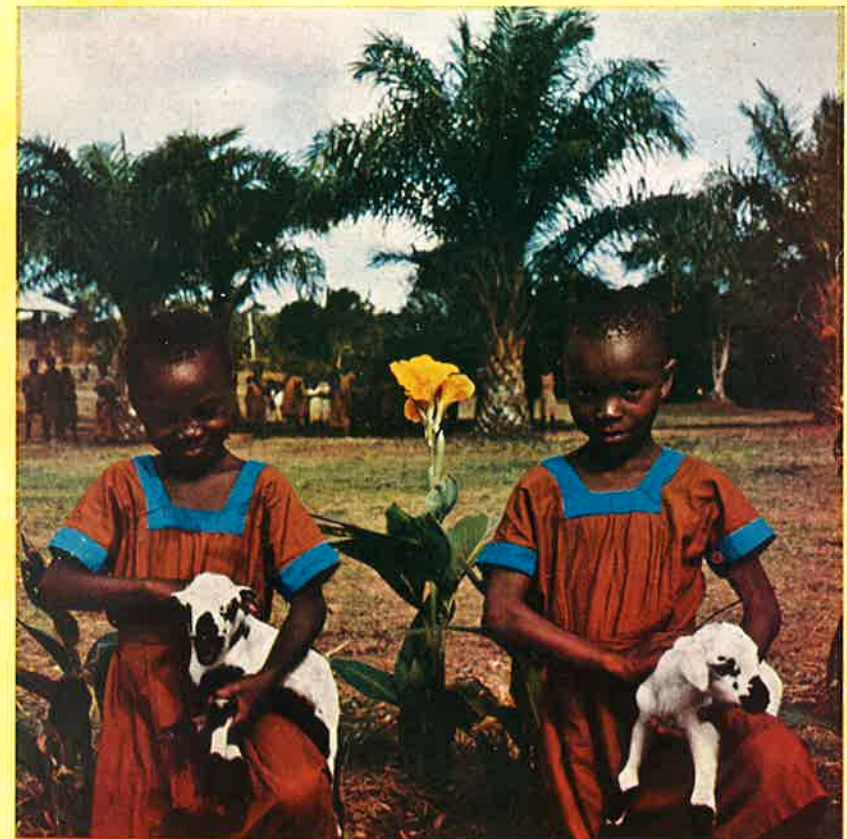




# THE PYLON



TO CARRY THE LINE THAT CARRIES THE LIGHT



Vol. XXI No. 2.

Summer 1959



COME AFTER ME AND  
I WILL MAKE YOU -  
TO BE FISHERS OF MEN

Matt. IV, 19



The  
Essene  
Women's  
Welcome  
to  
the  
"New  
Mothers".



A Visit  
to the  
Holy Child Missions

SWIFT, overall impressions of Africa crowd in on us now at the journey's end: the joy of discovering the Holy Child spirit in the most remote bush school, even where the roof had giant holes... The loveliness of the children and the warmth of their response (684 African girl students became eager new Electrons)... The happiness, outweighing the pain, in the Leper Settlements which we visited... The palm-fringed shore at Eikwe with the hot sand burning through the soles of our sandals... Clouds of red laterite dust swirling on the untarred roads as buses and lorries rushed past us, their names either very pious or highly satirical... But above all other impressions, the welcome we received everywhere,

from our own Holy Child Sisters and Handmaids, from the Fathers of the African Missions in Ghana and Lagos, from the St. Patrick's Fathers of Kiltegan whose auxiliaries we are privileged to be in Eastern Nigeria, the kind invitation of Archbishop Heerey, and the *Cor Unum* which made us instantly at home with all other missionary sisters: It might be just a hurried talk with Sister Aquiline, O.L.A., who recounted something of her days in Ghana before World War I, a happy twenty-four hours with the Sisters of St. Louis at Kumasi, or our frequent delightful visits to the Medical Missionaries of Mary, whose mission story is so intimately bound up with our own.



Kano, as the aircraft landed.

B.O.A.C.

No vivid imaginings could equal the experience of visiting in person our Holy Child Missions in Africa. When the two of us stepped into the strato-cruiser at the Roman airport that mild February evening

on the first lap of our journey, we knew a deep sense of gratitude – and a keen anticipation. At Kano early the next morning we touched African soil for the first time. Behind the ultra modern airport was a city of red-earth homes protected by mud walls 40 to 50 feet thick. A camel gazed at us with momentous dignity, then yawned. It was amazing that the first person we should meet in this ancient caravan center should be an old St. Leonards' girl, Arlette Hogan, with her husband and beautiful children, waiting for a 'plane in another direction.

Then on to Accra, the interesting capital of Ghana, where Reverend Mother Mary Joachim, one of our pioneer missionaries, and Mother Maria Assumpta welcomed us so cordially. They had been attending an educational meeting in Accra, and they drove us the 88 miles to Cape Coast before going on to their own Convent in Takoradi. As the car sped along the smooth asphalt highway, we had our initial view of the African landscape complete with oil palms and man-sized ant hills, alternating with a seascape which could hardly be more beautiful.



Looking towards Elmina Castle. Newly-acquired friends of ours, Kammah and Seth, bounced with delight when the boatman let them onto his canoe whilst Mother Virginia Mary, the photographer of the tour, "made photo ,,"

## Cape Coast



The School Bell, Paul, under a structure resembling a Chief's umbrella, presides with dignity over the Compound.

Here the Holy Child compound spreads out over undulating hills that border the ocean. Here, six nuns supervise a Secondary (High) School with 327 boarders. European and African lay teachers help, but even so the work is staggering. "I have been here since 1948," said Miss Mary Agnes Holbrook, who taught in Preston, England, before starting out on Apostolic work in foreign lands, "and I still do not know how the Sisters accomplish so much!" She is typical of the self-sacrificing lay apostle who is so greatly needed as the right hand of the missionary "In Form VI, our students prepare for University work just as they do in England, and they usually go on to Legon University near Accra, or to Kumasi, although

some also go to the United Kingdom."

The paramount need in Ghana, Miss Holbrook pointed out, is for the development of Christian family life. "That is true of Nigeria and of most of Africa, but especially here because the people have a matriarchal society." This is far from meaning that women have the ruling hand, but it does mean that the children belong to the mother's family. The father is responsible for his sister's children rather than for his own. "Most of the children are 'parked' with the maternal grandparents, uncle, or some other relative," she explained. "In many cases the father lives in one place and the mother in another."

Reverend Mother Mary Cyril and members of Holy Child Secondary School leaving the Assembly Hall.





"Papageno" - the Audience.

It is difficult to break with these old tribal customs of the Ashanti, Fante, Ga, Twi and Ewe. The students at Cape Coast belong to these tribes and many of the girls are converts from anything but Catholic backgrounds. Some of them have made great sacrifices for their Faith.

ONE memorable evening the students entertained us with their traditional dances, wearing native costumes some of which were of magnificent *Kente* cloth woven out of silk thread in rich colors. To the tireless beating of drums they did intricate dances that told stories

of the tribe and its customs. The Ashanti, for example, did the "Initiation to Womanhood" dance which is part of the celebrations which prepare a girl for marriage. At the beginning of each dance the girls came up to greet Reverend Mother Mary Cyril and the nuns in the courteous manner of their people. Excitement mounted high as the drums beat on steadily, but as the Angelus rang at 6 o'clock there was instant silence. It was like a mute symbol of Christianity superseding the old pagan rites.

Another evening, a large cast performed most creditably in the operetta *Papageno*, which is an adapted version of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. Agnes Ashun acted with a verve and spontaneity which suggested that she had not a care in the world. She is, actually, Head of the School this year. The students felt encouraged that their Archbishop and Bishop Amissah were amongst the audience at the performance, as were the Handmaids from Saltpond.

The Most Reverend W.T. Porter, S.M.A., Archbishop of Cape Coast, epitomizes the warm friendliness and kindness of all the Missionaries. His greeting made us feel that we, too, were now part of his big



"Papageno" -  
the  
Singers

HERE ARE THE FIVE FOUNDATION STONES OF THE FIRST CONVENT OF HANDMAIDS IN GHANA. THEIR BEAUTIFUL NEW CONVENT AT SALTPOND WAS NOT QUITE READY WHEN THEY ARRIVED SO THEY ARE SEEN AT THEIR TEMPORARY BUNGALOW. THE NEWS OF THEIR ARRIVAL WAS BROADCAST OVER GHANA RADIO AND THE PEOPLE ARE VERY PROUD TO POSSESS THEM. THEY WANT THE PRAYERS OF ALL FOR A GREAT WORK LIES BEFORE THEM.



Left to Right: S. M. Pius (old student at Cape Coast) S. M. Michael, S. M. Consolata, Rev. Mother Gertrude, S. M. Dolores and Mother Mary Tarcisus who is helping them to settle in.

"family". Reverend Mother Mary Cyril and Mother Mary Magdalen accompanied us one afternoon, to the Archbishop's house.

Someone remarked, that the Holy Child compound was nothing but bare rock when Reverend Mother arrived in 1946. She has had considerable part in making it a thing of beauty, whilst she uses her musical talent to enrich the school day.

A visit to our Handmaids' new Convent and to their School in *Saltpond*, which overlooks the ocean, was a special joy for us. It is like an out-pouring of the Spirit of the Holy Child Himself to see these

African Sisters spending themselves so generously to educate their people in the Faith. With the exception of Rev. Mother Gertrude, the Superior, who was one of the first Handmaids in their Society, all the Sisters are from Ghana. Some weeks later, we had the privilege of taking with us to Ifuho a new postulant from Saltpond, Agnes Desbordes.

At St. Michael's School, Cape Coast, the first of the many Holy Child Middle and Primary Schools where the travellers felt instantly at home. Mother Mary Ursula is seen with some of those who had performed for her Movie camera a few moments before. St. Michael's is in the Convent Compound quite near the bungalows belonging to the different lay members of the Secondary School staff.





St. Michael's School children march past the Prime Minister.

Nothing could have given us a more kaleidoscopic view of Ghana - old and new - than the Durbar which took place shortly after our arrival. It was the public reception given by local government officials and chiefs to welcome the Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, on his first official visit to Cape Coast. A grandstand had been erected under an awning at Victoria Park and hundreds of people milled about the grounds, wearing native costumes. There were cheers and shouts when Dr. Nkrumah stepped out of his car. Surrounded by his retinue, the welcoming committee, and press photographers, he strode to the stand across the field under

the traditional chief's umbrella. It was a huge red brocade and gold affair that required dexterous handling. The band played the music of *John Brown's Body*, so popular in Ghana, and the chiefs with their attendants began walking solemnly up to the grandstand. This country, just over two years old, is striving mightily to leap into a modern economy, but much of its picturesque past remains. Mother Mary Tarcisius, who will soon celebrate the silver jubilee of her work in Africa, explained the ceremony to us. "The Omanhene or paramount chief of Cape Coast, and the Omanhene of the states around here, come up in turn to greet Dr. Nkrumah. Each one has his linguist walking in front of him and carrying the royal gold mace." The chief, it seems, makes formal pronouncements to his people only through his linguist or interpreter; when he wishes to honor a person he speaks directly to him.

As we watched the colorful procession, it was evident that this really was the Gold Coast of fabulous history, for each Chief was adorned with crown and ornaments of solid

gold! Afterwards, Dr. Nkrumah walked along the sidelines of people, shaking hands with all within reach. "You are from Rome? How do you like Ghana?" he asked us affably. He is a man of many parts as he was to prove that day. Clad in a Yoruba damask and cap, which had been presented to him by members of that tribe from Lagos, he leaped off the platform to join in their dance while the crowd cheered lustily. Then he was carried on seven guns by men from an Asafo Company (Home Guard) - a traditional custom expressing implicit faith in the leadership of a national hero. Later in the day he attended a garden party given in his honor by Mr. J.E. Hagan, the Commissioner of the Western Region. Mr. Hagan is an outstanding Catholic. Families like his and that of Mr. J.H. Allassani, Minister of Health, are white hopes of the Church in Ghana.

THE visit to Kumasi from the coast was a revelation of the beauty of the Forest Belt. Everyone expects palms of great variety in Africa but the color and leafage of the other trees may come as a surprise. Fresh green, resembling young beech and silver birch, pushes up for air beside giant mahoganies or immense trees crowned with pink blossom. Roots are embroiled in undergrowth or fenced in by damp and feathery thickets of bamboo, the favorite home of snakes. In this country where there is no autumn, new leaves tend to be orange or purple, though the almond has its own fiery display, as red leaves fall and pale green ones appear almost on the same day. The town itself, centre of Ashantiland, still seems to be awaiting its turn for public money when the large hospital and the College of Technology have all that modernity can give them. In the latter, the Halls of Residence and the Engineering, Agriculture and Pharmacy units are a sample of Ghana's future. It was, therefore, encouraging to hear from the faculty in the engineering shop that "there are certain welcome traits amongst the men and women students here which we do not find today in our home universities. We put it down to this: they have all been to Mission schools." As the Arts are now being transferred to Winneba it was in an army-hut music studio that we met the main object of our quest. This was Dr. Amu who, with the quiet realism of a true scholar, gave us some of the benefit of his research into West African music. Thanks to the courtesy of Dr. Amu and his colleagues we came away with interesting pipe and drum recordings for the mission film we are making.

Nana  
Kojo  
Mbra V  
of  
Ognaa  
State  
in the  
line  
of the chiefs  
welcoming  
Dr. Nkrumah.



Representatives of Holy Child School take part in the Durbar.



Cape Coast Women (and their babies!) in a dance of welcome.







Students help M. M. Kentigern to unpack Crib Figures which she brought back from U. S. A., together with a Tabernacle, a Crucifix and a Monstrance and many other beautiful gifts for the new Chapel at Takoradi.

ONE of the most illuminating days of the trip was spent at Eikwe village where we went with Regina and Veronica, first-year College students who live there. In the two-hour run from Takoradi we passed fields of cassava and sugar cane, coconut palm forests and "just Bush." Tall Easter lilies with exquisite fragrance grew along the roadside in damp pockets. Eikwe village, primitive, lush, lay under a blazing sun on the shore of the Atlantic. The few good Christian families there have a difficult time, for a strange cult called the "Water-Carriers," has a powerful and insidious influence. An ancient custom of these people is to kill the tenth child in a family. This is only one of the difficulties faced by the three French sisters who have, for many years, run the clinic there as the pioneer work to which their rule pledges them. Now that the new hospital is ready, these Little Servants of the Sacred Heart will move on to other "virgin soil" in Africa.

Most reluctantly we left Ghana (we were to learn how quickly one takes root in each Mission!) and flew along the coast in a little Heron aircraft to Lagos. We had only a week-end with Reverend Mother Mary Fidelis and the Community there, since this was only a passing visit on our way to Port Harcourt and our convents in Eastern Nigeria.

Mother John Bosco is seen with some of her friends in Ikot Ekpene. They want to know all about cameras. Mother is now living at Cape Coast, Ghana.



## Ifuho

The African Vicariate house of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus looms suddenly out of the Bush like a spiritual oasis. It is a rolling compound of about forty cement red-roofed buildings interspaced over the thirty acres, with the loveliest flowering shrubs and trees, paths and flights of steps. Dignity and beauty are given to all the more important buildings in our compounds by the handsome concrete columns which support the overhanging roofs. Photographs give very little idea of this; to the impression they give one must add many degrees of strength and solidity through techniques which the Africans learnt from Rev. Mother Mary Osmund and which they are now applying to larger architectural undertakings up and down the country.

Each spot at Ifuho recalls some important milestone. Coming in at the gate one finds the Shrine of Our Lady of Ifuho, erected in thanks-giving for the safety of our Mother-House in Rome during World War II. The Chapel of the Prince of Peace, heart of our missions, conveys in its round-arched simplicity the spirit of the Cave of Bethlehem, of medieval Mayfield, and of Africa. (I shall always remember it as, in the course of morning Mass, the light of bush-lamps and candles gradually gave

James discusses with Sister the points of his horse.



A Postulant, a College Student, and two Novices from Ghana.

place to the light of dawn.) The very day of our arrival we were privileged to witness the Hooding ceremony there of two Handmaid postulants by Reverend Mother St. John. Close by the Chapel is the beautiful Noviceship of the Handmaids of the Holy Child, most important of all the activities that flourish there. Starting in "Fly Hall", that hot little room which was the nucleus of the Ifuho compound, Reverend Mother Mary Osmund and Reverend Mother Teresa Xavier developed the Higher Elementary Training College, Technical School, Marriage Training Centre and the network of Bush Schools. The "cottage plan" for the students, giving a homelike atmosphere to the whole compound, was initiated by Reverend Mother Mary Osmund who for so many years was the guiding spirit of the Holy Child missions. France has now reclaimed her as superior of the convent at Neuilly, but the French Government has recognized her great contribution to education in West Africa by nominating her *Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur*. The Red Ribbon of the Order will be conferred later in the year in the traditional manner.



Ever concerned with the needs of the children, Reverend Mother Vicar is here seen choosing their uniform material in Ikot Ekpene Market. She was equally concerned to make the three months' visit of The Pylon editors as perfect as possible.

From Ifuho we also visited the outstanding girls' schools of the area which are run by the Handmaids, at Abia Akpo, Oron, and our long established schools at Anua, Edem Ekpate, Essene, etc. Anua children made a recording of Efik songs for our film. At Oron, with its fast-developing Training College, we enjoyed a Physical Education display in modern peach-colored uniforms, but it was also charming, at Edem Ekpate, to see the Calabar Ntими dance in the traditional costume. The Handmaids have the enthralling task of preserving the old with the new.



Rev. Sister Mary Immaculata, Superior and Head Mistress at Anua.



Reverend Mother Mary Ronald with College Students awaiting the moment of their departure on the last day of the Spring Term, 1959



THE YOUNGEST MEMBERS OF THE IFUHO COMPOUND.

It is Sister Mary Gabriels' joy and privilege to look after the Twins who are brought to us, and any other children connected with the Women's Catechism Centre of which she has charge. Mother Mary Benignus (U.S.A.), who was Acting-Principal of the College in Mother Mary Leo's absence on leave, is here seen holding Mary Magdalen whilst Sister clasps Regina.



Mother Mary Stephane and Ma Maria with baby Francis and small girl, Assumpta, at St Agnes' School, Nto Nsek.

Mother Mary Stephane (U.S.A.) is Manager of the Bush Schools and one of our chief delights was visiting them with her. Along the highway, sign after sign would read "Holy Child Convent School." Some of these far in the Bush might be tiny mud and palm-mat schools waiting on the generosity which will transform them into permanent buildings. (An aluminum roof would cost about \$ 500.) In several of the larger schools the children gave Physical Education displays such as we might have seen anywhere in Europe or America. At Essene, a little Catholic center, more than a hundred women from the village assembled in the school compound to perform a dance of welcome. One Sunday at Nto Nsek, we attended a village meeting concerning the welfare of the school.

There were present 36 men, 17 women, 10 teachers and the three of us. Mother Mary Stephane explained how a re-division of classes would lower the education rates, but how they would lose their status as a two-stream school if the women did not see to the younger children attending Standard I, and much else to this effect. Her talk was a living proof of how greatly a wise manager could help these groups of African villagers to understand educational needs and the rulings of the regional government. Mother has to keep her finger on the pulse of sixty such schools by travelling, day in and day out, to visit them.



If it is hard to persuade the African village women to send their girls to "Convent School" they are very proud of the results.

## Calabar

All the Holy Child Mission foundations, except that of Calabar, stem from Ifuho. When the river launch swung around a mangrove swamp, and we caught sight of the town of Calabar, memory sped back to the arrival of our initial group of Missionaries who landed in October, 1930. It was not difficult to picture those three young Nuns leaning against the rail of a boat and scanning the same reach of the Cross River: Mother Mary Edith, who is now in Ireland doing such tireless work for the Missions, Mother Mary Joachim, Superior at Takoradi, and Mother Mary Laurentia, now Superior General of the Society, who will return to Africa this Fall for her first visit since her departure in 1935. Many plans are being made for her arrival, but nowhere is she more eagerly awaited than in Calabar. His Lordship, the Right Reverend James Moynagh, Bishop of the Diocese, and other priests (who became members of the Society of St. Patrick for Foreign Missions), came out on the same ship with her in 1930. They were all tyro Missionaries together under the care of the indomitable Bishop Shanahan. One of our happiest experiences was listening to Bishop Moynagh's recollections of those early days. He has built a Cathedral on the highest knoll in Calabar and a strong Catholic life centers around it, as we witnessed during Holy Week. On Palm Sunday the people cut the fronds off the nearest palm trees and brought their own palm branches to Church.

On Tuesday morning the Bishop, who had given us the kindest welcome as soon as we arrived, sent us word to come to the Cathedral "to see a sight that you will not see anywhere else in the world!"



When we reached the door, we saw some 200 women of various tribes scrubbing everything in the Cathedral with soap and water in preparation for the Holy Week services. A number of them had a "piccin" tied on back. One little fellow slept blissfully, lulled by the movements of his eka as she swept and washed. It certainly was a remarkable sight. But we were to see many of them during the days that followed.





C. Brandt

Boarders  
Crossing  
the  
Calabar  
Convent  
Compound

At 7 p.m. on Holy Saturday we attended the magnificent Easter Vigil – the “Lumen Christi” in Africa’s darkness, literally and symbolically. Walking back to the Convent later with Rev. Mother Mary Damien and the Community under a canopy of stars, we saw the beautiful Southern Cross sparkling more radiantly than we had ever seen it...

The Pontifical High Mass of Easter Sunday, with the Bishop officiating, and the whole congregation joining the choir in jubilant praise, was truly the great climax of Holy Week. In the afternoon, Bishop Moynagh spared precious time to drive us out to a thriving rubber plantation and explained the remarkable story of rubber. The trees formed a dense forest, cool and strangely fragrant.

All in all, we decided that Easter in Africa is a unique experience. Amongst this young Catholic people one sees more deeply into the meaning of “put off the old man and put on the new”; and, coming from Rome, one recognizes, here and there, the face of the Early Church.

Mother Mary St. Aloysius, in between her sacristy work for the Cathedral ceremonies, showed us over the large Primary school in the compound but a storm prevented our canoe journey to Creek Town. We visited the women-prisoners with her, and talked to various Praesidia of the Legion of Mary which does so much apostolic work in Nigeria.

Our work in Calabar is in a stage of transition for, in 1960, the present much-loved compound will become the home of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, whilst a new convent for the Society is rising up behind the Secondary School at Marianhill. We went there for the last day of term before Easter and saw, amongst other activities, the commercial classes, a special feature of the school begun by our present Reverend Mother Vicar and now under the care of Mother Mary Perpetua. The women-members of the Lay Mission Helpers from California, who help the diocese with press photography, printing, art, and many other side-lines, are already installed in their bungalow on the new compound.

Marianhill Secondary School.



Rev.  
Mother  
Mary  
Damien (L.)  
explains  
the layout  
of the  
new  
convent  
to  
Mother  
Mary  
Ursula



As we stood amongst the first concrete blocks of the new convent, there was no doubt that here was another Bethlehem, where all would be wanting at first but where, once again, the needs would be filled by

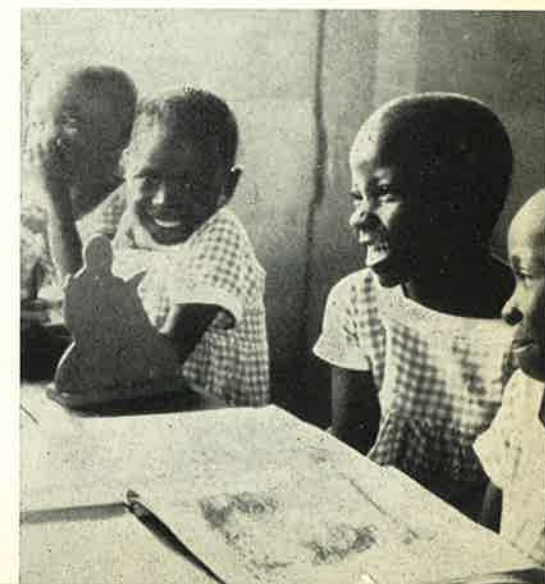
the friends of the Holy Child. From this new focal point His spirit would reach out to many more of His African children so that they might learn that “He is the true Way that leads men to life”.

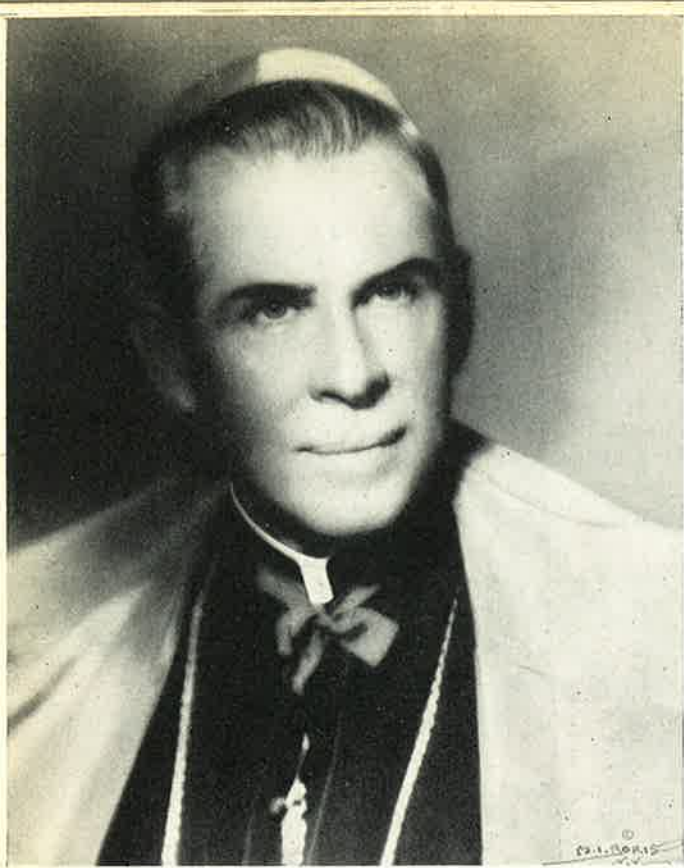
*The next (Winter) issue of The Pylon will recount the second half of the Editors’ journey – to Afikpo, Ogoja, Uyo, and finally Lagos. But it will take many subsequent issues of the Magazine to fill in the details of such an interesting and encouraging picture, encouraging because of what is accomplished, and encouraging to those who help and will help*

TO CHANGE THIS



INTO THIS





THE CAUSE  
OF  
CORNELIA  
CONNELLY

A Message from  
The Most Reverend  
Fulton Sheen,  
National Director  
(U.S.A.) of  
The Society for  
the Propagation  
of the Faith.

If we knew nothing about Mother Connelly, we could guess her deep spiritual records by the rich fruit which has grown on the trees she planted. But her own life merits special consideration for this Twentieth Century, for out of a broken home and marriage the world must be given a prospect of becoming a saint. In the ages of happy homes, saints came from happy homes; but in this age of unhappy homes, shall there not be the appearance of a saint?

In union of prayer and sacrifice for the expansion of the Church throughout the world,

I am  
Faithfully yours in Christ

National Director

Pilgrimage  
to  
Natchez

Every year in the month of March, thousands of Americans go on pilgrimage to the city of Natchez, Mississippi – the heart of the “deep South”. In a land which is still the New World, Natchez enshrines the relics of a bygone age, of an older and – at least to the city’s inhabitants – a better era, the pre-war civilization. When Natchez speaks of “pre-war”, she means the war, the American Civil War of 1861-65 between the Confederates and the Unionists. To prevent any misconception here, Natchez has adjectivalised the Latin phrase for pre-war, *ante-bellum*. And her pilgrim shrines are her ante-bellum homes, the colonial type mansions of the old Confederate families, of the cotton-planters and the Southern gentlemen of early American fiction; her relics are the period-furniture and costume – the Confederate uniforms and the crinolines.

In February of this year, I was an early pilgrim in Natchez. I, too, had an intense interest in the city’s past, in certain of its shrines and relics. For during the golden age, in those years preceding the Civil War, Cornelia and Pierce Connelly had made their home in Natchez. They had formed part of that Southern society whose life and manners the citizens of Natchez re-create annually for the edification of thousands of visitors.



White Cottage, Natchez home of Pierce and Cornelia Connelly. Today it is named Twin Oaks.

The earliest extant letter of Mother Cornelia Connelly, dated September 1st, 1835, announces to her sister Adeline that Pierce has resigned his Episcopal ministry; and that together, he and she are studying the claims of the Catholic Church to be the one true Church of Christ. This letter is written from “White Cottage”. During an address to the Catholic community of Natchez on the cause of Mother Connelly, I expressed a hope that White Cottage might still be standing and possible of identification. That was one of the main objects of my pilgrimage; to venerate the house where Cornelia had lived – where a great love for the Church, God’s gift of faith had been granted her. But in the time-span of a new world, 120 years and more was over half its history; and hence my hopes were not over-sanguine. But I had reckoned without the passion of Natchez for the past. The local historians had no hesitation in identifying White Cottage as one