

SOUTHERN TIER AUBURN-GENEVA

Elmira Native Organizing New Contemplative Abbey

Elmira—An Elmira woman who has been a contemplative sister since 1955 recently launched a new era in her career, going to Washington state to set up a new abbey.

Mother Miriam, formerly Mary Benedict, daughter of Clifford and Victoria Benedict of 601 W. Hill St., Elmira, left the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, Connecticut, Sept. 1 with two other sisters, Mother Presca and Mother Therese. They went to Shaw Island off the coast of Washington to set up a new abbey.

The cloistered order follows the Rule of St. Benedict.

Her father explained that the Abbey of Regina Laudis had become crowded, and it

became necessary for the sisters to look for other quarters. They also hope, he noted, that new members can be gained from the West Coast. He added that the Connecticut abbey has had more applications for membership than it has been able to accommodate.

Mother Miriam is a graduate of St. Casimir's School and Elmira Catholic High School, her father noted, and during her high school years, was the organist at St. Casimir's, and back-up organist at several local churches. She was closely associated with the Benedictine brothers at Mount Saviour Monastery, he said, and entered the Abbey of Regina Laudis after high school. He noted that she has not been back to Elmira since that time.

Funding Aids OAR Prison Effort

By MARTIN TOOMBS
Southern Tier Editor

Elmira—Campaign for Human Development funding and a grant from the Anderson Evans Foundation has made it possible for Sister Margaret Mary Flynn to become the full-time director of the Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR) program, which works in the Chemung County Jail.

The money became available at an opportune time; Sister Margaret Mary, formerly the agency's part-time director, currently is trying to rebuild the program after five months during which OAR's volunteers were not allowed in the jail.

OAR recruits and trains volunteers to work on a one-to-one basis with inmates in the county jail. The primary aim is to assist the inmate's return to society, with the goal of reducing recidivism, the tendency for prisoners to return to prison soon after release.

Last April, an escape at the Chemung County Jail caused Sheriff Carl Draxler to suspend all four of the volunteer programs in the jail. The other three were reinstated, sister noted, but OAR was not allowed to return until August. The gap meant a loss of volunteers, and, especially with the

short duration of imprisonment in county jails, many of the inmates in the program. The result has been a need to re-start the program, sister explained.

Conditions in the Chemung County Jail have been a continuing source of controversy, and the basis for the filing of several million dollars' worth of lawsuits against Sheriff Draxler during the past year.

Speaking in her office in the basement of the county facility, Sister Margaret Mary said that community information and involvement is an essential goal for the year. She explained that she is continually amazed by the community apathy concerning the jail. Despite the lawsuits and the publicity surrounding the escape, she noted that many local persons tell her they are surprised to learn that the facility usually has about 80 inmates; they had estimated about 10.

Sister also noted that after speaking to groups, describing the situation in the jail, many persons seem sincerely concerned, and say that something should be done, but they never do anything. Sister noted that she is amazed by "the lack of gospel response," among those she speaks to, to actually do something about the problem.

Community understanding of ex-offenders' needs is important to their becoming useful members of society, sister noted. She related a telling story of a reaction to an incarcerated person. A local high school teacher happened to be a neighbor of a person who was arrested and placed in the county jail. Sister asked the teacher if he would be willing to work with his neighbor. After they had met in the jail, she spoke to the men, and they reported that the teacher had been afraid to meet his neighbor in the jail. The teacher expressed his fears to the inmate, who responded by saying that everyone in the jail was somebody's neighbor and the fact that they were there did not make them different than they had been before their arrest.

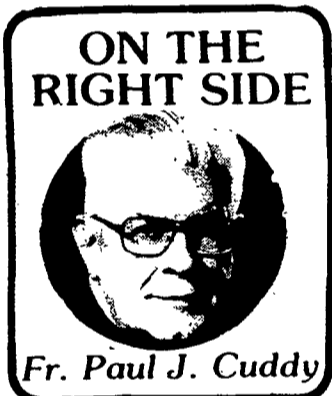
As Sister Margaret Mary wanted to be let through jail security to her office, inmates came by and spoke to her, and she asked them how they were doing. Their age was demonstrated by the fact that the discussion centered on returning to high school upon their release. They asked about tutors for their studies, a program lacking at the jail, and sister inquired about one inmate's contact with his father. His father had been afraid to visit him, he said, but had responded to a second letter with the news that he had found his son a

job on a farm after his release.

Sister Margaret Mary noted that specific plans for OAR for the year include a volunteer training program in December, and a pre-release program for inmates. A program on values and goal setting for the inmates was well received last year, sister said, and speakers such as persons from the employment office could be helpful. She noted that OAR is currently arranging for office space outside the jail, to serve released prisoners and assist them with job finding and other problems.

She also noted that there is no educational program at the jail, even though government allocations are made for the education of inmates 16 to 20 years old. A former high school equivalency program didn't really serve the needs of the inmates, she said, because they aren't there long enough, and many of them would need too much work to pass the equivalency exam. Tutoring on basic skills is needed, she said, and hopefully can be arranged.

Another project is the annual meeting of the Coalition for Criminal Justice, the ecumenical group that sponsors OAR, which will feature the two candidates for county sheriff, who will discuss citizen involvement in criminal justice.



To Father Joseph F. Hogan, Corning:

Many thanks to you and your parishioners for the wonderful Forty Hours Devotions last Sunday, and for inviting the Philippine missionary, Father Kraft. I phoned him: "Could you come with me to Forty Hours at St. Vincent's, Corning? You'll meet a lot of fine priests." He was edified by the great crowd at the services. Truth is, I haven't seen so many people at confession since the days of the Missions. I told him: "This parish has a deep tradition of devotion and strong family life. Firm and kindly leadership brings forth good fruit." Fr. John Brill's care of the Lord's sanctuary has always been an inspiration. Fr. Beligotti seems to be winning the hearts of Corning even as he did at Holy Family, Auburn.

I liked Fr. Elmer Schmidt's sermon. His talk was a catechetical model. I hope his people in Apalachin appreciate him. Please tell your precious housekeepers, Mary and Margaret Crane, and the women who helped them that the turkey dinner was glorious. I was touched when the twins presented me with the succulent turkey leg, smiling: "This was reserved for you."

What a good choir you have! And how the people belted out the Benediction hymns. I did not know Fr. Moynihan had such a good

voice. His directing gave confidence to the congregation.

Our SVD Father Richard Kraft has been in the Philippines for 21 years. He runs a radio station in the Province of Abra, about 250 miles north of Manila, in the hill country. It is the only radio station in the province, which is the size of Rhode Island. The station is situated on the campus of the Society of the Divine Word in Bangued, and uses both the local Ilcano language and English, but mostly Ilcano.

The station has as its motto: Dedicated to Build the Christian Community. Even secular programs are imbued with the Christian spirit. The Christian service includes instructions in agriculture, world and local news, and a curious kind of Penny Saver advertisements. For example, "A message is being sent to Jose Della Cruz to come to Signet Thursday morning with two horses to meet the bus. Signed: Albert Della Cruz." Or: "A message is being sent to the Della Cruz family that their mother is seriously ill in the hospital at Bangued. Signed: Alberto Della Cruz. While this seems strange to us, the newspapers do not reach the mountains and the mail is uncertain. The radio brings the message. A professional survey showed that 98% of the people who listen to radio in the province listen at least some time every day to Station DZPA. What an apostolate.

This is how I became acquainted with Father Kraft. His folks live in Rochester. They send him the Courier-Journal. He reads OTRSide column with attention, and two years ago he wrote: "Please send me a set of Abp. Sheen's cassette conferences which you write or in your column."

Later he wrote: "The Sheen talks are inspiring. I even arranged to give a Retreat for our priests through our radio station, using the Sheen conferences. We selected 9 p.m., a convenient hour for most, and notified them of the time and conferences. Nearly every priest in the province made the radio retreat, as well as many laymen. As a result, several priests ordered sets for their own churches." Station DZPA also airs catechetical instructions, devotions and a Rosary program with a short message, similar to Msgr. Cirrincione's Rosary for Peace. It is on every night, and greatly shared throughout the province.

When we left you Sunday at 9—my classmate, Fr. Harold Rogers bought a set of the Fr. Bassett cassette conferences on my way out—we went to Hornell. I wanted Fr. Kraft to see how our Magnify the Lord program, sponsored by the Legion of Mary, is produced at WLEA. Fr. MacNamara put us up at St. Ann's, and after Mass we hustled to WLEA. We did a couple of dialogues for the program. The manager, Kevin P. Doran, gave Fr. Kraft a thorough look-see of the operation of the station and sent him away with a check for \$350. to buy a special radio tape recorder to be used in the production department of the Bangued station. He will buy it in Manila, because the electronic hook-ups there are adapted to the Philippine system. Oh, what Fr. Kraft could not do if he had more money! What an apostolate!

Greetings to your staff, and to Father Tom Brennan. I always think of a special Bible quote when I think of him. "A faithful friend is a strong defence, and he who has found one has found a treasure." The diocese is richer because of him.



Father John J. Nacca, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi parish, Auburn and two altar boys dressed as members of the Swiss Guard walk down church aisle at the beginning of the Christopher Columbus commemorative celebration.

Columbus Day Award Presented in Auburn

By MARY ANN GINNERTY

Auburn—Mary Ann Piscioti was honored as Woman of the Year at the 15th annual Christopher Columbus Commemorative Committee Dinner here on Oct. 9. Mrs. Piscioti became the first woman to receive the award which is

given to the most outstanding area parishioner of Italian descent.

The celebration begins on the closest Sunday to Columbus Day with a Mass, held at St. Francis of Assisi, and followed by the dinner. This year's Liturgy was highlighted by Swiss Guard

uniforms worn by the altar boys.

Mrs. Piscioti is a communicant of St. Mary's Church in Auburn and a member of the Rosary and Scapular Society. She has served as president of St. Mary's Mothers Club and Mt. Carmel Mothers Club as well as being active in the Girl Scouts, Red Cross and the Italian American Veterans Administration voluntary services.

She is currently serving her second term as president of the Daughters of Columbus, is a member of ZONTA, and serves as president of Neighborhood House.

Radiology Graduation

Elmira—The class of 1977 of St. Joseph's Hospital School of X-Ray Technology had its commencement Wednesday, Oct. 12 in the Little Flower Chapel in the Dunn Memorial. The silver anniversary graduation of six students included Mary Frances Barry, Elmira; Jeffrey Bauer, Hammondsport; Patricia Cornish, Elmira; Robert Schumann, North Syracuse; Barbara Patterson Root, Millerton, Pennsylvania; and Jeanette Rose, Breesport.

Among the graduates honored were Patricia Cornish who received the Mallinckrodt Award for general performance. Robert Schumann received the radiologist award and the Squibb and Son award in recognition of his outstanding scholastic

achievement.

Presentation of the diplomas was made by the director of radiology, Dr. Fred Barton, assisted by the director of the school, Mrs. Firmina Wilkins, RT, and Mrs. Joann Treat, RT. The commencement address was delivered by Theodore Dutchess, RT. Father Cyril Guise offered the benediction. Following the graduation, a reception was held in the Dunn Memorial Social Room.

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