

Hopes Are Rising

This is registration week in most of our parochial schools. Predictions are already being made that there will be fewer empty desks throughout the diocese next Fall. Enrollment in first grades is expected to be higher than last year, some pupil-growth will enlarge the upper classes and new kindergartens will be opened in several areas.

Current statistics do not prove that the downward trend of enrollment which has been threatening parish schools for six years has been permanently reversed. Nor do the figures indicate that the grave doubts many Catholics have had about the elementary schools have been allayed.

But there is new confidence in many homes that our diocesan school system is not going to close down within the next year or so. Many parents aware of the shakeup proposed by the Educational Task Force and the Donovan Report have new hope that the reevaluation of our educational system prompted by the crisis will improve the quality of parochial education.

An underlying cause of the school-situation of the past ten years has been an internal collapse of morale: a loss of nerve by administrators and pastors, a loss of hope among faculties and a loss of faith in the values of the system by many Catholics sincerely dedicated to the welfare of the Church.

The credibility gap between schools and laity lies in the uneasy feeling that in some parishes the religious and moral values are not being taught with the efficacy the times demand. Parents have been increasingly distressed not with the secular content of the Catholic school curriculum but with the vagueness of the religious doctrine transmitted by some teachers and the inadequacy of the teaching of moral values.

The situation is not universal but Catholics are asking: "Unless our youngsters derive something distinctively religious and moral and doctrinally sound from the total school program which cannot be obtained elsewhere, why keep up this double-school system? If doctrine is reduced to feeling, if certainty is scepticism and worship and the Sacraments presented merely as options in Catholic life, why should we send our children to the parochial schools?"

The Catholic public doesn't need to be resold on the value of Catholic education. But we do need to be convinced, by the actual products of our schools, that quality education and Christian formation are the specific results of each day's work in the parochial school.

—Father Richard Tormey

Parent Aid

The bishops of New York State have strongly endorsed the Speno-Lerner Parent Aid Bill as the surest and quickest way to save the parochial school system in the state.

The bill presently is in committee and members must vote it out to the floors of the two houses. If they do not, the bill will die in committee.

The governor's role is a key one in this. If he exerts pressure to keep the bill in committee it may never get out.

Most observers feel the bill will be passed if it gets to the Legislature floor. Again the governor has the decisive role—he has indicated he may veto it.

Our diocese has a pivotal role in this—both chairmen of the education committees are from here. Sen. Thomas Laverne of Irondequoit is chairman of the Senate Education Committee and Assemblywoman Constance Cook of Ithaca has the same role in the Assembly.

Those who want Speno-Lerner passed have a two-fold task. First is to let these three key people know, through letters, telephone calls and telegrams, that there is great popular support for getting Speno-Lerner out of committee.

Then, using the same methods, they must let all the legislators know there is massive backing for passage of the bill.

If you are in favor of this bill and wish to contact your executive or legislative leaders, remember to be brief, clear and to the point. Do not harangue or go off on tangents.

Time is of the essence. The Legislature will adjourn in April and Speno-Lerner could come up at any time.

—Carmen J. Viglucci

Public Schools State Religion?

Editor:

Very recently the bishops of New Zealand reaffirmed the Church's teaching that parents of Catholic children have the grave obligation to use the Catholic school system. They challenged the conscience of Catholics "to promote this aspect of the Church's mission in New Zealand."

The bishops noted that in pressing for state aid, Catholics may have done "a disservice by highlighting the elements we have in common with state schools." They emphasized that "the Catholic school is not a state school with a religious instruction class added."

In the same sort of sense that lakes and deserts contain identical elements of water and sand, Catholic and public schools have little in common. Catholic schools are God-centered communities which receive, direct and apply God's gift of reasoning to the service of God in this world.

One can clearly identify the public schools as churches for the State Religion of Faith in

Education, rather than faith in God. Public schools must practice atheism although they are neither required nor permitted to profess atheism. They teach atheism implicitly by permeating the children with a godless atmosphere; they enforce a perverted environment that is isolated from the truth of the real world, in which people believe in God and have moral roots.

Joseph J. Murray
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in Mississippi" which describes in detail the search and apprehension of those guilty of murdering three civil rights workers in Mississippi.

The FBI is credited with finding the killers and bringing them to trial. Wayne Roberts and Imperial Wizard Sam Bowers received 10 years in prison, and several others received lesser jail sentences.

The FBI and the police in general have been the target of much unjust criticism. The people who write RACL Viewpoints have a right to their opinions, but they also have a responsibility to tell the truth.

Robert Bart
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RACL Facts Disputed

Editor:

In the Courier-Journal (2-17-71) RACL Viewpoints article entitled The Pen vs the Sword, by George Jost, stated "When the civil rights workers were brutally murdered several years ago, no one was captured by the fabled FBI or by any other police force."

I found this statement to be totally untrue, inasmuch as the September issue of the Readers Digest featured a story in their book section entitled "Murder

No More Just Wars

Editor:

There is a time for speaking and Father Logan, who has a special responsibility as a moral theologian has done so. In five articles in the Courier-Journal he has applied the conditions of the Church's just-war theory to Vietnam and has concluded the war is unjust. My wish is that Father Logan had drawn his conclusion from the Gospel of Peace rather than from the just-war theory.

Nuclear weapons, employed even as a deterrent, have nullified the just-war theory. There has to be an alternative for the Christian conscience.

Isn't it time we stood up and in one voice said 'No' to this war, degenerated now into mass murder of the defenseless?

By our accommodation with it, either by active support, or by default, haven't we betrayed the message of Him who is our Peace?

Would He not suffer injustice rather than inflict it?

Isn't it time we broke through the narrow barriers of nationalism to embrace our 'enemies,' seeking by love to overcome evil with good?

Mrs. Eloise Wilkin
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Alcohol Series Lauded

Editor:

The Courier-Journal recently carried a series of articles on alcoholism. It appears to be an excellent series and may well inspire some interest and action on the part of problem drinkers in the Rochester community.

May I make the following notation for area readers:

For local help and information, contact the Alcoholism Information and Referral Service, 973 East Ave., Rochester, 14607; telephone 271-3450.

Paul L. Miethker,
Health Association of
Rochester and
Monroe County

The Word for Sunday God's Promises Are Gifts

By Father Albert Shamon



It is God's special delight to comfort and cheer the hearts of His people when they are cast down (2 Cor. 7:6; 1:3-4). That is what the story of Abram (Reading I) and the story of the Transfiguration (Gospel) are telling us.

Abram had just returned from a battle with five kings. By a midnight raid with three hundred men, he had succeeded in rescuing his nephew, Lot. Abram feared reprisals for his daring sortie. He was depressed and worried. Then in a vision God spoke to Abram and uttered those words that occur nearly one hundred and eighty times in Scriptures, "Fear not, I am with you." Far from being ousted from the land and dragged into a foreign country as Lot almost was, God promised Abram that the whole land of Canaan would be his. To confirm His promise, "the Lord made a covenant with Abram."

Covenants were the equivalent of contracts today. A covenant was a solemn promise, made by two parties. To guarantee the fulfillment of the promise, some kind of ritual was used. A sacrificial victim was split in two with the halves facing each other. The contracting parties walked between the pieces and pronounced their promise. The rite symbolized that each party was ready to be slaughtered like an animal should he break his word.

God condescended to confirm His promise to Abram in terms Abram understood. He directed that a 3-year old heifer, a 3-year old she-goat, a 3-year old ram be halved according to custom. The turtledove and pigeon, too small to be divided, served each as the half of an animal. God passed between the carcasses in the form of fire, always a symbol of divinity, and as a smoking brazier, a symbol of suffering. As He did, He promised a land to Abram. Only God, not Abram, passed between the pieces because God's promises, like all His graces, are free gifts, undeserved by the other party. The birds of prey symbolized the obstacles

which Abram's seed would encounter before entering into their possession.

In the Gospel, Peter, James and John were in a state of depression not unlike Abram's. Christ had been telling them about His passion and death. It was a staggering revelation that stunned the apostles. So Jesus took them to a mountain to pray (prayer is always a good antidote to depression). There He showed them what glory His suffering and death would bring. God consoled Abram in his sorrow; Jesus consoled His apostles in their sorrow only to prepare them to bear the greater sorrow in store for them at the time of His passion.

It is instructive to learn that God always consoled His friends by His promises. Hannibal encouraged his soldiers not to give up while crossing the Alps by promising them the sunny lands of Italy — Post Alpes, Italia — after the Alps, Italy. So God's word reminds us of the end — "we eagerly await the coming of our Savior" (Reading II). After life, eternity, God would have us be consoled by remembering the great joys to come. Communists taunt religion with promising "pie in the sky when you die." But that was Christ's way — joy in sorrow, reward after death. It was Paul's way too. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come" (Rom. 8:18).

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