

# RELIGION

## The Portland Black Catholic Lay Caucus

By SAM JACKSON, JR.

The present Portland Black Catholic Lay Caucus (PBCLC) was formed in July 1976. This was actually the second attempt at forming a Black Caucus in Portland. A few years earlier in the late sixties an attempt had failed. As I recall, Bill and Gladys McCoy were active in the earlier group. Some meetings were held at the Albina Art Center.

This was the time of the Civil Rights Movement in this country, and African Americans were struggling and pushing for their rights

everywhere.

So it was only natural that the American Roman Catholic Church not be exempt from the desire of Black people to be recognized, accepted and supported by the church. That is the reason that the National Office of Black Catholics (NOBC) was formed in 1970 with its headquarters in Washington, D.C. The three groups that supported and actively participated in the NOBC were the National Black Clergy Caucus (NBCC), the National Black Sisters Conference (NBSC), and the National Black Lay Catholic Caucus (NBLCC).

Fr. Bert Griffin of St. Andrew Parish provided the impetus and the encouragement for the eventual formation of the current caucus. In 1974, he provided the means for Harold and Barbara Sibley and myself to attend a conference of NBLCC in San Diego, CA. Then in 1976 a much larger group of ten (10) Black Catholics attended the NBLCC conference in Seattle, WA. The Attendees were from Immaculate Heart and St. Andrew parishes.

By this time, our enthusiasm was so great that we decided that we just had to have a Black Catholic Caucus here in Portland, OR.

The primary purpose of the Portland Black Catholic Lay Caucus is to coordinate the activities of Black Catholics and other individuals in all areas of the Catholic Church in the Church environment. We also attempt to provide direction and guidelines to the American Catholic Bishops in the fight against racism; train and sensitize White clergy and plan and develop programs and strategies that affect the Black community.

In 1980 we sponsored five (5) representatives to the First National Conference of NBLCC in Chicago, IL. In 1981, we were privileged to host the Western Regional Confer-

ence of NOBC.

PBCLC has never been a fund raising organization. Our funds have primarily been provided by the Archdiocese of Portland. In the beginning, we received a percentage of the annual NOBC sponsored Black Catholics Concerned (BCC) collection, which was discontinued. When the BCC collection was stopped, the Archdiocese began giving the PBCLC yearly grants of about \$3,000. In 1987, during Archbishop Levada's tenure, we began to receive extra funds to send delegates to the Black Catholic Congress, which takes place every five (5) years.

The PBCLC has been officially recognized as a diocesan lay organization for twenty-two (22) years and is listed in the Archdiocesan Catholic Directory. The following members of the Caucus have been active for most of those years. Teletha Benjamin, Francisca Gabriel, Edna Hicks, Patricia Ryan, Sr. Kathleen Stupfel, Mary Paris and Lavern Watson. We have had five (5) PBCLC presidents since 1976. They are Sam Jackson, Jr., Gail Washington-Johnson, Geraldine Chelsey-Mitchell, Lucinda Tate and Louis Boston.

## Fr. Chester Smith, SVD

■ Father Smith, is the co-author of *Bohhood to Manhood*

Father Smith is a member of the Society of the Divine Word, an international religious order working in sixty-five countries worldwide. Father Smith was ordained in 1988 in Chicago along with his twin brother (Father Charles A. Smith, Jr.), making African American history by becoming the first African twin priests to be ordained in the Roman Catholic Church here in America.

Father Smith has served in pastoral, education, retreat and revival ministries. A major focus of his ministry is African American youth development. He is founder of Ambassadors of the Word, a peer group ministry program that has taken African American youth to West Africa, Caribbean Islands, Belize (Central America), Brazil and Trinidad.

Father Smith is also a member of the Bowman-Francis Ministry Project. The project produces culturally relevant educational materials, fosters cross cultural awareness, and promotes afrocentric approaches to the challenges and problems facing the African American family and community.

Father Smith has worked as an organizational consultant and trainer with numerous community non-profit business organizations and city agencies.

Father Smith, is the co-author of *Bohhood to Manhood*, a rite of passage manual for African American boys (1993) and a manual for the African American family Kwanzaa celebration: *My Family Our Family* (1995).

Father Smith lectures nationally. He has made numerous conferences and media presentations on the use of the adolescent rites, and he participates with rites groups around the country.



Fr. Chester Smith, SVD

## Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church

The Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church annual Fall Revival will begin on Monday, November 2 through Friday, November 6 at 7:00p.m.

Dr. Londell Williams, Pastor of the Park Avenue Missionary Baptist Church, Texarkana, Arkansas will be the Guest Evangelist for the week.

We invite all to join us. The address is 4009 North Missouri Avenue.

Please contact Pastor Johnny Peck IV at (503) 249-0537 or the Church Secretary, Sister Maretha Hart at (503) 249-0377 if you need more information.



Dr. Londell Williams

## Introducing...

### Ministers' Wives and Ministers' Widows, Incorporated

Oregon State President, Mrs. Jean Brown  
202 N. E. Skidmore Street  
Portland, OR 97211  
(503) 284-7410

"Just What Does A Ministers' Wife Do Anyway?"

The purposes of this organization are to:

- unite ministers' wives and ministers' widows of various Christian denominations into one Christian fellowship.
- cultivate international good will, develop stronger interpersonal relationships, and foster a more effective communication network.
- promote cultural exchange with minister' wives and widows around the world.

#### Upcoming Event:

"Annual Harvest Tea" Hosted by Local Chapter  
Rose City Ministers' Wives and Ministers' Widows  
Date: November 8, 1998  
Time 2 p.m.

#### Next Meeting:

Date: November 14, 1998  
Place North Portland Bible College  
4905 N. Vancouver Ave.  
Portland, OR

(For location and more information please call)

If you've ever been at an NPBC banquet before, you'll welcome this announcement!  
You are cordially invited to come and enjoy the

North Portland Bible College  
1998 Annual Banquet  
November 13, 1998, at O'Callahan's  
6221 NE 82nd Avenue, at 7 p.m.

Theme:

"Gratefully Giving God the Glory"

Speaker: Dr. Lawrence J. Park

President and CEO of the Urban League of Portland

Enjoy the elegance of a banquet with the friendly excitement of a family reunion!  
No ticket. The meal is complimentary; a freewill offering will be received.  
Reservations necessary - Call 288-2919 during office hours.  
North Portland Bible College - 4905 N. Vancouver Avenue, Portland, OR 97217

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