

**A critical evaluation of the members of the religious
Congregation of the Holy Spirit's understanding of their mission
to the poor in the Dioceses of Bethlehem & Durban-South Africa**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material used herein has not been submitted for any academic credit to any other institution. All sources have been cited in full.

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SUMMARY

This thesis is an evaluation of the members of the missionary religious Congregation of the Holy Spirits' understanding of their mission to the poor in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa.

The Congregation of the Holy Spirit was founded on 27th May, 1703, Feast of Pentecost. A group of poor clerical students knelt before the statue of the Black Virgin of Paris (Our Lady of Deliverance) in the Church of St. Etienne-des-Gres. Their friend and leader was Poullart des Places. This small group of young men consecrated themselves to the Holy Spirit so marking the foundation of the Congregation.

In the year 1848 some forty missionaries of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary founded by Francis Libermann in 1841 were integrated into the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

From its foundation, the mission of the Congregation has always been the "evangelization of the poor" (Luke 4:18). For the founders, the poor meant those who were oppressed and marginalized among whom were the poor students and slaves in the colonies.

My particular concern, however, is to evaluate the members of the Holy Spirits' understanding of their mission to the poor in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa. How do Spiritans in these two dioceses understand or interpret "the poor" whom they serve? How does this contemporary South African Spiritan understanding of the poor match with that of the founders or constitution of the Congregation? My response to these questions is an affirmation. In the evaluation, we will discover that the poor in the dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban include those who are unemployed, HIV/AIDS patients, orphans, children and women who are abused, refugees / asylum seekers, street children and many others. In summary, it is noted that the poor are those who lack physical necessities, socially oppressed and spiritually poor.

In faithfulness to the intuition of the founders, it is observed that Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses are attempting to be at the service of the poor. They are serving the poor through the proclamation of the Word, administration of the Sacraments, visitation of people in their own homes, attending to those who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS pandemic, promoting the values of the Kingdom of God through justice and peace ministries and finally, Spiritans are working among the refugees, prisoners and hostel dwellers.

Looking at these Spiritan ministries, it is noted that their choices of works are in accordance with the vision of the founders as well as what is in the Spiritan Rule of

Life or constitution. Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban perceive their vocation as being at the service of these people.

However, as religious, there are other elements which should be taken into consideration, such as prayer, community life and missionary spirituality. These are essential elements in the life of the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. In general, the interviews show a lack of community life among members of the Congregation. This lack of community life affects prayer life as well.

Other important elements include the need to revisit the idea of education and recovery of prophetic dimension of the Congregation where its members are always at the frontier situations.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD *Ad Gentes*

AFER Africa Ecclesial Review

EN *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

EA *Ecclesia in Africa*

FC *Familiaris Consortio*

RM *Redemptoris Missio*

PP *Populorum Progressio*

SRL *Spiritan Rule of Life*

CSSp *Congregatio Sanctus Spiritus*

Matt *Matthew*

MD *Mulieris Dignitaris*

Cor *Corinthians*

CHAPTER ONE

General Introduction

1.1 Introduction

At the end of the General Chapter¹ which was held at Maynooth in 1998, the then Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit² Fr. Pierre Schouwer had this to say:

“We believe that at the chapter, the Spirit helped us to hear what the Lord wishes us to say to our Congregation of the Holy Spirit at this point in our long history, somewhat along the lines of what He said to Simon Peter who had been working hard all night and had caught nothing: “Launch into the deep” (Luke 5:4). We felt that we were being called to new and radical options in the service of the most abandoned” (Maynooth General Chapter, 1998:vi).

The call for the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to ‘launch into the deep, casting the nets wider to have a bigger catch,’ remains as valid today as it was in 1998 when this call was made. Following this call of Jesus to Peter to launch into the deep, (Luke 5:4) this thesis attempts to make a critical

¹ A General Chapter is a special type of meeting for any religious Congregation or society where important decisions are made with regard to the mission of the Congregation. The interval for such special meetings differs from one religious congregation to the other. For Spiritans, a General Chapter is held after every eight years. The new leadership is elected during this special meeting. The current leadership was elected in 2004. The next General Chapter will be in 2012.

² The Religious Missionary Congregation of the Holy Spirit, “Spiritans” for short is an international family or congregation of about 3,500 members. They are a group of men (brothers and priests) with many diverse personalities and backgrounds called by God and committed to serving those most in need in a great diversity of culture. All over the world, Spiritans form over 40 provinces and foundations. South Africa where this research has been conducted is a young foundation which will in the near future become a province. The congregation spans the globe, from North America to South America and the Caribbean, from Europe to Asia, from North Africa to South Africa, from East Africa to West Africa, from the Indian Ocean to Australia (<http://www.spiritans.org/ministries/index.htm>).

evaluation of the members of the religious Congregation of the Holy Spirit's understanding of the mission to the poor in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa:

Firstly, how do the Spiritans in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban understand or interpret the 'poor?' Secondly, how does this contemporary South African Spiritan understanding of the poor match that of the Constitution? What are the similarities and differences? Thirdly, how do members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit understand or interpret their own vocation or mission to the poor in terms of the original vision of the founders Poullart des Places (1679-1709) and Francis Libermann (1802-1852) and in terms of the present context of South Africa where they are working. This thesis therefore will attempt to establish to what extent members of the Congregation perceive themselves to be living the Spiritan life in South Africa today. What is their perception of the poor in the context of the contemporary South Africa? And how do they want to serve them?

The Spiritan Congregation was founded on 27th May, 1703 by Claude Poullart des Places in France. He founded the Congregation for the "evangelization of the poor" (Luke 4:18). For him the poor meant destitute students and chimney sweeps in Paris. These poor students begged for their bread and for their training in order to become priests in order to serve people ignored by society. A century and half later, 1848, Francis Libermann became the second founder of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit by uniting it to his own Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, which was founded in 1841 in France. Like Poullart des Places, Francis Libermann had an affinity with the poor. For him the poor were slaves in the colonies.

From the time of its foundation in 1703, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit has always emphasized the purpose of its existence namely the "evangelization of the poor" (Luke 4:18). In the Spiritan Constitution³, the poor include those who are oppressed, disadvantaged, abandoned, uprooted and the voiceless. In the recent Spiritan official documents of the Congregation, the poor include refugees, immigrants, the homeless, landless, unemployed, victims of ethnic strife, women and children who are abused and many others.

³ The Spiritan Constitution is abbreviated SRL which means "the Spiritan Rule of Life." In this thesis, we shall be referring to the Spiritan Constitution as SRL instead of the "Spiritan Constitution."

1.2 Motivation

I am a young religious⁴ belonging to the missionary Congregation of the Holy Spirit⁵ (popularly known as “Spiritans”⁶) in the Catholic Church. I joined the Spiritans in 1996 when I took my vows. I was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest on 2nd June, 2001 in Malawi. After my ordination, I worked in a huge parish at Thunga⁷ in the Archdiocese of Blantyre in Malawi for four years. While at Thunga, I came in touch with the reality of poverty of the people. I was challenged in terms of my understanding of my own vocation in terms of the original vision of the founders of the Congregation and the reality in which I found myself at the parish. How do I understand my own vocation in the contemporary situation while at the same time, maintaining the vision of the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit?

The above scenario motivated me to make an evaluation of the members of the religious Congregation of the Holy Spirit’s understanding of their mission to the poor in South Africa. With this background of the poor in the contemporary South Africa, this thesis will attempt to identify, “how do Spiritans conceive or understand their own Spiritan vocation today?” These are some of the reasons which motivated me to undertake this research in order to see how Spiritans are identifying the wounds of the society while they remain faithful to the vision of their founders.

This research covers the period from 1984 to 2006. The reason for doing so is rather simple. There is already a book entitled “History of the Spiritans in Southern Africa.” It covers the period from 1924 until 1984. It is therefore logical that this thesis begins from there onwards. Secondly, this period is important in the history of South Africa not only because of the 1994 elections but also,

⁴ The term ‘religious’ refers to both men and women who live a common life in the Roman Catholic Church. They vow to live a life of poverty, chastity and obedience and sometimes other vows, according to the rules and constitutions of institutes approved by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. A religious vocation is more intimately and personally connected with the person who feels the call. It entails the consecration of one’s life to God in order to attain holiness and to achieve in a more certain manner the fullness of Christian ideal (See, Voillaume Rene, 1970:27).

⁵ The missionary Congregation of the Holy Spirit is one of the Religious Congregations with a distinct vocation in the Catholic Church namely the evangelization of the poor.

⁶ In this paper, we will be using both terms ‘Spiritans’ or members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Spiritans are also called members of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. However, this “term” is slowly phasing out and so the paper will not attempt to use the term.

⁷ According to the 1999 statistics, Thunga Parish had 48, 510 baptized Catholics. By then there were about 300 catechumens. Each year, about 1,000 people are baptized.

because from the late 1980's South Africa started experiencing a massive movement of people from the farms into the towns or cities. Thus, the focus of mission is rather oriented towards the urban areas. This is an important factor in the strategy of evangelization. And with the 1994 elections in South Africa, this thesis attempts to find out the shift made by the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in the approach to evangelization. The point is simple here. During the apartheid, the poor were mainly those who were oppressed and marginalized. After the 1994, the poor continued to exist but rather in different forms. The country started witnessing the influx of refugees or asylum seekers for various reasons, economic or social. Then, there is ongoing question of unemployment, HIV/AIDS, crime, abuse of both women and children and many other factors.

1.3 Preliminary Literature study

The main sources that will be used in this thesis are the Spiritan documents. Basic to all others is the Spiritan Constitution which is abbreviated SRL for Spiritan Rule of Life. The recent document that will be used is the 1987 edition. Contained in this document is the description of the Spiritan way of life in terms of the essential elements like prayer, community life and mission. Apart from the Spiritan Rule of Life or the Constitution, other documents will be used as well. These are the chapter documents mainly: the 1992 Chapter Document of Itaici entitled "Where is the Spirit Leading Us?" Then, the 1998 Chapter Document entitled "Launch into the Deep" and finally, the 2004 Chapter Document at Torre d'Aguilha entitled "Faithful to the Gift Entrusted to Us." The Chapter Documents do not in any way replace the Spiritan Rule of Life or Constitution but rather its actualization. The Chapter Documents restate the meaning of the Spiritan vocation in the context of today. The Chapter Documents help the members to evaluate what individual members are doing and why they are doing it. The Chapter Documents attempt to keep all members of the Congregation in line with the vision of the founders. At the same time, the Chapter tries to translate the vision of the founders into the contemporary situation. What are the areas that need the attention of the Congregation? The Chapter attempts to evaluate who the poor are in the context of the present reality. By so doing, more areas which need responses are specified. For example, in the last two Chapters, great attention has been given to HIV/AIDS, Refugees, landless, women and children who are abused and the youth.

The second primary source is the local document for the Spiritans working in South Africa. It is called the District Chapter. It is formatted upon the General Chapter. However, the District Chapter deals only with the issues regarding the missions and ministries in a particular area, and in this case, South Africa. The District Chapter is held after every three years.

The third primary source is the book written by A Kremer-Schillings and H Kuckertz in 1984 entitled *Cor Unum Et Anima Una : Spiritans in Southern Africa*. It is an excellent book which describes the history and missions and ministries of Spiritans in South Africa from 1924 to 1994. While this thesis covers the period from 1984 to the present moment, 2006, the Kremer and Kuckertz book gives us the background of the Spiritans in South Africa.

In carrying out their mission to the poor, Spiritans take upon themselves the general obligation that the Church is currently stressing in mission theology, namely: "mission understood as preaching the gospel and founding new Churches, mission as service and liberation, mission as dialogue and, finally, mission as inculturation of the Gospel message" (SRL, No.13.1). This thesis will therefore also use other sources which may give us the sense of what the Church is currently stressing. A document which, among many others, is very useful is the "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*" by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II. It is a useful document as it talks about the Church in Africa.

Another primary source that will be used in this thesis but not to a great extent is the encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II, on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate "*Redemptoris Missio*"⁸ which was issued in 1990. At the heart of *Redemptoris Missio* is an exploration of the key tensions that make the Church what it is.

Another primary source is the book by Brain J and Denis P entitled "The Church in the Contemporary South Africa." In its introduction, Bishop Louis Ncamiso Ndlovu, the then

⁸ *Redemptoris Missio* is the first encyclical on 'mission' since Vatican II's Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes* (7th December, 1965) – though there was the insightful *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Paul VI (8th December 1975), the Apostolic Exhortation written in response to the Third Synod of Bishops (1974), widely regarded as one of the best post-Conciliar documents. Pope John Paul II wrote *Redemptoris Missio* in the wake of these two texts, dating it 7th December, 1990, explicitly to honour the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Ad Gentes*. See Series: Pastoral Action No. 53, Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, p.251.

president of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, described the transition into the new millennium as a moment of grace where the Church has to take stock of how she has responded to the invitation : "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Bishop Ndlovu continued to say that the Church as a community is invited to prepare itself for new challenges already looming on the horizon (Brain J & Denis P 1999: vii). This book is relevant as it describes the life of the Church in the contemporary South Africa of which the Spiritans are a living cell in its mission of the "evangelization of the poor" (Luke 4:18).

It is clear that during the apartheid regime, the poor were mainly those who were oppressed and discriminated against. After the 1994 elections, while the country was liberated, the poor remained. Among many other people who are seen to be struggling and poor in the present context of the new South Africa are: the unemployed, elderly men and women surviving on pension and yet living with so many children whose parents have either died of HIV/AIDS, the HIV/AIDS patients themselves, refugees/immigrants and asylum seekers, orphans, street kids, victims of crimes including those who are abused and raped like women and children. The question this paper attempts to address is not "are members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit leading the Spiritan life according to the original charism?" But rather, how do they understand or conceive of their Spiritan vocation today? How do they express their way of life as Spiritans in the contemporary South Africa context?

Some of the limitations of this research are that the present generation of Spiritans consists of young religious who came to South Africa after 1994. The older members, mostly from Germany have left the country. However, Heinz Kuckertz plus a few others are a great source in this work.

1.4 Research Problem and Objectives

The main question that this essay attempts to reflect on is, "How do members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit understand or conceive of their Spiritan vocation to serve the poor today?" The dissertation therefore examines the fidelity of the Spiritans to their founders' vision, as developed over the centuries and as actualized within the South African context. The various Spiritan ministries will be described and evaluated in the light of the basic tenets of the Spiritan charism

Other questions to be asked include: Who are the poor in the light of Scriptures? Who are the poor according to the vision of the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit? Who are the poor in the context of the contemporary South Africa? What are the current ministries of the Spiritans in South Africa? How are Spiritans involved in the struggle for peace and justice in places where they are working? What does commitment to the poor mean? Is there any need for possible change in the Spiritans' approach to the poor?

The objectives of this study are: To analyze and investigate the Spiritans' perception of the poor in South Africa. To clarify the vision of working with the poor and finally, to identify who the poor are, according to the Spiritans in the context of South Africa.

1.5 Principal theories upon which the research project will be constructed: Research Design

This research will be constructed upon the theory of religious life, evangelization, and social commitment and teaching. The term religious life "refers to the way of life and / or to the institution of living a common life by members of a given community (also called a congregation, an order, or a religious institute) under the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity (celibacy) and sometimes other vows, according to the rules and constitutions of each institute approved by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church." (Azevedo, M 1995: ix). Many religious congregations devote themselves to apostolic activities such as education, health care and missionary activities geared towards the poor. Evangelization can properly be viewed as the entire work of the Church 'to proclaim the reign of God' (Mark 1:15) especially to the poor defined as, the captives, afflicted, the blind and the oppressed (Luke 4:18). Social commitment refers to the fact that true to the teaching and example of Jesus, who cited the preaching of the Gospel to the poor as a sign of His mission (Luke 11:22), the Church gives close attention to the development of peoples (Cf. *Populorum Progressio* No.1).

The Church was born of the evangelizing mission of Jesus Christ as he proclaimed at the beginning of his public ministry, "the Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord" (Luke 4:18). At the heart of her evangelizing mission is the development of every person and the whole person, especially the

poorest and most neglected (*Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 69). Human development and evangelization go together. In other words, the Church has to be committed to human progress through works of charity and love. In order that her evangelizing mission may be authentic, the Church has to promote the good of every person both men and women. The Church's mission is thus integral and holistic.

Based on this understanding that the Church's mission involves liberation and promotion of the values of the Kingdom of God, her missionaries have not only built Churches but have always been involved in issues "concerning peace and justice, liberation, solidarity and development in the world" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 31).

This research will therefore be constructed upon this theory of religious life, evangelization and social commitment.

1.6 Research Methodology

The research design of this thesis will be textual primary study with analysis of the written documents⁹ of the Spiritans and empirical study with qualitative interviews on the missionary work of the Spiritans with the poor in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa. Twenty-five people will be interviewed. Fifteen of them are Spiritans who are working in various places and have different ministries. The remaining are lay people. They are staying or working with the Spiritans. They were chosen as independent sources or witnesses to the work done by the Spiritans. Of these ten lay people, five are women.

The questions will relate to the following points: (1) How do the Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban dioceses understand and interpret the poor whom they serve? (2) How does the contemporary South African Spiritans understanding of the poor match with that of the Constitution? What are the similarities and differences? How do Spiritans today understand their

⁹ These written documents refer to all the chapter documents, minutes of the meetings, magazines and periodicals of the Congregation. These written documents are mainly from 1984 to 2006 – the period this study covers.

own vocation in terms of the vision of the founders and in terms of the present day context of South Africa where they work?

1.7 Structure of dissertation

The thesis is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one of this dissertation attempts to give a general introduction of this undertaking. An introduction of the thesis will be given. Then, a motivation that led to this study will be outlined as well.

The second chapter seeks to discuss the history of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Special focus is placed on the founders of the Congregation. Firstly, Poullart des Places and secondly, Francis Libermann. Poullart des Places founded the Congregation of the Holy Spirit on the 27th May, 1703. Almost a century and half later, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit merged with the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary which was founded by Francis Libermann in 1841. The two congregations were merged as they had a similar purpose, "the evangelization of the poor". This chapter further will discuss the identity of the poor. As religious, the Bible played a major role in their understanding of the poor. This essay therefore will attempt to discuss the poor from the biblical point of view. From there then, we will try to discuss the poor according to the founders themselves: who were the poor that prompted them to found the two Congregations? Then, finally, we will discuss the poor from the South African context where members of the Congregation are currently working.

The third chapter attempts to give a description of the Spiritan ministries in South Africa. This chapter is an outcome of field work where the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit were asked about the various missionary works they are doing in South Africa especially in the two dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban. How do they understand their mission or vocation in terms of the vision of the founders and the contemporary situation in which they are working?

Chapter four is an evaluation of the Spiritan ministries in the two dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban. This evaluation is based on the Spiritan missionary praxis and the perception Spiritans have of the poor. In order to do this, all the Spiritan ministries outlined in chapter three will be evaluated and compared to the vision of the founders as well as to what is stipulated in the documents of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

In chapter five, having looked at what has been discussed in the previous chapters, the work will be brought to its logical conclusion by suggesting the way forward for the Spiritans in their missionary work for the poor in the two dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban.

CHAPTER TWO

The Congregation of the Holy Spirit and the Identity of the Poor

2.1 Introduction

On May 27th, 1703, on the Feast of Pentecost, a group of poor clerical students knelt before the statue of the Black Virgin of Paris (Our Lady of Deliverance) in the Church of Saint Etienne-des-Gres. Their friend and leader was Claude Poullart des Places. This small group of young people consecrated their lives to the Holy Spirit, so marking the foundation of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (or "Spiritans" for short). Its members were to work in the most neglected areas in France. The congregation was founded to be at the service of the most abandoned poor people in society. Soon after its foundation, the young congregation developed a missionary dimension with the sending of the first priest to Quebec in Canada, followed shortly by others who went to Senegal, Guyane and the south of Vietnam.

Almost a century and half later, in 1848, Fr. Francis Libermann, born of a Jewish family in Alsace and son of a rabbi, converted to the Christian faith at the age of twenty-four, became the second founder of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit by uniting it to his own Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary which had been founded in 1841, primarily for missionary work among the Black people on the continent of Africa.

This chapter therefore attempts to discuss: firstly, the background of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Who are the founders? What was the motive for founding the Congregation? Secondly, this chapter will discuss what is at the core of the Congregation namely, the evangelization of the poor. This discussion will include who are the poor in the light of the Scriptures, the founders and the poor in the contemporary South Africa.

2.2 The foundation of the Congregation

The Congregation of the Holy Spirit has two outstanding founders namely: Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann. The two founders had totally different backgrounds and upbringing. However, both had one common vision and that was to undertake this missionary work among the most abandoned and wretched poor people. In order to admire what prompted them to undertake missionary work we will briefly discuss their backgrounds in which we will highlight the concept of the poor according to each of them and the poor when Spiritans first arrived in South Africa

2.2.1 Claude Poullart des Places

Who was Poullart des Places? He was born on 26th February, 1679 in Rennes, south of France. Just a day after he was born, on the 27th February, the little boy was held over the baptismal font in Rennes, Brittany (Koren, H 1983:1). His parents were happy as they looked at their infant son and had no doubt that he would inherit their wealth, place of nobility and write a glorious page in the history of their family. Since the middle ages, the family name "des Places" had been on the list of distinguished families. Poullart des Places' father, Francis Claude was one of the richest merchants and a well respected lawyer in the Sovereign Parliament of Brittany. His mother, Jeanne Le Meneust was a daughter of a well known and prosperous business person.

2.2.1.1 Beginning of Missionary Zeal

Poullart des Places' early years were blessed by a careful upbringing. At the age of twenty-one, Poullart des Places had successfully finished his studies at Nantes with a licentiate in Law. He then joined his father's business and worked for one full year but did not like it. In 1701, Poullart des Place withdrew from worldly affairs to pass a week in the solitude of retreat. He drew up his reflection on the truths of religion and debated on a choice of state of life (Spiritans papers, No. 16, 1983:17). By the end of the retreat, Poullart des Places knew that God was calling him to the priesthood. This retreat became a turning point in his life. During this retreat, Poullart des Places' vocation to priesthood was born. Now he had to pursue his studies towards priesthood at the Jesuit College of Louis le Grand where he would finish his studies without any licentiate but with solid

doctrine. While at the Jesuit College, Poullart des Places joined an organization called the "Assembly of Friends". This was a pious association which was composed of a small group of theology students who, at Louis le Grand as in most of the Jesuit Colleges, put life into the Marian groups. (Spiritan papers, No. 4.1983: 38). In this organization, Poullart des Places undertook to share his resources with the poor students who were studying theology. His adherence to this group greatly influenced his vocation for priesthood and the work he later founded, namely the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

2.2.1.2 The birth of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit

At the beginning of the 1702-1703 academic year Poullart des Places was fully engaged in providing food for the poor students whom he enabled to finish their studies. These poor students used to work in Paris as chimney – sweeps and tried to earn a few *usso* for their families as well (Koren H 1958:9). While busy with these students whom he gathered, Poullart des Places turned to other poor students who lodged in Paris, in conditions equally unfavorable to their studies and virtue (Joseph M 1983:15). With a growing number of dependents on his hands, Poullart des Places felt the need of providing for their spiritual needs. As the little group was developing, the students asked Poullart des Places to form a community. Poullart des Places waited until 27th May, 1703, the Feast of Pentecost, when a group of twelve poor young men knelt before the statue of the Black Virgin (Our Lady of Deliverance) in the Church of Saint Etienne-de-Gres. This small group of young men consecrated their lives to the Holy Spirit, so marking the foundation of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Poullart des Places, only twenty – three years old and not yet a priest, became the founder of the Congregation.

A few years after the Congregation was founded, on 2nd October, 1709, Poullart des Places died at the age of thirty. He was buried among the poor in a common cemetery of Saint Etienne du Mont besides the Chapel of Our Lady in Paris. At the time of the founder's death, the congregation had seventy students.

After Poullart des Place's death, another young man aged twenty – three was chosen to take over from the founder. His name was James Garnier. Unfortunately he too died in the following year

1710 thus leaving the newly founded Congregation orphaned for the second time within a period of six months. With the help of Divine Providence, another young man aged 25 by the name of Louis Bouic was chosen to lead the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. He was re-elected 17 times and was the superior altogether for 53 years until 1763.

For the next one hundred years up until 1840, the Congregation struggled for its recognition, faced the challenges of Jansenists and was further hit by the French revolution and persecutions. The Congregation lost all its possessions and most of its members suffered imprisonment and exile. With the fall of Napoleon in 1841, the Congregation started to be restored. However, this was not an easy venture as the Congregation had suffered nearly for one hundred years. This atmosphere created the chance for the Congregation to enter into a possible relationship with the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary founded by Francis Libermann.

2.2.2 Francis Libermann

Who was Francis Libermann? He was born on 20th April, 1802. He was a son of a conservative Jewish Rabbi, Lazarus Libermann of Sarvene in France. His father destined him to become a rabbi and carefully watched over his development. At the age of five, Francis was able to recite the Jewish alphabet. At ten, he begun the study of the Talmud and at the age of eighteen, he mastered the complicated compilation of Hebrew law, culture and wisdom. At the age of twenty-two, Francis Libermann was sent to Metz to get a diploma in rabbinical studies. Being away from home, his family upbringing no longer exerted an overwhelming influence, so he started reading Emile Rousseau and became a believer in the excellence of natural morality and the necessity of following one's conscience. He gave up the practice of his religion.

2.2.2.1 The foundation of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary

In 1826, Francis Libermann went to Stanislas College. While at the college Francis felt totally removed from his ordinary surroundings. He started to have doubts about everything: about Judaism, Christian religion and above all, about himself. This state of doubt led him to pray to the God of his fathers. From that moment, God moved back into his life and he believed this God to be

the God of the Christians. On Christmas Eve, Sunday 24th December, his wish was fulfilled. He was baptized in the college chapel under the names of Francis Mary Paul. Immediately after baptism he manifested his desire to become a priest. On 9th June, he was confirmed at Notre Dame in Paris. A year later, he entered the seminary at Saint Sulpice to prepare for priesthood. Soon he gave up, due to ill health. However, he remained with the community at Saint Sulpice while assisting as bursar and spiritual director of the seminarians. While at Saint Sulpice, Francis met two friends: Eugene Tisserant who was the son of a French chemist and a Haitian mother and Fredrick Le Vavas seur from a rich family of sugar planters on the islands of Bourbon in the Indian Ocean. The three shared the same vision. They all desired to work for an end to the violence, hate and disdain to which the slaves of Bourbon and Haiti were subjected. The three had one common dream of restoring the freedom and dignity of slaves.

In 1836, Fr. des Genettes, the Parish Priest of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, consecrated the parish to the Holy Heart of Mary. His parish became the centre of pilgrimage for many people both in France and abroad. Fredric Le Vavas seur and Eugene Tisserant were among those who prayed at the shrine. Five years later, September 21st in 1841, Francis Libermann was ordained as a priest by Monsignor Mioland, the Bishop of Amiens. During the same year the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary was founded for the evangelization of the poor, especially the black people. In 1842, the first missionaries left Bordeaux, bound for Africa, more particularly, the Vicariate of the two Guineas and Sierra Leone. Francis Libermann described the missionary task of the congregation as:

“To preach the Good News to the poor is our general goal. Nevertheless, the missions are the principal object we aim at, and in the missions we have chosen the most wretched and abandoned souls. Providence gave us our work for the Blacks, whether in Africa or in the colonies; incontestably, these are the most wretched an abandoned people down to our day. We would also like to work in France for the salvation of souls, but still having the poor as our principal goal, without abandoning those who are not” (Old Rule for the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, 1842).

2.2.2.2 The Merger of the two Congregations

From the very beginning after the foundation of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary in 1841, there were suggestions for a possible union with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. The reason behind this is simple. The two congregations had, from all angles, a similar purpose and vision, namely working with the poor. With the help of Divine Providence, the fusion took place at Pentecost, 1848. Libermann saw the union of the two Congregations to be according to the will of God. Rome approved this union on 28th September, 1848 in a letter in which it was stated that:

“It is up to you to complete this fusion of your two congregations, so that henceforth, the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary ceases to exist and its members and aspirants will be integrated into the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, thereby becoming members and aspirants, sharing the same rights and privileges and being subject to the same constitution” (Archives Book XIII, No. 170).

Now the two Congregations became one with the official name, “Congregation of the Holy Spirit under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary”. Thus, the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary ceased to exist as all its members were incorporated into the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. For Libermann, this fusion of the two congregations was both a necessity and a grace. He saw no problem in joining the two names “Holy Spirit” and “Holy Heart.” Not only does one go to the Holy Spirit through Mary, but it is the Holy Spirit who reveals Mary (Spiritan papers No. 22 December 1988:71). Libermann was elected the first Superior General of the newly merged Congregation becoming the ninth Superior General since after its foundation in 1703.

After the merger, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, now under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary continued to keep its missionary dimension. The missionary orientation of Poullart des Places (1679-1709) was taken up by Francis Libermann (1802-1852). The first Spiritan Missionaries were sent to Quebec in Canada in 1732. This was followed by opening other missions in India where Spiritans had to learn a difficult language. In 1773, the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith asked the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to take charge of the Apostolic

Prefectures of the islands of Saint Pierre and, Miquelon, Guyane and Saint Louis of Senegal. The members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit sent to Senegal and Gabon took particular care with the education of young people. They soon opened training centres for teachers, catechists, farmers, craftsmen and, above all, creating a local clergy.¹⁰

From the time the two congregations merged, the Spiritans founded many other missions worldwide. Today, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary has spread all over the world. Its members are working in all five continents, with greater numbers of Spiritans especially in Africa and Latin America.

2.3 The Spiritans in South Africa

In South Africa, where our research has been conducted, Francis Libermann had already dreamt of sending his missionaries after the fusion of the two congregations in 1848. However, it was only possible thirty years later, in 1878 when the indefatigable traveler, Fr. Charles Duperquet (1830-1888)¹¹ and other members of the Congregation made a two week trek from Cape Town to the new settlement at Kimberley. This first Spiritan group led by Fr. Charles Duperquet did not stay long. They withdrew from the South African mission and left for Angola. Spiritans went on a second missionary journey to South Africa forty-six years later when in 1924 the German Spiritans arrived for the new Prefecture Apostolic of Kroonstad under Monsignor Leo Klerlein who was appointed Prefect apostolic on March 1924. With him were five other priests¹² and four brothers who arrived in the course of 1925 (Cf. Brain J B 1996:151). The group was further strengthened by two priests and two brothers who came in 1926. By this time, the Catholic population in the prefecture was about 821 (Kremer, S and Kuckertz, H 1984:6). These were mainly of European origin. The Spiritans soon started opening parish centres and primary schools in various places, such that the originally tiny white settlers' Church turned into a black popular Church. In 1935, the Prefecture Apostolic of Kroonstad was awarded the status of Vicariate. Monsignor Klerlein was appointed Vicar Apostolic and subsequently ordained bishop in May, 1935.

¹⁰ 300 Years of Spiritan Mission. p.33

¹¹ Fr. Charles Duperquet was Irish and when he came to South Africa, he took over as Prefect Apostolic of Chimbebasia which comprised of some parts of Botswana, Angola and Namibia.

¹² The names of the priests who accompanied Fr. Leo Klerlein were: Winterle, Boenisch, Schings, Pleuss and Truckenmueller and the brothers were: Florus, Ewald, Adolf and Frohmund.

The Church continued to grow as many people were converted to the Catholic Church. By Papal Decree dated 12th February, 1948, the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith divided the Kroonstad Vicariate into two separate vicariates. The western part with Kroonstad as centre was entrusted to the Dominican Fathers of the Dutch Province while the eastern part with Bethlehem as centre was entrusted to the Spiritan Fathers of the German Province. Spiritans have been working in the Diocese of Bethlehem from then until the present day. Today, however, members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit also work in other dioceses, including Dundee, Kroonstad and Johannesburg where they serve the most abandoned people.

2.4 Aim of the Spiritan Congregation: the evangelization of the poor

The dissertation's main concern is to evaluate how the members of the Congregation in South Africa, working specifically in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban, are working with the poor according to the vision of the founders. This section attempts to identify whom we mean when we talk about the poor. Our concern is not an abstract theory but rather has to do with human life and suffering. Therefore, our reflection should be contextual, based on the reality of poverty surrounding us. Since the term 'poor' is rather broad, this essay will limit itself to using this term in three ways. Firstly, we will use the term referring to people who are deprived of physical necessities, secondly, the term will be used to refer to people who are socially and politically oppressed and finally, the term will be used to refer to those who suffer spiritual poverty.

2.4.1 The Poor in the Bible

In exploring the identity of the poor, the witness of Scripture is crucial. Scripture is an important element in the Christian Theology. The Bible gives us the background of the identity of the poor. It is therefore important in our study to go through some of Scriptural texts that describe the situation of the poor in both the Old and the New Testament. Our interest is, to see how the Bible speaks of the poor? Or to be more precise, what evidence is there to support our argument of the poor as those who are deprived and oppressed from Biblical point of view or perspective?

Taking the Bible as our basis for departure in our understanding of the term 'poor', it is noted that the poor are described with various terms. The poor are those who lack bread and water (cf. 2 Samuel 3:39). The book of Proverbs describes the poor as those without any defense (Cf. Proverbs 28:15). The poor are defined by their frailty (Ruth 3:10) and the rich by their power (Proverbs 10:15). It is the exercise of power by the rich for their own ends over the frail who cannot defend themselves that constitutes injustice. The prophet Isaiah talks of the poor as those who are trampled down by the rich (Isaiah 26:6).

The Old Testament further depicts poverty as need and dependence. In 1 Samuel 2:8, the Lord is said to raise up the poor from the dust and raise the needy from the ash heap. There is a need to combat poverty by both assisting the powerless individuals while at the same time, working to change the unjust structures which victimize the poor. Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord calls us to "let the oppressed go free" (Isaiah 58:6-7) and requests that those who have enough bread share with the poor. Here is a call for justice for the poor, who include the widows, orphans and aliens. They must be protected from exploitation and oppression. Another example of concern for the poor in Israel's laws is the provision of the Jubilee Year stipulated in the Book of Leviticus Chapter 25. This law was to make sure that the poor receive special consideration in an attempt to protect them from the rich (cf. Mott 1982: 67-68).

The idea of poverty further involves oppression. This in fact is the most common Old Testament terminology translated into English to denote the poor. This term, according to Perkins, is rather complex. It can be used to mean "humility", materially poor and troubled. However, in its basic thrust, it concerns oppression. Reflecting on its use in some Old Testament references to the oppressed-poor, Perkins writes:

In the undergrowth he lies in ambush, in his hiding-place he murders the innocent (Psalms 10:8-9). They trample them underfoot (Isaiah 26:6) and turn aside justice from them (Amos 2:7). Isaiah denounces the elders and princes because of the spoil of the oppressed-poor is in their houses (Isaiah 3:4), those who ruin the oppressed poor with lying words, even when their plea is right

(Isaiah 32:7)); those who rob them of their right by iniquitous decrees (Isaiah 10:1) (Perkins 1983:41-42).

At the heart of the Old Testament concept of oppression is the Exodus in which Yahweh hears the cry of his people and liberates them from their bondage in Egypt. Yahweh responds to the oppression of his people in Egypt as He says: "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out, and I am concerned about their sufferings. So, I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians" (Exodus 3:7-8). Here, God identifies himself with the poor. He acts on their behalf by rescuing them from the bondages of the Egyptians. From this, one sees that God has concern for the poor and those rejected by society.

Among the prophets, there is Jeremiah who received a special call to make an option for the poor. That is why he often condemned the sinful, social structures of his time that contributed to human suffering and misery. He has given us an example for our own ministry, proclamation and witness today as reflected in his call: The word of Yahweh was addressed to me, saying;

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations....."
(Jeremiah 1:4).

In the New Testament especially in the Synoptic Gospels, God's identification with the poor is seen through the incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ. And though being in the form of God, Jesus did not count equality with God to be grasped as he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Phil 2:6). In his mission, Jesus shows the concern of the poor. This is outlined at the beginning of his public ministry as he announces his intention:

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

Throughout his public life, Jesus and his disciples immersed themselves in social realities of their time. They opted for the poor. Donald Dorr proposed an option for the poor in his observation that:

“To make an option for the poor is not to opt for poverty but to opt for people. It is to commit oneself to acting and living in a way that respects people, especially those who are not treated with respect in our society. It is to proclaim by one’s actions that people are more important than the systems that deprive them of their basic rights to eat, the right to work, the right to participate in decision making, the right to worship according to their conscience, and even the right to life itself” (Dorr, D 1984: 77).

Orlando Costas writes: the Gospel of Luke saw Jesus’ entire life, annunciation to his death on the cross, from the perspective of the poor.

“The announcement of Jesus’ birth is linked with the hope of the poor and disenfranchised (Luke 1:51). He is born in a stable (Luke 2:8) and his parents can only afford to fulfill the requirement of the law with the offering as assigned to the poor (Luke 2:24). He locates his own mission among the poor, the captives, the sick, and the oppressed (Luke 4:18). He calls the poor the heirs of the Kingdom of God (6:20). He praises Zacchaeus for returning what he had stolen from the poor (Luke 19:1-10) and points to his healing and heralding ministry as signs of the messianic age (Luke 7:22-23).

In Mary’s song (the *Magnificat*), the poor are particularly in view and highlighted:

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him. He has used the power of his arm, he has routed the

arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love – according to the promise he made to our ancestors – of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever” (Luke 1:46-53).

In Luke’s Sermon on the plain, the poor are again given much emphasis as they are blessed and the rich are cursed: Fixing his eyes on his disciples Jesus said:

“How blessed are you who are poor; the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are hungry now: you shall have your fill. Blessed are you who are weeping now: you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on the account of the Son of man” (Luke 6:20-22).

Turning to those who were rich, Jesus said: “But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have plenty to eat now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who are laughing now: you shall mourn and weep” (Luke 6:24-25).

Here, the emphasis is on the contrast between the rich and the poor. It is the poor, the hungry and the sorrowful who are blessed while the rich, those who are well fed and the happy are cursed.

In summary, it has been observed that poverty and oppression are major themes in Scripture. The poor in the Bible appear to be those who are deprived of the basic necessities and those who are socially and politically oppressed. In both the Old and New Testament, it is noted that the “poor” are God’s favourite people. God sides with the poor. He identifies with them (Proverbs 14:31). The poor are God’s special instruments (1 Cor 1:26-29). God lifts up the poor and brings down the mighty (Luke 1:46-53). “The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that God is at work in history casting down the rich and exalting the poor because frequently the rich are wealthy because they have oppressed the poor or have neglected to aid the needy” (Sider 1977:76). Having established

who the poor are in the light of Scriptures the following section, attempts to define the poor according to the vision of the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Who were the poor according to the vision of the founders?

2.4.2 Vision of the founders concerning the Poor

The Spiritan Constitution¹³ begins: "Sent by the Father and consecrated by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ came to save all people. He continues in the world of today this mission of salvation of which the Church is the sacrament. In the midst of God's people, among the numerous and varied vocations which the Holy Spirit inspires, Spiritans are called by the Father and "set apart" (Acts 13:2) to follow Jesus and announce the Good News of the Kingdom" (Constitution 1) As people set apart among many, the Spiritan vocation is basically understood in terms of the mission of Christ:

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

This is the source of the Spiritan vocation. They are "set apart" (Acts 13:2) to follow Jesus and announce the Good News to the poor. This is what prompted both Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann. For Poullart des Places, the poor meant "the poor students in theology." These poor scholars begged for their bread and for their training to become priests. Poullart des Places gathered these poor students and trained them to become missionaries to the poor especially those who were ignored by society.

The vision of Poullart des Places was carried on by Francis Libermann who had an affinity with the poor. For him, the poor were the black people in Africa as well as the slaves in the colonies.

¹³ The Spiritan Constitution is commonly referred to as "the Spiritan Rule of Life." This paper will therefore use the term Spiritan Rule of Life in brief, "SRL."

For him, the black people in Africa were the most wretched and abandoned people of the time. In describing the people in the colonies, Libermann advised his missionaries saying:

“In colonies you will find an immense number of unfortunate people living in dependence on those who treat them horribly. It is the responsibility of the missionary to adopt their cause, to defend them. You will have to lessen the evils under which these unfortunate people are suffering. If circumstances are right, speak forcibly against the oppressors, exposing their injustices, but always with dignity” (Gilbert, A 1990: 78).

In February, 1992, Pope John Paul II crossed over from Dakar, Senegal, to the island of Goree¹⁴ to make a pilgrimage to the slave house. On this island, a place symbolizing the slave trade on the West African coast, the Pope had this to say:

“These men, women and children were victims of shameful trade. How can we forget the sufferings that were inflicted on these people being deported from the African continent, with complete disregard for even their most basic human rights? The sin must be confessed in all humility, a sin of man against man and against God” (Gittins A 2004:11).

In summary, it is noted that for the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, the poor comprised of two groups of people: first, those who were deprived of physical necessities like the poor students whom Poullart des Places decided to help. Secondly, the poor also meant those who were socially and politically oppressed like the slaves. In both terms, the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit aimed at liberating them while on the other hand, not forgetting the spiritual part. Thus, they had an integral approach to mission whereby they looked at the wholeness or totality of a person.

¹⁴ From the beginning of the 16th century, the slave ships began to leave Africa for America. Goree is one of the places on the Atlantic coast of Africa where men, women and children were sold into slavery by the slave traders.

Throughout the centuries, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit has always maintained this founding principle in mission namely the evangelization of the poor. In the Spiritan Constitution, the poor are described as "those who have not yet heard the message of the Gospel or scarcely heard it, those whose needs are the greatest" (Spiritan Constitution 4). In carrying out its mission to the poor, Spiritans take upon themselves the general obligations that the Church is currently stressing in mission theology, namely: "mission understood as preaching the gospel and founding new Churches, mission as service and liberation, mission as dialogue and finally, mission as inculturation of the Gospel message" (SRL No.13.1). In the evangelization of the poor, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, being at the service of the Church, shares the mission of Christ within the Church. They are servants of the local Church. According to Vatican II, a religious, by the very fact of his/her religious consecration, is also consecrated to the apostolate and the service of the Church (Cf. Voilleume Rene, 1970:261).

In recent years, the Congregation has constantly called upon its members "to launch into the deep" (Luke 5:4). Thus members of the Congregation are called upon to new and radical options in their service to the most abandoned. The recent official documents of the Congregation are explicit with regard to the definition of the poor in the present context. These include: the oppressed, disadvantaged, abandoned/excluded, and the voiceless. These official documents further list categories in which we find the poor in the contemporary world today. These include refugees, immigrants/migrants, the homeless, the landless, the unemployed, the victims of ethnic strife and corruption, the youth and women.

From the ministry of the poor students by Poullart des Places to the ministry of slaves by Francis Libermann, members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in various places have to continue to identify the wounds of the society.

2.4.3 A systematic reflection on the Poor: who are the poor?

The situation of poverty can be defined in various ways. This section therefore attempts to define poverty under three different categories.

2.4.3.1 Those who are deprived of physical necessities

The term poverty designates, in the first place, material poverty, that is, the lack of the basic needs like food, water, shelter clothes and other similar things. Pixley and Boff describe the poor as "those who suffer from basic economic need, those who are deprived of the material goods necessary to live with dignity" (Pixley & Boff 1989: 3). Boff too, describes the poor as "those who are dispossessed, deprived and degraded, made unworthy of human life" (Boff 1987: 31). They live in an environment that is dangerous and unsafe. They live in conditions which may cause all kinds of fatal diseases. Among the poor people, the crime rate is very high as people live in boredom, and unemployment. Attempts to survive are made possible by depriving one another of the few material goods available.

2.4.3.2 Those who are socially oppressed

The concept of "the poor" has to be understood in a broader way than simply that of physical deprivation. (cf. Walker D:1990: 63). The impoverishment of the poor comes about as a result of "the forces of a system of domination" (Pixley & Boff 1989: 3). In this sense, the situation of poverty is created by a certain political tension. Poverty does not just come about naturally. Gutierrez says that "a poor person is a product, or by-product of an economic and social system fashioned by a few individuals for their own benefit" (Gutierrez 1981:111). For Pixley and Boff, there are three groups of people who make up the poor today:

"The social-economic poor include those who are unemployed or partly employed, the exploited ('working poor' unjustly treated by the system). Secondly, there are the social cultural poor, groups including blacks, indigenous peoples and women who are oppressed by dominant systems. Thirdly, there are the so called 'new poor' of the industrial societies among which are the handicapped, the suicidal depressed, the old people who are dependent on the state pensions" (Pixley & Boff 1989:8-10).

For Gutierrez, the poor are those who are marginalized by socio – economic and political systems. They are “oppressed, exploited proletariat, robbed of their labour and despoiled of their humanity” (Gutierrez 1984:44-45).

Poverty of the people also includes the lack of political and economic power. Their voices are not listened to. They are relegated to the margins of society without any socio-political status. They lack personal dignity. This is why Comblin states that “poverty is not human. It is inhuman. Of itself, it begets nothing. It destroys” (1990: 169).

2.4.3.3 Spiritual Poverty

Apart from those who are deprived of physical necessities and those who are socially and politically oppressed, there are those whom the bible calls “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3). These are people who are meek and humble in their attitudes. This should not be looked at in a negative way but rather as the right spiritual attitude to God (Samuel and Sugden 1983:133). Because spiritual poverty is an attitude of openness to God, it is a precondition for approaching God (cf Gutierrez 1973: 296-299). Spiritual poverty then, is to be totally at the disposition of the Lord. Thus in Gutierrez view, the poor, who have no wealth, prestige and power to depend on, have no other sustenance than the will of God. As Samuel and Sugden continue to say, “material poverty leads to spiritual humility which is the right basis of our relationship to God” (1983:133). Spiritual poverty is irrespective of economic and social position (Cf. Walker D 1990:103). According to Richard Menatsi, “the spiritually poor are those who engage in active action to eradicate poverty” (1994: 33). He further says that “spiritually poor are those who love and are in solidarity with those who are concretely poor, expressed in the form of sharing with others” (Menatsi 1994: 33). For Gutierrez, this means struggling against human selfishness (cf. Gutierrez 1973: 300).

The contemporary world, which is getting absorbed in material things, is in danger of losing sight of God. This is a kind of poverty whereby people do not recognize God. In the Old Testament, the poor were sometimes seen as those who remained faithful to God. They were ready to God’s will.

The definition of the poor therefore includes three groups of people. The first group is those who are deprived of their basic necessities in life, such as money, shelter, food, education etc. They are materially poor. They lack "economic goods necessary for a human life" (Gutierrez 1988:163). The second group is comprised of those who are socially and politically oppressed. The two founders of the Congregation were involved with the two categories of the poor: the poor students who were deprived of their basic necessities and the slaves who were socially oppressed. The third group are those who are spiritually poor – those who hunger and thirst for God and are ready to do his will.

2.4.4 The South African Context of Poverty

Before 1994 in South Africa, the poor were those who were oppressed and discriminated against. The poor were the victims of apartheid. These were mostly blacks. Steve Biko, in the "Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa", edited by Moore, states that "the poor have always been black" (Biko S 1973: 40). The fact that the poor have always been black, in the case of South Africa, is indicative of a situation designed by others, namely, the dominant white race. It was a structural racism that grouped people to live in certain areas. It was on the basis of race that people would be employed or not. According to Boff, structural poverty is designed so that the poor are always in debt, as he states; "...poor for the people means dependence, debt, exposure, anonymity, contempt, and humiliation" (Boff 1987: 31). During the apartheid regime, the blacks had no social or political value. On this Maimela points out that, "blackness or whiteness carries an enormous economic and socio-political value, each determining one's place in society and what quality of life is open to one" (Maimela 1987: 63). It was on account of race that one could enjoy certain economic privileges in terms of good medical care, educational facilities or live a life of poverty in the townships or homelands. According to Nolan, "Anyone who was not legally classified as white was treated as inferior not only by the individual whites but the whole system...." (Nolan 1985:51).

The political situation of apartheid and discrimination in South Africa ended with the 1994 elections when the new democratic government was ushered in. The system of apartheid marked by oppression and racism was abolished, thereby making people of all races in South Africa into

the “Rainbow Nation”, as Bishop Tutu coined it. In the history of South Africa, this marked a new beginning in the lives of all people.

While the country is liberated, poverty has not yet been overcome. As Zaba Mbanjwa points out, “the collapse of apartheid in South Africa has cleared the ground for all people to discover the other forms of sufferings that might still hold back the progress and attainment of the realistic dream for the nation” (2002:103). The liberation attained in 1994 can best be understood as a privilege and an added responsibility to all South African people as they are called to a unified force, vision and method of all groups in combating the new forms of sufferings and inhuman conditions of the nation (Cf. 2002:103). Mandela in his *‘Long Walk to Freedom’* attests to his new experience of what it means to attain freedom in South Africa when he states:

“I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after the climbing a great hill, one finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom, come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended” (Mandela 1994: 751).

While the country is liberated, it seems that not all people are singing a hymn of praise to the God of liberation and justice. The nation is not yet completely free from injustices, sufferings and dehumanizing conditions. All over South Africa, one finds people who are still struggling in life. In other words, the poor are still present in the society. They have continued to exist and many new forms of the ‘poor’ have emerged. The poor we are referring to may be divided into the following categories, as Mbanjwa observes (2002:103).

2.4.4.1 Social Suffering

Since 1994, South Africa has become a country of refugees for many people both from within Africa and outside. The country has ever since continued to witness an influx of refugees and

asylum seekers who come into the country for various economic and social reasons. Statistics from Refugee Catholic Pastoral Care from the Archdiocese of Durban reveal that every month thousands of people enter the country. These people are mainly from the Great Lakes region; DRC and Rwanda. Recently, thousands of people have been coming from neighboring Zimbabwe. They are running away from the economic crisis in their country. When these people arrive in South Africa, they are traumatized, sick and in need of urgent assistance in the form of food, accommodation, clothing and religious assistance.

Internally, South Africa has been hit by the deadly pandemic of HIV/AIDS which continues to rampage the South African society. HIV/AIDS has for the past twelve years killed thousands of people thereby leaving many children orphaned. Aids orphans, are some of the visible signs of the ravages of this deadly pandemic. The pandemic continues to claim the lives of many people as no cure has yet been found. HIV/AIDS is crippling the nation. Connected to this reality of HIV/AIDS is the tragedy of a number of street children who are seen on many corners of our towns and streets. One may wonder where these children come from. This is a cause of great worry.

All over the country, it is heartbreaking to note that there is a high rate of crime. Many people are killed, raped and abused. Corruption is slowly penetrating into the society. Among the young people, one notices many cases of premarital sex which result in early or teenage pregnancy thereby resulting in school dropouts. Young people embark on adult life with very little enthusiasm and with less hope of a future which to them seems sad and somber (Cf. *Ecclesia in Africa* No. 115). Moreover, since there is no protection, this results into the spread of HIV/AIDS. Connected to this, is the high rate of divorce. This is an epidemic among young couples who are lacking a sense of real commitment to marriage. One cannot deny the fact that the society is, in some senses showing signs of moral decay.

2.4.4.2 Economic Suffering

While the country is trying to fulfill its promise of delivery, it is sad to note that unemployment continues to be a major problem in South Africa. This is resulting in high levels of crime as people are not working and end up using violent means to survive. Many people are still unemployed, idle

and living in unacceptable conditions, in the shacks. It seems that the dream of mass housing has not been fulfilled yet.

The late 1980's and 1990's saw thousands of people in South Africa moving from the rural areas or farms into the cities with the hope of employment. Unfortunately, they did not find what they were looking for.

Another modern South African phenomenon is poverty among 'whites'. This is different from the previous years before 1994, when most whites were relatively well off. However, the situation is slowly changing as poverty is affecting the various sectors of people in South Africa. In whichever town one is, one finds 'whites' who are unemployed and there are even some who are looking after people's vehicles in various centres or towns simply to find means of surviving. Moreover, there are a number of white people who are literally begging on the streets. This clearly indicates a sign of a nation which is experiencing economic difficulties.

2.4.4.3 Psychological Suffering

The impact of apartheid is still being felt among people despite the attainment of liberation in 1994. South Africa as a country has a wounded past that will take time to heal. While the people of South Africa are called by a new name "*a Rainbow Nation*", one still finds some attitudes of discrimination among people. These attitudes may also be seen in the way South Africans look or treat people from other countries (foreigners) who are seeking refuge in the country. If one goes into the public offices, the language and treatment one receives reveal the anger that is in the hearts of a certain section of the population.

Another type of anger among many people is a result of the unfulfilled promises of the government. After the 1994 elections, all people hoped for an economic miracle whereby all would have what they lacked. To their disappointment, the delivery takes time. One million houses cannot be built within a year. The people who are unemployed cannot find employment immediately. All takes time and needs patience. This is affecting those who have been waiting for the government promises to be fulfilled. .

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to provide a description of who the poor are in terms of the Bible, the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and the contemporary situation in South Africa. From the Bible, it has been observed that the poor are those who lack the physical necessities in life and those who are socially and politically oppressed. For the founders of the Congregation, the poor meant those who were materially disadvantaged and those who were socially and politically oppressed like the slaves. In the South African context, the poor are those who are deprived of physical necessities like food, clothes, shelter. In addition to that, there are other categories of poor people which include the refugees and asylum seekers, the victims of HIV /AIDS and crime, women and children who are abused.

The next chapter will seek to give a description of the Spiritan ministries in South Africa. What are their missionary works in the various places where they are assigned to work? Whom do they consider as the "poor" in the contemporary South African situation? How are they involved in bringing hope to many people who are suffering? Or how are they involved in the justice ministry? The responses to these questions will help us to understand what Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses conceive to be their vocation.

Chapter Three

The Spiritan ministries in South Africa

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we have attempted to give a brief historical background of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and a description of the identity of the poor. We have observed that the Congregation of the Holy Spirit was founded for the evangelization of the poor especially those who are most abandoned in society. We have looked also at the concept of the poor in the light of the Scriptures. It has been noted that the poor in the Bible are described as those who lack physical necessities in life, those who are socially and politically oppressed and those who are spiritually poor. Finally, we have also looked at the poor in the context of South Africa. While the country is liberated following the 1994 elections, the poor still remain. These include the HIV/AIDS patients, HIV/AIDS orphans, migrants and refugees, asylum seekers, victims of crime and corruption and those who are unemployed.

This chapter seeks to offer an outline of the Spiritan ministries in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa from 1984 to the present day, 2006. It is an outcome of what was gathered from the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and other people during the time of my interviews.

Twenty-five people were interviewed. Fifteen of them are Spiritans who are working in various places and have different ministries. Each Spiritan had to answer the question "what missionary work are you doing in these places where you are assigned?" The remaining ten are lay people. They are staying or working with Spiritans. They were chosen as independent sources or witnesses to the work done by the Spiritans. Of these ten lay people, five are women.

3.2 Description of the Spiritan Ministries in South Africa

The Spiritan history in South Africa dates back to 1924 when they came and settled in the vicariate of Kroonstad which was later, in 1948, divided into the two dioceses of Kroonstad and Bethlehem. Kroonstad diocese was entrusted to the Dominican Fathers while Bethlehem Diocese was given to the Spiritans. Since then, Spiritans have maintained their presence in the diocese of Bethlehem. Today, there are two Spiritan communities in Bethlehem Diocese namely Vrede Parish (which has been under the Spiritans since 1935) and a formation house at Glen Ash in Bethlehem. In 1978, Spiritans opened two new missions, one in the Diocese of Leribe (Lesotho) and one in the Diocese of Witbank at Lydenburg. However, they pulled out of Leribe after a few years following the shortage of personnel. In 1987, Spiritans accepted the request from the Archdiocese of Durban where they are currently working in four parishes (Wartburg and KwaMpumuza-St Vincent in the Pietermaritzburg area, Chesterville and St. Anthony in Durban). And in Durban itself, Spiritans are also involved in refugee and prison ministries. Other places where Spiritans are working in South Africa include the Dioceses of Dundee (where Spiritans are entrusted with three parishes: Volksrust, Standerton and Pomeroy), Johannesburg (Cartonville Parish) and Kroonstad (Heilbron parish).¹⁵ These two parishes (Carltonville and Heilbron) have been given to the Spiritans this year, 2006. What follows below is an analysis of ministries through which the Spiritans live out their vocation in the contemporary South Africa context.

3.2.1 Parishes

Of the twenty Spiritans in South Africa, twelve of them are working in the parishes.¹⁶ My interviews were conducted among Spiritans working in the following parishes: St. Anthony,

¹⁵ However, this research work covers the Spiritan works within the dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban. We have mentioned the other dioceses ie Kroonstad, Dundee and Johannesburg just to let the readers know some other dioceses where members of the Congregation are working in South Africa.

¹⁶ These parishes include: (1) In Bethlehem Diocese, there is Vrede Parish where two Spiritans are working, viz. : Gerard Steffen (from Germany) and Adrian Herbert (from United States). There is also a house of formation at Glen Ash where there are currently four novices – students preparing themselves to become Spiritans. With them, there are two priests, viz. Amandus Kapele (from Tanzania) and Bernhard Wiederkehr (from Germany) who are assisting these young men in their search for their vocation. In the Archdiocese of Durban there are several parishes where Spiritans are working in the following places: KwaMpumuza –St. Vincent Parish (Pietermaritzburg) with Joseph Nnadi (Nigerian) as parish priest who is also assisting at Esegodini parish as an administrator. Then, there is Wartburg Parish where Heinz Gibis is a parish priest. In Durban, Spiritans are in several places including: St. Anthony Parish with Sean

Chesterville, Wartburg, KwaMpumuza – St. Vincent in the Archdiocese of Durban and Vrede Parish in Bethlehem Diocese. In these parishes, Spiritans are involved in various ministries.

3.2.1.1 Proclamation and teaching

In the parishes, Spiritans are involved in the proclamation of the word of God as well as teaching. This in actual fact, is the first duty of all missionaries wherever they go. They have to preach the Gospel and proclaim the name of Jesus. Fr. Heinz Gibis clearly stated that our work includes proclaiming the word of God as well as teaching people about Christ. He believes that as a religious and priest, his work is to proclaim Christ to the people. Fr. Heinz Gibis highlighted this point when he said:

“We are the proclaimers of the word of God. We are sent to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to the people entrusted to us. Jesus commanded his disciples to “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). As followers of Christ, we have to do the same. We have to proclaim the love of God to people. This is what I am doing everyday. I proclaim the word of God through preaching and through my own way of life.”¹⁷

In addition to proclamation, teaching is another preoccupation among Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban Diocese. In their various places of work, Spiritans are involved in teaching catechesis. On this, Fr. Heinz Gibis said:

Mullin (Ireland) as parish priest, Chesterville where Peter Sodje (Nigerian) is priest in charge. Then there are special ministries: Refugee Ministry with Stan Augustijns as the chaplain and then Prison ministry with Peter Sodje as chaplain and Youth Ministry with Peter Lafferty who is a University Chaplain. In Dundee Diocese, there are three parishes run by Spiritans. There is Standerton Parish with Daniel Abba (Nigerian) as parish priest; Volksrust Parish with Vincent Moba (Zambian) priest in charge; and Pomeroy Parish with Mike Okoro (Nigerian) and Patrick Swary (Sierra Leone) as the priests. Recently, Spiritans have accepted two other missions: Heilbron Parish in Kroonstad Diocese with Michael Klein as Parish Priest (Germany) and Carltonville Parish in Johannesburg Diocese with Conor Kennedy (Ireland) as Parish Priest. Apart from them, there is Laval House which is the administrative centre. There is Fr. Jude Nnorom (Nigerian) and Sylvester Kansimbi (Malawi), and finally, there are two other Spiritans who are assisting the Sisters of St. Paul at Reitz. Their names are: Remo Bonifazi (United States) and Heinz Kuckertz (Germany).

¹⁷ Interview with Fr. Heinz Gibis at Laval House in Pietermaritzburg on 20th July, 2006.

“Our work is to teach people so that their lives be conformed to the life of Christ.... This takes time, but we have to teach people what Christian life entails namely to live the life of Christ.”¹⁸

Fr. Heinz Gibis further sees his vocation as a Spiritan Missionary as trying to teach the people the meaning of freedom which was attained in 1994. He notices that many South Africans, especially the blacks, suffered for a long time under apartheid. And he therefore says that the meaning of freedom would differ from one individual to the next. For some, freedom means “let the government provide us with everything.” In his observation therefore, he believes there is a lot more to be done especially for the ordinary people. For him, he believes that freedom should be understood in terms of responsibility. He further urges other members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to assist people interpreting the meaning of democracy. This is what he sees as his role as both a religious and a priest. He regards the past twelve years in South Africa as the period of learning as he believes that democracy as imported from the West must be integrated somehow into the African system of governance. The failure to do this may easily bring misunderstanding of what democracy is all about. This is an area through which he understands and conceives of his own vocation.

Furthermore, Spiritans in these various parishes are involved in the promotion of the spirit of sodalities. In all the five parishes I visited, there are sodalities like St. Annes, St. Josephs, Vincent de Paul, Sacred Heart and other groups like the youth and altar servers. Among these sodalities and groups, some of them are empowered to be involved in other social activities like taking care of the sick, visiting the elderly and give them Holy Communion.

3.2.1.2 Administration of the Sacraments

After the proclamation of the word of God, people are now in a position to celebrate the sacraments. On daily basis therefore, all the Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses are involved in the administration of the sacraments. Among these sacraments, each Spiritan talked of

¹⁸ Interview with Fr. Heinz Gibis at Laval House in Pietermaritzburg on 20th July, 2006.

the celebration of the Eucharist every day.¹⁹ The Eucharist is celebrated every day in communities both at parish level as well as in small Christian Communities. The celebration of the Eucharist is described by my interviewees as the highest form of celebration. Through this celebration, the Spiritans, together with their communities, commemorate the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a celebration of every member of the parish. Commenting on this celebration of the Eucharist is my lay interviewee, Mr. Erich Ncengani from KwaMpumuza- St Vincent Parish. He said:

“I like the Spiritans for their dedication and commitment to helping the people in our parish. Since I was a boy, I have always known Spiritans working in our parish. They give us mass every Wednesdays and Sundays and are always with us when we are as a community faced with problems like funerals.”²⁰

In addition to the celebration of the Eucharist, Spiritans talked of other sacraments like baptism and anointing of the sick. These are the most often celebrated sacraments according to all fifteen of my interviewees. Apart from the Eucharist which is celebrated almost on daily basis, the sacrament of anointing of the sick seems to be requested by many almost every week. Fr. Peter Sodje of Chesterville Parish talked of this in connection with the pandemic of HIV/AIDS which he said is the cause of many deaths in his parish. Another sacrament which both Fr. Sean Mullin (St. Anthony) and Steffen Gerard (Vrede Parish) talked about is the sacrament of marriage which is celebrated once in a while in their parishes.

3.2.1.3 Visitation

As well as with the administration of the sacraments, there are many other activities with which members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit are involved at parish level. Fr. Joseph Nnadi sheds more light on that as he says:

¹⁹ The “Eucharist” means “thanksgiving. It is a celebration of the Christian community as the people commemorate in the rituals of bread and cup the key events from which their community draws its life, namely the death and resurrection of the Lord (See Moloney, Raymond 1987, Eucharist, in Komonchak J, The New Dictionary of Theology).

²⁰ An interview with Erick Ncengani at St. Vincent Parish – KwaMpumuza in Pietermaritzburg on 27th September, 2006.

“Life in the parish involves a lot of things. It is interacting with people on daily basis. It is not enough to celebrate mass as a priest. One needs to visit people in their homes. One needs to talk to the people outside the administration of the sacraments. Visiting the people’s homes brings you closer to the everyday reality of the people, to their sufferings and problems. One can only see the poverty of people by being in touch with them. In the Church, one is able to see only people who are well dressed and nice looking. When you go into the people’s homes, then you can see people dying of HIV/AIDS, people living in shacks, people who are unemployed, people who need assistance. This is what we are meant to do as priests. This is the picture we get when we read the life of Jesus. He was moving all over, meeting people in their destinies. There, he healed people of their infirmities.....we too need to be available to people and offer ourselves to them just as Christ offered himself for our sake”²¹

In the same line of visitation at parish level, Fr. Heinz Gibis talks of its necessity as he says:

“South Africa has a wounded past: the wounds inflicted by apartheid. Ten to twelve years after the end of apartheid is not enough for us to simply think that everything is fine. Some people who suffered during the apartheid regime with special reference to those whom I minister to in Wartburg have not completely come to terms or reconciled with the past. This is clearly indicated when you talk with some people or Christians in the parish especially those in the outstations. Some still have the anger. Their issues have not completely been resolved. There is still deep rooted hatred and suspicion of each other. I therefore understand my own vocation and see my duty as a priest trying to talk with people in an attempt to break the barriers that separates them. As people who have been marginalized and stay in the remote villages, many of them have never shared their stories of sufferings with any other person. As I talk to them, they feel relaxed and happy. They become open to me and share their joys and

²¹ Interview with Fr. Joseph Nnadi, 27th July, 2006, Laval House in Pietermaritzburg..

sufferings. It is like reconciling them with the past. After this exercise of talking issues of the past with them, they are able even to participate positively in the celebration of the sacraments especially of the Eucharist.”²²

Like Fr. Heinz Gibis and other Spiritans working in the parishes in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban, Fr. Jude Nnorom talks of the need of meeting people as groups or visiting them in their various homes. He points out that:

“Apartheid meant that whites were superior to the black people. The underlying attitude of white oppressors towards the black people has in many cases resulted in an inferiority complex among black people. Many of the black people especially those in the rural areas still have the ‘*baas*’ attitudes towards the whites. With this inferiority complex, many people cannot establish their independence and do something on their own. Instead, they rely on other people and even the government for things they should do themselves.”²³

The role of a religious or missionary, as Fr. Jude Nnorom points out, is to empower the people in the various places where Spiritans are working so that they are able to recognize their potential. People should be helped to be committed and participate in the democratization process. This is where he finds the fulfillment of his vocation to the missionary religious Congregation of the Holy Spirit. He believes many people need to be shown their worthiness as sons and daughters of God. After the 1994 elections, people are supposed to participate in nation building rather than simply waiting for government to provide them with everything. At this time of equality and attempts to create a new nation, it must be acknowledged that the grassroots people should be seen as part of the builders. This is the message carried by some Spiritans in their various places of apostolate more especially those working in the rural areas. In particular, this is what Fr. Heinz Gibis is involved in at Wartburg Parish. He urges the Christians to fully recognize that many of the values of God’s Kingdom which Jesus Christ preached and supported by his actions are at the same time the pillars on which genuine democracy must be founded (Cf. Waligo, John-Mary, 1994: 61). He

²² Interview with Fr. Heinz Gibis at Wartburg, 20th July, 2006.

²³ Interview with Fr. Jude at Laval House, Pietermaritzburg, 28th September, 2006.

therefore sees himself as having a duty to support the values of justice, peace, equality, freedom, nation building, leadership as service.

Another aspect which Spiritans have adopted with regard to visitation is the evangelization of "the families."²⁴ Fr. Sean Mullin of St. Anthony Parish in Durban and Fr. Peter Sodje of Chesterville talk of the need to evangelize the families, as they quoted Pope John Paul II on this point, viz. that, "The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family" (Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, No.173). As a fundamental cell of society, Spiritans have targeted the family as another area in their approach to mission in the various parishes. Fr. Sean Mullin further says that "the evangelization of families is from the pastoral point of view, a real challenge as many families are faced with a challenge of adopting positive values of modernity with the preservation of their own essential cultural values."²⁵ He therefore calls all other members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to seriously reach out to as many families as possible thereby imparting the Christian message based on the Holy Family as the model of all families.

Commenting on other activities pertaining to the priest and all the religious, this is what Fr. Steffen had to say:

"The people to whom we minister need to be followed. It is not enough to simply feed them with the word of God or the sacraments. What is important is the process of journeying together with them. This is what I do myself. I find the value of my priesthood as a religious missionary in meeting people in their homestead. We need to walk alongside with the people..... it is by walking with them that as missionaries, we will realize their problems. Meeting people on Sunday during the celebration of mass is not enough. One needs a continuous solidarity with the people to whom one administers. You know Christ did not only preach and feed the people. He had above all, the concern

²⁴ Ideally, the family is supposed to be a privileged place of witnessing the Gospel, a true domestic Church, a community that believes and evangelizes, a community in dialogue, the first cell of the Christian community and society and a school of Gospel and of social virtues. See Cf. AMECEA Pastoral Department, ed., *The African Synod Comes Home : A Simplified Text*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995, p.16.

²⁵ Interview with Fr. Sean Mullin at St. Anthony Parish in Durban, 28th June, 2006

for them.....I think we need to do more. We need to give to the world the face of Christ who will give our people living with so many problems, some kind of hope.”²⁶

On visitation, lay people who are staying in places where Spiritans are working talked of their own experiences with the Spiritans. For many of them, what is remarkable about Spiritans is their simplicity and down to earth spirituality. One of the refugees in Durban, Theophile Mukambilwa from D.R.C said this when asked about his impression about Spiritans:

“In addition to Fr. Stan Augustijns who is our chaplain of the Refugee Pastoral Care, I have known other Spiritans during your special gatherings and feast days. What impresses me most with all the Spiritans I have met in South Africa is their simplicity.....while with you in all your gatherings, one may not notice the difference between me, as refugee and you as a Spiritan. You raise us up to the status of being Spiritans. This is different from many other people who are afraid of us when they hear of the name “refugees.” We are looked upon by many especially some South Africans, as if we do not have the same dignity as they do.”²⁷

Another lay person Mrs. Mgoza from KwaMpumuza Parish – St. Vincent, talks of the Spiritans as committed religious. She says:

“I have known Spiritans since 1987 when they came to our parish. Since then, many Spiritans have come and worked in our parish. One characteristic I give them as a summary of my personal experience with them is that they are committed priests. They have never given any excuse not to have the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday. They are always there for the celebration of the Eucharist, funerals, unveiling, and visiting us in our homes. If

²⁶ Interview with Fr. Steffen at Jacobs Well on 10th August, 2006.

²⁷ Interview with Theophile Mukambilwa at Laval House in Pietermaritzburg, 25th July, 2006.

one does not go to Church, you will hear that Father was asking for you. For me, you Spiritans love your vocation.”²⁸

Other lay people living in places where Spiritans are working express similar views about Spiritans. Many are attracted by their spirituality and their life of availability to serve the people in the various places of their apostolic works. Their life of solidarity with the poor is in itself the proclamation of the Gospel. Most lay people whom I interviewed acknowledged the fact that the Spiritans' presence among people is seen as a form of witness in itself. On this, one of my interviewees, Lungile Zulu says: “We know that priests are people like any other person. They commit sins and make faults..... and so are the Spiritans. However, one thing that impresses me with Spiritans despite their faults is their dedication, commitment and concern for us. Our priest, Fr. Peter Sodje spends the whole of his life visiting the elderly people, visiting those who are sick and taking them to hospitals. No other rich person can do what he does. He spends what we give him for us. His presence among people every day is in itself a form of evangelization. He preaches on Sunday and visits the people in the course of the week.”²⁹

3.2.1.4 HIV/AIDS Ministry

Following the pandemic of HIV/AIDS³⁰, most of the interviewees expressed their concern over the disease and shared what they are doing in the various parishes. Fr. Jude Nnorom, superior of the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in South Africa said: “this disease is the ‘devil’ of our time. It has crippled our society and continues to hamper human developments. No one can ignore the signs of the times and the current crisis regarding this pandemic in our society.”³¹

In the parishes where members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit are working, a good number of HIV/AIDS patients and orphans are taken care of. Talking of Chesterville Parish in the Archdiocese of Durban, Fr. Peter Sodje had this to say:

²⁸ Interview with Mrs. Mgoza at Kwampumuza –St. Vincent in Pietermaritzburg, 30th June, 2006.

²⁹ Interview with Lungile Zulu at Chesterville, 30th June, 2006.

³⁰ HIV/AIDS dates back to 1959 when the oldest blood sample ever retroactively identified as carrying human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was donated by a dying person in Leopoldville, now Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 1982, Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (Aids) was identified for the first time. See “The Southern Cross, November 22 to November 28, 2006.

³¹ Interview with Fr. Jude Nnorom at Laval House, Pietermaritzburg 28th September, 2006.

“HIV/AIDS is a reality that humanity has to face. People used to deny it some years ago. It is not the case in our days. Let us talk about it. Let us preach about HIV/AIDS in our sermons. Let us break the silence! Let no one think this pandemic is a myth or a mystery. It is mostly through unprotected sex that people get this disease. It is not an African punishment as some people may tend to think. Let us tirelessly commit ourselves as pastors, priests, religious, as whoever is in a position to programmes educating people about HIV/AIDS. Let people, especially those who are married, be faithful to each other and let all people try to abstain.....above all else, let us give hope to those who are infected and affected by this pandemic in various ways. Let us accompany the HIV/AIDS orphans and let us bring hope to them.”³²

Fr. Jude Nnorom considers the HIV/AIDS orphans as among the poorest in the context of the contemporary South Africa. He says that innocent children are deprived of their parents at an early age. Their future is shattered as they have no one to send them to school. He therefore sees his vocation as being called to be on their side and give them hope. He further says that, “we need to preach about the challenges caused by HIV/AIDS namely the orphans. Let people of good will come to their rescue by giving them support...let our Churches and various Christian communities be charitable homes where we can through our little resources share with them.”³³

Fr. Joseph Nnadi of KwaMpumuza-St. Vincent parish had this to say about what is happening in his own parish:

“We are helping a good number of orphans whose parents died of HIV/AIDS related diseases. Our concern is to see that these orphans are able to go to school, have clothes and something to eat”³⁴

³² Interview with Peter Sodje at Chesterville, 4th June, 2006.

³³ Interview with Jude Nnorom at Laval House in Pietermaritzburg on 28th September, 2006.

³⁴ Interview with Fr. Joseph Nnadi at Laval House in Pietermaritzburg, 29th July, 2006.

Joining Fr. Joseph Nnadi in supporting the HIV/AIDS orphans is Fr. Gerard Steffen who is working at Vrede Parish: He said the following:

“HIV/AIDS is the greatest human misery of our time. It is a tragedy to society. Parents are dying –who is to take care of the children? Our youth are infected too. Who will be the leaders of the Church, the government, the society tomorrow? For the past years, my work as a pastor/priest has been burying the dead – not only one, but many. The cause of these deaths is HIV/AIDS. What will humanity do to stop this pandemic? People are dying every day despite so many adverts on the radio, TV and in the newspapers and in the Churches. How can we give hope to the many orphans whose parents have died of this deadly killer? How can we unite our hands together to win this devil?.....what I would say is that is we keep on fighting as soldiers. We should not give in. Let us go on ahead with the fight. God will be on side”

On the point of HIV/AIDS and poverty, Fr. Heinz Gibis working at Wartburg Parish, thirty kilometers away from Pietermaritzburg, said this:

“HIV/AIDS is intertwined with poverty. I have in my parish two communities. The centre community which is mostly white people and the outstations where there are mainly black people. I have buried many people in these outstations whose death was related to HIV/AIDS. Almost every week, there is a funeral and mostly young people are the ones who are dying. Many other young people continue to die. On the side of the white community, while their population is smaller than the black communities in the outstations, there are rare cases of deaths if I compare with the black community. I have no doubt that poverty plays a major role. Even if one is infected, if he/she has good balanced diet, the person will live a bit longer than the one who has no food. The risk of getting HIV/AIDS is more among the poor than those who are relatively well off. Many poor people, especially women, are compelled to make themselves sexually available to men so as to feed themselves and their families. My work therefore,

as you have asked me, is to empower people with various skills especially encouraging the young ones to go to school. If funds are available, let us assist the orphans to go to school.”³⁵

Another challenge brought about by the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the pressure exerted on the grandparents. As the case is, Fr. Heinz Gibis noted that when both parents die, the children are likely to be taken care of by the grandparents who survive on the little pension they receive. And there are cases when the grandparents die as well, the level of poverty among these orphans doubles. He therefore regards this situation as in need of great attention. He sees this as an area of concern that he is currently involved in his parish in Wartburg.

3.2.1.5 Promoting the values of the Kingdom

The mission of the Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses involves human development. Spiritans believe that the Gospel must be presented in its wholeness, as God’s love for human beings as spiritual and physical beings. This is like Christ Himself, whose mission was to relieve and liberate people from their miseries and sufferings. Spiritans believe that their work as missionaries includes promoting the values of the Kingdom of God and liberation. Fr. Steffen expresses the fact that we are living in a world of evil, injustices and corruption. The victims are always the poor people whom we are called to serve as missionaries. As religious therefore, we cannot keep quiet looking at the injustices being done against the poor people. Something has to be done. Having worked as a missionary for over forty years in South Africa, Fr. Gerard Steffen said:

“My experience as a religious missionary has taught me that people will never be happy with whatever Gospel teaching they are preached to when they are still living in shacks and in inhuman conditions and abused. People will always ask whether the God who does provide them with the basic needs is a God who cares. People strive for blessings that allow them to cater for their families in terms of food, water, education.”³⁶

³⁵ Interview with Fr. Heinz Gibis at Laval House in Pietermaritzburg, 20th July, 2006.

³⁶ Interview with Fr. Gerard Steffen at Vrede Parish (Free State), 10th August, 2006.

As a missionary, Fr. Gerard Steffen sees this as an area that needs great attention for those who are called upon to be the disciples of Jesus.

Fr. Heinz Gibis talked of the poor people in terms of those who are victims of violence, abuse of women and children as areas where he gets involved in. To quote him in his own words, he said:

“We cannot keep quiet when women and children are raped.....no one can rejoice over the cases and reports of violence taking place in our country almost every day....this is evil and we have to challenge it. This is what we have to keep on fighting against. We cannot ignore the problems that our people are facing. Then what is Good News if we leave our people to suffer.”³⁷

On the same point, Fr. Jude Nnorom notices the big gap between the rich and the poor in the two Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa. He therefore sees his vocation as both a priest and Spiritan Missionary in trying to let the rich recognize the poverty of the multitudes of people and calls them to share their wealth with the poor. His observation is that there are thousands of people in South Africa who survive on the little pension while a few continue to accumulate an enormous wealth.

On promoting the values of the Kingdom of God, Fr. Joseph Nnadi talks of the abuse and violence against women and children. He describes women in particular as culturally being oppressed and looked at as second best to men. Referring to this he said: “This is a mentality that has been passed from generation to generation, and will take a very long time to remove it from the system. Most African cultures are male dominated. Many decisions are taken by men. Even the leadership roles are only shared among men. This puts women to be on the margin in the society. No matter how learned and successful a woman is, in most African communities including the Zulu communities where some of us are ministering, the place of women will always remain in the kitchen. This means that her role as a mother, wife, cook and caretaker is not open to new opportunities.”³⁸ He

³⁷ Interview with Fr. Heinz Gibis at Laval House, Pietermaritzburg, 20th July, 2006.

³⁸ Interview with Fr. Joseph Nnadi, Laval House, Pietermaritzburg, 29th July, 2006.

therefore sees this as an area which needs evangelization. Quoting from the Book of Genesis, Fr. Joseph Nnadi said: "both men and women were created in the image and likeness of God. It is therefore important that this area of abuse of women should be explored and as religious, we need to preach the message of equality between men and women."³⁹ Fr. Joseph Nnadi conceives his vocation as trying to promote and fight against the abuse of women and children. As Pope John Paul II noted, "there are some customs and practices which deprive women of their rights and the respect due to them" (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 6-8). Yet when reflecting on the status of women in society, one will find out that they not are pillars but the very hope of the society (Cf. Mallya, G 2006: 29). Women in their own quite ways have been able to give much hope to society because of their hidden power that gives them strength to keep going no matter how difficult the task may appear. Most women carry heavy burdens in trying to support and feed their families. They have to look for food, fetch water and take care of the sick. As Father Bernhard points out: "Women are not only our mothers but indeed the heart of the family and have stood for each one as pillars of hope."⁴⁰

From the abuse of women and children, Fr. Peter Sodje talks about the crime rate which is very high in many parts of South Africa. In particular, he referred to his own area of Durban where crime is experienced everyday. In his own understanding, those who are involved in crimes are not from another planet but rather from among the people to whom he ministers. He explains that people are perpetually living in fear as a result of crime. He therefore describes his own vocation in terms of preaching against all sorts of crime.

3.2.1.6 Youth Ministry

Connected to the parish activities is the youth⁴¹ ministry about which almost all of the interviewees talked. In all the five parishes where I conducted my interviews, the youth make up about half or

³⁹ Interview with Fr. Joseph Nnadi, Laval House, Pietermaritzburg, 29th July, 2006.

⁴⁰ Interview with Fr. Bernhard Wiederkehr at Glen Ash- Bethlehem, 10th June, 2006.

⁴¹ The meaning of the word "youth" varies from one situation to another depending on the perspective from which it is being used. In this paper, the concept of "youth" refers to young people who are neither children nor adults but certainly, they are in a stage of transition from childhood into adulthood. This stage of transition covers most of what can be called adolescence or teenage stage of human development. Usually people differ greatly in their understanding of the beginning and end of childhood, adolescence

then fact that the South African milieu of the youth is clad with all the influences that undermine human dignity. There is crime, rape, child abuse, permissiveness, secularism, satanism, unemployment, corruption, illiteracy, abortion, divorce just to mention but few (Cf. Challenge Magazine 50. Oct / Nov (1998: 5). His work therefore involves trying keep the youth away from many social troubles by providing them with recreation opportunities within the parishes. He suggests that the youth be given a home in the Church. In his observation, the youth are crying out for a sense and a place of belonging.⁴³ They need to be helped to recognize that they are part of the Church; they are in search of a Church that will accept them and offer them the warmth of its friendship.

3.2.1.7 Education

Education is an element of the Spiritan charism that is as old as the Congregation of the Holy Spirit itself. Wherever Spiritans are, their mark is seen in their involvement with both formal and informal education. Notable areas where Spiritans are directly and actively involved are: Glen Ash Combined School and Vrede Computer School in the Free State and St. Anthony's in Durban. Commenting on the issue of education, Fr. Andrew Guzik, who is in charge of the computer school in Vrede, said: "as part of empowering and equipping the young people, I decided to open a computer school. I find my vocation being fulfilled as the school offers and challenges them with the modern demands of science and technology. The modern world is in all aspects different from the older generation where there were no computers.....the only way to prepare our young people to cope with the modern challenges is to introduce them to the computer world...without computer knowledge, our young people will certainly remain behind..... I therefore see this school as a little response and contribution to the present challenges which require some knowledge of science and technology."⁴⁴

⁴³ As Mowry notes, looking for "a place" also relates to something bigger. It is the search for oneself in the string of events which makes history. It is the desire for a place where the generation as a whole can affect that history (See: Mowry C.E 1969:29-30).

⁴⁴ Interview with Fr. Andrew Guzik at Glen Ash Farm in Bethlehem, Free State, 3rd October, 2006.

Fr. Sean Mullin, who is in charge of St. Anthony Parish in Durban, is also actively involved in the school which is within the Church premises. Asking him about his involvement with the school, he said this to me:

“This parish is always busy. Apart from the administration of the sacraments, I am always busy offering my services to the school. As a Catholic School, I join them everyday for prayers. Each morning, we gather together at the assembly and after some announcements, I have some prayers thereby marking the beginning of the day....I interact with both the students and the teachers. I stand as a moral leader I see my presence as a priest having a great impact on both the students and the teachers.”⁴⁵

The same occurs in other parishes where Spiritans are working. They get involved in the affairs of any school that is attached to their parishes. In the past, the Spiritan involvement included building schools. A clear example can be seen in the Diocese of Bethlehem where many schools were constructed by the Spiritans. Wherever Spiritans were working, they made sure that they established a school next to the mission or parish.

3.2.2 Specialized Ministries

Apart from parish work, Spiritans are at present also involved in other specialized ministries. They are called ‘specialized’ in a sense that those who are appointed to take these types of ministries should be trained or well prepared for them. Here in South Africa Spiritans are involved in both refugee and prison ministries. Recently, due to the shortage of personnel, they gave up the hostel ministry which they had been running since 1992.

⁴⁵ Interview with Fr. Sean Mullin at Laval House in Pietermaritzburg on 28th June, 2006.

3.2.2.1 Refugee Ministry

Fr. Stan Augustijns shared a brief history of his experience with refugees⁴⁶ and asylum seekers.⁴⁷ He said that on 1st February, 2002, Refugee Pastoral Care (RPC) began in the Archdiocese of Durban. This year, they are celebrating the 5th anniversary. Asking him about his role as the chaplain of the Refugee Pastoral Care in this Archdiocese, he had this to say: "Our Refugee Pastoral Care is a pastoral ministry of festivity and tribute to refugees and asylum seekers. This apostolate is expressed in a hundred different ways and extends to them encouragement, support and respect so that they can see the world with eyes of God's love instead of hate and fear." Fr. Stan Augustijns continues to say that both refugees and asylum seekers fled their own home countries, leaving behind them their parents, families, relatives and all worldly possessions. They set off from their own countries in complete darkness, completely blind, not knowing where to go...this is why the Refugee Pastoral Care's ministerial target is oriented to the religious and human dignity of refugees and asylum seekers in the sense of healing, not only of the body but especially of the spirit, through a pastoral of healing of memories, reconciliation and forgiveness and peace building in the refugee and asylum communities. Other activities in which he partakes include; visiting the refugees where they have been accommodated within Durban and celebrating the Eucharist every Sunday at Emmanuel Cathedral in Durban. On some other occasions, they have their own Eucharistic celebrations in their own languages.

Furthermore, Fr. Stan Augustijns involved, together with his team in welcoming new arrivals (refugees and asylum seekers); he helps them to get papers at the Department of Home Affairs. They are further assisted to learn English as most of them have a French background. More aid is offered especially for health care and in case of death, some provision is made for burial. They are

⁴⁶ According to the mandate of the United Nations High Commission for Refugee, a refugee is defined as: "Any person who owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and unable or, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear or for reasons other than personal convenience, is unwilling to return to it" See (United Nations High Commission for Refugee, Information Paper, Geneva: UNHCR, 1989, p. 4).

⁴⁷ The greatest number of refugee and asylum seekers come from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia, Angola, Burundi, Congo (Brazzaville), and Rwanda. Over the last year, the number of Zimbabweans seeking protection in South Africa has grown dramatically to approximately 20,000. According to Refugee Pastoral Care in Durban, in the year 2005, there were 29,714 refugees and 140,095 asylum seekers in South Africa. See Kwethu, Refugee Pastoral Care, No 20- January 2007.

further assisted to be integrated into the local communities and the Church. Since some of the countries where these refugees come from are now free from wars, refugees are encouraged to go back to their own countries. Fr. Stan Augustijns describes it as part of his work to make sure that they are prepared for their return to their own countries of origin as soon as conditions permit it.

These are some of the works that Fr. Stan Augustijns does as a chaplain for refugees and asylum seekers in the Archdiocese of Durban. In brief, his work includes receiving them when they come from their own countries, providing them with all the necessities as they are in the country of refugee and finally, to prepare them for their return, if the conditions are suitable for them to go back.

3.2.2.2 Prison Ministry

Fr. Peter Sodje has ministered as a chaplain⁴⁸ in the large prison of Westville⁴⁹ in Durban, South Africa, since May 2003. He describes some of the daily difficulties and issues he faces and shares some of his personal struggles as he tries to construct for himself a meaning and spirituality of his mission and ministry.

The Westville Correctional Centre is located in the Southern part of the city of Durban. There are about 13,000 inmates, mainly from KwaZulu-Natal.⁵⁰ There are also people from different countries serving various sentences, as it is the third largest prison in the country. It has five large wings (including a young offenders and female prisoner⁵¹ area) and each is divided into about six sections.

Fr. Peter Sodje's work includes visiting all the five wings of the prison once a week and he celebrates the sacrament of the Eucharist especially with the Catholic community. He offers some catechetical instructions to them as well as administering other sacraments like Reconciliation and

⁴⁸ Apart from Fr. Peter Sodje who is a Catholic chaplain, there are other chaplaincies or spiritual leaders at Westville Correctional Centre. The total number of all the Spiritual leaders comes up to 122. They belong to various religious denominations.

⁴⁹ This ministry was formerly administered by the Religious Congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate before it was taken over by the Spiritans. This request was made to the Spiritans in 1999.

⁵⁰ Interview with Fr. Peter Sodje, Chesterville Parish, 4th June, 2006.

⁵¹ Of the 13,000 inmates in Westville Correctional Centre, about 600 are women prisoners.

Anointing of the sick. Last year, about 15 inmates were baptized in a colourful ceremony which was presided over by Cardinal Wilfred Napier. Fr. Peter Sodje describes this as true religious freedom where people are allowed to practice their religion while in the prison. While in prison, Fr. Peter Sodje says that they are not allowed to use candles for any religious activities as it is considered dangerous. For him, prison ministry is considered as an area of first evangelization as many of the inmates are not baptized.

He regards this as a true Christian ministry, as many of the inmates are hopeless and rejected. Some of them have lost a sense of life. He further describes this ministry as challenging as he meets people who are traumatized and frustrated. They find no meaning in life. He regards them as being innocent and needing the justice system to prove their innocence. Unfortunately, some die in the process and their cases are never heard. Overcrowding is another serious area of concern. The effectiveness of the justice system could drastically reduce overcrowding in the jails.

Another challenge that Fr. Peter Sodje talks of is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the inmates at Westville Correctional Centre. The majority of the inmates who are admitted to the prison hospital have HIV/AIDS related illnesses. He presumes this is partly due to gangsterism, infighting and rape, all which are common in the prison situation.

Fr. Peter Sodje sees his vocation as one of bringing hope and encouragement to prisoners, telling them that prison life or having HIV/AIDS is not the end of life. It does not mean that God has rejected them or has abandoned them. This prisoners' state of helplessness has led many inmates, once released, to offend again and so they are brought back behind bars. Fr. Peter Sodje suspects that many re-offend as they find prison a second home, if not a first home. Some of them are orphans and others have been rejected by their own families and communities. One of his major concerns is to reduce or totally eliminate the temptation to re-offend.

Fr. Sodje talks of another simple but powerful means of proclaiming the Good News to the inmates in prisons. That is 'presence.' His experience in working as a prison chaplain has revealed that his presence says a lot to many other inmates. Walking among the inmates is in itself a powerful

means of proclaiming the Gospel. Prisoners feel cared for if they are visited especially by ministers of the Church.

3.2.2.3 Hostel Ministry

Under 'specialized ministries' is hostel ministry in Durban, which the Spiritans accepted after the Archdiocese of Durban asked for personnel from the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to run the project. Accommodated in these hostels are the African workers, migrants who were originally working on the white owned farms. These people moved into the cities with the hope of finding employment. This is part of the whole move of urbanization where people flock to the cities. The government constructed these hostels in order to accommodate them. Some notable hostels include KwaDabeka, KwaMashu and Wema in Lamontville. In these hostels, no one is allowed to stay with his family. It is a place for men. In one small room, one finds even ten or more people sharing a single room. Most of the hostel dwellers are not employed and are therefore involved in much unruly behaviour. They are involved in drugs and many other criminal activities.

Fr. Bernhard, who once worked in these hostels, describes the situation of the hostel dwellers as below an imaginable level of a living standard.⁵² While they were trying to organize them into various groups in order to meet them, the best apostolic work he offered the hostel dwellers was his 'presence' amongst them. Fr. Bernhard's apostolate included visiting them in their own blocks and wherever it was possible, he organized a general sharing with them.⁵³ Through such sharing, he found ways to assist them.

Due to shortage of personnel, the Spiritans are no longer involved in this ministry.

3.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have attempted to outline some specific ministries of the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa. It has

⁵² Interview with Fr. Bernhard Wiederkehr, Bethlehem (Free State), 10th June, 2006.

⁵³ Interview with Fr. Bernhard Wiederkehr, Bethlehem, (Free State), 10th June, 2006

been noted that Spiritans are involved in various apostolic works mainly in the parishes though a few of them are involved in other ministries. At parish level, Spiritans are involved in the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. They are further involved in youth work, peace and justice ministry and HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. Apart from these parish activities, some Spiritans are also involved in other specialized works like refugee and prison ministries. Through these various ministries, Spiritans are attempting to live their own vocation in terms of the original vision of the founders while responding to the contemporary challenges in South Africa.

Having established the missions and ministries of Spiritans in South Africa, the next chapter will seek to evaluate the Spiritan missionary praxis as perceived by the members of the Congregation in South Africa. The question we are trying to answer is ‘how do they understand or conceive their Spiritan vocation or mission today?’”

CHAPTER FOUR

An evaluation of the missionary praxis as perceived by the members of the Congregation

4.1 Introduction

In chapter three, we attempted to outline the Spiritan missions and ministries in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa. In the Diocese of Bethlehem, the Spiritans have one parish at Vrede in the Free State. More Spiritan missions are found in the Archdiocese of Durban where they have four parishes namely: St. Anthony and Chesterville in Durban and Wartburg and KwaMpumuza St. Vincent in the Pietermaritzburg area.

In these parishes, Spiritans proclaim the Good News and administer the sacraments. In addition to that, they are also involved in other activities like youth work, HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, peace and justice ministry. It has been noted again that Spiritans are further involved in refugee and prison ministries in the Archdiocese of Durban.

This chapter will seek to evaluate the missionary praxis as perceived by the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in South Africa against the background of their religious vocation, including prayer, community life and missionary spirituality. What are they saying about how they perceive and understand their vocation in the contemporary South Africa? How do they understand their own vocation in terms of the original vision of the founders and in terms of the present day context of South Africa where they work? How do the Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses understand and interpret the 'poor' whom they serve?

In this evaluation of the Spiritan missionary praxis as perceived by the members of the Congregation in the two dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban, the criteria are the vision and constitution of the Spiritans where their mission is described as "the evangelization of the poor."

In the Constitution, it is said that Spiritans give preference to groups of people and individuals who have not yet heard the message of the Gospel or who have scarcely heard it, to those who are oppressed and whose needs are the greatest and finally, the Congregation willingly accepts mission for which the Church has difficulty in finding workers (SRL, No.12).

In the recent Spiritan documents, the poor include the oppressed, disadvantaged, abandoned, the voiceless and the weak. The categories of the poor include the youth, landless, unemployed, refugees, women, victims of corruption and ethnic strife, immigrants and migrants and the homeless.

4.2 Parish work

Our statistics reveal that more Spiritans are working in parishes than in other ministries in South Africa. In the Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses together, Spiritans have five parishes. Another five parishes which are not covered in this work, are found in other dioceses like Dundee where the Spiritans minister in three parishes namely: Standerton, Pomeroy and Volksrust. In Kroonstad Diocese, the Spiritans have one parish at Heilbron. And in Johannesburg diocese, the Spiritans serve at Carletonville.

Spiritans working in these parishes see their work as being in line with the constitution and vision of the founders. The founders of the Congregation wanted its members to evangelize the poor and to prefer the meanest and least attractive ministries for which the Church has difficulties in finding workers (Cf. SRL No.12). However, the founders did not ignore the parish apostolate within France and outside as long as the aim of the Congregation namely "serving the poor" would be maintained. Within a parish set up, Spiritans are called to foster Christian communities and to train a committed and responsible laity, engaging in social and educational work in line with the Spiritan calling (Cf. SRL No.18). They consider, as well, the youth apostolate, as the present situation of young people is crying out more than ever for social and educational works (SRL No.18.1). This is what Spiritans are trying to do in these five parishes where they are involved, not only in the administration of the sacraments but other social activities as well.

In these parishes, Spiritans see their vocation as a response to God to bring Good News to the poor and marginalized.⁵⁴ More responses from the interviewees reveal again that their vocation is to concentrate on being at the service of the local Church. The Spiritan Constitution emphasizes this point as it states: “any particular work is taken on in communion with the Church as it is in our time. The responsibility of carrying on Christ’s mission belongs in each place to the local Church” (Cf. SRL, No.13).

4.2.1 Proclamation and teaching

In *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II writes that “proclamation is the permanent priority of mission” (RM No. 44). It is an essential aspect for all missionaries wherever they are sent for mission. Since the understanding of mission is to be on the frontier situations, it is therefore imperative that their first duty is to make Christ known among people. This cannot be avoided as the word of God has to be proclaimed before people come to be baptized. First evangelization which is at the heart of Spiritan mission goes along with the proclamation of the word. It is therefore the duty of all Spiritans to proclaim the word of God to the people to whom they are sent. Proclamation leads to *metanoia* and baptism. From this stage comes the establishment of Christian Communities which are a “sign of the presence of God in the world” (*Ad Gentes*, No. 15).

From observation, Spiritans are involved in preaching and teaching in their various places of work. This is the main pre-occupation on each day they celebrate the Eucharist with their communities. Another form of proclamation is their continuous presence among people.

The Spiritans who were interviewed see this ministry as one of their main tasks. The interviewed lay people witnessed to the availability and commitment of the Spiritans in South Africa on the level of proclamation and teaching.

4.2.2 Administration of the Sacraments

Since many of the Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses are working in parishes, the administration of the sacraments is their main preoccupation. They have to administer the

⁵⁴ Interview with Jude Nnorom at Laval House in Pietermaritzburg, 28th September, 2006.

sacraments. This cannot be avoided as long as one works in the parish. After the sacrament of baptism, people have to continuously receive the sacrament of the Eucharist for their nourishment. The celebration of the Eucharist is therefore offered on a daily basis. This is so because the Eucharist is the centre of the Church's life (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1343). Another sacrament is the sacrament of the Anointing of the sick. In the five parishes where interviews were conducted, these sacraments are seen to be given on a regular basis, just as baptism which is done on a regular basis as well.

All interviewed Spiritans see the administration of the sacraments as an essential part of their ministry. The lay people that were interviewed praised the Spiritans for the frequency and manner in which the sacraments are administered.

4.2.3 Visitation

In order to be accepted into the life and culture of the people, Spiritans are encouraged to visit people in their homes. This is where a missionary comes to know the reality of the life of the people. Different from meeting people at the Church or in the office, the interaction with people in their own homes opens to one, in this case a missionary, the problems the people face, the food and their everyday life. Through home visits, it has been noted that Spiritans have come to know the people's unfinished business and the wounds of the past, the apartheid. Twelve years after the end of apartheid, it is amazing that there are people who have never shared their stories or pains of the past. Visiting and talking to them has been observed as an eye opener where people reconcile themselves with the past. This has been an effective means of evangelization. This is why in the 2003 District Chapter for Spiritans in South Africa, (Article 3.2.1) it was encouraged that individual Spiritans should avail themselves to make home visits.

4.2. 4 HIV/AIDS

Spiritan ministry to HIV/AIDS is part of the Spiritan mission today. HIV/AIDS is a pandemic that cannot be ignored. It is a modern crisis that needs special attention. It is interlinked with many issues such as poverty, unemployment, crime and disintegration of family values. Orobator, in his

book, "From Crisis to *Kairos*" describes HIV/AIDS as one of the burning issues at the present moment, of the continent's traumatized political and socio-economic history (Orobator, 2005: 18). It has therefore to be taken seriously. As HIV/AIDS a disease that is crippling our nation, Spiritans have taken this ministry as one of THEIR priorities in the approach to mission. In the South African District Chapter which was held in 2003, the issue of HIV/AIDS was high on the agenda. The Chapter noted that, "we cannot ignore the signs of THE times and the current crisis regarding the HIV/AIDS pandemic in our society."⁵⁵ A plea was made for the Spiritans as pastors to take the issue of addressing this pandemic seriously and try to spread the message of the dangers of this disease, in the various parishes and places where Spiritans are working. The same effort should be seen in taking care of the HIV/AIDS patients and orphans. As one of the areas of priorities, the Congregation makes sure that all those who are involved in this challenging ministry are encouraged and supported.

4.2.5 Mission as promoting the values of the Kingdom and Liberation

Spiritans in both Durban and Bethlehem Diocese involve themselves in promoting the values of the Kingdom and liberation. For them, mission involves not only the proclamation of the word but rather an integral human development. As Pope John Paul II puts it: "At the heart of evangelization is the development of every person and of the whole person, especially of the poorest and most neglected in the community" (Ecclesia in Africa No. 68). Human development and liberation cannot be separated from evangelization. This is, in actual fact, the mission of Christ as seen from his manifesto at the beginning of his public ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because 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 favour from the Lord" (Luke 4:18).

This is the definition of Jesus' mission which formed the vision of the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Jesus came to relieve and liberate humankind from all kinds of

⁵⁵ South African District Chapter, 2003 Glen Ash –Bethlehem, No. 1.

miseries: poverty, captivity and oppression. Jesus' entire ministry is marked by the concern he showed to all those around him who were affected by suffering namely, persons who were mourning, the paralytics, the lepers, the mute, the blind and the deaf (Cf Matth 8:17). In her evangelizing mission, the Church cannot ignore the problems "concerning peace and justice, liberation and development in the world" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 31). God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of liberty, justice, solidarity and total liberation of humankind. This integral mission now belongs to the Church.

For Spiritans, promoting the values of the Kingdom, liberation or rather Justice and Peace is an essential dimension for their mission. It is a criterion for choosing the work they do. Spiritans' affinity with the poor makes them to be sensitive to their situation. But something more than sensitivity is needed. Of the three who came upon the battered stranger on the road to Jericho, only one was moved with compassion and went into action (Luke 10: 29-37). In this way, Spiritans believe more in the practical acts than in simple theories. In this, Jesus is the best example. He was a practical man. He did not only preach the Gospel by words, but also fed the people when they were hungry and needed something to eat. The Spiritan founders, both Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann are an encouragement for all members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. For them, it was not enough to feel sorry for the poor students who could not pay their school fees or the slaves who were mistreated in the colonies. Both sought ways of doing something so as to alleviate the situation. Poullart des Places had to find lodging for these poor students and pay their school fees. Francis Libermann had to defend the slaves from abuse by their masters. This is what working for peace and justice may entail. It calls us to love Jesus, present in the poor (Matth 25:40) and this love is to be expressed in concrete deeds, (1 John 3:18) through humble service to one another based on Christ's example (John 13-16).

The Spiritans' various works like, their involvement in peace and justice ministry, education, promoting the values and dignity of women and children and many other parish social works manifests their seriousness about promoting the values of the Kingdom of God and liberation. However, more effort should be given to promoting the rights of women.

4.2.6 Youth Ministry

Many Spiritans expressed the view that they see the coming years witnessing a dynamic emphasis within the Congregation on work with the youth and the young adults.⁵⁶ This imperative has taken on an intensified, concrete focus in the two dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban and even in the entire South Africa. Spiritans have noticed that it is quickly becoming a mandate that more of their work be specifically for and with young people. They have to be involved in many activities of social justice and attempt to share a common life with them and offer them a spirituality that will help them to be focused and be responsible citizens. As Pope John Paul II says, "the culture of the youth has not yet been influenced by the Gospel" (RM, No.34. Hence, the youth are still searching for a home in the Church. On this, Bellagamba refers to them as having the right to know God and what He has done for them and for all in Christ (Cf. Bellagamba, A 1993: 29-30).

What best describes the background to the problem of the youth's search for a home in the Church is they (the youth) hail from a society that needs "a campaign of moral regeneration."⁵⁷ In the five parishes where this research was conducted, many young people are actually growing up in a single parent homes and many others growing up as orphans. In these parishes, Spiritans expressed the concern that many young people do not come from healthy family structures that offers a very good atmosphere for raising children. This noble structure of socialization is menaced by so many woes that include divorce and separation, children born out of wedlock and by the rampant death due to endemics and pandemics such as HIV/AIDS. Seoka, an Anglican Bishop in South Africa, lists other woes confronting the family structures, namely, migratory labour, the influence of western culture with its materialism, individualism and violence as depicted on the television and in the movies.⁵⁸ The youth therefore needs special pastoral care in each place. As Pope John Paul II pointed out in message for the Fourth World Youth Day, "the youth are hungry for the truth about God and man, about life and the world" (AFER Vol. 31 Nos. 4 1989:56). It is this hunger for

⁵⁶ In the encyclical on the Mission of the Church, *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II includes the young in the list of priority issues of mission *Ad Gentes*. Mission to the youth of this "New worlds and new social phenomenon" (RM, No. 37b) is being carried out in a "complex and changing reality" (RM, No. 32) and there are enough signs suggesting that the youth lack Christian Communities that are sufficiently mature to help them live their potential.

⁵⁷ Nelson Mandela, quoted in *South African Christian Handbook: 1999 to 2000*. ed. By Marjorie Froise, published in South Africa by Christian Info, 1999, p.20.

⁵⁸ Challenge Magazine 50. October / November. (1998), p.5.

the truth about God and about man that makes the youth feel homeless in the Church because their "hearts remain restless until they find rest in God" (St. Augustine). In this present situation the youth is crying out for formation, for education and for social work among them. In order to form these young men and women for future ministries, not only in the Church but also in the society, the Spiritans regard the youth as those whose needs are the greatest and, who therefore need great attention. Parishes should organize and create some activities for the youth so that they are not idle especially during holidays. The parishes should act as homes for the youth when they are not in school. This is what the recent meetings of Spiritans in South Africa suggested, namely, to create space for the youth in their various parishes.

4.2.7 Education

From the beginning of its foundation the Spiritans have always been involved in education. They have always taken education as a powerful tool for evangelization. In 1703, Poullart des Places established a house in Paris for the education of the poor seminarians and laid the cornerstone of what eventually became the *Congregation of the Holy Spirit*. In the following century, the Congregation was heavily oriented to grassroots missionary work but its interest in education continued. Francis Libermann insisted that to abandon schools is to destroy the future of mission. During the nineteenth century, education became an important instrument of evangelization in many places where Spiritans were working.

In South Africa where Spiritans arrived in 1924, education has always been part of their approach to mission. In the diocese of Bethlehem, wherever Spiritans established a mission, next to it was a school. This has always been a Spiritan approach in their work of evangelization. For Spiritans, education enables the students to recognize and respond to their vocation to be involved in the world and to be concerned for others. The first group of Spiritans in South Africa always encouraged parents to send their children to school.

At the 1998 General Chapter at Maynooth, it was stated that "both formal and informal education is not something on the margins of the Spiritan mission of evangelization" (Maynooth General Chapter No.1.3). Giving priority to education is based on the conviction that appropriate education

helps brings freedom to the poor people and promotes their dignity. Education becomes a powerful force for the transformation of attitudes and for promoting many social changes in the society (Cf. Spiritan Missionary News, Volume 28, No.1 February 2004).

A few Spiritans in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban are involved with education but at a very low key. Fr. Sean Mullin of St. Anthony Parish tries to be involved in the education programme of the school attached to the parish. Many of my interviewees expressed this need to revisit the education programme at all levels. Fr. Michael Klein insisted on education as he repeated the words of Francis Libermann that "to abandon the schools is to destroy the future of mission." He therefore calls all other Spiritans to consider the aspect of education in their various places of mission. He believes that education is a powerful tool to fight against poverty. For him, to be a Spiritan is to get involved in education as emphasized by the founders. He calls all Spiritans to get involved with education at various levels beginning at Creche level. He cited the two creches he constructed at Matwabeng in Senekal (Free State) and Mantse in Rosendal.

Fr. Lawrence Alabi sees a great link between the Spiritans and education. As the founders and predecessors of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit emphasized education, so too, the present group needs to invest in both formal and informal education. Education should be seen as a tool for evangelization. In other words, the Spiritan vocation cannot be separated from the idea of school.

The present group of Spiritans in both the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban is seemingly not very keen on the whole idea of education. In the light of the Spiritan documents and the situation of the poor in South Africa, this ministry should be revisited.

4.3 Specialized Ministries

4.3.1 Refugees

One of the most bitter fruits of wars and economic hardships is the sad phenomenon of refugees and displaced persons (Cf. Ecclesia in Africa, No. 109). Civil wars and the situation of instability in some African countries like Rwanda, Burundi, DRC Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe have

generated a great number of refugees who are flocking down to South Africa. Writing to the Bishops of Africa, Pope John Paul II made a pressing appeal that these people (refugees) be given material help and offered pastoral support wherever they may be, whether in Africa or on other continents (Ecclesia in Africa No. 119). Having acknowledged the increasing number of refugees in South Africa and in the Durban area in particular, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit did not hesitate to accept the request to take up the refugee ministry in Durban.

The Spiritans accepted this ministry as it is regarded as one of the priorities in the Congregation. The Spiritan Rule of Life states clearly that: "We consider work with the refugees, and immigrants as important tasks for our times" (SRL 18.1). Refugee ministry is one of the ministries very much emphasized in the recent documents of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. The Spiritan love of refugees and displaced people dates back to Francis Libermann, who himself experienced what it meant to be excluded from one's homeland. He was once rejected by his own family when he converted to Christianity after abandoning his religion. He was rejected again when he wanted to become a priest following the onset of epilepsy. All these events made Francis Libermann feel insecure. This is a mark of the poor of all time namely, insecurity. The refugees feel insecure whenever they are in a foreign land. Fr. Stan Augustjins describes his presence among refugees as ministry in itself. They feel cared for and loved. All that he asks is for the Congregation to consider more people in this special ministry. He sees refugee ministry as a real response to God to bring God's Good News, love and mercy. He conceives his vocation as a gift of empowering the poor/refugees so that they see the world with an eye of love rather than hatred.

His plea for more personnel is in line with the previous chapter in 1998 held in Maynooth where it was stated that: "the plight of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people is one of the signs of the times most clearly crying out for pastoral response" (Maynooth 1998: 39).

4.3.2 Prison Ministry

This ministry is befitting for Spiritans as it is at the core of the Spiritan life and mission as outlined in the Spiritan Constitution No.4. It is in line with the vision of the founders who opted to work for people who are rejected just as in the case of the slaves for whom Francis Libermann advocated,

by fighting for their rights. The Spiritan Documents are in support of this type of apostolate as prison ministry is counted as among the most urgent areas where great attention should be given. Currently, Fr. Peter Sodje who is a chaplain, holds another ministry of parish work. He is a parish Priest of Chesterville Parish. With the demand of parish work at Chesterville, his availability as the prison chaplain seems to have been affected. The two responsibilities should be shared by two people rather than be taken by one person.

4.3.3 Hostel Ministry

Hostel ministry is another challenging apostolate but suitable for Spiritans. It is a type of ministry for which the Church has difficulties in finding workers. Not many people would wish to work in such a challenging situation which is hostile and unstable. In addition to that, most hostel dwellers are notable for taking drugs. Hostel ministry is a newly felt needs and reflects the challenges of modernization. It is a kind of work which needs an urgent attention both by the Church and the government. For the past years years, this apostolate has been the priority for the members of the Congregation in South Africa. It is sad that currently, there is no personnel for the work. Despite its challenges, the work is appropriate for Spiritans and urgent review should be done to resume this apostolate.

4.4 Other relevant aspects of the Spiritan Religious Vocation

On two occasions in Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, missionaries are invited to "always meditate on the response demanded by the gift they have received", the charism of their missionary vocation. It is by going back to that original moment that missionaries can discover the richness of the spirituality. On this point, Pope John Paul II in his message to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit on its 300th anniversary, had this to say, "Cast out into the deep. Be faithful to the heritage that you have received from your founders: dedication to the poor, the missionary apostolate, community life and commitment to prayer"⁵⁹ The Spiritan documents continue to

⁵⁹ Pope John Paul II's Letter to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit on the anniversary of 300 years, Vatican, May 26th, 2003.

emphasize these points, as the identity of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit depends on being rooted in the elements that follow.

4.4.1 Practical Union with God

Union with God, personal holiness, and the witness of Christian living are according to Reilly, essential elements for a missionary (Reilly M 1978: 120). According to him, all missionaries must be men / women of an outstanding holiness. For Francis Libermann, those who are sent must be holy. Their holiness is integral to their mission. For him, personal holiness and union with God are necessary for mission spirituality. A missionary must be able to speak out of a deep personal encounter with God, an encounter that has already given him/her a totally new orientation in daily life (Cf. Tangaza Occasional Papers /No.1:66). The authority of the missionary is his/her relationship with God. In instructing his missionaries therefore, Fr. Francis Libermann always emphasized the sanctity and the gift of self as the basic elements of spirituality. All the Spiritan missionaries will have to remain united with Christ. He called this "practical union." There were two ways to achieve this practical union: through personal prayer and community prayer. With Spiritans staying on their own, the aspect of community prayer is affected. No one can be judged with regard to individual or private prayers. However, the significance of community prayers is essential for Spiritans. Citing Jesus as the model, Francis Libermann emphasized the point that when Jesus prayed, he was giving an expression to his union with the Father who sent him and with the Holy Spirit who consecrated him. A Spiritan is one who finds strength in God who sent him on mission and his spirituality is based on a life of prayer and apostolic service. It is about contemplation and action.

In addition to sanctity, the founders talked of the gift of self as another characteristic of his missionaries. For them, the gift of self was expressed in a special way when Spiritans commit themselves to a life of the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. Both Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann believed that when these three vows are lived with joy and in authenticity, they free the missionaries to serve God and others in a more radical way.

4.4.2 Community Life

According to the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, community life is the founding principle for mission. It is an essential element in the Spiritan way of life. In the Spiritan Constitution, "community life is a privileged means of practicing the evangelical counsels in the service of the Good News" (Constitution No.28). Both the two founders referred to the community of Jesus with his disciples as the prototype of all religious communities. Jesus began the announcement of the Kingdom of God with the creation of a community. In this community, the values of the Kingdom, fraternity, mission, sharing and prayer, were already experienced.

In general, the observations and interviews which were conducted show a lack of community life among the Spiritans living and working in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa. From the five parishes where interviews were carried out, only in two parishes do Spiritans stay in community. Despite the fact that a lack of personnel contributes to this, it must be pointed out that this is against the Spiritan way of life whereby community life is essential for mission. This somehow affects the prayer life of the Spiritans. As the 2004 General Chapter of *Torre d'Aguilha* in Portugal put it, "mission without community does not communicate a credible Church" (*Torre d'Aguilha* 2004, No. 1.1.4, p.35). The Spiritan way of being a missionary is simply implanted in community life where members are obliged to listen to other people's ideas and perspectives. The source for the belief in working and living in community is based on the most Blessed Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three are always in communion with each other. Spiritan life is modeled upon this. Secondly, it is based on the community of the apostles of Jesus. From the very beginning of Jesus' mission, it is observed that community is an essential element. The apostles of Jesus were to work in community. Community is where the experience of faith is shared and celebrated. Francis Libermann spent the last two years before he died trying to save the life of the community. Francis Libermann believed that it is in community where life animated by the Spirit is revealed to the world. It is where God is experienced. For him, community life is an entrance door for mission.

4.4.3 Missionary Spirituality

According to Vatican II and the post Vatican II documents a missionary is defined as one who is called and sent with the intention of naming Jesus where he has not been named, preaching the Gospel and the Kingdom where they have not been preached, and gathering the community of the Church where this has not been done. A missionary is a frontier person who has a definite intention of proclaiming Jesus and his Kingdom among people who do not know him. Missionary 'spirituality'⁶⁰ is the lifestyle of those called and sent on mission to share Christ with others who do not believe or fully accept him. A missionary is further defined by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* as the one who lives in intimate communion with Christ (Cf. RM 88). According to Bosch, a missionary is someone who is sent from his/her native land to bring knowledge of the faith to people who have not yet heard of it (Cf. Bosch 1991: 1). The specific end of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit is missionary activity among peoples and groups whose "material and spiritual"⁶¹ needs are the greatest and who are most neglected, a service for which the Church has difficulty in finding apostolic workers.⁶² The Spiritan spirituality is actually missionary. To be a Spiritan is to show readiness to be sent and to "renounce himself and everything and make himself everything to everyone."⁶³ This is where the vow of poverty comes in place. It sets one to be free for the Gospel, overcoming attachment to the people and things about him, so that he may become a brother to those whom he is sent and thus bring them Christ the Saviour (Cf. RM, 88). The missionary orientation of Poullart des Places (1679-1709) was taken up by Francis Libermann⁶⁴ (1802-1852). When the Congregation of the Holy Spirit was

⁶⁰ According to the *New Dictionary of Spirituality*, the term 'spirituality' derived from Latin "Spiritualitas" relates to the life of the "spirit" or is influenced by the Spirit (Romans 8:5). Christian Spirituality is not something but somebody namely "Christ." Thus, the following of Christ as proposed by the Gospels remains the basis of Christian Spirituality (See Downey, M 1993:931). This is echoed by St. Paul's words: "As God's dear children, then, take him as your pattern, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself for us as an offering and a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2).

⁶¹ Those whose material and spiritual needs are the greatest can also be described as those who are most deprived economically and most isolated culturally or those who suffer under oppressive structures. See Spiritan General Chapter 1968-69. Directives and Decisions, No. 4b.

⁶² Spiritan General Chapter 1968-69. Directives and Decisions, No. 4.

⁶³ *Ad Gentes*, 24.

⁶⁴ Fr. Francis Libermann, in the Constitution of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary before the merger in 1840 laid down: "In the name of Jesus Christ and sent by Him, the missionaries of the Holy Heart of Mary devote themselves to making known His Gospel and establishing His reign among the poorest and most abandoned in the Church" (Original Rule of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, No.1).

founded, Spiritans did not just set out from Europe to other continents but also from parishes to those who were outside the reach.

Spiritans have always maintained this aspect of missionary spirituality. In South Africa where this research has been conducted, the Spiritans have always tried to reach out to the frontier situations,⁶⁵ unexplored frontiers of the Church, preaching the Gospel where people have scarcely heard about Christ and where the Church has difficulty in finding workers. From Bethlehem where they first arrived in 1924, Spiritans have since accepted the invitation to Durban and eventually to other dioceses like Kroonstad, Dundee and Johannesburg. In all these places, Spiritans are involved in various ministries like the administration of the sacraments, youth work, peace and justice ministry, refugee ministry and prison ministry. This is a clear sign of how they are trying to be at the frontiers situations.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, an evaluation was made of the missionary praxis as perceived by the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. It has been observed that the various Spiritan works: proclamation and teaching, administration of the sacraments, visitation, HIV/AIDS ministry, promoting the values of the Kingdom of God, youth ministry, education and the specialized ministries of refugee and prison, all reflect the vision of the founders as well as what is stated in the Spiritan Constitution. The two founders of the Congregation talk of the poor in terms of slaves and poor students while in the Spiritan Constitution, the poor are identified as those who have not heard the Gospel message or scarcely heard it, the oppressed and most disadvantaged and people who are in places where the Church has difficulties in finding workers. In the recent documents of the Congregation, the poor include the disadvantaged, abandoned, the voiceless, the oppressed and the weak. Some categories of the poor in the Spiritan documents are: the youth, women, homeless, refugees, landless, unemployed, victims of ethnic strife and corruption.

⁶⁵ Pope John Paul II in Chapter 4 of *Redemptoris Missio* mentions eight of these areas, or "worlds" as he calls them, where the Church must either inaugurate or deepen its presence: the megacity, the youth, migrants and the youth, the poor, the mass-media, development and ecology, culture and science, and finally the world of those who are desperately searching for a meaning in life (RM, 32-37). See also: Kremer-Schillings A and Kuckertz H 1984. *Cor Unum Et Anima Una - Spiritans in Southern Africa 1924- 1984*, p.44.

Looking at the Spiritan ministries, it is therefore noted that their choices of works are in accordance with the vision of the founders as well as what is in the constitution of the Congregation. Spiritans in South Africa perceive their vocation as being at the frontier situations where they attempt to bring Jesus and make his presence felt among the people. They do this through their various ministries either in parish or in their specialized ministries where they are working and also through specialized ministries where they bring hope to the thousands of refugees and prisoners.

However, as religious, there are other elements which should be taken into consideration, such as prayer, community life and missionary spirituality. These are essential elements in the life of all the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. In general, the interviews show a lack of community life, which somehow affects the prayer life of the Spiritans. Another aspect that seriously needs to be recovered is the prophetic aspect of consecrated life or rather of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. In a world which is becoming materialistic and secularized, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit is called upon to be prophetic and show forth the light of Christ. The only and genuine security for people should be Christ rather than the material things.

CHAPTER FIVE

General Conclusion

In this study, we have attempted to make a critical evaluation of the Religious Missionary Congregation of the Holy Spirit's understanding of their mission to the poor in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa. The period covered is between 1984 to 2006. In the history of South Africa, this period witnessed the great political change from apartheid to a democratically elected government in 1994. For the Spiritans, this period marked the beginning of opening up from the traditional base, in Bethlehem where they arrived in 1924 to other dioceses in South Africa including Durban.

5.1 Summary

Chapter one dealt with a general introduction to the thesis: an introduction of the work was given, the motive that led to this research was given as well. Then, a preliminary literature review of some of the books which were used in formulating the research problem. Also indicated was the principal theory upon which this research was constructed and then finally an outline or structure of the thesis.

Chapter two gave a background of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. It has been noted that the Congregation of the Holy Spirit was founded by two outstanding members namely: Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann. The two were inspired by Jesus' love and passion for the poor (Cf. Luke 4:18). In following him, they decided to offer their lives for the salvation of those who were most abandoned and neglected in the society. Among them were the poor students who could not pay their fees in order to continue with their studies and the slaves who were mistreated and deprived of their dignity in the colonies. The Congregation of the Holy Spirit was therefore founded specifically for this purpose namely the "evangelization of the poor" (Luke 4:18).

In trying to define the poor for which the Congregation of the Holy Spirit was founded, this thesis attempted to look at the concept of the poor from the Biblical point of view, from the founders' point of perspective and finally, from the South African context of the poor.

Having established the understanding of the poor in the context of the Bible, the founders of the Congregation and from the South African understanding, the third chapter attempted to describe the Spiritan ministries in South Africa. It has been observed that Spiritans are involved in the proclamation of the Word of God, administration of the sacraments, visitation, HIV/AIDS ministry, promoting the values of the Kingdom of God, youth ministry and education. In addition to that, it has been observed that Spiritans are involved in other specialized ministries namely: refugee, hostel and prison ministries in the archdiocese of Durban. Through these various works, Spiritans are said to live their own vocation which is understood in terms of being at the service of the poor and the most abandoned. Some members of the Congregation view their own vocation as trying to show the world the face of Christ. Some, conceive of their vocation as being called to be faithful to the gift entrusted to them, namely the vision of the founders.

In Chapter four of this thesis, an evaluation of the Spiritan ministries was made. It has been noted that the Spiritan ministries are in accordance with the vision of the founders – the evangelization of the poor. The Spiritan various works in both Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses are seen as the felt needs of the Church and society in South Africa. In all attempts, Spiritans in both Bethlehem and Durban are trying to be practical and respond to the signs of times in the contemporary South African context.

5.2 Suggestions for the future

However, there are certain areas which need some improvement in the service of the poor. From the interviews conducted, it is observed that most members of the Congregation are staying alone. While they are doing excellent apostolic work, the fact of staying alone goes against the wish of the founders who put more emphasis on community than on the works. For the founders, life in community is in itself the proclamation of the Gospel. It is a model of life (a school) upon which other people can rely and draw themselves to Christ. It is the foundation of mission just as the

community of Jesus and his disciples were the foundation and nucleus of the Kingdom of God. The Chapter of *Torre d'Agulha* stressed the importance of community as the entrance door for mission (No. 13.4.3).

The need of community is connected to the life of prayer. The community is seen as being supportive in terms of prayer. While each one can pray on his own, the Spiritan Rule of Life puts more emphasis on the need of community prayer for all its members. There is no replacement for community life. Both the two founders clearly indicated, all members of the Congregation shall live in community. The choice of community unites its members in a common vocation of being servants of the proclamation of the Gospel. For Spiritans, there is no separation between apostolic life and community life. It is believed that it is the same Spirit that draws people together and sends them out. It is the same Spirit that animates the apostolic life and their community life (Cf. *Ad Gentes*, No. 4).

Another observation made in this research is the need for the Congregation to recover its prophetic dimension of consecrated life. The world has become secular and materialistic. In order to recover the sense of God, one has to loose and put aside all the false securities. Thus, the people's most important security should not be material but rather the trust in God. The 2004 General Chapter at *Torre d'Aguilha* called the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to help people to interpret the signs of the times and recover the image of God (*Torre d'Aguilha*, No.13.4.1). It is by recovering this prophetic dimension that the members of the Congregation in both Bethlehem and Durban Dioceses can take a fresh look at what God has to say to His people in these passing times.

More observations for the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in both Bethlehem and Durban dioceses include the recovery of the charismatic dimension of the Congregation. One has to bear in mind that the Congregation was founded for a specific purpose. Thus the Congregation has to respond to the felt need of a particular situation. In the case of Poullart des Places, it was the poor students. For Francis Libermann, it was the question of the slaves. Each time, the Congregation is called to be both charismatic and prophetic. In other words, the Congregation has to be at the frontier situation.

In the present context of South Africa, the frontier situations include the need to respond to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, the Refugee problem, the youth, crime, abuse of women and children and many others felt needs. The Congregation would therefore gain in credibility in its service to the poor if it would continue to respond to these felt needs. This may even demand to put more emphasis in these types of works than parishes which have been under the administration of the Spiritans since their arrival in 1924 like Vrede Parish in Bethlehem Diocese.

Another area of great concern that should be re-examined by the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban in South Africa is the issue of education. Education is an element of the Spiritan vision that is as old as the Congregation itself. Both Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann were for the idea of founding of schools so as to instruct the young and give them access to knowledge. For the two founders, it was not just a case of having a seminary for formation of clergy. But rather, to educate people for the variety of ministries required by people (Burke, C 1998:61). The need for education was to be seen in a broader perspective. Education has to cater for the needs of the people. The two founders of the Congregation believed that the carpenters and mechanics would have a part in the ministry of spreading the Good News just as well as the priests. Authentic education makes people aware of their personal dignity, rights and their duties (Message of the Superior General on the anniversary of 300 years of the Congregation in 2003). Through education, the people are shaped with strong values of faith, reason, service and concern for the world.⁶⁶ Education is the powerful tool to fight against poverty.

And finally, there is great need for the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit to promote the ministry for justice and peace in the Dioceses of Bethlehem and Durban, just as in the entire South Africa. One cannot respond to the needs of the poor without working for peace and justice. As the Spiritan Rule of Life puts it, "the Spiritan option for the poor include action for peace and justice" (SRL No. 18), advocacy and doing social analysis (SRL No.14.1).

⁶⁶ Cf. <http://www.spiritans.org/ministries/schools.html>

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Appendix I: Questionnaire

Questions for the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit

1. What is missionary work are you doing in South Africa?
2. In your own understanding, who are the poor in the context of South Africa? Or who are the poor in the democratic situation prevailing after the 1994 general elections?
3. How does your understanding of poverty in the context of South Africa correspond to the vision of the founders of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit?
4. How does the societal upheavals in South Africa like rape cases, crime, high rate of HIV/AIDS, violence impact upon the work of the Spiritans?
5. How concrete does the Spiritan presence in South Africa address the root causes of the problems outlined above?
6. In your work of addressing poverty or showing solidarity with the poor, what steps do you take to address the question?
7. As a Spiritan, how are you involved in peace and justice ministry?
8. What does commitment to the poor mean for you?
9. Do you think there is any need for change in your service for the poor?
10. How do you see the future of the members of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in South Africa in terms of their missionary work with the poor?

Questions for the non-members (lay people)

1. You have come to know or stayed with the Spiritans for some time. Would you share with me your impression as regard to their pastoral involvement?
2. What areas impress you most with the Spiritans?
3. The Spiritans' missionary work is mainly the evangelization of the poor. Do you see them putting that into practice?
4. What more would you want them to do in addition to what they are currently doing?
5. Do you have any comment as regard to the work of the Spiritans in your parish, institution or diocese?