

CDA Stodgy? Who Says So?

By TAMMY TANAKA

New York [RNS] — The Catholic Daughters of America (CDA) have set a goal of making "every Catholic woman want to be part of our work," says the new regent, Mrs. Winifred L. Trabeaux.

She hopes to see the 200,000-member organization shake off its undesired "stodgy" image, an image which she regards as a gross misconception.

CDA courts (chapters) are beginning to catch on at the college level. Two colleges now maintain courts and "the girls are really thrilled and excited about the program," Mrs. Trabeaux said. And the Junior Catholic Daughters of America program, for girls under 18, has been newly "revitalized."

"Giving away money is only part of the program," said Mrs. Trabeaux, in professional life the manager of an oil investment firm in Plaquemine, La. "We are vitally concerned in person-to-person involvement."

Mrs. Trabeaux came here to

CDA headquarters for a series of meetings with national officials to plan programs for the next two years.

"Our program is so vast," she said, "that there is a place for every Catholic woman to use her God-given talents to work for Church and God as set forth in the mind of the Church since Vatican II."

For example, Mrs. Trabeaux said, prison work has become a popular and highly successful CDA activity in recent years. In the Baton Rouge area, she said, about "600 to 700" Catholic women regularly visit women in prisons, working with them in crafts, makeup, educational skills, helping to prepare them in many cases for jobs when they are released.

Some CDA courts are helping imprisoned women to find jobs and are engaged in other "follow-through" activities, Mrs. Trabeaux said.

At the national level, the Catholic Daughters have just launched their main bicentennial project — the \$750,000 bicen-

family are the seed bed and the parents are the first and greatest tutors.

Parents, he says, must face certain questions and answer them honestly. e.g. "Do you expect someone else to rear your young, tell you that you are doing right or wrong, or will you follow your basic instincts and work together for the development of your family and your fellow man?"

"No one," stresses Blessington, will be as responsible for your child and his development as you, his parent, and none ought to be charged with that great concern.

For those parents who sometimes feel that the schools and their children's teachers sometimes run roughshod over them, Blessington says he is not advocating rudeness but to awaken parents to their "common law right not be afraid of a service organization built by you — for you."

Blessington's most pertinent lesson for downtrodden parent:

"As a father or a mother, you must realize your power. When you do you become immediately more powerful. If you know that a school cannot make you do anything you don't believe in, then you have power equal to the teacher. If you say 'I'm sorry but I shall not oversee this amount of homework because it messes up our family evening' the teacher is compelled to listen. If you say that you will not tolerate snide remarks about your child made to him alone or, worse, in front of others, the teacher is restrained. You are powerful because these are your children. You are powerful because you know life as well as anyone can know it. If you are also sensitive to educators as people, you are the most powerful of all."

He concludes "Your competence as a parent-educator is without question in history."

For those parents, like this writer, who sometimes need someone to reinforce their sense of strength and competence, particularly when it comes to the all important job of rearing children, Blessington's book would appear to be worth every penny of its purchase price.

For example, he points out: "Only of late has the reliance on school grown to the degree where families feel inadequate to provide the basics. Parents have been robbed of, or have surrendered that prime sense of self by their inordinate respect for formal education."

But he asserts: "The home and

tenial gift "for Church and Country — to the Catholic University of America for endowment of a Chair in American Church History."

The Catholic Daughters' thrust of action is described in their "seven fold involvement program" which lists seven basic areas in which members and courts may become involved. They include personal, ecumenical, educational, charitable, social, civic, and youth involvement. Each area lists up to 23 or more suggested projects.

Mrs. Trabeaux said that the courts are not expected to get involved in all seven areas, although they may if they wish. Each court generally picks out the projects which are geared to the needs of that community.

Also, each woman will choose the activity which interests her most and will generally give one day a week to her project. "Each member's talents differ," Mrs. Trabeaux said.

"For my part, I make home visitations every week to two shut-ins, a black woman and a white woman," she said. "One of them isn't poor. She doesn't need a nickel, in fact, she's richer than I am. But she's lonely."

Mrs. Trabeaux said most Catholic Daughters actively involved are women who are also busy with their families and outside work. But they still find time to give one day a week to their projects, and find their lives enriched.

"Drugstores wouldn't be selling so many tranquilizers if women did more of this," she said.

Mrs. Trabeaux said the CDA is "vitally interested in civic affairs." She said Louisiana members, for example, were successful in having six laws passed in the legislature related to drug rehabilitation and better drug laws. The regent estimated that up to one-quarter of the CDA membership is involved in some aspect of the drug rehabilitation and abuse prevention programs.

The CDA, she said, continues to place high priority on programs to strengthen family life and respect for life. It opposes

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abortion and euthanasia. While committed to rights for women, CDA does not support the Equal Rights Amendment because of the "many stumbling blocks" it entails.

Among the financial contributions from CDA since

February have been \$2,500 to St. Jude's Hospital, \$10,000 to the Propagation of Faith, \$20,000 to Catholic Relief Services for clinic use, and \$3,000 to Nicaragua. About \$17,000 a year is generally set aside for campus ministry, and \$8,000 for extra training of teachers of exceptional children.

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ALL IN THE FAMILY



Sarah Child

This month a book titled "Let My Children Work" is due to be published by Anchor Press/Doubleday. It is the work of John P. Blessington, a former headmaster of the Whitby School in Greenwich, Conn.

Some weeks ago I came across an adaptation of the book in the Sunday Times magazine, read it with great interest, then tore it out and stashed it away in my dictionary for future reference.

I rediscovered it yesterday, re-read it and found it made an even greater impression on me this time. The adaptation titled "Home As the Ultimate Classroom" is a complete reversal of all that I once thought was true regarding the roles of parent and teacher.

Growing up as I did in an era where the educator was one of the supreme authorities, where only the parish priest was better educated and where the parent, more often than not a member of the working class, was low man on the totem pole when it came to deciding what was best for his child in the field of learning, Blessington appeared as a beacon in the dark.

The rather special school our youngsters attend where parents are helped to understand that schooling is a process involving the entire family had already helped me change some of my childhood views on the academic institution.

But Blessington reinforced these relatively new ideas with special emphasis on the role and the POWER of the parent.

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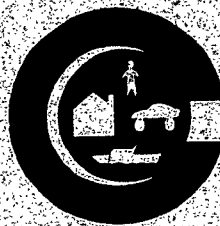
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