

Mother Teresa re-elected as congregation superior

VATICAN CITY — Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who earlier this year resigned because of age and poor health, has been re-elected superior of the Missionaries of Charity.

Her election has been approved by the Vatican, said Monsignor Piero Pennacchini, Vatican press spokesman, Sept. 10.

The re-election of the 80-year-old Noble Peace Prize winner and founder of the Missionaries of Charity took place Sept. 8 in Calcutta, India, at a general chapter meeting of the religious order.

Vatican Radio quoted Mother Teresa as accepting her re-election as the will of God and pledging to carry out her responsibilities to the best of her ability.

Last December, doctors in India implanted a pacemaker in Mother Teresa, who had been suffering from heart problems.

Mother Teresa was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu to Albanian parents in Skopje, in what is now Yugoslavia, on Aug. 27, 1910. She founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950 in Calcutta as a diocesan religious community, and 15 years later the Vatican recognized it as a pontifical congregation.

The religious order has more than 400 centers in 92 countries, including Cuba and the Soviet Union. It works with the terminally ill, abandoned children, the homeless, lepers and AIDS patients.

Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her work with the poor. She accepted it "in the name of the hungry, of the naked, of the homeless, of the blind, of the lepers, of all those who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society."



AP/Wide World Photos
HOME FREE — Ed Johnson of St. Louis carries an American flag as the Rev. Jesse Jackson follows him upon his arrival at Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Va. Sept. 2. Johnson and others were released after being held hostage in Kuwait.

Covenant

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But much that income came in before sexual and financial allegations led to Father Ritter's resignation Feb. 27. More recently the amount has been less.

"I have not been briefed yet on the actual numbers, but I see no need at this point

for further cuts," Sister McGeedy said.

Each department of Covenant House and its branches in other U.S. cities and other countries were affected, she said.

In addition, she said, Covenant House had eliminated its youth advocacy institute, a 26-bed floor for AIDS patients that opened in December 1988, a messenger service, an outreach center, two group homes in Manhattan and the Washington pro-

gram.

However, she said she felt strong commitment from the staff and support from friends across the country.

But she added no word has come from Father Ritter, either "verbally or in writing."

She said she was open to contact with Father Ritter, but did not know where he was. "He will always be the founder," she said, "and we pray for him."

Sister McGeedy said she had not decided what image of him should be presented at Covenant House.

Reading evidence presented in the report on Covenant House's internal investigation, she said, led her to agree with its conclusion that Father Ritter was so "irresponsible" in placing himself in compromising positions his "termination" would have been required if he had not resigned.

One former staff member, Anne B. Donahue, has strenuously opposed that conclusion in interviews and letters in periodicals.

"I cannot be a party to the repudiation of Father Bruce and his vision that Covenant

House now chooses as the means of attempting to survive the half-truths, misrepresentations and hearsay reported by the mass media," she wrote in a letter to the editor in the July 13 issue of *Commonweal* magazine. A staff attorney from 1982-86, she was director of Covenant House in Los Angeles before leaving in June.

"My problem," Sister McGeedy said, "is that we're no longer dealing with half-truths, misrepresentations and hearsay reported by the mass media." Now we have an extensive and professional investigation by the most reputable firm the board could hire.

The report on the investigation, led by former New York City Police Commissioner Robert J. McGuire, was released after the *Commonweal* letter, but Donahue subsequently published a similar letter in the Aug. 23 edition of the New York archdiocesan weekly, *Catholic New York*.

"The public ought to know that the self-serving Covenant House internal investigation, concluding that Father Bruce Ritter was guilty of misconduct, is not universally accepted by those who know the facts," she wrote.

Sister McGeedy said she knew of no other staff member who took that position.

Meanwhile, she said, Covenant House continued to get religiously motivated volunteers who give a year of service for a subsistence-level stipend.

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