

Catholic Schools We



Over at St. Lawrence School first graders listening to a story in the learning center are Jennifer Albee, Krissy Frasco, Wendy Ball, John Larotonda, and Richard Treschong.

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BY SISTER
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One of the popular activities in our country today is to search for our "roots" — our identity. Catholic educators have joined the trend and have traced the steps of Catholic schools in our country. Like many other groups reflecting on heritage, we note the periods of painful struggle to begin, to grow and to come of age!

We are proud of our early founders, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. John Henry Neumann, and are grateful to them for being people not afraid to risk. Their efforts to build a school system unique to the Catholic Church came in a period of history when the Church itself was unaccepted in the society of our country. However, under their leadership more men and women continued to devote their lives to the education of young people in the Catholic schools. The increased number of immigrants from Europe brought a rapid increase in the Catholic population in the United States. The desire of these immigrants to preserve the faith and the customs of their countries resulted in the founding of hundreds of Catholic schools with special nationalistic origins. Gradually these schools were influenced by the "melting pot" patterns in the American cities and existed as Catholic parish schools.

The goal of Bishop John Carroll was endorsed by our own Bishop McQuaid — to have every Catholic in a Catholic school. This goal was never realized due to the rapid increase of population and the inability of the buildings to accommodate all of the potential students. However, the custom of building a school with every parish did continue for several decades.

As the acceptance of Catholics grew and as Catholics began to assume positions of leadership and influence, the focus of Catholic education shifted



David Geisler is able to have a favorite lunch, hamburger, at St. Charles School's cafeteria.

Tuition Subsidies

Over the past two years the Diocese of Rochester has supervised the awarding of over \$62,000 in tuition aid to poor families wishing to send their children to Catholic schools but who would otherwise be unable to do so without this assistance.

Under the direction of Timothy Leahy, deputy superintendent, the Diocesan Tuition Subsidy Program (DTS) has enabled able 105 freshman and sophomores to attend our nine Catholic high schools since the 1976-77 school year saw the initiation of this project. Each April applications are made available to each high school to new ninth graders accepted for the next school year, and to already subsidized students who must reapply every year. By the beginning of August a screening committee has reviewed the applications and announces the awards of tuition subsidies to each individual school. The difference between the actual tuition cost and the amount the parents can pay is then subsidized one-half by the high school and one-half by the diocese.

A Diocesan Elementary School Tuition Subsidy Program (DESTS) for City of Rochester residents was established this year to aid economically disadvantaged city residents who wish to attend a Catholic elementary school. This year the program subsidized 96 city students from 14 city parishes. Application forms are screened by an impartial committee and awards are announced in August.

These programs hopefully will continue to receive financial and community support in the years ahead. Anyone interested in further information should contact Leahy at the diocesan office.

Federation Action

The Rochester Chapter of the New York State Federation of Catholic School Parents has arranged for five billboards and the Columbia Banking flashing sign to call attention to the celebration of Catholic Schools Week this year in the greater Rochester Area. All of the displays are designed to call public attention to the Catholic Schools within the community and to highlight the on-going purpose of the Federation — to guarantee freedom of choice in education.

All of the Federation's activities during its first complete year in operation have stressed the importance of individual participation in all decisions affecting that right of freedom of choice, whether they are at the local school level, or Diocesan and Governmental decisions. Through a Federation Liaison in 61 of the elementary and high schools in most areas of the Diocese, a monthly, locally prepared newsletter is distributed to all parents of children in the Catholic schools. The newsletter contains information about legislation which need the support of individuals with their own elected representatives, as information as well as information about Diocesan decisions which may affect the schools. An increasing volume of contacts from parents indicates that the Federation is viewed by them not only as a source of information, but also as an organization of volunteers who are totally committed to Catholic School education.

While stressing the importance of this individual participation, the Federation does become the spokesman for the interests of our schools' parents within the general community when the occasion warrants it. Notable examples during the current year were the appointment of a member of the Federation's Executive Committee to a City Committee studying the relationship between the Council and the City School Board, as well as its cooperative work with City public school parents and officials to get the Governor and State Legislature to follow through on promises for overburden money to fund current public school programs. In addition, a Times Union article gave probable credit to the Federation for the relatively large number of votes cast in the recent school board elections — a crucial election because of last Spring's crisis over the busing of city students to the Catholic High Schools outside the city limits.

The Federation views its role as that of facilitator for all those who believe that Catholic schools are an essential part of the mission of the Church in the Diocese of Rochester, as well as a viable alternative to governmental monopoly of education. It views the theme of this year's Catholic Schools Week as a daily challenge to everyone who supports this belief to make sure that Catholic Schools continue to exist in order that our children may, indeed, have an educational opportunity in which "Everyone Grows!"

Everyone