

in a

Word

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Photo by Father Pawlicki, SVD

THE FUTURE OF OUR WORLD DEPENDS ON THE
THE WELL BEING OFF OURUR CHILDREN



Reflections on Life! **An Open Letter to Black Children**

Dear Children:

We adults love you enough to stake our entire present and future on you, your well-being, and your complete development as physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual beings.

Hear, then, a word of caution about some of the things which threaten your welfare and your very life. Surveys have told us constantly that the main killer among somewhat older children is alcohol/drug-related accidents of various sorts.

Where you black children fit into that equation is not clear. It is also not clear how you fit into the statement that suicide is the second-leading cause among children. You as a group may be a bit less afflicted in that way.

However, you definitely fit into the front end of another very frightening statistic; namely, that AIDS is the leading cause of death among black men between the ages of 25 and 44, and the second-leading cause among black women of those ages.

"But I'm a child," you may say. "What do those statistics have to do with me? I'm not even close to 25."

True. But, as a member of the black community, you are more than likely a victim of ignorance, prejudice and lack of information which afflict blacks more than they afflict whites and others. And those things are with you now.

Yes, all these things are deadly poisons which invade our minds from our earliest years. Ignorance has to be the deadliest poison of all. Prejudice is born of ignorance, and lack of information is the direct result of ignorance.

Look all around you and you see how ignorance leads to terrible misunderstandings and arguments in families like yours, to great

difficulty in finding a decent job, and, eventually, to scams, drug dealing and other bad hustles.

Does this give you a hint as to how important it is for you to behave well and pay strict attention in school?

Ignorance also leads to unwed mothers and fathers, although the latest good news is that pregnancies are down noticeably among our teenagers. Some of this is due to "safe sex" so called, but much of it is due to abstinence.

Abstinence from sex is good news which must begin with very intimate conversations between you and your parents. In step with your parents, your extended family plus your teachers and counselors at school must lay a Godly base for you.

I hope you are not among the unfortunate youth whose parents are too ignorant, too negligent or too fearful to talk to you about drugs, about sex, about accepting all people as fellow humans, including gays and other targets of prejudice.

Be advised and warned that hatred toward the gay community has paved a smooth path for AIDS to enter and take over the black community. While savaging the gay community, we have been in denial about the reality and absolute terror of AIDS.

Your white counterparts have been grabbing the gruesome, frightening headlines around the country in school-related murder. On the other hand, you black children have been far ahead in killing each other on our asphalt jungle streets.

More than your counterparts, you have wasted many precious days in truancy and at the boob tube many hours of each day. We adults want to awake from sleep and be here for you every day, every hour, at home, at school, in church. Everywhere.

CALLING ALL YOUNG PEOPLE!

The National Black Catholic Congress, (NBCC) in cooperation with the Knights, Ladies, Junior Daughters and Junior Knights of the Knights of Peter Claver, The National African American Catholic Youth Ministry Network and Youth leaders and Ministers, has announced an upcoming program for youth.

Each year, the NBCC conducts the "Pastoring in African American Parishes" workshop. This gathering is designed as an opportunity for those members of the African American community and those who minister in our parishes to come together for study, for networking and for prayer. Such gatherings in the past have been highly successful and valuable experiences for participants.

The workshop for the Jubilee Year 2000 will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on April 30 through May 4, 2000. A new initiative for this gathering will be the inclusion of a youth track. This youth track will be designed for youth ages 13 through 18 and will be a "Rites of Passage" Youth Empowerment Retreat. The content of the Retreat will be conducted in two sections.

1. "Joining the Circle of Women-Girls Rites of Passage";
2. "From Boyhood to Manhood"-Boy's Rites of Passage"

Both sections will explore positive steps toward becoming more productive in our ever changing world. Guided by principles of Love, Peace and joy, participants will leave with a deeper awareness of self, family and community. There will be a special consideration of Catholic Church teachings

The retreat will be facilitated by members of "The Rites of Passage Youth Empowerment Foundation". The Boys and Girls sessions will run concurrently and separately from Monday May 1, 2000 to May 4, 2000.



Many school districts have instituted a "community service" requirement for high school graduation. Some systems require at least 75 hours of service learning. Young people who desire to attend the Pastoring Workshop should make contact with their school district to determine if approval will be granted for attendance without penalty or excused absence.

Registration materials will be available in December 1999 and will be distributed to dioceses and NBCC sponsoring organizations, including The Knights of Peter Claver. The registration fee for all participants is \$125.00.

The registration fee will include dinner on Sunday April 30, breakfast and lunch on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and breakfast on Thursday May 4, 2000.

Participating youth will be responsible for travel to Pittsburgh, hotel room at a rate of \$88.92 per night for single, double or quad occupancy and evening meals on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Registration will be limited to the first 50 girls and first 50 boys. Youth are being invited to participate from dioceses and parishes, Junior Daughters and Junior Knights of Peter Claver and through the National African American Catholic Youth Ministry, Network.

Youth Ministers and Youth Leaders are also invited to participate in this retreat experience. There will be sessions on Sunday, April 30, 2000 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM entitled "How

Much Guidance is Needed to Give the Youth without breaking their spirit to define themselves." This session will also empower participants to return home and replicate the Rites of Passage Retreat experience on the local level.

in a word or two

Congratulations to Andrew Lyke of Matteson, IL who was named Coordinator of Marriage Ministry by the Archdiocese of Chicago! In this position, Lyke will coordinate marriage preparation and marriage education programs for the Archdiocese. He brings 18 years of experience in marriage ministry.

He and his wife, Terri, have coordinated Marriage Ministry for the African American Community since 1982. The Lykes contribute articles to **IN A WORD** and their biweekly column, "Family Reflections" is regularly featured in Catholic diocesan newspapers around the country. Andrew and Terri have been married for twenty-four years. In all of his work and activities in and for the Church, Lyke says that his most important gift he brings is his family perspective.

On December 12, 1999, the Faith Community of the Church of the Crucifixion in Jacksonville, FL will celebrate its 25th anniversary. Rev. Cletus M. S. Watson, T.O.R. has been pastor of this dynamic parish since 1988. A reception in the Church Social Hall will follow the Liturgy celebration. For more information, contact:

Fr. Cletus M. S. Watson, T.O.R.
6079 Bagley Rd.
Jacksonville, FL 32209

St. Mary's Academy of the Sisters of the Holy Family and Fr. John Asare-Dankwah invite you to join a Pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi and Florence tour on June 13-22, 2000. The cost of the trip is \$2960. For more information, contact:

Concepcion Tregre St. Mary's Academy
(504) 245-0422 <smadev@juno.com>

St. Elizabeth Catholic Church in Chicago, IL will celebrate its 75th anniversary of its historical merger with St. Monica, founded by Rev. Augustus Tolton in 1893, thus making St. Elizabeth the oldest Black Catholic church in Chicago. Cardinal Francis George will be the principal celebrant of the anniversary Mass to be held on December 12, 1999.

Looking for original African American artwork? Log on to Your Arts Desire website, <www.concepcions.com>, by artist Connie Tregre of New Orleans, LA. Mrs. Tregre, a woman of faith, has been creating for over thirty years. She has received many awards in Louisiana and Texas; and most recently, the Torchbearer of Knowledge in Visual Arts Award presented by the Greater New Orleans Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. For more information, contact:

Concepcion Tregre at (504) 288.5038, ctregre@bell-south.net

Census 2000 is approaching. We are encouraging all African American families to participate in the upcoming census. We want programs for African Americans to be funded and our tax dollars distributed fairly. So stand up and be counted!



Photo by FMartha Adams Catholic Chronicle, 1999

Congratulations to K. LaVerne Redden of Toledo, Ohio who was recently chosen as the first African American President of the National Council of Catholic Women.

Father Frank Charles, SVD passed away suddenly on October 13, 1999. He was 69 years old at the time of his death.

Father Charles who was born in St. Lucia, West Indies was pastor of St. Anthony's Parish in Lafayette, Louisiana at the time.

As an SVD priest he had served in Ghana, West Africa; St. Monica's in New Orleans; Notre dame Church in St. Martinville, Louisiana; St. Gabriel's in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, and St. Katherine's in Leonville, Louisiana.

He will be greatly missed by the people of St. Anthony's and all who were touched by his life.

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.

In a Word is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center.

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