The Universal Church in the Segregated City: Doing Catholic Interracialism in Chicago, 1915-1963

Abstract
During the Great Migration, as black migrants moved north in search of warmer suns, they encountered, mostly for the first time, large Catholic populations tightly bound within their parish boundaries and a Catholic Church deeply mired in figuring out what it meant to be the universal church in a harshly segregated city. In response to this theological, moral, and social collision, a small contingent of black Catholics, along with a handful of white priests and eventually white lay people, debated and developed theological arguments for racial integration and for racial justice. Their sometimes radical ideas and their often radical actions proved deeply influential, affecting the lives of priests and bishops, laity and nuns, Protestants and Jews, and politicians and civil rights leaders. By the 1960s, various iterations of their beliefs had become standard within American Catholicism and within the nationwide civil rights movement as well. This manuscript tells the story of what I have labeled “Catholic interracialism” as it developed in Chicago in the minds of turn-of-the-century black Catholics like Dr. Arthur Falls, as it was broadened and tamed by white and black lay women working in Catholic settlement homes like the Southside’s Friendship House, and as it matured chastened if still vibrant in the work of the Chicago Catholic Interracial Council, which was given impetus by laity like Peggy Roach and Mathew “Mat” Ahmann. As an idea to live up to, Catholic interracialism was never monolithic; it meant something different to African American middle-class Catholics, white priests, white Catholic radicals, and white Catholic liberals, and it changed from the Depression to the civil rights movement. My manuscript follows these twists and turns, telling untold stories and revealing hidden sources of courage, while showing that, for these Catholics, black and white, the core of their struggle was the foundational belief that all people were members of the Body of Christ and that all Christians should therefore work for justice. This manuscript, therefore, is a social history of an idea, showing how a simple idea like Catholic interracialism forged connections between race and religion throughout the twentieth century, unearthing the importance of religion in the long civil rights movement. And, for the vast majority of the story, in ways with nationwide significance, Chicago was the vital laboratory.
These particular churches are modeled after the universal Church. In them the one and unique Catholic Church exists. Unity in Rome (834). Particular Churches are fully Catholic by their unity with Rome "which presides in charity" (St. Ignatius of Antioch). "For with this Church (Rome), by reason of its pre-eminence, the whole Church must necessarily be in accord" (St. Irenaeus). Others who are baptized and are called "Christian" but who do not profess the Catholic faith are still joined to the Catholic Church in many ways. They enjoy a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. The unity with the Orthodox Church is so profound that it lacks little to attain the fullness to permit a common celebration of Eucharist (Pope Paul VI). Karen J. Johnson, “The Universal Church in the Segregated City: Doing Catholic Interracialism in Chicago, 1915-1963” Dissertation Adviser: Kevin M. Schultz. Michal Kwiecien, “Communism, Nationalism, and Identity in a Polish-German Borderland, 1945-1950” Dissertation Adviser: Gosia Fidelis. Anne E. Parsons, “Re-Institutionalizing America: The Politics of Mental Health and Incarceration, 1945-1985” Dissertation Adviser: Leon Fink. Daniel Harper, “In the Shadow of Antitrust: Competition Policy and the Coal Trade of Toronto and Chicago, 1888-1940” Dissertation Adviser: Robert Johnston. PhDs Awarde