

More Opinions

Catholic School Necessary

Editor:

Having spent 25 years on the faculty of a Catholic high school, I have come to realize the definite need for the Catholic high school in providing a solid Christian education for our young people—our "teenagers"—our adolescents.

In the late sixties, we were tragically misled to believe that the Catholic high school was no longer needed. We were told by well-meaning people that it was

too "expensive"—that it would not stand up and endure and that we could not compete with the innovative educational program found in our American public school system.

Throughout this period of confusion and misconception, it has become even more evident how truly necessary it is that the Message of Christ be brought to our young people, whom we are preparing for adulthood who are indeed the future citizens of our country and our Church. No price tag can be placed on that!

When we consider the breakdown of public morality on the part of young people of today, I believe the present-day American

Catholic family needs the help of a school to instill a Christian value system to its young. The school structure needs a religious orientation and training of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The Good News becomes a reality through the teachers and students who make up the Christian community, whose center and scope is Jesus Christ. In a Catholic school, the Love of God must be experienced primarily through its teachers in their relationship with one another, in what they teach and with the students who have been placed under their care.

The Catholic high school must serve three important functions in a community. It must impart the Message of Jesus. It must engender a community experience and lastly, it must provide an opportunity to serve other humans in a healthy atmosphere of brotherly love and care.

No matter how great, how advanced the American public high school may be, it lacks the most essential ingredient to the happiness and peace of a person, namely, JESUS CHRIST.

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Vocations Rest On Home, Parish

Editor:

As a 22-year-old, presently considering my own vocation, I would like to share a thought on prayer for vocations. While prayer for vocations is unquestionably important, I believe there is a need for Catholics to pray and work for a broader intention, if the current "crisis" in religious vocations is to abate.

The dearth of vocations today may be viewed as a symptom of some more fundamental needs and problems in the Church. A young person looking at his own parish oftentimes doesn't see a very high degree of involvement in the parish or interest in the spiritual life among the parishioners. There doesn't appear to be the sort of vital faith community that makes a difference in the way most people live and order their everyday lives. This lack of spiritual vitality is often perceived in the home, as well.

This, more than anything, discourages young people from making the decision to lay down their lives in service of God and men in the Church. We need the example of parents and peers who are seeking a full and living relationship with God, and who are responding generously to their own particular call to support and serve the Church.

Opinions to the editor should be addressed. Letter to the Editor, Courier-Journal, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. - 14604. They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced. Names and addresses should be included. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

We should certainly pray for vocations, in the context of our prayer and work for the spiritual and corporate renewal of the Church. This renewal is one of the focuses of the Holy Year. When we see the fruit of this prayer—God's Spirit working visibly in people's lives and a greater involvement in the Church—then I think religious vocations will increase markedly.

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THE CHURCH 1974

Father Andrew Greeley

A priest senate I know of is busily engaged in "taking a survey" to find out what are the "priorities" of the priests in its diocese. One couldn't ask for a better example of what's wrong with the American Church.

I'd be the last one to knock taking surveys. But anyone with an elementary knowledge of survey research would know that you can't set priorities by taking a survey. Plebiscite democracy is fine (though then you don't need a priest senate), but it doesn't give you priorities, at best it gives you a list of problems — which is something else altogether.

Priorities are determined by leaders, or visionaries, or planning commissions — depending on what kind of priorities you have in mind. Maybe your priorities ought to be approved by a senate after they have been elaborated, particularly if they are planning-commission priorities. But priest senates are afraid of leaders and visionaries and they don't know what planning-commissions are all about — and don't understand their limitations.

Of course, vision and leadership is what we have bishops for. And if a bishop isn't laying out a visionary list of priorities for his priests, maybe the priests ought to request a new bishop instead of taking a survey.

There is an abundance of data available about what priests think their problems are; we hardly need a new survey for that. If a senate is interested in gathering raw material for an examination of priorities, it might much more appropriately find out what the laity think are their problems. But this is a subject about which most groups of priests are notably uninterested. Till they begin to show such interest they ought not to be taken very seriously.

I can tell them, though, what bothers the laity most — Sunday sermons. (And after that, the religious education of children, to which I will return in a later column.) The outpouring of letters from lay folk in response to my recent column on sermons may not be a scientific sample, but the sheer power of it leaves

little doubt about lay anger.

Take one example: "I propose a contest among the laity to select The Ten Louisiest Sermons of 1974-75." It could be the contest of the century! Imagine the monumental number of nominations. From cities, towns and villages across the land, you would be buried in mountains of words that have poured from the pulpit, drowning the laity in a pool of prattle. Certain details must be worked out for the contest, such as categories, length, number of times same sermon has been given, etc. There should be special awards for: All Around Worst, The Longest, The Dullest, The Most Insane, The Most Juvenile, The Least Comprehensible, The Most Pointless. Winners would receive a week of retribution. They would be confined to a soundproof room where the tapes of the winning sermons would be played over, and over, and over, and over.

Only the most naive would expect a senate of priests to be concerned about the quality of sermons preached in a diocese. That will surely not even appear on the list of priorities to be collected diligently by the survey. After all, the laity only pays the bills.

What recourse does the laity have? Well, they could stop paying the bills, but most of them are too charitable to do that. As an alternative, they could send a subscription to the bad preachers of one of the many moderately good homiletic services and suggest (anonymously, since most priests take anonymous letters more seriously than signed ones — as in fact do lots of bishops and archbishops) that instead of giving a sermon, Father, simply read what's in the homiletic newsletter.

The only trouble is that it is not at all clear that the worst preachers still know how to read. If they were reading, you see, they would be giving good sermons.

And if they were reading, they wouldn't need a survey to determine priorities.

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