

Province of The Most Holy Name Franciscan Fathers

135 WEST 31ST STREET
NEW YORK 1, NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL

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My dear Confreres:

Late the night of November 9 I left Idlewild on Avianca for Kingston, Jamaica, B. W. I. The trip had a twofold purpose: to attend the functions commemorating the centenary of the coming of the Franciscan Sisters to the island and to consult with Bishop McEleney concerning the work we expect to begin this Fall. We plan to start from scratch and to build a parish in the northwest sector of the suburbs of Kingston. This will be our home there. We expect to add to this parochial activity work in the two schools conducted by the Allegany Sisters and the direction of the very large Third Order Fraternity in the city.

Because this is the year for a General Visitor, I had planned to visit the missions in the Orient and South America during 1957. Transportation was originally planned to leave for Japan on December 12 and to return home from Japan on the 27th. My schedule, however, was changed several times. First came the announcement of a series of meetings in Rome connected with, or occasioned by, the Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee of Cardinal Valeri. It was necessary for me to represent the Conference of Major Religious Superiors and to report concerning their organizational activities. Word then came that it would be advisable to arrive early for the purpose of arranging a more stable and permanent situation regarding our new house in Rome. Eventually as explained below I had to stay in Rome longer than planned. I left the States on December 4 for Rome, left Rome on December 17 for Tokyo and left Tokyo on December 30 for Seattle and New York. On this last leg I had Fr. Gratian Feltz as company.

The transportation from New York to Rome and Tokyo was made on Scandinavian Airlines, from Tokyo to Seattle and New York on Northwest. The scheduled departure time from Idlewild on December 4 was 2 p.m. We were quite late in leaving. That was the day the snow was supposed to stop in the New York area at noon or shortly afterward, instead it grew increasingly worse. By the time we departed that evening the storm had reached blizzard proportions. I was surprised that we were even going to take off. They loaded us in the plane at about 5 p.m., then taxied it to a hangar. Here a complete de-icing job was done on the wings and fuselage. We remained in the hangar until our turn to take off. The stops were Hamburg, Copenhagen and Rome. The arrival at Copenhagen was late, we missed the flight to Rome. The two of us who wished to get to Rome that day were disappointed. There was no available transportation until the following day. It worked out well for me as I had a quick look at Copenhagen and a real good night's sleep. Upon arrival at Rome--a day late--I found that I was expected to stay at our new residence, 11 Via Po, although my obedience read that I should stay at the General Curia.

This residence is well located in a quiet section of the city, convenient for getting to school and for the other facilities used by the

students. It is centrally heated, has showers and American meals--a comfortable place in which to live. The Mercy Fathers of New York are the owners and they will not sell. Most Reverend Fr. General wishes that we get set up permanently in a house of our own; he is not adverse to our taking over a foundation of the Roman Province. We looked at a few places and after pricing them decided to see what we might do about purchasing --from the government--the property on which the Monastery connected with the Church of San Lorenzo is situated. The idea would be to raze the present monastery and another ancient building on the property and build a new one. San Lorenzo is not a parish church but is an important church in Rome. The geographical location is ideal. We are still in the inquiry stage. This project needs some prayers.

The original reason for the trip to Rome was to attend a series of meetings in connection with the Second International Congress for the States of Perfection scheduled for December 8-14. Some years ago the Pope began implementing a program that had for its objective the making of suitable adjustments necessitated by the participation of religious in the expanding apostolates of the Church. These included preparation for work in the apostolates and protection of the religious who would work toward the fulfillment of these apostolates. All those connected with the states of perfection were included in the plans. The first Congress was held in Rome in 1950. Three definite topics were on the agenda: Secular Institutes, Sponsa Christi and the Apostolic Constitution "Sedes Sapientiae."

The opening session on the afternoon of December 8 was concerned mostly with greeting and congratulating Cardinal Valeri on the occasion of his jubilee. The following morning, Monday, the entire congress met with the Holy Father after which the congress really got under way. Daily meetings began at 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. There were general sessions, and special sessions with small group discussions. The papers were mostly in Italian. Summaries--some too short and some quite adequate--were given of each talk. There were three bits of information that I really needed to acquire for use, both as Provincial of the Province and as President of the Conference of Major Superiors. The information, having to do with specific details of the agenda, I received in some detail from three sources: a top flight Franciscan canonist, Fr. Guy Brisebois; Fr. Bernard Ransin, C.S.C., an American secretary at the Congregation for Religious; and finally, the best source of information for religious, Fr. Laraona, secretary to the Congregation. Fr. Laraona explained just what the Congregation wants regarding the fulfillment of the directives of "Sedes Sapientiae." I had hoped to set up a special type of apprenticeship for those who will teach. My plan was not acceptable but another was suggested that will probably be tried in the Province. More about this later.

The Congress was concluded at noon on December 14. My original plan was to leave for Japan that afternoon. However, my business was not completed so I decided to postpone the departure until the 17th. The Scandinavian flight left Rome for Milan, Copenhagen and Japan at 3:45 p.m. on Tuesday, December 17. This particular trip from Rome--over the North Pole from Copenhagen to Anchorage and to Tokyo--saves some 13 hours. There were head winds so we had a service stop at the top of Sweden in a place called Lulea and then on to Anchorage. While this flight is advertised as over the North Pole and the Chart shows it as going over the Pole, flying over the Pole is not a direct route to Anchorage from Copenhagen. We were airborne a few minutes out of Lulea when the captain announced a route that was direct to Anchorage and about 300 miles south of the Pole. I never did

get to see what color the Pole is painted. The flight was due in Tokyo on Thursday, the 19th, at 1:40 p.m. It arrived about 4:30 which was not bad considering the head winds. The total time consumed from Rome to Tokyo was just about 40 hours, 35 of which were spent in the air. Customs at Tokyo were speedy. A group of friars was waiting and we spent a very enjoyable evening at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo and then went on to Gumma the next day.

There are 20 priests and one Brother from the Province in the Gumma Mission. Add to this one Japanese secular priest, one cleric novice and two Brother postulants and you have the total personnel. Ten mission stations are being served with resident priests who offer Mass, give instructions and in general conduct the business of a Catholic Information Center. It is rewarding to know that we now have 1,350 Catholics in Gumma and that this is almost exactly double the number there when we took over in 1952. Each year there are 2 mission-wide celebrations: the Eucharistic Procession in late May or early June and the Marian Day in late October. At each of these the Catholics from all over the mission participate.

At Kiryu there is a large monastery with chapel attached. This is used somewhat after the manner of our service churches--as a chapel of ease and convenience for members of the Kiryu and other parishes for Sunday and daily Masses and for such functions as Days of Recollection for the friars, other religious, secular priests and lay people. It is being promoted as a shrine with a set of outdoor Stations (The 12th Station is completed, the others are in the making), and statues of our Blessed Mother and St. Francis. Frs. Cormac, Robert, Jerome and Brother Martin live here. This is becoming a genuine service unit for the mission. Each Father in the mission comes to Kiryu each Monday afternoon for a day of prayer and companionship.

NEWS OF THE MISSION: At Kiryu a new church is being built. The Shinmachi-Fujioka combination has finally procured property at Fujioka on which a parish unit will be built and then Shinmachi will be served from Fujioka. The opposite is true now. Our unit at Tomioka was in need of many adjustments. These have been made and now Fr. Ambrose Donehue has a very workable plant. Takasaki, our first large establishment, needs a rectory and we hope one can be built or acquired in the not too distant future. Fr. Lucian Mulhern operates the poorest unit in the mission. Every effort is being made to procure land on which to build an adequate church and rectory. The ideal plant--all new--is at Tatebayashi. There is a new two-story rectory and a new church and it seems to be a model for future building. At Shibukawa Fr. Ralph built a combination parish church, hall and living quarters. It will soon need a separate rectory. Omama has adequate facilities for the present. It is served from the monastery at Kiryu. So much for the physical aspects.

Seven of the Fathers are still in the language school. Fr. Campion Lally is taking his third year so that he will have an added proficiency, and we hope that Fr. Callistus Sweeney will be assigned to continue his studies for a third year after he finishes in June. Fr. Conrad Schomske, the first to take the three-year language course is now temporary editor and publisher of the missionary bulletin, a publication that serves the missionaries. The Fathers of the Province have made contributions to the missionary bulletin as follows: 5 articles by Fr. Conrad Schomske, 1 article each by Frs. Ralph Reilly, Robert Frawley and Campion Lally; pastoral suggestions were contributed by Frs. Harold Finn, Anthony Moore and Ambrose Donehue.

There are 3 kindergartens in the mission, one at Shibukawa and 2 at Takasaki. The mission provides for the physical unit, but otherwise the kindergarten is self-supporting. At Takasaki the kindergarten is taught by Sisters; at Shibukawa by specially trained laywomen.

The one parish not mentioned is Maebashi. This is the oldest and is the responsibility of Fr. Makinow, a Japanese priest, who has been working with the Fathers in Gumma since the mission was opened. He works for the friars on a salary basis. The parish is ours.

It has been found advisable to have Frs. Lucian, Anthony and Ambrose live at their chapels. Fr. Lucian's address is in the Tabula. The others are as follows: Rev. Anthony Moore, O.F.M., Catholic Church, 309 Hashiba Machi, Shinmachi, Tano Gun, Gumma-Ken, Japan. Rev. Ambrose Donehue, O.F.M., Catholic Church, 1161 Nakamachi, Tomioka Shi, Gumma-Ken, Japan.

The return trip was fast: 10 hours from Tokyo to Anchorage; 4½ hours from Anchorage to Seattle; 7½ hours from Seattle to New York. You gain a day on this leg, i. e., the plane left Tokyo on Monday, December 30, at 7:30 p. m. and arrived in Seattle on Monday, December 30, at 7:00 p. m. Finally, we arrived in New York on December 31, at 9:40 a. m. Fr. Gratian Feltz as mentioned above was my companion. He made the trip in good shape.

Items of Interest: Fr. General visited our new Roman house while I was there together with Fr. Antonine DeGuglielmo and the Roman Provincial. Later, a few days after I left, Fr. General was there with his Definitorium. At the Christmas party in Kiryu, the entertainment was sparked by Frs. Cary Kean and Luke O'Connell. Bolivia will have its first Sisters in April when a group of four Missionaries of Mary Immaculate and of St. Catherine of Siena arrive in Coroico to begin the new school year. The Mother General of the Williamsville Sisters and a companion visited the mission in Puerto Rico. Four Sisters will go from Williamsville to Puerto Rico this summer. Fr. Daniel Hurley is making visible progress toward what we hope and expect will be complete health. A new Catalogus is being prepared. We will open a new high school in Olean with a freshman class this Fall. It will be co-educational with the Allegany Sisters teaching the girls. A friar will be principal. Either three Fathers and one layman or four Fathers will be needed in the Fall. The school will be in temporary quarters for at least one year.

Congratulations to the Jubilarians: Fr. Luke Panfoerder, Fr. Lawrence Bultmann, Fr. Columban Kelly and the Class of 1933.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Jesus Whelan, O.F.M.

Minister Provincial