

THE DIOCESE LOOKS AT URBAN WORK  
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When the new Bishop receives a copy of the Holy Scriptures at his consecration, these words are said: "Hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again the outcasts, seek the lost." This places the responsibility for the work of the Church in our cities squarely upon the diocese. It is to the fulfilling of this responsibility that this paper is addressed.

Elsewhere in this conference some of the causes of the plights of the Anglican Church in the cities will be discussed. However, there are certain aspects of the process of disintegration of the city church which are directly applicable to the dynamics of renewal, in a vigorous and effective approach from the diocesan level. The speaker's experience has been limited to the United States, but it is probable that the same patterns of failure are to be found in the cities of Canada.

Some Causes of the 'Urban Church Problem'

1. MOVING POPULATION. The primary exterior cause of our Church's weakness in certain areas of the city has to do with moving population. I think of a certain parish in New York City, past whose doors have come seven waves of immigration: Irish, German, Italian, Polish, Jewish of all nationalities, Southern Negro, Puerto Rican. Each wave has left behind in its wake its weak members, while the strong, in their second generation, climb forth from the slum to greener pastures. Other urban parishes may have been exposed to only one such movement. In any case, to have maintained a strong parish structure through such changes would have required an unusually creative sense of vocation.

2. INADEQUATE PAROCHIAL PHILOSOPHY. Our parish, by and large, has thought of itself as a group of spiritually likeminded people who receive the ministrations of the Church, those who "attend the Anglican Church"; or, as somehow the official religious institution of a given community. The diocese has, for the most part, acquiesced to this philosophy, with occasional encouragement to reactivate the lapsed or to involve other like-minded souls in the ordered round of parish life. Such inadequacies not only weaken and make irresponsible the work of the particular parish, but also tend to parochialism, and a lack of responsibility of one parish for another.

3. LACK OF COOPERATION. Take a particular metropolitan area like Indianapolis. It is a small enough city to analyze fairly easily. We have one strong downtown parish (the Cathedral), three weak urban neighborhood parishes (one Negro), not one of which is ministering to its neighborhood; two strong suburban parishes, and about five new suburban parishes or missions on the fringe of the city in various stages of rather rapid growth. Unless there is cooperation, the three small Inner City parishes will

die. The cooperation which has heretofore been lacking is in terms of leadership and finance.

4. LACK OF LEADERSHIP. The most deeply discouraging factor in Inner City Church life is the absence of leadership ability or leadership drive. The people who remain are frightened, beaten, defensive people. If anyone attempted to lead them, he would soon become discouraged. The more they fail, the more exclusive and defensive they become. Furthermore, for the most part, the true leaders have left the blighted area long since. To compound the weakness, old or broken clergy have usually been the ones to inherit these situations.

5. NO REALIZATION OF THE MISSIONARY QUALITY OF URBAN WORK. A few years ago there was established by the French Roman Catholic Church a new missionary enterprise called The Mission to France. The French leadership had realized that France was a pagan country. Think for a moment about this. Is it true, to some extent, of Canada? And if it is true, do you not realize the radical changes in thinking this necessitates? It means, among other things, that a mission is a place from which the Gospel is sent, to a pagan culture. This entails a deep problem of communication, and an infusion of leadership and funds from the outside.

6. LACK OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. It goes without saying that the financial councils of any enterprise wish a rapid return on the dollar, but that the rapid return is not always the most important for the ultimate success of the enterprise. In the Church, the new mission in the cellophane suburb is a glittering investment and often yields a rather rapid return on the dollar. However, if financial assistance in the city is not rendered; if the Church becomes merely a suburban institution, the Church will lose its soul and its very life. The Urban Mission is essential to the life of the Church, financial aid is essential to the Urban Mission.

7. ABSENCE OF LONG-RANGE AND COURAGEOUS PLANNING. This is self-explanatory. Each one of us can think of cases where the closing of one parish which a careful sociological study indicates to be without a future, and the intensive support of another parish in a key neighborhood, would have been far better than the back and purse-breaking procedure of pouring too little down the drain in both parishes.

#### Diocesan Planning

In planning for a military campaign of any kind you first decide (or usually the higher echelon decides for you) what your mission is. You then proceed to work out the fulfilling of the mission and finally combine it in the classic Operation Order. I cannot recall the exact structure of the Order, but it seems to me it went something like this:

1. Information about the enemy and the terrain.
2. Information about our own troops.
3. Mission of the operation - overall and individual.
4. Supply.
5. Communication.

Let us use this scheme in working out a framework for diocesan planning.

1. INFORMATION ABOUT THE ENEMY. If there are no theological objections, let us call "our adversary the Devil who goeth about seeking whom he may devour." In the causes of failure described above, some of his strength and the way he has deployed his forces is apparent. He has been rather successful, and, let us hope, is now complacent. A rather more careful reconnaissance in force may be indicated to feel out the strength of his position. There may be a certain parish which you are about ready to close down. There is a nagging sense of guilt about its closing. What is recommended? An intensive three or four year program of a vigorous neighborhood ministry of witness, service, and evangelism. A witness of sharing the life of the people who live around the parish; service -- a ministry of love to the needs of the neighborhood whatever they may be; and a teaching of the Faith to those who are attracted to the warmth (and may it truly be warm) of such a community. If such a program is unsuccessful in terms of response and fulfilling of the Church's basic mission, then close down the parish, the enemy's forces are too strong. If, on the other hand, there is human response to the ministry of love, whether it be golden age clubs, pastoral counselling, youth recreation, or street-corner preaching, keep up the ministry -- if possible intensify it. You have made a break-through.

The TERRAIN has to do, in our case, with the sociological factors present and projected in a given city. The diocese must be continually seeking data on which to base its planning: Where are the new freeways being built? Which slums are to be cleared? What is the age-profile of a given area, etc. A military unit does not use tanks in a jungle campaign; we do not need a basketball court in a highrise apartment area mostly inhabited by retired people. It is most important that such research be done on a Diocesan or Church Federation level. The entire metropolitan area must be investigated, since each part is dependent upon the other.

2. INFORMATION ABOUT FRIENDLY TROOPS. This would include, to continue the analogy, knowledge of the program and plans of other churches, particularly Protestant churches, since it is often hard to secure information from the Roman Catholic authorities. Whatever one's feelings about inter-church cooperation, it is important to know what is afoot. In some extreme cases, as in a Cleveland version of the East Harlem Protestant Parish, the Episcopal Church is actually working in organizational unity with an inter-denominational parish (a group of chapels sharing staff, etc.), while safeguarding their theological position and sacramental integrity within their own chapel life. In other places, there is careful planning not to overlap activities, but to complement the social service offered by each parish. Investigate as thoroughly as possible neighboring programs as to their actual effectiveness. Just because a church has a large gymnasium in a slum neighborhood does not necessarily mean it is touching the delinquency problem.

3. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH. The Mission of the Church is not always understood. Is it to save people from the world -- to save them from the corrupted life of the Inner City -- or is it to redeem the world? As sacramental, incarnational Christians, we believe it to be the latter. This has a direct bearing upon our subject. The Church in the Inner City must push herself into every aspect of the city's life. What is not taken on cannot be redeemed. This condemns the role of cultural oasis in a crude social setting, of white society in an integrated neighborhood, of aseptic settlement houses in gangland, of Bach in rock and roll. The Church must become incarnate, must identify as far as possible with the culture of the city and the people of the city. This means an aggressive evangelism, a courageous social action, a willingness to suffer, and a willingness on the part of the Diocese to support the effort. The Diocese must be convinced of this Mission and understand the criticism which it may entail.

The Mission of each parish should be a concern of the diocese -- emphasis on race relations in a changing neighborhood, attempt to relate to Bohemia in Greenwich Village, concern for labor in parts of Detroit, street gang ministry on the Lower East Side of New York. Each parish should have its mission described in terms of its setting, its facilities, its leadership and its resources. The diocese is to help each parish see and understand its mission, even if this be to gracefully go out of existence.

4. SUPPLY. The supply for the troops must be seen to by the higher echelon. A parish should perhaps be self-supporting. It is the diocesan responsibility to see that proper measures are taken to achieve this goal. Another parish may need help to sustain the extreme pastoral burden of Inner City work. The diocese must furnish such help, either directly, or by encouraging richer parishes to adopt a particular weak parish. One of the heaviest drains upon the morale of the city priest is the uncertainty of his financial status. Lay leadership may also be provided tactfully by other parishes to help establish the dying structure of a downtown situation. They may also furnish athletic equipment, clothes, food, furniture, etc.

5. COMMUNICATION. Here we have the most important and the most neglected aspect of the ministry to the city.

(a) Communication of clergy with each other

Without exception, every successful urban work I know of has had as its center a community of leadership. This takes various forms: a team ministry of clergy, their wives, and a religious order (Jersey City); a team ministry of clergy, Religious, wives, lay professional workers (Trinity Lower East Side New York); interdenominational ministry (East Harlem Protestant Parish); traditional Rector and associates with a sense of community among them (St. Philip's, Harlem); priests from separate parishes having a weekly corporate communion (Roxbury, Mass.); an enlarged, urban-oriented

Cathedral Chapter including the Bishop and Dean (Indianapolis); a militant group of laymen working with the rector, etc., etc. This community life is essential if the clergy morale is to be sustained and if the guidance of the Holy Spirit is to be received.

(b) Communication of the Clergy and their Bishop

It is obvious, by now, how important is diocesan participation in urban work. Besides the pastoral relationship with their Bishop that urban clergy especially need, there should be a Diocesan Committee or Department with Urban Work as its special concern. In the United States this has been handled in a variety of ways; either as a separate structure directly responsible to the Bishop, or as a division of the Department of Christian Social Relations or of the Department of Missions. However structured, it is absolutely essential that there be a vigorous group on the diocesan level with urban work as its sole concern.

(c) Communication with other concerned interests

We have already described the need for cooperation with the denominations. It is also most important that the Church be related to secular agencies, private and public: Courts, Probation and Parole officials, school systems, social welfare agencies, etc. These people ordinarily welcome the Church's interest after they overcome their surprise that the Church cares and that the clergy have some technical ability.

Conclusion:

This discussion of diocesan involvement in urban work has been little more than an outline of some of the important areas of exploration, set down by one whose experience has been limited to certain parts of the United States. Much remains to be said, and each point could well be enlarged, but hopefully it will be a jumping-off place for fruitful discussion.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Urban Work cannot be taken up casually with one's left hand. The diocese must enter upon it with a high seriousness, fully aware not only of the glorious opportunities for service and evangelism, but also of the great cost of such an enterprise -- cost not only in terms of money, but in terms of embarrassing social involvement, cost in terms of what is often a suffering sense of failure. The urban experience has often been a crucifixion; with courageous diocesan leadership it can be an experience of resurrection, not only for the urban parishes themselves, but for the entire diocese.