

Our Rural Catholic Schools

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ability of the school to lay the groundwork for the same thinking and the intelligent cooperation needed for organized and concerted action. The sad plight of the farmer today places upon the shoulders of the rural school a heavy burden which is not only to educate but to produce a new type of citizen.

provide schools adequate to its task. Since the task of the farm school is more difficult than the task of the urban school, the farm school must be even superior to the urban school. Indeed, our rural population will gradually be reduced and their social standing our educational agencies come to their rescue. It is part of the rural school to provide educational advantages, to build up community life and to foster a spirit of intelligent and voluntary cooperation. These are essential to the welfare and the progress of the people in our country today!

This situation is of vital importance in certain regions of our country. It is safe to say that in the vast Middle West no less than half the Catholic school population is found in rural parish schools. For example, in the Diocese of Omaha no less than 40 per cent, in the Diocese of Sioux City at least 50 per cent, and in the Diocese of Wichita almost 75 per cent of the parish school children live in rural districts or towns of less than 2,500 population. It goes without saying that the interests of this large portion of our people should be considered in the formulation of our educational policy and the preparation of our curriculum.

There is no Catholic educational agency that has shown much interest in the rural school except the Catholic Rural Life Conference. You will recall the Proceedings of the National Catholic Educational Association held in 1928 before you read a paper on the country school. The Bulletin of the National Catholic Educational Association for 1928 contains a paper on the country school. It is a study of the country school in the Middle West offered by the National Catholic Educational Association. It attracted the attention of many of the country school teachers and three of these were in attendance at the National Catholic Educational Association. It is a study of the country school in the Middle West offered by the National Catholic Educational Association. It attracted the attention of many of the country school teachers and three of these were in attendance at the National Catholic Educational Association.

For the most part our schools in the village and rural districts are of the type known as one-room schools. For instance, in the Diocese of Omaha 97 per cent of the elementary schools have four rooms or less. In the Diocese of Wichita 90 per cent of the elementary schools (or 82 per cent) have four rooms or less. Schools of this size offer peculiar difficulties in combining grade and subject and in arranging the daily program. Obviously, one who has to teach ten subjects a day, three or even four times a day, faces a trying task. It is humanly impossible to get in all the recitation periods. Perhaps the best way to solve this problem is to introduce the alternation plan whereby grades and subjects are combined.

The State of Nebraska has been experimenting with this plan for some time and has succeeded in reducing the number of daily recitation periods. It is a one-room school to the number of grades is much less in a two- or three room school. The combination of pupils of two grades in a group. The group covers the subject matter for one grade one year and the assigned material for the other grade the next year.

The rural parish school has adopted this plan with some modifications and has found that it possible to have longer recitation periods during the school day. It affords time to full recitation periods during the school day. It affords time to full recitation periods during the school day. It affords time to full recitation periods during the school day.

There is a suspicion that our Catholic educators have not taken into account the difference between the city and the country in formulating the curriculum. While the large objectives of Catholic education are the same in all schools, the means of attaining them will vary according to the conditions of the locality. There is a vast divergence between the city and the country in educational resources, in materials of instruction and in the pupils' background of experience. Likewise there is a great difference in the conditions of the community and in the needs of the children. It is an accepted principle that education should be adapted to the conditions, needs and capacities of the pupils.

Why then should diocesan authorities or religious communities in their zeal to raise standards of achievement and enrich courses of study endeavor to enforce uniformly over a diocese or a province a program of instruction which in every case is designed to meet the needs of city life. Why should so many of our private agricultural areas and seeking the patronage of country girls still cling to a rigid classical program and give their pupils an exclusive academic course which is suitable for a member of the aristocracy or an aspirant to learned professions? Such a policy will simply serve to industrialize and urbanize the ones who should stay on the farms and more than likely, within a few generations we shall have a thoroughly industrialized and completely urbanized Church in the United States.

It would be highly desirable to have a separate course of study for the schools in the villages and rural districts. This program of instruction should include specific types of training which are needed of rural life. It should include such studies as elementary agriculture, school gardening, rural citizenship and sociology, farm crops, art and decoration and a thorough study of nature including landscaping and nursery culture. Special emphasis should be placed on State geography which will open up before the eyes of the children the beauty of the rural environment with its birds, flowers, plants and shrubs, its luxuriant crops, its forests, rivers, lakes and charming scenery. Finally, the study of the history of our country should be made a part of the rural school curriculum.

We must confess that public school agencies have been more responsive to local needs and conditions than our own. Hence we can get many helpful suggestions from their studies and courses. It would be a great benefit to our rural schools if a State course were planned in the hands of every teacher. It is used as a guide if not a blueprint. Among the best organized and most successful courses are those of Montana, Nebraska and Wyoming.

The peculiar difficulties of organizing and administering the small school and the singular elements of the rural curriculum indicate the need of special preparation of our teachers. The fitness of a teacher for a position in any school who has failed to acquire a full understanding of our complete national life, rural as well as urban, agricultural as well as industrial, challenge the fitness of a teacher for a position in a rural school who has failed to learn the interests and failings of country children and failed to discover the rich assets of the rural environment.

The solution of the problem of Catholic rural education could be greatly aided if our teachers were specifically trained in the organization and management of the small school, the combination of grades and subjects, the formulation of the daily program and the peculiar technique of presenting the rural school curriculum. They should learn something of the background of rural life the vernacular of the people, the figures of speech they are wont to use and the pastimes they are wont to enjoy. Then they will understand the language of the little urban in patched overalls who speaks of the wheat-fed hog or the merits of a soil erosion. The inclusion of such education in our teacher training courses will help to meet these demands and at the same time will create a sympathetic country life in the hearts of our country children and women who have been born and reared on the prairies of the Middle West and whose attachment to the rural environment during their period of preparation even in the community normal training schools; and of they come forth with a distaste for the inconspicuousness of rural life and a disdain for the simplicity of country children.

However, a better day seems to be dawning for the Catholic rural school. It is no longer a disgrace to be sprung from the soil and to be no longer recommended that a youth go from the country to the city to make a name for himself. This gospel, so prevalent during the past generation, has gone the way of other falsehoods and misrepresentations.

The solution of our rural problem is a matter of keeping our intelligent and progressive farm youth on the soil. The Catholic rural school is destined to play a prominent part in the attainment of this end. Through the proper modification and adjustment of its program it will meet the needs of the rural child, reveal the beauty of the country life, teach voluntary farming and promote the economic security of the tiller of the soil. The realization of this program means enlarged and enriched training for the country child, growth and progress for the Catholic rural school and salvation for the threatened country parish which is a prolific source of Catholic population.

The Functions of Catholic Universities

By DR. ROY J. DEFERRARI, Dean of the Graduate School, The Catholic University of America (Written for NCWC SCHOOL SUPPLEMENT)

Whether we are in sympathy with existing opinion or not, the fact remains that nearly all leading scholars of the world are of the opinion that a true university must include a graduate school of arts and sciences. Of course no Catholic educator would agree that any institution without advanced work in the sacred sciences; but if under arts and sciences, one would include the sacred sciences, few Catholic scholars would disagree with this conception.

The university may lack professional schools and over a college of arts and sciences, but as long as it possesses an active and successful graduate school of arts and sciences, it is a real university. On the other hand, a university without advanced work in the sacred sciences, because it includes several professional schools and even a small graduate school of arts and sciences, is not a true university.

Two-Fold Functions Dana and other officers of American universities have invariably set down the function of the graduate school as two-fold: to disseminate knowledge, including the training of others to disseminate knowledge in the most effective way, and to discover new knowledge, including the training of others to discover new knowledge. As regards the first, the graduate school shares its purpose with the normal school and the college. Its second aim the graduate school shares as a part of a scholastic system which is first and foremost a scientific discovery of new truths has come to be regarded as its distinctive mark. Furthermore, since in the minds of many educators work alone and consequently the scientific discovery of new truths has come to be regarded as its distinctive mark. Furthermore, since in the minds of many educators work alone and consequently the scientific discovery of new truths has come to be regarded as its distinctive mark.

Obviously the Catholic university, which has gained the respect of the world for its scientific studies, does the Church and the world at large an indispensable service by its better understanding in a great many fields of research of the material to be interpreted, and in practically all departments of study through its solid philosophical principles by keeping theory distinguished from facts and by preventing the scholar in his intellectual pride from entering often even upon sacrilege.

Proper Interpretation Some will think of many arguments to raise against this erroneous opinion, but to me two considerations loom particularly large and important. The first of these is of great importance to non-Catholics as well as Catholics. Reference was made above to the three main steps in research process. The first two of these namely, the gathering and the arranging of the material might conceivably be carried out with equal success under Catholic or non-Catholic auspices. The last, however, the interpretation of the material, will be carried out successfully in proportion to the necessary background of knowledge possessed by the scholar and to the extent to which the scholar possesses sound philosophical principles. In other words, a scholar must know the complete setting of his subject to appreciate the significance of the material gathered and in all subjects of study the scholar must have a sound set of philosophical principles on which he is to base his interpretation.

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