

# The Time of Renewal.

## Part VI: Catholic Education

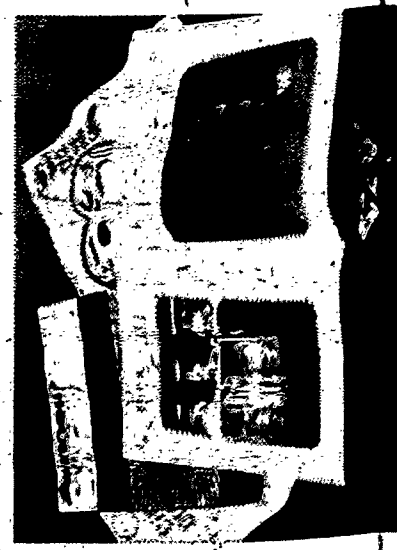
### Survey Report

This is the sixth article in a nine-week series based on a recent opinion survey conducted by the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.

The sample questions to the right were taken from that part of the survey which deals with this week's topic: What is the future of Catholic education?

Of all Catholics surveyed, nearly 75% had had some Catholic school education themselves. And, almost 33% had gone through Catholic high school.

The survey disclosed a relationship between the older, more traditionally schooled Catholic and the Catholic who attended convert classes. These two groups are more strict in their observance of all religious ceremonies, such as Mass attendance, Communion and Confession. However, these two groups do not agree any more strongly than others with the Church's position on moral issues.



The following questions appeared in the recent Diocesan Time of Renewal Survey.

Which adult religious classes have you ever attended?

- Convert
- Teacher Training
- Pre-Cana conferences
- Parent classes
- Never attended
- Don't remember
- Other (SPECIFY)

How do you feel that the parochial education of Catholic students in your community compares to the public school education of others?

- Much better
- Better
- About the same
- Worse
- Much worse
- No parochial school available

62% of the Catholics say that the most important reason for parochial education, aside from religion, is so that children will learn better self-discipline and work habits. Another 21% feel that children are sent because they will get a better education. Only 7% believe parents send children to Catholic schools to avoid racially integrated public schools.

Given the trend away from parochial education, the quality of religious education provided in the CCD, or released time classes, assumes added importance. The adequacy of the books and other materials for religious education is seen as uneven by many Catholics, and many others could not express an opinion about them at all.

For what reasons, aside from religion, do you think the Catholics send their children to parochial schools?

- They obtain a better education
- The discipline is better than in public schools
- To avoid having children attend integrated schools
- They learn better self-discipline and work habits
- Other (SPECIFY)

Do you feel that the training and competence of your children's CCD teachers is:

- Excellent
- Adequate
- Inadequate
- Don't know

Survey questions related to each weekly topic will be printed here throughout the Time of Renewal newspaper series. The complete survey answers and findings will be published in a book, "Dialogue For Renewal," available this fall.



CCD Workshop, Notre Dame Retreat House resources, CCD training cannot replace full-time parochial education in the development of moral character and strength in Catholic children. In general, Catholics in the Diocese of Rochester feel that parochial education is better than public education. But, the survey

### Church Commentary

Learning is a lifelong process. It is important to know that education is not merely the sharing of information, but also the process of developing the total person in all his personal and social dimensions. Religious education aims to develop persons whose knowledge and understanding of God shapes their thinking, their actions, their decisions.

The Catholic schools, which have been the major religious education program of the Church in the Diocese of Rochester, are now undergoing a severe financial crisis. A time of crisis is a time of evaluation. While the Catholic schools do make a distinct and valuable contribution, it is clear that they cannot provide for all the religious education needs of the people in the Diocese of Rochester.

Furthermore, the instruction of children alone is not sufficient. The continuing education of young adults and parents is essential if religious education is to help persons live out their Faith in regard to every day moral issues. The new emphasis on the education of parents and young adults is beginning to be understood. Parents are now, and always will be, the first teachers of their children. Parents share their faith with their children in the living room, at the dinner table, on vacations, in all the aspects of daily life. At a very early age children learn from their family life.

Religious education then is both formal and informal. It happens in the schools, as well as in the Sunday liturgy. It happens in reading the gospels, as well as in talking with a friend. It happens at age seven, as well as age ninety-one! It's not limited to time or space or age level. The success of the Church's religious education efforts is not to be measured by the number who attend the formal programs as much as by the quality of a person's Christian life and relationships.

Many programs now support the central role that parents play in the religious development of their children. Programs to prepare children for First Penance, First Eucharist and Confirmation now include parents. New programs also exist which are geared toward deepening an adult's faith life. Some of these are: Marriage Encounter, Cursillo, Days of Retreat, Adult Learning Classes, Parish Council Training and Regional Conferences.

A serious concern of the Church today is youth. While many teenagers and young adults are seeking answers to religious questions, they do not seem to be involved in parish activities. The challenge for the Church is to provide programs which not only teach doctrine but also address themselves to young people's quest for meaning in life. Some very successful approaches to involve youth are Teen Seminar, Campus Ministry and Youth for Christ. These programs are popular with youth and also emphasize their energies and desires to care about others through service programs. Religious education then is both formal and informal. It happens in the schools, as well as in the Sunday liturgy. It happens in reading the gospels, as well as in talking with a friend. It happens at age seven, as well as age ninety-one! It's not limited to time or space or age level. The success of the Church's religious education efforts is not to be measured by the number who attend the formal programs as much as by the quality of a person's Christian life and relationships.

Next week, Part VII: Catholics and Confession.



Family participating in Family Life Sunday