

Society suffers from decline of Catholic schools, education expert says

One of the primary distinctions between Catholic schools and their public counterparts is the differing emphasis the two educational systems place on excellence, "The First Lady of Catholic Education" contends.

"Without pushing children too hard, Catholic school teachers challenge them," Elinor Ford said in a telephone interview last week. "Whereas the state education department says, 'Be ye minimally competent,' we say 'Be ye perfect!'"

A frequent speaker on the importance of

Catholic education in U.S. society, Ford was dubbed "First Lady" by *Today's Catholic Teacher* magazine for her efforts on behalf of Catholic schools. She will address teachers, parents and school administrators from throughout the diocese at the Catholic Schools Week Dinner on Friday, February 6.

The former superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of New York was instrumental in the establishment of the Assembly for the Accreditation of Elementary Schools. She is currently on leave from her post as professor

of education at Fordham University.

Her speech will center on the theme "Catholic Schools Touch the Future," which is the focus of Catholic Schools' Week celebrations throughout the nation.

"Every time a Catholic school dies in America, the opportunity for the nation to reach its full potential dies a little, too," Ford said during the phone interview.

Noting that this year marks the 200th anniversary of the drafting of the U.S. Constitution, Ford said that public schools are hampered by their inability to promote the values on which this country was founded.

By contrast, she observed, Catholic education's emphasis on values benefits our entire society. "Research has shown that the longer young persons remain in Catholic schools, the greater their social consciousness and ability to transform the world," Ford said. "We want them to know enough and care enough to make a difference"

Quoting author Gustavo Gutierrez, Ford

said, "The goal of Catholic education is to go forth to announce the Gospel and to denounce oppression."

Because Catholic school parents sacrifice for their children's education, they are likely to participate in the school, thereby benefiting their children, said Ford, citing a report by curriculum research Bruce Joyce, who predicted that student achievement could be doubled if young people had increased self-esteem and the support of caring adults.

Moreover, the involvement of Catholic schools with families often goes beyond academics, she said. "All young people want a happy family life, but many are not happy. Our mission is not only to educate the children, but also to reach out and heal the families," Ford commented. "Healthy families help the ones who hurt."

Tickets for the Catholic Schools' dinner may still be available at Catholic schools throughout the diocese.

— Jeanne Gehret



Department of General Education

1150 BUFFALO ROAD · ROCHESTER NY 14624 (716) 328-3210

Dear Friend,

As you read this, we as a diocese will be well into the national celebration of Catholic Schools Week. This annual event provides us an opportunity to let people know that Catholic schools are present in the community to provide the next generation with an education that is strong in academics, strong in the Catholic faith and strong in developing individuals who will be sensitive to the needs of others.

It has been my privilege as superintendent of schools to have visited 40 of our 71 elementary schools during the first half of this school year. Space does not allow me to describe how each of these schools fulfills the theme of this year's Catholic Schools Week celebration — "Catholic Schools Touch the Future." Let me just mention a few of the many experiences I have had.

I was at Holy Family Primary School in Elmira on the day they were celebrating World Hunger Day. Along with donating their dessert money to alleviate hunger, they united as a school community — hands joined to form a chain around the school — and sang "We Are the World!" I was a link between a third-grader and a kindergartner, a weak link at that, as they knew the words and I did not.

At All Saints Academy in Corning and Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Rochester, I attended Eucharists that were joyful, prayerful and reverent.

Add to these events the experiences of praying the rosary with third-graders in Auburn; celebrating in prayer and song the sorrow of fourth-graders in Penn Yan at the sudden death of their teacher; a spirited prayer time with the faculty of Holy Apostles/Holy Family in Rochester; and the making of Advent wreaths with the fifth grade of Corpus Christi in Rochester — and you have a tapestry of events that shows the variety of faith experiences our Catholic schools provide students to help form their and our future.

May Our Lady of Perpetual Help ever guide and guard our Catholic schools.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Walsh

Brother Brian M. Walsh
Superintendent of Schools

Local parent federation will host convention

An enlightening, thought-provoking and spiritual weekend is what members of the New York State Federation of Catholic School Parents promises for those who attend its annual convention at the Rochester Plaza Hotel, May 1-3.

The theme of this year's gathering is "Do More Than Just Bake Cookies."

Jesuit Father William O'Malley, SJ, will offer the event's keynote address, speaking on "What Makes a School Catholic?"

Other speakers will include Leonard Fine from the Archdiocese of New Orleans, describing prepaid tuition and development; Joan Arnold, who will talk about the Regents Action Plan and state services to non-public schools; and Sister Ann Collins, who will discuss a

parish school program for children with special education needs.

Workshops will also be offered on motivating children to learn and getting the most from parent/teacher conferences.

The Federation of Catholic School Parents provides a network for exchanging information, cooperating on issues of mutual concern regarding Catholic schools, and promoting and strengthening the Catholic school system.

Any parent whose child attends a Catholic elementary or secondary school is considered a member of the federation and is invited to attend the convention.

For more information or a registration form, contact Cheri Walsh, (716)323-3305, or Sandy Behan, 467-5304.

Parent/adolescent lecture series set for Nazareth College

Dr. Dennis Boike, a Rochester marriage and family therapist, will offer a six-part lecture series slated for Nazareth College in February and March. Boike will discuss techniques and strategies to help meet the challenges of parenting adolescents.




The series, entitled "Fragile Alliance: Parents and Adolescents," will be held from

8 p.m. to 9:45 p.m. on Wednesdays, from Feb. 11 through March 18, in the forum of the Otto A. Shults Community Center.

Dates and topics for the lectures are: "Developing Self-Esteem" on February 11; "Communication Between Parent and Teen" on February 25; "Discipline: Myth or Reality?" on March 4; "Sexuality During Adolescence" on March 11; and "Depression During Adolescence" on March 18.

The cost for the course is \$25 per person or \$40 per couple. Individual lectures will cost \$5 per person.

For information and reservations, call (716)586-2525, ext. 390.



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