We Heard the Call

Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer, SCL
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The History
of the
Sisters of Charity
of Leavenworth
in Latin America

1963 - 2003

Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer, SCL
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Over the past forty years, so many have made possible the fulfillment of
the call of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth as missionaries in Latin
America that it would be risky to mention names. But heartfelt gratitude is
rendered to all who have had a role to play: Bishops and priests, Mothers
General/Community Directors, Council Members, and Sisters of Charity
who both volunteered and lent support in various ways. Corporations,
doctors, nurses, laymen and laywomen have contributed and continue to
give generously to the work of a relatively small core of Sisters of Charity
missionaries “in the field.” Certainly the work in the missions could never
have been carried out without the moral and spiritual support of sisters
and friends at home. This work is dedicated to the combined work and
prayers of all who have encouraged and participated in any way in these
mission endeavors.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author owes a debt of gratitude to all those who have collaborated in the writing of this history.

First of all, without the well-kept histories of the various mission houses, it would have been impossible to write; therefore, many thanks to all the chroniclers of events. All the sisters who have codified and maintained the archives of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth provided a rich source of house histories, diaries, journals, letters, documents, etc., from which to draw. The author is also grateful to Bishop John McNabb, formerly of the Chulucanas Diocese in Peru, and to Father Leo Cooper, Archivist for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, both of whom provided access to materials in their respective archives. Sister Helen Forge, Community Secretary, graciously provided information from individual files and researched needed material in Chapter enactments and/or Council minutes.

In addition, many sisters in the United States and Peru have provided input through interviews, readings, and suggestions. And laity in Talara who worked with the sisters over the years contributed anecdotes, pictures, and insights.

The author gratefully acknowledges the many hours of work done by Mary Rau, reader and editorial consultant, and Joyce Pangelinan, who entered the initial corrections. Gratitude is owed Sisters Frances Marie Grady and Mary Rebecca Conner for their artistic consultations; Sister Kathleen Mary Connelly for her technical help and encouragement with the picture pages and the production of the cover; and Karla Davis, initial consultant for indexing. The author most especially avows her profound gratitude to Sister Barbara Sellers for her interest and encouragement and the hours, days, and months she spent throughout 2004 and 2005 editing the manuscript. Finally, without the collaboration of Johnny Johnston and Tom Turkle, this book would never have reached the publisher. The latter donated a great deal of his time as well as his expertise and advice, involving himself in perfecting the final format, illustration pages, and indexing. In addition, he also worked directly with the editor and publisher.

To all these and the many who lent support and encouragement, the author is deeply indebted.
Ten years ago I had a conversation with Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, in Trujillo, Peru. Among other things discussed was my concern that young women entering the Community in Peru, as well as our young sisters, were still only reading about the establishment and growth of the Sisters of Charity in the United States and not about the Peruvian foundation and experience.

As so frequently happens, this challenge to have a history of the Latin American missions written was re-directed to the proponent. I told Sister Mary Kathleen that I was neither a trained historian nor writer, but that I was willing and interested in trying to write this history. For the first nine years, the research and writing was undertaken along with other activities, archival work being done chiefly when I was in the United States every two or three years. During 2004 and 2005, at the invitation of Sister Sue Miller, Community Director, I was able to finish most of the work in Leavenworth without interruptions and with direct access to the Archives and the Office of the Community Secretary. Further work was done throughout 2004 with the editor, Sister Barbara Sellers.

From the beginning, I determined “to put flesh on the dry bones,” including anecdotes and stories, writing this history in a style similar to the earliest history of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth written by Sister Mary Buckner, SCL. A comment of Sister Charlotte Swain as she was writing in the House History of Coripata encouraged me in doing so. She said something to this effect: “I don’t know why I’m writing all of this detail, but hopefully someday another Sister Mary Buckner will use it to write the SCL history of Latin America.” I only hope that this history may be read with something of the same gusto that Sister Mary Buckner’s first *History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth* has elicited over the years.
In June 1996, during a festive evening at the first gathering of all the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth from the two American continents, south and north, the sisters added this verse to the SCL version of the song "Faria, faria, ho":

Oh, we are the Sisters of Charity
Faria, faria, ho!
We change addresses with great dexterity
Faria, faria, ho!
First we came north,
Then we went south to Peru,
Because the Pope said
"You really ought to."
Faria, faria, faria, faria, faria, faria, ho!

During the SCLs' first forty years in Latin America (1963–2003), some thirty North American sisters served there. Except for Sister Charlotte Swain, who served only in Coripata, Bolivia, and Sister Ann McGloin and Sister Joseph Angela Reichenbach, who were in Guatemala for several years, all have served in Peru. Although some 197 sisters responded to the call extended by the Church and SCL Community to serve in the missions of Latin America, only five sisters were initially chosen in 1963.¹ They have represented, and continue to represent, the entire Community of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Latin America. Today, the backbone of the Community and its hope for the future in Latin America lies in the core of Peruvian sisters who have entered the Community since 1981.

As early as 1958, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth² were motivated to begin a mission in Peru. In that year, His Excellency Archbishop Romolo Carboni, Apostolic Nuncio in Peru, visited Saint Mary College and the Mother House in Leavenworth. He requested Mother Mary Ancilla Spoor to send SCLs to Peru. She assured him that sisters would arrive as soon as possible.³

Being a woman of action as well as of vision, a compassionate woman who was always committed to the service of the poor, Mother Mary Ancilla began to prepare the road that others would later travel. In the following years, she expressed her desire to respond to Pope John XXIII's call for help to the Church of Latin America "before it will be too late."⁴ The SCL General Council, however, hesitated to initiate such a large project and one with such far-reaching consequences before the Community Chapter scheduled for 1962.

Other SCLs had also heard the pleas of the Holy See, and among the proposals sent for consideration by the delegates to the Ninth General
Chapter were those about this very subject. Thus, on July 23, 1962, the proposal, "That the needs of the Church and our part in meeting these needs be studied," was presented for discussion. In the dialogue that followed, Mother Mary Ancilla explained that the only permission needed before the Community could accept a foreign mission, given that there were enough sisters to send, was the consent of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. She was sure there would be no problem in receiving this approval. She recalled how the Community a few years before, as a result of a meeting of the Major Superiors of Religious Women in Chicago in 1956, had actually begun collaborating with the foreign missions. Sisters Carmen and Violeta, Salesian Sisters from Peru, had been accepted in the SCL juniorate program in September 1961. In the discussion that followed, Sister Mary Baptista Ward, herself having entered the Community as a missionary from Ireland when only sixteen, was an ardent champion of the SCLs answering the call to the Latin American missions.

Meanwhile, Mother Mary Ancilla had taken several initiatives to prepare the road. In a letter of July 21, 1961, the Apostolic Nuncio from Lima commented on a suggestion that Mother Mary Ancilla had apparently made, that is, that it might be well to send some SCLs to work with a Community of missionaries already established. In that way, the new ones could learn from the experiences and advice of the others. The Nuncio believed such an experiment might be key to the preparation of the many Communities of North American nuns he hoped to receive. He indicated that he had already spoken with Mother Mary Trinita McGinnis, superior of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from Philadelphia. She was delighted to offer hospitality and the opportunity for SCLs to work with her Community. This plan was never carried out, however. When the Chapter of 1962 mandated the incoming Council to take the necessary steps to open a foreign mission, Mother Leo Frances Ryan decided to follow another route.

In a letter of June 1963 to Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston, Massachusetts, founder of the Missionary Society of St. James the Apostle, Mother Leo Frances refers to the reason that the SCLs were to begin their missionary work in Talara. She wrote, “For some time we have been planning to send Sisters to Peru, but until this year we hadn’t taken definitive steps. Father John Stitz, the Director of the Papal Volunteers for this Archdiocese, lives in a neighboring parish and is familiar with the necessities of the Church in Peru. I consulted with him and he advised me to write to Father Thomas Reilly, one of their priests that lives in Talara.”

As a matter of fact, Father Reilly, a diocesan priest and native of Wichita, Kansas, from the time he was appointed as pastor of the new parish of Santa Rosa in Talara in August 1961, began looking for nuns to
help in the work of his parish. He wrote the SCL Community, as well as other Communities from his native state, explaining that he and some of his lay collaborators wanted to establish a school and a clinic. In his letters to the States, he noted that of some 23,000 souls in his parish, at the moment only some 8 percent assisted at Sunday Mass or devotions, and only about 1 percent received the sacraments. Father begged Mother Leo Frances not to lend a deaf ear to his pleas. He prayed that the SCLs would be the ones to “bring Christ’s Presence to this people and awaken the religious vocations that are lacking here.”

Responding to Mother Leo Frances’ letter indicating the Community’s interest in Talara, Father had written the same night he received the great news: “I go to bed the happiest priest in Peru. . . . I shall keep you in every Mass and scan the airways for the plane that brings you to Talara. . . . Please pray for Talara, now it is your charge.”

On April 7, the Feast of Our Lady of the Abandoned Ones in Valencia, Mother Leo Frances announced to the Community that we truly would be missionaries, missionaries to Talara, Peru. In the same letter in which she informed the Community of the plans, Mother Leo Frances requested the prayers of the sisters for the direction of the Holy Spirit. She also included a questionnaire for sisters interested in the missions, in which they were invited to indicate their qualifications for the missions, such as their level of Spanish proficiency and other helpful skills. This was to be returned by April 18.

Rose Reinecke, a former collaborator with the SCLs for five years at Hayden High School in Topeka, Kansas, preceded them to Talara. As a Papal Volunteer from Kansas, Miss Reinecke had first worked in Our Lady of Guadalupe School near Lima. When Father Thomas Garrity, MM, the Director of the Papal Volunteers in Peru, relayed Father Reilly’s petition for a teacher in Talara, she readily agreed to go. As Father John Stitz was visiting in Lima at the time, he accompanied her to Talara.

At the request of Father Reilly, Rose Reinecke, with the help of two native teachers, helped organize a school in Santa Rosa. The first teaching was done in the house of the missionary priests. In an article for the new Papal Volunteers publication, Rose wrote of their plans to open a parish bilingual school for the first year in April 1963, and she remarked that the Inspector of Schools had approved her paper work to get the school open. Officials, the school was initiated the day after Easter, receiving 130 pupils. When her mother became ill, however, Rose decided to return to Kansas after finishing her two-year commitment as a Papal Volunteer.

The rhythm of planning, therefore, necessarily accelerated for the SCLs. From April 1, when Mother Leo Frances informed Father Reilly of the possibility of the Community assisting him in the work at Santa Rosa, there followed various communications and questions. Would it be best to
send two teachers and two nurses? If he recommends a clinic for the poor, in what capacity will the nurses be able to work before that clinic is ready? What would the reaction of the doctors be if the sisters began to visit house to house? How did he project financing the clinic? How are materials given to the students of the school? Should the sisters get ready in a language institute or did he think that teachers of experience with minimal knowledge of Spanish could assist in Santa Rosa’s school in the autumn of 1963? Mother Leo Frances also indicated that she would like to make personal contact within three or four weeks.\textsuperscript{14}

Early in April, Mother Leo Frances also wrote to the bishops of the five dioceses where most SCLs were serving, informing them of the decision of the Community and requesting each to free two sisters so that they could be prepared for a mission in South America.\textsuperscript{15}

Mother Mary Ancilla Spoor, then second assistant to Mother Leo Frances, assumed the responsibility for making all the preparations for the visit of Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan to Peru in early May. With so many things to carry out beforehand, there was almost not sufficient time to recover from the vaccines that truly took effect.\textsuperscript{16} As Father Stitz was in contact with Rose Reinecke by radio, Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine took many things wanted by the volunteers in Talara, including seventeen white suits for boys for First Communion and recordings in English to facilitate teaching that language better, as well as cigarettes, chocolates, and homemade cookies for the North American priests.

On May 8, Father Bonaventure Schwinn offered two Masses in Annunciation Chapel for pilgrims and travelers. Then, after breakfast, all the novices, junior sisters, and professed sisters who could be present congregated at the portico of the Mother House to say goodbye. Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine knelt on the pavement to receive Father Justin’s blessing. As the sisters sang the farewell hymn, the cars began to move away, but not before one of the Salesian sisters arrived with a last minute message for her Community in Lima.

More than fifty SCLs, as well as Father John Stitz and members of Mother Leo Frances’ family, were at the Kansas City airport to say goodbye and take pictures of this important event. In Miami, Florida, Mrs. Penny Lee Ashcroft Higbee, alumna of St. Mary’s Academy in Leavenworth, met and accompanied the sisters until time for their flight to Talara.

Next morning, on Thursday, May 9, they were welcomed in the Talara airport by Father Reilly, Rose Reinecke, and eight ladies from the parish. On arriving at Santa Rosa parish, they first received Communion and later shared breakfast in the priests’ house, accompanied by Father David Becherer of Illinois and Father Charles Duffy of Boston. To be sure, there were many
questions for news of the United States, but the sisters were also anxious to know everything about the new school, the parish, and the people.

Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine were driven to the house that soon would be the first convent of the SCLs in Peru. While in Talara, they stayed with Rose Reinecke and Señora Gregoria Jaramilo, her housekeeper. After freshening up and having a light lunch, Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine went to San Pedro, a village adjacent to Talara, at 1:00 to visit the area where many fishermen's families lived. Then at 4:00 they went to Punta Arena, the compound for upper-level employees of the International Petroleum Company (IPC). There they met with the Cruzada de Amor (Society of Love), some hundred women organized by Father Reilly to help the parish. This organization would later prove an immense aid to Sisters Rosalie (Mary Clementine) Mahoney and Anne Denise Shea in helping the poor. Later Father Reilly took them for a walk and to dinner. How happy they were to go to bed at 8:00!

Their introduction to Talara and the parish continued the next day. They were duly impressed with the new school with four big classrooms, a large office, a faculty room, and bathroom with tile. At the moment, only three of the classrooms were occupied (by kindergarten, first, and second grades), but construction was already in progress to add more classrooms and the church. Sister Mary Seraphine was immediately a great success with her puppets, and even more so when she gave the students Chiclets and Sacred Heart badges. She noticed that the children from families employed by the International Petroleum Company (IPC) were surprisingly well dressed. The following morning teachers of the state school brought their children to sing and to welcome the sisters, presenting them nosegays of artificial flowers.

Every day brought new experiences: praying in church under the curious scrutiny of the children; visiting the market; attending a funeral Mass without a body being present; being surrounded by so many children requesting pictures, Sacred Heart badges, or Chiclets that they could hardly make it to the car. They even experienced having their car immobilized by sand. They also met with the mayor, the doctors, and representatives of the Lions Club. These latter had been gathering funds for a clinic for children for three years, as well as organizing doctors and nurses to contribute their services. The IPC had already donated land for the clinic.

After a four-day whirlwind period in Talara, Father Reilly took Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine to introduce them to Bishop Juan Hinojosa of the Piura Diocese. The prelate not only assured them that the SCLs were welcome, but he even tried to persuade the Mother General to send sisters to Paita, for in that port city there was a hospital recently abandoned for lack of a medical team. After having lunch with Father
Reilly and two St. James Apostle priests who were working in Piura, Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine flew to Lima. There, the St. James Apostle priests received them and took them to eat at their Central House, having arranged with the Sisters of the Precious Blood of O'Fallon, Missouri, to give them hospitality during their stay in the capital.

During the following days in Lima, the sisters visited the places consecrated by Saint Rosa of Lima and Saint Martin de Porres, as well as several schools, clinics, and missions of various religious Communities. An alumna of Saint Mary College, Pat Olive, and her husband, Wayne, visited with them and accompanied them to several places. Two priests, Fathers Clifford and Byrne, natives of Anaconda, Montana, also helped them. Father Byrne advised them about the requirements the sister teachers would need to satisfy, such as presenting their photos, photostatic copies of their diplomas, and transcripts of studies to the Director of Education. They also visited the Institute of Language in Cieneguilla operated by the St. James Apostle priests and the Salesian Community of Sisters Carmen and Violeta, the sisters studying at Saint Mary College and living with the SCL student sisters in Leavenworth. Accompanied by Miss Laura Garrido Lecca of Caritas, they gained some knowledge of a few of the barrios around Lima. It was there that they discovered the necessity of at least shortening the habit skirts!

On Friday, May 17, besides visiting the center of Lima, they went to Caritas (Catholic Charities offices) with Fathers John Thomas and Rudolph Masciarelli, St. James Apostle priests, to make arrangements for future shipments.

On Saturday night, May 18, they began their return to the United States via Mexico City and the sites of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe. As Sister Mary Seraphine wrote in her detailed diary of the trip, she and Mother Leo Frances returned to Leavenworth determined that “our efforts in Talara would light one candle in the country of Peru.”

Both of the travelers carried home many memories to share with the Community. Uppermost in their thoughts, perhaps, were the scenes of poverty they had seen, such as friendly, beautiful children with open sores and other signs of malnutrition or the barefoot fishermen strapping balsam logs together for boats. They also recalled with gratitude the works being done there. One of their strongest impressions was the joy that they had encountered both among the people and the missionaries. While they were still in Peru, Sister Mary Seraphine wrote thus in a letter: “The North American sisters and priests are beyond description in their spirit of generous hospitality and kindness. Truly, this is like a new frontier.” She could have said the same of the missionary priests and sisters from Ireland.
and the Peruvian religious they had had the pleasure of meeting in Lima and its surrounding areas.

Without doubt, the travelers were greeted with immense joy the night of May 21 when they arrived home in Leavenworth. The members of the General Council and the local officers of the Mother House met them at the airport. As their cars came up the back lane, the bells of Annunciation Chapel were rung, and the novices and professed sisters gathered in front of the Mother House singing “Welcome Home.” Even the students of Saint Mary College shouted their greetings from the porches of Mead and St. Mary Halls. 19

Chapter I Notes

2 For brevity’s sake, the initials SCL will occasionally be used when referring to the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Community and/or members.
3 SCL Newsletter (Xavier, KS), April 14, 1963, A/SCL.
4 John XXIII, cited in letter of Mother Leo Frances Ryan to SCL Community, April 7, 1963, A/SCL.
5 Minutes of the 9th General Chapter, July 23, 1962, Office of Community Secretary, Leavenworth, Kansas (hereafter referred to as OCS/SCL).
6 Romolo Carboni (Titular Archbishop of Sidon and Apostolic Nuncio in Lima) to Mother Mary Ancilla Spoor, July 21, 1961, A/SCL.
7 Mother Leo Frances Ryan to Cardinal Richard Cushing, June 20, 1963, A/SCL.
8 Father Thomas Reilly to Ryan, April 4, 1963, A/SCL.
9 Ibid.
10 Ryan to SCL Community; “Foreign Mission Survey No. 1,” April 7, 1963, A/SCL.
12 Rose Reinecke, “Kansan Reports from Peru Frontier;” La Idea (the news of Papal Volunteers in Peru), March 1963, p. 3, Archives of Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, Kansas City, Kansas (hereafter cited as A/KCKArchdioc).
14 Ryan to Reilly, April 2, 1963, A/SCL.
15 Ryan to Ecclesiastical Authorities of Kansas City, KS; Denver, CO; Great Falls, MT; Helena, MT; and Kansas City, MO, April 1, 1963, A/SCL.
16 Sister Agnes Vincent Bauman (Secretary General) to SCL Community, May 9, 1963, A/SCL.
17 Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, personal log of trip, May 8–21, 1963, A/SCL.
18 Sheehan to SCL Community, May 16, 1963, A/SCL.
19 Bauman, “Diary of the Mother House;” May 21, 1963, A/SCL.
Promoters of the Call

a) Pope John XXIII; b) Archbishop Romolo Carboni; c) Mother Mary Ancilla Spoor; d) Father Thomas Reilly; e) Father John Stitz; f) Miss Rose Reinecke; g) Mother Leo Frances Ryan; h) Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan; i) Sister Cornelia Donnelly; j) Sister Mary Baptista Ward
Day of Reception of Mission Crosses, August 30, 1963

Departure from Kansas City, September 30, 1963

Arrival in Lima, October 23, 1963
Imagine the interest and expectation of all the Sisters of Charity in the spring of 1963, especially among the nearly two hundred sisters who had volunteered to go to the missions! Surely conversations such as this were repeated by many and in various situations: “Where are you going next year?” “To Peru!” “Oh, really?” “Me, too!”

But, of course, not everyone who volunteered could go. It lay in the hands of the General Council of the Community to decide who would best represent the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Peru. The decision must have been very difficult and the questionnaire filled out by the sisters was only somewhat helpful. One of the things asked was about studies in Spanish or ability to speak the language. In the end, not one of the five chosen had much, if any, language preparation. Other questions about abilities to sew and/or cook weren’t actually all that important for beginning missionaries. Surely the Council members must have invoked the Holy Spirit to be with them in their selection.

Three teachers were informed on May 27 of their mission to Peru; six days later, two nurses learned of their selection. Surprisingly, their appointments reached them at the same time other sisters in the Community received their missions for the following year—just as though being sent to Peru was a normal occurrence! One of the five, Sister Blanche Marie Remington, was living and teaching at Saint Rose of Lima School in Kansas City, Kansas. At a first quick glance, she thought her mission slip indicated she was returning to that same parish. But on a second reading, this talented and experienced primary teacher was even more delighted to read, “Your mission for the year 1963-64 is Santa Rosa de Lima, Talara, Peru.” Someone who no doubt was equally incredulous and ebullient was Sister Irene (Marie Colombiere) Skeehan, a creative and dynamic junior high teacher. Though no less awed by the news, Sister Agnes (Dennis Marie) Klein was perhaps more subdued to learn that she had been designated as director of the school and superior of the community in Talara. As for the nurses, Sister Rosalie (Mary Clementine) Mahoney had more experience in nursing and supervision than did Sister Anne Denise Shea, but both were highly qualified and brought considerable enthusiasm to their new assignment. On June 3 Pope John XXIII died, and the sisters promptly put their new ministry under his protection.¹

After finishing the academic year at the end of May, Sister Irene returned to the Mother House and began an intensive two-week Spanish course under the tutelage of Sister Mary Vincentine Gripkey. Sister Mary Vincentine was an excellent teacher, and it would appear that Sister Irene was an adept student as well. Persons who were later engaged to help our
missionary sisters when they went to Dayton in the summer were amazed when Sister Irene told them she had not known one word of Spanish before June. By July, she could understand and even enjoy conversations. What is even more incredible is that Sister Blanche Marie, after terminating her classes at Saint Rose's, even had an assignment to teach vacation school before going to the Mother House to begin preparations for the new mission assignment.

By June 20, all five of the future missionaries had assembled and begun the process of obtaining their passports and getting their inoculations and complete physical exams.

On June 28, the sisters left for a six-week course at the Marianist Mission Institute at the University of Dayton in Ohio. Described as a “mission orientation and indoctrination” course, this was meant to be quick, effective training in mission theory and practice. Courses included mission spirituality, catechetical theology, practical missiology, intercultural relations, social dynamics, health of the missionary, and lay participation in mission activities. In addition to these courses in the mornings, the sisters studied Spanish, using books and the language laboratory of the Institute; they also studied with a Christian Brother and had conversational practice with Sisters Carmen and Violeta, the Salesian sisters in the SCL juniorate the year before. While struggling with this intensive introduction, the sisters had to contend with the effects of the immunizations received before leaving Kansas and the follow-up shots they had while in Dayton.

Meanwhile, the preparations continued apace at the Mother House. Mother Mary Ancilla was in charge of making the arrangements for the travel of the sisters and the transportation of the mountain of materials that had been sent to the Mother House. Sisters in the hospitals and schools and friends of the Community had all responded more than generously to requests for supplies. Thus, by the time the sisters sailed from New York, they had 75 boxes (13 of them from Butte, Montana!), 16 trunks, and all kinds of suitcases. Besides these, there were crates of books (music, English, readers, catechisms, as well as some 125 library books). Moreover, there were flash cards, cards with numbers and letters, also all kinds of school supplies ranging from the more durable, like yardsticks, to the disposable, like notebooks, pencils, chalk, and art supplies. There were musical instruments, toys, soap, towels and washcloths, pillows and sheets, curtains, clothing, napkins, altar linens and chapel materials, and religious articles. Of course there were medicines, medicines, and more medicines, as well as first aid kits. Even a small library of religious books regularly used by the sisters in the United States was packed.

With all this, one would think that the sisters would not need other materials for years to come. But the fact is that all through the early years,
shipments were sent more or less regularly thanks to the transportation provided by the International Petroleum Company (IPC) and the continuing generosity of sisters and benefactors. For some years, Mr. Erwin Baker, father of Sister Mary Erwin, and other relatives and friends of the Sisters of Charity in the Leavenworth area met regularly at the Mother House to prepare shipments. Dubbed the “Barrel Banders,” these men sorted and packed everything from rosaries and First Communion dresses to medicines and medical instruments.²

Having finished the Institute in Dayton, Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise, whose nursing work had been only in full-service hospitals, went on to St. Louis, where they spent a week working in the Firmin Desloges Clinic before returning to the Mother House.

After returning from Dayton in mid-July, the others occupied themselves with further preparations, such as working in the “Talara Room” of the Mother House, unpacking and sorting donated materials and storing them in crates with exact inventories.

During the week of August 15, the sisters made short home visits, which was an exception at that time as home visits and vacations were not then a practice in the Community. When they returned on August 26, all began studying Spanish with Sister Mary Vincentine. In mid-September, Father John Stitz came to talk with the sister missionaries about Talara, and Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan showed them the movies that she had taken during her May visit to Peru.

On August 30, the Feast of St. Rose of Lima, Archbishop Edward Hunkeler of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas celebrated a Pontifical Low Mass at 10:00 a.m. and gave the five sisters their mission crosses. Father Justin Sion, OSB, and Father Bonaventure Schwinn, OSB, were assistants to the Archbishop. As these five sisters were the first religious from the diocese to leave for the missions, about forty-five priests came for the ceremony, as well as members of the sisters’ families, all personally invited by the General Council.

Toward the end of September, various local houses entertained the five. One of the most creative of these farewell parties was the “Wel-Well Party” given by the Mother House sisters. It was designed as a welcome for new Mother House members, as well as a farewell for those going to Peru. The program prepared by Sisters Mary Mark Orr, Mary Janet McGilley, and Xavier Andree highlighted the parallels between the SCLs’ first venture in going to Montana in 1869 and the new challenge of Peru. Just as Father DeSmet in far off Montana had begged for sisters to come to those missionary fields, so also Father Thomas Reilly begged for a colony of sisters to come to faraway Peru. The group that responded to Father DeSmet’s call had included five sisters and one young lady, Miss Rosa V.
Kelly. Likewise, the Peru expedition would include five sisters who would join Miss Rose Reinecke, already serving there. Even the dates of departure were almost exactly the same, the sisters for Montana having left on September 29 after Mass and breakfast while the "Peruvians" would similarly leave on September 30.

On September 18, Mother Leo Frances sent out a circular letter to all the sisters, inviting them to unite themselves in prayer and sacrifice on October 3 with those being sent to Peru in the name of the Community. "We shall offer this fast," she said, "together with our prayers, for a safe journey for the travelers and God's blessing on our first foreign mission." 3

With the aid of the Jerry Burke Travel Service of Kansas City, Kansas, Mother Mary Ancilla had made all the travel arrangements for the five missionaries and Sisters Mary Seraphine and Mary Baptista Ward, who were to accompany them. Each step of the journey would provide new experiences. With the exception of Sister Mary Seraphine and Sister Irene (before entering the Community), none had traveled by airplane before; and none except Sister Mary Baptista had made an ocean voyage.

After Mass and special prayer for travelers, all the sisters talked at breakfast (talking at meals was reserved for very special occasions in those days!), and at dinner the missionaries were served ham, French fries, and ice cream, while the rest of the Community had liver. By 11:20 all the sisters had congregated to bid them farewell. After Father Justin, Community chaplain, had administered a final blessing, the sisters intoned the new departure hymn written by Sister Rose Ann Colvin and put to music by Sister Rose Vincentia Tomlin. As the chapel bells pealed, the sisters entered their cars.

At the airport, the sisters tearfully made their farewells to family members and the sisters who had come to the airport. Of course, many photos were taken of this historic event.

In New York, the father and uncle of one of the novices of the Community, Sister Marie Elise Hays, met them. After dining at the Lisbon Lounge at the airport, they took them to Leo House, a residency on the west side of lower Manhattan.

During the next four days, the sisters toured many of the traditional sites of New York. In the Empire State Building, they visited the offices of National Catholic Relief Services and had a tour of the building while Sister Mary Seraphine visited with her cousin, Monsignor John McCarthy. During these days, some sisters also had the opportunity to visit with relatives, and they took advantage of the opportunity to see the Broadway show "Oliver." These six smiling nuns were impressed by the friendliness and generosity of so many people, including cabbies, bus drivers, policemen, and maids.
The evening before sailing, the group telephoned Mother Leo Frances, and each, in turn, talked with her. Once on board ship, they deposited their luggage and then took a tour of the Santa Elena, a Grace Line ship. After taking more pictures and having dinner, they happily went to bed.

The sisters were up early the next morning, and from the top deck, they watched the tugboat pull the Santa Elena out of port. They were delighted to discover that a Father Noon was aboard, and they were thus assured of having Mass each day of the voyage. They surely must have had mixed feelings as they sailed past the Statue of Liberty, but they were soon actively engaged in the life aboard ship, receiving instructions on the use of life vests and taking part in the fire drill and boat drill.

As on other days of the passage, they studied Spanish, practiced guitar, and sang Spanish songs. In the evening, on top deck, they faced south to their new home and prayed the Novena to our Incomparable Virgin and sang “Hail Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star.”

All along the way, they had the opportunity of visiting and sightseeing in various ports. Everywhere they went, they encountered religious, priests, and laity anxious to make them feel “at home,” giving them tours and/or taking them to their apartments or homes. In various degrees, they suffered from seasickness and the hot, humid air of the Caribbean, but, in general, they proved themselves to be good travelers.

One of the most fascinating experiences for them was passing through the locks of the Panama Canal. Sisters Mary Baptista, Irene, and Anne Denise were up early and watched from the bridge as guests of the captain.

On board, they shared community, celebrating Sisters Agnes, Anne Denise, and Mary Seraphine’s feast days with games, prizes, candy, nuts, and cookies. But they also made themselves members of the “family” on board the ship, participating in the celebrations, special dinners, and movies. More than once they were invited to eat at Captain Brennan’s table, and he seemed delighted by their conversations. When they declined the invitation to his cocktail party, the captain sent their refreshments to their cabin. The evening before they docked in Lima, Mr. Perry, the First Mate, took them for a tour of the ship from bow to stern and down under. He said that in his twenty-five years of service with the Grace Lines, he had never answered so many questions as on this trip.

On Tuesday, October 23, the missionaries finally found themselves in their new homeland. Typically, Callao, the port of Lima, was cool, misty, and overcast as the Santa Elena docked about 9:00 a.m. To the sisters’ surprise, there was a rather large delegation to meet them. Father Thomas Reilly, who had come down from Talara to welcome them, was on hand, as well as a newspaperman and two photographers. Also there were Señorita Laura Garrido Lecca, Secretary for the St. James Apostle priests; Señorita
Dolores Caballero from Catholic Relief Services; three gentlemen from the IPC; and two gentlemen from Caritas (Catholic Charities in Peru). The superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, two Salesian Sisters, and Mother Paula Marie O'Donnell, IHM, from Villa Maria had all come also to welcome the new missionaries.

With this group was a customs broker, who, along with the representatives from the petroleum company, greatly facilitated the passage through Customs. As a matter of fact, the sisters did not have to open one single suitcase. At the suggestion of the men from IPC, the larger suitcases containing things that would not be needed during their stay in Lima were taken directly to one of their ships, which would transport them and the trunks directly to Talara. They once again had great luck when, for formality only, they had to open a mere three trunks before entrusting them to "the Company."

While four of the sisters were attending to this business, the other three began what was to be the first of many tours in their two-week stay in Lima. Unrealistically, Father Reilly asked that two teachers travel to Talara immediately and start teaching the Monday following their arrival. But he soon learned that the Sisters of Charity are "masters of their own ship," and all continued in Lima until November 6. Four of them were housed with the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHMs) at Villa Maria, the other three at Villa Inmaculada Corazón, also with the IHMs.

It is amazing how much the sisters saw, heard, and did during these fourteen days. They did the usual tourist circuit: visiting the home and gardens of Santa Rosa de Lima, the Dominican Convent where St. Martin de Porres lived and worked; taking a guided tour through the Cathedral and the catacombs of San Francisco; and visiting the Church of the Nazarenes to see the famous painting of Señor de los Milagros.

They also had some not so usual experiences. Awed, they watched the sea of swaying humanity in the procession of Señor de los Milagros (the Lord of the Miracles) on October 28. On four days during October (18, 19, 21, and 28), huge processions are held in Lima in honor of Señor de los Milagros, the most venerated image in Peru. Hundreds of thousands of people line the streets while groups of perhaps twenty or more men, clothed in purple habits, carry the heavy platform with the seventeenth century image along the designated route. Both because of the weight of the platform and image and because of the honor of being a porter, these groups of men change off every quarter or half block. The people shower flower petals and lift up babies to be blessed by the Lord of the Miracles.

For this procession, the sisters had a prime view from the third floor windows of the convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. They marveled at how it took an hour and a half for the platform with the painting to pass just one block beneath them.
Another unusual encounter took place when they visited the Government Palace. Sister Mary Baptista was intent on seeing everything, including the President. In her Irish-accented English, she managed to communicate with people who understood not one word of English. As a result, the Sisters of Charity not only had a tour of the seat of government, but also got a personal interview of fifteen minutes with President Bellaunde, who proved to be “a typically Latin gentleman.” When they asked for his autograph, he not only gave them the desired signatures but also called for a photographer to have his picture taken with them.

In addition to all the sightseeing, from the very first day, the sisters were “about their business” of learning what would be necessary in their future work as teachers and nurses in Peru. The teachers visited three schools of the IHM Sisters in Callao the very afternoon of their arrival; that same evening they met with Mother Mary Trinita McGinnis regarding certification needs, government forms, and regulations. In the following days, they visited primary and secondary schools of all types, from the elite for the richer class to the most basic in the barrios around Lima. Impressed by their excellence, they not only observed classes and programs but also gained some hands-on experience teaching. Sister Irene tried her hand at kindergarten and inicial (pre-kindergarten).

The nurses likewise visited clinics and helped give vaccinations; they even accompanied sister nurses in visiting homes. In between, they visited a home for abandoned boys and various other works conducted by a myriad of religious orders and nationalities.

They were impressed by how many North American religious Communities were living and working in Lima and its environs. Besides those already mentioned, they came into contact with Maryknollers, Columbans, Marists, Sisters of the Precious Blood from O’Fallon, Missouri, and Carmelites. To their surprise, while visiting the main plaza, they met two Sisters of Mary, Mother of God, the Community formed by Cardinal McIntyre in Los Angeles, California. Their whole Community of seven sisters had moved to Lima the year before. They were, of course, delighted to meet members of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, the Community they had known in Santa Monica, California.

From these personal contacts in the clinics and schools, as well as from her experiences in a catechetical institute and the meeting of the superiors of U.S. Communities working in Lima, Sister Mary Seraphine was inclined to believe that the Community should accept a mission in Lima, too. Already the Columban priests were begging that the SCLs send two nurses to help staff two clinics they had in the barriadas (very poor sections of Lima). They hoped to build a hospital for the dying since many of the hospitals dismissed incurable patients to make room for those whom
they could successfully treat. The Columbans desired a Community of religious to work with them.

On November 3, 1963, Sister Mary Seraphine wrote Mother Leo Frances: “Actually the more we see of Lima the more desirable a house in this area becomes. So much, church-wise, government-wise and education-wise is here that we would greatly benefit from a foundation here. Friday all the American Sisters were here at a meeting and it was a wonderful lift for the whole group.” But nothing came of her suggestion.

Wherever they went, the sisters were impressed by the missionaries they met. Working long, hard hours in the most difficult of circumstances, they demonstrated great generosity and sacrifice. Sister Mary Baptista, in a letter to Mother Leo Frances, put it this way: “The thing that impresses me so much down here is the joy, the gaiety of the religious coupled with a courageous fortitude; nothing deters them. Their charity is so unlimited and selfless.” The sisters were overwhelmed by the poverty and sub-human living conditions of the people in the barrios and were awed by the sisters’ presence and sharing with them. Commenting on the conditions, Sister Irene wrote in her journal: “This area simply defies description . . . is nauseating . . . so overwhelming that you wish the whole community were working in Lima right now.” She thought the Irish Columban sisters were absolute saints and couldn’t believe them when they said they had become accustomed to the smells.

Surely this culture shock was only heightened by the very “normality” of life in the two villas where they were staying. There is frequent mention in the journal of parties (Halloween, St. Martin’s Feast), movies, special dinners, and even retreat Sunday with the sisters, as the IHMs and Dominicans sought to extend their best hospitality. The St. James priests also tried to show the sisters just how welcome they were, taking them to see their language school in Cieneguilla and coming to visit.

One of the things they learned during these visits was that Father Thomas Reilly, founder and pastor of Santa Rosa parish in Talara, was being replaced by Father David Becherer. An even greater surprise was hearing that Rose Reinecke, the Papal Volunteer in Talara, was returning to the United States even before they arrived! Her mother had become seriously ill, and she was therefore leaving earlier than planned. In fact, she came to visit them the evening of Sunday, November 3, and again the afternoon of November 4 to brief them on Santa Rosa School. She also informed them that the situation of the IPC seemed grave and that most of the North Americans expected to be leaving the country soon.

Having gone to the Foreign Office the morning of October 30 to get their papers and arrange to stay in Peru after their ninety-day visa expired, the sisters were legally ready to journey northward. Sister Irene claims in

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her journal that the seven sisters, plus Father Reilly, plus all their bags, plus the picnic lunch for the trip all fit comfortably in the Chevrolet four-wheel-drive field wagon. Arriving in Chimbote about 4:00, they stopped first to visit with the St. James priests, then were taken to the convent of the St. Joseph sisters. After having a nice dinner and visiting the school, they were happy to divide up and prepare for a night’s rest. One of the St. Joseph sisters and Sister Anne Denise spent the night with the Mercedarian sisters while the others slept on mattresses on the floor of the St. Joseph Convent.

The next day, Father Reilly and the sisters lunched at the Hotel Trujillo and later took a tour of a school operated by the Dominicans of Chicago. Reaching Monsefu by dusk, they met Father Doody at the church, who, in turn, took the sisters to the convent. The four Mercy sisters from Newfoundland were charming and told humorous stories of their experiences and what seemed to them quaint or superstitious customs of the people. The friendship established that evening lasted over a number of years.

After Mass in the sisters’ chapel the next morning, the travelers visited the church, which was in the process of being modernized. Among other things, this entailed the removal of some 40 statues, although according to Sister Mary Seraphine, there were some 180 statues. Having looked in on the school, Father Reilly and the seven sisters were once again on their way. Stopping by the wayside, they ate the lunch the Mercy sisters had prepared for them. Then they continued on to Piura. What was to have been a brief stop in that city was prolonged somewhat by a flat tire. While the sisters rested in the rectory, the priests looked for a garage. After saying goodbye to Father Flynn at the rectory, the travelers set out on the final part of their journey, heading west to Talara, arriving there at 5:30 the evening of November 8.

Chapter II Notes

1 After the 1968 SCL Chapter, many sisters chose to use their baptismal names instead of the religious names given by the Community. To avoid the confusion of name changes in mid-chapter, the sister’s name most recently used in Latin America is used throughout the book. The religious name is noted at first mention and where applicable.

2 Photo with caption, Leavenworth (KS) Times, December 4, 1966, A/SCL.

3 Mother Leo Frances Ryan to SCL Community, September 18, 1963, A/SCL.

4 Sister Mary Seraphine Skeehan to Ryan, November 3, 1963, A/SCL.

5 Sister Mary Baptista Ward to Ryan, November 3, 1963, A/SCL.

CHAPTER III: TALARA, AT LAST!

How history repeats itself! The reader will remember the program given by the Mother House sisters in the Wel-Well party in which comparisons were made between the first group of Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth missioned to Montana and the five being sent to Peru. What the authors didn’t know, of course, was yet another similarity. When the Montana group arrived in Helena, they were surprised to find that their promised quarters were not ready to receive them. The seven who arrived in Talara with Father Thomas Reilly about 5:30 the evening of Friday, November 8, 1963, must have been equally dumbfounded to discover that they were not yet expected. To his embarrassment, for some reason or other Father David Becherer, the new pastor, had not received the telephone communication.

Thus, after meeting the lay teacher, Margarita Hernandez, and several others in the parish house, the sisters were taken to the “convent” to leave their bags and then back to the rectory for a fresh fried crab dinner. Besides Father Becherer, other St. James priests from Piura and Negritos were present.

After dinner, Father Reilly drove them home via the tablazo, which overlooks the city of Talara. How lovely it appeared by night with all the lights glistening below them! Meanwhile, Father Becherer scrambled to acquire more beds. After depositing the three additional beds he had procured, he took Sisters Mary Baptista and Mary Seraphine to the guest quarters of the International Petroleum Company (IPC) in Punta Arena.

The next morning, after assisting at three Masses, “seven experienced muchachas,” as Sister Irene Skeehan dubbed them in her journal, set to work cleaning the house that previously had been occupied by Rose Reinecke, the former Papal Volunteer, and her housekeeper. Throughout the morning, Father Becherer frequently reappeared with all sorts of fresh fruit and other commodities, such as a hundred oranges, fifty lemons, and eggs. That afternoon, some ladies from Punta Arena who could speak English arrived to take Sisters Mary Seraphine and Agnes Klein shopping. In their absence, the other sisters located the trunk with the kitchen utensils and supplies. That night Sisters Mary Baptista and Mary Seraphine stayed with the other five in their new home.

How impossible it is to describe the immense support, moral and otherwise, that Sisters Mary Seraphine and Mary Baptista gave these beginning missionaries! It is yet more astounding when one realizes that the latter was seventy-six years old when she was undertaking yet again this role of missionary in a strange new land! She had been but sixteen-and-a-half years old when she came from Ireland to enter the Sisters of
Charity of Leavenworth, and she had served in so many capacities and in so many places in her new homeland.

Sister Mary Seraphine helped Sister Agnes in purchasing and ordering furniture and materials necessary for the house. She herself sewed the bedspreads and curtains, cooked, and otherwise animated and supported all the sisters. Sister Mary Baptista was indefatigable in her help both to the teachers and to Sister Agnes, the new director of the school. Later in the month, both Sisters Mary Seraphine and Mary Baptista accompanied the teachers and Father Becherer when they made catechism rounds, and Sister Mary Baptista again accompanied the five missionaries when they went to visit catechism classes taught on Sundays by young boys Father had been working with.

Father Reilly had promised that the sisters would be warmly welcomed, and so they were. Returning from Mass on their first Sunday there and always thereafter, the sisters were accompanied by hordes of children. That same day, two ladies visited the sisters to invite them to a reception on Thursday, and Father Charles Duffy, assistant pastor, also arrived that afternoon. For their part, after attending the evening Mass, the new missionaries accompanied the faithful in a procession around the block in honor of St. Martin de Porres. As in Lima, they were moved by the tremendous faith of the people.

When the sisters celebrated Founders' Day on November 11, they not only recalled the first arrival of the SCLs in Leavenworth over 100 years before, but they were also keenly aware of their privilege to be fundadoras (the founding group) in Peru. As special presents, they received red bathing suits and white swimming caps sent by Sisters Mary Louise Sullivan and Edward Mary Brown from Saint Mary College. In the evening, they enjoyed a lovely chicken dinner prepared by Sister Mary Seraphine, served at a table adorned with a white damask tablecloth recovered from one of the trunks.

Throughout the rest of the day, they had been occupied with many things. While Sisters Mary Baptista, Mary Seraphine, and Agnes met with Father Becherer in the morning, the others occupied themselves with unpacking and repacking things not immediately needed from the fifteen trunks that had arrived. They rapidly learned to save all boxes, sacks, and papers. Nevertheless, the gardener/handyman who was helping them recovered as treasures many of the things the sisters were discarding, such as broken statues and pictures as well as bottles they had found in the house.

When Sisters Mary Baptista, Mary Seraphine, and Agnes returned from their meeting in the parish, they promptly announced the plans that had been made. The teachers would go to the school in the morning to be introduced, and Sisters Blanche Marie and Irene would begin their work in the classroom the following day.
On November 12, the sisters donned their new off-white habits for the first time. Then, as promised, the teachers went to school to be introduced to the children. The nurses, accompanied by Sister Mary Seraphine, met with Father Becherer. They spent the afternoon in the “clinic” of the Cruzada de Amor (Society of Love), which was housed in a classroom behind the church, and they met the ladies who worked there daily distributing clothing and food to the poor.

When encouraging the Community to send sisters, Father Reilly had insisted that “the Religious can receive ‘on the job’ training in language and mentality and customs.” But it is hard to imagine just how the newly arrived gringas felt on beginning their new apostolates. All teachers starting anew in different surroundings experience a certain amount of anxiety. But what must have been the feelings of Sister Blanche Marie on November 13 as she entered the kindergarten of Santa Rosa with so little preparation for this new venture? How grateful she must have been for the companionship of Señora Vilma Alavedra, who had been taking Rose Reinecke’s place since that Kansan left for the States in early November. That afternoon, Sister Irene had her own “baptism of fire” as she began work in transicion (post-kindergarten for six-year-olds), again with the help of Señora Vilma.

In the morning, while Sister Blanche Marie was teaching, the other four went shopping for the first time. This encounter with the open-air market, seemingly so unhygienic to the newcomers, was quite an experience for the sisters. It, like other “firsts,” produced a kaleidoscopic image of their new home. They were impressed by how much of a religious nature appeared in the headlines and articles of the newspapers as well as how the “Catholic culture” was reflected in the saints’ names and images which appeared on trucks and in the stores.

Yet they quickly noted differences in the practice of religion. For example, the sisters were used to the quiet devotional aspect of the churches in the States. So they were a little disconcerted when all the people seemed to talk aloud, both before and after the Mass began and then again during Communion time as they lunged their way to and from the Communion railing. As mentioned, they admired the tremendous faith of the people and were profoundly moved by the processions on religious feast days. Another of their novel experiences occurred toward the end of their first full year in Talara. Visiting the cemetery on All Saints’ Day and the Vigil of All Souls, they witnessed another custom of the people for the first time. Whole families stayed at the graves of their deceased loved ones throughout the night; and the sisters were especially surprised to learn that they frequently brought along favorite foods and drinks of the deceased.
The sisters were touched profoundly by the poverty and misery they encountered, especially in the barrios (poor neighborhoods), where they met children who had never ever had either shoes or stockings. They felt indignation, too, at the condition of women, often regarded more as possessions of their husbands, meant to be available to them if and when they wanted to use them. They could scarcely believe that wives were so dominated that they needed permission from their husbands even to leave their homes and talk to the Madres. But they were even more amazed to discover how few were actually married and how often their partners, or maridos, might have commitments to more than one female partner. As the sisters came to know the people a bit more, they were both amused and frustrated by some of the superstitions they learned; for instance, that “eating the legs of crickets will make a child loquacious” or that “women ought not to receive the sacraments while menstruating.”

Even as the sisters observed and learned, they became conscious that they, too, were being scrutinized. From the first day that they went to the church to make their afternoon meditation and say the rosary, they were accompanied by hordes of interested boys and girls, who patiently waited for the sisters to finish praying so that they could then walk them back home. Someone soon told them how impressed the people had been when the Madres rode in the common conveyance when returning from the market with their purchases. No other gringos used this transportation, they were told.

When the sisters began teaching in Santa Rosa School in November 1963, there were 87 students in K-2, contrary to the 130 expected by Rose Reinecke. The sisters taught in Spanish with a Peruvian assistant. Cecilia Franco Tallero worked with Sister Irene in transicion; Leonor Ramos Fiestas accompanied Sister Blanche Marie in inicial and kindergarten; and Elena Navarrete de Hernandez helped Sister Agnes in her role as director of the school. Mercedes Infantes Silva served as secretary in the office, while Margarita Hernandez taught first grade until she married.

All the basic classes were taught in Spanish during the morning session, but the afternoon classes consisted of stories, songs, and games taught in English. According to Cecilia Franco Tallero, the students were very adept at understanding the sisters, who, despite their halting Spanish, soon conveyed their material with the aid of gestures and signs. Nevertheless, among the first changes that the sisters made was to limit the teaching of English to one half-hour class each day.

The very month that they began teaching, Sister Agnes began registrations for the following year. Since they wanted to have regular classes six hours a day, she and Father Becherer planned to open seven classrooms and registered accordingly. But in late February, when Father
John Thomas, superior of the St. James priests, paid a visit to Talara, he told Father Becherer that he could open only the four classrooms originally approved. So adjustments had to be made.

The energy and zeal of these first missionaries seemed unfailing. During the summer months (January through March in the coastal areas), when they might have been entitled to a little rest and recuperation, they undertook directing three sites of play and study in Talara in the mornings from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. and three others in the afternoons from 2:30 to 5:00 in San Pedro, the port city of Talara. The groups averaged anywhere from twenty-five to sixty children. Some young women from the Legion of Mary assisted them in this work even though their mothers at first demurred because they didn’t want their daughters’ skin to darken in the hot Talara sun.

The day after Sisters Blanche Marie and Irene began teaching, Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise began visiting San Pedro, having donned their fresh new nurses’ habits. They were not a little surprised to discover that in some homes every child had different last names. That afternoon, they attended a reception in Punta Arena, the compound for upper-level IPC employees. Then in the evening, they met with representatives from the Lions Club, who were planning to construct a clinic and donate it to the parish. This project, they said, would be ready for use March 7 of the following year, and amazingly enough, it was!

Meanwhile, the sister nurses visited from house to house in Cuemavaca and Leticia, two small, very poor settlements on the hillside above San Pedro, and then undertook a door to door solicitation in Punta Arena, begging for milk and other necessities for these extremely poor families. In early December, they opened a temporary clinic in what would later become the office of the school. They hoped that within a short time they could move to two rooms in the parish hall. Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise visited the IPC hospital; they were surprised to find how clean, well equipped, and well run it was. They likewise visited the Clinica Santa Maria, owned and operated by Dr. and Mrs. Saladarriaga just a short distance from the convent.

From the very beginning, Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise felt impelled to help in many more ways than nursing the sick. They began small clubs or groups not too unlike what would later be called “Health Promoters.” In these they helped women of the barrios learn basic health requisites and share this information with their families and neighbors. They met with each group every week. During the summer recess, they taught some young women the basics so that they would be able to help them in the clinic.

They also gave cooking and sewing lessons to some of the women. One of these women, Señora Victoria Tinedo de Mogollon, more than thirty years later, related what a great help this was to her and her family.⁴
Sister Rosalie would give her the material to make clothing; then she would sell this at very cheap prices to other poor persons. In this way, she could gain enough to feed and clothe her own children. Two of her daughters, Rosalee and Nely, continue to work with the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in a variety of ministries: in a parish pharmacy and the Well Baby Clinic, in reflexology, and as health and social promoters.

Besides all these activities, both Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise joined the teachers in giving catechism classes on Sundays and in the evenings, and also helped the doctors of IPC with their vaccination campaigns. They even participated in classes with the social workers of IPC.

On March 9, 1964, the two nurses had their first night call. Only a week later, they were called out in the early morning for a delivery in Cuernavaca, but they arrived too late to assist the mother. Nevertheless, the baby was named Maria Clementina in honor of the Madrecita.

They continued to be appalled by the conditions they encountered. Sister Rosalie wrote Mother Leo Frances in June 1964: “Mother, today we had our first delivery and you just can’t imagine what it was like.” She proceeded to describe the thirty-five-year-old woman in the midst of a one-room house made of cardboard walls, with dirt floor, no roof, and no bed. The sisters made a bed by cutting one of their wooden barrels in half, stretching planks of wood across it, and putting on an old straw mattress. But then they discovered that the mother had never given birth except in a kneeling position. So they helped her do so once again after sending the other children out of the house. The only clothes the baby had were what the sisters had brought with them. Fruitlessly, to be sure, Sister Anne Denise tried to give the drunken husband a lecture afterward.

One of the beliefs that the sisters had to struggle with was that “everyone who goes to the hospital dies!” The fact was that almost no one was taken to the hospital until it was almost too late and the patient stood very little chance of survival.

In spite of the long hours in the apostolate, the sisters developed a strong community spirit. Like other Sisters of Charity of this epoch, they arose shortly after 5:00 to pray and assist at an early Mass before having breakfast together and beginning their work. Apparently, they quickly adapted to the noonday break, returning home about 11:30 for dinner. But contrary to the custom of taking a siesta, they used the midday break for meditation, returning to their work in the afternoon at 2:00. At 4:45 they assembled for rosary before having supper together at 5:00.

Even their evenings were not free, for they almost immediately began lessons in Spanish at 6:30 with Laura Bardalles, a teacher at Immaculata High School. These continued until 9:00; even their precious recreation of
half an hour was undertaken in Spanish! Exhausted, they recited Compline together at 9:00 and, in turn, fell into their beds.

During the school year and the summer, they took regular classes from Señora Elena Hernandez, a Spanish teacher from the IPC compound, and Sister Angelica, a Dominican sister from Immaculata High School.

Perhaps they were just too busy to get homesick, but the many letters they received from their families and the sisters in the States kept them very much in touch. In a letter of November 21, 1963, just thirteen days after their arrival in Talara, Sister Irene remarked on this: “None of us really feel very far from home which, we think, is a tribute to our wonderful community spirit; still, it is very exciting when the mail comes because nearly every day one or the other or all of us receives a letter from one sister or from one of our community houses, and we all enjoy this! We are grateful to you!”

Sister Mary Seraphine commented along the same line: “I think many who have gone to Montana have felt it (the distance, that is) more keenly.”

Perhaps it was two deaths that made the sisters sense their isolation more acutely than anything else. On Friday, November 22, Father Becherer entered the church where Sisters Agnes and Mary Seraphine were praying to tell them of the assassination of President Kennedy. Sister Mary Seraphine, in writing about this, mentions how keenly they felt the language barrier at this time. But she also related how the Peruvian people commiserated with them. When meeting them at church or on the streets, they were prompt to offer their sympathy. Some even came to the house to offer their sympathy. The sisters were touched by the fact that the Peruvians came in great numbers to the Mass offered for the late President, most of them wearing clothing of mourning.

Only a day later, Sister Rosalie received news of the death of her sister Gertrude. And the sisters identified with her loss. Sister Mary Seraphine noted, “Believe me we have a solid-gold missionary in this little sister who received the word with that sweet dignity of hers and who has gone on her busy new routine with outward calm and all her usual kindness.”

There being no other choir available, the sisters themselves sang several high Masses for President Kennedy and for Gertrude. Perhaps this prompted them to begin choirs in both Santa Rosa and San Pedro within a few months.

Having decided that part of being in a new culture was leaving behind their own national holidays and adopting those of their new country, the sisters went to school as usual on Thanksgiving Day. They were, however, pleased when the priests invited them to a turkey dinner that night. But they were not a little dismayed when “the bird” appeared on the table whole—head, feet and all!

At the end of the month, thirty-one crates arrived from Callao, thanks to IPC. The sisters had been anxiously awaiting them, especially longing
for the washing machine that was in one of them. They had very soon learned that their white habits needed to be washed every single day. Opening and unloading the crates and receiving the car that Father Becherer had procured for them from IPC must have made this weekend seem more like Christmas than Thanksgiving. Nevertheless, they had ample reasons to give thanks too.

True to Father Reilly’s promise that the North American priests of the area would attend to the sisters’ spiritual needs, Father Becherer and Father Charles Duffy heard confessions, and Father Becherer gave a conference for their first day of recollection. They almost always had Benediction and a conference on succeeding ones too.

There was always something to laugh about, sometimes involving the lack of their facility with the language. On returning from Mass on November 20, the sisters discovered two signs on the small door to their house. One of the signs said “Pulpas Yanquis, a su casa,” and they thought someone was taunting them for being fat. At first they had a good laugh, but perhaps they experienced just a bit of fear when someone explained to them that the sign meant “Fat Yankees, Go Home,” and that this was a sign of the Communist presence there in Talara. Another time, the following year, they found a “for sale” sign posted in front of their house.

But most often the mirth could continue, even in the retelling. On one occasion, one of the sisters went to visit one of the state schools, but she confused the numbers. When she arrived at School #26 by mistake, she found herself invited in to participate in a program prepared for the director’s birthday. Much to her confusion, she was treated as an honored guest! Another time, Sister Rosalie, traveling to San Pedro in a colectivo (public transportation vehicle), sat in a seat with fish piled in an open container beneath it. As a result, in the first house she and Sister Anne Denise visited, the lady insisted on washing and ironing Sister’s habit—while it was still on her.

The relationship between the North American, Canadian, and Irish priests and sisters serving in Peru was warm and welcoming. During the first years in Talara, the sisters frequently had Mass in the convent and even more frequently served visiting priests breakfast or dinner. These included priests from nearby and far—from Lima, Cuzco, and even the United States. In April, Abbot Cuthbert MacDonald from the Benedictine Monastery in Atchison, Kansas, arrived by plane for a short visit. He even brought along cake mixes for the sisters! There were so many visitors at one point that Sister Irene commented that there was “never a lack of hungry clergy.”

But such hospitality was not all one-sided. The priests, too, as indicated earlier, invited the sisters to celebrate feast days with them in the rectory
Sisters open packages at Welcoming Party

The sisters begin studying Spanish with Sra. Hernandez
Early missionaries after the change of habit

First Communion Day
Sister Rosalie Mahoney visiting in San Pedro

Sister Anne Denise Shea and loyal volunteers in the clinic — Dr. Luis More on the right
Sister Agnes Klein and students at Santa Rosa

Sister Josephine Bustos teaching at Santa Rosa
and occasionally took them on outings. For example, Father Charles Duffy took the sisters with him when he visited the priests in El Alto and Los Organos and later had a picnic on the beach. Before they had their own car, Father Becherer was generous in offering his so that the sisters could take advantage of nearby beaches or go to a nearby farm for a hamburger fry occasionally. But before long, the sisters had their own car, a Volkswagen double cabin pickup with benches and guardrail behind. So the communal outings continued.

The sisters must have commented repeatedly on how small the world was! There were, of course, North Americans working in Talara with the oil companies. While Sisters Mary Seraphine and Mary Baptista were still with the sisters, they and the three teachers were invited to Negritos for dinner with a Mr. Howard Riley. They discovered that his mother lived in Butte, Montana, hometown of Sisters Mary Seraphine and Anne Denise! The two sister nurses had gone to a meeting with Dr. Asenjo and members of the Cruzada de Amor. Some of these women gave them the latest newspapers and magazine coverage of President Kennedy's assassination.

Despite the fact that they would be still more limited in living space, with three sisters sharing one bedroom, the sisters had decided to convert the room near the kitchen into a chapel. By December 9, just the day before Sisters Mary Seraphine and Mary Baptista left for the United States, the sisters received the altar for the new chapel. In the following days, in addition to their usual activities, the sisters busied themselves making drapes and ironing linens for the new chapel. By the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, they were all ready when Father Becherer brought the Blessed Sacrament.

Before bidding Sisters Mary Seraphine and Mary Baptista goodbye, the sisters made a tape to send home with the travelers. There must have been more than one tear shed as they sent these treasured companions of the previous three months on their way. But they could report to Mother Leo Frances and the Community that the sisters were well established. Indeed, they could relate having seen bulldozers clearing the site of the new clinic as they went up to the airport.

Needless to say, the sisters thought frequently of Sisters Mary Seraphine and Mary Baptista in the following days, especially as they visited the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day.

Fortunately, they were soon busy with preparations for Christmas. Despite their willingness to adapt, the sisters did miss traditional customs from home. Since at that time Christmas trees were not a part of the Peruvian culture, they created their own Christmas tree, wrapping a discarded fluorescent light with brown paper and attaching branches off their pine tree. Then they decorated it with red and white popcorn, a few bulbs, and
a silver star. Finally, they placed the gifts received from the Dominican sisters and several families and individuals beneath it.

When it was discovered that the Christmas Eve Mass would be in the new parish hall, Sisters Agnes and Blanche Marie spent much time preparing the hall. On being informed that they were expected to sing the Mass not only at Santa Rosa but also at San Pedro, they quickly formed two groups. When all had returned home, they had their “Santa Claus,” each receiving a red felt stocking full of goodies and a cup of cocoa.

The next day, after preparing breakfast for themselves and the priests, they went to the parish for the distribution of toys. At least five hundred children with their assorted parents and muchachas awaited them. According to the number of tickets each child had received for every time they had assisted at Mass and catechism classes, each child was allowed to choose a gift. What a clamor! Furthermore, each sister soon had children and mothers without tickets hanging on her, begging for a toy. Many of those who came for this distribution had never come to church, but the magic word “toy” brought scores of people, hoping against hope that they might receive something.

After that ordeal, the sisters postponed their afternoon prayers and then immediately recited Compline before setting about the final preparations for their first Christmas dinner in Peru. It may have been a Peruvian hour of dining (about 8:00), but it was a typical American dinner of turkey, dressing, cranberries, mincemeat pies, and all the other trimmings.

On January 3, 1964, the sisters realized that they had had their first burglary the night before. Having become too complacent, they had failed to lock the door to the laundry, and, as a result, three irons “had walked away.” Five days later, they discovered that they had again had “a visitor or visitors.” This time they filed a report with the police but were remorseful when their handyman came the evening of the ninth and informed them that he had been beaten and questioned all day. The police had tried to force him to admit being the one who had robbed the sisters. By January 10, someone brought them a two-month-old dog. But what good was it to have a dog if one of the sisters tells it to keep quiet when it barks during the night! About a week later, Sister Anne Denise got up and told “Mini” to stop barking, only to discover later that a girdle had been taken from the clothesline.

The interruption of news from the States was always a blow, but even more so when the postal strike lasted throughout the Christmas season. Even when resolved, there was soon another one. This time when it ended, the sisters had a “sweet surprise” from the States. Someone had sent them a “care package” of goodies. At best, the postal service was intermittent; again in February there was another strike. When the mail did not come
through, they had other sources of news. Throughout the summer months, there were many sisters and priests visitors.

To have a respite from the heat and the daily routine, the sisters accepted the invitation of Father Richard Walsh to visit his mission in Pueblo Nuevo, a village about two hours distant. They also took several short outings to Punta Sal, a seaside resort about an hour and a half north of Talara, or visited other religious in Piura, the capital of the department, about two hours east of them. Talara friends also loaned them respite areas or took them on excursions. One fine day "Hammi" (Mr. Hammerburg), a friend, invited them to go deep-sea fishing on his yacht. Although they enjoyed the outing immensely, they were ill-prepared for the consequences of their time under the sun, on the sea, and with the ocean breezes. All returned home with bad sunburns.

The Dominican Sisters of Immaculata High School continued to befriend them, taking the Charities along for a dip in the Pacific and inviting them to a Mardi Gras party. These same sisters later shared an eight-course meal in Sullana with them as their special guests. Quite a contrast both to their American customs and the conditions around them!

A third large consignment of supplies arrived in January, thanks to IPC. Unpacking took time. What with their playground activities and other work, they soon realized the necessity of looking for a replacement for Olga, their former cook, but with the arrival of a new washing machine from Lima, Isabel Pardo Julca, their laundress, assumed the kitchen work as well.

The retreat they made in Talara their first February would also be something that none of the five would ever forget! They had arranged with two St. James priests, Fathers Charles Duffy and David Higgins, to give their conferences as well as celebrate Mass and have Benediction for them. But due to the crowded conditions in the house and the heat of February, the sisters decided to go to the beach on the afternoon of the third day. That might have been a good idea, but they overstayed their time and consequently "looked like boiled lobsters." Sister Blanche Marie, with her auburn hair and light complexion, received an especially bad bum. The sisters never again tried to make retreat in Talara during the summer months.

On the Feast of the Annunciation, besides renewing their vows, the school sisters began their first full year of classes. The numbers were such that they first arranged to have two sections, one for morning, another for the afternoon. They were therefore disconcerted to learn that, as of May 1, a six-hour school day would be mandatory. However, the sisters were grateful that the last of the new school desks arrived on April 29, so everyone could be accommodated.
The new school year having begun, both nurses and teachers began catechism classes in four different areas on Sundays. At first they found the chaos a bit alarming, but they decided that they would have to adjust to what appeared to them as a lack of system and "do as the Peruvians do." That same week, the sister teachers began religion classes in School #27, the public school just across the street from their convent. Thus they added to their other duties three and a half hours of catechetical work in the public schools of Talara and San Pedro during the week, as well as classes in Santa Rosa and San Pedro on Sundays.

On April 15, Sister Anne Denise received the sad news of her father’s death. First via a ham operator in Lima and later by a telephone call from the Community officers, she learned that he had died in Butte, Montana, the previous Monday night. Times like these made the distances seem great indeed.

May 3 proved to be another full day. First they had retreat with all-day Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament until late afternoon. Then the sisters went to the Confirmation ceremonies, experiencing for the first time the Confirmation of infants. After assisting at two Masses, they attended the blessing of the parish hall and school. As though that were not enough, they hosted an open house in their classrooms!

Within a few days, the nurses were again begging door to door in Punta Arena, collecting cans of milk for the infants of Cuernavaca and Leticia. This project of the Cruzada de Amor netted 250 cans of milk for needy families. Later in the month, the two nurses and Father Becherer met with social service workers to make plans for a program for the parish.

The teachers discovered that "free days" were not necessarily free. On "Teachers’ Day," for instance, the students came to greet them, giving them many hugs, flowers, and gifts. Before beginning their mid-term holiday of two weeks on July 24, teachers and students had a program for the parents. It started at 5:30 (American time) but some of the parents did not arrive until the last act (Peruvian time).

During the July break, the sisters decided to take a short trip to visit the Mercy sisters in Monsefu, who had given them hospitality on their trip northward to Talara the year before. Before returning home, they did some shopping in Chiclayo and visited some of the haciendas nearby. In early August, some of the sisters from Chiclayo and the Hacienda Cayalti near Monsefu returned their visit, coming to Talara.

The following months passed in much the same way, with daily work, meetings, outings, and celebrations. There seemed to be a constant stream of visitors, and since it was not yet the custom for priests to concelebrate Mass, they frequently had more than one Mass offered in the convent, with the usual breakfasts and entertaining following. Among the visitors
was Laura Garrido Lecca, who had been of such help to them when they first arrived in Lima.

There were, of course, commemorations of all feasts and anniversaries, though not usually in the triple form given the birthday of Sister Agnes. As director of the school, she was honored there; then the Legion of Mary had a small celebration in her honor in the parish hall; and, of course, the sisters celebrated with her.

In September, the sisters experienced their first strong shakes or earth tremors. One time they were out on a picnic; at another time, the sister teachers were in classes in School #26. To be sure, this was a bit alarming for them. Through the following years, they experienced other tremors, but usually they were not of a devastating nature. However, in December 1970 part of the wall surrounding the convent was destroyed and considerable damage to the church was done.

While the sister nurses continued to give medical attention in their clinic and distribute clothing and medicine sent from the United States, they had an unexpected and most pleasant surprise on September 16. Dr. Luis More, a young doctor in Talara, came to volunteer his services in the clinic. Within the week, he had decided to make a commitment of an hour a day, setting up a consultorio in the sacristy. His wife, a dietitian, also spoke with the patients, advising them as to proper eating habits to regain and maintain their health. On Sundays, Dr. More took the sisters to Tamarindo, a village just off the road to Sullana. He has remained a friend and collaborator of the Sisters of Charity throughout nearly forty years, always more than willing to attend to their own health needs or those special cases they occasionally send him.

In October, the Lions Club officially presented the clinic to the parish. There for the occasion was that organization’s international president from, of all places, Wichita, Kansas. By November 5, Dr. Tomas Arizaga also began work in the clinic.

A very important development occurred in October when more or less regular radio contacts began, thanks to Father Stitz in Tonganoxie, Kansas, Dr. Powell in Topeka, Kansas, and the goodness of some of the IPC personnel. Mother Leo Frances, members of the General Council, and others were able to converse quite clearly from Father Stitz’s set. Sister Mary Dennis (Mary Margaret) Shea, sister of Sister Anne Denise, and other sisters in Topeka made contact via Dr. Powell’s ham radio. Sister Irene’s brother was likewise able to keep in contact in this way. When Sister Agnes Marie Horner at Saint Mary College and then Sisters Irmina Scheetz and Hildegarde Eberwein got their licenses as ham radio operators, the contacts were even more frequent.
On November 8, the sisters had dinner in Negritos, and, although the celebration was really for the Feast of Christ the King, patron of the parish church, the sisters tagged it an anniversary celebration. The following day, the priests in Talara had an elegant dinner in honor of the sisters’ first anniversary in Talara. Besides the Talara priests, those from Negritos and Father Ed Connelly from Castilla were present to help celebrate. The latter brought a Gene Autry movie for entertainment!

Thus came to an end a blessed and happy year in “the garden city,” or “the city of petroleum,” whichever one chose to call Talara. It was the beginning of a long and diverse presence there by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

Chapter III Notes

1 SCL Newsletter (Xavier, KS), April 14, 1963, A/SCL.
2 Dr. Jose Carlos Alfaro Bardales (student in Inicial in 1963 and first grade in 1964), interview by author, February 2003, Talara, Peru.
3 Cecilia Franco Tallero, interview by author, February 2003.
4 Señora Victoria Tinedo de Mogollon, conversation with author, Talara, August 1998.
5 Sister Mary Clementine (Rosalie) Mahoney to Mother Leo Frances Ryan, June 12, 1964, A/SCL.
6 Sister Marie Colombiere (Irene) Skeehan to Ryan and SCL Community, November 21, 1963, A/SCL.
7 Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan to Ryan, November 19, 1963, A/SCL.
8 Sheehan to Ryan, November 25, 1963, A/SCL.
9 Sheehan, “Talara House History,” August 10, 1964, A/SCL.
10 Department: a political division in Peru, similar to a state in the United States.
11 In Peru teachers are honored on July 6 by students and parents. Often a program is given in their honor, refreshments (sometimes a dinner) are served, and presents are given to the teachers.
12 Dr. Luis More, interview by author, Talara, 2000.
In the years that followed, life was in continual flux for the sisters. Once having begun the work in Talara, it was immediately evident that there was much to do.

As indicated earlier, the school sisters and nurses had taken on many additional activities: teaching catechism in the public schools as well as in the parish on weekends, supervising playground programs for children and summer courses for young women during the summer months, taking censuses, and begging from door to door for the poor.

In 1965 Sister Anne Denise Shea had begun a program for teaching reading and writing to young people of the barrios who had not had the opportunity for schooling. The sisters paid a young woman the equivalent of about ten dollars to teach eleven students, using the classrooms of Santa Rosa School during the two-and-a-half-hour noon break when the classrooms weren’t being used by Santa Rosa students. Within two years, the number of students in this program had grown to forty-two, taught by lay teachers in three classes.

Sisters Anne Denise and Rosalie Mahoney had also set up a rotating fund to loan to people so that they would have enough money to put roofs on their houses or make other improvements.

All of these programs and activities stretched the sisters in multiple and diverse directions, and it soon became clear that they needed to decide priorities. But how were they to decide?

One decision was far-reaching. It had become evident that it would be far better if someone could dedicate herself to preparing the teachers in the public schools to teach catechism. This would mean releasing one of the sisters to direct development of the catechetical program full-time. Sister Irene Skeehan, therefore, left behind teaching in the transicion in 1965 and began this work. In classes of three to six teachers, she presented the same material that they would later themselves teach. Given these teachers’ lack of preparation in catechetics, she realized that her instructions needed to be basic and simple. Begging materials of the sisters in the States, she said, “I myself have at this time forty-seven teachers under instruction. I try to give these teachers all the teaching aids that they will need to teach a particular lesson. For this reason I need not only a variety of pictures, but a good number of the same pictures.”

Sister Irene translated the “Jesus and I” charts that were used in the States at that time and numbered them to go with the Oklahoma religion program, which she also translated. As a result of her translation of these materials, this catechetical adaptation was used in various parts of the diocese, even all the way up to Tumbes on the border with Ecuador.
Instituting this program proved to be an immense relief to the sisters at Santa Rosa, who had been teaching religion in the public schools after already having spent six hours in their regular classrooms. Sister Blanche Marie was also freed somewhat of classroom duties so that she could visit homes of the children whom she and others would be preparing for First Communion. However, she continued teaching catechism on Sunday in Talara. Sister Josephine (Mary Anselma) Bustos, who had arrived on March 30, 1965, just in time for the beginning of the school year in Santa Rosa, took on the catechism classes in San Pedro.

In 1966, when it appeared that additional preparation would be helpful for the direction of the catechetical programs, Sister Frances (Ann Louise) Turk came to Talara after finishing language school in Cuernavaca, Mexico. She replaced Sister Irene so that the latter could attend a special course in catechetics in Santiago, Chile, as well as a course in the pastoral of catechetics in Lima. About this same time, Sister Blanche Marie left Talara to join three other Sisters of Charity who were founding a new mission in Coripata, Bolivia. (see Chapter XIV)

From the beginning, the sisters had interested themselves in the condition of women. As early as November 1964, Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise had begun classes for women in San Pedro and Cuernavaca. They socialized with their students in cocoa and bread sessions following the classes, and they had parties and outings for those who helped them in the clinic and school.

In 1965 Sisters Rosalie, Anne Denise, and Agnes Klein began religion classes in a night school for women. Continuing with these efforts for women the following year, Sister Rosalie began cooking, sewing, and other classes in a part of the Health Center that had been loaned to her for that purpose. When support was withdrawn there, she moved the classes to the parish. Sister Rosalie also began classes in health and community life for four groups of women and one for girls in Cuernavaca.

Another project that involved the women was to start a cooperative. In April, Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise went with Father George Emerson to San Lorenzo, near Sullana, to learn about cooperatives. By the next month, they had organized such a program in Leticia, having purchased rice, sugar, and other foodstuffs.

Seeking to gain further information and contacts, the two nurses attended a meeting in Lima with other North Americans working in the medical and social service fields and attended short courses in Lima and Piura. In fact, Sister Rosalie spent a week in Piura working with Public Health. Both worked with some of the social assistants of the IPC, and they attended the meeting of the Social Workers of Northern Peru held at Punta Arena in July 1965.
Meanwhile, Santa Rosa School continued to grow. Although Sister Agnes actually administered the school, for the first three years Señora Elena Navarrete de Hernandez, the director whom Sister Agnes replaced, signed all official forms. Finally, in 1966, after many trips to regional offices and filling out multiple forms, Sister Agnes was officially named Director of Santa Rosa School. The following year, she was even promised that the government would soon begin paying the salaries of three teachers. By that time, in 1967, there were 320 students in 7 classrooms taught by 6 lay teachers and 2 sisters, Sisters Josephine Bustos and Joseph Therese Mader.

When Sister Joseph Therese arrived in 1967, she not only taught part of the day but also worked in a variety of programs, preparing teachers, working with parents’ groups, and preparing teachers of religion with Sister Frances Turk. She also worked with Sister Rosalie in community education and a program for the formation of leaders in the barrios surrounding San Pedro. Groups were formed in which the people were encouraged to talk about their problems and, viewing them in the light of the Gospels, try to find solutions. These groups were not unlike the later Base Ecclesiastical Communities (CEBs). Sister Joseph Therese, especially, was indignant with “the company” (IPC) that owned all the land and property rights and, as she said, “the people themselves.” Unfortunately, her work was cut short by back injuries sustained in a car accident that required her return to the United States.

In 1969 Sister Marcianna Trujillo taught a weeklong catechetics workshop to the students of fourth and fifth year at Immaculata High School and also gave a workshop for teachers and parents with Father Sanchez and Father Gallo. Thus, not only was the challenge to form a stronger laity being met, but more catechists were available to help the priests and sisters.

The sister nurses continued their clinic work in Talara and their visiting in the port of San Pedro and settlements of Leticia and Cuernavaca. In 1965 the sisters recorded that they had made 1319 visits to the needy and had cared for some 1712 at the clinic. As late as the year 2000, Dr. Luis More still laughed as he related some of their experiences. For instance, visiting in one home and noting the deplorable hygienic conditions in which the family was living, the sisters decided to do something about it. When they left, the house was in order and as clean as they could make it. What a surprise it was on their next visit to find it again in complete disarray! Remonstrating with the woman of the house, they were yet more taken aback when she informed them that she had been waiting for them to come back and clean it! Another time the sisters approached Dr. More, very chagrined by their encounter with a woman who had come to them for help in the clinic. Their problem was that this “widow,” who supposedly
had lost her husband ten years before, had four to six children with her—all of them younger than ten years of age!

In efforts to promote social action, the sisters planned with the men to take a census in Cuernavaca and San Pedro. Men from the area carried it out. The sisters also supported these men in their efforts to pressure the mayor and assistant governor to fulfill their campaign promises to bring water and light into these barrios. Through the help of John Rohrer in Kansas City, a friend of the sisters, the Community in Leavenworth was able to obtain and ship a cement mixer. The sisters in Talara then donated it to help the people build homes of cement or brick in the barrios of Cono Norte, the area adjacent to Talara where San Pedro and other settlements were located.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, barrels and trunks continued to arrive from the Mother House. The clothing and medical supplies contained in them were used in a variety of ways to help the people. Sometimes they were simply given to the very poor. More often, the sisters tried to promote a sense of personal dignity, allowing the people to buy them for a nominal fee, sometimes conducting remates (auctions) in the various settlements and then using the funds gained to help the people in other ways. By 1981, no longer able to count on the assistance of the IPC and Grace Lines, the sisters decided that these shipments no longer warranted the cost and work involved.

The priests were anxious to develop the social service and outreach branch of their work within the parish. So, in 1968, after three years of teaching at Santa Rosa, Sister Josephine was asked to coordinate this program, partially supported by the Cruzada de Amor. Working at first out of a social service office next to the church and later working out of the convent, she developed a rotating program to loan money to the poor. In this way people could buy medicines, which otherwise would have been beyond their means, and could repay sister in installments. At the same time, she assisted with the Well Baby Clinic, which had been established in San Pedro, and did other parish ministry.

Sister Josephine and the nurses who succeeded Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise continued to integrate health care and social programs. Sister Ann Louis LaLonde worked in Talara for a short time in 1969, as did Sister Janet Cashman in 1976 and 1977. Sisters Janet and Joan Kilker began giving classes for Health Promoters. They also had sex education classes and presented the Billings Method as an alternate means for "responsible parenthood and family planning." While in Negritos, Sister Joan also set up the first parish botiquines (pharmacies) in the early 1990s.

When Sister Mary Patricia Kielty began working in Talara in 1989, she continued and augmented these programs. She solicited the aid of Pro Vida of Lima (an agency of the Peruvian Bishops) and arranged that the women administering the programs could sell medicines to the poor, often
at about half the price of that in private pharmacies. As time passed, Sisters Joan and Mary Patricia helped the women working in these pharmacies to receive continuing education. Some of them later even went to other areas, such as Piura, Sullana, Tambogrande, and even to Chalaco, to give classes to other women.

Other developments in recent years have been the promotion of the use of herbal medicine and reflexology. Sisters Maria Orozco and Laura Rumiche were instrumental in introducing programs in reflexology and training others to give it. Sisters Mary Patricia Kielty and Maria Orozco have also provided opportunities for further courses in this and other alternative methods of health care. Today, in 2003, five centers for this more natural healing and curative method exist in Talara and Negritos. These treatments are much cheaper, and the people donate what they can for the services; herbal medicines are also within the possibilities of the poor.

From the beginning, the sisters had discovered that with so many people living together, conditions were ripe for promiscuity. Indeed there was a lot of it. One of the shocking conditions which the sisters encountered were the large number of "bad houses," as Sister Blanche Marie had called them, writing to her father in early 1964. As the sisters struggled to understand the causes (low esteem of women, little or no education, scarce training in Christian principles, and a lack of employment), they were also faced with the consequences for the women and children.

Faced with the dire poverty of the children, the sisters bought shoes for boys who had never had them before and didn't even know how to put on the stockings they were given. They bought school supplies and material for uniforms in Piura, where these items were cheaper, then resold them at nominal prices.

Over the years the sisters have been able to help in many other ways. For example, using money from the Ryan Fund, they bought a microphone and earphones for a classroom for the deaf in the public school system. Working with a human rights group, they bought soap for some thirty-seven prisoners. Moreover, as they were always anxious to include the laity, they worked with Mercedes Chiappe, technician and wife of a prominent optometrist, so that the poor could have their eyes tested at a minimal fee. Then, if the prescription matched lenses on hand, these special patients would be provided with glasses donated by the Lions Clubs of Kansas.

Not surprisingly, the political-economic situation of the country has affected the work done by the sisters over the years. In October 1968, General Juan Velasco Alvarado overthrew the democratically elected Fernando Belaunde Terry. The unsettled conditions of Lima did not immediately affect those living in the north. However, the program of the
new military dictatorship brought about extensive agrarian reforms and also nationalized various banks, mining, and petroleum companies.

With the exit of IPC from Talara, shipments from the United States became much more costly, and with the introduction of posta medicas (public clinics), there was no longer need for a parish clinic. Informed of this, the Lions Club turned over the building to the parish and indicated that it was free to use it in any way it cared to. At different times, plans included using it for a library, for cooking and sewing classes, and for offices for catechists and social workers. In recent years, the edifice has housed the parish kindergarten.

Although Sisters Rosalie and Josephine continued to work with the Well Baby Clinic in San Pedro, nurses from the state hospital began giving talks in the Cono Norte and directing the people to the state health center. As a consequence, Sisters Rosalie and Josephine began working more in Negritos, the fishing community less than a half hour from Talara. Some of their activities are related in the chapter on Negritos.

As a result of “El Niño” in 1983, many lost their homes, businesses, and fishing boats. The infrastructure of the city was gravely damaged, including the drainage system, the potable water system, and streets. Tons of sand washed down into the city from the hills surrounding Talara. Homes that had precariously perched on the hillside in Cuernavaca and Leticia were carried away. The Belco Company, a Belgian operation, lost $1 million dollars of equipment in one night alone, and the Agua Marina Company was carried out to sea. Consequently, many people lost their jobs, even as prices tripled.

The sisters themselves sought to cope with the situation with ingenuity and grace. By means of tubes from the roof, they were able to store water in the upstairs bathrooms and also in three barrels just outside their patio. They even devised a method of showering there in the evenings. By going to the market each day, they were able to buy sufficient food, though not of much variety.

During this time, Sister Elena (Helen Therese) Mack and the two novices, Sisters Nelyda Clavijo and Susana Cordova, moved into Santa Rosa, Talara, after having abandoned the novitiate house in Pachitea. The sisters in Talara adapted their schedules, helping to give the novices classes several times a week, even while coping with the difficulties of living. The novices, of course, helped out in whatever way possible. In the face of the continuing rains, it was good to have six extra hands. As Sister Joan Kilker commented in a letter to Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, “Most of the people including us are living a survival type situation of trying to find food to buy each day and water.”
Sister Josephine received foodstuffs sent to Talara for the Civil Defense group as she had a group in the parish that were well organized to help the most needy. Likewise, the sisters helped to buy food for some ten neighborhood kitchens that opened. With the aid that came to them from the SCL Community and the donation sent by the Franciscan Sisters of Maria Reina in Lima, the sisters were able to help some of the victims of the torrential rains. Because of this help, some families bought plywood and put roofs on. The sisters even had enough to give aid to the state school, Santa Rosa, where Sister Donna Jean Henson was teaching. Obviously, families of these poor students could not finance the repairs by themselves, but with this donation at least some of the needed maintenance was carried out.

As conditions continued to worsen, the people became even more desperate. Even if they could go to the state clinics or another doctor for a consultation, they often could not buy the medicines prescribed. The sisters, therefore, began making loans of up to half the cost of the medicine. To keep this operative, Sister Josephine developed a strict record-keeping system, noting the names of the persons, the amount borrowed, and how and when it was paid back.

In the late 1980s, as hyperinflation raged in the country, reaching 3000 percent annually in the last years of President Alan Garcia's term, the people again suffered greatly. The sisters helped in whatever way they could. Sister Agnes Klein mentioned that there were up to 400 enrolled in the "well baby and prenatal program" in San Pedro at this time. The sisters bought school supplies and sold them at minimal prices, at times not even asking the people to pay back all of that.

Sister Agnes also indicated that, thanks to a donation of Sister Ann Barton's sister, she had finally opened a library in the parish hall. This was the fulfillment of a dream of several years, for in 1988 she had obtained permission from Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, to develop a library. At first she had hoped to use a former market area, and one of the bookstores had even donated about $100 worth of books. Other groups helped her collect books.

The following year, Sister Agnes tried to organize a library and a lunch program for about fifty children and some older people in San Pedro. It was planned that Sister Ann Barton would assume the responsibility for these when Sister Agnes left for the United States after having spent twenty-seven years of dedicated service in Peru.

In 1990 Alberto Fujimori was elected President and shortly thereafter made drastic economic "adjustments." After this so-called "Fujishock," Sister Mary Patricia Kielty became responsible for nine comedores (food kitchens) that had recently been established with funding from Petro Peru.
the state-owned oil company. The very month that Petro Peru’s money terminated, International Marina gave sister $500 to continue the work. Caritas (Catholic Charities) also assisted by donating foodstuffs at a later date. Although the number of food kitchens were reduced to five, Sister Mary Patricia continued working with these kitchens throughout the cholera epidemic of 1991, when much of the fish had to be destroyed and the people consequently had even less to eat. In 1992 she instituted a leadership program for the women leaders of these food kitchens.

One of Sister Mary Patricia’s more recent self-help programs is the Al-Anon group she began in about 1993. This group is unique, she is told, because until very recently there have been no Alcoholics Anonymous groups active in Talara, though Sister Mary Patricia tried to organize one at different times. Though development of the Al-Anon program was slow and difficult because of the misunderstandings and stigma attached to the problems of alcoholism, Sister Mary Patricia rejoices that the women participating in the Al-Anon program testify to its good effects in their lives. After attending a national meeting in recent years, the leaders of the group returned with greater commitment and energy; as a result, their group has begun to expand. Moreover, in the last year or two, an Alcoholics Anonymous group has finally been established in Talara, thanks to the assistance of some dedicated AA members from Piura.

Over the years and for a variety of reasons, there have been many changes in personnel at this founding mission. It is a fact that, with few exceptions, all sisters coming to Peru began in Talara. Sisters Marcianna Trujillo and Valerie Odrowski, respectively, succeeded Sister Agnes as directors at Santa Rosa School in 1970 and 1971. By 1972, the sisters left the administration and formal teaching in Santa Rosa, although in 1986 Sister Donna Jean Henson taught religion in the school for a time. However, when they officially withdrew in 1972, they left behind a strong faculty of lay teachers, some of whom continue to this day.

Outside the school, the missionaries worked in many other pastoral ministries, almost too numerous to mention. Some gave their time and effort to more traditional and established programs, such as catechetics and the Legion of Mary. Sisters Regina Deitchman, Edith McCauley, and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer taught in evening religion classes for students who worked all day. Sister Regina also took over the catechetical program from Sister Edith, providing training sessions for fifty catechists every Sunday. After her arrival in 1973, Sister Elena Mack also worked in programs for training catechists of the barrios and the teachers from within the town. After returning to Talara in 1981, Sister Blanche Marie Remington also gave religion workshops for some one hundred teachers of the public schools.
Sister Donna Jean continued working in this catechetical program until 1984. Then, after the introduction of the new Catequesis Familiar Program, she served as its coordinator. Catequesis Familiar is a program in which the parents are instructed weekly over a period of two years on how to prepare their children for First Communion. Various Peruvian sisters have also functioned as coordinators or animators in this family-based program. Sisters Clorinda Timana, Julia Huiman, Liduvina Dominguez, Deidy Abad, and Maria Orozco have all continued this new form of sacramental preparation.

Sisters Liduvina, Deidy, and Nelyda Clavijo also taught religion in some of the public schools, especially in the poorer sectors. Beginning in 1999, Sister Esther Vilela began teaching religion full-time in Ignacio Merino, the largest public high school in Talara.

With the introduction of the charismatic movement in the parish and surrounding areas as early as the 1970s, a number of the sisters not only participated but gave *cursillos* (workshops), teachings, and leadership programs both in Talara and in outreach programs to Mancora and Chalaco. For a time, they were likewise active in the Marriage Encounter movement.

Several sisters promoted and conducted evangelization programs. In the early 1990s, Sister Ruth Barron gave courses to train lay leaders and set up Base Christian Communities. She also organized laity for visiting the sick and giving talks, and she held monthly meetings in Talara, Negritos, San Pedro, and Talara Alta with groups formed for evangelization and visiting.

Other sisters engaged in youth work, including retreats both in Talara and in other areas, choral work, and *Escoge* (intensive weekend retreats similar to the Search programs in the United States). Sisters Joan Kilker, Josephine, Nelyda, and Julia were especially active in this apostolate.

In addition, at various times Sister Regina and others attempted to establish Bible study groups and prayer groups in San Pedro and their own neighborhood.

In 1990 Sister Agnes Klein helped establish a neighborhood library in San Pedro, but it was short-lived. Other sisters encouraged alphabetization programs (basic literacy) for adults who could not read and write. Sister Ann Barton received a substantial grant from an Italian group, OPAM, to promote alphabetization in San Pedro. Five laywomen trained at the central education office; then, over a twenty-four week period, they taught three to four students gathered in one of the homes.

Sister Ann Barton also utilized her talents for grant writing for various projects while in Talara, for example, to procure funds for the parish hall at Santa Rosa and the Evangelization Office of Piura. After her return to the United States, she remained a faithful collaborator with the missions, obtaining funding for various projects.
Throughout the years of change and renewal in the Church, the sisters assumed roles of leadership in the liturgical reforms wherever possible. As early as 1972, Sister Regina held a Penance service and liturgy, distributing Communion to the faithful and First Communicants when no priest came for First Confession and First Communion at Santa Rosa and the Air Force base. The sisters gave homilies when permitted or in the absence of a priest, had special prayer services for the ill and handicapped in Talara and Negritos, distributed ashes on Ash Wednesday, and encouraged the preparation of new lay Eucharistic ministers, including women for the first time in 1977. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty even baptized babies and anointed the sick at Mass when the parish priest became ill and asked for help.

Not long after the sisters’ arrival in Talara, it became very apparent that the sisters needed more living space. As recounted earlier, they first lived in a small house formerly occupied by Rose Reinecke, the Papal Volunteer, and her housekeeper. Quite likely, the sisters’ housing was a topic of conversation when Mother Leo Frances Ryan and Sister Mary Anselm Towle visited Talara in December 1964. Less than three months later, Sister Cornelia Donnelly arrived, and within two days she was conferring with Señor Enrique Munzon, an architect, about plans for a new convent. The following day, Sisters Cornelia, Agnes Klein, Rosalie Mahoney, and Anne Denise Shea went to visit the Bishop in Piura about the construction of the convent.

In May 1965, Mother Leo Frances again asked the Council members what they thought of building a convent in Talara. Realizing that the parish could not afford to build a convent for ten sisters, the Council members agreed that if the parish could pay half, perhaps the Community could pay the other half. The Council had decided that the house should be large enough for a novitiate if and when one was opened in the future.

By November of that year, plans were in their final stages, and a site had been selected on which to erect a large and comfortable convent. In response to a letter from Father David Becherer requesting start up money, since he had depleted his money purchasing cement and initiating the construction, the Council deposited money in the Leavenworth Bank so that Sister Agnes could draw it down as needed.

The sisters had expected the house to be finished by the end of October 1966, but because the cement took longer to dry, the workers could not lay the floors. A lady gave them sufficient material for drapes in three of the rooms, and the sisters prepared to move things from their temporary home. Needless to say, all they had was put to good use in the new quarters.

Over the years, this convent has had relatively few repairs. From time to time, its flat roof developed leaks and needed resurfacing. And after
years of utilizing storage barrels of water in the bathrooms, the plumbing was replaced in 1990, Sister Ann Barton overseeing this rehabilitation. Although periodically some have questioned its size and style, this convent has served well and certainly was preferable to crowding sisters in a less sanitary and less adequate structure. However, for a variety of reasons, it has not served as a novitiate house except for short periods of time.

St. Joseph seems to have continued watching over the material needs of the sisters. Although there were several attempts at robbery, there were no substantial losses. In 1965, S/. 5000 (Soles) of clinic money was stolen. In 1976 the sisters experienced a series of minor losses. One night in October, on returning from Mass, they encountered two young men inside the house. While the others watched all the exits, Sister Regina Deitchman went to a neighbor’s house to call the police, who surprisingly enough arrived in record time. It was discovered there were actually five young men involved, all of them from the neighborhood and one, the son of a former cook.

When Sisters Josephine Bustos and Elena Mack made out the police report and listed all the objects that had disappeared over the last several months, the police promised to investigate and recover as much as possible. Interestingly enough, they asked to use the sisters’ car, and they apparently used it (and the gasoline) to go to Sullana and Piura various times. Even after they finished with this case, the police sought to use the car for other investigations. When they were refused several times and when the sisters refused to press charges against the young robbers, the police left the distinct impression that if the sisters were to suffer another robbery, perhaps their response would not be so rapid.

In 1988 two trees that Sister Mary Joan Eble had been carefully tending disappeared. Nevertheless, the most strange and unsolved of the robberies took place in the 1990s when curtains repeatedly were robbed from windows on the first floor if someone forgot to close one completely. These thefts always occurred at 6:00 a.m., the robber ingeniously using some sort of pole with a hook to yank the curtains off the rods and pull them through the barred windows. He was so deft that he was long gone before anyone could descend from the second floor. Just as mysteriously as these morning curtain robberies had begun, they stopped after some seven years or so, but not before a good number of curtains had disappeared!

Despite the sisters’ multiple activities in and around Talara, from early on they felt drawn to serve in other areas than “the Petroleum City,” and it was not long before they initiated work elsewhere.

In recent years especially, as the call to respond to new missions has become more pressing, the questions—“Why Talara?” “Are we still needed there?”—have been raised by various sisters.
Nevertheless, the Community was loath to close this first mission in Peru, and the sisters have remained. In November 2003 the Sisters of Charity and the faithful of the area joined in celebrating the forty years of the sisters’ presence there. One of the original missionaries, Sister Irene Skeehan, together with Sister Helen Forge, Community Secretary, and Monte Mace, photographer-reporter for The Leaven, newspaper of the Kansas City, Kansas Archdiocese, came from the United States for the occasion.

The day before the arrival of these guests, the Social and Health Promoters and the community of Negritos offered a Mass and had a fiesta for the sisters, presenting them with certificates of honor, citing their incomparable work and service on behalf of the most needy. Father Joseph Lawlor, pastor and himself a missionary from the Diocese of Jefferson City, Missouri for forty years, celebrated the Mass.

On November 8, Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias of Piura concelebrated the Mass of Thanksgiving at Santa Rosa Parish; with him were the pastor, Father Gabriel Chunga; Father Eduardo Palacios, pastor of Inmaculada; and Father Joseph Lawlor from Negritos. Sisters from Piura, La Arena, and Chalaco joined in the Mass and reception that a committee of laity had planned. During the celebration, the Mayor of Talara bestowed upon the sisters honorary plaques naming them “Hijas Predilectas de Talara” (favored daughters of Talara). Two long-time collaborators of the sisters, Dr. Luis More and Victoria Huerrera de Sanchez, spoke briefly of their association over the years. Members of the laity presented the sisters with silver and gold pins with the Community design. And all joined in the festive reception. The following day, there was a special commemorative Mass in San Pedro too. In the other three missions, Piura, Chalaco, and La Arena, there were also mini-celebrations for the fortieth anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Charity in Peru.

Chapter IV Notes

1 Skeehan, “S.O.S. Catechetical Program ‘Del Perú’,” 1965, A/SCL.
2 At the insistence of the first missionaries, who had experienced the difficulties of arriving without sufficient preparation, almost all the sisters who arrived later had opportunities for language and cultural studies in Mexico, Bolivia, or elsewhere. Exceptions were native-speaking sisters or persons who had taught Spanish.
3 Ryan Fund: A special charity fund of the SCL Community formed from donations of the sisters to benefit the poor, especially those of Latin America; it was named in honor of Mother Leo Frances Ryan.
4 Sister Joan Kilker to Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, April 30, 1983, A/SCL.
5 Kilker to Hollow, June 6, 1983, A/SCL.
6 Sister Agnes Klein to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, February 28, 1989, A/SCL.
7 Ibid.
8 Minutes of the SCL Community Council (hereafter cited as Council Minutes), May 10, 1965, OCS/SCL
9 Council Minutes, December 24, 1965, OCS/SCL.
Sister Mary Joan Eble with a Peruvian family

Sister Liduvina Dominguez tutoring in Talara
Sister Ruth Barron with children

Sister Maria Orozco teaches reflexology to some of the Health Promoters

Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer prepares students of night classes for the sacrament of Confirmation
Sister Esther Vilela with students

Sisters Mary Patricia Kielty and Helen Forge at a botequin
Heart Symbol presented by Talara faithful in thanksgiving for the forty years of service of the Sisters of Charity

Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias greeting Sisters Irene Skeehan, Mary Patricia Kielty, and Susana Cordova before the liturgical celebration
CHAPTER V: NEW HORIZONS

Even before the first missionaries ever arrived in Talara in 1963, other sites were proposed for their labors. When Mother Leo Frances Ryan and Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan were yet only exploring the possibility of sending sisters to Peru, Bishop Juan Hinojosa of Piura requested that they consider taking the hospital in Paita, a seaport town south of Talara. Later, they were asked to look at the hospital and parish in Los Organos, to the north of Talara. The first they turned down as being more than the Community could assume. Regarding the second, the sisters later heard that a native Community had taken that mission. Again, in December 1964, when Father David Becherer took Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Anselm Towle to visit Bishop Hinojosa, the bishop urged them to accompany him to see the hospital in Paita. However, the decision of the Community remained the same.

Beginning in 1964, the Council also began hearing appeals from the Diocese of Kansas City, Missouri, which had recently accepted a parish in Coripata, a small town in the Nor Yunga of Bolivia. Responding to the insistent pleas of Monsignor Robert E. Walton, Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Anselm visited La Paz and Coripata before returning to the States in December 1964. As a result, in April 1965, Sisters Rosalie Mahoney and Anne Denise Shea accompanied Sister Cornelia Donnelly to explore the possibilities of a mission there. Sister Cornelia was very excited by what she saw and wrote a letter to Mother Leo Frances in which she conveyed her impressions: "I have not seen Paeta [sic], but until I do, Conpata [sic] seems an exceptional opportunity to help. . . . The need is terrific and the time opportune—I was not aware of this before coming." Thus it was that, in less than nine months, four missionary Sisters of Charity entered the flower-bedecked road leading into Coripata. More will be written about the Bolivian mission in later chapters.

In succeeding years, the Sisters of Charity tried out various sites in northern Peru as missionary ventures. As indicated earlier, the sisters in Talara had engaged in several outreach programs, going to Negritos frequently and visiting some of the other smaller pueblos nearby.

PUEBLO NUEVO

Almost from the time of their arrival, the St. James priests in Pueblo Nuevo de Colan were urging the sisters to visit them and help out as they could. This did not seem practicable during the first years, but it was not long before they decided to venture it. Thus, in 1967 Sisters Anne Denise Shea and Frances Turk visited the parish over a period of three months.
During their summer vacation, beginning on January 29, 1968, Sisters Marcianna Trujillo and Josephine Bustos spent a month there, teaching catechists, visiting homes, and in general motivating the people of the town of Pueblo Nuevo itself, as well as visiting the smaller pueblos (villages) attached to this parish. In all of these areas, they were much moved by the humble, simple people, who until recently had not had contact with the official Church since the Spanish were driven out, but who nonetheless had carried out many religious rituals over the years. Most were farmers, many exploited by the rich hacienda owners of the district. In a couple of the villages, the people dedicated themselves to fishing for a living. The pastor, Father Patrick Lohan, had started an agricultural cooperative and had trained the farmers to take responsibility for it into their own hands. This and the fact that he was instructing the people in social justice did not endear him to the hacienda owners or the richer class from Piura who had summer homes on the coast there.

Life in Pueblo Nuevo was much more rustic than the sisters had experienced in Talara. Even their arrival was quite an adventure as they and all their baggage had to be floated across a swollen river in a boat guided by two young men battling the current. However, they soon made themselves at home. Nevertheless, when the water failed in Pueblo Nuevo, they were only too glad to visit the sisters in Talara. On February 19, 1968, Sister Josephine wrote to Mother Leo Frances thus: “We are having a great time in Pueblo and for the first time in three years I feel like a real missionary. . . . I have fallen in love with the place and people and if it is to be the first ‘daughters [sic] house’ of Talara, I’d like to sign up now.”

While in Pueblo Nuevo, the two sisters lived in a very simple house just across from that of the priests. They had a front room with some benches and two lawn chairs, as well as a small table and one soft chair. They each had a bedroom with chest of drawers, bed, and chair, and they shared a rather primitive bathroom. Since they had no kitchen or dining room, they ate their meals with the priests. In the letter mentioned before, Sister Josephine commented that they had been able to bring a woman’s touch to many neglected things.

The sisters were quite a novelty for many of the people; many had never known a sister. So both in Pueblo Nuevo and in its villages, the sisters spent a good amount of time visiting. Their very presence seemed to draw the people out. On February 17, Sister Marcianna commented: “Our good deed for the day was convincing a woman to have her children baptized. . . . Now we must work to get her married in the Church.”

Since the area was too large for the sisters to cover during one month, Father asked them to concentrate on catechism classes for children and the night school for teachers. The two sisters therefore met with the teachers
for two hours a day, trying to give them whatever they felt would most help them improve their teaching. They had hoped to show some filmstrips, but there was no electricity during the hours when they were in class. By the time two weeks had elapsed, the number of catechists had grown from about forty-three to sixty, and the señoritas were asking for more class time. However, Father was afraid to take them away from their homes for too long. Most of them were in charge of the cooking and/or the care of younger children while both parents worked in the fields.

The sisters also accompanied Father to the different missions for the celebration of Mass or to meet with the Legion of Mary. Since they had brought a typewriter and Sister Josephine had her guitar with her, they were able to teach the people new songs and bring more life to the Eucharistic celebrations. The sisters hoped to return at least three days a week during the following year. For a time, Sister Catherine (Florence) Nichol accompanied Sister Marcianna.

In 1968 Sisters Marcianna and Assumpta Huttenhoff were assigned to work part-time there. When Sister Assumpta went back to Lima within a few months for more language school and later returned to the States, there was no one to replace her. Consequently, this mission adjunct of Talara did not continue.

THE PRELATURE OF CHULUCANAS

In the extraordinary Chapter of the Community in 1968–69, the delegates affirmed a proposal recommitting the Community to the Latin American apostolate and authorizing the General Council to make a study and five-year plan for continuing and developing the missions there. The delegates directed that a continuing program of preparation be instituted for those selected to serve in the foreign missions. Although they specified that for the time being the Latin American missions continue to function under the immediate direction of a member of the General Council, they also provided that she be assisted in this work by a field assistant appointed by the Mother General and her Council. In two years, the sisters in the mission area would select from among themselves a regional coordinator, whose appointment and duties would be similar to the other regional coordinators in the States. She would be charged specifically with the development of the apostolate in Latin America.

Soon after her appointment as Foreign Mission Consultant, Sister Rosalie Mahoney initiated formal contacts with John McNabb, OSA, Bishop of the Prelature of Chulucanas, roughly three hours southeast of Talara. From the time of the arrival of the Augustinian priests in 1964 in the new prelature, they and the Sisters of Charity had established a warm
friendship. Frequently, when someone came from Chulucanas to make purchases in Talara, they stopped at the Convent of Santa Rosa. The sisters also visited the Augustinians in Chulucanas. So it was not surprising that, when the sisters began investigating possibilities for a new mission, they first made inquiries there.

The prelature was a vast missionary area of 10,000 square miles with some 370,000 “souls” and very few priests or religious to care for their spiritual formation. In 1969 Bishop McNabb proposed two possible opportunities to the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. He was in need, he said, of a young sister to work in a youth center in Chulucanas; he also referred to the formation of a Mobile Missionary Unit to work among parishes that had no resident sisters. When neither of these proposals was accepted, he began to look at other possibilities. Eventually, it was mutually decided that the new field of service would be Ayabaca.

In March 1970, after many preparations and various delays while a convent was constructed, Sisters Rosalie Mahoney and Agnes Klein embarked on this first mission in the Prelature of Chulucanas. On June 18, they were joined by Sisters Blanche Marie Remington and Catherine Nichol, and still later, on July 1, by Sister Mary Patricia Kielty. However, after an unfortunate occurrence in October 1971, the sisters left quite abruptly. This mission was formally closed in August 1972. The details are described in Chapter VI.

Even before the untimely happenings in Ayabaca, Sisters Catherine, Blanche Marie, and Marie James Simms had gone to open still another mission, this time in the sierra of Morropon, also in the Prelature of Chulucanas. Mother Leo Frances and Sister Rosalie had earlier investigated the possibilities of sisters working in this mountainous area, which had suffered great destruction in the earthquake of 1970. In December of that year, 80 percent of the houses and most of the church had been destroyed. Thus, there was much to be done when the three sisters arrived by mule in February 1971 from Cabuyal, they and their luggage having been brought that far in the Bishop’s own jeep. The sisters’ long and continuous presence in that outpost is given the attention it merits in Chapters VII and VIII.

SALITRAL

Even before the Ayabaca mission was formally closed, Sisters Agnes Klein, Mary Patricia Kielty, and Rosalie Mahoney visited several sites of the Chulucanas Prelature, and their choice fell on Salitral in the Province of Morropon. Although this parish is located in a dusty, desert valley, the towns composing it form a “Y” as they follow the rivers Piura and Bigote. The principal town itself nestles in the foothills of the Andes and is bounded
by river and mountains. Even when Sister Agnes went home to the United States for her vacation, and Sister Mary Patricia accepted a new mission in Chalaco, Sister Rosalie consulted with Bishop McNabb about the possibility of working in health ministry in Salitral. Sister Sally (Miriam Joseph) Watson, who had recently arrived in Peru, was asked to go to the new mission with Sister Rosalie.

When they first visited the pastor, Father James McKenna, on August 1, 1972, he welcomed them heartily, even offering to move out of the parish house and set up his headquarters in another large pueblo of the parish. However, since there was a private section in the parish house, it was decided the sisters could occupy that until other arrangements were made. Sister Sally described it as being a simple house, not unlike other houses of the pueblo, but comfortable and with a walled garden that provided an oasis in that dusty area.

Because of mail problems, the sisters actually began the new mission before receiving word that the SCL General Council had formally approved of its being opened. Although the sisters were installed by August 4, it was not until August 7 that they received word from Talara, via Bishop McNabb, that the permission had come. Here, as in Ayabaca, the sisters at first received a stipend of $70 per month, the use of a jeep provided by the prelature, and their living quarters.

During the months that Sister Sally Watson was in Salitral with Sister Rosalie, she chiefly visited families since the pastor did not believe in formal catechetical programs. She also completed a census and began some prayer and Scripture study groups. Sister Rosalie worked with Don Julio Merino, a sanitario (public health person) in charge of the health programs in the posta medica (public clinic) in Salitral and the outlying villages.

When the sisters took their first walk around the town the day after their arrival, Sister Rosalie met a prospective patient in almost every house. That afternoon, they had their first experience of fording a river on foot when they accompanied Father to a neighboring village for Mass. This time the water came up only above their knees; later it would sometimes reach almost to their hips. During the severest rainy season, Sister Rosalie and her companions crossed rivers so swollen that the water reached nearly to their shoulders. Whatever the crossing, it was dangerous, for the large rocks were slippery and the footing uncertain. For that reason, members of the village sometimes accompanied them to the river and back to Salitral after the Mass or visit.

Very soon after their arrival, Don Julio visited the sisters to announce that he was leaving for a bit of vacation. He left the keys to the posta medica with Sister Rosalie. When he returned, he apologetically told Sister Rosalie that she would have to go to Piura to get permission to work in the posta
medica. Nothing more is mentioned of this “permission,” but for a time it seems that Sister Rosalie acted chiefly as a secretary, interviewing the people and collecting the small charge made for each visit. She accompanied the sanitario to the village of Bigote two days a week to extend services there, treating about thirty-five patients each day. When Don Julio was notified he was to take a six-week refresher course in Lima, he again left Sister Rosalie in charge of the posta medica in Salitral. When the chief nurse of the area visited the clinic, she asked Sister Rosalie to work in health care for mothers; she even invited her to visit such a program in the city of Tumbes, near the Ecuadorian border, that seemed to be functioning well.

On August 15, Sister Sally left for Lima to renew her passport and obtain her carnet (residence papers) for Peru. During the week and a half she was gone, Sister Edith McCauley visited Sister Rosalie in Salitral. By December, Sister Sally had decided to leave.

At the end of December, all the Sisters of Charity in Peru had a discernment session in Talara. While there, Sister Rosalie made arrangements for Ernestina Zapata, a Home Educator, to accompany her both in her living and work in Salitral for the next three months. The two planned classes for mothers, using the model Sister Rosalie had learned in Tumbes. This consisted of a combination of health classes and home arts to be given in the posta medica. They gave the classes two days a week in Salitral and two days in Bigote. At the request of some señoritas, they added two other classes for them in the parish house.

Pleased with the success of these classes, Sister Rosalie asked permission from Mother Leo Frances to begin a program wherein native girls might live in the convent, take classes, and learn to live in community. She also asked that Ernestina Zapata continue as companion and helper for the rest of the year, after which she herself would return to the United States. In March 1973, Sisters Regina Deitchman and Edith McCauley arrived for a visit and with the news that the proposed program had been approved. Sister Edith would also accompany Sister Rosalie the rest of the year.

Since Ernestina agreed to continue for the year, plans were put in motion for the course. In the weeks before Sister Edith’s arrival, Ernestina and Sister Rosalie visited a number of the smaller surrounding villages looking for possible candidates for the twelve-week program. When only two girls showed up on the first day, the Tuesday after Easter, Ernestina and Sister Rosalie went to visit girls in Bigote. There they had a better response. Five young women soon began classes in religion, health, and home arts, living in the house Monday through Friday and returning to their homes for the weekend. As they progressed, they were expected to make home visits and teach others the things they had learned in their classes.
With Sister Edith there to help with some of the classes and managing the house, Sister Rosalie was free to resume some of the work temporarily abandoned. She devoted three days of health work to Bigote and also worked in the posta medica in Salitral one day a week while Don Julio went to work in Malacasi. However, she had many “discussions” with the sanitario because, for some time, he had been selling the stock of medicines at a profit, even those the government sent as “social medicines.” She argued that since these were subsidized medicines, they should have been distributed at much lower prices to the patients.

When the first session of students ended on July 12, Sisters Edith and Rosalie went to Lima for a week. They hoped that their pastor would again be in Salitral by the time of their return, for he had been gone for six months, attending his sick parents in the States, during which time they had been without the celebration of the Eucharist. While they were gone, they left their jeep for needed repair work; although they had had the jeep for only a short time, it was already in need of repairs due to the road conditions in the sierra.

On returning, the sisters began recruiting a second group of young women for their twelve-week program. When Sister Mary Seraphine visited them from the United States in August, she was present for the first week of classes with the new group of six girls, this time all from smaller villages of the region. Ernestina became “house mother,” and Sister Edith began visiting some of the villages to become better acquainted with the people and to start some religious education programs. Meanwhile, Sister Rosalie collaborated with the public health engineer in a campaign to install outhouses in Salitral. She also worked with the people in Bigote, who were intent on fixing up a posta medica.

On terminating their classes, the sisters, Ernestina, and the six girls took a trip to visit the Center of Formation in Canchaque. The next day, the two sisters went to visit Talara, Sister Edith taking along almost all of her belongings as she expected to work in Talara the following year. However, while in Talara, she received a letter from the sisters in Coripata, Bolivia, welcoming her to her new mission there for the following year. As a result, she decided not to return to Salitral at all but to go immediately to Bolivia.

Since no other sister was available to come to Salitral to work with Sister Rosalie, she began to make plans to leave the parish. At the request of Bishop McNabb, two young nurses from the United States came to investigate working in Salitral.

For the rest of November, Ernestina conducted classes in a large village within walking distance of Salitral. Sister Rosalie made several trips trying to get medicines and official approval for the health post in Bigote. In this
she was successful, as the chief not only ordered S/.10,000 of social medicines to be sent there but also promised to have a man trained in the army sent as the health worker.

On December 2, Sister Rosalie met the plane that brought her two nurse replacements. For the next ten days, she oriented them to the area and presented them to the medical and the nursing chiefs of the area. On December 12, when she was leaving with Ernestina and Sister Regina Deitchman (who had come to help out with the last minute things), the jeep that Father was driving got bogged down in a deep place in the river. After piling everything on the roof, all waded to the other side. Fortunately, a man with a tractor came by and pulled the jeep free. About a half hour later, the jeep ran out of gas and there was another wait! Not surprisingly, it was about midnight by the time the sisters arrived at the Franciscan convent in Chulucanas. There they found Sister Agnes Klein still up waiting for them.

After spending the night there, the sisters took Ernestina home to Talara and thanked her parents for the great favor of having allowed her to live and work with Sister Rosalie. That afternoon, all the sisters working in Peru met in the Turista Hotel in Piura for a farewell dinner for Sister Rosalie, one of the five founding members of the SCL Latin American missions. She left for Lima by plane en route to the States that same evening at 7:00 p.m.

CHULUCANAS

After the debacle in Ayabaca, Sister Agnes Klein spent some months in the United States, returning to Peru in 1972. As a temporary assignment, she began working in the prelature offices in June 1972 and living with the Franciscan sisters in the convent of Saint Joseph. She was officially assigned to the community in Talara, and she spent time with the sisters there whenever that was possible. In addition to housing, she was given $70 monthly to help defray living expenses.

When the Bishop decided in August that the sisters definitely should not return to Ayabaca, Sister Agnes worked out of the Pastoral Office for Lay Formation from October 1972 until 1978. In 1974 she became a member of the Adult Leadership Team, training leaders from the various parishes throughout the diocese. In addition to Father Gerald Theis, OSA, she worked with two married laymen. Interestingly, one of these had been president of the parish council in Ayabaca when she was there. From August 1975 until the end of September 1976, she had a sabbatical in the United States for a home visit and study. On her return, she continued working on the team but lived at the Casa de Fraternidad. This former hotel housed the offices of the prelature as well as living space for the Bishop and visiting priests and religious.
However, being the community person she was, Sister Agnes missed living and working with other Sisters of Charity. Therefore, after dialoguing with Sister Elena Mack and consulting with Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director, and the Archbishop of Piura, she made plans to move to Piura in February 1979, once again “breaking ground” at another site.

Sister Agnes and her work had been highly esteemed in the Diocese of Chulucanas. Bishop McNabb, writing to Sister Mary Kevin, expressed his amazement that he had not been informed or consulted about the possibility of her change. Nevertheless, being a member of a religious Community himself, he recognized and accepted Sister Agnes' priority of living with her own Community.

Chapter V Notes

1 Sister Cornelia Donnelly to Mother Leo Frances Ryan, April 4, 1965, A/SCL.
2 Sister Mary Anselma (Josephine) Bustos to Ryan, February 19, 1968, A/SCL.
3 Sister Mary Marcianna Trujillo to Ryan, February 2, 1968, A/SCL.
4 Minutes of 10th General Chapter, 1969 Special General Chapter, Session 2, OCS/SCL.
5 Center of Formation program: Until recently the Bishops of Chulucanas sponsored a program for young women from the various parishes of the prelature/diocese. Its purpose was to help the women gain more confidence to help serve in their church communities. Many entered religious life.
CHAPTER VI: THE SAGA OF Ayabaca

In the Special General Chapter of 1968–69, the sisters in Latin America petitioned to expand their work within the areas of their present missions and pleaded for more SCLs to work there, especially in Peru. The Chapter members responded favorably on both counts.

Accordingly, at the recommendation of Sister Rosalie Mahoney and the sisters in Talara, Mother Leo Frances Ryan initiated formal inquiries as to the priorities Bishop John McNabb envisioned for the Chulucanas Prelature. The Bishop quickly responded with several proposals for work, based on his visits and studies of the needs of the immense area over which he had assumed authority just five years earlier.¹ His first priority was to obtain religious for Ayabaca, the capital of the province of the same name.

On October 1, 1969, Mother Leo Frances wrote Bishop McNabb to ask if he still wanted sisters for Ayabaca. She had not had a response from him to her letter proposing to send three sisters, with a fourth to join them later. On October 6 (surely the letters had crossed in the mail), she received a letter indicating that he would soon be in the United States and would like to visit with her and the other members of the Council.

Bishop McNabb did visit Mother Leo Frances and the Council members in October 1969. After hearing about the needs of the prelature and its pastoral plan, as well as assessing the resources of the Community, the Council decided that the SCLs could take two of the areas of the prelature. The first one would be Ayabaca; later, other sisters would go to Chalaco, both in the mountainous area. The plan was that Sisters Rosalie Mahoney and Agnes Klein would arrive in Ayabaca in March 1970, and that Sisters Mary Patricia Kiely and Valerie Odrowski would later join them.²

On March 3, when Bishop McNabb visited the sisters in Talara to make some final plans for opening the new mission, he expressed his delight in the assignment of Sisters Rosalie and Agnes, for he had come to know both of them over the previous six years.

Although Sister Agnes was not to return from the United States until March 12, she would bring with her woolen goods, because moving to Ayabaca from Talara, especially in March, posed quite an adaptation. During the more than seven years of living and working in Peru, the sisters had become acclimated to the hot desert coastal conditions. However, even in the northern part of Peru, Ayabaca is known as “cold country” since it is situated 9000 feet above sea level. During the winter months (January, February, and March), which happen to be the hottest months of summer on the coast, there are very heavy rains. Moreover, during the other eight months of the year, there are frequent rains.
On March 13, Sisters Agnes and Rosalie left for a two-day workshop in Chulucanas on the preparation of young Peruvian señoritas as "Auxiliaries" in the apostolic work of the prelature. During their absence, Sisters Edith McCauley and Marcianna Trujillo shopped for household articles and packed them. They even hemmed new sheets and thus had nearly everything ready when Sisters Rosalie and Agnes returned from their meeting.

On Friday, March 20, having packed everything into the parish pickup that they had borrowed, Sisters Marcianna and Edith drove the new missionaries to Sullana to meet Bishop McNabb. There, their bags and baggage, plus the household items, were transferred into the Bishop's station wagon. Shortly after midday, they set forth on the first part of the journey, going as far as Montero, four hours inland from Sullana. Initially, the sisters had been told that the trip to Ayabaca from the coast was not more than a couple of hours; this was later revised to eight, and they later discovered that in the rainy season it could take up to twenty-four hours!

They stayed the night with the pastoral team that would be their nearest neighbors. Two diocesan priests from Rockford, Illinois, Fathers Philip Riley and Bill Jones, gave hospitality to the Bishop and his driver while Sisters Rosalie and Agnes stayed with the two Franciscan sisters from Milwaukee, Sisters Maria and Corina. The climate in Montero was delightfully cool, being in the foothills of the mountains, but for the two "Talaraneans," it called for sweaters.

That night, via the radio connection between Chulucanas and its various parishes, contact was made with the priests in Ayabaca. These suggested that the Bishop and sisters stay in Montero until midday on Saturday and plan their arrival for about 3:00 p.m. They indicated that the authorities of the city had scheduled a welcoming ceremony for that hour.

The next day, when they arrived at the welcoming sign marking the entrance to the city, they noted that the people had put up an arch over the road loaded with lilies and other flowers that grew in the region. Driving on about fifteen minutes, they were greeted by the sub-prefect of the department, the mayor of the town, the president of the parish council, and others. Leaving the station wagon, the sisters walked down the street behind a group of altar boys who carried two banners that said "Welcome Sisters to Ayabaca." Upon their arrival at the town plaza, Father Gerald Theis, the pastor, the children's choir, and other members of the parish council greeted them. After this, the Bishop entered the church to concelebrate the Eucharist with the two Augustinian priests stationed in Ayabaca, Fathers Theis and John Tasto.

After the Mass, the sisters were taken to investigate their new convent. In a letter written to Mother Leo Frances the following week, the two
sisters describe their new home in this way: "We must have walked in as
the construction workers walked out, as all the mud and debris of the
construction has kept us busy cleaning these first few days." Despite the
fact that Bishop McNabb had been assuring Mother Leo Frances since
January that the house was completed except for the painting, Sisters
Rosalie and Agnes noted that the cement was not even dry. However, they
found it commodious and interesting in its design. Built in two sections,
the front part consisted of a large room for meetings, an office, kitchen,
dining room, and living room. The second section was connected to the
first by a corridor and had five bedrooms and a bath. Between these two
areas, there was an open patio, through which water drained from three
sides. The sisters named it their own "little Venice." As can be imagined,
they soon discovered that there was much mildew; moreover, the ceiling
of the corridor almost immediately sprang a leak.

Two beds, a stove, a water heater, and a freezer for meat were in the
house when the sisters arrived. To this were added the chairs and folding
card table brought from Talara as well as two other chairs given them by
the Talara house. The Bishop was having the furniture for the sitting room
and dining room made. Meanwhile, the sisters would eat at the rectory,
taking advantage of the time to get acquainted with the priests and the
program of the parish.

Although Sisters Rosalie and Agnes must have been more than ready
to go to bed, they went to the living Stations of the Cross that night. On the
following day, Palm Sunday, the Bishop celebrated Mass on the steps of
the church. Earlier, a procession had taken place from a mission chapel,
with the people carrying beautiful palm arrangements and flowers that
grow profusely in the region.

At three o'clock that afternoon, there was another ceremony in which
the president of the parish council presented the keys to the convent to the
Bishop and he, in turn, gave them to Sister Rosalie. There then followed a
program with talks and a presentation by the Club of Señor Cautivo, a
youth group.

At first the sisters were a bit mystified when they had lights in the
convent the first night and not afterwards. Then they discovered that the
lights were a part of the bienvenidas (welcome) and that to have them at
other times, they would have to make out a form to have a meter installed;
after that they could have electricity from about six in the evening until
midnight.

Despite the cleaning necessary to make the convent habitable, the sisters
lost no time in beginning their apostolic activities. Everything was new
and different for them in this extensive parish in the high sierra, the highest
point in northern Peru. The average temperature year-round was forty
degrees Fahrenheit, and typically there was heavy rainfall, especially during the winter months. The edge of the parish, from which one could see into Ecuador, was some three days away by mule or horse. There was no other way to reach it as the road stopped at Ayabaca. Thus, only five of the outlying villages could be reached by jeep, the other 115 being accessible only on foot or beast.

Since the pastor would be leaving for his home visit in the States right after Easter and the assistant pastor would be going to Chulucanas for meetings, the sisters attended their first formal parish meeting on Holy Thursday. Then they were into the Easter triduum. They were considerably impressed by the Good Friday procession in which the crucified Lord was carried in a coffin so large that it took twenty-five men to carry it.

On Easter Monday, the sisters had their first meal in the convent, serving breakfast for Father Theis before he left for the States. Because they would have such an active schedule, they readily adopted the Bishop’s suggestion to have a cook so that they would be freer for their respective ministries. Thus, a woman of the pueblo began fixing their noon and evening meals.

On Wednesday, April 1, Sister Agnes visited the schools for the first time, only to find that many of the teachers and even some of the directors had not yet arrived. The sisters also began a census in the town. The following day, they journeyed into the campo (countryside) for the first time, to the village of Yacupampa.

Before this, Sister Rosalie also made her first visit to the posta medica (public clinic) and was appalled at its lack of equipment and materials. Later in April, she wrote Bishop McNabb, saying that she had had three full tours of the posta medica and could vouch that even essentials were needed. Since he had offered to try to procure some of the basic needs, she included an “Application for Medical Supplies” for the Mission Board as well as a list from the director. The following year, in 1971, Bishop McNabb gave Sisters Rosalie and Mary Patricia Kielty $5000 for use in the posta medica or to purchase teaching supplies.

After both priests had left on April 7, 1970, Brother David and the sisters began having Communion services. In the absence of both of the priests, the Bishop had granted the sisters permission not only to administer Communion but also the Holy Oils in case of necessity. However, when Sister Rosalie distributed Communion for the first time, some of the older women were concerned about receiving from her, a woman.

About this same time, the sisters were relieved when the police arrested and put an evangelist in jail for disturbing the peace. This member of “The First Disciples of Christ” claimed to have risen from the dead, and he had been going from village to village preaching his own special brand of doctrine and celebrating distinct rites. He not only had been confusing the
people with his preaching but had frightened some of them into following him when he threatened to put a curse on them if they did not.

Sister Agnes soon began enrolling children for the First Communion classes that were to begin in May, but originally only nine were registered. Nevertheless, she dauntlessly began preparing catechists.

Meanwhile, Sister Rosalie struggled to organize a Commission for Social Assistance in the parish council. Of the seven invited to participate, only one came to the first meeting and three to the second. They were finally able to have a real meeting by the end of the first month. Sister Rosalie also helped the personnel of the posta medica with the vaccination program in early May.

On April 18, the new “Ayabaquinas” were delighted to receive their first visit. What was even better was that the visitors were SCLs brought up from the coast by the Bishop’s chauffeur. Sisters Catherine Nichol and Edith McCauley brought not only news of the sisters but magazines, a tape recorder, some catechetical materials, and a huge chocolate cake as well as other “comfort foods.”

As the visitors planned on staying the week, in the following days they began to explore the campo around about. The very first day after their arrival, they hiked down the mountain to Huanmarata, finding that, although it took just forty-five minutes to descend, the uphill climb required some two and a half hours. A few days later Sisters Agnes, Edith, Catherine, and Fathers Daniel and Robert went out on a mule trip. The priests were happy to have the visitors too and invited them to a turkey dinner at their house.

When the furniture for the dining room and living room arrived at the convent on April 25, Sisters Catherine and Edith took advantage of the transportation to return to the coast.

During the first week of May, the parish team met to draw up their pastoral plan and to develop a calendar for campo visits. They also met with the governors of the pueblos in the parish. There were some one hundred representatives who arrived, many of them from areas where “the evangelist” had been. After hearing from them, it was decided to form teams of two Redemptorist priests, the two sisters, and the two parish priests to give educational missions of twelve to fourteen days. They planned to return to the centers where the missions were given three times during the year.

All of this would require a lot of mule riding! Nevertheless, in their zeal they quickly began implementing the program early in June. The sisters first accompanied Father Nicholas, a Redemptorist priest who had been giving a mission, and Father John Tasto on a trip into the campo. While the priests prepared people for the Baptism of their children and heard confessions, the sisters visited the people.
The sisters had been in Ayabaca a bare two months when Peru experienced one of its worst earthquakes to date on May 31, 1970. Although the center of the quake was in Huaraz in the Central Sierra, the sisters and people of Ayabaca felt it quite strongly, even hearing some of the rumbling of the ground. The people ran into the streets crying and screaming in fright. Shortly, via the diocesan radio, they heard news about the devastation occasioned by the disaster.

When the Archbishop of Lima and various Bishops of Peru organized teams of priests, religious, nurses, social workers, and family educators to lend assistance under a group called “Solidarity of the Church,” Sister Rosalie and the Marist Sister Corita were sent with three priests from the prelature.

After a brief orientation in Lima, the teams set out for Huaraz, taking all their own supplies as well as tablets for purifying water. They stayed in Huaraz just one night before moving on to rural areas, passing Yungay and Rancaillica, two villages that had been completely covered by floodwaters when part of a glacier had fallen into a lake above them. Only about 1 percent of the people had survived by fleeing to the cemetery on a hill above.

The Chulucanas team went into the district capitals of Mato and Huata and their surrounding villages. Sister Rosalie later described the conditions as being “what one might imagine after a bomb raid.” Hardly any buildings remained standing and the wall of the city was tipped to one side. The two sisters set up a clinic to attend to those nearby; they likewise packed their saddlebags and ventured out into the countryside, helping the people as best they could. They found that many of the illnesses were related to the nervous strain the people had been subjected to, but that there were also the effects common to such disaster areas, such as dysentery, infected wounds, dog bites, and eye infections.7

Sister Rosalie remained in the earthquake area until July 26, barely having returned to Ayabaca when Mother Leo Frances visited the new mission. Without doubt, Sister Rosalie had many tales to share with Mother and Sister Agnes.

After finishing her language studies in Cochabamba and spending several weeks in Lima with Sister Regina Deitchman, who was recuperating from hepatitis, Sister Mary Patricia Kielty arrived in her new mission in Ayabaca that August. Shortly thereafter, Sisters Catherine Nichol and Blanche Marie Remington joined Sisters Rosalie, Agnes, and Mary Patricia. For Bishop McNabb had suggested to Mother Leo Frances that the sister catechists going to Chalaco could profit from an experience in Ayabaca.8 Sister Blanche Marie remained in Ayabaca about six months, but Sister Catherine returned to the States for a home visit and the celebration of her parents’ Golden Wedding Anniversary before initiating her years in Chalaco.
In early December, Sisters Mary Patricia and Agnes borrowed the priests’ truck to go to Talara as Sister Agnes apparently had cracked a rib when she fell from a horse. On December 9, they experienced the earthquake that shook many parts of northern Peru. Together with the rest of the sisters, they evacuated the house quickly. The two from Ayabaca teased the Talara sisters, saying they had come down for a rest, to wash their clothes and dry them in one hour instead of four days, sleep in soft beds, and take warm tub baths. Instead, they were experiencing the same life as in the campo, for Talara had no water, so they couldn’t wash their clothes and they were bathing in “a glass of water” and sleeping on the floor. (They were afraid to return to the bedrooms on the second floor of the convent.)

In February 1971, Sister Mary Patricia inaugurated a sort of SCL Peruvian newsletter called “LAMs,” for Latin American Missions. One of her first articles describes Sister Valerie Odrowski’s visit to Ayabaca after making a sixteen-hour trip from Talara. Sister Marie James Simms also visited, as did Sister Regina Deitchman in June of that year. During her time there, she apparently enjoyed her first mule ride in the sierra. How many more of them she would have during her years in Chalaco!

From the very beginning of their work in the Chulucanas Prelature, the sisters were impressed by the program and workshops available to help them in their pastoral work, and they rejoiced to see the laity assuming their proper role in the Church. Thus, Sister Mary Patricia commented on the pastoral meeting in Chulucanas for the formation of Base Ecclesiastical Communities, on a Workshop for Young People that Sister Rosalie had attended, and on how Father John Dowling and Sister Agnes were preparing people from the countryside to give preparation for Baptism in their own pueblos.

Sister Agnes also kept office hours in the convent, enrolling people for sacramental preparation. This was in addition to working with teachers in the grade and high school, helping them with their preparation. She worked with the liturgy committee of the parish as well.

Meanwhile, Sister Rosalie gave talks to the people after the Sunday Masses on different topics related to health and also made presentations to the mothers’ clubs. After a weeklong crash course with a Marist sister in Chulucanas, Sister Mary Patricia began working as a laboratory assistant in the posta medica. Thanks to a formal solicitud (application) of Bishop McNabb to the jefe (health minister) in Piura in July 1970, Sisters Rosalie and Mary Patricia were authorized to collaborate and work as volunteers in the Health Center of Ayabaca. Actually, Sister Rosalie was officially named to be the Social Assistant there in June 1971.

Sister Mary Patricia described to Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan one of her taxing trips into the outlying reaches of the parish. She had traveled with Father John Tasto to a remote area, taking ten hours each way by
View of Ayabaca with Sister Blanche Marie Remington

Sister Rosalie Mahoney visiting

Sister Mary Patricia Kielty in the clinic

Sister Agnes Klein setting out by mule
Sister Agnes Klein helping to direct veneration of Señor Cautivo

Miraculous image of Señor Cautivo
mule. She said she needed about forty-eight hours just to unwind after reaching home.\textsuperscript{12}

But not all was work. The members of the parish team, Fathers John Dowling and John Tasto and the three sisters, prayed Lauds and Vespers together in the church Monday through Saturday. They also made a monthly day of recollection together the first Monday of every month.

Sisters Rosalie and Mary Patricia attended the opening of the first theater in Ayabaca on the first of May. Moreover, since the sisters had received a Toyota car for their use, they were able occasionally to go to the coast for supplies and a little rest and recreation. However, during the rainy season they needed to count on twenty-four hours to get to town.

In October each year, literally thousands of pilgrims arrive in Ayabaca to fulfill promises made or to petition graces from “Senor Cautivo.” This mysteriously carved and reputedly miraculous statue of the Captive Christ dates back to Ayabaca’s earliest days.\textsuperscript{13} It is interesting that, during the sisters’ first year in this mission, they made no mention of these festive days or the extra work involved, nothing about the faith and devotion of the people.

The same cannot be said of the festival in October 1971! Those who lived through those days would forever remember the occurrences of that time. Apparently, variously colored stories of these events are told in different parts of the country and even in neighboring countries as well.

Less than a week after the “excitement,” as Sister Rosalie called it, the two sisters wrote a joint letter to Mother Leo Frances describing what had happened. Later, both Sisters Rosalie and Agnes made a tape or wrote up their memories of the events at the request of Mother.\textsuperscript{14}

In their joint letter, they commented on the fiesta itself as having been busy, very nice, and uneventful. Father Dowling, as well as the priests and sisters who had come to help out with the festival, had left soon after it was over. Sister Mary Patricia had also set out with them as she had received word that her mother was seriously ill. Shortly after they had departed, Sisters Rosalie and Agnes returned to work. All appeared tranquil, though the sisters and Father Tasto had heard rumors that the church was going to be invaded.

Sister Agnes had gone to the convent to register some people and had planned to stay and help count money that had come in as donations during the festival. Sister Rosalie stayed in the church after Mass to help maintain order as the people approached to venerate the statue. About noon, a group entered the church, shouting that the priests and sisters were changing the customs of the people, such as not letting them venerate the statue as they wanted.

Father Tasto told Sister Rosalie to let them do as they wanted and that she should take refuge in the tower. Meanwhile, he went to the police station to ask for protection. Within a very few minutes, the group in the
The church had grown substantially and they began shouting “They have cut his hair.” Sister Rosalie was detained momentarily, and Father went into the house and closed the door against the persons ready to attack him with sticks. Not feeling any fear, Sister Rosalie confronted them, telling them to get away from the door, whereupon one of them attacked her with a stick and pushed her to the sidewalk. Although some women tried to protect her, dragging her to the convent, she refused to go in when she heard that Sister Agnes was not there.

The crowd had increased fourfold by this time. Some had invaded the priests’ house and were throwing things out the windows, rubbing them in the mud, and threatening to lynch Father Tasto. Some police rescued Sister Rosalie and took her to the police station for safekeeping. After spending several terrifying hours in the priests’ house (with Father first hidden behind or under a big desk and later in the rafters above a false ceiling), both Father and Sister Agnes were also taken to the police station under heavy guard. There they stayed until they could be evacuated, Father disguised as a policeman and in the back of a trash truck, the sisters in Bishop McNabb’s car, which he had sent up for them. A few miles out of town, Father was allowed to leave the truck and join the sisters in the Bishop’s car, which sped them to Piura where the Bishop himself was waiting for them.

They spent about four hours recounting the events before leaving about 8:00 a.m. Then they slept for five hours. When they had rested, the Bishop asked them to tell their stories again, this time in the presence of a lawyer. Afterwards, they were taken to Chulucanas for a delicious supper and a Mass concelebrated by the Bishop and Fathers Dowling and Tasto.

The sisters left for Talara the following evening. It is amazing how calm they were, even in the midst of the events. In letters, they remark simply that they were using the time in Talara to take care of teeth, eyes, and other needs. They also occupied themselves in dividing up the shipments that had arrived from the Mother House for the missionaries. They both insisted that they and Father Dowling were willing to return to Ayabaca, but they planned to stay in Talara until the Bishop decided what should be done.

How difficult that and other decisions of the Bishop were! He made more than one trip to Ayabaca in the week following the wrecking of the parish property and the threat to the lives of the pastoral agents. He declared the parish to be “vacant,” that is, without priests or religious, until a special commission could finalize its studies of the parish. He placed the operation of the parish in the hands of the parish council and declared all parish property other than the church to be closed until further notice.

Meanwhile, in early November, he issued a formal communication detailing some of the reasons behind what had taken place and indicating
that what had occurred was the result of persons who had been and desired to continue exploiting their own people. It was evident, he said, that a small group of people desired to control the funds of the fiesta. He mentioned that all that had happened had been planned with a month’s anticipation.15

A commission of representatives of the archdiocese and the prelature was appointed to make a study and to offer recommendations. Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan arrived from the United States on November 13 to help evaluate the situation in Ayabaca. Bishop McNabb, writing to Mother Leo Frances in April of the following year, mentioned he had just received the results of the commission’s work the week before. He said that the study in no way indicated that North Americans should not return to work in Ayabaca. But he further noted that the principal point made by the study was that, whatever personnel went there, they should orientate their work more to the rural villages and free themselves from making the city of Ayabaca the focal point of their work. This would mean liberating themselves from many of the details of work that formerly occupied them. The parish office would continue to be run under the supervision of the layman who had been appointed ecclesiastical notary since October 15 when the priests and sisters left. He indicated that he hoped to make the parish center in Ayabaca as self-sufficient as the Base Ecclesiastical Communities that would be formed in the rural areas.16

Later, in May, Bishop McNabb and two Redemptorist priests took up residency in Ayabaca, with a third Redemptorist to join them later. As planned, they left much of the administration of the parish in the hands of the parish council while the pastoral program devoted more attention to rural ministries and establishing Base Communities. In the letter referred to above, Bishop McNabb had assured Mother Leo Frances that the sisters were both needed and welcome in Ayabaca. But he said he would not ask them to go in May; he would leave it to them to decide when and if they would return.

In a letter of early May, Sister Mary Patricia Kielty, who had recently returned from the United States, indicated that she planned to return to Ayabaca or one of its pueblos on May 21. But the Bishop canceled that and other return trips, sometimes just the night before departure and after all the meat and food had been purchased.17

In late June, Sisters Rosalie and Mary Patricia went to Ayabaca for ten days. In a letter of early July, Sister Mary Patricia tells of their having visited with Bishop McNabb on June 26. By that time, he had been advised not to assign permanent personnel to Ayabaca, so the sisters terminated their contract.18 They moved nearly all their things to Talara while deciding
what they would do or where they would go. However, many things were hardly usable; they were full of mildew.

During this time, Sister Agnes had been working in Santo Domingo. She joined the sisters briefly in Talara, but she apparently planned to accept the Bishop’s request to work in the Leadership Program of the prelature. Sisters Rosalie and Mary Patricia began looking into other mission possibilities.

Chapter VI Notes

1 When Bishop McNabb arrived in the Chulucanas prelature, aside from seven Franciscan priests from Sicily and four Franciscan Sisters from Colombia who were working in the province of Huancabamba, there were only seven diocesan priests working in an area which encompassed more than 300,000 people.
2 Mother Leo Frances Ryan to SCL Community, April 10, 1970, A/SCL.
3 Sister Rosalie Mahoney and Sister Agnes Klein to Ryan, March 27, 1970, A/SCL.
4 Ibid.
6 Sister Mary Patricia Kielty to Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, March 31, 1971, A/SCL.
7 Mahoney to Ryan and Sisters, August 10, 1970, A/SCL.
9 In Talara this earthquake destroyed part of the wall behind the house and garden as well as damaging the church; in Chalaco it destroyed the church and 90 percent of the homes there.
10 Kielty to Sheehan, 3rd Sun. of Advent, 1970, A/SCL.
12 Kielty to Sheehan, June 13, 1971, A/SCL.
13 See Appendix A for “The History of Señor Cautivo.”
14 The joint letter from Sisters Rosalie Mahoney and Agnes Klein to Mother Leo Frances Ryan (October 20, 1971, A/SCL) forms the basis of this account of the Ayabaca incident. See Appendix B and C for their individual accounts of the event.
16 McNabb to Ryan, April 20, 1972, A/Chulucanas, SCL File.
17 Kielty to Sheehan, May 11, 1972 and June 1, 1972, A/SCL.
18 Kielty to Sheehan, July 2, 1972, A/SCL.

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Major sites of SCL mission work in northern Peru, 1963-2003
Chapter VII: Chalaco: City in the Clouds

After Talara, Chalaco ranks as the mission in which the largest number of SCLs have served in Peru. It can also boast that some sisters have stayed there longer than in any other mission. Sister Catherine Nichol, one of the pioneers, served in that parish from 1971 to 1988, seventeen years straight. For years after changing from this mission, while persons on the coast were experiencing the hottest months of the year in January, February, and March, Sister Catherine delighted in going up to that mountainous "resort," despite its isolation, rain, and cold. Sister Blanche Marie Remington, another of the pioneers, gave ten years of dedicated service in Chalaco and its surrounding pueblos. Sister Regina Deitchman also gave twelve continuous years of service there from March 1974 to April 1986. She returned in 1996 to share her loving presence with the people of Chalaco and accompany the Peruvian sisters, who were by now assuming the responsibility for most of the campo (countryside) visits.

As mentioned in Chapter VI, the special Community Chapter of 1968-69 approved the request of the sisters in Talara that new missions be opened in Peru. After correspondence, Bishop John McNabb of the Chulucanas Prelature visited Mother Leo Frances Ryan and her Council in October 1969. Soon thereafter, the Council voted to send sisters to Ayabaca, and, a little later, to Chalaco. In a letter of February 17, 1970, Bishop McNabb expressed his delight at hearing that the Community planned to send sisters to Chalaco. He referred to Mother Leo Frances "pulling his leg" during his interview with the Council. Apparently, on that occasion she had alleged that he did not need so many sisters.

In his February communication, Bishop McNabb mentioned that he would need a little time to prepare because there was likely to be a change of clergy personnel. Moreover, since he had understood there would be no Sisters of Charity for the mission, he had asked that two Marist sisters go to Chalaco in April. He therefore needed some time to negotiate with that Community. In this same letter, he also expressed concern that he did not now have money for stipends as he had previously indicated he would. He asked Mother to be honest in saying whether or not the coming of sisters was dependent on their receiving a stipend. On May 6, Mother Leo Frances replied that the Community would accept his recommendations. Therefore, in 1971 the Bishop began paying the sisters a $40 monthly stipend, as the parish did not have funds with which to pay them. Even while these negotiations continued, Sisters Blanche Marie Remington, Catherine Nichol, and Marie James Simms assisted in their first pastoral meeting for the Chulucanas Prelature.

Located in the heart of the Andes, Chalaco lies at an altitude of 7500 feet, a good reason for it to be called the "City in the Clouds." Parts of San
Fernando parish are on plateaus at an even higher elevation, up to 9000 feet. Since the area is close to the equator, vegetation is often lush, and the cultivatable parcels of land on the mountainsides form patchworks of color where corn, wheat, potatoes, and other crops are grown. Many of these fields have such a steep pitch that they are still farmed in the style of the Inca Indians, that is, in step-like fashion. It is not unheard of for even a surefooted animal to fall off the sides of these mountainous fields.

The snake-like dirt road ascending to Chalaco from the coast holds its own perils. It is so narrow that only one vehicle can pass at a time, and drivers and their lookouts must constantly be aware of other vehicles ascending or descending. The latter must look for a widened space in the road to pull over and let the ascending car or truck pass, for with the wall of the mountain on one side and a steep ravine on the other, no one wants to back up to a wider section. During the rainy seasons, the road is often closed due to landslides. In some sections, the road is very hazardous due to the slippery, claylike mud.

Despite the earthquake of December 9, 1970, in which the 100-year-old church and 80 percent of the houses of Chalaco were destroyed or damaged severely, Sisters Blanche Marie, Catherine, and Marie James arrived at their new mission in Chalaco on February 20, 1971. Don Lucho, chauffeur of Bishop McNabb, drove the parish priest and the sisters in the Bishop’s jeep from Chulucanas as far as the road was open, near the village of Cabuyal. There Chalaco’s “governor,” Fernando Mezones, and several other men and young boys met them with eleven mules. From there, a train was formed, carrying the sisters, their suitcases, a mattress and blanket, tanks of gas, gas heaters, and other supplies the rest of the way. They were met at the outskirts of the town by school children and many of the townspeople, who welcomed them to the site of their new ministry. A little farther on, in their own dining room, they were toasted by the parish council with rompope and welcomed with speeches and songs. A dinner followed this ceremony. Hungry as they were, the sisters had three helpings of cebiche, only to find out this was but the entrada (first plate)! They could hardly believe it when soup and a main course of rice and chicken arrived.

Their new home was to be in the parish house that was nearing completion. It consisted of five bedrooms, a living room, bath, and patio on the second floor. On the first floor was the kitchen, dining room, parish office, and a large room meant for meetings, as well as another room that served at various times as parish chapel, infirmary, and later as an additional bedroom. Since Father Norbert Leyrita had surrendered his living quarters on the second floor, for a time he slept in one of the rooms below and took his meals with the sisters. However, he left shortly after Easter for a four-month visit to his home in the Philippines. During his absence, a priest or
the Bishop himself came to offer Mass once a month. Although Father Norbert returned to the Philippines the following year when his mother died, he was serving in Chalaco the last part of 1971 and part of 1972.

In their first days there, the sisters walked about the town to see the damages caused by the earthquake, meet the people, and have a better idea of their new environs. Father Norbert filled them in on the history of the town, from the effects of poor religious witness given by married priests living in the area (the disciplinarian in the high school was the son of a priest and the director himself, an ex-priest) to the exploitation of the people of the more rural areas by the merchants of Chalaco. The Marist sisters had also left them a list of problem areas with which to preoccupy themselves: alcoholism, unmarried mothers, and lack of respect for women. Father told them that murder should be added to the list! How many years more would future parish agents repeat those same items as sources of concern!

Father Norbert had a temporary structure built outside for Masses on Saturdays and Sundays; it consisted of posts and a metal roof, connected to the plaza side of the convent. During the week, he celebrated the liturgy in the library at the convent. The sisters lost no time in beginning their work with catechists, preparing parents for Baptisms, and holding classes in Bible study. They also discovered that many of the church records were missing or piled in boxes rather than being recorded in the ledgers. By mid-March, the two catechists and Father met to divide up their work. Sister Marie James soon made a trip to the coast with Father Norbert to solicit the Bishop's help in getting a temporary nurse's license so that she could work with the sanitario (public health person) in the town.

Despite the fact that the men and Father Norbert had worked long, hard hours on the road, there were many places where the road was still impassable due to washouts and slides. By the end of March, food supplies were so low that Sister Catherine and Father Norbert set out on mule to go to the coast to make purchases. Sister Blanche Marie repeated the journey in April. Such trips normally took at least twelve hours on mule before meeting up with a car. Yet they were deemed necessary as it would be another two months before the first trucks could come in with supplies.

There were, of course, many firsts for the sisters. These pioneers were struck by the meaningfulness of the Palm Sunday procession and Good Friday veneration and procession. However, the sisters were immediately conscious of the fact that neither the Virgin Mary nor Mary Magdalene was represented. In late April, they had their first experience with a funeral and were impressed with how the prayer leaders from Naranjo led various litanies and other prayers by heart as they waited in the cemetery for the grave to be opened. Sister Blanche Marie gave the homily when the priest lost his voice.
Being the excellent teacher she was, Sister Blanche Marie was appalled at the conditions in the school. The building and rooms reflected dismal poverty, with nothing of beauty to be seen. There was poverty too in the lack of responsibility among the teachers, who often came late and left early.

There were other culture shocks too. For instance, Sister Marie James was horrified when she discovered the walls in the health clinic were plastered with cow dung. She was likewise dismayed to see a piglet and small chickens running in and out of the house and even across the bed in which lay the infirm person she had come to attend. In June, Sister Marie James was summoned for her first parto (delivery) at 4:30 a.m. That was yet another trauma for a nurse trained in the antiseptic delivery rooms of the United States. In coming months, she was called out at all hours of the day and night to minister to mothers in labor.

Sisters Catherine and Blanche Marie continued with their instructions for Baptism and Matrimony. They also began meetings with the teachers of the boys' school, instructing them in the Medellín document, and, with difficulty, eventually convincing them of the possibility of having an alphabetization program (teaching reading and writing to the uneducated). By May of the following year, Sister Blanche Marie expressed her delight in the seeming change of attitude at the high school, where the teachers actually asked her to attend their meeting. Before long, she and Sister Catherine began teaching religion classes there. However, the more the sisters were present, the more they were aware of the serious problems that existed. They learned, for example, of young girls in the high school who had been exploited by the Guardia Civil (Civil Guard or police) and even by some of the teachers.

In summer 1971, Sisters Catherine and Blanche Marie attended an inspiring course in Lima taught by Pablo Freire, author of "Comunidades Eclesiales." As a consequence, Sister Blanche Marie began visiting married couples in Chalaco to invite them to a program on Base Church Communities (CEBs). This new method focused on developing small groups of ten to twenty persons who would meet weekly to dialog about their reality in the light of the Gospels and then take actions to improve their lives together.

The sisters' work was not limited to the town of Chalaco itself. Chalaco is the site of the parish church, rectory, and convent, but the parish staff attends the people of about 85 villages; these are divided into 6 sectors composed of 10–15 villages each. Three sectors lie on the western side of the cordillera (mountain range): Choco, at the highest altitude (9500 feet), Chalaco at 7500 feet, and Silahua, at a somewhat lower elevation (2700 feet). Three other sectors lie on the eastern side of the cordillera: Coca at coastal level, Tamboya at 2700 feet, and Yamango at 3000 feet. Here more
fruits, coffee and cocoa beans are raised. To reach this side of the parish from Chalaco, one needs to take a 12- to 15-hour mule trip over the cordillera or descend by truck or jeep to Morropon, the provincial capital on the coast (about three and a half hours in good weather), then ascend to one of the centers on the other side of the cordillera. To reach Coca from Morropon takes only about an hour; to ascend to Tamboya from Coca means fording a small river and climbing a rugged road for another hour and a half. To reach Yamango from Coca means fording a larger river with giant rocks in it and then climbing upward for about one and a half hours more. As can be imagined, visits to most of these villages were infrequent.

Not long after the sisters arrived in Chalaco, Sister Blanche Marie was going into the campo (countryside) with the CEB formation programs, beginning in two villages relatively close to Chalaco. By late August, the sisters were even more enthusiastic as this new method of getting communities to share seemed to be catching on. During the ensuing months, groups were formed in three other villages belonging to the Chalaco sector. Eventually, Sister Blanche Marie began concentrating her efforts in Naranjo while Sister Catherine introduced the CEBs in Cabuyal.

Sister Marie James assumed leadership in organizing the men to build a health center. Before the sisters’ arrival, the closest posta medica was in Chulucanas, there being only a posta sanitaria in Chalaco.8 Since the church had been too badly damaged by the earthquake of December 1970, the priests and Bishop had decided to tear it down. As the wrecking progressed, the remains of five or six persons were uncovered. Before the excavations were completed, one hundred or more burial sites were unearthed, revealing that there had apparently been a cemetery there sometime in the 1800s before the church had been built.

When news of the Ayabaca “uprising” and flight of our sisters in October 1971 reached the sisters in Chalaco, they were naturally worried. Needless to say, they were relieved when they heard that Sisters Agnes Klein and Rosalie Mahoney were safe and sound on the coast.9 Later, Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, who had come down from the States to help evaluate the situation in Ayabaca, came to visit Chalaco, as did Sisters Rosalie and Edith McCauley. Much to the joy of the sisters there, the three visitors ended up staying for Thanksgiving because the road was closed when a truck overturned near San Miguel.

Communication was often difficult in the mountainous region, so sometimes there were unexpected surprises, as when Sisters Mary Kevin Hollow, Mary Serena Sheehy, Regina Deitchman, Agnes Klein, and Rosalie Mahoney arrived for a visit on December 12. Although the Chalaco sisters had known some sisters were coming, they did not know when or how many, so there was much scurrying around to find beds and sufficient food.
Parish of Chalaco
The absence of electricity was another problem. Father had had a small motor installed so that normally the sisters had light for about four hours in the evenings. But at times, the motor failed. When this occurred, Sister Catherine, on mule, would accompany four to six men, who carried it to wherever the road was open; once this meant carrying it as far as Santiago, approximately one-third of the way to the coast. Because of the distance and the poor roads, it sometimes took up to six months to have necessary repair work done on the motor. Meanwhile, the sisters had to rely on kerosene or Petromax lamps for whatever they wanted to do after dark. The loss of electricity was important not only because of the non-existent light, but also because it meant the parish lost its almost nightly radio contact with the Bishop and his teams in Chulucanas.

The water supply, too, was frequently a problem. Whenever the city officials decided to clean the reservoir or make new connections to houses, everyone in Chalaco lost access to piped in water for whatever time was necessary to complete the repairs. Then the sisters, like others who had no water piped into their homes, had to go to the river.

Their first Christmas in the sierra was special in several ways. First of all, they used their ingenuity to “make” their Christmas tree, nailing together limbs. Sister Catherine recorded a number of the Christmas carols traditional to the sierra to be used in the liturgies, and even now she remembers taping Homero Ruiz singing “La Gente Se Quiere Mucho,” one of the Peruvians’ most-loved Christmas songs. Many people came for the Misa de Gallo (Midnight Mass) and even stayed for some time afterwards. The sisters themselves were enchanted with the live Nativity scene, with real shepherds squatting before Jesus, Joseph, and Mary during the Mass.

The seasons in Chalaco are the opposite of those on the coast. When it is summer on the coast (January, February, and March), it is winter in Chalaco and vice versa. Therefore, in Chapters VII and VIII, when winter is mentioned, think January, February, and March, and when summer is mentioned, think July, August, and September. Despite these climatic differences, the school year (April to December) coincides with the coastal calendar.

Soon after Christmas, the sisters began the long trek to the coast. During these winter months of January, February, and March, they took advantage of courses in Lima and Chulucanas. The last days of March found Sisters Blanche Marie and Catherine making their way back up to Chalaco by mule, the Bishop’s car making it no further than the river below Paltachaco at this time (about one-third to one-half the way up to Chalaco). Fortunately, the Marist sisters in Pambarumbe welcomed them into their home and celebrated the Holy Thursday liturgy with them. Not only did they share
the meal together afterwards, but they also exchanged many ideas about life and ministry. Leaving for Chalaco the following morning, the sisters arrived shortly before the Good Friday liturgy. Father delayed starting the services until they had time to refresh themselves and have something to eat. In typical Peruvian style, no one seemed to be upset by the delay.

Commenting on the celebration of Mother’s Day, Sister Blanche Marie noted some cultural differences. For such celebrations there are always public programs the evening before with poems, songs, and elocutions, all of which have a deep, emotional, even sentimental overtone. “Men and boys are not afraid to manifest the deepest sentiment in verse or song, especially for their mothers—but they can’t stand the pressure of human respect as far as their religious obligations go. This is very true for the men teachers as well as for the high school boys.” But the sisters were saddened by the other part of such celebrations: normally the men drank all day, and their wives and mothers pretty much stayed inside, perhaps only to suffer the consequences of such drinking when the men returned home.

By August 1972, a leadership program for some twenty men had been started, which continued until the end of September. Father Gerald Theis, OSA, with Vidal Mego, a Peruvian teacher, gave each of these workshops, which lasted for five or six days and nights. Thanks to the fact that a parishioner lent Father Norbert a house in Chalaco where the men from the outlying towns could stay together, they established a real camaraderie. This also allowed them to have more hours of classes, for many had come from two or more hours away. Their growth in self-confidence was evident, and for many years these same leaders continued to serve in the parish and their caserios (villages). Sister Catherine found the closing ceremonies developed by the men themselves so interesting that she taped some. They included songs, dances, adivinanzas (guessing contests), as well as original cumananas (spontaneously sung dialogues constructed by counterpoint groups).

In October, a cursillo for men was given in Chalaco, and the sisters looked forward to helping with this three-day charismatic retreat. This was given by a team from Talara, which included Sister Josephine Bustos. Sister Catherine had picked up the priest, sisters, and three laymen and driven them to Chalaco in the sisters’ Toyota. All were delighted with the enthusiastic response of the men.

From the beginning, the sisters had discovered that part of being a missionary, especially in a remote region of the sierra, was being flexible and changing one’s plans frequently. This was true whether one had planned to travel to another pueblo and the animals or weather did not cooperate, or one arrived on scene only to discover that the “word had not been passed” that they were coming. Indeed, even though one had planned a workshop
for teachers well ahead of the scheduled time and even invited other speakers to come, the ministry of education might override the plans, calling for its own meeting. So, what to do? The sisters sometimes found ways to adapt their plans for another group, such as calling together other parish members who could profit from the planned event.

As there were no sisters or resident priest at this time in the neighboring parish of Pacaipampa, northeast of Chalaco, Bishop McNabb asked the Chalaco team to take charge there. Sister Marie James first accompanied Father Isidro, one of the parish priests, in October 1972. The following year, the sisters were more frequently in that area, especially from August to December. Many faithful, even from distant villages and the coast, visit the miraculous image of the Virgin there during August. Customarily, many have their children baptized during the celebrations surrounding the principal feast day of August 15. As there were approximately four hundred children baptized each year, the sisters were given permission to baptize. Of course, that meant they also assumed the responsibility for the sacramental preparation of both parents and the godparents beforehand.

Sometime in October, Sister Catherine and a Marist sister from Pambarumbe accompanied Father Norbert to one of the outlying regions of Pacaipampa. They drove partway, then proceeded by animals on to Cumbicus to help Father Isidro with the Feast of Saint Francis. The most dramatic event of this visit, according to Sister Catherine, came when it was time to return the following day. The men had been drinking and made no effort to summon the animals until Father Isidro took out a pistol and “threatened” them. The necessary horses and mules for their return trip were promptly forthcoming!

In succeeding years, the sisters continued to serve the region of Pacaipampa as well as Chalaco. Although priests had arrived somewhat earlier, there were no sisters living there until 1984. Five men11 met with Sisters Blanche Marie and Catherine every Saturday to prepare the Sunday liturgy, which the men led when there was no priest to preside. Even when there was an ordained minister, they helped carry it out.

Meanwhile, Sister Catherine was also making campo visits in the other direction, first to Guayaquil in September 1972, then to Silahua in July 1973. In this largest settlement in the region, somewhat to the southwest of Chalaco, she discovered the people to be more indigenous, and, because they had been more isolated, they were more closed and less participative. For many years to come, pastoral agents would be frustrated in that region, but they persevered in their efforts and sometimes were pleasantly surprised.

In fall 1972, Sister Blanche Marie contracted hepatitis and spent the next several months recuperating in Talara, not returning until May 1973.
Even as late as the seventeenth of that month, she and Father Isidro had to make a twelve-hour trip by mule, the cars not being able to enter Chalaco until June 14 of that year. During Sister Blanche Marie’s absence and due to the fact that Sister Marie James had returned to the United States in December 1972, Sister Sally Watson was accompanying Sister Catherine in Chalaco and investigating to see if her health would permit her to work in the sierra. Shortly after Sister Blanche Marie’s return, Father Gerald Theis came to begin the next part of the leadership formation program begun the preceding year. The sisters helped with the follow-up in the parish.

In the division of work, a pattern soon developed, with Sister Catherine traveling to the villages south and west of Chalaco, while Sister Blanche Marie concentrated in the areas to the north and east. Father Norbert expressed his pleasure with their pastoral visits, marriage orientations, and preparations for Baptism and First Communion. Without doubt, the people were pleased to have the sacraments celebrated in their own villages following the sacramental preparation by the Madres. They also enjoyed coming together for the bingo or socials following the liturgies.

In October 1972, Mother Leo Frances Ryan had relayed her concerns to Bishop McNabb about not having a contract with the prelature, that is, nothing in writing. In November of the following year, Mother Leo Frances wrote to thank him for the contract he had sent, commenting that it was basically a good one, but that she would hope that something regarding upkeep of the convent could be included. Said contract called for a stipend of $40 per month per sister, to be paid by the prelature. She also mentioned that she still did not know who could replace Sister Marie James.12

Sister Catherine, with the Bishop’s authorization, had earlier applied (July 1971) to Adveniat, the German Bishops’ organization for helping missionary efforts. She requested funds for purchasing a jeep for the use of the sisters in going to the coast for supplies and other needs. Such petitions take time to be realized, but finally, on April 4, 1974, Sisters Blanche Marie and Regina Deitchman left Talara in a new jeep, an auspicious beginning for Sister Regina’s new mission. However, Sister Agnes Klein and one of the Augustinian priests could drive them only as far as San Miguel, leaving them to continue by mule since the road was still closed above that point. Fortunately, they did not have to wait long for the jeep. When Sister Catherine returned from her home visit, she arrived in the Chalaco jeep for the first time on May 1.

Soon after, Sister Agnes Klein, now working with the leadership training program of the prelature, came to help two Augustinian priests with an intensive weeklong preparation for lay leaders. These lay leaders would then give the mission program in various parish centers during the year. Sister Blanche Marie did the “ground work,” pre-planning and
orienting the people for the mission in Chalaco, the first in the parish that year. Sister Regina, together with Father Norbert, helped a group of campo leaders develop different themes to be preached during this time. They provided additional incentive by taping and re-taping the men's talks, critiquing and encouraging them in the process.

In their first few years in the parish, especially when Father Norbert was absent, the sisters typed up a lot of baptismal certificates, for they had discovered boxes of unrecorded baptismal certificates dating from the time when there had been no resident priest in Chalaco. Sometimes interesting errors were discovered. For instance, the girl "Carmen" recorded in the archive book might actually turn out to have been a male.

Even visitors were pressed into service, assisting the sisters in their various ministries. During her first visit, for example, Sister Elena Mack left the truck at Cabuyal, arriving in time for one of Sister Catherine's sessions. Very soon thereafter, she was experiencing her first mule ride. By the time she left Chalaco, she had gone with Sister Regina to Taspa one day and with Sister Catherine to Cabuyal on another. She may even have helped Sister Catherine and Father Norbert when they spent many hours helping the people prepare an altar from adobes where the Blessed Sacrament could be reserved. While visiting at another time, she went with the parish team, including a layman trained in the leadership program, to Pacaipampa and Cumbicus.

Naranjo, where Sister Blanche Marie spent so much time and effort, was also in the process of preparing to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in their midst. Twenty-five couples were meeting regularly there in a CEB, or base community. Because of this, the Bishop felt guaranteed that Our Lord would not be left alone or abandoned for long periods of time.

In this life in the sierra, there was always a good mixture of apostolic, social, and political works. Thus, Sister Catherine now went to Silahua to search for leaders and to talk about the possibility of a mission during the year. Sister Regina walked to Taspa for a kermesse (a sort of bazaar), and the sisters also participated in the formal installation of electricity in the principal streets of Chalaco, even if only about forty of the possible eight hundred houses had light globes in their homes. Both the priests and sisters met with the mayor, the captain of the Guardia Civil, the judges, and the sanitario (nurse technician) to discuss abuses of authority the people from the outlying areas experienced when they came to Chalaco for even the most simple of services. In this meeting, they detailed how campesinos (people from the countryside) were frequently overcharged, made to wait a long time, or even told to return another day.

For a while at least, the sisters were to number four. In August 1974, Sisters Catherine and Blanche Marie were joined by Sisters Regina
Deitchman and Mary Patricia Kielty. Sister Regina had just returned from Chapter in the United States, and Sister Mary Patricia had just finished her course as a nurse clinician in family practice in the United States. Sister Josephine Bustos accompanied Sister Mary Patricia to Chalaco and stayed for a week, during which she unpacked all the medicines Sister Marie James had packed before leaving and helped Sister Mary Patricia with the five duffel bags she had brought back. In a letter to Sister Mary Kevin a month after her arrival, Sister Mary Patricia said she could hardly get up in the mornings as she was so tired from going up and down the hills of Chalaco; she said "that soft life will kill a person in the states." However, she added that after two weeks she had begun to toughen up. She also went into the outlying villages, going as far as the Pacaipampa region. In September, doctors from Piura and Chulucanas began making a monthly visit to Chalaco, thanks to the invitation extended by Sister Mary Patricia.

Sister Mary Patricia still tells humorous and not so humorous stories about the trips into the campo. Once, after being in the campo for several days in the region of Choco with Sister Regina, without showers or even sponge baths in some cases, the sisters were looking forward to returning home the following day. Sister Mary Patricia had already climbed into her sleeping bag, fully clothed except for boots, when she heard Sister Regina rooting around among her things, rattling plastic bags. Sister Mary Patricia asked, "What are you doing, Regina, in the dark?" Sister Regina responded in a voice of exasperation, "I'm looking for a clean pair of socks!" At this, Sister Mary Patricia exclaimed, "My goodness, we will be home in a few hours; wear what you have on!" Needless to say, Sister Mary Patricia was laughing to herself in her bag.

Another story reflects the low estate of women. Once when Sister Mary Patricia went into the campo on a sick call for a "dying woman," she discovered her patient was suffering only from a fever and dehydration. Accordingly, she gave her some medicine and told her to drink a lot of water. When she returned two days later, she found the woman much better. On leaving the house, Sister Mary Patricia stopped to talk with the husband, commenting on the marked improvement of his wife. He responded, pointing at the coffin he had made, "And what am I supposed to do with this now?" Finding another woman would not have cost him as much effort apparently!

In October, a team composed of an Italian Franciscan and two young Peruvian women, members of a lay institute, arrived in Chalaco to help give a mission. Other lay leaders also arrived, giving evidence of the success of the leadership programs going on in many parts of the prelature. The sense of solidarity and camaraderie among all these pastoral agents reflected the atmosphere and fraternity that Bishop McNabb himself attempted to
foster among them and which was enhanced by the periodic meetings of all the pastoral agents in Chulucanas.

Within the parish itself, although the missions being given in the various sectors resulted in many Baptisms, Confirmations, and marriages, the priests and sisters realized there yet remained much to do. In the isolated areas especially, virtually abandoned for years, they encountered much alcoholism and even witchcraft in some places. In some places, there was also a strange mixture of Catholicism and the superstitious practices of the past. Thus, they were gratified by every advance. At the end of December 1974, for example, the people of Cabuyal were finally persuaded to turn over the *Virgencita-muy Milagrosa* (very miraculous virgin) to Father Norbert. This object, venerated by the people over many years, was really but a stone with an etching.

Such gains stimulated the sisters to extend their work into still new areas. When Sister Regina visited Inampampa, one of the villages of Chalaco at a higher altitude, she was the first sister who had been there in five years. She would continue to visit this isolated and especially impoverished zone often in the following years. She also went to Portachuelo to encourage the *campesinos* in the program they had begun with the aid of the Office of Agrarian Reform. They had begun planting more potatoes in place of the sugar cane that had been used for producing the strong liquor called *primera*.

In April 1974, Bishop McNabb wrote Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, liaison member of the SCL General Council for the Latin American Missions, revealing that recently he had received a sum of $801.50 from a Mrs. Agnes Robin in England. The money was designated for medical needs or for projects approved by the parish team of sisters and priests. He suggested that further donations from England be sent to the Mother House in Leavenworth. The sisters in Chalaco could then draw down this money as needed. Later that year, Sister Mary Seraphine wrote the Bishop, agreeing that the Sisters of Charity would administer the fund and inform him of any donations received from England. The people of Birmingham and West Midlands, England, have continued to sacrifice and work to support this Chalaco-San Fernando Fund for over twenty-five years in spite of their changing pastors with varying opinions. These dedicated laypersons have been ingenious in the projects they have undertaken, including the taking of annual subscriptions from parishioners and conducting bazaars, fairs, concerts, and sales of various kinds. Over the years, many poor sick of the Chalaco parish have profited by their interest, and a three-way communication has gone on over the years between the different coordinators, SCL mission liaisons, and the sisters in Chalaco.
Because of difficulties in borrowing animals for their trips, the parish bought two mules the year after the sisters arrived. Sisters Catherine and Blanche Marie succeeded in gathering fence posts from Cabuyal after plowing through mud; Sister Catherine secured barbed wire from somewhere and commandeered manpower to get the mules “behind bars.” Thus, they would supposedly always be ready for a trip to the campo. However, except for trips to the coast, the mules were normally not much used during the severe rains. Because of the difficulties of travel during the rainy season, Sisters Catherine and Blanche Marie stayed close to home, visiting homes in Chalaco and recopying old baptismal registers.

One of the new projects that Sister Catherine proposed to the people, especially the women, was a night school. A young Peruvian teacher who had his degree volunteered as “director” and also taught the first year. Sisters Catherine and Regina devoted time to the illiterate, and Sister Regina taught religion in the night school.

In early January 1975, Sister Mary Patricia left for Bolivia for language school. About the same time, Sister Regina also went to Bolivia, first to make a pastoral visit to Coripata as Regional Coordinator and then possibly study language before visiting her Benedictine missionary brother, Father Eric, in Brazil.

Later in the month, when Sister Blanche Marie made her trip to Chulucanas, it took her thirty-six hours! She missed the truck out of Santiago and had to stay overnight with the sisters in Pambarumbe. Nevertheless, she was a long time on a mule just to reach that point. From there, she went on to Lima for study; while there, she and Sister Elena Mack experienced the frightening disturbance and fighting between the Guardia Civil and the Army, with the consequent toque de queda (curfew).

In addition to their other work during 1975, the parish team decided to put special emphasis on workshops for women, especially for the wives of the lay leaders. In mid-June, eighteen women made the first workshop. A few days before it began, Sister Regina obtained the use of the adobe house used during the reconstruction of the church. That was a great advantage because the women from outlying areas could stay there, and it could also be used for presentations. Sister Regina even persuaded one of the women of Chalaco to give sewing lessons to the women making the workshop.

The sisters also planned to continue their work in giving missions in the outlying areas, scheduling four of them for the year. In September, Sisters Catherine and Mary Patricia formed part of the team that gave the five-day mission in Matalacas, an area that lay in a sort of “no man’s zone” between the parishes of Frias and Chalaco. Depending on the condition of the roads and the animals available, it required a trip of four hours or more by mule from Chalaco. There had been no mission in the area for twenty-five years.
While at home, there was always the unscheduled work, such as Sister Catherine’s taking soup to a dying man who, after a period of several months, finally had his marriage “fixed up” and thereafter received the Anointing of the Sick and daily Communion. Once when Sister Mary Patricia received a desperate call from Pacaipampa for help, she first prescribed emergency treatment by phone, then sent medicine for the boy, who had consumed a poisonous berry.

There were joyful events and ceremonies too. In late May, everyone became excited at the possibility of having hydroelectric power when the motor finally arrived that had been detained by Customs in the port of Lima for several years. When it was put into operation in mid-June, the city of Chalaco again had electric lights for the first time in years. That is, this meant that anyone who had electric wiring could have light until midnight. The small motor the sisters had been using provided light for only three to four hours and only for the convent.

On June 1, the sisters were delighted to see the participation of so many people in the memorial Mass offered for Sister Marie James Simms, who had died after returning to the States.

On December 8, the new church was dedicated with great solemnity, including the singing of the polyphonic choir from Chulucanas and “jillions” of rockets.

Besides their parish work, the sisters contributed to other groups. As mentioned, Sister Regina was the Regional Coordinator, which occasioned her making trips to the other SCL missions in Latin America and also serving on committees, such as for a placement policy. At the July pastoral meeting of the prelature in 1975, Sister Catherine was chosen as representative of the prelature to the National Liturgical Conference to be held in Chaclacayo. At the same meeting, Sister Blanche Marie was elected representative to the Regional Bishops’ Assembly to be held in Jaen. In January 1976, Sister Mary Patricia went to Caracas, Venezuela, with Sister Mary Baehl, OSB, for a three-week “Institute for Training of World Churchmen.” Later, in August 1977, Sister Blanche Marie helped develop the ten-year plan for CEBs for the prelature. During the winter months, Sisters Catherine and Regina even worked with a señorita in the municipal offices to set up a better filing system so that birth certificates of this century could be found more easily.

As a part of encouraging greater formation of women and also promoting religious vocations, Sister Blanche Marie took a group of high school students to a workshop in Chulucanas. Sister Blanche Marie, together with several teachers, also accompanied about 30 fourth and fifth year high school students to Piura for a retreat. For many, if not most, it was their first trip to the coast. The sisters also invited girls from fourth
and fifth year high school for afternoons of reflection and simple refreshments. In later years, young women from other parts of the parish were invited to come and stay the weekend so that they, too, could participate.

At various times over the years, the sisters took girls to the Center of Formation in Canchaque and later in Chulucanas. They likewise visited there to give presentations and were also very receptive to having young women live with them for different periods of time.

In January 1976, Fathers Norbert and Isidro left Chalaco, once again leaving the parish without a resident priest, although Father Daniel Turley, OSA, came to celebrate Mass a few times. After the departure of the priests, the sisters began distributing the viveres (foodstuffs) that had been stored for some time. They also set about cleaning both the priests' house and the sacristy, work that took them well into March. They likewise cleaned out and modified areas in their own convent, as well as doing some painting, all work that could not be done during the pressures of the work year.

Although there were no longer resident priests, Fathers Dan Turley and David Klotz, Augustinians, came to develop a special mission program that was given in more than forty villages. The sisters split up, each one pairing up with one of the priests to work in different villages. After working together for a period of six months, Sister Blanche Marie described it as one of the "most meaningful and beautiful pastoral experiences" of their SCL apostolate in Chalaco. The sisters made numerous and long trips, preparing and animating the people of each village the week before the mission, visiting homes, helping teachers with their religion classes, and giving the required marriage and baptismal instructions. The actual week of the mission, there was a morning and afternoon instruction that included Scripture, hymns, prayer, and often a simple drama. The evening gathering always included a Eucharistic celebration followed by a social gathering.

In October, Sisters Regina and Mary Patricia accompanied Father David Klotz on a four-day visit to Palo Blanco in the district of Pacaipampa. That same month, Sisters Mary Patricia and Catherine journeyed to Silahua with Father Dan Turley. As indicated earlier, evangelization was more difficult there. Although this was the only visit by a priest during the whole year, there were only sixty-eight Baptisms. Later, in November, Huachari also had their only visit of the year.

One of the highlights of the year was the weeklong mission given in Chalaco in October by Father Jose Ignacio Alemany, CSSR, a renowned preacher and missionary. Two Spanish Redemptorist sisters accompanied him to gain an appreciation of that area of the sierra, which would now become part of their special mission of prayer once they were cloistered in Chulucanas in December.
The question of whether there would be continuous service by resident priests in the Chalaco parish remained moot for a time, but there were various rumors. These included that there would be no priests assigned there, that two Irish priests might be coming, or possibly that Father Aquilino, OSA, would live in Santo Domingo with two other priests and come to Chalaco for part of each month.

Actually, there was a more novel proposal afoot, namely, that the Sisters of Charity in Chalaco would administer that parish. On February 19, 1977, Sister Agnes Klein, Director of Missions, and the three sisters then living in Chalaco (Sister Catherine was in the States for her home visit) sent Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, Coordinator of Latin American Missions, a copy of the proposed “Peru Pilot Project 1977.” At the same time, they included a memo signed by Sisters Agnes, Blanche Marie Remington, Regina Deitchman, and Mary Patricia Kielty.

Following clarifications and action by the SCL General Council, Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director, signed a Declaration of Intent which said in part: “The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, stationed at Chalaco, Peru, as members of a parish team, will coordinate the pastoral activities of the parish of San Fernando, Chalaco, Peru, in the absence of a resident priest.” Noting that the sister administrator would be appointed by Bishop McNabb, it further indicated that the agreement would be “for one year, from March, 1977, to March, 1978.” At the end of that time, the arrangement “would be reviewed by both the sisters working in Chalaco and Bishop McNabb” to determine whether or not it would be renewed.

Several times during 1977, seminarians who were in their last year of preparation for the priesthood came to Chalaco for their pastoral experience and to help the sisters.

On the last Sunday in July, Bishop McNabb came to consult with the sisters about the special arrangement under which the parish was functioning. He must have brought with him the revised document entitled “Chalaco, Peru Pilot Project 1977, Comunidad Eclesial de Base.” The main objective was expressed thus: “The integral evangelization of the Christian Community will be primarily through ‘Comunidades Eclesiales de Base’ in a parish without a resident priest.” Noting that the sisters were very familiar with the reality of the Peruvians living in the area, the document expressed the hope that they would continue working more intensely with the lay leader program, helping both men and women to grow in their roles as Christians. This working document was the basis on which the sisters, with Sister Regina Deitchman as Administrator, operated during the year.

On December 13, 1977, the parish team met again with Bishop McNabb to evaluate the year’s experiment. The evaluation was very positive.
However, in the interim Sister Mary Kevin Hollow had written Bishop McNabb to express the concern of the Council that the sisters were without daily Eucharist. She said that would be acceptable only as a last resort and only with the understanding that a priest would visit monthly or twice monthly for three to five days. She also insisted that it be understood that the sisters might continue to have the daily celebration of the Word with the distribution of Communion. She was adamant, moreover, that under no conditions should the sisters be responsible for the financing of the parish or its maintenance and upkeep. For that reason, she said, she did not want a sister to be the administrator, indicating that surely there must be responsible and qualified laymen who could assume that role. The sisters could help, she said. 22

During the winter months of 1978, Sisters Blanche Marie and Catherine had remained in Chalaco, although they changed off from time to time for vacations and meetings. During February, they arranged for a cursillo of thirty-two men with Father Dan Turley directing it.

At the full-week meeting of pastoral agents in Chulucanas in March, the agents were informed about the Better World Movement. 23 Apparently, the presentations were so enthusiastic that, by the end of the August meeting, the assembly voted almost unanimously in favor of implementing it for the whole prelature. 24 The Bishop and team proposed that a global ten-year plan be developed, with intermediate steps to be worked out by a committee of pastoral agents.

Sister Blanche Marie served as a member of the first planning group that developed the first three-year joint pastoral plan. They proposed these focuses: 1978-79, “Sensitizing the People of God to Fraternity”; 1979-80, “Sensitizing the People of God to a Sense of Church”; and 1980-81, “Sensitizing the People of God to the Redemption Event.”

On March 18, 1978, Sister Regina returned to Chalaco following her home visit in the States. She arrived by car with Father Aquilino, an Augustinian priest who would be the new pastor, and David Petraitis, an Augustinian seminarian. Just two days later, Sister Blanche Marie heard of her father’s death. Because rains had again closed the road, she had to descend partway by mule. Arriving as far as the road was open, she met up with Sister Agnes Klein, who took her the rest of the way. Although she planned to return to Chalaco after the funeral, she stayed on in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to care for her sister. This left just two sisters in Chalaco, Sisters Catherine and Regina, since Sister Mary Patricia had gone to the SCL mission in Bolivia.

Father Aquilino was not formally named pastor until June 1978. Nevertheless, as soon as Sister Catherine returned from the coast, Father Aquilino and the rest of the team began making plans for Holy Week and
for the year. The sisters invited all the people to collaborate in the planning. Apparently, by then the people felt so much a part of the parish that they responded enthusiastically, even returning many of the statues they had been guarding in their homes since 1970 when the first church was destroyed in the earthquake.

The sisters planned to visit all thirty areas of the parish between April and June, Sisters Catherine and Regina trading off visits to the campo. In May, Sister Catherine began working with a group of lay people to put out a letter for the parish. After the Community meeting in Lima that same month, Sister Rose Celine Siebers came to Chalaco with Sisters Catherine and Regina for a two-month experience. When she left, she did so with the desire to return.

In July, Sister Regina received word that her mother had a cancerous tumor on her spine, so she returned to the States at the end of August. As a consequence, Sister Catherine was the only sister full-time in Chalaco for the months of September, October, and November. During these three months, the sisters from Talara took turns staying with her.

In January 1979, Bishop McNabb informed Sister Mary Kevin that two Augustinian fathers would be assigned to Chalaco. In that same letter, he made a strong plea for four sisters to work in the parish, instead of just the two currently there.

During the rainy season, Sisters Regina and Catherine concentrated their work as usual on activities in Chalaco. In January, Sister Regina organized a youth club that met weekly in the parish hall to listen to a tape and afterwards do some sharing. Generally, they concluded the evening with some sort of social activity, such as playing bingo or dancing. Saturday mornings and afternoons found Sister Regina giving catechism classes. During the rest of the week, she visited homes and continued the work of indexing the baptismal records. After finishing her retreat in Lima, Sister Catherine had a program of filmstrips on Health Teachings for some 100 to 150 mothers of families. This large number may have been motivated by the fact that after each of the five meetings the women received *viveres* (foodstuffs).

In March, Father Dan Turley and Sister Catherine had three neighborhood meetings in homes in distinct parts of the town; the theme addressed was conversion. Sister Catherine also taught English five days a week to high school students and those in their last year of elementary school. One of these students, Juan Mondragon, was later ordained for the Diocese of Chulucanas. Meanwhile, during the early part of that month, Father Aquilino, Father David Klotz, and Sister Regina were parish representatives to a Better World Movement workshop in Lima. Conveniently, Sister Regina was able to make her retreat afterwards.

In the first week of April 1979, Father Aquilino returned to Chalaco, and once again the parish team undertook the planning for Holy Week and
the year. Shortly thereafter, they received the good news that Sister Blanche Marie would be returning in July and also that Sister Rose Celine Siebers would soon be a member of the Chalaco community. In May, the team was able to begin their campo visits, for happily the road was open again.

Once again the parish was priestless after May 26. Father Klotz returned to the States on receiving the news that his father had been involved in a plane accident, and Father Aquilino became ill and went to the coast. Therefore, Father Charles Bodden came from Santo Domingo on Sundays to offer Mass. In early June, Father Aquilino returned briefly, but resigned as pastor and again went to the coast. However, mysteriously, he returned on June 28 to resume his work as pastor. During this hectic month, Sisters Catherine and Regina had managed to visit eleven caserios and conduct the area meetings, as well as write and send out the parish letter and carry on all their other regular duties.

In July, Sister Regina traveled to four of the more remote villages, making a five-day mule trip. On her return she commented that the people certainly were ready for women priests; everywhere she was asked to baptize, hear confessions, anoint their sick, and offer Mass. During her absence, Sister Blanche Marie had returned and was joyfully received by both the sisters and the laity.

At the end of that month, Sister Catherine accompanied Sister Regina to Inampampa, an isolated village in the windswept heights more than two and a half hours by mule and foot above Chalaco. When they arrived, they discovered that men from the village had gone to Chalaco to ask them to postpone their visit but had missed them, perhaps having taken a different trail. Knowing that such failures in communication were not at all uncommon, the sisters waited patiently at the schoolhouse while the people were notified and gathered together. When the people did arrive, the sisters presented some simple teachings on the life of Christ and the rosary, aided by three pictures that Sister Regina had brought along. They then had a short Communion service, after which they also conducted the election of a town representative to the parish. Since that young man was the only one present who could read or write, his two assistants, especially the "secretary," were of nominal support.

On arriving home, Sisters Catherine and Regina were disagreeably surprised to discover that the door between their dining room and the stairwell to their living quarters above would not open. For some two hours, they tried various devices to open it, finally using saws on the doorway and the lock itself!

In early August, they went to the coast for the Charism Workshop that Sister Blanche Marie was to present for the sisters from Talara, Piura, Chalaco, and Bolivia. Following those two days, the Chalaco sisters
continued on to Chulucanas for a workshop on the Puebla Document with all the priests and sisters of the prelature.  

Early in December, Sisters Regina, Blanche Marie, and Rose Celine accompanied the two parish priests of Chalaco to Pacaipampa to help with the preparations for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Since there was neither a resident priest nor sister in this adjoining parish, there were always numerous Baptisms and Matrimonies to be celebrated when the team arrived. Moreover, in an effort to avoid the sense of a magical rite and also to give the people at least a little formation, the priests and sisters insisted on two instructions for Baptism before administering the sacraments.

They devised a unique system for this. Sisters Regina and Blanche Marie each filled a classroom with parents and gave the first lesson. From there, the parents passed on to one of the priests while the sisters began with another group. Meanwhile, Sister Rose Celine copied the information needed from the civil documents and put them in the parish registry. Since there were some 150 children to be baptized, this procedure required two complete days. The other priest was busy preparing those to be married and performing those ceremonies.

Since Sister Catherine had already left for her home visit and Sister Regina left to go to the States for pre-Chapter meetings after the Bishop’s Christmas dinner, Sisters Blanche Marie and Rose Celine had a quiet Christmas in Chalaco. They had a good laugh when they opened Talara’s Christmas gift to them—a lamp marked “based on Rosa’s optimism.” Sister Rose Celine was always thinking that electrical services would get better!

After the first of the year, Sisters Blanche Marie and Rose Celine drove to Talara, the latter going on to language school in Lima. Sister Blanche Marie returned to Chalaco, although she left the jeep in Talara.

Sister Regina returned to Chalaco from the States by mid-January 1980, but by the middle of February, she and Sister Blanche Marie joined Sister Rose Celine in Lima to take a course on Puebla, to make their retreat, and to attend the pastoral meeting for the prelature. After the meetings, Sisters Regina and Blanche Marie returned to Chalaco once they received word that the priests had sent the mules down for them. It had been decided that Sister Rose Celine should stay on the coast until the road was open.

After Sister Catherine’s arrival in Lima, she called to tell the sisters that she would remain there until the new Toyota jeep, which was supposed to arrive on April 15, was released from Customs. By April 22, having learned that the jeep had not yet been shipped, Sister Catherine decided to go on to Chalaco. It was indeed a good thing that she did not wait! For it was not until September that the jeep was finally released from Customs, minus many parts that had been stolen, including the back seats!
Sister Regina, on the other hand, left for the States in mid-April to be with her mother during her final days; she returned by the first of May. Sister Rose Celine went with her as far as Morropon, hoping to be able to continue on from there to Chalaco by truck. But since it was still raining, she again remained behind. Finally, after four months on the coast, she returned to her mission.

Trying to make the most of their summer months, the sisters and parish team always held training sessions for catechists and workshops for representatives from all the pueblos from late May to December. They also divided Chalaco into three zones with their own representatives. The sisters also invited a team from Chiclayo to give a workshop for teachers of the public school on methods of teaching religion.

On May 18, 1980, the sisters were all relieved and pleased when the first national elections in twelve years went so smoothly and Peru had a civilian president. They, as well as many others, prayed that all would go well during the changeover from the military government to the democratically elected one.

In July, just before Fiestas Patrias (Peru’s Independence Day), Susana Cordova came to live and work with the sisters for a couple of weeks. Although from the neighboring parish of Santo Domingo, this señorita had been living in Piura and had expressed an interest in the Community. A short time later, another young woman, Maximina Gomez, came to spend several months with the sisters in Chalaco. This young woman later decided to enter the Community of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, who were working in Negritos, her hometown. Over the years, others experienced community life and work in the “City in the Clouds,” including those young women who have gone there to help with vacation school in the last few years. Eventually, all SCL postulants and novices have spent time there during their years of initial formation, and when the Community authorized the establishment of an aspirancy (pre-postulancy) program in 2000, the Chalaco community again graciously opened its doors.

In mid-August, Sisters Rose Celine and Regina went to Yamango, where there was an interesting carryover from the time when only a very few priests worked in the sierra. This pueblo, which is a center for the surrounding area, had developed the custom of having a weeklong fair, accompanied by the celebration of various important liturgical feasts. Thus, one after the other, the people commemorated Our Lady of Mercy, the Child Jesus, the Blessed Sacrament, and other feasts. Each feast had its solemn Mass, procession, and firecrackers during the course of the week. The priest and sisters who came for that week had more than enough work! Naturally, there were always many Baptisms. This year of 1980 there were one hundred, in some other years, even more.
Sister Blanche Marie went to Talara in September for a break while Sisters Catherine and Regina went to Lima to drive the “new” jeep back up north. This left just Sister Rose Celine in Chalaco with Maximina. With all the sisters gone except Sister Rose Celine, this would be just the time when there would be a plumbing emergency! Taking care of such problems necessitated first bringing up a plumber from Morropon, three and a half hours away. After returning to the coast, he would then send up necessary parts. Finally, sister had to get someone from San Miguel, more than an hour away, to do the work.

In late October, Sister Blanche Marie went to Silahua for the celebration of its patron feast and a similar preparation for multiple Baptisms from the surrounding pueblos. In preparation for this, she had spent a week visiting this whole area earlier in the month.

As the sisters prepared to celebrate Founders’ Day with the people of Chalaco, they invited the criados to come for a dinner and a party. These were young people, many from the outlying districts, who were being raised by families in Chalaco. In return for their food and lodging, they normally rendered services to their “adopted families” in their homes and stores. On the evening of November 11, there was a special prayer service for the adults of the town, which focused on the life of Mother Xavier Ross, foundress of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. This custom of involving the people in the Founders’ Day celebration has continued for many years.

In mid-November, Sister Elena Mack called the sisters in Chalaco with the news of Sister Agnes Klein’s appointment as Director of Missions and her own naming as Director of Novices.

Sister Blanche Marie went to Talara in early December for a planning meeting for the following year as she had received word that she would be missioned there in 1981. Despite the heavy rains of mid-December, Sister Blanche Marie returned to Chalaco for her going-away party. The community also said goodbye to Maximina Gomez at this time. Sister Rose Celine went to the coast with them, as she was going to Piura for a catechetical course and then to Lima for more study of Spanish. As usual, Sister Catherine stayed on in Chalaco and on Christmas eve served hot chocolate and bread for eighty to ninety children. During the following months, she set up a breakfast program for preschool children. As before, she taught English for an hour a day.

In early January 1981, Sister Regina took two boys and their fathers to Piura for surgery and left the car on the coast, returning by mule as the road was closed. Among other things, during these winter months Sister Regina worked with Father Dan Turley in trying to get the people of Lanchepampa and Tutapur to resolve peacefully and justly their dispute over water rights.
Sister Regina went to Lima in February for two courses and stayed on for the Community meeting in March. Sister Catherine, too, joined the rest of the SCLs in discussing the acceptance of young women for the novitiate. After that meeting, the Chalaco sisters stayed in the Lima area for the meeting of pastoral agents from Chulucanas. Even after that, Sister Rose Celine stayed on for retreat and some more study. Sisters Catherine and Regina returned to Piura to purchase clothing for girls that were being helped through study grants. Having finished this, Sister Catherine stayed on to visit with the sisters on the coast, but Sister Regina returned to Chalaco.

Sister Catherine returned in time to direct the music for Holy Week, and Sister Regina took charge of the Stations of the Cross. The peoples’ faith and commitment were tried by the heavy rains that occurred all of Holy Week and afterwards. In spite of the fact that the rainy season had not abated, Father Charles Bodden, Sister Catherine, and Sister Regina conducted an all-day catechetical workshop for fifty representatives from the various caserios.

In May 1981, Sisters Mildred Irwin and Sheila Karpan arrived from the States for a visit. After the celebration of Sister Mildred’s Golden Jubilee in Talara, Sister Sheila returned to Chalaco to be with Sister Rose Celine since everyone else was gone. Sister Catherine had gone to the States in early May on hearing that her mother was gravely ill, and during part of May, Sister Regina accompanied her brother, Father Eric, in visiting some of the historical sites of Peru. As if to prove the adage that “history repeats itself,” there were plumbing problems again while Sister Rose Celine was the only resident sister present!

When Sister Catherine returned on August 22, she brought several sisters with her. Sisters Elena Mack and Janet Cashman came only to visit, but Sister Justin Wallace, a Franciscan Missionary of the Immaculate Conception, came to join the Sisters of Charity in their pastoral work and living.

Sister Justin received a real initiation into the parish work of Chalaco when she accompanied Sister Regina to Yamango the next week for the annual celebrations and also helped with preparations for Confirmation. When they found Father Aquilino in bed with back problems, the sisters not only gave the baptismal instructions but actually baptized more than one hundred children.

Despite a strong tremor and unusually heavy rains in October, Sister Regina set out for Inampampa for a pastoral visit. Then, after the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls on November 1–2, Sisters Regina, Justin, and Rose Celine went to Piura to do some shopping. While on the coast, they also took time to enjoy a day at the beach near Paita with the sisters from Piura and Talara and some Franciscans from Paita. Returning to Chalaco,
the sisters had a special liturgy and party for the *criados* of Chalaco on Founders’ Day.

Through the years, the sisters often made real efforts to get people to the coast for special treatments or operations. Sometimes Sister Regina or one of the other sisters accompanied them. More than once, however, the sisters were frustrated when, after much effort and planning, the person or family reneged for one reason or the other. Thus, late in November, Sisters Regina and Rose Celine took a lady with a compound break in her leg to the coast, but once there, she refused to go into the hospital for fear that the doctors would amputate her leg. What most irritated them was that they had had to intercede with authorities in Chalaco for the necessary papers to receive free care in the hospital since the woman was too poor to pay.

The day after the Bishop’s Christmas dinner in Chulucanas for pastoral agents, Sisters Regina and Rose Celine assisted at the Ordination Mass of Father Lucho Lopez, the first native son of Chalaco to be ordained. Sister Agnes, Sister Mary Vincentia Maronick, and the postulant, Nelyda Clavijo, were also present for the ceremony, for which Sister Regina was the proud *madrina* (sponsor).

Despite much mud, Sister Mary Vincentia, who was visiting from the States, returned with the sisters to Chalaco. Besides witnessing the multitudes present for Father Lucho’s first Mass on Christmas Eve in Chalaco and the reception afterwards, she assisted at the live Nativity scene and another reception the following day. Thus, she gained a sense of the celebrative nature of the people among whom her sisters were working.

As the rains were continuing, Sister Regina took both Sister Rose Celine and Sister Mary Vincentia to the coast shortly after Christmas. It was a memorable ride as the clay-like road was very slippery in places. The man who accompanied them on the trip frequently had to dig them out or dig a trench in the roadway for the water to run off. The sisters from Chalaco were more or less accustomed to these hazards but not so Sister Mary Vincentia, who got out at several points to let the car pass over the problem area before she again boarded.

Sister Regina returned to Chalaco almost immediately, bringing with her Sister Mary Arthel Cline, who was also visiting from the States. After her visit, Sister Catherine drove Sisters Mary Arthel and Justin to the coast in mid-January 1982. At the end of the month, Sisters Regina and Catherine again went to the coast for the Community meetings. Following those, Sisters Regina and Agnes had the privilege of making their retreat under Segundo Galilea, noted Liberation Theologian; Sister Regina also took a course in Liberation Theology after that. Sister Catherine, however, preferred to return to Chalaco until the meetings of the pastoral agents in early March. After that meeting, Sisters Catherine, Regina, and Justin were
all able to arrive in Chalaco without mounting any mules! Good for the travelers but not so good for the crops!

Since there were no Peruvians living in the Chalaco convent, the sisters still prayed and spoke in English while in the convent. Thus, Sister Rose Celine was limited in developing her conversational Spanish. She therefore went to Lima to take several courses and to live with a native Community so that she could gain more practice hearing and speaking Spanish. Following her studies and the first week of the pastoral meetings, Sister Rose Celine went home to the States for her home visit.

When the SCL Community began a formation program (novitiate) in Peru in 1981, Sister Elena Mack and those working with her were concerned about giving the postulants and novices practical experience as well as theoretical knowledge about religious life and apostolic work. Therefore, while taking classes, the postulants and novices were expected to enter into daily work inside and outside of the convent.27

Sister Elena also believed that the young women should have experiences in other Community houses. At this time, there were only two options, Talara and Chalaco. So, as postulants and again as novices, the young women in formation went to one or both of these Community houses to participate in the life and ministry of the sisters.

The presence of these young women was both stimulating and helpful as they brought new energy and enthusiasm. On the other hand, it was also draining in some ways as the professed sisters had to take time to “teach them the ropes” and integrate new and inexperienced persons into their community living and work. However, the sisters accepted the challenge with much good will since all had desired to begin the formation program and were glad to play their part in its realization. Thus, by the time Sister Rose Celine returned from the States in May, Nelyda Clavijo, a postulant, had joined the Chalaco community for a two-month mission experience. While there, she accompanied the sisters in some of their trips to nearby pueblos.

During the following months, best for traveling, both Sisters Regina and Catherine made long trips into their respective areas of concentration, Sister Regina into the caserios of Yamango, Sister Catherine to those of Silahua.

The sisters also busied themselves with the preparations for the four-month period with the Groups of Catholic Friendship (GACs), one of the key elements in the Better World Movement. Starting in August, the sisters planned to work with each group of six to ten couples the first night. Using the themes that Sister Justin had developed, the group would utilize the “See, Judge, Act” model in reflecting on their reality. During the following week, these groups would meet to dialog on various themes. Then, on the final night, the priest would come for the liturgical celebration. In the
meantime, the sisters would have moved on to another village and started the process all over. By the end of four months, over 150 of these prayer groups would thus have been established.

When Nelyda had completed her two-month mission experience in Chalaco at the end of July, she returned to the formation house in Piura. There she would continue to integrate her experiences on mission with the instructions on religious life.

After the sisters took Nelyda to Piura, they returned to Chulucanas for their semiannual pastoral meeting before again beginning their work in their various pastoral sectors. This time Sister Rose Celine and Susana Cordova, another postulant, accompanied Sister Regina to Yamango. On their return to the coast, they picked up Sister Donna Jean Henson and took her to Chalaco for a visit before she went on to Lima for language studies. Not long afterwards, there was again a change in pastors: Father David Petraitis, OSA, replaced Father Aquilino.

The rains auguring the coming of “El Niño” of 1983 actually began the November before. Sister Catherine made a horrendous trip of twenty-one hours down from Chalaco on November 21, 1982. Not surprisingly, she decided to leave the jeep in Morropon when returning two days later. In December, Sister Regina did make it to Chalaco from Morropon, but it took her two days instead of the usual three to four hours. By December 18, the principal bakery in the town lost its adobe oven when it was literally washed away. Consequently, the serving of oatmeal or bread with milk or soya to the little children of the pueblo had to be canceled. When Sister Catherine returned to the coast with the jeep on December 20, it took her twelve hours just to get to Chulucanas, after procuring the help of village men to dig her out various times. When she returned with food and supplies, she made it as far as Pambarumbe, then used mules to haul the provisions for the winter months to Chalaco. Right after Christmas, Sister Regina left for the coast and Lima, picking up the jeep in Pambarumbe and continuing on.

When Sister Regina returned after her January course in Lima, Bishop McNabb asked her to stay in Chulucanas to help with the relief programs of the prelature. He needed someone to coordinate the distribution of foodstuffs and medicines that were coming into the prelature through Caritas. This agency of Catholic Charities was responsible for the donations that were arriving in Peru from other countries. Rather than make the two-day mule trip to Chalaco, only to return later for the prelature’s Pastoral Planning meeting the first of March, Sister Regina decided to stay on the coast to help with this necessary program. The Bishop procured a helicopter to send this aid into the isolated outlying parishes. The sisters in Chalaco as well as everyone else in town were delighted when the first flight set down on the playing field at the edge of town, dropping off a few boxes of medicines.
Considering it impossible to go out into the campo, Sisters Catherine, Rose Celine, and Justin concentrated on helping the eighteen Groups of Catholic Friendship in Chalaco grow stronger. During the mornings, before the rains moved in, they helped the animators visit members of their groups to invite them to the evening meetings. They also spent Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights participating in one or the other of the groups.

Despite the continuing heavy rains, Sister Catherine decided to go to the coast and to Lima for the Pastoral Planning meeting in March, as she and Sister Regina were the only ones who could participate. After the meeting concluded, Sister Regina left immediately and made the two-day mule trip to Chalaco to join Sisters Rose Celine and Justin. Sister Catherine stayed in Lima to make her annual retreat at a Jesuit retreat house. By the time she was ready to return, she was barely able to make it to Piura and had to stay there for some time. When she finally ventured the trip to Chalaco, it took her a week to arrive.

Once home, Sister Catherine resurrected some old envelopes of seeds, set up some primitive seed boxes, and planted squash, tomatoes, cabbage, and cauliflower. Although the squash and tomato plants all grew to transplanting size, the tomatoes didn’t produce, due to a lack of sunshine and warm days. The families who received and planted the squash plants were grateful, but not all of them could be harvested because pigs or chickens ate the plants first.

For some time, the sisters had been trying to find a way to help Sister Rose Celine get to the coast as she badly wanted to celebrate her fifty years as an SCL in the United States in mid-June. Finally, in early June, she was able to board an emergency helicopter that had brought medicines into Chalaco. She reached the coast in just forty-five minutes, a trip which might otherwise have taken several days.

By June 1983, Sisters Regina and Catherine began making some campo visits and inviting the leaders from the caserios to come in for what normally would have been monthly meetings. The new priest, Father Bill Lego, and Sister Regina went to Choco, the highest area of the parish, for the celebration of the Feast of St. John the Baptist. What they had expected to be a one-day celebration turned out to be three days, with dancing all night in the plaza and the sacrifice of sheep and a steer. They were a bit taken aback by the grisly sight of the steer’s head hanging from a beam inside the church the next morning. This gave evidence that the mixture of “the old and the new” was still very much alive.

From Choco, Sister Regina crossed over to the parish sector of Yamango, on the other side of the cordillera (mountain range) from Chalaco. Three young women accompanied her on the trip to Pagay, a trip of some five hours, terminating it in rain and darkness. After spending the night in Pagay,
Sister Regina continued on three more hours to the village of Yamango. There she visited the grade and high school, discovering that two rooms in the recently constructed high school had been destroyed because of the rains. The church tower had also collapsed, and there were numerous mudslides on the trails in and out of the villages. Nevertheless, Sister Regina programmed a meeting for the coordinators and administrators of the various villages near Yamango and also met with the animators and moderators of the Groups of Catholic Friendship in Yamango.

It was obvious to her from what she saw and heard that there would be no crops in 1983. What a tragedy for these areas that were basically subsistence style farming, each family eking out its living by what it raised or perhaps by doing a little trading.

Crossing the river just below Yamango, Sister Regina arrived in the sector of Tamboya, only to learn of a measles epidemic that was claiming the lives of many children there. More than a hundred children died in the various villages of Tamboya, Sabila, Nangay, Carrizal, and others. Since there was no refrigeration for vaccine and because there was much malnutrition present, the children quickly succumbed. A couple of families lost three children; several had two die.

In 1981 and 1982, there had been insufficient rain and very few crops. Now, due to the heavy, heavy rains at the end of 1982 and during 1983, nothing except pasture grew. But the people had no cows even to give them milk.

When Sister Regina spoke to one of the women about sending her little girl to school in 1983, the mother responded that she would need to conserve the little energy she had just to live, since they would have very little to eat. Indeed a real pall hung over these villages. Sister Regina went on into Tamboya, where she held a meeting with the animators and moderators of their Groups of Catholic Friendship. After her many days in the campo, she was able to freshen up a bit in the parish house in Tamboya and get a good night's sleep in a room of her own. No doubt, she was overjoyed to once again use indoor plumbing and have a shower, even if a cold one. After making visits to two other villages as she came through the mountains, Sister Regina finally arrived home on July 9 after about two weeks on the trail.

Back in Chalaco, Sister Catherine had been asking men coming into the parish center about the trails and conditions. From their responses, she thought that Sister Regina might be held up on the other side of the mountains for some months, so she was pleasantly surprised by Sister Regina's arrival in mid-July.

After such a lengthy time in the campo and under such adverse conditions, one would think that Sister Regina would have contented herself
with some “R and R” at her home base. However, after only a week’s rest, she decided to try to make a trip to the coast for supplies since everything that Sister Catherine had brought up in April had been consumed. She hoped she could fly out in the Red Cross helicopter that was supposed to be bringing in food supplies to the people. However, after waiting all morning on the day it was supposed to arrive, she left the next morning with two mules and the empty gas tanks. She was able to take the helicopter part of the distance into Piura, having encountered it in Paltachaco, the village a little better than halfway down the mountainside. Her return trip was almost a repeat of Sister Catherine’s in April, except that one of the Chalaco merchants was on his way back with supplies too. The merchant’s truck awaited him on the Morropon side of the washed-out bridge. He and Sister Regina, as well as other travelers, had first to ford the river to reach the truck. Faced with the problem of unscrupulous persons trying to make off with the cargo, especially when they were crossing the rivers, the merchant took off his belt and threatened to use it on anyone who attempted to touch any of their purchases.

Once in Morropon, Sister Regina decided to leave most of her purchases there with the Benedictine sisters and Augustinian priests. She took only the most necessary items with her on the two-day mule trip back to Chalaco, planning on sending a man down on several occasions to recover them.

With the arrival of all three of the Augustinian priests missioned to Chalaco (Fathers Charles Bodden, Bill Lego, and Steven Ochoa), the team set about re-planning the pastoral work in early August. Problems they had never envisioned in March in Lima were realities they now needed to attend to. One of the most pressing of these was the evident hunger from which the people were suffering as a result of their inability to plant or harvest and the failure of emergency aid to arrive in anything near the proportions that were needed. All members of the team were shaken on seeing the campo people visibly thinner and often pallid, especially the children.

The first areas of the parish to receive food sent by Caritas were those at a lower altitude and closest to Chulucanas: Coca, Tamboya, and Yamango. As soon as possible, road machinery began working to open or build up passages through the rivers so that the trucks could cross through. The pastoral team planned that the pastor, Father Charles Bodden, would stay on in Chalaco to take care of the needs there and supervise the repairs to the church. The two other priests, along with Sisters Regina and Catherine, would visit the centers and their surrounding pueblos.

In mid-August 1983, Sister Catherine, accompanied by a young man, crossed over from Chalaco to Tamboya, asking guidance along the way since neither of them had ever made the trip before. They made it in eight
hours or so, it being Sister Catherine’s first crossing of the cordillera by mule in all of her thirteen years in the Chalaco mission. Normally, the sisters had driven down to Morropon and then had gone back up the other side of the mountain by truck. After staying in Tamboya for the night, the young man returned to Chalaco, and the coordinator of Tamboya served as Sister Catherine’s guide going to Yamango. Sister Regina had been in Piura and was to have come up from Morropon on a mule sent down from the parish. However, when she arrived, she was on foot since the mule had given out a little before the end of the trip, and she had dismounted so the mule could bring in the saddlebag of luggage and supplies.

Using Yamango as home base, both sisters went out in different directions to some eleven villages to set in motion the First Anniversary of Catholic Friendship Week. Besides the usual pastoral help in instructing new members of the village teams just elected, giving instructions in the biblical themes and outlines, and teaching songs, they also gave the coordinator or administrator of each zone an itemized ticket. These were good for a certain number of bags of food supplies that had been stored in the Morropon parish. It was then up to them to get men and burros or horses to go down to the coast and bring up the fifty-pound bags of flour, oatmeal, soy, powdered milk, wheat germ, or cases of soybean oil that corresponded to their ticket. It wouldn’t be nearly enough food for their people, but it would certainly help.

Sister Regina stayed on in Yamango to help with the Anniversary Mass for the Groups of Catholic Friendship, but when Sister Catherine had finished with her four villages, she again crossed over the river into the Tamboya area. There she did much the same, but with only one village and Tamboya itself to attend, she was soon on her way back over much the same route she had come eight days earlier.

Arriving back in Chalaco, Sister Catherine found there was little to eat, so she had to content herself with ten-month-old crackers and homemade peanut butter. However, she was almost too tired to care! That had been her longest continual horseback ride in her thirteen years. Not being able to face an icy shower, she “took off the top layer” and was soon ready for her own bed. It was another six days before Sister Regina finished her pastoral visits in the Tamboya area and arrived back in Chalaco.

In September, Sisters Catherine and Regina carried out much the same program in the eleven villages of the Silahua region. The people there, too, were suffering real hunger. Even the banana trees were rotting at their roots, and of course there was none of the sugar cane or other fruits that usually grew there. What was worse, it would be nearly impossible to get food into these areas, more isolated still than Tamboya, Yamango, or Coca. When Sister Catherine asked one of the women what they were eating,
she said, “Only rice, Sister.” Sister Catherine thought it was apparent they did not even have much of that.

In October, the parish team members concentrated on meetings with representatives from the twenty-three zones of Chalaco, having meetings in the parish center on a monthly basis and going out to visit some of the pueblos themselves. Sister Regina agreed to go to the coast and contact the prelature’s secretary in charge of Caritas supplies. She also went to Piura to make contact with other agencies representing the U.S. and other countries. As a result, the Red Cross did make a very feeble attempt and brought in a small amount of the rumored six tons of food destined for the District of Chalaco. Sister Regina also accompanied a team of French doctors to the regions of Tamboya and Coca.

As the road gradually opened up and food supplies could be sent into Paltachaco, the parish team gave tickets to representatives of the eleven villages of the Silahua district so they could go there to pick up a certain number of bags or cases of food. The U.S. CARE office sent thirty tons of food! But since the intention was that the food should be cooked and distributed in a public lunch program, Sister Catherine first of all had to explain to various village teams how to make a preparation of milk, soy flour, and cornmeal meant to serve anywhere from forty to two hundred children. Then she rode into the region, a six-hour trip by mule, to check on how things were going. When so many are hungry, there is a great temptation to misuse the donations. On one such trip, she found four villages complying just as they should, despite the pressures; but in two villages, the representatives had succumbed and, as a consequence, their villages were taken off the food-help list.

With the news that the road was being opened up “down below” and that the tractor was getting closer, Sister Catherine decided to go to the coast by mule and stay until such time as she could return with the jeep. At the bridge, she and her companion met up with Father Charles Bodden, who had been visiting in a nearby village. Since he had his Toyota pickup there, they joyfully climbed in, confident that they were now really on their way. After just a half hour, though, they encountered a broken down tractor that completely blocked the narrow road. After waiting for two hours and seeing that little or nothing was being done to remedy the situation, Father returned his pickup truck to the village above them; then they all boarded a truck that had been trying to come up the road and now had to turn around and head back to Morropon. There Sister Catherine got passage on another truck going into Piura. She arrived at the convent at 9:30 that night, having left Chalaco at 4:00 in the morning!

In November, trucks arrived in Chalaco for the first time in ten months. With some predictions that there would be a “rain repeat” in 1984, one can be
sure that the sisters stocked up well with cooking gas, canned goods, toilet paper, soaps, and other essentials. Of course, they also bought what meat and fruits or vegetables they could store for use. During the remaining fall months, thanks to the good weather, the parish team made numerous campo visits.

In mid-November, the sisters drove to Chiclayo for the SCL meeting with the other sisters from Piura, Talara, and Bolivia. Given their experiences of the preceding year, they found the conferences on Vincentian spirituality inspiring. Before leaving Chiclayo, they purchased an electric mimeograph for the parish, thanks to the funding provided by Adveniat, the German Bishops' auxiliary fund.

On their return, the sisters had a Community celebration in Piura honoring Sister Rose Celine's Golden Jubilee as an SCL. The Archbishop celebrated the Mass in the convent chapel, and the Chalaco sisters hosted a dinner party in her honor at the Hotel Turista.

Back together again for the first time since December of the previous year, the sisters sat down for their first house meeting on November 21! About a week later, they again met to decide how they could best help their suffering people.

Sister Regina assumed the responsibility for buying $3000 worth of corn seed so the farmers could begin to put in some crops again. They had trouble making this purchase, though, since the corn on the coast was not suitable for sowing in the sierra. Finally, two men of the town went to visit various villages in the province of Huancabamba, where they were able to buy 9600 pounds and arrange for a truck to transport it. Some of this would be distributed when the men agreed to bring rocks to improve the roadway.

Soon thereafter, Sister Regina went to the Caritas meeting in Chulucanas to report on how the foodstuffs had been used during 1983. She was able to report that thirty work projects had been accomplished and that workers had been paid by giving them some of the víveres. At the same time, she made out the requests for 1984-85 and pleaded for much more food for children's lunch programs.

Sister Catherine was put in charge of buying $3000 worth of food for distribution. She was able to buy 600 pounds of beans from a traveling merchant to be used in food programs. Although this was not much, whatever food could be obtained was a help. Sister Rose Celine worked with the mothers of the town, who were responsible for the lunch program for 450 youngsters. In other parts of the parish, Sister Catherine helped set up 25 lunch programs.

Aid continued to come in. Even the following year, Sister Justin Wallace received a check for $10,400 from the Irish bishops to be used for seed or fertilizer. The sisters in Chalaco thought the greater need was fertilizer, so,
with the aid of Sister Josephine Bustos in Talara, they were able to buy more than a thousand bags of it. An engineer accompanied Sister Justin to Talara to make the purchase. Sister Josephine suggested that Sister Catherine be responsible for distributing it out of Chalaco, using a ticket system.

Although the rains had begun again, the sisters went to Chulucanas for the Bishop’s annual Christmas dinner for pastoral agents. They returned together afterwards so that the parish might have an opportunity to celebrate with Sister Rose Celine on December 20. The sisters had sent out 150 invitations, and most of the people of the town participated at the Mass celebrated by the three parish priests. After the liturgy, the sisters and priests enjoyed dinner together.

Although Sister Rose Celine had planned to stay for Christmas, Sister Regina took her down to Piura the very next day since the rains were now falling pretty steadily and the sisters were afraid that she would not be able to get out later. Sister Regina left the car in Chulucanas and returned by truck. The team concluded this very abnormal year with a day of recollection and two days of evaluation.

In mid-January 1984, Sister Catherine took advantage of the fact that the road was again open, going to Piura for the religion books previously purchased for high school students. She also bought more provisions for the winter months. Coming back, she made it as far as Pambarumbe in the car, finishing the trip by mule. Once in Chalaco again, she opened the library for the children to read and work puzzles.

When Sister Regina began an inventory of the sacks of flour at the end of January, she discovered that many had been stolen in the previous few months. She also had reason to question the motives for some people accepting positions on village pastoral groups, believing they were more interested in the possibility of receiving *viveres* than in serving their people. Although this was discouraging, she continued to work on. In fact, when the engineer from the Agriculture Office asked her to help distribute the seeds that had come in from Germany, she readily did so, going to Noma for the distribution.

The road was still very bad in mid-March when the sisters went to the coast and on to Lima for the meeting of the prelature. There they were reunited with Sister Rose Celine, who had gone to Bolivia with Sister Agnes Klein, after which she returned to Lima for her retreat and a course. Sister Justin also joined them after having spent the winter months on the coast. At the prelature meeting, they discovered that they again had a change of pastor; this time one of the young Augustinians ordained just ten months earlier had been appointed. While still in Lima, they attended a Mass for two of the Chulucanas priests killed in an accident when they were returning from the meeting. One of these was Lucho Lopez, the young man from Chalaco.
ordained just three years previously; the other, a young priest from England. Arriving in the north, the sisters went to Chulucanas for the funeral.

Since Sister Regina had gone to the United States for her home visit, Sisters Justin and Catherine headed home by truck and mule, leaving Sister Rose Celine in Piura. In April, Sister Rose Celine was able to fly into Las Pircas, a mountain village about three hours above Chalaco; thus, this year she was in time to be present for the always inspiring Holy Week services. The following week, the two priests, a brother, and the three sisters finished making the plans for the year. In late April, Sister Susana Cordova joined the Chalaco community for her novitiate experience. Being from the sierra herself, she fit quite naturally into the work of the parish.

The following months saw a number of visits. Sister Elena Mack, Director of Novices, and Flor Figueroa, postulant, came to visit in May, also flying into Las Pircas on the little plane of the Bishop. When Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Bernadette Helfert, Community Councilors, arrived in late June, the road was open but badly rutted and uncomfortable to travel. Sister Susana left for the meeting of new pastoral agents in Chulucanas but later met up with Sisters Mary Kathleen and Bernadette in Piura. The Bishop also visited Chalaco in June for his pastoral visit, and Sister Regina arrived in mid-July. Sister Justin’s Superior General added yet another international dimension when she visited her from Rome. Finally in August, Sister Joan Kilker, recently appointed Director of Missions, paid her first visit to Chalaco.

In July, Sister Catherine took Sister Rose Celine to Piura to buy the tubes necessary for her “jubilee project.” Sister Rose Celine had decided to use gift money received at the time of her Golden Jubilee as an SCL, plus a donation from a doctor, to purchase and install water pipes in thirty-one homes of the poor in Chalaco. They might not have sinks, but at least they would no longer have to go to the stream below the town to haul water back to their houses!

Despite the thirteen years that the sisters had been in Chalaco, there were always new places to visit. Thus, in late August, Sisters Regina and Susana visited Lanque and Las Huacas in the Choco area for the first time. Other campo visits continued as normal, and sometimes they had very pleasant surprises, as when Sisters Regina and Susana visited La Laguna. A couple of months before, they had instructed a young man and his wife in how to have a prayer service in their chapel, using the Bible and the rosary. This time in November, as the sisters began the prayer service, they were delighted to see all the adults and children make the sign of the cross very devoutly as well as respond to the prayers, for in the isolated areas there had been very few who even knew how to make the sign of the cross. Sister Regina commented: “It was a very moving experience to see
Sister Catherine Nichol visiting with women of the parish

Sisters Susana Cordova and Rose Celine Siebers visiting a sick person

Sister Regina Deitchman preaching at Mass in Chalaco
what progress this community had made under the leadership of this young man who has only two years of schooling."29

At the beginning of December 1984, the parish had its first Parish Assembly, wherein representatives from all the zones were invited to evaluate their successes and failures and to propose the hopes they had for the future. To everyone's delight, more than two hundred representatives came, many of them having walked or ridden as many as eight to thirteen hours to get there! As usual, the parish team held its own evaluation and discernment at the end of the month.

In early January 1985, Sisters Regina and Justin, as well as Sister Susana, who had now completed her experience as a novice in Chalaco, went to the coast. Sister Susana would prepare to make vows in March; Sister Justin planned on going for vacation to Bolivia; and Sister Regina would return to Chalaco with needed winter supplies.

At the end of January, Sister Regina once again went to the coast with Sister Rose Celine because they both wanted to see the Pope in Piura. However, they almost lost that opportunity. Sister Rose Celine had put their entrance tickets in her sweater pocket, and while they were transferring things to the car after their two-hour ride down the mountain, one of the mules was attracted to the bright pieces of paper and almost ate the precious entrance tickets. Excitedly, Sister Rose Celine salvaged them in time, a little damp but still usable.

During that winter, Sister Catherine assisted two young women to organize a vacation school program for some thirty high school students. In March, she and Sister Regina met up with Sister Rose Celine, who had been giving a class in Community history to the novices in Piura. The three went on to Lima for the annual prelature meeting. There they learned that Sister Justin Wallace would not be returning to Chalaco but would go instead to Sondor, a parish in the Chulucanas prelature newly staffed by her Franciscan Community.

Before returning to Piura for the meeting with Sisters Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director, and Rosalie Mahoney, Councilor, at the chapel of Our Lady of Peace School, the Chalaco sisters made their retreat in Lima.

Very soon thereafter, Sister Catherine left for her three-month home visit, and Sisters Regina and Rose Celine returned to Chalaco. Even though the road was still closed, they were fortunate in being able to get within two hours of Chalaco before needing to mount mules. Sister Susana Cordova, who had made her first vows in March and had been missioned to Chalaco, stayed on the coast to take driver's lessons and to vote. Thus, it was not until April 18 that she arrived in Chalaco for her new mission.

She immediately became immersed in the pastoral work. Early in May, after accompanying Sister Regina as far as Morropon, she and Sister Rose
Celine went on to Coca by truck. The next day, Sister Regina picked them up to travel on to Yamango for another meeting with catechists. Sister Susana also went to Tamboya for a catechists’ meeting later in the month, and ten days later, she was in Yamango with Sister Regina for a meeting with the heads of village pastoral teams. In early June, Sisters Regina and Susana were again on the road, this time to the Choco area.

One time when Sisters Regina and Susana were in Piura to buy supplies, they bought a small black and white television, though they obviously did not have much time for viewing it.

Even while Sister Regina was in Lima to meet her niece Amy, she visited Juan Mezones, a young man from Chalaco who was recovering from a leg operation. Amy returned to Chalaco with Sister Regina. While there, she and the sisters went to Pacaipampa to visit the Mercy sisters who had been living and working there since March 1984.

When Sister Catherine returned from the States, she brought Sister Mary Joan Eble with her to visit and become acquainted with the apostolic work in the Chalaco mission. This was a part of Sister Mary Joan’s discerning her aptitude for missionary work.

In September, the postulant Trinidad (Trini) Orozco arrived for a month’s mission experience, accompanying the various sisters in their work and visits. She had not been gone long when Sister Joan Kilker, the Director of Missions, came to visit for five days.

At the end of November, the sisters issued written invitations to the people of Chalaco for a Thanksgiving Mass since they had not been home to celebrate Founders’ Day with them that year, having been in the campo giving retreats for the young people to be confirmed.

Right after Christmas, the sisters terminated the year with a farewell celebration for the pastor and Sister Regina. The latter was going to the coast to prepare for work with the postulants in Negritos. When she left Chalaco, both Sisters Rose Celine and Susana went with her, Sister Susana going on to Lima for courses. Sister Catherine remained alone in Chalaco until March, when the two others returned with her after retreats and the prelature meeting.

On March 25, 1986, Sister Susana renewed her vows in Chalaco, and this time her parents were able to be present. Her father rode a horse, but her mother, not wanting to mount, walked in the mud all the way from Santo Domingo, a trip of at least five hours. Sister Regina came too, as well as many of the townspeople, all of whom Sister Catherine had invited. After spending the night in Chalaco, Sister Susana’s parents returned home.

The following week, the sisters again had to go partway by mule when they went down to the coast. They joined the other SCLs for the annual Community meeting in Cajamarca. After the meeting, Sister Rose Celine
went to the States for her home visit. When Sisters Catherine and Susana returned to Chalaco, Sister Catherine became the acting pastor until the priests returned.

The postulant Clorinda Timana came for a month’s mission experience in September; toward the end of the month, Sister Elena Mack visited, and she and Clorinda went to Santo Domingo for retreat. At the end of October, the postulant Maria Orozco arrived for her month’s experience, but it was so rainy that she was not able to visit caserios. She was, however, present in Chalaco when the people from the surrounding villages all came with their signs and slogans for the celebration of the Fiesta de Amistad (Feast of Friendship); this was the culminating gathering of the Groups of Catholic Friendship from the various sectors of Chalaco. When Maria went down to Morropon with Sister Elena, who had come for a visit, she waited all day in vain for a truck to take her to Tamboya to meet up with Sister Susana and accompany her on campo visits. Since one never arrived, she returned to Piura, thus cutting short her “Chalaco” experience.

November was full of visits or celebrations. Early in the month, Sister Catherine picked up Sister Regina, her brother, and her sister-in-law to visit Chalaco. Various celebrations followed. Founders’ Day had its special Mass for the people and sisters. Then a newly ordained Augustinian, who had worked for a time in the parish, celebrated Mass. As usual, a reception and dance in the Council Hall followed. Finally, to honor all the Augustinian saints, the sisters were invited to dinner in the parish house after the liturgy.

At the end of the month, Sisters Catherine and Rose Celine drove to Morropon, where they encountered Sister Susana coming down from Tamboya. Together they went on to Negritos, where the Community was having its annual meeting. Sister Susana again went to Lima for courses, and Sister Rose Celine stayed on the coast. So, once again, Sister Catherine spent the winter months alone in Chalaco.

Sister Susana returned to Chalaco in early April 1987 after having renewed her vows. Accompanying her was Sister Flor Figueroa, who had just made first vows and had been missioned to Chalaco. In May, Sisters Flor and Catherine went to the sector of Tamboya to give a workshop for catechists of First Communion and Baptism. Stopping in Morropon, they picked up the novice, Sister Trini Orozco, who was to accompany them in their pastoral work until October and again after her first vows in November. Finishing these presentations, they went into Piura to make some purchases, and then the three of them returned to Chalaco. At the end of May, Sister Catherine took Sisters Susana, Flor, and Trini to Santo Domingo for a meeting of the junior sisters (sisters under temporary vows).

In mid-June, Sisters Trini, Flor, and Susana went by truck to Morropon. Sister Flor continued on to Chulucanas for a three-day meeting on Human
Rights while Sisters Susana and Trini went to Tamboya for a CCP meeting of leaders from the various zones belonging to the Tamboya sector and to visit caserios. In early July, before Sisters Trini and Susana returned, Sister Catherine again went to the coast to meet Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer, who was visiting all the missions before going to Bolivia for language studies. After Sister Rose Dolores’ visit, Sister Catherine drove Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores to Morropon, where they caught a bus into Piura. Sister Catherine herself returned to Chalaco after purchasing fifty pounds of rice.

There were a number of other visits during the rest of the summer. Two postulants, Esther Vilela and Luciola (Lucy) Huaman, visited for three days at the end of August. Then in mid-September, Sister Ruth Barron came up with Sister Rose Celine. However, all the Chalaco sisters were out in the campo at the time. Sister Catherine returned the day before the visitors had planned to leave. She graciously drove them to the coast the following day. Sister Joan Kilker visited again in October, this time having individual conferences with the junior sisters as well as meeting with the community. The postulant Renee Zeta had accompanied her and stayed for several days.

At the end of the month, Sisters Rose Celine and Susana went to Tamboya for the retreat with the young people to be confirmed. At this point, Sister Susana more than once voiced her pain that the sisters could not help out with the confessions.

Sisters Sue Miller, Community Councilor, and Marie Kelly, Community Secretary, who had come down for Sister Trini’s first vows and the Community meeting in November, visited Chalaco at Confirmation time.

Before joining the other sisters in Piura, Sisters Susana and Flor went to Tamboya for the Confirmations there. They arrived in Piura just in time to help with the final preparations for Sister Trini’s vows and reception. After the Community meeting in Chiclayo, Renee Zeta went back to Chalaco with the sisters in order to help with the pastoral work.

Having received a new mission after seventeen continuous years in Chalaco, Sister Catherine went to Piura on December 4 for a planning meeting, but she returned the next day for the annual Parish Assembly; this gave her an opportunity to say goodbye to many long-time friends.

On December 14, Sister Rose Celine left Chalaco for the last time too, as she was moving to Negritos. The cook, Georgina Quispe, had a farewell dinner for her, with friends present from the two Huacapampas, caserios most visited by her.

Sister Susana went to Chulucanas in mid-December for a meeting. Sisters Catherine and Trini joined her the next day for the Bishop’s annual Christmas dinner. Afterwards, they all went into Piura for necessary
purchases. When Sisters Catherine and Susana returned, the latter stopped off in Santo Domingo to see her parents.

On December 24, Sister Catherine took her leave of the people at the Christmas Eve Mass. Father thanked her for her long years of service, and the following day the priests joined the sisters for Christmas dinner. On January 1, 1988, the people of the town and many from the villages surrounding it came for the farewell for Sister Catherine. It was celebrated with the traditional *brindis* (toasts), food, and music. She left for Piura the following morning, accompanied by Sisters Susana and Trini and two friends from Chalaco.

In Cabuyal, one of Sister Catherine’s most cherished villages, the people also had a special farewell dinner. With her departure, for the first time in many years, the convent in Chalaco would be unoccupied during the winter months.
Chapter VII Notes

1 Bishop John McNabb to Mother Leo Frances Ryan, February 17, 1970, A/Chulucanas, SCL Folder.
2 Ibid.
3 Ryan to McNabb, May 6, 1970, A/SCL.
4 ronpole: wine and eggs, beaten stiff enough to require the use of a spoon.
5 ceboche: raw fish marinated in lemon or lime juice with cut onions and hot pepper.
7 Medellin, Colombia, was the site of the 1968 assembly of Latin American bishops, who endorsed “preferential option for the poor” on behalf of the Church in Latin America. Properly speaking, Liberation Theology stems from this assembly.
8 A posta medica is a small medical facility where a doctor is assigned. By contrast, a posta sanitaria was a medical facility with only a nurse technician in charge.
9 See Chapter VI for the story of the Ayabaca uprising.
10 Remington, “Chalaco House History,” May 14, 1971, A/SCL.
11 Miguel Cordova and Alfonso Garcia from Chalaco, Cypriano Garcia of Palo Grande, Pastor Cruz from Rio Claro and Reynaldo Cruz from Lancheapampa.
13 Sister Mary Patricia Kielty to Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, September 5, 1974, A/SCL.
14 McNabb to Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, April 6, 1974, A/Chulucanas.
16 See Appendix G for more on the San Fernando Fund.
17 The Center of Formation, sponsored by the Bishops of Chulucanas, offered a program for young women from the various parishes of the diocese/prelature. Its purpose was to help the women gain more confidence to help serve in their church communities.
19 Sister Agnes Klein et al, memo and “Chalaco, Peru Pilot Project 1977,” A/SCL.
20 Declaration of Intent, A/Chulucanas.
23 The Better World Movement, begun in Italy in 1952 by Father Riccardo Lombardi and blessed by three Popes, was a well-structured program involving large numbers of the laity in working for Jesus and His Church.
24 Normally the Better World Movement program is used at the parish level; Chulucanas was the first prelature or diocese to implement it on a more extensive basis.
26 Puebla, Mexico, was the site of the 1979 assembly of Latin American bishops. The Puebla Document proposed guidelines for carrying forward the spirit of Vatican II and Medellin.
27 For further information about the stages of the formation program, see Chapter XIX.
28 See other accounts of “El Niño’s” effects on the Chalaco community in Ch. XX and Sister Catherine Nichol’s account in Appendix D.
CHAPTER VIII: CHANGES IN PERSONNEL AND EMPHASIS

During the first seventeen years of SCL presence in Chalaco, the sisters worked selflessly, dedicating long hours, days, and years in their service of the people of Chalaco and, for a time, the neighboring parish of Pacaipampa. As indicated earlier, at different times they were responsible for managing various aspects of the parish when no priests were in residence. But until 1978, when the Chulucanas prelature adopted the Better World Movement, the sisters more or less organized their missionary activity independently and in specific sectors.

However, with the initiation and development of the NIP (New Image of the Parish) program of the Better World Movement, it became more necessary to organize activities and meetings as a parish team.

According to the NIP program, each caserio (village) was supposed to develop its own team of ministers, including a coordinator, an administrator, liturgist(s), a secretary, a treasurer, messengers, and catechist(s). Initially, the pastor appointed the first leaders, but after a year or so, the people of the village elected their own representatives, and with the passage of time, more people were selected to fill the increasing roles in the program, for example, for youth work and social justice. As a result of this development, some of the focus of the work of the parish team in Chalaco changed.

Although both priests and sisters continued to visit caserios, they also shared more responsibilities for meetings of the CCPs (Councils of Pastoral Coordination) in each of the six sectors of the parish, each sector consisting of six to ten caserios. Representatives of the zones of the caserios formed the CCPs. Once a month, members of the parish team met with these zonal representatives to encourage them and to provide and gather information. One or more workshops often followed the morning meetings. Meeting with these team members and educating and motivating them in their work and leadership roles assumed greater importance in the work of the parish team.

Moreover, each member of the parish team was called upon to act as assessor for one or more groups, thus better enabling the laity. All of this resulted from the dreaming, planning, and programming of Bishop John McNabb and his staff. His vision for the Prelature (later Diocese) of Chulucanas was very much in tune with Vatican Council II.

The expansion of this work took a giant step forward with the development of the Groups of Catholic Friendship (GACs) in all zones of the parish. These were base communities, composed of six to twelve couples who met weekly to "See, Judge, and Act." Together they considered
issues relevant to their local community in the light of the Gospels and themes sent out by the parish.

However, many elements of this mission in Chalaco remained the same. All the sisters who have worked in Chalaco throughout the years have felt enriched and blessed by the simplicity and generosity of the people, as well as by the camaraderie within the prelature/diocese. The biannual pastoral meetings and other educational workshops held in Chulucanas for parish agents provide time for much sharing and dialogue and generate a genuinely friendly and family-type spirit within the prelature/diocese.

Except for a short time when Sister Elena Mack and the sisters decided they could rely on public or parish transportation, the sisters have increasingly used the convent jeep or pickup for pastoral and community needs. By the beginning of the third millennium, the sisters could drive to areas accessible only by mule or on foot in earlier years. While this should have made life and work easier, the number of trips only seemed to increase. As different aspects of the diocesan program have been developed or emphasized, the sisters have often found themselves arriving from one set of visits and setting out almost immediately for other courses, instructions, or meetings. This is so much so that community members are rarely all home at the same time and have to plan carefully for times to share prayer and community together. From the beginning of the year, they schedule monthly meetings, retreats, and planned outings. Moreover, they have added prayer days and afternoons of reflection to their monthly parish team meetings.

The Chalaco sisters seem to appear in Piura with even greater frequency, too, for they still make most of their purchases on the coast. And in recent years, annual meetings of the Community have frequently become biannual. Moreover, members of the Chalaco community also serve on Community committees, such as the vocation committee, planning commissions, and the advisory group to the Director of Missions.

As the Peruvian sisters have entered into programs of higher studies in Piura, Lima, and Trujillo, they have needed to travel mid-year as well as in the summer so as to present projects and take examinations. As temporary professed sisters, they also have special meetings or programs both in the Community and as a part of Confer (Conference of Religious). Each year the latter offers several courses, such as the Enneagram, in which the young sisters are encouraged to participate.

Interest in and promotion of women has grown, especially with the new focus on women by the Community. The sisters have continued to provide study grants to high school girls as before, and the Schools for Women, begun in 1995, have done much to make both men and women more conscious of the dignity of women. The very nature of the prelature/
diocesan program, with its heavy emphasis on the role of the laity, has also highlighted the importance of women as they have increasingly accepted positions on the teams of their villages.

From the earliest days in Chalaco, before the Sisters of Charity had a formation program (novitiate) of their own, the sisters have encouraged vocations. They took young women to the Diocesan Center of Formation in Canchaque, and later to Chulucanas; they also visited the girls in those centers and gave presentations on religious life and the SCL Community. They have invited señoritas to share in prayer, afternoons of reflection, and retreats in Chalaco and other centers of the parish; the sisters have also taught in a couple of the high schools. Moreover, through the years they have welcomed young women into their home for experiences of community living, prayer, and work.

Yet, in over thirty years of this mission’s existence, only one or two young women from Chalaco have entered the Community, and no one from there has stayed. This is true, despite the presence of many young Peruvian sisters and postulants and the continued tradition of celebrating Saint Vincent’s Day and Founders’ Day with the people. Even the vacation schools and aspirancy program of recent years, both of which have witnessed to the collaboration of “coastal” girls with the sisters, have not engendered commitments from this parish.

Sisters from the coastal missions, including the various Directors of Mission, have frequently spent time with the Chalaco sisters, and Chalaco has always proven itself a very hospitable tourist spot for sisters visiting from the United States. During the 1990s, as the Community tried to form stronger ties between its members in North America and South America, the number of these visitors increased.

Another change that transpired in the late 1980s and 1990s has been the turnover in sister personnel. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sister Blanche Marie Remington moved to Talara in 1981, Sister Regina Deitchman went to the coast to work with postulants in 1986, and Sister Catherine Nichol received a new mission to Piura for 1988. The only sisters returning to Chalaco in 1988 were Sister Susana Cordova and the recently professed Sister Trinidad (Trini) Orozco.

Sisters Ruth Barron and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer, who had both recently come to Peru to work, prepared themselves somewhat for their new mission by taking a two-week course on the Better World Movement in Lima during January 1988 and participating in the prelature meeting for all pastoral agents in Lima early in March.

The new community group—Sisters Susana, Trini, Ruth, and Rose Dolores—arrived in Chalaco in late March, just in time for Holy Week. Luckily, they were able to travel all the way into Chalaco in the priests’
pickup truck as the road was relatively dry. The following month brought continuous rains, and even visits to nearby caserios were very limited. After their arrival, the sisters spent time planning for their community life and pastoral work. Since terrorism was extending itself into northern Peru about this same time, it was deemed advisable for the sisters to travel in pairs or at least to be accompanied by another woman in their visits to the campo (countryside).

The difficulties of travel remained, especially during the rainy seasons, despite all efforts at improving the road. More often than not, the heavy rains from January to May made it necessary to ascend or descend at least partway to the coast by mule. Likewise, somehow communication problems with the villages never seemed to be resolved, leading to the frustration of planning meetings in sectors and caserios, traveling long distances, and then having to readjust plans because the messages sent out earlier had not arrived.

The first trip for CCPs in Yamango and Tamboya in 1988 well illustrates these problems. When the four sisters, along with Father David Petraitis and Don Octavio, a layman, set out in late April, they did so in a public truck, planning to meet up with the priests’ pickup and chauffeur at Santiago. From Santiago, Sisters Susana and Trini continued on in the public conveyance, but the others entered the double-cabin pickup. They were not long on the road, however, when the driver informed Father that there was something seriously wrong and that he really should not try to take the pickup to Yamango. Knowing that the sisters had left their jeep at the convent in Morropon, Father asked if it could be used for the trip. Since Sister Ruth had driven in Bolivia and was anxious to drive the jeep, this was agreed upon.

Even at the lower altitude, the road was still quite muddy, and at one point, the men had to dig a way around a huge rock in the road. Since they had not left Morropon until 4:00, the sun was already setting when they arrived in Yamango. Rather than drive an unknown road in the dark, the sisters decided to stay overnight, Sisters Susana and Trini sleeping in the back of the jeep, the others in the parish house. Giving the only two beds to Sisters Rose Dolores and Ruth, the men stretched out on bags in the storage area.

Early the next morning, the sisters set out for their meeting in Tamboya. But after all that, they discovered on their arrival that the messages about the meetings had not arrived, and it was therefore impossible to carry out the programmed meetings. Nevertheless, the sisters decided to stay on for four days to visit a caserio and attend some of the meetings of the GACs in Tamboya. Sisters Ruth and Rose Dolores soon discovered that such difficulties of travel and failures in communication were common fare in this mission. Many, many other examples could be given.
In early August 1988, Sisters Ruth and Rose Dolores went to Chulucanas for the meeting for new pastoral agents. Feeling more a part of the prelature, they, along with Sisters Susana and Trini, joined the priests and sisters of the sixteen parishes in the weeklong meetings and discussions. They sensed a great camaraderie and were warmly welcomed in the dialogue and various planning sessions.

In mid-August, Sister Clorinda Timana, who had recently arrived for her novitiate mission experience, went with the sisters to Yamango for the CCP meeting and to visit different villages of that sector. Shortly thereafter, she joined the parish team in Santo Domingo for a team retreat.

While Sisters Ruth and Clorinda went to Piura, Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores left for the fiesta in Naranjo on August 29. They had several adventures, some of their own making. First of all, when they arrived at a fork in the road, Sister Susana insisted on taking the trail which went off to the left, although the mule strongly resisted. It turned out the mule was right! After a little side trip, they had scarcely arrived at the communal hall where they were to stay when there was a strong tremor, and the men urged them to get out rapidly. After meeting with the people, they stayed all night. Having just one mule for the return trip, they took turns walking and riding up and down the trail.

Problems were not limited to travel, however. Although the sisters had planned to go to Santo Domingo for retreat at the end of September, they had fortunately changed their plans and stayed at home. During the morning, the tractor that was leveling the road in front of the convent kept breaking the pipes that brought water into the house. It took a lot of words and even some “brow-beating” to see the mayor and governor for the Micro-Region. At that, the conversation was very frustrating since these officials seemed to think it was the fault of the sisters that the tubes entering their house were there. They were only trying to fix the road!

In late October, the young sisters attended a workshop in Piura for persons in formation. Father Arturo Purcaro contrasted the gospel of Saint Mark with the reality in Peru, speaking of the need to know how to respond if and when the sisters met with the problem of subversion or terrorists in their midst. These presentations were real eye-openers and gave these young sisters much to think and talk about.

In November, Sisters Rose Dolores and Clorinda went to Yamango for the first part of the pastoral visit of Bishop McNabb, returning to Chalaco to be present for his meeting there. As soon as the Bishop left, the sisters began their trip to Talara to join in the celebration of the Community’s twenty-five years of ministry there. They also participated in the Community meetings which followed in Paita.
During the next two months, the sisters were involved in meetings and visits of various kinds. Sister Ruth continued meeting with the youth group and also had a meeting with various health promoters and two representatives of the Health Office of the prelature. Sisters Trini and Clorinda visited some of the villages of Tamboya, and not too long afterwards, Sisters Ruth and Rose Dolores held meetings with the youth and human rights groups in that area.

In the early part of December 1988, Sisters Ruth and Rose Dolores were present for the Parish Assembly in Yamango and then traveled back to Chalaco to participate with Sisters Trini and Clorinda in the Parish Assembly there. In these important meetings, all the members of the zonal coordinating committees were invited to evaluate the year's work and to make suggestions for the following year.

Although Sisters Trini and Susana left the day after Christmas for classes on the coast, Sister Ruth stayed in Chalaco for about two weeks, leaving the last day that cars could use the road. Sister Rose Dolores worked all month with some young girls and a good number of children who came to the convent meeting room for classes every morning. The girls helped hear prayers and reading, told stories, and helped with dramatizations. In the afternoons, Sister Rose Dolores set about doing some painting and arranging of things in the convent.

By the time Sister Rose Dolores left in early February 1989, the roads and trails were exceedingly muddy, and she had the ride of her life. The young man accompanying her as guide convinced her that they should take the steep shortcut trail instead of the road. The mule slipped and slid for an hour or more over that treacherous route all the way down to Cabuyal. Miraculously, although Sister Rose Dolores was far from an experienced rider, she managed to stay mounted, even when the mule almost fell. From there, all the way down to the coast, she kept peeling off layers of clothing as the temperature rose. By the time she reached the jeep, she was a muddy disheveled mess, and she had the driver take her on to the Bishop's "Friendship House" in Chulucanas for the night. Bishop McNabb, affably greeting her upon arrival, immediately sent her upstairs to shower and rest before dinner and Mass.

Sisters Susana and Clorinda received new missions for 1989, to Piura and Talara respectively. Sister Maria Orozco, newly professed, arrived in Chalaco with Sisters Ruth, Rose Dolores, and Trini after a nine-hour mule ride from Paltachaco.

After a Human Rights meeting in Chulucanas in early May, Sister Rose Dolores returned with Sister Donna Jean Henson, Director of Novices, and Sister Esther Vilela, who was to begin her mission experience as a novice. By this time, Sister Trini, Sister Maria, and the parish secretary,
Maria Cruz Cordova, had begun making campo visits to nearby caserios; Sister Esther soon began accompanying them.

Since Sister Rose Dolores was still quite deficient in the language, her failure to understand correctly and her misuse of words frequently resulted in a good deal of mirth. One incident the sisters delight in recounting concerned the death of a little chicken (*pollito*). The sisters had asked a friend in Huacapampa Baja to raise a small chicken they had been given in payment for some service. One Sunday the mother of this woman sorrowfully explained to Sister Rose Dolores after Mass that this little chicken had died. Knowing that the youngest son in the family had been sick, Sister Rose Dolores misunderstood the woman's rapid Spanish and "heard" *hijito* (son) instead of *pollito* (chicken). What was the sisters' surprise when the boy's mother, Hermelinda, arrived at the kitchen door while they were eating dinner. Moreover, she did not seem in the least to be in mourning! In fact, she seemed quite happy. She told them she had not been able to come to Mass because there had been a meeting in the school at the same time. Only then, with the help of the other sisters, did Sister Rose Dolores understand about the demise of their little chicken.

In mid-May 1989, a team from the prelature came to initiate a new leadership program that was being started throughout the prelature. According to the plan, a group of eight to ten men would participate in a given course at the parish center—for example, a course on "the Good Shepherd"; they would then practice giving the course and critique one another's presentations. Before leaving the parish center, they would divide up to give the same course in various sectors of the parish. The sisters joined in the course and in the dramatizations and group dynamics. All agreed on the excellence of the team doing the training and the materials sent out by the prelature, and they were confident that the men of the Chalaco EAPP (Team of Pastoral Animation) would do much to animate the faith of their fellow parishioners. The sisters stood in awe of these simple men who were willing to leave their farms and families, walk ten to twelve hours to give the workshop, and then leave immediately to walk back home. They later learned that one of the men had complied with his scheduled presentation although suffering from a high fever; he nearly collapsed on returning home.

Twice a year the prelature/diocesan team arrived to give further training sessions to the team. Whenever possible, the sisters made time in their schedules to participate. They did so both to affirm the participants and learn what was being presented in order to be somewhat prepared in case they needed to step in and take the place of one of the men. Incidentally, a number of those who made up the EAPP had been part of the leadership program that Sister Agnes Klein had worked with in the early 1970s.
A good motto for the sisters in Chalaco might have been “Always be prepared.” Often, as mentioned before, notice of visits or CCPs did not arrive, or persons did not show up as planned. Thus, when one of the presenters didn’t show up in Chalaco to teach the course on the Good Shepherd, Sister Trini ended up helping to teach. On another occasion, a truck driver in Yamango had promised that he was going down to Morropon early on a Sunday morning and would take Sisters Esther and Maria to the coast, the former for a retreat and the latter to get her glasses repaired. When the man failed to do so, Sister Rose Dolores had to drive them to Morropon so they could get public transportation to Piura. She returned later that same afternoon. Meanwhile, Sister Trini asked a young woman teacher to fill in for Sister Rose Dolores and go out with her to one of the villages for a scheduled visit. After completing the remaining visits in the Yamango sector, Sisters Rose Dolores and Trini went on to Piura to make purchases and to pick up Sister Maria.

While Sisters Maria and Esther attended the course for new pastoral agents, Sisters Trini and Rose Dolores gave workshops for catechists and the group interested in human rights. Shortly thereafter, they all joined in the special celebration in Chulucanas in August 1989. This ecclesiastical jurisdiction had recently been created a diocese, twenty-five years after its foundation as a prelature. Sisters Regina Deitchman, Janet Cashman, and Nelyda Clavijo also came for the festivities; Sister Janet accompanied the Chalaco sisters on their return home.

In the middle of August, the parish team made a retreat together in Santo Domingo, Sister Ruth sharing a presentation on personality types, using the Myers-Briggs format. At the end of the sessions, Sister Rose Dolores accepted a ride with one of the Augustinian priests going to the coast, for she had injured her sciatic nerve in one of the jeep trips and was experiencing a good deal of pain. After having seen a doctor in Piura and gotten some extra rest, she asked to move her home visit forward and return to the States in October.

At the end of August, Sisters Ruth and Maria took a sick woman from one of the three zones of Chalaco to the coast for medical treatment; they had been delighted that people of her zone had taken up a collection, thereby manifesting their solidarity with the sick.

Throughout the morning of September 1, the sisters, passing back and forth from the church to the convent, had noted some wasps around the light pole but had not thought too much about it. By the time their cook, Georgina Quispe, left the house in the early afternoon, however, the wasps had been agitated by some young boys, and they began to attack her. As she fled down San Fernando Street, the wasps stung her as she went. Her face, arms, and legs became so swollen that she needed injections and bed
rest for five days thereafter. Others in the pueblo were also attacked, and
the people were especially concerned as there were rumors of the “killer
bees” entering Peru from Brazil. After much insistence on the part of the
sisters, the local representative of the Ministry of Agriculture finally sent
men to destroy the wasp nests.

Within a three-year period (September 1989–September 1992), the
parish had the great joy of participating in and celebrating the ordinations
and first Masses of four native sons: Guido Nunez of Yamango; Ricardo
Cordova of Chalaco; Isaias Jimenez of Yamango; and Juan Mondragon of
Chalaco. But to the sorrow of families, friends, and Church, the first two
left the active priesthood within a few years time.

Sisters Ruth and Maria Orozco went to Yamango in October. Sister
Maria replaced Sister Rose Dolores in the workshops on Human Rights
for teachers and campesinos (country people). Forty-seven teachers of the
region attended the first workshop, but very few of the people from the
villages came the following day. Sister Ruth, however, had a very good
representation in her meeting with the youth. She afterwards went to
Tamboya and then to Coca to give the same workshop, accompanied by
the assessor of the Youth Movement from Chulucanas.

On the afternoon of November 2, 1989, while Sister Regina was
visiting, a very sad thing occurred. Don Gregorio, a good friend of the
sisters, was fatally stabbed just outside their kitchen door. Sister Regina
tried in vain to stop the bleeding, and the priests gave him the sacraments.
When it was discovered in the clinic that nothing could be done for him,
he was removed to a friend’s house. Sisters Esther, Maria, and Trini, along
with Georgina, their cook, had the sorrowful task of climbing up the
mountain to tell his wife and children what had happened. The family
stayed with him through the night, but the following morning Don Gregorio
died. For once the sisters were glad when their guides did not appear for
their campo trips; all wanted to be present for the funeral.

Right after participating in the municipal elections and a four-day
workshop on violence in Peru, the Chalaco sisters returned from the coast,
accompanied by Sisters Rose Celine Siebers and Ann Barton. Sister Rose
Celine especially wanted to see the wife and family of Don Gregorio.
Besides having been the coordinator in one of the villages she had
frequently visited, he had often helped the sisters by guarding their house
when all were gone for several days or during the winter months. He had
also been the one whom they entrusted to help bring supplies up from the
coast. Sister Ann Barton had come to spend these months in Chalaco while
Sister Rose Dolores was in the States.

The week before Christmas, Sister Ann lent her creative talents in the
rearranging and painting of the community living room. Then began the
farewell celebrations: for Sister Esther, who was finishing her mission experience as a novice and did not yet have her assignment for the following year; for Sister Ruth, who had asked for a change of mission; and for Sister Ann. Immediately after Christmas, the sisters left for the annual Sisters of Charity meeting in Paita, where Sister Ruth Barron gave several presentations on Saint Vincent and Mother Xavier. For the first time in many years, no sisters remained in the convent in Chalaco during the winter months of January through March.

By April 1990, Sister Rose Dolores had returned from the United States and, together with Sisters Trini, Maria, and Esther (now professed), managed to arrive in Chalaco after several hours on mule. Since it was Holy Week, they entered into the planning for the Paschal celebrations and, as a community, took time for sharing on the Eucharist and the Passion.

On Easter Sunday, Liduvina Dominguez appeared at the convent door after Mass, accompanied by her mother. Although not from the parish, Liduvina was a niece of Don Gregorio, who had died the previous November, and she, her mother, and her sister had frequently attended Mass in Chalaco. Now she expressed interest in entering the Community. The week after Easter, Sisters Maria and Trini took her to Piura to visit the sisters there. Sister Joan Kilker, the Director of Missions, decided that it would be good for her to have a yearlong experience with the sisters so that she could get to know the Community better, and they, her. Consequently, for the rest of the year, Liduvina lived part-time with the sisters in Chalaco, sharing their community and ministry. During her time with the Chalaco community, Sister Trini was asked to companion her as she had had a special course in spiritual accompaniment in 1988. Liduvina also had the opportunity to visit the other SCL communities in Piura, Talara, and Negritos. From time to time, she returned home for brief visits.

In mid-May, Sisters Rose Dolores and Maria left by mule with Father Steven Ochoa for a meeting of coordinators on the other side of the parish. This time Sister Rose Dolores refused to ride the mule down the shortcut trail, dismounting and walking in the gummy mud instead, as did also Father Steve. Sister Maria, who had not dismounted, fell against a rock when her mule slipped. Unfortunately, she would pay the consequences of that fall for years.

By July, it was finally dry enough for Sisters Maria, Trini, Esther, and a señorita to visit the Choco area, separating into two teams once they were in the region.

By mid-July 1990, all were able to go to the Tamboya area for visits. Having finished those, Sisters Trini and Maria crossed over the river and walked to Yamango for the CCP meeting there. They still joke about how, in their state of exhaustion, Father Steve and they sat staring into space.
that night without saying a word. Finally Father suggested that someone "change the channel." Sisters Esther and Rose Dolores, who had stayed in Tamboya for meetings, drove down to Coca for more meetings with village representatives and then on into Morropon. There they were reunited with Sisters Trini and Maria, who had traveled down from Yamango with Father Steve. All needed a few days to rest up.

Shortly after arriving in Chalaco in 1988, Sister Ruth Barron had begun working with representatives of the Youth Ministry in Chulucanas in order to develop an active youth movement in the Chalaco parish. Beginning with a core group, she and some young people then visited other sites, such as in Naranjo and Tamboya, giving presentations and inviting the young people of those areas to organize groups. She also took some of the young people to encounters in Chulucanas, where they learned much by interchange with other groups as well as from the more formal presentations. When Sister Esther arrived in Chalaco as a novice in 1989, she joined Sister Ruth in this work, bringing to it her experiences in youth work prior to entering the SCLs.

When Sister Ruth transferred to Talara the next year, Sister Esther assumed the leadership of this group. Already by 1990 a team of youths from Chalaco felt sufficiently confident to begin meeting with representatives from other villages to act as their assessors and give them guidance. In 1995 another step forward occurred when two members of the Youth Animation Team took over the work the sisters had formerly been doing. This evidenced still further the power of the prelature’s NIP program to empower the laity.

In October 1990, a nurse and señorita came from the Diocesan Health Office to give a four-day workshop, but because of visits and meetings earlier programmed on the other side of the parish, the sisters left the third day of the health workshop.

During the year, two or three women had been engaged to sew and knit articles in one of the rooms below the convent, using sewing machines and materials that had come in a shipment from the Augustinian Mission office. By November, they had made a number of articles; these, together with the used clothing the priests had received in shipment, were sold on November 1. The proceeds paid some of the expenses of the parish. A similar sale was held later in Tamboya. This proved a good way of helping both the people and the parish.

When the sisters arrived in Chalaco after joining in the celebration of Sister Janet Cashman’s twenty-five years as a religious and Sister Trini’s renewal of vows on November 11, 1990, Sister Mary Patricia Kielty accompanied them. The cook, Georgina, was quick to remind Sister Mary
Patricia that she had asked her to get something on the coast when she had left twelve years before without telling anyone she was not returning!

December, as always, was full of evaluations. In the Parish Assembly in Chalaco, the representatives of the various caserios discerned their successes and failures in the work of the year. They also evaluated the visits of the parish team and proposed their hopes for the following year. In mid-month, the sisters evaluated the goals they had set for themselves as a community; the team also considered their work together. Shortly afterwards, the sisters went to Chulucanas for more meetings, first for the young professed sisters, then for all the pastoral agents. As always, the Bishop hosted the group for a Mass of thanksgiving, a Christmas banquet, and the distribution of gifts. Father Steve also invited the sisters to join him for a Chinese dinner the following day as a way of thanking them for their work.

Sister Nelyda Clavijo, who had been studying in Trujillo, returned with the sisters to Chalaco for Christmas. Many people were present for the Masses on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The live Nativity scene prepared by Huacapampa Baja and Huacapampa Alta was especially impressive. After having Christmas dinner with Father Steve and Brother Manuel Lopez, the sisters departed for the coast to participate in the Community meetings.

After their studies, vacations, and retreats on the coast, Sisters Rose Dolores, Maria, and Esther arrived back in Chalaco in late March 1991 in time for Holy Week services.

On the night of April 4, 1991, Sister Rose Dolores was working late in her bedroom and Sister Maria was in the community room when several strong tremors with aftershocks occurred. They met in the hallway and began feeling their way down the darkened stairs, Sister Maria calling back over her shoulder for Sister Esther to come too. Many terrified people were in the plaza, only too aware of how much of the town had been destroyed by an earthquake twenty years before. The priests, too, quickly ascended from their house below the church, and Father Steve joined the sisters at the door of the convent office until all felt it safe to return. Nevertheless, before going to bed, Sister Rose Dolores packed her backpack with emergency clothing and supplies, and Sister Maria slept in her jeans and polo shirt the rest of the night!

Later in the month, the sisters attended the meeting of pastoral agents in Chulucanas. After the meetings, Sisters Esther and Maria attended a meeting of sisters under temporary vows; then Sister Maria stayed on for the Golden Wedding Anniversary of her grandparents and Mother’s Day.

When Sister Trini came to Chalaco for a week of her vacation in mid-May, all of the sisters missioned in Chalaco were occupied with meetings, visiting the zones of Chalaco, and planning for the first part of the year, so
Sister Trini found herself once again involved in some of the parish work, such as interviewing couples who wanted to get married in the Church.

For many years and for diverse reasons, many couples in the sierra had not married, either in a civil ceremony or in the Church. Now, with regular visits by priests and religious, many expressed the desire to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. To protect the rights of the women, the Church in Peru had begun requiring a civil ceremony prior to the one in the Church. This meant that the couples had to procure both their birth and Baptismal certificates, not always an easy process, especially if they were living in a different site than their birthplace. The Church also required instructions for the couples, regardless of how long they might have been living together. Besides the religious aspects of the sacrament, these instructions stressed the dignity and rights of the woman and the Church’s legitimate expectations of the couples for creating a Christian home.

All this meant several more visits to caserios where couples had indicated their interest and willingness to enter in the process. First of all, members of the pastoral team visited a zone to help couples prepare the necessary papers. Somewhat later, another team would visit to give the couple instructions. Finally, one of the priests would solemnize the Matrimony, frequently with the couples’ children in attendance. This might take place in their own caserio or in one of the centers with as many as forty or more couples participating. Very often the zone would have a communal celebration following the Mass and marriage ceremony.

Although all this took more time and energy on the part of the pastoral agents, they were heartened to see the growth of these Catholic couples and were only too glad to help them gain the graces of the sacraments for themselves and their families.

On May 26, Sister Trini left for the coast, not having had much time for just plain visiting. Soon thereafter, both Sisters Esther and Rose Dolores had meetings in Chulucanas, the former accompanying fourteen youth group representatives, the latter traveling with three representatives for Peace and Justice.

Two diocesan representatives were scheduled to come from Chulucanas for a four-day workshop with health promoters at the end of May. When many women had arrived and there was no sign of the team, Sisters Maria and Rose Dolores improvised, having a prayer service and then a sharing with the women about natural remedies they used. When the team did arrive, they, too, had to be flexible: they had planned their workshop for midwives and had brought along a lot of written materials, but most of the women present could not read or write.

On June 12, Sister Regina Deitchman arrived in the Chalaco jeep, bringing with her Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani, Macrina Ryan, and Nelyda.
Clavijo. Sister Nelyda, having finished her course work in Trujillo to become a bilingual secretary, had now participated in the course for new pastoral agents in Chulucanas and had come to join the Chalaco community and parish team for the last part of the year. While the guests were there, a team of catechists from the diocese gave a workshop on the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Sisters Maria and Rose Dolores were in charge of this and so were busy all day. In the evenings, they visited with their sister guests. One evening they took them to a nearby caserio for a meeting and liturgy. Sister Macrina, who had worked with Sister Rose Dolores in the United States, remarked on Sister's "new-found patience" after she had watched her calmly wait two hours for the scheduled meeting to begin!

Although Chalaco was known in the Community as being the one place where one could get a nice warm shower, there was no water in the tank during the time the visitors were present as the town had picked this particular time to clean the reservoir. So first the sisters and then a boy had to haul all the water for use in the convent. Not surprisingly, Sister Mary Kathleen said she felt like she was camping out!

After the guests had left, the parish team had a retreat and then set about planning visits for the last part of the year, incorporating Sister Nelyda in the work. Maria Cruz Cordova, the parish secretary, began to go on more visits with the sisters too. Thus, at the end of June, the three younger sisters—Nelyda, Maria, and Esther—and Maria Cruz Cordova went to the regions of Tamboya, Yamango, and Coca, dividing the villages among them. Sadly, the meetings were affected by disputes over the foodstuffs from Caritas (Catholic Charities). In Yamango, there were also some political problems that affected the harmony and effectiveness of the zone.

Returning from these visits, they encountered Sisters Rose Dolores, Janet Cashman, and Linda Suzanne Roth in Morropon, the latter having recently arrived from the United States for a visit in Peru. Everyone was accommodated in the double-cabin pickup, either in the seats inside or the truck-bed behind. When the sisters later took Sisters Linda Suzanne and Janet to Huacapampa Alta for an evening meeting and liturgy, Sister Linda Suzanne was so impressed by the participation of the women who were in charge of the liturgy that she said it would almost be too bad if there were ever enough priests to go around! Because the guests were leaving on a truck in the early morning hours, the sisters celebrated the Fourth of July one day early.

This year, for the first time, there was a retreat for members of all the zonal teams of the parish in early August. Father John Dowling, OSA, gave the presentations. Then, after dinner in the large sala of the priests' house, there was a fiesta. The various groups seemed to appreciate the whole day.
From time to time over a period of months, some windows in the meeting room of the convent had been broken. As the breakage usually occurred late at night, no one had been able to discover the culprit. However, while Sister Rose Dolores was in Chalaco alone on August 17, 1991, she was attacked by a mentally unbalanced neighbor as she stood outside the side door of the convent talking with one of the Human Rights representatives. Ironically, they were awaiting another representative, who happened to be the brother of the assailant!

The deranged man struck Sister Rose Dolores from behind with his *palana*, a metal instrument meant for digging. Acting spontaneously, the young teacher with whom she was talking forcibly thrust her through the door and closed it behind the two of them just as the aggressor was ready to strike again. Since it was a head injury just behind the ear, she bled profusely although she was not seriously injured. She must have been somewhat dazed, however, for thereafter she was frequently quoted as having said to Father Ricardo, "If it's not one thing, it's another!"

Since Father Steve had been getting the parish pickup ready to go to the coast, Sister joined him after having first been stitched up by the health technician from the health center. Having been notified by phone, both Sisters Regina and Ann Barton were in Morropon to pick up Sister Rose Dolores when she arrived. Fortunately, all she needed was to stay in Piura for some R & R until the other sisters returned.

Sister Maria took three señoritas to Piura to meet the Community there; later, she and some of the other sisters accompanied the girls to the Center of Formation before continuing on to the other side of the parish for visits. The others returned to Chalaco. Sisters Esther and Rose Dolores accompanied the assistant pastor to Tamboya for the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls and to have the sale of clothes mentioned earlier.

As usual, the end of the year was occupied with Parish Assemblies, evaluations, and preparations for the celebration of Christmas. Then the sisters were off to the coast for the months of January through March for courses and varied activities.

When Sister Rose Dolores became ill during the summer and went back to the States for heart tests in March 1992, this called for some replanning on the part of the Director of Missions. For the first part of the year at least, only Peruvian sisters would be in Chalaco, and one of the four would be the postulant, Liduvina Dominguez. The other three—Sisters Maria Orozco, Laura Runiche, and Esther Vilela—had not been professed for too many years. It would be the first all-Peruvian community to date!

In early April 1992, the four began their journey to Chalaco, after having spent the night in Morropon with the Benedictines. Arriving at El Palto, they were met by two Augustinian brothers, a guide, and the mules
necessary to carry the sisters and their possessions to Chalaco. As for many of the sisters before her, this was the first time for Sister Laura to mount a mule, but for Liduvina it was “old hat” as she was born and grew up in a village close to where they began their trip by mule.

As always, pastoral meetings dominated the time shortly after their arrival. By Easter Sunday, Sisters Laura, Esther, and Maria headed to the coast and the pastoral meetings of the diocese. Liduvina went instead to her home for Easter and a few days’ visit. On arriving back in Chalaco and being alone in the house for two days without electricity, she was feliz de la vida (supremely happy) to hear on Radio Cutivalu that she could go to Piura to join the sisters. She lost no time in finding mobility.

On May 24, the sisters had a farewell party for Sister Maria, who was leaving to go to the United States for Chapter. This was a first for the Community as she and Sister Clorinda Timana were the first Peruvian sisters to visit the Mother House in Leavenworth or participate in Chapter. After Sisters Maria and Clorinda's return, the Community met in Piura to hear them describe their experiences.

By the end of June, Liduvina had concluded her mission experience in Chalaco and returned to the coast; in early July Sister Ann Barton, having recently returned from Chapter, came to Chalaco to live and work there. A few days thereafter, two youths came from Chulucanas to give a course in the Bible for the members of the youth group. Both Sister Esther, the assessor, and Sister Ann assisted.

On July 31, Sister Elena Mack and Sister Trini arrived to give a vocation workshop for eight señoritas interested in the religious life. To the surprise of the Chalaco sisters, they were expecting them to take part in giving it. Later, Sister Ann went to Sechura for a weekend vocation retreat with Sister Trini, replacing Sister Elena, who needed to return to the United States and her newly elected position on the SCL General Council.

In late August, Sister Laura and the parish secretary had had a pleasant surprise when they visited Silahua. There was not only good attendance and a good response on the part of the people, but more surprisingly, the people voiced their desire to have more continuous visits. This encouraged the team greatly.

In an effort to energize and revive the Groups of Catholic Friendship (GACs), the diocese proclaimed 1992 “The Year of Faith” and provided new materials for reflection. Using these new materials, the sisters participated in the opening and closing of “Workshops of the Faith” in various sectors of the parish. Similar to the series of prayer meetings of the 1970s, these nightly meetings of the GACs were opened with a special prayer service by the sisters in each caserio. Then during the following five nights, the couples met to discuss and pray on various themes, using
the “See, Judge, Act” methodology. The week terminated with a special liturgy and celebration. In the intervening nights, the sisters began the same process in other caserios.

Sister Ann Barton wrote of the simplicity and beauty of the people’s faith. She also commented on some of the sisters’ experiences while staying with the families: having chickens running through the rooms where the sisters slept; eating at a table while piglets foraged under the table; and experiencing the many fleas generously deposited on rugs and pillows by the dogs! Quite a different experience for someone new to the sierra! By the time they returned to their home base, they were very tired but also very content with the growth they had witnessed in the people.

The Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul on September 27 took on a different aspect this year. Sister Laura, who was now in charge of the Peace and Justice group of the parish, planned a public demonstration and march. The sisters participated, having made “a chain of charity” that showed the connection between the work of Saint Vincent, Mother Xavier, and the first Sisters of Charity who arrived in Peru. They carried this in the march and presented it at the offertory of the Mass.

During October, sixty teachers of the area took part in a course on teaching religion which was conducted by a team from Chulucanas. Sisters Laura and Ann also participated and almost immediately began to put into practice what they had learned, visiting the schools and applying the “See, Judge, Act” methodology in their presentations and activities.

On Founders’ Day, Sister Esther was operated on in Piura and stayed there for some time to recuperate. The rest of the community, after celebrating a quiet Founders’ Day in Chalaco, joined the other SCLs in Chulucanas for the yearly meetings. After their conclusion, the Peruvian sisters went to their designated areas to vote. Sister Marie de Paul Combo, who had accompanied Sister Elena Mack for the Community meeting, visited Chalaco for a few days, delighting the children in the school with her performances as a clown.

As usual, the parish team held evaluations of their year’s work. To the joy of the people, a new custom was introduced as a preparation for Christmas. During about four nights, the parish community celebrated the posadas, a reenactment of Joseph and Mary’s search for a place to stay in Bethlehem. Friends and neighbors went in procession to certain houses, asking owners for a place to stay and were refused at each. Finally, they reached a house where an altar and a Nativity scene had been set up. Here the pilgrims were admitted with great rejoicing. After a traditional prayer was said, a fiesta was held. Despite a lot of rain and mud, many people participated in the procession from the church in the search for a place for Mary and Joseph to stay.
At the end of December 1992, before beginning their summer activities, the sisters had another meeting in Chulucanas. Many priests and religious from Chulucanas and Piura joined the SCL Community to hear Father Gustavo Gutierrez, the famous “Father of Liberation Theology,” express his thoughts on the meeting in Santo Domingo, the fourth general meeting of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. As at the meetings in Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979), the bishops drew up an agenda for the future of the Latin America Church in the years to come. During the SCL meetings, the sisters themselves zeroed in on how they could best work with women and children as their special focus in the next five years.

As always in recent years, the sisters closed the house right after Christmas. Sisters Esther and Laura went to Lima to study. Sister Ann worked in the Office of Evangelization and Caritas in Piura, while Sister Maria began exploring ways in which she could better help women in the Peruvian society. For a month, she worked with Caritas in Chimbote and lived with the Sisters of the Holy Cross there. She worked with some social workers assisting women in various parts of the city and in the sierra of the Department of Ancash.

Following this experience, she assumed a new mission in Negritos, working with Sister Joan Kilker and in the food kitchens that she had helped set up; she also worked a little with her in the botiquines (parish pharmacies). When Sister Joan left for her home visit in the United States and to visit Ecuador to explore possibilities for the Saint Joseph Hospital project there, Sister Maria took charge of her former work in Negritos.

With the coming of the new year 1993, Sisters Susana Cordova, Esther Vilela, and Laura Rumiche returned to Chalaco, making the last part of the trip by mule, as almost always. Although there had been only Peruvians in the Chalaco convent for several months of 1992 until Sister Ann Barton joined them in mid-year, this was the first time in which only Peruvian sisters were missioned to Chalaco. Sister Ann had returned to the States in early 1993 to become secretary to the Community Director. A number of SCLs from the other missions visited during the year.

Sister Susana would teach religion in the high school, but she would also take part in the pastoral work with the other sisters and members of the parish team. Father Arturo Purcaro, their pastor, introduced several new and meaningful devotions, or new ways of carrying out the traditional ones. For example, after the Mass in the church on Holy Thursday, different members of the team took the Blessed Sacrament to homes of sick or elderly shut-ins in the three different sectors for a Holy Hour. After that, the three groups converged on the church in procession. On Good Friday, there was a living Way of the Cross.
Even when the trails were bad into late May and June, the sisters were animated by the participation of the people. Everywhere they went, they tried to motivate them to regenerate their GACs (Groups of Catholic Friendship), urging them not only to study and share the Bible and friendship among themselves but to reach out to needy families of their zone. They were aided in their efforts by a señorita from Chulucanas who came to give a refresher course.

Even after so many years, the sisters found themselves visiting new sites and introducing new aspects to their work. In early July, Sisters Susana and Laura visited Mariano Melgar and Vista Alegre, new zones that had been established in recent years in the high lands. Although the sisters were evangelizing, they themselves felt evangelized by the zeal of some of these people to nourish the faith in their villages. This contrasted with their earlier visit to Inampampa, a long-established area, where they had gone “in spite of” the coordinator. That “leader” had actually tried to dissuade them from going to his village. This seemed to be a repetition of what had happened to Sisters Regina and Catherine years before when going to that caserio.

When Sister Esther, Sister Laura, and four laywomen visited the Yamango sector this year, they were very much encouraged by the rebirth of many active GACs. They could not help but believe that the zeal and more frequent visits of Father Arturo had much to do with this reawakening. Later on in the month, Sisters Laura and Esther went back to Yamango, this time for successful workshops with catechists of Baptism and Confirmation.

In August, a team from Chulucanas came to help Sister Esther prepare catechists from the various villages. Besides renewing the program for Baptism, they also prepared five young women of Chalaco to give the course on Confirmation in the various pueblos.

Meanwhile, Sisters Esther and Laura, together with Maria Cruz Cordova, visited the Silahua region to inaugurate the Year of Faith with the GACs. Again they met up with the usual frustrations of this sector; namely, few people attended the meetings in the villages and many fiestas were in process. In addition, the sisters had problems with the mules. They had to console themselves with how different things had been the previous August and hope that their hard work would pay off in the end and that the faith would win!

In mid-October, following their meetings in Chulucanas, all three sisters and the pastor participated in the Confirmation retreats planned by Sister Esther. Between Chalaco and Yamango, there were some 550 youths to be confirmed, so there was much work for all. When the Bishop’s vicar came
for Confirmations in Chalaco in November, only Sisters Esther and Laura accompanied him to Yamango.

The end of the year 1993 saw all the usual activities, including now the *posada* experience in the three zones in preparation for Christmas. On Christmas day, the priests and sisters of Pacaipampa joined those of Chalaco for Christmas dinner. The following two days, there were various farewells for Sister Esther, who would be going to Trujillo to live in the Community’s new house of studies the following year.

When the sisters from Chalaco slipped and slid down the muddy road after Christmas, Sister Catherine Nichol began what was to become an annual trek in the years to come. To avoid the summer heat of the coast, she began spending January, February, and March in Chalaco. Sisters Susana and Esther both went to Lima to take tests and to present their work before starting summer studies. Sister Laura planned to study in Piura in January and then go to Lima in February.

In 1994 there was yet another change of personnel. Sister Elena Mack, who had recently resigned from the Community Council and returned to Peru, joined Sisters Susana and Laura. Sister Litudina Dominguez also came after making her first vows. However, because Sister Laura was operated on in Piura on March 26, she stayed behind to recuperate. The sisters agreed to change their annual Community meetings, having them in Sechura just before the assembly of pastoral agents in Chulucanas in April so that she could participate.

Following the diocesan meetings, the sisters immersed themselves in parish activities. Sisters Laura and Liduvina accompanied Brother Martin to Piscan for a Parish Assembly on that side of the mountain range, while Sisters Susana and Elena, along with Father Jose Luis Hernandez, directed the one in Chalaco. These assemblies were immediately followed by team meetings to prepare the *lemas* (slogans) for each month. While the diocesan team developed an over-arching theme for the year for all the parishes to use, all groups in the NIP program were then expected to incorporate this central theme in their activities. The parish teams developed mini-themes for each month, according to the ecclesiastical year. Banners with these themes were then posted in each zone’s chapel.

Ever since the SCL Community Council set up a special fund to help with the education of women in South America in the early 1970s, the sisters in Chalaco had used the designated monies chiefly to help girls in primary and secondary schools of the area. According to each one’s need, she was provided with notebooks, uniforms, and shoes. In order to maintain contact with the families of these girls and to guarantee that they were continuing in their studies, the sisters met once a month with the young women and their mothers, or on occasion with their fathers. The sisters
took turns in planning these sessions and included group dynamics, prayer, and presentations (by way of talks, filmstrips, and later videos) on various topics. The topics covered a wide range from health to important moral issues. Such was the case when one Father’s Day, the sisters presented a theme on drunkenness—its causes and its effects on the person and on the family. As indicated earlier, drinking was a major problem in Chalaco and its surrounding areas. Through these monthly meetings with parents, the sisters have helped to raise the consciousness of the importance of education for women as well as to introduce or strengthen Christian values.

Even though living in Chalaco, Sister Elena continued to work with the inter-congregational formation program in Piura. Thus, she traveled to Piura in May to give a course on the vows, and later she gave a retreat for the Sisters of St. Joseph on “Conflict and Contemplation.” About the same time, Sister Susana journeyed to Cajamarca with Brother Simon, OSA, and Sister Violeta Chu, Redemptorist, as representatives from the Conference of Religious of Chulucanas. There they participated in a course on Enculturation in Religious Life. Later in May, Sister Susana coordinated and Sister Elena participated in a course for teachers in religious education given by a diocesan team from Chulucanas. During the meetings, the participants elected a parish Religious Education Team that would be responsible for planning future activities, another step in enabling the laity. One of the first of these was a special liturgy for Teachers’ Day on July 6. In succeeding years, this team continued planning similar celebrations for July 6, one time terminating the Mass with a procession to the cemetery. There the professors left a commemorative wreath for all the teachers who had died.

At the end of May, Sisters Elena and Liduvina accompanied Father Jose Luis Hernandez to the meeting of new pastoral agents in Chulucanas. Afterwards, Sisters Elena and Susana journeyed with him to Tamboya for the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi; then they joined three teachers in giving a course for other teachers in Piscan Grande. During evenings the following week, Sisters Elena and Susana visited caseríos, completing a heavy schedule “in the field.”

Sisters Laura and Liduvina, too, had spent the week visiting villages on the Chalaco side of the mountain range before going to Yamango. When only six catechists showed up for a course, Sisters Laura and Liduvina were not unduly surprised, but Sister Juana Morris, OSF, who had come from Chulucanas for it, manifested her discontent. That same week, Sisters Elena and Susana went to the region of Choco for visits.

Since they were so occupied with campo visits, the sisters began the custom of planning a day’s outing together while they were home, frequently going to a river near Lanche, to Las Pircas, or to a beautiful pasture area in the area of Chalaco. When visitors came, they likewise
took them to one of these places for a brief respite. At times they even took a more extended excursion, going to Huancabamba, a trip of eight hours by bus, or to Frias and Ayabaca.

Through the years, members of the sisters’ families from the coast came to visit in Chalaco. Sisters Maria and Trini Orozco’s grandmother and sisters came to help celebrate Sister Maria’s birthday. Two of Sister Esther’s sisters visited her for several days. Sister Laura’s sister Karina visited more than once, even going on campo visits; one time her mother came along. Likewise, three of Sister Julia Huiman’s sisters made the trip up to Chalaco when she was missioned there. On the other hand, both Sisters Susana and Liduvina were able to visit their homes with some frequency. And at least twice over the years, the Chalaco community visited Sister Liduvina’s home in Trigopampa.

In an attempt to acquaint more North American sisters with the life and work in Peru, ten SCLs who had applied for the trip were sent to Peru for a period of approximately two weeks in July 1994. During their stay, they divided into two groups. On July 9, Sisters Elena and Susana picked up Sisters Nancy Bauman, Margaret Ellen (Peg) Johnson, Sharon Smith, and Mary Walter Swann and returned to Chalaco.

As planned, they went almost immediately to the church to participate in a welcoming liturgical service. At this time, the visitors received a hat, a walking stick, and a woven bag, symbols of the campesino women they would be encountering. Sister Elena invited them to reflect on the “cure of the blind woman.” The next day, these sisters participated in the meeting with the girls on study grants and their mothers; Sister Laura gave the presentation and conducted the dialogue and prayer, which treated of the place of women in Latin America. Before leaving for a meeting of health promoters in Yamango, Sister Susana tried to give the sisters an overall picture of the Peruvian reality; and to add a bit of “reality,” she invited the guests to take a ride on a mule. The following day, in order to give the sisters an opportunity to absorb and integrate all they had experienced to date and to enable them to appreciate something of the glorious nature surrounding Chalaco, Sister Elena took them for an extended period of reflection in the campo. On the last day, Sister Liduvina introduced the visitors to the children of Peru, taking them to visit the primary and preschool programs.

When Sisters Elena and Liduvina took this first group of SCL guests to the coast, they returned with four other sisters: Barbara Aldrich, Patricia Canty, Eileen Haynes, and Mary Siefken. Taking advantage of the Fiesta of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on July 16, always a big celebration in Chalaco, Sister Susana explained something of the “popular religion” typical of Peru. The following day, Sister Laura gave a presentation on the
role of women in Peru. These sisters also combined time in the countryside with a day of reflection and planning for the parish team. As before, Sister Liduvina concluded the Chalaco experience with visits to the primary and preschools. All of the North American sister guests expressed their gratitude for the insights offered them as well as for the opportunity to become better acquainted with their South American sisters.

As mentioned earlier, the parish team had added zonal retreats for teams of the villages and centers to their work. Thus, while Sisters Elena, Laura, and Liduvina took their visitors to the coast, Sister Susana and the priests had a zonal team retreat in the parish. The first three sisters journeyed to Silahua for a like experience before returning home.

When all were again in Chalaco, the parish team went to Pacaipampa to pre-celebrate Fiestas Patrias, Peru’s Liberation Day (July 28). Then, as a part of the Fiestas Patrias celebrations, the sisters helped organize a course on Life, Justice, and Peace in Peru for July 30. Some three hundred people participated, among them coordinators of the zones, youth leaders, animators of the GACs, and even civic authorities and police.

In mid-August, the sisters had an opportunity to join with other pastoral agents in Chulucanas for the course on “Formation in the Social Doctrine of the Church” presented by Father Gustavo Gutierrez. On their return, two young women from Piura and one from Chulucanas accompanied them for a pastoral and community experience.

Most of September and October was occupied with many trips into the campo for visits, retreats for zonal groups, and courses. Some of the sisters received input in Chulucanas on health concerns, and all the sisters traveled to Piura for a three-day meeting at CIPCA (Center of Investigations for Campesinos).

During these months, the sisters also gave the course “Mission in Christ” in various areas. This included four nights of theological reflection, praying, social action, and social activities. In addition, they again helped prepare couples for the communal marriage ceremonies. In some areas of the parish, they also gave courses for teachers and instructed Eucharistic ministers.

This year, the celebration of Saint Vincent’s Day took on a slightly new form. Besides inviting everyone in Chalaco to the evening liturgy as usual, they presented those in attendance with holy cards of Saint Vincent. Also, earlier in the day, thirty-eight members of different parish teams were invited to a simple dinner.

Despite all this activity, the sisters made time for their monthly retreats and team meetings. They also welcomed Isabel Pena, a postulant, to experience something of their community life and apostolic works.

November brought some festivities as well. On November 3–4, the sisters went to Santo Domingo, a neighboring parish, for the Provincial
Celebration and anniversary of the founding of the town. Shortly after the Bishop's annual visit, the sisters journeyed to Piura for Community celebrations. Besides the renewal of vows of Sister Mabel Cordova, they entered into a special jubilee celebration recalling Sister Catherine Nichol's fifty years as a Sister of Charity.

In the first days of December, all four sisters went to Tamboya, spending three days visiting thirteen GACs; then they joined Father Arturo Purcaro in Piscan Grande for the Pastoral Assembly for that side of the parish. Retreats and evaluations for parish teams followed.

The sisters gathered for an evaluation of their year together and to enjoy a time of prayer. Then Sisters Ruth Reischman, Janet Cashman, and Mabel Cordova arrived to celebrate Christmas with the Chalaco sisters. Having wrapped up everything for 1994, the sisters left for the coast, meeting Sister Catherine on the way as she returned to Chalaco for the winter months there.

Since there were elections in April 1995, the sisters came together in Chalaco a bit later than usual. In fact, after voting, Sisters Laura and Liduvina went to Tamboya for Holy Week, and Sisters Elena and Susana went to Choco, visiting five villages while there. When the two Augustinian seminarians who had gone with them returned late, they all missed the car that had been sent to meet them in Tierra Colorado. Consequently, the foursome had no other option than to make their long way back in the cold and wet, stumbling over the muddy road for two to three hours!

Believing that one car in the parish and public transportation were sufficient for the parish team in Chalaco, the sisters determined to sell their jeep to Don Wilo, a merchant of Chalaco. During that year, they were able to coordinate trips with the priests, frequently using the Augustinian truck. With a change in priestly personnel, however, it again became apparent that mobility for the SCL Community was necessary, and the process of obtaining a new four-wheel-drive truck was begun.

Before the team went to Chulucanas for the four-day pastoral meeting at the end of April, they went to Coca for the Pastoral Assembly. On their return trip, Sister Mabel Cordova joined them. Having just come from Trujillo to join the Chalaco community, Sister Mabel was quickly inserted into the group, attending a pastoral meeting and then the Pastoral Assembly during her first days. Together with the rest of the community, she spent the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker planning for their communal life and their campo visits.

Perhaps the most important development introduced into the parish program in 1995 was the School for Women, a project to be carried out by the SCLs with financial assistance from an Augustinian grant. This program
proposed gathering women of the sectors together for instructions in self-esteem and their rights as women.

During their visits in the region of Choco the last days of May, the sisters issued a special invitation to the women to assist in the “First Encounter for Women in Choco,” which was to take place on Saturday, May 27, 1995. What was their joy when two hundred women appeared! These participants came from six different villages to hear the presentation on the theme “Created with Equal Dignity and Human Rights.” At the end of the experience, these women from a very male-dominated society proudly pronounced, “We are created for more than cooking, washing, weaving and having children. We are daughters of God, created in the Image and Likeness of God.” This in itself was a real accomplishment, but there was another astounding thing that happened in this exceedingly macho society. Men from the villages actually prepared and served breakfast and lunch to the women! Needless to say, the sisters were more than enthusiastic about the initiation of their program.

However, during their evaluative meeting in June, the sisters discussed how they might better reach the women, given their lack of education and their high rate of illiteracy. They decided that the most practical way to convey their teachings in such areas would be by means of illustrations. They therefore asked Cesar Mendoza, an artist who frequently helped out with diocesan projects, to make these drawings.

At the same time, the sisters decided they needed to adapt the presentations for the Chalaco area. Therefore, when 150 women from the parish zones of Chalaco gathered in August for a workshop on Christian Values and Human Rights, this was led by Elsa Fong and her team from CEPESER (Center of Services for Central Peru). They showed films of the project for women that they had been coordinating in the region of Frias. In Chalaco, some of the men helped prepare the lunch, although women from the milk program and women’s club aided them.

The following year, in May 1996, the sisters decided to have these gatherings every two months and in different localities as well. They promptly set about planning the one for July. In successive months and years, the program was introduced into the areas of Silahua and Tamboya. Sometimes the sisters gave the presentations, but at other times they invited Elsa Fong and her group or women from the health sector in Chulucanas to present themes. In addition to these larger meetings, the sisters began to incorporate special shorter encounters just for women when they visited the caserios.

When the sisters planned to take their School for Women program to the sector of Silahua, they were not sure what to expect, and indeed, as with
other events there, results were never the same. However, they were delighted when eighty women arrived for the first such meeting on May 19, 1996.

At times, other sisters came to the aid of the Chalaco contingent. For instance, in 1997, when Chalaco was short-handed, Sister Elena Mack helped them take the School for Women to Carrizal, a village belonging to the Tamboya area and a place where the women had far fewer opportunities to better themselves. The attendance of 110 women more than compensated the sisters for their trip over the slippery road to reach them. Although only sixty women were present at the presentations two months later, the sisters were still pleased by their active participation. Actually, the sisters had discovered that almost always the large group who came to the first meeting in whatever area was diminished at the second encounter. Whether that was due to the pressure of husbands or other reasons was not determined. But the women who did come responded enthusiastically, and the sisters faithfully carried out their commitment.

As mentioned above, some of the men began to assist at these meetings too. By now, apparently, their presence was not a threat to the women’s open dialogue and expression of feelings. One of the priests encouraged the sisters to change the name to “School for Families.” That change, however, did not take place for another few years. At the closing sessions in Silahua and Tamboya in 1998, the sisters presented each woman with a cross and her husband with a rosary.

Much later, in 2000, the sisters were able to obtain a television, video, and battery-powered motor to present the themes. Following these showings, the women (and in some places men) discussed the topic and sometimes dramatized their understandings.

But to return to the year 1995. In May, the sisters were expecting yet another member for their house; they therefore took time to do some painting and rearranging in the house. The postulant, Liliana Morante, arrived on May 15 for a six-week experience in ministry and community; she soon learned how much time the sisters spent “on the road” and “in the campo” with visits, CCPs, meetings, and retreats. She also learned how full their time was while at home.

Early in June 1995, Sister Laura’s sister, Karina Rumiche, arrived to give a two-week course in sewing to fourteen women from Chalaco and its surrounding villages. Meanwhile, Sister Elena worked with the liturgists while Sister Laura and Liliana continued the formation of the catechists.

While the others were out on visits, Sister Elena helped give a teachers’ course with three members of the diocesan team.

The last five days of June 1995 saw the sisters entertaining sister visitors from the United States again. This time they were all former missionaries: Sisters Rose Celine Siebers, Edith McCauley, and Marcianna Trujillo. During
their days in Chalaco, they joined in special prayer services prepared by the Chalaco sisters, and Sisters Edith and Marcianna were taken on a tour of Chalaco and saw the schools and clinic. But Sister Rose Celine, who had lived and worked in Chalaco from 1979 to 1987, spent time visiting friends. Before the guests left, the Chalaco community also invited them to a picnic and prayers at the waterfalls and later to share some of their experiences in Latin America. On the same day that group went back to the coast, Sisters Agnes Klein and Mary Joan Eble arrived for a three-day visit.

After the last guests left, life returned to normal: visiting in the campo, giving catechetical courses, and welcoming young women into the convent for prayer and a community living experience. At the end of July, Sister Susana went to Lima for tests and to present her work in Champagnat University. Then all took part in the pastoral meeting and Confer meeting in Chulucanas in August. One out-of-the-ordinary event was Sisters Elena and Susana’s vacation trip to Ayacucho in the southern part of Peru’s Andes.

The second weekend of September 1995, everyone went to the Choco area for meetings with parents of the high school students and catechists of Confirmation and to prepare for a communal marriage ceremony. In this visit, as in others, the sisters stayed with families or in schools.

Despite all their pastoral work and Sister Susana’s studies and projects for Champagnat, the sisters continued to take time to further their spiritual formation. Thus Sisters Elena, Mabel, Liduvina, and Laura all went to Chulucanas on August 11, 1995, for a full-week workshop on the vows, sponsored by Confer for sisters still under temporary profession. On their return from the coast, they participated in a retreat for lay leaders of the parish given by the Leadership Team of the diocese.

With the election of Father Arturo Purcaro, their pastor, to the Augustinian General Council, various adjustments in the pastoral work needed to be made once again. Father John Tyma, formerly working in the Augustinian mission office, was to assume the role of pastor in Chalaco when Father Arturo left in early October. One of the great advantages of the diocese’s NIP program was that because all parishes were following the same program, changes in clerical personnel did not interrupt parish plans very much. Religious sisters could also more easily move into the structured program and interrelate with other members of the team.

October and November were heavy with CCPs, meetings, visits, and retreats in various zones, the sisters sometimes spending up to ten days at a time in the campo. Despite the satisfaction when all went as programmed, the sisters also suffered the frustration of mules not arriving or meetings having to be reprogrammed when messages had not arrived. They did, however, rejoice in the development of the sacramental programs. In November, 494 persons were confirmed in the parish.
In late October, Sister Mabel arrived in Chalaco to pick up her things and say goodbye to the sisters and her friends since she was not going to renew her vows on November 11.

On November 20, Sisters Liduvina and Laura left for a four-hour zonal retreat and visit. Some of the others were involved in travels of another nature. Sister Elena went to Lima for meetings of the Major Superiors of Religious Communities in Peru. Sister Susana and Father Tyma went to Chulucanas with seven coordinators for the Diocesan Assembly.

When all were in house again, the sisters enjoyed a picnic together in Rio Claro. They took advantage of everyone being home to plan for Christmas, the Parish Assembly, Confirmation, and communal marriages in Cajas. Carrying out all these activities kept the sisters more than busy until it was once again time for them to go down to the coast for the months of January, February, March 1996. As had now become a ritual, Sister Catherine Nichol ascended to Chalaco when the members of the local community descended to the coast. During the rainy months, she again occupied her time with visits, liturgies, presentations, and meetings in the zones of Chalaco.

On April 4, 1996, Sister Catherine returned to her mission in Piura while Sisters Elena, Liduvina, and Lourdes Abad wound their way back up the slippery road to Chalaco. Just two days later, Sister Lourdes, who had just arrived for her mission experience as a novice, accompanied Sister Liduvina to Silahua for the celebrations of Holy Week. On the Wednesday after Easter, the sisters had their first meeting with yet another pastor, Father Isaias Jimenez, who was a native of the Yamango area. The following Saturday, Sisters Elena, Liduvina, Lourdes, and Susana went down to Piura, taking time for a community outing in Paita before going on to Chulucanas for the meeting of pastoral ministers.

In early June, after participating with the others in the CCP in Chalaco, Sister Lourdes left for the meeting of new pastoral agents. While in Chulucanas, she also visited the Center of Formation.

About the same time, Sisters Susana and Liduvina accompanied Father Isaias to Tamboya for the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi and conducted the CCP meeting in Coca. Then they went on to Piura to join the other sisters who were going to Lima en route to the United States for the large Community meeting, "Converging Paths."

On June 29, Sisters Lourdes and Liduvina were the first to return from the United States. To their surprise, they discovered that they could not get into the convent because the person who had been guarding it had left the key inside when he closed the door. It was therefore necessary to break one of the panes in the kitchen window to obtain entrance.
In late July, ten sisters and a postulant arrived in Chalaco from Piura, Talara, and Trujillo to help celebrate the twenty-five years of SCL presence and work in that parish. With the exception of Sister Ruth Reischman, all had served in Chalaco at some time or other. On July 28, some of the Mercy sisters from Pacaipampa and some Benedictines from Morropon joined in the Mass of Jubilee celebrated by Bishop McNabb.

As always, during the break for Fiestas Patrias, Sister Liduvina left for a week of classes in ESER (Archdiocesan Institute for Religious Studies) in Piura. Sister Susana also went to Lima to take her tests and present her work in Champagnat University.

When Sister Elena received word on November 1, 1995, that she would replace Sister Regina Deitchman as the Director of Missions, she at first decided to continue in the ministry in Chalaco as well. She did so, leaving frequently to visit the sisters in the other houses in Piura, Talara, and Trujillo. However, recognizing the problems of communication (there were only one or two public phones in the whole town of Chalaco), she finally moved to Santa Rosa in Piura in September 1996.

Sister Regina, after an absence of twelve years, returned to Chalaco on August 4, 1996, to become a part of the local community and assume "a more limited ministry." Just three days later, however, she went to the coast with Fathers Isaiaas Jimenez and Jose de la Luz and two youths. Meeting up with Sister Liduvina in Morropon, they went on to hold training meetings for "messengers" in the zonal teams of Silahua, Yamango, and Tamboya. These "messengers" are very important in the NIP program as, there being no telephones or local radios, these people are responsible for delivering messages about meetings to the often widely dispersed families. They are also important because they communicate by word of mouth to the many people who neither read nor write. On this trip Sister Regina also participated in her first School for Women in Silahua.

On August 16, everyone journeyed to Chulucanas for the Episcopal ordination of Daniel Turley, OSA, and his Mass of Thanksgiving the following day.

Following this, Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes went to visit various zones in Silahua for visits and almost immediately afterwards set out for Choco, where they taught classes of religion in the high school—another new ministry for them.

In their August meeting with the girls on study grants, the sisters helped them record a tape for the benefactors of the San Fernando Fund. These generous people in England have continued to raise money for various charitable programs in Chalaco since 1971. 8

From September 15 to 21, Sister Regina (despite her "limited ministry") joined Sister Susana in visiting some of the villages of Tamboya, giving a
workshop for teachers and visiting some of the zones in the afternoons. Sister Clorinda Timana arrived to give a presentation to the fourth and fifth year students of the high schools in Piscan Grande, Sabila, and Tamboya.

On their arrival in Morropon, they were delighted to encounter Sister Elena, who had driven their new double-cabin pickup over for them. Before going to the Community meeting in Chulucanas, the Chalaco community went into Piura to visit their pastor, Father Isaias, who had recently had an automobile accident. Knowing that he was recuperating, they felt more relaxed to join in the discussions of the meeting and the celebration of Sister Regina’s Golden Jubilee.

The sisters continued to take advantage of in-service programs given by the diocese, Community, and Confer. For instance, Sister Liduvina went to Trujillo in October for a meeting of sisters under temporary vows, and Sister Regina made a workshop on Bioethics in Villa Nazaret in Chulucanas, after first taking advantage of a day of reflection in the house of the Redemptorist sisters. Sister Lourdes went to Piura for a course on the vows offered by Sister Elena in Confer.

On a visit to Naranjo, Sisters Susana and Lourdes had a meeting with the young people of the secondary school, and they took the opportunity to invite the señoritas to a retreat in the convent for October 20–21. Although somewhat crowded, the sisters accommodated the twelve young women who came.

On October 28, Sisters Regina and Susana went to Piura and brought Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Ann Barton to Chalaco. After Sister Mary Kathleen had made her official visit, Sister Regina and Susana took the two sisters back to the coast. Sister Maria Orozco returned with them to assist in the end of a two-month course in sewing given for the women of Chalaco and its surrounding pueblos.

During the first week of November, the sisters once again experienced the discouragement of failed meetings in the Coca area due to the fact that the messages from the parish had not arrived. The same thing occurred when they went to the Tamboya area at the end of the month. After all these years, problems with communication had not been solved.

On November 30, Sisters Regina, Lourdes, and Liduvina went to Chulucanas for the ordination of Telmisto Roman, a native son of Yamango; after attending his first Mass, Sisters Lourdes and Liduvina visited zones of that district.

As always, there were many end-of-year activities to attend to before going their separate ways for the months of January through March. On December 30, they held a farewell dinner for Sister Susana, who would be going to Lima for the Formation Program of Confer early the next year.
Sisters Susana and Regina took the car down to the coast on January 2, 1997. After buying fruits and vegetables, Sister Regina returned by a public van to Chalaco, leaving the pickup in Morropon with the Benedictine sisters.

On January 3, Sister Lourdes had busied herself taking registrations for the vacation school program that the sisters were offering again this year. That same day, Sister Esther Vilela and Deidy Abad, Sister Lourdes' sister, arrived. Three days later, seventy-five students of fourth, fifth, and sixth grades began classes in religion, mathematics, language, and dance. In the afternoons, Sister Esther, Sister Lourdes, and Deidy visited homes during the first two weeks. On January 19, Sister Elena arrived with more fresh fruits and vegetables. On the last day of the month, teachers and students rejoiced in a month well spent and had a program to close this vacation school experience.

The same day the vacation school terminated, Sister Catherine Nichol arrived with three Augustinians (a priest and two seminarians) for her annual "working-vacation" in the coolness of Chalaco. After the priest left, Sister Catherine held a daily Communion service in the mornings and spent several hours visiting homes before dinner time. Sister Regina also visited homes in the mornings; in the afternoons, she showed filmstrips on the Life of Jesus for twenty to thirty children.

Sister Liduvina continued her studies in ESER, and Sister Lourdes was occupied with her preparation for vows in March. Her sister Deidy would also enter the Community as a postulant in March.

Almost before the sisters knew it, the pastoral year 1997 was upon them. On March 26, the day after the final vows of Sister Esther and the first vows of Sister Lourdes in Piura, Sisters Regina, Liduvina, and Lourdes arrived in Chalaco. Sister Catherine returned to Piura the same day, accompanied by Sister Susana, who had been visiting her parents in Santo Domingo.

The last days of March were occupied as usual with community meetings to lay plans for the year. These were quickly followed by a meeting with the students on grants and their parents, then team meetings to plan the year's work for the three sisters, two priests, two Augustinian brothers, and long-time parish secretary, Maria Cruz Cordova. After the annual pastoral meeting in Chulucanas during Easter week, four members of the team went to Yamango for the Parish Assembly on that side of the parish while the other four conducted a similar meeting with members of the zones of Chalaco itself. With these Parish Assemblies, the year of multiple meetings and visits was initiated.

On May 2, Sisters Regina, Liduvina, and Lourdes drove to Piura for a Community pre-Chapter meeting at which Bishop Daniel Turley helped illuminate the signs of the times as reflected in the Peruvian reality. The following day, the sisters set out for Chalaco but had to return to Piura for
repairs on the pickup when Sister Liduvina failed to brake in time and hit a burro. Driving is always somewhat perilous in these rural areas since there are no fences, and a driver must be very alert for goats and burros that decide to cross the road.

Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes went on to Chalaco by bus on May 5 since they had a scheduled meeting that night. When Sister Regina returned on the eighth, Sister Donna Jean Henson accompanied her. However, since Father Eric, Sister Regina’s Benedictine brother, was seriously ill in Brazil, she decided to go and stay with him for a while. Sister Donna Jean returned to the coast with her.

After the “Fifth Encounter of Religious” in Chulucanas on May 8,9 Sister Elena traveled to Chalaco with Sisters Lourdes and Liduvina. While there, she helped them prepare for the first School for Women of 1997 since these young sisters were now alone in this isolated mission.

With only three sisters in the house, the trips multiplied, and the two younger sisters especially met themselves coming and going. To complicate matters, Sister Regina had a very bad cold after returning from Brazil on June 3, so Sisters Lourdes and Liduvina conducted a vocation day that had been scheduled. Then these two traveled to the Tamboya-Yamango sector in time for the CCP meetings. A week later, they were again on the road, this time for Choco, accompanied by one of the Augustinian brothers.

On June 19, Sisters Lourdes and Regina went to Piura to pick up SCL visitors from the States: Sisters Sara Kammer, Noreen Walter, Mary Julitta Doerhoff, and Rita Marie Anderson. Before going up to Chalaco, they took their guests to visit La Encantada, a village where local artisans make world-famous ceramics, and Chulucanas, to see the modern cathedral there and Villa Nazaret, the diocesan center where most diocesan meetings and workshops take place. In Chalaco, besides visiting the school (since they were all educators) and other places in the town, the North American sisters were able to participate in the celebration of the anniversary of Chalaco’s founding, thus seeing many of the brightly dressed campesinos, some dances, and other performances. On June 23, the sister guests returned to Piura, and Sister Regina went to Chulucanas for the course for new pastoral agents.

Following visits in the Tamboya sector, Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes were able to attend only one day of the course on Discernment given for novices and sisters under temporary vows in Piura. For, as the diocese was introducing the program of Catequesis Familiar, or Family Catechesis, they needed to attend the meetings for animators and those responsible for catechesis, GACs, and young people. With the introduction of this program, in which parents are instructed weekly over a period of two years on how to prepare their children for First Communion, the diocese was taking yet another step in giving more responsibility to the laity.
In mid-July, Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes again visited various parts of the parish, from the sectors of Choco to Chalaco to Tamboya. Returning from the latter, they picked up Sister Donna Jean and her nephew Darren, a seminarian from the United States. Just three days later they took the visitors back to the coast as they went to Silahua.

On their way home, they picked up Sister Clorinda, the postulant Deidy Abad, and a Señorita Kely, who had come from Talara for a visit and to experience something of the work of the sisters in the sierra. They helped with the School for Women and visits in the sector of Silahua as well as other campo visits, joining in the community life and work until August 11.

In early August, Sisters Lourdes and Regina attended the pastoral meeting in Chulucanas, and Sister Liduvina went to Piura, finishing her courses for ESER. That meant, with the three regulars gone, the “visitors” took over the visits to the zones and in the town; of course, Sister Clorinda had lived and worked in Chalaco before, so she knew the routine.

After the pastoral meeting, Sister Lourdes stayed on for a course in “Critical Consciousness” given by Clara Yanez of the Better World Movement team; she also assisted in an ordination in Chulucanas.

Later in August, the sisters returned to Chalaco after trips to the Tamboya and Yamango sectors. After a few days to wash clothes and rest a bit, Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes began visiting some of the pueblos surrounding Chalaco. Fortunately, they took time for an outing when Sister Elena came for a four-day visit the last day of the month.

On September 6–7, Sisters Regina, Liduvina, and Lourdes, together with the rest of the parish team and three señoritas from the sector of Yamango, held a training session for the members of the zonal teams of that sector.

Following that, the sisters went for a visit of several days to the province of Huancabamba, probably one of the most impoverished and abandoned areas in the diocese.

All were in Chulucanas with the other SCLs for the annual meeting of the Community at the end of September. Before returning to Chalaco, Sisters Lourdes and Liduvina participated in a meeting with other sisters under temporary vows, and again in early October, they attended a workshop on communication given by the psychologist Maria del Socorro. Shortly thereafter, Sister Liduvina returned to Chulucanas for another meeting of sisters under temporary vows.

When Sister Elena brought Sisters Therese Zimmerman and Carol Depner, who were visiting from the States, for a short visit, the community took them to Las Pircas, one of their most beautiful and picturesque zones, about an hour above Chalaco by truck. Three days later, Sisters Regina and Liduvina drove them to Piura, stopping in La Encantada to see the beautiful ceramic objects.
Sister Liduvina had been assessor of the Confirmation program during the year, so she and Sister Lourdes accompanied Father Jose de la Luz to Yamango for the Confirmations there on November 21 and then went on to Tamboya the following day for the visit of Bishop Daniel Turley. By the Feast of Christ the King, November 23, all were back in Chalaco for the Confirmations there.

Because of the predicted phenomenon of “El Niño,”* the meeting of pastoral agents in Chulucanas was held earlier. That was a good decision as there was indeed much more rain than normal during late November and early December. In spite of that, the sisters went on to Tamboya for the final School for Women.

Returning to Chalaco, the community had a joint retreat and evaluation of goals for the year 1997. On December 6, the sisters assisted in the Parish Assemblies in Tamboya and Chalaco with an impressive four hundred laypersons united in those two places. Among other things, the laity made a strong point of telling the team how important the visits of the sisters and religious were to the zones.

Shortly thereafter, the sisters had a surprise visit when a young woman from Yamango appeared at their door. She and her father had walked that immense distance (ten to fourteen hours by foot) to express her interest in the religious life. The señorita stayed four days with the sisters, sharing in their community life and prayer. The Saturday following her arrival, December 18, the sisters hosted two other señoritas for a day of reflection, one from Naranjo and the other from Chalaco.

On Sunday, the sisters had their last meeting with the girls on study grants. Then in the evening there was a farewell party for Sister Liduvina, who would be living in Piura the following year.

At the end of the week, Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes went to Piura and then on to Talara for the farewell celebration for Sister Donna Jean, who was returning to the United States after fifteen years of missionary work in Peru.

Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes returned to Chalaco for the celebration of Christmas, but immediately thereafter they and Sister Regina once again traveled to Piura. Sister Liduvina would spend the summer preparing for university studies while Sister Lourdes would go on to Lima for yet another summer in Champagnat. Sister Regina returned to Chalaco to welcome those coming for the January vacation school.

Sister Esther and Deidy, as well as a Señorita Roxana of Talara, soon arrived. During the month of January, they had eighty students in grades four, five, and six. Five other teachers assisted them, one of whom came from Naranjo and stayed Monday through Friday with the sisters and
Roxana in the convent. Since there were no Masses after January 19, the sisters held a Communion service every afternoon.

On January 30, 1998, Sisters Liduvina and Catherine arrived; the next day, Sisters Liduvina and Esther, along with Deidy and Roxana, returned to the coast with a driver. During the following months, Sisters Regina and Catherine resumed their previous schedule for the winter months. Sister Catherine also worked with a program of catechism for First Communion and Baptism. They were glad to have Father Telmisto Roman offer Ash Wednesday liturgy and consecrate extra hosts.

Although Chalaco experienced some eighteen inches of rain during the month of February, the sisters realized conditions were much worse on the coast where there had been considerable flooding and devastation. Of course, this affected them in so far as no supplies could come in. In March, Sister Regina decided not to attempt to go to the coast for retreat as it would have meant going by mule all the way to Morropon.

Because the rains had continued heavily throughout March, Sisters Susana Cordova, Julia Huiman, Lourdes, and the postulant, Deidy, had a memorable trip on their return to Chalaco. Setting out the day after Sisters Lourdes and Liduvina had renewed vows, the sisters traveled by car, foot, bus, and even boat and mototaxi just to arrive as far as Morropon. From Morropon, they walked and/or shared a mule, grateful that the burros at least carried their luggage and supplies. They stopped the first night in Faical with Sister Liduvina’s sister Luisa and the second night in Pambarumbe with the zonal coordinator and his wife. There they encountered the mules sent down from Chalaco for the rest of their journey.

Despite their weariness, the sisters began to make their annual plans since they knew that they would rarely all be home for any length of time. Sisters Susana and Lourdes went to Cabuyal for Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Then, as was the custom, the parish team spent Easter week planning for the following year’s activities. This year five SCLs would share the pastoral work with Father Jose de la Luz, two seminarians, and Maria Cruz Cordova, the parish secretary.

To arrive at the April pastoral meeting in Chulucanas again meant many hours of walking in the mud and among rocks. Not all were hardy enough to attempt that trip again, but Sisters Susana and Lourdes joined nearly 120 other pastoral agents, mostly laypersons and religious women. Remarkably, thirteen out of sixteen pastors were also present for the presentations.

On the afternoon after the sessions had terminated, Sisters Susana and Lourdes made their way to Morropon. The following morning they again set out at 7:00 a.m., but this time they had two good animals, a mule and a horse. Even at that, they needed to stop at Noma for the night after the horse fell in the river. Sister Susana said, “It was a great fright and a
great miracle" that they could retrieve the saddle bag with all the booklets, books, letters, etc., and indeed that they were able to get the horse itself—not to mention themselves—out from between the rocks in the river."

Fortunately, neither was on the horse when it fell, for they had been taking turns of an hour about walking and riding the mule.

All the sisters were present for the Parish Assembly in Chalaco the following Saturday, May 16, but on Sunday, they split up to begin visiting the caserios of Chalaco. The following week, all four sisters went into the region of Choco, going in twosomes to visit in the different communities there. They concluded their time there with the School for Women in Confesionarios on Sunday.

Both in April and May, young women interested in religious life came to visit.

At the end of May 1998, all the sisters journeyed to the coast in the first lap of their trip to the United States to participate in the Community Chapter. By this time they were able to descend by car, and Sister Catherine was finally able to return to Piura after spending three and a half months instead of her usual two in Chalaco.

The first days of July were occupied with house and team meetings. In rapid succession, various groups arrived from Chulucanas to work with the peace and justice representatives, the catechists, and the team for religious education in the primary and secondary schools. Then they began concentrating on the other side of the parish, visiting caserios and conducting CCPs and Schools for Women.

There was much coming and going in the weeks around Fiestas Patrias. Sister Liduvina visited Chalaco; Sister Julia went to Piura and Talara for a brief visit with her family; and Sister Lourdes left for Lima for tests and to present her work in Champagnat University.

On August 1, Sisters Susana and Julia started for Cajas and the School for Women in the Choco area. Meanwhile, Deidy helped with a retreat for 175 youths from Chalaco and its surrounding pueblos. In early August, Deidy and Sister Julia went to Chulucanas for the pastoral meeting for new pastoral agents.

After a month full of pastoral visits and courses, Sister Susana, now Director of Junior Sisters, met with Sisters Lourdes, Julia, and Liduvina in Santo Domingo for a day of reflection and sharing.

Over the years, the Chulucanas Diocese had helped promote some health education programs. However, that had not been a strong focus as Bishop McNabb believed the first priority was catechesis and faith development. By the middle and late 1990s, more health promotion began to be done. Happily, Sister Julia, a trained technical nurse, arrived in Chalaco in 1998. She has done much to strengthen the program, bringing
Sisters Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer and Susana Cordova in training session with lay leaders

Sister Laura Rumiche giving a presentation

Sister Julia Huiman teaching in "School for Women"
Sister Regina Deitchman observing a presentation

Sisters Clorinda Timana, Liduvina Domínguez, and Regina Deitchman at prayer in convent chapel

Sisters Julia Huiman, Regina Deitchman, and Barbara Aldrich in Cabuyal
in outside speakers to present courses. In time, she has helped women who have attended these courses to develop small *botiquines* (pharmacies) in their villages. That August, she and her health committee held a workshop for the health promoters of the surrounding villages. Two nurses from Chulucanas explained themes related to the use and care of medicines. The day following the workshop, Sister Julia and her health committee celebrated the Day of the Elderly, helping some seventy persons to assist at the special Mass and Sacrament of the Anointing. Afterwards they held a small reception for the participants. In later years, new topics were introduced. In 2000 Sister Laura Rumiche and Maruja Cespedes from Negritos came to give a two-day course for the health promoters. They had a wealth of information on the use of different medicines and the advantages of using natural herbal medicines. The following month the health promoters had a small celebration, and each promoter who had participated in Maruja’s course received a small package of medicine to help her start or amplify her *botiquin* for her village. In 2001 Sister Laura gave the health promoters a course on reflexology.

Back to the year 1998. On September 25, the Chalaco sisters gathered with other SCLs for the annual meeting in Chulucanas and the local celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer. After returning to Chalaco, they again participated in a team meeting and retreat for members of the parish team.

Sister Elena and the local community took a day off to enjoy a picnic and time together after she arrived on October 15; this time they went to Pacaipampa.

At the end of the month, Sister Susana and Deidy accompanied Señorita Mariela, an obstetrician from Villa Nazaret, when she visited Choco to give a presentation in the School for Women. In early November, Sisters Susana and Lourdes went to Chulucanas to pick up Señorita Cecilia, who was to give the talks on self-esteem in the Schools for Women in Tamboya and Silahua.

On October 31, Sisters Regina, Julia, and Lourdes had a vocation workshop for six young women from Chalaco and Naranjo. Then, a few days later, Sister Clorinda, the Director of Postulants, came to visit Deidy, who was having her year of mission experience in Chalaco.

The second week of November, Sister Julia and her committee of health promoters sponsored a health fair. A medical team composed of two nurse clinicians, two therapists, two nurses, and an oculist arrived from the United States as part of the Mercy outreach program. Sister Julia and her committee, along with some members of the youth group, prepared three examination rooms and a pharmacy in the garage. The oculist saw patients in Father Jose’s office.
On November 9–10, this team attended all who came from 8:00 in the morning until 6:30 in the evening; the following day, they continued their work for two hours, having seen about 330 patients in all. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty, who had come from Talara, worked with Sister Regina as an interpreter, thus facilitating the work of the North American team. The Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of Charity helped underwrite the cost of the glasses prescribed by the oculist. All in all, everyone seemed pleased with what had been accomplished for this people of the sierra who have so few medical opportunities.

On November 22, Sister Susana and Deidy went to Choco for the monthly meeting of the School for Women. The day after their return, a team from Villa Nazaret responsible for integrating the programs of agriculture, human rights, and health in the Choco area came to make a presentation to the parish team and to ask their suggestions.

The last week of the month, the parish team took an excursion, passing from Santo Domingo to San Jorge and Frias. Since they were not expected by the priests and sisters there, they decided to go on to Chulucanas to spend the night. On November 25, the group continued on to Ayabaca, where they visited with the parish team there. They also had a team meeting in preparation for the Parish Assemblies.

On November 30, Sisters Regina and Susana again went to the coast, this time for a meeting with Sister Elena and her advisers. During the first week of December, Sisters Lourdes and Julia made visits in the Yamango area and concluded their time there by helping with the Parish Assembly for the eastern side of the parish. They also assisted with the communal Baptisms, First Communions, and marriages in Tamboya on December 7.

Then Sisters Susana and Lourdes went to Confesionarios for the last School for Women of the year. Some youths from Chulucanas accompanied them and made a video of the closing ceremony.

While Deidy was gone for a Confer retreat, the parish team held their annual evaluation. Then on December 15, there was a meeting of the sisters under temporary vows; they and the other sisters from Chalaco participated in the Pastoral Encounter and Christmas dinner of the diocese afterwards.

On December 22, the sisters gathered in Chalaco for their community day of retreat and evaluation of goals; the following day, they held the last meeting with the girls on study grants. As in some other years, the Augustinians of the parish came to the convent after the midnight Mass to celebrate Christmas dinner together.

The sisters left for Piura and the scheduled Community meeting the day after Christmas, but first they took time for an end-of-year celebration together. Sister Lourdes would soon be leaving for Lima for studies during
the summer, and both Sisters Julia and Susana were going to visit their families after the meeting.

Sister Regina and Deidy returned to Chalaco to prepare for the vacation school program that would start in early January. Isabel Sandoval, a young teacher from Piura who was interested in the Community, arrived to be principal of the vacation school this year. Three other señoritas from coast and sierra also came to help with this project. Sister Julia worked with the fifty or so children during the first seven days before again going to the coast. On January 29, the vacation school for 1999 terminated successfully with a program and fiesta.

That same day, Sister Susana and Deidy left Chalaco to begin living in the new formation house in Lopez Albujar. In Morropon, Sister Susana turned the truck over to Sister Catherine who, after putting her own belongings and fruits and vegetables inside, began the trip up to Chalaco.

About a week earlier, Cecilia Acajima had arrived from Chulucanas to spend three days giving a course in self-esteem to the women of Chalaco and its surrounding villages; each day women from a zone of Chalaco and ten villages were invited to participate. This represented a two-fold growth: first, that women of the zones within Chalaco would participate; and, even more, that these women would participate with campesinos.

At the end of January, Sister Regina began Sunday Bible classes on the Gospel of Saint Luke; she was pleased that fifteen people attended.

On February 6, Sister Julia returned to Chalaco about 7:00 p.m. after having had a difficult daylong journey. The bridge was out at one point, and the public transportation had to make a four-hour detour. Then on the way up, the road was so bad that trucks could hardly pass in some areas. When she reached El Palto, she was glad to find the sisters' pickup and its driver awaiting her.

A week later, Sister Julia and the health committee met with representatives of the three different zones of Chalaco as well as with representatives of the town itself. Their goal was to coordinate the clean-up of the streets and provide a more healthful environment.

Planning to go to the Community retreat, Sisters Regina and Julia set out for the coast on February 25. They had procured an expert driver and had joined a caravan of others going to the coast, including the ambulance from the health center with some of its employees and the mayor in the city pickup truck. There were about twenty persons in all. However, they met up with so many mudslides—one almost every five to fifteen minutes—that they did not arrive at Pambarumbe until about 2:00 p.m. (eight hours instead of the normal one to two hours). After struggling on for another two hours, they finally had to call off the trip when they encountered a mudslide so large that it would take heavy equipment to move it. The
mayor, the sisters, and their drivers turned back toward Chalaco, arriving there about 11:00 p.m.

Still determined to make the Community retreat, Sister Julia set out the following week for El Palto by mule; from there, she took a truck into Morropon and then went on to Piura. Joining other sisters there, she traveled on to Trujillo and Moche, site of the communal retreat. But her troubles were not over. While on retreat, Sister Julia broke her foot but did nothing about it until she was on vacation in Talara following the retreat. Given this handicap, she elected to stay in Piura until the pastoral meeting in mid-April. She was present, therefore, for Deidy Abad’s entrance into the novitiate on March 24, and she renewed her own vows the next day, as did Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes.

On April 1, 1999, Sisters Regina, Lourdes and Clorinda began developing their community plans for the year. The next day, Good Friday, they participated in the Living Way of the Cross dramatized by the youth group of the parish; that afternoon Sister Clorinda gave the reflection on the last word of Jesus on the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing.” That night they entered into the deeply moving procession with the figure of the dead Christ.

On Easter Monday, April 5, the sisters welcomed two new priests to the parish, Fathers Ricardo Calle and Preciliano Romero, both diocesan priests. On Wednesday, the sisters joined the three zones of Chalaco in the town hall to recall with gratitude the twenty-three years of service the Augustinian priests had rendered to the faithful of San Fernando parish. In this celebration, the people also welcomed the new pastor and his assistant.

On Sunday, April 11, the Augustinian priests formally turned the parish over to their diocesan successors. When the Augustinians left, they took Sister Catherine to the coast with them. The following day, the sisters met with the new parish priests and also entertained them at a welcoming dinner in their house.

The three sisters left for Piura on April 15 with a male driver for part of the way. When the road became more manageable, Sisters Regina and Lourdes began trading off on the driving until they reached Piura. They met with Sister Julia the next few days to prepare the community project for the year and take care of other plans for the house. However, they also took time to celebrate Sisters Clorinda and Lourdes’ birthdays and take an outing to Catacaos. On the nineteenth, they went to Chulucanas to participate in the three-day planning meeting of the diocese and the meeting of Confer which followed immediately thereafter.

Before returning to Chalaco on the twenty-fifth, Sister Clorinda took part in a vocation committee meeting. The next day, all the sisters helped with the shopping and still had time to participate in the ordination of two
Franciscans to the deaconate. Once again their driver met them at San Miguel on their way back up.

The next week was full of meetings with the parish team of two priests, four sisters, the secretary, and a seminarian. Each of the sisters assumed responsibility for one or more areas of the parish plan, such as the small communities, catechetic and religious education, and the health plan. The sisters met the following week to plan their first visits to the zones and to set the dates for the Schools for Women.

By mid-May, the yearly round of visits to villages and meetings in the various sectors of the parish was on its way. In late May, the sisters welcomed the Diocesan Animation team to give a two-day workshop for the different zonal teams. Following that, on May 30, the sisters gathered to prepare the theme for the first School for Women for the year.

At the end of that week, Sisters Julia and Lourdes went to Chulucanas for the Confer course for sisters under temporary vows, and Sisters Clorinda and Julia attended the meetings for new pastoral workers the following week.

On June 11, Sisters Regina and Lourdes met Sisters Clorinda and Julia in Morropon, and the four traveled on to Tamboya together. The next day, they gave a vocation workshop for students of fourth and fifth years of secondary from Tamboya and Carrizal. A day later, Sisters Regina, Julia, and Clorinda had a School for Women. Meanwhile, Sister Lourdes crossed over to Piscan Grande, where she had a course for catechists of Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation from the sectors of Coca, Tamboya, and Yamango. The three sisters who had remained in Tamboya stayed on to make pastoral visits in the various zones of that sector. Their motto might well have been "Divide and Conquer!"

At the very end of June 1999, Sisters Sue Miller, Community Director, and Marianna Bauder, Councilor, came to Chalaco for several days. While they were there, they witnessed another advancement in the Chalaco scene. A team from the Religious Education Office in Chulucanas (ODEC) gave a course for ninety religion teachers in the parish. Since Sister Clorinda was assessor of the parish team of religious education (ESER), she was very much involved in the course.

On July 3, the sisters took Sisters Sue and Marianna down to the coast, where they joined the rest of the Community for a Vespers celebration of the Fourth of July at Lopez Albujar. On the fourth itself, the sisters met together at Santa Rosa. Sister Irene Skeehan, who had come up from Lima where she was attending a special program, gave a presentation on Jubilee. Afterwards, Sisters Sue and Marianna presented other points for consideration. The sisters also made suggestions regarding a new vocation brochure that had recently been developed, and at that time they determined
to begin an SCL aspirancy program instead of sending girls to the Formation Center in Chulucanas.

On their return to Chalaco, Sisters Julia, Lourdes, and Clorinda almost immediately set off for Silahua. Having invited a young woman to accompany them, they formed two teams and so were able to visit almost all the villages of that sector before meeting in Silahua for the School for Women.

On July 23, the sisters went to Chulucanas to help celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary of this church jurisdiction. On July 26–27, Sisters Julia, Lourdes, and Liduvina met with Sister Rose Dolores, Director of Junior Sisters, before Sister Lourdes went to Lima to present her work at Champagnat University and take her mid-semester exams.

On August 2–6, Sisters Regina, Clorinda, Julia, and Maria Cruz Cordova attended the pastoral meeting in Chulucanas. Since Sister Clorinda had a vocation committee meeting, the sisters went into Piura after the diocesan meetings. By this time Sister Lourdes had returned from Lima, and the following day, the sisters left for Chalaco.

Whenever possible, the sisters planned various activities in sequence. Thus, when Sisters Clorinda and Lourdes went to Choco in August, they conducted the CCP, then had a School for Women and gave a vocation workshop for students in the last two years of secondary. However, once there was a road into Silahua, they occasionally went for a one-day meeting.

The sisters had a special celebration on August 26 for Senior Citizens Day. After a Mass with the Anointing of the Sick, there was a small feast for the older members of the community. And as a special way of identifying with the people, Sister Regina entered into these activities as a guest also.

The next day, Sisters Clorinda, Lourdes, and Julia once again were in Silahua, taking along a young woman to help them in their week of visits, which would conclude with the School for Women in Silahua. They had planned to go on to Tamboya to conduct the same type of meeting with women there, but unfortunately, they had a serious accident just as they were about to depart from Silahua the afternoon of August 29. The sisters were all ready to go and Lourdes had already started the motor when a woman came alongside the car, wanting to talk with her. Not realizing that the children had already taken away the rocks from in front of the pickup, Sister Lourdes stepped out of the truck, leaving the motor running. All of a sudden, the truck started forward down the incline. Sister Julia and Lucia, the young woman accompanying them, were able to jump free from the front seat. However, Sister Clorinda and a woman to whom they had agreed to give a ride could not free themselves before the truck pitched into a hole about three yards deep, leaving the pickup turned upside down. With the help of numerous people, it was possible to extract Sister Clorinda.
and the woman from the back seat. Fortunately, a policeman friend said he would file the police report and another man agreed to drive the sisters into Morropon in his pickup, leaving their pickup with the lieutenant governor of the sector.

By the time the sisters and young woman reached Morropon, those who had ridden behind in the bed of the truck were covered with dust and very disheveled. To their chagrin, they found that the Benedictine sisters could not give them hospitality as they were in the midst of important Community meetings and the convent was full. So the SCLs had to go to a rather primitive hotel for the night. Meantime, they communicated with both Sisters Regina and Elena.

Sister Elena came over to Morropon the following morning to take Sister Clorinda into Piura for medical exams. The other three went on to Tamboya in the Benedictine Sisters' car to conduct the School for Women. They even took catechetical materials to Yamango when they had finished; but they cancelled their planned visits in the campo. Returning to Morropon, they asked a driver to go to Silahua for their car so that they could take it into Piura for repairs. With all the windows out, the sisters had a cold trip into Piura but were grateful to be able to put it in a garage for overnight while they stayed at Santa Rosa.

Though still somewhat traumatized by the experience, Sisters Julia and Lourdes were ready to return to Chalaco by September 2. Sister Catherine drove them to Morropon where they met up with Lucia, who had been waiting for them there. Sister Catherine took them the rest of the way home and stayed on for several days to visit.

Despite this traumatizing experience, the sisters carried on with planned activities. On September 4, Sister Julia gave a course for the health promoters from Chalaco and Silahua. That same afternoon, four catechists arrived from Choco to have Sister Laura prepare them for classes in First Communion and Confirmation. The next day, Sister Lourdes gave a vocation workshop for seventeen high school students from Chalaco and Cabuyal.

Sister Regina returned from Piura on September 6, having spent seven days there with Sister Clorinda. Although the latter had not sustained serious injuries, she was still suffering headaches and what appeared to be internal bruises.

After Sister Clorinda returned from Piura on September 11, the sisters took time to dialogue about the accident, expressing their feelings and what they felt they had learned from it. In her questioning of why this had happened, Sister Julia reflected on God's Providence. She said she seemed to hear the Lord say: "Yes, I was there, I was in the middle of the people who gave their love, their help, their support. I was in each one of them concerned and showing my love by means of them. I was in each one of
you to show you my love for one another, I was in each sister in the community. I never abandoned you and I never will abandon you.”

On September 22, the Chalaco community met to prepare for the SCL meeting which was to take place in La Union from September 23 to 26. The next day, they celebrated the Feast of Saint Vincent with the other sisters in Piura. Sisters Regina, Julia, and Lourdes returned on the twenty-ninth, and Sister Clorinda joined them the next day.

As usual at the beginning of October, the sisters met to do community planning, and then they met with the parish team before setting off on campo visits and courses. At this time of year, they were also busy with retreats for persons to be confirmed. Sister Elena visited for three days during October, although several of the sisters had to absent themselves for at least part of the time.

The night the sisters finished their communal retreat, Sister Clorinda went to Piura to prepare for a vocation promotion retreat. The vocation committee was sponsoring this for thirteen young women on October 31 and November 1.

On November 3, Sisters Julia and Lourdes went to Yamango for the Confirmation of 120 young people and the annual visit of the bishop. Three days later, there were 70 Confirmations in Tamboya. Immediately after dinner there, the sisters left to be present in Chalaco for the 311 Confirmations there the next day.

In the absence of the priests, Sisters Clorinda and Julia prepared a liturgy and, with the help of some young women, a dramatization from the life of Mother Xavier for November 11. Only about twenty persons came, however.

During the last months of 1999, much time and effort was given to preparing for the first Diocesan Assembly. In September, the sisters had spent days working with the smaller communities, helping the couples respond to a series of questions sent out by the Diocese. Then in October, Sister Regina met with some seventy animators and moderators of the GACs to help them organize their reports. She also worked with the editorial staff, whose job it was to consolidate the responses of more than one thousand families of the parish. At the end of November, Sister Regina attended the Diocesan Assembly together with seven coordinators of parish zones and the pastor. The sharing with a like number of representatives from the other fifteen parishes of the diocese was impressive, especially knowing that they were reporting in the name of their parish zones.

November and December called for final meetings and evaluations. When Sisters Clorinda and Julia were in Choco for the last School for Women, they were impressed by how these simple, unlettered women not only could recall the various themes presented during the year but could
even remember the gestures and dynamics that were used. This was not true in Silahua or Tamboya. In fact, in the former the sisters were disappointed with the few women who attended.

On December 1, the parish pastoral team met to finalize preparations for the two Parish Assemblies. Sisters Lourdes and Julia went to Yamango with Father Preciliano; Sisters Regina and Clorinda stayed in Chalaco and helped Father Ricardo and the seminarian there. On December 9–10, the pastoral team met for their evaluation of the year’s work.

On the day following the evaluations, the sisters set out on a community trip to the province of Huancabamba. They stayed with the Franciscan priests the first night and the following day went to see the Franciscan sisters in Sondor. By the thirteenth, they were in Piura, ready to participate in the diocesan pastoral meetings on December 14–16 in Chulucanas.

On December 20, the sisters put up the Christmas decorations. Scarcely taking time to enjoy them, Sister Julia left about midnight in order to have a couple of days with her aged father in Talara. Having returned on December 23, she joined in the preparations for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. After the 10:00 evening Mass, the sisters entertained Father Ricardo and a seminarian at a full Christmas dinner.

On Christmas Day 1999, the parish entered into the opening celebration of the Great Jubilee of 2000, beginning with a procession from the entrance to the town to the church. With their monthly sharing and evaluation of their year together on the twenty-sixth, the sisters brought their year in Chalaco to a close. The next day, Sister Clorinda left for a vocation promotion meeting on the coast. Sister Regina herself left for Piura and meetings. When Sister Lourdes and Julia left for Piura on December 30, they took all of Sister Lourdes’ things as she would not be returning to Chalaco the following year; she had been missioned to the formation house. On their way to the coast, they paused near El Palto to pick up Sister Liduvina, who had been visiting her family.

During January 2000, Sister Regina went to live at Lopez Albujar, both to study the use of the computer and also to be with the sisters and young women directing the vacation school in Esperanza, a poor sector of Piura.

On January 3, Sisters Julia and Clorinda bought sufficient food for the nine persons who were going to be in the house in Chalaco for the month of January for vacation school. Sister Clorinda and three young women went to Chalaco by bus while Sister Julia, Sister Esther, and three others drove to Morropon and then with a male driver continued on to Chalaco. On January 4, Sisters Julia, Esther, and Clorinda met to coordinate the schedule and plan work assignments in the house. When school started on the fifth, there were only sixteen students enrolled for fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, but others continued arriving. In fact, two young girls walked
all the way from San Lorenzo each day, a distance of about two hours even when the trail was not slippery.

On January 15, the young women from the coast were especially startled and frightened by a strong tremor, and in the days that followed, they were also astonished by the torrential rains that fell. Before they knew it, the month had come to an end, and the teachers and children put on a small program. That evening, the sisters had a farewell for the señoritas who had participated, and by 11:30 p.m. three of them had departed for the coast by bus. The following day, a driver took Sisters Esther and Clorinda and the three other young women in the sisters’ pickup to Piura. Within a day or two, Sisters Catherine and Regina joined Sister Julia in Chalaco. As always, Sister Catherine came well prepared, bringing more than a hundred mangos and other fruits as well as sufficient chicken and ground beef for two months. Sister Regina also brought a store of vegetables.

In mid-February 2000, Sister Julia left for the coast with a driver; she went on to Talara to visit her family before continuing to Lima with Sister Esther for a course on the vows. In late February, she joined the other SCLS for the communal retreat in Jimbe.

Sister Regina stayed on in Chalaco until the end of the month when she, too, went to the coast. There she joined Sister Clorinda, and both went to Jimbe for the retreat given by a Vincentian priest on the spirituality of St. Vincent in early March. After retreat, Sisters Clorinda and Julia went to Talara to visit family members. Shortly thereafter, Sister Regina returned to Chalaco to be with Sister Catherine.

Sisters Julia, Liduvina, and Lourdes renewed vows on March 25. Two days later, Sisters Clorinda and Julia drove the Piura pickup to Morropon. There they exchanged cars with Sister Catherine, who had come down from Chalaco with a driver. However, just four days later, Sister Julia returned to the coast to go to several courses for young professed at Parkinsonia.

During this new pastoral year, there would be just three professed sisters in Chalaco: Sisters Regina, Clorinda, and Julia. So each became assessors of two or more works, besides visiting villages and tending to the CCPs and Schools for Women. As always, travel was difficult at this time of the year, sometimes taking the whole day for a truck to come up from Morropon. On Palm Sunday, the sisters celebrated Sister Clorinda’s birthday with two elderly women whom she had invited to share her birthday dinner. On Good Friday, Sister Clorinda once again shared a reflection on one of Jesus’ last words at the afternoon service, and Sister Julia shared in the reading of the Passion of Our Lord.

On Easter Sunday afternoon, the parish team set out for Chulucanas and the weeklong pastoral meeting. Because the roads were still so bad, one of the priests drove the sisters’ pickup and the other followed in the
parish truck. Once again there was a new pastor, now Father Leoncio Jimenez. Following their three days of team meetings, Sister Regina accompanied Fathers Leoncio and Ricardo and twelve lay persons for a special course in Chulucanas. They were surprised when seven other laypersons arrived from Tamboya, but Father Leoncio was able to integrate them into the course.

The parish team met on the morning of May 15. That afternoon, the sisters had their monthly house meeting; this time they spent additional time planning for the first SCL aspirants, who would arrive that very afternoon. About 4:15, Rosa Guevara and Cinthya Auza were at their door.

The aspirancy program was intended to introduce the young women to the life and ministry of the sisters as well as help them in their personal and spiritual development. Within a week of her arrival, Cinthya had her first experience with a prolonged pastoral visit. She went with Sister Julia, Sister Clorinda, and Father Leoncio to visit the sectors of Coca and Tamboya for CCPs, and she stayed on with Sister Clorinda to visit the high school in Tamboya.

Like many other Peruvians, the sisters watched with consternation the results of the elections on May 28. Even though Alejandro Toledo had withdrawn from the run-off elections, President Fujimori could claim only 50.4 percent of the ballots. The sisters knew there were sure to be further protests. Most assuredly there were, but mostly on the coast.

Rosa had her turn at campo visits at the end of the month. She accompanied Sister Julia and Father Leoncio to three villages. In each place, following the meeting with the community, there was a vigil with the Blessed Sacrament in the home of a sick or elderly person. Following this prayer vigil and the blessing of the housebound person, the family and a few members of the community went in procession to the chapel, singing along the way. Then there was another period of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The following day, there was a special Mass, Baptisms, a meal, and games. Sister Clorinda, Father Ricardo, and Cinthya carried out similar visits in other villages. Both aspirants also accompanied the sisters in giving Schools for Women in different parts of the parish. Also, because of the shortage of personnel and conflicting schedules, Sister Julia found herself going with one of the priests or a laywoman on pastoral visits and to give courses.

On July 1, Sister Clorinda helped Father Leoncio give a retreat for thirty-eight members of the different groups in the parish. Astoundingly, three men walked eight hours to attend and learn more about the Eucharist.

After a course on “Jubilee and Trinity” in Chulucanas in early July, Sister Clorinda, Rosa, and Father Leoncio left for Yamango for visits in that sector, finishing with a course for liturgists on July 15. However, they
were disappointed that once again about half of the liturgists from the various villages did not show up. At that same time, Cinthya went with Sisters Regina and Julia to Carrizal in the Tamboya sector for the School for Women. About forty women participated in the theme on the "Eucharist, Food of the Community." Sisters Regina and Julia went into Piura afterwards to pick up the two Community Councilors, Sisters Rita McGinnis and Barbara Aldrich, on July 17. Cinthya stayed in Morropon awaiting those coming down from Yamango. After picking her up, they went on to Chalaco, arriving about 11:00 p.m.

During the next few days, the sisters introduced Sisters Rita and Barbara to Chalaco and their work there; the Councilors also attended one of Sister Clorinda's classes with the aspirants. The Councilors thoughtfully shared a special prayer service in Spanish based on the Chapter goals.

The third day of the visit, Sister Clorinda, Rosa, and Cinthya bade the visitors farewell and set off for the sector of Choco, where they had a vocation workshop for students of the last two years of secondary school; the next day they conducted the School for Women in that sector.

Meanwhile, Sisters Barbara, Rita, Regina, and Julia accompanied Father Leoncio to Cabuyal for Mass, after which the sisters continued on to Piura. Sisters Regina and Julia returned to Chalaco in time to have the meeting with the girls on study grants and their mothers.

On July 25, the parish team went to Santo Domingo for the funeral of a Sister of Good Counsel and then stayed over to make a team retreat.

As the sisters had anticipated, after the run-off elections for the presidency in May, there were major demonstrations throughout the country. On July 28, 2000, when Alberto Fujimori was to take the oath of office again, there were gigantic marches in Lima by people who had come from all over Peru (March of the "Cuatro Suyos"). However, these demonstrations were infiltrated by people who were later proven to have been common criminals planted by Fujimori's advisers. Consequently, there was violence and the burning of the Bank of the Nation and some other buildings in downtown Lima, resulting in at least six deaths. This was in an effort to discredit Alejandro Toledo, who had organized the popular resistance to the dictatorial Fujimori. Much unrest continued in the country; finally, President Fujimori resigned his office while he was out of the country and took up asylum in Japan. The interim president, Valentin Paniagua, former president of the Congress, was able to bring about peace and stability.

Meanwhile, Sisters Clorinda and Julia visited their families in Talara before going to the pastoral meeting in Chulucanas in early August. Sister Regina took Cinthya and Rosa to Piura to stay at the house of formation while the other members of the house were in Chulucanas. Following their
return, Sister Clorinda, the two aspirants, and a seminarian began some vocation promotion work in the high schools in Chalaco and Naranjo.

On the way to Silahua, Cinthya struck out on her own at one point and got lost in the fields. Taking a trail down an incline, she slipped and cut her arm, hand, and other areas. Not knowing she had fallen, Sister Clorinda and Rosa had gone on to the high school. When Cinthya arrived, her clothes were torn and bloody, and a teacher had to lend her some clothing. They tried to clean her wounds, but she was in such pain that they all returned to Chalaco; she needed nine stitches in her arm and hand. The doctor in Chalaco advised her to get x-rays, so the next day the sisters took her to Piura; fortunately, these showed her to have no fractures, so the Chalaco sisters returned home.

On August 28, Sister Regina went down to Chulucanas to participate in the beginning of the process for the beatification of John McNiff, an Augustinian priest who had worked many years both in Cuba and in the prelature/diocese of Chulucanas.

Sister Clorinda and the aspirants were in Yamango for the multiple celebrations there and helped arrange for the thirty Baptisms. On their return trip, these three stopped at Piscan Grande to give a vocation workshop. Following this, they crossed over to have a similar workshop for twenty-five young people in Tamboya.

On September 2, Sisters Susana Cordova and Julia Huiman went to Silahua for the School for Women. The theme was “The Gift of Life,” and for this they inaugurated the use of their new television and video machine. Of course, they had to use a portable generator as Silahua still had no electricity. Some twenty-five women participated, and some men and children also came to see the novelty. Having finished in Silahua, they continued on to Tamboya, planning to have the same presentation in San Miguel the following day. But as the road was under repair, they could not make it through and returned to Tamboya. There they had a liturgy for the people.

The next week, for the first time ever, Sisters Julia and Clorinda, the two priests, and the two aspirants drove all the way to Choco on the new road through Pacaipampa and Curilcas. They found it very narrow and steep in places, and they did not often use it in the future, preferring the old route of going about halfway by car to Altamisa and continuing on by mule and foot.

By mid-September, the sisters were glad to have a day or two at home together; on the eighteenth they made retreat, Sister Clorinda directing the reflections on the charism of the Community. With this sharing, the time of the aspirancy concluded for Rosa and Cinthya, and they returned to their homes for a time of discernment, but not before being entertained at a farewell party by the sisters.
The SCLs themselves went to the coast for the annual SCL Community meeting in Sullana from September 22 to 24. This time there were multiple themes: a reflection by the sisters on their dreams for the Community for the future; a consideration of the political reality of the country presented by a specialist from Lima; a report by Eva Boyle, Director of Diaconia (the diocesan Peace and Justice Office), who had recently been present at the United Nations and at the Mother House in Leavenworth. Her husband, Jose Aguedo, also gave a report on the volatile situation with regard to the incursion of mining exploration in the rich agricultural area of Tambogrande.

The following day, the sisters went to Piura to participate in a two-day theology workshop given by Sister Irene Skeehan. Sister Irene returned to Chalaco with the sisters following her presentations. Since they had packed a nice picnic lunch before leaving Piura, Sister Irene was not a little shocked when they stopped to eat by the side of the road beneath the shade of one of the infrequent trees. She had envisioned a little park with a table and perhaps by a stream!

When they went to Chulucanas on October 19 after having celebrated the Feast of Señor de los Milagros, Sisters Clorinda, Julia, and Irene took part in the course on Affection and Sexuality given by the Jesuit, Kevin Flaherty. Sister Irene went back to Piura with some of the sisters from there.

When the sisters went to Silahua this month, they took the new road. Even with stopping to see the hydroelectric plant, they made the trip in just an hour and ten minutes. What a marvel! After conducting the School for Women there, they went on to Tamboya.

On November 4, the sisters and Father Leoncio went to Cajas in the sector of Choco for the closing session of the School for Women. They gave the women who had been most faithful in their attendance a small present. Right after participating in the parish team meeting, Sister Julia was again off for a meeting of sisters under temporary vows. Sister Clorinda was very pleased with the vocation workshop they had at the convent for six young women from various sites in the parish. One had walked for six hours to be present for the presentations on values.

Before going to the pastoral meeting in Chulucanas, which included a special Mass and program in gratitude to Bishop John McNabb who was now retiring, the sisters spent a couple of days in Piura, even going to the beach at Yacila. Of course they were also present for the meetings in Chulucanas and the official installation of Daniel Turley as Bishop (he had been auxiliary bishop before).

In late November, the parish team took a four-day trip, first to Ayabaca to visit the shrine of Señor Cautivo, then to Ecuador, stopping to visit the home village of Father Leoncio on the way.
On December 5, Sister Elena Mack arrived with Sister Clorinda and stayed for three days visiting with the sisters. Later in the week, Sister Regina left in the middle of the night to go by public conveyance to Piura, where she had a meeting with Sisters Elena, Esther, and Susana. Sisters Clorinda and Julia left the next morning with the priests to do some shopping in Piura before going to the diocesan meetings. The following day, they participated in the Bishop’s Christmas dinner and program in Chulucanas.

After concluding the parish team meetings and evaluations of the year, Sister Julia left in the city-hall pickup very early on December 19. She accompanied two patients to Piura and returned the same night. Although Sister Clorinda also had to make a quick trip to Piura, everyone was present for Christmas Eve.

On December 27, the sisters left for Piura, Sister Clorinda to study in Trujillo, Sister Julia to take her vacation, and Sister Regina to struggle with the bank to get the Chalaco sisters’ funds released (their bank had gone bankrupt, and all accounts were in receivership with another bank.)

During the next few years of the new century, the life and work in Chalaco continued much the same despite continuing changes in priestly and religious personnel. One of the noteworthy things was the introduction of more lay people into the pastoral work. For instance, in 2001 Don Dario Cordova of Las Pircas, who had long collaborated as coordinator in his zone and also on the Human Rights Commission of the parish, now joined the parish team. In June, the two priests of the parish, five laypersons, and Sisters Clorinda and Deidy Abad met in Chulucanas to consider the four principal areas of parish work.

The Chalaco sisters had put in a strong plea for more sisters since Sister Clorinda was so occupied with the aspirancy program. So in 2001 their community consisted of Sisters Regina, Clorinda, Liduvina, Julia, and Deidy, plus the two aspirants, Jesus Ramos and Milagros Castillo, who arrived after Mother’s Day. Despite the number of people, there was work enough for all. As always, there were meetings in Chalaco and on the coast and courses to attend, especially for those still under temporary vows. (Sisters Julia and Liduvina had made their perpetual vows on March 25, 2001; Sister Deidy had professed first vows).

This year there was a slight change in the program formerly called School for Women. Because spouses had now begun to participate in various sectors, the title was changed to School for Families.

In the first part of July, the Chalaco sisters, together with other SCLs, went to the United States for the large Community gathering, “In the Spirit of Charity, 2001.” By this time, the Peruvian sisters were seasoned travelers.
and felt ever so much more at home in the Mother House and with their North American sister friends.

Right after returning, Sisters Julia and Deidy had an entirely different experience when they accompanied Father Leoncio to Huarmaca for a three-week mission experience. There they encountered villages that had not been visited for years and impoverished people who were still untrusting of strangers because of their experience with the terrorists in the ten or so years before.

All had great hopes for the future when Alejandro Toledo was installed as President on July 28, 2001, but his would be a gigantic challenge, given the amount of corruption in the government, the impossible economic situation, and his own political inexperience. In October, Sister Julia began to participate in the "Table of Concertation," which was designed to examine the problems of people and institutions, committees and organizations of the district. This was part of the plan for reconciliation within the country set up by the new government.

In December, the parish team went to Frias for its final evaluations of the year. On Christmas Eve, the sisters visited different people in Chalaco and that night had hot chocolate and paneton (special Peruvian sweet bread) for everyone after Mass.

In January 2002, Sister Julia helped Father Leoncio buy some furniture for the newly completed parish house in Yamango. This made things a little more comfortable when the team members visited the Yamango sector.

In March, the same five SCLs returned to work in Chalaco. In April, they began inviting young women with interest in the religious life to pray with them on Wednesday evenings and to stay for supper and some visiting afterwards.

In May after Mother’s Day, two aspirants arrived from the coast, Sheyla Noriega and Nory Garcia. A week later Kelly Abad, Sisters Lourdes and Deidy’s sister, came to join them. Kelly finished the aspirancy program, but the other two young women surprised the sisters by announcing their departure the night of September 29.

The diocese and the sisters continued to manifest interest in problems of justice and peace. In June, Sisters Regina, Liduvina, and Julia took part in a workshop on "Agriculture and Mines" in Chulucanas. Sisters Liduvina and Julia also went to Huarmaca for a week of missionary work in that abandoned part of the diocese. In August, the sisters participated in the pastoral meeting in Chulucanas that this year had "Solidarity and Social Justice" as its theme.

The sisters had more visitors this year too. At the end of June, Sisters Mary Lou Mendel, Sharon Smith, and their two sisters arrived for a short
visit. At the end of October, Sisters Sue Miller, Katherine Franchett, and Ann Barton came for Sister Sue’s official visit with the sisters.

Both in August and October, the sisters had some frightening experiences while driving on the other side of the parish. These are described in Chapter XX.

But not all was frightening. There were the laughable moments too. For example, Sister Clorinda had gone out into the country to get a chicken to fix for dinner since the sisters planned to celebrate Sister Liduvina’s birthday early before terminating the year. She put the live chicken in the shower downstairs, just off the kitchen, and went to get some papers to use when she cleaned the bird. Meanwhile, Sister Liduvina came in the back door and went into the bathroom. When Sister Julia entered minutes later and asked Sister Clorinda what she was doing, the latter answered, “I’m going to kill what is in the bathroom.” Sister Liduvina, having heard the exchange through the window, called out, “Clori, don’t talk that way!”

Earlier, while the Chalaco sisters went to visit some possible new mission sites, first in Chiclayo, then in Santa Maria de la Nieva and Nueva Cajamarca in the rain forest region, Sister Elena stayed with the three aspirants in Chalaco so that all the professed sisters could go.

In mid-December, the health committee and Sister Julia sponsored a get-together for all the children of Chalaco and some of its surrounding villages. Much to the delight of the children, they not only received hot chocolate and bread but got gifts as well.

About this same time, the parish had a special Mass and dinner for all the members of the different parish teams. About forty people participated in this first-time event, clear evidence of the growth in lay collaborators.

At the end of December 2002, the young sisters participated in a special meeting in Leavenworth for SCLs who had entered the Community since 1970. After it was over, Sister Julia stayed on for an extra month to help in Ross Hall and to get to know the Community better. She also improved a great deal in her English!

Sister Deidy took the entrance examination for the University of Champagnat, and Sisters Clorinda and Liduvina went to Trujillo for their summer studies at the University of Cesar Vallejo.

In January 2003, Sister Regina went to Lima with Sister Elena to purchase a new pickup for Chalaco. It was fortunate that a policeman helped them drive it from the capital to the northern part of the country since they were stopped several times en route for the checking of papers. Without the policeman’s presenting his identification, the sisters would most likely have been harassed and/or have had to pay a bribe to continue.

Toward the end of January, Sister Therese Bangert, Social Justice Chairperson for the Community, arrived with Sister Elena for a brief visit.
Sister Catherine Nichol also arrived that week. The veterans introduced Sister Therese to life in the sierra.

Since Sister Regina was going to be director of the young professed for the coming year, she went to a special course on “Healing Inner Wounds,” given by a psychologist in Lima during February. She also made the Community retreat in Chiclayo in March. In late April, she accompanied Sisters Lourdes and Deidy to a special course on the Bible in Chulucanas. In early May, all the sisters participated in a course in Chulucanas on “Managing Conflicts in Community,” given by two women psychologists from Lima. Later in the year, they would also participate in a special course on values.

In April, Sisters Regina, Clorinda, Julia, Lourdes, and Deidy had begun their plans for community life and work for 2003. (Sister Liduvina had gone to Lima to begin the Confer course in formation.) On May 12, a young woman from Talara arrived for the aspirancy program but her stay was short-lived. She returned home just two days later.

In late May, Sister Julia took two women from Chalaco to a weeklong course for women leaders in Chulucanas. These same women later gave the course to women of Las Pircas.

Meanwhile, the Family Catechetical program (Catequesis Familiar) was growing. Seven guide couples began meeting with Sister Lourdes every two weeks to prepare the next theme. Their dedication was reflected in that at least four of the couples walked two hours to arrive at these meetings. Later, a group of fathers from the Family Catechetical program planned the liturgy for Father’s Day. Sister Deidy accompanied two men from the catechetical team to Chulucanas to participate in the Pastoral Team of Animation program. All of this testifies to the growth of the laity.

In late June, eleven persons from the SCL/HSC (Health Services Corporation) visited Chalaco for three days. These corporate leaders wanted to strengthen their ties with the SCL Community and its missionaries. From their own report, it would seem that this goal was accomplished.

In an effort to reach out to young women of other areas, Sister Susana Cordova joined Sister Lourdes in traveling to Ayabaca to give a vocation workshop for twelve young women; the teachers in Ayabaca invited the sisters to visit the schools there.

Shortly thereafter, the sisters attended the Pre-Chapter meetings in Piura and later were involved in meetings in Chulucanas, Piura, and Sullana. Just about a week after the first meeting, the sisters gathered for the funeral of Sister Julia’s father in Talara.

One of the few times that one of the sisters serving in Chalaco had become really sick occurred in September 2003 when Sister Julia became very ill with what appeared to be a gallbladder attack. At this time, she was in Choco, one of the most remote parts of the parish. Sister Lourdes
walked a half hour just to get to a phone to call Sister Regina and ask her to meet them the following day. Then she had to walk another half hour in another direction to find some medicine. One can only imagine Sister Julia's condition the next day after traveling first by mule, then on a teacher's motorcycle, and then walking three hours before meeting up with Sister Regina. It is understandable why she needed to take a brief rest in Chalaco before traveling five more hours to Piura. Fortunately, she did not need to be operated on, but she suffered from gastritis for some time afterward.

As a special way to celebrate the SCLs' forty years in Peru and the Community's Founders' Day, Sister Clorinda planned a special liturgy with all the children of grade school age in Chalaco and surrounding areas on November 9. Of course, there were sandwiches and refreshments afterwards. The next evening there was a special Mass for the youths at 7:00 p.m., and then a panel of judges decided the winners of the best themes in honor of the SCLs. On November 11, 2003, all the people of Chalaco and the authorities were invited to the celebration of the Eucharist. The liturgy concluded with a celebration with cocktails and sandwiches. Having finished their own celebrations, the sisters welcomed Sisters Helen Forge and Irene Skeehan and Monte Mace, who had journeyed to Peru from the United States for the Community celebrations. Monte Mace, a reporter for the Kansas City, Kansas Archdiocesan paper, *The Leaven*, had come to prepare a story about the celebration.

During the thirty-two years of SCL presence in Chalaco, many changes have occurred. Surely not a little of the growth in faith and development of lay leadership has been due to the sacrificial ministry of the sisters who have served and are serving there.
Chapter VIII Notes

1 The Better World Movement, described in Chapter VII, aimed at engaging the laity actively in the life of the Church.
2 In Peru, especially in the mountainous areas, large trucks carry both passengers and cargo to and from the coast.
4 In Peru persons who do not vote and have their identification papers stamped have a fine imposed on them, and they cannot do any legal business until that is paid.
5 As the population continued to grow, the people continually looked for new arable lands and established new caserios.
6 The two weeks surrounding Fiestas Patrias, July 28, were like a mid-term break.
7 For more on the “Converging Paths” pilgrimage, see Chapter XVIII.
8 See Appendix G for more on the San Fernando Project.
9 The northern region of Confer encompasses all the Confer groups from the Department of Ancash to the Department of Tumbes. In 1997 these two groups of Confer were hosts for the Northern Regional Meeting. Later they sponsored another such meeting in Paita.
10 See Sister Julia Huiman’s account of this trip in Appendix E.
13 So that passengers could arrive in Morropon in time to catch a bus to Piura, public trucks and buses left Chalaco anywhere between 11:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.
14 Ross Hall: the skilled nursing unit of the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.
By 1979 Sister Agnes Klein was feeling the need to live again within a Sisters of Charity community after having spent several years at San José with the Franciscan Sisters and later in quarters in the Bishop's house. Sister Elena Mack, having spent six years in Talara, was also interested in a move. After talking together, they decided to ask to establish a house in Lower Piura.

Archbishop Fernando Vargas, however, felt a more pressing need: to have a religious community live at the ex-seminary to guarantee the rights of the Church to that property. At that time, there was a move by the government to take over unused church properties and utilize them for other purposes. He therefore desired to set up a Spirituality Center in the Old Seminary in Piura that had stood vacant for fifteen to twenty years. After further consultation with the members of the SCL Community in Peru and, of course, with Sister Mary Kevin Hollow and her Council, it was decided to accept the invitation of the Archbishop to live at the seminary and do pastoral work in the parish of Cruz del Norte as well as at the new pastoral center.

The sisters would live on the second floor of the edifice, using seven rooms formerly occupied by the seminary staff; other areas would be utilized for retreats and workshops. Although the Archbishop envisioned the sisters' principal work to be that in the Center, he also outlined an unrealistic program of work to be done in the parish of fifteen to twenty thousand people. Sister Mary Kevin indicated to the Archbishop that the scope of the work in the parish alone would seem full-time, making impossible the sisters' services in the new Spirituality Center. Accordingly, the Archbishop responded that, although there was much work to be done, he would leave the sisters free to determine just what their services for the Church in Piura would be.

Although the Archbishop desired them to begin on February 1, 1979, and the Council canonically opened the mission on March 5, the move was not made until March 13. After a week of bargain hunting in Talara as well as cleaning out some of the closets in the Talara house, Sisters Elena and Agnes loaded up the car and headed for their new mission. Father Miguel Yuel came by and loaded up the surplus in the parish van of Santa Rosa.

After arriving in Piura and unloading the cars with the help of two young men living in the seminary, the two sisters turned their attention to securing two beds before nightfall. Supposedly, the young men were to have had the building clean and ready for their arrival; needless to say, the sisters set about a re-cleaning process. However, they limited their activities to two bedrooms and the kitchen area. By that night, both were all too glad to fall into the newly acquired beds.
After attending early Mass in the Cathedral the next day, they returned to their new home, heated water on their electric plate, and had a Spartan-like breakfast. Then they set out in search of a refrigerator and gas stove. They later discovered that the attachment for the tank of gas did not work, so they were limited to the use of the electric plate for several days.

While they were still out making purchases, Sisters Josephine Bustos, Joan Kilker, and Janet Cashman arrived to help with the rest of the cleaning. During most of the day, all contented themselves with the coffee and snacks that the Talara sisters had brought. Later, Sisters Agnes and Elena invited them to dinner in gratitude for their help and the forfeiture of their customary day on the beach.

A couple of days later, Sisters Agnes and Elena went to Catacaos, returning with, among other things, two straw room dividers. The sisters attracted some little attention as they drove through the city since the dividers were so big they stuck out the windows of their Volkswagen.

The following day, they took off to visit and celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day in Talara, returning the next day in time to participate in the Mass at their parish church, Cruz del Norte. They were impressed with the participation of the people and the singing. On the other hand, they were somewhat disconcerted by the bats flying low in the church throughout the liturgy.

Their seventy-five-year-old pastor was a little hard of hearing and not too well; consequently, he celebrated Mass only on Saturdays and Sundays. But he seemed very open and told Sisters Agnes and Elena that they could do anything he used to be able to do. During the week, the two sisters went to churches throughout the city, looking for a meaningful liturgy, but to no avail.

On March 20, Sister Regina Deitchman became the first of many overnight guests. On her arrival, the young man responsible for the seminary insisted on staying with her since the sisters were not at home and she was unknown to him. She was chagrined but at the same time grateful for his obvious concern. The following day, Sister Regina helped Sister Elena in buying other things that were needed for the house. Much to the sisters’ satisfaction, a plumber came, as not only did the bathrooms not work in their sector of the seminary, but not one of the twenty or so bathrooms in the whole building worked. Their first week there they “lighted a candle and walked about half a block just to arrive at one that at least had water.” Following the plumber’s visit, they had two clean and functioning bathrooms in their quarters!

Soon after moving in, the sisters began collecting furniture from all over the vacant seminary. They also purchased not only the refrigerator and stove mentioned before but also three additional beds and a straw
living room suite. Thus, they soon had a living room with one corner turned into a den, a combination kitchen and dining room, four bedrooms (each with a shower), and one storage room.

One evening they went to a prayer group meeting in the church. While returning, Sister Agnes was bitten by a neighborhood dog. Not surprisingly, the next time the group met, it was in the home of the sisters.

Archbishop Vargas visited them several times, first just to look over things in the seminary and then later for several meetings. In one of these meetings, the sisters met with the Archbishop and Fathers Gallo and Camacho regarding policies for the use of the seminary. The Archbishop indicated he was trying to get the house next door so that the sisters could live there. They all agreed that when there were retreats, especially for high school students, the sisters would be able to rest better. This desire, however, never became a reality.

Both Sisters Agnes and Elena were grateful for contacts with other religious in the city, and especially for visits to or from the SCL community in Talara. These were more or less frequent, and the sisters from Chalaco also stayed with them when they were in the city. On March 24, the sisters from Talara came to lunch following a meeting of Confer (Conference of Religious); then they stayed on for Vespers, giving everyone the opportunity to celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation together.

On April 4, they joined the sisters from Talara and Sister Regina, the Mission Coordinator, for a discussion of Mission and Ministry in the Church in Latin America. There they affirmed the importance of a simple life style. Several other times they visited Talara for meetings in preparation for the forthcoming Community Chapter.

On April 2, they had attempted their first trip into the villages they hoped to serve on the outskirts of Piura. They made it to Los Ejidos but couldn't make it to Huan at that time because of sand drifts on the road. On May 5, they returned to Los Ejidos for a meeting with parents of children and young adults who had not received their First Communion. Three weeks later, they began classes for forty-five children and young people. They also visited Huan to meet the people living there and to have their first meeting with the Mothers’ Club. Sister Agnes returned a few days later for the swearing-in of its new officers.

Despite the number of apostolic commitments they had assumed, the sisters gladly joined in activities and celebrations of other members of the Church of Piura and Chulucanas. Shortly after arriving, they assisted at the Mass of profession for a young Sister of St. Joseph of Tarbes. They likewise joined the Benedictines in Morropon for the celebration of the Feast of Saint Rita. On May 12, together with many others, they participated in an all-parish Charismatic meeting held in the coliseum. In late August,
Sisters Agnes Klein and Elena Mack in the patio of the seminary with Father Miguel Justino Ramirez, pastor of Cruz del Norte, and Father Pablo Alvarado of Cristo Rey

Sister Sally Watson with a group of catechists from the parish of Cruz del Norte
they journeyed to Santo Domingo to join in the celebration for the Feast of Saint Augustine.

Various visitors also came at different times. Since Sister Agnes had been stationed for several years in the neighboring diocese, some friends stopped by from Chulucanas at different times. On June 4, a young woman from Chalaco who was interested in the Community visited the sisters at the seminary. Of course, the sisters were overjoyed when Sister Blanche Marie Remington arrived in mid-July to give them news of the Community in the States. Early in August, they had a full house as they played hostesses to the Charism Workshop that Sister Blanche Marie presented.

In early June, Sisters Elena and Agnes attended an activity in the Plaza Escudero just in front of their parish church. Its purpose was to raise funds for a new church roof. Shortly thereafter, several señoritas volunteered to serve as catechists with them. Therefore, on June 8 they began organizing a course for seventeen catechists. Helped out by six priests and some teacher aides, the classes continued until the twenty-fifth. They also visited the homes of these young women during this time.

On June 10, they accompanied a Franciscan priest in Huan as he celebrated the first Mass offered there in many years. Some of the young people from Cruz del Norte parish walked out to this village to provide music for the event. That same day, Sister Agnes invited the parents to send their children for classes in preparation for their First Communion; some sixty children were enrolled the following Sunday. Classes began on June 24. Later, in mid-July, Cristina Pingo and Nelyda Clavijo, two young women interested in the Community, helped Sister Elena with a workshop in Los Ejidos on the use of the Bible.

On June 16, the sisters had a retreat for some catechists and members of the parish youth group in preparation for the Feast of Corpus Christi. The procession through ten blocks the following day was beautiful and impressive.

Besides visiting and praying for the dead in the parish, they also found time to take a census of Cruz del Norte. Perhaps because of the location of the church, the sisters found their catechism classes there very challenging, as there was always great competition for the attention of the students, a park and theater being so nearby.

At the end of July, the sisters were surprised when twenty-five priests arrived for retreat since the seminary had been prepared to receive only twelve. Later, in August, various extraneous groups made their appearance, one being a troupe of performers and a priest from Ecuador. The sisters tried to remain flexible, "putting their hands to whatever was at hand," as Saint Vincent had instructed.

In September, Sisters Agnes and Elena joined other religious in a retreat day at St. Ignatius High School, after first voting for delegates to the
forthcoming SCL Chapter. Sisters Janet Cashman and Regina came that
same afternoon to spend a couple of days before going on to Chalaco.

From September 15 to 24, Sister Elena and the catechists went each
evening to Los Ejidos for a rosary novena in honor of Our Lady of Mercy,
the patroness of the department of Piura. On the feast day itself, September
24, Sister Agnes had been busy seeing off youths for their pilgrimage to
the special shrine in honor of “La Merced” in Paita. The two sisters had
also made and delivered special invitations to the catechists for a Mass
anticipating the Feast of Saint Vincent.

The sisters from Talara arrived for a pre-Saint Vincent’s day celebration,
a Jesuit celebrating the liturgy with them. Since those from Talara returned
home, Sisters Elena and Agnes celebrated the actual feast in a very quiet
way. Surely they were grateful for the quiet interlude; for nearly two weeks,
they had been busy with catechists and youth groups.

In mid-October, they helped the parents and village leaders plan for the
reception of the sacrament of Penance in Huan and Los Ejidos. At the last
minute, they had to look for a priest when the one scheduled to come had
forgotten. Fortunately, Father Rivera, a diocesan priest, obligingly filled in.

Still later in the month, both were very involved in preparing for the
First Communions in their parish, although there they received much help
from their very active catechists. Fittingly, these catechists had a birthday
party for Sister Agnes, who had played such a role in their development.

At the end of the month, the sisters attended the First Communion
Mass in Los Ejidos but were dismayed when only they, the catechists, and
First Communicants received Communion. Only then did they discover
that most of the couples either were not married or had never received
their First Communion. Sisters Agnes and Elena decided to attack these
problems the following year. On November 4, Sister Agnes went to Huan
for the First Communion there, but the ceremonies were somewhat more
rushed because the visiting priest also took time to bless the chapel.

On November 13, Sisters Agnes and Elena joined other SCLs in Lima
for the Vow Workshop and Community meeting. When they returned to
Piura, several of the sisters from faraway missions came with them: Sisters
Lucille Harrington and Mary Patricia Kielty from Bolivia, Sister Ann
McGloin from Guatemala, and Sister Mary Liguori Horvat from the States.
Sister Blanche Marie Remington also joined them.

In late November, Sister Blanche Marie brought the fifth year high
school students from Chalaco to make a retreat in the seminary. Sister
Lucille, who had been visiting in the sierra, accompanied them, and Sister
Mary Patricia took pictures of this and the other works being done by
Sisters Elena and Agnes.
After having a retreat day for the catechists on December 2, Sisters Agnes and Elena began preparations for their trip to the United States, where they were to participate in pre-Chapter meetings and visit their families. When Sister Agnes returned on January 22, 1980, she found the summer school for catechists already in session at the seminary.

Less than a week later, Sisters Mary Liguori Horvat and Janet Cashman came to visit just as the “convent” was being painted. For, despite the terrible summer heat in Piura, Sister Agnes had begun overseeing different repairs in the seminary, including the repair or replacement of badly damaged mattresses. During her quieter moments, she began going through the census sheets, looking for prospective students for Confirmation classes.

Sister Elena returned from the United States on March 14. Toward the end of March, a former “associate,” Nelyda Clavijo, arrived from Lima with two members of the religious Community she was planning to enter. These latter had come with her to visit her family before she would go to Chile to begin her postulancy. Obviously, she did not remain with them long, as she became the first to enter the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in September 1981.

Sisters Agnes and Elena met with Archbishop Vargas on March 24 regarding plans for the seminary during the year. The following day, he offered Mass at the seminary for the renewal of their vows and also for the twenty seminarians of the archdiocese who were making a day of recollection before returning to their places of study.

Holy Week services were a bit different that year. Since the Cruz del Norte church was still roofless, Palm Sunday services were held in the small plaza in front of it. The Holy Thursday liturgy was much simplified since Father arrived forty-five minutes late, and five minutes after beginning the services in the plaza, there was a general blackout. On Good Friday, the worst rains the area had experienced in ten years occurred from 3:30 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. The fifteen valiant but drenched persons who came for the liturgy assembled in the sacristy of the church. Fortunately, there was no rain on Holy Saturday and there was light, so the Paschal Liturgy was held in the small plaza at 11:30 that night. In late July, the sisters rejoiced with the people when the repairs of the church were finally finished and all services could be held in the newly refurbished edifice.

The sense of community is sometimes never stronger than in times of trial. Thus, the sisters commiserated with Sister Josephine Bustos on the death of her father in early April. And on the eighth, they sorrowfully bade farewell to Sister Regina, who was returning to the States due to the serious condition of her mother. But while visiting in Talara, they welcomed the news that Sister Sally Watson would be joining them in their mission for the year.
They soon were busy with the preparations for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of their pastor, Father Miguel Justino Ramirez, to be held in the seminary on April 19.

During the week following the celebration, Sisters Agnes and Elena visited prospective teachers for the program of First Communion and Confirmation, inviting them to a workshop the following week. Although they began with eight catechists, they terminated the week with fourteen. Then they began planning the Mother's Day Mass and the activity afterwards.

In May, their attention was again directed to Community matters. On May 6, they journeyed to Talara for a bit of rest and relaxation as well as to participate in pre-Chapter discussions. The following week, the Talara sisters came over to join them in welcoming Sister Sally Watson. The next Monday, Sister Agnes traveled to Chalaco to combine efforts with Sister Regina on pre-Chapter work.

Before leaving for the States, Sister Agnes helped with the registrations for First Communion and Confirmation for both Cruz del Norte and Huan in late May. On May 21, the sisters held the first meeting with catechists since their workshop. Happily, these joined in the celebration of the first Mass offered in the sisters’ new chapel two days later.

With the anticipation that the 1980 Chapter would approve setting up a novitiate program in Peru, the Council had asked Sister Elena to take some courses in spirituality at Creighton University in Omaha. She also went to Lima for a religious formation workshop during the first fifteen days of July 1980.

Sister Sally went with her at that time, thinking she would finalize the paper work for her residency. After three weeks, however, she returned from Lima still without her papers; then in August she had to go to Guayaquil so she could re-enter the country on a visitor’s visa. Actually, it took her until September 20 before she could complete her documents.

Sister Sally was not the only one who was frustrated. When Sister Elena returned in mid-July, she discovered that there was no water on the second floor of the seminary where they lived.

Throughout the month, Sisters Sally and Elena found themselves involved in varying activities. On July 25, four young women came from the Center of Formation in Canchaque to visit the sisters in the seminary. Sister Regina returned from Chapter four days later, bringing letters and news. On August 2, a group of catechists came from Talara to make retreat, and eight days later a “Misión Popular” began throughout the archdiocese, together with a rosary crusade.

Sister Agnes returned the second week of August, but soon thereafter she went to Talara to share information about what had gone on in the Chapter. She again absented herself from the Piura community in order to
go to Bolivia to share with the sisters there about the spirit and decisions of the 1980 Chapter, returning the middle of September.

Just after helping with the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation in the parish in mid-September, Sisters Agnes and Elena began the Confirmation program in Los Ejidos and in Huan. Twenty-five young persons responded in the first small community, but there were only a disappointing few in the latter because there was a fiesta going on in the pueblo.

When Sister Agnes received word on October 11 that her father had died, she again left for the States, returning less than two weeks later. In her absence, Sisters Elena and Sally listed themselves for a telephone with the hope of having one installed sometime in the next two years.

The sisters in Peru and Bolivia had been more than enthusiastic about the recent news that the Community Chapter had approved initiating a Community formation program in Peru. Their eagerness was reflected in their activities.

Just after helping to sponsor a party for the senior citizens of the parish, Sister Elena left for Santo Domingo to visit the family of Susana Cordova, a young woman interested in entering the Community. Visiting in Talara shortly thereafter, she made arrangements to bring Susana there to meet the community and learn something more about its life and work. Very soon, the sisters began plans for a vocation committee composed of members from each of the SCL houses.

On October 13, Sister Catherine Nichol passed through Piura with a Señorita Maximina Gomez of Negritos; the latter was going to participate in a weeklong experience in community living and apostolic work. When the vocation committee met to revise and adapt the "associate program" recently begun in the United States and to plan further vocation promotion activities, Maximina returned to the coast with Sister Catherine. When Sister Catherine returned to Chalaco, she took along another señorita, Rosa, for an experience with the community there. Then, early in November, Sister Elena went to Tamboya to visit the parents of another prospective candidate.

Shortly before assisting in the First Communion celebration in their parish, Sisters Sally and Elena took time out for an excursion to Talara. While there, they also had some input from Sisters Janet Cashman and Joan Kilker on health themes. On November 11, the three sisters joined in the celebration of Founders' Day in Talara. A few days later, Sister Elena accompanied Sister Regina to Chalaco but was again in Piura in time for the retreat given to eighteen young women at the end of the month.

*The "associate program" referred to here is not related to the formal SCL Associate Program developed for the laity in the late 1980s. Rather, it was a more loosely structured program that provided opportunities for young women interested in the Community to share in the prayer and work of the sisters. More will be said of this program in Chapter XIX.
Shortly after her return from the United States, Sister Agnes had continued her work with the children and young people of the two settlements outside the city. She was present for the First Communion program in Huan and also that of Los Ejidos, but she especially rejoiced with the people of Huan in the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation in their own pueblo on December 7, a first time event for them. In mid-month, she was also present for Confirmations in Los Ejidos. Meanwhile, Sister Sally had begun working with a club for women in Cruz del Norte parish.

The vocation committee met in Piura in December to discuss further the associate program and to divide up the work. Shortly after this, the sisters at the seminary held an afternoon of reflection for fifteen young women from the parish. Susana Cordova also arrived at 9:00 that night. On December 21, they again sponsored an afternoon of reflection for the catechists that included a Eucharistic liturgy; the time of prayer and reflection was followed by a social gathering.

In an undated letter to Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, Sister Agnes wrote about the kinds of aid they had been able to give to students because of the Community’s education fund for women set up several years before. Besides buying school materials and uniforms for grade and high school students, they had also helped with board and room for some students in Our Lady of Peace School, the deaf school operated by Franciscans. They were also helping some graduates of high school to get further preparation, paying for courses in nurses’ aide training, catechetical preparation, and sewing. Many of these were young women who were then helping or had helped the sisters in their work.

Following the authorization of a formation program in Peru by the 1980 Chapter of the Community, the sisters had begun to look to the future, not only in terms of encouraging young women who might be interested in the religious life, but also with plans for the construction of a convent that could be used for such a program. Sister Agnes had been asked by the Community to take charge of the construction and legal work connected with it.

Thus, on December 27, Sister Agnes and the other sisters talked with a contractor about plans for the new formation house. On January 25, 1981, she wrote Sister Mary Kevin about some of the problems she was encountering. For one, the money the Community had sent for this project was held up in Lima in the banking system. Also, since the property on which the convent was being constructed in Pachitea was in the title of the Archdiocese (a part of the land belonging to the parish of Cristo Rey), she was having difficulty getting a legal paper showing that the building itself belonged to the Community for as long as they chose to use it. Part of the difficulty lay in the fact that a new Archbishop had not yet been named.4
The sisters also continued meeting with the associates, Cristina Pingo and Maximina Gomez, who were very anxious to begin their formation process. They also helped Susana Cordova, Maximina, and Cristina go to Lima for a catechetical course. Sister Elena herself left for Lima at the end of January to study in a course on religious life at the seminary there.

On March 12, Sisters Agnes and Elena returned from Lima very tired from their trip, only to discover there had been a robbery in the seminary during their absence. On the fifteenth, Sister Agnes went to the police to report it.

Nevertheless, they felt they needed to “look forward to the good that was yet to be,” as Mother Xavier had said. Therefore, the next day they went shopping for the new house and also looked for an electrician and bricklayer, the latter to construct a wall around the new edifice. A few days later, they finally received a document from the Archbishop giving them the “possession of the house until such time as they should decide to move.”

The following week brought a number of visitors. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty came to take pictures of the new house and of the works of the sisters in Piura; Sisters Catherine and Regina also spent two days. On March 23, Sisters Charlotte Swain, Catherine, Agnes, and Elena, together with Georgina Quispe, the cook from Chalaco, went to Talara to celebrate Sister Blanche Marie’s birthday, only to discover that she was in the hospital with a severe kidney infection.

At the end of March, Sisters Agnes and Elena checked out their schedules for helping with religion classes in Mater Admirabilis High School; they learned that classes would begin on April 6. Despite this, Sister Agnes decided to continue with her scheduled ten-day visit to Bolivia as Director of Missions.

Before she left, they welcomed Susana Cordova and two other young women for a visit. The following month, Sister Janet brought two young women from Lima to visit the SCL Community. Susana again visited, this time accompanied by her sister Margarita. During Holy Week, Cristina Pingo spent several days with the sisters. Later that same month, several associates came for the weekend. On May 23, although an associate weekend had been planned, only Susana arrived. So, while visiting, Susana helped to pack books and other things for the proximate move to Pachitea, the sector of Piura where the new formation house was located.

In preparation for their move to Pachitea, the sisters visited with Father Pablo Alvarado, pastor of their new parish, Cristo Rey. They questioned him about possible work, inquiring especially about opportunities for working with educational programs for women. Though still living in the seminary, the sisters assisted at some of the Holy Week services in Cristo Rey. They also met with the catechists with whom they
had been working in the parish of Cruz del Norte to tell them that they would be moving. They informed them that from now on they should meet with the pastor regarding the catechetical program there.

Before leaving the seminary and their work in the parish and school there, Sisters Agnes and Elena held a retreat for 150 girls in Mater Admirabilis High School. This proved to be an exhausting ordeal as all were packed into a hot, crowded, and anything but retreat-like atmosphere. That same day, Sister Sally had a unique experience of her own when she accompanied some women to visit the prison and to celebrate Mother’s Day with the women there.

As plans moved ahead, the sisters met to plan for the move to Pachitea and for a small housewarming. On May 9, they received the good news that the German Bishops would provide the necessary funds to help finish the construction of the new convent and to help furnish it.

On May 29, they began moving some things from the seminary to the new house in Pachitea. Then they spent the next two days packing, re-varnishing desks and chairs, and hanging curtains. Not surprisingly, they went to their beds exhausted. By early afternoon on June 1, they had completed the moving process. Although there were still painters working and Gabriel, the watchman/handyman, was busy with various tasks, they set about relocating the furniture that had been delivered.

The next day, they continued with this and also gave the floors a “treatment” with petroleum. Some welders used “ironed out” barrels to provide more privacy and security for the garage door and the garden area, making a sort of grillwork with the metal. On June 3, workers were still underfoot, but the sisters experienced an even greater inconvenience: living so close to the central market, they soon became aware of the presence of a great many flies.

Later in the day, they had a short visit with Father Alvarado to set some priorities for their work in the parish. When the sisters from Chalaco arrived, they helped prepare for the blessing and open house. Sister Blanche Marie also arrived from Talara for Pentecost Sunday, June 7, when Father Alvarado officially blessed the convent. She helped welcome the many religious and priests of the area who attended the open house. But even before the official opening, the sisters entertained the Women’s Club and catechists from Cruz del Norte, their former parish.

Less than a week after the dedication, Sisters Rosalie Mahoney, Sheila Karpan, and Mildred Irwin arrived after an all-night trip on the bus. They stayed just three days before Sisters Mildred and Sheila continued on to Chalaco in their tour of the SCL missions.

On June 17, Nelyda Clavijo came to meet Sister Rosalie, now a Community Councilor, as a step in her entrance into the Community. The
following day the latter went to visit Salitral, site of her last endeavors in Peru; she also passed through Chulucanas. On her return, she and Sister Agnes went to Talara, and shortly thereafter Sisters Mildred and Sheila arrived from Chalaco. They joined all the sisters gathered in Talara for a celebration of Sister Mildred's fifty years as an SCL.

In the ensuing months, the sisters continued their catechetical and pastoral work as usual. On September 10, Sister Elena went to Lima for a three-day formation meeting on "the Peruvian Reality and Popular Religiosity." After her return, she attended a meeting in Mater Admirabilis High School, where she and Sister Agnes had been teaching. Meanwhile, Sister Agnes had begun her work in Los Algarrobos, a barrio close to Pachitea.

In early September, Don Santos Solano began working as a gardener for the house.

In mid-September, the carpenters finally brought the kitchen cupboards, the shelves for the pantry, and a telephone table. Two days later, Susana Cordova came to help varnish the new cupboards and help in other ways.

Throughout the months of September and October, sisters from Talara, Chulucanas, Chiclayo, and Paita arrived to see the new house. Bishop John McNabb of Chulucanas and Father John Dowling also came to see the sisters and the new house. At the Bishop's request, Sister Agnes accompanied the Bishop to buy furniture for a new house being established in Chulucanas.

The Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul was very special this year, for Nelyda Clavijo officially entered the SCL Community on that day. More can be found about her entrance in Chapter XIX.

Early in October, Sister Elena accompanied the catechists and children on an outing while Nelyda busied herself working with Confirmation groups. Sister Sally occupied her time planning for a seminar for young ladies. Then the sisters attended a special Mass in Cruz del Norte in honor of Sister Sally's forty-fifth anniversary of entrance in the Community. Her friends there held a small fiesta after the Mass in the home of one of the ladies.

Sister Agnes returned from Lima on October 13 after spending the week making preparations for the Community meeting to be held there in January. During the rest of the month, the sisters met with various groups in both Los Algarrobos and Cruz del Norte parishes and visited families in their new parish, Cristo Rey, as well.

In Los Algarrobos, Sister Agnes met with twenty-five persons, including the mayor, about the construction of a meeting hall for that sector. As always, there were many promises made by the politicians present. After several unfruitful visits or calls to the mayor's office, a committee from Los Algarrobos prevailed upon Sister Agnes to accompany them once again. According to the story as told by the participants, Sister Agnes,
upon being received in the mayor’s office, walked over and pounded on his desk, saying, “Are you going to help us, or aren’t you?” Not too long thereafter, the promised help arrived and the meeting hall became a reality!

As always, people were very generous. Some of their friends brought plants and trees for their garden; the sisters looked forward to enjoying their own oranges and dates at a later date. One family even indicated that they wanted to help each month with a gift of money or food. Various friends continued to bring gifts for the new house.

While Sister Agnes, as Director of Missions, left for a visit to Chalaco and then to Bolivia at the end of October, Sister Elena held a retreat day for eighteen women of the parish on the thirty-first. She also welcomed Susana Cordova when she came to visit.

But it was not all work, work, pray, pray. The sisters took advantage of several opportunities to attend the movies or a live play, and they assisted at the banquet for the graduation class at Mater Admirabilis High School. They also went to Talara to visit.

In early November, the sisters were surprised by a visit from Sisters Regina, Rose Celine Siebers, and Justin Wallace, the Franciscan sister living in Chalaco. Although the visitors had sent a telegram to inform the community of Pachitea, it had never arrived. As a sort of pre-celebration of Founders’ Day, these three, plus the sisters from the formation house and those of Talara, all met in Paita for a picnic.

On November 8, Sister Elena assisted at the ceremony for First Communion in Cruz del Norte, and Nelyda went to San Martin parish, where she had been working. Two days later, the Talara sisters arrived to celebrate Founders’ Day. While there, Sister Janet Cashman informed everyone that she had received her mission to Piura for the following year.

Sister Agnes left for Bolivia once again in mid-November and did not return until December 2. The day following her departure, the other sisters offered an afternoon of reflection for girls in the Confirmation program. Beginning about this time, the sisters had the privilege of having Mass in the convent almost weekly, thanks to Father Alvarado.

In anticipation of the Feast of Christ the King, the sisters participated in a procession on November 21, complete with torches, hot air balloons, and fireworks. The following day, they joined other members of the parish for the Confirmation ceremonies. The next evening, they assisted at a talk about the papal encyclical “On Human Work.”

On December 5, Nelyda accompanied young people from San Martin parish who were preparing to be confirmed; these made their retreat day at the Jesuit high school of St. Ignatius in Miraflores. That same day, the professed sisters assisted at the official installation of Oscar Cantuarias as
the new Archbishop of Piura and Tumbe. The five sisters who had come from Talara for the installation stayed over after the ceremonies.

Sister Elena went to Talara on December 8 to give a presentation during the novena in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. She returned the day following. On December 11, Sisters Agnes and Sally also journeyed to Talara, this time to say goodbye to Sister Blanche Marie, who would shortly be returning to the United States.

Although it was retreat Sunday for the sisters, the postulant, Nelyda, assisted at the Confirmation ceremonies in San Martin on December 13. The following day, she accompanied a group of catechists on an outing to Chimbote. Shortly after their return, Nelyda also participated in a pre-Christmas celebration with these catechists.

About this same time, Sister Mary Vincentia Maronick arrived from the States for a visit. While in Pachitea, she entered into the making of Christmas cookies, bread, and other preparations. She also met Susana Cordova and another young woman interested in the Community, who had arrived for the weekend.

On December 20, Sisters Elena and Agnes participated in the end of year ceremonies at Mater Admirabilis High School, where they had been teaching. The following day, Sister Elena went to Santo Domingo with Susana to visit her parents, returning two days later. Meanwhile, Nelyda went with Sister Agnes to an ordination in Chulucanas, and Sister Mary Vincentia went to Chalaco to visit that mission.

Following the Mass in the coliseum on Christmas Eve, the sisters were invited to Father Alvarado’s home. There they celebrated the traditional meal of *Noche Buena* with Father and twelve children he had also invited. On Christmas morning, Father celebrated Mass in the convent.

On December 26, the sisters finally received their new Community Constitutions for which they had been waiting so long. Since they had been sent by regular mail, they had been months in coming “by land and by sea.”

Two days later, the sisters celebrated the Feast of the Holy Innocents, having a party with costumes and decorations. When Sister Sally received a check from a parish in the United States that had adopted her and her missionary activities, they had something additional to celebrate. On New Year’s Eve, they rejoiced in some new patio furniture. That night, after the traditional hour spent in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, they joined in the Peruvian custom of “burning the old man” at midnight.

The house rapidly filled up in January 1982. The Chalaco sisters arrived on January 2 as did also Sisters Sheila Karpan and Mary Arthel Cline, who had come from the States for a visit. That made nine in the house! Since Nelyda had gone to the beach with Father Patricio and the catechists from San Martin parish, the North Americans chattered away in English.
The following day, the sisters from Talara brought six young women for an afternoon of reflection. On their return, they took Sisters Mary Vincentia and Sheila along.

On January 6, Nelyda’s grandmother, aunt, and uncle visited her in the formation house for the first time since her entrance in November. Just two days later, the second postulant, Susana Cordova, entered the Community. When she arrived, bringing along some products from her farm in the mountainous area of Santo Domingo, to her surprise she found no one at home except Sister Sally. The others had all gone to a movie, not expecting her to arrive so soon.

Two days later, the sisters and postulants made a retreat day, and the following morning Susana began a catechetical course at the seminary.

With the arrival of Sister Janet Cashman on January 12, there were now six in the house of formation, four professed and the two postulants. Because of apostolic duties, they decided to ask to have the Mass time moved to 6:15 p.m.

When the Chalaco sisters arrived and two young women interested in the Community came for the weekend, that meant eleven persons were living in somewhat restricted space. But they made do, Sister Catherine Nichol going to Lourdes Convent to sleep and the others accommodating themselves with folding beds. Although four of the sisters left to go to retreat in Lima, “the census” continued to fluctuate.

Meanwhile, business proceeded as usual. Susana accompanied Sister Agnes to Los Algarrobos for a tea, and Nelyda again went on an outing with some catechists. Sister Elena took Susana to the beach the following day with some parishioners, and Nelyda, Sister Agnes, and Sister Mary Arthel set out for Lima that night by bus. By January 26, all had gathered in Lima for the Community meetings that extended until February 1. While everyone was gone, Father Alvarado’s nephew stayed in the convent as a precaution against attempted robberies.

On Sunday, February 7, the sisters were pleasantly surprised by Father Alvarado’s glowing tribute to Sister Janet and the other sisters in his homily. Toward the end of the week, Sister Janet entered full force into cleaning the Parish Health Clinic, disposing of old medicines, and sorting other materials. Toward the end of the month, Sisters Elena and Janet did some painting in the clinic. All was ready for the opening day, March 1, as planned. That very day, Sister Janet had many patients.

When Don Santos Solano, the yardman, did not show up for several weeks, some of the sisters tried their hands at mowing. So they were ready to engage in carnaval in the patio but also took time to give a warm greeting to Sister Agnes, who had just arrived after a thirty-hour bus trip from Lima.
During these summer months, Susana was preparing for and taking her
tests to enter her fifth year of secondary studies. Nelyda returned from her
catechetical studies in Lima just in time to join Susana and Sister Sally in a
weeklong class, "Introduction to the Bible," being given by a priest in early
March. The following three weeks, the two postulants also took a class in
the use of their new sewing machine, even learning to do embroidery and
other fancy stitches.

On March 21, Susana helped Sister Elena give an afternoon of reflection
for twenty young women, something they repeated the following month.

From time to time, as the sisters soon learned, their new locale of
Pachitea experienced failures of electricity, sometimes for prolonged
periods of time. Part of the difficulty lay in others "pirating" electricity
from their connections and the consequent cutting of electrical service by
the power company. Among other inconveniences, perhaps the greatest
was having to locate enough ice to store their meat in a chest.

Sisters Josephine Bustos and Joan Kilker arrived on March 25 in time
for the sisters' annual renewal of vows at the 6:00 p.m. Mass. The following
day, the two postulants went back to Talara with them but returned in time
to help Sister Elena direct a parish workshop for seventeen catechists during
the afternoons of the following week. While they were doing this, Sister
Agnes was working with the members of the parish council of Los
Algarrobos, preparing for the pastoral visit of the new Archbishop, Oscar
Cantuarias, on Palm Sunday, April 4. Nelyda also gave a one-day workshop
for the catechists there.

Several days before Easter Sunday, Sister Sally left for Talara en route
to the United States for medical treatments. Sisters Agnes and Janet also
made brief trips to Talara for meetings in the following week.

Not long afterwards, just after a week's nursing course in Lima, Sister
Janet was named to the Archdiocesan Commission for Vocations. At the
same time, Sister Agnes assumed a new role on the Commission on the Laity.

Sister Elena and Susana registered seventy children for religious
education classes, and the following week Nelyda enrolled children in
Los Algarrobos. About a week later, she took the catechists from Los
Algarrobos on an outing.

Twenty young women came for an afternoon of reflection in which
Sister Janet presented slides and gave a talk on the female body and
sexuality. The following month, the sisters again hosted an afternoon of
reflection for some twenty young women. At that time, Sister Agnes
presented slides to enable a study of Scripture.

Due to an explosion that had occurred at the gas plant in mid-May, the
sisters were without gas for cooking for about a week. That led to some
creative cooking, using the two-burner kerosene stove and the barbecue
grill. Given the circumstances, the celebration of Nelyda’s birthday was somewhat different this year.

When the parishioners of Los Algarrobos began constructing a new church for their area toward the end of May, Sister Agnes lent her hands as well as her enthusiasm to their efforts of the first day. Two days later, Sisters Joan and Josephine came for a farewell party for Sister Elena, who was going to the States for three months. Sister Regina stopped by on her way from Chalaco to Talara to pick up Sister Rose Celine, who had recently returned from a two-month visit in the States. Since Nelyda would be in Chalaco for an apostolic experience during Sister Elena’s absence in the States, Sisters Regina and Rose Celine stopped in Piura to pick her up on their return trip to Chalaco.

On June 1, Sister Agnes went to Lima for the meeting of major superiors of religious communities working in Peru. She returned just in time to join in the monthly retreat in the house. A few days later, she welcomed Sister Regina, who had arrived unexpectedly from Chalaco with a patient whom she had brought to Piura for treatments.

The number attending the June afternoon of reflection was disappointingly few, perhaps much to Susana’s relief, as she was in charge of the presentation. Besides receiving young women in the formation house, Sister Elena as well as sisters from the other houses continued to visit the Center of Formation in Canchaque for vocation promotion activities.

During the first days of July 1982, the sisters received a welcome phone call from the United States. Sister Donna Jean Henson informed them that she hoped to have her visa very soon and would arrive in Peru on July 19. Thus, Sister Agnes went to Lima to meet her on the eighteenth and, happily, returned with her five days later, to be greeted by Sister Janet and Susana at the Piura airport.

Following a day of recollection on July 24 given by the Archbishop for all priests and religious of the diocese, Sister Donna Jean went to her new mission in Talara with Sisters Josephine and Joan.

Susana made a quick visit to her family in Santo Domingo for Fiestas Patrias, Peru’s Independence Day, and Sisters Janet and Agnes briefly visited in Talara.

Just a few days later, Sister Janet assisted at an all-day presentation on the “Humanization of Health Services”; in this she was joined by Sisters Joan and Josephine, who had brought her back from Talara.

When the sisters from Chalaco came down for a Community meeting on a placement policy to be sent to the Forum of the Community, Nelyda visited her family for the week. After she returned from her home visit, she attended a catechetical meeting in Los Algarrobos and then went to a
A weeklong workshop in Talara. Returning to the house of formation, she began classes in sewing.

In the meantime, Sisters Regina and Rose Celine had once again arrived from Chalaco; this time they took Susana along for a catechetical workshop in Yamango. When Susana returned to Piura, Sister Donna Jean joined the other two in their return trip to Chalaco.

One of the evenings during the Community meetings, Sister Donna Jean had lent her hands to help Sister Janet and some women clean out the former rectory. Sister Janet and some parishioners then moved the medicine and equipment into her expanded clinic in the former parish house. On August 11, she held open house for members of the community. She planned to go to Lima in October for a week to buy books and more supplies for her new endeavor.

A few days after the opening of the clinic in its new setting, Sister Janet and the other sisters joined in the parish meeting to plan for the Archbishop's pastoral visit. The following week, Sister Janet began a series of nightly talks about human and Christian formation in the large civic theater. She and some others were surprised when the theater was full for the final night's presentation about religious vocations.

Perhaps as a result of this, she was invited to join in a video taping of a panel treating of vocations to be shown on television less than a week later. On the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel, patron of Piura, she, Nelyda, and an associate attended a special Mass for vocations in the Cathedral.

Sister Elena returned from the States on September 1 and was accompanied from Lima to Piura by Sister Agnes. They arrived just in time to help celebrate Susana's birthday. Despite its size and weight, Sister Elena had carefully brought with her the statue of Mater Admirabilis, patron of novices, to install in their chapel.

When Archbishop Cantuarias finally made his official visit to Cristo Rey and Los Algarrobos on September 18, the sisters invited him and the pastor, Father Alvarado, to dinner in the convent.

The sisters once again hosted an afternoon of reflection in the house; this time Nelyda helped Sister Elena present the theme "the Broken Christ." The following day, Susana accompanied Sister Elena and the children of the catechetical program on a picnic outing. Nelyda likewise assisted in the picnic of Los Algarrobos.

On September 27, Sisters Joan, Josephine, and Rachel Sarosi, a Vincentian Sister of Charity (VSC), arrived for an evening Mass and dinner to help celebrate the feast of their common patron, Saint Vincent.

For the afternoon of reflection in October, Sister Agnes and Susana gave talks on the theme of Christian commitment. Two days later, Sister
Rose Celine arrived from Chalaco with four señoritas for an overnight visit. The house was full, for Sisters Joan and Josephine were there at the same time. No wonder Sister Elena took two days off to go to Talara when these sisters returned.

Even though the sisters from Talara arrived on October 27 to help celebrate Sister Agnes' birthday, she was in Los Algarrobos almost all day giving last minute instructions to parents and children who would be receiving the sacraments. Nevertheless, she of course took time to join in the community celebration and dinner. Perhaps her best birthday present was the pleasure of seeing one hundred children baptized and ten marriages celebrated or rectified on October 30.

On November 1, Sisters Elena and Agnes and the two postulants participated in the custom of visiting the cemetery. They organized a time of prayer there and helped with the preparations for the Mass.

The following day, Sister Agnes left for a two-week visit with the sisters in Bolivia. Sisters Catherine and Janet attended a performance of the Red Chinese Ballet group.

November began a number of end-of-year activities. Sister Elena and Nelyda gave a retreat at St. Ignatius High School for the young people to be confirmed, but the directors did become a bit anxious when Father Alvarado almost failed to come for confessions and Mass.

For the celebration of Founders' Day, the sisters hosted some sixty catechists and other collaborators at a special Mass and reception afterwards.

During the week prior to the Feast of Christ the King, the patron feast of the parish, and on the day itself, the sisters were occupied with many activities. On November 18, there were Confirmations in both the parish of Cristo Rey and in Los Algarrobos.

At the end of November, Sister Elena baked enough cakes in one day to have two hundred pieces! This was in preparation for a te infantile (a social gathering with children), a project to raise money so the catechists could make a trip to the Ecuadorian border. Despite this orgy of baking, Sister Elena left that same afternoon for Talara, where she was scheduled to give a talk in the parish there.

In between times, the sisters also took part in the monthly discussion of Church documents guided by various priests of the area.

On Thanksgiving Day they welcomed Father Bob Gloisten of the Society of St. James to celebrate with them. However, Sister Agnes was not present for this since she had gone to Chalaco for her visit as Director of Missions shortly after her return from Bolivia. Since the rains had already begun in the sierra, she had a harrowing return trip over an extremely slippery and treacherous road. So she had something special to give thanks for the day after the others celebrated the traditional feast. Ironically, just
a few days after her return from Chalaco, she fell in one of the slippery streets of Piura and broke her wrist.

Sister Janet gave a presentation on drugs for the young women who came for the afternoon of reflection at the end of November. Then, in early December, she took the health promoters from Piura to Talara for four days to meet and share with the promoters there.

On December 8, the other sisters took part in the First Communion celebrations in Pachitea and Los Algarrobos. That evening, Sister Agnes departed for Talara for the last of her visitations of the year.

On the tenth, Sister Elena again gave an instruction and the homily at the evening Mass in Talara for the novena to Guadalupe. The following morning she and Sister Agnes returned to Piura with Sisters Joan and Josephine to participate in the Christmas dinner given by the Archbishop for all the priests and religious.

The next day, the Piura sisters joined in another celebration, that of the religious community of Canonesas de la Cruz, who recently had received Papal Approbation.

During late November 1982, Piura had already begun to experience the preliminary effects of the coming disastrous “El Niño.” The slippery roads and streets have already been mentioned. By December 13, the sisters had to have men bring in supplies to repair their rain-damaged roof.

Sister Agnes left for her three-month vacation in the United States on December 16, but not before joining the Talara sisters and the Pachitea community in celebrating Sister Janet’s birthday. The health promoters also celebrated with Sister Janet that evening.

Early the next morning, about 1:00 a.m., Sister Elena and Susana left for the Ecuadorian border with the catechists! How tired they must have been when they returned at 9:00 p.m. after a full day of travel and buying. But, in a way, Susana may have found it an exhilarating way of celebrating the good news of having passed all her exams for the completion of her high school studies! While Sister Elena and Susana were at the border, Sister Janet and Nelyda participated in the ordination celebrations of a Jesuit.

The sisters had another associate weekend on December 19. This time the young women helped decorate the house for Christmas. The following days and evenings saw various Christmas parties: with a parish prayer group, with the catechists of Cristo Rey and Los Algarrobos, and with the health promoters. Sister Elena and Nelyda, together with their visitors, Sisters Donna Jean and Catherine, attended a special concert by a Piura instrumental group and choir.

On Christmas Eve, the sisters divided forces to attend the two liturgies in Cristo Rey and Los Algarrobos. After the midnight Masses, they returned to the convent for the traditional dinner and celebration.
In the morning, they rejoiced in having Mass in the convent, Father Alvarado celebrating for them and four Franciscan sisters. All joined in a delicious brunch afterwards. That afternoon, they went to visit various Nativity scenes in different churches and to drop in on Nelyda’s grandparents. In the evening, they continued the celebration, entering into the hilarity of the movie, “The Gods Must Be Crazy.”

Nelyda and Susana left for home visits the next morning, and the other sisters journeyed to Talara for a few days of rest and recreation.

Right from the beginning, the New Year 1983 gave evidence that it was going to be a trying one. When Sister Elena returned from Talara on January 1, she discovered that the electricity had been off for some twenty-four hours already, and electrical service did not return for another twenty-four hours.

Sisters Janet and Donna Jean arrived the next evening, accompanied by three young women who would be boarding at the convent for the next eight weeks while attending a catechetical course. Ceci Garcia, Trini Orozco, and Juana Rojas would also have the opportunity to learn more about community living during their stay.

With the arrival of Nelyda and Susana, the “family” expanded to eight residents. That was just as well, as there would be much cleaning up to do throughout the month. Since the men had not finished tarring the roof, although work had begun in mid-December, there were puddles throughout the house whenever rains occurred. And occur they did, with frequency and force—on the night of the fourth, the afternoon of the fifth, the night of the fifth, and again during the day of the sixth and the seventh.

By that time, so much rain had fallen that there were twelve inches of floodwater all around the house on the parish property. To add to the problem, the weather turned very hot, making the whole area a good incubating space for flies, so much so that by mid-January 1983 a plague of flies had invaded the city, covering clothes, walls, and sidewalks.

Sister Elena and the two postulants, Nelyda and Susana, left for Lima on January 8 for summer studies and retreat. As a consequence, Sister Janet and the recently arrived Sister Donna Jean, who was really missioned to Talara, were left to do battle with the increasing problems of “El Niño,” helped out by their boarders. At that, they were sometimes shorthanded since Trini went home several weekends; each time it took her four and a half hours or more to return instead of the usual two. By the time the catechetical course was finished in mid-February and Ceci, Trini, and Juana had returned to their homes in Talara, both the situation in-house and outside of it, as well as all travel, had become very difficult indeed.

Meanwhile, in mid-January Sister Janet began teaching a weeklong course in first aid, but only a disappointing five persons showed up for it.
On January 12, the men finally finished repairing the roof, and the electricity, which once again had been off for twenty-four hours, was restored. Less than a week later, however, they were again “lightless,” this time because a truck had hit a cable. It took about a week to make the necessary repairs.

But no one could have imagined what would follow. Nothing like it had occurred since the SCLs had arrived in 1963. More will be said about this in the following chapters.

Chapter IX Notes

1 Sister Mary Kevin Hollow to Rev. Archbishop Fernando Vargas, SJ, October 20, 1978, A/SCL.
2 Sister Agnes Klein to Hollow, April 1, 1979, A/SCL.
3 Ibid.
4 Klein to Hollow, January 25, 1981, A/SCL.
5 The “burning of the old man” is a Peruvian New Year’s custom. An effigy is stuffed with paper and clothing from the old year and burned at midnight before the house with the hope that the New Year will bring greater luck and prosperity.
6 Carnaval (Carnival): In Peru this term applies both to the festive period before Lent and activities in which children or the young at heart douse each other with water or talcum powder or explode balloons filled with water.
CHAPTER X: A MOBILE NOVITIATE

As early as the first days of January 1983, the novitiate community in Pachitea, Piura, had begun to experience various trials as a result of the beginnings of the phenomenon "El Niño." But that was just the beginning!

By January 26, with the heavy rains of the night before, the parish property had become so flooded that no one could enter or leave the convent or the clinic without wading through water. In the afternoon, the sisters built a bridge of stones so that they could get out to go to Mass. In the wee hours of the next morning, the doorbell shorted out due to the heavy rains, and it rang and rang—incessantly—until Sister Janet Cashman finally cut off all the electricity just to make it stop.

The following day, as the water continued to rise, the sisters built some dikes to try to keep the water from entering the convent, and Sisters Janet and Donna Jean Henson fixed sandbags to put in front of the door. That night five neighborhood children whose house had been completely flooded slept in the sisters’ parlor.

Amidst the news that parts of the city were under water, three señoritas from Talara, who were staying with the sisters while taking a catechetical course during the summer months, returned home for the weekend. But travel was difficult, to say the least; in fact, one of the señoritas, Trini Orozco, elected not to return for more than a week. About the same time, Sister Regina Deitchman arrived from Lima en route to Chulucanas but was not able to continue her travel until February 7.

Meanwhile, the house was again without electricity for about twenty-four hours as a result of a cable breaking between the church and the house. The connection had scarcely been repaired when a truck snapped an electric cable in their vicinity; that time it took three weeks and a great deal of insistence on the part of the sisters before electricity was restored.

Moreover, learning that there were no more tanks of cooking gas in the city, the sisters began restricting their use of the stove. At times they used a small kerosene stove to boil their water and cook.

Despite all this, the sisters tried to maintain some semblance of normality in the situation. For example, Sisters Donna Jean and Janet gave the three señoritas who had been staying with them a sort of farewell, treating them to a movie. Actually, it was a sendoff for Sister Donna Jean, too, as she would finally be leaving for her mission in Talara. She had been detained in Piura for six weeks because of the heavy rains and road washouts. Now some priests of the Society of St. James the Apostle had agreed to drive her over in their jeep.

For three weeks, Sister Janet had been able to work in her health clinic only from time to time because it was frequently isolated by the waters
swirling around it. Fortunately, during the week of February 21, she was able to attend to patients.

Two days later, Sister Elena Mack and the two postulants, Nelyda Clavijo and Susana Cordova, returned from summer courses and retreats in Lima to begin their month's preparation before entering the novitiate.

In early March, needing a bit of diversion, Sisters Janet and Elena and the two postulants attended the fifth anniversary celebration of the Marriage Encounter held at Saint Ignatius High School in Miraflores. Apparently they had no difficulty in arriving although from time to time the bridges across the river Piura were closed to all but foot traffic.

As the heavy rains continued, the parish was more and more inundated. Finally, with the heavy rains on the night of March 14, the floodwaters entered the gardens surrounding the convent. As had been feared for some time, the parish church built of adobe collapsed, leaving only the front door and roof standing. Meanwhile, many persons had begun taking refuge at the entrance to the parish grounds, their own homes having over three feet of water in them. On March 15, the sisters prepared a large pot of Chinese rice to serve to them.

When Sister Agnes Klein arrived on March 18 after her three months in the States, she was accompanied by Sisters Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director, and Mary Julie Casey, Community Treasurer, who were making their first visit to the house of formation. Sister Mary Julie had been promised a kind of vacation trip, but it was hardly that, for she suffered many trials during her visit. Sister Regina had returned from Lima on March 16, thinking that she would go to Talara to meet the incoming guests. Due to the heavy rains, however, the road was closed, so she had to await them in Piura. On March 22, she was able to take them to Chulucanas to meet Bishop McNabb.

As the situation continued to deteriorate, the sisters tried to keep the water from entering the front door of the convent by building a cement wall. Sisters Mary Kevin and Mary Julie lent what support they could, that being mostly moral. For example, while Sister Regina, Sister Janet, and Susana worked on the barricade mentioned above, Sister Mary Kevin led them in saying the rosary.

Sister Elena succeeded in procuring a pump from the seminary, thanks to Father Gallo of Caritas. However, despite the fact that Sister Agnes and a group of men waded through hip-deep water getting to the seminary, the pump provided only a brief respite. Throughout the afternoon and evening, the waters from the "lagoon" in front of the house were transferred to the playing field across the street, but by the next day, a main water conduit had ruptured, and a great deal of water flowed back into the area.
Nevertheless, plans for the reception of the two novices moved forward, with everyone helping to decorate the house the evening of March 24. Could it have been otherwise? After all, this was indeed an historic occasion: the first two Peruvian young women would officially be called Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth the next morning. However, even such a solemn occasion was not to be without its moments of mirth. Seeking a bit of “high ground,” a mother cat gave birth to her litter of kittens on the doorstep of the convent sometime in the wee hours of the feast. Knowing Sister Mary Kevin’s aversion to cats, Sister Elena and some of the others spirited the cat and her family away before the Community Director became aware of her presence.

Later, in a simple ceremony, Sister Mary Kevin received Nelyda Clavijo and Susana Cordova into the Community as novices. In addition to conferring the name “Sister” on each, she presented them with personal copies of the Constitution of the Community and with silver crosses encrusted in their center with the figure of Saint Vincent and two children. Despite the problems inside and outside, there was a festive atmosphere, with red roses on the altar and two banners that Susana had made. The presence of their two guests from the United States as well as the members of the novitiate community and Sisters Regina and Catherine Nichol from Chalaco added to the sense of celebration.

Although the ceremony had been moved ahead a half hour because of the continuing heavy rains, when there was a letup in the downpour, the sisters decided to have breakfast and open gifts. They further decided to stay in the house until after the noon meal.

The Mass and reception were moved to the chapel of the Franciscan sisters at Our Lady of Peace School, two blocks from the convent on somewhat higher ground. In that way, families and guests would not have to wade through water. This Franciscan community had generously offered to help in whatever way they could, and they had decorated the chapel beautifully for the 5:00 Mass planned by Sisters Nelyda and Susana and celebrated by Father Pablo Alvarado. Nelyda’s grandmother, two aunts, and two uncles, as well as Susana’s sister, joined in the liturgy and the brindis (toasts) afterwards.

Since Sisters Mary Kevin and Mary Julie would be leaving the following day, it was decided that they, along with Sisters Agnes and Janet, should stay overnight with the Franciscans. These hospitable sisters invited all the SCLs to breakfast.

On the morning of March 26, Sister Regina began preparing to leave for Chulucanas and Chalaco, but it was uncertain if the road to Chulucanas was open. Then Ceci Garcia, a young woman interested in the Community, arrived from there, looking for hospitality since it was impossible for her to journey on to Talara.
Because of the problems of transporting food to and from the convent, Sister Mary Kevin invited all the sisters to the restaurant Tres Estrellas for dinner at 3:00. When Sister Regina could find no bus or comite to Chulucanas after this, Sister Catherine, the two novices, and Ceci set off with her, arriving back in time to see Sisters Mary Kevin and Mary Julie off at the airport. Happily, they had been able to cross the bridge by car and did not have to carry their luggage across. Sister Janet accompanied them to Lima to act as tour guide and assist them in making some purchases. When she returned three days later late at night, she chose to stay with the Franciscans rather than risk wading through the floodwaters in the dark.

Holy Week services were held at Sacred Heart School. When the rains began on Holy Saturday, the liturgy had to be interrupted so that the people could take shelter in a narrow corridor. As the torrents continued even after the Mass terminated, the people lingered for quite a while before setting out in the blinding rain. Sister Catherine, having the Chalaco jeep, was able to drive the sisters home, albeit by a very circuitous route to avoid the deepest accumulations of water.

All the sisters helped prepare the Easter dinner. The menu, however, was dictated by what was available and not by what had once been planned. By now there were many shortages in the market. But where there is a will, there is a way, as the saying goes, and the sisters would celebrate the Feast of the Resurrection!

In the first week of April, Sister Janet accompanied a delegation of men from the neighborhood who were seeking the aid of Caritas to obtain gasoline for the pump. For it had been necessary to operate it day and night just to diminish the floodwaters. However, they were not successful, and during the night of April 4, water entered the convent patio and quickly spread throughout the house. The sisters worked feverishly to elevate furniture and rugs out of harm’s way. Although the water was by now ankle deep throughout the convent, the sisters decided to spend the night there. But what was Sister Nelyda’s surprise and consternation to discover a snake swimming in the water of her room! Sister Agnes came to her rescue, killing the small garden-type reptile with the garlic-press rock.

Once again it was imperative that the sisters seek the hospitality of the Franciscan sisters. With great kindness and charity, they agreed to take in the flood victims. Therefore, the sisters spent all morning raising things yet higher in the house and carrying out the more precious and needed objects. Sister Catherine was a godsend in maneuvering the jeep in as close as she could to the house, helping to load it, and then transporting the salvaged articles to Our Lady of Peace School and convent.

Sister Agnes was able to find a man from the area where she had been working in Los Algarrobos who was willing to sleep in the Pachitea convent.
and guard against others entering or robbing. By April 6, alerted by this guard, the sisters saw the necessity of moving more things from the house. This difficult operation took all day. Although the sisters hired two men to help, things had to be transported a whole block since Sister Catherine could not risk bringing the jeep closer. Fortunately, the Franciscan sisters lent their Volkswagen van to carry some of the larger objects. During the day, the water level rose to two feet in the patio.

On Sunday, April 10, the sisters joined the Bishop and many hundreds of people in a two-hour procession through the streets with a statue of Our Lady of the Assumption, patroness of Piura.

Since the floodwaters gave no signs of receding, Sister Elena and the two novices left for Talara the following Wednesday. It was uncertain just how long the trip would take since there was no direct transportation; because of washouts, it was necessary to transfer from one vehicle to another in various places. The plan was that this threesome would remain in Talara until such time as they could return to the formation house in Pachitea. Meanwhile, the Talara sisters as well as their temporary guests had to adjust to the “new activities” of the house, such as going to the beach to buy fish and collecting water in whatever containers were available when it rained.

The novitiate program itself was adapted as best it could be. Sister Josephine Bustos taught the novices handicrafts; Sister Donna Jean, the Bible; Sister Joan Kilker, Health; and Father John Drury gave a course in Puebla documents. Sister Elena continued with her courses on the Vows, the SCL Constitution, and such. Sisters Joan and Elena made an additional trip to Piura by “buffalo” (army transport plane) in order to bring over some books for the novices, since the library in Talara was sparse in Spanish books.

It soon became questionable just what they would have to return to. Although the waters continued to rise in Pachitea, so did the number of burglaries in the city. On April 23, when the guard entered for his night’s duty, he discovered that his bed on the roof had been stolen. He immediately informed Sister Agnes, and the following day when she entered the house, she discovered that the robber or robbers had also been in the dining room and kitchen, from which they had stolen the stainless steel service donated by Sister Josephine after her mother’s death. Also missing was the gas tank for cooking. By the end of the following week, the guard and Sister Janet discovered that the kitchen, dining room, and all the bedrooms had again been entered, so it was decided that a guard should be hired for the daytime, too.

Meanwhile, Sister Agnes began working with a breakfast program in Los Algarrobos. The Catholic university in Piura (UDEP) was in charge of the program initially and planned to serve children between two and
seven years old. When they found out that the children would number some two thousand, however, they had to narrow their sights to ages two to four as there was sufficient food for only five hundred children.

Not knowing just what might be involved in such a trip, Sister Janet set out for Talara on May 2 to tell the sisters goodbye before going to the United States for her three-month stay. On May 6, she returned to Piura via helicopter, courtesy of the Bishop, who had been visiting in Talara. According to her account, the thirty-minute flight was much more agreeable than her seven-hour land journey of the previous Monday with its two *transbordos*!3

On May 8, she and Sister Agnes presented the three Franciscans with flowers and wine as a Mother’s Day present. It was a very small token of the immense gratitude they felt to these sisters who had welcomed them so warmly into their family.

In early July, Sister Elena and the novices returned to Piura. Various seminarians and other volunteers, including Clorinda Timana, a young woman interested in the Community, came to help the sisters clean, paint, and then move their things back to the Pachitea house. The sisters patched the damaged doors and purchased what was necessary to set up housekeeping again. Following weeks of hard work, Sister Catherine took the novitiate community to Paita for an outing in honor of Peru’s Independence Day. Sister Agnes also returned to the formation house. Finally on August 14, the sisters had their first house meeting; among other things, they carefully planned for a lunch of thanksgiving in honor of their friends and benefactors, the sisters at Our Lady of Peace.

When Sister Janet returned from her visit in the States in September, things were still not normal although the community was once again in the Convent of Cristo Rey. Shortly after her return, Sister Janet tried to enter her clinic in the parish but was unable to do so because the lock had become rusted. There was evidence that robbers had also tried to gain entry beforehand.

On Saint Vincent’s Day, Father Gerald offered Mass at noon; then the sisters entertained twenty-two pre-seminarians for a rice and chicken dinner. In the afternoon, the sisters just relaxed and visited; later, they had *salchipapas* (French fries with cut up hot dogs and various sauces).

Although the pump had been diligently working all week, there remained much water on the premises. Since the sisters had again been without electricity for some time, they had been taking turns all that week going to the light company and begging that their lines be reconnected. Always they were told “tomorrow.” On September 30, someone finally admitted that the transformer was missing, and consequently there could be no reconnection! Some of the sisters’ neighbors offered to connect
their lines clandestinely, claiming that almost everyone else was doing so. In desperation, the sisters readily accepted.

After having spent a few days in Talara, Sister Catherine returned with Sister Donna Jean, who planned to spend a few days in the formation house. To relax a bit, Sisters Elena, Janet, Nelyda, Susana, Catherine, and Donna Jean attended the performance of a folk music group the next evening. That same evening, Sister Agnes was participating in a procession of Señor de los Milagros (Lord of Miracles) in Los Algarrobos. She was occupied there again the following day when the other sisters went to the meeting of Confer (Conference of Religious).

On October 3, Sister Janet began attending patients at ODEC, the diocesan catechetical office, as it was the one dry corner in the parish. A few days later, she was finally able to enter her clinic, only to find that everything had been ruined. Even the bookshelf had fallen, so all the books and filmstrips were unusable.

On the sixth, Sister Janet accompanied five young people to a citywide planning meeting. The hope was to bring other young people from around the city together to share their reflections and feelings about the rains and inundations caused by “El Niño.”

Since there was no church, the devotions for Señor Cautivo (the Captive Christ) were scheduled to be held in different streets of the parish each night from October 4 to 8. Sisters Janet, Elena, and Susana attended the first night of devotions; Sisters Elena and Susana were again present for the final night’s prayers.

The community had their monthly day of recollection on October 9. The next day, Sister Agnes left for a three-day visit in Talara. Just as she returned, Sister Elena went to Lima for a meeting of formation personnel. About the same time, Sister Janet journeyed to Talara for a few days of rest and relaxation. All were at home again by October 19, and they took the day to set their house goals for the year. What a challenge that must have been, given the continuing traumas resulting from “El Niño”!

For instance, on October 20, they had “legitimate” light for the first time in two months. But, even at that, the service was very undependable and iffy. The man in charge of Electroperu gave permission for the sisters to have a connection to the nearby generator, but he did not want to inform any of his subordinates of this permission. As a result, the sisters lived with the knowledge that the connection might be cut and the wiring taken at any moment. This actually happened on October 25 while some of the sisters from Chalaco and Talara were in the house to anticipate Sister Agnes’ birthday. They rejoiced—tentatively—when they were reconnected; and they were overjoyed a few days later when the current was strong enough to operate the refrigerator! Less than a month later, however, the sisters...
were informed that it would be necessary to disconnect them since too many neighbors were pirating electricity from their lines.

That same day, Sister Elena had accompanied a neighborhood committee to visit the offices of the chief engineer of the sewer system being installed in the market. Well they might protest what was happening. For as the tubes were being placed in the ground, the engineers were pumping all the sewage into the parish grounds and the area about them! Thus the backyard of the convent as well as some of the homes of their neighbors had become cesspools. After two trips to the city offices, the committee finally received the assurance that conditions would improve—in fifteen or twenty days! They were relieved when a man actually began operating the water pump throughout the night, complementing the work being done during the day.

In the midst of all this, the formation work continued. The sisters often received visits from young women interested in finding out more about religious life. A bit earlier in the month, Sister Joan Kilker brought four young women from Talara for an overnight stay. Flor Figueroa from Castilla visited more or less frequently, sometimes staying for the weekend and participating in processions or other activities with the sisters. On the Feast of All Saints in November, two of the girls who had stayed with the sisters during the catechetical course came for a visit and dinner.

In spite of poverty, misery, and hopeless situations, it seems that the Peruvian people can always find a reason to celebrate and give thanks. So, in true Peruvian spirit, the sisters celebrated and participated in outings despite the fact that they could have been overwhelmed by the conditions and all the extra work and frustration. Thus, early in November, Sisters Elena and Susana joined the celebrations in the parish of San Martin, and Sisters Janet and Regina took Sister Rose Celine to Catacaos, a neighboring town, for a mini-celebration of her Golden Jubilee.

They also provided one another mutual support, accompanying Sister Agnes in some of her endeavors in Los Algarrobos and helping Sister Elena in her retreat for the rosary group in the seminary. They also evidenced their sense of "the greater Church" by attending the Silver Jubilee celebration of the Priests of St. James Apostle in the cathedral.

For Founders’ Day and the Community’s 125th anniversary, the Pachitea sisters joined all the rest of the South American SCLs in Chiclayo for a three-day charism workshop given by a Vincentian priest. When they returned, they brought along the sisters missioned in Bolivia and Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, who had come from the States for the celebration and a two-month visit. To accommodate everyone, four of the sisters stayed with the Franciscans at Our Lady of Peace School. The following day, Archbishop Cantuarias celebrated a special Mass in the convent chapel in
honor of Sister Rose Celine’s Golden Jubilee. Following this, all enjoyed a special dinner in Hotel Turista. Later they enjoyed apple pie and ice cream in the convent before Sister Mary Seraphine and the Talara sisters set off for Santa Rosa in Talara. The next day, all the rest of the sisters joined them there for yet another celebration, that of the SCLs’ first arrival in Talara some twenty years before.

The next week, Sister Janet attended the novena in honor of Christ the King being held in the community hall of Pachitea. A few days later, everyone from the formation house attended Confer in the morning and the conclusion of the novena in the parish that night. They also joined in the special Mass the next day.

On November 21, women from the rosary group in Cristo Rey brought food and beverages for toasts as their part in celebrating the 125 years of service of the Sisters of Charity. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty arrived the next day to spend a few days before returning to her mission in Bolivia; she joined Sister Agnes in preparing a Thanksgiving dinner.

In early December, the sisters concluded all the preparations and celebrated with their respective First Communion groups in Los Algarrobos and Cristo Rey. They were also guests of Bishop McNabb at a special Mass and dinner for the young men from Chulucanas studying in the local seminary.

Sisters Joan Kilker and Donna Jean Henson arrived on December 9 to spend the night. The next day, they joined the sisters from Pachitea in the Archbishop’s special Christmas dinner for all the priests and religious of the diocese. Sister Catherine arrived late that night from Chalaco to buy some things before going to Chulucanas for the Bishop’s Christmas dinner there; after that celebration, she came again with the rest of the Chalaco household. Meanwhile, Sister Nelyda had accompanied the catechists from Los Algarrobos in their retreat at Our Lady of Peace School.

Sister Mary Seraphine and the Talara sisters arrived for an early celebration of Sister Janet’s birthday, departing the next day. Flor Figueroa arrived two days later. Then, as noted earlier, the sisters from Chalaco had arrived, all planning for yet another celebration of the Community’s 125 years.

As might have been expected, the Pachitea convent lost its electricity that night, this time due to the wire being stolen. Undaunted, the sisters managed to prepare for the reception the next day. After a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Cantuarias in their chapel, they served champagne and finger foods to the representatives of various religious Communities who had come to share in the celebration.

As the holidays approached, the frequent, almost daily loss of electricity due to stolen lines became a part of the reality, as did also the sometimes heavy rains. Despite these trials, the sisters participated in the posadas,
and on December 23 Sisters Elena and Susana attended a party for the catechists. It was not until the sisters prepared to decorate the house that night that they became aware that they had lost almost all their Christmas decorations in the robberies of April.

Sister Elena had worked throughout the past month readying the parents and 134 children of all ages for Baptism. On December 24, Sisters Susana and Janet helped Sister Elena put the final touches on the preparations for the group Baptism.

Sister Rose Celine, who had arrived from Chalaco, and Sister Nelyda joined Sister Agnes in Los Algarrobes that evening. After the 7:00 p.m. Mass, there was a fiesta for the women who had been cooking for the children. Sisters Janet, Elena, and Susana attended the Noche Buena Mass in Pachitea at 10:00 p.m. When all had arrived home, they celebrated Christmas Eve together. On Christmas Day itself, they were grateful to enjoy a bit of time together just relaxing and sharing.

Sisters Joan and Mary Seraphine arrived on December 28. On New Year’s Eve, Sisters Agnes and Nelyda once again attended the evening Mass in Los Algarrobes. All the rest assisted at the later liturgy in Cristo Rey. They welcomed the New Year at home, surely praying that 1984 would be better than the last year, especially since it had begun to rain once again.

On New Year’s Day 1984, Sister Janet and the two novices enjoyed the movie “E.T.”; meanwhile, Sisters Agnes, Elena, and Rose Celine went to visit the Franciscan sisters in Our Lady of Peace School. That night they all met to make plans for the following weeks and months of summer.

The next day, Sisters Nelyda and Susana began vacation school classes; art, sewing, English, and learning the guitar were the possibilities open to them. On January 6, Sister Rose Celine accompanied Sister Agnes to Bolivia for retreat and a bit of vacation. For their monthly outing, Sisters Elena, Nelyda, and Susana packed a picnic lunch and went to visit the Sisters of Charity of Mallorca in Lower Piura at Bellavista. During the month, the sisters also hosted two sisters who were passing through, one from Chiclayo, the other from Lima.

Due to the repeated robberies of electrical lines, the sisters hit upon a plan they thought would guarantee their having light at least for the night hours. Someone would disconnect the wire at 6:00 a.m., hide it during the day, and reinstall it at 6:00 p.m. Despite this strategy, within the week the wire was again stolen, and they were left without electricity!

About this same time, Sister Janet secured some tin roofing from Caritas. On January 9, she tried to distribute fifty tickets that could then be redeemed for the metal sheets, but she was nearly mobbed by the crowd and had to escape to the house. Nevertheless, in the days that followed, she was again working on the water problem.
In mid-January, Father Bob Gloistson, one of the St. James priests with whom the sisters had worked in Talara, arrived to give the novices a class.

On Saturday the twenty-first, everyone took time for a communal outing, going to Pueblo Nuevo. The following Tuesday, Sisters Elena, Janet, Nelyda, and Susana went to Talara for a farewell dinner for Sister Mary Seraphine, who was returning to the United States.

After the heavy rains of the twenty-sixth, the city began fumigating for mosquitoes. With the summer heat and the many puddles, those insects had begun to propagate rapidly. That Saturday Sister Nelyda went to visit her family, and the other three sisters went to a traditional fiesta of the Bajada de los Reyes (the ceremony of taking down the Christmas crib).

Sunday was full of comings and goings. Sister Agnes returned from Bolivia; Trini Orozco arrived on her way to the Center of Formation in Canchaque; and Flor Figueroa came to visit that same afternoon, discovering to her delight that she had been accepted for entrance into the Community.

On January 30, Sisters Elena, Nelyda, and Susana left for Lima for their annual retreat and a Scripture course. Back in Pachitea, Sisters Janet and Agnes entertained Margarita, the sister of Susana, who had decided to enter the postulancy of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate.

The war against too much water and too little light continued! When another water main broke, what had already come to be called “Lake Pachitea” was enlarged. Yet the rains continued almost every day. Sister Agnes and her committee, therefore, visited the mayor, who informed them that there would be a new company in charge of the water and sewage system in Piura. But their questions were “When?” and “Will it be able to solve the problems the other could not?”

By February 22, the drain in front of the house had filled up completely, and the water began rising in the sisters’ back yard once again. When the company said there was no money to make repairs or pump the water out, Sister Agnes and the committee again marched off to the mayor’s office. Finally, by the end of the month, the men had filled in much of the back yard with sand, but there was still water in the patio area.

By February 24, the water was so high in front of Sister Janet’s clinic that she began looking for another space in which she could receive patients. Fortunately, she was able to secure the use of the communal hall and began serving the people of Pachitea there.

With the darkness, some families had invaded the church property again, but this time there were drug dealers taking advantage of the situation as well. Therefore, Father Pablo Alvarado joined the neighbors in reporting this to the police and requesting that they take action.

Sister Elena and the two novices returned from Lima on the twenty-seventh, very enthusiastic about the Bible course they had taken. Within a
short time, the two candidates—Flor Figueroa and Trinidad (Trini) Orozco—arrived for a visit. Since Sister Joan Kilker had come that same afternoon, she took Trini with her when she returned to Talara the next day.

By March 10, the good news was that there was again electricity; the bad news was that the refrigerator had burned out its motor with all the stoppages and starting. Thus the sisters had a new preoccupation: where to buy ice every day?

Although Sister Janet was in Lima for retreat, the other sisters and Flor journeyed to Chulucanas on March 24 for the funeral of Fathers Lucho Lopez and Jeremy Lear, both of whom had been killed in an automobile accident just after leaving the diocesan planning meetings in Lima. Because of this sorrowful event, the sisters had postponed the celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation and Flor’s entrance into the Community.

After the funeral, Sisters Rose Celine, Catherine, and Justin Wallace (OSF) returned with the novitiate community, where they had a proper celebration for Flor, as well as for Sisters Susana and Nelyda, who had just completed their canonical year as novices. The next day, Father Jose, SJ, offered a special Mass, during which the sisters renewed their vows before Sisters Catherine and Justin departed for Chalaco.

On April 11, there was a double celebration: first, for Flor’s birthday, and secondly, because not only was there electricity, but the refrigerator was also working. Since Sister Susana was leaving for a two-week vacation at home in Santo Domingo before going to her mission experience in Chalaco, she, too, did some celebrating. The catechists as well as the sisters gave her a farewell on the twelfth, and Sister Elena and Flor accompanied her to Morropon the following day. That Saturday Flor began a weeklong course for catechists. Sisters Janet and Elena began cleaning and painting the communal hall.

On Good Friday, most of the sisters participated in the living Stations of the Cross prepared by the youth group with whom Sister Janet had been working; however, Sister Agnes went to Los Algarrobos to conduct the liturgical services there. But all the sisters attended Easter Vigil services together in Cristo Rey. After Mass, Sister Janet and Flor went to a celebration with the youth group. On Easter Sunday, the community joined in a quiet in-house celebration of the Resurrection.

During Easter week, Sisters Rachel and Sara, Vincentian Sisters of Charity from Pittsburgh, who lived and worked in Talara Alta, spent a few days with

* The term “candidate,” as used here and throughout this book, refers to a young woman who is in the process of seriously discerning her vocation to the SCL Community. She has not yet entered the Community but has become acquainted with the sisters through live-in community and prayer experiences and sometimes participation in ministry.

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the sisters while they did some shopping. On Saturday, the sisters attended a retreat day given by the Archbishop for all the priests and sisters of the diocese. That same day, Trini Orozco and another young woman interested in the Community arrived from Talara to talk to Sister Elena; they stayed for the afternoon of reflection the following day. On Wednesday, Sister Agnes, Sister Elena, and Flor accompanied the Archbishop to Tambogrande for the laying of the cornerstone of the new Benedictine Monastery.

On the night of May 6, the sisters in Pachitea experienced the presence of terrorists in Piura for the first time when they were awakened by a loud explosion. They later discovered that a light post just two blocks away had been dynamited.

Despite this, activities continued as usual. Sister Janet continued working with the youth group, preparing for the celebration of Mother’s Day. In one of the Catholic high schools, Sisters Agnes and Elena began a three-night course on the social teachings of the Church. Sister Elena also led the Marian prayer group in an afternoon of spiritual reflection. Thanks to a very generous gift from Spain, Sisters Agnes and Elena began making preparations to distribute 6000 kilograms of wheat in Los Algarrobos and Pachitea.

Flor went home for Mother’s Day. The following week, Sister Janet left for a nursing workshop in Lima. Because the road to Chalaco was still all but impassable, Sister Elena and Flor went to Chulucanas with Sister Justin to take Bishop McNabb’s small plane to Chalaco. While alone, Sister Agnes went to Los Algarrobos for a procession in honor of Maria Auxiliadora. It was not until the morning of May 29 that she discovered evidence of an attempted break-in at the house.

Sister Elena and Flor returned from Chalaco on May 31, having walked for seven hours after leaving at 6:00 a.m. They had finally encountered some trucks to bring them the rest of the way. Altogether, the trip had taken thirteen hours; it was 7:00 p.m. when they arrived in Pachitea. Two days later, Flor was ready to accompany Sister Agnes to Los Algarrobos for a dance being given to raise funds for the new church.

In between all these activities, the sisters continued their battle to remove the stagnant waters from the parish property. Sister Elena joined yet another committee, and Sister Agnes kept trying to make contacts with authorities that could help solve this problem. On June 22, a new pump finally arrived after several weeks’ work and pleading. Just imagine their frustration when the same pump was stolen eleven days later!

A sign of hope appeared when Sister Catherine arrived from Chalaco to make some necessary purchases and said the road was finally open. She came again a week later, this time bringing Sister Susana along. The following day, Sisters Joan and Donna Jean brought Sisters Mary Kathleen
Stefani and Bernadette Helfert, Community Councilors, from Talara so they could go with Sisters Catherine and Susana back up to Chalaco.

After the travelers had departed, Sisters Joan, Elena, Agnes, and Flor went to Los Algarrobos for the laying of the cornerstone of the new church. The latter two stayed on for the greater part of the day for the sports events and the *kermesse* (food sales) being held in celebration of the day and to help raise funds. Sister Janet also joined them later since she was assessor for the youth groups.

When Sister Catherine brought Sisters Mary Kathleen and Bernadette down from their visit in Chalaco on July 5, she was pleased that the roadwork had advanced enough so that it took only eight hours to arrive! But surely the two North American guests must have considered it too much time to cover only seventy miles.

The next day, Sisters Mary Kathleen and Bernadette visited the food program for children in Los Algarrobos and then the following morning gave a communication workshop for the sisters. In the afternoon, they visited the catechetical programs in Pachitea and Los Algarrobos with Sister Elena and Flor. On Sunday, July 8, they divided up, Sister Mary Kathleen going to Mass in Los Algarrobos with Sister Agnes and Flor, Sister Bernadette assisting in Pachitea with Sisters Elena and Janet.

Despite the fact that it had been raining all morning and the roof of the formation house had begun to leak, Sisters Mary Kathleen and Bernadette continued with their plans. They presented the sisters with their personal copies of the new SCL Constitution and played a taped message from Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director.

On Tuesday, following an expedition to Catacaos to shop in the artisan stalls, the visitors had dinner at Hotel Turista. On their return to the house, they went to see Sister Janet’s clinic and even joined in the painting and sweeping that was in progress. The following day, the guests were taken to see a few more sites and participated in a prayer group in the afternoon. On July 12, Sisters Josephine Bustos, Joan, Donna Jean, and Nelyda arrived for a Community celebration of Sister Donna Jean’s twenty-five years as an SCL. This event also served as a farewell party for Sisters Mary Kathleen and Bernadette, and for Sister Donna Jean who was returning to the States for a visit.

On November 11, the sisters had lunch with their good friends and benefactors, the sisters of Our Lady of Peace School. Later, they took cake and hot chocolate to the elderly of the Asilo for Ancianos (Home of the Elderly).

On December 8, Sister Elena was occupied with the First Communicants of Cristo Rey. In the absence of their own church, the ceremony took
place in the seminary chapel and was followed by a breakfast for the young people in the seminary dining room.

In February 1985, Trini Orozco was officially accepted as a postulant, although she had been living with the sisters since January while participating in the catechetical course in ESER (School of Religious Education for teachers and catechists). On the day of her entrance, her mother, aunts, grandmother, and a cousin accompanied her in the simple ceremony.

March 25 marked another historic occasion. On that day, the first two Peruvian SCLs, Sisters Nelyda Clavijo and Susana Cordova, made their first vows in the chapel of Our Lady of Peace School. Once again, Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director, was present, this time to receive their profession of vows. Sister Rosalie Mahoney, Community Councilor, who accompanied her, must have been especially moved, for she had been among the first five Sisters of Charity to have come to Peru as missionaries.

Following the celebration, Sister Elena took time to go to the United States for a thirty-day retreat and her home visit. During her absence, Sister Agnes was in charge of the postulants, Flor and Trini.

Trini returned from her monthlong mission experience in Chalaco on September 30, accompanied by Sister Susana, who had come to Piura to make some necessary purchases for the Chalaco community. Upon Trini’s return, she and Flor began classes in meditation and the Bible with Sister Elena; later on, they would also study the Eucharist with Father Pablo Alvarado and Father Jose Rosas, OFM.

In early October, the sisters joined the Franciscans at Our Lady of Peace School for the celebration of their patronal feast. Sister Elena and the two postulants stayed on after the Mass to make a “desert day” in the silence of this school for the deaf. This practice would become a part of the weekly schedule in the novitiate.

During October, the sisters again entered into the processions, devotions, and novenas so special to Peruvians during this month. First there was the opening procession in honor of Señor de los Milagros (Lord of Miracles) and then the novena in honor of Señor Cautivo de Ayabaca (the captive Christ of Ayabaca). When Flor accompanied Sister Agnes to Los Algarrobos for a celebration in honor of Señor de los Milagros, they discovered the people had even paid to have a Fireworks Castle to culminate the evening. On the day of the feast, the sisters fasted and prayed; then in the evening after the Mass, they joined in the procession with the image.

On October 22, Sister Agnes and Flor were occupied with a meeting of the parents of the young people to be confirmed in Los Algarrobos; they also had a practice for the ceremony. On the twenty-sixth, Sisters Agnes, Rose Celine, Elena, and the postulant, Trini, all went to the Confirmation ceremony to lend their moral and other support.
In the face of the events that were taking place in the mountainous areas of Peru, especially in the south where the group Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) had begun its terrorist activities in earnest, all the parishes of the Department of Piura held an evening of reflection with the children, young people, and adults on the subject of world peace. Sister Agnes and Flor were in charge of the reflections in Los Algarrobos on the evening of confirmation. The next day, the sisters assisted in a demonstration in the Parque Infantil (Children’s Park) against violence and for peace.

Sister Janet was unable to assist because she had recently begun working with a group of handicapped persons known as the Fraternity of the Sick. They came together for mutual support and prayer, and at this particular time, she had already scheduled a retreat for these handicapped in Castilla. Later, Sister Janet worked with some other nurses to coordinate a parade of handicapped persons.

On October 29, Sisters Josephine, Joan, and Nelyda joined in the farewell party for Flor, who was returning with them for a month’s experience in Talara. Sister Agnes also took some rest and relaxation, going to Paita with the Franciscan sisters there. Meanwhile, Sister Elena and Trini went to Chulucanas to the Center of Formation to do a little vocation work. On November 2, Esther Vilela of Piura, a young woman interested in the Community, arrived for a vocation retreat.

On November 6, the sisters received their new breviaries from Lima. Although all joined in the monthly retreat on the tenth, Sister Agnes had to go to Los Algarrobos in the afternoon for the beginning of the mission there.

The middle of the month was likewise full of various activities. Sister Janet and a woman from the parish went to a meeting of Caritas in Paita. Sister Agnes attended Confer. Meanwhile, Trini and two young women of the parish conducted the practices for Confirmation. Sister Agnes and Trini also went to Los Algarrobos for a communal marriage ceremony and various Baptisms. The same night that there were Confirmations in Pachitea, the novena in honor of Christ the King began in the parish. After this bevy of activity, Sister Agnes took a bit of time for some rest in Talara.

While she was there, Sister Elena, Sister Janet, and Trini accepted an invitation to have Thanksgiving Dinner with various priests of the Society of St. James in Castilla. The following day, Clorinda Timana, a candidate, and her father joined the sisters for dinner at the convent before Sisters Janet and Elena left for Talara. Sister Janet intended to spend a few days for rest there; Sister Elena was journeying to Lima with Sister Joan for a formation course on the “Critical Conscience.” The next week, Sister Janet also went to Lima for a health workshop.

Shortly before Christmas, Sister Agnes left for Lima en route to the United States. Sister Elena and Trini gave a workshop for some of the
young people about establishing a youth program. During these days, Sister Janet met with her Health Promoters and also helped one of the friendship groups to prepare hot chocolate for children. The postulants had a Christmas celebration with the catechists of Pachitea and Los Algarrobos. As had become usual, the community divided into two groups so the sisters’ presence would be felt in both communities where they worked.

Early in January 1986, Sister Janet, Flor, and Trini went to Lima for summer studies, returning the afternoon of February 1. Maria Orozco, a candidate and the sister of Trini, had been staying with Sister Elena in the formation house while the others were in Lima; she returned to Talara the day after the others arrived.

In the house meeting of February 2, plans were laid for the reception of Flor and Trini into the novitiate and for the visit of Sisters Rosalie Mahoney and Rosalie Curtin, Community Councilors, who were to arrive from the United States on the sixth. Trini and Flor paid their families a short home visit, returning before the visitors arrived. Sisters Elena and Janet took the two guests to Catacaos the morning after their arrival to visit the artisan shops. That afternoon the two candidates (Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco) and the postulants (Flor and Trini) entertained them with a program of traditional dances. Then the dancers entertained themselves playing *carnaval!* The following morning, Clorinda and Maria returned to their homes. That evening Sisters Josephine, Joan, Rose Celine, Regina, and Sara (VSC) arrived; in the morning, Sister Nelyda also returned from Lima and her retreat.

The official reception of Flor and Trini into the novitiate on February 9 was a simple ceremony carried out in the chapel of the novitiate house at 8:00 a.m. The candidates, Maria and Clorinda, arrived in time for dinner, and in the afternoon they lent their efforts to preparing the chapel of Our Lady of Peace School for the Mass celebrated at 5:00 p.m. Friends and members of the two families were present. Trini’s family waited until after the simple reception to tell her that her paternal grandfather had died that very afternoon. That evening a note of joy was again introduced when Sister Mary Kevin and members of the Council called from the United States to felicitate Flor and Trini on their reception into the Community. Before retiring for the night, the sisters serenaded Sister Elena with “Las Mañanitas.” Following the song and some hugs and birthday greetings, everyone went to bed.

The following day, the sisters ate out at a restaurant but returned home for cake and ice cream before Sisters Josephine, Rose Celine, and Sara returned to Talara by early afternoon.
Later that afternoon, Sisters Elena, Susana, and Trini stopped to visit Trini’s family and express their condolences. After Señor Orozco’s funeral, Sisters Joan, Rosalie Mahoney, and Rosalie Curtin left for Talara.

Towards evening, the sisters went to Señor Chunga’s house to see the video that the Councilors had brought, prepared by members of the novitiate in the United States. About a week later, Señor Chunga came to the convent to film the novitiate members at their study and work. In this way it was hoped that the Sisters of Charity in North and South America would have some idea of each other.

On February 12, Father John Drury and Maria Orozco came to visit; Sisters Elena, Nelyda, Flor, and Trini accompanied them to the beach. A little over a week later, Sister Elena and the two new novices went on another outing, this time visiting the Benedictine monastery in Sechura and a priest friend.

On their return, they found that Sisters Joan, Rose Celine, and Nelyda had arrived from Talara. While Sisters Joan and Elena busied themselves planning for their trip to the United States and the Community Chapter, Sisters Rose Celine and Catherine Nichol made preparations for going to Lima for the annual meeting of parish agents from Chulucanas. Sister Janet announced she would be going to Lima about the same time to make her annual retreat.

In mid-February, Sisters Flor and Trini began visiting older people in Pachitea and Cruz del Norte every Thursday. Each took Communion to four to six persons. About this same time, they began a project to report on the liturgical celebrations in the various churches of the city. As during their postulancy, they continued the practice of making a weekly “desert day” of prayer and silence at Our Lady of Peace School for the deaf.

In mid-March 1986, three candidates entered the formation program as postulants. Clorinda Timana had known the first Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth while yet a child in Talara and had been visiting Sister Elena and the formation community for some time. Maria Orozco was, of course, Sister Trini’s sister; Rosa Cordova had grown up in Chalaco.

Besides their classes in the novitiate house, both the novices and postulants began assisting at the weekly Bible classes that Father Gallo was giving every Tuesday evening in the parish. During June, they continued participating with members of the parish in the classes on liturgy, Exodus, and the Psalms given by Fathers Miguel Medina, Jose Seminario, Pablo Alvarado, and others. They also joined parishioners for prayer meetings in the parish. As their apostolic work, Maria and Clorinda met with the catechists every Wednesday.

When the postulants and novices went home for Mother’s Day, Sisters Elena, Janet, and Agnes accepted the invitation to Our Lady of Peace
Convent for dinner. A few days later, Archbishop Cantuarias celebrated Mass in the convent and stayed for dinner.

Shortly before Sister Elena left for the United States and Chapter, she accompanied the two novices, Sisters Flor and Trini, to the Center of Formation, which was now located in Chulucanas. They introduced the girls participating in the program to the Sisters of Charity and also invited them to visit the formation house.

When Sister Elena departed for the States, she left the members of the postulancy in the able hands of Sister Agnes and the novices under the guidance of Sister Janet. Besides celebrating Sister Trini’s birthday on June 9, Sister Agnes took the postulants to visit Catacaos. A few days later, she sent all the novitiate members home to celebrate Father’s Day. On June 17, she and the two novices went to Paita for a day of retreat and prayer for the Chapter.

About 8:00 p.m. on June 19, the sisters received word of Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani’s election as Community Director. The postulants and novices went to a movie afterwards while Sisters Agnes and Donna Jean, who had come over from Talara, stayed home to visit.

Later in the month, Sisters Flor and Trini accompanied Sisters Catherine and Susana to Ayabaca for the ordination of Father Leoncio. Rosa Cordova and Clorinda Timana accompanied Sister Agnes in various activities in Los Algarrobos for the celebration of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul. From time to time, they continued helping her there with other projects, such as distributing clothes from Caritas among the most needy.

Sister Elena returned in time to help celebrate July 4th. In the days following, the postulants met with the parents of the children in the catechetical programs both in Los Algarrobos and in Pachitea. Maria and Clorinda also met with the catechists in the communal hall in Los Algarrobos. Before Sister Agnes and Clorinda went to Lima for an eight-day course in Liberation Theology in August, Rosa and Clorinda both took short vacations.

In early September, Sister Regina Deitchman brought two girls from the far side of the Chalaco parish to visit the novitiate and to have their interviews with a psychologist. Both Renee Zeta and Luciola (Lucy) Huaman accompanied the postulants and novices in their work throughout the week. Morfília (Morfi) Liviapoma, a young woman from Pachitea, also joined in the process preparatory to entering the postulancy. This included going to Talara for an interview with Sister Joan Kilker, Director of Missions at this time, and having medical examinations done by Dr. Luis More.

By this time, the parish clinic operated by Sister Janet had been rehabilitated, and on September 2 it was rededicated. The convent also
took on a new look as Rosa Cordova and the gardener busily planted flowers that Sister Agnes had bought.

Sister Elena left for Morropon and Chalaco to visit Clorinda, who was having a mission experience there in the sierra. While she was there, Rosa took the children preparing for First Communion in Los Algarrobos for an outing. Sisters Flor and Trini accompanied Sister Agnes to Sullana to make some purchases and then went on to Querecotillo to visit the shrine of Señor de Chocan. While there, they met with several señoritas that were interested in the religious life.

When some of these candidates came to visit and have their examinations, the postulants and novices were good hostesses, taking the girls various places and explaining about the Community. They invited them to come back to help celebrate Saint Vincent’s Day on September 27.

Besides her work in the clinic, Sister Janet was busy meeting with the Fraternity of the Sick and giving a class about realities in the nation. Sister Agnes helped Sister Janet teach a group baking skills, insisting on the importance of measuring accurately.

In October, Sister Agnes wrote to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, volunteering to go to Bolivia, noting the need for more sisters there and telling her that although she had not wanted to be in the formation house, she had now served there for these first six years of its existence. But Mother Nature and Community need would intervene; heavy rains and flooding in 1987 would again force the sisters to abandon the novitiate house in Pachitea. Then, when Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani asked Sister Agnes to supervise the construction and paper work for a new house of formation, Sister Agnes’ move to Bolivia was delayed for almost another year.

On October 23, the sisters got Maria Orozco up, singing “Las Mananitas” for her birthday. The day itself proved full, for besides the birthday celebration and Holy Hour in the house, Sister Agnes went to her class on liturgy, and there were the usual classes with the catechists and children. Added to that were the devotions to Señor de los Milagros and Masses in both Los Algarrobos and Pachitea. Some even went to the Cathedral for ordinations and celebrations there!

During the month, Sister Flor had begun lessons on the guitar, and she and Sister Trini took a class in education at Lourdes. This class on the benefits of exercise was called “Psicomotriz.” Throughout October there were numerous comings and goings. At the end of the month, Maria went to Chalaco for a mission experience in the sierra, and Sisters Josephine, Joan, and Regina came from Talara for a meeting regarding various points of the Chapter. After they finished, they returned to Talara in the afternoon, and Sister Elena went to Paita for some rest and relaxation.
On November 2, the Feast of All Souls, Clorinda went to Catacaos “to crown her mother,” that is, to put a wreath at her burial niche and pray for her eternal rest. About a week later, having been selected by the election board, Clorinda was busy all day as a “member of the table,” checking ballots and registrations.

Again during November there were several outings. The novices and postulants enjoyed another part of the culture of Peru when they went to see and hear a musical group called “Peru Negro.” They also participated in a presentation on Human Rights given by an organ of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference at the Jesuit high school. As a way of celebrating Founders’ Day on the eleventh, some went to visit the Archbishop’s Home for Street Children in Santa Julia, taking along a dinner for them. Sister Elena and the novices also went to the beach at Paita for a day.

Early in December, Sister Flor received the good news she had been accepted for vows. Shortly thereafter, the sisters joined in the ordination celebration for Javier Castillo, one of several seminarians who had more or less regularly visited the formation house. December 8 was a busy day, what with the first Mass of Father Javier, First Communions in both Pachitea and Los Algarrobos, and the first vows for the Redemptorist Sister Luzmila in Chulucanas.

On the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sisters Elena and Trini went to Catacaos to shop for Christmas gifts, stopping on the way to pick up the medical reports of one of the young women interested in entering the Community. The next day, the sisters attended the meeting with the Archbishop and his Christmas dinner for the priests and religious working in the diocese. Two days later, Maria Orozco accompanied Esther Vilela to Talara so that she could get to know the community there.

Besides the normal pre-Christmas comings and goings, baking and delivering of cookies to the older people the sisters had been visiting, there were two rather unusual occurrences. On December 16, as they returned from the Feria Navidena (Christmas fair), the sisters discovered some men trying to climb the wall of their house. First they called the police, but discovering that they couldn't come, Sister Elena and Flor began blowing whistles to frighten the would-be robbers away. The following night, Sister Trini, Sister Flor, and some of the postulants went up on the roof of the convent with a microphone and began reciting the rosary. This was a protest against the inactivity of the police and the continued use of the parish grounds for purposes of prostitution.

Both before and after the Bishop's Christmas dinner in Chulucanas, the sisters from Chalaco visited briefly; Sister Rose Celine stayed on for Christmas. Meanwhile, Sister Elena had gone to Chalaco with Sister
Susana; and she would go there again the day after Christmas with Rosa Cordova, who was returning to her home after nine months as a postulant.

When Sister Elena returned, she was again accompanied by Sister Susana since she, Clorinda, and Sister Rose Celine were all planning to travel to Lima for the long course in the New Image of the Parish (NIP) program. As the number of Peruvians entering the Community continued to increase, it had become difficult for one person to direct both years of the novitiate program and also attend to the needs of incoming postulants. The Community had, therefore, decided to divide the formation work. After conversations with Archbishop Cantuarias, it was decided to establish the postulant program in the vacant convent in Negritos, with Sister Regina Deitchman as Director of Postulants. Thus, on December 30, Sisters Joan Kilker, Elena, and Regina met at Pachitea to discuss plans. When Sister Joan arrived from Talara, she brought along Sisters Donna Jean and Rose Celine, who would also be living in the new convent in Negritos to help form community. One of the candidates, Renee Zeta, arrived from Piscan Grande that same day for a visit; that night Sisters Susana, Flor, and Trini took Renee to the movies.

The last day of the year, some of the Augustinians visited the sisters for dinner, and Sister Nelyda also arrived to spend New Years before journeying on to Chiclayo to make her retreat. As is customary in the Community, the sisters had Holy Hour on New Year’s Eve before bidding farewell to 1986 and welcoming 1987. Had they known all that was to come in that year, they might not have welcomed it so jubilantly!

The two postulants, Clorinda and Maria, both returned from short home visits on January 2, 1987. Sister Elena accompanied the two novices, Sisters Flor and Trini, for their “desert day” of reflection and prayer. The next day, the novices and Maria went to Yacila for a day at the beach. After helping to take down the Christmas decorations on the seventh, Sisters Elena and Flor left for Lima and retreat the following day.

On January 12, Sister Regina arrived with two candidates and two other señoritas who would be taking the catechetical course in the seminary. Although they would join the sisters in the formation house for their noon meal, they would have their breakfast and supper at Our Lady of Peace, at least during January. Maria Orozco also attended her final year of classes in catechetics at the seminary. Besides this, she participated in a Bible class with the novices. During the second part of the month, Maria also helped Renee Zeta and Luciola Huaman, the two candidates from Piscan Grande, make some clothes preparatory to entering the postulancy in March.

Sister Agnes continued her work in Los Algarrobos and was very pleased with the work of Sister Flor and the candidate Esther Vilela with the Pastoral Juvenil (Program of Youth Work). Not all her work was without
difficulties, however. For instance, when the deacon who had been working there left for Lima without making other arrangements, Sister Agnes was authorized to officiate at three Baptisms on Saturday night. This took place in spite of the fact that one of the priests tried to change the time and day at the last minute.

Although Sister Flor returned from Lima right after her retreat, Sister Elena stayed on there for a couple of days. When Sister Janet arrived from the States, she at first stayed over in Lima awaiting her luggage. Despite this, she was still without two of her suitcases when she arrived in Piura on the twenty-second. Three days later, hearing that her suitcases had finally been located, she returned to Lima to pick them up, returning the following day.

By that time, it had begun raining again and the sisters had again lost their electricity. There was much mud in their barrio and elsewhere in the city. So it was good that they could distract themselves with the tales of a Colombian sister who had asked for hospitality while awaiting her papers. She was a missionary in the rain forest area of Peru and had many stories of the life and customs of the indigenous people there.

Although it had rained heavily during the early morning hours of January 23, Sisters Joan and Josephine arrived from Talara for the formation meeting with Sisters Regina and Elena. Despite the amount of water all around them, or perhaps because of it, Sister Elena and the novices, as well as Maria, Sister Regina, and the candidates, all went to the beach the following day.

As they finished their catechetical course at the seminary, Sisters Flor and Trini invited the young women who had been studying at ESER that summer to the afternoon of reflection for that Sunday. Four responded, so, together with Renee and Luciola from Piscan Grande and Mabel Cordova from Frias, there was a good number for interaction.

Expecting the arrival of Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, and Sister Ann Barton from the United States, Sister Elena prepared a special feast on February 8. After having unsuccessfully met both flights, however, the sisters returned home, and the novices, postulants, candidates, and professed sisters had their own private fiesta!

The following day, there were such heavy, heavy rains in the afternoon that Sister Janet could not leave her clinic. In the house, rain entered the front room and bedrooms through the windows. Some went to the airport again to await their guests, but while they were there, Sister Joan Kilker called from Lima to say that Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann were in Mexico City and that she would let the sisters in Piura know when they finally made it to Lima.

The visitors finally arrived in Piura midday on February 11. Having arrived by plane in Talara, they had been driven over by Sisters Joan and Mary Patricia Kielty. The latter had just arrived from Bolivia the night
Sister Regina Deitchman greets first Peruvian postulant, Nelyda Clavijo, at new formation house in Pachitea.

Sister Janet Cashman in her consultorio before the rains.

Sister Elena Mack accepting an engraved silver plate, expression of the gratitude of the parishioners of Cristo Rey.
before. Sisters Elena and Regina took Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann to Catacaos the next morning. That afternoon they accompanied Sister Agnes to Los Algarrobos.

In anticipation of Sister Flor’s first vows, the sisters entertained the family of Flor for dinner that Friday. Then in the afternoon, Sisters Elena and Mary Kathleen went to visit the family of Morfi Liviapoma, one of the candidates preparing to enter the postulancy. Meanwhile, Sister Ann went with Sisters Regina and Susana in the new Chalaco jeep to pick up Sister Catherine in Pambarumbe, a village about halfway down to the coast from Chalaco.

That evening the postulants and candidates gave a show for Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann, presenting their dance in the garden area even though it had begun to rain heavier and heavier. As it continued to rain throughout the night, creating a real pool of water outside the house, someone went to the market to buy yanquis (thongs made of rubber tires for their feet) for Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann.

In the midst of all this, when Sisters Joan Kilker and Mary Joan Eble arrived from Talara on February 14, Sister Mary Kathleen had a meeting with the formation team. That same day, Sister Flor went to Our Lady of Peace Convent to make an afternoon of reflection. Later, she and the others involved practiced for the ceremonies of the following day. That evening, the candidates (Renee, Luciola, Esther, and Morfi) ate with the sisters and received their formal acceptance to enter the Community in March.

There had again been heavy rains that afternoon, although they let up some that night. The following morning, the sisters gathered for a special Lauds prepared by Sisters Flor and Trini. Afterwards, they enjoyed a delicious breakfast prepared by Sister Elena, the Director of Novices. After the dishes were cleared away and washed, Sister Flor opened her gifts. Later, all enjoyed a special dinner at the restaurant Tres Estrellas.

That afternoon Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann, as well as Sister Flor, Clorinda, and Maria, went to Our Lady of Peace Convent to change clothes so as not to have to wade through the water and mud in their “fineries.” Meanwhile, the sisters got word that Sisters Mary Patricia and Donna Jean would not be present for the vows as they were unable to get a comite (a public van that travels a designated route) from Talara due to the flooding of the Pan American highway.

This time the Mass and vow ceremony were celebrated in the Franciscan chapel at St. Anthony’s at 4:00 p.m.; a reception in the Franciscan hall followed the liturgical celebration. By 7:00 the sisters returned to the convent in Pachitea for an evening in community.

On February 16, Sister Joan Kilker and Mary Joan Eble set off for Talara with Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann after joining in the Mass for Sister Catherine’s father, who had recently died. Later in the day, Sister Mary
Kathleen called to ask that all the professed sisters come to Talara on Wednesday for a meeting about the future of the SCLs’ Bolivian mission in Coripata. Despite the fact that there was again no light, Sister Regina organized a birthday party for Morfi and Esther that night at Our Lady of Peace Convent.

The following afternoon, the sisters from Pachitea went to St. Anthony’s for Mass. Just about the time the Mass finished, the rains began, becoming ever increasingly heavier. Sister Flor was held up visiting with various persons; so after waiting for some time, Sisters Elena, Janet, and Trini decided to return to the convent by car. They prayed in the dining room using kerosene lamps.

Following Vespers, most went out to the kitchen to look for something to eat. However, Sister Elena was still in the front room when the rainwater again began to enter the house. She called for help to put everything they could above water level. Not knowing how serious the flooding would be this time, it was decided that it would be better if all the younger sisters went to Our Lady of Peace for the night. So, after putting most of their belongings on top of the beds and closets, they took only what they needed when Sister Regina arrived with the jeep.

When Sister Flor arrived some time later, Sister Elena sent her on to join the rest. Meanwhile, she called Sister Mary Kathleen to inform her that it would be impossible for them to attend the meeting in Talara since the novitiate house was again under water.

Despite the heat, early the next morning about 8:00 a.m., the sisters started moving their things to Our Lady of Peace. Working continuously until 6:00 p.m., everyone (postulants, novices, sisters, neighbors, and children) managed to pack up everything and move it, thanks to the Chalaco jeep and one of their friends from the parish with a pickup truck. The following day, based on their experience when they had had to abandon the convent before, they asked a couple of seminarians to remove the doors and lights from the house. Again the friend with the pickup helped transfer these to Our Lady of Peace. As tired as they were, they complied with a former invitation to join a parish family for dinner and a celebration of Sister Flor’s vows.

The next morning, while they were still at breakfast, they were indeed surprised when Sisters Mary Kathleen, Joan, Ann, and Mary Patricia appeared at the door and came in to embrace them all. The displaced sisters were much moved by this show of sisterly support and solidarity.

Thus it was that in March 1987 the formation house in Cristo Rey, Piura, was again abandoned, this time permanently. While the sisters looked for a possible solution, the novitiate was temporarily moved to a rented house in the Urbanization Santa Ana, within easy walking distance of St. Joseph Church.
Although Maria Orozco and Clorinda Timana became novices and were given the title Sister in a simple ceremony on March 14, their reception was delayed until later in the month due to the move into the house in Santa Ana. The day following their entrance in the novitiate, Sister Regina welcomed the four new postulants into the newly opened convent in Negritos.

The sisters knew it would be difficult to find something already built that would satisfy their needs for formation in Piura, but they hoped to locate a house to which they could add on. Sister Agnes agreed to look into possibilities for land on which to build or for a house that could be remodeled to fit the needs of the Community.

In early April 1987, Sister Elena went to Paita for a few days of rest. Two days later, the two new novices, Sisters Maria Orozco and Clorinda Timana, met her in Sullana to buy some things for the students on study grants and also to visit Amalia, a young woman interested in the Community.

The sisters continued attending Cristo Rey and Los Algarrobos, carrying out activities as though they were still living in Pachitea. The novices and postulants continued making their weekly “desert days” at Our Lady of Peace. When the sisters met to refine the house goals developed earlier, the novices entered into the planning with the professed sisters.

Holy Thursday services were held in San Juan de Dios in Santa Isabel and most of the sisters attended the services there, but the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament took place in the community hall in Pachitea.

Sisters Agnes, Elena, and Trini went to Los Algarrobos on Good Friday for the Way of the Cross, and Sister Maria joined Sisters Janet and Clorinda for the liturgical celebration in Pachitea. On Easter Sunday, they enjoyed a quiet day at home, although Father Miguel stopped by later in the day.

On Easter Monday, Sister Elena had a formation meeting in Negritos. In her absence, the novices began a class in manual arts in the afternoon with Señora Ubaldina Herrera. The following day, the novices also went to Negritos to visit the sisters and the new postulants (Lucy Huaman, Morfi Liviapoma, Esther Vilela, and Renee Zeta), returning that same afternoon. Sister Janet visited a señorita Rosa in Querecotillo to encourage her in her interest in the religious life.

On April 22, Sisters Regina and Mary Joan Eble arrived from Talara to join Sister Agnes in looking at various houses and sites that might be used for a new formation center. They were successful in locating a house in the AAHH Santa Rosa that they all liked. The site was convenient to the parish church of the same name and to various modes of public transportation to the center of town. There was a small market within two blocks, and the large city market was easily accessible by public transportation. The house, however, would need considerable changes and additional construction to be suitable for the Community’s needs. For that
reason, Sister Agnes continued to look for other possible sites, consulting
the newspaper every day.

Despite the crowded conditions at Santa Ana, Amalia arrived for a two-
day experience with the sisters. Sister Agnes took her and another señorita
to Mass in Los Algarrobos and to see some of the work being done there.
Two other señoritas joined them in the house for dinner and the afternoon
of reflection. This time the novices shared the stories of the SCL foundress,
Mother Xavier, and of Saint Vincent, and something of the history of the
SCLs' coming to Peru in 1963.

Sisters Clorinda and Maria continued making their Communion calls
in Pachitea and helping Father Miguel with the Mass he regularly held in
the old convent for the shut-ins. On April 30, the novices and Sister Elena
assisted at the Penance service he had for the shut-ins and older people.

On May 3, Sister Regina and the postulants joined the sisters in Piura
for the meeting of Confer. On Tuesday Sister Agnes had classes with the
novices, and Sister Janet busied herself in Pachitea distributing food
provided by Caritas. As planned, the following day the sisters had a farewell
dinner for Father Pablo Alvarado, with whom they had worked for several
years in Pachitea and Los Algarrobos.

Since the sisters had decided on the house in Santa Rosa, Sister Joan
Kilker, Director of Missions, arrived on the seventh to join Sister Agnes
and the owner of the house to begin the paper work involved in its transfer
to the Sisters of Charity. This process would consume many days; in fact,
it was not until May 14 that Sister Agnes was able to finish the last papers!
No one was surprised at this since obtaining any type of legal papers always
takes a long time in Peru. Nevertheless, the community living in Santa
Ana celebrated the purchase of their new home in Santa Rosa long before
the papers were finalized.

On May 7, Sister Elena joined the formation personnel from other
Communities in a meeting in Lourdes High School. That evening, since
Sister Trini was leaving for her novitiate mission experience in Chalaco,
the sisters had her favorite cake and finger foods as a farewell party.

The Saturday before Mother’s Day, Sister Agnes held a prayer service
in Santa Ana. Then Sister Maria and Clorinda both went home to celebrate
the day. While the postulant Morfi was visiting her home in Piura, she
paid the sisters a visit.

While attending a three-day workshop in Lourdes with Sister Elena
and the novices, Sister Regina and the postulants were houseguests in
Santa Ana. Sister Donna Jean also visited briefly and returned to Negritos
with three of the postulants.

The day following the workshop, the postulant Esther was hospitalized
in preparation for an operation. Sister Regina stayed with her even at night
following the procedure. Being from Piura, Esther’s family also accompanied her. The evening before Sister Regina’s birthday, the sisters called her at the clinic to sing “Las Mañanitas.” The following day Esther was sufficiently recuperated to return to the convent. So, of course, there was a real birthday dinner and celebration for Sister Regina then. Sister Donna Jean and the rest of the postulants had come from Negritos to join in the festivities, returning to their house afterwards.

On May 28, Sister Elena and the novices joined Sisters Joan, Nelyda, and Sister Margarita Escudero, Handmaid of the Sacred Heart, in going to Santo Domingo for a three-day workshop; the young sisters from Chalaco joined them there. Besides receiving good input on the Eucharist and its central role in their lives, the young sisters enjoyed being together and all the natural beauty in that mountainous environment. Before leaving, Sister Elena received a live turkey from Sister Susana’s brother that she and the others transported back to Piura in a sack.

On June 8, Sister Maria was the first to discover that there had been a robbery in the house. After Mass and Lauds, while the others were still finishing breakfast, Sister Maria went up to the laundry area of the roof to take down her laundry of the previous day. When she could not find a couple of her blouses, she began to look inside and then to ask the other sisters if they knew anything about her missing clothes. With that, Sister Elena exclaimed “That man!” Earlier she had gone to the roof to put some of her clothes to soak and had noticed a man on the neighboring roof with a sack under his arm. At the time, she didn’t pay too much attention to him. When an “inventory” was taken, it was discovered that not only had Sister Maria lost two blouses, but Sister Agnes was missing a blouse and a towel; Sister Janet, a towel; and Sister Clorinda, a bedspread! Not a bad collection for a little bit of work!

Given this incursion onto the roof, the sisters decided to take some preventive measures, removing a couple of woven chairs, the buckets and washtubs, as well as some statues and pictures of the Virgin and St. Joseph. They also moved all the notebooks they had stored there to be given to poorer students. Needless to say, they had something concrete to add to their discussions on the “National Reality” when they had class with Señora Guerrero that day.

Early the following morning, Sister Elena left to visit the young sisters in Chalaco. She especially wanted to be present to help celebrate the birthday of Sister Trini. That same day, Sister Clorinda began the long process of trying to get the telephone line changed to Santa Rosa. She knew it would take days of standing in long lines, visiting the police station in San Martin, and filling out forms. However, she was very much touched by her visit to the latter. When she returned home—without the necessary
certificate—she told the sisters how pained she was hearing all the sad cases being presented to the police. On June 11, Sister Janet had her class on sexuality with the novices somewhat earlier because Sister Mary Joan Eble had arrived from Talara to try to get her driver's license and wanted Sister Janet to accompany her. Sister Maria afterwards went with Sister Agnes to check on the construction in Santa Rosa.

When Sister Elena arrived from Chalaco, Sister Rose Celine was with her. The latter had a number of abrasions on her face as well as a broken arm due to a fall in Chalaco. Sister Elena was not feeling too well either as the trip had been long and she was suffering from a bad throat, having almost lost her voice. Consequently, after having something to eat and visiting but a little, both of the travelers went to rest.

When Sister Mary Joan accompanied Sisters Regina and Joan Kilker for their monthly formation meeting with Sister Elena, she helped out in the kitchen and gave an art class to the novices before returning to Talara. Sisters Janet, Rose Celine, Clorinda, and Maria went to the movies in the evening.

The following day, Sister Elena and the two novices once again went to Chulucanas to visit the Center of Formation and talk with the señoritas there about the Community, its history, and the requisites for entering. While there, Sister Elena also invited the two sisters of San Jose de Tarbes in charge of the Center to come to the meeting of the formation personnel in July.

On June 20, while Sisters Janet and Rose Celine were en route to see the doctor, a young man seized Sister Rose Celine’s purse, which contained five hundred Intis. They were frightened by the incident, and Sister Rose Celine felt terrible about the loss of so much money. Later, when Sisters Elena and Maria arrived from checking on the new construction, they found Sister Rose Celine still more distraught because she had lost or misplaced three hundred more Intis. Sister Elena helped her search her room without avail.

In the evening, the sisters decided to walk to Santa Rosa for Mass, accompanied by the postulant Morfi, who had come to visit them while home for Father’s Day. After the Mass and a stop for some pop and salchipapas, the postulant went back home and the sisters returned to their temporary home in Santa Ana. Sisters Maria and Clorinda left to spend Father’s Day at home, returning in time for Vespers and evening recreation.

When Sister Elena went to Lima for four days of national meetings of formation personnel, she took along some cakes she had baked for the seminarians studying theology there. That same day, Sister Agnes went to receive the property titles for Santa Rosa, or so she thought! Of course, there were some papers missing and she came home empty-handed. Later in the afternoon, some of the catechists with whom the sisters had worked
in Cristo Rey came to visit. Other friends, such as Señora Paula, came from time to time.

At the end of June, Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer arrived for a few days visit before going to Chalaco. She was visiting the various mission houses before going to Bolivia for five months of study in the Maryknoll language school in Cochabamba. Sisters Catherine, Susana, and Trini came to get her so that she might learn a little about their life and work in the sierra. On July 6, Sister Susana accompanied her in her return trip to Piura before she herself went on to Chulucanas for meetings.

During the first week of July, a carpenter finished some work in the chapel and study room to make these two areas more usable during the rest of their time in Santa Ana. For Teachers’ Day, the novices and Sister Elena had some refreshments and a gift for their teachers of “National Reality” and “Manual Arts.” Sister Janet also visited the sisters at Our Lady of Peace School and left a gift with them.

Along with her arduous work in Los Algarrobos, Sister Agnes frequently visited the new house of formation being constructed in Santa Rosa. She also continued doing the necessary legwork to receive all the official papers necessary before taking possession of the house.

One day Sister Elena and the novices went to Catacaos to buy gifts for Sister Agnes and for the novices in the United States. These Sister Maria wrapped and sent to Talara so that some sisters from Pittsburgh presently visiting their sisters could mail them in the United States. While in Catacaos, they also bought some woven cloths for the chapel and went to visit a friend who was pastor there.

On July 21, Sister Elena went to a meeting of formation personnel from the various Communities in and around Piura. That evening she and the novices went to the parish of Santa Rosa to participate in one of the prayer groups there, thus trying to integrate themselves somewhat in what would soon be their new parish. The ladies welcomed them warmly and, after the shared prayer, invited them to have some coffee before accompanying them to the bus stop.

During vacation time for Fiestas Patrias, Peru’s Independence Day, the sisters enjoyed a few days of rest and relaxation. Sister Elena had a formation meeting in Negritos and stayed on afterwards; Sister Agnes spent a week with the Talara community; and Sisters Maria and Clorinda visited their families. On July 30, everyone gathered to help the family of Sisters Maria and Trini celebrate the blessing of their new house. After participating in the feast prepared by Señora Orozco, they returned to Piura. There they found that Sister Janet had prepared some delicious soup and a chocolate cake to welcome them.
On July 31, Sisters Trini and Flor visited the sisters after finishing their weeklong course for new pastoral agents in Chulucanas. They participated in the rosary for the Marian Year and in the recreation with the sisters that night. Happily, they stayed a few days more until the meeting of all the pastoral agents with Bishop McNabb in Chulucanas.

Meantime, Sister Janet had left for a meeting in Talara. On August 1, the postulants Esther and Morfi visited, staying long enough to enjoy the cebiche (raw fish marinated in lime juice) and aguadito of fish (a thick soup made with rice) that Sister Clorinda prepared. That evening after Mass, Sisters Trini, Flor, Clorinda, and Maria went to the movies.

On August 2, Morfi accompanied the sisters to the beach of Yacila. By the time they arrived, they were so hungry that they ate with enthusiasm although it was still early. Thus satisfied, they more readily enjoyed the rest of their time, returning to Piura in the early afternoon.

During August, the sisters began various preparations for the move to Santa Rosa, washing and adjusting some of the curtains they had and measuring and making new ones, selecting the color of paint for the dormitories, etc. At this time, Sister Janet told them that she would soon be moving to Talara to live and work there. Sister Elena also announced that Sisters Mildred Irwin and Ruth Barron were coming to Peru.

As a matter of fact, these two new missionaries arrived on August 6 and were warmly welcomed not only by the sisters from Santa Ana but also by Sisters Joan and Mary Joan from Talara. The latter returned to Talara that same afternoon after visiting with the new arrivals. The sisters from Chalaco arrived the following evening, cutting short Sister Mildred’s plans for an early bedtime.

As always, the mountain sisters were up bright and early the next morning in preparation for making their purchases in the market and getting ready to leave for Chalaco. Sister Trini was able to stay an extra day as there had been no room for her in the jeep once all the purchases and their television were inside! So she had a little more time to enjoy with her sister, Sister Maria, and Sister Clorinda; the three of them went to the fair in the afternoon.

The following day, Sister Janet accompanied Sisters Mildred and Ruth to the center of town to show them where and how to change checks and to make inquiries as to the best method for renewing their visas. When Sister Ruth discovered that it would take twenty days, she decided to go to Talara where she was missioned.

These were days of transition, more difficult for some than for others. On the evening of August 11, all the sisters went to Pachitea for a farewell meal in the house of the family Guerrero Niño, good friends whose daughters
the sisters had helped with their studies. Following this, they went to Santa Rosa for the rosary, arriving home very tired after a very full day.

Sister Janet had a special farewell the next afternoon for all the women who had worked with her in her clinic and also for those who had helped in the distribution of food. Of course, the sisters prepared a special meal and prayers for Sister Janet the night before she left for her new mission in Talara. As a farewell gift, they presented her with rose-colored mosquito netting and a nightgown embroidered in pink, her favorite color. They also gave her an image of Talara’s shield. Sisters Joan, Nelyda, and Josephine arrived the following morning to pick up Sister Janet and her belongings.

Although Sister Agnes was supposed to have been helping Sister Mildred fix the farewell dinner, she had to leave. Thus, Sister Mildred ended up preparing the special chicken and rice dish by herself, while Sisters Joan, Josephine, and Nelyda went with Sister Clorinda to see the progress of the house in Santa Rosa. After dinner Sisters Elena and Agnes joined Sisters Joan and Josephine in going to make some purchases. In spite of Sister Janet’s many things, such as suitcases and baskets, and the purchases of the others, everyone and everything fit into the Talara car since Sister Nelyda had decided to stay over to do some shopping.

With Sisters Maria and Clorinda sewing a large curtain for the living room of the new house, Sisters Elena and Agnes shopping, and later Sisters Elena and Maria moving some of the smaller items to the new house, August 15 was again full of activity. They were very grateful that Sister Clorinda stayed home and prepared *cebiche* and *sudado* of fish (poached fish)! After resting a bit, all set about cleaning their charges so as to leave them in good condition when they moved out.

In the afternoon, Sister Agnes went to Los Algarrobos for her last day of catechism there. Sisters Mildred, Maria, and Elena went to Mass at Santa Rosa. Sister Clorinda, who was experiencing some difficulties with the idea of the move to Santa Rosa, decided to go downtown by herself.

Early on the morning of August 15, Sister Maria had contested forcefully with the man who had been hired to put iron bars on the windows and in front of the small patio at the new house. When he arrived, he said he had finished the work and asked to be paid. But when Sister Maria said the sisters would not pay until they had seen the work was completed to their satisfaction, he admitted it was not yet ready and promised to finish it that day. This turned out to be another false promise. Nevertheless, the sisters celebrated the Feast of the Assumption by going out to dinner. In the afternoon, the sisters finished adjusting some of the curtains they would be taking with them to Santa Rosa. In the evening after prayers, they
entertained themselves playing a new card game that Sister Mildred taught them and for which she even provided some prizes.

In the following days, last minute preparations for the move were carried out. Sister Maria helped get extra empty boxes so that the sisters could pack up the books, magazines, and other things. Sisters Elena and Agnes checked on the last minute things that were being finished in Santa Rosa. When they were at last ready to clean the Santa Rosa house, three young women from Pachitea who were interested in the Community accompanied them.

Although Sister Elena had suspended the novices’ classes during this time, she continued to have interviews with Sisters Clorinda and Maria. Sister Maria helped Sister Elena get copies made for the course in discernment that she would be giving for the postulants and formation personnel of the various Communities in Piura the following week. With such teamwork, this “mobile novitiate” was about to settle into their new home. But as time would tell, “we have not here a lasting dwelling place.” There would be much more movement in the future.

Chapter X Notes

1 For more details about the devastation of “El Niño,” see Chapter XX.

2 Comite: a sort of taxi service between cities. It accommodates five to six passengers.

3 Transbordo means getting off one conveyance and walking past/over/around an obstacle blocking the road (e.g., wading through a flooded area of the road or walking around a landslide that has blocked the road), then getting on another conveyance on the other side of the obstacle.

4 Las Mañanitas: a serenade to a person about to celebrate her birthday, traditionally sung at midnight and celebrating the new life brought into this world on this day.

5 Sister Agnes Klein to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, October 9, 1986, A/SCL.

6 Such courses were intended to help parish teams and participants understand and better implement the NIP program (part of the Better World Movement), which governed the parish activities in Chalaco. See Chapter VIII for details of the program.

7 AAHH, or Asentamientos Humanos: a euphemism for barrios from the time of Alan Garcia in the 1990s. One almost never hears the word barrio in Peru today. The term pueblo joven is also used in its place.
Early in 1987, the formation house in Cristo Rey parish, Pachitea, was again inundated by heavy rains, and by February 16 it was decided the convent would have to be abandoned. While the sisters looked for a possible solution, the novitiate was temporarily moved to a rented house in the sector of the town called Santa Ana, within easy walking distance of St. Joseph Church.

The sisters knew it would be difficult to find something already built that would satisfy their needs, but they hoped at least to locate a house to which they could add on. Sister Agnes Klein agreed to look into possibilities for land on which to build or for a house that could be remodeled to fit the needs of the Community.

In April 1987, they finally located a one-floor house in Santa Rosa, a sector of Piura. The site was convenient to the parish church of the same name and to various modes of public transportation. There was also a small market within two blocks, and the large city market was easily accessible. What was even more important, the existing floor plan would provide a front room and dining room, a kitchen, two bedrooms, and a bath, as well as a front room in which visitors could be received.

Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, again asked Sister Agnes to oversee the project and attend to the paper work that needed to be done to get the house registered in the name of the Community. On May 12, Sister Joan Kilker wrote Sister Mary Kathleen to say that, as of the day before, the house in Santa Rosa was "now ours." For the first time, the Sisters of Charity owned property in Peru.

After consulting with the sisters and obtaining the help of Señor Ernesto Benavides, the same architect they had employed in Pachitea, the Community decided to remodel the house to provide a stairwell and sufficient rooms on the second floor for a chapel, library-study room, six small bedrooms, and two baths. At the top of the stairs, the sitting room in the central area was designed to serve as a passageway to the other rooms and the exit to the laundry on the roof.

During the initial stages of construction, Sister Agnes made trips one or more times a week to check on the progress and motivate the crew. In July 1987, she wrote Sister Mary Kathleen that the roof was on, the divisions in, and that the men would soon start plastering. She noted that
when the carpenters and painters began, she would visit the site more often. Looking to the future, she even included a plan for the possible addition of a third floor with other bedrooms, a bath, a work and storage area, and a library. She said there would even be room enough for a study and sewing room plus a patio in the center. 

Finally, the day they had been waiting for came. The sisters from Talara arrived bright and early on the morning of Wednesday, August 19, to help with the moving. A little later, Sister Regina Deitchman and the postulants—Luciola (Lucy) Huaman, Renee Zeta, Morfilia (Morfi) Liviapoma, and Esther Vilela—also arrived from Negritos. Sister Janet Cashman had thoughtfully prepared and sent over a big pot of *arroz chaufa*, a convenient one-plate menu for moving day.

Dividing into three groups, some went to the market to find pickup trucks for moving the larger items, others stayed at Santa Ana to direct the loading process, and still others went to the new house to receive the shipments and direct their placement. When there was an uncertainty, those items were deposited in the living room. By 2:30 p.m., the sisters finished with the moving and were more than ready to have something to eat and drink.

After resting a bit, they again set about arranging and cleaning. Boxes that had been deposited in the living room were unpacked and their contents distributed. About 6:30 p.m., Sisters Elena Mack and Mary Joan Eble went to buy some broasted chicken and pop for the tired and hungry crew. While they relished their chicken and fries, they planned who would sleep where. Since there was still furniture belonging to the owner in the house in Santa Ana, Sisters Agnes, Joan, and Mary Joan decided to sleep there as a protection against robbery. The others all too happily showered and sank into their designated beds in the new convent.

The work continued the following day. Some volunteered to prepare the food for midday while others finished arranging the house and supervised the carpenters, who needed to make some adjustments. After joining in the noon meal, Sister Regina and the postulants left for Negritos, taking with them the gratitude of their sisters. That evening at Holy Hour in the new chapel, the new community—Sisters Elena Mack and Mildred Irwin and the two novices, Sisters Maria Orozco and Clorinda Timana—prayed in thanksgiving for all that had been given them, all who had helped them, and all those who would come to live or visit in this new house.

The carpenters returned the next morning to finish some of the doors for the closets. While the others busied themselves with some of the final touches, Sister Maria went to the market to see about the chapel curtain that was to have been finished for this date.

On Saturday, after doing a little more cleaning, everyone went to a Chinese restaurant for a farewell dinner for Sister Agnes, who would soon
be going to Bolivia. Amidst tears, the sisters shared some gifts with her, telling her how much she would be missed. Sister Janet arrived in the afternoon to accompany the community to yet another farewell celebration, this time one that the Cristo Rey parish community of Pachitea had organized for the following day. In the evening, the youth group of Los Algarrobos also held a farewell party for Sister Agnes; these young people would likewise miss her, for she had spent long hours and worked diligently with them.

On Sunday, August 23, the pastor and parish community of Pachitea celebrated a special Mass of Thanksgiving in gratitude for the presence and work of the sisters among them; some of the seminarians and the youth choir were present. Each sister was presented with a memorial plaque. After this liturgy, held in the back yard of the former convent, there was a program in their honor, prepared by the catechists and other members of the Pachitea community.

After attending Mass at Santa Rosa on Monday night, the sisters had a special prayer service for Sister Agnes, followed by some toasts and expressions of gratitude for all that she had meant to the community here in Peru. She had indeed been an integral part of everything, from the very beginning in Talara in 1963 right up to the construction of this new house in Piura. Twenty-four years of dedicated service!

On Tuesday morning, everyone accompanied Sister Agnes to the airport. There they encountered Father Medina and some of the people from Los Algarrobos, who had also come to bid her goodbye. Despite their tears, everyone was talking right up to the last minute.

The day before, Sister Elena and the two novices had begun a course in discernment being given in Lourdes High School by Sister Margarita Escudero, member of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart religious Community. After the plane departed, Father Medina drove Sister Elena and the two novices to the parcela, a place in the countryside belonging to the Jesuit fathers, where the course was going to be held the next three days. Sister Mary Joan Eble had come over from Talara to stay with Sister Mildred Irwin in Santa Rosa while the rest of the community was thus occupied.

When Sisters Elena, Clorinda, and Maria completed the course on Thursday afternoon, a Redemptorist sister and some of the Benedictines from Morropon came to see the new house in Santa Rosa. After they had left, Sisters Joan, Regina, and Elena had a meeting of the formation team. Although the other SCLs returned to their houses afterwards, Esther, Lucy, and Morfi stayed overnight, Esther and Lucy leaving early the next morning for a short experience in Chalaco. After visiting her family in Pachitea in
the morning, Morfi, accompanied by Sister Elena, went to her doctor’s appointment in the afternoon.

On the Feast of Saint Rose of Lima, August 30, the sisters participated in the Mass in the morning and the procession in honor of the parish’s patron saint in the afternoon. The following day, they met with Father Jose Maria, the Redemptorist pastor of Santa Rosa. They explained that they would be willing to help with some things in the parish, but that their time would be limited since this was a house of formation.

From the very beginning, Santa Rosa Convent also served as a central house for the Community. There was much coming and going since it provided space for the sisters from Negritos, Talara, and Chalaco who came to Piura for meetings, shopping, or other business.

The sisters also welcomed young women both for monthly reflection days and, at times, for experiences in community living. In fact, they held their first vocation afternoon on the Feast of Saint Rose, less than two weeks after moving in. Thanks to the references of some of the young priests the sisters had befriended while they were still seminarians, as well as contacts of the sisters themselves, there seemed to be an unending stream of young women seeking interviews with Sister Elena about the religious life.

The sisters soon discovered that, with the football field and open space just across the street from the new house, plus strong winds every afternoon, it was difficult, if not impossible, to keep the house dust free. This meant that cleaning became a daily affair, and since they were still doing the cooking and the shopping, much time was being spent just in these household duties. Thus, it was not long before they decided to look for someone to help in the house, thus providing the time necessary for classes and formation work.

In spite of this help, much time was still consumed in caring for the “finishing touches” in the house. Electricians had to redo some of the wiring they had put in, and other workers began laying a tile floor in the chapel. Meanwhile, the gardener, Don Santos Solano, who had worked for the sisters in Pachitea, also came to take charge of the small garden area in front of the house.

While the novices continued taking Communion to their shut-ins in Pachitea, Sister Elena used the free time to work on the house books and prepare her classes and presentations to various groups. She also translated the letters of Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani and shared them with the sisters. Sometimes friends from their former parish in Pachitea visited. Señora Paula Medina brought them copies of the photos taken at their farewell party, and these memories were safely guarded in an album.

While Sister Elena and the two novices went to Our Lady of Peace for their “desert day,” Don Santos or Sister Mildred stayed in the new convent
so that there would always be someone there. After finishing their time of prayer, the sisters went to Pachitea for the Mass for the shut-ins. While Sister Clorinda’s father was hospitalized, they also went to the clinic to visit him; Sister Clorinda had the privilege of taking her father Communion.

Occasionally, Sister Elena and the novices took short outings, such as visiting the artisan shops in Catacaos for gifts or dropping by to see Father Edwin Castro, a friend from Pachitea days when he was a seminarian. Father was now pastor in Catacaos. They also went to Sechura for the profession of a Benedictine sister and stayed for the reception following. The following month, they visited the Notre Dame Sisters and Father Lucas, Benedictine, in Tambogrande. On their way to and from Tambogrande, they passed a number of pilgrims on their way to Ayabaca for the Feast of Señor Cautivo (the Captive Christ). People make pilgrimages from all over, some walking miles. Some do the last miles on their knees.

Even as they visited others, they also welcomed other religious to their home, for instance, inviting the Franciscan Sisters from Our Lady of Peace School for a special luncheon in thanksgiving for all their kindnesses to them. Father Medina and the seminarian, Beto, as well as some pre-seminarians, came to see the new house. One of the Sisters of Notre Dame from Tambogrande even brought a candidate from England to dinner.

In early September, the sisters from Talara brought Sister Mildred back to Piura after an eight-day visit with them. Sister Joan Kilker accompanied Sister Elena to the meeting of formation personnel. Sisters Ruth Barron and Josephine Bustos, however, stayed on since they had been invited to spend the week giving classes to the novices. Sister Ruth actually began her presentations on Saint Vincent with the novices that very afternoon; Sister Josephine taught them some handiwork, including the making of macramé hangers and purses.

When Sister Elena and the novices went to Our Lady of Peace for their “desert day,” Sister Ruth accompanied them. Sisters Josephine and Mildred made their day of recollection in the house; gratefully, Sister Josephine prepared a casserole of leftovers sufficient for all. The following day, she delighted them with some of her famous chili. The sisters reciprocated her generosity by singing “Las Mañanitas” outside her door at midnight in celebration of her birthday. The next day, September 13, Sister Elena and the novices prepared a special Mexican dinner for her and the other sisters who had gathered in Piura for the meeting of Confer (Conference of Religious). The sisters from Talara provided the cake, and the sisters from Negritos provided the drinks for the brindis (toasts). Sisters Rose Celine Siebers, Susana Cordova, Trini Orozco, and Flor Figueroa arrived from Chalaco in time to join in the festive celebration.
After doing the dishes, the sisters had very little time to rest before Archbishop Cantuarias arrived for the blessing of the new house. He arrived promptly at 4:00 and seemed very relaxed and friendly. He asked about padrinos (sponsors) for the event. When the sisters said there were none, he declared that St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin would be their padrinos. After blessing every room in the house, he declared this to be a house of prayer and hospitality. He also told them to remember that since all the rooms had been blessed, all the work done there was blessed. He stayed on to share some pop and conversation, not seeming at all in a hurry to leave. Most of the sister-guests from Talara and Negritos left about 5:30. Except for Sisters Rose Celine and Mildred, the others in the house finished the celebration by going to a movie that night.

The following morning, the Archbishop returned to celebrate the first Mass in the new chapel. Sister Mildred, who had only recently arrived from the United States to live and work in Peru, was very favorably impressed. In a letter to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, she commented on how the Archbishop stayed and talked amiably with the sisters afterwards.

As mentioned earlier, the sisters had decided they needed help with the housework and cooking. They were fortunate to obtain the services of Señora Agustina Berru, initially from Cabuyal, one of the villages belonging to Chalaco. She now lived in a sector just west of Santa Rosa. Sister Josephine stayed after the dedication of the house to help orient Agustina, showing her how to prepare salads and desserts and otherwise accustoming her to the way in which the sisters served their meals. For many years, Agustina faithfully cooked the main meal for the sisters of Santa Rosa and the many others who have come there. In her quiet, pleasant way, she has also helped maintain the first floor.

Soon after the dedication, the sisters met to make initial plans for the Feast of Saint Vincent, their patron, on September 27; the novices planned something for the parish bulletin about Saint Vincent’s life and the SCL Community. The sisters prepared a program to be presented in the church and divided the responsibilities for the reception they planned to have after the prayer service.

Meanwhile, Sister Clorinda attended the parish council, where she received a warm welcome on behalf of the Community. Sister Trini had returned from Chalaco to the novitiate house in order to begin her final preparation for first vows in November. In mid-September, she began her eight-day retreat at Lourdes High School under the direction of Sister Margarita Escudero. About this same time, Sister Mildred began classes in Spanish, her instructor coming to the house.

The sisters soon learned that the scarcities of Pachitea were not unique to that place, for they had neither electricity nor water in the house all day.
Nor did any of their neighbors have any. By the following day, they were in such straits that they visited the Perez family in Pachitea in order to obtain some water, an act they repeated on Sunday. Whenever they lost electricity, this of course also cut off the water pump on the patio behind the house, which carried water to the tanks on the third floor. When there was no water in them, there was no water anywhere in the house; at such times, the sisters had to bail buckets out of the well in the back.

Sister Elena tried to motivate the neighbors to protest the continuing failure of water and light, but she found them apathetic. Thus, the convent continued waterless for days at a time. But they were at least successful in having their telephone line installed in a remarkably short time.

The Friday before Saint Vincent's day, Sisters Elena and Mildred began making cakes; Sister Mildred was still baking some at midnight! The preparations continued the next day with shopping and more cake making. At the evening Mass, the novices distributed the parish bulletin with a short history of the SCL Community.

On September 27, all the sisters went to different Masses in the parish, where they and the Community were duly greeted and welcomed by the pastor, Father Jose Maria, and the parishioners. Four young women interested in the Community participated in the Masses and later helped Sister Trini, who was in charge of the kitchen for the day. Sister Clorinda showed the second part of the filmstrips on the life of Saint Vincent for the girls who had come. Meanwhile, Sister Mary Patricia Kielty helped out by sewing the cap for the costume that Sister Trini would use in her portrayal of Saint Vincent, Father Jose Maria having obtained a black cassock for her earlier.5

After enjoying the feast day dinner of chicken and rice and distributing the various jobs for the afternoon, it was almost time for the prayer service and the reception. About 150 friends from Pachitea and Santa Rosa had accepted the invitation to the prayer service and program in the church. Sister Clorinda acted as commentator, Sister Maria Orozco as interviewer, and Sister Trini as Saint Vincent. Sister Mildred led the group in the petitions, and Sister Elena invited everyone to join in the open house afterwards.

Even before starting, the choral group, accompanied by Father Jose Maria, taught the congregation the hymn to Saint Vincent. After the liturgy, members of the choral group came to provide a happy and welcoming atmosphere, singing in the small patio at the entrance to the house. The same young women who had helped Trini earlier now helped with the tour of the house and the serving of cake and chicha morada (a beverage made by boiling dried purple corn). By 6:00 the guests had departed, and Sister Mary Patricia and some of the others went to the Franciscan house to check on the time of her departure for Bolivia the next day.
Things returned to normal in the following days. Sister Trini shared something of her experiences during her time of mission in Chalaco. Sister Elena accompanied the junior sisters (sisters under temporary vows) to a meeting early in October; and Sister Josephine returned for a week, during which she gave a permanent to anyone so desiring it. She also continued teaching various handicrafts to the novices. Sister Clorinda began guitar lessons; and Sister Maria accompanied some women in the parish doing handiwork in the salon on Monday afternoons. Sometimes in the evening, Sisters Elena, Maria, and Trini went to the prayer group called Virgin of Mt. Carmel. Meanwhile, Sisters Janet Cashman, Susana Cordova, and Donna Jean Henson arrived for a meeting with Sister Elena to make plans as a vocation committee.

Sister Elena had weekly conferences and some classes with the novices. One day after a class on the vow of obedience, during the noon meal, Sister Elena asked for suggestions as to what she should take for the dinner of vocation directors the following day. Since she had regularly been taking the principal food, the sisters said she should take dessert or something less costly this time. To the novices, it appeared she would be putting into practice her own teachings on shared responsibility!

Before long, preparations for the next celebration began in earnest. Archbishop Cantuarias readily accepted Sister Elena's invitation to preside at the Mass in Santa Rosa on November 11, when Sister Trini would pronounce her first vows. Sister Trini took a cassette with the songs for the Mass to a friend previously in Sister Josephine's choir in Talara but now living in Piura. Sisters Elena and Maria went to the market to buy a bunk bed and two mattresses to accommodate the extra people who would be arriving. Sisters Maria and Trini also picked out material for her vow day dress while Sister Elena took care of having copies made of the invitations for the celebration.

For several weeks, Sister Mildred had been working hard to make the floor of the sitting room upstairs more presentable. Since it was cement, she gave it several applications of gasoline to "cure" it and provide something of a finish. Naturally enough, she was most solicitous when workers came to create a better drainage system on the roof so that the rainwater would not gather in puddles. Sister Mildred carefully spread out newspapers and rags to protect "her" floor, and she was delighted when this methodology succeeded in protecting her hard work.

When the novices went to Our Lady of Peace School on October 16, they had something of a hilarious experience during what was normally a tranquil "desert day." As the superiors of the Franciscans were visiting, Sisters Trini and Maria were assigned a room on the lower floor. While Sister Maria was there reading, she saw a mouse come out of a clothes
closet and enter the cabinet where the sisters stored medicine. When Sister Trini returned from the chapel, Sister Maria told her about their “visitor.” Sister Trini climbed on a bed, refusing to get down until Sister Maria placed a piece of furniture for her to walk on. Then what did she do? She immediately checked to see if the mouse had munched on their lunch! It hadn’t, and the two sisters had a good laugh, but Sister Trini did not long stay in that room.

In November, all centered on the forthcoming vows of Sister Trini and the preparations for the Community meeting in Chiclayo. Sisters Sue Miller, Community Councilor, and Marie Kelly, Community Secretary, arrived on the fifth but were whisked off to Chalaco the following day, arriving back just in time to practice for the vow ceremony.

In the morning of November 11, the community gathered for special morning prayers at 9:00. Then there was a festive dinner at mid-day. With a little time to rest afterwards, the sisters finished the final preparations and met at the back of the church in time to process in with the Archbishop and priests at 4:00 p.m. Sister Trini’s parents, grandmother, sisters, and some aunts from Piura were present for the ceremony, her parents assisting in the offertory procession. After the Mass, the sisters hosted a reception for family, friends, and parishioners in the parish hall. That evening, after sharing a light meal, everyone gathered to watch Sister Trini open her vow day gifts.

On the morning following Sister Trini’s vows, all the sisters journeyed to Chiclayo, where they had the opportunity to hear Sister Margarita Escudero present several themes on the Eucharist. During this meeting time, they also enjoyed a deepening of community, sharing in prayer, discussions, and recreations together.

On December 3, the novices again took Communion to the elderly in Pachitea but notified them that they would terminate this pastoral service in that parish at the end month. They regretted leaving their old friends, but it had been decided they should begin working more in their new parish of Santa Rosa. Later in the month, Sister Elena and the novices were invited to a Mass of Thanksgiving in the seminary, requested by the elderly for their intentions. Afterwards, representatives of the group presented the sisters with a diploma signed by all of them and expressed their sorrow that the sisters would not be visiting them in the future.

Sister Elena left for the last meeting of the year of the formation team, this time at Punta Sal. While Sister Ruth Barron was in Piura seeing about her documents, she gave the novices some classes on processing dreams.

Besides continuing their classes with Sister Ruth, Sisters Clorinda and Maria visited various homes in Santa Rosa to invite people to attend a filmstrip on Advent. This also provided them with the opportunity to get to know some of the families of the parish.
In the December Confer-Clero meeting with the Archbishop, the sisters heard a presentation on the various sects that were proselytizing in Piura and causing much confusion among the people, especially in the *pueblos jovenes* (barrios). In this same meeting, the Archbishop introduced Sister Catherine Nichol to the assembly, noting that she would begin working with animators for all the poorer sectors of Piura after the beginning of the New Year 1988.

On December 14, the sisters went to visit the new Benedictine monastery outside of Tambogrande. After a tour of the monastery, they assisted at the Eucharistic celebration, following which they all went to the countryside where they enjoyed the afternoon, sharing the chicken casseroles they had brought. On their return trip, they took along the mangos, plums, and papayas that the Notre Dame Sisters had given them when they had stopped at their convent. Arriving home, they found Sister Susana Cordova awaiting them at the door with still more mangos she had brought from Chulucanas. Before retiring early, they all enjoyed the kettle of soup Agustina had left for them.

On December 17, the sisters all went to the meeting in the Cathedral and the march for peace convoked by the Archbishop. These demonstrations were in connection with the death and burial of Luis Paredes Maceda, President of Corpiura, former mayor of Piura and a professor in the University, who had been murdered by terrorists just after finishing one of his classes. The murder itself and the disturbances at the cemetery made more real for the sisters the political climate in which they were living.

Sisters Mildred, Catherine, Elena, and Susana left for Talara and a Community meeting early the morning of December 19. Sister Trini stayed with Sisters Clorinda and Maria, who had a meeting in one of the homes that night. There they showed some filmstrips and also tried to answer questions as to what the sisters would be doing in the parish of Santa Rosa. These three also left for Talara very early the next morning.

In the morning of New Year’s Eve, the novices had an art class with Sister Mary Joan Eble, who had come over from Talara with Sister Joan Kilker for shopping and other errands. Later, while Sisters Joan and Mary Joan were out shopping, they had a memorable end-of-the-year experience. Returning from Pachitea, Sister Mary Joan had her watch stolen. Both sisters were amazed not only by how rapidly the man was able to jerk her watch from her arm, but they were flabbergasted that he did not even run away but only seemed to laugh at their startled expressions. Two minutes later, after boarding the bus, someone motioned to Sister Joan that another man was about to rob Sister Mary Joan. She called out to her to protect her purse and glasses. Consequently, the man got off the bus at the next stop without anything. Although both Sisters Joan and Mary Joan were perhaps
a little shaken and angry by what had happened, they determined to pray for these men.

Although the sisters were without electricity at this time, they enjoyed the soup that Sisters Joan and Mary Joan had prepared. Then, after the traditional Holy Hour, they toasted the New Year with piña colada and went outside to see the "burning of the old man" (stuffed images representing the past year) and to greet their neighbors for the new year of 1988. The following day, Sister Joan accompanied Sisters Mildred and Mary Joan to Lima, where both planned to take courses in Spanish. Shortly thereafter, on the Feast of the Epiphany, Sisters Clorinda and Maria joined some neighbors who had been invited for the Bajada de los Reyes (ceremonial of taking down the Christmas crib).

On January 16, 1988, Sister Janet Cashman came over from Talara to see Archbishop Cantuarias about setting up a program for health promotion in the Archdiocese of Piura. Her hope was to give training to primary health care workers and invite full community participation so as to give people a sense of ownership. If successful, she believed that the number of children under five years old suffering from malnutrition would be reduced by 40 percent, and that the mortality and morbidity of children below fifteen years old would be lowered by 30 percent. Since many such deaths were the result of diarrhea and infectious diseases, she was sure many could be prevented by better hygienic practices and simple health training. She even projected that maternal mortality could also be reduced by 30 percent.

To achieve such dramatic improvement, Sister Janet proposed having workshops twice a year in nine different regions of the diocese, with monthly follow-up visits to the Health Promoters formed in the workshops.

She planned on starting in one target area the first year to gather information for evaluation and future planning. The second year she projected that they could expand their activities and invite more community participation in the planning and implementation. She planned on forming a Diocesan Committee on Health Promotion, which would coordinate programs, putting emphasis on health promotion rather than health care. When Sister Elena returned from her retreat in early January, she and Sister Regina Deitchman went to visit Piscan Grande to discover what had happened to two of the postulants, Renee and Luciola, who had not returned after their Christmas home visit. Following the visit with the two girls and their families, Renee and Luciola decided to return. But they did not continue in the formation program for long, Renee returning home just eight days later.

During the summer (January, February, March), Sister Regina and two of the postulants, Esther and Luciola, arrived from Negritos to participate in the institute of religious education known as ESER. Throughout January, Sisters...
Elena, Clorinda, Maria, and Esther paired up to make pastoral visits and go to different prayer groups. The novices also continued visiting the older people of Santa Rosa; in February, they began visiting the sick of the parish.

While Esther made a day of retreat on January 23, Sister Elena, the two novices, and Luciola went on an outing to Bernal in Lower Piura. A few days later, Sisters Regina and Clorinda and the postulants went to the beach at Sechura; Sister Maria, however, went home for a day of rest and relaxation. Shortly thereafter, Luciola decided to return home. The novitiate members now consisted of two novices, Sisters Maria and Clorinda, and one postulant, Esther.

Sister Catherine went to Lima for classes. Sister Elena continued her work with the novices and had interviews with young women interested in the Community. On February 6, she took some young women with them when she and the novices made their monthly retreat. In mid-February, Sister Elena contracted hepatitis.

Meanwhile, Sister Regina had begun promoting the use of solar ovens. She constructed one on the roof of Santa Rosa and painted some pans so they would absorb more of the sun's rays. She tried various "cook-outs," even cooking *anticuchos* (like shish kebobs) one time. But using the solar oven proved a very slow process, and the cooker was a long way from the kitchen where the food had to be prepared. So this experiment in the conservation of energy did not prove too successful.

When Sisters Elena and Janet, the novices, and Esther journeyed to Huachipa for retreat, Sisters Catherine and Mildred were left in the house of Santa Rosa. Sister Catherine busied herself exploring various Asentamientos Humanos (barrios) in preparation for beginning her program of catechesis. She was drawn to some of the poorest areas on the eastern side of the city; there she found many families who had migrated from the sierra of Morropon. If she did not know them personally, she certainly knew their relatives after having worked in the Chalaco area for seventeen years.

After their retreat, Esther went on to Negritos, and Sisters Clorinda and Maria continued their classes by way of a tape that Sister Elena had left behind. They also resumed their visits to various prayer groups and to some of the elderly of the parish. During these days, the two novices went to Tambogrande for the profession of Iris, a Sister of Notre Dame.

Meanwhile, Sister Nelyda Clavijo had arrived to begin her new mission in Piura and was introduced to the different areas of the parish by Sister Clorinda. In her spare time, she settled in at the convent. On March 23, Sisters Joan and Trini arrived from Talara, and Sister Regina and Esther, from Negritos. That evening they had a welcoming party for Sisters Catherine, Nelyda, and Esther, who would form part of the community at Santa Rosa during 1988.
The following morning, Esther was received as a novice in a simple ceremony at the convent. Following the Mass that afternoon, there was a reception in the church hall. Since almost all the Sisters of Charity in Peru were present, some had to seek hospitality for the night with the Franciscan sisters at Our Lady of Peace.

During the morning of March 25, the sisters met to plan the forthcoming celebration of the Community’s twenty-five years in Talara. That afternoon, Sisters Nelyda and Susana renewed their vows. The meetings concluded the following day, and those not staying in Piura began to disperse the next day.

Since her arrival, Sister Mildred Irwin had frequently accompanied Sister Clorinda so that she could become acquainted with the various sectors and families of the parish. Hence, she began visiting and conversing with others about her proposed project to provide food for tuberculosis patients in the parish. Dr. Hummer, a doctor friend in California, had indicated his willingness to sponsor her work in this area. In support of her efforts, Sisters Elena and Esther visited the medical post in Bosconia operated by the Salesian priests. Together with Sister Mildred, they also visited the doctor in the nearby clinic.

Sister Mildred’s health had never been too strong since her arrival. The combination of wind and sand affected it still more adversely. She first spent some days in Negritos with Sister Regina, but shortly after her return to Santa Rosa in Piura, she was quite sick; for three consecutive days, she needed to have injections twice a day. When she awoke the morning of April 16, she was very ill. Sisters Nelyda and Esther, therefore, replaced her in the distribution of basic foodstuffs for the tuberculosis patients and their families in the parish.

The program itself was in question. Commenting to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Sister Joan Kilker, Director of Missions, mentioned that in no way could it be self-supporting; indeed she doubted that the people would be able to help in any way. But she promised there would be an evaluation in six months.8

During the following week, the regular novitiate classes were suspended as Sister Elena and the three novices participated in a special week of training for religion teachers in Jorge Basadre School. Each evening, they accompanied catechists from the parish from 7:30–10:30 in this program. During the day, Sisters Maria and Clorinda also took some secretarial classes. Meanwhile, they accompanied Sisters Mildred and Esther, who were going to take over their program of visiting the elderly.

At the end of May, Sisters Clorinda and Maria received their missions for their novitiate year of experience, but they did not actually go for about six weeks. On July 14, the sisters at Santa Rosa had a farewell party for Sister Maria, who was now ready to go to her mission in Talara. About a
week later, the sisters had a send-off for Sister Clorinda, who was finally going to Chalaco to begin her mission experience. However, they both returned from time to time for special courses for people in formation.

While Sisters Regina and Elena went to Chiclayo for retreat, the postulant, Mabel Cordova, stayed in Piura. Sisters Esther, Maria, and Clorinda took the Myers-Briggs test. Later Mabel, the novices, and the junior sisters began a weeklong workshop on personality development held at CIPCA, the Jesuit meeting area just outside of Castilla.

On Pentecost Sunday, the girls receiving study grants and their mothers had been invited to participate in a time of prayer and sharing. Two young women interested in the Community also joined them. Taking a short respite, Sisters Elena and Mildred went to spend some time in the house of the Vincentian Sisters of Charity (VSC) in Los Piños, Talara Alta. Sister Esther accompanied them as far as Talara but went on to Negritos. Later that day, after her classes, Sister Nelyda also went to Talara.

In early August, the sisters experienced what would become a more and more frequent occurrence due to the growth of terrorist activity. They were without lights. Confer called the sisters together for a discussion of the activities of the Shining Path terrorists; together, those present tried to discern precautions and responses to the situation. The religious felt that they themselves would profit by such dialogue, and they would be better prepared to help the people whom they were serving.

During these days, Sister Catherine visited the various pueblos jóvenes to talk with the young people who were working with Catequesis Familiar (Family Catechetical program) as animators of the faith. During the summer, she coordinated a workshop for these groups in Lourdes High School. With the help of various priests and sisters, she conducted this monthlong course for several years. In April, she began classes with catechists in these areas.

Sisters Elena and Esther went to Talara, where they gave a workshop to the catechists of Negritos, returning the next month to give a similar presentation for young people of Negritos and Talara Alta. On their first trip, Sister Mildred went with them to have a little rest and relaxation by the ocean in Negritos. Sisters Elena and Esther also began working with the catechists and young people in the parish of Santa Rosa. Meanwhile, Sister Rachel Sarosi, VSC, came over to give Sister Esther a two-day course on St. Louise de Marillac.

Along with formal classes, apostolic activities, and shopping for the house, the sisters needed time just to listen and empathize with the people who were suffering from the tremendously rising prices in this period of hyperinflation. Due to the additional tension and stress, violence in families was increasing. Thus, in the middle of the month, Sisters Elena, Joan,
Nelyda, and Catherine met to discuss what could be done in the face of the increased problems of women.

In addition, Sister Elena continued with the preparations for the Great Catholic Mission of the Archdiocese, giving classes to the Peruvian laity being trained to be missionaries in the new evangelization program. She also visited Sisters Clorinda and Maria in their missions.

As a way of commemorating Saint Vincent’s Day, the sisters invited the choir members to enjoy some sweet rolls with them. They also hosted the group for the rosary in honor of the Sacred Heart, having received the traveling image of the Sacred Heart at the convent.

In September 1988, Sister Regina was re-appointed Director of Postulants, and Sister Donna Jean Henson was named to replace Sister Elena as the Director of Novices. For a long time, there had been an ongoing discussion as to the best place for the location of the two programs. Finally it was decided that Sister Donna Jean would be with the novices in Negritos and Sister Regina would stay at Santa Rosa with the postulant, Mabel.

Early in October, the sisters participated in an all-day retreat at Lourdes for religious of the city; however, Sister Elena had to leave early to give a class to the “missionaries” in the parish of Guadalupe. Sister Esther missed part of it also due to her Sunday program with the youth in Santa Rosa. Soon thereafter, the sisters participated in a “Solidarity Workshop” at Lourdes.

By way of commemorating locally the presence of the SCLs in Peru for twenty-five years, the sisters of Santa Rosa hosted a prayer service and reception for the sisters of the various Communities in Piura on October 20. Then in November, the sisters of Santa Rosa joined present and past missionaries in Talara for the gala celebration of the Community’s twenty-five years in Peru. Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, and Mary Kevin Hollow, were present, along with the former missionaries—Sisters Josephine Bustos, Lucille Harrington, and Rosalie Mahoney.

The day following the celebrations, the annual Community meeting began in Paita for three days. One very interesting thing occurred during these days in Paita. While leaving the parish church after Mass, Ernestina Zapata recognized Sister Rosalie Mahoney and presented herself. As a young woman, she had lived and worked with Sister Rosalie in Salitral during the time that the latter had no sister there to accompany her.

Sisters Mary Kathleen and Rosalie stayed in Piura for three or four days. Since both Sisters Susana Cordova and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer had stayed over, the latter was able take Sister Mary Kathleen to Chulucanas to meet Bishop McNabb. Sister Rosalie was unable to go as she had been adversely affected by some of the food in Paita, but when she was feeling better, Sister Rose Dolores took her and Sister Mary Kathleen to Catacaos.
to do some shopping. After several days, Sisters Mary Kevin, Josephine, and Lucille, all of whom had stayed in Talara during this time, came to Piura to join Sisters Mary Kathleen and Rosalie for their return trip to the United States.

In November, Sister Mary Patricia Kielty, having recently finished her sabbatical program after closing the house in Coripata, Bolivia, now briefly took up residence in Santa Rosa, Piura. She began working with the Archdiocesan Health Program. Although Sister Janet Cashman wanted her to begin training parish primary health care workers, Sister Mary Patricia hesitated to start in if she would not be there to follow through. Writing to Sister Mary Kathleen from Piura, she said, “Janet doesn’t want me to do anything on the Archdiocese’s level and so I will inform Monsignor Bishop Oscar Cantuarias.”

She therefore took on various other activities, such as taking pictures of a family being helped by the school children of Billings, Montana; going to Ecuador for her visa; and accompanying women of the parish in a sewing class and mini-course on the care of the hair organized by Sister Elena. She also purchased foodstuffs for the tuberculosis program begun by Sister Mildred, increasing both the number of patients enrolled and the portions of food they received. She bought fruit and bread for the children enrolled in the vacation school at Santa Julia, some of whom she found in the second and third degree of malnutrition.

Sister Mary Patricia also started working with a “Trickle up” program, loaning money to individuals to get started in a small business, such as in carpentry. She provided $50 with a promise of more if the person could gain enough money to reinvest 20 percent of the original loan. She also encouraged a thirteen-year-old boy to sell “Pretty Feet and Hands” lotion, making a small profit on each bottle. One of the single mothers whom Sister Mildred had been helping planted a garden with seeds Sister Mary Patricia bought, fencing it in with *algarrobo* limbs. Another mother began raising ducks and doves. Sister Mary Patricia empathized with these urban poor, saying it was a deeper, more desperate type of poverty than that of the campo where she had always worked before.

But as Sister Mary Patricia had foreseen, she did not remain in Piura for long. She moved to Talara in March 1989 to help meet nursing and other needs there.

During the first week of December 1988, the sisters had a farewell dinner for Sister Mildred, who was returning to the United States for a checkup and some rest. When she returned in March, she, too, was missioned to Talara. She planned to coordinate a nutrition program for preschool children there. But after just a year, she again found it necessary
to return to the States for health reasons. Clearly this was a case of the "spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

Having decided that it was virtually impossible to keep the house clean with only concrete floors on the second floor, the sisters finally contracted with someone to begin laying pisopak tiling. This work started on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

When Sisters Maria and Clorinda stopped over on their way from retreat in Lima, they stayed long enough to help put up the Christmas decorations and crib; then they returned to their missions in Talara and Chalaco.

On Christmas Eve, the sisters went to the church at 9:15 p.m., thinking they would assure themselves of seats for the 10:00 Mass. But they had a very long wait; what with the many Confessions and the enactment of a living Nativity, the Mass did not start until 11:30 p.m. By the time they returned to the house to have the traditional Christmas meal, it was 12:30 a.m.; even at that, they had to eat by kerosene lamp as they were without electricity. Fortunately, the meal at noon the following day was more tranquil.

When Sister Elena left for Lima in early February 1989, she took along a heavy basket of mangos and lemons for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. When she returned on the thirteenth, she went to Negritos to accompany Sisters Maria and Clorinda in their final month of preparation before making first vows. A few days later, Sister Catherine Nichol joined them to teach a course in Community History. Toward the end of the month, Sister Mary Patricia shared some classes on communication skills with Sisters Clorinda, Maria, and Esther.

In late February, Sister Joan Kilker wrote Sister Mary Kathleen on behalf of Sister Catherine, asking to buy a car, saying that when the old Toyota jeep from Chalaco was sold, they would be able to refund the money. About a month later, she received word that the pickup as well as a car for Negritos had arrived, coming up to Paita by boat from Lima.

March 15 once again marked a happy day as Sisters Maria and Clorinda professed their first vows as Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The community gathered for special prayers in the morning; then at noon all assembled to partake of the feast day dinner. That afternoon, family members, as well as priests and religious from Piura and Chulucanas, joined the community for the festive Mass at Santa Rosa and the reception afterwards. In the evening, the community assembled for a light supper and the opening of the gifts.

Since Sister Donna Jean Henson had been appointed Director of Novices, Sister Elena was free to begin her sabbatical year on April 1. The following day, Laura Rumiche was received as a postulant in a meaningful prayer service planned by her director, Sister Regina. The sisters from Talara and Negritos joined her family and the Piura sisters for this happy occasion.
In early May, Sisters Regina, Catherine, Nelyda, Susana, and the postulant, Laura, all attended the inauguration of the Great Catholic Mission for Piura and Castilla. During the next fourteen days, they would be involved in neighborhood sessions of this evangelization program that Sister Elena had helped to prepare.

At the end of June, Sister Susana finished her studies in San Fernando Academy, a preparatory school for superior studies. One of the girls who had been studying with her came to spend a day with the sisters and another young woman who had expressed interest in the Community. Besides studying at the Academy, Sister Susana had been taking Communion to shut-ins every week and also accompanying catechists of the parish in their formation.

On the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, a holiday in Peru, the sisters took advantage of their free day to visit the reservoir of Los Ejidos and various Catholic sites of interest in Piura: Bosconia, the Salesian center; the University of Piura, a Catholic Opus Dei University; and CIPCA, a center operated by the Jesuits to help farmers and rural communities. As Fiestas Patrias neared, Sister Nelyda went to Talara for a little rest and relaxation, and Sister Susana went to visit her family in Santo Domingo. Sisters Catherine and Regina went to Chulucanas for an outing with other members of Confer.

On July 11, Sister Janet returned from her sabbatical in the United States, ready to open the Archdiocesan Office for the Promotion of Health. Two months later, the sisters celebrated with her the reception of a diploma as a Master in Public Health. On her birthday in December, she received a very welcome call from Sister Mary Kathleen, telling her she had received a grant of $15,000 to help pay for her health project for the Archdiocese.

Meanwhile, Sister Catherine helped organize breakfasts and bought bread and milk for children ages four to six years old in some of the pueblos jovenes, and the sisters also began giving a banana a day to 250 children in the second and third grades nearby. The Santa Rosa community also continued to help ten families in the program for tuberculosis patients that Sister Mildred had initiated.

In October, Sister Catherine wrote about the strategy of the Archbishop in working against terrorism and for justice and peace. She mentioned that Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias was urging the formation of block groups for Biblical prayer and discussion. She herself spent many nights with the people in the pueblos jovenes. During the day, she visited homes, encouraging the people to form and participate in these groups.¹²

As there were municipal elections in November, many of the Peruvian sisters went to their hometowns for that event. Thus, Sister Trini renewed her vows in Talara, and a number of the sisters assisted at that community event even if they had to return the next day.
As a result of the shortages and terrible inflation, Sister Catherine had begun helping some women in her areas to organize food kitchens. They went to various places in the city looking for food. It was not until later in the month that Sister Catherine finally located some sugar after most people had been without it for weeks. In December, Sister Catherine received the welcome news that Caritas (Catholic Charities) was donating four 100-pound sacks of potatoes for distribution among the food kitchens.

All the sisters gathered in Paita for a few days at the end of the year. Among other things, Sister Ruth Barron gave presentations on the charism of the Community. Unfortunately, several of the sisters once again returned from Paita ill with diarrhea. Since this was not the first time this had happened, it was decided this was not the best place to have Community meetings.

On January 2, 1990, the sisters from Santa Rosa journeyed to Tangarara for the inauguration of Region Grau. All hoped that this movement toward decentralization would help make the government more responsive to the needs of the people. Alas, such hopes were short lived!

That same day, Sister Nelyda began teaching a course in “Corte y Confeccion” (making of patterns and sewing) in Lower Piura as part of her summer experience working with CIPCA. Sister Janet was also busy preparing for her first courses for the Health Promoters; this involved visiting various sectors and looking for doctors and nurses to give presentations in Tumbes and Talara as well as in Piura.

In early January, five sisters and the postulant, Laura Rumiche, went to Chulucanas for retreat. Several went to Morropon to help celebrate the first vows of the first Peruvian Benedictines.

Throughout this month, Sister Elena had been exploring the apostolic needs in Piura to better determine where she might work. Among other possibilities was her working with different prayer groups in Blessed Sacrament parish, where Father David Becherer was pastor. But very soon Sister Elena became more and more immersed in the Evangelization 2000 program, going to Mexico for the course there and then giving courses in Chiclayo, Trujillo, and Arequipa.

All were delighted when Sister Susana was accepted in Champagnat University in Lima following her passage of examinations there. Now would begin the many summers of class work with assignments to do during the year in the process of gaining her teaching certificate.

Because of the constant coming and going of visitors in Santa Rosa, when the sisters had their house meetings in 1990, they decided to write a description for part-time work as coordinator of hospitality in the central house. However, the position was never realized, and the sisters missioned there have generously continued giving of their time and energy in this “open house” at the crossroads.
On Palm Sunday 1990, there was the first of numerous presidential elections to be held in Peru during the following decade. Sister Nelyda, who had moved to Trujillo in pursuit of better studies as a bilingual secretary, returned to vote, and others passed through on their way to Talara, Frias, and other places. In Piura, Sister Esther worked as president of the table at one of the voting sites; this was an all-day job, from which she returned tired and hungry. In the first days of June, all had to return to vote in the second round of elections.

In mid-April, Sister Donna Jean began giving a new course in the inter-congregational formation program. As they had at other times, the Benedictine postulants from Morropon stayed all night at Santa Rosa.

The very day they left, Sisters Trini and Maria arrived from Chalaco with Liduvina Dominguez, a young woman who was anxious to begin an experience with the sisters. At the suggestion of Sister Regina, now Director of Missions, Liduvina had come to Piura so that she might know the rest of the community a little bit. Later in the year, she would spend ten days with the sisters on the coast, sharing in their ministry and life.

Besides her work in the Diocesan Health Program, Sister Janet took on another task. She organized a week of prayer and reflection as well as a Mass of intercession for the lives of the children. Later, in June, she once again was in charge of the Children's Mass in the Cathedral.

On April 22, the sisters at Santa Rosa had a farewell for Sisters Regina and Laura. The latter was going to Negritos to begin her canonical year in the novitiate. Sister Regina left for the United States and a home visit.

At this time, Sister Elena was in charge of the meeting of the missionaries generated by the Great Catholic Mission of Piura and Tumbes; more than two hundred laity took part in the meeting. She also attended a presentation on Evangelization 2000 given by Father Jose Ignacio Alemany, CSSR. When Sisters Elena and Susana had given a presentation on May 18, they took two youths dressed as clowns with them. These dramatists added zest!

Besides these activities in connection with the new evangelization program of the Archdiocese, Sister Elena also helped with preparations for Baptism in the parish. She and Sister Susana likewise presented a short course in Mariology at the Center of Formation in Chulucanas. Soon after, Sister Elena went to Talara for about a week to give some workshops, retreats, and talks to various groups on prayer and catechesis. Perhaps it was while she was there that she and Sister Ann Barton first talked about writing a grant to start an Office of Evangelization for the Archdiocese. By November, Sister Ann had it completed.

Meanwhile, Sister Catherine organized a Biblical course to be given in the pueblos jovenes in the eastern part of the city; for these she called upon some lay teachers as the presenters.
Sister Janet left for Tumbes with Archbishop Cantuarias to visit some of the towns and easteros and explain the program for health promotion. Shortly thereafter, she once more went to Talara and then on to Tumbes, thus beginning what would become regular monthly visits. In future months, she would take Sister Mary Patricia Kielty along; at another time, she invited Sister Lucille Harrington to give a retreat to her forty-six students of First Aid. As a part of her work, she was selected as the archdiocesan delegate to the First National Seminar of the Episcopal Conference for the Health Pastoral.

Sister Nelyda visited during the break for Fiestas Patrias. Sister Ruth Reischman, who would soon be leaving for her intensive Spanish course in Cochabamba, Bolivia, also spent some time at Santa Rosa. Although there were new faces at Santa Rosa, some of the “regulars” were absent. Sister Janet was again gone, and Sister Elena had left on July 22 for a two-week course in Evangelization 2000 in Mexico. Sister Susana, too, had gone to visit her family, bringing back some produce from her mountain home when she returned.

As mentioned earlier, the sisters felt the need for a little diversion from time to time. Sometimes they went to the Municipal Theater for a performance of musicians. They also went over to Talara or Negritos for days off. On occasion, they invited groups they were working with to go on an outing. Once, when Sisters Elena and Janet accompanied the Health Promoters on a day’s outing and retreat at Los Ejidos, they were surprised to encounter a religious denomination there baptizing their “newly converted Christians.”

Sister Regina, having returned from the United States, went to Talara in mid-August to talk with the sisters and to meet with Sisters Janet and Clorinda regarding plans for the December Community meeting. She also visited Negritos and in September accompanied Sisters Trini and Maria to Chalaco for a week’s stay there. In November, she attended the annual meeting of the Major Superiors in Lima.

On November 11, Sister Nelyda and the sisters from Chalaco arrived in time to help celebrate Sister Janet’s twenty-fifth anniversary as an SCL. Sister Trini renewed her vows that day, and as always, all entered into the joy of being together and sharing prayer, food, and liturgy. That same afternoon, Sisters Regina, Janet, and Elena participated in the Mass of installation of Augusto Beuzeville Ferro as Auxiliary Bishop of Piura and Tumbes. According to those present, Sister Janet received more attention and applause than the new bishop when Archbishop Cantuarias mentioned that it was her Silver Jubilee.

In the weeks following, Sisters Janet and Ruth Reischman, who had begun working in the Archdiocesan Office of Health after her return from
language school in December, gave workshops for the Health Promoters in Piura, Talara, Sullana, and Tumbes. In these trips, they encountered and trained some 250 persons. Following the deaths of two young men and the sickness of others due to cholera, Sister Janet attended a meeting regarding the deplorable health conditions in the jail in Castilla.

During January 1991, Sister Elena began teaching a course on Spirituality in ESER (Institute for Religious Education). Her students were chiefly catechists and teachers of religion in the diocese. Then in February, she attended COMLA (Congress of Latin American Missionaries) and a retreat with the program Evangelization in Lima. On her return, she went to Chulucanas for her personal retreat.

During January and February, Sisters Trini and Esther studied in the Academy of San Fernando and lived at Santa Rosa. The course was very rigorous and the hours killing, especially given the heat of Piura in the summer. Their classes lasted from 7:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m., seven days a week. But this review of their high school education proved invaluable for both of them since they had finished their secondary education a number of years before. During March, Liduvina Dominguez, who would be entering the Community at the end of that month, took a three-week course in grammar at Lourdes High School.

Throughout the summer, Sister Catherine bought hundreds of mangos, washed them, and then in the mornings distributed them to the food programs for children in the five settlements she served. She mentioned that this supplement cost at least $100 per month, but since the women sometimes could not cook the soy meal or oatmeal because they had no water, the fruit became these children's only breakfast. For years to come, Sister Catherine would continue taking mangos, in season, and bananas the rest of the year, so that these children might have some fresh fruit.

Despite the terrible heat, Sister Ruth accompanied Sisters Rose Celine Siebers and Ann Barton to the Benedictine Monastery in Tambogrande for retreat. When they finished, Sisters Rose Celine and Ann had to come to Piura with Sister Ruth since the road had once again been closed by rice producers protesting the terribly low prices they were receiving. Sister Regina, who had gone to Talara for a visit, could not return to Piura either and ended up going to Negritos with Sister Maria.

On February 13, Julia Huiman, who also planned on entering the Community in March, had arrived to help with various programs. About a week later, Sister Susana returned from her studies in Lima, but she soon left to make a retreat in Tambogrande, directed by Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer.

Besides continuing her workshops with the Health Promoters in Talara, Tumbes, and Sullana, Sister Janet took some time off to vacation in Trujillo,
Simbal, and Talara with Sister Mary Joan Eble. Meanwhile, Sister Ruth Reischman had to go to Lima to take care of the paper work for her *carnet* (residence papers).

Although Sisters Catherine and Regina were “in house” all month, they were not actually at home very much. Sister Catherine was kept busy with her purchases of mangos and visits to pueblos jovenes, and Sister Regina made many excursions to take care of the necessary papers and purchases for a new house at Santa Julia in Piura. With Santa Rosa serving both as a formation house and a center house, the Community decided to open another house in Piura for the sisters working in the Health Pastoral, the Office of Evangelization, and other apostolates. Although the Santa Julia house was not officially opened until April 1, Sisters Elena and Ruth moved in there on March 5.

On April 1, 1991, Sister Donna Jean had assumed her role as director of both the postulants and novices. Since Sisters Laura Rumiche and Mabel Cordova undertook mission experiences as second-year novices, Sister Donna Jean and the two postulants (Liduvina and Julia) moved into Santa Rosa, Piura. The postulants took part in the inter-congregational classes in formation as well as those specific to the SCLs, and Sister Donna Jean assumed an active role in the group of formation personnel.

On May 1, the Day of the Worker, the sisters took advantage of the free day and went to Pueblo Nuevo de Colon as an outing. During the following week, Señora Blanca Maria, who was giving a course for the people in formation, stayed at Santa Rosa. She became known as “I am a triumphant woman,” as this was a slogan she used and had the sisters repeat throughout the course. During this time, as well as during another course on Corporal Expression, the postulants and novices plus two Benedictines stayed at Santa Rosa.

Soon thereafter, the postulant Liduvina and Sisters Susana and Catherine went to Santo Domingo—Liduvina and Sister Susana, to celebrate Mother’s Day at home, and Sister Catherine, to enjoy the guest house at the Center of Formation there and to make a private retreat. Sister Regina traveled to Sondor with Sister Rose Celine to visit Sister Justin Wallace, the Franciscan sister who had lived with them in Chalaco.

For the Feast of the Sacred Heart, the sisters sponsored one of the “altar stations,” decorating it with a small statue of the Sacred Heart and flowers. Sisters Regina, Donna Jean, and the two postulants participated in the procession.

On June 10, Sister Regina went to Talara to welcome Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani, Macrina Ryan, and Linda Suzanne Roth, all newly arrived from the States. The very next day, she brought Sisters Mary Kathleen and Macrina to Piura to visit some of the areas where Sister Catherine worked.
with breakfast and lunch programs for children. A few days later, Sister Regina drove them to Chalaco. Meanwhile, Sister Linda Roth returned from her trip to Tumbes with Sisters Ruth and Janet ill and tired.

Sister Ann Barton moved to Santa Rosa in August 1991; in December, she began working in the Office of Evangelization with Sister Elena. She stayed on in that position until after returning from the Community Chapter in June 1992, at which time she went to Chalaco to do pastoral work and help form community there. Ever since Sister Rose Dolores' unexpected heart problem on the coast during the summer months, only three temporary professed Peruvians and a postulant had been in the Chalaco community, so Sister Ann willingly complied when Sister Regina thought her presence would be helpful there.

Although Sister Regina had resigned her role as Director of Postulants at the end of March 1991, she continued serving the Community as Director of Missions. She worked in such pastoral ministry as was possible, given the need for frequent trips to the various houses and Lima. She continued living in Piura until November 1992, when she moved to Santa Rosa, Talara.

Except for Sister Donna Jean's three-month home visit in 1992, nothing much changed at Santa Rosa from March to the end of June. Sister Catherine continued working with the parent guides and animators for Catequesis Familiar in the eight settlements on the eastern side of the city. Her daily purchase and delivery of fruit were very much looked forward to in the food kitchens there. As mentioned earlier, Sister Regina continued to live in Piura until November.

During January 1993, seven young women stayed at Santa Rosa for a week's experience, with Sisters Trini, Clorinda, Maria, and Ann forming the team of SCLs who lived, worked, and prayed with them. Three of the seven continued working with the sisters in the summer programs. Although some kept in contact afterwards, only Lourdes Abad actually entered the Community.

That year Sister Clorinda moved to Santa Rosa, working in the parish and coordinating vocation promotion. Sister Donna Jean directed the two second-year novices, Sisters Julia and Liduvina, and worked in the inter-congregational formation program. The following year in January, she again moved back to Negritos.

In 1994 Sister Catherine was motivated to move back into catechesis and formation of parents and children because of the growth of pandillas (gangs) in the pueblos where she was working. Seeing the lack of moral principles and religious education, she turned her efforts to developing the Catequesis Familiar program, educating parents so that they, in turn, might prepare their own children for First Communion.

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Several changes took place at Santa Rosa in the first months of 1994. Sister Elena, who had returned to Peru after resigning from the Community Council, remained at Santa Rosa until April; at that time, she went to Chalaco to form part of the parish team and community there. For a brief time, Sister Mabel Cordova also lived at Santa Rosa before leaving the SCL Community. Earlier, when the convent at Santa Julia had closed in February, both Sisters Janet Cashman and Ruth Reischman moved back to Santa Rosa with Sister Catherine.

Sister Ruth continued to work in the Archdiocesan Health Office. That June, with the permission of the pastor of Cristo Rey parish, Father Manuel Curay, she began a food kitchen for children who worked in the market. Working with a lay consultative group known as the Junta Directiva, Sister Ruth helped to organize activities such as raffles and parilladas (barbecues) to gain funds. In this way, they were able to provide the kitchen with cabinets, doors, and even a roof. Men of the Marriage Encounter group attached the metal roofing that the Junta bought.

By August 4, 1995, however, the kitchen for children was closed due to the fact that they had begun receiving free lunches in their schools, thanks to the government. One humorous anecdote demonstrates how long it takes to get things done in Peru. For eleven months, Sister Ruth and the Junta Directiva had been soliciting various groups for a stove. The very day the food kitchen was closing, a stove was delivered by the City Council!

However, the stove was gratefully accepted, and by the end of the month, it had been decided to open the dining area for senior citizens. Even before it reopened on September 4, the Eucharistic ministers and visitors of the sick and elderly had registered forty elderly persons for the lunch program.

With a grant from the SCL Ryan Fund, salaries for cooks, stipends for sister coordinators, and an activities director were arranged. This venture was able to continue for several years.

During the first year, Caritas provided basic foodstuffs; some food was also donated by parishioners, and some vegetables were raised in a garden begun at the site. Even Customs gave them a large donation from their store of confiscated materials. Participants paid approximately twenty cents for the food they received; from the money thus realized, kerosene, sugar, and other commodities could be purchased.

In all, about fifty persons ate there regularly Monday through Friday; about ten others had their meals delivered to their homes. Those who came were asked to help in some way, clearing away the dirty dishes, drying them, cleaning the tables, and otherwise putting the dining room in order. Because the kitchen was so small, no more could be accommodated, and many handicapped who had begun coming from the Social Security Center nearby had to be refused unless they were sixty years old or older.
Seeing the good that was being done, others made donations. The Lions Club provided more cooking pots, plates, glasses, spoons, and service ware. Someone gave a radio-cassette. A woman gerontologist gave several talks on self-care. The parish itself continued to pay the electric and water bills, but they also used the area for meetings many nights.

During 1996 several Peruvian sisters worked with Sister Ruth or for her. Sister Esther Vilela helped her during the summer months; the postulant, Liliana Morante, worked at the food kitchen on Fridays while living at Santa Rosa. While Sister Ruth was in the States on her home visit, Sister Maria Orozco took charge of the senior citizens’ kitchen for three months; and beginning in September, Sister Julia Huiman visited twenty-five homes in Pachitea, arranging for doctor and dentist visits. Sometimes she accompanied the patient and could even help pay for medicine, thanks to money donated by a prayer group. During this same time, she also helped organize a parish census.

Sister Ruth was informed in January of the following year that Caritas could no longer provide rice, beans, and other food staples because their funds had been cut. Nevertheless, with their own garden products, the donation of foodstuffs, and monetary contributions from some other groups, the program continued. In May, they were still serving forty persons daily. Besides the physical nourishment the senior citizens received, they were also encouraged to take part in various activities. They sometimes gave programs themselves, as at Christmas. Sisters Elena, Ruth, and Julia also provided an afternoon of reflection and Señor Jose Huertas, a layman active in Marriage Encounter, gave a mini-retreat; the City Council also sponsored one or more outings for them.

But in February 1997 Sister Ruth learned that all the funding for the food kitchen had been ended. This venture also had to come to an end.

But to return to the year 1995. After Sister Janet returned to the United States in January 1995, Sisters Catherine Nichol and Ruth Reischman were the only permanent members of the Santa Rosa community. However, as in previous years, any number of people came in for dinner or for the night when they had business or meetings in Piura.

Sometimes other sisters bolstered their numbers, as for the march on the Ecuadorian consulate to protest the holding of Peruvian citizens since the border conflict. They were especially motivated by the fact that Sister Clorinda Timana’s brother, Jose Manuel, had been a prisoner for six months, and the family’s efforts in Piura and Lima had thus far not brought results.

In mid-1995, eight former missionaries visited Piura and the other mission houses. They delighted in visiting scenes of their former work and also in seeing what the Community was involved in at present. Just a month later, a photographic crew from The Leaven, the newspaper of the
Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias blessing the chapel and new convent of Santa Rosa, 1987

Dining room of the new convent

Sala on the second floor of the new convent
Sister Mildred Irwin with a family in her tuberculosis program

Sister Elena Mack and a catechist prepare classes for summer program in Santa Julia
Sister Maria Orozco (left) demonstrates how to cut patterns

Sister Ruth Reischman (left) shows her garden for the senior citizens' kitchen
Sister Laura Rumiche helping a patient with her exercises — Reflexology Center, Santa Rosa

Sister Liduvina Dominguez (left) with her students
Kansas City, Kansas Archdiocese, arrived to take pictures for an article about the work of the SCLs in Peru.

During the summer of 1996, both Sister Liduvina and the postulant, Liliana Morante, participated in the summer classes offered at ESER under the sponsorship of the Catholic Office of Education. As mentioned, Sister Esther also spent two months at Santa Rosa while working in the food kitchen.

Meanwhile, Sister Clorinda settled in after completing her nine-month Confer program in Lima. In April, she would assume her new role as Director of Postulants; Liliana Morante, who had entered the Community the previous September in Negritos, would join her in Piura at that time. Besides their classes in Confer, Sister Clorinda and Liliana took time to go to Talara and Trujillo for a few days. Sister Clorinda also collaborated with other groups, giving a talk to five hundred young people of various parishes preparing for Confirmation. She also participated in a retreat at CIPCA and met with other formation personnel of the area.

Another Peruvian sister, Sister Maria Orozco, joined the house at this time. When the Catholic University phased out its program in social service at the last minute, Sister Maria had agreed to study at the pedagogical institute, Juan Pablo II, in 1994. But since she had never wanted to be a teacher, she withdrew from that program at the end of 1995. In April 1996, she enrolled in a two-year program in sewing and pattern making at the School of Domestic Arts of the Salesian Institute in Piura. She also took a course in Catequesis Familiar in Paita and then began going to the village of Monte Castillo in Lower Piura every week with Father Francisco (Pacho) Muguiro, SJ, and others from the Office of Peace and Justice. During the year, she traveled to Huaraz with a group of young people from Monte Castillo.

Sister Catherine continued to coordinate Catequesis Familiar in four sites in Castilla. She not only worked in the First Communion program but also managed to see that forty-two children were baptized.

In May, the sisters participated in a course on “Self-Esteem” offered by Eva Boyle of the Office of Peace and Justice. They considered this very good preparation for working with women, one of two focuses the SCL Community had decided on.

By far one of the most memorable experiences occurred in June 1996. For the first time in the history of the Community, all the sisters working in Peru and all the Peruvian sisters were invited to the Mother House for the “Converging Paths” get-together. The purpose of this encounter was to help develop a sense of the SCLs being one Community, whether living and working in North or South America. Tremendous preparations were made for the event, and all the liturgies and talks were in both Spanish and English.
Each Peruvian sister had a North American sister assigned to her as companion in visiting various sites in which SCLs were working in the United States. For over a week before the general meetings, the “southern sisters” were guests in various convents and enjoyed seeing the diverse works of the sisters, significant sites, and beauties of nature.

The “Peruvian Contingent” was in charge of the liturgy on the opening day. In a liturgical dance, the Peruvian sisters entered carrying banners of Ecuador, Peru, and the United States. When they did the readings and gave the offertory petitions, their poise and enthusiasm was very impressive.

During the two weeks they were in the United States, they generously took part in whatever was asked of them. They enjoyed visiting with sisters they had met before and making new acquaintances. All in all, the whole event was a very moving experience for the sisters from both north and south of the border.

Although mission changes normally take place in March, in September 1996, Sister Clorinda and Liliana moved to Talara; Sister Julia Huiman came to Santa Rosa from Talara; and Sister Elena also joined the Santa Rosa community, having left her beloved mountains and Chalaco mission to carry out better her duties as Director of Missions. About the same time, Sister Ruth returned from her three-month home visit. And so it was like starting the year all over again.

In October, Sister Elena made her first visit to the sisters living in Ecuador. Shortly after her return from there, she and the young sisters met in Trujillo for a presentation on the history of the Community in Peru. That same month, some of the sisters took part in a special prayer workshop with Father John Sima, SJ, at Saint Ignatius High School. This priest is famous for his retreats and book on letting God speak to you through working with clay.

Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani arrived later in October for her official visits as Community Director. The sisters welcomed the opportunity to visit with her.

In late November and early December, Sisters Maria and Julia had a six-week sewing course for young women from Monte Castillo. During the summer, they also had a vacation school in Simbala for women and children, which ended with a retreat in Catacaos.

During the summer months of 1997, Sisters Ruth and Julia began visiting in La Arena and Catacaos regarding the possibilities of working there with Catequesis Familiar after school started again. They stopped in time to go to Jimbe, inland from Chimbote, for retreat.

While all the other sisters were in Jimbe, Sister Maria stayed in Piura, cleaning and painting. Although she was able to accomplish much, this work continued on through March. The house was once again full for
Sister Esther Vilela's perpetual vows and the Community celebration. Just ten days earlier, on the Feast of Saint Louise de Marillac, everyone had rejoiced with the Rumiche family as Sister Laura celebrated her perpetual vows in San Pedro.

During 1997 Sister Elena, besides being Director of Missions, also worked with some groups in the parish of Santa Rosa and gave conferences, retreats, and courses for Confer and other groups. This year she began acting as facilitator for the Franciscan sisters in their Community meetings, a service she would repeatedly fulfill in the following years. Indeed, she even traveled to Lima for a meeting of the Sisters of Mercy and to Massachusetts for the Franciscans.

Beginning in early May, Sisters Ruth Reischman, Maria Orozco, and Julia Huiman became involved in Catequesis Familiar in Lower Piura, traveling in a pickup twice a week with other sisters and priests to out-of-the-way places. There they met with parent guides to reflect on their lives in the light of the Gospel. These guides then met with groups of parents in their four villages, and the parents themselves instructed their children for First Communion.

In early May, all of the SCLs in Latin America gathered for a Community meeting at St. Ignatius High School. Later in the month, many attended the regional Confer meeting in Chulucanas which Sisters Elena and Clorinda had helped organize. Toward the end of this meeting, they had to evacuate Sister Mary Patricia Kielty when she became seriously sick.

Very shortly thereafter, Sister Elena left for the United States for pre-Chapter meetings, as she would again do in November.

During 1997, the Community provided the opportunity for ten SCLs to visit the missions in Peru. After arriving in Lima, those ten were divided into two groups. In mid-June, Sisters Mary Julitta Doerhoff, Rita Marie Anderson, Noreen Walter, and Sara Kammer arrived from Trujillo with Sister Maria, who had gone down to accompany them to Piura. Following three-day visits to Chalaco and Talara, the sister guests toured Catacaos and various places in Piura with Sisters Elena and/or Catherine.

The same day these guests left, Sisters Elena and Julia traveled to Carrizal in the sector of Tamboya. There Sister Elena helped the Chalaco sisters with the first School for Women offered there, and Sister Julia saw at first hand this program for women. Shortly after her return, Sister Elena went to visit Sisters Rose Dolores, Trini, Laura, and Esther in Trujillo in the SCL house of studies.

As part of the pastoral team in Lower Piura, Sisters Ruth, Maria, and Julia helped host the Confer-Clero meeting in July at Santa Maria High School. Father Julio Wicht, SJ, one of the former prisoners in the Japanese
Embassy, gave a very interesting presentation not only on his experiences but also on the economic situation of the country.

Sister Julia organized a youth retreat for the young people of Nueva Esperanza, utilizing facilities at Bosconia, the Salesian school and grounds. Sister Eileen Haynes, who had recently returned from her language studies in Bolivia, brought twenty young people active in EJE in Talara to help direct the retreat. EJE is a program for young people similar to Search in the United States.

During the vacations of Fiestas Patrias, Sisters Maria and Eileen went to Trujillo for a few days visit. Meanwhile, Sister Donna Jean Henson and her nephew, Darren, visited in Piura.

Over the years, the sisters in Piura had developed strong ties with the Missionary Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception, the same Community that had befriended the SCLs in Bolivia. Sister Elena often facilitated meetings or translated for them, and Sister Ruth filled in at their house of formation when all the professed were engaged in meetings. Sisters Elena, Susana, and others worked closely with them in Confer. The two communities also celebrated special feast days together from time to time.

Sisters Julia, Ruth, and Maria visited Parkinsonia to determine its possibilities for the retreat for Eucharistic ministers planned for November. Since they were satisfied with its facilities, Sister Clorinda later gave a day of retreat there.

When Sisters Carol Depner and Therese Zimmerman visited from the States, Sister Elena took them to Chalaco. On their return, Sisters Julia, Ruth, and Maria showed Sister Carol the artisan shops of Catacaos and the beaches of Yacila; Sister Therese did not feel able to go.

One of the groups that Sister Elena helped organize at Santa Rosa was Grupo de Apoyo, a group formed to minister to the sick and elderly. These men and women who visited the sick and homebound began having birthday parties once a month to help their elderly friends have at least one social outing. Various groups of the parishes and from surrounding schools provided entertainment and refreshments.

In 1997 the SCL Community in Peru and Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver, Colorado, began a collaborative program. The hospital would send medicines and, later, doctors to help the poor. These same doctors would gain hands-on experience in a third world setting. In the early months of the program, Sisters Julia and Catherine accepted the responsibility of making contacts and setting the program in motion. They therefore visited various doctors and agencies about the Saint Joseph Hospital health project, and they were warmly welcomed. Later, these two went to see about importing medical supplies through the port of Paita. However, the boxes sent in April 1997 by Sister Mary Walter Swann, the liaison at Saint Joseph
Hospital, went to Negritos instead of Piura. It was not until rather late in June 1997 that these medicines were finally discovered by Sister Julia. Sister Ruth also went to see Dr. Carlos More about setting up a clinic for senior citizens in the parish of Santa Rosa.

At the beginning of December 1997, Sister Eileen Haynes joined the Santa Rosa community and began working with Aldea Infantil, or Children's Village, in Los Algarrobos.

Sister Maria, having finished her courses at Bosconia and an English course she had been taking, began her orientation in the Archdiocesan Office of the Health Pastoral. Consequently, she began her travels throughout the Archdiocese almost immediately although she was not officially in charge of that office until the following April.

On December 15, Piura had a preview of the forthcoming “El Niño,” the rains falling steadily for ten hours. Despite that, the sisters entertained Father Manuel Curay, pastor of Cristo Rey parish, and some of the women from the lunch program.

Because the rains had begun in full force and travel was precarious, the sisters made an improvised retreat in February 1998, using Santa Rosa and the newly founded formation house in Lopez Albujar for sleeping. Conferences and meals were at Lopez Albujar although the meals were prepared by Agustina Berru and her daughter at Santa Rosa and transferred by mototaxi each noon.

Sister Elena made several trips to Trujillo during the summer months, helping to make living arrangements for Sisters Esther and Laura after the house of studies was closed. Her last trip was to help with the packing of the furniture to be shipped to Piura. At times, in order to get to and from Trujillo, she had had to ford flooded areas and rivers of running water. On the night of April 1, she and Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer arrived at the airport in Castilla from Trujillo via a Peruvian Air Force plane. There, amidst a steady downpour, they crossed the last bridge open, and that open only to foot traffic. A man hauled their luggage in a cart. Sister Trini arrived the following day under only slightly less stressful conditions. She was welcomed as a member of the Santa Rosa community on Holy Thursday 1998. After a few days of rest, Sister Rose Dolores went to her new mission in Talara in a very small passenger plane.

On April 14, Sister Elena again traveled to Trujillo, this time to see Sister Esther about her health problem. When Sister Elena returned, Sister Esther came with her to consult another doctor.

Toward the end of the month, Sisters Eileen, Maria, and Elena drove to Talara, taking most of Sister Rose Dolores' luggage since she had taken the least possible when she had flown over in the four-passenger plane. They celebrated Sister Rose Dolores' Golden Jubilee as a Sister of Charity,
and then brought her back to Piura with them as she was traveling with Sister Eileen to the United States. Sister Eileen had decided to return to the States for at least a year, due to her father’s precarious health. The community at Lopez Albujar had a farewell for Sister Eileen; then in the evening, the sisters at Santa Rosa had an early birthday celebration for her.

Since Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani had sent special emergency money for help following the flooding, Sisters Elena and Trini began to visit families who needed financial help for school supplies.

Sister Trini had gone to Trujillo to defend her thesis in April, but she once again had to travel south in May, this time to complete paper work for her academic title. After she finished there, she continued on to Lima to arrange for visas for the sisters going to the United States for the Community Chapter.

Sister Catherine was finally able to arrive from Chalaco in early May, making it by car as far as the bridge in Morropon. With Sister Trini’s return, the family was complete for the year—at least for a brief time.

However, on June 4, most of the sisters were on their way to the United States and Chapter. Sister Maria had to stay to coordinate the Day for Health Promoters but left the following morning.

Because Sisters Elena, Maria, and Trini stayed to help celebrate Jubilee Day at the Mother House and to visit family members, the house was not complete again until July 3. Even then, what with Sister Elena’s travels as Director of Missions and Sister Maria’s journeys for the Health Office, they were not often all together.

Sister Catherine had elected to stay in Piura and had begun working some in the parish of Santa Rosa. Besides her other work, she tended her garden in front of the house and helped young people with study grants. As time passed, she began to work with the Catequesis Familiar program in the parish, visiting homes and forming groups especially in Santa Julia, Nueva Esperanza, and Santa Rosa. She also began visiting a small comedor infantile (food kitchen for children) in Nueva Esperanza supplied by the government program PRONAA.

Through the years, the sisters had invited priests from the surrounding area to celebrate the Mass about once a month in the house, but when Father Roland Castro became pastor at Santa Rosa, he began celebrating the Eucharist weekly in the convent, staying afterwards for breakfast and conversation.

When Sister Trini first came to Piura, she began to work in the office of the parish school at Lopez Albujar, but given the problems there, she soon left. Shortly after her arrival in Piura, she had also put her name in at the Catholic Office of Education, and she was notified in August about a substitute position in Nestor Martos High School for Boys, taking the place
of a young twenty-eight-year-old teacher dying of cancer. She also began working in the school office, supervising teachers of religion.

Because of damages caused by “El Niño,” it was necessary to make some repairs to the house. At the same time, the sisters secured permission to screen in porches on the third floor and in part of the patio area in front of the house.

As Director of Missions, Sister Elena had visited Sisters Joan Kilker and Lucille Harrington in Ecuador in October, so she was surprised on November 14 to hear of Sister Joan’s hospitalization. At first she asked Sister Lucille if she wanted Sister Mary Patricia Kielty or herself to come. Although Sister Lucille asked for Sister Mary Patricia, Sister Regina urged Sister Elena to go also. So both went to Quito and stayed until November 26, when both Sisters Lucille and Joan flew to the United States.

On Thanksgiving Day, a Redemptorist celebrated Mass at Santa Rosa for the sisters. Then in early December Sisters Elena, Catherine, and Maria joined with the other priests and religious of the archdiocese for the Silver Anniversary celebration of Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias in La Union.

Early in December 1998, Sister Catherine terminated two years of work in preparing for First Communion in the eastern part of the city. Free of the catechetical duties, near Christmas she had a chocolatada, a party where hot chocolate and sweet bread is served, for more than one hundred children of the neighborhood. Serving them at the front patio of the house, she thus began a custom to be continued for a number of years.

Toward the end of December, Sisters Maria, Rose Dolores, and Trini went to Trujillo for the Golden Anniversary of Father Wenceslao Calderon, pastor in the parish where the sisters had lived from 1994 to 1998. They enjoyed meeting and seeing old friends. This also provided them time to visit with Sisters Esther and Laura, who were just finishing their studies there.

At the end of the year, the sisters again united in Piura. First of all, those from Santa Rosa joined the Lopez Albajar community for Christmas Eve; then on Christmas day, the Talara sisters joined everyone else. Finally, all the sisters met together on the twenty-seventh to reflect on their response to the Chapter challenges.

On January 2, 1999, Sister Elena accompanied Isabel Sandoval, a prospective candidate and teacher, as far as Morropon when she left to help with summer school in Chalaco. The next day, the four sisters from Santa Rosa went to Talara for an Epiphany party, after which Sister Elena stayed to give a Discipleship Workshop for young women who had been attending the monthly reflection afternoons during the year.

During much of January 1999, Sister Trini was busy with the organization of the summer program in the Diocesan Office of Catholic
Education. This special summer program was especially directed to teachers, although catechists and others could attend.

On January 18, Sisters Ann Schumacher and Janet Cashman arrived with Sister Ruth Reischman. Sister Ann was scouting out possibilities for a medical exchange program for doctors in Saint Joseph Hospital’s Family Practice group in Denver, Colorado. During the week, she visited Talara and Paita with Sisters Catherine and Elena. Of course, Sister Ann was able to see Catacaos and other points of interest, too. After this visit, Sisters Elena and Ruth went to meet the new doctor in charge of Health in Piura on February 18. In the years following, Sisters Ruth and Mary Patricia would coordinate the visits of the doctors from Saint Joseph Hospital in Piura and Talara.

Although Sister Laura had brought up the computer and copier when she came on February 21, the rest of the furniture that she and Sister Esther had been using in Trujillo did not arrive until a week later. Sister Elena took Sister Esther’s things to Talara, where she would be living, and visited with the sisters.

In March 1999, Sisters Elena, Maria and Trini made a community retreat at the Franciscan House of Studies in Moche. Carrying on the Community thrust, Father Luis, OCD, helped the sisters develop personal life plans. The hope was that in sharing these individual plans in each house, the local communities could fashion a Community Project for the year.

Besides continuing with her work as Director of Missions, visiting the various houses, and attending to Community matters, Sister Elena always seemed to find time to teach in ESER and give talks to religious education groups and Confer. In May 1999 she made an unexpected trip to the United States when her father died. Throughout the year, she also worked with the Grupo de Apoyo, the support group for the elderly of the parish, who celebrated their first anniversary in June.

Sister Trini began her second year of working with the Catholic Office of Education as a supervisor of religion teachers; she also taught part-time in Mater Redentoris, the high school alongside the offices. Later in the year, she helped coordinate a special course on the Gospel of Saint John given by Father Diaz Mateos, SJ.

Sister Maria worked full-time as coordinator of the Office of Health, together with Maria Piza, a Sister of Charity of Mallorca. Besides this, she collaborated in the family catechetical program in part of the Catacaos parish and acted as animator of the Rural Christian Program in Lower Piura.

Once again Sister Maria busied herself after retreat with getting some maintenance done in the house. Soon she had a painter, a carpenter, and a plumber occupied. These workers finished just in time for the reception of Deidy Abad into the novitiate and the renewal of vows on March 25.
While most of the sisters returned to their missions almost immediately after the celebration, Sister Catherine remained in Chalaco until April 12 when the road to the coast was finally open. On March 27, Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Ann Barton arrived for a social visit after their trip to Cuzco and Machu Picchu.

After receiving her title as a technical nurse in April 1999, Sister Laura Rumiche had joined the community in Lopez Albujar, working in the Archdiocesan Office of Health with Sisters Maria Piza and Maria Orozco. In mid-July, she joined Sister Maria Orozco in giving a week’s course in reflexology at the parish of Santa Rosa.

Sisters Sue Miller, Community Director, and Marianna Bauder, Councilor, arrived the end of June and, after some visiting, participated in the party at Lopez Albujar on the night of July 3 and the meetings at Santa Rosa the following day. Sister Irene Skeehan, who was in a special program in Lima, came up to translate.

Sister Maria left on July 30 to begin her thirty-day retreat in Lima at the House of the Daughters of Charity. She returned to Lima in November, substituting for Sister Elena at the Major Superiors’ Meeting since Sister Elena had gone to meet with the Community Council and to visit her mother.

In the first days of September, Sister Elena was approached by various neighbors concerned about a child who had been beaten by her mother. The twelve-year-old had agreed to denounce her mother, and Sister Elena accompanied her to the police station, the district attorney, and the doctor. Thanks to Sister Elena’s work, the girl was placed in a home sponsored by a Canadian group called “Gaudium et Spes.”

Throughout October, Sister Elena went every Monday to give a retreat for teachers, often in outlying districts such as Malingas. She also gave the discernment retreat for young women in formation in the various Communities of Confer.

In September, Sister Catherine had begun visiting homes in Santa Rosa parish. She gratefully accepted the accompaniment of Claudia, a young woman from Santa Julia who knew the neighborhoods well. Preparatory to her beginning work in the parish, they preregistered children for the Catequesis Familiar in the various sectors of Santa Rosa parish: in Santa Julia, Nueva Esperanza, and Santa Rosa itself, as well as Tallanes. She worked with groups similar to those she had sponsored on the eastern side of the city for six to eight years. She also began accompanying a small comedor infantil (food kitchen for children) at least once each week in Nueva Esperanza.

In October, Sister Maria was busy for several weeks coordinating the activities of Eugene Smith and Dr. Maria Garcia. Both had come to Peru representing the Seton Institute of the Daughters of Charity. They provided
courses for Health Promoters both in Talara and Piura. Thanks to this contact, both Sisters Maria and Laura would later be invited to visit Guatemala to see the work of Dr. Garcia and the Daughters of Charity there.

At the end of October, Sister Trini joined other vocation committee members in sponsoring a two-day vocation retreat in Kurt Beer Park. Sister Elena helped with presentations on Saturday, and Sister Maria was chiefly responsible for getting the food delivered to the park for the group.

After Sister Elena returned from the United States, she went to Paita with Sisters Laura and Mary Patricia for a meeting with Pro Vida, the Catholic agency that makes it possible for botiquines (parish pharmacies) to buy most medicines at half price. Several of the women who conduct these botiquines with the sisters also attended.

At the end of the year, the sisters all gathered at Santa Rosa for a special presentation on Human Rights. As a result of this meeting, Sister Catherine had a letter published in El Tiempo, the newspaper of Piura, protesting the television program of Laura Bozzo, which the sisters had agreed offended human dignity. Several sisters signed the letter.

On January 3, 2000, Sister Laura moved into Santa Rosa, making a fifth member for a time. Shortly thereafter, she and Sister Maria took a brief vacation, visiting a frontier city of Ecuador. Then the following week both of them went to Lima in preparation for going to Guatemala and their course on nutrition.

Sister Catherine as usual went to Chalaco for the hot summer months after the vacation school had finished there. Sisters Elena and Trini visited Sister Liduvina Dominguez in Trujillo, where she was beginning her higher studies in the University of Cesar Vallejo. Somewhat later Sisters Elena, Ruth, and Mary Patricia went to Lima for a course in Confer on “The Third Age.” Shortly after her return, Sister Elena went to La Union to participate with the priests in their development of a pastoral plan for the year.

In April, Sister Maria left for Lima and her yearlong Formation Course in Confer. Sister Laura assumed greater responsibilities with Sister Maria Piza in the Diocesan Health Office.

Sister Trini began teaching language and literature at St. Joseph the Worker’s High School as well as doing pastoral work there. Sister Catherine began working more in Santa Rosa parish, and Sister Elena continued with her diverse activities as Director of Missions, translator, teacher, and retreat director.

As Sister Laura’s program in reflexology and rehabilitation developed at Santa Rosa, it appeared that more room was needed. Moreover, the parish pharmacy begun in 1998 was increasingly active. So Sisters Laura and Elena began developing plans for a multi-use center to be housed on the parish grounds. Among their dreams was to develop a special program for victims
of AIDS and their families. As early as August 1999, they had done a special orientation program for youth on that subject, and some of the people that Sister Elena’s Grupo de Apoyo helped care for were AIDS patients. The full flowering of that dream, however, remains for future telling.

When Sister Janet returned to Peru, she again assumed the work in the Archdiocesan Office of Health, leaving Sister Laura free to dedicate herself to the center for reflexology in the parish and to gaining all of the necessary authorizations for the new project. When the land on the parish property proved too small for the plans, the sisters applied to the city government for an area on which to build, but as always, there have been a succession of problems.

Although the sisters had hoped to see at least the beginnings of the new center by the Feast of Saint Vincent, September 27, 2003, the groundbreaking had to be postponed indefinitely. Sister Laura continues the arduous work of obtaining all of the official papers. On a happier note, members of the SCL/HSC (Health Services Corporation) who visited Peru in 2003 gave generous personal donations toward this work. Assuredly, with patience and perseverance, the St. Vincent Center will become a reality.
Chapter XI Notes

1 Sister Joan Kilker to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, May 12, 1987, A/SCL.
2 Sister Agnes Klein to Stefani, July 1987, A/SCL.
3 It is customary in Peru for house blessings and all such events to be sponsored by relatives or friends.
4 Sister Mildred Irwin to Stefani, [n.d.], A/SCL.
5 Sister Mary Patricia Kielty had recently arrived from Bolivia, as she and a Franciscan Sister had driven Community belongings from Coripata, Bolivia, to Piura and then on to Talara.
6 Confer-Clero: a joint meeting of the Conference of Religious and the Archbishop and priests of the diocese.
8 Kilker to Stefani, June 2, 1988, A/SCL.
9 It was customary that a statue be taken from one house to another. Prayers are said in the house where the image is; then it is transported to another house.
10 Kielty to Stefani, January 22, 1989, A/SCL.
11 Ibid.
12 Sister Catherine Nichol to Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, October 11, 1989, A/SCL.
13 At least seventy-seven people died of cholera in Peru in the early months of 1991 (Kilker to Horvat, February 13, 1991, A/SCL.)
14 Nichol to Horvat, January 13, 1991, A/SCL.
15 The Day of the Worker, like Labor Day in the United States, is a national holiday in Peru. It is celebrated on the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.
16 Nichol to Horvat, End of May 1994, A/SCL.
17 Sisters Josephine Bustos, Mary Joan Eble, Agnes Klein, Ann Louis LaLonde, Edith McCauley, Rose Celine Siebers, Irene Skeehan, and Mary Marcianna Trujillo.
18 See Chapter XX for details.
19 Because the highway was washed out in so many places, the Air Force flew people in cargo planes.
20 Kurt Beer Park had been established with funds from Germany; before the rains, it had had lovely flowers and shade trees and even some animals and play equipment for children. Although most of the plants had died, it still provided a quiet place for a day of retreat.
As early as the 1960s, the sisters from Talara had begun to work in Negritos, a fishing port about twenty minutes southwest of Talara by car. As mentioned in Chapter IV, Sister Josephine Bustos stopped teaching at Santa Rosa School in Talara in 1968 and began working in social services at Santa Rosa Church and helping in the Well Baby Clinic in San Pedro one day a week. Later that same year, she began working in Negritos. In a letter of October 7, Sister Agnes Klein commented to Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan that Father Martin O'Grady was satisfied with having only one sister working in Negritos and did not want another. He apparently wanted someone to be a sort of "jack of all trades," doing both catechetical work and attending to social problems. Sister Agnes suggested to him that he ask one of the English Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, who were about to arrive, to take over the catechesis.

Nevertheless, the Community apparently assigned Sister Mary Assumpta Huttenhoff to work with Sister Josephine part-time in Negritos and part-time in Pueblo Nuevo. In the end, the pastor won out, and Sister Josephine continued in Negritos while Sister Mary Assumpta worked for a time in Pueblo Nuevo. Sister Josephine took charge of the catechetical program in seven schools and also worked in social services.

Because Father O'Grady was gathering funds to build a convent, he could not manage a salary for Sister Josephine. However, through the generosity of a parishioner, Desmond Maingot, he did provide a car, and the parish paid the gas for her trips back and forth to Talara. Desmond Maingot also paid the rent for two rooms in the old hotel. Sister Josephine stored her catechetical materials in one, and Julia Pindi, a volunteer, used the other for her sewing classes.

As the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition took on more aspects of the parish and hospital work in Negritos, the SCLs no longer felt their presence necessary. Thus, when Sister Rosalie Mahoney left Talara in 1970, Sister Josephine returned to the parish social services program there and also worked with the Well Baby Clinic in San Pedro. It was not until sixteen years later that the SCLs returned to Negritos.

In 1986, when Sister Joan Kilker, Director of Missions, went to visit Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias about the possibility of opening a new mission, the prelate suggested Negritos as a possibility. The Sisters of St. Joseph had moved out the year before to establish their novitiate in Lima. The Archbishop said the sisters need not pay any rent and could use the convent as long as they so chose, but they would be expected to assume whatever repairs were necessary as well as pay for utility bills. They would
also have to buy a major portion of the furnishings, although some furniture had been left behind. In return, the pastor asked that they help with the liturgical ceremonies and prepare people for the choir and as lectors. Accordingly, after consulting with the other sisters, Sister Joan requested permission to accept this offer. After discussing the matter with her Council, Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, authorized the use of the Negritos convent as an SCL formation house for postulants.

At the time, this house overlooking the Pacific Ocean and so proximate to Talara seemed ideal, especially since the Community had hopes of receiving six to eight postulants the following year.² It was spacious, with a good-sized kitchen and dining room and a large living room, as well as an entry reception room and a side screened-in porch. Its one-floor plan further provided two complete bathrooms and seven bedrooms, one of which was turned into a chapel. In the back there was an enclosed patio and laundry, a storage room, and the former chapel, now turned into a classroom. A small garden area and carport were adjacent to the house.

Before they could open the house, the Sisters of Charity would need to buy three beds and mattresses, six desks and chairs, a typewriter, sewing machine, eight chairs for the chapel, a table, books, and cassettes in Spanish, as well as plates, glasses, tableware, pots, pans, and bowls. Sister Regina Deitchman, who would be directing the postulants, requested $8000 for an opening budget, indicating that she was applying to Adveniat (the German Bishops' assistance organization) for half that sum.³

On Thanksgiving Day 1986, all of the SCLs gathered in the new house to celebrate and begin three days of meetings. The discussions and reflections centered on the 1986 SCL Chapter enactments and their implementation. They found walking on the beach just west of the house to be very conducive to their prayer and reflection time.

The following months were spent in cleaning the house and ordering and purchasing materials. By February 20, 1987, Sisters Regina and Donna Jean Henson were ready to spend their first night in the new house. On the second day after moving in, they discovered there were leaks in the roof when it rained heavily. The following week was occupied with still more cleaning, painting, calling in plumbers, etc. By the next week, they were glad to go to Talara for a pre-Lenten party and to share in some of the fun of Carnaval in San Pedro.

Many hands helped in getting the house ready. Sister Susana Cordova came over from Piura to help out, and in early March, Sister Trini Orozco brought four girls from Talara out to help clean the windows and scrub the floors. Laura Rumiche, a young woman interested in the Community, and her sister Karina came out from San Pedro to measure for drapes for the dining room, community room, kitchen, and chapel. Sister Trini again came

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back to help clean the bedrooms. By early March, Sisters Regina and Donna Jean could take time off to go to the beach at Balcones.

Finally, all was ready for the Big Day, March 15, 1987, when four young women, accompanied by Sisters Elena Mack and Janet Cashman, joined the Negritos community as postulants. The sisters from Talara also came to welcome the new postulants—Luciola (Lucy) Huaman and Renee Zeta from Piscan Grande (Chalaco parish) and Morfília (Morfi) Liviapoma and Esther Vilela from Piura. All stayed for the simple prayer service and reception followed by dinner. Later, Father Andres offered Mass in the community room and afterwards installed the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel.

After the guests had departed, the new household (Sisters Regina and Donna Jean and the four postulants) gathered for their first house meeting on the patio at the side of the house. Later, they attended the evening parish Mass together so that everyone could be introduced.

During the first year, Sister Donna Jean continued her former work as coordinator of the Catequesis Familiar (Family Catechesis) program at Santa Rosa three days a week, sometimes taking along two of the postulants. During that time, she also helped to orient Sister Mary Joan Eble in the parish work at Santa Rosa. Besides these activities in Talara, she also taught religion in the public schools in Negritos and worked in the parish.

Being so close together, the sisters from Talara and Negritos saw a good deal of each other. They celebrated birthdays, feast days, and many other occasions together. Over the years, they also lent each other support in their apostolic activities. Whenever they could, they tried to combine trips for shopping with times of meetings, courses, and such. Thus, when everyone went over to Piura by bus for Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco's reception as novices in mid-March, Sister Donna Jean stayed on for the vocation committee meeting two days later.

When Father Andres was reassigned to Chimbote in early April, attending daily Mass became more difficult. The public transportation to and from Talara responded to the law of supply and demand. If there were insufficient people to fill the combi (van with multiple seats), one's trip might take forty or forty-five minutes instead of the possible twenty while the driver sought more passengers. There might be other impediments too. For instance, on April 11, when the sisters and postulants sought transportation to get to Mass, a roadblock had been set up by striking oil workers. The sisters and postulants had to walk for two hours before encountering transportation. Of course, they were too late for Mass, but they did do some necessary shopping, and rather than risk another such delay, Sister Donna Jean, Renee, and Morfi stayed on in Talara for a scheduled afternoon meeting with catechists. Sister Regina and the other postulants returned to Negritos.
Father Gabriel Chunga, pastor of Talara Alta, was assigned to fill in during the absence of a resident pastor. However, given his multiple duties in Talara Alta and its two mission churches and his unhurried attendance of these, he most frequently arrived late. The sisters had their first experience of this when the Easter Vigil services scheduled for 11:00 p.m. actually began at 1:00 a.m. Due to these circumstances, Sister Regina found that planning any kind of schedule for the community or novitiate program proved difficult, if not impossible.

Despite this, in addition to their classes in the house, the postulants began taking a census of the parish, visiting families in twos. They also found time to prepare a program to share with the sisters at Santa Rosa when the Negritos community joined the Talara sisters for Easter dinner. They always welcomed visitors, such as Sister Elena Mack when she stayed overnight following the monthly Formation Team meeting and the novices when they came for a day of rest and relaxation.

During Easter week, Father Chunga met with leaders in the parish. Among the decisions made was one regarding Masses: he would offer the Eucharist on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday. So the sisters adjusted their schedules, going into Talara the other three days of the week and taking along reading material in preparation for the wait on the scheduled days.

On Mother’s Day, the postulants went home to visit their mothers. Temporarily relieved of their responsibilities, Sisters Regina and Donna Jean took a few days for rest and relaxation. Indeed, Sister Donna Jean remarked to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani on the difficulties of living in a formation house, saying she felt like she was living in a boarding school. She further mentioned that she now saw the value of the former rules for sacred and ordinary silence. She bemoaned the lack of silence of action too, the more so as she had just been awakened five times within an hour by the banging of doors.4

In the third week of May, three of the postulants went to Piura for a four-day workshop with other persons in initial formation from different religious congregations. Father Robert Beckman, SJ, gave them an “Introduction to Religious Life.”

Early on, the new postulants gained a sense of what it means to be supported in Community, both in times of difficulty and sorrow and in times of joy. Four days after Sister Regina accompanied Esther to see Dr. Luis More, she likewise accompanied her when she was operated on for a tumor on the uterus on May 25 and in her days of recuperation in the clinic. When Renee had to travel to Piscan Grande for her uncle’s funeral the very day after Esther’s operation, she went fortified with the sisters’ expressions of grief and prayers. Then on May 27, Sisters Donna Jean, Morfi, and Lucy went to Piura to celebrate Sister Regina’s birthday in the
novitiate house. Since Esther was dismissed from the clinic early that day and Renee had returned from Piscan Grande, the whole Negritos community was present for the festive dinner, cake, and ice cream. Though the others returned home that day, Esther stayed on in Piura until June 1.

During June, the Negritos community began having afternoons of reflection and prayer for young women interested in the Community. The first one had drawn nine, but the numbers varied from month to month. Sometimes young women from Talara and San Pedro arrived, and sometimes young women attending live-in experiences also took part.

During June and July, the Negritos community was in a state of flux. In mid-June, the postulants went home for Father's Day, and again Sisters Regina and Donna Jean enjoyed a little time to themselves. Shortly thereafter, Sister Regina went with Sister Elena to Lima for the annual meeting of formation personnel from different religious congregations. While Sister Regina was gone, Sister Donna Jean and the postulants spent the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul in the fishing port of San Pablo just south of Negritos for a program and Mass.

Visitors, too, came and went during this time. In mid-June, Sister Rose Celine Siebers, who was on the coast due to a broken arm she had suffered in a fall in Chalaco, came for some R & R. In July, Sister Rachel Sarosi, the Vincentian Sister of Charity (VSC) working in Talara Alta, came for dinner, bringing two of her visiting sisters to see the place where she had initially lived and worked. That very same afternoon, Sister Janet Cashman brought Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer to visit for a few days before the latter went on to Bolivia and language school. The comings and goings continued as the postulants left for their homes to help celebrate Fiestas Patrias. When they did so, Sister Donna Jean availed herself of the opportunity to visit Chalaco for a few days; the novices, Sisters Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco, likewise came for a visit; and there was another formation meeting with representatives from three of the houses. Sister Elena stayed over for a time with the novices. When Sister Regina left for Lima and retreat, the sisters from Talara came over for the weekend to guard the house and to enjoy some time by the sea.

By early August, most of the Negritos community were home again and involved in various activities. Sister Donna Jean, Morfi, and Esther all returned the afternoon of August 3, but Lucy and Renee extended their vacation by another day. On the nineteenth, the postulants went to Piura to help the sisters with the move from Santa Ana, the rented house in Piura, to the new Santa Rosa Convent several blocks away. At the same time, Sister Regina went north to the frontier to meet her brother, Father Eric.

On the twenty-third, Father Eric continued on his journey, and Sister Regina once more went with the postulants to a four-day workshop in
Piura, this time on discernment. At the end of these classes, Esther and Lucy left for Chalaco and a brief experience in that mission house. Although Morfi stayed on an additional day with her family, no doubt to inform them that she would be leaving the formation program, Renee and a young woman from Chalaco returned to Negritos with Sister Regina. A few days later, Sister Regina accompanied Morfi when she returned home.

On September 3, Esther began a monthlong mission experience in Talara. On the thirteenth, all went to Piura for the meeting of Confer (Conference of Religious) and stayed on for the dedication of the new convent at Santa Rosa, Piura. On their return, they brought Altimira, a young woman from Piscan Grande interested in the Community, to visit for a week. Toward the end of the month, Sister Donna Jean left for a meeting of coordinators of the Catequesis Familiar program in Lima.

Again in October and November, there was considerable coming and going. Early in October, Lucy began her apostolic experience in Talara, and toward the end of the month, Renee went to Chalaco for the same. On the eighteenth, Sister Elena, the two novices, and four possible candidates visited from Piura. And at the end of October, everyone went to Piura to express condolences and participate in the funeral of Sister Clorinda's father.

On November 11, everyone went to Piura, where they celebrated with Sister Trini Orozco and her family when she pronounced her first vows. All the sisters continued on to Chiclayo the next day for the annual Community meeting.

On their return, the postulants went to the Center of Formation in Chulucanas with Sisters Agnes Klein and Trini to give a vocation talk. Sisters Sue Miller, Community Councilor, and Marie Kelly, Community Secretary, who had come from the States for Sister Trini's vows, visited the Negritos house. Then, for Thanksgiving, the sisters from Negritos joined the Talara community for dinner. There they learned of the death of Sister Clorinda's brother and nephew in an accident returning from Lima. How they commiserated with the family in these sudden losses so soon after the death of their father!

On December 12, the sisters went to Piura for the annual Christmas dinner and meeting with the Archbishop. The missions for the following year arrived that same day. There were twelve changes! Sister Rose Celine Siebers was assigned to Negritos, and she went there with Sister Donna Jean that very day. The following day, everyone joined in decorating the house for Christmas.

There were several celebrations in the next two weeks. On December 19, Renee and Lucy accompanied Sister Donna Jean for a farewell party given her by the parents of the Catequesis Familiar program in Talara.
She would be studying in the Confer Formation Program in Lima beginning in April. That same night, Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer arrived from Bolivia to spend the summer.

Just four days later, twenty-three Sisters of Charity, including postulants and novices, met in Talara for a general farewell party and “missioning” ceremony, in which each sister was given a rose and sent forth to her 1988 mission with the prayers and blessing of all.

Just before Christmas, Sister Ruth Barron came to give a three-day Dream Workshop. Sister Rose Dolores joined the postulants and Sister Rachel Sarosi, VSC, in the workshop.

On Christmas Eve 1987, the community opened both the communal and individual gifts after evening prayers together. Then they went to the “midnight” Mass” at 10:30. On returning home, they carried out some of the traditional Peruvian Christmas Eve customs, such as having hot chocolate and paneton, a special sweet bread made for the holidays. At midnight they enthroned the infant Jesus in the previously empty manger.

On Christmas Day, the Talara Sisters joined the Negritos community for a festive dinner. Shortly after dinner and dishes, the postulants left for a visit home, and the professed sisters drove over to Talara to enjoy a video.

During many afternoons and evenings in the week following Christmas, the four North Americans enjoyed visiting and playing bridge, either on the side patio or in the dining room. In fact, on New Year’s Eve they interrupted their game to go to “midnight” Mass and to walk about to see the “burning of the old men”; they then returned and finished playing the rubber of bridge.

As indicated, Sister Rose Celine Siebers had joined the Negritos community in mid-December 1987. For the next five years, she visited the sick in their homes and in the nearby hospital, taking them Communion. Given the worsening of the economic conditions of the country and moved by the suffering of many of the families she had been visiting, Sister Rose Celine began to obtain some generous donations with which she was able to buy rice and beans and sell them at a less than cost price.

Some of the prayer groups of the city not only provided her with names of very needy families but also managed to collect some funds. The nutritionist at the state clinic gave her a good deal of encouragement. Señor Jorge Delly, owner of a prospering filling station, provided immeasurable help, at first making a monthly donation and later supplying trucks to go to Talara for rice and to Sullana for soy beans in the weeks that the City Council did not pick up these commodities. Señora Natividad Calle de Coronado also proved an immense help, going to Talara and Sullana to purchase the rice and obtaining one of the city trucks to pick it up.
By November 23, 1988, when Sister Rose Celine began selling rice and beans, there were 113 families enrolled, some coming Mondays, others Wednesdays or Fridays. A committee of women faithfully helped distribute the foodstuffs from the garage attached to the rectory. In about two weeks, the number of families had increased to 200 and in another month had added 25 more. Prices continued to rise dramatically, rice inflating by 23 percent in just four months time. Many men lacked steady work, and even the families of those who were employed suffered, for salaries had barely risen, if at all.

Fortunately, others recognized the crisis situation and also began to come forward with help. In January 1989, a local woman appeared and offered 3000 Intis\(^5\) for the program, with the promise that she would repeat this as often as she could. On Holy Thursday, a man from the Rotary Club came to promise a check and the help of some women from his group. Señor Delly also came with some ladies of the Rotary Club to present a check for 175,000 Intis. These ladies further promised to sponsor an activity to raise funds; when they actually carried it out, they realized 609,000 Intis in a raffle for the program.

By 1990 three hundred fifty families were enrolled in the program. Besides the numbers needing help, there were other problems. Sometimes there simply was not enough rice to be bought, so another trip had to be made. Also, the prices continued to accelerate, and sometimes the people selling it tried to make prices retroactive, claiming not enough had been paid in the previous purchase. And as always, there were some who tried to take advantage or rob. On August 14, 1990, while the sisters were making their day of reflection, someone came to the door, saying that the storeroom had been broken into and two 100-pound bags of rice had been stolen. But, true to early experiences of the SCLs, a “Saint Joseph” appeared at the door offering three 100-pound bags of rice, a large box of soap, a package of noodles, and a can of coffee for the poor. This generous benefactor was just a young shopkeeper in Negritos.

It is no wonder that on October 31, 1990, the Lions Club presented Sister Rose Celine with a Certificate of Appreciation for establishing the rice program.

But to return to early 1988. In preparation for her mission to Chalaco, Sister Rose Dolores had left for Lima on January 3 for a course in the New Image of the Parish program (NIP).\(^6\) And Sister Donna Jean had received word that her interview for acceptance in the Confer Formation Program would be on the seventh in Lima.

Sister Regina had gone to Piura on January 4, expecting to join the three postulants there for a summer catechesis course. When neither Renee nor Lucy arrived in Piura, Sisters Regina and Elena decided to visit their
homes in Piscan Grande. There they discovered that Lucy had initially been sick; then the two girls were afraid to return late, they said. Although they did return with the two sisters, neither of them stayed in the Community more than a few weeks. Now only one postulant, Esther Vilela, remained in the Negritos house.

On January 22, Sisters Rose Celine, Rose Dolores, and Donna Jean met with nine young people to plan for a vacation school of two weeks. A little over a week later, they began classes with twenty-five youngsters and eight helpers.

In early February, the sisters were startled to hear that there were plans afoot to build a brick factory just across the road or path by the side screened-in porch. Besides creating much more dirt and contamination, such a plant would have completely obstructed the sisters’ view of the ocean. When they told Sister Joan Kiker, Director of Missions, about it, she immediately went to see the provincial mayor, who was a good friend of the sisters. He then went with her to see the mayor of Negritos. After surveying the situation, it was decided that the city could look for another site on which to build the factory. The sisters were much relieved, for in truth, the porch had become a favorite site for reading, praying, and even for having some meals.

In February and March, there was again considerable movement. Early in February, Sister Regina and Esther briefly returned from their studies in Piura to help celebrate Sister Rose Celine’s birthday. Then the sisters joined with the charismatic prayer groups in giving a reception for the four Negritans who had just pronounced their first vows as Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, the Community that had preceded the SCLs in Negritos.

On February 29, both Sisters Rose Celine and Rose Dolores left for Lima, the former to make her retreat, the latter to take part in the prelature meeting and more training in the NIP program. While they were gone, Sister Donna Jean provided meals for a seminarian who was making a private retreat at the parish house prior to his ordination. After Sister Regina returned on March 6, she and Sister Donna Jean took a few days off by the sea at Punta Sal. This beautiful beach was a favorite getaway place for the sisters, for retreats, outings, or R & R, as they had the use of a beach house there belonging to Dr. Chiappe, a good friend of the sisters.

The third week of March was a time of Community celebrations and meetings. On March 24, 1988, all joined the rest of the SCLs in Piura to celebrate Esther’s reception into the novitiate. The following day, Sisters Susana Cordova and Nelyda Clavijo renewed their vows. During these days, the sisters also met to discuss the proposed five-year plan drawn up by the future planning committee for the South American missions, and to continue developing the plans for the SCLs’ 25th anniversary celebration.
to be held in Talara in November. With a little ingenuity, fifteen sisters were able to spend the night at Santa Rosa. Others went to Our Lady of Peace convent to sleep.

On Easter Sunday, some young women from Negritos had a farewell for Sister Donna Jean. The sisters later joined the community in Talara for dinner; Sister Donna Jean left for her year of studies in Lima directly from there.

While Sister Regina was in Piura for an inter-congregational meeting of formation personnel, those at home busied themselves with supplying school items for some of the high school girls. After her meeting, Sister Regina went to Lima in April for treatments for a cancerous skin growth.

Because two new postulants were expected on May 9, Sister Janet Cashman came over from Talara to help Sister Rose Celine prepare bedrooms. Actually, one prospective postulant, Rosa, decided not to come, and the other, Mabel Cordova, did not arrive until May 16. So by that time, the Negritos community had a combined celebration, a farewell for Sister Janet, who was going to the States on sabbatical, and a welcome for Mabel.

Soon thereafter, Sister Rose Celine and Mabel began attending Bible classes in Talara every Monday night, and Mabel and Sister Regina traveled to Piura every Tuesday for classes. These classes were in addition to those Mabel was already having "in house."

In preparation for the Feast of Saint Vincent, Sister Regina, Sister Rose Celine, and Mabel invited the parishioners to a special Mass on September 26. The next day, they went into Talara for dinner, then on to Piura for inter-congregational formation classes the next morning. They stayed over to enjoy an outing at the chacra (the bishop's experimental farm area).

On October 1, Mabel went to Talara for a month's mission experience. A few days later, Sister Mildred Irwin came to spend a few days by the sea, and Sister Rachel Sarosi also came to Negritos to make a private retreat. Both of these sisters were frequent visitors. Sister Regina took advantage of her greater free time to help a parish group work on a parish hymnal. Earlier she had sponsored a day of recollection for a group in the parish who were promoting renewal.

For a time, the road to Piura was again blocked by the rice farmers of the area, protesting conditions and prices, but by the time Sister Regina went to Piura with Mabel on the eighteenth, the road was clear. Sister Rose Celine went to the neighboring fishing port of San Pablo for their celebration in honor of Señor de los Milagros (Lord of the Miracles).

On October 24, Sister Regina went to Piura for the final meeting of the liturgy committee planning for the November SCL celebration; she also participated with Mabel in a course on "The Gospel of Saint Mark and Non-violence" given by Father Arturo Purcaro, OSA. After this course,
Mabel went home for a home visit. Sister Regina therefore felt free to go to Lima for a few days with Father Eric, her Benedictine brother, who had arrived with two friends on their way to Brazil.

Mabel returned on November 8 in time to attend her regular Tuesday class in Piura. The following day, she rode over to Negritos with Sisters Rose Dolores and Esther, who had gladly accepted the hospitality of the Negritos sisters during the time of the festivities celebrating the SCLs’ twenty-five years in Peru. Of course, everyone joined the visitors from the United States—Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani, Mary Kevin Hollow, and Rosalie Mahoney—for the dinner and Mass on the tenth and again for the Holy Hour, Mass, and program on November 11. Sisters Mary Kathleen and Rosalie visited the Negritos house briefly before going on to Paita for the Community meetings.

On the last day of November, Sister Regina and Mabel went with other members of the inter-congregational formation group for a day of retreat at CIPCA, a Jesuit center just outside Piura. Again the following week, Sister Regina was in Piura, this time with Sister Joan Kilker for a planning meeting of the inter-congregational group of formation personnel. They both evaluated the work of the present year and laid plans for the program for 1989.

With the approach of the end of the year, there were again many activities both in the house and parish. Sister Regina and Mabel participated in the Christmas dinner Father Chunga gave for the catechists. Then, along with all the preparations for the following day, there were fifteen Baptisms and two marriages on December 24. Nevertheless, they were ready to welcome the Talara sisters for Christmas dinner.

Right after Christmas, Mabel and Sister Regina registered the children of San Pablo for vacation school. During the last week of December 1988 and the first week of January 1989, Sister Regina and Mabel, plus five catechists each from Negritos and San Pablo, did their best to instruct and entertain seventy children. On January 7, the teachers and aides took a day off at the beach and shared a picnic lunch.

On the eighth, Sister Regina gave a retreat in the convent for a group from the parish. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Mabel accompanied Sisters Joan Kilker and Rachel Sarosi for a day at Punta Sal. Two days later, Sister Justin Wallace, OFM, who had lived and worked with the sisters in Chalaco for three years, stopped by for a short visit with Sisters Rose Celine and Regina. Sister Regina and Mabel left for Lima shortly thereafter for summer courses and retreat.

For several nights, while Sister Regina and Mabel were gone, Sister Joan Kilker stayed with Sister Rose Celine until Sister Rose Dolores arrived from Chalaco. Sister Rose Dolores planned to stay in Negritos for most of February and March while the Peruvian sisters in the Chalaco house were
taking courses, visiting families, and making retreats. Her coming was very welcome, especially since she brought the Chalaco jeep with her. This facilitated the trips into Talara for Mass and shopping.

Shortly before Sister Rose Dolores’ arrival, Sister Rose Celine had had an experience or series of experiences that would demonstrate how good it was to have one’s own transportation. One Sunday she had overslept when her clock had stopped. Being too late for the morning Mass in Negritos, she decided to go into Immaculate Conception Church in Talara. Arriving there, she was told there was no Mass until 11:00, so she decided to go to Santa Rosa for the 10:30 Eucharist. However, there she discovered they were having only a Communion service since Father was sick. Undaunted, she returned to Immaculate Conception for the 11:00 Mass. After waiting a long time, she discovered there was going to be only a Communion service at 12:30, so she returned to Negritos. That evening, still desiring to participate in the Eucharist, she went to the 7:00 p.m. Mass there!

In mid-February 1989, Sisters Clorinda Timana, Maria Orozco, and Esther Vilela arrived in Negritos to spend a couple of weeks. During this time, Sisters Rose Dolores, Agnes Klein, and Catherine Nichol gave several courses to the three in formation. With so many in the house and the scarcity of water, all were glad that Sister Joan had purchased fifty-gallon cylinders to store water in the bathrooms.

Before returning to Piura and elsewhere, everyone went to the beach for the day, everyone except Sister Rose Celine, who had gone to Sullana to buy more soybeans. Most of the guests left in late February, and Sister Regina and Mabel returned from Lima in early March. On March 15, the sisters and Mabel went to Piura for the first vows of Sisters Maria and Clorinda and a short meeting of the Community the following day.

Soon everyone entered into a farewell party for Sister Regina, who was moving to Piura, where she would direct Laura Rumiche as a postulant. Thus, just two years after opening Negritos as a house for postulants, that program was transferred back to Piura.

Sister Donna Jean had been named Director of Novices in September of 1988 while still studying in Lima. Following the closure of her program, she spent three months in the United States. Since it had been decided that the Negritos house could provide a more suitable ambiance for the novitiate program, she began her work there in April 1989.

In late March 1989, Sister Joan Kilker, although still acting as Director of Missions, had moved to Negritos to work in parish ministry, especially as coordinator of youth groups; she also did prenatal care and health teaching. In connection with the latter, she began a group of Health Promoters and began Saint Vincent’s Botiquin (pharmacy) in part of the parish hall. Following the paquetazos (terrible overnight rises in the prices
of food and other commodities) of the early 1990s, she helped set up and oversee several food kitchens in some of the poorest sections of the parish.

The second year novice, Sister Esther, also arrived in Negritos in late March, but shortly thereafter, she and Mabel left for a brief visit to their families. The latter had to return, however, because the roads to her home in Frias were impassable. The same proved to be true when Sister Donna Jean attempted to go to Chalaco in early May with Sister Esther. As there were no mules available, Sister Esther had to delay the beginning of her novitiate experience in Chalaco.

In mid-May, the Talara sisters joined the Negritos community in a farewell dinner for Sister Joan, who was leaving later that week for the United States. Mabel, who was now living and working in Talara as a second year postulant, came along.

On June 16, Sister Rose Celine went to Piura for the fiftieth anniversary celebration of her good friend, Sister Justin, OFM. She returned to Negritos with just enough time to pack and have a farewell party before leaving for her home visit in the United States.

After her departure, Sister Donna Jean was alone for two months, but Sisters Mildred Irwin and Mary Joan Eble regularly checked in on her. Of course, she was not lacking for things to do. She taught her weekly class in the inter-congregational formation program in Piura, and sometimes her time away was extended for one reason or the other. For instance, on one occasion, neither Sisters Donna Jean nor Mabel could return after classes as the farmers had blocked the roads, demanding that the government pay for the rice which it had purchased on consignment two or three months before. It was only after two days that they and the many others who normally made that trip daily between Piura and Talara could reach their destinations.

On July 2, Sister Donna Jean and Mabel accompanied thirty-two young women from Talara Alta and San Pedro to a vocation day sponsored by the Diocesan Council of Women Religious in Piura. Señor Jorge Delly generously provided a bus to transport them. The following week, Sister Donna Jean attended an Enneagram Workshop in Paita given by the inter-congregational group; and the next day, she went on to Piura for the quarterly meeting of the Archbishop with the priests and religious of the diocese. At this meeting, he stressed the unprecedented dangers within the country and implored them to work with prayer groups and other lay groups.

In the first days of August, Sister Donna Jean directed the postulant Mabel in an eight-day retreat. A week and a half later, she and the sisters from Talara shared a day of reflection with nine young women in the Negritos convent, each sister sharing part of her own vocation story.
Despite Sister Donna Jean’s many activities, she was more than glad to welcome Sisters Joan and Lucille Harrington when they arrived from the United States on August 30. However, it was not long before she took to the road, first of all going to Lima for the ISET meeting. Returning from Lima, she stayed on in Piura for a week’s classes with the postulant, Laura. Meanwhile, Sister Regina took advantage of a week’s respite in Negritos.

Although the Negritos house was still designated for the novitiate, there were no novices present. Besides her preparation and presentation of a weekly class in the inter-congregational program, Sister Donna Jean maintained contact with the novice, Sister Esther, and the sisters in Chalaco. She sometimes accompanied Sister Rose Celine to the Draga, a sector of Negritos where the Mission Group was attempting to organize some Basic Christian Communities.

Sister Rose Celine was still actively engaged in visiting the sick and elderly in their homes and in the nearby hospital; she also continued to direct the food program for the needy. Sister Joan resumed her work in health with the botiquin and Health Promoters as well as helping to coordinate the parish youth groups.

Newly assigned to Negritos, Sister Lucille Harrington had arrived with Sister Joan in late August. While Sisters Joan and Donna Jean were on the road in September, Sister Lucille visited different areas. Her first perception was that the people in Negritos itself had money but that the outlying areas were suffering. But she soon became aware of the many people coming to the door to beg for food or water right there in Negritos.

In a letter to Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, Sister Lucille commented on other kinds of poverty she had encountered: water cut off for two days at a time, lights going out at any time of the day or night, and the dirt and dust that was constantly carried into the house by the winds.

Nevertheless, she was duly impressed by the parishioners, who she said did a terrific job of running and organizing things in the parish. At various times, the parish had been without any resident priest and had someone coming in only for Mass and the sacraments. She gave much credit to the strong family life and the dynamic charismatic movement present in Negritos.

Sister Lucille herself soon became involved in adult education as well as home visiting. She worked with the charismatic groups and organized and directed days of reflection, not only in Negritos but also in Talara and Talara Alta. One of her principal contributions was directing and teaching leadership programs for laity. These were especially important given the inroads the protestant sects and Mormons were making.

Again there was considerable coming and going. In late September, Sister Joan accompanied Sister Ruth Reischman to Lima as she returned
to the United States after her initial visit to see if she wanted to serve in the Peruvian missions. About the same time, Sister Rose Celine returned from her home visit. Then in early October, when Sister Donna Jean went to Chalaco to visit with Sister Esther, she stayed on with Sister Ruth Barron and the three Peruvians in the absence of Sister Rose Dolores, who had gone to the States for health reasons.

On October 16, Sisters Joan and Mildred went to a program given by the hearing and speech impaired at the special school in Talara. They were honored guests because SCL Community had helped purchase new equipment for them the year before. Two days later, Sister Joan accompanied Sister Regina to Lima for a meeting of formation personnel.

The sisters traveled to Piura for Sister Trini Orozco's renewal of vows on November 11. Two days later, Sisters Joan, Donna Jean, and Regina joined other formation personnel and the postulants, novices, and juniors of all the Communities for a five-day workshop at CIPCA. This time Father Ernest Ranly, CPPS, and a Sister Yon presented an especially timely topic: "Spirituality of Non-Violence in an Environment of Total Violence." Before returning home, they attended Confer the next day. Then, just two days later, Sisters Joan and Donna Jean needed to travel to Piura again to help plan the inter-congregational program for the following year.

Given the centralization of everything in Lima, Sister Joan traveled there in late November in order to receive and register the documents for the two cars that had been purchased for Negritos and Piura. But since it was too dangerous to drive them from Lima to Piura because of the terrorists and common criminals, she made arrangements for them to be shipped to Paita, a port city west of Piura.

During the first two weeks of December, the sisters sponsored a live-in for two young women. Sister Esther and Mabel came to share one week with them, and Sister Lucille directed all in a special day of prayer. In mid-month, Sisters Joan and Donna Jean helped Sister Mary Patricia Kielty with a workshop on health that she was sponsoring in Talara.

Following the regular Christmas activities, everyone left for Paita and the annual meeting of the SCLs in Peru. As always, they enjoyed being together, and this time they profited from input of their own: Sister Elena spoke about prayer and Sister Ruth Barron presented material on Saint Vincent and the SCL Charism.

In early January 1990, the Negritos house finally got a telephone. Sister Joan had spent a lot of time negotiating for it. A “modern” phone wouldn’t work, so the sisters ended up with the old-fashioned type, the kind one has to crank to call the operator. The problem with that was that often the operator didn’t answer! Regarding the placement of the phone, the sisters consulted together about the best place to install it so that users could
have a little privacy. That proved to be a needless concern because they usually had to shout into it to be heard at the other end. Nevertheless, they were grateful to be able to contact Talara and Piura.

With the beginning of the summer months, there was again a good deal of traveling. On January 3, Sister Donna Jean, Sister Rose Celine, and Mabel all went to Chulucanas for their annual retreat. The week after they returned, Sister Regina visited; since she was now Director of Missions, this was a visit for both business and pleasure. Then on January 18, Mabel and Sisters Esther and Donna Jean left for Lima for courses.

A few days later, Sister Joan accompanied Sister Lucille to the Ecuadorian border to renew her visa. During that same week, a priest and some laymen, members of a charismatic team, visited. While Father Chunga was in Lima for two weeks, Sisters Rose Celine and Joan took turns having Communion services in the parish.

In early February, Sister Joan left for Lima for a course and some vacation time. When she returned, she was even more determined to work with the young people. For she said that one of the main messages coming out of her Lima workshops was the need to work with youth since so many were being lost to the sects, drugs, drink, and terrorism.

By February 25, Sisters Donna Jean and Esther had returned, and Laura came to join them for the month of March. On March 2, Mabel also returned. Sister Lucille then gave Laura, Mabel, and Sister Esther a leadership course.

Finally, on March 11, Sister Joan returned by bus from Lima with fifty pounds of tools for the two cars the Community had purchased. She had been afraid to ship them with the cars for fear of them being stolen. When the cars arrived in the port of Paita, Sister Regina drove over the one destined for Negritos. On March 15, Sister Regina drove from Negritos over to Talara; so, between the Negritos car and the Talara car, the sisters from those two places arrived "in style" for the renewal of Sisters Maria and Clorinda's vows. They also participated in a special missioning ceremony in the convent at Santa Rosa on March 24. The following day, they celebrated with Sister Esther and her family as she made her first vows.

One month later, Laura Rumiche and Mabel Cordova entered the novitiate in a simple ceremony in the Negritos convent. Following prayers and the offering of toasts, all the sisters participated in a delicious dinner together. At 4:00 there was a special Mass in Cristo Rey church at which Sister Laura’s family as well as sisters and friends were present. A simple reception in the parish hall followed.

In July, as a part of the inter-congregational formation, Sister Donna Jean went with Sisters Laura and Mabel to Chulucanas for a workshop in Human Relations and Public Speaking. The woman who presented the
workshop made a great impact on the participants, and her oft-repeated words, "I am a triumphant woman!" were heard numerous times thereafter. About this same time, the people in formation were instructed in social etiquette and its importance in religious life.

Prices continued to soar. With the sudden increases of the *paquetazo* of Fujimori, Sister Donna Jean wrote about gasoline going up thirty times what it had been before and food tripling in prices. Indeed, at the time of Fujimori's inauguration on July 28, 1990, inflation had soared to 3000 percent, with the consequent devaluation of the Inti. By the following July, his government substituted the "New Sol," valuing each one to replace one million Intis.

Besides their pastoral work, the sisters remained intent on fostering vocations. In mid-July, Sister Joan accompanied three young women to Piura for a vocation prayer day and returned with Liduvina Dominguez for a short visit of several days. Julia Huiman, also considering the Community, came to spend the weekend. A few weeks later, they welcomed a young woman from San Pedro for the weekend; she participated with fourteen other señoritas for the Sunday afternoon reflection.

When Sister Ruth Barron came to Negritos to give a course in visiting the sick, Sisters Joan, Rose Celine, Mabel, and Laura all participated. That weekend, Sister Donna Jean substituted in the catechetic program for Sisters Laura and Mabel so that they could attend the Natural Medicine Workshop with Julia.

Sisters Joan and Lucille went to Lima the following week with Sisters Clorinda and Nelyda Clavijo to attend a workshop. A week later, Sisters Donna Jean, Laura, and Mabel assisted in a workshop in Piura called "Grace Lived in Community." Sister Rose Celine took advantage of a week's rest and visiting in Piura during this time.

Toward the end of August, Sister Regina visited for three days; while there, she invited the sisters to a special celebration in November for Sister Janet Cashman's Silver Jubilee and Sister Trini's renewal of vows. On August 26, the sisters joined in the fiftieth anniversary of the Archdiocese of Piura, attending the Mass in the plaza in Talara. Early in September, Sister Laura accompanied groups from the parish to Paita for another anniversary celebration at the shrine of Our Lady of Mercy.

Besides giving days of retreat, the sisters themselves took time for special days of prayer and reflection. Each sister, including the novices, took turns in directing them. This was in addition to the many opportunities for prayer and reflection that the novices had.

Because of their classes in Piura, sometimes community celebrations had to be rearranged. Thus Sister Donna Jean and the novices shared in the feast day dinner in Piura on Saint Vincent’s Day, then returned to Negritos in time for the evening Mass. It was not until the following day
that they could participate with the other members of the house in an outing to Miramar, a pueblo not too distant from Talara.

Despite the possibility of encountering more roadblocks, Sister Joan persevered in her planned trip to Piura and Chalaco to visit with the young professed sisters. When she returned, Sister Regina came with her for a formation meeting with Sister Donna Jean. The latter then left for Lima and a national formation meeting.

On November 22, while Sisters Donna Jean, Laura, and Mabel were in classes in Piura, Sisters Rose Celine, Lucille, and Joan took a day off by the sea at Punta Sal with the sisters from Talara. The following week, Sister Donna Jean and the two novices had an unplanned respite when classes were cancelled in solidarity with the farm workers' work stoppage. At the end of the month, Sister Lucille went to Piura to participate in the opening of the Archdiocesan Synod.

The inter-congregational classes finished on December 6. During the two semesters, Sisters Joan, Janet, and Elena had all taught in them. They and Sister Donna Jean felt good about their contributions and were glad for the opportunity to share with other religious communities and their formation personnel. In mid-December, Sister Donna Jean and the novices joined other participants in the program for an enjoyable outing at the Bishop's chacra outside Chulucanas.

Sisters Joan and Janet went to Puerta Nueva de Colon on December 7 to visit with a sister about natural medicine and curative plants. A few days later, Sisters Joan and Lucille gave a workshop for Health Promoters in Talara Alta.

On December 14, everyone joined in decorating the house for Christmas. Between then and Christmas Sisters Laura and Mabel helped give a number of Christmas parties for the children of San Pablo and San Cristobal. In each, they helped the children prepare a reenactment of the Nativity or give some kind of dramatization. On the morning of December 24, they even had a special party for the children who had recently made their first Communion. After all these activities, plus Christmas Eve Mass, they were glad for a little rest on Christmas Day and the invitation of the Talara sisters to dinner.

From early January 1991 until June 1, 1991, Sister Nelyda Clavijo lived in the Negritos convent while doing her practicum in secretarial work at Petro Mar. On January 5, Sisters Joan and Lucille went to Bolivia to make their retreat and enjoy a little vacation with old friends. Sister Rose Celine joined Sisters Ann Barton and Ruth Reischman in going to Tambogrande to make their retreat in the Benedictine monastery. Sisters Donna Jean, Mabel, and Laura went to Lima and retreat.
Sister Mary Patricia Kielty came over to guard the house several nights. Then, when Sister Maria Orozco finished her retreat in Chiclayo, she came to stay for the summer, and Sister Regina joined her for a few days. Sister Rose Dolores arrived soon after to spend much of the remainder of the summer months. She and Sister Maria had English language classes during the day and did most of the cooking.

After her return, Sister Rose Celine helped with much of the cleaning and hauled water for the grass she was trying to root. In addition, she began a little evangelization program of her own. Each time the women came for their rice, she had a little “spiritual food” for them, giving them a little talk based on a book Sister Elena had shared with her.

In early March, the house began to reassemble. Sister Donna Jean and the novices arrived from Lima on the second, having finished their summer studies and retreat. On March 5, Sister Joan met with city health officials regarding the cholera threat that was present, especially here in the north. The sisters also met to decide how they could best help the truly needy with matriculation and school supplies. They decided to continue helping the students who had been on study grants the year before and to check with teachers and Health Promoters for names of those most in need.

On March 11, Sister Donna Jean resumed classes with Sisters Mabel and Laura. But after returning from the formation meeting three days later, she told them they would soon begin their mission experience as second-year novices upon concluding their canonical year. Sister Laura would live and work in Talara with Sister Mary Joan Eble in catechesis, although she would continue to work some days in health with Sister Joan Kilker in Negritos. Sister Mabel would go to Santa Julia and would work in catechesis as well as teach religion in some of the grade schools.

Sisters Rose Celine and Joan went to Piura on March 15 for Sisters Maria and Clorinda’s renewal of vows at Santa Rosa, returning that same afternoon. Sister Nelyda renewed her vows in Negritos on March 25.

In early April, Sisters Joan and Donna Jean went to Piura for an intercongregational meeting of formation personnel to help plan courses for the year. They discovered there would be thirty-nine postulants and novices taking part; the number of Communities participating had nearly doubled since the program’s initiation. That same week, Sister Lucille was in San José parish in Piura for a four-day workshop on Catequesis Familiar.

When the novices moved to their new missions on April 22, Sister Donna Jean moved to Piura. This meant that the Negritos community would now be composed of Sisters Joan, Lucille, and Rose Celine. As always, Sisters Joan and Lucille acquired pet dogs, eight puppies having been brought to the convent when their owner went to Lima. Soon the patio behind the house was full of canines! Later on, in July, another dog, Rocky,
came to be a permanent member of the family. Sisters Joan and Lucille were *feliz de la vida* (extremely happy); Sister Rose Celine managed to tolerate the dogs.

As Director of Junior Sisters, Sister Joan arranged for some time of sharing and integration at Punta Sal. Each sister had been asked to bring one theme to present. Besides sharing ideas, they came to know each other better during their walks on the beach and in the sharing of household chores.

During May, Sister Lucille helped Sister Clorinda with some of the prayer groups in San Pedro. About this same time, she participated in the Evangelization Workshop which Father Jose Ignacio Alemany, CSSR, gave in Negritos. When Father David Becherer appointed her to be in charge of the charismatic groups all along the coast from Talara to Tumbes, this signaled various visits for her in the coming year. She also continued her work in forming lay leaders and working with marriage encounters.

During the second week of June, Sisters Joan and Janet sponsored a Workshop for Health Promoters, Dr. Charles Hidalgo from Petro Peru giving several presentations. They also invited Sister Lucille to give the final “spirit” talk.

June brought SCL visitors from the States. Sister Linda Suzanne Roth arrived with Sister Janet to visit Negritos for six days. Besides joining the sisters in their various apostolates, she enjoyed a bit of time alongside the beautiful ocean. Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, and Sister Macrina Ryan, Councilor, arrived on the twenty-third for a four-day visit. They, too, visited the areas of the sisters’ work and talked with the sisters both individually and as a group. During their stay, they also enjoyed an excursion to Mancora and Cabo Blanco, two towns up the coast with lovely beach areas.

With the worsening economic situation, it seemed imperative to begin some food kitchens in the poorest areas. Early in July, Sister Joan, Sister Mary Joan, and Father David Bird, OSB, went to Piura to begin the paper work to be able to receive foodstuffs through Caritas, the Catholic Charities organization. With women of the various sectors, Sister Joan helped set up eight food kitchens; some of her Health Promoters and youth also helped.

Throughout the first week of July, there were various activities, including meetings and a very long Mass of Healing, all of which celebrated the eighteenth anniversary of the Charismatic movement in Negritos.

Aside from all this, much of the month was dedicated to trying to solve the water problem for the house. Various pros and cons were considered: one or two tanks on top of the laundry, a well with a pump, or making a direct connection with the water main leading into the hospital. Initially the sisters settled on two tanks and a pump. But before too long, they discovered that they would not need to use the pump (cost of
electricity) if they connected directly to the hospital line since it had sufficient force to raise the water to the tanks.

After the sisters went to the Confer meeting in August, Sister Rose Celine stayed over in Santa Rosa convent in Piura, while Sisters Joan and Lucille went to a charismatic meeting in Trujillo. Later in the month, they joined the sisters at the Talara convent for the visit of the American ambassador and his wife. When they had been informed of his desire to meet with them, everyone thought he would advise them as to precautions in the face of the terrorist activity or something of the kind. But it turned out to be a purely friendly visit, and it seemed to the sisters he gained more information from them than he conveyed.

During the year, Sister Joan had begun working with the Human Rights group in Talara and Negritos, but she was disappointed by the turnouts for meetings, especially for the workshop given in Negritos. She decided they needed to do more publicizing.

In early September, the sisters twice journeyed to Mancora for farewells for Sister Electa, the last of her Franciscan community from England to have worked in that fishing port. Now eighty years old, she had spent herself there as a midwife and clinician for twenty years.

Shortly before the Mancora visit, Sister Joan sponsored a workshop given by two men from Blessed Sacrament Parish in Piura on natural medicines. While there, they made themselves available for consultations; for a time, at least one of the men returned weekly.

When Sister Joan visited the sisters under temporary vows in Chalaco, she brought back sacks and sacks of herbs to be used as natural medicines. From then on, with her encouragement and that of some of the women she trained, the people of Negritos turned more and more to natural remedies. They found these to be very effective and much less expensive than pharmaceutical medicines.

While Sister Joan was in the sierra, Sister Lucille helped with a charismatic retreat at Blessed Sacrament in Piura. Twenty servidores from the very active charismatic community of Negritos attended.

For the Feast of Saint Vincent 1991, the Talara sisters joined those from Negritos for Mass in the convent and dinner following. That afternoon, they were also present for the opening of the new St. Vincent Botiquin in a room of the parish hall. Both prescription medicines, which had been collected by the youth of the parish, and natural medicines would be distributed for very modest prices. Later, Sister Joan would begin purchasing prescription and over-the-counter medicines from Pro Vida, an agency of the Bishops’ Conference for Health.

On September 29, the sisters rejoiced in the outcome of the mission given in Michaela Bastidas, in which they had participated the previous
week. In just this one small sector of Negritos, eight marriages were rectified and forty-six persons were baptized. It gave them hope and energy to proceed with other such missions in the rest of the sectors in the parish.

Sister Rose Celine returned from the States on March 20, 1992. From the time of her arrival, she was anxious to visit her rice program. During her absence of five months, her friend Natividad Calle de Coronado had taken charge not only of the buying and storing of the foodstuffs but also their distribution. Sister Rose Celine was delighted to find the program functioning well.

Sister Susana Cordova pronounced final vows on March 25 in Piura. Of course, the sisters from Negritos joined the rest of the Community for this memorable occasion when our first Peruvian sister pronounced her perpetual vows. Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, and Bernadette Helfert, Councilor, were present for the occasion. The next day they made a quick visit to Negritos.

In early April 1992, Sister Lucille began implementing the program of Catequesis Familiar in Negritos. As always, this two-year program met some resistance as both parents are required to take part in weekly meetings and take the responsibility of preparing their own children for First Communion. But as Sister Lucille, Sister Joan, and others testified, it soon bore rich fruits. By the end of the second year, two marriages had been blessed in the Church and more than twenty children had been baptized. What is more, many of the couples became very active in their religion.

On April 6, Sister Joan went to Piura for a meeting of Health Promoters. Sisters Lucille and Rose Celine had planned to meet her there for the Confer meeting, but the area experienced heavy rains that made the roads impassable. In fact, Sister Joan had to leave the car in Piura temporarily. In Negritos the roof leaked. Fortunately, Señor Eduardo, who sometimes worked in their garden, mopped up the wet areas within the convent. Again in mid-month, there were very heavy rains. Because of the nature of the terrain, the lack of drainage ditches, and the type of houses, rain always caused serious problems, especially in the poorest areas. By the time Sisters Joan and Rose Celine went to Piura on the tenth for a talk by a Vincentian priest, they were able to drive the car back.

The rains were not the only blow the Peruvians suffered at this time. On April 5, 1992, President Alberto Fujimori declared an autogolpe and, with the help of the military, seized control of all elements of the government and began ruling by executive decree until such time as he could call for a “referendum” to accept his new constitution. There were disturbances of various kinds throughout the country, but the military kept a tight hand on things. Throughout the country, including in Negritos,
young men who had not done military service or did not have their papers were picked up and hustled away.

In mid-June, the sisters attended a special workshop on visiting the sick and evangelization held at Immaculata High School in Talara. The following week, Sisters Joan and Lucille tried to go to Lobitos to assist the charismatic groups there, but they were unable to make it since the roads were once again blocked.

All the sisters journeyed to Piura on June 27, expecting to hear Sister Regina Deitchman’s report on Chapter, but she had been detained in Lima because some of the luggage had not arrived. However, they did enjoy Sisters Maria and Clorinda’s enthusiastic account of their first visit to the Mother House and their impressions of Chapter.

In July, the sisters joined in the nineteenth anniversary celebration of the charismatic groups in Negritos. Sisters Joan and Lucille had planned on going to Lima afterwards for a charismatic retreat, but they cancelled their trip because of the number of terrorist bombings going on in the capital.

Sister Joan was in Piura twice during August. The first time, she represented the community of Negritos at the Synod of Priests and Religious for a week; then about a week later, she was present for a meeting of youth groups.

When Sister Lucille went to El Alto for talks in connection with her position of animator of the charismatic renewal along the coast, Sister Rose Celine spent some time in Talara. In the following months, Sister Lucille would travel as far as Tumbes besides directing a Life in the Spirit Seminar in San Pedro.

Because of the increasing terrorist activity in the north, Sister Regina paid the sisters a visit in September to discuss the emergency procedure that had been formulated earlier by the community. In the light of the recent bombing at the gate of Santa Julia Convent in Piura, it seemed even more advisable to review what should be done in case of trouble. The September Confer meeting also focused on this issue, considering the nature of “Spirituality in Time of Violence.”

Taking a break from their multiple activities, Sisters Joan and Lucille accompanied Sisters Clorinda and Mary Patricia to Punta Sal for a day. Sister Rose Celine went to Chalaco for a visit, returning to the coast in a truck with Sister Ann Barton. All were home again and celebrated Saint Vincent’s Day with the Talara sisters.

In December, Sister Marie de Paul Combo, SCL, who had accompanied the newly elected Councilor Sister Elena Mack, came to visit for a short time. Since Sister Lucille set off for her home visit in the States on the eighteenth, Sisters Joan and Rose Celine celebrated Christmas with the sisters in Talara. Then on December 28, they joined the rest of the SCLs
for the Community meeting in Chulucanas. There, besides receiving Father Gustavo Gutierrez's insights on the meetings of Bishops in Santo Domingo, the sisters discussed what the focus of their work should be in the coming years. They determined they should give special attention to women and children.

During the first two months of 1993, Sister Donna Jean Henson and the two novices, Sisters Julia Huiman and Liduvina Dominguez, came over to spend some time by the sea. According to the plan, Sister Rose Celine was to teach them English three times a week; they were to help out in the apostolate, Sister Julia with Sister Joan in the botiquin and Sister Liduvina with Sister Rose Celine in her food program and visiting. However, as always, plans had to be modified when Sister Rose Celine decided she should return to the States for treatment of the osteoporosis in her spine.

Even the day of her farewell dinner and prayer service was altered. On January 23, all the sisters from Talara and Piura had planned to gather for a three-fold celebration: Sister Rose Celine's forthcoming birthday, her sixtieth anniversary as a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth, and her conclusion of fourteen years' work in Peru. But that morning, the sisters learned that Señor Nelson Orozco had died very unexpectedly. His two daughters, Sisters Trini and Maria, did not get the news until they arrived from Piura for the celebration. So the celebration in honor of Sister Rose Celine had to be modified so the sisters could accompany the Orozco family in their grief.

In early March 1993, Sisters Regina and Rose Dolores directed retreats for Sisters Esther Vilela, Mabel Cordova, and Susana Cordova. Then, before the Feast of the Annunciation, Sister Regina brought together the six sisters under temporary vows in Negritos. One of the worries with extra people in the house was the scarcity of water, for some of the pipes knocked out by the rains had not been repaired.

Sister Maria Orozco joined the Negritos community on April 1 for what would prove to be a very different year. First of all, Sister Joan had been asked to accompany Sister Paula Rose Jauernig, SCL, to Ecuador to look at a program Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver, Colorado, was sponsoring. So Sister Maria began working with Sister Joan with the Health Promoters and the food kitchens, replacing her during her absence. During this time, Sister Maria was in charge, but not really in charge, as Sister Joan was expected back.

Later, Sister Maria would help fill in for Sister Lucille in the Catequesis Familiar program. Sister Maria herself would be absent for about six weeks doing a sort of internship in a program for women in Chimbote. Meanwhile, Sister Liduvina had come to Negritos at the end of her canonical year to work with Sister Lucille in religious education and Catequesis Familiar.
As she was still a novice, however, she often spent one or two weeks a month in Piura for workshops or courses.

On May 2, Sister Lucille attended an all-day workshop on Catequesis Familiar given by a sister from Lima. Then on the fifteenth, her program in Negritos had its formal or official beginning for the year. Sister Lucille was very pleased with the outcome of her many hours of visiting families, training couples to lead groups of parents, and preparing animators.

Sister Lucille also continued with her charismatic work. In July, Father Manuel Rodriguez, renowned charismatic healer, came to Negritos for a Mass of Healing during the anniversary celebrations. At the end of the month, Sister Lucille journeyed to Tumbes for a two-day workshop. On her return, she joined in the leadership program that was being given in Talara.

In August, Sisters Lucille and Liduvina traveled to Chiclayo for conferences there. In November, Sister Lucille agreed to give a retreat and then to become assessor for the Legion of Mary in Immaculata parish in Talara. But more and more she appeared to feel the group in Negritos was self-sufficient. In a letter to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, she mentioned her desire to give herself more to evangelizing “from scratch,” nurturing natural leaders and having the opportunity to preach and teach. In the light of this, she expressed her interest in investigating pastoral work in Quito, Ecuador.14

In November, Sisters Lucille, Maria, and Liduvina gave the house a thorough cleaning in preparation for a visit by the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, who had lived in that convent and worked in the parish before them.

In 1994 Negritos was once again used as the house for postulants. A variety of reasons accounted for this. With the establishment of a new house of studies in Trujillo, the Santa Julia house was closed and its furniture sent south. The sisters remaining in Santa Julia then moved back to Santa Rosa, Piura. Moreover, with Sister Joan going to Ecuador with Sister Paula Rose Jauernig, Sister Maria moving to Trujillo, and Sister Liduvina preparing for vows, only Sister Lucille would have been left in Negritos.

Sister Donna Jean stayed in Piura to direct the final month of preparation for vows by Sisters Liduvina and Julia, but Sister Clorinda was asked to take charge of the two postulants, Josefa Cordova and Lourdes Abad, and move to Negritos with them. The move took place on February 7. Fortunately for them, Sister Laura Rumiche was available to drive them and all their suitcases, boxes, and guitars. The day after their arrival, Sister Lucille sat down to brief the newcomers on the various maintenance projects that were underway in the convent. It was a good thing she did so since she left the following day for Ecuador for retreat and a visit with Sister Joan.
Sister Regina Deitchman in front of the "new convent" for postulants in Negritos

Sister Regina Deitchman putting the medal of Saint Vincent on Sister Lourdes Abad after presenting her with the SCL Constitution

New postulants Josefa Cordova and Isabel Pena celebrate with Sisters Esther Vilela, Maria Orozco, and Julia Huiman
Sister Donna Jean Henson and Mary Patricia Kielty with postulants Isabel Pena and Lourdes Abad on beach in front of Negritos convent

Sister Donna Jean Henson protests against lack of water

Sister Maria Orozco in a reunion with the Health Promoters
On February 10, Sister Clorinda, Lourdes, and Josefa went to Santa Rosa in Talara to participate in a four-day vocation workshop organized by the vocation committee and the sisters at Santa Rosa. Sister Elena Mack had come to help out with this live-in experience. Although they had expected eight young women, only four arrived, two from Piura, one from Tumbes, and one from Talara. Sisters Elena and Regina returned to Negritos each night to sleep, giving time for the younger people to share informally. When Sister Julia Huiman’s mother died, Sister Clorinda went with Sisters Mary Patricia Kielty and Esther to visit the family. The following day, everyone went to the funeral; this introduced the girls to yet another aspect of Community spirit.

After the postulants and Sister Clorinda had returned to Negritos, Sister Elena came to enjoy a few days of rest, but she also took time to share some ideas about prayer with the postulants. Sister Regina also visited from time to time since she recognized that being in charge of the postulants was quite a responsibility for Clorinda, who was not yet under perpetual vows. Things were going well, though, and she and the two postulants worked well together, spending time cleaning, arranging things in the house, and praying. The time passed rapidly as they had to go into Talara for Mass every day, thus taking at least a couple of hours out of each day.

When Sister Clorinda went to Chiclayo for the meeting of temporary vow sisters, Sister Mary Patricia came over to spend the nights with the postulants. Then the two postulants went to Piura for a two-day workshop in Catequesis Familiar; while there, they stayed overnight with the sisters at Santa Rosa.

In the third week of March, Sister Laura gave a course in lettering to the two postulants. During that same week, Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Sue Miller, Community Councilor, visited for a couple of days. While they were there, the sisters from Talara came over to view a video of Pope John Paul II’s historic visit to Saint Vincent’s Home in Denver, a mission of the SCLs.

On March 24, the postulants went to Piura. After making a day of prayer at the Negritos convent, Sister Trini left for Piura with Sister Clorinda that afternoon. Following the first vow celebrations of Sisters Julia and Liduvina and the perpetual vows of Sister Trini in Piura on the twenty-fifth, Sister Joan Kilker came to Negritos for a visit. On March 30, after several farewells by members of the parish and the sisters, Sister Lucille left with Sister Joan for her new mission in Solanda, Quito, Ecuador.

The very day they left, Sisters Catherine Nichol and Mabel Cordova brought Sister Donna Jean over from Piura to assume her role as Director of Postulants. On April 4, a third postulant, Isabel Pena, entered the Community, making the new Negritos house complete with two professed
sisters, Sisters Donna Jean and Clorinda, and the three postulants, Lourdes, Josefa, and Isabel.

The activities of the new community and scholastic year began for real the very next day, with house meetings to determine goals and objectives, the schedule, and the distributions of the various responsibilities. A day later, both Sisters Donna Jean and Clorinda began their weekly trips to Piura to assist in the inter-congregational classes at Lourdes High School with the postulants.

On April 8, Josefa and Lourdes again made the two-hour trip to Piura, where they met Sisters Laura and Julia. The four then proceeded another two hours to Morropon to join in the celebration of the first vows of three Benedictine novices.

Sister Clorinda began teaching a class in contemplative prayer to some members of the parish. Since the parish was so actively charismatic, this type of quiet prayer must have proven quite a challenge to the participants. Sister Donna Jean put it into practice, taking several days off for prayer at the Redemptorist Sisters’ convent in Chulucanas. Meanwhile, the three postulants began their preparation for becoming animators in the Catequesis Familiar program in the parish.

During the year, Sister Donna Jean also met with Sister Clorinda to share once a week, using a book on the following of Jesus and religious life. This had a dual purpose: to help Sister Clorinda in her own preparation for perpetual vows and also to help prepare her for working in formation the following year.

While the postulants and Sister Clorinda were home for Mother’s Day, Sister Julia came over to spend some time with Sister Donna Jean. They both joined Sister Mary Patricia in Talara for dinner on Sunday as she, too, was alone.

In Peru, just to have a telephone installed normally takes a long time, and this had been true for the sisters in Negritos. Therefore, after finally having their own line, the sisters were not a little taken aback when three men from the telephone company arrived to remove the lines and take out the telephone, claiming that the bill had not been paid in February or March. Sister Donna Jean insisted there must be some mistake as she had paid the bills for April and May and there had been no indication of pending payments. When she visited the offices in Talara, she found that the bills indeed had not been paid for those two prior months. But although she paid the $3.25 due for February and March, she steadfastly refused to pay the $500 they demanded to have the line reconnected. When she was informed she would have to see the regional boss in Piura, she went. Discovering the man’s name was Vicente, she began praying to Saint
Vincent. Apparently, this patron saint intervened, as the boss sent word to Talara to reconnect the line, and the cost was only $35!

Calamities never come singly it seems. About a week later, the sisters and their neighbors experienced an unscheduled fireworks display when a light pole just west of the house suddenly began to emit sparks and loud pops, hisses, and crackles. Then all the lights went out, the dogs began to whine and claw at the back door, Isabel began to cry, and neighbors began pounding on the front door. Not realizing the sisters’ phone was disconnected, they were pleading that they call the power company. To their relief, the electric company did send out a truck and repaired the wires after some time.

Just a week later, there was yet another perilous situation. While Sister Clorinda and Josefa were trying to connect a new butane tank, it sprang a leak. A loud hissing sound ensued, and gas rapidly filled the house. Sister Clorinda, Sister Donna Jean, and Josefa immediately began to open all the windows and doors in the house. Meanwhile, Lourdes and Isabel ran as fast as they could to the gas company, which was just about three blocks away. Efforts to seal the valve with soap failed, but before too long, two men from the gas company arrived and stopped the leak. They replaced the tank but warned the sisters not to strike a match anywhere in the house until the following day!

On July 8, 1994, the first group of “pilgrim sisters” from the States arrived with Sister Donna Jean and Isabel, who had gone to the airport to meet them. Not being sure just who would arrive in this first group, the sisters had prepared the names of everyone coming, ready to be stuck on the welcome sign in the entryway. Cleverly, Lourdes and Josefa remained just inside the door pasting on the names as Clorinda joyously and loudly welcomed each by name! Welcome, ANN!—BARBARA!—EILEEN! After lunch, the guests went to rest. With the help of Sister Ann Barton translating in English and Sister Donna Jean in Spanish, the sisters shared prayer together that evening. After Mass, they returned to the convent for a few games and some songs, but by 9:00 p.m. the travelers were more than ready for a night’s sleep.

While Sister Clorinda went to Piura with Sisters Regina and Ruth for a meeting with the Archbishop, priests, and religious of the archdiocese, Sister Donna Jean and the three postulants took the guests to Mass in Talara and then to see the city market. Sisters Barbara Aldrich and Eileen Haynes were much distressed by the number of undernourished children working there and were surprised to learn that many could not go to school as they were helping to support their families.

*Sisters Ann Barton, Barbara Aldrich, and Eileen Haynes.

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Upon returning to Negritos, the postulants took the guests to visit the soup kitchens as well as the botiquín that Sister Joan had helped organize. In the afternoon, Sisters Barbara and Eileen went to see some of the groups of children preparing for First Communion; Sister Ann Barton took advantage of the time to go into Talara to visit old friends.

The next morning, Sisters Barbara, Eileen, and Ann went with Sister Donna Jean to visit some of the schools and also the hospital. In the afternoon, Sister Clorinda took them to the fishing village to visit the sick. Learning of a funeral that was taking place for a man of the area, the sisters decided to attend, returning shortly before it was time for shared prayer and the evening Mass. Afterwards, the guests went with Sister Clorinda to the meeting of the parent guides for the twenty-five groups in the Catequesis Familiar program.

On July 12, the North Americans went into Talara to visit the works of the sisters there. As a sort of climax to the visit, the sisters from Talara and Negritos took their guests to Cabo Blanco, a famous fishing and beach area an hour and a half north of Talara. Sister Julia had located a van large enough to accommodate everyone, so they were able to spend the day on the beach, taking time out to eat at a restaurant owned and operated by Josefa's uncle. At a farewell party in the evening, Sisters Ann, Eileen, and Barbara were quizzed on places, foods, and activities of these days. As always when the sisters are gathered, there was much merriment and good fun.

Early in the morning of July 14, Lourdes and Josefa left by bus for their classes in Piura. Sister Donna Jean and Isabel drove the guests over a little later for the next part of their experience. Meanwhile, Sister Clorinda stayed home to clean house and get the bedrooms ready for the next group of sister guests. When Sisters Nancy Bauman and Sharon Smith still had not arrived by 7:00 p.m., Sister Clorinda went on to her scheduled meeting. On her return she was overjoyed to find them awaiting her, and they stayed up for some time talking about experiences in the religious life. It was like meeting old friends since she had come to know both of them two years before when in the United States for Chapter.

The next morning, Sister Clorinda took Sisters Nancy and Sharon to see a bit of Negritos and the fishing village of San Pablo nearby. She was pleased to see that they could understand the Spanish fairly well when they visited some of the families and a school for the handicapped. That afternoon, Sisters Mary Patricia and Julia brought Sisters Margaret Ellen (Peg) Johnson and Mary Walter Swann over. With Sisters Peg and Nancy playing guitars, all joined in singing both in Spanish and English.

On the sixteenth, experiencing a bit more of Peruvian culture, the sisters attended a quincenera Mass. The following afternoon they went with the postulants to visit First Communion classes. At 6:00 all went into Talara
for a farewell party for the North American sisters. Characteristically, Sister Ann Barton had prepared an artistic setting for the prayer service she had readied. Singing and praying in Spanish and English, the sisters felt very united in the charism of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and their love and appreciation for one another. After spending their last night by the sea, Sister Donna Jean took Sisters Nancy and Sharon into Talara in the morning so that they could link up with Sisters Peg and Mary Walter. Sister Regina then took them to Piura and the first step of their return trip to the United States.

After celebrating Sister Donna Jean’s birthday on July 27 with the Talara sisters present, everyone went into Talara the following day for the parade in honor of Peru’s Independence Day. On the twenty-ninth, Isabel and Lourdes left for a ten-day vacation with their families; Josefa left the Community to return home.

That same day, Sister Clorinda took twenty-five members of her prayer group on a “desert day.” The pastor of Cristo Rey, Father David Bird, OSB, went with them and celebrated Mass at the conclusion of the day. Then, taking advantage of a theology course being offered in Lima, Sisters Clorinda and Julia left for the capital on July 30. Sister Donna Jean, after staying on in Negritos for a few more days, left for Trujillo and a little vacation.

In late August, everyone attended an inter-congregational workshop called “National Reality and Reconciliation” given by Father Mateo Garr, SJ. The sisters stayed over to celebrate the Feast of Saint Rose of Lima with the sisters in Piura.

With the beginning of second semester classes, the postulants were surprised to find seven young men, postulants in the Franciscan order, attending classes with them.

On September 14, Lourdes and Isabel went with Sister Ruth Barron for a seventy-fifth anniversary Mass for the Congregation of Canonesas de la Cruz in Piura, a native Peruvian Community. Since they had classes the following day, the two postulants and Sister Ruth stayed overnight. From time to time, the sisters welcomed young women who manifested interest in the Community. Thus Lourdes’ sister, Deidy, had returned with her after her mid-term vacation. Then in September, three young women from Piura came for a few days, one of them being Isabel’s sister, Nathalia. On the twenty-fifth, Sister Clorinda took two of them with her for a vocation workshop in Sullana, after which they returned to their homes. Nathalia stayed with her sister.

On October 6, Sisters Joan and Lucille arrived from Quito for a short visit before going on to the Community meeting in Piura. The sisters enjoyed hearing about the experiences of these two Ecuadorian
missionaries. Starting out very early before sunrise on the eighth, they all arrived just in time to greet other Community members at Santa Rosa, have a light breakfast, and then continue on to CIPCA (Jesuit meeting, place in a rural area). The presentation and discussions centered on children and the sisters’ visions and dreams with regard to working with them, based on the SCLs’ Vincentian charism.

Following the conclusion of the meetings on the eleventh, Isabel went to Chalaco with the sisters for an experience of mission life there. Sisters Joan and Lucille returned to Negritos for a few more days of visiting with friends.

During the first week of November, Lourdes, Isabel, and Sister Clorinda attended a workshop in Piura on the Bible; this workshop, sponsored by Confer, was directed by two priests from Lima, Fathers Missette and Bosco. After their return, the sisters enjoyed three days at Punta Sal in company with the sisters from Talara.

The following week, when Sister Clorinda and the postulants went to Piura for classes, they stayed over to celebrate Sister Catherine Nichol’s Golden Jubilee and Sister Mabel’s renewal of vows. After Mass and dinner, most of the Negritos house left immediately as some had a meeting for the opening of a three-day Family Congress.

Lourdes was absent from the formation house for several days during mid-November. After the Community celebration, she had stayed over to attend a committee meeting. Then she went to Talara for a four-day mission experience.

In late November, Lourdes, Isabel, and Sister Clorinda participated in a workshop given in Talara by a married couple from Lima regarding the Catequesis Familiar Program. On November 29, Sisters Donna Jean and Clorinda went to Piura to attend the evaluation and planning meeting of the Formation Directors. They returned to Piura two days later, this time with Isabel and Lourdes, for the final classes of this year and a bit of potluck sharing.

Preparations for First Communion for this year were winding down too. Lourdes and Isabel had their last meetings with the children on December 3. The next day, there was a fiesta for the children, their parents, and the animators of the Catequesis Familiar program. The children from Isabel and Lourdes’ groups gave a dramatization about the birth of Jesus.

Toward the end of the month, the sisters cleaned the convent from top to bottom since all of them would be gone for the summer months. They wanted to leave it in “tip-top” condition for the sisters from different Communities who would be using it for retreat and relaxation.

On Christmas Eve afternoon, the sisters gathered together for a prayer service and to open gifts. They were going into Santa Rosa for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. After attending Mass together, they watched the
fireworks display on the school playground. Then they went to the convent for a turkey dinner with all the trimmings at 12:00 midnight, Peruvian style.

All four went to Piura on December 27 to join in the farewell party for Sister Janet Cashman, who was returning to the United States to work there. Isabel and Lourdes stayed on to attend the religious school of education classes (ESER) during the summer. Sister Clorinda went to Lima and Trujillo for classes in preparation for perpetual vows, and Sister Donna Jean left for the United States and her home visit.

During 1995 Sister Mary Patricia Kielty joined the members of the formation house in Negritos, although she continued some work in Talara and attended several courses for Pro Vida and Al-Anon in Lima. In April, Lourdes and Isabel began their canonical year as novices in Negritos. Sister Donna Jean, as chairperson for the inter-congregational formation group in Piura, attended a weeklong international meeting in Chucuito in Puno. As one of five representatives from Peru, she joined directors from six other countries in conferences, liturgies, and prayers emphasizing enculturation in formation.

On June 11, Sister Donna Jean and the two novices went to Piura for a retreat. Meanwhile, Sister Mary Patricia had a two-day meeting with Health Promoters, and the sisters had a panel representing the various states of life for animators of Catequesis Familiar. Father David Bird, OSB, willingly joined them for the afternoon. In September, they repeated the same format for their day of reflection with young women.

Some attended one or more of the anniversary activities of the Charismatic Movement of Negritos during the first week of July. As usual, they celebrated both Days of Independence during the month, the fourth for the United States with the Talara sisters and then the twenty-eighth for Peru. That day they also attended the traditional patriotic parade. Sister Mary Patricia began attending Father Bird’s Bible classes once a week, and the novices made plans to attend the mid-semester study week at ESER.

Before Sister Mary Patricia went to her retreat in Chulucanas, she invited members of the house to attend a presentation on Al-Anon either in San Pedro or in Negritos.

In late September 1995, the Negritos community invited the sisters from Piura, Talara, and El Chaco to a double celebration: to welcome a new postulant, Liliana Morante, and to celebrate Saint Vincent’s Day together before going on to the Community meeting in Chulucanas.

Toward the end of October, the sisters invited the fathers of the postulant and novices to come for Mass and dinner. About this same time, at the suggestion of Sister Donna Jean, the group began to meet one night a week to make Christmas cards to be sent to benefactors and friends.
By 1995, Father David Bird, OSB, had hopes of obtaining sisters or lay missionary nurses to work in the hospital. He indicated that he would like to use the convent for housing them. Just about the same time, the SCL Community in Peru decided that either the house in Talara or the one in Negritos should be closed due to a decline in personnel. After considerable discussion, the decision was made to leave Negritos and maintain the house at Santa Rosa. Thus the house in Negritos was reluctantly but officially closed in March 1996, just nine years after its opening.

But before that time, some availed themselves of “last days” in the house by the sea. Sister Rose Dolores came up from Trujillo in January to make her eight-day retreat while the Negritos community spent several days of vacation in Trujillo. Some of the sisters from Piura came for a last weekend. A number of SCLs made directed retreats under the guidance of Sisters Elena, Donna Jean, and Clorinda, some returning to Talara to sleep.

On March 9, Sister Donna Jean had to leave unexpectedly upon hearing of her father’s death. After receiving the news, she spent almost the entire night packing, as all her things and the formation file, books, and other things would be moved to Talara during her absence.

Finally, during the week of March 27, 1996, the grand move of people and belongings, both private and communal, began. Sister Julia and Liliana came over to help. Inventories were taken and boxes identified for taking to and storing in the convent in Talara. But many fond memories remained. For several years, some sisters hoped that one day the SCLs would again occupy that house by the sea—especially since Father David’s plans never materialized and the convent stood vacant.
Chapter XII Notes

1 Sister Agnes Klein to Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, October 7, 1968, A/SCL.
2 Sister Regina Deitchman to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, September 17, 1986, A/SCL.
3 Deitchman, "Latin American Missions—Request to Expand—Information for Phase II,” October 2, 1986, A/SCL.
4 Sister Donna Jean Henson to Stefani, May 20, 1987, A/SCL.
5 In the last fifteen years, Peru has changed its monetary unit from time to time, due to hyperinflation. Thus, the “Sol” was changed to the “Inti” on February 1, 1985, and on July 1, 1991, the “New Sol” was adopted.
6 The NIP program, part of the Better World Movement, is described in Chapter VIII.
7 ISET: Instituto Superior de Educación Teológica, where Sister Donna Jean Henson had studied for formation work. Every year the alumni had a get-together for input and sharing.
8 Sister Lucille Harrington to Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, September 18, 1989, A/SCL.
9 Ibid.
10 Henson to Stefani, August 12, 1990, A/SCL.
11 As used in this book, the term Junior Sisters refers to those under temporary vows.
12 Besides the hyperinflation and rising prices, more and more people lost their jobs. In October 1991, Petro Peru laid off four hundred men, with another four hundred discharged soon thereafter. Of course, this affected the merchants and other businesses.
13 See Chapter XIII for details of the bombing incident at Santa Julia Convent.
14 Harrington to Stefani, October 19, 1993, A/SCL.
15 In order for more North American sisters to become acquainted with the life and work of the Sisters in Peru, ten SCLs who had applied for the trip were sent to Peru for a period of approximately two weeks in July 1994.
16 Quinceñera: In many Spanish-speaking countries, the people still carry on this custom, a sort of rite of entering adulthood somewhat akin to a “coming out” party in English-speaking countries, except that in these predominantly Catholic countries, the parents and daughter and sometimes some of her friends attend a Mass before the party.
17 Sister Janet Cashman returned to Peru eight years later, after having served in health ministry both in the States and in Haiti.
CHAPTER XIII: SHORT TERM RESIDENCES

Among temporary missions that the Sisters of Charity assumed in more recent years were those at Santa Julia in Piura; Santo Dominguito in Trujillo; Lopez Albujar in Piura; and La Arena. Some of these establishments were caused by changes in the formation program and so are dealt with in the corresponding chapter. But since they were connected with community and apostolic activities, it seems they should also be addressed here.

SANTA JULIA

For various reasons, some of the sisters living at Santa Rosa Convent, Piura, in 1990 asked to look for another living situation and began investigating several possibilities. Finally, Sisters Elena Mack and Regina Deitchman, Director of Missions, found a house that they could rent in Santa Julia, not far from Santa Rosa. Although it was very large, having been built as a two-family structure, the sisters decided it was a good option as it was within walking distance of the Santa Rosa Convent, and there could be frequent communication and sharing between the two communities.

During the summer months of 1991 (January through March), Sister Regina bought most of the necessary furniture. Although the new house did not officially open until April 1, Sister Elena, who was working with the Office of Evangelization, and Sister Ruth Reischman, who was working in the Archdiocesan Office of Health, moved into the house as early as March 5. Besides these two, three others made up the community: Sister Janet Cashman, director of the Archdiocesan Office of Health and coordinator of the Diocesan Committee of the Health Apostolate; Sister Susana Cordova, who worked part-time in Santa Rosa Parish, taught some religion classes in the public high schools nearby, and continued her studies and work projects for Champagnat University; and Sister Trini Orozco, who would be a part-time parish worker at Santa Rosa as well as a student at the National Pedagogical Institute.

At first, the Office of Evangelization was in the second floor sala of Santa Julia. The Office bought the wicker furniture and bookcase and paid some of the rent. Later, the Archdiocese provided office space in the Cathedral area.

Along with moving in, getting settled, and beginning to form community, the sisters immediately entered upon their varied ministries. Already on April 6, Sisters Janet and Ruth began making their monthly jaunts to Tumbes to assist lay Health Promoters and hold retreats for them. In addition to the all-day workshops, these trips were tiring, as they always meant all-day or all-night journeys both going and coming.
That same day, Sister Elena joined Sister Susana in giving an all-day retreat for the catechists of Santa Rosa; the next day, she did the same for the catechists of Our Lady of Transito in Castilla.

Not quite a week later, Sisters Donna Jean Henson, Director of Novices, and Mabel Cordova came to dinner to discuss with the sisters the expectations of the Community for Sister Mabel's five-month experience as a novice at Santa Julia.

On April 13, Sisters Susana, Elena, Janet, and Ruth all attended the quarterly meeting of Confer-Clero, the joint meeting of the Conference of Religious and the Archbishop and priests of the diocese. During their time in Santa Julia, they would continue to attend Confer and Confer-Clero regularly.

Sister Janet's leadership of the Archdiocesan Office of Health also required her presence in regional and national health meetings, and she willingly accepted additional responsibilities on both levels. Thus, on the fourteenth, Sisters Janet and Ruth left for the regional meeting of the Health Pastoral in Trujillo, Sister Janet being in charge of the five-day meeting. They were barely home, with only time to catch their breath, when they traveled to Querecotilla, near Sullana, for a retreat. Again at the end of the month, they left for Talara as well as Tumbes for other meetings with Health Promoters.

Meanwhile, since Sister Trini's classes still had not begun because of a fire and the construction taking place at the Institute, she decided to make a private retreat at the convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Tambogrande. During her absence, Sister Mabel Cordova moved into Santa Julia, ready for her five-month mission experience as a novice. After May 1, she began assisting Sister Elena in the Evangelization program and also taught part-time in St. John Baptist High School during first semester while living with the sisters. On April 27, Sister Susana went to Punta Sal to join the other young professed sisters for a week of meetings.

Sister Trini was finally able to begin her classes at the Institute on May 2. Her presence there was apparently both a threat and a blessing. There were a number of professors who were either actual members or sympathizers of Sendero Luminoso, the “Shining Path” revolutionaries. She was viewed as an obstacle to the propagation of their philosophy, and a few made it a bit difficult for her. However, a number of the students sought her out for advice when they did not know how to confront some of the situations they were meeting up with in their classes. Symptomatic of the times, after only two weeks, a general and indefinite strike was called for all educational centers, and once again there were no classes.

On May 17, Sister Trini went to Chalaco for a week’s vacation. When she returned, she began taking a class in English at a private institute.
During the early part of May, there were a number of social activities. At his own request, Archbishop Oscar Cantúarias was invited to offer Mass in the new convent and to stay for breakfast. On May 6, the sisters invited Sister Regina to dinner to celebrate her birthday, and the following day, a young woman from La Arena who was interested in the Community came to dinner. Both Sisters Susana and Trini went to their homes to help celebrate Mother’s Day. While in Talara, Sister Trini joyfully joined in the family celebration of her grandparents’ Golden Jubilee; she was pleased to have Sisters Ruth and Janet join them that night.

On the very day of their return, Sister Elena left for Chiclayo and Trujillo, where she gave workshops in evangelization for the next three and a half weeks. At the end of May, Sister Mabel joined Sisters Ruth and Janet for another of their workshops and days of retreat in Tumbes. The following weekend, after their workshop in Talara, Sister Ruth took an extra day to rest but returned in time to help celebrate Sister Trini’s birthday on June 9. Sister Janet, however, stayed over to be on hand to greet her friend, Sister Linda Suzanne Roth, who had arrived in Talara with Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, and Macrina Ryan, Community Councilor.

The visitors from the United States arrived on the eighteenth; on the twenty-first, everyone joined them in a short outing to Catacaos to see the artisanship there. When Sister Mabel set off for a week’s vacation in Frias, Sisters Janet and Ruth also began their monthly trip to visit Tumbes, this time accompanied by Sister Linda Roth. However, the trip, the heat, and the long hours were a bit too much for Sister Linda, and she returned exhausted and a bit sick.

All were back home in time to take a short outing to the port of Paita and the colorful celebration of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, when the fishermen take the statues in procession in their boats. The following morning Sisters Janet and Linda left for Chalaco, returning on July 4. The sisters from Santa Rosa, as well as Sisters Maria Orozco, Esther Vilela, Laura Rumiche, and Joan Kilker joined in the farewell party for Sister Linda. Then Sister Janet accompanied Sister Linda to Lima for a couple days of sightseeing before her return to the States.

Early in July, Sister Mabel attended a weeklong course in prayer with other young women in formation. Less than a week later, Sister Trini joined her in Chulucanas for a five-day course on sexuality.

Besides attending Confer-Clero, Sisters Janet and Ruth went to Tambogrande for a workshop. Early the next week, they took part in a special liturgical celebration for “the day of the prisoners” at the penal institution in Castilla.

Although the sisters sometimes invited young women for an afternoon of reflection or accompanied them to inter-congregational days, more often
they entertained them informally. The sisters also invited priest friends or lay collaborators to share a meal with them.

Sisters Elena and Mabel were in Arequipa for a workshop in evangelization the last part of July and the first part of August. They thoroughly enjoyed their time in "the white city," as it is called in the southern part of Peru.

Those left at home helped Sister Donna Jean celebrate her birthday at Santa Rosa on July 27 and then attended the widely acclaimed Peruvian movie, "La Boca de Lobo" (The Mouth of the Wolf), which graphically portrayed the emergence of terrorism in Peru.

Sisters Susana and Trini gave a retreat for the catechists of the parish on July 29. Then, since Sister Trini's classes at the Institute still had not begun, she went to Lima with Sister Susana. There she attended a workshop for junior sisters on communication and community while Sister Susana attended to her exams and turned in her work at Champagnat University in Lima. Finally, on August 13, some of Sister Trini's classes at the Institute began, but by this time, she had lost a good many class days in her teacher education courses. What a waste of educational opportunities!

On August 24–25, Sisters Elena and Susana assisted in "From Faith to a Social Commitment," a series of presentations for priests, religious, and laity of the Archdiocese. On the thirtieth, everyone was actually home for the scheduled retreat day. That night they had a small party in honor of Saint Rose of Lima, patroness of healthcare workers.

Just about this time, Sendero Luminoso, the Maoist terrorist group that had been operating for some years in the southern part of the country, began to demonstrate its presence in the north. Following the murder of three priests in the Diocese of Chimbote, the Church became aware that it was now a target of the subversives, too. The attack on a police station in Lower Piura by a band of twenty terrorists brought the violence even closer to home.

Various presentations alerted the sisters to both the dangers that existed and the precautions that should be taken. When Sister Janet attended a national meeting for health representatives in Lima in mid-September, terrorism's effects on this area of work was stressed. Several Health Promoters had already been assassinated in various parts of the country.

In early October, Sisters Janet and Elena attended a special meeting for priests, religious, and laity regarding the reality of the presence of Sendero Luminoso in Region Grau, the larger political entity to which the Department of Piura belonged. It was noted that Sendero did not always advance as planned, but the presenters emphasized that Church agents should share with one another what was going on in their areas. One of the tactics of the terrorists now was to discredit the Church, the most credible institution in the country. It was further recommended that Church agents
be very circumspect in giving information, especially about parochial priests, to persons whom they did not know.

Despite all this, life continued as usual in most respects, with meetings, journeys, and birthday and feast day celebrations. The sisters from Santa Rosa and Santa Julia frequently celebrated together. Thus, since Sister Mabel would be making her first vows on November 11, the sisters had a farewell party for her on October 9 before she returned to the novitiate house for a month of intensive preparation.

Early the next morning, when the sisters went to claim laundry they had left hanging in the walled-in patio behind the house, they were surprised to find that they had had "visitors" during the night. Thereafter, they tried to be very careful about removing things from that enclosed space.

Earlier, in September, Sister Janet traveled to Lima as the official representative of the Archdiocese for a weeklong national meeting of the Health Pastoral. Then right after Saint Vincent’s Day, September 27, she joined Sister Ruth Reischman in Talara for a three- or four-day visit to the Department of Tumbes.

Toward the end of October, Sister Elena went to Chulucanas to help give the workshop on Discipleship for the Office of Evangelization; Sister Susana accepted her invitation to attend the program since she was on semester break. Sisters Janet and Ruth invited Sister Trini to accompany them in their regular monthly trip to Tumbes, giving her the opportunity to stop briefly to see her family, too.

In November, the whole SCL Community in Peru gathered not only for the renewal of Sister Trini’s vows, but more especially to help Sister Elena celebrate her Silver Jubilee as a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth. On the night of November 10, they both had an “in house” celebration at Santa Julia, with opening of gifts and enjoying banana splits.

On November 11, 1991, Sister Mabel’s first vows took center stage. First, there was a Holy Hour in the morning, followed by breakfast. Then at mid-day, Sister Mabel’s family and Sister Trini’s mother joined all of the sisters for dinner. At 4:00, Archbishop Cantuarias was the principal celebrant of the vow Mass. Afterwards, there was a public reception in the parish hall. Following this, the sisters again assembled at Santa Rosa Convent for the evening meal and opening of gifts. Five days later, Sister Mabel returned to Santa Julia and her catechetical work in Santa Rosa.

In late November, Sister Janet participated in the Archdiocesan Synod as a representative of the Health Pastoral. Shortly thereafter, Sister Regina paid an official visit to the Santa Julia community as Director of Missions and stayed the night.

When Sister Elena went to Paita on December 8 to help direct a workshop on discipleship, she invited Sister Mabel to accompany her.
Later in the month, Sisters Susana and Mabel left for visits with their families, but both returned in time for Christmas. Following the "midnight" Mass at Santa Rosa on Christmas Eve, the sisters joined many of the parishioners in the agape (refreshments and fellowship) for a while and then went home for the traditional Noche Buena dinner, which all of them had helped prepare.

In January 1992, Sister Susana went to Lima to begin the year's cycle in the pedagogical school at Champagnat. Sister Ruth also went for classes and to make her retreat. In mid-February, Sister Regina accompanied Sister Janet to Chimbote to make preparations for the forthcoming March regional meeting for the Health Pastoral. Following their days there, they continued on to Lima for retreat so that Sister Janet could attend another national meeting of the Health Pastoral. Shortly after Sisters Regina and Janet had left Piura, Sister Trini also went to Lima for her annual retreat. The next week, Sister Elena went to Zorritos to direct Sisters Nelyda Clavijo and Esther Vilela's retreats at the house of the priests of St. James. Since everyone else was gone, Sister Mabel stayed at Santa Rosa Convent each night.

All were home again by March 6, but just briefly, as Sister Elena left for Chiclayo and a course in Evangelization the very day that Sister Ruth returned from Lima and Sister Trini went to Talara for her oldest sister's marriage. That same weekend, Sister Susana went over to Talara to continue her preparation for perpetual vows the end of the month.

Although Piura experienced heavy rains the night before, Sisters Janet and Ruth set out for Chimbote and the Regional Pastoral Health meetings on the fourteenth. The following day, Sisters Trini and Mabel left for Talara and the meeting of the young professed sisters.

Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Bernadette Helfert, Community Councilor, had come for the perpetual vows of Sister Susana, the first Peruvian to make final profession. Although they stayed at Santa Rosa Convent, they came for dinner at Santa Julia on the twenty-third and, of course, joined in all the Community celebration of March twenty-fifth.

The sisters had morning prayers and breakfast together. Then, although there was a complete outage of electricity, the sisters prepared a feast day dinner for everyone in the Community. In the intense heat of March in Piura, and since the kitchen and small dining room had no windows or source of ventilation at all, that was no small feat, especially as they had decided on a jello salad! Although crowded together in the front room and dining room without fans, all enjoyed themselves on this very special and historic day.

In the afternoon, Father Pablo Alvarado, Vicar in Piura and long-time friend of the sisters, and Father Geraldo Calle, representing the Chulucanas Diocese, concelebrated the vow day Mass at 4:00 p.m. Following the reception in the parish hall, the sisters gathered for a light meal and visiting.
Three days later, when Sisters Janet and Maria Orozco tried to make a trip to Tumbes, they had to return because the road had been washed out in two places by the very heavy rains.

On April 5, the Santa Julia sisters (Elena, Ruth, Janet, Susana, Trini, and Mabel) met to discuss community plans for the year and to set goals for themselves. They determined to be a welcoming community, extending their hospitality not only to priests and sisters but also to the various groups with whom they worked. They also planned to take an active part in the various meetings in their sector and to establish a religious presence, especially in those groups where they believed there was subversive infiltration.

As remarked upon in previous chapters, April 5, 1992, was a momentous day in Peru. That very night at 11:00 p.m., President Alberto Fujimori announced an autogolpe, setting aside the Constitution and dissolving the Congress. Since the army backed his action, all feared that this again marked the end of democracy in Peru. Although there would be a façade of democracy in the coming years, actually these fears were on target.

In fear of possible disorders, classes were cancelled in all educational institutions the following day. The army was in full view to maintain order throughout the country. As if the heavens themselves wept, there were heavy rains again the night following the coup.

On April 10, the sisters attended a lecture on Vincentian spirituality given by Father Victor Hugo at Santa Rosa Convent. Then on the twelfth, the sisters again met to develop their house budget for the year and to plan dates for outings and activities together. Given the varied apostolates and many trips, it was essential to fix priority dates at this time. When they had finished these “beginning of the year meetings,” they celebrated by going out to eat afterwards.

Early in April 1992, Sister Janet had accepted Archbishop Cantuarias’ appointment as Secretary General of Caritas of Piura. It soon became apparent that there were various irregularities in the program, and the Archbishop asked Sister Janet to try to put things in order. Consequently, she began working half day in the Health Pastoral and half day in Caritas (Catholic Charities). From the beginning, she could sense some resentment and unfriendliness on the part of the workers but was not certain of its cause. She felt it might be due to the fact that she was now top administrator in a very male chauvinistic environment. But she was also cautious, not knowing to what extent some of the employees were responsible for the problems.

In mid-May, she took a day off for some retreat and rest at Santa Rosa in Talara. Later, on May 23, she was startled and frightened when she was summoned to an interrogation by the National Police of Peru. There she
learned that she had been denounced for the disappearance of some sacks of foodstuffs lost during shipment from Lima to Piura; she was subjected to two hours of questioning without being able to have a lawyer present.

The following weeks and months were very tense ones for her. She found it hard to know whom to trust as there seemed to be a "dirty game" going on among the workers at Caritas, some protecting former workers and directors. On July 1, Sister Janet talked with Sister Regina about the situation, and they decided to call Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani. They also went to talk with the Archbishop.

Later, Sister Regina asked the Sisters of San Jose of Tarbes to recommend a trustworthy lawyer. They promised Sister Janet their moral support, as did various priests and sisters. On July 3, Sister Janet went to give her formal declaration before the judge; a short article in a local newspaper the next day referred to her as "the religious J.C."

During this whole time, Sister Janet turned to prayer and the Bible for solace. Afterwards, she remarked that she had never before been so aware of the number of times justice is referred to in the Bible and in the Church Breviary. Even with all this, Sister Janet continued to work in the office of Caritas in the mornings and continued her afternoon visits with Sister Ruth to the Health Promoters.

While a great deal of the sisters' attention had been directed to Sister Janet's ordeal during this time, their life and work had continued on. Thus, on April 17, Good Friday, Sisters Ruth and Elena went to the jail for the Way of the Cross conducted by the prisoners. Afterwards they, together with Sisters Susana and Trini, went to Catacaos where Sister Elena gave one of the reflections during the prayer service on the seven last words of Christ. While there, they discovered yet another of the traditions of Lower Piura, namely, that no one in colored clothing is allowed to enter the temple on Good Friday; people must dress as in mourning.

The following week, Sister Susana went with Sister Elena and the rest of the group from the Office of Evangelization for a retreat day in the Benedictine monastery in Sechura. Sister Janet, too, made a day of retreat at the monastery a week later. On April 23, after first attending first vows of a Franciscan sister in Consuelo de Velasco, Sisters Elena, Susana, and Trini also went to Sechura for the night and the following day.

After spending the week in Paita giving a workshop for the Office of Evangelization, Sister Elena went to Tumbes for several days in mid-May with Martha Monroe, a good friend and co-worker. Together they organized evangelization work in that department.

At this time, both Sisters Susana and Mabel began teaching religion part-time in St. John the Baptist High School in nearby San Martin. On June 24, they prepared a prayer service for the name day of the high school.
In early June, Sisters Mabel and Trini went to the Center of Formation in Chulucanas to invite the young women in the program there to participate in a vocational workshop in August. Several indicated their interest. Later in the month, Sisters Ruth, Susana, and Trini welcomed five young women for an afternoon of reflection in their house.

In the latter part of May, Sister Elena had left for Lima and the United States, first for a vacation and then to participate as a delegate in the SCL Chapter in Leavenworth. On June 19, 1992, the sisters anxiously awaited word of the Community elections, but it was not until the next morning, after Sisters Janet and Ruth had left for Tumbes, that Sister Catherine Nichol brought over the list of the new officers of the Community. The sisters were not a little surprised to see Sister Elena Mack's name on the list. They knew they would miss her presence in the house and in their lives, and they were sure her election would bring many new experiences for her, too. They were glad to have the opportunity to talk with her the afternoon of the twentieth and extend their felicitations.

When Sisters Regina, Maria Orozco, and Clorinda Timana arrived from the States after Chapter, Sister Regina had to stay over in Lima because of a lost bag and because Customs questioned her bringing in walkie-talkies. The sisters from Santa Julia and the other houses enjoyed hearing Sisters Clorinda and Maria's impressions of their first visit to the Mother House and their observations on the Chapter and elections.

Because of the uncertain climate in the National Pedagogical Institute the previous year and the continuing evidence of Sendero Luminoso influence there, Sisters Trini and Regina had decided that it would be better for Sister Trini to enroll in a private institute. She soon found out that things were not too stable at Sanchez Valier either. For instance, on the morning of June 22, she had arrived for classes only to find out that the Institute had transferred to another site without informing the students beforehand. Needless to say, she and a number of other students arrived late for their classes that day.

On the twenty-sixth, Sister Mabel went with the team from the Office of Evangelization to give a workshop in the jail for women in Sullana. She was much impressed by this experience.

While Sisters Janet and Ruth were in Sullana with the Health Promoters the following day, a policeman dressed in street clothes came to Santa Julia looking for Sister Janet. He had a notification for Sister Janet to appear before a judge to make a formal declaration regarding the lost sacks of wheat belonging to Caritas. The public prosecutor had charged sister for mal-use of foodstuffs. Despite this upsetting news, Sister Janet decided to go that afternoon with some of the other sisters to Chulucanas for the first profession of a Peruvian Sister of Mercy of Philadelphia. She also
went with Sister Ruth to Sullana the following day for the second day of the workshop for the Health Promoters.

The afternoon after Sister Regina arrived from Lima, she immediately began trying out the new walkie-talkie communications system between Santa Rosa and Santa Julia. Although there was some interference, it was possible to convey information from one house to the other. How fortunate that would prove in the coming months!

The following day, everyone went as planned to St. Ignatius High School for a retreat day. Since this is one of the few really green areas in Piura and Castilla, the sisters always enjoyed spending quiet time there. However, the sisters had to cut the day short as Sister Mabel had a retreat afternoon scheduled with her catechists.

On July 4, Sisters Janet and Ruth invited Sister Esther Vilela to judge the demonstration of typical dishes prepared by the Health Promoters. The next day, Sister Susana accompanied five young women to Lourdes High School for a vocation day, but she did not stay since the sisters had invited Sister Regina to dinner and to share with them about Chapter. After the dinner and sharing, Sister Janet went to Paita for a meeting of Caritas.

Taking advantage of Teachers' Day, Sister Trini invited Liduvina Dominguez to go to the Center of Formation with her. She wanted to invite the young women there in Chulucanas to the vocation workshop the Community was planning to have in Sechura in August. Ten señoritas indicated that they were interested in participating.

On July 10, the sisters joined the novitiate community at Santa Rosa in welcoming Liduvina Dominguez and Julia Huiman as novices.

Soon after this, Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer arrived from the United States to join the community at Santa Julia, where she was welcomed enthusiastically. A few days later, she accompanied Sister Trini to Sechura to make arrangements at the Benedictine monastery for the vocation workshop for thirty señoritas from Piura, Tumbes, and Chulucanas. Although the timing was inconvenient because only one young professed sister was in the Benedictine monastery with the novitiate members (the other professed having gone to England for Chapter), she agreed to accommodate the group if the SCLs would help, especially at meal time.

Late in July, Sister Ruth attended a meeting of CEPESER (Center of Services for Central Peru) to share about terrorism in the area. Everyone had been shocked by the assassination of Luis Paredes Maceda as he left his university classes the evening of the ninth. He had been a well-known professor and had formerly been mayor of the city.

For some time, the sisters had been aware of Sendero Luminoso's presence in their area. In fact, if they were in the laundry area at night, they could sometimes hear the anthem of the terrorist group being sung
somewhere in the neighboring pueblo joven (barrio) of Nueva Esperanza. One night Sisters Rose Dolores and Trini even heard a cadre marching in the alley that separated them from that pueblo joven. At one point, someone found some fliers in the back patio but swept them up and threw them away, not realizing at the time what they were.

But on July 21, 1992, Sister Mabel, on going out early to leave for her high school classes, found some papers thrown into the front patio area. Picking them up, she discovered they were warnings to observe the armed strike called for the following day by Sendero Luminoso. They threatened with death anyone who would work.

Sister Mabel brought the papers back inside. Everyone was frightened, of course, but the sisters decided that Sister Rose Dolores should take them to Diaconia, the Peace and Justice Office, when she went for her meeting that morning. On examining them, the personnel there did not consider the sisters to be in any danger. The Archbishop also did not think they represented a real threat. However, they were proven wrong when, the following morning at 6:00, a homemade bomb was exploded at the gate to the patio. All the windows on the ground floor as well as some on the second floor at the front of the house were shattered.

Fortunately, it was a Saturday and only Sisters Janet and Ruth were up, one in the small dining room, the other in the kitchen area. The other four shot out of their beds to see what had happened. Sister Trini at first thought someone was machine-gunning the front windows and expected to see terrorists outside the house. Sister Ruth thought the refrigerator behind her had exploded.

Naturally, they were terribly frightened on discovering that it had been a bomb and that, beside the windows, it had wrecked the gateway to the patio. Without thinking, and perhaps in a bit of shock, they took up brooms to clean up the broken glass. Sister Susana called Sister Regina on the walkie-talkie, and Sister Regina immediately notified the police by phone. Soon many neighbors began gathering in front of the house, and they urged the sisters not to clean up until the police arrived. Even while commiserating with the sisters, some of the men commented that it had "only" been a homemade bomb.

First, one group of police arrived and then, a bit later, some specialists in explosives. Both groups interrogated the sisters as to how and when the explosion had taken place. When they heard that they had received fliers the day before, they were upset that they were not brought to the police. They said that since this was a central day for Sendero, they had patrol cars circulating and would have had them pass by the house. Actually, one had not been too far away at the time of the detonation. Some of the neighbors volunteered that they had seen a motorcyclist leave a package at the gate and speed away shortly before the explosion.
Sister Regina and the novice Sister Julia Huiman arrived shortly after the first police did. Everyone was very grateful that no one was hurt, and they acknowledged that if it had occurred on a weekday, the story might have been far different. Although the owners of the house wanted the sisters to put plywood over the windows rather than put in glass again, this did not seem viable if they were going to continue living there. Therefore, Sisters Regina and Trini set about finding someone to replace the windows and a welder to repair the gate and the part of the wall that had been blown out. Meanwhile, Sisters Rose Dolores, Susana, and Mabel cleaned the house. Sisters Ruth and Janet left to give their workshop as planned! Not even a bomb could stop them.

Just two months later, the sisters at Santa Julia were again threatened. This time all the sisters except Sister Rose Dolores had gone on an excursion to Ayabaca. Sister Maria Orozco had come to stay with Sister Rose Dolores, who was suffering from a bad cold. In the morning of September 24, Sister Rose Dolores hung the Peruvian flag from the second story balcony, complying with the petition of President Fujimori that throughout Peru there be a celebration of gratitude for the capture of Abimael Guzman, the founder and leader of Sendero, earlier in the month.

When Sisters Maria and Rose Dolores returned from evening Mass, they found more fliers had been thrown into their patio. These fliers appeared to be more explicitly directed at the sisters than those of July, so the two were naturally frightened. Sister Maria called Sister Regina on the walkie-talkie while Sister Rose Dolores took down the flag.

Sister Regina called the police, who promised to send a patrol car to take her over to the other convent. When the police still hadn't arrived after an hour and Sister Maria had again called to find out what was happening, Sister Regina decided to take a taxi over. The novice Sister Liduvina accompanied her to pick up Sisters Maria and Rose Dolores. These two stayed all night at Santa Rosa, Sister Maria leaving early the next morning to return to her mission in Chalaco.

The following morning, Father Bernabe, CSSR, pastor of Santa Rosa and Santa Julia, went with Sisters Regina and Rose Dolores to see the police commander in central Piura. After talking with the sisters, he directed them to the Civil Guard operating out of the San Martin station. They assured the sisters that they would pass the house on a regular basis.

That evening, Sister Rose Dolores was very surprised to encounter the other members of her house at Mass because they were not due until the following day. It seems that the five had intended to stay in a hotel in Ayabaca, but there were no rooms available, even though the Feast of Señor Cautivo (the Captive Christ) was still two weeks distant. Although the Franciscan sisters graciously offered them accommodations, Sister Trini
had begun suffering a severe toothache and Sister Ruth offered to return with her. Then Sisters Janet, Susana, and Mabel also decided to return early the morning of the twenty-fifth. Arriving at Santa Julia, they thought it strange that Sister Rose Dolores was not there. Then, when leaving for evening Mass, Sisters Trini, Susana, and Mabel watched curiously as a patrol car slowly passed their house. It was not until they had entered the Church of Santa Rosa that they learned of the new threats. Returning home, they recounted the news to Sisters Ruth and Janet.

On the morning of September 26, a Major of DIRCOTE (Direction Against Terrorism) came to the house with Sisters Regina and Rose Dolores to talk with the sisters about various precautions they should take. Very interestingly, he had asked to return to the convent to talk with them as he said he could not be sure but what there were subversives infiltrated in the police station!

As a result of these threats and because the Sendero was expected to be especially active the next two weeks, the police advised the sisters to seek hospitality away from the house at least during the nighttime. This they did, in other convents of the area; but some returned to Santa Julia to work during the day. Sisters Ruth, Mabel, and Trini had their noon meal together in the house, trying to make things seem as normal as possible. Sisters Rose Dolores and Susana traveled to Tambogrande with professors from the Office of Education as planned, and Sister Rose Dolores continued on to Talara afterwards to interview the sisters regarding their preferences should a new mission be established. The question of establishing a new mission was brought up at almost every yearly meeting. In 1992 the biggest point of debate was whether the new mission should be for apostolic purposes or serve as a house of studies for the young professed sisters.

On October 12, no one went near the house, as that day was deemed especially dangerous since it marked the first month since the capture of Abimael Guzman, the Sendero Luminoso leader. The following day, the sisters considered it safe to return to a more normal life together at Santa Julia. After a couple of months, the sisters met to discern whether or not to stay in Santa Julia for the following year. The decision was affirmative.

Both between these two incidents with the terrorists and thereafter, the sisters continued their lives quite normally. Although they took some additional precautions and some may have felt a little more tension than others, no one thought about leaving Santa Julia.

To pick up on this part of the history, it is necessary to regress to July 1992. On July 29, Sisters Janet and Ruth accompanied Sister Regina to the airport to meet Sister Elena, who was returning to reclaim her things and say goodbye to the sisters and her lay collaborators. After welcoming her in the house and hearing about her trip from the States, the sisters met
to talk about the kinds of precautions that should be taken in the face of the continuing terrorist threat.

As usual, Sister Susana went to Lima during the semester break to present her work and take her exams in Champagnat University. During that same week, Sisters Elena and Trini went to Chalaco for the vocation weekend they had planned there previously. Although Sister Elena desired to stay longer to close out her unfinished work and say her farewells, Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani called to tell her she was needed for forthcoming meetings of the Council in Leavenworth. So, on August 6, the sisters from Santa Julia and Santa Rosa joined for a farewell dinner. Then, as it had been impossible for most of the sisters from Negritos and Talara to attend, Sister Elena left to say her goodbyes to those two houses.

That weekend, Sister Ann Barton filled in for Sister Elena, going to Sechura with Sisters Trini and Clorinda for the vocation workshop for young women from Piura, Talara, Chulucanas, and Tumbes. Sister Elena promised to visit the group Saturday afternoon, in between her preparations to leave and various farewells. Father Cruz Villanueva, a Redemptorist priest who offered Mass on Sundays at Santa Julia, gave her a special blessing the next morning at the Mass. Afterwards Sisters Susana, Mabel, and Rose Dolores accompanied her to a special farewell dinner planned by her co-workers in the Office of Evangelization.

From August 10 to 15, Sister Ruth attended the Archdiocesan Synod as a representative of the Santa Julia community. Sister Rose Dolores also was present for the Office of Evangelization, and Sister Janet took part in some of the sessions. One day Father Jose Ignacio Alemany, CSSR, a leader in the Evangelization 2000 Movement, told Sister Rose Dolores that it would be advantageous for her to participate in a forthcoming workshop to be given in Lima. He assured her that there was still money available for her registration. The members of her house agreed that she could pay for the bus ticket from house funds.

On the first Sunday of September, several of the sisters attended a morning retreat sponsored by Confer. That afternoon, Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores prepared materials for their forthcoming workshop with teachers in Las Lomas. They were helped in this preparation by three young women visiting them from Chalaco.

Following their day of helping teachers in Las Lomas, Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores went on to Mancora to visit with the pastor about the possibility of a new mission. Father Pepe Seminario more than welcomed them and took them to see the other three sites he served. He even pointed out the parish house in Los Organos that might be used if sisters came to work in this priest-less settlement. While in Mancora, they stayed all night in the abandoned convent there but ate with Father. Great was their surprise
and joy the morning of the September 12 to learn at breakfast time of the capture of Abimael Guzman, the Sendero Luminoso leader.

Returning to Piura on the fourteenth, they set out again on the sixteenth for another workshop for teachers in Tambogrande. This time some other professors from ODEC (Office of Catholic Education) accompanied them.

Meanwhile, Sister Trini took some young people from Santa Rosa parish to a one-day vocation workshop in Lourdes High School. Sisters Janet and Ruth had once again headed for Tumbes.

In a letter to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani in late September, Sister Rose Dolores expressed some of her frustrations at not having enough to do. Her work for the Office of Evangelization included only attending some meetings and doing the banking, as well as coordinating the team who visited the jail. She filled in her time with reading and taking notes in the Evangelization Office and helping with some retreats and meetings in the parish. Moreover, she and Sister Susana had been frustrated regarding the workshops they had been asked to give for the Office of Catholic Education. Three times the office had not informed teachers and directors ahead of time about their coming. However, by Christmas time, Sister Rose Dolores indicated that, despite the problems and delays and lack of coordination, she and Sister Susana were satisfied and would like to continue giving more workshops the following year.

On September 27, 1992, the sisters went out to dinner together to celebrate Saint Vincent’s Day. In the evening, they joined the other SCLs at Santa Rosa for a small celebration. But how much greater that would have been if Sister Janet had already received the news given her the following day—that she was exonerated of all charges in the case of the missing grain sacks of Caritas! The great weight of the past three months was lifted; her faith and strength of character had seen her through. Another celebration the evening of the twenty-eighth was called for.

On October 1, Sister Ruth fell as she was getting off the bus. She had been on her way to stay with Sister Esther Vilela, who had been operated on in the Clinica Roma. With the help of a young man she knew, Sister Ruth just barely made it to the foyer of the clinic. The receptionist went upstairs to tell Sisters Julia Huiman and Trini that there was a North American sister downstairs who needed help. Sister Julia called Sister Donna Jean Henson to ask her to come and stay with Sister Esther. When Sister Donna Jean arrived, so did Sister Regina, who insisted that Sister Ruth should go to San Miguel Clinic to be examined since she could barely walk.

A succession of funny things happened before Sister Ruth finally received medical help. The old taxi that Sister Regina had hailed kept stopping en route to San Miguel, and all the efforts of the taxi driver to get it started seemed futile. Sister Regina decided to summon another cab but
discovered she couldn't get her door to open, try as she would. Finally, the chauffeur opened it from the outside so Sisters Regina and Ruth could get out. Then the two entered a mototaxi (a sort of rickshaw drawn by a motorcycle), hoping to arrive at San Miguel before closing hours.

Meanwhile, Sisters Trini and Julia, who were with them, wanted to change cars, too, but the driver insisted he could get the stalled vehicle moving. Nevertheless, Sister Julia got out and was looking for another taxi just as the first taxi started up and took off. Sister Julia went running after it, awaiting an opportunity to get back in.

Arriving at San Miguel Clinic, Sisters Trini and Julia begged the driver not to turn off the motor. There they saw Sister Regina coming out of the door and learned that the doctor had said he would wait while Sister Regina took Sister Ruth to have x-rays taken. Fortunately, there were no broken bones, but there were a good many laughs before they finally got Sister Ruth to Santa Rosa and flat on her back. Two days later, many of the sisters arrived at Santa Rosa to have ice cream with Sister Ruth for her birthday. As it happened, Sister Ruth and her “patient,” Sister Esther, were sharing a bedroom on the ground floor!

In mid-October, Sisters Rose Dolores, Susana, and Janet were once again on the road. Since Sister Ruth was unable to travel, Sister Nelyda Clavijo accompanied Sister Janet to Tumbes from Talara. The first two returned to Las Lomas for another workshop with teachers. They would again go to that area north of Sullana in November, going as far as Chipillico for a workshop.

Since there was going to be a regional meeting of Assessors of the Health Pastoral in Paita the last days of the month, Sister Janet invited three sisters from Huacho for dinner on the twenty-sixth. Sister Joan Kilker joined them; then that afternoon all went to the port city for the meeting.

On November 8, Sister Mabel joyfully finished the Confirmation program at Santa Rosa, seeing 120 persons confirmed that day. On the eleventh, she renewed vows at Santa Rosa Church. Earlier that day, the sisters from Santa Rosa and some from Talara joined the sisters at Santa Julia for the vow day dinner and a celebration of Founders' Day.

Beginning November 16, everyone was in Chulucanas for the annual meeting of the Community. This time they were joined by Sister Marie de Paul Combo, head of the SCL Office of Peace and Justice, and Sister Elena Mack, recently elected Councilor in the United States.

Following these meetings, Sister Janet returned to Paita for yet another meeting, and Sister Mabel went to her home in Frias for a two-week vacation. While there, she participated in the municipal elections. Although Sister Susana voted in Piura where she had been living right before she entered, Sister Trini went to Talara for her civic obligations.3
Shortly after returning from Paita, Sister Janet again packed her bags, this time to go to a Caritas meeting in Lima. While there, she learned of funds available from the German Bishops that could be used for self-help projects. As a result, Sister Ruth developed a grant to help seven young men in the pueblo joven San Sebastian develop a small carpentry shop. One of the seven with carpentry training was to teach the others, first of all to make coffins that could be sold at minimal prices to the poor, then hopefully to make simple furniture. The Health Office and CEPESER sponsored the project. However, there were a series of problems, and by the time Sister Ruth had returned from her home visit in 1993, all the tools had been stolen, and the project failed.

In late November, Sisters Rose Dolores and Susana went to La Union in Lower Piura to meet with religion teachers there. However, very few showed up from there and the surrounding towns because the directors of the high schools had not informed the teachers.

On December 2, Sister Marie de Paul Combo came to visit for several days, staying until after Sister Rose Dolores' birthday dinner on the sixth. While at Santa Julia, she went with the various sisters to see where they worked and what they did.

In the light of the discussion at the Community meeting in November about the need for a house of studies and the suggestion that Trujillo offered very good possibilities, Sister Regina asked Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores to make a trip there to find out more specifics. Accordingly, they investigated the two Catholic pedagogical schools, the national university, and several institutes. They also talked with religious who lived in the city. Their impressions were very positive.

During their visit to Trujillo, Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores received hospitality from the Franciscan priests with whom the SCLs had worked in the Chulucanas diocese; these warmly welcomed the two to their house of studies in Moche, south of Trujillo. One of the Franciscan brothers even acted as guide when they decided to see some of the famed archaeological ruins on the last day of their visit.

With the coming of the end of the year, the sisters met to share and evaluate their personal and community projects. They found it an enriching experience, especially in the light of all that had transpired during the year. They indeed had much to be grateful for. On December 19, Sisters Janet and Ruth went to Tumbes for one last time, and Sister Susana went to spend several days with her family in Santo Domingo.

After attending the Misa de Gallo (midnight Mass), the sisters returned to have the traditional Christmas Eve dinner at midnight. Even though it was near 1:30 a.m. when they had finished dinner, three of the sisters decided to take the turkey and other perishables over to Santa Rosa to
refrigerate them since they were once again without electricity. Not being able to rouse anyone in the front of the house and the bolt being on, they were wondering what to do. Just then they saw Sister Catherine Nichol coming down the lower hallway. She was, of course, surprised to see them at that hour, but graciously let them in and helped them find space to store the food. It may have seemed very late to her, but the neighborhoods were alive with music and dancing and people in the streets.

Typically, the biggest celebration is Christmas Eve, and then many take it easy the next day. So, in Santa Julia, the sisters had decided to make the twenty-fifth a “do-it-yourself” day, with everyone eating or resting as they cared to. However, Sister Susana had invited a friend from Chalaco, who was now working in the Piura post office, to come to visit. So Sisters Trini and Rose Dolores, who also knew her from their years in that mountain village, also visited with her.

On December 28, 1992, the SCL Community again met in Chulucanas. The sisters, acting on the assessment and recommendation of Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores, voted to ask the Community Council to authorize setting up a house of studies in Trujillo in 1994. The following day, Father Gustavo Gutierrez, Father of Liberation Theology, addressed the SCLs and their guests on the Latin American Bishops’ meeting in Santo Domingo. The Community finished up a few more items on the agenda the following morning before returning to their respective convents.

On the night of December 31, the sisters from Santa Julia joined three from Chalaco and the Santa Rosa sisters to celebrate the new year. After Holy Hour, the sisters went to the roof to watch the “burning of the old men” in the neighborhood. Then they celebrated below in the *sala* with beverages and chips, music and dancing.

On going to bed, they also set their clocks ahead as President Fujimori had declared that Peru, too, must conserve electricity and enter a Day Light Savings’ program. This would be the only year it was tried, however, as people soon discovered that this close to the equator it really did not make any difference, and so many people went to work early that even more energy was burned!

The first day of the New Year 1993, Sisters Susana and Esther set off for Lima for summer studies at Champagnat University. A few days later, Sister Rose Dolores went to Chulucanas to make a retreat under the direction of Father John Sima, SJ, and his team.

During the second week of January, Sister Trini joined the team having a live-in at Santa Rosa for seven young women who had come from Chalaco, Piura, and Talara to learn a bit more about religious life.

On January 23, 1993, everyone headed for Negritos and the farewell for Sister Rose Celine Siebers, who was returning to the United States for
good after nearly seventeen years of service in Peru. On leaving the bus in Talara, while Sister Trini and three other sisters were walking to the *combi* (public van) that would take them to Negritos, Sister Trini was approached by a friend of her father’s. She was incredulous when he offered her his condolence, for she had not received any news from home. But it was true: Señor Orozco had died early that morning, and both Sisters Trini and Maria had left Piura before the family could contact them.

The sisters did their best not to spoil the farewell for Sister Rose Celine Siebers, while at the same time accompanying their two sisters and their family in their sorrow. Sister Rose Dolores had already planned to stay over in Negritos and so had clothes with her, but Sisters Janet, Ruth, and Mabel returned to Piura that afternoon and came back the following day for the funeral.

A week later, Sister Ruth Reischman left for Talara to accompany Sister Rose Celine to the United States. She would spend the following three months there, visiting family and community, and making retreat.

During January, February, and much of March, the community in Santa Julia was very fluid. Sister Mabel had a special program for some of the children of Nueva Esperanza during January. Two young women helped her, one of them being Lourdes Abad, who would later enter the SCL Community. In February, Sister Janet was in Lima for meetings of the Health Pastoral and her retreat. Sister Trini left with Sisters Maria and Clorinda to make the same retreat.

Sister Rose Dolores occupied herself with repairs in the house. She had screens put on some of the windows and a metal door with a screen put at the back door. That way there would be more circulation of air and more security. Naturally, the refrigerator ceased functioning just at this time. As with all such repairs, it took many visits to the technician and much urging to see the work completed.

By *Carnaval* time, most were back in the house and there was often great hilarity, with Sisters Janet, Rose Dolores, Mabel, Trini, and even their guests, Sisters Maria and Clorinda, entering into the fun one day. In Peru, since this season occurs during the height of the heat of summer, it is frequently customary to douse others with either water or talcum powder. While it is generally children and young people who are involved in this, the “child” in the sisters emerged at this time also.

Shortly after returning from her summer studies in Lima, Sister Susana went to Negritos with Sister Rose Dolores, who would direct her retreat. Following these eight days, Sister Rose Dolores stayed on for her vacation.

On March 15, Sister Trini returned from Lima, where she had attended a workshop on vocations, arriving in Talara for the vows of Sisters Maria and Laura Rümiche. She then stayed on with the other young professed for a meeting in Negritos with Sister Regina.
On April 1, Sister Ruth Reischman returned to Peru from her home visit and resumed her work in the Archdiocesan Health Office. She also began working with a group of ladies in El Indio about starting a bakery in that very large and very poor district. With money from the German Bishops, they bought the machines and fixed up one of the houses so that they could begin production.

At first there were ten ladies who took turns baking the bread at night. When one of the women had to quit because of a jealous husband who declared that she had to choose between the bakery and her family, and when another balked at selling bread outside the bakery, troubles began to accumulate. For a while, they hired a man to bake the bread, but since there was little income left after paying him his salary, they were only able to struggle on to their first anniversary. Very shortly thereafter the women gave up the project.

They managed to move the huge, heavy machines to a room off the community hall of the parish in their barrio. Several years later, when Sister Ruth was working with the food kitchen in Cristo Rey parish, the machines were moved there. Two or three groups tried to develop a bakery without success, but when the food kitchen was closed there, a couple from Santa Rosa bought the equipment.

Sister Trini continued with her studies at Sanchez Valier for a second year. While there, she became a good friend of a young Mormon, Jhony Sosa Risco, and an evangelical, Martín Morales, who were studying with her. They often worked on projects together, seemingly having much more in common than they did with other younger students in the pedagogical. But as the year progressed and the director failed to secure the state accreditation he had promised was forthcoming, Sisters Regina and Trini again began to talk about a change of pedagogical institutes.

Sister Mabel secured work at Mater Admirabilis High School. Interestingly enough, she taught religion in the same place that Sisters Agnes Klein and Elena Mack had taught while living at the seminary in Piura.

With the approaching school year, Sister Rose Dolores visited the Diocesan Office of Catholic Education to see if it planned to continue the classes in developing teachers of religion. Father Javier Castillo, who had taken over the direction there, asked her instead to take charge of organizing a religious education program for adults of his and other parishes in Piura. At his suggestion, she began visiting with some of the clergy to see which ones would be willing to collaborate, both by way of informing their laity and accepting classes to teach in a three-year cycle. She met with a positive response, especially from Father Jesus Moline, the director of the local seminary of the Cure de Ars.

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As it happened, one of the professors there and also one of the seminarians in his last cycle agreed to teach the two courses of the first semester. The classes took place three times a week in a large classroom in San Jose parish. Since Sister Rose Dolores needed to be on hand each night to take roll and see that all was in order, she was glad that Sister Ruth decided to take the classes, too.

Sister Rose Dolores also continued working with the members of the Office of Evangelization, participating in some of the retreats and workshops in one form or other. Following one in Chulucanas at the end of June, she came down with malaria. Because she received prompt attention from her sisters and the medical post across the street, she recovered quickly.

Sister Janet had left for her home visit in the United States on April 30 and returned on June 29, 1993, resuming her former activities. Her two jobs at the Health Office and Caritas kept her exceptionally busy. Besides the regular visits to Health Promoters around the diocese, she normally had at least one meeting on a national or regional level, and she still made time for other interests. One was the establishment of a police station staffed by female officers to attend women who had suffered abuse in the home. In a letter to Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, she commented that some estimated that seven out of every ten women were victims of such mistreatment. She also helped with the organization of activities for World Aids Day, participating in a radio panel representing the Church’s position on the use of condoms to prevent AIDS, and other related subjects. Although she was not the one chiefly responsible for either of these activities, as she said, they “meant lots of meetings and certain tasks to complete.”

Meanwhile, Sister Julia Huiman came to live at Santa Julia during her mission experience as a novice in 1993. She once again worked with Sister Janet in the Health Pastoral and also with some of the kitchens supplied with foodstuffs by Caritas.

The rest of 1993 passed rapidly, without any traumatic occurrences as in the previous year. During the early summer months of 1994, Sister Trini took several courses in Lima in preparation for her perpetual vows. Sister Mabel studied at an academy before taking the entrance exam for the University of Trujillo.

Between retreats, beginning to dismantle the house, and packing up things for the move to Trujillo, it was soon time to close the doors on Santa Julia on February 15, 1994.

**TRUJILLO: A HOUSE OF STUDIES**

In the 1990s, several Peruvian sisters were interested in pursuing higher studies, but neither the intensive summer programs of Champagnat
University nor the possibilities in Piura seemed to meet their needs for various reasons. Therefore, at the request of the sisters in Peru, the Community Council authorized setting up a separate house of studies.

Since the Community had decided in late 1992 to set up a new house in Trujillo in time for the beginning of the 1994 school year (March/April 1994), Sister Regina Deitchman, Director of Missions, and Sister Janet had gone to Trujillo during 1993 to look for rental property that could be used for the house of studies. Although they found a few possibilities, Sister Regina was not satisfied and determined to return at the end of the year. In December 1993, she took along Sister Rose Dolores, who had agreed to transfer to Trujillo with the student sisters when the house was set up. Just as they were almost ready to sign for one house, though not entirely pleased with it, an almost ideal house became available in the new parish of Cristo Resucitado in Santo Dominguito, a sector of Trujillo.

Located just a block from the new parish plant, which was in the initial stages of construction, and close to a good-sized local market, bakeries, and stores, the house had the additional advantage of being near frequent public transportation. Both the pastor and people were most happy to have religious coming to live among them even though only Sister Rose Dolores would be free to enter into much pastoral work. The house would be available on February 15, 1994.

Trujillo, a city midway between Piura and Lima, had already been identified as a sort of cultural capital, offering many different opportunities for study, both formal and informal. Indeed, when Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores went to investigate study opportunities in December 1992, they also visited the historic and world famous archaeological site of Chan-Chan, the largest mud-built citadel in the world. This and the Temples of the Moon and the Sun would become regular tourist sites for visitors and sister-guests in the four years the house of studies was in Trujillo.

Because several sisters would be moving out of Santa Julia, it was decided to close that house and move the furniture from there to Trujillo. During January and February, preparations began for the two-fold action of closing and opening, with Sister Ruth Reischman doing much of the organizing. Finally, on February 15, Sisters Regina, Ruth, Rose Dolores, and Liduvina Dominguez set out in the Chalaco jeep after early Mass, taking along some of the more fragile possessions. Stopping in Chiclayo long enough to eat and change drivers, they arrived in Santo Dominguito by 3:30. Since they discovered the family still at work cleaning, they decided it would be best to get a good night's rest and start early the following day, by which time the large truck with the rest of the belongings should have arrived. Sisters Regina and Ruth went to stay with the Augustinian priests who had previously given Sisters Regina and Rose
Dolores hospitality at their house of studies; Sisters Rose Dolores and Liduvina gratefully accepted the cordial welcome of the Sisters of the Abandoned Elderly at their Home only about ten blocks away.

Meanwhile, Sisters Elena Mack and Esther Vilela had an adventurous trip in a decrepit 1965 truck with the name “God is Love.” Although they left Santa Julia at 4:00 in the afternoon, it took them three hours just to leave the city! The driver first had to return to the office to get money for gasoline, then go to the police station to be certified for transfer of properties. There they were first told that the person to authorize them was not in the station, but then they were informed that “perhaps there was someone who could do it.” Sister Elena, innocent as to the bribe that was being proposed, thanked the official profusely and went back outside. The truck driver later told her he had never seen anything like that; the last time, he had to give the official twenty Soles.

Throughout the twelve-hour trip, especially during the night, Sister Elena talked to the driver and told him jokes to keep him awake. The most novel part of the trip, though, was that periodically the driver stopped to put a condiment powder in the radiator in order to plug the holes; that way the water he was continually pouring in would not all drain out!

When they finally arrived in mid-morning, they found Sisters Regina, Ruth, and Liduvina hard at work cleaning. Sister Rose Dolores had gone to the market to find some roach spray, as they had discovered innumerable cockroaches in the cupboards and cabinets. Since Sister Rose Dolores had not mentioned to anyone where the keys to the patio garage were, the unloading process was slowed down until she returned. But by 1:00 p.m., all the furniture had been delivered to its proper rooms.

Tired and hungry, the sisters went to a local restaurant Sister Rose Dolores had seen while returning from the market. This family-owned neighborhood eating place would be a favorite of the sisters during their four years in Trujillo. They soon discovered that the owner made delicious wine, which they not only enjoyed themselves but also bought as gifts for the sisters in the north.

By the third afternoon, things were sufficiently in order that some ventured downtown to visit the Cathedral, plaza, and other points of interest. Sister Ruth had already left for her retreat in Lima, and Sister Liduvina soon returned to her novitiate program in Piura. But Sisters Regina and Elena stayed on for several days.

That first Sunday, the first Sunday of Lent, the sisters found out just how cordial their new parish community was. Father Wenceslao Calderon, the pastor of Cristo Resucitado parish, officially welcomed them at the Mass. Then after the Mass, since the parish had no church, as such, and the “prayer room” served also as a multi-purpose meeting and reception
room, the benches were moved around in a square, and all were served coffee and chicken sandwiches. Father Wenceslao put much emphasis on the people being the Body of Christ and the Church, and he was doing all he could to form a strongly knit parish community. As time progressed, the sisters both saw and felt how well this goal was being met.

Two days later, the pastor came to celebrate Mass and install the Blessed Sacrament in the house. At this and other times, he told the sisters that when the Archbishop had asked him about sisters living and maybe working in his parish, he had readily agreed, but with certain conditions. The most important was that said religious have a commitment to the poor. So, given the Community charism, he was more than pleased to receive the Sisters of Charity.

That same week, Sisters Regina, Esther, and Rose Dolores went to visit Archbishop Manuel Prado, SJ, so that he would know some of the SCLs living and working in the diocese; Sister Regina had visited with him the year before. The Archbishop received the sisters most cordially and inquired about the possibility of other SCLs working in the mountainous area of his diocese, for there were no sisters and very few priests living and working there.

That very same day, the sisters had another interesting encounter. After registering for a post office box and coming downstairs, they stopped to introduce themselves to a Sister of Mercy. They were astounded when she said she knew the SCL Community as she had had an aunt in it. Sister Mary de Paul Downey had left Ireland many years before to enter the Kansas Community; the Sister of Mercy herself had come to Peru as a missionary and was working in a poor area not too distant from Santo Dominguito. Once again the world proved itself smaller than one would think.

Things are never as easy as they seem, especially in Peru. One of the main reasons for choosing Trujillo for the house of studies was the presence of Catholic Institutes and particularly some departments of the Catholic University of Peru. Sister Maria Orozco was assigned to the house of studies so that she could begin working toward a degree in social services. The first month after arriving, Sister Rose Dolores visited the new campus several times, only to be put off by the secretary until a later date. It wasn’t until Sister Maria had actually moved to Trujillo and it was nearly time for school to begin that she was informed that Catholic University had withdrawn the social services program to Lima. Since this news was imparted the very day that Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, and Sue Miller, Councilor, were visiting the Catholic University site, they gained a firsthand appreciation of just how exasperating the process of gaining an education in Peru is.
Meanwhile, Sisters Trini Orozco and Esther Vilela had both enrolled at Juan Pablo II Institute of Pedagogy. With the hope that either the National University or maybe even Juan Pablo II (which had applied to join Juan XXIII at Chepen as a University) might later provide the studies Sister Maria desired, Sisters Regina and Rose Dolores counseled her to enroll in the pedagogical institute, too. They also believed it would provide her a good foundation for future studies.

For the first two years, all three sisters (Trini, Esther, and Maria) took educational classes at Juan Pablo II. At first the Institute did not have its own buildings, but held classes in a private elementary-secondary school from two to eight p.m. The Spanish Jesuit in charge was pretty conservative; he and a number of the other professors taught in a very traditional style and insisted on a lot of memorization. Others used an analytical and critical methodology that the sisters found more to their liking. Sister Trini commented favorably on the discipline and punctuality of professors, contrasting it with experiences in her two previous institutes.6

However, in the second year, when there still seemed to be no possibility of a social service program opening, Sister Maria returned to the north and began working in Piura.

Although Juan Pablo II did not increase its educational offerings, it did move into its new facilities in 1996, even though they were not completely finished. This meant a longer bus ride for the sisters, but nicer surroundings; it was, however, colder since the new buildings were closer to the sea and there were as yet no windows installed.

Since Sister Trini had already had three years in two different pedagogical schools in Piura, she had been able to transfer most of these credits. Rather than just mark time while waiting for her classmates to complete classes in Language and Literature that she had already had, she gained some teaching experience by volunteering to teach religion at an elementary school in the center of the city. This was in addition to taking courses she had not had. Sister Esther elected not to claim credit for the work done at Champagnat University during the summer of 1993, so she began at base level to acquire her certificate in History and Religion, a double major at Juan Pablo II.

By the second year, Sister Esther began preparing catechists for Confirmation classes in the parish. Having sacramental preparation in the parish was something of a novelty, as the custom had been to prepare students for First Communion and Confirmation in the schools. But Father Wenceslao, the pastor, and some of the other priests had become aware of the faulty preparation of the teachers themselves; indeed, with the infiltration of the sects, some of them were not even Catholic but were nevertheless expected to teach the Catholic religion in their classes. For
this reason, Father Wenceslao had decided to prepare his children and young adults at Cristo Resucitado.

Sisters Esther and Trini planned a retreat with Father Federico and invited any young people in the parish who wished to participate in catechetical work or the chorus. Later, Sister Trini would begin working with the group of young people to carry on the Confirmation program, with Sister Laura Rumiche assisting her. Sister Esther then helped the new lay assessor of First Communion, Señorita Isabel, who also studied at Juan Pablo II. The following year, Sister Laura worked with the First Communion catechists while Sister Trini continued with the young people, who more and more took charge of the Confirmation classes. To better prepare them, Sister Trini arranged workshops for them with Professor Cruz from Juan Pablo II, Professor Manuel Quinde from the Diocese of Chulucanas, and Father Wenceslao and Señora Carmen from the parish. She also programmed two retreats for these young people and the chorus group at a nearby retreat house of the Dominican Sisters in Porvenir.

After Sister Laura had explored possibilities for study in obstetrics and nursing, she at first settled on the private Institute of San Luis but soon found out that the classes there were uncertain due to the paucity of enrollees. She therefore took the entrance exam for the state Institute Trujillo, and after gaining entrance there, she proved herself a real leader in her section. She was also able to insert not a little religious influence there and encountered many questions about her life as a religious.

Besides their regular classroom study, the Institutes required various projects and activities of the students. For instance, Sister Laura had to help clean her classroom at mid-semester; another time, she and her companions took part in a four-mile ecological walk to and from the port city of Salaverry as their final exam for their physical education class. This was a two-mile walk each way. At times, Sister Laura had classes all morning and afternoon if teachers had not finished teaching their course work, and she was “strongly encouraged” to attend a Health Congress at the National University of Trujillo. During what normally was a semester break, at least once Sister Laura had to forego it in order to take an all-day course in sterilization techniques.

Sister Esther joined her companions in a trip to Cascas, a large grape-growing and wine-making area south of Trujillo. More disconcerting, however, were cases such as this: Sister Esther interrupted her preparation for perpetual vows in Talara in order to return to Trujillo for a supposedly compulsory class, only to find out on arriving that it had been cancelled. Both Sisters Trini and Esther were required to spend a semester of Saturday alphabetization classes in one of the poorer sectors of the city. And, as
was to be expected, they were both required to student teach during their last year.

During their first months in Trujillo, while Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Sue Miller were visiting, Sister Rose Dolores accepted Sister Mary Kathleen's challenge to write the history of the SCLs in Peru so that present and future Peruvian sisters would have a better idea of the foundations and work of the Community here. As Providence would have it, Sister Rose Dolores returned to the States for medical attention in late March. While at the Mother House in Leavenworth both before and after cancer surgery, she spent many, many hours researching in the Community Archives. With this information, she was able to begin her writing after returning to Trujillo; she also pursued more research while at the Mother House for three months in 1996 and 1998.

Meanwhile, she became involved in some apostolic activities in the parish of Cristo Resucitado and directed a few retreats during the summers. Members of various commissions in the parish invited her to join them; initially, she spent time working with the Liturgy Commission but was soon more attracted to the Human Promotion Commission.

These men and women engaged in various activities on behalf of the needy of the parish. They were in charge of distributing the food and clothing collected weekly in the Solidarity Basket at Sunday Mass. Three women spent many hours a week in the parish library helping students. A seamstress of the group helped organize a workshop on the second story of the plant where some industrial machines had been installed, thanks to Korean friends of Father Wenceslao. Father envisioned having a place where some women of the parish could find employment and where clothing could be made and sold more economically to the poor of the area.

For a time, Sister Rose Dolores took a great interest in this workshop, especially as Father initially designated a certain percentage of its profits to be placed at the disposal of the Human Promotion Commission for helping people with the purchase of medicines or making funeral arrangements. However, for various reasons, the workshop did not realize its purpose, and even for the short time that it was functioning, the proceeds were soon diverted to the building fund of the parish.

Sister Rose Dolores joined the group in several activities to gain funds for medicines. She also participated in semi-annual collections of clothing and school supplies for the poor, Sister Maria or one of the other sisters helping her canvass some blocks. When the group took a census in Bosque Semi-Rustica, the poorest section of the parish, Sister Maria also accompanied her.

Officially the assessor of this group, Sister Rose Dolores faithfully met with them every week and shared their frustrations. Perhaps because
of these frequent meetings, some of which were very long, the group became tightly knit; they also became known for their birthday celebrations and other festivities.

One New Year’s Eve, Silvia Moreno invited Sisters Trini and Rose Dolores to come to her house (the other sisters having gone north). Various other members of the group were present to offer toasts to the New Year, have dinner, and dance or otherwise enjoy one another’s company. Even Sister Rose Dolores, who normally never danced, was induced to engage in not a few steps at their celebrations. After a while, realizing it was late, but not knowing just how late, Sister Rose Dolores indicated she thought it was time to leave; how astounded both she and Sister Trini were when they entered their house at 4:00 a.m.! They soon discovered, however, that the party at the house just behind their bedrooms was still in full swing, but that did not keep them awake long.

Early on, at the request of the pastor, Sister Rose Dolores assumed the classes in preparation for Baptism, and she had some very interesting experiences in this regard. Her first candidate was a very old and infirm woman, originally from the sierra, but now living with one of her daughters. Since the woman had never had the opportunity to learn or practice her faith, Father asked Sister Rose Dolores to talk with her to see if she knew what she was doing. Because Señora Rosa Lujan was somewhat deaf and confined to her wheelchair, Sister Rose Dolores went to the house, where they had a long discussion. Señora Rosa answered sister’s questions very well, expounding on her experiences. Yet when her daughter arrived, Señora Rosa told her daughter that she had not understood what the “Madre” was saying because she was talking in English! Sister Rose Dolores was flabbergasted. Señora Rosa nevertheless insisted that the Madre should be her godmother.

At the same time, Sister Rose Dolores gave instructions to a young Japanese woman with the help of her husband-to-be, who translated one for the other. He had met his fiancé while working in Japan and had brought Tomaka to meet his family. A few years later, the couple returned with two children and her parents. Her father was a Shinto priest, but he seemed happy seeing his grandchildren baptized in the Catholic Church.

Sometime later, Sister Rose Dolores also gave instructions to two young Korean girls, whose Peruvian father and Korean mother had taught with Father Wenceslao at the University of Peru at Trujillo before going to Korea to live.

During these years, Sister Rose Dolores also helped train a zealous young teacher and some of her students at the high school Maria Negron so that they could prepare fellow-students for Baptism. From time to time, after Sisters Trini and Esther began working in parish catechetical programs,
she lent them a hand with workshops and represented the sisters at the monthly parish council meetings, which were most often very long.

Trujillo was a frequent stopping-off place for visitors. Soon after their arrival, Sister Susana Cordova stopped on her way north from summer studies in Lima. During her stay, she enjoyed visiting and exploring the city, and she even worked in the back garden a couple of days. By the time she continued on to Piura, first Sisters Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco and then Sisters Trini and Esther arrived. The day after the last two came, Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Sue Miller also arrived; meanwhile, Clorinda returned to the north. While visiting their own house of studies, some Augustinian priest friends stopped by. Other sisters came for a visit or just stopped off on their way to retreat further south.

Several groups of North American SCLs also visited as they made pilgrimages to our various missions in Peru. Sister Ruth Barron even stopped by as she was returning to the United States for good. During many of these visits, Sister Rose Dolores delighted in taking the travelers to see some of the archaeological sites, especially the Temples of the Sun and Moon in nearby Moche. On occasion, if there were enough time, she or the others took them to Huanchacho, a beautiful fishing port and beach where the fishermen still employ totoras, fishing craft made like those the ancient pre-Incan tribes had used.

In addition to regular visits by members of the Community, the sisters also entertained members of other religious orders and some laity. Once they received Sisters Barbara and Martina, two Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, who were visiting the northern sector of Peru after having worked in Lima and the South for more than thirty years. Interestingly, one of these sisters had welcomed the first SCLs when they visited the Cincinnati sisters’ mission to the Chinese in Lima in 1963.

Another memorable experience was giving hospitality to two Korean sisters who were visiting Father Wenceslao. When asking us to provide housing, he assumed they spoke English, but they did not—nor any Spanish! Fortunately, they spent most of their days with him and so were able to converse in Korean. However, one very amusing incident happened one night after they had both retired. For some time, the neighborhood had been suffering from a plague of rats, and the sisters had been battling these creatures, which entered the house from the open stairwell to the roof and a kitchen window that did not close completely. On this particular night, Sister Maria had caught sight of a rat upstairs near her bedroom and asked Sister Rose Dolores to help her check second floor. Armed with regular brooms and push brooms, they had finally cornered the rat in the bathroom just across from where the Korean sisters were staying. Every time it moved, Sister Maria shrieked. The younger Korean sister emerged
wide-eyed, and Sisters Maria and Rose Dolores tried to explain in sign language that they had just killed a rat. How they laughed afterward, sure that the sister must have thought Sister Rose Dolores was administering some kind of corporal punishment to Sister Maria.

At various times during the years in Trujillo, one or more of the sisters traveled north to Piura for meetings of committees, Community meetings, or celebrations. In March of their first year there (1994), Sisters Trini and Rose Dolores went to Talara the week before Sister Trini’s perpetual vows, as Sister Trini planned to conclude her preparation there and in Negritos. Sister Rose Dolores had a meeting in Talara and was going to guide Sister Trini in a mini-retreat.

At this same time, Sister Sue Miller was meeting with the other North American sisters over age sixty, for the Community wanted to know their thoughts about retirement, whether they planned on returning to the United States or staying in Peru. At the meeting, a very moving letter from Sister Trini was read, urging the sisters to remain and pledging that she and other Peruvians would gladly take care of them if and when they needed help. All the North Americans indicated they preferred staying in Peru although they didn’t wish to take Peruvian sisters from apostolic ministry.

Several days later, all the SCLs gathered in Piura for Sister Trini’s perpetual vows, the second ones celebrated in Peru. Sister Esther renewed her vows, and Sisters Julia Huiman and Liduvina Dominguez made first profession at the same Mass.

In October 1995, Charlotte Smith Kelly, a long-time friend and former Sister of Charity, invited Sister Rose Dolores to accompany her on a trip to Cuzco and Machu Picchu. Considering it an early gift for her Golden Jubilee, Sister Rose Dolores delighted in the days spent with Charlotte.

One of the most memorable trips and experiences of 1996 was “Converging Paths.” All the Peruvian sisters and North Americans experienced SCL hospitality in various local houses in Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, and Montana before assembling at the Mother House. Thanks to Sister Mary Kathleen’s letter to the U.S. ambassador to Peru and other preliminary work, Sister Rose Dolores was able to secure the visas for the Peruvian sisters and make final arrangements with Exprinter, the travel agency. She herself left earlier because of her eldest sister’s pending death.

While in Lima attending to the visas and tickets, Sister Rose Dolores bought additional books for the library in the house of studies. Thanks to two generous grants from Adveniat, the Community had been able to supplement furniture and materials brought from Santa Julia. It was even able to purchase a computer and its accessories, as well as a photocopier. These were valuable helps for the students and also greatly assisted Sister Rose Dolores in her work on the history.
During the summer months, the sisters engaged in apostolic work, such as taking charge of the vacation program in Chalaco. Sister Trini did this the first year (1995) and Sister Esther, the second and third years (1996 and 1997). In the first summer, Sisters Esther and Rose Dolores offered a summer religion program for two weeks in one of the poorest areas of the parish. Señora Marlene, a member of the Human Promotions Group, and her family offered an enclosed patio for their use.

Although there was a good deal of movement during the summer, someone always stayed with Sister Rose Dolores, who remained and kept the house open, sometimes offering retreats to one or another sister. During the summer of 1996, Sister Maria stayed on and took a course in artificial flowers (earlier she had learned to make running suits and wind-resistant jackets). That same summer, Sister Laura began living at Santo Dominguito, as she had come to work in a clinic with the Sisters of Good Counsel in Esperanza before beginning her studies in nursing.

Through the years, the sisters were grateful for the advice and counsel of Father Wenceslao. At times he was able to recommend a technician or lawyer; he even lent his influence to help get things done. An example of this was securing an enclosure for the stairwell and a strong metal and glass door to the third floor in their house. Sister Rose Dolores had been insisting on its necessity for some time, but her requests fell on deaf ears. Finally, when she knew that she would be going to the United States in May, she mentioned the situation to Father, arguing that she wanted neither two-legged nor four-legged visitors in the house while the sisters were in classes. With just a word from him, the work was soon done. Indeed, just utilizing his name seemed to have a welcome effect on inefficient maintenance or service people.

Since both Sisters Laura and Esther had asked to make perpetual vows in March 1997, Sister Elena Mack suggested that the whole community at Santo Dominguito share in a program of monthly days of retreat with them. She herself frequently arrived to participate, and one month invited Sisters Julia and Liduvina to participate in a review of the history of the SCLs in Peru directed by Sister Rose Dolores. Most often, the day of retreat was followed by a Sunday of paseo (an outing). Besides this yearlong preparation and additional readings, Sister Esther participated in four to six weeks of special reflections and sharing in Talara with Sister Lourdes Abad, who was preparing for her first vows. Sister Laura, on the other hand, capped her yearlong preparation with a thirty-day retreat in Arequipa.

While Sister Laura had renewed her temporary vows in Trujillo in 1996, Sister Trini being deputed to receive them, she made her perpetual vows in San Pedro the following year. In doing so, she delighted the people of that fishing port by having “one of their own” profess final vows there.

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Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer on a Communion call

Sisters Laura Rumiche, Clorinda Timana, Esther Vilela, and Susana Cordova at a vocation workshop

Sisters Laura Rumiche and Esther Vilela preparing to move from Santo Dominguito
The sisters at Santa Rosa, Talara, provided hospitality for the SCL visitors and helped with the reception in San Pedro, but Sister Laura's family and friends took care of much of the preparations. Appropriately, the wall behind the serving table was decorated with fishing net and a large boat made of balloons.

Sister Esther, however, made her final profession in Santa Rosa, Piura, on March 25. She was joined in the celebration by Sisters Julia and Liduvina, who renewed their vows, and by Sister Lourdes, who made first profession of vows. The traditional reception for family and friends followed.

Throughout 1997, Sister Trini was working on her thesis. This was a source of unending frustrations, for the Institute of Juan Pablo II insisted that the thesis work be done as a group, not individually. Although Sister Trini originally thought she had collaborators who would work together well, this did not prove to be the case, so she carried a good deal of the responsibility, especially in its final stages.

On December 26, 1997, the owners of the house paid the sisters a visit, as they had often done when in town from Lima. But this time they announced their intention of putting the house on the market. They really hoped the sisters would be interested in purchasing it, but that not being the case, they wanted them to be willing to show it to interested buyers. This did not seem an agreeable arrangement, so the sisters conferred with Sister Elena, Director of Missions. She decided that Sisters Laura and Esther should look for lodging with another Community for their last year of studies and that the house of studies in Santo Dominguito should be closed by the end of March. Actually, since the novitiate community was going to move into Lopez Albujar in early March, they would welcome the furniture from Trujillo.

Hoping to escape the heat of Piura during January, Sister Catherine Nichol made her first trip to Trujillo, but she found the month there hotter than was usual due to the oncoming "El Niño." Nevertheless, she seemed to enjoy her walks in the neighborhood. While there, she and Sister Rose Dolores attended Sister Trini's graduation. Shortly thereafter, Sister Trini left for Piura to check on some possibilities of work for the following year.

In early February 1998, Sister Elena came for a meeting with Sisters Susana Cordova and Rose Dolores, but she was gone by the time Trujillo was hit from three sides by floodwaters when the dam of Mampuesto broke and the Moche river went out of its banks on February 11. Sisters Rose Dolores, Esther, and Trini gathered together some food, sheets, and pillowcases and took them to the Mercy sisters living in one of the hardest hit areas. Although their house had not been directly affected, they gratefully accepted these items for the people with whom they were working.
Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores were supposed to have been in charge of the Community retreat planned for early March in Jimbe, so Sister Susana had come to Trujillo following her summer studies in Lima. However, given the heavy rains and flooding, it seemed less and less possible that the sisters could reach that mountainous village south of Trujillo. After exploring some other possibilities, Sister Elena and others decided to have the retreat in Piura, improvising as best they could using the new house at Lopez Albujar and the convent at Santa Rosa. However, Sister Rose Dolores refused to brave the trip north since the highway had been destroyed in various places and travelers often had to wade through gullies of running water. Sister Susana, at the insistence of Sister Elena, did go as representative of the planning committee. However, her bus was delayed several hours even before leaving Trujillo, so she did not arrive in Piura until 2:00 a.m., making Sister Rose Dolores all the more glad she had not attempted the trip.

Along with the continued and unusually terrible heat of March, more frustrations were added to the sorting and packing going on. First, the refrigerator came to a halt, taking eleven days to have it fixed. Then the young cook suddenly quit when refused an advance on her pay. And finally, the water pump also ground to a halt. In the midst of all this, Sister Rose Dolores directed Sister Trini in her annual retreat!

Following their retreat in Piura in early March, Sisters Esther and Laura returned to help finish their packing and get ready for their transfer to the Convent of the Sisters of Good Counsel in Esperanza. Even after their move on March 22, they continued to return to Santo Dominguito to help prepare furniture for the move north.

As might have been expected, the end of March saw a series of farewells. First, the Human Promotion Group invited the sisters to a breakfast following Sunday Mass. Some friends in the parish invited them to a farewell dinner in their home. And although Sisters Esther and Laura were living in Esperanza on the Feast of the Annunciation, they met Sisters Trini and Rose Dolores at the house of the Augustinian priests for Mass. The four then celebrated their own leave-taking, going to the Mochica Restaurant in the center of Trujillo. On their last Monday, Father Wenceslao celebrated a special Mass of Thanksgiving, and some of the parishioners had the traditional sharing afterwards.

Unexpectedly, when the plane did not leave as scheduled on March 31, Sisters Trini and Rose Dolores went to their last fiesta in the parish. Although actually a birthday celebration for the husband of their good friend Tana, it was a fitting closure for their time in Cristo Resucitado parish. There was much camaraderie and dancing.
On April 1, Sister Elena, who had come down to oversee the final packing, took Sisters Laura and Esther to a farewell dinner at El Rosal, the local restaurant they had visited the first day in Santo Dominguito and on various occasions in between. By 1:30 p.m., Sisters Elena and Rose Dolores left for the airport. That same day, Sister Trini moved her things to the Convent of the Good Counsel Sisters in Esperanza to stay the night before leaving for Piura.

Fortunately, Sister Trini’s plane was not delayed the following day. When she arrived at the airport in Castilla, Sisters Maria and Eileen Haynes were waiting for her. After helping her get her bags and boxes from the airport and across the Bridge Grau, all boarded the Chalaco jeep which Sister Rose Dolores had been guarding on the Piura side of the bridge. Later, Sister Trini had to return to Trujillo briefly and stayed in Esperanza while finishing the paper work necessary to get her accreditation.

Nancy, the daughter of Tana and Benjamin, had agreed to stay nights in the house at Santo Dominguito until such time as the furniture could be moved northward. Originally it was supposed this might take up to a month, but actually within a week Leoncio Monon, husband of one of the women in the group Sister Rose Dolores belonged to in the parish, thought it possible to make the trip. Sisters Laura and Esther, who had been checking almost daily on the house, helped oversee the packing of the trailer. Thus, the Sisters of Charity ended the experience of a separate house of studies in Trujillo just four years after its establishment.

LOPEZ ALBUJAR AND LA ARENA

In the Community meetings of September 1997, Sister Clorinda Timana, Director of Formation, proposed that the Community acquire another house in Piura, preferably in one of the poorer areas, where the postulants and novices would take more responsibility for the cooking and cleaning than was possible in Talara. She also saw such a move as more desirable than having the postulants and novices traveling to Piura every week for classes in Confer and thus being absent from their local community for one or two days.

By chance, in the December meeting of Confer-Clero, one of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary mentioned to Sister Elena Mack that three members of their Community were withdrawing from the convent in Lopez Albujar, and as of yet, no other Community had indicated a desire to use it. On viewing the house, Sisters Elena and Clorinda thought it would serve the Community’s needs very well. Archbishop Cantuarias and Father Cesar Camacho, the pastor, were both delighted at the prospect of having the Sisters of Charity live in the convent.
Just about this same time, the owners of the house the Community had been renting in Trujillo indicated their desire to sell it. Since Sister Trini Orozco was terminating her preparation as a teacher and Sisters Esther Vilela and Laura Rumiche had just one more year of studies, it was decided to vacate the house there during the summer months. That meant the furniture could be moved back north again, almost all of it having come from Santa Julia just four years before.

On February 26, 1998, Sisters Ruth Reischman and Clorinda began to clean the relatively empty house in Lopez Albujar and move in. Finding that the stove left behind by the former Community was almost unusable, they closed off all the connections except for two burners. They also discovered that various other minor repairs were necessary, mostly involving plumbing problems, screen doors, and the like. Between the end of February and the end of March, they "made do" with furniture borrowed from Santa Rosa and brought out of storage in Talara; this latter had been in the house of Negritos until it had closed.

Moving furniture from Talara and Trujillo presented a real challenge, however, as the flooding caused by "El Niño" had washed the highway out in many parts. But intrepid friends helped as soon as it was possible. When the furniture from Trujillo arrived on the afternoon of Palm Sunday, the 160 cases, boxes, and pieces of furniture were unloaded by four youths from the parish, plus a neighbor, Señor Victor Escurra, and his son.

Lopez Albujar is actually a part of Fatima parish farther west, where the pastor lived; on weekends and feast days, Mass was celebrated in the Chapel of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary alongside the convent. On March 1, Father Camacho welcomed the SCLs at the Mass in the Chapel.

Just before retreat, the sisters of Santa Rosa brought popcorn and refreshments as a sort of farewell party for Sister Ruth, who had lived at Santa Rosa the year before, and to celebrate the "readiness" of the new house. Although the sisters had planned to make retreat in Jimbe again, by March 2 they realized the unreality of trying to do this, for the rains were continuing and the Pan-American Highway was impassable at various points. Discussing the situation, the eleven sisters in Piura decided to make the best of it and creatively manage in Piura.

Thus the sisters began their "improvised retreat" the evening of March 5, using the house at Lopez Albujar for the prayers and conferences. They took turns giving the conferences and suggesting readings from the Bible and the SCL Constitution. Various generous priests offered Mass in the Chapel of the Sacred Hearts, and all were surprised at how well things worked together. Agustina Berru, the cook at Santa Rosa, and her daughter prepared the noon meal in Santa Rosa and brought it by mototaxi to serve in Lopez Albujar. Five sisters stayed at Lopez Albujar at night and six at
Santa Rosa, including Sister Ann Barton, who had come from the United States for retreat and a visit.

On finishing the retreat, the eleven sisters present in Piura began a pre-Chapter Community meeting at Santa Rosa. Since they desired a bit more space and also a large screen for viewing videos that Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani had sent, they went to the Jesuit high school for the second day of meetings. The final day, they discussed topics more directly related to the Community in Peru, such as the use of funds Sister Mary Kathleen had given each house for helping flood victims, social justice issues, and vocation promotion.

The next morning, Sisters Ruth, Elena, and Ann Barton set out for Catacaos to make some purchases, crossing over the Bolognesi Bridge just an hour before it collapsed into the river. How the sisters counted their blessings and gratefully proclaimed protection of Divine Providence even while mourning the unknown number of people who were swept away by the floodwaters!

That same day, Sister Susana Cordova, Director of Junior Sisters, met with the three under temporary vows, Sisters Julia Huiman, Liduvina Dominguez, and Lourdes Abad, as she would several other times during the year. The following week, Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes renewed their temporary vows for one year at Santa Rosa Convent in Piura, Father Jose Jirones of Chulucanas celebrating Mass for the occasion.

Since no postulants or novices would be living in the house in Lopez Albujar the first year, the three professed sisters (Ruth, Clorinda, and Liduvina) soon began to make plans for their life together as well as for their individual and communal ministries. They planned to join the people of the area in their worship and activities at the Chapel of the Sacred Hearts. Both Sisters Clorinda and Liduvina decided to participate in the Catequesis Familiar program, Sister Clorinda with the guide couples, Sister Liduvina with the young animators.

Besides frequent visits and shared celebrations with the sisters at Santa Rosa, they would maintain and even build upon the friendly relations they already had with other priests and religious in the city, both visiting them and welcoming their visits.

In particular, they agreed that they would welcome young women into their home for Holy Hours and visiting and even for more prolonged experiences. Their first attempt in mid-April proved a little disappointing in that only one of the three girls expected actually arrived. However, Isabel Sandoval proved truly interested and entered the Community the following year. The sisters continued to invite young women to “come and see.”

By the end of their first year in Lopez Albujar, three young women from the Talara area lived with them while participating in a summer school
program sponsored by the Community. Others from Piura joined in this project, spending more time at the convent during weekends; afterwards, some of these continued to visit the sisters regularly, even helping clean house and tend the garden. Meanwhile, the sisters also collaborated in giving afternoons of reflection in Santa Rosa, in lower Piura, or in their own house.

On an individual level, Sister Clorinda continued her work with the inter-congregational formation group, even helping to teach a course on Human Relations with Sister Marie Elena, a Mercy Sister. At the same time, she continued to serve on both the vocation and formation committees of the Community. She also visited Deidy Abad, who was having a year of mission work in Chalaco as a second year postulant.

Sister Liduvina attended classes in the academy sponsored by Confer and worked as a teacher’s assistant at the Faith and Joy School sponsored by the Teachers of Catholic Education in the settlement of Michaela Bastidas in western Piura.

Sister Ruth continued accompanying the Eucharistic ministers in Santa Rosa parish and also spent three mornings at Casa Nazaret, a day program for senior citizens on the western side of Piura. As the year advanced, she became more and more involved in coordinating the visits of the Family Practice doctors who were coming to Peru with a program of Saint Joseph Hospital, Denver, Colorado. This volunteer service to the poor was organized and directed by Dr. Ann Schumacher, an SCL at Saint Joseph Hospital.

During the continuing rains, the dirt street in front of their house turned into a muddy river at times, making it difficult to get in or out of their front door. Sometimes the waters even moved into the house and the sewer system backed up. Their good friend, Señor Jose Cordova, who acted as sort of pastor of the Chapel of the Sacred Hearts and director of Catequesis Familiar, also came to their aid whenever there were inundations. He also proved their mentor as to the realities of this sector of Fatima and Lopez Albujar that constituted their new parish.

Due to the moisture and perhaps aided by the garden in the center of the house, the new convent suffered from the presence of many crickets and insects. On one visit, Sister Trini dubbed it a “zoological house” because of the number of bugs she counted. Not only that, but given the type of open roof construction, they soon realized that they had other unwanted “company” and obtained a cat. Some visitors found the kitten too friendly, though, since it was wont to jump into one’s lap quite unexpectedly or rub up against one’s legs.

The sisters and the people who received assistance were very appreciative of the aid of their benefactors. In a letter to some of these
donors in the United States, the sisters explained how they used such money to help buy school supplies for the very needy and even to matriculate them. They also told how they had been able to help buy needed medicines and contribute toward burying the dead. One family was so appreciative of the help they received from one of the schools in the United States that they came to help the sisters clean their house every weekend.

In June 1998, all three sisters (Ruth, Clorinda, and Liduvina) left for the Chapter meetings in the United States. During their absence, they arranged for two señoritas to stay in the house every night. Since it was not now their first trip to Kansas, Sisters Liduvina and Clorinda felt more at home and welcomed the opportunity to greet sister-friends formed over the last few years. They were also much more ready to enter into the work of the Chapter and the Community celebrations, such as the dedication of the memorial plaque placed at “the Landing” on the Missouri River where the first Sisters of Charity had disembarked in Leavenworth in 1858.

After the Chapter meetings, Sisters Ruth and Clorinda stayed over in the States to visit and to be present for the Golden Jubilees of Sisters Ruth Barron, Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer, Marie de Paul Combo, and other members of their Jubilee group. Sister Liduvina, however, returned home with the first group of Peruvians to depart; Deidy and Sister Lourdes stayed with her at Lopez Albujar until Sister Clorinda returned the following week.

As a part of her ongoing formation, Sister Liduvina attended three or four weekend workshops planned for religious under temporary vows by the Conferences of Religious of Piura and Chulucanas. On at least one occasion, Sister Ruth went with her for the presentation on “Enculturation.” The two of them also began classes in computers at the “Prolabor” workshop of the parish, but after three classes, Sister Ruth quit in frustration. The following summer, Sister Liduvina attended a special class for the young professed sisters in Lima.

The sisters also enjoyed various outings together, sometimes going to the Kurt Beer Park or the cemetery “Campo de Paz,” which had verdant lawns and gardens. At other times, they went to Yacila or other places near the sea, taking along picnic lunches. They sometimes even made their monthly retreats in these areas.

When given the opportunity, they participated in musical programs, especially folkloric ones, and attended showings of one kind or the other. Of course, they also joined in various religious celebrations. They helped the Jesuits celebrate their forty years in Piura and Archbishop Cantuarias celebrate his twenty-five years there; they participated in various vow day celebrations of other Communities, as well as ordinations to the priesthood. At times, the sisters also engaged in some civic protests, such as the march
demanding that the government repair the bridges, streets, and sewage system that had been badly damaged by the torrential rains.

As time passed, the sisters discovered robberies of furniture from the front part of the house, both from a classroom and from what initially was meant to be a garage. The robbers apparently entered by climbing over the high brick wall in front of the house. The sisters reported the robberies to the police, but to no avail. Later on, Sister Ruth found that some of the plants, some pieces of wood, and clotheslines had been taken from the patio area inside.

Throughout the years, the sisters of Lopez Albujar and Santa Rosa frequently joined together for birthday and Community celebrations as well as less formal occasions. Of course, the sisters were present for Community meetings. In September 1998 Father Jose Luis, a Carmelite from Lima, talked with them about the advantages of forming communal projects each year which took into consideration each individual's plans. He indicated how enriching such planning together would be as they came to know one another better and learned to share their feelings and sentiments.

Besides weekly preparations and the workshops for Catequesis Familiar, both Sisters Clorinda and Liduvina took part in other events. Sister Liduvina accompanied eighteen young people to Yamango for an outing after making sure they had raised their own transportation costs. Sister Clorinda helped give a workshop for eighty young people in the Confirmation program at Santa Rosa. Sisters Ruth and Clorinda likewise attended a weeklong course on the Apocalypse with eighteen laypersons, whose enrollment had been paid thanks to a donation from the United States. And Sister Liduvina helped give a course in evangelization in the school where she was a teacher's assistant.

Believing that an important role was the development of lay leaders, Sister Ruth accompanied three women from the parish to a workshop on medicines available through Pro Vida and the making of natural medicines. What was even better was that the workshop was given by two Health Promoters from Negritos sponsored by the Office of Health Pastoral. She also took part in another health course in Santa Rosa with three women from Fatima. At another time, she and Sister Clorinda took the Eucharistic ministers from Santa Rosa to a retreat about the Holy Spirit conducted at Parkinsonia, a Dominican meeting and retreat area northeast of Sullana. Sister Clorinda later returned there with Deidy for a retreat of young people in formation; this was sponsored by Confer and directed by Sister Elena.

On occasion, the sisters at Lopez Albujar invited a priest to celebrate Eucharist in the house. One such time was when they had invited the sisters from Santa Rosa to help celebrate Thanksgiving Day. Father Walter, CSSR, offered the Mass and stayed to dinner. At another time, Father
Camacho celebrated the Eucharist for all of the SCLs gathered in Lopez Albujar the night before meetings in Santa Rosa.

Planning for the vacation school project of January 1999 involved several meetings with the Sisters of Santa Rosa and some of the girls who were going to participate, as well as with Señora Socorro, director of Casa Nazaret. For they planned to use part of the second floor of that structure for half the children and Guardian Angel School, which was under parish sponsorship, for the rest of the children.

Fortunately, they were able to engage the services of Jose Cordova and Ana Medina to help the “teachers” prepare their classes. Although the summer classes terminated at the end of January, four of the young women who had been involved continued helping the sisters until the end of February. Even afterward, they continued assisting at the weekly Holy Hour for some time.

During their first summer in Lopez Albujar, the sisters had visitors from both within and outside the country. Sister Susana brought a young woman from Chalaco, and both Sisters Ann Schumacher and Janet Cashman came during these months.

Sister Ruth took Sister Ann, the coordinator of the new volunteer program of Saint Joseph Hospital’s Family Practice Program, to visit with the doctor in charge of the regional hospital in Piura; then they visited various public medical clinics in and around Piura, Sullana, and Talara. They also went to Paita and some of its outposts, as well as Tambogrande, Malingas, and Chulucanas; there Sister Ann was introduced to the Health Program sponsored by the diocese.

Later, Sisters Elena and Ruth went to visit with the new director of MINSA (Minister of Health Hospital). Although the Minister was not there, his assistant, Dr. Feliz Sandoval, promised to help with the integral health program of the doctors who would be coming from Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver.

When Sister Ruth returned from meeting Sister Ann in Lima, she brought back a statue of Saint Rose of Lima; from a visit to Talara, she carried an image of Saint Martin de Porres, both for the chapel in Lopez Albujar. Subsequently, an original sculpture by Max Ingas, a very well-known paraplegic artist of La Encantada, was added. This Virgin of Evangelization is a remarkable Peruvian likeness of the statue of Mater Admirabilis found in the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. It is doubtful that the artist had ever seen the Roman painting or its statue replicas, but several sisters quickly made the association.

While Sister Janet was visiting, Sister Ruth renewed acquaintances with old friends from her days in the Diocesan Health Office. Many from the Health Pastoral gathered for a dinner in honor of Sister Janet and a
Dominican sister who had been in charge of the office after Sister Ruth and Sister Janet left. The Dominican was also visiting at that time.

Following the summer school, Sister Clorinda went to Lima to assist in two courses. In “The Challenges of the Religious Life in this Time of Change,” Father Simon Pedro, noted Benedictine author, offered many insights. Barbara Bucker, a Mercedarian of Charity from Brazil, presented “Theology of the Religious Life.” She especially welcomed the opportunity for interchange with other religious in formation work.

During February, Sister Liduvina moved to Talara and Sister Clorinda prepared for her new assignment in Chalaco. Sister Susana moved into Lopez Albujar, and shortly thereafter, Sister Laura Rumiche arrived after finishing her program as a technical nurse. Within the week, Deidy joined them after her vacation. In early March, the community traveled to Moche for the retreat given by Father Joseph Guerricagottia, Carmelite; he emphasized the development of personal projects for the year.

As she had done at other times, Sister Ruth stayed at the house of the Franciscans in Bello Horizonte while the professed members of that Community were in the United States for their Chapter. However, she maintained her own schedule during the day, going to their house only for the nights.

At the end of March 1999, Deidy was received as a Canonical novice; the next day, her sister Lourdes, as well as Sisters Liduvina and Julia Huiman, renewed their vows. The rest of the SCLs also renewed their vows that day in Santa Rosa of Piura. Isabel Sandoval was welcomed as a postulant on April 3. Thus the house at Lopez Albujar would be a house of formation during 1999 as it had been intended to be.

In their first months together, the sisters undertook a number of trips and various communal activities. Very early, they welcomed Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Ann Barton, who had come to visit after touring Cuzco and Machu Picchu. After helping entertain the sisters from Santa Rosa for Easter dinner, only Sister Laura left for Trujillo to take one last exam. By the end of April, the sisters celebrated with her the end of three years of hard work; they likewise lent her their encouragement as she began working in the Diocesan Office of Health, even though it would mean absenting herself regularly for visits to Tumbes and other places.

Continuing the precedent of communal outings, on May 1 they all went to visit La Encantada, site of much artisan ceramic work. Later in the year, they visited Querecotilla and the shrine to “El Señor de Chocan” and went on to Lancones and the reservoir of Poechos. Yet another time, they explored the archaeological ruins and museum at Narahuala. In October, they visited the valley of San Lorenzo, famous fruit-growing sector. While on their way to visit Pueblo de Colán, they got lost and even
got stuck in a sandy area. Fortunately for them, a farmer befriended them and helped them on their way. But they did not always go a distance; sometimes they visited places in and around Piura.

Given the noise which enveloped their convent, especially on weekends, due to the playing field on one side of the house and loud music emanating from houses in front of them, it is not surprising that the sisters followed the previous group’s practice of “going abroad” for their monthly days of retreat. They, too, went to Kurt Beer Park; to Bosconia, the site of a Salesian school and shops; and to Rio Sol, where they enjoyed the lawn and flowers alongside the river.

Since the Lopez Albu jar convent was properly a house of formation with a postulant, Isabel Sandoval, and a canonical novice, Sister Deidy Abad, in residence, the sisters did not plan any live-in experiences. But Isabel and Sister Deidy did accompany Sister Laura to the Center of Formation in Chulucanas to share something of the SCL Community history and charism with the young women there. Later, Sister Deidy and sometimes Sister Laura went with Sister Catherine Nichol to La Union in Lower Piura for days of reflection with students.

At the end of May, Sisters Ruth and Laura attended the regional meeting of Confer held in Paita, which had “Religious Life and Human Rights” as its principal theme. They also participated in the forum organized by the Health Pastoral the first week of June. And everyone joined in the celebration of Corpus Christi, both in the Chapel of the Sacred Hearts alongside the house and in the Cathedral in the afternoon, taking part in the procession with the Blessed Sacrament through the streets to the church of that name. Sisters Susana and Deidy and the postulant, Isabel, also attended the tenth anniversary celebration of the local seminary, Saint John Vianny.

Because of the frail health of her father, Sister Susana availed herself of several opportunities to visit him in their mountain village during the year. She also readily journeyed to Silahuá and Tamboya to help the Chalaco sisters with some of their programs for the School for Women. Later, following her trip to the United States for “Bonfire Days,” she made a special trip to Chalaco to share her experiences with the sisters.

Working more and more integrally with other formation personnel from in and around Piura, Sister Susana not only actively participated in the monthly meetings with them but served as the treasurer for the group; she also accompanied the chairperson, Sister Jean Morrissey, Franciscan, in looking for sites and visiting bishops about proposed courses. With Sister Deidy, she attended workshops during the year and went with her to the Discernment Retreat given by Sister Elena later at Parkinsonia.
Earlier in June, much to the delight of some, the sisters received another small cat, the first one having escaped or died. Indeed, some considered this and later cats to be like members of the community. They seemed to be present wherever the sisters were, including the kitchen, dining room, and chapel.

All the SCLs in Peru, as well as Sisters Sue Miller, Community Director, and Marianna Bauder, Councilor, joined the sisters in Lopez Albujar for a pre-Fourth of July picnic-style supper, music, and dancing. A local folkloric group also performed for their guests. During the course of the evening, they welcomed Sister Irene Skeehan, who had just arrived from the States. The next day, they and the rest of the sisters participated in Sister Irene’s presentation on “The Sabbath” and the meeting that Sisters Sue and Marianna led at Santa Rosa.

Throughout the course of the year, all the sisters had many opportunities to expand their knowledge and personal growth. In mid-year, Sister Susana participated in the Theology Week sponsored by the Diocesan Catholic Office of Education at Lourdes High School. Sister Ruth attended a course in reflexology taught at Santa Rosa by Sisters Maria Orozco and Laura Rumiche at the same time. During her mid-term break, Isabel took part in a workshop on the new focus for a “National Plan of Capacitating Teachers.”

In August, Sisters Laura and Julia went to Lima for a special course on AIDS and later shared some of the information with the rest of the sisters in a general meeting. The week following her return from Lima, Sister Laura was in Chulucanas at Villa Nazaret for the Regional Meeting of the Health Pastoral. She and Maria Piza, a Sister of Charity of Mallorca, with whom she worked in the Health Office, were in charge. The following month, the two of them traveled to Chalaco and then on to Choco at the invitation of Sister Julia; there they gave a presentation on health to the women who had gathered. At the end of the month, a young doctor working with the Daughters of Charity in Guatemala arrived to help with a special program for the Health Promoters. As a result of this encounter, Sisters Maria Orozco and Laura were invited to spend a week on site at the doctor’s mission in Guatemala.

Sister Laura also attended some classes to better prepare her to help those with heart problems. In November, she attended a course in Paita sponsored by Pro Vida. Besides health-related courses, Sisters Laura and Maria Piza went to Lima for a workshop on the external debt and its effects on the country.

As a result of some changes in the clergy of the area, for the first time the sisters were invited to participate in the Vicariate meeting at Santa Rosa. They welcomed this opportunity of inserting themselves in the local Church and perceived it as a sign that perhaps it was more ready to
recognize the role of religious in the Church. This belief was strengthened when representatives of Confer were asked, for the first time, to give a presentation about their activities at the following meeting of Confer-Clero.

As indicated earlier, Sister Ruth Reischman gave many hours weekly to accompanying the elderly at Casa Nazaret in Piura. When they took outings, as to Rio Seco, she went with them, too. So it was only appropriate, although still a surprise, when the elderly showed her their appreciation by giving her a birthday party and program.

At the end of October, the sisters welcomed two girls from Talara to spend the night before beginning a weekend retreat with twelve other young women interested in the religious life. One of the two was Sister Laura’s niece Karina. The following day, they united with the others, with Sister Laura and other members of the SCL vocation committee who were sponsoring the weekend at Kurt Beer Park.

Sister Ruth continued working with the Family Practice project of Saint Joseph Hospital, greeting Dr. Julia and accompanying her to Talara. Later, Dr. Monica stayed at Lopez Albajar for several days before going to live with Dr. Mary Chumacero. She also attended the Theological Week sponsored by the Diocesan Catholic Office of Education and was grateful for the companionship of Sister Deidy and Isabel in these evening sessions. Together they also enjoyed the talent show presented at the Club Grau.

In mid-November, the sisters grieved with Sister Ruth at the news of the approaching death of her brother in Texas. They sent her on her way with many prayers; on hearing of his death, they called her to extend their condolences.

Just after this, Sisters Susana, Laura, and Deidy learned that Isabel Sandoval had decided not to continue in the formation program. The three remaining sisters celebrated Christmas Eve with a family of the parish and then went to Santa Rosa for Christmas dinner. On the twenty-eighth, they welcomed Sister Ruth home and just two days later joined with the whole Community for meetings at Santa Rosa.

Again in the summer of 2000, Lopez Albajar provided an experience for some young women interested in the religious life. Three señoritas from Talara Alta came to live with the sisters and work with Sister Deidy in summer classes in Nueva Esperanza, where they taught and tutored some twenty-five children. During their stay, they shared community life and also went on several outings with the sisters. Six other young women from the parish also worked in the summer program, but they lived in their own homes. To conclude the experience, the nine girls were invited to a sharing of their adventures and some food at the convent. The following day, Sisters Elena and Trini directed a retreat for them, using the Chapel of the Sacred Hearts and the library. After the girls had left, since Sisters
Esther and Clorinda had arrived from Chalaco following their summer school there, the sisters from Lopez Albujar joined them for a party in Santa Rosa and a mutual sharing.

In January 2000, with money procured by Sister Ann Barton from the Hackett Foundation, Sisters Elena and Ruth purchased a computer for the formation house. To provide more security, the sisters had new padlocks put on the kitchen and dining room doors. In February, Sister Deidy took some accelerated classes in computer science. She and Sister Ruth also relaxed while learning some new handiwork skills. They all welcomed the company of Sister Regina Deitchman, who stayed with them for a month before returning to Chalaco.

During February, Sisters Ruth, Susana, and Deidy all went to classes sponsored by Confer in Lima. When Sister Lourdes Abad returned from her summer studies at Champagnat University, she was welcomed into the Lopez Albujar community. Her university assignments were now more demanding, and she had been freed part-time for this work. Nevertheless, she would teach part-time at the high school Miguel Grau in Santa Julia. Meanwhile, Sister Laura had requested a change and had gone to live at Santa Rosa.

Once again the sisters journeyed to Jimbe for a communal retreat, this time directed by Walter Crespo, Vincentian from Chiclayo. Just two weeks later, Sister Lourdes renewed her vows at Santa Rosa Convent, together with Sisters Julia and Liduvina.

Very soon the courses and work of the school year began. First Sister Lourdes went to Sullana for a course given by ODEC (Office of Catholic Education). Then she went on to Parkinsonia for the first of the Confer workshops for young sisters. Sisters Deidy and Susana joined her for another workshop there on developing critical consciousness.

Sister Ruth resumed her work as usual in Casa Nazaret and with the Saint Joseph Hospital project. She also took part in a retreat for the Health Pastoral, accompanying a woman from Lopez Albujar. When Dr. Ann Schumacher arrived, she and Sister Elena again went with her to see the Director of Health for Piura.

On April 18, Sister Susana journeyed to Talara with Sister Deidy, who would begin living and working there during this, her second year as a novice. Sister Deidy, while still taking part in weekly classes in Piura, would work with underachieving students in one of the schools in San Pedro and also serve as an animator in the Catequesis Familiar program at Santa Rosa parish.

A couple of days later, Sisters Susana and Lourdes went to Chulucanas to receive the paintings of Saint Vincent, Saint Louise de Marillac, and Mother Xavier that Sister Susana had commissioned a local artist to do. They and
others were well satisfied with this representation of the three SCL founders, watched over and guarded by the three members of the Blessed Trinity.

Father Luciano and three seminarians came to relax and enjoy some refreshments in the convent following Holy Saturday services in the Chapel of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Two señoritas and their mother from the sierra also joined them since they were staying with the sisters several days before entering the Center of Formation in Chulucanas.

In May, Sister Susana journeyed to the United States with Sisters Elena and Esther. She had been asked to be present for the meetings of the ongoing formation committee and for “Bonfire Days.”

At the end of June, members of the house took their longest trip together to date, to Jaen, nine hours distant from Piura. They also went a bit farther to visit Bagua Grande. In August, the three went with Sister Elena to the Eucharistic Congress in Tumbes but also took time to visit the smaller villages of Corrales, Zaramilla, and Zorritos while they stayed with the Sisters of Saint Ann in Corrales.

On the first weekend in July, Sister Ruth attended the workshop on accompanying terminal patients given by Father Cesar Rivera from Lima. While Sister Lourdes attended the whole week of the theology presentations sponsored by ODEC, Sisters Susana and Ruth participated several nights.

With Sister Deidy in Talara, the house was again without postulants or novices, so community members had more time to give to vocation promotion. In June, they invited young women for an afternoon of reflection in the convent. The following month, Sisters Lourdes and Susana went to La Arena to make their presentation to some young women. In September, Sister Susana visited with a group in Santa Julia, while later that month Sister Lourdes went with Sister Liduvina to Santiago, a village belonging to the parish of Santo Domingo where Liduvina had attended high school.

In mid-July, Sisters Ruth, Susana, and Lourdes went to La Arena to make plans for a workshop for 120 Confirmation students at the end of the month. Sister Lourdes also gave a weekend workshop to first-year students in her high school, although many of her weekends were filled with workshops for professors given by ODEC.

Sister Susana joined Sister Jean Morrissey, OFM, and Father Juan Noboa, SJ, in planning courses for Confer, as well as participating in the monthly meetings of the formation committee of the Community and of Confer. Sister Lourdes helped plan activities and the workshops for use by other members of the SCL Community since she was not only representative but also chairperson of the vocation committee this year.

As usual, there were various comings and goings, and as always, the sisters welcomed the visit of some of the Councilors of the Community, this time Sisters Barbara Aldrich and Rita McGinnis.
For some time, there had been difficulties with the pastor with regard
to work in the parish. So Sister Elena was not surprised to hear, on August
23, 2000, the suggestion that the Sisters of Charity look for another house,
hopefully in Lower Piura. There were no sisters living in the Catacaos
Deanery, which consisted of a number of villages. Sisters Ruth, Julia
Huiman, and Maria Orozco had earlier done catechetical work there while
living at Santa Rosa, and Sister Elena had always wanted a house there
with the rural poor.

The following week, therefore, Sisters Elena and Susana visited Father
Luis Arrasco, vicar of the Catacaos deanery. He, in turn, consulted with
the Archbishop, who suggested La Arena as a site. His thought was that
the sisters might use the parish house since there was no resident pastor.
After looking at the house, however, the sisters decided to look for another
habitation that might better serve their needs.

In September, the sisters visited the Sisters of Charity of Mallorca in
Bellavista, Lower Piura. One of their objectives was to see how that
Community had constructed their house in this very hot desert area. On
their way back to Piura, they stopped off in La Arena. As Providence would
have it, they discovered a two-story house for rent, which they believed
would be quite adequate as a house of formation. Three days later, Sister
Elena went with Sister Susana to see it.

At the Community meeting in Sullana that week, the sisters were told
about the possibilities, although authorization had not yet been given by
Sister Sue Miller and her Council. Nevertheless, confident of the approval,
the sisters began to pack for yet another move. Sister Ruth was becoming
quite an expert as this was the fourth time in less than ten years that she
had moved in or out of a new Community house!

Fortunately for Sister Ruth, she had made arrangements with Señora
Eva Boyle and her husband, Jose Aguedo, to give hospitality to Dr. Kelly
O'Keefe, a volunteer medic from the United States. Dr. Jorge Calderon,
chief of the Health Ministry, and Dr. Mary Chumacero of the clinic in
Urbanization San Jose, Piura, where Dr. O'Keefe would be working, also
extended a warm welcome to her. Thus Sister Ruth was a little freer to
attend to preparations for moving.

But the sisters were in no great hurry to move and continued with
their regular activities. That was fortunate, as Sister Irene Skeehan had
come to give a presentation on "Woman in the New Millennium" to the
members of Confer and, a week later, a weekend theological workshop
for the Sisters of Charity. On the Sunday after Confer, Sisters Ruth, Susana,
and Lourdes went to Mass in La Arena and then found an open space in
the countryside where they could make their monthly retreat.
On October 17, the move finally took place. A truck hired from EMAUS (a group which collects, restores, and sells used articles) made two trips from Lopez Albujar to La Arena. The community pickup also made various trips carrying lighter articles. The next day, Sister Elena brought the "unpackers" a hot meal at noon and helped them settle things in their places. Surprisingly, the telephone company actually came to install their new telephone in just three days.

Things were enough in order that Sisters Susana and Lourdes left for a workshop in Chulucanas just two days after the move. And fortunate that was, as all 120 participants agreed that Father Kevin Flaherty, SJ, gave a most helpful, if compressed, course in "Affective Maturity and the Celibate."

Sister Lourdes continued teaching at the high school Miguel Grau in Santa Julia for the rest of the academic year, which ended in December. At that time, she was very happy to be re-assigned to teach religion in Las Malvinas and Loma Negra for the following year. These schools were nearer to La Arena.

At first, Father Luis Arrasco headed the pastoral team that served several of the parishes out of Catacaos. Both he and Father Manuel Castro, who regularly had Mass in La Arena, visited the sisters and gladly accepted invitations to dinner. In fact, he frequently came by after Saturday night Mass and joined in some refreshments and cards.

Father Arrasco invited the sisters to attend the Vicariate meeting in Catacaos along with the three priests and two sisters of Bellavista. When Father Arrasco went to Spain to study, Father Pedro Chully assumed leadership of the team and continued to maintain good relations with the sisters.

During their first years in La Arena, a succession of priests served in the parish. At one time Father Carlos Coronado was assigned as a resident priest, but his mission there lasted only two weeks. The sisters admired the people who held on to their faith and carried on without stable leadership.

Members of the parish came to visit soon after the sisters had moved in. Within the first two weeks, a group representing Catequesis Familiar had visited with Sister Susana. Sister Ruth soon became involved with the women's chorus, playing the organ for the Saturday evening Mass. Besides joining the liturgy group in the parish, she also began taking the Eucharist to shut-ins, inviting some young women to accompany her. Later, she invited Sister Elena to give a retreat for the nine people who were training to be Eucharistic ministers and the three who already were.

Before leaving Lopez Albujar, Sister Ruth had resigned her ministry with the Eucharistic ministers of Santa Rosa. On hearing that she was leaving, they asked her to return at least once a year for input. So she
invited them to La Arena for the above retreat; they were delighted and came together in a van.

After moving to La Arena, Sister Ruth also limited her trips to Casa Nazaret to once a week, but she joined these elderly friends in an outing to Paita later in October and to a dinner provided by a friend in Cristo Rey in Piura. On the days she worked at Casa Nazaret, Sister Ruth usually had dinner with the sisters at Santa Rosa.

Since there was no daily Mass in La Arena, Sister Ruth frequently went to Piura to assist at Mass. Afterwards, she often shopped at the Piura market and took care of other necessities for the house. When Nor Bank declared bankruptcy and went into receivership, it was she who struggled to secure a release of their funds and to find a place to cash their checks.

Sister Susana continued her work with the formation personnel group, attending the monthly meetings and at times participating in the retreats. She also went to meetings of those working in formation in Trujillo and in Lima; while there, she took a course on Leadership. Toward the end of 2000, Sister Susana traveled to Huarmaca with Sister Elena, staying with the Franciscan priests there. A principal objective was to visit "on site" Liliana Morante, a former postulant, who was teaching in one of the remote villages of that mountainous area but still professed a desire to reenter the Community.

On January 3, 2001, Sisters Susana and Deidy accompanied seven young women from the coast to Chalaco, where they all worked in a religion vacation school for a month.

Upon the entrance of Rosa Guevara and Cinthya Auza into the Community on March 24, 2001, Sister Susana again had to prepare classes "in house" as well as accompany the two young women to Confer classes in Piura. Besides these classes, which were directed more specifically to religious life, Rosa and Cinthya also attended an Academy sponsored by Confer in Chulucanas each week to help them improve their basic skills. Sister Ruth helped by giving them classes in English.

Rosa helped Sister Susana with preparation for First Communion in Loma Negra, Casa Grande, Santa Elena, and La Arena. Cinthya aided Sister Lourdes in those same places with the program for Confirmation. Besides these activities, they both helped Sister Laura Rumiche one day a week with reflexology at Santa Rosa.

Once again, the sisters began having afternoons of reflection for young women in La Arena itself. Usually the group was very small, sometimes only two coming, at other times a few more. The sisters therefore took turns, two each being responsible each month. The two others went out into the country and worked with girls who were helping in the First Communion classes. Sister Susana and Rosa also took part in a Vocation Fair offered in Sullana for high school students. In addition, Sister Susana
gave a workshop on “Values” for 108 Confirmation youths. At the invitation of a long-time friend and co-worker, Hermelinda, Sister Susana also gave a presentation for her high school class on “The Commandment of Love.”

The sisters continued their monthly outings, at first exploring many places in Lower Piura and later returning to Paita, Colan, Yacila, and Poechos. Sisters Ruth and Lourdes joined Sister Deidy and others from the Confer classes in a trip to Lambayeque to see the archaeological site and museum of Señor de Sipan. Their festivities with the sisters of Santa Rosa also continued, especially for birthdays and Christmas. Now celebrations of the birthdays of vicariate personnel were added.

On May 27, Sister Ruth left for the United States to celebrate her Golden Jubilee as an SCL and to enjoy her home visit. Even while there, though, she did not stray from formation, for she accompanied Sister Mary Rachel Flynn and the two North American novices, Melissa Camardo and Elizabeth Adams, on a “Joanna Brunner Pilgrimage,” visiting sites in Wyoming and Montana where the pioneer SCLs lived and worked.

In July, Sister Lourdes also went to the United States for the all-Community inter-Chapter meeting in Leavenworth. On her return, she told Sister Susana, “I felt a greater identification with the spirit of the congregation and understood better the different ministries and the charism that the sisters try to share. I also felt that we are one family with one heart, open and welcoming especially to the women who had formerly been Sisters of Charity. Nevertheless the Community is composed of two different cultures, one North American and the other Latin American and that it depends on us Peruvian sisters to respond to the challenges within our culture, which is a very different reality and with very different needs. I believe that the Peruvian sisters have a great responsibility ‘to continue the charism given by Saint Vincent and Mother Xavier’ here in Peru as Peruvian women identified with our own culture. The whole experience was very enriching and very challenging.”

Having finished the aspirancy program in Chalaco, Jesus Ramos joined Rosa Guevara and Cinthya Auza as a postulant on Founders’ Day, November 11, 2001.

The year 2001 was special in that the SCL Community in Peru came together on three occasions dedicated to the theme of Reconciliation. Based on a call to personal and communal prayer and reflection during the early part of the year, they were further challenged by the presentations of Father Andres Gallegos on “Sin and Reconciliation” in September, Sister Dora Vasquez’s brief course on “Human Relations,” and a New Year’s Eve sharing and prayer together.

During the early months of 2002, Sister Lourdes continued her university studies at Champagnat in Lima, and the three postulants
undertook classes at ESER in Piura. They also continued to help Sister Laura in her reflexology center once a week. In March, all traveled to Jimbe, in the mountains east of Chimbote, to make a retreat.

On March 12, various SCLs met at Santa Rosa, Piura, to share ideas and experiences from their summer course work and retreats. When Sister Lourdes renewed her vows on March 25, she did so at the Mass in the La Arena Convent. As Sister Elena was in the United States at this time, Sister Susana received Sister Lourdes’ vows.

Besides her work with the postulants, Sister Susana helped the parent guides for First Communion and helped Rosa and Cinthya with their sacramental preparation programs. Sister Lourdes continued teaching religion at the high school in Las Malvinas. Sister Ruth worked one day a week with the senior citizen program in Piura; she also worked with the womens’ choir and liturgy committee in the parish. In addition, she took Communion to the sick and shut-ins.

In April, Sister Susana and the three postulants took clothing donated by a group in Lima to some of the families in a village near them that had been ravaged by heavy rains and the flooding of a river.

Throughout the year, the sisters planned retreats and outings together. They likewise continued inviting young women in for afternoons of reflection.

Sister Susana continued to participate in the monthly meetings of directors of formation for the various Communities in and around Piura. This interchange and mutual support helps raise the spirits of these women, who are often the only ones in their Communities carrying out such work. Sister Susana’s sharing with other SCLs in the formation and vocation committees also fortifies her.

In June, Sisters Mary Lou Mendel and Sharon Smith, SCLs, plus their two sisters, came for a short visit. Sister Susana took them to see the two high schools where Sisters Trini Orozco and Lourdes were teaching. She also took them to see some of the surrounding villages where she and the postulants were teaching.

During August, the sisters had the opportunity to attend several very interesting presentations. Sister Lourdes attended the annual Theological Week in Piura sponsored by ODEC, and Sister Susana attended the monthly meeting of Confer, which focused on “The Place of Women in the Church.” The vicariate meeting addressed the issue of making liturgies more meaningful in the parishes. Sister Susana also made a three-day Confer retreat in Chulucanas. At about the same time, Sister Ruth and Jesus Ramos attended an excellent workshop on accompanying Aids patients.

Sister Ruth began working with some ladies of the parish in the hope that some of their artisan craftware might find a market in the United States.
When Sisters Sue Miller, Katherine Franchett, and Ann Barton arrived on November 3, they not only took care of Community business, but they enjoyed a presentation of some typical dances that Sister Lourdes had arranged for. Before returning to Piura, all the sisters visited Catacaos, where the North Americans bought gifts to take home for Christmas.

When Jesus Ramos went with the Confer sisters in formation for an end-of-year outing on November 23, they visited several historical spots, including the Church of St. Luke, the oldest church in Peru, founded by Pizarro and his soldiers in the seventeenth century.

December was filled with many celebrations, beginning with the Confirmation of 216 young people from in and around La Arena. Then there were First Communions in the country villages and the town. Then on December 12, Jesus Ramos was received as a novice.

Although both Cinthya Auza and Rosa Guevara left the formation program in 2002 and Jesus Ramos in 2003, shortly before her canonical year as a novice ended, the community of La Arena continues to "look forward to the good that is yet to be," as Mother Xavier Ross directed all her daughters to do.

Chapter XIII Notes

1 Just as there is a "day of the teachers," there is "a day of the prisoners" in Peru.
2 Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer to Stefani, September 25, 1992, A/SCL.
3 As noted earlier, voting is considered a serious obligation in Peru, and those who do not vote are subject to fines and cannot carry on other legal acts until such fines were paid.
4 Sister Janet Cashman to Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, December 4, 1993, A/SCL.
5 The conditions were that first they have a preferential option for the poor; that they accept and promote liberation theology and evangelization (Father is a close personal friend of Gustavo Gutierrez, Father of Liberation Theology); that they authentically and integrally promote all human beings; and that they not be charismatic or introduce charismatic forms and attitudes in parish celebrations or groups.
7 Fe y Alegria (Faith and Joy) schools have been founded by Jesuits in poor and marginalized areas throughout Latin America. It is estimated that more than a half million students have been served, who otherwise would not have received an education.
8 Pro Vida is a Catholic, non-profit institution that provides medicines at very low prices, usually about half of pharmacy cost.
9 Sister Lourdes Abad, quoted in "La Arena House History," July 16, 2001, A/SCL.
Scarcely a year after the first Sisters of Charity reached Talara, insistent requests began arriving in Leavenworth for a contingent of SCLs to help in the North Yungas of Bolivia. In 1963 the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese had sent a group of their priests to work in that poorest of all countries in South America. Monsignor Robert E. Walton had worked happily with the Sisters of Charity for seven years at Saint Stephen’s Church in Kansas City, Missouri. So very shortly after he assumed the mission in Coripata, he began pleading for sisters.

Learning that Mother Leo Frances Ryan and Sister Mary Anselm Towle would be visiting Peru in December 1964, Monsignor wrote Mother, begging her to visit the Bolivian mission. He offered her the hospitality of the Precious Blood Sisters from Ruma, Illinois, or the Loretto Sisters, who also had a mission in La Paz. He promised to meet them there and drive them to Coripata himself. Mother agreed to visit, though she told him the SCLs had no intention of establishing another mission so soon.

At the end of January, Monsignor wrote again, presenting persuasive arguments for the SCLs taking on the Bolivian mission. One of these apparently was that the sisters should have missions in two different countries so that if there were a revolution in one, they could seek safety in the other. Indeed there had been both bloody and bloodless overthrows of government in both Peru and Bolivia. The latter had experienced 184 revolutions in its first 140 years of independence from Spain. With the poverty and instability of both governments, there were sure to be more.

Monsignor also argued the necessity of the sisters taking charge of the local government hospital. He was worried that the Adventists would either take it over or build one of their own. He said that the doctor currently assigned was very conscientious and interested in spending two to three years in campo work, as opposed to the many who had come only to comply with the one-year mandatory service in the country following the completion of their education. While home on leave from serving in Coripata, Father Robert Crider also visited Mother Leo Frances.

Obviously these pleas did not fall on deaf ears, for on February 14, 1965, Sister Cornelia Donnelly accompanied Mother Leo Frances to see Bishop Charles Helmsing, Bishop of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese, regarding the missions he and his diocese were sponsoring in South America. In the Council meeting the following day, Sister Cornelia gave a report on this meeting. On February 26, Mother informed Monsignor Walton that Sister Cornelia and two SCL sister nurses from Peru would soon visit him.

Before leaving Bolivia, Sister Cornelia wrote Mother Leo Frances and the other Council Members about the visit, remarking on the hospitality of
the Precious Blood Sisters, Monsignor Walton, and the priests. In Coripata, they not only visited the hospital, where they found everything locked up because the doctor was out of town, but they also attended a sick call. The following day, Monsignor took them to Coroico to see Bishop Thomas Manning, OFM. Though only twenty-five miles distant, this trip took two hours because of the roads. Just before leaving La Paz, Sister Cornelia penned, “I truly feel Coripata has great opportunities and Monsignor will leave nothing undone to put a program over.”

On May 4, Sister Cornelia reported to the SCL Council on her visit to Bolivia with Sisters Rosalie Mahoney and Anne Denise Shea. She indicated that the hospital was in bad shape and completely run down although it was only eighteen years old. At Father Crider’s suggestion, they had visited with Bishop Manning in Coroico about a contract he had drawn up there. Actually, she reported, Father was much more anxious that sisters come to Coripata just for clinic work and to visit the sick, give emergency care, and teach basic health.

Following sister’s report and many discussions, Mother Leo Frances asked the Council what their final decision was about opening a mission in Bolivia with the priests of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese. Some of the Council still felt that it was too soon, that we ought to be better established in Talara before attempting a second mission; besides, they noted, there were no sisters prepared at this time. On the other hand, the Holy Father had continued to plead for more religious for South America, and there were no sisters assisting the priests of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese. It was also noted that they had been warned against taking on a mission where the sisters would work only with native priests who did not understand North American religious and where the sisters would not understand their mentality. Moreover, the Council members were reminded that the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese would underwrite the expenses of the Coripata mission and that this might not be true elsewhere. By the time this discussion was concluded, apparently the “ayes” had it. The Council divided up various aspects of the preparation: Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan would assume responsibility for the shipments and the departure ceremony; Mother Mary Ancilla Spoor would once again attend to travel and transportation arrangements; Sister Cornelia Donnelly would see to hospital supplies; and Sister Mary Ellenice Colvin would arrange for the clothing needs.

On the Feast of the Queenship of Mary, May 31, Mother Leo Frances announced to the Community that, after much prayerful consideration, the Sisters of Charity would be establishing another foreign mission, this time in Bolivia. She said that hopefully by fall, two sister catechists and two sister nurses would be en route. The hope was that besides their catechetical
work in the surrounding villages, the sisters would be able to work with the
teachers in the public school of Coripata, much as Sister Irene Skeehan was
doing in Peru. The nurses hopefully would set up a clinic, do home nursing,
and instruct the mothers in childcare, hygiene, and nutrition.

In June 1965, the official letter of request from the auxiliary bishop of
La Paz, Armando Gutierrez, arrived, welcoming the Sisters of Charity of
Leavenworth to the Archdiocese of La Paz. The following month, Bishop
Charles Helmsing wrote to thank Mother Leo Frances for her letter of
June 16 informing him of the decision; he wrote, “I know that our devoted
priests are overjoyed at the prospects of help for the sick and the ignorant
in their area.”

Bishop Helmsing also lamented the fact that he could not go to Bolivia
himself to make the arrangements for the sisters because he was going to
Rome for the second session of the Vatican II Council. He was confident,
however, that Monsignor Walton and the other priests would provide for
their needs and also work out equitable financial arrangements for the sisters.

Indeed, Monsignor Walton and Joe Clark, a Papal Volunteer who had
long worked with Monsignor even in Kansas City, were hard at work
preparing for their arrival. On the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel,
Monsignor wrote of his hopes that the sisters would arrive by September 8.
He promised that if the convent were not yet ready (because of the current
cement strike), he would provide quarters for them in the hotel nearby.

Mother responded by saying that the Community would not rush in
sending the sisters; she thought perhaps the slowdown on the building was
providential. She informed him that the sisters had been very rushed during
the summer and were now making their retreats. She also expressed the
hope of enrolling them in some type of course before they would set out.

About a month later, Monsignor further wrote that any delay beyond
September 15 would not merely be a disappointment but an embarrassment
and might jeopardize their work. Some Bolivian sisters who had been
working with him had left, thinking the Sisters of Charity were coming,
and now the Adventists, Quakers, and Jehovah’s Witnesses were making
“an all out effort.” It seemed to him that he would lose face with the Health
Ministry because he had been assuring them of the arrival of the sisters.
He therefore urged Mother to send two sisters from Talara if the others
were not yet ready; or, he said, he would see that they got to language
school in Cochabamba or Coroico once they arrived.

In August, Sisters Anne Denise Shea and Blanche Marie Remington
received a surprise visit in Talara from Father Donald Powers. From
conversations with Father Powers, Sister Blanche Marie concluded that
catechetical work in Coripata would have to be extremely fundamental.
Besides some two thousand children in the eighteen little schools of the area, he indicated that there were many more children that were not enrolled.4

Mother Leo Frances was used to withstanding pressures, even, or especially, those of the clergy. On the advice of Sister Christin, a seasoned missionary in South America, Mother and the Council decided to send four sisters to Cuernavaca, Mexico, to attend CIF (Center of Intercultural Formation). With only four days notice, Sisters Charlotte Swain and Joan Kilker left for Mexico on Tuesday, August 24. Sisters Lucille Harrington and Frances Turk, visiting relatives in the East, were able to join them by the end of the week.

Writing from Cuernavaca about three weeks later, the sisters said they had survived the “shock system” used at CIF created by Monsignor Illich and directed by Father John Lefebre, former secretary to Cardinal Suenans. In fact, they said, they had not found it all that traumatic, though they didn’t think they would ever get used to the cold showers. At first they had been told they could wear their habits, though most of the fifty sisters there were wearing lay clothes. But by September 4, Father Lefebre asked them to wear secular clothes, as the “staff preferred it.” Sister Charlotte said this had been one of the most difficult adjustments for them to make.5

While the sisters were busy being indoctrinated in the culture and language of South America, the Council made plans for the departure ceremony on December 28, inviting Monsignor Charles Stimac, Sister Frances Turk’s uncle, to conduct it and present mission crosses to Sisters Lucille, Joan, and Frances; Sister Charlotte had received hers earlier in August.

On December 29, Mother Leo Frances wrote Monsignor Walton that the sisters would be leaving on January 11, 1966, and informed him there was already a change in those missioned. Sister Anne Denise Shea, originally designated as superior and moving from Talara to Coripata, was to be replaced by Sister Joan Kilker. At the same time, Mother wrote Bishop Helmsing, informing him of the sisters going to Bolivia and requesting a date on which she could present them to him.

So it was that the four sisters (Sister Blanche Marie had been in the United States for a home visit) chosen to join the Kansas City-St. Joseph mission set off in early January 1966. All the sisters, novices, and postulants gathered in the community room of the Mother House, and Father Fischer, SJ, at this time giving a Mother House retreat, gave them a special benediction after all had recited the prayer for travelers. As the missionaries walked out onto the portico of the Mother House, more pictures were taken. As the Departure Hymn was sung and the chapel bells began to peal, the sisters entered their cars on the first lap of their journey.
On the plane to La Paz, Bishop Jorge Manrique of Oruru introduced himself. Discovering that the sisters were going to the North Yungas to work, he tried to persuade them to come to his mining area, saying two should be sufficient for each place. After they arrived at the Precious Blood Convent in La Paz, they were surprised to find him waiting for them there. He again urged them to consider Oruru. Not too long thereafter, this prelate was made Archbishop of La Paz, and he was only too happy to have the four SCLs working in Coripata.

Sister Blanche Marie described their arrival in Bolivia on January 11, 1966. A red Indian blanket had been spread on the ground in place of the touted red carpet; Monsignor Walton, Father Powers, and Joe Clark, the Papal Volunteer, all greeted them warmly. At that writing, she failed to mention that Father Tom Gier and the Precious Blood Sisters, Sisters Mary Kevin and Mary Eusibia, were also there.

This delegation took them to Cristo Rey Convent where the Precious Blood Sisters gave them a most hospitable welcome and provided them with their very own dormitory for use whenever they pleased. The sisters stayed in La Paz for two days, visiting schools, a catechetical center, and a sewing cooperative.

To reach Coripata, the travelers were driven from La Paz up through a 15,300-foot pass, and then down a 75-mile winding, narrow dirt road. There they found a verdant mountainous paradise at 6000 feet. Along the way, they passed cascading waterfalls, towering poinsettias, citrus fruit and banana trees, as well as cultivated coffee and coca fields.

The day following their arrival, Sister Charlotte sent Mother Leo Frances a description of their arrival. The group stopped at Machacamarca, the first large village belonging to Santiago parish. The people had constructed a huge archway across the road and showered the newcomers with rose petals and confetti when they left the car. The sisters were presented two large watermelons as gifts. Just a few miles down the road, they were stopped again by men who sang a hymn in Aymara for them. Thanks to Father Philip McGuire, the sisters gave these greeters holy cards.

At the entrance to Coripata, the sisters were urged to get out of the car. As they walked through the town to the church, they passed through three more arches. At these, people showered them with petals and embraced them. By the time they arrived at the church, they were loaded down with bouquets. Sitting on the church steps, they received an official welcome by the mayor and one of the chief catechists. A little girl welcomed them in English, though not without some stage fright.

Following Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the church, the sisters went through yet another arch, this one constructed by the workers who had put up the convent. How happy they were to enter their lovely,
though not quite finished, house. Workers still needed to finish varnishing
the fourth bedroom and the sala (living room). Since the kitchen was not
yet ready, the sisters were invited to eat with the priests during the interim.

Now in the country where there were no newspapers, no TV nor
telephones, and where one had to travel seventy-five miles to La Paz to
send or receive mail, they were grateful to discover that there was at least
communication by ham radio each day.

The city of Coripata itself had a population of between 1500 and 2000
residents, depending on the source. Some 30–35 pueblos (towns/villages)
belonged to the parish, the next largest after Coripata being Arapata with
a population of 500. Most of the rest had between 10 and 160 families.
Together with Monsignor Walton, Fathers Philip McGuire and Donald
Powers of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese served these people.

During their three years there, enormous strides had already been made.
Besides teaching in the schools, they had spent many hours training lay
catechists for the villages. Each pueblo elected a married man of the village
to serve without pay. These were then sent to the Maryknoll catechists’
school in the Altiplano. Afterwards, they came to Coripata twice a month
for all-day instructions in the materials to be used in the following weeks.
The priests were very pleased with the results by way of increased
participation in the liturgies and sacraments. The priests scheduled Mass
every two months in the fourteen villages that by now had trained catechists.
The year before, they had begun offering Mass facing the people and using
Spanish for the “permissible parts.” They had also begun to have the rosary
and litany every evening.

At the end of their first week in Coripata, Sisters Charlotte and Joan
returned to La Paz with Monsignor Walton so that they could be registered
with the Ministry of Health. Although Monsignor was most anxious for
them to take over the administration of the hospital and so wanted to have a
contract drawn up, he recognized that it would take six months to a year to
realize this. So he was in accord with their setting up a clinic in one of the
rooms of the rectory and also attending to the people in the outlying regions.
He also recommended that they ask for a jeep with four-wheel drive.

Indeed, the campo visits began almost immediately. When Sisters
Charlotte and Blanche Marie accompanied Father McGuire for a Mass,
they were asked to see a young girl in the last stages of tuberculosis.
Although she was about nine and a half years old, she looked to be about
half that age. The sisters discovered that she had been under the treatment
of a brujo (witchdoctor). When Sisters Lucille and Joan went with Father
McGuire, they were stopped by a mudslide and so had to hike to the hut of
the woman for whom they had been called. She, too, was seriously ill with
tuberculosis, and she wanted to go to confession. Father told her she would
first have to be married and that he would return the following day. He and
the sisters were scarcely on their way again when a guide told them of a
man on another mountain who wanted to see him. So off they went. This
time they found a sick old man with terrible stomach pain. Father and the
sisters decided to take him into the hospital in Coripata but told the family
that they would have to come to attend him since only the doctor was
there at this time.

About two weeks after their arrival, Monsignor Walton took Sisters
Charlotte and Blanche Marie to visit the Franciscan priests and Bishop, the
Columbian Sisters, and the Poor Clares at Coroico. Intent on the SCLs taking
over the administration of the hospital in Coripata, Monsignor discussed
the contract that the sisters in Caranavi had with the hospital there.

A few days later, Father McGuire took Sisters Lucille and Blanche
Marie to La Paz to look for catechetical materials. While there overnight,
they stayed with the Precious Blood Sisters at Cristo Rey Convent, using
the dormitory they had so graciously set aside for them. Dubbing it the
"Coripata Room," the sisters encouraged them to treat it as their own
whenever they came to the capital. While in La Paz, the two sisters
successfully applied for their carnets (residence documents) and their
drivers’ licenses. They even went to the “black market” since the shipment
from the United States had not come in and they needed some things for
the house.

On their return trip, they went for their first trip to the Altiplano or
high plateau area, visiting the St. Louis Priests and Columbian sisters
working there. They also visited the Maryknoll Center for training
catechists in the Altiplano.

By February 1, 1966, the kitchen in the convent had been finished and
Joe Clark had installed a stove. Joyously the sisters prepared their first
meal in the convent, breakfast on February 2. That same day, Graciela
Rojas came to prepare the noon meal for the first time. Once in their own
convent, the sisters decided to begin speaking Spanish at the noon meals.
This was, no doubt, another “stripping away” of themselves, but they knew
the added practice and mutual support would be helpful. It would also aid
them in relating to the people in a more normal way.

On February 3, they took a little outing, discovering lovely waterfalls
and a relaxing stream where they could wade. This would become a favorite
place for picnics, and most visitors were invited to enjoy its beauty. The
following day, Sisters Blanche Marie and Charlotte went to Arapata to
watch the catechists’ lessons.

That Sunday, when they tried to make a day of recollection, they found
it well nigh impossible, for there were constant interruptions. These ranged
from someone with an attack of epilepsy to someone who had attempted
suicide. As a result, they frequently took days off, often going to Coroico for retreat, a trip of one and a half to two hours if the road is good.

Following the good news that their first shipment had arrived in La Paz, Sisters Joan and Lucille set out with Monsignor in spite of heavy rains and washouts. In the first airlift, one trunk and twenty-seven drums arrived, containing everything from medicine and instruments to baby clothes and plastic baby cribs for Christmas gifts. Since St. Joseph’s Home in Helena, Montana, had recently been closed, furniture and many items were “willed” to the new mission. Monsignor Walton and the two sisters returned three days later with much of the cargo. Due to an agreement between the Episcopal Conference of Bolivia and the Bolivian government in 1964, articles and products necessary for the work of the Church could be imported duty free. This represented an immense saving to the missionaries.

In mid-February, Sister Charlotte began Matrona (midwife) classes for eighteen women at their request. She herself made many late night delivery calls. But even with all her work, the custom of women giving birth alone continued for many, and it was only in cases of real emergency that she was called in. She commented that there was so much to do in the line of health teaching it was hard to know where to begin.

When Sisters Charlotte and Lucille were accompanying Father Powers to Nogaloni, they were saddened when the people sent word not to come, that they didn’t want the Eucharist. Father and the sisters realized this was the result of the work of the Adventists, who were working feverishly in the area. The Evangelists were also working very hard.

Nevertheless, the campo visits continued, sometimes only with a sister catechist and a nurse; at other times, one of the priests went along to administer the sacraments and offer Mass. Sometimes a lay catechist also was part of the team. Everyone was glad when one of these hearty campesinos (farmers from the countryside) was with them, for not infrequently they had to dig the jeep out of the mud, sometimes both going and coming.

Besides working together well, the priests and sisters enjoyed a warm camaraderie, sometimes taking time out for a picnic or for a special meal together, as when Monsignor Walton prepared a special Shrove Tuesday meal for everyone. The sisters were surprised to find that in Bolivia Lent traditionally did not actually begin until the First Sunday of Lent. “Carnival time” continued until Sunday evening, at which time the community went to the cemetery to “inter” the festivities.

At the beginning of March, Sisters Charlotte and Blanche Marie went up to La Paz again, this time with Father Powers. Sister Charlotte went to the Ministry of Health to find out about programs for control of the
Map of Bolivia
(World Fact Book)

View of Coripata
Copy of map hand-drawn by Sister Mary Patricia Kiely, 1986
tuberculosis that was so rampant in the yungas (hot tropical valleys). She was dismayed when told there were none. Meanwhile, the services the sisters were giving at their clinic were becoming more widely known. During February, they saw some ninety-four patients there, and by the end of March, that number had more than tripled!

While the parish’s own generator didn’t always work properly, it was a great boon when it did work, for there often was no electricity in the town.

During the first week of March, both Sisters Lucille and Blanche Marie gave their first classes in the grade school and were pleased to find that the director and teachers were anxious to work with them. They also began visiting families in the parish in preparation for the mission that was to be given. When they went to the teachers’ meeting in Arapata, they explained their plan to present monthly lesson plans. Shortly thereafter, Sister Lucille had her first class in the secondary school.

In all of this, the priests seemed very helpful, proffering many ideas and suggestions. They were also considerate in many other ways. During these early days, they often drove the sisters out to the villages even if they had not intended to go themselves. They included them in trips to Coroico to celebrate feasts of the pastor, and on March 25, though Sisters Charlotte and Lucille were not there, two of the priests celebrated Mass in the sisters’ sala in English for their renewal of vows.

The reason that Sisters Charlotte and Lucille were absent was that Sister Charlotte had suffered a broken eardrum and Joe Clark had driven them up to La Paz to get a specialist’s attention. Apparently, the infection had stemmed from a cold she developed when everyone had gone over to Coroico for St. Patrick’s Day. They stayed with the Precious Blood Sisters in La Paz for two weeks while she was getting treatments. As a result of this, the hearing in her left ear was severely impaired.

Having experienced how difficult it was to control the fully pleated skirts of their habits in the windswept hills and streets of Coripata, the sisters had modified them, replacing them with straight panels in front and back but with kick-pleats on the sides. When Sisters Charlotte and Lucille returned from La Paz at the end of March, they brought back materials for new habits. Sister Charlotte wrote to Mother Leo Frances, noting that she had earlier forgotten to mention a very important item, namely, that she and the other sisters in Coripata had presumed permission to modify their habits due to the windy conditions. She assured Mother that they were very neat and did not reveal the figure.

While in La Paz, Sister Lucille had also bought catechetical supplies and some books for a parish library. The Altar and Rosary Society of Laramie, Wyoming, had sent the sisters $98 for their school. Since the sisters did not have a school, Sister Lucille had talked with the others
about using the money to buy some illustrated "classics" and starting a small library to encourage the children to read. It would also prove an incentive for their other work since only those children who were attending catechism classes could use the library.

Because of the lapse of time, Sister Charlotte thought that Monsignor Walton had forgotten about the hospital contract and his desires that the SCLs take over the management of the Coripata hospital. But while she was still in La Paz, he also came up. He told her that Bishop Manning was going through with his contract for Caranavi, and he thought the Coripata parish should make a similar contract. Sister told him that if the parish were to take the hospital, more help would be necessary and he should apply for some Papal Volunteers. She wrote Mother about this and also suggested she might consider sending two nurses to the language school in Cochabamba.

On April 1, Mother Leo Frances wrote Monsignor Walton saying that it was her intention that the sisters do everything possible to improve health conditions in the area. But she felt that if they were to take on the administration and service of the hospital, their contacts with the people and providing a sound health program for the people would be severely limited. She told him that she felt very strongly about this, and that while she was not opposed to the sisters working in the hospital and caring for the sick, even furnishing equipment, she did not want them in administration. Not surprisingly, by April 7 Monsignor and Sister Charlotte made the decision not to take over the hospital!

Actually, Monsignor said that he really had in mind more of an outpatient facility than a full-fledged hospital. But, he said, he had had some doubts himself and now would continue with the facility being constructed in the ground floor area of the convent. As the work progressed with the clinic, Sisters Charlotte and Joan were overjoyed. For it had hot and cold water, cupboards that locked, and ample space to store equipment and medicine. It even had an operating room that functioned on batteries and two cubicles for examinations.

During March and April, the sisters were kept busy with the missions given first in the town and then in various sites in the campo. The priests had scheduled special classes for marriage preparation and for First Communion of adults. There were also Confirmations of infants, although the Bishop announced that thereafter this would not be permitted. The sisters found the custom of padrinos putting colored headbands and armbands on their godchildren interesting, but they apparently never learned the origin of the custom.

The campo missions took some organizing, as each one lasted for three days, and a priest, a sister catechist, and a sister nurse went for each. Besides
the sacramental instructions given in Coripata, these campo visits were augmented by home visiting and some health education. For Palm Sunday, too, one team stayed in Coripata, and another went to the countryside.

Services for Holy Week proved interesting. The sisters were surprised to learn that here in Coripata the mayor appointed the times for adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. They were deeply moved by the long procession through the main street with the glass coffin bearing the figure of the Crucified Lord and the platform bearing the Sorrowful Mother. The procession stopped at fourteen station sites prepared by the people, and almost all of the people participated, including the Baptist minister.

Though Sister Charlotte had made a quick trip to La Paz with Sister Blanche Marie and Father Mike Walker on Tuesday of Holy Week, she was on deck in plenty of time to make her famous Crispies on Good Friday night. These were special sweet rolls made in the SCL Community for special feasts. She also helped prepare the special dinner for Easter Sunday. The sisters had invited the priests to share the feast in their new dining room.

Work continued to increase. In the second part of April, Father McGuire asked that the sister catechists visit each campo school for at least two hours each month. Within the town, Sister Blanche Marie, like Sister Lucille, had begun teaching English in the grade school. They explained that the teachers in the school were more favorable toward them and their teaching of religion when they did this. Sister Blanche Marie also began teaching in the night school every Thursday evening.

By July, Father McGuire asked Sister Blanche Marie to work full-time in Coripata and in the four campo schools closest to the town. Besides her work in the schools, she would teach nine other classes and have five activities during the week for different age groups. Sister Lucille would now work exclusively in the campo. In addition to going on the missions, she was to prepare some of the men for teaching in the campo schools. This work proved to be arduous as it necessitated her visiting one or two campo schools daily. Besides this, in the evenings the sisters and priests did street preaching two nights a week, and Sister Lucille joined a catechist in teaching a large group of boys twice a month in the evenings. There were also classes on Sunday afternoons for the criados (country children who were given room and board in return for their work for families in the city).

Two of the sisters went up to La Paz about twice a month for mail and shopping, especially for meats since nothing but llama meat was sold in Coripata. In the beginning, they were frequently accompanied by one of the priests. During some of their trips, the sisters noticed that some campesinos turned their backs to the jeep as it passed; they were told that this was the result of the severity with which they had been treated by some.
of the *gente* or *finca* owners before the land reforms of 1952. If an Indian dared so much as look at these people, he was often subjected to a beating.

At one time, the sisters and priests went to La Paz to be vaccinated for yellow fever as there had been reports of it in the Caranavi region. About this same time, they were warned that a Communist influence was present in a nearby campo school. The sisters were glad to know this since they themselves had begun to drive more into the outlying areas. Before this, the priests most often drove them to their campo visits.

Sisters Charlotte and Joan had many late night calls, both for deliveries and accidents. They were always amazed at how many came to their aid in the case of the latter. In mid-June, for instance, a very large truck overturned and many were gravely injured; two died. But besides one of the priests and Sister Blanche Marie, who came immediately, the Peace Corps workers, the Captain of the police, two dentists, the *sanitario* (public health worker), and others came to help do whatever was necessary. In the same way, the sister nurses were edified by the loving care of family members.

But they were not always so satisfied with the doctors who took a year’s turn of service in the town to fulfill requirements of the government. First of all, they often absented themselves, and even when in town, they seemed uncaring and/or inept. One time when Sister Joan had been in the campo with the doctor and wanted to take a last-stage alcoholic back into the hospital, the doctor demurred, indicating that it was hardly worthwhile. When Sister Joan remonstrated, “But Doctor, we can surely help him die better,” the doctor himself carried the man to the jeep.

As isolated as they were, they were always glad when visitors came. At first, they only encountered other religious when they went up to La Paz or over to Coroico or Carmen Pampa. But in late April, a gringo priest came with a native Aymaran who was to give the mission in Arapata. Then two Peace Corps nurses about to return to the United States and two Dutch priests visited in late May. In early June, Monsignor Froeschl brought news of Kansas City, and in mid-June, two Italian Sisters spent some time with them. When Bishop Helmsing visited, he blessed both the convent and the clinic. The parade of visitors continued during late June. Seven of the Precious Blood Sisters from La Paz came to see the convent before going on to Coroico for retreat, and after the retreat there, ten sisters from five different Communities stopped in to see the SCLs.

As the years passed, Coripata seemed to become known for its agreeable climate and the hospitality of the sisters. More and more priests and sisters stopped in, and various religious took some time for rest and relaxation, a few even making private retreats at the convent.

The sisters celebrated “Christmas” mid-year when, at the end of May, they were informed that thirty more barrels of supplies had arrived from the
States, and within two weeks there was word of yet another shipment. This one included a cement mixer to help Joe Clark with his construction projects. It and twenty-five other crates and trunks were soon on their way to Coripata.

On July 11, 1966, just six months after their arrival in Bolivia, the sisters came close to losing one of their own. At noontime, just as they were sitting down to eat, the doorbell rang. When Sister Blanche Marie answered it, she was met by what seemed to her to be nearly half the pueblo. They were all shouting that “the Madre Juana” (Lucille) and la Reina (Rosario), a lay catechist, had turned over. Looking down the street, she could see a truck bringing the two injured into the town. Sisters Charlotte and Joan took things in hand and within a half hour had both of the injured ready to be taken to the Saint Isabel Clinic in La Paz. The assistant pastors and Joe Clark helped prepare the Toyota for the trip; Father Mike Walker anointed them both, and Father Philip McGuire prepared to drive the two nurses and the injured.

Various men spent the whole afternoon looking for the red jeep. Apparently, the brakes had retained some humidity from crossing the river, though Sister Lucille later said she had tested them and they seemed fine. When negotiating one of the switchbacks on the road known as “the Devil’s tail,” the brakes went out. The jeep tumbled over the side onto the road below, throwing Sister Lucille and Rosario clear. It then continued to roll, falling into the ravine with fifteen to twenty feet of water. The jeep was not found until more than a week later.

How grateful the sisters were for the radio that night. By means of it, they heard that the patients had reached the hospital, had been attended to, and, considering everything, were doing well. Many considered their condition miraculous, and many were the prayers offered by priests and people for their survival. The prompt action by a couple of campesinos accounted for their quick removal and treatment.

Rosario escaped almost unscathed with just bruises, and she and Sister Joan returned home in two days. However, Sister Lucille had wrenched her neck and lost six teeth. She also had a broken ankle, and one ear was almost torn off. In addition to head lacerations, she suffered a severe concussion and wavered between consciousness and unconsciousness for several days. But in the light of what could have happened, these injuries seemed mild, and everyone remarked on her tranquility and remarkable sense of humor. Ever resilient, she sent word by radio just four days after the accident that she wanted the sisters to send up her Spanish textbooks. More, she asked for the boxes of library books that she had been processing! Gratefully, she was able to return to Coripata in less than three weeks.

Though Sister Lucille’s accident had not been covered by diocesan insurance, Bishop Helmsing graciously paid for the “amount of loss”
accrued by the sisters and priests in Coripata, reimbursing them for their medical bills. The SCL Community bought a replacement for the jeep, but, as always, it took time for it to arrive. It was not until October 13 that the sisters would have their own mobility again.

With continuing good news from La Paz, the remaining sisters were ready for the marches and demonstrations in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The festivities continued for three days. The blessing of the trucks, with prayers for their drivers and passengers, held special meaning for the parish team. With the closing of the festivities, the sisters prepared to go to La Paz to celebrate Saint Vincent’s Day together on July 19.

Earlier in the month, catechism classes had begun, and on July 28, Sister Blanche Marie began Bible classes for women of the pueblo. This group of twenty-five was a good mix of gente (women from the upper class), Negritas, and Indiancitas. All of this spurred the sisters in their preparation of a catechetical center and library beneath the convent. They also solicited pictures and charts from the sisters in the United States. As Sister Irene Skeehan had done in Talara, they asked for many copies of the same items, saying that ten were not enough, given the number of fincas (haciendas) and programs in town.

The number of people dying of tuberculosis was high, and fairly frequently the sister nurses encountered cases of whooping cough. Once there was even a polio scare. Sometimes when they accompanied the priests on a campo mission, they not only attended the sick but also heard the penances of the penitents as a way of checking on their knowledge of their prayers.

The day after the sisters received their three-year missions on August 18, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went to the Poor Clares convent in Coroico to make private retreats. On their return, they stopped at Carmen Pampa to visit the Xaverian Brothers. On September 3, the four sisters went over to Carmen Pampa for the dedication of the new chapel. They were glad for the opportunity to visit with members of various Communities who had come for the occasion.

For some time, there had been little or no water in the pueblo. In September, Father McGuire hauled water from the river on two different days. And the sisters finally “went native.” After two months of not bathing, or at best sponge-bathing, they took their towels, face cloths, soap, and shampoo to the river to bathe. Finally, on September 20, it rained all day, but it wasn’t until mid-October that there was enough pressure for showers.

Sister Blanche Marie and one of the priests had been sponsoring mixers at the parish for young men and women. They rejoiced that some eighty were coming in October; by the following April, there were a hundred!

At the end of October, Sister Joan returned from a meeting in Lima and one week spent with the sisters in Talara. About two weeks later, Sisters
Charlotte and Lucille flew to Lima for a month’s course and then went to Talara for their vacation.

Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went to Arapata for the Mass of Noche Buena (Christmas Eve). In Coripata, Sister Blanche Marie’s choir sang at the midnight Mass. The following morning, Sister Blanche Marie and a Papal Volunteer accompanied Monsignor Walton into the campo for Christmas Mass.

Since there were always many campesinos in town on Sundays and holidays, the sister nurses kept the clinic open. In fact, these were usually their busiest days.

Several days after Christmas, the four sisters went up to La Paz for a little rest and recreation. Three days later, Sisters Blanche Marie and Joan went down to Cochabamba to study.

Though it had appeared that the question of the hospital had been settled in April, Monsignor Walton again wrote Mother Leo Frances in December 1966, saying that with a hospital in town, the clinic being operated out of the parish had no legal standing. He told her that when the Director of Hospitals had arrived some days before, they had worked out a plan for the local Committee of Health (of which Father McGuire was president) to administer the hospital with the Ministry. Monsignor indicated that with this arrangement, the sister nurses might be willing to transfer their clinic to the hospital building, given that they would have the same freedom to work in the campo and attend in the clinic the same hours as presently. He further indicated that, given the present “ethical accord,” the sisters would most likely assist the doctor when there was an emergency. Much to Monsignor’s surprise, the Director of Hospitals not only agreed but also offered to let the Committee suggest the doctor to be appointed.13

The rainy season almost always lasts from November to April, and sometimes the roads become inaccessible during this time. So travelers always had to check out road conditions. Nevertheless, since it was “summer” and there were no classes during the first week of 1967, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille took some days off to visit in Trinidad Pampa and Coroico.

Besides religious who came down to Coripata, a Papal Volunteer who had been in classes with the sisters in Cochabamba came toward the end of the month and spent two weeks. But best of all, three SCLs arrived from Talara on the last day of January 1967. The sisters were most happy to welcome Sisters Agnes Klein, Anne Denise Shea, and Frances Turk. Within just a few days, Sisters Blanche Marie and Joan returned from Cochabamba, and at the end of February, Sisters Mary Seraphine and Joseph Therese Mader arrived. Sister Mary Seraphine entertained both adults and children with her puppets. However, Sister Joseph Therese returned to La Paz to visit friends there. On March 8, they set out for Peru.
and the United States. It was fortunate that Sisters Charlotte and Blanche Marie took Sister Mary Seraphine up on the sixth because heavy rains had washed out the road in some places within a few days.

By mid-March, six or seven Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Coripata to inaugurate a tuberculosis program in the Yungas. A couple of them would remain living and working at the hospital for a couple of years. On March 25, two other Peace Corps workers visited from Arapata and stayed for Easter.

Before leaving to study Aymara in Cochabamba for several months, Sister Lucille decided to try to break down some of the barriers of resentment, visiting some of the people from the fincas on a more informal basis. Using puppets, films, and other visual aids, as well as her guitar, she hoped to gain the confidence of some of these embittered people who had lost power and influence as well as their lands in the land reforms of 1952.

Also before she left, Monsignor took the four sisters on a pilgrimage to the famous Virgin of Copacabana on Lake Titicaca. The sisters made their renewal of vows on March 25 in the church. Monsignor suggested that they translate the vow formula so that they could renew their vows in Spanish the following year.

For a second time within a month, a trip was planned to Copacabana. This time Father McGuire wanted to take some of the faithful catechists to see this national shrine. On the way, Sister Blanche Marie overturned the white jeep she was driving on the slippery sand and gravel. Fortunately, no one was hurt, although Sisters Charlotte, Blanche Marie, and the two catechists were all thrown out of the jeep. The jeep itself needed repairs, so the outing had to be cancelled.

In early May, Sister Lucille planned an ecumenical meeting with Monsignor Walton, Father McGuire, and two of the Protestant pastors. As a result, they planned to initiate such joint classes and instructions as they could in Arapata. Sister also reached out to the wives of the catechists, inviting them to come for the monthly presentations and share in the two meals with their husbands. They were also invited to participate in some religious and health instruction themselves. These regular monthly meetings did much to develop the women’s self-esteem and influence the men’s attitude toward their spouses as partners.

In June, the sisters received seven more trunks and five drums filled with all sorts of necessary things. There was still much being shipped from St. Joseph’s Home in Helena, which had recently closed. So there were clothes, quilts, and comforters. St. Pius X School in Billings, Montana, also sent many things. Though not every shipment made it through to Bolivia, the sisters happily unpacked the warm sweaters, boots, and coats, and the nurses welcomed the bandages and twenty-six medical books included. They could hardly wait to find ways of awarding the stuffed
toys made by the women inmates of Deer Lodge State Prison in Deer Lodge, Montana, as also the rosaries and religious articles tucked in.

In early June 1967, Sister Blanche Marie accompanied Father Tom Gier to visit the boys' school at Trinidad Pampa and to see the new church in Arapata. In mid-June, Sister Charlotte once again went to the meeting of Superiors of Religious in Cochabamba; she stayed on to make her retreat. About this same time, Sister Blanche Marie went to the Conference of Religious and Pastors in the Franciscan prelature. Toward the end of July, all four sisters went to Chulumani to visit the Dutch Augustinians and Spanish sisters working there. They had hoped to gain some help with music from Father Jaime Postma, but he had gone up to La Paz.

In August, all were delighted to hear that their numbers would be expanding. Father Ed Wagner was coming to augment the work of the priests, and the sisters received word that Sister Sally Watson was coming to lend her hands and heart to this mission.

Later, Sisters Blanche Marie and Charlotte visited with some Precious Blood Sisters in the Altiplano and then went on to La Paz. While there, they contacted Mother Leo Frances by radio and were delighted to learn that she would be visiting them the following month. She told them that Sister Sally would be arriving with her and that Sister Marcianna Trujillo would be traveling with them on her way to her new mission in Talara.

As the sisters and priests became better acquainted with other missionaries working in their general vicinity, they began to collaborate more. In September, not only did the priest director of the St. Louis mission come for a three-day meeting, but he brought with him sixty native catechists from the Altiplano. During these days, there was much sharing with Coripata's campo catechists.

Arriving on October 3, Mother Leo Frances and Sister Marcianna stayed for a week and a half. The sisters enjoyed their visit very much and were saddened to see them depart for La Paz on October 15 with Sisters Charlotte and Sally.

Meanwhile, Sister Lucille had begun a school of religion (something like the vacation schools in the United States). The teachers had once again been out on strike, and she thought to supplement something of what the children had missed. Father Mike Walker also started various cooperatives, such as carpentry, vegetable cultivation, and animal husbandry. He also helped build about four new adobe homes. He and the men used materials at hand, but made improvements, such as laying a cement floor, installing running water, and building on a second story so that the families might have four rooms.

Also in October, Father Robert Crider came to replace Father McGuire, the latter going to La Paz. And Sister Sally replaced Sister Lucille in the
catechetical work when the latter went to Cochabamba to begin studying Aymara.

At this time, General Watson, Sister Sally's father, became a great benefactor in so far as he facilitated the shipment of many, many supplies for both the convent and for the ministry of the sisters and priests.

Throughout December, the sisters added on to their work as they planned parties and dinners for their various helpers. They made good use of the many "goodies" included in the trunks and crates that had arrived from the States.

Shortly after the first of the year, Sisters Charlotte and Sally took a few days of vacation in the Alto Beni before the latter went to Cochabamba for four months of Spanish.

Toward the end of January 1968, the sisters had their first CFM (Catholic Family Movement) meeting for Indian couples; earlier, some couples from the mestizo (mixed blood) and upper class had begun meeting.

During the January team meeting, it was suggested that someone should receive training in community development. This could help the cooperative that Father Walker had developed. The team also discussed the possibility of hiring a social worker to help out. All the team members were encouraged to visit other mission groups from time to time to learn from their experiences.

In February, Sisters Catherine Nichol and Assumpta Huttenhoff, who had been studying language in Cochabamba, visited for a few weeks before leaving for Talara. By the time they left, the roads were so bad that the trip to La Paz took eight to ten hours instead of the usual four.

Toward the end of February, Sister Charlotte organized a kermesse (fair) for the hospital. She and her helpers raised $150, a sum that guaranteed the approbation of the parish club when she gave her next financial report for the hospital.

On March 5, Sister Lucille returned from Cochabamba. Impressed by the fact that she could now carry on a simple conversation in Aymara, Sister Joan left for Cochabamba for the new four-month course in that difficult language.

This year the sisters had translated the vow formula into Spanish as Monsignor Walton had advised. On March 25, Sisters Charlotte, Lucille, and Blanche Marie renewed their vows at Arapata.

In June, Sisters Charlotte and Blanche Marie left for the States for their home visits and to attend the General Chapter of the Community. In early July, Sisters Lucille and Joan went to Sorata on the Altiplano near Lake Titicaca for retreat. During their absence, a Precious Blood Sister and a postulant, along with a laywoman, spent some time at the Coripata convent. After their return, a Franciscan Sister, a Maryknoller, and two
Ursulines came to visit for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on July 16.

In November, the sisters celebrated Founders’ Day by each one fixing and taking a dinner to a different family.

About this time, Sister Sally undertook some new projects. She began teaching sewing, basic nutrition, cooking, and household care, as well as basic sanitation and other topics.

Since another doctor had arrived at the hospital who showed very little interest, Sister Joan found herself doing much of the supervisory work there.

In 1969 their friend and mentor, Monsignor Walton, left to work in La Paz, but not before seeing that another bathroom and a new sala had been added to the convent. Father Mike Walker also left. Father Charles Lackamp came to replace him.

Sisters Lucille and Joan went home for their home visits. But before leaving Bolivia, Sisters Joan and Mary Seraphine, who was visiting from the States, went to celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation in Cochabamba with Sisters Agnes Klein, Catherine Nichol, Ann McGloin, and Sally Watson.

In April 1969, Sister Charlotte went to Cochabamba to study Aymara. That same month, Sister Ann McGloin took a break in Coripata from her studies in Cochabamba, and Sister Mary Seraphine spent a nice long visit.

The house was complete once again with the return of Sister Charlotte in early August and the coming of Sisters Marie James Simms and Edith McCauley. In their house meeting, they decided to make their monthly retreats with the Poor Clares in Coroico since there were too many interruptions in Coripata.

On August 9, Graciela Rojas, who, without notice, had quit two weeks earlier as their cook, appeared at the convent door. She was demanding a large indemnity, but actually she was in error. After consulting with the priests and with a lawyer in La Paz, suitable termination papers were worked out.

In mid-August, the sisters visited the Franciscan sisters in Carmen Pampa. While there, Sister Joan was asked to treat a man from the British Mission, so she stayed over for a few days. Meanwhile, the sisters invited the priests and Joe Clark to dinner on the Feast of the Assumption.

That was a busy day for Sister Lucille as she had gone to Saint Gertrudis in the morning for the First Communion of those whom she had prepared, and that evening she and Sister Charlotte went to a fiesta in Tabocal, where Sister Lucille had been teaching six couples in Aymara for the preceding six weeks.

On August 20, the parish sponsored a dance for their adult group, including about one hundred Indians, who had not been invited to the city’s Independence Day dance in July.
Given their interest in the development of women, the team devised various new programs. During August, the parish hired two ex-teachers to begin an evening alphabetization (basic literacy) program. Since Sister Sally wanted to teach them how to cook oatmeal and cream of wheat, Joe Clark set up kerosene burners on adobes in the cooking room of the parish club. Later, she sang the praises of the kerosene ovens in that they allowed her to teach the girls to wash dishes with soap and water. A further wonder was that she had induced them to hang the towels on the line to dry afterwards.

At the team meeting, Sister Lucille proposed that she and one of the sister nurses spend three to four days visiting and working with women in the various villages. While there, the sister nurse might be able to teach someone to perform simple cures.

In early September, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille and the priests went to a pastoral meeting of teams from both the north and south Yungas. There they exchanged ideas and planned some cooperative efforts.

Sisters Charlotte and Joan continued to collaborate with the doctors at the hospital as much as was possible, often going out to help with vaccination programs in the outlying areas. Sometimes these were preventative, but often enough the health system waited until there was an outbreak of a disease before something was done. There were already twenty children with scarlet fever before Sister Joan accompanied the doctor to Nogaloni.

Returning from a hospital meeting in early September, Sister Charlotte announced that all the money given for medicine now had to be sent to La Paz. The sisters were not a little unhappy with this since they had been purchasing most of the medicine and using what little was paid to help buy more. By the next day, however, the doctor told Sister Charlotte that, although the law was on the books, they would continue operating as before. Later in the month, Father and the sisters formed a committee to take care of food and hired a woman to cook and take the food to the patients in the hospital.

Since the catechists had been divided into four groups, Sister Lucille went to one of the centers each week to meet with the catechists from the area. During the daylong meeting, she presented materials for the liturgies and catechetics for the coming weeks.

Right from their earliest years, the sisters had formed a warm relationship with the Franciscans and Poor Clares in Coroico, about an hour and a half away by jeep, as well as with the Xaverian Brothers and the Franciscan sisters in Carmen Pampa, about one hour away. And after becoming part of the radio system that the Dutch Augustinians operated in Chulumani in the South Yungas, they both visited there and were visited
by them from time to time. With some frequency, they took patients to the Adventist hospital staffed by three European doctors in Chulumani.

Frank, one of the Xaverian Brothers, came to paint a mural for the Blessed Sacrament altar in the parish church in Coripata. When Sisters Joan and Sally took Brother Frank back to Carmen Pampa, they visited with the sisters there; they also availed themselves of the opportunity to take a shower and wash their hair since Coripata was low on water before the rainy season began. A few days later, Sister Lucille took Sister Charlotte over to Coroico to make her retreat. While there, she likewise took advantage of the water supply before returning home.

On occasion, Father Jaime Postma came over from Chulumani for confessions. He also recorded a number of hymns in both Spanish and Aymara for the sisters to use.

Toward the end of September, the sisters heard that the official papers for their jeep had been lost by Catholic Charities, but thanks to the intercession of Saint Vincent perhaps, a copy of them was located on his feast day, September 27.

During these years, there was evidence of growing Communist influence within the country. Already two years earlier, in October 1967, the armed forces had confirmed that Ernesto Che Guevara (Cuban revolutionary) had been killed in the southeast jungles of Bolivia together with six guerrillas. On September 25, 1969, the military coup in La Paz revealed that there were more leftists involved in it. General Alfredo Ovando Candía pledged to protect the rights of the peasants and bring about even more land reforms than those of 1953.15 Sisters Lucille and Joan just happened to be in the center of La Paz that very day to do some shopping. Naturally, everything shut down.

Closer to home, in Santa Gertrudis, one of the teachers appeared to be disseminating Communist ideas, and in mid-October 1969 the sisters became aware that their radio messages were being monitored. They were told they must speak in Spanish and that they could no longer place orders to La Paz by radio. According to Sister Sally, they were informed that "they were privileged to be in Bolivia, and that they must obey her laws, etc., etc."16 Some of the authorities in Coripata became more difficult to work with at this time. When Sister Joan went to La Paz a few days later, she found the city in turmoil and the inflation even greater. The sisters also learned that the government had now taken over the Adventist Hospital, which that group had operated for the past twenty-four years and had only recently renewed its contract for the next thirty years.

Despite all this, the sisters continued with their work as normally as possible, even making night calls into the campo until such time as Bishop Adhemar Esquivel told them he thought it unwise to continue doing so. At
least, he explained, they should not go out alone. But the sisters had almost always gone in twos after dark, and many times the sisters gave rides to catechists returning home or to patients who had been hospitalized. Indeed, they were often called upon by either the doctor or a member of the family to go out to a village to bring in someone too sick to walk in.

As always, their work was complicated by the number of accidents that occurred. All too often these were caused by drunken drivers, for any celebration or occasion called for imbibing. Moreover, normally there were three days of drinking at the time of a funeral, and this sometimes led to yet another funeral or funerals. Later, the sisters and priests considered it a milestone when some of their catechists held celebrations of one kind or another without serving alcohol.

The sisters continued to take time to go to Carmen Pampa and Coroico for days of recollection, either as a group or as individuals. In late October 1969, Sisters Sally and Charlotte left for a vacation in the Altiplano of Bolivia and Peru, stopping along the way to visit friends from their days in Cochabamba. During the trip, they delighted in seeing the ancient Incan ruins at Machu Picchu.

The sister catechists and nurses continued to encounter many superstitious practices and beliefs. For instance, on the Feast of Saint Nicholas, patron of bakers, a big crowd assembled, shooting off fireworks and procuring special breads. Later, in bad times, the country people would toss some of the bread blessed on this day into their fields, hoping to make them more productive. On All Saints’ Day, the arrival of the souls was announced at 12:00 noon with sounds of dynamite, rockets, and band music. Promptly at noon on the next day, November 2, the souls would be dispatched (word used by the people) even though the festivities were still going strong in the cemetery. Family members offered Tanta Huawas, breads made in the shape of human beings, to people visiting the burial niches. 17

Sisters Charlotte and Joan constantly battled some of the age-old beliefs and practices and tried to introduce health education along with health care. Many beliefs concerned conception and birth. For instance, it was considered bad luck to have any baby clothes ready before the baby’s birth because the baby would be sure to die if you did; or the newborn would die if it were bathed, especially if the head were bathed before the child was three months old. A woman presented herself at the clinic one day and asked the sisters to remove a snake from her abdomen. She told them she had spent a night in the field guarding the crops and that a snake had entered her body and had grown until it was now causing her a lot of pain. Within a few hours, she had delivered twins. 18

The sisters learned how necessary it was to share among themselves, even if that meant meeting for cocoa at 10:30 or 11:00 at night after someone
had just returned from a campo visit or meeting. Often enough they had stories, sometimes funny, but not always. One time Sister Charlotte regaled the sisters with the story of how she had told a woman with a cold to drink lots of liquids. The next morning, she discovered that the family of the woman had been drinking heavily all night. The explanation was, "The Madre just told me to go home and drink a lot."19 And not to be forgotten was the day the policeman being examined said to Sister Joan, "Si, Madre," then saluted and took a deep breath.

Not so funny was the time that a man objected to his wife being hospitalized because there would be no one to take care of the animals. When Sister Joan asked, "What is more important to you, your wife or your animals?" he unhesitatingly replied, "The animals."20

Besides celebrating Thanksgiving with Father Crider and Monsignor Walton, the sisters attended a farewell party for one of the sisters in Carmen Pampa who was returning to the United States. They celebrated Sister Joan’s leave-taking at the same time although she was not leaving for another three weeks.

When Sister Joan left for Bozeman, Montana, to study at Montana State University, Sisters Charlotte and Sally were alone much of January 1970 although they had the company of a Precious Blood sister for a while.

After being on order for a year and a half, the sisters’ new red and white jeep finally arrived in February. This was welcome news. Even more welcome, though, was Sister Marie James Simms, who came to take Sister Joan’s place until the following January while the latter was away for studies.

During this year, Sister Charlotte went with Father Lackamp to some of the most distant villages, Siete Lomas and San Juan, usually visited just once a year by the priests. They could go only partway by jeep, then walked straight up the mountain for an hour or more. Not too surprisingly, the couple that was being married had their two children with them; both of them were baptized after the Mass. That night Sister Charlotte slept in her sleeping bag on the floor of the cooperative store.

The sisters in Coripata were aware that unrest continued within the country, but they were rarely a part of the political events. However, in September 1970, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille had gone to La Paz to purchase some necessary supplies and had a "first-hand experience of revolution." Sister Lucille graphically described what happened when they were awakened at 1:30 a.m., only to watch agog as "an army plane dived repeatedly and strafed a large army barracks in one of the larger residential areas." The operation was repeated at 4:00 a.m., and they learned by radio that "all miners, factory workers and university students were to report in defense of the Revolutionary Government." Later, all seemed to return to normal, the
rightist government personnel having been captured or gone into exile, and businesses re-opened. But at 5:00 p.m., when Sisters Charlotte and Lucille were in the “black market” section, they heard dynamite blasts in “El Alto,” announcing the arrival of forty truckloads of miners. Sister Lucille wrote, “People began scurrying and ‘closing shops.’” And, she noted, she and Sister Charlotte returned to Cristo Rey Convent “F-A-S-T.”

In October 1970, Sister Charlotte wrote Mother Leo Frances and the sisters not to worry about them despite the reports of the civil war in Bolivia. She told her that despite the constant reports of changing chiefs of government, all was calm and business was proceeding as usual in the Yungas. Nevertheless, she admitted she had just heard that the Peace Corps was expelled, and there were rumors that all Americans would be asked to leave, though not very soon. She assured Mother that she would keep her posted.

At Christmas time, Sister Edith McCauley visited for ten days. During the summer months, Sister Sally organized a sort of “vacation school,” reviewing the basic subjects one hour every day. She also had an hour of recreation for the teenagers and even had a sort of “Headstart” for children ages three to five.

On January 10, 1971, Bolivia had another revolution, and throughout much of 1971, Bolivia was plagued by mail strikes, making the sisters feel still more isolated. By July, even the high-school students went out on strike, mirroring the turmoil in all aspects of society.

In March, Sisters Charlotte and Joan had begun a six-week first aid course for people of the campo. Although the sisters could not venture into the countryside much, the simple campesinos were faithful in attending their classes. In September, Sister Joan wrote Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan about her joy in seeing some of her students put the teachings into practice. For example, one of them had delivered a baby, cut the cord, and had the baby all cleaned and dressed by the time Sister Joan arrived in his outlying pueblo.

Sister Lucille went to the States during June, July, and August for her home visit and some courses in catechetics and theology. Shortly after her return, Sister Charlotte left for her home visit, too.

After bringing Sister Ruth Barron to her new mission in Coripata in late September 1971, Sister Regina Deitchman, Director of Missions, stayed on for a ten-day visit. As a trained technician, Sister Ruth planned on setting up a small laboratory at the hospital. However, before she could begin her work, she and Sister Joan had to try to find some materials and instruments. When they went to La Paz, they discovered that prices were double what they expected since everything had been imported from Germany or the United States. At first they were frustrated in their efforts to gain help. USAID told them that they could not do anything until the
sisters had applied to various Bolivian agencies and been refused. So after soliciting help from four Bolivian agencies and being refused, they returned to USAID. This time they were assured they would be eligible for a grant of $500 to $1000; in the end they received $1000. The sisters also asked a doctor who was going to the States to bring back medicines for Coripata. Back home, Sister Ruth taught Sister Joan and her assistant, Olga Guerra de Illanos, to do some basic tests. They first practiced on themselves. To their surprise, they discovered that they both had worms.

About this same time, Sister Joan was asked by a Sister of Loretta in Loja to teach a young Aymaran girl all she could about nursing. Sister Joan accepted, and the eighteen-year-old proved an apt student. Meanwhile, Sister Ruth began studying Spanish with Graciela Rojas.

On her return from the States, Sister Lucille began doing street preaching in Aymara, using a small battery-powered projector to capture the people’s attention. She apparently attracted considerable listeners, and some even asked questions, taking advantage of the darkness to guard their anonymity. Sister Lucille also began meeting with some of the young people in Arapata, their second largest center.

Once again there was another revolution in August. Nevertheless, Sister Charlotte followed her plans and was able to leave Bolivia for the United States in September.

In October, Sisters Lucille and Ruth took four catechists to a meeting in Alto Beni. Since the schools closed two months early, the sisters began some vacation school classes for them.

By early December, Sister Ruth was receiving many requests from a doctor at the hospital. By the thirteenth, she had outfitted a laboratory in the hospital, the only one within a five-hour drive.

In early December, the sisters were charmed to learn that Sister Mary Seraphine would be arriving. Sisters Joan, Charlotte, and Sally were in La Paz to receive her. They arrived in Coripata in time to celebrate Sisters Joan and Lucille’s feast days. They all enjoyed Mother Leo Frances’ “Little Christmas Gifts.”

As always, Sister Mary Seraphine entered right into the life of the mission, going out to the campo for visits and deliveries. She also joined the sisters in their pre-Christmas visit to Coroico and, despite the slushy snow on the pass, went with Sisters Charlotte and Sally to La Paz to help deliver Christmas gifts to benefactors.

On the travelers’ return, they were delighted to find that Sisters Joan and Lucille had decorated for Christmas during their absence. On Christmas Eve, they joined together to make cookies, and on Christmas they gave small gifts to all the children of the town. Afterwards, they enjoyed dinner with Fathers Crider and Lackamp.
During Bishop Esquivel’s visit in mid-December, the sisters rejoiced when he gave permission for the first four Aymara Indian catechists from their area to begin in the Deacon Program in January. They were to study one week out of every two months for a three-year period.

Sisters Ruth and Sally decided to do some sightseeing on their way to the Community meeting in Talara in January, so the day after Christmas, they set off for La Paz. From there, they traveled overland to Lima, stopping in Puno, gateway to beautiful Lake Titicaca and folkloric capital of Peru, then on to the famous Inca ruins at Cuzco and Machu Picchu, and then to Arequipa, called “the white city” for its shining marble buildings. On some of the legs of their journey, they were traveling for seventeen hours or more. Not surprisingly, when they finally got to Lima, they flew to Piura, continuing on to Talara by bus.

Meanwhile, the other sisters flew from La Paz to Lima, and from there took a bus to Talara (about 14 hours). The Coripatans were only too happy to join the rest of the SCLs on January 3, 1972, in the meetings conducted by Sisters Mary Kevin Hollow and Mary Serena Sheehy, Community Councilors. Besides the meetings, they took time out to enjoy one another and to take a day of rest and recreation at Punta Sal, although some ventured on to the Ecuadorian border for shopping. Following the meetings, Sisters Mary Kevin and Mary Serena visited Coripata briefly before returning to the United States.

The next day, Sister Sally was once again on the road to La Paz, this time accompanying Sister Ruth and some catechists. On the way to visit the frontier with Peru and do some shopping, their bus collided with another bus. Sister Sally hit her left hand against a metal bar and had some pain in her right shoulder, but there were no serious injuries. After boarding another bus and crossing into Peru, she took the catechists to a clinic to be checked, but they were only badly bruised. More frustrating, perhaps, was that they were stopped to be checked by Customs officials six different times on their way back.

Sister Ruth left for Cochabamba for four months of Spanish classes on January 31, and Sister Sally and the catechists returned to Coripata. She was surprised to find Bishop Helmsing and Father Ken Criqui, Sister Angela Marie Doman’s nephew, who were visiting from the States.

A few days later, Sister Lucille conducted her first classes for sixteen of the catechists’ wives. Other sisters helped in giving lessons in health and sewing. In March, these women decided they would rather come for three days every three months rather than one day each month.

Following the meetings in Talara, Sisters Joan and Valerie Odrowski had left on a vacation in Peru and Chile. Sister Joan returned to Coripata in early February. For most of February, the roads were all but impassable.
When the sisters did go to Coroico or Carmen Pampa, it was by bus. Finally on the twenty-second, Sisters Joan and Lucille went up to La Paz, taking along some women and girls. While there, Sister Joan received the equivalent of $1000 from USAID for the new laboratory that Sister Ruth had been setting up in the hospital. Once again the doctor stationed in Coripata left.

In March, greater emphasis began to be given to developing groups for shared prayer. First, some women from the parish began sessions. Then the sisters from Coroico came over for an afternoon or evening of shared prayer. A few days later, a prayer meeting was held with nine people of the upper class, referred to as gente. Still later in the month, the sisters joined Sister Charlotte (who was making several days of retreat) and the Franciscan sisters in Coroico for more shared prayer. When Sister Charlotte returned home, Sister Joan took her turn making several days of retreat. The SCLs and Franciscan sisters continued to alternate places for weekly times of prayer together.

Sister Lucille developed a plan to instruct the teachers in the campo schools so that they themselves could give the religion classes. When the schools started in the middle of March, Sister Sally and the catechists worked in the schools in town; Sister Lucille and some catechists worked with three of the campo schools. Sister Charlotte worked with couples in a prayer group during this time.

Early in April, though the roads were still very bad and they had to take the longer way through Coroico, Sister Sally went to La Paz with some Precious Blood Sisters who had been visiting. One of her purposes was to register in the Census of Foreigners that the government was now demanding. She also wanted to contact her home to get news of her stepmother, who had been ill. On the sixteenth, Sister Joan accompanied Sister Charlotte when she ventured to the capital for a meeting of Religious Superiors or Community Representatives.

At the end of April, Sister Joan went up to La Paz with Father Lackamp, who was going to Cochabamba to study Aymara. Father Crider had already studied it and was now saying Mass and giving simple talks to the Indians in their native language.

While in La Paz, Sister Joan learned that a doctor would be coming to Coripata only every two weeks, thus increasing the sisters' work. Ironically, the sisters were later told that the Minister of Health was not sending a doctor because the sister nurses were caring for the people! Nevertheless, a new doctor was appointed by late June. He did not stay long, however, leaving the whole area of North Yungas without a doctor. To make matters worse, when the sisters took a patient to Chulumani, they discovered that the doctor from there had gone to La Paz. As a result, Sister Lucille actually
drove a woman who had fractured her shoulder and an eight-year-old boy who had lost an eye all the way to La Paz.

Early in May, Sister Sally and a catechist took a mother and her sixteen-year-old deaf mute to La Paz for testing and to see if she were educable. But in the end, the mother would not allow her to stay for the four months necessary, so the trip was in vain.

Earlier in the year, in February, the sisters had heard that the government officials visiting in Coripata were actually down to investigate possible infiltration of people from Chile; they believed that subversives were coming in to foment unrest among the campesinos. Now, toward the end of May, there was news that three sisters had been expelled from Bolivia for harboring guerrillas in their convent. The soldiers had forced their way in and had killed three of the “guests.”

Several changes took place in mid-year. Sister Joan left for her summer tertianship program, after which she would enter a nurse clinician program at Kansas University Medical Center and a preceptorship. On June 1, Sister Ruth Barron returned from her language studies in Cochabamba and was very content with the new laboratory at the hospital that Sister Charlotte and Joe Clark had readied. Besides her clinical work, Sister Ruth helped with the two days of classes for the sixteen wives of catechists. On June 18, Sister Sally left for Talara, hoping that her asthma and other health problems might be taken care of in the warmer, drier climate. At the end of the month, Sister Ruth went to Cochabamba for retreat. Shortly thereafter, Sister Regina Deitchman, Director of Missions, arrived for a two-week visit before going to the United States.

At the end of July, Bishop Esquivel came to Coripata for a four-day visit and to rest. In future years, especially after the Kansas City-St Joseph priests left, he would be a very regular visitor, dropping in announced and unannounced. He seemed to love the sisters and conversed very openly with them. At one point, he even took English from Sister Lucille.

In mid-August, Sister Lucille began the series of classes for the third group of catechists’ wives. Again the other sisters helped her in the presentation of courses in health and homemaking. In late September, Sister Mary Patricia Kielty arrived to replace Sister Joan during her absence in the States.

At various times, the sisters tried to have some activities for the youth of Coripata, especially on Friday nights, to lure them away from the drinking which commonly began then. On October 15, Sister Lucille took a group to Coroico for a Fun Day.

During November, a series of guests came, some staying ten days to two weeks. The following month, while Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia went to La Paz to renew the latter’s visa, Sister Charlotte remained at
home, making cookies and candy for Christmas gifts. As usual, the priests and sisters shared Christmas dinner together, this time at the convent. Within a few days, Sister Lucille left for a month’s vacation with a Franciscan sister. During her time away, she visited the sisters in Talara.

In early January 1973, Sister Charlotte left for retreat in Cochabamba, and Sister Ruth went with her to see a doctor about a sinus infection. This left Sister Mary Patricia alone on the home front for almost two weeks. As there were many patients, it was fortunate for her that a doctor visited, using the clinic for his examinations. A few days later, Dr. Alba, who had earlier deserted the scene, returned to await his replacement. During his remaining time, he continued to make things difficult for the sisters, even going to a meeting of the Federation of Campesinos and denouncing the “Madres.” He asked the campesinos to do likewise, but they did not.

About the middle of the month, the sisters heard that Sister Joan would not return until later than she had thought. She was to have a foot operated on and would have to be off it for three months.

During the first week of February, Sisters Charlotte, Mary Patricia, and Ruth took three days for faith sharing with Sister Regina. Among other things, they discerned whether or not one of the missionary SCLs should spend a year in the United States promoting the SCL missionary works. The decision of the sisters in Coripata was affirmative. During this time, the sister nurses took no calls, and Olga Guerra de Illanos, an employee in the clinic, attended as many patients as she could in the clinic.

The next week, Sisters Ruth and Lucille drove to Coroico where Sister Ruth had agreed to collaborate with a French doctor doing research on a tropical disease. In return, she would be supplied with free medicines provided by the French Embassy.

During the time of Carnaval, all the sisters took some break from their work. Both Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went to La Paz and Oruru for the famous pre-Lenten fiesta, and Sister Mary Patricia took advantage of the time to go to the Peruvian frontier to renew her visa.

It was still dry enough in mid-March for Sisters Lucille and Charlotte to drive the three hours to Irupana to consult about the program for deacons and their wives. Early the next month, Sister Lucille took six catechist deacon candidates to Irupana for their first week of courses. She herself would teach the sessions on marriage.

During the latter part of March and the first part of April, Sisters Charlotte, Mary Patricia, and Ruth began a series of meetings to establish health goals, begin records on each patient in the clinic, and set up a system of cross-filing. They also met regarding the role of the laboratory and the collaboration that should be expected of the nurses and doctor. Even more specifically, they tried to describe clearly the SCL Health Program in Coripata.
During this time, the sisters also met to evaluate their experiences with “group government” during the first half of the year. For in these times after Vatican II, members of local houses were given permission to assume the duties that formerly belonged to a superior and share responsibility within the group. During the following weeks, the sisters began several faith-sharing sessions, using the topics the Community had recommended on “Common Vision” and “Elements Essential to Religious Life.”

Moreover, they laid plans for the next weeklong course for catechists’ wives. Sisters Charlotte, Lucille, and Ruth, as well as the two priests and Señorita Graciela Rojas, would all teach, Sister Lucille and Father Crider giving their presentations in Aymara. However, on the day they were to begin, Sisters Lucille and Charlotte were severely disappointed when they took both jeeps and went out to collect the participants. They both returned without a single passenger. Two women had walked a long way. The next morning, they began with these two and one more that had arrived; by that evening, four more had come. And so they proceeded.

In April, they welcomed a new doctor and were favorably impressed. Dr. Valentia also appeared genuinely interested in the sisters’ teaching program.

Later in the month, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille took four catechists’ wives to a weeklong course in Chulumani. That same week, Sister Ruth and two señoritas visited Machacamarca, where they took a census in preparation for the coming campaign to control tuberculosis; they returned two weeks later to continue the work.

In mid-May, Sister Charlotte and Father Lackamp met with the Hospital Committee. Sister Charlotte also worked with the doctor in giving vaccinations for polio while Sister Mary Patricia made campo calls with Señora Olga. Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia also spent time sorting the medicines they had on hand so that they could take ones they were not using to the General Hospital in La Paz.

Sister Ruth also went to La Paz with Dr. Gomez, with whom she was collaborating on his research. During this and some nine other fruitless trips, she tried to get the vaccine against tuberculosis that was so badly needed. The Health Minister in La Paz must finally have heard her insistent pleas, though it was not until August that Dr. Valentia returned from La Paz with enough vials to vaccinate one thousand people!

Following a day of recollection at their house, the sisters prepared for a triple celebration on Mother’s Day. Together with the priests, they gave thanks for Father Crider’s twenty years as a priest, Father Lackamp’s ten years, and Sister Ruth’s twenty-five years as a religious. It may also have been partially a farewell for Father Lackamp, who had been transferred to Santiago de Huata; Father John Seck would replace him in Coripata.
To their surprise, Father Charles Tobin arrived the following month as the new pastor.

During June, the nurses began both a beginning and an advanced class in first aid for men. The following month, the classes continued for the catechists' wives; this time Sister Charlotte was in charge, though both Sisters Lucille and Ruth helped out with the teaching and preparations.

On July 10, the sisters welcomed Sister Joan back from her studies in the States. By the end of the month, Sister Mary Patricia left to take a nurse clinician course at Wichita State University (Kansas) and have a six-month preceptorship afterwards. Sister Charlotte went to Talara for vacation about the same time.

When a measles epidemic broke out in Trinidad Pampa, the doctor, Sister Joan, and Olga all went out to vaccinate the healthy and tend the sick. Actually, they had not been informed of the epidemic until after two children had died.

At the end of the month, Sister Charlotte took Sister Ruth to La Paz to begin her vacation. At the same time, she welcomed Sister Mary Seraphine, who had come to visit and share news of the first session of the Community's Renewal Chapter.

When Father Seck arrived the third week of September, he brought news that Sister Ruth had fallen in Oruru. Father Walt Zientarski had sent a driver and one of the Mercedarian Sisters to Oruru for Sister Ruth and brought her back to Clinic San Miguel in La Paz. Sisters Lucille and Charlotte went up to La Paz, but Sister Ruth stayed at the clinic until the following week.

Three Franciscans from Coroico came over for the feast day dinner on Saint Vincent's Day, and that evening Father Tobin celebrated Mass for the sisters in the convent dining room.

The next day, Sister Lucille began a prayer group in Aymara as the basis for a Basic Christian Community. About two weeks later, she began a group of classes for teenage girls. She hoped to develop such groups in each area of the parish. The content of such classes varied a great deal, depending on who was giving them. One sister, for example, might teach some basic religion and/or prayer. But sometimes the sisters worked as a team and taught basic health, sewing, cooking, and whatever else might help the girls. They also had recreational activities. Women in the parish like Graciela Rojas also frequently helped.

Just before Thanksgiving, Sister Edith McCauley arrived from Peru. Both the Franciscan sisters and the priests from Coroico came over for Thanksgiving, and one of the Franciscan sisters stayed on to give a day of reflection.

At the end of November, Sister Lucille went to Alto Beni to help with a five-day workshop on the Bible and prayer. Meanwhile, Sister Ruth and
a señorita went twice a week to Machacamarca to continue their census there. Sisters Ruth and Edith likewise went to Carmen Pampa later in the month for a learning session with the Franciscans.

On December 24, the sisters had a party for their women employees, no doubt utilizing some of Sister Charlotte’s famous Christmas delicacies. On Christmas Day itself, they ate with the priests. Then all joined in a party for 350 catechists in the yard at the hacienda house at Chulumani. Sisters Edith and Ruth went to Chulumani to represent the sisters at an inter-parish council of the South Yungas and Coripata. While on that side of the river, they visited the French Canadian sisters at Irupana.

The sisters welcomed in the New Year with Holy Hour in the church. Afterwards, they were invited to the priests’ house for a snack. On January 1, when Father Tobin returned from a home visit in the States, he brought many goodies from Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine.

Toward the end of January 1974, Sisters Edith and Ruth drove to La Paz for additional supplies and to meet Sisters Agnes Klein and Josephine Bustos, who were coming up for the Community meeting. The next day, Sisters Regina Deitchman, Sally Watson, Blanche Marie Remington, and Elena Mack also arrived in La Paz. All eight piled into the Toyota with all of their luggage and the purchases. While returning to Coripata, they found that the pass and the “Devil’s tail” were soupy mud, so they were very happy to discover that Sisters Charlotte and Lucille, using the other jeep, had come out partway in the other jeep to meet them.

Originally, the sisters had planned to begin the Community meetings with a retreat in Coroico. But those plans were changed when the road closed. Instead, Father Vincent gave his conferences in the hotel and celebrated Mass in the sisters’ dining room. He and the Convent Station sister who had come with him tried to leave at least twice, but there had been twelve inches of rain during January, and the road to La Paz was closed. They were finally able to leave by February 1. Two days later, the sisters concluded their meetings, and a series of adventures began for those trying to return to Peru and for those trying to get them to La Paz. Sometimes they had to turn back because of landslides; at other times, they walked more than three and a half miles in the rain; almost all trips took up to seven or nine hours.

In the third week of February, Sister Ruth went up to La Paz with the two Kansas City priests; from there, she went on to Cochabamba to begin a one-month course in Aymara. She planned to leave for the States after this was over in order to have her heel operated on.

Sister Joan returned from her vacation in La Paz, Arica, and Santiago, Chile, just in time to take part in the first Culto de Salud in the parish church. This consisted in a penitential service with readings, hymns, the
laying on of hands, and anointing of the sick. Sixty people were anointed and received Communion.

On March 16, Father Crider, Sister Lucille, and Sister Charlotte went by jeep to the South Yungas. Two truckloads of catechists and their families also left for the ordination of the first married deacon of the Yungas area, but the rain and the roads were so bad that they arrived after the ceremony was completed! It had taken them four times the normal time to cover the route. The roads were even worse coming back, and most had to walk a long distance. Even at that, they considered themselves fortunate that there had been no accident. On April 1, the sister nurses worked at the hospital all night as a result of a truck accident in Coripata.

The roads being as they were, Sister Lucille borrowed a horse and went to Trinidad Pampa for two weeks to work with the people of the pueblo. Whether it was due to this time in the campo or not, Sister Lucille became quite ill toward the end of April. She was diagnosed as having hepatitis, so she finally went over to Carmen Pampa to recuperate, not returning until July 6.

Since Sister Lucille was ill, the others pitched in and gave the monthly workshop for the wives of catechists. They taught them health, cooking, religion, knitting, and nutrition. Perhaps it was during these days that Sister Charlotte taught them how to make orange marmalade without using pectin, a recipe she had recently developed for use at the convent. She had been anxious to share this knowledge with the women.

Three days later, Sister Charlotte began a workshop for teenage girls similar to that for the women. In early May, Sister Edith taught the women’s course with the help of a couple of the women from Coripata.

During the last week or so of May, there were several farewells for Sister Charlotte, given by the sisters, the parish workers, and friends, all expressing their gratitude for Sister Charlotte and her work. On May 28, she left for the United States, where she would first visit the Community and her family and then go to Montana State University for more than a year’s studies.

During July, Sisters Joan and Edith went to Carmen Pampa to celebrate the Fourth with the other gringos of the area. This year the celebration for Our Lady of Mount Carmel was somewhat larger than the previous year. Five groups of costumed dancers came to participate in two distinct parades.

On July 19, Sister Joan went to La Paz to make telephone connections with the States and learn who had been elected Community Director. The sisters received a telegram the next day giving them the names of the new Community Councilors.

During August and September, the sisters took turns going out to the pueblos for Communion services while Father Tobin was in Cochabamba.
studying Aymara. By August, Sister Lucille was “back on deck” and gave a workshop for the young girls of the campo. On August 17, there was a small celebration in the parish club room for Sister Lucille’s twenty-fifth anniversary as an SCL.

Both Sisters Joan and Edith entered into the many activities in the boys’ school the last week of the month. They were all delighted that many received their First Holy Communion at that time.

The Franciscan sisters from Coroico and a young woman from Unguyu came to help celebrate Saint Vincent’s Day on September 27. For Founders’ Day in November, each of the sisters invited five elderly poor persons. Both Graciela Rojas and Celi Arteaga cooked the dinner in the club.

In mid-November, thanks to a ham operator in Venezuela who called La Paz, Sister Joan received the sad news of her mother’s serious illness. She left almost immediately, staying to care for her mother until she died of cancer in Denver on January 31.

During December, there were the usual pre-Christmas activities. Sister Edith took boxes of candy and cookies to La Paz to share with their benefactors there. Some of the sisters from Coroico and two Presentation Sisters came to see the Aymara Christmas program in the parish club room. The Presentation sisters stayed over for Christmas.

At the end of December, Father Crider left the mission for good. Father Walt Zientarski arrived to replace him, but he was in Coripata for just three months before he left unexpectedly for the United States for health reasons.

Sister Regina Deitchman came to spend five days in January 1975 before going to Cochabamba for a review course. When she returned after the course, Sister Edith, who had just finished a thirty-day retreat, accompanied her. Shortly thereafter, Sister Lucille left for vacation and retreat.

During February, Sister Ruth began an exasperating time of trying to get her driver’s license. She did not even find the office open until after four attempts since there were no regular days. Then, a month later, she was told that the driving office had lost all her papers and she would have to start all over. But her perseverance won out; in the end, she got not only her own license but one for Sister Joan. What was more, she was told these were valid for the term of their mission, so at least there would be no more hassle with this.

On April 28, at a meeting of all the priests and sisters working in the three parishes under the auspices of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese, the sisters heard for the first time that Fathers Wagner and Lackamp were leaving in the middle of the next year, and that within five years there would no longer be Kansas City-St. Joseph priests at Santiago in Coripata. After the priests met again at the end of May, they informed the SCLs that they would withdraw from the parish in June of 1977, just two years away.
On May 1, Sister Mary Patricia returned from a refresher class in Cochabamba. Two weeks later, Sister Joan was engaged in a midwifery course. She soon more than put it into practice when, in early June, she performed a C-section because the young woman doctor couldn’t proceed. That was the first time in nine years that one of the sisters had delivered a baby in that way.

Continuing in her efforts for women, Sister Edith contacted CODEX (an office for the promotion of Bolivian women) and invited them to come to Coripata. She was delighted when four women arrived for two days toward the end of May to investigate the needs of the campesino women and then to meet with Sister Edith and the priests about ways of meeting these needs.

In early June, Sister Lucille gave a weeklong workshop completely in Aymara, translating for those who needed it. Among these were the sisters, all of whom participated in the course.

In the middle of the month, Sister Ruth went back to Cochabamba for another month of Aymara, then to take her vacation and participate in a workshop. Sister Joan also went to Cochabamba a few days later, traveling with a Franciscan sister. They both made retreat with the Daughters of Charity and then took a trip through some other parts of Bolivia.

During the traditional celebrations in July, the City of Coripata had presented the sisters with a “Diploma of Honor” for their work for the good of all the people of the area.

Bishop Adhemar Esquivel came the first week of July to speak with the priests and sisters and make plans regarding the priests’ withdrawal from Coripata. When he returned in November, everyone was surprised when Fathers Mike Walker and John Seck insisted that the sisters should leave when the priests did. Contrariwise, the Bishop spoke of the necessity for the sisters to remain and told the priests that he would make whatever decisions were necessary when they left. Both Sisters Mary Liguori Horvat and Mary Seraphine Sheehan were present at this meeting, having arrived from the States in late August. Needless to say, there was some little tension between the priests and sisters after their pronouncement.

Again in mid-November, Father John Seck “made it official” at a noon meal at the rectory. He told the sisters that they were no longer needed and that he was buying an ambulance for the hospital so the sisters no longer needed to care for the campo health-wise. Moreover, he told Sister Lucille that she no longer was needed in the campo because the catechists were well formed. He indicated that his definite intent was to get the sisters out of Coripata.

As if to manifest their intention of staying, the sisters purchased a piano the Sisters of Notre Dame in La Paz no longer wanted and had it delivered to their convent in Coripata. Interestingly enough, after Midnight
Mass, when the priests came over for some refreshments, it was Father Seck who entertained them all playing the piano. And the next day, the priests welcomed the sisters for a festive dinner at their house.

But the saga was not over. Right after the New Year, all the priests of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese who were in Bolivia met together in Carmen Pampa and afterwards visited with the sisters. Apparently, Father Mike Walker had been informed by Sister Mary Kevin Hollow while he was in the United States that neither "he, nor the K.C. priests, assigned nor moved our Sisters according to their desires."23

While all of this was happening, Sister Edith left for her three-month vacation in the United States, and in December Sister Charlotte returned from her year of study in the States.

It seemed that no matter how long the sisters were in Coripata, they were always encountering "new" beliefs or practices. Thus, at the end of almost ten years there, Sister Joan made a grisly discovery while making a sick call. While examining the patient, she discovered that both the face and throat were swollen. No small wonder, since a rope had been tightened about the throat to keep out the bad odor! The sisters had heard of such "mercy killings" but had never actually witnessed one.

On January 7, 1976, Sister Joan departed for a three-week course on Church Leadership in South America and other countries. This international sharing was going to take place in Venezuela.

Sister Regina Deitchman, Director of Missions, arrived in mid-January, thinking she was to discuss the matter of the sisters' continued presence with the priests. On her arrival, of course, she found there was nothing for her to resolve. About a week after she returned to Peru, Bishop George Fitzsimmons, Auxiliary Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph, arrived. He spent all of one morning with the sisters; then in the afternoon and again after supper, he dialogued with the priests and sisters. He assured the sisters of the continuing financial support of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. He also asked them what they thought Bishop Esquivel would think of having a sister administer the parish.

During February, Sister Ruth shared with the other sisters that she was experiencing some of the symptoms of multiple sclerosis, especially with regard to problems of coordination and vision. The sisters urged her not to drive, especially when tired. Shortly thereafter, she told them that the Seton Charities had offered her work in their hospital in Cochabamba, and she had asked to go there.

In the first part of March, Sister Suzanne, a Convent Station Sister of Charity working with CIPCA,24 came to Coripata to investigate social justice problems of the Indians. She asked to stay with the SCLs whenever she was in Coripata; she did so for some time.
In early March, Sister Charlotte went to La Paz for meetings of the newly formed Nurses' Conference for the diocese. About the same time, Sister Lucille and Father Seek were making preparations for Lent. They created a very graphic representation of sins, which they attached to the large cross in the sanctuary, and of the virtues, which they portrayed on the image of a man that was then attached on the front of the altar. These graphic representations would remain throughout Lent.

Fathers John Seck and Mike Walker, Sister Lucille, and a catechist began visiting various villages and doing home visiting, praying with the prospective deacons and their families. It appeared that Father Seck had suddenly realized that the catechists were not as well formed as he thought. On the Feast of St. Patrick, the parish held a farewell for Father Mike, who went to the Altiplano to work with the Maryknoll priests. Father Terry Bruce came to Coripata as his replacement. But during the next few years, the sisters would see Father Mike frequently in Coripata.

At the end of March, the sisters went to Talara for Community meetings, where they met up with Sister Edith McCauley, who had just returned from the States. All were back in Coripata by early April when the school year began. With the beginning of classes, Fathers John Seck and Terry Bruce and Sisters Edith and Lucille had an all-morning class for 280 students in the high school. Sisters Charlotte and Lucille met with Father John Seck and the CIPCA workers to evaluate that program, but the meeting was very disorganized.

The parish team tried to make the Holy Week services even more meaningful for the people. The various prayer groups met for a Last Supper liturgy and explanation before the Mass. On Good Friday, following the celebration of the Word, there was a procession in which some of the people carried placards saying "This isn't the end." During the Easter Vigil, there was a procession with the "new man" that had been on the altar since Ash Wednesday.

During Holy Week and on Easter Sunday, there were several farewells for Sister Ruth, first in Machacamarca, where she had worked on the census, and then in Coripata. On Easter afternoon, she left for La Paz with Fathers Terry and John, planning to wait there for her official mission to the hospital in Cochabamba.

On May 15, Father Terry and Sisters Charlotte, Joan, and Lucille all helped give the "Life in the Spirit" seminar for catechists. On Pentecost Sunday, the catechists from the campo held a three-hour prayer and praise service in the evening. Afterwards, they spent some time socializing and having refreshments.

In early June, the two priests and Sisters Charlotte and Joan met once again with the CIPCA team for evaluation, but this time in La Paz.
About this same time, Father John Seek discontinued the library the sisters had started, appointing a committee to be in charge of operating the library on the lower floor of the cooperative building. He had said that his motive was so that the parish would not have to continue paying a librarian, but of course he found out that he still had to have one at the new place too. So a junior from the high school was put in charge after attending a short course in La Paz. The volunteers did collect new and old books and categorize them. However, the rule of silence was promptly forgotten by all who entered, and one can only guess at the outcome.

On July 2, Sister Lucille left for a year’s study in the United States, thus reducing the house to three sisters. Then it was decreased still more when Sister Joan went to Talara to stay with Sister Josephine Bustos, who was alone there. Father Terry Bruce also went to Cochabamba to study Spanish. So the parish team was now composed of two sisters, Sisters Charlotte and Edith, and Father John Seek.

During the second half of July, Bishop Esquivel arrived to spend a week and to visit the various parish groups. He also met with the priests and sisters after Mass one night, stressing the importance of the prayer groups and the Eucharist.

Sister Edith took her prayer group to Carmen Pampa and to Coroico for the evening Mass in the Cathedral one night. Then in mid-July, she went to the Conference of Religious in Cochabamba. While she was gone, a Dutch volunteer from Chulumani stayed with Sister Charlotte for two nights.

Sister Edith's plan for working full-time with the promotion of women was accepted in August. She planned to have two weeklong workshops every month in the community. Graciela Rojas and Rosa Salinas were going to help her initiate the program.

After almost two months in Talara, Sister Joan returned. She had two new objectives: to start a choir and to find some way of teaching the Billings Method of natural family planning to the men and women of Coripata. She was no sooner back than a measles epidemic broke out. There were about thirteen unnecessary deaths due to the ineptness and disinterest of the doctor currently stationed in Coripata. Sister Charlotte finally wired the Minister of Health, and two doctors were sent down from La Paz to inoculate the children.

At the end of September, Sisters Ruth Barron and Janet Cashman came for a visit. During the week she was in Coripata, Sister Janet had lots of practice in deliveries as there were ten babies born that week.

Father John Seek, in his efforts to organize everything before he left, asked the SCLs if they would mind if another religious group took the hospital; he also asked once again if the SCLs would consider managing it. They responded “no” on both counts. On October 22, the mayor
petitioned the sisters to take the hospital, saying that it was the desire of all
the inhabitants of his jurisdiction. On November 20, Sister Mary Kevin
Hollow, Community Director, again responded negatively to Father Seck.26

During November, Sister Josephine Bustos came to visit the sisters,
spoilng them with her good cooking. Some of the Franciscans came over
to help celebrate Sister Charlotte's feast day. Then later, all the gringos were
again guests of the Xaverian Brothers in Carmen Pampa for Thanksgiving.
And once again the sisters made a day of recollection afterwards.

Sister Charlotte went to Cochabamba for the second-level course in
Social Promotion and stayed on for a charismatic weekend. Later, Sister
Joan and a Franciscan sister went to Cochabamba for retreat.

For Advent, some of the boys from the parish made manikin figures of
Isaiah, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist. Closer to Christmas, the Aymara
prayer group again began preparing for their Christmas program. The
women read the Scriptures this year for the first time. No doubt, this gave
further evidence of the good things that were happening thanks to Sister
Edith's work with the women.

At the end of the year, the sisters recorded some of their concerns. They mentioned that the government's control of coca planting would have
a definite effect on the economy of the Yungas and on their poor
campesinos. There was also a severe drought in progress. A number of
vecino families closed down their shops and moved to the city.27 Moreover,
the growing discrimination against the Indians was frightening. It seemed
that the government had developed a plan for their elimination, noted in
the increased abortions, the attitudes of the doctors toward Indian patients,
and the non-treatment of tuberculosis. Another evidence of discrimination
was exhibited when Clara Arteaga, a woman of mixed blood, made fifteen
trips to La Paz trying to enter a nursing program; the sisters, too, had
intervened on her behalf.

Working relations with the doctors during the previous two years had
been more and more difficult, especially as the doctors began pushing
abortion and birth control, although covertly. The sisters also sensed an
anti-Americanism among them but realized that some of the difficulty lay
in the doctors' own professional insecurity.

Right after New Year's Day 1977, Sister Charlotte went to Coroico
for a directed retreat. On the ninth, Sisters Joan and Edith went up to La
Paz. Sister Edith planned on attending a special class in Social Promotion
being given at the Archbishop's place. Then on the thirteenth, they would
pick up Sister Agnes Klein before returning to Coripata.

On the fourteenth, Fathers Mike Walker and Terry Bruce met with
Sisters Agnes, Charlotte, and Joan to draw up a recommendation to Sister
Mary Kevin Hollow. They suggested that the sisters be allowed to remain

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in Coripata for a year of experimentation, and, if the Bishops agreed, that the sisters should be in charge of the parish.

On January 25, Sisters Joan and Charlotte took Sister Agnes to La Paz for her return flight to Peru. Just four days later, Sister Ruth Barron returned to the United States after six years of service in Bolivia.

Again in February 1977, the sisters had a sad experience with one of their employees. On the third, Olga Guerra de Illanos walked off her job in the clinic after having worked with the sisters for almost ten years. Apparently, she had been ill-advised and thought the sisters should pay her more according to the laws. In the month before the matter was settled, there were considerable hard feelings and misinterpreted actions. After the sisters consulted a lawyer in La Paz, Olga would receive only about $600 according to the law. This was much less than she had expected. Father Seck said the priests would help with the expenses. As a result of this experience, the sisters decided to put both their cook and the other clinic worker under contract.

In mid-February, Sister Joan, who was planning to transfer to Talara, helped Sister Charlotte clean out unusable items that had arrived as long as ten years ago. At this time also, the sisters were glad to welcome Sister Mary Vincentia Maronick for a short visit.

Toward the end of February, Sisters Charlotte, Joan, Edith, and all five priests of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese in Bolivia met with Archbishop Jorge Manrique in La Paz. He was in accord with the sisters staying on in Coripata, provided that they had Mass and the Sacraments at least twice a month. They all recognized, however, that the decision depended on the Community Director. In March, the sisters learned that the SCL Council was in favor of the SCLs staying in Coripata.

In response to Sister Mary Kevin concerning sister personnel, Sister Charlotte said that she did not see a need to replace Sister Joan when she left. Since there probably would not be priests in the parish, she thought catechists were more important than a nurse. She also noted that Sister Edith did not see herself as a catechist, but as someone working in the promotion of women.

In April 1977, Bishop Adhemar Esquivel wrote to Sister Mary Kevin, urging her that the SCLs remain. He said that he had just recently visited Coripata and that he valued the work the sisters were doing there. While he was there, he was present for a day of prayer for forty catechists and was duly impressed. He promised to send the sisters a copy of the pastoral guidelines the following week.

Meanwhile, Sister Edith had taken six volunteers to a center of formation in Viacha in March. She hoped to have some of the women from there come to Coripata to help with classes in May.
During April, the sisters again had many guests, from Kansas City, La Paz, and Santa Cruz. The priests and sisters also took time out for a day of reflection down by the river.

As always, the Holy Week services were very impressive. On Holy Thursday, they had a Seder meal in the parish hall with members of the prayer groups participating. Then there was a dramatization of Jesus before Pilate in the plaza, followed by a live Way of the Cross.

Easter Sunday again became a farewell day, this time for Father Terry Bruce in the parish hall. The sisters were invited to dinner at the priests’ house. Then Father John Seek, Sister Joan, and Sister Charlotte went up to La Paz for the party for him there.

Sister Charlotte went on to Santa Cruz for two weeks, partly to see the charismatic movement there. She was very impressed by the conversions and transformations that were taking place in that community.

The priests’ leaving seemed more real as the sisters saw Father John Seek cleaning out the accumulation of years. After he had turned off the refrigerator in mid-April, he began eating with the sisters.

Toward the end of May, Sister Joan returned from Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, relaxed and impressed with what she had seen of the pastoral work being done there. At the end of the first week of June, Sister Lucille returned from her year of study in the States, accompanied by Sisters Mary Kevin and Mary Liguori, who had come to meet with the Bishop. The first few days, they had time for a picnic and a partial day of recollection before beginning the meetings.

During the four days that followed, a contract was drawn up between the SCLs and the Diocese of La Paz which provided the following: (1) that the SCLs promised to work in the parish of Santiago, Coripata; (2) that, in the absence of a priest, the Madres would have charge of the parish; (3) that the contract was for one year, July 1, 1977 to June 30, 1978, subject to review, evaluation, and possible renewal; (4) that the Madres would prepare a Pastoral Plan with other pastoral agents and the agreement of the Bishop; (5) that the Archdiocese promised to promote the conditions necessary for the Madres to live and develop their spiritual and communal life, with the celebration of the Eucharist being guaranteed at least twice a month in the parish; and (6) that the Archdiocese promised to provide for the sacramental life of the faithful. This contract was signed by Sister Mary Kevin Hollow and Archbishop Jorge Manrique.31

Father Mike Gillgannon, representing the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese, shared his views regarding a budget, and Father Alboa from CIPCA gave a report on that organization’s investigations in the parish. It was decided that if the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese would continue to support the sisters, the SCLs would contribute to the apostolic works.
Following this meeting, Sisters Charlotte, Lucille, and Edith met to formulate objectives and a pastoral plan. The latter proclaimed this general goal: "Integral Evangelization through the divine power of the message, serving the people through human promotion and incorporation of all pastoral agents." Since Sister Joan was leaving for Talara after the Feast of Carmen in July, she did not participate in this. Two more days of meetings followed.

Then the departures began: Sister Agnes Klein, who had come over earlier, left on June 18; Sisters Mary Kevin and Mary Liguori, on June 21; and Father Seck, on June 21 also, although he would return for the Feast of Carmen and its many festivities and then leave definitively on August 1, 1977. With his departure, a new epoch in the Coripata mission began.
Chapter XIV Notes

1 Sister Cornelia Donnelly to Mother Leo Frances Ryan and all, April 2, 1965, A/SCL.
3 Ryan to Msgr. Robert E. Walton, August 10, 1965, A/SCL.
4 Sister Blanche Marie Remington to Family, August 15, 1965, A/SCL.
5 Sister Mary Cabrini (Charlotte) Swain to Ryan, September 4, 1965, A/SCL.
6 Remington to her father and family, January 17, 1966, A/SCL.
7 Swain to Ryan, January 14, 1966, A/SCL.
8 Ryan to Walton, April 1, 1966, A/SCL.
9 People graduating from medical school had to serve in the rural areas for at least one year.
10 "Coripata House History," July 31, 1967, A/SCL.
11 Coripatan (newsletter of the SCLs in Bolivia), July 1-17, 1966, A/SCL; Remington to her father, July 13, 1966, A/SCL; and John Ratterman, "Nun Still at Diocesan Mission in Spite of Fall," Catholic Key (paper of the KC-St. Joseph, MO Diocese), July 2, 1978, A/SCL.
13 Walton to Ryan, December 20, 1966, A/SCL.
14 Sometimes the shipments arrived considerably later than expected. For instance, on St. Patrick's Day 1968, they received a 1966 shipment with Christmas presents, medical supplies, and clothes. Although this had been shipped through Catholic Relief Services, it was held up in Customs!
16 "Coripata House History," October 16, 1969, A/SCL.
17 Coripatan, November 1-December 31, 1966, A/SCL.
18 "Nursing in the Mountains of Latin America," SCL Spectrum (SCL newsletter, Leavenworth, KS), May 1976, p. 10, A/SCL.
20 "Nursing in the Mountains," A/SCL.
21 Sister Lucille Harrington to Sisters and Friends, January 13, 1971, A/SCL.
22 Swain, Coripatan, October 7, 1970, A/SCL.
23 "Coripata House History," January 3, 1976, A/SCL.
24 CIPCA: Center for the Investigation and Promotion of Campesinos (small farmers)
25 Swain to Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, October 8, 1976, A/SCL.
26 Hollow to Father John Seck, November 20, 1976, A/SCL.
27 Vecinos: middle or upper class people. They often had shops in the city.
28 Archbishop Jorge Manrique and Bishop Esquivel, his auxiliary.
29 Hollow to Sisters in Coripata, March 12, 1977, A/SCL.
30 Bishop Auxiliar Adhemar Esquivel to Hollow, April 5, 1977, A/SCL.
31 Copy in A/SCL.
Sister Blanche Marie Remington with the youth group

Bishop Esquivel and Sister Lucille Harrington giving Communion

Sister Ruth Barron training young Bolivian for laboratory work
Sister Sally Watson teaching women in the kitchen

Sister Joan Kilker helping Sister Charlotte Swain in the clinic
On July 10, 1977, Bishop Adhemar Esquivel concelebrated with Father John Seek and officially turned over the administration of the parish of Santiago to the sisters and representatives of different parish groups. Sister Lucille Harrington and five laymen gave verbal responses to the commission. Bishop Esquivel also paid tribute to all the priests who had served in the parish of Santiago, and he honored Father Seek’s mother who was visiting. He likewise offered words of gratitude to Sister Joan Kilker for her many years of service in the parish. Following the ceremony, there was a reception for both Father Seek and Sister Joan. In the week that followed, there were many farewell celebrations for both.

Even before the departure of the last of the Kansas City-St. Joseph priests, the process of transition began. Following the June meetings in which the contract was drawn up, Sisters Lucille, Charlotte Swain, and Edith McCauley met to formulate objectives and a pastoral outline. It set as an objective the “Integral Evangelization through the divine power of the message, serving the people through human promotion and incorporation of all pastoral agents.” Each of these areas was further delineated, and the pastoral team agreed to meet biweekly to evaluate and plan for the further implementation of this pastoral plan.

While the sisters conducted the Communion services, the catechists, Eucharistic ministers, and lectors of the parish were all invited to collaborate.

One of the effects of the priests’ leaving was the end to the paternalism that had existed over the past fourteen years. For instance, the twenty-five women who began taking the monthlong course in sewing sponsored by the CENAFI program of Coroico now were expected to pay the $2.50 fee. Earlier, the parish would have taken care of this.

In protest of the drinking that always occurred on July 17, the sisters did not join in the procession of Our Lady of Fatima. Instead, they had a barbecue for Sister Joan and invited the sisters from Coroico. The next day, Sister Joan went to La Paz so she could get all her paper work done before leaving for Peru on the twentieth.

As part of Sister Edith’s Promotion of Women, three young women from the Altiplano arrived to give workshops in personal hygiene and health, home management, family, cooking, as well as sewing and knitting. Each was a one-week course given in the Aymara language.

The Belgian organization CENAFI also provided scholarships for three girls of the parish. In return, these young women had to promise to give volunteer service in their parish following their five months of training. The girls themselves had activities to raise money for their materials and their room and board while they were in the program. While they were in
La Paz, Sister Edith visited them at least once, staying all night with them, reviewing their notebooks and handiwork, and giving them news of Coripata. When the course closed in late November, Sister Edith took ten girls to La Paz for the celebration and the exposition of work done by members of CENAFI.

Although the SCLs had been put in charge of the parish, it became apparent early in August that Bishop Esquivel planned on making Coripata a center for workshops and pastoral development. On August 8, he arrived with an Oblate priest to give a three-week course on the Bible to thirty-five catechists from the Altiplano. A few days later, a religious and another woman arrived to organize the kitchen detail. During the time of this workshop, some of the catechists went out into some of the campo communities. There they were well received in some; but they were driven out with machetes from other areas.

In the third week of August, Sisters Charlotte and Edith went to La Paz to attend a meeting of the northern zone in Santiago de Huata. Although Sister Charlotte became ill, Sister Edith found the discussions good, especially those in which parishes run by sisters were evaluated. Another meeting was scheduled for October in a parish now conducted by the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul.

On August 28, Archbishop Jorge Manrique authorized the sisters to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony, hold Communion services in the absence of the priest, and carry Communion to the sick. These faculties were valid if a deacon or priest did not arrive as scheduled, or in case of emergency.

In the first week of September, a Spanish priest and the future priest, Paz Jimenez, who was then working with Bishop Esquivel, arrived. Father gave a mission on the Catechumenate Program in the parish.

During September, the sisters arranged with an American agriculturist for the sale of the laboratory equipment that was no longer in use. They were also pleased to learn that more medicine and supplies had arrived in La Paz from Catholic Relief Services.

In October, Sister Edith went to Nogaloni for a weeklong course in the Promotion of Women. Later that month, she went to La Paz for a week's workshop on Personality and Human Relations given by the Conference of Religious (Confer).

During the middle of the month, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went to Carmen Pampa to help Sister Virginia close up the Franciscan convent. As she was the last Franciscan there, she was returning to the United States. Since Sister Charlotte developed a case of mumps, Sister Lucille accompanied "Ginny" to La Paz.
At the end of October, when the Sister of Charity of Convent Station who was working with CIPCA arrived,2 she reported the detention of a Maryknoll Sister and of her being placed under house arrest in La Paz. It appeared that this had happened because, while working in a factory, she had begun working for rights of the workers. She had also worked to obtain prisoners’ rights in the jail. Thanks to the intervention of the Archbishop and the support of her Maryknoll superior and other Maryknollers, as well as the local and national Conference of Religious, she had been given her freedom and all charges had been dropped.

In November, Sister Charlotte had gone to Cochabamba with two Franciscan sisters for a charismatic retreat. Soon after their return, the Franciscan Sisters from Coroico came to help celebrate Sister Charlotte’s birthday. In early December, Sister Edith took the jeep to La Paz for repairs, staying over to meet Sister Agnes Klein, who arrived on the seventh for a week’s visit.

In mid-December 1977, Sister Charlotte had quickly set up a first aid course and taught three men how to give injections when they came seeking help. These new health promoters happily and proudly returned to their own villages ready to help their people. At a later time, Sister Charlotte would again prepare men who came to her with the desire to learn and thereby serve their fellow villagers.

The sisters were happy when one of the priests from the St. Louis, Missouri Diocese working in the Altiplano appeared for the Christmas festivities and Masses. Following their day of prayer on the twenty-fourth, Sister Lucille and the catechists and their wives decorated the church. The Xaverian Brothers invited the sisters from Coripata and Coroico, as well as the priests, to have Christmas dinner in Carmen Pampa.

On December 31, Father Enrique Sanchez arrived for a week, so the sisters and people had Mass and exposition for the New Year. While in Coripata, Father had meetings regarding the Catechumenate program.

In the last week of December and through the beginning of January, another conflictive situation arose between the Church and government. A group of women began a hunger strike in the Chancery Office in La Paz. They were seeking amnesty and justice for political prisoners and exiles. They were joined by other groups not only in La Paz but in other parts of the country. On January 16, 1978, the government ordered a twenty-four hour cessation of all work and activities in La Paz; the following day, it moved in to take the strikers by force. The Archbishop immediately objected to the violation of Christian sanctuary and stated that if a satisfactory solution was not reached by the nineteenth, he would close all churches and forbid all services for that weekend. The radios and newspapers closed because of what they proclaimed to be a violation of asylum and freedom of speech.
During the first week of January, Sister Edith and the three girls who had recently returned from CENAFI began a series of courses in sewing for women and girls of the parish. When the courses for women were finished in May, there was a special Mass, and Sister Edith presented certificates at the program and dinner for them.

The Sister of Charity of Convent Station had resigned from CIPCA because of a social justice issue. However, two laywomen, one from CIPCA and one from Radio San Gabriel, arrived on February 19 to give the workshop for Sister Edith’s program. They were delighted when fifty-seven women came for it.

Once again Coripata had been without a doctor since December. As a result, Sister Charlotte’s work in the clinic was very heavy. In late February, therefore, she made various complaints to the Health Ministry in La Paz.

Early in March, at the request of the sisters, a Resurrectionist priest and six members of his team came from La Paz to give a charismatic retreat to sixty-seven catechists.

Priestly attendance in the parish was not always reliable. Sometimes the priests scheduled did not arrive. At other times, Father Mike Walker “happened in.” However, when he visited for Holy Week, the Archbishop had sent a Sulpician and a sister to conduct the services. The community therefore had full liturgical celebrations, including the Seder meal on Holy Thursday.

In May 1967, just a year after the sisters’ arrival in Coripata, Sister Lucille had the catechists’ wives begin coming to the catechists’ classes with their husbands so that the couples could begin working as a team in their communities. By April 1978, she could look with pride on their progress. Before she began her program with them, the women would shrink back, hardly emerging from their houses when she went to visit the villages. Now some of them even replaced their husbands at times.

Another improvement came into being in April. A sort of substation for Radio Yungas of Chulumani was set up in the convent so that the sisters could keep in contact with other missionaries in the Yungas. The sisters were also invited to a pastoral zone meeting with the Bishop, priests, and sisters of the South Yungas.

After completing her Nurse Clinician program in the United States in 1974, Sister Mary Patricia Kielty was missioned to Chalaco. In 1978 she returned to work in Bolivia. Early in May of that year, she went to Lima for an international nurses’ meeting and workshop.

That same month, all the sisters participated in the Genesis II program in Lima led by Sisters Mary Liguori Horvat and Mildred Irwin, Councilors. After the meeting, Sisters Mary Patricia, Agnes Klein, and the two councilors went to La Paz to visit Bishop Esquivel and the Kansas City priests before driving down to Coripata. After arriving in Coripata, the
sisters met to do their own evaluation; then on June 9, Father Mike Gillgannon, as representative of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese, took part in evaluation meetings with the sisters. By the eleventh, Sisters Mary Liguori and Mildred left for the United States. GrATEfully, they were not present for the uprisings of the following month.

According to Sister Mary Patricia, during the normal July celebrations for the Feast of Carmen, things turned ugly. During the parade of July 15, effigies of President Pareda were kicked and beaten, maybe even burned. On the nineteenth, the unrest continued, and roads on both sides of Coripata were blocked by campesinos (farmers from the countryside) protesting fraud in the elections. On the twenty-first, some trucks with very angry people prepared to leave for La Paz. When Sister Mary Patricia tried to reason with them, one of the women said, "It is better to be dead than to live like dogs." Things remained tense.³

On July 25, 1978, there was a two-hour revolution in Coripata, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. One soldier died in the hospital and others were wounded. At noon the soldiers gave up their guns to Sister Mary Patricia and Father Mike Walker, who was again visiting. But on July 27, military trucks drove into the pueblo at 7:30 p.m. They said they brought peace and had come to install the new mayor. But the people insisted that they wait until Father Mike Walker arrived.

Sisters Mary Patricia, Lucille, and Charlotte were “in knots” and really keyed up because the priest from Chulumani had earlier told Sister Charlotte that Father Mike Walker had gone into hiding and not to believe anything the military said. He further told the sisters that they were on their own and that he would pray for them. Not knowing what to do, the sisters divided up the dollars and checks they had in the house and got their papers ready in case they should have to flee.

About 9:00 p.m., Father Mike Walker did arrive with some men from Coripata. The new mayor was installed, and the military left. But very shortly, the sisters and the people watched in terror as ten truckloads of Rangers came down the road to Coripata.⁴

At this time, all of the Bolivian Bishops were in a meeting in Mexico. So Sister Lucille decided to take a message to Bishop Thomas Manning, OFM, of the Coroico Prelature, regarding the young revolutionary who had been shot and buried surreptitiously without even notifying the parents for fear of more bloodshed. Although Bishop Manning had been planning to leave in those days for a visit to the United States, he cancelled all plans and came to Coripata and stayed four days. Sister Lucille went to La Paz, carrying a message for Bishop Prado from Bishop Manning. Meanwhile, knowing the seriousness of the situation, the Poor Clares sisters had kept an all-night vigil for the SCLs in Coripata.
In the last days of July, almost all the people, but especially the men, left Coripata. During the first three days of August, the soldiers and officers of the Rangers committed brutal abuses, destroying doors and looking for the men of the town. An Episcopal Commission arrived to investigate, and two truckloads of regular soldiers arrived to replace the Rangers. However, the Civil Rights Commission did not come, and many families of missing or detained men could do nothing but wait. By August 7, some normalcy had returned, and the soldiers left the following day. Two days later, thirty policemen arrived to maintain order.

When CIPCA arrived about a week later, Sister Lucille informed them that they were no longer welcome in the parish and should remove all their things from the office they had been using. The reason for this was that Sister Charlotte had discovered that the so-called coffee meetings CIPCA members had been having were being used for quite other purposes. Representing themselves to the people in the villages as Human Rights representatives, they had been recording injustices of the days while the army was present. When Sister Lucille verified this, she also discovered that at earlier purported coffee meetings, they had been playing tapes inciting the campesinos against the government. Feeling that these two Spanish priests, ex-seminarians, and other personnel were really revolutionaries disseminating communist ideologies, she dispatched them summarily. The very afternoon after she had done so, Bishop Esquivel appeared on the scene with an order from the Archbishop to expel them from the parish and refuse them faculties to offer Mass. He was overjoyed that Sister Lucille had already accomplished what he had come for.

A few days later, while Sister Lucille was in Coroico to obtain consecrated hosts for the parish, she discovered that members of CIPCA had distributed material there about a political meeting to be held in Coripata that weekend. When she returned and talked with the other sisters, they decided that the local authorities should be informed. Fearing to be seen, under cover of darkness that night and dressed in dark clothes, she crossed over to the police station to put the flier under the door.

Two days later, Bishop Esquivel returned and again cautioned the sisters that no outside group should use the parish without the express permission of the Archbishop.

On September 27, the Coroico sisters joined Sisters Edith, Charlotte, and Lucille for Saint Vincent's day as usual, and when Father Mike Walker arrived for his monthly visit on the twenty-ninth, Sunday Masses and weekend weddings were celebrated as though nothing had taken place. The sisters went to Coroico to celebrate the Feast of Saint Francis.

On October 9, Father Jaime Virreira arrived and was formally installed as pastor at the night Mass by an official representative of the Bishop.
Before his ordination two years before, Father Jaime had been a lawyer, sociologist, and social worker, so there were great expectations for his leadership. The sisters had an all-day meeting with him the day after his arrival.

For two days thereafter, Sister Lucille visited the most remote area of their parish, accompanied by Pio Ruiz, a catechist. Later Father Jaime, his mother, and the sisters went to Carmen Pampa for dinner with the Xaverian Brothers.

Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went to La Paz in early November. After seeing Sister Charlotte off to the United States for her home visit, Sister Lucille stayed on to make her retreat.

At the end of that month, Bolivia and Coripata once again suffered a political crisis. In La Paz, the military overthrew the government, and in Coripata the Commandos took over the City Hall and called the campesinos to a meeting on the twenty-fourth. The Commandos told the campesinos that the campesinos were now in charge. Father Jaime and the sisters had intended to go to La Paz but found that the buses and trucks were all immobilized. However, by the following day Father Jaime and his mother were able to leave on the bus.

The sisters learned that a policeman had been beaten for two nights and that there had been much drinking. About 10:30 that evening, a drunken commando, or one pretending to be so, arrived at the convent and began harassing the sisters. So they decided to send a trustworthy woman with a letter to Bishop Esquivel the following day.

On November 26, 1978, after going to Coroico and taking over the City Hall there and installing his own mayor, Ramiro Meneses returned to Coripata and declared himself the head of all the campesinos in the North Yungas.

When the sisters tried to contact Bishop Esquivel, Ramiro threatened them to be careful with regard to their radio messages. Bishop Esquivel finally arrived from La Paz on November 27 with Father Mike Gillgannon. They had Mass that evening, and since things appeared to be very still, they left for Coroico and La Paz the following day. But their parting words were not to worry about protecting material things. Later, the sisters learned that a government commission had arrested Ramiro the night before and taken him to La Paz.

Nevertheless, Ramiro returned on December 2 and everything appeared to be in the Commandos' favor. A new mayor, the choice of the Commandos, was installed.

Despite all this, Sister Lucille went to Chulumani with three deacon candidates for an evaluation of their training program.

On December 8, Father Jaime returned briefly from Cochabamba, but on the fifteenth went to La Paz for a meeting. However, both he and his mother returned to Coripata for Christmas. After Midnight Mass, Sisters Mary Patricia
and Lucille joined them in the rectory for some refreshments and gift-giving. The following day, they went to Carmen Pampa for dinner. Then Sisters Mary Patricia and Lucille left for Caranavi to visit the Convent Station Charities.

In mid-January 1979, Father Jaime returned from a trip to La Paz with a new priest for the parish, Father Miguel Silva. Shortly thereafter, Sister Lucille left for the First National Charismatic Congress in Cochabamba. She took three of the catechists and the clinic worker, Señorita Innocencia Flores, with her. By the end of their five days there, they had decided to have charismatic prayer meetings every Friday night.

In the latter part of January, the Xaverian Brothers and two of the Franciscan sisters from Coroico began their first adult education program in Coripata. CETHA, as it was called, would work with adults at their own speed; when they finished the program, they would receive certificates equivalent to high school diplomas. This program continued successfully for a number of years. Another plus for the SCLs was that this provided regular contact with these religious communities.

When Father Silva, Sister Lucille, and Sister Mary Patricia went to Chulumani in mid-February to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Dutch Augustinians there, they did not return until 1:00 a.m.

Sister Mary Patricia took their cook, Celi Arteaga, with her to La Paz on February 15; two days later, she brought Sisters Charlotte and Agnes Klein back with her. Naturally, Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia were anxious to hear all about Sister Charlotte's time in the States. They also always enjoyed visiting with Sister Agnes and hearing about the other SCLs in Peru. When it came time for her to leave on March 2, they were not too sorry that a flat tire and a washout forced her to cancel her plane ticket by radio; she was finally able to leave for Peru on March 6.

The rains continued and the roads were very bad. Nevertheless, Sisters Mary Patricia and Charlotte made it to La Paz by March 12 to buy necessary supplies. By the sixteenth, they returned, but stayed with the Franciscans in Coroico to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day.

In April, there was a special meeting about the adult education program, CETHA, in Carmen Pampa. Both Sisters Mary Patricia and Lucille attended it. The sisters then spent Easter in Carmen Pampa and traveled on to Caranavi for a three-day visit with the Convent Station Charities.

In early May, Father Jaime Virreira left for a two-and-a-half-month course in Colombia to study the Puebla documents. Sister Lucille went to Santa Cruz to the Charismatic Center on May 8, and on June 12, Sisters Mary Patricia and Charlotte left for Cochabamba for a Conference of Religious and a nurses' workshop.

On June 23, the day after the sisters returned from their meetings, Archbishop Manrique arrived. After visiting with Sister Lucille all morning,
he told her he was going to make her “Pastora” because, after her thirteen
years in Coripata, she knew the people better than anyone and had their
confidence. At the noon meal with Father Silva and at the evening Mass,
he told the people that the team of sisters were in charge of the parish and
that he was designating Sister Lucille as the person in charge. After the
crowded Mass (there had been three matrimony), he returned to the
convent and visited until midnight. At the Sunday Mass the next day, he
gave the same message in Aymara.

When Bishop Esquivel visited a little over a week later, he told the
sisters that the Archbishop had relieved him of managing the parish.
Nevertheless, he would continue to drop by from time to time.

Elections were scheduled for the first of July. Sister Charlotte, who
was in charge of the Radio Yungas Office in the convent, received a letter
on June 29 authorizing the sisters to be observers at the polls. They were
asked to send in the results to Radio Yungas. Sister Charlotte was present
at the polls all day on July 1; she truthfully reported that the Commandos
controlled everything.

By the end of July 1979, there was considerable political unrest since
many of the Commando ballots had been nullified in La Paz. Roads were
once again to be blockaded and a boycott for picking or sending oranges
to the city was called. At first the sisters cancelled their trip to Piura for the
SCL Charism Workshop, but later Sister Mary Patricia went when she
discovered the road was not yet blocked. After she returned, she gave the
Charism Workshop for Sisters Lucille and Charlotte.

On the evening of August 4, some Commandos began hassling the
sisters, ringing the doorbell and kicking the gate door. After putting up
with hours of this noise, the following morning Sister Lucille boarded the
bus in front of the church. As always, some of the Commandos were aboard,
so she spoke with one of the leaders whom she knew by name. She indicated
what had been going on the previous night, saying that the sister nurses,
especially, needed their rest in order to serve the people. He acted surprised,
but the sisters were left in peace after that.

During the latter part of July, Father Silva and Sister Lucille made
some visits to some of the more remote villages, after which Father Silva
went to La Paz. On August 16, he returned by truck to pick up his things.
That very same day, he left Coripata and returned to La Paz, intending to
go to Spain. Once again Coripata was left without a priest.

On August 19, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went up to La Paz with a
catechist and a Precious Blood sister who had been spending a few days
with them. The following day, they had an interview with the Archbishop.
They asked that he put his authorization of them as a team in writing and
that he spell out Sister Lucille’s duties. While there, they asked permission
for a priest from another diocese to come in December for a retreat for the catechists and their wives. He not only gave his wholehearted approval but gave Sister Lucille $100 to help defray the expenses. The sisters were relieved when he expressed the hope that a priest from the Coroico prelature could come to Coripata for Mass and the sacraments from time to time, for they had already talked with Father Innocence Staco, OC, about doing that very thing, and he had agreed to do so.

In September, the sisters began having Holy Hour in the parish, with solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. After experiencing two months without rain, the sisters also organized a procession with prayers. Not long after, it began raining and raining.

The sisters also directed their attention to forming leaders. On the first weekend in September, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille took twelve laypersons to El Alto, La Paz, for a leadership workshop. Nine days later, when Bishop Esquivel arrived in Coripata, he found Sister Lucille conducting a workshop on the Puebla documents for the catechists, and he commended the sisters on their work.

The Coroico sisters brought Father Innocence with them for Saint Vincent’s Day on September 27. Since there were already two Convent Station Charities visiting, there was a real celebration with Mass and a feast day dinner.

At the request of Bishop Esquivel, Sister Charlotte went to La Paz on October 7 to give a four-day health course to seven young women from the Altiplano. After finishing the course at the Bishop’s house, one of the young women came down to Coripata to gain some experience in deliveries and first aid while working with Sister Charlotte.

Meanwhile, Sister Lucille continued with her catechists’ days in the different sectors of the parish. She and Sister Charlotte divided up the Sunday liturgies, Sister Lucille having the one in Aymara at 10:30. Sometimes Father Innocence accompanied her into the campo for a Mass. Sister Lucille always had to provide transportation for him, though, as he did not drive. Occasionally, she took the night or day to visit with the Franciscan sisters when she took him back to Coroico.

On October 22, there was a terrible truck accident caused by a drunken driver. Of the twenty-two people who were killed, eighteen were from one village, San Agustin. When the catechist came in to ask Sister Lucille to come out and talk to the people, she, “knowing her people,” said she would come later, for she knew all too well that almost everyone would be drinking at this time.

On the thirtieth, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille took Celi Arteaga with them when they left for La Paz and then to Cochabamba for the National Charismatic Conference.
Once again there was another military coup on November 1, 1979, and there was again unrest within the country. The campesinos blocked the highways, protesting the monopoly of the truckers of the zone. Military Rangers appeared once again “to maintain order and prevent violence.” But in fact, they went door to door looking for arms and political agitators or extremists. When Sisters Charlotte and Lucille returned from Cochabamba and La Paz, they brought stories of the happenings there. In the capital, a barrio had been machine-gunned from a helicopter.

Nevertheless, on November 16, all three of the sisters left for La Paz and two days later for Peru and the SCL meeting. They stayed on for a few days to visit the sisters in their missions; Sister Lucille returned to La Paz on December 3. Four days later, she telegraphed Sister Mary Patricia to stay in Talara as the roads were blockaded.

On January 5, 1980, Bishop Esquivel, a Precious Blood sister, and a Dutch lay volunteer visited; there was therefore Mass in town for another two days. For the first time in all these years, apparently, the sisters asked permission to have a chapel in the house. The Bishop readily acquiesced, and Sister Mary Patricia set about reconditioning a tabernacle and some prie-dieux that were on hand.

To take care of any kind of business—personal, communal, or parochial—meant traveling. Not surprisingly then, the sisters were frequently on the road. For example, in early February they needed to go to Coroico to obtain more consecrated hosts for the parish. That same day, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia drove about three hours before they could get medical attention for the wife of one of the catechists, going first to Chulumani and then on to Irupana. Then in early March, Sister Lucille made a trip to Chulumani with another sister to see about reinstalling the radio communications they had been without since the previous October. Of course, when SCLs or other visitors came to Bolivia to visit, the sisters went to meet them at the La Paz airport. On their arrival, they might learn that the flight had been delayed or cancelled, which would require a return trip later. Such interruptions of their principal work were common.

In mid-January, the three sisters met with the catechists from the various pueblos. In February, Father Jaime Postma arrived to give a course to the catechists. Later, Sister Lucille had become aware of some problems with the preparations for the sacrament of Baptism, so she called all the catechists in for a meeting to straighten things out.

Although Father Mike Walker had arrived and offered Mass for several days, Sister Lucille conducted the Ash Wednesday liturgy. Sister Josephine Bustos helped her distribute ashes and gave the homily.

In early March, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia met to make plans about a forthcoming health course. The woman doctor who was supposed
to represent the government's Department of Health at the workshop had had an emergency appendectomy. Eventually, the course had to be cancelled. Sister Mary Patricia commented at the time: "Trying to get the health program off the ground is like trying to fly a jet liner without fuel."

After a trip to La Paz in mid-March, Sister Charlotte and Mary Patricia returned with the sad news of the torture and death of Father Luis Espinal in La Paz. This Jesuit professor at the University of La Paz had identified with the poor and was active in numerous causes against social injustice. On the night of March 21, 1980, he disappeared and his tortured body was found the next day near La Paz. It was said that some 200,000 people attended his funeral.

On March 25, the three sisters renewed their vows at a Mass with the catechists. The priest celebrating the Mass explained to the catechists the meaning of vows and the sisters' consecrated life and service of others. The following day, the sisters went to Sachabaya for a zonal meeting of the priests and sisters of the North and South Yungas.

During April, Sister Lucille went to Huayrapata for Baptisms and later took a few days in Coroico for rest and relaxation. Otherwise, the sisters kept busy with daily activities, shopping in La Paz, and entertaining visitors who stopped overnight or longer. Father Miguel Silva, who supposedly was returning to Spain when he left Coripata, came for a few days at the end of the month and offered Masses; he came again in early May.

About this time, Sister Charlotte became more careful about where and when she drove since she was beginning to experience macular degeneration. Her rheumatism also began to cause her considerably more pain. Although she no longer drove in La Paz, she still insisted on going out on night calls, even when she had to walk uphill a considerable distance. On one occasion when Sister Mary Patricia was absent, she even sutured a woman's leg when there was no one else to do it.

During his May visit in Coripata, Bishop Esquivel offered Mass in the sisters' chapel and studied English six hours a day. Sister Lucille was his teacher but left him on his own while she attended to parish matters and campo visits. By May 7, he felt confident enough to celebrate his first Mass in English; however, he did not attempt a homily this time. A day or two before the Bishop left, the sisters took him on a picnic. When Sisters Charlotte and Lucille took him back to La Paz, they heard rumors that another priest might be assigned to Coripata.

In mid-month, Father Jaime Postma, OSA, came to say Mass for a few days. He also accompanied Sister Lucille into the campo for Mass.

Just when the sisters had had no water in the house for several days, for some reason or other there was a dramatic increase in patients, keeping
the nurses busy up to 8:00 p.m. As a consequence, Sister Mary Patricia felt the need to take a day off and went over to Carmen Pampa.

Innocencia Flores, the clinic worker, was taking on more campo visits with the sisters, going with Sister Charlotte for deliveries some times and with Sister Mary Patricia to treat people sick with the flu or school children with worms. She also helped Sister Mary Patricia to vaccinate for yellow fever.

In early June, Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia took Bishop Esquivel to Alto Beni for Corpus Christi. After this seven-hour drive, he celebrated Mass and had a Holy Hour. Then Sister Lucille took the Bishop to Choro to meet with the catechists there.

Hearing of the amount of anti-American spirit being generated in Santa Cruz, Sisters Mary Patricia and Charlotte cancelled their plans to go to that city for the OCEAN meeting (Overseas Continuing Education for American Nurses).

By June 21, Sister Charlotte finally decided to see a doctor about her rheumatism. First, she took a week off to rest. Then on July 1, Sister Lucille took Sister Charlotte to La Paz to see if she could get some relief from the terrible pain she was suffering, especially in her feet. On top of everything, she had developed psoriasis.

In early July, Sister Lucille and Celi Arteaga went to La Paz to pick up Father Lucas and his group; they were going to give a retreat for catechists in Carmen Pampa. Sister Charlotte felt well enough to go with them.

This left Sister Mary Patricia in charge of the novena to Our Lady of Mount Carmel on the eighth. Fortunately for her, Father Lucas and some retreatants arrived. Father stayed for the novena and had the Sunday Masses. Unfortunately, there was a great deal of drinking. On the evening of the feast itself, Father Lucas and some others conducted a two-hour prayer session.

No one was too surprised when there was another military coup on July 17. One of the sad side effects of this was that some five hundred people and merchants were stranded in Coripata when roadblocks were set up. On the twenty-first, the authorities asked Sister Mary Patricia to use the parish for housing and the parish club as a sort of soup kitchen for some one hundred people.

Dynamite could be heard in the hills around the city. When Father Lucas asked Sister Mary Patricia to take him to Chulumani in the jeep, she prayed he would decide not to go as she feared what might happen if they attempted to pass through. Fortunately, he agreed to postpone the trip. There was continued tension in the country, with reports of torture and killing of women and children in La Paz and in one of the mining areas.
Late in July, Sister Lucille had the two liturgical celebrations and at both read Archbishop Manrique’s circular letter on the political situation within the country. That night a truck of soldiers arrived from Caranavi and installed yet another new mayor.

Two days later, Sisters Lucille and Charlotte ventured a trip to La Paz, returning with mail from the States, including Chapter notes. Meanwhile, Father Jaime Postma arrived for Mass and stayed overnight.

On August 2, Sister Lucille went to Caranavi for a first Mass and the celebration afterwards. While she was gone, Sister Charlotte had the 7:30 a.m. liturgy, and Sister Mary Patricia gave out Communion at the Aymara liturgy at 10:30. They as well as the people were alarmed when a helicopter buzzed Coripata three times that morning. When Rangers from Santa Cruz arrived and stationed themselves at the high school, tension increased. That afternoon, the Rangers began banging on doors and searching for men. The sisters sent a telegram to Sister Agnes Klein, telling her not to come as planned. The sisters were glad to see Bishop Esquivel and his group arriving that evening. In the morning, he called for a general meeting with all the catechists. The military trucks left Coripata late that afternoon, but all the military did not.

On August 5, 1980, Major Carlos came to pay the sisters a “social visit” and to talk with them. Sister Mary Patricia called Bishop Esquivel and asked him to be present, too. Among other things, the Major made a point of telling them that Father David Ratterman, a priest from St. Louis, had been picked up for supposedly instructing the campesinos in how to blow up bridges. He also mentioned that a couple of Daughters of Charity had been detained. Actually, the sisters knew from the Voice of America broadcasts that at least two thousand people had recently been detained. During their “conversation,” Rangers with automatic weapons guarded the outside door of the convent.

That evening, Coripata was put under a 9:00 curfew. On August 6, Bolivia’s Independence Day, flags were displayed, but there were no parades. On a much lighter note, when Bishop Esquivel came to dinner, he brought Sister Lucille a birthday cake and a card he had written in English.

On the seventh, soldiers went to San Juan and Marcaribi at 2:00 a.m.; when they returned, they brought back prisoners and one young man who had died. Needless to say, almost all the men again vanished from Coripata, and the people were very fearful. Bishop Esquivel decided to stay over until the following Monday.

On the eighth, Sister Mary Patricia was “interrogated” by the Commanding Major, who acted in a friendly manner and extracted the promise of a ride to Coroico. Fortunately, Bishop Esquivel intervened and told her she was not to comply. So after the Rangers left at midnight,
Sister Mary Patricia told the Major she could not take him after all. He shook hands with her and left without incident.

When Sister Lucille drove to Coroico on the ninth, she found the Franciscan sisters really stressed out. The soldiers had commandeered the school building beneath their convent. From where they were, they had heard and sometimes seen much of the maltreatment of the men. Father Luis Oliete had been interrogated and held incommunicado for two days. He finally was released into the hands of the Papal Nuncio in La Paz, in whose house he stayed as he waited to be expelled from the country. Ironically, he had been planning to leave in November anyway. By the time Sister Mary Patricia went to Coroico five days later to visit the Franciscan Sisters and Xaverian Brothers, the sisters were much calmer.

Perhaps it was a sign of the stress they had been under and the need to communicate with other religious, but Sister Lucille soon went to La Paz to do some shopping, then two days later she again went to the capital with some of the sisters from Caranavi. While she was there, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia went to Carmen Pampa to visit the Franciscan sisters and Xaverian Brothers. Meanwhile, Father Jaime Postma arrived to spend almost a week in Coripata.

Sister Mary Patricia was disappointed when only two out of the five men scheduled arrived for her health course the next day. At that, one of the two became ill and had to be taken to La Paz in the ambulance. Sister Lucille had somewhat better luck when she had her parish meeting that evening.

On the last day of August, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia went to La Paz. While Sister Charlotte saw the doctor and had some lab work done, Sister Mary Patricia shopped. Learning that Sister Agnes Klein was coming in two days later, they stayed over to pick her up. They not only welcomed her company but also had much to share with her. Too, they were very interested in her report on Chapter.

As Sister Agnes' return flight was delayed a couple of days, the sisters spent a few days visiting and sightseeing. Even then, Sister Charlotte decided to stay on in La Paz a few more days for some rest and relaxation.

On the nineteenth, Sister Lucille took Celi Arteaga, their cook, up to La Paz since some of her children had been in a bus accident. Fortunately for that family, only one son had minor injuries although six people had been killed in the accident. Sister Charlotte returned to Coripata with Sister Lucille.

September was quieter than the preceding months, and the sisters continued with their work uninterruptedly. Sister Lucille had a meeting with the catechists to prepare them for the evangelization program that Bishop Esquivel would be giving for them. Father Jaime Postma again came and even went out to various villages with Sister Lucille for Mass before she took him on to Coroico. The day following his departure, Sisters
Charlotte and Lucille went to the pastoral zonal meeting in Chulumani. There they learned from the Augustinians that the priests and sisters in the South Yungas had been even more harassed and that indeed the priests and brothers had been threatened.

On September 28, the Franciscans from Coroico and Carmen Pampa came for dinner to celebrate Saint Vincent’s Day belatedly. Sister Lucille took two catechists with her to La Paz the next day. While there, she made arrangements for her travel to the United States in early October.

Within a week’s time, when Sisters Mary Patricia and Charlotte went up to La Paz, they found the roads considerably worse, encountering a landslide that had converted the road into a river. They had to drive up the hill against the current!

During October and November, both Father Jaime Postma and the Bishop came. The latter had expected to have an evangelization program at the end of October, but the communication had been bad and he had to reschedule it for November. When he did return, he told the sisters that more priests and sisters had been expelled from the country, this time mostly from the Cochabamba area.

Sister Charlotte went up to La Paz on November 9, planning on buying medicines and returning immediately. However, learning that their cook’s son had been shot in La Paz by a drunken friend, she changed her plans and spent the day with the family.

When she returned on November 14, she found Sister Mary Patricia very busy in the clinic. Moreover, the Bishop and two of his friends and Father Mike Walker had all arrived. And there was no cook! She also found much work to be done at the parish since many people were looking for copies of their baptismal certificates so that they could get their new carnets (residence papers).

In mid-November, the sisters joined the Dutch Augustinians in Chulumani in celebrating the ordination of the first Bolivian in their order. What is more, he was the first black man ordained in Bolivia! Many of the catechists and more than 150 people from Coripata also arrived for the ceremonies and festivities.

Toward the end of the month, Father Postma came not only for Masses and the sacraments but also to give a two-day music workshop. The sisters were also both surprised and elated by a visit from Dr. Rosario Chavez. This “atheist” they had known from the year before had been converted by the Franciscan priests where she was presently working; she told the sisters she was now a daily communicant.

During the first days of December, both Sisters Mary Patricia and Charlotte were occupied with improvements in the church. The altar had been moved, and Sister Mary Patricia worked with an electrician to install
a spotlight over it. Sister Charlotte and Señora Graciela Rojas, a member of the parish, measured for the new drape for behind the altar.

On the seventh, Sister Mary Patricia went to Caranavi for the reception of a new group of Franciscans. As usual, Sister Charlotte busied herself with making cookies and candy to be used for Christmas gifts. By the twenty-first, she and Sister Mary Patricia took some of these to Carmen Pampa and Coroico.

They were happy to welcome Father Mike Walker on December 23. The Penitential Rite was well attended that night. Christmas Eve Mass was celebrated earlier than usual because the sisters had expected that the town would still be under the 9:00 p.m. curfew. On Christmas Day, the two sisters and Mike Walker joined the other English-speaking missionaries in Carmen Pampa. He stayed on until January 4, and since Father Jaime Postma had also come, these days were replete with Masses.

Sister Mary Patricia went up to La Paz on January 4, 1981. Since there had been much rain during the intervening days, she had a difficult time returning on the seventh, having to spend a terrible night on the road because of the mudslides. It took five hours before the road was cleared the following morning, but she finally made it into Coripata at 3:30 p.m. the next day.

Sister Mary Patricia was not the only one to suffer the inconveniences of travel at this time of the year. On the tenth, some trucks finally arrived in Coripata after four days and three nights on the road. By January 25, however, travel was almost normal. When Sister Charlotte left for La Paz by bus that day, she went prepared, taking along sandwiches and some crochet work, but she was delayed only three hours. Sister Lucille arrived from the States the next day, and by the twenty-ninth, all three sisters were back in Coripata, Sister Mary Patricia having come up by jeep the previous day.

While Sister Charlotte was in La Paz on January 26, she heard a Franciscan priest from El Alto in La Paz describe the torture, mutilations, and killings that had taken place. His parish was currently being used by the United Nations for families of the exiled.

During February, the sisters made several trips to Coroico and Carmen Pampa. Both Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia made their retreats in Carmen Pampa.

As mentioned earlier, many sects and Protestant churches had been working in the area for some time. On February 15, something of a novelty took place. Representatives from the Friends Church attended the Catholic service in Huayrapata. With the help of Sister Lucille, the catechists and people had prepared well for their arrival, and the catechist, Pio Ruiz, explained to the people the differences in the churches.
Although Sister Charlotte had planned to go to Lima a few days early for the Community meetings, she had to change her plans thanks to the government declaring two days of holiday when no paper work could be done. On March 3, they all received clearance to leave the country, and they flew to Lima on the fifth. After the four-day meeting on formation, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia went to Talara on the bus with some of the sisters. There they enjoyed four days in the sun at Punta Sal with Sister Joan Kilker, thanks to the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Chiappe offering their beach house. Sisters Josephine Bustos and Janet Cashman joined them for a “Mexican Saint Patrick’s dinner.” On March 19, Sister Mary Patricia went to Piura to take pictures of the formation house under construction there, returning to Talara in time to leave for her three months in the United States.

When Sister Charlotte returned to Bolivia, Sister Lucille tried to fill her in on the news of what had been happening in Bolivia. The government had continued cracking down on coca growing, and some people had begun relocating. But Bishop Esquivel had told the catechists not to go to other areas to buy new land. Although the land near Coripata was very poor and apparently not suitable for growing anything other than coca, the Bishop promised to bring in an agricultural engineer.

Travel continued to be precarious. On April 8, Sisters Lucille and Charlotte went up to La Paz to meet Sister Agnes Klein, but their trip back was anything but pleasant since they had to travel through heavy fog. A few days later, a St. Louis priest arrived for Palm Sunday after a twelve-hour trip from Coroico (this normally took an hour and a half!).

The year before, the sisters had cancelled the outdoor Way of the Cross because of the drinking and noise involved. At the request of the people, the procession through the town was again programmed, and Sister Charlotte commented that it was the most devotional she had ever seen it.

On April 22, Fathers Mike Walker and Mike Gillgannon arrived for meetings with the sisters. These seemed to be very profitable. The sisters told the priests that they felt their presence was more necessary than ever. Among other things, the people were suffering a great deal because of the stoppage in coca production and the drop in coffee prices.

Father Innocence came for the second week of May. And Sister Lucille took Innocencia Flores to Alto Beni for a five-day “Teens for Christ” workshop.

True to his promise, Bishop Esquivel brought an agricultural engineer with him on May 20. This specialist counseled the catechists to plant foodstuff and vegetables sufficient to feed their own families for the first few years. He told them that after that they would be able to expand their production into the consumer market of La Paz. Taking his advice, the
catechists formed a coordinating board and began seedbeds at the parish. In early June, a former catechist from the South Yungas came to talk with them about truck farming, gardening, and irrigation.

After Sisters Charlotte and Lucille met Sisters Mildred Irwin and Sheila Karpan in La Paz on May 26, they introduced them to the mission and their work. Sister Lucille, of course, took them out on a campo visit to Dorado Grande and on a scenic drive; these sisters enjoyed other outings during their brief stay.

On the Feast of Pentecost, June 7, the sisters had the celebration of the Word in both Spanish and Aymara in the morning. Following the 10:30 liturgy, the parish community continued in prayer until noon. They stopped then for a potluck dinner. At 2:00 they entered into prayer again, with the laying on of hands, until 5:00. The following Sunday, Sister Charlotte became aware that her eyesight was better. She could actually read the Office and some other things without the extra magnifying glass she had been using.

On June 28, Sister Charlotte went to La Paz by bus and then on to Cochabamba for the Charismatic retreat. On her return to La Paz, she shopped for medicine; then just two days later, she had to return to La Paz to have pictures taken for her carnet (residence papers).

Father Jaime Virreira arrived on July 12 with two seminarians to help during the fiesta days of Carmen. Sister Charlotte commented that the celebration honoring Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Our Lady of Fatima was especially disgraceful that year, given the economic situation. The five prestes (sponsors) spent about $500 to pay for the orchestra from La Paz, the hall, and the dinner. Besides that, liquor was plentiful, and there was much immorality that accompanied the drinking.

In mid-July, Bishop Esquivel made one of his lightning visits but stayed overnight on being reminded of Sister Lucille’s birthday. During a private Mass in the sisters’ chapel the next morning, he paid a lovely tribute to Sister Lucille, to her dedication and sacrificial spirit.

About four days later, Paz Jimenez, a seminarian, arrived by truck and began a charismatic renewal program, which was well attended. He also had a retreat for seven young people.

On July 31, Bishop Esquivel arrived with the message that the Archbishop wanted to see the sisters in La Paz. After dinner he told Sister Lucille that the reason was that two priests would be coming to Coripata. But since the Archbishop would be gone the following week, the sisters made no plans to go to La Paz immediately.

Bishop Esquivel stayed on and at the Sunday Mass announced that he would have catechism classes for the children that afternoon. He also called for a catechist meeting for Wednesday night.

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Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went up to La Paz on August 17 but discovered they still could not see the Archbishop until the nineteenth. When they did meet with him, the Archbishop said that Father Justus, a Franciscan, and another priest would be coming to Coripata in September.

Two weeks later, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went up to La Paz to welcome Sister Mary Patricia home. While there, they learned that the jeep that had been on order for more than a year had finally arrived. But since it still needed a metal box for the tools, they left it with Father Gillgannon until the following week. In late November, the sisters received the good news that the old jeep had been sold for $1200.

Sister Charlotte had been talking up prenatal clinics for some time, but it was not until September 11, 1981, that she was able to start one at Nogaloni. She was much encouraged by the attendance and planned to have classes and “well-baby control” once a month.

There was another success story on the pastoral side when the three communities of Trinidad Pampa finally agreed to work together (after twelve years!) to construct a chapel. It became a real community-building effort in the following months, and Sister Lucille lent them both moral and actual support in whatever ways she could.

Father Jaime Postma said an early Saint Vincent’s Day Mass in the sisters’ chapel. On the actual feast day, Sister Charlotte went to La Paz to buy medicines. Several days later, Sister Lucille and a young man went to La Paz to bring Sister Charlotte and the medicines back.

On September 28, an agricultural engineer came to the catechist meeting in Coscoma. Sister Lucille went with some of the catechists to visit the gardens on the Coroico side afterwards. On October 8, she accompanied thirty-five catechists with the engineer to San Pedro.

Sister Janet Cashman came for a three-week visit in October. Sister Lucille later accompanied her to Copacabana and Lake Titicaca for four days. After Sister Lucille’s return in mid-October, Sister Mary Patricia went to Coroico for a four-day workshop on vaccinations.

Once again the sisters’ cook, Celi Arteaga, had a death in the family, and Sisters Lucille and Janet took her to La Paz on October 25 for her daughter’s funeral.

On their return, by chance they met Father Justus waiting for the bus to go to Coripata, so they gave him a ride to his new mission. However, Father Justus seemed not too sure of what he wanted. Nevertheless, Sister Lucille tried to introduce him to his new parish and took him out to visit a campo village. A few days after his arrival, he told the sisters of his dilemma; he could not decide whether to stay in Bolivia or leave. He did not stay long, returning to the United States before the end of November.

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At the end of October, Father Jaime Postma arrived for his usual monthly visit; he had both of the morning Masses in town and then went out into the campo. About the same time, a Father Comacho arrived as Bishop Esquivel's representative to offer a Mass for a woman who had died as a result of a brush fire. The woman had been a good friend of Bishop Esquivel since his seminary days. With the arrival of this priest, there were three priests for the prayer group in the evening! This seemed to be a case of Feast or Fast! On November 2, after the Masses and procession to the cemetery, the other priests left, but Father Jaime stayed on until the following day.

Sister Mary Patricia was unusually busy in the clinic from the eighth to the twelfth, just after Sister Charlotte and the doctor took a patient to La Paz in the ambulance.

Sister Agnes Klein joined the sisters in mid-month, going to Carmen Pampa with them for Thanksgiving.

On November 29, there was an orientation day of prayer for the twelve delegates from Coripata to the National Charismatic Congress in Santa Cruz. Later that same day, Sister Lucille took Innocencia Flores and Meliton Mamani, catechist, to Carmen Pampa for two weeks to study the manuals for the adult education courses. On December 6, Sister Charlotte left for La Paz to make connections to go to Santa Cruz for the Congress. Shortly before Christmas, Sister Mary Patricia went to La Paz to welcome Sister Mary Louise Currie, SCL, who was coming to spend the holidays with the sisters in Coripata before returning to Brasilia, where she worked for the U.S. State Department.

The Bishop came for Christmas Eve. Following dinner in the convent, they had exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 3:00–6:30 p.m. After the Mass at midnight, in Bolivian style the sisters were invited to a full dinner in the priests' house. Still they went to Carmen Pampa for the annual Christmas dinner there the next day!

The Bishop must have been very pleased indeed when 241 couples arrived for his workshop on December 26. During its two days, there were three marriages, twenty-eight renewals of marriage vows, ten Baptisms, and two Confirmations. No wonder he thought the sisters were doing such a good job in the parish!

During January 1982, Sister Mary Patricia returned to the United States when she received word of her father's serious illness. Sisters Lucille and Charlotte went to Lima for the Community meetings. While in La Paz on their return trip, Sister Charlotte was unable to buy much medicine because of the unstable economy.

On February 1, Bishop Esquivel brought some pre-seminarians for a retreat. Rumors about what was going on within the country were often...
the source of conversation. The day after a group of protesters had entered some church offices to begin a hunger strike, demanding a control of the inflation and higher wages, the Minister of Interior and a group of soldiers broke into the Chancery offices. The Archbishop formally complained to the President. It was felt that the whole thing had been a "put-up job."

Toward the end of February, Sister Lucille made a special trip to La Paz to renew the sisters' kerosene permit. The sisters needed the kerosene for operating their refrigerator and motor, but since that fuel was used in the processing of cocaine, anyone who wanted to buy in quantity had to have special permits from the government.

Sister Mary Patricia, who had returned from the States in mid-February, devised a new method of promoting vaccinations. She connected a microphone and amplifier in the jeep and drove about giving the necessary information. In March and again in June, she went into the outlying sectors to announce the vaccination program in this way. Her first efforts were successful, but later usage of this method didn't seem to recruit any more patients.

Also in March, Sister Lucille started some religion classes for small children between the ages of five and ten. Two women from a prayer group helped her.

As usual, the sisters went to Carmen Pampa to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day with the Irish Franciscans. About a week later, Sister Mary Patricia drove to Chulumani for a workshop in natural medicine. Two days later, she went to Coroico to pick up Father Innocence, who said Mass for them on the day they renewed their vows. Sister Lucille took him home afterwards.

As the political and economic situation deteriorated, the sisters became aware of increasing problems of all kinds. Bread prices again rose. By April 1, 1982, there were eighteen counter-drug agents in Coripata, and there were also reports of their brutality in making arrests. Because of all this, there was more infidelity, more robberies, more sexual molestations, and even more child abuse!

Sister Lucille took Sister Charlotte over to Coroico on April 1 to catch the bus for La Paz, but because there had been more landslides, there was no bus for her. She finally found transportation six days later. Once there, although she was able to buy some medicine, a transportation strike started and all stores closed. Four days later, Sister Lucille drove to La Paz to pick her up. A sign of the times: the telegram Sister Charlotte sent Sister Lucille on April 21 arrived in Coripata two days later. At the end of the month, Sister Charlotte again returned to La Paz, this time to go to the United States.

In early May, Sister Mary Patricia went to Carmen Pampa, but this turned out to be a "busman's holiday" since she helped out in the clinic there. Toward mid-May, she had a workshop for women from the campo, going out to three different villages to pick them up. Dr. Carlos Jimenez
from the hospital helped teach in this workshop for the promotion of women. But when another workshop was offered in late May in Coscoma, none of the women showed up. Sister Mary Patricia was again disappointed when only about ten women appeared in Millaguaya in early June. She and a young woman from the clinic tried again to give presentations there at the end of June, but the women didn’t seem interested.

On June 20, Sister Lucille went to La Paz to pick up a Jesuit and a Bolivian sister who were going to give a five-day retreat for the catechists. In addition to those from the parish of Santiago, Bishop Esquivel sent forty Aymaras, so Sister Lucille, besides all the work of organizing and coordinating, also had to translate.

The sisters both picked up and took back the priest from La Paz who came for the Feast of Carmen. In an effort to thwart the usual accidents following the celebrations, Sister Mary Patricia actually smelled the breath of the drivers and reported to the traffic office those who should not be driving. As a result, there were no accidents in 1982!

Sister Lucille was responsible for all of the preparation for the JEC (Meeting of Young Christians) that took place in early September. Both Sister Charlotte (who had returned the week before) and Sister Lucille helped the team with the presentations. Outside her time in the clinic, Sister Mary Patricia acted as hostess.

After Sister Lucille left to take the team back to La Paz, Bishop Esquivel arrived. While the Bishop was there, Sister Charlotte spoke frankly with him about the problems he caused when he came in and tried to organize programs and then left. She told him this made things difficult for the SCLs who were in charge of the parish.

On September 10, Sister Mary Patricia went to Nogaloni for papers needed by the adult education program. She also advised the villagers that she would be showing a video on the breeding and raising of cuyes (guinea pigs) that Sunday night. Guinea pigs are a common food in many countries of South America.

A new president, Guido Vildoso Calderon, had been installed on July 19, but there remained much unrest in the country. This marked 193 presidents during Bolivia’s 156 years of independence! Because of the general strike in the country in September, the sisters cancelled their plans to go to La Paz for the ordination of Paz Jimenez, the Aymaran seminarian who had helped out in Coripata from time to time. However, they felt safe to go to Coroico the next week to enjoy supper with the sisters there.

During early October, Sister Lucille took a week or so off for some rest, relaxation, and retreat. When she returned, however, she brought newspapers that told of further violence and disturbances in the country. Seven narcotic agents and one of their employees had been brutally murdered by the
campesinos on the Chulumani side. Many of the campesinos were supporting
the new leftist government; in fact, a caravan of seven trucks had gone from
Coripata for the installation of the new leaders in La Paz.

Sister Charlotte went to La Paz again in mid-October to buy medicines
but could buy very little as the prices were so terrible. At the end of the
month, she accompanied Sister Lucille and five members of the youth
group to the meeting of JEC in Espada. When they returned, both she and
the young people reported very favorably on the meetings. Shortly
thereafter, Sister Lucille went with Sister Kathy Keck, OSF, to request
Bishop Manning to send his priests and seminarians for the JEC meeting
in Coripata in December.

Meanwhile, Sister Lucille had been busy helping the campesinos of
Trinidad Pampa with efforts in building their new church. Using the jeep,
she helped them haul adobe blocks at one point, and she persuaded the
Agricultural Extension Office to lend them an electric saw for cutting
roof beams and supports. By the first week of December, she was visiting
the construction site almost daily.

She did take time, though, to go up to La Paz with Sister Charlotte for
some shopping and to make arrangements for a Marriage Encounter
Program in the parish. And, of course, she joined the other priests and
sisters for the annual Thanksgiving dinner in Carmen Pampa.

In mid-November, Brother Hugo came from Carmen Pampa to ask
Sister Mary Patricia to come see Brother Niles, who was ill. She did so,
but he was later taken to La Paz with acute lumbar pneumonia. The
following month, Sister Mary Patricia went back to Carmen Pampa, but
this time for a little rest and relaxation for herself.

In the first week of December, Sister Kathy Keck arrived for a few
days of rest and to help with the final arrangements for the JEC meeting.
Because of a soccer game scheduled for that Sunday, Sisters Lucille and
Kathy accelerated the program, which they decided afterwards made things
too difficult. Nevertheless, they and the youth were very happy with the
program and deemed it a success.

As they had now become accustomed to do, the youth of the parish
prepared the church for Christmas and likewise prepared a Christmas
pageant. On the day before Christmas, the young people came to the sisters
all day for tips on how shepherds and kings dress and what the Virgin
should wear in the different tableaus. In the actual program, Mary rode a
real burro “on her way to Bethlehem.” The program was a great success!

The sisters celebrated at home after Midnight Mass (therefore, no full
meal). After opening their gifts, they enjoyed some of Sister Charlotte’s
delicious fruitcake. The next morning after the Masses, they went over to
Carmen Pampa for dinner with the priests and sisters.
In the first week of January 1983, Sister Charlotte went to Cochabamba so that she could attend a course by a priest psychiatrist. Sister Lucille met her in La Paz the following week, and the two stayed there for a couple of days due to the heavy rains that were occurring.

During this time, Sister Mary Patricia went over to Carmen Pampa for the better part of the week to give health courses for the participants in the adult education program, CETHA. Following this, she went to La Paz for a weekend. She brought back a Franciscan priest who was to give some vocation talks.

On January 22, Sisters Lucille and Charlotte went by bus to Trinidad Pampa with the priest and the catechists for the roofing party of the recently constructed church.

Toward the end of February, a motorcycle carrying two young men hit the jeep Sister Charlotte was driving while taking Father Innocence back to Carmen Pampa. Fortunately, no one was severely injured, but Sister Charlotte accompanied the two youths to the hospital to be checked out. Sister Mary Patricia picked up Father and took him the rest of the way to Carmen Pampa. Later, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille took a mechanic and a truck driver out to the site of the accident. With their help, they were able to drive the jeep in. Then the mechanic went with Sisters Charlotte and Lucille when they took it to La Paz to have it repaired at the Toyota dealer and to fill out the necessary reports for the insurance.

On March 5, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia left to meet Sisters Mary Kevin Hollow, Mary Julie Casey, and Agnes Klein in La Paz. While they were eating in a restaurant there, the guests' luggage was stolen from their jeep; what was worse, Sister Mary Patricia's passport and I.D. had also vanished. Back in Coripata, following two days of visiting various sites, Sister Mary Kevin visited with each sister individually, and Sister Mary Julie informed the sisters about the retirement and Social Security programs and presented a financial report. When leaving, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia took the visitors to La Paz; the next day, the chauffeur from San Antonio parish took them to visit the shrine of Our Lady at Copacabana.

Despite the perilous driving because of the rains and muddy roads, Sister Mary Patricia and the doctor went out to three villages to give vaccinations on the fifteenth. That same evening, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia showed a film on abortions in the parish club.

On the eighteenth, Sister Lucille drove three couples to Copacabana for the Aymara National Congress. Thirty other couples from Coripata met them there after traveling by bus.

Three days later, though unannounced, Bishop Esquivel and two seminarians arrived for a weeklong stay. Even though there was no food or cook in their house for them, the sisters were happy to have a Mass for
March 25, when they renewed their vows. Father Innocence also arrived on the twenty-fifth with the CETHA team, planning to stay on through Holy Week.

In early April, Sister Mary Patricia once again went to Coroico to help with the health promoters program. When Sister Lucille went to Carmen Pampa on some business, Sister Damon Nolan, OSF, director of the school there, asked her to take their truck when she went to Alto Beni for the priest and couple who were going to give the Marriage Encounter in Coripata the following week. Sister Damon wanted her to bring back some rice for the school and knew that both the people and foodstuff could not be accommodated in the jeep. Sister Lucille agreed to take the truck, but when coming back, the clutch burned out.

When Bishop Esquivel visited in mid-April, he talked to the sisters about his concern about the increased drug trafficking in the region. He warned them not to be out alone at night; they assured him that they had not been going alone.

Sister Lucille went with Sister Kathy Keck, OSF, and her chauffeur to La Paz for a cursillo. They both wanted the cursillo team to come to their parishes, but the only way the team would agree to do so was if the sisters themselves had made the weeklong course.

When Bishop Esquivel came on May 9, he persuaded Sister Lucille to accompany him to Chulumani. She did so but the following day had to set out on the seven-hour trip to Alto Beni for the youth meeting. She took three youths and a catechist with her.

Various things had been breaking down in recent months: first the heater in March, then the stove in April. Finally in the middle of May, Sisters Lucille and Charlotte went to La Paz to look for a new hot water heater.

On May 20, Sister Lucille took Father Innocence to Dorado Grande for Mass. When they were ready to return, she discovered the clutch was not working. They therefore had to walk forty-five minutes to Arapata, where they persuaded a taxi driver to take them to Coripata. The young man was not too charmed about the late trip and "flew low"; gratefully, all arrived in good condition.

On Pentecost Sunday, Sister Lucille had a meeting with the catechists after the Mass. When she took Father Innocence to Carmen Pampa afterwards, Sister Charlotte accompanied them, as she wanted to check on an expectant mother. Since the woman was not yet ready to deliver, Sister Lucille left Sister Charlotte there for the night and returned the next day for her.

Work went on as usual during June. The flu epidemic, which had kept Sister Mary Patricia so busy the previous month, had abated. Father Innocence came for a number of days and accompanied Sister Lucille to some of the villages for Masses and the sacraments.
Early in June, Sister Mary Patricia had a three-day course for her health promoters; the young woman doctor, Betsy Morales, helped her with a one-day program for them later in the month. Sister was pleased that thirteen showed up. In mid-June, she assisted the doctor with vaccinations in Coscoma, Santa Gertrudis. Then she spent a day advising other villages of the forthcoming program. She had two more workshops for her health promoters during July.

At the end of the month, a Jesuit and his team returned to give a retreat for the thirteen catechists and ordained deacons from the Altiplano. Bishop Esquivel joined the sisters for a couple of days, then borrowed the sisters’ jeep to go to Chulumani.

Sister Charlotte drove Father Innocence out to Nogaloni for Mass on July 9. Then on the eleventh, she went with the Bishop, his chauffeur, and an artist out to Trinidad Pampa. Although Sister Charlotte’s macular degeneration continued to worsen, she felt secure in driving in the Yungas. She said her peripheral vision was sufficient to allow her to do this safely. Thus, she drove Father Innocence to Machacamarca for the evening Mass during the festivities surrounding the Feast of Carmen.

The celebrations for the Feast of Carmen went forward. Though the bands did not seem as noisy this year, there was the usual drinking and dancing.

On August 8, Sister Mary Patricia had an unusual experience. A man had died six days earlier, and at this late date, she and Señor Cristobal Mamani were asked to do a “superficial autopsy” because the police apparently believed the death to be cocaine-related and wanted some evidence.

A few days later, Sister Mary Patricia and Sister Charlotte joined the Poor Clares in celebrating their patron feast.

In mid-August, Sisters Mary Patricia and Charlotte went to Carmen Pampa to have a clinic for the students in the high school. They promised to return to the school on the twenty-ninth to participate in a round table discussion on controlling one’s sexual desires.

Back in Coripata, Sister Mary Patricia had another workshop for her health promoters, and on the seventeenth, showed a film on abortion in the high school. Surprisingly, given the government’s efforts in promoting family planning, Dr. Betsy Morales helped sister in the presentation and explanations. Sister and the doctor had apparently developed a good working relationship, and the doctor continued to help with the workshops for health promoters.

When Sister Mary Patricia took Father Innocence home on the twenty-first, she stayed over with the Franciscan sisters for three days to get some extra rest. On her return trip, she went to Coroico to pick up the iron frames for the windows of the new church in Trinidad Pampa.
During August, Sister Carol Williams, a Convent Station Sister of Charity (SC), came to live and work with the SCLs in Coripata and stayed for four years, until March 1987.

Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan came to visit in mid-October. On the nineteenth, Sister Lucille took her over to Coroico to see the eight groups of dancers that were there for the big celebration of the prelature's officially becoming a diocese. Sisters Mary Patricia and Carol represented the Coripata community at the celebration on November 6.

In early November, Sisters Mary Patricia and Charlotte went to La Paz to make arrangements for the trip to Peru for Community meetings. Because of the continuing devaluation of the peso, their three round-trip tickets cost only $20 more than Sister Mary Seraphine's one-way ticket.

Despite the strike by the road workers and various mudslides, the sisters made it to La Paz on November 9 and were able to leave for Lima and Chiclayo the following day. Sister Lucille returned following the Community meetings, but Sister Charlotte stayed on until the twenty-seventh. Sister Mary Patricia stayed until the twenty-eighth to have some dental work done.

On Thanksgiving Day 1983, the sisters awoke to the news that the Legislative Palace in La Paz had been bombed at 4:00 a.m. Both Congress and the COB (Workers’ Union) had refused to accept the new economic decrees of the President. The question in everyone’s mind was, “What now?” The answer came about a week later when a general strike was called and roads were again blocked.

Meantime in Coripata, the Con Cola beverage plant was inaugurated. This factory would produce wines, liquors, and crackers from the coca plant. If it was successful, it would be a great boon for the campesinos of the area.

The Bishop arrived for a pre-Christmas visit and enjoyed watching the sisters putting up their decorations. Despite the heavy rains and the fact that the town was without electricity for several days, the sisters and priests from Carmen Pampa and Coroico arrived for dinner on the twenty-sixth. On December 31, the sisters enjoyed one of Sister Mary Patricia's cured hams. She had been experimenting with “curing” meats and cheeses for some time, and now the community was the beneficiary.

On January 1, 1984, they continued to enjoy the ham. That day Sisters Lucille and Carol went out to Trinidad Pampa for the presentation of two bells for the new church by the community of Huaycuni. These bells had originally come from the hacienda of a family in Huaycuni, but with land reforms, they had become the property of the community.

On the seventh, Sister Mary Patricia went to La Paz with a Franciscan sister for a weeklong workshop. After its conclusion, they met Sisters Agnes Klein and Rose Celine Siebers and brought them down to Coripata.
Because everyone, including the women, were busy in the coca fields, only about three-fourths of the catechists and none of their wives came for the January 20 meeting in Coripata. Two days later, Sisters Lucille and Carol went out to a village for a prayer group, and within a few days, they went to another village for the monthly catechist meeting.

On January 22, Sister Mary Patricia had another workshop for the health promoters. This time Sister Charlotte and Nati Arrascaita, a nurse’s aide in the clinic, gave the talks on sex education. The group would have its fourth and last workshop in February. That time it would be on venereal diseases. Sister Mary Patricia was delighted that seven young women persevered to the end.

On January 28, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia took Sister Agnes to La Paz. (Sister Rose Celine was staying on as she had spent the first part of her “vacation” in bed with bronchitis.) Although Sister Agnes left the next day, the Coripatans could not return home until the thirty-first because of mudslides. These continued to complicate their travels and ministries, making it difficult to visit outlying areas or to pick up Father Innocence from Carmen Pampa. Moreover, with the heavy rains, Sister Charlotte was suffering a great deal with her arthritis and back pain.

In the second week in February, Sister Lucille took three men to Trinidad Pampa for a week of visiting and a preached mission. On the twelfth, Bishop Esquivel and Father Jaime Postma came from La Paz for the dedication of the church. Since it was also Father Innocence Staco’s seventy-ninth birthday, the Bishop gave him special recognition and a medallion from Rome. That evening, the sisters invited the clergy to a birthday celebration with cake and ice cream at the convent; for the Bolivians, this was an introduction to the American way of celebrating birthdays.

At the end of February, Sister Mary Patricia began working on a program to introduce family planning. Sister Charlotte and the two clinic workers, as well as the doctor and her nurse aide, also helped. Only three couples participated, but perhaps that was just as well since the doctor and her nurse’s aide gave a very complicated presentation.

On February 27, Sisters Lucille and Carol set out for Coroico to pick up Sister Rose Celine after her private retreat. The roads were in such terrible conditions that it took them twelve hours for the trip to and from Coroico, a journey that normally would have taken no more than two and a half hours. Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia had better luck on March 7 when they took her to La Paz for her return trip to Peru. However, when Sisters Mary Patricia and Carol went to Coroico to pick up Sister Carol’s superior on March 19, it took four hours as they became stuck in the mud; they had to stay with the sisters there overnight.
Since Sisters Lucille and Carol were with their guest in La Paz on the twenty-fifth, Sisters Charlotte and Mary Patricia renewed their vows at the Mass in the church. When Sister Mary Patricia tried to take Father Innocence back to Carmen Pampa that day, the old jeep again became stuck, and Sister Damon Nolan had to come out and pull them out. Sister Mary Patricia stayed in Carmen Pampa the following week, giving physicals to four hundred students.

When Sister Mary Patricia tried to return to Coripata on the thirtieth, the jeep again became stuck and had to be pulled back to Carmen Pampa. Although she tried to communicate her whereabouts to the sisters in Coripata by radio, she was unsuccessful. On the evening of April 2, Sister Lucille arrived with a workman from the parish. The sisters had been worried when they had heard nothing from Sister Mary Patricia. After staying overnight, all three returned to Coripata by the Coroico road.

After about two weeks, Sister Lucille went over to Carmen Pampa when the adult education group was returning. By that time, she could drive home the 1975 jeep that Sister Mary Patricia had been forced to leave there.

On April 1, 1984, there were rumors of another turnover in the government. There was, however, nothing on the radio, and it was not until later in the month that there were massive demonstrations in La Paz and another new cabinet was put in. Unrest continued in La Paz.

Meanwhile, in Coripata the people had begun to work such long and hard hours that no one had time for meetings, not even for religious services. Coca production had increased, and there was more gold mining. In the pastoral meeting in Chulumani, the sisters and priests discussed what could be done about the drug problems in the Yungas.

Sisters Carol and Lucille continued visiting the villages, and Sister Mary Patricia gave a workshop on the use of natural medicines with the help of a sister from Chulumani. The latter also showed slides on venereal diseases to the JEC group. During the week, the number of participants increased each day.

Sister Charlotte had gone out all week with the nurse from the hospital to give vaccines. On April 13, she drove to Pararani for palms for Palm Sunday. However, the work proved to have been too much for her, and she ended up in bed on the fifteenth.

On the seventeenth, Sister Lucille took Father Innocence to Arapata for Mass; on the eighteenth, while on their way to Los Anguias, they met Bishop Esquivel. After having dinner together, they celebrated a Penance service in Coripata although there were no lights.

The youth group prepared the church for Holy Thursday services, and Sister Lucille made a trip to Coroico to intercede for electricity. Her efforts
were successful in so far as they had lights that night, right up through adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 11:30. The youth group again prepared the church for the Easter Vigil.

During Easter week, Sister Lucille took Sister Charlotte to La Paz to see if something more could be done about her arthritis. While there, they received permission from Sister Mary Kevin Hollow to purchase a new jeep. Sister Lucille had already applied to the German Bishops’ fund, “Church in Need,” for money for a Toyota Land Cruiser.

During May, Sisters Carol and Lucille had several days with catechists’ meetings; Sister Carol also had a meeting with First Communion parents. Some of the catechists had begun opening the parish club for games for the younger people on Friday nights as a means of diverting them from beginning to drink all weekend.

On May 19, Sister Mary Patricia received word that her father was to be operated on, so Sister Lucille took her to La Paz the following day.

After many weeks without water in the house and having to stand in line at the town spigot, the sisters rejoiced on May 21 to have it once again in the house.

Despite her arthritic condition, Sister Charlotte continued to take night calls, sometimes being called out as often as three times, not to speak of her work during the daytime. In at least one case when there was a particularly difficult delivery, a truck came over from Carmen Pampa to ask her to come to help out. She always obliged.

At the end of the month, Sister Jeannette, one of the Allegheny Franciscans, came down from La Paz to Coripata to tell Sisters Lucille and Charlotte that her Community was “suspending” their mission in La Paz for two or three years. All three American sisters, plus their four Bolivian members, were going to the States for study and renewal programs. She told the SCLs to feel free to continue to use the convent whenever in La Paz and asked them to “keep an eye on it.”

Sister Lucille and Señora Graciela Rojas, a parishioner, went to La Paz to make purchases for the forthcoming workshop for catechists. While they were there, Bishop Esquivel communicated that Deacon Paz Jimenez would direct the retreat for the forty catechists and their wives from June 2 to 10. Father Innocence came to offer Mass and be sacramental minister. The Bishop himself arrived the last evening. Though Coripata was again without electricity, this did not dim the joyous conclusion of the retreat.

On June 14, 1984, Sister Joan Kilker brought Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Bernadette Helfert, Community Councilors, for a week’s visit. While in Coripata, they visited various areas of work. They also shared a communications workshop with the sisters and played the tape sent by Sister Mary Kevin for presenting the sisters their new Community Constitutions.
During their stay, Bishop Esquivel stopped by to visit. While there, he offered Mass for them before having dinner and going on his way.

Once again Bishop Esquivel arrived unexpectedly the evening of Corpus Christi. He had Mass that evening and again early the next morning. On Saturday, Father Innocence, that nearly eighty-year-old "retired" Cistercian, walked almost all the way from Carmen Pampa before he was finally picked up by Sisters Charlotte and Lucille. Both jeeps had been in repair, but he was determined to have Mass and sacraments for the people!

On June 28, the sisters were really happy to see the chauffeur from San Antonio parish in La Paz drive up with their new red jeep. What was even more surprising was that he brought with him Duane and Colleen LaPorte! Colleen, a former SCL and member of Sister Charlotte's novitiate, had visited before. The chauffeur took back the old jeep with him to try to sell it in La Paz.

This year the priests, brothers, and sisters from Coroico and Carmen Pampa came to Coripata for the celebration of July 4th. Since Deacon Paz Jimenez was to have the Novena for Our Lady of Mount Carmel this year, Sister Lucille went to La Paz to pick him up on July 6; she also drove him to Carmen Pampa after the festivities. She returned to La Paz on the fourteenth to pick up a priest who was substituting for Bishop Esquivel for the Mass and procession of Carmen. The political situation was such that the Bishop did not feel he should leave the capital.

Through all their years in Coripata, the sisters had lamented the heavy drinking that seemed to be part and parcel of the religious festivities (as well as all gatherings). At various times, they had talked with the people, and Sister Lucille had been delighted when the catechists in charge of the fiesta for the dedication of the church in Trinidad Pampa had served no liquor. Now Sister Lucille began to talk with the women about trying to stop this custom in the feasts of May and July. She called for a parish meeting in the club. She was delighted when they promised to try to bring about changes for the next year.

At the end of July, after taking Father Innocence back to Carmen Pampa, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went on to La Paz via Coroico. Sister Charlotte picked up her Bolivian identification card, and they went to meet Sister Lucille's good friend, Annette Stockey, who was going to spend the month with them.

The time passed rapidly. Gratefully, by this time the experienced catechists were now giving the workshop for the new ones, so some of the pressure was taken off Sister Lucille. The last week of Annette's vacation, Sister Lucille took her to La Paz and Lake Titicaca. After she saw her friend off, she met Sister Carol Williams, who was returning from her Community's centennial celebration in the United States.
On September 11, when Sister Lucille was going to Chulumani for building materials for their back patio, she was surprised to see Sister Mary Patricia coming up the road on a truck. For Sister Mary Patricia had not let them know of the date of her return from the United States.

On September 16, Sisters Charlotte and Lucille went to La Paz, for Sister Charlotte had reached a hard decision and wanted to make tentative arrangements to return to the United States. On September 18, she called Sister Mary Kevin Hollow to tell her that she was in much pain and was nearly immobile. They decided that she should return the first week in October. On their way back to Coripata, Sister Charlotte stopped to see the sisters in Carmen Pampa and Coroico to tell them of the decision.

But God had other plans. Indeed, Bishop Esquivel seemed privy to them, for he told the sisters in Coroico that Sister Charlotte was not going to live long.

Sister Lucille had scheduled Masses in the various villages the whole week of September 24, so Father Innocence was staying in Coripata. On September 26, Sister Lucille had been in the campo all day. Since she was very tired and had already attended several Eucharistic celebrations, she did not go over to the evening Mass. Sister Charlotte also said she was going to bed as she did not feel well enough to go over to the church.

Immediately following Mass, Sister Mary Patricia went directly to Sister Charlotte’s room to check on her. Noting her grave condition, she gave her some medicines she had on hand. Throughout the night, Sister Mary Patricia kept a clinical log and did everything she could.

Meanwhile, the sisters sent for Father Innocence to give Sister Charlotte the Anointing of the Sick. She was alert until her last four or five minutes, and Sisters Mary Patricia and Lucille stayed with her until she breathed her last at 1:23 a.m., September 27, 1984. Though she had been suffering in many other ways, Sister Charlotte had never had heart problems. Nevertheless, in the end it was her heart that gave out. Perhaps, though her mind had consented to leaving Coripata, her heart could not do so.

Many memories came to mind. Sister Lucille recalled Sister Charlotte telling her, “I really had an experience in prayer. . . . Jesus asked me if He could touch me.” On September 26, when Father Jaime Postma and his sister had been visiting, the latter had asked Sister Charlotte how long she had been in Coripata. Impressed when Sister Charlotte responded, “eighteen years,” Jaime’s sister said, “Now this is your home.”

In the days that followed and for years afterwards, Sister Lucille reflected on her own more or less mystical experience of the previous month. Beginning during her trip to Lake Titicaca with Annette Stockey, Sister Lucille had frequently cried spontaneously. She could not explain it, but everything just appeared so much more beautiful to her. She said
she was sort of “caught up in God.” This experience stopped the day Sister Charlotte died.

On September 27, Sister Lucille left early with one of the Franciscans from Coroico to send telegrams to the Community and Sister Charlotte’s family. Sister Mary Patricia stayed behind to deal with the doctor and help make necessary arrangements. By 7:00 a.m., various parish workers arrived to help out: to see about the coffin, the cemetery plot, and the register. Innocencia Flores and Nati Arrascaita, aides in the clinic, helped in the kitchen. Later, Innocencia, Sister Charlotte’s faithful helper in the clinic, bathed her body. Everyone wanted to do something for this Sister of Charity who had spent herself for them. Lacking just two months of being fifty-six, Sister Charlotte had lived and worked among them for eighteen and a half years. Her memorial card and grave marker would say it all: “The only thing she did was to love.” The suggestion for this epitaph came from Bishop Esquivel.

Father Innocence celebrated Mass in English in the small convent chapel at 11:30 a.m. midst the tolling of the church bells. About 1:00, Sisters Damon Nolan and Sheila McGee, OFM, arrived from Carmen Pampa, having walked an hour and a half before being picked up by a truck.

By 7:00 p.m., the coffin arrived. After being reverently placed within it, Sister Charlotte was carried to the church to be waked. Needless to say, the church was packed to overflowing.

Sister Lucille returned from La Paz at 8:00 p.m. with the Deacon Paz Jimenez and a Precious Blood Sister. Paz Jimenez and Meliton Mamani, the head catechist, conducted the wake service with four other catechists participating.

Two other Franciscan sisters arrived for the wake and stayed the night. The Abbess of the Poor Clares and another sister, as well as two of their postulants, arrived too. The housekeeper for Bishop Manning and another Franciscan from Coroico all came for the wake also. Bishop Esquivel was at a meeting in Ecuador at the time, but another auxiliary bishop came down from La Paz for the funeral.

The Franciscan Sisters from Sarota did not learn of Sister Charlotte’s death until early the morning of the twenty-eighth. When they did hear the news, they left immediately, driving from early morning until late afternoon. They stayed with the SCLs that weekend, offering what comfort and support they could.

On October 5, Sister Lucille went to La Paz to arrange for her trip to the United States, where she would be the SCL ambassador to the members of Sister Charlotte Swain’s family.

In November, Sisters Agnes Klein and Joan Kilker visited Coripata. At the time of Sister Charlotte’s death, Sister Joan had been the only professed sister in the house of formation, so she could not go to Bolivia. Of course, even if she could have left immediately, she would not have
Funeral procession for Sister Charlotte Swain

Sisters Lucille Harrington and Joan Kikker
at the grave of Sister Charlotte Swain
in Coripata
arrived in time for the funeral on the twenty-eighth. Both she and the sisters in Coripata felt keenly the absence of other Sisters of Charity. Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia never forgot the empathy and kindnesses of the Franciscan sisters.

Father Paz Jimenez was assigned to Coripata following his ordination in December. Another seminarian and laymen were to accompany him.

During the past year, the economic situation in Bolivia had worsened considerably. By February 4, 1985, the exchange was 90,000 pesos for a dollar. When Sister Mary Patricia went to La Paz in mid-month to pick up the sisters’ check from the Kansas City-St. Joseph priests, she was unable to cash it as there was no money in circulation.

On the twelfth, Sisters Mary Patricia and Carol went to Coroico to help celebrate Father Innocence Staco’s eightieth birthday. Sister Lucille made a day of recollection in Carmen Pampa on the seventeenth. That same day, Bishop Esquivel had a workshop for thirteen catechists. A week later, Bishop Esquivel and Sister Lucille went to La Paz to pick up ten young people in music ministry who would accompany the catechists’ retreat. The Bishop was the celebrant for the Ash Wednesday liturgy. The following day, Father Paz Jimenez announced that Deacon Justino had also been assigned to Coripata.

During these years, the sisters were frequently called upon to help the medical personnel in the town, either driving them to attend a very ill person or bringing the sick or injured into Coripata. Once, for example, as there was no ambulance in the town, the mayor asked Sister Mary Patricia to go out to the scene of a truck accident about forty minutes away.

On September 28, 1985, Father Juan Vargas from Coroico and Father Innocence had a special Mass in the parish. The sisters from Coroico and Carmen Pampa also came for the first anniversary of Sister Charlotte’s death; after the Mass, all went in procession to the cemetery. The SCLs invited these friends to a cookout at the convent afterwards. On the thirtieth, the sisters invited those who had been so helpful the previous year for a similar Mass and cookout. In their sharing at this time, many spoke of the favors they had received through Sister Charlotte’s intercession.14

Meanwhile, during October, Sister Lucille and Señora Graciela Rojas began classes in the formation of women in Marcaribi, and about a week later, Sister Mary Patricia joined them for other classes with the women. She also had a monthly meeting with the women who had learned to assist with deliveries.

On November 1, 1985, Father Paz Jimenez gave a special blessing to Sister Charlotte’s grave, and he offered Mass there the next day. The Franciscan sisters from Coroico and Carmen Pampa were also present.
When Sisters Joan Kilker and Elena Mack visited in November, they interviewed some young women who were interested in the Community. Sister Mary Kevin Hollow suggested that it would seem that there should be some adaptation of the screening process for potential candidates in Bolivia. She commented that perhaps a sort of “associate program” should be set up with the two sisters in Coripata. Then perhaps the girls could be invited to Peru to visit and come to know the sisters there before any other plans were made.15

Sister Joan attended the graduation of twenty-four adults in the CETHA program in Carmen Pampa with Sister Mary Patricia in late November. In early December, Sister Lucille went out to Arapata for adult education courses, and Sisters Joan and Mary Patricia went to Carmen Pampa with members of the families of some of the young women receiving the equivalent of their high school diploma. Before Sister Joan returned to Peru, she gave the sisters their Christmas presents from the Talara and Piura houses.

After having been gone all week again, Father Paz Jimenez returned for the Christmas Masses, even going out to Trinidad Pampa after the Aymara Mass. Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia went with him.

On December 27, Sister Mary Patricia met Sister Donna Jean Henson in La Paz; she was making her first visit to Coripata. As usual, the sisters took their guest to visit with the Poor Clares in Coroico and the Franciscans and Xaverians in Carmen Pampa. Then in early January 1986, the three sisters went up to La Paz. Sisters Mary Patricia and Donna Jean shopped, but Sister Lucille began a six-week program in Formation Spirituality. Together, they stayed at the Franciscan House in Cala Coto, a sector of La Paz. Sister Lucille continued living there for the length of her program.

Before going back to the Yungas, Sister Mary Patricia cashed a $400 check; the exchange by this time had risen to 5150 Bolivianos per dollar. It was a challenge just to carry out the money.

Once at home, Sister Mary Patricia found herself extra busy in the clinic since the doctor had completed her contract year, and Innocencia Flores was in mourning for her mother, who had died on January 10. Innocencia did not come to the clinic for eight days.

In her “free time,” Sister Mary Patricia cleaned the cemetery and burned the bones that had been strewn around. For in Bolivia, if a family discontinued paying for the niche where a loved one was buried, the remains were disinterred and heaped in a corner of the cemetery. Sometimes animals “toyed” with these if they were not properly disposed of.

Sister also met with the Hijas de Maria (Daughters of Mary), a group of girls aged ten to fifteen formed by the deacon before he left, and she invited the charismatic group to meet in the convent.

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When Sister Mary Patricia went to substitute for Sister Lucille at the catechists' meeting, Father Paz Jimenez wanted to direct it all. She found him very difficult to work with. Therefore, when Father Paz again left for La Paz in mid-January to spend two weeks, Sister Mary Patricia was glad to welcome Bishop Esquivel when he arrived five days later.

Besides her work in the clinic in Coripata, Sister Mary Patricia drove out to a village half an hour away to take fifteen stitches in the head of a drunken woman who had fallen. She also drove Dr. Maria Elena Aryianda, the dentist, her two clinic aides, and an aide from the hospital when they wanted to take two very small children and an infant to Chacon, forty-five minutes away.

At the end of January 1986, she was lucky to secure the help of a young woman doctor. Dr. Rosa Haybar, a native of Coripata but practicing in Argentina, had come to vacation with her parents for two months. While in Coripata, she volunteered to help sister. In fact, she took over the clinic when Sister Mary Patricia and Innocencia went out into the campo to visit four patients.

On February 1, Sister Mary Patricia took a full team to Trinidad Pampa to provide health services there. With her were Dr. Maria Elena, dentist; Nati Arrascaita and her daughter; Innocencia Flores and her daughter; and Martha Landiveri, a young woman interested in the Community. The dentist pulled forty teeth that day, and Sister Mary Patricia and her team had many patients. On March 1, Sister Mary Patricia, the aides, and Dr. Maria Elena went to Trinidad Pampa. That Saturday the dentist pulled fifty teeth!

The second week of February, Sister Mary Patricia went to La Paz to receive the paper necessary for the renewal of her *carnet* (residence papers). When she stopped at the convent in Cala Coto before leaving La Paz, she was surprised and sorry to find Sister Lucille there instead of at her workshop. Sister Lucille had not been able to attend classes the whole last week of the workshop because of illness. Before returning to Coripata, Sister Mary Patricia helped Sister Lucille clean the house. They also picked up Father Paz Jimenez for the trip back.

A few days later, the sisters went to Coroico to help celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of one of the Poor Clares. While in Coroico, Bishop Manning asked Sister Lucille what was wrong with her neck. The following day, while Bishop Esquivel was visiting, he too noted that Sister Lucille was continually turning her head to the left while talking with him. Within the next day or two, Sister Lucille began using a foam neck collar. However, she continued to feel worse, and by nighttime her left leg was swollen.

By February 19, Sister Lucille was seriously thinking of going to the United States early. Sister Mary Patricia encouraged her to do so, but as she continued to massage her neck, she felt some better. At a prayer meeting
in early March, Sister Lucille said she experienced a “healing” and could feel the neck cracking and relaxing. Later on, her back began to hurt, but she still made no definite plans.

Meanwhile, on Friday and Saturday, February 21–22, three young women interested in the Community came for retreat and stayed overnight with the sisters. Sister Lucille continued working with the girls on Saturday, but Sister Mary Patricia was in the clinic since Saturdays and Sundays were always busy days with many campesinos coming into town.

Sister Mary Patricia also continued working with the Hijas de Maria, though at times they seemed like an awfully noisy group. At one time, she invited Dr. Maria Elena to come and speak with them. They seemed to have enjoyed themselves, for the group increased in size until it had about eighteen participants in March.

In the middle of March, Sister Lucille was very saddened when Meliton Mamani came to see her. He told her Father Paz Jimenez had informed him that he was no longer needed either in the parish office or as a catechist. Sister Lucille felt helpless, but asked Meliton to continue helping her in the campo with the young married couples and prayer groups.

Although Father Paz was there for Palm Sunday Mass and procession, he left for the campo that very day. He asked Father Innocence to fill in for him from Holy Thursday through Easter. It was clear that he preferred to work solo and also to be in the countryside.

On March 25, Sister Lucille drove the jeep for the first time in three months, going out to Arapata and Trinidad Pampa. The next day, she and Sister Mary Patricia took Father Innocence back to Carmen Pampa. While there, they visited with the sisters and the Xaverian Brothers.

Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia went up to La Paz on June 1. While Sister Lucille renewed her residence papers and driver’s license, Sister Mary Patricia shopped for medicine and other things.

When Sister Lucille went to Trinidad Pampa for the prayer group in mid-June, she also talked to some of the people about forming a women’s group there. There were many people present in the church, a fact that Sister Lucille attributed to the impetus of the Faith and Joy school that had recently been started by a Jesuit and in which she and three laypersons had been invited to teach as volunteers.

Sister Mary Patricia made a couple of trips to Carmen Pampa to care for some of the Franciscan sisters there. Sister Damon Nolan was having some problems with her blood pressure, and later she asked Sister Mary Patricia’s advice regarding Sister Sheila McGee’s slipped disk. Sister Mary Patricia returned again later to attend Sister Damon.

On June 20, 1986, the sisters went to La Paz to obtain news of the recent Community elections in the United States. There they learned that
Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani was the new Community Director; they were also informed of the new Councilors. When the Chapter News Notes arrived early in July, they devoured them.

On the vigil of the Feast of Saint John Baptist, normally the coldest night of the year, the sisters watched the burning of the bonfires. In Bolivia, there was a custom similar to that in Peru for New Year’s Eve. The people burned their old belongings and started a new year with the hope that the warming temperatures would also bring good harvests.

Later in the month, when Meliton Mamani went with Sister Lucille and the rest of the teaching team to Trinidad Pampa, he asked her about his social benefits from the parish. As she was still in charge of the parish finances, she wrote him a check for the benefits that were due him.

On June 30, Sister Lucille took two young women to the workshop in Carmen Pampa and picked up Sister Mary Patricia, who had been spending a few days there. Less than a week later, Sister Mary Patricia returned to Carmen Pampa for the July 4th celebration; this year Sister Lucille did not go.

That day a catechist from Chacon came to talk with her. He wanted her to let a curandero (healer) from his village cure her neck using the fat from a black dog’s head. While she did not accept, she was pleased by his concern and the confidence he manifested in her by even suggesting it. She commented, “I guess it’s because I am an Aymara at heart and they know it.”

In mid-July, the sisters were saddened to hear that Bishop Manning had reassigned Father Innocence to the seminary as a confessor and that he would no longer be serving the faithful of Coripata. He had helped in so many ways ever since about September 1979, a little over two years after the Kansas City-St. Joseph priests departed. Sometimes at great personal sacrifice, Father Innocence had come to Coripata and its villages, and he had proven to be a close friend of the sisters.

During the previous week, Sister Lucille left to make a two-day retreat at the Poor Clare Monastery. When she returned she was pleasantly surprised to find that Sister Mary Patricia had made a cake and some ice cream for the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and her birthday.

Sister Lucille went to La Paz for two days right before the celebration of the Bolivian Independence Day. After her return, she talked with a Jesuit about the possibility of them taking the high school in Coripata. He told her to pray.

On July 19, both Sisters Mary Patricia and Lucille went to Choro to teach until noon. That way they could have a group in Spanish and one in Aymara. Sister Lucille also went out to Arapata for the adult education program.
Bishop Esquivel arrived on the twenty-fifth and asked for a meeting with Father Paz Jimenez and the sisters. Although nothing much happened, he asked for a monthly team meeting of the priests and sisters and said that he planned to be present for them. It seemed to the sisters that he really did not know what to do with Father Paz, his many absences, and the difficulties he sometimes caused, as for example his treatment of the catechists and the removal of the library to the parish club.

In mid-August, Sisters Joan Kilker, Director of Missions, and Mary Joan Eble arrived. During their visit, the sisters discussed the Chapter Enactments, and Sister Joan filled them in with interesting news pieces regarding the Chapter. She also delivered a letter saying that Sister Ann Louis LaLonde would join Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia in January.

When the sisters visited Sister Charlotte’s grave, they were moved by the fresh flowers the people kept at her gravesite. While in Coripata, Sister Joan also talked with two girls who were interested in the SCL Associate Program.

On August 25, Sisters Joan and Mary Joan left for La Paz and from there to Cochabamba, where the latter would begin her studies in the Maryknoll Institute of Languages.

Arriving from taking the sisters to La Paz, Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia discovered that Bishop Esquivel was already there. What is more, they also found out that the pastor had re-scheduled the next team meeting for September without consulting them. In the morning, he again left with the Bishop. When he did finally meet with the sisters in mid-September, there was little or no improvement in communication.

Early in September, Sister Mary Patricia and two aides went to the school in Chulumani to teach health. Sister Mary Patricia and Nati Arrascaita also went with the dentist and a nurse aide from the hospital to Nogaloni.

On September 19, Sister Lucille announced she really was going to the United States. She received a letter from Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani that same day, urging her to come home early and to go straight to Denver for medical attention. Six days later, she was on her way.

Fortunately for Sister Mary Patricia, a Notre Dame Sister returned to Coripata with her to make a private retreat and rest. She stayed for three weeks.

In late October 1986, Sister Joan Kilker wrote to Sister Mary Kathleen, commenting on the situation in Coripata. She said that both Sisters Lucille and Mary Patricia wanted more sisters to come to Coripata, both for the work and in order to have a better community life. She also commented on the fact that there was little or no communication with the pastor.18

As if to confirm this, Sister Mary Patricia wrote Sister Mary Kathleen on November 16 about the difficulties in the parish. She said that Father
Paz Jimenez made many promises but fulfilled almost none, and that he had been gone all week again. Bishop Esquivel arrived about 9:30 Friday night. He told Sister Mary Patricia that he had confronted Father Paz, and the latter had gone to Santa Cruz to make retreat and to see a doctor.

The next day, the Bishop took the place of Father Paz Jimenez in the meeting with the catechists. The catechists were very open about presenting their problems in working with Father Paz. The Bishop called for a general meeting of the catechists from the five zones to begin to make plans and organize for 1987. Before the Bishop left, he closed the rectory and gave the keys to Sister Mary Patricia, telling her that she was now in charge of the parish. But Sister Mary Patricia found it difficult working with Bishop Esquivel, too. 19

The Bishop again tried to find someone to live with Father Paz in Coripata, but he didn’t succeed. So he said that he would fill in for him for the time being. Despite her feelings about both the priest and the Bishop, Sister Mary Patricia told Sister Mary Kathleen that she could see the SCLs staying for five years more, but she thought they should have some definite long-range goals as well as short-range ones. 20

On January 20, 1987, Sister Ann Louis Lalonde, an SCL nurse, arrived as scheduled. She was met by Sister Mary Patricia and one of the Franciscan Sisters from Carmen Pampa. A week later, two of the sisters from Coroico came to welcome Sister Ann Louis and stayed a few days.

Father Paz Jimenez came to visit on February 5. In talking with Sister Mary Patricia, he said that after his three-month leave he was cured of his physical, mental, and emotional ills, and he indicated that he planned to stay. Despite this declaration, Sister Ann Louis later noted in the house history that they had had their first Mass in a long time on February 15. Even though glad for the Eucharistic celebration, she was none too pleased with the hell and damnation preaching of Father Paz.

On February 6, Sister Mary Patricia left for Talara and a special meeting with Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani about the future of the Coripata mission. On her return the twenty-fourth, Sister Mary Patricia told Sister Ann Louis that the focus of the meeting had been on the lack of personnel to keep Coripata open.

After her return from the meeting, Sister Mary Patricia attempted to orient Sister Ann Louis to the parish, taking her out to see some of the closer villages and haciendas. The first wake service Sister Ann Louis attended was a bit of a culture shock. She commented on the singing, drinking, and chewing of coca that was all a part of accompanying the body and the family.

Sister Mary Patricia went to Coroico for Sister Carol Williams’ farewell on February 28. This Sister of Charity of Convent Station had been working

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in Coripata since August 1983. A week later, Sisters Ann Louis and Mary Patricia went to Carmen Pampa when they took three of the students on SCL study grants to begin their new school year.

In mid-March, Sister Mary Patricia took Sister Ann Louis to La Paz to see about a residence permit. Sister Ann Louis soon learned that things are never easy in third world countries, especially official things. On April 1, she returned to La Paz to pick up the document she had applied for in the middle of March. It was not ready then, or on April 20, or on May 11, or on May 17 or 18.

When Sister Ann Louis blessed a body brought to the church and then accompanied the family and coffin to the cemetery, this was another first for her. She assisted at two deliveries that same week.

Sisters Mary Patricia and Ann Louis went to Chulumani on April 6 for a meeting on “Proyecto Yungas,” a U.S.-Bolivian effort to persuade the campesinos to grow less coca and diversify their agricultural production. They both sensed that the U.S. was not trusted nor seen in too favorable a light.

On the Friday before Palm Sunday, Sisters Damon Nolan and Sheila McGee walked from Carmen Pampa (five hours!). They stayed until Palm Sunday afternoon when Sister Mary Patricia took them back after attending the dedication of the new kitchen in the school.

How nice it was to have Mass all of Holy Week! However, there was a mix-up on the time for the Easter Vigil. Father had said 9:00 p.m. but didn’t actually have it until 5:00 the following morning. Then he had the two other Masses, one in the morning and one in the evening.

In the latter part of April, supplies arrived from Caritas (Catholic Charities), so the sisters unpacked them and organized their contents. About a week later, Sister Ann Louis had her first experience with a vaccination day. The chaos was indeed different from the orderly immunization clinics in Grand Junction, Colorado, where she had recently served.

Bishop Esquivel arrived the Sunday night after Easter. The next morning, he walked into the convent unannounced, introduced himself to Sister Ann Louis (Sister Mary Patricia had gone to Coroico and Carmen Pampa for several days of rest), sat down, and began to visit with her about his plans with the new Archbishop.

Four days later, while giving vaccinations, Sister Ann Louis cut her finger on a broken vial. As a result, she developed a full-blown infection in her hand and arm. With aggressive therapy, she was able to overcome the cellulite, but it took her three weeks.

Again in May, Sister Ann Louis began her struggle to receive her residence papers. On the eleventh, she went up to La Paz with some Xaverian Brothers who were going. This time the papers couldn’t be
finished because the sun wasn’t out so they couldn’t take her picture! When she tried again on the seventeenth, the sun was out, but when she returned the following day, someone had attached her picture to the wrong papers. So she was told to return three days later! By this time she, like most gringos, was ready to throw in the towel! She decided to return to Coripata instead.

Another frustrating series of events started when Sister Ann Louis was in La Paz on the seventeenth. She had planned to pick up two friends, Martha and Kay, who were coming in. But after having gone to the airport three times and not finding them, she gave up. What a surprise it was to find her friends waiting for her in Coroico when she returned from La Paz by bus on the twenty-second! Martha and Kay had arrived in La Paz earlier than expected on an unannounced flight and had taken a car to Coroico and from there to Coripata. Sister Mary Patricia had been entertaining them in Sister Ann Louis’ absence and then had taken them to Coroico to meet Sister Ann Louis when she arrived!

After a day of rest, the sisters showed Martha and Kay around, going to La Paz as well as to the countryside. After packing the jeep with medicines and such medical supplies as they might need, the sisters drove into the countryside and tended patients right from the jeep. Seeing such things as these “car clinics” interested the visitors very much. They knew that their tours with the sisters allowed them to see many things and places they would otherwise have missed.

Since her arrival in Coripata, Sister Ann Louis had begun to take long walks in the countryside, one time walking all the way to Trinidad Pampa, ten miles distant. She did accept a ride back. At the end of May, Sisters Ann Louis and Mary Patricia walked five and a half hours, and they still had energy the following days for “car clinics” in two outlying villages. By August, however, Sister Ann Louis developed a problem with her heel, and the doctor advised her not to walk more than three times a week.

After being in Coripata for five months, Sister Ann Louis wrote Sister Mary Kathleen, saying she thought the time of the SCLs in Coripata was over. It was not that she did not think there was still work to be done, but she sensed a general lack of enthusiasm and joy. She commented that although there were programs, there didn’t seem to be any plans. She also noted a lack of collaboration with the diocese and hierarchy, as also with the doctor present in the city. She therefore was in accord that the Coripata mission should be closed.

On June 27, Sisters Mary Patricia and Ann Louis drove to Siete Lomas for the dedication of a new chapel. Afterwards, they participated in a Bolivian-style buffet. Big pans of food were placed on a piece of plastic on the ground; one served oneself with either spoons or fingers.
By late June 1987, Sister Joan Kilker, Director of Missions, had formulated a formal recommendation for the Council based on the discernment done in Talara the previous February and the process the Council had asked her to follow. The reasons given for withdrawal from Coripata were (1) personnel; (2) isolation from other missions; and (3) lack of communication and support on the part of the pastor.

These reasons would be repeated by Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani when she communicated the decision to the Community and to the mission benefactors, although the third was replaced by "a lack of pastoral plan by the pastor of the parish." She also mentioned the difficulty of the Aymara language and the desire to strengthen the SCL presence in Peru. When writing to Archbishop Luis Sainz Hinojosa, Archbishop of La Paz, Sister Joan did not mention the third reason, though certainly he knew of the problems existing there.

In earlier letters to the Community in South and North America (on September 30 and October 2), Sister Mary Kathleen had outlined the steps taken in making the decision to discontinue serving in Coripata. She indicated that after reviewing all the information available, the Council had unanimously decided that we should no longer staff that mission and would leave there at the end of December 1987.

On July 1, a new doctor, Dr. Julio Barrientos, and his family arrived. He brought his wife and two nieces to introduce themselves to the sisters. While there, he asked for the help of the sisters in the vaccination program later that week. They did so on the third, then took time to celebrate July 4th with the sisters, brothers, and priests in Carmen Pampa.

The first procession for the weeklong celebration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel took place on the seventh; it was very big. There was a clinic in San Agustin the next day, but again it was poorly attended. On the eleventh, Sister Mary Patricia, Sister Ann Louis, Dr. Julio, and Innocencia Flores went to Trinidad Pampa; besides the clinic, vaccinations were given at this time. On their return, they ate at a local restaurant; the boiled pork with hominy was a first for Sister Ann Louis.

After First Communion on the morning of the twelfth, Sister Mary Patricia drove up to La Paz to meet Sisters Joan Kilker and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer. At that time, Sister Joan brought definitive word from Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani that the SCLs would be withdrawing from Coripata. During this visit, some plans for the closing were discussed.

Sister Rose Dolores, who had just arrived in South America the month before, eagerly took part in the processions for the Feast of Carmen, walking in the long procession through the streets and feasting her eyes on the colors and sights of the dancers and bands. Except for here and in
Cochabamba later, she would not see "devil dancers" and the like during her years in South America.

On July 17, the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima in Coripata, the sisters celebrated a belated seventy-fifth birthday for Sister Ann Louis. On her real birthday, May 14, she had been in La Paz alone, struggling to get her residence papers!

After participating in the blessing of the trucks on the eighteenth, the sisters packed up and drove to La Paz, staying with the Allegheny Franciscan sisters overnight. After visiting a few places there, the sisters drove Sister Rose Dolores to Cochabamba to begin her language studies.

When Sisters Joan, Mary Patricia, and Ann Louis returned to La Paz on July 26, they stopped to see Bishop Esquivel to tell him of the Community's decision. He received the news in silence, and then asked them to stay six months so that he could look for another Community to staff Coripata. He also inquired if changing the priest there might make a difference, for he was well aware of the problems.

On July 27, Sister Joan returned to Peru and Sister Ann Louis went to Coripata by truck. Sister Mary Patricia stayed several days in La Paz to talk to the Maryknollers and to Father Mike Gillgannon of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese. She also saw a lawyer about the closure and what sort of papers she needed.

Meanwhile, after Sister Ann Louis returned to Coripata, she began making inventories of the clinic and house. She was an expert at this, as she mentioned in a letter to Sister Joan. She had moved herself various times as well as helping with four moves in Community hospitals. Three pages of this inventory represented things later given to the hospital Juan XXIII in La Paz.

On August 8, Sisters Mary Patricia and Ann Louis drove to Los Anguias for a workshop. When no one showed up, they took their picnic lunches and walked along the river until they found an appropriate site to eat.

Three days later, Sisters Mary Patricia and Ann Louis took Innocencia Flores with them when they went to Coroico for the Poor Clares' patron feast day. On the twenty-first, they went to Carmen Pampa for a workshop sponsored by the Project Yungas group. The sisters enjoyed the company and also the folkloric performance that night. They likewise stayed over to participate in Sister Damon Nolan's twenty-fifth celebration the next day. On the following day, they joined with the teachers who were again demonstrating. A few days later in the month, they took Martha Landiveri, Innocencia, and two men to join in another protest at Carmen Pampa. A rally had been scheduled in support of the demands of the teachers, who had not been paid for two months.
Sister Agnes Klein arrived on August 25 to help with closing the house. The next day, Sister Mary Patricia made another trip to La Paz to take the papers that would be necessary for the projected trip to Peru.

In mid-September, Sisters Mary Patricia and Agnes went to La Paz to shop and to get some other papers necessary for taking house goods to Peru. While they were there, they visited Father Mike Gillgannon again. He urged them to protect themselves against litigation in regard to the wages of their employees; he said they should get a good lawyer and have in writing all the transactions taking place with regard to the parish, convent, and clinic. With regard to the jeep, he told them that the parish could reimburse the $4000 the SCLs had put toward it. After returning to Coripata, the sisters packed up the Franciscan van. On the seventeenth, Sister Mary Patricia, Sister Damon Nolan, and Brother Gary left for Carmen Pampa and the trip to Peru.

Earlier, when Sister Mary Patricia announced to the four employees that the SCLs would be closing this mission, like the Bishop they did not show much reaction. Although some of the books and equipment being given to the school in Carmen Pampa were taken over, Sister Mary Patricia resisted the dismantling of the house at this time. She was undoubtedly suffering ambivalent feelings. In August, she had written Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani that she regretted leaving, but then acknowledged that perhaps it should have been closed a few years before.

While Sister Mary Patricia was gone to Peru, Martha, Innocencia, and Sister Ann Louis set about cleaning the church thoroughly. On the twenty-seventh, Father paid all the SCLs a nice tribute at the morning Mass. Then Sisters Agnes and Ann Louis visited Sister Charlotte’s grave on this, her third death anniversary. They took Innocencia, Martha, and Nati out to eat in celebration of Saint Vincent’s Day. That evening the two sisters celebrated a special Vespers together.

On September 28, 1987, Bishop Esquivel stopped in and offered Mass in the convent. While talking with the sisters, he told them that the parish had sent a delegation to La Paz to see what the Bishop could do about keeping the SCLs there. The Bishop again asked if changing the pastor would affect their decision. On hearing that it would not, he began to discuss some alternate plans with them. The following morning, he again offered Mass in the chapel and thanked the sisters for the years of silent work and charity that the Community had rendered in Coripata. He told them that the results might not be seen now, that perhaps it would be left for others to reap the benefits of their work. After breakfast he said goodbye.

On October 1, Sister Ann Louis went with the doctor and his wife to Trinidad Pampa. This time they were busy all day in the clinic. On the way home, they noted the number of people along the river and the mountainside
who were looking for gold. Whenever a little was discovered, many more turned their hands to searching for it.

Sister Mary Patricia, Sister Damon, and Brother Gary returned on October 3. They had had a very successful and uneventful trip taking the household furnishings to Peru. Fortunately, they had had no trouble crossing the border.

On October 20, the sisters went to Coroico for a fiesta there and joined in the procession. There were lots of white flowers, musical groups, and much folkloric dancing.

During the week that followed, Sister Mary Patricia busied herself with sorting and packing the accumulation of years. Sister Agnes was doing the same with Sister Lucille's things since she had not come back from the States. Presently she was living at the Mother House and working in the Leavenworth Emergency Center.

On the twenty-third, despite the bad roads, Sister Mary Patricia went to La Paz to arrange for tickets to Peru and the Community meeting. On the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth, the sisters celebrated the birthdays of Sisters Mary Patricia and Agnes.

Sisters Mary Patricia and Ann Louis drove over to Carmen Pampa on November 3 so that Sister Ann Louis could tell the sisters goodbye. When they visited the cemetery that afternoon, they found that it was cleaned up and that there were many flowers. The people visiting the graves of their loved ones had included Sister Charlotte's grave in their affectionate care. 26

The next morning, Sister Mary Patricia drove Sisters Agnes and Ann Louis to La Paz. They stayed overnight with the Franciscan sisters at Cala Coto, shopped a bit, and then had a farewell lunch at the Gloria Hotel. The following morning, the three departed for Lima and then went on to Talara. They took more things from the Coripata house with them. Despite the fact that there were three traveling, they still had to pay overweight.

Sister Ann Louis stayed in Talara following the meetings, so Sisters Mary Patricia and Agnes began the count down. On November 21, Sister Mary Patricia wrote Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani that she had sold $1000 worth of medicine to Dr. Julio Barrientos, the new doctor in Coripata. He was to make monthly payments to Señorita Innocencia Flores, who would use it to continue helping two girls study in Carmen Pampa. 27

Sisters Mary Patricia and Agnes stayed in Coripata until after Confirmations on December 13, then left for La Paz the following day. Sister Agnes returned to Peru on the sixteenth and Sister Mary Patricia left for the United States on December 19, 1987.

The municipality, various persons, and groups had expressed their sentiments on learning of the sisters' forthcoming withdrawal. One of the most touching was a formal letter from the village of Chulumani written
by its Secretary General. It speaks of the pain and sobs of their community on learning that the sisters were leaving aside their work in the Parish Santiago de Coripata. After appealing to God and the Director of the Sisters of Charity, the community expressed its gratitude for the works and the love that had been imparted to them.

The Coripatans noted that since the SCLs were leaving behind Sister Charlotte Swain, this would make them sense the presence of each of the sisters. They would recall how they had been taught to practice the Gospel of Our Lord, loving one another and practicing charity and solidarity; because of this, they would have confidence and hope in the future.28
Chapter XV Notes

2 CIPCA: Center for the Investigation and Promotion of Campesinos (small farmers).
3 Sister Mary Patricia Kielty, personal notes written at the time of these events in July and August. A/SCL.
4 These Rangers were special Quechua men from the Santa Cruz area trained by the Green Berets of the United States. Besides their training, they were seen as natural enemies of the Aymara people of the Yungas.
5 "Coripata House History," March 6, 1980, A/SCL.
7 Sister Charlotte Swain, "Coripata House History," April 11, 1981, A/SCL.
8 "Coripata House History," July 17, 1981, A/SCL.
9 Both of the jeeps used in the parish were old, the one that had belonged to the parish and the one the SCL community had provided. In 1980 Sister Lucille applied to the German Bishops for help, and Kirche in Not (Aid to the Church in Need) provided $6200 in funding. When Sister Lucille became Administrator of the parish, she put maintenance for the two jeeps into the parish budget.
10 On April 12, a new economic package had devalued the peso again; the exchange went from 500 to 2000 pesos per dollar, and prices increased 400 to 600%.
11 Sister Mary Kevin Hollow to Sister Joan Kilker, September 19, 1984, A/SCL.
12 Kielty, clinical notes taken from 8:20 p.m., September 26, until 1:23 a.m., September 27, 1984, Coripata, Bolivia, A/SCL.
14 Harrington to Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, October 14, 1985, A/SCL.
15 Hollow to Harrington, November 5, 1985, A/SCL.
16 Fe y Alegria (Faith and Joy) schools have been founded by Jesuits in poor and marginalized areas throughout Latin America. It is estimated that more than a half million students have been served, who otherwise would not have received an education.
17 "Coripata House History," July 4, 1986, A/SCL.
18 Kilker to Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, October 27, 1986, A/SCL.
19 Kielty to Stefani, November 16, 1986, A/SCL.
20 Kielty to Stefani, December 29, 1986, A/SCL.
21 Sister Ann Louis LaLonde to Stefani, June 3, 1987, A/SCL.
22 Stefani to SCL Community, December 31, 1987, A/SCL.
23 LaLonde to Kilker, May 12, 1987, A/SCL.
24 The employees' indemnification amounted to one month's salary for each year of their work. (Kielty to Kilker, August 6, 1987), A/SCL.
25 Kielty to Stefani, August 1, 1987, A/SCL.
26 To the present day, sister visitors find that the people of Coripata continue to care for Sister Charlotte's grave. The Franciscan sisters have also continued to tend her grave plot.
27 Kielty to Stefani, November 21, 1987, A/SCL.
28 Mariano Medina (Secretary General of Chulumani) to Kielty and Sister Ines (Agnes) Klein, December 8, 1987, A/SCL.

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On June 11, 1966, the General Council of the Sisters of Charity voted to respond to the request of Bishop Raymond Hunthausen for help in staffing a mission in the primitive and indigenous northwestern part of Guatemala. But it would be about a year and a half before the founding group would arrive.

Members of the Diocese of Helena, Montana, had embarked on missionary activity in Guatemala at roughly the same time as the SCLs first went to Peru. They were currently present at Santo Tomas de Union on the Pacific coast and Santa Maria de la Visitación further inland in the mountainous area.

In early February 1967, Sisters Mary Seraphine Sheehan and Rosalie Mahoney visited Guatemala and the area of the proposed mission for one week. Flying in, they noted the land formations, with the jungle giving way to quixotic mountains and hills and volcanoes “belching somewhat placidly”; the capital itself was situated on a large plateau in the midst of the mountains.

At the airport, they were met by Father James Hazelton, who had received word of their arrival only a very short time beforehand. He took them to the Maryknoll school, Monte Maria, to freshen up; after dinner, he visited with them until almost ten, discussing the people, the culture, the mission, and his views of mission work.

After visiting the school and having lunch the following day, Father made room for their bags among chairs and boxes already in his pickup. Then they set off on a four-hour ride through verdant mountains for Santo Tomas de Union, where they would spend two nights with the three volunteers working there and where they would come to know the other priests working in Santo Tomas and Santa Maria de la Visitación: Fathers Eugene Saycich, James Tackes, and James Mondloch.

Besides the priests and volunteers’ residence, they also visited the clinic and church. Father Tackes had been the architect and overseer in building the first ones there; he was also responsible for the church and priests’ house in Santa Maria and was now making plans for the construction of the sisters’ convent there.

The following day, Father Saycich took them to visit an adjoining tobacco finca (like a hacienda in Peru); in the afternoon, they went to Pasac, a pueblo (town) high in the hills where Father Tackes was to offer Mass. Except for the few Indians they had seen in the clinic, this was the sisters’ first encounter with them, men of exceedingly short stature, wearing their traditional brown plaid skirts, and women and girls in their cortes, long blue wraparound skirts with bright but dirty blouses. Everyone was
barefooted. Although they were unable to communicate verbally, the sisters found them very friendly.

While Father Tackes heard some confessions, Father Mondloch gave the sisters a tour of the village. There was already a clinic built here and a church under construction. The thatched houses were dark, with a fire built in the middle of the dirt floor. Corn was stacked within the hut and also hung from the rafters. Beds made of blankets or rags lay in the corners. Carts or other materials were guarded inside.

During the Mass, they were introduced to the Quiche language, a very difficult dialect used by all the Indians of this area. Although Father Mondloch had mastered it and could help lead some hymns, Father Tackes had to rely on a catechist to repeat his homily in the native dialect. Here, as later, the sisters were impressed by the devotion of the people and the active participation of both men and women in the liturgy. The woman who carried the basket of offerings (bread, eggs, a few coins) and the two men who carried the wine and water and ciborium raised these gifts as Father raised the paten.

Although ashes were distributed at the Mass, the sisters were surprised to find meat served at all three meals on Ash Wednesday. At first they remonstrated in the morning, but by evening they seem to have participated with some zest in the rib roast served. Even more to their liking was the animated conversation that took place with the priests and volunteers at meals.

After breakfast the third day, Father Mondloch showed off a witchdoctor's box and contents, some of which were odd-shaped stones, a few crude figures, and half a piece of paper money. He also showed them a picture of the demonista, whose image is venerated in some of the surrounding areas. As the priests told them, there is a mixture of the Catholic religion with the ancient pagan rites in a number of the villages. In fact, in at least one place, the priests have to share the church with "the pagans" of the cofradías (associations), who claim to be the guardians of the church itself as well as of the statues therein.

Shortly after this "show and tell," the sisters set off for the future SCL mission site at Santa Maria. All along the road, they met heavily burdened natives. The women carried great loads on their heads, a baby on their backs, and bundles in both arms. The men strapped impossible loads of wood and/or sugar cane on their backs, sustained by flat broad straps across their foreheads. In their hands they carried wicked-looking machetes.

At Nohaula, the priests stopped for lunch and to introduce the sisters to the priests, some Sisters of Notre Dame, and a papal volunteer doctor from the Spokane, Washington Diocese. They discovered that Sister Avila supervised a school with native teachers. The priests had a carpentry shop,
a shoe shop, and a sewing shop, all of which were helping to provide
trades. Another building was being constructed, in which the girls would
study health, cooking, and sewing. Meanwhile, Sister George Marie was
in charge of the radio school, which beamed lessons into the rural areas.

After Mass and dinner, a Claretian priest and Father Tackes drove the
sisters to El Novillero, about thirty minutes away, to spend the night with
four Daughters of Mary, Health of the Sick. Both in this mission at ten
thousand feet and in the earlier one, the Daughters greatly praised the
priests from the Helena, Montana Diocese. They regularly worked with
them and went every two weeks to help out in the clinic and with catechesis
in Santa Maria, sometimes also assisting the priests at Santo Tomas. Their
warm comments did much to encourage Sisters Mary Seraphine and Rosalie
as to the prospects for the mission at Santa Maria.

The next morning, after having something hot to warm them, the sisters
again loaded their bags in Father Tackes’ white car. They were grateful as
the car descended several thousand feet and the air became warmer. About
forty minutes after leaving El Novillero, the car was entering the parish,
and on reaching the row of houses, Father asked the sisters to get out and
walk into the village. A banner, flowers, and a man with an accordion
appeared, as well as children and teachers in welcoming lines. At the church
door, they were welcomed by a delegation from Santa Clara, about fifteen
minutes distant. These were clothed in white breeches with red sashes,
colorful waists, and hats.

Within the church, freshly strewn with pine needles, Sisters Mary
Seraphine and Rosalie knelt to beg God’s blessing on all the SCLs who
would work here in the years to come.

Father delighted in showing the sisters the priests’ house connected to
the church, the large meeting hall in which he showed movies and stored
the marimbas and drums, as well as his garden in back of the rectory.
Across the road from the rectory, the plot for the convent was already
cleared, and adobe slabs, contributed by each family, were already
accumulating there.

After lunch, they visited a few of the homes, picking their way through
chickens, dogs, and pigs. The head of the house, dressed in his best, though
mended clothes, bowed them into his home. The floors were all dirt, of
course, but most had at least one bed made of slabs of board and a table.
All had a crucifix decorated with flowers. As elsewhere, the “stove” was a
fire in the middle of the floor; in at least one home, they watched a young
girl making *pancitos* (tortillas) on a tin.

As might have been expected, the teachers at the Fiscal School had
prepared a program for the *Madres*. At the end and at Father’s suggestion,
Sister Mary Seraphine produced her puppets. As always, they were an
immense success, but what a surprise she had when more than one of the little ones tried to imitate the string puppets’ antics.

At both the noon and evening meals (both meatless!), there was again good conversation and advice given. Afterwards, they went into the parish hall to hear the men playing the marimbas, drums, and a viola. On returning to the house, they discovered that a Maryknoll priest had been trying to make radio contact with them; he had made contact with Sister Agnes Marie Horner in Leavenworth and had set up a time with her for a radio contact in Lima the following day.

The next day, they made two trips to Santa Clara, in the morning to see the market and visit, in the afternoon for Mass. In this place, there were more Ladinos (persons of mixed blood) and more influence of the pagan rites. The following morning, the people began to assemble early, in festive attire and mood. After Mass, the sisters seated themselves to hear the marimba concert in their honor. On their way back to Guatemala City, called simply “the City,” they stopped at Nohaula for coffee, taking note that the sisters who came would have to be good drivers, as the road is so rugged. Then they went to dinner in a semi-European-North American restaurant at Panajachel on Lake Atitlan.

Just one week after their arrival, they flew to Panama and on to Lima, ready to recommend that the SCLs implant themselves in the fertile soil of Guatemala. Their only reservations concerned the difficulty of working there without knowledge of the Quiche dialect and the rugged road into and out of the mission. And they were there during the dry season!

On June 24, 1967, Mother Leo Frances Ryan informed the Community of the forthcoming Guatemalan mission. Within three days, Sisters Anne Denise Shea and Frances Turk received their missions, and they began their preparations to join Sisters Ann (del Rey) McGloin and Joseph Angela Reichenbach in October.

Actually, Sisters Ann and Joseph Angela left Kansas City for New Orleans on September 17, 1967, arriving in Guatemala the following day with fifteen pieces of luggage and a guitar. Though initially stranded in the airport with all this baggage because Father Hazelton had expected them later (at three o’clock), they were befriended by some Daughters of Charity and taken to their convent. Father finally made contact with them about nine o’clock.

Since the convent at Santa Maria was not yet ready and both sisters felt the need of language study and orientation to the culture, it was decided that they should stay in Guatemala City and attend the Guatemala Language School (IGA). For the three months they were there, they transferred to another convent of the Daughters closer to the Institute. Although the accommodations were not the best for study purposes, the ten-bed dorm
being very cold and having little lighting, it was at least within walking distance of the school. With the capital in a state of siege, with a curfew and many military evident on the streets, it was just as well that they did not have to travel far.4

Sisters Joseph Angela and Ann adjusted to tempering the cold water in a small container for bathing (since they did not choose to take completely cold showers). They discovered that the Daughters still lived quite a monastic style of life, having reading at all three meals. Moreover, Sisters Joseph Angela and Ann did not find the methodology of the Institute all that helpful. So they were doubly glad to be befriended by Isabel Carroll, Sister Ann Teresa Conroy’s sister and Sister Blanche Marie Remington’s aunt. She and her husband, John Carroll, frequently invited them to their home and helped them in innumerable ways.

In October, Sister Anne Denise Shea had returned to Talara briefly after a home visit but very soon directed herself to her new mission in Guatemala. As had happened before, word of her arrival did not arrive until less than an hour beforehand. Nevertheless, Sisters Ann and Joseph Angela arrived in time to meet her in Customs.

Meanwhile, Sister Frances Turk waited for Mother Leo Frances to come to Talara following her trip to Bolivia. After Mother’s visit, the two of them were driven to the Ecuadorian border by the Talara sisters; from there they journeyed overland to Machala, then to Guayaquil, where they were able to take a plane for Panama, then to Guatemala.

There they were met by Father Saycich and Sisters Ann, Joseph Angela, and Anne Denise. They stayed overnight in “the City” and then were off bright and early for an introduction to Santa Maria. Father Rinehart of the Spokane Diocese took them to Solola by a scenic route. After all the sands of Talara, Sister Frances was especially grateful for all the greenery and the view of large and beautiful Lake Atitlan. They stopped at El Novillero for some coffee, and two of the Daughters of Mary (“the Blue Nuns”) accompanied them to Santa Maria.5

Since they had arrived after dark, the reception for Mother Leo Frances and the new sisters was held the next day, complete with flowers and music by the marimba players. Mother Leo Frances and the sisters were pleased to see that the new convent was almost ready. Again, one of the most impressive things for them was the participation of the people in the Mass. Like the visitors beforehand, they were especially struck by the Offertory procession, following which one of the people raised the ciborium into which they had placed their hosts, another the wine and water, and a third the baskets of food, all while Father elevated the host. They also liked the fact that the people gave spontaneous petitions and clapped during some of the hymns of the Mass. After breakfast, Sister Anne Denise, Sister
Frances, and Father Hazelton made their first visit to a distant aldea (small village) on foot.

On the Feast of All Souls, the sisters were astonished at the number of people who attended the Mass. Then they accompanied Father for prayers at the cemetery and were again impressed by the way in which the people remembered their dead out loud. Very soon thereafter, they were en route to "the City," but not before a group from Santa Clara came to bid them farewell and sing a song for them.

In October, Mother Leo Frances had reminded Bishop Hunthausen of the necessity of having a formal invitation from the bishop of Solola for the Community to open a house within the diocese. On November 8, she received the desired letter from Bishop Angelico Melotto, Bishop of Solola. Accordingly, December 10 was set as the date for the official opening of the convent at Santa Maria Visitación.

Meanwhile, Sisters Ann and Joseph Angela had gone to Huehuetenango to pursue more language studies with a tutor since they had not found the classes at IGA (the language school in Guatemala City) that helpful. Sister Ann also got some help with lab work so that she would be able to help in the clinic work. During this same time, Sisters Anne Denise and Frances went to Santo Tomas for a month to study Quiche with Father Mondloch.

The Diocese of Helena contracted to pay a salary sufficient for normal living expenses, but the SCL Community would be expected to pay for additional expenditures, such as medical and dental costs, major travel, and retreats. The diocese also ordered a new green Toyota for the sisters' use; until it arrived in mid-January, they were dependent on the buses to the cities and the generosity of the priests when they could not walk or ride horses to distant aldeas (small villages).

Following their studies at Santo Tomas and Huehuetenango, Sisters Frances and Joseph Angela began helping with the radio school in the latter mission. Sisters Anne Denise and Ann collaborated with the "Blue Nuns" at El Novillero in nutritional centers and health education.

On December 10, Sisters Ann and Joseph Angela bade the sisters in Huehuetenango goodbye and prepared to depart for "home" with Father Hazelton, who had brought his truck to pack in all the SCL treasures: pots and pans, sheets and a table, in addition to their many suitcases and boxes. After stopping in El Novillero for dinner with the "Blue Nuns," Father and the sisters arrived in Santa Maria about 8:30 p.m.

The following day, Father Saycich drove Sisters Anne Denise and Frances from Santo Tomas. Sisters Joseph Angela and Ann had already unpacked and given the house a homey flavor. Indeed the convent, constructed according to Father Tackes' plans, was very adequate. It consisted of four nice-sized bedrooms, a kitchen, laundry, a dining-living
room area with fireplace, a parlor, and library. Since the church was next
door, there was no chapel in the house; besides, Father Hazelton thought it
important for the people to see the sisters praying in the church. The sisters
were most happy to find they even had hot water and six lovely innerspring
mattresses. Each sister projected her own personality into her bedroom,
making drapes and decorating according to her distinctive tastes.

The very next day, they were off to visit three aldeas, participating in
some of the feast day activities in Paquip and making some sick calls.
Although not expressing it the same way, the sisters could identify with
the ideas expressed by the wife of a volunteer doctor: “The filth and squalor
of the Indian’s life is complete.” 6 The sisters knew that one of their biggest
challenges would be to teach hygiene and the need to bathe the babies.
They wondered how they could possibly provide medical care when it
would be impossible to visit these aldeas more than once or twice a month.
For Santa Maria parish contained thirty to forty thousand people, many
living in isolated houses apart from the forty or so villages. 7 Different
visitors to the area placed the civilization at a fifteenth to seventeenth
century stage.

On December 15, the sisters made a trip into “the City” to make some
urgent purchases, but they found the streets alive with army and police.
They also discovered that one of the stores they had planned to visit had
been bombed the night before. Just after they had been in another store,
everyone was ushered out by the police because a clerk had just discovered
in the pocket of a coat a bomb ready to detonate. After this somewhat
nerve-wracking day, the sisters were only too happy to return to the Papal
Volunteer Center where they planned to stay; but they accepted the gracious
invitation to the Carroll home for supper. The next day, they concluded
their shopping and had a delicious lunch with John and Isabel Carroll
before heading for home.

Two days later, they received their first company when some of the
“Blue Nuns” from El Novillero came for Sunday supper. Then they began
stretching their legs. Sisters Anne Denise and Frances made an eight-hour
foot trip with Father Mondloch; Sisters Ann and Joseph Angela began
with a shorter two-hour trip to an aldea. In one of the aldeas, a sick man
started telling Sister Anne Denise his sins and Father Hazelton his aches
and pains! 8

On Christmas Eve, after opening some gifts, the sisters invited some
villagers who had walked three hours to assist at Mass to come into the
convent for a hot drink. The Indians entertained the sisters with some of
their songs. Then at 8:00 the marimba group began a Christmas Concert.
After the impressive Mass at 11:00 p.m., the sisters enjoyed some hot
cocoa together. One of the sisters remarked that it had not been hard to
picture the Nativity nor feel its pervading spirit of poverty and simplicity since this environment could not be too very different from the secluded village at Bethlehem. This impression was dramatized even more clearly when one of the men carried a lamb on his shoulders during the offertory procession of one of the Masses.

The sisters spent Christmas Day itself in the aldea of Panyebar and experienced their first Guatemalan Christmas dinner: beans, tortillas, rice, and eggs. They appreciated the sacrifice the people had made to prepare this meal for them and noted that the crib scene was at the center of any celebration that day. In this, the sisters sensed the immense difference in the celebration here and the commercialized festivals of the United States.

Nevertheless, toward evening they joined the other North American missionaries at Nohaula for a Christmas party, complete with tree and traditional Christmas carols. Since it was late, they stayed the night with the "Blue Nuns" at El Novillero.

During the holidays, the sisters accompanied the El Novillero sisters to the beach of black volcanic sand and the first view of the ocean for Sisters Ann and Joseph Angela. On New Year’s Eve, the El Novillero sisters came to help them welcome in the New Year.

This New Year 1968 began with a great deal of activity. First of all, Sister Anne Denise accompanied someone to El Novillero to have a tooth pulled. Sister Frances went into "the City" for a reunion of people with whom she had studied in Cuernavaca. Sister Joseph Angela went to Huehuetenango for a weeklong workshop on Mission Team Work and Problems.

In mid-January, Sisters Anne Denise and Joseph Angela went to several aldeas on foot and again realized just how difficult it was not being able to communicate with these warm and welcoming people in their native Quiche. The sisters were somewhat amused by the extra protection they received: when taken to "their convent hut" of sugar cane stalks and thatched roof, they found two Indian men ready to stay at the door all night. Also in the morning, although they had cleansed themselves as best they could with towelettes, when they arrived for Mass, they were presented with a large basin of water and a cup. So the whole congregation watched as Father and the sisters dutifully went through their ablutions.

Later, after having stopped at another aldea, they hiked straight up the mountain for two hours before reaching the truck at the "jungle parking lot." In succeeding months, Sister Anne Denise and a companion would make this same trip again to complete the vaccination program.

The political situation had continued to deteriorate, although the people in the campo were hardly conscious of it. Since the U.S. government had recognized the current Guatemalan government and sent some planes and other equipment as well as military to train and advise the Guatemalan
armed forces, Americans became objects of “Communist” guerrilla activity. An American Colonel and the Naval Attaché were shot while driving in their cars. The following month, the American Ambassador was gunned down in the street. Therefore, not only was the American Embassy put on special alert, with many military guarding its surrounding area, but employees like John Carroll were escorted to and from their homes.

Meanwhile, a very unfortunate thing occurred that affected all the missionaries working in Guatemala. Two Maryknoll priests and one sister who had been working with young people were expelled from the country for terrorist activity. Actually, when they were ordered home to Maryknoll, New York, by their superiors, they did not go and were expelled from their Orders too. Mrs. Carroll said she believed that they really had been trying to help the poor and got fed up with nothing getting done, but that unfortunately this might cause many people to forget all the good the gringo priests and religious had done.

As a result, it became unsafe for priests or religious to appear in religious garb in “the City.” When, in late January, Sister Frances needed to go into “the City” to have her visa prolonged and Sister Anne Denise to have her glasses repaired, Sister Ann told them not to wear their veils. Nevertheless, while at the optometrist’s place, Sister Anne Denise was queried as to whether she was a Maryknoller or not; and when they stopped at a gas station and asked to use the restroom, they were at first refused, then questioned about being Maryknollers. Finally, they were permitted to use the facilities. Later, Father Hazelton and the sisters were stopped at two roadblocks.

On the Feast of the Purification, Sisters Joseph Angela and Ann headed for “the City” to buy supplies. That night, as they were visiting in the living room of the Carroll home, a telegram came, announcing that the long-awaited trunks had arrived and that the sisters should contact Major Woerner at the airport since the shipment had come in by military plane. When the sisters went out the next morning, they were supremely surprised to find fifteen trunks and barrels awaiting them on the tarmac. The Major was very anxious to get them off his hands, so the sisters began calling everywhere trying to find a way to move them. Finally, Dr. Trimble from the Mission Center came to their aid. With his small truck, the sisters’ jeep, three men and three trips, everything was stored in the Carrolls’ garage.

Fortunately, the sisters met no roadblocks the next day, and the unpacking began. On February 5, Sisters Ann and Joseph Angela returned to “the City” in the truck; this time they were not so lucky and were stopped by the police while returning. Their big concern was that they had no papers from Customs or papers to show their rights to ownership and transporting since the shipment had not come in commercially or through
Map of Guatemala
(World Fact Book)

Sister Frances Turk teaching hygiene
Sisters Ann McGloin and Joseph Angela Reichenbach visiting

Sister Frances Turk teaching sewing
Miraculously, they were waved on after a lecture on the need for safe and careful driving, and nothing was confiscated.

During their first months in Santa Maria, the sisters started many projects. One of the first that Sister Anne Denise began was a Well Baby Clinic, such as she and Sister Rosalie had had in San Pedro, Talara. She and Sister Ann worked together in the clinic and in visiting the sick. Sister Anne Denise taught Sister Ann how to give injections and apply dressings. They also began conducting a health clinic one day a week, weighing youngsters, checking their eyes, ears, skin, and teeth. From time to time, they profited from the expert help of doctors, dentists, and nurses who volunteered some time with the missions.

Sister Frances began preparing some Indian girls who had completed school to teach Spanish to preschool youngsters, first in Santa Maria, then in some other villages. This required on-site visitations to supervise and help. She also began escuelitas (little schools) for children aged four to six, in which she taught rhythm band, often constructing some of the instruments herself.

Sister Joseph Angela taught Spanish to women and to señoritas. She also became interested in the native music. Right after the Feast of the Annunciation, she went to a weeklong course on Guatemalan music at Panajachel, an hour and a half by launch across beautiful Lake Atitlán.

Whenever the sisters made presentations, whether in Santa Maria or in other aldeas, they always took along a set of Bingo. Since the concentration span of the village people was quite short and because the people had so few social opportunities, these games were always looked forward to; besides, it helped the people learn their numbers. It was always interesting also to see what the winners would choose as their prizes.

Even before the sister missionaries had set forth for Guatemala, Sister Mary Borromeo Brose had sent a box of medicines for the clinic in Santo Tomas, and Sister Mary Seraphine had sent books to the state school in Santa Maria. Even St. John’s Guild in Leavenworth prepared a generous Christmas package of new and used baby clothing. Surprisingly, letters and boxes came through well, especially those sent by the diplomatic pouch. These took longer but were more likely to arrive intact. The sisters were deeply indebted to Sister Mary Seraphine, who responded to every request and included many things not asked for. They also delighted in hearing from the sisters at home and receiving information of the Community and its preparations for the Special Community Chapter.

In the first week of March, Sister Frances received word that her mother was critically ill and that she should go home immediately. The other sisters helped her pack and drove her into “the City,” where she was fortunate enough to obtain a flight for that very night.
With the coming of Holy Week, the sisters were surprised by the festive spirit of Good Friday. Large poles decorated with fruits, greenery, and colored cellophane lined the procession path to the cemetery. The image of the Dead Christ was carried there following the services in the church. The services in Santa Clara were even more colorful. Besides the Dead Christ and other statues carried to the cemetery, there was another procession which wound about the village and culminated in a mock “war” with two groups of men bombarding one another with grapefruit, oranges, and mangos. Apparently, this was seen as some type of penitential rite and a willingness to suffer for the good. After about an hour, the “battle” ended, and all returned to the church to conclude the services.

By comparison, Easter was very quiet although many people of the village were present for a joyful Mass, the musical group performing the Pan-American Mass for the first time. Later in the afternoon, the personnel of the area missions gathered at Nohaula for dinner and song.

The following week, the missioners joined in Panajachel for a workshop in group dynamics conducted by Dr. Donald Harr of Billings, Montana. Accompanying him was his wife and Dr. and Mrs. John McGahon.

Before going into “the City” to welcome Sister Frances back on April 19, the other three sisters participated in the final vow ceremony for one of the “Blue Nuns” in El Novillero and stayed briefly for her fiesta.

Even with the best of will, sometimes people find it difficult to adapt to new places and ministries. Thus, although Sister Joseph Angela had been longing to come to the missions for some years, once there the experience did not prove a happy one for her. She missed the structured work of a classroom and something concrete to do as well as the presence of more sisters nearby. She therefore asked to be reassigned to the United States and left Guatemala in June 1968.

Sister Frances more and more discovered the desire of the people to learn Spanish. Shortly after she started classes for men, women, and children in Santa Maria and Santa Clara, men from two more distant aldeas brought her a list of people in their area who wanted to learn. This thirst for learning seemed contagious. By March, when Sister Frances and Father Hazelton visited the escuelitas, they discovered that in one aldea the eighteen-year-old male teacher had started evening classes for the men and women interested in learning to read and write, and over forty were in attendance.

Also, with the help of treadle machines purchased through CARE with money donated by Blessed Sacrament and St. Peter’s Schools in Kansas City, Kansas, Sister Frances started four different sewing groups. At first she imagined her students would be females, but the men and boys soon outnumbered the women and girls. Later, more machines were requested,
and these were funded by a benefactor in Billings, Montana. When her students became proficient enough to make shirts, the Basket Co-operative asked about selling them in the market place.

Father Hazelton had gone home for an operation in May, leaving the sisters without the possibility of daily Mass. Shortly after his return, the sisters began hearing rumors about Santa Maria closing. When confronted with the question, Father Saycich confirmed that there was talk of this, but he assured the sisters they would have a year’s notice.¹³

Besides helping in the clinic, Sister Ann had begun teaching knitting and crocheting. The women were delighted with their newfound ability and progressed from simple squares to small blankets and stocking hats. However, still frustrated by her lack of proficiency with the Spanish language, in October Sister Ann returned to the IGA language school conducted by the Maryknollers in Guatemala City. Once again she was disappointed in the methodology and teachers. With the encouragement of the sisters, she enrolled in a four- or five-month course in Cochabamba, Bolivia, for March of the following year. Sisters Agnes Klein, Catherine Nichol, and Sally Watson would also be there at the same time, so they could lend one another moral encouragement.

In late November, the sisters helped the officers of Catholic Action conduct a one-and-a-half-day congress for fifty catechists. At that time, the bishop expressed his hope that many of these might become deacons with authority to baptize, marry, and conduct Communion services.

In her general letter to the Community in November, Sister Frances expressed her joy at the inauguration of the radio transmitter which the bishops of Helena and Spokane had helped fund, together with the Federation of Radio Schools and Catholic Relief Services. With the new power, the radio classes would reach many more people. One ingenious method they had learned was to provide the catechists of the different villages with an alarm clock. When it went off, they rang a bell for the people to come for class.

She also mentioned a measles and typhoid epidemic that had proliferated in the parish. This meant many more calls for help and undoubtedly many more funerals.¹⁴

Since the obstetrical problems seemed to be increasing, Sister Anne Denise asked to take a refresher course. As it happened, Sister Joan Kilker attended the same course at Chicago Maternity Center for two months in January and February 1969.

During January, the Montana and Spokane missionaries began meeting on a monthly basis for an exchange of ideas, projects, methods of working with the Indians, and other topics of interest. The group divided into those working in catechesis, the radio ministry, and health. Following this first
meeting, Sister Frances stayed on to help the El Novillero team with a congress for catechists.

In February, the sisters sensed coolness on the part of the Carrolls and decided not to stay with them while in Guatemala City. They also asked Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine not to send mail or packages via the diplomatic pouch. The sisters seemed to have been unaware of the reason for the change of attitude. Perhaps it was just part of the general tension all Americans were feeling in “the City.” Or perhaps the sisters had overused their hospitality, although John and Isabel Carroll had certainly been most generous in welcoming and helping them up to this point.

In March, the sisters of the Solola Diocese decided to meet on a monthly basis. The first meeting centered on catechesis work. Although many of the religious working in the diocese were Spanish and were more traditional or conservative, the interchange of ideas was always profitable.

From the beginning, the sisters had been impressed with the catechists, who worked so well with their own people. Father Hazelton maintained that their dedication and enthusiasm supported the argument for a married clergy. On Easter Sunday, the fruit of their labors was manifest when Bishop Melotto of Solola confirmed 160 persons.

Sisters Anne Denise and Frances, together with Father Saycich and the El Novillero sisters, were on hand to welcome Sister Mary Seraphine when she arrived on April 9. Sisters Anne Denise and Frances showed her some of the tourist attractions, and once back in their part of the country, they took her on a launch across Lake Atitlan. On the other side of the lake, they visited the Oklahoma mission at Santiago.

But more than the sightseeing and general visiting, there were serious conversations under way. Both Sisters Anne Denise and Frances had requested to return to the United States as they were seeking dispensations from their vows.

They both stayed on, carrying out their work with unbelievable enthusiasm and good will while they awaited Sister Ann McGloin’s return from Bolivia. Devastated by the news she had received while at the language school in Cochabamba, Sister Ann cut short her studies to return to Guatemala and see her two friends, if only briefly. They were all packed and ready to leave on June 11, the very day after her arrival.

Two weeks later, Sister Ann was joined by Sister Blanche Marie Remington, who had come to fill in temporarily.

In her letter informing Bishop Melotto of the plan to withdraw the sisters by the end of the year, Mother Leo Frances pleaded a lack of personnel and the difficulty of the Indian dialect. In her letter to Father Hazelton, she had also added the reasons of the isolation of this mission from other SCL ministries and the circumstances of being deprived of
Mother informed the Community of the decision on September 30.

In October, Sister Rosalie Mahoney arrived with a letter about the closure of Santa Maria. On December 14, 1969, this SCL mission was formally closed. Departure was made doubly hard as Father Hazelton had asked the sisters not to tell the people they were going. Sister Ann deeply loved the people and felt that they loved and accepted the sisters.

AN INDIVIDUAL CALL

The Community mission had closed, but an SCL presence was to return. After repeated requests, Sister Ann McGloin was allowed to return to Guatemala three years later to do individual ministry at missions already in operation. On October 30, 1972, she arrived at La Democracia, Huehuetenango, just a half hour from the Mexican border. Although about three thousand feet lower than Santa Maria, the nights could still be cold.

There she worked with a Maryknoll sister, an Incarnate Word sister, and an Oxfam volunteer. At Christmas the sisters went to Olintepeque, three hours away and forty degrees colder! But the sixteen priests and sisters warmed the atmosphere. Even more missionaries, some thirty-five of them, joined together in March to celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day.

Sister Ann found the Indians in Hueheutenango were somewhat different, and there were more Ladinos (mixed blood). In January, she began teaching cooking and sewing. Her little shack with a camp stove and two ovens made out of five-gallon tin cans served her well. She taught the girls to make bread, rolls, and even cookies and cake. Each girl brought the equivalent of five cents, and for “Irish stew,” each brought a vegetable. She taught the girls to make aprons from old hospital gowns that had come down with a medicine shipment.

Sister Ann felt right at home and remarked several times on the good relations that existed among the priests and religious. Although daily Mass was not available, they always had a Communion service. Every Monday night, a number gathered for a prayer meeting at Huehuetenango. Sometimes they made retreat on the coast.

On the Feast of the Annunciation, Sister Ann wrote Mother Leo Frances to tell her that despite the troubles within the country, she was not in any danger, although she admitted that three priests from the area had been “invited” to leave the country without any explanation being given.

In the middle of 1974, Sister Ann returned for a home visit and for the ordination of her nephew, James McGloin, SJ. When she returned to Guatemala in September, she moved closer to her original mission, going to El Novillero. It felt good to be back with the native people again and
with some of the sisters she had previously known. In all, there were four Communities represented in this mission site. Two Sisters of Charity from New York and a doctor from the Philippines were working in El Novillero and its villages. Also, besides herself, a Franciscan sister and a Daughter of Mary were there.

Besides teaching crocheting, knitting, and sewing to thirty-five young women, Sister Ann began taking a more active role in the parish, attending meetings and playing at the Masses.

Toward the end of January 1975, Sister Ann went with Father Arthur Martens and two young Indians to the International Charismatic Meeting in Mexico City. This marked the beginning of extensive work on her part in the Charismatic movement. In all, some eight hundred Indians were involved. She even collaborated with Father James Hazelton, her former pastor at Santa Maria, in forming charismatic leaders.

In February 1976, there was a 7.5 earthquake in their region; the epicenter was about thirty miles distant. That was succeeded by a 6.0 earthquake, with many strong tremors following over a four-day period. Though El Novillero itself suffered no deaths, there were damages. Just about fifteen minutes away, there were major damages and injuries in nearby aldeas. In all, some five thousand people died and many others were severely injured. Sister Ann and the other sisters from El Novillero went to Camalapa to attend the injured and spent several days in a tent on the rumbling earth (there were twenty-eight tremors within twenty-four hours). Along with the governments of Mexico and the United States, the SCL Community sent donations.

As the political situation became more and more difficult and Sheila McShane, one of the nurses who had worked for a long time in the Santo Tomas mission, had to flee the country, Sister Ann, too, felt that she should consider withdrawing. Moreover, Bishop Bernard Topel of Spokane had begun rescinding his support and suggested that the team should consider leaving El Novillero.

So, in July 1980, after thirteen years, Sister Ann left her beloved Guatemala and returned to her native home. Her friend, Sheila McShane, who had worked with her there, said, “She was special to many here in Guatemala for her spirit of hospitality, her kind smile, her ‘delicious pastry’ and mostly for her great contribution to the Charismatic Movement.”

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Chapter XVI Notes

1 Council Minutes, August 10, 1966, OCS/SCL.
2 Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, Journal of Guatemalan Trip, February 6-13, 1967, A/SCL.
3 Volunteers at this time were Sheila McShane, nurse, Emma Jean Ries, and Helen Driscoll, catechist.
4 Guatemala, like Bolivia, was and is constantly endangered by terrorist and counter-terrorist take-overs.
5 The Daughters of Mary, Health of the Sick, were called the “Blue Nuns” because of the dark blue habit they wore.
6 Mrs. Janeth Parker, quoted in Montana Catholic Register-Western Edition, September 1, 1967, p.1, 5, A/SCL.
7 Actually no one knew just how many people lived in the area; the priests did not “find” some of the villages for some time, and when one did so, he was frequently the first white man to have visited the village. (Report of Father James Mondloch in article of Father J.B. Oblinger, Montana Catholic Register-Western Edition, September 22, 1967, p. 1), A/SCL.
8 Sister Ann Louise (Frances) Turk to Sheehan, December 18, 1967, A/SCL.
10 General Letter [no author] to Mother Leo Frances Ryan and Sisters, January 5, 1968, A/SCL.
11 These trunks and barrels had been shipped through a man in Oklahoma at the same time that Sisters Ann McGloin and Joseph Angela Reichenbach left Kansas.
12 “St. John Guild to Send Packages,” Leavenworth (KS) Times, November 12, 1967, A/SCL.
13 Sister del Rey (Ann) McGloin to Sheehan, August 19, 1968, A/SCL.
14 Turk to Ryan and Sisters, November 26, 1968, A/SCL.
15 Ryan to Most Reverend Angelico Melotto, October 7, 1969, A/SCL.
17 McGloin to Ryan, March 25, 1973, A/SCL.
CHAPTER XVII: AT THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

In establishing new missions, the tradition of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth had always been to await an invitation into a diocese or parish by the Bishop or priest shepherding that area. This was even truer in the foreign missions established by the Community. But that is only somewhat true of the mission experiences in Ecuador between 1993 and 2000.

Actually, the SCL presence there came about in this way. In 1990 Sister Marianna Bauder was serving as administrator of St. Mary Hospital and Medical Center in Grand Junction, Colorado, when a young Ecuadorian couple approached her for help. Since they were both students at Mesa College and could not work for wages, they asked if they could give service “in kind” to pay for Balbina’s expenses in birthing their child. Sister Marianna was able to arrange for both of them to work in the hospital. As it turned out, twins were born and Sister Marianna was asked to be the godmother for Andrea. Within a few months, Sister Marianna was transferred to Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver, and shortly thereafter the couple returned to their native country, the father having graduated from Mesa College.

Meanwhile, Sister Marianna had learned that the parents of the couple belonged to the upper classes and held governmental positions in Ecuador. So when the family called and invited her to come for Andris and Andrea’s first birthday celebration, she was not surprised that they offered to pay her transportation.

Before she left for Ecuador, Dr. Leroy Stahlgren, Director of the Surgery Residence Program at Saint Joseph Hospital, asked Sister Marianna to explore possibilities for doctors from Saint Joseph to serve the poor in Ecuador. She did discuss this with one set of grandparents while there; later, Dr. Stahlgren himself went to Quito. While visiting hospitals and physicians, he also encountered the possibility of operating the St. Peter Claver Clinic in Solanda, a poorer section of southern Quito. Over eighty doctors and nurses at Saint Joseph began preparing to give some service in Ecuador.

During 1992 Dr. Stahlgren and a committee drew up a four-part approach that they envisioned medical personnel from Saint Joseph might sponsor: (1) establishing an Outpatient Clinic in Quito; (2) recruiting volunteers to work in the three church-related hospitals in the Oriente; (3) selecting volunteers; and (4) securing the transport of equipment and pharmaceuticals to Ecuador.

From the beginning, Dr. Stahlgren and his committee were assured of the interest and intervention of Gonzalo Vergara, Andris and Andrea’s grandfather, in helping them secure a site and making other arrangements.
But the members of the committee believed that it would be necessary to have sisters working in Ecuador who would commit themselves to working in the clinic. Their presence would be especially necessary in coordinating the work of the professionals coming from Saint Joseph Hospital with the local professionals and hospitals.

During the summer of 1992, Sister Marianna spoke with Sister Paula Rose Jauernig about coming to Denver, working at the hospital and joining the committee that was working on the proposed project for Ecuador. Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, the Community Director, authorized Sister Paula Rose's mission, and soon she was not only working in Denver, but studying Spanish with the other volunteers.

Sister Elena Mack, who was serving on the SCL Council at the time the program was being planned, urged Sister Paula Rose to visit Peru before going to Ecuador so that she could have some idea of health care in a third world nation. Consequently, on March 31, 1993, Sister Paula Rose left Denver for Lima. With her, she took two wheelchairs Sister Joan Kilker had requested for two incapacitated people in Negritos. Although somewhat nervous about getting through Peruvian Customs, everything went amazingly well. Surprisingly, Continental Airlines did not charge her anything extra, and she had to pay a total of only $81 to Customs and the Peruvian airline to fly them north to Piura. Nevertheless, she was happy to see Sisters Regina Deitchman and Donna Jean Henson awaiting her with a truck at the Piura airport.

For a month, she visited the sisters in the coastal houses and was introduced to the health services and hospitals of Piura. Never having been out of the United States, she was dismayed by the differences, discovering beds and possibly equipment similar to what might have been used in the United States fifty years previously. In some cases here, as she would later discover also in Ecuador, even when there was equipment, there was no technician trained to use it.

While in Piura, she also went with Sisters Janet Cashman and Ruth Reischman to meetings of the Health Promoters, where she learned of the emphasis on preventive health care. She also visited homes with Sister Clorinda Timana as well as the orphanage with Sister Julia Huiman. She saw food programs for children and some of the state-owned clinics in the various sectors of the city. In Talara she went to the Well Baby Clinic with Sister Mary Patricia Kielty; there she was appalled at the number of teenage mothers and other women in their thirties with as many as eight children.

In both Talara and Negritos, she visited the botiquines (pharmacies) operated under the supervision of the sisters. Besides visiting the food kitchens and Health Promoters with Sister Joan Kilker, she also talked with the consultant in natural medicine who came from Piura each week.
Because of Sister Paula Rose's very limited Spanish, Sister Joan Kilker had agreed to accompany her to Ecuador on a fact-finding mission. Gonzalo and Jacinta Vergara, Sister Marianna's friends, met them at the airport; after lunch, they packed small bags and set off for the summer home of this couple for the weekend.

In the following days, thanks to the contacts Gonzalo had previously made, the sisters met many people who could help them in various ways and orient them as to needs and services. One of these was the Apostolic Vicar for El Napo, Bishop Julio Parise, who spoke with them of the needs of hospitals in the jungle area sponsored by the Josephite Fathers. He indicated that they would be more than willing to accept the assistance of physicians and noted that they also needed people to teach lab and x-ray work. He offered to facilitate the reception of medicines into the country and suggested that they send him information to take to Customs beforehand.

Gonzalo told the sisters that the Archbishop of Quito had suggested they contact the Jesuits, who sponsored a clinic or medical center in Solanda, a sector of southern Quito where some 60,000 people lived without adequate health care. Accordingly, they met with Father Luis Chocon, the Jesuit superior and pastor of San Ignacio parish. He explained that St. Peter Claver Clinic had first of all been set up by the Medical Assistance Program International and had been run by a group of Evangelists. When the Medical Assistance Program had stopped sending funds, the Evangelists moved into another part of Quito and set up their own hospital. As a result, the parish of San Ignacio had assumed responsibility for the clinic's operation, paying the three doctors, one nurse, a technical nurse, and a lab technician, as well as a caretaker and cleaning lady.

About half the patients were seen at the clinic, and the other half were visited in their homes free of charge, the major health problems being respiratory ones. Of course, there were also many parasites and much malnutrition, especially among the children. Father was honest in admitting that this health center had an annual debt of $5000, which a foundation was attempting to subsidize with appeals made abroad.

Several days later, Sisters Joan and Paula Rose met with the Jesuit Provincial, who urged them to meet with the people of the Jesuit Foundation of Marianna of Jesus. Although Solanda was not the poorest area in Quito, he said that the Foundation had set three goals: (1) attending the poor, (2) helping the working people, and (3) providing education for all ages. When the sisters proposed a three-month assessment period, he assured them that would be all right with him, even if it meant that they chose to work elsewhere at the end of that time.

On their fourth day in Quito, after doing some sightseeing, the sisters had dinner with Archbishop Antonio Jose Gonzales at the Vergara home.
He welcomed them to Quito and made various suggestions. He told them that the Ecuadorian people were generally very fatalistic with regard to health and sickness, believing that whatever came about would be God’s Will. For that reason and because of the lack of resources, perhaps 65 percent do not receive medical attention. He promised the help of the Vicariate in constructing a medical center and house for the sisters.

During that same week, Sisters Joan and Paula Rose visited several Communities of sisters working in Quito and Solanda. Among them were the Daughters of Charity and the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph. From them they received some helpful insights and were directed to some dispensaries operated by other sisters.

On May 11, they left for a two-day tour of the missions of the Josephite Fathers and the hospitals operated by the Sisters of St. Dorothy. Both groups were Italian but had been working in the Oriente for seventy years. The farthest area was Archidona, about four hours from Quito by car. Though they passed through lush and beautiful mountains to arrive in the Amazonian region, it was, of course, hot and humid once they were there.

On their return to Quito, Sisters Joan and Paula Rose met with the Foundation Board; nine of the eleven men on the Board were Jesuits. Gonzalo Vergara and the two sisters made their presentation, offering to come for a three-month evaluation period. When they were recalled to the meeting after a mere fifteen minutes, the Board had voted to give them full support if they would but come and take charge of the facility. The parish and Foundation would provide room and board during this time, with the understanding that a permanent convent would later be established in the parish. Gonzalo also assured them that the “people of Quito,” more specifically the people of means, would help through donations and in other ways.

The following day, they visited Solanda and South Quito, visiting with the Vicar. Later in the afternoon, they met again with Father Luis Chocon, pastor of San Ignacio parish, and Bettie Reid from Texas, who had been working with street children for seven years. As a nurse, physician assistant, and psychologist, she would prove to be an invaluable contact and friend of the sisters during the next four or five years.

On May 14, the sisters left Quito with the promise to return in October. Sister Paula Rose would study Spanish in Guatemala before returning to the United States.

On June 22, 1993, Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani wrote the President of the Foundation of Marianna of Jesus in Quito. She stated clearly that the establishment of a clinic in Quito was the project of Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver and that Sister Marianna Bauder, in conjunction with the Saint Joseph Board of Directors, was directly responsible for this project. She
further stated that the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth would attempt to staff said health center with two sisters during its initial development and possibly longer, although the SCLs could not make a long-term commitment. This reflected her communications with Sister Marianna Bauder earlier.

In mid-October, both Sisters Joan and Paula Rose returned to Ecuador. While waiting for their apartment at St. Peter Claver Clinic to be readied, they stayed with the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart sisters in Solanda, about eight blocks from the clinic. Father Chocon came to welcome them and presented them to the people at all the Masses the following day.

On their first day in the clinic, the sisters met the staff and worked with the nurses. In the following days, they accompanied the doctors both in the clinic and in their outreach visits and were impressed by their kind and thorough attention to the poor and children of the daycare centers.

By October 23, they moved into their new house, just one block from the clinic. In this two-story structure, there were four bedrooms, a kitchen, one room for living and dining, and three bathrooms. At first they “made do” with folding beds and other things borrowed from the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart sisters. Until the stove and refrigerator could be connected, they ate meals, except for breakfast, at the rectory. Little by little, they acquired the things necessary for setting up housekeeping. It was a full two weeks, however, before they had almost completed the furnishings with new beds and bed stands. (The first beds had to be returned when they could not be assembled due to mismatched parts.)

In thanksgiving for the many kindnesses of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart, Sisters Joan and Paula Rose baked cookies and made popcorn, which they took to them on November 11 when they returned the last of the borrowed items. In turn, the Handmaids invited them to stay for supper, and this Founders’ Day evening was spent in exchanging Community stories.

During these early weeks, Gonzalo Vergara arranged for them to meet with Father Giovanni Pegoraro from the Josephite missions, who would be coordinating services with the doctors from Saint Joseph Hospital. He also took them to visit Archbishop Antonio Gonzales, who expressed the hope that another sister would join them; he told them that in Ecuador religious were not recognized as a canonical Community unless there were three.

By November 13, Sisters Joan and Paula Rose were only too glad to accept Gonzalo Vergara’s invitation to spend the weekend in the country. On Thanksgiving Day, they invited Bettie Reid to help celebrate a traditional holiday feast, having received a new stove and small table for the kitchen as well as a cupboard for dishes in the dining area. Two days later, Gonzalo and Laura Cartagenova invited them to a second Thanksgiving dinner,
where they met many of their friends who had volunteered to help in the Solanda project. 4

Though a bit early, they gratefully accepted a live Christmas tree brought by the Administrator of San Pedro on November 30.

Fortified by a day of recollection on the Feast of Christ the King, the sisters had their first serious talk with Father Chocon and sent their first report to Sister Marianna. They were very positive about wanting to stay and work at the clinic and had formulated a preliminary budget after reviewing the books. They also had a meeting with all the doctors and nurses at the clinic and planned to have these thirty-minute meetings three times a week until some of their concerns had been addressed.

When all the personnel met on December 2, the sisters were disappointed that almost all the time was spent on organizing a raffle and Christmas party. They felt that the most important issues were not dealt with. Sensing the tension among the staff, the sisters recognized that they were no doubt anxious about the possibility of new management coming into the clinic.

On December 13, Father Luis Chocon told the sisters that he was being changed from the parish and that Father Luis Bayas was the new priest in charge. Indeed, Father Chocon had been finding it hard to let go of his supervision of the clinic, and the sisters thought things would be better when he was changed and Father Bayas came. Sister Joan assumed that she would be in charge, so she was dismayed when she found out that the pharmacist had been fired. After she met with two of the Jesuits about maintaining Christian values with regard to the rights of workers, she was able to get the woman back to work.

During the time of the posadas before Christmas, Sister Regina Deitchman, Director of Missions, paid the sisters a visit and even went out with one of the doctors to make home visits. At the dedication of Quito’s new coliseum next to San Ignacio parish on December 19, she met most of the members of the Foundation. The sisters were glad when the Archbishop formally acknowledged their presence at the Mass that evening.

A few days before Christmas, Sisters Joan and Paula Rose had an informal meeting with the Board of Directors of the Foundation. Sister Joan expressed the sisters’ concerns and perceived needs; they left the meeting happy that they had been given three months more to study the clinic and come up with a realistic proposal. On the twenty-eighth, the sisters had a meeting with the clinic employees to let them know that Sister Joan had been delegated by the parish to be the director. Some of the workers were very nervous, expecting her to make drastic changes.

Then Sisters Joan and Paula Rose turned their attention to some Christmas activities, first of all with the employees, and then taking candies
and cookies to children at the daycare center provided for mothers working in the market and also visiting the orphanage operated for homeless girls.

In so many ways, the sisters felt the finger of God operating in this project. Within a very short time, they felt so at home in Solanda that they preferred being there with the poor to going to Gonzalo and Jacinta Vergara’s for Christmas.5

Almost a month before, Sister Joan had written, “I think we should take a good look at Ecuador. The Foundation is willing to build and furnish us with a convent here in Solanda.” She suggested various possible works besides that in the clinic, such as working with street children, teaching in a Faith and Joy school,6 doing pastoral work in the parish, forming leaders, and working with prayer groups. In her enthusiasm she added, “Quito should be considered an option for our sisters in Peru to work.”7

With the outbreak of a diphtheria epidemic, the sisters and other nurses became very busy. With medicine supplied by the state, they gave free vaccinations every Friday to all children and pregnant mothers. They also vaccinated eight hundred students in three schools of the area. After someone died, they had to go door to door in a five-block radius, vaccinating everyone.

Although Sister Joan was officially in charge of the clinic before Christmas, reviewing finances, contracts, inventories, and policies was difficult since the former pastor and director continued to return. The sisters were especially glad for the additional months given them, for in no way did they feel that they would be ready to sign a contract when the provincial, the secretary of the Foundation, the pastor, and another Jesuit visited in mid-January. Sister Joan had many questions about the employee contracts, many of which had been signed by Father Chocon after August 1993. She felt that he should not have made those contracts, knowing at that time that the sisters were seriously considering the management of the clinic. She also had questions about extra spending in November by Father Chocon. The Secretary of the Foundation himself said that it was because Father Chocon, knowing that North Americans were coming, believed that money wouldn’t be any problem.8

Moreover, Sisters Joan and Paula Rose felt depressed and uneasy after a visit with Gonzalo Vergara and two doctors who had come from Denver. When they suggested that the sisters discharge all the current employees and “start over,” the sisters rejected the idea, not feeling it would be fair, honest, or charitable. The sisters also recognized there was a little friction between the parish, the clinic, and the Foundation. It was difficult for the sisters to report such discrepancies and problems to the Foundation since the majority of the members were Jesuits, and Father Luis Bayas, a Jesuit, was both the Foundation director and the pastor of the parish.
By late January 1994, Sister Joan had serious doubts that the clinic was really what Saint Joseph Hospital wanted. She thought the doctors coming down would be better in a hospital setting or in giving workshops if they spoke Spanish or had a good translator. Moreover, there were difficulties both working in and managing the clinic under the current circumstances.

Outside the clinic, things were a little discouraging, too. When Sister Joan attended a meeting on January 27, to which two thousand health workers in Quito South had been invited, only thirty came, many of them volunteers. Then she had to spend all day at a Ministry of Health meeting in order to find out how to fill out their multiple forms. Since she had had to take the medical and nursing personnel with her, Sister Paula Rose and one doctor attended the clinic all day.

On February 7, the sisters had a meeting with the new pastor, Father Luis Bayas. They told him about all the things they had observed and discovered. Sister Joan told him that at the present time, with what they knew about the financial situation and how hard the people seemingly found it to work with North Americans, she did not want to be the Director. She suggested that she be co-director, together with one of the priests or a layperson. Moreover, she indicated the need for more programs to treat the whole person. When Sister Joan and Father had finished their discussion, Sister Joan felt positive about this meeting.

A few days later, Sisters Joan and Paula Rose welcomed Sister Lucille Harrington, who had come to visit, to make retreat, and to explore possibilities of work for herself. While she was still on retreat, the other two sisters attended a meeting at the church. Father was trying to start an evangelization program, but disappointingly only thirty parishioners came. However, he announced he planned to offer different classes on Saturday afternoons on such topics as the Bible and Human Rights. Sister Joan attended some of these, but sometimes there were only three or four people present.

Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Sue Miller arrived the night of March 12, accompanied by Mary Ann Slattery, a friend of the SCLs. Gonzalo and Jacinta Vergara met them and took them to their home, where Sisters Joan and Paula Rose greeted them the following day. After a tour of Quito, they all enjoyed a weekend at the Vergara country home.

On March 15, the sisters spent a long time talking after breakfast. They reviewed the many joys and sorrows of their time at the clinic. It was decided that Sister Paula Rose should return to Denver since her work of coordinating the medical personnel coming from Saint Joseph was no longer necessary. Saint Joseph Hospital would be able to do all the scheduling and sending of equipment from Denver, and Father Giovanni
Pegoraro, procurator for the Josephite Fathers, would coordinate the work in Ecuador.

Sister Joan asked to stay on and work with Sister Lucille in the parish. The pastor was willing to welcome them and felt the Foundation would continue to support them.

In the afternoon, Sister Mary Kathleen and the sisters met with four members of the Foundation and explained why the sisters did not want to take over the directorship of the clinic. The Foundation personnel were receptive to this decision, though saddened. They were pleased to learn that Sisters Joan and Lucille might stay on to do pastoral work and promised to pay their board and room as well as provide a stipend for personal needs. They indicated that since they had rented the sisters’ house until December, there was no problem; by that time, all could see how things were working out and whether the Foundation should build a convent or not.

Sisters Mary Kathleen and Sue left for Peru on March 17. The next day, Sisters Marianna Bauder and Mary Walter Swann arrived from Denver and were met by Gonzalo and Jacinta Vergara as well as other members of their family and the sisters. That afternoon, the sisters met with Sisters Marianna and Mary Walter and confirmed the decision that had been made, saying they would terminate at the clinic on March 31.

On March 19, Mary Ann Slattery left for the States. That same day, appropriately the Feast of St. Joseph, Sisters Marianna and Mary Walter went to visit the hospitals of the Josephite Mission in the jungle. They promised the sisters there that they would continue to extend a helping hand.

The Denver visitors left early on March 23. Sister Joan also set off for Piura, Peru, to participate in the vow ceremony for Sisters Liduvina Dominguez, Julia Huiman, and Trinidad Orozco on the twenty-fifth; Sister Liduvina and Julia were making their first vows, and Sister Trini was making final vows. Sister Joan hoped to return to Ecuador on the thirtieth with Sister Lucille. Meanwhile, Sister Paula Rose agreed to stay on, working at the clinic until her departure date on the thirty-first.

Sisters Joan and Lucille arrived just the evening before Sister Paula Rose left. Some of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart came by to bid farewell to their friend. The following morning, Good Friday, exactly one year after she had first arrived in South America and begun this mission experience, Sister Paula Rose left Solanda at 5:30 a.m.

Just days after their arrival, Sisters Joan and Lucille began their pastoral ministry. First, they attended a meeting Father Bayas had called for evangelization, but no one else showed up. Later, the Legion of Mary group came to ask them if they would be their spiritual directors. The sisters agreed to this and promised to attend the meeting on Wednesday. They also began visiting homes within the parish. Soon they set up a time
to meet with the pastor every two weeks in order to keep him informed of their efforts.

As mentioned earlier, Sister Joan had begun attending the Saturday afternoon evangelization classes given by Fathers Bayas and George Gaelo, SJ. The latter was in charge of the Faith and Joy schools in Quito. Sister Lucille joined her, but both were disappointed with the paucity of attendance. By June, Father Bayas asked the sisters to take over the evangelization program.

Having fixed up a small oratory on the second floor of their house, the sisters were happy when Father Bayas installed the Blessed Sacrament there on May 4. They also welcomed the opportunity to invite him for coffee and an informal visit.

Sometimes the pastoral work sprang from unlikely sources. For instance, two women gave aerobics classes three times a week in the parish, both morning and afternoon. They invited the sisters to give some classes on religious and health themes to the women attending their aerobics classes. Sisters Joan and Lucille accepted.

As the sisters visited in the homes, a number of people expressed a desire of belonging to a prayer group in their neighborhood. It seems there had been such small groups previously, but they had been disallowed by the previous pastor, Father Chocon. He wanted all to belong to one large group meeting at the parish. However, because of the distance and the violence in the area, many never went to the large Friday night meetings. When Sisters Joan and Lucille discussed the matter with Father Bayas, he told them that they could reactive the smaller groups. Soon there was a prayer group in their own neighborhood that met every Tuesday in the evening.

Besides their work in the parish, the two sisters tried to enter into the various activities of the Vicariate. Every first Thursday, they met with the priests, religious, and laity working in South Quito. They also joined in the Corpus Christi procession, which emerged from and returned to the small chapel next to the clinic. It did not take too long to discover, however, that only a few people controlled parish functions. This was clear when only twenty people showed up for the meeting in preparation for the visit of the statue of the Virgin of Quinche. Since the Virgin of Quinche was so revered in Ecuador, Sisters Lucille and Joan had expected that more people would be anxious to help plan for this event. In June, the sisters accompanied the Legion of Mary parish group to a retreat given for all Quito Legion of Mary presidiums, another evidence of their participation in parish and Vicariate activities.

Having first consulted with the leader of the Charismatic prayer groups of the parish, they met with the Friday night group to discuss their collaboration in the evangelization program. A little over a week later,
they met with those who had agreed to team-teach in the program. On July 2, eighteen participated in their first class; plans were laid to continue meeting until the end of August. But when they finished these classes, Father Bayas decided that instead of missioning them to evangelize, the laypersons should first go to South Quito for classes on the development of the laity.

From time to time, the sisters enjoyed a break, going to Gonzalo and Jacinta's country home or visiting with Bettie Reid, either in her home or inviting her to join them for some celebration or other. They always felt enriched by sharing with this dedicated lay Catholic volunteer.

In late July, Sisters Joan and Lucille welcomed Sisters Janet Cashman, Ruth Reischman, and Mabel Cordova, who came to visit for a few days. Besides taking them to visit some of the beautiful churches of Quito, they also went to Otovlo, one of Ecuador’s most popular Indian markets a few hours out of Quito. Less than a week later, Sister Regina Deitchman arrived for a week’s visit, accompanying them in some of their ministries. At the end of August, Sister Mary Patricia Kielyt joined them for a short visit before going on to the States for her home visit.

While Father Bayas was in New York on temporary assignment for two months, he became acquainted with Ed McDermott, a former principal and physical education teacher. Ed accepted Father’s invitation to come to Solanda as a volunteer, although he spoke no Spanish. Living at the rectory with all Spanish-speaking priests proved difficult, so the sisters tried to ease his trauma by inviting him to eat with them on the priests’ day off.

In mid-September, Sister Joan went down to the Oriente with a doctor from Saint Joseph Hospital to help with the translations. Her friend Bettie also had offered to go for a week to help translate, as did a Franciscan sister working in Quito.

On Saint Vincent’s Day, Sisters Lucille and Joan entertained the Legion of Mary, sharing with them the life of Saint Vincent and having a prayerful interchange of ideas on charity. They concluded the afternoon with refreshments and informal conversation.

When they returned from the Community meeting in Peru in early October, Sisters Lucille and Joan brought Sister Catherine Nichol with them for a visit. Together they enjoyed the hospitality of Gonzalo and Jacinta at their country home, and again Sisters Joan and Lucille showed their visitor the Indian markets. Toward the end of her visit, Sister Catherine joined Sister Lucille, Bettie, and Ed McDermott on a trip to Panecillo, a small rounded hill that dominates the old town of Quito. This “little bread loaf” is a major landmark. On top is a huge statue of the winged Virgin of Quito, who bears a crown of stars on her head and stands atop the world, with a chained dragon at her feet. This statue, the only one in the world
that depicts the Immaculate Virgin with wings, represents Ecuador’s consecration to Mary.

Sisters Joan and Lucille continued to find other ministries opening up. In visiting the homes, they discovered many aged and people with poor health. Others sought Sister Joan out for help with medicine. So the sisters decided to begin a health promoters program and develop a core of people who could visit the sick and aged. In a letter to Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, Sister Lucille commented that she was happy to have the opportunity to put into practice a course on “Friendship Ministry” that she had had while in the States in 1992. Sister Lucille expressed the hope that one of the Peruvian sisters would join them the following year to help in this ministry. 11

In honor of Founders’ Day on November 11, the sisters took a basket of food to a poor family. They also called Piura to remind Sister Catherine that they were with her in spirit as she celebrated her Golden Jubilee there with the sisters and parishioners that day. Two days later, as a continuation of Founders’ Day, they welcomed thirteen young women for an afternoon of sharing. The guests were so pleased that they asked to meet monthly.

On November 15, Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani called to tell the sisters that Sister Ann Barton had received a grant for $6000 for a car or jeep for them. However, she asked them to wait until after the evaluation of the Foundation Board. She thought it would be better to postpone buying any vehicle until they were more sure what they might be doing in 1995. Although Sister Joan felt confident that the evaluation would be positive, she bemoaned the fact that the Jesuits had made no move to provide them with permanent housing. She once again expressed the hope that one or two Peruvian sisters would join them in ministry there, as she thought it would be good for the people to see that there were Latin Americans in the Community; she also felt that that would assure the Jesuits that the sisters intended to stay. 12

On Thanksgiving Day, the four North Americans (Sister Joan, Sister Lucille, Bettie, and Ed) enjoyed an old-fashioned Thanksgiving dinner together. Bettie furnished the turkey; the sisters, all the trimmings. Afterwards, they enjoyed seeing the video of Pope John Paul II’s visit to Denver, Colorado.

The sisters had another afternoon of reflection for young women on December 1. However, because of other holiday parties, only three young women came, so they visited informally and made plans for another date.

On December 6, they put up their Christmas decorations, and the following week, they joined in the planning for the Christmas Novena in the church. Each group would be responsible for a given night, giving a theme on the family at the time of the homily. Two days before Christmas,
Sisters Joan and Lucille took a Christmas basket to a poor family and also took animal crackers and candy to a daycare center for poor children whose parents worked in the market place.

On Christmas Eve, the sisters attended the final night of the Christmas Novena, this time held in the coliseum with more than a thousand persons present. Since families have the custom of bringing their Infant Jesus to the Christmas Eve Mass and placing it on the floor before the altar to be blessed, one needs only to visualize all those hundreds of statues of various sizes and dress to grasp the force of tradition in the lives of these people.

By way of contrast with Peru, most of the people in Quito do go to Mass on Christmas itself, so the 8:30 Mass was again held in the stadium. Afterwards, Sisters Joan and Lucille treated themselves to Kellogg's Corn Flakes and paneton, the traditional sweet bread. Bettie brought a ham for dinner, but first she and the sisters had a special prayer service in their oratory. After dinner, Bettie showed the sisters some of her videos of Bethlehem; later, they enjoyed fruitcake and coffee before she returned home.

Here in Ecuador, as in Peru, the people have the custom of burning effigies on New Year’s Eve, except here some were made to image political figures. Sisters Joan and Lucille walked through their neighborhood in the afternoon to see these symbols that would be burned up in the hope of a better New Year. They had invited Bettie to dinner and used some of the delicious leftover ham. They also blessed their watches and clocks and asked the Lord to bless the New Year.

On January 9, 1995, Gonzalo and Jacinta welcomed Dr. Joseph Hait of Saint Joseph Hospital and his wife, who were on their way to work in the hospitals in the Oriente. The following day, Sisters Joan and Lucille joined them for dinner at the Vergara home. Since the doctor had brought down a duffle bag packed by Sister Paula Rose and the sisters at Saint Joseph Hospital, St. Vincent’s Home, and Sister Joan’s family, unpacking it was like having a second Christmas.

Sometime in December, Sister Regina Deitchman had sent word to Sisters Joan and Lucille that Sister Julia Huiman would be coming for the month of January. They were happy in as much as they saw it as a possible first step in integrating Peruvian sisters in the Ecuador mission. However, it was not until mid-January that Sister Julia arrived by bus from Peru. Although it took her a few days to adjust to the altitude and cold of Solanda, Sister Joan gave Sister Julia an orientation to Solanda and presented her to the employees of the clinic. They were happy to meet her, and Sister Julia responded by volunteering to work some hours at the clinic in the mornings. She also accompanied Sisters Lucille and Joan in some of their home visiting and went to the Legion of Mary meeting and to the Tuesday night prayer groups.
However, Sister Julia’s time was cut short due to the border conflict between Peru and Ecuador. When the frontier was closed, she decided she should return to her homeland, and since the only way she could do so was to fly to Lima, these arrangements were made. As time passed, that proved to have been a wise decision as there was more and more tension between the two countries. In the parish and city, the sisters noted a lively burst of patriotism, with most houses displaying the Ecuadorian flag. Sister Julia could not have comfortably remained in the country.

As mentioned earlier, when the sisters had begun working in the parish after leaving the clinic, the Foundation had indicated they would evaluate their services at the end of the year. Beginning in late November, the sisters had begun inquiring about the meeting to be had between the pastor and the Board, but they were never told anything.

Father Bayas left for a monthlong retreat on January 5, but without mentioning anything about the evaluation, although he must have received it. So it was not until January 20 when Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani called that they knew its contents. The Board lauded their excellent work, noting that their visiting of the people and their influence was the only antidote against the poison of the many sects invading the area. The sisters were both loved and trusted. Yet, while professing to be very happy with the sisters’ presence and work in the parish, they indicated that the initial reason for their coming had changed and that supporting them for parish work seemed unnecessary when there were Ecuadorian sisters who could do the pastoral work. Nevertheless, they asked that the sisters continue in this pastoral work until the services of another Community could be contracted. Following her conversation with Sisters Joan and Lucille, Sister Mary Kathleen informed Señor Laso Barba, Secretary and Treasurer of the Foundation, that the sisters were willing to continue in the same work for three to six months while the parish looked for Ecuadorian sisters.

A couple of weeks before they received this news, Sisters Joan and Lucille had been invited by Father Efren Gallegos, a Josephite priest and friend of Bettie, to go to the Oriente. He was very interested in their coming down to help him in pastoral work in the jungle area. Sister Lucille felt more inclined to this work, which seemed more pastorally oriented and of a larger scale than what they were doing in Solanda. It especially appealed to her because of its likeness to the work she had performed in Bolivia, namely forming lay leaders and catechists not only in the parish but also in its surrounding areas.

In early February, both Sisters Joan and Lucille began Father Ignacio Larranuga’s fifteen-week workshop on prayer. This well-known Latin American author prepared people to actively participate in and then to teach
fifteen different methods of prayer. Finding it very helpful, Sisters Joan and Lucille arranged for the team to give the same workshop in Solanda.

Sister Mary Aloys Powell called from Denver on February 3 with the good news that they had received a grant to help Sisters Joan and Lucille with the purchase of a new jeep. The sisters felt that with this additional funding, Sister Mary Kathleen would agree to their purchasing mobility.

On February 20, Bettie took Sisters Lucille and Joan to Borja in the Oriente to visit with Father Efren so that they could look over the possibilities for a mission there. Though Father was out of town, they visited with the Sisters of St. Dorothy, who work in both primary and secondary education there. Sisters Joan and Lucille learned that these sisters also did sacramental preparation and catechesis for children. They graciously welcomed Bettie and the sisters and invited them to have dinner at their convent, though in a separate dining room, as was their custom.

The following day, they met Father Efren for the first time. He was enthusiastic about forming a pastoral team that would work in the surrounding area. Since his thrust was charismatic prayer groups and leadership formation, he was delighted to learn of the sisters’ previous missionary experience and their work in a pastoral team covering a wide area. He assured them that they would not be duplicating the work of the Sisters of St. Dorothy as those sisters worked only with the children and young people. Moreover, he was very interested to hear of Sister Joan’s background since he considered preventive health promotion important.

Having just been appointed superior of the Josephite Fathers in the Oriente, Father Efren said he would speak with Bishop Julio Parise and his auxiliary bishop about having the SCLs work in the area. He said that he would make an appointment with the Bishop to present the sisters the following week. However, things did not move quite that quickly. It was March 6 before Father Efren called to ask the sisters to contact the Bishop, who was in Quito for a youth convention. Luckily, they received an appointment for the ninth.

Once again Bettie came to their aid, driving them to the Josephite Center House in San Rafael, about fifty minutes from Quito. Bishop Parise was most hospitable and very happy to know they were interested in working in the Oriente. In fact, he offered them a couple of places in the jungle area, accessible by a four- to six-hour motorboat trip and another one accessible by a small cub plane. Considering their ages, the sisters politely declined, expressing their preference for his next option—to visit the valley area to see where they felt they might best serve.

After going to Peru to help celebrate the final vows of Sisters Maria Orozco and Clorinda Timana, Sisters Joan and Lucille spent a week visiting the sisters and friends, then returned on March 20. Bettie met them and
invited them to hot and delicious chili, some Texas cornbread, and freshly made peach pie.

The following day, they called Bishop Parise for an appointment to visit the Oriente. It was agreed that they would meet him in Borja on March 27. Once again Bettie drove them to this appointment. Once there, they discovered that they were to meet not only with the Bishop but with the three pastors of parishes in the valley. The sisters asked Fathers Efren, Lorenzo, and Antonio about their pastoral plan; they were told that they were willing to begin pastoral planning for the whole area. Actually, there were about eight different areas served by these three centers. After seeing the three different parishes, the Bishop gave them their choice, but Sisters Joan and Lucille asked him where he considered the greatest need to be. When he replied El Chaco, they told him that they would be glad to work there.

In El Chaco, they visited the hospital operated by the Sisters of St. Dorothy, a modern and well-kept health facility by third world standards. They also visited the monastery of the cloistered Visitation sisters. From El Chaco they went on to visit Baeza, first dropping Father Efren off at Borja. The Bishop had mentioned in the meeting that he hoped the sisters would work out of four different pueblos, and that each pueblo would provide accommodations for overnight stays when necessary.

Even before they made this exploratory trip, Sisters Joan and Lucille had received a very supportive letter from Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, affirming their work in Ecuador. She said the Community would support them if they desired to stay in Solanda.

After their visit to the Oriente, they sent a fax to Sister Mary Kathleen, telling her of their visit and decision. Sister Mary Kathleen immediately called to ask them if there were sisters to continue the work in the parish of Solanda. Sister Lucille informed her that both the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart and Dominicans had postulants and novices who could work in the parish in the future. Sister Joan told Sister Mary Kathleen that they would talk to Father Bayas the next day to inform him that they would be leaving the parish in conformity with the time limitation which the Foundation had given them.

Father Bayas expressed mixed feelings about the sisters leaving and told them that the Jesuits in the parish did not wish them to go. Nevertheless, the sisters made arrangements to leave the parish sometime after Easter.

It is interesting to note that Sister Paula Rose left Solanda just a year before, on March 31, 1994. Sisters Lucille and Joan began their parish work on March 31, and just one year later, they informed the pastor of the termination of their work as of March 31, 1995. Sister Regina Deitchman, Director of Missions in South America, would have liked Sisters Joan and Lucille to return to Peru. Sister Joan, however, indicated in a letter to Sister
Map of Ecuador
(World Fact Book)

View of El Chaco, Ecuador
Sisters Joan Kilker and Lucille Harrington in airport and on trip from Quito to El Chaco

Sister Joan Kilker in the clinic in Solanda
Mary Liguori Horvat that if the mission in the Oriente did not work out, she planned on returning to the United States to work among Hispanics there. After returning from the vow celebrations in Piura, Sisters Joan and Lucille spent April in Solanda awaiting their house in El Chaco to be readied.

This house was a sturdy wooden structure with three bedrooms and a small living room on the second floor. Two showers and lavatories had been added to the original structure, just off the living room. However, the stairway to the bottom floor (where the kitchen, dining room, and laundry area were) was open on the outside of the house. Below the bedrooms and living room area, there was a huge room that could serve as a reception room, office, and storage space. Between the rectory and this house, there was a garage.

Bishop Parise had told the sisters that they would be able to move after Easter and that he would provide a truck to transport their belongings to El Chaco. Besides providing their living quarters and utilities as well as some food staples, the Josephites would give them a stipend to help cover gasoline costs. They would lend them a used jeep until they could purchase their own.

About ten days later, Sister Joan again faxed Sister Mary Kathleen to tell her that things were moving along very well. Bettie had again driven them down, and they were well pleased with the progress being made on the house. The procurator of the Josephites had also visited them in Quito to tell them of the furnishings they had or would buy for the convent. In the same communication, Sister Joan commented on how happy the missions were with the first shipment of medical equipment they had received from Saint Joseph Hospital; it was already in use in Archidona.

Actually, the sisters did not move to the Oriente until May 3. The following weekend, the Bishop came up from Tena, about four hours away, to present the sisters at the Masses.

Every first Monday of the month, Sisters Joan and Lucille went down to Tena for a meeting with some twenty-two priests and sisters (themselves and two Daughters of Charity who worked further into the jungle). In June, the Papal Delegate was also there and gave them a conference.

By mid-June, the sisters had been authorized by Sister Mary Kathleen to buy a jeep. They purchased it through the Josephites at roughly one-third the price they would have paid otherwise.

They were grateful when doctors came down from Saint Joseph Hospital to El Chaco. Not only did Sister Joan help out with the translation, accompanying them on their rounds when necessary, but both sisters took advantage of the doctors’ presence to have consultations. Because of her heart problems, Sister Joan regularly had her pro-time checked at the hospital in El Chaco.
The sisters found most of the people warm and open when they visited them in their homes. During July, Sister Lucille organized a three-week vacation school for children ages eight to ten, but not many persevered for the three weeks. Sister Joan helped her in the mornings, and then in the afternoons, she gave some talks or classes to the youths in the workshop being given by some seminarians who were in El Chaco for the summer.

Sister Lucille was “jolted to the reality of how nothing and next to nothing these little ones know about God” and that “their parents know less.”17 So she kept her teachings very basic. Recalling that the rosary is the poor man’s Bible, she presented a separate set of the mysteries each week as she instructed and practiced with the children the recitation of the rosary. She rejoiced that not only could she teach the life of Jesus in this manner, but she could also put a focus on Mary and help combat some of the distortions of the many sects that were operating in the area. In a letter to Sister Mary Liguori, she commented with some bitterness that “this country has done an excellent job of keeping the poor spiritually starved and the rich fed in abundance on the educational level.” She also mentioned how the Indians were kept in their place, being nice for “show” and tourism—so long as they stayed in their own sections of the country.18

In early August, Sisters Joan and Lucille went to the capital to make retreat at the Daughters of Charity place just outside of Quito. They both felt very affirmed by the Vincentian priest who gave the retreat on the charism of Vincent and the need for enculturation. They felt they were on the right track in both areas.

They waited with some anticipation to hear of the clergy changes on August 15, praying for a pastor who would be open to Vatican II. Though good men, most of the Josephites were elderly and clung to old ways, and most had never worked with sisters before. When they discovered that Father Antonio was remaining in El Chaco, Sister Lucille mentioned that they would just have to learn to work with him, despite his lack of practicality and “hell and damnation” preaching. As a result, she and Sister Joan always needed to do some “patch up work” along with their evangelization. Father Antonio was very attentive to the Visitation Community as well as to the Sisters of St. Dorothy and the patients at the hospital. And, Sister Lucille added, he was good to them also.19

After returning from retreat, Sisters Joan and Lucille began doing home visiting in San Pedro, a completely Indian community that had lots of young couples and lots of children. The sisters planned on starting prayer groups there when they returned from the meetings in Peru. Sister Joan also went to Latina with some doctors from Saint Joseph Hospital.

The sisters did not have electricity all the time in El Chaco, and the one channel on TV did not come through very well, so they mostly
depended on the radio, listening often to Voice of America broadcasts and sometimes tuning into Mother Angelica’s channel, though they were not in accord with all her programming.20

In October, six Redemptorist priests and five sisters came to work in the valley, giving missions. Sisters Joan and Lucille again prayed that their pastor would be more open; he remained very conservative and wanted to do everything himself. Consequently, the sisters found themselves working around him rather than with him.

When the sisters showed up for the celebration of Our Lady of Quinche, the people appeared surprised since the pastor was against fiestas (because the people drink). But Sisters Joan and Lucille felt right at home, saying that the celebration with live band, fireworks, and all kinds of movement reminded them of their days in Coripata.

Sister Elena Mack, now Director of Missions, visited Sisters Joan and Lucille for three days around New Year’s time. Sisters Joan and Lucille again asked for a Peruvian sister to come to join them in El Chaco, but Sister Elena said she would prefer that two came if anyone did. The sisters felt they had a good visit and interchange of ideas although they could not properly introduce Sister Elena to their ministries because of the time of the year and the inconvenience of travel. They did take her to meet the Bishop in Tena.

In February 1996, Sisters Joan and Lucille attended a pastoral meeting with Father Efren. Though a pastoral plan had been put in writing, the sisters felt that it really could not be carried out until some leaders and catechists could be formed. They hoped that some leaders would emerge from some of the prayer groups that they had formed.

A couple of months earlier, while the sisters were still in Peru for the Community meetings, there had been a serious earthquake in northern Peru and Ecuador. When they returned, they found that El Chaco had been badly shaken also, but not damaged. An area about an hour and a half from them had been damaged, and the whole area continued to have tremors thirty-sixty seconds in length, sometimes strong enough to sway the floors and beds.

With the beginning of the new school year in April, the sisters began teaching religion in an academy for both boys and girls. Although teaching religion is not mandatory in Ecuador, as in many parts of South America, a new law had just given permission for Catholic students to receive instruction if the parents gave their permission. The sisters also taught the little ones in San Pedro, about ten minutes away, and they had catechism classes for the children in schools where permission to teach had not been given.

In June 1996, both Sisters Joan and Lucille went to the States for “Converging Paths,” the Community gathering of SCLs from both
continents. After that, they enjoyed time with family and friends. Sister Joan’s brother, Bob, returned with her in August and spent three weeks seeing something of Ecuador. On September 3, Sister Lucille returned and was greeted at the airport by Sister Joan, Bob, and Bettie Reid. Bob left the following morning, and two days later, Sisters Joan and Lucille returned to El Chaco where they were warmly welcomed by the people.

Toward the end of the month, they left for the Community meeting in Peru. As always, it was good to be with the sisters again, and also to see old friends in Negritos and Talara.

In October, Sisters Joan and Lucille were invited to Puerto Napo in the dense jungle area about four miles from Tena. There they gave a workshop for some catechists. The priest working in this mission had been in Brazil and was a little more progressive than the other priests in their area. Sister Lucille taught methods of teaching as well as content, and Sister Joan helped out. The priest was so pleased with their work that he invited them to come back in January 1997.

Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Ann Barton arrived on November 3. All the sisters spent part of the day with Bettie Reid and then went shopping. By chance, they met two of the doctors from Saint Joseph Hospital who had been volunteering at the Archidona hospital and so were able to introduce them to Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann. Later that same afternoon, the sisters went down to El Chaco.

The next morning, Sisters Joan and Lucille took their guests to the monthly retreat day with the Josephite Fathers in Tena. Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann were happy to meet both Bishop Parise and his successor, Bishop Pablo Mietto. After lunch, they returned to El Chaco, enjoying the sights and sounds of the jungle as they went. The following morning, they rested a little and saw more of the area of El Chaco.

They took Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann back to Quito the next day, stopping en route for a trout dinner at a resort by the hot springs. After resting that night, Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann were again on their way. Waiting for them beforehand, Sisters Joan and Lucille had been a little nervous, believing that Sister Elena Mack was insisting on their return to Peru. Neither desired to do so, and they were relieved when Sister Mary Kathleen made no such request.

Their friend Bettie came down the day before Thanksgiving and spent the weekend with them. She brought her two dogs, so Lucky, Sisters Lucille and Joan’s dog, had company, too. Bettie returned for Christmas also. The sisters always enjoyed her company as she was so knowledgeable about public and church affairs.

Not much out of the ordinary took place in the early months of 1997. In January, their Christmas mail from the Mother House arrived, and some
doctors from Saint Joseph came to work in the area, both in El Chaco and Archidona.

In April, Jacinta and Gonzalo Vergara came to visit for a couple of days, staying in one of the doctors' houses provided by the hospital. They took their meals with the sisters and Nancy Morton from Saint Joseph Hospital, who was in El Chaco while doing an evaluation of the Saint Joseph project.

Father Efren asked the sisters to give a series of classes in preparation for the sacraments and a special group of classes for young adults and adults who had never made their First Communion or Confirmation. Besides the series of eight three-hour classes on Saturdays and Sundays, they also began a class of Bible Study and Health in Bombón, a village in the mountains.

In May, Dr. Deborah Parson came from Saint Joseph Hospital. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty also arrived to visit, and, as they had with Sisters Mary Kathleen and Ann, Sisters Joan and Lucille took Sister Mary Patricia to the hot springs resort for a trout dinner before she returned to Peru.

Later that month, they were very much surprised to learn that Sister Mary Patricia was seriously ill in ICU in Talara since she had been well and healthy on her recent visit. They empathized with Sister Donna Jean Henson, who was bearing much of the burden of her illness, even though other SCLs were taking turns being with her. Helpless to do anything else, Sisters Joan and Lucille offered a Mass and many prayers for her and asked the Visitation sisters to remember her in a special way.

In early June, parts of the road were closed by landslides caused by the heavy rains, so the sisters could not go to the monthly meeting in Tena. However, they were able to go up to Quito, where they met two of the doctors from Saint Joseph Hospital before they returned to the States.

In September, Sisters Joan and Lucille made their directed retreats with the Redemptorist Sisters in Chulucanas before the Community meeting at Villa Nazaret. They left for Ecuador almost immediately after.

Early in October, Sisters Therese Zimmerman and Carol Depner arrived as the first stop on their circuit of the SCL missions, a gift won in a drawing at “Converging Paths” days the previous June. Before going to Gonzalo and Jacinta’s beautiful home in the country, everyone went to the Indian Market at Otaualo. After Mass the following morning at the Basilica of the Virgin of Quinche, they had lunch; then they took Sister Carol to the Hospital de Los Andes. There she discovered she did indeed have a broken rib from a fall at home before she left the States and was given medicine for the pain.

The following day, they left for El Chaco, stopping once again for a trout dinner at the restaurant by the hot springs. After a day or two of rest,
the four returned to Quito so that the guests could see some of the churches and visit the equator. On October 11, Sisters Therese and Carol left for Peru.

A couple of months earlier, Sisters Joan and Lucille had begun to focus on the elderly in their area, visiting them and providing food and clothing when needed. They decided to invite some of them for a nice dinner on Founders’ Day. Four of the ladies from a base community insisted on preparing the chicken dinner, and one of them set up a spacious area with tables. She even prepared some *brindis* (toasts) for the elderly. These guests were very appreciative of the meal and the opportunity to socialize a little. And, of course, they entered into the prayer time in honor of Mother Xavier.

At the meeting of the Vicariate on November 17, each Community had been asked to present its charism, spirit, and history. Sisters Joan and Lucille were most grateful for the opportunity, as some, especially Ecuadorian members of the Sisters of St. Dorothy, had always referred to Sisters Joan and Lucille as “seculars” since they wore no habit.

Later in November, a married couple, both of them doctors and pediatricians, arrived to work for several weeks. The husband spoke Spanish very well, but his wife only a little. Sisters Lucille and Joan invited them to visit and to dinner, and Sister Joan assisted them in various ways, like taking them to the schools and accompanying them into the campo.

Once Sister Marianna Bauder left Saint Joseph Hospital in fall 1977, some problems began with the program she and Dr. Stahlgren had initiated in Ecuador. Dr. Raphael, an Ecuadorian doctor at Saint Joseph, had been put in charge of the translating, but apparently he overstepped his bounds and a communication problem developed. Later, the sisters learned in a meeting with Gonzalo, Jacinta, and Father Giovanni Pegoraro, the procurator for the Josephite Priests, that a container shipped by Saint Joseph had never arrived, and he had been unable to trace its whereabouts. Since those responsible for coordinating the program in Ecuador had appealed to her, Sister Joan tried to clarify matters with Sister Mary Walter Swann at Saint Joseph.

During the Novena before Christmas, the sisters entered into the activities, each of the twelve neighborhoods taking a night to perform the Christmas story after Mass. They also helped judge the crib scenes created in the homes.

On December 13, they joined in the ceremony celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the arrival of the Josephite Fathers in Napo Province. There was a long program in the coliseum in Tena, followed by a Mass and then a delicious dinner in one of the nicer hotels.

Sisters Joan and Lucille went into Quito to do some shopping and to celebrate Valentine’s Day 1998 with Bettie Reid. She had told them some months before that she would be selling her house and moving to Miami.
as her health wasn’t good and the altitude of Quito was not good for her. The sisters would be very sorry to lose this tried and true friend, but they realized the move, planned for May, was best for her.

In mid-February, a lay missionary group arrived in El Chaco at Father Efren’s invitation. The plan was that this married couple and single woman would spend about a month and a half establishing Base Communities. They lived with Father Efren, but the sisters spent a lot of time with them. The sisters were impressed with their work, though they commented on how much freer they themselves were to carry out ministry since they had no spouse or children to attend to.

Because of the terrible flooding in Peru caused by “El Niño,” Sisters Joan and Lucille realized the impossibility of going for the March Community meetings. But, as indicated elsewhere, they were not the only ones absent.

The previous December, three Franciscan sisters had given a retreat to the youth in preparation for Christmas and seemed to be very effective. Now, in Holy Week 1998, the youth were given a retreat by a Franciscan sister from Quito. Sisters Joan and Lucille were impressed with the Living Way of the Cross and all the liturgies planned by the young people.

In mid-April, Sisters Joan and Lucille helped the persons from the Base Communities who were responsible to give their first mission outside of El Chaco. The mission was well attended, and the team was pleased with the results. They hoped the groups would be faithful to their Monday night meetings in the future, but they recognized that regular attendance would be a real test, given the coming of the rainy season and the distance between the homes spread out along the road to Quito.

On May 23, Sisters Joan and Lucille went to spend their last weekend with Bettie. Then they took their jeep over to leave with the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart in Solanda while they were in the United States. They departed on May 25 for the SCL Chapter in Leavenworth.

When the sisters returned, they continued accompanying the people in the Quijos Valley, working with the Base Communities, forming lay leaders, and preparing adolescents and young adults for the sacraments. They also gave marriage and Baptism instruction for adults once a month.

As the political and economic conditions in the country worsened, the sisters did what they could. When the President offered all the poor and elderly 100 sucres (about $20), they helped to register the people. Necessarily, all the work had to be done through the parish because it was the only institution that was trusted. In the face of the poverty of most of the parishioners, the sisters found it hard to see the pastor building a bigger and better church tower and replacing the windows with stained glass ones, even though they knew the money had been donated by more affluent members of the parish for that purpose.
Suddenly, on November 14, 1998, the sisters’ work came to a halt. Just after breakfast, Sister Joan suffered a slight stroke that affected her speech. With the help of the priests, Sister Lucille took Joan to Quito, where she received excellent attention at the military hospital there.

Sisters Elena Mack and Mary Patricia Kielty arrived from Peru and stayed with the sisters for the next nine days. When it was decided that Sister Joan should be flown to Denver, Sister Lucille accompanied her on the trip. Sister Joan’s heart doctor and primary physician were impressed with the care she had received in Quito, saying they could not have done more for her at Saint Joseph.

However, having discovered a spot on the lung, the doctors at first quarantined Sister Joan and began treatments for tuberculosis. During this time, she stayed with her brother Robert. However, in later checkups, the doctors diagnosed cancer in two lobes of the lung. She was operated on for this and received follow-up radiation treatments and medicines. Her faithful friend, Sister Lucille, stayed with her at the hospital, doing the many little things she could not do for herself.

In February 1999, Bishop Pablo Mietto wrote Sister Sue Miller, Community Director, inquiring about the sisters and assuring Sister Sue how much their presence was desired in El Chaco. He said that their presence and work, especially considering how aggressively the sects and other religions were acting, was terribly important. He also affirmed that “the work of catechizing in groups and families by the sisters has been very advantageous for the coming of the Reign of God in this sector of the mission of Napo.”

In July, Bishop Mietto wrote to Sisters Joan and Lucille to say how happy he was when he heard indirectly that Sister Lucille would be returning in August or September.

Sister Joan was sure she would recover and wanted to return to Ecuador. Sister Lucille actually did so on August 11, 1999. Fathers Giovanni and Victor met her at the airport and took her to the Josephite Center House over night. The next day, Sister Lucille went to visit the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart in Solanda. The following day, Father’s chauffeur, Pepe, drove the sisters’ jeep down to El Chaco since Sister Lucille’s license had expired while she was in the United States. Father Victor followed in the Josephites’ pickup, and Pepe took Father on to Tena from El Chaco.

Gloria, the sisters’ cook and cleaning lady, had cleaned the sisters’ house and prepared lunch for them. Everyone, including Lucky the dog, was very happy to see Sister Lucille. Of course, Father Efren and everyone else were eager for news of Sister Joan; Sister Lucille, too, was anxious to catch up on the news of El Chaco.

Unfortunately, there was some disturbing news. During Sister Lucille’s absence, the sects had destroyed some of the church property, even
demolishing the beautiful grotto of the Blessed Virgin. In the coming nights, leaders of these sects harassed Sister Lucille whenever she was out on the streets; they threatened to break into the church and destroy the idols, and they even threatened to poison the dogs.

Sister Lucille also discovered that the political and economic situation had become worse. Among those suffering the most were the Indians in the Amazon area and the poor, self-employed farmers. Inflation was devastating, and there was little to buy. It was rumored that the government was going to adopt the American dollar to replace the sucre, the national monetary unit.

Meanwhile, it seemed as though Mother Nature, too, was rebelling. Two of the largest active volcanoes of the country had begun erupting, raining down ashes and cinders upon the population. There were repeated tremors also.

To add to all this, some of the desperate people from Colombia and some of the drug traffickers were infiltrating the area, adding violence and problems nonexistent before. Many people had begun moving from El Chaco, fearing for their future.

On August 19, Sister Sue Miller wrote to Bishop Mietto, saying she was sure that Sister Lucille was working “con gusto,” but that Sister Joan and the Community were awaiting the results of a three-month control period before deciding whether or not Sister Joan would return. 22

Almost immediately after her return to El Chaco, Sister Lucille began her pastoral work, helping Father Efren in many ways while he was present and pinch-hitting for him in his classes and in the parish during his many absences. She was especially concerned that the church and parish plant should not be broken into and things stolen or destroyed. As a result of the violence mentioned above, the Base Communities had been reduced from seven to four. These continued to meet, pray, and support the people of God.

During the months following her return, Sister Lucille called Sister Joan regularly, but it was not until December that she realized Sister Joan would not be returning to El Chaco. The doctors did not want to risk her contracting respiratory illnesses, especially in the light of the continuing volcanic gases. Though alone in the rain forest, Sister Lucille felt the prayers of the SCL Community and maintained regular contact with Sister Sue Miller. She took comfort when she recalled the words of Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani in one of the SCL gatherings: “When there is only one SCL missioned—there is the entire Community.” 23

During this time alone, Sister Lucille very much appreciated the goodness of those about her. The Josephite priests were very thoughtful about stopping by to visit; even the Bishops dropped in if they were going up to Quito. The Sisters of St. Dorothy invited her to eat with them on
Sundays and for feast days. They also included her in the few outings that they took and otherwise encouraged her in her work. The cloistered Visitation sisters even gained permission from the Bishop to share dinner every Wednesday with Sister Lucille and to include her in their recreation afterwards. The recreation was especially welcome since the dinner was eaten in silence and they had table reading.

Normally, Sister Lucille rode up to the monastery with Father in the morning for 6:00 Mass; if he was celebrating just one Mass, she attended the 7:00 Mass in the hospital and stayed for breakfast afterwards. Gloria and Sister Lucille ate lunch together whenever Sister Lucille was there.

The people were also good to her, often sending in something to eat or on occasion inviting her to eat with them. Jacinta and Gonzalo Vergara also kept in touch, calling her at the hospital and even coming down in mid-September.

The volcanoes showed no sign of abating. In fact, two closer at hand appeared ready to erupt. Early in 2000, Sister Sue suggested that Sister Lucille assess the situation. Though it was very painful to finalize plans for leaving, and Father Efren, the sisters, and Gloria all asked that she stay on, Sister Lucille told Sister Sue that she probably would not renew her visa in March when it expired. However, she suggested that it would be good for Sister Joan and for the people if Sister Joan could come down for the closure of the mission and to pick up her belongings. Sister Sue agreed and said that Sister Marianna Bauder would probably be able to accompany her.

On February 11, the Sisters of Charity formally donated the 1995 Toyota Land Cruiser to the Missions of the Josephite Fathers in El Chaco.

On March 9, Sisters Marianna Bauder, Joan Kilker, and Lucille Harrington were presented with a plaque on the occasion of their withdrawal from El Chaco. It said:

_The Mission of the Josephite Fathers of Napa are grateful to the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth for the five years of generous work of evangelization and formation of Christians among the faithful of Chaco and invoke special blessings of God over them (Sisters Joan Kilker and Lucille Harrington) and their deserving community._

_**Tena, March 9, 2000**_  
_Msgr. Pablo Mietto_  
_Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of NAPO_
Chapter XVII Notes

2 The Oriente is the name given to the Ecuadorian Amazon basin. The Oriente occupies almost one-half of the country’s territory, but it has only about 5 percent of the population.
3 Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani to Ing. Jose Maria Uribe (President of the Foundation of Marianna of Jesus), June 22, 1993, A/SCL.
4 Gonzalo Cartagenova, the Comisión Fulbright at the United States Embassy. He and his wife had lived a number of years in the United States as part of the Ecuadorian diplomatic service. They had continued to celebrate this feast of giving thanks after returning.
5 Sister Joan Kilker to Sister Mary Liguori Horvat, Christmas 1993, A/SCL.
6 Faith and Joy (Fe y Alegría) schools are part of a program sponsored by the Jesuits in very poor or marginalized areas.
7 Kilker to Stefani, November 29, 1993, A/SCL.
8 Sister Paula Rose Jauernig to Stefani, January 1, 1994, A/SCL.
9 Kilker to Stefani, January 23, 1994, A/SCL.
10 Kilker to Stefani, February 3, 1994, A/SCL.
11 Sister Lucille Harrington to Horvat, November 9, 1994, A/SCL.
12 Kilker to Horvat, November 15, 1994, A/SCL.
13 Leonardo Laso Barba (Secretary and Financial Adviser for the Foundation) to Stefani, January 4, 1995, A/SCL.
14 Stefani to L.L. Barba, February 2, 1995, A/SCL.
15 Harrington and Kilker, fax to Stefani, March 3, 1995, A/SCL.
16 Kilker to Horvat, March 18, 1995, A/SCL.
17 Harrington to Horvat, August 1, 1995, A/SCL.
18 Ibid.
19 Harrington to Horvat, September 7, 1995, A/SCL.
20 Mother Angelica is founder of the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) and WEWN Global Catholic Radio Network.
21 Pablo Mietto (Obispo Vicario Apostólico de Napo) to Sister Sue Miller, February 8, 1999, A/SCL.
22 Miller to Mietto, August 19, 1999, A/SCL.
CHAPTER XVIII: A SPIRIT OF COLLEGIALITY

From the beginning, a unique life and spirit of sharing has animated the SCL Community in Latin America. Sister Agnes Klein mentioned in an interview on July 12, 1994, how she and Sister Rosalie Mahoney had made most of the decisions of those first years mutually during the first years in Talara even though she, Sister Agnes, was officially the superior. At that time, Sister Agnes was director of the parochial school of Santa Rosa while Sisters Rosalie and Anne Denise Shea were working in health and social work projects in the barrios of Puerto San Pedro.

Also, because of the distances and the difficulties in communication, the sisters in the mission fields sometimes had to act before official approval came from the Mother House. Thus, the sisters going to Salitral were actually in place before official word from the Mother House reached them.

One of the greatest evidences of this collegiality lies in the joint discussions, discernments, and recommendations that originated in the regular all-Community meetings beginning in 1972 and continuing to the present. While the Sisters were keenly aware that their suggestions and pleas needed action by the Mother General or Community Director and her Council, they also had a sense that their voice was important and that it was heard. They, therefore, accepted decisions that modified or negated their recommendations, knowing that there were perhaps reasons of which they were unaware. But they did not hesitate to reformulate and petition again when and if they thought it for the good of the Community and its work in Latin America. This will be seen in the repeated requests to begin a formation program and to have councilors or advisers for the Director of Missions.

One of the reasons that the sisters could deliberate so well together, although not without disagreements, lay in their growth together. Being few in numbers, the Mother and the Community Council deemed it important for the sisters to come together at least every two years and to receive common input and dialogue together. This occurred even before the beginning of “Forums” in the United States and continued thereafter with yearly meetings replacing the biennial ones.

Sometimes the themes or input was determined by the Community Council or by forthcoming Chapters of the Community in the United States. At other times, the topics grew out of the Latin American scene or the needs of the Community there. Much of the time, the sisters called on priests, sisters of other communities, or laity to make presentations; but for some of the meetings, members of the Community themselves shared their wisdom or expertise.

The photos and minutes of these meetings tell a history in themselves. In the former is reflected the changing face of the Latin American
Community of the Sisters of Charity in Peru. From 1972 to 1980, there were only North Americans present, but with the foundation of the formation program, Peruvian faces and voices were evident although it took quite a while for many of the Peruvian sisters to express themselves openly in discussions with the whole group.

On January 3–10, 1972, the two Community Councilors, Sisters Mary Kevin Hollow and Mary Serena Sheehy, met with fourteen sisters working in the missions of Peru, Bolivia, and Guatemala. The seven-day meeting was held in Talara. The first point worked on by the sisters was a description of the SCL role in Latin America. They defined it “to be a medium of the encounter of God and His people, the promoter, the animator, the indicator, the catalyst of change and replacement,

- by witness, as a person dedicated to God,
- by pastoral service in acts directly related to religion, as in liturgy, teaching religion, etc.,
- by the law of charity lived, in professional services that promote human welfare as in health, social services, trade schools, etc.,
- by the formation of Christian leaders.”

Following further discussions, the sisters sent eleven recommendations to Mother Leo Frances Ryan and her Council. Most were accepted, although some were modified or deferred. Thus, in the February Council meeting, some points were noted as corresponding to policies already in practice by the Community in the United States. For example, the Council said that the suggestion to have an instrument of performance appraisal developed would be handled in the same manner as for other apostolates of the larger Community. The recommendation for selection of sisters to work in the missions and their orientation was generally accepted although at that time the suggestion to allow applicants to visit the missions before making a commitment was disallowed. The idea of having regional councilors was also not accepted. However, recommendations for preparation and study as well as for home visits were accepted as given. The Council found the three points regarding job descriptions for Regional Coordinator, Administrator, and Council liaison person not totally acceptable and indicated that they needed to be reworded, made more flexible or precise. As to the request that inter-congregational work and/or living be possible, the Council said each case would be handled individually as per the placement policy; but they asked the sisters to be aware of the missions the Community supported. The subject of contracts with bishops or parishes would be taken under consideration. Finally, the Council endorsed the obligation of the sisters to foster religious vocations in Latin America and agreed with their intent to concentrate on the program, “Volunteers in Charity,” with an openness to what should evolve.
Two years later, the sisters again met, this time in Coripata, Bolivia. According to some of those present, the key point of this meeting was the discernment on whether or not to have a Latin American formation program. In the response of the Council, no mention was made of this terribly important point. Rather, the reflections of the Council centered on the position of the regional coordinator and her selection, and the form of government and leader in the local houses. As to the former, since this was under consideration by the government commission for the forthcoming Chapter, no response was given. The sisters serving in Latin America were assured that they had the same right to choose their form of local government as houses in the States. But there was a strong recommendation that the contact person in each house review the duties previously performed by the administrator, and that the local group be more conscientious in developing budgets both for apostolates and house. Regarding home visits every two or three years, the Council asked that plans sent to the Mother General indicate time to be spent with families and in travels, time with the Community, and workshops for renewal or education.

At the end of March 1976, Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan joined thirteen sisters in Talara for six days. In the beginning session, before all had arrived, the sisters had a faith sharing on each one's call to the Latin American missions. The discussions that followed centered on the need of the sisters to develop a vibrant prayer life and the need for open communication and reconciliation in the houses. They also addressed the need for each sister to pray with the people, regardless of her specific apostolic work. This set the stage for the two days following, in which Father Carl Ronsman, a Norbertine from Lima, gave a Charismatic retreat. This was a highlight for Sister Ann McGloin, who had come from Guatemala for the meeting. She said afterwards, "One of the most wonderful surprises at our recent meeting in Talara was to learn that nearly all of the South American Missionaries (SCLs) are involved in the charismatic movement."

Four days of discussion followed the retreat. The sisters investigated ways in which the Sisters of Charity could best contribute to what seemed to be the goals of the Church in Latin America. They also considered various points of interest to the Community. They sent five recommendations to the Community Director and her Council. The first two alluded to their dream of having a formation program. They proposed that the Director of Novices be given the opportunity to visit the Latin American missions to experience the reality in which Latin American women live. Secondly, they recommended the establishment of a novitiate program in Latin America. Sister Mary Seraphine reportedly said at this
time, "Sisters, you realize that you are now an international community.” Regarding the position of Director of Missions, they asked that nominations be submitted following the regional meeting. And they again proposed that sisters interested in mission life be given the opportunity to spend a limited time visiting before making a decision; they also asked that the dates for submitting and releasing openings available in the Latin American missions be moved forward to January and February respectively. There was even some discussion at this point of accepting lay volunteers, perhaps in the form of encouraging students at Saint Mary College in Leavenworth to consider giving a semester of service.

Reporting on this meeting, Sister Catherine Nichol wrote: “When the missionary sisters voted unanimously on April 3, 1976 to initiate the associate program in Latin America, the tree that was planted in Kansas extended its roots to the southland. In doing so at our third regional meeting, we ‘crossed the border’ at a much deeper level. Our community, North American, became our community, international. . . . Up to this point, it had been our policy in Latin America to encourage girls who manifested interest in religious life to become acquainted with some of the more ‘renewed,’ pastorally engaged Latin communities.” The “associate program” referred to here is not related to the formal SCL Associate Program developed for the laity after the 1986 General Chapter. Rather, it was an earlier program designed in the 1970s to provide an opportunity for young women interested in the Community to share in the prayer and sometimes in the work of the sisters. Since the Community did not establish a novitiate in Latin America until 1980, this loosely structured “associate program” allowed the sisters to maintain contact with interested young women until such time as a novitiate was authorized. More will be said of this “associate program” in Chapter XIX.

Not all was serious work in these meetings. Besides the opportunity to share and relax in the evenings, the sisters also took some other time-outs. On March 31, the Bishop of Piura came to celebrate Mass and enjoy supper with the sisters. The following evening, the sisters held a “Bicentennial Party” to celebrate the United States’ two hundred year anniversary. Each of the sisters dressed in a very creative costume of red, white, and blue.

In 1978 eleven sisters participated in the Genesis Program at the Cenacle Retreat House in Lima. Sisters Mary Liguori Horvat and Mildred Marie Irwin brought this video and discussion program from the United States, where it had been used in various parts of the Community, and they guided the sisters through each part of the program.

Prior to their November meeting in 1979, Sister Blanche Marie Remington, who had recently returned from the States, gave a one-day
Charism Workshop. The sisters gathered at the Vocation Center (former seminary) in Piura on August 17 for her presentations and the sharing that followed.

On November 21, thirteen of the Latin American missionaries met with Sister Mary Liguori in Lima. They had a workshop on the vows. Besides this, the sisters spent time finalizing proposals regarding formation to be sent to the Council and the forthcoming Chapter of the Community. It seemed that the community in Latin America was more ready than ever to begin a formal formation program. Two of the three Peruvian "associates" had by now asked to enter the postulancy.

Sister Mary Liguori conveyed to the sisters that the Council was indeed discussing such a program and thought that it should be in Latin America. She further indicated that some discussion had taken place regarding the appointment of someone with Latin American experience to be prepared for formation work. But she said that the associates should continue as associates until a formal program could be put in place and a novitiate house established. Definite approval would have to await the Community Chapter of 1980.

Thus animated, the sisters sent the following proposals. First, "We propose that a formal SCL formation program, including postulancy, novitiate, and tertianship be established in South America, e.g., Peru." Second, "We propose that mission experience in Latin America be a requisite for the novice director of the formal formation program in L.A. (e.g., Peru)." Third, "We propose that those who develop the SCL formation program in L.A. include personnel with knowledge and experience of the L.A. culture and our Community tradition." Fourth, "We propose that part of the education of formation personnel be in L.A."

The thinking of the group was that all of the SCLs should be consulted about the program and that the proposed Director of Novices should be directly involved in drawing up the program. Piura was proposed as the site of the novitiate house. Sister Josephine Bustos was insistent that the intentions of the candidates be tested so that persons only wanting an education or to go to the United States would not be admitted. Sister Elena Mack passed out a draft of nine requirements that potential candidates should have for admission. It was also proposed that the existing "associate program" should be evaluated and revised. For one thing, it was suggested that there should be a more definite program in place of the "nebulous" one in existence. Sister Agnes Klein noted that while the "associate program" was not a prerequisite for one entering the novitiate, it was a very important way of coming to know young women interested in the Community, and they would know the Community better also.
Sister Mary Liguori introduced the idea of Mission Promotion by the sisters during their visits to the United States. It was suggested that the sisters collaborate and that, in particular, they visit rural areas to promote the Latin American missions. She also requested that the sisters send more pictures and letters, as well as copies of house minutes to her. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty suggested that a mission history or chronicle should be started with the different houses taking months about to write it. Each house was assigned two months to send articles to Sisters Mary Liguori and Mary Catherine Dougherty for the Community newspaper, Connecting.

On March 11, 1981, Sister Mary Liguori, who had recently been named as contact person for the missions although she was no longer on the Council, met with the thirteen SCL missionaries. Although this year’s meeting was outside the normal two-year cycle, it had been called to provide information on the formation program. Other topics were raised also. In discussing shipments to Talara, the sisters voted to terminate them, saying that the amount of usable items did not justify the work or the cost. Some of the sisters also proposed that more local or Peruvian products be used and called for a simpler life style. The sisters decided to try again to attract more SCLs to the Latin American missions, discussing the possibility of sending summer job descriptions to the States. Local communities accepted specific months for sending articles to Connecting.

Regarding the use of the Latin American Fund for Women, it was noted that Chalaco had aided girls to study both in high school and in the Institute of Evangelization and Catechetics. Others indicated that money had been used to help young women attend nursing school and, in a very few cases, with university studies. Sister Agnes indicated that the houses could ask for more money if needed as the Community had much interest in this project.

Once again the subject of vocation promotion came to the fore. Some suggested using media as well as having “Vocation Weeks” and “Days of Prayer,” putting announcements and posters in the parishes.

Lastly, it was noted that mission intent forms should be sent to the Director of Missions now instead of to a Community Councilor. Sister Agnes said that she would remind Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director, that the mission assignments should arrive in December.

As a part of their time together, each sister gave a review of her apostolic work. Time was also made for a panel presentation on formation by a Christian Brother and Sister Therese Arevalo, Novice Director for the Sisters of St. Joseph. The speakers gave much importance to prior contact with the families of candidates. They also cautioned that, although the sisters should show interest, they should not provide “soft shoulders” for the girls nor should they take over or impede the work of the formation

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person. Above all, members of the panel counseled the sisters to be willing to "waste time together" and to be visible when girls visited. The Christian Brother also expressed his concern regarding the use of money, noting that most postulants would never have had access to spending money and would not know how to manage it. Both advised using psychologists and various types of testing before accepting postulants.

When the sisters met again on January 30, 1982, there were ten professed sisters, plus two postulants for the first time. Nelyda Clavijo and Susana Cordova had entered by then. Meeting at the retreat house of the Sacred Heart Sisters in Lima, the sisters began by sharing information about their apostolic work. They again decided to continue sending articles to Connecting, each house taking its turn. To integrate themselves with what was going on in the United States, the sisters asked Sister Agnes to find out from the president of the SCL Forum what themes would be treated there and to call a meeting in Latin America beforehand so that the sisters in Latin America could send their ideas up North.

It was suggested that the now annual meetings begin with a day of prayer. As to the question of whether sisters living and working with the SCLs might attend these meetings, it was decided they might be invited for general sessions, but not for those treating of Community topics. In further conversation, a plea was made for more co-responsibility at the local area. Also a committee was formed to study and revise the goals for Latin America.

On March 21–23, 1984, twelve professed sisters and two Peruvian novices met in Chiclayo at the Hotel Turista. Sister Rosalie Mahoney, who was present with Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, directed a reflection on community life. During the first morning, the sisters themselves shared their experiences and their relationship with the goals of the Community as well as how they arrived at objectives or goals in their local houses. In this discussion, they used the document that the Council had developed for Long Range and Immediate Planning.

Sister Joan Kilker, Director of Missions, led the discussion on the goals of the Community in Latin America, its future, the development of vocations, and its collaboration with other Communities. In relation to the Long Range Plan suggested by the Community, the sisters were asked to make personal plans of growth for three years, to include personal goals and ways of carrying them out in the areas of health, education, ministries, simple life, spirituality, and time for rest and relaxation.

Given the increasing violence and terrorism in the country, the sisters also spent time talking about Crisis Management. This included a discussion of whom to communicate with if the sisters felt in danger and the importance of writing a history of the events. Someone also shared
information as to the various German entities, such as Adveniat, that provided financial help for church-related projects in missionary countries.

Once again the sisters met in Chiclayo in 1985. From this meeting they sent various recommendations to the Community Director and her Council; these were responded to in due time.

With the likely growth in numbers, the Council readily assented to the suggestion that the South American sisters explore new mission possibilities and promised to develop criteria to assist them in such exploration. When this policy was developed, it asked that the sisters take into consideration and respond to the following points. First, the source of interest/call for this mission should be identified as well as the needs to be met there and its relation to the mission goals of the Community. The number of sisters to be assigned and the effect of such reassignment on other community houses should be considered. Also questioned were the means of financing the work and living situation of the sisters and potential problems that might be envisioned.

Recognizing the poverty of the Church and society in the areas served, the Council not only agreed that the SCLs should explore financial support of the missions, but they also had a preliminary discussion, including such points as an "endowment fund" for the missions.

The Council also affirmed the various points the sisters in Latin America had made with regard to community living: that at least four sisters be at each mission and that new missions should be located sufficiently close to existing ones that the sisters could "get together." They further expressed the need for adaptability and a facility of living in a small community as important qualities for sisters applying to work in Latin America. The Community Director and Councilors promised to keep this in mind in their discernments with sisters. Finally, they agreed with the suggestion that requests from sisters of other religious Communities to live and work with the SCLs be examined and evaluated prudently.

This year, when the sisters again recommended that SCLs interested in the missions be able to visit for a short time before making any commitment, their request was affirmed. Indeed, it was noted that this recommendation had already been implemented in one case. The Councilors further agreed that persons applying to work in the missions should receive two recommendations from sisters who had lived with the applicant.

The following year, the sisters met at Cajamarca on April 5–8 at the Hotel Turista. By this time, there were thirteen professed and five in formation present. On the first day, Sister Elena Mack gave a presentation on formation, utilizing the Book of Exodus as her basis. She offered her reflections on the future of formation in Latin America. Sister Nelyda Clavijo later commented that there had been some tension since not all
were in agreement regarding the projections for the future, especially if and how Bolivian candidates should be accepted. In her response to the sisters following the meetings, Sister Mary Kevin Hollow noted that the Council appreciated the future thrust of the recommendations. She also addressed various points but indicated that much more could be said. It was her hope to be able to discuss them personally with Sister Joan Kilker, Director of Missions, when she was home for the Community Chapter in June.

Noting that one of the recommendations was not only that Bolivian candidates be accepted but that their initial formation begin in Coripata, Bolivia, the Council called to the sisters' attention that there had been no actual applications from Bolivians (although three young women were supposed to be interested). Moreover, they indicated that there was no one in Bolivia prepared to be a Director of Postulants and that such training and orientation to the SCL formation program would take time. In addition, the Council said that, because of the few sisters in Coripata (only two), it would be difficult to establish a formation house there and impossible to have another locale for mission experience for the candidates. For all those reasons, the Council and Community Director decided to delay acceptance of any Bolivian candidates until those concerns could be addressed adequately.

The sisters had also recommended that the Director of Latin American Missions present her report both orally and in writing to the Community Council each year. This was accepted, and it was further suggested that a member of the Council be present for the annual meetings in South America.

As to the request that all official communications be sent to Latin America in both English and Spanish, the Council thought it would be more practical for someone in the houses where there were Spanish-speaking sisters to translate said letters and documents locally.

Responding to the plea for six more North American sisters to be sent to Latin America as soon as possible, the Councilors agreed to encourage sisters who had the desire to go and who met the criteria outlined by the sisters in Latin America the year before.

With regard to the petition for studies for the Peruvian sisters, the Council referred to the policy for the education of sisters under temporary vows used in the United States. They said that the Community decided on SCL ministries, identified sisters who had the interest and qualifications, and then looked at the training needed. In connection with the foregoing, no action was taken on the recommendation for a monetary fund for the education and support of the sisters in Latin America. Nor did the Council act on the suggestion that a promoter for the missions be appointed, whose
objective would be securing a financial base for the missions. It was noted that there were similar proposals for all SCL missions that would be considered by the June Chapter.

Although the concept was endorsed, no action was taken on the proposal that a history of the Latin American missions be written in time for the twenty-fifth anniversary in Peru in 1988.

The Council supported the notion that the Director of Latin American Missions should be free from other occupations that might hinder her Community responsibility. Although the sisters had requested that each of the Community Councilors visit the missions at some point during her term of office, no guarantee was forthcoming. It was noted that the Councilors’ activities are performed in accordance with their responsibilities as designated in the Constitution and as requested by the Community Director; their availability thus varies.

With regard to publications and audiovisuals to promote vocations, the Council agreed that these were desirable but suggested that this request be united to the proposal for a mission promoter.6

Before dispersing, the sisters divided into small groups to share the stories of their vocations, utilizing the booklet, “Una Jornada.” The North Americans and Peruvians then met separately in the evening to brainstorm about vocation brochures. Later, various other points were treated: Sister Joan explained about the Airline Clergy Passbooks as a means of reducing costs of home visits to the States; Sister Rose Celine Siebers proposed the adoption of the cross or a cross encrusted with the figure of Saint Vincent as a common sign for all; Sister Elena announced that because of additional responsibilities, she would be able to offer only one vocation-week retreat although she hoped that in other years she could sponsor more three-day vocation retreats.

A second “extraordinary” meeting took place in Negritos on November 25–27, 1986. The first morning, Sisters Regina Deitchman, Elena, and Joan gave a panoramic vision of the results or enactments of the Chapter in June. Following this, the sisters shared what had most touched them personally in their lives and apostolates during the year. The next two mornings, Sisters Elena and Regina led discussions on parts of the Constitution and the SCL characteristic virtues, touching especially community life, the spirit of mission, service to the poor, and the vows.

When the sisters resumed their sharing, there was much discussion on justice, simplicity, and the need to reflect on the SCL history and Constitution. During the afternoon, a variety of themes arose with questions and suggestions freely given. As always, comments were made about the need for better communication among the sisters and local houses, with benefactors, and with the larger Community.
Once again the topic of possible future missions came up. Sister Joan said that although it would be impossible to consider opening a new mission for two years, she had already talked with Bishop John McNabb of Chulucanas and Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias of Piura. Both had made suggestions as to possible sites of work. Sister Elena announced that the sisters under temporary vows would have three weekends of sharing with the novices during the forthcoming year; she also said that another retreat for young women was programmed for August.

Sister Regina suggested a communal retreat for those who cared to participate and further promised that she and Sister Joan would plan for the 1988 meeting, at least as far as checking out the possibilities.

On November 14–18, 1987, right after Trini Orozco’s first vows in Piura, the Community met in Chiclayo. Sister Joan Sue Miller, Councilor, and Sister Marie Kelly, Community Secretary, were also present. On the very day of their arrival, the North Americans and the Peruvians met to brainstorm ideas for a Community celebration of the SCLs’ twenty-five years in Talara. In the evening, after prioritizing the suggestions, the sisters chose which of the five committees on which to work and assigned chairpersons. Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer, who was still studying in Cochabamba, Bolivia, was surprised to discover that she had been named chairperson of Communications! The following day, Sister Margarita Escudero, Handmaid of the Sacred Heart, gave an excellent presentation on the Eucharist.

Among the topics discussed at this meeting were these: annual evaluations and the discernment process each sister was asked to make every three years; the need for preparing three-year personal plans for growth in the areas of health, studies, spirituality, and apostolate; holistic health; and “perspectives of the future” as regards Community, work, and the condition of the country and society.

In a dialogue led by Sister Donna Jean Henson, the sisters considered the possible number of sisters in Latin America in ten years time, the needs of the Peruvian people, and how the SCLs could best respond to these needs. A commission was formed to study all of the suggestions that flowed from the discussion groups and to propose two possible plans for the next five years. Many of the sisters asked that information for discussion be made available during the year before such plans should be drawn up and sent out.

Throughout the discussions, the sisters manifested a strong sense that only if communal life were happy could apostolic work be truly productive for the Kingdom. As an aid, Sister Elena presented some ideas on house meetings, suggesting that it was an appropriate time for sharing plans for
the month; she recommended that each sister be given her own copy of the
minutes.

As always, various points arose about new houses. Sister Elena
suggested that there be a formation house established for novices in
Catacaos. She did not want the novices to be in Negritos for several reasons:
lack of daily Mass, absence of other postulants and novices in the area,
and the distance from study programs. She felt that Catacaos would provide
a good ambience for formation, especially since there were four priests
located there. Also, because of its proximity to Piura, the sisters could
continue participating in the inter-congregational formation program. There
was also some discussion of a house in Lima or Trujillo for studies, and a
committee was appointed.

At some point, the sisters considered giving a name to the new Center
House/House of Formation in Piura. After discussing various titles, the
sisters decided on “Casa Maria,” but this title was rarely ever used.

Sister Nelyda Clavijo requested that the sisters have Community
Identification Cards, and Sister Joan Kilker promised to look into the possibility.
A recommendation was forwarded to the Council that after a sister’s first two
years in Peru, she should be allowed a home visit. In the discussion, the sisters
were again reminded that one’s time in the States should be divided between
the Community, family, study, and spiritual renewal; time should also be allotted
for mission promotion. Moreover, the sister’s plans should be presented to
her local community, to the Director of Missions, and to the Community
Director some months in advance of her journey.

Sister Joan reported that Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community
Director, felt that the sisters under temporary vows should be deepening
their spiritual life and communal spirit; their studies should therefore be
limited to summers and Saturdays or free times during the year. Regarding
professed sisters being assigned to mentor temporary vow sisters on the
missions, Sister Sue Miller indicated that in the United States there no
longer was anyone on the local level appointed to do this. The Community
Councilor assigned to her area works with and advises the temporary
professed sister.

In March 1988, the afternoon after the renewal of vows in Piura, the
sisters gathered together to listen to various reports. Sister Joan informed
them that the office of missions of the Archdiocese of Denver was interested
in helping financially if the Community had a specific project to propose.
Also, a good friend of Father Dave Degan, J. S. Fryml, who had earlier
proved such a benefactor, would like a description of an idea or project
for which to donate money. Along this same line, Sister Mary Liguori
Horvat asked that the sisters send reports as to how donations were used,
including photos if possible. Sister Joan also told the sisters that she would
be attending the General Forum Meeting in the States in April and would afterwards meet with Sister Mary Kathleen.

Sister Donna Jean then presented the plans developed by the Future Planning Committee, based on the suggestions that had been offered the previous November. After dividing into four groups and then reuniting, the sisters voted to send these four recommendations to the Council. First, that after determining the amount it costs to maintain an SCL in Latin America for one year, benefactors be sought to donate this sum. Second, each sister should make a plan for the next three years. Third, the Director of Missions should check on what workshops, retreats, and courses were available in Peru. Fourth, the sisters should evaluate the works they are presently doing and check to see if there are new works possible in Talara, Piura, Chalaco, or Negritos. This point was postponed until the November meeting. Finally, it was suggested that the sisters offer greater friendship to young women and visit secondary schools in their areas, but the second part of this proposal was not accepted for various reasons.

In November 1988, the sisters again gathered, first in Talara for the celebration of twenty-five years of SCL presence in that city and in Peru. It was a happy time for all. Some former missionaries had returned: Sister Rosalie Mahoney; Sister Lucille Harrington, presently working in Texas; and Sister Josephine Bustos, now working in Denver. The Community Director, Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, and former Community Director, Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, were also present. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty, who had recently finished a sabbatical in the United States after closing the house in Coripata, Bolivia, had come back to work in Peru just in time to join in the celebrations. In all, thirteen North American SCLs, three professed Peruvian SCLs, three novices, and one postulant were present. Many friends and co-laborers came to help celebrate, including Father Robert Gloiston of the St. James Priests, who had earlier worked with the SCLs.

On the evening before, a special Mass was offered for benefactors, living and dead, for deceased SCLs, and deceased relatives of the sisters. In the afternoon of November 11, the sisters had a Holy Hour of Thanksgiving on the newly refurbished patio at Santa Rosa Convent. This time was interspersed with reflections on Scripture passages and corresponding articles from the Sisters of Charity history. And, of course, there were many prayers of thanksgiving offered. That evening Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias was the principal celebrant of a very festive liturgy. Following the Eucharist, there was a very long program in the church. Most all the missionary sisters participated in some form or other, and various groups from the parish, from San Pedro, and from the larger
community of Talara also gave presentations, including an original song written for the occasion.

In the United States, the event was celebrated with a special liturgy and appropriate Vespers. Earlier, Sister Mary Catherine Dougherty had published a commemorative edition of the Community newspaper, Connecting, making it available in both English and Spanish. Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, with the help of Sisters Mary Patricia Kielty and Rosalie Mahoney, also prepared a video on the first twenty-five years of the Community in Latin America.

Following the celebrations in Talara, Sisters Mary Kathleen, Rosalie, Lucille, and present missionaries met at the retreat house in Paita for four days. During the first day and a half, Sister Hanni Rolfes, MSC, gave several excellent presentations on “The Option for the Poor.”

As always, the subject of opening another house came up. After some discussion, Sister Joan said there were not enough sisters to consider opening one for another two years at least. Once again the sisters spoke of the need to evaluate their present works and to view what possibilities there were for new ones. After considerable discussion, the sisters agreed that finding better ways to evangelize should be the priority, especially given the damaging onslaught of the sects. Sister Lucille commented on the advantage of Base Communities because in them the laity themselves become the leaders and they are in daily contact with the people.

Apparently, some thought it would be good to plan a community retreat, and Sister Joan indicated that anyone who cared to do so was free to organize one; Sister Ruth Barron offered to direct one. Since many voiced a concern about how the Community might better help the poor in this time of economic crisis, the sisters divided into two groups to discuss this point. In the general session following, a wide range of ideas was offered. Sister Mary Kathleen offered to send money to each house; in relation to this, Sister Mary Patricia pointed out the necessity of knowing how and for what the money would be spent. Sister Joan suggested that each person reflect on the question: “What does making an option for the poor mean?”

When the subject of terrorism came up, the sisters decided that some kind of emergency plan was necessary for the houses in case the sisters were caught in a conflict or were detained or disappeared. Related to this topic, there was again a request for some kind of Community Identification Card, with the Archbishop’s signature added. No decision was made, but each house was asked to decide procedures for an emergency, including whom to notify. The sisters were asked to be faithful in noting their expected times of absence from their house. They were also urged to increase their prayers and penance in solidarity with those who were more and more
afflicted by the violence and terrorism in the country. Although several suggestions were offered for some form of communal penance, in the end it was decided that each local community should make its own decision, based on its own schedule, and then communicate it to the rest.

Sister Joan again addressed the subject of holistic health and positive thinking, pointing out the need for each sister to care for her health, both physical and spiritual. In relation to the materials on the death penalty sent out by the Social Justice Committee in the United States, although some houses had discussed them, others expressed their difficulty in translating so much material.

On March 16, 1989, the sisters had a one-day meeting in which they again spoke of the increased presence of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and how other groups were perhaps taking advantage of the fear. Consequently, it was suggested that every sister memorize the phone numbers of their bishops and the offices of Justice and Peace in their diocese. Sisters Donna Jean Henson and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer were asked to find new materials so that Sister Joan could disseminate them to the houses. Action was deferred until the December meeting, but a committee was named to draw up a plan based on the new information. Related to this, it was suggested that each sister have the numbers of the carnets and/or passports of the other sisters in her house.

Noting that Sisters Ann Barton, Janet Cashman, and Ruth Reischman would be returning to Peru and that possibly Sister Lucille Harrington would be coming also, it was suggested that perhaps now the Community was in a position to look for another mission house. Sister Joan asked the sisters to consider the purpose of said new mission, i.e., whether it should be in a place for education of the young professed or directed to a new apostolate. Sister Joan was asked to consult with various bishops, and all were asked to pray to recognize the will of God.

Sister Joan also introduced the idea of having an Intensive English course for the young sisters, inviting the team that gives Intensive Spanish courses in the United States. Much discussion followed, but no decision was made. Likewise, there was considerable sharing about the best months for making vows, but in the end it was decided that each case was distinct. When it was again proposed that the Director of Missions have councilors or advisors, the topic was deferred to the December meeting, with the promise of having more materials available.

Following the discussion of a possible slide program for vocations, it was decided that more specifics on the use of the Ryan Fund were needed. This fund, established in 1988 by the SCL General Council in recognition of the SCL presence in Latin America for twenty-five years, was intended to assist the sisters working in Latin America in their mission projects.
Benefactors and SCLs throughout the Community have continued to contribute to this fund since its beginning.

A few announcements concluded this meeting: Local houses should be faithful in sending their letters of gratitude to benefactors; sisters should remember to send in their photos for the Community Directory; the use of cars and television should be handled at the local level; and the sisters should refer to the Constitution when choosing their form of government and coordinators for the year.

On December 28–31, 1989, the sisters reunited in Paita. As per suggestions made at the end of the 1988 meeting, greater time was spent on spirituality, mission, and charism. Members of the community made the presentations and led the discussions. Sister Elena Mack presented information on Leccio Divino on the twenty-eighth; Sister Ruth Barron gave input on the Spirituality of Saint Vincent on the morning of the twenty-ninth, and in the afternoon Sister Donna Jean led the discussions on charism, inviting the sisters to share from their own experiences.

The following day, Sister Donna Jean continued with a section on "The Signs of the Times." After reflection on the question, "What is God asking of us, and how can we best respond to this call?" the sisters selected four points. The hope was that after further dialogue on these points in each of the local communities, the sisters would commit themselves to put them into practice. These items centered on (1) knowing the reality of the people; (2) looking at how this would affect the sisters' insertion, sharing, mission and community life; (3) forming really united local communities; and (4) celebrating life.

On the thirty-first, Sister Janet Cashman presented a report of her work in the Pastoral of Health. Some suggestions were made with regard to the Plan of Emergency, especially as to how and with whom the sisters should communicate in case of the disappearance or death of a sister.

The sisters recommended to the Council that they look for study grants. Suggestions were also sought regarding the house of formation in Piura. Those working in formation wanted to evaluate the possibilities of moving the novitiate house from Piura to Negritos in 1990. When this was approved, Sisters Laura Rumiche and Mabel Cordova went to Negritos to begin their canonical year as novices with Sister Donna Jean as their novice director.

Although the subject of new works again came up, it was once again postponed. And once again it was suggested that there be a group of advisors for the Director of Missions, but again it was decided not to recommend this yet. Sister Ann Barton shared information about the Associates in the United States. Each house reported on its use of money from the Ryan Fund.
Before finishing their time together, the sisters had a special dinner in appreciation for Sister Joan Kilker, who was terminating six years as Director of Missions.

On December 27-31, 1990, twenty-four sisters met at Villa Nazaret in Chulucanas. The afternoon of the twenty-seventh, Sister Janet explained a way of reading the Gospel of St. John, and the community utilized it, reading chapters 1-5 and chapter 20. This was by way of preparation for a day with Father Paul Stonham, OSB, who led the sisters in a consideration of themes from the Gospel of St. John.

During the business meetings, it was affirmed that the Peruvian sisters should be able to budget for vacations to visit other places in their country. Up to this time, they had only spent time with their families. Following much discussion of a spontaneous proposal by Sister Rose Dolores, it was decided to recommend that two Peruvian sisters be invited as observers for the coming Community Chapter. Sister Regina Deitchman mentioned that there was an opening for the following year in Chalaco. She also gave the Peruvian sisters the forms for social security and everyone their summer placement forms, asking that they return them to her before leaving.

Bishop John McNabb celebrated Mass with the sisters on the thirtieth and blessed the new chapel at Villa Nazaret. After breakfast, there was a prolonged discussion of the booklet on Associates sent from the United States. A committee was appointed to review the translation and content and make recommendations at the 1991 meeting as to the adoption of this program in Latin America.

Sister Clorinda Timana informed the group that the vocation committee had not yet prepared the brochure to be used in promotion of vocations. Representatives of the various houses reported on what had been done during the year to promote vocations. Further, this committee asked about the possibility of a summer mission experience for Julia Huiman who intended to enter the Community in March. Afterwards, Sister Elena reported on her time in Mexico and explained the planning for “Evangelization 2000.”

As always, the sisters took time to enjoy one another and to join in games and fun activities in the evenings. On December 29, the sisters had taken time for a fun day at Bishop McNabb’s rustic country place and experimental farm close by.

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* A formal SCL Associate Program was developed in 1987 for individuals, both women and men, who desire to share in the life, ideals, and mission of the SCLs in a formal and mutually enriching way. This Associate Program is not related to the earlier “associate program” designed for young women interested in the Community. The sisters serving in the Latin American missions ultimately did not adopt the later Associate Program for use there.
In 1991 the sisters once again met at the end of December at Villa Nazaret in Chulucanas. This time there were twenty sisters present, plus two postulants. The first day was dedicated to the challenges of the Community in Latin America and the preparation necessary for Chapter. The four challenges they addressed were these: “How can we live more united in community?” “How can we share freely our life and faith with maturity?” “Could the community investigate the possibility of integrating all the Sisters of Charity in a Confederation in order to take advantage of the spiritual, personal and material riches of the various Charity Congregations?” and “How can we live our poverty and give an authentic testimony of the Gospel?”

On the twenty-eighth, Bishop Augusto Beuzeville, Auxiliary Bishop of Piura and Tumbes, shared his vision of “The Reality of Peru and Our Response and Commitment as Religious.” His insightful presentation was based on the Peruvian Bishops’ pastoral “Perú Escoge la Vida” (Peru Choose Life) and on the encyclical “Populorum Progressio” (The Development of Peoples). He asked the sisters to reflect in small groups on three questions: “Why and how does violence appear in our parishes and places of work?” “What kind of evidence is there in your situations indicating lack of respect for human life?” and “What are the signs of hope in the place where you live and work?”

During the afternoon, Sister Elena Mack directed the sharing on events that had transpired in the country, region, or city. One of the points mentioned was the importance of sharing one’s feelings within the local community or at least with someone within it; it was further suggested that these events should be viewed within the framework of the Gospel. She also shared the suggestions sent to religious communities by the Conference of Religious of Peru (Confer) that highlighted the importance of being united, maintaining communication, and being conscious of this “New Moment” in history. She mentioned that Confer had insisted on the importance of maintaining greater communication with the Bishops. Sister Elena also presented the “Plan of Emergency” which the committee appointed earlier had worked out. After reviewing it, the sisters had time to present their suggestions. Among other things, the sisters agreed that there were situations and information that should not be shared with persons outside the house. It was urged that each house review and revise the Plan frequently.

The next point on the agenda was the election of delegates for the Community Chapter to be held in June 1992; Sister Regina Deitchman, Director of Missions, directed this process.

On the twenty-ninth, the committee that had revised and corrected the booklet on the Associate Program presented it to the rest of the sisters. Although thanking the sisters for their work, the group decided it was not
yet time to implement the Associate Program in Peru. Later, Sister Donna Jean Henson, along with the sisters under temporary vows and the postulants, gave the highlights of the course on “Sanctity in Community” that they had attended in Chulucanas. Sister Donna Jean also presented a report on initial and continuing formation; Sister Joan Kilker then explained her role as Director of Juniors.

After this, Sister Regina presented a paper that contained some of the questions and concerns expressed to her by various sisters about apostolate and community life. She also provided information on retreats, vacations, and home visits. Sister Lucille Harrington led a discussion on Santa Rosa as a Center House. As a result, clarification was made about services that could be offered to the sisters from outside Piura, taking into account that the sisters at Santa Rosa had full-time ministries and that postulants and novices, when present, had specific programs; following a discussion in groups, further suggestions were offered.

As always, there was a discussion of a new mission and possible sites for one; the difference this time was that a committee was formed to investigate possibilities. Sister Regina said that after talking with Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, she would ask some sisters to help her in this work.

On the thirtieth, the sisters took time to relax and enjoy each other’s company at the chacra, or experimental farm belonging to the Bishop. That night all joined in the traditional noche de gala (festive night) with games, presentations by the various houses, and refreshments. The next morning, the sisters concluded these days together, suggesting dates and places for the next meeting as well as themes to be treated. Sister Regina was asked to investigate the possibility of inviting Father Gustavo Gutierrez, “Father of Liberation Theology.”

In 1992 twenty-three sisters met in Chulucanas on November 16–18. Sister Elena, recently elected Community Councilor, and Sister Marie de Paul Combo, head of the Peace and Justice office of the Community, were present. The sisters spent some little time reflecting on what experiences as an SCL had been life-giving, which had been death-giving. Each sister was asked to question herself as to where she was going as an SCL, what her personal call to conversion implied, and wherein lay her resistance. Each was asked to consider an occasion in which she had felt concerned or uncomfortable and what had stood in her way of expressing herself about it. Although many negative and positive points were mentioned as to their lives in community, some also mentioned cases that touched on their apostolate, personal development, relationships with others, and even feelings about terrorism.

Because Father Gutierrez had had to postpone his presentations, Father Arturo Purcaro, Augustinian, gave input on the two feet of a Christian:
Charity and Justice. He suggested various questions to be used in small group dialogue. Each house was asked to continue the consideration of these points and to be ready to share their reflections and commitments in December.

Sister Marie de Paul explained the campaign with regard to the death penalty and asked the sisters to form a clear idea about it and to share this concern with others.

Sisters Susana Cordova, Ann Barton, Esther Vilela, and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer reported on the interviews with individual sisters and local communities regarding a new mission. The committee was asked to visit Trujillo to examine opportunities for study and to prepare a report for the group.

Before the sisters returned to their respective houses, Sisters Janet Cashman and Donna Jean Henson were elected as “councilors” to assist the Director of Missions.

In December 1992, twenty sisters once again assembled in Chulucanas. Based on the three goals proposed by the previous Chapter (solidarity with the poor, simple lifestyle, and community life), they spent time discussing the “call of the SCLs in Peru for the future.” Many suggestions were made, but the focus was on helping women and children, thereby anticipating the enactments of a later General Chapter. Following lengthy discussions, the sisters formulated two main goals. First, “In the next 5 years we will have contributed to the development and consciousness raising of women in understanding their self-worth and rights in the Community, the Church, and the Society.” Second, “In the next five years we will promote the dignity and the development of poor children by continuing the program for healthy babies and children, by accompanying children of the streets in various ways, and by developing programs of nutrition, education, and evangelization.” It was decided that the community have a course on the rights of women in order to educate and prepare themselves better. It was also recommended that psychologists and others be invited to address prayer groups and evangelization groups.

On the twenty-ninth, Father Gustavo Gutierrez, world-renowned “Father of Liberation Theology,” addressed some two hundred priests, religious, and laity from Piura and Chulucanas on the topic, “Reflections about the Document of Santo Domingo.” The sisters and their guests were gratified to hear his firsthand perspectives.

The following day, after Sisters Susana and Rose Dolores reported on their visit to Trujillo and investigation of opportunities for study there, a recommendation was made to the Council that a mission or house of studies be established in Trujillo in 1994.
When the Community met in Chulucanas in October 1993, they first spent time sharing what they had been doing in support of women. The following day, Eva Boyle of the Office of Justice and Peace in Piura gave a two-faceted presentation. First, she outlined the reality of women in the Department of Piura and then spoke of the need for all people to be liberated. She insisted that the dignity of woman does not depend on her social condition; that there is a need to work with all to overcome their inferiority complex; and that violence against women is serious, especially domestic violence. She explained that often women have little access to education; that they need to be taught their rights and how to defend them; and that reflection groups need to be formed to help change ideas.

In a second presentation, she outlined the Lines of Action in the Document of Santo Domingo, #104–108. She said there had been a call to Denounce, to Announce, to Foment, to Discern, to Push For, to Accompany, and to Create. These points related to many of the themes she had addressed in her earlier presentation on the reality of women in Peru. By taking the foregoing steps, she assured the sisters that they could help create new women with a good self-image, giving them the opportunity to know themselves and to socialize with other women.

The next day, the sisters met in local communities to plan how to implement the objective of working with women. Interestingly enough, some suggested that such a program first needed to begin in the local houses, with greater mutual respect, self-esteem, and sharing of gifts. Then the sisters would be better able to offer their services to groups according to their reality. But it was also agreed that they should take advantage of all the opportunities possible to raise the consciousness of women.

Recognizing the plight of some of the sisters’ own families, a plan for helping them in case of emergency was developed. First of all, the sister should ask her local community for money from the charity budget. If such help exceeded $150 during the year, the sister should seek the approval of the Director of Missions.

With regard to the celebration of receptions into the Community and novitiate, as well as renewal of vows, it was decided that these should be simple and normally celebrated within the community. For first profession and final vows, the celebration might be public, with a special Mass and reception for family and friends. In the case of the celebration of a Golden Jubilee, there might be a public Mass, with the sister inviting whomever she wished, but it was thought preferable to combine this festivity with the first or final vow celebrations. With regard to birthday celebrations, it was agreed that the desires of the person should be respected. Some mentioned that when persons receive a change of mission or when someone
first comes into a local community, perhaps the group should recognize the occasion in some special way.

There was a report given on the Quito Project of Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver. It was explained that this was not a Community project as such and that at present only one Sister of Charity, Sister Paula Rose Jauernig, was involved in working with it.

Following this, various announcements were made. Sister Mary Liguori Horvat had indicated that all requests for the missions should be made through her, using the forms sent. Donations received by the sisters should pass through the local treasurer, and the annual charity budget would not be affected by these donations; that is, it would not increase. Sister Clorinda Timana, as newly appointed Coordinator of the Vocation Promotion Program, mentioned the three weekend programs that had been given in Mancora, Los Organos, and El Alto; she further said there would be a weekend in November for young women of Talara. The Director of Juniors communicated that there would be a four-day meeting sometime between February 27 and March 7. It was also announced that ten sisters would be coming from the United States to visit the missions in Peru. They would be coming with Sisters Ann Barton and Elena Mack in July with the purpose of increasing their vision of the life and work in Latin America; therefore, they would be pilgrims to the various missions. As some of the Peruvian sisters had expressed interest in having a habit, there was an opportunity for all to express their opinions and share ideas on that subject.

On October 8–11, 1994, eighteen sisters and two postulants met in the parcela of CIPCA (country meeting place of the Jesuits just outside of Piura). On the first day, the sisters reflected and shared about their work with children and women, in accordance with the goals proposed two years earlier. This time the focus was on children. Luz Monzon, a professor, developed the theme “Children in a State of Abandonment.” Basing her ideas on her work in Hogar Santa Rosa, an orphanage in Piura, she spoke of family problems, adoption, education, and the rights of children. She also addressed the problem of self-esteem and the children’s need to develop critical thought processes. Following her presentation, the sisters divided into groups to consider possible strategies to work with abandoned children and the values one should try to develop in them. They questioned whether a sort of profile should be developed for teachers who work in homes for children and what objectives ought to be developed if the Community or persons in the Community were to work with abandoned children. At the end of their group work, they met together to share their thinking.

The following day was dedicated to reflecting on the Chapter Challenge to love the poor. The sisters used the same materials that had been developed for the spring regional meetings in the United States. Sisters
Susana Cordova, Liduvina Dominguez, and Laura Rumiche helped Sister Elena present the materials that she had translated.

On the eleventh, the sisters of the various houses shared the work that they were doing and their dreams for the future. Sister Regina Deitchman also explained a little more about the “Converging Paths” pilgrimage that the sisters had been invited to make to the United States in 1996. Some suggestions were offered as to how they could better prepare themselves, such as studying English and perhaps making some handiwork to be sold there. Sister Regina also informed the sisters about the course on “enculturation” (entering more deeply into a culture) in which she had participated at the meeting of Confer in Cajamarca. She asked the sisters to reflect on and then share their reflections on two questions: “What experience do we have of enculturation?” and “What anxieties do we have in the face of enculturation?”

Sister Clorinda Timana gave a report on activities for vocation promotion. She would soon be going to Huancabamba with the vocation team. Sister Joan Kilker (now working in Quito, Ecuador) mentioned that there were young women there interested in the Community. There was some talk of the possibility of Peruvian sisters visiting them in Quito, possibly of having a vocation workshop for them. But most of all, it was suggested that it was important that the young women first of all know the sisters living and working there. Before leaving, Sister Regina offered a subscription to the magazine Testimonio to the various houses as a Christmas gift.

From September 29 to October 2, 1995, the sisters from Peru and Ecuador once again met in Villa Nazaret in Chulucanas. This time there were sixteen professed, two novices, and one postulant present. On the morning of September 29, the sisters reflected on “The Christ of St. Vincent,” using a tape that Father Rosendo, Vincentian, had made. In the afternoon, Sister Donna Jean Henson informed the sisters of a meeting on enculturation that she had attended in Chiquita; some of the themes dealt specifically with culture and enculturation in religious life.

On the thirtieth, the sisters shared about their apostolic activities in the various areas. Sisters Trini Orozco, Maria Orozco, and Esther Vilela evaluated Juan Pablo II Institute in Trujillo and acquainted the sisters with other study possibilities in that city.

Given the decline in personnel in Peru, the subject arose of closing either the house in Talara or that in Negritos. Pros and cons were given with regard to both places, but no recommendation was made. There was also a discussion regarding higher education for the Peruvian sisters. Some thought that they should continue working in the apostolate during the year and study in the summers. Others suggested that this was not a viable
option for all. For one thing, Champagnat University was almost the only place where this was possible, and it did not offer studies in all areas. Further, it was indicated that superior education was not necessary for all, and sisters discerning future study should do so in the light of the works the Community is doing.

On October 1, there was a lively discussion on the time of temporary vows. There seemed to be a consensus that the sisters under temporary vows needed more help and direction in their spiritual and apostolic life and in regard to their studies. That afternoon, Sister Elena shared some of her thoughts about the U.S. “Converging Paths” pilgrimage in June. In preparation for this first all-Community meeting, bringing together sisters from both South and North America, many plans were made to integrate the Peruvian sisters both before and during the general meetings. Some expressed their fears and hopes about the forthcoming meeting, but that evening the Peruvian sisters made a video to send to the SCL cluster groups meeting throughout the States. Afterwards, the sisters watched a video of Sister Mary Julie Casey’s presentation on financial aspects related to the Community. They appreciated this effort of the Community Treasurer to keep them informed.

In 1996 sixteen professed sisters and a postulant arrived for the meeting in Chulucanas on September 27. The sisters living and working in Peru were delighted to welcome Sisters Joan Kilker and Lucille Harrington, now working in El Chaco, Ecuador. As had the regional meetings in the United States, this meeting concentrated on remembering the experiences of the general Community gathering, “Converging Paths,” and deepening understanding and love for Mother Xavier and St. Louise de Marillac.

The following day, after a prayer service using sayings of Vincent, Louise, and Xavier, the Trujillo sisters promised to prepare a booklet of such sayings for the sisters for Christmas. A series of presentations by members of the group followed. Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer entitled her summary of the importance of maintaining good house histories “This is Your Life”; she also encouraged the sisters to write or update their autobiographies. Someone addressed the use of material goods, making house inventories, and preparing house budgets. Sister Catherine Nichol invited the sisters to reconsider the Associate Program for here in Latin America. After a discussion of the options, the sisters agreed to begin an informal process and share the results at the next meeting. Sister Clorinda Timana once again reported on vocation matters, such as the meetings of the vocation committee and the ten-day experience to be had in November in Talara. She also suggested offering two retreats each year, the first more general and a later one for young women seriously discerning their vocation options.
On the twenty-ninth, the sisters took time to celebrate Sister Regina Deitchman's Golden Jubilee. Bishop John McNabb offered Mass at noon, and all enjoyed a festive dinner afterwards, giving Sister Regina a communal gift of a wall hanging that portrayed the arrival of the Sisters in Leavenworth; this had been made by the workshops for women in Chimbote sponsored by a Holy Cross Sister.

Earlier in the morning, Sister Donna Jean invited the sisters to a reflective reading of section five in the SCL Constitution, which speaks of "entering ever more deeply into the mystery of love . . . the mystery of Jesus," and thereby discovering better the meaning of their own lives and enabling them "to speak to all people of the meaning of theirs." Based on this reflection, Sister Donna Jean asked the sisters to share what they knew of the work being done by the sisters in another house. The members of that house then had time to add on or correct what had been said. A discussion ensued about summer activities. Sister Elena Mack spoke of the importance of being a community in mission and the need at times to renounce one's personal plans for the communal good. She stressed that the religious life is prophetic and that one needs to feel an interdependence among the members.

Sister Donna Jean then spoke about "Spiritual Companionship," especially for young sisters. She explained what it is and is not and spoke of three crisis areas that recently professed sisters often experience: newfound liberty, affectivity, and establishing oneself in the local community. She mentioned that it was preferable that the person companioning be older and more experienced. In the afternoon, Sister Laura Rumičhe continued this theme by sharing with the sisters the elements she felt had most helped her grow during her time of formation and as a young professed sister. To further the idea that formation is an ongoing process, the sisters were invited to share with one another something that had helped them grow during the previous year.

Sister Elena explained a new process that would be used in regard to the pre-vow evaluations with the hope that this would prove more helpful for the young sisters. All evaluation forms would be sent to the formation team, who would synthesize them and make united recommendations to the Council. The young sister would then be asked to respond in writing to the evaluations received, expressing what and how she needs to change and indicating how her local community and the formation committee can help her.

There was a brief discussion on the use of computers in Peru and the possibility of having them in the houses. There was also a preliminary discussion regarding the possibility of setting up a collaborative project with the SCL Health Services Corporation (SCL/HSC) in order to increase medical attention for the very poor in Piura. Sisters Catherine Nichol and
Julia Huiman assumed the responsibility for investigating and communicating with the persons involved. Finally, it was clarified that the monies earlier received from the German Bishops’ fund, Adveniat, was not limited to the use of the sisters in the house of studies in Trujillo but could be used for educational and spiritual needs of other young sisters.

Before returning to their houses, the sisters heard a series of “housekeeping” announcements and were asked to evaluate the meetings. The sisters affirmed Sister Mary Catherine Dougherty’s efforts in translating some of the articles from *Connecting*.

Sister Catia Pintossi, a Marist sister working in Chulucanas, acted as facilitator for the first part of the meeting on May 27, 1997, held at St. Ignatius High School in Piura. In this preparation for Chapter, eighteen sisters and one postulant took part in the process work on the ten Chapter Challenges. Later in the afternoon, the sisters engaged in a discernment process for leadership in the Community.

Monsignor Daniel Turley, OSA, also shared with the community members his reflections on “Rupturas y Desequilibrios en la Vida Religiosa” (Fractures and Lack of Balance in Religious Life). In his remarks, he challenged the sisters to go to the “new poor” and encouraged them to look at the many resources to be found in religious life. Most of all, he insisted that each become another Jesus.

On September 28, 1997, following an evening of prayer and relaxation together, the sisters were ready to begin their work the following morning. With Sister Susana Cordova acting as facilitator, the sisters met together in small groups to discuss various points related to SCL work with women, some of which centered on how the community living affects the apostolate and vice versa. Together the sisters affirmed that presence and sharing of experiences lead to self-knowledge. In addition, they highlighted the spiritual necessities of women, as well as the need for alphabetization programs, i.e., classes in reading and writing for unlettered adults. Moreover, there was general agreement that the sisters should be willing to express points of view in opposition to the political situations that surround us. In conclusion, after using the prayer for Chapter, Sister Susana distributed the essays that various sisters had written about women and women’s issues.

Sister Donna Jean informed the group that Sister Marie de Paul Combo, head of the Community Office for Peace and Justice, was inviting a sister in South America to serve as contact person for social justice issues. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty offered her services for one year.

Sisters Ruth Reischman, Julia Huiman, and Maria Orozco reported on their pastoral work in La Arena in Lower Piura, where they were working two days a week in Catequesis Familiar (a religious catechetical program
mandated by the Archdiocese). Each week they split up to go to four villages belonging to La Arena parish (Vichayal, Loma Negra, Santa Elena, and Casa Grande). In their report, the sisters suggested various points for evaluation and reprogramming of the work.

Sister Liduvina Dominguez spoke about the School for Women being conducted in three areas of Chalaco: Chaco, Silahua and Carrizal. She stressed that in general this program enables women to share their faith, joy, fears, and anxieties, and it helps them overcome their fears, set new goals, and increase their desire to be strong women for the society, the church, the family. It also helps each one recognize her role as an educator. Before finishing this part of her presentation, Sister Liduvina played a tape with the testimony of some of the women as to their experiences and their desire to continue learning and sharing.

Sister Liduvina also conveyed to the group the request of Bishop John McNabb that Confer or a religious Community assume the responsibility for the center for women in Chulucanas. Many comments and questions were forthcoming, but it was decided that this was a point that should be reconsidered at the next meeting, although there was general agreement to ask for funds from the charity budget to help with the funding.

Sister Mary Patricia Kielty raised the question of whether or not sisters take time off for rest and relaxation. She insisted it was a necessity for mental health and also suggested that the sisters ask for the convent in Negritos as a place for days off or vacations. But following a general discussion, it was decided not to pursue this suggestion.

Because of shortage of time, Sister Rose Dolores abbreviated her presentation on the various stages of life and development but gave the sisters handouts that she had prepared.

Sister Clorinda Timana presented her report on vocation promotion. She indicated there was a possibility of having a vacation school in Talara in March and that there would be a retreat in November in that city. She informed the group there were three possible candidates: from Piscan, San Pedro (Talara), and Piura. Sister Clorinda then raised the issue of moving the formation house closer to Piura, possibly to some place in Lower Piura. But the group insisted on the necessity of discernment as there had been much movement in the formation program since its initiation.

Since Sister Donna Jean was planning to return to the United States, Sister Regina was selected to take her place in the group that assists the Director of Missions. Then Sister Julia Huiman reported on the health project in connection with SCL Health Services Corporation; everyone was in favor of continuing it.

On March 15, 1998, just after finishing retreat in Piura, eleven professed sisters and one postulant met. Sister Ann Barton, who had come
from the United States for the retreat, facilitated the meeting. The first topic of discussion was the use of the money given by the Community to counteract the effects of the devastating “El Niño” that was now afflicting Peru. It was decided that the $2000 to be given to every house, except the house of formation at Lopez Albujar, could be spent for a variety of needs, such as medical and educational needs, parish pharmacies, burials, food, and the coordination of different groups. Local communities should decide on the best uses in their areas.

Since Sister Mary Patricia was isolated in Talara by the rains, Sister Maria Orozco presented four questions in regard to the Social Justice Network that called for a personal and communal response. Sister Marie de Paul Combo had sent a great deal of material related to pardoning of the external debt of third world nations. Sister Susana Cordova suggested that it be part of the agenda for the September meeting. Meanwhile, the houses might use it in prayer and for discussion. As Sister Julia Huiman was moving to Chalaco, Sister Maria Orozco also offered to replace her in working with Sister Catherine Nichol on the Health Project.

Sister Susana showed a video about the process of developing a communal project. Those present agreed to invite someone from Confer to provide more orientation at the following meeting.

Sister Elena, Director of Missions, expressed her desire to invite members of Confer from Piura and Chulucanas to use the Talara house during July while none of the sisters would be present. (Sisters Mary Patricia and Rose Dolores, the only two missioned there for this year, would both be in the United States).

It was suggested that the formation committee develop a discernment process to be used by each local community in electing its vocation promoter. In relation to this, some asked that a profile of said person be developed. When the committee meets, its members will then elect their coordinator.

In September 1998, when the Community once again gathered in Chulucanas, seventeen sisters and one postulant were present. Sister Ruth Reischman led the first reflection on the twenty-fifth. This centered on the feelings experienced and the dynamics of the Community Chapter in which nearly all had participated in June. Sister Ruth asked the sisters to reflect on three questions for a later sharing: “How do you feel regarding the challenges?” “What changes do you think you have to make?” and “Should we continue with the work that we already do?” Following a reflection on leadership and cooperation with it led by Sister Ruth, the sisters affirmed Sister Susana Cordova as the new Director of Novices and forwarded this recommendation to the Council.

Sister Rose Dolores led the discussion on the Chapter Challenge regarding the sisters’ work with women. She began by handing out large
paper petals on which she had written various ways in which Community members now work with women in their development. As various sisters read these descriptive works, they assembled them in a large flower on the floor. All were surprised at what was actually being done. After rereading the Chapter Challenge, Sister Rose Dolores asked the sisters to focus on ways they might become more critically aware of and responsive to women’s needs. Following are some of the suggestions that were forthcoming: watching television with a critical eye; speaking out about the problem of degradation of women; expressing one’s opinions to television channels, newspapers, and magazines. The sisters were invited to inform themselves through the use of media and the Internet and become a voice for women, for example by sending tapes of their testimonies to Congress people. Sisters might also investigate the extent of their collaboration with Eva Boyle (of the Office of Peace and Justice in Piura), Sister Marie de Paul (SCL Social Justice Coordinator in the States), Radio Cutivalu, and NGOs. They might also copy and share the Bishops’ letters in defense of life. In relation to Sister Catherine Nichol’s concern for abused women and children, it was suggested that working with DEMUNA (a rights group for children) would be more effective than working independently as SCLs.

There followed a discussion related to the future use of the Talara convent, especially since the formation program had been moved to Piura. Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani had earlier asked that this topic be considered in light of the high cost of maintenance of Santa Rosa and the lack of an organized ministry program there. However, what followed turned out to be more a sharing of memories and images. The sisters were asked to express in writing their reasons for staying in Talara or leaving it. Following further discussion, the decision was made that the Talara mission was still viable.

Having been elected coordinator of the vocation committee again in August, Sister Clorinda Timana announced that the materials prepared for the afternoons of reflection had been used, except in Chalaco where they had been modified to be used in the high schools of Tamboya, Naranjo, and Chalaco for both sexes. Lopez Albujar had combined forces with the sisters at Santa Rosa, Piura, for these reflection experiences. The sisters in Lopez Albujar had also begun to invite some young women for Holy Hour on Saturdays at the formation house. Sister Clorinda suggested that each local community discuss what could be programmed for the summer months. To motivate planning, the sisters shared about experiences that had attracted them to the community. In the end, a suggestion was made that it was time to develop another vocation brochure.

A few other points were reported on before concluding the meetings. Sister Maria Orozco summarized the work and focus of the Association of
Vincentian Volunteers. And the community retreat was confirmed for March 3–13, 1999, in Moche. Sister Elena distributed some materials for prayer and sharing regarding the use of material goods and requested that comments be returned to her later.

Finally, the sisters were informed that Dr. Ann Schumacher, SCL, had requested that family practice residents from the Saint Joseph Hospital (Denver) program be allowed to visit Peru for brief periods to expand their experience and enable them to give some free service to the needy. Sisters Mary Patricia Kielty, Catherine Nichol, Regina Deitchman, and Ruth Reischman volunteered to translate for them, although they stressed the importance of the doctors knowing some Spanish. The sisters requested that Sister Ann Schumacher send more information about plans for implementing such a program.

On September 24–26, 1999, the sisters met at El Albergue, a multiple-use center in La Union. In addition to the fifteen professed sisters, a postulant and a novice were present.

Vocation promotion was the first item on the agenda. Each house reported on its activities; all had had afternoons of reflection, Chalaco even going to Silahua and Choco, where they reported they had good participation. The sisters living in Lopez Albujar, together with Sister Catherine Nichol, had offered several afternoons of reflection in La Union in Lower Piura. The sisters from Talara informed the community that besides participating with others in the afternoons of reflection, there were nine young women visiting one or the other of the sisters. The vocation committee stated it was preparing a retreat at Kurt Beer Park in Piura for young women who seemed genuinely interested; Sister Elena Mack had promised to join them for some of the presentations.

As the subject of having an aspirancy program had come up in May due to dissatisfaction with the operation of the program in the Center of Formation in Chulucanas, this was the next topic of discussion. Working in small groups, the sisters developed pros and cons with regard to the Community initiating such a program in Peru. The consensus of the group was that the Spirit was leading the Community to begin this stage of formation. Although some suggestions were offered, it was decided that the formation committee and Sister Regina, as Director of Missions, should elaborate a plan and objectives that would then be presented to the group in December.

Sister Liduvina Dominguez presented information on “the world of youth today” that she had received in a series of meetings in Lima and that might prove helpful in a youth ministry. Sister Ruth Reischman then directed the sharing on ministries recently begun or that had some potential. Sister Laura Rumiche reported on a program for the rehabilitation of stroke
and paralysis patients; she said that a therapist and some of her students were willing to give volunteer time in the parish center.

With regard to the Saint Joseph Hospital Family Practice program, Dr. (Sister) Ann Schumacher would be coming in April to examine further possibilities for doctors from Saint Joseph Hospital offering services; she hoped to make this a year-round connection. Sister Mary Patricia Kielty reported favorably on the work already done in Talara by one of the doctors, although she recommended that future residents have a better grasp of Spanish. The next practitioner was scheduled to work in Piura with the help of Sister Ruth Reischman. A request was made for baby clothes for mothers who lack resources.

The four Peruvian sisters engaged in educational ministry gave an account of some of their experiences. The postulant, Isabel Sandoval, was continuing to teach in the elementary school where she was employed before entering. Sister Liduvina was named to teach religion in the high school in Choco, spending several days a month there. Sister Esther Vilela was teaching religion in Ignacio Merino, the largest public high school in Talara, and Sister Trinidad Orozco was working in the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education in Piura.

Sister Elena reported on her work with the formation of the laity, especially in services to the sick and aged poor in the parish. She also commented on the difficulties she had experienced in having a young girl who had been beaten placed in a court-designated home. In addition, she spoke of the parish pharmacy in Santa Rosa and the reflexology program with which Sister Laura Rumiche was working there.

The next morning, Sister Esther led the group in working as local communities on their community projects, discussing the dimensions of mission, charism, and ongoing formation.

That same day, Sister Violeta Chu, a Redemptorist sister from Chulucanas, gave a workshop on social communication. Against the backdrop of the world situation and the powers that dictate or control the economy, she urged the sisters to recognize that they often think in fragments, without valid points of reference. She told the group that as members of religious life, they must be “messengers who repair the walls and fix up the houses in ruin,” as had said the prophet Isaiah (Is. 25). To do this and to give a new image of women, she insisted on the need to be critically aware of what is going on in the world as well as in one’s own sphere of action. Thus deepened, religious can and should communicate authentic, broad, and humanizing convictions to those with whom they live and work.

Later in the day, there were various announcements. The Community retreat would be held at Moche from March 6 to 13, 2000, under the direction of Father Walter Crespo, Vincentian. In order to make better use
of the funds in the Salud y Esperanza Fund, a commission of four sisters was formed to set up criteria for applying for funds. Among possible uses suggested this day was a Rehabilitation Center in Santa Rosa parish, Piura, with Sister Laura acting as the coordinator. Sister Mary Patricia also argued for the use of these funds as a means of enabling both sisters and laity to participate in ongoing formation courses.

On September 26, the sisters heard several other reports. First of all, Sisters Julia Huiman and Laura gave a resume of a course they had taken in Lima called “Toward a Spirituality of Mercy in a World of AIDS.” Their presentation included not only a description of the disease and alarming statistics regarding its spread but also the need for counseling of families and patients and the need to train volunteers for working with AIDS patients.

Sister Mary Patricia Kielty, as Social Justice Representative, informed the group about the document, “Act of Peace,” concerning the mining project in Tambogrande. She said that the Peru Peace Network will be asked to monitor the situation by using the newspaper El Tiempo. Sister also referred to the globalization process.

Sister Julia invited the sisters to work with nutrition projects for women and children and to encourage women to breast-feed their children.

In September 2000, thirteen sisters and one novice met at Villa Alegria in Sullana. With Sister Maureen Coyle, OSF, acting as facilitator, the sisters entered into a “Dream Process for the Year 2010.” From this reflection and dialogue about future service and programs in Peru, two “dreams” emerged. The first concerned the development of a Faith and Joy (Fe y Alegria) School as an educational initiative for the poor. The second focused on a center for working with women, preparing the laity to evangelize in the schools, providing health services, including alternative medicine, work with AIDS education, reflexology, and other programs. Consideration was given as to why and how these dreams might become realities by 2010.

Sister Clorinda Timana provided a report on the first year of the aspirancy program of the Community. She reported that it had generally been a good experience for the two young women participating in it, Rosa Guevara and Cinthya Auza, enabling them to discover their gifts. She reported, however, that the girls’ fears had inhibited them from taking initiative. All of the sisters considered it important to continue with the aspirancy program. But Sister Julia recommended that there be another professed assigned to Chalaco for the apostolic work if the aspirancy program continued there.

Sisters Esther Vilela and Susana Cordova gave a generally positive report on their opportunity to participate in “Bonfire II” in the United States. This was part of the ongoing development of the 1998 Chapter Challenges.
1974 Community Meeting, Coripata, Bolivia

1983 Community Meeting, Piura, Peru
1995 Community Meeting, Chulucanas, Peru

2001 Community Meeting, Sullana, Peru
With regard to the Salud y Esperanza project, Sister Laura Rumiche reported that it had begun in January with physical therapy as a main goal. She noted that many persons came for consultation and for reflexology and that the space they occupy in the parish was already becoming too small. At the time, she had one helper who came six days a week and three others who assisted on Saturdays. From time to time, Sister Elena Mack also helped. Sister Laura included a financial report as part of her presentation.

Sister Ruth Reischman asked for another sister to help coordinate the program with the doctors arriving from Saint Joseph Hospital, Denver. Following discussion, three recommendations were made: (1) that the doctors come to help Peruvian doctors, but it was noted this would change the nature of the program originally envisioned; (2) that the doctors asking to come be required to take a proficiency test in Spanish; (3) and that an investigation be made of receiving doctors coming with “the Mercy Connection” since that is already an organized program.

When the topic of a summer school program arose, it was noted that there were now no sisters available because of summer work or summer studies. A suggestion was made that laity might help with the school and girls might also have a short live-in experience with some sisters. But in the end it was decided to table the program for the present.

Dr. Joanna Drzewieniecke, very active in Human Rights and extremely knowledgeable about the political reality in Peru, had been invited to share her expertise with the sisters. She worked with the “Coordinadora” of civil rights groups in Lima, taught political science, and was a frequent contributor to the Peru Peace Network. After giving a background on the current political milieu, she asked the sisters to discuss some questions in small groups. In general, these touched on the sisters’ motivations for being involved in human rights work, the problems, disadvantages, and difficulties they can expect to confront, the resources they have, and a way to establish priorities. Besides the information surfaced by the sisters, Dr. Joanna gave them valuable insights and recommended groups involved in Human Rights that could further help them in developing this dimension of their ministry.

Later in the day, Sister Susana Cordova informed the sisters about the decision to move the formation house from Lopez Albujar to La Arena. Initially, at least, the community will rent a house while the sisters get to know the people of the area and the people to know the community.

Sisters Susana and Julia Huiman confirmed the retreat dates in Jimbe for February 23–March 4. They said that Father John Laydon, OSA, would focus his conferences on “Jesus, the Center of our life, service, prayer, community and vowed commitment.” Since the majority of the SCLs had worked in the Chulucanas Diocese, Sister Regina suggested that the
Community honor Bishop John McNabb, inviting him for a Mass and dinner at Santa Rosa, Piura, before his return to the United States following his retirement.

On the morning of September 24, Jose Aguedo gave a presentation on the situation in Tambogrande, “Challenges of the Region of Piura: at what Cost Future Mining Development?” Eva Boyle, Jose’s wife and Director of Diaconia (the Archdiocesan Office of Justice and Peace), also reported on the People’s Millennium Forum that she had attended in May at the United Nations as a representative of the Charity Federation. There she had the privilege and responsibility of presenting the human rights situation in Peru at the General Assembly.

The sisters decided to have a Mass celebrated for the Franciscan sisters at Maria Reina in Lima, longtime friends and “hospitable” benefactors of the Sisters of Charity and of other religious who did not have their own house in Lima. After more than thirty-five years of service at Maria Reina, the Community was withdrawing and the sisters were returning to the United States. Sister Julia was asked to make a thank-you card for them; Sister Elena would take it when she went to the national meeting of religious superiors in November.

The sisters were reminded of the two presentations Sister Irene Skeehan would give in October: one for Confer on October 7 on “The Woman Religious in the New Millennium” and reflections on “The Use of the Sabbath” on October 14–15 for the SCLs at Santa Rosa, Piura.

Sister Mary Patricia Kielty said that she felt it was time to close the Well Baby and Pregnant Mothers Program that had been operating in San Pedro, Talara, for so many years. She felt there were now other free programs to replace it and suggested that the reflexology program could be begun there with the Health Promoters. (Actually the closure did not happen because the laywomen who worked in this program insisted it would be a very bad time to withdraw, given the economic situation.)

Sister Clorinda apprised the group of the work of the vocation committee, saying the themes for the afternoons of reflection had been prepared. She indicated that the committee had received a budget of $750 for materials, travel, retreats, and summer vacation school costs. Various new formats, including a video, had been suggested. And Sister Clorinda would coordinate a discernment retreat in Sullana for up to 15–20 young women, various sisters having been asked to present talks. As far as the vocation work of the year, Chalaco reported having visited Choco, Tamboya, and Piscan; moreover, the sisters had participated with seminarians and aspirants in the parish in Chalaco, Naranjo, and Silahua. Someone from the committee showed tee shirts designed as a way of presenting the Community.
The sisters from the formation house mentioned that several young women had expressed interest in the SCL Community. The sisters had, therefore, invited them to participate in other on-going experiences, in addition to the afternoons of reflection.

As the sisters set the dates for the 2001 September meeting at Villa Alegría in Sullana, they decided to extend the SCL "Red Carpet" Jubilee Celebration of the U.S. to Peru by inviting former novices and professeds to participate in a special liturgy and lunch on the twenty-fourth.

In September 2001, the report of the formation team took first place on the agenda when the sisters again met at Villa Alegría in Sullana. In response to the question, "What achievements have you seen in the formation stages?" many positive points were made. Among these were the development and integration of a plan for the different stages and facets of formation; greater participation and responsibility by the Peruvian sisters and the collaboration and regularity of meetings of the formation team. Most felt that the aspirancy had been a good step forward, as also the retreats and workshops planned for young women by the vocation committee. The group applauded the greater interest in vocation promotion in the local houses and the participation of the sisters in ongoing formation as evidenced by the use of the Emmaus Program of Confer and the Communal Project each year. It was felt, too, that there had been growth in reconciliation of differences among the sisters. The formation team recommended that each month each community work on some dimension of the Sister of Charity profile that had been developed collaboratively earlier.

The sisters living in La Arena reported favorably on their first year of experience there and expressed the desire to renew the contract for the house.

Sister Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer proposed that the sisters discern what the Providence of God wanted them to do with Sister Rachel Sarosi’s house in Talara Alta. This Vincentian Sister of Charity of Pittsburgh had died in February, and her Community had given the house and its furnishings to the SCL Community. Some fifteen suggestions were forthcoming, and the sisters were asked to decide which possibilities seemed most beneficial to the Community and why. Further, they were asked to consider how and when these suggestions could be realized. It was decided to use the house during the ensuing year for a program in reflexology, with Sister Maria Orozco maintaining the house and the program. There would be further evaluation in September 2002. Meanwhile, the furniture and household goods from the house would be distributed as needed among the four Community houses. Remaining items might be raffled for funds for the Vincentian group or be kept locked in a room to be used as needed.
Members of the various houses formed a committee for removing the objects their local communities could use.

Sister Laura Rumiche reported that she had received a grant the previous year from Salud y Esperanza for a monthly salary of $150 and that it had been renewed this year. She further told the group that the Archbishop of Piura had donated eleven square meters of parish land for the construction of a health/charity center. Sister Laura has asked Sister Ann Barton to seek funds for the construction. Noting that such a center could be considered part of the “dream” of last year’s meeting, she invited other sisters to consider working there. Meanwhile, she was depositing the money contributed for reflexology services in the bank. When the construction was finished, this money would be used for furnishing the center.

When Sister Esther Vilela raised the question of summer programs, the sisters indicated that they had not yet discussed the matter in their houses and that this topic should be postponed until November, when the sisters would be meeting again. In connection with this prospective meeting, the sisters were reminded to keep the goal of reconciliation in their prayers.

With regard to the use of the Emmaus Program of Confer, the sisters indicated that it had been enriching, and they challenged one another to continue using the leaflets for reflection; more importantly, they urged one another to put the suggestions into practice. Sister Elena Mack distributed written policies for the insurance on community cars, calling attention to some of the more important points.

The following morning, September 22, Rosa Guevara and Cinthya Auza, postulants, and Jesus Ramos and Milagros Castillo, aspirants, joined the Community for the presentation of Father Andres Gallegos, diocesan priest and professor in the Confer program in Lima as well as at the Pontifical University there. Since his overall theme was “Sin and Reconciliation,” he began with a reference to structural sin and morality. He then went on to develop the Biblical idea of sin and presented an anthropological reflection on Israel during its time of exile. He showed how sin and pardon are processes and used examples from both the Old Testament and New Testament to demonstrate. Then he invited the sisters to share in smaller groups before coming back for a general session.

In the afternoon, Father Gallegos continued with the theme of “refounding” in religious communities. Again the sisters were asked to discuss in groups and come back for a plenary session. Father made the point that faithfulness in religious life begins with one’s vocation and one’s response to challenges. He invited the sisters to discover where and how God is revealing Himself now. He questioned what new challenges, demands, or realities are appearing today that call for a creative fidelity on the part of
persons and the congregation. Later, he gave time for personal reflection
and prayer on the question, “What is the role of Jesus in me?”

Shana Van Kirk, the Vincentian Volunteer from Denver who was living
with the sisters in Talara, had arrived about 9:00, but after a brief
introduction, she spent the morning enjoying the nature around Villa Alegria
until noon. Then she joined the sisters for the Golden Anniversary Mass
and dinner celebration for Sister Ruth Reischman.

On September 24, Sister Elena, Director of Missions, reminded the
sisters of the discernment booklet prepared by the Council and asked that
those terminating their mission assignment utilize it. She asked these sisters
to set up times with her in November to share their discernment.

Various items came up with regard to donations received. Sister Elena
indicated that she had divided among the four houses some money recently
donated. Sister Rose Dolores informed the sisters of the generous gift of
Darren Henson, nephew of Sister Donna Jean, who had been ordained
during the summer. Criteria were developed and a committee set up to
administer Darren’s gift and other forthcoming donations. (Sisters Mary
Patricia Kielty, Ruth Reischman, and Laura Rumiche composed the
committee). In general, it was decided that the funds should be used to
educate or promote people, that the major part should be used for
educational purposes and that such education should have some kind of
“multiplication effect.” Monies might also be used for educational material
and pastoral work. Persons applying should submit a general report to
the committee.

Sister Maria Orozco also related that she had received $200 while in
the United States to be used for reflexology. And Sister Ruth informed the
group that the $4000 received for the sale of the machinery from the bakery
was still in the bank. It is a designated fund to be used for a project with
women. Sister Regina Deitchman mentioned that the community of Chalaco
had used $300 for projects in Chalaco and commented that Chalaco is
blessed with various benefactors.

It was announced that the Community retreat for 2002 would be in
Jimbe on March 3–10. The director would be Father Guido Zegarra, the
theme: Re-foundation. The sisters asked that a new site be found for 2003
when Father Andres Gallegos agreed to give the March 2–9 retreat.

Sister Elena informed the group that she was working with Mr. Luis
Tavara, a lawyer who works with various Communities in Confer of Lima.
They hope to draw up legal papers so that the SCL Community can be
recognized as a legal entity in Peru (Persona Juridica), a step necessary
before it can officially own property or sign official contracts, etc., in the
Community’s name. Interestingly enough, this lawyer is using the SCL
Community Constitution so that the language will correspond. When the
process is finished here, the legal papers will, of course, have to be approved by the Community Council in the United States.

In discussing the work of the vocation committee, the sisters from Chalaco indicated that only the first theme developed by the committee had been used, but they had used it in a variety of places: Choco, Tamboyama, Rinconada, and Chalaco. They also mentioned that this vocation work was causing some problems with the coordinator of the youth ministry for the parish. The other houses reported on the afternoons of reflection they had sponsored during the year. Sisters Maria Orozco and Susana Cordova also related that they and the two postulants, Cinthya Auza and Rosa Guevara, had participated in a Vocation Fair in Sullana. It was suggested that such fairs be planned for Chulucanas and Piura. There was some discussion of the vocation activities taking place in the United States and also of the work of the Good Counsel Sisters in Trujillo.

The sisters shared their noon meal with Nelyda Clavijo and Mabel Cordova, two former members of the Community. This was an extension of "Red Carpet Days" in the United States.

On November 3–4, Sister Dora Vasquez, a psychologist and member of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart, gave an excellent short course on "Human Relations and Reconciliation and Communication" for all the sisters gathered at Villa Alegria in Sullana. Her conferences, the shared prayers, and time for conversations were a part of a yearlong effort to build some bridges and effect reconciliation within the Community. The last gathering of the year on December 31 was directed to the same objective.

In 2002 sixteen sisters and one postulant returned to Villa Nazaret in Chulucanas on September 20–23. On the first day, Father Carlos Rodriguez Arana, SJ, spoke to the sisters on personal and communal discernment, its goal and the preparation and dispositions necessary.

The following day, Sister Ivonne Nasai, School Sister of Notre Dame from Malingas, shared various topics on building community. First, she invited the sisters to share in pairs on these questions: What makes community difficult for me? How can I change this difficulty into an opportunity? and What do I like about community? Later, she led the group in a reading of John 4:1–15, the story of the Samaritan woman, and asked the sisters to reflect on their experience of God, their growing freedom and openness to the Spirit, and their solidarity with excluded peoples. Following a time for personal reflection, Sister Ivonne asked the sisters to reflect on how the experience of God is actually cultivated in local community houses and the places where the sisters work or whether we consider this a private experience. Then she asked what impedes serious, renewed commitments to justice, truth, and peace. She further questioned
how to handle differences regarding places of origin, customs, age, language, and theology. She asked that responses be given creatively in socio-dramas.

Before noon, she challenged the sisters with two other questions for personal reflection. In the afternoon, she continued this process with four other questions for personal reflection, all directed at helping the sisters create greater unity, heal wounds and divisions, and promote hope and enthusiasm among themselves and in their consecrated life together. After asking the sisters to share in small groups, Sister Ivonne asked them to recognize and name the values most important for community. She concluded with a creative prayer service in which each sister made a commitment to work on something during the year.

In discussing vocation promotion the next day, it was noted that although all the houses had had afternoons of reflection, only Talara had a young woman who seemed serious about wanting to enter the Community. Various ideas were proposed as to how to improve contacts with possible candidates. Then the group turned to the article of Sister Catherine Bertrand, SSND, which had been used in the SCL regional meetings in the United States and which Sister Elena Mack had translated. However, the sisters soon discovered that there was too much material to be covered at this time (It had constituted the work of the entire day in the United States), and they determined it could better be explored at the local level. The representatives from each house on the vocation committee were asked to bring the results of the local discussions to their next meeting.

As the Community neared the end of three years of experience with the aspirancy program in Chalaco, the sisters in that community were asked for their assessment. They mentioned that the girls had helped in the apostolate and shared experiences in the community, including retreat days, but that they had not participated in house meetings or the “review of life” reflections.

The committee presented an outline of a calendar for 2003 that they hoped to produce as a way of sharing the SCL charism. The hope was to distribute it to high schools, parishes, parish zones, the Catholic Office of Education, and the Technical school. They also spoke of sending some to the United States for sale. But at one of their next meetings, the committee decided that creating a Community Liturgical Calendar would prove more effective.

Sisters Concepcion Medina of the Congregation for Catholic Teachers and Dora Rodriguez of the Carmelites of Vedruna arrived to impart some of their experiences in working in and directing Faith and Joy schools in Piura and Sullana, respectively. They explained that there is always a three-way contract signed by the people, the state, and the congregation and that although the program is sponsored by the Jesuits, each school is
autonomous and able to instill its particular charism. Following their presentation, there was an opportunity for questions both to them and to the sisters who had visited two possible sites for Faith and Joy schools in Santa Maria de la Nieva and Nuevo Cajamarca. After some discussion, it was agreed that other areas needed to be investigated before the Community could make a commitment to assume direction of a particular Faith and Joy school.

Regarding the invitation to work with the Vincentian Fathers’ program in Chiclayo, it was decided that the Community does not now have the personnel and that the women presently operating the program can continue it. Moreover, it was felt that it is not in line with the sisters’ vision of a center for women.

Sister Maria Orozco gave the report for the formation committee. She reported on the courses and year’s experience in the aspirancy program, noting that possibly one of the three girls might opt for religious life. Sister Clorinda Timana would continue to be in touch with her until she entered the next stage of formation. The objectives of the postulancy and temporary vows were summarized. Sister Maria Orozco mentioned that individual sisters were responsible for their continuing formation, noting the opportunities offered by personal and communal projects, the annual retreat, participating in the Emmaus series of reflections, attending regional meetings, listening to various speakers, and entering into dialogue. She also noted the possibilities for growth in pursuing one’s own tasks and ministries through reading and attending meetings and workshops.

Following this, Sister Maria tried to encourage the “young sisters” to respond positively to the invitation to the “Alpha and Omega” gatherings scheduled by the Community for December 28–30 in Leavenworth. She explained that the meeting was motivated by the desire of the younger sisters in the United States to know one another better and to come to know the Peruvian sisters better. She mentioned that it would be from this group that community leadership would emerge in the future. Sisters Trini, Maria, Clorinda, Esther, and Julia indicated their intention of going, and Sister Maria offered to look for a “travel package” to obtain better fares.

Since, for various reasons, a reflexology program had never been set up in the house left to the SCLs by the Vincentian Sisters of Pittsburg after Sister Rachel Sarosi’s death, other possibilities were considered. In the end, it was decided that it should be sold at the first opportunity after receiving property titles and other documents. Meanwhile, the garden and plants should continue to be watered; it was also recommended that a water meter be installed to lower costs.

Regarding the fund set up for ongoing formation of women, Sister Laura Rumiche reported that only $329.69 had been spent during the
previous year, leaving $670.31 for further courses. Sisters Elena, Maria, Trini, and Mary Patricia all spoke of various courses to which they had sent women representatives and how pleased they were with how these women had imparted their course work to others. Sister Elena also mentioned that Sister Sue Miller, Community Director, had informed her that the Bishop of Wyoming had donated money, and she had designated it for use in Peru. Sister Elena suggested dividing this money among the four houses. Projects should be written up, and what was not used during the year would be divided again for the community’s use with the poor.

The group decided that again there could be no summer school programs this year since at least five or six sisters would be attending summer school classes themselves.

Sister Elena reminded the sisters of the schedule for the official canonical visitation of Sister Sue Miller and noted that she would be accompanied by Sisters Ann Barton and Katherine Franchett. She also referred to the coming visit of Sister Therese Bangert, the newly named head of the SCL Social Justice Office in the United States. In relation to this, following nominations and a lengthy discussion, it was decided to ask Sister Therese to furnish a list of qualities or qualifications for the person to be contact person for the social justice committee here in Peru. Until a new person is chosen, Sister Esther Vilela agreed to continue in this role.

Sister Elena reported that the legal documents for the Community (Persona Juridica) were still in process. As Director of Missions, she would serve as the legal representative, and the Community would then be inscribed in the Civil Registry. After this was completed, the process of making wills and testaments would begin.

Sister Elena also asked what the group thought of sponsoring a weekend in April or May on “Conflicts in Community Life.” A group of psychologists from Lima had offered to provide this service to local communities. Sister Elena suggested that the SCLs might invite other Communities to take advantage of the opportunity, spending the weekend in Villa Nazaret in Chulucanas.

Finally, Sister Elena mentioned that the formation committee had recommended to the Council that Sister Liduvina Dominguez study for formation work in the yearlong course of Confer.

On September 26–28, 2003, fifteen sisters and a novice again gathered in Chulucanas. The first morning was dedicated to two Chapter preparation circles in which the sisters reflected on the materials and questions forwarded by the Chapter Planning Committee.

In the afternoon, Sister Elena conducted a reflection on personal health care and the use of health insurance. Following this, she presented the
possibility of the sisters enrolling in the government health insurance program, "Es Salud." After the sisters had time for questions and discussion, Sister Elena asked them to inform her by the end of September if they wished to enroll in this program.

The formation committee invited the sisters to share their thoughts on qualities basic to being a Sister of Charity. The following areas were identified: a capacity for living in community, an option for serving the poor, availability and charity, and a spirit of obedience. They also stated that having Jesus as center and maintaining a profound experience with God was essential; they believed that this would make possible an option for prophetic mission. In response to the question, "How does my local community help me to live this grace and process?" they responded that the testimony and sharing among the sisters did this.

Before concluding this session, Sister Clorinda indicated that the formation committee was making a recommendation to the Council to continue the formation house in La Arena for two more years, following which there would be another evaluation.

The vocation committee indicated that the local communities were visiting high schools and showing a vocation video on life choices before dialoging with the students. Someone suggested to them that they ask Father Walter Crespo for Vincentian vocation material for young men. The committee also reported that liturgical calendars would be ready by mid-December.

Sister Laura Rumiche reported that sixteen grant proposals had been made for the new St. Vincent Center. Recent visitors from the SCL Health Services Corporation had indicated that they were donating part of their vacation monies to this project. Happily, Sister Laura noted, the cornerstone would be blessed on November 11.

In the investigation of possible future missions, Sister Elena and one or more sisters were planning a visit to Ayacucho.

On the second day of the meeting, Sister Margarita Escudero, Handmaid of the Sacred Heart, directed a theological reflection day. As always, her reflections on "The Spirituality of Religious Life in These Times" proved thought-provoking and challenging.

On the last morning of meetings, the Community assembled to consider various shorter topics. A proposal to continue the topic of Conflict Management was modified. Sister Liduvina recommended that Jose Luis Cervera, psychologist, be invited to help the sisters work on their own self-knowledge, especially their fears. She said the course she had had from him could be key to resolving conflicts in community. She and Sister Clorinda were asked to contact him as to time and place.
Sister Elena invited each person to reflect on a possible new mission effort in Cangallo and/or Huarmaca. She indicated that, depending on the sisters’ pre-discernments, if it were the desire of the group, the consent of the Community Director and Council would be sought.

Sister Elena also told the sisters about a request from Shana Van Kirk, former Vincentian Volunteer in Talara. She would like to set up a group in the United States to seek ongoing funding for the library in Talara Alta. The sisters noted two important things: that the ownership and responsibility for the property be defined and that whatever monies come be banked in a special account.

Before ending, times for the communal retreat in Jimbe and the Community meetings for 2004 were established. Sister Elena met with sisters who had not previously made wills to indicate the process to be used. Finally, the sisters made out their evaluations of the present meeting.

As can be seen, through the years these regular meetings of the Latin American Community have been a font of information, formation, and communication. They have also served to foster community spirit and participation among the sisters through their serious and not-so-serious times together.

Chapter XVIII Notes

1 Sister Mary Serena Sheehy, “Recommendations from the First General Workshop of the SCLs in Latin America,” January 3-10, 1972, A/SCL.
4 “Latin American Mission Recommendations and Community Council Response,” October 11, 1985, Office of Community Director, A/SCL.
6 Sister Mary Kevin Hollow to Sister Joan Kilker and Sisters, May 9, 1986, A/SCL.
7 Document of Santo Domingo: the document published following the meeting of Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in October 1992.
8 The Salud y Esperanza (Health and Hope) Fund is provided by the SCL Health Services Corporation for health and health education needs.
9 For some years, the Mercy Federation had sponsored a program to send doctors and medical personnel into the Diocese of Chulucanas where their sisters worked. They also worked with hospitals in Piura.
Although it was not until the Eleventh General Chapter of the Sisters of Charity met in 1980 that permission was given to establish a novitiate program in Peru, there is ample evidence that it was in the mind of the Community from even before the foundation in Talara in 1963. In one of his first letters to Mother Leo Frances Ryan, Father Thomas Reilly mentions that part of our future work in Talara would be awakening native religious vocations. He promised that should the Community establish a mission there, it would be blessed with numerous vocations. In a letter to Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston and founder of the Society of St. James Apostle, Mother Leo Frances, writing of the Community's plans, added, “We are looking forward to the time when we will be able to establish a novitiate there.”

Less than a year after the Sisters of Charity arrived in Peru, Sister Blanche Marie Remington wrote her father, “We have certainly seen some good prospects of late for our novitiate (if and when it gets started). Pray for this intention.” In November 1964, she again told him of a young woman who had spoken to her of her desire to be a sister.

According to Community Council minutes of February 12, 1965, Mother Leo Frances informed the Councilors that two girls who had been assisting the sisters in Talara had expressed their desire to be Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. She said that Father David Becherer was assisting them to further their education in Piura after having finished high school with the Dominican Sisters at Immaculata High School in Talara.

The following month, when the Council was discussing building a convent in Talara, the conversation included whether or not this should be large enough to house a future novitiate as well. Some noted that perhaps this was not the best place for formation as there was no possibility of providing for advanced education since there was no Catholic college or university in the city of Talara. In a further discussion in May, the subject of advanced education again arose, and one of the Council members suggested that perhaps it would be better to establish a formation program in Lima for that reason. Nevertheless, when the decision to build a convent in Talara was made, it was decided it should be large enough to house ten sisters or professed sisters and persons in formation if and when a novitiate should be opened.

The sisters working in the missions continued to sense an interest in the Community on the part of Peruvians and Bolivians. For example, when Sister Marcianna Trujillo returned from a catechetical meeting in Lima in November 1968, she mentioned as a possible candidate a young Peruvian woman who was presently studying at Saint Mary College in Leavenworth, Kansas. And as early as August 1967, Monsignor Robert Walton had written
Mother Leo Frances about a young woman interested in the religious life and had queried whether and how the Community was considering replacing its North American missionaries.

There continued to be considerable discussion among the sisters in Latin America concerning the possibility of admitting native candidates into our Community. In February 1974, when the Latin American SCLs met in Bolivia, they began a three-day discernment process, concluding with a formal petition to the Council to open a Latin American novitiate. Sister Charlotte Swain questioned whether said formation should be directed toward being a branch of the SCL Community or a foundation of a native Community. Whatever the outcome should be, it was generally agreed that future candidates should not be sent to the United States for a novitiate program, and the possibility of joining with other Communities in an inter-congregational program was deemed advisable.

In considering candidates, it was noted that given the social conditions present in Peru, the Community should be ready to accept illegitimate and uneducated young women. Again in 1976, following further discernment, the sisters in Latin America again petitioned the Community to open a novitiate. In the meantime, they planned to use the proposed “associate program” as a means of getting to know better young women over eighteen years of age who were interested in the Community.

The “associate program” adopted in Peru in 1976 served a dual purpose: to provide local groups with an opportunity of sharing in pre-novitiate training of prospective SCLs; and to provide the Community with a good screening process before accepting young women as postulants. It also provided the applicant with time to discern whether or not the Spirit was prompting her to join the SCLs. But the sisters were in agreement that such “pre-formation” should not last more than two years for those manifesting interest in the religious life.

From the very beginning, the sisters had indirectly fostered vocations by including young women and girls in their apostolic activities, sometimes inviting them to visit the local community, sponsoring afternoons of reflection, and visiting the Center of Formation in Canchaque. Thus, Nelyda Clavijo visited the Talara community in December 1977, after first

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* The term “candidate,” as used here and elsewhere in this book, refers to a young woman who is in the process of seriously discerning her vocation to the SCL Community. Prior to this, she has become acquainted with the sisters through live-in community and prayer experiences and sometimes participation in ministry.

** As noted in Chapter XVIII, this “associate program” is not to be confused with the formal SCL Associate Program developed in the United States in the late 1980s.
having met our sisters from Chalaco when they visited that Center in the Prelature of Chulucanas. The following day, she began visiting some of the barrios with Sisters Janet Cashman, Elena Mack, and Blanche Marie Remington. Within a month, she asked for and received her application to be an “associate.” In July she spent a weekend with the Talara sisters, also assisting in the afternoon of reflection that Sunday.

In August 1978, the Talara sisters hosted a special afternoon of reflection whose theme concentrated on the nature of a religious vocation and religious life. Of the thirty-five young women who attended, nine accepted the invitation to a “live-in” at the convent the following weekend. Two weeks later, five other young women came for the same experience. From time to time, Nelyda and another associate, Cristina Pingo of Talara, were invited to dinner and to share in the sisters’ prayers. In October, thirty-two other young women attended a similar afternoon of reflection. Right after Christmas, Sister Elena accompanied Cristina to Chalaco so that she might become acquainted with the sisters there and their work in the sierra. On the Feast of the Epiphany, Nelyda, Cristina, and a young woman from Negritos, Maximina Gomez, came for a weekend of reflection with the sisters in Talara.

When Sisters Agnes Klein and Elena Mack moved into the Seminary in Piura in March 1979, they also soon found themselves involved indirectly in vocation promotion activities. In addition to training catechists, they directed days of reflection. In mid-July, Cristina Pingo and Nelyda Clavijo helped Sister Elena with a workshop in Los Ejidos on the use of the Bible.

In May 1980, Sisters Agnes and Elena prepared an SCL Vocation Poster for the Archdiocese, and Sister Elena arranged several vocation displays and gave talks at the St. Joseph Cooperative workshop.

With the anticipation that the 1980 Chapter would approve setting up a formation program in Peru, the Council asked Sister Elena to take some courses in spirituality. She first went to Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and then to Lima for a religious formation workshop during the first fifteen days of July 1980; the following January, she took an eighty-hour program on “Spirituality of Religious Life” at the major seminary in Lima.

During the General Chapter of the Community in June 1980, permission was given for the establishment of a Latin American novitiate in Peru. This was a monumental decision, for as Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan said to Sister Regina Deitchman that day, “We are now an international community!” On receiving news of the Chapter’s action, the sisters in Latin America were more than a little enthused, and vocational activity increased. Almost immediately they began to formulate plans and
prepare to receive Peruvian candidates. One of the things they did was to devise a screening program for future postulants.

As indicated earlier, the sisters planned to use the "associate program" as an opportunity to know young women better and do some screening before they were actually admitted to the Community. However, once a young woman indicated her serious desire to enter the SCL Community, she was to make a formal application to the Community Director, such letter of application being accompanied by copies of medical and psychological examinations. Most often sisters who knew the young woman also wrote letters on her behalf. Very often, but not always, the young woman was asked to participate in a three-month program in the Center of Formation in Canchaque, later in Chulucanas. During this time, she lived in a structured program with other young women, learning how to live together in community and become more involved in the liturgy and prayer experiences. This also provided time for her to separate herself from the close family ties of her home as she discerned which state of life she was called to. In 2000 the Community substituted an Aspirancy Program of seven to nine months for the program in the Center of Formation in Chulucanas.

After an associate was informed of her acceptance by the Community Director, a date was set for her entry into the Community, at which time she began her year as a postulant. This year was adapted according to the needs of the postulant, but normally she was involved in some classes given by the Director of Formation or Director of Postulants and also participated in the life and apostolic work of the sisters. Once the Community became involved with the inter-congregational program of Confer (Conference of Religious) in Piura, the postulant(s) took more classes, both of a religious and academic nature, in that program. Most often the postulant also had an experience of two or three months living and working in one of the other missions of the Community, especially in Talara and Chalaco.

Toward the end of her postulancy, the young woman was invited to apply for the novitiate if she and her director felt she was ready for that step. The time of her postulancy might be extended up to another year.

During the novitiate, the novice continued with courses in Confer and with the Director of Novices. These were more directed to her life within the SCL Community: Vows, Community History, Charism, and the like. One of the two years of novitiate was specified as a Canonical Year; during this time, certain requisites determined by Rome were fulfilled, and the young woman, now called Sister, spent more time in prayer and reflective reading and weekly retreat days. The other novitiate year again gave the young sister an opportunity to experience religious life in one of the SCL
mission houses, normally in Talara or Chalaco. Toward the end of the second year, the young sister, with the recommendation of her Director of Novices and one or more of the sisters with whom she had been living, might apply to make her first vows.

Following first vows, the young professed sister took on full-time ministry in one of the missions of the Community. Toward the end of her first year as a professed sister, she could apply to renew her temporary vows for a period of one or two years.

As the Confer program developed, courses were also offered for young professed sisters, called junior sisters, together with or separate from those in initial formation as postulants or novices. The Community also encouraged the young sister to take special courses offered by the national Confer in Lima during the summer months. Normally, she did not begin professional studies until three years after profession and work in the missions. Even then, most often higher studies were pursued in the summer months on the coast.

The young sister might apply to profess perpetual vows at any time between six and nine years after her first profession. During the year prior to perpetual profession, or certainly during a more intense period during the summer beforehand, the young sister prepared in a special way with courses, readings, or a more prolonged retreat.

Given the formal approval to establish a novitiate in Peru, the sisters increased their contacts with young women and took further steps to know better some of the young women with whom they had been in contact in recent years.

In July 1980, the sisters welcomed four young women from the Center of Formation in Canchaque for a visit at the seminary house in Piura. At the end of September 1980, Susana Cordova, a young woman from Santo Domingo who had expressed interest in the Community and had been talking with Sister Elena, traveled to Talara to spend a week with the sisters, getting to know them and their work there. On October 13, Sister Catherine Nichol passed through Piura with Maximina Gomez of Negritos, who was going to participate in a weeklong experience in community living and apostolic work with the sisters in Chalaco. When the vocation committee met a week later to plan further vocation promotion activities, Maximina returned to the coast with Sister Catherine. On the latter’s return to Chalaco, she took along another señorita for an experience with the Chalaco community. Early in November, Sister Elena went to Tambogrande to visit the parents of yet another prospective candidate.

In October, Sister Joan Kilker gave a slide presentation on vocations at a prayer group in Talara and announced that the Sisters of Charity now had permission to admit Peruvian candidates. The following month, helped
by Sisters Joan and Josephine Bustos, Sister Janet Cashman gave an afternoon of reflection for seventeen girls in Talara. During the first days of December, Sister Janet visited the Center of Formation for the Diocese of Chulucanas in Canchaque in order to acquaint the participants in the program about the SCL Community.

On October 20, before journeying on to Lima for a workshop for religious formation personnel, Sister Janet arrived in Piura for the first meeting of the recently established SCL vocation committee of Latin America. At that meeting, the sisters of the committee named Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan “honorary member” and asked that she contribute “whatever creative ideas [occurred to her] concerning vocation promotion and vocation work.” Besides Sisters Janet and Elena, other members of the committee were Sisters Catherine Nichol and Charlotte Swain (long distance from Bolivia).

The committee members recommended several projects for the consideration of the various houses during the next few months. Among the suggestions included were these: (1) having a vocation theme for community prayers during the month and making Founders’ Day a special vocation day in each house; (2) trying to reach young unmarried women through an afternoon of reflection on the various states of life (As a result of said afternoon of reflection, those who seemed most interested should be invited for a longer time of reflection on religious life); (3) visiting groups interested in the religious life, such as those at the Center of Formation in Canchaque; (4) designing a simple, colorful poster to be put in the high schools where SCLs work; (5) visiting other high schools and offering to help with the “Religious Week program” or offering to give vocation talks during religion classes; (6) continuing to work with the youth and young adults in the groups already established in the parishes; (7) using the sisters’ contacts with parents and adults to educate and help them understand better the nature of a religious vocation, encouraging them to let their children make a free vocational choice.

On November 10, 1980, another step forward was taken when the Community received formal authorization from the Archbishop of Piura and Tumbes to establish a novitiate program in his diocese. The document stipulated that said program should be in accord with the statutes of the Congregation and Canon Law.

In December, the vocation committee met again to discuss the “associate program” and to divide up their work further. On the fourteenth, the sisters held an afternoon of reflection for fifteen young women from the parish, and again on the twenty-first the sisters sponsored an afternoon of reflection for the catechists that included a Eucharistic liturgy and a time of prayer and reflection, as well as some socialization.
Following the formal authorization, the sisters began to look to the future in earnest, not only by way of encouraging prospective candidates, but also in making plans for the construction of a convent that could be used for such a program. The Archbishop gave them permission to use part of the grounds allotted to Cristo Rey parish in Pachitea, Piura. Thus, on December 27, Sister Agnes Klein, who had been asked by the Community Council to take charge of the construction and legal work connected with it, and some of the sisters talked with Ernesto Benavides, an architect, about plans for a new formation house. On January 2, Sister Agnes signed the contract.

Three days later, work began on clearing the site, and on January 14, 1981, Father Pablo Alvarado blessed it. Sisters Sally Watson, Regina Deitchman, and Rose Celine Siebers were present and joined Sister Agnes in depositing various articles in the foundation. Among these were a picture of Mother Xavier and a prayer to her, a picture of Saint Vincent, and a small statue of the Blessed Virgin, as well as a prayer to St. Joseph. Also placed there were notes from the Eleventh Community Chapter, a picture of the current Community officers, the SCL Mission Statement, a picture of the sisters then missioned in Latin America, and the front page of the local newspaper.

On January 25, 1981, Sister Agnes wrote Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director, about some of the problems she was encountering. For one, the money the Community had sent for this project was held up in Lima in the banking system. Also, since the property on which the convent was being constructed was in the title of the archdiocese, she was having difficulty getting a legal paper showing that the building itself belonged to the Community for as long as they chose to use it. Part of the difficulty lay in the fact that a new archbishop had not yet been named.12

In March, the sisters in Piura held an “extraordinary meeting” to inform all the sisters about the formation program that had been developed by Sister Elena Mack and approved by Sister Mary Kevin.

Though still living in the seminary, Sisters Agnes and Elena went shopping for the new house and also looked for an electrician and bricklayer, the latter to construct a wall around the new edifice. On the eighteenth, they finally received a document from Father Cesar Camacho, representative of the Archdiocese, and the Bishop of Chiclayo, who was also Apostolic Administrator of Piura. This paper gave them possession of the house until such time as they should decide to move. It further stipulated that if and when the Community left this locale, it and all its installations would pass to the Archdiocese. Sister Agnes signed this agreement for the Community.

Meanwhile, the sisters continued meeting with the associates, Cristina Pingo and Maximina “Maxi” Gomez, who were really anxious to begin
their formation process. They helped “Maxi,” Cristina, and Susana Cordova go to Lima for a catechetical course. Sister Elena herself also went there at the end of January for a course on Religious Life.

In March, they welcomed Susana and two other young women for a visit, and the following month Sister Janet Cashman brought two young women from Lima to visit the SCL Community. Later, Susana brought her sister Margarita to visit, and she herself and some other associates continued to visit.

As construction moved ahead, the sisters met to plan for the move to Pachitea and for a small housewarming. On May 9, they received the good news that Adveniat, a funding program of the German Bishops, would provide the necessary funds to help finish the construction of the new convent and furnish it. On the twenty-ninth, they began moving some things from the seminary to the new house in Pachitea. Then they spent the next two days packing, re-varnishing desks and chairs, hanging curtains, and doing other necessary things preparatory to the move. Not surprisingly, they went to their beds exhausted each night.

The house was officially opened on June 1, 1981, and Sister Elena began her first term as Director of Novices. That same day, the sisters completed the moving process by early afternoon, although there were still painters working and Gabriel, the watchman/handyman, was busy with various tasks. Still, the sisters set about relocating the furniture that had been delivered. The next day, they continued with this and also gave the cement floors a “treatment” with petroleum. Some welders used “ironed out” barrels to provide more privacy and security to the garage door and garden area, making a sort of grillwork with the metal. On June 3, the sisters became aware of an even greater inconvenience than the workers who were still under foot. Because they lived so close to the central market, they soon recognized that they would have to do battle with many, many flies.

In June, Sister Elena submitted a general program and objectives for the postulancy and novitiate in Peru. It naturally expected that young women applying would be Catholics and participants in their parishes, hopefully as catechists, youth leaders, or members of a liturgy group. Good physical and moral health, a high school education, and freedom from financial or moral commitments were also deemed requisites. In her description, she mentioned that applicants would be bringing their own customs and traditions to the religious life and that they should be encouraged to be proud of and retain their national identity. As to the formation itself, she suggested that the postulants attend classes in catechetics during the summers and such other workshops as might be helpful in their health education and human promotion. She further recommended that, when possible, the postulant should continue with the
work or study that she already was doing before joining the sisters or that she should work in some dimension of the apostolate. Apparently, at this time she gave some thought to the postulants living in other local communities, with herself as Director visiting from time to time. She further indicated that home visits should be planned and coordinated at the local level and according to individual circumstances.13

On July 7, 1981, following her visit to South America, Sister Rosalie Mahoney, Councilor and liason for South American missions, wrote a detailed description of the new house in Pachitea for Sister Mary Kevin and the Council. She described it as being very nice and detailed the simplicity of the furnishings and curtains, but noted that the wood used for doors, closets, and cabinets was light weight and that the house itself did not seem as durable as the convent in Talara. As everyone else who lived in or visited this formation house, she commented favorably on the interior open courtyard, as well as noting the garden space around the convent.14 While she had been visiting the sisters, she also interviewed a candidate, Nelyda Clavijo.

On September 17, the carpenters finally brought the shelves for the pantry, the kitchen cupboards, and a telephone table. Two days later, Susana Cordova came to help the sisters varnish the new cupboards.

The Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul in 1981 was very special for the Sisters of Charity, for on that day their first Peruvian postulant, Nelyda Clavijo, entered the Community, even though Sister Mary Kevin’s official letter of acceptance did not arrive until the following day. In a letter a few days later, Sister Elena described how Sisters Agnes, Sally Watson, and she had their last prayers in English that morning, and then awaited Nelyda’s coming about noon. Father Pat Cannon of Nelyda’s parish in Castilla drove her to the convent, and some friends accompanied her to the door. The sisters had a little welcoming service for Nelyda, which included a short reading from Saint Vincent, patron saint of the Sisters of Charity, and they presented her with a rose, symbolic of the sisters’ acceptance and affection for her. Sister Agnes had also prepared a special blessing prayer for the meal. Together they then enjoyed a Peruvian dinner that included rice with duck, a Peruvian vegetable salad, and a dessert called torta helada. Later in the afternoon, all went to the Old Peoples’ Home, taking cupcakes and punch to the residents there. In the evening recreation, the community played the card game UNO.15

The following day, the sisters from Talara brought six young women for an afternoon of reflection. Shortly thereafter, Susana Cordova again visited the formation house.

As always, people were very generous with the sisters. Some of their friends brought plants and trees for the garden. The sisters looked forward
to enjoying their own oranges and dates at a later date. One family even indicated that they wanted to help the sisters each month with a gift of money or food.

On November 10, the Talara sisters arrived to help celebrate Founders’ Day. While there, Sister Janet Cashman informed everyone that she had received her mission to the formation house Piura for the following year. Beginning about this time, the sisters had the privilege of having Mass in the house almost weekly, thanks to Father Pablo Alvarado.

The vocation committee met regularly, and the sisters in all three houses—Chalaco, Talara, and the formation house—continued to offer opportunities to young women to know the SCLs better. Two young women from Lima visited Talara in April 1981 at the suggestion of friends of the sisters in the capital. Others from areas where the sisters worked participated in monthly afternoons of reflection with a variety of themes, including some on human development and reproduction. At times, Sister Blanche Marie Remington or others offered an entire day of prayer and reflection. The sisters also maintained contact with the various groups of young women that entered the Center of Formation in Canchaque each year.

The sisters tried to introduce the young women with whom they dealt to other SCLs and their ministries. For instance, in mid-December 1981, Sister Elena took Susana Cordova to Talara for a brief visit, and on the third of January, Sister Joan Kilker took six young women to the convent in Pachitea for an afternoon of reflection. On the more ordinary level, Sisters Joan and Josephine Bustos invited some of the young women to help clean house and wash windows and to accompany them in their outings to Punta Sal.

On January 8, 1982, the second postulant, Susana Cordova, entered the Community, having frequently visited with the Pachitea community the previous year. When she arrived, bringing along some products from her farm in the mountainous area of Santo Domingo, to her surprise she found no one at home except Sister Sally Watson. The others, not expecting her to arrive until later, had gone to a movie.

With the arrival of Sister Janet Cashman on the twelfth, there were now six in the house of formation, four professed sisters—Sisters Elena, Sally, Janet, and Agnes—and the two postulants—Nelyda and Susana.

Each of the postulants had flexible and individualized formation programs because of their work and study programs.16 During the summer months, Susana prepared for and took her tests to enter the fifth year of secondary studies. Nelyda returned from her catechetical studies in Lima just in time to join Susana and Sister Sally in a weeklong “Introduction to the Bible” class being given by a priest in the parish. The following three weeks, the two postulants took classes in the use of their new sewing
machine, even learning to do embroidery and other fancy stitches. In March Susana helped Sister Elena give an afternoon of reflection for twenty young women, something they repeated the following month. Since Nelyda would be in Chalaco for an apostolic experience while Sister Elena was in the United States, Sisters Regina Deitchman and Rose Celine Siebers took her with them on their return to Chalaco in April.

In April, twenty other young women joined them for an afternoon of reflection, in which Sister Janet presented slides and gave a talk on the female body and sexuality. The following month, two señoritas spent the weekend, and once again twenty young women joined in the afternoon of reflection. Sister Agnes presented slides to assist them in their study of Scripture. In April, Sister Elena went to the Center of Formation in Canchaque to promote religious vocations. Perhaps as a result of this, she was invited to join in a videotaping of a panel treating of vocations; this was to be shown on television just a short time later.

At the end of June, the number attending the afternoon of reflection was disappointingly few, perhaps much to Susana’s relief, as she was in charge of the presentation.

Having returned from Chalaco and her home visit, Nelyda attended a catechetical meeting in Los Algarrobos and then went to a weeklong workshop in Talara. After returning to the house of formation, she began more classes in sewing. In August 1982, Nelyda, who was still a postulant, visited Talara to help with an evening of reflection. The following day, she and Sister Joan Kilker went to Negritos for a workshop on the religious life.

From time to time, the sisters at Santa Rosa Convent in Talara also invited some young women to dinner. It was during one such time that Trini Orozco made the decision to apply. She was at the convent when Sister Josephine Bustos related how one of the SCLs had told her quite a few years before, “It is now or never!” As a result, Trini decided to apply for entrance into the Community. The sisters directed her to go to the Center of Formation in Canchaque at the end of that month. Trini did not actually enter the SCL Community for almost three years although she lived at the formation house during the summers of 1983 and 1984 while going to ESER (the archdiocesan religious education school in Piura for teachers and catechists). She formally entered the postulancy on February 2, 1985.

While in the United States, Sister Elena met with Sister Mary Kevin Hollow about a number of points of interest. Among other things, they discussed trying to clarify what would be the best manner of providing for health care for the Peruvian sisters. Apparently, no decision was reached, although later it was decided that they should be entered in the national health security program. They also reflected on long-range financing for ongoing formation for the sisters in South America, at least while they
were under temporary vows. Reflecting on the growing sense of terrorist influence in Peru, they mentioned the need to plan for any novices or postulants that might be faced with an abrupt departure of the North American citizens.\(^{17}\)

In June, Sister Elena took a course in "Foundations of Spiritual Counseling" at Creighton University in Omaha. On her return, all rejoiced in installing the statue of Mater Admirabilis, patron of novices, in their chapel. Despite its size and weight, Sister Elena had carefully packed and carried it with her for the new house.

On September 19, the sisters once again hosted an afternoon of reflection in the house; this time Nelyda helped Sister Elena present the theme of "the Broken Christ." The following day, Susana accompanied Sister Elena and the children of the catechetics program on a picnic outing. Nelyda likewise assisted in the picnic of Los Algarrobos.

Later in the month, Sister Janet Cashman gave a presentation on drugs for the young women who came for an afternoon of reflection.

In October, Sister Agnes and Susana gave the theme on Christian commitment to the monthly gathering of señoritas. Two days later, Sister Rose Celine Siebers arrived with four señoritas from the Chalaco area for an overnight visit.

Sister Elena and the two postulants left for Lima on January 8, 1983, for summer studies and retreat. While there, Sister Elena participated in the summer program for religious at the major seminary, taking eighty hours of course work. At different times during that year, she also took a course in "Prayer for Religious Today" and a workshop on using and teaching the Bible.

As early as the previous November, the sisters had begun to experience the preliminary effects of the coming disastrous "El Niño." The rains in the north continued, making life more and more difficult (See section on Pachitea in Chapter X and sections on "El Niño" in Chapter XX).

In early January 1983, Sisters Janet and Donna Jean Henson had three young women from Talara living with them. Cecilia (Ceci) Garcia, Trinidad (Trini) Orozco, and Juana Rojas boarded at the formation house while taking a catechetical course at the seminary. This time was meant to provide them with more knowledge of community living also. When Sister Elena and the two postulants returned, the "community" was expanded to seven or eight participants. That was just as well since there would be sufficient cleaning for all to do throughout these months because of the rains.

By the time Sisters Mary Kevin Hollow, Community Director, and Mary Julie Casey, Community Treasurer, arrived at the end of March, there was already much water surrounding the convent in Cristo Rey, Pachitea. Despite the rains and flooding, on the Feast of the Annunciation 1983,
Mary Kevin received Nelyda Clavijo and Susana Cordova as novices in a simple ceremony at 8:00 a.m. She presented these first novices in Peru with personal copies of the Community Constitution and conferred on them the name of Sister. She also placed around their necks silver crosses encrusted with the figure of Saint Vincent and two orphans.

The new sisters and other community members had breakfast afterwards and took time to open some gifts. Because there had been a letup in the rains, the sisters decided to prepare and enjoy the noon meal there in the convent. But because of the flooding, the Mass and reception were moved to the chapel of Our Lady of Peace School about two blocks away on higher ground. The 5:00 Mass was celebrated there by Father Pablo Alvarado. Susana’s sister and various members of Nelyda’s family were present for the occasion as were Sisters Mary Kevin and Mary Julie from the United States, Sisters Regina Deitchman and Catherine Nichol from Chalaco, and members of the formation house community.

By April 13, the flooding was so bad in Pachitea that it was deemed necessary to leave the formation house. At first the sisters stayed for about ten days with the Franciscan sisters at Our Lady of Peace School. During this time, it was decided it would be better to move the novitiate to Talara temporarily. The sisters there willingly accepted Sisters Elena, Susana, and Nelyda into their home and even helped teach some classes in the modified schedule of the novices. Sister Josephine Bustos taught handicrafts; Sister Donna Jean Henson, something on the Bible; Sister Joan Kilker, health and sexuality. Even the pastor, Father Jack Price, lent his expertise, teaching classes on the Puebla documents. Sister Elena continued teaching the vows, the SCL Constitution, and other classes.

The novices also entered into the not-so-normal activities of going to the muddy and slippery market and to the shore in San Pedro to buy food. They also soon learned the process of placing barrels beneath the drain spouts and collecting water in whatever way possible since there was a real scarcity of that vital substance. At one point, Sisters Joan and Elena braved an additional trip to Piura by “buffalo” (an army transport plane) to obtain some books that were needed for the novices since the Talara convent library had a scant supply of Spanish books.

By the end of July, the novitiate community could return to the convent in Pachitea. Thanks to the aid of seminarian friends and other volunteers, including Clorinda Timana, a young woman interested in the Community, the necessary cleaning, painting, and moving of furniture earlier evacuated was accomplished. They patched what they could (doors, for example) and replaced the necessary things that had been lost. After weeks of arduous labor, the sisters gratefully accepted Sister Catherine Nichol’s invitation to an outing to Paita on July 28.
In true Peruvian spirit, the sisters celebrated the joys of life despite the many shortages and frustrations of daily living. They regularly had evening recreation and took advantage of outings to Paita, Yacila, Catacaos, and Tambogrande as opportunities presented themselves. They also visited sisters of other Communities living and working in Piura. From time to time, they even enjoyed a movie.

In the midst of all this, formation classes, spiritual exercises, and days of retreat continued. Sister Elena joined with formation personnel of other Communities in monthly meetings to share ideas, concerns, plans, and such. She also went to Lima for national meetings of formation personnel.

Members of the formation community continued to welcome possible candidates for afternoons of reflection and short live-in experiences. At times, Sister Elena offered three-day discernment retreats for young women interested in the Community. She also interviewed a constant flow of interested young women, one of whom, Flor Figueroa, became the third person accepted for the Community. Flor had often visited the formation house and had even gone to Talara to get to know the sisters and their work there. Since she had quit her job before entering in March 1984, she was able to begin working with Sister Agnes Klein in catechetics in Los Algarroboes almost immediately.

During the early months of 1984, Sister Elena, Nelyda, and Susana again went to Lima for courses in Scripture at the Summer Institute on Religious Life and to make their annual eight-day retreat. They took courses in the Wisdom literature and the Acts of the Apostles. They returned to Piura in time to make preparations for their year of mission experience as novices, Sister Nelyda in Talara and Sister Susana in Chalaco. During this year, Sister Elena visited each of them several times, discussing their work and community experiences.

While the novices were gone, Sister Elena took advantage of the opportunity for a three-week workshop in October given for formation personnel sponsored by CLAR (Conference of Latin American Religious). As opportunities presented themselves, she continued taking other classes and workshops.

The novices returned to the formation house in February 1985 after having made an eight-day retreat in Lima in early January. Arriving in Piura, they began their proximate preparation for first vows the following month; various sisters helped by giving presentations.

On February 2, 1985, Trinidad Orozco was officially accepted as a postulant although she had been living with the sisters in Pachitea during January while attending courses in ESER. She had been a friend of the Talara sisters for several years and had helped both in the convent and in their apostolic work.
On March 25, Sisters Nelyda and Susana made first profession of vows as Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. It was another historic first for the Community. Thanks to the openhearted Franciscan Sisters at Our Lady of Peace School, the sisters, their friends, and families were again warmly welcomed in their chapel. Father Pablo Alvarado was the principal celebrant, but Bishop John McNabb of Chulucanas, some of the priests of the Society of St. James Apostle, and several Peruvian priests concelebrated. Sister Mary Kevin Hollow accepted the vows. Quite fittingly, Sister Rosalie Mahoney, one of the founding missionaries and now a Community Councilor, was witness of this historic occasion. Following the Mass, there was a simple reception, and later the Sisters of Charity served a typical Peruvian dinner at the convent in Pachitea for the two newly professed sisters and their thirty invited guests.

After dialogue with Sister Mary Kevin and the postulant, Flor Figueroa, Sister Elena asked that Flor continue as a postulant for a second year. One advantage of this would be that she would have a companion during her canonical year as a novice. During this year of postulancy, Flor and Trini Orozco studied typing, music, psychology, logic, and the sacraments; they also worked in catechetics in the parish. During the second half of the year, each had a mission experience, Trini going to Chalaco, Flor, to Talara.

On February 9, 1986, Flor and Trini were officially received as novices. Sisters Rosalie Mahoney and Rosalie Curtin, Councilors, were present for the simple reception ceremony in the convent chapel at 8:00 a.m. Members of both novices' families had come for the celebration. The two candidates, Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco, came for dinner and later helped prepare the chapel in Our Lady of Peace School for the Mass to be celebrated at 5:00 p.m.

Shortly after their entrance into the novitiate, both Sisters Flor and Trini began visiting some of the elderly and shut-ins of the Pachitea and Cruz del Norte parishes. Each took Communion to about four persons weekly. They also began a study of the different liturgical celebrations in the various churches of the city.

In Bolivia, too, several young women had expressed interest in the Community. As early as September 1984, a young woman studying in La Paz had visited with Sister Joan Kilker about the religious life. In November of the following year, Sisters Joan and Elena had visited Coripata to interview some girls. In a letter to Sister Lucille Harrington at that time, Sister Mary Kevin commented that it seemed that some adaptation of the present program would have to take place if Bolivian candidates were accepted. She suggested that a sort of "associate" relationship with two of the señoritas in Coripata should be the initial step.
Accordingly, three girls—Carmen Quisbert, Elsa Guadama, and Martha Landiveri—applied to be associates in Coripata. In February, after Sister Lucille had finished a short formation course in La Paz, the three girls came for a two-day retreat, staying overnight at the convent. Again in August 1986, Sister Joan talked with two girls about the associate program while she and Sister Mary Joan Eble were visiting in Coripata.

However, when Sister Mary Kevin responded to the recommendations made by the sisters in South American regarding Bolivian candidates, the tone was negative. She said the Council had, first of all, noted there had been no actual applications. More importantly, they were concerned that there was no one in Bolivia prepared to be Director of Postulants and that such training and orientation to the SCL formation program would take time. Moreover, with the few sisters in Coripata (only two), it would be difficult to establish a formation house there, and there was no other house in which persons in formation could receive a mission experience.  

Meanwhile, the sisters in Talara continued offering monthly afternoons of reflection and inviting interested young women to share dinner with them from time to time. On February 14, Clorinda Timana visited the sisters in Talara before entering the Community the following month.

On March 19, 1986, three postulants were welcomed into the formation community. Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco had been frequent visitors during the last year or so and had helped the sisters in various ways, and Rosa Cordova had worked with the sisters there. Besides entering into some of the apostolic activities in Cristo Rey and the Los Algarrobos parish and having classes in the convent, these new postulants generally entered into the life of the community. They took part in Bible and Liturgy classes in the parish with the novices and participated in some prayer groups.

When Sister Elena left for her home visit and thirty-day retreat in the United States, Sister Janet Cashman began working more closely with the novices, and Sister Agnes Klein, with the postulants. Sister Regina Deitchman, who had recently been appointed Director of Postulants, arrived in Talara in the middle of August, content with the course she had just taken in Lima on “Spiritual Accompanying.” At the end of the month, she went to Piscan Grande to visit some young women who were interested in the Community and their families. The following week, she returned to Talara with three señoritas, Renee Zeta and Luciola (Lucy) Huaman from Piscan Grande and Morfilia (Morfi) Liviapoma from Pachitea, for their interviews with Sister Joan Kiker, Director of Missions. While there, they also visited Dr. Luis More for their medical examinations. Following this, they spent several days in the novitiate community in Pachitea, accompanying the postulants and novices in their work throughout the
week. While in Piura, they had interviews with a psychologist, preliminary to their being accepted.

At the end of September, two other girls from Chulucanas and Piura journeyed to Talara for their medical examinations, and in December Maria Orozco accompanied Esther Vilela when she went to see Dr. Luis More. In October, a lay missionary, whom Sister Joan had met earlier in Lima, also visited Talara in order to know the SCL Community.

Earlier, Sisters Joan, Elena, and Regina met as a novitiate committee. At that time, they discussed the advantage of separating the postulants and novices. Shortly thereafter, Sister Joan informed the other two that Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias had offered the Community the use of an empty convent in Negritos as a house of formation. The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition had lived there while serving in the hospital and parish in Negritos. However, when these sisters left to establish a center house in Lima, the convent had been left vacant. During the summer months, Sisters Regina and Donna Jean Henson worked hard to have the convent ready to receive postulants in March. Sister Rose Celine Siebers also soon joined the local community there. By the Feast of St. Louise de Marillac in March 1987, all was ready, and Renee, Lucy, Morfi, and Esther entered the postulancy in the newly established initial formation house in Negritos. Sister Regina was the Director of Postulants, and Sisters Donna Jean and Rose Celine Siebers were also members of this new house of formation.

The first formal meeting of the newly formed formation team met in an all-day session on December 30, 1986. Thereafter, Sisters Joan, Regina, and Elena met monthly. Topics of ongoing discussion included the interviewing of candidates, future studies, meetings for junior sisters and novitiate members, vocation promotion, ongoing formation, plans for reception into the novitiate and professions. The formation team also agreed to work with the recently organized inter-congregational group on formation. Together they would work to plan joint retreats and classes for those in formation in the various Communities of the area. Further, the SCLs approved continuing experiences in which young women interested in the religious life might live and work with a local community for a time. They also determined to enroll the Peruvian members of the Community in the Peruvian Social Security Program.

Flor Figueroa made first vows on February 15, 1987, in the Franciscan Chapel at Saint Anthony School. Family and friends were invited to the reception there after the ceremony.

Because of renewed flooding in Pachitea, it became apparent that the convent there would have to be abandoned. After investigating various possibilities, the sisters accepted the offer of Lucio Nevado to rent his house in the Urbanization Santa Ana as a temporary formation house.21
On March 14, Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco were received as novices. However, because of the problems with the flooding and the move to Santa Ana, the reception was delayed until March 25, at which time the formation community was installed in their temporary housing in Santa Ana.

Despite the somewhat crowded conditions, the novitiate community was able to adapt to its new surroundings. Sisters Clorinda and Maria continued to visit their shut-ins in Pachitea and Cruz del Norte and attend some of the liturgical activities there. Sister Elena, of course, continued her weekly interviews and classes with the novices. These included instructions on the Constitution of the Community, its history, the vows, and Christology. Others, including laity, helped by giving courses in the "National Reality," manual arts, religious life, and the documents of Puebla. Sister Janet continued her classes in sexuality.

Sisters Janet and Elena visited interested young women living in some of the small towns near Sullana, a city about halfway between Piura and Talara. Following these contacts, the community managed to make room for some overnight guests.

From time to time, a Jesuit or diocesan priest offered Mass in the house, but for the most part the sisters sought out liturgies in their old parishes, in St. Anthony's or in nearby churches.

Sister Elena continued to meet with formation personnel of the other religious Communities in and around Piura and joined Sisters Regina and Joan for monthly meetings of the formation team. Among other things, they decided that the postulants and novices should continue visiting their families for Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, days of great significance for the Peruvian people. They also agreed that they should go home for vacations after Christmas.

After much investigation, on April 22, 1987, Sisters Joan, Regina, Agnes, and Mary Joan Eble located a structure they all liked and thought had real possibilities as a new formation house. However, since it would need considerable work and additional construction, it was not until August that the community could relocate again, this time to the Urbanization Santa Rosa, Piura.

For the first time since the formation program had been established, Sister Agnes would not be a part of it. Having finished supervising the remodeling in Santa Rosa and procuring all the necessary papers, she prepared to go to Bolivia for a new assignment. Sister Janet had even earlier assumed new work in Talara. This left Sister Elena as the only veteran member of the formation community. Fortunately for her, Sister Mildred Irwin arrived as a new missionary and member of the Santa Rosa community. By the following December, Sister Catherine Nichol also joined them.
Meanwhile, Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias arrived on the afternoon of September 12 to bless the new house. When, in response to a query of his, the sisters indicated they had no sponsors for the occasion, he declared St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary to be their _padrinos_ (sponsors). He then proceeded to bless every room in the house, concluding with a brief homily in which he declared that this should be a house of prayer and hospitality. The following morning, the archbishop returned to celebrate the first Mass in the new convent. It was called “Casa Maria,” but this name never “took,” and it continues to be called Santa Rosa Convent to this day.

In June 1987, Sister Joan Kilker, who recently had added the position of Director of Juniors to her work as Director of Missions, met in Santo Domingo with the three young professed sisters (Nelyda Clavijo, Susana Cordova, and Flor Figueroa); the three novices (Trini Orozco, Maria Orozco, and Clorinda Timana); and Sister Elena Mack. At this meeting, Sister Margarita Escudero, Handmaid of the Sacred Heart, gave an excellent workshop on the Eucharist. In August, Sisters Elena, Clorinda, and Maria also took part in a workshop in discernment given by the same sister in the _parcela_ (rustic meeting area owned by the Jesuits). In October, Sister Joan accompanied the junior sisters in Piura for an inter-congregational meeting of young professed sisters. Later, on October 20, Sisters Joan and Regina accompanied the postulants to Piura for a three-day workshop with members of initial formation from other Communities of the area.

Once installed in their new quarters, Sisters Elena, Mildred, and the novices continued to welcome both Sisters of Charity passing through and young women interested in the Community. From time to time, other sisters lent their talents in instructing the new SCLs. Thus, on September 8, Sisters Ruth Barron and Josephine Bustos arrived for a week's stay. Sister Ruth taught the novices classes in the life and spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul, and Sister Josephine instructed them in various handiwork techniques. She also was an immense help in the kitchen and actually stayed on another week to help orient the new cook, Agustina Berru.

The formation team had earlier discussed the possibility of a vocation brochure. Since they had also proposed that a new vocation promotion committee be formed with representatives from each house, they asked that group to see this project through. Early in October 1987 Sisters Janet, Donna Jean, Joan, and Susana met as representatives of the various houses. They set about the task of creating a brochure and proposing other activities for vocation promotion in the various areas.

On November 11, Trini Orozco made first vows at Santa Rosa Parish in Piura. Family and friends were invited to a reception in the parish common room.
During the following years, there would be various changes in the formation program, both as to the persons in charge and the places involved. In March 1988, Esther Vilela entered her canonical year as a novice in Piura. Her three companions—Renee, Lucy, and Morfi—had earlier left the formation program in Negritos. Sister Elena was Sister Esther’s Director of Novices during this year. In April 1988 Sister Donna Jean entered the nine-month Confer program on Formation Direction in Lima; then she spent three months in the United States with her family and the Community. At the end of March 1989, she took over the role of Director of Novices. Shortly thereafter, Sister Elena left for a sabbatical program. That same year in May, Mabel Cordova of Frias entered the postulancy in Negritos under the direction of Sister Regina Deitchman.

In June, Sister Joan took five girls to Piura for a retreat. Later, there were workshops in Myers-Briggs and Discernment sponsored by Confer of Piura-Chulucanas for persons in early stages of formation. In October, Mabel went to Talara for a month’s mission experience. While there, she accompanied Sisters Joan, Regina, and Maria in a weeklong course in New Testament in Piura. In May of the following year, Mabel again returned to Talara for a six-month experience as a second year postulant. During this time, she and Sister Clorinda went to Paita for a workshop in the Enneagram given by a Sister of Notre Dame.

After her canonical year, Sister Esther went to Chalaco for her year of mission experience as a novice. Following this, she made first vows in Santa Rosa in March 1990; she then returned to Chalaco.

On April 24, 1990, Mabel Cordova and Laura Rumiche officially entered their canonical year of the novitiate program in Negritos with Sister Donna Jean as their director. Sister Laura had made her postulancy the previous year in Piura under the direction of Sister Regina. The following year, Sister Mabel went to live and work in Santa Julia, Piura; Sister Laura had her year of novitiate experience in Talara. Both made their first vows in Piura in 1992. Thereafter, Sister Laura began her professed ministry in Chalaco while Sister Mabel stayed on in Santa Julia.

In August 1988, Sister Joan had asked Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani, Community Director, about the possibility of full-time study for some of the young sisters after at least a one-year mission experience. Apparently, Sister Mary Kathleen had indicated earlier that the sisters should work in an apostolate during the year and study during the summers. However, Sister Joan presented some of the difficulties that the Community in Peru had encountered in finding summer programs in institutes and universities, and apparently her arguments were heard. A year or so later, Sister Nelyda Clavijo began full-time study as a bilingual secretary, and Sister Trini Orozco was permitted to begin professional pedagogical studies in 1991.
Sister Mary Kevin Hollow presenting the SCL Constitution to Susana Cordova as she begins her novitiate

Sister Joan Kilker presenting the SCL Constitution to Esther Vilela as she begins her novitiate

Sister Elena Mack directing an activity at a Vocations Retreat
Sister Mary Kevin Hollow receives vows of the first Peruvian Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Sisters Nelyda Clavijo and Susana Cordova. Sister Elena Mack, Formation Director, is in the background.

Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani receives the vows of Sisters Julia Huiman and Liduvina Dominguez. Sister Donna Jean Henson, Novitiate Director, is on the right.

Sister Susana Cordova, first Peruvian Director of Formation
But not all was the joy of new entries. On September 21, 1988, our first professed Peruvian to leave the Community, Flor Figueroa, returned to her home in Castilla. Flor was accompanied there by Sister Joan.

Nevertheless, other young women continued to manifest interest in the Community. Sometimes, as in the case of Julia Huiman, they had to build up sufficient courage to present themselves at the convent. Julia relates how she came down from Talara Alta twice, went to the church, and walked past or around the convent before she actually approached the door and asked to talk with someone about her vocation. Fortunately, Sister Agnes Klein was the one who met her at the door and gave her a warm welcome before calling Sister Clorinda to talk with her.

As a part of the ongoing formation, Sister Joan accompanied Sisters Trini, Clorinda, and Maria to Lima for an inter-congregational retreat for junior sisters and their directors in January 1990. The Community continued its participation in the expanding inter-congregational formation program sponsored by the Confers of Piura and Chulucanas. Writing to Sister Mary Kathleen in January 1990, Sister Joan mentioned that Sister Donna Jean had volunteered to teach a course in the inter-congregational formation program in Piura. In September, Sisters Laura and Mabel participated in the course on the vows given by Sister Elena for Confer.

On Easter Sunday 1990, Liduvina Dominguez and her mother arrived at the door of the convent in Chalaco after the liturgical celebration. Although Liduvina was actually from a village belonging to the parish of Santo Domingo, she was a niece of a good friend of the sisters in Chalaco. She and her mother and sister frequently attended Mass in Chalaco, and she apparently had been observing the community during her visits. After conversing with Sisters Esther and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer, she asked what she needed to do to become a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth.

Since she was still only seventeen and had not really known or worked with the sisters, those in formation decided it would be better if she had a prolonged experience with the sisters working in Chalaco and also visited other members of the Community on the coast. So, shortly after the pastoral meetings in Chulucanas, Liduvina began to live and work with the sisters, making campo visits with them, helping with workshops and retreats, and generally experiencing community life. Sister Trini was asked to mentor her during this year's experience. A program was designed in such a manner that she would return to her home in Trigopampa for periods of time and then rejoin the sisters. This was the first and only experience of its kind up to this point but was, perhaps, a forerunner of the Aspirancy Program that would be adopted a number of years later.

In September 1990, Sisters Joan and Donna Jean took Julia Huiman to the Center of Formation in Chulucanas. In March 1991, Julia and
Liduvina entered the postulancy in Piura with Sister Donna Jean as their Director. During her year of experience, Liduvina went to live with Sisters Joan and Lucille Harrington in Negritos. There she worked in the program of Catequesis Familiar. Meanwhile, Julia moved just a few blocks south to the community in Santa Julia. She worked with Sister Janet Cashman in Caritas (Catholic Charities) and in the programs of the Archdiocesan Office of Health.

Vocation promotion continued, now with native Peruvians included in the work. On February 23, 1991, Sister Maria Orozco joined a team of seminarians in giving a vocation workshop to twenty-five youths in Immaculata High School. That same afternoon, two young women arrived at the convent in Talara for an afternoon of reflection; the following day, five others participated in a similar time of prayer and sharing. That same month, Sisters Ruth Reischman and Janet Cashman, on their return trip from a health workshop in the north, brought a young woman from Tumbes to visit for a few days in Talara. The sisters continued offering afternoons of reflection in the convent, always with differing numbers of participants.

At the end of April and beginning of May, Sister Joan met with the sisters under temporary vows in Punta Sal. For some days beforehand, the young sisters, in their respective convents, had worked on presentations of various themes to be shared with the others.

In February 1992, the vocation committee, now composed of Sisters Elena Mack, Clorinda Timana, Maria Orozco, Lucille Harrington, and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer, met in Talara. On March 15, the Feast of St. Louise de Marillac, Sisters Clorinda and Maria renewed their vows and Sister Laura Rumiche made her first profession, all in Santa Rosa in Talara.

Later in March, Sisters Mary Kathleen Stefani and Bernadette Helfert, Councilor, arrived in the midst of terrible heat for the perpetual vow ceremony of Sister Susana Cordova on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25. They, like the rest of the sisters, made the best of it when the electricity failed and there was little or no ice and no electric fans. For, despite the problems, all the Sisters of Charity rejoiced in this historic occasion in Santa Rosa Parish when the first Peruvian made her perpetual profession.

In April 1993, Sister Clorinda went to Lima to study in the yearlong program of Confer for formation personnel. In May, Sister Donna Jean drew up and presented two possible plans to Sisters Regina and Clorinda to be implemented if more candidates were accepted as postulants in March or April of the following year. For at this time, there were four other señoritas expressing their interest.

In August 1993, Lourdes Abad and Josefa Cordova entered the postulancy in Piura under the direction of Sister Donna Jean. After Sister
Clorinda returned from her studies in Lima in February 1994 and had had time to reintegrate herself in the community, she moved to Negritos on February 7 with the two postulants. She would work with them until Sister Donna Jean could move over to Negritos, which was once again designated as a house for postulants. Meanwhile, Sister Donna Jean welcomed the two novices, Sisters Julia Huiman and Liduvina Dominguez, back to Santa Rosa for their final preparation for vows. They made their first vows on March 25, 1994. Sister Trini Orozco professed her final vows that same day.

On March 31, Sister Donna Jean moved to Negritos from Piura to assume her role as Director of the three postulants, Lourdes Abad, Josefa Cordova, and Isabel Pena. The latter young woman arrived on April 1 to join the Community.

During the year, Sister Donna Jean also met once a week with Sister Clorinda to share ideas, using a book on the following of Jesus and religious life. This had a dual purpose: to help Sister Clorinda in her own preparation for perpetual vows and also to help prepare her for working in formation the following year. Sisters Donna Jean and Clorinda began their weekly trips to Piura to assist at the inter-congregational formation classes for the postulants at Lourdes High School. Both Sisters Elena and Donna Jean taught classes in this inter-congregational program at times, and Sister Donna Jean served as coordinator one year.

During the next several years (1994–1997), the novitiate program was in much flux. A number of young women appeared ready to enter at times, but for various reasons they did not come to the SCL formation program. Of the three postulants mentioned earlier, only Lourdes Abad persevered to make vows. So plans had to be adjusted continually.

Throughout 1994, the sisters gave several workshops promoting vocations in Talara and Negritos. Early in the year, twenty-five young people gathered for a day in Negritos, but most of them were young men. A little later, young women who had shown a serious interest in religious life were invited to Santa Rosa. In March, Sister Laura Rumiche prepared a presentation on Mother Xavier for the postulants, and Sister Esther also reflected on community with them.

On February 10, Sister Clorinda and the two postulants, Lourdes Abad and Josefa Cordova, went to Santa Rosa in Talara to participate in a four-day vocation workshop organized by the vocation committee and the sisters at Santa Rosa. Sister Elena came over from Piura to help out with this live-in experience. Although eight young women were expected, only four arrived. Sisters Regina and Elena returned to Negritos each night to sleep, giving the younger people time to share informally.

From May to July 1994, the sisters in Chalaco offered longer live-in experiences, saying that they could accommodate up to six young women.
The next year, 1995, Sisters Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco professed their final vows in Talara after preparing in Lima and Trujillo during the summer. After having attended ESER during the summer months, Lourdes Abad and Isabel Pena became canonical novices in April 1995.

The Community closed the Negritos convent in March 1996. In April, Sister Clorinda was put in charge of initial formation, the first Peruvian SCL to assume such a charge. She and the postulant, Liliana Morante, at first lived in Piura, both attending various courses and workshops of Confer in Chulucanas and Piura during the year. Meanwhile, Sister Donna Jean directed Sister Lourdes Abad in the novitiate program in Piura before the latter went to Chalaco in August for her novitiate mission experience.

That same year, Lourdes' sister, Deidy, went to the Center of Formation in Chulucanas for three months. She entered the Community the following year although the two women from Chalaco who went to the Center with her did not do so.

Throughout the year, Sisters Elena, Donna Jean, and Clorinda met as the SCL formation committee to discuss various ways of carrying out vocation promotion. In July 1996, Sister Clorinda and Liliana invited a young woman from Piura and three from San Pedro, Talara, to participate in a live-in experience at the convent of Santa Rosa, Talara. In September, Sister Clorinda and Liliana moved to Talara.

During 1997, the sisters continued giving days of reflection and working with young women. On March 15, Sister Laura Rumiche pronounced final vows in her home village of San Pedro. The people were delighted to have their native daughter make vows right in their very own church. It was a gala celebration.

On March 20, the young professed sisters met together in Talara before attending the Mass for the perpetual vows of Sister Esther Vilela in Piura on March 25. At the same Mass, Sister Lourdes Abad made her first vows and Sisters Julia Huiman and Liduvina Dominguez renewed their vows. With the families and friends of these sisters present, there was quite a celebration in the parish hall afterwards. For according to Peruvian style, the sisters entertain parishioners, family, and friends at a reception following first and final vows.

It was not until April 1997 that Deidy Abad officially entered the Community although she had been living, working, and praying with the sisters before this, even making the Community retreat in Jimbe with them in March. Sister Clorinda was her director in the postulancy program, for Sister Donna Jean was preparing to return to the United States at this time.

At the Community meeting in September 1997, Sister Clorinda had spoken of her desire to relocate the formation house yet another time. She proposed that the Community acquire another house in Piura, preferably
in one of the Asentamientos Humanos (poorer sections), where the postulants and novices would take more responsibility for the cooking and cleaning than was possible in Talara. She also saw such a move as a more desirable solution to the novices and postulants traveling to Piura every week for classes in Confer and thus being absent from their local community for one or two days on a regular basis.

By chance, in the December 1997 meeting of Confer-Clero, one of the sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Community mentioned to Sister Elena that three members of their Community were withdrawing from the convent in Lopez Albujar, an Asentamiento Humano in Piura, and that, as of yet, no other Community had indicated a desire to use it. On viewing the house, Sisters Elena and Clorinda thought it could serve very well for the Community’s needs. When Sister Elena spoke with the Archbishop and Father Camacho, the pastor, they were both delighted at the prospect of the SCLs moving into the convent.

As Providence would have it, just about this same time the owners of the house that the Community had been renting in Trujillo indicated their desire to sell it. Since one of the three sisters studying was terminating her preparation as a teacher and the two other students had just one year more of studies, it was decided to vacate the house. That meant moving the furniture back north again; almost all of it had come from Santa Julia just four years before. Sisters Esther and Laura, who had just a year before completing their studies, were asked to live with the Good Counsel Sisters in Nueva Esperanza in Trujillo their final year.

Between the end of February and the end of March 1998, Sisters Ruth Reischman and Clorinda “made do” with furniture they borrowed from Santa Rosa Convent, Piura, and other furnishings brought over from Talara. Some of this furniture had been in the house of Negritos until it had closed and then had been stored in the convent in Talara. But moving furniture from Talara and from Trujillo presented real challenges because the flooding caused by “El Niño” had washed the highway out in many parts. However, intrepid friends helped with the moving as soon as it was possible to pass through.

On March 16, 1998, Sister Susana Cordova, now acting as Director of Juniors, met with the three sisters under temporary vows, Sisters Julia, Liduvina, and Lourdes, as she would several other times during the year. The following day, Sisters Liduvina and Lourdes renewed their temporary vows for one year in the chapel at Santa Rosa Convent, Piura.

Since there were no postulants or novices to attend to, Sister Clorinda planned to accompany various señoritas in their discernment regarding their vocations and also provide live-in experiences at Lopez Albujar during the year. She would also work with Catequesis Familiar during the year,
devoting her time principally to the couples who guided the discussion groups in that program.

In April, Sisters Elena and Clorinda met to organize a program of preparation for members of the Community who would be in charge of promoting vocations for each of the local houses. Later, on June 3, the vocation promoters from the various houses met with the formation team at Santa Rosa in Piura. During their time together, they worked on a community project for the promotion of vocations and developed four themes to be used in vocation afternoons with young women and girls on a monthly basis. The members were also presented with material to help them accompany young women in their own localities.

On June 17, Sisters Ruth, Clorinda, and Liduvina were prepared to receive three young women for their first live-in experience in Lopez Albujar. Neither Antonia from Chalaco nor Roxana from Talara arrived, but Isabel Sandoval arrived punctually, so the four of them proceeded with prayers, supper, and recreation as planned.

The move from Talara to Piura made it more possible for Sister Clorinda to take an active role in the meetings with other formation personnel of the area. These mutual support and planning meetings were scheduled for every month. Among other things, this group began to plan a program for young professed. On June 6, for example, the three junior sisters met with young professed of other Communities in Chulucanas for the first of four weekend workshops scheduled to help them in their continuing formation. Because of the move, it was also easier for the formation team, now comprised of Sisters Elena, Susana, and Clorinda, to meet regularly on a monthly basis.

In July, the sisters in Lopez Albujar began inviting interested young women to join them for Holy Hour once a week. This practice of prayer and sharing attracted various young women, sometimes as many as six, and helped them deepen their faith life.

On July 25, Sister Clorinda visited Jacqueline Torcás, a young woman in Negritos who had been assisting at the afternoons of reflection in Talara. When Sister Clorinda returned to Piura, Jacqueline accompanied her to experience something of community living and prayer. On August 3, another young woman from Lopez Albujar joined Jacqueline, both staying until the ninth of the month. Less than a week later, on August 14, Isabel Sandoval of Piura and Miriam Fernandez of Negritos began a monthlong experience with the sisters.

On August 23, Sister Elena gave the presentation for a workshop on vocations in San Sebastian that was sponsored by Confer. A cousin of the young woman from Negritos who had most recently stayed with the sisters
came for this workshop and stayed with the sisters in Lopez Albujar the night before.

During 1998, Deidy Abad went to Chalaco for an additional year as a postulant. In March 1999, she began her canonical year as a novice under the direction of Sister Susana, newly appointed Director of Formation. The following year, Sister Deidy went to Talara for her apostolic experience as a novice. During Sister Deidy’s canonical year, the postulant, Isabel Sandoval, also lived at Lopez Albujar until December when she returned to her home.

As a part of the ongoing formation, there was a meeting of the young professed sisters in Santo Domingo in September of 1998.

The sisters of the various convents continued having vocation afternoons for high school girls and young women. On the coast, this was a monthly affair from April or May until November. Sometimes the formation house and the sisters of Santa Rosa had a joint afternoon of reflection while the house in Lopez Albujar was open. In Chalaco, because of other priorities of the parish plan, the School for Women that they had begun, and the great distances, the sisters elected to adapt their presentations for students of fourth and fifth year of secondary school.

The sisters also invited some of these young women who had participated to take part in vocation days sponsored by Confer once or twice a year. Some years there were vocation retreats sponsored by Confer for young women discerning their vocations. Thus, in October 1998, Sister Clorinda had accompanied Deidy to Parkinsonia where Sister Elena was giving the retreat on discernment.

At the end of the year 1998, the SCLs from the various communities invited some of the young women who had been most faithful in their attendance and showed a real interest in the religious life to attend a retreat with like-minded young women from the various areas. These retreats of two or three days were held at various places, such as Kurt Beer in Piura and Villa Alegria in Sullana. During these days, different sisters presented themes for reflection and sharing. Often, toward the end of the retreat, the young women were invited to participate in a summer experience, helping in vacation schools for poor children either in Chalaco or in Lopez Albujar, Piura. During their month with the sisters, they took part in the daily living and prayers of the community.

Not only were the young professed sisters encouraged to take summer courses in spirituality in Lima, but the formation personnel likewise updated themselves. For example, in January 1999 both Sisters Clorinda Timana and Susana Cordova participated in Father Simon Pedro’s course, “Challenges of the Religious Life in this Epoch of Change.”
Toward the end of February, the formation team, now composed of Sisters Elena (as Director of Missions), Susana (Director of Novices), Clorinda (Director of Postulants), and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer (newly named Director of Junior Sisters), met in Piura to formulate an integrated plan of instruction and development for the various stages of formation. In the following years, other formation teams would modify and adapt this plan.

Because the SCLs were dissatisfied with the way the program in the Center of Formation in Chulucanas was being directed, they decided to begin their own Aspirancy Program in Chalaco. This is a seven- to nine-month program to help introduce candidates to the religious life and community living. During this time, candidates have some classes, do catechetics, and work with the sisters in the house and in the pastoral. They are also instructed on methods of prayer, reading, and sharing. Such a program is deemed necessary since most girls finish high school when sixteen or seventeen years old. Those from mountainous or outlying villages are unacquainted with “modern conveniences,” such as plumbing, cooking stoves, refrigeration, etc. The Aspirancy Program also gives them the opportunity to “break” with their families and learn how to live with and form community with other young women.

In May 2000, Cinthya Auza from Negritos and Rosa Guevara from Talara Alta became the first aspirants admitted under the direction of Sister Clorinda. The following year, Cinthya and Rosa entered the postulancy program in Piura under the direction of Sister Susana, and three young women began their preparation as aspirants in Chalaco. In 2002, three other young women became aspirants but left the program before its end.

Besides brochures about the Community and monthly afternoons of reflection, other formats were planned to inform young women and their families about the SCLs. In 2002 Sister Maria Orozco, who had been serving as Director of Juniors since December 2000, accepted the responsibility of preparing a booklet with a liturgical calendar and some vocational information for sale by the sisters of the various houses. She also agreed to ask Sister Mary Patricia Kielty to help make a video of the sisters and their works.

In 2003, in celebration of the Sisters of Charity’s forty years in Peru, the sisters prepared memorial cards and calendars to share with the people of the various parishes and places where they work.

As time goes on, it may be necessary for a sister or sisters to dedicate more of their time to vocation promotion work, but for the present, this continues to be seen as the responsibility of all. For if “the tree planted by running waters” is to flourish, all must help cultivate it.
Chapter XIX Notes

1 “Charities to Go to Talara, Peru,” SCL Newsletter, April 14, 1963, A/SCL.
2 Mother Leo Frances Ryan to Cardinal Richard Cushing, June 20, 1963, A/SCL.
3 Sister Blanche Marie Remington to her father, September 13, 1964, A/SCL.
4 Council Minutes, February 2, March 27, and May 4, 1965, OCS/SCL.
5 Council Minutes, December 14, 1965, OCS/SCL.
6 Msgr. Robert Walton to Ryan, August 21, 1967, A/SCL.
7 This Center of Formation, begun in the Prelature of Chulucanas, provided a program for
young women from various parishes to help them gain more confidence to help serve in
their church communities. Many of these young women entered religious life.
8 Minutes of 11th General Chapter, June 1980, OCS/SCL.
9 Sister Regina Deitchman, discussion with author, September 2000.
10 Sister Helen Therese (Elena) Mack to Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan, October 27, 1980,
A/SCL.
11 Fernando Vargas, SJ (Archbishop of Arequipa and Apostolic Administrator of Piura and
Tumbes), November 10, 1980, A/SCL.
12 Sister Agnes Klein to Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, January 25, 1981, A/SCL.
13 Mack, “General Program and Objectives,” [n.d.], A/SCL.
14 Sister Rosalie Mahoney, “Report on the visit to South American Formation Program,”
memorandum to Hollow and Council, July 7, 1981, A/SCL.
15 Mack to Hollow, September 30 1981, A/SCL.
16 Mack, “Report of the Director of Novices of the Sisters of Charity in Peru Latin American
17 Hollow, notes and letter to Mack, June 11, 1982, A/SCL.
18 Sister Joan Kilker to Hollow, November 5, 1984, A/SCL.
19 Hollow to Sister Lucille Harrington, November 5, 1985, A/SCL.
20 Hollow to Kilker and Sisters, May 9, 1986, A/SCL.
21 “Urbanization” sectors of Piura are considered a scale up the ladder of living. For example,
all houses are built of “noble” materials, such as brick or cement blocks.
22 Cruz del Norte and Pachitea were the first two sectors of Piura in which the SCLs lived.
23 The title Director of Juniors was used in Peru for the person accompanying/in charge of
the sisters under temporary vows.

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In countries such as Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, and Ecuador, which seem perennially marked by both natural and man-made disasters, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth have had more than enough reasons to thank Divine Providence for their protection during the last forty years.

In their houses, they quickly learned the necessity to boil and filter their water and to make sure that fruits and vegetables were well washed; and they were very careful about what they ate and drank outside their houses. Nevertheless, the sisters from time to time suffered the effects of "Montezuma’s revenge,” parasites, hepatitis, malaria, and typhoid fever, but none became too seriously ill from them.

Unfortunately, in the 1970s, Sister Sally Watson had to return to the United States because of her allergies and other health problems. And both Sisters Mildred Irwin and Joan Kilker suffered from shingles at different times; but with patience, medical care, and rest, they overcame this affliction.

In 1977 Sister Janet Cashman returned to the United States because of health problems, but the next year she returned to Peru. After spending three years in Peru, Sister Mildred recognized that she had neither the strength nor health to continue, and she left her beloved Peru in 1991.

Sisters Donna Jean Henson, Ruth Barron, Joan Kilker, and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer all had operations in the United States, but all returned to their mission duties after their recuperation. Sisters Janet, Esther Vilela, and Mary Patricia Kielty were all operated on in Peru and recovered promptly.

Probably one of the most serious illnesses was that of Sister Mary Patricia in 1997; she suffered a ruptured gallbladder while at a meeting in Chulucanas. By the time she was taken first to the hospital in Chulucanas, then to Piura and finally to Talara, life-threatening peritonitis had developed. She gave Sister Donna Jean and the other sisters a bad scare, but with the care of Dr. Luis More and Dr. Ricardo Zuniga, she made a remarkable recovery.

In the Community’s forty years in Latin America, the only death suffered was that of Sister Charlotte Swain in 1984. Even in that, there seem many providential circumstances. For some years, Sister Charlotte had had increasingly poor eyesight due to a fallen retina. She also was more and more debilitated by a crippling arthritis. Yet she resisted returning to the United States for a long time. When finally she reached the hard decision to leave her beloved people and was preparing to depart, Providence intervened. Though she had never suffered from heart problems, she had a severe heart attack and died on the Feast of Saint Vincent 1984, just one week before she was to leave. Another happy circumstance lay in
the presence of a priest at that particular time, making it possible for her to
receive the Sacrament of the Anointing.

In 1986, after returning from a course in La Paz, Sister Lucille Harrington
began experiencing difficulties with the muscles of her neck which pulled
her head to one side. After trying various remedies, such as massages, she
began considering a return to the United States for medical attention. When
she did leave, she did not return, except for a visit in 1990, almost three
years after the Coripata mission had been closed. Most likely, the fact that
she didn’t come back to Coripata was both merciful and providential, as the
decision to close Coripata was exceedingly painful for her.

Sister Joan Kilker suffered a stroke in November 1998 while working in
El Chaco, Ecuador. Providentially, the Josephite priests with whom she and
Sister Lucille Harrington were working had a special contract with the
Ecuadorian government. Since the Josephites cared for the spiritual needs
of the military, the government provided them and all their employees free
medical care at the Military Hospital in Quito. Thus, Sister Joan received
the very best medical treatment available in the country. When she was
later flown to Denver, Colorado, her doctors at Saint Joseph Hospital said
they could have done no more for her.

Likewise, for the most part, the sisters have been spared serious
accidents. Even with all of the falls various ones have sustained, only
Sisters Rose Celine Siebers and Ruth Barron broke anything. Sister Rose
Celine suffered a fractured arm while descending to the incinerator in
Chalaco; and Sister Ruth injured her ankle when she fell while hiking
near Oruru. More than one sister, North American and Peruvian, have
injured their backs in falls from mules on the muddy trails of Chalaco, but
all recovered with care and rest, although they have had to take some
precautions.

During their first years in Talara, the sisters experienced all the usual
problems of driving in Peru. Batteries and transmissions clogged due to
the dirt and wind, and they had many flat tires caused by driving on less
than adequate roads. Receiving their drivers’ licenses was always a major
problem because all the paperwork and exams had to be taken care of in
Piura, and sometimes that called for more than one trip.

They also had a few car accidents. In June 1966, just ten minutes after
leaving Punta Sal, the sisters’ car hit a soft shoulder and somersaulted.
Although the car was a total wreck, the sisters walked away, even taking a
bus as far as the convent in Los Organos. From there they took a colectivo¹
to Talara until they were rescued by Father Charles Duffy, who had driven
out to meet them. As a result of this accident, Sister Josephine Bustos
needed five to six stitches in a head wound, and Sister Frances Turk had
ten stitches in her shoulder for a cut close to her neck. Dr. Luis More came

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to the hospital and took the sisters to his own office for x-rays, and the Dominican Sisters came immediately from Immaculata to offer moral and other support.

In August 1967, Sisters Agnes Klein and Joseph Therese Mader were involved in a still more serious accident. Ironically, they had gone to begin the process of obtaining a driver’s license for Sister Joseph Therese. Apparently, the driver dozed off while praying during the return trip. Sister Agnes later mentioned in a letter to Mother Leo Frances, "We shall always have lots of noise in the car from now on when we’re driving. We'll leave our meditation until another time." 2

In that incident, after "sailing off" the road, the Opel station wagon impacted in a ditch about twenty feet below. Sister Agnes was able to extract herself from the car, and with only cuts and bruises, she was able to climb the steep ditch and obtain help. Four men from an army truck carried Sister Joseph Therese up to the highway, and she was taken to Saint Mary’s Clinic in Talara. At first it was believed she had sustained but a deep gash in the face and a lesser back injury. But when she continued to suffer considerable pain despite the plastic collar in which she had been placed, the sisters in Talara decided she should return to the United States. Two days after the accident, she was carried aboard a Peruvian Air Force plane and taken to Lima en route to Los Angeles. Sister Anne Denise Shea accompanied her, and thanks to an ambulance the St. James priests had secured, she was cared for at the Military Hospital in Lima until time for the flight to Los Angeles that these same priests had arranged. 3

Welcomed by the SCLs from St. John’s Hospital in Santa Monica, Sister Joseph Therese was taken to St. John’s for further examinations and care. It was learned she had fractured her sixth and seventh vertebrae and dislocated another. A piece of the chipped seventh vertebrae locked behind her spinal cord. Because of pressure from the sixth vertebrae, the nerves of her right arm were also damaged. She was placed in a Kenny brace, but the doctor did not think the disability sufficient to warrant radical procedures even though her left shoulder might be one to two inches lower than her right. 4 As a result of these injuries, however, her mission experience had come to an end.

In Bolivia, too, the sisters were mercifully preserved from serious injuries although they were involved in two jeep accidents and undoubtedly a number of narrow misses. In July 1966, just six months after their arrival, the brakes on the jeep Sister Lucille Harrington was driving gave out just as she was descending a series of switchbacks. The jeep tumbled onto the road below, falling on its cab and throwing sister and the catechist with her free before continuing on its precipitous descent. The catechist received bruises and minor injuries. Though Sister Lucille wrenched her neck, broke
an ankle, and lost some teeth, all considered her condition and subsequent recovery miraculous considering the nature of the accident.

The following year, on an outing to Copacabana, Sister Blanche Marie Remington hit slippery sand and gravel. The jeep turned over, but gratefully, no one was hurt even though Sister Blanche Marie, Sister Charlotte Swain, and two catechists were thrown out of the jeep.

Five years later, Sister Joan Kilker and her clinic assistant, Olga, slid into the mountainside after first getting stuck. Needless to say, they were grateful the jeep slid in that direction instead of toward the outside edge.

In 1999 Sister Lourdes Abad and some of the other sisters from Chalaco had just arrived in Silahua. Sisters Lourdes and Julia Huiman had stepped outside the pickup truck to talk with some people. But either Sister Lourdes had only put the truck in park or the hand break did not hold, and it began rolling backwards and into the drainage ditch. The two in the front seat were able to jump free, but Sister Clorinda Timana and the woman with her in the back seat were trapped in the back when the truck turned over on its cabin. Though badly frightened, neither suffered much bodily harm.

At the end of August 2002, the Chalaco sisters had another fright when on their way to Piura. Sisters Julia Huiman and Liduvina Dominguez and the three aspirants had taken the pickup into Piura to have it fixed, but then on their way to Yamango, their windshield was broken by a falling rock. Even worse, the brakes went out just before they reached a bridge on their way back. However, Sister Liduvina was able to steer the pickup across the bridge. Again in early October, Sisters Clorinda, Julia, Deidy Abad and her sister Kelly had a frightening experience when they were going to Choco by way of Yamango. As they began the climb, they noted that the pickup did not have the normal force. When it came to a halt, Sister Deidy jumped out to try to put a stone behind the back wheel. Before she could lodge it, however, she saw the car come backward very fast and out of control. She was terrified as she saw the fear on the faces in the car and heard Sister Julia calling for her to stop the car. Miraculously, the car ran into a fence of poles and stopped. Finally, with the aid of Don Santos and some rocks, they were able to advance the truck and continue on, but not without much fear and insecurity. Their return was calmer, but they all had the same fear that the car would not make some of the inclines. Later, the car continued to have problems with the air filter among other things. To top it all off, Sister Deidy slammed the door on her own finger.

Scarcefly a week goes by in Peru and Bolivia without a serious bus accident, often causing fatalities and serious injuries. Yet, despite the fact that the SCLs have frequently used these public conveyances, they seem to have been singularly protected. On a return from the first Community meeting in Talara in 1972, Sisters Joan Kilker, Charlotte Swain, Ruth Barron, and Valerie Odrowski were returning to Lima by bus. Providentially,
they missed the one they had planned on taking, for that vehicle was involved in a deadly accident. Five died and many were injured.

Despite the hyperinflation in the 1980s that caused rioting in some parts of the country and increased robberies in all parts of it, the sisters were able to carry on their work. During December 1989, the blackouts became more frequent and longer, both because of growing terrorist activity and due to the inability of the light companies to pay their own bills. Conditions in the country continued to worsen. With hyperinflation reaching 3000 percent, there were many scarcities. On July 28, 1990, the newly elected president, Alberto Fujimori, was sworn in. Within nine days, prices were escalating so much that merchants began hiding goods in the hope of receiving still more money. On August 7, "the Fujishock" occurred. The price of bread more than tripled; noodles cost 286 percent more than before; and overnight, gasoline not just doubled or tripled, but registered prices ten times greater than before.

Seven million Peruvians living in absolute poverty often resulted in desperate methods. The police and soldiers tried to prevent sacking of stores and warehouses. Eleven provinces were declared in a state of emergency, Piura being one of them. The sisters suffered in seeing the deprivation of the people. They themselves were protected in that they were able to cash checks on the Leavenworth bank. So, although prices escalated dramatically, so did the rate of exchange. Within a month, the Inti (national monetary unit at the time) had devaluated so much that one American dollar was equivalent to 340,000 Intis. When Sisters Esther Vilela and Trini Orozco arrived in Piura to purchase supplies for the Chalaco house (the reader will recall that that mission stocked up every month or six weeks), it cost them nine million Intis to buy the necessary supplies!

Due to the economic and social unrest, demonstrations and strikes were frequent. Sometimes travel from Talara to Piura was interrupted by the demonstrations of the rice growers, who were receiving abysmally low prices for their crop. Other groups also set up blockades from time to time, and truck drivers just did not make trips if they did not have sufficient travelers or cargo.

As indicated in earlier chapters, during the 1980s and 1990s the sisters were increasingly aware of the terrorist influence in Peru and suffered the inconvenience of interruptions of electricity due to blown-up electrical transmitters.

As the violence of the terrorists became more evident in the Department of Piura, the sisters drew up plans for use in case of an emergency or the disappearance of a sister or sisters. They even devised some codes to use in telephone messages in case of an emergency, and they planned alternate
ways of leaving/escaping their houses. Fortunately, these plans never needed to be implemented. The closest encounter they had with the terrorists was the bomb that was set off at the gate to the house in Santa Julia in 1992 and the Shining Path leaflets left in both the front and back patio of that house. In all the houses, they were counseled to take added precautions, being careful of what they said and to whom they said it.

In Bolivia, too, during the height of the Communist activity there, the sisters were much aware of possible dangers. They were advised not to go out alone on the roads after dark. And they were counseled as to what were the best routes to take if they should have to flee the country into Chile or Argentina. As mentioned in the Bolivian accounts, at one point, the sisters prepared their documents and divided up the money they had should a quick escape be necessary.

In Guatemala, though various religious personnel were expelled from the country and there was frequent turmoil in Guatemala City, the capital, the SCLs were not in immediate danger.

At different times, various sisters and houses have been robbed, but Divine Providence was always looking after them. Although some items and money were taken, no one ever suffered physical harm. Given the constant break-ins and assaults, that is a remarkable record. On the streets or in the markets, too, the sisters lost a watch or purse from time to time, and one even lost her documents. Thankfully, the losses were usually not major, and no one was more than scratched.

Just a few years ago, however, Father Guido Zegarra was to give a retreat for the sisters in Jimbe, a small village inland from the port of Chimbote. Most of the sisters who had arrived in Chimbote earlier in the day had gone on to Jimbe in two previous vans. But Sisters Susana Cordova and Lourdes Abad remained in Chimbote to meet Father when he arrived from Lima and accompany him to the retreat house. About an hour after they had left the port city, the public conveyance in which they were traveling was forced over to the side of the road. Several masked youths demanded that everyone leave the van, and then and there these youths dispossessed the travelers of whatever money or valuables they had. Poor Father Guido had his laptop computer stolen, along with all his Power Point presentations for the retreat. Sister Lourdes, sensing what was about to happen, stuffed the hundred dollars for her retreat in her mouth!

After the delinquents fled, the driver, his assistant, and the passengers went to the nearest village to report the episode to the police. Sisters Susana and Lourdes called Jimbe to let the sisters know what had taken place. After assuring Sister Elena Mack that they were fine, they indicated the approximate time of their arrival.
Besides such very human dramas, there were the natural disasters with which our sisters have had to deal. Within a year of their arrival in Peru, they came to realize that Peru is indeed a land of many seismic movements. Although the worst of these normally take place farther south in the country, they frequently felt them wherever they were in the North. Though most were only tremors, some were strong enough to make them rise from bed or prepare to go outside. In December 1970, at the same time that Chalaco was 90 percent destroyed (just before the SCLs assumed that mission), the back part of the wall surrounding Santa Rosa Convent in Talara was destroyed, and the church sustained quite a bit of damage.

In May 1970, following the devastating earthquake in Huaraz and Yungay in the mountainous area of mid-central Peru, Sister Rosalie Mahoney joined a team from Chulucanas in trying to relieve some of the suffering in the most affected areas. This team, composed of three priests and another nurse, Marist Sister Corita, worked out of the district capitals of Mato and Huata. In order to set up a makeshift clinic, they needed to ride horses and ford rivers into the devastated countryside. According to a letter written by Sister Rosalie about her experiences, most of the illnesses they treated were related to severe nervous strain, but the people also suffered from dysentery, infected wounds, dog bites, and eye infections.

The force of the earthquake and the continuing tremors, which came at fifteen-minute intervals for days, sent up clouds of dust so thick that people could hardly see. For more than two weeks, this dome-like cloud hung over the valleys. Moreover, the roar of the flood waters produced when part of a glacier fell into a lake, completely inundating two villages, made many think the end of the world had come.\(^5\)

In 1976, as mentioned elsewhere, there was a 7.5 earthquake just fifty kilometers from where Sister Ann McGloin was working in Guatemala. Though Novillero, where sister was working, suffered no deaths, there were damages, and just fifteen minutes away there was much destruction and many persons were injured. Sister Ann and other sisters attended the injured and spent several days in a tent on the rumbling earth. There were twenty-eight tremors in twenty-four hours!

While Sisters Joan Kilker and Lucille Harrington were in Peru for a Community meeting in 1976, northern Peru and Ecuador had a serious earthquake. On their return to El Chaco (Ecuador), they found that their area had been badly shaken but had sustained no human or material damages. Still, they were well aware of the possible dangers as the earth continued to have lighter shakes after their arrival.

As alluded to in other chapters, it is the monumental rainy seasons to which Peru is repeatedly subjected that has most challenged and
inconvenienced the SCLs. Seeing terrible devastation and suffering all about
them, they know only too well how fully they have been protected.

The Department of Piura, in which all four of the Sisters of Charity
missions are currently found, is located in one of the northernmost parts
of Peru. The coastal or desert area typically receives only about one inch
of rain per year. However, since the Humboldt cold water current snakes
in close to the coast there, clashing with the warm tropical waters, a
phenomenon known as “El Niño” develops with what appears to be ever
greater frequency.

It is now thought that it was to appease the god of these torrential
rains that the Moche Indians offered human sacrifices in pre-Incan times.
Called El Degollador (Beheader), this deity appears repeatedly in paintings
and ceramics still extant from this ancient culture.

Sister Blanche Marie Remington made the first mention of the problem
occasioned by heavy rains in March 1965, telling her father that these
were reported to be the strongest downpours since 1925. In describing the
havoc wrought, she noted that as always it was the poor who suffered
most. If they were lucky enough to have beds, they slept under them to
escape the water coming in through their leaky roofs.

Although there were a few heavy rains in 1967 and 1968, the next
serious occurrence of “El Niño” was in 1972. Many areas were severely
affected, Piura and Catacaos among them. The sisters living in Talara
mentioned that, compared to Piura, Talara was like a paradise, although
they did suffer from a faulty water supply. The sisters contributed $100 to
the Bishop’s Relief Fund and Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan air-freighted
a special load of food and medicine from the United States.

Again in 1976 there was widespread damage and loss of life. The
sisters in the convent in Talara needed to mop up following inundations at
the end of January, and they lost electricity for at least twenty-four hours.
One of their concerns at that time was the quantity of meat stored in their
freezer by the sisters from Chalaco; fortunately it did not spoil.

However, the sisters were disturbed by how badly the pueblos jovenes
(barrios) had been affected and by the number of persons that drowned there.
The rains continued through the next two months on the coast and were
more serious in the mountainous areas during March. Chalaco received
twelve inches, and the sisters reported that there were many mud slides and
that many wires were down. In February 1977, it rained every night in Talara;
as a consequence, the flat roof on the convent developed leaks.

But it was in 1983–84 that all of northern Peru suffered as never before.
In various parts where the sisters lived and worked, the unprecedented
rains wreaked havoc and destruction. Dry rivers and creek beds that had
been without water for fifty years were not only full but were flooding

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over. Roads, homes, churches, and all types of edifices were destroyed by the torrential rains and inundations. There was a shortage of food and all sorts of supplies, and there was consequently much hunger and sickness. Because of the contaminated and/or stagnant waters, the population was afflicted by typhoid, malaria, cholera, and skin diseases.

Travel became all but impossible. What formerly took six hours for the sisters of Chalaco to arrive in Piura now took sixteen hours when they were brave enough to venture it. The Pan-American Highway was washed out in many areas, at times temporarily repaired only to be destroyed again. There was some effort made to use planes and helicopters to bring in medicines, food supplies, and people, but it was inadequate.

On the coast, there was a lack of food and medicine and a shortage of drinking water. This was a particular problem for the Talara area as the tubes which normally carried water from Paita were destroyed in several areas by the rushing currents.

In the mountains, housing suffered less, for the most part. Although the adobe walls around the corrals and homes dissolved, the houses themselves remained intact, though the roofs frequently developed leaks. On the coast, however, many lost their homes, especially in the barrios or poorer settlements. Cuernavaca and Laeticia, which had been built on the hillside above the port of San Pedro, were swept away. Seventy centimeters of rain fell in the first three months of the year instead of the usual three centimeters.

The only highway connecting the north and south of Peru was impassable in various places, bridges and highways having been washed out. Irrigation canals on the coast overflowed, as did major rivers, such as the Piura. This meant a halt to the transportation of fuels and foodstuffs. Even planes could not land for a couple of days due to damages to landing strips. Bread lines formed at bakeries for what little could be made. And, of course, almost all the crops normally produced in the whole northern sector of the country were destroyed, if they had been planted at all.

The formation house that recently had been built in Cristo Rey parish in Piura was located in a low area very close to the principal market. During late November, the sisters had already begun to experience the preliminary effects of the coming disastrous “El Niño.” The slippery roads and streets have already been mentioned elsewhere. By December 13, the sisters had to have men bring in supplies to repair their rain-damaged roof. With continuing heavy rains, a gully full of sewage, human defecation, and just plain muddy water surged through the convent.

Meanwhile, on the coast, the New Year 1983 gave evidence from the beginning that it was going to be a trying year. When Sister Elena Mack returned from Talara to Piura on January 1, she discovered that the
electricity had been off for some twenty-four hours already. And electrical service did not actually return for another twenty-four hours.

The next evening, Sisters Janet Cashman and Donna Jean Henson arrived from Talara, accompanied by three young women who would be boarding at the convent for the next eight weeks while attending a catechetical course. The plan was that these three would also have the opportunity to learn more about community living during this summer. With the arrival of the two postulants, Nelyda Clavijo and Susana Cordova, the "family" expanded to eight residents. That was just as well since there would be much cleaning up to do throughout the month.

Since the men had not finished tarring the roof, although they had begun in the middle of the preceding month, there were puddles throughout the house whenever rains occurred. And occur they did, with frequency and force—on the night of the fourth, the afternoon of the fifth, the night of the fifth, and again during the day of the sixth and the seventh. In fact, by that time so much rain had fallen that there were twelve inches of floodwater all around the house on the parish property. To add to the problem, the weather turned very hot, making the whole area a good incubating space for flies, so much so that by January 15, a plague of flies had invaded the city, covering clothes, walls, sidewalks, and anything else that was exposed.

In the midst of all this, Sister Elena and the two postulants left for Lima on the eighth for summer studies and retreat. As a consequence, Sister Janet Cashman and the recently arrived Sister Donna Jean Henson, who was really missioned to Talara, were left to do battle with the increasing problems of "El Niño," helped out by their three boarders. They were indeed grateful for the help.

In mid-January, to help cope with health problems generated by the rains and its effects, Sister Janet began a weeklong course in first aid, but only a disappointing five persons showed up for it. On the twelfth, the men finally finished repairing the roof, and the electricity, which once again had been off for twenty-four hours, was restored. Less than a week later, however, the sisters were again "lightless," this time because a truck had hit a cable; this time it took about a week to make the necessary repairs.

But who could imagine what would follow? Nothing like it had occurred since our sisters had arrived in 1963. Between January and April 1983, the rainfall exceeded the total rainfall in Piura for the previous seven years combined.8

During these months, the sisters continued to use the formation house in Pachitea, but under ever more difficult circumstances, as indicated in Chapter X. By April 4, Sister Elena and the novices transferred to Talara, and Sisters Agnes Klein and Janet Cashman went to live with the Franciscan
Sisters in Our Lady of Peace Convent. For the next three months, much of the parish grounds and the convent were under water. Watchmen tried to stave off thefts but without too much success.

In Piura, Sister Agnes reported that the sacristy wall and one of the interior walls had fallen in at the Cathedral and that several more homes in the area of Los Algarrobos where she worked had fallen, including some brick ones.9

While the dirty water on the street in front of the convent was about waist deep in mid-April, it went down about ten or twelve inches in the following three weeks. And one of the guardians at the house began taking Sister Agnes the sheets and towels from the novitiate house to wash with bleach, soap, and disinfectant.10

With a lessening of the rains, the drain system had begun to work slowly, the water in the street in front of the house dropping to about twenty inches. But there was still much muddy water in the parish and in the house and yard. Sister Agnes said the men were going to dig a drainage ditch by hand as the machinery could not get any closer. Then they would open the gate and door so that the water could flow out of the house and the yard. Once that was done, they could start the cleaning up and drying out process. The convent yard had entrances to the church grounds and to the street. Once the water was out of the house, the men planned to place sandbags at both of those entrances with the hopes that they would keep out further flooding. But evaluation of the house would have to wait until everything was dry and the house had settled.11

However, in mid-June, there was still water in the house, despite the fact that the pump was working twenty-four hours a day. Just to complicate matters, a water pipe broke. There were also light shortages.12 Nevertheless, by June 25 Sister Agnes reported that the area was almost dry again and that she planned to get two men to help her with the first cleaning the following Monday. She mentioned that Sister Elena was coming over to do errands and help supervise, and the novices would come when things were more or less settled.13

Conditions were equally pathetic in other parts of the city, especially in the poorest areas. By mid-February, the church alongside the convent in Pachitea had fallen, and Masses and devotions were held outside or in a nearby school. Everywhere, sewage and water lines broke. Beetles, crickets, mosquitoes, cockroaches, and frogs infested the area, as did, of course, rats. Some 200,000 people lost their livelihoods, and 80 percent of local crops were lost.14 Victor Navarro, head of Civil Defense for Piura said, “Without work, food, drinking water and with the electricity company about to close down, we’re nearing the point where things are just going to explode.”15
Despite all this woe and hardship, the people and the sisters were grateful for the efforts to aid them. Twice Sister Agnes mentioned such help. First, she referred to the check that Bishop Hart of Wyoming had sent to the Archbishop; the Archbishop in turn had given money to parishes in Sullana and Tumbes. He had also given Sister Agnes $3000 to be used by the sisters in Talara and another $4000 for use in Piura. She also mentioned the breakfasts being provided for 600 children in Los Algarrobos by Civil Defense teams. Sister Agnes herself purchased some cooking utensils for the women preparing the breakfasts. She also commented on the distribution of beans, noodles, and sugar to people living in the barrios (pueblos jovenes).

Writing from Talara, Sisters Josephine Bustos and Joan Kilker had similar stories to tell. The rains that had begun in December continued through January, though not very heavily during the first part of the month. Then, on January 20, the storm broke with full force, with lightning, thunder, and great sheets of water, which washed sand, silt, and rocks into Talara from the hillsides. The ferocity of the rushing water carried the mud under doorsills and windows; the ground floor of the convent was coated with mud as high as the baseboard. Though Sister Joan was in Lima when the first inundations took place in January, she reported that the mud was three feet deep in many of the homes in Talara. Sister Josephine and two friends, Paula and Hilario, had spent one whole day cleaning mud out of the convent itself. Having returned by the time of the second great flooding, Sister Joan described how they placed barricades around the back of the house and sandbagged the doors.

Nevertheless, the ground floor of the house was again rapidly covered by mud, and many more hours were spent in cleaning. The sisters were without electricity for days and without gas or water for indefinite periods of time due to the many breaks in the large water pipes that bring fresh water from Paita to Talara. The sisters, like the rest of the people, filled buckets and other depositories with water from the cistern trucks which came to the various sectors of the city.16

Talara itself was covered with three feet of mud, but it was the barrios that were hardest hit. For the quebradas (ravines) from the flatland and cliffs above Talara "ran like rivers, taking everything in their paths including over 100 homes and a boat shop that was on the beach."17 The homeless were taken to the fairgrounds, and Sister Josephine helped the people set up two food kitchens. How grateful they all were for the foodstuffs that had been delivered to them by Caritas, the Catholic Relief Service, and foodstuffs procured by Edward Tito Castillo, a psychologist. The people of Talara, too, came to the rescue, donating clothes, money, and food. After a few nights in the fairgrounds, the people were able to be moved.
into some schools that provided better protection. Of course, there were many sick, and the hospitals were full and very low on medicines. In spite of all, the sisters carried on their services to the people as best they could.

San Pedro was cut off from Talara. To reach either side of the ravine that separated Talara from San Pedro, one had to wade through mud and water by roundabout ways or take a chance on crossing by means of a precarious raft. Food was increasingly scarce and many were actually hungry. The food shipment from Caritas in early February was literally a lifesaver. Powdered milk, oatmeal, cracked wheat, corn meal, and flour were rapidly distributed to the poor and alleviated some of the greatest need. But more and more people were homeless and bereft of all personal belongings. To make matters even worse, an increasing number of people from outlying areas fled to Talara, hoping for food and shelter. Some food came in from Ecuador, but of course not nearly enough. And the sisters answered calls for help in whatever area they could reach on foot; when at home, there was a constant plea for help at their door. A little later, Santa Rosa parish in Lima adopted the Talara sister parish, and the sisters gratefully received and distributed the supply of clothes, food, and medicine.

With so much rainwater and so little city water, the sisters devised an ingenious shower system in the west patio of the convent. A pipe was connected to a storage bin on the roof that collected rainwater. Taking turns, the sisters brought their soap and towels and bathed at will. Finding this to work quite well, they moved two other large water tanks close to the house, connected a motor, and thus were able to distribute water to the bathrooms. They also collected rainwater for drinking, after boiling and filtering it.

Gradually, a few more temporary roads were opened, and the sisters reactivated some of their various programs, even while continuing their aid to the homeless. Sisters Joan and Josephine had welcomed Sister Donna Jean Henson’s presence and help once she was able to make the trip from Piura on Ash Wednesday, February 16.

The sisters joined the people of San Pedro in their fervent celebration of their patron’s feast day in June. Although their homes were mostly destroyed, they gave thanks that their lives had been spared and that there had been no rain since June 5.

When the school term began, Sister Donna Jean began some religion classes in the parish school but also in the state school, Santa Rosa. The latter had been hard hit by the rains, and most of the children attending it were very poor. The sisters, at the suggestion of Sister Donna Jean, gave some money to help with the reconstruction in the school. They also helped some families without roofs to buy plywood and used charity monies to buy milk, sugar, and some basic foodstuffs for the food kitchens.18
“El Niño” had begun in earnest in the Sierra by the time Sister Catherine Nichol made a horrendous trip of twenty-one hours down from Chalaco on November 21, 1982. Not surprisingly, she decided to leave the jeep in Morropon when returning on the twenty-third, her badly bruised and swollen arms giving ample evidence of her struggle to control the jeep on the way down.

In early December, Sister Regina Deitchman did make it up to Chalaco from Morropon, but it took her two days instead of the usual three to four hours due to the terrible road conditions. By December 18, the principal bakery in the town lost its adobe oven when it was literally washed away. Consequently, the serving of the milk or soya with oatmeal or bread to the little children of the pueblo had to be canceled. When Sister Catherine returned to the coast with the jeep on the twentieth, it took her twelve hours just to get to Chulucanas, having to procure the help of village men to dig her out various times. When she returned with food and supplies, she made it about as far as Pambarumbe, then used mules to haul the provisions for the winter months to Chalaco. Right after Christmas, Sister Regina left for the coast and Lima by mule, picking up the jeep in Pambarumbe and continuing on.

Because of the continuous heavy rains, anywhere from one-fourth to three inches in one day, the main drain in the patio of the second floor of the convent stopped up. After using various tools and techniques, the sisters were finally able to get it open on the second day. Fortunate that was because there was virtually no other exit for the water, and the situation could have been even more critical since this patio is also the roof of their dining room. Although the adobe walls around the corrals and homes dissolved, the houses themselves remained intact, though the roofs frequently developed leaks.

When Sister Regina returned after her January course in Lima, Bishop McNabb asked her to stay in Chulucanas to help with the relief programs of the prelature. He needed someone to coordinate the distribution of foodstuffs and medicines that were coming in through Caritas. Rather than make the two-day mule trip to Chalaco, only to return later for the Prelature Study Week the first of March, Sister Regina stayed on the coast and helped with this necessary program. The Bishop procured a helicopter to send this aid into the isolated outlying parishes. The sisters in Chalaco, as well as everyone else in town, were delighted when the first flight set down on the playing field at the edge of town, dropping off a few boxes of medicines.

Despite the continuing heavy rains, Sister Catherine went to the coast and to Lima for the Pastoral Planning Meeting. She and Sister Regina were the only ones who could participate. After the meetings, Sister Regina returned immediately and made the two-day mule trip to Chalaco to join
Sister Rose Celine Siebers and Sister Justin Wallace, OSF, while Sister Catherine stayed in Lima to make her annual retreat at a Jesuit retreat house.

By the time Sister Catherine returned from retreat in Lima, the situation had deteriorated considerably. Because a bridge had been washed out on the Pan-American Highway, she and her fellow passengers, as well as those of about a hundred other vehicles, waited on the side of the road all of one morning. Arriving in Piura, she found that city to be isolated. So much flooding had occurred that many bridges and roads had been washed out, and almost nothing could get in or out of Piura. It was impossible to think of trying to go to Chalaco in the immediate future. Since the formation house in Pachitea was under water, Sister Catherine stayed a month with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Tarbes at Lourdes High School. But she helped the other SCLs, who were also living outside their convent, rescue as many things as they could from the inundated convent. By the time she ventured returning to Chalaco, conditions were so bad that it took her a week to arrive. (To capture the flavor of what that trip was like, read Appendix D, the story as told by Catherine herself.)

One of the most memorable stories of these “road-less months” concerns the efforts of Sister Rose Celine Siebers to get to the coast so that she could go home to celebrate her Golden Jubilee as an SCL in the United States. In May, large shipments of medicines supplied by the U.S. government were crated and prepared for delivery to the disaster areas in northern Peru. From Piura, helicopter deliveries were begun for the various sectors of the prelature. On various occasions over a period of several weeks, thinking that the helicopter was about to arrive on the Chalaco playing field, the sisters began their morning vigils. Since this site was very difficult to get in and out of and the helicopter barely touched down before taking off again, persons hoping to catch a ride to the coast had to be ready to go rapidly.

Finally, one bright June day, after waiting all morning at the football field, Sisters Regina, Rose Celine, and Catherine dejectedly walked back up to the convent, convinced that even if the copter did arrive a little later, it would not be able to sight the field for the clouds. They were just preparing for their siestas after dinner when they heard a motor and the people in the plaza all shouting that the helicopter had arrived. Sister Catherine ran all the way to the field in the hope of detaining the pilot long enough for Sisters Rose Celine and Regina to arrive. Fortunately for them, the pilot had mistakenly flown over to Naranjo and so arrived back at Chalaco just as Sisters Regina and Rose Celine turned the corner. The newly ordained priest arriving to serve in Chalaco alighted and began helping to get some of the medicine boxes and his own luggage out. Meanwhile, the sisters had just enough time to help Sister Rose Celine
Flood waters surrounding the parish of Cristo Rey in Pachitea

El Niño destroyed bridges, roads, and churches
aboard, pushing and lifting her, when away went the copter again, making
the flight back to Chulucanas in forty-five minutes.

In June, after visiting Choco with the pastor, Sister Regina crossed
over to the parish sector of Yamango on the other side of the mountain
range from Chalaco. As narrated in Chapter VII, she stayed out a whole
month visiting the center of Yamango and its villages, then crossing over
into the Tamboya area. She found the people suffering from severe
malnutrition and various diseases. Many children had died or were dying
as a result of a measles epidemic and other sicknesses. Although she
returned even thinner than usual, she survived all the hardships and
sicknesses of this difficult time and journey.

Although the sisters of the formation house had moved back into the
house in Pachitea by early July 1984, their stay proved to be of fairly
short duration. Early in January 1987, it began raining again for days at a
time, causing outages of electricity and the formation of stagnant puddles.
By February 9, Sister Janet Cashman could not leave her clinic in the
afternoon. In the convent, rain once again entered the front rooms and
bedrooms through the windows.

The rains continued throughout the month, creating some problems
when it came time for Sister Flor Figueroa's profession of first vows. Since
the sisters had to wade in and out of the convent, Sisters Mary Kathleen
Stefani and Ann Barton, together with Sister Flor and the two postulants,
Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco, carried their clothes to the Convent
of Our Lady of Peace. There they cleaned up and changed before going to
the Chapel of St. Anthony's for the Vow Mass and the reception afterwards.
Because of flooding on the Pan-American Highway, Sisters Mary Patricia
Kielty and Donna Jean Henson were not able to come from Talara, but by
the sixteenth, the road was again open.

With heavy rains on the seventeenth, the house of formation was again
under water, and most of the sisters went to sleep in Our Lady of Peace
Convent after first putting as many things as possible out of harm's way.
Early the next morning, postulants, novices, sisters, neighbors, and children
began moving everything to Our Lady of Peace Convent, once again
utilizing Chalaco's jeep and a pickup truck of some friends. Because of
their prior experiences in 1983, they asked seminarian friends to remove
the doors and lights from the house; these, too, were stored at the Franciscan
Sisters' convent. Shortly thereafter, the members of the formation
community moved to a rented house in the Urbanization Santa Ana until
such time as a new house could be constructed.

There were other less damaging rainy seasons in the intervening years.
The next major "El Niño" occurred in 1998. Again roads and bridges were
destroyed and crops suffered major damages.
Transportation became precarious, if not dangerous. The highway between Talara and Piura was out in at least six places because of the “rivers” or “lakes” formed by the rains. The same was true traveling south to Trujillo and Lima. Some of the sisters risked crossing the coursing waters to vehicles on the other side. Others cancelled plans for retreats and meetings.

In January 1998, “El Niño” returned with force once again. This time the effects were even more generalized on the coast. While the sierra experienced heavy rains, it was not nearly as hard hit as in 1983. In Piura it rained every night, usually not stopping until 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning.

On the evening of January 10, the sisters at Santa Rosa found themselves forming a “bucket brigade,” bailing out the downstairs hallway for about two hours. While carrying their buckets of water to the street-turned-river, Sisters Maria Orozco, Julia Huiman, Elena Mack, Eileen Haynes, and Trini Orozco sang “Raindrops Keep Falling on Our Heads.” Meanwhile, Sister Ruth Reischman was working upstairs, trying to control the water entering through the door that leads to the roof and the water entering through the windows of the upstairs bathroom. All of this was being done by the light of kerosene lamps, the electricity having failed some time before. Afraid that the flooding would enter the kitchen, the sisters emptied the refrigerator and turned it on its side. Finally, about 10:00 p.m. Sister Eileen fried the chicken purchased for the following day and everyone enjoyed it by candlelight about 11:00, thereafter falling into their beds exhausted.

The following day, a metal stand was purchased to elevate the refrigerator. Then Sisters Maria and Julia enlisted the help of several young men to fill sandbags; with these, they protected the four doors to the house.

Nevertheless, the house periodically continued to be inundated. Large sheets of plastic were placed on the roof to help prevent damage. Sisters Maria, Eileen, Ruth, and Julia took turns laying them down at night, then picking them up in the morning so they—and the roof—could dry. Despite all this and the grave damage around them, the sisters maintained high spirits, encouraging one another. Their prayers often focused on the effects of “El Niño,” God’s presence in the midst of suffering and loss, and the search for hope. They shared stories of their own experiences and of those with whom they worked and served.

Once again the Pan-American Highway was cut in various places by torrents of water rushing to the sea. Sister Ruth three times attempted to go to Lima for a catechetical workshop in January, but the buses were unable to go through. Travel between Piura and Trujillo became more and more questionable. Sometimes the passengers had to change buses in one or more places, ford swollen currents, and re-board other buses on the other side. Yet the very next day after such swift streams endangered
passage, the highway might again be open, or the conveyances would be able to take another route around the flooding.

Earlier, in February, some parts of the poorer districts of Trujillo had been flooded by heavy rains. The sisters in Santo Dominguito gathered together clothing, some bedding, and the last of their bags of rice and sugar to take to the Mercy sisters in Porvenir, who were setting up a food kitchen for the dispossessed. But the following week, Trujillo was hit from three sides on the same day. The dike above Mampuesto broke and flooded out the cemetery and a large part of Porvenir. That same morning, the canal Mochica and the “Quebrada (ravine) El Leon” passed flood stage, the waters ravaging through the streets and arriving as far as the Plaza de Armas in the center of the city.

Sisters Esther Vilela and Trini Orozco both heard advisories on the radio that people should move their possessions to the second story of their houses where possible. So, although there was no sign of danger in their sector of Trujillo, the sisters began moving what they could. Since their furniture would be moved to Piura the next month, Sisters Esther and Rose Dolores Hoffelmeyer decided to pack up most of the chapel things at this time. Gratefully, the waters did not reach Santo Dominguito, but there were many losses and damage in other parts of the city. Fearing a loss of water supply, Sisters Trini and Esther filled various containers as a precaution.

By March 2, when Sister Clorinda Timana and Deidy Abad left Talara, the highway between that city and Piura had been washed away in at least five places. While crossing these, they and Sister Clorinda’s nephew formed a human chain in order to resist the force of the current better. However, while passing through “The Deborah,” another ravine, Deidy let go of Sister Clorinda’s hand and was almost swept away. Her suitcase and its contents were completely soaked, but mercifully she was rescued.

Because of such conditions, the sisters cancelled the retreat planned for Jimbe, south of Trujillo, deciding to improvise as they could in Piura. Nevertheless, Sisters Regina and Catherine did not attempt to come down from Chalaco, Sister Mary Patricia did not brave the trip from Talara, nor did Sisters Trini Orozco and Rose Dolores make it from Trujillo. Sister Esther Vilela, who had gone to Piura for meetings in mid-February, was not able to return until March 18.

The rains continued throughout much of March, and it seemed doubtful that the house in Trujillo could be closed as planned. But Sister Elena decided that Sisters Esther and Laura Rumiche should move to the Convent of the Good Counsel Sisters, and that the furniture should be packed and ready, and the house formally closed by March 31. Sisters Elena and Rose Dolores flew to Piura on a transport plane of the Peruvian Air Force that day; Sister Trini arrived the following day in the same way.
By that time, all the bridges in Piura had either fallen in or were so weakened that they were closed. Therefore, it was necessary for them to travel from the airport in Castilla to the Bridge Independence near La Legua south of Piura. On the night of the thirty-first, Sisters Elena and Rose Dolores walked across the bridge in the pouring rain, having hired a man with a three-wheeled cart to transport their luggage across. By the time Sisters Elena and Rose Dolores arrived at Santa Rosa Convent by cab at 10:30, they were drenched and exhausted. Fortunately for Sister Trini, her plane had not been delayed and she arrived in daylight and minus rain.

Meanwhile, the sisters at the new house in Lopez Albujar soon discovered that rainwater mixed with sewage water entered the front part of the house. This area had initially been built as a garage, but the sisters were using it for an entrance room and flower area. Then, too, when the wind was particularly strong, the back part of the chapel was thoroughly dampened as there was no overhang to protect the windows and door.

Leaving the house became an adventure, too, since the dirt street in front of it frequently ran like a river. With the aid of a neighborhood youth, they threw the water from the house out into the street, and like their neighbors, they procured bags of sand to divert the waters a bit. Then Jose Cordova, member of the parish council, and Victor Escuro, a neighbor, helped put some cement bases in front of their door so they would not have to wade through the water. Since many in the area had also put sand bags in front of their houses, this gave a more solid base on which to walk the block and a half to Circumvalacion, the first paved street.

As Sister Ruth commented in a letter to benefactors, “So many roads and bridges have been destroyed that the food products that come to Piura from other parts of Peru could not get here. The price of fruits and vegetables quadrupled and the price of almost everything went up. With so many people out of work this is a terrible hardship for the people. They just eat less and less.”

After Sister Clorinda and Deidy left in February, Sister Mary Patricia Kielty was alone in Talara until Sister Rose Dolores arrived in early April. In a way, that was fortunate as she was able to have enough water in the house, thanks to the tanks on the roof, right up to the day before Sister Rose Dolores arrived. However, she was kept very busy trying to help the people in the poorer sectors of San Pedro that suffered many losses due to the heavy rains and flooding.

Although Chalaco experienced some eighteen inches of rain during the month of February, the sisters realized conditions were much worse on the coast. Sisters Regina and Catherine commiserated with the people on the coast, seeing the accounts on television. Of course, they were affected
in so far as no supplies could be brought in, and in March Sister Regina decided not to attempt to go to the coast for retreat as it would have meant going all the way to Morropon by mule.

Despite the heavy rains that had continued throughout March, Sisters Susana Cordova, Julia Huiman, Lourdes Abad, and the postulant Deidy Abad started out from Piura for Chalaco. However, to the non-initiated, the road to Chalaco was an incredible adventure in late March. Sister Julia wrote a very graphic description of her first trip up with Deidy and Sisters Susana and Lourdes. After beginning their trip by crossing Piura’s fourth bridge on foot shortly after 6:30 a.m., they were able to take a car as far as Carrasquillo, a village close to Morropon. There they had to take off their shoes and wade into the river to board a rowboat; the crossing itself was a frightening adventure. Having arrived on the other side, they took a car into Morropon, arriving about 11:00, only to learn that no cars would even attempt to make the trip to Chalaco.

Sisters Susana and Lourdes were able to rent two donkeys to carry their things and with that the three set off walking. They continued in the hot sun all afternoon, walking slowly and resting periodically. By 6:00 p.m., they reached Faical and the house of Sister Liduvina’s sister Luisa. After resting a few minutes, they took showers in very cold water that tumbled between two big rocks. Then they washed their clothes and returned to Luisa’s house for a supper of chicken and boiled yucca, with a hot drink. Following this repast, they were more than ready to turn in for the night, even though it was only 7:00 p.m.

The following morning, they were on the road at 7:00 a.m. after having partaken of a breakfast of yucca and chicken. Luisa’s husband kindly got his burro to carry the baggage. The climb over a muddy road was much more difficult and slippery. Nevertheless, the sisters enjoyed the scenery and conversed among themselves, not being dismayed by the many people who passed them on the road. They just plodded on and took time out to rest or to wash themselves in the streams. Near noon they sat down to eat the lunch that Luisa had packed for them. After resting, they walked as far as Oberaza where a good portion of the road had fallen away. They needed to climb a hillside field full of broken branches, thorns, and sticks to get to a spot where they could descend to a roadway. They held on to one another so they would not fall in all the mud. By the time they emerged on the other side of the field, their legs were covered almost to the knees with mud. Finding a big stream, they washed themselves and their sandals and rested a while. Finally they continued on to Pambarumbe, arriving there about 2:00 p.m. They bought some crackers and pop and finished eating the food Luisa had sent along. The Coordinator of the zonal team of Pambarumbe invited them to stay in her house overnight. After showering,
they rested until close to 6:00 p.m., then had supper and played a dice game and conversed with the woman and her children.

Starting out early the next day with Wilmer Cordova, their guide, and the mules from the parish, they were able to make it to Chalaco by 4:00 p.m. In her account, Sister Julia described her fear of mounting for the first time and the problems encountered as the mules slipped and slid. At times, these poor animals sank in the mud up to their stomachs. Another thing that terrified her was the way the mules walked along the edge of the trail with the abyss just below them. About noon it began to rain, and despite her two sweaters and plastic rain poncho, Sister Julia shook with the cold. So she and the other sisters were more than glad to partake of the delicious hot soup Sisters Regina and Catherine had waiting for them. Afterwards, they rejoiced in hot showers and a long sleep. 20

Through forty years of disasters of all kinds, the SCLs have felt the protection of Divine Providence and the Incomparable Virgin. Their faith and devotion has redoubled, and it cannot be doubted that they will continue to entrust themselves to Divine Providence and the care of the Incomparable Virgin in the years to come.

Chapter XX Notes

1 Colectivo: a car that travels a given route, taking on and letting off passengers on the way.
2 Sister Agnes Klein to Mother Leo Frances Ryan, August 15, 1967, A/SCL.
3 "Talara House History," August 12–14, 1967, A/SCL.
4 Sister Joseph Therese Mader to family, August 30, 1967, A/SCL.
5 Sister Rosalie Mahoney to Ryan and Sisters, August 10, 1970, A/SCL.
6 Sister Blanche Marie Remington to her father, March 28, 1965, A/SCL.
7 "Scientists, Fishermen, Farmers Wonder if El Niño is Coming or Going," Lima Times (Peru), April 1, 1983, A/SCL.
8 Archbishop Oscar Cantuarias, monograph published by the Archdiocese for benefactors in England and Spain, 1983, A/SCL.
9 Klein to Sister Mary Kevin Hollow, April 17, 1983, A/SCL.
10 Klein to Hollow, May 8, 1983, A/SCL.
11 Klein to Hollow, May 30 and June 1, 1983, A/SCL.
12 Klein to Hollow, June 13 and 19, 1983, A/SCL.
13 Klein to Hollow, June 25, 1983, A/SCL.
15 Lima Times, May 20, 1983, [no title], [n. p.], A/SCL.
16 Sisters Joan Kilker and Mary Anselma (Josephine) Bustos to Hollow and Sisters, January 11, 1983, A/SCL.
17 Ibid.
18 Kilker to Hollow, July 22, 1984, A/SCL.
19 Sister Ruth Reischman to Benefactors, May 1998, A/SCL.
20 See Sister Julia Huiman’s account of this trip in Appendix E.
1958 First invitation to send missionaries to Peru. While visiting Saint Mary College campus, Leavenworth, Archbishop Romolo Carboni, Apostolic Nuncio in Peru, asked Mother Mary Ancilla Spoor to send Sisters of Charity to Peru. She promised to send sisters as soon as possible.

1961 Father Thomas Reilly began requesting religious to help in the new Santa Rosa parish, Talara.

1962 July 23 – Sisters of the Ninth General Chapter of the Sisters of Charity accepted the proposal to study the needs of the Church in South America and the SCLs’ part in meeting those needs.

September – Father John Stitz, Director of the Papal Volunteers for Kansas, encouraged Father Thomas Reilly to take slides and send a tape to Mother Leo Frances Ryan and her Council regarding his plans and desires for sister missionaries for Santa Rosa Parish in Talara, Peru.

1963 March 18 – Father Thomas Reilly wrote Mother Leo Frances.

March 31 – Father John Stitz visited the Mother House and showed slides to Mother Leo Frances and her Council.

April 7 – Mother Leo Frances announced to the Community that the Sisters of Charity would send missionaries to Talara, Peru. (Included a questionnaire and volunteer form).

May 9 – First Sisters of Charity visited Talara; Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Seraphine Sheehan also saw the works of other missionaries in Lima.

May 25 – Council unanimously decided to accept Talara as first mission.

May 27 – Sisters Agnes (Dennis Marie) Klein, Blanche Marie Remington, and Irene (Marie Colombiere) Skeehan received missions to Santa Rosa, Talara.

June 2 – Sisters Rosalie (Mary Clementine) Mahoney and Anne
Denise Shea received missions to Santa Rosa, Talara.

1963

August 30 – Mission Crosses were awarded in ceremony at Annunciation Chapel; Archbishop Hunkeler, many priests, and family members attended.

September 30 – Missionaries left Mother House and Kansas City by plane for New York.

October 5 – Missionaries and Sisters Mary Baptista Ward and Mary Seraphine Sheehan left New Jersey on board the Santa Elena (Grace Lines); had seven intermediate stops before arriving in Peru.

October 23 – Missionaries and their two companions, Sisters Mary Baptista and Mary Seraphine, arrived in Lima; spent two weeks visiting sites and missions in Lima; left for north overland on November 6.

November 8 – Father Thomas Reilly and Sisters of Charity arrived in Talara about 5:30 p.m.

November 12 – Sisters donned new off-white habits for first time.

November 13 – Teachers went to classrooms for first time; nurses met with Father David Becherer and Cruzada de Amor.

1964

February 4 – Sisters changed head-gear and habits: simple veils with white bands; grey habits tried in March.

June 12 – Permission was given to shorten new grey habits.

December – Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Anselm Towle visited the Sisters in Talara.

December – Mother Leo Frances and Sister Mary Anselm visited Coripata, Bolivia, at insistence of Monsignor Robert Walton.

1965

First teacher released from classroom duties; Sister Irene Skeehan began full-time work in preparing religion teachers.
First new sister arrived; Sister Josephine (Mary Anselma) Bustos arrived on March 30, just in time to begin classes.

May 31 – Announcement to Community of forthcoming mission in Coripata, Bolivia.

1965

May – Plans submitted for new convent in Talara (Sister Cornelia Donnelly and Peruvian architect).

August – Sisters Charlotte (Mary Cabrini) Swain, Lucille (John Francis) Harrington, Frances (Ann Louise) Turk, and Joan (Mary Martel) Kilker began language studies in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

November 30 – Names of sisters assigned to Coripata were announced to the Community: Sisters Charlotte Swain, Lucille Harrington, Frances Turk and Joan Kilker; but Frances Turk was soon replaced by Sister Blanche Marie Harrington in January before departure.

December 28 – Departure ceremony for three of the Bolivian missionaries: Sisters Lucille, Joan, and Frances. Sister Charlotte had an earlier departure ceremony with Sister Josephine Bustos.

1966

January 10 – Bolivian missionaries left for La Paz; arrived in Coripata on January 13.

Modified habits adopted in Bolivia (winds played havoc with full, pleated skirts).

June 11 – Council voted to accept Guatemalan mission with priests from Helena Diocese.

July 11 – Serious accident in Bolivia; Sister Lucille Harrington injured more or less severely; catechist Rosario slightly injured.

November – New convent in Talara blessed.

1967

February – Sisters Mary Seraphine Sheehan and Rosalie Mahoney visited Guatemala.
June 24 – Announcement made of new mission in Guatemala: those missioned were Sisters Ann (del Rey) McGloin, Anne Denise Shea, Frances Turk, and Joseph Angela Reichenbach.

August 12 – First serious accident in Peru; Sister Joseph Therese Mader was flown to Los Angeles for treatment at Saint John’s Hospital, Santa Monica.

1967

August 30 – Departure ceremony for Sisters Ann McGloin, Joseph Angela Reichenbach, Sally (Miriam Joseph) Watson, and Mary Marcianna Trujillo. The latter two were going to Bolivia and Peru; Sisters Anne Denise Shea and Frances Turk had been in Peru and left for Guatemala in October.

Increasing Communist influence evident in Bolivia; became worse in following years.

Sister Lucille Harrington returned from language school in Cochabamba, Bolivia, able to converse and begin teaching in Aymara language.

1968

April – Sisters Josephine Bustos and Mary Marcianna Trujillo began catechetical work in Pueblo Nuevo, the first outreach from Talara other than Negritos.

June – Sister Rosalie Mahoney went to Special Community Chapter as representative from South America; was appointed as “Field Representative” for Latin American Missions (2 yrs).

September – Sister Charlotte Swain returned from Chapter wearing an olive green knit suit; first street clothes used instead of habit.

October – Revolution in Peru nationalized oil; ousted IPC, American Oil Company.

1969

October – Sisters Anne Denise Shea and Frances Turk left Guatemala and the Community, leaving Sister Ann McGloin alone at Santa Maria temporarily; Sister Blanche Marie joined her in November, but Guatemalan mission was closed in December.
1970 January – Sister Mary Marcianna Trujillo replaced Sister Agnes Klein as Director at Santa Rosa school.

March 21 – Sisters Agnes Klein and Rosalie Mahoney opened mission in Ayabaca, Peru.

1971 February 20 – Sisters Catherine Nichol, Blanche Marie Remington, and Marie James Simms opened mission in Chalaco.

June – Sister Regina Deitchman was named first Regional Coordinator of Missions.

1971 September – Sister Ruth Barron arrived in Coripata; set up first laboratory in whole Yungas area.

October 15 – Sisters Agnes Klein and Rosalie Mahoney forced to abandon Ayabaca by night.

1972 January 3 – First Community Meeting of Latin American missionaries (held in Talara).

August – Sisters Rosalie Mahoney and Sally Watson opened mission in Salitral; Sister Rosalie worked with Ernestina Zapata with live-in experiences for campo girls during week; promotion of women programs; Sister Edith McCauley went to help in April 1973 after Sister Sally left; mission closed in November of 1973.

August – Sister Agnes Klein began work with Leadership Program for the Prelature of Chulucanas.

October – Sister Ann McGloin returned to Guatemala to work at Huehuetenango with other religious Communities. (She returned to U.S. in 1980).

1973 November – Sister Edith McCauley arrived in Coripata; began programs for promotion of women.

1974 January – Community meeting held for first and only time in Coripata; meeting significant for discernment regarding establishing Latin American novitiate.
January 1 – First Director of Missions appointed.

June-July – Kansas City-St. Joseph priests withdrew from Coripata, Bolivia; Sisters of Charity signed contract with Archbishop Jorge Manrique to administer parish; Sister Lucille Harrington appointed Administrator.

August 1 – Sister Regina Deitchman named Administrator of San Fernando parish, Chalaco; yearlong experiment.

April – A substation of Radio Yungas was set up in the convent in Coripata.

February 1 – Sisters Agnes Klein and Elena Mack opened first mission in Piura at the old seminary; was then called Spirituality Center.

Considerable political unrest in Coripata; also very unstable clergy presence.

May – Archbishop Jorge Manrique named Sister Lucille Harrington “pastora” in Coripata, putting her in charge of the parish whether or not priests were present.

July – Community Chapter gave permission to establish a house of formation in Peru.

June – New formation house opened at Cristo Rey in Pachitea, Piura; Sister Elena Mack appointed first Director of Formation.

August 22 – Sister Justin Wallace, OFM, arrived in Chalaco to share in ministry and community of the SCLs.

September 27 – Nelyda Clavijo enters as first postulant in formation program.

Sister Janet Cashman began forming Health Promoters and conducting a clinic in Pachitea.

Devastating rains of “El Niño” forced abandonment of the formation house from April to August; ruinous conditions in Piura, Talara, and the sierra.
August – Sister Carol Williams, Convent Station Charity, came to live with SCLs of Coripata until March 1987.

1984 September 27 – Sister Charlotte Swain died in Coripata unexpectedly; first Sister of Charity buried in Latin America.


1986 January 1 – Sister Regina appointed as Director of Postulants.

1987 February – Negritos Convent set up as House for Postulants.

1987 February 16 – Formation house in Pachitea abandoned for good; Sisters moved to rented house in Santa Ana, Piura, until new convent at Santa Rosa, Piura, was ready.

Participation in Inter-congregational Formation Program began.

June-July – Decision made to close the house in Coripata, Bolivia.

August 1 – Sister Mildred Irwin began Nutrition Program for TB patients and families in Santa Rosa Parish, Piura.

August 19 – New house at Santa Rosa, Piura opened; blessed by Archbishop on September 12.

December 14 – Coripata house closed.

1988 January – Sister Catherine Nichol began program for preparing catechists for the Archdiocese.

November 11 – Celebration of twenty-five years in Talara.

1989 April 1 – Sister Donna Jean Henson appointed Director of Novices; novitiate house moved to Negritos in March 1989.

July 18 – Sister Janet Cashman appointed Health Coordinator for Piura; opened Office of Health Apostolate on March 10 of the following year.
1990  March 15 – Sister Elena Mack participated in Great Catholic Mission of Piura; opened Office of Evangelization.

August 1 – Sister Janet Cashman appointed Health Coordinator for Archdiocese of Piura and Tumbes.

1991  April 1 – Santa Julia, Piura, opened.

1992  June 3–24 – First Peruvian sisters visited United States; Sisters Clorinda Timana and Maria Orozco were observers at Community Chapter.

First Peruvian sister entered formation work; Sister Clorinda Timana worked with Sister Donna Jean Henson at first and then independently with postulants (named Director of Postulants in 1996).

March 25 – Sister Susana Cordova professed final vows; she was the first Peruvian sister to make her final vows as a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth.

May 1 – Sisters Paula Rose Jauernig and Joan Kilker arrived in Quito, Ecuador, to investigate work in the Jesuit clinic in Solanda, South Quito, in collaboration with an outreach program of Saint Joseph Hospital, Denver, with the Josephite Missions in the Oriente; actual work in the clinic began in October.


March 31 – Sisters Joan Kilker and Paula Rose Jauernig terminated their work with the clinic in Solanda; Sisters Joan and Lucille Harrington (who had arrived in February) began work in the parish of Solanda.

June 18 – Sister Ruth Reischman began a food kitchen for children of the market place at Cristo Rey Parish, Pachitea, Piura.
1995  April 1 – Sister Ruth began coordinating a food kitchen for senior citizens in Pachitea (This replaced the children’s food site).

May 3 – Sisters Joan Kilker and Lucille Harrington moved to El Chaco, Ecuador, to work with the Josephite priests.

1996  March – First Communal Retreat; Negritos; Directors: Sisters Elena Mack, Donna Jean Henson, Clorinda Timana.
March – First Peruvian Sister to receive vows: Sister Trinidad Orozco received Sister Laura Rumiche’s vows in the name of the Community Director.

June – All Peruvian SCLs traveled to United States for “Converging Paths” celebration.


Formation house opened in Lopez Albujar; no postulants or novices in the house that year

November 14 – Sister Joan Kilker suffered a stroke; taken to Quito for treatment, then to the United States.

1999  March – Sister Susana Cordova became Director of Novices.

August 11 – Sister Lucille Harrington returned to El Chaco alone, hopeful that Sister Joan Kilker would be able to return later.

First doctors from Saint Joseph Hospital, Denver, Colorado, arrived for a collaborative program with the poor of Peru.

2000  March 9 – Sisters Joan and Lucille closed the mission at El Chaco, Ecuador.

May – Aspirancy Program opened in Chalaco; Sister Clorinda Timana named Director.

October 17 – Formation house moved to La Arena.
April 1 – Sister Laura Rumiche began Reflexology Center at Santa Rosa, Piura.

August – Shana Van Kirk, Vincentian Volunteer from Omaha, Nebraska, arrived for seven months of service in Talara.

November 8 – Celebration of forty years in Talara by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.
The miraculous image of Señor Cautivo that has been venerated in Ayabaca (Piura, Peru) for more than two hundred years has a truly extraordinary origin. The following account represents the most generalized tradition and the one that seems most acceptable because it coincides with certain historic data.

It was in the year 1751 that a parish priest named Garcia Guerrero had the happy idea to give the town of Ayabaca a holy patron. To give reality to this idea, the priest agreed with the inhabitants of the place when they decided to send to Ecuador, where there were good sculptors, to have the desired image made.

With this end in mind, they named a commission to travel to this neighboring country. The attendants soon left for Ecuador. But, after walking several leagues, they met with two young men dressed in white, who, by fortune, were sculptors. These two personages entered into conversation with the members of the commission, who, on hearing that they were sculptors, contracted with them to do the longed for work. They returned to Ayabaca to put them in contact with the priest. The unknown sculptors promised to fashion the work, but with the following conditions: that nobody watch them work; that their food be brought only once a day, at daybreak; and that the price of the work should be settled on later.

The parish priest and the neighbors of the place accepted this triple condition and, in fact, provided a room hermetically closed, with only one window by which each day they could leave the food very early in the morning. They also gave them the material for the work and a thick trunk of cedar, brought with anticipation from a hill called “The Zahumerio” close to Jilili. Enclosed in their room, the sculptors put their hands to the work.

Many days elapsed, and nothing was known of them and even less of the state of the work. The inhabitants of the place desired to have some news of how the work was going. To this end, they directed themselves to the room of the sculptors. Realizing that nobody was responding in the cell, they lost patience, and believing themselves mocked, they invaded the room. But—oh wonder of wonders!—they did not find the sculptors, but only a most beautiful image, the one that today is known as “Señor Cautivo,” the Captive Christ, because he is in the form of a Divine Prisoner.
At the sight of so imposing an effigy, the neighbors of the place remained amazed with eyes downcast to the floor, not even daring to look at so majestic an image. All shouted: “IT IS THE WORK OF ANGELS!”

From that time to today, the tradition has continued that the image of “Señor Cautivo” was carved by the hands of angels, perhaps for the very impression made on the viewer and for the expression of the statue’s face. Also, the coloring of the image can hardly be found in any school of sculptors.

Moreover, the food that had been brought to the mysterious sculptors during almost eight days was conserved intact. They had not even touched it.

*This story was adapted from a novena booklet prepared by Telmo Antonio Vegas in 1958.
Sister Rosalie Mahoney's Account of the Ayabaca Event
October 1971

I went to church for the 7 a.m. Mass and was surprised to find it over half full of people, as we had thought most of the people had gone home from the fiesta. I noticed Fr. John Tasto was in the confessional, with people waiting in line for him. About 7:15 a.m. a lady from the waiting group came to me and said they had contracted to have a Mass at 7 a.m., and wasn't the priest coming to offer it? I answered he was already in Church, but people had stopped him for confession and I was sure he would start as soon as he could. She said that they were negociantes, and did not have time to wait long; that she personally had made arrangements for this Mass. (Those who made arrangements for the Mass had a tela puesto, and yelled "Goldie" every time they made a sale.)

The Mass started at 7:30, although the first article in the paper about all of this said that it didn't start until 9 or 9:30. I had the money for the pension of the police who had come to help during the fiesta and during the Mass several of them came to me to collect. I had helped to distribute Communion during the Mass, and therefore was up in front when it ended, about 8:30.

Several people immediately asked if they could enter to 'adore' the image, and P. Juan corrected them, and said they could 'venerate' it, but to come around to the side door of the Cooperative, and enter by that way to the sanctuary. I offered to stay with the peregrinos, and he got four men from the crowd to help, two to stay in the entrance to keep all from coming in at once, and two more to help getting them up and down the steps behind the image. I was just to keep things moving, and answer questions, etc. We started this immediately and then about 9:15 John said, let's go to breakfast.

So we told the helpers that we would be gone about half an hour, and I invited him to come to our house to eat. We left the church through the salon exit, and as we got to the street it was just in time to say good-bye to P. John D. and the two Redemptorist priests who were leaving for Piura.

We returned to the church at 9:45, and the men who were helping wanted to leave. Sr. Agnes [Klein] had taken my place while I was gone, and when I returned she went to the front office. P. Juan told me to stay in the sanctuary until he sent for me to help count money, as he had to see Vital Mego and arrange for a commission to begin this counting. One of the altar boys came in, and since all of the other helpers had gone I asked
him to help the people on the steps so they wouldn’t fall, while I kept the crowd from piling up.

During this time, two policemen came in, watched for a few minutes, and someone suddenly complained that his wallet had been taken. They questioned several people, taking them to the outer room, and they suddenly left and did not return.

A man came in, stood beside me for a while, and I noticed his camera. He said he was a correspondent from EL TIEMPO, and had been coming there for 15 years. He put his camera on the floor beside me, and went up in line to venerate the image. When he returned he started to talk to me again, and said that it seemed to him that the face of the image had changed, that it looked older this year, and that didn’t I notice that one side of the face seemed to be scratched. I said that I hadn’t noticed any difference in it at all. Then he asked if he could take a picture of it, said he had taken one every year for 15 years. I said I had not heard any regulation against taking one, and to go ahead. It took him about 5 minutes to get himself situated to take the picture, and then he moved to another spot and took another. I didn’t know that this same man had asked to take a picture the day before, and P. Juan D. had said no pictures were to be taken, and Sr. Agnes had not let him take it. Also, later in Talara, she met the manager of EL TIEMPO, who commented on the story about Ayabaca, and he said he had had no representative of EL TIEMPO there, but they had published the account sent in by this man.

At about 11 a.m., the altar boy wanted to go, too, and there were only small groups coming and going. So I sent him to ask P. Juan if we should keep it open any longer, since it seemed most of the people who wanted had come and gone. He sent word to close it if I wanted to, so after a few minutes of no one at all, I closed it. There was no one anywhere near the door, but when I returned to the sanctuary almost immediately 4 or 5 men came up to the railing and demanded to come in to venerate the image. I answered that I had just closed the door because there was no one there, but to come around to the side and I’d let them in. They came in without further comment, and left by the other door. From then until noon, people came in a few at a time, so I just decided to leave the door open and let them come as they wanted to do. All was quiet and orderly; some were friendly, others paid no attention to me, and all seemed devout.

As the clock in the plaza struck 12 noon, P. Juan T. came in with Vital Mego by the side door of the church that leads to their house. They came up to the front and asked me if I had heard anything about the rumor that a group was going to invade the church. I said I had not heard anything about it at all, and that the morning had been very tranquil and quiet. He said, “Just let them do anything they want to”, and I told him that they had
been coming in all morning. No one wanted to do anything they hadn’t
gotten to do.

Just then a slender woman in black dress with grey slacks underneath
and a dirty half apron came in the lead of a group of six or seven men. She
entered by the center door of the church, and started screaming immediately,
“They have changed our customs. They won’t let us venerate like we want
to. They are interfering with us”. She repeated this and the whole band of
them came up the center of the Church to the sanctuary. John said, “Let
them do what they want, let’s get out of here.” So from the inside of the
sanctuary I opened the gates and the group came in, the woman screaming
at me, “You’ve come to take our money. The curas⁶ use it for their women.
You’ve come to change our customs,” etc.; and she kept on repeating it.
They didn’t put anything in the alcancia,⁷ but climbed up the steps behind
the statue, all of them grumbling; but she continued to scream. On the way
back down she started to scream “They’ve cut his hair! They’ve cut his
hair!” and the rest did the same. I had watched them, and when she came
toward me she pushed me down the sanctuary steps. I, thinking she was
just mentally disturbed or drinking, tried to calm her, and took a step toward
her. She screamed “Don’t touch me”, and John said, “Sister, let’s get out!”
I said I thought they planned to take the money, and he said, “Let them.”
So I said all right, and went out with him and Vital.

We left by the door that goes to their house, and John asked me if the
police hadn’t come during the morning. I said they had come for about
five minutes, but that all seemed to be well and I guessed that they felt
they weren’t needed, except for that incident about the wallet. John went
out into the street and over to the jefe’s⁸ house, Canales, but he wasn’t
there, so he started for the police station. I followed him to the front of the
church and looked in through the door there, and already the crowd inside
the church had gotten about three times bigger, and all were crying,
“They’ve cut his hair!”

John came back running from the police station and said, “Let’s get to
the tower”, and I followed him toward their door. A lady stopped me to
ask a question, and I paused to answer her, and didn’t see the crowd coming
from the other side of their house with sticks and shouting for the cura to
come out. John saw them, and got to the door just ahead of them and
closed it. He said they pushed it open and he got it closed again and turned
the lock. At that moment I got there, too, and told the 15 or so to get away
from the door as they were pushing on it. The woman in black who had
been in the church and pushed me started at me again and pushed me from
the sidewalk. She said, “She’s one of them, “ and a man hit me with his
stick. I did not recognize any of these people. I had the impression that the
majority of those at the door first were well dressed, except for this woman.
(The police in Ayabaca have her name, and she comes from Sullana, they said she had a chicha stand during the fiesta.)

At this moment a group of women and girls who live near us caught hold of me and pulled me down the street toward our house, telling me that this was very dangerous. I had thought it was a small group of discontented persons. When we got near our house I asked if Sr. Agnes was inside the house. They said, “no, she wasn’t”; so I got away from my helpers and returned to outside the priests’ house again. And by that time their front door had been broken down, their things were being thrown out the window upstairs, and the bottles of beer from cases they put there for the guardia were being broken on the street. In a frenzy the crowd in the street, which suddenly got to be about four times bigger, rubbed the articles in the mud, and shouted for the cura to come out and they would take his clothes off and clean the street with him.

At this point three police showed up in their doorway, and two in the window above. I was standing behind the mob on the sidewalk just opposite the priest’s house, and three men stepped in front of me to shield me. They were saying that I should hide somewhere, but I couldn’t see where, and didn’t feel afraid. Suddenly some from the street saw me, and shook their fists at me, and told me to come down into the street. I said, “No, we didn’t do anything”. But they continued, and stepped toward me and said, “Come down”. The police noticed them and one of them came forward with his gun and stood by me. Someone said, “To the police station,” and since he didn’t seem to know what to do with me, we walked over to the jail. Someone threw mud after me, but nothing else happened.

In the jail, I watched out the window and heard the bells ringing, and people running from everywhere. At this time it was about 12:45. The statue suddenly appeared in the church door, and a procession started. Everywhere people were shouting, “They’ve cut his hair” and “Away with the cura and those foreigners!” Someone got a hand mike and made a speech about the oppression of the foreigners, and that they would be sent out of the country. Many shouted, “Lynchamos el cura”. I had many visitors in the jail, and asked the police and others if Padre and Madre Inez were all right, and for a long time they didn’t seem to know. Since I was in the dormitory of the guards, I saw them coming in to load up with machine guns, and they told me the crowd was “Muy bravo”.

It was evident that it was getting bigger, and I asked right away if they couldn’t use the police radio to inform Chulucanas, and they said they couldn’t, that no one would be listening. When Dr. Rogellio Villivencia came in a little after 1, I asked him if he couldn’t send a wire to Chulucanas, and he said the office wouldn’t be open. I asked if there was no emergency service, and don’t remember how he answered that. He went out, and a
short time later he came back, and I asked if he had sent the wire, and he said “no”. He left again, and returned after 3, telling me what he had wired to Msgr.\textsuperscript{14}

One of the police finally came in who said he had seen the Madre and Padre Juan, and that they were well guarded, so I asked them to take me where they were. They answered that it would be better to bring them to where I was, so I didn’t bother them any more. During the afternoon, they put machine guns pointing to the doors, told me to keep away from the window and in a corner so no one would see me, and brought in all the containers of money. A young boy of about 17 ran in, because he said the crowd was chasing him, said he was on the side of the \textit{curas}. He had a toy gun and said he had been walking up the hill, when a group started after him. His name is Sedano, and he lives on the corner across from the police station. The Sra. Guermina Gallegas came in with her face all mud and bloody. She wouldn’t wash it until they had taken a picture of it. She had been pushed down and they had threatened to throw her in the fire because she defended the priests. John T. came in the back door of the jail about 5:30, very nervous and exhausted.

The mother of the boy who ran into the jail brought me some food earlier, and by evening others came with more food. The Sra. Luisa de Canales, wife of the Alferez, came in, and asked if she could do anything. I gave her my house keys, and asked her to find out if our house was really a wreck as some had told me, and she went over there. She returned with some of my clothes, my papers, and books, etc. Later, she returned for some things of Sr. Agnes and Sr. Patricia.\textsuperscript{15} At about 6:30 p.m. Sr. Agnes joined us in the jail, and the crowd outside seemed to be getting quieter. They blocked up the windows, and the police gave us places to sleep the night in jail. Earlier they had told me that they were sending for the army from Suyo, but it never came. We kept waiting for it to come and some time later they said that they were told to radio at 6 p.m. if the riot had not been controlled, and the army would come...5 hours away.

The Sra. Luisa brought in someone who knew how to operate the radio, and John gave him some messages for Msgr. When the police officers sent up with Lucho arrived, things seemed to move along well. The local force had gotten us to a safe place, and the new group called in the PIP for \textit{denuncias}.\textsuperscript{16} They also had a meeting with the authorities, as the people were calling for an open meeting and that the money be given to them. They therefore set up a money counting table with representatives from the Banco de la Nacion, PIP, alcalde, sub-prefecture, and police all present.

At a little after 11 p.m. Saturday, they said to get ready for the exit. So we told everybody good-bye, and stood by the wall inside the jail office. Lucho was outside with the car going, two guards with machine guns at
the windows of front and back were there, and Sr. Agnes and I were told to get into the center. Another guard got in after us, and we went flying out of town. We asked where F. Juan was, and they said he had left from the back door in the garbage truck, and that we would pick him up a way out of town. We did that just this side of Pingola, and I got in the front seat, as they wanted him in the back. The trip down was uneventful, and I promptly went to sleep, slept nearly all the way. We arrived in Piura at 4 a.m. where we told the story to Msgr. and P. Jack D.

Notes

1 Father John Tasto and Father John (Jack) Dowling are referred to in this account alternately as Father John, P. Juan (Padre John), Fr. Juan or John. Sometimes a T. or D. distinguishes them.

2 negociantes: business men or women

3 tela puesto: canvas covering for street vendor’s site

4 peregrinos: pilgrims who came for the feast

5 El Tiempo: a newspaper of Piura, Peru

6 curas: literally, the priests, but usually used in a derogatory sense; the word sacerdotes is used when respectful.

7 alcancia: money box

8 jefe: chief, here the one in charge of the police

9 chica: corn liquor

10 guardia: guards

11 "Let us lynch (or hang) the priest."

12 Madre Inez: Sister Agnes Klein

13 muy bravo: very spirited and uncontrollable

14 Msgr.: Bishop John McNabb. In Peru, the title Monsignor is given to bishops.

15 Sister Mary Patricia Kielty

16 PIP: Investigative Police of Peru; denuncias: reports to the police
Between 9:30 a.m. and 10:00, I went to the office to help the secretaries who were selling pictures of Señor Cautivo. About 10:30 Vital Mego, president of the Parish Council came in and told me that the people were going to invade the Church, but that the Police had been informed and would be there to guard the Church. A little later Father John Tasto came and said that we would start counting the money of the Fiesta a little later.

After closing the office, I went over to take care of a couple who wanted to make out their marriage proclamas.* When returning to the office, I met Lola Jaramillo, our cook, and she asked me to come into the house as she had something to tell me. I asked her if it was about the invasion and she said “Yes”. I assured her that Father already knew the plan and had informed the police. She said that Mr. Portacarrera had told her to tell the Sisters that the attack would be made, and to tell us because that as we were weaker they may attack us first. Telling her not to worry, I returned to the library where we were to count the money. I met Father and he said they had decided to count the money in their house, and to go up and put on some music for the secretaries and the librarian, and that he would be up a little later. I went up stairs, put on the music and we started counting the money. This was about 12:00. Before too long we heard a lot of shouting in the streets, and went to the window to look out.

People were running toward the Church, and I told the group that they were invading the church. I saw Sister Rosalie below talking to Señorita Antolina, and made the statement that she would be alright as she was with Antolina, who is a very respected lady in the pueblo. The girls remarked that no one would be safe in a crowd like this. A little later, Father John came running up the steps and I went out to meet him. I motioned that the door to the sacristy was open, and Father ran down to shut and lock it. We next pushed the deep freezer in front of the kitchen door, closed the window, and Father took out two butcher knives. He gave one to the librarian, Raynaldo Calle and kept the other himself. He turned to me and said that he never thought that he could kill anyone, but he had changed his mind. Bertha Flores de Mego, the secretary, was crying by now and ran and hid behind the desk in the living room. Socorro Castro, the other secretary, said that she couldn’t be seen at all, and why not let Father hide there.

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* proclamas: marriage banns (to be announced later in the church)
The exchange was made, and we began to wait for the people to come up the stairs. We could hear them on the second floor in the Fathers’ bedrooms and they sounded as if they were wrecking the house. The people from the streets started to throw rocks at the windows, and we had to keep back as the rocks were coming into the room. The three fell on their knees and made their act of contrition, and I tried to calm them down. During this time the bells of the church started ringing and the shouting got louder and stronger. They kept shouting for the priest, and they wanted to kill him. Once in a while they would shout for the foreigners and a few times for the Sisters.

After waiting for about an hour, which seemed like an eternity, we heard them coming up the steps. The door burst open like the freezer wasn’t even there, and people started into the room. I went out into the hall and asked what they wanted, but they didn’t even answer me. They just kept breaking up things with their clubs. They entered into the kitchen and one man, Manuel Calle, looked into the freezer and all the cabinets. They entered into the dining room and looked around and then into the room where Father was hiding. They circled around, but didn’t break anything in either of these rooms. Bertha, Socorro, and Reynaldo ran down the steps as the crowd was coming up, and Bertha shouted that Father was in the tower. This distracted quite a number and they started climbing the ladder to have a look. One man, Galacia, returned to the room where Father was hiding and came within about a yard of the desk, and then turned and left the room.

I stayed in the hall all the time, as I didn’t want to draw attention to where Father was. I turned to find that they had Marco, the sacristan, beating him up on the steps. I ran out and started hitting on the fellow who had him and told him to leave him alone. He grabbed me by the collar, and pointed a pistol at my forehead. (I noticed right away that the pistol was plastic, so had no fear of this). He asked me where Father was and I answered that I didn’t know. He then told me to open the door of the sacristy, and I said that I would. We were at the top of the steps leading to the sacristy, and as they are concrete, and four flights, I had no desire to be thrown down—therefore I stopped fighting him, but hit his hand and told him to leave me alone, and that I would go by myself.

In the trip down he kept poking the plastic gun in my ribs. When we reached the sacristy, I pulled out my key (Father had said that the police were in the church guarding the statue, and I wanted to get to them). He told me to wait that there was no hurry, and I found that they had dragged Marco down also. They asked him for the keys of the Church, and I told him to give them to them. I couldn’t get the door open as Father had double locked it, and a man took the key away from me and opened the door. I stepped out into the Church and one of the police grabbed me and put me
behind him. There were about six or eight police there with drawn pistols. I first shouted: "Where is Sister Rosalie?" and they said that she was in the jail and alright.

One of the women in the group shouted that Father was in a large box in the sacristy, but the police let no one enter. The other group left the sacristy by the same way we came down. I whispered to the police that Father was upstairs, and I led them back up. When I told Father that the police were here, he said he had no confidence in them either. After a very short while more police arrived, and they decided that Father had to find a place more secure. As the ceiling is false, Marco suggested that Father hide up there. We brought in a table and chair, and Father climbed up, sitting on a concrete beam with his legs out on two other beams. This was at about 3:30 p.m., and there he was to sit until 5:30.

During this time, the people would try to break the sacristy door and also from time to time some would climb up on the roof and also enter into the second floor again. All this time there were from six to eight police upstairs with us and three on the second floor as well as two on the first floor near the door. They would leave from time to time to get whoever was on the roof etc. After a short while, those that arrived had machine guns to add to the pistols and clubs. They moved the big box in the sacristy in front of the door and planned their action if anyone broke through (they would beat them off with their clubs as they came up). The Mayor and the sub-prefecto• came up during this time and they stated they didn’t think that they could keep the people out. We smelled the smoke, and thought that they were burning the building, but one of the police went down and said it was the things from the office as well as the Fathers’ clothes that were burning.

The procession was going out through the town with band and all, and later the sub-prefecto said this was to distract the people and get them away from the Church. One of the police suggested that we bring up the chalices and Blessed Sacrament from the Sacristy. We went down, and I was told to crawl past the windows so the people couldn’t see me. We brought these up and put them in the cabinet in the dining room. At about 5:30, the police came up in a larger group with the heads of the Guardia Civil and Guardia Republican, and said that they were going to take Father over to the jail. They called him, but he wouldn’t even answer until I went over and called. Plans were made that he would follow one policeman and the others would run along side of him to protect him.

They turned to me and said: “Madre, you can’t go now, because you can’t run fast enough!” They left, leaving about four police with me, and

• subprefect
started down the stairs. The police had put magazines in front of the windows to cover the holes made by the rocks, and they were watching through these. I wanted to see, but they told me I was not to be seen. Finally, I could wait no longer and I ran over and looked out the other window just in time to see about seven police with their machine guns pointed to the crowd, and I knew that Father had gotten in safely. In a short time they came back to tell me that he was safe, and that one of the police had been hit on the leg with a rock and had fallen. The same police told me how he had rolled with the pace of the others so no one else would trip. The poor fellow was a bit sore.

Later, one of the police said they wanted to take me across the street or to somewhere else where it was safer, but that there were not enough police at that time—there were about six or so. About six, the Sub-prefecto came over and said that Father had sent the keys to get out the money which was in the Office of the Parish Council. I went down with him and the police, and what a sight! The rooms on the second floor were completely wrecked, but the door of the office had not been broken in. We went in, and the police took the money over to the jail as I put it into bags. Later, we gathered up a few things that were left in the Fathers’ rooms and took them upstairs.

The Sub-Prefecto wanted me to come over to the jail with the police then, but I said that I would wait to see if the Bishop might be on the radio. (I had heard that a telegram was sent, and I thought he might try to call when he received it). He said that he would send me something to eat, and left. About 6:30 Lola, our cook, came over with the wife of one of the policemen and said that I should come over to the jail and that one of the police could talk over the radio. The Sargent [sic] and about six police came along to take me over. We started down the stairs, and once we reached the outside door, the Sargent told me to put my arm around him, and he put his arm around me and the other police followed.

As we reached the bottom of the Church steps, a few people started over toward us, but he shouted that the first who threw a stone would receive a club. He shouted to the police to watch from behind, and we calmly continued our journey. He saw a shadow between two of the tents, and sent the police ahead only to find a little girl who just wanted to see. We entered the jail and had a happy reunion with the three of [us] being safe and sound together.

The people in the crowd that came upstairs were: Manuel Calle, Segundo Galacia, Peña Pintado, Rubia Niño, Señora de Chunga, and many others that I didn’t know by name.

The man who grabbed me was Peña Pintado, a teacher from the campo. 637
APPENDIX D

Sister Catherine’s Account of Her Trip to Chalaco in 1983

This is Sister Catherine Nichol’s account of her memorable trip from Piura to Chalaco during the rains of El Niño in April 1983.

The Bishop’s chauffer [sic] was still “fighting the Road”—and absences of it—from Chulucanas to Piura—bringing a nurse in to buy medicines for the many sick persons there. Gasoline was often unavailable because trucks from the Talara refinery could not get to Piura. But he said if I could take some gas out of our car, for theirs, he would take me (after we got to Chulucanas) to Palo Verde (Green Stick)—a place between Chulu and Morropon where the road had also been destroyed and it was flooded—cars could not pass it. We went to the filling station in Piura and had gas removed from the tank, to take back, waiting for the next arrival of the Bishop’s driver. When he came, he was changing his mind about taking me beyond Chulucanas, but we persuaded him to carry through. Another sister and myself were passengers from Piura to Chulucanas.

We left in the evening to make what, in normal times, is a one-hour trip, and had now become 3-4 hours. The driver fought his way through mud—at one place having to cross a canal that, on the other side, had no road—only mud between us and a return to what was left, on the other side, of the highway. This was only the outskirts of Piura. There were more “detours” through the remainder of the desert than pieces of the “original highway”, as we drove through the night. We met large trailer-trucks stalled. After entering the cutoff—usually a good, paved road of approximately ten minutes’ drive in to Chulucanas, we found that a pick-up truck had stalled in a wash-out in the main road, and cars could not pass. Since the chauffer was going to try to leave the road—and pass over to the other side, by going through the field, he asked us to walk across the stream, in the dark, rain pouring down. We waded, in the dark, about 9:30 p.m., partially seeing where we were going, and, of course, saturating our shoes, and joined the car when it came back to the road.

The bridge into Chulucanas, a bit further on, had already broken down from the swollen river and abnormally swift currents. So we had to again leave the car—which would be parked on this side of the bridge—put our luggage on bicycle carts, walk across, and get into another car on the other side of the river. At about 11:00 p.m. we reached our destination for the night—for me, the Bishop’s residence, which also houses several other persons. One of the sisters indicated a bedroom which I readily “fell into”, after first unpacking some frozen meat, and leaving it in the freezer. We
were not to travel the next day, during which rain steadily fell, because the chauffer had another trip to make.

That night I planned to ask the sisters in Chalaco to send two mules down to Morropon to get me and the supplies, the next day. But that was not to be. I was unable to use the usual radio connection between the parishes in our prelature, because the motor to provide its power could not be started. I would have to spend an extra day in Morropon, and try to contact the sisters from there. The mules would need a day to come down the mountains. We would need two days, starting from Morropon—for the 1st time in 13 years! (Always before one could get at least a part of distance up, by car, before having to transfer to mule!)

Fortunately a young priest, Fr. Richard, an Augustinian stationed in Chulucanas, was also going to go to Chalaco, to replace the priests and deacons assigned there, for a month. The next morning we set out! Cars in Chulucanas (which, by the way, could not leave—they were “caught” on that side of the broken bridge!), took us to the bridge. We again unloaded, had our luggage wheeled across the bridge, which we could walk across—It had buckled, but not been carried away, as had the bridge over the Morropon river. The chauffer got a car he had parked—“under guard”—on the “outside” of the bridge, and drove us about 1/2 hour to Palo Verde. There a stream was being crossed by men pushing and pulling and swimming with make-shift rafts which held one person—a few boards on top of barrels. These men, at least, had a “new-found job!”

On the other side of that crossing we transferred ourselves and baggage to a pick-up truck running between Palo Verde and the Morropon River. (It, too, was “caught”, and couldn’t cross anywhere to go anywhere else!) All these moves we had to be seeing our pieces of baggage as well as getting ourselves across, or things “disappeared!” Richard and I decided that he could be the “front guard”, and I’d follow whoever or wherever the luggage was going! Ten minutes later the pick-up truck journey ended! Now we were reasonably close to the river bank. Other “cargadores”—persons making a small income carrying baggage, helped move us down the bank where we “boarded a rowboat!” “Ten minutes later that trip ended! No, we had not reached the other side of the river, but [the] boat had gone as far as it could! The rest of the river was to be “walked” (I regret to say, not “on”, but, “in”!). I had on heavy shoes intended for walking the muddy road (2 hours) which would follow, but, not having planned on wading, had safely stored paper money in my shoes. (This, of course, had to be “spread to dry”—somewhat faded—once I got to the Morropon Convent.)

Purses and watches are “high-priority items” for thefts, so it isn’t too wise for either to be “visible”, or have anything of significance inside.
Once at the river bank—slacks dripping, shoes waterlogged, we hiked through farmland for about 15 minutes. An enterprising Peruvian had “burros” for rent, so we decided on one to carry our supplies. — Richard asked if I’d like one to ride, but I opted to walk. (The saddles are wooden!) We decided to continue our strategy of Richard “in front” of our supplies, & I would follow. (It’s a good thing it wasn’t the other way around! The “procession” would have been mighty slow!)

After two hours of walking the muddy road, we reached the Morropon Convent. I stored the now somewhat “less frozen” meat in the refrigerator at the priests’ house. Because kerosene for everyone was in short supply, the sisters had neither their refrigerator nor deep freeze (both of which operate on kerosene—many places have electricity only for part of the night.) functioning. After talking that night on the inter-Prelature radio with Regina in Chalaco, it was arranged to start 2 mules down to Morropon the following morning. (They would have to rest that night, near Morropon, to make half the return journey—entirely up the mountain, to Chalaco, the day afterwards.)

The expected “early arrival” of the mules in Morropon, the second day, turned out to be after 11:00 a.m. But even though darkness overtook us, we pushed on to the “half-way mark”—the pueblo of Pombarumbe—to spend the night. The next morning early we saddled up and set out for Chalaco. The morning was not too bad, weatherwise. But just as we reached the detour through an up-hill pastureland (The route by road had been completely destroyed!—A sizable chunk of a mountain had fallen into it!), the heavens opened up!—and a “voice was not heard”—but, rather, a torrential rain cut loose! We were drenched, walking that hour of the trip, because it was so steep and slippery the mules could barely climb, without a rider! (Furthermore, they do sometimes fall! And I’d rather be walking than mounted when that happens!)

I was proceeding at the rate of about, “one step forward—two steps backward” when a little campesina woman—a friend from years back who lives in the village we were just passing—came with a “lampa”—farming tool used to help clean out irrigation ditches, irrigate, etc.—and helped, cutting a few “toe-holds” in the side of the hill. Finally, we rejoined the road. The rain let up considerably. Hermendina returned to her little adobe house, and my guide was able to re-load the mules, and I also remounted. We were now only about an hour’s distance from Chalaco! At about 3:00 p.m. of the second day muleback, I reached Chalaco—soaked and exhausted! My greeting was, “I don’t care if I don’t return to the coast for 99 years!” (It was six months later before I went down again.) To repeat: I arrived, 6 days after leaving Piura, having completed a journey that, in normal times, takes 6 hours, by jeep!
Sister Julia Huiman’s Account of Trip in 1998

Well, here is the story of my first experience and adventure in the beginning of my new mission in the parish San Fernando-Chalaco. It was in the rainy time of the Phenomenon of El Niño 1998, during which many of the bridges were falling and the roads were terrible because of the rains. But, in spite of all, we had to arrive at our mission. So, Sisters Susana, Lourdes, Deidy and I decided to start our trip the 26th of March, 1998.

March 26. We left the Sta. Rosa-Piura house at 6:30, going to the 4th bridge in Piura. We had to cross walking carrying our things because the bridge had been closed to cars for precaution because of the 4 bridges that are there, this was the only one that was more or less good. On the other side we took a car to Carrasquillo (close to Morropon). There we had to cross the river in a row boat because this bridge also had fallen because of the force of the water. To get to the boat we had to take off our shoes and go into the river a little to get into the boat. A man carried S. Lourdes on his back to take her to the boat. When this started to move this was terrible, because it seemed to me that everything was moving, the hills, the trees but not the boat. When we were about half way across we were so frightened, and not only us but all the passengers that were with us, because we thought we were going to hit a large tree trunk that was close by. But the man that was rowing started to laugh because it wasn’t us that were stuck but the tree trunk and we were moving in another direction. At last we were on the other side and we walked a little way to get a car to take us to Morropon. We arrived there about 11:00 am.

There were no cars that would even attempt to make the trip to Chalaco. So we had no other alternative except to begin our walk. Ss. Susana and Lourdes looked for and rented two donkeys to carry our things. So in this way, we left Morropon at 12 p.m. walking. We walked all afternoon. We walked slowly and every once in a while we stopped to rest. In the trail there was so much mud, some parts worse than others, but the good part was that every little while we crossed creeks with lots of water. It was so good to be able to wash ourselves and wet our heads because the sun was very very hot; a little bit hotter and we would have burned all that we have inside our heads. As we walked we met lots of people and among them was the mayor of Chalaco who was coming down to Morropon. He told us that at the rate we were going it would take us at least a week to arrive in Chalaco, because this was just the beginning of the way.

At 6 pm we arrived at a place called Faical, the house of Luisa the sister of S. Liduvina, who took us in for the night. After we rested for a
few minutes we took a shower. I would say in the natural because it was a big stream that fell between two big rocks. This was where the people came to get water for cooking, to wash their clothes etc. They also used it for taking a bath. So again there was no other alternative it was to take a shower there or not at all. But with that long walk it was necessary to bathe. So I decided to put myself under the fall and it almost left me paralyzed because the water was so cold. As we finished bathing, we washed our clothing and when all of us were ready we returned to Luisa’s house. She was almost ready with our supper. She invited us to chicken and boiled yuca and a hot drink because I was so cold. After we finished eating we went directly to bed. It seemed strange to me to go to bed at 7 p.m. But I was so tired it was the only thing I wanted to do at that time. Not only me but everyone was tired.

March 27. The night passed rapidly. We rose close to 6 am because we wanted to get an early start. Luisa very generously prepared breakfast for us. Her husband went to look for his burro to carry our luggage. Later we shared our breakfast (chicken and yuca). Again we started our hike at 7:00 am. For me this was more difficult than the previous day, because it was climbing and more climbing with so much mud and it was slippery and so was more difficult to walk. This day we also met many persons on the trail and we laughed because all that we met passed us by and left us behind because we walked very slowly. We enjoyed the scenery and conversed among ourselves and in parts we took time to rest. Mainly we looked for streams with water where we could wash ourselves. Close to 12 o’clock midday we sat down close to a curve at the side of a hill so we would be covered from the sun while we shared our lunch (chicken and yuca) that Luisa offered us for our hike. While we ate we conversed and laughed about our adventure up to this time. After we rested for some minutes we continued our walk until we came to a place called Oberaza, where part of the road had fallen away. We could not pass there not even walking. We had to walk without our shoes because when we stepped in the mud it came up to above our ankles and if we walked with our shoes on they would stay in the bottom of the mud. To pass that part we had to climb a hill; for me it was a hill. For Susana it was only a field, but any way it was full of branches that had fallen, thorns, and sticks in all parts and besides it was all mud and very slippery. We passed holding hands to help one another and not fall in all that mud. When we got out of all that our legs were covered almost to the knees in mud. It looked like we had on boots of mud. Just on the other side there was a big stream of water and there we washed ourselves and our sandals and sat for a little rest. We then continued until 2 pm when we arrived in Pambarumbe where we stayed until the next day.
When we arrived we looked for lunch because we were hungry but no one had any so we bought some crackers and pop. But we still had some of the lunch that Luisa had prepared for us. So we repeated the menu: chicken with yuca, but really the chicken had been finished so this time we had only yuca. Thank God we found the lady that was the coordinator for her Zonal Team and we could stay in her house. We took a shower with water so cold and rested until close to 6 p.m. The lady had our supper ready and it was very good and so opportune as we were hungry again. After we ate we played a little with dice a game called “Farco”. We enjoyed this time the game and also the presence of each one. Besides the lady and her children were conversing with us. Her children were beautiful and very friendly. The lady offered us 2 beds to sleep and this night we went later to bed than the previous evening.

March 28, 1998. Again we started the day early at 6 am because Wilmer arrived early with 4 mules to continue our journey to Chalaco. The lady prepared breakfast for us and after this we left at about 7 a.m. I was a little afraid because I have never had the experience of riding an animal. But I had to force myself to mount because there was no other alternative. It was to mount or continue walking in the mud. This last part was the worst part of all because the poor animal would sink into the mud up to its stomach and sometimes it would slip. Besides it liked to walk on the edge of the trail and on the other side was a deep abyss. For this reason I was almost paralyzed from fear. After many climbs we arrived at a very high hill and very narrow trail. We climbed walking and the animals alone because it was very difficult (narrow and slippery). But when we ended our climb we had to mount again because we couldn’t walk. The part difficult for me was when I got down from the mule I felt like my legs were like two sticks. For this reason when it was possible to walk a little I did. This day it was very cloudy until around 12 p.m. when it began to rain and the cold I felt was terrible. I wore two sweaters and a plastic poncho and even so I shook with the cold. We began to laugh at my plastic poncho because it was with a hood and completely black.

The sisters said that I looked like Zorro. But Zorro or not, the only thing that I wanted was to cover myself well. This black poncho was a gift from the Sisters in Sta. Rosa-Piura, my previous local community. In the trail this day we again met many persons, some walking, others riding on horses but all were very well covered with plastic because the rain was heavy. Thank God, between rain, mud and cold etc. we arrived in Chalaco at around 4 p.m. Everyone well. Ss Catalina and Regina were waiting for us with a delicious hot soup. But really all I wanted was a shower and my bed until the following day.
This is how I arrived at my new mission in March, 1998. It was a difficult but a good experience in that I felt the deep and close love of God through the persons on our way and especially the sisters. It was an experience in which we helped one another mutually, physically and spiritually. Physically: because we helped one another with packages, moving from one place to another etc. Spiritually: encouraging one another, being patient and understanding and principally in walking together as SCLs; in this hike and in our journey in our following of the Lord.
APPENDIX F

Health Project for Tuberculosis Patients and Families

Sister Mildred Irwin initiated this project on April 27, 1988, in collaboration with the Posta Medica in the area.

Peru has the highest number of tuberculosis cases in all of Latin America. The Peruvian Health Department provides free medication and treatment. But other factors make control difficult. For lack of personnel, there is little or no follow up, and the poverty of the people does not allow for adequate alimentation to help combat the TB. Thus, whole families need better alimentation to protect them from this highly contagious disease.

The project consisted in the following:

2. Visits to eighteen families by thirty-five women from the parish of Santa Rosa, plus three Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.
3. Selection of six of the poorest families, consisting of sixteen adults and twenty-six children.
4. Making sure that those enrolled went to the clinic for their monthly weight control program.
5. Initial funding from Dr. Hummer of Santa Monica, California, Iris Figuerola, and other benefactors.
6. Additional funding from the Kasal Charitable Trust, Minnesota Trust Company in 1989; this $2500 was to be used for food and medical supplies.
APPENDIX G

Chalaco and San Fernando Fund*

Some of the fruits of Vatican Council II were the greater consciousness of the universal Church and its needs and the friendly relationships established among the hierarchy of the local churches. One example of this interfacing can be seen in the relationship between the Catholic Church in the Prelature (later diocese) of Chulucanas and the Archdiocese of Birmingham, England. When Bishop John McNabb, OSA, was in Rome for an official visit in 1968, he met the Archbishop of Birmingham, who conveyed the interest of one of his parishes in helping the poor. Initially, plans were made to help with the construction of a hospital in Piura, Peru. But when the Bishop was denied permission to build, the people of St. Gregory's Parish stopped raising and sending funds.

A few years later, Mrs. Agnes Robin, a member of St. Gregory's Parish Council, suggested to Monsignor Davis that the parish adopt a village in the Third World. With his approval, contact was made with Bishop McNabb, asking him to suggest a poor area of his diocese that needed special help. Bishop McNabb immediately suggested Chalaco, which had recently been rocked by an earthquake in December 1970. He named it as the most needy parish in the diocese since more than half of the people had lost their houses, and the church had been destroyed as well as much of the clinic in the town. The people were extremely poor and the children were suffering from various diseases due to malnutrition. He asked Sister Marie James Simms, a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth, to inform the people of St. Gregory's of the reality of the situation in Chalaco. Since the Sisters of Charity had arrived in San Fernando Parish, Chalaco, just months after the earthquake, she could detail the situation; moreover, she sent photographs to document conditions more clearly.

St. Gregory's Presbytery soon began what they called the Chalaco Project and named Mrs. Robin the coordinator of the group. Initially asking that the money raised be used for children, the committee asked the parishioners for annual subscriptions and also held various types of fundraising activities, such as bazaars, fairs, concerts, and sales. At the request of Bishop McNabb, the group sent their contributions to the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The sisters of Chalaco could then draw down money as required for their needs. The Chalaco Project continued in this way until 1978 when a new pastor at St. Gregory's declined

* Information for the history of the San Fernando Fund up to 1993 was taken from a summary written by Sister Mary Liguori Horvat in 1993. A/SCL.
to carry on this project. Undaunted and unsupported, a group of the parishioners decided to continue the project independently. Around 1979, Mrs. Robin handed over the work of coordinator to two younger women of West Midlands, Mrs. Josie Plummer and Mrs. Angela Maguire. This independent group continued to send funds twice yearly until 1986.

In that year, Mrs. Plummer approached Father James Ward of St. Francis Xavier’s Parish in Oldbury, West Midlands, asking him if his parish would adopt the program. After consulting with the Sisters of Charity, Father agreed to undertake the project, but on the condition that the name be changed to the San Fernando Project (the name of the parish in Chalaco). A young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Shaw, became the coordinators of the newly named project. All the original members of the Chalaco Project continued, and Father Ward took a very active part in all the people did.

In September 1986 Father Ward, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish representing the San Fernando Project, visited the Sisters of Charity at the Mother House. Just about a year later, Josie Plummer visited the sisters while she was in the United Sisters visiting an elderly aunt. While in Leavenworth, she presented Sister Mary Kathleen Stefani with a donation of $1,695 for the San Fernando Project. Both Father Ward and Josie Plummer were delighted to meet members of the Community and to learn of their multiple works of charity. Josie conveyed the news that Father Ward had been changed after having been ill for several months; but she delighted to tell the sisters that the new pastor, Father David Goodwin, was in accord with the parishioners carrying on their good work for the people of Chalaco. Following the floods in Peru, the benefactors from England indicated to the sisters that they might use the donations in whatever manner they judged most worthy.

The contacts between the parish and the SCL Community were strengthened even more when Sister Marie Brinkman of Saint Mary College, Leavenworth, spent time with the parishioners during Lent of 1988. While on a sabbatical and doing research on John Henry Cardinal Newman, she met both Father Ward and the new pastor, Father David Goodwin. At a special Mass, the latter presented Sister Marie with a check for $866 for the Chalaco mission. On behalf of the SCL Community, she thanked the pastor and his parishioners for their faithful support.

In late summer 1990 another change occurred in the pastorate at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Oldbury, West Midlands. The new pastor terminated the parish sponsorship. Maura and Bob Shaw, feeling they could not continue as coordinators of a project that did not have the backing of a church community, resigned their position. However, Angela Maguire, Anna Browning, and others of Warley and Oldbury chose to continue the project as a private enterprise and secured the support and blessing of a
local and “enlightened” (Angela’s descriptive word) Bishop. With Angela as sponsor, the group continues to raise funds.

In 1993 Mrs. Agnes Robin, who began the Chalaco Project in 1972, sent a donation of 1000 pounds. Although in her nineties, totally blind, and confined to a nursing home in Birmingham, she continued to remember her friends in faraway Peru.

In September 2004 Mrs. Robin died at the age of 103. The family asked that donations be sent to Chalaco, knowing that Agnes hoped that the people of Chalaco would always be the beneficiaries of their good English friends.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adveniat: Charitable office of the Catholic Bishops of Germany; it has provided great support to missionary efforts in Latin America.

Asentamientos Humanos: Euphemism for human settlements or barrios; also referred to as Pueblos Jovenes or young towns.

Autogolpe: seizure of power, as when Alberto Fujimori (elected president) overthrew the constitutional government and took control of the courts, etc.

Barrio: a group of houses in a sector; the name fell into disuse in the 1980s and 90s; it was replaced by euphemisms such as Asentamientos Humanos and Pueblos Jovenes.

Better World Movement: a highly structured program aimed at engaging more laity in the work of the Church, especially at the parish level.

Burning the old Man: a custom in Peru and some other countries; on New Year's Eve, homemade mannequins stuffed with old clothing and papers are burned at midnight with the hope that the New Year will bring more prosperity and luck.

Campo: the countryside, or land outside a city or village.

Campesinos: peasants or people living in the country.

Caritas: Catholic Charities of Peru.

Caserios: Villages or small pueblos.

Carnaval (Carnival): In Peru this term applies both to the festive period before Lent and activities in which children or the young at heart douse each other with water or talcum powder or explode balloons filled with water.


Catequesis Familiar: A sacramental program in which the parents are instructed how to prepare their children for First Communion.

CEPESER: an NGO or non-governmental organization; proper name is Center of Services for Central Peru.

CCP: Council for Pastoral Coordination; part of the Better World Movement.

CEB: Basic Church Communities.

Chacra: a piece of land on which are sown vegetables, fruits, trees; Bishop John McNabb maintained an experimental farm on his chacra.

CIPCA: Jesuit center of investigation and promotion of campesinos (small farmers).

COMLA: Latin American Missionary Congresses; the fourth such congress was held in Lima in 1991; the first in Mexico in 1977.

Confer: Conference of Religious.

CRAS: Detention center for delinquents.
DEPAS: The Health Commission in the Area of Human Development of the Peruvian Bishops' Conference
Diaconia: Office of Justice and Peace for Piura Diocese
ESER: School of Religious Education for professors and catechists
Fiestas Patrias: Days celebrating the national independence of Peru
FAP: Peruvian Air Force
"Fujishock": the dramatic, overnight rise in prices following Alberto Fujimori's inauguration as President
GAC: Group of Catholic Friendship; part of Better World Movement
Intis: National monetary unit of Peru in the 1980s. It replaced the "Sol" and was later replaced by "the new Sol."
ODEC: Office of Catholic Education
NGO: Non-governmental organization; NGOs frequently promote educational and social programs for development of the people.
NIP: New Image of the Parish; part of the Better World Movement
Posta Medica: governmental public health clinic
Pro labor: Center of Education and orientation for technical courses
PRONAA: National Program for Nourishment (of children)
Pro Vida: An organization or center that prepares health promoters and sells generic medicines at low price; works with the Peruvian Bishops.
Pueblos Jovenes: Settlements founded in or around cities by families moving in from other areas, such as the mountains. The people most frequently have few or no economic resources.
Sanatorio: Nurse technician in charge of a posta medica
Study grants: money given to enable persons to attend school who otherwise would be unable to do so
Tablazo: The flat area above the sand cliffs of Talara; Talara Alta and many "Pueblos Jovenes" are situated there.
Transbordo: Leaving a bus and walking to the other side of a ravine that has been flooded and where the road has been destroyed; or to travel beyond where a blockade has been erected in order to board a bus on the other side.
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