

Elmira Convert Discusses:

Protestant Community Life

Catholics familiar with the tradition of "community life" in religious orders, are often surprised to find that there is a similar tradition in some Protestant lay groups.

Although ordinary garb is worn, and whole families often join together, the goal—seeking closer union with God through community life—is much the same as that of the Catholic religious orders.

An Elmira parochial school teacher, Mrs. John Houssman, can speak on this subject from both sides of the fence. In her teaching role, she is now a colleague of Catholic nuns. And prior to entering the Catholic Church in 1959, she was a member of a Protestant religious community—the Society of Brothers.

Mrs. Houssman of 1203 Lake St. in Elmira, joined the Woodcrest community, near New Palz, N.Y. with her husband in 1954. When he died in 1955, she remained with the group for another four years, leaving only when she decided to become a Catholic.

The soft-spoken teacher has had something of a personal religious odyssey. Daughter of a Congregationalist couple in Aurora, Ill., she was baptized in that church at 12.

She later joined the Presbyterian church with her husband at Midland, Mich. He was employed by Dow Chemical company there.

Her initial interest in community life stemmed from a casual visit to an "intentional" community at El Toro, Calif. in 1945. ("Intentional" in this case means a group of people banded together with a definite "intention" to combine their resources in order to live a more fervent Christian life.)

In a June 19 ceremony this year, she received the black veil and cross, emblematic of first vows in her congregation. The Mission Helpers, who have a mission in Fairport, specialize in catechetical work. They staff the Assumption parish school of religion in Fairport.

Sister Kristina attended Blessed Sacrament and St. Thomas the Apostle grammar schools in Rochester. She attended Nazareth Academy and Irondequoit High before graduating from Fairport's Minerva Deland High in 1963. The family are parishioners of Assumption parish.

After a summer school course, Sister Kristina will be assigned to a mission of her community for two years, then return to Baltimore, for 3 years to complete her undergraduate studies.

The Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart last year celebrated the 75th anniversary of their founding.



MRS. HOUSSMAN

In Woodcrest's very ecumenical library, Mrs. Houssman came across and read some outstanding Catholic authors. She was particularly impressed by Dietrich von Hildebrand and Romano Guardini. Over a period of several years, her reading and the frequent discussions on religious history that she engaged in with other community members, gradually led her to conclude that there was "One True Church," but it was the Catholic Church.

"The only reason I could see for anyone to leave here, would be if he decided that it were not the 'One True Church,'" stated Mrs. Houssman.

A moment of decision arrived for her in 1959. Attending a religious seminar at Cornell University, she met a Benedictine monk, Brother David, from Mt. Saviour monastery in Elmira. She asked a few key questions, got some direct answers, and made up her mind to become a Catholic.

Leaving Woodcrest, she went to Elmira to discuss her decision with Brother David and his prior, Dom Damasus Wintzen. She needed a job now, decided to settle in Elmira. At Elmira Heights, she took instructions in the Catholic faith from Father Joseph Merkel, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Church. In due time, he received her into the Church.

Mrs. Houssman has been teaching for the past four years at Our Lady of Lourdes school in Elmira. (She was a teacher before she married.)

This summer, she's working on her certification at Nazareth College, with many nuns as fellow students. When the conversation touches on community life, Mrs. Houssman is able to make her own contributions to the discussions!

—Father Robert Kanka

remind them of the importance of fraternal charity.

The meeting room being a symbol of group unity, members who had any discord with others, were expected to remain away from the meeting until the rift was healed. "If you were not really united with everyone, you should not be present until that unity was again a reality," is the way she explains it.

Mrs. Houssman's personal pilgrimage had not ended, much as she esteemed the life at Woodcrest. One thing that perplexed her was the claim made by members of the group: that this was the "One True Church." She can still remember the time when the group's leader, who held the title "Servant of the Word," stated:

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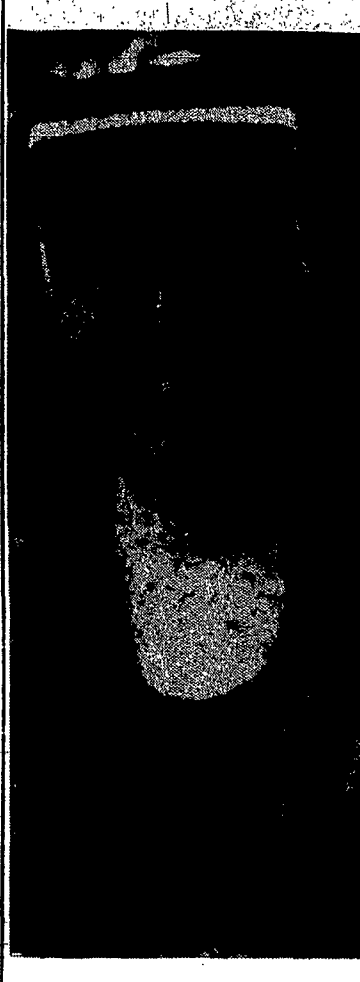
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First Vows As Mission Helper



SISTER M. KRISTINA

Sister Mary Kristina of Jesus recently made her first religious vows at the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart Motherhouse in Baltimore, Md. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Gorsuch of 168 High St. in Fairport.

Sister Kristina entered the Mission Helpers community in September, 1963, and received her religious habit in June, 1964.

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200 Trackmen Set To Go In Elmira

Elmira—The spiked-shoe spotlight swings to Elmira's brightly-lit Parker Field Saturday night (July 30) for the Sixth Annual New York State Track and Field Championships.

The meet, sponsored by the Elmira K of C Track Club, will bring some 15 track clubs and 200 athletes from all corners of New York State to compete.

Gates open at 4:45 p.m., with the field events and time trials scheduled for 5 p.m. and the track finals, slated for 7 p.m. Family rates prevail. The donation is \$1.00 for adults; 50 cents for grammar school students when accompanied by an adult, and pre-schoolers free.

For the first time in the history of the State Championships, the long and triple jumps will be held directly in front of the grandstand.

In previous years, these events, which are rapidly becoming real crowd-pleasers, were held on the West end of the field, on a dirt approach and restricted to standing fans only.

With the addition of a modern, hard-surface runway, Elmira track fans will be able to set in the stands for both events, plus the return of the pole vault, absent the past two years.

Also highlighting the 20-event card will be another event of local interest—the William C. Emerson Memorial Mile Walk.

This year's walk shapes up as a real "heel-and-toe" struggle with Ron Daniel, the national 30-kilometer champ and 1963 winner here, facing tough competition from the Long Island Strider's Steve Hayden, New York Metropolitan AAU record holder.

Don Brown, tireless Elmira K of C mile and 2-mile performer, is also a threat in the walk.

Brown, if his stamina holds out, and K of C Coach Glenn Mallette thinks it will, will either be a threat, or push the front-runners to new records in the mile and 2-mile.

Three Most Valuable Performer award winners will return—Charley Mays of the Grand Street Boys (1962) and Chuck Gullo (1963) and Fran Smith (1965), both of Gardentown.

Mays, a member of the United States team for the Russian and Polish meets, is entered in five events—the 100, 220 high jump, broad jump and triple jump.

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