

# The 'Forgotten' Tract Is Gaining Notice

BY PAT PETRASKE

The "forgotten" tract 74 that makes up most of Ss. Peter and Paul parish is quickly becoming known in the diocese's thrust for neighborhood organization. The completion of stage two is bringing concrete results, including the demolition of a hazardous building vacant for over a year.

A survey of the buildings, church services, neighborhoods, age and ethnic concentration by the Office of Human Development staff was the first stage. Next came the recent census by the parish's own human development committee, producing more than mere names and addresses. Unfolded was an overview of important problems voiced by those who have to put up with dilapidated housing, infrequent garbage removal and playgrounds in the street.

Forty-three volunteers

pounded on the doors of residences in tract 74, a census division with a population of 2,246 chosen for its strong Catholic concentration. Breaking the area into nine districts the survey contacted 250 households; Future projects will encompass the other census tracts in the parish.

Father Charles Collins, a member of the parish human development committee, believes the "involvement in the community is having a unifying effect on the people in their concern for neighborhood improvement." This involvement has taken the form of appointing a contact person for each of the nine areas. His role will be to communicate the needs of his area to the human development committee.

"People are more likely to contact someone they know if they have a problem," Father Collins explained. In addition, an

emergency phone number list was left at each house, providing a quick reference to city services and other resources in the area.

The first action taken on the expressed needs of the community was a petition signed by over 60 residents to tear down a building considered a fire and safety hazard at 657 Brown St., adjacent to Ss. Peter and Paul school yard. Commissioner Clarence Alhart, City Public Safety Board, stated that he was overwhelmed with the "united efforts in organizing the petition." Demolition companies bid on the property July 5 with the building to be demolished within ten days.

One of the main priorities has been the establishment of some type of neighborhood communications. Besides feeding information into the Brown Street News, the newsletter of the Charles Settlement House, the human development committee will have its own monthly publication to be issued next Sunday.

Neighborhood organization means the parish will be the focal

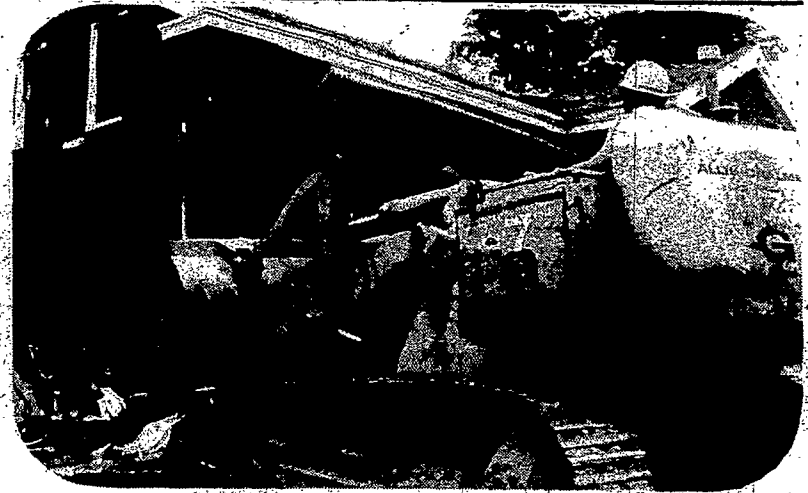


Photo by Susan McKinney

## Bulldozer attacks dangerous building...

point of the community, according to Father Collins. "Many people commented that this was the first time they realized that Ss. Peter and Paul's was there to help them," he said.

Many of those surveyed expressed appreciation for the "chance to be listened to and heard." Area residents feel a better response would be gotten on issues if the Church would speak out more, according to the survey.

The basic approach to any project is to have the committee, composed of Catholic and non-Catholic area residents, work as a whole. "The people of the area now know what are the problems and are more impressed because they have seen the problems themselves," Father Collins said.

The deteriorating neighborhood is causing many families to leave. Deterioration stems largely from poor city services, according to some residents. One retiree complained that "sometimes five weeks go by before the bulk trash is taken care of."

"Panic peddlers" have sparked much of the outflow from the area. Ss. Peter and Paul itself has had its Mass attendance drop from 1100 to 300 within seven years. The "panic peddlers" are salesmen who "come into a changing area and scare the whites into selling their homes at a low price, saying the value of the neighborhood is going down. The houses are then sold to the blacks for a high price," Father Collins explained.



## WORD FOR SUNDAY Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Reading: (R1) Jer. 23:1-6. (R2) Eph. 2:13-18. (R3) Mk. 6:30-34.

The incident in today's Gospel came after a piece of sad news, the execution of John the Baptist. At almost the same time, the Twelve returned from their first missionary journey. Eagerly they told Jesus of their preaching and of the miracles they had worked. For the moment they were so popular that people thronged about them and left them no time even to eat.

Jesus was weary — the pain of the news of the Baptist's death must have drained His loving heart; and the Twelve were tired — they had walked miles, preaching and healing. So Jesus, thoughtful as always, invited them to rest, to take time off. To be along with Jesus and a chosen few afford the retreat necessary for meeting the calamities of life and for successful service. So they "went off in a boat by themselves to a deserted place."

Perhaps they rowed in a northeasterly direction from Capernaum to a spot across the lake that was four miles by boat, but ten miles on foot around the top of the lake. On a windless day, an energetic crowd could cover the ten miles before a boat could make the four. This seems to have happened on this occasion. Upon disembarking, Jesus saw a vast crowd waiting for Him.

An ordinary man would have been annoyed. Both Jesus and His disciples needed rest, and deserved it. He could have argued that their right to privacy was being invaded. But Jesus was not that kind of a man; instead He pitied the crowd, "for they were as sheep without a shepherd." Only a Palestinian could catch the full import of what that figure meant. Sheep without a shepherd are most to be pitied; for they cannot of themselves find pasture nor can they defend themselves against predatory animals. Jesus saw the crowd last, "as sheep without a shepherd": not knowing where to find the spiritual food for which they were hungering and helpless against the "shepherds" of formal religion who were scattering and driving them away. "Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture" (R1).

John the Baptist had been murdered. Only Jesus seemed able to satisfy their great need. Their faith was imperfect; their

hopes indefinite, still Jesus, "the righteous shoot to David," gladly responded, "He began to teach them at great length."

If Scripture emphasizes the duty of work, it also speaks of the need for rest.

By His material creation, God signified His desire that man take physical rest. Light and darkness say, there is a time to sleep and a time to rise. Winter is nature's way of telling the earth to take time off. Even flowers close their petals at regular hours. In fact, so regularly do flowers open and close their petals, that it would be possible to construct a floral clock by which one could tell time from the opening and closing of the petals of different flowers. The same God who made the seasons and the flowers ordained a Sunday rest and regular festivals. What a terrible indictment of man's greed and inhumanity to man that businesses should open seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day!

Not only man's body, but his mind also needs rest. The Indians had a saying that the bow that is always strung soon loses its snap. How often doctors advise business executives to take time off. To get away. To be alone. To read. To meditate. Still valid is the old truism: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

But perhaps man's greatest need today is to go apart with Christ to replenish his spirit. There is a rhythm to the Christian life, like breathing. Man must inhale and exhale to live. The Christian man must continually go into the presence of God from the presence of men and come out into the presence of men from the presence of God if he is to live a true Christian life.

Two dangers threaten such a Christian life: [1] social activism, or the Messiah complex — thinking the salvation of the world depends on our activity; as a result, one is constantly on the go, so busy that he has no time for Christ; and [2] isolationism or escapism — totally withdrawing from any involvement with others in order always to be with Christ.

The truth stands in between: the Christian life must be both a coming and a going — to Christ and to men. Devotion that does not lead to action is not real devotion; and prayer that does not issue in works is not real prayer.

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