

Designed To Fail

Catholic Education in America

STEVE KELLMEYER's new book is a "must" for those dismayed at the pretence or deceit conducted under the misnomer, "Catholic" schools.

An Australian parish priest disillusioned with his schools asked me to read it. I've just finished it, and am about to start again. It's worth it! **It's one of the most powerful demolitions I have ever read.**

Its two main points are:

1. STRATEGIC ERROR

Making Catholic schools a top priority was a strategic error. Quite apart from post-Vatican II dissent in schools, they cannot be expected to work (and they don't work) because the most basic priority was ignored, namely **adult education in the faith.**

The heroic effort in the USA parish schools has so often bypassed the parents and their inalienable personal rights and duties.

Kellmeyer quotes 2000 years of continuous Church teaching about catechesis. Incidentally, these texts strongly favour family catechetics and, implicitly, homeschooling as preferable to government schools.

He even mentions the possibility of **suing the "Catholic" schools for malpractice and fraud (!)** - which he says - perhaps tongue in cheek - will help parents finance their own homeschooling, instead of both having to go to work to pay the parish school fees. Remember, in the USA, there is no government assistance (state aid) for private schools.

2. SCHOOLS NEVER MEANT TO EDUCATE

He alleges that government compulsory schooling - he quotes someone else's research - was introduced in the 19th century to make youth into zombies, so they would abandon family farm or family business, and work as cogwheels in factories, and also become big consumers, thus guaranteeing the millionaires who run such enterprises a luxury lifestyle. Wow!

He quotes figures of early 19th century USA children having the highest level of literacy anywhere in the world, **before schooling took them over!**

FEATURES

He turns some fascinating phrases such as "adolescent marriages" of a husband and wife who didn't want children, and "adolescent bishops" who ignored Papal teaching and compromised with the civil power (the heresy of "Americanism"). He accuses the 19th & 20th century USA bishops of "contracepting the parents", by thwarting them from the completion of their act of procreation in that they imposed dictatorial diocesan and parish structures on sacramental programmes, and did not insist on home catechesis, or give proper support to those diffident of their abilities; in a word, they violated subsidiarity by usurpation.

SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

His credo is the graces of the Sacrament of Marriage. He laments the fact that Vatican I in 1870 was closed down by the invasion of the Papal States, *before* it could begin a proposed document on marriage.

One of his earlier books, *Sex in the Sacred City*, is on the theology of the body. Like Christopher West, he may have somewhat over-sexualized Pope John Paul II's nuptial meaning of the body.

STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS

1. The First Principle: Family Catechesis
2. The Organizing Principle: Adult Catechesis
3. Establish Monasteries
4. Get Professional Instructors (parishes can afford it)
5. Create an Adult Space (ie. a parish centre for *adults*)
6. Support Catholic Radio (same \$ as a diocesan paper)
7. Let Parents Do Their Work (subsidiarity)
8. Leverage Homeschooling Parents (to guide the others)
9. Reform the School Curricula
10. Enforce the Mandatum (in the catholic universities)
11. Support Orthodox Newman Centres (at universities)
12. Change the Diocese (reject a *churchy* welfare state)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

1. Learn the faith
2. Instruct Your Children in the Sacraments
3. Create Family Associations
4. Give Your Child Adult Responsibility
5. Build a sanctuary of Life (ie. the home)
6. Beware of Homeschooling (it's too hard for some)

SYDNEY'S TESTIMONY

In the late 1970s, after one meeting, I had state school parents working from texts at home, to **prepare their children for Confession, Communion, and Confirmation**, with a help-line, and Sunday check-up to collect new materials. The only other meeting was a final drill for the event. It worked!

In the early 1980s, I turned half the Sunday bulletin into a worksheet, for parents to use with their children at home, because the particular parish school excluded the priest from the Confirmation preparation. This was the beginning of the **Family Catechetics** monthly gatherings (called by some, "catechetics in the park"), to support parents giving at least a weekly instruction at home. It really worked!

And much further back, The Rev. Dr. Austin Woodbury S.M. founded the Aquinas Academy (now the Centre of Thomistic Studies), to educate many of Sydney's faithful in Catholic philosophy and theology. His niece, Sister Maur Woodbury, S.M., like Elisha, has inherited a double share of Elijah's spirit.

In 1939, Sydney's Archbishop Kelly ordered that the Catechism be taught "in the family, in the Church and in the School."

DESIGNED TO FAIL - WHO IS IT FOR?

It is essential reading for bishops, priests, homeschoolers, parents and teachers. ALL should **own their own copy.**

Father James Tierney (of the *Catholic Family Catechism*)

241pp Paperback: \$33.00

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