

Pastoral Letter On Diocesan Christian Education

My dear People:

Christian education is one of the primary apostolates of the Church. "In discharging her educative function, the church is preoccupied with all appropriate means to that end. But she is particularly concerned with the means which are proper to herself, of which catechetical training is foremost. . . . Among all the agencies of education the school has special importance" (Christian Education, No. 4, 5, Vatican Council II.)

In the same document, No. 9, the Council Fathers have also pointed out that we should spare no sacrifice for schools and that we should show special concern for the poor and those not of the faith.

Mindful of these principles enunciated by Vatican II and fully aware of our present crisis in education and the factors that have led to it, I must now make some difficult decisions. I am firmly convinced that the future of Christian education in the Diocese of Rochester depends on present decisions and that it would be disastrous to adopt a "wait and see" policy.

The task forces commissioned by me after lengthy and detailed study have recommended a double goal: quality religious education for all, and a strong Catholic school system.

Such a school system is needed, because—
our youth must have stabilizing moral and spiritual values;
the Church must present herself as a cultural, humanizing factor in this world;
and
our country must preserve pluralism, freedom of choice, freedom of religion and the rights of parents—foundation stones of society.

Therefore, after careful study of the reports of these commissions and after due consultation, I am instructing our Department of Education to pursue the following course of action:—

First, reorganize education in the diocese on a regional basis that transcends parish lines and narrow parochial interests. This regionalism must be effected:

- (1) to improve the quality of education not only of our schools but also of all our religious education programs;
- (2) to maximize the use of all of our resources to reach the greatest number of God's people; and lastly
- (3) to pursue educational goals that are too local for the Diocese, and too large for the individual parishes.

The consolidation of Catholic schools in Elmira and Corning deserves special commendation. It has encouraged my hopes and desires for similar action in other areas of the Diocese.

Secondly, (1) devise methods to promote an equitable distribution of the financial resources of the Diocese, because the concern of the church is for all its children. Some methods recommended were the salary pool, the establishment of an emergency fund, and equalization of the contributed services of the Sisters.

(2) generate new sources of income to meet increasing needs, such as, mounting a legislative campaign to obtain parent-aid and seeking out new funds from private sources.

Lastly, to give further direction in these areas, I shall appoint, as suggested by the Task Force, an interim Diocesan Educational Commission to serve until elected representation from the regions is an actuality. This Commission shall carry on and implement the work initiated by the task forces.

Consistent with the function of a Diocesan Pastoral Council, when it is established, I shall delegate to this Diocesan Educational Commission all the authority needed to fulfill its mandate.

I ask for the support of our priests, sisters and laity in this critical endeavor and pray that the Spirit of Truth will bring this work to fruition.

With a blessing, I am

Devotedly yours in Christ

Joseph L. Hogan
Bishop of Rochester



Don't Be Forgetting?

He may have been squeezed off the calendar of saints but we ask: Who could forget St. Patrick on March 17?

The Word for Sunday

Who Is Without Sin?

By Father Albert Shamon



One of the great themes of Lent is the reconciliation of sinners. In the early Church sinners did public penance during Lent and on Holy Thursday received absolution from the Bishop, who then welcomed them to the table of the Lord as a sign of their reconciliation to the community. Paul's letter speaks of reconciliation with God (R11); and Reading I and the Gospel exemplify this reconciliation.

After Israel had left Egypt in a blaze of glory, she promptly rebelled against God at Kadesh-barnea. As a sign of His displeasure, God condemned Israel to wander for thirty-eight years in the Shur desert. In addition none of the people was circumcised, as if God had disowned them. But the miraculous crossing of the Jordan under Joshua demonstrated that Israel was once more reconciled with God. As a sign that He had "removed the reproach of Egypt" and resumed His covenant relationship with them, God commanded Joshua to circumcise the people. Circumcision was the condition for celebrating the Passover just as baptism is the door to Holy Communion.

We can well imagine the deep despair of the Canaanites when they saw the Jordan split in two for the Israelites. The military thing to do would have been for Joshua to take advantage of the paralysis of the enemy and strike one swift blow for victory before the enemy could recover himself. But after crossing the Jordan, Joshua tarried. The ways of God's men are not the ways of worldly men. "The race is not won by the swift, nor the battle by the valiant" (Eccl. 9:11). What a lesson for this hurry-hurry mad age of ours. Joshua prepared for the conquest of the Promised Land, not by quick assault, but by one act of devotion after the other. In obedience to God's command, first he circumcised the people, then they celebrated the Passover.

And where did the unleavened cakes and the parched grain come from for the celebration?

From the Canaanites. In their terror they had retreated to walled Jericho, leaving the fields garmented with grain as spoils to their enemy. So plentiful was the food of the land that the manna ceased. God works no unnecessary miracles.

The parable of the prodigal son reflects the same theme that Israel's history does — that of separation and reconciliation. The hero of the parable is not the son but the father, who images God. The prodigal's motive for returning is anything but noble, yet he had faith enough to rise and go. And when faith goes an inch, grace comes a mile. The father did not keep his son waiting at the door or receive him gruffly or with an I-told-you-so attitude. He ran to embrace his son. It is the parable of the wonderful father.

However, there is a discordant note. It is the unforgiving brother. He claimed to be an obedient son. Yet he had no realization of his merciless heart, no conviction of his bitter envy. He spoke of his brother as "this son of yours," repudiating all bonds of brotherhood. His father rebuked him answering, "This brother of yours." This elder son gives a repelling picture. He needed, as much as his younger brother, to kneel and plead, "Father, forgive me; I have sinned."

Here is our twin danger: to neglect to seek reconciliation with God and to refuse it to our fellowman. Who is without sin? Who has not been injured?

Letters CEF Wire Sent to Rocky

Editor:

The following telegram was sent to Gov. Rockefeller by Citizens for Educational Freedom:

The State Board of Citizens for Educational Freedom has noted your position with regard to aid for private and parochial education (New York Times, Feb. 9). Heretofore we have been encouraged by your efforts to provide quality education on a non-discriminatory basis for all the children in New York State. We strongly agree with that goal, and compliment you for your efforts to substitute the language of the First Amendment for the present Blaine Amendment of the State Constitution.

However, we believe that the Court of Appeals decision in the New York Textbook Loan case has removed any urgency for repeal of Blaine, and provides the necessary constitutional basis for giving aid during this session of the legislature to children in the financially hard-pressed nonpublic schools.

The press quotation left the impression your immediate concern is that aid to parents who may elect to send their children to private or parochial schools might undermine the public school system. As citizens of New York State our concern is not primarily with the preservation of any single system of education. It is with the total educational program, and parental rights under the law. We are concerned that the historic combination of private, public and parochial institutions, with their diverse programs under the supervision of the Board of Regents, not be impaired either in quality or availability.

Inequitable use of tax resources, obtained from all taxpayers, now threatens both and infringes on parental rights. We would appreciate your consideration of measures, among them the Speno-Lerner Bill (Senate 671, Assembly 123) now pending in the legislature. This Parent-Aid bill, or a similar alternative, would preserve and strengthen the State's total educational program.

We respectfully call your attention to the fact that many parents are being penalized for exercising freedom of religion in the education of their children. To avoid the educational crisis which, as you mentioned in your recent annual message to the legislature, gravely threatens the "already overburdened public schools", an alternative must be made available to these parents in this session of the legislature.

Dr. J. Kenneth O'Loane,
Secretary
New York State Board
Citizens for Educational
Freedom

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