

Memento for the Novices

from Reverend Mother Mary Vianney

Note: These pages about the Handmaids would not be complete without some word from Reverend Mother M. Vianney who was their Novice Mistress from 1950 to January, 1960 - and whose devotion to them has been a spiritual bulwark.

An old Missionary once said that every religious vocation is like the unfolding of the Joyful Mysteries in the Life of Our Lord. But he forgot to mention the joy - the indescribable joy - of the one whose privilege it is to watch this unfolding. When the vocations bud from brand new Catholic life wrested from pagan soil, as they do so often in Africa, the happiness goes deeper. I can never be grateful enough for my ten years with the Handmaid novices at Ifuho.

With each one, the Call - the *Annunciation* - was the beginning; the desire for Christ conceived in each heart. But He came to them in a hundred different ways. Sometimes the difficulties in answering the Call seemed insurmountable. Marriage with a pagan planned by the girl's parents from her infancy, and a dowry to be repaid; fanatical

opposition from the family, especially if the girl was a convert and Catholic ideals were totally unknown to her relatives; younger sisters and brothers to help put through school - these were some of the obstacles. But once the girl has made her "fiat" to God with love and confidence, obstacles exist only to be overcome!

The *Visitation*... that quiet carrying of Christ to others in newfound charity which is essentially the "Magnificat" of every vocation... what special meaning it has in Nigeria, in Ghana.....

The *Nativity*. There is no delight on earth that can compare with seeing Christ's image appear when the soul surrenders itself to Love. It never happens suddenly or with a flourish. It may be recognized in only a word held back or in a new gentleness. But it is there,

Reverend Mother M. Vianney with the novices in front of the Noviceship at Ifuho.





Mother Mary Genevieve, the New Novice Mistress.

As a child she came to Ifuho from Ogoja, and continued her studies here until she became an H.E.C. teacher. She was a successful Headmistress when she decided to become a Handmaid in December, 1949. Prior to her entering the Convent, her fellow-teachers had voted for her to be their representative in the Holy Year Pilgrimage to Rome in 1950. They still wished her to go, so as a Postulant she accompanied Rev. Mother Teresa Xavier, Rev. Mother M. Joachim, and M.M. St. John on the flight to Rome.

In 1958 Mother M. Genevieve was awarded a British Council Scholarship to study the teaching of English as a Second Language at the University in Edinburgh...

unmistakable, real, warm, beautiful beyond words. The Holy Child is born in a heart. And there is added brightness in the novitiate.

The Presentation. In a way, each day is a Presentation for the novice, a fresh offering of herself with and to the Infant Saviour at Mass. It culminates in her Vow Day, her "Feast of Light" when Our Lady offers another little *ancilla Domini* to Her Son. And the Novice Mistress, taking her place behind Joseph and Simeon and Anna is permitted to share a small part of the delight which they must have known so fully.

The Finding of Christ. Every Christian experiences the loss of Christ at some time or other. Days grow dull and monotonous, the weak-

ness of our human nature makes itself felt. Frequently the Holy Child hides Himself for a time just to give us the joy of finding Him. And He never fails to impart extra graces when we have searched, by prayer and sacrifice, until we *do* find Him again. All this is particularly true of those dedicated to Our Lord. It is His little test to prepare them for the Apostolate.

For our Handmaids, this Apostolate is as far-reaching as Africa itself. And the powerhouse for it is the novitiate at Ifuho. My thankful prayer can only be expressed in those words of Reverend Mother Foundress: "Oh most sweet Jesus... grant us thy own spirit of the Holy Child Jesus - engrave this dear Name in our hearts..."



THE TWINNERY AT IFUHO... Bringing happiness into the lives of children such as these— teaching them to know and love God, their Father — is a rich reward in itself.



Physical education plays an important part in the Preliminary Teachers' Course given at Anua as in the Training College at Oron



THE NEW MOTHER HOUSE OF THE HANDMAIDS OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS, CALABAR. Only a small part of the lovely compound is shown in this view of the Chapel, shrine and Convent (opposite page). Calabar was the original Mission of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus when they first came to Africa.

MESSAGE FROM REVEREND MOTHER MARY GERTRUDE

given on December 30th, 1959 when the Handmaids took possession of the original Convent compound in Calabar formerly occupied by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. It will serve as their temporary mother-house.

" We take this opportunity to express our most sincere thanks to the whole Society of the Holy Child Jesus and especially to the Sisters in our Missions for all they have done for us. They have given their very best to us. They brought us into being, have fed and nourished us both spiritually and temporally. We thank them for their generosity and self-sacrifice, for their patience and untiring labour, and above all for the good example they have shown in their lives. Reverend Mother Mary Amadeus, whose desires and plans have been realised today, will always be remembered in our Congregation.

" We give special thanks to our Bishop, His Lordship Dr. Moynagh, who has been our Father, our guardian and our unfailing friend.

" We also thank priests of the Diocese who have helped us through their prayers and encouragement.

" Now we have launched out on our own. Realising our great responsibilities we earnestly beg your prayers. We must all pray that what God has started He Himself may guide, direct and perfect so that through Him and with Him we, His Handmaids, may draw all souls to Him who will glorify His Blessed Name throughout all eternity. "



Mission News

The first Ghanaian Archbishop, the Most Reverend John Kodwo Amissah, D. D., was enthroned last June 8th in St. Francis' Cathedral, Cape Coast. The Senior Prelate officiating at the beautiful ceremony was his predecessor, His Grace Archbishop Porter, who is retiring because of ill health. The latter's kindness to the Holy Child Society cannot be summed up only in a phrase and we look forward to recording his work for Ghana in a coming issue. Sister Mary Francis, Archbishop Amissah's sister, is a Handmaid of the Holy Child Jesus. She is at present in Ifuho, Nigeria.

World Congress in Rome

Two of our Ghanaians from Cape Coast, Miss Cecilia Amissah, who is on the staff of the Holy Child Secondary School, and Miss Augusta



**Rev. Mother M. Gertrude,
first Superior General of the
Handmaids.**

Gabianu, Sixth Form student, arrived in Rome last Easter for a memorable week. They were delegates to the Congress of World Federation of Catholic Young Women held in Rome from the 18th to 24th April. Soon after their plane landed, they were in St. Peter's for the dialogue Mass offered by the Holy Father. Later, they stood in St. Peter's Square to hear his Easter message delivered from the famous balcony, and to receive his Apostolic Blessing. As Miss Amissah described it, "That was the perfect beginning for a perfect week."

About the Congress she writes:

Over 700 young women and girls from more than 36 countries participated in it. The theme of the Congress was: The



All Calabar celebrated Bishop James Moynagh's 25th Anniversary as Prefect Apostolic.

Young Woman and her Work The Pope spoke to us in a special audience about the dignity of woman which is equal to man's, but God and nature have given us different tasks which perfect and complete man's mission.

Missionaries visit Mother House

Rome, fortunately, has become a "stopping-off place" for air travellers, and a number of Missionary Priests and Sisters have paid visits to the Holy Child Motherhouse on their way home or back. Reverend Mother M. Hubert (Ogoja) and Reverend Mother M. Vianney (Lagos) arrived early in the year for a short stay. The former's tour took her all the way to Portland, Oregon, and she gave many talks on the Missions to schools in the United States. The Cause of

Cornelia Connelly claimed much of Reverend Mother M. Vianney's time for she spent a number of weeks in England working in the Cause Room at Mayfield. Among other visitors from Africa who enjoyed the magnificent sights of Rome were Mother M. Magdalen (Cape Coast), M. M. St Aloysius (Calabar), Reverend Mother Ronald (Ifuho) and M. M. Stanislaus (Afikpo).

New school at Abakaliki

After working 25 years in the Calabar Diocese, Mother M. St. Henry is moving up to Ogoja Province to work for a new Secondary School soon to be opened at Abakaliki. The needs here are many. In her letter she says,

We are most grateful for the 'film' donation for Abakaliki. The school is supposed to open in January, and I wonder if the *Pylon* readers would like suggestions for basic needs of our children. (The approximate cost is given in British and American money).

Bowl	1 s. 3 d., or \$	0.25
Cement Block for building	2s.	\$ 0.40
Plate	3s.	\$ 0.60
Knife, Fork, Spoon	6s.	\$ 1.20
Chair	15s.	\$ 2.75
Mattress	£ 1.	\$ 3.00
Locker	£ 1.10s.	\$ 4.50
Desk	£ 2.10s.	\$ 7.00
Bed	£ 3.	\$ 9.00
Window	£ 8.	\$ 23.00
Door	£ 17.	\$ 48.00

Rev. Mother M. Hubert and Rev. Mother M. Vianney tour North American College with seminarian Jim Joy as guide.

