

RE PARISHMENT
1946 B.C.A.

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS VACATION SCHOOLS
IN
OKLAHOMA

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IN OKLAHOMA

By

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INTRODUCTION

It is preeminent in the minds of all true Catholics that the Catholic School is the ideal institution for the education of the Catholic child. Religion is not, and never should be regarded as simply another academic subject added to the course of studies to be forgotten as soon as the period of instruction in religion is over.

The properly organized Catholic School makes the principles inculcated in the Religion class filter through every hour of the day and thus each subject is learned in the light of man's last end. The child finds through this type of atmosphere God is as omnipresent as the air he breathes. Whether in the classroom, study hall, library, or on the playground, his every act is satiated with the fact that he is there "to know God, to love Him, and serve Him in this world and be happy with Him in the next."¹

But, unfortunately, all of our twenty or more million Catholics in America have not the sharp spiritual eye which would enable them to think with the Church and hence, with Christ and make the necessary sacrifices, great if need be, to realize Catholic ideals. Again many well-meaning Catholics, because of the absence of parochial schools, especially in dioceses of sparsely settled Catholic population, cannot attain the ideal at all. Are the children of these groups, constituting fifty percent of the Catholic children, to be ignored and left in their peril

¹ Baltimore Catechism. New York City: Benziger Brothers. (1940), 12.

without religious training.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me,"² is Christ's answer. That they may come unto Him, they must know Him. Therefore, His messengers must go out and compel them to come in and learn of Him. That is the mission of the Religious Vacation School.

It is a difficult mission with vast fields to be conquered. It requires great determination, a determination to use every known method of reaching and teaching these children; a determination to put our minds and hearts into the work. According to a report given by Most Reverend Bishop J. M. Cannon,³ of Erie, at the Seventh Annual Catechetical Congress, held in Philadelphia, November, 1941, there are more than two million Catholic children enrolled in the Public Schools of the United States. Citing other figures Bishop Cannon says, there are 17,500 Catholic parishes in the United States and fewer than half of them, 7,500 have parochial schools. Therefore, there remain 10,000 parishes without schools, and the little ones attend the public school.

The purpose of this paper is to show how the Catholic Religious Vacation Schools are attempting to solve this problem; what has been done so far, what is yet to be done, and how they are doing it. The subject, Catholic Religious

² Mark X, 14.

³ The Register. XVII (November 30, 1941), Col. 8, P. 1. Denver, Colorado.

Vacation Schools is discussed generally under objectives, organization, enrollment, and history, -- specifically as functioning in the State of Oklahoma, the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, under the captions, History, Enrollment, Organization, Financing, Personnel and Procedures, together with the Results obtained and the flaws in the present set-up.

CHAPTER I

THE RELIGIOUS VACATION SCHOOLS IN GENERAL

The Church has an all-important duty to perform in complying with the command of Christ who says, "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations;----- Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."¹ Thus, it follows that instruction in the principles of faith must be taught to all, from the pulpit, in the parish school or in the vacation school.

The standard Catholic Religious Vacation School, may be defined as a systematic school of religion conducted three hours each day, five days a week, for four weeks during the period of public school vacation. The daily session begins at nine o'clock and the children are dismissed at noon. Sessions are held from Monday through Friday of each week. Morning classes have been found to be most practical for several reasons: first, they avoid the heat of the afternoon and put less tax upon the teachers; secondly, they permit the children to return to their homes where they may be usefully employed in the afternoon.

The work of the vacation school is not a mere formal religious instruction such as is furnished by the Sunday School; it also provides the atmosphere of a school and gives opportunity for forming the conscience and developing a sense of responsibility to God in daily conduct.

1 Matthew XXXVIII, 19-20.

It is during the first years of life that a child receives those indelible impressions that mold his mind and heart and since many parents are negligent in teaching the child its obligations to God, its parents and charity to others, the saintly Pope Pius X saw fit to admonish both clergy and laity in his encyclical Acerbo Nimis, of April 15, 1905, in the following terms:

Ex quo colligimus iure, quum fides id aetatis usque eo languerit ut in multis pene sint intermorta, sacrae catechesis tradendae officium vel negligentius persolvi, vel praetermitti omnino.

Fortunately, his admonition was heeded, and the solemn duty of instructing our youth in Christian Doctrine has been recognized.

It is an accepted fact that many of our people have only a smattering knowledge of the faith and hence, lack the energy which springs from its high ideals. Others, through no fault of their own, have been deprived of a sufficient knowledge of their religion to meet the difficulties that arise during life.

Hence, the main purpose of the Religious Vacation School is to give an opportunity to all those who may be deprived of such education, to learn the principles of

2 Pope Pius X, Encyclical. "On the Teaching of Christian Doctrine." The American Catholic Quarterly Review, XXX (July, 1905), 423. (Translation: Wherefore, we justly conclude that since faith has so languished that in many persons it seems to be dying, the duty of catechetical instruction must have been negligently performed or altogether omitted.)

right conduct; that is to instruct the pupil in his duty to his Supreme Ruler, to the State, and his fellow-man.

It is the duty of the school to correct the false philosophy of materialism since the Catholic view-point is unalterably opposed to such doctrine. The Catholic holds that there can be no morality in conduct unless that conduct is shaped by the proper norms. Morality and religion are intrinsically related.

The religious training and education of the Catholic Public School child is one of the greatest problems of the Church. It is evident that both Church and State will suffer if our girls and boys grow to adulthood without a knowledge of Christian faith and morality. "People today are asked to give reasons for the faith that is in them"³ and the inability to give an explanation, or make ones faith seem reasonable tends to weaken and even to destroy it.

Since all educators are agreed that childhood is the time to set standards and fix habits it is obvious to all that when the Public School child receives no religious education, the Church will sustain a heavy loss, because the standards of faith and morality which these children should profess in later years will not be the same as of those who have attended religious instruction daily or of those who have been under the guidance of consecrated teachers. Indeed, they will be fortunate if they have any faith at all.

³ Most Rev. Robert E. Lucey. "The Necessity of Religious Instruction for Children Attending Public School." National Catechetical Congress, Proceedings. (October, 1940), 83.

Lacking the necessary knowledge of religion the Church will be burdened with weak, careless, and poorly instructed Catholics. An outstanding Catholic layman has the following to say on this subject:⁴

And so it is that we find in America today millions of people---some calling themselves Catholics---who cannot logically defend their faith in God, or in man as an immortal being. And when they are confronted by pseudo-scientists (whose arguments can usually be knocked into a cocked hat by an informed Catholic), they either evade the issue or weakly acquiesce in the arguments they hear.---How important it is, then for the Catholic layman to evidence his faith in this age of chaos and confusion.

Nor, is that the least harm, these un-christian lives will deter many an interested soul who is seeking God, from joining a church in which its members give little or no evidence of that faith, for, "If our lives are not visibly better than those of heretics and pagans, we will not convince them that our souls with religion are better off than theirs without it."⁵

It is most important that the citizens of a democracy be well trained in self-control, because if they cannot restrain themselves from evil, neither can they govern themselves, nor others. Consequently, the Church or the school must teach the principles and practices of self-discipline.

Public officials are beginning to realize that without religion and morality the citizen of the State prefers

⁴ John Moody. "Why the Catholic Layman Must Evidence His Faith." National Catechetical Congress, Proceedings. (October, 1938), 33.

⁵ Lucey, op.cit. 83.

his own pleasure and comfort to the common good. Joseph C. Cropsey says, "A dozen years on the bench have shown me that our boys can be saved only by religion."⁶ Without religion the virtues of patriotism, honesty, and justice will disappear; family life will break down and then the nation will disintegrate. It is therefore, the duty of the Church and school to teach its students the correct viewpoint and principles of right thinking and living; to develop in them a respect for authority and responsibility to God and man. Since in religion and right ethics, men learn to be good citizens, it is incumbent that each one should know his duty to his Creator and fellow-man. It necessarily follows that the State will suffer from violations of law, if the child has been deprived of religious education.

In order to permit the teaching of religion, the school authorities of several states are granting release time with credit to all students who desire to enroll in a religion class.

However, the chief objectives of the Religious Vacation School are to bring the life of Christ into the daily life of the family. To increase consciousness of the mystical body of Christ in our country and to instil virtue in the future leaders of our nation, so that, they will exemplify Christ in their lives and by this means, enable them to become useful members of society, law abiding

⁶ Joseph C. Cropsey. Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association. 1924, 152.

citizens of the State and loyal members of Christ's Holy Church.

In general, the child that bears the name of Catholic and attends the Public School has a poor religious background. The religious atmosphere in the home may be indifferent or it may be antagonistic to religion. This does not apply to the child in small towns or rural areas, where there are no parochial schools, but it does apply to the child in our industrial centers where there is a parochial school, or one in easy commuting distance.

The average pupil attending the vacation school is one who resides in a parish without a parochial school; or lives in a section of a parish remote from his school or who for various reasons does not attend the parish school.

The non-Catholic child attending the vacation school usually "falls in love" with the beauties of the Catholic Church and gladly comes. Its heart yearns for the truths, the story-hour and the lovely hymns. These children are most anxious to obtain religious articles, consisting of pictures of Christ, medals, etc., given as prizes for attendance, doctrinal knowledge, and neatness in project work.

Many protestant children come to the vacation school; there is no truant officer to enforce their attendance; frequently not even parental command or encouragement to urge it. But there is interesting subject matter, interestingly taught; and in addition to God's grace, a desire to learn and a yearning for truth and goodness.

The organization of the vacation school is under the direction of the pastor, however, if more desirable a local committee may be organized to promote it. Except in very poor missions the financing of the school should be borne by the parish or mission. The Catholic Rural Life Conference has received from the American Board of Catholic Missions a sum each year, for a number of years, "used to subsidize the establishment and maintenance of vacation schools of religion in the missionary dioceses of the south and west."⁷ Other organizations sponsoring the Religious Vacation Schools are: The National Council of Catholic Women, The Catholic Daughters of America, Daughters of Isabella, Christ Child Society, Society of the Propagation of the Faith, and many others including the Diocesan Confraternities of Christian Doctrine.

In the beginning, many poor parishes asked aid of some organization but later, were able to finance the work, even with increased enrollment.

It is interesting to know that during the first few years, the expenses of each school which included such items as, small payments to teachers, purchase of catechisms, bible histories, etc., were borne by each individual parish. In later years the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women has given assistance and encouragement to the work in the

⁷ Rev. W. Howard Bishop. "The Catholic Rural Life Conference." Report of the American Board of Catholic Missions. (July 1930-July 1931), 181.

smaller and poorer missions.

In order to meet the expenses of these vacation schools many ways and means have been devised; parishes have special collections, free-will offering of parents, tuition, or enrollment fees, parish funds, or contributions by the Bishop, Pastor, individuals and organizations.

For a number of years the Home Mission Board of the American Hierarchy gave \$5000.00 annually to the Catholic Rural Life Conference. Twenty-five hundred dollars of the amount given was distributed annually to needy dioceses for demonstration vacation schools, and the remainder was used for printing and distribution of the Manual of Vacation Schools, which were distributed gratis. This "money was allotted for this purpose until 1932 inclusive."⁸

The Religious Vacation School calls for a large number of teachers. Priests, seminarians, sisters and lay teachers have played an important part in the conduct of these schools.

Next to the priest, the seminarian is the best equipped to teach in the Religious Vacation School. His training, his long years of preparation equip him better than sisters or lay teachers to carry the Gospel message to rural communities. He can cope more successfully with anti-Catholic propaganda, calumny, undesirable literature, and with indifferent or hostile members of the community. He can more easily associate with the men and boys; enter into

⁸ Letter from Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B. Director of the Catholic Family Life Bureau, Washington, D.C.

their sports, play ball and engage in various games with the children. He can also, accompany the young people on outings with far less inconvenience than the sisters.

Seminarians are required to attend courses in methods of instructing children. St. Bernard's Seminary, Rochester, New York, require its students to teach catechism in the city centers under actual supervision and under a system of criticism similar to that obtained in the State Normal Schools.

During the summer of 1932, thirty-seven theological students of St. Paul's Seminary, conducted religious vacation schools in fifty-four parishes, located in eleven dioceses. During that summer they taught over two thousand children and gave instruction to about the same number of adults.

But by far the greater part of the teaching is done by sisters. Their long years of training in religious life, their study of child psychology, their pedagogical training enables them to find their way into the minds and hearts of the little ones. It is a proven fact that there is natural affinity between a sister and a child. They are drawn together as by a magnet. There is an eagerness--a joy which manifests itself in each at the others approach. This ready response makes it easy for the teacher to teach it the love of God for it, and it is easy for the child to pass over from the love of the sister, to the love of God.

By decree of Holy Mother Church the teaching Sister

must know her religion and be trained to teach it. The Church declares that the duty of learning Christian Doctrine thoroughly is incumbent especially upon those who are consecrated to God in religious congregations. She is very solicitous that the members of these religious institutes of both sexes be well grounded in Christian Doctrine and that they should, with due diligence, instruct the boys and girls entrusted to their care. To this end the Sacred Congregation of Religious, of November 25, 1929, with the approval of the Holy Father, decreed as follows:

(1) During the postulancy and the novitiate all shall receive serious instruction in the doctrine of the Christian religion, in such a way as not only to know the catechism by rote but also to be able to explain it; and no one shall be admitted to profession without previously passing a successful examination.

(2) The year of novitiate over, the religious who are to teach catechism to children shall be given fuller instruction both in Christian Doctrine and in the method of communicating it to others, in preparation for an examination in the presence of the Bishop or his delegate.

(3) As to the program of this examination, that used in the Vicarate of Rome to test the capacity of prospective teachers of catechism in elementary schools, may be adopted.

(4) Those who are to teach catechism--not in the class room, but in the parish church--- shall take care to obtain a document from the diocesan curia testifying to their ability.

From this decree the following facts emerge: 1. Our Sisters must be theologians, to the extent that they must pass an examination in Christian Doctrine and its teaching before the Bishop of the diocese or his delegate; 2. To

9 "Three Important Roman Documents." Sponsa Regis, I (June 15, 1930), 153.

teach Christian Doctrine in the parish they should procure a testimonial of their fitness from the chancery office.

In ever increasing numbers the sisters are enlisting in Confraternity work; they have responded generously to the need of the age: namely, teaching the younger generation to know, love and serve its Creator.

The third of the group of vacation school teachers is the lay-teacher or lay catechist. In some cases lay people give instructions under supervision of priests or sisters and in other instances they are occupied entirely with activities other than the imparting of religious instruction. Nevertheless, in some dioceses the entire vacation program is in the hands of lay-teachers, under the supervision of pastors or priests, appointed to direct their activities. These lay-teachers are prepared for their work by special institutes, under the auspices of the Diocesan Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. The Confraternity in the Diocese of Providence, R. I. has worked out a very successful plan. "Prospective catechists in the diocese of Providence, are given a 16-week course in apologetics, catechetical methods, project work and practical teaching of religion. If, at the end of this period they have completed the work successfully they are certified by the diocesan office as capable of instructing in religion."¹⁰

Several Catholic Women's Colleges have been preparing

¹⁰ Rev. Cornelius B. Collins. "The Confraternity in the Providence Diocese." Catholic Action, XX (August, 1938), 9-10.

their Seniors for the vacation school work by devoting one-hour a week to instruction and methods. During their senior year the girls spend some time each week teaching catechism, under supervision, in parishes without Catholic schools. Nazareth College, Louisville, Kentucky, began their work as early as 1924. Since then Rosary College, River Forest, Ill., Marymount, Salina, Kansas and Mt. St. Scholastica College, Atchison, Kansas, have made great progress in the preparation of lay-teachers for this work.

Lay-catechists who are enrolled in the preparatory religion classes should study "Morals, Dogma, Worship, Bible and Church History. Study from approved textbooks which will be supplemented by the professor is to be preferred to the lecture method.----To develop skill in imparting, it is necessary that the candidates make a study of methods in religious teaching."¹¹

When a vacation school or a center of religious instruction is planned one of the first assistants of the director in charge is the Fisher. Fishers or the home visitors may be referred to as "scouts". The Divine Master Himself stands before them by way of example and guidance, and they heed His invitation, "Come after Me and I will¹² make you become fishers of men." Fishers, therefore, in-

¹¹ Rev. William R. Kelley. "The Preparation of Teachers of Religion." National Catechetical Congress, Proceedings. (October, 1935), 133.

¹² Mark I, 17.

flamed with love of God and a burning thirst for souls,
 "go into the highways and hedges"¹³ to search for the lost
 sheep.

Various ways of reaching the children have been employed, but the most successful is personal contact with the child. The visit with its human touch has proved the best method of attracting the little ones to the vacation school.

A minimum of five or six meetings should be held in order to acquaint the fishers with their duties. The fishers are assigned districts into which the parish is divided, and Pastors find them indispensable when working under their direct supervision by conducting a systematic door-to-door canvas of the parish. In making these visits, their immediate objective is----that every elementary school child, not attending the Catholic school, be enrolled in the Religious Vacation School, and the high school pupil enrolled in the religion class, on high school level.

The successful fisher draws upon his knowledge of local conditions to determine the best means of attracting indifferent children. Frequently, he can awaken interest by showing text books to be used, or some completed projects. It is their duty to have the pupils enrolled, or at least a fair idea of how many will be enrolled in the vacation school, a month before the opening date. The qualifications for a good fisher are, first and foremost, "zeal

13 Luke XIV, 23.

and a spirit of prayer,"¹⁴ secondly, tact.

The last of the group which makes up the personnel of the Religious Vacation School is the Helper. He or she belongs to a group of young people, true to their name, just "Helpers." "They prepare themselves. The young people have vivid imaginations, and once they are organized there is no curbing their zeal."¹⁵

The various duties of the helpers may be listed as follows: transportation of Sisters, teachers, and children, preparing lessons for teachers, office work, to promote efficiency, smoothness and order, and to supervise games during the recreational period.

The Confraternity program as outlined in the vacation school manual arranges for a four-week session, five mornings a week from eight fifteen to twelve o'clock, as follows:¹⁶

8:15 Holy Mass, Congregational prayers and singing.
 9:00 Opening prayers and hymns
 9:10 Picture Study and Sacred Stories
 9:30 Christian Doctrine
 10:00 Conduct and religious practice
 10:10 Recess and supervised recreation
 10:30 Singing
 10:45 Liturgy

¹⁴ Very Rev. August P. Koerperick. "Confraternity Fishers in Rural Parishes." National Catechetical Congress, Proceedings. (November, 1939), 71.

¹⁵ Julia M. Sheridan. "The Preparation of Helpers." National Catechetical Congress, Proceedings. (October, 1940), 133.

¹⁶ Religious Vacation School Manual. (Revised Edition), Washington, D.C. National Center, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, (1939), ix.

11:00 Project work
11:50 Closing prayers
12:00 Dismissal

Classification, subordinating itself to this program arranges the children according to their grade in the public schools, and separate work for each grade is outlined in the Manual. The Vacation School Manual provides material for the various classes from the kindergarten through high school. The lesson plan for each day is designed to bring out in all its aspects one central idea or truth. These lesson plans are arranged not only as to what and how much to teach each day, but they, also, make suggestions as to how to teach each lesson and activity.

Not only is it advisable for those teaching in vacation schools to follow the Confraternity program faithfully, but it is almost necessary to use the schedule, because it provides a definite time for the various elements of the program.

All the children are encouraged to attend Holy Mass each morning, if possible. They are recommended to use missals, or inexpensive prayer books when assisting at Mass, and even in rural communities the Missa recitata, which means a recitation out loud, in translation, of the prayers which are being said by the priest at the altar, is not an impossible accomplishment. By this means it is impressed upon the child's mind that he has a place in the daily sacrifice.

Classes begin in a vacation school, just as they be-

gin in any Catholic school, with prayers and the singing of a hymn. Then follows the order of the day, the teacher passing easily from one class period to another, correlating each as she proceeds. Obviously it is necessary for her to study her pupils as well as her subject. She must speak their language. In other words she must not talk over their heads. This makes a great pull upon her teaching skill because she must put profound dogma in simple language.

The history of the present set-up of our Catholic Religious Vacation Schools may be traced back to a historic paper entitled "The Rural Problem in its Bearing in Catholic Education" which was read by Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara, at the seventeenth annual meeting of the National Catholic Educational Association held in New York City in 1920. Father O'Hara, then superintendent of schools in the diocese of Portland, Oregon, painted a vivid picture of the possibilities of Religious Vacation Schools patterned after those which certain non-Catholic sects were conducting, during the vacation period or when there was a lull in the farm work.

In 1921, Father O'Hara decided to experiment on his project in three separate missions of Springfield, Cottage Grove, and Junction City, Oregon. Sisters of the Congregation of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary were asked to staff the schools, two sisters in each school. The schools proved to be very successful and have continued to function ever since, having an attendance of from twenty to fifty child-

ren. So evident was the enthusiasm of the children and so hearty the cooperation of the parents in these missions during the summers of 1921 and 1922, that Father O'Hara persuaded the pastor of Corvallis, Oregon, to open a vacation school in 1923. The enrollment quite surprised the pastor of Corvallis, for the number of children in daily attendance numbered sixty while during the winter months the average number at his instruction classes was only twenty-five.

During the same summer that Father O'Hara tried his project in Oregon, Reverend Boleslaus Weljeko, at Crivitz, Wisconsin, in the Diocese of Green Bay, opened a vacation school which has continued to function yearly since. "Instructions are given in both English and Polish Language. Approximately one hundred children attend the school and the work begun during the summer is followed up throughout the year by an hour and a half of instruction every Saturday."¹⁷

In November 1923, Father O'Hara, as organizer of the Rural Life Conference, reported to that body, at its first convention in St. Louis, Missouri, the result of the Oregon experiment.

The success of these vacation schools, no doubt influenced the delegates to the first Rural Life Conference to adopt as their first resolution the following: "Where the numbers are insufficient to maintain a parish school, we recommend that religious vacation schools should be

¹⁷ Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B. "The Religious Vacation School in Action." Truth, XXXVII (March, 1933), 17.

held." ¹⁸

At the second annual convention of the Rural Life Conference, in 1924, held in Milwaukee, representatives from the National Council of Catholic Women attended as well as delegates from the diocesan council. These women pledged their support and assistance to the vacation school movement. With the assistance and co-operation of these supporters, vacation schools have made rapid progress. Interest was aroused, possibilities tested, and aid offered.

In 1925, Miss Margaret Lynch, representative of the National Council of Catholic Women, was given a position on the Board of Directors of the Catholic Rural Life Conference, Catholic Rural Life, was turned over to Miss Lynch for the purpose of circulating information about the vacation school.

During the first few years, religious vacation schools were organized in a haphazard sort-of-way by individual pastors, who had learned of the movement, and were able to secure teachers. Other pastors in remote districts found it difficult to obtain teachers for their schools.

In the spring of 1930 the first edition of the Manual of Religious Vacation Schools, which had been prepared under the direction of Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara, of the Rural Life Bureau, National Catholic Welfare Conference, appeared.

¹⁸ Copied from the Resolutions, as in the Minutes, Catholic Rural Life Conference, November 1923. Cited in letter from Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B., Director of Family Life Bureau, Washington, D.C.

In addition to directions for organizing the vacation school, it contained a detailed course of study in religion for each day, making a program of sixty hours of religious education. Courses were provided for four groups, designated as Primary, Intermediate, Junior and Senior High School. The program outlined work in Picture Study, Catechism, Bible History, Liturgy, Sacred Singing, Health, Recreation, and handwork. During the succeeding years revisions have been made under the direction of the Committee for Revision. The 1939 edition consists of two small volumes, one covering grades I-IV and the other grades V-VIII.

A summary of the contents of the Manual may be made by saying that it covers in outline the entire teaching of the Catholic Church as embodied in the Creed, the Sacraments and the Commandments.

By 1930, one of the most encouraging developments, was shown by the fact that between twenty and twenty-five arch-dioceses and dioceses, had for the first time appointed diocesan directors of the religious vacation schools under various titles.

Due, no doubt, to Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara's report of his success in the Oregon project during 1921 and 1922, vacation schools spread rapidly. In 1924, Religious Vacation Schools were operating to a large extent in the Arch-diocese of St. Louis, and in nine other dioceses including Salt Lake, Rockford, Louisville, and Portland. During 1925, Milwaukee Arch-diocese joined the ranks. During the first

year in the last named diocese, about fifteen hundred children ranging in ages from four to seventeen years, were taught by twenty-eight sisters. During the summer of 1929, the enrollment increased ninety-eight percent. In 1928, the movement started in the Omaha diocese, at St. Benedict's parish in Omaha, and St. Francis in Blair, Nebr. By 1929 there were "nineteen schools in the diocese with a total enrollment of one thousand two hundred seventy-seven pupils. The schools were taught by twenty-nine sisters and twenty-two lay teachers."¹⁹

During the summer of 1929 Religious Vacation Schools were established for Catholic children attending public schools in Pittsburgh, Chicago, San Francisco, Omaha, Sacramento, and others.

"New York's first Religious Vacation School was conducted by the New York Arch-diocesan Council of Catholic Women during the summer of 1928."²⁰ More than two hundred and fifty children attended classes at St. Ann's Hall.

Another outstanding example is found in the diocese of Cleveland, where the vacation school became an agency for combating juvenile delinquency. Under the direction of the diocesan superintendent, the program was extended to all parishes in the diocese: 14,084²¹ children-----8,925

¹⁹ "Religious Vacation Schools." The Catholic Educational Review, XXXVIII (April, 1930), 234.

²⁰ National Catholic Welfare Conference Bulletin, I (September, 1928), 18.

²¹ Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B. "Religious Vacation Schools in 1932." Catholic School Journal, XXXII (October, 1932), 312-14.

from Catholic Schools and 5,159 from the Public Schools, attended. There were one hundred and eighteen seminarians, six religious and seven hundred thirty-eight lay teachers in charge. The seminarians received their preparation in the Diocesan Seminary and they, in turn conducted institutes for the lay teachers in each deanery. All institutions of higher education co-operated in some way. The courses of instruction were free and the teachers served voluntarily.

Many cities have shown decided interest in the religious education of the foreign groups; those of which have shown great interest in the Mexicans are San Antonio, Denver, and Los Angeles. The work in the Denver diocese is not limited to the Mexican Nationality alone. In 1928, a school reported an attendance of over six hundred and fifty children of different nationalities---Spanish, English, Slavic and Italian.

Vacation schools for special groups have been opened in many places. In the Pacific and Mountain States, schools have been opened for the Indian children. During the summer of 1933, "in the diocese of Great Falls, Montana, twelve such schools were conducted." ²² Indian children are especially difficult to assemble, because as soon as the vacation period begins the little ones scatter in all

²² Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B. "Religious Vacation Schools in 1933." Catholic School Journal, XXXIII (November, 1933), 271.

directions over the reservations. Perhaps, the least assisted by the vacation schools are the negroes. However, very successful schools have been held in Wichita, Kansas, under the direction of Reverend Leon A. McNeill. At Houma, Louisiana, the Reverend August Vanderbilt, conducted a most worthwhile school. One exceptional feature was that of the two hundred and thirty-three colored children enrolled, "only twenty were Catholics, and of the Catholics, only one had made her First Communion."²³ Many of them were descendants of Catholic Indians and Negroes, early inhabitants of Virginia.

In Albany, New York, at Camp Jogues, a summer camp for seminarians, a catechetical school is carried on in connection with the camp. The teaching personnel is entirely composed of seminarians, and the pupils are drawn from three small parishes. The school was established in 1935 with an "initial registration of about fifty children; the 1938 session saw over two hundred boys and girls attending classes daily."²⁴

In the diocese of Charleston, South Carolina, an experiment was made; a project, combining the religious vacation school with the best features of the Catholic camp. They chose a site sheltered by a grove of oaks near a stream.

23 "The Religiously Under-privileged Child." Pamphlet. The Abbey Student Press, Atchison, Kans. (1933), 13.

24 Robert Long. "Catechetics in Practice." Catholic Digest, III (September, 1939), 26.

Here they erected long rows of army tents for both boys and girls, an enclosed kitchen and dining-room, power house, and a clinic. A tent was, also, used for the Chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved during the three weeks vacation school. These, together with a farm house which served as a residence for the Sisters formed their temporary living quarters.

Children came from various parts of the diocese, some coming from a distance of over one hundred and fifty miles. Three weeks were devoted to an intensive and practical course in religion, in accordance with the Manual of Religious Vacation Schools. The children were classified in six divisions which were cared for by a teaching staff of seven members; one priest, three sisters, two seminarians, and one lay teacher.

The most rapid growth of the vacation school has been in the Far West; where there was a particular need for them because of the scarcity of parish schools. By 1931, the diocese of Los Angeles and San Diego led the entire country with one hundred and seventy-two vacation schools. In 1932 the Arch-diocese of Portland, Oregon, "conducted a vacation school in every parish this summer, in which there was no parochial school."²⁵

During 1913 a group of Catholic teachers in New York initiated a very interesting and worthwhile movement known

25 Schmiedeler, op. cit. 23

under the title of Theta Pi Alpha, to devise a means of providing religious instruction for Catholic children attending public schools. They devoted their time and energy after school hours to giving religious education to children deprived of instruction during the school-week. Cardinal Farley demonstrated his interest in the new society by placing it directly under his patronage. "Today the Catholic Teachers' Association for Religious Instruction, has a membership of more than three thousand teachers."²⁶

At the present time these weekly instruction classes have been supplemented by the vacation school. A special work assigned to this group of teachers is the instruction of the deaf children.

The Catholic Religious Vacation School has had a phenomenal growth. Accurate figures are not obtainable for the first few years, but suffice it to say that statistics show that by 1930, "approximately eight thousand children were in attendance"²⁷ and by 1937 nearly "three hundred thousand children were enrolled in six thousand vacation schools. The schools were found in almost every State and diocese of the country."²⁸

In 1936, the work of the Religious Vacation Schools

²⁶ "The Theta Pi Alpha's Religious Instruction Activities." National Catholic Welfare Conference Bulletin, XI (July, 1929), 18.

²⁷ Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B. A Better Rural Life. New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc. (1933).

²⁸ Ibid.

which had its birth and was sponsored by the Rural Life Conference, centered in the Rural Life Bureau of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, gradually passed over to the National headquarters of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. The particular work of the vacation school falls under the scope of the Confraternity and is one of its objectives.

It does not matter who receives the credit, who carries it on, the important point is that the work be carried on to a successful completion, so that each child whether he lives in a remote country-side or in a crowded city, be given an opportunity to know and cherish his religion, his relation to his Creator, which is religion defined, and which is his birthright.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS VACATION SCHOOLS IN OKLAHOMA.

"The Vacation School is the greatest single contribution that has been made to the solution of our gigantic rural religious problem."¹ There are many problems to be solved in the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa but the one that is more important than any other, is the instructing the Catholic children in the truths of their Religion.

The first Religious Vacation School in Oklahoma was held in Anadarko, during the summer of 1929, under the direction of Reverend Father Blaise, O.S.B., with the help and guidance of Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara, director of the Rural Life Conference, which organization sent eighty dollars to finance the project. The school was conducted in the class-rooms of St. Patrick's Mission, the facilities of which were kindly lent by Reverend Father Aloysius, O.S.B. Father Blaise, himself, was the principal teacher and his assistants were Mr. Joseph Campbell, a seminarian, now Father Campbell, and two Franciscan Sisters, whose mother-house is located in Glen Riddle, Pa.

Four weeks of intensive study were held. About fifty children were enrolled, some of whom were non-Catholic.

Although the Religious Vacation School Manual did not appear in print until 1930 the program followed was much

¹ Rev. W. Howard Bishop. "The Catholic Rural Life Conference." Report to the American Board of Catholic Missions, (July 1930-July 1931), 181.

as it is outlined in the Manual. Liturgical instructions, given by Father Blaise, preceeded the Holy Mass at eight o'clock. During the Mass the children, with the assistance of their teachers recited the Mass prayers. At 9:15 the singing began, and sacred hymns and patriotic songs were sung, followed by the flag salute. At 9:30, prayers were reviewed, and Bible stories, both from the Old and New Testaments, were told. At 10:15 the children were given a supervised recreational period. From 10:30 to 11:00, Christian Doctrine was taught, each week under a different subject; the first week--the Apostles Creed was explained; the second--the Life of Christ; third--Grace, and the Sacraments; fourth--the Commandments. From 11:00 to 11:30, the Lives of the Saints, and essentials of Church History were given. Dismissal at 11:30. Thus is outlined the order of the program of the first Religious Vacation School in the Diocese. This school has been conducted practically every summer since. Much good work had been accomplished and by the summer of 1930, Father O'Hara was backed by state-wide co-operation.

During the summer of 1930, two Religious Vacation Schools were conducted in the central part of the State, namely at Hennessey and Marshall, respectively, both supervised by Reverend Joseph A. Woucters, under the direction of the Benedictine Sisters, from Guthrie, Okla. Sixty-three children were enrolled at Hennessey, and thirty-five at Marshall. These schools were the first schools located

in this part of the Diocese and the priests were most enthusiastic about the good being done.

By the summer of 1931, the number of Religious Vacation Schools had risen to seven. The schools were held at Billings, Pondcreek, Mangum, Wilburton, Holdenville, Poteau and missions, and Mine No. 10, near Hartshorne. These schools were taught by the various Sisterhoods of the diocese and the adjoining diocese, namely, the Sisters of Mercy from Oklahoma City, and Fort Smith, Arkansas, and the Benedictine Sisters, from Guthrie, Oklahoma.

The following is an interesting account of one of these Religious Vacation Schools in the diocese. Reverend Joseph A. La Bonte was pastor of the missions where the schools were conducted, namely, Poteau and missions of Heavener, McCurtain, and Bokoshe during the summer, June 1, to July 5, 1931, the first in the southeastern part of the diocese.

The teachers were the Sisters of Mercy, from St. Ann's Academy, Fort Smith, Ark. This year, the first, the Sisters resided in their Convent at Fort Smith.

The school was held one month, but the classes were only heard, every other day. There were two reasons why the school was taught every other day. The pastor's car was the only means of conveyance for the Sisters to reach the various instruction centers. The Pastor needed his car part time, therefore, he arranged his business on the days school was not in session, and the other was,

the Sisters needed a respite.

The Sisters were called for each school day at about six o'clock in the morning at Fort Smith. From there they went direct to Heavener, picking up three or four children in Poteau on their way. At Heavener they attended Holy Mass, and taught until 10:00 o'clock. They left immediately for Bokoshe and began classes there at about 11:00, and taught until 1:00 o'clock. The Sisters ate their luncheon at one of the parishioners' homes, and left immediately for McCurtain and had classes from 3:00 to 5:00. Supper was served here by one of the families and the teachers returned to Fort Smith. The Sisters traveled about one hundred and fifty miles each school day, over roads that did not have a single piece of concrete or black top. In rainy weather, which is often enough in that part of the State, the roads were very slick, so as to elicit from the sisters the constant refrain, "Mother of Mercy, protect us." This routine was hard, but it was an experiment worthwhile when you consider the good that was done.

The number of children enrolled at Heavener was twenty-two, and seven adults attended. The First Communicants numbered nineteen. The number attending classes at McCurtain and Bokoshe were thirty-nine children and eight to ten adults. The First Communicants numbered twenty-six here.

The following year the parish was able to alleviate

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the hardships of so much traveling and the sisters resided at Poteau and at McCurtain whilst the schools were being conducted.

The financing of these schools was taken care of by the parishioners, as are all of Father La Bonte's vacation schools.

Again, during the summer of 1932 there were only eight vacation schools, namely, Duncan, Harrah, Wilburton, Yukon, Anadarko, Coalgate, Prague, Poteau and missions. Several of these were very large. Wilburton registering sixty-five children, Coalgate over seventy, while Harrah enrolled one hundred and twenty-seven. Of the large enrollment at Harrah, seventy of these children received their First Holy Communion. This was by far the largest enrollment of any vacation school ever conducted heretofore in the diocese. Many of these children came a great distance; some finding it necessary to walk three to four miles to school.

The summer of 1933 found the number of vacation schools raised to fourteen. Among these the most outstanding was Skiatook and its missions. This school was opened June 12th and continued for one month. The opening day fifty-three children were enrolled, but within a few days seventy-one answered morning roll call. The pupils' projects were displayed in the vestibule of the church for about two weeks, much to the enthusiasm of the children.

The parish of Skiatook covers an area of six hundred square miles, including the towns of Sperry, Turley,

Collinsville, Vera, Avant, Romana, Walco, and Barnsdall; hence, those furnishing transportation had long distances to travel in collecting the youngsters. The children arrived in time for Holy Mass at eight o'clock, and some days, their classes continued to five o'clock in the afternoon. This school has continued to function yearly since its opening, having practically the same teachers year after year. One special feature of the Skiatook parish is that they own a little house which the sisters occupy during the summer and it is rented to the public school teachers during the winter. Thus, the sisters have more privacy and get more rest after school hours than if they resided with a family. The Sisters remain in Skiatook nearly all summer and after they have closed the Skiatook Religious Vacation School, they drive to other missions working two weeks in each. Frequently they drive thirty miles before and after school daily. During the summer of 1941 their vacation school at Claremore was very successful and the teachers feel much good was done.

In 1934, again our religious vacation schools numbered fourteen, with an enrollment of approximately six hundred and fifty children. During this summer, a vacation school was opened at Depew, a small town in Creek County, about forty miles from Tulsa. The school opened August 1, the first Religious Vacation School for non-Catholics. Great interest was shown in our Holy Faith, which had been awakened by the street-preaching of Reverend Father S. Leven.

Children came by bus from Gypsy, and for three days the school moved to Gypsy from Depew.

Classes were held in the City school building. The first day's enrollment was twenty-seven but it increased until it reached sixty-nine, forty-seven of these were non-Catholics.

The regular catechetical work was supplemented by hymns, and to insure interest in the singing of sacred songs, and to encourage the learning of the hymns, a religious pageant, "The Annunciation and the Birth of Christ" was planned for the end of the summer session. The children eagerly designed and prepared their costumes, studying pictures of biblical times. Nor were the evenings idle; with the aid of slides, a projection machine, and an improvised screen, the Sisters instructed the school children, their parents and others.

After the final session the Catholic women of Stroud, held a general picnic for the Sisters and the children. This was climaxed by a huge picnic dinner served in the gymnasium of the Gypsy high school.

This school was conducted as an experiment to determine a method of "following-up" the street preaching, and to demonstrate the value, as well as, the necessity of catechetical work in this field.

The next summer, 1935, six Benedictine Sisters were drafted for the Creek County Schools. This group consisted of the two sisters who had taught the vacation school

during the summer of 1934, and four new recruits. Catholic Religious Vacation Schools were opened at Depew, Gypsy and Slick, on June 12th. Several young ladies from Tulsa and Oklahoma City assisted in the work. During the first two weeks, the temporary convent was located at Depew, and two sisters drove to Slick and Gypsy each day. Eighty women and children attended the instruction classes in the three schools. The second group of Religious Vacation Schools were opened July 2nd. The Sisters making their headquarters in a rented home in Jennings. Here, they were joined by two Dominican Sisters, and three young ladies from Rosary College, River Forest, Illinois.

The Sisters conducted schools in a store building in Jennings, and in school houses in Cleveland and Terlton. More than one hundred attended the instruction classes. The young ladies besides assisting in the Religious Vacation Schools, also, took part in the street-preaching every evening.

All in all, there were twenty-nine Religious Vacation Schools in the diocese during the summer of 1935, employing fifty-nine sisters, seven seminarians, and six lay teachers. The total enrollment was one thousand one hundred and seventy-four.

The Catholic Religious Vacation Schools were under the direction of Rt. Rev. Msgr. A. T. Monnett, the Vicar of Missions and the Director of Catholic Action, until the early part of 1936, when Rev. F. X. Neville, was ap-

pointed the Director of Catholic Action in the Diocese. Since then, the Religious Vacation Schools, under the direction of Rev. F. X. Neville, and the sponsorship of the National Council of Catholic Women, have made rapid progress. The statistics of the schools during the past six years is given on the following table:

	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941
Number of schools	40	39	35	39	54	56
Total Attendance	1501	1528	1434	1563	1861	1912
Sisters teaching	79	72	63	72	100	103
Lay teachers	8	8	8	9	20	17
Priests teaching	23	-	3	-	2	4
Seminarians	-	-	-	-	-	1
First Holy Communions	191	109	188	217	253	268
Baptisms	51	12	31	86	82	74
Number of Catholics brought back to Church		26	46	40	62	40
Marriages rectified			3	11	3	2

In the summer of 1938 there was a drop in the number of schools held; but it regained its old footing and has steadily increased until, during 1941, there were fifty-six Religious Vacation Schools in the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Believing that every one revels in a human interest story, no matter how technical the matter of the manuscript,

I take the liberty to interpolate two here, told me during interviews with Religious Vacation School teachers; the first of which is impressive, the second amusing. A child of six years, who was apparently unable to hear or speak was made to realize for the first time the use of those two senses. Environment had placed her with domestic fowls for companionship. At the close of the summer session the child understood that she was a personality and took her place in the games and activities of the other children.

At Bowring, because the public school had burned, after arrangements for the Religious Vacation School had been made, the vacation school was held in a large garage where the school buses and desks were stored. The romantic part was furnished by the "town herd", hugging the building without giving any disturbance. St. Anthony drew the birds and fishes to hear his sermons, but our Oklahoma Religious Vacation School teachers draw the dogs, cats and cows to listen to their feeble efforts to instruct the little ones.

The eagerness with which hungry souls responded to these opportunities held out to them by attendance at these schools is evidenced by the example of a mother, near Mangum, who moved her little family to town for the two weeks, so that her children would not miss any of the school work because of bad roads. At Waurika, the ladies took turn in housing and boarding the eleven children from the country. Truly it was a work of charity and kindness. Thus, when all work together it is not necessary for the Catholic

farmers to migrate to the city to give their children religious instruction. Parish schools should be established when possible, but there are a vast number of places where it is not possible to do so, and where it will never be possible unless the religious education of the children is taken care of now by the Religious Vacation Schools.

According to the latest Official Catholic Directory, there are in the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa thirty-two parishes with resident pastors and seventy-three missions all without parochial schools. About nine thousand children are enrolled in the parish schools of the Diocese, but there is still larger number of Catholic children attending the public schools. Many of these reside in the one hundred and five parishes and missions without parochial schools, but a large number of Catholic children are in the public schools because of the religious indifference of their parents, or in smaller parishes, mixed marriages are more numerous, and the non-Catholic party will not permit the children to attend the parochial school because he has heard they stress religion too much. But, on the whole, the average Catholic child attending the Religious Vacation School in the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, is there because his parents reside in a rural district at too great a commuting distance from a Catholic school. In most cases, the parents are not financially able to send them to a Catholic boarding school.

The non-Catholic child attending the Religious Vaca-

tion School, comes just because it desires to do so. Parents permit their attendance in order that their time may be usefully occupied. The non-Catholic children love all that is connected with the school; they especially yearn for the beautiful stories of Christ. I know of one occasion when a little non-Catholic girl of six summers was given a small gold cross for a prize; she began to cry saying "Jesus isn't on it." Not only the little ones want religion but the older ones want it as well, especially in their teens. If this desire changes to indifference or cynicism, and finally disbelief, it is because of the inconsistency which they find between what is being taught from the pulpit, Sunday school or day school, and what is practiced in every day life, especially in the home.

It is because of this lack of religion that Father Joseph A. La Bonte appealed to the group of members of the National Council of Catholic Women, at a deanery meeting, June 22, 1930, to assist in bringing religious instruction to the children residing in the isolated districts of this Diocese. "Father La Bonte's appeal-----fell on open hearts."² The ladies suggested keeping their donations for their own deanery vacation schools. Father La Bonte promised to consult His Excellency, Bishop Kelley, on the subject, that the Shawnee Deanery be permitted to use its funds for deanery works.

² Irene Flowers Hickey. "Vacation Schools." The Southwest Courier, IX (December 6, 1930), Col. 5, P. 4.

At the first State convention of the National Council of Catholic Women, October 4, 1930, one of the organization's resolutions was "to promote Catechism classes especially in the missions."³

During the summer of 1932 several of the deaneries were active in the Religious Vacation School program, and at the Fourth convention of the N.C.C.W., at Shawnee, October 22-23, 1932, His Excellency, Bishop Kelley, expressed his approval and appreciation of the vacation school work.

The Tulsa Deanery sponsored three Religious Vacation Schools during 1933, and six in 1934. At the Fifth State Convention of the N.C.C.W., October 11, 1934, His Excellency, Bishop Kelley, "gave the National Council of Catholic Women the sole duty of establishing and maintaining vacation schools"⁴ in the diocese, which was accepted by the third resolution of the convention. "We accept the challenge of His Excellency, Bishop Kelley, and devote ourselves as an organization to the fostering of the work of the Religious Vacation Schools which he has allotted to us."⁵

At an Executive meeting of the N.C.C.W., December 13, 1935, it was decided to allow each sister \$5.00 per week for teaching the Religious Vacation School, plus her board and transportation. If the parishioners desire to give the

³ Historian's Notes, N.C.C.W. Convention, (October 20, 1930), Tulsa, Oklahoma.

⁴ The Southwest Courier, VII (October 20, 1934), Col.5, P. 1.

⁵ Historian's Notes, N.C.C.W., 5th Convention, (October 11, 1934), Shawnee, Oklahoma.

sisters a larger remuneration for their services they were to supply the extra amount themselves. However, there were parishes before then, and still are, that are able and willing to finance their own vacation schools.

Some thought it could not be done, but experience has shown that children can be assembled in large numbers during the summer vacation period. Seminarians, religious, and lay catechists are usually available.

Repeated instructions from Rome impose upon bishops and seminary authorities the duty to instruct students for the priesthood in both the theory and practice of catechetics. Special training courses are being conducted in many seminaries to prepare the students for work in the vacation schools.

A few seminarians have found in the vacation schools of Oklahoma a valuable laboratory for catechetical practice; an opportunity to teach little ones, to instruct adults, to reclaim the lax and fallen-away, and to carry the Gospel message to well-disposed non-Catholics; and withal a very enjoyable way to spend a portion of the vacation.

The seminarian who has taught religion for a while will return to his ecclesiastical studies with a new appreciation of their value and importance. He will understand the child better by his contact with children. In teaching older children and especially the larger boys and girls, the sisters and lay teachers admit the greater effectiveness of the seminarian. He is usually a good organizer, which

quality is of great importance in directing and taking part in the recreational activities of the school. He enjoys taking part, and they in turn are pleased to have him. This intimate association opens up opportunities for effective lessons in fair play, manliness, and charity.

But the seminarian is fully aware of his lack of experience and in perplexing problems gladly steps back for the sister to take charge of the situation.

Owing to the small number of theological students, studying for the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, at the present time we have very few to take part in the vacation school program. The Evidence Guild attracts the majority, and they spend their summer Street-preaching; for this reason the teachers of the vacation schools of the Diocese are largely comprised of the members of the Sisterhoods. These sisters have training in pedagogical methods and experience in dealing with children, since they all hold teachers' certificates valid in the State of Oklahoma or her sister-states.

Whenever possible religious teachers should be obtained because of their familiarity with religious instruction, their experience in preparing children for the sacraments, their knowledge of their religion, as well as, the atmosphere created by their presence; since the religious habit demands their love and respect. All of these things are an advantage to the children under their care.

We must thank God for the great army of sister-cate-

chists we have in the United States. No other country in the world has such a large number of sisters nor such valiant women in religion, who are so whole heartedly devoted to spreading God's Kingdom. All our sisters are eager to qualify as catechists. Once their duties are made known to them, their co-operation is excellent.

In only a few of the vacation schools in Oklahoma are lay teachers working alone. They usually are associated with Sisters and through their guidance and instruction assist in teaching the children.

It is unnecessary to point out the fact that unless a great number of the laity take part in this important work of the Church, hundreds of children in every section of the State will grow up without proper religious instruction. We must admit that a great number of our public school children are receiving very little, if any, religious education. We must be willing to share our religious treasures with others. When we find zealous souls willing to sacrifice their time and energy in spreading the eternal truths, we must give them proper help. Institutes should be founded, directed by a competent priest, and several assistants to give courses in apologetics, catechetical methods, and liturgy.

We know, of course, that in a short time a complete knowledge of theology and the other subjects cannot be obtained. First, they should give the essentials and clear up some personal religious difficulties. They must be di-

rected in the matter of private study and to acquire a desire to continue seeking information.

The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, which has for its object to impart catechetical instruction, was organized centuries ago, in Europe; it was only first organized in 1903 in the United States by Most Reverend Archbishop John M. Farley, and in 1918 the New Code of Canon Law ordained that it be established in every parish. It was confirmed in all parishes of the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, by a decree of His Excellency, Bishop Kelley, dated May 3, 1938. Only in those parishes where the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine has been established will we find the five divisions of membership. Only where it is thoroughly and systematically organized will you see active work being done; here only, will the pastor have the cooperation of the fishers and helpers in planning the vacation school.

As has been explained earlier in this thesis, when we speak of fishers in connection with the work of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, we mean those men and women who visit the children's homes in order to get them to attend the religious instruction classes.

There are no rules for successful fishing, as each fisher has his or her own technique. Each home visited reveals a different situation, different personalities, different opinions. Much of the fisher's success depends

upon understanding and sympathy.

There is no problem confronting pastors today which is so vaguely known as that of the number of children deprived of religious education. They do not have accurate knowledge and it is difficult to obtain. We need fact-finding on this problem; a survey of each parish so to speak. In September 1941, two Benedictine Sisters began their work of home visitors in Blackwell. Sisters are more persevering in this work than the laity. Most Reverend Bishop Samuel A. Stritch said:

Experience teaches that Sisters do the fact-finding better than others. They more easily gain entrance into the homes of careless Catholics and win their confidence. Their religious consecration inspires them to do their arduous work thoroughly.

The next group are the Helpers. Because of the lack of young people in the parishes, who are foot loose, and are able to devote all their time to the project, our sister catechists organize in their class rooms, in the parishes where they are teaching during the winter, a group of children, whom they call "vacation school helpers" and they have these pupils salvaging materials for projects; such as booklets, miniature altars, vestments, etc., and these children spend some time each week during the school year, making supplies for use in the vacation school work. What do they make? For instance: flash cards, which may be

6 Most Rev. Samuel A. Stritch. "The Place of the Teaching Sisters in the Confraternity." National Catechetical Congress, Proceedings, (November, 1939), 157.

made from card board; booklets, illustrated with pictures cut from Christmas cards; miniature vestments made from scraps of cloth by the girls, while the boys made miniature altars and sick call cases. These children, although attending the parochial school, and seeing the articles daily, are apt to be only superficially acquainted with them; but by placing themselves in the position of helper and preparing these materials with their own hands they render a double service: one to themselves and one to their neighbor. For if to do is to learn, they will never forget these things they worked out for use in the Religious Vacation School.

Since the prizes, booklets, etc., have been made by "little helpers" during the winter, far from the vacation school, this relieves the young people in the rural areas of this duty, and they may then assist in transporting pupils and teachers, boarding and housing teachers and pupils, or assisting with the recreational activities. Some helpers assist financially by raising money to defray the expenses.

It is obvious that the tasks which they perform relieve the instructors of a vast amount of detail work, and enable them to make more personal contacts. These helpers carry into the community a better understanding, and therefore a greater appreciation of the Religious Vacation School.

Practically all of the Religious Vacation Schools in the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, follow the program given in the Manual; it is diversified including Picture Study, Sacred Story, Christian Doctrine, and Religious Practice and Liturgy.

The Sacred Story has a power all its own and finds its place in the program by opening the child's mind to the sublime supernatural truths. As the story is told the child's attention is turned in the right direction, his attitude becomes one of expectancy and his desire to know is stimulated. Since the Catholic Educational system operates on the Philosophy of the Scholastics "Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu",⁷ the most potent of which is the eye, the course provides picture study, and handicrafts. The teacher must proceed by easy and logical transition from sacred story to motive, and from motive to christian character formation, on the age level of the child in order to be accepted by the child.

Formal Christian Doctrine is presented, developed and explained in class before being assigned for study. The pupils are exhorted to apply the points of doctrine and moral principles treated in the class to conduct and religious practices on the assumption of the fact that "real religion is life and life is action."⁸

Because there are few children who do not love to sing, and because hymns are prayers containing acts of faith,

⁷ William A. Kelley. Educational Psychology. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., (1940), 39. (Translation: there is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses)

⁸ Rev. Joseph H. Ostdick. "Training for Conduct and Religious Practice According to the Manual." National Catechetical Congress, Proceedings, (November, 1939), 133.

adoration, contrition, humility, hope and desire, they are part of the curriculum. It is best to teach the hymns by rote, because this facilitates time, and time is a great element in this work. Since requisites to Sacred Hymn Study are correct pronunciation, distinct enunciation, proper phrasing, strict time and close observance, the rote method is still to be preferred.

The period of singing is followed by a lesson in liturgy. Liturgy may be defined as the public and official worship which the Church offers to God. "It comprises all the acts of religion which the Church performs throughout the year--either by divine command or of her own accord--for the glorification of the triune God and for the sanctification of souls."⁹ The Public consists of the united body of the faithful, as such, The Church, hence, it is more than a mere congregation. The three great liturgical acts are the Mass, the Divine Office, and the Sacramental system. A knowledge of these great mysteries, and a desire to live them, "gives to every man, woman, or child both the knowledge and the means of supernatural life without which all other life is as death."¹⁰

In the daily schedule the project period is assigned

⁹ Rt. Rev. Abbot Michael Ott, O.S.B. "The Liturgy and the People," The Homiletic and Pastoral Review, XXVIII (June, 1928), 961.

¹⁰ George G. Morrow. "The Liturgy and the Confraternity." National Catechetical Congress, Proceedings, (November, 1939), 428.

to the last fifty minutes. The child has had an exacting preparation. Through the Picture Study and Sacred Story; the teaching of Christian Doctrine; and through the application of the doctrine to conduct and practice; by sacred song liturgy, the child has the necessary matter. The project provides opportunity for him to correlate his knowledge and give expression to what he has learned. For the benefit of those who are prone to discredit project work the Editors of the Manual have this to say: "It is a mistake to consider project activities as mere busy work,--- the development of an attractive booklet containing pictures, drawings, and brief compositions correlated with topics of instruction can be made a genuine learning activity, as interesting as it is beneficial."¹¹

For the making of the project, each child is given a blank page or a blank booklet, and one or two picture sheets. The pictures are pasted in the booklet to illustrate the day's lessons. The small picture which the child has for his own booklet corresponds in subject matter to the larger picture used on the chart during the Sacred Story Hour.

The material for the project work has been collected, pictures, etc., which can be used by the teachers, and possibly mimeographed stories in booklet form, patterns

¹¹ Religious Vacation School Manual, (revised edition), Washington, D.C. National Center, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, (1939), vi.

and pictures for various projects prepared and counted and put into envelopes ready for distribution. This is where the helpers' services of the past year are appreciated.

Since today, educational leaders advocate visual-education, the writer begs to be permitted to elaborate this point a bit here in connection with religious education. The same advantage which general education has discovered in the use of visual aids, religious education can, also, enjoy even to a greater degree, because the subject matter of religious instruction, being particularly abstract, needs to be presented as concretely as possible. Words alone are barren and meaningless to the child. Often they pass over his head, and if they register on the mind at all the concept may be either incomplete or incorrect. With visual aids the meaning is clarified and driven home and the more successfully retained in the memory.

Remembering that it is necessary for the teacher to descend to the level of the pupil and speak a language that he understands, she makes use of every and any device which will enable her to do so. The intelligent and wise use of visual materials enables the teacher to do just that. How? It engages the interest of the child. Interest opens the door to the mind and heart, and secures attention. All things being equal the child has a fair chance of receiving a vivid concept and a lasting impression of the matter presented. Here, also, we call upon the helper for assistance. She prepares the slides, places and arranges the projector,

and if in day-time, darkens the room.

What makes for success in teaching Religious Vacation schools? A definite program, without which they are at best a makeshift. No one knows what has been taught, and no one knows what should be taught. Where does the teacher get this program? The Manual, which gives a framework of the course of study. It is the job of the teacher to make that framework real to the child. Its use will be a means to an end.

Because the State of Oklahoma remained an open territory for so long a time, to be exact, until 1907, it became the harborage of all nationalities, races and creeds. This situation still maintains and therefore, demands that various kinds of Religious Vacation Schools be set up to enable us to better instruct all those in need of our services.

The vacation school established in the ordinary parish provides religious education for the white and sometimes the Mexican children residing in cities, villages, or the country. The majority of Catholic Religious Vacation Schools in Oklahoma are planned for this type of grouping of the children.

Religious Vacation Schools for Indians have been established at St. Patrick's mission, near Anadarko, and at Hominy. Assembling these Indian children for religious instruction presents some difficulty. Because of the native characteristics of the Indian parents, who really want this kind of training for their children, but who have not the

firmness to compel them to attend consistently. Their training is not always as productive as that given to other races.

What is true in other dioceses, is also true in this diocese. The field least cultivated by the Religious Vacation School, is that of the Negro. The only vacation school in the diocese for this group, was held in Oklahoma City for several summers. In the fall of 1940 it became a parochial school for Negroes. This ended the vacation school for Negroes, as such. Hennessey has a Chapel for Negroes and the Sisters, when teaching the vacation school there, always teach the little Negro children in the afternoon and on Saturday. There are several towns in Oklahoma just for Negroes, where the soil would be most fertile for a Religious Vacation School to be established. The "Black Harvest" is languishing.

In several vacation schools, as Mine No. 10, near Hartshorne, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Tulsa, and Pittsburg have enrollments consisting entirely of Mexicans. The language difficulty at times tends to handicap the work in these schools, however, we have been fortunate in having in the diocese a community of exiled Mexican Sisters, who have done excellent work among their own.

The question of the non-Catholic attendance in these vacation schools is about the same story as was stated before with regard to the white Vacation School.

The vacation school program is very flexible and is designed to meet the needs of any community, regardless of

location or population.

The length of the session of the schools in this diocese range from one week to four weeks, and one vacation school held in 1941, asked for a six-week session during 1942. The locality having the school decides when and for how long the school will be held. Due to the harvest time beginning the early part of June in Oklahoma, many districts want the school during the latter part of July or in August. However, when the thermometer registers 100 degrees or over during the day it takes a lot of inducement to get little folk to study intensively for two or more weeks.

Just where the Religious Vacation School will be held is, also, a local problem. They may be held almost anywhere or in any building. The church or rooms connected with the church serve admirably. The availability of the Blessed Sacrament for devotions, of the organ for singing and the church grounds for recreation makes it the most desirable. In some cases, a school building, with blackboards and desks is available in the immediate vicinity of the church and can be secured from the Board. When neither church nor school building can be had, the children may be assembled at a home, if one or two fairly large rooms can be placed at the disposal of the school. Where it has been impossible for children to come because of the distance, residential centers have been established for them.

The teachers frequently reside in the parish house, or

are entertained by the parishioners in their homes. In many instances the Pastor finds lodging with a family or in the village hotel and turns his home over to the sisters during the period of the vacation school. Sometimes the sisters remain in their convent home and are transported back and forth each day.

Results specifically set down, inspite of the many hardships that must sometimes be endured, are summarized as follows: (1) baptism is given to many children who previously were not known to be unbaptized, and others who were not known to be Catholics, (2) many indifferent and fallen away Catholics become penitent and return to the active practice of their religion, (3) many mixed marriages --where only a civil ceremony has been performed are rectified, (4) conversions have resulted from the interest gained through the school; religious fervour in adults and children stimulated, (5) ground work laid for the development of religious activities in the community, (6) vocations are discovered, (7) prejudice is broken down, (8) and finally vacation schools frequently result in the establishment of a parochial school, or if held in a parish where a parochial school is already established, the vacation school is instrumental in increasing the enrollment.

More than one pastor has stated that the Religious Vacation School renewed the spiritual life of his parish. Attendance at Holy Mass, and the reception of the sacra-

ments, instruction of the children in the presence of the Congregation on Sunday, general communion at the close of the session, and finally a parish picnic have helped to arouse the interest of the adults and caused them to share in the fruits of the Religious Vacation School.

Regardless of all the good that has been accomplished there are many flaws in our present system; the first of which is that the vacation school should be longer than a two-week session. This is too short a time. The truths of the Catholic Religion cannot be learned in a few weeks, it requires years and years of intensive study; there should, also, be a follow-up program. The teachers, who taught during the summer should make at least monthly, if not bi-monthly contacts during the school year. Thus the children will not forget what they learned during the summer time, but will add to their store of knowledge. It is better if the same teachers return to the parish each summer; they are in a position to know just how much subject matter was covered the previous summer and with a few days review, the new matter can be taken up without delay.

In some rural parishes the vacation school is held only every three or four years, which should be changed to every summer. The children receiving religious training benefit by the presence of the sisters or other devoted Catholic women who have especially prepared for the work; and they are protected and removed from temptations that surround children left to their own devices during the sum-

mer time.

One more criticism I feel I must make. Parishes should help finance, if not entirely finance, their own vacation school. If people give, and "give until it hurts" they know and appreciate what they have. That, this is by no means asking the impossible is evidenced by one parish and its missions, which, if not the poorest in the diocese, is, at least one of the most financially embarrassed, pays its own expenses entirely and the people are truly eager to have their Religious Vacation School each year. The religious education of the children is a moral responsibility incumbent upon parents; a responsibility that they cannot shift to the shoulders of an organization or individuals charitably inclined. The sooner parents realize this, the sooner will the blessing of God fall upon them in a special way.

However, every difficulty which the mind's eye or the imagination can conceive has already been met somewhere and successfully solved. Those who have watched the movement during the several years, assure us that there is no obstacle insurmountable. They can be met and overcome.

CONCLUSION

The preceding pages set forth the origin, evolution, and objectives of the Catholic Religious Vacation Schools in the United States generally. Specifically the same topics are treated with regard to the establishment of these schools in the State of Oklahoma. The writer has tabulated the results obtained and the flaws, still to be ironed out and has arrived at a conclusion which will be developed in detail in the few paragraphs which follow.

As a working hypothesis, the Introduction sets forth the Catholic Philosophy of Education and gives some enlightening data on the vast number of Catholic children attending public schools in spite of the morality of their obligation--points from which several very poignant conclusions may be drawn, one of which is, why the paper was written.

The body of the thesis, or the succeeding chapters are explanatory of these schools from the points of definition, objectives, children attending, organization, media of finance, personnel, methods and procedures, and history, discussed in detail as far as rather exhaustive research has made bare the facts. Since Oklahoma is the laboratory from which the first hand information was obtained and is the field detailed to the writer for research, the summarizing of the findings are confined to Oklahoma.

Briefly they are:

	Status	1936	1941
Number of schools		40	56
Total attendance		1501	1912
Sisters teaching		79	103
Priests teaching		23	4
Seminarians teachings		-	1
First Holy Communions		191	268
Baptisms		51	74
Number of Catholics brought back to Church		-	40
Marriages rectified		-	2

More surprising is the fact that in spite of the efforts made for establishing parish schools in the diocese, there are still one hundred and five parishes and missions without parochial schools. Only fifty-six of these are doing anything about organizing religious instruction centers. What is the answer? Conclusion I. The Catholics and possible Catholics in the other forty-nine parishes and missions are languishing for spiritual nourishment and if it does not come soon they will be carrion on which the foreign "ism" vulture will feed. Conclusion II. The minimum upon which a Religious Vacation School of a four-week session, having an enrollment from fifty to one hundred children, can be successfully run is about \$80.00 and $49 \times 80.00 = \$3920.00$. No small

sum to be raised in a diocese where only 2.7 percent are Catholic in a population of 2,326,434. This population is far from being well fixed financially. So shall we make converts of the money group and enlist their help or shall we solicit aid out of the State. What is the solution? Something must be done. The figures are applicable to the actual set-up or to those already begun. Now, before a school can be opened we must look for trained teachers in dogmatics on child level. Who is going to train these teachers to meet the need in a hurry? Adequate preparation costs money, whether it is done in a department of an established college or a Religious Normal School for the training of teachers. The other alternative would be to transport teachers. But from where? Every diocese is using all it can get.

In a word--in this diocese we have scarcely scratched the surface and to go on tabulating conclusions might be too discouraging. Let us be content to abide by the adage "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

It is the hope of the writer that this paper will serve as a vehicle for solving at least some of these problems.

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