

Religious Educators To Improve 'Product'

By **SISTER ROBERTA TIERNEY**
Director of Education

Accountability is an "in" word in society and the Church today. One of the ministries of the Church which is structured to be evaluated and accountable is the educational ministry. Therefore, it is natural that "educators" are constantly being asked questions concerning their "product".

What is happening in Catholic schools? What is happening in the religious education programs? Why aren't they teaching the way they used to teach? Why do we continue to pour so many of our resources — personnel and financial into education?

To begin to address these and other questions, it is necessary to reflect on the commission to religious education which is found in the Bishops' Pastoral, To Teach As Jesus Did:

"Catholic education is an expression of the mission entrusted by Jesus to the Church He founded. Through education the Church seeks to prepare its members to proclaim the Good News and to translate this proclamation into action. Since the Christian vocation is a call to transform oneself and society with God's help, the educational efforts of the Church must encompass the twin purposes of personal sanctification and social reform in light of Christian values."

If we accept this definition and mission, we accept the premise that education touches and is a part of the life of everyone. It is not a program to be taught or a content to be mastered, but it is the blending of belief, knowledge, trust and love



SR. ROBERTA TIERNEY

which is lived out through action in our relationship with God and others.

The "what" that is happening in our Catholic schools and in our programs of religious education is the fostering of this blend of faith into practice. Following the directions of the Bishops this is not being developed as an intellectual, academic program alone, but is a growing process striving toward the goals of teaching the message of the Word of God, building community as a reality to be lived in all aspects of life and using our gifts to serve others for the good of all.

The effects of these programs can be measured, but in ways beyond (though not exclusive of) demonstrating that each child mastered 100 per cent of the content. The Religious Education Outcome Inventory (REOI) is a tool developed by the National Catholic Educational Association to measure the mastery of content at particular grades and also to measure

the attitudes of those students. It was used by a limited number of our schools and religious education programs last year and will be expanded this year.

The success of the programs depends upon the dedication of the men and women throughout our diocese who continue to serve the Church through this ministry whether it be on a full time basis or as a part time volunteer. Their efforts to become updated through participation in courses and programs for their professional growth as well as taking opportunities to be spiritually renewed strengthen the reality of religious education by demonstrating faith in practice.

We have a right to be proud of the accomplishments of the programs offered in our diocese, yet, we must also be concerned about the numbers we are not reaching. We are the heirs of the command Jesus gave His apostles, "Go out and teach all nations". It was not a command to wait for all men to come to us. Therefore, we must accept the mission of not only strengthening the programs and modes of education we have, but also of developing ways to search out the unreached.

Discipleship is not a dimension of Christianity reserved for a privileged few. It is a mission in which we all must share and the experience of restlessness with needs and people yet unmet, must be felt by all. In this way we can join together — whether our role is that of influencing, teaching or planning — "to prepare members to proclaim the Good News and translate this proclamation into action!"

Sue Vergo Wins JA Position

Susan Vergo, a recent graduate of Our Lady of Mercy High School, has won second place in the National Junior Achievement Secretary of the Year Competition held at Indiana University last week. She competed with secretaries from 252 areas throughout the U.S. as well as 9 foreign countries.

Susan was secretary for the

JA Dratsum Co., (counseled by R.T. French) which manufactured and sold wooden book shelves with cookbooks, and event calendars. The company sold 82 shares of stock at \$1 per share to raise the capital for production. As secretary of her company Susan kept the minutes of the board meetings, and performed other corporate secretary duties.

Through competition, including written and verbal testing along with an interview conducted by Rochester Business Institute, she competed with 33 other secretaries from this area, emerging as Rochester JA Secretary of the Year.

Susan will attend St. John Fisher in September.

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