happens more at the individual and local levels than at the congregational level with organized and prepared plans and projects. Greater solidarity and spiritual support at the level of the entire congregation, would greatly promote the human rights/JPIC ministry at the individual and local levels. The optimization of human and financial resources for this ministry and the better coordination of existing structures deserves attention.

ENDNOTES

1. www.vivatinternational.org
2. Rule of 1849; N.D. X, 517 as quoted in SRL 14.

Andrzej Owca, C.S.Sp.,
Geneva.
7. Declaration of the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), adopted in Cairo, on 5 August 1990.
8. Cf. African Human Rights Declaration: art. 17; 18.1; 18.2; 27.1; 27.2; (http://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=49 – seen on February 9th, 2021); Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam: art. 2; 3; 5; (http://www.fao.org/ human-rights/caire - en on February 9th, 2021); American Convention on Human Rights: art. 4; 17.1; 17.2; 32.1; 32.2; (https://www.cidh.oas.org/basic/english/basic3.american%20convention.htm – seen on February 9, 2021); Beijing Declaration: art. 1; 2; 4; (http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/08/c_136811775.htm – seen on February 9th, 2021); Universal Declaration of Human Rights: art. 1; 16.3; 25.2; 29.1; (http://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/documents/udhr_translations/eng.pdf – seen on February 9th, 2021).
9. Dom Helder Camara was the Archbishop of Olinda and Recife in Brazil serving from 1964 to 1985 during the time of the country’s military regime.
10. Spiritan Rule of Life (SRL) 2.
13. SRL 3 (Rule 1848; N.D. X, 505).
15. SRL 4.
16. Cf. Grégor Puppinck Les Droits de l’homme dénaturés; Paris, Cerf 2018. Grégor Puppinck, PhD, is Director of the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), which is an international Non-Governmental Organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights.
17. It seems that this is what the Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig had in mind in his article ‘Das Neue Denken’: Kleine Schriften, Berlin 1937, p. 395-396.
The behaviors and attitudes described, if we do not take care to correct them definitively through education and awareness, can seriously compromise dialogue and therefore, living together between individuals and communities, and finally make them impossible. In view of “certain signs or attitudes of mistrust, even intolerance, which remind us that in matters of religious peace and national cohesion, nothing is ever definitively acquired,” the dialogue and living together of which Cardinal Sarr speaks lead us in this article to refine their theological understanding to which the Senegalese ecclesial context can contribute. In the background, we want to define the positioning of each actor in the dialogue through the notion of “interlocutor.” In the first part, we will present the way in which the calls for unity by religious and civil authorities, which by their factual and punctual character, allow us to deduce the figure of a tradition, rather than a novel dialogue. In the second part, we will show how the expression dialogue proportionate to the interlocutors serves as a point of reference for the theological perspective of Muslim-Christian dialogue. We conclude by considering how this perspective can enter the debate opened by Nostra aetate on the human condition as a cornerstone of the dialogical method.

I. CALLS FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AS A QUEST FOR UNITY IN RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The Senegalese episcopate’s calls for peaceful coexistence are an invitation to behave in places of natural human collaboration: families, villages, neighborhoods, groups of youth, children and adults, etc. However, we must “understand that we are all in relationship with very different individuals and communities.” Maintaining these relationships is part of the mission of the Episcopal Commission for Christian-Muslim Relations. As the prelates point out, “it is a long road of life.” This remark is necessary in a field where “living together in the same nation, between people of different ethnicities, languages, backgrounds and especially religions is a test for all.” The evocation of three levels of trials – the trial of cohabitation, the trial of Islamic-Christian homes, and the trial of daily life – is an explicit recognition of the conflicts and tensions as well as the challenges to be faced in Islamic-Christian relations. It is a question of reaching a breakthrough to enable “living together in peace and harmony.” Hence the legitimate questions that the Senegalese bishops are asking themselves:

What is the quality of our relations, among ourselves, but also with those who have a different faith from us. That is the question. Do we have a spirit of openness and understanding, of welcome and forgiveness? It is this spirit that leads us to true dialogue where two people, two communities, can speak to each other with respect, in mutual listening, each seeking to understand the other, his thought, his faith.

In this questioning dynamic of the dialogue between Christians and Muslims, it is necessary to resituate the “examination of conscience.” What the bishops did not say about unity is that it is not an idea detached from the resolutions taken at the personal level. “The path of dialogue is possible, if we want it, and if we accept to enter into fraternal relationship with believers of other religious traditions.” This situation obliges us to return to the motivation that risks being hindered by the lack of reciprocity: “Our faith in Christ is the most compelling motivation that pushes us to dialogue. Fidelity to the Gospel demands that we live like Jesus himself.” In recalling that Christians and Muslims in Senegal must engage in a true, respectful, and sincere dialogue, the bishops point out the convergences in the behavior of the two religious communities that demonstrate the fundamentally constructed character of religious cohabitation. Through what is said on Islamic-Christian relations, one realizes the strength of the messages of peace that inspire the bishops of Senegal. These messages relate more to the participation of the Church in the project of building a way of living together: “There is finally a domain, also vast, where we can contribute effectively to greater peace. It is to look at each other in the diversity of ethnicities, customs, levels of education, religions. Let us carry out this attention to the other in a spirit of respect and esteem.”

The order of the episcopal speeches that serve as norms for the attitudes of Christians in Senegal towards their Muslim compatriots confirms the calls for the Church to dialogue with human society. For “no Catholic can ignore how sensitive the Christian conscience is today to the effort for justice and peace.” Considering this awareness, one must wonder about the de facto distances...
in the Senegalese ecclesial space. Indeed, relationships in communities are often maintained on the basis of the closeness that arises from the same religious affiliation with the other. We remember the words of the bishops exhorting external witness through unity lived within: “the unity of hearts and lives, both privately and institutionally, will represent, among non-Christians, one of the best forms of witness.” In this climate of fraternity which respects the state and the evangelical task proper to each one, the apostolic worker can only be perceived as the artisan of dialogue.

On the side of the Muslims, their numerous messages to Catholic families during the Christian feasts and their assistance at the time of trials testify to their desire to live in peaceful cohabitation, love of God and of neighbor, as the common foundation of Islam and Christianity. All this leads to the conclusion that the call for unity, launched by the religious authorities of Senegal, touches all the specific aspects of the intra-ecclesial and inter-religious dialogue in the Senegalese environment. Is there a convergence of the different levels of conflict? Unity and diversity once again mark the dialectical link that joins particular communities to the larger societal group.

Faced with the multiple social, political, and economic crises that the populations are experiencing, the bishops advocate inter-religious dialogue as a necessity to build, with Muslims or followers of traditional religion, “a society of peace and brotherhood ardently desired by men and women of good will.” They invite “all the Christians of the country, out of fidelity to their faith, to open more widely a path of dialogue, peace and collaboration” with the Muslims. Collaboration, reciprocal respect and dialogue are in fact the affirmation of a path taken by individuals who want to live a universal value: development. “We call for reciprocal respect among believers to foster dialogue and fraternal encounter, to promote together the harmonious development of peoples.” It is therefore not surprising to see Bishop Ernest Sambou take a positive view of the Muslims of his diocese of Saint-Louis of Senegal: “Islam in Saint-Louis is currently an open, welcoming, and even friendly Islam.” Inter-religious dialogue and communion, the principle and foundation of mission, have a common meaning in the pastoral letters: that of a return to the values of love and witness of the Gospel. For those who want to understand the relations of the Senegalese Church with the outside world, it is also imperative to restore the discourse with other religious traditions, which often consist either of cognitive diffusions on the view of the other, or of responses to the Church’s calls. Thus, seen from the point of view of Islamic-Christian and ecumenical dialogue, the positions of the general khaliifes of the Muslim brotherhoods and the pastors of the evangelical churches are not without interest for the Senegalese ecclesial authorities. According to a document from the Center for Islamic-Christian Studies and Documentation (CEDIC), the concern for unity between brotherhoods is constant among the mourides, the tijanes, the Tall family, and the kadres. This concern is expressed through the Kadiya Higher Council for Africa, whose objectives are defined as follows: to restore to the Tarika its original and fundamental principles for a better application of the precepts of the Koran and the Sunna, to fight against deviations through education and the dissemination of teachings, to cultivate and maintain among all Muslims the spirit of brotherhood, harmony, and tolerance.

By talking too much about peace and unity, we undo the consensus more often than we improve it.
close one’s eyes to things that can weaken dialogue and social cohesion. Taking into account the drifts also leads to conceive his role as a politician. “To this end,” says Macky Sall, “my role is to gather us around the ideals we share.”

In the face of reflexes of “identity withdrawal,” which it would be naive to believe will disappear with a few success stories, with laudatory speeches, sporadic warnings and advice, the theme of dialogue can and must be defended, but it must be associated with a suitable theoretical and mobilizing force. At the national and ecclesial level, we see in previous speeches and examples the need for a “harmonized legislation” of the state that avoids putting the followers of religions in competition with each other and the reminder of the constitution that makes them equal citizens before the law.

Dialogue and living together have a theological and not only an institutional meaning. However, this meaning does not appear sufficiently in calls for peaceful cohabitation that remain ad hoc. In order to build an interreligious theology “for times of crisis,” our conviction is that it is necessary to begin by elucidating the conflicts locally in order to establish the principles and paradigms of a theology of religions, not for the sake of fashion, but in order to get away from generalizations and misleading appearances. We cannot propose new horizons in interfaith relations without first having the courage to name the problems and to situate them at the levels where they arise. As Father Pascal Fap-Téning Diome, Director of the Archdiocese of Dakar, writes:

Interfaith living together needs to free itself from the concept of Senegalese exceptionalism, which grants it a judgment in a trial, with the conclusion that everything is fine. It should be considered as a construction site to be built daily, to be maintained without respite.

And when Bishop Benjamin Ndiaye advises religious to “pay attention to the environment and its expectations, in order to create favorable conditions for a mission open to all,” one should not only expect pastoral answers. The reaction to the statements of Pascal Diome and Benjamin Ndiaye also requires a “great moment of Christian understanding” to allow the disciples of Christ to nourish possible changes. The theologian must be able to contribute to this. From the Senegalese experience summarized in the calls for unity and the persistence of problems, an adequate approach to the theology of interreligious relations can only be situated today on the horizon of proportionate difference. The principle of proportionality seems to respond to such a perspective.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPORTIONALITY APPLIED TO TRUTH, RELIGIONS, AND DIALOGUE

The term “proportionality” is used by the French theologian and philosopher of Lebanese origin, Michel Younès, to designate the way of thinking about religious difference not as a “decline” or “product of the bad,” but as an indicator of a truth that “is carried out according to different degrees, in proportion to people and their situation.” The scriptural basis for Younès is the parable of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30). In this gospel story, three servants receive talents from their master, which they must make fruitful. The difference between the beginning, or “differentiated giving,” and the end, or “differentiated receiving” is visible: the first servant receives five talents, the second two, and the third one. The master acts in this way because he takes into account what each servant is and what he is capable of doing. The difference in the results will prove him right since the three servants do not report to their master in the same way. For Younès, the proportionate reasoning in the parable of the talents allows for three types of interpretation related to revealed truth, the context of religious pluralism, and dialogue.

Revealed truth, remains unique and represented in the parable of the talents by the one and only position of the master towards the servants. The master does not multiply himself, even less the talents that come from him. The uniqueness of revelation is a unique event whose manifestation in history does not lead to its fragmentation. The second level of interpretation of the parable of the talents is religion or religions, marked by the attitude of appropriation of the three servants. Believers of different religions accept the one truth that is in God or that comes from God according to their historical situations. In this case, it is not the truth that is different or plural; what is different and plural are the ways of understanding of what is originally given and intimately linked to human reception. The ways of understanding the truth both within and outside the same religion are not opposites but differences. “If very often, difference is considered as a barrier, or at least, as a place of separation and opposition, the consideration of proportionality brings out its relational side.”
Dialogue is the logical consequence of the two areas of appreciation in the parable of the talents.

The consequence here is that we must avoid classifying something as hate, and to oppose everything related to religious otherness. The religion of the other is the one that is different from mine, not the one that opposes mine, and I do not listen to the one who speaks to me about his religious practices as someone who speaks ill of mine.

Dialogue is the logical consequence of the two areas of appreciation in the parable of the talents. This dialogue is vertical because it takes place between God “the master” and human beings “the servants.” It is also horizontal because the understanding of the relationship with God leads the human being to his fellow man; it is the proof of this: “By the love you have for one another, you will be recognized as my disciples” (Jn. 13:35). On this last point, the question of dialogue is understood in connection with the charity lived firstly within the same religious family. It is the “ethics of reciprocity,” to use the rhetoric of the American philosopher and jurist Thomas Nagel, who proposes that we think of the relationship to the other according to a certain biblical wisdom, “Do not do to anyone what you would not like to suffer” (Tb. 4:15; Mt. 7:12; Lk 6:31; Rm.13:8-10). This is the rule imposed on all people who want to live together in the same territorial space.

Is there only one true religion? Does one religion have a monopoly of the truth? The success of dialogue depends in large part on how truth and religion are represented. Interpreted in the light of the parable of the talents, truth, religion, and dialogue lead to a perception of interreligious relations in terms of the “particularity of proportionate providence” and the capacity of each to enter into the fullness of God. The proportionate principle of understanding religious pluralism does not lead to a relativism of truth that remains attached to a common root. Nor does it lead to a theocentric approach that levels out all religions. Its specificity lies in the capacity of each one to appropriate the truth. The truth revealed in Jesus Christ, the native of Nazareth, is presented open to all and drawing humanity to Himself. It is in this sense that we must understand the words of Peter, “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Dialogue is a communication that takes place between interlocutors. There is no Christian-Muslim dialogue where Christians are among themselves without their Muslim interlocutors. This dialogue is vertical because it takes place between God “the master” and human beings “the servants.” It is also horizontal because the understanding of the relationship with God leads the human being to his fellow man; it is the proof of this: “By the love you have for one another, you will be recognized as my disciples” (Jn. 13:35). On this last point, the question of dialogue is understood in connection with the charity lived firstly within the same religious family. It is the “ethics of reciprocity,” to use the rhetoric of the American philosopher and jurist Thomas Nagel, who proposes that we think of the relationship to the other according to a certain biblical wisdom, “Do not do to anyone what you would not like to suffer” (Tb. 4:15; Mt. 7:12; Lk 6:31; Rm.13:8-10). This is the rule imposed on all people who want to live together in the same territorial space.

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Nonetheless, its implementation, which is always the place of unceasing discoveries, requires an encounter, a consultation, a dialogue. The central truth of a given religion is only truly respected in its particularity if the believers who expe-
the problems of the vital environment, of seeking and introducing novelty in the way of dialogue between believers, looking at the present and the singularity of the human person in the plan of God.

CONCLUSION

It is in the field of contextual theology that we must place the pages we have just read. Indeed, each passing year shows more fragility in the relations between believers in general, and between Christians and Muslims in particular. The expression *teranga*, which is more and more linked to educational and training pathways than to overall social and religious belonging, is no longer a cultural obligation for many young Senegalese. The current outbreak of identity claims and the crises that arise between Christians and Muslims risk breaking the long tradition of conviviality. On the subject of tradition, the philosopher Hannah Arendt warns, “The end of tradition does not necessarily mean that traditional concepts have lost their power over the minds of men. On the contrary, it sometimes seems that this power of old notions and categories becomes more tyrannical as the tradition loses its vitality and as the memory of its beginning recedes.”

One of the contributions of our reflection is to show how local tradition can be reborn through faith in God and reference to Christian and Muslim texts. This rebirth does not lack theological reference points for the two religious traditions. Dialogue proportionate to the interlocutors is one of the principles that encourage reflection and action by being more attentive to the resources of the people involved in the dialogue.

Pope John Paul II made two proposals that allow us to focus on the interlocutor. The first is that “when dialogue begins, each party must presuppose a willingness for reconciliation in the other, a willingness for unity in truth.” The second is that “the interlocutor must be consistent with his or her own religious traditions and convictions and open to those of the other in order to understand them.” In summary, the concept of “interlocutor” does not refer only to the other. If we take into account the fact that, in the philosophy of language and communication, the one who holds the role of “speaker” becomes the interlocutor when the latter becomes the speaker, the concept of interlocutor designates sometimes the “other” and sometimes “me.” Because of the prefix, inter, which translates the exchange, the action, or the mutual dependence between two or more parties, we preferred this concept to that of speaker to refer to the dialogue actor as such as well as to the different situations in which he finds himself. The methodological and epistemological challenge is nothing other than to restore the dialogue in the historicity of its actors, to make people aware of the appropriation of the revelation-history link.

The theological model of the interlocutor can thus help Christians and Muslims in Senegal to question their attitude, to explain the “right to difference,” to develop the proportionate dimension of the reception of the revelational gift, and to place the human at the center of their dialogue. This perspective connects the history of one’s beliefs to those of another, encourages them to engage more deeply with the human condition, and to plan their responses according to the broader model of *Nostra aetate* which asks,

What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is good and what is sin? What is the origin and purpose of suffering? What is the way to true happiness? What is death, judgment and retribution after death? What is the last and ineffable mystery that embraces our existence, from which we derive our origin and towards which we tend?


ENDNOTES

6. Ibid., p. 754.
7. Ibid., p. 754.
8. Ibid., p. 756.
9. Ibid., p. 754.
10. Ibid., p. 754.
11. Ibid., p. 755.
12. Ibid., p. 755.
17. The Bishops of Senegal, loc. cit., p. 17.
18. Ibid., 17.
19. The Bishops of Senegal, Message to Christian communities, authorities and people of good will, Tambacounda, December 2 2014."
24. This body has ceased its activities to date.
26. Quoted by Adama Dieng, in The Observer, no. 4631, from Wednesday March 6 2019, p. 4; read also Le Soleil, no.14656, from Wednesday April 3, and Thursday April 4 2019, p. 3.
31. Ibid., p. 196.
32. Ibid., p. 162.
34. Word of the Wolof language meaning hospitality, conviviality.
37. Encyclical Redemptoris missio, December 7 1990, no.56.
38. Nostra aetate, no.1.
INTRODUCTION

The present article is the authors’ latest expression of a multipart research project on Spiritan educators and education, involving Spiritans and those that embrace Spiritan pedagogy at Duquesne University. In our earlier research on Spiritan educators, study participants clearly articulated their dual commitment to academic excellence and solidarity with the dispossessed. They take seriously the vision from Catholic social teaching of solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” However, sometimes sustaining this commitment to both excellence and solidarity raises a tension between them. One of our focus group participants described the tension in the following way:

Pretty soon the school that we have established for the poor is being attended by the rich.

Many times in our Spiritan institutions . . . we will go out to a poor community; we will establish an educational institution. We insist on academic excellence. When we have academic excellence, those who have more resources will be drawn to it because we have an excellent school. And pretty soon the school that we have established for the poor is being attended by the rich.

This Spiritan educator was speaking primarily of the congregation’s experiences in the global South, yet a similar shift in student populations has also occurred at Duquesne University. From a small Catholic college built to educate the children of immigrants, Duquesne has become in significant ways a school for “the rich.” With this in mind, another focus group participant applied the tension between academic excellence and solidarity with the dispossessed directly to Duquesne University while envisioning what a Spiritan education should accomplish:

The difference I would say would be, if you want to come to Duquesne Law School, Duquesne should be famous in the world for producing the best public defenders in the world, not the best corporate lawyers. And if you go to the Nursing School, it should be the best school in the world for cross cultural nursing of the poor. It should be known because we are focusing on those kinds of areas and that’s what I mean by not looking at excellence, academic excellence. Looking at a different kind of excellence that focuses—you understand what I mean, right? I
think you can do that with every school in the university, but it really has to go to that and then you attract the students who are interested in serving the poor.

This vision of a Spiritan education as “a different kind of academic excellence” committed to serving those in poverty made us curious about ways that Duquesne University faculty are maintaining their commitment to these Spiritan values, as they seek today to educate students who may have little experience or understanding of the plight of marginalized people. Accordingly, we piloted a workshop at Duquesne in which we asked faculty to reflect on their commitments, highlighting three pedagogical strategies emerging from our study of Spiritans that connected academic excellence with a commitment to those living in poverty:

• addressing systemic issues of poverty from a disciplinary perspective
• sparking student empathy through encounter and relationship building with those who are marginalized
• developing commitments to advocacy “for” and “with” those who are marginalized.

The positive input from faculty at the workshop led us to a next stage: inviting faculty from across the university to tell their own stories about ways that they put Spiritan pedagogy into practice, particularly in relation to the issue of poverty and related forms of marginalization. Fourteen faculty submitted a total of thirteen contributions. In what follows, we will share their stories grouped around the three strategies. Each of these pedagogical approaches affirms the Spiritan commitments to academic excellence and solidarity with those experiencing poverty and other oppressions. While a university curriculum that attempts to honor Spiritan pedagogy will embrace all three strategies, a particular course might focus on one or two strategies. Each of these approaches inherently enhances the others, and together they display the rich ways that faculty address these critical issues.

I. ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC ISSUES OF POVERTY FROM A DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

While commitment to excellence in one’s area of expertise is common to educators of all stripes, “a different kind of excellence” in the Spiritan mode features instructors seeking to help students understand the situations of those marginalized and in poverty while acquiring disciplinary competence. Since disciplines vary widely, approaches to poverty will likewise vary—by discipline as well as through the creativity of each teacher. This section presents four faculty reflections on how each incorporates his or her respective disciplinary goals, subject matter, and typical teaching practices into a focused effort to enhance their students’ understanding of poverty and those who are caught within it.

First, sociology professor Anita Zuberi draws upon her discipline’s commitment to systemic analysis of the root causes of poverty, interpreted through a Spiritan sensibility:

... My work examines the intersection of urban poverty, racial inequality, and social policy. In particular, I research how growing up in an impoverished neighborhood affects the life chances and opportunities of individuals. I explore the racial inequity in exposure to these marginalized communities. I also assess the role of housing policy in creating and maintaining this injustice, as well as the potential for improving opportunities in these communities for the individuals who live within them. The Spiritan value of focusing on poverty, and our response to it, is also a focus of my teaching in Sociology. …

Gaining a deeper understanding of the social forces at play, students are able to use sociology to see the injustice present within our society, learn about how we attempt to address it through policy, and assess how well we are actually doing to improve the experience and opportunities of those who are poor.

Second, philosophy professor James Swindal narrates his efforts to bring the work of Karl Marx into conversation with Spiritan interpreters of Marx, with results both personally illuminating and pedagogically suggestive:

... [W]hen I first came to Duquesne’s Philosophy department, I was keenly interested in learning how to work within and contribute to the Spiritan mission. Academic that I was, I did research on several of the Spiritan priests who had written in my areas of disciplinary perspective: philosophy and theology. …
I was particularly fascinated by Fr. [Henry] Koren’s book, Marx and the Authentic Man. In it, he strongly endorses Marx’s commitment not only to humanism but also to the needs of the poor and oppressed.

I had taught a course entitled Marxism and Critical Theory for several years at John Carroll University. Now with Fr. Koren’s inspiration, I modified the course to emphasize not only the profundity of Marx’s view of social justice, but also how particularly the authentic humanism of Marx’s analysis of laboring persons is in several key ways consistent with the Spiritan charism.

[In future teaching] I plan to have the students also take an outing to St. Nicholas Croatian Church in Millvale (a city near Pittsburgh) to see the stunning murals of Maxo Vanka, such as “Immigrant Mother Raises Her Sons for American Industry” and “The Capitalist.” These murals depict the plight of workers as well as the ultimate oppression of capitalism: the warfare it engenders with a terrifying cost on the most vulnerable.

Third, music therapy professor Noah Potvin shows how he uses students’ required community engagement practicum for sustained practice of the skills of music therapy within student therapist-client encounters, characterized by co-responsibility and respect for each individual’s unique personhood and stakeholder role:

The music therapy program in the Mary Pappert School of Music has embraced the calls for cultural responsivity and cultural humility which challenge healthcare professionals to locate themselves, within ethical boundaries, from the unique perspectives of each patient. The culmination of this effort is the year-long Community Engaged Practicum taken by music therapy seniors. In this course, students provide clinical services in community-based organizations where the labels of “music therapist” and “patient” are replaced with “stakeholders” wherein there is an equal sharing of power and agency among all in the space.

One of those community-based sites is St. Joseph’s House of Hospitality, a homeless shelter for men over fifty-five years of age. Through clinical supervision and critical self-inquiries that help root out internalized assumptions and prejudices, students approach the work from the perspective of learner in addition to expert. This, in turn, enables students to understand the men they work with as whole persons that cannot be reduced to labels such as “homeless” or “mentally ill,” and instead respected as cultural beings with unique lived experiences to be acknowledged, respected, and validated.

Finally, Jennifer Elliot describes the School of Pharmacy’s use of community settings in which students offer health screenings for marginalized people, allowing students to practice key pharmaceutical skills while increasing their cultural competency:

All pharmacy students participate in a community-engaged learning (CEL) course, providing health care in underserved communities and learning specific racial and ethnic approaches to health interventions. Students learn how to address risk factors faced by communities with health disparities, promote health equity, and link patients with the clinical care they need and community resources.

Although students practice health screenings in a lab setting, these real-life experiences provide them the opportunity to boost their confidence and improve their skills, including how to communicate effectively and provide culturally sensitive care for people from cultures different from their own. Further, students develop an understanding of how culture/beliefs may impact patients’ acceptance of certain types of interventions. Results of the pre and post-test surveys show significant increases in student confidence in providing culturally competent care.

Within the particularities of each educator’s discipline-specific interpretive modes, professional expectations and individual pedagogical approaches, some common threads can be discerned. All the narrators show a concern that students come to appreciate the inherent dignity of every human person and cultivate a commitment to the wellbeing of all. They also make evident that each of us lives within powerful systems that dramatically affect our potential to flourish, and that those marginalized and in poverty are systemically deprived of such opportunities.
Elliot’s and Potvin’s clinical work offers students direct experience within settings where these systemic effects are evident. All the storytellers point as well toward possibilities for transformed systems that would foster greater equity and cultivate everyone’s potential for participation. Zuberi and Swindal focus on the use of key texts and data to analyze disparities from social-science and humanistic sources, while Potvin teaches his students specific techniques for dismantling traditional, unequal therapist-client relationships and enacting more reciprocal patterns, cognizant of cultural and psychological factors affecting the development of such mutuality. Elliot uses key “tools of the trade” to assist student pharmacists in gaining competencies vital for their profession. In addition, Swindal offers the use of art as a reinforcing interpretive source for the cultivation of authentically humanist attitudes.

2. SPARKING STUDENT EMPATHY THROUGH ENCOUNTER AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH THE MARGINALIZED

In this section, we consider faculty reflections on instructional practices that foster social empathy in students for the marginalized and dispossessed. Elizabeth Segel defines social empathy as “the ability to understand people by perceiving or experiencing their life situations and as a result gain insight into structural inequalities and disparities.” According to Segel, the three components of social empathy include “individual empathy, contextual understanding, and social responsibility.” Each of the five faculty reflections in this section touch on various aspects of fostering social empathy within students.

Our first faculty reflection about fostering social empathy comes from an education professor. Lisa Lopez Levers describes genuine empathy as an opportunity to take notice of a person’s dignity as a contributor to a reciprocal relationship, drawing on her own experience.

. . . In the Spiritan tradition, we think about giving to the poor, teaching the poor, caring for the poor. We often fail to contemplate, in the act of giving, teaching, and caring, how these acts are received, and, with humility, sense how the receiver may be “giving, teaching, and caring” to us. While I was working in Botswana, a poorly paid groundskeeper was hard at work, digging, in the hot sun.

. . . I could see that he needed something to drink, so I poured him a glass of juice. When I offered it to him, he regarded me carefully. Before accepting the drink, he demonstratively removed his gloves, carefully placing the spade in the soil. He took the drink, with great dignity, and sat on my stoop. I realized that, in his scrutiny of me, he was communicating to me that he was not accepting charity—he was allowing me to offer an act of kindness—allowing me to act with compassion and love. I took notice of him. This is different from charity. He gave to me. He taught me. . . .

The second faculty reflection comes from Courtney Novosat of the English Department. She fosters student empathy through using literature about the plight of immigrants to help students gain a contextual understanding of immigration that moves beyond popular stereotypical discourse.

Teaching [Imaginative Literature] offers a unique opportunity to test the powers of literature to foster empathy in readers. . . .

Given the volatile rhetoric and encoded racism embedded in public discourse about Mexican immigrants, this term my students read Helen Maria Viramontes’s “Under the Feet of Jesus” (1995). Full of immersive descriptions of the daily exploitation of migrant Mexican farmworkers, the novel centers on the absolute poverty and discrimination children in these families face. . . .

[Students] chose one of the novel’s central themes of marginalization—child poverty, homelessness, or child labor, for example—to research for a group writing project. . . .

Students were further tasked with presenting the plight of one character from the novel to compel or persuade their readers toward action. This assignment asks students to engage with the language and imagery of poverty. It asks them further to recognize and question the uncharitable, unchristian language used to speak about immigrants from a largely Catholic nation. Finally, through their research discoveries, it asks them to reconsider, if not reshape their own perspectives on migrants, and ultimately on children detained at the border.
In our third faculty reflection, Sociology professor Anita Zuberi describes how she fosters student empathy by challenging cultural stereotypes and designing encounters for her students with agencies serving those who are marginalized.

Many students who attend Duquesne do not know what it is like to experience life in poverty. . . . I build empathy for the poor in my teaching through reading contemporary accounts of poverty written by sociologists, such as $2 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America and Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the City. These books focus on the poorest households . . . allow students to get exposure to the lived experience of poverty . . . challenge societal stereotypes of the poor . . . [and] give students a deeper understanding of the circumstances of how people become marginalized in society. . . .

Students also learn about the policies and programs that aim to help the poor. . . I bring members from the Pittsburgh community who work with the poor into the classroom. . . . I also have students research local agencies that serve the poor and then share their knowledge with the rest of the class. Students also visit a local human service program to gain exposure to how we as a society aim to help those in need. Together, these experiences allow students to gain a deeper understanding of those who are marginalized in our community and begin building relationships with them.

Professor Amy Mattila from Occupational Therapy offers the fourth faculty reflection on helping students to develop social empathy. Her students work with underserved individuals to build digital stories about their experiences, the societal context, and appropriate professional responses to the needs of the individuals.

One way I try to help students understand marginalized populations and build relationships is through what we call narrative reasoning in occupational therapy. Narrative reasoning is what we use to make sense of people’s particular circumstances. It allows students to build empathy by imagining the effect of illness, disability, or occupational performance problems on their daily lives, and create a collaborative story with the individual.

Preparation students to assist clients that cannot afford legal services.

Finally, Grace Orsatti, a professor in the School of Law, contributes our fifth faculty reflection about building empathy through preparing students to assist clients that cannot afford legal services.

. . . The Wills and Healthcare Decisions clinic, like all law school clinics, has two components: a seminar component in which students participate in classroom learning activities and reflective exercises, and a fieldwork component where students meet with clients to draft wills, advance healthcare directives, and other estate planning documents. In the classroom, students learn client-interviewing techniques to prepare for client discussions about end of life plans. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the client directs his or her own estate plan--the client is the ultimate decision maker. Students must therefore understand and respect the client’s perspective in order to serve their needs while also being cognizant of the lawyer’s obligation to counsel and advise. Client interviews present a unique opportunity to build a relationship between client and student through conversation. To prepare an effective estate plan that meets the client’s objectives it is necessary for the student to delve deeply into the client’s affairs and understand the world from the client’s vantage point, a key to developing empathy. The student-client relationship requires an element of trust by both parties--trust by the student that the client is sharing accurate and complete information, and trust by the client
Social empathy is a skill that instructors committed to Spiritan pedagogy can cultivate in students. That the student will act in the client’s best interests. . . . The educators in these five reflections, while maintaining commitments to disciplinary approaches and conventions, demonstrate that social empathy is a skill that instructors committed to Spiritan pedagogy can cultivate in students. Social empathy includes developing personal empathy, contextual understanding, and a commitment to social responsibility. Lever’s reflection describes a Spiritan approach to being open to another person, valuing his or her dignity, and welcoming him or her as a mutual contributor of knowledge. While her reflection hints at the need to break the stereotypical approach that relegates the dispossessed as merely recipients of charity, Novosat and Zuberi further develop the importance of appreciating a contextual understanding of marginalization that counteracts stereotypes. They accomplish this through their selection of course readings that give students an indirect opportunity to empathize with the experience of others and appreciate a contextual perspective of the marginalized. Zuberi, Mattila and Orsatti show ways that indirect classroom encounters can move into community settings for the benefit of society. Thus, each of these faculty reflections contributes valuable insights that Spiritan educators can use to cultivate social empathy in students.

3. BUILDING SKILLS TO ADVOCATE “FOR” AND “WITH” THOSE WHO ARE MARGINALIZED

Duquesne University is committed to community engagement through “mutually beneficial partnerships that advance the city, the region and the world.” In collaboration with community partners, faculty create community-engaged learning opportunities for their students, reinforcing course content while addressing community-identified priorities to make a positive and sustainable difference in the lives of clients. Students, faculty, and community partners seek to engage in authentic relationships of caring and empathy, reflecting the Spiritan tradition of working together for the common good. Through these caring relationships, students acquire motivation and abilities to advocate for and with those they serve. While empathy provides a strong foundation for raising systemic questions, the development of advocacy skills is a further, vital aspect of academic excellence in the Spiritan mode.

Nursing faculty Melanie Turk and Cynthia Walters describe the process for freshman nursing students who identify and learn complex problems associated with poverty, leading them through a contemplative process to consider how to provide health care in a holistic way.

School of Nursing faculty guide a fifteen-year service-learning partnership between the City of Pittsburgh, Parks and Recreation, and Community Enrichment Program Office. More than two hundred freshmen nursing students [visit] six Pittsburgh Public Schools annually. This partnership begins to prepare nursing students . . . to serve as advocates for elementary school students, living in diverse socio-economic areas. . . .

. . . Nursing students see . . . far reaching physical and mental health issues children living in poverty, transience, and dislocation face . . . [and have] the unique opportunity to directly interact with school-aged children, provide classroom support to teachers, and assist social workers and school nurses to advocate for improved health outcomes for the families and their communities. . . . Students [learn] common health needs and disparities students, their families and surrounding communities [face]. . . . Weekly reflections serve as an opportunity for these future nurses to identify and learn . . . complex problems associated with poverty and contemplate opportunities to provide health care from a holistic perspective.

Health Administration and Public Health professors Brenda Swanson-Biearman and Faina Linkov introduce poverty to their students through an interactive simulation exercise, allowing them to see poverty from various perspectives, discuss potential for change within the community, and become advocates for those living on the margins of society.

[In the Rangos School of Health Sciences curriculum] poverty is presented as an important epidemiologic risk factor for adverse health outcomes in public health related courses. While teaching about poverty, there is an important emphasis on the fact that it is not an individual choice, but a vicious cycle that oftentimes contributes to poverty. By understanding the vicious cycle of poverty, students are learning to empathize with people affected by poverty and homelessness.

During the simulation exercise, participants role-play the lives of low
Participants to look at poverty from a variety of angles.

Income families. They are assigned to family units and have the stressful task of providing for basic necessities and shelter on a limited budget during the course of four 15-minute "weeks." Each family tries to provide food, shelter and other basic necessities, including health care needs, for themselves and their loved ones. The simulation enables participants to look at poverty from a variety of angles and then to discuss the potential for change within their local communities. It was designed to sensitize those who frequently deal with low-income families, as well as to create a broader awareness of the realities of poverty among policymakers, community leaders, and others.

The Director of the Center for Environmental Research and Education, John F. Stolz, describes a lab he has been conducting to survey well water quality in Western Pennsylvania in areas with unconventional gas drilling. He provides this information to residents to help them advocate for clean water and inspires his students with a sense of community.

. . . Graduate students in the Environmental Science and Management master's degree program . . . [work] with many communities across Pennsylvania. . . . [One] helped an Amish community in Warren County get a moratorium on brining of their roads with oil and gas waste. . . . In Grant Township (Indiana County) we tested 41 of the community's water wells providing them with baseline data prior to the opening of an injection well facility used for oil and gas waste. . . . In Butler County our testing results have been used in legal testimony for families who lost their water wells and rely on a volunteer water drive for their drinking water. Testimony I provided to members of the Seneca Nation tribal council helped them to prevent the construction of an experimental brine treatment plant in Coudersport, PA. Its location posed a threat to the headwaters of the Allegheny River and the Allegheny Reservoir. The study is advancing the science, educating people about their water, assisting those harmed by oil and gas activities, and instilling a sense of community in the students.

Finally, Occupational Therapy faculty member Anne Marie W. Hansen guides students to practice clinical reasoning skills while meeting the priorities and needs of marginalized populations through teaching them life skills and listening to the stories of injustices they face. Through this process, students move from empathy to a deep desire to advocate for justice and with those they serve.

Occupational Therapy students learn clinical reasoning while developing occupation-focused programming for underserved and marginalized people in the community. Students partner with community agencies serving homeless war veterans, abused women living in a homeless shelter, ex-offenders and adults with severe physical and intellectual disabilities.

Students access staff and clients' social, occupational and functional priorities and needs, and together create and carry out a 12-week program to address identified needs. Students listen to client stories, growing caring, culturally sensitive relationships, and humbly begin to understand life from a very different perspective including racial and social injustices clients face. Students acquire empathy, compassion and understanding. They create and carry out an advocacy plan to address injustices. Experiences open their eyes to life on the margins, changing their attitudes toward underserved people, moving to advocate for justice with them.

These four examples of community-engaged pedagogy exemplify faculty who are addressing a common theme of developing relationships with those on the margins through which students develop empathy, while also entering into the struggle for justice by becoming advocates for and with marginalized populations. Future nurses identify and learn complex problems associated with poverty and contemplate opportunities to provide health care from a holistic perspective. Health sciences students look at poverty from a variety of angles through a simulation exercise and discuss the potential for change within their local communities, learning to become advocates. Biological science students educate local citizens about their water, assisting those harmed by oil and gas activities, and gain a sense of community with the citizens. Occupational therapy students hone their
They seek to embody Spiritans’ dual commitments to academic excellence and solidarity with those on the margins.

Clinical reasoning skills while developing relationships with and empathy for those they serve. Through these relationships, they move to advocate for justice for and with these people.

CONCLUSION

Catholic social teaching consistently emphasizes a “preferential option for the poor,” grounded in faith in a God who continually hears and responds to the cries of those who are marginalized and forgotten (Psalm 34:17). Further, “The primary purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good.” This sensibility is central to Spiritan mission and educational efforts.

As the faculty stories woven throughout this essay show, Duquesne University faculty demonstrate a commitment to the Spiritan charism shaped by a pedagogy which includes building relationships of mutuality, diversity, inclusion, and non-patronizing attitudes with those on the margins, with a goal of empowering and transforming their students and those they serve. They seek to embody Spiritans’ dual commitments to academic excellence and solidarity with those on the margins. In our context, the three pedagogical strategies explored in this paper help faculty to navigate potential tensions between these two commitments. Through the first strategy, they invite students into rigorous exploration of discipline-specific content and practices with particular attention to the experiences and perspectives of the dispossessed. Here we see concrete examples of a “preferential option for the poor.” In practicing the second strategy, faculty develop learning activities through which their relatively privileged students encounter and grow in empathy for under-served populations. And, guided by the third strategy, faculty train students to advocate for and with the marginalized and foster mutual experiences of “participation” among disparate groups, thus contributing to the fuller flourishing of all.

These pedagogical strategies—discipline-specific focus, empathy, advocacy—individually and in combination, offer a “different kind of academic excellence” in solidarity with those living in poverty and on the margins of society. We, the essay authors, anticipate continued research and collaboration with Duquesne faculty and other Spiritan-oriented educators to nurture these efforts and to open new areas of investigation. While our institutions may enroll significant numbers of privileged students, our calling remains to grow efforts in community-engaged teaching, building learning communities of engaged participants with people in greatest need. Through these relationships, our hope is that the Reign of God more fully shines forth.

Endnotes

1. Throughout Spiritan literature, authors refer to “the poor” when labeling people experiencing poverty and people living on the margins of society and those who are un-served or underserved. In this essay, we are trying to break away from objectifying people as “the poor” by naming them as “people” first. However, the original story prompt we offered to Duquesne University faculty included the labels “the poor,” “the marginalized,” and similar terms.


5. Ibid.


Dr. Steven Hansen,
Dr. Maureen O’Brien,
Dr. Anne Marie Witchger Hansen,
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Spiritan Mission and Restorative Justice

Dr. Norman Conti, Dr. Rick McCown, Dr. Maureen O’Brien

I. Listed alphabetically, the think tank members who contributed to this article include: Cathleen Appelt, Ralph Malakki Bolden, William Cleary, Norman Conti, Sharnay Hearn Davis, Luci-Jo DiMaggio, Craig Elias, Joshua Ellsworth, Deanna Fracul, Elaine Frantz, Lou Gentile, Anne Marie Hansen, Jalila Jefferson-Bullock, Rick McCown, Jaime Munoz, Maureen O’Brien, Jotham Parsons, Lori Pompa, Juel L. Smith, James Swindal.
THE INSIDE-OUT PRISON EXCHANGE PROGRAM

With the global incarceration crisis of the last few decades, Spiritans’ solidarity with the oppressed has drawn them to men, women, and children trapped within carceral systems in various parts of the world. The Spiritan focus on ministry with those who are, or have been, incarcerated, has also powerfully manifested itself in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Duquesne University is a Catholic university in the Spiritan tradition, which has inherited the legacy of Des Places and Libermann. The university is religiously motivated in serving students, and seeks to inspire its graduates “to work collaboratively to build a more just and verdant world” through the Spiritan objective of “making young people aware of the problems of poverty and unjust structures in their society and the world at large.”

Spiritan mission, and the University it fostered, created a rich environment for nurturing a powerful movement that emerged at the end of the twentieth century: Inside-Out. In 1997, Lori Pompa, an instructor at Temple University in Philadelphia, began “The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program,” based on a suggestion from a man serving life in the Pennsylvania prison system. Inside-Out conducts university courses within correctional settings. Enrollees include traditional college students and an equivalent number of learners selected from prison populations. One of the program’s goals is a shift in the consciousness of each participant, with reducing the stigmatization of incarcerated people central to the experiential process. Courses begin with a discussion of labels and a recommendation that negative terms, such as “inmate,” be exchanged for “inside student,” while the rest of the class is referred to as “outside students.” Starting with this relabeling, participants start to realize that neither group can reduce the other to the one-dimensional image previously assumed. As students interact over the course of a semester, their views of each other change. Incarcerated persons no longer appear as the misfits and monsters portrayed in popular culture, but as people with lives and families beyond prison walls. College students become something more than “children of privilege” incapable of understanding why individuals succumb to the culture of street crime. In time, initial changes in how people see one another are

as offering a unique blending of Spiritan and Freirean adult educational practices for empowerment and liberation.

Students begin with a series of self-reflection exercises.

The possibilities of mutual transformation through mutual learning.

flect how participants view themselves, their futures, and their potential impact on society. Most Inside-Out instructors will readily attest that it is, by far, the single most engaged learning process in which they have ever taken part. What has often been most surprising are the many levels of learning that take place—people learning about themselves, about other people, about how they are both different and alike, about communication and working through conflict, and about the systems that impact their lives—and their relationship to those systems, as individuals and as a community.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s pedagogy offers an important framework for interpreting the nature of such deep, multilayered, and lasting learning. In Freire’s terms, the pedia
gogical dynamics of Inside-Out can be considered intentional conscientização (“conscientization”) that emphasizes not only personal agency, but also the possibilities of mutual transformation through mutual learning. “Education makes sense because women and men learn that through learning they can make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility for themselves as capable of knowing—of knowing that they know and of knowing that they don’t.”

Through creating a space in which insiders and outsiders learn about one another through engaging together in learning activi
ties, they examine and change their perspectives on the “other,” acknowledging that each group’s perspective is insufficient and that freedom comes through dialectical engagement.

As Freire would insist, true praxis is accomplished only through the interplay of “word” and “work”—reflective pro
cesses of educational study and dialogue must be accompanied by action, or else our conversation becomes mere verbalism.

Faithful to this imperative, the Inside-Out curriculum includes a number of modules on restorative justice (i.e., a model of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behavior and then repairing that harm in a process that includes all stakeholders). Students begin with a series of self-reflection exercises in which they reflect upon their expe
riences of causing and experiencing harm. They are asked to consider moments when they suffered as well as moments when they caused suffering. They summarize how they felt and what they lost in these experiences into single word responses that are anonymously listed before the class. Students then make con-
Restorative justice can be used to resolve real world problems.

nections and recognize the similarities between both victimization and harming others. In this moment, they realize that incarcerated offenders are frequently the victims of some individual or social harm.

From this awakening, they move on to case studies of individual offenders presented in narrative form. Students are asked to come up with some means for dealing with the harms described in the narratives in a world without a criminal justice system (i.e., harms caused as well as suffered by the characters in the case studies). This exercise is useful for separating the concepts of justice and punishment. Once the students realize that justice does not necessitate punishment, they begin reading on the topic of restorative justice in order to participate in an exercise that develops one of the case studies into a role-play of a “peacemaking circle” in which a number of students are given character backgrounds and asked to use them as a grounding for their parts in the activity.

These class projects function as vivid examples of how restorative justice can be used to resolve real world problems, offering the opportunity for the deep dialogue and imaginative re-creating of interpersonal and societal relationships that lead to transformative liberation. In such efforts we also hear the echo of the Spiritan Rule of Life: “We count the following as constitutive parts of our mission of evangelization: the ‘integral liberation’ of people, action for justice and peace, and participation in development. . . . In order to contribute effectively to promoting justice, we make every effort to analyze situations, to lay bare the relationship of individual cases to structural causes.”7

In the summer of 2007, Norman Conti, a sociology professor at Duquesne University, set up Duquesne’s first Inside-Out course at SCI-Cresson, a correctional facility in Cresson Township near Altoona, Pennsylvania. Although the prison was a two-hour drive from campus, he and sixteen dedicated students leapt at the opportunity. Following that pilot, Norm next taught several classes at the Allegheny County Jail in Pittsburgh, and then moved the program to SCI-Pittsburgh, a correctional facility in Pittsburgh, for two semesters.

The University integrated these classes into its curriculum as part of the Justitia Learning Community, established around the guiding principles of justice and community engagement.8 Since its inception, the Justitia community has functioned as a primary driver for Inside-Out at Duquesne.

Various combinations of insiders and outsiders (including returning citizens, i.e., those returning from incarceration to society) come together for joint projects that continue their commitment to the liberating, reflection-action dynamic of praxis.9 In the Pittsburgh context, this germinated as a core group of men within SCI-Pittsburgh enrolled in all three of the Inside-Out classes offered through Duquesne. In 2013, wanting to push the collaborative learning model even further, the men, together with Norm Conti, formed an Inside-Out think tank to meet weekly and develop policy solutions to address the carceral state and the injustice of race. They named it the Elsinoe Bennu Think Tank for Restorative Justice. In the collaborative spirit of the group, “Elsinoe” (the cursed castle in Hamlet) was Norm’s idea, and “Bennu” (an Egyptian symbol of rebirth) was proposed by Ralph Malakki Bolden, an inside member. Most of these founding members had been convicted of murder. The oldest two had been incarcerated since the 1970s and the youngest for just over a decade. While all of them passionately hoped for eventual parole or commutation, none had concrete grounds to ever expect release. Nevertheless, they saw one of their major roles as supporting other incarcerated men in their preparations for reentry. Duquesne students, other faculty, and community members regularly came to these weekly meetings inside the facility, many of them ultimately joining the think tank themselves.

From 2013 to 2017, the think tank produced many programs, publications, and events, all of which were meant to foster the recognition of the common humanity of those inside and outside carceral facilities, and to use the mutual recognition to build a collaborative process of restorative justice. This took the form of programming inside SCI-Pittsburgh; for example, the EBTIT developed events like a “Victim’s Day” in which men inside that prison could come together to consider how they had victimized others, and also, how they themselves had suffered victimization, with the goal of brainstorming strategies to stop this cycle. They sponsored the showing of Etty, a powerful play about the Holocaust, inside the facility.10

ELSINOE BENNU THINK TANK FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Fundamental to the Inside-Out movement has been the creation of think tanks, through which various combinations of insiders and outsiders (including returning citizens, i.e., those returning from incarceration to society) come together for joint projects that continue their commitment to the liberating, reflection-action dynamic of praxis.9 In the Pittsburgh context, this germinated as a core group of men within SCI-Pittsburgh enrolled in all three of the Inside-Out classes offered through Duquesne. In 2013, wanting to push the collaborative learning model even further, the men, together with Norm Conti, formed an Inside-Out think tank to meet weekly and develop policy solutions to address the carceral state and the injustice of race. They named it the Elsinoe Bennu Think Tank for Restorative Justice. In the collaborative spirit of the group, “Elsinoe” (the cursed castle in Hamlet) was Norm’s idea, and “Bennu” (an Egyptian symbol of rebirth) was proposed by Ralph Malakki Bolden, an inside member. Most of these founding members had been convicted of murder. The oldest two had been incarcerated since the 1970s and the youngest for just over a decade. While all of them passionately hoped for eventual parole or commutation, none had concrete grounds to ever expect release. Nevertheless, they saw one of their major roles as supporting other incarcerated men in their preparations for reentry. Duquesne students, other faculty, and community members regularly came to these weekly meetings inside the facility, many of them ultimately joining the think tank themselves.

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A learning exchange with incarcerated men and Pittsburgh Police officers.

Members also sent their voices over prison walls through projects like an art fair at Duquesne’s gallery space featuring work created by the incarcerated, and a book of writings by EBTT members called Life Sentences: Writings from an American Prison (Belt Press, 2019).

When SCI-Pittsburgh closed in 2017 and inside members were moved to facilities throughout Western Pennsylvania, the EBTT took on a new form, meeting outside of a prison setting, at Duquesne University itself, and bringing together returning citizens with activists, artists, police officers, political leaders, professors and students. At the same time, three of the original inside members, with the help of Gannon and Mercyhurst Universities, formed a new think tank within SCI-Albion in northwestern Pennsylvania. As the New Destiny Think Tank for Restorative Justice, they have created a series of events and programs focused on juvenile offenders and support for young people in general.

POLICE TRAINING INSIDE-OUT

One of our most ambitious EBTT initiatives is a learning exchange with incarcerated men and Pittsburgh Police officers. The six original inside members at SCI-Pittsburgh and Norm spent years developing an ancillary curriculum for police academy training. The three-credit course, which uses a modified version of the Inside-Out curriculum, brings police recruits together with incarcerated men to study criminal justice policy. Adding this new curriculum to traditional academy training is intended to help recruits develop a more nuanced professional vision. For the incarcerated students, their coursework also empowers them to see the humanity in a group of people—the police—which they had seen only as adversaries. The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police partnered with the EBTT on this course, and now, working with Duquesne University and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, their police recruits go through it as a regular part of their academy training.

Police Training Inside-Out (PTI-O) is a response to the widely accepted finding that traditional training methods are failing new officers and their departments. Traditional training promotes the type of us vs. them mentality that undermines the best efforts of law enforcement within the communities they serve. PTI-O approaches policing from a social problems perspective, emphasizing the problems that police respond to, the problems that they create, the problems that they suffer from, and how their professional vision contributes to each of these problems. The curriculum allows the two groups to see each other—and themselves—as people with vested interests in their shared communities.

Recruits tend to enter our classroom with a set of such us vs. them biases toward the incarcerated, having heard from some senior officers that participation in this sort of thing would make them “soft” and could be dangerous. They encounter their inside classmates and, after a series of icebreaker activities, their excitement becomes visible as they take part in the joy of learning across their preconceived boundaries. As SCI-Pittsburgh was closing, the Pittsburgh police department made PTI-O a permanent component of its academy training and agreed to send all future recruits to course meetings at another institution. Moreover, administrators from a number of local facilities were clamoring for the program, and EBTT members have since facilitated six PTI-O courses at SCI-Fayette, a facility one hour south of Pittsburgh.

A NEW INITIATIVE: THE HOUSE OF LIFE

One of the founding members of our think tank, Ralph Malakki Bolden, maintains an interest in Egyptian mythology that brought us the Bennu (a symbol of rebirth) in our name, as well as a number of other important guiding metaphors for our work. The Duat, the underworld (i.e., the realm of the dead) has become essential for our understanding of the potential that men and women facing life sentences have for changing the world. The Duat, like an art fair at Duquesne’s gallery space featuring work created by the incarcerated, and a book of writings by EBTT members called Life Sentences: Writings from an American Prison (Belt Press, 2019).

Some souls become trapped in the Duat, providing an opportunity for them to serve as teachers to others in their ordeals. This is an obvious parallel to the struggle accepted by many people facing life sentences without the possibility of parole. Through the adversities of confinement, the lives of these men and women gain greater meaning and allow them to make a positive impact on the larger world. The Duat-like existence of a life sentence, in Freirean consciousness, could easily become a realm of “silence” for those fatalistically resigned to it. Instead, it has become a “generative theme” through which the incarcerated people achieve a kind of liberation through their teaching and mentoring role.

This metaphor is also observed in the widely-praised work
There are Lifers on both sides of prison walls who are as committed to ending mass incarceration as were abolitionists to ending the horrors of slavery.

of The Fortune Society, in New York City.13 Inspired by a series of dialogues following a performance of John Herbert’s The Fortune in Men’s Eyes in the late 1960s, a group of people impacted by the criminal justice system began a campaign for public education, human rights, and direct services for returning citizens and their families. Since the late 1960s, The Fortune Society has grown into one of our nation’s premier reentry services organizations, serving 7,000 of New York City’s returning citizens every year. The most tangible element of their success can be observed in their temporary and permanent housing facilities in West Harlem, which accept men and women upon release. Housed in a Gothic building that had once been a girls’ school, staffed in part by people with a history of incarceration, and fondly referred to as “the Castle,” the facility neither looks nor feels like a conventional half-way house or reentry center. Additionally, The Fortune Society built an environmentally sustainable, mixed-use building to house justice-involved citizens as well as community members facing homelessness. The staff helps to mediate between landlords and formerly incarcerated people to ensure access to safe, stable, and affordable housing for those leaving their facilities. Moreover, the Academy holds Thursday night community meetings very similar to our own think tank meetings.

The EBTT has drafted a proposal to create our own version of The Fortune Society’s endeavor that would make greater use of our deep connections to both those who have served life and universities. Malakki once noted that major ancient Egyptian cities included temples called “The House of Life,” essentially libraries, staffed by high priests, containing all of the accumulated cultural knowledge. We are offering a contemporary reimagining of these sites as brick-and-mortar think tanks that would house commuted “Lifers”—formerly incarcerated people whose life sentences have been commuted—and serve as key impact points for community development initiatives undertaken in partnership with universities, local government, and other civically-engaged organizations. These commuted Lifers would also work as frontline activists in collaboration with the committed men and women on the “inside,” who remain teachers with those who are currently passing through a carceral experience.

There are Lifers on both sides of prison walls who are as committed to ending mass incarceration as were abolitionists to ending the horrors of slavery.14 The House of Life would empower hundreds of life-sentenced and long-term sentenced men and women toward this goal. With or without an eye toward their own potential commutation, they would work through this initiative to actively recruit and educate the most promising of their shorter-term fellow incarcerated citizens in preparation for eventual careers on the outside. The House of Life would be a further step toward formalizing and therefore strengthening the role that so many Lifers already play within prisons.

CONCLUSION: RESONANCE WITH SPIRITAN MISSION

Duquesne University’s version of Inside-Out, along with EBTT and the proposed House of Life, offer abundant evidence of a unique combination of Spiritan and Freirean sensibilities in service of education and justice. This is especially evident in the following dimensions:

An open-ended, missional priority for liberation from oppression. Core to Spiritan mission is openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and led by these promptings, their founders and members continually have promoted efforts to enthrone the Christian gospel in diverse settings. Since this is a gospel proclaiming “glad tidings to the poor” and “liberation to captives,” Spiritans are drawn into those settings where great poverty and oppression exist. Spiritan lore abounds with stories of congregation members setting out into new endeavors with minimal planning and resources, zealous to serve.

One such setting are the favelas (low-income slum neighborhoods) of Brazil where the Spiritan approach to mission and Freirean methodology come together. One Spiritan, Pat Clarke, became friends with Paulo Freire in 1974. He went to Brazil two years later as a newly ordained priest and lived in one of these favelas, Vila Prudente, in Sao Paulo city. Pat remembered Freire’s advice, “Don’t begin with ready-made answers and ready-made projects. Be a fly on the wall until you know what the people are talking about. Then use your teacher-learner skills to help them become empowered.”15 Rather than responding to the immediate demands for a soup kitchen and food handouts, “Pat hit upon the idea that transformation had to begin not only from without, but also and fundamentally, from within.”16 He recognized “that culture was food too. Food for the heart and the soul.” He founded a Center for Culture and the Arts, now over forty years in existence, providing an oasis of affirmation for the youth of Vila Prudente.
The inherent dignity and life-situation of each participant is honored, while recognizing that the transformational callings of various groups will differ. Here they learn self-respect and respect for others and develop a sense of dignity and self-worth.

The Center’s artists have exhibited in galleries throughout Brazil, as well as in Hong Kong, the USA, and Ireland. “They are able to tap the creative mystery that is in everybody, the dream to be able to believe in and feel and express their worth as human beings.” Initiatives such as Inside-Out at Duquesne, the EBTT and the House of Life show a similar energy and determination to focus on areas of greatest need and allow creative efforts to grow organically through the participation of diverse stakeholders.

Praxis-oriented interplay of reflection, dialogue, study and action. Duquesne University offers many opportunities for community-engaged learning and action partnerships. As evident in the initiatives discussed in this article, educational models that bring together incarcerated people and returning citizens with university faculty and students can yield rich fruits. Freire offered a hopeful vision in which revolutionary leader-educators could sponsor “educational projects” to be “carried out with the oppressed in the process of organizing them.” In so doing, the pedagogy of the oppressed could move from its initial stage of liberating the oppressed themselves to a second stage in which it “becomes a pedagogy of all [people] in the process of permanent liberation.” The initiatives described in this article embody such efforts.

Creation of educational spaces in which “privileged” and “marginalized” people learn from one another and become open to transformation. In a 1983 conversation with United States religious educators, Freire spoke of the fatalism that often characterizes the ideology of the “non-poor” as much as the “poor” – and of its twin, despair – with cynicism and immobilization as frequent outcomes. Spiritan and Freirean-influenced strategies for pedagogy and action offer a way beyond such immobilization, as they are characterized by efforts to create spaces of hospitality and mutuality “in which obedience to truth is practiced.” Inside-Out and the EBTT are powerful examples of such spaces.

In the legacy of Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann, the inherent dignity and life-situation of each participant is honored, while recognizing that the transformational callings of various groups will differ. A strong culture is fostered in group meetings of mutual welcome and attentive listening to each person’s contributions. As practiced within the Spiritan ethos of Duquesne University and through EBTT’s initiatives, Freire’s hope in the growth of mutual love can be concretely realized: “Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence.” And in the messy, dialectical exchanges that result, the effect is an effort toward Freire’s epistemological vision, deeply consonant with the Christian Gospel’s hopeful message as Spiritans seek to embody it.

As participants engage together in critical interpretation of the world as they find it, a new world becomes imaginable.

As participants engage together in critical interpretation of the world as they find it, a new world becomes imaginable. “With the advent of the existence men and women created with the materials life provided them, it became impossible for them to be present in the world without reference to a tomorrow.” Such a hoped-for tomorrow finds a deep echo in Jesus’ invitation toward the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Norman Conti, Dr. Rick McCown, Dr. Maureen O’Brien, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh.

ENDNOTES

1. If interested in attending our meetings please contact: ebtt100@gmail.com.
2. A notable example is that for the past twenty years, Spiritans have devoted themselves to improving the health and living conditions of, and providing education and training initiatives for, the roughly 2,000 people in Arba Minch prison, in the southwestern part of Ethiopia. They have applied their deep commitment to grounding their ministry in the lived experience, dignity, and initiative of those they serve. Another is the Spiritans’ work in Taiwan with two prisons in the cities of Hsinchu and Taichung. Whereas in Ethiopia, the focus was on meeting the existential need of the world as they find it, a new world becomes imaginable. “With the advent of the existence men and women created with the materials life provided them, it became impossible for them to be present in the world without reference to a tomorrow.” Such a hoped-for tomorrow finds a deep echo in Jesus’ invitation toward the Kingdom of God.


INTRODUCTION

I recently completed my doctoral dissertation entitled “Approaches to curricular and co-curricular community engagement with college students: building relationships, shifting power, and developing a social justice mindset.” In my literature review, I pulled from authors writing for various higher education settings from large land-grant schools to small religiously affiliated schools. Despite the literature coming from a variety of contexts, it quickly became clear to me how easily one can draw connections between the Spiritan charism as we experience it on Duquesne’s campus, and the way in which we approach community engagement in both curricular and co-curricular spaces.

This article pulls largely from the literature review portion of my dissertation. It begins by outlining how service, now known in higher education as community engagement, has developed into separate but complementary components of curricular and co-curricular community engagement. It will then explore the central role of authentic relationships in both areas of community engagement. Authentic relationships are an indispensable piece of both community engagement and the Spiritan charism. As such, ties between the charism and the role of authentic relationships in community engagement will be highlighted. As there is not a consensus on definitions of terms within the field of community engagement, it is necessary to define terms as they will be used in this article. Curricular community engagement is academically rooted and is usually a part of a credit-bearing class. Co-curricular community engagement is done outside of the classroom often as a part of the work of student organizations or as a component of faith-based activities.

Catholic colleges and universities have long considered service to community as emblematic of their mission and identity. At Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit, this consideration has long been the case. Our Catholic Spiritan identity has driven our outreach to those on the margins since

8. At Duquesne University, “Learning Communities” are required for all first-year students in the College of Liberal Arts. Each community is organized around a core theme and its student members take three courses together in their first semester. Course instructors design coordinated learning outcomes and class activities to emphasize the theme and offer interdisciplinary connections. Some form of community engagement is typically required.
14. Tyrone Werts, a central figure in Inside-Out and commuted Lifer offers a premier example of this sort of career. See: http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=GB6H6u2bBts.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.10.
18. See, for example, listings of active partnerships supported by the Duquesne University Center for Community-Engaged Teaching and Research at https://duq.edu/academics/community-engaged-teaching-and-research/partnerships.
20. Ibid.
25. Freire (2004), 18 (emphasis added).
While service to the community has always been a part of our work here at Duquesne, the formalizing of that work came much later in our history. This formalization of service to the community is seen across divisions over a fifteen-year span. In 1988, the Division of Mission and Identity created both alternative spring break and alternative fall break mission trips. The Division of Student Life, in 1989, formalized and coordinated volunteer work in the community with the creation of the Duquesne University Volunteers (DUV) Office. The idea of academically rooted service to the community, first known as service-learning was formally established with the creation of the position of Coordinator of Service Learning in 2005. After two years, the University established the Office of Service Learning in 2007, which was later followed by the mandate in 2010 to include service-learning courses for all students. While these offices and initiatives came out of different divisions, the projects included commonalities from the beginning including working in local and global communities in the spirit of the mission of Duquesne University.

Critical service-learning theory provides a strong framework for the exploration of curricular community engagement. This framework is applicable at any institution whose mission includes themes of social justice or service to the common good. It is particularly relevant at a Spiritan Catholic university such as Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit where our mission calls us to serve God by serving students so that they in turn can serve others. Often, the focus of curricular community engagement is integrating students into social change models while using critical reflection as a tool. Focus on personal development of the student is much more prominent in co-curricular community engagement work.

APPROACHES TO CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Curricular Community Engagement: A Critical Approach

A critical approach to curricular community engagement appears as early as 1997 in Robert Rhoads’ work Community and higher learning: Explorations of the caring self. Rhoads, using the term service learning to refer to curricular community engagement, lays out themes that include mutuality in the relationship between the academy and the community, intent to create social change, and relationship building both in the classroom and between the institution of higher education and community partners. These concepts are central to the social justice framework found in later writings on critical approaches to curricular community engagement. Mitchell, in particular, outlines the advantages of what she calls a critical service learning model arguing that this model, while more complex, leads to richer reciprocity and interdependence between students and communities and allows for greater transformational learning experiences for all involved.

Rhoads is intentional about not dismissing the desire to do community engagement while making clear that the work of critical community engagement must supersede a “feel good” experience for the students. This piece in particular is important when studying co-curricular engagement work. The positive emotional experience of curricular community engagement can be dismissed when it is viewed as the primary goal, or as the primary driver for the work being done. It is viewed by some as conceivable that the emotional experience can be a building block for the social analysis work done by students inspiring them to become effective agents of social change. Furthermore, student experience and emotional dispositions toward service are often central in co-curricular service work. Rhoads’ work can be used to argue that emotional experience and academically rigorous reflection on social justice education are not mutually exclusive.

Critical curricular community engagement, also called critical service-learning, is an alternative to a traditional service-learning model that differentiates itself through the focus on three key aspects: a social change approach that requires students to examine the root causes of the problems they are addressing; an examination of the distribution of power in the community-university relationship; and the building of authentic relationships between both the teacher and the students as well as between the academy and the community. Critical curricular community engagement provides a framework consistent with a Spiritan approach to engaging in community
Framing a non-critical approach to service-learning as a pedagogy of whiteness is particularly central to informing work done at Duquesne University.

Critical service-learning versus traditional service-learning.

while remaining applicable at any institution with a mission toward serving the common good.\textsuperscript{13}

As much of the research done around curricular community engagement is focused on predominantly white institutions working in communities of color, an examination of this work would be incomplete without a short exploration of the impact of a pedagogy of whiteness. The idea of a pedagogy of whiteness, for some, is embedded in the very fabric of service learning itself. Writings on intersectional approaches to critical service-learning and service-learning as a pedagogy of whiteness illustrate the importance of social change education and shifting the power distribution.\textsuperscript{14} While integrating other frameworks, the intersectional approach to critical service-learning gives more weight to its significance.

Framing a non-critical approach to service-learning as a pedagogy of whiteness is particularly central to informing work done at Duquesne University. It is a campus with a predominantly white student body, faculty, and administration; inadequate examination of who we are as a predominantly white institution and the impact that fact has on our work in communities of color can produce unintended consequences. By failing to examine power and privilege in the relationship between predominantly white colleges and universities with the communities of color in which they often serve, higher education can further oppress the very groups it is attempting to help. This is arguably the largest unintentional consequence of not using a critical service-learning model in both curricular and co-curricular settings.\textsuperscript{15} Likewise, critical approaches to service-learning that assume students are from the dominant culture can also inadvertently support a pedagogy of whiteness.\textsuperscript{16}

While the academic community as a whole does not agree that critical service-learning is a superior model, some institutions challenge the dichotomous model of critical service-learning versus traditional service-learning and instead argue that criticality is a component of all service-learning work.\textsuperscript{17} Possibly the most disturbing point made in this argument is that a social justice approach might be off-putting to students of privilege.\textsuperscript{18} Still significant contributors to the literature posit that getting students out of perceived comfort zones can contribute to their growth toward an understanding of systemic injustice.\textsuperscript{19}

Another notable point of the traditional service-learning perspective is the idea that relationships may be burdensome on community partners.\textsuperscript{20} While there are certainly ways one could build any relationship that would be burdensome on one party, mutually beneficial relationships are not structured this way and are at the heart of community engagement work in the modern era.\textsuperscript{21} The centrality of relationships in community work is also present in Spiritan literature and is articulated as “walking with.” From a Spiritan perspective, the relationship itself supersedes all else including the task at hand.\textsuperscript{22}

The core themes of a critical curricular community engagement model are also present in co-curricular contexts of community engagement as well as literature supporting reciprocal community-university relationships.\textsuperscript{23} Rhoads’ 1997 work and subsequent writings in critical service-learning are foundational to the examination of community engagement as it is done in curricular, co-curricular, and institutional spheres.

**CO-CURRICULAR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES**

Like curricular community engagement, co-curricular community engagement often has a significant positive impact on students. Co-curricular community engagement can contribute to the development of social responsibility, understanding of working across cultural boundaries, and personal growth in college students. Keen and Hall note in their 2009 longitudinal study of the Boners Scholars Program (BSP) that the area of co-curricular community engagement, as it contributes to building engaged citizens, is largely unexplored. This study remains as one of the only longitudinal study of a large-scale co-curricular community engagement program on college campuses. The study concluded that reflection done consistently with co-curricular community engagement can have a profound impact on how students understand their work and their future engagement in communities beyond graduation. The findings are supported by smaller case studies done on Alternative Spring Break experiences as well as later studies of the BSP.\textsuperscript{24} The research seems to converge in support of reflection as a key component in co-curricular community engagement and its capacity to increase students’ ability to understand differences across cultural borders as well as increase a student’s understanding of
The centrality of relationship building in the work of community engagement.

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do not define the campus constituencies that can range from faculty, to students in various capacities, to higher levels of administration. In addition, they do not define the community as an individual or organization. Important distinctions exist with each of the entities within universities and communities that change the dynamic of individual dyadic community-university relationships. The dynamics impacted by the specific entities engaging in the community-university relationship include, but are not limited to, access, power, and length of involvement in the partnership.

Across the literature, common attributes can be found that support the idea of authentic relationship as discussed in this article. Although much of the literature still speaks of the relationships as dualistic between the community and the university, the themes present in literature regarding community-university relationships often outline more specific subsets of community and university: students, community organizations, faculty, university administration, and community residents.

That is to say, even the literature that refers to dualistic community-university relationships often presents research that explores more specific groupings. Researchers commonly support three attributes of authentic relationships: (a) partnerships in which institutions of higher education (IHE) work with communities, not simply in communities; (b) partnerships that, at the least, are open to, if not intentionally leading to, transformational relationships; (c) partnerships that foster equity through asset-based understandings of community.

**WORKING WITH**

First and foremost, authentic relationships require a mindset of working with a community, not merely in a community. Working *with* implies equity and a shared work toward a common goal. The various parts of IHEs cannot engage with communities merely as a geographic reality. Working with evokes the idea of standing on equal footing with another, sharing in both the work and the rewards. When an IHE works for a community, the language suggests the community lacks agency to work for itself. Researching on a community dehumanizes and problematizes the community. It is not the length of time spent in the relationship, but rather how that time is spent that impacts the building and quality of authentic relationships. In fact, relationships that last over a long period of time may only do so because of a unilateral and habitual dependence, and not result in authenticity.

Likewise, relationships limited by time and/or range of work are not by default bad relationships. It might be that a narrow scope of work over a brief period of time in the context of a transac-tional relationship is what is needed and wanted by all parties concerned. Furthermore, shorter-term relationships with a specific and narrow focus can still be authentic or have elements of authenticity if all involved commit to coming together frequently to work in a just and fair atmosphere.

Clayton et al. proposed a continuum of relationships between IHEs and communities that begins with exploitative relationships as the lowest level, moves up to the middle level of transactional relationships, and places transformational relationships as the highest and deepest level. They refer to this continuum as the E-T-T continuum. The idea of transformational relationships will be addressed more deeply in a subsequent section, but it is worth nothing here the ideas proposed in the research around the desirability of short-term transactional relationships as they can still have authentic components. Clayton et al. asserts the following:

*One possible interpretation of the E-T-T continuum is that transformational relationships are always to be preferred over transactional relationships. Sometimes, however, transactional, mutually-beneficial levels of relationship are satisfying and perhaps appropriate. Because of time constraints and other responsibilities of both persons, a more involved transformational relationship may be neither possible nor desirable. Expecting transformational relationships when such is not appropriate (e.g., given the goals and investment of either or both persons involved) might inhibit the relationship operating effectively at a transactional level to the benefit of all participants.*

The quality of the relationship is not always defined by how long or broad the relationship is.
be achieved through frequent and diverse interactions between partners. As Bringle and Hatcher propose, “Campus-community partnerships are closer when they grow beyond the original focus of the partnership (e.g., service-learning student placements), identify additional projects on which to work, and develop a broader network of relationships for collaboration.”

**OPEN TO TRANSFORMATION**

The second critical aspect of authentic relationships is an openness for the relationship to become transformational. Enos and Morton (2003) characterize transformational relationships as ones that “proceed with less definition, with an openness to unanticipated developments, and with a deeper and more sustained commitment.” Transformational relationships make room for what might be called a civic *metanoia* where the driver of the change is deep community engagement instead of deep spiritual commitment. It is important to note two things at this time. The first is that all relationships begin as transactional.

The second is that central to the work of building relationships is understanding from all parties involved what type of relationship is needed and wanted. Transactional relationships focused on one-time events or short-term placements may best serve the need of all involved. This is because transactional relationships do not necessarily require a commitment to time spent together in various ways as long as all stakeholders agree the relationship should exist as narrow in focus and temporary. As mentioned previously, transformational relationships often develop when the work grows beyond the original task to include a broader scope of work and relationship system. However, long-term transactional relationships, when not attended to, can become unilateral flows of charity from IHE to community that fosters unhealthy dependence, problematizes communities, and blocks progress to the transformational level. IHEs wanting thicker and richer work in communities should look toward evolving some transactional relationships into transformational relationships.

Transformational relationships often are hallmarked by what Dostilio et al. (2012) called generative reciprocity. Generative reciprocity embraces the connectivity of the larger ecological system in which the relationships exist, and the synergistic way of being in relationships that can ultimately lead to transformation. This way of being breaks the dichotomous model of one faction holding all power, goods, and knowledge and the other faction lacking in power and in need of goods and knowledge. This approach asserts that a more web-like exchange of power, goods, and knowledge that also includes a mindfulness of our own positions of power, disadvantage, and niche in the ecology in which the relationships exist.

**ASSET-BASED UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITIES IN RELATIONSHIPS**

The final characteristic of authentic relationships is an asset-based understanding of communities. In Keith Morton’s 1995 seminal article on charity and service at IHEs, he argued that the way universities attempt to “help” communities is both shaped by and at the same time reinforces beliefs about the community. If IHEs believe themselves to be fundamentally the keepers of knowledge and wisdom, and the community is the empty vessel in which they pour that knowledge and wisdom, this concept will have a profound impact on any attempt to build an authentic relationship.
Many of the ideas present in democratic engagement support an asset-based approach. Democratic engagement lifts up the ideas of inclusiveness, participation in problem solving, and mutual deference between the university and community in regards to expertise. Asset-based approaches through democratic engagement support the co-creation of knowledge through mutual respect for and understanding of all the gifts that all partners bring. This approach also prevents IHEs from falling into the common trap of problematizing communities. For those in higher education to see themselves as the experts, they adopt the inherent view of the community less as people and more as problems. The idea of asset-based approaches to community as an important component of impactful relationships can be found in critical service-learning theory as well. This theory roots authentic relationships in connections that challenge the dualistic understanding of self and other and instead emphasizes interdependence between IHEs and community.

CONCLUSION
The principles of authentic relationships explored here – working with others, openness to transformation, and asset-based mentalities – are particularly relevant to our work in community engagement at Duquesne. Inspired by our Catholic Spiritan identity, relationships are at the heart of our work.

We go to a people not primarily to accomplish a task, but rather to be with them, live with them, walk beside them, listen to them, and share our faith with them. At the heart of our relationship is trust, respect, and love.

While the ideas proposed in this article are founded in current academic literature, it is easy to see their connection with our Catholic Spiritan identity at Duquesne. During my eighteen years at Duquesne, my work has always included community engagement with students. For most of that time, I was aware of the ways in which our work reflected our Catholic Spiritan identity. It was such a privilege during my dissertation work to be able to connect that back to the bigger picture of community engagement in higher education. It allowed me the opportunity to realize that what we have always called “mission-driven work” in community engagement here at Duquesne is also viewed as rich, authentic, community engagement by the broader higher education community.

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ENDNOTES
7. Ibid.
12. Ibid.


28. Ibid.


40. Bringle and Hatcher (2002).


42. Enos and Morton (2003), 21.

43. Clayton et al. (2010).


45. Bringle and Hatcher (2002); Bringle et al. (2009); Enos and Morton (2003).


49. Clayton et al. (2010).


51. Benson et al. (2000).

52. Saltmarsh et al. (2009).


EVANGELIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church has been instrumental in the education of the Nigerian citizenry. Many of the citizens now occupying top positions in the country received their education in Catholic schools. The education apostolate is part of the divine mandate, “Go therefore and teach all nations!” (Matthew 28:19).

The education apostolate, as an evangelization strategy, is the bedrock for any development. Oke, in Aboyade and Abumere, quotes the definition of education given by the Director-General of UNESCO. “Education is not only instilling knowledge, but awakening the enormous creative potential that lies within each of us, enabling all of us to develop to our fullest potential, and better contribute to the societies in which we live.”

Irish Spiritan, Fr. Tony Byrne, presents the definition of Development by Pope Paul VI as “The promotion of the good of people, every person and the whole person.”

We can define evangelization as making the good news of Jesus Christ known. In other words, it is the proclamation of the good news as commanded by Christ who said, “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere, and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

In this article, I intend to give an account of how my passion for the youth apostolate began and then explain the theoretical framework that provides me with the needed energy for this challenging apostolate.

MY VOCATION STORY

My vocation story began when I was a child. My father took me on his shoulders to watch a religious film in a Catholic primary school. On seeing the priest, a Holy Ghost Father with a cincture tied round his waist, I told my father “I would like to be like that man.” The desire I had, and the prayer I said, without knowing what the priesthood was all about, prompted me to start primary school at a very young age. Initially, pastoral life in a parish attracted me: the lay people were always seeking the attention of the priest. Pious religious societies and confraternities gathered regularly at the church premises for one function or the other, and the priest was always visible as the immaculate cassock distinguished him from all around him. As a child, such a life attracted me and I never thought of being a teacher. I thought that the role of a priest was only to say Mass in a parish church and administer the sacraments.

My aversion for the education apostolate heightened when as a seminarian, confreres who were serving the congregation in formation houses were always complaining of the sacrifices involved. At the same time, the parish priest had all his needs and wants met by the people he served. The priest-formator was most often unable to meet his basic needs and was almost like a beggar – supplying in parishes to get stipends to help ends meet.

My appreciation for the education apostolate started during my prefecting experience in The Gambia in 1994. While there, I resided at St. Peter’s Parish, Lamin, where Fr. Reginald Gillooly, CSSp, an Irish Spiritan, was pastor, and I taught at St. Therese’s Middle School, Kanifing. The students were drawn to me just as I was drawn to them. We organized educational, social, and spiritual programs, some of which appeared both in print and on the broadcast media. These programs made a deep impact on the lives of the students. They appreciated my teaching and after my pastoral year, as they escorted me to the airport on my way back to Nigeria to continue with my seminary training, we were shedding tears. That contact and positive impact on the youth gave me a taste for the youth apostolate.

After my seminary studies, I, along with eleven out of twenty-four deacons meant for ordination that year, were put on probation. While the eleven were ordained in December 1999, I was ordained in July the following year. Meanwhile, I did my probation at Our Lady, Queen of Africa Parish, Bolgatanga in the Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocese of Ghana. The probation year gave me another opportunity to work with the youth as a youth chaplain. In Ghana, I replicated the youth programs I started in The Gambia taking cognizance of their spiritual, educational, and social needs. The programs made a great impact on the youth. The then bishop of the Diocese, Most Rev. Lucas Abadamoobra, of blessed memory, in appreciation for my dedication and commitment, appealed to my religious superior for my return to the diocese following ordination. So it was that
HOLY SPIRIT PARISH, SANKERA

On my return to Nigeria in 2004, I took up residence at Holy Spirit Parish, Sankera. The parishioners asked the Spiritans to start a secondary school for them. They had no quality secondary school in the area with the result that many opportunities were passing by their children. One such possibility was the inability of any of the youth of the parish to apply to the major seminary for priestly training in the Catholic Church. The parishioners knew Spiritans were good at running schools. They knew this from the expatriate Spiritans who had built and administered schools in Benue state – Mt. St. Michael’s Secondary School, Aliade; St. Gabriel’s Secondary School, Makurdi, and St. Andrew’s Secondary School, Adikpo – with excellent reputations for providing a quality education.

After prayerful reflection and consultation with my religious superior, I took up the challenge. I had earlier on obtained permission to start a project called, “Spiritans in Integral Development” (SIID) with the motto Called to Build a Better World. I felt that a better world needed educated citizens. Thus, the education apostolate received prominence in the strategic plan of SIID.

A major obstacle that confronted this project was finance. I had no money in the pocket for the project. God supported me right from the start with the search for a piece of land in the area to build the school. All the local landowners demanded money that I did not have.

Fortunately, a member of a protestant church provided the piece of land, as he did not want such an opportunity to pass the community by for lack of a site. After taking possession of the site, the next challenge was to find the resources for construction work to commence. Without a fund-raising base, I put things in the hands in God. God came to my help. While in the UK for a holiday that year, my host family took me to a convent to celebrate Mass. Following the Mass, the sisters asked me to tell them something about what I was doing in Nigeria. After narrating about the school project, one of the sisters told me that if it was God’s will for me to carry out the project, he would provide the needed means.


After three years in Ghana, I was transferred to Nigeria. Interestingly, fifteen years later, in 2019, I had the opportunity to return to Ghana for the wedding of one of the youth members I inspired while working there. During that visit, I travelled to Bolgatanga and the parish that gave me a sound foundation in the education apostolate. There I found that the youth center I had built while working at the parish was turned into a secondary school with a classroom block named after me. I was overjoyed. In an interaction with the students, I asked why a classroom block should be named after me, a foreigner. One young boy raised his hand and said, “It is because you impacted the youth positively while you worked here.” This positive compliment spurred me on to commit myself even more to the youth apostolate, especially in the education sector.

One of the challenges facing youth which struck me most, was the lack of opportunity to attend school as their parents or guardians did not have the funds.

After my ordination on July 15, 2000, I reported to the Spiritans in Ghana. Among other tasks, I was appointed editor of the Diocesan publication, The Diocesan Link, in which I promoted the youth apostolate. At this time more than ever, I was really engaged in their joys and sorrows. One of the challenges facing youth which struck me most, was the lack of opportunity to attend school as their parents or guardians did not have the funds. The challenge made me to start a “Needy Child Educational Fund” that could assist such children. I also started a youth center to provide employable skills for them. Youth work became my passion, and I was fully committed to it.

During those days, I came to realize the challenge of the youth apostolate. At this time more than ever, I was really engaged in their joys and sorrows. One of the challenges facing youth which struck me most, was the lack of opportunity to attend school as their parents or guardians did not have the funds. The challenge made me to start a “Needy Child Educational Fund” that could assist such children. I also started a youth center to provide employable skills for them. Youth work became my passion, and I was fully committed to it.

The parishioners knew Spiritans were good at running schools.

Blessed Daniel Brottier depended on God’s providence.
or by the hand of an anonymous donor. It was an ongoing miraculous approval of his apostolic charity. These gifts have never ceased to multiply at Auteuil over the years. But more important still are the miracles of grace and physical cures obtained through prayer in the chapel.

I found myself in a similar situation as that of Blessed Daniel Brottier, and I instantly adopted him as one of my patron saints and composed a prayer to that effect. Every day I ask for his help. I named the make shift apartment I built at the school with local bricks in 2005 in his honor.

In my fund raising efforts, I pleaded with friends to donate a bag of cement, nails, or any building material useful for the work. I removed trees on the premises of the school. Because I was doing things such as the removal of trees, and I had no source of income, some confreres thought I had gone mad and asked the religious superior to take me out of the environment. In a jovial way, I would always tell those who said I was mad for starting a project without money in the pocket that “only mad people can change the world.” At a ceremony to introduce the school to the host community, a member of the community was shocked to find out that I was the priest behind the construction of the school project. He said he thought I was a laborer as he saw me doing manual work at the site.

After the completion of the walls for the classroom block, I did not have the slightest idea of where I would get money for the roof. Again, divine providence intervened. A colleague I met in Bangkok, Thailand during a world congress of Catholic Journalists in October 2004 introduced me to a German foundation that provided the money needed for the roofing of the classroom block. The school opened on September 18, 2006, with 30 pioneer students, from which 25 graduated in 2012.

I chose the motto, “Faith, Knowledge and Service” for the school, to inspire students who pass through the institution to make their contribution to the development of society. Our faith tells us that God has created us in his own image and likeness and has mandated us to conquer the world and rule it. If we are to achieve the purpose for which God has created us, then we need to pray. It is through prayer that the spiritual dimension of our lives receives adequate attention at Holy Ghost College, Sankera. We have communal and personal prayer consisting of daily and Sunday Masses, benediction, the daily recitation of the rosary, and regular spiritual retreats.

To be impactful, we need knowledge, as the Prophet Hosea said, “My people perish for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:1). Apart from classwork, we provide the children with many opportunities to learn. For instance, we have a Readers’ Club meeting on a weekly basis. Attendance and participation at the club is a must for all the students of the college and during the meeting six papers are presented – one from each class. The paper presenter asks the audience five questions and the audience also asks the presenter five questions. Members of the Press Club broadcast news at the school assembly twice a week – this is to help them develop an enquiring mind and an ability to communicate. In addition to the Press Club, media education teaches the students how to be discerning consumers as well as producers of the media. We organize retreats periodically during which we always remind the students of the reason for going to school.

We host “Hard Talk” sessions each term, just before the students go on holiday. During these sessions, we evaluate our stay together to encourage ourselves and make amends where we had gone wrong in the course of the term. The knowledge gained is to enable us to serve just as Christ served. He came into the world not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). Living and acting as one community, the Spiritan confreres on the compound join with the students to do manual labor, especially when a new building project is to be undertaken. We clear construction sites, dig foundations, fetch water, etc. along with the students.

THE CHALLENGES

The work of evangelization in a rural area faces many challenges. Finances are very difficult to come by as people do not normally support projects in rural areas, and the priests live frugal lives in order to serve the youth. Because of the poverty in the society, the payment of school fees is often a problem. In line with the charism of our founders, we try to support those with financial challenges. For instance, a child who begins their education at Holy Ghost College and loses their source of support receives a scholarship to stay and complete their secondary school.
WHAT PUSHES ME TO DO WHAT I DO?

Development work is not an easy task at any time, as resources are always scarce. The people who are the beneficiaries do not have the financial means to support the work. It falls to the development worker to seek out the necessary resources. This is not an easy task! So one needs an anchor or some principles to sustain him in this challenging work. My Christian faith and the charisms of my founders are the motivational tonics that keep me going. The missionary mandate of Christ, adopted by the Spiritan Congregation, is my principal source of strength.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me, to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

The Second Vatican Council called on missionaries to work towards raising human dignity and promoting human development. Christians ought to interest themselves, and collaborate with others, in the right ordering of social and economic affairs. They should apply themselves with special care to the education of children and young people through various types of schools, and these are not to be considered solely as an outstanding means for forming and developing a Christian youth, but as a service of great value to men, especially in the developing countries, one that is ordered to raising human dignity and promoting more human conditions.

Justice and peace are a pre-requisite condition for development in the world. Without peace, it is difficult for development to take place.

Working for justice and peace, even in challenging circumstances, gives one a deep satisfaction. Spiritan, John Kilcrann, C.S.Sp., advanced reasons why the Spiritan should embrace the justice and peace apostolate.

The official document of the 1971 Synod of Bishops gave an authoritative stamp of approval to the principle of the centrality of JPIC to mission. Specifically, it commented that...
“action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

Education has a great potential of liberating the human person and equipping them to work with the aim of transforming his environment. Spiritan, Fr. Bede Ukwuije, C.S.Sp., provides a historical basis in the Spiritan tradition for involvement in education.

The education apostolate has always been part of the Spiritan charism. In 18th century France, the founder of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Claude Francis Poullart des Places, committed himself to the education of the youth.

He consecrated himself to poor students who were ready to study. This was enshrined in the Rules of his Seminary. “In this house we shall only admit students whose poverty, conduct and aptitude for study are known to us.” He insisted on high standards of academic attainment.

...In 19th century France, Francis Mary Paul Libermann, who founded the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary in 1841 and became the 11th Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit after the merger of the two in 1848, highly recommended to his missionaries going to Africa to educate the people to become teachers, farmers and craftsmen. For him, the survival of the newly founded local church must be guaranteed by marrying evangelization with ‘civilization’ through the school apostolate. Some objected that the missionary is not a schoolmaster.

Libermann replied: “I understand that it would cost the missionary very much to act as teacher. Nevertheless, it is urgent to take this step in order to consolidate their efforts....In my opinion, to abandon the schools is to destroy the future of missions....” Libermann understood the work of education to be holistic.

Fighting poverty means that we invest in human capacity, we enable people to be the people that God wishes them to be.

CONCLUSION

My vocation to the Spiritan Missionary Life occurred in a social context. Initially I did not have a taste for the education apostolate, but realizing the potential of education for human development, I have embraced it and it is gratifying for one to realize that my little efforts are changing lives positively. I would like to conclude with a quotation from a speech given by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin on social care in a changing Ireland in 2006.

Poverty is the inability for people to realize their God-given potential. Fighting poverty means that we invest in human capacity, we enable people to be the people that God wishes them to be. We rejoice that they can be so, equal in dignity to us. It means that we personally feel hurt when there are others in the world who are unable to have the same opportunity to fully realize themselves as we are. Our relationship is one based on love and respect for the other, in their inherent dignity and freedom.


Nigerian North-East.

ABBREVIATION


ENDNOTES

3. Quoted at the beginning of Chapter 1, Our Spiritan Vocation. SRL.
A CENTURY OF SPIRITAN COMMITMENT: SAINT ANN’S PARISH, MILLVALE, PA

During the 1950s, as a young parishioner and pupil in the parochial school at St. Ann’s Parish, I was the beneficiary of rich foundational experiences that have withstood the test of time. For that, I remain grateful.

ORIGINS

The Spiritans took responsibility for St. Ann’s Parish, Millvale, in the Diocese of Pittsburgh in 1876, when it comprised seventy-five German-speaking families and thirty English-speaking families. The first Spiritan pastor of the new parish was Rev. James Richert, C.S.Sp. Fortunately, he was fluent in both languages. Fr. Richert, a kind gentle pastor, was replaced in 1882, by another gifted linguist, Fr. Matthew Heizman, C.S.Sp. He also possessed the rugged characteristics required to energize a struggling young parish. In 1884, he opened the first Catholic school in Millvale. The ongoing meager financial status became evident in the parish accounts for 1885. Although the parish net income was a little over two thousand dollars, Fr. Heizman managed to pay $3,493.57 off the initial parish debt of $6,075. Fr. John Quinn, C.S.Sp., who unfortunately did not speak German, succeeded Fr. Heizman in 1887. The language issue created difficulty, which was resolved when a second Millvale parish was established.

The new parish of St. Anthony, formed in 1886, was entirely German. The church was dedicated in 1887 with Fr. John Willms, C.S.Sp. appointed pastor.


During Fr. Lee’s second pastorate at St. Ann’s, two issues of profound global impact overlapped. During the course of World War I (1914-18) a pandemic of Spanish influenza broke out in January 1918 and lingered until December 1920. The pandemic infected 500 million people and caused 50 million deaths worldwide. In Allegheny County, 60,000 people were infected and 4,500 died. Houses of worship were shuttered as pastors urged congregations to worship at home. Bishop John Francis Regis Canevin agreed with these closures. Further, he committed the full force of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Pittsburgh to fight the pandemic and offered relief at forty shelters around the diocese.

During those trying times, Fr. Lee remained a tireless pastor determined to clear the parish of its debt. Not only did he accomplish that goal, but he also began to plan for a new church. Fr. Lee, for the first time in parish history, initiated a building fund in 1919, reaching an amount of $2,587.02. Unfortunately, his health declined, and he requested a leave of absence. On March 4, 1920, he sadly departed from the parish that had become his home. While Fr. Lee was convalescing in the residence for priests at Duquesne University, his condition worsened and he died at nearby Mercy Hospital on January 23, 1921, at sixty-eight years of age.

ASCENT

Fr. Alphonse Gavin, C.S.Sp., born in Limerick, Ireland in 1882 succeeded Fr. Lee in 1920. He was a person of kindness and charity mixed in with Irish wit and charm. Now, the church building fund started by his predecessor reached a new total of over $13,000. This was sufficient to begin the construction of a new church. Fr. Gavin oversaw the project initiated in 1922. The church interior measured 100 feet by 60 feet with a capacity to hold five hundred persons and a gallery to accommodate another one hundred and fifty. The basement walls were of cut stone and exterior walls were a light-colored, vitrified brick, with stone trimmings. The rectory was moved back sixty-feet to accommodate these dimensions. The cornerstone was laid on May 24, 1923, and the dream became reality with the dedication of the new St. Ann’s Church on St. Patrick’s Day, March 17, 1924.

By 1926, both the strain associated with the construction project along with the aftermath of a train wreck took its...
toll on the well-being of the beloved pastor. In 1926, the fiftieth anniversary year of Spiritan service at St. Ann's Parish, Fr. Gavin was succeeded by Rev. Eugene McGuigan, C.S.Sp., a native of Philadelphia, who was born in 1886, and ordained in 1912. With the splendid new parish church in place and the ongoing increases in both the number of parishioners and their children, Fr. McGuigan turned his attention toward the development of St. Ann's School. With an enrollment of over four hundred pupils, the faculty comprised nine teachers with a principal to administer, supervise, and maintain discipline at the school.

Progress continued at St. Ann's until that fateful day of October 29, 1929, when the New York stock market crashed. In the frenzy that followed, banks failed, businesses closed, workers lost jobs, and The Great Depression ensued. Severe economic deprivation took hold during the 1930s as nearly everyone, including those in Millvale, struggled to survive. In the 1932 presidential primary elections, Democrats chose Franklin D. Roosevelt to challenge President Herbert Hoover. FDR inspired hope among the people and won the election. He immediately initiated economic stimulus programs that became known as “The New Deal.”

On St. Patrick's Day March 17, 1936, the Allegheny River burst its banks causing considerable damage in the Borough of Millvale. In a 1936 issue of Our Province, Fr. McGuigan reported that “St. Anne’s was a beehive of activity, a harbor for the homeless and a clothing store for the naked.”4 The country was beginning to recover and make economic progress until World War 2 erupted in September 1939. As the U.S. geared-up for wartime production, materials critical for military use were rationed. Women were working jobs held previously by the men who had gone off to war. With perseverance, the Allies declared Victory in Europe on, May 8, 1945; VJ Day followed in August 1945.

Meanwhile, back in Millvale late in the 1930s nearing the end of Fr. McGuigan's pastorate, the parish received a gift from Edward Vero, a local business man who donated his former home on land adjacent to the school. “Bishop Boyle has permitted us to obtain the house and property next to the school… a house with ten rooms, to be used as a convent. We can get enough to furnish the house and arrange the alterations. St. Ann’s will then have a complete setup.”5 The first convent for the Sisters at the parish was dedicated on October 15, 1939. In 1940, Fr. McGuigan was succeeded by Fr. Joseph A. Kirkbride, C.S.Sp., born in 1894 and ordained in 1919.

Fr. Kirkbride had been serving since 1935 as superior of the Holy Ghost Fathers Community at St. Mary Ferndale Norwalk, CT. His pastorate at St. Ann's spanned five years until 1945, during which he strove to grow the parish and reduce the parish debt. Fr. James F. Carroll, C.S.Sp., a native of Limerick, Ireland, succeeded him. A genial person, he was for the greater part of his priesthood an academic, having served at Duquesne University as a dean and vice-president. Despite limited pastoral experience, Fr. Carroll was enthusiastic in his role as pastor and instilled new life into the parish. However, failing health resulted in him leaving Millvale after only three years in 1948, the year in which St. Ann’s Church was renovated.

Fr. Joseph A. Griffin, C.S.Sp., who had already served in Millvale, succeeded him. From the outset, he had the advantage of being well acquainted with the parish and its parishioners. Born in Philadelphia in 1902 and ordained in 1928 at St. Mary’s Seminary Ferndale, Fr. Griffin arrived at St. Ann’s with a priesthood rich in experience. His first assignment following ordination was in the mission fields of East Africa where he ministered for eleven years making converts and building churches in Kili-manjaro, Tanzania. Numerous reports in Our Province chronicle his ministry there:

• “To the south west of Arusha is the mission of Ufiomi staffed by Fr. August Ashman and Fr. Joseph Griffin.”6
• “Get the men over home to help us. Poor Gus Ashman, Jack Kelly, and Joe Griffin are up against it, but battling hard-chin up.”7
• “Fr. Kelly and Fr. Joe Griffin are at Ufiomi. Fr. Griffin is very keen on opening a new mission at a place called Giting, a new tribe to be tackled. He knows the country well and is a very zealous worker.”8
• January 20, 1935, Bishop Byrne writes, “Out in the far West in the wilds, Fr. Kelly, Fr. Griffin, and Fr. Diamond hold the first trenches of the Church’s long battle-line. God bless them. They are all from South Philadelphia and all good fighters. They have the hardest post and are glad to be in it.”9
• Out in the west, there is plenty of work among the Wambulu, a splendid, intelligent people. Joe Griffin...
Fr. Griffin returned to the U.S. in 1940, and following a number of pastoral appointments throughout the U.S., came to Millvale.

When ...
Fr. James J. Maguire, C.S.Sp., visited classrooms, pupils were always delighted. With thick brogue and biretta always resting high atop his balding head, we believed he must have regularly kissed the Blarney Stone in county Cork.

**HARVEST**

Fr. Griffin’s pastorate at St. Ann’s from 1949–1958, was a good era for the country following World War Two. With President Dwight David “Ike” Eisenhower in the White House, times were good. Young married couples with growing families found steady jobs and saved enough to move outward from the inner cities into the suburbs. With such activity in a growing parish, Fr. Griffin benefited from the services of three assistant priests: Fr. T. Charles Dooley, C.S.Sp., 1948–1952; Fr. James J. Maguire, C.S.Sp., 1952–1957; and Fr. Francis X. O’Reilly, C.S.Sp., 1957–1960.

Fr. Griffin always carried a white bowl meerschaum pipe with curved black stem. The bowl had turned a rich golden yellow from careful handling and years of smoking his favorite mixture of Cherry Blend and Kentucky Club pipe tobaccos. In 1954, he officiated at the First Holy Communion Mass for my parochial school class and, throughout the years, he made periodic stops at each classroom to distribute report cards and present the Honor Roll Certificates.

When the elderly assistant, Fr. James J. Maguire, C.S.Sp., visited classrooms, pupils were always delighted. With thick brogue and biretta always resting high atop his balding head, we believed he must have regularly kissed the Blarney Stone in county Cork. After receiving his blessing, with wit and charm, this masterful storyteller would ask questions and weave his stories of God and His saints, St. Ann and, of course, St. Patrick in March. Spellbound, we sat in our neat rows of old-fashioned worn wooden desks listening to his every word. Born in Kilmore, Ireland in 1887, Fr. Maguire was ordained in 1917. After he arrived in the U.S., he became the first Spiritan pastor at St. Monica Church Tulsa, OK in 1929. Then during the late 1930s, he took up a position at Duquesne University teaching moral philosophy before arriving at St. Ann’s Parish in 1952. He died while serving at St. Ann’s, on July 8, 1957, at seventy years of age and was buried from the parish.

Fr. Francis Xavier O’Reilly, C.S.Sp., arrived at St. Ann’s in 1957 as assistant pastor. Born in Waterbury, CT in 1910, Fr. O’Reilly was ordained in 1937. Before his arrival in Millvale, he had served two tours as a Spiritan missionary in East Africa and remained at St. Ann’s Parish for three years until the parochial school class had graduated in 1960. He then returned to Africa for his third tour that lasted two years. Fr. O’Reilly was appointed in 1962 to St. Catherine’s Parish, Riverside, CA for four years. He then worked in Our Lady of the Valley Hemet, CA; and St. Joseph Indian Mission of Soboba in San Jacinto, CA. Although seemingly a bit jittery at times, Fr. O’Reilly was more of an organizer with us adolescent boys than his older predecessor. He started a Junior Holy Name Society for the seventh and eighth grade boys and would sit in the front at our monthly meetings with a hand carved African briar pipe clenched between his teeth. For these gatherings, he organized activities such as boxing matches among the boys and he always provided a snack at the conclusion of the meetings. Each summer he would organize a Junior Holy Name picnic at North Park for members. We piled into his big station wagon and headed to the park in search of a ballfield. As we played softball, he would slowly walk around the perimeter of the field praying the Divine Office.

Fr. O’Reilly also started a bowling league for us on Saturday mornings. After bowling, he would drive us to our homes in his station wagon, forever singing Sweet Adeline out-of-tune, regardless of what was playing on the car radio. His mood would shift suddenly when the news reporter announced that another missionary nun or priest was kidnapped or murdered in the Congo. After his retirement in 1978, he remained active and was blessed to commemorate his golden jubilee as a priest in 1986. He died in his sleep on January 4, 1988, at seventy-seven years of age at Hemet, CA.

Our pastor, Fr. Griffin, was an affable person; well liked in both the parish and local communities and seemingly held in high esteem among his confreres at Duquesne University. For example, at the dedication ceremony of a new community house, February 1953, he served as Sub-Deacon and on September 14 of that same year, he marked his Silver Jubilee of ordination with confreres at St. Ann’s. To celebrate Pentecost on June
9, 1957, Fr. Griffin hosted forty-four fellow priests and religious brothers at a dinner and social evening in St. Ann’s Parish hall. Fr. Griffin and his assistants fostered a harmonious parish, and, with the sisters maintained a well-functioning school. So well, in fact, that the parish faced yet another acute crisis to accommodate an excess enrolment of two hundred pupils. As this was the Baby Boom era across the nation, projections were that this trend would continue; so, yet another building project seemed inevitable. For the short term, a stopgap measure was again the solution to bide time. St. Ann’s parish rented the unused second floor of Millvale Second Ward Public School where the two, sixth grade and two, seventh grade classes were temporarily relocated.

Fr. Clement A. Roach, C.S.Sp., succeeded Fr. Griffin in November 1958, who lived in retirement at Duquesne University and celebrated his Golden Jubilee in 1978. He died in Pittsburgh on July 2, 1979 in his seventy-seventh year. Fr. Roach, a New York native, born in 1901 and ordained in 1926, arrived at St. Ann’s with rich and varied experiences. His first appointment was to South Philadelphia where he became an advocate for the minority community. As Rector of St. Peter Claver Church, he spoke on local radio broadcasts and the Philadelphia press interviewed him due to his support for the “Negro Apostolate.” In 1935, he opened a mission house for the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement with President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognizing his work in 1936. Fr. Roach continued his apostolate through a series of assignments in the Deep South, where his knack for fund-raising and building became well known. As pastor, in 1940, he dedicated Blessed Martin de Porres School at St. Peter Claver Church, Oklahoma City, where the following year he built a new lunchroom. In 1942, after a fire had badly damaged the church interior, he completed the renovation with support from parishioners and benefactors. In 1945, he was founding pastor of Holy Spirit Parish Kansas City, MO. Within less than eighteen months, he built a new church there, “starting from scratch in a poor Negro community.” Four years later, he became pastor of Sacred Heart Parish Lake Charles, LA, where he oversaw the construction of a new recreation center and high school classrooms. While there, he celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his priesthood on August 28, 1951 and was reassigned as pastor of St. Edward New Iberia, LA in 1957. There he made plans and broke ground for a new church. In 1958, after a wait of forty long years St. Edward’s had “…a permanent church thanks to the resourcefulness of the previous pastors and the ingenuity and knowledge of the present pastor, Fr. Roach.”

When Fr. Roach replaced Fr. Griffin as pastor at Millvale his reputation had preceded him. Parishioners were not quite sure what to expect after working for over a decade with the genial Fr. Griffin. On his arrival in November 1958, he straight-away established a building committee for the much-needed new school. Characteristically, Fr. Roach took charge and it was “full steam ahead” from then on. A fund-raising campaign was initiated, and he began to preach his “Green” sermons at Sunday Masses. He unhesitatingly asked for money and urged “Silent” collections, the implication being he was not expecting coins or extra change, but preferably large denomination paper money or checks. Next, building committee members made personal visits to parish families soliciting pledges of financial support; annoying some parishioners. The approved plan included a new three-story school building with eight classrooms – four each on the first two floors – and an integral convent and chapel on the third floor. The new building would be in addition to the existing old eight-room redbrick school building. A groundbreaking ceremony took place on July 10, 1960. Fr. Roach offered the first Mass in the new convent chapel one-year later on August 19, and the dual-purpose building was dedicated on December 10, 1961.

The 1960s are variously characterized, but suffice to say these were tumultuous times both for society at-large as well as for Catholicism. John F. Kennedy was elected in 1960 as the first Catholic U. S. President. Punctuating that decade, we experienced the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, a moral revolution, a grim series of political assassinations, and the war in Viet Nam. In the Catholic Church, Pope John XXIII convened the hope-filled Second Vatican Council that had worldwide reverberations. Back at the parish, Fr. Roach renovated the church in 1964 in accordance with the decrees issued by Vatican II. So, indeed the world and the church had changed during the 1960s.

In December of 1970, the old wood-frame church was torn down to make room for a new multi-purpose hall. The old building had served the parish well for nearly a century. Fr. Roach in 1971 oversaw the construction of the parish social hall, but later that year became seriously ill. Pastor Emeritus Clement A. Roach died at seventy-four years of age on Friday April
11, 1975, while in residence at the Vincentian Home. Rev. Regis C. Guthrie, C.S.Sp., was appointed interim administrator until a successor to Fr. Roach was identified.

DECLINE
Beginning in the 1960s and extending throughout the 1970s, the factors listed above resulted in upheavals throughout the world. The cumulative effect of those factors and others affected Catholic parish life, including the parochial school system. Demographic shifts occurred as segments of the population migrated from inner-city ethnic parishes outward into affluent suburban territorial parishes; fewer new vocations coupled with those leaving religious life contributed to dwindling numbers of priests and sisters; enrollment in parochial schools plummeted.

Amid this turmoil, Fr. Norman G. Hannahs, C.S.Sp., arrived in 1975 as the new pastor. He was fortunate to inherit a hundred-year-old, debt-free parish. Fr. Hannahs proved to be a prayerful man who excelled in human relations as he cared for his parishioners and brought improvements and peace to the parish. By the late 1980s, with demographics shifts in full swing, it became increasingly apparent that Millvale could no longer support three Catholic churches in existence, each with its own parochial school. The three pastors began their deliberations. These were Fr. Hannahs at St. Ann’s, Fr. Robert Spangenberg at St. Anthony’s, and Fr. Hroboka at St. Nicholas’s. Whereas in the 1960s each of the three parochial schools in Millvale had enrolled between 600-700 pupils, enrollment by 1987 had diminished dramatically to 187 at St. Ann’s, 193 at St. Anthony’s, and 126 at St. Nicholas’s. Predictably, these schools merged into one — Holy Spirit Regional Catholic — with operations consolidated in the former St. Anthony facility.14

Fr. Hannahs was pastor from 1975-1989. On learning that he was leaving St. Ann’s, parishioners signed and delivered a petition urging that he be permitted to remain as their pastor, but to no avail. Fr. David L. Smith, C.S.Sp., succeeded him as the last pastor. Pittsburgh Bishop Donald W. Wuerl, in a letter dated March 1994, announced the suppression of both St. Ann’s and St. Anthony’s as part of a diocesan wide reorganizational plan.15 A transition period beginning March 11 would precede the merging of the parishes on May 27, 1994, with the new parish known as Holy Spirit Parish having two “worship sites,” one at St. Ann’s and the other at St. Anthony’s.16


Fr. John R. Weber, C.S.Sp., replaced Fr. Seichepine as pastor at Holy Spirit from 1996 until 2001. The two “worship sites” continued to function for nearly four years but the end was inevitable.17 A final Mass at the old St. Ann’s “worship site” of Holy Spirit Parish in the Borough of Millvale was celebrated on February 22, 1998, after which the buildings were closed.18 St. Ann’s Church was deconsecrated and the building was sold in 2000. Following considerable renovation, the building opened in 2002 as an entertainment venue under the name of Mr. Small.19 Meanwhile, Fr. George Spangenberg, C.S.Sp. served as the final Spiritan pastor at Holy Spirit Parish Millvale from 2001-2005, at which juncture the Diocese of Pittsburgh began to assign diocesan priests, thus ending Spiritan presence there.

EPILOGUE
The Spiritans who served at St. Ann’s Parish for well over a century ministered tirelessly, not only to the needs of parishioners, but also to the wider Millvale community. The dedicated priests from the Congregation of the Holy Spirit along with the devoted Sisters of St. Francis offered their best, not only during good times of growth and ascent, but also more importantly during harsher times of war, pandemic, economic depression, and multiple floods. As the Spiritans administered the sacraments to loyal parishioners from birth to the grave, the Franciscan sisters instilled in their pupils’ strong foundations in the precepts of the Catholic faith. So too, they provided a solid education in the liberal arts, together with good doses of legendary discipline and self-control.

The priests and sisters remained steadfast in honoring...
their commitments through the decline and eventual suppression of the parish.

Dennis N. Ranalli BS, DDS, MDS
Professor Emeritus University of Pittsburgh.

ABBREVIATIONS

https://digital.library.duq.edu/digital/collection/cdm-spoprin

ENDNOTES

JOHN O’BRIEN
WOMEN’S ORDINATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
ISBN 9781725268043. $26.1

Women’s Ordination in the Catholic Church, by John O’Brien, comes at an interesting time, the right time. It poses the right questions and suggests interesting answers.1 The controversy over the non-promotion or non-appointment (O’Brien prefers “non-ordainability”) of women to the priesthood in the Catholic Church is beclouded with cultural assumptions and cultural wars over gender. Gender as a social construct determines male-female roles. Those gender roles are themselves time-space bound and not to be hardened into irreformable laws in face of surging social change. Nigerian feminist sociologists, working from postcolonial epistemological framework, go further. They argue that the colonial-postcolonial dominant ideology of gender is externally imposed; a product of wrongheaded “anthropology”.2

O’Brien’s work takes the reader through a thorough historical investigation of the foundations of and positions adopted on the non-ordainability of women to the priesthood by Inter Insigniores, Declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) that Pope Paul VI approved, confirmed and ordered to be published, October 15 1976. This declaration has developed its own life; repeated and reaffirmed under subsequent popes. John Paul II, in Ordinatio sacerdotalis (1994), concluded that non-ordainability of women should be definitively held by all the faithful. Benedict XVI and recently Pope Francis have repeated the precept. However, in the concluding chapter of his book, O’Brien takes the reader to December 28, 1970, when Bishop Felix Maria Davidek, the underground Catholic Bishop of the Czech Republic (supported by the Vatican) ordained Ludmila Javorova, priest. Davidek saw women ordination as part of the answer to the challenge of ministry in the communist republic: “female priests” could casually visit “female prisoners” without arousing suspicion. Davidek died in 1987. Ludmila’s letter to John Paul II explaining the circumstances of her ordination never received a reply (p. 193). Would the Pope have modified his position for pastoral reasons (Ordinatio Sacerdotalis notwithstanding)? One is left wondering!

Despite the fact that by the Pontificate of John Paul II the official position was that the conversation on women ordination was over, interest in the question keeps on increasing. That the position of Inter Insigniores was taken up by Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, only shows that it is
stil an issue that deserves attention.

The Synod of Amazonia, in its Final Document (#103), proposed permanent women deacons. Pope Francis, in his characteristic approach to synodality, did not overrule the Synod. Nor did he, in Querida Amazonia, wish to “duplicate” the Final Document. Rather he wished to “encourage everyone to read it in full” (#3). The permanent diaconate of women is therefore still a subject of legitimate discussion. In fact, at the request of the International Union of Superiors’ General, Pope Francis did set up a study group (2016) on the ordination of deaconesses. Though the findings were inconclusive (“ordination” or “blessing”?), the matter is still on the table (p. 92). That is why as a theologian, John O’Brien thought that the 2018 note from the CDF repeating what has been said repeatedly since 1976 on Women’s Ordination in the Catholic Church merit comments in a monograph.

The merit of O’Brien’s important study, that any reader of this monograph would appreciate, is the patient historical research. He is attentive to the fluid nature or concept of ministry (diakonia) in New Testament times. He follows the best authorities to reject the habitual confusion of the notion of the Twelve (irreplaceable) with the Apostles that included women. For instance, Mary Magdalene was recognized and called “apostle” — the “apostle to the apostles.”4 According to O’Brien’s study, the practice in the time of the Fathers was fluid. Female deacons and widows are more common in the East, but not absent from the West. Note the interesting expression, ἡ διακόνος (the female deacon) combining feminine article with masculine noun. This should not go unexamined. O’Brien insists that “funerary inscriptions … even well into the Byzantine period, indicate widespread use of the masculine form, διακόνος, to refer to women who ministered in official capacities as ‘deacons.’ One of them, Sophia, is not only called ‘the deacon’ (ἡ διακόνος), but also called ‘the second Phoebe.’” (p.50)

The CDF, in Inter Insigniores, based its position against women ordination on the authority of the Fathers and Scholastics. Strangely, Aquinas was omitted from the cloud of witnesses. This aroused the interest of O’Brien. What actually were the foundations for denying ordination to women, a position that appeared closed by the Middle Ages?

Those familiar with the Scholastic tradition know that from Peter Lombard and Alexander of Hales through Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas the debate on sacraments sharpened, and the conversation around Orders narrowed (Fourth Lateran 1215); the priesthood intimately connected with the Eucharist (consecrating in persona Christi). Aquinas saw no difference between the presbyter and the bishop: both are ministerial priests that consecrate the Eucharist. They differ only in the delimitation of areas of administrative competence or jurisdiction.4 Consequently, ordination gives the authority to invoke the assembly (church) to celebrate the Eucharist: the Eucharist makes the Church, and on the other hand, the Church makes the Eucharist. So, no Church as such without the Eucharist.

Since the Scholastics were crucial for the non-ordainability argument of CDF (Inter Insigniores), what is the basis for women exclusion from the administration of this sacrament, Eucharist, (they can administer “baptism”, the sacrament of initiation)? Duns Scotus was of the firm view that if the exclusion did not go back to Christ-tradition, the exclusion of women would be a great injustice against the female sex. Inter Insigniores named four leading Scholastics as witnesses to the rootedness in tradition of the exclusion—Bonaventure and Scotus, Richard of Middleton and Durandus of Saint-Pourgain—but curiously excluded Thomas Aquinas. O’Brien’s reading of the history is of the view that the doctor communis (Leo XIII), Thomas Aquinas, did not state, with the aid of extrinsic reasons (Scripture-tradition), that the exclusion of women unambiguously goes back to the teaching/practice of Jesus and the Apostles. Rather, Aquinas’ explanation of the practice falls within attempted intrinsic (as opposed to extrinsic) theological reasoning (faith seeking understanding of this practice) (p.131). But ultimately it is dependent on the socio-psychological misunderstanding of authority, arising from feudal/medieval notions of hierarchy. In this hierarchical reasoning, the man (male) is the head, superior in dignity (ordainable), over the woman; the woman, female-inferior, is by nature subject (non-ordainable). Therefore, one can ordain a slave-male, but not a free-born-female. This feudalistic sociocultural argumentation, based on “flawed anthropology of gender” (p.190), is unconvincing.

Inter Insigniores did state that Scripture has not made this matter of non-ordainability “immediately obvious” (p. 35). (“This is no surprise” says Inter Insigniores, “for the questions that the Word of God brings before us go beyond the obvious.”) As it is not obviously proven to go back to the practice of Jesus, the Scholastics constitute the bedrock for the argument of Inter Insigniores. O’Brien appreciates this dependence on the Scholastics as covering the core of the debate. He carefully draws his conclusion following the lead of Karl Rahner who asserted that Inter Insigniores “should not be dismissed outright, it comes from Roman teaching and not simply the opinion of theologians”. Nevertheless, despite papal approval, “it is not a definitive decision”. Consequently, “It is in principle reformable and it can (which is not to say a priori that it must) be erroneous.” (p.34).

On the question of male-priest representation (in persona Christi), of the Risen Christ, O’Brien sums up Rahner’s thinking: “the mere fact that Jesus was male is no answer to the question of women’s ordination, since it is not clear that a person fulfilling Christ’s mandate and ‘in that sense, but not otherwise’, acting in persona Christi must at the same time represent Christ precisely in his maleness.” O’Brien’s argument closes, following Rahner, the “conclusion seems inescapable that the attitude of Jesus and the Apostles is sufficiently explained by the cultural and sociological milieu in which they acted.” (p. 35) This response to the practice of non-ordinability as a matter of discipline arising from culture and not from doctrine-tradition of Jesus and the Apostles, enables the reader to follow with ease O’Brien’s review of the fluid practice and recognition of ministry through history. One takes seriously the evidence of inscriptions memorializing ordained presbytera (not to be confused with wives of priests) in Sicily and other parts of Southern Italy in the 5th century. One notes with interest the condemnations of ordinations of deaconesses and presbytera as proof by negation—real ordinations whose validity is not denied but ordinations that are being declared illicit.

The case of abbesses in the West is of much interest. The decision to restrict their hearing of confessions to only the nuns under their watch provides another example of the call to the exercise of ministry. They were restricted because they were performing Reconciliation as part of their ministry, and as of right. Abbesses were, for O’Brien and his historical sources, the transmutation of the clerical order of deaconesses that the Council of Orange declared illegal in the 5th century. If the Abbesses presided over Reconciliation and gave absolution in the name of the church, theirs was ministry
deriving from ordination, appointment; and their installation was not a simple blessing. The Mozarabic Liber Ordinum (Ordo ad ordinationen Abbatissam), opens their ordination with the liturgical prayer invoking God who does not discriminate as to sexuality: “Omnipotens Domine Deus, apud quem non est discretio sexuum.” O’Brien notes that the Abbess “is clothed in sacred vestments and crowned with a mitre”; the crosier of the Abbess “is not purely ceremonial, rather a symbol of office. (p. 114)"

In the Eastern Church, one of the most interesting accounts on deaconesses comes from 9th century Constantinople, of John Chrysostom and emperor theologian Theodosius. Olympias was a 30-year-old widow when she was ordained deacon. She was inadmissible because she needed to attain the canonical age of 60 years. However, in the dominant socio-religious ideology of “estate churches”, “bishops and estate owners understood the church as an extended household” (p.96). This impacted on ministerial offices. With Olympia widowed at age 22, and with immense wealth attracting a revolt threatening Constantinople, the rules changed. The estate church of clans with a revolt threatening Constantinople, the rules changed. The estate church of clans forced Constantinople to bend the rule, and Olympias became a deaconess at age 30.

Taking account of the sociocultural impacts on Women’s Ordination, it is less difficult to agree with O’Brien’s historical critical analysis of the Scriptural material—his preference for the Martha (Woman) of John’s Gospel (presiding over a house church) to the reduced role of the Martha (Woman) of Luke-Acts (never “a missionary preacher”). The fluidity of ministry gives one more flexibility in interpreting the headship of house churches, the ministry of deaconesses and associates of Paul like Phoebe who took charge of churches. Phoebe, in particular, was the trusted bearer of Paul’s letter to the Church of Rome, a cluster of house churches that Paul has not visited (pp. 52-53); this displays the clear functioning of women in ministry.

Can one say that O’Brien, in this monograph, is patient with Pope Francis, i.e. trusting that with time, his new synodal style (e.g. the Pope’s reaction to the Final Document of the Synod of Amazonia), and building wider consensus, the Pope will pass to action on the ordination of deaconesses? This is the feeling one gets from O’Brien’s comments on the stand of Pope Francis. The mind of O’Brien is clear on the matter. Citing Cardinal Gracias (Mumbai), O’Brien could predict that “prelates from the nation Amazonian region could still petition the Vatican on a case-by-case basis for the diocesan ministry of women through ordination” (p. 94n37).

The reader may agree or disagree with the conclusions of this interesting work. The last sentence comes as no surprise. It is framed in such a firm way as to leave the reader in no doubt about the position of the author, who gets the last word: “The practice and presumption of the non-ordinability of women is a matter of ecclesiastical law and not one of divine precept. That law is reformable. Women have been and can be ordained in the Catholic Church.” (194)

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**ENDNOTES**

1. The author was gracious to make available to me an advance copy of the book; for which I am most grateful.
3. O’Brien notes that “apostle” was used frequently in the 9th century Life of Magdalene, by Rabanus Maurus. (p. 48n10).
4. O’Brien notes correctly that Vatican II will set aside Aquinas’ theology to teach that the episcope is the fullness of the priesthood.

**CARDINAL DIEUDONNÉ NZAPALAINGA**

**JE SUIS VENU VOUS APPORTER LA PAIX.**


*Je suis venu vous apporter la Paix.* [“I have come that you may have Peace”] was written by Spiritan Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic (CAR).

Born in a disadvantaged district of Bangassou, in the south of the CAR, Dieudonné Nzapalainga wanted to become a priest to follow the example of Father Léon, a Dutch Spiritan missionary very close to the poor. Having become a Spiritan in his turn, he spent several years in France before returning to the Central African Republic as District Superior. Appointed apostolic administrator in 2009 and then archbishop of Bangui in 2012, he became the voice of peace in the civil war that broke out in 2013.

He was created cardinal in 2016, at just 49 years old, after Pope Francis’ remarkable visit to Bangui in November 2015. During that visit Pope Francis anticipated the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome and thus inaugurating the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy (December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016) with the opening of the Holy Door of Bangui cathedral. The pope explained this prophetic action, “The Holy Year begins earlier in this land that has suffered for many years as a result of war, hatred, misunderstanding and a lack of peace.”

Personally committed to the peace process in his country, Nzapalainga participated alongside the president of the Islamic Council and the president of the Evangelical Alliance in Bangui, in the foundation of the interfaith Platform for Peace in Central Africa. This book gives a rare and original testimony to the Christian challenge to go beyond the usual divisions that separate people and foment suspicion, and to overcome the distrust that often overflows into violence. Shortly after his appointment as Archbishop of Bangui, Nzapalainga had to face the civil war that was ravaging the country and its capital. The conflict, initial-ly political, gradually became labelled and identified as a religious conflict between Christians and Muslims. To stem this wave of violence that nothing seems to be able to stop, he continues to travel all over the country to call for appeasement with an imam and a pastor. “The three saints of Bangui” as *Le Monde* would call them, have succeeded in averting massacres and committing communities to the path of reconciliation. They get involved as mediators.
resolve conflicts, free hostages, and bring about a process of peace and reconciliation. This they continue to do often at the risk of their lives. Cardinal Nzalaija found himself several times with a weapon aimed at his head. He attributes his many escapes from injury to the force of his words.

The cardinal’s courage makes him today one of the most listened to men in Central Africa. Why did he dare to stand up against the warlords? Why are his calls for reconciliation heeded? How do you address these questions and talk about his career and his experience with Laurence Desjoyaux, journalist at La Vie (a weekly French Roman Catholic magazine) who accompanied him on one of his tours in the interior of the country. She witnessed firsthand that his reputation and courage enabled him to bring together opposing militia leaders and make concrete progress for peace.

Desjoyaux is an accomplished reporter with expertise in jihadist movements. She has travelled and reported extensively on Central Africa and the Middle East. She has also collaborated with the head of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Iraq, Louis Raphael Sako, created cardinal by Pope Francis in 2018. Sako’s book, Ne nous oubliez pas! “Do not forget us” (2015) tells the story of the atrocities committed in Iraq against Christians since the establishment of the Islamic State. Desjoyaux accompanied and reported on Pope Francis’ historic visit to Iraq in March 2021. In Je suis venu vous apporter la Paix she enables Cardinal Nzalaija to put the spotlight on the continuing anarchic violence besetting his beloved CAR with its ever deepening divisions and hostilities. A debt of gratitude is owed to journalists such as Desjoyaux for giving global access to the story of such intelligent and brave Christian advocates for peace and reconciliation.

Like his brother cardinal, Nzalaija calls for help to put an end to a dramatic situation and for an international mobilization of all peoples and all religions in the cause of peace.

Both church leaders are contemporary Christian witnesses to great strength of soul and courage in the face of adversity that can inspire their contemporaries.

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MARIA CIMPERMANN, RSCJ
RELIGIOUS LIFE FOR OUR WORLD: CREATING COMMUNITIES OF HOPE.

Maria Cimperman, RSCJ, is director of the Center for the Study of Consecrated Life at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago, USA. She writes both as a theologian, and as an experienced religious of over twenty-five years. While recognizing her own particular North American context, Cimperman points out that she “lives in an international community, and is part of an international congregation” (xviii). She acknowledges engagement with religious on four continents, – giving for communal transformation; and religious congregations committed to the revitalization of their particular charism.

Chapter Two reflects on the nature of call and charism. There is the personal story of God’s call connecting with the deep narrative of a congregation’s particular charism that gives shape to a collective story of gospel living in service to the needs of the world. Chapter Three, entitled “Friendship with God,” develops five signs highlighting the symbiotic relationship between the mystical and prophetic in the religious vocation. These are to know God, cultivate interior freedom, read the signs of the times, live in closeness to and in solidarity with the powerless and marginalized, and invite all to participate in the vision of the Reign of God. “A mystical-prophetic life leads us and our congregations to the depth and breadth of our life in God and God’s creation” (52).

The material for the second part of the book is organized in seven chapters, with chapters’ four to eight providing a contemporary catechesis on the vows beginning with a general introduction in Chapter Four and subsequent chapters attending to consecrated celibacy, poverty, and obedience. Significantly, Cimperman interjects a chapter entitled “Living Community: Doors and Destinations” (Chapter Six) in this catechesis on the vows right between celibacy and poverty. Healthy community living is a prerequisite for consecrated life well lived. She adds, “Building community is part of our participation in the mission of God” (91). It is the fulcrum on which the vows well lived revolve and generate communities of hope, so much
needed in the world today. Intentional intercultural living is key to building up and sustaining life-giving communities in international congregations. She quotes Spiritan, Tony Gittins, “Theologically speaking, intercultural communities consist of members drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds but sharing a single charism and an intentional commitment to fellowship, motivated not simply by pragmatic considerations but by a shared religious conviction and commitment to a common mission” (98).

Finally, in Chapters Nine and Ten, Cimperman connects the call of consecrated life with the cries of the peoples of the world and of the earth by returning to the world’s challenges listed earlier and developing these with examples of creative congregational responses resulting from “a communal discernment in action within a charism” (177). One such example is that of the Medical Mission Sisters founded in 1925 with the charism to live as a healing presence in the world by trying to live as Jesus lived, with care and compassion for all. Their General Chapter of 1997 discerned that healing the earth had to be part of their healing ministry. One of the outcomes from that discernment came some nine years later with the establishment of an ecological education project connecting centers all over the world through the congregation’s network entitled “Haven for Ecological and Alternative Living” (HEAL).

This book is in the vanguard of Pope Francis’ call for religious life to “wake up the world” as announced in 2015, the “Year of Consecrated Life.” He called on religious to “be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world. We are speaking of an eschatological outlook, of the values of the Kingdom incarnated here, on this earth” (xv). But first, religious have to wake themselves up to become the mystic-prophets they are called to be through individual conversion, communities transformed in hope, and congregational revitalization.

Cimperman presents this book as being “about living our sacred Paschal time - the living, dying, and rising, wounds and all, with the Risen Christ” (25). At a time when religious life knows both decay and new life, “Consecrated life is being asked to look at its structures in order to see what is still helpful and what needs to change for the sake of mission” (xvi). This is a familiar challenge for religious, one first presented in this epoch by Vatican II’s call to age尸...