

Is the social-activist priest a relic?

Peter Feuerherd | Jun. 12, 2009 NCR Today

An inspiring story about the social-activist priest [Fr. John Powis](#) [1] of Brooklyn is in this week's *Village Voice*.

Just wondering: Is Fr. Powis, now near retirement, a relic of the '60s? Is his brand of socially active priesthood -- he spent his entire life in the roughest sections of never-gentrified sections of Brooklyn -- a dinosaur? Are there still young priests who are captivated by this vision of living with and being of service to the poor in this country? The best cinematic treatment of the priesthood may well be Karl Malden's character in "On the Waterfront," whose fiery speech in the climactic scene offered a spirituality that saw Christ crucified anytime there was oppression.

Or is the focus of priesthood today on careerism, with the greatest emphasis placed on liturgy and sacramental ministry? Finding a large, comfortable parish? Not to let lay people off the hook: Has the increased wealth of American Catholics put us further removed from the people served by Fr. Powis?

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Links:

[1] <http://www.villagevoice.com/2009-06-10/columns/rebel-with-a-cause-brooklyn-priest-father-john-powis>