

Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

Why Involve Church with Haitians?

Dear Father Hohman:

The Church which I grew up in was a spiritual Church which cared about the salvation of souls and spiritual matters. Why is the Church now involved in things like the Haitian refugees, illegal immigrants, and other such matters? Isn't it the duty of the Church to show us how to get to Heaven rather than taking care of people's temporal needs?

Dear Reader:

Right from the very beginning the Church has always had a sense that it had a mission. That mission belongs not just to the hierarchy and religious but also to all people who are

Christians by baptism and confirmation. The mission is determined from the Gospels either in Luke 4 or Matthew 25. In each case it amounts to helping the lowly to improve their temporal lot. In Luke it speaks of giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, release to captives, and good news to the poor. In Matthew 25, it speaks of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, and so forth. It also speaks of giving shelter to the homeless. In a very real way refugees are homeless because they cannot remain in their native land without loss of their personal dignity. Therefore, as Christians, we owe them shelter. This is also true of immigrants who can find no other way of leaving their native land than by illegal entry. While we do not have to back the illegality, we certainly must

back the need to help these people.

When we talk about the Church not looking at it that way 20 or 30 years ago, we are looking at what is still an immigrant Church in which the needs of the members themselves were so great and their possibilities for helping others so small, that the mission was in a certain sense put in the background. However, it was never abandoned; it simply took forms which were capable of being met by a poor, immigrant people.

Today in this country we Catholics are neither poor (as a whole) nor are we outcast nor are we politically impotent. Therefore, we have an obligation to use the gifts we have to help those who are helpless. That is why the Haitian issue and the issue of illegal immigrants is very important to us as a Church if we are to fulfill the mandate which Jesus gave us.

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Church, Politics Forum Subject

Father Francis Canavan, SJ, a former associate editor for six years with the Catholic magazine America, will defend the First Amendment right of churches to become involved in the political process as part of a panel discussing "Churches in Politics" at 8 p.m., Monday, Nov. 23, at the Academy of Medicine, 1441 East Ave.

Other panelists will be local attorneys John B. McCrory and Alfred P. Kremer and Larry Beaupre, managing editor of the Times-Union. Beaupre and McCrory will support the 1980 Gannett

editorial position which criticized the involvement of Boston's Cardinal Medeiros in seeking to amend the abortion-on-demand laws by urging from the pulpit that citizens become involved in the political process. The constitutional question of separation of church and state was raised in Gannett and New York Times editorials.

Father Canavan was ordained in 1950 and received his doctorate in Political Science at Duke University in 1957. He is professor of political science at Fordham University. He has written

many articles for several magazines.

The constitutional right of a religious community of citizens to become involved in the political process will be the subject of the forum.

The presentation is sponsored by the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild, an association of local attorneys formed in 1976. It has presented forums on such relevant topics as capital punishment, the definition of death, infanticide, euthanasia and sex education.

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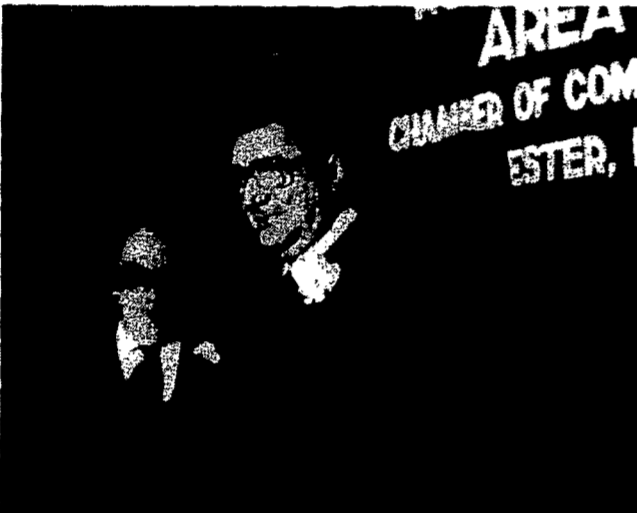
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Chamber Awards

Dr. Carl F. Montione of Irondequoit was one of eight Rochesterians honored by the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce at an awards luncheon last Friday, Nov. 13. Dr. Montione, a dentist, received the International Relations Civic Award for his work in Catholic missions in South America. In the past 10 years, he has treated thousands of patients in Guatemala, Peru and Ecuador, personally financing all his trips and supplies. Dr. Montione is a member of Annunciation Parish.

Haitian Decision

Continued from Page 1.

political circles around the country.

"The obvious fact," Walker said, "is that they are people of color and they are being treated as criminals."

In addition, he said that the move would merely facilitate the government's attempts to deport the refugees.

Walker and Father Charles Mulligan, division director of Social Ministries, will attend a meeting Friday in New York City to discuss a broad-based religious response to the Haitian refugee situation.

That meeting, to be chaired by Auxiliary Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua of the national

bishops' ad hoc committee on migration and tourism, was called at the behest of the diocesan refugee group through Father Mulligan.

In the meantime Walker reported last week that the diocesan drive for winter clothing for the more than 200 Haitian refugees now incarcerated at Ray Brook Federal Correctional Institute outside Saranac Lake, had far exceeded its goal. He said that clothing which could not be used at Ray Brook would be distributed to Haitian migrant workers in the diocese.

Walker urged parish priests last week to speak of the Haitian refugee situation from the pulpit, encouraging congregations to protest through their representatives.

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