

FOSTER CARE

Can Love Make the Difference?

A theory, generally accepted by most behaviorists, is that personalities and attitudes are formed very early in life. If, for example, a person is mistreated or ignored in his or her "formative years" they will be unable to express or even respond to love and affection when they become adults.

Lita D. Gonzalez, a Foster Care Worker for New York State's Division for Youth, disagrees with that theory, however, and she has case histories to back it up. Ms. Gonzalez works on a day to day basis with young people (mid-teens and older) who have experienced serious problems at home.

She contends that "kids can and do change their outlook on life. All that is needed, she said, is to show that young person that someone really cares."

The New York State Foster Care Program, formally organized 1 1/2 years ago, is described by the state as being "one way for interested and capable people, from both rural and urban areas, to help fill a vital role in a young person's life."

The program con-

centrates on children, usually over 13 years-old, who have had "troublesome periods in their lives." These problems can range from trouble with police, habitual truancy not getting along with their parents or guardians, and running away from home. The youths come "from all walks of life," Gonzalez said. No one group is immune.

Gonzalez explained that "for one reason or another, these kids can't live at home anymore." It is up to Foster Care workers to find a place where the young person has a chance to lead a more normal life.

New York State provides all funding for the program. Foster Home parents are given a daily fee for each child's room and board. Money covering clothing, medical and dental fees plus special expenses (such as school field trips or college books) are also provided.

Gonzalez said that Foster Home Care provides an alternative to institutionalizing the child. Sending a foster child to an institution not only takes more tax dollars but also damages the child's chances

of becoming productive and happy, she said.

The Rochester office, located at 183 East Main St., is responsible for youths in eight counties in addition to a satellite office in the Southern Tier. The homes range from city apartments to farms and offer a wide range of atmospheres, Gonzalez said.

She explained that the most difficult part of her job is to match the foster child to the home. "I don't just plop a kid into a house that has an extra bed. I want to match him or her up with a compatible family," she said.

"If (for example) a child is interested in sports and wants to be able to participate in them, I try to match him up with a family who enjoys sports as well. It gives each a common bond."

There is now a critical shortage of suburban foster homes, Gonzalez said. This is a problem because very often the suburban setting is the most ideal.

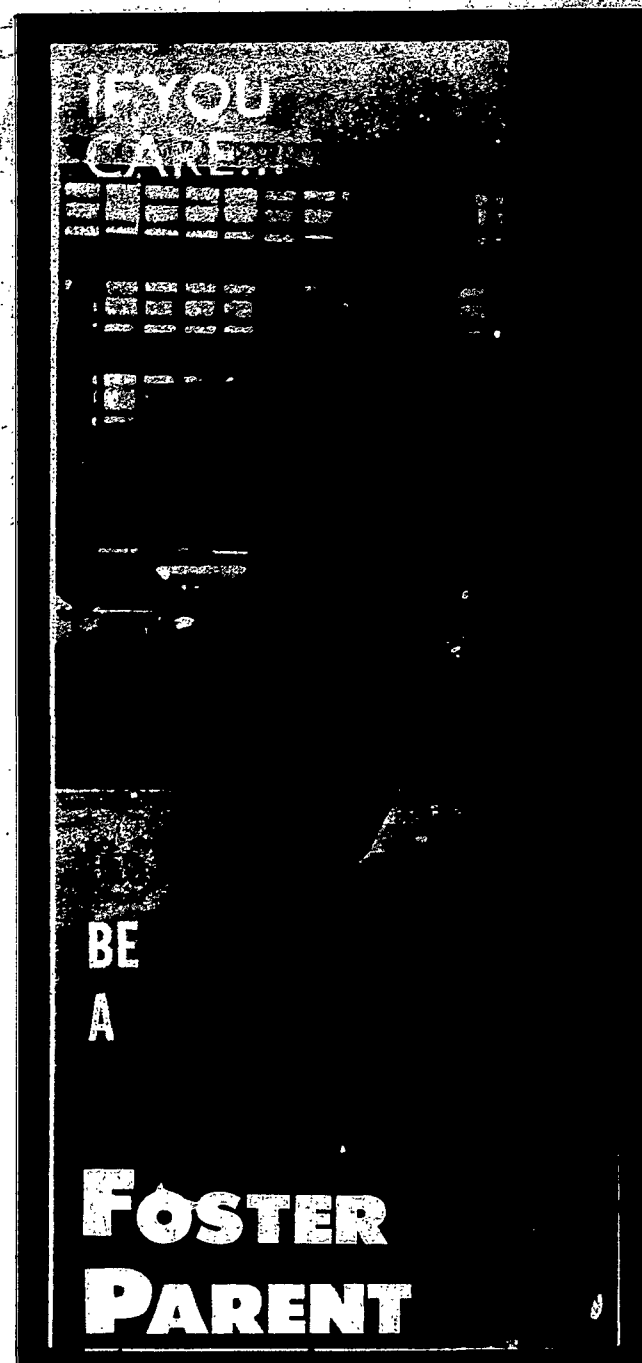
As an example she said "We have a number of kids who are involved with the Foreman Center (a BOCES

facility). The center is "an especially good one" with "fantastic programs and instructors." It only serves eastern Monroe County towns, however, so a foster child could not participate in it unless he lived in one of the eastern suburban areas.

Each child is carefully supervised through an involved "support system," Gonzalez said. In addition to her office and the Foster Parents, a caseworker for each child regularly checks on other progress. There is also a 24-hour phone service so that the foster child or the foster parents "always have somewhere to turn to for help."

Gonzalez added that if anyone is interested in being a foster parent (whether they are married, single, divorced or widowed) or if anyone feels they need the services she provides they should call the office at 716/232-6470.

The program works. One of Gonzalez's foster children recently sent a newspaper clipping announcing her wedding. A small sign, perhaps, but an important one to the Foster Care Workers.



Pontiff Should Resign, Commonweal Says

New York (RNS) — Commonweal magazine, an independent Catholic journal edited by laymen, says Pope Paul should resign. It declared that such an action would move "public appreciation of the papacy onto a new plane," would enhance the ecumenical movement and force Roman Curia officials to "relinquish their power that had kept modern popes hanging on till death."

The magazine also claimed that his retirement would give Catholics a picture of a man with enough confidence in his people to give up control and "communicate a more vigorous, credible, realistic,

humble and hopeful message about the Church" to what it describes as today's disaffected youth.

An editorial in the Nov. 11 issue of the bi-weekly said that the Pope's "generous and heroic" offer to become a hostage for airplane hijackers indicates that he does not see "his continued reign as indispensable to the Church."

The offer to risk death "indirectly highlights an understanding of the papacy that this Pope has not emphasized that much before: the Pope himself can decide how long he should be Pope," Commonweal said.

Claiming that Pope Paul is "now 80 years old and often weak, isolated and depressed," the magazine said that "as a man who probably understands the power of the symbolic act to heighten public understanding of a moral or theological truth, he should now move public appreciation of the papacy onto a new plane by giving the papacy up."

Stating that older models of the papacy fashioned after European monarchies seemed to call for a life-long term, the editorial stated: "But now, in a democratic age, it seems rather the reluctance of Roman curial officials to relinquish their power that has kept modern popes hanging on till death."

"Paul VI, perhaps the most intelligent of modern Popes, knows that he is neither emperor nor king. He is a servant — like Christ, the servant of servants. It is this understanding of his role — that his ultimate function is not to impose his will on history but rather to minister in a preeminent way to the People of God — that should lead him to retire while his act of voluntarily relinquishing power would still have meaning to the world."

Citing Pope Paul's argument that his resignation would mean deserting his family in the Church, the editorial said, "It is the example of Jesus as much as anything that should lead Paul VI to resign, for Jesus was not afraid to set His apostles free; He knew that the original Church could come into full maturity only when He was gone...and when the Spirit was sent forth as Christ's continued but invisible presence."

Commonweal claimed that Vatican-watchers argue that Pope Paul believes he must remain in office to counter the traditionalist Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, to block some particular "reactionary, or unreliable, or too-liberal prelate from gaining power," or because he sees no worthy successor.

"Even in this secular-rationalistic age," Commonweal said, "Christians must have confidence that the Spirit will aid the talent search today."

Claiming that Pope Paul's resignation would be ecumenically rewarding, the editorial said the "future

reunion of Christendom can best take place around the papacy, but in the context of a papacy where the Pope himself can give moral and pastoral leadership to our fellow Christian churches without dominating them..."

The editorial held that Pope Paul has been "preoccupied with papal authority."

Finally, Commonweal asserted, Pope Paul should resign "because the picture of a Pope who has enough confidence in his people that he need not hold control until death will communicate a more vigorous, credible, realistic, humble and hopeful message about the Church

to the same disaffected masses of young believers" which, it said, the recent Synod of Bishops hoped to address.

It claimed that people today, generally, want important issues determined by younger men, a fact which Pope Paul acknowledged when he set the retirement age of bishops at 75.

"What can Pope Paul do when he retires?" Commonweal asked. "...he can go on doing most of the best things he is doing now" as a "brilliant, warm and, above all, holy man who carries his cross and, in a unique way, bears witness to God's presence among men."

Clothing Drive Season Is Here

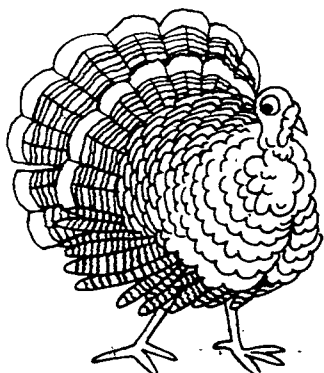
It's almost upon us again — that slightly movable feast on the Catholic calendar dedicated to the collection of old clothes.

Parishes are scheduling Thanksgiving Week work sessions and recruiting people to fill the boxes to fill the trucks that go to Catholic Relief Services in New York.

The greatest need, again this year, is for lightweight clothing, CRS says, because "most of the poor that benefit from this collection are situated in the warmer climates of the world."

Blankets also are needed, and infants' layettes.

And there's a new twist — something extra for Thanksgiving. The letter reminding pastors of the imminent annual project suggests a collection of canned goods to restock neighborhood emergency food shelves. The suggestion comes from the International Justice and Peace Commission, the diocesan agency that has taken responsibility for the clothing drive. Contributions of money also would be welcome.



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