

CHURCH AND THE CITY

Forman... Symbolic Act

By Father P. David Finks

Several weeks ago James Forman, after due notification of the pastor, walked to the sanctuary steps during the early stages of the Sunday service at St. Riverside Church in New York City. He proclaimed a manifesto demanding \$500 million in church funds issued by the 700-man National Black Economic Development Conference in Detroit, Mich., April 26, 1969.

The furor that followed this symbolic confrontation done in the style of the Old Testament prophets gives some insight into the subtle nature of that particular form of prejudice we have come to recognize as racism.

The news media and church spokesmen from their status quo frame of reference immediately mounted the counter-attack. Little notice was paid to the rather positive program outlined in the manifesto.

Attention was focused not on the human issues at stake, but on the arrogance of a black man interrupting a sacred service and the somewhat harsh rhetoric of the document's preamble.

As so often on the local scene when the FIGHT Organization speaks out on social injustices toward Rochester's black community, the tactics, rhetoric, and personalities involved receive our institutional and personal reaction rather than the human issues being presented for the majority community's attention.

The issues to be remedied are critical. Fifty million of our fellow-citizens—black, brown, red, white—are forced to live in sub-human conditions of degradation and hopelessness. Our ordinary answer when goaded by civil unrest is to allocate small amounts of money into special programs aimed at alleviating immediate symptoms and restoring calm.

Furthermore, governments, social agencies, churches in setting up programs use most of the funds within their own organizations and the poor for the most part remain helpless and powerless. The brokers—including church institutional types—benefit most from administering to and planning for those suffering injustice and deprivation.

The Detroit Manifesto is just one more sign that poor and minority peoples are no longer content to be administered to like colonial natives.

They are organizing among themselves to do the job.

Mexican-American farm workers in the Southwest, ghetto community organizations, like FIGHT, and now coalitions of such groups under tough young leaders are developing national lobbies like the National Black Development Conference.

What they are saying underneath the rhetoric is: "We will form our own foundations, Ford, Carnegie, Rockefeller, Community Chest, Red Cross, March of Dimes can do it; why can't we?" All our society asks of an existing foundation is that it be a legal entity set up under the incorporation and tax laws of the state and nation and that it serve a good cause.

The new minority leaders are saying that if you want to help, then put your money into minority operated foundations. They can legally

do this, their books will be audited regularly, their annual reports will be published, their officers will be duly elected. This is much more accountability than we demand from our own Catholic church corporations.

We are living in an age of new styles of operation. It will do no good to waste adrenalin on training ushers in strong-arm tactics and filling our Sunday congregations with police officers. Our middle-class institutions, white and black, church and secular, have done precious little to change the conditions of our society that breed poverty and helplessness. Our easy rhetoric will increasingly be tested in open confrontation.

The judgment will not be repressed until eternity, but will be heard in our churches and other institutions from the voices of the poor and from our own young people. Many

have decided that they would rather "fight than switch."

It will also be fruitless to turn for support to those whom Father Torrey (Catholic Courier Journal 5/16/69) calls "notable black leaders." The leaders whom white society chooses for minority groups are generally not the leaders of "the new day."

I would strongly suggest that the church communities of Rochester strongly support with funds and technical expertise our own FIGHT Organization with its proven track record of organizational and planning skills. Then when James Forman, or any group nationally or locally comes to the churches for "reparations," the negotiations can be turned over to Minister Florence, DeLeon McEwen, and the black pastors of the Rochester Area Ministers Conference. They are somewhat more skilled in the politics of confrontation.



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Without Prayer, the Soul Withers

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

St. Gregory wrote: "Prayer is as necessary to the soul as water is to a fish." Since the soul is immortal it seems reasonable to be even more attentive to it than to our weight or our cash and property, or to know the Red Wings made out of the horses came in.

The fact is that we muster more enthusiasm about material interests than about the spiritual. What Christ said still holds: "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Mt. xvi — 26)

Despite some exaggerated teaching, we know that it is not a sin to omit our morning or evening prayers. Yet wise parents inculcate that habit into the lives of their children. It is instructive to know that President Kennedy got on his knees every night before he went to "bed" and said his night prayers. Who helped him form that virtue? ("A virtue is a habit of doing good.") Who else but his good mother Rose. "The hand that rocks the cradle influences the world."

In Rochester Diocese we have four religious houses of prayer run by men and three for women, the Cenacle and Carmelites in Rochester, and the Dominicans in Elmira.

Notre-Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua is the largest. It is a center for diocesan men's retreats. The Redemptorists run it, and thanks to them thousands of men each year are spiritually rejuvenated by prayer, conferences and periods of precious silence. Such a good cause de-

merges financial gifts. It would be good to read in the papers: "Substantial gift (or legacy) given to Notre Dame Retreat House."

In Piffard, near Geneseo, the Trappists have a monastery which is a power house of prayer, especially liturgical prayer, celebrated by the monks according to the Trappist traditions. For centuries a high light of the Trappist liturgy has been the soul-stirring Gregorian SALVE REGINA, MATER MISERICORDIAE, sung in Latin.

I was saddened last October to find the Salve had been ditched for a vernacular HAIL, HOLY QUEEN in a decent melody, but far inferior to the ancient tradition. Vatican II says: "The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as proper to the Roman liturgy. Therefore, other things being equal, it shall be given pride of place in liturgical services." (Const. on Sacred Liturgy # 116.)

Most of us are happy about vernacular. A few of us who remember the magnificence of the Gregorian SALVE, soaring from the human spirit, regret it's being replaced by something good but less noble.

Despite this disappointment I am in awe and full of thanks for the prayer life of the Trappists, and for the retreats which they give for laymen and priests to strengthen our interior life. The monks support themselves farming and selling their famous Monks Bread.

Outside Elmira is the Benedictine Monastery of Mt. Saviour. It is lo-

cated in hilly isolation. The monks follow the Benedictine liturgical prayer life. They offer opportunities for special ecclesiastical studies, often to off-beat scholars and self-searchers. They support themselves by farming. They have accommodations for men and for women, for Retreats, and for those who just "want to get away from it all" for a few days.

The least known is the Carmelite Monastery outside Waverly. An O'Brien family of deep and dogged devotion prevailed upon the discolored (sandals and socks) Carmelites to establish a house of prayer. They donated 39 acres of land, and some dozen years ago the monastery became a reality. The priests help the neighboring parishes. They also take care of the chaplaincy of St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira.

Three weeks ago I spent two days at their Monastery. The building complex is practical, without frills. The monks are devout and prayerful, kind and theologically sound. Some little thing is often the big event of an occasion. This was mine. The second night there, I attended Compline, which was chanted with no spectacular skill. Immediately followed the recitation of the Litany of Our Lady.

As I listened to the poetry, the imagery, the beauty, the theology of this old form of prayer, I thought: "What a deluge of devotion pours out from these poetic proclamations of the nature of Our Lady! Ark of the covenant, Morning star, Seat of Wisdom, O God, how you have blessed your Mother!"



A Boy, 5, Pictures God

Catholic Press Features

Some people don't believe that God is alive unless you draw them a picture, and now more than 2,000 far-seeing children have done just that.

Asked to draw an answer to the question, "What does God look like to you?"—a question posed in an unusual newspaper advertisement—young boys and girls from throughout the country responded with a series of crayon-and-pencil visions.

The ad, created for the Standard Romper Co. ran in the children's fashions section of the Sunday "New York Times" in mid-March.

Many of the drawings follow the religious imagery of the Bible and traditional religions—God sitting among clouds, with a long white beard—but there are also many imaginative, humorous and touching interpretations.

An eight-year-old boy from Roanoke, Va., pictured God reading a manual titled, "How to Make People," and operating the levers in a factory that has separate departments stocked with hands, legs, noses and eyes, plus a nearby chute that is labelled, "To Earth."

One child, impatient with adults' doubting ways, drew a figure of a man and over him a comic-strip-type balloon with the words inside, "I am God I tell you!"

The new ecumenical spirit obviously influenced a six-year-old boy who pictured God as a king holding a cross in one hand and in the other hand a Star of David.

COMMENTARY

Courier-Journal — Friday, May 23, 1969 19A

THE HOLY FATHER

Use Communications Media for Good

Beloved Sons and Daughters, and men of goodwill everywhere:

The observation of the third annual "World Communications Day" with the theme "Social Communications and the Family" affords us an opportunity which we accept with pleasure as we have done on previous similar occasions, of inviting all those who are interested to a positive and fruitful meditation on this subject.

Indeed, who can claim today not to be affected by a phenomenon of such world-wide proportions as the ever-growing expansion of the press, radio, motion pictures and television, or by their immense influence on families?

The instruments of social communication have now penetrated into the very heart of the family circle. They influence timetables. They change habits. They form stimulated discussions. Above all, these instruments have an impact on the psychology of those who use them.

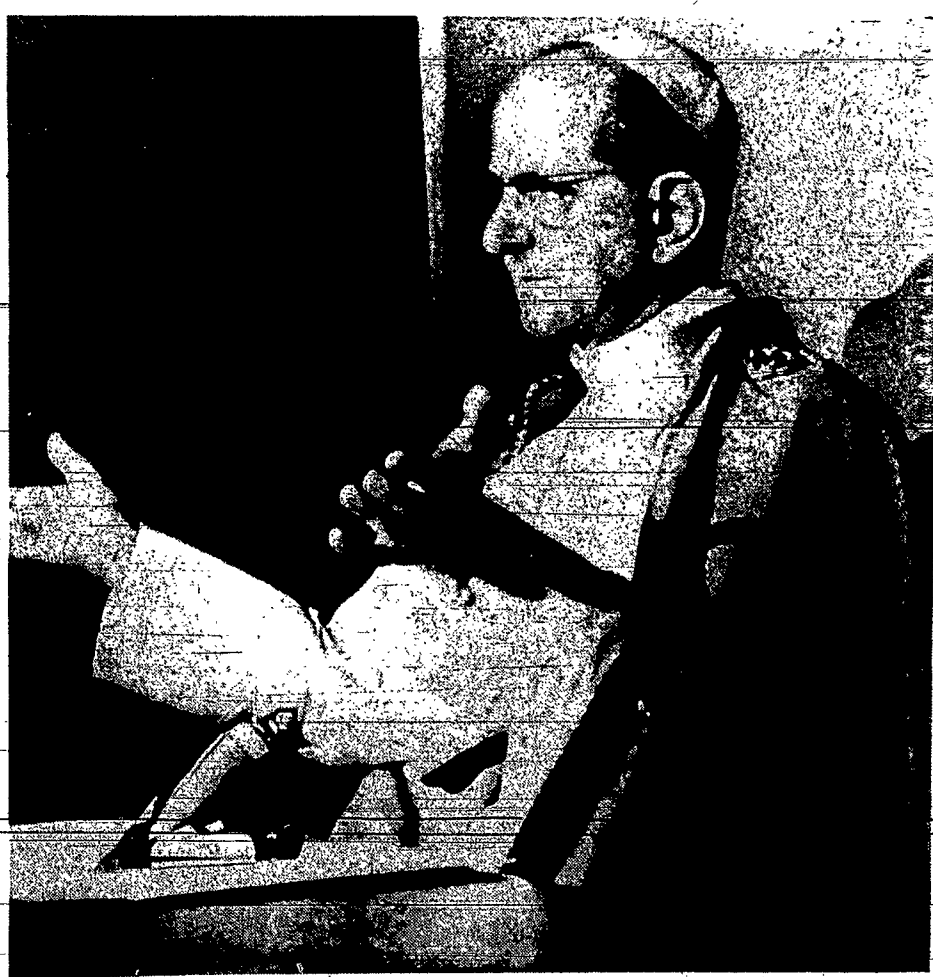
This impact, at times truly profound, is exercised over the emotions and the intellect. It extends to the moral, as well as the religious spheres. There is hardly a news item or matter of discussion that is not brought within the family circle by means of the printed page, or an audio-visual means, so that it can influence the conduct of one and all, awakening the most diverse reactions.

There is no doubt that the intellectual development of young people is hastened. Their hearts and spirits are more easily alerted to the great problems of the human community, such as peace, justice and development.

It is also clear however, that the persuasive force of these new means can be utilized for good or for evil. Moreover, an abuse, even be it only quantitative, of audio-visual programs, can bring with it a deterioration of the values of family life; as a result it may well set people apart, instead of bringing them together. It is necessary then, to form consciences, to use intelligently these sources of cultural enrichment.

It is time that the family undertakes its "aggiornamento" in this area, so that with the indispensable cooperation of the school, the family may progressively take care to train consciences to come of their own accord to calm and objective judgments leading them to accept or reject the various programs that are offered.

The work of education however, does not stop here. It is necessary that a dialogue be established between the families and those who are responsible for social communications. The families are called upon not simply to make known their wishes and criticisms, but also to show understanding for those who,



often—at the price of strenuous effort, provide them—day by day—with so many elements for their culture and entertainment.

The communicators must, in their turn, know and respect the needs of the family.

This presupposes at times much courage on their part, and always a high sense of responsibility. It means practice, that they should exclude on the one side all that can damage the family in its existence, its stability, its order and its happiness, for every attack on the true fundamental values of the family—whether it be eroticism or violence—is an attack on genuine human welfare and the good of society.

On the other hand, communicators have the difficult task of educating the public to know, appreciate and love values that are often unknown or despised but which are the strength and the glory of a given society: such as, the dedication of one's self to a great ideal, the sense of sacrifice and the hidden heroism of daily routine.

We invite all families to collaborate with those associations which by constant contact, make known their yearnings and just requests to those responsible for social communications. May this World Communications Day mark the beginning of a genuinely fruitful and constructive dialogue.

The question of the presence of

Christians in the professional world of social communications now calls for close consideration. If there is a sector of present-day life where this presence is especially necessary and desirable, it is surely that of social communications.

Thank God, in the world of social communications, no less than in others, there are shining examples of moral living, both in professional and in family life. There are those in the world of journalism, the theater and the field of motion pictures who live out their faith in God in the calm and conscientious exercise of their profession.

The very history of Christianity teaches us that the force of evangelical leaven increases rather than diminishes in proportion to the difficulties caused by one's environment. The evangelical leaven gathers force by vivifying and transforming an environment. Young people who have received a solid moral and religious formation and who are inspired by a genuine ideal are, therefore, to be encouraged to engage in the different activities of social communication.

A realistic appraisal of the situation leads one to see that the influence of these techniques, far from being lessened, will be on the increase in the society of the future. Nothing should be left undone in order that this influence have a positive effect on every family.

PAULUS PP. VI
From the Vatican, April 7, 1969

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