

We Do Not Have Here a Lasting City

By SISTER KATHERINE M. POPOWICH, SSJ

Since we, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, began our mission work in Brazil in 1964, our life has continued to be a series of beginnings — beginnings of new works, beginnings in new areas. This year finds us in one more beginning — living in a city that is just beginning.

This is the temporary city that is being constructed to house the workers and engineers on the São Simão dam project. It is a city without a past, without a future, without a name — simply a "Vila"; a city of great contrasts — economic, cultural, and physical; a city isolated by strict security measures; a city administered by a foreign firm, in this case a European firm, with all the problems of cultural differences.

The first dwellers arrived in March 1973. Already the population is about 15,000 with the expected peak of 30,000 to be reached in 1976. The inhabitants have come from all over the world. The engineers are mainly Brazilian and Italian but some have come from Australia, Poland, the United States and various other Latin American countries. The "operários" come mainly from the poverty stricken Northeast but all parts of Brazil are represented.

Economic distinctions are sharply delineated by the upper vila, the lower vila and the "peões" who are bussed in daily from neighboring regions of São Simão and Paranaiguara. The peões, who earn barely \$45 a month, are not entitled to a house in the vila. To merit a house in the lower vila one must earn at least \$125 per month. The upper vila could easily be any wealthy suburban area of the United States.

Sister Katherine Popowich, SSJ, has been in Brazil 10 years and works mainly in the field of religious education. She has lived and worked in Paranaiguara. When the dam project is completed the Brazilian cities of São Simão and Paranaiguara will be under water. A new site has been found for São Simão.

Strict security measures not only protect but ensure orderly controlled living within the vila. There are barriers at all entrances to the vila. Non-dwellers must have a very good reason for entering. Regulations for living in the houses prohibit their use for political or religious gatherings. (So far my house is an exception to this rule since there is still no church building or other locale provided for religious meetings.)

A 10 p.m. curfew, rigidly enforced, sometimes curtails a lively discussion or meeting. I became aware of the strict censorship regulations during Holy Week. At that time I went to the school to request use of the duplicator to make copies of our Good Friday services, only to discover that the master had to be censored with one copy placed permanently on file.

Since last February I have been living in this very artificial setting so different from the warm, close-knit communities we have worked among in other parts of Goiás. While a house in the upper vila was offered for my use, it was more in accordance with our values as a group to choose a small worker's house even though this meant very limited space for meetings. Up to 14 people can manage in the small front room of the house but when the number goes up to 40, as it did for last week's Baptism course, we have to take to the open air.

What do we hope to do in this temporary city? First of all, I think we can be a "presence" among people suffering from loneliness and isolation though our houses are barely two meters apart. Sometimes it is a listening presence, listening to the hopes, fears, disappointments and problems; sometimes just a friendly presence — a smile, a visit, a shared cup of cafézinho, common meals in the workers' canteens. Very often we are a supporting presence to those who have high ideals and good ideas, yet are inhibited by their sense of aloneness.

Secondly, we can provide an orientation, sometimes directly religious, sometimes more human. Besides the religion classes in the company schools, there are courses of sacramental preparation in small groups. Often my role is simply to organize, motivate and bring together the elements that can best give an orientation for pre-marriage courses, encounters for domestics, and youth encounters.

Most important, we are a "questioning," presence through discussion groups, reflection groups; questioning the effects of progress on human values, human rights; questioning Christian obligations in the face of inequalities and injustices. We do not have the answers. We can only share with and support those who are sincerely questioning.

In a new, very real way, I have come to appreciate that we do not have here a lasting city. But people we do have. It is to them we are trying to offer a supporting, listening presence, an orientation for a more truly human, Christian way of life and evangelical guidelines for their questioning of life and life situations.

Women Religious Support Open Ministerial Roles

By Sister Elaine Kolesnik, RSM

Strong resolutions on the opening of all church ministries

to women, on amnesty, and on world hunger were adopted in the closing session of the 1974 national assembly of the

Leadership Conference of Women Religious, in Houston, Texas.

The LCWR met there Aug. 25-29 to explore the theme — "Gospel: Vision and Mandate."

Sister Mary Judith, Superior General of the Sisters of Mercy, attended from the Rochester diocese. Sister Judith is the present secretary-treasurer of Region II LCWR, which includes the major superiors of women in New York State.

By voice vote the LCWR resolution supported the principle that "all ministries in the church be open to women and men as the Spirit calls them."

Implicit in the resolution was the ordination of women as Catholic priests, although this was not spelled out. The resolution concluded: "The LCWR affirms the principle that women have active participation in all decision-making bodies of the church."

"It is an injustice to restrict any church ministry or the right to participate in making decisions on the basis of sex," was the rationale submitted with the resolution by the Woman Focus Session.

Another closely related resolution seeking the proclamation of "International Woman's Year" during 1975 also was adopted. The resolution stated that the LCWR would "offer leadership in its celebration as a consciousness raising and liberating event."

World hunger was a basic concern of the more than 600 nuns gathered for the national assembly. The nuns approved a resolution calling on all women religious to fast during World Hunger Week, Sept. 22-29.

COURIER DEADLINE

The Courier-Journal deadline is noon Thursday for articles intended for the following Wednesday edition.



Career Woman

Photo by Susan McKinney

Sister Jamesetta, director of the Graduate Program at Nazareth College, chats with Josephine White, executive secretary to the vice president of finance at Bausch & Lomb and president of the Bishop Kearney High School Mothers Club. Both participated in a recent job seminar for women who want to go back to work. Sponsored by Business Personnel Services, Inc., with assistance provided by representatives of the New York State Employment Service, the seminar was held at the Monroe County Fairgrounds Sept. 12. It offered speakers on the topics of educational preparation, the right attitude to get and hold a job, planning, adjusting and where to look for a job. Group discussions were held after the speakers finished.

Cathedral Offers Adult Education

Early Christian history, the cinema as "modern man's morality play," and current directions in theological thought are among the topics offered in Sacred Heart Cathedral's adult education program. Evening classes begin next week.

In addition, there will be a daytime Bible study course.

Msgr. Richard M. Quinn will lecture Wednesdays, 8-10 p.m., on the cultural and political background of the First Century

A.D. At the same time, Sister Margaret Brennan, SSJ, of Nazareth Academy, will give the film course.

The Bible course will be given Thursday afternoons, 1:30-2:30, by Sister Ann Habershaw, SSND, religious education coordinator for the parish.

Registration may be made in advance with Ted Lum, 647-1900, or at the first session of any course. The fee is \$3, or \$5 per couple.

THE OPEN WINDOW

Father Louis Hohman

Dear Father Hohman,

Does the ordination of Episcopal women priests have relevance to Roman Catholic women who may seek ordination?

Sincerely,
H. H.

Dear H. H.,

The ordination of Episcopal women priests does not have any direct bearing on the possibility of Roman Catholic women seeking ordination but it does raise the question.

As you are probably aware, the body of bishops who exercise the highest authority in the Episcopal Church declared the ordinations of those women null and void. In spite of that decision there are still many protests that their ordination should be regarded as valid. In my opinion it will not be too long before someone in the Roman Catholic Church directly confronts the law which says no women can be ordained priests.

What will the answer be? In the near future I could only foresee a resounding "No." But the question remains — on what grounds will that answer be given? Cardinal John Wright recently commented that it was a matter of tradition, spelled with a Capital "T." Others have tried to base their rejection on Scriptural grounds. It seems to me that these arguments are not worth the powder to blow them up.

For example, to eliminate the possibility of the ordination of women on the grounds that Jesus

did not choose any women to be members of his college of Apostles is to me a non-argument. It should be apparent that in Jesus' time the status of women would not allow them to be leaders in the Church. They would not have been listened to, they could not even get up and talk in the synagogues as Paul and other Apostles did. Their effectiveness would have been near zero. The same holds true for the argument that St. Paul ordered them to be silent in church services. That sprang from the same situation and not necessarily from the fact that they were disqualified simply because they were women. I think anyone who tries to come up with an argument from Sacred Scripture to disqualify women simply because they are women is in for a bit of a hassle.

Cardinal Wright's argument that it is a matter of tradition spelled with a capital "T" leaves me perplexed. I will assume that the Cardinal is infinitely more a theologian than I. But I would like to see the basis for his argument. What he means by capital "T" I must assume is that it would be a Divine rather than human tradition that women could not be priests. I sure would like to see how he works that one out.

One final thought: if the Divine call to ordination (bishopric, priesthood, diaconate) comes through the faith community and there are no solid arguments against ordination of women in Scripture or Tradition, maybe in a few decades (or centuries?) the faith community might be ready to call women to ordination.