

CLASSIFIED



Catholic school officials upbeat despite scandal

NEW YORK (AP) — Leaders of America's Roman Catholic schools can recite a daunting list of challenges — tight finances, teacher retention, shifting demographics. The ever-growing sex abuse scandal among clergy has left the vast network of schools, run mostly by lay people, largely unscathed. "Our schools have never been more important to the church," said Michael Guerra, president of the National Catholic Education Association. "We will not be blind to the pain and grief that exists — we will simply redouble our efforts to convince people that we take the trust they have in us very seriously."

With about 94 percent of their faculty and administrators now coming from the laity, Catholic schools have won wide praise — for higher-than-average test scores and graduation rates and for their emphasis on moral values.

Admirers include inner-city minority leaders and Protestant conservatives, as well as Catholic parents whose children remain on parochial school waiting lists even as the scandal spreads. Catholic schools also have their problems. While many prosper, especially in suburbs, tight budgets and shifting demographics are forcing scores of other schools to close each year — and enrollment is down slightly.

Tuition increases have made the schools less affordable for working-class parents, but Catholic school teachers still generally earn 25 percent less than their public school counterparts. "We've had success recruiting good young teachers, but not great success retaining them," Guerra said.

Long term, Guerra hopes public funds will become available to help parents afford Catholic school tuition. A pivotal ruling could come in June, when the U.S. Supreme Court decides whether publicly funded vouchers

in Cleveland can be used at private and religious schools. Roughly 2.6 million students attend the country's 8,114 Catholic schools. Enrollment dipped by 30,000 students last year — more than 1 percent — and construction of 50 new schools was more than offset by the closure of 80.

Many of the closures were in inner cities where racial minorities and recent immigrants have replaced suburb-bound white Catholics. "The church's decision was to stay and educate the next generation of newcomers, whether they are Catholic or not," Guerra said. "It's a tough promise to deliver on because of economics — the newcomers are often of limited means."

Outside the inner cities, hundreds of Catholic schools have more graduates than they can handle. Daily revelations about sex abuse by priests has not changed that. "Our enrollment is high, the parent support is great," said Jim Gerken, principal of all-boys Chaminade College Preparatory School in St. Louis. "Students have pretty strong opinions, but they haven't talked a lot about it ... I don't think kids put priests on a pedestal as much as adults do."

Dentist Chuck Grelle, whose 18-year-old daughter will soon graduate from St. Louis' all-girls Visitation Academy, is skeptical of the church's handling of the scandal. But Grelle, like his wife, said his heart remains in parochial education — and his church. "It hasn't affected my faith at all," he said.

In Boston, the epicenter of the scandal, allegations of sexual abuse have extended into the Catholic school system. Former students of Boston College High School accused three priests, including one who was still teaching, of sexually abusing them from the mid-1970s to early-1980s.

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FOR RENT

Mid-May-Mid-Aug Melrose Apts. 1bdrm in 4bd/4bth furnished, w/d, ethernet, phone and cable included in rent. \$399/mo. Micala 680-3343.

Needed: 2-Male Christian summer sub-lease. 3/2 house, mile north of campus. \$220/mo. +split bills. 260-5935. jamezger@hotmail.com

Northgate 2bd/2bth summer lease 846-4076.

Northgate fourplexes, new construction, 3bd/2bth, walking distance to campus. 979-250-9611 or visit webpage www.northgatefourplexes.com.

Northgate, 2bd/2bth, 3bd/2bth, nice apartment, walk to TAMU. Call 2bd/2bth, walk to Blinn College. Call 846-4076.

One bedroom in three bedroom house. \$273/mo, near campus. 695-0709.

3bd/2bth/3ba, huge rooms, \$410/mo +1200. 2bd/2bth, 3bd/2bth, 4bd/4bth, 5bd/5bth, 6bd/6bth, 7bd/7bth, 8bd/8bth, 9bd/9bth, 10bd/10bth, 11bd/11bth, 12bd/12bth, 13bd/13bth, 14bd/14bth, 15bd/15bth, 16bd/16bth, 17bd/17bth, 18bd/18bth, 19bd/19bth, 20bd/20bth, 21bd/21bth, 22bd/22bth, 23bd/23bth, 24bd/24bth, 25bd/25bth, 26bd/26bth, 27bd/27bth, 28bd/28bth, 29bd/29bth, 30bd/30bth, 31bd/31bth, 32bd/32bth, 33bd/33bth, 34bd/34bth, 35bd/35bth, 36bd/36bth, 37bd/37bth, 38bd/38bth, 39bd/39bth, 40bd/40bth, 41bd/41bth, 42bd/42bth, 43bd/43bth, 44bd/44bth, 45bd/45bth, 46bd/46bth, 47bd/47bth, 48bd/48bth, 49bd/49bth, 50bd/50bth, 51bd/51bth, 52bd/52bth, 53bd/53bth, 54bd/54bth, 55bd/55bth, 56bd/56bth, 57bd/57bth, 58bd/58bth, 59bd/59bth, 60bd/60bth, 61bd/61bth, 62bd/62bth, 63bd/63bth, 64bd/64bth, 65bd/65bth, 66bd/66bth, 67bd/67bth, 68bd/68bth, 69bd/69bth, 70bd/70bth, 71bd/71bth, 72bd/72bth, 73bd/73bth, 74bd/74bth, 75bd/75bth, 76bd/76bth, 77bd/77bth, 78bd/78bth, 79bd/79bth, 80bd/80bth, 81bd/81bth, 82bd/82bth, 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