

University of Notre Dame
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How Can People Be So Dumb?

It is a Boy Guidance graduate who asks the question. He has been finding out how much some boys don't know about God. But let him tell the story:

"I am employed as a teacher at an industrial school for boys. Besides my regular classroom duties I have been helping to prepare a class of forty-five boys, ranging in age from fifteen to twenty, for Confirmation. Their almost utter lack of Catholic training and of knowledge of their prayers has astounded me. I could never before conceive of anyone being so devoid of even a thought of God, and yet I suppose there are thousands of such cases.

"The boys here are delinquents, yet some of them are not in that class. I wonder how we can account for such a condition existing among our Catholic brethren. Surely there is something missing somewhere along the line, and I wonder if you can tell me what this can be."

For answer you have to go back to the home, the school, and the street or alley in which these boys have lived.

The home. How many Catholic men entering matrimony regard the soul of the woman they choose for a life partner? Most of them, no doubt, but if even at Notre Dame we find Catholic boys ignoring this important matter in their choice of girl companions, what can we expect of the less privileged. Intoxicated by the sight of a pretty face - even though it be kalsomined - they forget that the future guardian of the faith and morals of their offspring must have spiritual qualities of sound endurance if she is to show them how to save their souls. Mixed marriage is, of course, often the root evil when the children have no religious training.

The school. It is estimated that only one-half of the Catholic children of this country are in Catholic schools, and the district from which this alumnus writes is one of the weakest in Catholic primary education. And the public schools are not calculated to supply any defects left by the home training in the spiritual knowledge of their pupils. We have instructed many public school graduates, and we are quite accustomed to such questions as, "What are these Ten Commandments I hear the boys talking about?" Thank God, non-Catholics are beginning to question the wisdom of this Godless education against which Catholics have protested in a very practical way for the past hundred years, but we still have a fearful score to pay before we check the criminality let loose by a century of godlessness.

The alley. Environment means a great deal in life, but to no one more than to the growing boy. In estimating Catholic life we must never lose sight of the fact that in this country we are outnumbered four to one; that is, for every Catholic there are four non-Catholics. This does not mean, of course, that all non-Catholics are evil influences working against our moral and spiritual life - God forbid - but it does mean that against the Catholic ideas and ideals implanted by the Catholic home and school there are many potential evil influences wearing down the standards of the weak. Even Catholics of excellent background succumb at times to the false standards of the worst elements of their environment; it is small wonder, then, that underprivileged kids, with no inspiration for good in the home and no spiritual influence in the school, follow the pack - or lead the pack - in the way of sin.

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Draw your own moral. Are you a good advertisement for your parents?

PRAYERS: George Howlett asks prayers for his grandmother, who is very ill. Today is the fifth anniversary of the death of Frank Gallagher, whose beautiful and edifying death here at school is still an inspiration. Four special intentions.

BE AT CONFESSION BEFORE FRIDAY NIGHT IF YOU WOULD RECEIVE SATURDAY MORNING.