

**San Jose Obrero**

**A Time to Reminisce**

On a Sunday in May it was our day to make the pilgrimage procession to the Cathedral to commemorate the Holy Year. Down the steep, muddy, cobblestone streets of our hill moved a wobbly procession of 2,000 men, women, youths, and children.

They came with babies on their backs; they came in school uniforms; they came singing hymns and carrying banners and flags announcing to all that they were from San Jose Obrero. The

police smiled in amazement as the procession, sometimes a quarter-mile long, moved down the narrow market streets. The archbishop beamed his approval as he welcomed the throng that packed the Cathedral. Even the remnant of the Rochester team, Tim McCluskey and Fathers Peter Deckman and Daniel Torney, were surprised and proud at the huge turnout.

In these final weeks of the presence of the Rochester team

there is much reminiscing, much to be grateful for, and some tearful separations.

When the Rochester priests arrived in Bolivia in 1966 to begin the Rochester Mission they were armed with a letter from Bishop Kearney, lots of good will, and little else. After language school at Cochabamba, Bolivia, and six months of work with the Maryknoll Fathers, they moved to one of the poorest barrios in the heights of LaPaz. In August 1967 when Father Deckman arrived, San Jose Obrero was a half-completed church, an adobe house, and 40,000 people. The problems were enormous and solutions came slowly in an underdeveloped area. First there was the brick cooperative to provide jobs; then the credit cooperative to provide loans to the poor; the health clinic with dental and medical care; and months of simply climbing the hills and meeting the people.

In March 1968, Father Paul Freemesser arrived. He would have terrified the small Bolivians except they loved his big heart and loud voice. The fourth priest to arrive in June, 1968, was Father Edward Golden who always said because of his red hair he blended right in among the people. Father Freemesser was the only one of the mission who fell victim to hepatitis. His stay was interrupted for a while and he finished his tour of duty in 1972 when Father Torney arrived with Tim McCluskey, the only layman.

Over the years guests included:

Msr. John F. Duffy, when he was head of the Propagation of the Faith; Father Joseph Reiphart and Father John Rösse; Father Charlie Curran who played golf on the world's highest golf



As the diocese of Rochester turns over the keys of the parish of San Jose Obrero to local administration it means that the future of the mission will be in the hands of youngsters such as these, many of whom have grown up under the spiritual guidance of the Rochester padres.

course, Father Lawrence Tracy who watched the revolution of 1971 from his rectory window; Fathers Richard Torney, Robert Miller, James Marvin, Michael Conboy; the St. Joseph Sisters from Brazil, the Mercy Sisters from Chile.

Bishop Hogan visited the parish in April 1970. It was one of his first decisions when he became Bishop of Rochester to visit the three South American missions staffed by Rochester religious. He was accompanied by D&C columnist, Cliff Carpenter, who became a great friend of the Rochester team and devoted many articles to the people of LaPaz.

Each month parish progress was reported by a newsletter. These tell the story of babies born in the middle of the night in our downstairs maternity ward — and of others who died for lack of

such care — of Good Friday processions to the top of the hill — fiestas and birthday celebrations with our household in the living room — the health campaign and the Promotores de Salud — the 13 seminarians who lived and worked at various times in the parish — visits from Archbishop Manrique — taking donkeys to the jungle colonization area — the new parish meeting hall — and many other events.

All this has led up to the day, long prayed and worked for, when the Bolivian people would take charge of their own parish. Now the parish team of Bolivians is functioning, and the lay administrator is in residence. When the 2000 singing children and adults marched into the Cathedral on May 5, the missionaries from Rochester knew it was time to move on to other parts of the world.



**St. Thomas Fun Night**

Dr. and Mrs. G. Keefe Jackson are general chairmen of this year's Fun Night activities at St. Thomas More on June 4 from 5 to 9 p.m. Pizza, hot dogs, soft drinks, coffee, ice cream and cotton candy will be available. Assisting the Jacksons will be Mr. and Mrs. E. Garrett Cleary, Mr. & Mrs. James Comisso, Mr. and Mrs. John Glavin, Mr. and Mrs. Jon Matheis, Dr. and Mrs. Charles Salamone, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Spath and Mr. and Mrs. John Woloson.

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