

# Cincinnati: Archdiocese On The Brink

By W. H. MARSHNER

## PART I

A pastor nearing sixty, with a history of heart trouble, is transferred; the bishop assigns a younger man to take his place. An ordinary sort of event, which happens every year in every Catholic diocese, uncontroversial and unnoticed. Thus, too, in early October, 1974, Fr. Francis Flanagan is transferred from St. Bartholomew's Parish in suburban Cincinnati to a smaller, less taxing place in the rural town of Russia, Ohio.

Then the extraordinary happens. Carloads of St. Bartholomew's parishioners materialize on the sidewalks of Cincinnati, carrying picket signs in front of the Arch-

diocesan Personnel Office and up in front of the Chancery. Angry people demand to see the Archbishop, Joseph L. Bernardin. They confront Fr. Philip Seher, director of the priests' personnel office. They tell him that they flatly do not believe Fr. Flanagan's transfer was motivated by the reasons publicly given out: health and overlong tenure. Nor do they believe it was voluntary. "He's a good, orthodox priest; he kept the school and the nuns in line, so they want to get rid of him," a lady tells this reporter. "Fr. Flanagan didn't want to be moved; he said so repeatedly, but they twisted his arm. And do you know who his replacement is supposed to be? A Fr. Breslin from the North American College in Rome — that nut-house." They are well-informed people, these protesters; they have a letter from a former seminarian at the North American College, describing the spiritual

and theological decadence of that once-famous place in stark terms.

The bonds of parish identity are still strong in Cincinnati. The people of St. Bartholomew's are dedicated to keeping the pastor who founded their parish thirteen years ago; they will settle for nothing less than a cancellation of the transfer. As the demonstrations continue, despite the fact that Fr. Flanagan himself, of course, is opposed to them, the concerns of the parishioners find a sympathetic echo throughout the Archdiocese. A flurry of letters, harshly critical of Church officials, appears in the daily papers. Protest is joined to prayer, as people from parishes all over the city join together in a prayer walk "to do penance and to petition God." Block after block the march continues, despite a driving rain, to its destination,

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"TO RE-ESTABLISH  
ALL THINGS IN CHRIST"

(Ephesians 1:10)

# The Wanderer

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## WHY THE TROUBLE?

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(Continued from page 1)

where hands clutching soaking wet rosaries pass out leaflets. "Many older priests with years of experience and wisdom, who uphold the teachings of Christ and the Magisterium, are being removed or retired at a time when Religious vocations are on the decrease, and these priests' presence and guidance are needed," the leaflet says, and this is just one of six major points of complaint.

## WHY THE TROUBLE?

Beyond question, there is brewing a crisis of confidence in Cincinnati. Otherwise, a simple change of pastors could hardly be a traumatic event. As everyone knows, Catholic churches change pastors the way a platoon changes sergeants — not the way a commune changes life-style. Fundamental values, in other words, are not supposed to be in question (which is one very good reason why Catholics don't expect to be consulted on the subject). Something is terribly wrong when the fear exists, on whatever grounds, that these values are in question. The thing is as bizarre as if a troop of soldiers suspect the new C.O. is going to be a pacifist.

No, the question is not whether there is a problem, but why. In staid, conservative Cincinnati, what could possibly put middle-class Catholics on the street with picket signs? What has got people stirred up enough to march in the rain at a time when all too many Catholics are too apathetic even to go to Mass?

Let me go by process of elimination. I could furnish stories like the Flanagan incident from perhaps half-a-dozen American dioceses. But the funny thing is that Cincinnati is not really like those places. Those places are like Saginaw, Mich., very far gone: places where the bishop had lost control of his clergy, where a dissident clique of priests and Religious rides roughshod over ecclesiastical discipline, preaches suspect doctrine, and perpetrates any liturgical kookery it jolly well pleases. Obviously, in a place like that, if people are lucky enough to have a decent pastor, they hold onto him for dear life. But in Cincinnati fine pastors are plentiful.

## REBUFF TO THE NFPC

For instance, one of the best indicators of whether a priest loves the Church and feels privileged to obey Her is his attitude toward the National Federation of Priests' Councils (NFPC), an outfit which has bitterly denounced the Holy Father's policies and stridently demanded an end to clerical celibacy. About two years ago, however, aware that such overt militancy is a dead end, the Chicago-based Federation changed presidents, toned down, and sought respectability. On June 13th, 1974, the Cincinnati Priests' Senate resolved to affiliate with the NFPC by a vote of sixteen to seven. But at least one of the seven opponents felt strongly that this vote did not reflect the true thinking of the clergy of the Archdiocese. He organized a referendum, pursuant to the by-laws of the Senate, and by a thumping majority the priests of Cincinnati rejected the proposal of having any connection with the controversial Federation. No doubt about it: the clergy of Cincinnati is a company of priests for the likes

of whom almost any other Archbishop in the Country would give his eyeteeth.

Of course, there are exceptions; there are strange birds here, as everywhere else, such as the Franciscan Holy Roller and teenybop messiah, Fr. Richard Rohr. But even the bitterest critics I could find of the present situation in Cincinnati were quick to admit that one can find splendid priests in great abundance in this Archdiocese.

Why, then, were the people of St. Bartholomew's up in arms? Why a prayer march?

Again, in other places where incidents similar to these have erupted, there is a bitter estrangement between the bishop and his more traditional laity. People find that they cannot get a sympathetic hearing (they are lucky to get a five-minute audience). They find that the bishop himself either supports the ill-considered "experiments" which are troubling people's faith or else, all too commonly, he has lost control of the situation, knows it, and plays deaf-dumb-and-blind for the sake of "peace." Inevitably, then, people become cynical. After a time, they put a sinister construction on every move the bishop makes, or else dismiss him as vacuous. Is Cincinnati, perhaps, the same way?

## THE BISHOP IS IN CONTROL

Fortunately not. Of all the people I interviewed, across the spectrum, no one had the slightest doubt that Archbishop Joseph Bernardin is the master of his See. If he wants something done, it gets done. To be sure, there is a shopping-list of things which he, perhaps, ought to do but doesn't; thereby will hang a hefty part of my tale. But when he does want to act, he has in fact (and not just in theory) the power.

Moreover, there is none of that bitter estrangement here which I have seen elsewhere. There is tension, surely; there are "bones to pick" between this Archbishop and certain segments of his laity. But people have not decided by any means "to give up on Bernardin," as the vernacular puts it, no matter how dissatisfied they may be on particular issues.

This is quite important. On one of my stops in Cincinnati, I was told confidentially, very hush-hush, that there is "this extreme group, you know, CUF, which is making trouble against the Archbishop." "Really? Why would they want to do that?" "Oh, those people hate him; they're trying to have him deposed."

This is not from one source. I found many people who had heard the same rumor, which apparently runs through the Archdiocese like an underground sewer. But despite a good deal of sleuthing, I never found these extremists. Cincinnati doesn't even have an active CUF chapter. (N.B. CUF, or Catholics United for the Faith, has no connection with CEF, Citizens for Educational Freedom, a very active organization in Cincinnati.) I moved in the most fervently traditional circles; I talked to people close to the Flanagan demonstrations and to the investigators of many other "troubles." And I was quite struck by the fact that they were not bitter about Archbishop Bernardin. On the contrary, despite many criticisms, they were pleased with a great deal he has said and done, and they were hopeful about the future. To my repeated questions, no one voiced the slightest doubt about the Archbishop's personal soundness on all theological questions.

This happy state of affairs is not just the result of pious and respectful dispositions on the part of Cincinnati's "conservatives" (I hate to bring in that political word where Church affairs are con-

cerned; it makes no sense). It is more a result of this Archbishop's own not unimpressive record where questions of orthodoxy and sound discipline are concerned.

## DEFENDING THE MARRIAGE BOND

For instance, on July 6th, 1973, Archbishop Bernardin sent a letter to all his priests, enclosing a communication from the Vatican Congregation for Doctrine stressing the indissolubility of marriage. "Certainly," Bernardin wrote, "we must show great solicitude and concern for those who are in marital difficulties. . . . Where there is any reasonable doubt about the validity of a marriage bond, I urge you to submit the case to the Marriage Tribunal. No priest himself, however, can declare a marriage invalid, nor can he authentically witness another marriage for one whose valid marriage partner is still living. To do so would be a denial of the very concept of Christian marriage." The force of these words was to order all Cincinnati priests to steer clear of the unauthorized "good conscience" solutions which were being pushed in many American dioceses and had stirred the ire of the Holy See. In many places these practices are still going on (case in point: an acquaintance of mine in Baltimore was previously married in the Church, got divorced, and decided to marry again; about a month ago the couple went to a priest at St. Matthew's Parish, who refused to marry them but, then, against all dogma and logic, agreed to witness their "marriage" at a Lutheran church three blocks up the street. The Archdiocese of Baltimore is getting a seedy reputation for this sort of thing). Many dioceses I visit are buzzing with the stories of preposterous annulments and invalid marriages winked at by the clergy. But in Cincinnati I heard no such talk, and not a word of scandal about the Archdiocesan Marriage Tribunal.

## COMPLYING WITH ROME

Moreover, a sure mark of every "liberal" diocese is the strange notion that children can't commit sins and hence do not need to be prepared for the Sacrament of Penance until years after they have made their First Communion. This silly delay, deeply resented by many parents, is still being pushed by religious educators in many dioceses despite a clear, sharp, unequivocal order from the Vatican, saying that children must be prepared for First Confession before making First Communion. The so-called "liberal" bishops of the United States, when this order came out, snatched any excuse they could find for saying that their compliance would have to wait. But in Cincinnati, within days of the Vatican order, there was a non-nonsense letter from Archbishop Bernardin: "as part of the universal Church," he said, "we must bring our practices into line with the directives of the Declaration."

Finally, a good deal of attention has been paid recently to the fact that Archbishop Bernardin ordered one of his high schools to stop using a religious education book called *Love, Sex and Marriage* by Bro. Hugo Hurst, C.F.X. In a detailed memorandum on the subject, the prelate took exception to Bro. Hurst's treatment of four subjects: (1) masturbation, which had been treated as though it were not objectively wrong or else hardly ever a serious sin; (2) petting and premarital intercourse, treated as though it were fine, "if no one gets hurt"; (3) birth control, treated as though the opinions of the *Humanae Vitae* dissenters had the same moral worth as the teaching of the Pope; (4) Catholics involved in invalid marriages, treated as though such persons could freely receive the Sacraments.

Now, sex education in general, and these four subjects in particular, are bitter irritants in dozens of American dioceses, where concerned parents can get no corrective action whatsoever. Needless to say, therefore, such parents are grateful in Cincinnati, even though the battle is far from won. There are books as bad, if not worse, than Bro. Hurst's that are still in use in the Catholic schools — including the Archdiocese's own official program, which is modeled on the Education in Love program sharply condemned, in part, by Bishop Floyd Begin of Oakland. By no means has sex education ceased to be a problem in Cincinnati, but at least something was done. One book was suppressed.

READER: I don't see why you make a big thing of that.

AUTHOR: Come with me sometime on one of my trips to Richmond, or Saginaw, or Baltimore. People will tell you that the idea of their bishop getting rid of a textbook, no matter how bad, is as remote as coming home someday to find the Pope in your living room. Forget it.

READER: Well, now let's not make invidious comparisons. The theologians today are questioning many traditional ideas, even in the area of sexual ethics; perhaps those other bishops are waiting until the theologians have come to a consensus.

AUTHOR: The so-called theologians (as opposed to the sound ones) are changing their minds all the time. Right and wrong, however, do not change. The question is, whom do you believe? Certain "theologians," or Archbishop Bernardin? Who is your authority? Besides, when you bring theology into it, you make a strange insinuation. Do you mean to say that Archbishop Bernardin and those other bishops disagree on theological questions? You think the others are soft on impurity, perhaps! Which of us is making "invidious comparisons" now, my friend?

READER: All right, I take that back. What I should have said was, there are different ways of exercising authority. I'm sure all the bishops would find the same faults in Bro. Hurst's book that Archbishop Bernardin found, but they might find other ways of correcting the misimpressions. OK? I just don't see why you put so much emphasis on throwing out a book.

AUTHOR: Very simple. Actions speak louder than words, and this particular action speaks volumes. To have a widely respected Archbishop throw just one book out of just one school tears the veil off a deep, dark secret. Here it is (brace yourself): the expert educators who write textbooks for Catholic school children are not (repeat), are not always right, and the concerned parents who have been sneered at everywhere as "cranks" and "Birchers" are not always wrong.

READER: Oh, come on. You belabor the obvious. Nobody is always right, and I don't know of anybody who would claim that the textbooks are all perfect.

## HOW ABOUT A LITTLE TEST?

AUTHOR: Don't change the subject. The issue is not perfection but minimum accuracy in presenting the Faith. The Baltimore Catechism wasn't perfect either, but at least it didn't give kids the idea they could fool around. Now, as to whether I am belaboring the obvious, are you up for a little experiment?

READER: Sure.

AUTHOR: Are you a member of the John Birch Society?

READER: No.

AUTHOR: Have you taken any secret oaths to destroy Archbishop Bernardin?

READER: Are you crazy? What is this?

AUTHOR: Fine, you'll do. You come along with me to the next PTA or School Board meeting at Our Lady of Angels High School; now, sometime along in the discussion, you raise your hand and just say, word for word, what I said: "The expert educators who write textbooks for Catholic school children are not always right, and the concerned parents who have been sneered at, etc., are not always wrong." Then back it up with just one example. If you don't know of any other example, use the book that Archbishop Bernardin condemned. You'll be branded as an "extremist," if not silenced on the spot.

READER: I don't believe it.

AUTHOR: Neither did Fr. Francis Flanagan. On March 19th, 1973, he went to a school board meeting at Our Lady of Angels, where they were discussing textbooks exactly as in the Hurst affair. Some of the parents were complaining, and all he did was to stand up and say the parents were not all wrong and that we must follow the Magisterium of the Church. The words were still on his lips when the head of the High School Religion Department, Fr. Robert Apking, leapt to his feet and shouted, "You've said enough, Father; sit down and shut up."

Poor Flanagan did exactly that, speechless at the rudeness of a fellow priest. That was the first time that the parents who were involved in the textbook fight ever met Fr. Flanagan. But they stayed in touch with him, found him a wise ally — and that is the genesis of the whole blow-up a year and a half later, when this good priest was transferred out to the sticks.

READER: No kidding.

AUTHOR: I kid you not. Put your finger on the textbook problem (and the related mess in religious education), and you have put your finger on the chief cause of the unrest in Cincinnati. I don't think I've ever been in a diocese where the issue is as clearly drawn.

## TEXTBOOKS ARE "SACRED COWS"

Now, what happened to Fr. Flanagan that night was not an isolated incident. I can give you the names and addresses of people all

over Cincinnati — perfectly normal people — who have gotten the same kind of treatment. For example, there was a textbook controversy at St. Vivian's Parish around the same time — January to March of 1973. One of the parents involved was Mrs. "Jones" (who doesn't want her real name in the newspapers). She found out that her child wasn't learning any religion. She organized a group to present papers at a meeting of the parish board of education. The purpose of these papers was to criticize the textbooks currently in use (Pflaum and Sadlier, with titles like *Becoming Myself*) and to recommend replacing them with the Our Sunday Visitor Series (which is used all over this Archdiocese and has the imprimatur of the Bishops of Australia). A moderate proposal, surely. But before the school board meeting took place, the principal of St. Vivian's, a Sr. Roseanne, went to the individual homes of the board members and said: "Mrs. Jones is emotionally disturbed. She's had a hysterectomy and a nervous breakdown. This girl is not well, so she has no credibility." Mrs. "Jones" subsequently learned that this absolutely false piece of character assassination had been spread all over town.

READER: Good grief, and by a nun yet!

AUTHOR: An Ursuline, to be exact.

READER: Well, look, I don't want to interrupt the point you're trying to make, but would you mind backing up a minute and explaining one thing to me. I guess I don't move in the activist circles you're talking about, because I know there's been a lot going on over this school business, but nobody ever explained to me what was supposed to be wrong. Now you mentioned textbooks. Could you put in a nutshell for me what's the matter with them?

## TEXTS WITHOUT CONTENT

AUTHOR: I'll make a stab at it. First, though, I'd better make it clear that not all the religion textbooks stir up this kind of trouble. For example, the Our Sunday Visitor Series is used in sixty schools in this Archdiocese, and there is not a hint of trouble or division or recrimination in a single one of those schools. The Daughters of St. Paul, who work at the Cincinnati Chancery, also have a series which is excellent. So, all of the trouble revolves around four or five of the other highly-touted series, like *Word and Worship*, *Sadlier*, *Paulist*, *Benzinger*, etc. What's wrong with these can be said in five words: there's no meat in them. A child using those books does not learn the dogmas of his Faith; he doesn't even learn the basic vocabulary. I have the results of a test given by a Cincinnati parent (and part-time teacher) to twenty-seven children picked at random. Twenty-six of these children were in the sixth grade or higher. Twenty-one of them attended Catholic schools, three were in CCD, and three were in neither. Here are some sample questions along with the poor kids' answers.

What is the Blessed Sacrament? Eleven of the children did not know, four thought it was Baptism. Only seven knew that the term refers to the Eucharist. The remaining answers were scattered.

Who is the Holy Spirit? Nine children did not know. One said, "Jesus." Another said, "the creature Jesus sent to help us." Eleven knew only that He is "part of the Holy Trinity."

What is the Mystical Body of Christ? Fifteen children did not know. Six said the Eucharist. One said, "He can change to any form." Only five knew that the term refers to the Church.

What is meant by the Incarnation? Twenty-two did not know. One said, "When form is changed." Another said, "When Jesus was baptized." Another said, "When you have life after death." One ingenious child said, "When women and men have two lives." (Shades of Herbert Philbrick!) The remaining answer was, "The redeeming of Christ."

What is the redemption? Nineteen children had no idea. One said, "God going to Heaven." Two said, "When Christ rose from the dead." Five replied tautologically, "When Jesus redeemed us."

What is the Assumption? Fourteen did not know. One said, "When Jesus went to Heaven." Twelve had the correct answer. (Here and elsewhere, by "correct answer," I don't mean a letter-perfect formula; I'm settling for any stab in the right direction.)

Can it be a mortal sin to miss Mass on Sunday? Here an even division: Thirteen said yes, twelve said no, with two on the fence.

What do we mean by the Blessed Trinity? Nineteen of the children were pretty much on target, but five did not know. One said, "Three Gods in one person." One said, "Three people in one." The remaining answer was ambiguous.

What are the two natures of Christ? Nine children had no idea.

Six said, "Man and spirit." Four said, "Jesus and God" (a touch of Nestorianism). One said, "Love and kindness." One said, "Good and powerful." Another, obviously at sea, said, "To guide over you." Only five had the correct answer.

What is meant by Immaculate Conception? Nineteen had no idea. One said, "Mass honoring Mary." Another said, "Mary went to Heaven." Three said, "Crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth." Two said, "Mary" or "another name for Mary" (perhaps this child was thinking of the story of Lourdes). Only one had the correct answer.

What is meant by immortal soul? Seven children had the right idea (saying, "It never dies.") Fifteen had no idea whatsoever. The remaining answers were most entertaining: "It has grace," "a soul that is inhuman," "a perfect soul," "a sin unable to be forgiven," and "when you have a mortal sin on your soul."

## NOT AN ISOLATED PHENOMENON

Let me remind you: these children were not tots. Fourteen were in the sixth grade. Eight were in the seventh grade, and four were in the eighth grade. There were forty questions on the test in all, and I have not picked the worst errors by any means. I have just picked basic vocabulary items — words that crop up in almost any sermon and in the most elementary books of devotion. And let me remind you also: these results are not an isolated fluke. I have similar results from two other tests given in Cincinnati, and I can put my hands on surveys and questionnaires that have revealed the same educational disaster in Catholic schools all over America where the controversial textbooks are used.

Moreover, there is no argument as to these results; the educational failure is freely admitted by the Superintendent of Schools of the Archdiocese, Fr. Jerome Schaeper. Just this past September, at a meeting of the Catholic Federation of PTA's, Fr. Schaeper was challenged on the fact that eighth graders all over Cincinnati do not know the Ten Commandments. He replied: "I admit that a child graduating from the eighth grade might not know the Ten Commandments, but he knows that God loves him." Adolf Eichmann, at his trial in Jerusalem, called himself *gottgläubiger*, that is, one who is indifferent to specific commandments but vaguely convinced that "God loves him." I'll be frank: Fr. Schaeper's remark is one of the most contemptible dodges I have ever heard from a Catholic spokesman.

READER: He really said that, the Superintendent of Schools?

AUTHOR: I have it on tape.

READER: Are you sure you're not taking him out of context?

AUTHOR: Judge for yourself. The situation is this: a top-ranking educator, at a public meeting, has it thrown in his fact that his school system has failed to teach elementary moral information. How does he handle the challenge? He might have claimed that the charge was false, that he knew plenty of children who knew the Commandments, etc. Or, he might have said, "Yes, this is a serious failure and, believe me, we are going to do something about it." But Schaeper did neither. He admitted the malfeasance and lamely tried to justify it.

## TEACHERS WHO DON'T TEACH

READER: I have to admit that that's a little hard to take. But getting back to those test results you were citing before — and I agree they were pathetic — why do you put the blame on the textbooks? Doesn't a lot depend on the teacher?

AUTHOR: Absolutely, which is why these series have a teacher's manual. But the manual tells the teacher not to teach anything! Let me quote you chapter and verse. One of the most widely used series in Cincinnati is the *Word and Worship* series. A committee of Cincinnati parents got hold of the entire series, both the children's books and the teachers' manuals. Here is a little of what they found.

The first grade book of *Word and Worship* is called *Our Brother, Jesus*, a general introduction to who Christ is through the medium of various simplified Bible stories. What kind of Christ is supposed to emerge for the children? The teacher is told on p. 15 of the manual: "Primary focus is on the fact that Jesus ENJOYED being with people. . . . She (teacher) is highlighting . . . the social consequence of being a mature person. The teacher should not use the Gospel incidents for this week to emphasize the power of Jesus or number of wonders He worked." One of the stories bowdlerized in this way is the marriage feast at Cana, which, according to p. 17, is supposed to come out sounding like this: "His presence adds to the joy and merriment of the occasion. This story is used only to indicate that Jesus was part of a happy group and even helped provide

them with the means to enjoy the occasion. . . . The role of Mary is not emphasized." Throughout the book, care is to be taken to avoid referring to Jesus as the Messiah (a word "foreign to the vocabulary of the children" — as if every word were not originally foreign to them!) but only as a "leader." The word "sin," says the manual, is also not to be mentioned.

In the second grade book, called *Jesus With Us*, the child gets a peek at salvation history — but, again, in such a way as to miss learning very much. Adam and Eve are discussed, for example, without reference to Original Sin (p. 49 of the children's book). Then the children go on to learn about Moses, without ever being told that God gave him the Ten Commandments.

## ATTITUDES HAVE PRIORITY

The explanation for this strange way of going about things is contained in the second grade teacher's manual on p. 2. "The object of the primary texts of the Word and Worship Program is to foster Christian Attitudes. The acquisition of knowledge and facts is, at this primary level, entirely secondary." To judge by the results, it remains secondary straight up to high school. In any case, there you have it in black and white. The purpose of these books and hence of a curriculum based on them is not to teach anything in the classical sense of the word but to somehow massage the child's mind into having the right attitudes. Let me ask you something. Do you think I can form in you the correct attitude toward x without telling you the indispensable facts about x?

READER: Well, I'd have to think about it, but I admit it doesn't sound very plausible.

AUTHOR: It doesn't. And the absurdity of the idea becomes even clearer when you look at the inconsistency with which it is applied. Go back to the first grade book where Jesus is the happy party-goer, and where it's verboten to call Him the Messiah or to mention the word sin, lest we escape the parameters of the child's experience. In the same book is a chapter on Christians helping each other. On p. 260, the teacher's manual gives this advice: "Teacher should be concrete and speak of neighborhood problems, unemployment, race relations and depressed areas." In other words, the child is treated as an idiot where the things of God are concerned but as a prodigy where the intractable woes of political economics are concerned.

## PARENTS IN A FIGHTING MOOD

This is why parents by the hundreds in Cincinnati are ready to fight — and more are becoming so every year. As I mentioned, it was parents who reviewed the *Word and Worship* series and isolated the methodological oddities I have just mentioned. Obviously, they are not stupid people. (Many have professional degrees — lawyers, doctors, artists, teachers.) And yet when these very parents have gone into a parish school board meeting, or a PTA meeting, or the archdiocesan education office, to present their reviews or even just to testify to the empirical fact that their children are growing up like Rousseau's *Emile*, as goddess as turnips, they have been demeaned as numskulls who can't possibly understand the arcane ways of "education," or else maligned as trouble-makers, cranks, extremists.

READER: Take it easy, man, you don't have to shout at me.

AUTHOR: Sorry. I get carried away.

READER: Look, I can see that there is a problem with these books and curricula. In terms of ordinary and reasonable expectations of what a Catholic child should know about his or her Faith, these programs don't seem to deliver. But are you trying to tell me that these failures have never been openly and honestly discussed?

AUTHOR: Exactly. At St. Vivian's Parish, the Ursuline Sisters started to cry, and the whole thing turned into a vote of confidence on them. At All Saints Parish, exactly the same thing happened. But there, I am happy to say, the parents won a round. The pastor, Fr. Kappes, deserves a Nobel Peace prize: he allowed them to set up their own, independent, parent-taught CCD program, which is in operation right now and going swimmingly.

At the archdiocesan level, however, the school officials have never permitted a debate on the issues. Within the structure of that education office on Liberty and Vine Streets, a mechanism for parental input doesn't even exist.

READER: But surely Archbishop Bernardin and his Vicar of Education, Bishop Pilarczyk, see a need for such input and discussion?

AUTHOR: That's a very delicate question. Tune into my next installment, and we'll see if it has an answer.

(To Be Continued)



— FOR LENT —

## VISIONS OF THE CROSS

by Rev. Cletus Healy, S.J.

The Cross for the Captive Peoples" grew out of the Vigils for Peace in the Milwaukee arch-

diocese. They were appreciated that they were requested for

use in the Milwaukee archdiocese. This is a prayer for those members of the Church suffering the torment of Communist oppression of the much forgotten

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