

more than ever. The lure of drugs, the horror of AIDS, the spectre of nuclear threat, the despair of environmental ruin all threaten humanity. To arm the next generation with the hope, the will, the skills to counter these dangers, there is no institution better equipped than our Catholic schools.

The nursery of the future Church

Catholic school graduates remain loyal to the Church. The 1976 study, *Catholic Schools in a Declining Church*, by Andrew Greeley, Kathleen McCourt and William McCready, found that Catholic schools are 38% more effective in bringing about loyalty to Catholic beliefs. Most graduates will become active Catholics and members of parishes, the study found.

Further, a 1985 study of slightly more than 3,000 seminarians showed that 51% were from a Catholic school background. The significance of this figure multiplies when one considers that only 7 to 9% of Catholic boys ages K-12 were in Catholic schools at the time. More than half our priestly vocations involve boys from this small segment of our population.

Solving problems of finance and governance

If there are many signs that Catholic schools are succeeding academically and socially and need to be preserved and enriched, there are also evident problems. Nationally, 25 years ago, approximately 13,000 Catholic elementary and secondary schools served a total student population of nearly 5.3 million. In early 1989 there were 9,000 Catholic schools in the United States, with a total enrollment of 2.7 million. In our own Diocese, 14 elementary schools and two high schools closed between 1969 and 1975; a third high school closed in 1982.

The number of students attending Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese dropped from 18,867 in 1982 to 14,778 in 1987, while the cost of educating a student in a local Catholic school doubled to \$1,574 per year. In some schools, enrollment had dropped to under 100 students. When Cardinal Mooney High School closed at the end of the 1989 school year, it had suffered a steady enrollment decline, from 1302 in 1985-86 to just under 700 in 1988-89, and an operating deficit of \$200,000 per year over that same period. St. Anne's, Our Lady of Good Counsel and Genesis Junior High also closed in 1989.

The 1984 study, *Effective Catholic Schools: An Exploration*, by Dr. Anthony Bryk, Peter B. Holland, Valerie E. Lee and Ruben Carriedo, identified two major areas of difficulty: finance and governance. The authors pointed to the need across the country to improve and upgrade instructional facilities such as science labs and computers, and to improve teacher salaries in order to attract and retrain the best possible

instructors.

These goals are difficult to attain under a parochial system of finance, especially in neighborhoods that have high percentages of poor families. The Declaration on Christian Education said,

"The unfinished business on the agenda of Catholic Schools, like many other schools, also includes the task of providing quality education for the poor and disadvantaged of our nation. Generous, sustained sacrifice is demanded of those whom God has favored in order to make available educational programs which meet the need of the poor to be self-determining, free persons in all areas of individual and social life."

Yet recent national surveys have shown that as Catholics achieve middle-class status, they tend to cut the percentage of their income that they give to their Church in half. We need to make clear what schools really cost, and the benefits they provide to both families and the Church.

Rethinking and renewal have been under way for several years in our Diocese. Following unsuccessful attempts to save inner city schools, notably through organizing a Council of Inner City Parishes, the Diocese formally recognized the need to plan in 1979.

Since then, consultants and various committees have been working on studies of the direction and future of our schools. In 1985 the Center for Governmental Research presented a proposed plan, but it met with great criticism. It was modified by a report which Bishop Clark approved in February 1986, which initiated a process for planning. He announced that the planning process would expand to include all elementary schools in Monroe County, not just urban schools, and all parishes, not just those with schools.

Over the next two years, an Implementation Committee coordinated 10 task forces and committees which fleshed out that "plan for planning." This process

Time for change

moved into actual development of a master plan in September, 1987. At a meeting of pastors, principals and parish leaders, Bishop Clark said the time for "planning to plan" was over; now it was time to develop the plan itself. He called on all Catholics to support Catholic schools, and said we would now emphasize "Catholic" rather than "parochial" schools. The Bishop also met with representatives of the secondary schools in the Diocese.

At that time he also spoke of the need to locate Catholic schools within a well-integrated catechetical plan in each parish. Such a plan would use new models of catechesis to satisfy the needs of the changing family, the special needs of the emotionally handicapped, the physically disabled, the burgeoning numbers of Hispanics, Blacks and Orientals.

Quadrants created

In spring 1988, the Diocese began planning to implement a new governance structure, in which Monroe County parochial schools would be reorganized into four quadrants. As Bishop Clark said then, "Business as usual" isn't acceptable; in some cases we will by necessity be "reactive," but in others we have the opportunity to build in procedures and structures to moderate future enrollment changes and financial impact.

The Bishop charged the new Quadrant Planning Boards with recommending any necessary openings, consolidations, and reconfigurations, and with accommodating the educational needs of the poor. The summer of 1988 saw the Quadrant Planning Boards begin meeting to develop action steps.

Last fall clusters outside Monroe County were formed in the Southern Tier, Finger

Lakes and the Valley. Bishop Clark reiterated his September 1987 emphasis on Catholic rather than parochial schools, and announced a plan based on the recommendations of the Oversight Task Force of the Five Year Financial Planning Committee: formation of a nine-person Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools to analyze the work of the Implementation Committee, Quadrants and Clusters; integrate that work and give it direction; and develop a Master Plan to strengthen Catholic schools. Dr. William L. Pickett, president of St. John Fisher College, was named head of the Commission.

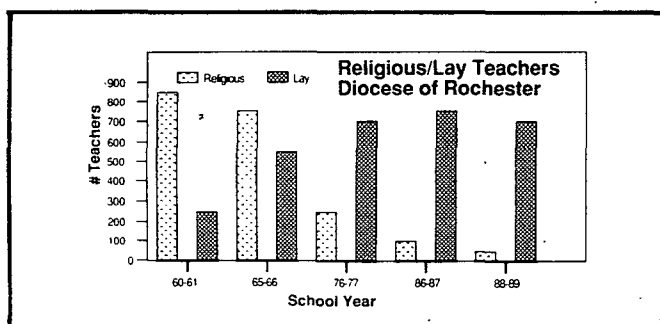
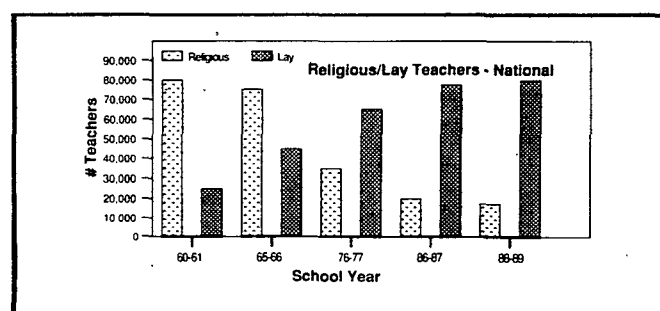
The plan also called for hiring a consultant to work with the Commission; developing a marketing plan; and, once the transition from parochial to Catholic schools is under way, creating a \$20 million endowment fund.

The Commission and its consultants have worked with information and plans submitted by a variety of groups already involved in studying Catholic schools.

Northeast Quadrant plan developed first

In the spring of 1989, on the Commission's recommendation, the Bishop approved a plan for the Northeast Quadrant. This Quadrant plan came first because of the immediacy of the needs of some schools. Changing population trends had left the Northeast Quadrant with twice the classroom capacity needed.

The plan, which used criteria developed by the Quadrant Planning Board, called for consolidating from 13 schools to 7 by Fall 1991. Five schools that have had 7th and 8th grades will transfer them to a new junior high school to be opened at Bishop Kearney High School in 1990.



One factor in rising school costs: the decline in the numbers of religious available to teach