

Fr. Groppi Unlocked: It's Good to Be Home

By ETHEL GINTOFT
(NC-News Service)

Milwaukee — It was good to be home, good to offer Mass, good to be with friends and, temporarily at least, to be free from the awful "pain of separation" that is imprisonment.

Father James Groppi frankly expressed these reasons for celebration as he celebrated his first Mass at St. Boniface Church since release from the Milwaukee County House of Correction Oct. 27.

About 200 persons in the congregation echoed his joy in their applause, in moist eyes during Communion time, in the long line of greetings after Mass was concluded.

Throughout his homily, longer than most, he developed several central themes; that his prison experience could be likened to "putting on the garb of Christ; that he hated no one because hatred of one's brother is against Christian principles.

Father Groppi severely scored penal institutions for being instead of correctional, "sadistic acts of vengeance by a morally sick society."

In likening his experience to that of Christ, Father Groppi said the Church, too much identified with the "establishment," has forgotten its heritage—born of a man who was a prisoner, who criticized the establishment in strong words. He referred, too, to St. John the Baptist who was beheaded, and St. Paul who

served two years in prison.

Spreading his vestments, Father Groppi observed: "Today, I am clothed in the traditional garb of the Catholic priest when I offer Mass. Yesterday when I took off my prison garb and put on my priestly clothing I thought to myself, this is one of Jesus' garments; this is the other."

He said he does not apologize for putting on the garb of prisoners, he was proud to go to jail, and he sees no difference between the men in the (Wisconsin state) Assembly and the Pharisees and scribes of

2000 years ago. "We had as much right to go into the Assembly for the poor in a non-violent way as Jesus who went into the temple of the poor."

It is the role of the Church, he insisted, and of priests to stand up and say "it is wrong for public officials to belong to racist clubs. . . . It is a violation of the law of God to cut off money necessary for food and clothing for the poor."

"The Gospel is the Gospel of the Poor!" he added.

As a prisoner, not only the garb but the pain of isolation,

of being pointed at "like a worm" reminded him of the suffering of Christ. He thought of Christ, too, when his 80-year-old mother came to visit him, he said: "She had to see me in prison garb. . . . she almost died when I was arrested, her blood pressure went up 40 points. I thought of Christ looking down from the Cross at his mother and telling John to take care of her."

He described the isolation in prison as the "greatest mental pain that can be placed on a man. . . . I met a man who was separated from his wife for five years, seeing her only through prison bars. . . . It is wrong for society to cut a man in half."

After nearly four weeks in jail, the priest is on a stay-of-dom will terminate automatic execution (six months in jail) ally.

one likes to go to jail. Our jails are not correctional institutions. They are a sadistic act of vengeance by a morally sick society. They are punitive, vengeful, and they should properly be labeled slave camps."

His appeal is on a calendar of cases before the Supreme Court to be considered starting Nov. 10. If the court decides not to consider the appeal, his freedom will terminate automatic execution (six months in jail) ally.

on order of U.S. Supreme Justice Thurgood Marshall. It is effective pending a decision by the federal high court to consider his appeal regarding a 1968 conviction for resisting arrest during a 1967 demonstration. Father Groppi had led open housing marchers in protest of an emergency ban issued by Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier on all demonstrations.

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EDITOR NAMED

New York — (RNS)—Charles W. Carruth, former editor of The Catholic News, a New York archdiocesan newsweekly, has been named executive editor of Medical, Inc., specialists in medical communication. His immediate responsibility will be the editorial management of Medical Counterpoint, a journal of internal medicine.

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Catholics Gain In Drive for Separate System

Toronto, Ont. — (RNS)—A breakthrough in Roman Catholic efforts to obtain a completely separate school system in Ontario was seen when the opposition Liberal party endorsed full public tax support for such a plan.

Liberal leader Robert Nixon announced that his 27-member caucus wants tax support for Catholic schools all the way through Grade 13.

(Under Canada's constitution, Ontario Catholics are guaranteed their own parochial schools, supported by tax funds from kindergarten through grade 8, the last elementary school grade. Limited tax support is also available for the first two grades of high school, but there is no public aid for the last three grades.)

Parents who seek a wholly Catholic education for their children must pay fees to private Catholic high schools of up to \$400 a year as well as paying their regular education taxes. In recent years, bishops, trustees, teachers and laity have campaigned periodically for tax support of all grades.

The Liberal party stand is certain to spur political controversies.

Ontario's Progressive Conservative government under Premier John Roberts has said that the province simply cannot afford two parallel school systems and that if complete school system aid was given to Catholic schools, other private schools would demand the same treatment.

Protestant and Anglican leaders have voiced strong opposition to the Catholic requests.

Diocesan Operation To Be Surveyed

Buffalo — (NC)—The Buffalo diocese has retained a management consultant firm—Peat, Marwick & Mitchell—to conduct an extensive study of all diocesan operations.

The goal is to find ways of conducting diocesan operations more economically, according to Msgr. Bernard D. McCarthy, chancellor, and John Galvin, chairman of the Lay-priest Finance Committee.

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