

Apostolate urges Kwanzaa celebrations reflect sacredness of life

NEW YORK (CNS) — The head of the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life in New York has urged that Kwanzaa observances between Christmas and New Year's Day reflect the sacredness of life.

"Kwanzaa for Life 2006 is an occasion for us African-American Catholics to renew our value of family life, celebrate our heritage and defend the sacredness of life," Franciscan Father James Goode said in announcing Kwanzaa for Life 2006. "Our contribution as black Catholics to Kwanzaa for Life will be to choose life and help our community choose life."

This year marks the sixth annual Kwanzaa for Life sponsored by the apostolate, which is supported by all the major black Catholic organizations in the United States.

Kwanzaa is a nonreligious celebration of African-American history and culture, focusing on community and family. The seven-day festival begins Dec. 26 and ends Jan. 1.

The name "Kwanzaa" comes from the Swahili phrase "Matuna Ya Kwanzaa," meaning "first fruits of the harvest." Now observed in the United States, Canada, England, the Caribbean and Africa, Kwanzaa has roots in ancient African harvest celebrations.

It was created 40 years ago to introduce and reinforce seven principles of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture among African-American people, as well as Africans throughout the world.

The Web site of the National Black Catholic Apostolate for Life — www.blackcatholicsforlife.org — has an explanation of the seven principles as well as a special Kwanzaa for Life prayer.