

Adoption

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"What is good for one child may not be good for another," Judge Kohout said. "Perhaps a cross-cultural adoption wouldn't be as good for an older child who has some strong feelings about his identity."

Legalities aside, the debate still rages as to whether children are better served by placement in families of similar races and ethnic heritages.

The National Association of Black Social Workers felt so strongly about keeping minority children in minority homes that in 1972 it issued a statement opposing transracial adoptions. As a result of this statement, social workers across the country were encouraged to become more aggressive in their pursuit of black adoptive families.

Since the 1970s, federal guidelines have emphasized the need to staff adoption agencies with more minority workers and make agencies — through hours of operation and location — more accessible to minority workers.

When social workers actually looked for black adoptive families, they found them, Soule said.

Speaking Nov. 17 to parishioners at St. Mary's Church, Rochester, and to the fifth-annual Foster Training Workshop at the Henrietta Marriott Hotel, Father George Clements, the first U.S. Catholic priest to adopt a child, emphasized that it is best to place black children in black homes.

Father Clements, who has been the pastor of Holy Angels Church in Chicago since 1969, is the founder of the "One Church, One Child" movement, which asks every black church to encourage at least one black family in its parish to adopt a child.

The black priest created a stir in the Catholic community when he decided to adopt the first of his four sons 11 years ago. The 58-year-old priest said he believes it is better for minority children to be in minority homes because it is hard enough to raise children without the additional complications of racial issues.

But Father Clements alternately emphasized that proponents of same-race adoption should not push their case to the extreme. He noted, in fact, that he disagrees with the Association of Black Social Workers' stand against transracial adoptions.

"I am not about to expostulate (about) any white families who adopted black children because they took them in at a time when we (the black community) didn't have the sense to take them in ourselves," he said.

Any loving home — even a rectory — is better for a child than being on his or her own, the priest said.

In reference to an African proverb that says "Parents give birth to the children, but the village raises the children," Clements encouraged non-black parents who adopt black children to get involved in black support groups.

"Don't feel that you can do it yourself. You are handicapped because you don't understand the black experience," Father Clements said.

The CAP Book's Soule came to the same realization in 1969, after she and her husband, David, adopted the first of their two black children. The white couple quickly found it necessary to reach out to the black community for guidance.

Peggy and David Soule sent their son Mark to integrated schools to ensure that he would know other black youths, and introduced him to black role models in the community. But Peggy — mother of four biological children, as well — still feared that Mark may have been missing something.

She said her biggest fear had always been that as a white mother, she might not be able to teach her child how to survive in a racist society.

"I've never been called a nigger, so I don't know what it feels like," she said bluntly.

Mark, now a senior mass-communications major at the State University College at Plattsburgh, said he enjoyed his childhood. Still, Mark noted, "I can't say that I didn't miss anything, because I wouldn't know what I was missing if I had."

Mark Soule said everyone was treated as an equal in his household, but he remembered times when people in the community were not as understanding. He recalled instances when people stared at the family as he and his parents entered crowded public areas.

"It wasn't so much racial slurs as it was ignorance," he said. "(People) just didn't make the connection. But I wasn't hurt by that."

Mark said he was sensitive to what others thought, but did not let it bother him. Like Mark, many children adopted cross-culturally feel right at home with their families.

Tom Salamida is one of them. Tom, Amerasian son adopted by Connie and

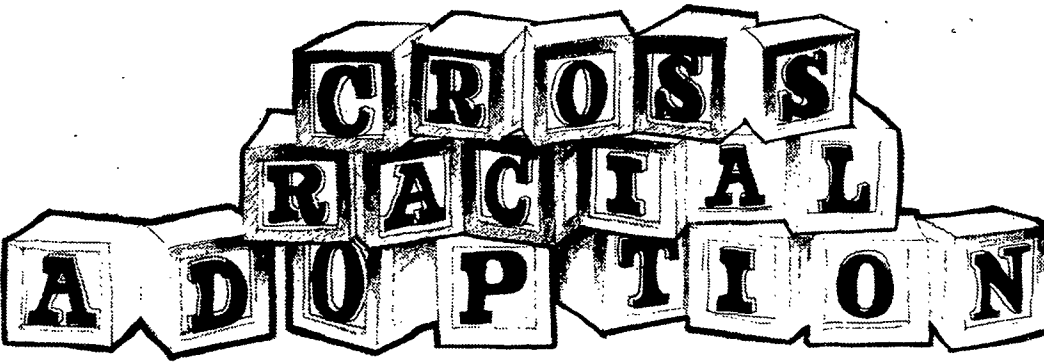
children were from. "From our home," he answered incredulously.

The Kedleys, who also have three biological children, said they strive to treat all five children equally. "They're just our kids," Karen Kedley said. "As a natural mother you don't say, 'I'll only love my child if she has blue eyes.' As an adoptive mother you love your kids the way they are, too."

Although Meera and Leah are not old enough to be aware of racism, Bill Kedley said his daughters were taken aback when a young friend in their suburban community asked why the girls' skin was brown. The Kedleys said they use such situations to teach an appreciation for differences.

"We don't pretend we're all the same color," Karen said flatly. "We have discussions on who has brown skin and who has pink skin, especially in the summer when we all need different levels of sun block."

Eye shape, more than skin color, has been the subject of curiosity among playmates of five-year-old Simah Waddell, Korean daughter of Bill Waddell and his wife, Linda Rubel.



Dom Salamida, said he never felt different from other children. He said he and his siblings share responsibilities and are all equal. "just like a normal family."

The Salamidas have adopted seven of their 11 children, including two black sons. As a devout Catholic, Connie considers her vocation as an adoptive mother to be a "conversion experience."

"We don't like to stress the differences between our children," she said. "We believe in one church, one fold, one Shepherd."

Yet public adoption agencies are very much aware of such differences, generally refusing to place a minority child with a white family except as a last resort. Thus while white couples frequently face delays of months or years before finding healthy white infants available for adoption, non-white children may confront equally long waits for adoptive parents.

The plight of children awaiting adoption motivates some white parents to find other ways of adopting minority children. Some even travel to foreign countries to find their children.

Take, for example, the Kedleys of St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield, whose decision to adopt was motivated by a newspaper article about Indian orphans unable to obtain adequate medical treatment in their native land.

Bill and Karen Kedley adopted their first Indian daughter, Leah Asha, now 7, through an American adoption agency. But when they decided to adopt their second Indian child, six-year-old Meera Anuja, Karen — a midwife at the University of Rochester — decided to go to India herself to get her child.

"I wanted to go to India so that I could foster a love of the country. I came away with an understanding of the politics and culture, too," Karen Kedley said, adding that she hopes the knowledge she gained will help her children understand their heritage.

Bill Kedley, business manager at the law firm of Harris Beach and Wilcox, said although he has found love to be color blind, others don't always ascribe to that belief.

For instance, he recalled going to a church where no one knew his family. Someone came up to him and asked where his

But Waddell, an English professor at St. John Fisher College, said he and his wife are lucky to live in such a diverse and accepting city as Rochester. They plan to enroll Simah and their son Ethan, 3, in a Korean day camp so the youngsters can get a sense of their racial and cultural heritage.

Yet some observers wonder if simply acknowledging a child's differences is enough to establish a positive self-image. Citing a 1980 study of children who had been adopted cross-culturally, Shirley Bryant, a black associate professor of social work at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., noted that such children generally develop positive personal self-esteem, but often lack group self-esteem.

In a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Bryant said the dilution of group identity that can occur in cross-cultural adoption is one reason minorities seeking to perpetuate their cultural identities are threatened by — and therefore opposed to — such adoptions.

Family friends — not the black community — was the source of opposition experienced by Pat Viglucci, adoptive

Father Edward C. Pappert, CSB; former Aquinas student, teacher

Father Edward C. Pappert, CSB, a native of Rochester who graduated from Aquinas Institute and later taught there from 1943-1948, died in Windsor, Ontario, on Sunday, Nov. 18, 1990. He was 76-years-old.

A memorial Mass for relatives and friends of Father Pappert will be celebrated on Saturday, Nov. 24, at 9:30 a.m. at St. Ann's Home, 1500 Portland Ave., Rochester.

Father Pappert was born in Rochester on Feb. 13, 1914. He attended Catholic grammar schools and the Aquinas Institute before entering the Basilian order in 1932. After receiving his seminary training in Toronto, Canada, he was ordained there in 1942.

Father Pappert came to Aquinas in 1943. After teaching at the Catholic high school for five years, he was assigned to Assump-

tion University, Ontario, in 1950. He taught there until his death.

While teaching at Assumption, Father Pappert was a member of the English department and served for many years as director of adult education. Charles Schiano, a native Rochesterian who attended Assumption University, said Father Pappert "was a great inspiration for many" of his students.

"He was generous with his time and talents," Schiano said. "We held him in great respect. He was a great priest; always a gentleman. He was a real father to me."

Father Pappert also served on the marriage tribunal in the London, Ontario, diocese.

Burial was in Windsor on Tuesday, Nov. 20.

Father Pappert is survived by his sister, Loretta Pappert; a sister-in-law, Catherine; and several cousins.

mother and author of two children's books dealing with the issue of cross-cultural adoption.

When Pat and her husband — former *Catholic Courier* editor Carmen Viglucci — adopted their biracial daughter, Cara, friends suggested that the couple was being unfair in depriving Cara of placement in a black home.

"Since Cara's mother was white, I felt we had as much right to adopt her as anyone else," Pat recalled, adding, however, that she has often wondered whether she did her daughter a disservice by adopting her.

Yet in a telephone interview from her current home in Seattle, Cara — who is now married with a child of her own — had only praise for all her parents had given her.

"I don't believe I missed out on my racial heritage," said the Vigluccis' 21-year-old daughter. "I don't think I could have had a better experience."

While growing up, Cara Viglucci Santiago had friends of both races, and even though she lived in a predominantly white suburb, she said she had not been the subject of discrimination.

"I'm not sure why people are against interracial families," she remarked. "Not letting white families adopt minorities is a form of racism."

John Raible doesn't see the situation that way. In an interview published in *USA Weekend* Nov. 2-4, Raible argued that cross-cultural adoption can confuse children.

The 30-year-old Ithaca resident reiterated that point in a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*. Raible, who is bi-racial, said that when his white parents adopted him they chose to play down his cultural differences. He said his parents believed in the "color-blind theory," and treated him the same way they treated his natural-born brothers and sisters.

"When I went out into the world, I found that I wasn't being treated like I was raised," he noted. "Many parents think that being color-blind is being anti-racist, but you can't ignore racism."

White parents who adopt minority children should be prepared to make lifestyle changes, said Raible, who suggested that such families relocate into integrated neighborhoods to ensure that their adopted children will have black friends and black role models.

Even so, Raible still opposes transracial adoption in principle. "Ideally, black kids deserve to be with black parents," he stated.