

The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

Why Persecute Catholic Schools?

When I was in grammar school the nuns used to warn us about the dangers of religious persecution in America.



The Communists, we were told, might take over America and persecute the Catholics just the way they had in Mexico or Spain. We all dismissed the nuns as being pious but uninformed. Our country was a democracy with a Constitution. Persecutors of religion would never take over. It turns out we were wrong.

The proposed Internal Revenue Service regulations for religious schools are persecution in the strict sense of the word. The regulations violate the due process of law, they usurp the power of the courts and the legislative branch of government and they also violate the Bill of Rights' protection of religion. But they will stand because they are done in the name of racial integration and because federal bureaucrats and federal courts no longer care much about the Constitution, particularly when Catholic schools are involved.

If your local parochial school does not have an IRS-approved quota of blacks, the government will in effect close your school down — and possibly your church, too (by taking away the tax-exempt status). It will do so even though the public school down the street from you may have no blacks in it at all. The Internal Revenue Service, in other words, is imposing a standard of racial integration on Catholic schools which the government does not require of public schools.

The idea is that white parents, fleeing from court-ordered desegregation are sending their children in huge numbers to parochial schools. As the National Council of Churches, the American Jewish Committee and the NAACP said in an ad they jointly sponsored (with other organizations) against the tuition tax-credit bill, Catholic schools are "rich men's segregated enclaves." As the haven of segregationists, Catholic schools must be forced to either integrate or cease to exist.

The government has made up its mind and it doesn't want to be bothered with facts. Catholic school enrollment has not increased in cities where there has been public desegregation. On the contrary, Catholic school enrollment has declined because of the movement of Catholic families to the suburbs. The only increase in enrollment in Catholic schools is not of whites fleeing segregation

but of blacks seeking quality education. But the government bureaucrats and their supporting organizations like the National Council of Churches and the NAACP are convinced that this cannot possibly be the case because they KNOW that Catholic schools are segregationist. That settles the matter.

Catholic schools, in other words, are being discriminated against because they are Catholic and are assumed to be guilty of segregation despite the evidence to the contrary; they are required to meet a racial quota that is not imposed on public schools. If this is not religious persecution then nothing is.

It is all monstrously illegal and unconstitutional, but the same kind of men are appointed to the federal judiciary who staff the bureaucratic agencies. To them, the Constitution is irrelevant.

Nor does it seem likely that any political leaders will speak up to defend Catholic schools from the government attack.

Catholic senators (like Edward Kennedy) or senators who depend heavily on Catholic votes (like Adlai Stevenson) have consistently voted against Catholic schools and remain silent in the face of the outrageous charges against them. These men simply do not believe that Catholics are prepared to defend their schools at the ballot box against government persecution.

The president of the United States, having reneged on his pre-election promise to help Catholic schools, must find the leadership of the bishops coming to visit him lacking — men who will even speak to him after the way he has betrayed his promise, men who obviously have no political sense and can be easily manipulated. Besides, has not HEW Secretary Joseph Califano assured the president that Catholic schools are not a matter of political concern to the American Catholic voter?

Its political leadership silent, its ecclesiastical leadership befuddled, the president openly contemptuous, the national staff of the hierarchy insisting there is no conspiracy — are American Catholics really going to stand idly by while the Internal Revenue Service imposes on their schools demands for racial quotas from which most public schools all over the country are excused, and see their tax-exempt status lost because they are unable to meet the impossible IRS guidelines?

I'm afraid the answer is "yes." The Constitution and the Bill of Rights are irrelevant. The courts and the bureaucracy are packed with anti-Catholic bigots. The Catholic schools have become the scapegoats of the New Left. There is no Catholic leadership capable to resist. The first phase of religious persecution will begin.

... At Your Parish

St. Mary's, Ontario

Ontario — St. Mary's Parish has initiated plans for the construction of a new Parish Center with a meeting hall and classrooms for their 725 religious education students. The parish building committee have met every other week for four months planning the building and a floor plan has been drawn. The building should be ready for use by late 1979.

Mary's release the building will be used to "encourage a deeper sense of community among the parishioners of St. Mary's, to encourage fellowship and spirituality, serve present and future programs accommodating the various age groups, and be a useful and functional building that is an asset to the site."



Building designer Alfred L. Pardi displays preliminary plans for the Parish Center.

the church at its present south entrance. Building committee chairperson is

Jean Bell and the structure's designer is Alfred L. Pardi.

St. John's, Spencerport

The annual family retreat at St. John the Evangelist, Spencerport, opens at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 18, with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, teaching and benediction. Father Patrick McGarrity, CSSR, of Washington, D.C., will direct the retreat on the theme "Spirit-filled, yet Hungry."

The building will adjoin

9:30 Father McGarrity will meet with the Bible Study Group in the activities center; Youth Mass in school hall, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, 2 and 7:30 p.m., communal penance service, with opportunity for private confession; Friday, day of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 9 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Saturday, there will be a pot-luck supper after the 5:30 p.m. Mass, with everyone asked to bring table service, plus a dish to be shared with six others. Sunday, on regular schedule, a collection will be taken for retreat expenses.

Some highlights of the week-long program:

Anointing rite at Masses Tuesday, 9 a.m., 2 and 7:30 p.m., with a social hour in the rectory after the 2 p.m. Mass.

Wednesday morning at

St. Francis, Geneva

Geneva-The Holy Name Society at St. Francis de Sales here held their annual election of officers recently. Elected were James Damick, president; Mike Augustine, vice president; Charles Cribbs, secretary; and Allen Christensen, treasurer.

The January meeting for the Divorced, Separated and Widowed group at St.

Francis, cancelled because of bad weather, has been rescheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the school hall, 110 Exchange St. An assessment of the needs of participants will take place and individuals will have a chance to meet group members to discuss common problems. All are welcome to attend.

St. Mary's, Scottsville

The Education Committee of St. Mary's, Scottsville, will sponsor a six week adult education series beginning Ash Wednesday, Feb. 28, following the 7:30 p.m. Mass. The remaining sessions will follow each Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Francis, cancelled because of bad weather, has been rescheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the school hall, 110 Exchange St. An assessment of the needs of participants will take place and individuals will have a chance to meet group members to discuss common problems. All are welcome to attend.

Father Thomas Bales, CSB will head the remaining three sessions on the topic of prayer.

Participants will meet at the Krieg Library at St. Mary's, 99 Church St., Scottsville. There is no charge and the public is invited.

Father Lawrence Murphy, chaplain at Genesee Hospital, will

WILL YOU SHARE A CATHOLIC EDUCATION WITH A WORTHY CHILD?

For over 80 years, a strong Catholic school system served children in Rochester's central city neighborhoods. But there aren't very many Catholic schools left in central Rochester these days.

Saint Monica's Catholic Elementary School, located on Rochester's southwest side, serves children living in neighborhoods ranging from the city's 19th and 3rd Wards all the way to downtown Rochester.

Many children are from genuinely poor families. Families which are plagued by sickness or suffer the death of a parent, for example.

These worthy children and their families find themselves in real poverty through no fault of their own.

These parents desperately want their children to be educated in a Catholic school, to be exposed to high academic standards, a healthy sense of discipline, the values of patriotism and good citizenship, and most of all, to Christian teachings.

Saint Monica's has established a CATHOLIC EDUCATION FUND to help pay the costs of educating children who are needy and worthy. So many good people have helped bring Catholic education to Rochester's poor over the past few years.

Would you be willing to help?

Your contribution, large or small, will help make it possible for Saint Monica's to serve more deserving children next year. You can share a Catholic education with a worthy child.

Sister Clare Francis Mogenhan
Saint Monica's School
841 Genesee Street
Rochester, N.Y. 14611

Dear Sister:

I'd like to help. Enclosed is my contribution of \$_____ to Saint Monica's CATHOLIC EDUCATION FUND.

(Your Name)
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Clip and mail to the address above. All gifts are tax deductible.

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