

religion

Willa Mae Rice

From this pew

If we were not just automatically aware of the recent Jewish Holidays, if you attempted to go shopping in the Jewish industrial centers as I did, you were promptly reminded.

I am quite impressed with the significance of the following message from the leader of the Rabbinical Council of America.

Rabbi Bernard Rosensweig, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, representing more than one thousand members throughout the country, in a Yom-Kippur (Day of Atonement) message recently, called upon all the peoples of the world "to adopt Yom Kippur as a holy day, in spirit, if not in fact."

The rabbinic leader declared, Conceptually, Yom Kippur is not limited to Jews alone. It is equally relevant for all mankind. Its theme is penitence which, in essence, expresses regrets for past sins and a dedication to better values and a return to basic moral principles.

"The world desperately needs one day a year for spiritual inventory; a day for soul-searching; a day for honest self-examination and a day of decision. Humanity has wandered far from basic values. It has abandoned the time-tested ethical concepts to which all humanity paid tribute for thousands of years.

It is time to ask ourselves the question of whether or not we have not fooled ourselves with new ideas and ideals and have used them as excuses for abandoning the time-tested values of integrity, honesty, peace and love."

In his message, Rabbi Rosenweig also called for special prayers to assure that the negotiations between Egypt and Israel will lead to a lasting and genuine peace.

"All of us," he said, "are extremely tense about these negotiations, even at their conclusion, for we realize that without good will and genuine efforts they cannot lead to peace.

"Peace in the Middle East," he stressed, "is our fondest hope. It can be the salvation of all humanity and can bring genuine growth and development to all the countries in that area.

The Middle East was the cradle of the world's civilization and it now has an opportunity to resume that role. The first requirement is peace and good will among all of its inhabitants. Our prayers towards that goal must, indeed, be fervent."

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The mail-a-gram read: "You are invited to join top administration officials at a White House Briefing on the President's Urban Policy Thursday, Sept. 28, beginning at 9 A.M. in the Dept. of Interior Auditorium. The afternoon session and reception for registered church leaders will be at the White House with President Carter."

RSVP was required for acceptance or regrets, and signed, Anne Wexler, assistant to the president.

The mail-a-gram did not come as a surprise, however. Each of us had been contacted by long distance telephone call by officials of the National Council of Churches informing us that we were among those listed to participate as representatives of top administration in the church, in a dialogue with President Carter and members of his cabinet, relative to his program to redeem the deteriorating cities. Thursday Sept. 28, pending clearance.

We were advised then to send a resume and Social Security Number so that the clearance process could begin. When the list of confirmed invites arrived, I looked hurriedly for names of other Pittsburghers, and I was pleased to see the name of Bishop Anthony G. Bosco of the Catholic Church and the Rev. W. Lee Hicks, executive director of Christian Associates. Bishop J.C. Hoggard and the Rev. Andrew Whitted were other AME Zion representatives.

I must say that this was one of the most eventful days of my entire life, and I have had many wonderful experiences. This delegation of 200 church leaders included people from every denomination; and possibly every state in the union.

During the preliminary briefing with members of cabinet in the auditorium of the Dept. of Interior that morning, we described ourselves as "veterans of urban wars." As various industries close shop, leaving thousands jobless; this flight of capital bleeds our cities to death, we stressed.

"Partnership" and "targeting" were keys to President Carter's Urban Policies. The President's inter-agency coordinating council, under the able direction of Jack Watson, will bring leaders of various departments together—housing, labor, health care, educational reform, employment, etc. in an effort to consolidate divided programs, combine resources and together, target in on the need areas.

We gave great support to the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill. As church leaders, we were told that the religious community can and must make a difference. As administrative leaders, pastors and laity we were reminded of the church.

Office for Black Catholics names new director

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The National Office for Black Catholics has announced the appointment of Cyprian Lamar Rowe, a Marist Brother and a noted scholar, poet and educator as its executive director.

The appointment came after a year-long search to find a successor to its co-founder and first executive director, Brother Joseph M. Davis, S.M.

Walter T. Hubbard, of Seattle, Washington, president of the organization's board of directors, announced: "The board of directors is pleased to have Brother Cyprian Lamar Rowe accept the position of executive director of the National Office for Black Catholics. Brother Cyprian will enable NOBC to continue its efforts to provide a strong pastoral ministry program, develop lay leadership and give witness to the many social concerns, especially at this time in American life. . . . We welcome him to join us in the challenging times ahead."

Holder of a Ph.D. (African Studies, Howard University, 1973); two Masters (African Studies, Howard University, 1970; English and Comparative Literature, Hunter College, New York City, 1963) he did his undergraduate work at the Marist College, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., earning his A.B. cum laude, in English. He also earned a General Excellence Award for being first in his class, which otherwise was all white.

Born in Dalton, Ga. in 1935, the youthful-looking new director has the ability to inspire enthusiasm and confidence. His soft-spoken manner and charismatic presence had the NOBC offices here aglow with excitement and hope as soon as his appointment was announced.

"It's like a breath of fresh air," declared Ms. Penny Taylor, interim director, "I look forward to working with him." Spokespersons for NOBC's component organizations: the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, the National Black Sisters' Conference, and the National Black Catholic Lay Caucus, expressed equal enthusiasm when the announcement was made. These organizations, like NOBC, are advocates for fuller participation in the Roman Catholic Church by the 1,000,000 black Catholics of America.

Sr. Josita Colbert of Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts, president of the National Black Sisters' Conference, said: "The NBSC is impressed with the selection of Brother Cyprian Lamar Rowe as the new executive director of NOBC. His high integrity, coupled with a sensitive and conscientious spirit makes us confident that under his leadership and direction, NOBC will be a source of inspiration and support to all black Catholics."

Rowe who has a lengthy association with the organization—as a member of its advisory commission on liturgy and worship; as author of a book, "This Far Faith," published by it; as author of several poems and articles in "Freeing the Spirit"; NOBC's prize-winning quarterly, and most recently, as director of its Department of Culture and

Worship—assesses NOBC's role and importance.

"I feel that the National Office for Black Catholics exists to give black Catholics an effective voice in the governance of the Church in this country. I feel that just as other groups have done, black Catholics should find spokespersons, articulate ones, persons who will say those things that need to be said about the situations—religious, social and political—in this country as they impact upon the people who are believers.

"It is my hope that this office [will be able to serve all the black Catholics in the country, and serve them well."

After not more than a moment's reflection, he continued: "I feel that the primary function of any black organization should be to and for black people. The function of this office will not be to justify the existence of black Catholics to people who are neither black nor Catholic. Mutual respect demands cooperation and not subjugation.

"We hope through various departments in this office to bring all our people awareness of their art and their culture and to help them identify ways of using their rich culture in areas of worship."

The rich background of varied work experience that Brother Cyprian brings to NOBC began with eight years' teaching experience (English, Math, French, Debate Coach, Developer of Honors Programs, etc.) in private secondary schools in the New York City area. During the year 1963-64, he was an exchange tutor at

St. Joseph College, Dunfries, Scotland.

At the University of Rhode Island, in addition to being the director of Black Studies, he was also president of the Black Faculty and Staff Association and acting president of the Black Coalition for Higher Education. His other activities during the period 1967-1972 included: pursuing the Marist College Full Time Honors Program; leading a Crossroads-Africa group to Ghana; lecturing to graduate students at Howard (Protect Literature-African and American); lecturing to prisoners at Lorton prison.

He also served as consultant to: The Marist magazine; the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures; the English department at Federal City College, and to the African-American Institutes.

In 1974 he was named assistant professor of African Studies at Temple University and was elected assistant director in 1977. Prior to joining NOBC as director of its Department of Culture and Worship this summer, he had been associate professor of English at the University of the District of Columbia.

His list of publications is lengthy; the honors, grants and fellowships bestowed upon him are numerous; his scope of activities ranges from the field of education and writing to radio production and announcing (NBC).

When the coordinator of the Black Catholic Lay Caucus, Robert L. ("Robbie") Robinson, greeted the news of his appointment with the joyous exclamation, "God



moves in mysterious ways his miracles to perform!" he was close to the facts.

Sept. 23 the NOBC board of directors, convening in Washington to choose a director, had paused in its deliberations to attend a long-planned Mass celebrating Brother Cyprian's 25th anniversary as a Marist Brother. It was a rededication, a renewal of vows for the scholarly Brother.

A huge crowd from across the nation, and from some foreign lands attended. There were people of all races, religions, walks of life converging on Howar'd Rankin Memorial Chapel to pay tribute to Brother Cyprian. A large contingent of his Marist Brothers (mostly white) along with a cross-section of America's black priests attended.

It was a highly inspirational service that included: singing by the Howard University Gospel Choir; stirring solos by Arthur Lee Patterson Jr. of Cincinnati (he actually caused choir members, as well as the audience, to break out in applause); sincere testimonials from Religious and lay, black and white, all acclaiming their love and respect for Brother Cyprian, and homily delivered by Brother Joseph M. Davis, S.M. (former NOBC executive director) that climaxed an emotion-packed afternoon of love and praise.

The Board returned from the Maass to its deliberations, ended its year-long search (a la "Acres of Diamonds") and unanimously named Brother Cyprian.

"God moves in mysterious ways—"

Will we pray for peace and pay for war?

WASHINGTON—Can the tax revolt be turned against the cost of maintaining the military establishment and preparations for war?

Members of three of the smallest but most influential religious denominations in the country hope so and when some 300 of them gather for the national "new call to peacemaking" conference in Green Lake, Wis., tax resistance will be high on the agenda.

The three Anabaptist denominations, the Church of the Brethren, the Mennonites and the Society of Friends (Quakers), are known as the "historic peace churches" and have a long tradition of protesting war by refusing to accept military service.

Modern warfare, however, relies less and less on manpower and more and more on technology and automated weapons — weapons that cost money and thus the "new call to peacemaking" and the challenge it poses to peace church members:

"Are we going to pray for peace and pay for war?"

The new call was initiated by Friends' Faith and Life Movement but endorsed by members from all three of the denominations and seeks to breathe new life into the peace witness of the churches.

In the context of both humanistic peacemaking and biblicist support for killing, there is an urgent need for the biblically-oriented witness of the peace church traditions," says a paper prepared for the Green Lake meeting.

"Although the popular peace movement of the Vietnam-era has waned," the statement adds, "There remains a greater legacy of activity and groups

than the current interest of the media would have us believe."

For almost two years, the new call has been discussed in regional meetings of the denominations focusing on task force reports dealing with the biblical and theological bases of the peace witness, peacemaking lifestyles and disarmament.

Within the three denominations, the new call is "fostering dreams that our internal unity may be strengthened both within and between our constituencies," according to Dale W. Brown, professor of christian theology at Bethany Theological Seminary in Oak Brook, Ill.

Brown, writing on the peace churches in a recent issue of the Christian Century, also said the new call has given members of the denomination the hope that "a sound biblically and theologically oriented theology of peacemaking can be boldly proclaimed in Christendom."

The Green Lake conference is expected to make what has been essentially an internal discussion become a witness to the rest of the churches and indeed, to the world.

Tax resistance appears as if it will be one of the major programs and strategies of the new call.

"Effective disarmament strategy must be based on citizen action at the local level," says Robert Johansen.

Lois Barrett, a Mennonite writer, notes that while none of the peace churches have recommended tax resistance on the national or conference level, "most groups have recognized refusal to pay war taxes as one among many valid witness against war."

For the most part, members of the

three denominations have always paid their taxes without question and the issue of tax resistance was largely dormant until the Vietnam War made many Americans aware of the cost of maintaining the U.S. military machine.

The issue has become more urgent for the peace churches since the Quaker relief agency, the American Friends Service Committee, agreed with two of its employees that the "war portion" of their federal taxes not be withheld from their paychecks.

The case went into the courts but was not resolved on its merits and new court tests will have to be brought.

In addition, several of the regional new

call groups have asked the churches and their agencies to stop collecting taxes from their employees "so they can have the option to follow their consciences in war tax resistance."

According to those involved in the leadership of the new call, the number of those in the peace churches withholding a portion of their taxes is still quite small. The Internal Revenue Service will not release figures on the number of tax resisters in the United States.

But it is the belief of the organizers of the new call that "when the tax revolt touches the cost of the arsenals of terror, the prayers for peace may have an answer."

United Methodists plan annual meeting in Detroit

DETROIT—United Methodist involvement in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia will be discussed by at least four divisions of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries (BOGM) when the church's mission agency holds its annual meeting here Oct. 13/21.

Several other divisions will adopt programs to eliminate institutional racism in their ranks. And the board itself will take stock, midway through the 1977-80 quadrennium, of what progress has been made in generating support for the church's theme, "Committed to Christ, Called to Change."

The World Division expects to consider the Zimbabwe situation in the context of a major report from its Africa Task Force. Members of the task force visited 14 countries, including Zimbabwe, last February/March and will come to Detroit armed with a series of recommendations for the church's future work in Africa.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is slated to consider two grants of \$15,000 each to Rhodesia. The first, going to the United Methodist Church of Rhodesia, would provide emergency relief including food and clothing and aid pastors' families. The second, to Christian Care, would enable this inter-church agency to assist detainee families with a subsistence allowance, rent and school fees, and would help to rehabilitate released detainees. Earlier this year the Rhodesian church received \$20,000 and Christian Care \$30,000.

The Ecumenical and Interreligious Concerns Division (EICD) will set the

World Council of Churches' grant to liberation movements in Zimbabwe within the framework of other council activities. And the Women's Division will analyze responses to its resolution of April 1978 calling for inclusion of all parties in the Rhodesian settlement.

Specific proposals for eliminating institutional racism will be before the Health and Welfare Ministries Division EICD and UMCOR. Workshops for staff and directors of Health and Welfare will seek to develop attitudes, understanding and skills for combating racism. EICD will have Phyllis Freeman, former member of TEAM (Training Ecumenically to Advance Missions) who now teaches at Columbia University School of Social Work, as its Resource on consciousness-raising.

The Women's Division will lead off the series of BOGM meetings with sessions Oct. 13/16. The national policy-making body for 1.2 million members in 33,000 local units of United Methodist Women, the division will hear a report on conference plans for observing International Year of the Child and for working on farm issues and ERA will be finalized and a comprehensive evaluation of response, its monthly magazine, received.

UMCOR will consider grants to refugees in six African countries and emergency relief to victims of flooding in India and victims of fighting in Nicaragua.

The World Division, in addition to the Africa Task Force report, will consider human rights in Cambodia, a progress report from its Caribbean Task Force and the participation of ethnic minority persons in mission.

Pope's death shock's world

"The news of Pope John Paul's death has shocked the world. Just a short month ago millions of people scattered across the globe shared the joyous announcement: 'We have a Pope!'"

"Today, people throughout the world — even those who knew him only by newspaper report, through radio or television — are saddened."

"Death comes suddenly whether it comes for Pope or President, or for young or old. In his short time as leader of the universal church, Pope John Paul repeatedly asked the prayers of all those he met. In his name, I ask today for that same kindness — that all of you might join me in prayer for his good, loving soul."

