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The Negro in America, 1958.

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#### THE NEGRO IN AMERICA

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A Study of Rights and Responsibilities

The Temple November 23, 1958

#### Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

It has been said that Communism and color are the two most serious challenges which face the American people. Certainly these two problems are not unrelated. For what success Communist propagands has achieved in the once-colonial nations of the world is in no small measure due to the failure of America to abide by its pledge of equal justice and equal rights for every citisen. The wast majority of the population of our world is today non-white. These people are determined no longer to dance to the tune of the white piper. They demand independence, respect for their judgment, the privilege of selfdetermination in matters of national destiny. They — even the most honest and well-intentioned among them — have good reason to pause and to consider deliberately the role of America internally towards her own citizens before they accept the rights and the propaganda and the aid and the political ambitions of America externally. For unfortunately, though Communist agents have much exaggerated our race relations pattern, there is sufficient substances to these charges to make even the best intentioned man pause and

# take stock. Consider the sad chronicle. The internment of our Japanese-Americans in prison camps during the Second World War. The exile of the American Indian to out-of-the-way, quickly forgotten reservations. The social and economic abuse of the Mexican migratory worker. The callous, heartless, unplanned ingestion of the Puerto Rican cheap labor. And as the <u>lait motif</u>

of this chronicle there is the trumpet clarion call which brings attention to this history -- the cacklings of Jim Crow, the caterwaulings of the Southern demagogue, the crude racial chauvinism of the White Citizens Council, the self praise of the self styled hero of Little Rock, We have good reason for self reproach when we consider the history of race relations in our own country. None of us can but understand how it is that our own record in this field is the most serious obstacle to the acceptance by other nations of the world of the doctrines of democracy and civil rights which we try to espouse and to champion.

The problems of race relations have the most ancient history of any problem which faces the American people. In 1619 twenty slaves were sold on the block in Jamestown colony. By the year 1625 a conscience-stricken slave owner had freed his first human chattel. From that day to this convenience and callousness have warred within the American breast against our conscience and our knowledge of the right. During the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the slave trade was carried out unabated. Cargo after cargo of human misery was brought to our American shores. But in the same period the Society of Friends, the Quakers, and such redoubtable Puritan ministers as Cotton Mather and John Elliott spoke out in unmistakable tenes against the injustice and immorality of human slavery and underscored that in the Christian tradition all men are equal before God. The Constitutional Convention bowed to the needs of accomodation, of temporization, and they said that only three-fifths of the slaves were to be granted representation. The Bill of Rights of our Constitution spoke out on the fundamental truth that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. By 1817 the men of good will and of conscience in our

-2-

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nation had succeeded in banning any further importation of slaves, in outlawing the slave traffic. But in the 1820's and 1830's the fugitive slave laws were harshened, and in the Carolinas a slave revolt, an attempt of the slaves to win their own freedom, was brutally and bloodily put down. We fought a Civil War here in America to root out the weed of human enslavement. But after victory more lethargy set in, and we quickly allowed the South to slip back into familiar patterns of old prejudices and old injustices. What I am saying is this: America has always been conscious of the right. We have known that God and truth bespeak human equality. We have never argued with the principle that justice must be color blind. But unfortunately in practice we have equivocated and we have temporized and we have allowed our needs to accomodate the social fabric, to undermine fundamental national principles. But even in moments of self rebuke we are never to forget that America was the first of the great nations of the world in modern times to outlaw the slave trade, that alone of the great nations of the world we have been willing to fight, brother against brother, for the sake of those not our brothers in flesh, but in spirit. That we have succeeded in our Federal Government in gaining complete equality of employment and of security and of job opportunity for men of all colors of skin and of all creeds. American progress in race relations has been slow. Privation has continued. Nevertheless we ought not to forget that we have not allowed the rationalizations

-3-

of the racially prejudiced to become the sanctified principles of law or the sanctified teachings of the conventional customs and mores of the marketplace. We have known that which was right. The pity is that we have not always acted upon that knowledge.

Indeed, it is only in the South that there has not been even a begrudging

approval of the doctrine of human equality. The last century has seen a vast improvement in the lot of all the citizens of our nation, and throughout our country in matters of employment, in matters of education, in matters of financial prosperity, in matters of recreation, in matters of housing, all of our citizens, black and white alike, have moved forward greatly towards an enjoyment of the American prosperity. Only in the South has the last century been a century of regression rather than of progress. Only in the South has the wall of separation between the races been raised ever higher. For after the brief and chaotic period of reconstruction the South quickly set about to strip its Negro citizens of their vote and of their representation. Through grandfather clauses and literacy tests, through the poll tax and through the subterfuge of the all-white primary, the South quickly took away from the Negro his vote, his right to be heard in the form of politics. The South seized upon the "separate but equal" formula of the Placy against Ferguson decision of 1896. In order to justify not only segregation in the public schools, but the maintenance of the Negro in the condition of illiteracy, hence of subordination, by providing him a school system which was not only separate and minimal but separate and miserable. In every area of life -- in public transportion, in recreation, in medical care, in housing -- Jim Crow has been the standard by which Southern laws have been framed and Southern codes have been

-4-

established. Dr. John Franklin has published a short history of racial segregation in the United States. It is published by the American Academy of Political and Social Science. In this history of segregation he has spoken of the wall of <u>apartheid</u> which has grown and grown high, especially in the half century between 1875 and 1925, in these terms: The law had created two worlds, so separate that communication between them was almost impossible. Separation bred suspicion and hatred, fostered rumors and misunderstanding, and created conditions that made extremely difficult any steps toward its reduction. Legal segregation was so complete that a Southern white minister was moved to remark that it "made of our eating and drinking, our buying and selling, our labor and housing, our rents, our railroads, our orphanages and prisons, our recreations, our very institutions of religion, a problem of race as well as a problem of maintenance."

Yet law was only one part of the mechanism keeping the races segregated. Numerous devices were employed to perpetuate segregation in housing, education, and places of public accommodation even in communities where civil rights statutes forbade such practices. Patriotic, labor. and business organizations kept alive the "Lost Cause" and all that it stood for, including the subordination of the Negro. Separate Bibles for oath taking in courts of law, separate doors for whites and Negroes, separate elevators and stairways, separate toilets existed everywhere, even where the law did not require them. Finally, there was the individual assumption of responsibility for keeping the Negro in his place, such as the white man who placed a rod across the boat to segregate his Negro fishing companion while they ate lunch, and the archivist of a Southern state who cleared a room of manuscripts, ordered a special key, and assigned an attendant to serve a visiting Negro scholar who would otherwise have had to use the regular research room, from which he was not barred by law.

By the middle of the twentieth century the pattern of segregation was as irregular as it was complex. Every conceivable form of segregation had been evolved, although one would have had to visit many places to observe all the variations. The wall of segregation had become so formidable, so impenetrable, apparently, that the entire weight of the American tradition of equality and all the strength of the American constitutional system had to be brought to bear in order to make even the slightest crack in it.

Unfortunately, history belies the claim of those who say that if left

alone the South would have slowly, gradually achieved a condition of

parity, of equality between her peoples. The contrary is true. Stubbornly,

-5-

9

intractably the South has opposed every move intended to give to her Negro citizens their just place in the American sun. For over twenty years they delayed in the courts the attempts of Southern Negroes to enroll their best young people in the graduate professional schools of state-supported universities. For twenty years they delayed and they procrastinated. For fifteen years they delayed and procrastinated against legislation intended to outlaw Jim Crow in interstate transportation. And when the Supreme Court finally struck down this legislation as unconstitutional, the South has turned to suasion and to violence and intimidation in order to nullify in fact what has been negated in law. And when the Supreme Court struck down one after another the subterfuges by which the South had disenfranchised its Negro the legislatures and the lawyers of the South combined to devise new subterfuges, new legal technicalities in order to prevent the Negro from voting. And the ingenuity of these new subterfuges would do justice to a much more worthy cause. And when the Supreme Court declared in May of 1954 that segregation in the school system was essentially unequal and unjust, it must be eradicated and done away with, the South has not met this decision with any desire to achieve it in time, to put it into practice, but rather with massive resistance and with a doctrine of interposition. Unfortunately, history belies the claim that had it not been for economic pressure and governmental Federal prodding the South would of its own good will have worked, slowly perhaps but deliberately, towards the equality of all of her peoples. Senator John Fulbright of Arkansas is known as an internationally minded statesman. He is considered to be broadminded and liberal. He has full knowledge of the frailty and the weakness of the human being and sepcially of the Southerner with his legacy of prejudice. But unfortunately he has not the same knowledge that it is the essential truth of life. the human burden upon each of us to overcome our weaknesses and to seek to better ourselves rather than to roil and to remain in our prejudices and in our hates. Senator Fulbright entered a frief of amicus curiae to the Supreme Court when the Board of Education appealed from Little Rock for a delay in the

-6-

desegregation order. And I should like to read to you a section from this brief because I believe that it will show you the despair of the South -of the best minds in the South -- the all-too-ready acceptance of their own frailty and their unwillingness to accept the responsibility of strength rather than of weakness. Senator Fulbright wrote:

The people of Arkansas endure against a background not without certain pathological aspects. They are marked in some ways by a strange disproportion inherited from the age of slavery. The whites and Negroes of Arkansas are equally prisoners of their environment. No one knows what either of them might have been under other circumstances. Certainly, no one of them has ever been free with respect to racial relationships in the sense that the Vermonter, say, has been free. Each society is conditioned by the other's presence. Each carries a catalog of things not to be mentioned. Each moves through an intricate ritual of evasions, of make-believe, and suppressions. In Arkansas one finds a relationship among men without counterpart on this continent, except in similar southern States, and all this is the legacy of an ancient and melancholy history.

Under the circumstances, it is inevitable that there should have come into being what one might call a southern mind. And it is a grave error, it seems to me, to fail to realize that there is a southern mind.....

History tells us that race memories long endure. They are perpetuated in myths, in monuments, and in a mother's lullaby. They are sentimental and emotional and when stirred up, they become irrational.

We are confronted here with a problem, novel and unprecedented in the history of our country and extraordinarily comples. In our congenital optimism, we Americans believe, or affect to believe, that social questions of the greatest difficulty may be solved through the discovery and application of a sovereign remedy that will forever dispose of the problem. Yet all this flies in the face of human experience. Thus, for example, a so-called Jewish problem has endured for more than 2,000 years. The Roman Catholic-Protestant problem has similarly endured since the Reformation, and one might add the Islam-Christian problem and the Hindu-Muslim problem, among many others, which plague various groups of men in this and in other countries. Millions of lives have been sacrificed to this problem and the end is not yet.

-7-

I would suggest, then, that the problem of school integration in Arkansas is more likely — bearing in mind that flesh and blood is weak and frail — to yield to the slow conversion of the human heart than to the remedies of a more urgent nature. Unfortunately, the heart of the South has been more cynical in its outlook than conversionistic, more self-seeking than conscious of the error of its ways. Unfortunately, unprodded the southern heart has not taken away a single brick from the wall of separation between the peoples. And no one argues with the southern plea for time. Time is of the essence in any problem of accomodation between peoples. It is the greatness of our country that we have grown into the present national well-being slowly through a process of gradual efflorescence rather than through a series of chaotic, self-destroying revolutions. And yet the plea for time must not be allowed to mask a plea for the opportunity to procrastinate. But we must demand of the southern man of good will the honesty of intent. a pledge of common purpose. The time will be his, but he must first evidence to us that his pleas for time are not the cynical promptings of men determined that, given an opportunity, they will undermine, they will sabotage the stated purpose of our law and the stated principle of our moral code, This we must command of them. This we must demand. I pray that there may be men of the South who have a heart which is slowly yielding to the pressures of conversion. Much has been made recently of the development in the South of a new temper. Mr. Harry Ashmore, editor from Little Rock, the very citadel where Faubus has muttered forth his imprecations against the Negro race, has spoken in his book An Epitaph for Dixie of the many

-8-

pressures which have served in his mind to bring about a broadening of outlook among the southern whites. He spoke of the influence of the depression and of the social vision of the New Deal. He speaks of the Hitlerian war and of the realization by many that if we fight injustice abroad and racism abroad we cannot tolerate injustice and racism at home. He speaks of economic revival of the South and of the arrival there as

part of this movement of new blood trained in a freer climate. He speaks of the broadening aspects of travel, of military service, of education in universities besides those of southern cities. And he says that all this has brought a leavening to the southern spirit, that they are now more tolerant, more willing to experiment pragmatically towards a condition of racial change. I pray that this may be so. Certainly it must be so if the social achievements of the last decade are to have any lasting value. For the wall of segregation in the South must be removed and reduced by southern hands if it is to remain rubble. But unfortunately, in all candor I must also say this: that if a new southern mind and southern leadership is indeed developing, its most conspicuous characteristic to date has been its utter silence. Possibly the most happy auspice for the future lies in the development of an activist and dedicated and able Negro leadership. These men are determined to win for their people their fundamental rights, and they have determined to win these rights for their people peacefully and legally. The mob chooses the mask of soiled linen. These Negro leaders have chosen to plead their cause publicly in open debate, and they stake their future on the educability of all peoples. The mob resorts to violence, these men resort to prayer and to moral persuasion. Indeed, I take it to be one of the most miraculous events of the twentieth century that, considering the tensions and the hurts that must sear within

-9-

the Negro heart, the leadership of the Negro people has spoken in terms of peace and love and accomodation and not in terms of violence and outbreak. Consider a man of the stature of Martin Luther King, leader of the bus boycott in Montgomery. In the year of that boycott his house was bombed, and his church and the churches of three of his fellow ministers in the city were bombed. His life was threatened many times. The safety of his

family was in jeopardy. He was constantly harassed by midnight telephone calls. He was imprisoned from time to time. He was made to suffer a thousand daily indignities, as were his friends and his co-workers and his people. And yet this man and all of the leadership of that movement preached a doctrine of Ghandi-like, Tolstoian non-viclence. They sought to return love for hate. They accepted abuse with silent dignity. In all of the year of the boycott the Negro did not resort in a single instance to an act of mob violence, though God alone knows how many provocations there must have been. These leaders are keeping the natural outbursts of their people in check. They are determined to work if possible with men of good will throughout our nation for the good of all, and they seek their rights in a way which must command the respect of all. Listen, if you please, to the statement of victory of Martin Luther King once the Supreme Court had ruled that segregated seating on the buses of Mongomery was illegal. You will not find in this text any trace of vindictiveness, any of the natural exuberance that the man might feel after a long and difficult and sometimes bloody struggle has been won. Listen to the spirit -- profoundly gentle, great spirit -- of this speech:

For more than twelve months now, we, the Negro citizens of Montgomery, have been engaged in a nonviolent protest against injustices and indignities experienced on city buses. We came to see that, in the long run, it is more honorable to walk in dignity than to ride in humiliation. So in a quiet dignified manner, we decided to substitute tired feet for tired souls, and walk the streets

-10-

of Montgomery until the sagging walls of injustice had been crushed ....

Now our faith seems to have been vindicated. This morning the long awaited mandate from the United States Supreme Court concerning bus segregation came to Montgomery. This mandate expresses in terms that are crystal clear that segregation in public transportation is both legally and sociologically invalid.....

I cannot close without giving just a word of caution. Our experience, our growth during this past year of nonviolent protest has been such that we cannot be satisfied with a court "victory" over our white brothers. We must respond to the decision with an understanding of those who have oppressed us and with an appreciation of the new adjustments that the court order poses for them. We must be able to face up honestly to our own shortcomings. We must act in such a way as to make possible a coming together of white people and colored people on the basis of a real harmony of interests and understanding. We seek an integration based on mutual respect.

This is the time that we must evince calm dignity and wise restraint. Emotion must not run wild. Violence must not come from any of us, for if we become victimized with violent intents, we will have walked in vain, and our twelve months of glorious dignity will be transformed into an eve of gloomy catastrophe. As we go back to the buses let us be loving enough to turn an enemy into a friend. We must now move from protest to reconciliation. It is my firm conviction that God is working in Montgomery. Let all men of goodwill, both Negro and white, continue to work with Him. With this dedication we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man to the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice.

For such a speech to come from a community of white violence for to bespeak the heart of the "inferior" segment of that community must certainly prod the man of good will in the South to again find his tongue, to recognize that he has so much more in common with the great-heartedness and the civic spirit of such men than he has with the roughneck, semi-literate, prejudiced rabble which seems now to control and to determine their local politics. I pray that men of good will from both peoples will in the South find their common bond of community feeling and responsibility that they may work together to not only eradicate injustice but to eradicate that spirit of violence which is incubating now in the south of our land. And I pray for each and every one of us that we may in our own hearts, in our own community, recognize that man must be judged not by his birth but by his worth, that man should be accepted in our society not on the basis of his color but on the basis of his character. that in questions of neighborhood, questions of education, questions of the friendships which we covet for our children, in questions of the society which we sustain for comminis.

-11-

ourselves, questions of politics, of economics, of religion -- in all these areas we begin to cease to see the color of a man's skin and see again the color of a man's heart, the skill of a man's fingers, the talent of a man's mind. The Negro people is the last of the great sub-cultures polity to seek and win for himself a place in the American sun. He was brutalized by the brutality of slavery. His progress has been retarded by a series of legal and de facto injustices in every aspect and area of his life. Where a member of his group fails to abide by the mores of our society we must in large measure accept the blame, for it is we who have consigned that man to live in the dim light of the outskirts of our society. And when a Negro has achieved greatly and has won for himself skill and professional ability and has made a contribution to our community or to our nation his triumph is single-handed, almost. We cannot accept the accolade of support and of help, for our support has been niggardly and our help all too often has been non-existent. And yet the very fact of his achievement should testify to us the greatness of the achievement which the Negro people, liberated and educated, will bring certainly to our American way of life, for they will fructify with ideas and enrich with their talents every area of our culture in which they are allowed to have their just and proper place. The road which we must travel will be a long and tortuous road. It will require understanding and conviction and moderation from all

-12-

parties. But our goal is an unmistakable goal, and the fruits of gaining that goal are unmistakable. And I am firmly convinced the American people, in their honesty of purpose, in their understanding of that which is morally right, in their fundamental adherence to the basic God-given dictates of human equality, will in time achieve together a society of true brotherhood such as our world has never seen, such as our faith preaches and our God commands.

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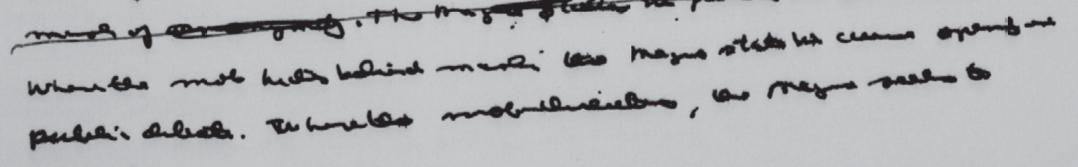
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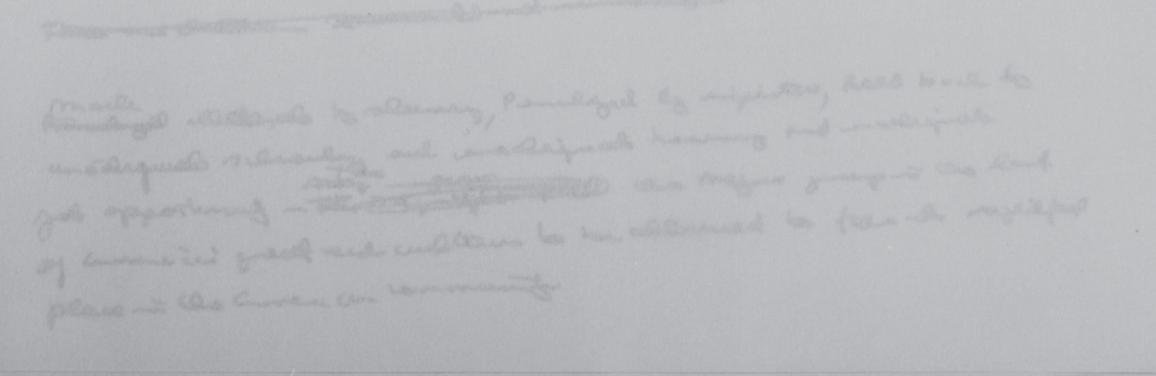
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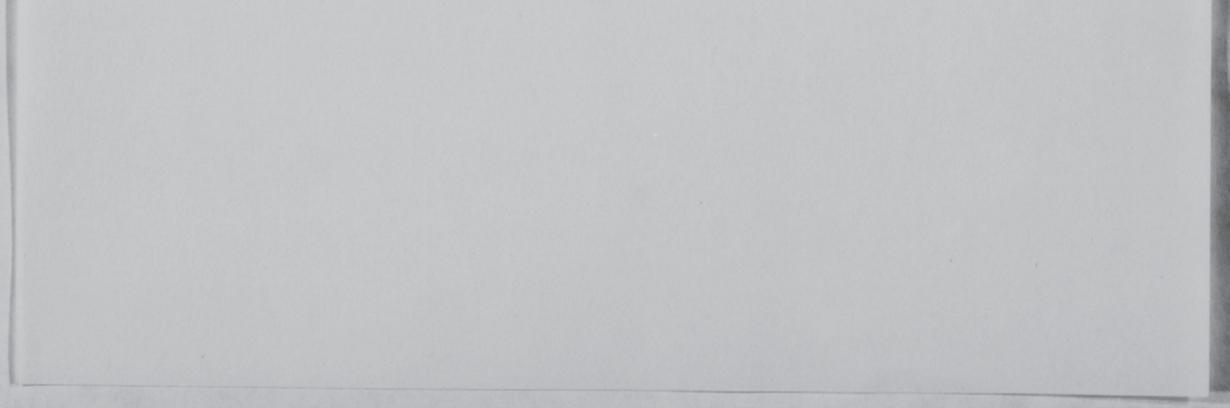
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# Facilities

The beautiful campus of John Carroll University will be the site of The Ohio Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice. The University is located in University Heights, an eastern suburb of Cleveland. All workshops, conferences and meetings will be centered in the spacious new Student Activities Building. All meals will be served in the cafeteria, located in the same building. Mass will be celebrated in Gesu Church located on the edge of the campus.

John Carroll University is easily accessible from downtown Cleveland by bus, and from all principal highways.

The Conference Banquet, with Jackie Robinson as the featured speaker, will take place in the Rainbow Room of the Pick-Carter Hotel in downtown Cleveland.

## Housing

One of the interesting aspects of the Conference will be the lodging of visitors and delegates in "Homes of Hospitality", homes of Clevelanders interested in demonstrating Christian interracial living in action. All housing assignments will be made on a "first come-first served" basis. Early registrants will be assigned to a "Home of Hospitality" if so desired. All others will be assigned to the Pick-Carter Hotel, one of Cleveland's outstanding downtown hotels. So mail your registration card immediately!



The Conference planning committee made every effort to make this the most economical conference you've ever attended, without sacrificing quality. All the cost details are on the enclosed registration card, check your needs and mail it at once ... you're on your way to spend a week-end you'll never forget! "It is impossible for any good Catholic not to be on the side and in the forefront in the struggle for interracial justice for all men are brothers."

-Francis Cardinal Spellman

Ohio Catholic Conference for Internacial Justice June 15-16-17, 1962 • Cleveland, Ohio The words on the cover of this folder, from an address by Cardinal Spellman more than 10 years ago, remind us that good Catholics do not have a choice of sides in the struggle for interracial justice.

Good Catholics belong on the side of interracial justice --- and in the forefront.

This is why the first Ohio Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice is being held. On June 15-16-17, some good Catholics and others interested in interracial justice are meeting on the campus of John Carroll University in Cleveland for a weekend of ideas, insights and inspiration.

Theme of the convention will be "The New Community". In obedience to the admonition contained in "Mater et Magistra" we are pledged to a renewed and deeper theology underscoring the social teaching of the church with a view toward their ultimate application in the everyday community interracial situations and to affirm publicly the unity of human society.

Workshops will be conducted on: Intergroup Organizations in the New Community, Psychology of Race Prejudice, The Negro and the Catholic Church, The Racially Changing Parish, Teaching Human Relations, Civil Rights, Housing in Suburbia and the Central City, Catholic Interracial Council Leadership and Programming.

There will be a Social Action Technique Clinic and general meetings at which we will hear people who are experts and dedicated in the field of human relations and the Catholic lay apostolate.

Each day of the convention will begin with our participation at Holy Mass in the beautiful and grand Gesu Church.

One of the highlights of the convention will be the lodging of visitors and delegates in "The Homes of Hospitality" (Cleveland families acting as hosts). The banquet dedicated to the newly canonized St. Martin De Porres will be another highlight which will be addressed by Jackie Robinson, a nationally known figure in the field of race relations.

Why don't you come? The weekend will be most rewarding--Spiritually, Intellectually and Socially.

Details of the conference--program, costs, housing and such--are on other pages of this folder. There's also a registration card. Please fill out the card and let us know in advance that you are coming.

## **Program of Events**

### Friday, June 15

4:00-8:00 P.M. Registration, Student Activities Building.

8:00 P.M. General session, Invocation, Remarks

by the Chairman and announcements.

9:30 P.M. Reception. Host: The St. Augustine Guild of Cleveland.

Saturday, June 16

5:30-9:00 A.M. Masses for attending priests-Gesu Chapel.

7:30 A.M. Registration at Information desk.

8:30 A.M. Holy Mass, sermon--Gesu Church.

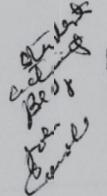
9:30 A.M. Breakfast, Cafeteria.

10:15 A.M. Opening of Conference.

Prayer. Welcome, John Carroll University,

Diocese of Cleveland, City of Cleveland.

Purpose of Conference, Announcements, Explanation of workshops.



10:45 A.M. Workshops:

Intergroup Organizations Psychology of Race Prejudice The Negro and the Catholic Church The Racially Changing Parish

12:30 P.M. Lunch, cafeteria.

2:00 P.M. General session, speaker.

2:30 P.M. Workshops:

Teaching Human Relations Civil Rights Practices in Ohio Housing in Suburbia and the Center city.

Special Workshop for CIC leaders.

3:45 P.M. Break

4:00-5:30 Workshops continued.

7:30 P.M. Conference Banquet, Rainbow Room

Pick-Carter Hotel, principal speaker,

Jackie Robinson.

### Sunday, June 17

8:00 A.M. Holy Mass, sermon, Gesu Church.

9:00 A.M. Breakfast, Cafeteria. (RIGHT CONSCIENCE

10:00 A.M. General session, speakers RELIGIOUS RESPONS-RADDI SILVER ?? IS MINDLES (IBILITY. 11:00 A.M. Break.

11:15 A.M. Clinic on Effective Race Relations--

Methods and Techniques. Closing Remarks.

12:30 P.M. Brunch, cafeteria.

1:00 P.M. Panel: Your Involvement in the New

Community.

3:00 P.M. Tea.

(All events in the Student Activities Building unless otherwise noted)

Joseph newman. Chairman