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'Black Power' Is Christian—Groppi

Vows Stepped-Up Demonstrations

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"If there is anything that is going to save this nation, I believe it is 'black power,'" the Rev. James Groppi, controversial leader of open-housing demonstrations in the Milwaukee, Wis., civil rights movement, told a capacity crowd at Loras Fieldhouse Tuesday night.

The dynamic Roman Catholic priest who has led protest marchers for an open housing bill in Milwaukee for nearly five months, lectured in Dubuque under the sponsorship of Loras and Clarke colleges.

Father Groppi told the nearly 2,300 students, nuns, priests and laymen jammed into the fieldhouse that after the open housing bill had been turned down four times by the Milwaukee City Council, "It was then that our common council began to demonstrate."

"We came to the conclusion that a white man doesn't have a conscience and that there was no sense in trying to bring about civil rights legislation because man doesn't listen. The only thing man listens to is power . . . we call it 'black power,'" he said.

He said his parishioners and other members of the common council of civil rights advocates began to demonstrate because moral persuasion hadn't worked.

"Black power is something good . . . something Christian. There is nothing anti-Christian about power and the correct use of power. The only thing anti-Christian about power is the abuse of power.

"Until the black man can bring himself from his position of weakness in which he finds himself in this nation—a position of being on his knees and begging the white man for everything that is justifiably his—he cannot respect himself.

"The white man will not respect the black man until he can view him in a position of power. Because power brings respect and there is no true brotherhood, there is no true love, without respect."

The militant priest who arrived here about four hours later than scheduled because his flight was delayed in Milwaukee, said there are many people who talk about brotherhood and love, "but what they are really talking about is condensation . . . and paternalism. What I'm talking about is the equitable share in the ultimate power of God," he said.

"Black power can be a redemptive force in our society, because it is going to combat the stereotype that exists in white society in connection with the black man, like nothing else can combat it. And it will bring the black man to a position

where he will respect himself."

Visibly weakened, (he said he had been ill with influenza the last five days), Father Groppi said before man can learn to love his neighbor, he must learn to respect and love himself.

"If government would only spend one-half as much time dealing with the issues of racism as it does with repression," he pleaded, "How do you stop violence once it starts—with troops, tanks and machine guns? Repression will never solve the problem of violence in our cities because it does nothing more than increase our desire to resist," he said.

He spoke of many priests and clergymen who participated in the civil rights demonstrations in Selma, Ala., a few years ago. Few, he said, came home and began demonstrations in their own backyards. Much of what is being fought for in Milwaukee, however, should be fought for in other American cities, he said.

"I've been told not to make Milwaukee, Wis., another Selma, Ala. I contend every group that has gotten its rights in society has had to struggle," the priest said.

He gave examples of struggles in the early stages of the labor movement toward unionism in America, women's right

to vote, Gandhi's struggle in India for independence from England, and the "milk strike just a few months ago in Wisconsin" by members of the National Farmer's Organization.

Father Groppi, who called riots, "a necessary aspect of the black revolution," said the Negro is "tired of being relegated to a secondary status in society." He said the Negro is "tired of being called 'niggers and black bastards.'"

Met by spontaneous applause was his statement: "If white people want to go (move) to the suburbs, let them go . . . let them go to hell! Let them go and take their gyp merchants with them, and we will build a fine community of our own."

He admitted he doesn't like violence, "but there is violence when you teach a man to hate himself. Violence has always been exerted upon the black community. There is a great deal of good in black power—to me it is the answer," he said.

Flanked by two members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council from Milwaukee, Father Groppi called attention to the words inscribed on their jackets: "Black and Beautiful."

He said the black people have to learn to remember those words and so do the white people in order that the Negro may learn to respect himself.

Father Groppi said he was often asked what his parishioners at St. Boniface's Catholic Church in Milwaukee think of him and his open-housing demonstrations. "My whole parish is marching with me. I refuse to sit in the rectory when I look out the window and see my people being denied their God-given rights, being denied dignity as children of God."

Referring to the racial tension which arose in Milwaukee last summer during open housing demonstrations, Father Groppi said, "things will get worse, much worse by next spring and summer. We will continue to go to jail together, march together, sing and pray and do whatever is necessary together to wipe out the 'caste system' in this country . . . this, I believe, is real Christian involvement."

Proceeds from Father Groppi's speech will be used as financial support for sending two Clarke College juniors on an exchange-semester program with two Negro students from Xavier University in New Orleans, La., officials said.

Selected to begin their exchange semester next week are Carolyn Most, vice-president of the junior class, a psychology major and the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Most of 2222 Simpson St.; and Mary Jo Hostert, an economics major and the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Hostert of Worthington, Ia. Clarke officials said Wednesday.