

Registration Shows Pride in Catholic Schools

By CECILIA VIGGO

"The faith is declining" is often heard from the pulpit. Public morals seem to sink lower and lower. Even the wisdom of Bishop Fulton Sheen was going at \$1 per hardback volume at a local store last week.

But at the same time, this week, scores of Catholic schools in the diocese received hundreds of parents who wished to enroll their children for next fall.

They are doing this, despite the fact school taxes are rising, more parochial schools are charging an annual tuition of \$60-\$80 per pupil, and pundits continue to question how long the parochial system can survive.

Why do parents continue to want their children to be educated in Catholic schools?

I talked to several parents about their motives for supporting Catholic education.

The same major reason was offered by every parent whom I questioned: they send their children to Catholic schools because they prize the ethical, moral and spiritual values inculcated there.

"I want them to learn everything in terms of their faith," commented Mrs. Paul Ringwood, who has four children in Holy Family School, Auburn.

Mrs. Vincent Lahr explained that she sent her five children to St. Stephen's school, Geneva, because of the "Christian influence, integrated into all the children's school work."

"No matter what the subject, teachers will use it as an opportunity to discuss morals," responded Mrs. Gerald Skerrett, whose four children have attended St. James, Rochester.

Mrs. James Howard, whose six children have attended St. Michael's school, Penn Yan, and Mrs. Thomas Sidoti, who sent her two children to Most Precious Blood school, voiced similar comments.

Many parents also felt that the parochial schools could better foster order and self-discipline among the children. They credited this ability to generally more selective enrollment in the schools, and the fact that the Catholic schools were less vulnerable to outside pressures and influences.

"I think they learn to respect others from the nuns," observed Mrs. Carlyle Sutherland, five of whose six children have attended St. Michael's school, Penn Yan.

Her remarks were echoed by Mrs. John Costello, whose seven children have attended Holy Family school, Auburn. "I like the kind of discipline that prevails in the school," she said.

Many parents also agreed with Mrs. Lewis Scarciota, who has sent four children to Most Precious Blood school, Rochester. "I put all my trust in the sisters and know that they are getting a good education."

Joseph Camardo, who has two children enrolled in Holy Family, praised the dedication of

the parochial school teachers, especially the teaching sisters. "The nuns give of themselves unselfishly day and night. Teaching is their only vocation," he said.

Most parents whom I interviewed had supported the Catholic schools for a long time. What of the parent newly committed to Catholic education?

Special education programs offered at several parochial schools in the diocese:

St. James: non-graded primary program; perceptual development program for primary grades; music program; band and chorus; resource room.

Holy Family, Auburn: 4 languages offered in grades 2-8; German, French, Italian and Spanish; speech therapy, remedial reading; special art program.

Most Precious Blood: learning center; grades 7 and 8 are interdepartmental.

St. Stephen's, Geneva: French program—grades 1-8; tutoring program with cooperation of the education department of Hobart College.

Arthur Müller enrolled his eldest son this year in the kindergarten at St. James, Rochester. He told me about the larger implications of the role of Catholic education.

"I don't think that you can take the moral and ethical side of human life out of education," he said. "Education must deal with the total human being."

The parochial schools, he declared, are free to "teach values, to explore the moral context of knowledge. For this reason, they can work with all facets of the individual."

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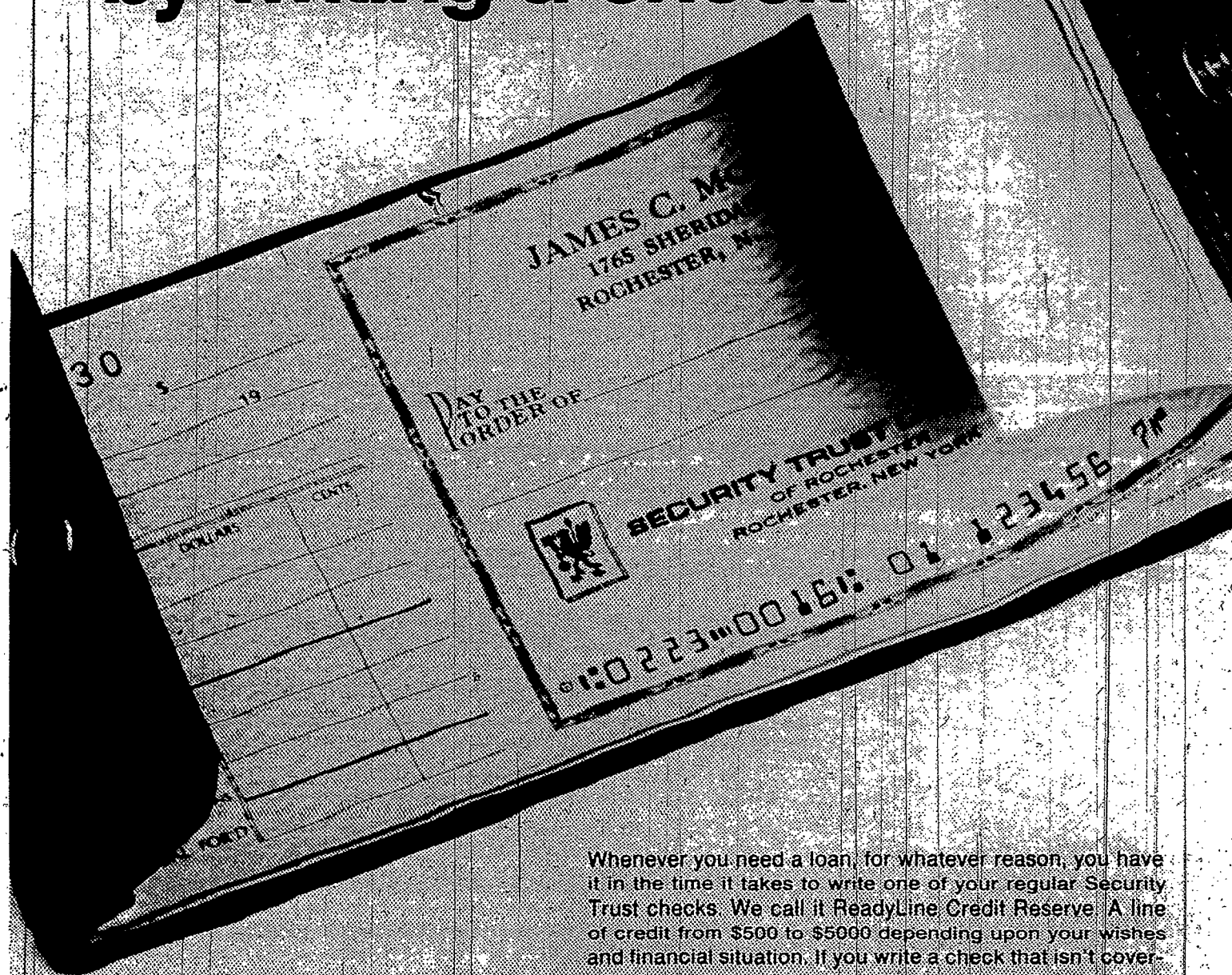
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