

Courier

Upon my appointment as Assistant General, it soon became evident that I would need to do a lot of travel. I was advised that our travel agent was very cooperative and helpful to all our Brothers. At the time we had several Marist Brothers at the General House working for the Holy See, and one of them was able to obtain a special Vatican passport for me, facilitating my job. We obtained the special passport by offering my services as a courier for their private documents. I was asked to contact the Office of the Propagation of the Faith and they would advise me.

I made an arrangement with them, and they told me that they would let me know if there were any documents to be carried for them. I in turn would inform them of the various countries I planned to visit. If they had any documents to be carried to Bishops or Archbishops, I would get them and deliver them in the name of the Holy See. I did this during most of the years that I worked in Rome for our congregation. It was a sure method of being able to obtain the Vatican passport, which was handy in case I had trouble in any of the countries I visited. I can say that there were a number of times that I went to the Propaganda Fide and received documents to be hand-delivered. I was pleased to be able to render this service and on a few occasions it proved to be a great help.

I remember visiting our Brothers who were studying at the Jesuit College in Trichy, and I was asked to deliver messages to five Bishops or Archbishops along my journey. I would arrive at the Bishop's residence, hand over the document I had for him, stay for supper, pass the night there, and be on my way the next day after Mass and breakfast. On one of those visits I was advised that it would be a timesaver if I hired a car to take me to the five Bishops around the southern part of the India triangle: Madras, Trichy, Madurai, Couchin, and Bangalore. The Bishop suggested that I would save a lot of time if I had a driver for the whole trip, as the busses and trains were always packed. I agreed and the Bishop hired a driver for me in Trichy.

The next morning the driver was waiting for me after breakfast. My driver asked me to do him a favor by stopping at his home first, as his wife did not believe that he was going for a week with a clergyman. I fully agreed and we went to his house. When his wife saw me in my collar, she wanted to hide her face. I told her that I was pleased to be able to keep an eye on her husband for a week, and that on returning we would come back to her house and I would let her know if her husband behaved. We had a great time and returned to the house before I moved on. There were several other incidents that were fascinating, and the Church finally had to take action and transferred him to a convent of nuns.

It proved helpful to have a Vatican passport. I was traveling with Brother Basilio going to visit our Marists in South Africa, and authorities would not let Basilio in because of his Mexican passport. There had been some grief and trouble with Mexico when South Africa had gone there for a soccer tournament. We were on a strict schedule and Brothers, alumni, and students were waiting to see our new General. So I picked up our national passports and handed the border police our Vatican passports. Everyone was happy! These Vatican passports proved to be a blessing many times over.