

## THE CHURCH HERE AND THERE

### CONSECRATION OF VIRGINS' RITE REVIVED

In an age, Pope Paul VI has said, marked by sexual perversion and immorality, the Vatican has revised the solemn consecration of a virgin, common in the early Church but almost unknown in recent times.

The Church has approved a new rite in which young women who are not nuns may consecrate their virginity "to Christ and their brethren," and continue living a lay life. This new rite can be administered both to cloistered nuns and also to "young women living in the world." Fr. Bugnini CM, secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship said the decision to extend the consecration of virgins to women outside of convents and religious institutes "recognises the spiritual value of a consecration — interior and exterior, brought about by the Spirit and sustained by personal commitment — conferred under the guarantee and through the ministry of the local bishop, by women who, by offering their whole being to Christ, obligate themselves to live forever in dedication to the service of God, the Church and of brothers."

The Congregation described the new rite "an act of esteem for women, whose dignity is sometimes assailed by society, dominated as it often is by myths and vulgar hedonism."

The new rite is a revision of one promulgated by Pope Clement VII in 1596, but its roots go back to the Roman liturgy of about 500 AD.

### CHURCH'S SUPPORT TO UPROOT ILLITERACY

The Pope has pledged the Church to closer cooperation with organizations that aim at "uprooting illiteracy" in the world.

In a letter (Sept. 8) to Rene Maheu, director general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commemorating the third Literary Day and the International Year of Education, the Pope wrote, "We hope that this celebration may be the occasion for a further impulse and a closer cooperation with UNESCO for the complete promotion of man." He expressed to UNESCO "the determination of the Catholic Church to join, by collaborating with your organization, in efforts aimed at uprooting illiteracy." He further stated that the committee on human promotion in the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace has enlarged its programmes to stamp out illiteracy in various parts of the world.

Illiteracy is usually loosely defined as the inability to read and write, but today a higher level of competence in reading and writing has become necessary to meet many of the practical needs of daily life. Educators therefore stress that learners must achieve "functional literacy" of a higher standard.

About 40 per cent of the world's adult population is illiterate — even by minimal standards. And of this illiterate population, three quarters lives in Asia.

### MISSIONARIES TO WORK FOR CREDIT UNIONS

About 120 missionaries, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant, met in Rome at the end of September for the Do-It-Yourself Development Conference, or, to use the alternative title, the Ecumenical World Planning Session for Missionaries on Credit Unions.

After four days of energetic discussion and planning, the participants at their final meeting met the Religious Major Superiors and Protestant leaders whose cooperation will be indispensable if the plans of the conference are to be carried out.

For many, the high moment of the conference came during a Papal audience, when the Pope gave warm positive approval to credit-union work as an expression of that love for their fellows which is essential to all missionaries. "We should like," the Pope said, "to say a special word to the group of participants in the Ecumenical World Planning Session for Missionaries on Credit Unions. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38), when asked what was the greatest commandment of the Law, did not give the love of God as his full reply, but added the second commandment of love of our neighbor. So you are called upon to preach as missionaries, and to live, as Christians, a faith which is concerned also with the concrete conditions of social life. You have gathered in Rome to discuss means of making more effective your work in the field of credit unions, considering them as a way by which communities can from their own resources promote their development. In your studies and discussions we should like you to be assured of our paternal and cordial encouragement. And may God grant that your conclusions will contribute to the building of a world fashioned more humanely."