

# Shouting can't save schools

"Those of us that are doing fine can't become complacent. We have to remember we're not all out for our own good. We're a Gospel people, a part of a whole faith community. I would love nothing better than to keep what I've got here ... (but the plan) might call for my school to change. I have to be open to that."

Those inspiring words came from a suburban principal in 1987, shortly after Bishop Matthew H. Clark announced that the diocese would develop a master plan to preserve Catholic schools.

Last week, the same principal's ideals were tested by the news that her school would lose its seventh and eighth grades to a regional junior high under a plan proposed by the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools.

Quoted in a local newspaper report recently, she sounded far less assured of the merits of school planning. "I'd put my job on the line" to save my school, she said. "Parishioners will be there long after I am. They are the people who hired me. I believe in the education we have here, and believe in the school community."

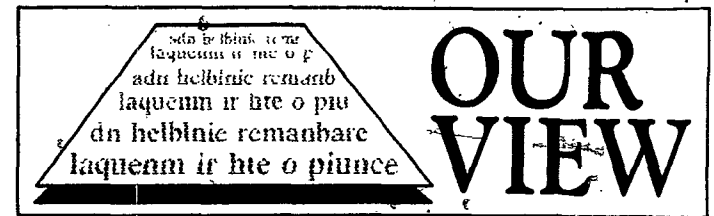
Pity the principals caught between conflicting loyalties to the diocese and to parishioners and school parents. But at the same time, ask yourself how two groups with the same beliefs and values can be so divided over how to preserve Catholic schools?

The record reveals that diocesan school planning has at times been muddled, but hardly unreasonable. Back in 1985, diocesan officials undertook the Urban School Study, which was greeted with a stone wall of suspicion. Many people believed that the study masked a secret master plan to save money by closing Rochester's urban schools.

Then, as Catholic school closings accelerated and no master plan was forthcoming, people began to demand decisive action from the diocese to halt the atrocity.

Now real change is proposed, and it is met with a chorus of outraged protest. How many of today's protesters were equally determined to be heard during the planning process?

Granted, commission members have yet to show whether benefits from their proposals will measure up to the sacrifices they require — particularly in the



southeast quadrant. The planning process has also misstepped, as illustrated by the initial proposal to close Irondequoit's Christ the King School, based on a faulty assessment of the school building.

But as parishioners at Christ the King demonstrated, accusations and rampant emotions are not the best tools with which to redress a wrong. Representatives of the Irondequoit parish were — for the most part — calm and deliberate as they documented a reasonable case against closing their school — a case that was heard and believed by the commission.

Too many others are determined to fight any plan, that changes their particular school, regardless of the rationale. Those doing the shouting are suffering real trauma; yet they compound their own injuries by threatening to amputate themselves from the diocesan body.

— The Editors

## Leave southwest's healthy schools alone

To the Editor:

I am the mother of two boys, ages two-and-a-half and one. When the time comes, my husband and I hope to provide these boys with a Catholic education. Currently, we reside in the town of Gates near St. Helen's School in the Southwest Quadrant of the Monroe County Catholic School System. Nearly everyone with whom I have spoken about this school has had high regard for the quality of education provided there. (I should add, at this point, that while we reside in St. Helen's Parish, we have continued to be members of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in the city, where we were married five years ago.)

Recently, I have been watching developments in the diocesan school system with increasing interest — and anxiety. Of particular concern to me is the proposal to

make St. Helen's, St. Pius X, and several other schools K-6, with St. Theodore's School being converted into a regional junior high school.

I can understand the need for school closings and consolidations and grade reconfigurations in areas where overall enrollments are declining, which appears to be the case in the Northeast Quadrant. But in areas where enrollments are stable or thriving, as with St. Helen's, St. Pius X and St. Theodore's parishes, and the Catholic schools in the Northwest Quadrant, I seriously question the wisdom of tampering with a system that is working well for the people it serves to strengthen the schools that are having difficulties. For the schools that are in trouble, it would make more sense (at least to me) to work out some kind of separate reorganization plan and

leave the healthy schools as they are — otherwise all the schools will be undermined by declining enrollments, hard feelings, and logistical problems. I fear that if this proposed reorganization goes into effect, by the time our sons reach school age, the Catholic schools in our area will be in such disarray that we will have no choice but to send them to public schools.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that I think there is a great deal of wisdom in the old saying "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I think that the members of the Southwest Quadrant Planning Board, and all the others who are involved in planning school reorganizations throughout the diocese, would do well to keep these words in mind — it may well prevent a great deal of heartache and unnecessary disruptions.

Christie B. Battaglia Gates



## Priest supports bishop's hard-line stance against pro-choice politician

To the Editor:

Having just read your wonderful commentary in the December 7 issue, I would like to ask you a question: "How many more years of dialogue would you like the Church to engage in before you would grant the American Bishops your permission to castigate publicly (or even, horror of horrors! - excommunicate) 'Catholic' politicians for their pro-abortion stance?" In my humble opinion, being only a Priest and not an editor of a Catholic newspaper, it seems to me that 16 years and 24,000,000 abortions ought to be ample enough "dialogue" with which to determine that perhaps (with your permission, of course) it could be time for the Church to say: "ENOUGH!!!"

Great theologians and scripture scholars that you are, you are correct to say that "Jesus never barred sinners from His presence." However, if you would bother to

read the rest of the Gospels, you would notice that Jesus, by the strength of his uncompromising announcement of His Father's Word and His demands on what His true followers' behavior should be, set an atmosphere in which many people walked away from Him because His demands on their belief was too strict. He invited them to follow Him unconditionally, or return to the mediocrity of those who would not live up to the standard His Father offered. Sixteen years and 24,000,000 infant killings should be enough time for even the most obtuse Catholic politician to decide whether to live and vote the strength of his faith, or give up that faith for a lesser one.

As far as Catholics who work for Planned Parenthood and related agencies, personally, I would give them one year to find another job and then deny Communion to all of them who choose to remain in those jobs. Actually, doctors, nurses, and

others directly involved with performing abortions already are supposed to be denied Communion. So, Bishop Maher was merely expanding that mandate in his own Diocese.

If you editors of our supposedly Catholic newspaper cannot stomach the thought of our Bishops asserting their responsibility as teachers of Catholicism, perhaps you

would feel more comfortable writing for publications which are more in line with your own beliefs. God knows we Catholics don't need more wishy-washy writers joining the ranks of the secular press to undermine our Catholic beliefs.

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Penn Yan

## Catholic Church should keep a safe distance from Project Life group 'Christians in Action'

To the Editor:

As a woman of faith and conscience I was surprised to see an article about Christians in Action and Project Life in the *Catholic Courier*. I would think that the Catholic Church and Father (Anthony) Mugavero would want to be very careful about aligning themselves with groups that terrorize women and harass minorities and non-Christians.

Gerald Crawford's contention that (Rev. Pat Robertson inspired) Christians in Action might appeal more to Protestant churches is incorrect. Mainstream Protestant denominations do not recognize the Religious Right's "absolute as standard," fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, nor do they practice intolerance of other's religious beliefs or lifestyles. Father Mugavero's assertion that "there might be an affinity for Protestants to go to this group" is also not likely. RCAR (Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights), a coalition of laymen and clergy from 33 different religious groups, have condemned both the mission and tactics of groups like Project Life.

So what does Christians in Action want

with the Catholic Church? Having failed in their attempt to gain support from recognized Protestant Churches, they are turning to the Catholic Church to find disciples for their own political agenda. Don't be fooled, however, by self-proclamations that compare the political struggles of Christians in Action to those of the abolitionist movement of the 1800s or Dr. Martin Luther King's Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. This group is not interested in either your civil rights or mine!

Catholics and Protestants alike should raise an eyebrow when any political or religious group wraps themselves in the American Flag yet proclaims that bombing clinics and endangering women's lives are "justified" because their version of God's "higher laws" are above the laws of this country. Sounding more like World War II Germany, Christians in Action want to strip you of our personal and religious freedoms and subject you to their own brand of Christianity.

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