

I WILL GIVE THEM ONE HEART!

A sketch of the life of Archbishop Louis Couppe
and of the Congregation founded by him -
The Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Vunapope.

by Sister M. Adela, FDNSC.



Archbishop
Couppé and
a group of
Sisters of
the Cong-
regation he
founded -
Daughters
of Mary
Immaculate.



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Feast of the Assumption
of Our Blessed Lady.

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PROLOGUE

It gives me special pleasure to fulfil the wish of the author by writing an introduction to the life and work of my predecessor, Archbishop Louis Couppé, pioneer Bishop of New Britain. For that which we witness today, a growing and consolidating of the young Church of New Britain, in the Archdiocese of Rabaul, is founded on the organisation, zeal, the trust in God and love for the people, of a man of God possessed of great foresight.

A man lives on in his work. This becomes only too true in Archbishop Couppé. From the beginning he involved the indigenes in his work: the spreading of the Gospel, the living of the Gospel and the building of the young Church of New Britain.

This idea he realised in the foundation of the "Daughters of Mary Immaculate". The beginnings were hard, the history during their first 50 years a list of trials: the disease that almost wiped out the Congregation, the war with its trials, toil, persecutions and brutality on the one hand, and bravery, courage, trust in God and Our Lady, on the other; trials which demonstrated clearly that the Congregation was a work of God.

The post-war development, the renewal of religious life, the particular emphasis on education, health, technical and social work among their own, their understanding of the times and needs of the people, as well as their readiness to do the best for everyone, fill me with great hope for the future of the local Church.

In the light of the Second Vatican Council, their spirit, and their progress, crown the idea of their Founder and the Church. May their example inspire many young girls of these islands to follow in their footsteps, to make the Church of New Britain their own service to the people.

+ J. Hoehne.
Archbishop of Rabaul
August, 1968

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to all those who assisted me in preparing this booklet - especially to Rev. Mother M. St. Paul and her community of Daughters of Mary Immaculate and all those who supplied information connected with the life and times of his Lordship Bishop Couppé M.S.C.

Some of the material in this book has been gathered from "75 Glorious Years", "Talaigu" and "Pioneers of the South Seas" a copy of which was kindly supplied by Rev. Father Kiessler, M.S.C.

Miss Frances Connelly gave valuable service in typing the manuscript and to her I offer grateful thanks. Let us hope that in the not too distant future, an abler pen than mine will write a fuller account of the life and labours of the first great Vicar Apostolic of New Britain and the surrounding islands - Archbishop Louis Couppe.

Vunapope,
August, 1968.

To the Golden Jubilarians of the Congregation of the
Daughters of Mary Immaculate,

and

to the memory of the pioneer Daughters of Our Lady of
the Sacred Heart who trained them, this booklet is af-
fectionately dedicated.

PART I

OFF TO THE SOUTH SEAS

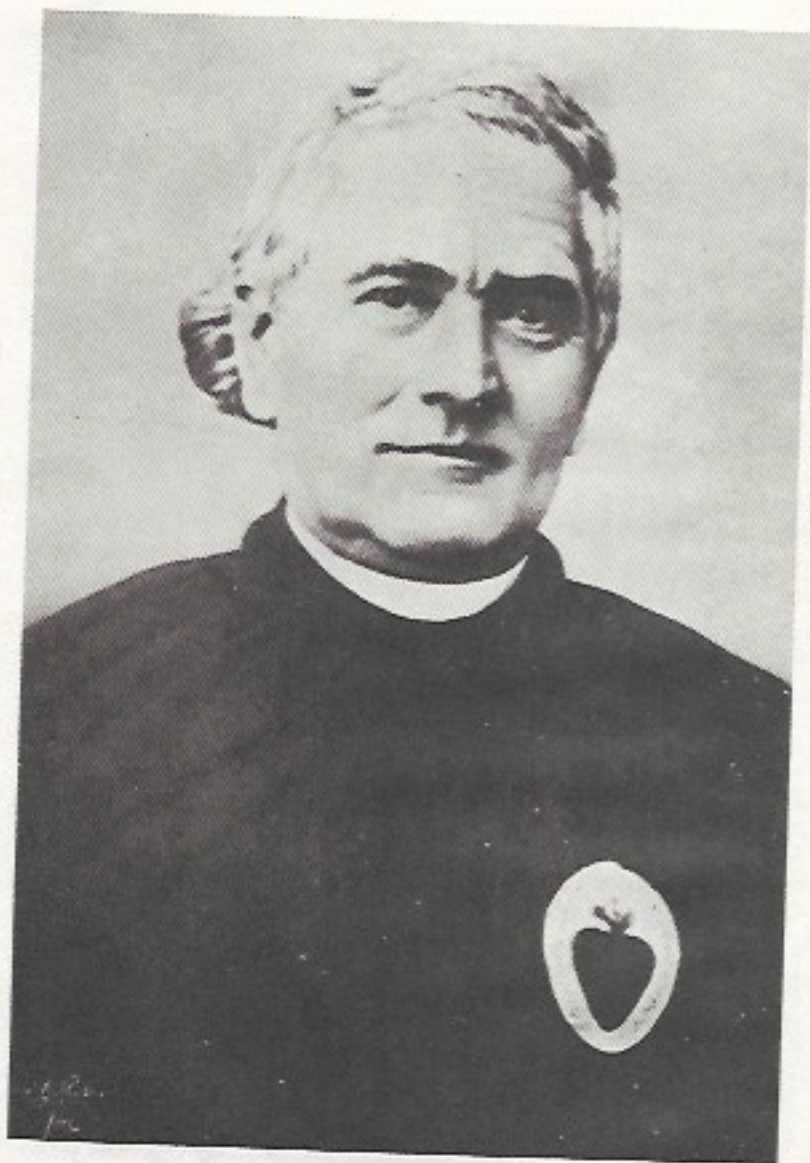
Bishop Louis Couppé, the first Vicar Apostolic of New Britain, New Ireland, Manus and Solomon Islands was born at Romorantin in the Diocese of Blois, France, on 26th August, 1850. As a young man he entered the Seminary and was ordained a secular priest on 30th May, 1874. His desire to become a Missionary led him to apply to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart for entrance to their Order. It was with great difficulty that he obtained permission from his Bishop to do so, and he entered at last on 26th June, 1880.

His first profession as an M.S.C. priest was made at "Gera", Holland, on 25th July, 1881, and his final Vows were made in Rome on 25th July, 1884. On 20th March, 1881, Pope Leo XIII invited Father Chevalier, M.S.C. to send his priests to New Guinea, New Britain and "New France", as New Ireland was then called.

It was in the year of Bishop Couppé's first profession, six months after Pope Leo had expressed his wish on the matter, that the first five missionaries set out from Marseilles for their great undertaking - to spread the Gospel in Papua and New Guinea.

In Singapore, Father Superior Durin became so ill that he had to return to France, accompanied by his nephew, Brother Durin. After terrible hardships and a voyage lasting 393 days, the first three missionaries, Fathers Navarre and Gramille and Brother Fromm, landed in Matupit on the feast of St. Michael, 1882. On that day they fulfilled the Holy Father's order: "Go to New Britain".

On landing the missionaries walked over the "Mother" Mountain to Nodup. There they were joyfully received by the people, and that evening they returned to Matupit, where their ship was anchored. A day or two later they hired a canoe, loaded their cargo in it and sailed around to Nodup. Many Nodup people believe



Father Jules Chevalier, Founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It was at the Pope's request that he sent the first Missionaries to New Britain.

Father Andrew Navarre who led the first band of M.S.C. priests and brothers to land at Malupit Island on 29th September, 1882.



that the first Missionaries of the Sacred Heart landed at Nodup. Though the first mission station was at Nodup, their first landing was at Matupit on that historic day in 1882.

The missionaries remained at Nodup for six months. However, Father Navarre considered that Nodup was not central enough, so he bought land at what was then called Kininigunan and today is named Kokopo. This area was inhabited by rather fierce Natives and by Queen Emma and her family. The missionaries built their mission house on the exact spot where the Kokopo Club stands today.

Father Bley, M.S.C., one of the early missionaries in New Britain (and brother of one of the Baining "Martyrs"), writing of the Natives of Oceania in general says:

"When the missionaries came to the islands of Oceania the people were wild men of the jungle. In some places they were cannibals, in other places they were headhunters putting the bones of their victims in their houses. Everywhere they made statues of stone or wood and they worshipped them. Believing that the devils were in these statues they offered gifts to them in order to appease their anger. All kinds of sorcery and magic were practised to chase away the evil spirits from the sick people. Not knowing about the life of the soul

some thought that the life of man finished with death, whilst others thought the spirit of man went into the sea or into the dense jungle or to the place of all the evil spirits.

"While they were on earth they gave themselves up to fighting, immorality, stealing and everywhere there was fear and sadness. The men of one place could not go to another place for fear of being killed. The people feared to walk outside in the darkness for fear of the evil spirits or even of their friends. Even inside the house they were afraid of the evil spirits or of an enemy putting poison into their food or on their belongings. The devil degraded and held in chains these people of former times and did all in his power to prevent them from following the light afterwards."



Village group of New Britain Natives taken in the early days of the mission.

EARLY TROUBLES

The missionaries built their permanent house in Kokopo in April, 1883. On 27th June of that year, everything they possessed was destroyed by fire, a fire instigated by a European planter. They lost so much that the priests were unable to say Holy Mass for the next twelve months. The sacred vessels, vestments and Sacred Heart banner specially blessed for the Missionaries by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII were lost in the flames. The missionaries in the blazing building just managed to escape with their lives that night.

Seeing they were left homeless, Father Navarre decided to go to Australia to get a pre-fabricated house, a trip of many months in those days of no planes and infrequent boats travelling to Australia. In his absence, Father Gramille, without breviary or altar, stayed alone at Volavolo with a trader called Dupre, studying the language and looking after the sick. Brother Fromm had become so ill that he had to return to France. While there, he studied for the priesthood and later returned to New Britain. His sister, Mother M. Odile, was Superior of the first Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to come to New Britain.



Pioneer Missionary Sisters of O.L.S.H. in New Britain. Mother M. Odile Superior of first five Sisters to arrive in 1892. (Front row right).



Women of New Britain in the early days before the Sisters came to help the missionaries in their schools and hospitals.

In 1884, Father Navarre returned with four new missionaries: Fathers Hartzler, Gallard and Vatan, and Brother de Santos. Fathers Gramaille and Vatan stayed at Volavolo whilst Father Gaillard began the mission at Malagunan. (Father Gramaille later died and was buried at Volavolo where his tomb is inside the church.)

In September of that year, 1884, the Holy Father asked the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to begin a mission in Papua. The Fathers in New Britain were called upon to make the beginning. The priests held a conference at Kiniginan (Kokopo) and it was decided to send Father (later Archbishop) Navarre to Thursday Island so that from there a way might be found over to Port Moresby.

In the meantime, Father Louis Couppé with Father Verius (the holy missionary whose cause for canonization is being examined in Rome) had left Issoudun in company with three lay Brothers and the first Missionary Sisters of O.L.S.H. They were destined to do great work for the Sacred Heart in Thursday Island, New Britain and Papua, but there were to be many trials before that came to pass.

At Marseilles, Father Verius became very ill with the dread typhoid fever and had to remain in hospital while the others continued their journey. (Then during the journey Father Couppé also fell ill from typhoid fever.) * (In those days this was a terrible sickness lasting about six weeks. The patient was given only milk to drink and was often unconscious for weeks.) Thus when their ship "Salazie" anchored at the island of Bourbon, Father Couppé was carried to the hospital while the Brothers were received by the Holy Ghost Fathers and the Sisters stayed at the convent of the Daughters of Mary.

The state of Father Couppé's health soon became worse and he asked for and received the last Sacraments. The Sisters, greatly alarmed, prayed earnestly to Our Lady not to allow their Father to be taken from them. They decided to begin a solemn Novena to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, "Hope of the Hopeless". At once they went to the wharf to get the statue of 'O.L.S.H. which had been presented to them at Marseilles by the Sisters of the Holy Name of Jesus. At the convent of the Daughters of Mary, the statue was given a triumphal reception. The Superior and her Sisters carried the statue to the altar prepared for it in their chapel.

The children from the school, people who sympathised with the sick priest, and the Sisters who depended on him to conduct them to their missions in Papua and New Britain, all united daily in the solemn Novena. Our Lady was never left alone; each day the crowd of native people increased until Father Couppé gradually recovered from the illness which had brought him so close to death. K

Then a boat from France called into Bourbon. On board was Father Verius, unaware of the presence on the island of Father Couppé and the other missionaries. Father Verius was suffering from a relapse of fever and himself had to enter hospital there. At last, on 7th

January, 1885, all the missionaries sailed for Australia on the good ship "Caledonian". How grateful they were to the kind missionaries of Bourbon who had befriended them in their hour of need for two whole months.

The ship rapidly bore the priests, Brothers and Sisters towards Australia, and they were happy to be drawing nearer and nearer to those whom they called their "dear natives". For them, Australia was to be just a port of call. All their thoughts, prayers and desires carried them farther on towards the tropics, to those splendid islands of New Guinea and New Britain where pagan souls awaited them.

However, in the designs of Providence the Australian continent, too, was destined to become a field of fruitful apostolate for the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. In the all-wise designs of Providence only the leader of this missionary band, Father Couppé, was destined to labour for the glory of the Sacred Heart in New Britain. There he became the first Bishop, in a land that was wholly pagan, cannibalistic and primitive, but soon to awaken from the long years of darkness through the labours of a band of zealous missionaries with Bishop Louis Couppé as father and Leader.

HALT IN AUSTRALIA. DEPARTURE FOR PAPUA

When Father Couppé and his missionaries arrived in Sydney, Cardinal Moran (who was the head of the Church in Australia) asked the Sisters to take charge of a school in Sydney which had already been built by pious Catholics. There were few Sisters in Australia at that time and it was difficult to find teachers for Catholic schools. Many children knew nothing of their holy religion, and big boys and girls of thirteen and fourteen had not yet made their First Holy Communion. It was a case of "How shall they learn if no one teaches them?"

Sister M. Xavier, from Ireland, was already a trained teacher, so she took charge of the school in Botany,

and a lay teacher was employed to assist her. The joy of the Catholic parents knew no bounds on the first day the school opened. From that first O.L.S.H. Australian school came forth many missionary vocations.

DETAILS
The Cardinal also asked for a priest to remain, so for a time Father Couppé took charge of the parish of Botany while looking after the business interests of the missions. This period in Australia enabled him to get a good knowledge of English, so necessary for his future labours.

DETAILS
Father Verius accompanied Father Navarre to Thursday Island. From there they made every endeavour to cross over to Papua. People tried to dissuade them from it. "The climate is deadly," they were told, "the natives the cruellest in existence". Captains of ships demanded passage money too high for the missionaries to pay. At another time the Commissioner of the British Government forbade ships to carry the Catholic missionaries into Papua.

Father Navarre acknowledged his helplessness and put everything into the hands of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the "Hope of the Hopeless." Their prayers were heard and Father Verius with two lay Brothers set out on the dangerous expedition over an unknown sea full of reefs. To make matters worse, they had no pilot. However, the ship was blessed and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was officially named pilot of the "Gordon" for its voyage to Papua. A small bronze statue of Our Lady blessed at Rome was placed on deck. It was 19th June, 1885 that the valiant band set sail from Thursday Island.

After battling through furious seas, hardships and untold dangers, the "Gordon" landed the first three missionaries of Papua at Yule Island on 1st July of that year. As the mission of New Britain had been dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, this in Papua was named in honour of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. On August 27th, 1886, Father Couppé landed at Yule Island. He was of great assistance to Father Verius in laying the foundations of the new mission. Together they explored the mainland, naming a river discovered after St. Joseph.

FIRST VICAR APOSTOLIC OF NEW BRITAIN.

Copy
The following year, 1887, Father Navarre was consecrated Bishop of Papua and New Britain. However, he was worn out by fever and hardships, so two years later the Holy Father nominated Father Couppé to be the first actual Bishop of New Britain, New Ireland, Manus and the Solomon Islands. He was consecrated Bishop in the chapel of the M.S.C. Monastery at Antwerp, Belgium, in 1890.

With the appointment of Bishop Couppé as its head, the real life of the New Britain mission began. With a mere handful of missionaries labouring under many hardships, he put his hand to the plough and never looked back. For thirty-three years he spent himself in the service of God, his missionaries and his people. Father George Boegershausen, M.S.C., writes:- "From this time onwards churches, schools and boarding schools were erected, plantations were planted, sawmills introduced to further the material needs of the mission."

Typical missionary's house in the early days.



Above all, the apostolic labour for souls began in earnest. All Bishop Couppé's gifts of soul, heart and mind were brought to bear on spreading the peace and joy of our holy Religion to these poor people steeped in the fear and darkness of paganism.

The Bishop was not only holy and zealous: he was also possessed of great business foresight. On foot, on horseback, by small ships, and later by a three wheeled car driven by Hubert Zander, he travelled far and wide around New Britain, New Ireland and Manus in order to find suitable sites for future mission stations. The Bishop was never satisfied with general observations or second hand reports. He would examine anchorages by swimming underwater to make sure of their safety for ships. In every place he thought would be a suitable location for a mission station in the future he bought land for Church, priests and Catechists. Thus was set up the excellent foundation for the mission we have today. He opened up the Bainings at Vunamarita, Manus at Papitalai, New Ireland at Namatanai and Rakanda, and many other places.

From Germany in 1900 he bought a large sawmill and equipment. Because the ship could not navigate the Toriu River the cargo was dumped on the coast near Mandres; from there the small mission ship "Gabriel" towed the lot to the site chosen for the sawmill at Toriu. The Brothers built it up as best they could but it was not until 1905 that the first timber was cut.

In the years 1901-1903 many missionaries arrived from Europe. Bishop Couppé wished to have a strong foothold in the Gunantuna area (Gazelle Peninsula). However, the Government in New Britain and Papua had divided the country into "spheres of influence". In 1890 when Bishop Couppé was consecrated Bishop, the German Government had introduced the system into the Gazelle Peninsula. Taking Papatava or Toma as a centre, a line was drawn from Toma to Weberhaven in the north and to Ralvana in the south. The Catholic Mission was to work south of this line in which there were not so many people. There were already two Catholic stations in the northern area at Volavolo and Malagunan and here the Catholic missionaries were allowed to work, but only on their own stations. This



Waiting for the Sister to come and bring relief to a tired old man.

division of the Gazelle Peninsula made Catholic extension of mission influence almost impossible.

In order to expand the work as well as possible, the priests at Volavolo and Malagunan trained catechists who went into the villages to teach and lead the prayers. On Sundays the people used to gather for Mass on the two stations.

In 1896 great crowds came for instruction. A real problem was in dealing with the sick and dying. In the case of sick calls and death what were they to do? The Bishop instructed the priests that in such cases they were to go to the sick and dying who needed them. Thus little by little the dividing of the Methodist and Catholic Missions into "spheres of influence" became a dead letter. (The law was in force from 20th January, 1890, to 27th March, 1899.)

About this time a court case arose about the ownership of the land occupied then by the Catholic missionaries on the place where Kokopo now stands. The dispute was between Queen Emma and the mission. The German Government decided the matter with a Solomon-like judgment: The land north of Kokopo was to go to Queen Emma; 40 hectares south (Vunapope today) was to go to the mission, whilst the disputed land around Kokopo was kept for the German Government itself.

Thus the Bishop made Vunapope the main Catholic mission centre. Here the young missionaries came to be trained for their life's work, and here, too, the sick and aged missionaries would spend their last days before being carried to their last resting place among the people for whom they had gladly spent their lives.

The old house at Kokopo was pulled down, enlarged and converted into a boarding school conducted by the O.L.S.H. Sisters. Thus began the great educational establishments which flourish in Vunapope today.



Old native woman
holding her
precious pig



Photo taken at Paparatava about the year 1924 when the F.M.I. Sisters opened a school and orphanage under the direction of an O.L.S.H. Sister.

A small Catechists' school was begun in Vunapope in 1899 with 40 or 50 students, with Father Meier in charge. Stations at Kavieng, Lemakot and Lamasong were set up in New Ireland in 1910. Unremitting in his labours the good Bishop went down the South coast in the small mission ship "Gabriel" buying land with the permission of the German Governor. Trading was done with store goods such as axes, knives, hammers, etc., as money at that time was of no value to the Natives.

Boundaries around the bought properties had to be clearly marked by roads or paths as well as signs chopped into trees. All transactions had to be carried out before witnesses and exact reports made to the Government. Thus today we have the many stations where priests, Sisters and Catechists carry on the good work begun by Bishop Couppé and the pioneer missionaries, spreading the Faith, caring for the sick and teaching the children.

From the very beginning the people came to the Sisters, seeking relief from their aches and pains, ulcers and skin diseases.



TRIALS AND JOYS

Trials
Surely the most terrible trial of all for His Lordship and the whole mission took place on the morning of 13th August, 1904, when two Fathers, three Brothers and five young Sisters found death at the hands of a murderer. The missionaries had assembled at St. Paul's, Baining, for the solemn Blessing and opening of the new church to take place on 15th August. To Mario, the murderer, borrowed Father Rascher's gun "to shoot birds for the Feast". However, his real aim was the killing of the missionaries.

It was an overwhelming blow for the mission but the "blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians", and many fervent young souls were inspired to offer themselves to labour in the Lord's harvest precisely because of this tragedy. Sister M. Dorothea, M.S.C., one of the two Sisters who had escaped the massacre, returned later with other missionaries to St. Paul's to labour zealously for the uplifting of these lovable but primitive people. In 1927, she had the joy of seeing one young girl offer her



Pioneer M.S.C. Sisters caring for orphans at Malaganan.

life to God in the Congregation of Daughters of Mary Immaculate, and she has laboured therein for more than 40 years. Today, as Sister Agnes, she is still busy in the Lord's Vineyard.

Perhaps the greatest of all the achievements of Bishop Couppé was the foundation of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Vunapope, a congregation of indigenous Sisters, founded by him in 1912. This called for immense courage and foresight at a time when most of the people of these islands were still in a primitive stage. However, we will not go into further detail about the foundation here as it is the subject of the second part of this work.

When he founded the Congregation of Mary Immaculate, Bishop Couppé was already in his sixties, somewhat prematurely worn out by his manifold labours and trials in building up his mission. How zealously had he laboured for its conversion. In his small ship the "Gabriel" he visited the farthest islands establishing personal contact with the wild, warlike people who confided small boys and girls to his care so that they might be educated in his schools. Many of these children were orphaned victims of tribal warfare but in later years as catechists, teachers, good parents or Sisters, they became the backbone of the church.

The first Chinese Catholics in New Britain were baptised by Bishop Couppé himself. Of these first converts, Paul Ah Lok and John Ah Chai became saintly men working zealously to spread the Faith amongst their fellow countrymen. John Ah Chai gave three sons to God as priests and two daughters as nuns. The father himself was a daily communicant for more than forty years. After the grace of God, it was due to Bishop Couppé, Paul Ah Lok and John Ah Chai that the vast majority of Chinese people in Rabaul are Catholics today.

The older mixed race people speak with great veneration of Bishop Couppé. He built a special school for them, provided them with teachers, then had workshops erected to enable them to become skilled tradesmen. These schools he visited often. Hubert Zander was the driver of the Bishop's three-wheeled car. At that time there were only two cars in New Britain - that belonging to the German Administration and the Bishop's.



The two large ships "Louis Couppé" and "St. Teresa" anchored at Vunapope wharf. These ships and smaller ones were built by M.S.C. Brothers at Vunapope to carry missionaries, cargo, trucks and machinery to the far coastal stations and surrounding islands.





His Grace Archbishop Hoehne with Mr. John Ah Chai and Mr. Lam, earliest Chinese Catholics, with teachers and pupils of new Chinese Sacred Heart School in Rabaul (1964).

WORLD WAR I

As the years went on, Bishop Couppé was anxious to open up the Nakanai area in Talasea on the north coast of New Britain. Therefore, early in 1914 Father Stamm was sent to Toriu to learn the language of the Nakanai people from the Toriu labourers. World War I was just beginning but the Bishop thought it would not last long and decided to build a house for Father Stamm at Valoka. He went to live there for some time, where he found those wild people friendly and co-operative. Then as the war continued Father had to return to Vunapope but later was placed in charge of Vunavavar. The house at Valoka was dismantled by the Army and taken to Bitapaka for the radio station started by the Germans and taken over by the Australians. It was not until the 1930's that the radio station was transferred to Rabaul.

Sister M. Helena, a French Sister of O.L.S.H. who was in Vunapope when the war commenced in Europe and spread to the Pacific, gives us some of her memoirs:

"One week after Germany declared war against France, England and other countries of Europe the Australian warships arrived. It was necessary for them to get in before the Japanese who were on their way south to take over Papua and New Guinea.

"Three of the warships came quite near to Vunapope, one moving right into the jetty. They saw the large buildings on the hill and thought they were the German Government Headquarters. When the Australian Captain and some armed soldiers came to O.L.S.H. convent, they were met by Sister M. Canice, an Australian Sister, and her companion. The Captain asked for the German Governor. The Sisters referred him to Bishop Couppé who though being French would not betray the country and the Captain did not ask this of him. He merely directed them to Kokopo where they would find out all they wished to know.

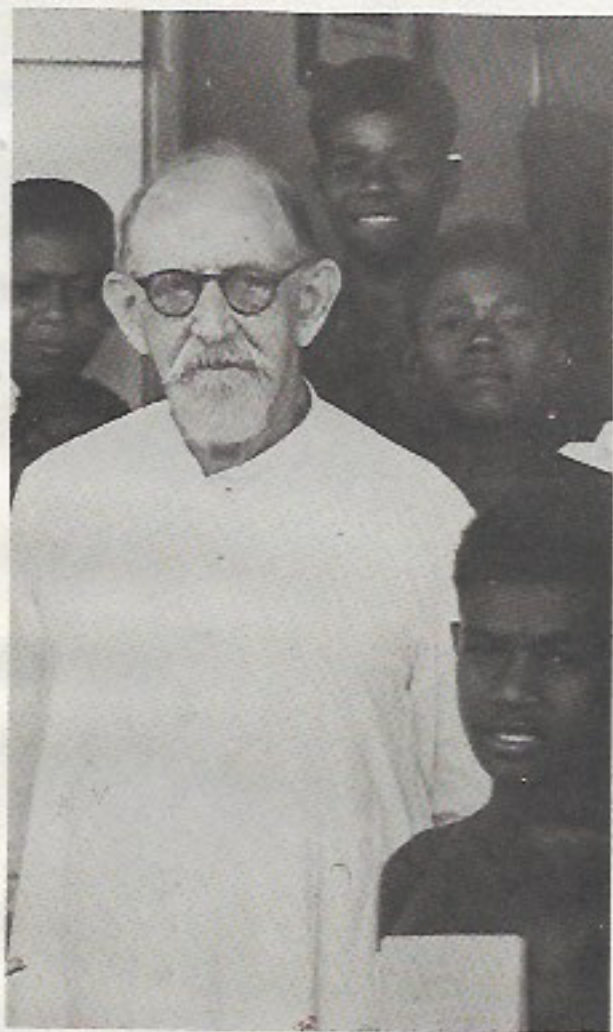
"About two weeks later several warships returned. Some went direct to Rabaul and others remained at Kabakaul whilst soldiers went ashore. There was a battle at Bitapaka near where the German wireless station was being erected. An Australian Officer and some soldiers were killed on that day.

As shooting could be heard in the bush Bishop Couppé ordered the Sisters and girls into their houses, telling them to remain very quiet. Next morning the mission was surrounded by military guards. All the missionaries in the Rabaul area were interned at Malaguna and those of Kokopo area were interned at Vunapope.

The Australian Army was calling on the German Governor to surrender but he did not answer. He and his Officers were hiding in Toma so they were threatened with shelling if they did not respond. The next day when all Vunapope was in the church attending Requiem Mass for Pope Pius X who had just died, the noise of heavy firing from the ships began. Shells passed over the church far into the bush and everything shook as during an earthquake. After that the German Governor surrendered. He and the Government men were deported along with all German civilians.

As most of the M.S.C. Fathers, Brothers and Sisters were German there was some danger of their having to leave too. However, Bishop Couppé being French used all his influence with the Australian authorities so that

the German missionaries were allowed to remain. In 1918 the dreadful World War I came to an end in Europe. Normal life returned to the mission, though it was some time before new missionaries from Germany could come to fill the ranks.



Father Joseph Stamm, pioneer priest who has laboured for fifty-five years amongst the people of New Britain.



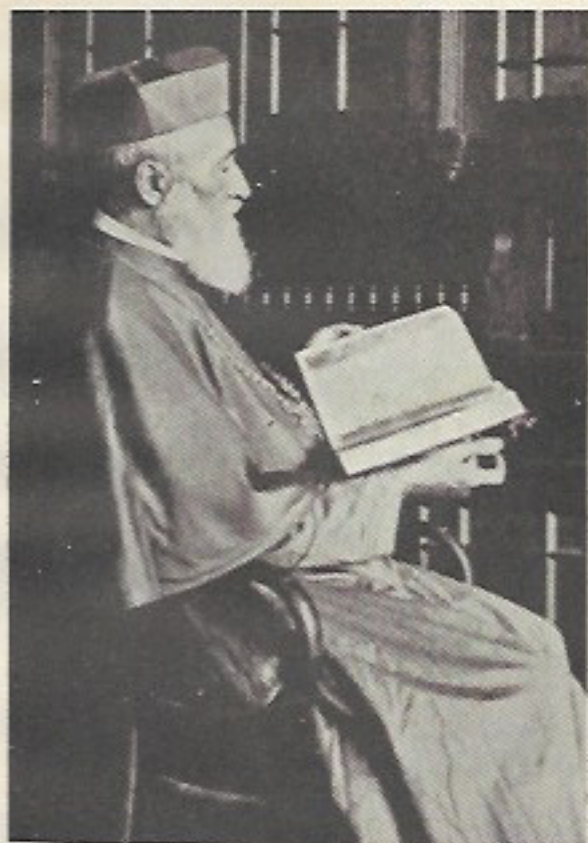
The church at Mope with Bishop Scharmach as a young priest with his school children.

FAREWELL TO VUNAPOPE

Bishop Couppé was becoming an old man by this time but he continued his visits to the stations for Confirmation or for special celebrations. One priest relates how the Bishop came to Vunavavar to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. He was in ill health and in the night could be heard groaning in pain. However, in the morning, seated in the sanctuary he was able to administer Confirmation though he asked one of the priests to preach the sermon.

The senior Sisters F.M.I. who knew Bishop Couppé said he lived in a poor house of two or three rooms. His bed and furniture were of the simplest kind. From time to time his friend Bishop Alain de Boismenu of Papua came to visit him (Bishop de Boismenu's cause for beatification has been introduced in Rome.) On occasion he was also visited by the Governor of Papua - Sir Hubert Murray.

When Father Dicks M.S.C. came daily to give religious instruction to the big girls at "Palairam", (name given to first O.L.S.H. School Yunapope,) Bishop Couppé instructed the smaller children. They were his beloved innocents whom he had rescued as little pagans from distant parts of the Vicariate from dangers threatening soul and body and it rejoiced his heart to instruct them in the truths of our Holy Fath. The motto inscribed on his Coat of Arms was: "I WILL GIVE THEM ONE HEART", one heart with the heart of Our Lord and to transform a pagan people one could best begin with the little children.



His Lordship Bishop Couppé resting after the long years of labour for God and souls.

In these last days he was to be seen daily, taking his evening walk, Rosary in hand, stopping now and then to speak to groups of children, always with the same friendly, approachable manner.

As the Bishop's strength continued to fail and he felt unable to carry the heavy burden of the Vicariate he asked the Holy Father for a successor to be appointed. Therefore, on 5th August, 1923, the Apostolic Delegate from Australia, Archbishop Cattaneo, came to New Britain and consecrated Bishop Gerard Vesters as the second Vicar Apostolic of Rabaul. The grey-bearded, venerable Bishop Couppé was co-consecrator.

When all the future well being of his flock was safely confided to his successor, Bishop Couppé said farewell to his beloved priests, Brothers, Sisters and people. Part of this farewell was a beautiful concert tendered to him, the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor King and other visitors. The writer after more than forty years remembers still the beautiful farewell song composed by Father Kraehenheide, M.S.C., and sung in several parts by Native Sisters and girls of Vunapope: "loko, Monsignor, loko, loko". The throbbing pathos, sorrow and gratitude of a people seemed to be enfolded in the glorious melody.

Then, buoyed up by the company of His Excellency Archbishop Cattaneo, his secretary, and Monsignor King, Bishop Couppé left his beloved New Britain. There were no planes in those days so the good ship "Marsina" conveyed the Bishop to his new home in Australia.

23,498 Catholics, 6,205 Catechumens, 36 priests, 33 lay Brothers, 39 European and 37 Native Sisters of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate were left behind as witnesses to the labours of a great shepherd who thirty three years before, with but a handful of priests, was given by the Holy See the task of winning this savage land for Christ.

At the Sacred Heart Monastery, Douglas Park, near Sydney, Bishop Couppé spent his last days. In 1925 he celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood and in December of that year he was made an Archbishop by the Pope.

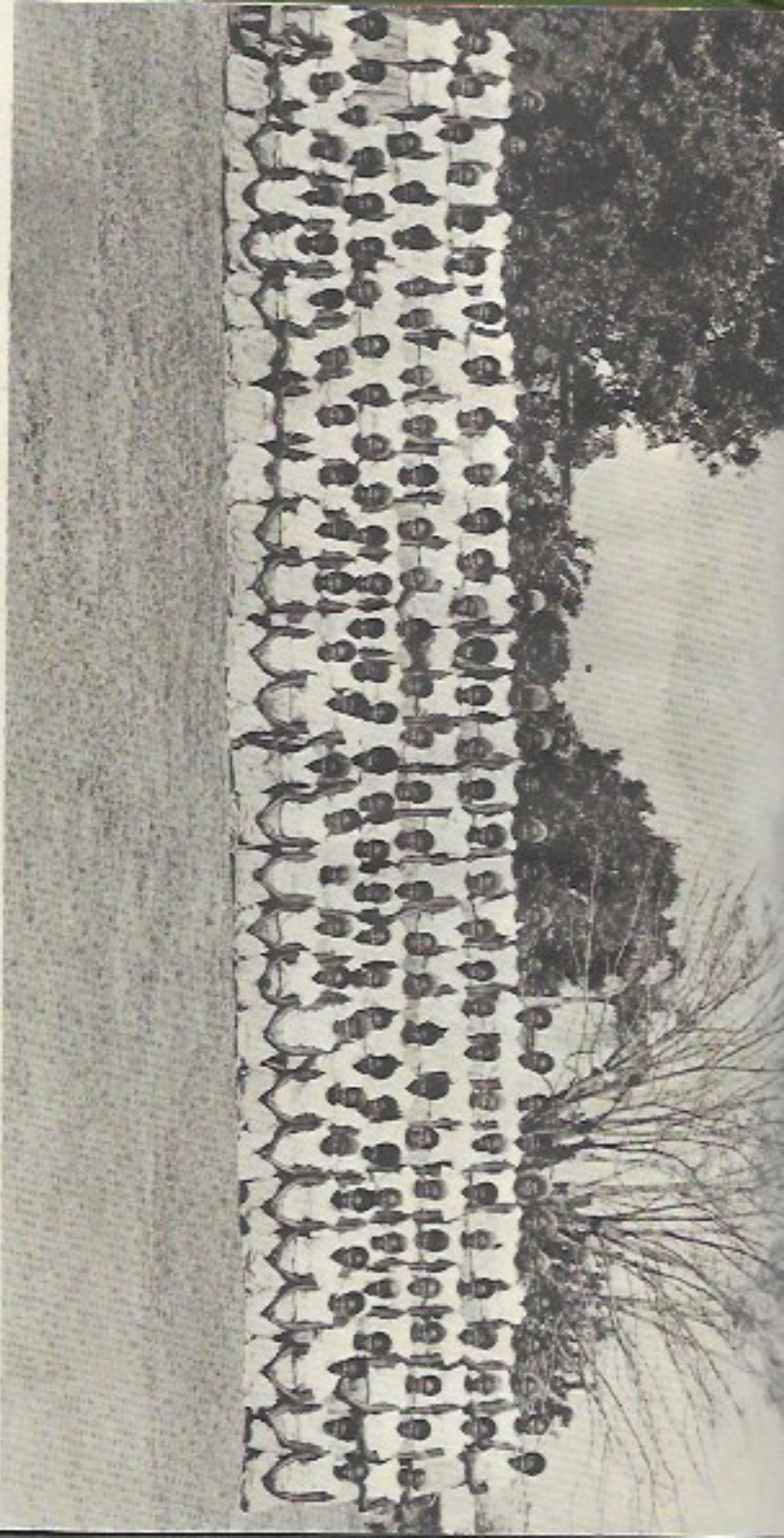
From afar he followed the progress and prayed for his beloved mission until on 20th July, 1926, he was called to his eternal reward. On 14th January, 1927, his body

was brought back to his mission and the following day he was buried with all honour among his former fellow labourers who were sleeping peacefully in Vunapope Cemetery awaiting the Angels' trumpet which will call them to hear Our Lord's "Well done, good and faithful servants." *Archbishop Couppé death*

Father Mertens, of saintly memory, has said that he remembered Bishop Couppé as a man who was an excellent leader, with a clear and practical mind and great foresight. In short, a great pioneer. This is amply testified by his works which live after him. *Example*



The burial of His Grace Archbishop Couppé took place at Vunapope on 14th January, 1927. Here his mortal remains are being taken to his last resting place at Vunapope cemetery.



1968 students of O.L.S.H. High School, Yonapope, which replaces the first Yonapope School, "Palairom" built by Bishop Coupé in 1893.



Ex students of O.L.S.H. High School, Vunapope, who have finished their Nurses' training at the M.S.C. Sisters' School of Nursing. This photo was taken at the graduation ceremony 1968.



Ex students of O.L.S.H.
High School, Vunapope,
at Kabaleo Teachers'
College conducted by
Daughters of Our Lady
of the Sacred Heart.



PART II

THE FOUNDATION OF THE SISTERS F.M.I. (DAUGHTERS OF MARY IMMACULATE)

In the year 1912, just thirty years after the arrival of the first missionary priests and only twenty years after the coming of the first five Sisters of O.L.S.H. to New Britain - that great Island of Papua-New Guinea whose people knew nothing of the true God, the Ten Commandments, or the life of Grace - His Lordship Bishop Couppé decided after much prayer and advice, both favourable and unfavourable, to found a Community of native Sisters. They were to be named after Mary Immaculate and drawn from the young girls who for some years had been under the care of the Sisters in the various boarding schools or orphanages.

The work of the Bishop, missionaries and Sisters had been greatly blessed by God, and many families had sought and obtained the grace of Baptism. Zealous native Catechists had penetrated far away villages assisting the priests as well as the Bishop. This did not suffice for the ardent apostolic soul of the Bishop. Often the idea came to him that the Faith would not take deep root amongst his people until some chosen souls from their midst heard Our Lord's call: "Go, sell all you have and come follow me"; unless there were some generous enough to follow the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, sacrificing themselves that God's Kingdom would reign truly in the hearts of their people.

For this he prayed and worked especially in his talks with the O.L.S.H. Sisters as well as during his instructions to the senior schoolgirls of "Palairam," Vunapope. He explained the meaning of the Religious Life, its difficulties, but likewise its immense value in the salvation of immortal souls.

Following are two letters written by His Lordship Bishop Couppé concerning the founding of the F.M.I. Congregation.

Vunapope.

21st October, 1912.

In order that I might know the Will of God I prayed fervently, considered the matter carefully and asked the advice of others as well as begging many to assist me with their prayers in this important matter. After all this I feel that it is the will of God that I found a Congregation of Sisters in this Vicariate of New Pomerania. (New Britain was formerly known as New Pomerania).

The first end of this congregation will be the sanctification of its members. As in all congregations of Religious they will labour strenuously for their advancement in perfection.

The second end for which this Congregation is founded is that they may labour in works of charity amongst their own people especially in teaching the young Native girls and training them to be true Catholics. Likewise the Sisters will carry out any works of charity assigned to them by the Bishops.

The following are the reasons which prompted me to undertake the foundation of this community of Native Sisters:

1. THE WISH OF THE POPE:

It is his wish that the Vicar Apostolic choose some of the people in his Vicariate and instruct them in the various works of Religion that the Church may progress in the country and endure forever. The Holy Father wishes that each mission be self supporting so as to be able to supply its own personnel and not be dependent on missionaries from other countries. Thus, in instituting this Congregation of Native Sisters I am obeying the express wish of His Holiness that they may instruct the girls in our various schools in the Catholic way of life.

2. EDUCATION:

Today all teachers in our schools are Religious from foreign countries. If any law or trouble arises in these countries and the Sisters were unable to continue their work who would take their place if we have not Native Sisters to do so?

3. ECONOMY:

The mission spends a great deal of money on the European missionary Sisters on account of the great distance they have to travel and also because of the many illnesses which afflict them here in the tropics. The mission income is not sufficient to provide many foreign Sisters.

4. EXAMPLE:

On many missions the Vicars Apostolic have established Congregations of Native Sisters. Some of these have entered the European Sisterhoods already existing on the missions. Others have established a special branch for the Native Sisters connected with the European Congregations. Others again have founded a special Congregation suited to the Sisters of the Country. These Bishops have expressed their joy and satisfaction with the conduct of these Sisters and their works of charity also.

5. THE WILL OF GOD:

Since the day we established our various boarding schools for young girls to train them in the Catholic way of life, especially by prayer and frequent Holy Communion according to the wishes of His Holiness Pope Pius X regarding daily Holy Communion and the reception thereof by very young children, I recognised the call of God that many would become Religious because Holy Communion is the "Wine that bringeth forth Virgins".

For these reasons I consider the time has come to institute a Religious Congregation for Native women, otherwise I would be failing in my duty. I dedicate this Congregation to Mary Immaculate, entrusting it to her special care. Those who enter therein will be known as Daughters of Mary Immaculate. They will strive to imitate her virginal purity and thus become pleasing to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Earnestly I beg the Sacred Heart of Jesus to love this Congregation tenderly and to bestow on it abundant blessings because it was instituted for His glory alone and the sanctification of its members, so that all their prayers and works may increase the love of the Heart of Jesus in this Vicariate.

Ludwig Couppé M.S.C.
Ep.Lero.

The second letter written by Bishop Couppé:
Vunapope.
27th October, 1912

(The Bishop granted his approbation to the Congregation of Mary Immaculate and to its Constitutions.)

For all those reasons enumerated in my letter of 21st October, 1912, I now establish in the Vicariate of Nova Pomerania a Congregation of "Daughters of Mary Immaculate" entrusting it to her protection as Mother and Model.

The aim of this Congregation, as for all others, is the sanctification of its members. Thus they will obey all its rules and practise the evangelical counsels of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience according to their promises.

The special aim of this Congregation is the teaching of Catholic girls in the Catholic way of life. Besides this the Congregation will carry out other works of charity which the Bishop may confide to them.

It is my wish that the Sisters follow these constitutions and put them in practise so that if found suitable they will receive final approbation.

Ludwig Couppé M.S.C.
Ep. Lero.

It was on 21st October, 1912 that the first six young Native girls entered the Convent of Maria Immaculate, Vunapope. Three were from the Gunantuna area, one from the Bainings and two from Manus. All had been for some years at Vunapope School. Mother M. Gerarda FDNSC was their Novice Mistress and Sister M. Helena was her assistant. Bishop Couppé was the Director and came regularly to instruct them in the Religious Life.

How difficult it was for these first aspirants to the way of perfection - long prayers in the morning, silence in the house and garden outside recreation hours! Sometimes they felt themselves in a kind of "kalabus" and they longed for the free day which was allowed them once a week. Daily they saw the good example of the European Sisters, but the constant self-sacrifice was too



Archbishop Louis Couppé first Vicar Apostolic
of New Britain and surrounding islands.

much for the three Gunantuna girls whose homes were close by and soon they left, whilst the other three continued the struggle.

The first Sister to pronounce her promises was the young Postulant from St. Paul's, Baining. She had a very dangerous sore which all medicines failed to cure. She remained earnest in her determination to become a Sister so when it became evident that she would not

recover Bishop Couppé received her into the Congregation on her deathbed where she took the three holy Promises of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience on 19th July, 1913. This Sister M. Veronica was the first Sister in all Papua and New Guinea to vow herself to God's service.

The two remaining Postulants were not long alone. A number of young girls applied to embrace the Religious life. They were accepted. Some of them persevered and some left after a while. However it is not to be thought they were allowed to enter without a struggle. Not at all! The family and relations did all they could to prevent it. They went to His Lordship Bishop Couppé asking for the "bride money" - the tabu. This they demanded as their right. If His Lordship would pay the tabu they would consent to their daughters entering. Bishop Couppé refused them saying: "God does not pay for His Spouses with tabu. He wants you to give them to Him as a gift". The irate parents would not hear of this and were indeed very angry. Some even tried to poison the girls who insisted on entering.

One girl named Luisa la Pia entered as an aspirant and soon after some members of her family paid her a friendly visit, offering her some food they had brought as a gift. She ate of it and died very soon after as it contained deadly poison against which all treatment proved useless. Her death occurred whilst she was still an aspirant on 15th October, 1916.



One of the very early groups of F.M.I. Sisters.

To go back to the first three postulants to receive the holy Habit - they were la Markapa from Beka, Malagunan, Nakanas from Manus and la Pea also from Manus. Their names in Religion were Sister Cecilia, Sister Gertrude, and Sister Eugenia. Bishop Couppé performed the ceremony, the significance of which was carefully explained to them and to the people present during the sermon. The Habit received consisted of a white cap and veil tied under the chin by two straps of white material a grey habit the same as worn to this day with the addition of a cape and black cincture.

EARLY STAGES

To celebrate this first step in Religious life taken by daughters of the newly converted peoples of New Britain and Manus, His Lordship granted a week's leave to the three Novices during which they were able to visit the Sisters at Volavolo as well as villages Reber, Livuan and others whilst Sister Cecilia paid a visit to her home village of Beka, Malaguna. Thus the people learnt to know by seeing the wonderful events that were taking place in their midst. The people greeted them with respect, admired with awe the Religious Habit till it was time for the favoured trio to return to the Novitiate at Vunapope.

There they commenced the two years' serious novitiate training and the testing necessary to know if they were really called to the Religious Life or not. Bishop Couppé did everything possible towards the initiation of these first Sisters into the ways of Religious Life. Mother M. Gerarda, their Mistress of Novices, gave herself devotedly to this charge, ably assisted in the practical formation by Sister M. Helena.

Day by day the good work went on - the holy Bishop instructing, exhorting, clarifying. The Sisters on the other hand training them to become useful sacristans, cooks, teachers and nurses.

At last the real birthday of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate arrived. On 10th October, 1915, (in the evening) the first three Sisters pronounced their



Rev. Mother M. Gerarda, F.D.N.S.C., with a group of F.M.I. Sisters, taken in 1921.

sacred promises to practise Poverty, Chastity and Obedience before the assembled congregation of priests, Brothers, Sisters, and people, with His Lordship presiding at the ceremony. Mother M. Gerarda and Sister M. Helena must have rejoiced with Bishop Couppé as did the congregation of Native people present.

Of these three Sisters professed only one persevered to the end. Sister Cecilia was destined to live many years and during the Japanese occupation it was she, as Superior, who sustained the struggling community till war's end. Sister Eugenia probably did not make her Perpetual Vows. Sister Gertrude left the Congregation and returned to Manus about 1933. During the war she was drawn along with her people into the Paleo heresy. To one who endeavoured to withdraw her from this unfortunate environment, she said, "My heart is in the Catholic religion, but my body is here", and there she remained.

From the beginning the little Congregation of F.M.I. continued to expand. The second group to enter consis-

ted of Sister M. Margareta, Sister M. Regina and Sister M. Klara. Year after year girls who had been for some years in Vunapope "Palairam" or the Sisters' orphanages or boarding Schools at Volavolo or Malaguna offered themselves to the service of God. Among those of the second group Sister Margareta is still alive (1968). In 1966 her Congregation celebrated the Golden Jubilee (50 years) of her Religious Profession. Her novice companion Sister Regina died in 1929, and Sister Klara, deciding she had no vocation, left as a young Sister.

Writing of those early days, Sister Margarita says:

"His Lordship Bishop Couppé in conjunction with Mother M. Gerarda FDNsc accepted six young girls for the foundation members of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate in New Britain - the first congregation of Sisters to be founded in Papua and New Guinea Islands. The simple postulants dresses were prepared and with great confidence in Divine Providence and the Immaculate Mother, the humble work commenced. Bishop Couppé was happy. Every day he came to help the young Sisters in the ways of the Religious life. He made the meditation with them, instructed them in the meaning and rules of the community; wrote their Constitutions and

Sister M. Margareta taken on the occasion of her Golden Jubilee, 10th Oct. 1966. Sister went to her eternal reward on the 1st November, 1968.



left no stone unturned that these foundation members understood the responsibilities and benefits of their new way of life."

Sister Margareta continues: "The good Bishop prepared us carefully for our first retreat. We were very raw recruits but he explained the meaning and graces attached to our first retreat and remained in the chapel or small room assigned to him in our new Convent so that he would be on hand if we needed him."



An early group of Sisters taken at a Church celebration.

Meanwhile, amongst the clergy and others there was a good deal of criticism of the Bishop's latest venture. Many said the time was not ripe for such an important undertaking, the people too primitive, the girls from "Palairam" and other schools too immature. It was true that before World War II the Gunantuna and other girls came at any early age to be trained by the Sisters and rarely returned to their home villages until they were married. In this way they became somewhat out of touch with village life. Many of the girls were greatly sought after as eligible wives in the marriage market and there was much consternation in certain quarters when it was learned that a girl who had been bought in childhood by a certain family rejected the suitor chosen and decided to enter the Convent.

Both sides of the family joined in the fray causing no end of uneasiness to the missionaries in so far that some decided to send no more girls to "Palairam" and elsewhere. The girls would stay at home and not become involved in such disturbing situations like entering Convents, thus causing parents to lose their tabu and family peace as well.

The two letters written by His Lordship Bishop Couppé in October, 1912, set forth his reasons for foundation of the Congregation of Sisters called Daughters of Mary Immaculate. Both letters were inserted in "A Varkurai na Vavaki upi ra Kivung Tabu kai ra umana Natu i la Maria Immaculata". (The first Constitutions of the Congregation.)

EXPANSION

In 1914 four girls entered the postulate at Vunapope and all four persevered in their holy Vocation until death. Three were from the Gunantuna area and one from Manus. Sister M. Crescentia who hailed from Bitagalip has lived to celebrate her Golden Jubilee of Profession in Vunapope last year, October, 1967.

Of the next group received into the Congregation, Sister M. Josephine, at present Sister in Charge at Gunanba, celebrated her Golden Jubilee of Profession in October, 1968. These three Jubilarians after 50

Two Golden Jubilarians



Sister M. Crescentia,
10th October, 1967.



Sister M. Josephine,
17th October, 1968.

years are still labouring zealously in the Lord's Vineyard, thus proving that Bishop Couppé made no mistake when he judged the young Native girls of his Vicariate in the South Seas would become worthy Daughters of Mary Immaculate - following her on the road of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience in the service of God and man.

As the number of professed increased and the Sisters were considered sufficiently capable to undertake work on a Mission station, a number were sent in 1920, to open a convent and school at Tapo. In 1922, others went to Takabur, while Papatatava received Sisters in 1924. The F.M.I. Sisters worked on these stations until the Japanese invasion.

In 1923, as has been mentioned earlier, Bishop Couppé asked to resign, on account of advanced age and in-



Group of Sisters taken during the period of growth and expansion in the Congregation prior to 1928.

firmity and in that year he left his beloved New Britain to spend his last days in retirement in Australia. You can imagine the grief of the F.M.I. Sisters as they said "Farewell!" to their Founder and Father. After Bishop Couppé's departure for Australia, His Lordship, Bishop Vesters appointed Father Kleintitschen as Spiritual Director of the Sisters F.M.I. whilst Mother Gerarda and Sister M. Helena continued in the offices of Mistress of Novices and Socia respectively, preparing the Sisters carefully for the various duties they would be called upon to fulfil on the outstations.

TRAGEDY STRIKES

The numbers continued to increase each year as some Sisters made their holy profession and others received the Habit or entered the postulate. Young and ardent souls were only too happy to respond to Our Lord's invitation, "If thou wilt be perfect come and follow Me!" Some of the missionaries asked: "Where are the stations for all these Sisters to work on?" Alas! a great trial awaited the now flourishing congregation. The terrible sickness of T.B. gained a hold on many young



Sisters renewing Vows during Profession Mass.



Sisters before it was recognised. Today we have X-rays and special medicines for this sickness but forty years ago these remedies were hardly known in the tropics. There was quite a lot of malaria in those days and at first the Sisters' fever was thought to be caused by this germ.

In 1928, the mission doctor, Doctor Brehm, was convinced that the disease was the dreaded tuberculosis. At once all precautions were taken to combat the spread of the disease. A special infirmary was erected and the sick isolated therein, but all to no avail. One after the other Sisters contracted the disease, especially the younger members of the community. Every known treatment for T.B. was administered along with rest and nourishing food but in the ensuing ten years more than twenty-two Sisters died of the disease. So the Bishop decided that no more postulants should be received.

Later the cause of the outbreak was thought to have been the infection of "open" T.B. of the young F.M.I. Sister appointed Socia in the Novitiate. Her case was not discovered until the dread disease was well advanced among the junior Sisters.



Present day Novitiate at Takabur, officially blessed and opened by His Grace Archbishop J. Hoehne, 30th June 1968.



Takabur - 1966. Novices and postulants taken with
Rev. Father Juenemann and Rev. Mother M. St. Paul.

Mother M. Gerarda died on 9th February, 1931. She had been in a state of suffering for some time from diabetes and other complaints but her last illness was short. She was replaced as Superior of the F.M.I. Sisters by Mother M. Helena.

In 1937 on October 12th, the Congregation of Mary Immaculate founded by Bishop Couppé celebrated its Silver Jubilee or 25th anniversary of foundation. The community was still in existence but in a weakened state. Twenty-two of the finest Sisters were dead, forty-three were still alive, some of whom were very ill, and there could be no new postulants.

However, those young Sisters did not die in vain. One after the other they offered their lives to God for the mission and their congregation, dying the death of God's saints and resigned to His Holy Will. They rejoiced in heaven on that Jubilee Day whilst the community in Vunapope was weak unto death.

After the Jubilee the congregation began to take new life. Bishop Vesters decided that the Sisters who were not infected with T.B. should be moved to Takabur. Preparations were made and on 11th February 1938 a lorry conveyed 12 Sisters to Takabur. They attended Holy Mass there and Father Bender welcomed them in

the church and a crowd of people came to offer their greetings. Sixteen Sisters remained in Vunapope - nine of them on the sick list. Sister Imelda died soon after. Five Sisters were at Tapo and four at Paparatava.

Sister M. Helena was named Superior of the Sisters at Takabur with Father Bender as Spiritual Director. The Sisters' Habit was modified - the cape done away with and a lighter veil introduced.

Some of the Sisters had great difficulty in adapting themselves to the various changes. Two Sisters gave up their vocations, but the good advice of Father Bender and continued kindness of Sister M. Helena helped the others to adapt themselves by degrees.

On 1st June, 1938, eight young postulants entered the new Novitiate at Takabur and on the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception six of them received the Habit as Novices. Thus did the little Congregation come through its dark hour of trial to begin a new life.

Father Bender M.S.C. died in 1940 and was replaced by Father Zwinge. In January, 1941, three F.M.I. Sisters went to Rabaul to assist the O.L.S.H. Sisters, but in December they returned as Japan had begun the war in the Pacific and her ships were coming close to Rabaul.

Takabur - 1968.
Rev. Mother
M. Athanasius,
Novice Mistress,
with novices
and postulants.



WORLD WAR II - COMING OF THE JAPANESE

In January, 1942, the Japanese bombed the aerodrome near Rabaul and on January 23rd the expected invasion of Rabaul took place. The European women and children had all been evacuated whilst the men were at once taken prisoners by the Japanese. Many were interned at Vunapope until they were taken away on a Japanese ship bound for Tokyo - it never arrived.

Missionaries in the Gazelle Peninsula and elsewhere were rounded up and interned at Vunapope, the smallest buildings being retained for their use while the Father's House, Convents, schools and hospitals were taken over by the Japanese. A fence of four rows of barbed wire partitioned off the missionary prisoners' domain which was the area where the printing office, technical school, etc., now stand. In the hills nearby the seminarians and missionaries excavated underground tunnels as safety zones from air raids. How necessary these proved to be!

The Sisters F.M.I., being natives of New Britain, were not at first sent away from the Vunapope camp, and were even allowed to go to Takabur and the school vegetable gardens (some distance from the mission) in order to get food for themselves and the missionaries interned at Vunapope.

However, after the Coral Sea battle all native Sisters from Paparatava and Vunapope were sent to Takabur. When Father Zwingge and Mother Helena, F.D.N.S.C., were being taken away from Takabur, Sister M. Cecilia, F.M.I., was appointed Superior with Sister Scholastica and Sister Josephine as her assistants. Each Sister was given secular dress (kolot and lavalava) in case it became necessary for them to disperse. Sister Cecilia was the senior member of the Congregation, being the only surviving member of those first three professed in 1915.

The Japanese soldiers came to Takabur and settled themselves in the Novitiate building, interned some mixed race people in Father Zwingge's house and permitted the Sisters to live in the Professed Sisters' Convent. The Sisters were allowed to pray in the church but Father

had removed the Blessed Sacrament. The Catechist, Lucas To Vanganga, kept watch over the Sisters' welfare, and built a secret house in the bush where the sacred vessels, vestments, and belongings of Father Zwinge and the Sisters were kept safely hidden and guarded night and day by Catholics.

Some of the people advised the Sisters to change their Religious Habit for the kolot and lavalava but the Sisters would not hear of it. They stood firmly behind their new Mother who governed them wisely and well. Besides, the Japanese had respect for the Sisters and feared to antagonise the natives by injuring the "holy women" in any way.

All the Sisters' religious duties were carried out as regularly as possible though they were deprived of Holy Communion and had to be content with a Spiritual Communion.

Father Juenemann was still free at Bitagalip living in a small hut but able to carry out his priestly duties. Occasionally the Japanese Police gave the Sisters permission to visit Bitagalip where they heard Holy Mass and received the Sacraments.

When the feast of Mary Immaculate was drawing near, the Sisters, according to their custom, wished to make their annual retreat but there was no priest to conduct it. However, Sister Cecilia settled the matter by conducting the retreat herself during six full days. Every day there were four conferences, the first early in the morning, the second at 11 a.m., the third at 3.30 p.m. and the final one in the evenings. Besides this they said the Rosary daily and made the Stations of the Cross, being exhorted by their retreat mistress to pray for the interned missionaries and for the people. At retreat's end the Sisters proceeded to Bitagalip where they heard Holy Mass, received the Sacraments and devoutly renewed their vows.

However, this was not a time for praying only. There was no food except that which their own garden produced, so they laboured long and hard to send something to the hungry missionaries interned at Vunapope. Sister Cecilia encouraged them earnestly in this work of charity, distributing the food into baskets, sending some Sisters off each morning heavily laden, warning them to beware

of the dangers abroad, and to return before the planes began dropping their bombs.

At times the Sisters made the rounds of the villages with tabu (shell money) to buy taro or other food from the people. Many good people such as la Kalamana, la Tolo and others gladly helped them. The Catechist, To Lucas, especially showed great kindness. He gave them taros, bananas and fowls, refusing any payment whatever and merely warning them to be very prudent in their speech lest the Japanese Police became suspicious as there were spies everywhere.

At times the Police waylaid the Sisters when they returned with the food. After questioning them closely they accused them of carrying secret messages or some other mischief and at times even hit some of them. On other occasions the "Kempei Tai" (Police) raided the community cupboard and helped themselves to whatever they fancied.

On 23rd November, 1943, the eleven Sisters F.M.I. from Tapo were added to the Takabur community. Two Sisters, Sister Tarsisia and Sister Agatha had already died at Tapo since the coming of the Japanese.

Soon after the arrival of the Tapo Sisters the Japanese Army Captain from Tobera arrived and ordered the Sisters to leave the only building they had been allowed to retain. A large number of Japanese soldiers duly arrived to occupy the Sisters' dwelling and the church.

Gathering their belongings quickly together the Sisters took refuge in their banana plantation and commenced to build a makeshift house of coconut leaves. To Buavubar, hearing of their plight, offered them the use of his house, so some Sisters took up their abode there whilst others continued to live in the plantation house. That was a necessary precaution as Japanese soldiers were wont to invade any gardens left unprotected, helping themselves generously to the produce there. The heartrending cries and wails of the Sisters sufficed to drive them off as the common soldiers were rather frightened of the native people and reports to their Superior Officers.

The church was no longer a place of worship but resembled more a "den of thieves". The Sisters continued to carry out their spiritual duties at home or going

secretly in turn to Bitagalip where they heard Holy Mass and received the Sacraments and good advice from Father Juenemann.

Bishop Scharmach in his prison quarters at Vunapope heard of the Sisters' plight and sent word for them to put off the Religious Habit and to return to their own villages. However the Sisters clung to their Religious life together and to their beloved Habit. Four only went to live with their relations at Gunanba but still retained the Sisters' Habit. When Sister Christina died there suddenly, the other three made their way back to the community.

Soon after Sister Juliana, who had been sick when they were evicted from their convent at Takabur, died and was buried in the cemetery at Takabur.

BOMBINGS

Then the war with its accompanying bombings began to increase in intensity. On 11th February, 1944, Vunapope was bombed for the first time. It was a fearful experience. No one who was caught outside the air raid shelters, excavated into the hillsides by the missionaries who had prepared for the worst, escaped death or injury that day. The missionaries were using an old shed, usually used for storing kapok, as a hospital for sick Fathers and Brothers. Among the inmates were Father Mertens and Brother Redmond, S.M. with Brother Wischen as infirmarian. The siren sounded - Father Mertens rushed to the tunnels in the hills, but Brother Redmond, who was bedridden, stayed with his nurse in the "house kapok" only to be blown to pieces by the deadly bombs that fell that day. Twenty Brothers and priests were to die as a result of that bombing. Some lingered for days, being nursed in dark, earthy tunnels, as were the Sisters who had also been wounded. Henceforth the Missionaries lived in these tunnels. One was set apart for the priests, one for the Brothers, one for the F.D.N.S.C. Sisters, one for the M.S.C. Sisters and one for the mixed race schoolboys who had nowhere to go.

Soon it was realised that the Americans intended to bomb Vunapope out of existence - it was blasted daily from the air and the sea with a ferocity that

defies description. At last there was nothing left to bomb but the church. For some time it had been used for all kinds of profane purposes by the Japanese, but for the time being these were at a safe distance from the doomed mission.

As one tunnel had received a direct hit and everyone's nerves were tried almost beyond endurance, the Bishop told the Brothers to burn down our beloved Cathedral. In the calm of the evening we watched the grand monument erected by Bishop Couppé for the worship of God, go up in flames and the great bronze statue of the Sacred Heart standing on its highest pinnacle, in thanksgiving for the mission's safety in World War I, come crashing down to the ground.

At the war's end when the surviving missionaries returned from Ramale Camp to find Vunapope covered with jungle there were only two familiar landmarks to guide them. - the big cement tank riddled with holes, and the Sacred Heart statue lying where it had fallen. Now the grand statue stands once again in triumph with open arms welcoming all who enter Vunapope, not on top of the church but on top of the great cement tank which is covered with flowering vines.

When there was nothing left to bomb in Vunapope, the Americans left us in peace amongst the rubble. The Japanese now gave orders that the missionaries were all to go to a "safe" place at Ramale - a dark damp unhealthy valley about two hours' walk from Vunapope and five hundred feet down a jungle - covered gorge. The missionaries were not anxious to leave the safety of the underground tunnels, excavated at such an enormous cost of energy, even though the bombings had ceased since the destruction of all the buildings. At Ramale there was nothing but virgin bush and who knew if the bombings might not be later aimed at that area!

Anyway, the Japanese were the masters so the long procession of almost three hundred evacuees set out early one morning for their new home, each one carrying a bundle of clothes, and falling flat on the ground as planes passed overhead. A truck was provided for the very sick bedridden patients. And so the head mission station set up and organised by Bishop Louis Couppé became a deserted wilderness.

At Ramale all able bodied inmates got busy clearing a site for the camp, setting up a few shacks, but especially digging safety tunnels into the hills. There was one for each community - damp and dark but providing sleeping quarters, hospital, and above all refuge from danger. In these first days at Ramale the F.M.I. Sisters came and worked generously with their displaced Fathers and Sisters. However a strong guard of Japanese Police was installed on the hill above the camp, and they strictly forbade the Native Sisters to enter the Ramale camp - they were to stay out.

The Sisters F.M.I. then moved to a valley called Lalapit, not too far removed from Ramale. Their kind friend and support Father Juenemann had to join the other Fathers in the camp, and so the Sisters were deprived altogether of the Sacraments and Holy Mass whilst the missionaries, by a special dispensation of Providence were able to assist at Mass daily in their dark tunnels and to receive the Bread of Life to sustain them in their hardships. It was almost miraculous the way the small amount of flour which they had brought with them from Yunapope to make Altar Breads lasted until peace came in spite of the damp dark valley in which they lived. Like the Manna in the desert, there was sufficient for everyone to have their daily food for the journey.

On Christmas Day the F.M.I. Sisters stood outside the boundary fence and united themselves with Ramale inmates assisting at Holy Mass. Then to their joy they saw Bishop Scharmach approaching them carrying the ciborium from which he gave each one Holy Communion. After a great deal of persuasion he had obtained permission from the Japanese Major and Police for this. It had been a hard won victory with the Major and Police on guard during the proceedings.

On Christmas Eve the Bishop had received a parcel of food wrapped in banana leaves, and between the food was a secret message: "Dear Bishop and Father, we want to let you know we are in distress. For days and nights on end we have been crying and unable to sleep for sorrow. Christmas is so near and we know there will be no Mass and no Holy Communion for us even on Our Lord's Birthday. Can't you help us, dear Bishop? Your little Sisters."

This message stabbed the good Bishop Scharmach to the heart - he had tried repeatedly to make Mass and Holy Communion possible for them but had failed. This Holy Christmas Day he won.

Later on six Sisters returned to Takabur because of the food in their garden. Alas! a short time after an aeroplane suddenly appeared and dropped bombs over Takabur, killing Sisters Anna and Sophia. (These two Sisters with Sister Veronica, the first F.M.I. to die in the Congregation, had come to Vunapope from St. Paul's,, Baining, after the massacre of M.S.C. missionaries there.) The surviving Sisters buried the victims in the cemetery and from then on no-one dared remain in Takabur.

All remained together in their hiding place at Lalapit, but as their Patronal Feast of Mary Immaculate was drawing near they decided to follow their custom and make a six days' retreat. Once again the valiant Superior, Sister M. Cecilia, conducted it. After the first conference each day the Sisters hurriedly made ready the sweet potatoes, or tapioca or bananas for Ramale Camp. According to Police custom, they had to carry the heavy baskets up the hillside and set them down to be examined by Japanese Police. They would help themselves to a goodly quota before the Sisters could carry them to the "banis", and empty them over the banis to the missionaries. All was quickly carried to the tunnel kitchen to be cooked for the day's meal. Right through the internment the Sisters kept in mind the Patronal Feast of each missionary. They had a special calendar for that. Then the honoured one would receive a specially cooked parcel wrapped in banana leaves containing punupur sufficient for that particular community.

On their arrival home again at Lalapit the Sisters applied themselves to work, prayers and conferences. There were constant distractions from planes passing overhead, causing them to fly for cover many times a day.

There were spies around too, and at times the Japanese were very nasty towards the Sisters, threatening some with the death penalty. Sister Cecilia like a true mother always defended her Sisters.

SISTERS BEFORE JAPANESE COURT

On one occasion the Sisters became thoroughly frightened. The Japanese police spies (mostly young native men who were unable to return to their distant island homes and who worked for the Japanese for their keep) reported to the "Kempei" (police) that they heard Sister Teresia say, "America number one, Nippon (Japan) number ten!"

The Japanese proceeded to hold council and decided the "Black Sisters" must be severely punished. The police headquarters for that area were just above Ramale prison camp where the prisoners could be kept under strict observation. They, too, could also observe some of the police activities which certainly when they were punishing wrongdoers could only be termed "drastic".

For reasons which we need not specify here, the Japanese police and Tagai (the English interpreter) decided the Sisters' case should be dealt with in an obscure corner - not near the road and quite removed from Ramale camp.

In due time Muru, a policeman, arrived at the Sisters' hut in Lalapit. Here he found only two sick Sisters. He demanded to know the whereabouts of the other Sisters. "The other Sisters are at Kabaleo getting food for the missionaries at Ramale camp". There could be no objection to this activity for, as mentioned earlier in this story, the police always obtained the choicest portions of food when examining the Sisters' baskets for secret messages.

Muru departed and before long came upon the weary Sisters, each carrying two baskets of sweet potatoes, yams and tapioca suspended by bush rope from their heads. In addition, some of the stronger Sisters carried a large bunch of bananas.

Muru hustled them along to police quarters where they were told to leave their food and proceed further. They were conducted by two policemen who occasionally looked behind to see if their activities could be observed from the camp. Spies were awaiting them at the scene of the "trial" with six long, green, heavy bamboos. The Sisters were not told what the accusation against them was.

The police merely ordered them to kneel down. Then the spies lifted the bamboo poles and put them behind the Sisters' knees. The Sisters were then ordered to sit back on the bamboo while spies stood on each end of the six bamboo sticks. The Japanese police called to the spies, "You fellow playboy! You fellow playboy!" and the boys see-sawed and jerked the heavy bamboos to the satisfaction of their masters.

When it began to get dark, and the Japanese still had not told the Sisters the reason for their punishment, the Sisters could bear it no longer and called for pity. Sisters: Master, our legs are paining terribly!

Tagai: Yes, your legs are paining. Can't you put up with a little suffering? When Jesus hung on the cross he felt greater pain but he did not cry out. He bore it patiently.

The perspiration caused by the pain was pouring from the Sisters' bodies.

Sisters: Master, please have pity on us!

Tagai: Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament keeps silence always.

Then the charges against the Sisters began: Sister Teresa was called to stand forwards. A policeman placed his bayonet on her neck and cried, "Nippon governs this place, Inglis no! You Sister Teresa, you insulted us by saying "Nippon number ten, Inglis number one"."

Sisters: Master, I know nothing about that talk you accuse me of.

Police: You know! You said it!

Sister: No sir!

Police: You did say it!

This went on for some time. Then the police called Sister Cecilia, the head Sister, and said, "We are going to cut off her head!" Sister Cecilia: "Master, have pity on me. Do not cut off Sister's head cut mine instead."

Police: No! Sister Teresa must die - not you!"

Then the two policemen brandished their bayonets, putting them close to her neck and waving them in front of the other Sisters, who by now were beseeching the Mother of God to assist them.

The young Sisters began to cry with fright but the older Sisters told them not to cry but to pray to their Immaculate Mother as they had been taught to do.

It was now late at night and the police were relieved by two others, who showed little respect for the Sisters. Sister Cecilia gave the order, "If these men try to do anything to you, run as fast as you can and scream loudly". The Japanese did not understand her words in the native language, but the Sisters feared a fate worse than death was upon them. The spies, seeing the lustful manners of the two policemen, began to adopt the same leering attitude. The Sisters were furtively glancing around to see which side would be the best to run.

Then their prayers to Our Lady were answered and the court assumed a serious tone once again. A great peace filled their souls because now they wished only to die.

The police asked Sister Teresia if it were true that she had spoken disparagingly of "Nippon". Sister again denied the charge.

Police: Sisters "Black Skin", you like me cut off all your heads or Sister Teresia's only?

Sisters: Please sir, cut off all the Sisters' heads. We all prefer it that way.

Police: Aren't you frightened to die?

Sisters: No sir, we are glad to die.

The police sent off the limping Sisters, keeping only Sister Teresia. Sister Cecilia begged that Sister Teresia be released also. After more threats and warnings the police sent the spies after the departing Sisters to say they must return. Those Sisters took the opportunity to tell the spies just what they thought of them and their revolting conduct, and they did not spare their words.

Sister Teresia was then handed over to her Sisters and all returned to their home in the valley, thanking Our Lord and His Immaculate Mother for their deliverance.

It was now past midnight and it was long hours since the Sisters had eaten, but those war-weary victims were glad to drop on to their beds and rest their tired limbs - at daybreak they must be off to Kabaleo again, otherwise the missionaries at Ramale would starve. Only those who were in the camp could realise just how great that hunger was.

FURTHER ORDEALS

Just as they had recovered somewhat from their ordeal with the Ramale police, the Sisters received an order to present themselves to the Japanese Officer in charge of Telo near Bitapaka. Bitapaka was about eight miles distant, but no-one seemed to know anything about Telo.

The Sisters thought that the police probably intended to take them to a deep valley or to one of their tunnels and kill them. Praying fervently they set out, accompanied by some faithful catechists. After a long trek they arrived in the vicinity of Bitapaka. No Japanese camp was to be seen so they tried various paths only to become separated from one another. When they were all together again, they set off, only to land this time in the midst of a large ammunition set-up, cannon, machine guns, and all the other attractive implements of war presided over by Japanese officers and soldiers who seemed quite upset at this invasion of Sisters into their secret domain.

The Sisters were ordered to stand at attention but they fled, followed by the abuse of the Japanese. The Sisters, now tired and footsore, continued their search for Telo, and stumbled once again upon some Japanese sentries guarding their treasures in a secret hiding place. The Sisters did not wait to enquire about Telo as they were once again confronted with military harshness which sent them scurrying off.

Once again they came upon an ammunition dump, but this time a well-disposed Japanese met them, and after enquiring about their business, put them on the right track. Soon they were close to the Japanese headquarters. Waiting till all the Sisters were together they prepared for the ordeal. One catechist warned them, "If they offer you rice and kakaruk (fowl) to eat, don't accept it - refuse it at once because that is the sign they are going to kill you".

They saw a Japanese sentry looking out for them so the Sisters presented themselves and were immediately conducted to a small room or shelter. There they awaited the officer who was seated at a table near a tunnel

When the sentry advised the officer of the Sister's arrival he appeared before them carrying a book in his hand.

The frightened Sisters bowed low and gave the Japanese salutation: "Hooio gosaimas". The officer took his seat, surveyed the Sisters and ordered: "Sing 'Ave Maria' for me".

Gladly the Sisters arranged themselves to sing Mary's praises in different parts. With all their hearts they sang the lovely hymn in Gunantuna, "Ave, ave Maria". When they finished, the officer clapped his hands. The Sisters began to relax somewhat as they had seen this Captain Sakaiama at Takabur.

Then the Captain called a Namatanai native boy To Geor to translate the Sisters' answers for him if he did not understand clearly.

The Sisters were fearless now and as some knew Pidgin English quite well they were spokesmen for all.

Sakaiama: Are you children of the Mission?

Sisters: Yes, sir.

Sakaiama: Do you love the Fathers and Sisters of the Mission?

Sisters: Yes sir, we do.

Sakaiama: Do you also love the "Kristo"?

Sisters: Yes sir, we do love Him.

Sakaiama: You have pity on the missionaries at Ramale and bring them food every day. Why is that?

Sisters: We help the missionaries because they taught us everything we know; because they have worked for us and brought us up. The missionaries fed us when we were small and gave us everything we have.

Sakaiama then looked thoughtful and asked To Geor if what the Sisters said was true. To Geor assured him the statements were all true. Sakaiama laughed and abandoned his questioning about the missionaries, and changed to the vital subject of war.

Sakaiama: Are you Sisters cross with Nippon (Japan) because we came here to your country and chased away the Australians?

Sisters: No, sir

Sakaiama: Nippon number ten?

Sisters: No sir! Nippon number one!

Sakaiama: "Inglis," Doiska" and America, do you like them?

Sisters: We like you all. This is not our war but yours. We have nothing to do with it. We obey your laws but we are not fighting anybody.

On that note the interview ended. Sakaiama remarked to To Geor that he was surprised at the answers given by the "Black Sisters".

Then once again the pagan soldier asked the Sisters to sing "Ave Maria". They sang with all their hearts an Ave Maria different from the first one, and as he seemed pleased they sang yet a third, one composed by M.S.C. missionaries.

Sakaiama thanked them, and then called Sister Cecilia to ask if the Sisters would care to cook rice and eat it, but she assured him they had their own food. He then asked all the Sisters if that were true. Then they bowed themselves out, glad to be free from the interview.

Soon after this Sister Bernadette and Sister Magdalene became very ill, so the Japanese allowed them to be taken into Ramale Camp. There they died and were buried beside other victims who did not survive the starvation and misery of the internment. A little later the police asked Sister Cecilia if she and the others would go into the camp too. She answered, "Why not?" We are not frightened of the camp". However, one or other of the more kindly disposed Japanese advised the Sisters to stay where they were, saying, "In a little time all the missionaries in the camp will be killed".

The Sisters replied, "In that case we would like to die with them".

PEACE ONCE AGAIN

However, Mary Queen of Heaven spoke the glorious peace giving: "It is finished!" Every missionary in Ramale camp had completed a retreat, disturbed somewhat by siren signals and aeroplanes flying low. The Sisters finished theirs on 15th August, Feast of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven, that glorious day in 1945 when peace came to the Pacific.

On 17th August, the Bishop was called up to the police camp and the chief simply stated: "The war is over. You are free now". When the official news spread through Ramale camp there was great jubilation. Special thanksgiving-Solemn Benediction was held.

Though the inmates of Ramale were supposed to be free they stayed on in Ramale as there was still some danger from the Japanese, and there was just nowhere else to go as all mission buildings had been bombed to the ground.

It was not until 13th September that the Australian soldiers reached Ramale camp, then things began to improve rapidly - quantities of food as well as gifts of clothing came to cheer the inmates who then learned the story of the war and the doings in the outside world. Since January, 1942 they had received no letters, newspapers or information of any kind except for a few distorted stories about Japanese victories.

Many of the very sick missionaries were flown to Jacquinot Bay Military Hospital and later to Lae for special treatment. Those who remained gradually became stronger and were soon able, with the assistance of willing soldiers, to begin clearing operations in the wilderness that was once Vunapope. However, it was necessary to return to Ramale each evening as in Vunapope there was nowhere for them to lay their heads.

The native Sisters were now with the European missionaries in the camp. The mixed race people who had been interned moved out and the Sisters were given their quarters.

On 21st March, 1946, Sister Teresia F.M.I., died. She had been tortured and threatened with death by the Japanese. In spite of her brave exterior bad health soon brought her to the grave in Ramale Camp.

At last the day came when Ramale was abandoned and the exiles returned to stay in Vunapope. Their abode was mostly in tents with a few army huts thrown in for good measure. All rejoiced to be back in the loved station again.

No one was happier than the Sisters F.M.I. During their exile they had suffered much but God had sustained them through many dangers of soul and body. The valiant Sister Cecilia's work was done. She had guided the flock confided to her into safe pastures - other



A group of professed Sisters taken with Mother M. Helena shortly after the war.

hands were there to guard and guide them; gradually her health began to fail and she joyfully gave up her soul to God on the Feast of the Ascension, 1946.

At this time there were thirty Sisters in the Congregation. Mother M. Helena, FDNSC, again became their Superior. It was not possible for the Sisters to return to Takabur but in March 1947 four Sisters went to Anelava where they assisted the M.S.C. Sisters in their work of mercy among the poor lepers there. The same year four Sisters went to Rakunai and from that time the F.M.I. Sisters have continued to labour in these parishes. The year 1948 saw the Sisters return to Tapo, their former station, and the commencement of a new field of labour at Vunavavar.

A number of young girls having applied to enter the Novitiate, Mother Helena and Sister Gerarda F.M.I. went to Takabur in preparation for their entry which took place on 17th December.

There were four postulants received on that day. From that time there has been a steady flow of candidates. Each year new postulants enter, others receive the Religious Habit while others pronounce the three Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. Thus the mustard seed planted by His Lordship Bishop Louis Coupé has grown into a vigorous tree, battered by storm

An historic occasion - Sisters entering the Cathedral at Vunapope on 21st June, 1962, to pronounce Final Vows in the Congregation. Prior to this they made promises only.





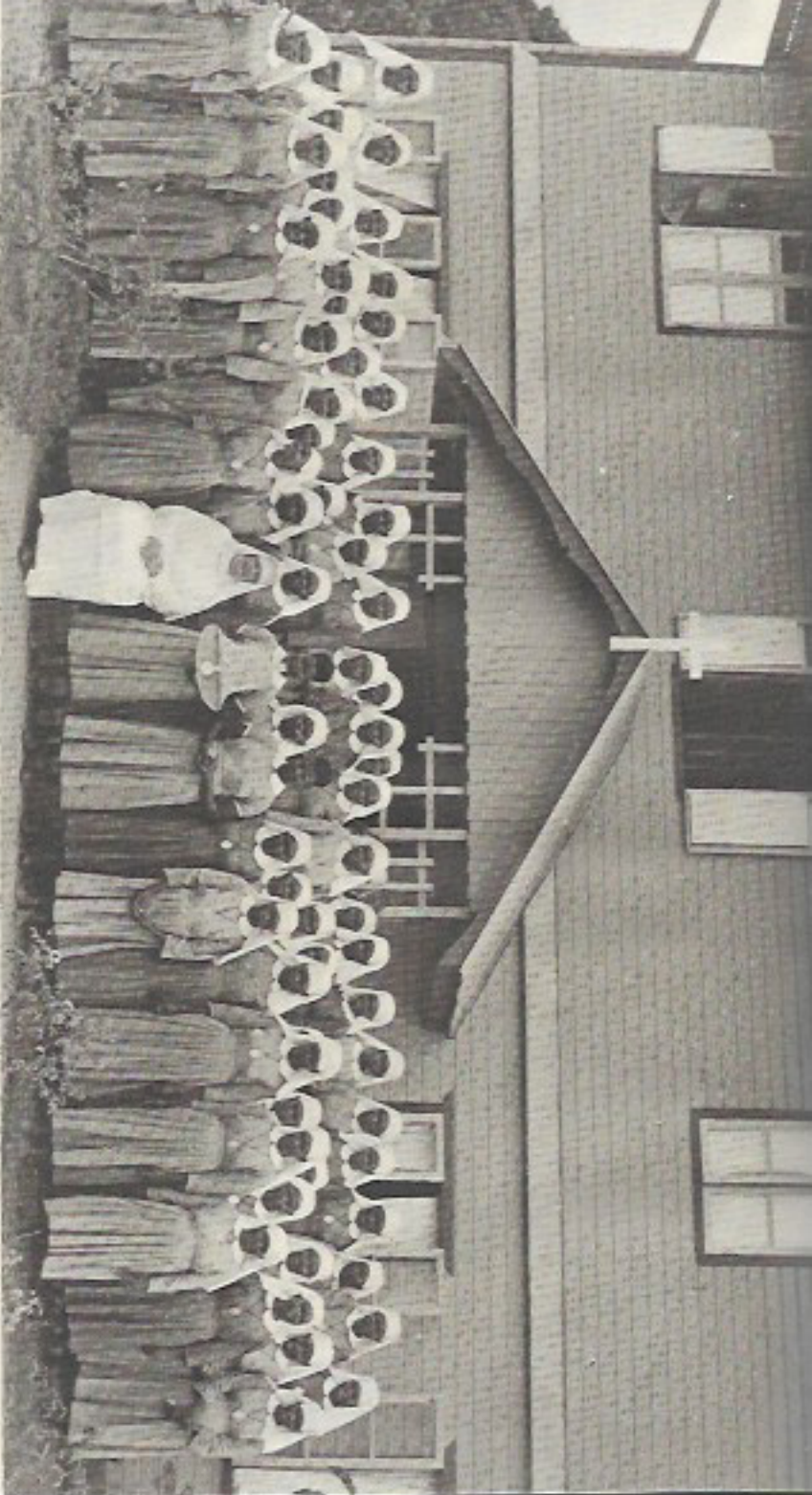
Rev. Mother M. Champion shown with a group of aspirants at Takabur in 1955.

and wind, at times threatened with destruction, but destined to live on because it is not the work of man but of God.

21st June 1962 was a very special day of thanksgiving for the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. Assembled in the church at Vunapope a large number of Sisters pronounced their Final Vows and received the silver ring symbolising Fidelity. Through these vows the Daughters of Mary Immaculate were firmly established as a Diocesan Congregation attached to the Vicariate of Rabaul.



His Grace, Archbishop J. Hoehne, taken with a group of Sisters who had just taken part in reception and profession ceremonies at Takobur.



The Golden Jubilee of the Congregation, 27th October, 1962.

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE CONGREGATION OF DAUGHTERS OF MARY IMMACULATE.

The Golden Jubilee or fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the F.M.I. Congregation by Bishop Louis Couppé was celebrated on 27th October 1962. The whole mission, including Archbishop, Priests, Brothers, Sisters, Catholic people and children, rejoiced with the Sisters F.M.I. on this their great day. They thanked God, the giver of all good gifts, for this Congregation of Native Sisters which He had brought through many trials and tribulations, sustaining it through sickness, war and persecution for fifty years. Who shall tell the good done, the souls saved, by the Sisters in all those years?



Sister students preparing for examinations. Sisters are given opportunity to complete their secondary studies after profession if they haven't done so before they enter.



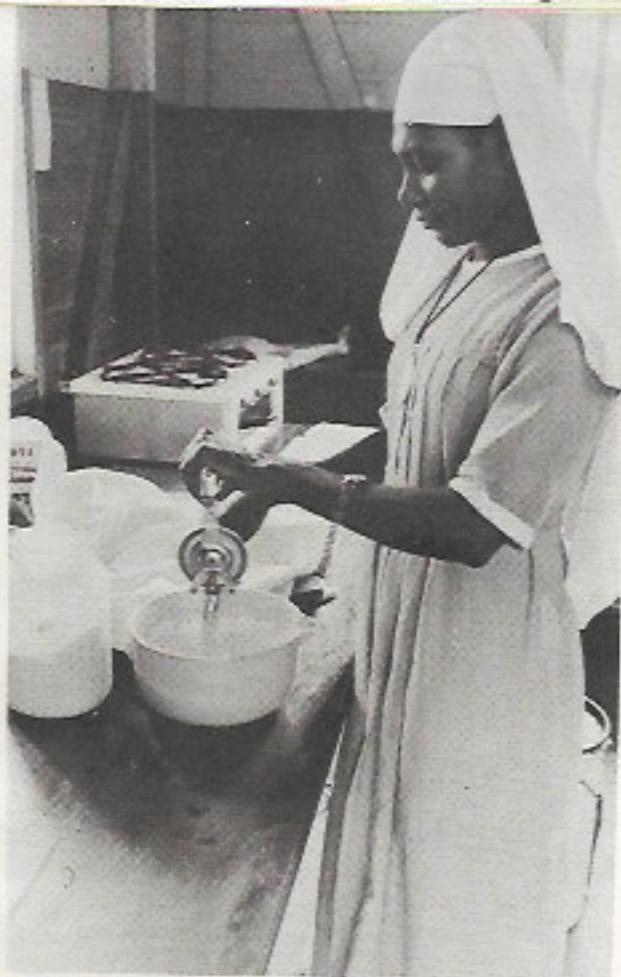
Sister cutting altarbread. The F.M.I. Sisters bake and dispatch altarbread for the whole of New Britain.

Today, Archbishop John Hoehne, M.S.C. carries on the good work begun by his predecessor and continues to take a paternal interest in the Congregation of his beloved native Sisters.

The Congregation is still under the devoted guidance of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. When Mother M. Helena became worn out after thirty years of faithful service she was replaced as Superior by Mother M. Campion, F.D.N.S.C. - that was in 1948. About sixteen years later, Mother M. St. Paul became Superior General with Mother Petronilla, F.M.I., as Superior of the large Yunapope community. Mother M. Athanasius F.D.N.S.C. is Novice Mistress at Takabur aided by Sister M. Ursula F.M.I. as Socia.

With the exception of two stations where the F.M.I. Sisters work with the M.S.C. Sisters, they are in charge of their own communities - at Kabaleo, Rakunai, Gunanba, Yunavavar, Volavolo, Silanga, Pililo, Guma and Mai, with more stations to be opened in the near future.

What's cooking?
We'll soon know.
Good cooks are
very popular on
the stations.



Sister at the sewing
machine. It takes a
lot of sewing to
clothe a hundred
Sisters, but Sister
doesn't mind.





F.M.I. Sisters' convent at Kabaleo. Sisters doing teacher training and those on the staff of the Primary 'T' School live here.

Many of these stations are in isolated regions where, under the direction of the Priest in Charge, the Sisters labour as trained teachers, nurses, seamstresses or cooks. At the O.L.S.H. Teacher Training College, Kabaleo, and the M.S.C. Sisters' nurses training school at Vunapope, the Sisters are prepared for Government Certificates. At present (1968) thirty three F.M.I. Sisters have gained the Government Teachers' Certificate, ten have passed their Nurses' Examination, others are still in training and seventeen are pursuing High School studies at the O.L.S.H. High School, Vunapope.

The number of professed Sisters in the Congregation has now reached more than 100. In the Novitiate there are twenty two Novices and postulants.

Many of the first Sisters are still with us among them two of the Golden Jubilarians. Sister M. Crescentia and Sister M. Josephine. The latter can count among her former pupils Monsignor Herman Paivu, one of the Vicariates first native priests. (Sister M. Margarita the first to celebrate her Golden Jubilee died in 1968.)

Bishop Louis Couppé made no mistake when he crowned his glorious labours for God and souls by instituting the native Sisterhood dedicated to Mary Immaculate, to labour among their own people on their own soil on the farthestmost corners of the Vicariate, tending them from the cradle to the grave, just as their holy Founder wished them to do.

On his Coat of arms were inscribed the words, "I will give to them one Heart". This he fulfilled most perfectly in the Congregation which owes its life to him.



Teaching is one of the most important forms of the apostolate of the F.M.I. Sisters. Here is one with her class.



Sisters on the playing field with schoolgirls.



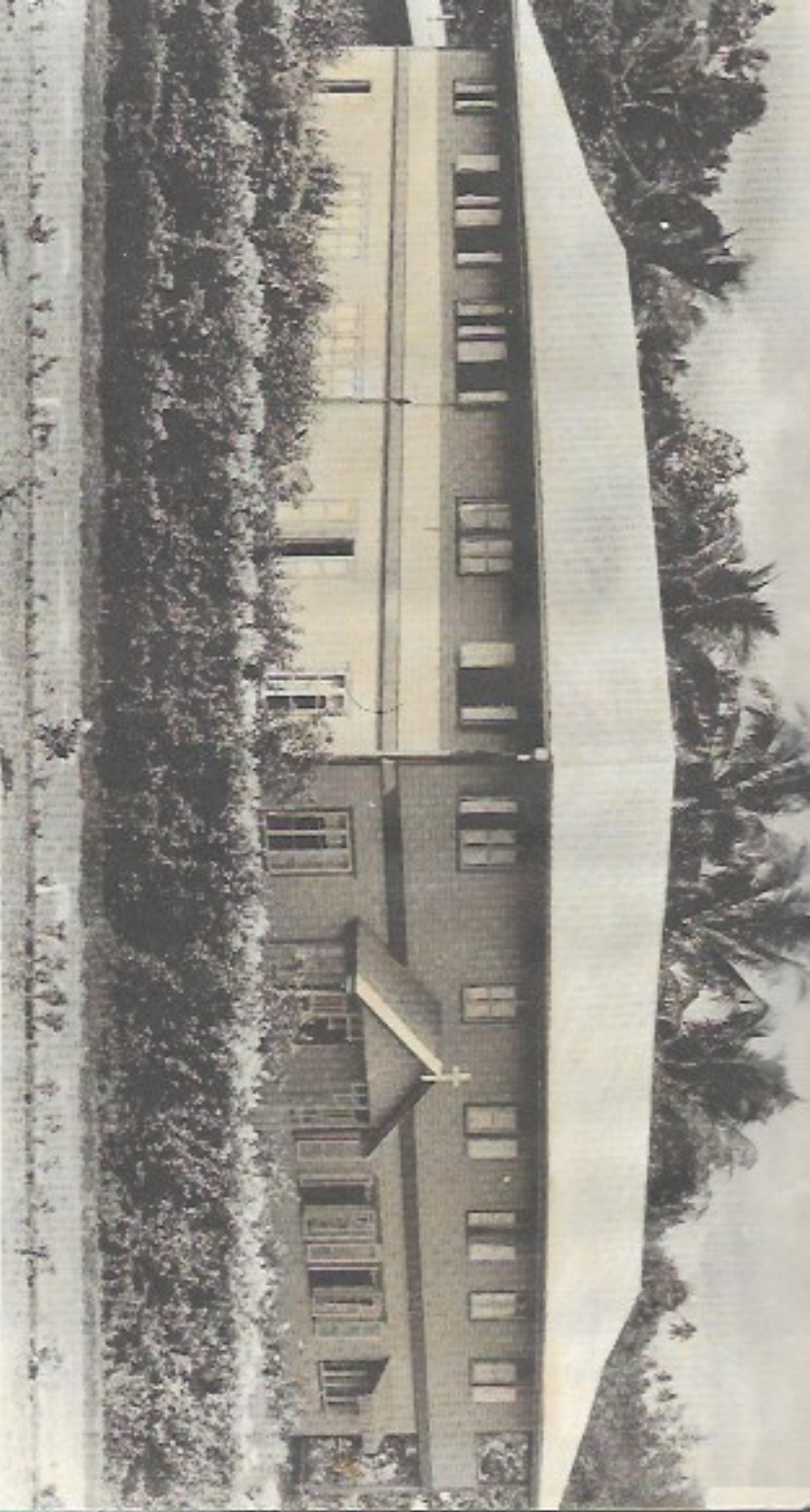
Everyone likes
the Sister Nurse!



Sisters are trained as General and M.C.H. Nurses.



What's happening over there? It looks mysterious!



The Motherhouse and juniorate at Vunopope. Here junior professed Sisters spend three years furthering their religious and secular studies.

