



Nuns, and Sisters, Together Again

The Hunt sisters, who have given the Daughters of Charity a total of 175 years' service, are together once again at Villa St. Michael in Baltimore. In all their years in the religious community, only once were all three stationed in the same place — from 1957 to 1961 in Washington, D.C. Sister Catherine (left) and Sister Remi (right) are 81-year-old twins and Sister Vincent is 84. Sister Remi (Anna Hunt) has served in the religious order of nuns for 60 years, Sister Catherine (Catherine Hunt) for 59 years, and Sister Vincent (Ellen Hunt) for 56 years. (RNS Photo)

Vocations

They Rise Behind Iron Curtain, But Drop in U.S.

NC News Service

Cincinnati — Religious vocations are on the rise behind the Iron Curtain, in developing nations of Africa and Asia — but are declining in the United States, Canada and Western Europe.

The observation was made in a study of religious vocations presented to the Council of the International Union of Superiors General recently in Rome.

Mother General Mary Omer of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, one of two U.S. representatives at the Rome meeting, discussed reasons for the opposite trends during an interview at the Mount St. Joseph motherhouse of the sisterhood.

"In countries where people have suffered great hardships, where there is oppression of religion and of religious life, vocations are on the increase," Mother Mary Omer said.

"I feel there is something to be learned from this," she added. "We must make religious life more challenging."

She compared the increase in vocations in Iron Curtain and developing nations with the flourishing of religion and religious vocations in Ireland during the centuries of religious persecution there.

Mother Mary Omer, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Major Superiors of Women, said religious women from Iron Curtain countries are "tremendous women" who seem to possess a "stronger motivation."

Among the reasons cited by the superiors at the Rome session for

the decline in religious vocations in the western countries, she said, were "a breakdown in family life," a "spirit of secularism," changes in the Church, "unrest and confusion in the world," and "our affluent society."

But despite the "terrific handicaps" confronting today's youths, they possess "a tremendous potential," and there is reason for optimism about the future of vocations in this country, Mother Mary Omer said.

Attraction to Marriage Cited

St. Paul, Minn. — (RNS) — Attraction to marriage is the single most important deterrent keeping young people from becoming priests, Brothers and nuns, according to a survey of some 80,000 Roman Catholics in the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

Father John F. Donahue, archdiocesan director of vocations, in commenting on the findings, said that "something must be done either to make the celibate life more appealing than the married life" or church laws requiring celibacy must be changed.

The survey was taken last Spring in connection with an annual campaign supporting religious vocations.

Asked what Catholics can do to help young men and women respond to the call to serve the Church, 63 per cent of the respondents said "young people should have better opportunities to develop closer personal relationships with priests, Sisters and Brothers."

She pointed out that "communities are taking women at a later age" than formerly. She added: "I feel there will be fewer Sisters for a while, but the trend will again be upward."

Purpose of the International Union of Superiors General (IUSG), formed in 1967, is to bring all religious communities in the world together to study common problems and explore areas of collaboration, Mother Mary Omer said.

ters and Brothers."

On the question, "Which are the most important factors deterring young people from the priesthood and religious life?" respondents as a whole gave top priority to "the attraction of the married state" (24.8 per cent first choice, 19.45 per cent second choice).

Ranking next highest in the choices was the statement that "young people are unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary for a life of service to God and His people" (24.03 per cent first choice, 19.55 per cent second choice).

Others noted that "family attitudes prejudice children against choosing the life of a priest, Sister or Brother" . . . "the work of the majority of priests . . . Sisters and Brothers is not appealing" and "young people lack faith in their own ability to face the responsibilities of a specialized vocation in today's Church."

U.S. Chides Biafra on Flight Curbs

Washington, D.C. — (RNS) — A spokesman for the U.S. State Department censured the government of secessionist Biafra for hampering relief efforts during its war with Federal Nigeria.

A statement chiding Biafra for refusal to allow daylight flights was read by Robert J. McCloskey.

The State Department aide said that Nigeria had expressed willingness to permit day flights, adding that Biafra's reluctance to agree was "incomprehensible."

The State Department spokesman said that Biafra had failed to agree to Red Cross flights in daylight hours to the "puzzlement" of the U.S. government.

A staff member at Catholic Relief Services pointed out that Biafra is dubious of any agreement between Nigeria and the Red Cross since planes of the neutral agency have been commandeered by Nigeria in the past.

Catholic Relief Services noted that night delivery could be substantially increased if the U.S. would respond favorably to a church-agency request for larger aircraft.

Nigeria Radio Hits Catholic Aid to Biafra

Lagos — (RNS) — The Catholic Church and its international relief agency, Caritas, were attacked here in a broadcast by the Nigerian Radio for "misguided" efforts to "insure the survival of (Col. Odumegwu's) rebel regime" in Biafra.

In a wide-ranging attack, the broadcast accused missionaries of propaganda activities for Biafra and said that the Vatican "has always regarded itself as a sort of divine octopus which must have its tentacles in the affairs of every nation."

Nigerian Radio also announced plans to send a delegation of missionaries to the Vatican to urge the Pope to check the "clandestine military activities" of Catholic organizations in Biafra. The delegation will be headed by Archbishop John Kwao Amuzu Aggey of Lagos, the broadcast said.



In comparison with recent years, East Berlin has taken on a brighter look for the Christmas season. This is evidenced by the above view of shoppers at the Christmas market on Karl Marx Alley. The Communist regime, which promotes atheism, has not reduced its pressure on Catholic and Protestant Churches. (RNS)

A Long Christmas

Warsaw — (RNS) — Christmas is a long, long season in Poland and continues as a major celebration despite a Communist regime which promotes atheism.

For Protestants and Catholics, Christmas begins on Dec. 6, the Feast of St. Nicholas. It is a day for exchanging of gifts. They celebrate Christmas on Dec. 25.

But for Orthodox Christians in Eastern Poland, the birth of Christ is observed on Jan. 6. The difference comes from calendar variations. Catholics and Protestants observe Jan. 6 as Epiphany.

Christmas trees, extremely popular in Poland, are usually discarded on Jan. 7 although Catholics often continue the festival until Candlemas on Feb. 2.

Stores and shops are brightly decorated and packed with shoppers on St. Nicholas Day. Trees are set up in city squares and in villages, decorated

with colored balls, stars and figures of houses and animals. Polish-made tree decorations are sold around the world.

Theaters in other areas give special Christmas performances based on stories found in Polish literature. Music halls set concerts attuned to the season. Polish Radio broadcasts carols during the season. Greeting cards are sent. On "holy evenings" people are free from work.

Christmas Eve is an important family occasion. According to tradition, the meal must include fish, beet root soup, mushrooms, poppy seeds, fruits, nuts and sweets. Christmas Eve begins as soon as the first star of evening appears.

One place at the family table is left vacant, a place for the Christ child. One old custom requires hay to be placed on the table. In some villages, hay is placed on, under and around the table.



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