

federal court decision required the desegregation of the Boston public schools and the busing of students to accomplish it. I can remember taking part in a public march in protest of the Boston School Committee's stonewalling of the integration of the schools. Many parish priests accompanied black students on buses to escort them into white neighborhoods. But, as in so many cities of the United States, resistance then took the form of a white exodus from the city.

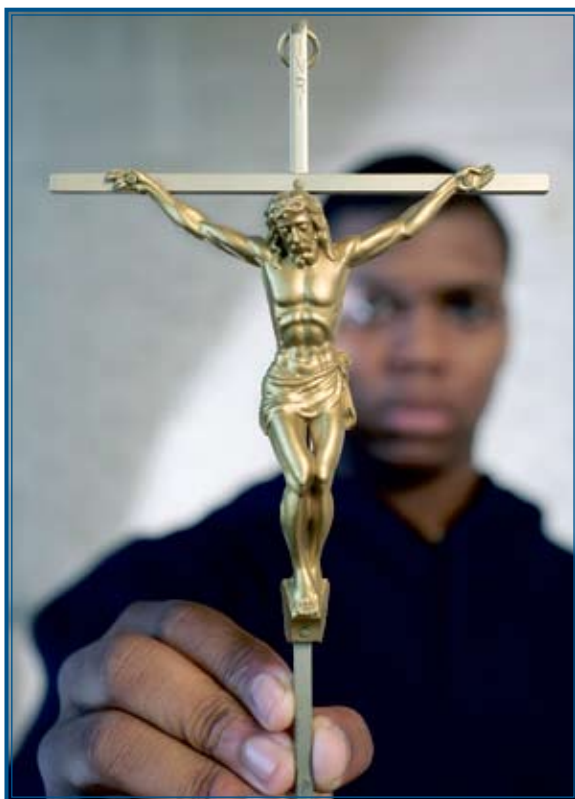
As a seminary faculty member, I was part of the development of a seminary policy which provided for field education in the inner city and participation in summer programs similar to New Orleans' Summer Witness Program.

In Boston, I began to serve people of many different backgrounds, including Hispanics and Vietnamese. But it was not until I came to live in south Louisiana

that I really got to know African Americans on a personal basis. I became conscious of the number of separate black church parishes. I wondered if continuing the separate parishes undermined racial integration until I discovered how important they were in the development of black Catholic identity, community, leadership, liturgy and spirituality. Soon I came to the conclusion that it was important to ensure both that our territorial parishes were open to everyone and that those who preferred to remain in

historically black parishes were given the opportunity to do so as well.

Now the Katrina experience has reinforced for me the need to address responsibly the racial undercurrent to so many issues we face in our community. The housing crunch, economic barriers, the failures in public education, the two-tier health care delivery system in New Orleans, the shortcomings of civic, governmental and church leadership have impacted us all, but the poor to a disproportionate extent.



African Americans seem to find it the most difficult to return. The African-American middle-class wonders what will be the future for New Orleans East. Latinos who have migrated to the New Orleans area to work in the jobs of recovery and rebuilding often experience prejudice and unjust treatment. Even though the Vietnamese community found itself outside the civic decision-making structure, it

has manifested a remarkable community resolve not only to rebuild, but also to protect the neighborhood from harmful toxins connected with the dumping of debris and to create a new and better community. Sometimes the people of St. Bernard and lower Plaquemines feel all the attention is on New Orleans and their plight is being ignored. In each of these areas the Church is challenged to contribute to the common good.

A recent controversy highlights how persistent racial undercurrents