Spiritan Parish in Virginia Celebrates 20 Years of Friendship and Service in Haiti

Our Lady Queen of Peace Church (OLQP) in Arlington, Virginia, one of more than 20 Spiritan parishes scattered throughout the United States, takes the Spiritan commitment to global ministry to a whole new level.

On October 22, 2017, OLQP celebrated its 20th anniversary of “twinning” with St. Joseph’s in Medor, Haiti.

The two congregations were paired in 1997, when Fr. Jeff Duaime, C.S.Sp., then pastor at OLQP, requested a parish with challenges that other parishes might find too difficult to partner with.

According to their quarterly newsletter, The Advocate, “They had faith that OLQP would be able to climb the mountain to St. Joseph’s (both literally and figuratively!), one of the most inaccessible parishes in the twinning program, a place without roads, running water, sewage system, or an electrical grid.”

Since 1997, the parishes have worked together to improve health, education, energy, and local development in Medor.

Some highlights of the many accomplishments are expanding a primary school of only 320 students to include a secondary school, now educating 3,000 students in grades K-13.

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Welcome

With another Thanksgiving behind us, I continue to give thanks for the many blessings God provides.

In particular, I am grateful for the strong community of friends like you who follow Spiritan news, share our story, support our mission, and pray for us and those whom we serve.

Thank you for your interest in the Spiritans’ work, your passion for sharing God's love, and your giving spirit.

God bless you and your family this Christmas season and in the New Year.

Fr. Tim Hickey, C.S.Sp., pastor at OLQP, blessed the Haiti committee before their journey to the anniversary celebration.

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Where once no student was educated beyond the sixth grade, now dozens of graduates in Medor are even able to attend university.

Lifesaving health programs have been implemented, including a school lunch program, a water purification program, and installation of household latrines called arbor-loos.

Countless initiatives have increased self-sufficiency, including an agro-forestry program and a solar energy program.

Spiritan priest, Fr. Joseph Philippe, C.S.Sp. (pictured above), who has ministered among the poorest communities in Haiti for 30 years, has launched the 3Legs initiative, through his organization, the Association of Peasants of Fondwa.

The goal of this program is to empower rural Haitian communities to create sustainable wealth and improve livelihoods.

Dr. Sue Carlson, MD, chair of the Haiti committee at OLQP and volunteer Executive Director of the Raising Haiti Foundation, along with five parishioners from OLQP, made the trip to Medor for the anniversary celebration in October.

Festivities included a dedication ceremony at a tree nursery, visits with children in each classroom, and a celebratory Mass led by Père Daniel, the first resident priest in Medor, and Père Luckson, the current pastor at St. Joseph’s.

The two parishes gifted each other with meaningful paintings to commemorate their inspiring and mutually-fulfilling journey together.

More information on programs happening in Medor can be found in The Advocate newsletter, available for download at OLQPVA.org.
Message from Fr. Dave Cottingham, C.S.Sp.

Dear Friends,

As the Advent and Christmas seasons approach, you, our faithful friends and supporters, may be using this time to prayerfully consider how you can share your blessings with others.

As Spiritans, our ministry is worldwide. Within these pages, we want to share just a few examples of how Spiritan priests, brothers, and Lay Spiritan associates are working to bring God’s word to every corner of the world — a mission that is only possible with your prayers and support.

Thanks to your generosity, Spiritans are able to go wherever we are needed — in parishes, schools, and missions, at home and abroad — immersing ourselves in the community and culture, and tackling the greatest needs head on.

From education and healthcare to energy and sustainability, there are few challenges Spiritan missionaries haven’t experienced and worked to overcome, while sharing God’s message of love and hope with those who haven’t heard it.

Please consider blessing the critical and life-changing work of the Spiritans with your gift to help us help others in the New Year.

We hope the Holy Spirit inspires you, as it inspires us, to make a difference in the lives of those who need it most. May God’s holy light of Christmas fill you and your families now and throughout the coming year.

Keeping you in my prayers,

Fr. Dave Cottingham, C.S.Sp.

What is SOMA?

Based in Houston, Texas, the Spiritan Office for Mission Advancement (SOMA) supports the Congregation’s public and charitable works of health, education, social services, and religious mission in the United States and throughout the world. The Sharelink-Spiritan Worldwide Aid Foundation, Inc. (The Spiritan Foundation) operates under its auspices, as does the Spiritan involvement in the Mission Cooperative Program of the U.S. Bishops Council.

Financial assistance including capital contributions, loans, and grants and acting as a fiscal agent

Solicitation and receipt of funds, grants, gifts, and contributions directly or in trust for the religious and charitable purposes of the Congregation

 Provision of technical support and advice to Spiritan missionaries directing developmental projects overseas

Support for the special needs of the elderly, infirm, and disabled members of the Congregation, including but not limited to housing, health care, and relief from financial distress

Management of funds, securities, and property of SOMA, be it real, personal, or mixed in nature

Visit Spiritans.org/Donate

Through gifts large and small, our donors make possible the daily miracles of the Spiritans and our ministries throughout the world.

Thank you!
Formation is a profoundly important time in the spiritual journey of a postulant preparing for priesthood. Over the course of seven years of Spiritan formation, having adequate accommodations, room and board, and appropriate educational materials is critical so that the student may fully immerse himself in his studies of philosophy and theology.

The Spiritan province in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is relatively new, having received its designation just three years ago. Consequently, it lacks the resources to cover all the needs of community life at the formation house there. And despite a wealth of natural resources in the DRC, its citizens are among the most economically disadvantaged in the world — making the continued presence of dedicated Spiritans serving there particularly important.

Four Spiritan seminarians studying for priesthood at the St. John Paul II Institute in Kinshasa, DRC, have been fortunate to receive much-needed financial support over the past two years, thanks to the generosity of two families in the United States. As the new year approaches, would you prayerfully consider “adopting” a seminarian?

Please select “Development / Self Help” on our online donation page at Spiritans.org/Donate.

Adopt a Seminarian!

For many years, inhabitants of northeast Nigeria have lived in fear of a militant Islamist group known as Boko Haram. This group is fighting to overthrow the government to create an Islamic state, instilling fear and destruction through bombings, assassinations, and abductions.

Against that backdrop, Spiritans are leading the charge to bring the Gospel to a large population which has not yet heard the message of Christ—a daunting task with Christians comprising less than 10% of all Nigerian citizens.

In Chonku, Taraba, Nigerian Fr. Kuha Indyer, C.S.Sp. is hard at work making his congregation’s vision of creating a youth center and bakery a reality.

The youth center will provide employable skills to young people, allowing them to earn a living wage in an economically-depressed region of the country. The bakery will employ 10 people and serve the local community, with profits supporting youth center operations.

Will you help Fr. Kuha bring life-changing stability and self-sufficiency to youth in the community he serves?

Please select “Development / Self Help” on our online donation page at Spiritans.org/Donate.

Youth center construction is underway.
Growing Numbers, Growing Needs in Vietnam

Growth among religious vocations can be rare these days, so the recent influx of Spiritan seminarians in Vietnam is cause for celebration.

The years of work in Vietnam, led by Provincial Fr. Pat Palmer, C.S.Sp., along with the support of the Vietnamese diaspora, has led to 45 men currently studying for the priesthood there, residing among three buildings throughout Ho Chi Minh City.

This remarkable growth in Spiritan vocations has resulted in plans to purchase property to construct a single Spiritan facility.

The new formation house will serve as a home base for the superior, bursar, and the postulant community, as well as a warm and welcoming retreat for visitors and confreres returning from their pastoral missionary experience and other studies.

According to Fr. Pat, “Within two years, the first confrere to be trained in Vietnam will be ordained and after that there will be a steady trickle of new Spiritan missionary priests and brothers, ready to continue the work of the Congregation and of the Church.”

Two funds have been established for this project—land purchase and construction.

If Vietnam holds a special place in your heart, please help us make the Vietnam Formation House project a reality.

Simply choose “Seminary / Minister Training” on the online donation form at Spiritans.org/Donate.

Novenas Available

The suggested cost per copy, including postage, is $2. Please inquire about discounts for large orders.

To order, please email us at missiongiving@spiritans.org or call (713) 522-2882.

Checks should be made payable and mailed to:

Congregation of the Holy Spirit
1700 West Alabama St.
Houston, TX 77098

“I exhort everyone to live the joy of mission by witnessing to the Gospel in the areas where they live and work…At the same time, we are called to support with affection, concrete aid and prayer the missionaries who have set off to proclaim Christ to those who still do not know him.” - Pope Francis

Houston Forum Provides Insight on the Chinese Catholic Church

“Understanding the Catholic Church in China,” a unique cross-cultural forum for clergy, educators, students, and professionals, was held at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas, on September 16.

The successful event was attended by dozens of participants, including Bishop Sheltz of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

Event topics revolved around Chinese culture, historical and contemporary aspects of the Catholic Church in China, and opportunities to partner with the Chinese Church.

The event was co-sponsored by the Donald S. Nesti, C.S.Sp. Center for Faith and Culture at the University of St. Thomas, which, along with the Spiritans and local Catholic Chinese community, supports the studies of Chinese Catholic priests in Houston.

It is hoped that at some point in the future, priest candidates from China will be allowed to travel to and reside at the Manila Formation House during their studies.
New Video Shares Spiritan Story in Arkansas

Fr. Jean-Michel Gelmetti, C.S.Sp., Dept. of Spiritan Multimedia at Duquesne University, has released the second video in a two-part series about the Spiritans in the Diocese of Little Rock in Arkansas.

Part one, released in May 2017, was a historical narration of the years 1878 to 1892, when the first provincial of the Spiritans invited German immigrants to Arkansas.

Today, four Spiritans still serve Jesus Christ in rural Arkansas. Check out part two of the series “The Spiritans in Arkansas,” to meet some of the parishioners of Spiritan churches keeping the faith alive in the Mississippi delta.

Fr. Gelmetti has also produced other videos about various Spiritan parish ministries, available online at Spiritans.org/spiritan-video-library.

Spotlight on a Spiritan Studying in the United States

Fr. François Kodena was born in central Africa, in Kama, known today as Cameroon.

His name comes from the Beti verb kode, meaning “to save,” and the adverb na, meaning “thus, this way,” indicating the manner through which the saving act is carried out. In Beti, names convey an identity and a mission to their bearer.

His village of Zili (“amazing”) is just an hour-long drive from Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, where he grew up. He is the fifth of nine children of his mother, Ngono (meaning “moon”), and his father, Ngoa (meaning “rock”).

He describes his upbringing as having “watered me with a deep sense of gentleness with myself, my siblings, and others, as well as with the notion of solidarity with the universe.”

Fr. Kodena credits his family with providing his diverse educational background, including humaneness, fishing, hunting, farming, sporting, theologizing, and philosophizing.

During his youth, he was very active in his parish, Spiritan-run Paroisse St. Pierre d’Essos-Kong, in Yaoundé. His involvement in various youth groups led to a Spiritan seminarian, Fr. Basile Mbarga, C.S.Sp., “reading something” in him, and sharing the Spiritan charism with him.

According to Fr. Kodena, “Fr. Mbarga was instrumental in setting me on this journey of connecting people and peoples, and building bridges among cultures. For me, to be a Spiritan is simply to try to become Love, Charity, that is, God. And this begins with one’s parents and siblings. It is said that charity begins at home, and then spreads elsewhere.”

He was professed in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in 1999 and 2003 and ordained as a priest in 2004.

One lesson that stands out in his mind during his years of training is

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Scripture Reading
Ephesians 1:17

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”

A Christmas Blessing

God grant you the light of Christmas, which is faith; the warmth of Christmas, which is purity; the righteousness of Christmas, which is justice; the belief in Christmas, which is truth; the all of Christmas, which is Christ.

Source: www.thoughtsaboutgod.com

Feast Day of Blessed Daniel Brottier

Feast Day of St. Katharine Drexel

Spotlight on Fr. François Kodena
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the view that diversity is strength; that openness to the “Other” is a route to the self. That is one reason why postulants spend a pre-novitiate year in international formation houses before beginning philosophical studies.

Since training as a formator in Dublin, Ireland, he has studied in Duquesne University’s Department of Philosophy for the past five years, continuing work on his doctoral dissertation while serving at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Baltimore, Maryland.

When asked his plans after finishing his dissertation, Fr. Kodena replied, “No need to burden myself with such a question, for the answer will be timely. Fr. Louis Makong, C.S.Sp., an elderly Spiritan from Cameroon, who now enjoys the company of the ancestors with God, used to tell me in the Bassa language: ‘Job a ta bè djon;’ that is, ‘God is not insane.”

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“The Spirit’s presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.” I Corinthians 12:7

From the Spiritan Archives

Fr. Jeff Duaime, C.S.Sp., catches a lift on a mule for the journey up the mountain to St. Joseph’s in Medor, Haiti in 1997.

Inside this issue: Read about Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, a Spiritan parish in Arlington, Virginia, and their 20-year “twinning” relationship with St. Joseph’s.