



FATHER GROPPY

On January 16, Rev. James Groppi, advisor to the NAACP's Youth Council in Milwaukee and nationally prominent civil rights advocate, addressed in excess of 2300 persons assembled in the Loras College Fieldhouse. The dynamic Catholic clergyman told his audience that it was because of the Milwaukee City Council's veto of an open housing bill that he and his Negro parishioners began to demonstrate. Since moral persuasion had failed, Father Groppi said, "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 that man listens to is power."

"I don't like violence," asserted the militant priest, "but every group that has gotten its rights in society has had to struggle." Father Groppi continued, "If there is anything that is going to save this nation, I believe it is 'BLACK POWER'. It is something good

... something Christian. There is nothing anti-Christian about power and the correct use of power."

Flanked by two members of the Milwaukee Youth Council, Father Groppi called attention to the insignia on their jackets: "Black and Beautiful," and he ascertained that if the Negro is ever to stop degrading himself, he must believe in those words and take a full share in his God-given rights.

Attacking the hypocrisy in contemporary Christian society, the Milwaukee priest drew applause while assailing the racists who pompously attend Sunday Mass and then proceed to live out the week in hatred and bigotry. He also declaimed those people who incorrectly interpret Christianity to mean, "Let the Negro suffer now and be rewarded later in heaven."

By Black Power, Father Groppi explained, "I'm talking about an equitable share in the ultimate power of God." The church, he continued, sinks millions of dollars into its physical structure and ties itself to politics, forgetting about the essential meaning of Jesus Christ and Christian love.

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Father Groppi also noted that overt racism is as much a problem in the North as it is in the South, "but down there you know where you stand. In the North you play a guessing game—a fraternalistic, condescending kind of racism that drives the black man to the psychiatrist." Immediate implementation of Christianity, he concluded, is the only way to wipe out the very real caste system in this country.

The views that Father Groppi expressed in his address were neither original nor unique, but his articulate realism and sense of conviction have succeeded in bringing to the forefront of the Christian conscience an awareness of the intolerable plight of many Negroes.

This project, sponsored jointly by Clarke and Loras student leaders, was definitely a high point in the activities of the year.

