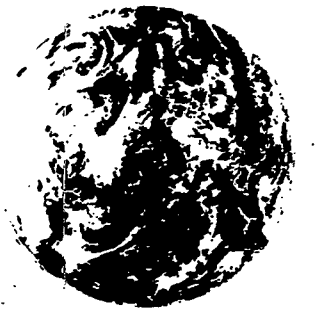


To Look Through Each Other's Eyes

"COULD A GREATER MIRACLE TAKE PLACE THAN FOR US TO LOOK THROUGH EACH OTHER'S EYES FOR AN INSTANT" -HENRY DAVID THOREAU



Logo by Maureen Servas

Chilean Missionaries Will Attend Central American Conference

Sisters Margaret Mungovan, Kay Schwenzer and Chela Lagos Donoso, all Rochester Sisters of Mercy and Chilean missionaries, will attend the fifth Mercy Latin American/Caribbean Conference from July 11-19, in Belize, Central America.

Sisters of Mercy in Latin America and the Caribbean have been coming together as a global community periodically during the past four years in an effort to strengthen the bonds that unite them, to better focus on the reality that is theirs as Third World countries, and to respond to the "cry of the poor" as Church, a companions of Catherine McAuley, Sisters of Mercy foundress.

In Belize, representatives of the 250 Sisters of Mercy who are working in Central and South America and the Caribbean, including an ever-growing number of native sisters, will reflect on the conference theme, "The Word Was Made Flesh and Dwelt Among Us -- Indigenization: Structural Analysis in its Cultural Dimension." In other words, they will examine their ability to live in another culture and to see/live the values of that culture rather than imposing their own values on it.

Conference objectives are two-fold:

1. Consistent with the Mercy option for the poor, to continue the process of structural analysis in its cultural dimension.

2. To create conditions for initiating a process that will free them, as missionaries, mentally and culturally and motivate them to evaluate seriously their lifestyles, apostolates and modes of action in the different areas so as:

- to serve the poor more effectively, and
- to commit themselves as Mercy Community in Latin America/Caribbean to an in-depth, integral, indigenous Formation process for native women wishing to become Sisters of Mercy.

Sister Anna Gleeson, chairperson of the conference, is an Australian Sister of Mercy who lives and works with the Rochester Mercies in Santiago, Chile. She has been living at St. John the Evangelist convent (Humboldt Street) for a few months, getting a break and some space from the Chilean scene.

With reference to the conference, she said, "The increase of native vocations is a phenomenon happening in all of that region (Latin America/Caribbean). At the conference we want to examine the meeting of cultures and how we, as Sisters of Mercy, are integrating into the culture where we serve."

Chilean Missionaries' Addresses

Following are the addresses of Rochester Sisters of Mercy serving the missions in Chile:

Sister Janet Caufield, RSM
 San Luis de Huechuraba
 Casilla 17003 Correo 8
 Santiago de Chile
 South America

Sister Jane Kenrick, RSM
 Sister Chela Lagos Donoso, RSM
 Casilla 17003 Correo 8
 Santiago de Chile
 South America

Sister Margaret Mungovan, RSM
 Sister Kay Schwenzer
 Santa Ana
 Casilla 60 Correo 26
 Santiago de Chile
 South America

The Monthly Courier-Journal Missions Page

Local Sisters In Mississippi

At right, from left, Father Nick Abraham of Greenville, Miss.; Ms. Clara Touchstone, parishioner; Sister Mary Concepta Walsh, RSM; Father Larry Watts, pastor of the Belzoni/Anguilla parishes in Mississippi; and Sister Phyllis Bernardo, RSM. Sisters Concepta and Phyllis, both Rochester Sisters of Mercy, administer St. Benedict the Moor Parish in Indianola, Miss., working in a predominantly Black and



non-Catholic area. The two also work in Immaculate Conception Parish in Indianola, and two other

parishes in the Belzoni/Anguilla area. Below, a poor Black section in Indianola.



Shortly after their arrival in Brazil, Sisters Maureen Finn, center, and Patricia Frisk, right, meet Brazilian postulant Joana Dalva Alves Mendes.

Our Mission Experience

FIRST REFLECTIONS

By Sisters Maureen Finn, SSJ and Patricia Frisk, SSJ
 Our first few months have been overflowing with new experiences. Fortunately, we had several weeks before starting language school to travel to various areas of Brazil. By visiting with people (enjoying endless cups of "cafezinho"), attending group meetings, celebrating with church communities, and by talking with our sisters, we began to get an idea of the Brazilian reality.

We then came to Brasilia for the four-month course in language and acculturation. The school is organized through the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops to prepare incoming missionaries. Our 38 participants from 12 countries included not only priests and sisters, but also lay missionaries, a married couple, and a Baptist woman pastor -- all having in common our desire to learn the language and to prepare ourselves to share in the work of the Church.

The daily four classes of Portuguese only began our exposure to the language. Struggling with meal conversations, the newspaper, traveling by bus, shopping, using the telephone, going to cultural events -- all gave constant exposure to hearing and using our new language.

Since classes were not held during Holy Week, we traveled 13 hours by bus to the rural town of Cacu where we each lived with a different Brazilian

family. Arranged by Sister Marlena Roeger and four lay Maryknoll missionaries, this was a wonderful way to experience life among the people. In spite of language barriers (at times we literally did not know if we were being asked to "come" or "go!"), communication did take place as we were warmly welcomed into their lives.

We particularly enjoyed joining our host families in their neighborhood Lenten reflection groups. The services, the Palm Sunday Procession and Good Friday Way of the Cross in the streets of the town were strong experiences of faith. As we left, the bus station was filled with people. Almost everyone had tears in their eyes. We were reaffirmed in our belief that we will be taught and formed by the people here.

On our return trip to Brasilia, the bus was stopped five times for security checks by the military -- one effect of the state of emergency declared while Congress voted on the proposal for direct popular election of their president. The military presence, searching of documents, closing of the university, along with arrests, censorship and prohibition of demonstrations were reminders of the power of the military government as one of the problems facing the country.

Our final two months of study have included presentations about some of these problems. We have become aware of the

struggles of the Indians, the problems over land, the suffering and death toll from a severe drought in the Northeast, now in its fifth year. We have also studied geography, economics, Church structures and liturgy.

June 29 initiates our major challenge, directly entering the life here. We begin this next phase aware of our limitations, but hoping to open our hearts to the ordinary people to understand the causes behind the injustices they endure.

A question that comes to mind in moments of frustration over language and during waves of homesickness is, "What am I doing here?" Our reasons will develop the longer we are here, but we are aware now of the importance of participating in the Church which is universal. Sharing with people from all over the world during the language course has given us a much keener sense of what it means to belong to a universal Church. The time of Pentecost reminds us of the promise and challenge of the Spirit which all Christians share -- the promise that God's Spirit is with us, sending us forth to spread the Good News by the way we live in the midst of our reality.

Sisters Maureen Finn, SSJ, and Patricia Frisk, SSJ, arrived in Brazil early in 1984, joining the 10 other Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester who are stationed there.