

# Belgian Jesuits Report Gains In Red Workers' Stronghold

By REV. ANTHONY COFFENS, S.J.

CHART, Belgium — (NC) — "We have won an elite, and with this elite we will conquer the masses." With these words, Father Dewit summed up the fruits of a mission which he and another Jesuit began about a year and a half ago in bringing back to the Faith the communist workers of Chart, Belgium.

In November, 1930, that Father Dewit and DeBorman were working welcomed by a class socialist daily which proclaimed that the "religious priests" would not last a fortnight in a parish looked upon as the home of Belgian socialism. The priests are still there and there is no question of leaving.

Like the priest of France's Mission de Paris, Fathers Dewit and DeBorman are living like the workers themselves in their patient task of winning back to Christ the 3,000 socialists, communists and anarchists who comprise their "parish."

The priests live in an old-fashioned worker's dwelling owned by a nearby factory. They have a small room downstairs with a narrow sheet bed which serves as kitchen and storeroom. A lead pipe leads to a bedroom under the tiled roof which is equipped with the plainest type of cot.

When Father Dewit came to Chart, the factory owners told him he should speak to his "parish" of spiritual things and forget about social questions. But he and Father DeBorman, who happens to belong to the Belgian Society, had different ideas.

THREE WEEKS CONSIDERABLE work in the neighborhood was done when a fresh cart brought some furniture to an unheated home and two rooms.

They had come across an unused dining hall belonging to the factory, but when they sought permission to convert it into a place of worship, they were twice told "no." Father Dewit was looking for a plot of ground where he could build a shed to serve as a chapel when he was informed that he could have the dining hall after all.

WITH THE AID of young Catholic Actionists, the premises were cleaned, painted and decorated in no time. A schedule of three Sunday Masses was inaugurated and attendance began to increase from week to week. When invitations went out for the first Christmas services in the new chapel, predictions were that hardly more than 20 would be present. Actually, more than 300 persons showed up.

Meanwhile the number of Confessions heard in the chapel continued to grow. Many of the penitents were persons who had abandoned their religious practices for as long as 20 or 30 years.

"IT IS 25 years ago you should have come to us," a workman told Father Dewit one day.

WHEN MAY FIRST, the communist labor day, came around, Father Dewit sponsored a Christian festival in honor of Labor. Dressed in their working clothes, factory employees flocked to Mass to offer the symbols and fruits of their work. All through the same month the chapel was filled during lunch hour by factory workers, men and women, praying the Rosary.

Father Dewit dedicated his chapel to St. Maria Goretti, the daughter of an Italian peasant family who was slain in the early 1900's while defending her chastity.

## Rural Unionization Urged For South

Union House, La. — (NC) — Unionization of farm laborers and of workers in rural areas is the power that can change the face of Louisiana and the South, a prominent Southern priest told the Louisiana Federation of Labor (AFL) here.

The Rev. Vincent J. O'Connell, S.M., chairman of the Industrial Relations section of the Catholic Committee of the South and a faculty member at Notre Dame Seminary, New Orleans, said labor organization in rural areas would "eliminate the old shell game of playing the country against the city."

The saint was canonized during the Holy Year of 1930, the rites being witnessed by the largest crowd ever gathered for such an event. In his honor and as inspiration to his working class parishioners, Father Dewit erected a small altar over which a picture of the child-saint is suspended. Since then, the chapel has been filled by young workers, boys and girls, for what is known as the Maria Goretti vigil.

Credits for initiating the vigil belong to the young workers themselves, according to Father Dewit. He said that every Thursday they set their benches in a hurry so as to be on time for the prayers in honor of "our saint." They pray aloud and their prayers are carried over loudspeakers for those who remain outside.

"These young people," Father Dewit said, "pray in their petitions to protect them in their fight for chastity. The ceremony is a unique scene to witness."

## Therese Neumann Suffers Again Good Friday Bleeding

Kennersroth, Germany — (NC) — In compliance with the usual request of Therese Neumann not to attempt to visit her on Good Friday, scarcely 40 persons called on the stigmatic this year. On the

maia were not bleeding. This year, however, the bleeding was again profuse from the wounds on her head, her eyes, shoulder, hands and arms. Once again, the scene made a deep impression on all who called on Therese Neumann.

The huge crowds which in former years came to this village at Easter time were absent and everything in the village was orderly and peaceful.

proceeding Friday more than 1,000 visitors, among them many Americans, had come to this village.

This year, the stigmatic's Good Friday experiences of the Passion of Our Lord were the same as in previous years. Good Friday of 1931 was the only exception and her ailments were not bleeding.

## Amarillo Announces Church Expansion

Amarillo, Tex. — (NC) — A master plan for the development of church structures, one that marks the growth of the Catholic Church in the Texas Panhandle, has been announced this week by Bishop Laurence J. Fitzsimon of Amarillo.

The plan provides for the purchase of property in suitable locations throughout the city to serve the steadily increasing Catholic population of Amarillo. A survey reveals there are now 1,551 known English-speaking Catholic families in the city, in addition to the Spanish-American and Colored congregations, and that an average of 35 new Catholic families are arriving here daily.

## Cheyenne Starts Catholic Weekly

Cheyenne, Wyo. — (NC) — Wyoming now has its own Catholic newspaper, The Wyoming Catholic Register, newest member of the Register chain which has begun serving the far-flung Diocese of Cheyenne. The Rev. James Rudy, of St. Mary's Cathedral Parish here, is the editor.

## Korean Catholics In Hawaii Organize

Honolulu, T. H. — (NC) — Korean Catholics on this island are being organized into a Korean Catholic club. They will be the latest racial group to take part in the Catholic Action program here and will join the St. Francis Xavier (Japanese) Catholic Club and the Chinese Catholic Club.

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