

*From M. M. Arthur's account  
of the visit to the first Holy  
Child project in South America*

A unique link exists between the founding of our Holy Child African Missions and our first Mission in South America . . .

Back in 1930, when the S.S. *Appam* anchored in Dakar harbor, on the way to Nigeria, our pioneer group of missionaries set foot on the soil of Africa for the first time. They were just three in number, M.M. Edith, M.M. Joachim, and M.M. Laurentia.

In November, 1966, Mother Mary Laurentia, now the Superior General, flew from Rome to establish our new Mission near Santiago, Chile — and the plane's first stop was on Africa's "hump", Dakar.

It took us (I was her companion) sixteen hours and twenty minutes flying time to cover the distance of 7,759 miles to Santiago. The gradual descent of the jet liner gave us our first clear glimpse of the peaks of the Andes, rugged, majestic, unforgettably beautiful. They seemed to encircle the city in a kind of maternal protection. As the plane

*Las Hermanas,*

A typical  
mountain  
village.

esey of the Chilean Embassy, Rome)

rolled to a stand-still, we caught sight of the three Holy Cross Fathers who had come to welcome us and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters whose magnanimous hospitality we were to experience throughout our week's stay. The lovely new novitiate of the Sisters nestles in the foothills of the Andes and the "welcome" sign over the door gave us a warm feeling of being at home.

We could not help but have a sense of Mother Cornelia Connelly's presence that night as she followed her Society into another continent.

The longed-for visit to our future Mission came on Monday when we drove the short distance from the Immaculate Heart Novitiate to the parish plant of Santa Rosa de Lo Barnechea. The original buildings of church, rectory, school, convent, and theatre had been constructed several years ago by a Chilean priest.

Intervening years and a recent earthquake had brought considerable damage to the buildings. Parish participation had sunk to a low ebb. A year and a half ago the diocese asked the Holy Cross Fathers to assume the responsibility for the parish, and marvels have been wrought in that short time, due in great part to the earnest zeal, patient labor, and administrative ability of the young pastor, Father Redington, and the curates.

With justifiable pride, Father showed us the newly renovated Church. Its beamed ceiling and stucco walls show strongly the Spanish influence. A plain liturgical altar, dominated by a large, stark wooden cross, gives place only to the tabernacle recessed into the side wall. The Church is lovingly tended by the parishioners whom Father has already organized into several groups. November is Our Lady's

Come Back!





*On the grounds of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Novitiate. Fr. Le Vasseur, Regional Superior of the Holy Cross Fathers (left), Mother Bernetta, I.H.M. Superior, Reverend Mother General, and Fr. Redington, pastor of Santa Rosa de Lo Barnechea.*

month in Chile and her shrine was artistically decorated in pure white graceful flowers. The Church is small but devotional and truly is the center from whence radiates the spiritual light and strength for the needs of the twenty thousand parishioners spread over a radius of thirty-five miles.

The school is connected with the Church by an inside passage. The classrooms, on three floors, are small and poorly equipped. Rough wooden benches and double desks fill the limited space. A tiny chalk board on one side provides the only teaching aid. The lack of material warmth and color is soon forgotten as the vibrant, eager faces of the class turn upwards to look with expectancy and joy upon the Sisters. These children are taught by devoted lay men and women and except for occasional catechetical classes have had little or no contact with Sisters. The harvest of souls is truly rich and

promising here, for the natural responsiveness, sincerity and innate religious spirit need but to be cultivated.

A small office and library and a very inadequate cafeteria for these four hundred children complete the school. In our mind's eye we could almost pierce the future and visualize the spiritual help and temporal improvements that our nuns, with God's grace, will bring to these Chilean children.

The convent is located on the top floor of the school which also has two classrooms, formerly kindergarten and art rooms, but presently unused. It was from this height that we had our first real view of the surrounding terrain. On one side can be seen the Mapocho River, at this season full and rushing forward over its stony bed. Small wooden shacks dot its stony shores. This is the "River Bottom" where the homes of many of the children are

located. In this squatter's territory the poor live out a daily and often frustrating existence.

In stark contrast to the desolate scene rise the Andes in the background sharing alike with rich and poor their majestic serenity and breath-taking beauty. Immediately below the school on one side, grim terraces of solid rock provide a stadium. For a moment we might think we were looking into the Colosseum! On the flat level the boys were occupied happily in sports and games.

Because of the sharp rise of land, the other sides of the school-convent-church structure stand almost evenly with the ground. In the front is an attractive municipal park whose velvety green grass, varied flowers, and freshly painted white benches provide a pleasant scene. Facing us on the street side is a small residence occupied by two Sisters of the German Secular Institute, Christ the King. They do social work in the parish and attend to the simple medical needs of the poor.

Returning to our tour of the tiny convent, we found several small rooms which will serve as cells, an open entry and hallway which will make a community room and refectory. A small kitchen, laundry and "bath" complete the convent which will be home to our first missionaries in Chile. As in the school, there is no heat of any kind so warmth will be provided by movable heaters. Despite its present shabby condition and disrepair, the convent in time will be a true replica of the little home of Nazareth. In the months ahead, the Fathers will take care of

the repairs and see to the furnishings. One of the passages leads directly to the church loft and overlooks the sanctuary, so our Sacramental Lord will always be close. Here is truly an apostolate among Christ's very poor and neglected.

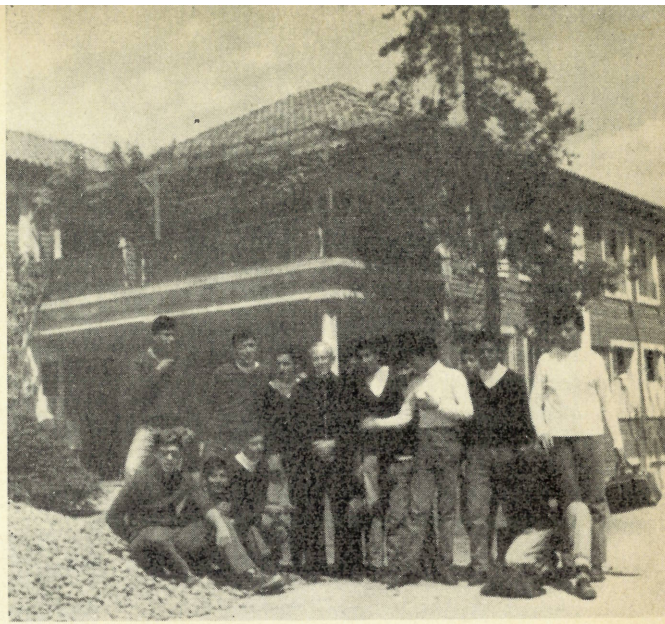
Adjacent to the church building is a parish theatre now in the process of repair by the municipality. It too gives promise of a place where

*At the foot of a mountain - a village of shacks centered around a small church.*



*(Courtesy of the Chilean Embassy, Rome)*

**Fr. Send, C. S. C. with boys of the parish of Santa Rosa de Lo Barnechea. In the background is the first school and convent of the Holy Child nuns in South America.**



parish and school activities can be centered very effectively. The Chileans, like all South Americans, are lovers of song and dance and here their native talents can be developed in a truly Christian way.

As we left Santa Rosa de Lo Barnechea, some of the children called after us pleadingly, "*Las Hermanas* (Sisters), come back, please come back!" It is good to think that our missionaries will soon be able to answer that plea.

Santiago and its environs continued to display their fascinating attraction as Reverend Mother General and I terminated our week in Chile by visiting several places of interest. The Trappists have found in the ruggedly beautiful foothills of the Andes an ideal setting for their contemplative lives. In 1960, a group of monks from Spencer, Massachusetts, began a new foundation in the parish of Santa Rosa. This month the famed Gethsemane

Abbey in Kentucky is supplementing the number there and during the week of our visit to their farm, Dom Fox arrived from Kentucky to evaluate future needs... Lush grassy acres of rich land supply the pasturage for their cattle. The monks' small, one-story building, almost dwarfed to oblivion in the high mountain ranges, houses their tiny chapel, poor in externals, but rich and vibrant in the hymns of praise and adoration. And it must be this profound prayer-life that brings down God's blessing on the spiritually favored parish of Lo Barnechea. During our brief visit with two of the Trappists — Father Richard from Minnesota and Brother Lawrence from New Jersey — Reverend Mother General asked the prayers of their Community on our new missionary work in South America.

Continuing on in another direction, still within the boundaries of the far-flung parish, the Holy Cross

Fathers drove us to a Benedictine monastery perched precariously on the side of one of the steep mountains. It is a modern and startlingly symbolic building. In the chapel, whose architecture has been dictated by a theme of lights, we prayed again for our Society's mission venture. Because of its elevation, the monastery commands a superb view of the parish, stretching endlessly over the grim mountain heights and dipping into valleys.

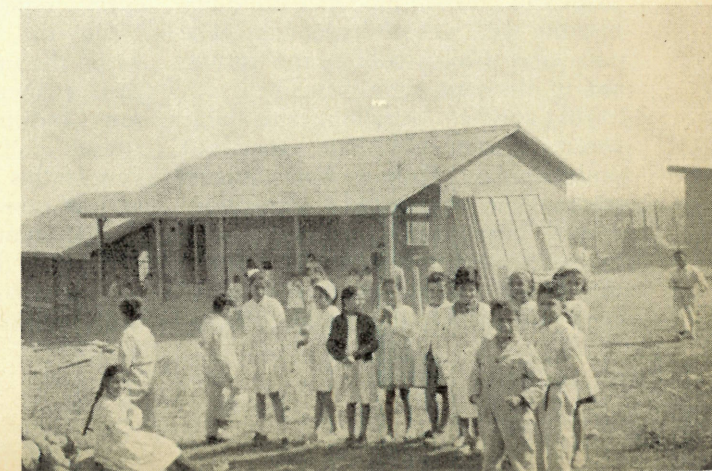
The Holy Cross Fathers have a seminary in Santa Rosa parish where seminarians from the United States as well as those from Chile are being prepared for their future Latin American apostolate. What the Holy Cross parish work in a mission really is, Reverend Mother General and I saw at first-hand the day that Father Le Vasseur, the Regional Superior, drove us to Penalolen. The name signifies "Place of the Rock" and its uncompromising title hints of the rugged sternness of the life of its people. Here, 25,000 parishioners, crowded into a cluttered squatters' settlement, live in small rudely constructed sheds. Water is carried from muddy rivers and stored in

crude wooden containers. Yet despite the lack of even elemental necessities, the children are happy and hopeful. When the priests drove into the parish yard, the children flocked around them in affectionate greeting. Two priests, Fr. Joseph Pawlicki and Fr. Michael Wilsey, reside in this parish of Christ the Redeemer. A parish school, taught by two lay women, awaits the day when Sisters can come to assume the administrative responsibility. It was with a feeling of reluctance that we said goodby to these children of the impoverished members of the pilgrim Church.

How effective even two Sisters can be was seen in the nearby school of San Francisco where two Immaculate Heart nuns teach and supervise the instruction of some four hundred children. These Sisters, one a native Chilean and the other an American, will help our missionary Sisters as they learn the Latin American approach to education.

Towards the end of the week we had the privilege of a visit in the Chancery Office with Cardinal Silva, the gentle but dynamic spiritual leader of Santiago. The kind

**Penalolen - school building in the background. 'With reluctance we said goodby to these children who are also awaiting the day when the Sisters can come.'**





**Mother M. Arthur with the children of our new school.**

Holy Cross Fathers accompanied us, as did Mother Gertrude, the Superior General of the Christ the King Secular Institute. The Cardinal expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the work of the missionary Sisters and gave his blessing and approval to the Society's hope of undertaking the important apostolate of teaching in the Archdiocese. Already the Cardinal is begging for more nuns!

We visited the nearby Cathedral that same day and were awed by the intricate and ornate Spanish design. The Cathedral is built on the site of the first Church in Santiago and is relatively new and modern. Santiago has demolished most of the crumbling "relics" of the past and today modern buildings line the wide graceful avenues. The people of Chile look to the future, not to the past.

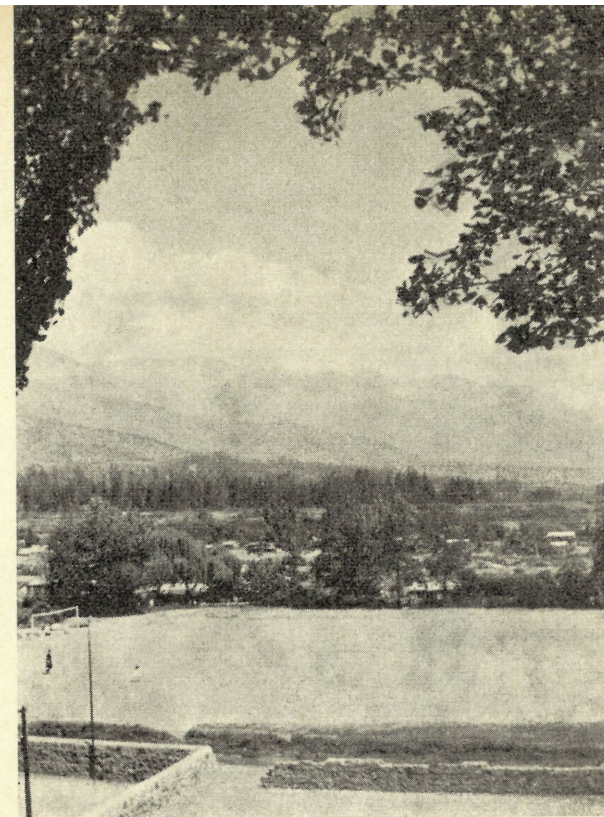
On another occasion, the large Jesuit school for boys was our destination. This is San Ignacio whose one thousand elementary school pupils are taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame while the five hundred secondary school boys are educated by the Jesuits.

This very advanced, thriving school, together with St. George's, the Holy Cross secondary school, ranks among the best educational institutions for boys in Santiago. Villa Maria, the Immaculate Heart elementary and high school, enjoys this same enviable reputation for the education of girls.

Our final social call was to the Regional House of the Maryknoll Sisters in the heart of downtown Santiago. Some sixty Maryknoll Sisters are in Chile at present and they are engaged in teaching, nursing, catechetical and social work. For months at a time they live in hidden outposts of this great country, laboring to extend the Kingdom of Christ in conjunction with the Maryknoll Fathers. As opportunity provides, they periodically return to this Regional Center which means contact again for a few fleeting days with their other Maryknoll Sisters. We felt very privileged to be with these dedicated nuns whose modern missionary work has made such an impact on the spiritual life of countless souls, and among whose ranks several martyrs are numbered. Their joyous spirit of self-giving in the spread of the Gospel permeates every aspect of their apostolate.

On the last night of our stay with the dear Immaculate Heart Sisters, they bid us God speed with song and music. It was with the strains of "Take remembrance with you of this Chile stay" still ringing in our ears that we said goodbye to the Community in the Novitiate where we had experienced such a truly magnanimous kindness. Mother Mary Eileen, the Regional Superior,

**Santa Rosa.  
View from  
the  
convent  
verandah**



**River  
bottom  
in the  
background.**

Mother Bernetta, the local Superior, and the Community of professed, novices and postulants — how can we thank them all?... These Sisters have offered to share their home with our missionary nuns when they arrive in Chile later in 1967; we know it will be a sharing of their heart too.

En route to the airport on Saturday evening we took our final drive along Santiago's broad, tree-lined avenues and watched the sun setting in an explosion of color on the peaks of the Andes. We felt that this country, rich in a culture of by-gone days, so full of promise and hope for the future, had claimed a special corner of our hearts. Chile

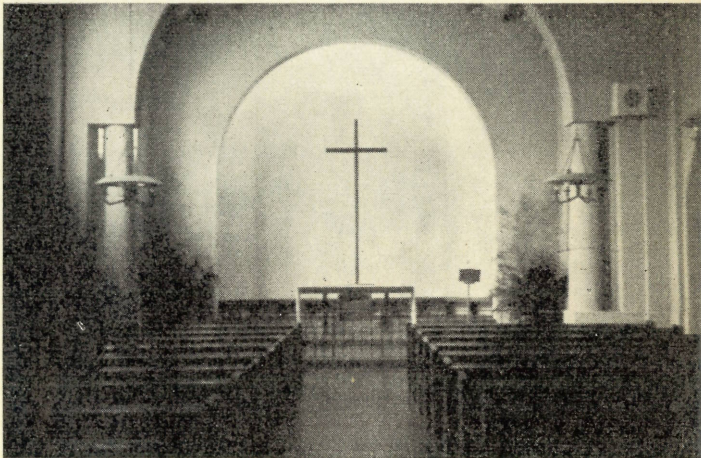
— sentineled through the ages by the towering Andes — has developed a people resourceful, industrious, and liberty loving. They are instinctively democratic and more politically mature than many other people on the continent. These are truly the People of God, seeking, searching, waiting, hoping... They are innately a religious people who need but dedicated workers to bring them the good tidings of the Gospel.

As our plane lifted its wings over the city, we could see the Holy Cross Fathers and the Immaculate Heart Sisters waving goodbye and we could hear Father Redington's final words, "We will be waiting for the Sisters."

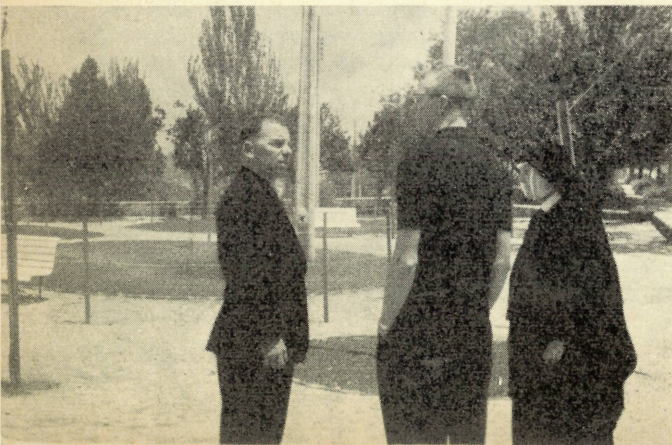
The Children of Penalolen give Fr. Redington a rapturous "Welcome back" when he brings the Holy Child visitors to see his first Parish



The transformation effected in Santa Rosa church which was damaged by an earthquake. The Holy Child Sisters will be able to look down into the sanctuary from their tiny convent



Fr. Le Vasseur, regional Superior of Holy Cross in Chile (left), making plans with Fr. Redington and Rev. Mother Mary Laurentia for the new Holy Child field of apostolate



# NON - STOP in SANTA ROSA

by William Redington, C.S.C.

*Pastor of Santa Rosa de Lo Barnechea - Chile*

The missionary vocation is a special gift of God. For me it was the seed of my sacerdotal and religious life. At first it was the attraction of East Pakistan with the challenge of carrying Christ's message to non-Christian Bengali. Then, in God's providence, when I was entering first year Theology, I was sent to **Santiago de Chile** to live in Seminario de Santa Cruz and to study in the Theological Faculty of the Catholic University of Chile. It became my contact with the world of underdevelopment, social injustice, massive poverty and gigantic pastoral challenges. It was clear how God was guiding the development of my missionary vocation.

After ordination I was assigned to live in Parroquia **San Roque** and to work in Penalolen. **Penalolen** is a slum area burdened with extremely

complicated social problems. The people had no drinking water, they had no light, they had no paved road, they had no legal lot, they had two decrepit schools, and they had horrible transportation to the city where they all worked. They - some fifteen thousand people - suffer immensely. My heart went out to them, and they in turn formed and educated me. They gave me my best insights about Chile and Latin America.

Three years later I had to leave them to come to **Santa Rosa**. When I first came, to the eye it was paradise, but I now had the insight to see it was the same Chile. It was green with its shrubbery, grass, and trees; in Penalolen it had been dirt and rocks. But behind that frontage, there was the riverbottom of the Mapocho where some three to five