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Sr. Luke: Religious Missionary

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Martha Tomesen

Sr Luke: Religious Missionary

Abstract: In this paper, I will reflect upon my interview with Sr. Luke. In our interview, she spoke of her life as a religious missionary, the meaning of humility and what she learned from serving in some of the world's most poor countries.

Sr. Luke's missionary work started when Pope John XXIII called upon her Congregation to have five sisters sent to South America. The charism of the Congregation is humility, which can be seen as a fitting charism for Sisters who go on to be missionaries.

The Latin American church is still evolving and maturing. The mission of the sisters sent to South-America was to evangelize and help the Latin-Americans grow. They were to prepare leaders for small villages and teach the new notions of Vatican II. Sr. Luke was sent to a country in Latin-America to train community leaders and train catechists. She stayed until the beginning of the seventies.

Latin America was just the first stop of the many places that Sr. Luke taught in. After having signed up to be a part of Peace Corps, she went to Africa, to teach English as a Foreign Language at high school level. The following destination was supposed to be another African country, but the living conditions were so inhumane (oppressive heat, dehydration) that the stay in this country, which was supposed to last two years, was cut short after two weeks. When Sr. Luke told me about her shortened stay, I was very surprised and completely appalled by the fact that sisters were expected to adjust to horrible living standards.

Despite the fact that sisters don't do their work to gain material rewards, it was a great honor to be acknowledged for all her hard work when Sr. Luke was presented with an award

acknowledging the work she and her Sisters do. Sr. Luke went on to be a 6th grade teacher in another Latin America country, but not as a part of Peace Corps anymore.

Sr. Luke refers to herself as being 'lucky' to have been chosen as one of the religious missionaries, despite the fact that this meant she would have to trade her home for poor countries with unideal living situations. Later in the interview, Sr. Luke disregards the word chosen, and refers to her going to be missionary as a calling. An example of her humility and gratefulness of being able to be religious missionary work really shows when Sr. Luke tells me of experiencing Christmas in Africa. "Actually, I don't like Christmas here, how it is celebrated. When I was in Latin-America and Africa, Christmas is, I think, more what it is; spiritual. But it is becoming so commercial that it's just taken away from what is really is. I found when I was in Africa that we didn't have anything."

Towards the end of our interview, Sr. Luke reflects on how her world perception has changes after working in underdeveloped countries for so long, "There is something that happens to you when you work in another country that's very poor. I think you learn more about living simply. Come back to the United States, and all of the sudden everything is very complex. It's not so simple."

Works Cited

“Sr. Luke Hepburn.” In person interview by author. January 15, 2019.