

A celebration of religious Profession

SAN NICOLAS — A fitting conclusion to our stay in San Nicolas is the celebration of religious Profession of the two young Nicaraguan novices, Sisters Yerenia and Carolina.

They were with us for the first part of our journey, when we met at the novitiate in Barrio Edgar Mungia in Managua.



Carolina and Yerenia, expressing the meaning of their Professions

The way of life of the Mexican Benedictine Sisters in Nicaragua has not only been a ministry and service to the people, it has also attracted and inspired young women to consider embracing the religious life as practiced by the sisters. They are especially attracted to the commitment of sisters to social justice and to accompanying the poor.

Family and friends have been invited to San Nicolas, as well as the people of the parish and nearby villages. The church is decorated with colorful streamers and abundant flowers. With the help of some of the women of the parish, the sisters have been busy in the kitchen since early morning, preparing a meal to be served for all who come to the celebration.

All is in readiness to begin the service. Brothers are dressed in their white monastic cowls, the sisters in their black habits with scapular and veil.



Sister Inez, Brother Richard

Sister Inez, the Prioress of the Mexican Benedictine Sisters, is to receive the sisters' Profession of Vows in the name of the Congregation.

Brother Richard, the Prior of Weston, is to lead the Eucharist.

But at the appointed hour, the relatives of Sister Yerenia have still not arrived. It is not unusual to have such delays. A half hour or so later, word is received that the bus from Managua, which is filled with relatives, has broken down on the highway. A truck is dispatched from the parish center to rescue the stranded relatives.

It takes several trips to bring everyone to the Church but it really causes no great distress. It is all rather normal to delay an hour or two.

After all have arrived and been joyfully welcomed, the service begins. There is a procession with lively music. The youth group from Managua with guitars, tambourines, drums, and keyboard set a joyful tone to the celebration. The Weston brothers join in with songs in Spanish and English..

Solemnly, the two sisters make their religious Profession and sign their promises at the altar table. Together they sing the traditional Benedictine invocation, "Receive me, O Lord, and I shall live; and I shall not be confounded in my hope."

Their parents are then invited to come forward and give the newly professed sisters their blessing. It is a moving moment as parents place their hands in a loving gesture on the head of their daughters and then they embrace.



Eucharist at Profession

The ceremony continues with the celebration of Eucharist. As the members of the large congregation come forward in procession for communion, Sister Yerenia and Sister Carolina, wearing the veil and habit of the Congregation of Sisters, offer the cup of Eucharist wine.

An elderly woman, deeply wrinkled and aged, approaches Sister Yerenia, looks into her eyes, raises both hands to Sister Yerenia's face and kisses her on both cheeks in loving blessing, and then drinks from the cup. These women, who have experienced so much of the struggle of daily life, with great dignity affirm and bless one of their own who has just committed her life to the service of others as a Benedictine Sister.

The rest of the day is spent in fiesta—a communal meal, songs, dances, and presentations by groups from the parish. The Mexican Benedictine Sisters, the parish community of San Nicolas, relatives and friends, and the Brothers of Weston Priory all join in thankful celebration for the gift of new life in the person of these two young Nicaraguan women.

Just at the end of this joyful day the disquieting news arrives that the early bus from Managua to San Nicolas has been held up by robbers. The sisters assure us that, even though it was a very unfortunate incident, the good news is that the thieves are already in jail and therefore will not be working the highway on the day we are to head back to Managua.

All that remains is a day of fond farewells as we prepare to return to Managua and then to Vermont.



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