

COURIER-JOURNAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

NEW DIOCESAN INITIATIVES IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

Dear brother priests and partners in the educational mission of the Church:

You are all aware of my support of the position of the American Catholic Bishops as articulated in "To Teach as Jesus Did."

"For our part, as bishops, we reaffirm our conviction that Catholic schools which realize the threefold purpose of Christian education — to teach doctrine, to build community, and to serve — are the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people who thus may grow into manhood according to the mature measure of Christ." [Christian Education, 2; cf. Ephesians, 4:13] We call upon all members of the Catholic community to do everything in their power to maintain and strengthen Catholic schools which embrace the threefold purpose of Christian education."

I am personally convinced that Catholic schools do offer a profound and unique contribution to the nurturing of the faith of young people and to the building up of the gifts of the entire Church. In the past, I have been told that I have not been supportive enough of the mission and role of Catholic schools in the Rochester

Diocese. My support is firm, but not without serious questions about how we will resolve the increasing financial drain and the need for other religious education approaches. The Church has many pastoral responsibilities, and Christian education must itself mirror the diversity of peoples and the interlocking of gospel values and life questions in attempting to fulfill Jesus' mandate "go ye therefore and teach all nations." In the past, the emphasis was placed totally on Catholic schools. This represented an incomplete vision and response to the total parish community. We must think of the entire Christian community, the young and the old, the participating members and the less visible members as we design our parish programs and allot our human and financial resources.

I recognize the pressures facing many parishes today as they struggle to stretch their monies to serve through effective pastoral ministries. Inflation and unemployment are serious problems touching the lives of many of our people. In my leadership role, I owe you a clarification of what I expect of you in your prayerful and careful decision-making regarding the practical demands of matching resources with educational ministries. It is imperative that we direct our efforts towards an honest and

intelligent search for the most effective and most possible way to preserve Catholic school opportunities within this Diocese, and that we do this in light of the specific circumstances of the local parish situation as well as the needs of the larger Christian community. Cooperative planning is a must. This means some Catholic schools may be called to a renewal of purpose, some to reorganization and some regrettably to closing. Difficult as these challenges are, I am hopeful that if approached with candor, intelligence and reliance on God's Spirit, we shall come to the best course for our Church in this diocese at this moment of our salvation history. The guidelines below will support the directions I offer you.

The School Planning Assistance Program, directed by Dr. Padraic O'Hare, will enable you to do concrete planning.

May we be a sign of unity and love in today's world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Joseph L. Hogan

Guidelines for Catholic School Financial Arrangements

1. The educational mission of the parish is regularly carried out through a variety of educational programs. It is important that Catholic schools not be seen as competing with other Catholic educational endeavors. While the school has great potential for nourishing faith for the students and their parents, other quality programs must also be provided for students in public schools and for adults. These too will require leadership, resources, and encouragement. Consequently, decisions regarding any parish educational program must be made by seeing it as part of an overall educational effort, each program complementing the others.

2. Comprehensive parish planning is required to properly provide for the variety of services — educational, liturgical and service programs — which are a parish's responsibility. This includes a careful assessment of parish priorities and needs, and as much involvement of the parishioners as possible. All budgets should be developed early enough each year to provide time for resolving deficit problems that may arise. In this manner, perspective will be gained on the most effective and feasible ways to implement the parish's educational mission.

3. Decisions relative to the continuation, consolidation or closing of parochial schools are the prerogative of the local parish community. However, a school closing should not be made without considering the possibility of increasing revenues (and/or enrollments) to sustain the school and the possibility of consolidation. To insure that there is adequate consultation and communication, I will insist that process for such decision making be in complete compliance with the general patterns indicated in our Parish Council Guidelines and those that will be provided by the Department of Education.

4. Inferior education is never to be tolerated. I recognize the legitimate value of conducting a limited number of grades where a parish cannot support a complete elementary school program. However, consolidation is to be preferred, if it is feasible, and can provide the opportunity for comprehensive quality (K-8) Catholic school education.

5. I encourage policies requiring tuition or minimum levels of parish support from parents. This not only assists a school's financing, but it also serves to call for parental support which research tells us is essential to the effectiveness of Catholic schools. Tuition policies must always provide accommodation arrangements for those suffering financial hardship.

6. I will insist on the payment of diocesan assessments. This item is not negotiable by parish councils or finance committees. I am committed to a course of collegial determination of what activities will be sponsored by the Diocese. I am also committed to fiscal accountability for my use of resources for those programs. However, I cannot permit individual parishes to set those Church efforts aside in favor of local parish priorities.

7. Deficit spending for ordinary parish or school expenses is not allowed. Exceptions will require my permission, which will be given only where I am satisfied that an adequate plan has been developed to reach a fiscally responsible budget within a reasonable time.

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