

Our Missioners Surveyed:

'Let's Keep on the Job'

By CARMEN VIGLUCCI

The diocese should remain in the Latin American missions, provided personnel is available, as the Church by its nature is missionary and needs to continue in that part of the world. But we should continue in the present missions before attempting anything new.

That is the consensus of opinion on one of 11 questions asked of diocesan personnel serving in Latin American missions. The diocese is presently operating or is responsible for establishing missions in LaPaz, Bolivia; Uberlandia, Paranaiguara, and Cachoeria Alta, Brazil; and Santiago, Chile.

The survey was prepared by personnel who have returned home from missions work and was taken by the Missions Office, headed by Father Joseph Reinhart, to gather information for making decisions regarding the future of diocesan mission work. The diocese is approaching the annual appeal May 17-18 for our missions in Latin America as well as in Selma, Ala., and the home rural and urban missions, such as the Spanish Apostolate and Rural Human Development.

In addition to the formal questions, space was provided for general comments and Father Reinhart said they provided some of the more interesting insights into the missionaries' opinions.

"It is of the utmost importance that we continue to serve the Church outside the diocese of Rochester" as is now being done in Latin America, said one.

Another mentioned the personal benefits of serving in Latin America — "Vision widened, experiential knowledge of poverty, hunger and suffering. As a result of this experience, humility in front of problems and therefore a greater hope in the Lord. Some of the edge of the know-it-all priest was shaved off and a greater sense of service developed. A wider understanding of Christ's mission, the Church's and of the extension of the salvation being brought about."

Another felt that "the most important evangelization must be done in the United States as regards Latin America and the Third World. Aware of the present economic difficulties at home," another missionary, commented:

"I know the need at home is great, but if we only give of our abundance, how can we expect the Lord to multiply the fruits of our efforts at home?"

Two parishes have been established in Latin America through the work of diocesan personnel. Diocesan priests and laymen established San Jose Obrero in La Paz, Bolivia, and diocesan Sisters of Mercy along with the Columban Fathers set up the parish of San Andres in Santiago, Chile. Upon their establishment, the diocesan personnel turned the responsibilities over to the local Church.

Such action is in line with Church policy as expressed by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan — it is the role "of all foreign missionaries to try and establish the Church on a local level . . . they (missionaries) always remain as foreigners . . . as outsiders."

Father Reinhart said such transitions are "the fulfillment of the dream we had when we went there . . . to hand over the parish to the people . . . with the local

Church in a position to take over."

The diocese looks forward to strong involvement in and healthy financial support for the missions in Latin America, according to Father Reinhart.

That direction is bolstered by the sentiment of the missioners expressed in answer to a survey question which asked, "From the viewpoint of Rochester, are foreign missionaries a help or a hindrance to the national churches in Latin America?"

The general answer was that "most find a sensitive missionary, respecting the native culture and Church, fills particular needs and can be helpful to the local Church. Hindrances would come about if foreign cultural values and excessive paternalism were imposed."

"The diocese continues to encourage volunteers for work in South America," Father Reinhart said, "especially in areas where

we have worked for the last 10 years."

Another survey question touched on this subject:

"Is there still a potential among young religious, priests, seminarians and laity for service in Latin America as representatives of the Church of Rochester?"

"There seems to be untapped potential in the two congregations and among the priests. There is a need for more information in mission theology and more stimulation of mission vocations. Lay volunteers should be approached for specific needs."

So, as we head toward the annual Missions appeal and the consequent focus on the work of our diocesans away from home, it is clear that much has been done, there is a great deal that still needs doing, and our diocese is seeking ways to help perform the task.

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