

# Catholic School Plight Gaining Attention

The crisis of the parochial school system is a national concern. THE NEW YORK TIMES, for April 6, carried the following Page 1 article reflecting the attention of the secular press to the Church's worry over school closings and declining attendance.

By GENE CURRIVAN  
NEW YORK TIMES

A spokesman for the nation's Roman Catholic bishops has warned that the church's elementary schools will close their doors to almost two million pupils — about half the enrollment — unless there is a vast upsurge in public support for Catholic education over the next six years.

This means that many of the 10,000 elementary schools in the nation may close despite aid expected from state governments.

The message to the Catholic laity, in substance, is that it must pay more if it wants to maintain quality parochial education.

The warning came from Msgr. James C. Donoghue, director of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education of the United States Catholic Conference in Washington, which represents the nation's Catholic bishops.

Msgr. Donoghue made the declaration in a recent interview while pondering a constant flow of reports from around the nation on school closings, decreasing enrollments, dwindling finances and a scarcity of teaching nuns.

These problems will receive close attention at a meeting of the Catholic Educational Association being held this week in Detroit.

In 1968, 360 Catholic elementary schools and 125 high schools were closed, and reports indicate many more closings will follow.

Enrollment in elementary and secondary schools has dropped to 4,982,927 in the current school year from 5,600,519 four years ago.

The decline of parochial education has implications for non-Catholics because a steady rise in the flow of students from church to public schools seems likely to jam some already over-crowded urban schools without any compensating rise in school revenues.

Although the church makes public no overall figures on school closings, officials say the financial crisis stems from steadily mounting operating costs and decreasing revenues in the \$1.7-billion a year operation.

They say Catholic parents, who already support public schools through taxes, are rebelling against increased tuition, averaging \$998 a year, and are sending their children to public schools.

In Boston, Richard Cardinal Cushing has made a direct public appeal for contributions.

He denied published reports that he would close down the high school system, but he told the parents of 9,100 pupils in 14 high schools that he was facing a debt of \$10-million and that the operating deficit for 1969-70 was budgeted at \$1.6-million, or \$177.8 a student.

In Buffalo, Msgr. Leo E. Hammori said the operating loss this year would be \$400,000, with a \$1-million deficit in prospect next year. There have been no closings, but "the next two years will be critical," he said.

In Chicago, six high schools and one elementary school will close in June. Since June, 1967, 11 elementary schools and six high schools have been closed.

Msgr. Donoghue said that while government aid would be helpful, the answer to the problem was more support from the Catholic lay people.

"There has to be a groundswell of public support," he said. "We have to know what the parents want. The bishops want to continue offering as much Catholic education as possible, but they can't maintain the present schools without help."

**PRELATE MEDIATOR**  
Buenos Aires — (NC) — A three-month-old printers' strike here has been mediated by Co-adjutor Archbishop Juan Carlos Aramburu, whose messages to Leonardo Prati of the management group and union leader Raimundo Ongaro led to the conciliatory action.

"If the groundswell is great enough, the bishops will listen. I am sure that if the seriousness of the present predicament dawned on the people the situation could be reversed. If the poor people of the country built the Catholic schools, why can't the more affluent support them?"

Many Catholic laymen have taken a different stand in their appearances before state legislators. Some of them have predicted the possible closing of entire diocesan systems if government aid is not forthcoming.

Msgr. Donoghue characterized this as bordering on blackmail. He said he knew of no bishop who contemplated closing a school system.

"The total closing threat," he said, "is political and tactical. It may have some value in showing how parochial schools save money for public schools but I have my doubts about its use. However, it seems less fictional than ever before. I haven't met a bishop who has built a new elementary school in the past two years."

Seventeen state legislatures are weighing various measures to aid the parochial schools.

In New York, a bill sponsored by Senator John J. Marchi, Republican of Staten Island, would give each pupil from \$50 to \$250 a year depending on need.

Other proposals include busing and the loaning of text books in Missouri, tuition aid of \$150 a pupil in Connecticut and payment of some teacher salaries in Michigan.

In Pennsylvania, where the Legislature earmarked \$4.3-million for private education, the Philadelphia Archdiocese

is trying to raise more than \$3-million from parishioners to guarantee continuance of the Catholic schools.

Throughout the nation, bishops seem to be nonplused with the situation. Many have ordered in-depth surveys, but in many cases the search for accurate statistics is unavailing as the schools are run under not one, but three systems — the dioceses, the parishes and the religious orders.

Coordination of facts, it has been found, is difficult because some of the orders jealously protect their virtual

autonomy and computers are few and far between.

Viewing the national situation, Msgr. Donoghue said that even with massive government support, which he felt would not pay teachers' salaries or build schools, a cut-back in Catholic education would still be necessary unless there was continuous public support.

However, he said, the cut-back will not mean schools for the elite.

"The strength of the church is going to be in what will be done for the Negroes and


Puerto Ricans," he said.

The nation's bishops, facing the necessity of denying Catholic school education to half of the elementary school

youths who would ordinarily receive it, appear to be wondering how much faith they can put in the faithful, who they feel, must ultimately pay the bill.

Robert J. Graf

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Houston U.S. Air

Houston — (liturgy, education, clergy disputes were subjects discussed by more than 200 U.S. Bishops at their semiannual ed. yesterday.

Keynote address Wednesday by John F. Dearden, Detroit, and John J. Pittsburgh, skeleton of national action.

(Bishop Fulton) lary Bishops De John E. McCaf meeting, held i Hotel. They ret Thursday night.

Daily sessions a.m. to noon. A permitted reports mittes followed sion.

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Albany — At zens and lawmak tion legislation debated in the week — have sefer Catholic con before the legis them on genei. American and private educatio

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