

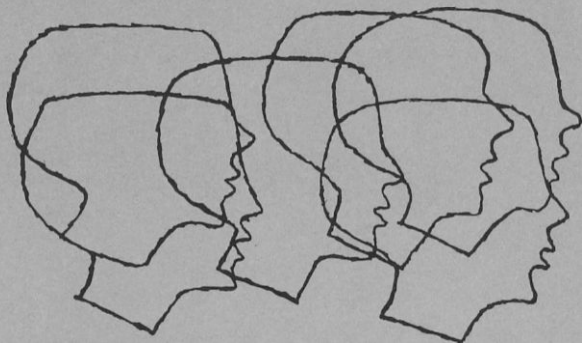
your

# PARISH SCHOOL

Chiadini, J.J.  
Your parish school  
ADL 6302

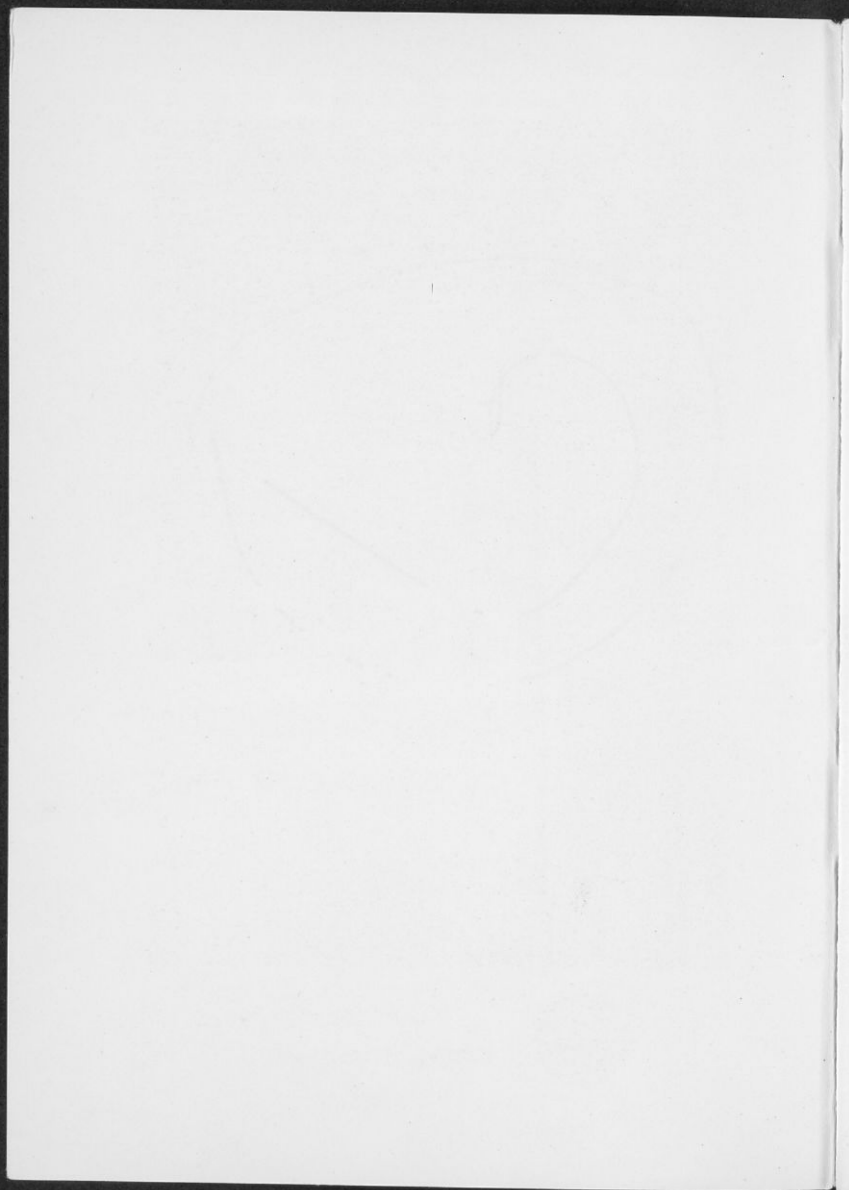


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A HANDBOOK  
FOR PARENTS

Rev. J. J. Chiadini  
Mr. Rhea Felknor



your

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## FORWARD

As a pastor, I am impressed by the "little things" parents can do to help their children get along in school. Taken singly, these ideas and practices may appear unimportant; but as a consistent attitude and pattern of action, they prevent confusion in your child's mind and contribute greatly to the education you want him to have.

Many of us still look at the parish school through the eyes of a child—our own eyes, when we were 20 or 30 or 40 years younger. Things have changed since we went to school. This booklet tells about some of the changes, and how they affect your child.

I am not an expert on parochial education. As a pastor, however, I have seen certain problems come up again and again—problems which only parents can solve. I hope this booklet will be of some help in solving them.

REV. JASPER J. CHIODINI

NIHIL OBSTAT—John L. Reedy, C.S.C.  
Censor Deputatus

IMPRIMATUR—✠ Most Rev. Leo A. Pursley, D.D.  
Bishop of Fort Wayne

August 4, 1959

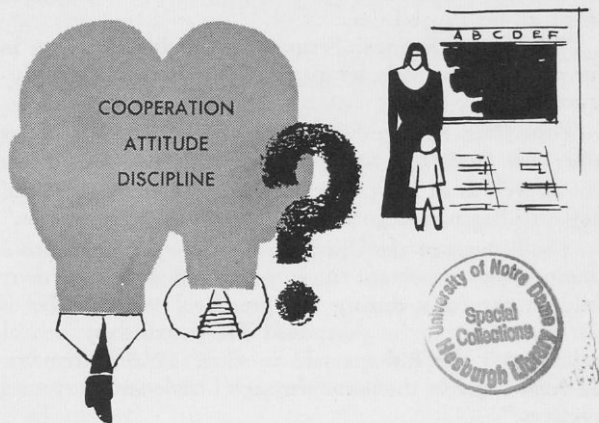
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## ATTITUDE OF PARENTS

Are your children missing some of the best things a Catholic education can offer?

Each year thousands of our youngsters fail to get full value from the time they spend in school. Naturally I'm concerned, for I know that you, as parents of school-age youngsters, are in a position to do something about it.

School buildings can be modern and up-to-date, teachers can be wonderful, your child can be a genius—and still, at the end of the twelfth grade he may have only patches of the knowledge which should have come from his investment of time—and your investment of concern and money. On the other hand, a child can be

below average in intelligence, his teachers may be mediocre, his school building old and dilapidated—and he can end up with a superior education which makes good use of all his capabilities.

Why the difference? Frequently the difference lies in the preparation made by parents for their child's education.

Pope Pius XII once told a group of parents, "It is your task from the cradle to begin their education in soul as well as in body. For if you do not educate them, they will begin, for good or ill, to educate themselves."

The Bishops of the United States have repeatedly told parents how important it is for them to mold their children carefully during the preschool years. "This is not something to be postponed for nurture by school authorities," the Bishops said in their 1950 statement. "It must begin in the home through simple and prayerful practices."

Yet some parents continue to look on the parish schools as an all-day baby-sitting service. Once Johnny leaves the house in the morning, it is the school's job to take care of him. These parents are glad to wash their hands of all further responsibility.

Every teacher has seen by experience how a child suffers when his parents refuse to live up to their obligations.

The parish school is really an extension of the education that began the day the infant was brought home from the hospital. This is an education in living—learning how to know and love and serve God, to honor his father and mother, to live with his fellows. Long before a child reaches the age of five, his parents have given him many habits. They've taught him to speak well or badly; they've taught him to see or ignore the beauties of nature; they've taught him to love good music—or bad.

So, when he enters the first grade at 8:15 on a September morning, your child isn't beginning his education—he's merely continuing it, and he still needs your help.

In fact, you have a still more difficult job after school begins: then you must preserve the union of authority that makes the teacher in the classroom an extension of yourself. You must be concerned about this because you have the primary responsibility for your child's education.

Experienced teachers say that it's almost impossible to train a child in school—unless his parents maintain a united authority, both between themselves and with the school.

Unless this happens, the child is certain to become confused. Eventually he will learn to play one person against the other, making chaos out of what should be his education.

This union of authority won't occur accidentally. Parents, school authorities and teachers must work hard to make it exist. That is why your attitude toward school is important. Some people never understand the role of the school simply because they never take time to think about the school's purpose.

What *is* the purpose of a school? Why does it exist? What are the needs of your child? Who is responsible for his education? What should he learn? How can his parents teach him? Who else can teach him? How much responsibility should be given to that other teacher? What place does discipline have in education? What should be done when there seems to be a conflict in authority?

These are questions you have to answer for yourself if your child is to get the most from his education. Unfortunately, many parents don't face these problems; as a result, they sometimes make serious mistakes which do harm to the education of their children.

It's easy to forget that youngsters are learning *all the time*. As Pius XII pointed out, if we don't keep in mind the things we *want* them to learn, they will pick up many things we do *not want* them to know.

What sort of an attitude toward teachers—toward knowledge in general—do you suppose nine-year-old Betty G. got from her father when he asked, "Well, Betty, what sort of nonsense did they teach you today?"

I know Betty's father. He is a college graduate with a gruff sense of humor—a man who is convinced that our teaching sisters do little more than fill their students with fantastic tales about saints. But nine-year-old Betty isn't quite sure what her Daddy means—after all, she can't see all reservations in her father's mind. She knows, however, that her Daddy is pretty skeptical about her teacher. She knows that he doesn't take seriously the things she is being taught in school.

John S. is an attorney with five children. His legal mind is suspicious of statements that can't be backed by evidence. It isn't surprising that he wants his children to develop a passion for accuracy. But when seven-year-old John, Jr., came home with a badly-garbled version of an episode in a saint's life, John's reaction was quick:

"Son, I don't want you to believe all that junk your teacher tells you."

Both of these fathers forgot they were dealing with youngsters. Betty, at nine, can't detect irony in humor like an older person can; seven-year-old John cannot collect and present evidence like a lawyer in a court room.

Remember, when you send your children to school, you are sending them to specialists—specialists in childhood education. Their teachers are people who are de-

voting their lives to finding the best ways to teach and guide young people.

The patient who goes to the doctor for a prescription and then refuses to have it filled is wasting his time and money. In the same way, the parent who sends his child to school for an education and then undermines the teacher's efforts is wasting his money—and squandering the God-given possibilities for growth in his child.

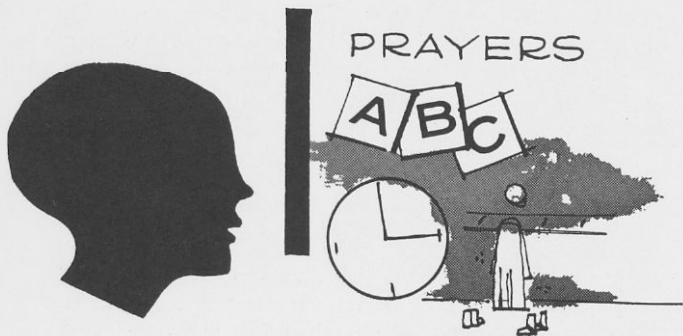
Thus, your thinking about school is important. Your parish school exists to help you teach your youngster what he should know, and to fulfill the Church's obligation toward her members.

Remember that even preschool children are learning all the time. Don't underestimate the intelligence of your youngster—he can spot immediately your reaction when you register doubt about something he learned in school.

Above all, keep your sense of humor! Remember that the teacher in the classroom represents you. It is your teaching authority she is serving. It's your own authority over your child you will destroy if you systematically weaken a child's respect for his teachers.

## BEFORE YOUR CHILD STARTS TO SCHOOL

Your child starts to learn the day he is born. Before his first day in school he absorbs thousands of facts, scores of habits. Because you love him, you will see that he learns the facts and habits he will need for a successful school career. As his first teacher, you must make a realistic evaluation of your youngster's intelligence. Let's discuss each of these three things—facts, habits, and intelligence.



### Things Your Child Should Know

He should know certain prayers—for his own religious development, and for the preservation of school time for things not so readily learned at home. The *Hail Mary*, the *Our Father*, the prayer *Angel of God*, and the prayers *Before and After Meals*— at least these should be known by your child before he starts school. (page 40)

He also ought to know how to make the Sign of the Cross. (I am assuming he has been told about God and Jesus.) Our first grade teacher tells me many youngsters come to school without the slightest knowledge of the Holy Family, the model for all families. Family life is what the child knows best. He should be taught about the family in which Jesus was the little boy.

The *alphabet*, *how to count*, and *how to tell time* can be taught easily by the parents before the child enters school.

Some mothers feel that the four or five-year-old child is too young to start learning these things. Experience is against this opinion. Did you ever notice how many children below the age of three can recite whole advertising jingles they have heard on television? It is just as easy to learn a simple prayer as it is to memorize the rhyming assets of a filter-tip cigarette.

## Personal Habits Are Important

Every year some children enter school without having received proper toilet training. This is cruelly embarrassing for them. The little ones should know how to tie their shoes and how to dress themselves for outdoors. They may detest overshoes and gloves, but they can be taught to wear them, just as they can be taught to eat vegetables and meat.

## Study Habits Start Before School

The school can teach a child his prayers and how to tie his shoes if he doesn't learn at home. But if the home hasn't taught him a sense of responsibility and the meaning of discipline, his school work is certain to suffer—all his school work, for eight or twelve years.

*Quiet* is an important study habit that should be learned at home. I know it's difficult to quiet a houseful of small children, but periods of quiet are necessary—not only for mother to maintain her sanity, but for the youngsters to develop the sense of calmness and the habit of reflection which are necessary for any serious effort at study and homework.

The greatest enemy of quiet in most homes is the television set. It is a wonderful gadget, but you can't expect children—particularly preschool children—to know when they've had enough. Make sure your set is turned off for lengthy periods during the day. A child

from a home in which the television set is constantly blaring can't sit down for even five minutes to think for himself. We notice among the children entering first grade an increased nervousness which characterizes the tiny television addict. The child who watches television all day has picked up two habits long before he comes to school—the habit of half-listening when someone speaks to him, and the habit of almost uncontrollable restlessness in any situation of silence—such as the classroom or the Church.

You must realize that your four, five and six-year-old sons and daughters are not old enough to acquire a taste for quiet unless you help them. Leave it to the youngsters, and they'll have the TV or the record-player running from morning till night. This is bound to leave some mark on their personalities.

### **Obedience Must Come From Home**

Teachers can't do their jobs properly if they have to spend most of their time acting as policemen. Obedience to direction is something a child should learn years before he starts school. As his parents, you will, of course, supervise the development of this habit as your youngster grows older and faces new problems.

Obedience cannot be learned well at school if it has not been first learned at home. It gives a security every child craves—no one is more frustrated than the child who has his own way constantly.

### **Responsibility Can Be Taught**

School difficulties encountered by older children often go back to the parents' failure in developing this important trait. You give your child a sense of responsibility when you give him a job to do and see that he does it. I don't think it makes much difference *what* the job is—helping mother wash the dishes, hang his clothes



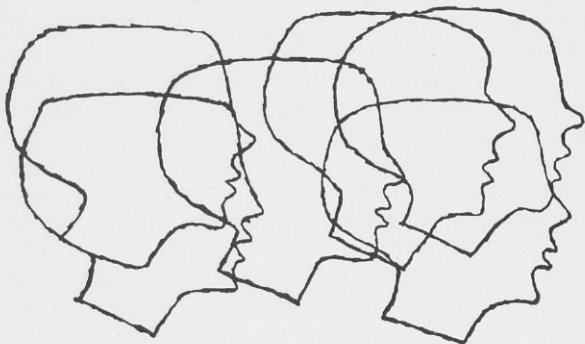
on the proper hook—as long as he understands that he has a continuing responsibility to do it. The habit is taught over weeks and months, as the child learns that performance is expected, and that shirking will not be tolerated.

Teach your child that he has an obligation to perform certain tasks, that he will be held responsible for them, and you will be giving him an essential study habit that will benefit him throughout his school career and for the rest of his life. No basic characteristic is more lacking in today's youngsters than this sense of responsibility. Because they haven't been taught at home that they are responsible for a given piece of work, they see no particular urgency about school work. Of course, this training is hard on the parents who see their children as young and tender and lovable. It's hard to enforce demands on them, but the teachers can't possibly serve your child properly unless you prepare the child to receive what the school has to offer.

### Open-mindedness Is Contagious

Your child will pick up many of your prejudices unless you are careful. You may remark to a friend, "Janie's having trouble with her arithmetic again, but I can't say that I blame her. Figures were always hard for me, too." And Janie, who has heard you, will feel perfectly justified with her poor performance in arithmetic.

Your child is a completely different person, endowed with different gifts. Yet he'll inherit some of your mental roadblocks if you allow yourself to talk him into it.



## HOW MUCH TO EXPECT

You're an unusual parent if you don't believe, deep down inside, that your child is above average.

Yet your own experience has taught you that most people are "about average." The odds are that your youngster—any youngster—is about average, too. You have to discount those remarks his grandparents have been making for the last four or five years about how brilliant their grandchild is.

You have to take an honest look at your child's capabilities before he starts school so you can encourage him in what he does in school, instead of demanding things obviously beyond him.

Suppose, when report cards come out, the little girl down the street gets a higher mark than your son? Suppose teacher decides to move your daughter from the

middle to the slowest section of her primary grade? How will you react? This is why it is so important to have a fair idea of your child's capabilities. Almost certainly, you will encounter frustration and your child will experience needless unhappiness if you overestimate his abilities.

You can gain a general idea of the level of a child's intelligence by the time he is about five. How quickly does he understand instructions? When you ask him to put something on the top shelf, does he put it there? How good is he at coordinated movements, such as tying his shoes or brushing his teeth? How well does he dress himself?

Sometimes a child of only average intelligence will show a remarkable ability to memorize. His parents, impressed by his achievements, may be disappointed when he brings home a report card with average marks. They must remember that a good memory doesn't always signify an ability to understand easily and completely.

Occasionally you find a child of limited intelligence who has collected an amazing amount of factual knowledge. His parents should recognize the difference between memory and understanding.

The point I'm trying to make is that exceptional intelligence is exceptional, unusual, out-of-the-ordinary. But most parents of primary grade children think that their child has exceptional intelligence. This gap between reality and wishful thinking can have serious consequences.

It may help you to remember that a high intelligence quotient has no particular relation to success in any field. A successful life results from a combination of many character traits—and the way they are developed. Intelligence is only one of these. You can find many men and women who won great sanctity and great achievements, without possessing genius.

Your child, regardless of his intelligence, will get much more from school if you encourage him in whatever he does, and refrain from demanding things obviously beyond him. If his teacher, trained to observe mental traits in youngsters his age, finds that he belongs to the slowest section of his grade, rejoice with him that he has the opportunity to develop his capacities. Any person—child or adult—is happier in a situation where he can accomplish something, than in an atmosphere where he is constantly on the defensive from trailing behind everyone else. That is why so many parish schools have things like ungraded primaries, or different sections for one grade. Placement in a slower section isn't a penalty; it's an attempt to give your child the more specialized training his particular talents need. You might also remember that frequently the slower child retains much more than his quicker classmates.

### **Don't Put Too Much Emphasis on Grades**

It's simply not warranted. I remember a mother who stopped one of our teachers after a meeting and said, "Now Ellen isn't going to get another 'L' (for Low) on her report card, is she?" Her tone clearly indicated that if the teacher were considering such a mark, she had better reconsider it.

Yet why shouldn't Ellen get an "L" if her work merits it? Why is she in the arithmetic class—to learn arithmetic, or to get marks on her report card that will please her parents?

"I do hope Billy can get some higher marks by the end of the year," another mother commented. "Both of his brothers got higher marks, and it just won't do for him to keep coming home with those low grades."

How much more constructive was the attitude of this mother, who said: "Anne got a 'Low' mark in spelling on her report card"; and then asked the teacher, "Where do you think I can help her?"

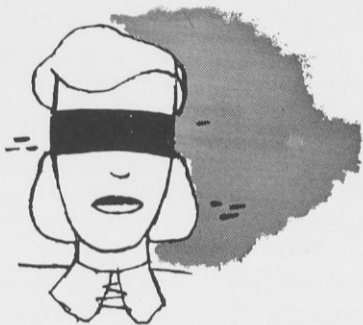
## The Exceptional Child

I have been urging a realistic evaluation of your child's capabilities. It may be that your son or daughter is truly exceptional in being able to accomplish far more than the other children in the class. Obviously, such a child needs a special kind of education, a special challenge. His parents should get the best advice available from professional educators before deciding on the educational program the child will pursue.

## Preschool Preparation

This preparation is most important for your child. It includes learning such things as the *Hail Mary* and the alphabet. It covers personal habits, like proper toilet training. And it embraces other traits that will develop later into sound study habits—things like training in discipline, knowing the value of quiet, and development of a sense of responsibility.

The discipline taught young children extends to their parents, too, as they force themselves to look realistically at their youngsters' abilities. The wise mother and father observe their child during his preschool years and see—with rare exceptions—that while he is like no other child on earth to them, he is about normal in intelligence. So, after school starts, they are prepared to steel themselves against a natural inclination to urge their child to "beat" the grades of someone else. They are more interested in helping their youngster to develop his own capabilities to the highest degree.



## THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

You could hear the sobs several feet away from the classroom.

Inside, frightened boys and girls were eyeing the little girl who was crying.

"I wanna go home," she cried, between sobs.

Outside in the corridor the teacher was begging a mother to leave.

"But she's crying so hard," the mother said, with tears in her eyes. "Can't I stay out here? I won't bother you . . ."

Unfortunately, situations like this still occur. The first day of school, which can be the happiest day in a young child's life, is often the saddest.

There is a way to make the first day happy for your youngster. It involves a sacrifice on the mother's part, but a number of mothers who have tried it both ways tell me they think it is worth it.

Let's look at it from the child's viewpoint. He is making a big change in his life when he leaves home

for the first day of school. But as a six-year-old, he won't be thinking about this big change in his life as he moves out of the shelter of home—unless you make him think of it.

Mothers who want their youngsters to begin school smoothly, without tears and tantrums, deal with the big day in a matter-of-fact way.

"I think it's best not even to take him to school," a young mother of four told me. "If there's an older child in the neighborhood going to the same school, it's just as well to have your youngster join him."

Sounds cold and indifferent, doesn't it? But it does work well. The more experienced mothers are pretty well agreed that you should not take the child any farther than the schoolyard. Let him find the front door for himself. Above all, don't enter the building, and don't take him to the classroom.

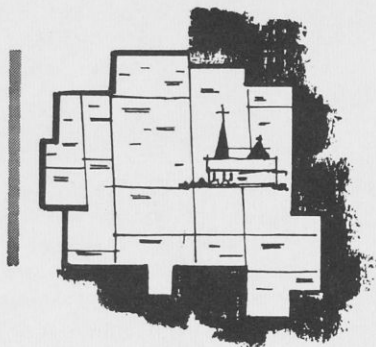
It's natural for most mothers, putting their first or only child into school for the first time, to want to cry. If you think you will react this way, see if you can't have someone else in the neighborhood drop by and pick up your daughter or son.

Hold the tears back, if you possibly can, until he's out of sight. The effort will pay off when you see your youngster come home from school that first day, bubbling with eagerness to tell you what he learned.

Anyone familiar with teaching has observed how much more a teacher can do for a group of new children by herself than when parents are present. The teacher's technique is simple. She gets the children distracted by a game, a story, or some other activity, until all are having such an interesting time they haven't time to notice that they are alone in school for the first time in their lives!

By the time they do notice, the ice is broken.

# CANON LAW



## ORGANIZATION OF THE PARISH SCHOOL

Did you ever hear a parent complaining that he couldn't send his children to the parochial school he chose—simply because he lived in another parish? It's a fairly common complaint. Ordinarily this can't be done, for the same reason that a child living in St. Paul can't cross the Mississippi to attend public school in Minneapolis, or for the same reason that a resident of Missouri can't pay Illinois state taxes in preference to Missouri taxes just because he likes the Illinois taxes better.

### Parish Boundaries

Each parish has a definite geographic area set up according to Canon Law. If you have your eye on a particular parish school, the easiest way for your children to attend it is for you to move into the parish. Don't trust a real estate agent to know exact parish boundaries. Call the rectory and ask the pastor.

### Parish School Management

This is the pastor's responsibility. He invites a specific religious community to staff the school, and he has to find a way to pay all the bills.



## Teaching Sisters

The religious community of sisters decides which individual sisters will teach in a given school, and which sister will be principal or superior. Usually the selection is made by the Mother Provincial.

## Lay Teachers

According to a recent study, lay teachers now form from 25 to 40 per cent of the teaching staff in most parish schools. In our own suburban parish, nine of 12 teachers are laywomen. I consider it my responsibility to help our school principal search for qualified lay teachers.

When lay teachers were still something of a rarity, parents sometimes complained, as though their children were being neglected when assigned to a lay teacher's class. Now such objections are seldom heard. Experience has shown how dedicated these laymen and women are. Our teaching sisters, too, are grateful for the efforts of these lay people—not only because they relieve what had become an impossible burden for the sisters, but also because they make their own unique contribution to parochial education. "The children will accept some truths more readily from a lay person than from a religious," one sister explained, "precisely because the lay people are not living in a convent." You can count on it—lay teachers are now a permanent part of the parochial school system.

## The School Day

In most parish schools the day starts around 8:00 or 8:30 a.m. and ends around 3:00 or 3:30 p.m.

## Bus Service

Some parishes in suburban areas have their own school buses; some use a bus service. Often the bus operation is a major cost in operating the school.

## Daily Mass

Pupil attendance at daily Mass varies from parish to parish. In our parish, for example, we have a daily Mass at 11:30 a.m. and, consequently, all of our students attend. There is no pressure to make the children receive Communion daily, or to make a confession. A priest is always in the confessional during the children's Mass for their benefit.

## School Buildings

In most dioceses today school buildings are planned and built with the aid of the Bishop of the diocese and his administrative staff. As a result, architectural planning and building techniques are possible that would not normally be available to the individual pastor, or even to the individual small public school board.

## Is Your School Overcrowded?

Because of the tremendous shifts in population since the war, and because of the increase in the birth rate, many new schools are already overcrowded. The teachers, your pastor and your Bishop are even more aware of these facts than the parents.

They would start plans on a large addition tomorrow if they had the money. In the meantime, they often have to wait until parishioners have made enough of a dent in existing parish debts to make an additional parish loan possible.

## Ungraded Primaries

These or other special "track" programs are features of many elementary schools today. These plans are designed to tailor courses to the needs of different children. Suppose your daughter is one who learns slowly at first, but later on blossoms rapidly. Under the ungraded primary program, she would move from level to level as she progressed, with no particular thought as to the "grade"

she was in until she had completed her first four years of school. By that time she would have mastered all of the courses a child would be taught in a conventional primary school. In the opinion of many educators, she is likely to have a better start on her school work than she would under the older "grade" system. You can be sure that the teachers examine all such systems thoroughly before adopting them.

### **Report Cards**

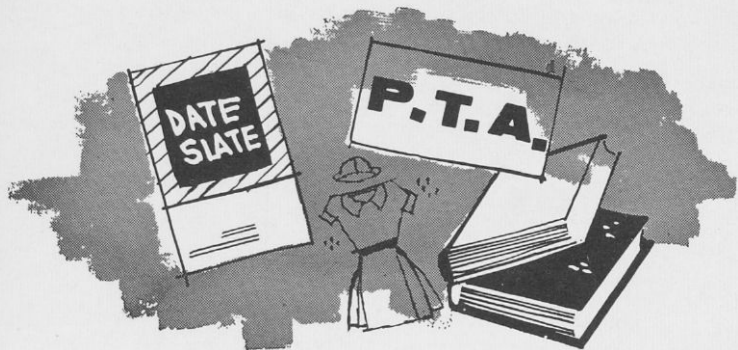
These will come four or six times a year. Many parish schools arrange for appointments with the parents so the teacher can visit with them privately and discuss pupil progress. In this way, the teacher gets to meet all of the parents at various times during the year.

### **How Do You Get in Touch With the Teacher?**

From time to time you will need to contact your child's teacher. How do you go about it? Just call the school and ask for her. You'll generally find it easier to get in touch with her after school hours. If she is in class when you call, leave your name and number, so she can call you back. Many pastors list the school telephone number in the parish bulletin. Otherwise, you'll find it in the telephone book. If you can't find it, ask at the parish rectory.

### **Summary**

Canon Law—not whim—prevents a pastor from accepting a pupil from another parish unless there are unusual circumstances. Organization of the school is the pastor's responsibility, but the school is actually administered by the Sister Superior. Most schools have about one lay teacher for every three or four nuns, and the lay teachers are doing an excellent job. When you want to get in touch with your child's teacher, just call the school and make an appointment to see her.



## SCHOOL CUSTOMS

### Holiday Policies

In parochial and public schools, holidays are not the same. Your children will be home some days when the public school pupils are still in class. (What may not be so obvious to you are the number of days *your* children are in school when the public school children are having a holiday. The number of days of required education for both public and parochial schools is determined by state law.)

The holidays that most often catch parents off guard are (1) the patron saint of the parish, and (2) the patron saint (or foundress) of the religious community teaching in school. These, of course, vary from school to school, but both are observed in most Catholic schools. (It is simple to obtain a list of the school holidays at the beginning of the year. If they aren't published in a bulletin, send a note to your child's teacher

requesting the information. Jot down the dates in the back of this booklet for future reference.)

The only other major holidays likely to be different in parochial and public schools are Holy Days and the days of teachers' conventions. We happen to have our teachers' convention in the fall, and the children get a two-day holiday then. The public schools observe theirs in the spring, and their pupils get a two-day holiday then, when our youngsters remain in class.

You'll find school holidays usually printed in advance in your parish Sunday bulletin, or your diocesan newspaper. Types of holidays are:

- (1) Legal holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, Washington's Birthday and Memorial Day. (Others, in some states—Columbus Day, Armistice Day, and Lincoln's Birthday.)
- (2) Holy Days of Obligation: All Saints Day (Nov. 1); Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8); Ascension Thursday (40 days after Easter).
- (3) The traditional Christmas vacation, usually extending from the Friday before Christmas till the Monday or Tuesday after New Year's Day.
- (4) Some brief pre-Easter vacation, beginning perhaps on Holy Thursday or Good Friday.
- (5) The days of the annual teachers' convention or institute.
- (6) The patronal feast of the parish.
- (7) The patronal feast of the sisters teaching in the school.

## School Uniforms

These are often suggested by parents, and become a school custom. They occasionally cause concern to a new family moving into the parish. There is usually a difference of opinion on this matter among parents, but many mothers prefer uniforms for both financial and

social reasons. They save money (only a few uniforms comprise the child's entire school wardrobe) and are "more democratic" since all children dress alike, regardless of background.

"The real reason I like uniforms, though," one mother confided to me, "is that they put an end to the 15-minute debates Janie and I used to have every morning over what she would wear."

Uniforms for boys? There's nothing against them, but I have never met a large group of women solidly for them. I think one explanation is that, on the elementary level, boys' clothing can be purchased more cheaply than uniforms, and boys are simpler to dress. With girls, it is the other way around, and the uniforms not only solve many problems; they also present a real savings to the parents.

### **Textbooks**

Some parishes furnish books without cost; others rent them, and still others ask pupils to buy them. Each plan has its advantages. If your parish rents books and you want to buy them, there is nothing to prevent you from writing to the publisher and ordering copies for yourself. If your parish sells books and you want to rent them, you may be able to find parents of some older children whose books are available. The school will take steps to see that books are provided in cases where families are too poor to provide them.

### **School Lunches**

Thanks to the federally-subsidized school lunch program, lunches can be provided at far below the cost of serving a hot meal almost anywhere else. Twenty-five cents a day—\$1.25 a week—is a typical charge for the hot lunch served in many parish schools. However, if you want your child to bring his lunch from home there is no social barrier against it. We have well-adjusted

children who do both. In some city schools, of course, pupils will be able to go home for lunch, but this is not true in most suburban or rural parishes.

## Parent-Teachers Associations

These groups exist in some schools, not in others. I have found the most successful associations are those aiming at the twofold task of increasing school income and increasing understanding of the school. These projects give the association an important work to do, and the PTA members should have a real sense of accomplishment when a particular goal is reached.

Occasionally one hears of a parent-teacher group which seems to feel its function is to give the teacher pointers on how to run the school. If you ever get into such a group, stop and ask yourself, "How would I feel if the teachers' organization told me how to run my home?"

In some organizations the school administrators do seek the opinion and advice of the parents on particular educational programs. But two points should be kept in mind: 1) Not everyone in the group will be satisfied with particular solutions. At one time or another a decision will go against your own opinion. Have enough understanding to realize that the school authorities are doing their best to arrive at the most practical decision for the group. 2) Remember that the school authorities are professional educators who have given much more thought to these problems than the average parent. Their training and experience should be regarded as highly as the professional knowledge of a doctor or a lawyer.

## Playground Supervision

This sometimes worries parents, because playground accidents are bound to occur. I think a parent should make sure there is an adult supervisor on the playground during recess periods, and trust the school to do the rest.

Few things do more to ruin a teacher's morale than parents who, by word or attitude, imply that a teacher isn't concerned about the welfare of her pupils.

Believe me, she is! But a playground could have dozens of supervisors, and growing children would still get hurt. Somebody is going to get pushed, someone is going to fall down, someone is going to come home with a skinned knee, a bloody nose, a sprained ankle.

If the mothers of your parish volunteer for playground duty—thus freeing teachers for classroom assignments—you probably know the importance of remaining at your post on the playground while the children are there. But you also know that you cannot prevent every mishap. The most you can do is exercise normal vigilance and be quick to take care of any emergency that does arise. In the case of serious difficulty, of course, you'll telephone for assistance.

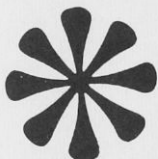
Sometimes parents feel that playground games will be too strenuous for their child. Remember that the physical condition of a child affects his ability to do school work. Reasonably energetic activity of some kind is necessary for the development of sound bodies which can support good minds.

No booklet could list all school customs; each school will have its own. These customs help form the school's tradition.

School holiday policies, the policy on uniforms, home and school associations, and the like, have been planned for the interests of everyone concerned—the children, their parents, the teachers. If you have a question about a custom in your school, make a point to ask someone about it—your child's teacher, the principal, your pastor.

Remember that these customs exist ultimately to help you give your child a better education—by helping to provide either better teachers, or a better environment in which to learn.





# COOPERATION

## DISCIPLINE

School discipline is a necessity if you want your child to learn. We saw that training in character traits must begin long before the child is old enough to enter first grade.

Since the teacher represents the parent in the classroom, there has to be a genuine unity of purpose and practice between you and the teacher. Otherwise, your child will be torn between two authorities. The resulting confusion will make it difficult, if not impossible, for him to learn.

No school, no teacher is perfect. But is any home, any parent? Sometimes parents make mistakes, and it is likely that at some time in your child's school career you will unwittingly do something at home that will undo some of the work the teacher has been accomplishing at school. How would you feel if the teacher came to see you and complained about it? How would you feel if she told you, in front of your child, how you were falling down on the job?

It would be hard to imagine a more damaging scene for an impressionable child. Yet this same sort of thing happens—in reverse—all too frequently today.

Take 11-year-old Elsie, for example. She's in the giggly stage, and has caused more than her share of commotion in school. The teacher punished her by having her stay after school. Elsie came to school next day with a note from her mother. The punishment was unfair, her mother wrote, because it was too severe.

Mary was given some extra homework for the week end after she had misbehaved in class. When school began Monday, only part of the work was done. The second time this happened, the teacher called Mary's mother.

"Frankly, we thought you were punishing us more than you were Mary," her mother said. "Sunday is the only time the family has for an outing, and so Mary didn't get to finish all of her homework."

I certainly don't mean that the teacher is always right; at times there are mitigating circumstances which are unknown to the teacher. But I do want to illustrate what is happening to some children, day after day, when their parents undermine the school authority.

This is a terribly serious thing to do. Never, under any circumstances, question the authority of a teacher in front of your child—any more than you would expect the teacher to question yours. I can imagine no situation in which the child will benefit by being present when such a discussion takes place.

Those of you who still have doubts about this might want to visit one of the metropolitan centers where disturbed children are treated. You might talk with one of the psychiatric workers there. I don't mean to exaggerate. I know from experience, however, that once the authority of the teacher has been destroyed, the child is in serious emotional trouble.

Your own example plays a big part in your child's life. Usually a teacher can tell from behavior at school which child's parents come late to Mass, or use profanity around the house.

Under discipline we can also consider two contemporary problems—one caused by television, the other by the general level of prosperity. Many children, because of indiscriminate television viewing, have a fixed habit of *not listening* by the time they start school. A remedy, as we saw on page nine, is to cut down drastically on the televising. The prosperity level has affected children's attitudes toward property. Elementary school teachers today frequently find that a child is not too disturbed about destroying school property, or damaging a classmate's bicycle. They've learned the magic words, "I'll ask my Daddy for some money." Lost is the respect for another's property, and this respect is part of the education of a well-balanced person.

When your child approaches the age of 10, he discovers a new set of values. Until then, pleasing Mother or Dad, his teacher and pastor, play an important part in his life. About the time he reaches the fifth grade, he suddenly discovers his peers—his own playmates. From then on you are going to hear a lot of what his friends think of his conduct (or what he thinks they will think).

This is the time when the remark, "But Mom, all the boys have one!" is heard over and over again—like a cracked record.

You have to realize that there are many parents and many children who don't follow the rules of common sense and Christian living. Your own children, proud of them as you are, will naturally prefer to follow the example of an easier way of life, unless you, through discipline and example, teach them differently.

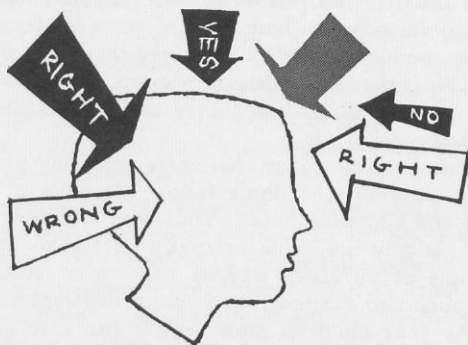
As your children grow, you'll run into new problems. For example, kissing games for fifth graders may be common at some parties. You may have a job convincing your children that this is not a Christian way of living. The same goes for the daughter who may want to begin steady dating at 12. She'll know of lots of cases where other girls her age are doing it. The girls might

enjoy all-night pajama parties on nights preceding a school day, but they might as well skip school the next day.

Many parents allow their children to do whatever they please in their spare time, with whomever they please. It won't be easy for you to convince your child that there must be rules that he will be expected to obey.

Anticipating these questions—planning for them before they come up—is half the battle. That's why discipline is so important.

I have been impressed with the effect discipline can have on others—an entire roomful of students, for example. The lad who failed last semester because he was shirking his work took a far more serious attitude toward school this year. And what an improvement that one failure made on the rest of the class! Once they learned that the teacher meant business, they settled down to work.



## ADJUSTING TO SCHOOL— EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

When there is a serious problem in a child's emotional adjustment, you must act quickly. Many cities

now have child centers where emotionally disturbed children can be diagnosed and treated until they can return to take their place in the classroom.

Such action is out of the ordinary. What most parents need, though, is an understanding of what unity of discipline means to your child.

Children are children. Often they will not listen attentively, or will copy something down in haste, and then go home and repeat *part* of what they learned in school.

"My teacher said it was all right to eat meat on Friday," a nine-year-old told his Dad.

The father became angry. What were they doing at school anyway?

"You tell that teacher of yours she doesn't know what she's talking about," he said.

The child did. In the process he learned what he had ignored the previous day—that the teacher had been explaining dispensations. But while belatedly learning the fact, he also learned to doubt his teacher. The unity of respect he once had, with the schoolroom an extension of the home, was damaged by the father's hasty words.

Let's assume that your child's teacher *is* wrong, and the matter is important. What should a parent do?

I would advise against *ever* challenging the teacher's authority until you have time to investigate. Experienced parents know that most of the time a check will show something got garbled between the classroom and the home. If the occasion demands that you say something to your child, say something noncommittal until you can see the teacher and talk things over. You can't possibly make a wise decision until you have the facts.

When you hear some outlandish report on school happenings, it's difficult to keep calm until you can investigate. But remember that your child must be taught

respect for authority. And that includes your authority as well as the teacher's.

Neither you, nor the school, can get the idea across if you fail to back up the teacher — even though it means siding with her against your own flesh and blood. This isn't simply a matter of justice to the teacher. Of more importance — for both you and the teacher — is the welfare of your child.

Common sense will tell you that most of the time the teacher will be right. She will be right, not because "teacher is always right," but because she is a mature, dedicated person. The child is a child, looking upon life with a child's mind. If he is normal, he tends to resent any symbol of authority — particularly his teacher. Children will be prejudiced in their own cause, particularly if they have done something they believe to be wrong. Look back at your own childhood and see if this isn't true.

## Good Study Habits

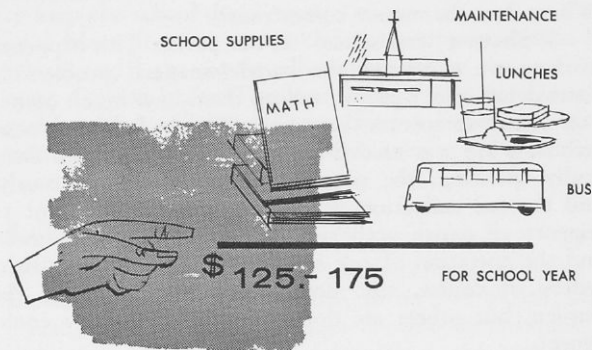
Good habits go with good emotional adjustment to school, and we have already seen how calmness and quiet periods in the home can aid in establishing these habits even in preschool children. A common fault in study habits today is sloppiness. Ten-year-old Anne is a bright girl, but she finishes all her school work too fast. As a result, her papers are almost illegible. She has never learned the value of neatness.

Another common failing with primary children is a lack of perseverance. This is almost always a matter of poor home training. Perseverance comes from encouragement and discipline at home.

## Encouragement

Be pleased when your child does a good job; be understanding when, if he is doing his best, his grades are only average. This is important throughout your child's career.

When report cards come, go over them carefully with your child. Let him take pride in his accomplishments and recognize his shortcomings. You add to your child's incentive to do his best by showing a sincere interest in his work.



## SCHOOL COSTS — WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

Never before have so many parents asked for—in fact, they literally demand—a Catholic education for their youngsters. This fact, together with the increased birth rate, and the growth of suburbia, has created new financial problems for every parish.

One occasionally hears some hard remarks about the fantastic ways some Catholic schools raise money.

I make no excuse for such assorted ills as “penny marches,” lottos, magazine subscription drives, or what have you. But I can explain why a hard-pressed pastor may be forced to turn to such devices if the money needed for school operation can't be obtained in any other way.

Personally I don't believe it is a healthy thing for

schools to be used for fund-raising activities. We have a rule in our school: No financial drives whatever in school, no collections, no raising of money under any pretext. The only exceptions are projects required by Diocesan Regulations, such as the Holy Childhood Association. Yet we have financial needs like any other school. Where does the money come from?

We have a "free school" in our parish. This happened because we explained the parish financial problem in some detail to our people, telling them how much money was needed to operate the parish. We asked them to contribute what was needed in the Sunday collection. Generally speaking, the people are responding generously, and the one collection at Sunday Masses is sufficient to support all parish activities—including debt retirement and the operation of our school. There are some parishioners, of course, who don't carry their share of the burden, but others are doing more than anyone could expect.

I know there are many parishes not as fortunate as ours. What happens when the people of the parish fail to support the parish school?

What usually happens is that any number of ingenious fund-raising devices are organized to get the money to keep the school in operation.

"Father couldn't even give us the money we needed for hectograph paper at one school," a sister told me. "We had to have the supplies to do a decent job of teaching. So—we ran a candy store during recess."

Almost always, when parishioners refuse to contribute realistically in the Sunday collection, the school children are used in some way to attempt to raise needed money. After all, if the parents have failed the school, who else can the teachers turn to? When Catholic people tie the hands of a pastor by failing to give him the funds the parish must have to pay its bills, he is forced to resort to other means.



How else is a school affected when it is short on funds? Generally, the teachers will be less experienced. The more experienced teachers will naturally move to areas where parents put a premium on good education. Classes will be larger than desirable. And a good amount of the pastor's time will be spent in trying to find money to keep the school doors open.

I know it takes real sacrifice to support the parish school, and I am continually impressed by the sacrifices many families make. This is one reason why our Catholic parish schools today are approaching a level of development far above what was possible even a few years ago.

## Building and Land

In most postwar parishes the parents in one way or another will be asked to help retire the parish debt. Usually this is handled through the Sunday envelope, or through a special building drive. Thus, the cost of the school building and grounds is amortized without help from school tuition.

## Tuition

Some schools are "free." The Sunday envelope collection supports the tuition of all pupils. One parish I know of charges \$50 per year for the first child in a family, \$25 for the second, and nothing for all other children in the family. The charge in another parish is \$5 a month. Another school charges \$1 per week. In general, \$40 per year seems to be a rather common charge for tuition. Needless to say, no Catholic in the parish will be refused a Catholic education because of lack of money.

## Books

At some schools books are rented. The charge in our

parish, for example, is \$10 a year for the first child, \$5 for the second child; all others in the family are free. We lose money because of wear and tear, obsolescence in texts, and the like. Cost of buying texts would be at least double the \$10 rental figure.

### **School Bus**

Costs also vary considerably, depending on the size of the parish and the number of pupils using the bus. In some parishes this cost may equal or exceed tuition. \$1 a week is not uncommon (about \$40 a year).

### **Hot Lunches**

Thanks to federal subsidies, lunches are served "below cost." Twenty-five or 30 cents a day—\$1.25 to \$1.50 per week—is customary.

### **Clothing**

This is an important part of school expenses, but I, as a pastor, am not going to attempt to tell you parents how much this will cost. The use of practical school uniforms by many schools has cut the size of this bill.

### **Overall Direct Costs**

Direct costs will be somewhere between \$125 and \$175 a year for many parish schools. This would include tuition at \$40 to \$50 a year, books at \$10 to \$20; bus fare at \$15 to \$40, and school lunches at \$40 to \$48, plus other expenditures for school supplies and the like.

### **Money Raising**

If money-raising activities are distasteful to you, you may want to ask yourself if the school is receiving the financial support it needs. As the figures show, it costs around \$150 a year to supply tuition, school buses, books and the like for each pupil, and an additional sum to pay

the interest and retire the debt on the parish school building. If you have a question about school finances, talk it over with your pastor. He may be able to help you, and you may be able to help him.

## HOW GOOD ARE OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

The press is filled these days with charges and countercharges about schools, public, private and parochial. Many a parent can well ask himself: How good *are* our schools?

Catholic elementary schools in this country have never been as good as they now are, and they are getting better each year. Let's look at some of the reasons why.

### The Problem of Progressive Education

This system, which caused some painful readjustments in some non-Catholic schools, did not affect Catholic schools to the same extent. And so during the decade after 1946, when many public schools were making austere changes from the progressivism of the '30's, the Catholic schools could forge ahead on new programs.

### The Sister Formation Program

This is part of the major revolution in teacher training which began in Catholic schools before the war. It is having important effects. This program, which developed from Pius XII's directive to teaching orders, insures that the sisters teaching in our schools have a thorough preparation for teaching. More and more of these sisters who have gone through advanced training are entering our schools each year. At the same time, many of the lay teachers in our parochial school system have higher degrees. All of this adds up to better qualified teachers and higher standards for our schools.

## New School Facilities

All have been designed to aid learning. Lighting, heating, ventilating, all is better today than a generation ago. There are science, home economics, and manual training facilities in many of our secondary schools which surpass anything which could have been offered in the past.

## Educational Standards

All states have strengthened educational standards since the war. Practices accepted a generation ago won't pass today. Teachers not only have better educations; many are required to go back to college from time to time if they wish to keep their state license to teach.

## Problem Teachers

We have seen the importance of unity in authority between the teacher and the parent. And we've emphasized the necessity of withholding judgment on what appears to be a grievance until you can get all the facts.

Chances are your child may run into a real problem teacher someday. What effect will it have on him? It may take you 20 years to appreciate it, but I believe in most cases the effect will be good. The child, after all, is in school to learn. One of the truths that must be learned in this life is that all people are not beautiful, patient and kind.

You should remember that problem teachers are not nearly as prevalent as some parents seem to think. And the value your child will get out of such a situation depends largely on you. Let me stress again: Reserve judgment until you can check the facts. Nothing hurts a school more than gossip. In all cases where you have a question about a serious matter, call the school and ask

for an appointment with the principal. If you've had trouble with a particular teacher, and if it is a legitimate complaint, chances are the principal will have heard similar comments from other parents.

## Values

The value we place on education can be seen by many of the developments of the past few years — the large number of new parochial schools, the increased training for our teachers, the financial sacrifices of devoted parishioners.

You can be encouraged about your child's education when you realize that educational standards have never been higher. Never before have so many pupils from our schools walked off with national awards in interscholastic competitions.

## CONCLUSION

We've talked in this booklet about a lot of the "little things" that can help your child in getting the best possible education. We've discussed school costs, noted the improvements in school buildings, discussed the increased emphasis on longer training for teachers. We've tried to stress how important it is to support a parish school financially, and how abuses are bound to occur when people refuse to do this. And we've commented on a number of school customs, like holidays and uniforms.

Most of all we've tried to emphasize how very important it is for you and your child's teacher to be united in your attitude toward the purpose of your child's education. You, the parent, hold the key. With your encouragement and cooperation, it can unlock for your child the best in education for this life and for eternity.

## PRAYERS TO KNOW

### Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

### Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

### Prayer to the Guardian Angel

Angel of God, my guardian dear,  
To whom His love commits me here,  
Ever this day be at my side,  
To light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.

### The Blessing Before Meals

Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Grace After Meals

We give Thee thanks, O Almighty God, for these and all the benefits which we have received from Thy bounty through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The inspiration for this informative booklet was contained in an article that appeared in the November 1, 1958 issue of AVE MARIA magazine.

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