Conference Time Again

Fred Hanko

... The lack of a close relationship between parents and teachers can have several unhappy results. Both parents and teachers are more hesitant to discuss problems with the other when they arise. The lack of knowledge and understanding of each other leads to doubts about what the other is trying to do. Parents begin to talk to each other about "the teachers," and teachers grumble about "the parents" and the result is a poorer relationship

and no progress in our mutual interest, the welfare of the children. If we knew each other better and could talk things over more frequently, I'm sure that many of our problems would disappear.

That's what conferences are all about. It's true, they're very limited in time and are often very formal and structured, but they are the best that we have now, and they do offer an excellent opportunity to help the children through shared experiences and knowledge and to help each other by discussing the problems that we have.

I have been asking myself the question, what do I really want from these conferences? I think the first thing I want to know is whether or not your child is learning as well as we can reasonably expect him to learn. I have an opinion, of course, formed from the results of tests he has taken, my observation of his work habits, and my experience with him in class, but you can help me make a better judgment.

If the answer is no, he is not doing as well as he could, then the next question is what can be done to get him to work as well as he is able? On this you can tell me a great deal because you can tell me what kind of person he is and what experience you have had in all the years you have known him. You can give me all sorts of valuable information about his special interests, about things that bother him, about things that help him.

Then I asked the question, what can I give to you parents at these conferences? I think, for one thing, you also want to know

whether your child is doing the best he can. I can give you my opinion. If he is not doing as well as he should, I can tell you what the problems are as I see them. Perhaps I can suggest some ways that he can try to overcome the problem. I can tell you something about his behavior in the group of children at school, I can tell you something about his behavior in the classroom and about the attitudes he shows there.

Looking at the things I want to know from you and the things I want to tell you, several things are clear: We are both interested in the same things. We can accomplish a great deal by sharing our information and our problems. The conferences help us both. By getting to know each other we can accomplish great things.

Your child may not always think so, but we teachers like your child. We want your child to grow in knowledge and understanding that a covenant child needs to live a life of service to God. You want the same thing. The conferences can help us work toward that goal.