

The Church and Education

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Many evils of our modern life are due to the wretched philosophy of materialism, which takes account of the present only, and makes human happiness consist in riches and pleasure. For over a century it has dominated non-Catholic schools. Its fatal results are being felt all over the world. Catholicism has been for a long period one long protest against

the tenets of materialism and its dead spirit in education, laws, conduct, literature, art, music, the drama, and in every expression of human life. Through her schools mainly the Church has been able to combat this low and mean philosophy of life and to raise up in every nation a generation of men and women who shape their lives by the strong spiritual temper of the Church, and by the teaching of her saints. In this respect, the teaching of our Catholic schools has been justly threatened or actual, over vast areas, and by the ever-growing demand for a complete distribution of this world's goods to multitudes who no longer believe in another world or any reward or sanction beyond the present.

Those who sow the wind must expect to reap the tempest. We are only now gathering the consequences of a century of unintelligent and soulless materialism in the growing annals of disease, suicide and crime; in the prevalence of violence, thievery, murder; in the decay of courtesy and good manners, in open gross selfishness, in lack of principle and moral stamina, and in the other unpleasing facts of public and private life.

Life and conduct are normally based upon our beliefs, particularly our attitude toward God and the other world. It is to the Catholic school in these days that we owe in great measure the retention of our belief in God and the soul, in immortality and judgment. Our correct sense of virtue and vice, of good and evil, of right and wrong, above all our grasp of the great central fact of our Redemption through Jesus Christ, come to us regularly by Catholic teaching, whether in the domestic or the common school, and they affect our lives in proportion as they are taught with faith and skill. The Catholic school is the continuation of the pastor's teaching office and is essential to the normal growth of faith and the highest intelligence of its place in our Catholic life.

It is a truism to say that our Catholic social order is based on the family, and it is precisely to the family, with all that it represents, that the Catholic school offers the only bulwark it now has against the destructive influence of the modern world. From every quarter arise its enemies. State intervention, control, direction, suggestion, are never lacking until the normal right and authority of the parent cease to be considered and eventually disappear. With the old-fashioned American family life goes soon the sturdy individualism so characteristic of true Americans, the vivid sense of personal right and responsibility, the broad vision of personal opportunity and development, to which our last century owes so much. By its respect for the soul, the human life, for the religious rights of the child, for his physical and economic welfare; by its principles and teachings about marriage and duties of parents, by the immemorial tradition of Catholic family life coming down from Nazareth, the Church has established the family as the cornerstone of our civilization, the very opposite of what she found it in Greek and Roman paganism. Every Catholic school is the lengthening shadow, as it were, of the family, works in its name and for the same ends, cultivates its ancient and lovely virtues, follows the same ideals, and appeals to the same motives, rewards and sanctions. Should our Catholic schools ever lose their commanding influence, the last secure shelter of American family life would be threatened. Given the present temper of our non-Catholic educational forces and interests, we should be well on the way to ancient Sparta or modern Prussia, in which the child is a helpless chattel of the social power, and the parent and the school its agents, revocable and chastisable at will.

Dishonest adversaries raise the cry of disloyalty to our country. What answer can they make to the splendid response of our Catholic schools to the nation's call to arms, to the heroism and sacrifices of their graduates on the field of battle and in every branch of national service? "Greater love than this no man hath that he should lay down his life for his friends." The Catholic graduates are found today by thousands in every community from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and by their respect for law and order, for authority, and by their cultivated sense of obedience and reverence, they are a strong bulwark against the rising tide of bolshevist dechristianization of all life, public and private.

Who rendered better service during the war than the K. of C., whose numerous membership is largely the product of our Catholic schools? The fruits of education are quickly reaped, and the war records of our schools are convincing proof of the patriotic spirit which abides in the hearts of American Catholic parents and teachers. Loyalty to God and country is a distinctive mark of our Catholic schools and every insinuation to the contrary is strongly resented by them.

Morality is essential to the good order and proper growth of every community. Long experience, including that of the recent war, has proved that without religious training, without a definite belief in God and in the Christian way and spirit of life, it is impossible to sustain in our American society, respect for morality, i. e., for correct views concerning right and wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice, personal responsibility, the sanctions of law and order. In the absence of strong religious conviction only threats and force operate to restrain the average individual from invading his neighbor's rights, or the common goods, or the domain of law and order, and from superseding by cunning or violence every will except its own. By its definite and clear teaching concerning the divine source of all authority, the divine sanction of all wrong, vice and injustice, the Catholic school lays in every youthful heart a firm foundation of intelligent and willing respect for law and administration. It exhibits the social order as God's own work and domain, and man as his responsible agent, governing for the common welfare and by the authority of the Creator of mankind.

Passion may lead such youth astray but it will never accept the evil principles which are now driving many into camp of social pessimism, anarchy and manifold revolution.

Our Catholic schools uphold in every quarter of the United States the traditions of American political and social life. The original American type and concept of popular government are today seriously challenged by many hostile agents, and the concern of our government is amply justified by the facts of communistic and anarchistic propaganda. Our Catholic teachers and school texts do not need watching lest they be found to corrupt the up-coming youth of our cities and towns. Every Catholic school is an ally of the American government as handed down by the fathers, and a source of sane American patriotism, for it bases the love of our country on divine commands and on the teachings of the American Catholic Church from Archbishop Carroll to Cardinal Gibbons.

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