

Catholic Schools Week

Education A Community Venture

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Our impression and opinion of many things in life is often affected by the perspective from which we view it. Looking at the lights of a city from an airplane reveals a galaxy of tiny glimmers streaming together in a purposeless fashion. When viewed from the ground, those lights become significant individual units serving specific purposes.



SR. ROBERTA

The effect of education on the lives of so many can parallel this. From a distance the effects of education seem vague and blurred together — what is it all about — what is its significance? The daily effects are not visible or dramatic, but become clearer and meaningful as we are closer to each individual and situation.

Education is a lifetime process. It is taking place in the life of each of us and we are influencing the education of each other in countless formal and informal ways. The theme for this year's Catholic Schools' Week is — Next to the Family — the Catholic School. The message contained in this theme is the recognition of the importance of family life and the need to extend the same values from family to school community.

It is not a new theme; it is one which must be renewed. The Catholic schools of the 19th century were established through the sacrifices of immigrant families who wished to preserve their culture and heritage for their children. Many of our cities are peppered with churches and schools in close proximity because they were built by different national or ethnic groups. As the American Catholic experience began to emerge, these differences tended to disappear. The role of

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the Catholic school was not to preserve a national image, but to present a value system grounded in the Gospel message which would be different from the materialistic philosophy promoted in society.

There are many factors in society today which influence the quality of family life. Mobility, employment by both parents, single parent families, television, availability of drugs and alcohol, peer pressures have all contributed to changes within the family unit. These influences can strengthen the love and concern family members have for each other or they can become factors of division and separation. In their Plan of Pastoral Action for Family Ministry, the bishops of the United States have called for the schools to be involved with family ministry at the parish level.

The goals of Catholic Schools — to teach the Word of God, to build community and to offer service cannot succeed without being extended beyond the formal education program to reach the total lives of the children and their families. The expression, "I can't hear what you are saying because what you do is much louder," can relate to the difficulty that exists if parents send their children to the

Catholic School for "good religion" while through their example religion has no place in daily living.

Faith is not something that can be learned without example and practice. The message of the Gospel does tell us what we all should do; it tells us how to live — it calls us to be doers!

Building community involves time together especially time for prayer. The school community realizes that prayer is an important part of being together and caring for the needs of one another. True community in the home needs to be centered around prayer and worship as a family.

The goal to offer service focuses on the extension of our gifts and talents to others. School programs provide opportunities for the students to reach out beyond their own lives to help others in need. This may be through special projects, through ongoing activities or through the spirit of willingness and availability as needed. The necessary element in the true offering of service is to give generously from the gifts we have received to help those in need or those who are less fortunate. Once again example of this concept of service is needed as part of family life. Justice in our dealings with others is a key principle to putting service into action.

The Catholic Schools of our diocese are committed to the goals explained. It is our hope that the families of the 29,000 students served in the schools join with us in sharing the responsibility to promote these values. As we develop ways in which the schools can contribute to the planning of the Year of the Family in 1980, let us unite to give meaning and reality to the words of Pope John Paul I in his address to Bishops from the United States in September — "The Christian family is so important, and its role so basic in transforming the world and building up the kingdom of God that the church called it a 'domestic church'... Let us do everything we can for the Christian family, so that our people may fulfill their great vocation in Christian joy and share intimately and effectively in the Church's mission — in Christ's mission — of salvation."



St. Thomas More students Mike Morency, Mike Sibol, Tyrone Robinson and Laura Friel pay a visit to Mrs. Hill at the Rochester Friendly Home.

St. Thomas More Students Learn The Art of Caring

"Education to Justice", a new diocesan course of study, shows us reasons for caring about others, and it shows us ways to do it. Although the St. Thomas More student body has only begun this study, they are experiencing what it means to reach out.

A special area of concern has been their senior neighbors at the Rochester Friendly Home. Third graders like being responsible for someone who needs periodic cheer-ups so they have chosen "grandparents" and share with them little notes, visits and handmade remembrances. All the students share in making birthday cards for Friendly Home members. Eighth graders assume more

responsibility by their helpful presence when infirmity members are brought down to Mass.

Students directed some of their energies to gathering up Christmas toys for children of needy families. Eighth graders brought joy to the preschoolers of St. Joseph's Early Childhood School when they gave them a Christmas Party.

Students know that there is much to learn and do by way of bringing more justice into their world. They will be studying further ways to do this in their new program and hope to grow in faith and responsibility for helping it to happen.

Parents Group Work To Keep Catholic Schools

Do you ever fear the loss of your parochial school because of shrinking enrollments and increasing costs? Do you wish that you had input into decisions which affect the Catholic education of your children? Have you wanted the clout that the phrase "parent power" implies? Shouldn't there be an organization in our area which could help you to realize your real potential as parents?

There is such a group — the Rochester Federation of Catholic School Parents. The Federation is firmly committed to the idea that parents should be equal partners with educators in the Catholic education of their children and continually works toward that goal. It has the strong support and approval of the Diocesan Office of Education. However, it does not depend on the diocese for financial support or governance. The Federation provides leadership and service to its members rather than exercise jurisdiction over them. It attempts to provide coordination among parents in order that the united voice of its members might express itself in those forums where the welfare of our children's education and our schools is concerned. Geographically, it represents every Catholic school in the Rochester Diocese regardless of any membership payment.

In the past it was not uncommon for school administrators and teachers to view parents as a necessary evil. Parents could support but not question, assist but not initiate. Much of this has changed or is rapidly changing

in this decade of parental involvement in schools. If such a change is desired in your school the RFCSP endorses the booklet, "Guidelines" supplied by the Diocesan Office of Education. It contains reference materials for both school boards and education committees. The survival of Catholic education will require profound commitment to a continuing cooperation between parents and educators. The Rochester Federation firmly believes that school boards operating along the aforementioned Guidelines is the key to that survival.

The Rochester Chapter is a member of the New York State Federation of Catholic School Parents. The state group works continuously to protect your freedom of choice in education. It obtained, with other interested groups the \$15 per student Textbook Aid. The State Federation has supported major changes in state transportation laws including the removal of the phrase "nearest available Parochial school," thus giving parents, rather than public school districts, the right to decide which school their children will attend.

Much has been accomplished by our local Chapter this past year. The Rochester Federation has kept parents informed through the monthly Newsletter which is distributed through 85 per cent of our schools and we're hoping for 100 per cent by the end of the school year. It has supported appropriate state

and federal legislation in your name and provided you with the necessary information to express your support. The RFCSP has played a significant leadership role in obtaining busing for city students who attend five of our high school. It has organized the Citizens for Alternative Schools with representation from all of the private — parochial schools affected by the busing difficulty to work toward a permanent solution. We continue as their resource.

The Federation has provided all kinds of information to parent groups as well as to individual parents.

Educational research has demonstrated that the quality and quantity of your involvement significantly affect your child's achievement, attitude, attention span, absenteeism, school conduct, persistence in problem solving, reading, competency, and study work habits. If this is true, how can you afford not to become involved?

City Catholic Schools Celebrate

The Rochester City Catholic Schools will begin their celebration of Catholic School Week with representatives from each school participating in the celebration of the Eucharist at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Sunday, Feb. 4, 2:30 p.m.

The city schools will have a common open house on Tuesday, Feb. 6, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Parents and friends are welcome.

There will be a booth at Midtown, Monday, Feb. 5 to Friday, Feb. 9, staffed by parent representatives from the city schools. The booth will be open each day from 1-3 p.m. and the parents will be available to answer questions and distribute brochures. A map with the locations and

pictures of all the city schools will be displayed.

In addition, each school is planning special programs and activities throughout the week. Some programs are McAnthony's Nite at St. Anthony's School supper for the whole family; Grandma and Grandpa day at Sacred Heart School — Grandparents come for lunch and stay for the afternoon; School Emblem Contest at St. Andrew's School — the prize winning emblem will be worn by all the children during Catholic School Week; Family roller skating at Holy Cross School — families are meeting at USA Roller Rink Sunday, Feb. 4; Open House for local public school principals and staffs at St. John's/Blessed Sacrament consolidated schools. Other ideas include schoolwide spelling bees, essay contests, prayer services and liturgies.