

COURIER-JOURNAL

Bishop Visits Missionaries Brazil

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Uberlandia: three of our Sisters serve here — Ann Lafferty, Dolores Turner and Elaine Hollis.

Ann, from Holy Rosary Parish, Rochester, is the veteran of the group. Her experience of life with the people of Brazil has gone deep inside her as any significant human experience will when taken before God in a life of committed prayer.

Her words are few but are enlightened with a conviction which made Pete and me listen — and then think.

Sister Ann Lafferty: "I think the most important message I would like to send would be to ask the people of our diocese to become aware — to stay aware — of the problems that are present in Latin America and particularly in Brazil.

"It requires a great deal of reading and study because the press doesn't always report well the issues which are very important for our lives here. We need your support and encouragement in the struggles which the people here face. We need you to understand why the Church here takes the stands it does."

Sr. Elaine Hollis is the new girl in town. She came to Uberlandia just a few weeks ago after finishing her study of the Portuguese language in Brasilia.

Elaine celebrated a birthday during our visit, a celebration made happier by some homemade peanut brittle and cookies which Pete and I brought down as a gift from Mrs. Hollis.

Listen to Elaine speak as one for whom life in Brazil is still a very new experience:

Sister Elaine Hollis: "I arrived in Uberlandia on Christmas eve and was made to feel very much a part of the activity of Christmas here. I must say it was a little different though to come out of midnight Mass and find a ferris wheel set up across the street and popcorn vendors at the door of the Church."

"It seems that I'll be going out to the country to work with one of the Oblate fathers. There are about three small towns. I'll be going there to help and support the people in any way that I can.

"I came here wanting very much to learn from the people — not just to try to give something to them. And I think that my experience has been that they have an awful lot to teach us through the beauty and simplicity of their lives."

If that gift of the Brazilian people to the Sisters is a real one, no less real is the obvious and gentle affection the Sisters communicate to the people.

Our Sisters are one with the people they serve. They share their joys and sorrows, their fiestas and their struggles in a ministry very much rooted in the gospel.

That theme of union is constantly present in another way — in the appreciation the Sisters have of being one in the life of the Diocese and in the life of their congregation.



A youngster proudly points to one of the more than 2000 water filters bought through the Courier-Journal Filter Campaign.

Sister Dolores Turner of St. Mary's, Canandaigua: "I'd like to say how much more I appreciate, since I've been here in Brazil, the real meaning of the Church universal and of the communion of life, prayer and support each one of us have with one another. The prayers, support and interest of the people in our diocese mean a great deal to us. This kind of support means that we're not working for ourselves but we're working here on behalf of all of you as part of one Body, the Church."

Itaguacu: We stood on a bridge over a roaring river. Sister Barbara Orczyk of St. Stanislaus Parish, Rochester, spoke fondly of her home parish and of the people who had supported her so well as she grew up and in her religious life. She mentioned with joy the devotion with which her parents have always served the parish. And — I am sure she won't mind me saying it — she allowed as how Father Joe Jankowiak, present pastor at St. Stan's, and she went to school together, although Joe was "many years ahead of me."

Sister Barbara does many things in Itaguacu. Principal among her activities is the operation of a medical clinic serving the poor of the village. Sister is a fully qualified physician's assistant. She speaks of her work in this way.

Sister Barbara Orczyk — "The clinic started in 1977 but the Brazilian doctor refused to come out to this area because the people are too poor. They couldn't build up a clientele to support them the way they wanted to be supported. So the poor were left on their own.

"When I came here there was really no medical assistance so I began to work in the clinic in February 1979. I



Text by Bishop Clark
Photos by Father Deckman

am able to do all kinds of physical examinations and simple surgery like sewing up cuts to the legs or arms but for any kind of major surgery we have to go to a doctor in Sao Simao, about 30 miles away.

"Many children suffer from malnutrition because they do not eat properly. They eat enough rice to fill their stomachs, but they can not afford the meat or beans which would give them protein. As a result you find that many Brazilian children are rather small in stature.

"Another challenge for us is the superstitions they have about vegetables, they will not eat many of them. It is slow work to convince them that eating them would improve their health a great deal."

Those who know Sister will appreciate the happiness she brings to the people of the village as she makes her rounds. Young and old, well and infirm, men and women, salute her with a genuine joy when they see her.

From most she draws the universal "thumbs up" sign of approval when she passes by. Although she may not be able to alleviate all health problems, Sister can offer to all something of the peace of Christ as she walks the road with them.

Cachoerira Alta: Colon O'Flanagan, OMI — "I am an oblate priest from Ireland working for the past 15 years here in Brazil, most of these years I worked with one or another of the Sisters of St. Joseph from Rochester and I'd like to make my testimony of their collaboration with us over the past years.

"Their collaboration in the field of catechetics, evangelization and medicine, the Christian witness of their

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Observations

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4. Our missionaries have called me to be more critical of our own government's policies especially as these policies favor regimes which curtail human freedom and rights. They call also for a similar awareness of the economic impact of multinational corporations on the poor of developing countries.

5. I pray that the apostolates of Janet Korn, Pete Deckman, Katherine Popovich and all the rest will be the seeds of new vocations to the priesthood and religious life. I am convinced that there are many young people in the Diocese akin to the famous class of '52 from Sacred Heart School.

6. My desire to learn the Spanish language, until now so weakly pursued, has been renewed. Ask me how its coming along the next time we meet and allow me to suggest the possibility of that study to you.

7. I have been inspired by our sisters in Brazil and Chile. They are beautiful women in whom all in the Diocese of Rochester can justly take great pride.

— Bishop Clark



Sister Jean Bellini, second from left, and Sister Marlene Roeger, on the bishop's left, pose with a parish family.