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WELCOME

As the first hints of Spring are in the air, I am pleased to welcome you to the fourth edition of our **Walking with the Poor** newsletter. Although springtime brings new life and new energy, we live in difficult times, and I pray that we may have the fortitude and courage to meet the current challenges with faith in

the love of God and the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

As the intrepid Winston Churchill said “This is no time for ease and comfort. It is time to dare and endure.” In these pages, you will read of those from the Spiritan family who dare and endure in these testing times. John Kingston whose work in troubled Mozambique seeks to bring education, more sustainable agricultural practices and better opportunities for young people. Pat Palmer is currently Rector of the only Spiritan house of theology in Asia. Based in Manila, students from Vietnam, Kenya and Tanzania live and learn there at present. Our regular **From The Archives** feature brings an interesting slant to the “second founder” of The Spiritans, Venerable Francis Libermann, whose Feast Day was celebrated on February 2.

Above all else we must have hope. The African American writer and abolitionist Harriet Ann Jacobs put it well:

“The beautiful spring came; and when nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also.”



Fr. Martin Kelly, CSSp, Provincial

OVERSEAS NEWS



MISSION IN MOZAMBIQUE

To understand mission in Mozambique in 2024, it is important to understand something about the context that is Mozambique itself.

Mozambique is located on the southeast coast of Africa, and stretches from Tanzania to South Africa with a long Indian Ocean coastline. At over 801,000 km², Mozambique is the world's 35th-largest country. The country experienced a devastating civil war between 1977 and 1992, and still undergoes periods of insurgency by Islamist groups to this day.

Despite having a largely impoverished population, the country has some wonderful natural resources: the land in all its diversity, the rivers which are a positive and negative reality, much mineral resources and of course the ocean itself with some fine ports like Maputo, Beira and Nacala. The rivers are a positive factor because of all the life along the banks, the hydroelectric dam at Cahora Bassa on the mighty Zambezi, fishing; but negative because of the almost annual flooding and the havoc which that causes. Mozambique suffers greatly from cyclones and is still trying to recover from the greatest giant of them all, Cyclone Idai in 2019, which devastated Beira city and a wide stretch of country far inland.

In addition to all of this, Mozambique is a very fertile country and some districts like Bárue in Manica Province where I live and work have plenty of rivers, good soil and therefore great agricultural possibilities.

Of course, the most important resource of a country is its



people. Unfortunately, many of the problems faced by the population here are not being properly tackled. Despite a high increase in school building since the end of the civil war, education is quite poor, the level of illiteracy remains very high and schools in many rural areas are not easily accessible to children. At the same time, the growing population means that in some classrooms one finds up to 120 pupils and 60 in a classroom is very common. Needless to say individual attention to pupils is almost non-existent.

Healthcare is another important but sadly deficient area here. The hospitals are crowded with people waiting for help, medical supplies are either too scarce or not available.

OVERSEAS NEWS



People are often given painkillers for Malaria which needs specific medication and can and does kill when not treated early and properly. As usual women, children and the poor suffer most. One author has called the health service here an “incurable cancer”.

Agriculture suffers from a lack of mechanisation. Still using hoes and slashers, people can only cultivate small areas. In our area, people mostly grow only maize and for lack of crop rotation the land gets exhausted after a few short years. This too is a source of poverty.

All of the challenges faced by Mozambique are further aggravated by the paralysis caused by wall-to-wall corruption which everybody talks about but nobody does anything to correct.

My work in Mozambique goes some way to address some of these problems in some small way. From an educational perspective, we run a hostel for boys here on our campus from which they attend local schools. The poorest pay no fee. We also support students who have completed secondary studies to do courses equipping them to work in healthcare and other areas. We have also acquired a fine piece of land at a place called Sabao just outside Catandica town. We were given this land in order to build a school there. We are planning a secondary school and already have beautiful plans drawn up. It will surely have to be built in phases and both the people and ourselves are anxious that building would begin. Where to find finance for such a big project is the question for us now.

In 2020, a small group of people around Clonakilty raised money in order to buy a tractor and some equipment for us here. Our own mission has 100 hectares of lovely land on which we are cultivating different crops. Our aim, apart from providing food for people, is to model a sustainable



way of farming as distinct from the ‘slash and burn’ method which currently prevails in the area. We are trying to show people that by rotating crops the land can be renewed and never exhausted. We provide ploughing and other activities for the farmers in the area. We still need a few more pieces of machinery in order to work more effectively with the tractor. Africa has a bad name for demolishing tractors. We are trying to show people that a tractor can last a long time if it is properly operated and looked after. We are aligned with what the ministry of Agriculture is trying to do in this regard also. We have three different areas where we are engaged in vegetable gardening, depending on the seasons. Our challenge here is pumping water from the rivers and, unfortunately, for this we are under-equipped at the moment.

Our mission/parish celebrated 75 years since its foundation on July 2nd of 2023. A date like that raises the question of when we will be self-sustaining here. While there is much to celebrate, there is much to think about.

John Kingston CSSp

OVERSEAS NEWS



SPIRITANS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is often described in news articles as the only predominantly Catholic country in Asia. It is an accurate enough description as a majority of people would describe themselves as Catholic. But at the same time most people would not see going to Mass on Sunday as part of their commitment. On the other hand going to Mass on fiestas or saints days is very much part of their commitment. At the recent celebrations for the Black Nazarene devotion, anything from 3 million to 6 million people processed through Manila, attended the Masses and paid homage to the image. Most of them were men. The Spanish, who were the colonialists for 360 years, left little of value behind them but they did leave the Church behind. The Americans, who were the next colonialists, left behind them fast food outlets, Coca Cola and some good educational centres.

Because English is the language of education and the Church is very Spanish in appearance, foreigners might think the culture is not too difficult to understand. But they would be mistaken. It soon becomes clear that the real influences on culture comes from pre-colonial times. This includes moral attitudes, political attitudes and even some religious attitudes. Church influence on these attitudes seems to have had very little effect.

Irish missionaries have a history of involvement in the Philippines in the last century especially the Columban Fathers and Sisters. We Spiritans are more recent arrivals. In 1997 a team of Spiritans arrived led by Fr. Brian McLaughlin of the Irish Province. They concentrated their efforts on the island of Mindanao in the south of the country. Today 18 confrères from different countries work in parishes, chaplaincies and education there as well as in a parish in Manila. Manila also has the only Spiritan house of theology in Asia with students from Vietnam,

Kenya and Tanzania living there. This community is under the auspices of the Union of Circumscription of Asia and Oceania (UCAO) which includes the Philippines, Vietnam, India, Taiwan and Papua New Guinea. Pakistan is also associated with the union.

The Filipino people are a very warm and welcoming people. For many of them life is difficult as the gap between rich and poor is very wide. The Spiritans — priests and students — are committed to working with and for them. But we also realise what we receive from the people: it is an experience of the love of God in the midst of their daily struggles and the joy which their faith brings them and which they share with everyone; it is a joy which can only come from the Spirit.

Pat Palmer, CSSp, is Rector of the Spiritan House of Theology in Manila



OUR NEW SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL OPENS

The Libermann Spiritan School opened its doors to students on September 4th, 2023. It was a very eagerly anticipated moment, and the students and parents were delighted that the dream had become a reality! The school caters for children aged 4-18 years with a diagnosis of Autism and complex needs. There are currently five classes open with six students in each class. They are supported by five teachers and 21 SNAs. The facilities both inside and outside of the building are excellent with a multi-sensory room, ball pit, living skills room and Lego project room alongside two outdoor playgrounds and a picnic area for outdoor classes.

Community living is also very important for our students and trips to the shop, library, restaurants, and coffee shops amongst others form an integral part of learning. The use of public transport and many other life skills are incorporated into learning 'on the go'!

We have linked with our neighbours, Templeogue College, another Spiritan school and are intending to establish strong links with their students, particularly those in Transition Year who will visit our students and provide peer links and support to the school.

The children have settled well into their new environment and are thoroughly enjoying the facilities. Parents have spoken to us of the changes in their children since starting in Libermann and how happy they are coming to school every day – this is testament to the hard work of the

teachers and SNAs on a daily basis. Whilst we are very privileged to work with the amazing students and their families that attend Libermann, I think that the dedication and care that the staff show to the children every day must be acknowledged. They are an amazing group of professionals, completely devoted to the wellbeing and development of each individual child.

February 2nd is the feast day of the Venerable Francis Libermann who was one of the Spiritan Founders. . Libermann School celebrated this day with a visit from Josepha Madigan, Minister of State with responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion, along with Archbishop Dermot Farrell who officially blessed the school.

Over the coming years we will focus on the building project which will see our school student population grow to 156. Our intention is to ensure as much integration as possible with Templeogue College which will offer significant learning opportunities for both communities of students in an integrated, mutually respectful relationship.

We anticipate a future where our students will be challenged, respected, and valued in a community which reflects our Spiritan values.

*Ms Vivienne Wynne, Principal,
Libermann Spiritan School Templeogue*



SUPPORTING THE CHARITY SECTOR IN IRELAND

CHARITIES INSTITUTE IRELAND

Charities Institute Ireland (CII) was formed in 2016 following the merger of ICTR and Fundraising Ireland, two key players in the non-profit sector, who combined to create a strong voice for high-impact fundraising charities, and the wider not-for-profit sector. Over 25,000 charity board members, senior managers, and employees trust CII to provide all their education, advocacy, and networking needs. CII works tirelessly with their members to help change the landscape of the sector, acting as a single unified voice for the leading Irish charities.

EDUCATION & PEER NETWORKS

CII understands how important fundraising is to most charities and the significant responsibilities which fundraising brings to a charity in terms of accountability and transparency. Charities need to operate to high standards and it's essential that all Trustees and staff are equipped with the relevant training and knowledge to carry out their missions.

CII offers the highest level of relevant education and training. This includes the Certificate in Fundraising and the Diploma in Fundraising Management. Both courses are certified by the European Fundraising Association, helping fundraisers to develop their skillsets by delving deeper into fundraising theory, learning practical and effective skills.

CII also runs a comprehensive schedule of relevant training sessions throughout the year including accredited Charity SORP workshops, masterclasses, fundraising short courses, GDPR training, and much more.

Members of CII have the opportunity to network with colleagues facing similar issues and challenges. For senior management teams, this means free access to thought leadership events as well as the ability to connect with other CEOs, Finance Directors, HR Leaders and Fundraising leaders.

Fundraising staff can engage with their peer networks at the CII fundraising fora. Over 350 fundraising professionals gather three times a year to share challenges and learn from each other both in person and online.

TRIPLE LOCK STANDARD

The CII Triple Lock symbol evidences that a charity is working to deliver best practice standards. All CII members are encouraged to achieve this award by demonstrating commitment to transparent reporting, ethical fundraising, and good governance.

To learn more about CII, its work and membership benefits visit: www.charitiesinstituteireland.ie or contact Mark Hughes, Director of Membership & Communications: mark@charitiesinstituteireland.ie



THE ONLY PHOTOGRAPH OF VENERABLE FRANCIS LIBERMANN

The Congregation's "second founder"

The Heritage and Archives Centre of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (The Spiritans) holds an extensive collection of its founder's writings but also a copy of the only photograph of him.

Venerable Fr Francis Libermann had a most remarkable journey of faith culminating in 1848 when he brought new personnel and a renewed spiritual energy to the Spiritans that transformed the congregation. He had been born into an orthodox Jewish family in the Alsace region of France in 1802, and given the name Jacob. Jacob Libermann's father was a rabbi, and Jacob was preparing to become a rabbi himself but his studies led him to discover the New Testament and to Christianity. In 1826 he was baptised Francis Mary Paul at Christmas. Soon after he felt the call to the priesthood and began studies in earnest. However, sickness intervened in the form of violent attacks of epilepsy. This put his vocation on hold. It was fifteen years before he was finally ordained, in 1841.

There followed a difficult period of organising his Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and of gaining official permission from Rome to begin the apostolate to people of African descent.

Soon his growing group was asked by Rome to join another much older Religious community, legally and canonically established in France, but which had fallen on hard times by the mid-1800s. That Congregation was the Spiritans.

In 1848, Libermann's young, energetic, flourishing group fused with the Spiritans, immediately bringing much needed new life to the Congregation.

Libermann is considered to be the congregation's "second founder."

His letters, hundreds of which survive, are frequently used as a guide in the spiritual life. Libermann was a pioneer of strategies now recognised as a blueprint for modern missionary activity. He urged the Spiritans to "become one with the people" so that each group received and understood the Gospel in the context of their own traditions.

The only photo of Libermann, taken in 1846, was a daguerreotype*. In 1875 a negative and positive were made from the daguerreotype. In 1961 a negative was made from the 1875 picture, and in 1981 a positive was made from the negative. The copy of this photo forms part of the Heritage & Archives collection was gifted to the Spiritan House of Philosophy who subsequently deposited it with the Archive.

**The daguerreotype was the first commercially successfully photographic process (1839-1860). Named after its inventor, Louis Jacques M. N. P. Daguerre, each plate holds the unique image on a silvered copper plate.*



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