Seasons of Grace

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When Bishop Michael Gallagher came to Detroit in the fall of 1918, he found that many of his immediate problems had to do with schools. The 102 parochial schools in his new diocese were too few and too small to accommodate the rapidly growing Catholic population. The quality of those schools, moreover, varied enormously, due in part to the veritable immunity of the schools to effective diocesan control. Most disturbing, however, was a growing opposition to the very existence of parochial schools—something spawned by a recrudescence of organized anti-Catholicism. Michigan's voters were asked in 1920 and again in 1924 to amend the state's constitution for the purpose of outlawing any but public schooling for children in grades one through eight. These were costly referenda: the Catholic bishops of Michigan spent heavily on both campaigns, although Catholic schools throughout the state were critically short of funds. (The leaders of Michigan's Lutheran and Dutch Reformed communities had schools to defend as well; they too spent generously on the school campaigns.) And there were psychological costs, perhaps especially for Catholics, against whom the school campaigns were principally directed. Coming as it did in the wake of the First World War, the assault on the parochial school seemed to say that even an ardent and amply demonstrated patriotism could not win for Catholics an unassailable American identity.

For all the bitterness it caused, however, the campaign against parochial education worked in the long term to strengthen the Catholic schools of the Diocese. That campaign enabled both state and diocesan authorities to bring the parochial schools under stricter regulation, particularly with regard to the qualifications of teachers. And it strengthened the hand of educational reformers, especially those who favored a highly centralized mode of administration. By the mid-1930s, the Diocese of Detroit had begun to implement a uniform curriculum in its schools, and to monitor the quality of instruction in its classrooms in a systematic way. These reforms appear to have accomplished a genuine improvement in the quality of Catholic education locally, particularly in the weaker schools. They were a spur as well to a nascent professionalism on the part of many teaching Sisters. And because these reforms reflected much-publicized
Part III: 1919-1958

trends in Michigan’s public schools, they helped to assure the laity that Catholic schools were in no way inferior to their state-run counterparts. Partly for this reason, lay support for Catholic education grew substantially in the Gallagher-Mooney years. Nearly 80 percent of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Detroit had schools in 1940, compared to 59 percent in 1918. Catholic school enrollments more than doubled between 1918 and 1940, although the Archdiocese had lost a portion of its territory to the newly created dioceses of Lansing and Saginaw. And by 1940 there had been a dramatic increase in the number of Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese.

The growth of the system and its reform did mask certain critical weaknesses. Some teaching orders were slow to meet the educational requirements laid down for their members by state law. And the Diocese was perennially short of teaching Sisters. The shortage was especially acute in the 1920s and in the 1950s, times of rapid population growth for the Archdiocese. The “Sister shortage” of the 1920s caused severe overcrowding in many schools, and frustrated efforts at curricular and administrative reform. The shortage of the 1950s led to an increasing dependence on lay teachers, who made up nearly 25 percent of the parochial school teaching force in 1959. (About 9 percent of the system’s teachers in 1945 were members of the laity.) The growing numbers of lay teachers “do pose a special problem,” Msgr. Vincent Horkan admitted in 1959, when he was in his third year as archdiocesan superintendent of schools. “Fundamentally it is an economic problem.” That problem worsened substantially over the next ten years, as the women’s teaching orders nationally entered a period of precipitous decline in membership. By the early 1970s, the parochial system locally was in crisis.1

The Gallagher-Mooney era, then, was preeminently a time of growth and reform in the field of education. The principal achievements of these years, indeed, were little short of remarkable. But the period was also one of recurrent crises with regard to the schools, crises caused by the limited resources that Catholics brought to the increasingly costly business of education. “Should we continue to expand?” Msgr. Horkan asked bluntly in 1958, when, despite a prodigious growth in parochial school enrollments, only 56 percent of the Catholic children in the Archdiocese were enrolled in Catholic schools. “Perhaps we should drastically curtail or declare a moratorium on school-building for a period of time.” The “baby boom” of the postwar years was the immediate cause of Msgr. Horkan’s troubles, which centered on the growing shortage of teaching Sisters. But a rising birthrate was not the whole story. The baby boom simply made clear to a large lay audience what prescient observers had known for decades: without state aid—and that in substantial amounts—Catholics could not expand their schools indefinitely. This realization contributed in no small way to the reappraisal of parochial schooling that came in the wake of Vatican II. And that reappraisal had incalculable effects on the teaching orders, whose sense of identity and purpose was badly eroded in the 1960s. In this respect, as indeed in many others, the post-conciliar crisis in parochial education had roots in the years of the system’s greatest triumphs.2
"BIGOTRY IS NOT DEAD": THE SCHOOL AMENDMENT

The campaign to outlaw private grammar schools in Michigan was apparently begun in 1917. Its principal leader was one James Hamilton, a Republican of vast political ambition and a man who wore his anti-Catholicism with a distinctly progressive flair. The public school, as Hamilton saw it, was the culture's principal means of promoting unity and intellectual freedom; religious schools—and Catholic schools in particular—were not only sources of division and disloyalty but of reactionary political values as well. "Never since the first document of liberty [was] won from King John in 1215," Hamilton wrote in a typically florid passage, "has the Hierarchy done anything but oppose every vestige of progress toward human liberty throughout the world." Hamilton and a handful of colleagues had tried without success to have a bill introduced into the Michigan legislature to abolish the private grammar schools. They turned subsequently to efforts to force a statewide referendum on the issue, and apparently found considerable support among the electorate. (Hamilton's proposed amendment to the Michigan constitution provided that all children between the ages of five and sixteen "shall attend the public school in their respective districts until they have graduated from the eighth grade.") It was widely reported by the spring of 1918 that Hamilton's petition campaign was on the verge of success, although he had needed to secure the signatures of more than 40,000 registered voters.3

The Catholic response to Hamilton's 1918 campaign was surprisingly muted, apparently because the Diocese of Detroit was then without a permanent bishop. A lay committee was established under Detroit Chancery auspices to generate publicity against the campaign—the "Association for Educational Freedom" had at least two staff members in 1918, both of them on the Chancery payroll—but its lobbying efforts were notably subdued. Auxiliary Bishop Edward Kelly also appointed a diocesan superintendent of schools in 1918, a move that was meant to allay public fears about the quality and patriotic content of Catholic education. (Michigan's Lutheran synod named its first "school inspectors" at about the same time.) Kelly was surely comforted—and perhaps confirmed in his quiet approach—by the storm of protest that greeted the school amendment in 1918, most of it from non-Catholic and eminently respectable sources. Editors, businessmen, public school officials, and not a few Protestant clergy denounced the proposed amendment as a violation of religious liberty, a veiled attack on the overburdened public schools—and on the overburdened taxpayer—and as a subversion of wartime unity. Catholics found this last line of argument especially congenial. "The league has 'Made in Germany' written on its brow," Jesuit Father John McClory declared in June, with reference to the Wayne County Civic League, as James Hamilton's organization was called. "The kaiser himself could not have thought of a better scheme of social disruption just now. It is trying to spoil the present harmony between Protestants and Catholics who have been standing shoulder to shoulder in the war."4
The patriotic argument proved to be an effective one, but in the short term only. The Wayne County Civic League announced in July that, "for patriotic reasons," it would not file its petitions until the war was over. That moment came soon enough: the Hamilton forces submitted their petitions to the state in December 1918. Those petitions, however, were found to be lacking the required number of valid signatures, and the Civic League was obliged to begin its campaign anew. This it did, assisted by an apparently substantial number of dedicated workers. "On street car and on boat these agents of the devil's work are to be met with," the Michigan Catholic noted bitterly in the summer of 1919, "and last week a number of men working at Ford's Highland Park factory (one a foreman) were detected going about among the employees asking for signatures to the petition." The petition was not invariably presented as anti-Catholic in its purposes, at least according to Catholic sources. Some signers evidently thought that the proposed amendment provided for compulsory education through age sixteen. Still, "bigotry is not dead," as the Michigan Catholic pointed out: anti-Catholic rhetoric was prominent in the campaign, and was apparently the principal source of its fervor. That fervor produced the expected results by the close of 1919: sufficient signatures had been collected to ensure that the "school amendment" would appear on the Michigan ballot in November 1920.5

The Catholic response to the school amendment in 1919 and 1920 was far more aggressive than it had been in 1918. Detroit had a new bishop by 1919, and Michael Gallagher was not much given, at least in times of crisis, to quiet persuasion and measured speech. The proposed amendment was unjust, he told a gathering at Kalamazoo in the spring of 1919, "and if the law is an unjust law we are not bound to obey. We will not sacrifice the souls of our children, we will all go to jail to protect them, for we cannot in conscience obey any such law." The bishops of Grand Rapids and Marquette were a good deal more guarded in their public comments on the issue, and the Catholic campaign against the amendment in those dioceses was more subdued than it was in Detroit. But it was Detroit's campaign that commanded statewide coverage in 1920, and Bishop Gallagher who was widely regarded as the spokesman for all of Michigan's Catholics. This worried some of those Catholics, who feared that an aggressive and highly visible campaign might simply intensify anti-Catholicism, especially in rural areas. Catholics, after all, were only about 20 percent of Michigan's voters. But Bishop Gallagher was apparently confident that anti-Catholicism, at least as a political issue, appealed to a distinct minority in the population.6

The Gallagher-led crusade against the school amendment was formally inaugurated in Detroit in the spring of 1920. The early months were largely directed at Catholics, who were urged to register in good time for the state's late-August primary. (James Hamilton was one in a crowded field for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.) Michigan's women had been granted the full suffrage in 1919, and Catholic women were especially encouraged to register and vote. Bishop Gallagher wrote at least two pastoral letters to this effect in 1919 and 1920—he had endorsed women's suffrage in 1918—and the Michigan Catholic
repeatedly reminded women of "their duty to vote," as did the leaders of the League of Catholic Women. This duty obligated Sisters, too: "every Religious in the Diocese of Detroit must be registered on or before October 16th," Bishop Gallagher instructed the superiors who were under his jurisdiction. Gallagher feared, and with good reason, that Catholic women were less likely to vote than their generally more affluent Protestant sisters, to whom he gave credit for the success of Hamilton's efforts thus far. "Women are far more bigoted than men," the bishop told a Catholic rally in the spring of 1920. "Of the 120,000 names signed to the petition of the Wayne County Civic association to virtually ban all private schools, 75 per cent were those of women." How the Bishop had come to this conclusion is something of a puzzle. A sampling of names from the 1919 petitions shows that fewer than 40 percent of the signers were women. A mostly female opposition, however, whether real or imagined, had its rhetorical uses. "I... ask all right-minded women to work for the defeat of the movement," Gallagher urged, "and so clear the name of their sex."

Catholic activity against the amendment reached its height in the fall of 1920. Every parish was expected by then to have a "school amendment committee," whose job it was to see that Catholics locally were registered to vote and that non-Catholics were well supplied with anti-amendment literature. And nearly every parish seems to have complied, although some committees were much more active than others. (The parish committees were units of the Chancery-sponsored "Educational Liberty League.") The Holy Name Society, which had already staged a midsummer rally against the amendment, held two more "monster demonstrations," one at Lansing and one at Flint. The Lansing rally was addressed by Bishop Gallagher and by University of Michigan Regent James O. Murfin, a prominent Methodist, who represented the considerable body of Protestant opinion that had rallied to the cause of the religious schools.

By the time of the Lansing rally—it was held in mid-September—there seemed to be ample grounds for Catholic confidence. The Hamilton forces had been denounced from every respectable quarter, and Hamilton himself had placed a distant seventh in his primary bid for the gubernatorial nomination. Still, there was no cause for complacency, not, at least, in the eyes of Bishop Gallagher. September and October were months of intense political activity in the parishes: a special collection was taken up to defray the costs of the campaign, prayers for victory were said at every Mass and the Rosary recited daily for this intention in the schools, and priests were instructed to preach regularly on the issue and to distribute sample ballots to their parishioners, many of whom had never voted before. Then, on the final Sunday of October, Catholics staged a massive parade in Detroit, one that included most of the parochial school children from the city and its environs. "For more than three hours, Rt. Rev. Michael J. Gallagher... surrounded by ten priests of the diocese who served as chaplains in the recent world war, stood on the steps of his residence, reviewing the parade," the Michigan Catholic reported. That parade was climaxed by an open-air Mass at Navin Field, home to the Detroit Tigers and the city's largest stadium.
The Mass was celebrated, amidst a sea of patriotic symbols, by Father Patrick Dunigan, thrice-decorated for his valor in the recent war. Bishop Gallagher addressed the crowd at the conclusion of the Mass, commending Catholics for their splendid record in the military defense of the nation and for their steadfast support of religious liberty. More than 100,000 were said to have been in attendance.

The "school amendment" was defeated in November by a margin of nearly two to one. (The Diocese of Marquette, in Michigan's upper peninsula, was more solidly against the amendment—with "no" votes at 70.7 percent of the total—than were the dioceses of Grand Rapids and Detroit, where 62.7 percent of the votes were opposed.) Bishop Gallagher was publicly jubilant, and generous in his praise of the many non-Catholics who had voted against the amendment. But he was in fact disturbed, and apparently surprised, by the size of the vote in its favor. "Our majority was not very encouraging," the diocesan consultors agreed when they met in mid-November. "This means therefore that our enemies are not beaten and our work remains. We must begin immediately to build up and strengthen our forces for a repeated fight." Since the Chancery was in debt for the campaign just ended, a "repeated fight" was a most unwelcome prospect. "The Reverend Bishop," the consultors were told, "suggests the passage of a bill which would require the Supreme Court to pass on all proposed amendments before they are placed on the ballot."

As feared, the Hamilton forces did regroup in the wake of their defeat. They succeeded in placing the "school amendment" on the ballot for a second time in 1924. How best to respond to this turn of events was a matter of debate at the Chancery. Michigan politics were a good deal more polarized in 1924 than they had been in 1920. The Ku Klux Klan was active in many areas of the state, with Detroit alone thought to have more than 20,000 members. Anti-Catholicism was more open and bitter and apparently more widespread in 1924 than had been the case in 1920. This was true across the nation: a referendum in Oregon in 1922 had resulted in the passage of a school amendment similar to that proposed for Michigan, and bills of this nature had been introduced into other state legislatures. Under the circumstances, many Catholics worried that an aggressive campaign in defense of their schools might inadvertently strengthen the Klan, and further fuel anti-Catholicism. (There were fears, indeed, that the 1920 campaign in Detroit had done just that.) It might be prudent, certain of Gallagher's advisors contended, to mount no campaign at all and depend on the courts to strike down the "school amendment," should it become law. For by the summer of 1924 the Oregon law had already been declared unconstitutional by a federal court.

There was in fact a Catholic campaign against the amendment in 1924, but it was a quiet one, aimed almost exclusively at the Catholic population. There were no mass rallies, no parades, no provocative speeches by the bishop. Committees were again established in the parishes and their work coordinated by the Educational Liberty League, but that work was largely confined to registering Catholic voters. This did not mean, however, that non-Catholics were deprived
of anti-amendment propaganda. Lutheran and Dutch Reformed and Seventh Day Adventist committees distributed anti-amendment literature, and the Diocesan School Committee, as the Educational Liberty League was sometimes called, sent a letter in October to every signer of the Hamilton petition, most of whom, the committee professed to think, had either given the amendment "little thought, or have been misinformed as to what it proposes to accomplish." The secular press, moreover, was nearly unanimous in its opposition to the amendment, as it had been in 1920.12

The 1924 campaign was an exceptionally bitter one, despite the inconspicuous part that Catholics generally played, and it looked for a time to be going badly. "Authentic reports from different parts of the State disclose a hostility to Catholics far in excess of anything encountered in the last school fight of 1920," Bishop Gallagher warned in October. The results of the election, however, were not appreciably different from those in 1920. The "school amendment," in what proved to be its final appearance, was defeated by a margin of slightly less than two to one.13

The school campaigns were costly for the Diocese of Detroit, and not only financially. (The state's three dioceses were said to have spent nearly $2 million to defeat the amendment in 1920 and 1924.) Despite the considerable support that their cause had received from non-Catholics, many Catholics were shocked by the extent and the bitterness of popular opposition to their schools. The school campaigns left a residue of resentment in the Catholic community that had its effects on political life for the better part of a generation. The campaigns gave impetus to certain reforms as well, and these too were resented by many Catholics, who saw in them an erosion of what they called their educational rights. A state law, passed in 1919, required that all schools in Michigan be conducted in English, save for instruction in the catechism. Bishops Gallagher and Kelly had both opposed this bill, regarding it as unduly restrictive. But the climate of opinion in the wake of war—and in the midst of charges that Catholic and Lutheran schools were essentially foreign in their curricula and allegiances—caused the great majority of legislators to support it.14

There was strong support as well for a move to bring the parochial schools under state supervision. The Dacey law, passed in 1921, placed every private school in the state under the jurisdiction of the state superintendent of public instruction. And it required that teachers in the private schools meet the same educational standards as those in the public schools, and hold the same certification. The state's bishops supported the Dacey bill, evidently afraid that opposition would strengthen the school amendment forces. But the Dacey law was the kind of legislation that the bishops had long sought to avoid. Its advent, however, did give the bishops an additional incentive to promote reform in their schools, and an increased leverage over the clergy and the teaching orders, which had generally opposed attempts at rationalization and centralization of the Catholic systems. Bishop Gallagher, at least, seems to have recognized that in this respect the law was potentially a beneficial one.15
Despite the provisions of the Dacey law, reform came slowly to the Catholic schools. Local authorities were generally reluctant to police those schools closely and seemingly content to let all but the most egregious violations of state law pass unchecked. Diocesan authorities, for their part, were very nearly overwhelmed by the rapid expansion of the system, and by the consequent shortage of teaching Sisters. Bishop Gallagher did appoint a superintendent of schools for the Diocese in 1921, who succeeded a man whose functions in the post had been almost wholly ceremonial. The new superintendent was Father Charles Linskey, trained in pedagogy at the Catholic University and, at least for the first five years of his tenure, a full-time school administrator. He seems to have begun his new job with laudable zeal, visiting schools and promoting academic competitions. But he apparently attempted no serious administrative reforms, and left the system in as decentralized a state as he had found it. Perhaps this was partly a result of his temperament: reform of so sprawling a system could hardly be achieved by other than a forceful personality. But the failure had more fundamentally to do with the rapid growth of the system and its want of resources. Bishop Gallagher, presumably discouraged by the many obstacles to reform, assigned Father Linskey to a parish in 1926. He was both a pastor and superintendent of schools until 1930, whereupon the superintendency fell vacant, and remained so until 1934.16

The system over which Father Linskey had at least nominal jurisdiction was characterized, as it had been for decades, by wide variations in quality and resources. Some teaching orders, most notably the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters, had long maintained high standards for the training of teachers. (One hundred and seventy IHMs had college degrees in the mid-1920s.) These orders had no difficulty meeting the rather limited certification requirements of the Dacey law. That law required all teachers to have at least one year of college training, which warranted a "limited certificate." The limited certificate was valid for three years only, but might be exchanged for a grade school certificate, provided that the applicant had completed another sixteen hours of college credit. A "life certificate" was given after four years of college training. The great majority of teachers in the Diocese were certified by the late 1920s, although only a small minority had completed four years of college. But there were certainly teachers who did not meet the standards of the Dacey law. Of the five Sisters teaching at Patronage of St. Joseph School in 1934, for example, only one had Michigan certification. Nearly every order, it is true, made notable educational progress in the 1920s, and most Sisters spent their summers laboriously accumulating college credit. But the disparities in teacher training within the parochial system were still pronounced, and were almost certainly greater than those in the public schools.17

Class size too varied enormously, although nearly every Catholic school in Detroit was overcrowded in the 1920s. "For years the Archdiocese of Detroit has
had more pupils per classroom than most public or private systems in the country,” a Chancery report conceded as late as 1941. Even in 1935, when the teacher shortage had eased considerably, fully two-thirds of the Catholic grammar schools in Detroit had an average of at least fifty pupils per classroom. Three schools still averaged between seventy and seventy-nine pupils per room. It was nearly always the primary grades that were most overcrowded, for even in the 1930s the majority of pupils in the Catholic schools were enrolled in grades one through four. Many parents were apparently still accustomed to remove their children from the parish school once they had been confirmed. (Confirmation was generally conferred, in the Gallagher-Mooney years, at about the age of nine.) The skills that are taught in the early grades are, of course, essential to a child's intellectual development, and it may be that many children were permanently handicapped by their school’s overcrowded conditions. But we lack the evidence to determine whether this was in fact the case.18

We do know, however, that the most serious crowding occurred in the Polish schools. “New Polish schools in Detroit cannot get Sisters anywhere in America,” Bishop Gallagher complained in 1924, “yet it is imperative that they be gotten for the good of religion in some cases. One I have in mind especially, the new school in the Help of Christians parish, [was] founded recently to combat the pernicious activities of an Independent Church.” Our Lady Help of Christians School did indeed get Sisters. (The bishop may have requisitioned them from the older Polish schools, as he had done in a similar case in 1922.) But the school was terribly congested: “From the I to the VI grade each classrooms has over 100 children,” the pastor told the Chancery. His school, however, was in happier straits than the school at SS. Peter and Paul (Polish) parish, founded in 1923 on the western fringes of Detroit. “Our 242 children are still being taught in the church building, by 2 lay teachers, separated by a canvas curtain,” the pastor reported in 1925, not a little annoyed that “the Detroit School Board and the Board of Health are giving us all kinds of trouble.” Even the long-established Polish schools were badly crowded. “In many of the rooms seats designed for the occupancy of only two pupils are being used to accommodate three children,” a Board of Health inspector noted in 1925 of St. Stanislaus School in Detroit, where he had found as many as 122 children in a single classroom. In the neighboring public schools, on the other hand, even the most populous rooms were only “slightly overcrowded.” Conditions there were “not as alarming as those found at St. Stanislaus School.”19

The Board of Health did accomplish a limited reform at St. Stanislaus—the pupil-teacher ratio declined by some 14 percent between 1925 and 1928, when six new classrooms were added to the school. But it was still overcrowded by contemporary standards. What relieved the crowding at St. Stanislaus, as at many other schools, was the end of mass immigration in the mid-1920s and the plummeting birthrate of the early 1930s. These, coupled with growth in the ranks of the teaching orders, set the stage for major school reform.

Still, there were certain schools in the Diocese that even in the 1920s were
at least the equal of the better public schools. Catholic schools were often praised for their exemplary discipline, and many Sisters came to their work with an admirable intensity of purpose. The academies maintained by the various teaching orders were especially respected, by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. He had “found no poor or mediocre work whatever,” one W. H. Higbie reported from St. Mary’s Academy in 1921, which he had visited on behalf of the University of Michigan. “I would be glad of an opportunity to place my own daughter under such instruction.” The “intellectual and moral tone” of St. Joseph’s Academy in Adrian was “excellent,” according to the University’s G. M. Whipple in 1927. A colleague confirmed that judgment in 1931: “I can recommend very highly the instruction you are carrying on,” one Dr. Wray told the superior at St. Joseph’s Academy, adding that he was especially impressed “by the fine spirit I found on the part of both teachers and pupils.” The academies were not parish schools, and they drew their students, in the main, from affluent Catholic families. But many parish schools as well enjoyed respectable reputations. The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters had decided as early as 1915 to seek accreditation for all the high schools in their care. By 1935, 64 of the 104 high schools in the Diocese of Detroit had been accredited by the University of Michigan.

The high schools of the Diocese in 1935 were nearly all of them parish schools, something that distinguished Detroit from other large and long-established dioceses. For Detroit, as we have seen, was unusually slow to establish central high schools. The parish high schools throughout the Diocese were generally small, especially in the 1920s, when many of them had fewer than 100 pupils. (As late as 1935, twenty-one of the high schools in the Diocese were not yet four-year institutions.) Some of the schools were too small even to support the minimum of three teachers required for accreditation. “With but one teacher for the four grades of high school,” the superior at the Nazareth (Michigan) convent told the Anchorville pastor in 1934, “it is really impossible to accomplish the teaching task in the right way. . . . Your school was at its best when the eight grades only were taught and the children took the County Examinations and passed most successfully.”

The small parish high school was usually coeducational, and this too made the Diocese of Detroit unusual. About 78 percent of the high schools in the Diocese were coeducational in 1928, a figure far higher than that reported by any other large diocese. The pastor at Holy Rosary parish in Detroit was among those who deeply regretted this state of affairs, which was, indeed, a trifle embarrassing, given repeated papal pronouncements against coeducation. “Due to the Monsignor’s orders, many of the high school boys left us this year to attend schools taught by men,” the chronicles of Holy Rosary Commercial High School noted in 1938. “Those who could not afford these schools were enrolled in the different public schools. About sixty courageous souls walked back to us as if nothing had been said, and tried to hide behind their more fortunate feminine companions. No doubt they felt that once settled, they would not be disturbed, and thus it has been.” Boys outnumbered girls in the tenth grade at Holy Rosary by the fall of 1943.
High school enrollment in the Diocese grew substantially in the 1920s, as it did elsewhere, although the growth was inhibited to some extent in Detroit by the pressures of rapid development. (The Diocese of Detroit was fifth in the nation in elementary school enrollment in 1928, but sixth when it came to high school enrollment.) And enrollment continued to grow throughout the 1930s. The population of the Catholic secondary schools more than trebled between 1928 and 1941, when there were in excess of 19,000 students in the high schools of the Diocese. This had important effects on many schools: more students meant more teachers, which meant in turn a more specialized instruction and, often, a more diverse curriculum. The growing enrollment also gave Bishop Gallagher a welcome justification for the establishment of central high schools. A central high for girls was opened in 1927 in the former Cathedral School in Detroit, and a similar school for boys, taught by the Basilian Fathers, was opened in 1928. The need for such schools was evident, Gallagher told his clergy. "From every angle, be it of economy or efficiency, its wisdom cannot be called in question." Still, he apparently anticipated opposition, and was quick to assure his priests that the central high schools were not the start of major change in the decentralized parochial system. Those schools were "not intended to interfere in any way with the larger parochial high schools already functioning, but to provide higher educational facilities for grammar school graduates of those parishes where the maintenance of a high school is not practicable."23

The growing enrollments of the 1920s and the 1930s included unprecedented numbers of boys, who made up about 50 percent of the Catholic high school population locally by 1935. Their growing presence in the schools made for major changes, both curricular and atmospheric. Athletics assumed a new importance in many schools in the 1920s—a Catholic Schools' Athletic League was organized in Detroit in 1921—and competitive sport was more and more a principal focus of student life. This alone made the high school a palpably different place than it had been in the years before the First World War, when extracurricular activities had been mostly of a literary nature, and genteel standards had prevailed among the largely female ranks. The curriculum too came under scrutiny, and was more and more criticized as excessively academic, too little connected to the work-a-day world for which most boys were destined. The enormously high attrition rates that afflicted most Catholic high schools in these years only gave point to such criticism. "Startling as it may seem," the Michigan Catholic reported in 1935, with particular reference to the situation in the Diocese, "over 50% of the pupils who start in Catholic high schools never finish there." It was the boys who failed to finish school that mainly worried Catholic opinion-makers: they were more numerous than their female counterparts, and the social consequences of their undereducation were thought to be the more alarming. Worries of this sort did much to shape the school reforms that were finally inaugurated in the 1930s. For those reforms embodied a more utilitarian view of secondary schooling than had generally been characteristic of the principal teaching orders, whose proudest achievements, even in the 1930s, were
likely to be their young ladies' academies—and, of course, the women's colleges that had developed from them.24

The reforms of the 1930s are generally credited to the work of a single man. He was Father, later Monsignor, Carroll Deady, who served as diocesan superintendent of schools from 1934 until 1957. Deady was a young man when he came to the job—he was still some months shy of his thirty-third birthday—and not well known in the Diocese of Detroit, at least among the clergy. (Born and raised in Massachusetts, he had degrees from Boston College and the Catholic University, and had taught for a time at Notre Dame.) His youth and his want of local connections were widely assumed to be serious handicaps in his new position. So too was the apparently limited support that he received from the Chancery in the early stages of his career. Father Deady may have been appointed a full-time superintendent of schools, but he had difficulty, at least initially, acquiring even a modest office at the Chancery Building. For the Diocese was in financial crisis in 1934, and Bishop Gallagher was not much interested at this point in the historically nettlesome problem of school reform.25

Still, Father Deady brought some formidable strengths to his new job. He was an aggressive and energetic man and a notably adept administrator, who was not without a certain ingratiating charm. His credentials as a pedagogue were genuinely impressive, and this did much to win the confidence of an increasingly well-educated corps of teaching Sisters. He had the good fortune, moreover, to come to the superintendency from a year devoted to teacher-training in the Diocese, during which he seems to have made important friends in the larger teaching orders. (Father Deady was not quite the outsider that his fellow clergy believed him to be.) Perhaps most important, he was passionately devoted to the cause of school reform: his tenure was marked by a singleness of purpose that is seldom encountered in the administrative annals of the Archdiocese. And he had the confidence of a man who knows that his reforms are overdue. Changes of the sort that Deady had in mind had already been achieved in many of the larger dioceses, and had long since been implemented in the larger public systems of the state.

What Father Deady had in mind was nothing less than an administrative revolution. He wanted a uniform curriculum and a uniform approach to pedagogy, as well as a more stringent regulation of teacher education. This meant, of necessity, a highly centralized administration, for the teaching orders varied widely in each of these regards. And there were thirty-two orders at work in the schools of the Diocese by the mid-1930s. Deady knew, however, that he shared a vocabulary and certain major goals with at least the larger teaching orders, whose approach to their work was affected by current pedagogical trends as well as by their own traditions. When he announced that he intended to implement a modified version of the "Hoosic Plan" in the schools of the Diocese, there were Sisters who understood what he meant and were eager to assist him. Women like these were often among the best educated and most influential members of
their orders, and they were of inestimable help to Deady in allaying fears about his plans and minimizing resistance to his work among their fellow religious. 26

Certain of Deady's reforms, moreover, were welcomed by the great majority of teaching Sisters. He announced in the spring of 1934 that teachers in the Diocese would be required, by the fall of 1935, to have at least two years of college training before they began their careers. "It is no longer possible," he maintained, "to prepare a teacher during a summer and assign her a classroom in the fall in which to practice." Deady himself conducted "a course in the supervision and improvement of teaching" at Marygrove College in the summer of 1934, and at his instigation the number of courses available to teaching Sisters in the Diocese increased substantially. Among the most influential was a summer "demonstration school" at the University of Detroit, where "the best teachers from both the parochial and the city systems" taught master classes for the benefit of nearly 500 Sisters. The new emphasis on teacher training—and the generous publicity given to it—did much to enhance the status of the teaching orders locally, and their members were obviously grateful. They were pleased as well by Deady's appointment, in the fall of 1934, of an "elementary school council," which was composed of representatives from each of the twenty-seven orders that taught in the elementary schools. Deady saw the council primarily as a means by which his reforms might be explained to the various teaching orders. But it was at least potentially an advisory body, and, as such, an affirmation of the heightened professional status of the teaching Sister. 27

The elementary school council had a number of reforms to explain to its constituents even in 1934. Work was begun on a uniform curriculum for the elementary grades in spelling, handwriting, and arithmetic, and a "systematic testing program" was inaugurated in many schools. A textbook rental system was introduced into a handful of schools; this was understood to be a step toward the adoption of uniform texts throughout the parochial system. And the larger teaching orders were obliged to appoint at least one teaching supervisor from among their ranks, who was to be engaged full-time in the work of instructional improvement. (There were ten supervisors in the Diocese in the spring of 1935.) These women functioned too as Deady's agents in the work of reform, explaining his policies and overseeing their implementation. 28

The Deady reforms were substantially implemented in the grammar schools by 1940. Those reforms had meant extensive changes: children throughout the system now rented their books from the Archdiocese and followed the same course of study. Once they had finished the second grade, moreover, they spent their days with more than one teacher. Third and fourth graders moved between at least two classrooms daily, and children in the higher grades had three or four instructors every day, depending on the size of the school. This system was meant to improve the quality of teaching: an instructor was, at least ideally, given only her strongest subjects to teach, and various classrooms were supplied with the books and maps and equipment necessary for thorough instruction in a single
subject or subject group. There were “history rooms” and “mathematics rooms” in the schools of the Archdiocese by 1940, as well as the long familiar rooms devoted to music and art. Meant to improve instruction too was the “unit system” that prevailed in grades five through eight. The various curricular units, which were published by the Archdiocese, were detailed course outlines, and these were expected to be followed exactly by every teacher in the system. A uniform approach to pedagogy was thus achieved, at least in theory, and a minimum level of instructional competence all but guaranteed. As for the rigidities inherent in the unit system, these were modified to some extent by regular revision of the units, which had been drawn up initially by committees of teaching Sisters. And every unit included an individual testing program, by means of which the pupil was enabled to move through the work at a pace commensurate with his abilities.29

The unit system had been introduced in the high schools too by 1940, and it came eventually to incorporate most of the secondary curriculum. That curriculum was altered in other ways as well. Deady was eager to make the high schools less academic in their orientation, and more responsive to the vocational needs of those many students who did not go on to college. It was under his auspices that shop courses were made widely available to parochial high school students in Detroit, by means of a program of “Saturday schools” that were taught by men from the public system. And Deady encouraged the growing emphasis on sports. “During the past year high school athletics has received more publicity than [at] any other time in its history,” he reported in 1935. “This was of inestimable value to the schools.” Deady’s efforts, of course, simply hastened developments that were caused fundamentally by the emergence of even parochial high schools as instruments of mass education. But he did a great deal to legitimize, for many teaching Sisters, a less traditional understanding of secondary schooling.30

The Deady reforms were widely applauded. He had strong support, as we have seen, among the various teaching orders, and his work was much admired by Archbishop Edward Mooney, something that helped to silence any lingering clerical criticism of Deady’s centralizing policies. Public school authorities admired his work as well. “I have found that both teachers and pupils have been highly stimulated by the techniques, methods and underlying philosophy which the Diocesan Superintendent is recommending,” a school inspector from the University of Michigan wrote with typical enthusiasm in 1938. Deady’s reforms did indeed make the Catholic schools more like the public schools, both in terms of curriculum and methodology, although the English-speaking orders had long been accustomed to pattern their curricula at least in part on that of the local public system. Appropriately enough, the high school curricular units in literature, drawn up in the late 1930s by a committee of Sisters, included as mandatory reading not a single specifically Catholic novel.31

That the Catholic schools were similar to the public schools in many respects was generally reassuring to parents, at least to those who looked to the schools
as a means to social mobility. They did, of course, expect a certain "Catholic content" in their schools. But this was provided by daily instruction in religion, which ranked in every grade as a major academic subject, by daily Mass and classroom prayers, and by the presence of the Sisters. Parents had particular reason to be grateful, moreover, for the economies accomplished by the Deady reforms. The textbook rental system was a popular one, and of real utility in a mobile population. Those who moved house from one parish to another were similarly grateful for a uniform curriculum.

Deady was not without his critics, however, particularly within the ranks of the teaching orders. Some Sisters were never wholly reconciled to his reforms; others came eventually to believe that his reformed system was too rigid, that it failed to tap the full pedagogical expertise of the experienced teacher. This was the case with the women who served on the Educational Policy Board of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters, still the largest of the teaching orders locally. The board was established in 1945, the occasion of the order's centenary, and it quickly became a rival of sorts to the superintendent's office, although this rivalry was never acknowledged and was perhaps not fully recognized by the Sisters themselves. (The board published a regular Bulletin for teachers and one for principals, just as Deady's office did.) The board's members were frank, however, about their unhappiness with many of the Deady reforms. They especially disliked the rotation of pupils in the grammar school among several teachers every day. "In our sectionalized system the pupil becomes everyone's responsibility and consequently no one's," it was noted late in 1945. The IHMs' own tradition of pedagogy, known as the St. Andre system, had placed an extremely high value on the moral example of the teacher, and on her intuitive understanding of the children in her care. The intimacy between teacher and pupil, the almost maternal role that the teacher was assigned—these were seriously undermined, in the view of the board, by the rotation system. An intuitive approach to teaching was hampered too by the rigidities of the unit system, at least in the board's opinion. This was especially troubling with regard to the teaching of religion, but here the board looked forward to "more pliable procedures" that were evidently under consideration at the Chancery. As to the teaching of prayers, the members regretted the passing of a program that had once been standard in every IHM school. "It was generally felt that the inability of children to say the Acts, etc., is the result of not saying them regularly in school." 32

The Educational Policy Board was unhappy too with conditions in the parish secondary schools. These had lost their academic rigor, many members believed, and too much attention was given to vocational courses and to sports and other extracurricular activities. Most students, moreover, were not serious about their work, and the quality of that work was disturbingly low. There were apparently objective grounds for concerns of this sort: Deady's office began, probably in the 1940s, to publish a booklet for high school seniors that reviewed the basics of spelling, grammar, and simple computation. ("Considerable comment is caused by the fact that high school graduates apply for positions and are found
deficient in spelling, grammar, arithmetic and similar items that are considered essential knowledge," the parochial schools' Manual explained.) But the changes that the board deplored had much more to do with the explosion in high school enrollments than with any deficiencies in the Deady approach to education. High schools were no longer the elite academic institutions they had once been. As for the large classes that the Sisters quite rightly thought made for inadequate teaching, these had long been opposed by Deady himself. The superintendent in the late 1930s had placed a limit of fifty pupils on classroom enrollment. But even in the 1950s, this limit was sometimes ignored.

The discontents that surfaced in the Educational Policy Board may well have been those of a particularly well educated and ambitious elite. Many IHMs, like the members of other orders and like many Catholic parents, seem in the 1940s and the 1950s to have looked on the Catholic schools with enormous pride. The postwar years, indeed, were widely regarded in the Archdiocese as something of a golden age in Catholic education. Enrollments boomed: there were more than 175,000 children in the system by 1959, an increase of some 69,000 over 1947. The number of schools grew rapidly too, as Catholics began their exodus toward and into the suburbs. These new schools included twenty-two high schools built between 1945 and 1960, nearly all of them larger and better equipped than the parish high schools that still made up the great majority of secondary schools in the Archdiocese. (These new high schools were either "private" institutions, run independently by a religious order, or they were interparochial high schools that served a cluster of parishes.) Schools like these helped to bolster the academic reputation of Catholic education, and this, in turn, helped to strengthen the already remarkable support that parochial schools enjoyed among the laity. The demand for Catholic schooling locally exceeded the supply of classrooms well into the 1960s, and there were many parents for whom the teacher shortage of the postwar years was a personal tragedy. "I am disappointed and very unhappy because I wanted so much for my son to attend a Catholic Institution," one distressed father wrote to Cardinal Mooney in 1955. "Our children certainly need the guiding instructions of our nuns in order for them to someday take their places in this Great World of Ours as respectful and true servants of Our Almighty Lord."

"Our nuns," however, were in increasingly short supply in the 1950s. And in many orders there were changes underway that seem, at least in retrospect, to foreshadow the vocations crisis of the post-conciliar era. These changes had much to do with the reforming currents of the Deady years. They are, in consequence, best examined in this context.

Msgr. Deady's vision of a thoroughly professional corps of teaching Sisters was shared by many women religious. Certain orders, it is true, did not lengthen the training normally given to their members until they were obliged to do so by state law and diocesan regulation. But others had long been ahead of the law with regard to the education of teachers. Nearly half of the professed members of the IHM Sisters had bachelor's degrees in 1944, although the law required
no more than two years of college for what was in practice a permanent certification. And the community's leaders were already looking toward the day when every school principal and high school teacher in the order would hold a graduate degree. There were pressures at work, however, against ambitions of this nature: teaching Sisters were in chronically short supply, and many pastors opposed reforms that limited their availability. Msgr. Deady's gospel of an adequate teacher training was thus of great importance, for it gave an imprimatur of sorts to the educational policies of the more ambitious orders, even when those policies went beyond the standards that Deady himself had immediately in mind.35

That gospel also helped to legitimize the growing concern with professional status that was evident in a number of orders by the late 1940s. The IHMs announced in 1950 that their members would henceforth have a full four years of college training before they began to teach. "They arrived at this conclusion from a study of the breakdowns that are caused by the pressure of summer school work and Saturday classes," Msgr. Deady explained to Cardinal Mooney. That the IHMs were no longer willing to endure the grueling round of summer school and Saturday classes is worth noting: it is, at the least, a mark of growing independence in an already independent-minded order. But it also suggests that the Sisters had come to regard themselves as genuine professionals, and to see their loyalty to professional standards as sometimes taking precedence over their role as servants of the Church. For the IHMs' decision was taken in the midst of an acute and worsening teacher shortage, and was greeted with less than enthusiasm at the Chancery. By 1950, however, the IHMs had a wider community of reference than simply the Archdiocese of Detroit. They knew that many teaching Sisters not only supported their stand, but saw it as essential to the future of Catholic education and even of religious life.36

This wider community of reference had been quietly forming throughout the 1940s. It was animated by a shared concern for the professional and personal development of the teaching Sister, who, it was increasingly argued, was sent into the classroom both unprepared intellectually and inadequately grounded in a spiritual tradition. These concerns were given legitimacy and force by the various pronouncements of Pius XII on the religious life. The Pope was anxious that the teaching orders be unassailably professional in their work, that the excellence of Catholic schools be evident even to their harshest critics. It was under his auspices that the first International Congress of Teaching Sisters was convened at Rome in 1951, and at his behest that the first National Congress of U.S. Religious was held at the University of Notre Dame in 1952. ( Appropriately, the speakers there included Sister Mary Patrick, IHM, who urged a greater reliance on lay teachers in the parochial schools so as to permit a lengthened period of religious and professional training for Sisters.) The National Congress gave rise to immediate reforms in many orders. And it helped to prepare the way for the Sister Formation Conference, which was, for more than a decade after its founding in 1953, the principal forum for American Sisters who wished to explore the
possibilities of reform in the religious life. Sister Mary Emil, IHM, was among
the founders of the conference and served from 1954 until 1960 as its executive
secretary.37

The Sister Formation Conference was a force for change in nearly every re-
ligious order locally. The Sister Formation Bulletin was widely read, even in con-
servative communities like the Polish-American Felician Sisters. For it spoke to
a widespread desire among Sisters for a fuller recognition of their needs as pro-
fessionals, a desire that was the perhaps inevitable consequence of their rising
levels of education. The Felician Sisters, for example, decided in 1953 to increase
the preservice training of their members from two years of college to three; this
was extended to four years in 1960. Like the IHMs, the Felicians were weary
of the interminable summers spent in school, and eager to be as well creden-
tialed as other members of their field. An emerging sense of professional identity
was evident too in a 1952 reform that redefined the obligations of the teaching
Sister. Felicians were henceforth forbidden to "perform or supervise the children
in any janitorial service in the school" or in the church, they were no longer to
supervise after-school games or to oversee the collection of money in the schools
on any but "very rare occasions." Nor would they be allowed any longer to perform
such tasks as counting the Sunday collection or writing Sunday bulletins and
parish reports. Reforms like these were common to many religious orders in the
early 1950s. They were the fruit, in good part, of the First National Congress
of Religious and of the various papal directives that urged a more professional
approach to teaching on the part of the religious orders. (The Felicians regarded
their 1952 reform as a response to "the injunctions and wishes of the Holy Fa-
ther," according to their Mother General.) But reforms like these are best under-
stood as part of a larger shift in mentality among women religious, a shift that
was well underway before the Second Vatican Council.38

It was a long step, to be sure, from the heightened professional aspirations of the
1950s to the revolution in religious life that came in the wake of the council. That
revolution had many causes, some of which had to do with secular political devel-
opments. But the heightened aspirations of the 1950s were almost certainly a pre-
condition for the post-conciliar changes. It was their strong sense of identity as cre-
dentialed professionals that enabled many Sisters to demand a greater autonomy
as religious, and to carry the work of "updating" their orders beyond the bounds of
modest reform. It was this same sense that enabled many women to leave their or-
ders, something that growing numbers of Sisters were doing even before the close
of the council. And it was the demoralization of many orders, caused by defections
and by the divisions that were born of reform, that explains in part—although
only in part—the dramatic decline in new vocations to the religious life. (The
number of women religious nationally has declined steadily since 1966.) This
is not to say that the crisis of the religious orders was inevitable, or that it could
have been predicted with any certainty from the vantage point of the 1950s. But
that crisis did indeed have roots in the preconciliar years and in the remarkable
work of reform that was the hallmark of the Deady era.
The number of students enrolled in Catholic colleges nationally more than trebled in the 1920s, and very nearly trebled again between 1930 and 1950, largely, in this latter case, the result of the GI Bill. The rate of increase slowed after the late 1940s, but postwar prosperity meant continued health for even the smaller institutions: Catholic college enrollments continued to grow, and many schools moved in the postwar years to strengthen the qualifications of their faculties and to broaden their curricula. These national patterns were closely approximated in the Archdiocese of Detroit. Both St. Mary's—later Marygrove—College and the University of Detroit saw substantial growth in their enrollments after 1920; with the larger enrollment came a greater curricular breadth and an enhanced academic reputation. And Marygrove acquired some local competition: four Catholic colleges for women were founded in the Archdiocese between 1919 and 1947. Two of these developed, as Marygrove itself had done, from long-established female academies. They were the Adrian Dominicans' St. Joseph College, incorporated in 1919, and Nazareth College near Kalamazoo, opened in 1924 by the Sisters of St. Joseph at Nazareth. Madonna College and Mercy College, however, were outgrowths of the training institutes maintained by the Felician Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy for their own young members. These were more frankly vocational in their purposes than the older women's colleges—the genteel tradition of the female academy had been greatly weakened by the 1940s—and their prosperity in the 1950s was due in good part to this practical orientation. But every Catholic college locally was prosperous in that decade. Enrollments did not begin their precipitous decline until the early 1970s.39

Support for the Catholic college in the decades after 1920 reflected more than the growing wealth of the Catholic population and the general rise in college attendance among the middle class. It had much to do with a growing Catholic commitment to institutional separatism. The very existence of parochial schools was evidence of that commitment, although there were still many Catholics who regarded these schools as necessary only for the very young. But more and more Catholics by the 1920s were willing to support a broad range of Catholic institutions, including colleges and universities. (Both Marygrove and the University of Detroit received generous local support when they built their new campuses in the 1920s.) And an increasing number of Catholics were pleased to think that they were distinguished, as a people, by what a leading layman in Detroit described as a "proud and glorious isolation" from the larger culture. Catholics in this camp were likely to be assimilated members of the middle class, and more than usually devout. They had particular reason to promote the cause of the Catholic college: theirs was a world where college training was rapidly becoming the norm, but where that training was popularly linked to a decline in religious orthodoxy. Only the Catholic college seemed to offer a means to social mobility that did not threaten the integrity of the religious group.40

The Catholic college, then, was widely understood to have more than aca-
ademic and vocational goals: it was meant to preserve a worldview and a way of life. And this was a task for which the Catholic college was well adapted. For that college, whatever its academic deficiencies, was heir to a coherent philosophical tradition and to the spiritual discipline of its governing religious order. Its curriculum had a unity that had long been absent from the secular college, and its faculty had the confidence peculiar to those who operate within the bounds of a closed theological system. Every Marygrove student was taught that "Civilization is the Faith—the Faith is Civilization," according to President George Hermann Derry in 1927, who was certain as well that contemporary social problems could all be analyzed and solved "in the light of our established Catholic standards of the past." This closed intellectual world was not necessarily a stultifying one, even for the brightest students. Marygrove was a vibrant place in the decades after World War I, and an important local center of Catholic social action. Only the best-educated members of the IHM order were assigned to its faculty, and these included, over the years, a number of women whose intelligence, strength of character, and depth of faith made them formidably influential figures in the lives of the young.41

Marygrove was indeed a liberating place for many of its students, and not only intellectually. For they were encouraged by the faculty to expand their horizons to encompass more than an eventual marriage. The "Marygrove girl," according to President Derry, should be "rich in intellectual interests. . . . She should be capable, too, of doing her part in the world's work in whatever sphere of life she may be placed, either as a means of self-support or as an aid to others less fortunate than herself." By 1936, the college catalog was speaking of female independence in language that was less genteel: "OUR PURPOSE . . . is the production of personal POWER; DRIVING POWER, or ambition, the indomitable desire to succeed, to excel, to rise above the ranks; all college activities lead the student to an early determination of a lofty aim in life, and to a career motivated by the ideals of Catholic Action and by the crusading spirit of the Lay Apostle." The school had emphasized careers in social service well before the 1930s: a course in "social science" had been inaugurated at St. Mary's College in Monroe in 1921, and had included a generous provision for fieldwork and research in areas such as "labor, trade, employment and public health." And the life of the college had from the first been geared to producing leaders: students were trained as public speakers in weekly assemblies, and urged to model their own lives on those of the notable Catholics who were regularly brought to the campus. The Sisters too were important models. It was a moment of no small significance when Sister Honora Jack became Marygrove's first woman president in 1937.42

Some students, of course, were indifferent to the emphasis on leadership and social service. They betrayed no sign of the intellectuality or the reforming zeal that the faculty aimed to cultivate. But others took the lessons very much to heart. Marygrove students were prominent locally in a number of Catholic Ac-
tion movements, and the school's alumnae have since the 1930s been disproportionately represented in the ranks of Detroit's lay leaders.

The rapid growth in Catholic college enrollments in the decades after 1920 did not mean a decline in the number of Catholic students at secular colleges and universities. Their numbers too continued to grow. State schools were generally cheaper than their Catholic counterparts, and their academic reputations were usually stronger. And there were many Catholic parents—and would-be students too—who were not much worried about the purportedly deleterious spiritual effects of secular education. Some of them were probably marginal Catholics, but others were at least ordinarily devout. The Students' Holy Name Society at the University of Michigan, for example, had some 300 members at its birth in 1920, when Catholic enrollment at the school was probably around 500.43

The Catholic student at Michigan in 1920 had a Catholic chapel on the campus and a thriving Catholic student society to which he might belong. Perhaps this looked to him like an indirect episcopal blessing on the university, although it was hardly intended as such. Both Bishop Gallagher and Cardinal Mooney were ardent supporters of Catholic higher education, and Mooney especially was convinced that the secular college and the Catholic college were wholly at odds in their conduct and purposes. He "pointed out the wide variance there is between the Catholic mind and the non-Catholic mind," the Michigan Catholic reported of a 1938 Mooney address to the Newman Club in Ann Arbor. As to Wayne University, the former City College of Detroit, it was "a rival secular (and secularist) institution," according to the Cardinal in 1952, "whose influence on the cultural life of the city has to be countered as much as possible."44

Still, Mooney gave quiet support to Catholic student activities at the University of Michigan, as Bishop Gallagher had done before him. A Catholic chaplain was regularly assigned to the university after 1919, and these chaplains were, on the whole, an unusually able and articulate lot. And Gallagher and Mooney both encouraged lay financial support of St. Mary's Student Chapel in Ann Arbor, which opened in temporary quarters in 1919. (The permanent facility was completed early in 1925.) St. Mary's apparently drew a substantial majority of Catholic students to Mass on a fairly regular basis, although it was always a distinct minority who were active in the Catholic students' society, which was known as the Newman Club after 1929. The club's membership stood at only 282 in 1940, after several years of unusually ambitious activity. The university had any number of rival attractions, of course, and Catholic students were apparently as eager as most to demonstrate their independence in religious matters. Not that this was easy, at least in the days of Father Michael Bourke, who had charge of St. Mary's from 1919 until his death in 1928. Father Bourke kept an evidently careful record of the number of times his student parishioners failed to attend Sunday Mass, convinced, as he often told his flock, that "the curse of the U. student is not loss of faith but indifference as to Mass and the Sacra-
ments." "I feel it a bounden duty to write to some parents in this matter," he told his congregation in 1926. "They look to me to keep an account and notify them."45

Father Bourke was also careful to prepare his flock for the attacks on revealed religion that they were almost bound to encounter in the classroom. They would be told that "man is a material development from a lower order," that "science and the Bible will not square," that miracles are impossible, that "dogma shackles independent thought." But the students should not be upset by this. "Evolution is only a theory after all," Father Bourke pointed out. "What would happen to the lawyer or theologian who used the so-called proofs of the scientist?" A properly circumscribed view of evolution, he hastened to add, was quite consistent with Catholic orthodoxy. Father Bourke cited St. George Mivart to prove this point, although perhaps to dubious effect, for certain of Mivart's writings on science and religion had long since been placed on the Index expurgatorius, and the man himself was excommunicated in 1900. But Father Bourke had other, happier examples of intellectual converts with which to reassure his students: it was men like Newman and Orestes Brownson in the last century and Chesterton and Msgr. Robert Benson in the present one, he told them, who refuted the claim that the Church was hostile to the intellectual life. Still, Father Bourke instructed the students to avoid certain university classes—the Bible as literature, "natural religion," and apparently nearly every course in philosophy. "If you need this," he told them, with reference to philosophy, "get it in your own schools."46

There was more to Catholic intellectual life at Michigan, however, than prohibitions and apologetics. The Newman Club sponsored numerous study groups and lectures—the social encyclicals were popular topics in the 1930s—and in the 1930s especially a number of distinguished Catholics spoke on campus, among them G. K. Chesterton, Etienne Gilson, Msgr. John A. Ryan, and the Catholic Worker's Peter Maurin. The Catholic Worker itself was a feature of the pamphlet rack at the Student Chapel by 1937, where it joined the likes of Commonweal and America. And there was a growing interest in the liturgical movement: the Newman Club was experimenting with the dialogue Mass by 1939. St. Mary's was never an influence on the intellectual life of the campus as a whole; Michigan was as secular in its preoccupations as most large state universities. But it did provide those students who were drawn to it with at least an introduction to a generous range of Catholic thought.47

The Newman movement in the Archdiocese of Detroit was not confined to the University of Michigan. A Newman club had been founded at the City College of Detroit by 1933, when a Basilian father was its spiritual director. Father Leo Andries of Holy Rosary parish in Detroit assumed the post in 1936; he found "a very fertile field" of work at what was now Wayne University. "From the short conversations I had with the various students there," he told the Chancery, "I find that some of the teachings, especially in psychology, are a far cry from the Catholic Doctrine." Archbishop Mooney, as we have seen, was equally worried about the contents of the Wayne curriculum, and in 1940 he managed
to secure the Paulist Fathers for the Newman apostolate there. (The Paulists, who were based at "Newman Hall" on the fringes of the campus, remained at Wayne until 1971.) There was also a Newman Club at Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti by the 1940s, although a "Catholic Students' Club" had had at least a brief existence at the school at the time of the First World War. But a campus chapel for what eventually became Eastern Michigan University was not achieved until 1965, when there were apparently more than 1,000 Catholic students on the campus.48

It was clear by then that Newman work needed to be greatly expanded, and not only in the Archdiocese of Detroit. Catholic college enrollments were still growing in 1965, but there were nearly three and a half times as many Catholic students on secular campuses as there were in Catholic colleges. The national chaplain of the Newman Apostolate in 1965—he was Monsignor John Bradley, rector of St. Mary's Student Chapel in Ann Arbor—was finding his a veritably "impossible position." "At the present, there are 198 full-time priests on secular campuses," he noted with reference to the national scene, "while more than 3000 priests, nuns, etc., are on Catholic campuses." His unenviable task, as he saw it, was "trying to sell the bishops, priests, nuns, religious orders, faculty and friends on the urgency of visualizing Catholic higher education wherever you find Catholic people and not just on campuses under Catholic auspices."49

Monsignor Bradley's mission was so difficult, in large part, because Catholic education had been an astoundingly successful enterprise for at least the past half-century. Detroit was a typical diocese in this regard: parochial school enrollments there had grown dramatically after 1920, and the quality of the Catholic schools had increased substantially. Lay support for Catholic education, moreover, was stronger than it had ever been before, especially with regard to the secondary schools, where the growth in enrollment since 1920 had been particularly impressive. There were still many Catholic children, to be sure, who were not in Catholic schools. But many of them—perhaps most of them, in the Archdiocese of Detroit—were in the public schools because there was no Catholic school available locally or because the parish school was filled to capacity. Even in 1965, it seems safe to say, a substantial majority of Catholic parents wanted—and expected—to see the parochial systems expanded to serve the needs of the newest suburbs. For the parochial school was, for a great many Catholics, an integral part of the religious world in which they had been raised. Loyalty to that school was widely seen as an essentially religious obligation.

By 1965, however, the parochial schools had acquired some formidable Catholic critics. Pope John had called for a greater openness to the world on the part of Catholics, these critics argued. Was it right for American Catholics to continue a policy of institutional separatism, especially at a time when racial segregation in the schools was more and more a troubling issue? And Catholics were no longer a heavily immigrant population; their educational needs were very much those of other Americans. The recent election of a Catholic president was
often cited as conclusive proof that Catholics had arrived, and not just economically. Accepted now as fully American, the critics asked, were Catholics justified in maintaining a system of schools that had its origins, at least in part, in nineteenth-century intolerance? Might the abolition of the parochial schools be a necessary gesture in support of ecumenism? And there were financial questions too, ones that troubled even the supporters of Catholic education. Building and maintaining schools was an increasingly costly business, too costly, indeed, for Catholics to look toward a system of parochial schools that would serve the needs of every Catholic child—or even a sizable majority of Catholic children. Under the circumstances, might Catholic resources not be better invested—perhaps more charitably invested—in other ways? 

The Catholic audience for critics of this sort was never large, even at the height of post-conciliar disaffection. There was then—and still is—substantial support among the laity for the idea of Catholic education. The crisis in parochial education was fundamentally an economic one: many parishes simply could not afford to pay a sufficient number of lay teachers to staff a school. But the rising tide of criticism almost certainly contributed to the economic crisis, for that crisis was caused most immediately by an abrupt decline in the number of teaching Sisters. And that decline had to do in part with a growing doubt in many orders about the importance of the educational mission to which most American Sisters had historically been committed. There were growing doubts among the clergy too, especially among the younger men. Service to the poor—most of whom were non-Catholics—seemed to an increasing minority of the clergy to be more Christian than the work of parochial schooling. And more and more priests were frank about their desire to work almost entirely with adults. These changing attitudes, it might be noted, had more than symbolic meaning: there were not many parishes in the 1960s where a troubled school could survive without the full support of the pastor.

The crisis in parochial education was but one in a series of crises in the post-conciliar Church. But it was surely among the most important. For American Catholics have been decisively shaped, as a community, by the parochial school. It was the schools that were largely responsible for the surprising solidarity of what was, after all, a multiethnic and economically diverse population. It was the schools that made it possible for even assimilated Catholics to live in partial isolation from the larger society. The steady decline in parochial school enrollments has already had important effects on the Church, as Andrew Greeley, among others, has shown. And it will continue to do so, as more and more Catholics come to maturity in a world whose institutional and theological boundaries are no longer clearly drawn.
ILLUSTRATIONS
Weinman Settlement House, League of Catholic Women, in the early 1920s.

Baseball in Detroit's St. Rose parish. Father Herman P. Fedewa, at left, and Father Edward J. Taylor, probably in the mid-1920s.
A class at St. Rose High School in Detroit in the mid-to-late 1920s.

Bowling in St. Margaret Mary parish, Detroit, during World War II.
Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD): an after-school class in the catechism, probably in the early 1950s.

Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD): a home visit near Erie, probably in the early 1950s.
Guardian Angel's Home, Detroit, in the care of the Felician Sisters, probably in the early 1950s.

Holy Name Society men in 1951. The Society's national convention was held in Detroit that year.
Mrs. G. William Guering, president of the League of Catholic Women in 1957, before a portrait of League founder and first president, Mrs. Charles Casgrain.