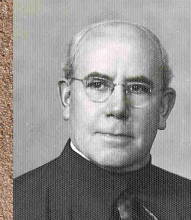
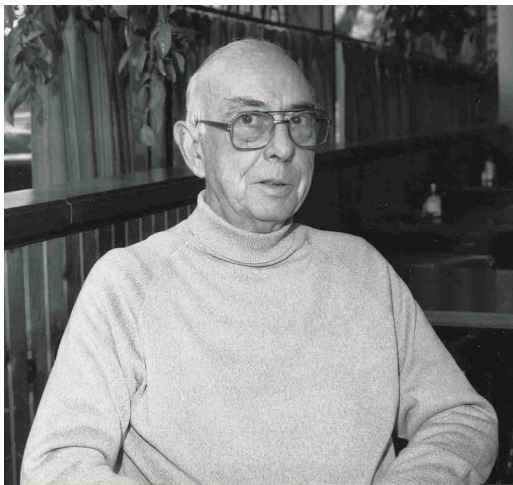


THESE
are our brothers



“Friend of Poor”: The Life of Father Robert Warden



Father Robert “Bob” Warden lived his life as a ‘friend of the poor.’ Though his causes were numerous – social justice, affordable housing, and assisting the poor – his focus was simple: defending what was best for families. His tireless devotion to serving the impoverished, alongside his usual priestly duties, showed Father Warden’s dedication to serving others, and ensuring that the dignity of all people was respected.

Born in August of 1926 to Gordon and Clara Warden in Ingersoll, he was raised in a home that was already very sympathetic to the working class: by his own recollection, his parents often tried to find work for those who needed it. It is clear these experiences affected his outlook immensely, teaching him that everyone was worthy of respect and dignity, virtues that he would carry throughout his life, and which would influence his later social work. As a child, he went to Sacred Heart School, and then Ingersoll Collegiate Institute. He later attained a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at St. Peter’s Seminary, and was ordained by Bishop John Cody on May 30, 1953. His time at the seminary is noteworthy; by Father Warden’s own admission, he began to learn about social justice around then, and his desire for justice would only grow stronger as the years passed.

He did not immediately go to Windsor, but instead served as Assistant Pastor at Holy Cross in London from 1953-55, and then, from 1955-1959, at St. Joseph's Parish in Chatham. He also served as administrator at Our Lady of LaSalette from 1963-64, and at Star of the Sea at Pelee Island from 1965-66. Father Warden briefly took time off from 1966-69 to do post-graduate work in Lille, France, and resumed his duties within the diocese afterward, serving at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Windsor, a position he held until 1972. His final appointment as pastor was at Notre Dame de Lourdes in Comber, from 1986 to 1993.

However, it is not merely Father Warden's loyal service to his parishes that is notable. He also served as a director for several charitable organizations, all of which reflected his commitment to social justice issues. For example, in 1964 he served as the National Director of the Young Catholic Students, and the Young Catholic Workers. His longest-held role, and the one he is most known for, was as Executive Director for the Windsor Coalition for Development. That organization was particularly close to him, as he was its president, and one of its founding members. During that time, he was a tireless champion for the poor, taking on the city of Windsor to ensure those living below the poverty line had access to affordable housing; he called this "a moral right" of all people. This has remained his legacy within Windsor, and a reason for why he is so fondly remembered.

Father Warden made a lasting impact on Windsor. He died in 1993, and was memorialized by the *Windsor Star* with the words "Friend of Poor Dies," an epithet that nicely sums up Father Warden and his beliefs.

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