

Celebrating 50 Years in Brazil

This month, in Newsletter we kick off a year-long series commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the SSJ mission in Brazil. In the months to come we will be featuring people, places, memories, ministry and reflections from yesterday and today. Our first piece comes from Regis O'Connell who was a member of the first SSJ missionary team that went to Brazil in 1964.

Mission to the Unknown

Regis O'Connell (Deanna Sarkis)

How wonderfully innocent we all were when we left our homeland and family and friends to come on a mission to the unknown. Our only concern was to love and serve the people of God in a country considered third world fifty years ago.

At that time we knew very little about Brazil. On March 31, 1964, a few months before we came to Brazil, we read about the military coup. In geography classes the students learned a little about the Amazon River, the jungle, Rio de Janeiro and the famous Christ the Redeemer statue, rubber and coffee exportation, the construction of the city of Brasilia in the interior of the country, and the new location of the country's capital.



First SSJs from Rochester to Brazil
Sisters Regis Sarkis (Regis O'Connell),
Michael Myra (Katherine) Popowich, Annice Kloster,
Adelaide (Ann Lafferty.) Rose Alma Hayes
Center visiting from Rochester
Sisters Florentine MacCarthy, Mother Agnes Cecilia Troy



Sister Regis Sarkis with students

Looking back on those beginning days, I think I can say for all of us that we never suffered from cultural shock because of different climate, food, language, culture, costumes, poor roads, and no "modern" conveniences. Why? Because our main objective was stronger – to love and serve the people of God in Brazil.

If you would like to contribute an article to this series, please contact Dawn Gruba at dgruba@ssjrochester.org or 585-641-8172.