

Inner City . . . Its Problems Overrun Its Borders

Total Religious Ministry Tackles Community's Ills

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"The Church is the most exciting thing happening today."
— Reverend P. David Finks, Vicar for Urban Ministry.

Perhaps we are facing our greatest challenge in the Church today as we attempt to study, to deal with and to resolve urban problems. No longer can we tidily pigeonhole such apostolates as "the poor," "the immigrants," "the blacks," or even the "inner city."

A much more complex picture presents itself today, and though poverty and racial tension are the two main thrusts of the urban ministry, our concern is with the whole metropolitan area, and the interaction (or lack of it) between inner city and the suburbs.

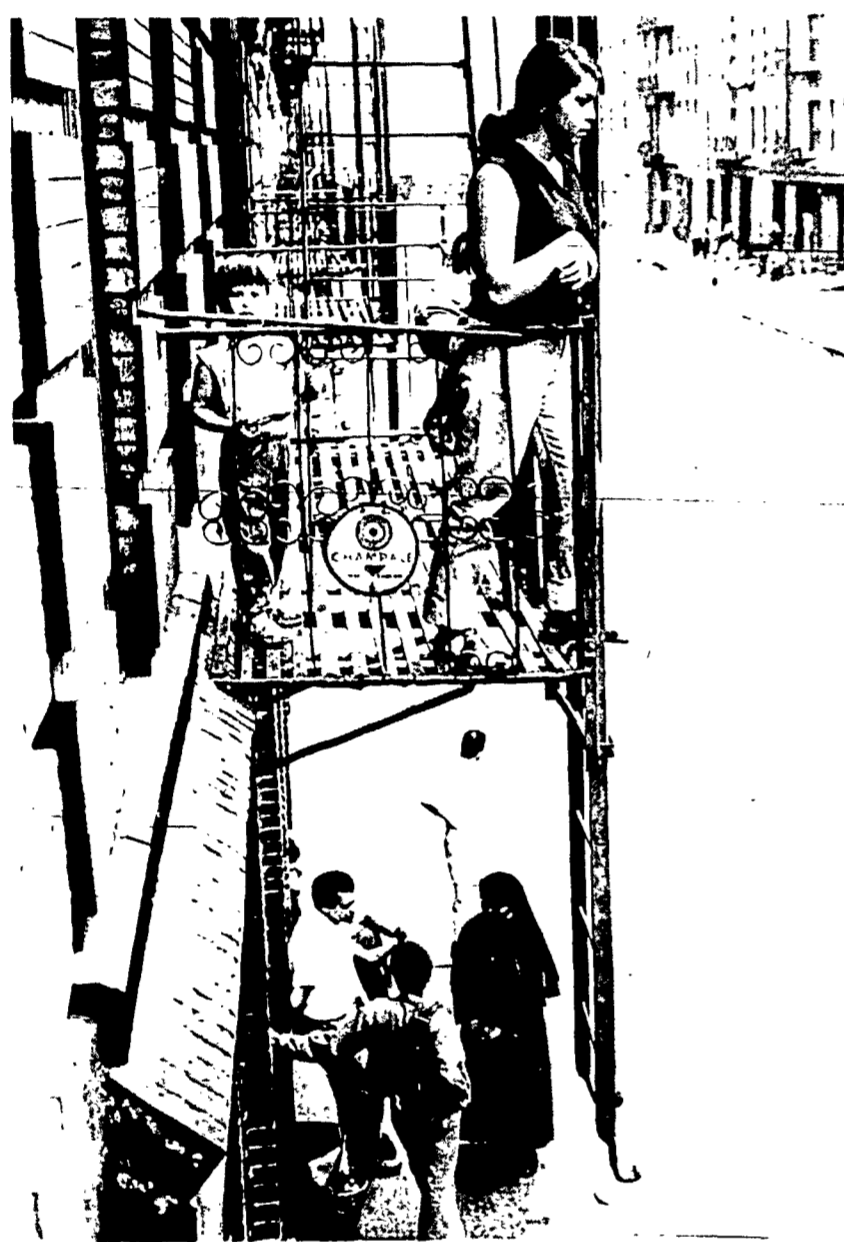
For the past one hundred years in our diocese, as throughout the country, the Church has been concerned with building and staffing schools, churches and hospitals, preserving and spreading the faith. Now, just as life styles are changing, so is our form of church mission. While not intending to abandon our structures and ministries, we are trying to find more dynamic and relevant approaches to meet present-day challenges.

The home-neighborhood-parish centered life has given way to a larger world which includes work, recreation and community involvement, and so our focus as a church should expand to include not just inner city problems but the development of the whole community, wherever there is a need.

Working in ghettos and binding up wounds will serve little purpose unless we also work in the suburban areas which help keep the ghettos in existence.

The newly-developing Joint Urban Ministry is an effort by the Rochester Area Council of Churches and the Catholic Diocese of Rochester to merge strategy and planning in ecumenical community projects, to create and build new forms of ministry to the city. Though at this time poverty and the racial issue receive priority, the Joint Ministry Office looks to suburbs to respond to the city's problems: housing, health and welfare, sanitation, air pollution, unemployment.

Protestant response to urban needs preceded organized effort by the Catholic Church in



Rochester by a few years. Out of an adult lay study group which met to discuss urban issues at Third Presbyterian Church in 1963, there grew the realization of the need for new ministries to the city, and for a valid way to support the development of black leadership.

Dialoguing among denominations of the Rochester Area Council of Churches led to the birth of the Board for Urban Ministry, staff for which was hired in the spring of 1964. Thus it was that Director Rev. Mr. Herbert White was in a position to act when the summer of 1964 erupted in Rochester's first riots.

Following the coming of Saul Alinsky under the auspices of the Council of Churches, and the subsequent formation of FIGHT, mission ministries were developed in the Hanover Houses and Southeast Loop areas. By autumn of 1965, the beginnings of ecumenical community action in the Northwest areas was evident. While the Northwest Ecumenical Ministry was becoming a reality, further ideas for sector-planning on a city-wide basis were growing.

At present, a number of programs operative under local sector ministries are financed principally by individual churches and denominations, and by the Board for Urban Ministry, with a small sum coming from the Catholic Diocese. However, in the areas of planning and strategy, as in that of personnel and resource sharing, the cooperation evidenced at the local levels is enthusiastically mirrored at the coordinating level.

The Board for Urban Ministry, under the direction of Reverend Perry Fuller, is composed of two representatives from each of the following denominations: American Baptist, Episcopal, Reformed Church of America, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, and United Presbyterian, with official observers including representatives of the Urban Ministry Council, Jewish Community Council, the Lutheran Church, the Rochester Ministers' Conference and the Missionary Baptist Alliance.

The Board itself had made effective contact with business and with government both at the local and the national levels in matters concerned with FIGHT, the Police Advisory

Board, Model Cities, and urban renewal.

The Urban Ministry Council of the diocese was organized in February, 1968, under the chairmanship of Louis Martin, and is composed of twelve delegates from various diocesan organizations and agencies, at-large delegates chosen for special expertise in the area of urban problems, representatives from the four sector areas, and the directors of the Spanish Apostolate and the Secular Mission.

Under the direction of Father Finks, the Council works to establish priorities for diocesan programs concerning urban problems; in planning, evaluating, and implementing programs for the new urban ministries under diocesan auspices and in cooperation with religious agencies of all faiths; in helping to bring others to sensitive understanding of urban problems; in representing to community agencies the concern of the Church for the poor and disadvantaged.

Besides Father Finks, there are three fulltime staff members: Sister Grace Miller, (Continued on Page 74A)



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