

The two following newspaper items are recent, and concern the course which was given at Catholic Theological Union during the Spring Quarter, April to June 1980.

'Universal' Priests for Global Church" and "Madam Sent to Nunnery."

In the United States, researchers conservatively estimate 10 million persons in female prostitution. These estimates include both the women (prostitutes) and the men (pimps and customers). But the ministers are few.

Where are the ministers? It is a modern version of "the harvest is great but the laborers are few." Thank God for the San Francisco Good Shepherd Sisters who minister on behalf of our sisters in prostitution. May their kind quickly increase.

Having labored in ministry with persons in female prostitution since June 1972, I realize that ministerial support is vital both to continue ministering and to increase its kind in the church. I would be most happy to correspond with anyone interested in this ministry. One encouragement: this year at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago there was a course presentation on "Street Ministries" with emphasis on female prostitution and the church's response. I believe this is the first time that such a course was ever offered in a theological context. . . .

(Fr.) DEPAUL A. GENSKA, OFM
Chicago



GENSKA, in "red-light district" where he works: "Where are the ministers (to minister to prostitutes)? It is a modern version of 'the harvest is great but the laborers are few.'"

— *New York Times*

Readers are invited to send letters -- preferably typed double-spaced -- to Repartee, NCR, P.O. Box 281, Kansas City, MO 64141.

ministers needed

ORS:
recent articles in the NCR (Aug. 1)
ter-related: "Vatican Wants

'Wall of apathy divides Church from prostitutes'

NEW YORK (NC)—A wall of apathy stands between the Catholic Church and an estimated 500,000 full-time female prostitutes in the United States, according to Franciscan Father DePaul A. Genska, 49, who taught a course in female prostitution at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

But Fr. Genska said in an interview in New York that Catholics are becoming concerned and responsive to the spiritual and social needs of street walkers.

HE INITIATED the seminary course so ministerial students could prepare themselves in urban ministries to befriend female prostitutes "as people with rights" rather than to regard them as objects of scorn and exclusion from society.

With backing from his superiors and leading American bishops, Fr. Genska said, he hopes to develop internships for priests, sisters, brothers and lay people at several projects specializing in helping prostitutes to re-enter the regular work-and-family world.

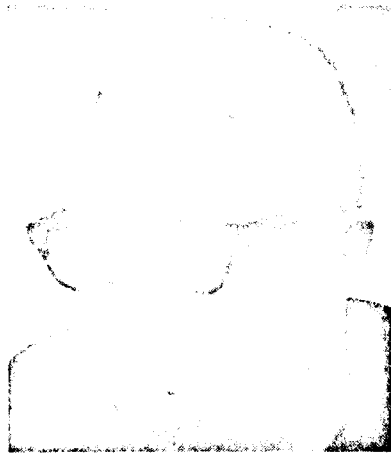
These projects include the under-21 hostels of Franciscan Father Bruce Ritter in New York; New Life Style Alternatives for Women, begun three years ago in St. Louis by Josephite Sister Agnes Marie Baer; and Le Nid, founded in Paris during World War II.

"I'M NOT CONDONING prostitution," the priest said. "But I don't condemn the people in it."

The Church needs to "respond rather than react" to the human rights needs of prostitutes—male and female—by "getting to know them as people with joys and hopes and sorrows," said Fr. Genska.

"Instead of raising banners against sin and marching on porno shops, a much better approach for Church people is to get to know the names of prostitutes and befriend them as persons. I've found the best way is to walk up and down the streets or meet them in society's watering holes—the bars."

Citing figures from *The Lively Commerce*, by Charles Winick and Paul Kinsie, Fr. Genska said that at least 10 million persons are involved in or affected by female prostitution. This is based on the estimate that



Father Genska

every full-time prostitute has at least 20 persons in her life circle, including eight or 10 men customers, a pimp and members of her family.

OTHER ESTIMATES place the number of male prostitutes, most of them homosexuals, at four or five times the number of female hookers, he said.

"We've had all kinds of academic courses to prepare seminarians in Scripture, liturgy, theology and dogma," Fr. Genska said. "But we have not taken seriously the problems of the alienated and marginals. The very description of a person as a prostitute or gay gets in the way of relating to that person."

His ministry among prostitutes since June 1972 has won support from some 35 bishops, including Archbishop John Quinn, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop Jean Jadot, former apostolic delegate in the United States, he said.

BUT FR. GENSKA added that he is dismayed that many members of the hierarchy, to whom he has written twice, have simply ignored his letters pleading for aid for prostitutes and the alienated.

The 21 students who took his course, believed to be a first in any Catholic seminary, gave it a "very, very high rating," he said. The majority were students preparing for the priesthood or ministry and three were nuns. They did their field work on Rush Street and North Sheridan in Chicago, working in cooperation with the police vice squad.

Fr. Genska occasionally has run into misunderstanding of his motives by other priests, he said. For the most part, however, the reaction has been affirmative, he indicated. He recently circulated information gleaned from his apostolate. It is "not just the persons in prostitution (who are) alienated from the Church; but the Church is also alienated from them," he said in his document. Many prostitutes are reportedly Catholic.

Just as the Church seeks to remove offensive references to other faiths from its official teaching, Catholics also should seek a change of attitude and show greater concern for persons having sexual lifestyles which differ from traditional "normal" marriage relationships, he said.