

A LAYMAN'S VIEW

CHURCH AND THE CITY

What PAR Failed to Do

Sex Ed 'Band-Aid' Approach

By Father P. David Finks

Editor:

Having followed the diocesan Sex Debate, I wanted to make a logical critique of issues. Being a woman, logic is not my forte, but my woman's intuition warns of inherent dangers in any unproved experiment that directs personality development.

"Values" programs developed and/or promulgated by any school may be instituting the beliefs of the relatively few people who developed the curriculum, within their personal viewpoint and at a given point in time influenced by a prevailing climate of opinion. The seeds of thought or teaching are distributed to a captive audience, and concepts or handling may be in direct opposition to parental teaching or authority.

A child could become confused, not only by dual teaching, but also authority — as he is expected to obey and respect parents and teachers.

Instead of asking the "why" of a need for sex education, we have another case of applying a band-aid to a cut artery, as in many social programs. Remedial cures instead of preventive medicine.

Unless all people of all ages attempt to do the will of God and obey His laws — instead of their interpretation of His laws — there will be no stemming the tide of the Devil's works. Unless the example exists in the home, as in lying, stealing, etc., no program will be of much value. If the example is in the home, there is no need for the program.

The syllabus for Catholic schools in Rochester is physiologically informative. However, I feel the spiritual aspect of doing God's will and the sacrifices and hard work required to achieve peace of soul is less apparent.

For example, there are 28 "Understandings" for 8 grades which the teacher is assigned responsibility to communicate. Unlike the seemingly now out-dated (but timeless) question, "Why did God make you?" and its answer, these easy-to-remember statements leave little room for development of the soul's search for God in this area of knowledge. Not once in them is His Name mentioned.

Or, for example, of the thirty 7th and 8th grade "attitudes," only five are religiously oriented as are just five of these two grades' 34 "activities." If children "learn by doing," the emphasis is too physically slanted for me.

The answer given to critics who question the lack of the spiritual in this program is that "religion is also taught in the school." In these days of individual conscience, situation

ethics, religious freedom et al, how can a parent be sure a child will receive this information in the light of Church doctrine (e.g. birth control) instead of a teacher's interpretation of doctrine? Again confusion for the child, and dual authority.

If we are going to inform children what type of actions can become trouble, we just better teach them very emphatically how to overcome these troubles. And if an action is "wrong" let's call it a spade and a sin a sin. This theory of non-repression foisted on parents by baby specialists, educators, and psychologists has been used as a crutch too long by delinquent parents and pragmatists.

If a child does not start to learn in early life a non-sinful (non-"wrong") way to live and a sense of self-discipline, not only may he fall prey to dangers of sexual experimentation while too young but also satiation by overexposure as he matures. Later in life sexual exploration can lead to deviation and aberration caused by ennui. The theology of individual conscience functions only as long as a person has an informed conscience.

Once a wedge is driven between the home and its authority, the child can become easy prey to unhealthy ideologies. The basic structure of a child's security (the home) is weakened every time some institution takes control of some family responsibility.

Finally speaking, as a woman I know certain looks, actions, and speech are personal, indefinable, and intimate. These can't be taught.

To have the ability to nonchalantly discuss the ins and outs of sex (or sexuality, if you prefer) perhaps at a P.F.A. or a dinner-party, would not mean I had been freed of Victorian taboos or prudishness. It would mean that I had lost, or given up, just one part of the mystery of ME. To make intimacies and privacies open discussion, whether on a child's or an adult's level, outside my home is only making them and me commonplace and vulgar.

I want my children to mature into God-loving and God-fearing (yes, I said fearing) masculine men and feminine women. If these opinions make me "old-fashioned," "Mid-Victorian," "reactionary," etc., so be it.

My qualifications to express the above opinion: 1) a Catholic convert of 24 years; 2) mother of seven children who have spent a total of 50 years in parochial schools; 3) a belief in Papal authority and obedience to it; 4) happy.

—Mrs. Herbert J. Schuhart, Penfield.

With the first flowers of spring last week the second annual meeting of the Priests Association of Rochester was held at Canandaigua. In the spirit of Vatican II, priests gathered to pool thinking and make plans to participate more responsibly in the mission of the church in our time.

Mrs. John J. Egan of Chicago waited through day-long discussions and voting on resolutions to address the association. The articulate Msgr. Egan has been a pioneer in specialized urban ministry in the U.S. Catholic church, a founder of the prototype Chicago Association of Priests, a creative crusader for racial justice in the Catholic Church, a man above all with the courage to act while the rest of us are still looking for something to hide under.

The Chicago priest began by saying that the content and scope of our resolutions in this hour of crisis in the church and world reminded him of an old saying: "Things are always dark just before total darkness." He saw us fumbling with democratic process, anxious to avoid conflict, caught up with trivial clergy concerns while the world of campus revolt, war and peace, hungry people, inadequate housing waited "outside" in vain.

We priests are products of our culture and our training. The virtues of obedience and fidelity to traditional patterns, these were the keystones of seminary training. This disciplined passivity helped develop a priest to be a reactor to planning and decisions from above rather than an initiator. Ingrained patterns of behavior are hard to shake. Only 95 diocesan priests of our almost 400 took part. Would more be interested if serious issues of our day were up for debate and action?

The insane war grinds on, destroying the irreplaceable young men of the next generation, ours and theirs. Fellow priests, Dan and Phil Berrigan and others, have suffered imprisonment to awaken our consciences to the immorality of this war that nobody wants. Suppose a resolution of support for our brother priests and their conscientious actions had been brought to the floor for serious debate?

Conscientious objection to the war has produced thousands of young men resisting the draft, fleeing to Canada, "deserting" the armed forces. There is no evidence that any priest in the Rochester diocese has attempted to minister to such young people. What position on such new ministries would the association take?

The Catholic school system is in serious trouble from Aquinas to

Sacred Heart Academy, in inner city and suburb. In "bull" sessions I have heard much constructive discussion of alternate plans for our educational resources, yet there was no discussion of organizing even a lobby with the superintendent's office to encourage and support meaningful change before it is too late.

In Rochester, clusters of churches are forming—in almost all areas—to pool resources, buildings and personnel to develop a mission to the surrounding neighborhoods. These ecumenical—community—ministries are supporting residents in their struggles to meet the human needs of their area and develop power to bring about desirable social change.

Lay and clergy in these sectors

complain that Catholic pastors generally show less interest in these forms of mission to the community than they do in the Boy Scouts or Campfire Girls. Assistant pastors express frustration in many of these same areas because of lack of a meaningful ministry from Monday to Saturday afternoon. Yet the question of developing new approaches did not surface at the association meeting.

We believe that the Holy Spirit works in priests, too. Pastoral ministry cannot wait for planning and innovation coming from bishops and pastoral offices. A priests' association should bring together the "doers" and idea men to share experiences and plans for a more viable pastoral ministry.

Msgr. Egan reminded us that bishops today need ideas and support to help the whole church to be more attuned to the needs of our day. Institutions cannot bring about radical change. They are created to maintain what already exists.

We need men willing to experiment and create new patterns of ministry for priests and laity. We need new organizations to evaluate and keep the institutions responsive to new needs and new ways.

Perhaps a little more action would lower the frustration level and we might not need to debate setting up a special center for disturbed priests at next year's Priests' Association meeting.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Ethel Kennedy: A Rock in the Storm

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



April, 1969, will be remembered as a special month of violence in American colleges and universities. The TV and the papers have presented a variety of administrators, from the strong backed-president of St. Bonaventure's University who inspires confidence with his intolerance of narcotics and lawlessness, to a variety of many other vacillating and puzzled administrators throughout the country.

The communications, especially TV, presented mobs of protestors, anti-protestors, and just plain neutrals. They presented seized buildings, seized deans, seized facilities. They showed prevented classes, ejected visiting parents, imprisoned administrators.

Amidst all this presentation of chaos, madness, and hateful confrontations, came a beautiful article in TIME magazine for April 25. It was entitled "The Kennedy of Hickory Hill." It could well be subtitled: "Ethel Skakel Kennedy: a study in norms and normalcy." This article, and the COURIER-JOURNAL article on the work of Ithaca College Students, were two bright lights in a dismal month, as far as persons are concerned.

With the great cries for freedom, for liberty, for development of one's own ego, there has been an annual eroding of norms, divine and natural. There has been a deafness to objective responsibilities to God, to society, to self. Then comes the TIME article on Ethel Kennedy, a simple, heartwarming reminder of norms and

normalcy and how they came about; how they are preserved.

How does one account for the discipline of a woman desperately in love with a just-assassinated hero husband, comforting others rather than being comforted? This woman of vivacious animal spirits, who loved sports and pranks, madcap games, hilarity, and children — the seeming complete extrovert, in time of trial reveals her source of strength. Interviewer Hays Gorey wrote:

"Beneath the surface of her character lay the qualities that were to sustain Ethel Kennedy and all those around her — an absolute dedication to the duties of wife and mother, a total devotion to her Roman Catholic faith, a steely will and discipline. The Kennedy women are the choral figures in the family's saga. Their lot has been to bear witness and to endure. Ethel's special triumph has been to maintain normalcy..."

How her Catholic faith permeates her whole being is illustrated: "Ethel is up every morning at 7 for breakfast with the children. Before attending Mass, she shuttles youngsters back and forth to school in one of several cars pools. Eight children are at Hickory Hill with her now. She sits down to every meal with them; says the rosary and reads the Bible with them every night. She comforts, counsels and disciplines — quite strictly sometimes."

We ask ourselves: "How did Ethel Kennedy come by such deep faith that even in this day of revolt against

the rosary, and the honored term 'Mass,' she goes to Mass daily and recites Our Lady's rosary daily with her brood?"

I do not think it stems as much from the schools she attended, as from the mother who formed her religious faith as well as her body. "Mother was Ann Bannack Skakel, a huge (200 pounds plus), cheery, moon-faced Irishwoman who relished a joke even more than her husband did. Mrs. Skakel was in dead earnest about only one thing — her religion — and her earnestness there was more than a match for George Skakel's casual Protestantism.

"She saw to it that all the children were enrolled in parochial schools and from the age of 4 onward, went to Mass daily."

Henry Ward Beecher once wrote: "The mother's heart is the child's school-room." Ann Bannack Skakel's school room produced a prodigious student in daughter Ethel.

So, if you are a bit down in the dumps with the newspapers and radio and TV commentaries of abnormalities, of confrontations, of hatreds, take courage in the article of April 25, TIME.

The country and the Church are full of such women, who love their vocations as wives and mothers, who carry their charity beyond their own homes, who are passionately devoted to the Church, and who love in practice as well as in word, the rosary of Our Lady and the Holy Mass, thanks be to God.

COMMENTARY

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ADULT EDUCATION

Defense of Christian Formation

By Father Leopold Protomastro

The religious education of the adult Catholic has suddenly become a topic of discussion, and perhaps a point of contention within the Church. Christianity has always been faced with the problem of how to carry out the mission which Jesus has entrusted to her. The preaching of the good news that is Christ the Saviour of the World might of itself be simple, but the human race to which the message comes is a complex society of men varying according to time and place.

In virtue of this, the Christian community has always highly revered the "teacher" as someone with a legitimate apostolate alongside the apostle and preacher. Yet, despite this tradition, and the deep conviction of the Church as might be seen in Vatican II, there is still abroad the idea that "you just can't trust those intellectuals," and "why not leave well enough alone," and after all is said and done, "it isn't what a person knows but what he believes that is important."

This sometimes subtle approach to the teaching of the Christian faith will nevertheless demand we teach our youngsters the rudiments of the faith, even at rather a large investment in money, time and talent. No one can deny the validity and importance of religious education for youngsters. But what reasoning argues that the Christian need not grow in his faith in a manner suited to his age, intelligence and place in life?

Why give the fundamentals alone when the most crucial age in man's struggle with the problems of life comes in his adult years, years in which his mind seeks to understand more fully the deeper meanings of life and death, years in which the

painful experiences of everyday life may require more than the simple answers of a childhood instruction? God so loved us that He became man, the God-man, Jesus of Nazareth. Who was all things to all men. His Church, from the beginning, sought to bring Him to all men: "Could we do less?"

The Diocese of Rochester has officially taken a stand in favor of Christian Education for all the faithful, regardless of age. It would be unrealistic to imagine that this stand has been perfectly implemented. It hasn't. However, the effort has been made, and successfully made.

The men and women involved in this program of Christian Formation do not delude themselves into thinking all the faithful will want or take advantage of the religious education offered, any more than believing that all embrace and practice Christianity wholeheartedly. This does not stop the Church from her mission of bringing the Gospel message to all. Her mission comes from Christ and not from the human consensus.

Christ nor his Church cannot and will never embrace mediocrity in this endeavor, nor any down to earth type of philosophy that paternally regards all indifference or complacency as something we have simply got to learn to live with. Such would drain the Christian Faith of its vitality and urgency, substituting in place of dedication and conviction the varying moods of men.

During the recent Lenten program which the diocesan Board for Christian Formation carried out through its "Adults' Theology" Program, 460 adults were enrolled in religious education courses held in Rochester, Penfield, Newark, Seneca Falls, Au-

burn and Apalachin. This brings to 1750 the number of enrollments in this program since last September in 16 separate locations.

This program has also helped bring another 500 adults a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the Eucharist through courses offered in 4 other areas. The effort still continues with classes being given in another 7 locations throughout the diocese.

And if this seems to be so small a number compared with the total number of Catholics, perhaps it might be recalled that this is only one among many other smaller efforts being made in various parishes and areas. The number of adults who have been interested enough to do something about their religious education is much greater than the figures quoted, and they represent a dedicated group of individuals who carry into their lives and work what they learn.

The diocesan effort should not be sold short. It has made a good start. It is required now that it continue to develop and perfect itself.

What happens depends very much on how influential the old, knowing "let-well-enough-alone" approach to the message of Christ becomes.

The diocese has openly inaugurated and supported adult religious education in its various aspects. For those who think it is just another passing fad, it might be well to consider that to simply turn away from the adult who wants to learn might be simply to turn away from someone loved by Christ... and doesn't that really mean turning away from Him Who could not rest until He had given Himself fully, even to the death of the cross?

Meanwhile, NCEA Urges Action

Washington — (NC) — Catholic diocesan superintendents of education have called for an action program to assure "the continued well-being of American Catholic education."

Nothing enrollment declines and a growing number of school closings, they said the continued well being of Catholic schools is essential to both the Catholic Church and the nation.

The statement was adopted at the NCEA's 66th annual convention. The association's department of school superintendents numbers about 450 members.

Catholic schools, the statement said, "educate today no less than 5.5

million young Americans at all levels of instruction. No American can afford to countenance any diminishing of the Catholic school's vital role in maintaining the quality and quantity of our national education programs."

Among the steps recommended for meeting Catholic educational needs were:

• Formation of "authoritative diocesan boards of education, responsible for the total diocesan educational program" in each diocese.

• Launching of diocesan studies centered on the present status and future means of support of Catholic educational programs, and wide publicity for the results of such studies.

• Formation of departments of religious education in every diocese.

• Creation of diocesan public information services relating to Catholic education and efforts to make industry more aware of its responsibility to assist education.

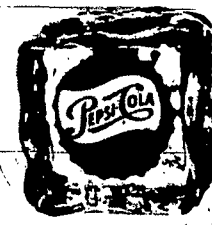
• Inclusion of non-public school students in programs of public aid to education.

"Despite its current problems," the statement said, "the assets of Catholic education outweigh its liabilities. Its invaluable contribution to the nation as a whole, as well as to the Catholic community, completely justifies its existence. Therefore, we stand unqualifiedly committed to Catholic education."



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