

The Parish School

(By JOSEPH S. HOGAN, S.J., in America.)

We have in the United States over 5000 parish schools. It is estimated that they represent an outlay of 55,000,000 dollars a year. There are about 42,000 teachers, and about 1,750,000 children in these schools. It has been often asked by our enemies, "Are these schools American?" "Do they give as good a training as the public schools?" These questions may not deserve an answer but they can be answered very easily. But they will not occupy us here. Before we talk about the Americanism of these schools, before we talk about what they teach, we need to answer the fundamental question, Why do we build these schools at all? With the public-school system at our own doors, why go to the expense and sacrifice of maintaining our own system? If the public school is good enough for the Catholic child, then we are the most foolish people on earth. We are throwing money away. One question alone therefore I propose to answer: "Why do we build parish schools?"

True Child-Culture

Let us begin by saying what we do not build them for. We do not build them to gain a monopoly in elementary education. We do not build them to create sectarian jealousy or to substitute the Pope for the President. For one reason alone do we build them: Our children belong to Jesus Christ and we want to train them and keep them in the faith and love of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our foundation stone and on none other do we build. When the Catholic child is taken to the Baptismal font and the sacred waters are poured upon him, that child becomes a child of God. He is sealed with the seal of the Kingdom of Heaven; sanctifying grace is poured into that soul and the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are infused into it. Consequently that child is something sacred. If it were to die, at once it would see the face of God. Now as the child grows we must see to it that faith, hope, and charity are increased in that young soul. These are precious gifts of God and we cannot afford to throw them away. We must take the mind, the heart, and the will of the child and so train them that his faith becomes a lively faith, his hope a strong hope, his charity a burning flame of love. To do this we need the proper atmosphere.

Nature itself teaches us some very practical lessons here. Flowers that need a warm, sunny climate will never bloom and blossom in a region of ice and snow. You find plants that grow only in southern climes, others that flourish only in the cold north. Even the animals that must live in the colder regions are provided by nature with fur to protect them against the rigors of their home. Following this law of nature, if you wish to increase the faith, hope, and charity in a child's soul, you must put him in the proper atmosphere. But these gifts are supernatural, they are gifts of God, and to increase them you must use supernatural means. You cannot perform a delicate operation with a sword, however jewelled its hilt may be; you cannot chisel the beautiful features of a statue with a crowbar. So with these gifts in the soul of a child. You cannot increase his supernatural gift of faith by telling him how many rivers there are in the United States; you cannot increase his supernatural gift of hope by teaching him the number of bones in the human body; you cannot increase his supernatural charity by teaching him clay-modelling.

Getting the Right Start

If you want to increase and cherish these virtues in the soul you must use supernatural means. You must teach the child to know God, and His Son, Jesus Christ. You must teach him to pray; to lift his mind and his heart to God; you must teach him the power and the beauty and the use of the Sacraments; you must teach him the story of Bethlehem and Nazareth and Calvary; you must tell him of the Mother of God, of heaven, hell, and purgatory. In other words, you must teach him his faith and how to preserve it.

But you will not find this in the public school. I am not criticising. I am stating facts. The public school does not teach these things. It makes no profession of teaching them. The Catholic school does teach them, and if you send a Catholic child to a school where these

truths are not taught, you are taking from the most tender years of life a beauty, a power, and a joy that can never be replaced. By Baptism that child has received a capacity for drinking in the beautiful truths of God, and if you put him in an atmosphere of indifference he will grow up in indifference, perhaps cynical and hardened in heart to the things of God. We are in duty bound to give the child a right start on his journey home, and we know his home is heaven.

In a story written some years ago there is a scene where a little lost child meets a young man, and placing her hand in his, she says simply, "Please, sir, take me home." These little children in Baptism have the longing for their eternal home implanted in their hearts, and out of the depths of those same young hearts they cry: "Take me home." Lead my steps aright to the great home, where many mansions are. Take my thoughts to their rightful home; lift them up, guide them, feed them on all that is pure and beautiful and true. Take my imagination home, take it to the realms where nothing may stain its purity, mar its beauty, or sully its innocence. Take my heart home, that its every beat may throb in unison with the great Heart of Him who loves the hearts of children. That is the heart-cry of the Catholic child. Will any Catholic father or mother say that cry is answered in the public schools

Can We Take a Chance?

We are not tampering with the child's life. We are not making an experiment. We have a definite plan, built on a rock-bottom foundation: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven." You may take a chance on the child's faith; you may put the things of this world first, and let the child grow up on a weak foundation. But Catholic fathers and mothers should think long and hard before they do this. Let them remember that the child is flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone; that they have held that child over the Baptismal font. God's seal is on him, he is marked for the Kingdom of Heaven. For the poor passing things of this life, will they risk his losing sight of that kingdom? Remember who it was that said, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" Remember the awful story of Judas. He sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver, and he came back in despair and flinging the silver down on the marble floor of the temple, cried out, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood," and he then went out and hanged himself with a halter. Think long and hard, Catholic fathers and mothers. If your child has lost God's friendship because for the sake of a little worldly gain in social advantage you deprive him of the helps he needed, you may come back in the day of your sorrow, when the world has lost its charm and cry out, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood."



The Redemptorist Fathers of Australasia

The following appointments among the Redemptorist Fathers have been announced (says the *Catholic Press*).

Very Rev. Father Gleeson, C.S.S.R., has been re-appointed Vice-Provincial for Australia and New Zealand; Very Rev. Father M. Hannigan, C.S.S.R., becomes Rector of St. Alphonsus', Waratah; Very Rev. Father T. Brown, C.S.S.R., Rector of St. Mary's, Ballarat; Very Rev. Father P. Murray, C.S.S.R., Rector of Monastery, Perth; Very Rev. Father P. Whelan, C.S.S.R., Rector of St. Gerard's, Wellington, New Zealand; Very Rev. Father A. MacMullan, C.S.S.R., Rector of St. Clement's College, Galong, and Director of the Juvenate; Very Rev. Father M. Collins, C.S.S.R., Superior of St. Joseph's, Oxford Park, Brisbane; Very Rev. Father W. Bannon, Master of Novices, Ballarat; Rev. Father Cornelius Treacey, C.S.S.R., is transferred from Perth to Waratah; Rev. Father J. Murray, C.S.S.R., from Perth to Galong; Rev. Father W. Cagney, C.S.S.R., from Perth to Brisbane; Rev. Father C. MacDermott, C.S.S.R., from Ballarat to Waratah; Rev. Father A. Kelly, C.S.S.R., from Ballarat to Waratah; Rev. Father Mitchell, C.S.S.R., from Ballarat to Wellington; Rev. Father T. Roche, C.S.S.R., from Galong to Perth; Rev. Father W. O'Sullivan, C.S.S.R., from Waratah to Perth; Rev. Father D. Mangan, C.S.S.R., from Wellington to Ballarat.