

**Commission on Human Rights**  
of the  
**Catholic Committee of the  
South**



Its Principles,  
Objectives  
and  
Achievements



New Orleans  
Louisiana

**Q. What do you mean by "human rights"?**

A. Human rights have been, up to a point at least, defined for us in the Declaration of Independence where we may read that, "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

**Q. Does the term "human rights" have any further or deeper significance for those of us who are Catholics?**

A. It most certainly does. The very word "Catholic" means universal. It implies that the Church is for **all men**. Those of us who accept the truths and teachings of the Church of Christ are one in the Mystical Body of Christ; we are equal, because of our dignity as human beings and members of His Church, one with another. Be we White, Negro or Oriental, we are all brothers in Christ; and we have the **right** to be so regarded by our fellow-Catholics.

**Q. Is there any proof for your statements? I mean, are there any passages in Scripture which back up what you have said?**

A. There are many, but just a few should answer your question. For example:



A. The fact that you are living in the South really has little to do with the question; the fact that you are a Catholic has a great deal to do with it. You are obliged to love your Negro brother as a fellow member of the Mystical Body of Christ and you are further obliged to render him all the honor due him as a creature composed of body and soul and created in the image and likeness of God.

**Q. If all this is so, why are Negroes segregated in our Churches here in the South?**

A. Segregation of the races is not a recognized policy of the Catholic Church anywhere. It is the unhappy product of regional prejudices and traditions which the Church merely tolerated at one time because it was felt that conflicts and tensions might otherwise arise. But as recently as 1949 in the Synod of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, a decree was promulgated which states explicitly that Negroes must be allowed to worship in whatever church they please and must not be asked to sit in specially designated pews.

**Q. Are Catholics in New Orleans and elsewhere in the South doing anything to break down the prejudices against Negroes which prevail throughout the region?**

A. In the city of New Orleans there is an organization which is specifically

“For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another: in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans XII.1-5)

“ . . . and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” (John X.11-16)

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free; and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.” (Corinthians I,13)

**Q. Whenever a right is mentioned, we automatically think of an obligation. How does this follow here?**

A. That is simple enough. Just as each of us has the right to be considered an equal sharer in the privileges of the Church, so do we have a real obligation to love our neighbor, our brother in Christ regardless of his race or national origin. I can give you some pretty strong words to back this up.

“If any man say: I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.” (1 John, IV. 8-21)

“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer . . . ” (1 John, III, 13-18)

**Q. Let me be a little more specific at this point. As a Catholic living in the South what must my attitude towards other Catholics who are Negroes be?**

3. The ultimate removal of the color-bar from our Catholic universities, colleges, seminaries, academies, high schools and elementary schools.

4. The admission to Catholic hospitals of individuals on a basis of need rather than of race.

5. The admission of Negroes as nurses, qualified technicians and physicians to our Catholic hospitals.

6. The complete integration on a diocesan level of all organizational endeavor and the elimination of separate diocesan organizations in such groups as the H.N.S., A.C.C.W., A.C.C.M., and St. Vincent DePaul Societies.

7. The acceptance of the Negro Catholic on a non-segregated basis in all public demonstrations of our Catholic Faith—religious processions, Holy Hours, forums, discussion groups, etc.

8. A recognition of the reality of the oneness of Man in the Mystical Body of Christ.

**Q. Does the Commission take part in any extra-Catholic interracial activity?**

A. The Commission supports all movements which honestly seek to end obvious injustices towards Negroes; either by mutual action or through expressed approval, it co-

dedicated to such an ideal. It is the Commission on Human Rights and it serves as the local committee on race relations of a large regional group known as the Catholic Committee of the South.

**Q. Are there any restrictions upon the scope and range of the Commission's activity?**

A. Yes. The Commission sees as its primary labor the removal of prejudice, intolerance, segregation, jim-crowism and kindred evils from within the framework of Catholic life in New Orleans. In other words, our task is to bring about, if possible, a change in attitudes towards the problem of race among our fellow Catholics.

**Q. More specifically, what are some of the positive evils which the Commission hopes to see eliminated from Catholic life in New Orleans?**

A. The Commission stands for the following reforms:

1. The absolute and complete elimination of segregated seating arrangements in the Catholic churches of the city with the concurrent removal of all discriminatory signs and notices.
2. A recognition by Catholics of the natural right of Catholics of both races to sit together in church and to kneel together at the Communion rail.

ing to address schools, convents and Catholic organizations. An information committee has assembled a splendid collection of materials on human relations which is available to our membership and the general public. The same committee is now preparing a monthly bulletin. Letters and personal contacts convey our opinions on human-rights issues to church officials, newspapers and municipal authorities.

**Q. Has the Commission on Human Rights actually accomplished anything?**

A. The Record speaks for itself. For many of our members, the question seems to be of some importance, so the gains and achievements listed below are presented for your consideration.

a. Actual direct accomplishments of the Commission:

1. Public appearances of an interracial group at Mass and Holy Communion have made a profound impression.

2. The public meeting arranged by this Commission, together with the Students' Interracial Group, in honor of Bishop Kiwanuka at Holy Name Auditorium saw a non-segregated audience in that hall for the first time.



operates with other agencies and groups working in the field of human relations. To be more definite, the Commission has actively taken a stand on such questions as police brutality towards Negroes, the discriminatory policies of New Orleans' newspapers, segregation in the Municipal auditorium, and the segregated and discriminatory pattern now in force in New Orleans' public schools.

**Q. Is it true that the membership rolls are dominated by "Northern whites" who are not fully cognizant of affairs as they stand in the South in regards to racial matters and who are, therefore, hasty, rash and imprudent in their judgments?**

A. There are 60 white members on the rolls; of this total 45—or 75%—are bona-fide Southerners by birth.

**Q. What are the methods and techniques employed by the Commission to further its work?**

A. Monthly attendance at Holy Mass and the reception of Holy Communion by our membership in a body give visible evidence of our belief in the doctrine of the Mystical Body. Our regular monthly business meetings serve the purpose of clearing houses for the discussion of mutual problems and the dissemination of important information. Speakers provided by our Speakers' Bureau are ready and will-

10. The great increase in membership over a period of less than two years without any membership drive of any kind is an indication of the growing interest in our ideals.

b. Advances made since the Commission came into existence but in which we can claim only an indirect part:

1. The establishment of a study club in a large "white" parish to discuss the Catholic stand on race.

2. A noticeable change in attitudes towards racial matters among white Catholics in New Orleans.

3. The addition of two Negro members to the Archdiocesan School Board.

4. An increased interest in race displayed by young members of the diocesan clergy.

A final word: The Commission is being talked about! Its weight is being felt. The greatest set-back we could possibly suffer is to be ignored, and that is **not happening**.

**Q. If one is interested in the Commission on Human Rights and its work, can he obtain further information?**

A. Yes, by addressing the Executive Secretary—**Box 694** New Orleans, Louisiana.

3. Acceptance of an interracial group for Mass at:

St. Louis Cathedral

St. Raphael's Church

The Academy of the Sacred Heart

The Convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Holy Eucharist  
Madonna Manor

4. The presentation of the Catholic point of view on race relations by official Commission speakers and by many members of the Commission on an individual basis in talks and addresses.

5. An art contest in which prizes totalling \$100.00 were awarded.

6. A committee visit to the Archbishop resulting in a complete revision of the arrangements for public demonstrations of faith in New Orleans. A new system inaugurated this year while far from perfect did succeed in better integration of Negroes and whites in the public demonstration.

7. Cooperation and support of Catholic Interracial Day sponsored by the student groups in New Orleans.

8. Aid in producing a Catholic radio program over station WMRY.

9. The very existence of the Commission—**THE FIRST CATHOLIC INTERRACIAL GROUP IN THE DEEP SOUTH**—is in itself a great achievement.

PRAYER OF  
SAINT FRANCIS ASSISI

Lord, make me an instrument of Your  
peace!

Where there is hatred—let me sow love

Where there is injury—pardon

Where there is doubt—faith

Where there is despair—hope

Where there is darkness—light

Where there is sadness—joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not  
so much seek

To be consoled—as to console

To be understood—as to understand

To be loved—as to love

For

It is in giving—that we receive

It is in pardoning—that we are pardoned

It is in dying—that we are born to eternal  
life.