

Financial Facts of Life of Area Catholic School Dilemma

The following article, prepared by a Rochester physician, appeared in "Greater Rochester," a monthly publication of the local Chamber of Commerce. Aimed at the business community of Rochester and emphasizing figures rather than educational philosophy, it is a unique contribution to the discussion of the Catholic schools' "problem."

By JOSEPH A. SERGENT, M.D.

There is an almost universal unawareness of a soon impending financial crisis facing every community. This is the economic problem of the Catholic school system.

No general awareness exists for one simple reason. All the warnings which have been issued in recent years by Catholic school officials have been largely ignored by the general population on the grounds that, no matter what, the Catholics would never close their schools.

The time has come for another warning. That word is used advisedly, for any weaker one simply would not adequately describe the imminence of the problem. Unless financial help of some sort is soon made available, the Catholic schools will be forced to close. You will note the word "problem" in the title is in the singular, for all the problems of the Catholic school system boil down to one—MONEY.

There may or may not be sufficient "dollars for education" in circulation. Most certainly, however, there is a tremendous imbalance in the numbers of those dollars in the public versus the Catholic systems of education.

Allow me to put the problem in perspective:

FACT: The Catholic schools educate over 800,000 elementary and secondary school pupils in New York State. That's 1 of every 5 pupils.

FACT: We educate almost 18,000 pupils in the city of Rochester. THAT'S ALMOST 1 OF EVERY 3 PUPILS.

FACT: We educate over 35,000 pupils in Monroe County.

FACT: We educate almost 51,000 pupils in the Diocese of Rochester.

FACT: 3600 of these pupils are in the inner city parochial schools. Almost none of these students is able to support his school in any way. Their education is therefore subsidized by the other Catholics of the diocese. Approximately 50% of these students are not Catholic. Their special educational needs are not financed by state and federal funds, as are similar pupils in the public school system.

FACT: For the public schools, the expenditure per pupil per year is approximately \$1100 (k through 12).

FACT: For the Catholic school

pupil, the expenditure is approximately \$200 per pupil per year (k through 12). There are many factors to explain the difference between the two expenditures. Some of these are:

1) 50% of our teachers are religious. Their salaries are almost nothing. This factor is more and more of our teachers rapidly changing, however, as are laymen.

2) Many religious teachers, nuns especially, do many of the jobs gratis that the public schools must hire other personnel to do, e.g., secretarial, administrative, and even some janitorial work. Many others could be listed.

3) Our facilities, buildings, etc., are "donated" by the Catholic people in general.

4) The current salaries of our non-religious teachers are lower than their public school counterparts.

5) We have escaped large-scale new building costs by a de facto marked reduction in construction. It is felt that, alone and without help, the Catholic segment of the population can ill afford even what must go into the building, much less the buildings themselves.

Paraphrasing, it might be added that in spite of the many handicaps, our students perform at least as well as their public school counterparts when measured by any competitive yardsticks available.

FACT: It is obvious this situation cannot long continue. It is equally obvious that the Catholic public cannot afford \$200 per Catholic school pupil while it continues to pay its share of the \$1100 per public school pupil cost.

FACT: Figures are available to show that we could continue educating our present number of students with all the necessary facilities for approximately \$600 to \$650 per pupil per year. No one as yet has asked the Catholic public if they are willing to spend that much by themselves, but every available sign indicates their answer would be "NO!"

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS? CLOSE THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

If no financial help is forthcoming soon, this is the probable outcome within the next five years. This is not a threat. It is a reasonable prediction, based upon the evidence, by many authorities in the Catholic educational system, including the Superintendent of Schools of the Diocese of Rochester, Msgr. William Roche.

If this comes to pass, it is a flat statement by these same authorities, again including Msgr. Roche, that there will be no gradual phasing out of the schools with the inevitable accompanying decline in quality of education. Rather, when the time comes, the schools will simply close—all of them.

An estimate of the cost of such a step to the general public follows:

THE CITY OF ROCHESTER:
18,000 pupils x \$1100/pupil/year = \$20,000,000

The cost of building new classrooms for these pupils, based on a very conservative \$30,000 per classroom of 25 pupils would be \$21,600,000.

Total first year cost, therefore, would be \$20,000,000 plus whatever the carrying costs would be on the presumed bond issue floated to cover the building costs. The latter item would depend on factors such as interest rate, length of bond to maturity, etc. One more factor which needs to be included is the cost of the special educational facilities of those 3600 inner city pupils ever and above the standard rate per pupil.

THE COUNTY OF MONROE:

For the entire County, including the city and all suburban areas, simply double the above figures. Start with \$40,000,000 in annual per pupil costs, add to that double the building costs necessary in the city.

THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER:

For the entire Diocese, almost triple the costs of the city alone. Remember we are referring to 51,000 pupils here versus 18,000 in the city alone.

It should be emphasized that these are conservative figures. In addition, they do not include the actual projected cost five years from now, nor the inevitable increased "carrying" costs, nor the increase in the cost per pupil per year which is rising all the time.

KEEP THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OPEN AS AN ACADEMY SYSTEM

This is rejected for many reasons, the two major ones being:

a) it would represent a cost per pupil per year of approximately \$700 per year, obviously totally unrealistic.

b) it is opposed to a basic principle of Christian education, i.e., the wealthy should not be educated only with the wealthy, for the path of brotherhood does not lie that way.

CLOSE THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS BUT SELL OR DONATE THE BUILDINGS TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

This is absolutely unacceptable to the vast majority of Catholics, who already feel a deep resentment at being denied what they consider equal treatment for their children. In addition, the buildings would be needed to continue religious education for both children and adults.

This means the creation of

some method whereby the entire public could help share the difference in cost between our current expenditure of \$200 per pupil and our needed expenditure of \$600 to \$650 per pupil.

It should be emphasized that we are talking of costs for education in only non-religious subjects. We emphatically reject the notion that there are such things as "Catholic" arithmetic, "Catholic" languages, "Catholic" geography, etc.

Any combination of percentages of local and state tax contributions for education per pupil which equalled \$400 to \$450 per pupil per year (\$800 to \$850 minus the \$200 already contributed by Catholics alone) would probably be acceptable.

Two more factors deserve emphasis. First, if the Catholic schools close, the cost to the taxpayers will be approximately 2 1/2 times what we are here suggesting. Secondly, and to repeat, unless this amount of money is obtained from somewhere, and in the near future—less than five years—it is a virtual certainty that Catholic schools will be forced to close.

It is hoped that this exposition of the problem, in some

form, explains the dilemma.

I also hope I've made clear that this is not a Catholic problem, but a community one. That seems obvious even if one considers only an approximately 33% increase in school taxes to educate the extra pupils if the Catholic schools must close.

To summarize this problem in one sentence, it is fair to say that if the Catholic school system does not have more money

soon for its pupils, it will close, with all the financial burdens that follow being laid upon the shoulders of the entire tax-paying community.

It is somewhat abhorrent to put the problem so bluntly, but we believe the financial facts are too obvious to be ignored any longer. The public must be made aware of the monumental Catholic schools are forced to close.



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Opposite Blessed Sacrament Church

Student - administrators over policy and have struck comparable Catholic campuses. But the Catholic college being forced by the examine their purposes question their goals.

The COURIER - J. asked Professor St. Helming, of the St. er-College faculty, to views on the presence of the U.S. Cal lege.

By CLARENCE HEININGER, P. St. John Fisher

To foretell the future which was once left perstidious and the become the practical of every man in our world. We call it plan it is a particularly siness in Catholic edu

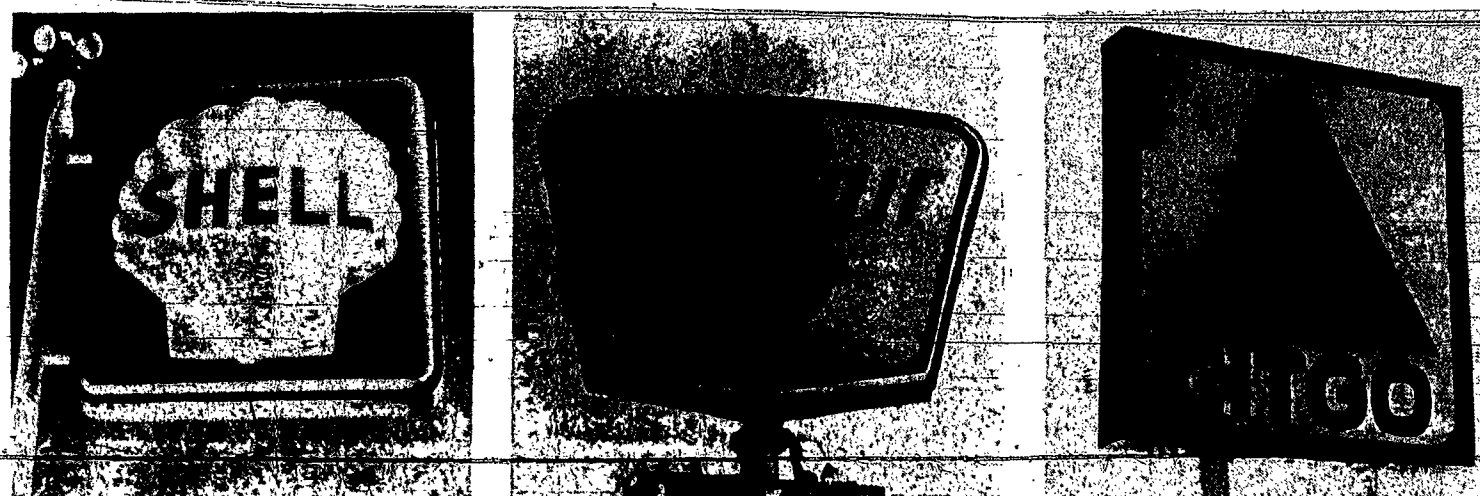
The Catholic coll two serious problems age of money and th of their real purpo are also the principal confronting all privat But the question of p more dimensions on lic campus than on t Why does the Cath exist?

Some Catholic coll founded in order to yond the high school separate, protective Catholic education America in the nine tury. Along with the and private Cathol ical and high schools the press, the Sunda and parish missions, an important part of lectual ghetto.

Other colleges we so that each religi could have, within it munity, a complete education, kindergar calcurate for its bers. The sound for these religious-in-tr thought to be more they could live and



New officers council at In ward Moy, a ber; Peter D. Cann was eld religious edu man and



Do You See Christ in These Signs?

Catholic Press Features

Portland, Maine—Although gas stations already seem to be offering more "games" than service, a woman using religion as a special additive has come up with a new service. She is the "Shell" sign.

According to Annette Bouquet Jones, who laid down the rules in a column she writes for "The Church World," official Catholic weekly of the Portland Diocese, all you need to play are gas station signs, "eyes of faith and the grace of a religious imagination."

Since the signs at gasoline stations "intrude into our consciousness" so often, she argues, "why not put them to spiritual use? Why NOT see God in them? Why not use them as markers for meditation?"

She proceeded to show how the familiar signs of leading

carservice companies could help Christians get extra mileage. Among her observations:

SHELL — "Christianity's age-old symbol for Baptism is the shell. Medieval pilgrims carried shells to their shrines to show they had made the pilgrimage to the popular shrine of St. James Sanjaogoia-Compostela, Spain, but the use of the shell as a symbol is found in Christian art long before that. Now, just as Shell starts us on our journey, Baptism starts us on our Pilgrimage."

SINCLAIR — "The sign contains a dinosaur and the word, 'Sinclair.' Together they give a bilingual religious message. In Franco-American, the juxtaposition of name and animal says: 'Sin, it is clear (clair), makes a monster (morally deformed) out of us.' The dinosaur is extinct, but we all want eternal life. Therefore,

let us avoid sin, for sin will make moral monsters out of us, unfit to share His life."

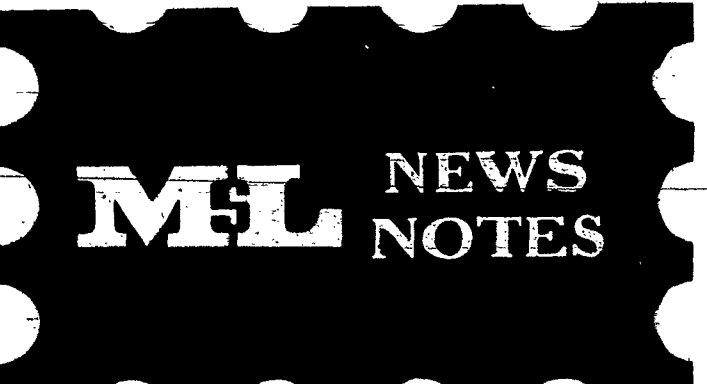
CITGO — A red triangle. The triangle, symbol of the Holy Trinity, of God who created, redeemed and inspired. The triangle, one that has been used by the Divine action, says, "We have done our best? The triangle is red, suggesting blood, and thus martyrdom. While most of us do not have to shed our blood for our faith, have we striven to be perfect, even if it causes us — say — inconvenience?"

TEXACO — The lone star originally referred to Texas, the origin of its oil and gasoline, but in Christianity the star is Stella Maris, Star of the Sea, a title of the Blessed Virgin, the origin of Christ's manhood. Without her acquiescence in our Redemption, where would we

be? The Messiah might still be long awaited."

HUMBLE — "The Humble sign continues this idea of service, but may also cause us to wonder in what humility does consist. Oftentimes there is a false assumption that humility consists in 'not living up to our highest possibilities in the better that seeking out situations in which our God-given abilities would shine could be immodest."

"Other service stations have similar, but not as readily obvious, hints for meditation," she commented. "Thus, though the city-dweller may be screened by skyscrapers and smog from the sight of most of the divine creations which traditionally give glory to God, he CAN meet him, albeit third-hand, at any corner gasoline station. Petroleum plus!"



Have you noticed the "submarine" ad which has been appearing in the Courier-Journal these past few weeks? If you haven't take a look this very minute. There you'll find the list of clubs, churches and societies which to date have entered the MONEY LABELS fold. Each week the list grows just a little longer—an obvious indication that more and more groups are convinced that MONEY LABELS is the in thing.

Unless you're among that practically non-existent breed which "doesn't need funds," then you too, your organization, that is) should certainly be among those listed. Whether it's large or small, church or community, any society today requires money to operate. The mere sending out of notices or publishing a bulletin, means an ever-growing expense.

MONEY LABELS is not a Catholic program, any non-profit group can participate. In fact if you read the ad mentioned, you'll note that many non-church groups are included. Though some of these are small in actual membership, they know they can swell their earnings. How? By inviting friends, neighbors and relatives to join the program through their group—that is, contribute one fourth of their stamp earnings to the group. For example, several chairmen have asked if out-of-state relatives could participate. The answer is that they most certainly can.

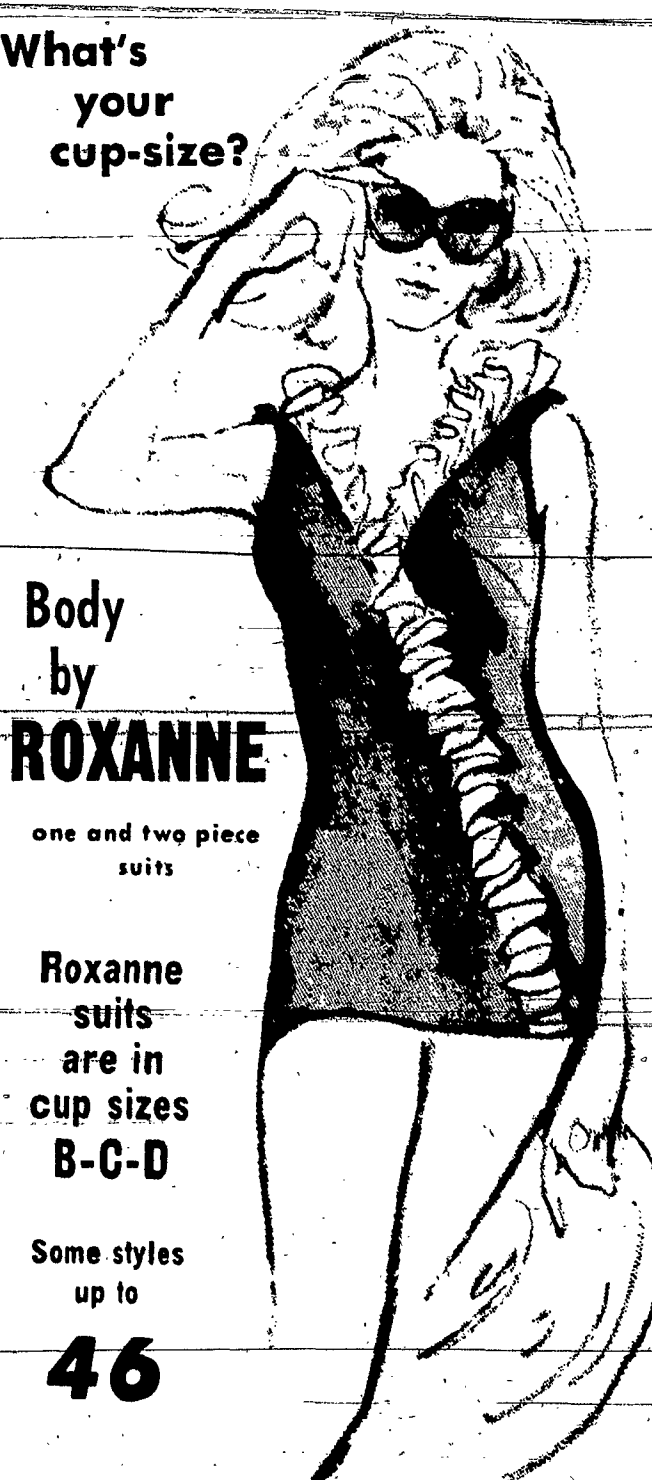
So if your group is hesitant about joining because of its small size, do consider this method of adding to your "membership."

MONEY LABELS offers another advantage for small groups with limited funds. There's absolutely no risk involved, no danger of incurring a debt. Unlike many fund-raising projects where you must first spend money in order to make money, M/L requires neither initial nor continuing expenditure.

All these "pluses" should merit your attention. Find out why our "submarine" is increasing in length. A minute of your time or a 6 cent stamp can supply the answer. If you're within convenient phoning distance, call 548 5140 or 865 1554. Others can just fill out the coupon below and mail it to MONEY LABELS, Courier Journal, 35 Scio St., Rochester 14604.

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Twenty Sisters of who taught at Mc Blood School durin will be feted by pa a reception in the s to 5 p.m. Sunday.

The reception "farewell" to the nuns, who, because commitments a throughout the dioc be staffing the se June.

The school, with in eight grades, no Sisters, three fi three parttime la and the assistanc volunteers.

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