

AGAIN THE SCHOOL BELLS RING

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WEEK or two ago our Catholic parochial schools flung open their doors following the summer recess, and there poured in thousands of God's little ones to take their places under the care of our Sisters and Brothers. Despite the severity of the times and the poverty and discouragement of so many of our people, Catholic education surely must go on. It would indeed be nothing short of a calamity were we to deprive our children and our nation of the powerful and enduring benefits of the Catholic school. And if there ever was a time when America needed the Catholic school it is at this very hour. If our country is to come safely through the present economic crisis (and at this present writing there is hopeful indication that it will) it must rest on a stronger ethical structure than in days gone by. Such a structure can be made solid and secure only by adherence to Christian principles, by bringing the spirit of Christ into the daily lives and affairs of men. The depression has taught many lessons. Among them and by no means the least is that a nation cannot exclude Christ from its life and yet enjoy a healthy vigor.

Education, culture, modern scientific specialization—all these are vastly important to the life and progress of any nation. But one cannot help wondering just where they have been leading us. Culture without a moral guide, science without a First Cause, education without a God—these are products of a system existing to a great extent in America which has sought to train the mind but has unfortunately left the will to its own destruction. A Godless nation, a nation knowing no moral code cannot long endure. Washington and Lincoln realized this; they foresaw a great and strong and magnificent republic only so long as Christian morality would penetrate the lives and actions of its citizenry.

One of the bright hopes for our future America lies in our Catholic youth of to-day. Our country will have an important

place for them to-morrow. There is reason to believe that we are coming into an era when the righteous man, the honest man will receive just preferment over the deceitful man, the dishonest business man and the crooked politician. Then confidence and trust placed in men will be commensurate only with their already proved and acknowledged integrity and sincerity in the community. With God's help, better and happier days are beyond the horizon, and our country will emerge from its present difficulties with a new and healthier vitality. Catholic Action in all its various phases must and will exert every effort to bring about this wholesome and salutary restoration. It is in the field of Catholic education especially that we look for a gigantic and effective contribution. Men and women equipped with the very best that modern education can give in the way of secular sciences coupled with a deep sense of the spiritual and a fine realization of duty to their fellowmen will in the new era be given their rightful place of responsibility and leadership.

In the Catholic parochial school the foundation for future service to God and country is laid. There the children spend their tender and impressionable years—years which will mean so much to them in later life. Many a man to-day attributes his success or failure in life to the use or misuse he made of his grammar school opportunities. The Master Who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me" and Who gave the command to "teach all nations" is speaking to our Catholic children to-day through the mouths of that vast and wonderful army of men and women of whom every Catholic is proud—the Nuns and Brothers who stand on the teacher's platform guiding and directing in our parochial schools. Too much credit cannot be given these religious teachers. Theirs is a life of pure, unselfish devotion to the work of Christ. If one looks for a motive for their long, hard hours of labor, their solicitude for the little ones, their services of love, it can be found in their love of God. They have given up the world, they have followed the Master Whose delight while on earth was to be with and to be teaching the children of men. These religious give whole-heartedly and joyfully their many talents, their wise and prudent judgments that souls may be saved and that the youngsters of to-day may tomorrow be a credit to their Church and an asset to their country.

Of course, the Catholic college and university must necessarily take a very prominent part in every educational program that contributes to our national progress and stability. Though

our institutions of higher learning are handicapped by lack of endowment and by mortgages on much needed improvements and expansions made during the "prosperity" years after the War, still, they must carry on. Their mission is so vitally important, the leadership which they are capable of giving is so urgently needed that it would be a real misfortune if even one of them were to close its doors at this time. Supported by sufficiently large student bodies and sacrificing teaching staffs let them by all means continue to render the Church and nation the important service of which they are capable. In a recent editorial in one of our leading Catholic weeklies it was said that "never before has the Catholic attitude toward life been more worth preaching and teaching, nor on the whole has it ever been more eagerly listened to." It is important that Catholics should keep this in mind during these difficult days, and that they should realize, too, that the Catholic attitude toward life can never be sufficiently made known unless we have a great and strong Catholic educational system.

It is, however, the importance of the Catholic elementary school to the health and vigor of the Nation that we particularly wish to stress at this time. The obvious fact is that unless we build well the foundation it will be useless to attempt anything in the way of a strong superstructure later on. Certainly we cannot expect a young man or young woman who during childhood never heard of the Ten Commandments suddenly to become an exemplary Christian when the college or university is reached. Such things rarely happen. The Catholic Church has the answer to the child training problem that has long puzzled the minds of educators. The answer is the Catholic elementary school, where both mind and will are disciplined. This institution known so commonly as the Catholic parochial school is conspicuous by its mighty symbols, the Cross and the Flag. It has served the country well in the past; even greater things will it do in the future. In times of distress it need never be feared that it will turn loose from its halls a body of Communists. The student body that each morning makes the Sign of the Cross likewise salutes Old Glory. Education, culture, peace, stability, courage, loyalty to country and above all love of God are the fruits of the Catholic school. Again its bell has rung to begin another year!