

CCD... a Revolution in Religious Education

BY JOHN DASH

It was Thomas Jefferson who expressed an idea that seems aptly applied to the Diocese of Rochester's Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

The idea is that institutions need a revolution every 20 years or so.

The CCD has both been a revolutionary force in religious formation and has experienced revolution itself, the latest still going on.

While there were a few programs pointing the way to CCD in the diocese dating before WWI, the start can be considered the day when Bishop Thomas F. Hickey signed an agreement with the Rochester City School Board in 1920.

The agreement made possible a program of "released-time" religious education of children attending public schools.

In 1935 Pope Pius XI sanctioned the CCD in the diocese and issued a directive establishing it as an official organization under the direction of Msgr. John M. Duffy. Msgr. Duffy undertook the organization of the fledgling movement and made it the principal form of religious education for Catholic youth in public schools.

Less than a decade later, Pope Pius XII issued a directive creating a separate, stronger centralization of CCD activities, creating the post of diocesan director of the CCD as a full time position. Father George C. Vogt was named to fill it.

Father Albert H. Schnacky succeeded Father Vogt in that position in 1947, and for 23 years directed the program.

In 1952, the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart, a small band of Baltimore-based catechetical nuns came to the diocese.

Described by Msgr. Schnacky as "one of the greatest forces in the dynamic of the CCD," the Sisters have been responsible directly or indirectly for establishing more than 25 catechetical centers in the area and a greater number of lay parish boards for religious formation.

By 1968, Msgr. Schnacky's records contained the names of more than 5,000 laymen trained to teach the Faith. At that time 53,976 children in grades 1-12 were in CCD programs ministered by 2,300 laymen and 590 priests and Sisters.

Last Spring Msgr. Schnacky moved to full-time duty as pastor of St. Catherine's in Mendon. In association with Father Vogt, he had founded the diocesan CCD, which grew "from a broom closet" in the Columbus Civic Center to a diocesan-wide efficiency serving more than 55,000 students in public schools.

Succeeding him is 30-year-old, soft-spoken Father Daniel Holland. Father Holland brings to the post the new title of Diocesan Director of Religious Education and CCD.

During Msgr. Schnacky's time, the CCD office, now occupying almost half of the sixth floor of the Columbus Civic Center, developed from a service agency providing films, books and tapes to a directive force in the establishment of programs of religious formation.

Under the new guidelines it finds itself responsible for educating public school children, and lay adults, as well as moulding the Christian person

of children in parochial schools.

Father Holland readily shudders at the thought expressed recently that almost three-fourths of the diocesan Catholic schools will be closed by 1975.

His job is to make sure that each child and parent affected is given the opportunity to grow in the knowledge of Christ.

The next revolution in religious education, Father Holland believes, will be a stronger "teaching-union" between the home and the parish. "A non-school religious education program must be built in every parish."

Recently he remarked, "The Christian formation of our children, from kindergarten through high school, must be more than book-learning."

Reducing this idea to concrete action, Father Holland expects to enlarge on the program whereby children are prepared for reception of the sacraments by their parents.

Acknowledging that most children simply don't care about religious education as it is presently being done, he hopes to work out "an improved curriculum to attract them."

The major push for the Fall, according to Father Holland, will be to put a full-time, professional, religious educator in every parish as a staff worker.

He explained such a job in terms of a coordinator between the pastor, parish council and faculty of the parochial school, teaching teachers, devising curricula, and tying together religious formation programs.

Father Holland is hopeful that clerical and lay teachers will soon come to "structure a broader learning environment." That is, they will appreciate "religious education is not just instruction, but includes celebration, projects of learning that are self-experience centered, and special opportunities to develop habits of religious practice."

Panel Discusses School Aid

Denver—(NC)—Catholic schools would not want public aid at the expense of public schools, a Catholic education official said here.

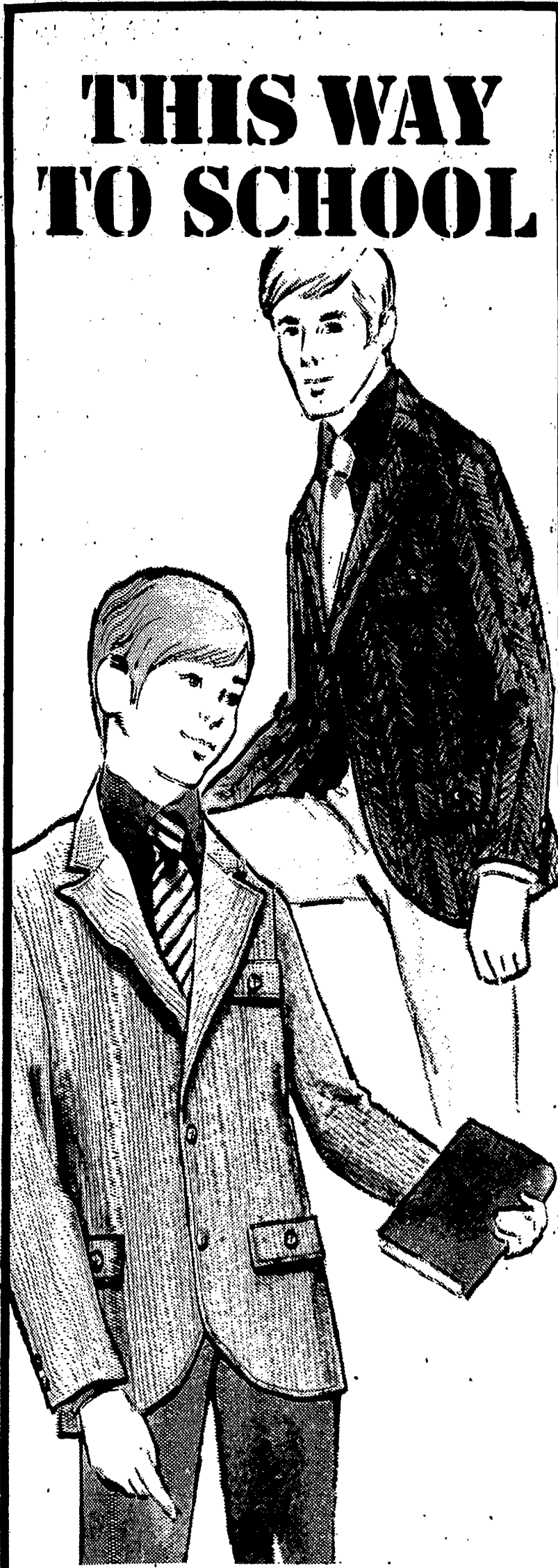
"No one in private education wants to weaken the public schools," said Father C. Albert Koob, O. Praed., president of the National Catholic Education Association. "But we believe a way can be found to finance all education."

Father Koob was a participant in a panel discussion at the annual meeting here of the Education Commission of the States (ECS).

"It's not a church-state question," Father Koob told ECS members. "The question is: what is the public function of private schools? What are the secular functions of religious schools?"

One objection to public aid for private schools raised by another panelist was that such aid might encourage the opening of additional schools trying to fight integration laws.

Public schools are in desperate financial trouble, another panelist said, and all available funds should go to them.



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