

Black Catholic

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learned self-control, discipline and pride in doing even menial tasks well. I now realize that these nuns were helping train strong, black women with values that would ensure their future as leaders in their communities.

One of the practices that disturbed me greatly was the selection of white males only as altar servers. I always had a desire to serve on the altar. I soon realized I was in double jeopardy, being black and female.

My resentment against injustice in the Church came to a head one Sunday. I went to an early Mass and then remained for the following one. As soon as the church emptied after the first Mass, I went up to the front and sat in the second pew. As people began to come in, I could feel the tension increasing. An usher came up to me and quietly asked me to move. I ignored him. No

one, black or white, joined me in my pew. There I sat, head held high, looking intently at the altar throughout the whole Mass, defying anyone to make me move. I was five at the time. Now, many years later, I applaud in my heart that angry little girl who had the courage to witness the "ungodliness" of an unjust system.

Another event that made a great impression on me while I was in grammar school was the coming of the first black priest, Father Charles Hall, to New Orleans. I remember our excitement and pride each time he came to visit our school.

I went on to a Catholic high school. After graduation, I felt I was called to be a missionary. I was hurt and angry when I found out that "religious" communities did not welcome black men and women. It pains

me to think how much the Church lost in terms of service and leadership in the rejection of worthy men and women whose desire was to further the work of Christ in bringing liberation and justice to the whole world.

I have left the memories of childhood behind. I have tried to forgive those whose prejudice dimmed its joys. I am grateful to all those whose goodness inspired me to hang tight to my faith.

As I sit in the front of the church here in Rochester, New York, I warm with pride as I watch my black, feminine daughter serve on the altar. I marvel at the circumstance of fate that brought me here to this place where Father Charles Hall worshipped with his family. I rejoice at what I see happening in this church, where his picture is proudly displayed.

I am proud to be part of the struggle to save a parochial school where blacks can receive a quality education in a Christian atmosphere such as the Sisters of the Holy Family provided for me.

I am not so naive as to believe that racism no longer exists, that my own children will not experience some of the hurt that I experienced in New Orleans.

I have not lost faith. I know that with the help of my dedicated black and white sisters and brothers, I can be part of racism's eradication.

There is an old Negro spiritual that aptly expresses my feelings:

"I don't feel no ways tired
Come too far from where I started from
Nobody told me that the road would be easy
But I don't believe He brought me this far to
leave me!"

National Peace Institute to tackle 'number one problem of humankind'

By Julie Asher

Washington (NC) — The U.S. Institute of Peace will stimulate scholarly research, education, training and an information exchange on how to encourage "peace with freedom," according to board chairman John Norton Moore.

"This is a significant step in dealing with the number one problem of humankind,"

said Moore in an interview after the first meeting of the institute's board of directors in Washington February 25.

"It's yet another initiative in the strong tradition of democracy in seeking to do everything possible to encourage peace," added Moore, who is a law professor at the University of Virginia.

President Reagan in October 1984 signed a

bill into law that created the institute and Congress appropriated \$4 million in initial funding.

Board members were to meet Feb. 26 with President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz.

Moore said the meetings demonstrated the importance Reagan "attaches to the search for peace."

The idea for an institute to help train U.S. leaders to promote peace has been endorsed by the U.S. Catholic bishops.

In their 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace, they urged that "all citizens support training in conflict resolution, non-violent resistance and programs devoted to service to peace and education for peace."

Such an institute "would be...tangible evidence of our nation's sincerity in its

often-professed commitment to international peace and the abolition of war," the bishops added.

The institute's most important role, Moore said, is to be a catalyst for "enhancing our ability to resolve and manage conflict."

He said he would like to see the institute hold public hearings in various U.S. cities.

The institute will not serve as a college or university, he said, but its projects will include a Jennings Randolph Program for International Peace, which will give scholarships, fellowships and stipends to American and foreign leaders. The program is named for former Sen. Jennings Randolph, D-W.Va., who promoted establishment of a national peace institution for about 40 years.

Moore said the board will also work on establishing a medal of peace.



LENT: SACRIFICE FOR WHAT?

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Have you really sacrificed enough? Sacrificed for people, not for things?

Easter is only weeks away. Have you prepared in a meaningful way? Lent is a time of shining hope. It is not a time for feeling guilty or being narrowly introspective. Do things with purpose for God! (If you insist on wearing a hairshirt, make sure it tickles!) Why not build a mission church and name it for your family? You can do it for less than you think — meaning less money but more dedication on your part. We urgently need a parish meeting hall in Thakkattukara, India (\$3,000) and a convent for the Sisters of the Visitation at Cullen Road, in Alleppey, India (\$5,000). There is still time for you to make this Lent worthwhile — for yourself. For others.

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STILL
IS
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