

Jesus People Sincere, Too Often Misunderstood

By MYRNA MULLEN

Rita, 22, was converted to Christ in a tavern.

"I was feeling so depressed and scared, it was like a black cloud over my head," she recalls. "Someone accused me of stealing and suddenly I wanted to kill."

"Next thing I knew, I was on the floor, calling for Christ to save me."

"I was aware Jesus was standing right beside me. I knew I had been washed clean."

"I have no desire to go to bars anymore," says dark-haired Rita, who once could drink a dozen beers with little effect.

ONCE HEAVILY involved with drugs, Dwight, 23, made several disappointing tries at being saved before he feels he experienced God's power in an Akron church.

"I told God 'If you're real, let me know,'" Dwight says. "Without taking a step, I found myself at the front of the church responding to an altar call."

Eighteen-year-old Jop—nicknamed for the late rock singer Janis Joplin—used to attend church youth meetings while on drugs.

"I tried to read the Bible, but I was so stoned, I'd fall asleep," Jop admits. "Then I decided to give God a chance."

"I made my decision that the Word of God is more important than dope."

A native of Detroit, Mich., Butch supported himself with burglary and safecracking before turning to Christ.

These four young adults tell stories common among the Jesus People who witness to area turned-off youth.

THE LOCAL movement takes its name from the term coined by newsmen to describe similar groups which sprang up independently on the West Coast.

"Just calling ourselves 'Christians' doesn't convey what we're in to," Dwight observes.

What they are "in to" is learning about and telling others of Jesus. They feel their former life-styles and their preferences for beards, suede and denim help make their cause more acceptable to other young people.

"If you look straight, no one will talk to you," Dwight suggests.

Not all the Jesus People for-



Amid Bibles and Tambourines, the Jesus People Sing a Hymn of Praise



Three Young Converts Register Joy at Knowing Christ

merly were involved with drugs, alcohol or crime, however.

As Jop explains, "A lot are straight kids who would never think of trying dope."

The "kids" range in age from junior high school students through adults, some the parents of Jesus People converts.

"THERE IS NO generation gap in the movement," offers Ted, 19, who before his conversion was "in acid pretty heavy."

The movement worships in Trinity Gospel Temple at 416 High Ave. SW. Jesus People attend regular Sunday and Wednesday services of the church and now conduct their own services at 7:15 Tuesday and Thursday nights.

"Going to church is no imposition on life. It is our life," volunteers one member.

"Our kids don't want to play games," Rita explains. "We want to learn about the Scriptures."

To this end, many Jesus People carry Bibles, worn through obvious use in witnessing and worshiping.

Run entirely by members of the movement, their twice-weekly services include singing, prayer requests—often for parents or relatives of members—scripture readings, personal testimonies and altar calls.

During a recent session, responding to the call were 14 youths, several drug addicts brought to the meeting by converts of a previous service.

FRIEND AND PASTOR to the Jesus People is the Rev. David Lombardi of Trinity Gospel Temple.

He first met the Jesus People one stormy night about two years ago.

A group of young converts was having a prayer meeting in Rita's apartment when a disagreement arose over doctrine. Rita telephoned Pastor Lombardi, whom she had never met, and invited him to come settle the matter.

"About the only contact I had with hippie types was to see them on the street. I was repelled by them," the minister admits.

"I made up excuses why I couldn't go over there. When I explained my wife had the car, they came to get me."

"I was scared to death of them," he states, recalling the wild furnishings and dim lighting in the apartment.

"But when they began asking me questions, I realized how sincere they were."

AS PASTOR Lombardi left several hours later, he invited the group to attend Trinity, which they have done ever since.

"If people only knew how these kids believe instead of how they look, they'd understand the Jesus People movement," the minister declares.

Activities of the Jesus People outside the church involve witnessing on streets and in schools, distributing cartoon-style Christian materials and picketing "Jesus Christ, Superstar," which the movement

feels "is a lie," in that it portrays Christ as man, not God.

To further their goal of winning souls, the Jesus People soon will open a drop-in drug prevention center at 416 Fifth St. SW.

Two of the Jesus People will live in the rented house and be available on a 24-hour basis to help guide lost youth to Christ.

First Church of God To Hear Music Group

MASSILLON — The King's Messengers Quartet will sing at 10:30 Sunday morning in First Church of God at 1133 10th St. NE here.

Begun in 1967, the group includes Mrs. Grace Cole Baughman of Carrollton, Trent Garber and Bud Esselburn of Greentown and Glenn Ferguson. The quartet has performed throughout north central Ohio and western Pennsylvania. Church pastor is Jorgen Norholm.