



Sister Elaine Hollis, Sister Ann Lafferty, Father Peter Deckman, Sister Dolores Turner and the bishop.

Brazil

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lives and their dedication are priceless gifts to the people with whom we work.

It has been edifying to have worked with them and to collaborate in the growth of the Kingdom of God.

"Presently I work with Sister Katherine Marie Popovich and Sister Suzanne Wills. Both are deeply involved in pastoral projects in the parish. Sister Suzanne works mainly in health; Sister Katherine, in evangelization and catechetics.

"I would like to attest to their dedication . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ said that by their fruits you shall know them. I would like to express my thanks to the people of Rochester for their support, interest and encouragement to the SSJs who work here."

These words serve not only to introduce the Sisters who work in Cachoeira Alta, but they represent the view of all of the Oblate Fathers with whom our Sisters work so closely in all of their mission stations.

On a walk we took together to visit families Sister Sue spoke about her work. She is a registered nurse and is able to assist the people in the city with some of their health needs. It's not easy, because illness is only one link in a chain which shackles the poor.

Sister Suzanne Wills — "Health is a big problem because the people do not have the good food necessary for nutrition. There is no money to buy the food because the jobs they work at do not pay the minimum salary. Even if they did pay the minimum salary it would not be enough for them to buy the food."

It's no wonder this is where at the present time Brazil's poor are suffering under a rate of inflation in excess of 100 percent.

Cacu: During the Lord's prayer at Mass the congregation joined hands. I grasped the hands of Sister Marlene Roeger and a 4-year-old boy. It was for me a moment of special appreciation of the Church and of the ministry of Bishop.

Sister Marlene is blessed with a great voice and brought richness to the celebration as she led us all in song. (I don't sing well in Portuguese either!)

Sisters Jean Bellini and Marlene arranged visits for Pete and me with the leaders of committees for youth, human development, liturgy and ministry. We also had the privilege of spending time with a woman who has been trying to better the lot of the washwomen of the area and a gentleman who is trying to organize the farm workers around Cacu. They are people of strong faith.

Sr. Marlene, St. Michael's, Rochester — "Every day that passes I am more grateful for the opportunity to be here to work with the Brazilian people, to live among them and to share their lives."

This has a lot to do with the Diocese of Rochester, too, because what I am able to share with the Brazilian people first came to me among the people at home. Here I share it with a valiant, struggling Church whose people are of deep faith and are willing to put their lives on the line.

"They struggle to bring about equality, liberty, justice and freedom for all people. I am grateful for the visit of Fr.

Pete Deckman and Bishop Clark because it says to me that the people of the Diocese want to be part of that struggle."

I had heard much about the water filters provided here by the people of the diocese. Sister Jean updates that story and speaks of the long range effects of the filter program.

Sr. Jean Bellini — "We distributed about 2,000 filters in a year and a half. The people wanted them very much but were less interested in the course in hygiene we presented in conjunction with the filter program. As a result we have not been very successful in improving the hygiene of the people.

"But one good thing that happened is that we identified some good leaders who took the course seriously and who became instructors as well.

"So even though we did not manage to change patterns of behavior we got them to participate and feel more like persons with dignity. We ended up building up people even though it wasn't exactly the way we planned it originally."

Paranaiguara: Sister Kay Foy makes you think! She is a Sister of remarkable achievement, having chaired the math department at Nazareth College and having served on the general council of the Sisters of St. Joseph. And now she opens herself to a new faith experience in the service of the people in this small city. The new culture, new language must make great demands on her. If they do, they do not diminish the obvious joy which is hers for being here.

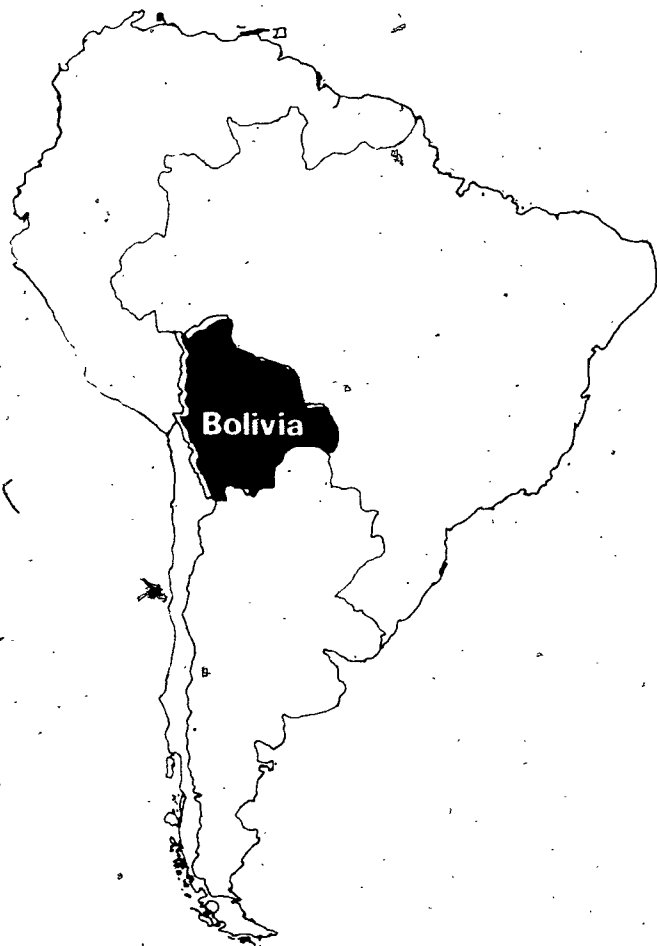
Sister Chris Burgmaier is Kay's partner. Sister Chris is a nurse. On one walk with her we stopped at the house of the Teixeira family — husband, wife and five children. There is a beauty in them hard to describe. They are black. On the way home Pete told me that Mrs. Teixeira said that in his boyhood her husband had wanted to become a priest. His father discouraged him because he had never seen a black priest and did not think it was possible! In the following excerpt Chris reminds us that often enough the joy of mission work comes from sharing the ordinary experience of life with the people.

Sister Chris Burgmaier — "Today we brought two girls along with us to Uberlandia — Maria, 15, and Hosanna, 13. They're really excited. Neither saw the city last night."

"They're looking forward to their first experience of seeing an airplane and buildings of more than one story. Later we hope to go downtown to see some of the buildings and some of the people whom we all know from Paranaiguara. The girls are the youngest of six and I would imagine it was very hard for their mother to see them go off this morning because in a way it's saying that even her youngest ones are getting old enough to see the big city which she herself has never seen."



The bishop celebrates Mass with Sister Katherine Popowich and Sister Suzanne Wills.



BOLIVIA

Here they still speak of Fathers Ed Golden (El Dorado), Paul Freemesser (Caliman-Superman), Dan Tormey and Tim McCluskey. And, of course, the return of Pete Deckman was a cause for great jubilation at San Jose Obrero, the parish in which all of these men worked when the Diocese of Rochester staffed the parish from 1967-1974.

We were met at the airport at La Paz by a delegation from the Archbishop Jorge Manrique Hurtado, an extraordinarily hospitable man. This meeting was a brief one because after Immigration and Customs formalities Pete and I boarded another plane for Cochabamba to spend some time with the Maryknoll Fathers with whom Pete will be working for the next five years.

The Rochester priests who served in Bolivia studied Spanish at the renowned language school at the Maryknoll Center here, the present director was a student with Pete in 1966.

Here missionaries study Spanish and take orientation and acculturation courses from veteran missionaries. It is an exciting opportunity to share, however briefly, in their apostolic mission spirit.

Among those with whom we spent time was Jim Courneen of Maryknoll who is from St. Augustine parish. Jim is stationed in Santa Cruz but came to Cochabamba to make a retreat. We were delighted to see him.

Jorge Jimenez, a priest of the Diocese of Cochabamba, invited us to dinner at his parents' home during our stay. Jorge studied at St. Bernard's in preparation for his ordination; prior to that he became acquainted with Rochester people as a leader of the parish in La Paz.



Father Deckman, left, and Father Jorge Jimenez flank Father Jimenez's sister.

To have experienced the hospitality of a Bolivian home was a great treat; to have shared a meal with the Jimenez family a special blessing.

In La Paz, Pete and I celebrated the Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy with the parish community of San Jose Obrero. I wish all in the Diocese of Rochester could have been there with us to see the joy which Pete's return brought to the people there. They were delighted; and I think it fair to say that for Pete it was a return to his family away from home.

Following Mass we toured the dental and medical clinics conducted by the parish; were treated to a puppet show together with a room full of young people; and enjoyed

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