

ARCHBISHOP'S RESIDENCE
2809 S. CARROLLTON AVENUE
NEW ORLEANS 18, LOUISIANA

August 17, 1960

REOPENING OF SCHOOL -

SEPTEMBER 6, 1960

To the Clergy, Religious and Laity,
Archdiocese of New Orleans

Dearly beloved in Christ:

Although our Catholic Parochial School System is not directly involved in the state of uncertainty which at the present writing still prevails regarding the operation of our public schools, especially in New Orleans, we consider it our duty to address this message to the faithful of the Archdiocese. Certain points in this pastoral letter will be of interest also to the parents or guardians of Catholic children attending public schools.

Our first announcement is that our Catholic elementary and high schools will reopen for the 1960-1961 scholastic year on scheduled time, namely on Tuesday, September 6. The opening dates for Catholic colleges and universities will be in conformity with their announced programs of operation.

In principle we are committed to the racial integration of our Catholic schools for reasons which have been repeatedly set forth in letters addressed to the clergy and laity of the Archdiocese in past years.

We can never brush aside the outstanding truths of the Sacred Scriptures in which we learn that in the beginning God created man after His own image and likeness, breathed into this human form an immortal soul and gave to this marvelous product

of His creative power an eternal destiny. Nor can we ignore the truth that all human beings without exception and regardless of accidental differences are created after the same pattern and endowed with the same essential gifts.

Nor can we spurn the consoling truth that the Eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, became Incarnate, lived, taught and worked miracles, suffered and died on the Cross of Calvary to prove His love for all men without exception or distinction and to merit for all men of good will the saving grace that guarantees peace of soul on earth and happiness with God in heaven.

In establishing His Church Christ envisaged all peoples, all nations, all men as recipients of His teaching and the beneficiaries of His grace through the Sacraments: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world."
(Matt. XXVIII, 19-20)

These truths we learn from Holy Mother Church through our Popes, the successors of St. Peter; they are the truths upon which the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of our own country based their solemn declarations in 1943 and in November 1958 that racial segregation is contrary to the teaching of our Catholic Church.

For the present the statement of these basic truths should suffice for prayerful reflection. When school integration can take place the issue will receive consideration of a more practical nature. In the meantime we urge Catholic parents to discharge faithfully their obligation in conscience to send their children to Catholic schools on every level from the kindergarten through the university wherever these facilities are available even to the point of special sacrifice. Only through the Catholic system of education can parents guarantee to their children that well-rounded education which includes spiritual and moral teaching, as well as mental and physical discipline; the education which regards as paramount the soul's relationship to God in time and in eternity, the education which gives to good moral conduct the incentive of religious responsibility.

To Catholic parents who for any reason whatsoever send their children to public or other non-Catholic schools, we give the solemn reminder that they are in

conscience bound to enroll and send faithfully their school-aged children to the Religion Instruction Classes of their proper parish. Wilful neglect of this duty is grievously sinful. These classes begin shortly after opening of the regular school term.

For the guidance of Catholic parents who have children enrolled in the public school system we submit three outstanding issues which the racial integration problem or controversy has raised:

First there is the question of law and order, the danger of chaos and moral irresponsibility which is latent in the prevailing efforts to nullify or circumvent or even defy a ruling proclaimed by the supreme legal authority of our country. We cannot hope to prevent or eradicate present-day lawlessness in our teen-agers by procedures which flout the school integration decision. Then there is the proposal to close all public schools rather than integrate them even on a moderate installment basis. Apart from the financial and economic losses, who can evaluate the social, moral and cultural damage which such a flagrant action would inflict upon our civilization and history? Parents, teachers, religious leaders and public officials cannot consider without a deep shock to their sense of moral and civic responsibility the prospect of even one year without schooling for hundreds of thousands of children in State, City and countryside. Even with our schools in full operation, complaints about lawlessness to the point of most heinous crimes are cited almost daily by the press. What can we expect during a year or more of closed doors and empty classrooms within our public schools? Certainly not a millennium. We appeal to parents interested in public schools for their children to become concerned and vocal against such an unrealistic prospect.

Another important problem is presented by the proposal to substitute private schools for the public schools if the latter should be closed. Such a solution would create financial and administrative problems which in turn would create confusion, disrupt existing standards of education, make education the privilege of the rich over against the privation of the poor, leave Negroes for the most part without education and in general destroy the educational sacrifices and achievements of generations. The private school plan, like the "close our school" plan is no

solution but dissolution, offers no constructive prospect of a "dream come true" but only a dull grey dawn of illusion and frustration. Both plans have been tried and found wanting elsewhere; good sense and calm judgment will caution against the risk here of greater frustration where the stakes are so much higher and the responsibilities so much greater.

We have presented our thoughts on these special phases of the public school segregation problem, because of our interest in the public welfare of all our fellow citizens, our special responsibility as the spiritual shepherd of so many souls who have interests in the public school system and our concern for the cultural life of our country. The problem demands objective thinking, unselfish decision and generous acceptance of the American way of life which is heralded in the declaration of our Founding Fathers that: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Finally, we must look to God for guidance and strength. Therefore, we ordain that Sunday, August 21, be dedicated as a DAY OF PRAYER in all our parish churches, mission chapels and religious institutions and houses throughout the Archdiocese. On this day we exhort the clergy to announce and conduct a Holy Hour of Adoration at a convenient time between 4 P.M. and 8 P.M. We appeal to the faithful to dedicate their prayers during Holy Mass and at the Holy Hour in the following intentions:

That it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ and the intercession of His Immaculate Mother, to grant an early solution of the race problem in our midst and to bring about a propitious response to the challenge for compliance with the ruling on the integration of our public system of education.

May it please God to bless especially our schools during the ensuing scholastic year and to grant to our Archdiocese, our State and our country the gift of internal peace.

Faithfully your shepherd in Christ,

+ Joseph Francis Rummel

Archbishop of New Orleans