

We must carry on Cunningham's cause

FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



REV. TIMOTHY F. BABCOCK

Just about a month ago, the community of metropolitan Detroit observed the death of one of its members who had made a major contribution to the well-being of our society as a whole, and especially to the poor and underprivileged members of our society in a special way. A special of Fr. William Cunningham, pastor of the Church of the Madonna in Detroit, and founder and executive director of FOCUS:HOPE. The outpouring of appreciation expressed at the time of his death was an indication of the many ways that Fr. Cunningham and his ministry had "made a difference" in 30-plus years of service. It was with pride and appreciation that the Catholic community of the Archdiocese of Detroit joined with the community-at-large in honoring one of its own.

Fr. Cunningham made it very clear, in his final days, however, that what was important was not that he be remembered and honored, but that the work he had begun should continue and grow. Many people, both leaders and ordinary citizens, agree with this hope and many will dedicate themselves to trying to continue the vision and opportunity that FOCUS:HOPE offers to so many people.

During the time of Fr. Cunningham's funeral, however, I was remembering that Fr. Cunningham and what he stood for, was not always so popular in metropolitan Detroit. Yes, Fr. William Cunningham was about feeding the poor, and developing marvelous programs to train city youth for productive careers and lives. But Fr. William Cunningham was also about racial harmony, and about strongly opposing segregation and racism in all its forms. The special symbol of FOCUS:HOPE continues to proclaim that what his work and mission was, and is, about is bringing people of diverse races together. He not only wished for this, and prayed about it, but challenged all of us to live it. This message was not, and is not, always popular and accepted by many of us.

One of the FOCUS:HOPE events that Fr. Cunningham helped to put still takes place today, is the annual "Walk for Justice" in October. In its earlier days, this was called a "Walk for Brotherhood." It was a walk to bring together people who had moved apart. People who participated in the walk sought not only to raise money for FOCUS:HOPE and its wonderful programs, but to express a willingness to reach across boundaries and divisions to heal some of the hurt and deprivation that so many in our society experience. It is not accident, even to this day, the Walk for Justice takes a path that goes through the area where the 1967 riots started. It is a sign of hope.

What Fr. William Cunningham stood for will continue if all of us are willing to embrace not only what he did, but what he stood for. A commitment to justice, brotherhood and sisterhood on many levels, care for the poor, respect for one another regardless of race or creed — these are the legacies, and this is the challenge that Fr. William Cunningham leaves with us.

Fr. Cunningham also showed us that these high aspirations and goals can only be reached with hard work and commitment. Prayer is important as a foundation, but this must be followed with sweat and work. The impact Fr. Cunningham had on our community called us out of our "safe zones." It called us to reach out to one another, and most especially to the poor. It calls each of us to do what we can to make a difference for racial harmony.

Fr. Cunningham's contribution was awesome, and our community will be greatly better for it. It will only be truly honored, however, if we pick up this often unpopular torch. This testimony, as Fr. Cunningham taught us so powerfully, is exemplified when we:

Honor the worthy of the heritage this great servant of God left. The Rev. Timothy F. Babcock is minister of St. Andrew Catholic Church, 1400 Ingleside, Rochester. You can reach him at the church: (248) 651-7486.

Beliefs & Values

Temple archive moves toward 21st century

RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

Sitting among an orderly assemblage of historic artifacts is an unopened soda pop bottle encircled with a Coke logo in English and Hebrew — its contents half evaporated with time.

Like the aging treasures that surround it, the bottle offers a glimpse of Metro Detroit's early Jewish history to inquisitive individuals visiting the Rabbi Leo M. Franklin Archive at Temple Beth El.

"It's so interesting," said archivist Heidi Christein. "It's better than fiction. This is real life, immediate, you-can-reach-out-and-touch-it history."

As the first full-time archivist to serve the Bloomfield Township temple, Christein has begun the arduous task of organizing, describing and marking the vast collection of manuscript materials, photographs, glass lantern slides, microfilm and audio and video materials stored in the windowless room on the temple's second floor. The arduous process is expected to take two years.

"Since Temple Beth El is the oldest (Jewish) congregation in Michigan, there is 150 years worth of history here," said Christein, who has already begun logging entries on the computer. "I was amazed at the range of materials they collected."

There were only 60 Jews among the city of Detroit's population of 21,000 when Temple Beth El was founded as an Orthodox community. The adoption of by-laws for Reform Judaism six years later prompted a handful of members to split off in 1961 and form Congregation Zedek, a Conservative congregation now located in Southfield and West Bloomfield.

What makes Saturday Night at Troy unique?

It gives the attendees the chance to meet new friends and get to know their neighbors, allows them to enjoy upbeat music with a contemporary flavor, has a come-as-you-are-dressed policy,



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE J. MCKEE

Historic collection: Archivist Heidi Christein of Bloomfield Township holds the 19th Century Marriage Certificate she discovered within the 200 liner feet of manuscript materials available to researchers at the Rabbi Leo M. Franklin Archive at Temple Beth El.

Community involvement has been an integral part of congregational life at Temple Beth El, whose worshippers outgrew seven spiritual homes in the city before moving to Oakland County in 1973.

"It's a congregation that sunk roots deep into the community in which it was established," said Rabbi Daniel Syme, who leads the 1,600-family congregation along with Rabbi Daniel Castiglione, Cantor Stephen Dubov and Congregational Educator Joyce Seglin. "Someone had a sense that this would be a significant community, that preserves

its history would be important and that others would want to share that history and learn from the triumphs and mistakes."

"This is not just an archive about Beth El as a Jewish institution," continued Syme, who lives in West Bloomfield. "It is part and parcel of the history of Detroit and the state of Michigan."

Documents show that as early as 1861, Beth El women organized Soldiers' Aid Society of Detroit, the first of its kind in the nation. Seven years later, congregants established Detroit's

first philanthropic agencies, "The Gentlemen's Hebrew Relief Society" and "The Beth El Relief Society."

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin — the 11th rabbi after whom the archive was named — organized the United Jewish Charities in 1899, which later became the Jewish Welfare Federation. He established the first Interdenominational Community Thanksgiving Service in the country in 1902, and was the first in the nation to organize a student congregation on campus in 1914 at

See ARCHIVE, B9

Troy church offers Saturday night service

Due to the pace of our society, a new church service has been designed for those who can not or do not attend traditional Sunday morning church services.

What makes Saturday Night at Troy unique?

The Saturday Night at Troy service has met a tremendous need in our area," said Dr. Doug Schmidt, senior pastor.

"We've found in our research

gives the chance to hear positive, practical, biblical messages that will encourage, and provides top-notch child care through the guidance of dedicated child care workers all on Saturday Night.

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"We've found in our research

that's casual, the service is designed for you to come as you are whether you have never been to church or you've been a lifelong attendee."

Saturday Night at Troy meets at 3165 Rochester Road, one block north of Big Beaver Road (16 Mile Road) every Saturday night from 6-7 p.m. Call (248) 659-2015 for more information.

It's not just the dress style



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