

The Baltimore Province, Bolivian Presence, 1964 Beginnings

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The first four sisters from Baltimore went to Bolivia in the fall of 1964. Bishop Thomas Manning OSF (brother of our Sr. Claracita) invited the sisters to establish a teacher training school to prepare teachers for the rural schools of his jurisdiction. He made the request to Mother General Ambrosia, who personally visited the site to assure herself of the appropriateness. Once convinced, she forwarded the request to the Baltimore Province, with the expectation that they would assume responsibility for the new mission.

Four volunteer Sisters (Ancilla Marie Fitzpatrick, Mary Ann Wood, Christopher Marie Rosendale and Margaret Marie Giblin) departed for Bolivia in September 1964. From 1965 until 1970 they conducted the teacher training boarding school.

In the first days of 1969, after four years of devoted service to the Bolivian people, Sr. Christopher Marie Rosendale, aged forty, died in a tragic automobile accident. At the insistence of her parents and in the absence of any definite policy regarding the death of a sister on the mission, her body was returned to the USA for burial. This event emphasized the need for the establishment of clear guidelines for possible situations that might arise on the missions.

In 1970 two circumstances led to changes in the sisters' mission. The preference given to graduates of the Bolivian Government schools for available teaching positions made Church sponsored teacher training schools unnecessary. At the same time there was a growing realization on the Sisters' part that working with adolescents away from their home was not the most effective mode of evangelization. They became convinced that a more direct involvement in the lives of the people would be far more effective. As a consequence of these factors, the school was discontinued and the sisters moved to another area.

For several months they looked for a location in which they could participate more fully and directly in the lives of the people. In 1971 at the invitation of Bishop Augustine Lopez de Lama CP, six sisters took up residence in two Aymara Indian villages – Machacamarca and Colquencha, in the diocese of Corocoro. The community consisted of four SSNDs of the Baltimore Province, one SSND of the Canadian Province and one Sister of Loreto of Kentucky. The sisters lived in two neighboring villages five miles apart.