

Where Woman Work Is Needed

By Rose Ghurayyib

There are groups of women whose members lead a secluded life, away from noise and publicity. They spend part of their time in prayers, devotion and missionary work; and the rest of the time in profitable occupations, which allow them to earn a living. They are the nuns and sisters who belong to the various religious orders in Lebanon.

The nuns are bound by vows of chastity, austerity and obedience, to which they add celibacy and consecration to the service of God and the Church. These nuns represent an important section of the population in Lebanon, which contains a relatively large community of Christians including Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Catholics, Greek and Latins. The nuns belong to the local orders founded in Lebanon during the last two hundred years and are mostly affiliated to the Roman Catholic Church. Their convents exist in almost every district in the country.

Besides missionary work, the nuns practice traditional professions like teaching, nursing, caring for orphans, the old and handicapped, arts and crafts like lacework, embroidery, sewing, design and flower-making.

There is a growing interest in higher education among these nuns in order to keep up with the growing demands of our times. This demand for higher education has been rising since the Vatican II Council was held and The University of the Holy Ghost was founded by a Maronite monk.

Sister Georgette Nasr, from the Order of the Cross (founded some sixty years ago in Lebanon by a Lebanese Capuchin monk, Father Jacob Haddad) is a student of Business Administration at the University of the Holy Ghost. The University also known as Kaslik University is a co-educational institution where women form half of the students and include seventy five nuns. At Kaslik University, most of the teachers are laymen and the language of instruction is French because reference books in Arabic are too few. In Business Administration, Sr. Georgette prepares herself to take

charge of accounts at one of the orphanages, hospitals, nursing homes or schools belonging to the Order of the Cross. During the four years of study, she takes courses in general culture, economics, statistics, mathematics, accounting, computer, science, administration, commercial relations in Lebanon and a course in the French language. She graduates with a degree called "Licence" equivalent to the B.A. granted by American or Anglo-Saxon colleges and universities.

The recently created Order of the Cross contains 250 nuns. The older orders such as those of The Holy Hearts, The Lazarist or Charity Sisters, have over a thousand each. Why so many? **They fill a need, answered Sr. Georgette. Lebanon is short of women directors, nurses, social workers, artisans, accountants, teachers and so on. In spite of people's belief, nowadays, that every woman should have a profession and although we find women in almost every field of work, we find that few of them are adequately trained and many stop working after marriage.**

Furthermore, convents and monasteries are used as school buildings and teaching centers, where convenient buildings are lacking. The Sisters of the Cross own a number of old people's homes and rest-houses. Neither the government nor business people show any interest in creating modern hospices and nursing homes for elderly people. Those that already exist belong to four chief religious sects and communities and because they generally receive the poor who are unable to pay, they lack a trained staff and give little heed to hygienic services.

Sister Georgette ended by saying: **Lebanon is in need of conscientious leaders, planners, directors in every field. This war has obliged women to venture into new areas where they are replacing men. They have to look for neglected areas and occupy positions where they are most needed. Once they make their choice, they must be equipped with the necessary training. The spirit of change and evolution has invaded all institutions and work centers. There is no more place for improvised work and unskilled workers.**