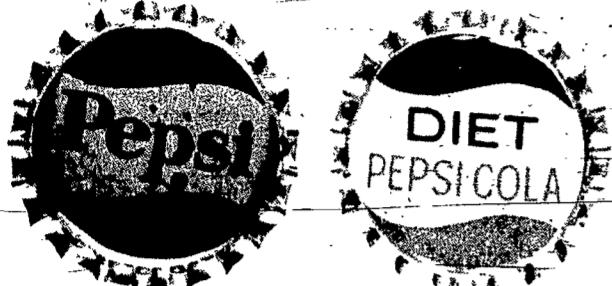


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Vietnamese Pastoral

So. Vietnam — (RNS) — A peaceful pastoral scene in war-torn South Vietnam. A young Vietnamese girl leads family ox home from grazing area in the coastal lowlands.

Survival of Faith

'Miracle of Latin America'

By MARJORIE L. FILLIYAW
(NC News Service)

Miami, Fla.—Two Irish-born missionary priests from Peru agreed here that "the miracle of

Latin America" is that its millions of impoverished and illiterate people have retained their Catholic faith despite the critical shortage of priests to minister to their spiritual needs.

Now visiting the United States for the first time, Father Denis O'Donoghue, a priest of 20 years, and Father Sean McGhann, ordained in 1966, are from the Cork and Ross diocese, Ireland. They volunteered to serve five years in a densely populated "barriada," or slum area, in the Trujillo archdiocese, Peru.

Three years ago when Bishop Cornelius Lucey of Cork and Ross offered to provide priests and religious to minister to the spiritual, educational and medical needs of some 100,000 people in a 10-square mile area on the Peruvian coast about 350 miles north of Lima, Father O'Donoghue was one of the first to volunteer.

After four months of training at the Society of St. James School in Lima, which provided Spanish language courses and orientation programs, Father O'Donoghue, who had served with the Society of St. James in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, for two years, and two other priests began their mission.

"There hadn't been a priest there to bring them the sacraments except during infrequent Sunday Masses over a period of 10 years," he recalled.

After living for a brief time in a rented house, the priests built a rectory. As other priests, now 10 in number, arrived from Cork, they inaugurated a building program and now have erected the church of Buen Pastor (Good Shepherd), eight modern primary schools built of brick, and five medical clinics within the 10-mile area.

Three Irish congregations of nuns are also working in the area — the Sisters of Bon Secours, who are all nurses and are planning to build a hospital, and two communities of Sisters of Mercy. Sunday Masses, Father O'Donoghue explained, are celebrated in each of the schools as well as in the church.

"Peruvian teachers conduct our classes," he said. Some of the teachers are paid by the government and others by the mission, expenses of which are underwritten completely by the Cork and Ross diocese. Although the mission cannot afford the salaries paid by the government, Father O'Donoghue said: "We have no trouble getting teachers. They would rather teach on the coast than go up to the mountains."

In addition the priests teach religion at some 20 public schools in Trujillo and conduct education classes for adults at three different locations in the evenings.

"Each time we open a school it is practically empty at the beginning of the year but as the school year progresses the class-rooms are filled. Since the adults are not educated themselves, they see no reason for educating their children," Father O'Donoghue said.

Because the people have been exploited by persons of other nations who have taken much of the country's wealth out of Peru "there is a great bias against non-Peruvians," the priests agreed.

"The Sisters, whose primary work is in the clinics and in home visitations, get a tremendous welcome but not the priests," Father McGhann said.

"But by being there, and living among them they finally realize that we are not there to fleece them," Father O'Donoghue added. He estimated that more than \$500,000 already has been spent by the Cork and Ross diocese in erecting buildings and another \$50,000 for maintenance.

Economic deprivation, in the

opinion of both priests, is the first problem to be solved among the Latin American masses. In the winter, although the temperature rarely drops below 60 degrees, slum families who live in adobe huts or straw shacks without sufficient clothing are subject to disease. Tuberculosis is common, they said.

The average yearly wages of the head of a family is \$100. Because hunger is prevalent, the priests, with the cooperation of Caritas, which works with Catholic Relief Services, the overseas relief agency of U.S. Catholics, recently inaugurated a breakfast program for children in their schools, the two missionaries said.

"We can make wonderful contacts with the people in our clinics," they said, "but it's very hard to preach to empty stomachs."

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Wounded Nuns "Fair"

Columbus, Ohio—(NC)—Two nuns shot by a woman sniper as they crossed the rear yard of their convent are reported in "fair condition."

Sister Mary Leonard and Sister Mary Richarda, Dominicans who live at St. Francis convent and teach in the adjoining elementary school, were shot Jan. 6, by a 20-year-old former mental patient.

Janet Lazarrus, a proofreader for a printing company, has been a mental patient at Columbus State Hospital "on and off" since 1964. Detectives said she fired about a dozen rounds of rifle bullets into the convent courtyard from the window of her third floor apartment. They took Miss Lazarrus into custody, confiscating a 22 caliber rifle, and charged her with assault with a deadly weapon.

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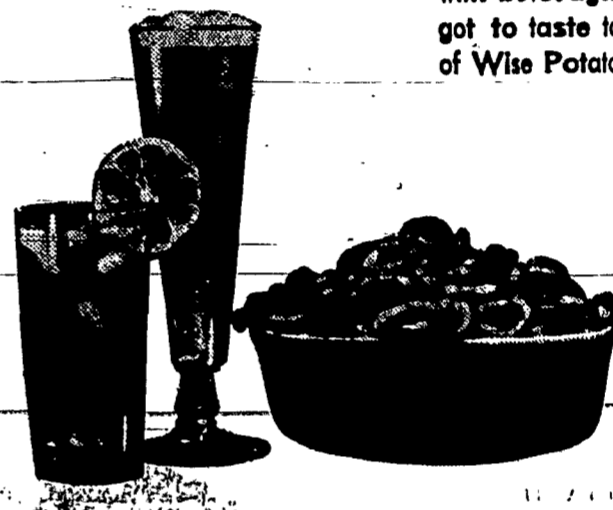
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