

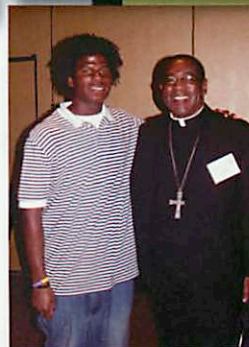
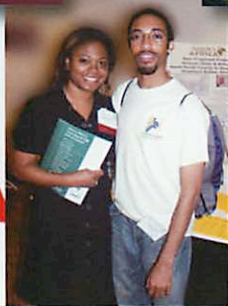
in a

WordTM

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

Volume 25, No. 7 September 2007

Tenth National Black Catholic Congress



July 12-15, 2007 in Buffalo, NY

The National Black Catholic Congress X

What was the purpose?



The National Black Catholic Congress held in Buffalo New York from July 12 - 15, 2007 had many interesting components. In order to bring a balanced report we will devote the next three issues of IN A WORD to examining this important gathering.

In this issue we look at the purpose of the Congress X gathering. This we do by presenting in this issue the opening remarks of Bishop Joseph Perry, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago. What this meeting hoped to accomplish is found in his words opening Congress X.



Good afternoon, brothers and sisters in Christ, with your bishops, their excellencies who are with us, your parish priests and deacons, men and women of consecrated life and fellow Catholics from around the country and beyond who are with us these days. I am Bishop Joseph Perry, auxiliary Bishop of Chicago and chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for African American Catholics.

It is my privilege to officially call to order *Black Catholic Congress number 10!*

If only Daniel Rudd and Father Augustus Tolton could see us now! We share the mission of those first Congress planners –



their vision for the life and vitality of the church in the African American community, from the very first Congress of 1889 unto this year 2007 Congresses have become the primordial assembly of our commu-

nity by the grace and mercy of God!

Congress IX gave us eight principles to explore and implement for life in our parishes and communities in order to nurture all things black and Catholic.

We have, for the last five years, been pondering, researching and implementing these for the good of the whole Church, matters connected with: *Spirituality, Parish Life, Youth and Young Adults, Racism, Catholic Education, Africa,*

HIV/AIDS, and Social Justice.

Congress X wishes to report on these eight principles through the prism of the 7 sacraments which distinguish us as Catholic Christians. The principles, therefore, are not simply a charter of social and political survival. The principles arise out of our baptism and anointing – our birthright in the Roman Catholic Church. These principles must improve us essentially as Catholic Christians.

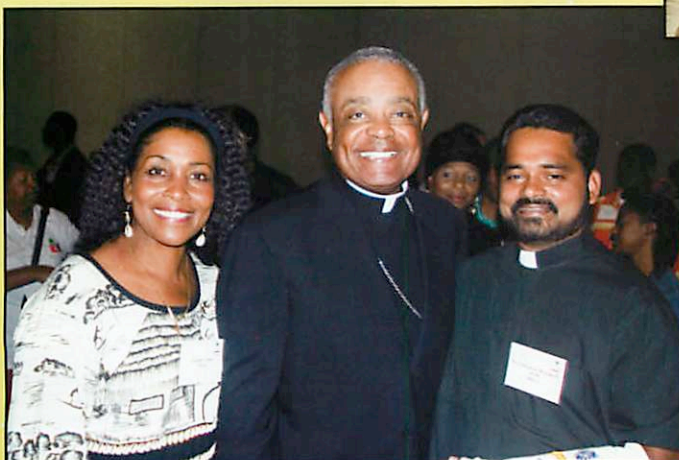
Whereas Scripture gives us the words of Jesus recalled by his closest disciples for our hearing and adoption. The Sacraments are the gestures and the touch of Jesus on our bodies in his healing, consoling and enlivening and commissioning of us anointed in friendship with him through baptism. **The Sacraments give empowerment to our 8 principles of implementation for truly Catholic evangelization. These 7 sacred signs are benchmarks of our pride as African American Catholics; the articulation of our uniqueness as Christians and instruments of our holiness.**

Sacraments are not mere pageants or performances or concerts. Sacraments insure our graced encounter with Jesus

Christ each in their own way. Something takes place in each Sacrament that only God can do resulting in our sharing life with God and friendship with the redeemer Jesus Christ while we receive strength for the journey. We trust that renewed excitement in each of us can be engendered by the presentations of these days. Both Scripture and Sacrament in the Catholic imagination, from the very beginning of Christianity, give us experience of the whole Christ until He comes back to take us with him.

In other words, ours is an altar and a pulpit!

We have something special, holy and authentic. This means we are responsible for handling it with faith, care and the authenticity of our lives. We are required to teach others and bring them to the faith of Christ's Church.



in a word or two

Fr. Clarence Williams is taking a position in the Washington, D.C. area with Catholic Charities USA. Fr. Williams served in the Archdiocese of Detroit for 30 years and assumed the position for Director for Racial Equality and Diversity Initiatives in September. For the last 12 years, Fr. Williams served the Detroit Archdiocese in the area of Black Catholic Ministries. Previously, he served as pastor of St. Anthony Parish on Detroit's eastside and was a celebrant for the TV *Mass for Shut-Ins* for 25 years. As the Director of Racial Equity and Diversity Initiatives, Fr. Williams will share his *Racial Sobriety* approach with more than 150 diocese and archdioceses which are members of the Catholic Charities network. Catholic Charities USA has adopted his *Racial Sobriety* approach as its official tool for race relations in their 1400 agencies. This approach was developed while working for the Archdiocese and promoted by the Department of Parish Life and Services throughout Southeastern Michigan.



Father Williams (far right) is pictured with Xaverian Father Rocco Puopolo, executive director of the Africa Faith and Justice Network, and Sister Jamie Phelps, O.P., Ph.D. Director of Institute for Black Catholic Studies

The National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) will be held November 8-11, 2007 in Columbus, Ohio. This is an excellent opportunity to gather and celebrate with over 20,000 Catholic teens from across the country.

For more information contact:

Michael Youngblood

Diocese of Toledo

Secretariat for Pastoral Leadership

419-244-6711 ext. 511 www.toledodiocese-spl.org

Brother Pat Hogan, SVD is leading a tour to China May 26-June 7, 2008. Brother Pat spent 30 years teaching Chinese at Fu Jen University in Taiwan. He is well versed in the Chinese language, history and culture. One could not ask for a better guide! The tour will be conducted when China will be hosting the 2008 Olympic games. For more information email Ms. Carmi Linden at DWM6099@aol.com

The Very Reverend Joseph Donald Simon, S.V.D., Provincial Superior of the Southern Province (U.S.A.) of the Society of the Divine Word passed away on July 18, 2007 as a result of complications arising from cancer. He was 75 years of age.



He was ordained a priest on May 4, 1961. Following ordination he studied church history at the Gregorian University in Rome and earned his Licentiate there in 1963. Returning to Bay St. Louis he taught Church History and Homiletics at St. Augustine's until he was assigned to the newly opened Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa in 1966. He was President of the College from 1987-93. Father returned to Bay St. Louis to serve as Director of Development for the Southern Province from 1993-96. He then served as pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Maurice, Louisiana from 1996-2002. In 2002, Father Simon was elected Provincial Superior of the Southern Province which includes parishes in Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas.

Malonna Michelle Baudy and Dr. Eric Anthony Peters were married in April at St. Joseph Catholic Church in New Orleans. The bride's uncle Father Fernand Cheri III, OFM officiated at the ceremony. Malonna graduated from St. Mary's Academy and Louisiana State University. She is a Real Estate Consultant.



Photo by: gkphotography.com

Dr. Peters graduated from Xavier University where he received a Doctor of Pharmacy degree. Both bride and groom are active Catholics and full of life! The lively couple reside in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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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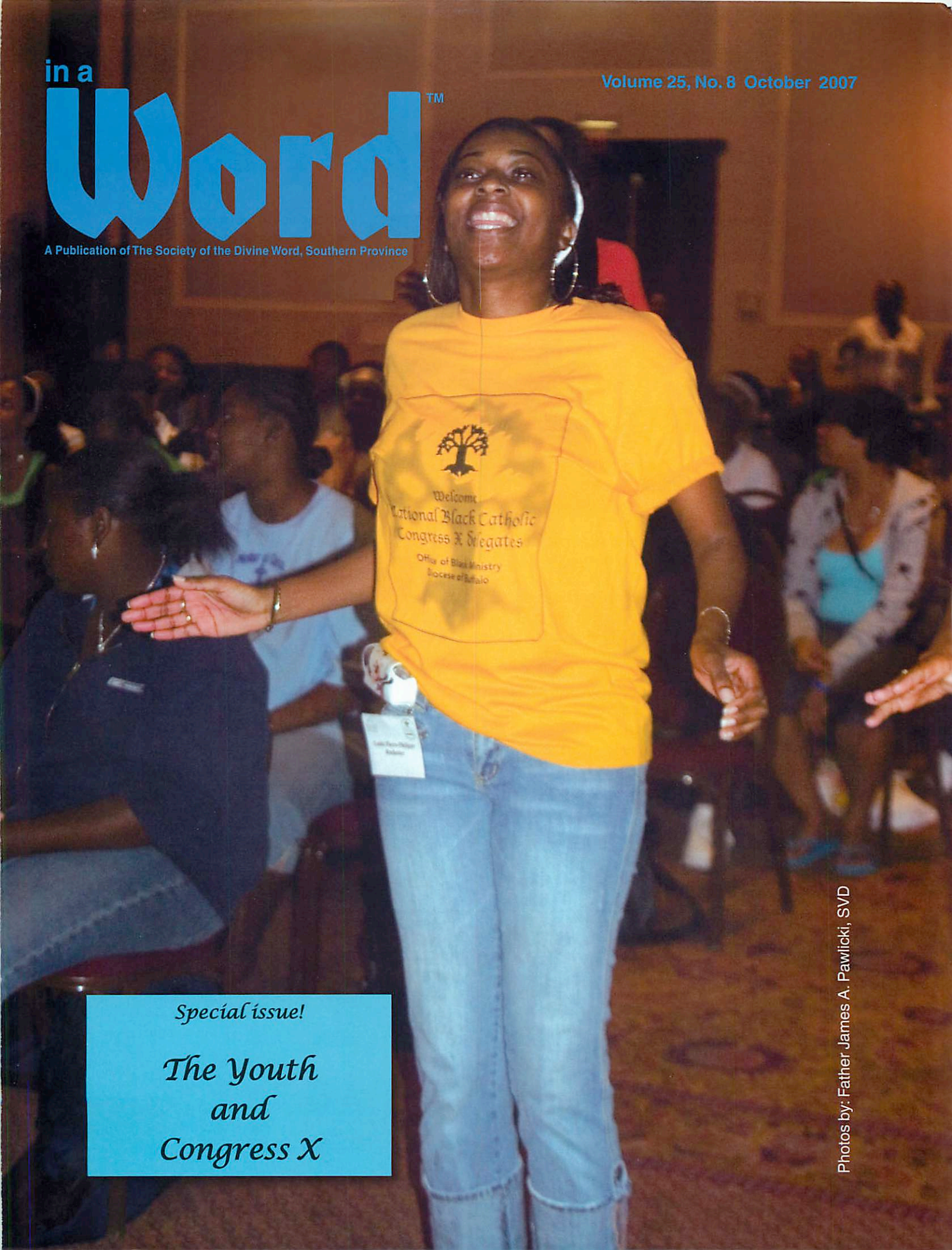
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in a

WordTM

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

Volume 25, No. 8 October 2007



Special issue!

*The Youth
and
Congress X*

Photos by: Father James A. Pawlicki, SVD

Supporting the Faith

CONGRESS X

They were young and you could not miss them. From all parts of the country they came full of joy and a spirit of faith. High school youth and young adults who were very much a part of the Tenth National Black Catholic Congress.

The Congress planners wanted to give special attention to young African American Catholics. After all...aren't they a part of the Catholic Church? They are indeed our future and if there is to be a gathering of African American Catholics every 5 years then why not involve our youth?

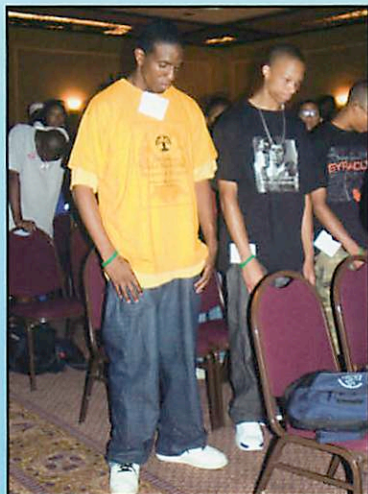
The Congress office called on the talented Vincent Guider of Chicago, Illinois. He in turn organized a planning committee of young people from throughout the country. The results were nothing short of fantastic. Not only did the young people come but they participated with song, dance, and prayer.

The youth sessions were held apart from the larger group in the Convention Center. The youth would join the adults for Mass, adoration services, and reconciliation.

All was expertly set up by Vince and his young associates to provide variety and opportunities for all to express themselves freely. There were large gatherings called "mega sessions" and many workshops which spoke to the youthful spirit present at Congress.

Three "mega sessions" set the stage for the young Catholics to feel the love of Christ and the community.

In the first mega session young African American



Catholic youth were issued a mandate to be sensitive and loving toward brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ both far and near. Special focus was set on respect for elders, solidarity with people in afflicted African nations and respect for all Congress attendees.

The second session emphasized the sacrament of confirmation. Youth heard that Confirmation is more than a one time ceremony...it is a lifestyle. The young people were challenged in the assembly to rely upon the Holy Spirit in the daily endeavor to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ.

The last "mega session" emphasized reconciliation. With stories, issues, testimonies, media, ritual and song the youthful assembly was guided to understand the evil nature of sin, its disruptive effects on humanity and God's endless mercy despite what we do. The session ended with the Sacrament of reconciliation.

There were smaller meetings that addressed all the difficulties of being young.

There were even workshops for youth adult leaders. One session that received national attention in the news releases was a presentation by Christopher Boudy on how to use communication media as a tool to evangelization.

There was a session that spoke to athletes and how sport can play in one's education, personal development and Christian witness to others. There were sessions on music and dance. A lively session challenged youth as to what they want to do with their lives.

There was a special assembly for females and one for males. Young



Heart and Spirit of Youth

women were urged to see themselves as daughters of the King and to live their lives in a spiritual way. Young men were challenged to look at what makes a real man.

At the final workshop the young people shared their dreams for the future and the Church.

The Congress dedication to youth went beyond just saying the old phrase "the youth are our future." The Congress movement is actively promoting programs that will help our youth in the day to day struggles of their lives.

The Congress days gave the young not only song and spirit but brought them together to experience how much alike they are despite geographical differences. The young people realized in Buffalo that there are many others like them who want support and strength in facing life's problem. They found that there was no laughing about making God the center of their lives. They found that it was okay to stand up and pray.

Nothing brought this out more dramatically than in a skit the young people presented during the reconciliation session. Here they shared their weaknesses. One girl in particular gave a poignant dramatization of a young person contemplating suicide. Her virtuoso portrayal of a young person struggling with whether or not to end her life spoke loudly to all present. Her salvation in the end was realizing that God was there at her side and that to end her life was not the answer.

Another powerful witness was given by a young woman and young adult male who stood up before the entire assembly to share their love for the Eucharist. At the adoration service these two moved all present with their unabashed love of God and their joy in the Eucharist.

To their credit Congress planners included plenty of time for the younger generation to pray and yes, even meditate. It was an awesome sight to see a whole room of energetic talented youngsters deep in silence and prayer.

Young people want to experience God and the Congress wisely saw that this happened during

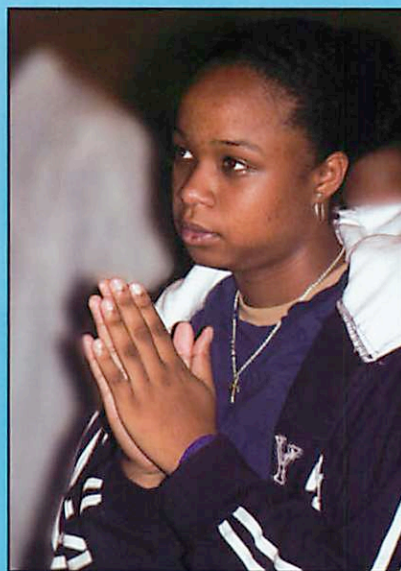
the Congress days. So it was the sessions were not without substance. The team assembled by Guider did not bring the young together to entertain. No, all the assemblies dealt with difficult issues and gave to the young people tools to deal with their travails. The biggest tool was their love of God and realizing that God was there for them. Congress challenged them to bring that gift out in their local Churches.

Yes, the youth are the future of our Catholic Church. For the first time in recent Congress assemblies the youth experience was not an "add on" or afterthought. It was well planned and organized and most importantly brought a sense of community to young from diverse parts of the country.

Love of God was everywhere in the youth sessions. Would that more would be able to feel that spirit and know that

**....talking about God is okay.
....to pray is okay.**

Teens and young adults learned a valuable lesson...the Holy Spirit is alive and in their hands.



JULY 12-15, 2007

in a word or two

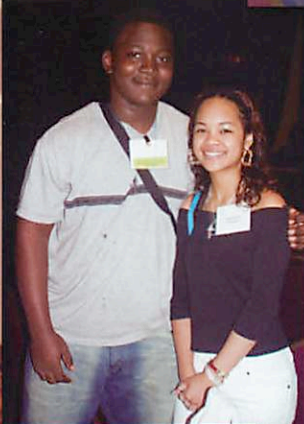
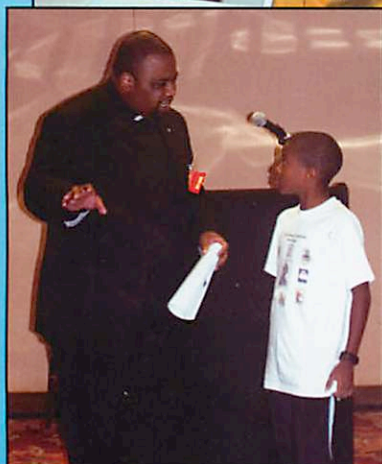
A video documentary on the 2007 National Black Catholic Congress meeting is now available. The 1 hour 20 minute video gives highlights of the Tenth Congress held in Buffalo, New York. Included in the highlights are many scenes from the Youth sessions.

Cost is \$20.00 and \$5.00 for shipping and handling.

To order contact:

Media Production Center
Society of the Divine Word
199 Seminary Drive
Bay Saint Louis, MS 39520

phone 228-467-1097
e mail to video@inaword.com



The Youth of Congress X

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in a **Word**™

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Pages 2-3
Final Reflections on Congress X

Page 4
The Church loses a great priest

Congress X - The Movement Continues



The September and October issues of **IN A WORD** have examined features of the National Black Catholic X gathering in July of 2007. This month we conclude our three part series by reflecting on significant aspects that occurred during those days and what the future portends.

To be sure those who attended the Congress event truly benefited from the gathering. For a large number this was their first meeting of so many African American Catholics in one place and at one time. It was an opportunity to hear and share.

For the people who had attended all the Congress meetings since 1987 the event was like a two edged sword. One it pointed to signs of growth and maturity in the African American Catholic Church. Yet on the other hand it was also a painful reminder of how much more work needs to be addressed to sensitize the Church to the value and gifts of African Americans.

One could point to many things that made the Congress unique. Surely there were those who had a list of negatives and those who spoke nothing but praises. We do not wish to compare shopping lists. For we believe that when one gets right down to it three things stand out prominently in this Buffalo Congress gathering. We ask our readers to consider their importance.

The first is the prominent role of the laity. Liturgies were conducted in wonderful fashion with the Bishops giving excellent homilies. However, the workshops showed the power and abilities of the laity.

The majority of the workshops were conducted by lay men and women. Workshops on *Spirituality, Parish Life, Youth and Young Adults, Racism, Catholic Education, Africa, HIV/AIDS, and Social Justice AIDS*, were ably run by talented people from all over the United States. As mentioned in

the video documentary about the Congress days it seems that the recent Congress is gradually inching back to the time of Daniel Rudd where the Congress events were led by laity.

The Buffalo meeting had fewer African American Priests and religious than ever before. Yes, the presence of African American clergy and religious was there. Yet, we repeat that it was not with the numbers of the past. This gradual decline has been going on since the New Orleans Congress in 1992. Why this is so is open to many interpretations.

Thus it stands to reason that with lay men and women dominating the workshops and discussions it seems to be just a matter of time when future Congress assemblies are led primarily by lay men and women who are African American and Catholic.

Spirituality is the second item that rose prominently at the July gathering. Deep faith and spiritual life has been found at all previous Congresses. However, this time a strong contemplative spirituality was manifested.

There were the moments of the Spirit moving in song and dance but for the first time a deep yearning for a quiet resting with God was allowed to come forth. Throughout the Congress days there were expressions of prayer and meditation. For example a workshop on meditation was attended by a large number of participants.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was the ultimate sign of this deep spiritual hunger for God. **For the first time ever at such a Congress event the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**





was held. This was an historic first. In silence prayer came from deep within the hearts of young and old. The public testimonies as to the power of the Eucharist were powerful witnesses to this strong yearning for God.

Thirdly, youth and young adults were for the first time prominently present. As mentioned in the last issue of *IN A WORD* the youth experience of Congress X was powerful.

It should be noted that the youth were not just teens but included a large number of young adults. The presence of so many twenty to thirty somethings was a sign of the Spirit moving in the young future leaders of our communities.

The young adults WANT to make a difference in their Church. They WANT responsibility. They hunger for God. That yearning for God was evident time and again in their prayer and meditation and



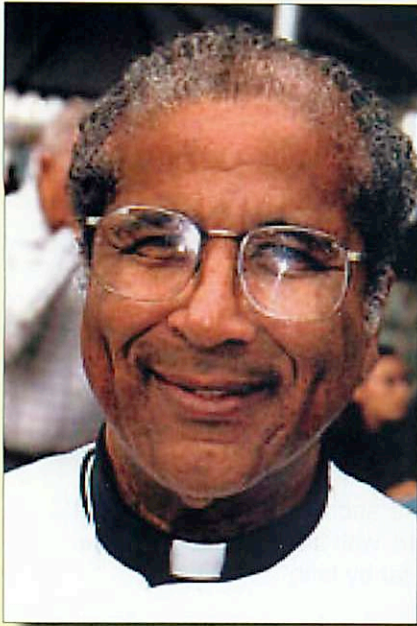
reverent attitude to the sacred. What a wonderful future we have ahead with these young people. Truly "we have come far by faith".

The emergence of a dynamic laity, a broadening of expressing spirituality from outward expressions to a contemplative form, and the dreams of our young people are going to be recurring thoughts in the years to come. If our Church is to go grow then Bishops, priests, and Catholics in general must allow the laity to come alive, speak to the spirituality both interiorly and exteriorly and reach out to the young adults who so fervently want to make a difference.

The Congress X event was more than just those days in July of 2007. As Bishop Ricard said back in 1987 "The Congress is not just an event but is a movement". There is no doubt that African American Catholics are moving forward and the Congress movement is definitely alive.



in a word or two



Fr. Fisher Robinson Jr., SVD, a Divine Word Missionary for almost 65 years died October 18, 2007, at Downey Medical Center in Downey, CA. of multiple natural causes. He had lived with his Divine Word Community at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Los Angeles, since 1989.

Fr. Robinson was born on August 12, 1929, in Abbeville, Louisiana. He entered the Society of the Divine Word in Bay St. Louis,

Mississippi, in 1943, pronounced his First Vows in 1950, in Techny, Illinois, and was ordained a Priest on May 1, 1958, in Bay St. Louis. He would have celebrated his 50th Jubilee as a priest next May.

He was first assigned as Assistant Prefect of the Minor Seminary at Bay St. Louis, from 1959-61, then as Associate Pastor of Notre Dame Church in St. Martinville, LA, until 1963, when he was assigned to Divine Word Seminary in Riverside, CA as a teacher of math, science and Latin. In 1967 he became Principal of Verbum Dei High School in Los Angeles, where he served for 13 years, and continued to serve as a consultant and member of the Board of Directors. He was a recipient of the Verbum Dei Eagle Award for his contributions to the school. In 1980 he was appointed Pastor of St. Malachy Catholic Church in South Central Los Angeles.

In 1986, Fr. Robinson was appointed Episcopal Vicar of African American Catholics for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles by Cardinal Roger Mahony. He accepted the challenge and reached out to Catholics and the unchurched for the purpose of evangelizing and educating the laity about their baptismal calling. He held this position for 14 years.

A priest of priests, Fr. Robinson (Robbie, as he was affectionately called), dedicated himself to service in both his Community and the greater Archdiocese. He was a member of the Los Angeles Council of Priests, Archdiocesan Board of Consultors, Board of Ecumenical Center for Black Church Studies, was a founding member of the Black Lay Catholic Ministry and an active member of the 4th Degree Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver.

He was deeply respected and loved for being a sign of God's presence among us with his compassion, understanding, joy

and quiet wisdom. He drew the respect and affection of all who met him with his mentoring, spiritual direction, encouragement, friendship and presence. He was truly a Brother of the Word.

Cardinal Roger Mahony said of Father Fisher...

"Your work and ministry has been a tremendous gift to us all. As a priest, you have accompanied many people on their journey of faith and strengthened their commitment to live the Gospel. As a leader in the Church you have mentored many others to recognize and develop their own gifts and have encouraged people to put these gifts at the service of the Church at large. As a faithful disciple of Jesus, you have helped bring the Good News to all people regardless of their ethnicity or culture."

(Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, 2001)

The 2008 Josephite African American History and Heritage Calendar for 2008 is available. The theme for this year's calendar is **LORD YOU ARE MY STRENGTH AND MY HOPE**. All images for the 2008 edition are taken from original paintings by the Benedictine Nuns of Turvey Abbey, part of their Jesus our life series of posters. The brilliant colors, rich design, religious sensitivity of the images reflect an outstanding creative, spiritual vision.

To order copies contact:

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Included in the highlights are many scenes from the youth sessions, workshops, general sessions, and liturgies.

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e mail to video@inaword.com

Front cover photo features Father Raymond Harris of Archdiocese of Baltimore; Ms. Valerie Washington, Executive Director of the Black Catholic Congress office; and Ms. Danielle Charles of St. Louis, Missouri. Father Harris and Ms. Charles assisted Ms. Washington by being facilitators for Congress X.

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