

Other Letters to the Editors

Reader Takes Issue With Parochial Drive

Editor:

I guess I'm one of those parish Sister Ramona of Brookline (C-J, 1/17/73) would call an "enemy of Catholic education" because I believe that the mission of the Church is more obviously met in social services than in the education of our children.

Those of us who, after continued frustration, have despaired of beating the terminally moribund horse of parochial education, believe that the real tragedy lies in the preoccupation with this enervating and demeaning effort to secure our "civil rights" as Catholics. God knows it's hard enough for the larger populus to secure its rights as Americans! The tragedy lies in the diversion of energies from more promising and humanly vital needs of the Christian enterprise. These must both precede and embrace the Christian education of our children.

For even if the state were eventually to give us aid of the scope necessary to allow Catholic education to meet the general "competition" of public school financing, the price would prove too high in the untenable philosophical and psychological controls inevitably exacted.

My concern as layman, parent and teacher lies principally in these convictions:

1. We ought to use the public facilities much more willingly and realistically, and bend every effort to that task which is more properly the task of the Church, namely spiritual and moral formation of children equipped to enter the public scene. We ought to get out of the very expensive and preoccupied business of secular education.

2. We must explore the workable alternatives for accomplishing this function... alternatives which continue to be ignored because we have taken as articles of faith certain axioms of Catholic education that are obsolete.

3. In view of the new ecumenism and the more universally human rather than narrowly sectarian outlook it implies, we would do well to consider the serious responsibility we have neglected in failing to contribute to the public system the spiritual and moral leaven of good solid, young Catholics daily bringing to those schools the forceful influence of clear thinking, selfless self-discipline, and the example of genuine altruism and meaningful family life. Only God knows how much of the corrosion in the discipline of the public schools, corrosion we have been quick to deplore, and corrosion we have even made an argument for preserving separatist schools, is in fact a consequence of our refusal to contribute to those schools the powerful moral force of daily presence of our own Catholic young.

4. Finally, and most serious of all, is it not true that persisting in this present course, the Church is violating the very right and responsibility it is trying to implement, and is cultivating a continued apathy on the part of parents — a continued willingness on the part of parents to turn over to the Church too easily their own most serious personal duty and right, namely training their children in the truths of faith, and disciplining them in moral affairs.

As long as the Church will tend to it for them, Catholics will humanly be inclined to abdicate this right and duty in deference to the "more authoritative" Church. In this day of better educated and more sophisticated parents, we ought to be making a more determined effort to give this task back to its prime owners, with a view to providing a whole new kind of institutional help. The latter must do much more to improve the capabilities of parents.

through adult education. Sunday sermons, the present staple of this effort, do little of consequence.

Surely, a whole new rationale of "Catholic education" is called for. It won't be developed overnight, but we are not really working on new concepts, only new ways of doing the old things. The new plan recommended by the CACP task force locally does indeed give some hope of new concepts. And it emphasizes serious weaknesses — the weakness of Catholic Education that allows outer-city parishes to rationalize the jealous preservation of redundant facilities at the expense of desperately needed inner-city reinforcement! It is an anachronistic and scarcely Christian justification that haunts a pastoral voice that will say seriously: "My parishioners won't give up their school. They have too much invested in this plant." Nor do conscience-appealing pinnacles yielded in the name of regionalism satisfy the kind of sacrifice Christ summoned people to substance to.

God give us clear and honest thinking on this.

Clarence Amann
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Meditation Recommended

Editor:

"Public School Nurse Fired for Letting Kids Meditate." So ran the headline in "The Courier Journal" of 1/31/73. In my further reading, I discovered that "she (the nurse) had allowed a group of six (high school) students — she did not join them — to use her office for silent meditation when it became too cold for the group to hold their meditations outside. The meditations do not include vocal prayers."

In her defense she pointed to provisions in the New York education law that she said permitted "a brief period of silent meditation" at the beginning of the school day.

When I contrasted the silence and the calm such meditation must have effected with the nerve-racking noises so prevalent in too many schools, I had to turn to an experience of William James, the American psychologist, for a rebuttal. He wrote: "We have lately had a number of accomplished Hindoo visitors at Cambridge... More than one of them has confided to me that the sight of our faces, all contracted as they are with the habitual American over-intensity and anxiety of expression, and our ungraceful and distorted attitudes when sitting, made on him a very painful impression."

"I do not see," said one, "how it is possible for you to live as you do, without a single minute in your day deliberately given to tranquility and meditation. It is an invariable part of our Hindoo life to retire for at least half an hour daily into silence to relax our muscles, govern our breathing, and meditate on eternal things. Every Hindoo child is trained to this from a very early age."

The good fruits of such a discipline were obvious in the physical repose and lack of tension, and the wonderful smoothness and calmness of facial expression and imperturbability of manner of these Orientals. I felt that my countrymen were depriving themselves of an essential grace of character. How many American children ever hear it said by parent or teacher, that they should moderate their piercing voices, that they should relax their unused muscles, and as far as possible when sitting, sit quite still? Not one in a thousand, not one in five thousand! Yet, from its reflex influence on the inner mental states, this ceaseless over-tension, over-

motion, and over-expression are working on us grievous national harm.

Obviously the school board that dismissed the school nurse never experienced the benefits of meditation in their own lives!

John J. A. Overlander
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Encounter Praised

Editor:

This is to say thank you to Bishop Hogan for his support of the Marriage Encounter Movement. We first encountered in August here and again last week in New York City.

With each weekend we have grown so in love and acceptance of each other's feelings that we are beginning to understand Christ's words, "Love one another as I have loved you."

All the second honeymoons at all the resorts in the world, all the prayers at all the altars of Rome couldn't have done for our sacrament what Marriage Encounter did in 44 hours.

We have been active in parish CCD programs. Birthright and right-to-life have been our apostolates since the hideous abortion law was first demanded. We've helped with Pre-Cana instructions to engaged couples to mention a few areas of need.

We've wept when young marriages have failed; when teenagers don't listen to the Father's call; when 5-year-olds are dropped at the school door by parents who demand we do their job then are puzzled when the child, as a teen, won't go to Mass; when young girls turn to promiscuity and killing as "my right."

Finally we realized we're attacking the problem at the wrong end of the spectrum.

The real hope for a "new world" is to reach wife and husband with the value of their sacrament of matrimony. From the total design to love as Christ loves, whether we "feel" like it or not at the moment, will flow the graces to lead lives that make these problems obsolete.

This is not to say that the above or other programs are not good, necessary and helpful. They will continue to be a needed enrichment. But we envision a world of married lovers called to total unity in Christ. Marriage Encounter best preaches this message.

"Love isn't love till you give it away."

Won't you share our love by accepting our invitation to live with the expectations of newlyweds again — the Marriage Encounter way?

Pat and Mike Grattan
1183 West Side Drive
Rochester, N.Y. 14624

Pax Christi Seeks Pen Pals

Editor:

A large number of boys and girls, aged 12 to 25 years, in vain did wait until now for a letter from a pen-friend in USA. Who would be ready to accept a pen-friendship with one of these German, French and Austrian young students?

Interested boys and girls are kindly invited to address to:

Catholic Exchange and Correspondence Service, Pax Christi, D-6630 Saarlouis, P.O. Box 462 (West Germany)

giving clearly their personal data and languages known.

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Minister's Protest Accrues a Fine

Eugene, Ore. (RNS) — A clergyman's attempt to dramatize a consumer complaint cost him a \$45 fine for shoplifting here.

The Rev. James E. Coppedge, 45, pastor of Asbury United Methodist church, said he took a square and plumbline from a chain drug store after calling the district attorney's office with a consumer complaint and being told he would do better to handle the matter himself.

According to Coppedge, business firms accused of wrong dealings with customers can sign a promise of voluntary compliance with the law and thus forestall prosecution.

In contrast, he said, when a customer steals from a store, "the business community has at its disposal the police force to make an arrest and establish a criminal record" for the thief.

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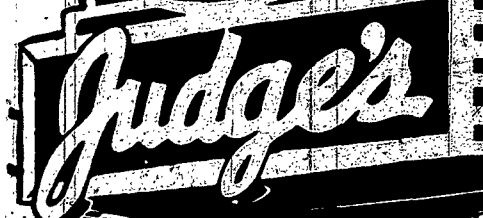
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