

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED IN PERU

With the return to Vancouver of Rev. Gordon McKinnon and Rev. Terry Larkin there are no Vancouver Diocesan priests serving in Peru.

Financial assistance is still being sent to the parish of Grocio Prado in the Diocese of Ica, but responsibility for staffing the parish has been turned over to Peruvian clergy.

Vancouver priests accepted responsibility for Grocio Prado in September, 1968. When the Archdiocese of Vancouver accepted the Mission the stated intention was to organize the resources of the area towards the day when Peruvian priests would be able to staff the parish. This spring the Most Rev. A. Dettman, D.D., Bishop of Ica, indicated that he was able to take care of the parish with his own clergy. Bishop Dettman named as pastor Rev. Raul Montoya.

Bishop Dettman offered a parish in the mountains to the Vancouver priests but Archbishop Carney felt that there were serious problems in beginning a new Mission at this time, particularly in the Sierras.

Father McKinnon has been named Pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in North Surrey and Father Larkin has been named Assistant Pastor at St. Joseph's Parish, Powell River.

The first Diocesan Priests went to Peru in 1966. At the invitation of His Grace Archbishop Johnson, then Archbishop of Vancouver, Bishop F. Kaiser of the Diocese of Caravali in Peru visited Vancouver to speak about the needs of his mission territory. Archbishop Johnson told the Vancouver clergy that if any wished to volunteer for temporary service in Caravali they would be free to make this commitment.

Three priests responded to Bishop Kaiser's appeal: Rev. Gordon McKinnon, Rev. Allan Smith and Rev. Thomas Cullen.

The three priests left for South America following a departure ceremony in Holy Rosary Cathedral on June 29, 1966.

Bishop Kaiser assigned them to the Mission of Lampa in the Diocese of Caravali. As a mission of a relatively small diocese such as Vancouver the area presented some serious difficulties.

Situated at an altitude of some 10,000 feet the priests had to serve five parishes, involving travel by horseback into even higher altitudes. The difference in culture was profound. While the three priests had studied Spanish at the language school in Lima, they found that the language of the people was the Indian dialect of the area.

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One serious challenge was the lack of close association with other clergy, and the lack of continuity and support that is found in missionary religious orders.

After a great deal of discussion and on the advice of other Canadian missionaries serving in Peru, the Vancouver priests moved to the Diocese of Ica where they were assigned to the parish of Grocio Prado. This parish never before had the care of a resident priest.

In March, 1969, Father Larkin volunteered for the Peru Mission and took up residence in Grocio Prado after graduating from language school.

Father Donald Campbell, presently pastor of Holy Name Parish in Vancouver was named pastor of Grocio Prado in ~~1966~~ 1967 and worked in this capacity until the following year when he was recalled to Vancouver.

Father Gordon McKinnon and Father Terry Larkin have been assigned to the parish since that time. In consultation with the Bishop of Ica, Father Raul Montoya came to Grocio Prado on January, 1970 and the Vancouver priests began preparing for the day when he or some other of the local clergy could accept responsibility for the parish.

A great deal was accomplished in Grocio Prado in the four and a half years during which our priests were present there. The church was renovated, a priests' residence was built, a parish centre was erected and staffed by catechists, and a number of social welfare programs instituted. A detailed report of these activities is included in this issue of the B.C. Catholic.

Miss Ellen Barrett, a public health nurse from Vancouver volunteered her services and worked with the priests in Grocio Prado from March 1970 to June 1971, doing much to improve hygiene and nutrition amongst the parishioners and to institute public health measures.

The return of Fathers McKinnon and Larkin ends at least temporarily a significant missionary activity by Vancouver priests in Peru. As indicated, financial assistance will continue.

I wish to express my admiration for all those who served in the Peru Missions since 1966. These Missions presented a profound challenge to priests whose background and seminary training had prepared them for pastoral work in our North American culture.

Particularly in Caravali, where our priests first began their Mission, conditions were extremely challenging. One of our sad memories is that we suffered losses among that first Missionary contingent. But we cannot forget the sacrifices made by each of them.

In Grocio Prado our priests took over a parish that never before had a resident priest and transformed it into a thriving community.

I wish to express my personal appreciation for the accomplishments of each of these priests in Grocio Prado. A proof of their success is that the Bishop of Ica has decided that the parish has reached such a state of development that it can function without the assistance of Canadian personnel. Our priests literally "worked themselves out of a job".

I also wish to bring to the attention of the readers of this article the work of Miss Ellen Barrett who volunteered her services during 1970-71. I also thank the Franciscan Sisters for sending Sister Shawn Flynn who worked at the Mission from June 1969 to December 1971.

Our missionary effort in Peru would have been impossible without the prayers and financial support of many people in Vancouver, a great many of whom sent in regular contributions for our Peru Mission, either with the co-operation of Development and Peace by contributing to the annual "Share Lent" collection, or by donating privately on a continuing basis. Our financial support of Grocio Prado will continue throughout 1974.

Through these combined efforts a portion of God's vineyard has been rebuilt and tended until the day when the Bishop of Ica and his clergy could accept responsibility for its care.

James F. Carney, D.D.
Archbishop of Vancouver.