

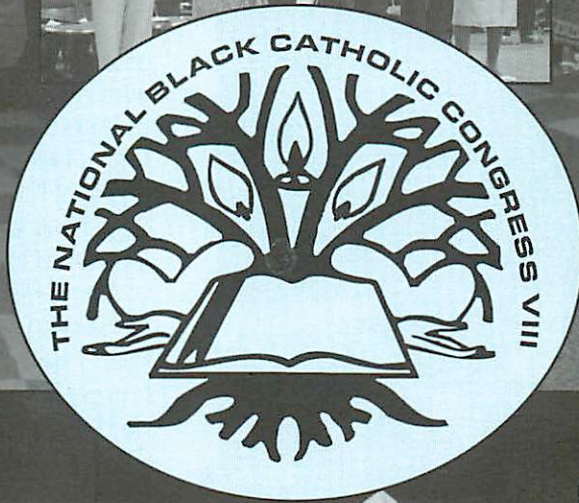
in a

# Word

The Eighth National Black  
Catholic Congress  
Pages 2-3

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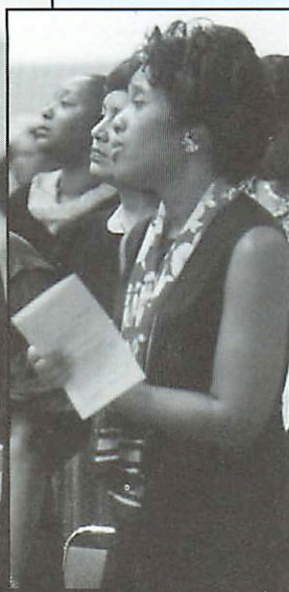
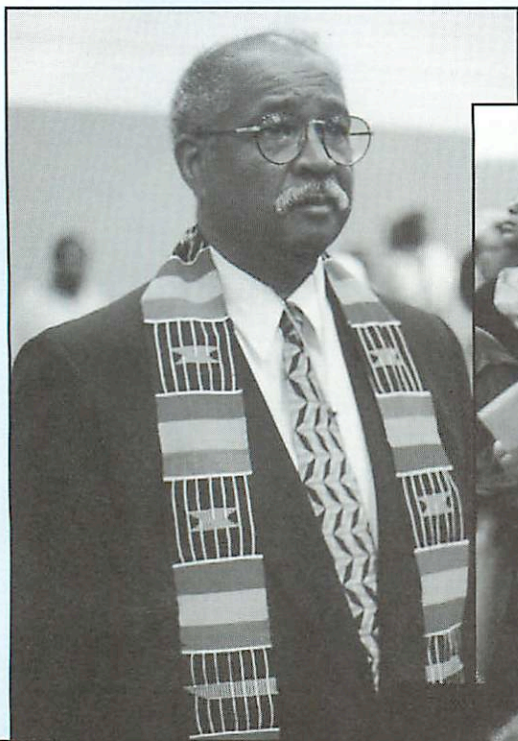
Volume 15, No 10, 1997



Photos by Father Pawlicki, SVD

# THE 1997 NATIONAL BLACK

## What We Have S We Proclaim A



People were literally everywhere in the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on that warm Saturday afternoon. "Literally" is the appropriate word, for at the Mass celebrating the dedication of Our Lady of Africa chapel, there were close to 5,000 people in attendance. The Shrine did not hold that many people. Yet they stood in the aisles, sat on the floors, sat in stair wells. Yes, any place they could find, they filled that space.

The Mass that August 30, 1997 was a sign of what the National Black Catholic Congress VIII was all about. This Congress was a celebration of faith! It was a festive occasion that held up the faith of African American Catholics. It was a call to carry that faith far and wide.

The theme of this Eighth National Black Catholic Congress was evangelization. The days of August 28-31, 1997 challenged people to bear the responsibility of sharing their faith with others.

The main events of the Congress were the liturgies. There were very fine keynote addresses but one would have to say that the key to this Congress meeting was the evident love of the faith as seen in the liturgies held at this time.

The liturgies highlighted the African American leadership in the Church. The African American Bishops were enthusiastically cheered whenever they walked into the sacred space. The number of deacons and priests was very noticeable. In fact, the opening processions of just the priests, bishops, deacons took over 25 minutes for each liturgy!

Affirming and welcoming this faith were a



# BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS

## Seen And Heard and Celebrate

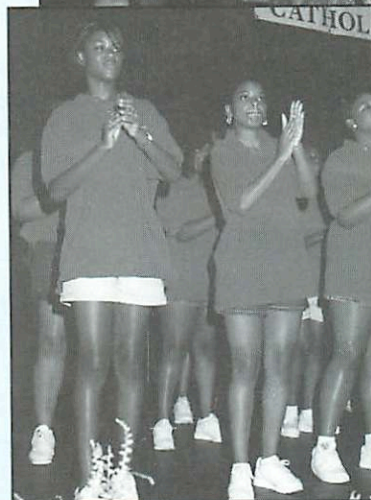
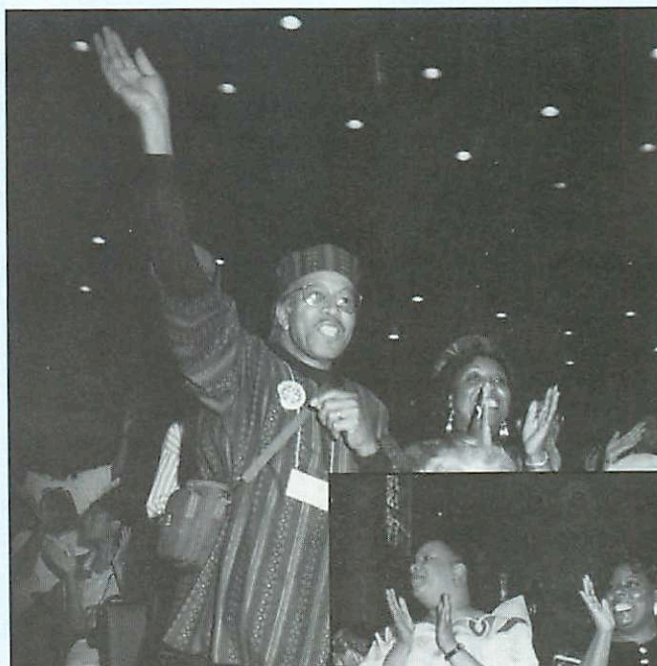
large number of Bishops and Cardinals and other priests in attendance. They were saying African American Catholics had a place in the Church and it was welcomed!

There were other events which kept the Congress participants (all 3000 plus) busy. There was the usual roll call of the dioceses where delegations from individual dioceses were recognized. Banners were brought up by the delegates to be hung on a large wall in the main conference area. The roll call demonstrated the lively faith and joy which the participants had brought with them.

There were workshops and innovative "Word sessions" acted out by the youth. Talks were given by Brian Johnson, Sister Mary Rogers Thibodeaux, and Cardinal Francis Arinze. These keynote speakers and workshops gave the participants added desire to go out and evangelize. We say "added" for these participants came with a desire in their hearts to serve God, their Church and community. The many in attendance work hard in their respective dioceses and this Congress gathering was a stimulus for them to keep on.

The liturgies from opening to closing night conveyed an everlasting faith that will be practiced by African American Catholics well into the next millennium.

As Bishop Ricard remarked back in 1986 "the congress is not just an event but a movement." The movement continued in Baltimore this past August. The faith is alive and well and African American Catholics are expressing "WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD."



## in a word or two

### WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Can you help us fill this space in the future? We are in desperate need of parishes, dioceses, individuals to send us news and information for this page.

We know that many good things are taking place in our communities. However, getting that news to us here at IN A WORD has not always been realized.

We ask you to please drop us a line and let us know what is happening in your locale. Many people are interested in what is going on in other parts of the country. Help us be of service to them!

If you want to share the news but find yourself busy why not try this. Send to us via e-mail, mail or telephone the name of someone in your area that we could call each month. By us calling we would take the burden off you and ensure that your respective area is represented.

There are many active parishes and individuals doing wonderful things in our parishes. **Help us please by sending the name and phone number of a person who could be a contact person for your area.**

**Do this today!**



The Mass of dedication of the Lady of Africa Chapel was so large that people were sitting on the floor! One added note . . . they stayed the full three hours!



The *Say It Loud Video* crew poses with Bishop Steib at the Congress VIII gathering. These young women taped all major events of the Congress. Tapes will be made available of the following events:

OPENING MASS

MASS AT SHRINE FOR DEDICATION OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA CHAPEL

CLOSING LITURGY

A HALF HOUR DOCUMENTARY ON THE ENTIRE CONGRESS

For more information call or write:

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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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