

Black Jesus in dashiki at Bishop Anstey

By LAURA ANN PHILLIPS

AT THE height of the Black Power Movement in 1970, a "revolutionary" image of Jesus Christ was commissioned for a prestigious secondary school for young ladies.

A mural depicting an African version of Jesus Christ was mounted behind the altar in the chapel of Bishop Anstey High School, Abercromby Street, Port of Spain early the following year.

Stephanie Shurland was principal then.

Lorraine Granderson, who was a student there when the mural went up, said yesterday, "It caused quite a stir, Christ in an Afro and dashiki!"

Granderson is now the school's music teacher.

"People were quite alarmed, but you have to remember what was happening at the time.

"We were very impressed as students," she continued. "People were amazed that you could walk into a school like Bishop Anstey and find an image like that!"

The mural is a mosaic of tiles, each approximately two inches square, in browns, blues, black, white and reds, placed in circular designs.

The image of Christ is several feet tall. He's dark-skinned and wears a blue dashiki, edged with yellow and blue. He's surrounded by four symbols in the four corners of the mural—a deya, a three-pointed clover, an image of the sun and a fish.

The deya symbolises light conquering the darkness and the three-pointed clover, the Blessed Trinity, Granderson said.

The use of the sun symbol in



JESUS of the People, the black Christ which an American Catholic magazine chose to update the image of Christ for 2000.

Christianity, according to Roman Catholic priest Fr Michel de Verteuil, stems from the Biblical prophecy of Zechariah, father of John the Baptist in the Benedictus, or blessing, which refers to Jesus Christ's coming "like the dawn from on high".

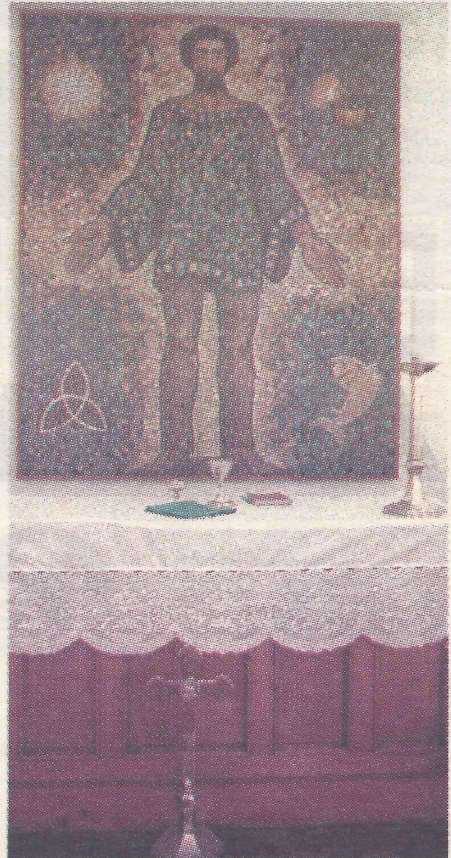
The significance of the sun and the light is also linked to the Greek expression *sol invictus*, meaning "the unconquered sun".

In Christianity, said Fr Michel, the symbol of the fish is significant.

The Greek word for fish is *ichthys*. The *i* means "Jesus", *ch* which is one word in Greek, means, "Christ", *th*, also one word, means "of God", *u* means "son" and the final *s* in the word means "saviour".

The Greek word for fish, *ichthys*, literally translated, means "Jesus Christ, son of God, saviour".

The mural was created by Vera and



THIS mosaic by Vera and Ralph Baney depicts a black Christ in the chapel of Bishop Anstey High School, Port of Spain.

Ralph Baney of San Fernando. It was blessed and hung February 2, 1971 on the Feast of Christ the King by Anglican