

Black Catholics Convene To Study Their Mission

By BONITA BALDWIN

A convocation of 35 Black Catholics tried to define their particular mission last Thursday night at St. Monica's rectory in Rochester. Bishop Joseph L. Hogan told them, "This is not my Church, it is our Church." He said the spiritual uniqueness and beauty of black people result from their having shared so much of the suffering of Christ.

Brother Joseph Davis, executive director of the National Office of Black Catholics headquartered in Washington, D.C. reported that the Catholic Church in black communities is disintegrating steadily across the country. Such deterioration will stop, he said, only when Black Catholics decide the Church has something to offer their people.

Later, in an interview, he expressed a hope that the entire diocese would appreciate and support the tremendous undertaking of the black brothers and sisters struggling to keep the Church alive among black people.

Ever since the arrival of the first Negro slaves in the new world in 1619, the Church among the blacks has been a missionary venture. "The responsibility is ours," Brother Davis emphasized to the group. Referring to diocesan support of inner-city parishes, he said, "A church is alive when its people provide the resources the church needs to continue." Jesus Christ came "not to be served, but to serve," Brother Davis quoted and added, "We are not asking what the Church can do for us. We are the Church."

He defended the term "Black Catholic." "God made me a black man. When I appreciate the life God has given me naturally, then I can appreciate the life of God within me."

There are 1,500 Black Catholics, many of them converts, in the Rochester diocese. The total Catholic population numbers about 500,000; the black population, about 50,000. Blacks in numbers have been living in the diocese for the past 20 to 25 years.

Brother Davis asked why no greater inroads had been made. "How many priests and nuns and brothers have we given? We are as much the Church as anybody."

A black ministry will require much planning and must be a two-way enterprise between the Black Catholics and the Bishop, based on commitment, trust, and resources, according to Brother Davis. When his commitment was questioned by participants, the Bishop replied, "Every department of the diocese is at your service." He added that he has to hear their needs stated by a united voice before the diocese can act.

The meeting was called at the bishop's request by a committee that included Fathers Stanley Farier, SVD, Martin Gomes, S.S.C.C., and Raymond Booth; Viola Brown of Fight, Bob Laird of the CYO, and members of the Human Development staff.

A second meeting is scheduled for March 20. At that time a core group will be selected to work with the bishop. Bishop Hogan said that he expects more input from this group than from himself.



Official Visit

Sister Rosemary Ferguson, left, prioress general of the Adrian Dominican Sisters, was greeted last week at the Monroe County airport by Sister Miriam Stimson, Ph.D., Keuka College chemistry professor. Sister Rosemary, who likened her position to that of a company president, travels throughout the country visiting the 1,800 Adrian Dominicans involved in education, medicine, politics, and social concerns. At Keuka College she discussed the importance of maintaining values when confronting world issues. She told the Courier-Journal in a telephone conversation that equality is the most needed social change: equality in the distribution of goods, equality in sharing power, equality for women.

Life, Liberty and Law



Nancy Murphy

Music is the global language. All things are involved in its creation: wood, brass, ivory, wind, rain and growth. All living things respond. It is one of earth's basics, one of earth's senses.

On Oct. 17, 1961, Dr. Paul Nordoff, an American composer, began his unique session in its usual way. Nine children between the ages of five and seven were with him: Vera and Tom were able, despite being cerebral-palsied, to walk. Wendy was brain damaged and aphasic. Ralph was mongoloid. Mike, Lucy, Alice, Marvin and Gene had to wear football helmets to protect their heads. They were fitted with "a variety of braces" and had to be supported by special fixtures to hold them in upright sitting positions. Playing the piano, Dr. Nordoff sang to the children making up the words as he went along, words about their activities, their smiles, their clothes, their hopes. At two previous sessions with them he had introduced his little group to the drum (a word no one could say) and to the cymbal (another difficult one). Now he wanted them to play the flute.

Many were unable to do so. Unable even to make the faintest sound, because they couldn't hold the flutes, or could not set them into their mouths. Many were unable to purse their lips around the mouthpieces. And some could not even blow a bit of breath. Mike and Ralph succeeded. Vera after enormous effort, set the flute determinedly between her teeth, pressed her lips to it, and blew.

But Alice, Marvin, Gene, Lucy, Tom and Wendy were completely helpless. They could do nothing. Dr. Nordoff took six very small flutes and found the solution. The children were thrilled. He simply put the flute to one nostril of each youngster in turn, and pressed the other nostril shut. It was not only successful, it was fun.

The global language. All living things respond to it.

Paul Nordoff has a gift: music. He developed it, studied, worked, sacrificed. He bore it when it was a burden to him, and fanned it when it waned. He practiced, spent years in training, years of education, years of development, just like the medical doctor, the Jesuit or the attorney at law. He taught. He reached the theaters and the concert halls. He outlived his frustrations. Success came.

Only then did he apply his full share of gifts. He forged them into new tools, into delicate keys and gentle plowshares with which he discovered, released and nurtured the tiny potential within his young and suffering pupils.

He went into the uncharted realm of musical therapy for the handicapped. To him these are not ugly children. These are not strange, loud, undignified and meaningless children. They are people in need of someone who will respond, someone who speaks their language.

Dr. Nordoff's book, *Therapy In Music For Handicapped Children*, is a chronicle of his exciting innovations with many little groups, his thrilling successes, his hopes and his visions, not for his own fulfillment, not for theirs. And the book is a source of inspiration, a guide, for all who will apply their gifts to the glory of childhood. He, at least, is unafraid to act.

The 26 pages of photographs are the triumph of a sensitive hand with a sensitive camera. They rival exhibits I've seen in Manhattan, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The photographer caught the soft lines of the children's bodies, the intense concentration, the freedom of a newfound joy through the discovery of a sound or a vibration. The purity of a child released from darkness. His response to the fun of being laughed with instead of being laughed at.

The hands of the therapists, the hands of the children. The eyes, the expressions, the effort—the dawn. The photos alone are worth the price of the book.

If indeed these youngsters are shared with us as flawless human mirrors, their's will be the true reflection of what man has become. And will that reflection show us ugly, strange, loud, undignified, and meaningless?

At the ultimate judgement by a merciful Lord, will Christ see that? Or will He see the reflection of Paul Nordoff with his gentle plowshares?

His book is in the library.

Ecumenism Graces Southeast

By MOLLY JUDGE

Even though the economical situation has forced most parishes to struggle to maintain their inner life, the Rev. Robert J. Gillespie, coordinator of the Southeast Ecumenical Ministry, believes that ecumenism is the only way to go.

"There is strength in the ecumenical movement, churches of different denominations pool their efforts together to work for a better community," Mr. Gillespie said. "The laity is much more concerned in ecumenism and they realize that if they do it together, they can get things done."

SEM, which is headquartered at 247 Rutgers St. in the Blessed Sacrament convent, currently comprises 17 churches, two being Blessed Sacrament and St. Boniface in the Southeast sector of the city. Each member church selected two lay persons from its congregation, one from the church's governing board, and one from the clergy staff. The representatives meet monthly to discuss areas of community concern such as the elderly, youth and political problems.

"SEM tries to open the lines of communication between the churches in order to make them aware of the problems existing in the city. And it helps them organize so they can help each other solve these problems," he added.

Prior to becoming a full-time staff member of SEM, Mr. Gillespie served as minister to the Third Presbyterian Church with part of his efforts devoted to adult education and community ministry. "After becoming aware of many community problems, he organized a meeting in October 1968 of clergy and lay people from 15 churches in the Southeast area to discuss metropolitan problems.

From the meeting, SEM was formed. And in September 1974, Mr. Gillespie became the only full-time staff member of SEM. Each of the churches contributes to the SEM budget, paying according to the size of its congregation. For 1975, SEM has requested \$31,900 for its programs and Mr. Gillespie's salary.

"Since 25 per cent of the people living in the Southeast area are elderly, SEM had designated service to the elderly as her first priority," he said.

"Although SEM has no specific program for the elderly, wherever we can help, we will jump into advocate a program."

SEM has worked with the Monroe County Council on the Aging and the federal government to help locate elderly people who subsist on Social Security and are eligible for the federally funded Supplementary Security Income. Approximately 150 lay persons from each of the churches made phone calls and personal visits to explain the program and the method of applying for the aid.

"A volunteer for Blessed Sacrament found an 87-year-old woman who owned her own home and was living on \$77 of Social Security a month. She was forced to cancel her fire insurance policy because of the money problem. Our volunteer visited the lady and took her down to the Social Security Office and waited while she applied for the aid. Then the volunteer got the woman's fire insurance policy renewed and opened up a savings account for her. And now she is receiving \$140 a month," Mr. Gillespie said.

Mr. Gillespie, a graduate of Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Center, Mass., is not a new-comer to the ecumenical field. "I was always interested in urban ecumenical ministry in Cincinnati. Then I was the director of the Neighborhood House in Cleveland," he said.

He finds SEM to be one of the better organized and more effective ecumenical organizations in Rochester. "For example, our FISH group answered over 550 telephone calls last month, whereas the next largest FISH group answered 50. And last year, FISH volunteers came to the aid of 17,730 people who called," he said.

Friends in Service Here (FISH) is an emergency service organization in which people with problems can call and receive help 24 hours a day. The calls are referred to SEM volunteers who offer their services 12 hours each month or to one of the three drivers on duty daily. Currently the group consists of 275 people who also work on scheduling services from calls in the Southeast and Brighton areas.

"Most of the calls are from the elderly who are in need of transportation," the Mr. Gillespie said.

Another successful program

initiated by SEM is the Young Adult Ministry to singles in the Park Avenue area, which is heavily populated with people in their 20's and 30's. "Since a number of these young people are trying to get themselves established and are not really a part of the community, I felt that if we could establish a ministry in which they could be involved in some kind of community life, it would be worthwhile," he said.

SEM began working with the Immanuel Baptist Church on the organization of the proposed ministry. The church received a grant to enlarge the Young Adult Ministry and employ a ministerial couple, Nick and Debbie Carter, to counsel and form programs for the singles. SEM has also aided the project by supplying additional funding.

Currently, over 300 people participate in the new ministry in one way or another. Programs such as classical music, folk groups, Yoga classes and YMCA sponsored programs are offered. A religious experiment is conducted each Sunday night. Around 15 to 20 young adults meet to participate in a spiritual dialogue on philosophical and religious subjects.

The key to ecumenical cooperation lies in the pastor, Mr. Gillespie explained. "If the pastor is enthusiastic about the ecumenical effort, the laity will also be. The lay people need someone to lead them to cooperate with the ecumenical ministry. And if the pastor supports our group, we will receive more cooperation on the part of the laity," he said.

BASH Slates Art Exhibit

The Building a Scholastic Heritage Association (BASH) of McQuaid is sponsoring an art exhibit and sale at St. John Fisher College, Kearney Auditorium. The paintings donated by national and international artists are on display, and can be viewed from 10-4 p.m. daily.

The art festival is only one of the many events BASH sponsors for its fund-raising drives, which will end with an auction and banquet on Saturday, March 15.