

## THE IRISH OBLATE FATHERS OF MARIA IMMACULATE AND THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF ROCHESTER IN BRAZIL

By Sister Chris Burgmaier



The OMI fathers came to Brazil in 1962 and their first mission was in Paranaiguara, Goias. Besides assuming the pastoral care in the region, they were instrumental in organizing and running the town schools which were in great need of assistance. The priests wanted sisters in the area, and when they heard that there were American sisters coming to talk to the Bishop about the possibility of working in his diocese they made sure they were in the right place at the right time! And so began our history of working together in Brazil.

We had many of the same ideals; interest in education, love of the poor, desire to walk with the people, helping the Brazilians to grow by starting where they were, using their own customs and traditions and building on from there, formation of leaders, building basic Christian communities and etc.

As more sisters and priests came to Brazil each year, the priests assumed parishes in neighboring towns and soon the sisters followed, spreading to Sao Simao, Cachoeira Alta, Itaguacu, and Cacu. Each Monday everyone would assemble in Paranaiguara. Monday was our day off and we often did things together. Tuesday morning was reserved for prayer and study, after which we had dinner together and then everyone returned to their own towns. These times of getting together weekly were opportunities of growth and support for two communities of Religious who were themselves adapting to a new language, a new culture and a new way of living the post Vatican II church and created bonds of mutual support present up to today.