

Two Viewpoints on Religious Education Goals

There are traditional and modern views on religious training for children. This second in a series of articles on the goals of the diocesan CCD-Religious Education Department explains that the old and the new viewpoints overlap rather than conflict.

By CECELIA M. VIGGO

At first impression, Father Daniel Holland and Father George Vogt would seem to be ideal subjects for a treatise on the "clerical generation gap". The boyish, breezy Father Holland, bustling with energy, and speaking with machine gun rapidity, seems an utter contrast to Father Vogt, whose priesthood spans 40 years, and whose kind bluntness reveals the wisdom of a man of experience.

Father Holland, as head of the diocesan Department of Religious Education-CCD, sees the overall situation, the macrocosm composed of many parishes and problems.

Father Vogt, as pastor of Good Shepherd Church in Henrietta, is responsible for the education of about 2,000 parish children: 600 in parochial school and 1,200 in CCD programs. So his view is conditioned by the day-to-day problems of simply

keeping an operation of this size going.

But the old guard versus the new guard label simply will not work here. For Father Holland is aware of the past and its influence, and Father Vogt, in turn, is acutely cognizant of the importance of the future.

Each, however, brings a different perspective to the subject of religious education.

Both discussed reaching children not presently receiving formal religious instruction, and the importance of the Christian home in religious education.

Father Holland's concern is focused on the enlisting and training of teaching personnel, and securing modern teaching aids for every parish in the diocese.

He cites as some immediate objectives for CCD: "increasing professionalization of teachers, and getting the 'hardware' (i.e. audio-visual equipment) to the teachers."

He hopes that in the future CCD might sponsor "a real program of master certification for teachers", with volunteers enrolled in theology courses offered by area colleges.

He also envisions the pres-

ence of "a full-time religious education coordinator in every parish," and looks for the development of resource centers throughout the diocese offering on loan the most up-to-date textbooks and teaching materials to area CCD programs.

Father Holland's stress is on the teacher, for he believes his role is crucial. To make the new theology work, Father Holland insists that "teachers trained in the old system must undergo a lengthy process of change" in order that they may orient themselves to the new directions in religious education.

Father Vogt concedes the importance of teacher training and modern equipment, but cites "time" as the overruling factor in religious education.

"The tragedy of CCD is that one hour a week is not enough," he insists.

He says that problems of pure logistics often defeat more ambitious religious education programs.

In his own parish, Father Vogt explains that it would be nearly impossible for 112 teachers and more than 1,000 students to meet for more than one hour on an already hectic Saturday morning. Parking prob-

lems alone would make a longer session impossible.

Both men are anxious about the estimated 36,000 children across the diocese who enroll in neither parochial school nor CCD programs.

Father Holland hopes that when parishes hire religious education coordinators the problem will be eased. "A full-time coordinator would have the time to find out who the missing children are, and the duty to try to enroll them."

Father Holland also maintains that young people involved in improved and updated CCD programs will attract other young people.

"Let's face it," he says, "a quality program gets better response."

But Father Vogt takes a dimmer view. Although he agrees that parish coordinators and updated approaches may be helpful, he believes CCD's problem is related to an accelerating "lack of faith" in the Catholic community.

"The drift away from the Church is much greater than anyone realizes," he insists.

He cites his own experience in visiting Catholic parents registered in the parish, but long absent from parish life. So

many are unconcerned about their children's faith that he doubts whether a parish coordinator would be very effective.

"Contact won't help," he says. "Although they sweet-talk you in their home, they still remain indifferent, and inactive."

Whatever their differences in other areas, both men are agreed on the importance of Christian family life in religious education.

Father Holland affirms that CCD must "convince the parent that he is number one teacher." He says that CCD is encouraging parishes to enlist the aid of parents in preparing their children for the sacraments, and reports that CCD is publishing a newsletter in a few sample parishes in an experiment aimed at informing and involving parents.

Father Vogt echoes Father Holland's sentiment on the parental role. He contends that it is up to the Christian home to give children "a solid taste of religious belief," and to inculcate them in the Christian virtues of "Christian love, intelligence, and commitment."

"If there is no Christian home behind it," he asserts, "CCD is a waste."

(To be continued)



Paul W. Brayer (left), president of the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen, greets panelists at recent meeting on religious education priorities: from left, Father Cyprian Rosen OFM. Cap., William T. Cannon, Father Leonard A. Kelly and Dr. Kenneth O'Loane.

Catholic Schools Topic

Opinions on Catholic schools, from "close them" to "strengthen them," featured a forum Oct. 28 sponsored by the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen.

The meeting, attended by more than 70 religious and lay, was held in the Central Presbyterian Church Hall, 50 Plymouth Ave. N. It was designed to explore priorities in religious education.

Panel participants were Father Leonard A. Kelly, pastor of Assumption Church, Fairport; Father Cyprian Rosen, OFM. Cap., Geneva, co-director of the diocesan Adult Religious Education Program; Dr. Kenneth O'Loane, Rochester, secretary of the New York State board of Citizens for Educational Freedom, and William T. Cannon, Rochester, chairman of RACL's commission on human dignities.

Cannon noted that parochial schools serve a minority of Catholic children, and advocated more funds for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) program, "using paid, not volunteer teachers."

Contending that "educating only the few is unjust and unfair," he stated that "if necessary" the parochial schools should be de-emphasized or closed.

He also claimed that the schools are "divisive," in that they tend to separate the fam-

ilies from the social issues of the rest of the community. He added further that they "have a discipline of fear and prejudice" which "constrains the total Christ."

O'Loane urged continuation of parish schools with a plea that they be made better. Citing Vatican II documents, he maintained that God-centered schools with a specific Christian philosophy were the wish of the Church Fathers and were necessary for Christian growth in society.

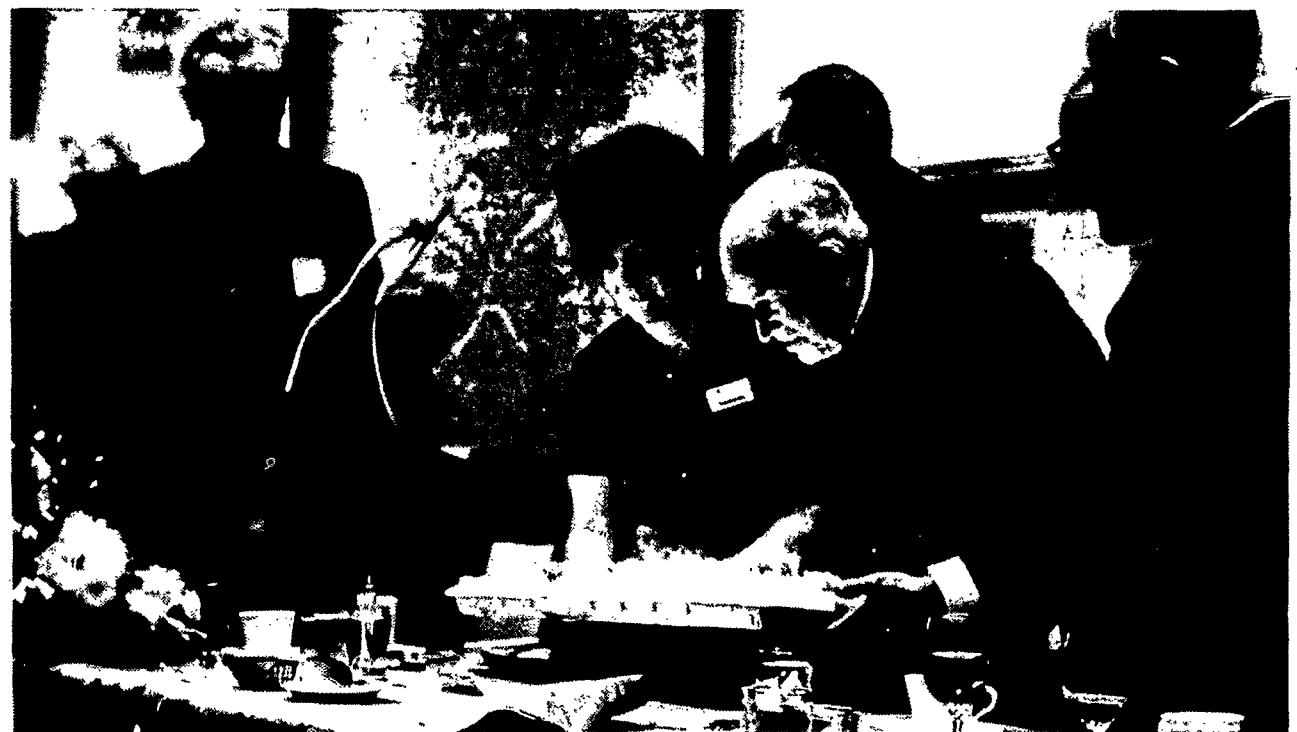
Father Cyprian urged greater concern for adult education at a time "when today's problems require adult decision-making." He termed the need a matter of urgency "before it is too late," and regretted that to date there has been so little done in planning and producing better programs for such education.

Father Kelly showed a film describing the School of Religion program in his parish. The school, opened 14 years ago on property immediately adjacent to the public school, is staffed by four Sisters of the Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart. They are assisted by two parish priests and by 80 volunteer parishioners.

The school provides religious education not only to some 1700 children but also to adults. Religion in the home, in practice and study, is one of its basic objectives, and the Sisters often visit the homes. The school also conducts train-

ing courses for Confraternity of Christian Doctrine volunteer teachers throughout the area.

"Ours is a practical experience, not theory," the priest declared. "It is a total parish program."



Favorite 'Alumnus'

Large candle-light cake signaled "Happy Birthday" greetings for retired Bishop James E. Kearney Oct. 28 during luncheon at biennial meeting of St. Bernard's Seminary Alumni Association in Rochester's Flagship Hotel. Day marked Bishop Kearney's 86th birthday and 38th anniversary of ordination as a bishop. More than 350 priests attended reunion. Pictured from left are Bishop Lawrence B. Casey of Paterson; Bishop Hogan; Bishop Kearney; Father Joseph Reinhart, diocesan director of Propagation of the Faith Society; Bishop David F. Cunningham of Syracuse.

Mass Disruption Termed 'More Harm Than Good'

Interruption of Mass at St. Thomas More Church in Brighton last Sunday by some 20 members of the "Sunday Coalition" demanding money for breakfast programs was termed "poor tactics and leadership" by the pastor, Father Francis Pegnam, who said it "did more harm than good."

A statement issued by the coalition said the group was seeking \$25,000 from the Catholic Diocese for self-help projects. This is in addition to \$24,500 requested previously from Protestant churches of the Rochester area.

Also demanded was a voice in determining how money to be gathered in a Nov. 22 Campaign for Human Development Fund in all parishes is to be spent.

Several persons left the church when the group entered during the 12:15 p.m. Mass. They lined up behind the pulpit during the homily by Father Gerald Connor, assistant pastor.

When he concluded, William Lincoln, representing the coalition, referred to the Human Development fund and told the more than 400 parishioners that they "must be allowed to sit at the table to say how this money is to be spent because, believe me, we know how it should be spent."

Nearly half the group were members of Metro-Act, a community organization seeking changes in "the system," and others were members of the Baden-Ormond Welfare Rights Action Committee and the Orleans County Colony Camp Action Committee.

Queried about the coalition's tactics, Father John J. Hempel, director of the diocesan Office of Human Concern, described the action as "disturbing," and said that a week earlier he had pointed out to coalition leaders the extent to which both the diocese and his office have been involved in programs for the poor.