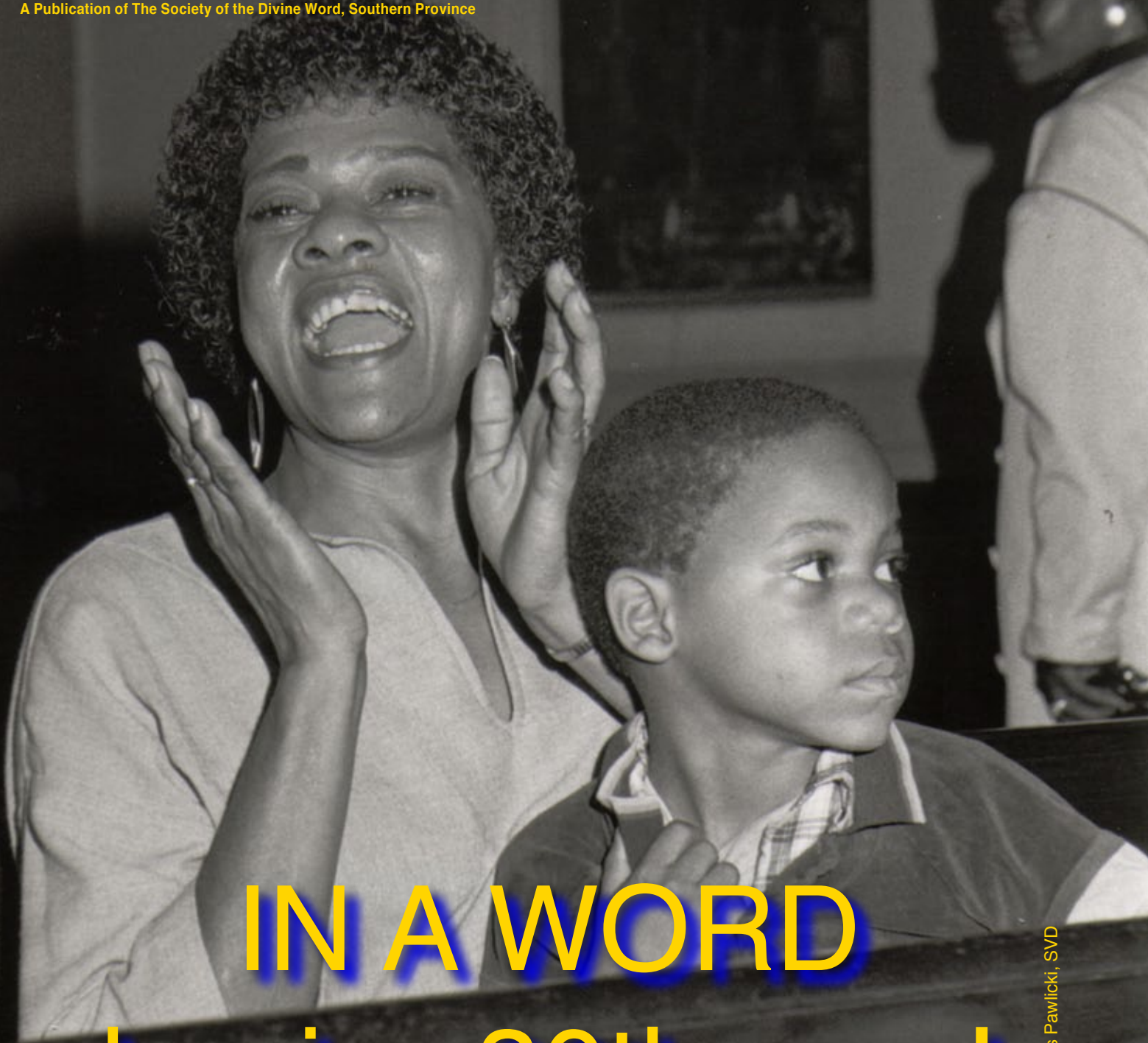


in a

Word™

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

Volume 31, No. 1, January 2013



IN A WORD
begins 30th year!

Photo by: Father James Pawlicki, SVD

ENGAGED IN PARISH LIFE AND EVANGELIZATION

(Part 4 of National Black Catholic Pastoral Plan)

All Christians are called to spread the Good News through word and deed. Catholic Church documents powerfully challenge us to “go and make disciples” and to “evangelize the modern world.”

We “go forth” from our home base, the parish. There, we learn and nourish our faith, build a community of believers, and we contribute our time, talents, and treasure so that community thrives. From there, we go forth, as a parish and individually, to evangelize the world. Knowing that ordinary life is filled with evangelization moments if our faith is engaged, we vow to live and speak faithfully--on the street, in the workplace and marketplace, and in our social activities.

Our perspective as African Americans:

From its 19th century founding through the present, the National Black Catholic Congress has promoted evangelization. Indeed, the modern NBCC’s mission statement begins with the commitment “to establishing an agenda for the evangelization of African Americans.” At Congress XI, we celebrate the anniversary of *What We Have Seen and Heard: A Pastoral Letter on Evangelization from the Black Bishops of the United States*. We recall the words in that pastoral letter, which continue to summarize what parish life means to us:

“Black Christianity is eminently a social reality. The sense of community is a major component of Black spirituality . . . [that] permeates our experience of liturgy and worship. Worship must be shared. Worship is always a celebration of community. No one stands in prayer alone. One prays and acts within and for the community.”

Because evangelization begins in parishes, we are distressed by the closures and mergers of urban parishes. We understand the fiscal responsibilities of diocesan leaders and we recognize the need for the local church to live within its means, nevertheless, we wish to express in the strongest possible terms our anguish over the vibrant parishes that have been lost. Parish closures mean lost opportunities, lost culture, and lost community.

We believe that the evangelization impact of these traditionally African American parishes cannot be overstated. Only one-fourth of Black Catholics belong to predominantly Black parishes, yet these are the Catholic African Americans who are most likely to attend weekly or daily Mass and who expressed the greatest satisfaction with the Church, on a variety of African American issues, in the *2011 National Black Catholic Survey*.

Furthermore, urban parishes are vital to the neighborhoods where they are situated. As the Second Vatican Council put it, “the People of God and the human race in whose midst it lives render service to each other” (*Gaudium et Spes* 11). That service is not rendered when the people of God have shuttered the church and scattered to the four winds.

The *2011 National Black Catholic Survey* showed that parish registration correlates with active engagement and stewardship in the parish. This suggests that strong parish registration efforts may help to sustain traditionally Black parishes.

Our faith engaged:

- We commit ourselves to discover anew the documents already written on evangelization.
- We commit ourselves to invite those who have left the Church to prayerfully consider coming “home.” We encourage adaptation of successful Catholic evangelization programs to the specific needs of African Americans. We especially encourage parishes to develop comprehensive RCIA programs for people seeking to join the Catholic Church, and we commit ourselves to support those efforts by extending personal invitations to attend our parish RCIA.
- Faith is engaged through parish life, so we urge every parish to promote registration by all Mass-goers and we urge all practicing Catholics to register in a parish.
- Full participation in a parish requires much more than registration. We urge each parishioner to prayerfully commit to full stewardship, including a generous financial commitment to sustain the parishes that sustain our faith.
- When diocesan leaders face budget and personnel constraints, we know from experience that *prior* dialogue and input from the affected parish communities are most helpful. Trust and good will are maintained when communication is open and forthcoming. *Long before* any closure decisions are made, diocesan leaders should establish and maintain dialogue with parishes that might be affected.
- We applaud the innovative approaches that some dioceses have taken to support parishes ministering to the African American community, and we ask diocesan leaders who are considering parish closures or mergers to consider creative solutions, to address financial and administrative obligations while sustaining the affected faith community.
- Finally, when closure of a traditionally African American church is unavoidable, we strongly urge the local church to plan for the pastoral after-care of those who have lost their parish. After the closure, the Church must work with a spirit of true communion, enabling the faithful who were accustomed to a traditionally African American parish to find a new parish home *that they can make their own*.

IN A WORD at 30!

IN A WORD has begun its 30th year of publishing! Since our beginnings in 1983 our publication has reached out to people far and wide. Anything of importance for the African American Catholic community has been highlighted through articles and photos. Countless numbers of people have given their support and encouragement. It has been a good 30 years.

When we began back in 1983 the intent was to continue the contributions of the *St. Augustine Messenger* that had been published by the Divine Word Missionaries for many years. In 1982 Provincial Terry Steib, SVD, now Bishop of Memphis, Tennessee, saw a need to involve the Southern Province in the field of mass communication. His vision is best summed up in an article he wrote in 1993 on the 20th anniversary of *IN A WORD*.



First issue cover photo - 1983

REFLECTIONS OF BISHOP STEIB

(written on the 20th anniversary of *IN A WORD* in 1993)

I remember it well: *IN A WORD* began with a dream about how the Divine Word Missionaries in the Southern Province could proclaim once again the Good News through the *Divine Word Messenger*. It was a dream about a new magazine by which we Divine Word Missionaries could bring the Divine Word to a people filled with hope, could serve a people walking with new-found dignity, could lead a people who were now free to dream about their future in the Church because we had dared to dream for and with them.

That dream was slowly nurtured into a vision in the chapel at St. Augustine's Seminary in Bay St. Louis, MS, on the levee of the Mississippi River and on the sands of the Gulf Coast. The dream came to life on many walks around the grounds of St. Augustine's Seminary.

The dream became real when Father Jim Pawlicki, SVD and I took a long walk and spoke about changing the format of the *Divine Word Messenger* and once again re-entering the Southern Province and the Black Apostolate into the world of communication. Questions were asked: how could we touch the lives of the people we serve through the



Divine Word? How could we lift up their spirits by the words we pen? How could we have a positive influence in their lives by word and example, by preaching and teaching, in a word? How could we write to them without a clutter of words? Thus, *IN A WORD* was the response to the questions.

Twenty years later, by God's grace and the diligent work of many dedicated persons, *IN A WORD* continues to spread the Good News of the Word-made-flesh. It tells the story of how African Americans are about the mission of spreading the Word. It inspires and brings hope. It helps others to become better people because of the written word. *IN A WORD* allows us to view ourselves in pictures and in words. It permits us to see our hopes and dreams etched into the eyes and faces of our people. It graces us with the wisdom and knowledge gleamed from the African American experiences.

IN A WORD has connected African Americans to their Catholic faith and to each other. May it continue to reflect the faces that look like us – or as Cathy Green-Miner puts it: “Young, old, vibrant, make, female, rich, poor, downtrodden, rejoicing, waiting, crying, hurting, giving, forgiving, and full of faith.”

IN A WORD has brought the gifts of our African American heritage to our attention. May it continue to tell the story that we belong and do contribute to the family we call Church.

in a word or two

Remembering IN A WORD at 30! we feature the front cover from September 1985 issue. This photo eventually received an award from the Catholic Press Association. Color photos would begin to be used in 1992. Moret Press of New Orleans, Louisiana was our faithful printer until Hurricane Katrina destroyed their shop in 2005.

The National Day of Prayer for the African American and African Family will take place February 3, 2013. Theme this year is **GOD HAS SOMETHING FOR US TO DO!** See flyer attached at www.solidgroundministry.com



Retired Auxiliary Bishop Moses B. Anderson, SSE, the first black bishop for the Archdiocese of Detroit, died on New Year's Day. He was 84.

Bishop Anderson served the Archdiocese of Detroit from 1983, when he was ordained a bishop by Cardinal Edmund C. Szoka, until his retirement in 2003. He was known especially for his humble service in international and interracial ministry.

Moses Anderson was born in Selma, Ala., on Sept. 9, 1928, into the Baptist faith before his conversion to Catholicism in 1949. He was ordained a priest nine years later into the Vermont-based Society of St. Edmund before later being appointed auxiliary bishop of Detroit by Pope John Paul II.

During active ministry, Bishop Anderson oversaw regions that included 63 churches within the archdiocese and was pastor of Precious Blood Parish — now merged as part of St. Peter Claver Parish — in the city of Detroit from 1992 to 2001. He continued to assist with confirmations and special Masses after retirement.

Bishop Anderson served most of his years as auxiliary bishop under Cardinal Adam J. Maida, who was archbishop from 1990 until 2009. The cardinal said service to those in need marked Bishop Anderson's many years in ministry. He would often sing a hymn with his wonderful voice during his sermons.

Bishop Anderson took an active interest in African and African-American culture. He visited the west African nation of Ghana several times during his ministry, and was honored by being named a tribal chief in the country's Ashanti tribe in 1990. An avid admirer of the arts, Bishop Anderson also donated some of his personal collection to various Catholic colleges and universities over the years, including Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Madonna University and Xavier University in New Orleans.

Father Armand Francis Theriault, SVD passed away on December 27, 2012 at the Divine Word Residence in Techy, Illinois. "Father T" as he was affectionately called was born January 21, 1928 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He joined the Society of the Divine Word and was ordained at St. Augustine Seminary in Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi in 1955. His long ministry in the Southern Province of the Society of the Divine Word included being associate pastor at St. Rose de Lima Church in Bay Saint Louis; St. Francis Church in Yazoo City, Mississippi; St. Nicholas Church in St. Louis, Missouri. He was pastor at St. Augustine church in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1976 he returned to St. Augustine in Bay Saint Louis to serve as rector of St. Augustine Seminary. He remained rector until 1985. He spent time in St. Martinville, Louisiana for one year and then became pastor of two churches in Delcambre, Louisiana, St. Martin de Porres and Our Lady of the Lake. He then returned to St. Rose de Lima Church in Bay Saint Louis where he had begun his ministry and was pastor there until retirement in 2002.



His entire ministry was marked by compassion and care for people. He was part of many ecumenical groups, a member of NAACP, and extremely proud to be a fourth degree member of the Knights of Peter Claver. He was a vocal advocate for justice and equality and spared no energy during the civil rights era. Fr. Theriault not only spoke his beliefs; he lived them. He was once jailed for violation of Jim Crow laws. He went to an African-American barber for a haircut. Police officers asked him to leave the shop, and when he refused, the police escorted him out and into jail, where he stayed until his pastor could post his bail.

With his engaging personality "Father T" was well known by many. Everyone who has been touched by his life has a story to tell of this charismatic priest. He was active in youth ministry throughout his life as he was also a teacher in the Catholic schools, a coach, director of youth center, and even bus driver.

His work, personality, cheerful and outgoing nature will be sorely missed. Yet, his spirit lives on in the hearts of untold numbers of individuals far and wide.

He was a legend in his own time and as Father Gus Wall, SVD said so well in his Facebook tribute to "Father T"..."well done, Frank...well done".

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 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.

IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center. Rev. James Pawlicki, S.V.D., Director and Editor; Cathy Green-Miner, office manager; Father Brendan Murphy, SVD consultant.

Correspondence to Media Production Center, 199 Seminary Drive, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520, 228-467-1097, Cell phone 504-908-6343. Electronic messages to our Internet address, editor@inaword.com.

IN A WORD is not published during July and August.

Web page can be found at <http://www.inaword.com>