

The New Cities and Religion

Second in a series

There is no Catholic church building in Columbia, Md. James W. Rouse marked land in each village for religious use, but his plans did not allow for unnecessary duplication of anything.

If the number of service stations was to be limited, so was the number of church buildings. Gasoline stations were not going to be on every four corners in this "New City — New America," and churches were not going to be all over the block, according to the Rouse Development Co.

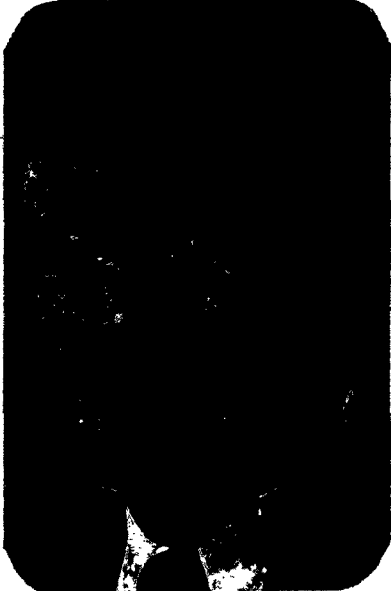
Separation of people was not what Columbia was to be all about. All sorts of people living together, working together, understanding differences and working with them, is its raison d'etre.

So there is a centrally located interfaith center where Catholics, United Methodist-Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Baptist clergy have their offices, and where congregations hold meetings and religious services.



New Superior

Sister Joanne Frey, MHS, has been elected general superior of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, at the order's twelfth general chapter in Towson, Md. Sister Joanne is a native of West Virginia. Her order staffs catechetical centers throughout the country including the Diocese of Rochester.



Cancer Prexy

Robert C. Odenbach of North Country Club Drive, Pittsford, has been elected president of the American Cancer Society, Monroe County Unit for the second time. Odenbach, treasurer of Dolomite Products, Inc., has been an active Cancer Society volunteer and filled a term as vice-president before assuming the presidency.

All residents of this planned city are not accepting this ecumenism easily.

The areas where the denominations worship are partitioned from each other by movable walls, the altar in the Catholic section is smoke colored plexiglass and triangular, the baptismal font is used by all denominations and is in the center of the interfaith center. Some Columbians feel a bit lost, they miss traditional church buildings and traditional Mass liturgies.

Columbia's Interfaith Center, which opened in 1970, three years after the first residents moved in, was preceded by six years of denominational cooperation.

While Columbia was still in the planning stages, the Columbia Cooperative Ministry (CCM) organized. Thirteen Protestant denominations banded together for new and more effective forms of ministry.

The archdiocese of Baltimore did not become a constituent member at that time, however, which was a blow to the whole concept, according to Father George Zorn, SJ.

Though the Catholic archdiocese was not a member of the CCM it did join the other denominations in a bit of a business venture which provided seed money to set up a low income housing corporation which has built 300 housing units.

It was after the success of this \$4.5 million ecumenical business venture that the Catholics joined the Protestant denominations to attempt ministering to their respective congregations under one roof.

The archdiocese joined the ecumenical venture in 1968, when it pledged close cooperation in fields of religious education, Bible study and worship programming in a Covenant of Ecumenical Effort.

Father Zorn came into Columbia in 1969 to try to make the ecumenical Covenant a working reality. Both Father Zorn and James Montague, vice president of the Rouse Co. and chairman of Columbia's Religious Facilities Co., advised future developers not to build an interfaith center before people moved into the community.



The Interfaith Center is a multi-purpose building. Religious education, family life and pastors' counseling are available, and community groups and county agencies meet there, making it a real hub of activity seven days a week.

Father Zorn pointed out that new people are still arriving at a rapid rate, "about 28% of the parish has been in Columbia less than eight months," he said.

People who move into the community want to help in the planning, Father Zorn explained, stressing that it is essential to the interfaith concept that the people be committed to it from the outset.

Montague advised other planned towns to use temporary facilities for a few years, explaining that people don't feel a part of the church unless you wait for them.

Father Zorn was critical of the close union between the Church and developers of Columbia.

It is a bad arrangement, he said, since the developer "is profit-oriented to work his way out of the city, and the churches are non-profit, trying to work their way in to stay."

The Interfaith Center is very important to the whole concept of Columbia, and it has been reasonably successful in promoting ecumenism, according to the Rouse Co. vice President.

On such occasions as Thanks-

giving and Palm Sunday common liturgies of the Word have been held, preceding each denomination's own service, and there have been ecumenical baptisms.

"There is understanding growing from the exposure we are getting to each other," Father Zorn explained.

Lay involvement in the Church is higher than average in Columbia, Montague said. In Columbia, lay people run the parish totally, by way of the elected board of eight representatives who are responsible for liturgies, religious education and finances.

The nurturing of faith in children is a priority for congregational programming in Columbia, but there is no Catholic school.

Instead, there is a well-organized religious education program called, "Faith in the Home." Lay people hold classes in their homes during the school year for children K-8, using a curriculum which includes lesson instructions, music and art.

The lay teachers are trained by two School Sisters of Notre Dame who serve as religious coordinators in Columbia.

Father Zorn pointed out that four schools are closing this year in the archdiocese of Baltimore. "I see no reason to try to open one here when the trend is the other way," he added.

According to statistics, attitudes are not significantly different in Catholic school graduates than those of any other school, and as far as Father Zorn is concerned, "If we don't have different values, specifically Christian motivation, we're failing anyway."

In this futuristic, planned city, religion generally does not play a very big part in people's lives. Only about 40 percent of the residents attend church, and most of these are Catholics. About 55 percent of the 800 registered Catholic families attend Mass on a given Sunday, from which Father Zorn concluded, "A fair number of people still consider themselves Catholic but don't go to Mass every Sunday."

"The real cathedral in Columbia," he added, "is the shopping mall. In a consumer-oriented society that is materialistic, not Christian, the Mall is the center of worship."

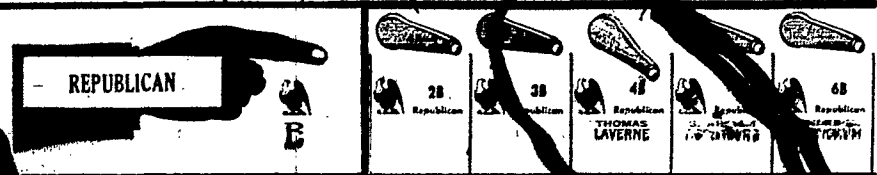
So much for life in planned cities and life in the future.

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