

The Family Farm... Can It Survive?

By RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE

A rural pastor in South Dakota, concerned about his farmer parishioners, called a seminary classmate in his Church's New York headquarters: "There's talk of a general farm strike. My people are mad. They don't trust the government. They think the church doesn't care. They're going to dump their produce, they'll lose money and my whole parish will go into an economic slump. What should I do?"

Such a frantic phone call was not unique in the Fall of 1977. The rumblings of a farm strike got louder and louder. Some believed the irate farmers. But some, believing them to be the main-stay of supply and demand, the bastion of free enterprise, said the farmers wouldn't just go out on strike.

But, strike they did. More than 6,500 tractors lumbered into Atlanta on Dec. 14 "Tractorcades" bound traffic on the nation's rural communities.

Out side the White House, 600 tractors and other farm vehicles paraded as former Peanut Farmer Jim Carter closeted himself with his popular Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland to study the issues.

Churches and their representatives were among the first to react to the implications of the strike. A former executive director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC), Msgr. John G. Weber, said, "The earth is the Lord's and everybody is entitled to a living, but when you say I'm going to stop producing crops, what you're really saying is 'I have the right to starve you.'"

Msgr. Weber said that his was a "devil's advocate" position, because he strongly sympathizes with the goals of the farmers.

A major demand is that the Congress act to raise the price support levels of major crops. Administration statistics say that farm income in 1977 will be \$20 million, down 33 percent from 1973's all-time high.

Meanwhile in South Dakota, United Methodist Bishop James Armstrong and six of his district superintendents issued a statement saying, "The family farm is endangered. Agriculture seems to be at the bottom of the national agenda." They urged their Church and other religious institutions to "identify with the plight of the American farmer."

Msgr. Weber's NCRLC predecessor, Father Edward
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Pro-Life Rally Jan. 22

The Monroe County Right to Life Group has scheduled a pro-life demonstration for 2 p.m. on Jan. 22.

The demonstration, which marks the fifth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision allowing abortion on demand, begins with a motorcade from the Baptist Temple, 1101 Clover St. and ends with a 3 p.m. pro-life rally in the fellowship hall of the church.

Featured speakers at the rally include New York State Assemblymen Roger Robach and Gary Proud, Donna Leary, president of Phoenix Unlimited (which lobbies for the rights of the handicapped), and Mr. and Mrs. Dominick Salameda, staff members of Birthright of Rochester.

Dr. King Mass Set

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A special commemoration in honor of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has been scheduled at 5 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 14, at St. Monica's, 831 Genesee St.

Sponsored by the diocesan Office of Black Ministries, a Mass will be celebrated by Fathers Jerome B. Robinson, executive director of the OBM, James K. Duah-Agyeman, a native of Ghana.

The OBM choir, under the direction of William Crimm, will provide music for the ceremony which is on the eve of the 49th anniversary of Dr. King's birth.



Saturday Knights

This group of clerics were part of a group that met for lunch regularly Saturdays with Bishop James E. Kearney for about 10 years up to his death last Jan. 12. Dubbed the "Saturday Knights" by Bishop Kearney, the group gathered informally last Thursday to celebrate a Mass at the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery chapel in honor of the bishop. In the front row are Father Joseph Reinhart, Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey and Father Edward A. Zimmer; second row are Father Charles Lavery and Msgr. Charles V. Boyle; back row are Father John V. Rosse, Father Bernard J. Power, and Msgr. John M. Duffy. A diocesan-wide Mass in honor of Bishop Kearney is scheduled for 8 tonight (Wednesday, Jan. 11) at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Auxiliary Bishop John E. McCafferty will be principal concelebrant and Bishop Hickey homilist. All diocesan priests are invited to concelebrate and all diocesans are invited to attend.



BP. KEARNEY

Ecumenical Revitalization Theme of Unity Week

Graymoor, N.Y. (RNS)—The 71st observance of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, beginning Wednesday, Jan. 18, will seek to remind all Christians that in Christ no nation, community or person need be a stranger to others any longer. It will also urge a revitalization of ecumenical exchange and dialogue.

The 1978 theme for the week -- "No longer strangers" -- is taken from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians and was selected jointly by the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute here and the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches in New York.

Noting that St. Paul's letter was addressed to Christians who were caught up in personal animosities and intramural wrangling as they endeavored to witness Christ in their lives, Father Thaddeus Horgan, SA, co-director of the Graymoor

Institute, said "many problems of disunity have surfaced during the past decade of dialogue" among Christian churches.

He said this year's theme "is both a commentary on the state of the ecumenical movement and a call to Christians telling them what to do about it."

Acknowledging that the ecumenical movement is "not as dynamic" as it was a decade ago, Father Horgan said many Christians have lost heart about the possibility of Christian unity and are wondering what to do about the disheartening divisions that are cropping up in Christian churches more and more.

"Christians have really become strangers once again," he declared.

Pointing to liberal-conservative splits in some churches, divisions between poor and affluent Christians

in the First and Third Worlds, and apolitical schisms as in Northern Ireland, the priest said, "the delicate issues that unite or divide us are often carefully avoided." He said, "They are too painful to confront," in the face of internal difficulties facing the churches today.

A powerful antidote for this apparent malaise in ecumenism, he suggested, is for Christians and their churches to become fully aware that in their faith in Christ they are "no longer strangers" -- and to act accordingly.

"Within our churches each of us has to reach out to the estranged, be they conservative, liberal or otherwise labeled," Father Horgan said. "The means to manifest growing into unity according to the epistle to the Ephesians are love instead of hardheartedness; consideration instead of stubbornness; mutual

pardon instead of accusation; and promoting harmony instead of entrenchment."

He said that from "coping with strains and stresses that all Christians experience we will learn through sharing how to build up and preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and in the one Body of Christ."

"If we do that, the one Body of Christ will be a sign of unity as it should be for the welfare of all humanity," he added. "Indeed, we can do so, because by faith we know that we are no longer strangers."

The Week of Prayer was launched in 1908 by Father Paul Wattson, founder of the Atonement Friars at Graymoor, and is co-sponsored today not only by the NCC's Faith and Order Commission but also by the
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Christian Unity Week, Jan. 25-28.