

## Task Force Report Has Hits and Errors

The last word has not been spoken on the future of our parochial school system. Despite the fearsome financial squeeze, declining enrollments and personnel problems which seem to foredoom many schools, the first report of the Diocesan Educational Task Force carries more optimism, courage and ambition than most trend-watchers expected. The Report implies: "The future is not hopeless; parents and pastors want leadership to keep every school alive."

Formally engaged by Bishop Hogan to analyze the awful realities threatening the life of most of our parish schools,—in particular to study the Donovan Report and statistics of the diocesan School and Society Survey made early in 1970,—the 17-member Task Force has recommended maintaining the "maximum possible number" of schools. Their contradiction of opinions which have proposed the closing of groups of church schools in Albany, Buffalo and Detroit is striking.

The long report, which has been distributed to diocesan clergy, school principals and school board presidents, will surely be well read and hotly discussed. On balance, we see the following strong positions and weak points in the whole report:

- It is prudent to yield to the unanimous voice of the large groups of laity who in eight regional public hearings convinced the Task Force that they were awake to the crisis. They said they could handle it themselves and wanted no authority in Rochester to order the closing or consolidation of their schools.

BUT, it seems unrealistic that the Task Force did not similarly hear the opinion of large numbers of good laity and clergy who would close the expensive schools because they question the justice of using the major portion of parish income to educate a quite minor proportion of parish children.

- It is progressive to urge that regional groupings of schools voluntarily form area-boards for mutual assistance. They must be stimulated to organize for collective action on reducing costs, sharing personnel and property with the least waste and most effectiveness.

BUT smug parochialism, plus inertia, jealousy and indifference to a neighboring parish's problems are so ingrained that actual cooperating effort may evolve too bloodily and slowly to save schools in many cases. Parishes in Chemung and Steuben counties, with the newly-effective leadership of Auxiliary Bishop John E. McCafferty, do prove that consolidation of concern can be achieved—but it has come laggardly and painfully.

- It is hopeful to have an intelligent group of educators and laymen bravely offer action programs which they believe will maintain our school system in the traditional manner, serving all who come to it.

BUT, regrettably, in view of the temper of the times, the Report only slightly suggests a renewal of the philosophy of Catholic education, never hints at imaginative reform of curriculum and leaves to later study the question of how to guarantee the best religious education to every Catholic child in any school.

The members of the Task Force deserve our appreciation for their weeks of meetings and travel and study. The fruit of their work lies not in the words of the Report but in the further discussions it will provoke.

—Fr. Richard Tormey

## You Need a Break?

Unless one happens to be a winter sports enthusiast, we are now entering that limbo time of the year. The brisk, invigorating days of late autumn and the holiday zest of December have given way to the long gray line of days which annually chill the outlook as well as the bones of us denizens of the north.

And even the poet's hopeful words about spring not being far behind can do little to pierce the somber tones of January and February. But here's an idea that may help.

In the issues of Dec. 16 and 23, the Courier-Journal printed a list of people in particular need as well as the agencies serving them. May we suggest that it would be appropriate as well as cheering to keep the warm glow of Christmas kindled as an antidote to this gray season by referring to these cases and making a gift.

Courier-Journal

## Letters to the Editor

### Argument Clarified

Editor:

Mr. Joseph Kelly's letter (Courier-Journal 1/6/71) completely missed the essence of my argument of 12/23/70. Nowhere in it did I seek or advocate "a complete state monopoly of education." I merely described what the snowballing of financial aid to religious schools will inevitably lead to in New York State. Once such aid becomes law, all religious schools, not just Catholic ones, will become eligible for state support. Not one religious school of any sect or denomination can be denied such aid.

What has to be the realistic effect once the state supports religious schools? Religious schools already existing will be able to buy new land and erect more buildings, purchase more

equipment to meet their expanding enrollment. What an inducement state aid will offer to those churches that either do not run schools as yet or to those churches yet unborn!

If present taxes for public schools are crushing, will the taxes for the ever expanding religious schools be, less?

Financial aid to church schools has not and could not per se carry the stigma of state control of such schools. The American people wouldn't stand for it.

John J. A. Overlander  
Wimbledon Road  
Rochester

### Fund Helpers Get Thanks

Editor:

I would like publicly to express my gratitude to all the

people who contributed to the Catholic Charities Christmas Fund this year. With the rise in unemployment and the deteriorating economic situation, the demands this year were almost double that of last year.

During this Christmas season, Catholic Charities assisted 870 families either with food baskets or a cash donation. In other words, nearly 4,000 people were the beneficiaries of the generosity of the people who contributed to the Catholic Charities Christmas Fund. Also, toys and gifts were given to 228 children in foster care and St. Joseph's Villa.

Catholic Charities' Christmas appeal this year resulted in donations of almost \$7,000 which was about \$1,000 less than last year. To each and every donor, we are most grateful since we realize that a donation this year involved some sacrifice.

We, at Catholic Charities, would like to extend our gratitude to the Catholic Courier which did a magnificent job in telling our story to the people. Most of all, we would like to thank the families who came to us in need. It is our hope that many of these families will not have to ask for special help at Christmas time in the years ahead. This, we hope to accomplish by working closely with these people to help them with problems in the area of finance, employment and other family situations.

To all who helped to make our Christmas appeal so successful, our heartfelt thanks. May God bless each and every one of you in the new year.

Father Wm. G. Charbonneau  
Director,  
Catholic Charities

### Dead Seeds Don't Grow

Editor:

Thoughtless men, drunk with prosperity in the vast rich land their forefathers discovered, assaulted wildlife until its very existence was in danger. Then they turned to rape the wealth and innocence of their environment until fearful scholars warned that eventually man's environment would be destroyed. They sobered for a moment, pondered this; then they nodded with great relief as technologists proposed an amazing answer: Kill the offspring of man himself, technologists said. In this way, man could preserve his environment!

How can abortionists argue that a fetus is not alive in the early stages of development?

A dead seed does not grow. A fetus, if healthy, continues to grow and flourish from the moment God has struck life into it: If there is no life, there can be no death. Why, then, is it required by law that an abortionist sign a death certificate after the performance of each abortion?

Nina McPherson  
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Corning

### The Word for Sunday

## The Baptism Of Jesus

By Father Albert Shamon



The Baptism of Christ was told by Mark, Matthew and Luke. The fact that Christ was baptized by John was embarrassing to the early Church. It made Jesus appear as a sinner and as less than John. As a result we see a gradual editing of the account of Jesus's baptism in the Gospels.

Mark, for instance simply blurs it out, "Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John." But Matthew and Luke, writing later, tone down Mark's remark. Matthew has John protesting, "I should be baptized by you." Luke goes further: he doesn't even mention John and focuses, not on Jesus' baptism, but on the phenomena accompanying it—the skies opening, the voice, the dove. John, the last of the evangelists, omits the baptism account altogether.

Yet Jesus' baptism was told to show the necessity of baptism, to teach us to do what we must.

John's baptism symbolized two spiritual realities: repentance and hope.

Repentance looked to the past, to something personal, to sin. John baptized only those who confessed their sins (Mt. 3:6). The Pharisees who came to his baptism only for show, he castigated in a violent outburst as a "brood of vipers."

Hope looked to the future, to something social, to the Kingdom of God. John promised his baptism prepared for the reign of God. Hence his references to God's reign being near at hand, to One in their midst mightier than himself.

This One, John said, "will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire." To a Jew, fire connoted God's presence and power. Fire recalled the burning bush Moses saw. It recalled the pillar of fire that led Israel out of Egypt, the burning coal that touched the lips of Isaiah, the flames in the visions of Ezekiel. A baptism in fire augured a new manifestation of the power and presence of God.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is baptism in fire. Fire destroys and transforms, it gives light and heat. The Spirit destroys sin as light does the darkness; and the Spirit transforms the soul as heat does the snow-blanketed earth. At Jesus' baptism there was no fire—only

a dove. For in Jesus there was no sin, no evil passion to be burned away. When He came to be baptized, He confessed the sin of mankind. So after baptism He prayed. And in answer the Spirit came upon Him as a dove to make Him gentle as a lamb to be sacrificed for the sin of the world. Hence the next day, John the baptizer of Jesus pointed Him out exclaiming, "There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Christian baptism confers ontological holiness, or holiness of being, just as health confers ontological wholeness. One who is healthy, can do his work; one who is made holy in baptism is able to become what baptism has made him be, namely, a son of God.

This becoming what one is through baptism is holiness of action or moral holiness. It is an ongoing endeavor, a lifelong struggle. As Grace Kelly's children, born in a royal family, must spend their lives learning the culture and traditions of the monarchy of Monaco and must always strive to live worthy of them, so each one born into the holy family of God must endeavor forever on earth to assimilate the culture, the cult, and the creed of God's family and strive to live this out in their lives—to become in deed what baptism has made them in fact, children of God.

Jesus' life began with a baptism of water but ended in a baptism of blood. It was His baptism of blood that renders all subsequent baptisms effective. Likewise it is the blood, sweat, and tears of our sacrifices that makes our baptism truly redemptive.

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