

Home follow-up vital to religious education

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Q: What do you think of religious education?

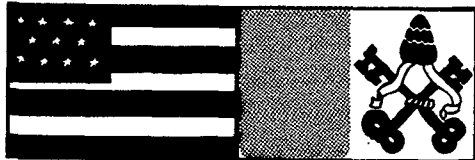
A: You mean for public-school children, which is usually referred to as CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine), Bible school, etc. This form of religious education tries to teach youngsters in public schools from the first grade through high school. Many do a fair job with the preparation for the first Communion and confirmation.

On the whole, however, with the burial of the catechism and since Vatican II experiments, religious education for public-school children has been a disaster.

Q: Oh, aren't you harsh? Hundreds of devoted CCD teachers are dedicated to the work of leading the little ones to Jesus?

A: The problem is not the teachers, it's the system. If you want a child to know arithmetic or spelling and you send your child to a school where he would receive 35 minutes of instruction once a week for 22 weeks of the year, what do you think would be accomplished?

The fact is that our CCD classes meet



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

once a week for 35 minutes for 22 weeks of the year. That adds up to approximately 13 hours throughout the whole year. How much can be accomplished?

Q: Then do you consider CCD a waste of time?

A: If a child gets no follow-up from the home, what do you think is accomplished? Every good CCD teacher will agree that any successful religion class has to have concerned input from the home — from fathers, mothers, grandparents, godparents and such.

For example, one of my earliest memories was when I was a little boy, around 7- or 8-years-old. I was standing in front of my seated father, reciting my prayers and my catechism. I went to the parish school

at Holy Family in Auburn. In addition to teaching the elementary academic and religion courses, the Sisters of Mercy expected us to receive preparation at home as well.

Not long ago, I asked 10 boys, ranging from sixth- to ninth-grade: "What prayers do you know?" I was dismayed when eight of the 10 said they *only* knew the Our Father and Hail Mary. Another boy said he knew those two prayers plus the first part of the Act of Contrition. The other lad said he knew the two prayers, plus the Glory Be to the Father and all of the Act of Contrition.

Not one of the 10 knew how to say the rosary. I gave each boy a copy of the pamphlet, *Treasury of Prayers*, with the hope that their parents and grandparents would assume the responsibility, not only of memorizing them, but using them in daily prayers. I wonder how many youngsters say morning and night prayers.

At a recent funeral, I met a family with four boys from Rushville, which is located near Canandaigua. After questioning the oldest boy — who was 15-years-old — I discovered that he knew all the traditional prayers and how to say the rosary.

"How is it you know your prayers so well?" I asked. "I talked with 10 boys about your age, and they knew only the Our Father and Hail Mary."

"My mother makes sure that we know and say them," he replied.

Q: Then you don't blame the CCD teachers?

A: They have my respect and appreciation. But I am sure that they agree with my contention that a concerned home is vital to effective catechesis.

I know of an Anglican group in England, which for years has studied the condition of religion in Russia. The group discovered that millions of Russians and Ukrainians are believers in Jesus Christ and the Gospels because of grandmothers.

Members observed that because of the Soviet system, mothers had to go out to work. Consequently, children were cared for by their grandmothers, who trained many of them in religious rituals and practices, such as the sign of the cross as well as prayers and teachings of the Bible.

Our parents and grandparents need not be theologians, but they do need to be the first guides and influences for our CCD children.

In face of danger, Paul trusts in God's plan for his life

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

"Hurry, get this prisoner out of here before the crowd tears him apart," the Roman commanding officer told the soldiers. "We'll deal with him back at the stockade."

The soldiers quickly moved into position and formed a barricade around me as the angry mob surged forward. The crowd was determined to kill me after my last statement to them about Jesus Christ.

It was discouraging to think that my own people, the Jews, wanted me dead. They regarded me with utter contempt because I told them that God had sent me to witness not to them, but to the Gentiles, because they had refused to believe.

"He must be some sort of terrorist," I heard one of the soldiers remark as we walked. "Why else would the crowd be so worked up?"

"State your full name," the commanding officer inquired as soon as we were safely locked behind the doors of the Roman prison.

"Paul of Tarsus," I replied.

"And what do you have to say for yourself?" he asked looking directly at me.

"I have committed no crime. All I have done is tell my people about Jesus Christ," I said.

The commanding officer didn't answer me but instead motioned to two of the soldiers who stood nearby. "We have ways of finding out the truth. Confessions usually flow freely after the sting of a whipping," he said.

What I said next halted their plans for me abruptly. "Are you prepared to whip a

Roman citizen?" I asked knowing that it was against the law to do so before a proper trial led to a guilty verdict.

The commanding officer looked surprised. "You are a Roman citizen?"

When I nodded, he continued, "Then we shall do nothing until I have spoken to the authorities. Make the prisoner comfortable," he said, turning again to the two soldiers.

Other than being restricted to cramped quarters, I spent a couple of days in relative peace. However, the Jewish Council was determined to bring me up on charges that I had spoken against God's laws.

I continued to trust in God's promise to me even when my troubles increased the next day.

What was I to do now? All during my confinement I kept seeking God's answer to my dilemma. And finally, the second night, I clearly heard his voice speaking to me in the quiet and darkness of my cell:



THE BIBLE CORNER

"Don't worry, Paul. Just as you have told the people in Jerusalem about me, you will be going to Rome to be my witness there."

"Uncle Paul, I have heard about a plot to take your life," my nephew reported when he came to visit me. "A group of Jews have taken up a fast and have vowed not to eat until you are dead. The Jewish Council is going to ask the commanding officer to send you to them for more questioning. En route, these Jews plan to ambush you."

"You must go now and tell this same

story to the commanding officer," I told my nephew calmly. After he had gone, I kept thinking about the Lord's words last night to me. I wondered how his plan for me would be accomplished and tried not to lose heart.

Later that same day, I was sleeping when one of the soldiers came and shook me awake. "You're going on a little trip," he said. "It's not safe for you here anymore."

We left Jerusalem under cover of darkness. The commanding officer sent more than 200 soldiers to protect me as we traveled the 60 miles to the Roman headquarters in Caesarea. He also sent a letter to Governor Felix who would decide the case that the Jews had brought against me.

I was no longer worried or discouraged. Caesarea was one step closer in my journey to Rome, where the Lord's promise to me would be fulfilled.

Scripture reference: Acts, Chapters 22:24-23.

Meditation: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1).

College to offer own nursing degree program this fall

After serving for 13 years as a branch site for the program, St. John Fisher College will take over the nursing studies curriculum of Alfred University this fall.

The two schools will operate the 49-year-old program jointly for one year, with graduates receiving an Alfred degree. After August, 1992, Fisher will operate the nursing program independently.

Classes will continue to take place at Fisher, as they have been since a cooperative agreement was signed with Alfred in 1977. In addition, the program will continue to carry full accreditation by the State Edu-

cation Department and National League of Nursing.

When the program switches ownership from Alfred to Fisher, tuition will cost about \$4,600 less. In addition, students will need fewer credits to earn a bachelor's degree in nursing (120 instead of 130).

In addition to a four-year undergraduate program leading to a bachelor of science in nursing, Fisher will offer a master of science in nursing administration for those interested in managerial advancement in the nursing profession. Fisher will also continue to offer courses for registered nurses seeking a baccalaureate degree.

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