

An Airline for Missionaries

By MOLLIE MCGEE
(NC News Service)

Rome — There are no misadventured stewardesses serving champagne, but there is a Catholic-missionary "airline."

Today a missionary priest from Kenya on a missionary plane from Ceylon may spend a couple of weeks at the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome, brushing up on regional dietetics or soil problems.

And to get back to the field afar where they can put this know-how to work, most missionaries prefer to travel by plane.

The demand for flight accommodations has been so great in recent years that the missionaries have acquired their own "airline." The home base for the departures is Amsterdam. From there missionaries from the United States,

England and Northern Europe begin their journey to Africa and Asia.

After a brief landing in Rome, the plane continues on an eight-hour flight to Entebbe in Uganda. Passengers may then go on to Nairobi, Kenya, or smaller planes may take them to regions more remote. On other trips the missionary plane touches base in Bangkok. From there missionaries find their way to mission centers or remote islands of the East.

The idea of the missionary "airline" was born in Holland in 1949. It's called RAPTIM for the Roman Association pro Transvehendis Itinerantibus Missionariis, an international travel agency for missionaries.

At first, the planes and pilots were chartered where they could be found. The planes were the old reliable DC-3's; later, DC-4's were available to carry 80 passengers.

"Then slowly, we came into the jet age and DC-8's carrying 180 passengers," explained Henry J. Piotrowski, RAPTIM's general manager. "Last year RAPTIM carried over 5,000 missionary workers to Africa and the Far East. Our Eastern service began in 1966," he said.

RAPTIM is supported by religious orders that pay in proportion to the accommodations they require.

Nuns usually arrive for their departure flights in small groups, often accompanied by their mother superior. In the past, the mother superiors were uneasy, sometimes difficult, demanding that stopovers should be arranged so that the Sisters could attend morning Mass.

But times have changed, according to one RAPTIM official, who said: "The modern mother superior is a practical woman, and even cloistered

orders are becoming more and more normal travelers, coming in with complete itineraries worked out by time-tables."

RAPTIM also provides flights for the veteran missionary who is leaving his post and going back to his home country. Such scenes can be very touching.

Piotrowski tells of being at an airfield in Africa when a whole village arrived in every kind of decrepit vehicle to see their priest off.

"It was a fantastic sight," Piotrowski said, "Men, women and children swarmed across the field. They sang, they danced and they waved. They called, begging him not to forget them and to come back. He was still a young man and he smiled and waved from the window, until they were out of sight."

"Then, as he sat back still smiling, I thought that is a proud and really happy man."



Msgr. Andrew P. Landi, assistant executive director of Catholic Relief Services, accepts a donation of \$4,500 from James E. Foley of New York City, center, and Frank A. Rossini of Flushing, N.Y., the State Deputy and Civic Affairs Chairman, respectively, of the New York State Council of the Knights of Columbus. The funds were raised by chapters throughout the state to assist Catholic Relief Services with its emergency program to provide food and medicines to victims on both sides of the Nigeria/Biafra civil war. Presentation of the donation took place at CRS world headquarters in New York.

Churches Differ On Sex, Says Melkite Priest

Detroit — (NC) — "Rooted in different experiences, the Melkite and Roman Churches have quite different approaches to the ethics of sexuality," a Melkite priest told the annual Melkite Association of North America meeting here.

Father David Kirk, founder and director of Emmaus House in New York, drew both applause and challenges when he presented his views on Eastern Christian approaches to sexuality, including birth control, divorce, and celibacy.

Since the priest of the Western Church was to handle holy things, Father Kirk said, "and since the idea of sexuality was necessarily something impure or dirty, celibacy was the proper condition for a priest."

"This theory, which symbolically castrated the Western world is at the root of our present Western phenomena of imposed celibacy of clergy, opposition to birth control, and Protestant puritanism," he said.

While many persons in the Roman Catholic Church would teach that the primary end of marriage is procreation, Father Kirk said, "the texts of the Orthodox Churches seem to place the end of married life in the spouses themselves."

He Covers the Waterfront

Philadelphia — (NC) — Father Thomas W. Wassel, pastor of St. Philip Neri parish, has for 20 years doubled as captain of the largest fresh water port in the world. His waterfront "parish" extends roughly from Wilmington, Del., to Fairless Hills, Pa.

In his 20 years as port chaplain, he has befriended countless seamen and administered

the Last Sacraments to dying men aboard ships. He has also shown the knack of "touching the souls of thousands of men who handle the Port of Philadelphia's \$2 billion annual cargo and the hundreds of thousands of merchant seamen who pass through the port each year aboard its 12,000 vessels.

Father Wassel's permanent "parishioners" are the check-

ers, pier guards, longshoremen and stevedores who load and unload the 50 million tons of cargo handled by the port. His transient flock includes, for example, an Irish lad, a Liberian sailor, a native of Goa.

Father Wassel lumps them all under the all-inclusive term "my waterfront guys." He has organized the Rudder Club for waterfront Catholics, which he calls his "right arm." He has also won the respect of many men of other faiths who are proud to share in his work.

Father Wassel began working as port chaplain before he was officially given the duty. As assistant pastor at a nearby parish, he offered Mass each Sunday in St. Peter's Chapel, overlooking the Delaware River on bustling Pier 98, and cared for the spiritual needs of the men who worked the sprawling South Wharves area.

He still offers Mass on Sundays and holy days at pier 98. In addition, he hears confessions "anywhere there's room," during Lent, answers emergency calls, and roams the waterfront, holding innumerable little private chats with men whose problems range over the whole spectrum of human frailty — domestic troubles, labor inequities, financial difficulties, moral woes, aching loneliness, spiritual crises, long neglect of church and sacraments.

In his office at St. Philip Neri rectory, Father Wassel has numerous plaques and assorted souvenirs of his years as port chaplain, including a plaque which describes him as "Philadelphia Waterfront's Man of the Year."

Pacific Bishops Center Talks On Ecumenism

Suva, Fiji — (NC) — Much of the discussion at the meeting of the Bishops' Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC) has centered on ecumenical concerns.

In the Fiji and Gilbert Islands, permission has been granted for Anglicans to receive Communion in Catholic churches, in accord with the 1967 Directory on Ecumenism issued by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

The conditions for this are that the non-Catholic asks spontaneously for Communion, that he expressed a faith in the Eucharist in accord with the Roman Church, and that his own minister is unavailable for long periods of time.

The bishops also discussed the need for dual-purpose churches that serve for worship as well as parish centers. Bishop Pierre Guichet, M.S.C., of the Gilbert Islands added that in the future Catholics and Protestants should increasingly share in common church facilities.

As a fraternal gesture, the bishops of CEPAC made a donation to the new Pacific Theological College, a non-Catholic training center for students from many areas of the Pacific.

The bishops also decided to apply to the Vatican for permission to set up the diaconate as a permanent order within the Pacific Islands. Deacons could perform all the functions of the priest, except celebrating Mass and absolving in confession.

Archbishop Michel Coppenrath of Tahiti cited the excellent work being done by Protestant deacons for their communities, and added that he knows of many Catholic catechists who would most worthily fulfill the functions of the diaconate.

BINGO BILL
Harrisburg, Pa. — (RNS) — A bill to legalize, license and tax bingo games operated by churches and other non-profit organizations has been introduced in Pennsylvania's House of Representatives.

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Be Creative with Media, Director Tells Churchmen

San Antonio — (RNS) — A famed Hollywood director told a panel of international catechetical specialists here that if the church wants to make effective use of the media it must be willing to invest large sums of money in creative new ideas.

Frank Capra drew on 40 years' experience as a director in his address to more than 50 Roman Catholic catechetical scholars and mass media experts attending the International Study-Week on Mass Media and Catechetics here.

"You can't compete with entertainment in the theaters and on television," Capra said, "unless you make your message as exciting as the best entertainment."

Today, he continued, the Church is finally recognizing the potential of the media and discovering that "the real difficulty is getting artists who can use the Christian message and use it prudently."

"Christians have plenty to say," Mr. Capra noted, "because there has never been anything like Christ in the history of mankind. But we've got to tell people about this in many different ways."

Instead of a direct approach, he said, "religion must be worked into stories about people to show there is a value in goodness."

"Of what use is religion," he asked "unless it can help people with their problems? If the Church has any mission at all, this is it."

A permanent commission of 15 international experts in catechetics was named here to explore the "economic, political and technical feasibility" of the Roman Catholic Church becoming involved in satellite communications.

A report adopted at the conference stressed the need for the Catholic Church to have a specific policy formulated in the event it is invited to participate "in cooperative, pluralistic demonstrations via satellite."

It cited the opportunity exists for the Vatican "to take the initiative in proposing a joint venture with the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, the International Academy of Sciences and other organizations to reach the underprivileged all over the world with satellite-transmitted information on health, nutrition, vocational skills and universal primary education."

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Bare Essentials
A bare light bulb provides the only illumination for Father Vincent H. Montague, M.M., of Topeka, Kansas, as he celebrates evening Mass in the open lot which is Cristo Luz del Mundo parish in Merida, the capital city of Yucatan and Mexico's fifth largest city. Few immediate improvements are planned for the church site until a community of lay people who will work for social action is formed.

'Lamp' Shows Way For Church Building

Louisville, Ky. — (NC) — One of the most enterprising real estate firms in the Louisville Archdiocese employs no salesmen and depends entirely on goodwill.

The firm is LAMP, which stands for Louisville Archdiocesan Mission Promoters. "Mission" has meaning in this case, for several of the 31 counties in the archdiocese have but a handful of Catholics.

Through voluntary contributions, LAMP has purchased land for church buildings. New churches lately have been blessed in Jamestown, Tompkinsville, and near Monticello, Ky. In each case, sites of five acres or more were given by LAMP.

But the generosity doesn't stop there. Two Louisville parishes in relatively affluent neighborhoods paid the com-

plete costs of building two of the churches. Funds for the third were contributed by a couple who wanted "to pay back the Lord" for the material blessings they have shared.

Why build churches in areas where there are few Catholics? One reason is that each of the churches is within range of one of Kentucky's burgeoning vacation areas — resorts which are packed with Catholic tourists from early spring until late fall.

Another reason was cited by Father John J. Molloy, C.P.M., who serves the new mission church at Tompkinsville.

"When I came here to St. Helen's there were four Catholic families. Now there are more than one hundred," Father Molloy said.

How Nice to Get The Summer Off!

One nice thing about teaching, non-teachers may enviously agree, is the long summer vacation.

The Sisters of St. Joseph reported this week on how most of them "take the summer off."

In 37 colleges around the country, 256 sisters are studying. Seven others are on study tours in Europe, Africa, Japan and Mexico.

Sixty-one have gone on teaching, in colleges, inercity programs and enrichment and remedial classes. Forty-two are working on high school curriculum development, and 51 are doing volunteer work in various institutions.

Seven are involved full-time with the Storytellers' Summer Playhouse. Thirty-five are committed to the summer renewal program and 67 to short-term workshops, mainly in theology.

Meanwhile, the community's general chapter takes the time of 47 delegates and 14 sisters in auxiliary posts.

The sisters' summer is different, but not really "off," the summary concludes.

Burma Adamant: No Missionaries

London — (NC) — The dictatorship of Burma in southeast Asia, has allowed no missionary priests or nuns to enter the country since 1962, according to an exiled Italian bishop from the republic here-on a visit.

Bishop Fernando Guertel of Kentung who now lives in Italy said his vast diocese bordering China, Thailand and Laos, now has only 10 old Italian priests and a few local nuns to carry on religious instruction and look after its many lepers.

The 70-year-old bishop first went to Burma, which broke away from the British Commonwealth in 1948. Some 43 years ago from his home diocese of Crema, Italy, he and recently returned to Italy for an operation. Because of the restriction

on foreign missionaries he has been refused re-entry, he said.

His diocese and in particular, its orphanages have been swelled in the past few years by the arrival of thousands of refugees from China — not Chinese people but jungle and mountain tribes fleeing from both the oppression of Communist China and wandering bands of brigands.

The Union of Burma came formally into existence in 1948 when a treaty with Great Britain provided for the independence of Burma as a country. Until 1962 Burma was constitutionally a parliamentary democracy. On March 2, 1962 Premier Gen. Ne Win overthrew the government of U Nu and replaced it with a Revolutionary Council.