

# Concordia Hall Is No Longer White Elephant

By MONICA REEVES

Until recently, Concordia Hall was a nondescript, rambling white elephant which had seen far better days as the A-Jo Club, a parish hall and bowling center.

Now it is the headquarters for an inner-city non-parochial project consciously aimed at heading-off a Puerto Rican problem.

For this building, located next to Holy Redeemer Church on Hudson Ave. at Clifford, is main base for the Spanish Apostolate of the diocese.

According to Father Roger Baglin, coordinator of the program, the Spanish Apostolate involves "the whole crescent of Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking people across the northern part of the city." It also takes in those Latin families residing in Newark and Geneva as well as the Spanish-speaking migrants scattered around the diocese.

The whole notion of an outreach project got underway when Father Baglin as assistant pastor at St. Bridget's Church already involved with the newly initiated Spanish Curial movement (Aug. 1966), approached Bishop Sheen in the early winter of 1967 with details of the Latin situation in Rochester.

Working with the figures that showed some 7,100 Puerto Ricans in the diocese, Father Baglin estimated that at least five priests were needed to do any sort of job with the Puerto Rican element at all: three for the city itself, one for Geneva and another for Newark. Their work—aided by several Spanish-speaking nuns—would be to seek out Puerto Ricans and offer them religious services, employment and other counseling services.

The idea that the project should be a supra-parochial one was a practical measure, since the Spanish-speaking people had already formed a natural community which spanned several parishes.

This community "was more real and unified than many parish communities," Father Baglin claimed. The priests involved should not be assigned to any one parish he suggested, so that they could follow their people when they moved across parish boundaries "as they frequently do."

Bishop Sheen was intrigued with Father Baglin's general proposals and appointed him coordinator of the Spanish Apostolate in June of 1967.

Since that time, things have been picking up momentum. Between June and October of 1967, the apostolate's program to the migrants—Hermanos Gaiticos, operated on a limited scale with volunteer help, due to lack of a paid lay-coordinator and sufficient funds.

Efforts were made to register Puerto Ricans to vote during the month of October. In an attempt to awaken the liturgy for frequent Spanish Masses held in Newark and at St. Michael's and St. Patrick's in Rochester, 1,000 home made Spanish hymnal-missals were prepared.

Some scouting around that Father Baglin did during this period, even before the renovation of Concordia Hall was approved as a religious-social center, has paid off in dividends more recently.

A trip to Miami provided a lead on the Catechetical Missionaries of Guadalupe, who will be sending four Sisters to Rochester's Spanish Apostolate in the immediate future. The order, which has a mission in Miami, two in Puerto Rico and headquarters in Mexico, is eager to get on the Rochester scene. Upon their arrival, the four nuns will stay at St. George's parish convent on Hudson Ave.

What started out as an informal lay board for the Spanish Apostolate is now the local American Action League. The diocesan Spanish Apostolate has become the religious branch of the League. The League concerns itself with the social, educative and community-organization aspects of the work with the Spanish-speaking people.

At the moment, the Diocese of Rochester is footing the bill



FATHER BAGLIN

for the League, but eventually their board hopes to uncover outside funding.

The League also hopes to hire Jorge Colon, now with the Rochester offices of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, as its Executive Director in the near future.

Right now, Concordia Hall houses the Spanish Apostolate. Upon the completion of the vast renovation that's well underway now, the building will probably also become headquarters for the Ibero-American League, the Puerto Rican government offices of the city and also the city's representative to the Puerto Rican community. The latter arrangement is under negotiation now.

Since November of last year, when the Spanish Apostolate staked their claim to Concordia Hall, more has happened than just physical renovation. There's been a renovation, a renewal of spirit.

Dealing with the headaches and heartaches of the inner city is never an easy task. But as Father Baglin puts it, "We're going to continue to ask for community opinion, and try to be sensitive to what is needed."

If he's as determined as he seems, Concordia Hall may well be in for far better days than it's ever seen before.

## Passover, Easter Noted In Holy Land

Jerusalem — (RNS) — Passover coincided with Holy Week and Easter this year and the two religious seasons, combined with the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli rule gave Jerusalem an unusually festive air.

Despite continuing tension between Israel and Jordan, marked by several skirmishes and exchanges of fire across the Jordan River, thousands of Christian and Jewish pilgrims poured into Israel for the holy days.

While the Western Churches were observing Easter, it was Palm Sunday for the Eastern Churches, adding still more variety to the observances taking place.

Among the Passover ceremonies, one which attracted special attention was that of the Samaritans, a small community which still follows the exact form of sacrifice laid down in the Book of Exodus.

Thousands of other Jews and many Christians watched the Samaritan rite on Mount Gerizim near Nablus as High Priest Amram ben-Yitzak read the words of the Lord's commandment and 13 unblemished lambs were slaughtered. Yitzak, aged 79, claims to be a lineal descendant of Aaron, the brother of Moses.

The community which he leads, which formed a large ethnic and religious group at the beginning of the Christian era, now numbers only 380 persons.

Many different Christian denominations held services during Holy Week and Easter commemorating the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and finally the Resurrection of Christ.

Approximately 10,000 Catholics followed Father Lino Capriello, O.F.M., Franciscan Custos of the Holy Land, along the Way of the Cross.

The Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre was almost entirely at the disposal of the Roman Catholic Church for the observance of Good Friday but time had to be strictly allotted to other shrines on Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday because the Easter Orthodox and Armenian Churches were observing other feast days.

On Holy Thursday, thousands of pilgrims witnessed the washing of the feet of twelve priests by Latin Rite Patriarch Alberto Gorri in commemoration of Christ's action at the Last Supper.

## Efforts Continue To Maintain School

Parishioners of Most Precious Blood parish in Rochester continued their efforts this week to prevent closing of their 13-year-old school.

Latest effort was a Tuesday night meeting at the Stenson St. School attended by some 300 people, including representatives of many other parish school boards.

Participants heard several speakers call for improved communication between diocesan school officials and lay board members. "We are not advocating any revolt," stated David Carney of Brockport's Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary school board, (but) "we are advocating dialogue between the clergy and laity if we are going to insure further cooperation."

Over the Easter weekend, Precious Blood parishioners carried signs and staged peaceful demonstrations in front of the diocesan Pastoral Office and Sacred Heart Cathedral, and again at the Rochester-Monroe County airport. The latter was timed to meet school superintendent Monsignor William M. Roche, who was catching a plane for an educational conference in San Francisco.

The pot had begun to boil on April 9, when the Precious Blood parish school board heard of the decision to close their four room, 165-pupil school

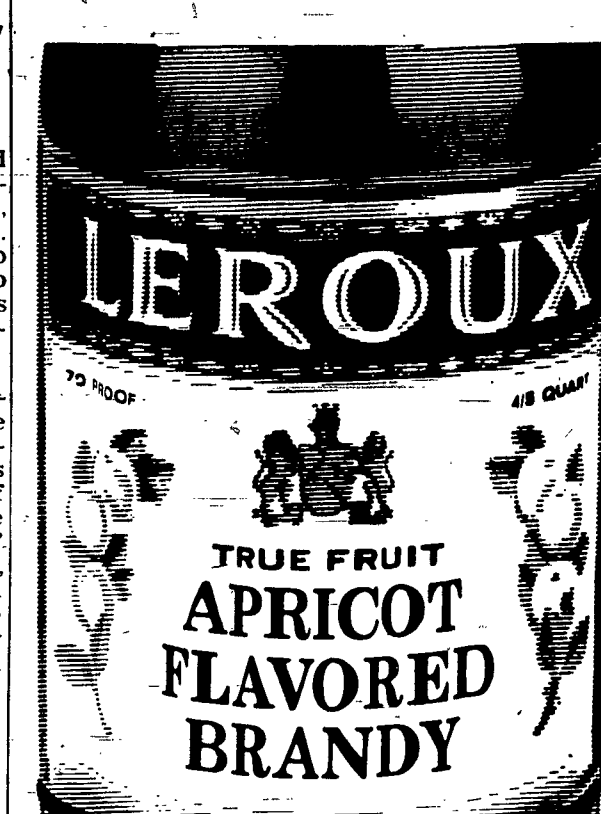
this June. The decision had been given to their pastor, Father Sebastian Contegiacomo, by Monsignor Roche on April 4. The pastor had planned to wait until after Holy Week to notify his people, but the news leaked out, and the action began.

Basis of the decision, Monsignor Roche stated, was the fact that eight grades were being taught in four classrooms at the school. "A program of quality education cannot be sustained with double grades," the school head pointed out, adding that plans had been made to accommodate all the pupils at two neighboring schools, Holy Apostles and St. Anthony's.

In addition to their well-organized and peaceful picketing, the parishioners voted to take a large advertisement in the Rochester daily papers to state their case to the general public. Signed by school board chairman, Richard J. Triano, the notice cited Vatican II decrees calling for greater lay responsibility and participation in Church affairs.

There was some reason to believe that the decision was not irrevocable. Triano stated this week, after talking briefly with Monsignor Roche at the airport on Sunday, Triano reported that the school superintendent had told him, "there is room for arbitration."

Jesuit Chief In Brazil month-long inspection of Jesuit provinces and missions, and to meet as many as possible of the 1,000 Jesuits in that country. He will return to Rome on May 18.



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