

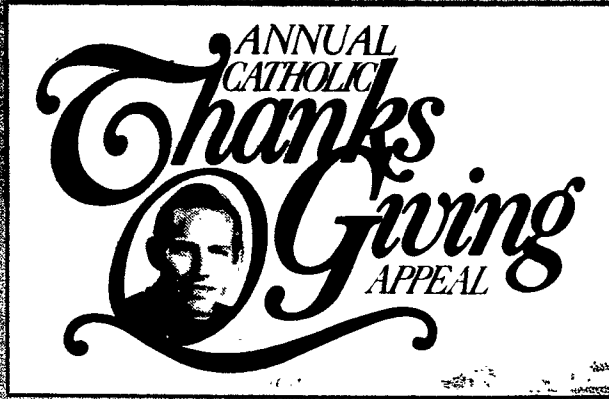
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Division of Special Pastoral Ministries 1983-84

... established ... four by ... Diocesan ... each campus ... ministry permitted, specific ... philosophy ... is different. Therefore, each campus ministry adapts to the needs of the college community.

For example, some are total commuter campuses and are very different from the ministry of a large residential campus. The campus ministry at a commuter college needs to possess a great deal of creativity and flexibility in order to reach out to individual students, faculty and staff, all of whom are in perpetual motion. At the residential campuses, there is somewhat of a captive audience, so the ministry is structured on a parish model, which lends some stability to the faith community. Nevertheless, all campus ministry is committed to "making present on the campuses of the college and university within the diocese for all the members of the academic community and their families the Gospel of Christ, the vision of the Pope's Church, the mission and the purpose of the Church in the world." (Campus Ministry, 1978, p. 10)

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Counseling services are also offered in the area of educational programming. A unique aspect of Campus Ministry is the opportunity to work

together with other Christian and Jewish campus ministers, which encourages ecumenical and interfaith joint programming in education, dialogue and prayer.

Campus Ministry has, as one of its priorities, education for leadership. We encourage and nurture the students in roles of responsibility within the Church community so that they will be prepared to continue these responsibilities in the future in their parish churches.

Cardinal John Henry Newman, the English churchman and patron of campus ministry, said in his "Essay on Development of Christian Doctrine": "In a higher world, it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often." In campus ministry, change is frequent, even daily; each campus is different; each person is unique, and the unpredictable is often the reality of each day; but always a challenge, and a wonder!



Rochester Institute of Technology campus ministers - Father Jim Smers and Sister Shirley Pilot, SSI - confer with some students.



Father Bruce Ritter

PREDATORS AND PROUD FATHERS

The predator at our door was about 30, a dark, lank, straight-haired, bleached-blond, bitter-faced woman. Her quarry, 17-year-old Richie, was safe inside.

"I want him," she raged. "He agreed to work for me."

Our security people were not polite. "He doesn't want to go with you," one said curtly. The bitter-faced woman turned to leave, malevolence incarnate.

Richie, a really good kid, had arrived at Covenant House a few days earlier begging food and Pampers for his 18-month-old baby—abandoned by her junkie mother and being cared for by him in a cheap Times Square hotel. The room rent was being paid by six prostitutes who had taken pity on the homeless and incompetent young father.

"Jaime's hungry," Richie said. "She doesn't eat too often. I haven't either." We quickly provided Pampers for the baby and food for both.

"We can't go home," he told us. "My stepfather doesn't want anything to do with us. We've been on the street for about a year, usually with some friends. I rip people off to get money to feed her. Sometimes I have to hustle johns." The beautiful baby squirmed in his arms. "She's a good baby; she doesn't cry at all when I hold her...."

Richie and Jaime stayed on with us at Covenant House, and our staff began the difficult and sensitive process of trying to help a young street kid get his life back in order.

Richie's brief history—a runaway at 14—gave us an all-too-familiar glimpse into that netherworld of Times Square: the smoking hell beneath the bright lights and glitter and crowds.

"I didn't like ripping people off," he said. "I never hurt anybody. I didn't like hustling johns either. Last month this woman offered me \$500 to, to..." (he flushed and dropped his head) "to have sex with her on stage in front of a lot of people. It's pretty bad you have to look happy when you do it. At least you can't see the customers though—the lights are too bright. But I'm afraid of her," Richie said. "She wants me to work for her some more."

There are a couple hundred other kids who really needed us this week.

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.

Laurie, 13—a classic middle-class runaway from a classic middle-class family—was picked off by a Times Square pimp last week and raped and brutalized before finally being put out on the street to make some money. Early Monday morning, Laurie had the wit and the courage to escape and come to Covenant House.

Beth, originally from Pittsburgh, came in last night, tired, cynical, desperate—older inside her mind and heart than any of us will ever get. She's 17 now, has been a prostitute since 15. You might say she came by it naturally. You see, her mother—a prostitute—was killed by her pimp. (The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.)

"Seventeen-year-old Richie arrived at Covenant House begging food and Pampers for his 18-month-old baby."

Sometimes people write me very concerned about the traces of anger or sadness that occasionally appear in my talks and in my letters. Although I try pretty hard to control these feelings, I'm not always successful. It's their faces. Kid's faces are supposed to be happy and open and excited and alive. Their eyes should be filled with trust and innocence.

My kids' faces are worn and cold; their eyes filled with fear. Richie and Laurie and Beth know the chances are downright excellent that they will not make it. I mean they will die. Quite young, deformed and made ugly by an industry that caters to our pleasures. Society (that's us) has been unable—or unwilling—to protect these kids or punish their exploiters. Meanwhile, quite literally outside our doors roam—and wait—the predators, the pimps—and a bitter-faced woman.

It's very hard to be true to the dangers and suffering my kids face every day and always be upbeat. Sometimes it's only the certain conviction that God loves these kids infinitely more than we do—even when they stand condemned by their own hearts—that makes it possible for me to meet tomorrow and next week and next month the hundreds of other kids who will come to our Covenant House Centers. And, sometimes, a letter from a friend on my mailing list makes me feel really great—like this one from a mother in Ohio:

Dear Father Bruce,

I just wanted you to know that the letters you send not only elicit a contribution from us, but have a profound

effect on our family life. We have a 16-year-old boy, the youngest of six, who definitely marches to his own drum. He has been reading your letters ever since you preached at our Church a year or so ago. He asks to see the letters and, I think, sees himself reflected in many of the situations you describe. His rebellions and experiments are tempering and he is developing into a very nice young man, although frequently headstrong. Your letters have made him realize, I think, that running from your problems never solves them, and that, although we may not be perfect, he does have a very intact, loving home.

Thanks for all your help. We pray God will give you the energy and fortitude to continue your ministry.

Cordially,

What a great letter! Boy, needed that.

The only reason these kids have any chance at all is because our Covenant House Centers are here when they need a place to come, to run to—a place where they can be safe from the pimps and predators and johns. They're good kids. You shouldn't think they're not. It would be wrong for you to think they're not good kids. Most of them are simply trying to survive in a world totally hostile to kids all alone.

We are here for them because of you. Almost all of the money we need to help these kids comes from people like yourself who care about children. With summer here, we need your prayers and financial help more than ever. Please pray for us, we pray for you.

Yes, I agree that kids should have a place safe from the predators of the street. Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____

please print:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____

ZIP: _____

AP (YMI)

Please send this coupon with your donation to

COVENANT HOUSE
Father Bruce Ritter
P.O. Box 2121
Times Square Station
New York, NY 10108



The street is NO PLACE FOR A CHILD