

A Plus For America

A Mother's Letter

Over the years, I have been asked countless times why our children are in parochial school...and I have given many answers...some terse, some lengthy, depending on whether the questioner seemed quarrelsome or truly interested.

Recently, though, as we parochial-school parents seem to be assaulted almost daily by anti-church/school forces, it seems appropriate to ask myself, "Just why are my children in parochial school?"

We are foregoing instruction in superbly equipped laboratories, gymnasiums, home economics and industrial arts centers. We are perhaps having to seek outside aid for speech problems, reading difficulties, and the like. We are pouring an immense school tax into a giant pool from which we take no return. We then pay added monies to maintain our church supported school. Why?

In recent years, we Americans have become very diligent about granting "equal time" to political rivals and factions. The term is in widespread use and receives ardent support. Perhaps this phrase can also be the key to parochial schools.

When I think of the out-of-school activities our family of seven children pursue, I find a quick run-down shows me this: A 30 minute piano lesson weekly demands daily practice of another 30 minutes. An ice skating lesson weekly is to be supported by additional practice hours. Recreational football plays a weekly game, with six hours of practice spread over three evenings during the week. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts have two hour meetings. Ceramics class meets for an hour and a half. And on, and on.

Not one of these activities in my opinion is so important to my children's

development as is a growing, maturing knowledge of their God and their Roman Catholic Faith. Yet enrollment in public school reduces our commitment for formal education about our God and our beliefs to less time in a religious education class per week than most children spend on piano or baseball!

I want our religious beliefs to be something our children actively study and develop, as they do their knowledge of English and Mathematics. Simply going to church at the specified times as automatically as they learn to get up in the morning, get dressed and eat, seems deficient. If their faith in God is to be a vital, moving force in their lives, it must be more than automatic. It needs persistent nurturing as does any other thing in this life in which we choose to excel.

Ultimately, then, I believe that is the reason our first child began in parochial school 11 years ago, and why we hope a first rate parochial school will still be available to us by 1978 when our youngest will start.

This seems to be the most logical way to give our religious faith at least "equal time" with other chosen activities. This does not mean I think all parents should make this decision, any more than I think all people should choose to be doctors, learn to swim, or like pro football. But it is a choice I believe my Church should make available to me.

I want our children in school where God is considered important. I want them to study about Him, and learn to develop their lives in relationship to Him. I want this to be a positive experience, not an automatic one.

And that is the answer to all my inquiries over the years...why are my children in parochial school?...to give God at least "equal time."



Holy Rosary students Tina Bloomfield and Robert Santos visit Aberdeen Nursing Home residents William Winters and Elizabeth Issehard. Holy Rosary students visit the facility regularly.

PEP Tests Significant

Mandated by the State of New York, the Pupil Evaluation Program (PEP) tests have become an important part of the educational systems both public and non-public.

These tests, in reading and math, are given every October third, sixth, and ninth graders. The final results are October to third, sixth, and ninth graders. The final results are compiled by the state and score compositions are sent to the school districts comparing their status with similar school districts. These in-depth records enable educators to compute the educational progress of the Rochester diocesan schools with public and non-public schools throughout the state.

The accompanying graph is a five-year comparison of percentile ranks of median scores for diocesan students, grades three and six. It compares these scores with those of both public and non-public schools, statewide, and shows significant signs of progress for the Rochester diocesan schools.

