

Spring, 1973

Dear

In February of 1972 we received official permission to live as an "experimental community" in Camden as had already been proposed in Albany two years earlier, c.f. Allegany Newsletter, January 1972 issue. We are grateful to the Community and wish to share this summary of what the Lord has been doing for us.

We moved to Camden on July 8, 1972 with the rare distinction of living over Bocco's Funeral Home (the "Bocco Nuns"). Life here has been a learning to live with the unexpected. The summer months seemed to be our time to get settled and, from the start, the Lord sent us people: smiling children; friends and members of the Audubon prayer community who contributed much by way of encouragement, T.L.C., prayers and furniture; people who needed a temporary place to stay and prayerful support. Our one empty room doesn't usually stay that way for very long and it has been a joy to us to have been able to offer hospitality to various people including some of our Sisters passing through the area. Each person has left something of themselves in partaking of our life here.

One of the more exciting and sustaining dimensions of our community is that we each have experienced the Lord's love in the charismatic or pentecostal movement and this, in turn, influences our prayer life. Crisis situations, individual and group needs and a desire to praise the Lord and seek His direction have brought us together in prayer. Our prayer together has no predetermined format but usually is characterized by spontaneous sharing, hymns, scripture and silence. Though originally we saw prayer as a priority in choosing this life-style, increased involvement in activities and the needs of others have required that we re-establish that priority from time to time and, in our changing and sometimes conflicting schedules, provide time for prayer together.

Life at Walnut Street is full of reminders of our great need to depend on the Lord and to support one another. Having chosen the same life-style does not remove all problems and sources of conflict within a community and "being born" is painful as well as exciting. Yet, we have experienced His healing power, alone and together.

Margaret is a member of the core group of the Audubon prayer community and we are happy to be in on the beginnings of a new Camden prayer group, possibly also a Spanish-speaking group in the future. Recently several children of the neighborhood have been joining us for prayer once a week, a practice that grew out of their curiosity and a certain sense of acceptance which has developed since July. This area is full of children and also has its share of lonely old people, often living in fear. We were happy to share our Christmas and Easter here with a few of them who otherwise would be spending the time alone. In our section of South Camden lives a mixture of Puerto Ricans, Italians and black Americans subject to prejudice and violence but also full of much beauty and the wisdom of the poor. We hope someday to be able to share Jesus in the Eucharist with them here in our home (when the Bishop grants permission) but, for the present, join them in the parish Masses, where we also teach CCD to Puerto Rican children, Sandi and Margaret at Fatima and Lucy at Mt. Carmel. Margaret teaches in the city CCD program for high school students held on a monthly basis at the Blackwood Diocesan Center, as well. We are interested in and supportive of individual and group efforts at forming Christian community and the opportunity for new life for people. Sandi finds herself counseling young people at the oddest times and Lucy co-moderates a teenage Alboradista group (based on Cursillo movement). The diversity in jobs and "contacts" has been both enriching and demanding in terms of openness and consideration for each other. Margaret is a nurse epidemiologist ("infection control") at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. Sandi teaches seventh grade at St. Aloysius School, Oaklyn. Both receive a "Sister's salary" which they deposit in our joint account. Lucy works as co-chaplain to the Camden County Jail (no salary) and does some substitute teaching and volunteer social work.

Trust in the Lord's providence is basic to the life-style that is growing here and often we have been able to be an "outlet" for food, clothing, furniture and even money to others in need. At this time, we are conscious of being directed into ministries that are new to us, e.g. working in the jails, with drug addicts, with young people in trouble; the development of charismatic communities. We ask your prayers that we be open to what the Lord's plan is for us locally and as part of the larger Community. Thank you to so many of you who have given us your encouragement and prayers.

In Jesus,

Sister Margaret Gerard Rumsey  
Sister Sandra Teevens  
Sister Lucy Cardet