

# Catholic Schools Indispensable, Declares Bishop Casey

Special to the Courier-Journal

**Paterson—Bishop Lawrence B. Casey**, in a major policy statement on parochial education made before the annual Elementary Teachers Institute here, called the Catholic school system the "indispensable means of securing the values which Catholic parents wish to transmit to their children" and begged for an end to pessimistic talk about closing any schools.

The Bishop conceded that parochial schools are facing heavier problems of personnel and financing than they have ever known but declared that their continuation gives the Church "an opportunity to effect change in society through our Christian teaching and example."

Citing the work of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Bishop Casey said that its importance has grown because the majority of our children are now in public schools.

"These children are not second-class," he insisted and the people in CCD are making sure that they get "first-class treatment."

Major excerpts of the Bishop's talk follow.

"These are not easy days for our Catholic schools. They and the people who staff them are targets of considerable criticism (much of it unfounded) and much advice (some of it unneeded). You and I know that our parochial schools face some serious problems. These issues are being debated on every level, and this is good. Almost everything in the Church is being debated today. These discussions will help clear the air and, hopefully, bring about needed reforms."

"We all need to take a closer look at the good we are doing and the good we are capable of doing as no one else can do it. Let's not sell ourselves short. In our Catholic schools, parochial or regional, we are doing something very special and very important."

"When we are convinced of this, negative criticism won't overcome us, and constructive criticism will only stimulate us to correct our mistakes, to solve our problems, and to move forward with greater energy."

"When we develop and strengthen this confidence and assurance about our vocation as educators, one of our most pressing problems will have been solved. We've got to be convinced that the job we are doing is important if we're going to turn out a first-class piece of work."

"The Catholic school still provides the best answer, as far as we know, to the problem of religious education. If religious education is provided apart from the rest of a child's education, it is always going to seem somehow less important to him. Despite their protests, most children see school as the most im-

portant thing in their lives. If religion has no part in it, then religion is already downgraded in their eyes.

"To sum up, the Catholic school has been and still is the best single means for securing the values which Catholic parents wish to transmit to their children. Any other programs are substitutes for the Catholic school. And substitutes never are as good as the real thing."

"We have another big plus sign in the nature of the school as a Christian community. We hear a lot about

the importance of community these days, especially as it relates to the life of the Church. In the Catholic school we have a true example of a Christian community, a community within a community if you will, but a community nevertheless.

"Another plus sign in our schools — and this ought to be one of our top priorities — is the opportunity we have to effect change in society through our Christian teaching and Christian example. This may seem like a large order, but I am convinced

that our schools can and must have this kind of thrust.

"If we have any social consciousness at all, we must realize that we have to contribute whatever we can toward the solution of the great social problems of our time. We can't solve them alone, but there are special ways in which we can help.

"I'm speaking, of course, primarily of the problems of poverty and race. Whether we are in the middle of the inner-city or on the fringes of the city or in the suburbs,

these problems are right on our doorsteps, and we can do something about them. Our Christian concern for all the disadvantaged, because they are our brothers, must be transmitted to the students in our schools and perhaps through them to their parents.

"Our students must be formed — as much as lies in our power — in the image of Christians who will strive to eliminate the serious injustices that burden society. It is realistic to hope that in our Catholic schools we can

prepare the way for an effective presentation of the Christian social gospel. There are many ways of doing this, ways that you have been exploring through your Christian Growth Council, your religion programs and your social studies classes.

"With full acknowledgement of the financial sacrifices made by our lay people, our schools have in fact been maintained largely by the contributed services of the religious. Without these contributed services there would have been few Catholic

schools a hundred years ago; without them, there would be no Catholic school system today.

"There is a very real question in my mind about the possibility of trying to continue our Catholic schools if the contributed services of the religious communities are seriously diminished. I hope we are never faced with a dilemma of this kind.

"Our Catholic schools perform a service to the Church and the community and to the People of God that cannot be calculated in ordinary

terms. As our society becomes more and more secularized and increasingly materialistic and pleasure-centered (note the trends in today's films and publications), the witness of our Christian schools to the relevance of God in education becomes more and more important. We need these schools for the life of the Church and for the life of our country.

"I am confident about the future. Let there be no talk about 'phasing out' our schools. There are so many good things going for us."

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Dr. Arthur X. Deegan will head the new office created by Archbishop John F. Darden in response to suggestions that he delegate to others administrative details of the 1,500,000-member archdiocese.

Dr. Deegan has served as a management consultant to Ford Motors, General Motors, John Deere and Co., the Chase Manhattan Bank and other firms.

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By FATHER PATR BURKE, S.S.C.

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"We wish only that the ping the bombing will r the lives of Allied sold all we ask. We hope at Hanoi will respond to ti shown and stop their ac sion."

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