

Education Profile

By FATHER ALBERT J. SHAMON

Vicar for Education

I am happy on the occasion of our schools opening to offer my reflections on the profile of education in our diocese.

Let me state it as a basic principle: the Catholic school cannot be eliminated or phased out in our Diocese! Vatican II earnestly entreated "pastors of the Church and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools to achieve their purpose in an increasingly adequate way..." ("Declaration on Christian Education, #9").

Those who would contemplate closing Catholic schools should think of the possible consequences to the American way of life. America cannot survive without morality and religion. The private school has spiritual and moral values built into the system. Every year these schools pump students (11 million) into the blood stream of society, students with Christian and Judaic principles, like red corpuscles. Cut off this flow and leukemia, or cancer of the blood, will result. "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity," wrote Washington, "religion and morality are the indispensable supports."

Catholic education was not founded in America to protect the faithful from a hostile Protestant culture. It was founded because the essence of humane and Christian education is that religion be integrated with life. Leaving religion out of education is not like leaving raisins out of a cake, but like leaving eyes out of the human body.

It is true that the shocking decision of the Supreme Court in the Lemon Case has cast an almost unupportable burden on Catholic parents. Yet we must remain undaunted. As the rock in a stream does not dam its flow but causes the waters to swirl more furiously, so the dastardly decision should only stir up animus for a fight for survival.

It sickens one in this age of ecumenism to see Know-Nothingism rear its ugly head in PEARL, POAU, and the Supreme Court. I think neither these vocal minorities nor the Supreme Court decision reflects the majority of good-willed people in the United States.

One wonders that our nation subsidizes industries to the tune of \$28 billion a year, that the President and the Congress get all astir over Lockheed, and yet all stand by and watch silently, almost gloatingly, the imperilment of the private education system of this nation with its glorious history of contributions to the country — stand by and almost hail its demise at a juncture in our history when, as never before, America stands

in need of men and women permeated with moral and religious principles.

What is done, is done. But for us the fight has just begun. Our schools must not close! Rather ours should be a holding action until parents obtain by political action the aid for the education of their children in the schools of their choice which they so rightly and richly deserve as taxpaying citizens

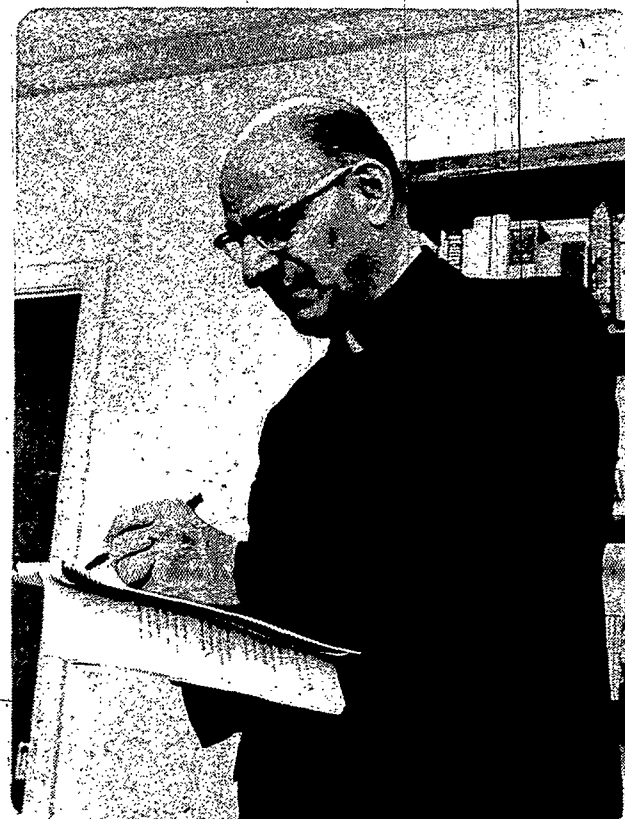
In the meanwhile I hope priests and people will begin to dialogue regionally, not to liquidate their schools, but to devise and discover new and better ways to improve them, staff them, and finance them.

Catholic schools, however, are only one facet of the educational profile of the diocese. Catholic schools focus on 40,000 pupils — no mean endeavor! Yet, another 80,000 pupils are not in private schools. To address ourselves to the herculean task of offering these a proper religious education at the expense of the Catholic school system would be myopic — robbing Peter to pay Paul. Too long have we thought in terms of either Catholic schools or religious education for those in public schools, as though these two educational arms were mutually exclusive. Are we so poor that we cannot nourish two hands to the Mystical Body of Christ in the diocese?

I see the Catholic school as the feeder for our future teachers in an ever-expanding, ever-improving religious education program for our youth in public schools. I see that more and more money must be expended for the religious education programs of these young people and that many of the problems confronting their religious education be assessed regionally or corporately.

I think it is time to stop criticizing texts, as though textbooks are responsible for the inadequacy of religious education programs. The real fault is not in the textbooks; the fault is in the preparation of classes, in the preparation of teachers, in the preparation of parochial and interparochial programs. Jesus Christ Superstar is certainly faulty text, yet thousands of people are paying thousands of dollars to see it.

One of the areas closest to a priest's heart is education in the Inner City. Again Vatican II urges that priests and people "show special concern for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of faith" ("Christian Education, #9"). In a meeting with a group of Inner City mothers,



FR. SHAMON

one pleaded for help from others in suburbia. I asked her why. Mrs. Johnson answered, "Father, it is like two boys — one is crippled and one is sound. The crippled boy needs braces to walk; the well boy needs only shoes. If a choice had to be made, Father, would you deny the crippled boy the braces needed for walking to provide shoes for the other?"

The Koerner Report said one of the four basic needs for Inner City to break the hellish circle of poverty is education. It is interesting, also, to note that parents in Inner City want Christian education for their children. They are pleading for the Catholic schools in Inner City. They are telling us loud and clear that nowhere in the diocese is the Catholic school so necessary as in the Inner City. At the same meeting with Inner City mothers, one said, "Father, all the riots in the Inner City don't make the newspapers. I have instructed all my children where to hide in the house when street fights occur. I forbid them to look out the window at these times for fear of their very lives. The only way to climb out of this ghetto is by Christian Education."

My admiration goes to the wonderful priests and school faculties of Inner City, for theirs is a titanic struggle which they have faced and are facing daily with burning zeal and faith. I sincerely hope that as soon as the regions are operative, priests and people will give any Inner City school in their region top priority. Either we give them the cross or they will turn to the switchblade.

May the Spirit of God stir the hearts of all and effect a new Pentecost in our Diocese through the prayers and teachings of its devoted teachers.

In Memory of Father Lynch, 1925-1961

Father Paul J. Lynch, diocesan priest, Army chaplain, was killed in a helicopter crash in Greenland on Aug. 24, 1961. A memorial for the 10th anniversary of Father Lynch's death was composed by Father Joseph P. Cloonan of this diocese, who is a Navy chaplain.

IN MEMORIAM

In the white sanctuary of the Arctic
he offered final sacrifice:
'coptered chalice poured out
its full libation; busy blades hovering
were paten held above an altar.

How beautiful with glory
the chaste generation! Virgin ice
received the red fullness of life
to sing its hymn of silence in awesome
requiem. No other voice to mar
the simple grandeur of the sudden gift.

Below the frozen waters great roots
of ice support the chaste edifice . . .
His life hid victim roots
plunged deep to form the paradox
of priest; he had pledged
his death on many altars; pledge now

paid in full—symbol of the legion priests
who daily die upon the altar world
of deep indifference. Daily, too,
their resurrection, constant fruit
of springtime faith, to be victims yet again
on more than Arctic vastness.

God so loved the world
that He sent a Spotless Lamb
for sacrifice. Strange love that stokes
a stubborn fire with prophets, priests,
and Only Son! Their holocausts burn bright
against the mistlike apathies of all
whose icy barriers fend off God.

Faith sings of life upspringing
when priest is victim slain
upon the altar of resolve.

Father Lynch, who died at 36, was a native of Canadaigua. He was ordained in 1949 after studies in St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries. He had been assistant pastor at St. Mary's, Auburn, and St. John the Evangelist, Rochester, before entering service in 1954. He is the only chaplain of the Rochester Diocese to be killed while in active military service. Since 1918, 65 diocesan priests have been chaplains and eight are still serving.



FR. LYNCH