

A Developing Picture



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

Future holds composite image

By Linda Dow Hayes

For some people, the words "Catholic education" may conjure up the image of a nun in a black habit writing math equations on a dusty chalkboard.

For others, these words might evoke a picture of a white-collared brother spouting a lecture to a group of boys and girls in a room whose walls are graced with portraits of the Holy Family and past U.S. presidents.

But for an up-to-date image of Catholic education, one would also need to envision a group of adult Catholics attending a Bible study group in their parish, or a gaggle of teenagers from public and Catholic high schools attending a retreat together.

And to complete the picture, one would need to throw in a handful of parish catechism leaders and youth ministers clustered in a continuing-education class or a workshop for professional skills.

As the 1980s unfold, the diocese is planning to draw these scattered images into a single, focused vision, with an eye toward improving much of the educational picture by expanding the Catholic education system in a long process.

"I understand the term 'Catholic education' to mean education in the Catholic faith and tradition in a variety of settings," commented Sister Mary Ann Binsack, RSM, newly ap-

pointed director of the diocesan Bureau of Education. She noted that the education division's four departments — Catholic Schools Office, Religious Education, Continuing Education and Youth Ministry — reflect that "variety of settings."

During the next decade, Sister Binsack hopes, diocesan Catholics will come to see the efforts of the division's three other departments as being every bit as important as the concerns of the Catholic Schools Office. "We can't say one is more important than the other. If we say faith formation begins when we're born and ends when we die," she remarked.

The education director added that the main goal of her administration in the next year is to implement Bishop Matthew H. Clark's call for the "Well-Integrated Catechetical Plan." To accomplish this, Sister Binsack said, the WICP will have to provide catechetical opportunities for children, adolescents and adults of all ages.

In the next year, that challenge will be taken up by the departments of youth ministry and of religious and continuing education, which will expand their program offerings, Sister Binsack added.

Meanwhile, a Protestant minister provided the diocese with at least part of the impetus for expanding its adult-education offerings in Scripture. Sister Binsack commented that the Rev. Billy Graham's Rochester cru-

sade in the fall of 1988 encouraged many diocesan Catholics to join parish Bible study groups.

That observation was confirmed by Maribeth Mancini, who is serving as acting director of the Department of Religious Education until she officially becomes its director Aug. 28, following seven years of service to the diocese as consultant for adult religious education.

In the past four years, the diocese has trained more than 300 Bible study leaders, Mancini said, noting that the Catholic Bible study movement is slowly but steadily growing in the diocese.

"People really need an opportunity for a more in-depth understanding of Scripture," Mancini said, adding that her department will sponsor a newly created Academy of Scripture in the fall. The academy will offer a series of in-depth Scripture courses for Bible study leaders, catechists and ministers in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Although it was designed for minister formation, it will also be open to any interested adults, she said.

The Scripture academy will offer courses at both basic and advanced levels. Students will attend five- and 10-hour courses at several sites around the diocese, where they will study such topics as introduction to the Old

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