

The Values of a Christian Education Remain Constant

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It was "... in a sense a preparatory seminary; but it welcomed students who had no clerical aspirations." Is it stretching a point too far to point to Sacred Heart College in the ancestry of King's Preparatory School?

The first Bishop of Rochester was renowned for many things, but most especially his strong determination to provide educational opportunities for his flock. Catholic educators everywhere would do well to recall the three-fold aim of Bishop McQuaid as he began direction of the new diocese:

1. To establish "Christian free schools — true parochial schools — in every parish where it is possible."

2. To found a community of nuns trained to staff these schools under his own spiritual direction.

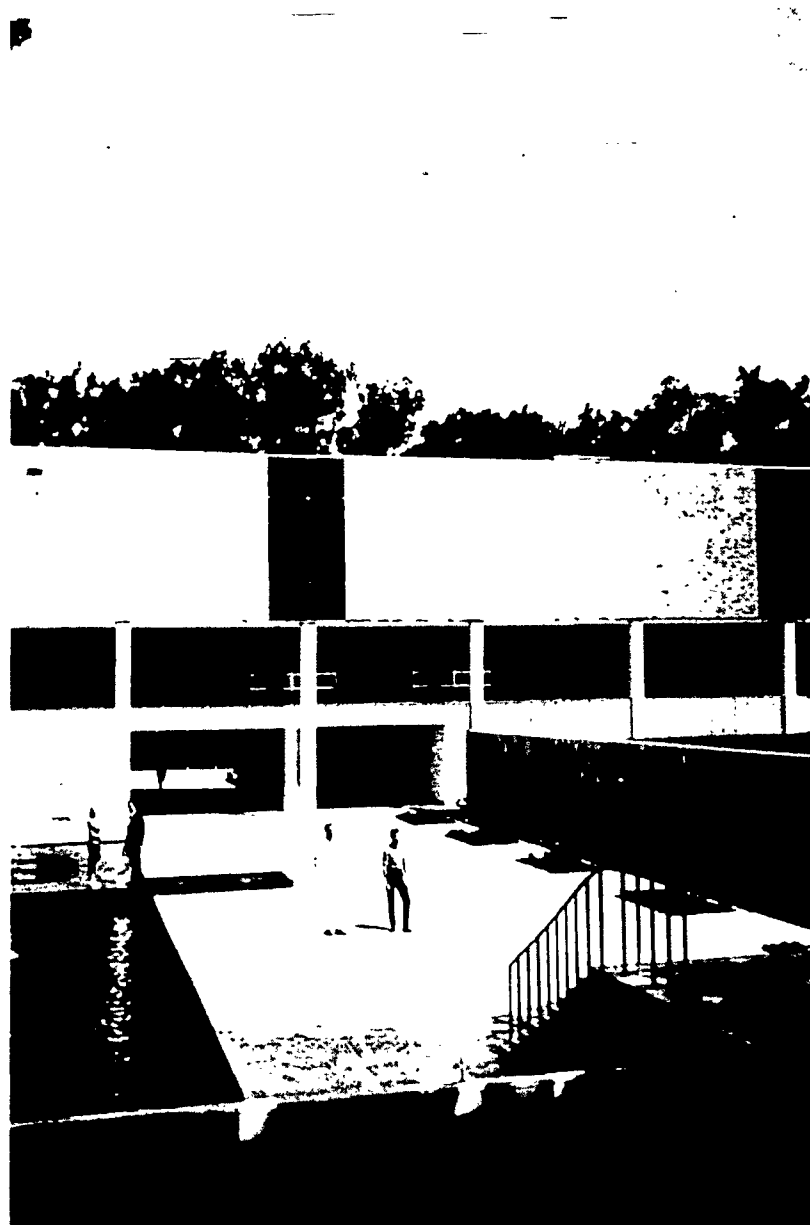
3. To develop a "homegrown" diocesan clergy, educated for their careers by members of the diocesan clergy.

No testimony to his conviction that education is a basic need is more forthright than the following. "I think," he declar-

ed, "that the time has almost come when it will be necessary to build the schoolhouse first, and the Church afterward." His concern for the proper education of the poor was expressed by his dislike of the dual-school system: parishes that had a tuition school, which was private and a "poor school," for those whose parents could not afford tuition.

Bishop Timon of Buffalo had disliked this double school. Bishop McQuaid also disliked it, and was determined to abolish the "poor school" plan, and to establish in every parish "full-fledged parochial schools, supported by the congregations, for the free education of Catholic children."

Throughout the years, Catholic education has been in a rather enviable position: guided by its Christian philosophy which helped it to avoid the pitfalls of so-called "progressive education" in the thirties and early forties, and with its definite sense of purpose unobscured by the often contradictory demands of parents with opposing philosophies, Catholic education has been able to preserve



St. John Fisher College

a degree of excellence far out of proportion to the material resources at its command. Throughout the history of the diocese the mandate laid down by McQuaid has been implemented to the letter: "(Catholic schools) would give as good a secular education as can be obtained in the public schools, and a Christian education besides."

And today we still struggle to obtain adequate support for Catholic schools—a fight joined by the first Bishop of Rochester who insisted upon the freedom of parents to select the school of their choice for their children, but who likewise insisted that "the State did have a duty, however, to pay for the education of all its children in the necessary secular subjects, no matter what accredited school they might attend, public or private."

And so now, at the century mark, we stand at a crossroads: should the parents of Catholic youngsters continue to insist upon their rights to educate their children according to their beliefs or should the secular education of their children become

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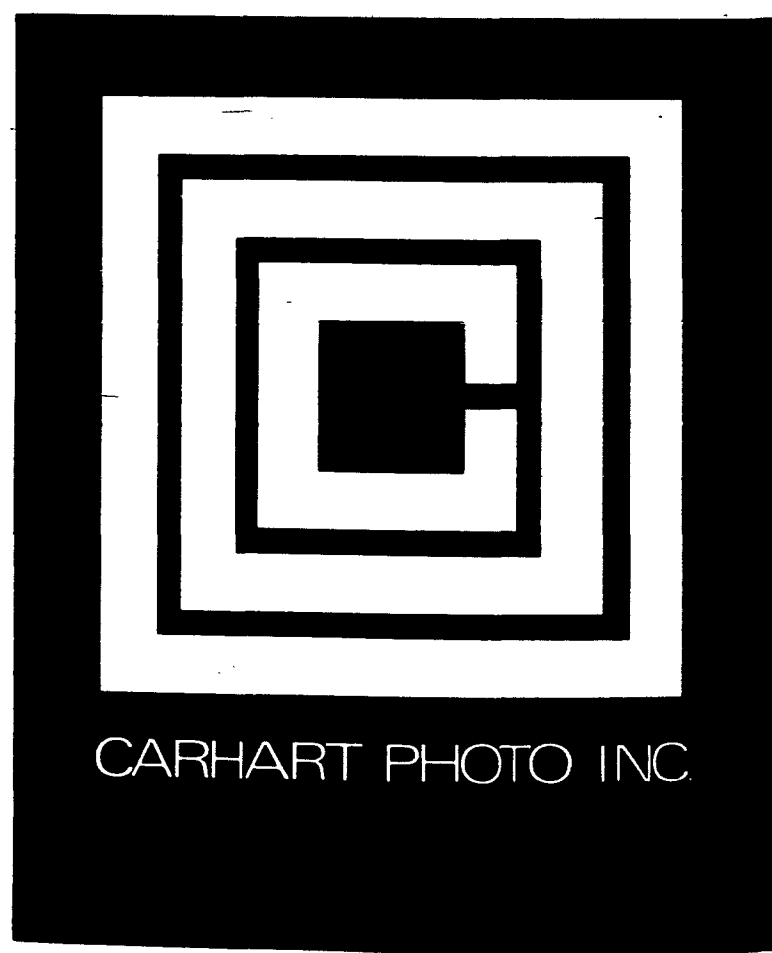
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