

Religion:

Missionaries In the New City

In a city like Freeport where the accent is on material progress and, for the average man, on material gain, it is difficult to place the church in its proper perspective.

Charged with the task of attending the faithful and of building up spiritual interest in the community, to help make it one where children can grow up in a wholesome atmosphere, are the priests and ministers of the established religions.

The Roman Catholics have Mass in the Roman Catholic School, the Methodists use the auditorium of Freeport School, and the Anglicans hold Sunday service downtown in a handsome church put up with the assistance of the Grand Bahama Port Authority.

Newly-appointed pastor of Mary, Star of the Sea, parish is Father Brendan F. Forsyth, O.S.B. Minister of the Methodist Congregation is Rev. Godfrey S. Johns, and priest-in-charge of the Anglican Church of Christ the King is Father John M. Burns.

A tall Devonshire-born clergyman, Father Burns came to Freeport a year ago June 18, after parish work in England and in South Africa.

An English clergyman with a predominantly American congregation, he notes that his American wife, Maxine, a native of Indiana, has been invaluable in bridging the national gap in the community.

When Father and Mrs. Burns came to Freeport it was to see a handful of faithful turn up for Sunday services.

Now some 130 people, including the Wallace Groves, attend devotions. The congregation has grown considerably and a religious census taken jointly by the clergy recently indicates that there are some 650 Anglicans in the City of Freeport.

"There are so many transients in town," said Father Brown, explaining the still small though encouraging number of regular attendants at Sunday service.

"The people here are genuinely busy and they are hard pushed to fit religion into the sort of life they're leading.

He noted however that there are in-

creasing signs of stability in the community and looked to the religious future of Freeport optimistically.

The Roman Catholics are well served at present by their religious quarters in beautiful Mary, Star of the Sea School, but the Methodists have a building fund well underway and expect to get construction on a new edifice shortly. Father Burns' optimism is borne out by plans reported this summer for the building of yet another house of worship, a Synagogue, for the Jewish members of the community.

In July, Freeporters witnessed the first Bar Mitzvah to take place in their city.

Relations between the clergy of the various denominations there are said to be extremely cordial. Father Burns said they meet once a month to discuss matters of mutual interest.

The religious census, which determined that the Catholics have the largest membership in Freeport, and which provided the clergy with a more definite picture of their area's spiritual

needs, is one example of what can be accomplished through this cooperation.

Another example was the recent decision to apportion acreage in the new city cemetery according to religious needs.

Father Burns feels that the church could do far more in Freeport especially with regards to youth.

"I'm very conscious that far more ought to be done for the young people," said Father Burns, chatting with the interviewer while his charming wife bought straw work to take back home on a brief leave. "This is a difficult place for young people to live in. The Church ought to do more about it."

In addition to any programs the Church will come up with, one of the service clubs, Rotary, is placing emphasis on the development of youth programs and facilities as part of its annual projects.

Signs of this growing public conscience are everywhere to be seen in the City of Freeport today.



FATHER BURNS AND HIS ANGLICAN CHURCH