AND OUR LADY GUARDED HER OWN

THE FOUR SISTERS OF HOLY CROSS INTERNED IN THE PHILIPPINES, 1941-1945

1995-2

by

Gertrude Gagnier, C.S.C.

Presented at the

1995 Conference on the

History of the Congregations of Holy Cross

June 15-17, 1995

Holy Cross College
Holy Cross Brothers Center
Notre Dame, IN

"...And Our Lady Guarded Her Won"

Holy Cross Interned at Los Banos -- 1941-1945

1.	Nov. 9, 1941	Departure from San Francisco on the President Grant
2.	Dec. 4, 1941	Arrival in Manila Bay -- advised to find lodging in Manila since the ship would be in the Bay for a few days. Sisters received by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
3.	July 7, 1944	Ordered by Japanese to be ready to leave by 9:00 a.m.
4.	July 8, 1944	Stop at Santo Tomas camp until 2:00 a.m.
5.	July 9, 1944	Transfer to Los Banos
6.	Jan. 7, 1945	Japanese all leave Los Banos during the night. Committee advises internees to stay put. Better treatment, better meals for a short period of time
7.	Jan. 14, 1945	Japanese return to the camp by night with plans to dispose of all the prisoners
8.	Feb. 23, 1945	Rescue by American General MacArthur and troops; transfer of all personnel to Montinglupa, the Bilibid prison safety
9.	April 9, 1945	Departure for America
10.	May 3, 1945	Landing at Los Angeles
11.	May 11, 1945	Return to St. Laurent

Sources:

1. Echo de Sainte-Croix, volumes for 1941, 1943, 1945
2. Holy Cross History Conference, 1985: "Prisoners of War, 1941-1945" by Robert McKee, CSC
3. Diary written by Brother Nivard, CSC, one of the internees
4. Personal interviews with Sister Lucille Latour (Alphonse de Liguori) and Sister Madeleine St.Arnaud (Madeleine Barat) at St. Laurent, July, 1944
5. Video of Manila experience lent by Sr. Olivette Whalen, CSC, Notre Dame, Indiana
6. Letter of Father Bleau, CSC, to his father
7. Report of her experiences in the Philippines written by Sr. Simone Bastien, CSC, (Anne Celine)

... AND OUR LADY GUARDED HER OWN __ notes on the four Sisters of Holy Cross interned in the Philippines, 1941-1945

From its origins, Holy Cross seemed destined to enflesh the apostolic zeal of its founder, Father Basil Anthony Moreau. His family of sons and daughters was to extend from France to other parts of Europe, to Asia, Africa, the United States, Canada, and South America. At the request of the Canadian hierarchy, did he not even send his cherished, trusted novices to labor among the French-speaking people of the province of Quebec? From then on, Holy Cross missionaries have been called forth into countless fields of action.

The seventh contingent of Sisters of Holy Cross from St. Laurent, aged twenty-five to thirty-five: Sr. Mary Alphonse de Liguori (Lucille Latour), Madeleine Barat (Madeleine St.Arnaud), Gustave (Shanti Marcelle Lalande) and Anne Celine (Simone Bastien) were scheduled to leave for the missions of India in August 1941. World upheaval delayed the departure until November. Their Superior General, fearing for their safety, begged them to change their minds about leaving--or at least to delay leaving until the war was over. But their hearts were burning with the zeal to relieve their Sisters so over-worked in India.

Their trip was to take them not across the Atlantic as usual, but across the country to San Francisco, thence, across the Pacific, leaving with two Sisters of the Holy Cross, five Holy Cross Brothers and eight Holy Cross Fathers. So it was that under a beautiful blue sky, the President Grant left the United States on November 9, 1941, escorted by five warships bound for Luzon where it would anchor on December 4 for a few days in Manila. Several passengers who had not developed their "sea-legs" were forced to cabin confinement during part of the journey. There were rumblings that Japan was preparing to attack the Philippines which it did eventually on December 8 (9). Since their ship was to remain in the harbor for some time, the passengers were encouraged to go into Manila and find a place to stay until further notice. Our Sisters found shelter with another Canadian community,

the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, where they remained until July 7, 1944. During this time, the Blessed Mother was invoked daily through the recitation of the Rosary. While they were in Manila, our Sisters took English lessons from two different Sister-teachers. Sr. Alphonse taught catechism to a few Filipino girls, gave drawing lessons to the orphans at the convent, and joined with her three companions to study the Japanese language with a Catholic Japanese teacher.

On the day following the Sisters' arrival, the Japanese lodged in a house across the street, summoned all the personnel living opposite them to meet with the Japanese officers. They were secretly looking for an American woman who was staying there, and who, regularly, sent to her American soldier husband in the hills, through a messenger, supplies of medicine and bandages. While the Sisters were assembled, the Japanese ransacked the upstairs bedrooms seeking incriminating evidence. In her room. they found proof of the woman's clandestine activity, and hustled her off to prison. As for the rest of the household--with the exception of three of the Sisters also sent to prison for insignificant reasons (such ss being the one who emptied the woman's waste basket)--all were placed under house arrest. Only two Sisters were allowed to go out once a week to buy supplies for the household. One of the Fathers finally got the ship's captain to release from the ship the trunks which our Sisters had brought from St. Laurent. Their contents of food and clothing were shared with their hostesses, as was also some of the money which they were to use in India.

While Holy Cross stayed at the convent, they joined in the work of the Sisters there--they went to care for the sick and wounded in a make-shift hospital, did household chores, and worked for two hours a day to encourage their little garden to furnish food for the inmates.

On July 7, 1944, "out of a blue sky", Japanese soldiers arrived at the convent and notified the thirteen missionaries to be ready to leave at nine o'clock on the following morning with their beds and two other pieces of luggage. The Sisters spent the night preparing their belongings, attended a final liturgy in their chapel, consumed the hosts remaining in the taber-nacle, saw that the sacred vessels and vestments were in good hands. At

eleven o'clock, the trucks arrived to transport them on the first lap of their journey, along with many other individuals.

The first stop was at the Santo Tomas concentration camp where there were already 5,000 prisoners. The Japanese directed the newcomers to the third level where they were assigned just enough floor space on which to sleep. Because they were not allowed to bring their mosquito nets, they spent their time fighting off the voracious insects until a gong sounded at 2:00 a.m. notifying them that they were to prepare immediately to leave. Through torrential rains, they were marched out, closely hemmed in by armed guards who constantly called out to them to keep in a straight line. There were 506 persons in the group: 312 Catholics, and 194 Protestant clergymen with their wives and children. They were told that they were being sent to Los Banos camp because "they were among the least dangerous of the prisoners". After some traveling by train, they got off and were again lined up between armed guards until trucks picked them up to transport them to the camp forty miles south of Manila. Los Banos was a secluded area far from human contact, a valley surrounded by beautiful mountains. Our prisoners never tired of admiring the view. As one said, it seemed as if, standing on the top of those mountains, one could touch the stars. They clung to and kept within their hearts their motto: "Take all from the hand of God with a smile of gratitude and love."

The prisoners were jogged along to Los Banos where already there were 1,500 others, mostly civilians. The first arrivals installed in their own barracks well separated from the newly-arrived, were to have no communication with them whom they quickly dubbed "Vatican City". Only in October would that "wall be allowed to crumble". The prisoners who were putting up the new barracks, believing they were destined to the Japanese, were taking their time building, but when they saw who was coming in, they sped up their work.

Each barn-like structure housed sixteen very empty cubicles 23' x 12' with seven-foot high walls of braided straw, a ceiling of dry grass, and a hard dirt floor slightly raised by bamboo shoots. Because their cubicle with its one door and two windows looking to the inside was to house five

or six people, our Sisters shared theirs with two Sisters of the Immaculate Conception at first, but frequent shifts of cubicles eventually brought them other lay women. The entire barracks measured 190' x 30', and was separated in such a way that the guards could look down the rows in either direction. Between the barracks were small structures which we'll call "sanitary rooms" along one wall of which was a row of sinks, along another, a row of rudimentary toilets, and along a third, a row showers--all of which were open. Needless to say, there were embarrassing moments for the internees.

At the camp, daily long-winded, monotonous roll calls kept the prisoners lined up by the hour, motionless, in any kind of weather. The Japanese had the high hand at the camp, but a "central committee" made up of Americans or other internees held some very small power--"in charge of the interests of the camp", a go-between for the prisoners and the Japanese guards. This committee also prepared the meals in quantities ordered by the Japanese, and were able to limit the amount of work assigned to the prisoners.

When scraps of wood, time, and physical strength were available, the Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters attempted to put together makeshift tables and other furniture for their cubicles. Father Constant made them folding chairs which they could carry to the chapel or to any other meeting place. Everyone had two hours of daily chores to which he or she must attend--road building, logging, transportation of materials, vegetable chopping, rice shucking, meal preparation, sewing and mending, upkeep of the barracks. Sister Gustave had night duty at the "hospital", a small house on the compound. To keep the mind alert, some priests had organized "reflexions", scriptural conferences, even daily classes which were avidly followed. One of these priests, Father Mulleray, S.J., who had given conferences for six months, became ill, died and was buried at Los Banos.

When the missionaries arrived at the camp, they requested and were granted permission to set up in one of the barracks, a central chapel surrounded by sixteen small altars where most of the 150 priests were privileged to celebrate their daily mass. The liturgical supplies were brought to them from Manila by the "Chaplain's Aid Society", a group of priests

of Italian, Spanish, or other origin not "suspect" at this time by the Japanese. The first general mass was said on July 11, 1944. For his daily mass, each priest was allowed five drops of wine in his chalice, and each communicant received one-eighth of a host. From then on, all holy days and the community feasts of each of the congregations represented were celebrated with solemnity by the entire group. Usually on those evenings, they held small get-togethers where good humor, song and laughter kept the captors guessing about what was going on. Chief among the entertainers, the "Glee Club", some ninety-six Jesuit scholastics, helped raise the morale by singing their own comical ditties adapted to well-known melodies--excellent idea at a time when the physical being was crushed by exhaustion.

On Sundays, there was an assembly at which time, each barracks in turn presented a concert or any other entertainment. A group of Dutch missionaries adapted to music in five vocal parts, the "Canticle of the Sun" composed by St. Francis. After some rehearsing, they presented their concert in the chapel packed with people of all denominations--even some camp guards attended.

An intense spiritual life grew within this atmosphere creating an aura of peace, unity and charity. The Sisters never tired of claiming the spiritual benefits of their captivity. The non-Catholic clerics attended many of the offices and prayed with the priests, Brothers and Sisters. Besides daily mass, there was daily Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. On Sundays, high mass with sermon, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; on the first Sunday, retreat. During November, the group made an eight-day retreat, three days for the children. Many conversions came about on the compound, and the camp Bishop, Mgr. Jurgens, had the pleasure of confirming several adults.

From December 8, 1944 on, there was continual recitation of the Rosary in the chapel; Rosary and Litany to Our Lady, every night. This practice continued until the physical strength no longer permitted it, at which time, each one prayed the Rosary privately. The novena to Our Lady of Lourdes was prayed in common with great fervor--it ended on February 11, 1945, day on which the Americans took the decision to free the camp. During this time,

also, the Japanese had decided and meticulously planned to wipe out the entire camp. To achieve their goal, they had dug entrenchments in the surrounding hills where soldiers were posted awaiting the signal to fire their canons and rifles into the ranks of internees assembled for the 7:00 a.m. roll call.

On Christmas day, the Lord granted them a happy surprise. The internees had obtained permission to celebrate midnight mass, provided the severe blackout restrictions were not violated. The faithful managed to feel their way to the chapel where they found the altar draped in green and white--sheets and rugs--, natural poinsettias and red candles on the altar had come from Manila. Brother Nivard, CSC, inspired by a holy card in his possession, had, with infinite patience, sculpted in clay a charming little Jesus, a recollected Mary and a kindly Saint Joseph. Catholics and non-Catholics gathered at the touching crib scene. For the mass. the Sisters provided the singing. All day long, Christmas hymns and songs in a variety of languages, rang throughout the camp. It is said that everyone experienced an exquisite joy that day. Some admitted that to appreciate that joy really, they had had to have the concentration camp experience. Of course, there were no gifts to be bought, but clergy and parents carved wooden toys for the children, and mothers sewed colored strips onto the children's tattered clothing, much to the delight of all.

As "reveillon" (lunch usually served after midnight mass), a Sister of the Immaculate Conception had prepared little "cakes" without eggs, sugar, milk nor butter. Each person received a little cake and three pieces of candy carefully stored for the occasion by the Superior of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. They had planned to enjoy their treat under the rays of the moon--but Lady Moon refused to show up for the party. However, the Star of Bethlehem had truly risen in every heart. A solemn high mass was celebrated the following morning at 10:00; Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given in open air at 6:00 p.m. All internees agreed that they had never spent such a beautiful Christmas day.

The greatest source of suffering at Los Banos was hunger. Food was at a premium. The amount of rice and the few pounds of vegetables ordered by the Japanese "lords" could never suffice to give to each one a reason-

able meal. At first, three fairly good meals were served at the central station where one had to go for it, plate or cup in hand. By the18th of July, meals were reduced to two small ones a day. A "canteen"--Filipinos who brought food for sale--came to the gates where the Japanese took over, selling eggs at anywhere from $2.00 to $18.00 apiece; a small lemon, 70¢; a coconut, $25.00; one small onion, 70¢. Never once did internees receive packages sent to them from home, but it was rumored that many American and others' products were being sold in the Japanese shops of Manila. For three years, the prisoners never saw meat, milk, cheese, or wheat flour. (For days after their release, their teeth and gums revolted over the chore of chewing!) Some prisoners tried to grow food with little success. Sr. Anne Celine, CSC, grew some sward beans and a few peanut plants and greens. It was a feast when she could give a few beans and peanuts to each Sisters. In December, the two meager meals, "lugao"--three spoonfuls of rice--were reduced to one serving of a watery soup in which one occasionally found scraps of vegetables, herbs or plant shoots. The "canteen" had disappeared entirely, and woe unto the one who would be found obtaining food from any other source. The lack of food, the illness and weakness resulting from it claimed the life of many of the prisoners. One doctor claimed that fifty percent of them suffered from beri-beri. The young Jesuits whose charge it was to dig the graves had difficulty keeping up with their duties, so weak were they themselves, and so numerous the graves they had to prepare.

In August of 1944, a typhoon raged, drenching or flooding the entire camp. One still had to collect one's food at the station, so the Fathers and Brothers waded knee-deep through the water to get the Sisters' rations. As a result, the poor, frail bodies became more haggard and weak, courage tended to flag, but they still had to complete their daily chores. A September black-out of the entire camp gave rise to a glimmer of hope. Could it be that the Americans were on the lookout for the camp? American planes spied briefly overhead a few times caused tension to rise among the Japanese--and their captives dared to hope again.

Unexpectedly, during the night of January6-7, 1945, all the Japanese personnel disappeared from the camp leaving only two "harmless" little Koreans on guard. The administrative committee (Americans under Japanese

rule) left in charge, met to decide on the strategy to follow. They advised the prisoners to remain where they were although they might move about freely. Oh, the smiles of relief which beamed from the faces--they were being given a new lease on life!

The Bishop of the camp requested that all unite--Catholics and Protestants--to recite the Lord's prayer in gratitude to God. The common recital proved to be a very emotional experience.

The American flag was hoisted, and there rang out the anthem "God bless America" followed by "God save the King". The reprieve was unbelievable. A radio turned on brought to people who had been carefully sequestered, news of the war in Europe. Three decent meals were served to them daily. The committee members obtained an extra supply of rice which they distributed to the prisoners at two different times with the admonition to hide and save it for any emergency. When, on January 14, the Japanese appeared again overnight, they took over all the supplies, and demanded that the rice be returned to them. Fortunately, the internees were free to give them only a small portion of what they had received. When the Japanese ordered a line-up of all the inmates, sick or not, they combed the barracks, apparently in search of a radio which they had left and which had disappeared. Not having found it, in retaliation, they cut off all electricity--no more lights, no more radio, no more ironing of altar linens or articles of clothing. These were carefully stretched outside to be dried and ironed by the sun. The great heat necessitated the washing of clothes daily. With no soap available, all the white clothes became very yellow. The washings were frequently done at night, hung up to dry, and put back on in the morning.

As time went on, the Japanese became increasingly severe, harshly punishing all infractions--even to shooting the culprits. The Bishop appealed to the inmates to make an intense novena to Our Lady, February 2 to February 11, to prepare the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. During the night of February 12, two American scouts infiltrated the camp to study its layout and situation, then, departed as unobtrusively as they had come, leaving American coins and cigarettes behind.

On February 4, the concentration camp at Santo Tomas had been liberated by the Americans who found there thousands of pitiful prisoners in all conditions. The thunder of planes roaring over Los Banos, the explosion of bombs, the din of artillery became more frequent daily--and seemingly much nearer. The prisoners could see the sky blaze and then darken with smoke as targets were hit as far off as Manila. They would sit in the evening, count the number of American planes that zoomed overhead, number the explosions and gauge their proximity with ever-growing hope.

After eight months of these agony-filled days, on February 23, 1945, General Douglas MacArthur with 1500 American soldiers, a corps of parachutists and a troup of guerilleros invaded the camp by land, by air, by sea. They attacked only minutes before the roll call that was to mark the shelling of all the prisoners by the Japanese. Within an hour, all the Japanese had been disposed of, and the internees were ordered to pack their belongings and to follow the soldiers--no time for the "thank you's" and the "God bless you's". Reprisals were sure to follow. It was at this point that a sympathetic soldier seeing a little Sister struggling with her bags, offered to haul them for her provided she carried his gun--and so it was! As soon as each barracks was empty, the Americans torched it, knowing full well that Japanese could be hidden there. The Catholic whose duty it was to burn the chapel did so very hesitantly. A Jesuit priest had stuffed as many sacred vessels as possible into a sack; a Holy Cross Father salvaged as many liturgical vestments as his bag would hold. All were transported in amphibian tanks across Laguna Bay to Montinglupa, a prison-turned-sanctuary where the American Red Cross, arriving soon, undertook to care for these 2,143 freed prisoners, preparing them to return to their own countries. On the bay, as the tanks rambled along, some baggage fell from the top into the water. Four soldiers and one Jesuit jumped to the rescue--and the Jesuit then had to be rescued! On the way, a soldier dug out of his knapsack a tin of canned meat and some chocolates which he gave to the Sisters. Could he have known that they had eaten nothing since five o'clock on the previous day?

On the opposite shore was a field covered with baggage. Passengers

were brought to safety until their turn came to claim what was theirs. On the escape route, Filipinos ran out to cheer them, to shout "Victory" as they held up two fingers, offering food to these men and women whose haggard features revealed months of starvation. The Japanese were in hot pursuit, but by 4:00 p.m., all the escaped convoy was safe. American authorities fixed for Monday, April 9, the departure of all--Americans, Canadians, or other. On that day, tears flowed freely as men and women, camp companions, said goodbye to those who were to remain in Manila--tears of farewell among prisoners who had lived such trama together.

DEPARTURE FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Twenty armored trucks shuttled the freed prisoners to Manila. As they were called alphabetically, the prisoners saw their names being checked off the lists. Airplanes flew over the convoy constantly to protect it. Manila, "pearl of the East", severely damaged, was a pitiful sight; half of its population had been killed. Beautiful buildings as well as simple homes were in ruins everywhere; charred rubble, mangled trees spoke eloquently to the prisoners of the protection they had enjoyed within the camp only forty miles away. Hundreds of religious and priests had been tortured and executed here within the last few weeks. On February 8, enraged at the thought that victory was slipping away from them, the Japanese entered a hospital, dragged out all "whites and Christians", (our Brother Romain, CSC among them), doctors, nurses, guards, and other prisoners, massacred the bodies, beheaded the Brother, threw the alcohol-drenched remains into a pit and set them on fire. Twenty-three were thus disposed of; the other nine were marched away and never heard from again. Our Brother had said over and over that he would be willing to give his life for the conversion of these poor pagans. God had heard!

Small amphibian boats brought the groups from land to the Eberle, a troop transport vessel which had just completed its first assignment in the South Pacific, with 1500 troops. Its speed exceeded that of the President Grant by eleven knots an hour. By six p.m., all were on board and in order, thanks to the American spirit of organization and adaptation. The first

night, all lined up for supper, but by the next morning, they went to their numbered positions at the dining room tables where, tray in hand, they awkwardly straddled the soldier-style benches. In the crowded cabins, bunks rose five high--a mere canvas stretched between poles. No sheets, no pillow cases, a single blanket in which to roll up--even this seemed almost luxury for survivors from a concentration camp. There being practically no baggage for this group of travelers, the cargo and crates, supplies stored in an almost empty hold, thundered back and forth across the floor with the tossing of the waves. The Sisters whose berths were the next floor up were frequently "rudely awakened" by the din, but as usual, they adapted to the circumstances, grateful for what God had given.

The first day presented to them an oil-slick sea--a rare condition in these parts. The Eberle, forced to avoid the Coral Sea peppered with Japanese mines, had to divert its course. It was accompanied by two torpedo boats as far as the Marshall Islands and the Carolinas; from there, it went ahead on its own. An early mass was said daily in the sailors' recreation hall. The travelers, so crowded in all quarters, enjoyed hours spent seated on the deck floor, weather permitting, until a navy officer offered to the "four white Sisters" as they were called, four folding chairs from his cabin. The Sisters were grateful to wrap their frail bodies in the capes which the Red Cross nurses had given them. By this time, they had lost most of their clothing. The greatest discomfort on this boat was the crowding, such close quarters resulting in a complete lack of privacy among the cosmopolitan throng aboard. The Los Banos experience of solitude and quiet had poorly prepared the religious for this brouhaha. Open showers on the ship were always overcrowded. The Sisters took the habit of going two at a time to the officers' quarters two flights up during the night to use these facilities undisturbed.

Then on the 12th came a fierce three-day storm which caused severe sea-sickness to the poor prisoners still very weak from their captivity. Only on the 20th did real calm return.

The daily salute to the flag morning and evening was among the numerous

ceremonies which impressed the Sisters with the patriotic spirit of the Americans. What power these multi-colored strips of material exercised over those whose country they represented! By the 20th, a calm sea found the four Sisters together again for meals. For four more weeks, the Eberle sailed along alone--only vessel on this path, with just blue sky and sea surrounding it. Around April 26, the Eberle passed a slower vessel; nearer to Hawaii, a huge American convoy was sighted and a mock-battle engaged in. Nevertheless, the passengers felt secure and at peace: the Red Cross was keeping close watch, as was their God!

One very sad event occurred on the return trip. A young girl accompanied by her father was going to the United States to undergo surgical intervention. She suddenly became much worse--so suddenly that a Sister nearby hardly had time to grasp her hand--when the girl died. The father was beside himself with grief as a priest pronounced the last rites for his daughter. The body was carefully prepared and placed within a rubberized container as is the custom at sea. An American flag was draped over the body which gently slid into the sea. The flag was given to the distraught father. Needless to say, the event spread a pall of sadness over the entire personnel of the vessel.

At Honolulu, there was a brief delay to allow the boarding of ten inspectors from San Francisco come to start the long official review required before travelers could touch land. Each person had to go through five successive offices and fill in endless questionnaires, especially those who had experienced difficulty with the Japanese. Our Sisters had no trouble since the enemy had never molested them.

On April 29, the Canadians were notified that they would leave ship at Los Angeles, then, go by train from Vancouver to Montreal. On May 2, a heavy fog indicated the proximity of the American shore line. At 11:00 a.m., the anchor was dropped at San Pedro, port of Los Angeles. At around 12:00, American citizens started to leave, and the British Consul officially received the British subjects. During the night, the Sisters finally left the ship aided by the Red Cross. To the repatriates, the totally-lit city looked like a Christmas tree. Mail from home started to filter through as the Sisters boarded buses, their names once more crossed off as they were called. The first stop was at the headquarters of the Knights of Columbus where all

nationalities met. The Ladies of the Catholic Committee cared for the Holy Cross Sisters, brought them to the convent of St. Agnes where they were royally received by the Sisters of the Holy Cross, fed, and given a good clean bed with sheets and pillows. When they arose at 11:00 a.m. on the following day, they found all their clothes laundered and ironed. The Provincial Superior had offered to replace their wardrobe, but the Sisters assured her that a complete outfit shipped to them was on its way. At noon time, the Red Cross ladies picked up the Sisters to bring them shopping for necessities, especially for much-needed shoes. At 7:00 p.m., the train with the Red Cross always there, departed toward Vancouver, the Sisters enjoying a private compartment promised by the British Consul.

There were stops at Oakland, Portland, then Seattle, and at 2:00 a.m. the group "crossed the lines" singing their own national anthem. At 3:00, they were met by Holy Cross Sisters from the western province. Stops again at Edmonton, Chauvin, Winnipeg (where they thrilled at the sight of lingering snow), and Foleyet. The same evening, they took the train for Montreal, last lap of the journey. Their mail had come in, and the Sisters gladly donned their black habits. After another few stops, they were greeted at Ottawa by their Superior General and her Assistant, come out to welcome them home. The train pulled into Grand Central Station, Montreal, at 11:15, May 12,1945, carrying seven priests, three of Holy Cross, two Brothers of Holy Cross, four Sisters of Holy Cross and three Franciscan Sisters. Many relatives and friends were on deck to "hug them" home. Two of the Sisters whose ailing parents were unable to be there, made a brief stop at their homes before all four were brought back to the Mother House at St. Laurent.

To the best of the writer's knowledge, three of the four interned Sisters returned to the mission field: Sr. Mary Alphonse de Liguori and Sr. Mary Gustave, to India, and Sr. Anne Celine--the frailest of them all--to Haiti where she has been for fourteen years. In India, Sr. Alphonse was asked to direct a new native community, Daughters of the Church, outgrowth of the Holy Cross congregation, until the Indian Sisters were prepared to be governed by one of their own. Sister Madeleine Barat, fourth member of the contingent, used her talents at the Mother House in St. Laurent.

As of July, 1994, all four of our Sisters are still very much alive. Sister Alphonse is stationed at the St. Joseph Pavilion, the Holy Cross Infirmary at St. Laurent. Ourside her many hours of daily prayer and reading, she keeps her mind and fingers busy making "recycled" greeting cards from used ones, from scraps of material and lace, from pressed flowers and feathers. These cares are much in demand at the Pavilion crafts shop--she made over a thousand last year--all proceeds going to the poor. Sr. Madeleine is also at the Pavilion, using her talents for the congregation. Sr. Gustave was recently discharged from the Infirmary after a serious illness. As was said above, Sr. Anne Celine continues her apostolate in Haiti.

Completed 7/30/94
Gertrude Gagnier, CSC