

in a
WordTM

A Publication of The Society of the Divine Word, Southern Province

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In this issue:
Highlights of Congress IX



Atlanta, Georgia



Sao Paulo, Brasil



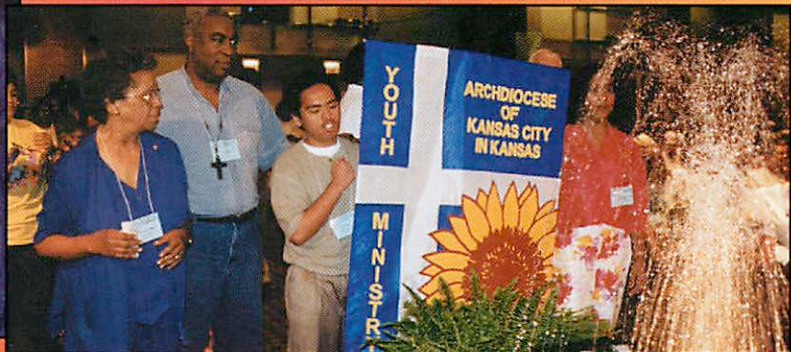
Supreme Knight and Supreme Lady of the Knights of Peter Claver



St. Petersburg, Florida



Chicago, Illinois

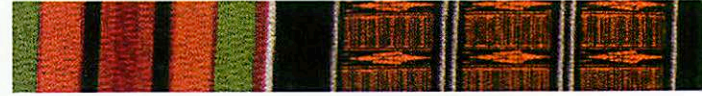
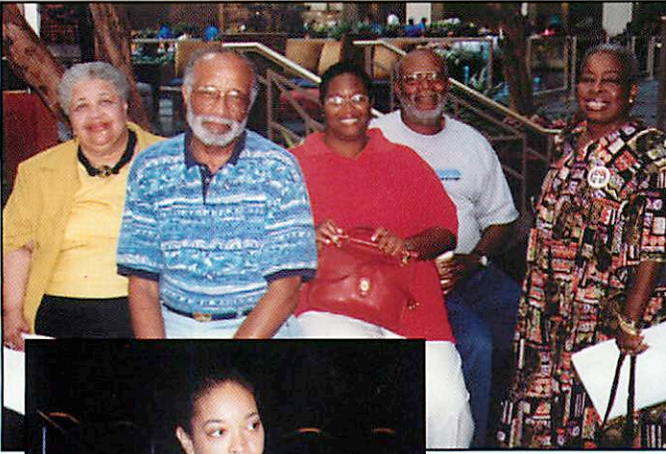


Kansas City, Kansas

Photos by Father Pawlicki, SVD

CONGRESS IX - SOLIDARITY IN ACTION
AUGUST 29 - SEPTEMBER 1, 2002 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Dedication and Love - The



Solidarity in Action was the theme of the recent gathering of African American Catholics in Chicago, Illinois. It was a theme well deserving of the assembly of approximately 3000 African American Catholics who gathered from throughout the country from August 29 to September 1, 2002.


In these days of discussion and evaluation of the place of African Americans in the Church today delegates met and carefully discussed a variety of issues important to African American Catholics. In those meetings, in subsequent discussions, the singing and in the praying, one could not help but notice that there was a clear solidarity of purpose. A unifying thread that wound its way in every minute of the time these talented Catholics gathered was so very evident.

It was not a theme of fist waving, hurling of angry words or use of negative slogans. It was not a time of reproach, despair, or tears. It was not a meeting from which would come violence and destruction. Not at all, definitely not all. No, this Congress IX was a Congress of dedication and love.

Dedication and love of their church. . . this is what permeated this meeting. Whether it was in the simple yet powerful liturgies or meeting the many delegates from throughout the country and even the world, there was the solidarity in action. **This Congress IX pointed out the many men and women who have their roots in the African American tradition proudly loving who they are as Roman Catholics.**

In the meeting days of this historic first gathering in a new century and millennium, African American men and women from throughout the country tackled, head on, issues of paramount importance for their faith, church and community. They discussed racism, Catholic schools, Africa, HIV AIDS. Youth were highly visible and affirmed in these meeting days.

Meeting Days of Congress IX



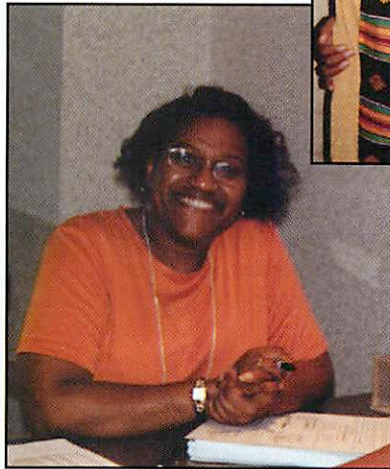
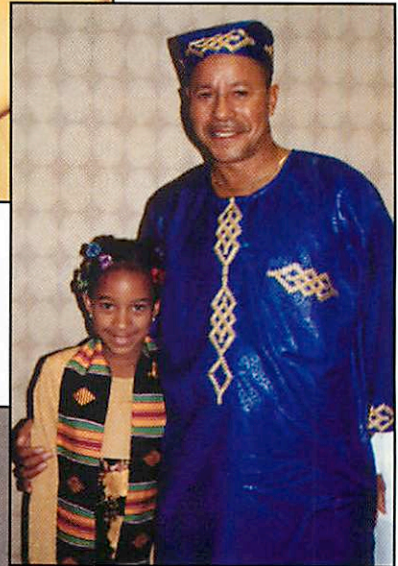
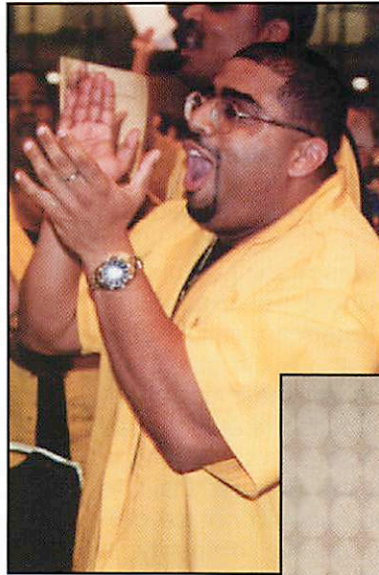
They met in the presence of Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, a large number of priests and deacons who were in attendance to show their support for African American Catholics.

It was a sign of the times to see that the seminars, so well attended, were sessions that dealt with parish life, spirituality and youth. These sessions had to be moved to larger rooms, they were so well attended! To see such a desire to improve parish life, the undeniable thirst for a deepening of spirituality and faith and the interest in the youth were truly signs of a Congress gathering that came to celebrate a spiritual solidarity.

Throughout the days delegates were enthusiastic to hear Bishop Joseph Perry, Bishop William Bennett, Sister Anita Baird, Bishop Palmer Buckles of Ghana, West Africa, Rev. Clarence Williams, CPPS, and Bishop Wilton Gregory. All provided the delegates with pride in their faith, joy in their African American traditions, and hope for the future.

Perhaps one observation to be made was the lack of African American lay folks to deliver major addresses to the body. All who spoke to the group in general sessions were religious. One has to ask why this was so, if the Congress movement was begun primarily as a lay Catholic Congress. Perhaps the Congress in the future will choose to ask a Norman Francis, an Arthur C. McFarland or Mary Briers, Leodia Gooch or any other of the countless prominent African American Catholics to speak at the next gathering.

Despite that omission which will no doubt be addressed in the future, it would seem that the Congress meeting was a success. The results of this meeting are sure to have a far reaching effect in the years ahead. There is joy in the hearts of African American Catholics and that joy in their faith and love of the Catholic Church was certainly demonstrated in these days.



in a word or two

With all the news this month about Congress IX we ask our readers to ponder these words from Brother Dennis Newton, SVD of Chicago, Illinois.

This past month I've been a little **dissed**.

I think it started when I was reading about the **disparity** in reporting about the **disappearances** of the African American child Alexis Patterson in Milwaukee and Elizabeth Smart in Salt Lake City. Alexis got the most attention when somebody noticed that she had been ignored. The director of ethics for the school of journalism at the Poynter Institute in Florida said that "race should not be **discounted**" when explaining the **disparity** in coverage.

I was **discouraged** when a friend of mine, Rey, got sent to prison for stealing a few small items from Walgreens. Probably from the **discount** bin. This at a time when we **discovered** that executives at Worldcom, Enron and Anderson have been stealing millions. If you think any of them will be joining Rey in Centralia, I'll **dispute** that.

An African American Muslim friend of mine from the homeless shelter asked me if I knew of any job training programs. I found a great program at a downtown Catholic church, but Faheem was **disqualified** because he's a felon. I was more than **disheartened**. I was flat out **dissed** off.

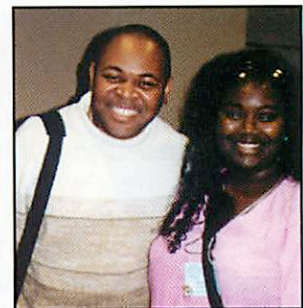
You were probably expecting to read a cheerful, uplifting message or at least a coherent essay. That was my assignment. Sorry to **disappoint** you.

We are saddened at the death of a truly great missionary priest, Father William J. Kelley, SVD. Father "Bill" passed away on August 28, 2002.

He had touched a multitude of people in his years as a priest. Much could be said of him, but in the final accounting he was simply a good priest who loved people and brought them the love of Christ. We know his spirit lives on, but his smile, optimism, energy and love of life will be sorely missed.



The Pastoral Plan of Action adopted at Congress IX is far too lengthy for us to include in this issue of IN A WORD. To view the entire document, go to our website at www.inaword.com. It can be found in our documents section.



Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 6,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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