



THE CHURCH 1973 Fr. Andrew Greeley

There is an extremely important, special report in Mike McAuley's Thomas More newsletter, "Overview." Entitled "What can we tell the children?" it raises the question of what Catholic parents can say to their children who attend parochial schools when they ask, "Why don't you and Mom ever go to church?" (And there is an increasing number of parents who don't.)

The answer is not very satisfying even to the anonymous author. He doesn't know what he believes, but he still wants his children to believe something and to have some sort of religious training. He summarizes his problem in the following crucial paragraph:

"However, . . . it would seem that you're going to have to get your own head together first. You're going to have to know what you believe and how to verbalize it. But given the present state of theology, the odds against you soon achieving this ordered understanding of your faith seem incredibly great. Not only would the theologians have to arrive at some sort of consensus, you would have to be convinced that they were right. For you not only want to have answers, you want to be able to believe them. Furthermore, there would have to be new myths, new liturgies, new nuances to your lifestyle which could convey these beliefs to your children. Yet, such developments don't seem probable or possible within the few years that you have before your children reach adulthood."

I don't accept the author's position at all. Indeed I think that it is intellectually, religiously, and morally flabby. It is a weak-minded attempt to cop out from religious responsibility. But it is still the position of a considerable

Mercy Sets Open House On Sunday

Open house for junior high school girls will be held at Our Lady of Mercy High School, 1437 Blossom Road on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 28, from 2 to 5 p.m.

Girls and their parents are invited to visit Mercy if they are interested in a private Catholic high school for secondary education.

The afternoon will include tours and presentations by each club, school publication and department. A slide program will be given at 3 p.m. in the auditorium. Members of the Student Council have coordinated the afternoon's activities and will act as hostesses.

CDC Fund-Raiser Slated Tomorrow

Citizens for a Decent Community (CDC) will hold a fund raising dinner to support their drive against pornography, tomorrow night, Oct. 25, at the Red Men's Club, 1001 Lexington Ave.

Guest speakers will be Bob Dorman, West Coast television personality, and Martha Rountree of the radio and TV show, Meet the Press.

The program begins at 6:30, with a roast beef buffet at 7:30.

Tickets, \$8.50 per person, can be reserved by calling Mike Macaluso, 436-2160; Ellen Zona, 328-5129; Alberta Ginther, 328-7136; or Candy Cange, 663-6161.

number of moderately well-educated Catholics; and it is a position that must be taken seriously if only because so many people subscribe to it.

The first thing that has to be said is that the author is kidding himself if he thinks the parochial schools can make up for religious deficiencies in the family environment. The by now hoary findings of The Education of Catholic Americans make it clear that the schools are worthless if there is not mutual reinforcement going on between family and school.

In addition, the statistically sophisticated work of William McCready has recently demonstrated that it is the father's religious behavior that is important. Indeed it is so important in affecting the religious behavior of children that almost nothing else matters.

The more serious weakness of the argument of the "troubled father" (to use the name Overview gives him) is that he equates faith with theology. There never was a theological consensus in most periods of the Church's history, and there is not likely to be one again. The "deep freeze" of the post-Tridentine Church was mostly historical accident. If he waits until the theologians reach a consensus he will quite literally wait till Judgment Day.

But faith does not follow theology; it precedes it. It is not an acceptance by the intellect of a certain number of systematic propositions arranged in a neat rational pattern. It is rather the commitment of the total human person to the word of God as revealed in Jesus — a word of hope and joy and love. What Christianity is in essence is not complex or elaborate or difficult to understand at all. It is a simple, clear, quite explicit message. It is either true and we live it to the fullest that we possibly can, or it is false and we damn it as superstitious nonsense.

If it is true, we band together with other Christians so that we might sustain each other in living it. We strive to find ways to articulate the meaning of its symbols in rhetoric that can be understood in our time and place (which is what theology is about). If it is false, we get the hell out and bring our kids with us.

The early Christians did not say, "We have to wait for Augustine and Aquinas to put the intellectual house in order." They believed and lived and then theologized.

It is so easy to live in the delightful limbo between faith and unfaith. You can have the consolations of believing some of the time and none of the challenge of believing all the time. And you can scapegoat the old Church for its rigidities and the theologians for their slowness in elaborating new systems. You don't have to search and decide for yourself. You can even write agonized pieces about your dilemma.

You don't even have to bother finding out what the essence of the Christian message is. You can continue in your pleasant confusion about what order and hierarchy is appropriate for various propositional statements about doctrine. And when someone (like me) comes along and tells you that you don't seem to know what the essence of the message is, you can always blame your Catholic education.

Just so long as you can blame something or someone else, you are free from responsibility of your own.

And then life is so nice. It is always nice to a child.

Stricken Africans Get \$500,000 Aid

New York [RNS] — Catholic Relief Services (CRS) here announced it is continuing its assistance to drought victims in six West African nations below the Sahara desert and that the CRS relief fund now totals just over \$500,000.

Some 38 U.S. Roman Catholic dioceses across the country have contributed \$164,344 of the drought fund total, according to officials of the U.S. bishops' overseas aid agency.

To date, more than \$367,000 in seed purchases, specialized food supplements, vitamins, antibiotics, clothing, blankets and other related emergency supplies have been made available for relief efforts in Chad, Niger, Upper Volta, Mali, Senegal and Mauritania.

An additional \$200,000 has been committed by CRS for construction of dams, well-digging and irrigation systems in three of the countries.

The latter commitment, coupled with several grants from American and European foundations, will enable CRS to expand its long range water projects in Sahelian Africa, a spokesman said.

It is anticipated that such projects will lessen the impact of future droughts and alleviate the sufferings of people in the stricken areas.

Additional contributions for the drought fund are being sought as men, women and children, emaciated and weakened from months of the

lack of nourishing food, have fallen prey to disease, the Catholic relief spokesman said. Most acutely affected, he added, are children and the aging.

been high protein foods, clothing, blankets and basic medicines, including vitamins, malarial suppressants and antibiotics.

Donations may be sent to Catholic Relief Services, 350 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 1001.

Among the goods provided for drought and famine victims have

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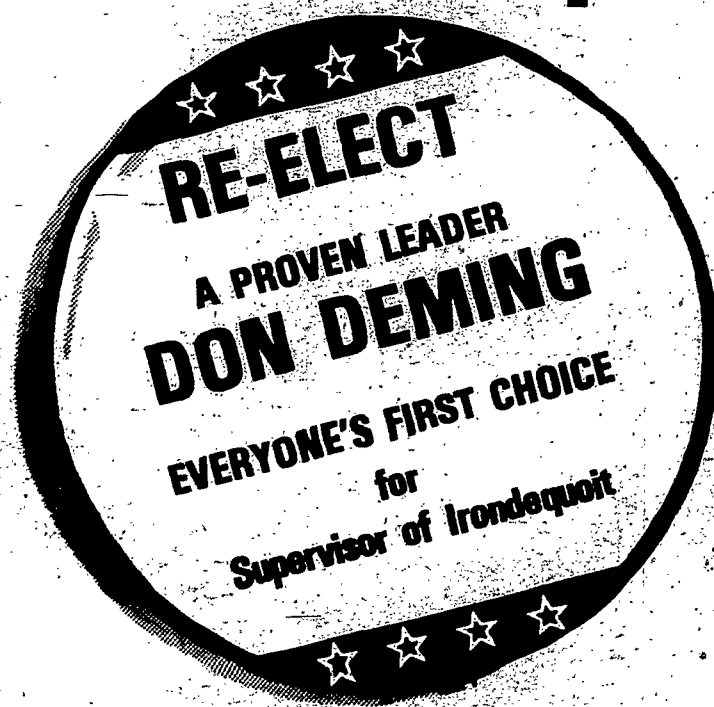
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