U. S. Lad At Oberammergau Eager For Drama To End; Wants To Cut Curls

By MAX JORDAN

Oberammergau, Germany—(NC)—At least one person in Oberammergau will be glad when the Passion Play is over.

He is Johnny McMahon, six-year-old son of Major McMahon, an American officer in charge of the military police division of the United States Army Intelligence school here.

The major is from Boise, Idaho, and Mrs. McMahon from Spokane, Washington. They have three children: Johnny, Patrick and Kathleen. Johnny, the oldest, was also proudly to be the only American ever to be included in the Passion Play cast.

THE OBERAMMERGAU performances are scheduled to end this month. They have attracted nearly a half million visitors this year from all parts of the world.

"I want to have my curls cut," said Johnny when I met him in his home, a few blocks from the Passion Play theatre. Just as the native Oberammergau children, Johnny had to let his grow for the Passion Play performances. He is a red-head and typically American in his manners although he has learned to speak German as perfectly as his classmates in the local school.

That Johnny should have been chosen for a part in the Passion Play cast was a mere routine matter. Many children are needed for the crowd scenes on the stage and the parts are assigned by mass rooms. Johnny was included automatically, and no one ever raised the question why he, as an American, should not share in his classmates' chore.

EVER SINCE this year's Play opened, Johnny has been on the stage once or twice a week. The children take turns as the burden would be too heavy were they engaged permanently.

"It's great to be in the Passion Play," Johnny admitted. But then came the remark about his locks. Of course, he cannot have them cut until the Play is over, so he can hardly wait for the last performance.

"Why do you want them cut anyway?" I inquired.

"I want to sell them!" said Johnny.

"How much are you going to sell them for?"

Johnny knew his price right away.

"A million Marks!"

"A million Marks? Goodness! That's a lot of money!"

JOHNNY'S FATHER interrupted at this point.

"Don't be silly, John," he said.

"But," countered Johnny, "I want to buy a horse."

First American to be included in the Oberammergau Passion Play, little Johnny McMahon, six-year-old son of Major Charles McMahon of Boise, Idaho, is shown to his role and at play. Johnny takes part in the Passion Play with his classmates in a crowd scene. His father is in charge of the military police division of the U. S. Army Intelligence School there. (NC Photos)

"A horse for a million Marks?" I said. "Why, Johnny, that would buy you an army of horses!"

Johnny had not thought of that. I went on to ask:

"How would you feel about being in the Passion Play when you're grown up, ten years hence perhaps?"

"Oh," said Johnny, "then I want to be Caiphas, the high priest!"

"Why?"

"BECAUSE HE wears such a big hat," explained Johnny.

"Well," his mother broke in, "we'll see about that. There is plenty of time."

"We are in the Army, John," added his father, "so no one can tell where we'll be in ten years."

"But when I am real big," insisted Johnny, "I want to be Christus — an American Christus!"

The Major smiled. But Johnny looked real serious.

Minister Becomes Catholic; To Study For Priesthood

Harrisburg, Pa.—(NC)—John F. Sponsler, for the past three years an Episcopalian minister in Pennsylvania, was received into the Church on August 14 and was confirmed on Sunday, September 3, by Bishop George L. Leech of Harrisburg in his private chapel.

Mr. Sponsler is a native of Harrisburg and as minister had assignments in Williamsport, Ridge Way, and St. Mary's, Penna. At St. Mary's he came in close contact with the Benedictine Fathers of the Sacred Heart parish. He resigned his ministry in May of this year and since then has been under instruction.

He attributes the grace of his conversion to his long standing devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. On September 13, Mr. Sponsler will enter St. Jerome's College, Kitchner, Ontario, Canada, to begin his studies for the priesthood.

His mother and two sisters reside in Harrisburg.

Catholics In Mission Areas Show Increase

By Rev. Joseph J. Sullivan

Rome — (NC)—The Catholic population of the missionary territories all over the world under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith has almost doubled during the past 23 years according to statistics just published here by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

In 1927, Catholics in mission territories numbered 14,660,000 and at the close of 1949 the number increased to 27,945,000.

THESE STATISTICS form part of the new Directory of Catholic Missions in the world, whose publication here by the International Fides News Agency is timed to coincide with the International Missionary Congress which has just concluded.

The book, which is prepared in Italian and entitled, "Le Missione Cattoliche," provides data of 566 missionary territories or "circumscriptions," giving the latest available historical, geographical and statistical information on all missions throughout the world. It contains an alphabetical index of missions and mission ordinaries, a section of 28 maps, a section on universities and a list of abbreviations of the names of the religious orders and societies with the territories entrusted to their missionary labor.

IN ADDITION to the nearly 28 million Catholics living in the missionary territories at the end of 1949, there are more than 2,500,000 catechumens. Laboring among these and their Catholic neighbors were 26,840 priests, 61,577 Sisters, 9,3331 Brothers, 82,883 catechists and 92,111 lay teachers.

Elementary schools in missionary areas numbered 41,632 with 3,216,720 students, while secondary and higher institutions exceed 5,000 with an enrollment of 900,000. More than 1,000 professional and normal schools have over 50,000 students.

Charitable institutions such as hospitals, orphanages and dispensaries number 6,401 with dispensary consultations amounted to nearly 34,000,000. There were 65,000 hospital beds and lepers, orphans and aged treated numbered 138,543.

U. S. Requests Permit For Moscow Mass

Washington — (NC) — The United States has renewed efforts to induce the Soviet Government to permit an American priest to hold church services in Moscow, it was learned here.

In a conference, held this week in Moscow with Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Ambassador Alan G. Kirk asked that the Soviet Government take appropriate measures to permit the Rev. Arthur O. Brassard, A.A., to say Mass for Americans at the Church of St. Louis of the French, the only Catholic Church in the capital.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF the conference was made by the State Department here.

Father Brassard, Assumptionist from Worcester, Mass., who arrived in Moscow last February, has been denied the right to say Mass publicly or otherwise to exercise his priestly ministry.

He went to Moscow to replace a fellow American Assumptionist whose reentry permit had been revoked by the Soviet Government while vacationing in this country. The quoted American was the Rev. George A. Laberge. It took ten months of negotiations before Father Brassard obtained a Russian visa to take Father Laberge's place.

IT IS RECALLED that Russia agreed to permit Americans living in Russia to be ministered to by "clergymen, priests, rabbis, or other ecclesiastical functionaries" in the treaty of recognition signed in 1933 by the late President Roosevelt and Maxim Litvinov.

A French Assumptionist, the Rev. Jean de Matha Thomas, pastor of the Church of St. Louis from 1947 to 1949, was ordered to leave the country in August this year. He was replaced as pastor in the summer of 1949 by a Latvian priest, the Rev. Josef Butorovich Adamovich who arrived in the Russian capital and was designated as pastor by the Soviet Minister of Religion.

Thereafter Father Thomas was able to exercise his ministry only with the permission of the Latvian priest. The Latvian priest alone now takes care of the spiritual needs of personnel from embassies of Catholic countries, numbering approximately 150 persons. He knows no French or English. He speaks only Russian, Polish and German.

Diplomats In Moscow Protest Red Ousting Of French Priest

By M. MASMIANI

Paris — (NC) —Diplomats of several nations silently demonstrated their resentment in Moscow on Sunday, September 10, against the Soviet's expulsion of the Rev. Jean Thomas, it has been learned from reliable diplomatic sources here.

Early this month Father Thomas, French Assumptionist priest, who had been pastor of the Church of St. Louis of the French in Moscow, the only Catholic church in the Russian capital, was given 48 hours to leave the country by the Soviet government. No reason was given for his expulsion.

ON SEPTEMBER 10 a group of diplomats gathered in St. Louis Church long before the usual time for Mass. They marched out in a body in protest when Father Thomas' successor, a Latvian priest appointed by the Soviet Minister of Religion, appeared on the altar.

Father Thomas himself reported in an interview here that foreign correspondents in Moscow had been prevented from sending dispatches on the Mass he celebrated there on St. Louis' feast day, just before he was forced to leave.

The Mass, celebrated after he had received the expulsion order, was attended by members of the diplomatic corps, including personnel of the United States embassy, Father Thomas said. Numerous NKVD (secret police) agents were also present, but did not interfere. A majority of the foreign newsmen in Moscow attended and all of them filed telegrams reporting the occasion. But none of the telegrams, Father Thomas declared, ever got past the Iron Curtain.

FATHER THOMAS also told reporters here that the Soviet police closely watched all persons going to confession at his church. Police agents, he said, frequently came to St. Louis' pretending to be Catholics. When they saw Slavic persons going to confession, the police spoke to them as Catholics and told them not to confess to the French priest, Father Thomas, but to the Latvian priest, Father Adamovich, who had been appointed by the Soviet government. Father Thomas added that the Latvian priest frequently announced from the pulpit that all Russians and other Slavs had to confess to him.

The police made a point of learning the identity of all parishioners who continued to confess to him and not to Father Adamovich, Father Thomas stated. To do this they used all sorts of tricks. For example, he said, they would approach the faithful and ask them to join a society dedicated to the Sacred Heart or to St. Joseph and thus learn the names and addresses of the faithful.

DURING HIS residence in Moscow, Father Thomas said, two cooks, a sacristan, a chauffeur and several other members of his staff had disappeared. He added that he was never able to learn what had become of them. His chauffeur, for example, had been arrested on July 31 on an unspecified pretext.

SERVE AS MISSION DOCTORS

Rev. Gordon H. Fournier, of the White Fathers, Washington, D. C., recently returned from Africa, smiles his approval as Drs. Leon and Madeline Adcock discuss their plans to serve as doctors in a mission area on Africa's Gold Coast. The husband-wife medical team recently served as resident physicians at St. Joseph's Hospital, St. Paul. They will aid the U. S. Medical Mission Sisters at Berekum. (NC Photos)

State Controls Polish Marriages

Vienna—(RNS)—A new marriage law and family code has been published by the Polish government, the official Polish press agency announced.

The new law, which is expected to be enforced beginning Oct. 1, is similar to one made effective in Czechoslovakia on January 1 of this year. It gives the government the right to interfere in any family situations deemed contrary to the interests of the State.

Under the law church marriages in Poland will be permitted only after civil rites are performed before State functionaries.

According to the law, a wife has the same rights and duties as a husband, but she must also contribute equal support to the family.

The law makes benefit to the State economy the criterion of whether or not a divorce should be granted.

Near East Missions

Francis Cardinal Spellman, President

Msgr. Thomas J. McMahon, Nat'l Sec'ty — Rev. Andrew H. Regesh

Rev. Wm. Kailer Dunn — Rev. Joseph P. Cassidy

Angels of Mercy

MARMARITA EXPRESS

"We enter a house," writes Mother Cecile, of the Sisters of Perpetual Help, Directress of the travelling Medical Dispensary at "Marmarita, the Valley of the Christians," Syria, "which is a house only in name. The family lives in a suffocating haze of smoke in the same room with a camel, cows and other beasts. The first impulse is to flee such misery, but the love of God pushes us in. We open our medical suitcases and begin." The body and soul saving work of these Angels of Mercy extends thru 40 villages. "Oh, if we only had enough medicine for our poor sick people!", pleads Mother Cecile. Who will help poor Marmarita? May we beg for a $20 gift? Many will be needed.

ATTENTION CONVERTS!

THE TIRUVALLA DIOCESE IN INDIA has converts by the thousands. In the town of Manarkad 2 schismatic priests and 20 families became Catholics and started a parish 9 years ago. The house they bought for a church holds only 60. Most Rev. Joseph Mar Severios doesn't want their zeal to burn out. Are there some converts in America who would join hands with these brothers and contribute towards a new church? It's a $2,000 package, but it's worth it.

EMERGENCY ALERT

CAUSES US TO ADD the problem of Holy Land Religious Houses to our Eastern Rite Mission needs. Today we bring you the appeal of the Sisters called "Dames of Nazareth" for their orphanage in that town where the Christian Home of Homes once stood. Kiddies with names like Emelie, Georgette, Nelly, Juliette, Olivia, Therese and Jacqueline hope you'll send their home $10 to help this winter.

AS THE TWIG IS BENT, SO GROWS THE TREE

"BUILD A PARISH SCHOOL and you'll have a filled Church." This thinking of our Bishops has resulted in the glorious Church in America today. We are utterly convinced it holds true for the Missions too. To advance this vital work we ask you today to join our BASILIAN CLUB. $1 a month for school support. No better investment for a dozen dollars can be found. Your certificate waits.

LATER THAN YOU THINK?

TO GIVE AND BEQUEATH something of what God has loaned back to Him for His dear Mission Lands? Whether for Masses for your soul or in a designated gift, remember the Missions in your last will and testament. Our legal title as a corporation is below.

"NOBODY CHILDREN HOUSE"

AS THEY CALL IT, is one of the units of the missionary center established by the "Pious Mothers for the Colored" in Asmara, East Africa. In a quaint attempt at English they plead for help to complete the new Chapel: "The present small chapel is extremely unable to accomodate this so large congregation. How many of American benefactors can make this dream coming true? Our present needs are mostly for the roof, as the raining season is approaching, and materials for the 3 altars dedicated to the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Heart of Mary and St. Joseph." "All donations, even small," they conclude, "will be deeply acknowledged."

MEMBERSHIP APPEALS

WILL BE OUT SOON, and we'd like you to join. Yearly, Individual, $1. Family, $3. Perpetual, Individual, $20; Family, $100. Your loved ones departed are easily enrolled in ALL classes of membership.

A GOLDEN CHALICE

ENGRAVED WITH YOUR NAME or that of a dear one deceased can be put in the hands of a missionary for as little as $40 or as much as $100, depending on the amount of ornamentation. A very precious memorial!

THE CARDINAL'S REFUGEE FUND BUYS A WINTER FOOD PACKAGE FOR $10.

Send all communications to:

Catholic Near East Welfare Association

480 Lexington Ave. at 46th St. — New York 17, N. Y.