

ALBANY ACTION

Bishops Support Tax Credit

Albany — In their strongest statement to date asserting the right of parents to assistance in exercising choice in education, the Catholic Bishops of New York State issued a statement calling tuition tax credits necessary, urgent, and just social policy.

In the 1,000-word statement, issued Dec. 6, the bishops said, "The time has come to recognize educational assistance to parents of children attending nonpublic schools as valid and necessary public policy."

Noting President Ronald Reagan's promise to ask the current (97th) Congress to enact tuition tax credit legislation, the bishops said parents of nonpublic school students are relying on that promise.

"The right to freedom to

choose should not be an empty right. Government must facilitate its exercise," the bishops said and, "That right must not be denied by unwarranted protestations of harm to other segments and institutions in our society."

They claimed that far from doing harm to American society, support for nonpublic school students and their parents can only enhance the educational effectiveness of this country's schools.

"Catholic schools have contributed in no small way to the educational vitality of America," they said. "As a fact of this country's history, the Catholic Church has been committed to education. Its educational institutions and programs have been a means of helping not only its own members, but society in general. The Catholic school

has been good for this country. It is a credit to the nation, and we are very proud of it.

"We are equally proud," the bishops said of the "sacrifices and commitment to educational freedom" by parents and students which have "maintained the viability and effectiveness of nonpublic education" over the years.

The bishops argued that tuition tax credit legislation is an effective means for government, which has the responsibility to educate all its citizens, to carry out that responsibility equitably and without prejudice.

"The tuition tax credit proposal is another use of the tax system to accomplish what has always been recognized as valid public policy: namely, that government help people to

help themselves. It will aid parents and families to do so.

"The educational benefits of this country, so dependent upon its fiscal resources, should be shared equally by all children. Our clear call for justice in this area is not some self-serving interest in preserving our educational institutions. Nor does it breach the principle of so-called separation of Church and state.

"The issue is simply whether parents who assume a more immediate and personal responsibility for the education of their children should be helped by government in exercising that right."

The statement was unanimously approved by the Catholic Bishops of New York State acting as the Board of the New York State Catholic Conference.

Bishops View Government Responsibility

Albany — The Catholic bishops of the state have endorsed a statement of principles concerning the development of social principle

Called the "Role of Government in Social Policy," the statement centers on governmental responsibilities based on the rights of citizens. It says:

1. Government is instituted to serve common needs.

2. Review of government social policy should begin with the importance of providing the basic needs of all citizens.

3. Government must respect individual rights and promote policies which protect those rights.

4. Local efforts, where possible, should be the first to meet needs; where possible, higher authority should step in but always with a view to the preservation of basic rights and liberties.

National or state leaders

may not leave those afflicted by these difficult situations (poor, immigrant, handicapped, etc.) simply to their own devices," they stated.

"In revising or terminating certain social programs and legislation," the bishops said, "we must always strive to protect the human rights which those policies and programs were developed to serve."

The bishops cited the statement of Pope John Paul II to the United Nations in which he enumerated the right to food, clothing, housing, sufficient health care, rest and leisure, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to adequate working conditions and a just wage and the right to participate in a free choice of political system.

With respect to the arms race, the bishops said they recognize the need for a "legitimate concern for the security of a nation." However, they said that the "arms race and the building of

military potential can be excessive and go beyond the national security demands of the common good." They said the demands of the military budget should not preclude a "meaningful response to social needs."

Another challenge, specifically to Christians, is

directed at "our style of consumption." Challenging specifically Christians to a "closer reading of the Gospels, the bishops said, "The pursuit of a more simplified lifestyle is not an option. It is a Gospel mandate. Unbridled consumption cannot be reconciled with sensitivity to the needs of the poor."

THANK YOU BECAUSE OF YOUR KINDNESS. WE LIVE A LITTLE LONGER

Maintaining Catholic education here at Saint Augustine's and Saint Monica's has not been easy in recent years.

Yet, time after time, in the midst of our financial difficulties and struggles, our friends have always been there to help.

This is a "thank you" message to our friends throughout the Upstate, New York area.

Because of your generosity, Catholic education at Saint Augustine's and Saint Monica's Schools is still strong and vibrant! We are determined that the Lord will always be present to our children through Catholic schools in Rochester's central city.

You have so willingly shared your gifts of money and prayer. Your generosity -- and your notes and letters of encouragement -- have touched our hearts. We feel truly blessed by your goodness.

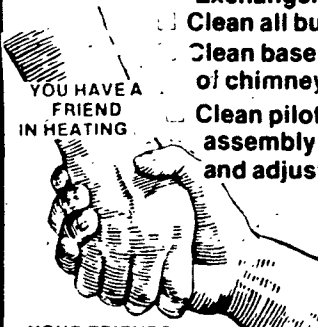
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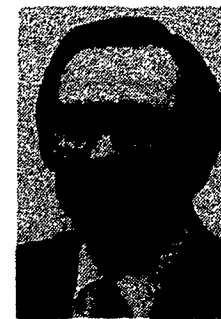
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The coming of winter offers us the opportunity to enjoy many activities we don't have time for during the summer months when we spend much of our time out-of-doors. You may especially enjoy reading, needlework... or other hobbies. Though the winter months are enjoyable, they can be especially difficult for older people -- or for people who have recently experienced the death of a loved one. Winter weather confines people to the indoors and limits their activities. Your friendship and visits during these months can make a great difference in their lives -- and in your own. Giving of yourself to help someone who needs you will make your own life more satisfying -- and can help a friend regain some of his enjoyment of life. Suggestions on how to comfort someone who has experienced a death in the family can be answered in more detail by any member of our staff. Please call or stop by.

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