

The Church In Nigeria



Student Leader

Miss Abigail 'Keji' Adams of Lagos University represented the Nigerian Young Christian Students movement at the six-week 'Youth and World Crisis Forum' in Portland organized by the United Presbyterian Church in the USA. She is national secretary for international affairs of the Nigerian YCS.



LAGOS — Archbishop John Aggrey of Lagos (above) baptizes a baby born in a Catholic church near Lagos during a Lenten service. The baptism took place in the same church — Regina Mundi (Queen of the World), and the baby was named for the church — Regina Oluwatosin. Right, is one of three lorries donated by Pope Paul VI for relief work in Nigeria. Religious News Photos



Christ in the Communist Prisons

'Jesus Had Waited All My Life for Me'

The Courier-Journal began to ask questions about the book 'Christ in the Communist Prisons' by Rev. Richard Wurmbrand.

The first half of my life ended on February 29, 1948. I was walking from our home to my church nearby when a black Ford braked sharply beside me and two men jumped out, seized my arms and shoved me into the back seat, while a third, beside the driver, kept me covered with an automatic. The car sped through the cold, gray streets of Bucharest and turned in through steel gates in Calea Rahova Street.

My kidnapers belonged to the Communist Secret Police and this was their headquarters. Inside, my papers, my belongings, my tie and shoes, and finally my name were taken from me. "From now on," said the official on duty, "you are Vasile Georgescu."

It was a common name, easy to forget. The authorities did not want even the guards to know the identity of their prisoners. In case the secret should leak out and questions be asked abroad, where I was well-known. Like so many others, I was to disappear without a trace.

The idea of becoming a Christian pastor was, however, far from my thoughts, and from those of my Jewish parents. My father died when I was nine, and our family was always short of money, and often of bread. My schooling was erratic and uninteresting, but we had many books at home. Before I was ten, I'd read them all and become as great a skeptic as the Voltaire I admired. Yet religion interested me. I observed the rituals in Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.

Although I had read the Bible for its literary interest, my mind closed at the point where the adversaries challenge Christ: "Descend from the cross if you are the son of God; and, instead, He dies. It seemed to prove His foes right. Yet, I found my thoughts going spontaneously to Christ, and I said to myself, "I wish I could have met and talked with Him." Each day my meditation ended with this thought.

There was a woman patient in the sanatorium, too ill to leave her room, who somehow heard of me and sent me a book about the Brothers Ratschonne, who founded an order to convert Jews. I was touched to think that others were praying for me. A Jew, while I did all I could to waste my life.

After some months in the sanatorium, my condition improved slightly and I went to convalesce in a mountain village where I became friendly with an old carpenter. One day he gave me a Bible. Only later did I discover that it was no ordinary Bible; he and his wife had spent hours every day praying over it for me. Lying on the sofa in my cottage, I read the New Testament, and in the days that passed Christ came to seem as real to me as the woman who brought my meals. But not everyone who recognizes Christ is saved. Satan believes, and is not a Christian. I said to Jesus: "You'll never have me for a disciple. I want money, travel, pleasure—I have suffered enough. You're so difficult to understand, and even if it is the way of truth as well. I won't follow it." His answer came to me like a plea: "Come my way. Do not fear the Cross. You will find it the greatest of joys."

I read on, and tears filled my eyes. I could not help comparing Christ's life with mine. His outlook was so pure, mine so tainted. His nature so selfless, mine so greedy. His heart so full of love, mine seething with hate. My old certainties began to crumble in the face of this wisdom and truthfulness. I was like the man in the ancient Chinese story, trudging exhausted under the sun, who came to a great oak and rested in its shade. "What a happy chance I have found you," he said. But the oak replied, "It is no chance. I have been waiting for you for four hundred years." Christ had waited all my life for me. Now we met.

I studied and taught myself to preach, and was ordained a Lutheran pastor, after carefully considering the claims of Romanism's rival denominations. The Orthodox church, to which four out of five people belonged, seemed to me concerned with ritual. I felt the same about Catholicism: one Easter Sunday, after sitting through the Latin liturgy and a political address by the bishop, I felt without even hearing in my own language that Christ was risen from the dead. The simpler Protestant services appealed to me, for they made the sermon in which one could teach and set a feast for the mind—their central part.

Our mission was accused of treachery, and I was threatened daily. One Sunday, from the pulpit, I watched a group of men in the green shirts of the Iron Guard slip silently into the back of the church. The congregation, facing the altar, was unaware of their presence, but I saw revolvers in their hands. I thought, if this was to be my last sermon, it should be a good one. I chose as my topic 'the hands of Jesus. With them He had wiped away tears, lifted children up and fed the hungry. They had healed the sick, been nailed to the Cross, and had blessed the Disciples before he ascended to heaven. Then I raised my voice to the murderers at the door. "But you, what

Bishop Sheen:

Remarkable Story Of a 'Dry Martyr'

(Ed. Note: The following letter from Bishop Sheen introduces a new series of articles in the Courier-Journal entitled "Christ in Communist Prisons." The material will be excerpted from a book by Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, described here by the Bishop.)

The stories of martyrs are always interesting. There are two kinds of martyrs: wet martyrs who shed their blood and dry martyrs who die a thousand crucifixions and still live.

One of the two sons of Zebedee, one was a wet martyr, James, who was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple; the other, a dry martyr, John, who after being thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, was miraculously preserved.

One of the latest dry martyrs of Christianity is Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, who has just written a remarkable story of 13 years in a Rumanian prison. The book is entitled, "Christ in the Communist Prisons."

have you done with your hands?" through the gates. He moved swiftly across the asphalt and through a door—an informer, come to report on his congregation.

Knowing that I faced endless questioning, ill-treatment, possibly years of imprisonment and ultimate death, I wondered if my faith was strong enough to endure. I remembered then that the Bible is written 366 times—once for every day of the year—"Don't be afraid!" 366 times, not merely 365, to account for Leap Year. And this was February 29—a coincidence which told me I needn't fear.

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Deaths

Ursula Levinger
A Requiem High Mass was offered in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Elmira April 24 at 10 a.m. for Mrs. Ursula H. Levinger, Underwood Ave.

Msgr. Leo G. Schwab, was celebrant of the Mass.

Survivors are: husband, Donald A. Levinger, daughter, Barbara Lynn; son, David Michael and sisters, Sister Miriam of St. Mary Namur Order, Mrs. Naomi Brady, Newton, Mass., Mrs. Bernadette Miller of Elmira.

Committal services were in Mount Saviour Monastery Cemetery, Big Flats.

Sr. Josetta Toole

Sister M. Josetta Toole, a St. Joseph Sister for 66 years, died April 23 in Geneva. The funeral was held last Saturday at the Motherhouse in Pittsford.

Sister Josetta taught at Immaculate Conception School in Rochester for 20 years and at St. Mary's, Canandaigua, for 14. Other assignments were at Sacred Heart, Rochester, and St. Agnes, Avon. She was a native of Geneva.

Mary E. Burke

A requiem Mass was celebrated last Saturday at St. Augustine's Church for Mary E. Burke of 19 Copeland St.

Mrs. Burke, widow of James L. Burke, died April 25. She was a member of the Rosary Society of Corpus Christi Church and of the auxiliaries of the Knights of Columbus and the Alhambra.

May Slate For Cenacle

Exercises will be held at the Cenacle Retreat House for Women, East Avenue, during the month of May as follows:

Retreats: May 3-5 — Single Women — Father Albert Bartlett, S.J.; May 10-12 — St. Raphael's Guild — Father Henry Atwell; May 17-19 — Jewish-Christian Dialogue — Father Edward Dillon; May 31-June 2 — General Retreat — Father George Fitzpatrick, S.J.

Meetings: May 1 — Married Couples — 8 p.m. — The Rev. James Hughes; Father Albert Bartlett, S.J.; May 14 — St. Raphael's Guild — 7:15 p.m. — Msgr. J. L. Hogan; May 15 — St. Joseph Guild for the Blind — 7:00 p.m. — Father William Poorten, S.J.; May 18 — Eucharistic Guild — 8:45 a.m. — Father Albert Bartlett, S.J.; May 29 — Married Couples — 8:00 p.m. — Father Henry Atwell.

Coming Events: May 25 — Patronal Feast of the Cenacle — 10:00 a.m. Holy Mass — Bishop Fulton J. Sheen; June 28/July 3 — (5 Day Retreat) — Father Albert Bartlett, S.J.

Seton Groups In Action

13TH SETON BRANCH card party in the Nurses Residence, May 7 at 12:30 p.m. Mrs. Arthur Doyle and Mrs. Forest Doyle are co-chairmen.

Pilgrimage Set
The 18th annual pilgrimage to the three national shrines in Canada will depart from Newark, N.Y. Aug. 5 and will tour till Aug. 11.
Reservations are now being accepted. For information, call 315-331-3859.

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Aquinas Victorious In Baseball, Track

Aquinas scored impressive wins in both baseball and track last week as the Little Irish opened its spring sports program.

Mike Nally walloped a home run and Dick D'Elia doubled with the bases loaded to help Aquinas defeat Jefferson, 9-4, at Aquinas. Wayne Bowser pitched for the winners.

In track, the Irish downed Madison at East High scoring wins in the broad jump, the pole vault, low hurdles, mile and two mile runs, the 440 and 880 events. Aquinas also won the mile medley relay.

Service Challenged

Rome — (RNS) — Italy's Constitutional Court is examining the legality of a 37-year-old regulation requiring inmates of Italian prisons to attend religious services. Roman Catholics (i.e. nearly all Italians), are compelled to attend Mass.

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JOSEPH E

The Dogs We

I had no dog as a child (grew in a flat) and I want no dog man. In this matter, as in things, my wife and I see eye to eye. And yet, through the conspiracies of our sons and daughters, abetted by Machiavellian relatives and friends, we have had, in the course of a married life, four dogs.

The first was a collie, a magnificent creature, pure white save a touch of black at the tip of ear. When his coat was clean, he was something for a magazine cover in a wink he could slip his leash and be gone through city streets, a flicker of distant lightning. When returned, he was a sight to mortals and rubbish man despair.

The clandestine excursions he so frequent and so disreputable that last there was only one thing to be done. Prince must be sent to a kennel where he would be running and roaming. The child shed a few tears, but soon absorbed in other concerns after wild one was handed over to a friend who owned a farm.

Next came a cocker spaniel. I chiefly remember about her was reverence for property rights boundaries. She would charge terrifyingly courage when the door dog ventured into our

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Added to this institutional today, is a functional need; today's ministers of the Gospel are not sufficient in number, for the world that their statistical charts diminishing and the fields open their work are increasing.

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This cartoon by Martin M. April-May issue of TI