

Father Keck at Fordham Prep

(Father Robert Keck, whose new work is described in this article, was formerly principal of McQuaid Jesuit High School in Rochester. The article is reprinted from Sign magazine.)

By EDWARD WAKIN

This fall when the first members of the Fordham College class of '72 assembled on the Rose Hill campus, it looked as though a near-sighted registrar had made a mistake. Several were hardly higher than the curved horns on the school's ram mascot; practically all were thirteen years old fresh out of the seventh grade. Yet in six years, they will be college graduates while still in their teens.

The campus invasion by fifty-six members of the Batman generation hardly meant that the Jesuits — after 125 years of operating their prep school and college — had opened a training camp for boy geniuses or precocious Robins. At a time when American education seems all wrapped up with either the gifted or the deprived youngster, Fordham has started a special program for the average college-bound student.

It is called the 3-3 Program. After cutting a year from the eight grades of elementary school, the students will finish Fordham Prep and College in three years each. The rigid, school-going lockstep of 8-4-4 has been broken and replaced by 7-3 in a bold experiment and a daring challenge to traditional notions about the proper care and education of the young.

While the Fordham administration is not making extravagant claims, it does cite the reaction of one college senior: "A lot of us seem to be afraid of these youngsters being 'out of it' as far as ordinary patterns of student life go. Isn't it just possible that Fordham's experiment will become so widely accepted that it will be just as much a part of American education as the present 8-4-4 system?"

In the process, Fordham is confronting a widely accepted complaint that there is much repetition and wasted time in the standard system of schooling. Fordham is also violating the sanctity of vacations by including summer sessions. Yet acceleration is a misleading label for the 3-3 Program. Rather than merely saving time, the program is trying to use it in the most effective way possible.

The director of the 3-3 Program, Father Robert J. Keck, goes further than that. He talks of fitting the school to the needs and abilities of the student. That, basically, is what he is trying to do for an assortment of gangling, bright-eyed adolescents who are typified by a fire captain's son, thirteen-year-old Kevin Moore — bright, ambitious, and attracted by the program because "it's something new, something that's a challenge."

Like his classmates, Kevin had an excellent record in elementary school and came highly recommended. He applied for the program to prepare for a career in law and politics. Meanwhile, he reads about politics and history, polishes his Gaelic, and practices on the Irish-war pipes.

When Kevin turned up this fall to begin classes, he had survived a careful process of screening and orientation that began last winter. Some 650 students took aptitude and psychological tests, and they were interviewed — as were their parents — by two members of the Fordham Prep faculty. Then 120 were chosen for a six-week summer orientation program before the final selections were made.

The selections were a refreshing departure from the Quiz Kid preoccupation that can be disruptive to youngsters and disturbing to parents. Here is the kind of student the program wants: "We are looking for geniuses but for boys ordinarily capable of a college education who would ordinarily be accepted into Fordham Preparatory School. We wish to put the stress on balance, emotional and social adjustment, good study habits, wide interests, enthusiasm, and generosity."

Kevin is an example. He was ranked by his seventh-grade teacher as an "above average" student with a "very inquisitive mind" and "interested in work." His showing in a ninth-grade aptitude test given the 650 applicants for the 3-3 Program was impressive but not spectacular; he finished 207th. His teacher also cited his "qualities of initiative and leadership" shown by his work in the civics club and his election as class president. One of the interviewers at Fordham Prep noted

Catholic Schools, We Still Need Them

Should all Catholic children be sent to the public schools for training in the arts and sciences? In view of the recent developments in Catholic schools where the formal teaching of religion is separated from the school, is there any longer a need for a Catholic school?

Many people seriously propose abandoning them, especially in the face of tremendous financial burdens under which Catholics labor to maintain a separate system of schools. Already, some dioceses have begun to curtail their involvement in Catholic education at the elementary and secondary level. The Diocese of Rochester has a mortatorium on schoolhouse construction.

What, basically, is the difference in philosophy between Catholic schools and public schools?

From recent rulings of the Supreme Court the public schools are seen to be purely secular institutions. They are prohibited from allowing the children to pray, and no sectarian religion can be taught in them. The result has been the transformation of our public schools from the Protestant public schools of the nineteenth century to completely materialistic schools in the twentieth century.

Public educators realize the crying need for the teaching of moral and spiritual values. The crass materialism to which they are forced is cause for alarm on the part of many deeply religious school administrators. They are convinced that the secularism of the public schools provides no answers to the problems of youth today.

Catholic schools teach children the arts and sciences within a frame of reference which is designed to teach them how to apply Christian principles to our democratic society. The Catholic school is not a place where religion is added to an already overburdened curriculum. The Catholic school presents a knowledge of the arts and sciences within the context of meaningful Christianity. We must do what the public schools are unable to do: be the vital link between the child's relationship to God and to his neighbor.

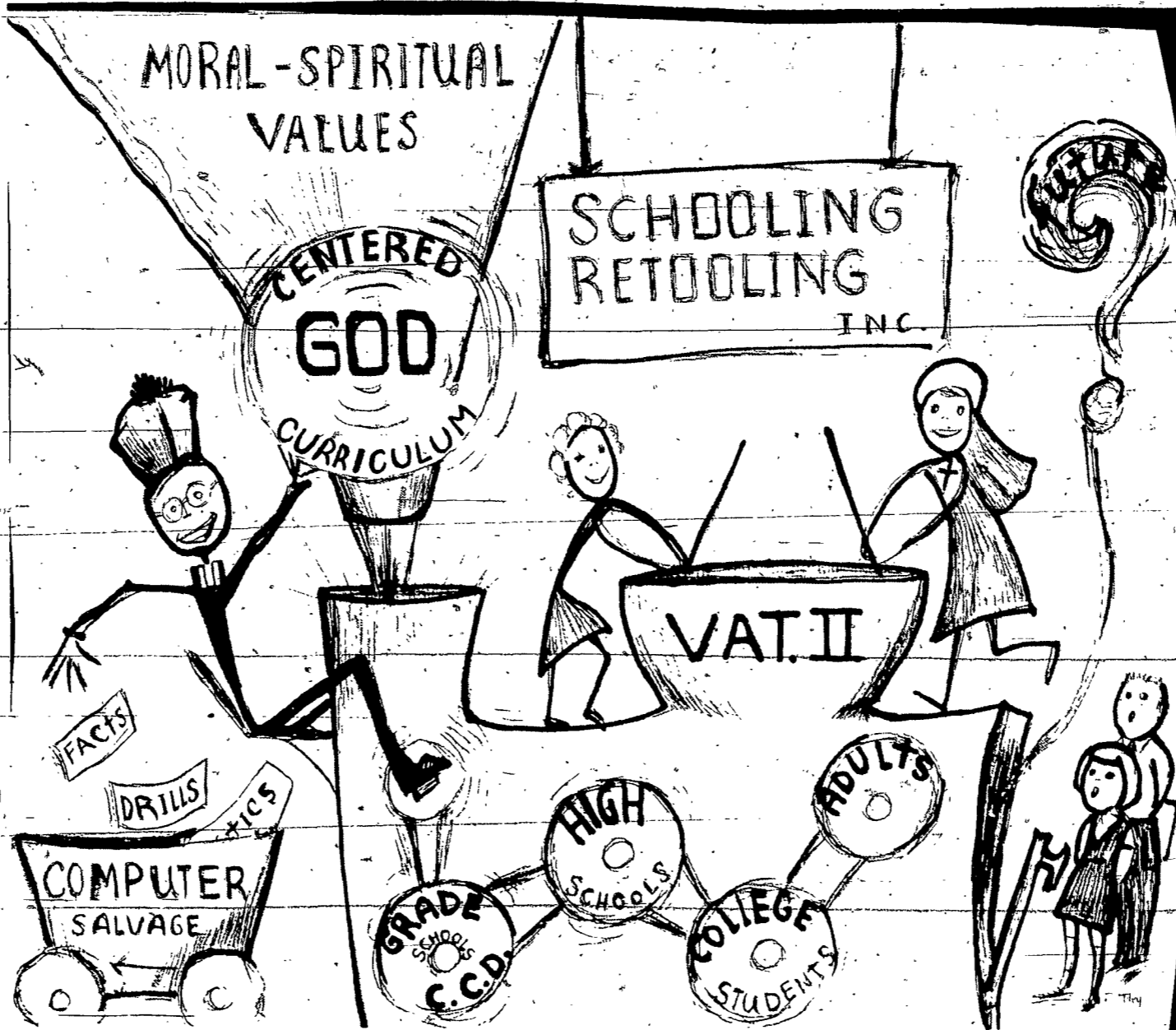
A Catholic a Christian? A 'Foolish Question'

To keep the record straight, when four out of five of our families of Clyde-Savannah parish voted to continue with the diocesan Courier-Journal, their election did not signify an enthusiasm for the editorials or the freighted selections of the Courier, but rather an interest in the news about our Bishop Shephard and our sister Churches in the diocese. What is significant is that 85 subscribers chose the Register for two reasons:

- 1) dissatisfaction with the Courier editorials and reporting;
 - 2) satisfaction with the Register editorials and reporting.
- The 85 who dropped the Courier are now 86. An enraged professional woman phoned last night at 8:00 o'clock and asked: "Are you too busy to talk? I'm sorry but I am." "Then I won't take up your time. But have you read the editorial in the Courier?" "No. Not yet." "Well, please read it — and cancel our subscription."
- Later I read and reread eight times the typically esoteric editorial. The impression I get is this:

Auto Show At Memorial

A dazzling display of exhibits including Antique Cars and Detroit's idea of the car of the future will greet upstate New Yorkers at the Golden Anniversary Auto Show scheduled Jan. 5 through 8 in the Rochester War Memorial Exhibit Hall.



This is the second part of highlights of a talk given in August by Monsignor William M. Roche, diocesan superintendent of schools. The full text of the talk is scheduled to be published in America magazine. In the first article in the Dec. 16 Courier, Monsignor Roche pointed out that the present age of transition

is one in which "the comforting certainty of the former has given way to the exciting freedom of the Church whose two greatest qualities are openness and honesty." He said the present need is "to step up the pace of progress" in a total program of religious education from cradle to grave for all Catholics.

philosophy is truly a Catholic school, even if it were not to teach formal religion. There is a terrible contradiction between the words, "In God We Trust" on our coins and a Supreme Court which interprets our laws to be based upon principles of atheistic materialism. It appears that the Catholic schools, the Lutheran schools, the Adventist schools, the Reformed Church schools, and any others that offer a God-centered curriculum, are the only defense our young people have against the imminent death and burial of God in America.

But what about the Doctrine of the Separation of Church and State? As Catholics we should do everything we can to promote the real Doctrine of the Separation of Church and State. That is, we are against the establishment of any religion by the government, and we are against the use of public funds

for the teaching of the sectarian doctrines of any religion. But we are not against the spending of public funds for the teaching of moral and spiritual values to our children. The religious schools of this nation presently possess the ability to preserve the moral fiber of our youth in education. It would be a tragedy for this nation to refuse to let them use this potential. It is time for Americans to honestly sweep away the emotionalism which surrounds discussions of religion and education. Some day the God-centered public school, supported by public funds for their public service, will operate alongside the secular public schools. It will be a decision based upon the needs of the child, not upon preconceived prejudices. It will preserve the most important of all American traditions — the principle of freedom of choice in education.

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Pope Asks Sacrifices For Catholic Schools

Vatican City — (RNS) — Sacrifices and extra efforts are demanded today of all who work in Catholic schools because these institutions are "faced, as never before, with the most discouraging obstacles," Pope Paul VI declared.

He addressed 4,000 delegates at the 20th general assembly of the Italian Federation of Religious School Institutions.

Urging delegates to carry off their work with "courage and faith," the pontiff said the plight of Catholic schools had been amply demonstrated in a report drawn up by a special committee of the federation.

"We must go forward," he said. "Our word of encouragement is this — go forward. You must make extra efforts. You must re-plan. You might even have to give up part of your work. Above all, you must perfect yourselves in the art and science of teaching and educating."

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