

Rochester Traveler Meets Local Missioners

By STEPHEN MAY
(Special to The Courier)

High on a wooded hill overlooking a picturesque bay some 20 miles drive from downtown Hong Kong, a Maryknoll priest from Rochester is studying Cantonese so he can bring spiritual and material assistance to the colony's immigrant population.

This month Rev. Vincent F. Corbelli, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Corbelli of 4240 Lake Avenue, expects to be assigned to a parish in one of Hong Kong's crowded resettlement areas.

In preparation for this task, he has been putting in nine hours a day learning the Chinese dialect he will need to communicate with his parishioners. Even with a tape recorder and intensive individual instruction, Father Corbelli, who has been studying since September, told me that progress seemed slow. Unfamiliar muscles are required and each tone gives a word a different meaning, he explained.

Up to now emphasis has been on the spoken language. Later there will be time to work on reading and writing. "We're here to instruct, motivate and educate, so command of the language is the first essential," Father Corbelli pointed out.

He added that eventually he will conduct Mass mainly in Cantonese.

The Rochester priest lives and studies in a red brick Maryknoll House, in front of which is a curved driveway and white statue of Our Lady of Maryknoll. The building was formerly a rest house for priests working all over China.

With all clerics now excluded from that land of atheism, Maryknoll fathers concentrate their efforts in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Eight other priests are in residence, one of whom is also engaged in language study.

A 1951 graduate of Aquinas Institute, Father Corbelli was ordained in Maryknoll in 1960 and did vocational and promotional work in Cincinnati for four years. He expects to spend the rest of his life in Hong Kong, with the exception of six months in the United States every six years.

Since 1949 the Maryknoll Fathers — the only American priests in Hong Kong — have been directly engaged in the work of helping destitute immigrants from Red China who have flooded into the already overcrowded British colony. Effectively supplementing the gallant efforts of the Hong Kong government to place the newcomers in tenement quarters, they have established housing areas, refugee centers, schools, clinics and welfare



Rochester's Father Corbelli at Maryknoll House in Hong Kong.

centers in areas entrusted to their care.

Their activities run the gamut from distributing surplus food to teaching typing to supervising a noodle factory they set up several years ago. All this, of course, is in addition to their overall mission of bringing the spiritual consolations of the Church to thousands who have suffered under the cruel rule of Godless communism.

It is tough, demanding shirt-sleeve work, much of it involving physical toil and deprivation, but Father Corbelli is looking forward to it.

"This is what I came here for," he said. "My task will be to minister to the needs of the poor in any way I can."

It might be added that his warm, informal manner and intense dedication to his calling will stand him in good stead in the challenging work he has chosen.

Father Corbelli is particularly concerned about education, a major problem in a community where 50 per cent of the population is under the age of 15.

"There are 600,000 children who want to attend classes but can't because there aren't enough facilities to handle them," he told me. In one Maryknoll school, 800 applied for 40 openings in the freshman class.

"We're also seeking Chinese to become priests so that eventually they can take over the

Stephen May, author of this article, is a young Rochester attorney who recently completed a four-month, seventeen-country study trip around the world. In Hong Kong he met two missionary priests from Rochester. He reports on their work in this article. Mr. May has been an executive assistant to former Senator Kenneth E. Keating and Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge. As on a previous trip in 1962, he conferred with diplomats, journalists and local people to gain first-hand knowledge of the countries he visited.

living in the colony now, he told me.

Among the 25 other Maryknoll fathers assigned to Hong Kong is Rev. James V. O'Halloran, whose mother Mrs. Sophia O'Halloran lives at 29 Avondale Road, Irondequoit. Since his arrival there two years ago he has been busy with the many problems of his parish in a resettlement area.

Last August he helped residents dig out after a savage typhoon inundated the area and left 5,000 temporarily homeless. With considerable envy, Father Corbelli reports that Father O'Halloran's Chinese is very good, adding that he's doing his best to catch up.

A graduate of Corpus Christi School in Rochester, Father O'Halloran attended St. An-

draw's Seminary before entering Maryknoll to study for the priesthood. Following his ordination in 1956, he taught in Pennsylvania and Illinois prior to beginning his missionary work in Hong Kong in 1962.

Both priests are members of Maryknoll, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, which was established in 1911 by the American Bishops to recruit, send and support American missionaries in overseas areas. Today, Maryknoll fathers are active in 13 countries, where they serve as official representatives of the Church.

It is doubtful that anywhere their work is more needed — or more appreciated — than in the incredibly populous area of Hong Kong with its continuing problems of human misery.

You can continue to help Bishop Kearney in his work for immortal souls.

Include the Diocese of Rochester in your will or for further details phone, 454-1155, or write the Chancery, 50 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y.

Dropouts Reveal Spiritual Drought

Pope Paul told throngs at the Vatican last Sunday that the world, instead of going forward has "taken a step backward on the road to peace."

His gloomy comment probably followed a look at Sunday newspapers which told of the escalating war in Vietnam and dashing of British hopes to bring the combatants to a conference table.

If the turmoil in southeast Asia could be described as "a step backward" then some aspects of religious life could be described as "a landslide backward."

The malignancy is not sectarian. It cuts across all denominational lines and the Catholic Church is far from immune.

A few statistics will illustrate the point —

America magazine reports this week that the Catholic population in the United States is up 42 per cent from its 1954 figure but that the number of priests is up only 22 per cent. And the total number of nuns has actually gone down — there being 60 fewer nuns now in the country than there were last year.

Lee Berton, a staff writer for the Wall Street Journal, recently reported that 60,000 Protestant and Jewish congregations are without a full-time clergyman. To complicate the situation, 120 ministers have joined the Peace Corps.

Lay people too are said to be "in the throes of a crisis of faith." Novelist Edward R. F. Sheehan told delegates at the Catholic Hospital Association meeting in St. Louis last month that the Church faces a "deep problem" as a growing number of young Catholics feel the Church has no "relevance" to them and they stop attending Mass and receiving the sacraments.

Seminaries are noticeably suffering the impact of this spiritual drought.

A nationwide survey by Sulpician Father Cornelius Cuyler tabulates statistics from 1935 to 1952 and shows an 83 per cent dropout rate in the nation's seminaries. Father Cuyler says this high percentage is due in large measure to the increasing number of dropouts in recent years compared to the earlier years in his survey.

He comments, "Safety in the faith does not lie with the candidates."

Which raises the question—where does the fault lie?

Most every spokesman these days has developed his own scapegoat to blame — from too much materialism or too much permissiveness to too much ecumenism or too much experimentation and change.

Any Catholic who drifts from the faith these days, or any aspirant to the priesthood or convent who drifts from that vocation is promptly labeled a "victim" of the "new scripture" or the "new theology" of just the whole "new breed" in general.

The fault, however, is most probably not out there in this galaxy of new ideas but, as Cassius long ago told Brutus, in ourselves.

If the shepherds find a dwindling number of sheep to follow them, are the sheep alone to be blamed?

Cassius also told Brutus, "Men at some time are masters of their fate." This, it seems, is one of those times when the shepherds will have to make decisions which determine not only their own fate but that of their sheep as well.

For Christians, the ultimate model of shepherding is that of the great Good Shepherd who garnered his followers in ways more orthodox churchmen today would reject out of hand. As Rochester's Baptist minister, Rev. George Hill, is quoted in the current issue of Look magazine, "The Cross was not a Favorite Citizen Award handed to Jesus by the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce."

If thousands of young people enroll in the Peace Corps or conduct Freedom Schools down south, then we can't say there's a lack of generosity.

Somehow the Church has lost its original image as an effective agency to serve those who are in either spiritual or material need. It looks too often like a comfortable, complacent little group intent on taking care of itself — and the cross seems more a decoration than a way of life.

It has been the genius of the Church that it has always found its way back to this path to Calvary and to the Cross. That road today leads perhaps through the inner-city and through Selma, through the jangle of beetle music and the jungle of chaotic morals and dependency. Seems ridiculous? The way of the cross, however, never did make much sense to those who preferred the status quo.

The dropouts and the dropout, therefore, are more accurately blamed on our own failure to be truly and totally Christian rather than to shunt blame onto some new phenomenon in the ecclesiastical spectrum.

—Father Henry A. Auel

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Text and symbol for Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

High Schools Preferred

Washington — (RNS) — Roman Catholics should divert some of their money and manpower from many of the newer colleges — especially for women — to a solid junior college and high school program if Catholic educators are to meet the demands placed upon them.

This evaluation of a present-day Catholic dilemma was given by Father Neil G. McCluskey, academic vice-president of Gonzaga University, Spokane, Wash. He addressed a conference of the nation's Catholic high schools are so few," enroll-Georgetown University.

"New ways must be found to multiply good Catholic high schools," he told the National Catholic Education Association.

Catholic schools, he reminded, often are faced with operation on tight budgets which, in turn, are partially responsible for using outmoded teaching methods. "And because Catholic high schools are so few, enrollment is 'moving in an elitist direction.'"

By that, Father McCluskey meant that the high schools could be more selective in their student body. "Very quietly," he

said, "the principle seems to be operating that since there is not room for everybody, we take the prepared youngsters whose families can afford to pay the tuition and fees."

The shortage of high schools and junior colleges, he contends, is carried by too much effort being concentrated on Catholic colleges "whose future

as solid four-year colleges is extremely doubtful."

"The proliferation of Catholic colleges, especially for women, has been the bewilderment of the academic community. They condemn themselves to the limbo of mediocrity, and in the academic market place they debase the general coinage of Catholic higher education," he commented.

The resultant "screening" of freshmen entering Catholic high schools, he said, "automatically guarantees a high level of ability and achievement."

Council Book Published

Washington — (NC) — "Council Daybook: Vatican II, Sessions 1 and 2" has been published here by the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The 8 1/2-by-11 inch 384-page paperback book contains the day-by-day news coverage of the first two sessions provided by the N.C.W.C. News Service, as well as many speeches and summaries of council documents.

It also includes the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the decree on the Media of Social Communication. There is a comprehensive index.

Utilization of team teaching methods, expanded use of television, more flexible scheduling, large and small group instruction were among methods the principals were told they could use to strengthen the caliber of teaching in parochial high schools.

Do We Need a 'Grievance Man' to Speak for us?

By GARY MACFARLIN

The Swedes have long had an institution which I believe would have captured wider attention were it not for its absurd-sounding name. This is the ombudsman, and it isn't at all absurd when it is translated into English as "grievance man."

The ombudsman is a government official whose job is to protect the citizen from the excesses of officialdom. Any citizen may complain to his office about illegal, unfair or even implicate public service. He also reads the newspapers and keeps his eyes open, and he can take the initiative when he thinks it appropriate.

I can speak from rather wide experience of officialdom in many countries, and I think that we in the United States are blessed with public servants of high integrity and courtesy. In my dealings with the income tax I have always been given the benefit of the doubt, since even now a refund when tax officials discovered "mistakes" in my mathematics. Customs men similarly tend to assume that I am law-abiding and engaged in legitimate pursuits.

Yet even in this country, everyone knows that the citizen must maintain

eternal vigilance against the encroachments of bureaucracy, its natural tendency to serve itself rather than him. We have developed many ways to do this. One is the appeal to our congressman. Another is the creation of permanent organizations, such as civil liberties committees, and ad-hoc groups to protest the closing of a hospital or the routing of a highway through a playground.

All these ways have worked, but all leave something to be desired. The tradition of help from one's congressman is one of our strongest. But Congress members are complaining that it is tending to distract them from their true function. "Many members of the House and Senate," Vice-President Humphrey has said, "spend up to 20 per cent of their own time and that of their individual constituents' requests."

Formation of citizen protection groups is also deeply ingrained in our traditions and should remain also. But it is open to abuse. Some recent complaints of police brutality have tended to take on racial overtones. Other groups have raised political or ideological issues. And one always remains with the problem that the individ-

ual or group that shouts loudest usually gets most satisfaction.

The Swedes have more than 150 years experience with the ombudsman, and they claim that he is the best solution to the problem. It is interesting to note that with the modern proliferation of bureaucracy, others are following their example. Finland set up the office when it became independent after World War I. Denmark followed suit in 1955, New Zealand in 1962 and Norway in 1963.

One of the campaign pledges of the labor governments that recently came to power in Britain was to establish the office of ombudsman, and presumably this pledge will be fulfilled. Canada, Australia, Ireland and the Netherlands are studying similar proposals. So is fact is the United States.

A bill introduced last year in Congress and reintroduced in the current session by Congressman Henry Reuss of Wisconsin and Senator Clairborne Pell of Rhode Island proposes the creation of the office under the title of "administrative council of the Congress." The hope is for a more rational and methodical handling of the complaints now dealt with by individual congressmen.

And what about the Church? It is hardly surprising that one of the suggestions made during the Council for strengthening the office of ombudsman. Not everyone will praise the practical judgment in all matters of the proposal, Archbishop Thomas Roberts, S.J. But one who has ever known him can doubt his dedication and his long-passioned concern for the small man, the ordinary Christian and citizen, trying to do the best he can in situations over which he exercises no control.

When Archbishop Roberts presented his proposal in Rome, he certainly put forward powerful arguments for speeding up the machinery of Church decisions. He instanced delays of ten years in ruling on marriage appeals. "What use," he asked, "is even a favorable decision ten years later?"

The Council decree on the Church calls for expression of opinion by the laity to the hierarchy on relevant matters through organs to be created for this purpose. It should not be surprising if among these organs in some American dioceses we soon see something very similar to the office of the ombudsman.

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