

Many views to study in school decision

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

At this writing we are very near a decision about how best to provide for the Catholic-school education of the children who reside in the Northeast Quadrant of Monroe County. That decision will come after a long period of study and consultation involving people on the local, regional and diocesan levels.

If the pre-announcement publicity and controversy are valid indicators, some people will experience considerable upset at any decision that consolidates our Catholic-school ministry into fewer buildings in that quadrant.

The people who have argued for preserving the status quo offer several supporting arguments. Among them are: 1) the fact that for some families using the schools, this will be the second significant change in a relatively short time; 2) the contention that we have not put sufficient funds or effort into marketing Catholic schools; 3) the alleged presence of hundreds of people who are ready and able to turn the situation around, if they are given a chance; 4) the assertion that we should hold no other priority as highly as we hold Catholic schools; 5) a belief that reorganization efforts of this kind send the wrong kind of signal because they indicate uncertainty and instability; 6) the claim that some pastors and parish committees in the quadrant have not been sufficiently committed to Catholic school education; and 7) the charge that I haven't been strongly enough committed to Catholic Schools either.



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I think these seven points are a fair representation of the main lines of argumentation that have been offered in support of no change at the present time. Because these positions were offered in the course of the process established to plan for the future, they have received careful and respectful attention every step of the way. And even to the 11th hour we have been willing to consider any new argumentation that has a bearing on the decision to be made.

Whatever the exact shape of the final recommendation I shall receive later this week, I will bring certain questions to it as I make my final review and decision. Among those questions will be: 1) Does the recommendation ensure the availability of high-quality Catholic-school education for the children of the quadrant? 2) Does it deal re-

sponsibly with the financial deficit we now experience in the quadrant? 3) Does it make the best possible use of available physical facilities and instructional resources? 4) Is the commitment of finances and energy necessary to make the plan work kept in proportion to other parish needs? 5) Are we considering carefully the impact our decisions will have on the poor? 6) Have we made as full an effort as we possibly can to consider all the input we have received in the context of this process?

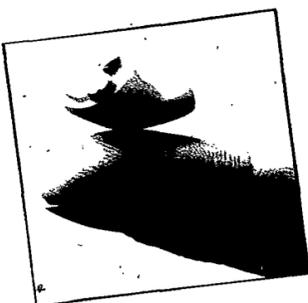
I am grateful to all the people of the quadrant for their participation in this venture. It is without question a difficult and sensitive one. It touches revered institutions in our communities, and it touches our children. We all want to do what is very best for both, so our effort is to make such decisions only after a careful collection and analysis of data pertinent to the question at hand. And then the question at hand must be judged within the context of needs, resources and possibilities of our wider community.

I write these words not in an argumentative spirit, but in an effort to assure all interested parties that we are considering the matter at hand very carefully and that we have reviewed respectfully all of the input we have received.

At this writing I believe I can say with some certainty that after we reach a decision, Catholic-school education will be available to all Northeast Quadrant families desiring it. My sincere hope is that once the decision is made we can come together and do our best to make the plan work.

Peace to all.

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