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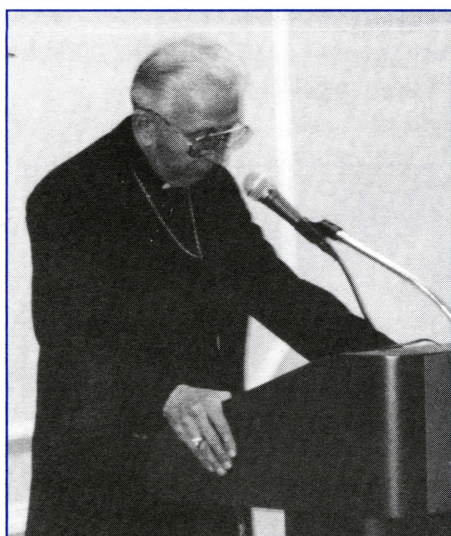


New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter

VOLUME XVII NO. 3

SPRING 1998

Conference on Catholic Education in New Jersey Held in April



Bishop Marconi welcomes the audience to the conference on Catholic education in New Jersey.

Saturday April 25, 1998, dawned as a day more suitable for rambling through Stokes State Forest with a picnic lunch or for walking the boards at Point Pleasant Beach than for serious consideration of the history of Catholic education in the state. Nonetheless an interested group assembled in the Bishop Dougherty University Center by mid-morning, and they were well rewarded for their attendance.

Bishop Dominic A. Marconi, D.D., chairman of the New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission, welcomed the audience. In his remarks the bishop set the stage for the day's activities with a brief review of the unceasing interest of the

Church in providing a solid education grounded in a Catholic understanding of the relation of the world to its Creator for its members. American Catholics demonstrated this concern early with the establishment of Georgetown University and continued through numerous schools conducted first by lay teachers, then increasingly by religious Brothers and especially Sisters down to our own day, when laity have returned in increasing numbers to teach in Catholic schools.

The first two panelists looked at aspects of educational development in the state's two largest urban centers, Newark and Jersey City. Doctor Petrick, chair of the Social Studies Department at Dickinson High School, Jersey City, examined the struggle for control of public education in Hudson County's seat from the early days of the nineteenth century up to 1930.

At first, public education really meant no more than education for children of the poor, supported by the efforts and contributions of some group. Only gradually did it come to mean tax-supported schools controlled and directed by elected or appointed public officials. The conflict over education was one of the principal means by which the old Protestant elite and the immigrant Catholic masses resolved their battle for power in the city. Despite urging



Speakers at the conference (left to right) are Reverend Michael G. Krull, chairman of the Commission's public programs committee, Thomas McCabe, Professor Elizabeth Milliken, Reverend Augustine Curley, O.S.B., Dr. Barbara Petrick, George Keenen, Jr. and Dr. Linda Jacewich.

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Dr. Barbara Petrick reads off some data about the development of public and parochial education in Jersey City.

by the American episcopate, American Catholics never managed to enroll all Catholic children in Catholic schools; the majority generally attended public schools. Thus, Catholics had a vital interest not only in the Catholic schools but also in the public system. With verve and humor Doctor Petrick traced the working out of the conflicts down to the 1930s.

In choosing the period 1880 to 1930 for her examination of the Newark schools, both public and parochial, Doctor Linda Jacewich focused on a narrower time period than did Doctor Petrick, but she examined it with similar elan and insight. Newark's population jumped from about 105,000 in 1870 to over 442,000

in 1930, and became much more varied, immigrants from southern and eastern Europe joining the older groups from northern and western Europe; a notable influx of blacks from the American south and the beginnings of Asian immigration further enhanced the variety of ethnic backgrounds.

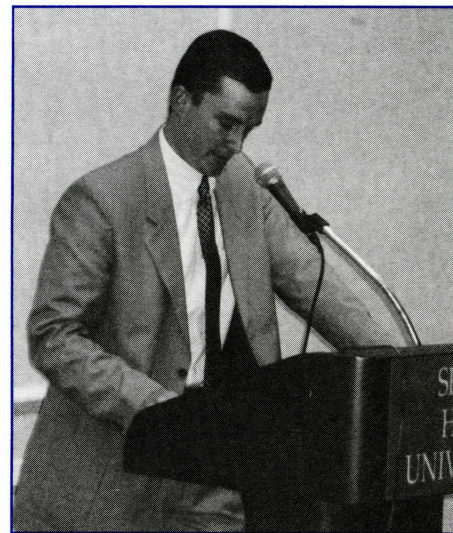
Not only the greatly increased numbers of students but the great variety of languages and cultures challenged both the public and parochial schools. Their tasks were complicated by the rapid industrialization taking place in the nation and the state; by 1910 Newark ranked eleventh in the United States in terms of the value of its manufactured products and this increasingly complex economy demanded a more skilled work force.

Tighter organization and greater centralization occurred in both the public and parochial schools. A central bureaucracy developed in the public schools to provide leadership, to coordinate curricula throughout the city, and to insure that standards were met. High schools began to proliferate, their offerings expanding to include not only the traditional college prep sequence, but various vocational and commercial programs.

Summer schools were another innovation that sought to meet both the academic and recreational needs of Newark's young. Catholic schools in part met the challenge of the "New

Immigration" by the establishment of national parishes, with their own schools. This meant also the entry of new religious communities to serve the recent immigrants. Central control by the diocese began to develop, with the appointment of a diocesan superintendent of schools, but "centralization" also meant more control by the higher superiors of religious communities, so that variety remained evident even under a diocesan umbrella.

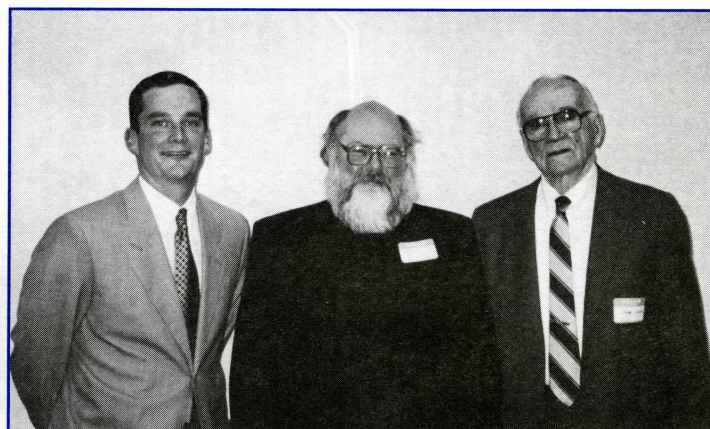
In sum, the circumstances of the time led both the public and parochial schools of Newark to adopt many of the same devices in order to meet the challenges, so that by 1930 they were much more like each other than they had been in 1880.



Thomas McCabe discussing the closing of St. Benedict's Prep, Newark.



The "macro" panel, who dealt with school systems: left to right, Professor Elizabeth Milliken, Dr. Barbara Petrick and Dr. Linda Jacewich.



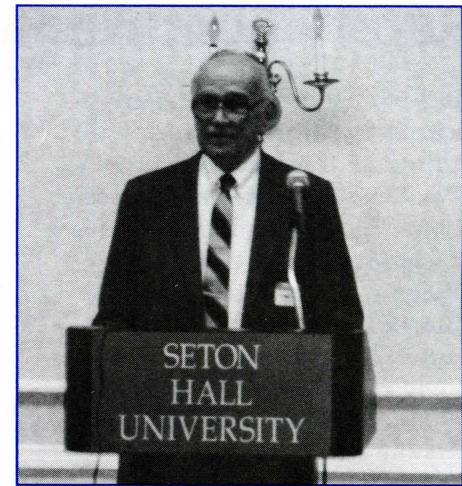
The "micro" panel, who dealt with individual schools: Thomas McCabe, Reverend Augustine Curley, O.S.B. and George Keenen Jr.



Dr. Linda Jacewicz makes a point about public and parochial schools in Newark.



Professor Elizabeth Milliken chaired the first session and commented on the papers.



George Keenen, Jr. recalled Newman Prep both as an alumnus and a student of its history.

The members of the second panel looked not at school systems, but at individual schools. Thomas McCabe, a doctoral candidate at Rutgers University and a teacher at St. Benedict's Prep in Newark examined the circumstances which led to the closing of that school in the aftermath of the 1967 riots. Established in 1868, Saint Benedict's was experiencing difficult times as it approached its centennial year. Located in central Newark, it had attracted students not only from the city but from much of the surrounding territory, as far away as Jersey City, and even farther.

In the late 1950s and the 1960s, however, Newark lost population as suburbia expanded. Suburban parents began to fear for the safety of their sons in what seemed an increasingly ominous city and attendance at the school dropped. This forced the Benedictine monks who operated the Prep to examine the economic feasibility of continuing the school. At the same time, the aggiornamento resulting from Vatican Council II led many of the monks to question whether conducting an urban prep school was an activity appropriate to modern Benedictinism.

So, for both economic and vocational reasons the monks were deeply divided over the question of retaining the school. The issue resulted in the closing of the school, the separation of the Newark and Morristown

communities, and then eventually the re-opening of the school.

George Keenen, Jr. discussed a very different school, Newman Prep, founded in 1900 at Orange, New Jersey, by Doctor Jesse Albert Locke. He apparently envisioned a small-scale Catholic Eton; the school was organized along the lines of English public schools and drew its students from well-to-do Catholic families across the nation. Newman had a seven-year program, in which the Third Form was equivalent to freshman year of high school, and it prepared its students well for college, its graduates regularly going on to Yale, Princeton, Notre Dame, Georgetown and Pennsylvania, among others.

It had the backing of Cardinal Gibbons and of prominent laymen like John J. Raskob, but it is best remembered, most likely, for F. Scott Fitzgerald, who spent the years 1911

to 1913 as a student there. By the time he arrived, the school had moved to Hackensack, where it had excellent facilities for its small size. In 1915 it moved to Lakewood, combining two private estates into a larger campus for its anticipated maximum student body of 100.

The school prospered during the 1920s, maintaining its elite English orientation and its Catholic character, but the Great Depression of the 1930s and the onset of World War II sounded its death-knell. It closed after the 1941-42 academic year.

Professor Elizabeth Milliken and Father Augustine Curley, O.S.B. in their commentaries emphasized the relationship of the paper topics to other contemporary events and developments, and Father Michael G. Krull, program chairman for the Commission, recapitulated the thoughts of the day in his concluding remarks.



A corner of the audience. For a change, the view shows some of those sitting towards the rear rather than at the front.

Gerety Lecture Series Continues

The Archbishop Peter L. Gerety Lectures in Church History will continue in the academic year 1998-1999 with two major presentations. On September 25 Professor Thomas Groome of Boston College will speak on "Catholic Education: Some Historical Roots." Professor Groome is widely recognized for his work in the field of religious education. He is the author of *Christian Religious Education* (1990) and of *Sharing Faith* (1991). He has just published *Educating For Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Parent and Teacher*, in which he attempts to develop a full-blown Christian philosophy of education. Catholic educators should find his topic a particularly interesting subject for an evening's conversation and reflection.

In February Professor John T. McGreevy of Notre Dame University will speak on "Catholicism and Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North." In 1996 McGreevy's book, *Parish Boundaries*, examined encounters between Catholics of European background and African-Americans, both Catholic and non-Catholic, in several Northern cities. His work provided, as one reviewer said, rich insights into the urban confrontations of the 1960s, their genesis and their results. New Jersey did not figure largely in the book; perhaps the lecture will focus somewhat more on this state. Whether it does or not, however, Professor McGreevy is well worth hearing.

Lectures take place in the Immaculate Conception Seminary on the Seton Hall University campus. All are welcome.

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Most Reverend Dominic A. Marconi, D.D., *Chairman*; Reverend Monsignor Joseph C. Shenrock, *Vice Chairman*; Barbara Bari; JoAnn Cotz; Reverend Augustine Curley, O.S.B.; Reverend Daniel J. Degnan, S.J.; Reverend Monsignor William N. Field; Reverend Monsignor Charles J. Giglio; Reverend Michael G. Krull; Reverend Raymond J. Kupke; Joseph F. Mahoney; Sister Margherita Marchione, M.P.F.; Elizabeth Milliken; Reverend Monsignor Robert G. Moneta; Allan Nelson; Sister Irene Marie Richards, O.P.; Sister Thomas Mary Salerno, S.C.; Reverend Monsignor Francis R. Seymour; Reverend Joseph D. Wallace; Peter J. Wosh. Joseph F. Mahoney, *Newsletter Editor*.

Publications Available

The following publications of the Commission are available:

Sullivan, et al.,
The Bishops of Newark
hardcover, \$10; softcover, \$5

Wosh,
Catholic Parish and Institutional Histories in the State of New Jersey
paperback, \$1

Wosh,
Guide to Northern New Jersey Catholic Parish and Institutional Records
loose-leaf bound, \$35

Mahoney/Wosh,
Diocesan Journal of Michael Augustine Corrigan, Bishop of Newark
hardcover, \$35

For the Guide or the Diocesan Journal, add \$3 for postage and handling.

Make checks payable to: New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission and mail to:

Professor Joseph F. Mahoney
Department of History
Seton Hall University
South Orange, NJ 07079-2687

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