

# Guest editorial

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# Social Thought

Housing, Habitat,  
and Social Welfare

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and the  
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of the  
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## Editor's Comments

# 1

Regular readers will recall that plans for *Social Thought* 1977 included an issue on "Housing, Habitat, and Social Welfare." Rev. Frank J. Parker, S.J., Associate Professor of Management, School of Management, Boston College, is the Guest Editor for this issue. He has assembled a group of papers whose authors have a wide range of knowledge and expertise in their respective areas including actual experience in demonstration or established programs.

We appreciate the contributions of our Guest Editor and authors and we invite responses from our readers to the content here presented.

D.A.M.

## Guest Editorial

On November 20, 1975, the Catholic Bishops of the United States issued a pastoral response to the crisis in housing, entitled "The Right To A Decent Home." In sympathy with the opinions expressed in this document, the theme of the current issue of *Social Thought*, "Housing, Habitat, and Social Welfare" was conceived. Rather than use the space of this editorial to steal the thunder from conclusions drawn by the specialists who graciously consented to write for this issue, some of the most cogent and persuasive paragraphs from the Bishops' Statement will be quoted:

The dimensions of the crisis in housing seem overwhelming in the number of people and communities affected, the complexity of the problem, and the magnitude of the effort required to meet our housing needs. There is a temptation to feel discouraged in the face of this situation.

However, we do not address this crisis to emphasize the difficulty, but to issue a challenge. The greatest obstacle is apathy and indifference. We ask all those in our society—individuals, private enterprise, government, social and religious organizations—to reexamine what role they might play in eliminating poor housing in our nation. Responsibility for this problem has been passed from one segment of the community to another for too

long. We pray that this statement will not further divide, but rather unite us in a common effort to meet our housing needs. For our part, we pledge to work with others in a renewed effort to promote awareness and action on the housing crisis. Shared responsibility, ecumenical coordination and cooperation with any group sharing our concern will mark our housing activities.

We are hopeful. We have faith in the basic values of people. We believe that once they understand the nature and extent of housing problems and their moral responsibility, they will respond with individual and collective action to meet housing needs. They believe, as we do, that every person has a right to a decent home in a decent environment.

Our hope flows from the core of the Gospel: new life springs from suffering and death. We believe our cities and rural areas can be resurrected and bloom again with renewed vitality and community life. As the prophet said:

They shall rebuild the ancient ruins,  
the former wastes they shall raise up  
And restore the ruined cities, desolate  
now for generations. (*Isaiah 61,4*).

Our Faith tells us that men and women are called by God to continue the work of creation, to fashion a better, more just society as we wait for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Effective action for decent housing is an essential dimension of this continuing creation.

This is a time for renewed dedication and action. Decent housing for all our people is a moral imperative. We pledge our support to those who carry out the demand of the traditional corporal work of mercy, "to shelter the homeless."

We are not suggesting a project or a program for this year or the next, nor are we calling for a reassertion of a public policy already declared, but never realized. What we are proposing is a long and determined effort, with all its frustrations, toward a better life for millions of Americans. This task is more than an element of a better society or an aspect of the common good; it is indispensable to the future health of America and its people.

In this undertaking, we summon our fellow Catholics and all who recognize this pressing concern to a task that calls for intelligence, resiliency and unremitting vigor. We will find allies in this work, and we must welcome them; we will find foes who think our dream utopian and unrealizable, and we must persuade them. The one thing we cannot do is to acknowledge the immoral situa-

tion of indecent, inadequate housing and do nothing about it. We seek in this statement to initiate a fresh response to the unanswered pleas for help that come from the oppressed, neglected and forgotten. We pledge our continuing efforts as we set out on the long road that offers a lasting hope for decent shelter to this nation and its people.

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**Frank J. Parker, S.J.**  
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