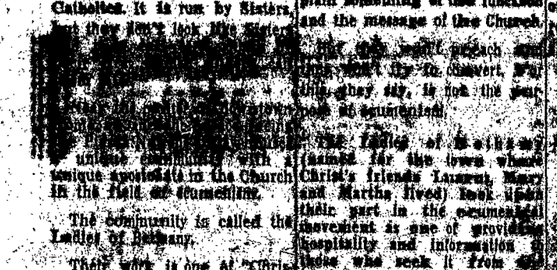
Bethany Nuns in Modern Garb Spur Love for Church

By FATHER JOHN DONNELLY

Rome — (NC) — It is a Catholic house, but not for Catholics. It is run by Sisters, but they don't look like Sisters.



It is a unique community with a unique apostolate in the Church in the field of ecumenism.

The community is called the Ladies of Bethany.

Their work is one of "Christian hospitality" specifically for Non-Catholic visitors to Rome, many of whom are lost in the swirl of things Catholic which surround them in this See city of Catholicism.

Separated Christians from all over the world have come to the UNITAS center, as it is called, or to the guest hostel.

Besides a room, and breakfast with the congregation, they are provided with a lounge, a library and a clear view from their rooms of the dome of St. Peter's over the rooftops of ancient buildings in the older section of the city.

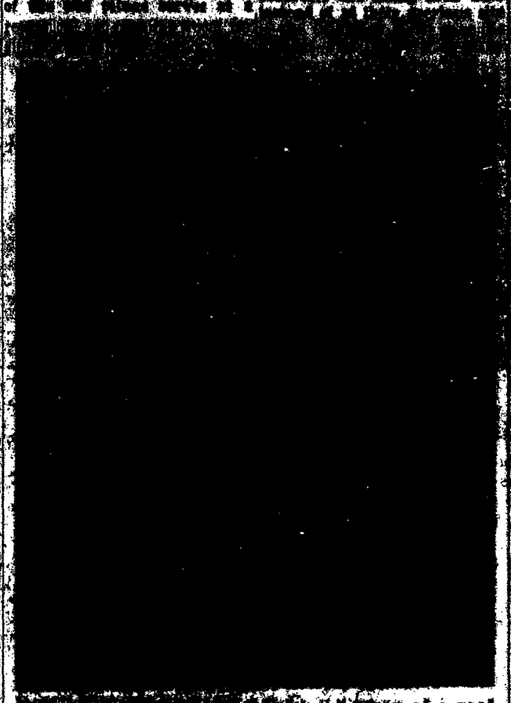
If they ask, the Ladies will explain the strange customs and sights they see as they tour the Eternal City; what this shrine represents; why Catholics burn candles in churches; the meaning of the cult of relics to common men here — and to foreign to many outside the Church. On request, the Ladies will also explain something of the function and the message of the Church.

They don't preach and they don't try to convert. For, they say, it is for the guest to question.

The Ladies of Bethany are named for the town where Christ's friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha lived) look upon their part in the ecumenical movement as one of providing hospitality and information to those who seek it from the Church and of creating a better atmosphere of understanding and smiling religious shenanigans — and between these denominations and Catholicism. They like to point out that many of their guests leave Rome with fewer prejudices and a deeper knowledge of Catholicism, without in the least feeling "preached at."

With the coming of the Second Vatican Council, a new phase of their activity began, similar to the old but with a new and almost official character. They have been working closely with Augustin Cardinal Bea's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity since its foundation a few years ago. Thus, when it was decided to invite Non-Catholic observers to the council, it was only natural that the Ladies of Bethany should have a part.

Three of the observers were wives of Fathers of the Council Union speaks throughout week of the [illegible] previous Council sessions. They are again sharing the third. A large, multilingual library of the [illegible] serves as a



[illegible] p.m. Discussing plans [illegible] Mrs. Robert Hansford and Mrs. Clarence Young cochairmen. There will be [illegible]

are happy about this. It is exactly the type of hospitality their apostolate envisions.

The apostolate began in 1919 when Father Jacques Ginneken, [illegible] at the Catholic [illegible] Amsterdam, the need for greater understanding among families of non-Catholics. He began to bring these separated [illegible] into a dialogue.

Begun as a religious community with emphasis on the contemplative life, the movement soon attracted many of the laity who were enlisted to help in the work of the apostolate. As they became more involved, they asked to take religious vows to give a deeper spiritual dimension to their work. Thus it was decided to combine the contemplative with the active and to form one religious community after the pattern of the Society of Jesus — contemplation in action. In 1936, the group was approved officially by the bishop of Haarlem, Holland, and given canonical status as a diocesan congregation.

Father Ginneken had chosen women for this particular apostolate "because of their special tact and their intuitive way of dealing with others." He saw that in the field of ecumenism — then in its infancy — there was great need for care not to overwhelm others with the force of argument, but to win over to friendship and trust those who had no notion of becoming Catholics, and to persuade them to listen at least to what the Church had to say.

He began at the university level, arranging conferences among Catholic and Non-Catholic students; instructing Catholics in their approach to the ecumenical movement; providing forums for discovery of common grounds. His method was drawn from St. Augustine, particularly his writings on catechetical instruction. This method concentrates on a Scriptural approach — in which Protestants are at home — with emphasis on the life and liturgy of the Church. Dogma and apologetics come only later.

World War II had many tragic consequences for Holland, but one of its consequences was almost providential for the ecumenical movement. Protestants and Catholics were united for years in a common cause against a common enemy, and gradually working together became a habit. After the war this continued and Father Ginneken capitalized on it.

He organized meetings of Catholics and Non-Catholics and continued preparing Catholics for such meetings. At the University of Amsterdam he inaugurated evening courses for this purpose, out of which grew discussion groups drawing Non-Catholic participants as well as Catholic.

Expansion became inevitable.

In 1948, a group of the Ladies was invited to go to Vienna and the congregation became international. In Vienna, however, the work concentrated almost exclusively on Catholics, since most of the population was Catholic, at least in name. Among the working classes especially, the Ladies set about instilling not only deeper instruction in the faith but also a rule of conduct which would effectively survive the factory environment and bring it a ray of hope. They called their work the "School of Life." It soon spread to Linz, Austria, as well.

In Rome in 1945, another movement in the ecumenical field began with the establishment of the international UNITAS, whose publication by the same name has been a standard-bearer in the field. Its specific focus was to prepare Catholic countries for ecumenical encounters. Father Charles Boyer, S.J., a professor at the Gregorian University in Rome, was the first president of UNITAS. In 1950, he established a center as an information outlet for Non-Catholics in Rome. Two years later, he invited the Ladies of Bethany to come to Rome and take it over.

Beginning modestly in a small flat near the banks of the Tiber, the community soon began to expand. In 1958 they began taking in boarders and in 1962 moved from the flat to the large building they now occupy.

The Ladies of Bethany like to point out that its 18 guest rooms are not for Catholics only, but while they always get very privately, the Ladies admit that quite a while a Catholic speaks in, since they haven't the indelicacy to ask a guest his religion. On occasion they have knowingly taken a Catholic on the condition he bring a Non-Catholic friend with him.

All sign the guest book, most with glowing accolades. One sailor says greetings from the U.S. Navy with a cartoon figure of a gob — a labor of love by one American sailor who found his way to the center with a Catholic sailor friend. Another speaks the thoughts of many ministers, rabbis and priests of other faiths who have come to know the gentle hospitality of the Ladies of Bethany: "It's people like you who make it so much easier to understand."

Today the congregation has 180 members who staff 12 houses in Holland and one in Pittsburgh, Pa., as well as three in Austria and the one in Rome. They also admit interest in Israel, and hope to be there soon.

Although they have never worn religious garb when working in the field, at first they did at their motherhouse in Holland. Since 1959, even this has been discarded and their garb is that of office secretaries or business women of the world. A visitor may fumble with the "Miss Jones" if he is aware of their Sisterhood, but for their work it is a most effective non-essential.

Have they noticed any difference in their guests' attitudes since the Council began?

Decidedly yes.

Questions are more numerous and more informed. Guests ask how the Council is going. They want to know about the declarations on religious liberty and the Jews. They want to know what is being done about the reform of the Curia, the dress of prelates and the like.

More than likely they will ask about Pope John XXIII, even now that he is gone. His personality, the Ladies confirm, had an enormous effect on Non-Catholics and they speak of him with a warmth once reserved for a Luther or a Calvin.

Kathleen d'Olier Rites, Ex-Director Charities

Tribute to Miss Kathleen d'Olier who for more than 30 years served in an executive capacity in Rochester Catholic Charities was paid at the Solemn Funeral Mass, Friday, Oct. 9 in St. Augustine's Church.

Miss d'Olier, 81, of Thurston Road was formerly executive secretary, Rochester Catholic Family Center died Oct. 6, 1964. With the Charities she was director of personnel and work of the Catholic Family Center, formerly the Family and Child Service Division of the Charities.

The Solemn Mass of Requiem was celebrated by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Arthur E. Mulligan assisted by Rev. Austin B. Hanna and Rev. Joseph E. D'Auria.

Miss d'Olier, a native of London, Ont., Canada was brought to Rochester by her parents when a child.

She attended the then Brockport Normal School and the University of Rochester and trained as a nurse in Rochester General Hospital.

After going from college to a small mission in the Blue Ridge Mountains Virginia, she returned to Rochester after several years. Here she worked successively with the Tuberculosis and Health Association, Lewis Street Center and Public Health Office.

While with the Public Health Office, she launched a program of pre-natal nursing and, after taking a Civil Service examination, was appointed a school nurse.

In 1917, Miss d'Olier was appointed supervisor of school nurses and was invited to join the recently established Rochester Catholic Charities.

Miss d'Olier was the first to recommend the use of board rather than institutions for unmarried mothers and participated in development of modern child care.

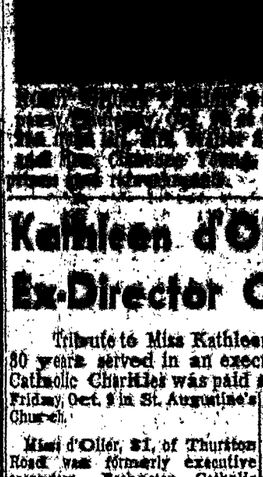
After World War I on a leave of absence she served in Athens, Greece, as director of the Junior Red Cross and established the first school of nursing in Greece.

On a second leave from Catholic Charities, Miss d'Olier went to Puerto Rico under auspices of the American Red Cross to organize the first public health nursing program. She established 15 infant welfare and pre-natal centers in various Puerto Rican towns and obtained scholarships for the first Puerto Ricans ever to attend schools of social work.

Her career included membership on President Herbert Hoover's 1930 White House Conference on Children. For 21 years she served on the board of directors of the Council of Social Agencies in Rochester and was a member of American Association of Social Workers, 28 years.

Surviving is one sister, Mrs. Luel (Marie) Johnson; one niece, Mrs. Louis (Ethel) Deutsch; one nephew, Walter W. Trimby of Atlanta, Ga.; two grandnieces, Mrs. Edward (Anne) Brown, Miss Patti Trimby; two grandnephews, Louis P. Deutsch III and John T. Deutsch.

Arrangements by Corbett Funeral Home.



KATHLEEN d'OLIER

ary were the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John E. McCafferty, Rev. Austin B. Hanna and Rev. Joseph E. D'Auria.

P. J. Kellerson Requiem Sung

Funeral Mass for Peter J. Kellerson was offered in Holy Cross Church, Oct. 12. Mr. Kellerson, 181 Chesterfield Drive died Oct. 9, 1964.

Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated by Rev. Robert H. Fennessy assisted by Rev. John Hempel, deacon and Rev. Frederick W. Bush, subdeacon.

Surviving are one daughter, Mrs. J. Howard (Teresa) Murray; one son, Joseph P. Kellerson; three grandchildren, John, Mary and Dale Kellerson; one sister, Mrs. Kathryn Jacobs; one brother, Paul Kellerson; several nieces and nephews.

Mr. Kellerson was a member of Holy Cross Holy Name Society.

Blessing at the grave in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery was given by Rev. Alphonsus P. Crimmens, Canandaigua. Arrangements by Alvah Halleran and Son, Chili Ave.

Welcome New Members

Holy Cross Rosary Society meeting Oct. 27 to start with Rosary and installation of new members in Church at 8 p.m. followed by business session in the cafeteria.

FBI Chief

Chicago — (NC)—FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover has been selected as the first recipient of its Sword of Loyola Award of Loyola University here. The presentation will be made Nov. 24 at the annual dinner of the university's Stritch School of Medicine.

Pancake Supper

Our Lady of Good Counsel Boy Scout Troop 45 will sponsor a pancake supper on Tuesday, Oct. 20 from 5 to 7:30 p.m. in the school hall.

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