

# Nun Gets Expelled By Nigeria

Philadelphia — (NC) — A Sister who brought more than 300 trunks filled with relief supplies for Nigerian war victims was expelled from that nation recently for "praying for Biafra."

Sister Mary Winifred, a member of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus who had served for more than 30 years as a missionary in the Nigeria-Biafra area, had her residence permit revoked by Nigerian officials after she returned to that nation with relief supplies from the United States.

Sister Winifred, who is now in residence at her community's motherhouse in the suburb of Rosemont, Pa., was accused by a Nigerian official of belonging to the "Keep Biafra Alive" committee.



## Biafrans Still Starving

Father Dermot Doran, C.C.Sp., one of the chief organizers of food and medical shipments to embattled Biafra, told Religious News Service that "the children there in Biafra are as bad off as in the worst times." Relief shipments have dramatically reduced the death rate, the Holy Ghost missionary said, but any interruption could lead to widespread starvation within a few days. (RNS)

she replied, "I've prayed for peace, I've prayed for people, not for sides."

Sister Winifred — who emphasizes that she was treated with great re-

spect and courtesy by the Nigerian officials — was then notified that she would have to leave the country immediately since her residence permit was revoked.

"No," Sister Winifred replied to the official, "I was a member of the Biafra-Immediate-Relief Committee—but I've brought more to the needy of Nigeria than I've gathered for those in Biafra."

Sister Winifred — who had traveled several hundred miles by truck over difficult roads from Lagos to front line areas where large numbers of needy refugees had gathered — was then told: "You have been praying and asking others to pray for the success of Biafra."

"I never said any such prayer,"

## For Biafrans: 'Nutritional Tightrope'

New York — (RNS) — The civilian population of Biafra is "walking a nutritional tightrope," Father Dermot Doran, C.C.Sp., said in an interview here. Relief shipments have dramatically reduced the death rate, he said, but any interruption could lead to widespread starvation within a few days.

The Holy Ghost missionary, one of the chief organizers of food and medical shipments to the encircled Biafrans, was cautiously optimistic in a report based on his recent observations in Biafra.

The situation now is "much better" than it was in late 1968, he said, chiefly because of the increased tonnage of new, larger planes. But he added that there are still large pockets of severe malnutrition, particularly in places close to the battle lines.

"The children there are as bad off as in the worst times," he said, and "the soldiers are bringing out truckloads of children."

One of the most hopeful developments, Father Doran noted, is the planting of new crops with seeds

flown in by the relief agencies. Special fast-growing, high-yield corn seed, developed in Colombia, is being planted on all available land.

Among the permanent effects of the food crisis in Biafra there will probably be at least one good one, Father Doran observed: enlarging of the diet and agricultural activity. But he added that physical disabilities and some degree of mental impairment will also be felt.

"The population now aged one to six will never be the same," he said.

## What Do Saints' Changes Mean?

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canonization only in the 17th century. Pope Urban VIII decreed that the whole investigation for new canonizations must be complete.

But what of the saints already canonized or venerated before that time? The same pope declared that even if they had not been officially canonized they could still be venerated as saints if they had been so venerated from time immemorial. This came to be called "equivalent canonization."

Pope Benedict XIV of the 18th century, maintained that while a formal canonization by a pope involves infallibility, equivalent canonization does not. Therefore, if the popes learn from later scientific investigation that this or that person "equivalently" canonized does not deserve such veneration, they can "withdraw him from circulation." Have we so soon forgotten how this happened in the case of "St. Philomena" in the early 1800s?

This is where St. Christopher comes in. He and the rest of the 46 "dubious" personalities are all very ancient personages, about whom there is little or no historical documentation. (Only one of them dates from the 13th century, and the rest are from between the first and the fifth centuries.)

St. Christopher has been venerated as a martyr. But the accounts of his identity, homeland, place, time and circumstances of death, are so entwined with legend that we know absolutely nothing for sure about his biography.

Now what attitude are we to take towards these "dubious" saints. So far as I can gather from the early news despatches, this is the story:

1. These may still be venerated as saints on a local level, and their feastdays may still be celebrated with their Masses. Thus, a church dedicated to St. Christopher may continue to observe his feast-day. All this at least for the time being.

2. They still may be venerated in private devotion, until further notice.

3. Their cases, I gather, are now to be studied more carefully by the Church to see whether the doubts entertained about their history are justifiable, then the Church will simply declare that these are no longer to be considered saints. We will accept that official declaration.

And what of our past prayers? Since all prayers are directed to God, even when through the intercession of the saints, we may be sure that our message has always "gotten through."

I have my doubts as to whether some of these saints will survive the scrutiny: Prudentiana, Praxedes, Sabina, Cyrian of Antioch, for example. Christopher himself, I think, may stand a better chance. In 452 A.D., long before he became the subject of popular legend, at least one church was dedicated to him; and he has been venerated not only in Latin Christianity but by the Orthodox and Armenians in Asia and the Copts in Africa. Quite likely the conclusion will be, as it was for St. George: We don't know a thing about his life, but we do know that he existed and was long venerated as a saint. So his cult may continue.

What really concerns me about the stir that has been raised over St. Christopher is that it has shown that many Catholics have the wrong sort of devotion to the Saint. The Church encourages devotion to saints for two

reasons: 1) so that we may imitate their virtue; 2) so that we may seek their intercession with Christ. It is to remind us of these saints, their virtues and their heavenly influence, that the Church permits the use of statues and medals.

But what has been the reaction of many Catholics to the latest Vatican report? Many have said: "No matter what the Church says, I shall still use my St. Christopher medal."

It is a sort of charm, like a rabbit's foot, for many people.

Is that the proper attitude towards saints and their images? No, it is pure superstition.

We might all do well to ask ourselves here and now why we have St. Christopher medals (or any other saints' medals). To remind us to imitate their virtues? To remind us to pray to them when we undertake some action under their patronage? Or because we are in some way afraid that if we don't have these medals something awful will happen? If our honest answer to this question is Yes, then we have been relying on magic, not true devotion.

I am sure that St. Christopher, if he could return among us, would be the first person to deplore being honored in this dishonorable way. He would be the first to praise the admittedly courageous action taken by Pope Paul VI in order to base Catholic worship on truth rather than on fables and phobias.

## Black Group Presses \$500 Million Demand

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tinued: "The General Board, having been confronted with the black 'manifesto' deeply regrets that it has been incapable of arriving at the decision which could be both immediately substantive and responsible."

An interracial coalition of Union Theological Seminary students seized the administrative wing of the institution's quadrangle on May 10. They said Union's president Dr. John C. Bennett, declined to meet their financial demands supporting a "black manifesto" seeking "reparations" from white churches and synagogues.

The action locked administrators, staff and faculty out of their offices. It did not disrupt classes since the academic term was over so far as scheduled courses were concerned.

The students asked a commitment of \$100,000 from the seminary for the NBEDC and \$1 million from members of the board of directors, which includes many prominent business men. They requested an all-day teach-in on the "black manifesto," and said they would hold the wing until terms were met.

The Lutheran Church in America (LCA) was asked here to provide \$50 million as its quota of \$500 million in "reparations."

A list of the demands was posted on the door of the 3.1 million member denomination's New York headquarters, and later handed to LCA President Robert J. Marshall by James Forman.

Officials of the Lutheran Church in America were asked to provide a list of all the denomination's assets, unrelated business income, pension funds, retirement and investment holdings and to give 60 per cent of the profits from these assets to programs outlined in NBEDC's Black Manifesto.

"We maintain that the father of the Lutheran Church in America never intended it to become a capitalistic concern and that the Lutheran Church has desecrated the spirit of Martin Luther by becoming an exploitative business enterprise as have all other white racist Christian Churches and Jewish synagogues," the statement declared.

Forman, at a news conference following the posting of the demands, said the NBEDC was making its appeal to the churches because they are a part of the "capitalistic system which has exploited blacks."

"We are pursuing our demands for reparation in peace," Mr. Forman declared. "But we are psychologically prepared to run the money-lenders, hustlers, crooks, investment brokers and racists out of the temples and churches as Jesus did."

The Rev. James Blake, executive director of the Interfaith City-wide Coordinating Committee Against Poverty (a group representing clergy in ghetto areas), said he believes the demands made in the manifesto are just, and that the possible seizure of churches threatened by some militants is solidly rooted in the traditions of the Bible.



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