

in a

Word

Special Issue
Approved Public Policy and Pastoral
Statements of the 1992 Congress

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**NATIONAL BLACK CATHOLIC
CONGRESS VII
1992**

The National Black Catholic Congress

African American Catholics met in New Orleans from July 9-12, 1992 at the seventh National Black Catholic Congress. The theme of the Congress was the African American Family.

From the opening Mass and throughout the meetings which ensued delegates were serious about the task at hand. Bishop Joseph Francis, SVD, Auxiliary Bishop of Newark, New Jersey set the tone with his homily at the opening liturgy. Bishop Francis challenged the delegates to take seriously the charge which had been laid upon them. He said:

"Lord help us to pray with more faith. To respect each other with more love and understanding, help us to work together, not as competitors, but as collaborators for a common cause. Lord, help us to find shelter, become better educated in the things that really count, and above all, help us to start redirecting our inward anger and frustrations into challenging projects for the good of all."

The Congress delegates heeded the call. The result was a number of statements aimed at preserving the African American family. The statements are divided up into **POLICY STATEMENTS** and **PASTORAL STATEMENTS**. All focused on the three areas of discussion for Congress VII. These areas were:

- a) The internal structure of African American family life;
- b) The African American Male;
- c) The effects of racism on the African American Family.

The Congress was attended by some 2700 voting delegates, numerous observers and some 91 Bishops. It was a time of listening to dynamic speakers and learning in workshops about programs that can be of help to African American families.

The liturgies were powerful testimonies to the faith of the people present and those they represented. The opening and closing Masses

left no doubt that African American Catholics are here to stay.

The media was not much in evidence at the meeting. Subsequent reports on the Congress meeting have been few. It seems the media feels that the Congress is over. However, **the Congress meeting may be over but the effects and spirit of that Congress have just begun.** No, the Church must now face up to these statements and implement them in the life of the U.S. church.



**Bishop Terry Steib, SVD
Auxiliary Bishop - St. Louis, Missouri**

How all of these statements will be put into practice in the Church remains to be seen. However, as Bishop Steib so simply expressed it, somehow it will be done. His constant refrain was **"You ask me how? I don't know! But, God will make a way somehow!!"** That word **"somehow"** captured the spirit of the delegates. **"Somehow"** they believe the church and the nation will heed the call of the 7th National Black Catholic Congress to heal, nurture, and support the African

American family.

Bishop Steib's homily at that final liturgy captured the enthusiasm, hopes and dreams of those present at the Congress meeting. The final words of that homily, so rich in expression and feeling, captured the Congress mood when Bishop Steib said:

"So, we take our message and approach our work not as victims, but as redeemed and holy in the eyes of the Lord. Not as prisoners, but as free persons and saved in the eyes of the Lord. Victims smolder with hearts of anger; the redeemed burn with hearts of love. Victims ask with a sense of uncertainty; the redeemed ask with a sense of righteousness. Victims feel not in control; the redeemed are in control. Victims do not have an agenda; the redeemed have an agenda. Victims are turned around by a one-time answer; the redeemed keep knocking. This is the kind of confidence with which we march toward the kingdom and to our dioceses with our message. This is the confidence that has inspired us from across the centuries, and should be inspiring us in this century."

"God who made a way in that day can still make a way today! You ask me how? I don't know! But, God will make a way somehow!!"

"As we make our way home with our eyes on the prize, with our hearts burning with righteousness, with our minds made up, with our souls savoring the sweetness of our salvation, with our tongues untangled and untied and telling of the goodness of our God, with our hands holding on to God's unchanging hand, with our feet fearlessly stomping on, stepping over, (or if need be) stepping on anything that threatens our quest for justice, we should be—no, we need to be—no we have to be, and will be, a determined church that is revived, renewed, and ready!"

Section I: Public Policy Statements

This section contains Public Policy Statements which represent areas of concerns in public policy which have particular relevance to African American family life. The areas were chosen as a result of the Reflection Days held in the participating diocese, on which occasion the African American Catholic participants came to the conclusion that an effective and meaningful approach to family life must not only address the Church, per se, but those who are responsible for the formation and implementation of public policy which affect family life.

These public policy statements are focused on the three areas of discussion for Congress VII, which are:

- a) The internal structure of African American family life;
- b) The African American male;
- c) The effects of racism on the African American family.

A: The Internal Structure of African American Family Life

Statement #1

National Family Policy

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful support the following:

1. A unified national family policy.
2. Just labor practices, policies and laws.
3. Increases in the minimum wage.
4. Increased efforts to provide life-long training, retraining and skill development.
5. Guaranteed higher education.
6. Affordable, high-quality child care.
7. Guaranteed health care coverage.
8. **Flexible refundable tax credits** sufficient to insure ordinary economic rights of the family.
9. Renew efforts to redefine poverty based on actual cost of living, with adjustments for regional differences, and what constitutes populations-at-risk for eligibility for social welfare programs.

Statement #2

Medicaid

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful support the following:

1. Medicaid benefits which are more even across states, and which make it transferable from one state to another.
2. Managed care providers who are required to provide services that are appropriate and necessary for populations eligible for Medicaid.
3. Standards for quality of services which are set by the federal government and mandate an adequate state monitoring system, which should be uniform nationwide.
4. The expansion of federal eligibility groups which include all individuals up to 150% of poverty level, and provide incentives for States to expand their coverage without rationing.
5. The expansion of federal eligibility requirements to allow young parents living in an extended household to qualify for medicaid benefits.
6. The expansion of health-care benefits for homeless individuals.
7. Increase home health visits from 52 to 125 per year.

Statement #3

Universal Health Care

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful support the following:

1. The development of a Universal National Health Insurance program that guarantees access to quality health care regardless of the ability to pay. This program should be federally administered with mandatory state participation and include standard eligibility criteria. It is imperative that the Federal government review the states' compliance to eligibility and access.
2. A comprehensive and sufficient health care program to promote and maintain good health, prevent disease and injury and care for the chronically ill and dying.
3. Advocacy for guaranteed access to quality health care for all people so as to reduce the most painful toll in preventable sickness, deaths and disability of infants and children. Priority should be given to poor infants and children.
4. Advocacy for quality health care for all displaced, homeless, and marginal persons who struggle to fill their basic human needs.

"We know that the family is the fundamental human community. That is why all of us, in almost unanimous consensus, charged that the family would be the agenda item for congress seven. For the last four or five years we have been told again and again and again how severe that crisis is."

—from homily of Bishop Francis July 9, 1992—



Jacquelyn Dobson and her mother from Rochester, New York were in attendance at Congress VII.



Richard Cheri and the choir which he directed were very important for making the liturgies so spirited.

B. The African Male

Statement #4

Welfare Reform

The Family Support Act of 1988

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful support the following:

1. Advocacy for the development of a national standard of need which better reflects the amount it takes to actually live at a minimum. There should be minimum benefits established nationally which vary by family size.
2. Advocacy for the provision of comprehensive, flexible employment training and job creation programs for both male and female heads of households.
3. Advocacy for the provision of day care services and medical assistance to all who need these services in order to meet their basic needs.
4. Advocacy for the provision of benefits, services and training in a non-discriminatory manner.
5. Advocacy for the provision of the AFDC-UP to both parents as long as they demonstrate efforts to obtain jobs and/or training.
6. Advocacy for the full implementation of the Family Support Act of 1988.

Statement #5

Job Training Partnership Act of 1982

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful support the following:

1. Targeting funds to unemployed and under-employed African American males, females, and youth.
2. Targeting funds to both hard-core unemployed, as well as those who are likely to succeed.
3. Greater flexibility in performance standards that continue to reward success, recognizing, however, that it takes longer and more education and training for the uneducated and unskilled worker than one who has completed high school.
4. Expansion and diversification of the amount of on-the-job training for African American teenagers which will increase job readiness later in life and prepare them for high technological occupations.
5. Expanding the supportive services provided to young parents, such as counseling, child care, transportation, and supplies. Those persons who have some income would be included to receive these services; however, their Job Training Partnership Act (JPTA) eligibility should not be jeopardized.
6. Increasing the participation of local African American leaders in the Private Industry Councils.
7. Advocacy for the Private Industry Councils to be held accountable for training, job placement and long-term retention of minority participants.
8. Advocacy for legislative reform to reduce bureaucracy in the administration of the Job Training Partnership Act and overlapping roles of organizations involved in the program.
9. Advocacy for full funding of the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982.

Statement #6

Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program

The National Black-Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful support the following:

1. On-the-job training targeted to African American males, females and youth.
2. Education and employment training targeted to African American youth.
3. On-the-job training targeted to African American parents in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Unemployed Parent (AFDC-UP) Program.
4. Providing AFDC-UP as long as parent(s) show efforts to obtain and maintain training or jobs.
5. Providing supportive services to African American males and females.
6. The National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice (NCCIJ)/Georgetown Project whose purposes are to:
 - (a) show the churches how to competitively direct a portion of their purchases to the small and minority business community to increase the size of the overall market available to minority businesses;
 - (b) teach churches how to instigate changes in the racial and other non credit discrimination policies of banks with whom they do business; and

(c) assist the churches in utilizing their unique position in the community to develop a corps of volunteer church business owners and potential owners.

"From the moment the first black man and woman were taken forcefully from their homes, from the moment millions of black men and women were systematically categorized as chattel, without rights, without dignity and without a forum to address their plights, the black male was fair game for the whip of the slave master and his overseer. Almost five hundred years later, nothing has changed. One only has to look at the horrifying video of the trial of Rodney King, the trial that took place in the streets of Los Angeles, to realize that the bull whip of the slave masters and their overseer are still at work in the billy clubs of uncaring and brutal men and women of '92."

—from homily of Bishop Francis July 9, 1992—

C: The Effects of Racism on the African American Family.

Statement #7

Africentric Curriculum K-12

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful support the following:

1. The solicitation of the critique of African American experts in the development of africentric curricula.
2. The beginnings of studies and development of outcomes that will assess the effectiveness of an africentric curriculum.
3. The mandatory implementation of an africentric curriculum from grades preschool-12 nationwide.
4. The development and improvement of teaching and instructional methodologies which are more conducive to different learning styles and African American values.
5. The evaluation of an africentric curriculum within 3 years of its implementation.
6. Extending the implementation of an africentric education curriculum into college and university Teacher Preparation Programs.
7. The development and improvement of teaching and instructional methodologies which are more conducive to early diagnosis and intervention for children with specific learning disabilities and special needs.

Statement #8

Minority Scholarship in Higher Education

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful support the following:

1. Institutions of Higher Education which expand their recruiting and admission efforts to promote an increase in the number of African American students enrolling with a substantial increase in academic categories.
2. Reform of the financing of Higher Education including: (1) a return to a need-based grant-in-aid to African American students; (2) increased funding of the Pell Grants and Stafford Loans; (3) Federal financing pro-

grams that target members of minority groups for financial assistance at the graduate level; and (4) a requirement that a majority of the financial aid provided by individual institutions be based on student academic performance and student/family need only.

3. Short of open enrollments, colleges and universities which initiate admission policies based not only on achievement, but also on denied opportunity.
4. More efforts must be put into the development of college and university sponsored pre-enrollment college readiness programs to overcome the historical disadvantages of sub-standard public schools in low-income areas.
5. The institutional church and Catholic colleges and universities which commit themselves to provide specific initiatives to recruit and support minorities throughout their college education.

"While there are so many, even among us who are saying that we have heard all we need to year about racism and that our preoccupation with the philosophy of victimization is more harmful than good, I say that maybe we should do less talking and more doing. If we don't talk about it, no one will do anything about it! If we deny it, we are doomed to live with it and die by it. So yes, we must continue to talk about it, to shout about it, to write about it but we must do more. We must chart out a course of action, we must hunt it down, isolate it, and annihilate it anywhere and everywhere we even suspect that it exists."

—from homily of Bishop Francis July 9, 1992—



Delegate from St. Augustine, Florida was one of many who participated in gathering rite for opening liturgy.

Section II: The Pastoral Statements

The Pastoral Statements approved by the Congress originated at Diocesan Days of Reflection II. The Pastoral Statements require some action from individuals, parishes or dioceses. The statements are focused around the three topics of Congress VII. They are:

- a) The internal structure of African American Family life;
- b) The African American male;
- c) The effects of racism on the African American family.

During Diocesan Days of Reflection participants were involved in consensus decision making activities on the three topics. For each topic they responded to the following questions:

- a) What should our diocese do to improve the situation expressed in the topic?
- b) What is the most effective way to address the issue of strengthening the African American family?
- c) What obstacles can you identify which will stand in the way of strengthening the African American family?

A. The Internal Structure of African American Family Life

Statement #9

African American Family Life

It is recommended that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following strategies that would:

1. Help African American families cope with the pressures and issues of our modern society—substance abuse, unemployment, affluence, media, etc.
2. Assist the increasing numbers of African American families who lack the basic necessities of life—food, shelter, clothing, and emotional support.
3. Recognize and minister to the African Americans with special needs of the single, separated, divorced or widowed and support the specific type of parenting that single parenting requires.
4. Develop parish-based marriage preparation and enrichment programs within the African American community that celebrate the uniqueness of African American life.
5. Teach African American family members how to relate to one another, with a particular emphasis on parent/child and parent/teen communication skills.
6. Develop family ministry programs that grow out of the traditional cultural values of African American life.
7. Enhance African American family ministry to enable children, youth and adults in discerning their call to participate in some form of ministry.
8. In collaboration with judicatories of various religions, speak out on the violence of prisons and advocate building a climate that will be more receptive to positive alternatives to imprisonment and punishment.
9. Develop within each parish a prison ministry program for family support, consolation, and guidance.
10. A commitment to “being there” - materially, emotionally, spiritually - for all African American women in the midst of a crisis pregnancy and their unborn children,

so that no woman feels abortion is her only realistic choice.

11. Plain and clear communication to African American women in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, through word and action, that the Church loves them both.
12. Forceful resistance to an ethic which judges each person's worth according to their “quality of life,” and rather affirm that **every** human being, born and unborn, is a child of God and a gift to the world.
13. Recognition of the physical, mental and spiritual pain of those women who have been the victims of abortions, and acknowledge and address the need for outreach to demonstrate that the Church is open to receive them in full communion and reconciliation.

“Now we go back to nourish and strengthen our sisters and brothers who may feel weak and heavy burdened. Now we go back - not to ask: ‘Who is my neighbor?’ That’s the wrong question. The right question is: ‘To whom must I be a neighbor?’ ”

—from homily of Bishop Steib July 12, 1992—



Sr. Jamie Phelps, O.P., Ph.D. and Prof. M. Shawn Copeland, Ph.D. read petitions at closing liturgy.

Statement #10

Marriage as a Sign and Sacrament

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all the Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

Programs of Marriage Preparation and Marriage Enrichment which include African American values, and development of programs where none exist. Among existing programs are the following:

- I. Marriage Preparation
 - A. Pre-Cana Conferences
 - B. Engaged Encounter Programs
 - C. Sponsor Couple Programs
 - D. Marriage Preparation for Older Couples
 - E. Cultural Elements in the Wedding Ceremony
 - F. Marriage Preparation for Remarriage
- II. Marriage Enrichment
 - A. Marriage Encounter
 - B. Newly Married Ministry
 - C. Ministry to Troubled Marriages
 - D. Natural Family Planning

Statement#11

The Laity and Family Life

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Opportunities for training lay ministers in parishes which serve African Americans.
2. Training provided for lay ministers in their relationships to parish councils and other parish committees.
3. Recognition that it is the ministry of the laity to be involved in the development of public policy, social and economic life of the community and to provide training and opportunities for such participation.
4. Support lay Catholic people in appropriate ecclesial ministries so as to foster, and encourage the participation of the laity in ministries of word, worship and service.
5. Provision of scholarship opportunities developed for those who have heard the call of serving the Church in professional lay ministry.
6. Adequate salaries and benefits provided to support lay men and women in ministry.



Women prepare the worship space at opening liturgy by symbolically sweeping the sanctuary.

B: The African American Male

Statement#12

Children and Youth

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Training for all parish personnel in Catholic Youth Ministry for African American Catholics.
2. Plans of outreach and welcome for African American adolescents.
3. Creative programs that help youth understand their cultural heritage, especially as it connects with one's personal faith and the church.
4. Addressing at-risk issues of youth in the African American community and family in collaboration with civic organizations, public and private agencies and schools.
5. Leadership training opportunities for African American youth.
6. Encouraging affiliation with the National African American Catholic Youth Ministry Network (NAACYMN).
7. A parish ministry program developed with a particular focus on youth and young adults for family support and guidance.



Bishop Joseph Francis, SVD
Auxiliary Bishop - Newark, New Jersey

Statement #13

Religious Education and Catechesis

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Identification, publicizing, and, if necessary, developing materials to be promoted for use in homes and in the Church, which family members can use to share their faith experience—with particular attention to African American traditions. The Kwanzaa program is an example.
2. Prayer experiences and rituals in the African American tradition which are printed and distributed for use by families in the home, wherein the home becomes a cultural center.
3. African American families who will be supported and empowered to nurture growth in faith through inter-generational gatherings and activities.
4. Parishes which initiate celebrations that will enhance the understanding of the developmental stages of the life cycle and the potential for African American families to celebrate and nurture their faith throughout the stages of the life cycle.
5. Multi-media programs (existing and future) that are developed for use in African American homes and neighborhood groups, especially for primary caregivers and parents to nurture the understanding of what it means to be loving adult disciples and their important role as teachers of faith by word, action and example, who will transform the world and how this can be shared with children and youth.
6. Programs for parish renewal that are adapted specifically for African Americans to enable parishioners to give a consistent witness of a living, active faith—especially through the formation of small faith-sharing communities.
7. Video programs that are developed for use in the Church, and in African American homes or neighborhood groups to nurture the understanding of what it means to be loving adult disciples who will transform the world and how this can be shared with children and youth.
8. Education and promotion activities that are initiated in all parishes with African American representation to help the community better understand its collective role as a teacher of faith by its spirit of welcome and hospitality, the vibrancy of its worship, the care and concern for those who are alienated or neglected.
9. Educational efforts that are initiated to promote understanding of the importance of catechesis in the African American community and encourage all adults, in particular African American adults, to be trained for this role.
10. More extensive implementation of the MARIAMA program for preparing African American catechists.
11. Potential leaders in all parishes must receive extensive training in theology, catechesis, and theory and practice in learning and teaching styles, particularly adapted for African Americans, so they will better carry out leadership roles as Directors and Coordinators of

Religious Education and in turn provide ongoing training for parents and catechists.

12. Diocesan lay ministry training programs must include a track for training parish catechetical leaders, with particular sensitivity for the learning needs and learning styles of African American participants.
13. Evaluation of catechetical resources for their sensitivity, usefulness, representation and authenticity of African American teachers and learners.
14. Pastoral care for African American Catholics who are located in dioceses which are without an established concentration of African Americans.
15. Parishes which develop and support an educational committee to contribute to the educational planning and decision making within the parish.
16. Publishers of religious educational materials, such as textbooks, audio-visuals, magazines, prayer books, and other resource materials that are inclusive of diversity and representative of African Americans.
17. The staffing of diocesan offices with persons sensitive to the African American cultural and religious heritage and that diocesan formation programs, congresses, conferences, and workshops include an Africentric perspective in planning and implementation.

Statement #14

Catholic Schools

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Catholic schools which continue to provide high quality education, to include the history of African and African American people, for all their students in a context infused with Gospel virtues and values.
2. Present the opportunity for evangelization with non-Catholic students as well.
3. Serious efforts which will ensure that Catholic schools are available for Catholic and non-Catholic parents who wish to send their children to them.
4. New initiatives launched at the diocesan level to secure sufficient financial assistance from both private and public sectors for Catholic parents to exercise this right.
5. Salaries and benefits of Catholic school faculties and administrators which reflect our teaching as expressed in "Economic Justice for All."
6. Concerted efforts made to maintain urban schools.
7. Creation of at least one gender specific Catholic elementary school geared to the needs of the African American male in each diocese where there is a significant African American population.
8. Development of Catholic school curricula and programs inclusive of the historical and cultural contributions of African Americans.
9. Catholic schools in the African American community which are Africentric in their teaching methods, environment, worship and philosophy.
10. The National Catholic Education Association work in conjunction with the African American Catholic leader-

ship to implement the directional statements of the National Congress on Catholic Schools for the Twenty-first Century.

11. Diocesan Offices of Education and The National Catholic Education Association encouragement of publishers of educational textbooks, magazines, audio-visuals and other resource materials to become more diversified in representing African Americans in particular, as well as other cultural, racial and ethnic groups.
12. Ongoing training for administrators, teachers, and staff in Catholic schools about African and African American History, African American expressions of faith, and African American learning styles.
13. Aggressive support for legislation that promotes tax-supported school choice options which enable all parents to choose appropriate and effective education for their children, with their share of the tax dollar.
14. The establishment of a National Catholic Education Committee to look at the needs, effective strategies and content for an African and African American infusion curriculum and resource development for Catholic education.
15. The availability of counseling services in the total school curriculum and environment.

"Teach them to be more than males with a macho image! Teach them to be more than females who only birth babies! Dare them to be husbands and wives, mothers and fathers who are real families and not just broken homes! Dare them to think for themselves and not get caught up in the big lie with misinformation, miseducation, misuse of god-given talents!! Give them an example to follow by our ability to make life-giving and life-saving decisions!!

—from homily of Bishop Steib July 12, 1992—



Youth were an important part of Congress VII.

C: The Effects of Racism on the African American Family

Statement #15

The Family and African American Ministries

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Establishment of an Office of African American Catholic Ministries in those dioceses where these offices do not exist.
2. Support and affirmation of the Office of African American Catholic Ministries, its staff, operations and functions by African American Catholics individually and collectively as a community.
3. Demonstrated diocesan commitment to the Office of African American Catholic Ministries by accepting responsibility for full funding of the office.
4. Use of the **Guidelines for Establishing Offices of Black Catholic Ministries in Dioceses and Archdioceses in the United States of America** in the establishment and operation of offices, which is a publication by The National Association of Black Catholic Administrators.
5. Focus, as a priority, on the concerns of the African American family, which includes program efforts directed to African American youth.
6. Staff of Offices of African American Catholic Ministries engage minimally in fundraising activities and only for special projects which aid in the mission of the office and the diocese.

Statement #16

Diocesan Structures Which Address Family Life

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Diocesan Family Life Offices and all other diocesan offices which are sensitive to the needs and concerns inherent to diverse cultures and which enlist the participation of the African community throughout all levels of program planning, development and implementation.
2. Diocesan offices which become knowledgeable of the various programs and opportunities that presently are available within African American culture to assist them in their own broadening and understanding of African American culture.
3. The pastoral letter "Brothers & Sisters to Us" be reintroduced and implemented.
4. Dioceses which encourage and motivate the parish family to include and welcome all people.
5. All existing Councils, Boards, Commissions, etc. which include people representing the ethnic racial and cultural diversity of the diocese.

Statement #17

Pastoral Ministry to Families

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Religious communities and dioceses which adequately prepare pastors and pastoral ministers for ministry in the African American parishes. That religious communities and dioceses take full advantage of pastoral training programs that are offered for ministry in African American parishes. That dioceses or religious communities recognize that not all are suited for work in African American parishes.
2. African American pastors and those who serve African American parishes to receive adequate training in the proclamation of the Word that is effective and relevant to the people.
3. Pastors recognize the importance of the use of language, signs and symbols, especially those which point to the African past and African presence. That pastors must support the catechesis of the people into an understanding of the deeper reality of what the signs and symbols mean.

Statement #18

African American Catholics and Public Policy

The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Support and encouragement for full participation on the diocesan and parish levels in the development of Public Policy which impacts the African American family.
2. Diocesan efforts in public policy which actively recruit and involve the leadership of the African American Catholic community, and other minority cultures to appropriately represent the Catholic constituency.
3. African American Catholics who are active in community affairs.
4. Offices for Black Catholics or similar diocesan groups and agencies which work with parishes located in areas largely populated by African Americans to help them form partnerships with, and provide resources to, their surrounding communities.

Statement #19

Evangelization and Family Life

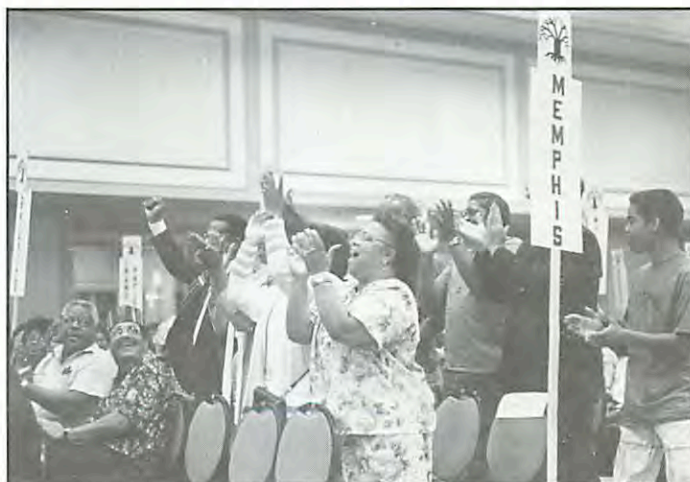
The National Black Catholic Congress VII recommends that the American Catholic bishops, other Catholic leaders, and all Catholic faithful implement and support the following:

1. Evangelization that takes into account and considers those unique aspects of African American culture which includes signs and symbols.
2. Evangelization which is conducted in such a way that worship becomes the center and unconditionally embraces gospel values.

3. Evangelization which is directed to meaningful involvement of the African American male in a variety of activities within the community, the family and the parish.
4. Evangelization which is family centered and demonstrates a knowledge of and respect for African family traditions.
5. Evangelization efforts which involve children and youth in meaningful ways in the life of the Church, the family and the community.
6. Evangelization in the African American community which is coordinated with all aspects of the "Church in Community."
7. The National Black Catholic Congress, in conjunction with the Secretariat for African American Catholics, in the development of a National census and a data bank on African American Catholics.
8. Evangelization which emphasizes the sacred dimension of family life, enabling people to appreciate and understand how witness and proclamation happen in the intimate relationships and ordinary daily circumstances of family living.
9. Evangelization which is steeped in the tradition of service, embracing God's charge that we are linked as brothers and sisters to each other and are ultimately responsible for one another.
10. Evangelization which seeks to reach unchurched African Americans.
11. Evangelization renewal programs which are developed for African Americans who are active in the Catholic Church.
12. Evangelization programs which are developed to involve Catholic school students and their parents.

"Down in the valley of our diocese, our parish, our neighborhood, our home, we will find many of our people literally and figuratively by the wayside, in riot-torn areas and in the streets — helpless, homeless, leaderless, robbed of their dignity, beaten by the system, victims and prisoners of illusionary happiness. For God's sake, be compassionate!! Show them that we care and are concerned."

—from homily of Bishop Steib July 12, 1992—



Delegates stood enthusiastically when introduced at opening roll call.

Resolutions Approved By The National Black Catholic Congress VII



Delegates voiced concerns at general sessions.

1. Submitted by the Washington Archdiocese

BE IT RESOLVED THAT African American Catholics strengthen our connections with people of Africa and people of African descent throughout the world by activities and programs in solidarity with the concerns that so closely bind us together.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT African American Catholics act in collaboration and consultation with existing efforts by national and local groups.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the National Consultation of The National Black Catholic Congress, in its gathering of January, 1993, consult regarding the feasibility of establishing a special national committee or task force to create a working paper that could outline a rationale and activities regarding our connections with the people of Africa and people of African descent throughout the world. This committee or task force, if established, will consult with knowledgeable African American leaders, representative Black Africans, and African American Catholics as the working paper is written.

2. Submitted by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati

BE IT RESOLVED THAT The National Black Catholic Congress declare its intent to actively recruit African Americans for the adoption of children in need of new families.

3. Submitted by The National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus

We urge the permanent body of The National Black Catholic Congress to initiate, coordinate, and support a comprehensive study to determine the desirability and feasibility of establishing an African American Catholic Rite.

4. Submitted by Lenell Davis-Young, Diocese of Baton Rouge

BE IT RESOLVED THAT The National Black Catholic Congress opposes the use of corporal punishment in schools and other educational settings;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT The National Black Catholic Congress will actively support efforts at national, state and local levels to ban the use of corporal punishment in schools and to promote positive disciplinary techniques in educational settings.



Bishops sat with their delegation for all sessions. Cardinal Bernardin and Bishop Gregory are shown with the Chicago delegates.



Black Bishops at closing liturgy.

"What more is there to say? Our God has spoken!! Our God has placed the message in our 'mouths' and in our 'hearts'!! We 'have only to carry it out'!!

All this weekend, through words spoken eloquently, through workshops given specifically, through services rendered prayerfully, the Lord has laid a command on us! All this weekend, through our lecturing and talking, dialoguing and sharing, chatting and rapping, the Lord has been making that command less mysterious. All this weekend, through laughter and tears, through joyful noise and quiet sounds, the Lord has been making that command less remote. In other words, we don't have to look up in the sky for somebody to tell us what to do. We don't have to cross the sea to find out what the message is. We know what we have to do! The Lord has laid a command on us!

From the mountaintop of our congress, we go back to the valley - back to our diocese, back to our parish, back to our neighborhood, back to our home! It is an old place, but from what we have learned here, we will make it a new place! From the mountaintop of our congress, we have been renewed and educated. 'What more is there to say? Our God has spoken!! Our God has placed the message in our 'mouths' and in our 'hearts'!! We 'have only to carry it out'!!'

—from homily of Bishop Steib July 12, 1992—



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Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 5,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among blacks in the southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green, Elaine K. Obee, Lynne Toles-Dixon, Kurt and Terri Guerin, and Shelby Wilson comprise the editorial staff.

All correspondence to Media Production Center, 199 Seminary Drive, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520, 601-467-1097, FAX 601-466-4393.