

ST. ANTHONY messenger

National Catholic Family Magazine

A former Sister tells the story behind

THE GLENMARY CRISIS



New Gospel live-in
TEENS
ENCOUNTER
CHRIST

SEPTEMBER 1967 / 40 CENTS

ST. ANTHONY

messenger

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THE FRANCISCAN PRIESTHOOD

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Cover photograph by Kieran Quinn, O.F.M.



Sr. Laura, a Glenmary, visits with mountain people in Cincinnati.

The End of Rumors

Chicago, Toronto, Detroit—everywhere we've been in the last few months someone has asked, "What's the story with the Glenmary Sisters?" Rumors (some utterly fantastic) have been flying. But many questioners were sincerely interested in the welfare of a progressive and respected community. To put the crisis in perspective and kill the rumors we convinced Maureen O'Connor, formerly the editor of Glenmary's Kinship, to share her insights and personal experience.

In previous decades such an account would never have been written or if written it would have been buried in the convent safe. It speaks well for the honesty of the Pilgrim Church that what is of concern to the whole Church can be written and published today.

Allegations have also been making the rounds that the retreat movement has terminal cancer. Retreat from the world and silence have no place, some charge, in the Church in the modern world. A St. Anthony Messenger survey of the retreat directors of the nation brought some unexpected results.

Hopeful signs of the evolution of the retreat movement are its first cousins like the Cursillos and various community weekends. Almost one half of our population today is below 25. We should be concerned that they have the experience of meeting Christ. One boy summed it up, "TEC helped me to experience Christianity and realize that it is possible for it to exist today." Pleased but puzzled parents may be interested in the psychological principles behind the movement.

And finally I can't resist quoting a pithy sentence by Msgr. S. J. Adamo that says a lot about God and man, "Only God subsidizes those who displease Him."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TO THE PRIEST

SEEKING A FIRST-CLASS PARISH

I am a teen-age girl and I can see your point about some of the laity! I think most people just don't or can't concentrate on anything but their own little family. I understand how hard life can be on a priest. I don't think you assumed too much responsibility. I think, also, it is wise not to spend all your time on the spiritual. It makes me mad when people criticize the Church and priests so much. I think it is not the Church now that is so much behind, as the people!

Father, if you think that none of the people care a lot about their Church, you are wrong. Maybe you have just met the wrong people. I care, and I am sure there are many others who do, too.

The Church is honored in having such a good priest as yourself. I think some parishes need a "priest," and some priests need a "parish." I really hope you find your "first-class parish" soon.

Jude Czimbal

Cincinnati, Ohio

INVOLVEMENT: CLERGY AND LAITY

I feel called to answer the priest who is searching for a parish that goes first class. Our parish does, largely by the efforts of our pastor. We have a fine athletic program, a CCD program for more than 1200 children, and for three years now the best Catholic school possible.

Father, don't leave things to the laity. They have as many different ideas as there are members of the committees. Discuss and plan, yes, but if it isn't followed through, don't be afraid to step on a few toes.

Don't forget that the laity have families and jobs to attend to, also. If the laity answer all the calls to action, there is going to be a lot more juvenile delinquency than there is now.

In short, when there is work to be done our pastor is there with his work clothes on, working. I am sure he must have had disappointing experiences when he was an assistant. He has been a priest for 30 years and started our parish about 12 years ago.

I have an answer for the Wise Man regarding the man who was unable to drive his family to Mass. Too many people become very involved in community and par-

ish affairs to the extent that they live literally at a "dead run" and have no time to perform an act of charity.

I have had occasion to need help, and I will never forget those who so generously offered me their time when they already had plenty to do. To me this is what Vatican II was all about. Your neighbor is right here, too—not just in Asia or South America. Finally, one should not have to ask assistance in a time of misfortune. It should be cheerfully offered.

Mary Anson

Hayward, California

"WELL DONE, DON'T SLACKEN"

The primary purpose of this letter is to express a "well done" to the reverend author of the letter entitled "A Priest Questions Lay Participation," printed in the July, 1967, issue of St. Anthony Messenger and signed "Name Withheld." Another purpose is to encourage the reverend author not to be discouraged. He states his point from 16 years of work in five parishes. I agree with him in entirety, after 33 years in many more than five parishes.

Of course, there may well be an exception here and there, but in the vast general the same "lay interest" is not new. It has always been present in affairs of parish sodalities, Holy Name societies, CYO, etc., and is very manifest at the present time in an almost year-old Parish Council. The very same and typical lay participation resolves itself, after a short time, into the same old "much wash, little hang out" status. The result is that the priest soon finds himself "holding the bag" in valiant efforts to keep things going. He finds himself in a capacity as janitor, doorman, errand boy, secretary, policeman, referee, etc., all in substituting for the eager laymen with the waning interest.

It is somewhat refreshing to read such an honest presentation of a point by one who knows what he is talking about. It was also refreshing to read an accompanying letter entitled "Don't Criticize, Pray!" from Laconia, N. H., evidently written by a lady who knew what she was talking about.

Many articles have been in the "dribble" class—such as keeping celibacy but junking obedience; advocacy of leniency re: birth control, optional celibacy to increase understanding, etc.; setting forth what the priesthood needs, or how to make a better priesthood—all a mess of superficial juvenile mouthings written by would-be lay participators who show no real knowledge of the actual priesthood of Christ, as distinguished from some results of the so-called Reformation of the 15th century.

So carry on, Father. Do not become cyn-

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Searching the World to bring you the Finest

A former Sister tells the story behind

THE GLENMARY CRISIS

BY MAUREEN O'CONNOR

Some Glenmarys will remain Sisters but the majority have asked for a dispensation from their vows. The largest group will now work as a lay, Church-affiliated organization particularly among the people of Appalachia. St. Anthony Messenger presents an in-depth report as seen by a former member of the Community.

It is with a great amount of hesitation that I begin to write an article on the Glenmary Sisters. It is a task, however, which needs to be done. It needs to be done fairly, with as much openness and candor as possible, out of kindness and respect for the parties involved.

To be sure, what is happening and what has happened to the Glenmary Sisters is newsworthy and has been written and talked about. In a Church which has made great strides in honesty and openness, this is to be expected. The only regrettable thing will be if the complexity of the Glenmary story is not understood, and if, therefore, any of the parties involved is looked upon as blameworthy or totally responsible for what has happened when in fact many had various and varying parts to play.

In recent months, a group of about 50 Glenmary Sisters have taken steps to move outside the structure of religious life. This would remove them from canonical status, would allow them to carry on the works which they want to do, and would, in a sense, free them from the laws, strictures, and customs governing religious life. A smaller group wish to remain religious and to continue to work within the framework of religious life. An additional 30 or more have taken steps to leave Glenmary since the Chapter of last January.

These measures, for an order which became increasingly popular, an order which was seen by many to be one of the most hopeful orders in existence because of its vitality and youthfulness, appear drastic. The question seems to be—just how did this happen and why?

It is important to trace the development of Glenmary, to examine its origins, to situate it in a context of history, so that the events which surround this final action can be comprehended.

Glenmary was born out of a dream of Father William Howard Bishop. A priest of Baltimore, Maryland, Father Bishop was active in rural life and felt that a society was needed to care for the citizens of rural America. These people, he thought, needed to hear the Good News of Christ before they moved to the cities, where reaching them was more difficult. To accomplish this, he decided that the talents and techniques of a new order were required. He established a group of priests, and in 1941 the women's group began.

In the period of growth between 1941 and 1952, when the church officially recognized the Glenmary Sisters as a religious community, there was an increase of members and a development of spirit. Although I was not at this time a member of the Community, I feel that some elements of this development can be noted and reflected upon.

Like a person, a community comes to know itself in relations to others. We know who we are, we learn to accept ourselves as we are through others. This is also true theologically, for it was part of the revelation of Christ to give us an identity—but an identity grounded in our rela-

tion to another. He told us that we were to accept ourselves as *sons of the Father*, and that our entire lives were to be spent in a growing consciousness of this relationship of sonship.

For the Glenmarys, it seems to me, identification came out of the association with the people we served. As a missionary community, Glenmarys did not fulfill the traditional role of Sisters in the United States. The Glenmarys went into areas where Catholics were few and where Sisters were an unknown entity. To gain acceptance they had to identify with the people rather than set themselves apart. Their catechetical work was not in a classroom but in visiting homes and serving the poor. These are roles which other Sisters are only now beginning to play. Mission work among the people was Glenmary's specific task. It gave Glenmary an orientation from its very beginning.

In addition, Glenmary's need for funds and vocations placed many Sisters in public relations work. Thus, Sisters became involved in cities with many different kinds of people. The experience furthered the outward thrust and served to broaden the horizons of the Community.

In 1952 under Archbishop Karl J. Alter of Cincinnati, the Glenmary Sisters were officially recognized. At this time they began the first formal novitiate, which was conducted by Dominican Sisters. This year of spiritual formation followed the traditional patterns of established communities. Sisters who had been out in the mission field came back for this year of intense training and preparation.

Here an after-the-fact reflection can be made. Some historians say there actually never was a spirituality or a theology for the active religious orders. The supposition is that when communities such as those founded by St. Vincent de Paul came into existence, they merely adapted a *monastic* spirituality to a life of apostolic endeavor. The problem is, however, that the two are often in conflict.

Thus I think it can be said that the Glenmary Sisters who had been serving in the mission fields, not through anyone's fault, came back to the novitiate to receive the spirituality and the training which was not suited and did not really apply to the life they had been living. It can also be said that for some this spirituality had a great deal of meaning and could be applied, others found it lacking, others *came* to find it lacking.

Historically, this is the time when the liturgical and biblical movements were coming to the fore in the Church. Glenmary benefitted from some of the best resources of this movement. I entered the community in 1956. My

Miss Maureen O'Connor, former Glenmary Sister, now with Community Action Center in Cincinnati.



earliest remembrances are of a strong emphasis on liturgy. I recall Father Michael Mathis, the pioneer liturgist from Notre Dame, giving a retreat. I remember a series of lectures given by Father Johannes Hofinger, S.J., on catechetics and a new and exciting theology. There were others. In 1959, two Sisters went to study at Lumen Vitae, a progressive catechetical center in Holland.

A year later another went. In 1961, two of these were elected to the Council, the governing body of the Glenmary Sisters. They brought with them a new vision and a new insight and they became involved in the formation of the young Sisters. (The Community maintained its own formation program after 1954.)

The point I'm trying to make, and it could be traced more carefully and minutely, is that Glenmary was a product of a time in the Church of new theological insights and ideas. Yet it was also the product of the old. While this is not a unique situation, it is a clear example of the current conflict in the Church.

Summarized, Glenmary, through being an outgoing missionary group, had received a spirit, an identity and its very own apostolate from the people served, but a spirituality which was not consonant with this. At the same time, the Community was subjected to a host of liturgical, biblical and theological influences and yet the old spirituality remained unchanged.

My impression is that Archbishop Karl J. Alter in those days was a great protector and friend of Glenmary. He gave his approval to some important decisions made by the 1962 Chapter. There was to be experimentation with secular jobs and a contemporary habit. (Prior to this chapter the question of habit change had caused so much conflict and consternation within the Community that it had to be dropped.) There was to be greater freedom. A directory was to be written to give the spirit for the life of the Community. To gain flexibility many of the prescriptions of the Constitutions were to be put into this directory so that rules could be changed as the need arose by the Mother General of the Council. Yet the old Constitution, which was based on Canon Law and traditional laws for Sisters, remained.

Following this important Chapter, controversy arose regarding the implementation of some of its decisions. For example, even though the community had voted to experiment with forms of secular work and secular dress, when this was done there was opposition, as there was also to the wearing of the experimental habits that had been designed.

An increased number of applicants to Glenmary meant an increasing number of young members. At least

half of the Community had entered after 1956. The formation program was changing and the Sisters were operating on a principle of greater freedom and individual responsibility. This formation was not completely understood by many members of the community. Besides, there were varying opinions as to the meaning of Community rules. As in the current Church, the question of the validity of a law which does not really apply to this day and age was a concern.

Another area of discussion was the kind of work the Glenmary Sisters should undertake. In the early days not all members went to college; some were required to go immediately to the mission fields to carry out commitments that had been made. In later years Sisters got into a variety of apostolates—social work, catechetics, Montessori, speech and drama, and music. Perhaps one of the great contributions of Mother Catherine, superior general from the Community's beginnings to the present, was to allow each Sister great initiative and freedom in using her talents. Thus it was that the work of the Glenmarys was not defined and throughout the growth of the Community the apostolate seemed to expand and spread out, without any set direction.

Between 1965 and 1966 several attempts were made to define Glenmary's direction. During this period the Sisters became involved in developing a more scientific approach to the social apostolate. A Center was opened in an apartment on Chicago's Near Northside. Here, with the help of Dr. Martin Corcoran, a social psychologist from DePaul University, some Sisters began to lay plans for a specialized Glenmary apostolate and for coordination of their mission efforts. It seems that up to this time the energy of Glenmary Sisters had been spent on formation and promotion and earning a livelihood to support educational and administrative needs.

I am eliminating the many steps that went on, but what finally evolved was based on two important facts: 1) all except two of Glenmary's missions were within the Appalachian region; 2) it was a time when the whole country's attention plus a special section of the War on Poverty was focused on Appalachia.

An approach was working out in which the Sisters would research a particular community or neighborhood, interview the people, tabulate the results, and then make up a list of the needs they saw and formulate a proposal on how these needs could be met. It was an approach based on a knowledge of the basic institutions of society—religion, family, education, etc.

Also taking place at this time were training sessions. Groups of six or more Sisters went to Chicago, lived among the Appalachian people, and through classes learned some basic principles of sociology and some basic approaches to the mountain people. Training in sensitivity and in group dynamics was also part of the course.

Because most difficulties in most groups can be traced to a lack of communication, I think it not unfair to

say that some of Glenmary's conflict stem from this very lack. On the part of those who did not attend the training there was not a real understanding or trust of the Chicago program. On the other hand, those in Chicago learned new techniques and a new language which became a part of their lives and their way of thinking. This was not the case for many of the other Sisters. Thus communication became more difficult. And so, in addition to the conflict between the modern world and spirituality, which I have already noted, a new kind of communication's conflict arose.

In the fall of 1965, Archbishop Alter issued to the Glenmary Sisters the directives which have since been publicized. To bring greater unity to the Community, he called for the Sisters to show a greater fidelity to the rules of religious life as contained in Canon Law and their own constitutions. In the main they were disciplinary prescriptions—statements about retiring at night, getting approval for college courses, etc.

For some, these directives were very difficult to accept. In many cases they could not be carried out, but the Archbishop did provide for exceptions to his norms. Even if all the specific directives could have been carried out, their spirit was unacceptable to many of the members.

I know that something provoked the issuance of these directives. I feel that the actions of some Sisters were deemed questionable by members of the Community, by church authorities, by the laity. That some would have acted imprudently is, to me, in keeping with the human condition which Sisters still retain. Imprudent actions, then, are not the puzzle. What is surprising to me is the amount of rumoring, talking, and ecclesiastical gossiping that went on. The bizarre accusations that were carried about to the Catholic community even by priests lead one to speculate on our priorities. Indiscretions, real, which there were, and some, falsely rumored, would seem to pale in the face of issues of race, peace, poverty, which should be the major concerns of Christians.

I suspect that reports on us—perhaps from our own members, perhaps from others—had gone to the Archbishop, although I have no proof of this. This is but a manifestation of the kind of mistrust within the Community and the lack of understanding that I pointed out above.

Also in the fall of 1965 the Glenmary Sisters with the help of a psychologist from DePaul undertook an image study. This study endeavored to find out the values of the Glenmary Sisters, how they looked upon the apostolate and religious life. Through a series of questions, associations, etc., it sought to develop a community profile.

There was again some questioning of this. I, for one, felt that the techniques used did not give opportunity for full expression of the spiritual cohesiveness of a religious group, or for the charismatic element, which captures the spirit of the founder as it is lived in its members. Along with some others, I felt the emphasis was too heavily sociological, rather than theological.

Following the tabulation of the questionnaire, workshops were held on the various phases of it. There were discussions about Glenmary, about how the Sisters looked at themselves and at the Community. For some this brought a greater unity and a greater understanding. For others it heightened some conflicts and communication difficulties.

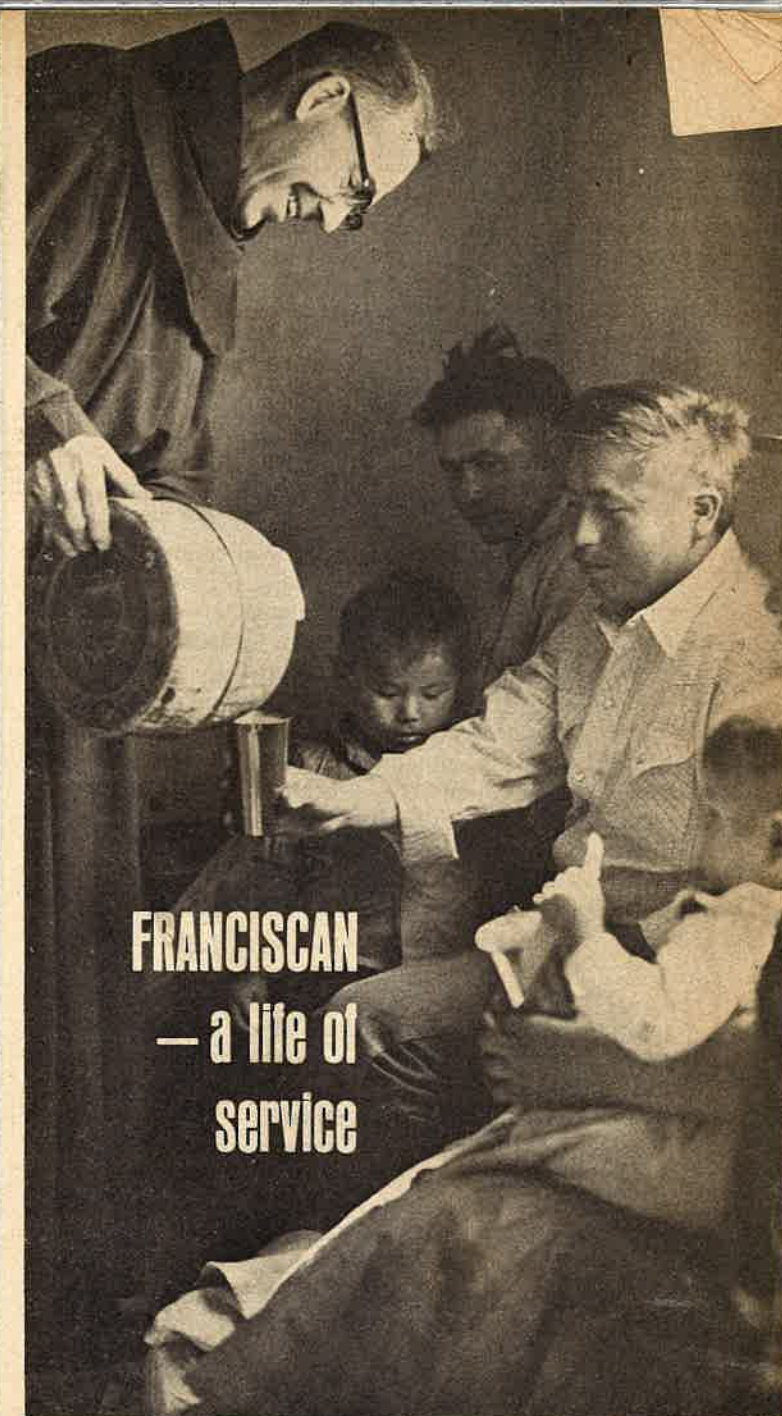
In August of 1966 the Community met for its annual institute. At this time there was a communique from the Archbishop and also a response from the Community. This latter was a statement of principles of religious and communal life and apostolic effort that the majority of the Sisters affirmed and a statement that the Community wished to remain in the archdiocese of Cincinnati.

The majority of the sessions of the institute were devoted to intra-Community discussions, with some material from the image study as background. During these days attempts were made to get at some of the problems within the Community, to come to some common understanding, to heal some of the conflicts.

Attention was also given to the apostolic mission of the Community. It was proposed that Glenmary take on a corporate apostolate to the Appalachian people. This apostolate was to include a specific approach which included research study and action.

It seems to me that at this time the majority of the Community favored this approach. Many would have been willing to make a commitment to this method and to make the necessary sacrifices and adjustments that would be needed if the Glenmary Sisters were to concentrate their efforts on one apostolate. Some, however, were not.

The reasons why members opposed or favored a single apostolate were varied. Some thought it was unfaithful to Father Bishop's plan, but others thought the single apostolate was an adaptation of his vision to this moment in time. Still others, aware that the proposed approach involved working with Appalachians both in the mountain country and in the cities to which they migrated, felt that Glenmarys were not meant to work in cities. Still another group believed that one apostolate was too constricting, that it did not make allowance for the varying talents of individuals and that it limited their vision. No decision was made at this time.



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That September (1966), news of the preceding year's directives from the Archbishop were printed in various Catholic and secular newspapers. Official comments from the Glenmary Community were sparse. From the Archbishop and Church officials public statements were at first nonexistent and then in time a release was made by Archbishop Alter to the Cincinnati *Catholic Telegraph*. Bishop Edward McCarthy, auxiliary of Cincinnati, wrote a letter to the *National Catholic Reporter*.

This publicity, although I am in no official position to say, seemed to heighten the difficulties in communication between the Church authorities and the Glenmary Community. To be sure it was an embarrassment for all the parties concerned. Regrettably, because of the failure of all parties to be able to make adequate explanation, and because of some understandable secrecy, the complexity of the situation was never made known.

After the election for Chapter delegates, a special pre-chapter meeting was called at which a plan was devised which would seem to have encompassed the various strains within the Glenmary Sisters. It was felt that Glenmary could have four separate units.

One unit, built on the Chicago plan, would be devoted to the Appalachian people.

The second unit, which I proposed, would have been an experimental one. The Sisters would live in small groups in apartments. The habit, prayer and community life would be allowed to evolve according to the circumstances of each place. An essential ingredient of this unit was the idea that each person could choose the form of work which she felt she could do, as long as it was valuable to the Church and to the world.

The third unit was devoted to service and seemed to incorporate ideas of both of the first two units. It proposed the approach of a mission team which would work in both town and country.

And lastly, the contemplative unit combined a life of contemplation and a life of activity, and placed greater emphasis on actual prayer life than any of the other groups.

Sisters were allowed to sign up for a unit which coincided with their ideals. For a time it seemed that this would be the answer to the Glenmary difficulties and that the Community would continue to allow various approaches and to encourage the freedom and initiative of many individuals.

Some concern developed, however, that there would be no functional relationship between these units and therefore that they would not really be one unified Glenmary Community. All this took place at the November meeting which was in preparation for the official Chapter in January. It set the scene for what appeared to be the moment of decision for Glenmary's future.

When the Chapter met in January, not just the delegates but all the Sisters who could come were present—some as observers. The Community voted to adopt an experimental habit, which consisted of a grey suit and veil, which was to be worn at specified times but not all the time. There was some feeling that the unit system was not going to go through. It is not necessary (or appropriate) for me to write about the various plans that were discussed and then later set aside. It is sufficient to say that the Community in time decided to devote its entire effort to the Appalachian people. I voted for this single-apostolate approach knowing and stating that I intended to leave the Community.

I voted for the proposal because I felt that this was what the majority of members wanted. At the same time, I was convinced that the work that I wanted to do could best be done outside the structure of religious life and thus outside of Glenmary.

To be sure, the hesitations I had about this Appalachian approach remained, but I realized that I knew very little about Appalachian work, having been involved in it only slightly. Also, I resisted the organizational implications of such an approach. It seems to me unnecessary for religious communities to take a formalized approach to their apostolate. Others felt that this was the very way that religious would find a meaningful place in the world. The question was discussed but could not be resolved. It was a matter of conviction.

Last March I left the Glenmary Sisters, having been preceded by several others. Approximately 15 have left because they are convinced they should try the experimental approach. We will be living together in various cities during this coming year, communicating with each other. In terms of an experimental approach to religious life, we will, during this first year, be doing little more than reflecting upon our experience. Each will either have a job or be in school. I have a feeling that what will evolve will be a less self-conscious, and to an extent undefined, form of Christian community life in the world.

Also in March, although news did not reach us until May, Cardinal Antoniutti of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, made a statement about the Glenmary Sisters. This was sent to Archbishop Alter and then presented to the Sisters. It said in part: "The Sacred Congregation, solicitous for protecting in religious houses regular and perfect observance and concord of souls, and attentive to the peculiar circumstances in which the Glenmary Sisters find

themselves, decrees that there be constituted a religious assistant to the congregation."

A Franciscan priest, Very Rev. Sylvan Becker, a former provincial, was appointed by Cardinal Antoniutti to give counsel to the administration of the Community especially in the formation of its members and faithful observance of religious discipline and also in financial matters.

Again because of lack of communication it is not definitely clear what actually transpired, but it seems that Archbishop Alter, upon receiving the norms of religious and apostolic life from the January Chapter of the Glenmarys, presented them to Father Becker and to Father Raymond J. Fussner, the rector of a Jesuit novitiate, and perhaps to some others. These individuals evidently questioned the validity of some of these norms, made recommendations to the Sacred Congregation. The result was the appointment of a religious assistant.

When this appointment was made known to the Community, some Glenmarys felt that the way of living, working and praying of the Community had been called into question, and that therefore if the Glenmary Sisters were to carry out their apostolate, it would be necessary for the Community to take steps to change its form of religious life. What is not clear, and what is representative of some of the lack of clarity and honesty in the Church, is precisely what was called into question. The Franciscan and Jesuit, upon private investigation of members of the Community, failed to cite any specific objections to the Glenmary way of life, perhaps because they did not feel free to speak. The Archbishop of Cincinnati referred a question on the matter to the newly appointed religious assistant. This appointment, this reference to Glenmary's "peculiar circumstances" by Cardinal Antoniutti and the concomitant undefined objections remain a puzzle to many.

Motivated by these happenings and undoubtedly by a long series of difficulties with the Church authorities, over half the Glenmarys decided to take steps to remove themselves from the canonical state of religious life in order to form a more loosely constructed group of women dedicated to service of the Church and the world. Some others have decided to remain as canonical religious and carry on what they see as Father Bishop's work.

Some have left to form an experimental community. There are others who are trying to find a way of dedication in many and varied forms.

This has been a hurried and inadequate sketch of Glenmary Sisters from 1941 to 1967. Some may wonder

why I tell this story. It was not to blame any party who has been involved. An honest account of our experience seems useful because there are some conflicts present in Glenmary's story which are models of conflicts within the Church. First and foremost is the difficulty of communication between members of the Community, individuals with varying spiritual insights and approaches, and between these individuals and the hierarchy. It is to be remembered that ideas come to life in persons. There were personality conflicts in Glenmary, just as there are personality conflicts in the Church and in all of human life.

Secondly, there was the obvious desire for change, desire for rapid and instant change on the part of some, a desire of more gradual change on the part of others, a reluctance to change on the part of still others, and in this case the impossibility of all of these remaining together as one.

Finally, Glenmary exemplified the conflict between an individual approach to an apostolate and an organizational approach, and in this instance the inability of the two to exist side by side.

Conclusions and endings tend to be maudlin. But to the Glenmary experiment an end has not yet been written. What will happen to the group who remain Glenmary Sisters, to the group who devote themselves to being a community for the Appalachian people, to the group who sets out on an experimental approach to religious life, to the many who have left Glenmary for some other way of life?

There is this to be said, without any false exhibition of pride. There is something about Glenmary which I attribute to the spirit of life and vigor in the Church in a conciliar age—a Church grown up with a biblical and liturgical emphasis at its base. This thrust, this availability to people, the youthfulness and zest for life, and the work which was a part of Glenmary that I have always known, is not dead. These groups to a certain extent retain this spirit and if there is some good to come from each of these groups, and if each member of each group can find community and peace in a shared life, then the going apart, as the coming together, has been of merit for the Church.

As a Glenmary Sister Maureen O'Connor acted as public relations director and editor of Kinship. Last March she left the Community and is now living in an experimental group.