

Midwest Bits and Pieces

October 1, 1990

Dillman On The Run



In a 1986 photograph provided by his family, Brother Thomas Dillman, C.S.C., poses with children at an orphanage located near Monrovia where he volunteered his spare time and befriended the

The following article appeared in The Message, the paper for the Diocese of Evansville.

"I have picked up a few pounds that I had lost," said Brother Thomas Dillman, CSC, the Evansville native who recently fled war-torn Monrovia, Liberia.

Brother Dillman spoke with the MESSAGE by telephone from St. John Secondary School, Sekondi, Ghana, Aug. 23. He has two sisters in Evansville, Marian Niemeier and "DoDe" Miller.

The Holy Cross brother, 63 on August 28, has been a missionary in Liberia 22 years. He said he left St. Patrick school in Monrovia, where he taught and had maintained his residence, on or about August 11.

"We were short of food those last few weeks," he said. "The stores had been looted by soldiers. No produce was coming in from the rural areas."

St. Patrick's School is about a quarter mile from the mansion of Liberian President Samuel K. Doe, the target of rebel forces led by Charles Taylor.

Brother Dillman said he helped distribute the last of the rice left by the United Nations. He said his truck had been used to get the bags of rice, but soldiers arrested the driver one day and took his truck and the rice in it.

After the rice was gone, people ate the coconuts and bananas.

"The bananas were about the size of carrots . . . and people were taking them, cooking and eating them, peels and all," said Brother Dillman. After the coconuts and bananas were gone, people ate whatever they could to survive. "People were eating lizards and toads."

Brother Dillman said he walked from his school to the Catholic hospital in Monrovia. As soon as the advancing rebel forces passed the hospital, the decision was made to evacuate the patients.

All patients who could walk were sent away, he said. About 150 to 200 patients were loaded into trucks and vans and ambulances, 24 vehicles in all. "We just jammed them (some of the patients) into a pickup truck," he said. "What we did to them wasn't the best thing to do, but it was better than leaving them behind."

About 75 persons, including hospital staff and about 15 missionaries, were involved in the hospital evacuation. Their caravan travelled 120 miles into the interior of the country, to a Lutheran hospital, according to Brother Dillman. After spending the night at a nearby major seminary, the missionaries continued their journey to the Ivory Coast, he said.

Brother Dillman said many of the missionaries then flew to Spain, but he used one of the evacuation vehicles to continue his journey to Ghana.

His arrival in Ghana caused quite a stir, he said. "The vehicle was pock-marked by grenades and bullets. I had been parked where there was a lot of fighting and the rear window was shattered."

He said he had the vehicle repaired in Ghana, and plans to travel from St. John's Secondary School to St. Augustine's College in Cape Coast, Ghana, and to other facilities staffed by his order.

"I plan on staying here in Ghana," he said. "I will stay for at least two months. I do intend to return (to Liberia) to help the people rebuild."

Reflecting on his experiences in battle-torn Monrovia, he admitted there were times when he was concerned for his safety.

"Of course, bullets are flying around," he said, "but no one was directly attacking me. We spent some time sitting on the floor, hunkered down, because of the bullets, and bigger things."

He also acknowledged that it was "kind of intimidating" when soldiers would

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point their guns at him and ask for food and money. He said he had no money to give them, but food was shared with all who were hungry.

"I could not have made it if I did not have the awareness of the support of the Lord," he said. Prayer was always important and became even more important in the daily events of the school -- the Divine Office in the morning, prayers at noon and the rosary in the evening.

"We all got religion little more seriously," he said.

HISTORY CONFERENCE

The 1990 Holy Cross History Conference, preceded by the "Moreau Retreat", concluded ten days of spiritual, historical and family celebrations.

The "Moreau Retreat" held at Maryhill Renewal Center, Pineville, Louisiana was directed by Brother Joel Giallanza, CSC. Brother shared his research and writing on the spirit and work of Father Moreau with eighty priests, brothers and sisters of the Holy Cross. The presentations were interesting and thought provoking as were the discussions on the similarity of the constitutions of the four congregations of Holy Cross. Sharing sessions, meals and especially the Bar-B-Que under the pavilion deepened the spirit and strengthened the bond of family as all enjoyed the fun of a "family reunion" with food, story and song.

The retreatants traveled by bus or car to Our Lady of Holy Cross College, New Orleans, Louisiana, where the 1990 Holy Cross History Conference convened on Friday, June 15. Sister Suellen Tennyson, the New Orleans Provincial of the Marianites, welcomed the one hundred forty-two participants who represented four countries and seventeen of the United States. There were one hundred and eighteen Sisters from the Holy Cross Family of Sisters, eleven Brothers and eleven Priests. Peru, Chili, Mexico and Canada were represented. Sister Therese Gendron from the Mother Leonie Memorial of Sherbrooke, P.Q., Canada and Sister Anita Verrier represented the Little Sisters of the Holy Family. Lay Associates of the three women's congregations were also in attendance and delivered papers on their work in Holy Cross.

The Conference dealt with the extended family of Holy Cross, as well as important personages and foundations of Holy Cross in the United States. There were papers about "Mother Leonie", "Little Hadmaidens of the Church" Acadia, Tottenville, New York, Mother Rose Elizabeth, Education and early experiences in Holy Cross. Conference-goers were treated to a special evening in the French Quarter which began with a buffet supper at Congresswoman Lindy Boggs' home on Bourbon Street. The setting was perfect as an introduction to the excellent food which featured cajun dishes specially prepared by some of the Marianite culinary artists. A bit of "night life" was a fitting climax to the French Quarter experience.

Visits to Holy Cross institutions comprised the Sunday afternoon program. Liturgy at Sacred Heart Church was celebrated by Father Leonard Collins, CSC, Provincial of the Southern Priests' Province, assisted by Father Harold Essling, CSC, Pastor. Father Harold gave an interesting history of the

Parish and gave out "doubloons" as souvenirs. Visits and talks at Academy of the Holy Angels (Marianites), Holy Cross School (Brothers) and Wynhoven Health Care Center (Sisters of the Holy Cross) comprised the rest of Sunday afternoon. Vespers at Wynhoven concluded the 1990 Conference.

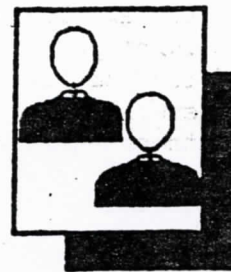
At the Associates meeting during the noon banquet on Sunday Brother Donald Stabrowski, CSC assumed the office of president of the Holy Cross History Association, Father Barry Hagan, CSC was elected vice-president and Sister Campion Kuhn, CSC was re-elected secretary-treasurer. Sister Ghislaine Roquet, CSC and Brother John Kuhn were elected to two-year terms on the Council. Father James Connelly, CSC was re-elected editor of the Newsletter, Holy Cross History, for a three-year term.

Copies of the papers presented at the Conference are available from the Indiana Province Archives, Box 1568, Notre Dame, Indiana, 46556.

The 1991 history conference will be held at the Holy Cross Brothers' Center, Notre Dame, Indiana, July 5 - 7. Efforts are being made to arrange a Moreau Retreat, June 30 - July 5.



NEWS FROM HOLY CROSS NOVITIATE, SAAKA, UGANDA



Recently we received a letter from Brother Joseph Tsiquaye, who is now on the staff of Holy Cross Novitiate in Uganda. He writes: "On Sunday, July 1, 1990, we received ten new novices into the Novitiate. Two weeks prior, there were six professions. The new group is a real international mix: Ghana, 4; Uganda 4; Kenya 1; and Tanzania 1. The novices are made up of five Brothers and five seminarians. We are a team of three: 2 Americans and 1 Ghanaian (two Brothers and 1 Priest). We are expecting Father John Gerber to be in residence in about nine months.

"Everything is moving very well. We have all adjusted to the new situation. The dry season has been upon us for the past six to eight weeks. There is so much dust and haze in the air that the sky looks like the Harmattan. Of course, the temperatures are quite different. Saaka is nice with the winds constantly coming off the lake. Sometimes it is too much. The hazy weather has hidden all the beautiful Ruwenzori Mountain ranges. I am sure they will be visible soon enough."

CHANGE IN DATE FOR CHAPTER

The congregational celebration of the Sesquicentennial of the Congregation of Holy Cross in the United States will be held on June 12, 1991. As a consequence, it has been decided to begin the Midwest Province Chapter on June 13, 1991. The Jubilee Celebration will be held on June 15, as had been announced earlier.

June 15, 1990
Province Gathering: "Forging Our Vision"
Holy Cross Brothers' Center
Notre Dame, Indiana



"My Review of Survey Data"
by Brother Richard Kearney, CSC

When I was asked to share my thoughts on the results of the survey, my response was to express concern about how to answer such a broad question; Who do I think we are based on my review of the survey data?

It seems to me that the results obviously show that we have not been left untouched by the dramatic changes which the world has experienced over the last thirty years. We, too have had to grapple with uncertainties and the crumbling of some of the structures in which we so strongly believed.

The survey results show us to be a group of men who hold many values in common, but who are also aware that there are areas where we disagree and have differing visions.

In the past few years, I have seen us move in the direction of affirming our diversity, and we seem to have less of a problem with it than we did before. Being a person who has learned to love diversity, I, for one, am very grateful for the fact that our province has allowed and even encouraged the development of each brother's potential as an individual.

In my remarks this morning, I will comment on our responses in the areas of ministry, community, and retirement. I will end with some concluding thoughts.

In regard to ministry, there are some responses which seem to indicate contradiction or confusion. For example, more than half of us agree with each of these statements: "The diversification of our mission is a good development", and "The Midwest brothers are scattering in all directions." 69% of us believe that present province practices regarding province ministry are good to excellent. There is a reluctance on the part of the majority of us to return to assigning brothers to various ministries. More than half of us disagree with the statement, "The Midwest Province should have ministry priorities which members are required to follow." I find this encouraging.

It appears that what we are really saying is that we are torn between the values of the old hierarchical structures which gave us orders and answers and the present day emphasis on individual initiative, responsibility and discernment. While today's approach can leave us feeling insecure and uncertain in our choices at times, I strongly prefer this over the more authoritarian, traditional way.

Two questions deal with our sense of mission. As individuals, 66% of us indicated a clear sense of mission, but as a province only 23% felt we have a clear sense of mission. I submit that it is more important for us as individuals to have a sense of mission. If I as an individual had no

clear mission in life, I would find this to be much more threatening and unsettling. It is easier for me to deal with a lack of consensus on group mission.

The journey of the last fifteen years together, has led us down many different ministerial paths. I feel just as connected to those who are my friends in Holy Cross now as I did years ago. We have gone into different ministries, but the glue which holds me to my brothers has a lot more to do with who we are as persons than we do in our work.

In general, it seems we agree that opting for the poor is an important part of our ministerial value system. How we implement this is another matter, and there are many opinions in this regard.

To me, one positive sign is that there has been a substantial increase since 1977 in our service to the lower middle class, blacks, the poor, native Americans and orientals. More of us are working with diverse groups, and I believe this has helped us to broaden our horizons and hopefully learn from the richness of other sub-cultures in our society.

I felt very much part of the mainstream in the province when I read that 76% of us believe that challenging of unjust or inappropriate policies or structures is an important or essential part of religious life.

An area of concern for me is that as our financial situation becomes more pressing, we need to be aware that there might be a tendency to discourage working with the materially poor because this would mean a brother might not be bringing in a salary which covers his expenses, plus the life development fund, etc. I would hope that we will commit ourselves as a group to making the sacrifices necessary so that some of our brothers can continue to serve the materially poor.

Moving on to responses regarding issues around community life, it was heartening to see that 72% of us believe that private devotional prayer is an important part of our life. It appears that being men of prayer continues to be a paramount value. This is also indicated by the fact that 79% see communal prayer as a necessary part of our life.

I have some concern about the divergence of opinion regarding hierarchical versus collegial attitudes towards authority. 59% of us lean either moderately or strongly toward the collegial, and 41% lean moderately or strongly toward hierarchical models. In practice, we as a province are clearly functioning with a more collegial approach. This leaves me wondering if 4 out of 10 of us feel disaffected from this approach, or if philosophically these members believe in the hierarchical model, but in practice are more comfortable with the collegial.

I was disappointed to find that roughly one third of us believe in the clerical model of church in which priests are at the top, followed by religious, and with laity at the bottom. I personally find this model to be unreal. Roughly two thirds of us are much more non-clerical in our view of the church. I believe that the teaching of Jesus is oriented toward loving each other as equals, and he certainly emphasized that we are not to think ourselves to be above others. Our very title of "brother" is a statement of this witness of being together as equals.

Associated with this issue of clericalism is the question of a brother as superior general. It is interesting to note that roughly 48% of us agreed with the statement: "The issue of brother as superior general is not important to me." 40% disagreed. On the other hand 66% of us agree that the congregation should continue to pursue the goal of eligibility of all members for the office of superior general." 32% disagreed.

There seems to be a contradiction between these two answers. I believe that this issue is quite important to us and our self-concept as brothers. If being eligible for the office of superior general is not important to 48% of us, how is it that 66% of us believe we should pursue this as a goal? We are not second class religious. If we seek justice for others, we should also seek justice for ourselves. I believe that we are most effective in our ministry to others when we love and respect ourselves.

In reference to handling conflicts, it seems our strength may also be our weakness. Our reluctance to hurt others or deal with conflicts among us contributes to each brother being able to make his own decisions and take responsibility for his life. This has helped foster in our province the diversity which I see as a positive attribute. On the other hand, we might avoid taking strong stands on issues we believe in because we don't want to rock the boat or be the recipient of anger directed at us.

Compromise and accommodation are very much the rule of the land in our province. When I hear some of the things that go on in other provinces, I end up strongly preferring our approach to theirs.

I contend it would be very difficult for us as a group to adjust to a more rigid approach to our problems.

In regard to our responses to questions about Type A personality characteristics, only one third of us answered in a way which showed us to be hard driving and competitive. The remaining two thirds of us lean toward more non-competitive values. The non-competitive personality might be more accommodating and less aggressive in attaining goals.

The component of the Type A personality which two thirds of us seem to have is the impatience dimension. That is, we don't like being kept waiting or might try to do several things at once. 88% of us are always or almost always on time.

In regard to retirement planning and policy, I was happy to see that 85% of us see this as a shared responsibility and only one half percent see it as the sole responsibility of province authority figures. It is a hopeful sign that our men want to be active partners in planning their retirement and also strongly support a variety of practices and options for retirement.

I was particularly encouraged to note that I am among the majority on the issue of women in the church and society. 61% of us see the women's liberation movement as having real significance for men religious. Not only that, but 68% of us disagree with the notion that men are better

suitied for church leadership than women. I am pleased to be part of a group of men willing to stand in solidarity with women in their struggle for justice.

In summing up, I see us as a group of men striving to live a religious life in the context of a confused and uncertain world in the last decade of the twentieth century. No, we do not have all the answers. No, we are not often absolutely certain about things. Yes, we do have doubts and disagreements and pain. We are called to live in this moment as brothers who seek to love and be loved. This must be our paramount concern and challenge. The contradictions which are present in the survey results seem to place us in the same lot as the rest of humanity. I hope we can bring ourselves to believe that this is not so bad after all. I also hope that we will never stop trying to make our condition and that of all human kind more like the kingdom which Jesus came to share with us.

FINAL VOWS

Three of our temporarily professed Brothers in the District of West Africa have been approved for final vows. They are: Brothers Paul Kofi Mensah, Daniel Dardoe and Michael Amakyi. The profession ceremony will take place in December, following the District Chapter. We rejoice with our Brothers in West Africa on this graced occasion and offer our congratulations and the assurance of our prayers to the young men who will take final vows.

"If we cannot reconcile all opinions
Let us endeavor to unite all hearts."

Robert Owen

DIRECTORY UPDATES AFTER SEPTEMBER 5, 1990

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