

Province of The Most Holy Name

Franciscan Fathers

135 WEST 31ST STREET

NEW YORK CITY 1

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL

January, 1953

My dear Confrere:

As this letter concerns itself with the mission in Brazil, I wish first to pay tribute to the work done here by Father Paul Seibert. In all his labors during the beginnings of this project and in its growth, Father Paul always put before anything else solicitude for the Friars working here. I take this occasion to congratulate and thank him for the work done here.

Now for some facts about this immense country. From New York to Rio is 4700 air miles; flying time, 21 hours. From Rio to Anapolis is 800 air miles and 4½ hours flying time. Goias, the State including our territory, is in east central Brazil and is shaped somewhat like Long Island. Brazil is in a time zone that puts it 2 hours ahead of New York. The seasons are winter and summer; dry and wet; dusty and muddy. It rains somewhat every day during the summer, mostly in showers. It never rains in winter. Natives prefer wet to cold. School vacation is from December to March. The wet season runs from October through March; the rest of the year is dry and cool or cold. This part of Brazil is located on a plateau that ranges from 1500 to 3000 feet above sea level. The country is rolling, with no wide valleys -- that is, the hills are close together. Many small and some large streams seek the sea.

Roads for the most part are rather primitive with little government maintenance. During the wet season they become very difficult to use; heavy rains take a terrific toll since the roads have no proper foundation. I have been many places where the 4-wheel drive of the jeep spells the difference between being stuck and making slow progress. The best transportation is by air. Anapolis has service to Rio and Sao Paulo, to Pires do Rio and Catalao. Goiandira can be reached easily by flying to Catalao. Anapolis also has rail contact with these spots. Most of the business is done in Sao Paulo. Contact with other missions, Ceres and Pirenopolis, is by jeep and bus. Freight is hauled by plane, railroad and truck.

The Brazilian school system is organized along European lines. To accommodate the various mentalities, the primary school has a First Year Forward and a First Year Backward. Depending on this fact and on local custom, primary school education is for 4, 5 or 6 years. This is followed by the Ginasio, a 4-year course which is roughly comparable to our high

✓

school as the primary is roughly equivalent to our grade school. There is a year called the Admissao which has as its purpose the preparation of the student for passing the Ginasio entrance exams, the only entrance requirement. Following the Ginasio is the Colegio, a 3-year course which either rounds out the education or prepares for the University. The individual graduating from the Colegio has an education probably comparable to our Junior College. There is also a Normal School which follows the Ginasio, a 3-year course for teacher training.

The Catholic religion (or any other) must be taught in any public school in which 10 percent of the students express a desire to have it taught. This means that the Fathers must see to it that the children express the desire and that the teachers are well enough instructed to teach. There is little or no difficulty in this regard.

Each graduate has a godparent of the opposite sex for graduation.

Much building has been done here by the Fathers. It is a case of drawing a plan, having the engineer lay out the foundations, getting a good bricklayer who can double as a foreman . . . and you are in business. A case in point is the new Seraphic Seminary of Our Lady Queen of the Order of Friars Minor, which was started during our present visit. The men are now digging the trenches which will take the foundation. The bricklayer will then take over and the building will be finished by him under the general supervision of Father Bernard (Beraldo) McInerney.

The Colonia Agricola is a colonization project undertaken by the federal government. Ten thousand 50-acre plots of land have been given to families or individuals who are to build a house on them and work them. Schools are located so that all children will have an opportunity to attend. A hospital was erected in Ceres to give them needed medical care without charge. Ceres is also the headquarters of our Fathers who serve this entire area. The State of Goias is now setting up a similar project which our Fathers are preparing to care for from a mission to be established in the town of Rubiataba, 27 miles from Ceres.

The Giro is the name given to the project by which we serve areas like the Colonia. The priest becomes a circuit rider. Using jeep or horse, he goes to centers of population to bring the Sacraments to the people. He announces his arrival at one of these centers by ringing a bell or shooting off firecrackers. Soon he is at work: hearing confessions, giving instructions, making arrangements for the morrow. Next morning comes Mass, Communion, baptisms, maybe confirmations, and marriages; the Father also makes arrangements for instruction of the children in the schools. Then on to the next location. An attempt is being made to have small chapels set up at these spots which will include a room for the Father. Inconveniences of the Giro include sleeping on the floor, lack of plumbing, routine food. (For some idea of the amazing extent of this work, see below Giro under each one of our mission stations.)

The Festa is a time of religious and secular celebration. It is connected with the observance of some feast; a combination of novena of religious exercises and a bazaar for the purpose of helping parish income. It is a time at which the people plan to have baptisms, confirmations, marriages. The priest is busy getting the Sacraments administered to large numbers and handling the bazaar. They tell stories here of people lining up for baptism and confirmation -- also a tragic episode of two babies being crushed to death in the rush.

In Brazil, confirmation is called "chrism" and is administered any time after baptism. First Communion comes after the sixth or seventh year. The only days when abstinence from flesh meat prevails are: Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent, the vigils of the Assumption and Christmas. Three Masses may be offered by any priest on Sundays, holydays, and First Fridays; 2 if necessary on any other day. The Fathers have the faculty to confirm.

When a Father comes down here with a name the natives have difficulty in pronouncing or which is a duplicate of one already here, it is changed. You will find such changes below in parenthesis.

Communications are slow: It takes 3 to 4 days for a cable to arrive from New York; 7 to 10 days for air mail; up to a month for regular mail. "Time," printed in Havana, is one week late. The best source of news is the Armed Forces Radio.

Factors militating against the work are the lack of a sense of responsibility in the people, plus active opposition from the Protestants and Communists. Spiritism attracts the very ignorant. The Masons are a bother mostly because they claim to be Catholic and battle to be allowed to be sponsors at baptism and confirmation. People have the custom of going to church for night prayers. This spells Rosary and Benediction almost every night. The call to church is by a large bell rung at the half hour and the quarter hour before Mass or devotion time. The people are known to band together in their homes for a novena of Rosaries.

To produce food and to provide a place for relaxation and rest for the friars, the Commissariat has 2 farms: one near Anapolis and one near Catalao. They are being developed slowly to a point where they will make a real contribution to the problem of feeding friars and students. Facilities for recreation are being developed also.

Anapolis is the GHQ of the Commissariat, and the center from which 50,000 souls are cared for. (The distance and direction of each individual house from Anapolis will be found in parentheses after the name of the place. The average rate of travel here is about 20 miles per hour.) The Commissary Provincial, Father John F. Granahan, lives in Anapolis, and his counsellors are in the area. Superior and pastor of the Parish of St. Ann is Father Celsus Hayes, who has as assistants Fathers Edmund Fox, Marcellus McCartney, Dominic (Benedito) Coscia, Kenan (Aloisio) Morris. Father Kenneth (Miguel) Brennan is pastor of another church in town. Father Mar-

cellus teaches in the diocesan seminary. Brother Gerard Quigley is likewise stationed here. Ten chapels are served from Anapolis, and 24 one-day Giros are handled from here each year.

There are 2 primary schools taught by the Allegany Sisters, and 1 Ginasio, 1 college, 1 seraphic seminary handled by the Fathers; there is some lay help in each of these institutions. In the seraphic seminary, which is outside the town, Fathers Andrew Quinn, Berard (Beraldo) McInerney, and Brother Theophane Musser are stationed. Fathers James Schuck, Stephen Walsh, Alexander (Francisco) Eustace and Brother Maurice (Vicente) Swarthout conduct the affairs of the Ginasio and college.

Pires do Rio (91-SE) is a parish serving 17,000 souls. Father Maurice Brick is pastor, Fathers John B. Vogel and Myles (Sylvestre) Glynn are the assistants. Father Colin (Pedro) Schaffner is director of the Ginasio. Helping Father Colin is Dr. Yvan, a Franciscan by affiliation. The Allegany Sisters teach in the primary school here and besides this they have a music school; one Sister runs an out-patient clinic. Five chapels in outlying districts are served from Pires, with Mass from 4 times a year to 3 times a month.

Catalao (137-SE) is a parish serving 31,000 souls. Father Ronan Giehl is pastor. Fathers Dunstan Carroll, Kenneth (Antonio) Knopke and Conall O'Leary are assistants. The Brother is Tarcisius Stumpf. Father Kenneth is the director of the Ginasio. Fathers Kenneth and Conall are translating Father Felix Kirsch's Catechism into Portuguese. Four Giros a year originate from Catalao. The distance to the farthest location is about 90 miles. The school consists of primary and Ginasio. Father Kenneth is director, all other teachers are lay. The poorer children are fed each day without charge. The school building, originally a private institution, was named after Franklin D. Roosevelt. The name has been changed to Siena.

Pirenopolis (43-NW) serves 28,000 souls. Father John A. Janson is pastor, Father Winfred Wiseman assistant. Two churches are in the town and there is a regular Giro program in the dry season. Thirty-five locations are served by Giro and get full Giro treatment at least twice a year. The school is private, conducted by the Carmelite Sisters. There are both boys and girls in the primary school, but only girls are allowed in the Ginasio. There is no Brother in Pirenopolis. We have no beneplicitum here.

Ceres in the Colonia (89-NW) is a parish and a Giro center caring for 45,000 souls. Father Gregory O'Donnell is pastor. Fathers Gabriel (Jaco) McDermott, John Fisher (Artur) Mayer and Dunstan (Roberto) Dooling are the assistants. Father John Fisher is director of the Ginasio. The Brother is Celsus Gansen. Giro here is SOP (standard operational procedure). Fifty locations are visited. Mass is offered in Giro territory at least 300 times a year. Fathers make arrangements for teaching religion in public schools all over the Colonia. The longest Giro trip is 35 miles. A new parish will be formed from Ceres -- Rubiataba, a center which will serve 25,000 more people. There is a primary school in Ceres and a Gina-

sio. The Fathers teach religion. Four Allegany Sisters and lay teachers handle other subjects.

Goiandira (125-SE) is a parish caring for 15,000 souls. Father Dominic Foley is pastor. Father Joseph B. Wider is assistant at Goiandira and pastor at Cumari, a mission. Four area chapels are served; 2 have Mass on 2 Sundays and 2 Saturdays each month; 2 have Mass on 1 Sunday. Twice a month on Sunday a Father from Catalao helps in Goiandira. The Brother from Catalao spends 3 days each week in Goiandira. There is a primary school staffed by 3 Allegany Sisters and lay teachers.

COMPOSITE REPORT OF STATISTICS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR

<u>SACRAMENTAL</u>	Baptisms	Confirm- ations	Commun- ions	Marriages
Anapolis	2403	2120	96,500	310
Pires do Rio	700	1100	42,000	110
Catalao	1255	1067	55,000	150
Pirenopolis	855	948	18,500	163
Ceres (Colonia Agricola)	1925	1400	42,000	350
Goiandira	600	800	17,000	150
	<u>7738</u>	<u>7435</u>	<u>271,000</u>	<u>1233</u>

<u>EDUCATIONAL</u>	Primary	Admissao	Ginasio	Colegio
Anapolis	1250	49	180	67
Pires do Rio	507		126	11
Catalao	450		60	
Ceres	870		35	
Goiandira	230			
Cumari	80			

N.B. The school at Pirenopolis is not under the management of the Fathers.

A more complete and detailed report of the visitation to Brazil has been sent to each of the superiors in the Province. This report is to be made available to all the members of the community.

Congratulations to Father Mathias Faust who has been appointed Delegate General to all United States Commissariats except that of the Holy Land.

There was a combined spiritual and social gathering of the missionaries at Clason Point on the Feast of St. Leonard of Port Maurice, Nov. 26. Thanks to Father Benedict Joseph for his thoughtful hospitality.

We have moved into the parish in Thomasville, Ga., and its missions. The address is: St. Augustine's Friary, 133 East Jefferson St., P. O. Box 609.

Father Matthew Conlin has received his Ph.D. He will now go to the Continent for a few months to polish up his French and German.

Father Fulgence Buonanno has also received his degree and will be home soon.

Because of ill health, Father Demetrius O'Friel will lose a year at St. Anthony's. He will take the courses at Louvain during the spring semester and return to Rome in the fall.

Father Justin Eeles has been transferred from Mitchell Air Force Base to George Air Force Base in Victorville, Calif.

I shall be in Denver for the visitation beginning on January 4.

With kind regards to all the Friars, and asking continued prayers for the Definitorium and myself for the successful administration of the Province, I remain

Sincerely and fraternally,

Edmund F. Whelan, OFM

Minister Provincial