

REFLECTION

STS. OLGA AND MARGARET OF THE HOT DISH

By Guillermo de Carndonagh

In a valley bound coal town the air hazy with the fumes and smoke of the smothering culm the nine-year old boy sat dazing in the classroom overheated by the afternoon sunshine of early spring. A low growling sound cut through the torpor, and as dust drifted down from the large opal glass globes above; everyone knew, a squeeze had started. Somewhere near by, and far under ground, men were in grave danger. Fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins, neighbors, men they knew might not come home again. The moan of sirens drowned out the dismissal bell.

Contrary to normal practice the family groups that were always supposed to walk home together actually did. The older girls gathered the wee ones up, and even the gawky and rebellious twelve and thirteen-year-old boys cooperated. As they walked down the hill towards the neighborhood small knots of women were coming up the street towards them. Olga and Margaret were the first to reach them. Olga was not much taller than the boy but she had shoulders as broad as any miner. Olga squeezed the boy's shoulder then she and Margaret walked on and gathered up two groups of children whose fathers were "on-shift".

Down the street a five ton coal truck sat parked in front of his grandmother's house, in it men in coveralls and helmets with lanterns sat waiting. The kitchen was full of women, they were filling baskets with sandwiches and making great pots of coffee. An uncle, the owner of the truck, handed the boy two dollars and sent him to the corner grocery to buy "miners fruit" bananas. As he ran up the street he could smell food cooking, hot dishes of potatoes and meat and sausage. Some of these dishes would go to the rescue site others to the homes of those trapped far below. In the houses where the cooking was being done it was likely that macaroni and cheese would be eaten that night, but the rescuers and the stricken would be cared for with the best that was available. These women did not stint when there was a need, Olga and Margaret, Sadie and Sophia, and countless Marys and Anns gave abundantly from what little they had. These faith filled women knew what true charity was and how to practice it.

Sts. Olga and Margaret, Pray for us that we will not become trapped by our possessions and that we will have the courage to practice charity like our mothers and grandmothers.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all." Romans 12;15-18 RSV