

Religious Instruction in the Philippines

ABOUT the important task of religious principles in the life of a country, Washington, in his "Farewell Address", says the following:

"Of all dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports... And whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

This is true because, as Washington continues, without "these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens" there would be "no security for property, for reputation, for life..."

Experience teaches us about the far-reaching consequences of these statements. And yet, what is the status of religious instruction in our country — in a predominantly Catholic country, at that? Over 3,000,000 Filipino children are attending elementary schools. But Section 928 of the Revised Administrative Code allows only "to teach religion for one half hour three times a week... to those public school pupils whose parents or guardians desire it..." Thus practically all Filipino children between 7 and 13 years of age are deprived of a thorough religious instruction, for indeed, nearly all elementary schools are government-controlled. True, religion is permitted to be taught; in practice, however, because of the lack of professional teachers of religion, only a very small portion of public elementary school children are reached. Teachers of religion are usually volunteer students of Catholic colleges who, without remuneration, are engaged in this highly important task.

Thus out of 36 weeks of the school year only 30 minutes three times a week are taken out for optional religious instruction! What do teachers do with the rest of the time? They discuss the wonderful things of God's creation. They admire the order, plan, harmonies, symmetries, gradations and progressions of the natural world which was created by the good God. They search for laws and truths hidden in the marvelous world around them. They read the book of nature whose Author is God. In other words, whatever any curriculum anywhere discusses, it is effect of the First Cause. Now, is it not unscientific to speak about the effects and not to mention or even to forbid to mention their

Cause? Does not such a schooling create a certain vacuum in the minds and hearts of the youth? Does it not destroy the spiritual balance of the child? Does it not disorient the child's conception of values? Does it not lead to pessimism?...

The thirty minutes three times a week of optional instruction in religion are just a drop of water in the ocean of adverse influences our youth is exposed to. The daily press pounds day in day out upon the minds of the people. It brings daily pages of different crimes—murders, robberies, stabbings, fights, cheating, unfaithfulness, etc. etc. The radio, the cinema, the advertisements, the street life create an unhealthy atmosphere in which the child must live. Thus says Pius XI religion must be

"In very truth the foundation and crown of the youth's entire training... If this is wanting, if this sacred atmosphere does not pervade and warm the hearts of masters and scholars, little good can be expected from any kind of learning, and considerable harm will often be the consequence."

More and more cries are being heard about juvenile delinquency, broken homes, social injustice, corruption in politics, etc. Pres. Quezon observed about the youths of his time: "Social decorum is fast becoming prostituted by a mistaken conception of so-called modernity." And the social virtues will continue to vanish if the education of children and

youth will not be based upon the immutable and eternal truths of religion and morality. If God is taken out from the hearts and lives of the citizens then even the best provisions of the law will not save the present dangerous situation.

by JULIET VILLALUZ

The high school youth receives a little better religious training as compared with the child in the elementary school. High schools in our country are mostly under Catholic tutelage. But even here let us not forget the words of Pope Pius XI that to make a school

"a fit place for Catholic students... it is necessary that all the teaching and the whole organization of the school, and its teachers, syllabus and textbooks in every branch, be regulated by the Christian spirit... For the mere fact that the school gives some religious instruction (often extremely stinted) does not make such an institution truly Catholic..."

Colleges in the Philippines are much better taken care of. Mention here will be made of some of the Catholic institutions which are the envy of many a college student who cannot attend one of them. Four universities: the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas in Manila established in 1611, a quarter of a century older than Harvard University; the venerable University of San Carlos founded in 1595 in Cebu City; University of San Agustin in Iloilo City; and Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro City are some of the best among the nation's 23 universities. Then such names as Ateneo de Manila, San Juan de Letran, De la Salle, San Beda, Sta. Isabel, St. Scholastica, St. Theresa, Holy Ghost—all of Manila, are stand-outs in the

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At the Classroom



A Pause from Strife.

The persons whose ideas about teaching were just quoted, meant what they said: Teaching is the noblest profession.

The foundation upon which the dignity of teaching rests is the truth that God's greatest work is man and that man's master art is leading man to God. Since the teacher's endeavor is to develop the intellectual and spiritual powers of man; his vocation is that of repro-

ducing, to some extent, the creative power of God Himself. The enthusiastic teacher discovers and observes the native abilities in his pupils, watches over the development and growth of the inborn powers of the human soul, regulates the child's ambitions, enriches his imagination. In short, the teacher fashions the child's ideals, molds his character, and helps him in the formation of the new man, "reborn in baptism, unto the

stature of a perfect Christian."

— (Pius XII)

Teaching, according to St. John Chrysostom, is the most excellent art. Says he: "To form the minds and mold the characters of youth, is the art of all arts." It is the art of helping and guiding man in his ascent to God. And "teachers have the assurance of receiving this mission from God" Himself.

— (Pius XII)

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educational world. So are such schools as Holy Name College in Bohol, Aklan College in Aklan, St. Theresa's College and Colegio de la Inmaculada Concepcion in Cebu, Ateneo de Davao and Immaculate Conception College in Davao, St. William's College in Ilocos Norte, Colegio del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus in Iloilo, St. Paul's College in Leyte, Lourdes College in Misamis Oriental, St. Louis College in Baguio, La Consolacion College and Don Bosco Technical Institute in Negros Occidental, St. Paul's College in Negros Oriental, San Nicolas College in Surigao, Ateneo de Zamboanga in Zamboanga del Sur, and, of course, the four universities just mentioned maintain standards of instruction and offer educational facilities comparable with the best in the country.

It is unfortunate that the masses of our elementary school children do not receive a solid foundation in the "two great pillars of human happiness" — religion and morality. It is true, though, that many high schools and colleges are conducted by different religious groups. Religion is implemented in these educa-

ing her knowledge of current events, educational legislation and history. Moreover, she pursues studies, joins professional organizations, attends seminars for the purpose of broadening her cultural outlook and deepening her professional interest with the end in view of improving her teaching competence.

Lastly, the good Catholic teacher must possess a deep psychological insight. Youths have high hopes, ambitions and ideals. They are in general optimistic. A good Catholic teacher sustains their optimism by her charm, cheerfulness and scholarship. Students cannot help but admire a teacher who has a cheerful face and possesses profound human understanding of the deficiencies and limitations of others. She does not point

tional institutions. But it also remains true that the high schools and colleges can only improve what the homes and the elementary schools present to them. The high school and the college seldom, if ever, can build up a character the foundation of which was not laid in the earlier formative years of the child. ‡

TEACHING: The Noblest Profession

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for you to make them all worthy of that high destiny. This boy has talents that should enable him to do great things for God and for the Philippines. His talents are entrusted to your keeping, and must be developed by you. That other boy is less gifted intellectually but has in him the making of a real man, and the material to inspire thousands with the example of his struggle against odds... This girl has the marks of a religious vocation and it is for you to develop, by example and precept, her character, into one worthy of her sublime calling. Those other girls may some day be nurses, teachers, or mothers of families; and one and all should be trained by you for the best that they are capable of."

The Catholic teacher.

"The Catholic teacher has been called to a sublime office. She is...the teacher of truth and virtue, the representative of the parents and a spiritual mother, the gardener in the parish nursery, the visible guardian angel of the children, the custodian of the likenesses of God, the guardian of the living temples of the Holy Spirit, and the guide and companion of the pilgrims on their way to heaven."

The GOOD CATHOLIC TEACHER

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out the students' shortcomings bluntly devoid of any suggestion for improvements, for this attitude will surely thwart their eagerness to learn. On the contrary, she tries to discover the good things the students can do and help them further to improve themselves. She commends whatever little achievement a student accomplishes. In other words, a good Catholic teacher builds up her teaching upon the facts of Original Sin and grace. She knows, therefore, that in every child there are disorderly inclinations which must be corrected and good tendencies which must be encouraged and regulated from tender childhood. And Pius XI continues: "Above all the mind must be enlightened and the will strengthened by supernatural truth and the means of grace." The good Catholic teacher has something of the goodness of Christ Himself.

A good Catholic teacher loves the profession more than the material compensation she gets from it. And she recognizes the fact that hers is the highest and the most dignified profession, for Jesus Christ, the Greatest Teacher of all time, in His Last Will made teaching the noblest of all the professions when He said: "Go and teach..." ‡