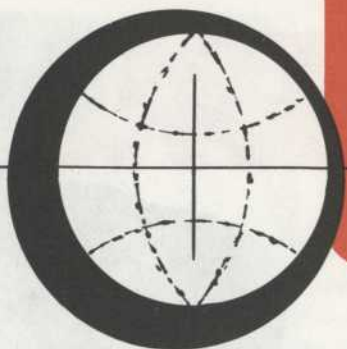




LIMA, PERU

Christmas in Peru

by Ederlina Torres, M.I.C.

Before giving a short account of Christmas celebrations in Peru, several factors must be taken into consideration — geographical, cultural, economical, and religious. They are common to the country's three main regions — the coast, the mountain, the bush. The people living in coastal areas, where Peru's principal cities are situated, are more or less marked by exterior influences. Those living in remote Amazonian or Andean regions tend to be more conservative. They can be reached only by plane or boat as roads over such rugged terrain are practically inexistent. Modern ways have hardly touched their primitive pattern of living.

In the coastal region, preparation for Christmas used to begin a week in advance, and the celebration was prolonged for several days afterwards. The villages held noisy fairs and bullock races which the whole population greatly enjoyed. For midnight Mass, the church was packed; all those present made a votive offering to the Holy Child.

Preparations in the cities were made one week in advance. On the programme figured fairs, races, and other sports. Each family had its own more or less elaborate representation of the Manger. Houses were gaily decorated. A familial atmosphere reigned throughout the cities and suburbs.

Nowadays, the celebration is not so colourful. There is no longer any period

of feverish preparation. Christmas is celebrated on December 25, within the family circle. Of course, the religious part of the feast is not entirely neglected, and the Christian community gathers in the various churches for the Eucharistic celebration. A festive mood reigns, but it has been toned down by a commercialized aspect of the feast.

In the mountain and bush regions, people used to assemble in one of the larger villages to celebrate the birth of the Saviour. Preparations were launched several weeks ahead of time and lasted until Christmas day. They consisted in sports, festive meals, games, etc. On this occasion, the people living in remote villages brought many objects they had manufactured and put up their makeshift booths close to the church. The feast was really a community affair in which all were happy to participate. Midnight Mass was the highlight of the celebration.

Today the cities of these regions are commercial centres where many things can be bought by the people of neighbouring villages. The feast is more of a family affair than it used to be. In each home, a bountiful meal is spread with the *Paneton*, a special kind of bread enriched with raisins and candied fruit, as the chief item on the menu. Poorer families have to be content with only a slice of *Paneton* and a cup of hot chocolate. For them this is a special treat. In rural areas the festivities last until the first week of January.



And this Baby was God...

Merry Christmas!

A prayerful wish for you on the birthday of our Saviour. May his peace and love be yours always. We keep in grateful remembrance your service in Christ during the past year. May the miracle of Christmas remain with you every day of the coming year.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S YEAR

1979



JAPAN



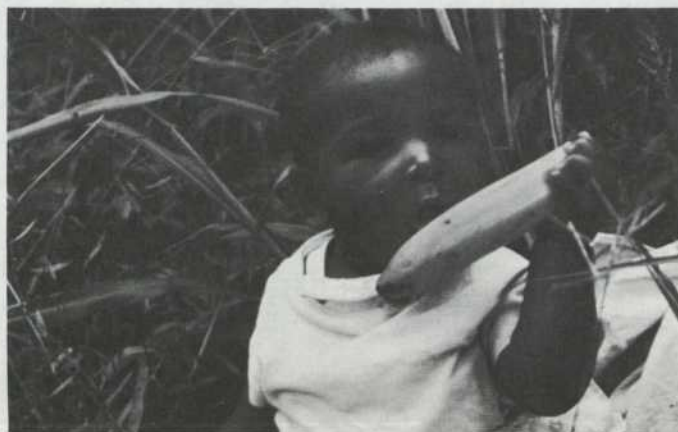
PHILIPPINES



GUATEMALA



TAIWAN





HAITI



AFRICA



PERU

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JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

JULY

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CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME, BUT HOME TODAY IS ALL THE WORLD.

MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Box 157, Laval Branch, P.O.

Laval, P.Q., CANADA

H7N 4Z4

Pope Paul VI

FLASHBACK

by Jeanne d'Arc Nolin, M.I.C.

One year, in early December, the Scouts and Guides in Hinche, resolved to do something special to mark the birthday of Christ. After animated discussion, they decided that the best thing to do would be to help the poor. But there were so many around them... To which should go their preference? Finally, all agreed that the prisoners were those who were the most to be pitied. After being consulted, the young people's parents agreed to pool their resources to encourage the project. None were well off but each family, out of its meagre income, provided 10 *cobs*, the equivalent of about two cents of our money.

Before anything could be definitively settled, a formal permit had to be obtained from the chief of the constabulary. Scout captains and guiders in uniform asked me, their teacher, to accompany them on this errand, hoping that my presence might lend weight to their request. Their project was easily

approved and a formal permit was issued.

Now that all was in order, Scouts and Guides set to work to achieve the best results possible. Some people provided the rice for the traditional feastday meal. Others offered meat, herbs, and vegetables. One woman lent two large pots. Another promised not only to lend another pot but to cook the delicious rice stew. Meantime, the young people rehearsed Christmas carols, Bible readings, etc.

On Christmas Day, a colourful procession of Scouts, Guides, and friends set out for the prison grounds, singing favourite Christmas carols. In the lead, a man pushed a wheelbarrow containing two large pots of steaming stew.

The prisoners were lined up inside the prison yard, guards in attendance. Although they no doubt enjoyed the singing and Bible reading, their gaze wandered to the food to be distributed.

When the time came, all were told to stand by, each with a recipient into which the Scouts cheerfully ladled copious portions of the savoury stew. Alas! A few had no recipients. But trust Haitian ingenuity! They took off their caps and had them filled to their hearts' content.

This proved a very happy Christmas for both donors and receivers. The best part of my story is that this gesture of goodwill has been repeated every week for the last seven or eight years. Fired by the example of the Scouts and Guides, the Legionaries stepped in to do their share. Hearing about the lack of recipients, they provided some for all those who had none, a thing that our young people had found it impossible to do on account of their poverty as students. Not satisfied with this generous deed, the Legionaries now provide a wholesome hot meal for the prisoners every Sunday of the year. So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

VANCOUVER, B.C.

JAPANESE-CANADIAN ASSOCIATION GIVES HOSPITAL \$17,000

Mount Saint Joseph Hospital was the recipient of a donation from the Japanese-Canadian Citizens Association, which wanted to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first known Japanese arrival in Canada. Under the leadership of Mrs. Shirley Kakutani, the Nikkei Hospital Benevolent Association was founded as a Centennial Project.

Mount Saint Joseph Hospital was chosen as one of the two beneficiaries of the fund for a very special reason. Until 1941, Vancouver had the largest Japanese population in Canada. At that time, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception operated the Saint Joseph Oriental Hospital which the Japanese called *Toyojin Byoin*

literally — Eastern Asiatic People's Hospital. Now, a new generation of Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception continue caring for people of several nationalities at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital. The Japanese continue to feel a special affinity for this hospital.

The Japanese-Canadian Centennial is the most appropriate time in the history of Japanese Canadians to acknowledge the long lasting feelings of gratitude for the kindness and care given to their sick and the elderly. The donation amounted to \$17,000 which will be used toward expanding and upgrading the hospital's Orthopedic service.

READ THE LIFE

OF

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CUBA

NEW APOSTOLIC CENTRE IN CUBA

Sisters Sara Perez and Marta Romero, M.I.C., received a hearty welcome upon their arrival in Holguin to launch a new missionary experience. Josefina Pupo was happy to offer them warm hospitality, while their modest house in Vista Alegre was being completed.

On the day following their arrival, Msgr. Pena, bishop of Holguin visited them and offered a special Mass for their intentions. In his homily, the bishop briefly stated the aspirations of the local Church in relation to the Sisters' presence in Holguin.

Requirements concerning identity cards and ration allowance took much

of their time during the first few days. They afterwards again met bishop Pena who gave them specific information regarding their apostolic activities: organization of a Christian community in Vista Alegre; formation and spiritual animation of young people and of catechists; animation of pastoral team in charge of visiting the sick and preparing catechumens for baptism.

Soon after their arrival, they travelled on foot to Vista Alegre, a journey which enabled them to witness at first hand the poverty of the district which is to be their field of apostolate. Masons were busy in the modest house being built for their use.

The Sisters stopped for a while to pray in the little village chapel. On the way out, they met two aged women catechists who were happy to welcome them to Vista Alegre. All along the way, groups of children and of adults stopped to greet them in a friendly manner. All seemed pleased to know the Sisters will also carry on their apostolic activities in the other parishes of Holguin: home visitations, group encounters, animation of catechists, etc. Both Sisters are very happy about various projects which meet the goal of the Institute and the priorities of the regional Chapter. Good luck to you both, dear M.I.C. pioneers in Holguin.

HERE I AM

It is no accident that the divorce rate grows apace with the defection from vocations of every kind. Neither is it an accident that vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life come so often from generous families, thanks to which the sense of vocation permeates the whole of a society, rather than a society in which that sense of vocation has been attenuated or lost. Priests and Religious, not merely producers and managers, should be on the constant lookout for artists who will sing the glory of God, craftsmen who will manifest some measure of his beauty, men and women for public life who will bind up the wounds of war and restore the unity of the worldwide human family. Believe me, it all depends on you!

The Spirit of God is not dead; neither is ours. We priests and

Religious, working as one in Christ, with our various gifts and ministries, this day dedicate ourselves to the guidance of a whole new generation which will answer in their respective ways: "Here I am, Lord! Lord! Send me!" It is not any particular vocation

that is in trouble; it is the sense of vocation itself. We no longer look upon ourselves as agents of God — in whatever we are called to do. Here I am, O Lord! Send me!

Cardinal Wright

Our newsletter MIC Mission News keeps you tuned to missionary doings around the world. Nothing could awaken missionary interest more effectively than your winning new members to the cause. How about asking your friends to join our missionary association ICMA? Use coupon below.

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