



Volume I

Victory-Noll, Huntington, Indiana, November, 1925

Number 12

POVERTY BARS THEIR WAY TO SERVICE!

—, California, Nov. 4, 1925.

Rev. J. J. Sigstein, Spiritual Director,
Society of Missionary Catechists.

Dear Father Sigstein:

A short time ago I heard incidentally that ten young ladies from one of the States of the Southwest volunteered to join your Society of Missionary Catechists, and although they were acceptable in every way, you could not accept them for entrance because they were too poor to pay the railroad fare from their homes to Victory-Noll, Huntington, Ind. Now, I consider these very poor girls more preferable in a way than the wealthy girls from the East as members of your Society, for the reason that being Spanish-American, and from the mission districts, they will far more easily fit in as workers among the poor natives of New Mexico. Far be it from me to detract from any Catholic Sisterhood! All are indeed doing a vast amount of good. Nevertheless the poorest among them can provide their members in the prosperous communities of the East and Central West with good homes, wholesome, nourishing food and all the comforts of life. Surely none are more entitled to this than our good Sisters, but knowing conditions out here as I do, I realize what it must mean to your good Catechists who must get down to the level of these needy Mexican people, live in their adobe huts, share their coarse food, and live the life of God's poor. Therefore I consider them head and shoulders above any order in the Church, except possibly the Sisterhoods in the leper colony of Hawaii.

One can readily imagine how deeply these generous self-sacrificing Catechists, who have left all in order to serve Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother in the person of Their poor, must suffer when they find they cannot alleviate in a material way the dire destitution of the poor among

whom they labor. How bitterly disappointing, too, it must be to think that when they have an opportunity of receiving their much-needed recruits from the ranks of these people in the person of pious, self-sacrificing New Mexican girls, they cannot accept them because, perforce, these daughters of the poor must be provided with the necessary traveling expenses before they can be trained for the work they so eagerly desire to do among their own people.

I have been reliably informed that conditions in New Mexico are about the worst in the country. Recently 8,000 men left this State to labor in the sugar beet fields of Colorado, and in the Wyoming sheep country, in order to save their families from starvation. Reports have come to us out here in California from various parts of New Mexico, that thousands of families have moved down into Arizona to work in the cotton fields during the winter. What untold privation and suffering these people must be enduring at this time! No where, I dare say, in this great country of ours can we find suffering to compare to the sufferings of God's poor neglected people in New Mexico.

Here, too, in Southern California, business has suffered somewhat of a slump, and living conditions for these people are not what they should be. Some of your friends will no doubt be surprised to learn that in the City of Los Angeles alone we have 150,000 poor Mexican Catholics. In this city, as elsewhere, the Protestant missionaries are very active. The city has been zoned into four districts by the proselytizers and each section has dozens of workers, both lay and clerical, laboring with all the resources at their command to rob these needy Catholics of their faith. Would you believe it that in some places the native Mexican Ministers put on vestments, use an altar, pretend to go through the ceremonies of Mass,

and give Communion to the Catholic Mexicans whom they inveigle into attending their services? In some of their churches in the suburbs, they have statues and holy pictures in order to deceive these poor ignorant people. The saddest part of it is there is nothing being done by us for these poor Catholics in a big organized way.

In one Los Angeles parish alone there are 15,000 Mexicans. In Santa Paula there are 7,000 Mexicans with no Church. In the new diocese of Fresno, California, 240 miles north of here, there are approximately 25,000 Mexican immigrants. Many of these are working in the fruit orchards and in the canning establishments. For none of these have provisions been made by our wealthy Catholics. Now, Father, we need not only good American Catechists, but Catechists of Spanish extraction,—thousands of them—in all the mission sections of the Southwest. I am most anxious that the poor girls whom you had to reject some time ago because you could not pay their railroad fare, should have a chance to take up this work. I want to do my share and although I have no ready cash, I am going to give all I have at hand for this purpose. I am therefore sending you a flawless, two-carat, white diamond ring. The retail price of this ring, which I recently received in a trade, is at least \$1,200.00. I am giving this ring in the hope that some of the readers of "THE MISSIONARY CATECHIST" may be inspired to send you this amount so that you may use it as the nucleus of a fund to cover the railroad fare of the zealous self-sacrificing girls who are anxious to come to you from New Mexico, Colorado and California. I am firmly convinced that there are thousands of wealthy Catholic people who would contribute largely to the upbuilding of your Society and to the extension

(Continued on Page Eight)