

THE CHURCH 1973
Fr. Andrew Greeley

Some Catholic psychologist of the 21st century may well want to do a Ph.D. dissertation linking psychology and history in which he will try to explain the militant self-hatred of the American Catholic elites in the years after the Vatican Council. Such a psycho-historian could argue that triumphalism generates self-hatred.

We pretend for many decades to be slightly better than perfect, but then admit grudgingly to ourselves that we haven't quite lived up to our own publicity, and then we turn vehemently on ourselves and castigate ourselves for our failures. The self-hatred of the 1960s and 1970s is but the other side of the triumphalistic coin.

The standards haven't changed any; we've simply become more realistic about performance.

How powerful the self-hatred can be was brought home forcefully to me in recent weeks. Someone sent me a copy of the "new nun" newsletter Probe in which I was informed that I had said with conviction that the "Catholic school makes no significant difference in the lives of young Catholics." I confess to being intrigued by such a quotation because while I can't remember everything that I've said in a long career of shooting off my loud Irish mouth, I was pretty sure I had never said anything like that. Indeed, the research I've done on the subject leads me to believe exactly the opposite and I've said so on so many occasions that it has long since become tiresome.

So I wrote to the editors of Probe asking for a correction. In response I received a letter saying that the "group" responsible for the article was checking to see if I had really said what they had claimed I had said. I responded by observing that I ought to know what my own position was and that I thought an immediate correction would be appropriate. I was then favored with a particularly nasty phone call from a nun who clearly hated all men in general, priests in particular, and me in even more particular, saying that "the group" was still checking the quote.

I finally received a letter from the sister who was apparently the chairman of the group. She expressed some surprise that I would be upset by the misquote because, after all, in the introduction to The Education of Catholic Americans Peter Rossi and I had predicted that we would be quoted out of context. It seemed to me that was an interesting sort of ethical argument. Because somebody expects to be quoted out of context it is therefore all right for those who are responsible for the distortion.

She then went on to lift another paragraph out of context to prove that Catholic schools don't make any difference. What Rossi and I really say, of course, is that under some circumstances Catholic schools make a difference and under other circumstances they don't, and in some circumstances the influence is slight, in some circumstances moderate, and in some circumstances very considerable. Everything I've ever written on Catholic education has made these points repeatedly but the Probe "group" doesn't care. They know what my position is better than I know myself.

Of course, most of the Sisters in the United States still teach in parochial schools, and I suppose most of the readers of Probe do, too. Why they would be so interested in denying evidence that is favorable to their work and in falsifying my position so that their work would look unsuccessful escapes me completely. But the demands of self-hatred are such that reasonable evidence to the contrary simply has to be rejected.

If the "new nuns" who are responsible for Probe could find anything in their own past or in their own work or in the history of the American Church or the work of the American Church that had in any slight way been successful then they would lose caste and not be "new nuns" anymore. The only ones who are not haters of themselves or their work and their tradition are "conservatives," and if you're a conservative you certainly can't be a "new nun."

Besides, nuns have been oppressed by man (and particularly by priests (never mind that women have more administrative and check-signing power in the American Catholic Church than in virtually any other corporate institution in this country). Greeley is a man and a priest and, what's more, he even likes being a priest. Therefore, he is an oppressor, so he has no rights, and there's nothing at all wrong with falsifying his position. In fact, he should rejoice that he's given a chance to do penance for his sins by having his position falsified.

Okay Sisters. Your work is all worthless and a waste of time. The parochial schools never accomplish anything. Drive taxicabs. Work in Marshall Field's basement. Sell fabrics. Be interior decorators. March on picket lines. Denounce bishops. Plot kidnappings. Dance in bikinis at offertory processions. Do something really apostolic.

And as for those black parents who so enthusiastically support the Catholic schools in the inner-cities of the country — well, they probably don't read Probe.

Sisters Council Hears Report

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

Supervision is the key to the three year old deacon intern program, a priest and deacon informed the Diocesan Sisters' Council last Thursday.

At an informational meeting that included reports on the Pastoral Formation Committee and Genesee Ecumenical Ministries, Father Edward E. Steinkirchner, pastor of Holy Ghost parish, explained the deacon intern program he directs.

Deacon Robert Weiss, who will be ordained May 11, told how the internship worked for him day to day at St. Christopher's, Chili.

To insure proper supervision, Father Steinkirchner explained, a leadership training program was established for pastors who want deacons for a year.

Deacon Weiss told the sisters, "Supervision has been most important for me," and also talked of the important part he feels deacons play in the new team ministries.

"Young deacons depend on support and advice from any one who has been in the field," he said, in a plea for both from the sisters. "This program opens a great opportunity to us and to you as well. You can give much to us, and a young man on the staff can be important."

The next step in today's priest training, is a three year priest internship after ordination.

The deacon internship program is not to be confused with the new lay diaconate program now in the works in the diocese, Father Steinkirchner cautioned.

The deacon interns are seminarians who have completed four years of study at St. Bernard's. The program is seen as an opportunity for the young men to test themselves in their vocation before vows are formally taken, working in mutual responsibility with a priest.

"Never underestimate the power of women," he said. "If women were called into action, parish councils, regional organizing and the pastoral council would come to be much faster."

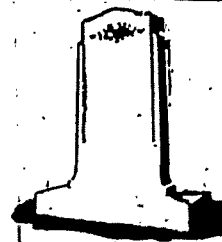
Sister Mary David, regional superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph, reported on the work of the Pastoral Formation Committee's subcommittee on regional boundaries and inner city questions. She explained that one purpose of regional division was to reach a financial balance among parishes. To date, only one parish in the diocese has really changed regions, she said.

His main area of concern was urban education. The Catholic Church is spending its educational funds and creative energy on only 34 per cent of its children, he explained, while 66 per cent of the Catholic children in Rochester attend public schools.

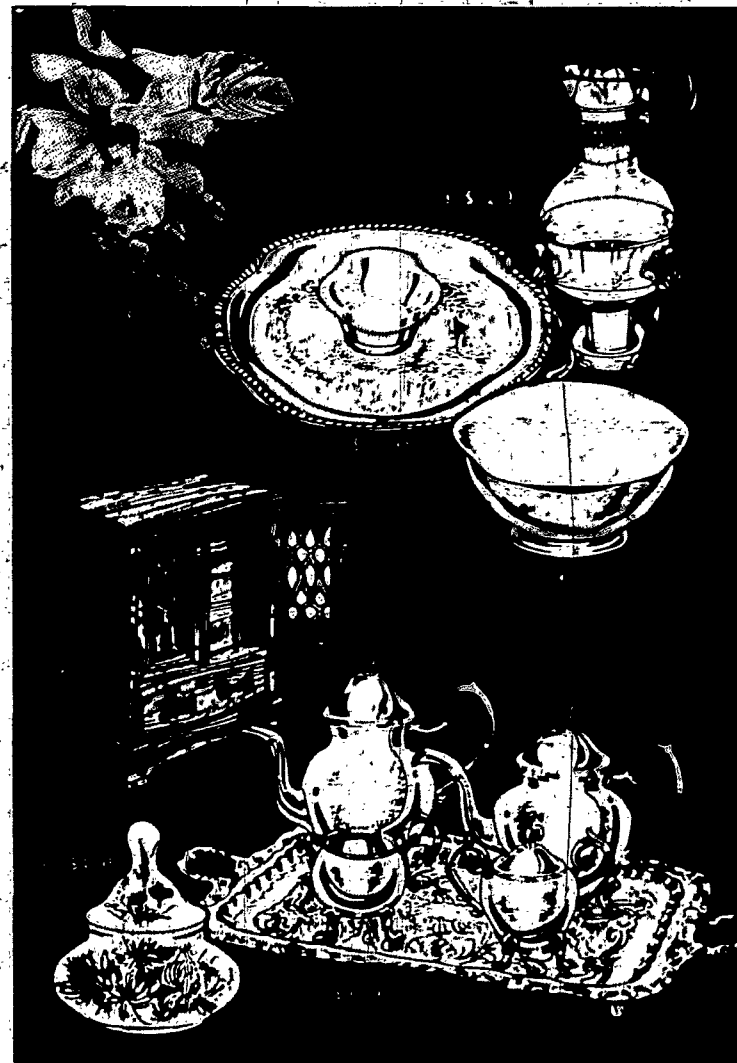
He told the Sisters about CEM's Urban Education Seminar, established to develop a consensus for quality education in public schools, and said, "It would be a great pity if we again come Johnny-come-lately into both ecumenical work and broader educational concerns."

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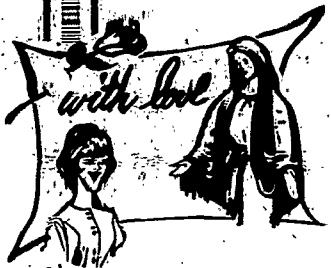
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