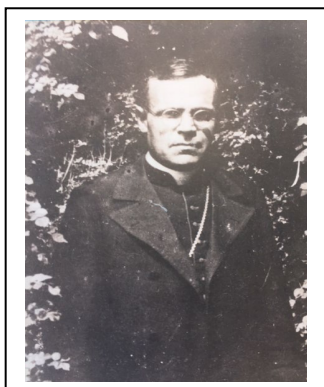


From the IHM Archives...

***Anticipating the
100th Anniversary
of the IHM Sisters in Peru!***

December 12, 1922

Although our IHM Sisters in South America will be celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Villa Maria, Miraflores, Lima, Peru on December 12, 2022, our sisters in North America will anticipate the celebration on August 27, 2022. Let us briefly enjoy this fascinating story of such a miraculous and momentous endeavor!



**Archbishop Emilio
Lisson**



***Dennis Cardinal
Dougherty***

In July of 1921, Mother Mary James Sweeney, IHM Mother General, received an invitation through Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia from Vincentian Archbishop Emilio Lisson of Lima, Peru. He was requesting IHM Sisters to provide Catholic Education in Peruvian English-speaking schools, so that, in the face of proselytism, the faith of the children could be preserved. At the suggestion of Cardinal Dougherty, Mother Mary James was seriously considering this, when the request was repeated in 1922.



**Mother Mary James
Sweeney, IHM**

Once again, Divine Providence had led us! On October 30, 1922, a letter from the motherhouse asked for volunteers among the sisters for this first foreign mission. The community responded with more than its usual generosity, and plans were at once begun.

The timeline is providentially incredible!

November 15, 1922 Trip to New York to arrange for transportation, purchase new furniture for the new mission, and meet with the Peruvian Consul.

November 19, 1922 The new missionaries were called to the Motherhouse to receive their appointments for Miraflores.

November 24, 1922 The new missionaries visited His Eminence Cardinal Dougherty to receive his benediction.

November 30, 1922 The first Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary sailed from Brooklyn, New York on the Grace Liner, "Santa Maria." Mother M. Berenice accompanied the little band:

...the little band

**Sister M. Seraphine Byrne
Sister Joseph Marie McCrosson
Sister M. St. Chrysostom McCrory**

December 12, 1922 Twelve days on the Atlantic, the Caribbean, through the Panama Canal and to the Pacific, calm as an inland lake, brought the sisters to their destination on Tuesday, December 12, 1922. They arrived at the first IHM convent in South America, “Villa Maria”, a large mansion on Avenida Pardo in Miraflores, a suburb of Lima.

March 15, 1923 Matriculation Day for Villa Maria! The students were 80 in number and classes were begun at once! After Matriculation, Mother M. Berenice (Sister Assistant) returned to the USA.

July 10, 1923 Mother M. Cornelia Higgins reached Peru. She was appointed Superior at Miraflores.



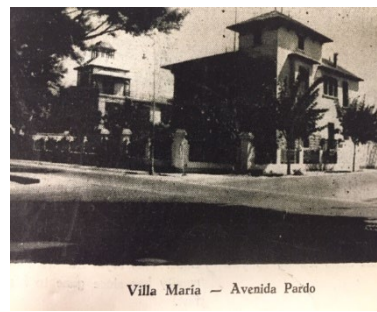
Mother M. Cornelia Higgins, IHM and Students

Back home, on April 16, 1926...

“The Catholic Standard & Times”, translating from the Lima newspaper “La Presna”, reported:

“The blessing of the new Villa Maria Academy, the

new hall of learning under the direction of the American Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was held yesterday afternoon, March 21, 1923, in the new building located on Avenida Leguia. The celebration exemplified the high grade of education which the Sisters of Villa Maria Academy impart to their pupils, to the cause of which education these sisters are devoting their lives into the greater cities of both Americas.”



Villa Maria — Avenida Pardo



Villa Maria Today

With her “Godspeed” to the first foreign missionaries in November 1922, Mother Mary James’ work was done. Her health, long impaired, now definitely failed, and on Wednesday, January 31, 1923, God called her to Himself. Aside from the countless manifestations of success in her term of office, she will lovingly be remembered for furthering the spiritual life of the community, as well as her kindness, tolerance, and great-hearted charity to all. No doubt she has won a lasting place in the hearts of her children. She, as well as all our Congregational leaders, have allowed Divine Providence to direct and guide them in their countless endeavors!

In closing, we praise and thank God for our pioneer IHM Missionaries, as well as for all our IHM Sisters who have served in South America, both Peru and Chile, through the years!

Information gathered from: Mother Maria Alma, IHM. Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 1845 - 1967, The Dolphin Press, Lancaster, PA. 1967

Contributions to this article from: The staff of the IHM Archives-Villa Maria House of Studies, Immaculata, PA. Current as of July 2022.