

The J.C. Center Lively Music at Mt. Carmel

By PAT PETRASKE

With the lively Latin American music vibrating from the juke box, the J.C. Center has served as a pied piper and has answered the kids' desire for "some place to go." But approval for funding from the Council of Inner City Parishes has enabled the Puerto Rican youth to generate some of their energy back into the 16th ward.

Tucked in the basement of the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel rectory is the J.C. center named in memory of Jesse Contreras, a 17-year-old Puerto Rican youth from the neighborhood who was killed in an automobile accident three years ago. The center has been the focal point of activities but at their weekly meetings the teens have become "less introspective" and have begun to use their money to help the community, believes Sister Carol Fox, Mt. Carmel's pastoral assistant who supervises the center.

One of three proposals submitted to the Council of Inner City Parishes establishes a revolving fund to "help the poor people in the inner city who have no money to buy fuel on an emergency basis."

Approximately \$1,000 has been allocated by the council. An additional \$200 will be raised by the youths themselves through various projects and \$300, through solicitation of agencies such as Action for a Better Community, Ibero-American Action League and the local churches.

To answer one of the basic needs of the teenagers themselves, a proposal for \$600 has also been approved to finance participation in the "Teen Seminar" at the Notre Dame Retreat House. The seminars are an answer to the discovery that alienation of youth from the Church is broadly true. Sister Carol Fox commented that it is "especially

evident among black and Puerto Rican youths."

"It is possible to relate to these teenagers on a personal, recreational and athletic basis, but any religious program has failed," she said.

So far four of the Puerto Rican youth have made Teen Seminar and the proposal will send 20 to 25 more. Cost of the three-day retreat is \$20. A few of the teens admitted that they attend Church but Rosemary gave the typical explanation that many do not attend because it is "not hip." Teen Seminar hopes to give a "different outlook" on the Church.

A final request made by the teens for \$1,500 would establish a teen employment service available to the elderly of the 16th Ward.

The center itself can be traced back to three rooms of a house owned by the Catholic Family Center. Overcrowding forced the move.

"The kids were starting to put holes through the walls when they played pool because there wasn't enough room," said Sister Carol Fox, Mt. Carmel's pastoral assistant who supervises the center. She is assisted by six supervisors who take turns keeping an eye on the center's nightly activity.

A typical evening produces a motley assortment of Puerto Rican youth from the 16th Ward. The small basement, formerly described as a "rat hole, period" has been brightened up with splashes of paint. A nautical print cloth covers one of the cement walls. Grinding out music in the corner is a donated juke box, and when the cheerleaders from the center-sponsored CYO basketball team are around, an excellent rendition of the latest dance, "The Bump" may be seen.

The center is open five days a week for youngsters over 14, with Monday night reserved for younger children. Until recently the card table and pool table were occupied primarily by older

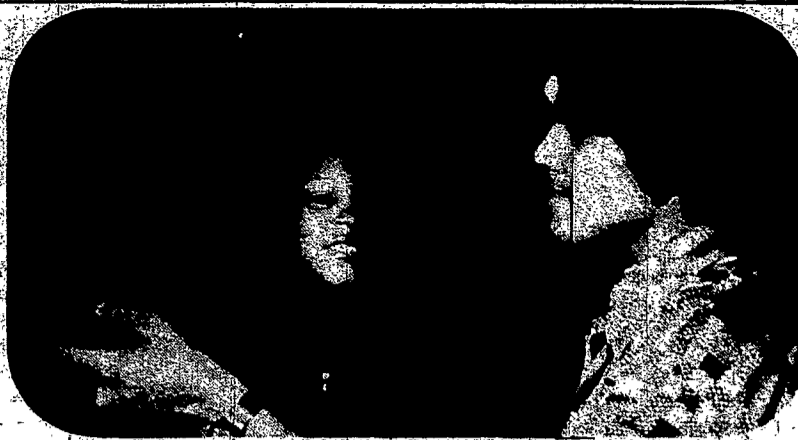


Photo by Susan McKinney

Jose Rivera and Rachel Martinez are among the Puerto Ricans at the J.C. Center who love to dance all night.

youths but two rooms on Lewis Street have been equipped and are used by those over 20.

While the J.C. Center itself may be drab, the atmosphere, fashions and goings on are not. Sporting everything from sneakers to platform, army surplus coats to clinch-waist jackets and Afros to wispy moustaches the players bend, walk, prance, pause, twitch and stretch through their card games, ping pong, pool and "shooting the bull." Proceeds from the soda machine and the juke box make the center self-sufficient.

Jammed together on one of the couches Jose, Paul and Rosemary discussed the center and its neighborhood. It offers "more activities," began 10th grader Rosemary, who said she comes to the center primarily because her friends are there. Record hops, bake sales, skating, bowling, camping and swimming are some of the events sponsored by the J.C. Center. Kiddie movies borrowed from a local library have been also shown to neighborhood children.

"Things are pretty cool here, there aren't many hassles," Rosemary continued after checking to see if was her turn yet at the pool table. Paul, who left school after the eighth grade because he "didn't like it" believes the center has helped teens stay off the streets. "We can come here and soak up some heat and get away from home," he laughed.

While the center has helped to cut down on the "messing around" on the streets, the use of drugs continues. "It's common that most of the kids at least try it," said 10th grader Jose, who added that a few of the youths use hard drugs. "The kids want to try drugs and then they keep coming back and coming back," he sighed.

Jose strives to maintain his Puerto Rican identity. The J.C. Center attracts mainly Puerto Ricans although it is open to all. "I like the way I am and I want to keep it," Jose said and then began to dance as one of the center's most popular songs, "Eliminacion de los Feos" came on the juke box.

WORD FOR SUNDAY

Father Albert Shannon

Sunday Readings: (R1) Neh. 8:2-6, 8-10. (R2) 1 Cor. 12:12-30. (R3) Lk. 1:14; 4:14-21.

In the new order of the Mass, the Mass is clearly divided into two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Liturgy. The Liturgy of the Word for Sundays consists of three readings — one from the Old Testament, one from the epistles, and one from the New Testament.

What is the purpose of the Liturgy of the Word? This liturgy has many purposes. First, it is meant to nourish our faith in order better to prepare us for the mystery of faith. For faith comes from hearing, wrote St. Paul, from hearing the word of God.

However, there is another purpose for the Liturgy of the Word too little adverted to, I think. It is this — the Liturgy of the Word specifies the particular grace Christ offers us at every Mass.

Let me put it this way: the Eucharistic Liturgy effects Christ's actual presence on the altar. After the consecration, the risen Christ is truly and really present in the midst of the Christian assembly. But why? Ultimately to change us so that we might become more Christlike. But specifically, at this moment and for that day or week, He is present to make his words spoken in the Liturgy of the Word come true in our lives. "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." That statement of Jesus is fulfilled at every Mass.

Consider the Scripture passages for next Sunday. Ezra reads the book of the law. The people listen attentively. God's word moves them to weep for their neglect of the law and inspires in them a resolve to future fidelity. St. Paul, in the second reading, tells us that in the Church there are many ministries. One of these is that of preaching and teaching the word. St. Luke's preface to his Gospel tells how the word of God has been handed on and our Lord homilizes on it.

What, then is the special grace next Sunday that our Lord comes to our altars to give to the Christian community? It is to give us all a great love for His word and a realization of its power — "Your words, Lord, are spirit and life." He offers to the preacher the grace better to prepare his homilies, and to the people the disposition to listen more attentively to them. And since the readings of every Sunday differ, every Sunday offers different graces. How, then, can anyone afford to miss even a single Sunday Mass without a reason?

Do not most of us need the grace to esteem the word of God?

To how many of us does not God's word seem merely words — poetic, yes, but impractical? Will His word cure poverty, open up jails, root out sickness, especially sickness of heart and head, will it reach the marrow of our bones like a two-edged sword? Ezra thought so, Luke thought so, and most certainly Jesus thought so, for He began His public life by reading from the word of God.

If we take His word seriously, poverty will be cured — both economic poverty and spiritual poverty. For listening to His word seriously means living it, doing and being what it says. It means receiving it as the soil does the seed and letting it bear fruit in one's life. If we do, His word will truly give us spirit and life. The early Christians tried it and it worked!

Good News on the Air

	HOST	RADIO STATION	DAY	TIME
Rosary for Peace	Msgr. Joseph Cirincione	WSAY (Rochester) WRLX (Auburn) WCLT-FM (Corning) WNIA (Buffalo)	Daily	7 p.m.
God in Headlines	Fr. Louis Hohman	WHAM (Rochester)	Sunday	11:35 a.m.
Call for Renewal	Fr. William Graf	WRÖC (Rochester)	Saturday	9:30 p.m.
Open Mike	Fr. Louis Hohman	WRÖC (Rochester)	Sunday	12:45 p.m.
Magnify the Lord	Fr. Paul Cuddy	WLEA (Hornell) WFSW (Seneca Falls) WFSR (Bath) WCLT (Corning) WAUB (Auburn) WACK (Newark)	Sunday	1:35 p.m. 10:45 a.m. 10 a.m. 9:45 a.m. 7:35 a.m. 7:30 a.m.
Sunday School	Fr. Lewis Brown	WLEA (Hornell)	Sunday	9:30 a.m. and 3 p.m.
Catholic News and Views	Fr. William Cosgrove	WFER-AM, FM (Dundee)	Sunday	10 a.m.
Mass	James Raftis	WEBO (Owego)	Sunday	9:25 a.m.
Contemporary Concerns of the Church	Msgr. William Roche	WHCU (Ithaca)	Thursday	11:30 a.m.
Morning Meditation	Fr. John O'Malley	WGHT (Bath)	Saturday	9:05 a.m.
Catholic Church Today	Fr. Otto Vogt	WHHO-AM (Hornell)	Sunday	2 p.m.
Now Generation	Sr. Vincenza Gogliostro	WHHO-FM (Hornell)	Sunday	5 p.m.
Gospel Changes	Joseph McCaffrey	WBBF (Rochester)	Sunday	10:15 a.m.
Mass	Fr. John O'Malley	WGHT (Bath)	First Sundays	10 a.m.
Mass for Shutins		WHEC (Rochester) (Channel 10)	Sunday	8:30 a.m.

CALL FOR RENEWAL — Fr. Latta, CYO Youth Worker in the Southeast Region, will discuss teenage alcoholism on Saturday, Jan. 26.

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