COURIER-JOURNAL

Wednesday, July 25, 1984

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COULD A GREATER MIRACLE TAKE PLACE THAN FOR US TO LOOK THROUGH EACH OTHER'S EVES FOR AN INSTANT



**Bector** (Tito) Gutierrez and Lis Gonzalez.

## Salvation Or Enslavement For Unemployed Chilean?

ter Ety Schermber, ESU the men call their place of work. They refer to the hill where, under priscalike conditions, they are construct-ing by human strength, pick, showel and crowbar, a road to connect a poor area of Santiago with a wealthier area in order to facilitate travel for the rich. There, each work gang of 20 men is supervised by a bost who receives twice the wage of the other

"I feel unclear using those tools." comments Hector (Tito) Outcosts, Jathan at this prace, Children, mattried profit, yests, and average entropy of the ball. "They work does not furfill are as a person, i consider sayself a useful person with my carpentry tools."

Tito, along with about 340,000 other Chilenns (14 percent of the memployed in the country), works in the Program of Minimum Employment (PEM) begun in 1975 as an "original and generous Employment (PEM) begun in 1975 as an "original and generous creation," a temporary answer to unemployment. At first, in government-created jobs, workers received a conservation less than minimum wage for working 15 hours a week, but when uncomployment increased, the program became perman-bourd lengthened to 35-40 hours a vect for the same we et and the

The salary has changed very little during these nine years, whereas the cost of living has rises transmissionly, spinling that of the United States. For the same basic family haster of food in 1975 for which gate would have to work 42 hourt a west, today the PEM worker would have to work about 85 hours.

PEM worker would have to work should 5 hours. Lie Consider, angle, a catechast and member of the Christian community of Santa Ana, juya with her widowed another in a small revortions house without technic or bathnoom. Used she was laid off from the program feelinty, the had series the same \$1.90 a day, or \$45 a month, as Tao... Why do no many program sector such ungest wages and treatment? "Because of the situation," says Lis, and "out of necessity and desperation," (sounds Tito.

# To Be Human in an Inhuman Situation

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ." --**Pastoral Constitution on the** Church in the Modern World

#### **By Sister Beatrice Ganley, SSJ**

What does a missioner learn from her experience? In a recent interview with Sister Catherine Foos, a Rochester Sister of St. Joseph working as a pastoral minister in the parish of Bom Jesus in Uberlandia, Brazil, I found an answer. Her stacks of pictures, her fund of information, her strong feelings spoke clearly: the missioner learns to love the people.

She spoke to me about a man who, although steadily employed for most of his life, will receive no social security pension or medical banefits when he can no longer work. Of course, there are laws that require an employer, after a period of three months, to pay into a National Health Fund and Retirement program. Brazil, however, has a large pool of cheap labor, and this requirement is skirted by the simple expedient of firing a person just before the expiration of the three-month period. Workers have no recourse. Labor unions are ineffective or nonexistent, and, as far as the system is concerned, these persons do not exist because no payments have ever been entered for them.

Hopelessness and desperation were words that occured frequently as Sister Kay narrated the predicaments of 11-year-old working girls, barely surviving families, and inadequate schools. It was realities such as these which challenged the General Conference of Latin American



Maria, left, at age 11 started doing housework from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day to help with family expenses. She attends school each evening from 7-11 p.m. With her are sisters Edna and Lucina.

Bishops at Medellin in 1968 and at Puebla in 1978 and which prompted these church leaders to decide upon an "option for the poor." The Church in South America has taken the documents seriously, making an honest effort to place the decisions, directions, and activities of the church in the hands of the people. Since Medellin the consistent message of the Latin American Church has been: you have dignity as a human being, and you van do something to take charge of your life. This is the "good news" that the church can proclaim as it becomes a church "of the poor" rather than "for the poor." The response of the average person to this message, Sister Kay has found profoundly inspiring.

To illustrate this, she described a recent development in Uberlandia. Neighborhood creches or day-care centers have been set up to meet the needs of

the workers' families. In a country with 200 percent inflation, it is the older children as well as both parents who must work just to survive. Younger children and dependent or disabled adults are often left an entire day without proper care. Kay became animated and invigorated as she described how these centers have been set up with all decision making, policy setting -- everything being determined by the families of those who come to the centers as clients. She spoke with pride of their commitment to care for the needy and dependent in their community.

It is, she says, in projects such as these that Kay sees a degree of hopefulness. Like many missioners, she is somewhat reserved about her hopes for change occuring on a systematic level. The problems, she feels, are "too world wide, too entrenched, but on the local level things can happen."

We shared our own form of powerlessness as we continued to look at her pictures of people whose lives were at a dead end, for whom there was no opportunity of breaking away beyond bare survival. Ours was the powerlessness of knowing that the advantages of our standard of living and economic system depend for success upon the inhuman situation experienced by the people that we were talking about. The failures in our capitalistic system, the vested interests that control the policies of the international monetary fund, deciding for example that it is a good thing to maintain a large supply of cheap labor and a high rate of inflation in developing countries, led to the discomforting awareness that the poverty and hopelessness confronting our missionaries are inextricably intertwined with our present way of life. It is hard to confront our complicity in such a situation. It seems so far beyond our control. But neither can we ignore the human realities presented to us by our missionaries on their home visits.

The individual can do little to right the balance of payments in national debt levels, or to remedy the defects in a capitalistic economic system, but we can come to know the people in "the third world" as persons, as individuals. We can, as Kay reminded me, learn much from those who have little in the way of material goods. We can draw upon our one really inalienable grace, that is, the ability to be human in our relationships with one another. "This is basically what I have learned," said Sister Kay Foos, "I have learned that one can be human even in an inhuman situation."

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forcitations works and apreceltural projects. The program is a way denote positive the work of any the work intrasticated of the same time, and without any power to even the managements the system of domination by the weaking furnecer and interspecting the system of domination by the weaking furnecer and interspecting the system of domination by the weaking furnecer and interspecting the system of control and rocal represents that created phases y few and a loss of periodulity model the weaking the reliable of any second and board represents that created phases y few and a loss of periodulity model the work created phases by capping the hands. For the first two inductions who give commands by capping the hands. For the first two inducts who give commands by capping the hands. For the first two inducts who are seen assigned to street-sweeping, the felt "induced of the work is wast" for women." The men passing by bolited upon them "as cheep women to be bought for a price." These, here, for the first time in the fift, she had to use heavy tools and models power to cheat up a subbish area and prepare the soll for planting. "Despite the economic frustrations and exploited on a definition."

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By Rev. Mr. Patrick Sullivan

In January, I decided that I would like to go to Tabasco. Being a new and unknown experience, I was a bit apprehensive and did not know quite what to expect. After some preliminary reading I learned that it was mountainous, hot and rainy. The colors on the map showed it to be an area that was quite green; not typical of Mexico.

Once I arrived it did not take long to appreciate the natural beauty of the surrounding mountains and the countryside; the warmth of the sun and the people of Oxolotan, the village where I was to stay. In fact it was the warm hospitality of the people that made the greatest impression on me.

I discovered the people of Mexico to be very generous people who find it so natural and rewarding to give. Oftentimes they would have no money, so they would give goods: a few eggs or perhaps a chicken as a sign of appreciation and friendship. In fact it was not unusual to see the collection basket come up to the altar with a few eggs crowning the money.

The children were particularly impressive. Quite often on my walks I would hear some child yelling, "Hola Patricio," and then run to the window with their arms waving and a beautiful smile upon their faces. If I would begin to play with one I would be surprised by five or six more appearing, anxious to join us. But'the most impressive thing about the children was their participation in the liturgy, especially during the sung responses. They would sing so loud that it would almost be a scream, yet their song rang from their hearts.

Though the area surrounding Oxolotan was very



## Experience

A Missionarv

beautiful, it was difficult to travel. The roads were pitted and narrow and travel depended upon the condition of the river. Therefore, much of the traveling to the mountain-hidden rancherias had to be done by foot. Yet it was in these rancherias that one could experience the presence of God and the spirit of the Mexican people. People would be living in what we would consider abject poverty, yet in many ways they were much happier and richer than we are. They do no have the petty concerns that we so often allow to dominate our lives. They are happy with so little. The children play simple games by the hours, for obviously the electronic age has not yet arrived to this part of Mexico. They rely on the companionship of others and are always ready to welcome them into their homes for coffee or pineapple juice.

Mexican liturgical celebrations are very festive, manifesting a tremendous love for music. Often there would be lengthy entrance processions representing different parish groupings. Sundays are days of particular festivity, being the only day when no work is done. A large part of the day is offered to the Lord. Daily the sanctuary was decorated with colorful-flowers which seemed to be reflective of the Mexicans' colorful spirit.

In conclusion, my month spent in Mexico was a time I of adventure and growth. veryday seemed to bring forth a new and unexpected adventure. In experiencing these adventures it was helpful for me in realizing the difficulties of daily life for the people of Mexico. It is a hard life with little time for leisure. Yet their spirituality is deeply rooted, reflecting Jesus' message urging outreach to those less fortunate. It was a month that I will never forget, for the love that was unconditionally given to me was truly a love that came from their hearts.