

Flock of Changes Face Diocesan School Office

By FATHER RICHARD TORMEY

A drop in elementary school enrollments, an increase of lay teachers, curriculum changes and increased effectiveness of parish school boards are the new-semester expectations of the Diocesan School Office, according to Msgr. William Roche, superintendent, and Rev. Daniel Brent, associate superintendent.

Enrollments will fall in the 1st grades and 7th grades, Father Brent predicted, for various reasons.

Transfers from parochial schools after the 6th grade in suburban parishes and in the small towns are becoming very common because of "the special glamor in the lavish public junior high buildings", he said.

"The language labs, the swimming pool, the social and athletic life offered in the central school systems lure youngsters. They beg parents to let them change. Parents yield to these material advantages for their youngsters because we have not sold them adequately on the advantages which the church-oriented curriculum offers."

Failure to enroll children for the 1st grades Father Brent

ascribed to "lack of confidence in the future of the parochial school system" and the influence of much-publicized surveys like the Notre Dame Report and the Greeley-Rossi Statement.

"Many parents have been persuaded thanks to current propaganda and these surveys, that the parochial school training does not offer a definitely superior Christian formation for their children. Very many see the current improvement of the CCD programs an adequate alternative to the parochial school. They also wonder whether our school system is ready to be phased out."

Besides the decline of births to young Catholics in the past six years, "which would naturally cut down our enrollments in the lower grades", Father



FATHER WILLIAM ROCHE

Brent said, another factor in the decline is the decrease in teaching Sisters.

"Parents today are prone to decide: 'If there are no nuns to teach my kids in the parish school, or if they only have a Sister every two or three grades,

why send the youngsters to the Catholic school?'"

On the plus side, Msgr. Roche declared the departure of Sisters to various other apostolates has not hurt the faculty competence in the elementary and high schools.

"For the first time in diocesan history we have more lay people teaching than Sisters," the Superintendent said. "But more than 700 lay teachers fill all the teaching spots. We have had an excellent supply of applicants and are pleased that all elementary school faculties are set by mid-August."

Both superintendents spoke enthusiastically about the new "Sex Education" curriculum to be used from grades 1 to 8 in 102 schools of the diocesan system reaching only 15 schools tested the material last year.

To evaluate the effect of the sex-instructions offered last year, a survey of the parents' reactions was made this spring, Father Brent said. "We had 1411 responses from the families whose children had taken the course. The vote was 10 to 1 in favor of the program's continuation."

Teachers who will handle the sex-education classes have been prepared for their responsibility, the Superintendent said. Nearly 1,000 Sisters have had a 20-hour course in the program's material from Dr. Gerard T.

Guerinot, co-author of the curriculum. Lay teachers were given orientation classes in March.

On Sept. 29, the school office will sponsor an institute in Rochester directed by Dr. Clark Vincent, national authority on methodology of sex-education. On Oct. 26-27 a similar session will be provided for teachers in the Elmira area.

The current trends for better understanding of Negro people will also be noticed in the diocesan school curriculum this year when a course in "Minority Cultures" will be offered in many parochial schools. Preliminary materials for class-projects in understanding various minority groups will be tried in outer-city schools.

The Superintendents' office is carefully watching the growth of the parish school board movement. Nearly three-quarters of parishes with schools now have a separate lay board treating school administration or a school committee of the parish board delegated for such affairs.

The diocesan school office will shortly announce "School Board Training Courses" for 3 or 4 parish boards at a time, to acquaint new school board members with the problems of parochial education. Through the simulation of fictional issues which might confront an average parish, board members would learn to work out the real issues which could come to their school.

Chemung Coordinator Named

Elmira—The appointment of Sister Mary Agnes Zimmer, R.S.M., as coordinator of the parochial schools of the county effective Sept. 1, was announced by the 15-member Chemung County Catholic School Board this week as the solution of a long-needed problem.

Sister Mary Agnes' first challenge will be preliminary actions leading to the establishment of a central Catholic Junior High School in September, 1969.

The School Board, formed three years ago, enters the 1968 semester facing three major problems in which the new coordinator will play a vital role:

1. Consolidation of the 8 parish schools and one high school into an efficient system.
2. Establishing needed stability of the religious facilities working in the area;
3. Establishment of the projected central Catholic Junior High.

The express purpose of the board, as described by its vice president, Dr. Thomas R. Curran, has been "to promote the concept of a Catholic School System in our area and continue to improve the quality of Catholic education by recognizing and developing more effective means of utilizing funds, facilities and personnel."

All area parishes having schools are represented on the board. This includes eight laymen, three pastors, and four Sister-principals. Monsignor Leo G. Schwab, dean of the Chemung-Schuyler Deanery is president.

The board's members serve in five duty-groups: Personnel, Facilities, Finance and Statistics, Curriculum, and Public Relations.

Dr. Curran reported that very tangible achievements have been realized in the board's brief life: "The Catholic schools

of the area have adopted a calendar common to the public school; increased participation in Federal funding programs; greater publicity in area news media and exchange of statistical data among the participating schools."

The current project of greatest concern is to find and hire a school coordinator, Dr. Curran said, to improve and enlarge the cooperation among the group and begin centralization of some educational facilities.

The establishment of a central Catholic school for seventh and eighth graders of the area and perhaps an exchange of some lower grade students to achieve better teaching on various levels of proximate goals of the coordination, he indicated.

The term of office of the board members is three years. Elections held in Elmira each year replace one third of the board.

Bishop Sheen To Teach in Adult Program

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen will teach an eight-week course in "Old Testament Personalities" as part of the Adult Theology Program being offered this fall in the Rochester area.

Bishop Sheen will teach the Old Testament course from 9 to 10 p.m. Tuesday evenings, Sept. 24 to Nov. 12, at St. Agnes High School, 300 E. River Road.

Special courses for Catholic elementary school teachers, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine teachers, courses in sex education and situation ethics, "The Church in the Modern World," "The City and the Church" and "The Sacraments of Christian Initiation" will be launched in the fall curriculum.

Seven courses will be conducted at Nazareth Academy, 1001 Lake Ave., three at DeSales High School, 90 Pultney Road, Geneva, and four at Mt. Carmel High School in Auburn.

Other instructors for the Adult Theology Program include Rev. Cyrian Rosen, O.F.M. Cap. and Rev. Leopold Protomastro, O.F.M. Cap., co-directors of the program; Monsignor William H. Shannon, chairman of Nazareth College's theology department; and Rev. Sebastian Falcone, O.F.M. Cap., lecturer in sacred scripture at St. Bernard's Seminary.

School Prayer Proposed
Harrisburg, Pa.—(NC)—The Pennsylvania Senate by a unanimous vote has approved a bill that would allow a teacher "if authorized or directed by the board of education to conduct a period of brief silent prayer" at the start of the school day.

Looking to 1969

Elmira Schools 'Holding Firm'

Elmira—Elmira parishes will operate a "hold-firm" policy in their elementary schools this fall, with seven parishes operating a full eight grades in each and one parish scheduling six grades and the transportation of some 25 older children to another parish for seventh and eighth grade studies.

Pastors surveyed this week indicated that hopes for amalgamating the seventh and eighth grades classes of several schools into one are being pointed toward the fall of 1969.

It was generally agreed that the establishment of a central Catholic junior high school would be welcomed to cut down the costly operation of the various parochial schools and ease the personnel problem. St. Patrick's and St. Anthony's are tentatively planning a junior high program together in St. Anthony's in 1969.

Father John J. Leary, pastor

of St. Mary's, stated that the inclusion of his parochial students in any centralized school plan would not be feasible in the near future, at least, because of their distance from the proposed central Catholic junior high and the expense involved in transporting students.

A rundown of the local registration figures:

St. Anthony's—200 pupils, 4 Sisters of St. Joseph, 4 lay teachers.

St. Patrick's—250 pupils, 3 Sisters of Mercy, 5 lay teachers.

St. Casimir's—284 pupils (8 grades and kindergarten), 4 Sisters of St. Joseph and 5 lay teachers.

Our Lady of Lourdes—280 pupils (eight grades and kindergarten), 4 Sisters of Mercy and 5 lay teachers.

St. Cecilia's—100 pupils (first thru 6th), 3 Sisters of Mercy and 1 lay teacher. Twenty-five pupils of seventh and eighth grade will be transported to St. Peter and Paul's.

St. Peter and Paul's—eight grades; 4 Sisters of St. Joseph, 5 lay teachers (25 pupils will come from St. Cecilia's).

St. Mary's—500 pupils, 7 Sisters of St. Joseph, 10 lay teachers.

St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads—350 pupils, 4 Sisters of St. Joseph, 7 lay teachers (10 classrooms for 8 grades).

The democratic voting of several parishes will influence school plans in this school year and next, pastors indicated.

St. Patrick's parishioners recently voted 6 to 1 to establish a central junior high school with St. Anthony's parish after a proposal to merge upper grades with the Elmira public school system had been defeated 2 to 1.

St. Cecilia's parishioners planning to send their upper graders to St. Peter and Paul's school for the second year, voted to support and participate in a projected Catholic junior high school plan.

Married Anglican To Be Roman Priest

Sydney, Australia—(NC)—Pope Paul VI has approved the ordination of a former Anglican clergyman to the priesthood.

He is Peter Rushton, 41-year-old father of three children, who is studying for the priesthood and is scheduled for ordination next year.

Rushton's wife, Helen, is a psychiatrist and a convert to Catholicism.

It is believed that Rushton, an Australian, will become the first married Latin-rite priest to serve in an English-speaking country.

Pope Paul's letter said Rushton was to serve in an administrative, social welfare or teaching position.

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