



'Jesus 78'

A participant in the "Jesus 78" charismatic rally at Giants' Stadium, Rutherford, N.J., reacts enthusiastically to a speakers message. Some 54,000 Christians from 30 states joined together in ecumenical worship. The gathering was sponsored by People of Hope and Logos International.

The Church 1978

By Father Andrew Greeley



Historians of the Future will ponder the May, 1968, meeting of the American Catholic bishops. The last great battle to Fr. Greeley provide some sort of justice for Catholic schools was raging on the floors of the Houses of Congress and the leadership of American Catholicism gathered in solemn assembly and agonized over Rhodesia, ERA, birth control (celebrating the 10th anniversary of "Humanae Vitae" — kind of like celebrating the anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic), a vague and well-meaning plan for family life apostolate (innocent of understanding of family problems), and the solemn interment of the Call to Action tent show. About the Packwood-Moynihan-Roth bill the hierarchs seem to have said nothing at all.

The barricades were assaulted and the commanding officers were somewhere else.

Meanwhile, the national PTA sends form letters to all PTA members in the country to send their congressmen on the tax credit issue, and the National Council of Churches, the PTA, and other members of the Coalition to save Public Schools cheerfully spread lies about Catholic schools serene in the confidence that the Church and its leadership will continue to lie down and play dead. Small wonder that the Columbia Broadcasting System feels free to vilify the Catholic Church on the abortion issue all the time completely ignoring the fact that black opposition to abortion is stronger than Catholic opposition.

While the bishops bite

their tongues and while the PTA and the National Council of Churches continue to lie, help for freedom of educational choice comes from what many would consider an unlikely source, the University of California at Berkeley. Two law professors there, John Coombs and Steven Sugarman, have written an extraordinary book, "Education by Choice: The Case for Family Control." Coombs and Sugarman are radicals. In an earlier book, "Private Wealth and Education," they laid out the theory that was later adopted by the California Supreme Court in the famous Serrano case, requiring equalization of school expenditures in all school districts in the state. Their theory was later rejected for national application by the U.S. Supreme Court on the basis of a very dubious opinion by the reactionary justice, Mr. Powell. But it still applies in California and is one of the most powerful intellectual tools of egalitarianism to be found in American society.

"Education by Choice" is an even more radical book. Arguing basically with the methods and from the traditions of the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition, Coombs and Sugarman propound the extraordinary, insidious, revolutionary doctrine that the family is the best institution to determine the best interests of the child, and that, in the final analysis, decisions about education should be made by the family.

If Coombs and Sugarman are taken seriously, control of education will be wrestled away from the vast public education monopoly with its huge, deadweight, Ph.D.-bedecked administration and given back to parents. Instead of having to take what they get and like it,

parents will be able to choose the kind of education they want for their children.

The issue before the Congress is not intellectual but political. The freedom of choice argument is indisputable in theory. The public school monopolists simply ignore the theory and appeal to nativist bigotry to inhibit the development of competition — while the leadership of the largest non-public system in the country twiddles its thumbs and worries about Rhodesia (where it has no clout at all). In the absence of, say, a letter to a congressman from the parents of each non-Catholic black child who has chosen a parochial school in preference to a public school, elegant, sophisticated and powerful arguments like those advanced by Coombs and Sugarman aren't going to have much impact.

Yet "Education by Choice" ought to be read by every priest, religious and layperson in the country who is at all serious about the Catholic schools' role as an educational alternative. We will not see a more deftly defined, sharply honed and brilliantly articulated defense of the family's authority and responsibility in education.

It is part of the appalling irony of the contemporary state of American Catholicism that the Church will ignore Coombs and Sugarman with their powerful arguments about the importance of the family, while it goes through the ritual motions of launching yet another national campaign on the family. We're for the family in theory, of course, but we shy away from supporting legislation which will strengthen enormously the family's control over education. I guess we don't want to offend the fellows at the National Council of Churches.

IFCA Plans Chair at C.U.

The local chapter of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae is participating in a recently established program of providing for a Chair of Catholic Education at the Catholic University of America, in honor of St. Elizabeth Seton.

Gifts for the chair are being made in memory of the late Bishop James E. Kearney. Bishop Kearney's name will be inscribed on a

plaque at the university.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan has endorsed the project with the words:

"I am delighted to hear that the Rochester Circle of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae is anxious to participate in the program for the establishment of a Chair of Catholic Education at the Catholic University of America. It is my happy privilege to extend

my blessings and prayers on this noble endeavor."

A brochure explaining the project is available to the public by calling (716) 473-7565. Checks should be made to the IFCA St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Chair of Education and sent to Miss Helen Durbin, regent of the Rochester Circle, 1100 East Ave., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

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'Why Did God Take My Child?'

A question that has to arise with members of the Foundation for Sudden Infant Death is "Why did God take my child?" The Genesee Valley Chapter of the national foundation has called a meeting at which three clergymen will discuss this question.

The speakers are Father Edward Palumbos, Rabbi Judea Miller and the Rev. Jack Bishop. The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 25, at the University of Rochester's Helenwood Hall on Crittenden Boulevard. A coffee hour will follow the discussion.

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