

NOW HEAR THIS ...

Time to Tell It Like It Is

By Father Richard Torney

The keynote address at the annual convention of U.S. Catholic educators this week in Detroit had a bold message:

The Church cannot collect enough money from its people to keep parochial schools running, nor will it ever get any money from the government, until it opens its books to the public and tells it like it is.

The speaker was a Bishop who isn't worried by daily crosses of running a diocese. But as executive secretary of the conference of all the Bishops in the nation, Bishop Joseph L. Bernardin is surely well informed about the money crisis which has caused parochial schools across the country to turn away nearly 500,000 children in the past two years.

He knows that Bishops and pastors are weeping over the widening gap between school expenses and Sunday collections.

Here is his suggestion for increasing school support: "I am in favor of all parishes and dioceses giving a complete open accounting of all their school finances to the public. The Catholic people whom we ask to support our schools have a right to this information."

The Bishop's recommendation was aimed primarily at pastors who virtually autonomous school operations depend totally on the support of the parishioners who seldom see a school budget.

The 10,000 educators who heard his address didn't, unfortunately, include thousands of these pastors nor the parishioners who are asked to pay the bills.

But pastors, and new parish school boards, might read more of Bishop Bernardin's words: "We have nothing to hide. In many instances

an accounting of all the facts as they relate to our education program will be our best argument."

More people in a parish will give and their support will enlarge, he implied, if it is made clear to all how parish funds are being used "equitably toward the total teaching mission of the Church."

This "total teaching mission," he declared, is not the parish school alone, as many parish budgets indicate. It must include children in public schools, students on secular college campuses and the vast, present, untouched adult population of the parish.

Poor children require special funding too, he said. He especially urged that parishes help the diocese to give inner-city schools "a priority and therefore a meaningful proportion of our educational dollar and personnel." But information must precede generosity.

In the same week another member of the U.S. Bishops' central staff, Monsignor James C. Donoghue, Director of Catholic Education, interviewed in the NEW YORK TIMES (turn to page 18 for a reprint), said that the answer to the financial woes of the parish schools must be "increased support from the Church's laity," rather than public funds.

He also believes that the required groundswell of lay support will be awakened, "if the seriousness of the present predicament dawned on the people. If the poor people of the country built the Catholic schools, why can't the more affluent support them?" he asked.

Both Bishop Bernardin and Msgr. Donoghue are realistic enough to know that government funds may not be appropriated in time to save the closing of hundreds of elementary schools. They estimate that over the

next 6 years almost 2 million children will be refused admittance in our parochial schools because hundreds of schools will have been totally or partially closed down for lack of lay support.

Opening the books means frequent, parish-sharing of the specific need for and the use of monies collected for the teaching work of the parish.

Is the average layman, whether he has children in the parish school or not, ever told precisely what he is being asked to pay for when he hears the announcement "Next week is School Collection Sunday"? How many parishes in the diocese publicize the expensive items in the school-cost total for a month or a quarter to demonstrate why small coins in the collection cannot pay big bills?

Is one figure for "School Costs" in a once-a-year financial statement enough to keep parishioners informed on the expense and expense of its educational program?

It seems to be a problem in communication. For lack of clear facts about what needs to be paid for, for lack of conviction that the school's important job deserves everyone's support, for lack of confident persuasion that the parish's teaching apostolate must be afforded, many parishes have schools in the red. The pulpit and the parish bulletin can remove all these defects.

Opening the books as the Bishop from Washington suggested, to show how much it costs to operate our schools, need not be disclosure of every item of cost. But if the "teaching mission" of every parish was regularly and pointedly catalogued, explained and sold to the laity, the future closing of many schools would be averted. Man gives when he knows what his investment is for and believes in its potential goal.



COMMENTARY

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ON THE RIGHT SIDE

What the People of God Want

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

I just read Mr. Paul Brayer's article on the state of adult religious illiteracy in the diocese and his proposals. (COURIER-JOURNAL, April 4) The thought came to me with a smile: "Why is it that so many of the young progressives have such a hold on my heart when my intellect stands aghast at the lacunas and aberrations in their ideas?"

The answer probably is this. So many are starry-eyed idealists who are so intent on their stars that they are unconscious of the good earth they are standing on. Ultra-progressives are obsessed with the notion that human nature is going to be truly changed to some idyllic perfection. Christian realists work hopefully for the improvement of self and the world.

Ultra-progressives see the great black clouds in human history and the present. They rebel against human frailties, human duplicities, human stupidities, human complexities. But the rebellion doesn't change the fact of fallen nature. They nag insistently for a complete reformation of fallen nature, rather than patiently and kindly facing reality.

What is this reality? It is the fact of the weakening influence of original sin, whether Adamic or poly-genetic. In all men are the seeds of spiritual disintegration. The wise old catechism calls them CAPITAL SINS: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, gluttony and sloth. (My progressive friends wince at "categories," exhibiting a mild bit of capital sin categories one, four and five.)

One can call them by psychological, sociological, or anthropological terms rather than the seven capital sins, but they all add up to the same: weakened human nature, fallen through original sin.

A little story illustrates this. A small boy was staring longingly at a laden apple orchard. The owner saw him and said: "Young man, are you trying to steal my apples?" The boy replied ruefully: "No, sir, I'm trying not to."

Mr. Brayer has a sincere angelic earnestness about him. He is an advocate of many good causes. He perseveres in his convictions. He is well read. And, unlike the progressives Pope Paul laments, he sincerely loves people, the hierarchy and the insti-

tutional Church. He is fortunate in a lovely, intelligent, dedicated wife. Because of these I admire him greatly and have been a friend of his for twenty years. But I must not get my heart mixed up with my head.

A brief analysis of his article:

POINT 1: An incredible story... reports that a survey conducted in the Catholic Diocese of Worcester established that 43% of the Catholics interviewed said they never heard of an event called the Vatican Council II. My own reaction to the report was the heartwarming recollection of my two sainted aunts, praiseworthy Kitty and Bridget. They were given to frequent debate in old country Irish style. No matter how outlandish the logic of the discussion might be, Aunt Bridget's trump card was always: "Why Kitty, I know it's true. I read it in the papers!" Quod est demonstrandum. Amen.

POINT 2: "A plea is made for re-examining our priorities in religious education," followed by the usual progressive undercutting of the value of parochial schools. I suppose the fallacy of the enthusiasms for adult religious education lies in this fact: despite commendable interest and desire to upgrade adults in their religious intellectual comprehension, we might as well be honest and open, and face the earthy fact that most adults are not desirous to be upgraded. We lament the fact, but the cool objective reality is this:

There are a few elite who are enthusiastic for theological enrichment. But the masses of the People of God do not want to be bothered with this enrichment. Then what are we to do? Shackle them in irons and march them like school children to lecture halls to listen to the New Theology, when they would rather be free to do what they want?

What do the masses of the People of God really want? They want to go to ball games, to bowling alleys, to bars. They want to play cards, to take their children on picnics and outings, to work in gardens, to put panelling and plumbing and fixtures in their homes. Women like to rummage sales and bake sales, and to attend cooking and sewing gatherings.

Men often want to be left alone to read the newspapers and to watch the Packers football team, or St. Bona-



venture's basketball game or the Red Sox on TV. They work hard all day earning a living for their sacramental families, and excepting for an elite, they are little interested even in reading a light novel or a sports story, let alone studying a scriptural thesis!

POINT 3: The article concludes: "Parish Councils, where they exist, should consider establishing regular programs of significant religious education for adults in their own parishes... That would cost money, and we return again to the question of money..."

Most Councils I'm familiar with, Catholic or Protestant, are constantly concerned about money. They are interested in upgrading the parish properties, repairing the boiler and mending the roofs. They scout for competent teachers, parochial and CCD. They are concerned about paying the parish bills — all kinds of earthy, crass things, but these are as necessary to the parish as they are to their individual homes and families.

It is the rare Parish Council that is very interested in studying the documents of Vatican II or Rahner, or the Dutch Catechism or Johann Adam Mohler, or even, unfortunately, true liturgy.

To recapitulate. Mr. Brayer is one of the more lovable progressives. He is starry-eyed as well as good. My meat and potatoes mentality and 34 years of sacerdotal experience say this: "Keep working to interest and to upgrade adult religious education as far as possible. Don't be discouraged if great concourses do not converge to drink of the waters of theology, scripture, liturgy and dynamics." You will save yourself from ulcers if you remember this story:

A famous professor of Greek stormed into the university president's office. "Sir, I come to protest. I have just learned that the football coach's salary has been raised to \$30,000. I am a world famous Greek scholar. I have written four books on the Greek arist. I have a select group of highly intelligent students. Yet you pay me a miserable \$15,000 a year."

The president looked sadly at the scholar and replied: "Professor, have you ever seen 80,000 people cheering their heads off over a Greek recitation?"

CHURCH AND THE CITY

Top Ghetto Problem -- Education

By Father P. David Finks

The number one priority in Rochester's ghetto community these days is an attempt to change the destructive influence of public school education upon its children. Parents have been coming in overflow numbers to the FIGHT organization's weekly education committee meetings for several months.

They have prodded the leaders to develop a major strategy to bring about community control of the public schools.

The local Gannett newspapers are doing their predictable best to cloud the issue for the general public. The papers can see only their perennial bete noire, FIGHT President Franklyn D. R. Florence, refusing to accept Board of Education agenda etiquette.

But the issue is far more serious. In a competitive, college oriented society, the children of minority groups across the United States are being educated for failure. Our Children Are Dying was the all too true title of Dr. Elliott Shapiro's book of a couple of years ago.

City dwellers have been moving to suburban towns in a vast migration since World War II. Part of the reason for this move was to enroll their children in a better and more manageable school system. City parents outside the ghetto areas have long resisted forced integration of their schools by calling for school districts to conform to neighborhood living patterns.

The black community fearful of the continued miseducation of its children is demanding community control of ghetto schools for the same reasons. Parents and students in their new-found racial pride and developing community organization want a strong voice in planning and managing the education of their children.

The whole concept is very familiar to Catholics. When the public school system in the last century refused to let Catholic parents change the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant orientation of the public school curriculum, we walked out and built our own school system. Far from hurting our children, Greeley and Rossi in their study, "The Education of Catholic Americans," showed that for the children of immigrant families the private Catholic system was eminently successful.

Perhaps the parochial schools in the inner city, deep in the financial red, can be resurrected for a new mission. The Catholic schools could find a whole new apostolate in helping ghetto parents develop a private, community controlled, educational process.

A district superintendent with a small staff could develop a central administration of the eight or ten ghetto parochial schools to avoid waste and duplication. A school board would be developed around the school in each neighborhood by

interested parents. This would be aimed toward parents electing representatives from their own number to participate in the educational process for their children.

These would be community schools with optional religious classes. Initially subsidized by the Catholic Diocese of Rochester and charging a fair tuition, these schools would be eligible for federal and state aid under a variety of headings.

The public schools may be too bogged down in politics and administrative redtape to respond to the demands for necessary change. There are signs in Washington that the Nixon administration may be interested in supporting viable options to the public school impasse.

The conservative economist, Milton Friedman, has long suggested a private school system publicly funded as an answer to public education's financial woes. President Nixon's new Commissioner of Education, New York's own James Allen, has always strongly supported imaginative educational change.

The whole idea deserves much more thought and development. Private school systems have been a Catholic "thing" for a century. Can we now come to the aid of the minority groups in our community who fear for the educational future of their children?



A LAYMAN'S VIEW

Ike Services: Religion Vibrant

By JAMES RESTON

It is hard to believe after the reverent public response to the Eisenhower funeral services that America is quite as indifferent to religion as the modern prophets and publicists say.

You can hardly pick up a paper these days without being told by somebody that God is dead. In fact, the Pentagon has just told its chaplains in Vietnam to banish Him from their services on the battlefield, which is scarcely surprising, considering the Pentagon's expansionist tendencies in all other fields.

Still the substitute gods of the modern age don't seem to be very satisfactory. The trend toward a secular society in America is clear, but when television demonstrates on a great occasion that it has the capacity to bring the whole nation into a common experience — almost to make us all part of a single congregation — then we find that at least the remnants of a common faith still exist.

The choir at the National Cathedral in Washington sang the old hymn. The opening line is: "Faith of our Fathers, living still," and despite all the modern denials of the point, it is probably still true. The first line of the chorus, however, is different: "Faith of our Fathers, Holy Faith, we will be true to thee till death" — and that is clearly not true for most Americans.

Nevertheless, for believers and unbelievers alike, some facts are plain. The political life and spirit of this country were based upon religious convictions. America's view of the individual was grounded on the princi-

ple, clearly expressed by the Founding Fathers, that man was a symbol of his Creator, and therefore possessed certain inalienable rights which no temporal authority had the right to violate.

That this conviction helped shape our laws and sustained American men and women in their struggle to discipline themselves and conquer a continent even the most atheistic historian would defend. And this raises a question which cannot be avoided: If religion was so important in the building of the Republic, how could it be irrelevant to the maintenance of the Republic? And if it is irrelevant for the unbelievers, what will they put in its place?

"The liberties we talk about defending today," Walter Lippmann wrote in 1938, "were established by men who took their conception of man from the great central religious tradition of Western civilization, and the liberties we inherit can almost certainly not survive the abandonment of that tradition..."

"The decay of decency in the modern age, the rebellion against law and good faith, the treatment of human beings as things as mere instruments of power and ambition, is without a doubt the consequence of the decay of the belief in man as something more than an animal animated by highly conditioned reflexes and chemical reactions."

"For unless man is something more than that, he has no rights that anyone is bound to respect, and there are no limitations upon his conduct which he is bound to obey. This is the forgotten foundation of democracy."

What the Eisenhower services suggested, maybe ever so vaguely to some and ever so strongly to others, is that the religious foundation of our common life — no matter how much we divide over creeds and sects and their relation to the state — is not "forgotten." It may be ignored or challenged or defied, but it is not lost. We may not believe, but we believe in believing, and the reaction to the old soldier's death dramatized the point.

It did something else. It demonstrated how national television can bring before the people the things that touch their noblest instincts, and in the process reminding us of how seldom we use their remarkable power for this purpose.

Eisenhower and the church and television were unifying forces of tremendous power for good in America in these last few tragic days. They touched some old and worthy echo in the American spirit which politics, religion, and television usually repress.

These are very old questions but they are still with us. Plato saw man's problem as that of the charioteer driving a pair of winged horses: "One of them is noble and of noble breed and the other is ignoble and of ignoble breed... and the driving of them of necessity gives a great deal of trouble to the charioteer."

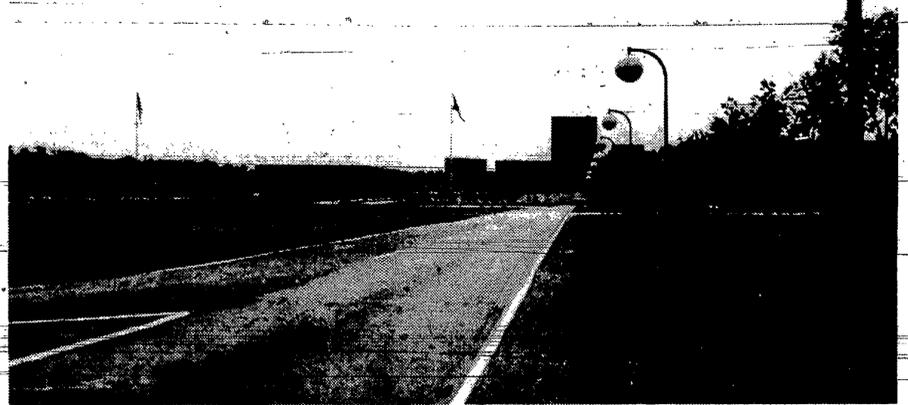
This is as true now as it was in Plato's time, but the old soldier gave us a glimpse of nobility, and through this remarkable instrument of television, the people responded to it with a solemnity and sincerity and cynic could deny. (N.Y. TIMES, 4/2/69)

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