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## WELCOME

Seasons come and seasons go. We can count on it. Summer fades to autumn, and autumn into the crisp winter season, which sprouts anew each year into spring. Spring saunters into summer and the cycle continues.

*“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven.” — Ecclesiastes 3:1*

It’s inevitable: change happens. As St John Henry Newman wrote: *“To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.”*

As we approach the end of this year, and look forward with hope to the possibility of the new year, we ask for God’s blessings in our lives and the capacity to deal with any change, challenges or difficulties which come our way. We can rest secure in the faith that we will be looked after.

There is a time for everything.

*Fr. Martin Kelly, CSSp, Provincial*

# OVERSEAS NEWS



## LIFE ON A THREAD IN BRAZIL: WEAVING THROUGH THE DAILY STRUGGLES

From the Spiritan parish of The Most Holy Trinity in the extreme north of the peripheral area of the city of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

We live in extraordinary times here in Brazil and it seems we are struggling for the very soul of Brazil. In spite of some hope through the new presidential elections, we still have to find the right socio-economic-political pathway forward that will care for the millions upon millions of people who live on the threads of survival. There is no easy fix. Brazil wakes up each day to an ever-deeper struggle; from social injustice, oppressive systems, the pangs of hunger, extreme poverty, increased urban homelessness, unemployment, cuts in healthcare and education, deep political distortion and the blatant and shameful lack of solutions to these hard-hitting realities.

Our parish is not immune! We're busy relying on our own resources and experience finding pastoral-social solutions from within to facilitate the most abandoned and marginalised of society.

Our parish operates well through an out-reach project with diverse approaches to cope with the different experiences we meet on a daily basis. Our Spiritan Mission of 'Walking

with the Poor' finds real and meaningful application in the neglected and abandoned streets of Sao Paulo.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, we have visited and distributed thousands of essential monthly food parcels within the parish boundaries. Our parish has a population of over 125,000 and a new land occupation comprising of shanty town slum-dwellings with a population of nearly 5,000.

Our Pastoral Healthcare Project for Children was given the responsibility to care and give full attention to the most vulnerable i.e. infants between 0-5 years. Visiting homes was crucial and necessary to identify the immediate needs, though risky at times. The constant number one issue was and still is delivering a monthly food parcel. In the land occupation we have a small community/chapel of St Michael Archangel. We come together to assess the project and meet the infants and mothers for official basic healthcare checks including progressive monthly weigh-ins.

# OVERSEAS NEWS



Alongside this project the parish council accepted a local NGO “GastroCharity” who cook a one-day fresh meal on Saturdays for the last 6 months. Our pastoral leaders help to prepare, cook and distribute the meals. This complements the food parcel distribution and assures older children and parents that they are not forgotten. The impact of this particular project continues to benefit the local community of the land occupation who are fighting for their rights and basic human dignity.

Head on in the parish, we face the reality of extreme inter-generational poverty, oppression, violence, the flood of drugs, unimaginable abuses at every level particularly against women, wandering street youth, unresolved conflicts and the socio-political-cultural abandonment of people. The pressure of peripheral living is laced with deep hidden trauma. To respond to this need, the Joy of Life Project was launched and is co-ordinated and given by Sister Ann Griffin, a Holy Rosary Sister from Co. Galway. The participants of this group freely responded due to deep

and varying traumas in their lives and meet once a month to interactively participate in a type of group therapy; reclaiming and transforming their lives where joy may enter in to replace the trauma and despair.

Today, the challenge of the living Gospel reaching into the heart of this Brazilian reality requires compassion, a nearness, charity and a service of mission. Jesus cured 10 lepers and only one returned to give thanks and praise for God’s wonderful gift of the power of life. Even Jesus knew the challenge ahead that there is no easy quick fix solution. But one thing is sure, we need to shout out loud, defend accordingly and act with mercy for those who are most marginalised.

The leper shouted out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”  
Fr. Brendan Foley CSSp, Parish Priest.



*Memorial to Frs Aengus and Jack Finucane, Spiritan priests, unveiled in Limerick, August 2022. Photo courtesy of Liam Burke/Press 22*

## THE SPIRITAN FOUNDERS

# CLAUDE POUILLART DES PLACES AND THE VENERABLE FRANCIS LIBERMANN

The founding of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (The Spiritans) is, in itself, an interesting and wonderful tale.

The Spiritans were founded on Pentecost Sunday 1703 in Paris, France by a young man, Claude Poullart des Places (1679-1709). Claude was not yet an ordained priest but had a deep calling to establish a community of young men who would be dedicated to the Holy Spirit and who would be willing to go to where they were called by the Church. Soon this little community flourished as more people were attracted to the simple lifestyle and the dedication of the Spiritans. Tragically, the upheaval of the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century nearly destroyed the Spiritans.

However, God was not yet finished with the Spiritans! In 1848, Fr. Francis Libermann merged his new young congregation of The Immaculate Heart of Mary with the Spiritans and this breathed new life into the congregation. The Spiritans quickly took on new missions in Europe, North America, Australia, the Indian Ocean and especially Africa.

It is a story that spans more than three centuries, criss-crosses continents in war-time and in peace, and features the selflessness of thousands of priests, brothers and lay persons who have forgone society's aspirations to power, prestige, and wealth. Rather, they made and continue to make profound sacrifices to minister to the poor and disadvantaged.

<https://spiritanroma.org/history>

Within the Catholic Church, a candidate who is declared to have lived life with heroic virtue, he may be declared Venerable. Such is the case with Francis Libermann, and it is a marvellous testament to the work which he accomplished in his short life — he was only 50 when he died.

*We ask your prayers for the work of our Spiritan Communities all over the world.*



## WE ACT

We Act is all about championing the doers. The people who organise, activate, inspire and ignite change around them.

It is a public awareness campaign that aims to promote the charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector in Ireland. By telling stories and showcasing good news from the sector, We Act raises awareness and promotes a positive image of the sector. We want to share positive stories. Stories about the people who spot a gap, see a need, take the initiative, and act.

We want everyone in Ireland to realise that we all benefit from charities and community groups. If you've ever been to the theatre, adopted a dog, played local sports, called a helpline, enjoyed a Tidy Town — you've been impacted.

We want to encourage participation. We want volunteering and community involvement to be part of the fabric of our society.

We want to celebrate the people who work and volunteer in our charities and communities. We want them to feel part of something bigger — meaningful societal change.

We are as diverse as the communities we serve, and this campaign is all about reflecting that by sourcing and boosting the real stories of impact from our work.

When we started to explore what defines the charity and community sector, it soon became clear that we are not defined by any one action, model, purpose or cause. Rather,

what unites us is our values — the drive to support others, to make society better, to pursue positive change. Furthermore, we have a real, definable reason for being: to respond to the variety of needs, opportunities and challenges in society. We wanted this campaign to capture that sense of energy and shared purpose.

We Act is a bold statement that sums up why we are here and what we are doing. This campaign was developed as part of a collaborative process. The campaign Steering Group comprises Boardmatch, Charities Institute Ireland, Disability Federation of Ireland, Dóchas, The Wheel, and Volunteer Ireland. Since the early days of the campaign, we have consulted with key stakeholders in the sector, members of the public and surveyed the sector more broadly to figure out the key messages this campaign needed to communicate.

This campaign represents our voice, and our contribution to society as a diverse and vibrant collection of groups and organisations.

Sign up for our Good News Gazette <https://www.weact.ie/subscribe>

Or follow We Act on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook @weactireland



*Pictured in Pakistan are Michael Liston, Jim O'Connell, Jean-Luc Herve Andrianoromandimby (Madagascar), John Baptist Mugerwa (Uganda), and Chemistone Moonga (Zambia). The fourth member of the present group in Pakistan, José Harivola Randrianjanakolona, was not present at the time the photo was taken.*

## OUR WORK IN PAKISTAN



Spiritans have been working in Pakistan since 1977. Since that time, confrères from England, France, Ireland (13), Madagascar, Mauritius, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia have all played their part on the journey of 'Walking with the Poor' in this highly populous nation (mooted to be the 4th most populous country by 2050)\*.

At present, the Spiritan community in Pakistan numbers four: from Uganda, Madagascar and Zambia. The community members live in the town of Mīrpur Khās, in the southern province of Sindh.

In Pakistan, the population is 97% Muslim with Catholics representing less than 1% of the population. The work of Spiritans in Pakistan has developed from our accompaniment of two marginalised peoples — Marwari Bheels and Punjabi Christians. Marwari Bheels are one of 40 Hindu tribes in Pakistan, known as the 'Scheduled Castes', the most marginalised communities, the poorest of poor classes in Pakistan society.

Spiritans pastoral initiatives have sprung from our efforts to walk with the Marwari Bheels. These have included formal and informal education, curative and preventative health, prayer sessions, and economic uplift through co-operatives.

Punjabi Christians are the largest ethnic group in the church in Pakistan. They too are a marginalised group, often suffering social and economic exclusion. They

are allowed to worship and there are many churches. However, practice of the Christian faith remains a very great challenge. Still, they persist. Spiritans are involved in liturgies, house visits, Group development, care for the sick and many other activities with Punjabi and Bheel Christian communities.

Marwari Bheels and Punjabi Christians, together with the rest of the population, suffered greatly from the catastrophic floods of July/August 2022. Overall, over 1,700 people died — including over 600 children. A further 33million people were displaced. Many were injured. Livestock perished. Crops were ruined and about one-third of the country was under water.

The Spiritan community remains ready and willing to continue its journey with these vulnerable communities, and to glimpse the grace of the Spirit in the endurance of the great strugglers, and the mending of creation.

\* <https://tribune.com.pk/story/283034/pakistan-could-become-worlds-fourth-most-populous-countr>.



*Fr Paddy O'Connor 1890-1966,  
photo taken circa 1921-1927*



*Fr Paddy O'Connor in Kenya,  
photo taken circa 1921-1927*

## VISUAL HISTORY

There is a rich and historically significant collection of photographs in the Spiritan Heritage & Archives Centre, currently located at Kimmage Manor, Dublin 12. Among this fascinating treasure trove is a set of five small albums from the early 1920s. These albums document the Vicariate of Zanzibar, which was then a vast mission territory, comprising the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, most of present day Kenya (including the cities of Mombasa and Nairobi), and even parts of Tanzania to the South.

In 1913 the Irish Spiritan, Bishop John Neville, replaced the Alsatian, Bishop Emile Allegeyer, as Vicar Apostolic of Zanzibar. The East African mission became representative of the typically transnational development of Irish Catholic missions, whereby Irish missionaries gradually superseded their French and German confrères in British colonial territories.

Much of the imagery relates to Fr Paddy O'Connor CSSp (1890-1966) and his work in missionary outposts among the Giriama and Duruma people. While the albums are attributed to Fr Con McNamara, he is noticeably absent from the albums' images, casting some doubt on his authorship. The figure who appears most frequently in the photographs is Fr Paddy O'Connor.

These albums are particularly interesting for several reasons: firstly, they are quite early in comparison to the

material held in the archives of other Irish missionary institutes. Secondly, the albums include a series of fascinating promotional images, which depict Kenyans holding messages aimed at Irish readers of *The Missionary Annals*, demonstrating how missionary photographs moved between private and public contexts.

Finally, in contrast to these promotional images, the albums also include a number of photographs which record the personal and affectionate friendships O'Connor forged with Kenyans; particularly with the family of the Duruma headman, Guni wa Bati. This type of material is very unusual among the photographic records of Irish evangelism, which tends to present more institutional views of mission.

For more information about the archives collection, contact [archives@kimmagemanor.ie](mailto:archives@kimmagemanor.ie).



## If you would like to find out more about the work of the Congregation please visit [www.spiritan.ie](http://www.spiritan.ie).

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