

# The St. Joseph Sister-Missioners . . .

The Sisters of St. Joseph presently serving in Brazil:

**Sister Jean Bellini**, a native of Water Mill, Long Island, the daughter of John and Mary Vigliotta Bellini. She taught biology and religious studies at St. Agnes High in Rochester and was adviser to the Student Senate there. She was campus minister at Ithaca College before going to Brazil in July 1976. She lives and works with Sister Ellen Kuhl in Cachoeira Alta and Cacu. She is involved with youth groups in each town, helps organize reflection groups and groups of women and youths to help poor families join courses on controlling diseases that can be contracted through unfiltered water, on hygiene and on child care.

Sister Jean sees community as all-important. "Since my involvement with the Student Senate at St. Agnes I have grown to see the great educational potential of working with groups . . . essential to the process is the dimension of community . . . that individuals are members of groups, not isolated persons."

**Sister Christel Burgmaier**, a native of Utica, graduate of St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing and the University of Rochester, her parents live in Cape Vincent. She has served in Brazil since 1968 and now works in Itaguacu and Paranaiguara. She works in two clinics, both without doctors, one a state-run operation at Paranaiguara, the other in Itaguacu, sponsored by the parish. She also works on projects such as sewing courses, classes for pregnant women, food distribution and the gathering of financial help for medicine. Clothing sales are run with the goods from the sewing classes and other goods sent from the U.S.

"We work on trying to help people help themselves," Sister Christel said. Outright donations make people dependent and take away any sense of dignity they may have. We also try to make the Church community aware of the poverty that exists and its responsibility to do something about it."

**Sister Ellen Kuhl**,

daughter of Mrs. T. S. Kuhl of Auburn, stationed in Cachoeira Alta and Cacu. She taught for eight years in the Rochester diocese, at St. Stephen's in Geneva, Christ the King, and in Auburn. She went to Brazil in 1973. "My work is largely in religious education," she said. "I am responsible for the catechetical program in the two towns and sacramental preparation for First Eucharist, Chrism and adult baptisms. I also help teachers in about 25 rural schools with the teaching of religion."

Sister Ellen also works with the poor, including home visitations, organization of courses, formation of adult reflection groups.

**Sister Ann Lafferty**, a native Rochesterian who taught at Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart, St. Monica's before going to Brazil in 1964. She returned to the diocese and was at Sacred Heart, St. Bridget's and St. Ann's Home before going back to Brazil in 1976.

Sister Ann is involved in the catechetical program for confirmation and adult baptisms and is "interested in the promotion of women." She plans to work in all communities of the parish to produce future lay leadership as "numbers of sisters decrease."

**Sister Mary Ann Mayer**, daughter of Norman and Mary Mayer of Rochester. She taught at DeSales High from 1963 to 1971 when she was assigned to Brazil. She coordinates a catechetical program in the parish of Bom Jesus in Uberlandia, including the training of catechists, scheduling of classes, and parent meetings. She also assists in a Mothers Club in a poorer section, visits homes, helps in liturgy preparations and directs Sunday worship in the absence of a priest, and works with youth groups. "In short, I am engaged in catechetical and pastoral work," she said, stressing that "I have gained much in my development as a human person and as a Christian."

**Sister Katherine Marie Popowich**, a native of Brockport. She worked at Immaculate Conception School, Holy Childhood School, St. Agnes Grammar and High School and DeSales High School before going to Brazil 13 years ago. She has extensive education experience in Brazil from directing primary schools to being vice director of a secondary school, to teaching at a camp school. Over the years she has gradually left teaching "to dedicate full time to parish activities."

Her present work includes formation of lay catechists in Sao Simao and Itaguacu; coordination of assistance programs for the poor in Sao Simao - the quilo campaign, clothing drives, sewing groups, food distribution, the filter campaign; formation of reflection groups, and providing of formation courses.

"We are trying to give the people a reason for the great faith we find among them," she said. "I feel that

I have always benefited much more in what I have learned from our people than in what I have given."

**Sister Virginia Schmitz**, daughter of Helen M. Schmitz and the late Henry F. Schmitz, a member of St. Alphonsus parish in Auburn, she taught at St. Michael's, Penn Yan; Sacred Heart Cathedral and Mother of Sorrows prior to going to Brazil in 1966. During her 12 years in Brazil she has lived in Paranaiguara, Cachoeira Alta and Uberlandia, teaching in state schools and engaged in pastoral and catechetical work.

The veteran missioner sums up: "The years in Brazil have been the richest and most growth-filled of my life and living in and being part of another culture has not only deepened and strengthened my own values in such a way that love, witness, serve, Church have all taken on new dimensions, but a deepening appreciation of my own American heritage and culture has occurred over the years."

## Cachoeira Alta



Sister Jean and Ellen work with parish youth groups. From left, Sister Jean, Sister Ellen, and two leaders of the parish youth group they assist, Mario do Carmo and John.



Dona Lazara wears skullcap given her by Bishop Hogan. She had sent her photo to Pope Paul and asked for one in return. Somehow the pontiff's photo was not included in the letter she received from the Vatican which she shows to Bishop Hogan, below.



The sisters visit parishioners.

