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Just What Is 'Blue Collar Ministry?'

By Deacon Victor M. Yanaitis

When it became known that one of my ministerial duties was to work in the Blue Collar Ministry, I was bombarded with the question, "What is a Blue Collar Ministry?"

I can best answer by first listing the reactions I received from blue collar workers:

• "It's about time the Church started to consider the plight of the blue collar worker. The governments — local, state and federal ignore the blue collar worker but demand the most from him,

Several weeks ago, Bishop Matthew H. Clark assigned newly-ordained Deacon Victor M. Yanaitis to work in "Blue Collar Ministry." This is Deacon Yanaitis' explanation of his duties.

such as taxes! The same is true with the Church. The Church not only wants physical labor from the blue collar worker, but also demands in some cases a contribution to the Church that can be a burden on the family of the blue collar worker. The Church rarely or never asks

the blue collar worker what he thinks and what the blue collar worker would like the Church to be to him."

• "I work in a factory all day long and other young adults like myself work driving trucks, digging ditches, waiting on table, sweeping floors, etc. We go to church and contribute money to the Church, but when holidays come, it is either the teenagers or the college students who have special meetings and parties. Maybe that is why many of us young adult blue collar workers have gone to other churches

that recognize the blue collar worker. Some are considering chucking the whole thing and rarely go to church."

• "The religious (Catholic Church) go out of their way to minister to the executive, business person, teacher, etc. because of the stress involved in their work. Blue collar workers are considered to be without stress problems and must solve their own difficulties. Damn it! I would like to see one of the religious put eight to twelve hours on an assembly line with a forman and a

general forman that have only one thing in mind — to put as many items as possible without regard for the employee. Talk about stress!"

• "I know one thing we need and need in a hurry, and that is more blue collar workers on parish councils and diocesan committees. Then possibly we will have some common sense decisions instead of far-out ideas that do not relate to us, the blue collar workers."

• "How come when the blue collar workers were being laid off year after year,

the Church stood by and watched? But when the white collar worker began to be laid off, all kinds of action in the Church began to take place."

All of the blue collar workers I spoke with were not all negative. There were some who thought the Church was trying to relate to all people. Some of these blue collar workers were serving on parish councils and thought they had a voice in their particular parish.

The point is that there are

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USA TODAY Cartoon Strongly Denounced

See editorial, Page 17 — Milwaukee (NC) — The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has denounced an editorial cartoon published in USA Today July 5 as "defamatory" and "viciously anti-Catholic."

The cartoon, by USA Today staff member David Seavey, showed a Supreme Court justice dipping into a chalice

placing a wafer embossed with a dollar sign on the tongue of a fat, fawning priest wearing a "Church School" mortarboard.

USA Today is a national general interest newspaper, published five days a week by Gannett Co. Inc. Circulation is 11 million in 347 cities in 15 regions of the country.

In a letter to USA Today Editor John C. Quinn, Jesuit Father Virgil C. Blum, Catholic League president, said that "in more than 40 years as an advocate of parental religious freedom rights in education, I have seen literally hundreds of editorial cartoons which have defamed the Catholic Church and its schools," but none "more

defamatory than the Seavey cartoon."

Father Blum said Seavey's cartoon is hardly consistent with USA Today's statement of purpose, as stated each day on the paper's opinion page. "USA Today hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation."

'Poor Evangelize Privileged' Unique Association Discovers

By John Dash

"There are 25 million needy and abandoned children in Brazil, about a fifth of the entire Brazilian population," Father John Drexel said last week.

Through a unique association, directed, funded and operated by Brazilians with some aid from friends in his home Diocese of Rochester, Father Drexel is providing a home for 33 of those children.

And those children are helping to evangelize, to tell the good news of the gospel to the privileged both in Brazil and here.

The association, Associacao Maria Helen Drexel, is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, ten years of "service with abandoned children" through four homes in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Father Drexel is in Rochester for a few weeks, visiting his parents and friends and trying to raise between \$20,000 and \$30,000 to establish an educational fund for those youngsters nearing the end of their stays in the homes.

"We are deeply concerned and question ourselves when confronted with the very high percentage of deprived and abandoned children and what causes this situation," an association brochure translated from the Portuguese reads. "However, the observation of this reality shows us that caring for the starved and abandoned is really the least that can be done in terms of survival and life's value; since as human beings they have a God given right to much more. And this 'more' demands an investment of time, resources and above all 'love'."

"The association," Father Drexel said, "is an instrument to help children to be independent and to know and love humanity, to help children not only to survive and exist, but to live — to be agents of transformation to a free world, a world of love, justice and peace."

The association is named for Father Drexel's mother, now a resident at The Heritage. Its basic idea, the brochure states, "is to accept



Father Drexel (left) among his parishioners in Sao Paulo.

abandoned boys, beginning at a year old, in a foster home, where the family environment is reproduced, and the possibility of creating ties of affection and feelings of being cared for and wanted."

Each home has between seven and ten children, with the constant presence of foster parents.

The first children helped by the association are now adolescents and some are learning a trade and at the same time attending classes at the nearby school.

It is for these children Father Drexel is now trying to raise funds.

Father Drexel, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, has been a missionary to Brazil for the past 21 years, a period of extraordinary changes in Brazilian society, and Brazil's place in the world community.

Throughout that period, and particularly today, the missionary becomes the avenue for the "poor to evangelize the privileged," he said.

The essence of the gospel is "Love one another as I have loved you," he said, twirling a ring with that text embossed on it.

Extending that love, helping others extend their love, to a world-wide family is the

task he has set for himself.

He sees his abandoned children, "not as a problem, but as a solution, a challenge to that conversion, that 'radical' change of heart needed in the world today."

He quoted Pope John Paul II's words at the United Nations:

"Nothing in the world surpasses the greatness or

dignity of a human person. Life is not simply an idea or an abstraction; human life is a concrete reality of one who lives, acts, grows and develops. Human life is the concrete reality of one who has the capacity to love and serve humanity."

Father Drexel is staying at 25 Pinecrest Dr., Rochester, N.Y. 14617; (716) 342-4309.

Father Barrett Named Regional Coordinator

Father William Barrett, pastor of St. Monica's Church, has been named by Bishop Matthew H. Clark to be coordinator of the Southwest Region.

Father Barrett fills the post left vacant by Msgr. Gerard Krieg who was recently named pastor of St. Stephen in Geneva.

Father Barrett took the pastorate at St. Monica in 1979. He had also been assigned there, as assistant pastor, in the middle 60s.

The 50-year-old priest was ordained in 1959. He has also served at St. Mary, Elmira; St. Joseph, Wayland and St. Alphonsus, Auburn.

In 1970 he was named chaplain to the Newark Dev-



FATHER BARRETT

elopmental Center, a post he held until his St. Monica appointment.

S. Africa to Review 2 Disputed Race Laws

Cape Town, South Africa (NC) — The South African government moved July 1 to review two of its most disputed race laws, the Immorality Act and the Mixed Marriages Act.

Cardinal Owen McCann of Cape Town is among leaders who urged repeal of the laws after Prime Minister Pieter Botha asked for feedback on them in 1980.

Internal Affairs Minister Frederick Willem de Klerk moved in Parliament July 1 the appointment of an all-party select committee to study the "necessity, possibility and desirability" of amending the two acts. Prosecutions under either law have been rare in recent years.

The 1949 Immorality Act made sex or attempted sexual acts between whites and non-whites punishable by imprisonment. For more than 20 years, prosecutions — sometimes involving prominent people — were reported regularly in the press. Several people committed suicide rather than face prosecution.

The 1957 Mixed Marriages Act forbids marriage between whites and non-whites, even if contracted outside the country or privately in religious rites.

Africa has four classes of

people, based on race: whites, Indians, Coloreds and blacks.

"South Africa is the only country in the world which has legislation forbidding marriage on grounds of color," Cardinal McCann said in a 1981 letter to the prime minister. "This indicates, by implication, that the civilized world considers such prohibition an intrusion on the rights of individual persons."

He said non-whites considered the law an insult, as if their dignity as humans was questioned. The right to choose a partner in marriage is a fundamental right which the state cannot nullify, the cardinal said.

Cardinal McCann has privately authorized his priests to marry racially mixed couples, subject to normal requirements, recorded in church registers but not reported to government marriage offices. The cardinal said he would take full responsibility for his actions. He has never been prosecuted.

The cardinal told the prime minister that in neighboring South West Africa (Namibia), both laws have been repealed without causing problems.