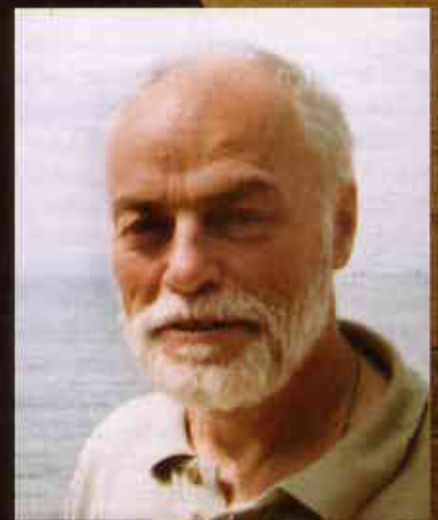


One Heart One Soul — Spiritans celebrate 300 years

February 2002 / \$2.50

# Spiritans **NEWS** MISSIONARY

## Our men in Malawi



**Plus:**  
**Spiritans missions in**

- Paraguay
- Mozambique
- Pakistan
- Ireland
- USA
- Nigeria

# 1703 - 2003 A Reason to Celebrate

Very few of the articles that appear in *Spiritan Missionary News* will interest editors of larger magazines or daily newspapers. The authors will not appear on TV or be heard on radio. For the most part they live simply, they work in relative obscurity and their comings and goings are of interest to a restricted number of people. They are not among the rich and famous of our world.

In this issue, which is published as the Spiritans begin the celebrations leading to their 300th anniversary, we read about people in Malawi, Mozambique and Nigeria, in Ireland and the United States, in Pakistan and Paraguay. On a map it would be possible to colour each country and give the impression that Spiritans are to be found from north to south and east to west of that particular land. In fact, they live and work there not as large groups, but mainly as individuals or small communities. Large is impressive. Small is beautiful.

In 1803 it was not possible to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Spiritans. They were a totally French Congregation at that time and, to quote Spiritan historian Henry Koren, "By 1802 a precarious peace between Church and State existed in France ... The Superior General, Jean Duflos, was 76 years old, almost blind, and crippled by disease, and wholly incapable of exercising his office. The other surviving members of the Congregation were all scattered."

In 1903, their 200th anniversary, they were still predominantly French and the French government was controlled by anti-religious forces. Prime Minister Emile Combes closed Catholic schools and colleges and confiscated and declared illegal 54 religious Congregations. Survival rather than celebration was the order of the day.

In 2003, as the Spiritans have become multi-cultural and multi-ethnic, there will be reason to celebrate. The 16-month long anniversary begins on February 2, 2002 and culminates on Pentecost Sunday 2003, the 300th anniversary of a small beginning in Paris, when Poullart des Places rented a house in Paris for students who couldn't afford room and board in the seminary and dedicated it to the Holy Spirit and to Mary conceived without sin.

Himself a seminarian, he did not look beyond offering some help to students unable to pay their fees. He lived simply, worked in relative obscurity and his comings and goings were of interest to a restricted number of people.

He would be surprised to discover that he had in fact given birth to a Congregation now found on all five continents.

One thinks of Elijah:

*The word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. (1 Kings 19:11-13)*

Patrick Fitzpatrick, CSSp

Volume 26, No. 1  
February 2002

Spiritan Missionary News  
is produced by  
The Congregation of the Holy Ghost  
TransCanada Province

Editors: Fr. Gerald FitzGerald  
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Design & Layout: Tim Faller Design Inc.

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Front Cover: Sunrise over Lake Malawi, photo by Patrick Fitzpatrick. Inset top: Conor Kennedy, CSSp. Inset bottom: Locky Flanagan, CSSp.

*Spiritan Missionary News* is published four times a year by the Spiritans, The Congregation of the Holy Ghost, 121 Victoria Park Ave. Toronto, ON M4E 3S2. Tel: (416) 698-2003. Fax: 698-1884. E-mail: mission@spiritans.com. All correspondence and changes of address should be sent to this address. Canadian Publications Mail Registration No. 09612. Postage paid at Toronto, ON. Printed by Johnstone/Adams Graphics Ltd., Markham, Ontario. One year subscription: \$10.00.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

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# Beyond Observance

Bernard Kelly, CSSp

In 1822 Jacob Libermann (not yet a Christian, not yet named Francis) went to the Talmudic School at Metz to study for his rabbinical diploma. His father was grooming him to be his successor as rabbi of Saverne. Four years later, Jacob was writing about the "chains of religion".

Away from the sheltered family atmosphere of Saverne, his faith had been too brittle to cope with the new situation. The echoes of his new experience were in literature, not in the Bible: "How foolish to believe all the fables it contains!" He neglected the practice of his religion. After years of observance, it was the hour of revolt. From his letter of 6th January 1826 to his brother, we see that Jacob was struggling to break free of the ghetto mentality he had inherited. In his thought a young man's concern for justice stood out: "All God demands of us is to be just and human." In this passion for justice, he had the temerity to call God to account: "Would it not be unjust on the part of God to choose a single people on earth (the Jewish people) to enlighten and reveal the true principles of religion?"

For Jacob, tolerance had stretched itself into religious indifference. What guided his action was no longer conformity to an approved set of external norms. He had found a more personal criterion: "I have formed my own religion based on my own reason, and I

don't think I would commit a crime even if I erred in some of my maxims, provided I don't harm my neighbour."

I think many university students and young people would find echoes of their own experience in Jacob's struggle at Metz. Away from home, the family upbringing no longer exerted the overriding influence of an earlier day. Jacob's critical faculties were bursting into life. He had scrutinized his father's worldview and found it wanting. In this new outlook there was much that was good, much that was an inevitable part of growing up, but there were also serious flaws that were hidden to him. The most serious was probably a galloping sense of self-importance. He turned away from God, but the God he rejected was an idol, made to the measure of his own reason. Jacob felt a need to take a stance in the world that was really his own. He was determined to make a personal statement that was not transcribed by his parents. There is an exhilaration in this struggle to establish one's identity, but it does not last. For Jacob, the excitement gave way to a new confusion, which no learning could dispel.

In a lonely room in Paris in 1826, he knelt down to pray to the God he used to know. In that room was born a burning desire for baptism and an unassailable conviction of the closeness of God. ♦

# MALAWI



## Geography of Malawi

Malawi is about 850 kms long and 200 kms wide maximum. Lake Malawi, 500 kms x 80 kms, the third largest lake in Africa after Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika, occupies about one-fifth of the total area of the country. Malawi's western neighbour is Zambia, its north-eastern neighbour is Tanzania, while surrounding it like a J is Mozambique. The Great Rift Valley, which begins in Israel and ends in Mozambique runs through Lake Malawi and down the Shire River into the Zambezi delta. Plains of up to 1000 - 1500 metres high rise on both sides of the Rift Valley and on them are some isolated mountains such as the Zomba Plateau and Mount Mulanje. These hilly landscapes, together with its pleasant climate have earned Malawi the title "the Switzerland of Central Africa".

## History of Malawi

When it was a British colony Malawi was called Nyasaland. It became independent in 1964 and changed its name. For thirty years (1964-1994) it lived under a one-party system, the Malawi Congress Party under the leadership of the self-proclaimed "Life-President", Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Under international pressure, the first free elections took place in 1994, and a new party under President Muluzi came into power.

Among the descendants of several people who migrated into Malawi since the 1200s the Chewa are the largest single group in Malawi today. In 1960 President Banda proclaimed that Chichewa, the language of this group, was henceforth to be regarded as the national language.

Today about 80% of the 10,000,000 Malawians live in rural areas. Hence village life predominates with only about six large towns such as Blantyre (pop. 480,000), Lilongwe (pop. 436,000), and Mzuzu (pop. 87,000).

### Religious Affiliation

Christian	50%
Roman Catholic	25%
Protestant	20%
Muslim	20%
Traditional Beliefs	10%
Other	20%

### Life Expectancy

Male	29.6 years
Female	38 years