

Champion

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proclamation of the Gospel, by denouncing violations of justice, by education, by encouraging the faithful to take part in political action aimed at achieving social justice, and by organizing programs and projects aimed at helping the poor, the weak and the oppressed.

"In general," he continued, "the Church has an indispensable role to play in supporting the efforts of the poor and disadvantaged to take in hand and give directions to their future." The Church, in other words, must become, without fear or favor, the champion of the poor in society.

Calling for an "ecumenical unity" of Christians and Jews and others "to bring about the full development of peoples" and the establishment of a just and lasting peace, the priest said "this we must do, not as a temporary ex-

pedient mission" but as an integral part of our Christian

Msgr. Higgins went on to consider the growing demand by minority groups for a full share of justice and participation in society and the concurrent neglect on the part of mainstream institutions of working class white ethnics, a large proportion of whom are Catholics.

Observing that minority group members and white ethnics share many problems and frustrations — as well as suspicion and fear of each other — he made a strong plea for the Church to "play a pivotal role in bridging the ever-widening gap between working class ethnic whites and the non-white minorities if we are to build an effective coalition for constructive social change in urban America."

He said a "great potential" exists for reconciliation and the building of coalitions on issues of common interest

and concern. "Such coalitions will not be possible, however, until white ethnic working class communities begin to receive sympathetic attention from major institutions in society and meaningful help in dealing with their problems."

He cited a "vacuum of concern" by government and warned that the "demagogues of hate will prey on the anguish of these communities" and further divide those who should be allied in the struggle of reordering priorities in the interest of human needs.

Citing Pope Paul's Bicentennial message to the U.S. Catholic Church, in which the pontiff praised U.S. Catholics for their "commitment to the social teaching of the Church in various fields," Msgr. Higgins said the Pope also stressed that such endeavors "must be incessantly renewed in the application of the uplifting message of the Gospel."

Coalitions

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them but between the victims of their policies. White ethnics and minority groups had not yet identified the enemy and were fighting one another.

The challenge of the Urban Church today, then, is to bridge the gap between white ethnic working-class communities and minority groups. This cannot be done at the expense of each group's own heritage but must be built on an even stronger self-identity. Both groups must recapture their own sense of values and struggle together for their common good. The need for jobs and decent housing cuts across racial and ethnic barriers. Economic decisions devoid of any moral considerations are responsible for the slow death of urban America. White ethnics and minority groups can no longer point to each other as the source of their problems.

The urban parish can, and must be, the focus for this new vision for our people. The parish must revitalize the neighborhood not only around the altar where we are one in the unity of the Eucharist, but the parish must also stand as a new sign of community development. It should become a catalyst for revitalizing the neighborhood and provide stability in the midst of rapid social change.

Urban America and the Church share a unique but common agenda. Coalitions must be built around issues of common interest and concern from basis of strong self-identity. By exercising her prophetic role, the Church can be a witness and speak with God's struggling people.

Direction

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recommendations are to be afforded, whatever the circumstances. On the contrary, this would prove foolish as well as impossible in most instances. Yet, no amount of envisioning ever reaches fulfillment without simultaneously moving to a concrete implementation. Therefore, offering very general principles about what the Church should do in ways "consonant with her own nature and specific mission" is far too vague for most Catholics to immediately understand and seriously be motivated to follow through somehow within their daily lives.

Without intentionally wanting to appear cynical or sarcastic, I would not presume that a majority of American Catholics profess a significantly similar discernment of Gospel proclamations and the subsequent implications for contemporary Christian witness. Thus, it would be premature to emphasize not confusing the role of the government with the mission of the Church, as Msgr. Higgins suggests, when quite frankly most Catholics have received so little practical assistance and basic instruction in deciphering the fundamental difference between the two in the past. In other words, I do not foresee any major changes in attitudinal or behavior patterns amongst a majority of Catholics in the United States especially affecting social justice issues, in the next five years. This is not due to pessimism on my part, but rather, the blatant discrimination which persists not only in society at large, but obviously at the core of the Roman Catholic Church.

If it is correct to state that the Church is composed of those persons who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and identify themselves with the principles, laws, and procedures of that same institution, then I dare say American Catholics as a whole have done little to strongly demonstrate their disdain and rejection of all that militates against the human spirit and the will of God. What outstandingly attests to this is the repeated failure of the American Church to incorporate to a more notable and proportional degree the very genius and beauty of non-white and alienated peoples in positions of responsibility and equal participation. Thus, unless the entire Church succeeds in hastening a new image of service and healing, an already dwindling influence and frazzled activity will perpetuate an ineffectual structure plagued by distrust and disunity. The "dangerous impasse" attributed by Msgr. Higgins to "the nation's inability to cope with questions of justice" is not removed in character from the calibre of the Catholic Church.

As a Church, something of the salvation and redemption for which we yearn will be contingent upon whether we radically alter the perplexities which feed oppression, ignorance and indifference. I think our diocese has taken some crucial first steps through several new diocesan programs and specific objects. I would hope this movement toward accountability to the Gospel and the disenfranchised would continue — even when such a presence is painful. We have so much more to do together.

The crux of this matter entails more simplified (not simplistic) teaching in all of our institutions of ways to manifest the Gospel. It also entails exploring ways to improve our capacity to listen to and support one another. Let I become vague in my exhortations, as I have accused Msgr. Higgins of doing, I urge more persons in our diocese to cooperate with the efforts of the Spanish Apostolate, the Office of Black Ministries, the Urban Task Forces, and the Office of Human Development. Each of these agencies seeks to strengthen optimism, healing, and unity among all communities and persons within our geographic regions.

Diocesan Tuition Subsidies Awarded

As the result of the screening process conducted by a review committee appointed by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, 59 ninth grade students have been selected to receive a Diocesan Tuition Subsidy totaling nearly \$15,000, for the 1976-77 school year.

Each diocesan secondary school was represented in the subsidy, and the overall feeling of those involved is that the first major step has been taken in fulfilling the purpose of aiding children of the economically poor to receive the benefits of the fine Catholic secondary school education offered in this diocese.

In August of 1974, Bishop Hogan received a report from the Bishops' Task Force on Catholic secondary schools. Leading the list of recommendations was the establishment of a fund which would enable the Church of Rochester to supplement the very substantial efforts of the Catholic secondary schools of the diocese. Monies from the Diocesan Fund Development were to be used to provide a Catholic education for

teenagers who would not ordinarily be able to afford such an education.

Because of the Bishop's endorsement of this task force recommendation, a committee composed of Sister Barbara Fox,

Father Daniel Tormey, Father Jerome Robinson, William Price, a representative of the high school administrators, and Timothy Leahy, chairman, was established to evaluate applications submitted by diocesan high schools for the Tuition Subsidy Fund.

Father Baksys Dies at 94; Was St. George Pastor

Father John M. Baksys, who retired in 1956 from the pastorate of St. George's Lithuanian Church, died Aug. 26, 1976, at St. Ann's Home. He was 94 years old.

The Lithuanian-born priest was buried Monday in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. The homily at the Mass of Christian Burial was given by a former parishioner, Father Dominic Mockevicius, chaplain at the Craig Developmental Center in Sonoma.

Father Baksys was active in the government's effort to rescue displaced Europeans after World War II. Father Mockevicius has said that his former pastor helped resettle at least 500 compatriots in this country.

Born March 8, 1882, in Salvate, Lithuania, he began preparation for the priesthood in his own country, at Vilnius, and later studied in Moscow. He finished theology at St. Bernard's Seminary and was ordained May 29, 1920, for the Diocese of Hartford. Incardinated to the Rochester diocese, he was appointed pastor of St. George's July 16, 1930, and served until deteriorating health forced his retirement in 1956, at the age of 74. After some years in Florida, Father Baksys returned here to live at The Heritage, at St. Ann's. He was the second regular pastor of the Hudson Avenue parish, founded in 1908.

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