

### Missionary in Vredenburgh

## 'Miss Claudie' in the Quarter

(The following article is reprinted, with permission, from Your Edmundite Missions Newsletter, August 1984.)

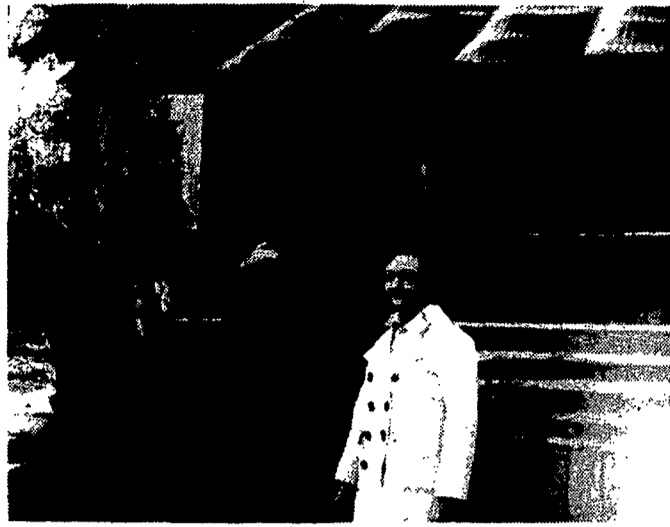
"I tell you, we couldn't do without Miss Claudie," says Mrs. Mattie Kennedy of Vredenburgh, Alabama. "We sure appreciate you folks sending her to work with us!"

"Miss Claudie," as the country people call Sister Claude Loeb RSM, has been working with the Edmundite Southern Missions since January of 1981. Her apostolate is to the poor people living in the Vredenburgh area of Wilcox and Monroe counties.

Sister Claude works particularly with the people of "the Quarter," where most of the local blacks have been living in shacks for over a century. Some homes are still without running water, except when it rains.

"Morse Castapheny's family had 15 people living under one roof, and the roof was leaking like a sieve," Sister recalls. "I told Father Roger, and he gave me the money to buy materials so that Morse could fix his roof."

(Father Roger La Charite SSE, is director of the Selma,



Sister Claude with Ms. Pinkie Fairley, 83, who lives alone in "the quarter."

Alabama, Edmundite Missions.)

Sister provided similar help to Mrs. Annie Mae Kidd, an elderly woman whose home badly needed repairs.

Sometimes the help needed is more subtle, as in the case of Mrs. Lugenia McCannnts. Mrs. McCannnts, 87, was dreading the prospect of a 100-mile trip to Mobile for an eye operation. "Miss Claudie" found out that the operation could be performed in Selma, only 57 miles away from home, and

helped Mrs. McCannnts make the arrangements.

"Miss Claudie not only drove me up to the hospital," says Mrs. McCannnts, "she also got me a pretty robe to wear after the operation. God bless that woman!"

The Finklea family also praise God for Sister Claude, who knew where they could take four-year-old Monica for help with her serious eye problems.

Indeed, many people in the Vredenburgh area have enjoyed better access to health care since Sister persuaded the Pine Apple Clinic to send its van to pick up patients from "the Quarter" once a month.

Last December, the people at the Vredenburgh Community Center got together to express their appreciation for all "Miss Claudie" had done. They took up a collection among themselves and presented Sister with the \$37 they had scraped together for her.

They might be poor, but they weren't too poor to share with somebody they loved.

Support is what makes her work possible, and in thanking "Miss Claudie," the people of "the Quarter" were indirectly thanking benefactors of the Southern Missions.



Sister Claude sits on the steps of a house on the verge of collapse. She arranged for the family who lived there to find other accommodations.

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## The Presence of Christ In Those Who Suffer And Those Who Help

By Ines Saavedra Ortiz

It is a pleasure for me to relate an incident which shows us the living and active presence of Christ among the poor, the homeless, the weak and the humble. It happened on Saturday, June 2, 1984. I was walking with my mother on a street in my sector which is called El Salto. I noticed that there were people gathered together, so I went ahead to see what was happening.

A woman was lying on the sidewalk unconscious. Two women in the group were trying to revive her with all good will but without knowing how. I knelt down near them and began to help since I know something of first aid.

In a few minutes the women opened her eyes. "I'm all right," she said. "It's only fatigue because I haven't eaten in some days."

She asked for water. Her body trembled and she gasped for breath. "I'm

hungry, and my children also. They are with a relative in another sector. Just today I dared to come out to beg a piece of bread, even if it's hard or moldy."

The woman, who had aged more from need than from years, was hungry and cold. With tear-filled eyes I stood up and said to my mother, "Give me some coins." Jangling the coins in my hands, I spoke to the group of people gathered there.

"Brothers and sisters, you have heard that the woman is hungry. Help her by giving a coin, whatever you may have." I began to collect them in my hand. For the first time in my life I found myself begging. How terrible! But it was as God wished it.

Afterwards, I tried to put the coins in the net bag the woman carried. Someone pointed out that she would lose them. An elderly woman in the group said, "I want to help, but all I have is this change purse

which my daughter gave me. I like it very much, but I want to give it to her."

My heart began to beat more quickly at this humble offering, so like that of the widow in the gospel.

But Jesus wanted to demonstrate even more clearly His compassionate mercy: someone offered to give her tea, another a wool sweater, and each one wanted to help in some way. How great is the Lord! He continues to show us that the poor are His special preoccupation today as always.

With great affection and love for Christ, I wanted to share this with you, my friends.

(Ines Ortiz is a member of the evangelization team recently formed in the community of Santa Ana in the parish of Nuestra Senora del Carmen in Santiago, Chile. Sister Margaret Mungovan, a Sister of Mercy of Rochester, works with the team.)



# 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: Sr. Maureen, SSM, RSM

## A Look Back; A Look Forward



Three Brazilian women will soon be received as novices into the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester in Brazil. Standing, from left, are novice candidates Ireni Rosa DaSilva and Joana Dalva Alves Mendes; Sister Elizabeth Anne LeValley, superior general of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester; and Sister Rosalma Hayes. Seated are novice candidate Anadir Pereira da Silva and Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

Commenting on her recent visit to Brazil, Sister Elizabeth Anne said that, with the conclusion of the activities surrounding the 20th anniversary celebration of the congregation's presence in Brazil, the SSJs are conscious of being in a new era. "We begin our plans for the years to come in collaboration with the people of the church in Brazil," she said. "We are allowing our future to be shaped by the people with whom we have chosen to be in mission."

*"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us. When we begin to take the lowest place, to wash the feet of others, to love our brothers (and sisters) with that burning love, that passion, which led to the cross, then we can truly say, 'Now I have begun.'" — Dorothy Day*

## Chilean Political Situation Getting 'Progressively Worse'

Stateside media have been reporting the stepped-up oppression and turmoil in Chile. Firsthand information comes from Sister Margaret Mungovan, a Rochester Sister of Mercy working in Santiago, who wrote in a November letter:

"You've probably read more about Chile lately in your papers than we have here. I'm using this occasion to mention the situation here because a Sister is going to the States on Sunday, and I can be sure in that way the letter will not be confiscated. Mail is very scarce among us (the Sisters from the States working in Chile), which makes me think that it is being intercepted. I failed to receive many letters written to me from Chile when I was in the States, and I'm sure some of your letters have not reached me here. It's well not to refer to the political situation if the letter goes through the

international mail...

"I haven't enough space to say much about the situation except that it has gotten progressively worse. There have been several incidents that show how the government is trying to harass the Church: the Vicar of Solidarity went out of the country and has been denied the right to return; fliers have been dropped all over about the way to make homemade bombs, and they were 'signed' by the former Maryknoll priests' superior here when he wasn't even in the country; other false messages with the first names of some priests were also dropped in various places...

"Please continue to pray for Chile that the Lord will free the country from the scourge of unjust arrests, tortures, violent repression and all that keeps the people deprived of human dignity."