

The CICP Three Years Later

TEXT BY PAT PETRASKE
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Last in a 2-Part Series
By PAT PETRASKE

"Don't worry. The people are the Church."

A second grader with these words tried to comfort her teacher who questioned the survival of the Church in the middle of the ever-changing inner city. While some parish structures may be threatened by urban renewal, the Church will remain standing because its supports are its people.

It is holding on through the Council of Inner City Parishes (CICP) which is trying to reach its people in new ways.

This consolidation of eight parishes and three organizations takes education as its primary responsibility, but "there are different degrees of education," maintained Sister Carol Fox, pastoral assistant at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. She feels that CICP and its programs are the "only thing that is keeping the Catholic Church in the inner city."

Last year \$200,000 was set aside by the diocese for the regional school system in the inner city. An additional \$20,000 was slated for social and economic needs.

Studies "show that the Church is not serving the needs of the people in the neighborhood. They need more than a Mass each week," said Roberto Burgos, inner city CYO regional worker for Spanish-speaking people and a member of CICP's alternate ministries committee.

There may be too many programs in the inner city that focus only on one interest group, according to Burgos. Each CICP parish often had its own programs that operated in a vacuum. Burgos, who works through the Puerto Rican Resource and Development Center, hopes that the alternate ministries committee will overcome the communications gap between programs.

Giving away \$20,000 is no easy task. Thirty-one proposals requesting a total of \$150,000 were submitted, but the alternate ministries committee whittled the number down to 15.

The ad hoc committee is composed of nine members from the parishes and organizations: St. Francis Xavier, St. Lucy's, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Holy Redeemer, Immaculate Conception, St. Michael's, St. Bridget's and St. Patrick's are CICP members, as are the diocesan Office of Human Development, the Black Lay Catholic Caucus and the Spanish Apostolate.

Critics of the allocation of funds argued against "piecemeal distribution" and wanted a large amount to be given to only a few projects, observed William Murphy, chairman of the committee and communications supervisor for Model Cities. One proposal sought the entire \$20,000 to establish a program for the handicapped in the inner city.

"Is it worthwhile and feasible?" Murphy asked when he considered each request. Priority was given to self-help or self-development projects to parish-related or poverty programs and to existing projects not adequately funded.

A basketball team is now running a store, thanks to contributions from the CICP. The Soul Brothers, a teenage black sports group, has opened the Youth Handicraft Shop which sells articles made at the Joseph Avenue Workshop. The outlet, open week nights and Saturdays, is at 809 North St.

Funding from alternate ministries has also kept approximately 14 families warm since January. The Jesse Contreras Fuel Fund operated by youths from Mt. Carmel provides emergency loans for fuel to people in the 16th Ward. The teens raised \$300 by soliciting area agencies, adding to the \$1,000 donated by CICP.

Other projects devised by the members of the J.C. Center at Mt. Carmel include a teen employment service for the elderly of the 16th ward and participation in Teen Seminar at the Notre Dame Retreat House. Holy Redeemer and St. Francis Xavier also received funds to send youths to a weekend retreat.

Many of the programs focus on youth. Social pressure hits hard in the inner city, Burgos observed. To help young people overcome social and economic problems, a multipurpose center to house the Puerto Rican Youth Development and Resource Center will be located in the rehabilitated Washington Square playground, 48 1/2 Thomas St.

Burgos emphasized that the center's main thrust will not be recreational, but more educational and cultural. Tutoring and counseling will be available, as well as arts and craft classes to be taught by the Puerto Rican Art and Cultural Center. The project received \$4,000, the largest amount allotted to any one proposal, and is expected to be completed by the end of March.

Other agencies and projects funded include the Office of Human Development, to continue its statistical analysis of inner city parishes; the Rochester Bail Fund, for office expenses; a marriage encounter program for Spanish-speaking couples; a Senior Citizens' Cultural and Recreational Program at Mt.

Carmel, St. Michael's human Development Committee, to publish a service directory for parish residents.

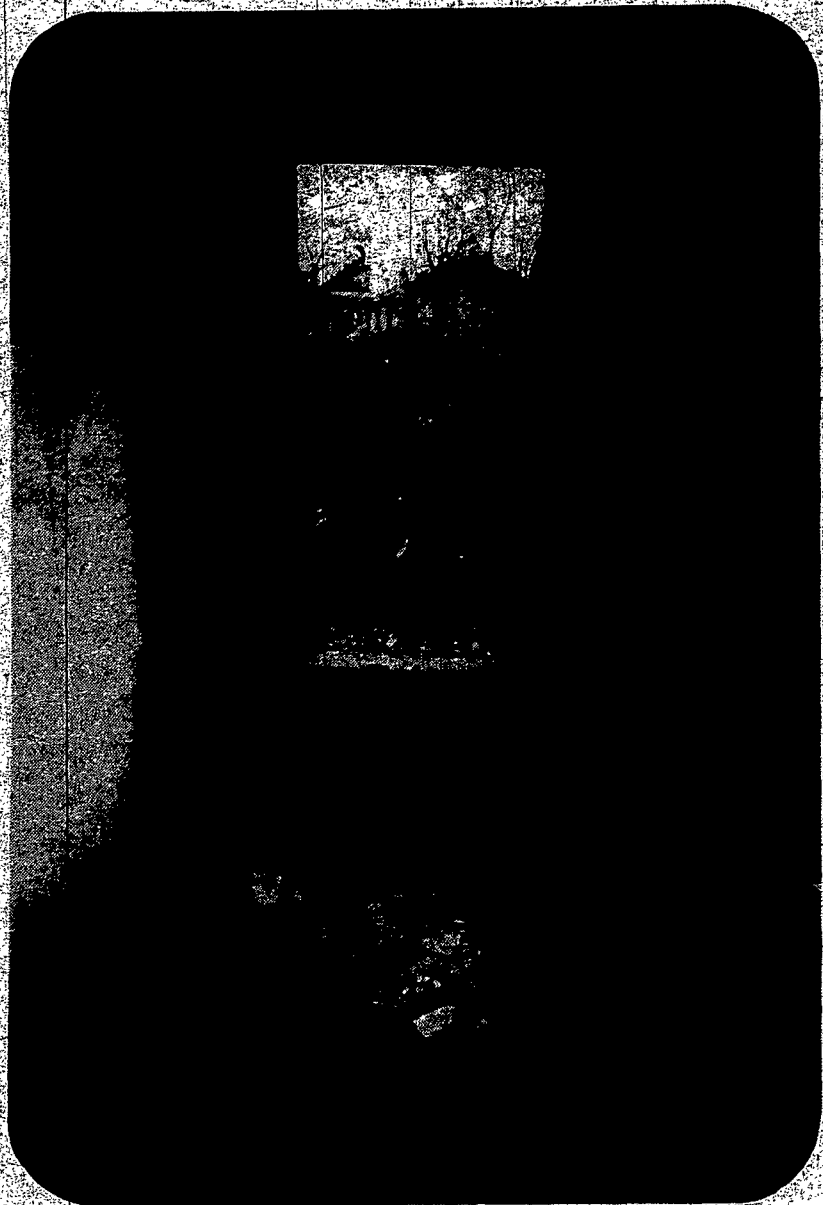
Also, the Spanish Apostolate, for a two-week seminar for persons working with Spanish-speaking people; Confianza, to purchase New Testaments for their bilingual prayer group; and Holy Redeemer, to rehabilitate a neighborhood youth center.

These projects are an attempt to hold the people together in their transitional neighborhood. Robert Molinari, executive director of CICP, admitted he is the "most optimistic person you'll find" and believes "the thrust of the inner city as a ghetto existence is going out." Molinari hopes it will become a haven for liberals and the hub of city activity. What will result after the rubble has been cleared will be a "more pluralistic rather than a class structure," he said.

Sister Kathleen McCusker, principal at St. Bridget's, which has been hit hardest by urban renewal, wonders if that church will last through the period of demolition and reconstruction. "Some think it's death for the inner city, but to me it's Spring. The seed for growth is here," she smiled. The racial makeup of the neighborhoods will be determined in the housing developments that are springing up in every parish, she said.

Burgos, who lived for 15 years in Hanover Houses, one of the city's first urban renewal projects

Waiting for the future, this vacant home offers a view of stability represented by St. Bridget's.



Robert Molinari

expressed surprise at the racial makeup of one of the later developments, nearby Chatham Gardens, which is becoming more "integrated."

"I hope the whites stick around to help make a better neighborhood," he said.

Molinari agrees with Burgos that the Church has the potential for directing the people in the neighborhood. "Eight hundred families are making the system work for them," he said. "They're like the hurdler who has to stop and rest but then he'll go jump the next one."



Another home has heat again as oil is delivered through the efforts of the Jesse Contreras Fuel Fund operated by the teenagers from Mt. Carmel.

Alternative Cares

By MARY HUTCHENS

Ithaca — "People caring about people" is the reason for the volunteer organization Alternative. The group is paraprofessional, offering counseling, information and referral to women with problem pregnancies. It is manned exclusively by volunteers and has been in existence since Nov. 17, 1971.

The office is located at 116 West Buffalo St. and counseling is available by telephone on a 24-hour-a-day basis. The average number of calls per week recently has been four to six, half of which are from women between the ages of 18 and 22, one fourth, between 14 and 18. In some cases

the caller is a parent, friend or boyfriend of the girl. In most cases the girl has nowhere else to turn.

Alternative gives prompt medical referral, legal, financial direction, places to stay if need be, and friendship and emotional support.

Alternative discusses realistically the four choices available to a person with an unwanted pregnancy and tries to assist her in making an informed decision. Of the four choices the girl may decide to remain single and raise her child, marry the child's father or someone else, or she may feel that adoption may be best. She may choose abor-

tion, in which case she would be referred to other resources.

The needs of the group are many. More volunteers are always welcomed to serve in various capacities. The office is staffed on a one-half day twice-monthly basis. Office duties include answering the phone and listening to problems; making referrals for professional assistance where indicated.

Training sessions for counseling volunteers are held periodically. Volunteers are also needed to answer phones at home for six hours twice a month, and to transport girls as need be. Maternity clothes are always in demand, as is financial support, which is tax deductible.