



Rooster in the Classroom

(Continued from Page 1)

I mimed the opening of a desk, took out the imaginary book and using my hands as the flaps made the motions of a book opening.

The students squealed in girlish delight. Heads disappeared behind desk tops. The poetry books emerged and were opened to page forty-two and my first great challenge of communication had been met.

I like to recall that first day in class because it exemplifies just one of the difficulties. I've been in teaching in a language that is not the mother tongue of the students. The contractions we use continuously in our spoken language, the swift-rhythmic flow of American English, the ordinary American idioms we use without a second thought all contribute to making communication between the American teacher and her foreign student most difficult.

The one hundred and twenty students in my school, learning and speaking English in the classroom, are operating in a language they put aside as soon as they return to their villages for school vacations.

The native tongues in Nigeria—no one knows how many but they estimate about two hundred and fifty—are still spoken predominantly by the people in the towns and villages. Because the students in my school are drawn from four distinctly different tribes, most of them are forced to speak in English outside the classroom because it is the only common ground of communication they have.

This is a distinct advantage to me in that they are growing in their awareness that English is becoming the universal means of communication in Nigeria and in the world.

But in those first few months, when I found that the English that they spoke and the English that I spoke was sometimes so different that I often wondered if there was any communication at all.

However, as time went on, I learned to erase all contractions when speaking to Nigerians. I began to speak more slowly, pronouncing more distinctly the and's, but's, and or's in the pursuit of the spoken idea. I began to listen in conversations for the words that the Nigerians used over and over in their speech. And in class, whenever I introduced a new English word, I made sure to associate it with a word they knew and used frequently.

Poetry class was the best way to teach them that English is a very rhythmic language and not the monotonous, every-vowel-stressed language that they have come to interpret it. The part of the poetry appreciation period that they have come to enjoy most is the part where we clap out the poem's rhythm with our hands. Some students have become so enthusiastic in the exercise, that they have begun pounding the desks to keep time.

And on one occasion, a couple of girls stood up and began dancing to the rhythm the other students were clapping to. I do not still consider that one of my most successful classes in English pronunciation.

Be flexible and ready for any situation," they told us in the training program. And so in my monotonous, every-vowel-stressed language, I envisioned being besieged with questions and criticisms about pertinent issues in the USA.

Little did I know that my biggest challenges would take place right in my classroom amid casual, unpredictable circumstances.

For example, there was the day that a rooster, a chicken and four haw chicks nonchalantly ambled into the classroom right in the middle of a poetry lesson. The rooster, hysterically proclaimed, his presence much to the delight of the students who were primarily entertained. Of course the class was my dumbfounded expression totally disrupted as two of the girls chased the enclosure out with the bush broom which was kept in the corner.

The students, seeing my astonishment, began to ask questions about the kind of schools that we have in America.

"You do not have chickens in our country," asked a student. "Well we do have chickens," I answered. "But they do not usually walk into the classroom."

Suddenly they were interested in the differences between their school and American schools. So for the rest of the period, we discussed what it would be like to go to school in Nigeria and the USA.

The girls were most surprised to learn that in the States boys and girls attend secondary

school together. Most of the Nigerian schools are all-boy or all-girl schools and all Nigerian schools are boarding schools since most students must come long distances to attend.

By and large that class, by sheer accident, was a very successful cultural exchange of ideas and it was all because of the rather academic route taken by some bush fowl.

In another class just a few weeks later, a vulture swooped in through an open window, perched himself on the back of my chair, stretched his wings to their full span and then swooped out through a window on the other side of the room. This time, I was frightened as well as astonished and still the girls were delighted with my reaction.

And so there we were again—another class where we found ourselves talking about America and Nigeria, this time with regards to birds rather than schools. And since the class had been doing poetry before our living friend entered, I finished up by having the students turn from Cherterton's "The Donkey" to Hilaire Belloc's "The Vulture."

The third and final term of my first year is beginning now. I do little pantomiming in class nor is their much repeating of facts. If they don't understand someone rises and gets me to repeat. They are confident that I do not consider them poor students because they do not always understand what I say the first time I say it.

The initial shyness has all but gone and many of them delight in coming up to me after class to ask questions they know will cause much laughter.

The classroom is very much home now, even on those days when it rains so hard that the pounding on the tin roof prevents any lecturing at all. On those days during rainy season I have come to prepare two lessons for each class—a dry lesson (lecturing and a wet lesson (written work). It is the point now that I have consciously remind myself that I am more than 5000 miles from home—my old home, that is.

New Music OK, But Not Samba

Rio de Janeiro—(NC)—Dorival Caymmi, Brazil's leading samba composer, has been asked by Church authorities to write music for a new Mass.

Father Domingos Seixas of Sao Bento monastery here said after talking to Caymmi that "the samba will not be sung in churches," but that the liturgy will be modernized. He said other popular music composers have been approached for the same purpose.

Shrine Pictures Available to Groups

Mrs. Sara Smith, 31 Quincy St., of Corpus Christi parish, Rochester, reports she has slide pictures of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington which she would show to parish or area groups

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Cuba Exiles Aided Totals 50,000 Plus

Miami—(NC)—The 50,000th Cuban refugee resettled by the Miami office of Catholic Relief Services—National Catholic Welfare Conference left here en route to New Orleans and a job at a residence for young women.

Mrs. Silvia Brooks, 53, widow of a Cuban mechanical engineer, was accompanied by her daughter, Mariana Luise, 28, who has suffered from a chronic disease of the nervous system since childhood.

The exiles, who came to Miami in 1962, studied English while here and will be assisted in New Orleans by the Catholic Cuban Center.

Hugh McLoone, director of the Catholic agency's resettlement office here said the girl has improved as a result of treatment here and expects further gains in New Orleans.

Almost 85,000 Cuban refugees now have been resettled through the combined efforts of agencies at the Cuban Refugee Center, McLoone said. Church World Service, the International Rescue Committee, and Church HIAS offices have resettled some 35,000 exiles.

Post Reports 'Momentous' Church Era

"A bold new generation is struggling to break with the hushed past and to bring the Church to grips with modern society," says the Nov. 28 Saturday Evening Post.

In a 19-page report, ten months in the making, the Post surveys the ferment at work which promises to make "momentous changes" in the Catholic Church, changing it from a religion of consolation to one of challenge.

Students Told Be Involved

New Orleans—(RNS)—Catholic youth must have a "clear understanding" that being a good individual and a good family man or woman is not all that makes

the editor of "Social Action" magazine, Father Twomey gave the keynote address at the three-day conference. He said social consciousness "consists in both commitment and involvement in the life of the faith as it relates to man and the society made up of men.

"Commitment," he added, "is the intellectual habit which involves knowledge of and assent to the great principles and practices of the Church as enunciated chiefly in the papal encyclicals on social reconstruction.

Segregation, Cancer In Nation

New York—(RNS)—A Jesuit law professor in a strong condemnation of racial discrimination in the North as well as the South, attacked segregation as a "cancer in the body politic" and a "desecration of Christian civilization."

"It is blasphemy in the mystical body of Christ," Father William J. Kenely of Boston asserted. "It is—and I say this with all reverence and accuracy—a God-damned thing."

The priest, a faculty member at Boston College Law School, spoke at the fifth annual Mass for the Advancement of Human Rights sponsored by the St. Thomas More Society.

His anti-segregation sermon included criticism of those who have opposed the 1954 Supreme Court desegregation of public schools and of the Founding Fathers for yielding to the "interest of inhuman property rights by perpetuating the institution of slavery."

Father Kenely told the congregation that the "failure of the Founding Fathers to implement in the Federal Constitution the full philosophy of the Declaration of Independence has been matched by our failure as Catholics to practice in our lives the teachings of Christianity."

Christmas Card Art Contest

Tarrytown—(NC)—A national competition to encourage Christian art and use of religious themes in Christmas cards is being sponsored by Marymount College here.

The contest, open to the public, offers prizes totaling several thousand dollars. Prize-winning entries and 500 others will be selected for display in the lobby galleries of the Union Carbide Building, New York, during the Christmas holidays.

Sister M. DeMontfort, chairman, said selection and award juries of artists and teachers and critics would choose winning entries and the others for the Dec. 21 through Jan. 2 exhibit. The deadline for submitting entries is Dec. 12.

Pope Closes Third Session

Vatican City—(RNS)—An historic moment in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Paul VI is given a bound volume containing the three major decisions of the Second Vatican Council's third session. Promulgated by the Pope, they establish the principle of collegiality in which the bishops share with the Pope the responsibility for governing the Church; provide guidelines for Catholics in the Christian Unity movement; and authorize Eastern Rite-Eastern Orthodox cooperation.

Papal Peace Document Theme of Convocation

Chicago—(RNS)—An international and inter-religious convocation devoted to world peace will take place at the last convocation of Pope John XXIII in the city.

Heads of state and other leaders from East and West are expected to take part in a three-day meeting designed to explore practical steps toward "Peace on Earth." The English title of the late pontiff's encyclical

he called Pope John's Peace in the world, the most significant document of the convocation since the charter philosophy and religious will of the United Nations, adding that it was "a proclamation against cynicism" designed to offset the cynicism of those who see no hope of everlasting peace.

"The convocation," he said, "will be in the face of this cynicism. We will do it with the thoughtful, practical spirit of the late pontiff's encyclical."

According to Robert M. Hut

Teachers Plea Wins Aid

Buenos Aires—(NC)—A group of country school teachers pleaded for help when a bishop, the plans in the province of the Chaco in the interior. Overpopulation has resulted in a better way of life for a tribe of Argentine Indians.

The Indians' 350 members of the Tobas tribe, shared the fate of the Argentine Indians in the 19th century. The Tobas were left homeless and landless.

Miss Vinde, through daily contact with the people, learned their story and decided something should be done about it. She wrote to Bishop Iñigo Serrano Di Stefano of President Roque Saenz Pena, and asked his aid.



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