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UD Hosts National Symposium on Future of Catholic Education

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DAYTON, Ohio, April 21, 1988—The University of Dayton will be the site of a historic week-long national symposium in May that will bring together more than 300 educators, together with theologians, futurists and historians, to develop an agenda for Catholic education in the 21st century.

"A Study of the Future of the Educational Mission of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States" takes place May 19-26 in the Kennedy Union on campus. As the cornerstone of the Catholic Education Futures Project, the symposium is the culmination of more than three years of planning, study and reflection from representatives of more than 20 U.S. Catholic organizations. The National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) organized the effort. As host, UD—the ninth largest Catholic university in the nation—is the only higher education institution invited to participate.

"The University is honored to be the host for this significant event in the life of the Church," said UD President Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M. "This is a unique opportunity for UD to play an integral role in shaping the future educational mission of the Church."

The symposium is momentous because it "marks the first time such a diverse group of Catholic organizations will actually talk with one another," said Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis, chair of the NCEA and one of a number of bishops supporting the project. Organizers hope the outcome is a "vision statement" that makes recommendations about the Catholic Church's educational mission up to and beyond the year 2000.

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"This conference has the real possibility of forming a backdrop for a pastoral plan in education," said Donald R. McCrabb, executive director of the Catholic Campus Ministry Association, a national organization based at UD that fosters the professional and theological development of campus ministers at 1,100 institutions around the country.

Symposium participants will confront and examine a number of "futurist" issues that challenge the educational mission of the Catholic Church. These include:

-- the changing roles of women and family;
-- the threat of nuclear proliferation;
-- the emergence of the "biotechnical revolution," which allows the creation of new life forms;
-- the impact of electronic communication, rapid travel and space exploration on how the world is viewed;
-- the accessibility of smaller, faster, inexpensive, more powerful computers; and
-- the growing gap between rich and poor.

To assess the impact of these trends on Catholic education and arriving at a consensus, symposium organizers conducted a "Delphi probe," a survey of 336 educational experts about the future of the Church's educational ministry during the next 15 years. A series of 50 statements were circulated to the respondents, who made judgments about the likeliness of events, their desirability and the impact on the Church. These statements covered such trends as the decreasing number of priests, the declining enrollment in Catholic elementary and secondary schools and advances in biotechnology that may one day allow couples to choose gender, intelligence and body structure of their offspring. The results of this survey are expected to form the basis of discussion at the symposium.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A local media contact is Donald R. McCrabb. He can be reached at (513) 229-4648. A national media contact is Sister Suzanne Hall, SNDdeN, chair of the Catholic Education Futures Project. Her phone number is (202) 337-6232.
SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

1. Catholic Campus Ministry Association — CCMA
2. National Association of Catholic Diocesan Family Life Ministers — NACDFLM
3. National Association of Diocesan Directors of Campus Ministry — NADDCM
4. National Catholic Educational Association — NCEA
5. National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association — NCYAMA
6. National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities — NCOPD
7. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Priestly Formation — NCCB, Priestly Formation
8. National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education — NCDD
9. National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry — NFCYM
10. National Office for Black Catholics — NOBC
12. National Pastoral Planners Conference — NPPC
14. Parish and Diocesan Council Network — PADICON
15. United States Catholic Conference, Department of Education — USCC
16. USCC, National Advisory Committee on Adult Religious Education — NACARE
17. USCC, Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs

Other participating organizations:
University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio
Pallottine Institute for Lay Leadership and Apostolate Research
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Conference of Major Superiors of Men

"The Catholic Education Futures Project sets an important precedent by bringing together a range of Catholic organizations representing the diversity of the Church in America — Black Catholics, Native American Catholics, Hispanic Catholics, disabled Catholics — including virtually everyone who wants a voice in determining the future of this central ministry of the Church."

— Sr. Suzanne E. Hall, SNDdeN
Chairperson, The Catholic Education Futures Project

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THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION FUTURES PROJECT

National Symposium:
A Study of the Future of the Educational Mission of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States
May 19-26, 1988
University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio
ON THE THRESHOLD . . .
The Catholic Church today stands on the threshold of a new era, a critical turning point.

Profound societal shifts are occurring at a faster pace than ever before in history. Among the most pivotal changes challenging the future of the Church and its educational mission are:

- The impact of electronic communication, rapid travel and space exploration on how the world is viewed
- The changing roles of women and family
- The threat of nuclear proliferation
- The growing gap between rich and poor
- The accessibility of smaller, faster, inexpensive, more powerful computers
- The emergence of a "biotechnical revolution," allowing the creation of new life forms

THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW . . .
How Catholic educators respond to these complex issues will have a profound effect on the Church of tomorrow.

That's why the National Catholic Educational Association, in collaboration with the Education Department of the United States Catholic Conference, has asked educators to "take time out" to examine and understand these trends.

Through The Catholic Education Futures Project, approximately 300 educators and bishops from 17 sponsoring organizations from throughout the United States will gather at the University of Dayton campus in Dayton, Ohio, May 19-26 for a historic week-long symposium. This national event — the culmination of more than three years of planning, study and reflection — gives Catholic educators the opportunity to play the role of "futurists" by exploring possible and probable futures for Catholic education and determining its role in moving society toward a preferable future.

A BROAD AGENDA . . .
Participants in The Catholic Education Futures Project will explore new ways of thinking about the future and will promote greater unity in carrying out the four-fold dimension of Catholic education — message, community, worship and service. The national symposium is expected to lead to:

- Increased understanding between and among national organizations about their ministries
- Agreement on the ingredients for a common "vision statement" for Catholic education in the U.S.
- Consensus on a broad agenda for the future of Catholic education
- Development of specific action plans for each of the sponsoring organizations
- Determination of a date to reconvene within two to four years to reflect on the progress of the action plans
- Publication of proceedings of the symposium