

Priests Hear Racism Testimony

By Michael Groden

"The person who really gets on my nerves is the one who feels guilty about the results of racism in this country. The more we nourish these feelings of guilt, the harder it will be to get rid of them."

So said Rev. John Walker, executive secretary for the Office of Black Ministries, during last week's April meeting of the diocesan Priests Council.

Giving "my own ideas on racism and other social problems faced by all people of color," and not necessarily the views held by most blacks, Rev. Walker gave council members practical ideas on how to confront and eradicate racism.

The Priests Council invited Rev. Walker to give his ideas on institutional racism. The Priests Council, together with the Sisters Council and DPC, was asked by Bishop Matthew H. Clark to respond to a pastoral letter written by the American bishops on racism.

Rev. Walker gave suggestions of how an individual parish can work towards eliminating racism, not only in their own churches but in the community.

His suggestions included:

"Getting rid of the 'Missionary Attitude' in the Church. He said that sending

out Christmas baskets, or Easter packets "for the poor minority groups" often embarrasses people, and causes resentment.

He also warned priests to avoid "so-called brotherhood Sundays" or the one-time-a-year pulpit exchange. Racism, he said, will not be eliminated by setting aside one day per year to think about it.

He suggested establishing programs with blacks and whites serving "on an equal footing" in fighting racism.

The Catholic Churches could also develop cooperative ventures with Black Churches in the area. These programs could "form a sense of fellowship" between the two.

Lecture series could be started on the subject of racism. Sermons and homilies on the subject should also be given regularly.

"If racism is indeed sinful," Rev. Walker said, "then congregations should be reminded of that fact."

Getting involved "in the anti-Ku-Klux Klan network" and "paying attention to international topics of racism" (e.g. S. Africa) will also help people to understand the problem.

Rev. Walker also feels that "integration, the induction of blacks into the white world, getting rid of black customs and traditions, is not the

answer to racism. Equality, staying where you are and developing the knowledge that nothing will be denied you, is.

Father John Norris, Priests Council president, asked Father David Gramke to take Rev. Walker's suggestions and put them into a proposal that will be discussed and voted upon at the May meeting.

In other council action, members heard reports on the revision of priests' personnel policies, given by Father Walter Wainwright, an update of work done by the school subsidy committee, by Father Gerald Connor, and liaison reports from the Diocesan Sisters Council and Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Father Wainwright said that the personnel policies committee, in its work to update the program, concluded unanimously that in

order for the policies to be implemented properly, and effectively, a full-time personnel director is needed.

He asked that council members dialogue with their blocs, as extensively as possible, on the policies so that a true vote may be taken, for or against, at the May meeting.

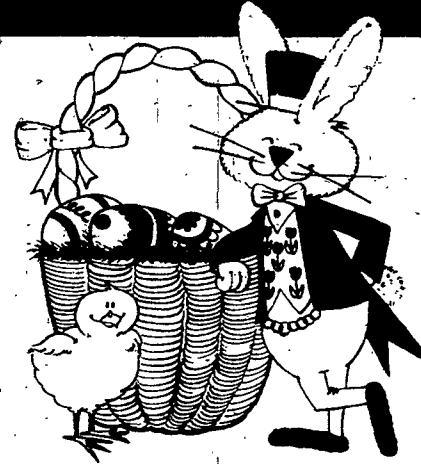
A number of council members, including Father James Callan and Msgr. John Maney, questioned the time line of the policies.

Msgr. Maney said that the request for passage at the next meeting was going far too fast. He said that many priests in the diocese were very concerned with these policies and felt that more time for study was necessary.

The current time line was maintained, however, and the policies will be discussed at the May 5 meeting.

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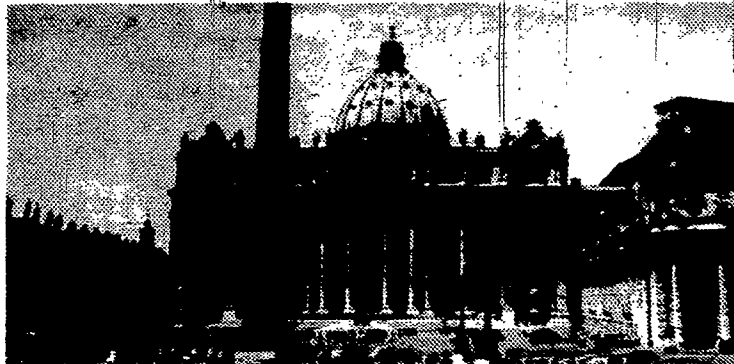
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All in the Family

The Negative Can Also Serve

Home Box Office has been playing a film titled "The Lady Vanishes," a remake of a 1938 Hitchcock thriller starring Angela Lansbury, Elliott Gould and Cybil Shepherd.

Perhaps if I hadn't seen the original with its brilliant and precise direction only six months ago I would have been less critical. As it was, the head of the house and I sat there howling with laughter when we weren't meant to, cringing and embarrassed when we were. The verdict: So awful it was delicious. We watched it again just for the fun.

To give credit where it was due, Ms. Lansbury was excellent as usual and Gould suffered primarily from having to play opposite Shepherd—who is as bad an actress as she is luscious to look at.

In spite of, or rather, because of, the film's deficiencies, however, I learned more about movie making than I ever have before.

It is much easier to pinpoint what goes into a work of art — and this goes for a book, a play, a piece of music — when one is confronted with a bad

example.

An appreciative audience, faced with a successful work, does not bother its collective head as to why it is so successful — at least not at the moment. The instinct simply is to enjoy and let oneself be transported.

A negative experience, on the other hand, puts one in fine nit-picking form. In the instance cited above this viewer discovered just how important a personage is the director. Lines were read too fast, read incorrectly or completely thrown away.

At the end, I concluded that the negative experience had had a very positive and exhilarating effect.

I also concluded that that holds true for a lot of things in life, not just art.

Doctors tell us that depression, a debilitating malady, can have very positive aspects if the experience is used to sort out one's life and establish one's priorities.

The first year of marriage — a time of adjustment and compromise — can lead to more conflict or be used to build a strong basis for the next 50 years.

The maxim also applies to the most joyous holiday in Christendom. History's ultimate negative experience paved the way for the most positive.

