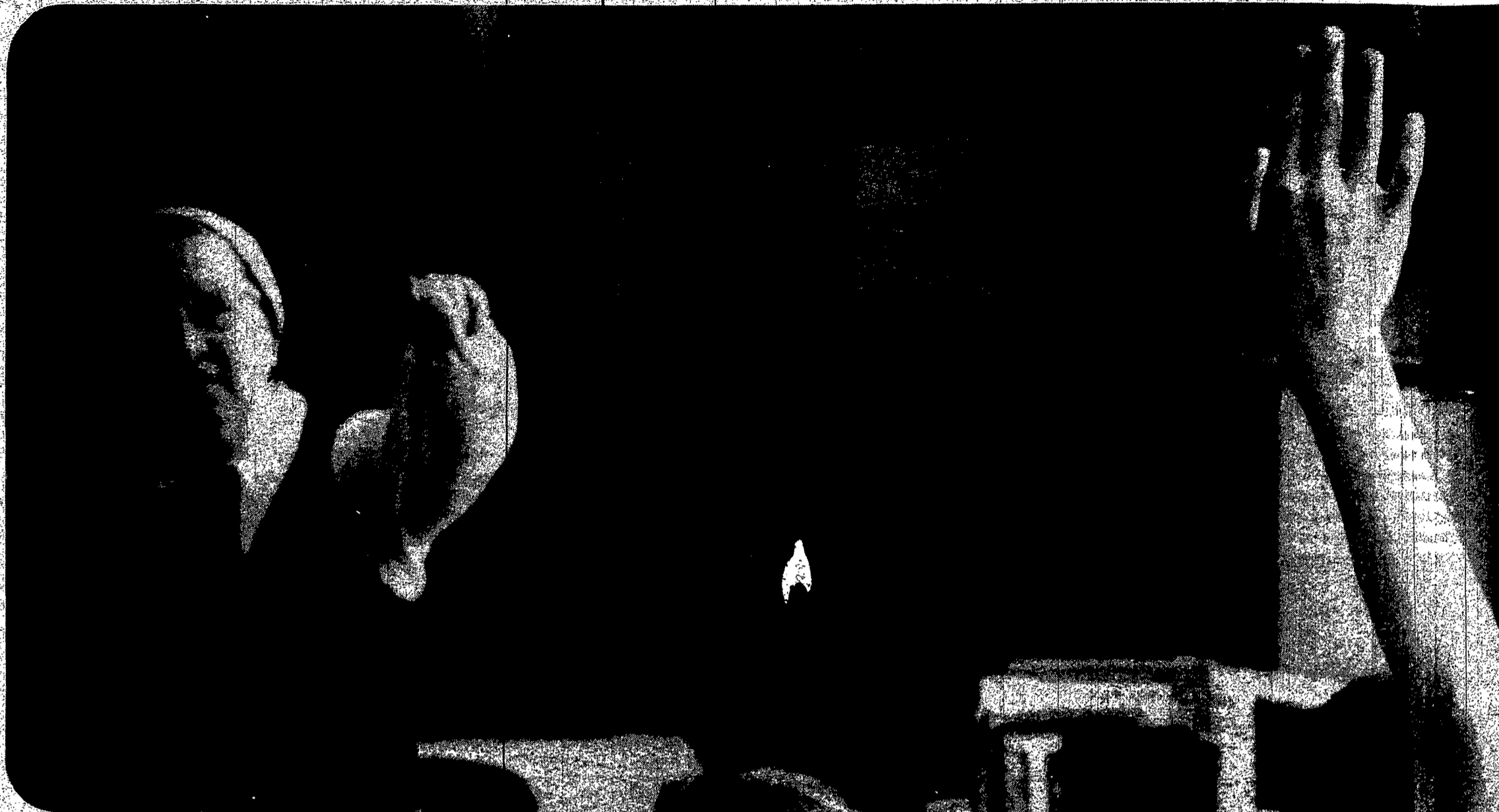


## Message, Service & Community



"What's the difference between . . ."

Sounds like the beginning of a child's riddle but 34,754 school children in the diocese have been asked to consider seriously why Catholic schools should be chosen over public schools.

Answers focus on three words, "message, service and community," which are part of the theme, *Different Where It Counts*, for National Catholic Schools Week, Feb. 17-23.

What a Catholic education means was summed up thus by Gini Mickel, a seventh-grader at St. Margaret Mary's School:

"It's fun talking about Jesus and God. It makes it easier to cope with bad times."

Comments with more of a Madison Avenue flavor will be aired during the week over the public address system at Corpus Christi. For instance:

Reading and writing and arithmetic,

They are the things that make us slick.

One child said he liked his school because, "Children have gym, the best schooling and half-day on Wednesday."

"It's time we stand up and applaud ourselves," said Salvatore G. Musso, deputy superintendent of schools, to "commend the population served by the schools for their efforts to continue to provide for private education and to support the value system for their children.

This "value system" was begun around 1896 by Bishop Bernard McQuaid, who liked to call the network of parochial schools "Christian free schools." Today there are 26,283 in diocesan elementary schools and 8,471 in the high schools. Thirty per cent of the 1,058 teachers in parish schools are from religious communities, as are 55 per cent of the 512 high school teachers.

Musso noted that five years ago the average parish school tuition was between \$20 and \$50, while today it ranges from \$175 to \$225. Comparing actual costs, however, he said the price of a public school education averages \$1600 per student per year, against

about \$390 in Catholic grammar school.

The uniqueness of the Catholic school is defined in "To Teach As Jesus Did," a pastoral message produced by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops:

"This integration of religious truths and values with the rest of life is brought about in Catholic schools not only by its unique curriculum but, more important, by the presence of teachers who express an integrated approach to living and learning in their private and professional lives."

Distinguishing this uniqueness, according to Musso, is a commitment to the three fold purpose of education: message, service and community.

"Information is sterile unless it blossoms in the way we live together as Christians, through love, respect and faith. This interest in each other is not by accident," interjected Father Daniel Brent, superintendent of schools.

Father Brent indicated that before the message was given by the bishops in 1972 "teachers felt guilty about using school time for social activities." But the mandate emphasized that "the needs of society are our own responsibility."

Exercising this responsibility was Lucy Mallo who brought tears to the eyes of her great aunt, Mrs. Emilia Maurizio, a patient at St. Ann's Home. Lucy's seventh grade made lap robes for nursing homes in a religious class project.

Guardian Angels pupils cut out valentines and attached them to lollypops for children summoned to Family Court.

Charity begins at home for the eighth graders at St. Ann's, who help with instructions for first graders.

The question of a Catholic education is decisive in the eighth grade when Marcia Voellinger, a senior at Bishop Kearney School, returned to her St. James alma mater to tell about Catholic high schools.



"I like the openness of the classroom, there's no limit to the discussions because of 'no God in the Syllabus,'" Marcia began. (She works with the muscular dystrophy foundation as part of her service project for religion class.) "If you're a Christian then you're treated like one. It's also easier to fit in. At a public school kids are always doing what the other kids want them to do."

She reported that during the discussion which followed her talk one student commented that if his parents cared enough to send them him to a Catholic school, then he was happy.

"I think the kids went home and thanked their parents for sending them there," Marcia said.

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