

Parishioners Pledge Fight To Keep Parochial Schools

Despite expert predictions that rising education costs may bring the closing of several parochial schools in the Rochester area within the next two or three years, many parishioners at area meetings last week expressed shock at the prospect and asserted they would retain their own schools "at all costs."

Representatives of some other parishes admitted, however, that unless increased financial support is forthcoming they do not see how their schools can be continued much longer.

Opinions ranged from "No—not our school!" to "close the schools and use the money for the education of all parishioners, — children and adults."

More than 800 persons, including many priests and nuns, attended the three evening meetings, sponsored by the newly-named diocesan Educational Task Force. They were conducted on Monday at St. Charles Borromeo School Hall, on Tuesday at St. James, and Wednesday at St. Anne's.

Similar Task Force sessions are scheduled at the following places:

Auburn, Nov. 11; Corning, Nov. 12; Dansville, Nov. 17; Geneva, Nov. 19.

Speakers at the Rochester meetings included priests, Sisters, school principals, teachers, parents and parishioners. Praise, appeal, criticism, suggestion and demand sparked many of the comments. Presentations or remarks were made by representatives of about half the parishes in Monroe County.

Presiding at the meetings were Father Daniel Brent, diocesan superintendent of general education, and his associate, Father Leon Hart, SCB. The Task Force numbers 20 priests, Sisters and laymen from throughout the diocese.

Highlight comments at the meetings included the following:

• Preservation . . . There is no alternative, no substitute for

the excellent Christian quality of our parochial schools . . . if the system goes, the future of the Church will suffer . . . our facilities are being bettered, our teachers now all have baccalaureate degrees . . . our system is well worth the investment, and additional sacrifice if necessary, for the future of religion . . . The public schools will not provide Christian education . . . our schools provide for a spiritual legacy which can't be bought anywhere else . . . if we are able to keep the system going, people soon will be knocking at our doors to give their children quality education.

• Criticism . . . We need more study on this whole situation . . . this is particularly true of proposals for incorporation, amalgamation and integration of our schools . . . We don't like decisions being made for us; there should be more "grass roots" representation on diocesan task forces, committees and so on . . . There has been a lack of leadership and of communications . . . we do not like to see hasty decisions.

A minority of speakers advocated closing the parochial schools because by educating less than half the Catholic children they are thereby "discriminatory" and for the "few elite." They contended that monies should be spent for a broadened Confraternity of Christian Doctrine program (religious education of Catholic youngsters on a part-time basis), as well as on adult education.

Others saw CCD as worthy but "an inadequate substitute," and declared that if parochial schools were closed the funds for religious education in parishes would dwindle.

Referring to diocesan assessment on parishes, one priest noted that while there are diocesanwide collections and subsidies for many worthy projects, there was none directly for parochial school education.

He further contended that parishes with parochial schools are being "doubly taxed" by the diocese on the monies pa-

rishioners give for their schools, as compared with parishes which do not have schools.

• Suggestions . . . Many suggestions were made. Principal among them were: There's been too much negative — we have a positive, but we haven't "sold the product" . . . We need to organize to obtain our "fair share" of tax funds; our taxes go to welfare non-discriminatory, but for education we are discriminated against . . . we have to face up to the fact that we have to lobby for these funds, and we should ask every parent of parochial school children throughout the state to sign petitions which should be placed on the desks of every government and school official . . .

A Diocesan School Tax should be considered; we can't continue to raise tuitions, or we ourselves are thereby discriminating . . . we should have a Diocesan School Board, but it should be advisory only, since we must retain parish identity and autonomy . . . Our Sisters are an integral part of the system, but if necessary we can live with a smaller number — but we need at least a Sister Principal . . . For the future not only of Catholic education but of the Church itself, we must immediately undertake a much greater effort to interest our young people in religious vocations.

Task Force members pointed out that their role is not to make decisions, but to present some general guidelines and recommendations to Bishop Hogan.



Members of The Mass League joined the Knights of Columbus First Friday Luncheon Club. From left are William J. Bennett, Friday Club chairman; Father Paul Wohlrab, pastor, Our Lady of Good Counsel, and Angelo DiNieri, Mass League president.

Mass League Cosponsors First Friday Luncheon

The first of a new series of First Friday luncheons was held Friday at the new Holiday Inn - Downtown under the joint sponsorship of The Mass League and the First Friday Club of the Knights of Columbus.

Sponsoring the luncheons is part of The Mass League's expanded program and complete reorganization. Angelo L. DiNieri, Mass League president said, "Both we and the First Friday Club encourage devotion to the Sacred Heart. In fact, our headquarters is St.

Peter & Paul Church, which is a parish of the Sacred Heart Fathers."

The luncheons have returned to the format that proved popular several years ago. The menu of clam chowder, rolls, butter, coffee and pie is served promptly at 12:10, followed by a speaker, and adjournment by 1:15 p.m. This month's speaker was Father Joseph Beatini pastor of St. Francis Church. Next month's First Friday luncheon will be Dec. 6 at the Holiday Inn. It is open to all Catholic Laymen.

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NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER



Father Patrick J. Logan of St. Bernard's Séminary faculty addresses diocesan priests at one of several conferences being conducted throughout the diocese on forthcoming Campaign for Human Development and its drive against poverty.

Bishop Decries Methods Of 'Coalition' Members

Bishop Hogan last week termed the Sunday Coalition, a group which interrupted a Mass at St. Thomas More Church Nov. 1 in a demand for funds for the poor, "an abrasive minority whose mouths seem more open than their hearts."

The statement was contained in a letter to St. Thomas More priests and parishioners, in which the Bishop reaffirmed his praise for "the generous spirit of St. Thomas More parish and its involvement in the needs of people beyond parochial confines." The parish is contributing several thousands of dollars toward poverty situations.

Some 20 coalition members lined up in the sanctuary at the 12:15 Mass Nov. 1 as three of them took the microphone following the homily to ask parishioners to intervene with the Diocese for self-help projects. They also demanded a voice in determining how diocesan funds for the poor are to be spent "because we know how it should be spent."

Bishop Hogan stated he does not approve of and will not succumb to "such pressure tactics," and continued:

"In all decisions in the diocese, I shall continue to seek the advice and direction only of prayerful and intelligent men and women who manifest the work of the Spirit of God, which is the building-up of the

Body of Christ through the strengthening of the unity of its members."

Noting that he did not question the sincerity of the coalition, the Bishop said he strongly disagreed with "the methods they employ." His letter to the parish concluded:

"I beg you to preserve the dignity of Christian charity to those who would disturb you—with kindness and patience. Above all, let not anything you do or say provide them with the opportunity to play the martyr role or to achieve the publicity for which they are seemingly hungry."

Fisher Students Entertain Parents

St. John Fisher College will hold its annual Parents' Weekend Nov. 13-15. Michael Roche is chairman.

Festivities will begin at the Campus Club in Kearney Hall at 8:30 p.m. Friday, with entertainment by "The Beale Street Bandwagon." On Saturday, there will be a barbecue lunch at 12:30 p.m., also at the Campus Club, with Fisher students entertaining. At 2 p.m. the intramural football championship will be played. Saturday night there will be a dinner-dance at the Flagship Rochester, at 7:30 p.m.

Help Fight Poverty, People Asked

Parishioners of the Rochester diocese have been asked to join Catholics throughout the nation to contribute funds in a special collection Sunday, Nov. 22, toward a drive against poverty.

Titled a Campaign for Human Development, the program involves a national crusade to (1) make Catholics aware of poverty situations in their own dioceses, and (2) provide a minimum of \$50 million to finance self-help projects on a diocesan and national level.

Rochester diocesan priests have been or will be informed of the national and diocesan program in a series of four day-long clergy conferences.

Two have been held in Rochester and Elmira, and others are slated for Rochester on Nov. 12 and Auburn on Nov. 19.

The conferences have been arranged by the diocesan Office of Human Concern, headed by Father John J. Hempel. Diocesan organizer of the Human Development Campaign is Father Robert Kreckel, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church, Rochester.

Highlighting the conferences is a pre-recorded video-tape presentation on social conditions, featuring an informal non-hearsed dialogue among Bishop Hogan, Father Sebastian Falcone, OFM, Cap., and Father Patrick Logan.

Bishop Hogan and the priests discussed the need for recognition of concern for poverty situations, and the theological and practical reasons for a resolution to do something about social conditions.

The priests at the conference are then asked to list social concern situations as they see them from a diocesan or parish viewpoint, and to list priorities. Discussion on priorities follows.

Observers state that clear-cut decisions on priorities have been difficult to ascertain, but that there is majority agreement that more information on the situation is needed, and that subsequent action is in itself a priority.