

# Anti-Poverty Campaign Opens in Diocese

Sunday marks the opening of an anti-poverty campaign, spearheaded by the nation's Catholic Bishops. Called "the Campaign for Human Development", the program seeks to raise \$50 million in parishes throughout the country.

The program is two-fold. First, it will attempt to mobilize a public will to reorder the priorities which govern the use of our private and national resources. Second, it will direct monies raised into self-determination programs for the poor of our nation.

The following article points out the avenues of responsibility bishops have selected for the Church in the United States.

(Third in a Series)  
By JOHN R. SULLIVAN  
(NC News Service)

What can the Church do about poverty?

In the past, it's done a lot — several generations of immigrants achieved political power, social status and wealth largely because the Church sheltered them, fought for them, and educated them.

That's past tense. The waves of Catholic immigration stopped a half-century ago.

The question is: What can the Church do now?

"It can educate people," said Auxiliary Bishop Michael Dempsey of Chicago, pastor of a ghetto parish and director of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Campaign for Human Development.

"It does have the means to change people's hearts and minds," he said.

The poor today are not, by and large, Catholics. So the Church's daily routine is not, as it once was, among the poor. It is among the American middle class, which has a stake, too, in eliminating poverty, and has the means to do so.

But it has to be made aware of that stake, and it must be given the help — and here the Church comes in — to do the job.

The Campaign for Human Development that Bishop Dempsey heads is its latest — and some might say, first full-scale — effort to do this.

Superficially, much of the emphasis is on fund-raising — a year ago the bishops committed themselves to raising \$50 million to fight poverty — but the real emphasis is on education.

"The money," said Bishop Dempsey, "is important, but its real purpose is to give tangible proof that the Church means what it says."

The money will do some good. But the bishop calls it "seed money."

It can help organize a housing project, a neighborhood council, or a job training program.

"But if others with real money — such as the government — don't come through with the funds to do the work, it will go nowhere."

The fund-raising aspect of the campaign will climax Nov. 22 with a special collection in all U.S. churches.

One quarter of the funds raised in each diocese will stay right there, to be used as local needs demand.

"Each diocese has different needs," said Bishop Dempsey, "and each diocese knows best how it can help meet those needs."

Those priorities will be determined and funds channeled through diocesan human development offices.

The rest of the money will be administered by a National Committee on Human Development consisting of four bishops and 17 priests, religious and laymen.

What are the priorities? Bishop Dempsey sees them this way: "Employment, job training, housing, medical care, and education in the broadest sense — literacy programs, classes for dropouts and so on.

"I do not mean Catholic parochial schools," he said.

The Human Development Committee will not undertake projects on its own. It will fund the projects of others, with emphasis given to experimental, pilot projects that, hopefully, will prove out and then receive more money from other sources to continue their work.

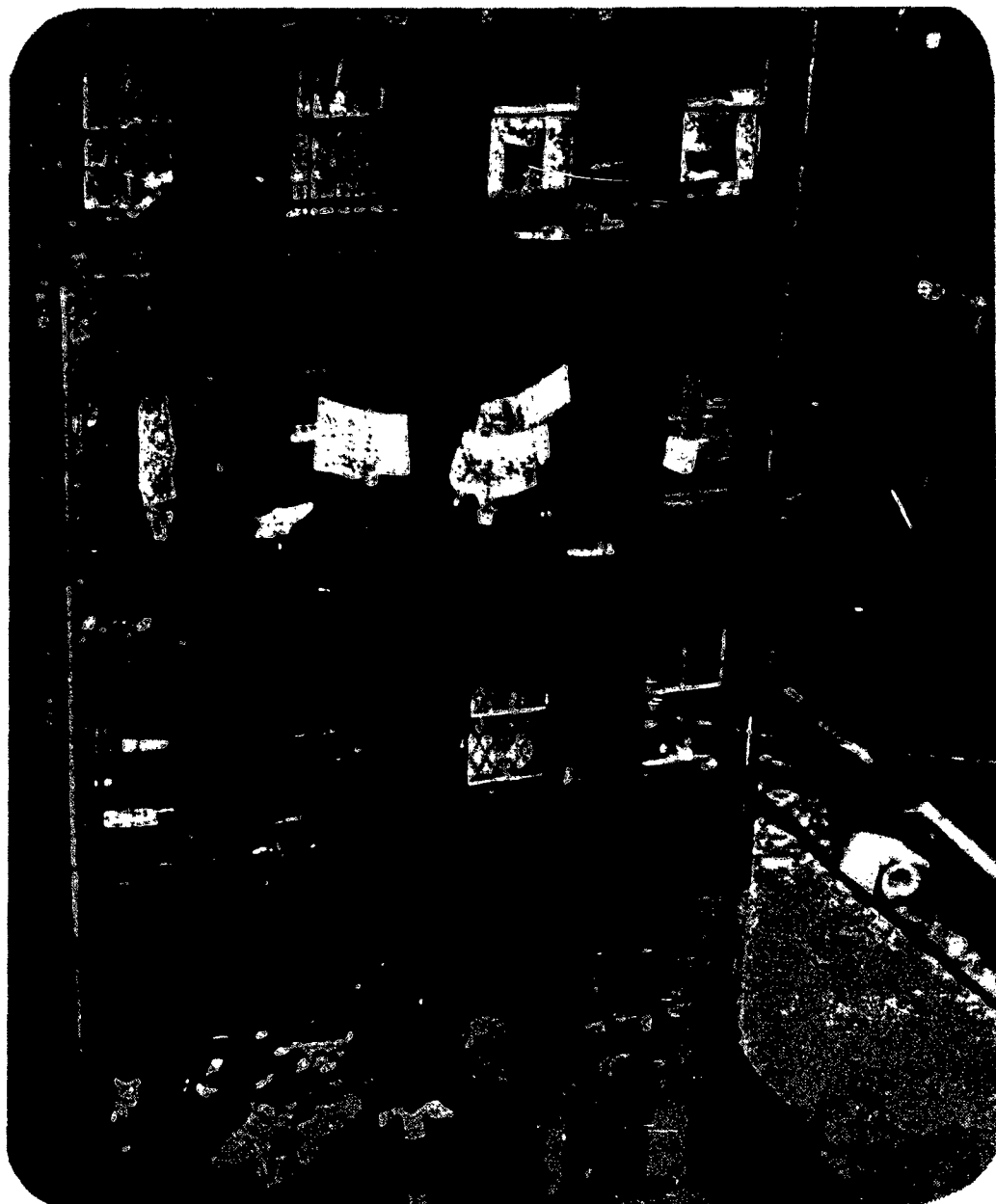
While money does talk, Bishop Dempsey stresses that the campaign's major goal is education.

Robert Beusse, director of communications of the U.S. Catholic Conference, has designed a year-round information program. The most visible aspects are television spot announcements and an eight-minute film designed for both broadcast and group showing.

But there's more: the Curriculum Development Center of Catholic University is preparing an in-class program for elementary and high schools.

College involvement is being developed by Father James Ryan, director of social action programs at Villanova University, and by the USCC Campus Ministry Division.

And parish agencies, such as parish councils, are being asked to initiate local adult education programs.



Urban



Rural