

Archbishop Urges Comprehensive Agricultural Policy

By Liz Armstrong

Washington (NC) — Archbishop Ignatius J. Strecker of Kansas City, Kan., has urged Congress to adopt a comprehensive food and agricultural policy in which farmers are adequately compensated, consumers get quality, affordable food, the hungry are fed and the land is protected for future generations.

In remarks prepared for delivery Feb. 29 to the House Agriculture Committee on behalf of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the Kansas archbishop also emphasized the importance of assisting family

farmers and ending tax and government policy advantages for wealthy investor-farmers, land speculators and corporate agriculture.

The House committee has been holding several days of hearings in preparation for new comprehensive farm policy legislation due to be enacted in 1985.

"The fate of our family farmers is not an abstract concern," Archbishop Strecker said. "What happens to them will determine whether or not a land-owning elite will increasingly control our food and the price of that food."

He said that it is "essential that this nation have a food policy within which we then develop a sound and consistent agricultural policy."

While farmers should receive a fair price and consumers quality food, the hungry must also be remembered, Archbishop Strecker said, with the government acting as a "supplier of last resort" for the hungry if food is too costly or is unavailable from private sources.

Expressing "concern with the growing reports of chemical residues in crops as well as in our water supplies," the archbishop's testimony for the Catholic rural life group called for "good stewardship" to "conserve and preserve the earth's bounty not only for the benefits of all living today, but for our children and our children's children."

"Reverence and care for the creator's gift of the land and its creatures go hand in hand with loving concern for each other," Archbishop Strecker added. "Equally, those who ravage the earth tend to savage one another as well."

He called foreign assistance "a necessary component of food policy," but said it "should not be intermingled with military assistance and must never see the use of food as a weapon." Moreover, "food aid must be designed to meet the immediate and emergency needs of the hungry, rather than cater to the refined tastes of a foreign elite," he said.

Warning that the family

farmer may be a "historical footnote" by the year 2000 if recent trends continue, Archbishop Strecker said agricultural policy must include preservation of family farms as a top priority.

Among other points, he suggested:

- That "the rights of individual investors and investor-owned companies to acquire land must be limited;"

- That "modest land holdings, sufficient to support family farms, be encouraged by taxing land progressively at a higher rate according to increases in the size and quality of holdings;"

- That "the favorable treatment which tax laws give to income from capital gains must be eliminated, since that favoritism works to the advantage of wealthy investors and land speculators and to the disadvantage of small and low-income farm families;"

- That "entrance of new families into farming" be encouraged, along with grants, low-income loans, technical assistance and training for existing small farm operators.

- That tax incentives be enacted to encourage retiring farmers to sell their land to small, beginning or tenant farmers; and,

- That the tax code be examined "to curtail laws which stimulate farm expansion, favor large operations and which encourage absentee ownership and speculation in agricultural land."

He also urged continuance of an "adequate Food Stamp program" within the De-

partment of Agriculture and strengthen the nutrition "efforts to improve and programs for children."

Parents Seminar Set for County

The ParentShip Resource Center has scheduled a "Seminar for Parents of Teens," for residents of Monroe County, 8:15 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Saturday, March 24 at St. John of Rochester Parish Center, 625 Ayrault Road.

The program, endorsed by the diocesan Office of Family

Life, offers help in improving communication skills between parents, teens and pre-teens.

More than 700 parents in 21 parishes have attended the seminars since 1979.

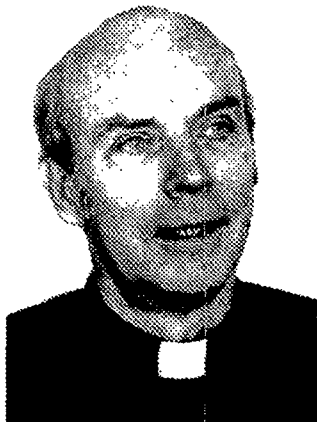
The program is open to parents of all faiths, single, separated and divorced, as well as two-parent families.

Enrollment is done on a first-come basis as space is limited. A registration fee of \$20 per family covers the cost of course materials; but the fee will be waived if the cost is a problem, a news release stated.

Further information and registration is available by calling Judy Platten at the ParentShip Resource Center, (716) 223-3639, before March 19.

Kateri Mass Planned

A special Mass in honor of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha is being planned for 3:45 p.m., Saturday, April 7 at the Cenacle Retreat House, 693 East Avenue. People are being invited to help in the planning of the Liturgy and those who are interested may call (716) 381-5998.



Father Bruce Ritter

EVERY DAY IS GOOD FRIDAY

Lent—spiritual death and dying—is hard to live with.

Death and dying are a way of life on the street. Sin is an institution here. Organized sin is literally the

lifestyle of thousands—chosen only by a few, forced on many. Outside our centers, every day is Good Friday. Every day. Our Lord's passion and death is reenacted; every day. Pilates and Herods wash their hands; every day. crowds jeer and deride goodness and condemn the innocent; every day. children are scandalized and corrupted; and every day, young people by the thousands are bought and sold.

Those young people, in a way most of us will never comprehend, share in the pain, the abandonment, the loneliness, the utter desolation, the terror that was Jesus' short life and dying. They, more than any, are the poor to whom He longed to preach His good news; the outcasts and nomads with whom He was most at home. They are the very least of His brethren.

A girl said to me: Why do you and your friends run this place? You must be very rich! And I said: "No, I am always broke and we do it because of God and we care about you and love you." And she said: "Can I come to Church and pray with you?"

A boy (a street kid, a hustler) said to me, "Bruce, give me \$10,000, you must be a millionaire to run this place." I just laughed and said I didn't have any money and he asked me where I got it and I said I asked people for it. He laughed and said unbelievably: "What do you say?" I said to him, "Well if you had money and I asked you for some of it to help a bunch of really good kids who had no place to stay,

Father Bruce Ritter, OFM Conv., is the founder and President of Covenant House, which operates crisis centers for homeless and runaway boys and girls all over the country.

wouldn't you give it?" And he said, "Yes" and started to cry. I think because it had been a long time since someone had called him good

"Death and dying are a way of life on the street."

You see the goodness is all around us here, in the beautiful kids who come to us. It's not always easy to love my kids—to see goodness. Our kids are beautiful, but sometimes it takes just a bit of looking for. We have to hope a lot and sometimes overlook the marks that pain and cynicism leave on a child's face.

Our kids are beautiful. They wouldn't like to hear me call them that. They would snort unbelievably and say I was crazy or weird and why did I think that. And that it just wasn't true. It would also mean that I loved them and there is no way they can believe that. No way.


Like Randy. I'll never forget him. He couldn't believe it. He was afraid to. "You want me to give up something for Lent, Bruce?" He said that incredulously, almost with a sense of shock and outrage. "I have a lot of getting to do. I ain't never had anything."

"If He died for us—that was long ago and I don't believe it."

Good Friday was even less comprehensible: "If He died for us—as you say—that was long ago and I don't believe it. He never did anything like that for me. Nobody did. Nobody does anything just to be good. You guys don't. You're getting something out of it. All your staff does. It makes you feel good to help me. That's your bag, man. Don't lay your trip on me. You need me, man! I don't need Him or you." The boy was 16. A street kid.


To us, who are believers, the world is a different place

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Those who wish to have arrangements carried out in accordance with the ideals of their faith can rely upon the funeral directors listed to perform their duties with sympathetic care and attention.


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FRANKLIN GRANATA

because of love and grace. The meaning the death of Jesus imposes on our lives is inescapable: He died for all of us because He loved us though we are not worthy of it and do not deserve it. And ever since that Good Friday, the only allowable reason for us to do good to anyone is out of love for Him. Most especially kids like Randy, still only 16, hurting and crucified.

We are in great need this month. Some new, urgently needed staff, some unexpected emergencies, shockingly high fuel and food bills—all kinds of expenses that make it so difficult for you and your families to make ends meet. If you can afford to help us, we would be deeply grateful.

Please pray for us every day. We always pray for you. Beyond any possible way of saying it, we are grateful to you and for you, for loving our kids.

I want to bring the hope of Easter Sunday to children who now know only the pain of Good Friday. Here is my gift of: \$ _____


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The street is NO PLACE FOR A CHILD