



Generalate, Rome
Congregation of the Holy Spirit

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Pentecost Novena 2026



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"Behold, I am doing something new" (Is 43,19)

Front cover: Our Lady of Good Deliverance, before whom Poullart des Places and his companions founded the Congregation on Pentecost Day in 1703.

Introduction

Pentecost stands at the beating heart of our spirituality: the moment when the Church is born and sent forth in the power of the Spirit; the moment when Claude Poullart des Places entrusted his small community to the Holy Spirit, allowing our religious family to come into being through the very breath of God; and the moment in **which Francis Libermann discovers the deepest truth of his vocation.**

Contemplating this founding mystery, we hear an invitation to renew the commitments of our own baptism and to rekindle the essential sources of our spirituality.

In this Jubilee Year of the bicentenary of baptism and conversion of Francis Libermann, as we approach the conclusion of the second phase of the General Council's Plan for Animation on Spiritan spirituality, this Pentecost novena gathers and echoes the key themes that have nourished our journey over the past two years. It is offered to us as a call to spiritual renewal, both personal and communal: a call to return to what is essential, to allow the Spirit to rekindle within us the fire of our origins, and to draw from the legacy of our Founders for the mission entrusted to us today.

These themes are not simply one set among many; they form the backbone of our identity. They continue to shape the way we live as Spiritan religious and missionaries, in service to the poorest and most forgotten.

This novena seeks to help us welcome the Spirit's work of renewing the grace of our vocation. May it become for each of us a time of visitation: may the Spirit surprise us, console us,

send us forth, and fashion us — even today — into Spiritans after God's own heart.

Our gratitude goes to Frs. Crispin MBUMBA and Damien MEKI, of the Generalate in Rome, who have prepared and offered this novena to us.

Day 1 – The Primacy of God

Word of God: Deut. 6:5

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

Insight from the Founders

During his retreat in 1701, Claude Poullart des Places, in silence and prayer, reflected on his life and discovered that God’s love had always preceded him, never tiring. Convinced that God alone loved him with true love, he was then able to write:

“Now, Lord, I repent of my blindness; with all my heart I renounce all the things that compelled me to flee from you, (...) descend into the heart where you have longed to enter: it will have ears for none but you, and will henceforth harbour no other affections than to love you as it ought” (Retreat 1701, *Reflections on the Truths of Religion*).

In Francis Libermann, the absolute primacy of God dwells in his soul like a living spring.

It is deeply rooted in the *Shema Israel* of Deuteronomy (Dt 6:5). From the very beginning, whilst he was still a young seminarian, on 30 August 1835, he wrote to another seminarian:

“I beg you to love God with all your soul, with all your heart, with all your strength. Apart from that, there is nothing good on earth or in heaven... But do you know what it means to love God in this way? It is when one has no affection or desire apart from God, but they are all centred in him alone. [...] As long as our heart is divided between God and creatures, it cannot make true progress in the most holy love” (LS 1, 107–109).

This insight would only deepen. Towards the end of his life, Libermann would sum up his entire spiritual experience in a few words that have become famous: "... Sacrifice yourself for Jesus, for Jesus alone. God is everything; man is nothing..."

Reflection

The primacy of God is the foundation of Spiritan spirituality. It arises from an encounter: that of a heart which discovers that God has gone before it, that he loves it, that he calls it to a life greater than itself. One cannot truly be a Spiritan without this foundational encounter. Poullart and Libermann, each in their own story, experienced this inner transformation.

Poullart des Places experienced it when he re-examined his life in the light of God. He realised that God had always been with him, with patient faithfulness, and that the Lord had never ceased to knock at the door of his heart. Under this loving gaze, he could at last see himself as he truly was, with his strengths and weaknesses, his shadows and his light: a poor sinner, deeply loved by God.

The light he has received leads him to a trusting surrender. By saying to God: "Come into the heart where, for a long time, you have desired to enter", Poullart gives primacy to God and allows Him to guide him and become the living centre of his life. By letting God act within him, Poullart des Places finds himself led down paths he had never imagined: service to the poor, fraternal life, the founding of a seminary. So many unexpected answers, made possible by a heart that chose to let itself be led.

Libermann, for his part, carried within him a profound intuition of the Absolute nature of God. Inherited from his Jewish faith and transformed by his encounter with Christ, this conviction became the key to his spiritual and missionary life. To say "God is everything" is not to deny the value of man, but to recognise

that his true greatness arises from his dependence on God. The more man empties himself, the more he becomes capable of receiving the light, strength and charity of Christ.

In many of his letters, Libermann returns time and again to this deep conviction that dwells within him: “God alone”, “I have nothing left but God alone”,

“God alone, God alone. Always God alone... one must see only God alone in all things” (LS 1,153), “Entrust your soul to God alone, who must be your all, at all times and in all circumstances” (LS 1,195).

Full love for God entails the need to live in his presence, and prayer then becomes a breath that permeates the whole of life.

Thus, Poullart and Libermann are in agreement: putting God first does not crush the human person, but liberates them and opens up an inner space within them where the Spirit can act, inspire and send forth.

Questions for reflection

1. What attachments, fears or securities still prevent me from letting God fully take first place in my life?
2. What concrete action, however simple, can I take so that my choices, my commitments and my relationships reflect more clearly that God is my All?

Prayer

Lord God of all tenderness, you who loved us first, open our hearts to your presence.

Teach us to love you with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength. Purify our hearts of all that divides them and make us fully open to your Spirit.

You alone are enough for us: Lord, be our All.

Grant that we may desire 'You alone', that we may turn our desires, our strength and the deepest impulse of our lives towards you, so that you may become the sole centre of our lives. Amen.

Day 2 – Docility to the Holy Spirit

Word of God: Lk 4:14-19

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

Insights from the Founders

From its very beginnings, Spiritan spirituality bears the mark of an **explicit consecration to the Holy Spirit**.

Claude Poullart des Places did not develop a systematic theology of the Spirit, but his life was deeply imbued with it. His Breton faith drew him towards the Spirit from a very early age, and his founding act is the clearest sign of this: **on 27 May 1703, the day of Pentecost**, he consecrated his small community to the Holy Spirit, under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin.

The first articles of his Rules bear witness to this:

- The pupils “shall particularly adore the Holy Spirit to whom they are especially devoted”;
- They shall have a “singular devotion” to the Blessed Virgin, the perfect model of docility;

- They shall celebrate Pentecost to obtain “the fire of divine love” and the Immaculate Conception to receive “angelic purity”.

Thus, from the very beginning, Spiritan life has been understood as a total openness to the Spirit, in the image of Mary.

A century and a half later, Francis Libermann took up and deepened this founding intuition. In the Rule of 1849, speaking of the Spiritans, he clearly states: “ *The Congregation consecrates them especially to the Holy Spirit, the author and perfecter of all holiness and the inspirer of apostolic action.* ”

To explain this docility, Libermann uses another powerful image:

“Stand before the divine Master like an anvil before the blacksmith, or rather like the red-hot iron he holds in his tongs; he strikes it with repeated blows, and the iron takes on whatever shape he wishes to give it. You are still like raw, hard iron; Our Lord must break you and make you pliable through trials and crosses” (LS III, 115–116).

For him, docility constitutes the beating heart of Spiritan spirituality. It is a profound inner movement that consists in allowing oneself to be shaped, purified and guided by the Spirit, until one becomes a pliable instrument in God’s hands.

Reflection

Poullart des Places and Libermann each express, in their own way, this same understanding of docility to the Holy Spirit. For Poullart, it is expressed first and foremost as a trusting surrender to the divine breath. From the very beginning, he invited his companions to become hearts open and available to God’s action: to adore the Holy Spirit, to ardently seek the fire of divine love, to imitate the inner openness that allows God to act freely.

For him, the whole challenge lay in transforming the missionary's heart into a free space, capable of allowing itself to be led by the Spirit.

With Libermann, this initial insight becomes a genuine spiritual method, a way of life, a way of being a missionary. For him, the Spirit is the One who guides, inspires, unites and sends.

Poullart offers the source, Libermann shows the way. Both invite us to become, like Mary, hearts open to the breath of God.

For Libermann, one conviction prevails: only the Holy Spirit knows how we are to radiate Jesus Christ. He was given to us at baptism to establish in us the holiness of Christ. He alone can lead us towards the unique vocation that God has dreamed up for us. What must we do? Nothing other than let ourselves be led along a path we do not know. Libermann expresses this forcefully: "Only the Holy Spirit can move you forward. Jesus has given you his Spirit to guide and lead you. Be docile. If you wish to go alone, you will stray from this path. Only the Holy Spirit knows it and can help you progress" (L.S. I, 366).

The more generously a person surrenders to God, the more the Spirit fills them, animates them and leads them along the unique path of their conformity to Christ and their apostolic commitment. Thus, docility to the Holy Spirit is not a secondary aspect of our Spiritan vocation: it is its living centre, the source of all missionary fruitfulness.

Questions for reflection

1. Where am I on the path of docility? How does my life enter into this movement of surrender and openness to the Spirit?
2. In what ways is the Spirit shaping me today into the likeness of the missionary Christ?

Prayer

Holy Spirit, you who set Poullart des Places ablaze and guided Libermann step by step, open our hearts as you opened Mary's.

Make us flexible servants in your hands, in simple and trusting docility.

Shape us, purify us, and take us as a light feather carried by your breath, as metal that your love works and transforms.

Lead us where you will and make us ardent witnesses for the glory of God and the life of the world. Amen.

Day 3: Availability

Word of God: Lk 1:38

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”

Insight from the Founders

In founding the Seminary of the Holy Spirit, Poullart des Places sought to form men capable of radical availability: ready to go where no one else wished to go, ready to serve where God’s call was most urgent. His own life bears witness to this inner disposition. During the retreat of 1701, he accepted to reorient his life. Shortly afterwards, he welcomed Jean-Baptiste Faulconnier, discerned his vocation with Grignon de Montfort, left the comfort of his theological college for the poverty of the Rue des Cordiers, and on 27 May 1703 consecrated himself to the Holy Spirit under the protection of the Virgin Mary. In 1704, during his decisive retreat, he once again allowed himself to be guided by the Spirit and by the community.

For Poullart, this was the concrete expression of love — the truest way of responding to God’s call and to the needs of his brothers and sisters.

For Libermann, docility is first and foremost an inner attitude. He writes: *“This docility consists of inner openness and profound trust, so that the Spirit may establish the life of Jesus within us”* (ND XIII, 144). Libermann’s entire life bears witness to this total openness: accepting trials without rebellion, discerning calls without avoiding them, advancing without relying on human certainties. To his fellow priests, he insists that openness does not mean waiting for guarantees, but standing ready for God: *“Do not fall into the fallacy that one must first seek certainty before embracing the uncertain... If we are not*

entirely devoted to the service of Jesus Christ in his Church, ready to sacrifice everything, there would be no point in us gathering together” (ND VI, 76).

For Libermann, availability means allowing oneself to be led wherever the Spirit opens a path, even when that path remains obscure. It means moving forward in confidence, certain that the Spirit precedes us, accompanies us, and accomplishes what we cannot do on our own.

Reflection

Availability is one of the most consistent features of Spiritan spirituality. It is both openness to God and attentiveness to our brothers and sisters — an inner movement that runs through our history from Poullart des Places to Libermann and remains today at the heart of our vocation.

From the very beginning, Poullart des Places embodied this attitude. This inner movement took concrete form in availability: going wherever God’s call was heard, even to the poorest and most neglected places. The motto of the first Spiritans expresses this attitude perfectly: *“Ecce ego, mitte me”* — Here I am, send me. Spiritan readiness is this constant “yes” that makes us mobile for mission and attentive to the needs of the community. This movement of openness, inaugurated by Poullart, is the first expression of the Spiritan charism.

For Libermann as well, availability is an attitude of the heart. He describes it as an “inner availability and a very great trust” (ND XIII, 144). His own life is a long apprenticeship in this openness: moving forward without human certainty, embracing trials, discerning calls, allowing himself to be led wherever the Spirit opened a path — the shaking of his Jewish faith in Metz, the revelation of Christ to Stanislas, the painful choice of Jesus over his father, the obstacle of epilepsy, the trials of the Eudist

novitiate, the “little light” calling him to work among Black people, the departure for Rome without support, and later the acceptance of the call to the priesthood and the opening of a novitiate in Amiens.

Through his life and writings, he testifies that openness is an act of faith in the unknown. Rather than seeking reassurances, he invites us to advance in faith, even when the path remains obscure. For him, availability means accepting God’s unexpected plans, standing ready for Him, and remaining attentive to the direction in which His Spirit leads — in a trusting openness to what God desires to accomplish.

This availability, nourished by union with God, poverty, and inner detachment, becomes the space where the Spirit can act and the source of our missionary presence. It is accompanied by attentive listening to reality, by a discernment that renounces what no longer bears fruit and welcomes God’s unexpected initiatives. Thus, walking in faith with open hands remains the Spiritan way of allowing ourselves to be preceded and guided by the Spirit.

On this path, Mary remains our model. She teaches us to say “yes” without understanding everything, to move forward in trust, to let the Spirit guide our lives. Understood in this way, openness takes root in a renewed “yes” that gives birth to mission and enables us to go where God awaits us.

Questions for reflection

1. In which areas of my life is the Spirit inviting me today to step out of my comfort zone to say a “yes” that is more concrete and more generous?
2. How can I today show a simpler, more joyful and more concrete openness towards the people God places in my path?

Prayer ¹

O my God, you who lead all those who truly trust in you toward the heavenly Jerusalem, I place myself entirely in your hands. I surrender myself to your divine Providence; I renounce my own will, that I may follow yours with simplicity and trust. Make known to me what you ask of me, so that I may live on this earth the state of life you have chosen for me. Grant me the graces I need to serve you faithfully and to give glory to your divine Majesty throughout my pilgrimage. Amen.

¹ Prayer by Poullart des Places quoted by Jean Savoie, *Praying for 15 Days with Poullart des Places*, p. 34.

Day 4: Spiritual and material poverty

Word of God: Col 3:1-4

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Insights from the Founders

In the Spiritan tradition, poverty appears as a detachment from material things that, above all, opens an inner path: the path by which a person allows himself to be fully conformed to the poor Christ. Poullart des Places offers a striking witness to this. Born into a wealthy family in Rennes, destined for a worldly life, brilliant and well-regarded, he freely chose poverty as his evangelical way. On this path, he gave himself without reserve to God, even to the point of sacrificing his life. His radical desire is evident in his own words: *“I wanted to see myself one day stripped of everything, living only on alms; having given everything, I did not claim to reserve for myself of all temporal goods anything but my health, which I wished to offer entirely as a sacrifice to God in the work of the Missions; I would have been overjoyed if, after having set the whole world ablaze with the love of God, I could have given even the last drop of my blood for Him whose blessings were almost always present to me”* (Retreat 1704, *Reflections on the Past*).

Libermann, for his part, deepens this insight by showing that true poverty is not primarily an external deprivation but a state of the heart — an inner space where the Spirit becomes the sole

principle of life. He calls for total availability, a way of being in which a person allows himself to be entirely guided by God:

“Be in God’s hands as a man who is dead and annihilated... Live and feel, therefore, only in God and according to God. (...) Have no life of your own any longer, but let Him alone live within you. Seek nothing and have no movement of your own, but let Him alone be the sole life and the sole movement of your soul. We must be entirely dead to ourselves and to all things; and then our life will be hidden in God with Our Lord (cf. Col 3:3), to whom we shall be intimately united by all the powers of our soul. Since the soul is entirely empty of creatures and of itself, the Spirit of Our Lord will be all life within it” (ND I, 214–215).

For Libermann, this interior poverty is inseparable from profound humility — an attitude that holds together the awareness of our nothingness and the greatness of the vocation received: God chooses what is weak to manifest His strength.

Reflection

In the light of our Founders, Spiritan poverty appears as an inner journey in which a person allows themselves to be shaped by God so as to become a source of apostolic life. It involves material detachment, but it is fulfilled above all as a way of standing before God: an attitude that consists in receiving everything from Him, living from Him, acting through Him.

Claude Poullart des Places’ experience illuminates this path. His encounter with the poor was part of a genuine spiritual journey. From Saint-Yves Hospital to the Savoyard chimney sweeps, and then to the poor aspirants to the priesthood, he discovered that poverty is not merely a social condition: it became for him an inner call that broadened his heart and transformed his outlook. In 1703, he took a decisive step: he chose to live with the poor,

in their simplicity and poverty. It was they who gradually freed him from his securities and privileges, rooting him in total trust in God. His home became a cenacle where poverty was lived as a mysticism of the Kingdom. His death, which occurred among those he had chosen as brothers, marked the fulfilment of this journey: poverty freely embraced is completed in the total gift of self. His legacy endures: to be poor in order to serve the poor, to the very end, in absolute trust in the Holy Spirit.

For Libermann, true poverty is a state of the heart in which the Spirit becomes the sole principle of life. The apostolic person knows himself to be poor because he is nothing other than what he receives from God; he is poor because he remains empty, praying, asking; he is poor because he gives back everything he receives, just as he receives it — as coming from God. This inner attitude opens the person to the very dynamic of God, which Libermann describes through the image of the Source. In this perspective, God appears as Gift: the Father, creative and merciful Gift; the Son, total Gift of himself even unto death; the Spirit, the Gift of the Father and the Son — each a Source of life for humanity.

Before this mystery, the apostolic person recognizes himself as a wellspring of poverty, entirely turned toward receiving God's Gift. The more he empties himself, the richer he becomes in God. Thus, God, the Source of life, enables the person to become in turn a source and a river: spiritual poverty becomes the condition for apostolic fruitfulness, for it allows the very richness of God to flow through him.

This is why Libermann describes the apostle as an instrument in God's hands, employed according to the Master's designs. It is in this inner openness, rooted in poverty of heart, that a person truly becomes a bearer of the Source of life.

Questions for reflection

1. In light of Claude Poullart des Places' journey, how do the situations of material, social, or spiritual precariousness that we encounter today awaken in us a renewed call to mission?
2. How does Libermann's invitation to inner poverty illuminate the way we pray and live in community, as a space where we learn together to receive everything from God?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you who made yourself poor to enrich us with your love, open our hearts to that poverty which leaves all space for your Spirit. Following the example of Claude Poullart des Places, teach us to leave behind our securities and enter into trust. In the school of the Venerable Libermann, make us docile instruments in your hands.

Lord, empty us of ourselves and make us poor so that we may be available, poor so that we may be fraternal, poor so that we may be missionaries. May everything in us belong to you, and may everything in us speak of you.

Amen

Day 5 – To be a Spiritan is to be Sent

Word of God: Jn 20:19–22

“ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Insights from the Founders

Across generations, a deep conviction has shaped our way of being: **the Spiritan is one who is sent**. This insight is woven into the very history of our origins. It is part of our spiritual DNA.

As early as 1703, Poullart des Places understood that God was calling him to prepare “good and faithful” priests to be sent where the Church most lacked workers. In his letter to Grignon de Montfort, he reveals this inner certainty: *“It seems to me that this is what God is asking of me... If God grants me the grace to succeed, you can count on missionaries. I will prepare them for you and you will put them to work.”* In founding the Seminary, he was not seeking to realize a personal project: he placed himself at the service of a mission. He wished to form men capable of carrying the Father’s love to the human and spiritual peripheries.

A century later, Libermann took up this founding intuition and expressed it with great clarity. From the opening lines of the *Instructions to the Missionaries* (1851), he affirms that our

vocation “places us in the ranks of the Apostles of Jesus Christ.” Now, the apostle is, by definition, one who is sent. For him, mission is never defined by our own criteria: it is received. “*Our mission is his,*” he writes, enlightened by the words of Jesus: “*As the Father has sent me, so I send you*” (Jn 20:21).

Reflection

Every authentic mission springs from Christ, sent by the Father. Jesus carries out his work in the deep awareness of being sent; this relationship gives unity, strength, and truth to his action. It is within this movement that the Spiritan vocation is situated: we never “set out” from ourselves, but as those who are sent. Our mission is not our own; it is a participation in the mission of Christ, which remains the only true mission.

If the mission comes from Christ, it must also take shape in him. Jesus fulfils his work in total fidelity to the Father’s sending, and it is this way of being sent that becomes the measure of our service. The Spiritan therefore does not rely on his own abilities: he seeks to make present the One who sends him. This transparency is possible only if he remains grafted onto Christ. Such union is not a spiritual extra, but the very condition of mission: it is by remaining in Christ that our apostolic life becomes a true participation in his mission and that our action allows God’s action to shine through.

Without this inner union, the sending loses its substance; it becomes the pursuit of our own plans, our ambitions, ourselves.

Before being an activity or a departure, mission is an inner state: **that of readiness**. The Spiritan stands before God in a humble and confident “Here I am,” from which springs the disciple’s response: “Send me.” To allow oneself to be sent by God is to accept being displaced, unsettled, led to places one would not have chosen. This openness is far more than human flexibility:

it is a profound consent to God's initiative. The missionary enters into a work that surpasses him; he receives a mission that does not belong to him. Mission begins where one makes oneself available so that God may reach the most vulnerable.

Finally, mission is received within the community: discerning with one's brothers, welcoming the guidance of superiors as a mediation of the Spirit, and allowing oneself to be led where God is calling today. Thus, the sending becomes a shared act, received in faith and lived in trust.

Questions for reflection

1. Does my "Here I am – send me" truly engage my whole life, or do certain inner resistances still keep me from letting the Spirit move me, surprise me, and lead me to places I would never have chosen on my own?
2. Does my way of being a missionary genuinely reflect the manner in which Jesus was sent by the Father, and where is the Spirit inviting me today to grow in that union which makes his presence visible?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you who gave your Spirit when you sent your disciples, we stand before you.

Deliver us from the temptation to send ourselves out or to build our own securities. Make us open and docile to your Spirit.

May our mission take shape within yours, may our way of serving reflect your love, and may your action shine through ours.

As the Father sent you, send us today. Make us Spiritans after your own heart. Amen.

Day 6 – The Spiritan life is prayer and service

Word of God: Jn 15: 1–5

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Insights from the Founders

From its earliest days, Spiritan spirituality has been rooted in a dual and inseparable movement: prayer that shapes the heart and humble service to the least among us. These two dimensions are never in tension; they illuminate one another and reveal how the Spirit guides the missionary.

For Poullart des Places, everything begins in prayer. His retreats open him to God’s mercy and reveal his own fragility. Prayer becomes for him a source of light and discernment: it is there that he understands the call to share the life of poor students. By leaving his comfort to live among them, he performs a founding act: service is not merely doing things for others, but being with them. In this closeness, he gives himself entirely to God for the service of the poor—especially the “poor students”—and discovers that prayer and service mutually illuminate and strengthen one another.

Libermann deepens this insight by affirming that the Spiritan life is, above all, a life of prayer. God speaks to the heart: there the Spirit purifies, enlightens, and guides. Even when burdened with

heavy responsibilities, Libermann insists on the necessity of inner silence, without which mission loses its source. From this experience arises **practical union**: remaining in God at the heart of action, allowing the Spirit to inspire decisions, words, and gestures.

This life of prayer naturally leads to concrete service. For Libermann, service is neither an abstract ideal nor spiritual rhetoric: it is a humble, daily, incarnate commitment. To the missionaries in Dakar and Gabon, he recommends radical closeness: to be with the people *“like servants to their masters”* (ND IX, 330). This powerful expression captures his vision of mission: total availability, active humility, unconditional service. The Rule of 1849 expresses it with striking clarity: *“We regard ourselves as their servants; we shall devote our whole lives to them”* (ND X, 515).

Reflection

Spiritan spirituality rests on a fundamental conviction: mission is born in prayer and fulfilled in service. These two dimensions respond to one another: prayer shapes the missionary’s heart, and service reveals the truth of that prayer.

In prayer, the Spiritan stands before God in simplicity. He allows the Spirit to touch his frailties, purify his intentions, and guide his desires. This daily return to the heart becomes a place of inner unification: there God works patiently, frees what hinders, and opens space for a renewed *“Here I am.”* Without this source, action becomes scattered and eventually runs dry.

But Spiritan prayer does not enclose; it sends forth. It gives a vision capable of discerning God’s presence in events, faces, and forms of poverty. It shapes a way of being that is gentler, more patient, more fraternal. It is within this movement that **practical union** is found: a way of remaining in God at the heart of action. It is not a technique but an inner attitude: when the heart stays

open, the Spirit inspires the missionary's actions, words, and reactions, gradually shaping within him the very manner of Jesus.

In this dynamic, service becomes a way of life: closeness to the little ones, respect for cultures, commitment to justice, peace, and the care of creation. The missionary becomes a person of solidarity, a defender of the weak, a witness to the compassion of Christ. Yet none of this is possible by our own strength: it is prayer that gives us the capacity to love with patience and to serve with gentleness. Without prayer, service becomes fragile activism; with prayer, it becomes a sharing in the way Christ made himself a servant.

Thus, prayer opens us to service, and service leads us back to prayer. It is within this inner unity that the Spiritan life unfolds.

Questions for reflection

1. To what extent does daily prayer truly nourish my choices, my attitudes and my way of being a missionary? How does it become for me a place where God speaks and guides my life?
2. What resistances or habits still prevent me from living the unity between prayer and mission? What concrete steps can I take to allow the Spirit to further unify my Spiritan life?

Prayer

Lord, open our hearts to your presence.

Teach us to listen to your Spirit in the depths of our being, where you speak, where you guide, where you silently shape our lives. May prayer root us deeply in you.

Teach us to love our brothers and sisters with patience, to serve them with humility, in the simple and radiant joy of your Gospel.

Open our hearts to compassion and make our service fruitful.
May every gesture, every word, every encounter make your
gentleness and compassion visible.
May everything within us reflect your presence through the
power of your Spirit. Amen.

Day 7 – The Spiritan life is lived in community

Word of God: Acts 2:42–47

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Insights from the Founders

Spiritan spirituality cannot be understood apart from community life. From the very beginnings of the Congregation, this conviction was already present. Claude Poullart des Places—coming from high society and with no prior formation in fraternal life—discovered community by living it. His conversion led him to share the daily life of the poor seminarians entrusted to his care. Among these young men, so different from himself and living a simple and austere existence, he learned what it means to follow Christ in fraternity.

The retreat of 1704–1705 marked a decisive turning point: he realized that fraternity must be structured in order to endure. He therefore established a small community of formators serving the students, laying the foundations for a Spiritan life conceived as a shared journey. As a man trained in law, he then gave the Community of the Holy Spirit a Rule of Life of 263 articles,

which he himself observed. Thus, the Spiritan life was born within a regular, simple, and evangelical fraternity.

In Libermann's case, his sense of community was evident from the very first steps of his missionary work. When, in 1839, he received the proposal for the "Work for the Blacks," he accepted it only on the condition that it be lived "in a congregation," and not in isolation. For him, mission required a stable, discerned, and sustained form of community life.

This conviction is clarified in the Provisional Rule of 1840: spiritual regularity—the very spirit of religious life—is inseparable from community life, even when permanent living together is not possible. The spiritual health of a missionary body depends on the quality of its fraternity. The Regulations of 1849 will make this a fundamental rule: *"For the perfection of apostolic life, for the stability and expansion of the works, and for the sanctification of its members, the Congregation has adopted communal life as a fundamental rule. All its members shall always live in community."*

Thus, for Libermann, community is not merely a framework but a spiritual principle: the Spiritan mission is born, nourished, and safeguarded within community life.

Reflection

The Spiritan is a man of community—not simply out of practical necessity, but because shared life is the lifeblood that sustains our spiritual and missionary identity. From the beginning, our founders understood that mission cannot be carried out by isolated individuals, but by a body shaped by the Spirit. Community is therefore not merely a setting; it is a theological space, the place where the Gospel takes flesh.

Prayer is the heart of this space: it nourishes fraternal charity, brings peace to relationships, and sustains the mission. Without prayer, community life becomes a fragile coexistence; with prayer, it becomes a place where each one learns to receive from God and to give himself to others.

Libermann knew how essential prayer was for fostering mutual understanding. He reminded his missionaries that “*the life of our missionaries is a life of community; they must never remain isolated*” (ND VI, 438). Aware of differences in temperament and the tensions they can generate, he saw in prayer the inner leaven capable of transforming relationships and fostering unity. In the *Instructions to the Missionaries* (Chap. II, 3), he presents the community as a true school of holiness: a place where one is supported, encouraged, corrected, and lifted up. For him, the community is also a bulwark—a collective shield. In isolation, the missionary becomes vulnerable; united with his brothers, he receives a strength and fidelity he could never sustain alone. Community prayer allows this fraternal strength to unfold and endure.

Thus, fraternity is far more than a support for mission: it is already a full expression of it. What we proclaim, we must first live among ourselves. A community that prays, shares, forgives, and welcomes differences becomes a living catechesis. The way we live together is already a proclamation of the Gospel—a preaching in action.

Our international and intercultural communities are a particularly eloquent sign of this. Day by day, they are true places of Pentecost, where the Spirit gathers people of different languages, cultures, and histories to form a single body. They bear witness that the Gospel can unite what everything else seems to divide, and that fraternity—fragile yet beautiful—is a concrete reality requiring patience, prayer, and daily conversion.

Thus, community becomes our way of living the mission: a space where the Spirit continues to create unity in diversity, and where shared life makes visible the very purpose of evangelization—to bring about Christian fraternity.

Questions for reflection

1. What conversions am I being called to embrace so that my way of living in community — or within my family — may become a genuine proclamation of the Gospel?
2. **Do our communities awaken in others a desire to believe in Christian brotherhood?** What aspects of our common life attract, challenge, or discourage? And what signs of the Spirit can we discern within them?

Prayer

Spirit of Pentecost, You who bring hearts together and foster communion, come and dwell in the midst of our communities. Spirit of Jesus, mould in us one heart and one soul. Teach us anew to pray together, to welcome one another in our differences, and to live in authentic brotherhood, attentive to each other's needs, joyful in service and united in love.

Spirit of the Father, breathe upon us, so that our way of living together may become a sign that draws all your children to You. Amen.

Day 8 – Waiting for God’s timing

Word of God: Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Insight from the Founders

Libermann was imbued with a deep conviction: **God acts in life and in events through his Spirit.** This discreet yet real presence gives sacred value to even the smallest details of existence. In every situation, he recognized the Holy Spirit as the One who animates, strengthens, directs, and guides, inviting each person to walk with confidence in the path God desires.

His way of life reflected this faith. Libermann advanced from one event to the next without seeking to anticipate the future or control the unfolding of circumstances. He allowed himself to be led with total trust, welcoming God day by day in the most concrete realities of his life. His inner rule was simple: never go faster than the Holy Spirit leads. He found God in the present moment, in the specific event he was living, and to which he surrendered himself fully.

Libermann passed on this inner attitude to Fr. Tisserant, who was too eager to act. He urged him to slow down and let God open the way:

“I wish you to wait and take no action for the moment; I would like to consider this for a while before the Good Lord... By rushing too much, one runs the risk of spoiling something, whereas by consulting God for a time, one can only gain. I fully realize that taking steps can be useful and move things forward, but in a work as great and as holy as this one, everything must rest on God” (ND I, 667–669).

What he recommends to Tisserant, Libermann first applies to himself. His way of conducting affairs is marked by a demanding inner discipline: *“I have made it a rule to wait, in all things, for the moments of Providence”* (LS III, 371).

It is therefore not surprising that many of his letters echo this same call to trusting patience, to surrender without agitation or self-will. He writes: *“Do not torment yourself because you cannot do what you desire; do not force things, but wait for the divine will”* (LS I, 126).

Reflection

Libermann views events, people, and things through the lens of faith. For him, God acts in life and reveals himself through the most ordinary circumstances. Libermann’s God is a God who gives signs within concrete history; in this, he remains deeply the son of a rabbi, familiar with the ways in which God guided his people. Rooted in this biblical mindset, he knows that God is the God of History. Since the Incarnation, our history has become God’s history: it is within human lives that his plan of love unfolds.

It was at the heart of his trials that Libermann’s unique way of interpreting life took shape. The difficulties he faced—illness, humiliations, apparent failures, long periods of waiting—became for him privileged moments in which he experienced God’s action. The way he lived through the decisive moments of his life reveals a journey deeply marked by welcoming the Spirit in events. He discovered that God cannot be scheduled or confined: one must wait for **his Hour**, in peace and patience, remaining attentive to his “moments.” Moving too quickly, becoming agitated, or trying to force things amounts, in his view, to cutting oneself off from the action of the Spirit. He therefore invites us to set aside haste and anxiety and let God lead.

Liebermann does not seek God in the extraordinary, but in the ordinary fabric of life. His conviction is simple and radical: **God speaks through events**. Thus, his whole life is marked by a confident waiting: he forces nothing, rushes nothing, does not rely on his own strength, but waits for God's Hour, convinced that Providence always opens a way. This way of standing in God's present nourishes within him a peaceful trust—the fruit of his total docility to the Spirit who reveals himself in the concrete realities of life.

Questions for reflection

1. In which concrete moments of my life — joyful, ordinary, or difficult — can I recognise today the discreet yet unmistakable presence of the Spirit who guides me?
2. What forms of haste, anxiety, or desire for control am I being invited to release, so that I may learn, like Liebermann, to wait for God's Hour with peace and trust?

Prayer

Lord God, we give you thanks for your active and working presence at the heart of our lives.

Teach us to recognise your 'moments' in the events that shape us,

Deliver us from restlessness, impatience and the need to control everything.

Grant us the inner peace that enables us to wait for your Hour, and trust in your Providence.

May we, like Liebermann, know how to live in the present with a willing heart, docile to your Spirit, open to your work, and ready to walk humbly in the rhythm you mark out for us.

Amen.

Day 9 – Of one heart with Mary

Word of God: (Acts 1:14)

“They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”

Insight from the Founders

From its very origins, Spiritan spirituality has carried a profoundly Marian imprint. Poullart des Places intended Spiritan consecration to be inseparable from a special bond with Mary, the model of total docility to the Spirit. The founding act of the Seminary of the Holy Spirit bears powerful witness to this: on Pentecost 1703, twelve students gathered around him to consecrate themselves to the Holy Spirit under the invocation of Mary conceived without sin, at the feet of the Black Madonna of Our Lady of Good Deliverance. This gesture was not merely devotional; in a certain sense, it re-enacted the Upper Room. Like the first Christian community, which awaited the power from on high “with one heart, together with Mary” (Acts 1:14), these young men gathered around her to receive the Spirit.

This conviction is equally present in Libermann. On 25 September 1841, together with Frédéric Le Vasseur and Eugène Tisserant, he celebrated the Mass marking the foundation of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary at Notre-Dame des Victoires. By giving his missionary community such a profoundly Marian name, he clearly followed in the footsteps of Poullart des Places. In explaining the Provisional Rule of 1840 to his novices, Libermann emphasized that the consecration was not simply addressed to Mary, but to the **Heart** of Mary. This choice, he explained, was not the result of calculation or strategy: it imposed itself upon him as an inner attraction, a powerful impulse. And this orientation was

anything but secondary: it touched the very heart of apostolic life. To carry out the apostolate fruitfully, one needs the Spirit; and after Jesus, where can the apostolic spirit be found in its purest form if not in the Heart of Mary? This Heart, “filled with the Spirit,” is an “eminently apostolic heart,” inflamed with the desire for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

This conviction is expressed forcefully once again in the Rule of 1849, where Libermann presents the Heart of Mary as “the perfect model of fidelity to all the holy inspirations of the Divine Spirit and of the interior practice of the virtues of the apostolic religious life” (ND X, 568).

Reflection

If Spiritan spirituality is Marian, it is because, from the beginning, our consecration has been understood as inseparable from a filial relationship with the Virgin. Poullart des Places experienced this deeply: his childlike trust in Mary shaped the way he surrendered himself to the Spirit and prepared the founding act performed at the feet of Our Lady of Bonne-Délivrance. By choosing Pentecost for the foundation, he placed the young community within the dynamic of the Upper Room: with Mary, open to the Spirit, ready to be sent.

In Libermann, this intuition becomes even more explicit. From the moment of his baptism, he discovered in Mary a maternal presence who introduced him to Christ and the Spirit. His devotion was peaceful, interior, and profoundly filial. He sees in her “God’s success,” the perfect model of docility to the inspirations of the Spirit, and a refuge in which to lay down his frailties. For him, Mary never ceases, from heaven, to work for the growth of the Church: she continues what she accomplished in the early days of the Christian community.

The Heart of Mary thus becomes for Libermann both **model** and **source**: a model of the apostolic zeal that must animate missionaries, and a source from which they draw light, strength, and peace. The Marian consecration he proposes is a central pillar: the surest path to learning docility, inner peace, and missionary readiness.

In the Spiritan tradition, Mary occupies a central place: she is a pole of unity, the one who gathers, opens us to the Spirit, and disposes hearts for mission. With her, waiting becomes readiness, and the community is formed in the same movement as the nascent Church: united, prayerful, docile to the breath of the Spirit. For the Spiritan missionary, Mary naturally becomes a model of fidelity, a source of strength and light, a refuge in trials, and a sure guide for remaining in the peace of the Spirit.

To be truly a son and heir of Poullart des Places and Libermann is to place oneself at Mary's feet to learn from her the right way to be a missionary. By allowing our hearts to be shaped in contact with hers, our way of acting becomes simpler, more unified, and more open to the Spirit. Then the mission ceases to be primarily about what **we** accomplish; it becomes what **God** can and wishes to accomplish in us.

Questions for reflection

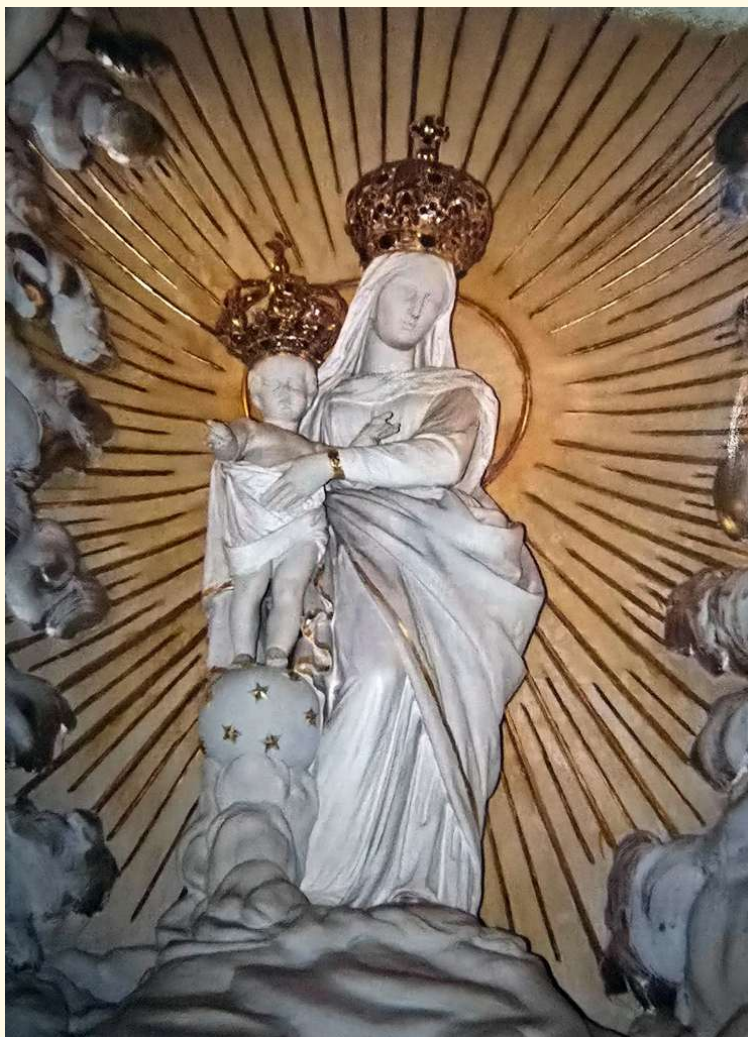
What changes are we called to make so that our way of living as a community — or as a family — becomes a genuine proclamation of the Gospel?

Do our communities inspire others to believe in Christian fellowship? Which aspects of our lifestyle attract, challenge, or discourage those who encounter us? And what signs of the Spirit do we discern within them?

Prayer

Mary, Mother of the Lord and our Mother,
You, the perfect model of docility and apostolic zeal,
You whose Heart is filled with the Spirit, we turn to you.
It is to you, and to your Heart, that we are consecrated.
United with you in one heart, in the cenacles of our communities,
we watch for the signs of the Spirit. Teach us docility and lead
us on the path of apostolic zeal.
With you, we offer ourselves to the Holy Spirit, that God may
accomplish in us his work of sanctification.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Happy Pentecost!



Representation of Our Lady of Victories, in the the chapel of the Mother House, 30 rue Lhomond (Paris)