

# Schools bring out Catholics' Jekyll-and-Hyde sides

Catholic schools bring out the best and the worst in us.

Who could help but be inspired by the immigrants who donated every spare penny to school-building funds? By parents and teachers who take second jobs to pay the tuition or to make ends meet on meager Catholic school salaries? By principals and pastors who put in countless hours at fundraisers and sweat over paying the bills?

Sacrifice built Catholic schools and keeps them alive. Good schools are unquestionably worth the effort, infusing quality education with a moral base and a spirit of caring that money can't buy.

But Catholic schools also evoke our xenophobic side. The prospect of busing children — even of junior-high age — into or near the center city can raise the level of dialogue among suburban parents to a shout.

Principles of a shared faith are ignored when competition between schools turns intense and ugly amid tuition wars and rumor-mongering.

The message that Catholic schools aim to teach is distorted by bingo games and candy sales when these efforts misuse students as hawkers and prey

upon the weak-willed.

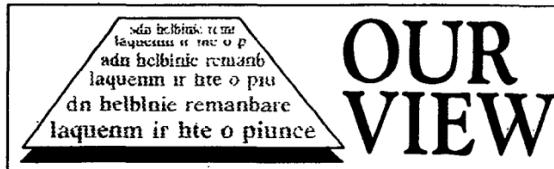
Preserving one's Catholic school can become an end in itself — regardless of what that means for neighbors, fellow parishioners, the larger Catholic school system and its students.

"Leave us alone," say those whose schools are strong. "We want to help other schools, but not at the price of our own."

"Help us," demand others trying to save struggling institutions. "Make the rich suburban parishes pay." "Use more Thanks Giving Appeal money." "Give us the millions from the sale of Cardinal Mooney."

Such zeal obscures the fact that — even if we could agree on how to apportion such aid — spending the combined proceeds of the entire TGA and the sale of Cardinal Mooney High School on schools would be a temporary solution. At best, the money would buy time to find other solutions for faltering schools; at worst, it would be wasted on schools without a mission.

Diocesan administrators, meanwhile, walk a tightrope between collegiality and accountability. Well-intentioned efforts to consult and satisfy



everyone dissolve in a maze of committees that leave no one responsible for real progress.

At the same time, every decisive move is greeted by howls of protest against dictatorial tactics.

Amid the squabbling, strong schools are hamstrung, and vulnerable ones — which all too often serve the most vulnerable among us — slip away.

If we are to preserve what's good about our Catholic school system, we can't abandon the principles we intend those schools to teach. We need to listen prayerfully to one another, act with respect and restraint, and keep before us the ideal of loving our neighbors — in the city and suburbs, at rival high schools, at the next-door parish and the Pastoral Center — as we love ourselves.

— The Editors

## Materialism blamed for Americans' vocation crisis

To the editor:

I am amazed at the ignorance that is being demonstrated, about vocations to the priesthood or religious life in Our Church, by so many laity. I hear the following — "Ordain Women," "Ordain Married Men," "Readmit Former Priests," "Give Religious Administrative Positions," etc.

Very few people endeavor to seek out the facts and truth. Now for some actual factual data to clarify the existing misconceptions. Diocesan ordinations actually have been increasing world-wide since 1980. Ordinations in 1987 increased 46 percent

from 1980. They decreased 20 percent in the United States. Very candidly the problem lies with the people of the United States.

American Catholics have in too many instances discouraged vocations within their families because of the materialism which is rampant in our society. Too many women clamoring for female ordinations are actually not listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, rather they are on an egotistic trip. Celibacy is not the significant reason that many people endeavor to offer as an explanation for the decline in

vocations. It is a fact that many more "Ordained Ministers" have left the ministry than Catholic Priests, and the majority of those were married. In addition, if marriage is such a "State of Bliss" and the solution to the vocation crisis why are there so many divorcés?

It is my own opinion that the vocation crisis in the U.S. will not be resolved until people once again become truly spiritual and obedient to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in their being. When there is a rejection of the God currently being worshipped — money — then our beloved U.S. will be blessed with abundant vocations.

Lawrence J. Perona  
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## Proposal will sacrifice successful junior high

To the editor:

For several months I have contemplated writing a letter to express my utter incredulity and total disagreement with a decision which ignores positive factors. I am concerned with the proposal to close Blessed Sacrament Junior High in June, 1990.

I do not understand why we terminate a Junior High which has proven its worth by steadfastly maintaining its enrollment during the 14 years of its existence. Parents are sending their children to this school in preference to enrolling them in schools in their own neighborhoods. Parents with whom I am personally acquainted have been pleased with the educational progress of their children in Blessed Sacrament. The faculty is Christian, dedicated, close-knit, and desirous of challenging each child according to his/her potential. Furthermore, the school is located in the City of Rochester where it is currently offering fine educational advantages and serving the needs of children living within the confines of Rochester.

Has the committee for consolidation

considered the fact that many city children will not attend Bishop Kearney in Irondequoit? Have the members given thought to the other high schools in the quadrant which will suffer a lack of students because of housing all children in a Junior High which boasts a high school in the same complex?

I suggest that before we follow through with this proposed transition, the committee meet with parents who have pupils in Blessed Sacrament and listen to their comments. One parent told me that at every opportunity she sends a message on a directive or a report card stating: "Don't let this school close!"

I, too, as a Catholic School teacher for over 30 years, as a principal for 12 years, and as an educator who believes in the value of Catholic education, reiterate: "Don't let Blessed Sacrament, a school which has proven its worth, bursts with spirit and vitality, and is sound in its Christian methodology, close its doors!"

Anna Louise Staub, SSJ  
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## U.S. policies blamed for Salvadoran deaths

To the editor:

Recently we have been mourning the deaths of our brothers and sisters in El Salvador and reflecting on the meaning of their lives as well as their deaths. The memory of the six Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter who were so brutally slain challenges us with questions that are painful to confront yet demand a courageous response.

It is all too comfortable for us as Christians to identify ourselves with the martyrs. Our tradition justly celebrates those who have given their lives for others in Christ's Name, and we would like to think that we belong spiritually, if not actually, in their ranks. The truth, however, does not allow us such smug complacency since we ourselves are implicated in the deaths of these and countless other persons of conscience and innocence. Concern for our own privilege and well-being have loaded the guns and fueled the hatred that perpetuates violence and terror. The Reagan-Bush administrations' policies in El Salvador, aimed at containment of what is seen as a communist threat in Central America, have contributed heavily to an atmosphere where massive violation of human rights is viewed as strategically justifiable. However, blame for these ongoing atrocities does not rest solely with governments. We as individuals are likewise culpable when we allow ourselves and our institutions to be used as instruments of oppression. In the eyes of a world in pain each of us is seen with a finger on the trigger.

Self-interest has diluted and distorted a faith that calls us to self denial and service to those who have least. Our own sense of security whether based on the advantages of economic affluence or the support and

approval of family, friends and community compromises our capacity to risk all to follow the dangerous call of Christ. Yet, like the martyrs in El Salvador, we too are called to sacrifice. We are called to stand with the oppressed in demanding justice and compassion from both church and government. We are called to accept the challenge of moving from accommodation to liberation!

Rev. Daniel J. O'Shea  
Abbey of the Genesee  
Piffard

## Columnist misrepresented traditional Catholics' views

To the editor:

I was recently visiting in the Rochester Diocese to attend the eleventh annual Rosary Rally in Elmira, N.Y. Not only was the rally edifying, but also inspiring, listening to the guest speaker, Father Albert J. Shamon, on our Blessed Lady. Wonderful!

However, during my visit, I was dismayed to read Father Richard McBrien's syndicated column in the October 5th *Catholic Courier*. To accuse "Traditional Catholics" (as Father McBrien labels them) of containing a "private, sad world of theological imagination," and "a deep seated anger and brooding pessimism," (about who will be saved) is simply not true.

I have never met a sincere Catholic who would be unhappy at the suggestion that God may save everyone, as Father accuses. In my experience, I've always found devout Catholics loyal to what the church has always taught; both compassionate and uplifting, guiding other souls onto the road of faith — towards Heaven.

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