

# The CICIP . . . . Three Years Later

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First in a 2-part series  
By PAT PETRASKE

She paid for it with pennies. The mother of two children enrolled in inner city Catholic schools brought in a shoe box full of copper coins to pay for that month's portion of the tuition. By pinching and saving she and her husband once again were able to pay the price to give their children "a better chance."

"Partners for a better chance" has become the slogan adopted by the Council of Inner City Parishes (CICIP) whose primary mission has been the coordination and administration of five inner city Catholic schools. Working along side the public school system, CICIP is striving to give everyone an educational choice.

"A choice is something that a person living in the suburbs has without question," began Robert Molinari, executive director and the dynamic force behind CICIP and its development.

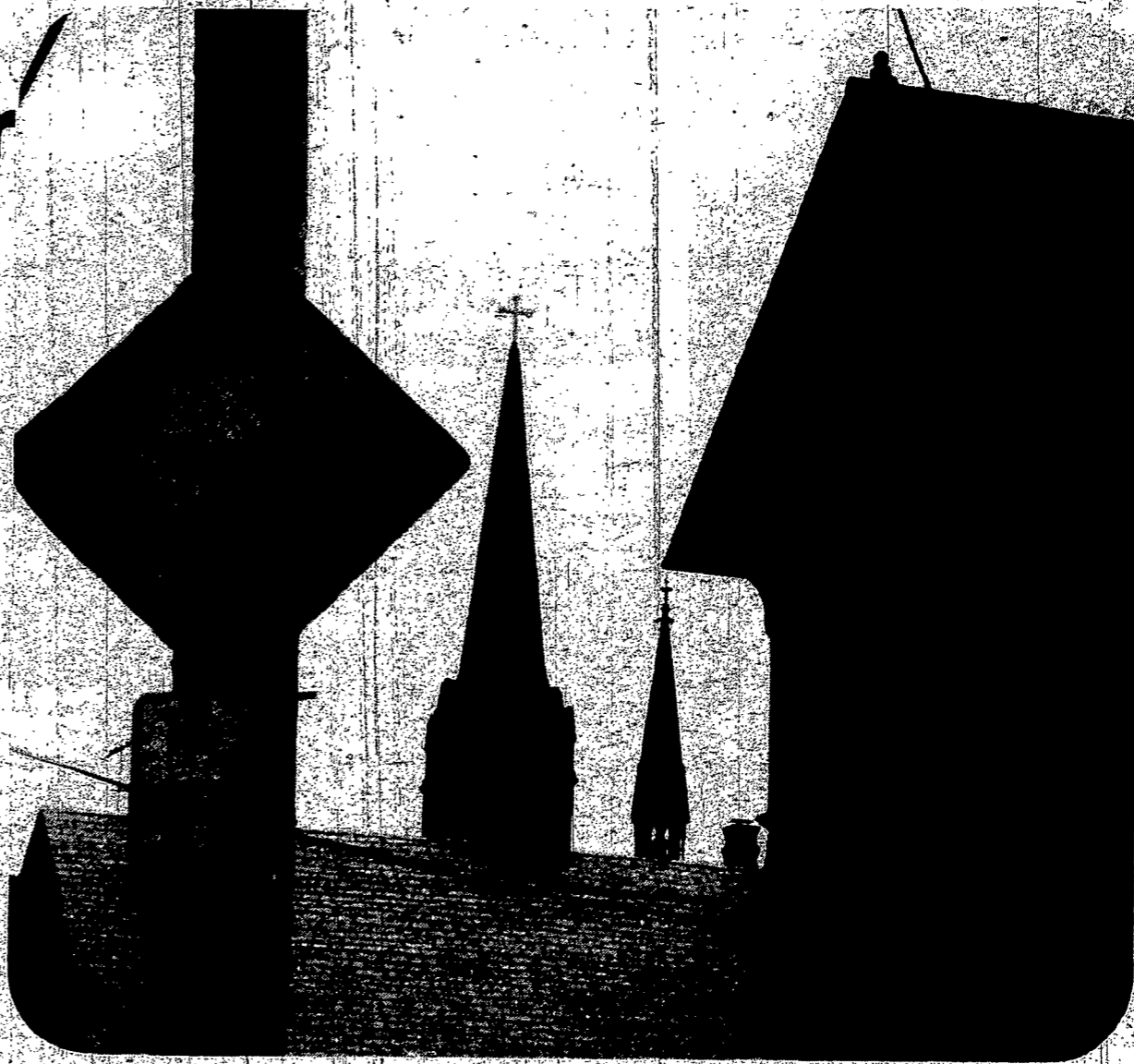
A crayoned picture of children on a bus stamped CICIP welcomes visitors to Molinari's office in the basement of St. Michael's school.

It is located in what economists would call a "blighted area" typical of the eight parishes under CICIP. Parts of the neighborhood are torn down and families have been forced to seek housing elsewhere. More than 75 per cent of the families served by CICIP earn less than \$9,000 annually and many have earnings near the poverty level.

This consolidation of interests, as CICIP can be termed, includes a core group of St. Francis Xavier, St. Lucy's, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Holy Redeemer, Immaculate Conception, St. Michael's and St. Bridget's. Other members are St. Patrick's, the diocesan Office of Human Development, the Black Lay Catholic Caucus and the Spanish Apostolate.

What the members of the core group had in common in 1971 was an ominously developing financial crisis which would soon have meant the schools' closing, Molinari said. To solve the problem the parishes combined their individual subsidies from the diocese.

The diocese now contributes \$200,000 in a subsidy for the elementary schools with \$30,000



set aside for a contingency fund and \$20,000 for alternate ministries.

Rising costs and declining enrollments called for another step — in 1973 the schools at St. Lucy's and St. Francis Xavier were closed and CICIP's seventh and eighth grades were merged into St. Michael's Junior High.

Sister Kathleen McCusker of St. Bridget's, whose pride in the CICIP prompts her to say that she would be a principal only in the inner city, believes the concept of CICIP is working because "it is not a total administrative plan but is what the people want."

Although more than one third of the children in the inner city school system are not Catholic, their parents "had confidence in our kind of education and the values inherent in it," Molinari observed. Of the approximately 1,200 elementary school children, 75 per cent are black or Puerto Rican. And one fourth come from families who receive some form of public assistance.

The expense of going to a Catholic school (average cost per inner city student is \$428 a year) has been adjusted to average \$50 per child with tuition based on a sliding scale according to the number of children attending and family income. Parents are willing to pay because "they want their child to have that extra control and discipline. They want them to have the religious experience because they see it as an essential part of the child's life," said Sister Kathleen who has worked in the inner city for eight years.

She describes the people reached by CICIP "not as Church people but as Christian people. In this poverty culture, it is a luxury to go to church. When you're alone with no husband and seven kids you are mainly concerned with the survival concept," Sister Kathleen said.

Molinari, whose work with minorities has led him from an Indian reservation to a migrant camp to the inner city, believes this poverty, however, is economic and not spiritual. "Poverty is a state of mind and conditions play upon it," he contended.

Extreme poverty can be witnessed especially in the areas around St. Bridget's and St. Michael's. The other parishes are only steps away, according to Sister Kathleen, who noted that Mt. Carmel is at the point "we were at seven years ago."

A visit on Easter Sunday was paid to a mother of six who was living in a multi-dwelling house with seven other adults and 42 children. Carefully tucked in the top drawer of a dresser was the mother's week-old baby. "She used her own ingenuity since she didn't have a crib. It also kept the baby from the rats," Sister Kathleen explained. The mother, whom Sister Kathleen believes exemplifies the neighborhood's "people of hope," told her visitor "I'm always happy with new life."

It is this hope that has kept the people and their schools going.

CICIP's schools are much like suburban schools although they often labor under fewer facilities and supplies. Sister Doreen Wozniak's pre-school program at the Early Childhood Center had to be cut from the budget of CICIP. But with the interest and financial support from St. Louis Parish in Pittsford, 20 children, ages 3 and 4, continue to learn reading, verbal, perceptual and social skills.

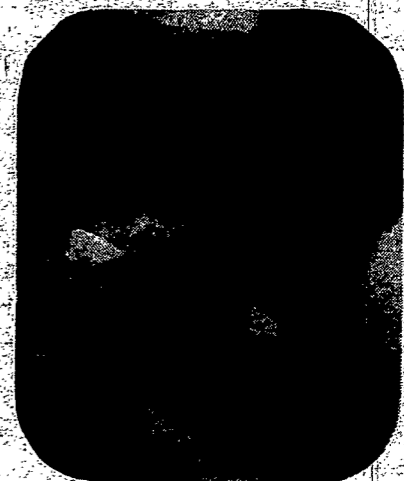
Classroom size in inner city schools averages 25 students. Some of the schools employ what Molinari terms an "each one teach one" situation where students from the intermediate or junior high levels help students from the primary level. "Kids tend to accept information from their peers rather than from superiors," Molinari maintained.

The students in the inner city schools who "are wise to the ways of the street" are also "fanastically independent rascals," laughed Sister Kathleen who believes that the inner city children walk and talk sooner than their contemporaries in the suburbs. "Some families cannot or do not want to raise a family so the kids often grow up on their own," she said.

Teaching these children can be a problem because of the lack of trust by the children. "Some families promise their kids the world and they can't give it to them. The kids know this," Sister Kathleen reflected. Attitudes on race rooted in parental prejudice had led to parental counseling in many schools.

The attitude "that everyone is out to get you" is prevalent in an area of high crime, according to the principal. "That's why they've learned to respect the Church; they know that it won't take advantage of them."

**NEXT WEEK:** How urban renewal and alternate ministries will affect the future of CICIP.



Identifying colors and shapes in English "no es facil" muses Jose Miranda at the Early Childhood Development Center.



There's nothing like a geometric jungle and a good book to make Theresa Jackson enjoy her reading class.



Reading, writing and hamming it up are part of this typical kindergarten class at St. Bridget's.

## Medieval Faire Opens At Memorial Art Gallery

The Medieval Faire, Memorial Art Gallery's re-creation of town life in the late middle ages, opens to the public Saturday, March 2.

It takes up the entire lower floor and the spacious Fountain Court upstairs, and is "probably the most ambitious undertaking in the gallery's history," according to a spokesman for the staff.

An exhibit drawn from the gallery's own Medieval collection, a sound and light show, a town square with guild shops and a cloister garden will be the background for many special events. The show will run through March 24, with a simulated town fair on weekends and Tuesday nights plus craft demonstrations and performances by drama groups on Saturdays and Sundays.

Highlight of next week's program will be a A Triptych for

Hieronymus by the Brockport Resident Dance Company. The contemporary dance work is based on Hieronymus Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights, a painting interpreted as a parable of man's fall from grace. There will be two performances Monday, March 4, at 7:30 and 8:45 p.m., in Cutler Union; next door to the gallery at 560 University Ave.

A concert by Eastman School faculty and students is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. Sunday, March 3, also in Cutler Union, and on Tuesday, March 5, the Eastman School Collegium Musicum will perform at 7:15 and 8:15.

Two lectures are scheduled. At 10 a.m. Monday, Gerald Bond, director of the University of Rochester's Medieval House will talk about The Formation of Gothic Culture. At 8 p.m. Tuesday, Prof. Russell Peck of the university will discuss The Inventiveness of the Middle Ages.