

Presentation made at the Federation Meeting of the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 9, 1970, in St. Louis by Sister Mary Patrick in the name of the Team on the Future.

Sisters, it is both a pleasure and a privilege for me to be able to speak with you in the name of the Team on the Future. You are the Leaders of the Sisters of Saint Joseph; you represent 21,000 Sisters, and as far as I am concerned you are those 21,000 Sisters. If it were not for your belief in the future of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, we would not be present today to speak with you about that future. In the name of the Team I thank you for your encouragement and for your support.

It is not possible for any one person, or group of persons, to say exactly what the future will be, nor is it possible for us, in one short summary statement, to express for you everything that our research has brought to light. There are, however, certain basic trends discernable in all of the happenings in society today, and it is to these that we have addressed ourselves.

First and foremost, it is important to realize that there are three great revolutions taking place at the present time. These are: the SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION, the SECULAR REVOLUTION, and the URBAN REVOLUTION. It is these which are shaping the future of mankind in a very real sense and it is in these that we find the cause for the trends we must consider and study.

One trend that is affecting all of us, and which will increasingly do so during the next decade is the CHANGE FROM CLOSED SOCIETIES TO OPEN SOCIETIES. This can be seen most readily in all of business management today. No longer do large corporations maintain a fixed pattern in relation to operation but, rather, a flexibility, an openness to change and revision and this as an on-going process. The person of the employee is considered above all else, and the company depends for its success upon the talent, the interest and the initiative of the individual. In other words, structures are not fixed. Structures are only a means to an end and it is the end that is the goal. In relation to Religious Congregations, this same idea was brought to light in America magazine, July 11, 1970 issue, in an article by Benedictine Father Kilian McDonnell, entitled, "Religious Life in Low Profile." If you have read the article, the parallel will be evident to you.

The results of the change from closed societies to open societies are immediately apparent.

1. Fixed structures are being replaced by more flexible ones where creativity and leadership at all levels is of prime importance.
2. The pace of social change is so fast that the ability to change becomes more and more essential. Fixed patterns no longer have meaning; goals become more important; diversity is part of this change.
3. There is an inevitable trend away from constant internalization with a resultant opening out to the world.

As one is forced to consider these ideas, it might be well to ask the question, "On what basis do we say to a girl today that she cannot be one of us?" Secondly, trends in the whole field of education must be carefully examined because these trends are and will continue to affect all of us.

1. Education's task is to shape an adaptable man rather than a finished man; the kind of flexibility needed here cannot be learned from lectures or from books. It is acquired from activities that entail participation and responsibility. Schooling will become an active period instead of a passive one and will include personal responsibility and leisure time for the absorption of culture.

2. Education covering the whole of man's life will eliminate the concept of the class. Teachers and lecturers will become counselors, tutors, programmers.
3. The polyvalent man who can adapt easily in a broad field will be a prime objective. No longer will we be seeking the mastery of a "specialty."
4. Diplomas will be valid for a given period of time--for example, five years--and then the individual will go through a period of retraining or up-dating. In other words, diplomas that are not renewed as a result of updating knowledge or training will become obsolete.
5. Education must become a matter of team work--the very opposite of the present system in which each student is continually judged on the basis of what he does by himself.
6. The prime objective of education will be to create a society in which men will continue to grow until the very end of life.
7. There will be an increasing movement toward more corporateness which is a slower process, certainly, but a much more valid and vitalizing one. Conflicts and risks are implicit in this trend but there can be no fear of conflict. To change means to risk mistakes but it means life; not to change is to die.
8. Greater emphasis will be placed on the massmedia and the computer for information. There will be an increased emphasis on the educative process, on the aesthetic, on the development of man's highest faculties. There will be then an atmosphere in which creativity will flourish and leadership will be born. The one who influences the group, as was mentioned earlier, will be the leader.

We need to consider the implications of these trends if we are to move effectively into the future.

1. Adult education, continuing education, retraining of the "aging" (not the aged!-- are just a few of the indications of the shift in emphasis in education. Generation "gaps" will disappear because individuals will be constantly returning to the sources of education for further knowledge, updating, retraining. Two questions we must ask ourselves now, as we prepare for the future are, "Who will be in our schools in 1980?" Are we going to be prepared to meet the needs of these students?"
2. There is need to turn off critical thinking while searching for creative answers.
3. There are benefits to be gained in trying for wild extravagant solutions that can later be tamed down to usable proportions.
4. The Universities, the colleges, and even the secondary schools of the future will consist of a library and dormitories. What is this saying to us as educators? Here again, we see the trend from the closed society to the open society. The students' education will stem from all of society--the environment, the corporations, the organizations, the milieu in which they are living--all of these will be the "books" of the future.

The third area we need to consider is that of life styles. These have taken on new meaning and importance for all of society because of the Urban Revolution. Values, as we know, are changing. This is not to say that values are not brought to fruition through a valid educational system, which we certainly need to consider and work actively to do something about, but it is to say that we must recognize those values which are being shaped by the great current revolutions and in whose presence we are living.

1. There is a new and ever greater emphasis on the value of the human person.
2. The shift in authority from a vertical emphasis to a horizontal emphasis is known to all of us, but something we must come to realize in all of our planning for the future is the fact that the elected leader is not necessarily the true leader. Again, we must note and emphasize that the one who has knowledge, the one who stimulates to action, the one who influences, is indeed the real leader.
3. Plurality and diversity do not militate against order, harmony, and unity. On the contrary, these very trends can be enriching, enabling, refining, rewarding, building. In all of Nature, God has marked the earth with great variety within an ordered pattern of life. The SPIRIT is blowing today where He will. Dare we miss His breath?!
4. There is a great stress on the importance of freedom, of responsibility, of initiative. There is a growing SENSE OF MISSION among youth especially, and this spirit must be channeled if it is to serve the future of mankind.
5. CONSULTATION is increasing in importance; those involved in actions must have participation in the decision-making process.
6. As a result of the SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION, there is a movement away from the idea of absolutes--no longer do we speak of an absolute universe; increasingly, we are stressing a relative universe. All things must be considered in relation to something else. (You might wish to recall at this point the last weather report you heard. How were the predictions made for the twenty-four hour period?)
7. We are living in the midst of LIFE today--consider for just a moment the themes around which current movies are produced--the gut issues of life are unfolded on the screen--no one is free to close his eyes to naked reality. Life is everywhere, at any given moment to be considered, to be evaluated, to be judged, to be directed.
8. McLuhan has stated that we've become a global village. The implications are evident enough, but have we closed ourselves to the vision?
9. Our CONSCIOUSNESS has changed. Comprehension shows up in our living rooms every time we turn on the TV set--there before us are the tragedies of Cambodia, of Vietnam, of the Mid-East, of Latin America, of the Black Man in America, of the Ethnic groups--to name only a few of the stark realities of this decade. Will they be the same in the next decade? Are we, as religious women, capable of doing something about them?

I have been able in these few minutes, Sisters, to give you a few of the highlights we've come to recognize as we've endeavored to research the future. We have been proud and happy to do this in the name of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the world. We are proud and happy to be Sisters of Saint Joseph, and we are convinced of the Congregation's viability for the future. We give to you, the Leaders of us all, loyalty and support. We ask only that you take up the CALL TO THE FUTURE.