

# Two Women Shape Laity Congress

COURIER-JOURNAL  
Friday, Sept. 1, 1967

By JAMES C. O'NEILL

Vatican City — (NC) — Two women, one Australian and the other American, are lending a very effective hand in preparing for the third International Congress of the Lay Apostolate which opens in Rome Oct. 11.

They are Rosemary Goldie of Sydney, Australia, and Alma Herger of Vallejo, Cal.

Miss Goldie, a veteran of lay apostolate work in Rome, is one of the two undersecretaries of the Vatican's new Council for the Laity.

Miss Herger is on special assignment from the National Council of Catholic Women in the U.S. to help organize the technical aspects of the congress, which will bring together more than 2,000 top Catholic lay leaders from 52 countries for eight days of meetings and discussions.

The two women work each in her own area, but by the nature of things they must and do work closely together. For instance, while Miss Goldie concentrates on the organization of 40 separate discussion work-

shops, divided up by languages and topics, Miss Herger has had to find 40 separate meeting rooms around Rome in which the workshops can be held.

While Miss Goldie meets in committee with liturgical experts to work out plans for the liturgy that will be woven into the days of meetings, Miss Herger has to find vesting space and storage room for objects needed in the various liturgical ceremonies.

In its way, it is a rather Mary-Martha relationship but both women keenly appreciate the other's capacities. Says "Mary" (Miss Goldie), "Alma is our gift from America!" Miss Herger (Martha) replies: "Rosemary has enormous know-how with these meetings and it is invaluable."

Miss Goldie indeed has had long experience in organizing lay apostolate congresses. She was sent from Pax Romana headquarters in Eribourg, Switzerland, to Rome to help prepare for the world congress in 1951. She stayed on with a permanent body to prepare for future such meetings, the second of which was held in 1957. In 1959 she

was officially named executive secretary of the permanent preparatory organization and in 1967 she was named an undersecretary of the Council for the Laity which will replace the preparatory organization after the third world congress ends.

Among the first of the laywomen to be named auditors to the Second Vatican Council, Miss Goldie has become a familiar figure in and out of the normally masculine precincts of the Vatican. For more than 15 years she has become identified with the laity's role in the Church on the Roman scene.

Miss Herger herself is no stranger to Rome. For eight years (1951-1959) Miss Herger was stationed in Rome as head of the USO club. During her time here the door count of the club jumped from 5,000 to 20,000 a year and she had to know how to get a lot of things done for a variety of people. That experience, plus a good mind for detail — although she swears she is not a detailist — makes her a really valuable American gift to the success of the upcoming congress.

The congress itself is the most ambitious of its sort yet to be held. Coming as it does in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, the congress is envisioned as a means of translating the council's teachings and ideas on the role of the laity in the Church into an active participation of the laity on a world level.

Martin Work, executive director of the National Council of Catholic Men in the U.S. and a member of the preparatory organization of the congress, sees its function as a "temperature-taking" experiment to learn the problems, ideas and projects of lay Catholics from all parts of the world. Miss Goldie agrees, but also anticipates even more positive results from the meetings.

The fact that the congress will meet in Rome, in Miss Goldie's opinion, the effect of speeding up implementation of many of the council's teachings on the role of the laity in the Church. This implementation can also be carried out in a more balanced way after the congress, she said, because the problems facing the laity and the Church in general will have been considered in different contexts and according to different situations.

Another important facet of the congress will be its ecumenical consequences, Miss Goldie said. "The congress will provide actual, practical collaboration between Catholics and other Christian religions. In fact, it already has had this ef-

fect in the planning stages."

Attending the congress will be about 100 observer-consultants from almost all major Christian religions. Among them will be three representatives from the Russian Orthodox Church and delegations from the Serbian Orthodox and from the Orthodox Church of South India. Representatives from the International Orthodox Youth Movement, from the Anglican Church, from the World Council of Churches (six observers) and from the YMCA and the YWCA also give a sampling of the variety of non-Catholic Christians who are following the congress with interest.

While some 2,000 Catholic lay leaders are considering the various aspects of such topics as "Man Today" and "The Laity in the Renewal of the Church," Miss Herger has already been considering since February of this year the aspects of the laity in Rome in October; where do they sleep, what transportation is available and how do you register all 2,000 of them — plus the observer-delegates — within the rather narrow spaces of the Pius X Auditorium near St. Peter's, which will be the main center of the congress?

Both aspects of the congress are very important. Few people know the thousands of hours that have gone into the preparation of this third world congress. But quietly, efficiently and relentlessly Miss Goldie and Miss Herger already are proving the laity's capacity for getting things done.

# 'Vanishing Nun' Illusion

Portland, Ore. — (NC) — The "vanishing nun" notion—which has led to a myopic view of the religious life—was attributed to sensational reporting by mass media at the annual Sisters' Conference on Spirituality at the University of Portland.

About 200 nuns, most of them superiors of religious communities throughout the continental United States, Hawaii and Canada, agreed that ill-founded pessimism had been created by sensationalized and negative stories in the press.

The conference was structured to point up new thinking within the Church pertinent to the role of the Sister.

In each workshop discussion, a Sister and a priest shared the platform as a team, going into sociological, psychological and theological backgrounds of religious life for women.

Sisters from all areas expressed a belief that any "mass exodus" of Sisters from specific religious orders was due either to rigidity of rule—where no change or renewal has been attempted—or to a too complete change, which led to confusion.

It was evident, they said, that those orders engaged in missionary work and work among the poor or in hospitals had retained vocational percentages.

One team, Sister Maureen O'Keefe and Father John J. Evoy, S.J., who have spoken in various sections of the United States and in South America, emphasized that community life makes it possible for a woman to develop her talents, express

interior disposition and develop a complete fulfillment by becoming "a greater part of the world" through religious life.

"Religious life is a matter of becoming more involved in solving problems of the world — not less," they said.

Sister Thomas More Mosland,

er, head of the theology department of Marymount College, Salina, Kan., developed a theme of personality development in contemporary religious communities.

It was pointed out that a maternalistic spirit was disappearing in religious communities.



Seminar in Ghana  
Cape Coast — (NC) — A national seminar on the lay apostolate will be held at Kumasi, Aug. 31 to Sept. 4, on the theme, "The Christian in Ghanaian Life."

The Catholic COURIER  
Vol. 78 No. 48  
Friday, Sept. 1, 1967

MOST REV.  
FULTON J. SHEEN, Ph.D., D.D.  
President.  
Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations and the Catholic Press Association, Subscriber to National Catholic Welfare Conference

News Service, Religious News Service, Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association.

MAIN OFFICE — 25 Solo — 454-7050, Rochester, N.Y. 14604  
ELMIRA OFFICE — 217 East 2nd St., Elmira, N.Y. 14801  
AUBURN OFFICE — 165 East Geneva St., AL 2-4444

Entered as second class matter in the Post Office at Rochester, N.Y., as required under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

Single copy 15¢, 1 year subscription in U.S. \$5.00, Canada \$5.50; Foreign Countries \$6.75.

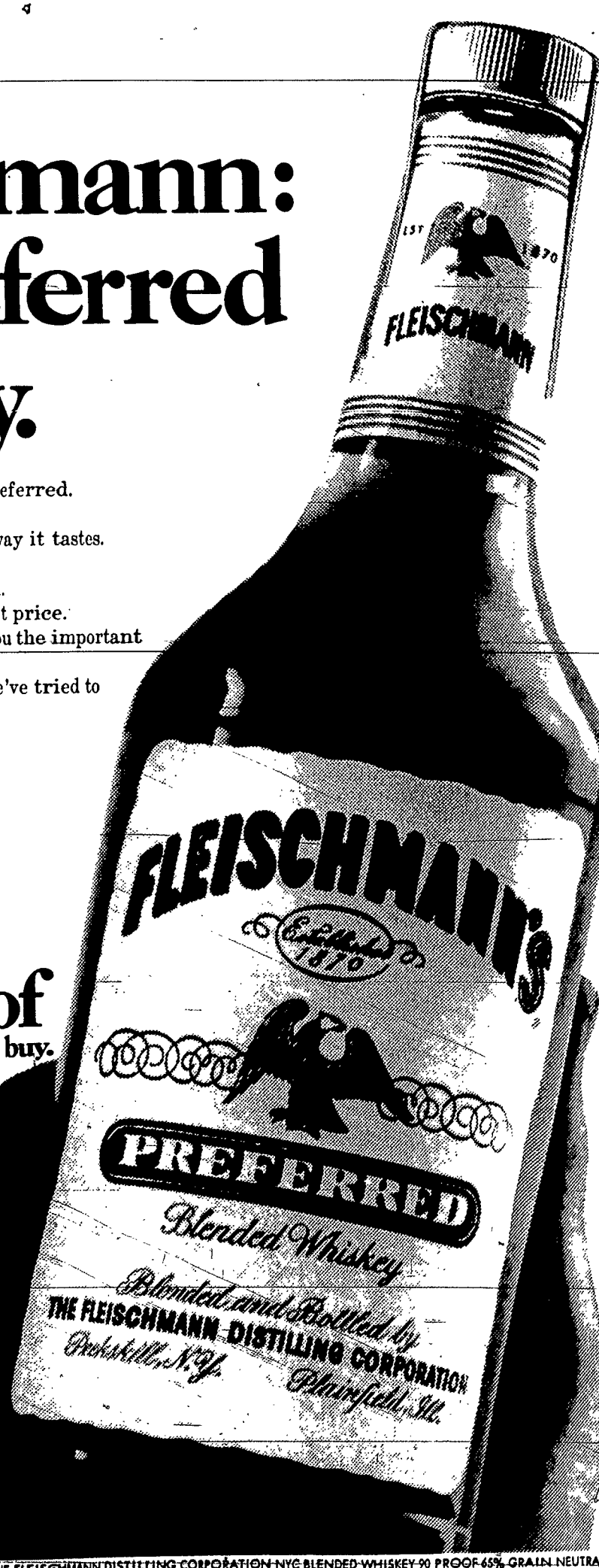


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