

It is Monday, A.M. in Belem, May 17, 1965, the Feast of St. Pascal. I am sitting in the living room of the convent at Santa Terezinha in Barria Jurunas, a very poor section of the city of Belem. There are about 40,000 people here in the parish. About 17,000 of these are in a section of the parish known as Santa Luzia. The other 23,000 are a part of Santa Terezinha parish. The convent consists of four rooms on the second floor of a complex of buildings. I will try to describe it to you.

First of all, there is the Church, small by our standards. It is as clean as can be in conditions such as exist here, but it gives the appearance of being in great need of paint. However, the equatorial rains come through the roof in spite of all efforts and a new paint job is spoiled almost immediately. In back of the Church is the sacristy; behind this, a locked room where the Sisters keep their barrels of medicines, etc., then two classrooms, a series of very small rooms and then a classroom (much larger) which serves also as a hall. The Sisters' convent is the only second story and is above the series of small rooms mentioned above. Two of the small rooms on the ground floor serve as an entrance way and laundry for the Sisters. The entrance way is about six feet square with no windows, but out of sheer necessity, the Sisters have converted it into an ambulatorio (clinic) and attend patients from 9:00 to 11:30 every morning. Right now, I can hear Sister Luella talking in Portuguese to a man who has pain in his kidney region.

The other small rooms on the ground floor are used for storing and sorting clothes to be distributed to the poor and for storing food which comes through the Alliance for Progress and is distributed to each parish by Caritas (Catholic Charities). At this moment Sister Dolores is working with several ladies of the Parish handling the distribution, Sr. Camilla is making house calls and Sister Frances has the washing machine going. The courtyard which runs along the buildings sounds like a school at recess time. Actually, it is, for the classrooms are used as four different schools might be used in the States. There are over 900 children in school here. They come in three shifts, from 7-10:30, 11-2:00 and 3-6:00. There are over 200 in each shift and in the evening the school is used for a fourth time by an adult class. Due to the short school day (3 hours), only the basic reading, writing and arithmetic are taught. Religion is supposed to be taught also but the teachers do not know it well enough to teach it. When the Sisters have mastered the language, they plan to train catechists to do the teaching of religion. At the present time, the two priests here (Holy Spirit Fathers from Holland) do the teaching of religion. They are wonderful, dedicated priests who lack only enough hours in the day to accomplish their tremendous tasks. Right now they are preparing 20 First Communicants here at Santa Terezinha and another class at Santa Luzia. They have sick calls, weddings, baptisms, three masses on weekdays and five on Sundays, religious instructions in the City schools, etc.

Try to imagine a city the size of this parish of 40,000 people, condensed in a few city blocks with poor little frame shacks (one or two rooms) built up on stilts to protect them from water, with boardwalks leading from one house to another (one or two, four or five inch planks) (also on stilts) and leading to the streets. There is an occasional electric bulb hanging in the area and there may be one very weak bulb in a home. Most homes have no plumbing or sanitary facilities of any kind either indoor or outdoor and the people walk for blocks with cans to a city water hydrant. (When the Sisters painted the walls of their convent, the people waited outside to ask for the empty paint cans). Here nothing is thrown away, old empty dented gasoline cans are precious, and the empty barrels are in great demand.

But, perhaps, I should begin at the beginning.

Sister Casimir Makstutis and I and a Candidate, Nenita Ortega, left Chicago at 1:00 p.m. on May 12, 1965, and arrived in Miami at 3:30 p.m. We boarded Varig Airlines at 7:00 p.m. and arrived in Belem (10 minutes early -- unheard of in Brazil) at 4:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 13, after one stop at Caracas, Venezuela. (The stop at Santo Domingo was canceled).

As we came down the ramp, we saw the Sisters coming across the airfield to meet us. After we were duly embraced in true Brazilian style, we went into the Customs area alone (the Sisters were not allowed to come with us). As we stood there a bit bewildered, a voice behind me said, "Hello" in English and I turned to find Bishop Jude Prost, Auxiliary Bishop of Belem in his Franciscan robe looking about as sleepy as we felt.

He took our passports and baggage declarations and from then on we were in good hands. My one concern was for the food (frozen steaks, bacon, butter), etc. which we had stored up in an insulated bag. visions of opening this in front of the customs official and trying to explain. But the Bishop told us to wait until all others had their baggage examined. A word from the Bishop to a man in charge and we knew all was. well. Before we could unlock the bags, the custom official marked them with chalk, the Bishop was reaching for them, the Sisters suddenly appeared again and we were on our way out to the Bishop's station wagon, packed in and on our way.

We had about a twenty-minute ride over some good and some very bad streets to Santa Terezinha. By now it was about 5:00 a.m. and the roosters were crowing. We stepped out of the car into mud and water but "it makes no difference" (nao faz mal) as they say here in Belem. We were delighted to see how homey the Sisters had their convent fixed. One room served as a kitchen, dining room, prayer room and workroom, another is the visitors parlor, the other two are bedrooms with two hammocks in each. While we are here, the Sisters are hanging two more hammocks in the visitor's parlor at bed time. Fortunately, it takes only a

moment to hang them up and take them down. And in the morning, there are no beds to make.

The Bishop went over to the Church at 5:30 a.m. and read Holy Mass for us, then joined us for breakfast and went home to begin his day of work. The sisters showed us around, Sister Luella left for house calls, Sister Camilla opened up the clinic, and Sister Dolores went to sorting clothes. Sister Francis and I took Nenita over to Casa Central to live. (Father drove us in a Chevrolet truck). Nenita Ortega is a nurse who has been working at St. Anthony's Hospital in Chicago. She was in the United State on an exchange student visa which expired in March. She is a Filipino who applied to enter our Religious Community but was unable to obtain a permanent visa. She decided to come to Brazil to work with our sisters and to enter as a Postulant either in Brazil (when we have a Novitiate) or in the States if her visa is granted.

Nenita is most anxious to begin her work. She speaks Spanish and her native tongue well and her teacher at Casa Central says she does not need to take the course--only to learn the pronunciation variations.

Nenita is right at home here, delighted with everything, and anxious to begin work in the clinic.

On Friday morning we went shopping with Sister Dolores. We ended a three-hour trek through the markets by getting caught in a downpour. We took refuge, wet but happy at Casa Central where Mother Ventura, a Precious Blood Sister, assured us we would soon dry off. In a few moments we did. It is amazing what the sun can do. Fortunately, we were wearing some of the Sisters' white habits and they dry quickly.

We arrived home at 12:30 p.m., ate dinner and collapsed in our hammocks. I came to at 4:30 p.m. to find Bishop Jude in our parlor.

Saturday afternoon, we went with Father Matteo (Assistant Pastor) in his truck to Santa Luzia's ambulatorio (clinic). Sisters Camilla and Luella had gone (walked at 2:30) but we rode over to see them at 4:00 intending to walk home with them over the boardwalks. We were there only a few minutes when a severe electrical storm came up. The rain came in torrents. The clinic is one small room, just big enough for four chairs, two very small tables, and one larger table and a few little shelves along the wall. Here the Sisters see patients every afternoon from 3:00 to 6:00.

To reach it, you ride several blocks and you walk two blocks from the street over planks on stilts. The clinic is on stilts, too. Or, if you walk all the way, it is many blocks over the boardwalks.

Well, the rains came, the roof leaked, the lightening cracked over our heads and all I could think was "What a wonderful place to die, in the midst of God's poor." But we did not die; instead, we closed shop at 5:30, walked back to Father's truck in the pouring rain, climbed in and rode home. The streets were under water, but the truck came through and we arrived home in great hilarity.

That morning we went out with Bishop Jude and several other Sisters to a Golden Jubilee Mass of a Sister from a Hungarian Order of Sisters. They have a school and also serve at the Leper Colony we visited last year.

The Archbishop, Dom Alberto Ramos, stopped to see us the morning we arrived. We invited him for Sunday dinner, so he and Bishop Jude joined us for a steak dinner (steaks we brought) on Sunday. That evening we had the Pastor and his assistant over, and we gave them cigarettes and the vestments from Sister Laurentine and Sisters from Mundelein. They were as happy as two children. Father Teodoro talked of enlarging the Sisters Convent by extending the second story out over the classroom. This will add two bedrooms, a chapel, a workroom and storage room. Father also hopes to rebuild the Church of Santa Luzia. His only problem is money.

I almost forgot to tell you about Santa Luzia. It is a little wooden chapel about as big as a large living room in an average home in the States. The people kneel on the floor, stand in every available spot even up around the Altar. A little priedieu beside the Altar serves as a Confessional, the only sacristy for vestments and supplies is the shelf under the Altar itself. The unconsecrated hosts were in a tin can and Father asked at the offeratory how many would receive and counted them out and placed them on the paten. The walls are boards with the paint long since removed by rain and behind the Crucifix (for a curtain) hangs a large pièce of brown paper (the kind we see used for brown paper bags). To reach the Church, you balance yourself on planks (some very narrow and weak) for a few blocks.

The Fathers have only this little chapel for 17,000 people and hope to rebuild it. It would be wonderful if some kind donor would give the money. I do not see how else it could ever be accomplished. A little old lady took up the collection by passing around a cloth bag. There are no coins at present in Brazilian money, only paper money, so sometimes she has to make change of smaller paper money. She also appointed people to watch the children and keep them quiet. Everything was quite orderly, all prayed and sang at the various parts of the Mass--even the youngest knowing the songs and responses from memory.

I must tell you about the children. They are precious, with the most beautiful brown eyes; very expressive, they seem to talk with their eyes. Most of the people are short and the children tend to be very small. A child of ten will look like one of six, and a two year old, I

would think to be less than a year old. They take care of each other--the older ones carrying the younger around. They crowd around holding out their right hand and say "Bensa" - "Blessing". When you say "Deus hle abencae" and touch their hand, they kiss their hand and run off. When a few hundred crowd around, it becomes quite a job. The Sisters tell them they are all ("totus") blessed and send them off laughing.

We talked with Dom Alberto (Archbishop Romas) and Bishop Jude about our next project in Brazil. We have one girl anxious to enter our Community but we know very little about her. That is the risk here. The Archbishop and Bishop believe we should open a house where girls can come, live in, go to school, help with the work and be observed.

They wish us to build a house at Icoaraci (eek oo ra see') (a town about 12 miles outside of Belem) along the shore of the river in the Interior (jungle all around). This would be on land owned by the Archdiocese adjacent to a Center called Tabor. This center is a house for workshops, retreats, etc., and is used for training catechists from the Interior, Sisters Retreats, Liturgical Conferences, etc. A very short distance away is a private school (grade and high school) run by a native Brazilian Sisterhood, the Daughters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. There is also a church with a parochial school with 1,400 children. There are no sisters in the school and the Priest also runs a clinic for the poor. There is only one doctor in the whole area. Our work would be to supervise the domestics at the Center, work in the clinic in the Parish, help with catechism in the school. How soon all this could be accomplished is not a settled matter, but this will probably be the plan.

It is now Monday May 24th. The place sounds like a bedlam. children are playing in the courtyard, the people waiting outside the clinic are talking and shouting to one another, several dogs are barking continuously and the club (clubbe) next to Father's house is celebrating some kind of anniversary and are shooting firecrackers every few minutes. (This has been going on night and day since yesterday and will continue for three days. But I slept all night). We went to Casa Central to see Nenita last Thursday. She was homesick and so happy to see us. Her teachers tell us she is doing very well. Father Clementi, the Redemptorist Priest who teaches there, says she is an outstanding girl. We agreed. Father Clementi also said, "Bishop Jude has two more projects in mind for you--be courageous and start them both--you won't regret it." That evening Bishop Jude came, and I told him what Father said. He told us one project was Icoaraci, the other is this. A native doctor, a fine Catholic Action leader would like to start a school of nursing. There is none in this area of Brazil. Girls interested in nursing have to go to Rio as Sao Paulo (a six or eight-hour flight away from here).

This doctor hoped to obtain faculty from several communities, wondered if we would be the beginners. We will talk to him later.

We asked the Bishop what it would cost to build a convent at Icoaraci. He believes we could build a convent and aspirancy or novitiate for \$50,000. (It would cost about seven or eight times that in the States) The land needs to be cleared and the Bishop said he could not do that until he returns from Vatican Council II in December. Then the rains will come so July of 1966 would be the time for beginning.

The Bishop has had to slow down operations for construction of his seminary due to lack of funds. Another \$50,000 would do it but that is like a million in the States. If only people in the States realized the great need, I am sure they would donate it. I took Sister Casimir to see the old seminary (still in use). The building, as well as the Chancery and the Archbishop's home are over 300 years old. It (the Seminary) cannot be described. It has to be seen. James Hastert, a Papal volunteer from Kansas (a former seminarian) is the Rector. He showed us around. Some parts of the wall had fallen down in the Chapel, some boards had just fallen out of the ceiling in the library. The stairs are so dangerous, James said he tacked a piece of old carpet down "to hold them together. Sister Casimir will verify my statement, "If ever a new seminary was needed, it is here in Belem."

Bishop Jude arranged for us to take a weekend off and go to a Sisters' cottage at Mosquiera Island. On Saturday at noon, Brother Hilary (Franciscan) picked us up in his "combie". In preparation we took our hammocks, threw in a few essentials for an overnight stay, rolled up the hammock, put it in a pillowcase and swung it over our arm and we were on our way. We also took a few loaves of bread (long and thin), some peanut butter, jelly, a jug of water, a few candy bars, our prayer books and a deck of cards.

We traveled two hours by boat (for 30 cents) and landed at Mosquiera at 4:00 p.m. A Sister met us in a jeep, tied our luggage on the back end of the jeep in a most ingenious way, packed six of us in the jeep and took off for the vacation house on the beach. Sisters from two other communities were there also for a few days' rest. There was one sink (outside the house) and a bathroom of sorts inside. The water was not boiled or filtered so we rationed what we brought along. We had hoped we could buy soft drinks, but we were too far from any store.

We strung up our hammocks and went swimming in the Amazon. The beach was beautiful and completely secluded.

The night was cool and full of mosquitoes. They seem to have spent the whole night bothering Sister Camilla and we slept well.

We were up at six, had coffee and bread and caught a bus to go to Church. The bus was the body of an old bus on top of the back of a truck. The seat covers were long since gone and the springs came through the seats. I was doubly glad we had Mission habits without cords

and rosaries, or we would never have untangled them from those springs. We attended Mass at a Collegio (school) run by some Sisters from Italy. During Mass a large cat had to be carried out by one of the Sisters. After Mass we went out in the yard to see the parrots in the trees and then went down the road to catch a bus.

We had a dinner of some strange Brazilian dishes, swam again and prepared to return to our boat.

When we arrived at the dock, it was pouring rain and we walked down a long pier in a deluge. We were soaked when we got on the boat but gradually dried off. The interesting thing is, you may be very wet, but you do not feel chilled as we do in the States when caught in the rain.

Several mornings, I have been out with the Sisters on "house calls." Sometimes to deliver clothes, other times to tend the sick. The homes are made of plain boards badly weather beaten (no paint). Usually, there are one or two hammocks, a couple of chairs, once in a great while a very old sewing machine. Frequently a dog, a cat, a chicken or two share the home with the family. The homes are as clean as possible, swept and orderly. Sometimes more than one family shares the home. The houses are so close together a neighbor can put her head out her window and in the window of the next house.

The people are friendly and very hospitable. I took pictures in several homes, and the people were happy to oblige. When asked how they feel when ill, it is always, "Thanks be to God, better (or worse), as God wills." Since it is not possible to care for everyone, the very poorest families (about 350) are given food and clothing by the Parish. They come for the food twice a month on the day assigned. (They must bring their cards with them). The clothes are put in a package (some for each member of the family) and delivered to the homes as clothes are available.

The Sister nurses make house calls to those who are bedridden or unable (due to illness) to come to the clinic.

It is Sunday May 29, in Belem.

On Ascension Thursday, we went with Bishop Jude to a Pontifical Mass which is annually celebrated for all the Sisters. We were embraced by everyone we were introduced to, sang the Mass in Latin together and received Communion. The Sisters who have a Jubilee this year were especially honored and received Holy Communion under both species.

Yesterday, we went to see the new Pius X Seminary under construction. It is large enough to house 200 seminarians, about 10 priests and the Sisters (who will supervise the domestics and also teach), has classrooms, library, chapel, auditorium, kitchen, dining rooms, etc. It

has been under construction about 16 months, part of it will be completed next March (beginning of school year next year). It has about 65,000 sq. ft. of floor space and will cost, completed, about \$350,000. I would estimate it would cost at least a million and a half to two million in the States. And yet, that \$350,000 is more difficult to raise here than six million would be in the States.

We visited a leper colony last week (600 lepers) (including children). The poverty of the building and equipment cannot be described. It breaks one's heart not to be able to do something for them.

We have listed items which cannot be purchased here so we will know what to send in the future. We have also spent many days sewing altar linens, vestments, making a new catafalque cover, etc., as the Church here has no one to care for these things.

We visited the city ambulatorio (clinic) across the street which is being remodeled. The Sister nurses are supposed to work there soon but there seems to be one delay after another. Father Teodoro (Pastor) has two rooms on the first floor of his house which he will give the Sisters in a few days. They will then move their clinic which is in the entrance- way of their house and operate from there. If ever the City clinic is ready for them, they will move there.

We have drawn plans for the extension of the convent here. It will include the conversion of the present two bedrooms to a chapel, the addition of six bedrooms, a dining room, a recreation room, a bath and storage space. The cost is estimated at two to three thousand dollars. Imagine that in the States!

And last, but not least, we visited the American Consulate and talked about Nenita. We have their assurance that she could obtain a student visa to go back to the U. S. for her Novitiate next year. So, Nenita will come here to Santa Terezinha as a Candidate, July 1, when she finishes at Casa Central. She will become a Postulant in January, and we will take her back to the States with us next June (God willing) for Reception of the Habit in August.

Nenita is thrilled. Her first word was "Sr. Edwardine will be so happy." (Sister Edwardine Ley and Nenita worked together in Chicago.)

And so today we are packing, and in the early hours of tomorrow, we will be on our way to Miami and home.

Our Missionaries send their love and their prayers and if they could see you personally you would get a real Brazilian embrace.

We will be royally escorted to the plane by our four Sisters, our Pastor and Brother Hilary (Franciscan). Bishop Jude would be there, but we talked him out of it. He is exhausted--

spends himself all week, then goes into the Interior where there are no priests on Saturday and Sunday. He is coming to the U. S. on June 16. We will have to see that he has some rest. He comes, of course, to beg again for his seminary. May God bless his efforts.

We leave Brazil with gratitude to God for allowing us to share in this work, humbled at the sight of so much poverty and illness, accepted so resignedly by so many. We also leave thrilled at the improvements we see over one year ago and with great hopes for the future of Brazil. Last year they averted a Communist takeover, and they are slowly but surely overcoming other social ills.

It is rewarding to watch and a privilege to be of assistance.

God bless you, everyone!

Research of Some Busy Times for FSSH around opening a mission in South America

As the Second Vatican Council opened in September 1962, there was great rejoicing in the Church throughout the world. Few were prepared for the changes that occurred in the sacred liturgy, ecumenism, and religious life.

On April 22, 1963, the Sixteenth General Chapter of the Religious Congregation elected Mother Timothy Marie Flaherty as the seventh Superior General. At this Chapter the Sisters adopted the wearing of a ring as a sign of perpetual profession and also the wearing of the San Damiano Crucifix to be received at first profession.

During this time many activities occurred within the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart. At the request of some of the delegates to the Sixteenth Chapter, a suitable site was chosen at Montecito, California for opening a Postulancy on the West Coast to receive candidates from that area.

In response to the call of Pope John XXIII that each American Religious Congregation send members to South America, Mother Timothy Marie and Sister Elizabeth Marie journeyed to South America on the 28th of December 1963, to find a suitable site. An area along the Amazon River, four degrees below the equator in the Archdiocese of Belem was chosen. On September 14, 1964, four Sisters, having received their mission crosses, left for Belem, Brazil, to begin their studies in language and culture so that they might assume their work in the parish of Santa Terezinha in Jurunas, a suburb of Belem.

With the move of St. Joseph Hospital to the new site on the west side of Joliet, the Motherhouse was moved to St. Francis Woods, Mokena on January 26, 1964.