

Where the Harvest is Great

by M. John Cantius

You reach it down a dirt road deeply rutted by rain, lorries, and the treading of many feet. It nestles against low hills and is battered by the sea. It is the village of Queen Anne's Point, and its royal name symbolizes its royal treasure — a rich harvest of souls.

The prime occupation of the village is fishing. On the whole, the people are pagans, and the village's "Sabbath" is Tuesday. Every Tuesday therefore Mother Mary Fintan and her Legionaries go from Holy Child School in Cape Coast to distribute food, visit the old and sick, and instruct all interested for the sacraments. This year's efforts netted a harvest of forty-one souls who were either baptized, or who received their

First Holy Communion or both. The youngest was a few days old, the eldest a grave-faced woman in her 70's.

Queen Anne's Point has a unique way of blending into its surroundings. It is an artist's dream and a town planner's despair. Except for the approach road it has no streets, not even lanes, nor even paths. Some of its red laterite houses come and go with the rainy season, a good percentage of its inhabitants are pigs and goats (with no fixed abodes), but there is nevertheless something about it that has a special place in my heart; and so I was most grateful to be asked to photograph the ceremonies for the forty-one neophytes and first Communicants.



Children in Queen Anne's Point (Ghana) are fed by M.M. Fintan and the Legionaries from Holy Child School in Cape Coast.



A newly made child of God radiates her joy. For many years this woman has been paralyzed and she lies on the floor of her small mud house. The Legionaries help to care for her, bring her food -and Faith.

Queen Anne's Point has a church - a nice one with a little courtyard in front and a choir loft. The church is made of mud (I was in the loft when I discovered that, and I came down.)

Nothing was quite ready when we gathered with the blush of dawn still on the sands. Some of the children had nothing suitable to wear, but our Legion of Mary members brought white dresses and veils for all who needed them. Most of the dresses and all the veils were gifts from America.

In the Church, Mother Mary Fintan busied herself arranging the altar while two Legionaries conducted "fittings" in the back of the Church and another gave reminders to a group of girls in the front. The boys sat not too noisily in the middle, while I wove in and out of the subdued confusion seeking good spots to take pictures.

At the right moment Father

Francis Asamoah arrived. He is a tall Ghanean who has been ordained less than two years. He folds himself into a Volkswagen and visits his fifty-four Mission Stations regularly, but from the attention and time he gave Queen Anne's Point that morning, it might have been his only parish church.

The ceremonies began outside, the forty-one forming a semi-circle. The scrubbed and polished boys were first and the unconcerned babies last. In between, stood the girls and women, all ages, all sizes, all attention. There was no talking, not even from the numerous heterogeneous bystanders.

When each candidate had received the salt of wisdom, and all the unclean spirits had whimpered and fled, the neophytes moved into the Church and formed a double row with their sponsors - the Legionaries - down the short middle aisle. Father spoke in



Every Tuesday the people gather around the statue of Our Lady to say the rosary with their friends from Cape Coast.

Latin, and the people said the "Apostles' Creed" and the Our Father in Fante. The little Church seemed to bend low and embrace them as they solemnly declared their Faith and trust in God. Each one received a lighted candle. Their eyes shone like gold as they lifted their faces to Father's and answered his questions: "Do you believe...?" "Do you wish to be baptized?" - There was no doubt.

During the Mass which followed the Baptism, a small group of parishioners sang, and caused the mud walls of the Church to flake a little by the sheer power of their voices. Nor were they content with such hymns as "Jesus Thou art Coming" or "Little White

Guest," but launched meritoriously several times into polyphony.

When Mass ended Mother Mary Fintan and I were ushered outside to be thanked profusely. The villagers had even cut a large pile of green coronets as a gift to the Communicants.

After assembling all for a group photograph in front of the church, we filled the lorry with the village children, and took them back to breakfast at Holy Child School. The needle-work room was festively decorated by Form I who stayed outside and leaned against the window sills like little cherubs to watch, while the children from the village sat wide-eyed before the breakfast of cereal, cocoa, fruit,

Breakfast at Holy Child School after the ceremonies. Father Asamoah helps M.M. Fintan with the serving.



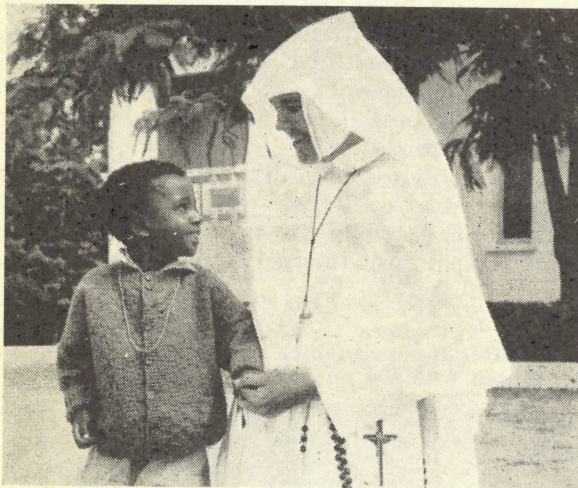


Breakfast over, the forty-one neophytes, radiant and joyful, board the lorry for the return to the village.

and small loaves of bread. There were medals, holy pictures, and new rosaries for them also, and Father Asamoah was on hand to bless them, and to help dish up the cereal.

When the breakfast was over, radiant and joyful they boarded the lorry for the return to the

village. It was a heartening sight, and more heartening still on the following Sunday to see every single adult and child who had so recently been baptized trudging down the road from Queen Anne's Point to attend Mass in the Cathedral at Cape Coast, three miles away.



The photographer-writer, M. John Cantius, with Abdu Barbar who is proudly wearing one of the sweaters sent from America.

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