

**A Moral Approach to School Desegregation?: A History of
Catholic School Reform During the Civil Rights Movement
in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Charleston, South Carolina,
1948-1963**

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Protected from direct government intervention because of a “separation of church and state” doctrine, Catholic schools remained shielded from the direct implications of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. After the “Brown II” decision suggested that school districts move toward desegregation “with all deliberate speed” in 1955, the Catholic Church faced a monumental decision: how to approach desegregation in their parochial schools. Despite initially evading the *Brown* decision, by 1958 the Catholic Church inevitably faced the prospect of desegregation as an issue of morality and responded with an educational policy that linked desegregation to Church doctrine. This essay will examine how the Catholic Church in New Orleans, Louisiana and Charleston, South Carolina pushed through a carefully constructed plan for desegregation that focused on preparing white parishioners for desegregation in an attempt to avoid alienation and withdrawal from the Church, beginning as early 1953 and ending with full Catholic school desegregation in 1962 and 1964, respectively. This history expands our understanding of school desegregation to include Catholic schools, which differed from public and other private schools because of the way they linked desegregation to morality, prepared parishioners for desegregation, and controlled the press coverage of desegregation.

The historiography of school desegregation typically classifies schools as “private” or “public” and examines desegregation from within these two classifications. The history of Catholic school desegregation deserves careful study separate from that of other private schools because Catholic governance linked morality and desegregation in an effort to implement desegregation. This distinction separates Catholic schools from public and other private schools, as it led to a comprehensive desegregation plan that

included strong commitment among stakeholders, thorough preparation, and careful oversight of implementation. This history of desegregation broadens our understanding of desegregation to include private, Catholic schools and how these spaces proffered different approaches to desegregating schools through thorough yet less visible means.

This paper demonstrates that the Catholic Church adopted a desegregation plan based on notions of morality that resulted in focused and comprehensive planning with parents and community stakeholders. Despite guidance from the national Church hierarchy, the decisions surrounding Catholic school desegregation primarily took place on a local level. The Church's unique position allowed the national Church hierarchy to comment on the morality of desegregation, linking it to Church teaching, and thereby encouraging adherents to support integrated schools.¹ In order to facilitate this change of heart, local Catholic dioceses instituted various preparation programs for both white and black parishioners. These programs, which consisted of sermons, lecture series, curriculum, pamphlets, organizations, and meetings, constitute a unique contribution to desegregation history by the Catholic Church, which develops our understanding of the process of school desegregation in the Southern United States by exploring the strides made when schools accepted and prepared for desegregation. Despite the Catholic Church's preparation efforts, the experience of desegregating remained unchanged, with black students who desegregated white Catholic schools still experiencing harassment

¹ Pope Pius XIII, *Summi Pontificatus* [Encyclical letter on the unity of human society], sec. 47, Vatican Website, 27 October 2014, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20101939_summi-pontificatus_en.html; Conference of the Roman Catholic Bishops of America, Letter from the 1943 Conference. Quoted in Ellen Tarry *The Third Door: The Autobiography of an American Negro Woman*. (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1966), 194; Catholic Bishops of the United States, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience," *The Journal of Negro Education* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1959): 66.

and bullying. New Orleans and Charleston, while strikingly similar in regard to culture and history, differ with regards to their Catholic dioceses. Whereas New Orleans was the largest Catholic diocese in the South, Charleston's Catholic population was a small minority. When examined together, the patterns of these dioceses' school desegregation indicate trends in Catholic school desegregation in the South, expanding our understanding of school desegregation to include this different type of private school.

To reconstruct this history, this paper incorporates a social historical perspective, utilizing both traditional historical research and oral interviews. Toward this end, oral interviews were conducted to shed light on the experiences of the first students to desegregate Catholic schools in both New Orleans, LA and Charleston, SC, the two cities on which this paper focuses. Additionally this paper utilizes primary source material, drawn from Church records from 1961 to 1964, housed in the Catholic Diocese of Charleston's archives. The paper also incorporates the 1961 to 1964 records of the Catholic Council on Human Relations, the driving force behind New Orleans Catholic school desegregation, which are housed at the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University in New Orleans. Incorporating both traditional historical research and the narratives of those who lived it allows this paper to explore both the preparation programs that the Church instituted and the impact they had on the first students to desegregate Catholic schools.

Historiography on Catholic School Desegregation

The topic of school desegregation has received extensive scholarly attention in both a national context and with regards to New Orleans, LA and Charleston, SC.² However, the topic of Catholic school desegregation across the South has received scant historical analysis, as Catholic schools are often mentioned as an aside in literature focusing on school desegregation nationally or locally.³ Works that do discuss Catholic school desegregation tend to focus on one particular region or diocese, emphasizing the Church's role in the Civil Rights Movement in that region as a whole. These pieces fail to

² For the history of school desegregation in Charleston, see: Maxie M. Cox, *1963—The Year of Decision: Desegregation in South Carolina* (PhD diss. University of South Carolina, 1996); Paul Wesley McNeill, *School Desegregation in South Carolina: 1963-1970* (PhD diss. University of Kentucky, 1979); I.A. Newby, *Black Carolinians: A History of Blacks in South Carolina from 1895 to 1968* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973); R. Scott Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles of Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926-1972* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006); *Toward the Meeting of the Waters: Currents in the Civil Rights Movement of South Carolina during the Twentieth Century*, ed. Winifred B. Moore, Jr. and Orville Vernon Burton (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010). For the history of school desegregation in New Orleans, see: Liva Baker, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: The Hundred Year Struggle to Integrate the Schools* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996); Robert L. Crain and Morton Inger, *School Desegregation in New Orleans: A Comparative Study of the Failure of Social Control* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966); Donald E. Devore and Joseph Logsdon, *Crescent City Schools: Public Education in New Orleans, 1941-1991* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1991). For a larger national context, see: George R. Metcalf, *From Little Rock to Boston: The History of School Desegregation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); William M. Gordon's, "The Implementation of Desegregation Plans Since Brown" *The Journal of Negro Education* 63, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 310-322 takes a broad, national approach, examining the various types of desegregation plans cities implemented; Richard Kluger's, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004) and James Patterson's *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) trace the development of the landmark *Brown v. Board* (1954) case and its legacy.

³ Adam Fairclough's *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995) provides a comprehensive examination of the desegregation of New Orleans public schools, briefly mentioning the Catholic Church's involvement and reaction during the desegregation and civil rights and James Patterson's movement in the city. Similarly, Mary Lee Muller's "New Orleans Public School Desegregation." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 17, no. 1 (Winter, 1976): 69-88 mentions Archbishop Rummel's statements regarding desegregation whilst discussing New Orleans public school desegregation. R. Scott Baker's *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles of Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926-1972* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006) touches on Catholic schools during his discussion on public school desegregation.

provide the details that an exclusive focus on Catholic school desegregation would provide and do not include the voices of the participants. Given the Catholic Church's unique position to operate schools while espousing a moral doctrine, the desegregation of these schools requires analysis separate from that of public or other private schools.

Within the past ten years, discussion of the Catholic Church's involvement in desegregation has become a more popular topic. Historians R. Bentley Anderson, Andrew Moore, and Danny Collum have recently completed extensive research on Catholic desegregation across the South.⁴ These studies focused primarily on particular districts in New Orleans, LA; Mobile, AL; Atlanta, GA; and Natchez, MS, all of which shed light on the complexities of Catholic desegregation and collectively point toward regional patterns. These authors agree that tying desegregation to Church teaching added another layer by which to understand the issue of race in the Church. In their examination of the crossover between the Catholic Church and the Civil Rights Movement, Anderson, Moore, and Collum all show the conflicting sides of the struggle, discussing both Catholics who supported desegregation and those who opposed it. These scholars, however, focus on the desegregation of the Catholic dioceses as a whole, including church services and religious charity, failing to provide the details that exclusively focus on Catholic *school* desegregation.

Additionally, historians have conducted research on Catholic desegregation in Charleston and New Orleans, specifically. While their research provides a closer analysis of the desegregation of the Catholic dioceses of New Orleans and Charleston, these

⁴ R. Bentley Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic: New Orleans Interracialism 1947-1956* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005); Andrew Moore, *The South's Tolerable Alien: Roman Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, 1945-1970* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2007); Danny Duncan Collum, *Black and Catholic in the Jim Crow South: The Stuff That Makes Community* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006).

authors fail to address the preparation programs that were so unique to the Catholic Church. Mark Newman examined this history in Charleston, and Dianne Manning and Perry Rogers' research on New Orleans provides an in-depth look at Catholic desegregation there.⁵ While Manning and Rogers conduct thorough research on the Catholic Council of Human Relations, founded in New Orleans in 1961 to address the issue of race in the Church, their work does not address the implementation of Catholic school desegregation policy and its effect. Newman's article, additionally, focuses on the desegregation of all aspects of the diocese of Charleston, spanning from 1950 to 1974. Given the large scope, his article glosses over school desegregation. Additionally, Justin Poche traces the sources of religious activism in Louisiana, providing broad context for the relationship between the Church and desegregation in New Orleans.⁶ Also, Kristina McKenzie gives context to the atmosphere of race relations in the city and provides a history of black Catholic education in the city.⁷ While these authors provide historical analysis, none of them incorporate the voices of those who participated in Catholic school desegregation. This paper includes these narratives in order to provide a more well rounded analysis of the Church's role in school desegregation.

The historiography overlooks several of the Catholic Church's most unique contributions to the narrative of school desegregation: the Church's moral stance, preparation programs, and purposive avoidance of media attention. The Church's unique

⁵ Mark Newman, "Desegregation of the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, 1950-1974," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 112, no. 1-2 (2011): 26-49. Diane T. Manning and Perry Rogers, "Desegregation of the New Orleans Parochial Schools," *The Journal of Negro Education* 71, no. 1/2 (Winter - Spring, 2002): 31-42

⁶ Justin D. Poche, *Religion, Race, and Rights In Catholic Louisiana* (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2007)

⁷ Kristina D. McKenzie, "The Desegregation of New Orleans Public and Roman Catholic Schools in New Orleans, 1950-1962," (Masters thesis, Louisiana State University, 2009).

ability to foresee, accept, and plan for desegregation provides a new lens through which to view school desegregation. The ways that Catholic schools desegregated, and the experiences of those desegregating, shift the framework for understanding what school desegregation looked like. This paper builds off of the aforementioned scholars' works by providing a historical study of the planning and implementation of Catholic school desegregation in Charleston and New Orleans, delving into the moral rationale behind desegregation, the ecclesiastical concerns with desegregation, the ways the Church planned to implement school desegregation smoothly, and the effect of these measures on the students who actually desegregated.

Church Hierarchy and Stance on Segregation

The Catholic Church operates under a hierarchical organization centered in Vatican City in Rome under the auspices of the Pope, the spiritual leader of the Church. Subordinate to the Pope are Archbishops and Bishops, who are charged with the spiritual leadership of a particular area, an Archdiocese or Diocese.⁸ Priests and laypeople are under the authority of their (arch)bishop. This hierarchical structure applies to Church teaching, as higher leaders' statements hold more authority. Despite statements from both the international and national Church hierarchy on the treatment of different races within the Church, which lower level Church leaders were expected to support, individual (arch)dioceses were left to react to the *Brown* decision and other civil rights changes in the 1950's and 1960's as they saw fit. The Church hierarchy took a hands-off approach,

⁸ An Archdiocese is simply a larger area or an area with a higher concentration of Catholics than a Diocese. One has no more authority than another.

feeling it was best to let archbishops determine what was best for their unique archdiocese.⁹

During the time period from 1939 to 1958, the Catholic Church developed and refined its stance on race relations in America. In his 1939 Encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, “On the Unity of Human Society,” Pope Pius XII declared, “Those who enter the Church, whatever be their origin or their speech, must know that they have equal rights as children in the House of the Lord, where the law of Christ and the peace of Christ prevail.”¹⁰ Although this early statement was in reference to the growing nationalism in Germany and other parts of Europe, the statement was also applicable to the United States. This statement laid the foundation for a later address from the Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States after their annual conference in 1943. In the midst of a burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, as evidenced in A. Phillip Randolph’s threat to march on Washington in 1941, the Detroit race riots of 1943, and the NAACP’s Double V Campaign during the Second World War, among other acts of defiance, the bishops’ 1943 statement directly confronted the issue of race relations in the United States by stating;

In the Providence of God there are among us millions of fellow citizens of the Negro race. We owe to these fellow citizens... to see that they have in fact the rights which are given them in our Constitution. This means not only political equality, but also fair economic and educational opportunities, a just share in public welfare projects, good housing without exploitation, and a full chance for the social advancement of their race. In many of our great industrial centers acute racial tensions exist. It is the duty of every good citizen to do everything in his power to relieve them. To create a neighborhood spirit of justice and conciliation will be particularly helpful in this end. We hope that our priests and people will

⁹ Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 176; Manning and Rogers, “Desegregation of the New Orleans Parochial Schools,” 31.

¹⁰ Pope Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus*.

seek opportunity to promote better understanding of the many factors in this complex problem and strive for its solution to a genuine Catholic spirit.¹¹

Fifteen years later, in response to growing organized pressure from civil rights organizations, the Catholic Bishops of the United States reaffirmed the Catholic commitment to racial harmony, declaring,

The heart of the race question is moral and religious. It concerns the rights of man and our attitude toward our fellow man. If our attitude is governed by the great Christian law of love of neighbor and respect for his rights, then we can work out harmoniously the techniques for making legal, educational, economic, and social adjustments. But if our hearts are poisoned by hatred, or even by indifference towards the welfare and rights of our fellow men, then our Nation faces a great internal crisis.¹²

The national Church hierarchy's statements on racial issues in 1939, 1943, and 1958 demonstrate a shifting climate in both the country and the Church around the issue of race, particularly after the holocaust pushed issues of race into the global sphere. As racial tension in the U.S. began to build, the Catholic Church demonstrated to adherents a stance on race relations that was more tolerant than that of segregationists. Soon after the conclusion of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in December of 1956, the spectacle in Arkansas with the Little Rock Nine in September 1957, and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the Catholic Bishops of the United States formally spoke out against racism and discrimination with a united voice. Despite speaking out against racial discrimination in 1943 and 1958, the Catholic bishops recognized that changes in race relations would not be made overnight. In their 1958 statement, the Catholic Bishops of the United States suggest that the topic must be approached prudently, taking time to examine the problems and possible remedies; all the while making sure that they were

¹¹ Conference of the Roman Catholic Bishops of America, Letter from the 1943 Conference in Catholic Bishops of the United States, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience," *Journal of Negro Education* 28, no. 1 (Winter, 1959): 66-69.

¹² Catholic Bishops of the United States, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience."

“sincerely and earnestly acting to solve these problems.”¹³ The Bishops, despite speaking out against racial segregation and discrimination with a unified voice, had no one overseeing the implementation of the ideals of their statement. For this reason, individual dioceses responded in differing ways to the advances of the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁴

Typically, Church teaching on racial segregation rested on two basic principles. First, “all men, since they have been created by the same God, are sons of the same eternal Father and hence enjoy the same fundamental human dignity and rights. [Second,] Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose from the dead in order to redeem all men and confer upon them the same supernatural dignity and rights as members of His Mystical Body.”¹⁵ Because all men are sons of the same Father, who sent His Son to die for all men, there should be no distinction in the House of God. Therefore, all men are entitled to the same human dignity.

As Father Robert Gleason, a Catholic priest and professor of theology at Fordham University, explained, it would be

absurd to call upon our common Father in the Our Father, the prayer taught by Christ Himself, and at the same time to deny a Negro, to a Chinese, or to a Jew the status of a brother. Even to imply a difference in status with regard to God would be implicitly to attach the Christian doctrine of the universality of God’s paternal care and the common origin and destiny of the human race. It is because there is one God and only on God in whose image we have been created that we are all children of the one Father and consequently that we are all brothers in Christ in a way that no created power can assail.¹⁶

In his discussions, Father Gleason also cites two stories from the bible to bolster his position. First, he calls on the story of Adam and Eve to display “the unity of all

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 176.

¹⁵ John LaFarge, *The Catholic Viewpoint on Race Relations*, (Garden City, New York: Hanover House, 1956), 77

¹⁶ Robert W. Gleason, S. J., “The Immorality of Segregation,” quoted in *A Catholic Case Against Segregation*, ed. Joseph E. O’Neill, S.J., 1-19, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 4-5.

mankind.”¹⁷ Secondly, he presents the parable of the Good Samaritan, which shows that the people the Jews were most prejudiced against can be more righteous than the Jews. In presenting the Samaritan as more just than the Jews, Jesus placed blame on the Jewish people for failing to treat their neighbor properly. These parables and fundamental principles formed the foundation of Church teaching on segregation, providing biblical evidence for the Church’s position.

The Church’s characteristic hierarchical structure combined with its definitive moral stance on racial segregation, enunciated authoritatively in 1943 and 1958 and discussed informally throughout the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, place Catholic schools in a unique position to respond to school desegregation in the South. While some dioceses took immediate steps to desegregate schools, such as the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, which began desegregating schools as early as 1938, and the Archdiocese of St. Louis, which desegregated schools in 1948, dioceses in the South such as Charleston and New Orleans took a milder stance, preparing for the inevitable desegregation of schools but not actively encouraging schools to do so.¹⁸

Unlike their public counterparts in New Orleans and Charleston, Catholic leaders accepted that school desegregation would take place and worked towards making that transition as smooth as possible. Knowing that other Catholic schools had already successfully desegregated, Archbishop Rummel announced his intent to desegregate New Orleans Catholic schools as early as March of 1953, and in Charleston, Bishop Hallinan announced his intent to desegregate Catholic schools in February of 1961. Although the

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹⁸ Both Archdioceses desegregated under the leadership of Cardinal Joseph Ritter, who was Archbishop of Indianapolis from 1934 to 1946 and Archbishop of St. Louis from 1946 to 1967.

Catholic schools did not desegregate until 1962 and 1963, respectively, the interim time allowed the dioceses to prepare for desegregation in varying ways. This commitment to desegregation and preparation for it sheds new light on the understanding of what school desegregation looked like in the South.

The Road to Catholic School Desegregation in New Orleans, LA

The movement towards school desegregation in New Orleans began much earlier than in most other cities. New Orleans, the largest Catholic diocese in the South, was home to more than half of the South's Catholics. The city was also home to the largest population of African American Catholics, who comprised 11% of black Catholics in the United States.¹⁹ Catholics in New Orleans realized their unique position early on. In 1948, an "interracial relations committee" of the New Orleans province acknowledged that Jesuits in Catholic schools held a unique position, "with all our wealth of religion and moral doctrine' to cultivate the proper attitudes on race relations."²⁰

Building from this recognition, the Jesuits founded the Southeastern Regional Interracial Commission (SERINCO) in 1948 and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in 1949 at the university they ran in New Orleans, Loyola University. It is notable that both of these organizations formed before any formal announcement of the Archdiocese of New Orleans' stance on race relations. Spearheaded by Father Joseph H. Fichter, a charismatic and passionate leader in the area of civil rights, SERINCO appeared on Loyola's campus in 1948.²¹ This student organization focused its energies on

¹⁹ Manning and Rogers, "Desegregation of the New Orleans Parochial Schools," 32; Poche, *Religion, Race, and Rights*, 110

²⁰ New Orleans Province, Institute of Social Order, Interracial Relations Committee, Loyola Jacques Yenni, SJ to general audience, July 9, 1948, box 19, folder 3. Louis J. Twomey Papers, Monroe Library, Loyola University, New Orleans.

²¹ Poche, *Religion, Race, and Rights*, 130

“[preparing] the white part of the student community for the day of Negro entrants—as students, and to work in our home parishes—as parishioners.”²² SERINCO’s major event was an “Interracial Sunday,” held annually on the Second Sunday of Lent, where students of both races gathered together for worship and discussion. The event gathered students and civic leaders for worship and discussion.²³ SERINCO also sponsored outreach to the local high schools, in the form of a talent show, which they held in 1953. The 1953-1954 SERINCO chairman, Gene Murret recounted to R. Bentley Anderson,

We picked up on the idea and decided to hold an interracial talent night, and we booked Jesuit High School auditorium and set about recruiting people in the high schools to participate, and so we would send speakers, just like we did for Interracial Sunday. We sent speakers to various schools in the city inviting them to compete for the talent show, auditions, and so forth. There was a large turnout for the affair and a good mix of black and white students... It was a full house, every seat in the place was taken.²⁴

According to press accounts, over seven hundred people attended the affair.²⁵ This was one of many forms of preparation that progressive New Orleans Catholics promoted in order to encourage fellow Catholics to accept the Church teaching on race relations.

In addition to the work of the Jesuits through SERINCO, a group of laymen formed the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in 1949 under the auspices of the Catholic Committee of the South for the purpose of removing “prejudice, intolerance, Jim-Crowism and kindred evils from within the framework of Catholic life in New Orleans.”²⁶ Father Joseph Fichter, who helped found SERINCO, was also integral to the

²² Edward Krammerer to Dawn Proteau, 1 November 1951, box 49, folder 18, Joseph H. Fichter Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Monroe Library, Loyola University, New Orleans.

²³ Poche, *Religion, Race, and Rights*, 128-129

²⁴ Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic*, 120-121

²⁵ “Jr. Phils’ Talent Nite Holds December Spotlight,” *The Blue Jay* (Jesuit High School, New Orleans, LA), Nov 25, 1953.

²⁶ “Statement of the Commission on Human Rights, 1950,” box 48, folder 4, Joseph H. Fichter Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Monroe Library, Loyola University, New Orleans.

formation of this group. According to Justin Poche, this was “the first formal campaign by the Archdiocese of New Orleans to address racial segregation,” despite not yet releasing any formal statements in support of integration.²⁷ During the seven years the organization remained intact, members strove to live their faith through their actions, attending Sunday services as an integrated body, holding monthly meetings, publishing a monthly newsletter, organizing a speakers bureau, and protesting racial discrimination.²⁸ The CHR also sponsored a series of essay contests for the community. In 1954, the essay contest targeted high school students, receiving seventy-two submissions from students representing fifteen schools on the topic “My views as a Catholic on the United States Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954.”²⁹ Again in 1956, the CHR sponsored an essay contest for parents with children in Catholic schools. The topic selected that year was “Why an integrated school is better than a segregated one.”³⁰ The CHR used various means of propaganda to reach Catholics in New Orleans with their message of racial solidarity. The CHR, along with SERINCO, are notable because their actions began well before the archdiocese released any formal statement in support of integration. SERINCO and the CHR show that Catholic New Orleans’ period of preparation for desegregation holds deep roots and continued for a lengthy period of time. Additionally, they follow the pattern of the larger Civil Rights Movement, which saw many organizations committed to desegregation formally emerging throughout the 1940’s. In New Orleans, the NAACP began to unite behind A. P. Tureaud, a brilliant attorney, throughout the 40’s. Tureaud

²⁷ 127

²⁸ Mat Grau and Michael Prados, “History of Integration at Jesuit High School of New Orleans.” Slideshare. (2013) Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/JesuitNOLA/history-of-integration-at-jesuit-high-school-of-new-orleans>; Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic*, 16

²⁹ “Statement of the Commission on Human Rights, 1950,” box 48, folder 4, Joseph H. Fichter Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Monroe Library, Loyola University, New Orleans.

³⁰ Anderson, *Black, White, and Catholic*, 172

had successes with teacher salary equalization and overturning the white primary during this time period and later with public school desegregation.

It was not until 1953, five years after the founding of SERINCO but also five years before the United States Catholic Bishop's 1958 statement in support of racial harmony, that the Archdiocese of New Orleans publically supported racial equality. In his pastoral letter, "Blessed are the Peacemakers," dated March 15, 1953 Archbishop Joseph Francis Rummel said, "And now we call upon all the members of our beloved flock to exercise the role of peacemakers in our intercourse with those who differ from us by characteristics of race, nationality, color of the skin, habits or creed."³¹ Rummel acknowledged that his statement was somewhat progressive, as it was released before the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board*, saying,

Undoubtedly the Federal and State Courts, supported by wholesome public opinion, will in due time define where such laws and customs are in conflict with the American Constitution and way of life, but we can help hasten the day of complete peaceful adjustment by an ever increasing spirit, in word and action, of good will, respect and sympathy towards the Colored people.³²

Rummel's pastoral concluded by declaring "Let there be no further discrimination or segregation in the pews, at the Communion rail, at the confessional and parish meetings, just as there will be no segregation in the kingdom of heaven."³³ This statement mandated that church activities, including seating arrangements, the administration of sacraments, and parish meetings, no longer be segregated. While this announcement received moderate backlash, the Archbishop was adamant that it parishioners and priests effectively implement the plan. He went so far as to place a parish in Jesuit Bend,

³¹ Joseph Francis Rummel, "Blessed are the Peacemakers," 15 March 1953, <http://archives.arch-no.org/documents/rummel/BlessedarethePeaceMakers.pdf>, 4

³² Ibid., 4

³³ Ibid., 5

Louisiana under interdict, prohibiting parishioners from celebrating the sacred sacraments after they refused to allow an African American priest to enter their chapel to celebrate Mass. Rummel's early action introduced Catholics in New Orleans to the idea of desegregation within the Church and displayed Rummel's serious intent to enforce desegregation. While *Brown* progressed through the court system, Rummel paved the way for Catholic school desegregation in the city.

Rummel formally announced his intent to desegregate New Orleans Catholic schools in 1956, one year after *Brown II* mandated that southern schools approach desegregation "with all deliberate speed" and four days after Judge J. Skelly Wright implemented the court's order in New Orleans. His pastoral letter "The Morality of Racial Segregation," dated February 11, 1956, declared racial segregation to be "morally wrong and sinful." Despite condemning segregation, Rummel announced no immediate plan for change. He stated, "Nothing would please us more than to be able at the present moment to render a decision that would serve as a guide for priests, teachers and parents. However, there are still many vital circumstances which require further study and consideration if our decision is to be based upon wisdom, prudence and the genuine spiritual welfare of all concerned."³⁴ Although the Archbishop announced his agreement with the court's decision and his intent to have Catholic schools comply, Southern schools were still in a state of avoiding the court order. Rummel allowed the Church to maintain the moral high ground without making any real plan to desegregate.³⁵

³⁴ Archbishop Francis Rummel, "The Morality of Racial Segregation," Pastoral Letter, 11 February 1956, <http://archives.arch-no.org/documents/rummel/MoralityofRacialSegregation.pdf>

³⁵ Poche, *Religion, Race, and Rights*, 157

After the backlash he received from parishioners after the initial announcement, Archbishop Rummel followed up with another pastoral letter in July of 1956.

“Integration in Public Schools” reaffirmed the Church’s stance outlined in the February 11th letter, while also clarifying that

Certain difficulties still remain and we are not now prepared to introduce desegregation generally; therefore, we deem it necessary to postpone integration in schools in which it has not yet been effected at least until September 1957. In the meantime we hope to overcome difficulties and make necessary preparations... During the year our Catholic attitude will be further explained in all patience and charity to remove doubts, misunderstandings and other difficulties... We are convinced that our problem will be solved only in the spiritual atmosphere of prayer, sincere earnestness and united prayer, inspired by confidence in the promise of Christ³⁶

In Rummel’s cover letter to the pastors, which preceded his pastoral letter, he urged the clergy to emphasize in their sermons that “the Roman Catholic Church would bring integration to the archdiocese ‘under regulations which would eliminate difficulties and objectionable features to the utmost extent.’”³⁷ Although originally taking a progressive stance towards desegregation, Rummel gradually backed down, launching the Archdiocese of New Orleans into a period of preparation and reflection as the city became confronted with the inevitability of desegregation and race relations in the city became more turbulent. However, the activities in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, dating back to the founding of SERINCO in 1948, add another dimension to our understanding of Catholic school desegregation and school desegregation at large. While in the minority, Catholics in this deep-South city recognized the incongruences in Catholic teaching and Catholic practice with regards to race relations and took actions to

³⁶ Joseph Francis Rummel, “Integration in Catholic Schools,” 31 July 1956, <http://archives.arch-no.org/documents/rummel/IntegrationinCatholicSchools.pdf>

³⁷ Associated Press, “New Orleans Prelate Postpones Integration in Parochial Schools,” *New York Times*, Aug. 6, 1956, ProQuest Historical Newspapers

remedy the inconsistency early on. These actions stand in stark contrast to those of public school officials, who took every possible step to delay desegregation, encouraged by an active White Citizens Council.³⁸

As part of this period of preparation, which lasted from 1956-1962, Rummel convened a committee to prepare a “Handbook on Catholic School Integration” in conjunction with the Commission on Human Rights. This pamphlet answered many common questions and concerns about segregation and Church teaching, including “Is the Bible for segregation?, Is desegregation practical?, Does it spread disease?, The question of intelligence, Psychological adjustments, Delinquency and desegregation, Legal and constitutional aspects, and Moral obligations.” The pamphlet explained,

The purpose of this pamphlet is the analysis of these objections, the removal of imaginary fears, and the clarification of the actual knowledge which has been gathered through deep research and thorough study... If parents, teachers, and priests have at their command the essential and reliable facts concerning race relations in elementary education, they can promote and maintain desegregated schools in a reasonable and intelligent manner.

The Handbook coincided with a lecture series, sponsored by the Commission on Human Rights. The eight-week series focused on one section of the handbook each week, bringing in a total of forty-two lecturers from within the archdiocese and across the country.³⁹

As *Earl Benjamin Bush et. al. v. Orleans Parish School Board* (1956), the case brought to desegregate New Orleans public schools, progressed through the courts, the outlook for New Orleans public schools turned increasingly towards desegregation. After

³⁸ McKenzie, “The Desegregation of New Orleans Public and Roman Catholic Schools,” 34; Muller, “New Orleans Public School Desegregation,” 74.

³⁹ Handbook on Catholic School Integration, Catholic Committee of the South Commission on Human Rights, box 4, folder 6, Catholic Council on Human Relations Archives, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, hereafter referred to as CCHR.

segregationists unsuccessfully appealed the *Bush* ruling, which was in favor of the plaintiffs, Judge J. Skelly Wright imposed his own desegregation plan, which mandated beginning integration with the first grade, after the Orleans Parish School Board refused to submit a desegregation plan. On August 17, 1960 the Louisiana governor, Jimmie Davis, seized control of the Orleans Parish school system in order to avoid desegregation when schools opened that year. After Judge Wright heard complaints about the governor's action, he voided the state's segregation acts, forbade the governor to interfere with the operation of schools, and reiterated his original plan, ordering that New Orleans public schools admit black first graders. Faced with the inevitability of desegregation, the Orleans Parish School board asked for an extension of the desegregation deadline so that they could formulate their own plan. As a result, Judge Wright agreed to an extension until November 14, 1960 so that the school board would have two and a half months to prepare.⁴⁰

In the midst of this fiery political argument, Archbishop Rummel ordained Sunday, August 21st, 1960 as a day of prayer, instructing Catholics to pray with the following intentions in mind: "That it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ and the intercession of His Immaculate Mother, to grant an early solution of the race problem in our midst and to bring about a propitious response to the challenge for compliance with the ruling on the integration of our public system of education"⁴¹ At the Archdiocesan school board meeting on October 19th, 1960, six weeks before public schools desegregated, it appeared that Catholic schools would prepare "to integrate the

⁴⁰ Muller, "New Orleans Public School Desegregation," 76-83; Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 196-264.

⁴¹ Joseph Francis Rummel, "Reopening of School- September 6, 1960," Aug. 17, 1960, <http://archives.arch-no.org/documents/rummel/ReopeningofSchool.pdf>

day the public school doors opened to all students.” At the meeting “officials declared that pastors of local churches should be informed of their ‘grave responsibility to prepare their teachers for integration.’” Rummel then met with Monsignor Bezou, the superintendent of Archdiocesan schools, and the Vicar General to discuss the plan, and the following day, the Archbishop telegraphed local pastors to inform them that Catholic schools in Orleans Parish were to be integrated “as originally planned if and when public schools are actually integrated.” However, the message also acknowledged, “existing conditions indicate no certainty.” Afterwards, Rummel sent confidential letter to every pastor proposing a tentative integration date of November 21, 1960 one week after public schools.⁴² Once this announcement was leaked, pressure assuaged the archbishop from all sides. “An overwhelming majority of the laity bitterly opposed racial integration, and much of the priesthood silently sympathized with their views.” One informal study estimated that twenty to twenty five percent of Catholic parents were “avid segregationist,” fifty to sixty percent were segregationists who preferred separate schools but would not actively rebel against Church teaching, and about twenty to twenty five percent of parents were willing to accept desegregation if the Church mandated it.⁴³ This pressure, combined with his failing health, caused Rummel to call off desegregation in 1960.⁴⁴

Although Archbishop Rummel allowed the Catholic schools to further delay desegregation, he continued to take preemptive steps to prepare Catholics for school desegregation. Backlash to the desegregation of New Orleans’ public schools was severe,

⁴² Minutes of Archdiocesan School Board Meeting, Nov. 30, 1960, in “Integration: School Board Meetings, Minutes and Notes (1954-1962)” folder, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans

⁴³ Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 172; “Interpretation of Interviews conducted with selected Catholic Priests” by the Catholic Council on Human Relations, box 1, folder 10, CCHR.

⁴⁴ Poche, *Religion, Race, and Rights*, 194-195

with legislators working on delay tactics until 9:45 the night before the deadline of November 14. Once public schools desegregated, tensions were so high that federal marshals had to escort the four first grade students into McDonough No. 19 and William Frantz Elementary amidst fierce riots and protesting. White parents pulled their children out of the integrated schools, which resulted in a nearly complete boycott of Frantz and McDonough in which only four white students remained.⁴⁵ During this same period, the Consumers' League of Greater New Orleans organized a boycott of white stores on Dryades street who refused to hire blacks for jobs beyond menial labor. Additionally, the newly formed chapter of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) staged sit-ins at local lunch counters.⁴⁶

During this period of strenuous race relations, Rummel worked through the Church to try and attack many of the racist beliefs that plagued New Orleanians. The massive social disorder and rioting during public school desegregation certainly did not help sway him to implement desegregation in the parochial schools. Instead, he continued to work to prepare parishioners for the inevitability of desegregation. One of the major ways he did this was through the formation of the Catholic Council on Human Relations (CCHR).

Formed in March of 1961, shortly after the violent desegregation of New Orleans public schools, CCHR became the major driving force behind the archdiocese's plan for desegregation. CCHR's articles of incorporation list the following as "Objects and Purposes:"

⁴⁵ Muller, "New Orleans Public School Desegregation," 86

⁴⁶ Nakhoda, Zein. "New Orleans Citizens Boycott for U.S. Civil Rights, 1960-61," Ed. Max Rennebohm, *Global Nonviolent Action Database*, 11 Oct. 2011, <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/new-orleans-citizens-boycott-us-civil-rights-1960-61>

(a) To promote good relationships among peoples of all races in the Archdiocese of New Orleans; (b) To make known the teachings of the Catholic Church on matters of interracial justice and charity, particularly as summarized by all of the Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops in their statement issued in 1958 entitled ‘Discrimination and the Christian Conscience’; and the application of these principles to everyday living experiences; (c) To work in cooperation with public and responsible private agencies, in strengthening the fabric of America’s democratic way of life through the promotion of good human relations and (d) To exhort all of the clergy, religious and laity to offer their daily prayers, good works, and sacrifices for the peaceful and charitable solution of all problems of human relations.⁴⁷

In carrying out their aims, CCHR sponsored a Race Relations course at Loyola University during the fall semester of 1961. This course, taught by various lecturers, focused on topics such as “historical background of race relations, when people meet, progress of discontent, utilization of opportunity, academic achievement, the position of the Jew in the South, the role of leadership in social change, and the development of the Catholic Church’s doctrine on racial segregation.”⁴⁸ This course was one of many ways in which CCHR promoted Church teaching in an attempt to soothe the inevitable Catholic school desegregation.

Part of the efforts of CCHR included the formation of a “Public Relations Committee,” which served to both predict and respond to the community’s reaction to Catholic school desegregation. The committee met several times between November 1961 and February 1962, recommending the following to the Archbishop:

Experience in other areas indicates that the issue of desegregation fades out if a longer period of preparation is adopted. In Atlanta, GA, for example, desegregation of public schools was announced several months before it was to become effective. The issue was so thoroughly ‘talked out’ that emotional reaction died down and there was no public disturbance when the schools opened on a desegregated basis...The Catholic Church would achieve an immediate

⁴⁷ “Articles of Incorporation.” March 23, 1961, box 1, folder 14 CCHR.

⁴⁸ Henry Cabriac. Letter to Very Reverend John McQuade, S.M. Nov. 2, 1961. box 1, folder 4, CCHR; “Race Relations, Loyola University, Marquette Hall, Fall Semester 1961 Schedule.” Oct. 30, 1961, box 1, folder 4, CCHR.

status of moral leadership by going beyond what has been done in public schools and by advancing further toward the ideal of full desegregation upheld by the Church.⁴⁹

The social disorder in New Orleans, where the school board had just six weeks to formulate a plan for desegregation, also supports the committee's belief that "the issue of desegregation fades out if a longer period of preparation is adopted." Additionally, the Public Relations Committee discussed the practical implications of school desegregation, recommending that the Archbishop institute a registration period in the Spring of the preceding year and keep confidential the number of African American students, their names, and the schools they would enter. After witnessing the media flurry surrounding public school desegregation in New Orleans, the public relations committee proposed a plan for keeping Catholic school desegregation shielded from the media in order to preserve the dignity of both the church and those desegregating.⁵⁰ The committee, and the Archbishop, hoped to avoid the violent spectacles and inflammatory media coverage that accompanied public school integration, thereby partially maintaining the moral high ground.

It is important to note that CCHR was not isolated in formulating their plan. CCHR was aware of other Catholic dioceses' desegregation efforts and relied on them for guidance. Correspondence with Bishop Hallinan of Atlanta (and formerly of Charleston) complements letters from the Dioceses of St. Louis, Indianapolis, Raleigh, and Nashville. CCHR was even in possession of the Syllabus on Racial Justice, which the Diocese of

⁴⁹ Public Relations Committee, Proposed Statement of Policy With Regard to Desegregation of Catholic Elementary Grades, 1962, box 1, folder 13, CCHR.

⁵⁰ Henry Cabriac, Jr., Minutes from the Public Relations Committee Meeting on March 27, 1962. Found in Confidential: report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice 1961-1962, box 1 folder 2, CCHR.

Charleston produced.⁵¹ However, the implementation of Catholic school desegregation was ultimately left to the individual dioceses.

While CCHR and the efforts of groups that preceded it worked to prepare the laity for Catholic school desegregation, Rummel worked behind the scenes to prepare the clergy. Before announcing his final decision to desegregate all Catholic schools at the start of the 1962-1963 school year, the Archbishop met with a “Priest Advisory Committee.” During the March 27th meeting, held at Notre Dame Seminary, the Archbishop announced to the clergy his plan for desegregation. He gave out copies of Father Robert Guste’s book, “For Men of Good Faith,” published by CCHR. In the book, Fr. Guste explains the Archbishop’s position thusly:

Even now, to have to force this thing down people’s throats’ is not the desire of the Archbishop of New Orleans. His passionate desire is to convince the minds and win the hearts of his people. He has asked us to think about this thing, to discuss it calmly, and to pray about it. His role is that of the father of the family of the Catholics. In that family he sees both White and Colored children whom he must treat equally. And, as their father, he must teach them all to regard one another with respect and to get along in mutual harmony.⁵²

At the meeting, Archbishop Rummel urged the clergy to be “patient and kindly in discussing the matter with individual parishioners but [cautioned] them to be expatiate on it in sermons or at parish meetings and not to give statements to representatives of news media, particularly from outside New Orleans.”⁵³

After the meeting, Monsignor Henry Bezou, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, announced the plan to the public on behalf of the Archbishop. The Public Relations

⁵¹ Rev. Croghan, Rector, Bishop England High School, “Social Justice Program for the High School Curriculum: A New Program- An Old Problem” *Catholic High School Journal* (May 1962) box 1, folder 13, CCHR.

⁵² “Archdiocese Announces” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), March 28, 1962.

⁵³ Henry Cabriac, Jr., Minutes from the Public Relations Committee Meeting on March 27, 1962. Found in Confidential: report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice 1961-1962, box 1 folder 2, CCHR.

Committee carefully timed the announcement of Catholic school desegregation to follow the primary and mayoral elections, so that Catholic school desegregation would not become a campaign issue. Additionally, public and political focus surrounded the 101 African American parents who filed suit against the school board, claiming that token desegregation did not satisfy the court's desegregation order.⁵⁴ These two strategies allowed the topic of public school desegregation some relief from media attention, which is one of the unique characteristics of Catholic school desegregation plans.

There was limited public backlash after the official announcement that New Orleans Catholic schools would desegregate in the fall of the 1962-1963 school year. The Archbishop did send letters of "paternal admonition" to several of the leading dissenting Catholics who publically protested the decision, but many Catholics who quietly disagreed with the Church begrudgingly accepted the decision.⁵⁵ According to a confidential report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, "Perhaps the best general gauge that can be used to measure the acceptance of the laity is the fact that attendance at Mass, reception of the sacraments, Sunday collections, and school registrations are excellent. Here again this does not mean that the majority of the laity are enthusiastic about desegregation, in fact, we know that they are not. However they are reluctantly obeying." This report also noted that

⁵⁴ Manning and Rogers, "Desegregation of the New Orleans Parochial Schools," 37-38

⁵⁵ McKenzie, "The Desegregation of New Orleans Public and Roman Catholic Schools," 62; Rummel sent these letters to Mrs. B. J. Gaillot, a housewife and founder of the segregationist group Save Our Nation, Inc.; Leander Perez, a longstanding segregationist who was involved in the 1948 Dixiecrat Revolt; Emile Wagner, a member of the New Orleans School Board; and Jackson G. Ricau, secretary of the White Citizens' Council and the Association of Catholic Laymen

collections for the Bishops Relief Fund were comparable to the previous year, even since the integration order went into effect.⁵⁶

Despite the Archdiocese of New Orleans' initial announcement in favor of desegregation in 1953, the diocese did not desegregate until 1962. While this delay does illuminate some hypocrisy in the church, the interim years allowed the Church to prepare parishioners for desegregation, espouse the moral teachings related to desegregation, and formulate a plan for desegregation that shielded both the church and participants from media attention. These contributions, which are unique to Catholic schools, are one of the resulting benefits from the Archdiocese of New Orleans' delay of desegregation.

The Road to Catholic School Desegregation in Charleston, SC

Similarly to the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the Diocese of Charleston postponed school desegregation and instead instituted a period of preparation for the diocese. The Bishop of Charleston, like the Archbishop of New Orleans, announced his intent to desegregate schools early on. However, the Bishop launched the diocese into a period of preparation, again espousing the moral teachings of the church in order to prevent alienation and withdrawal from the Church and formulating a plan to deal with press coverage once the event took place. Catholic school desegregation in Charleston differs slightly from New Orleans, however, because Catholics in Charleston made up a small minority and because Charleston's public school desegregation took place later and less violently than New Orleans'. However, the Church's commitment to link desegregation with morality and church teaching, affect a plan for desegregation, and shield the event from the media remain consistent.

⁵⁶ Henry Cabriac, Jr., Confidential: report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice 1961-1962. box 1, folder 2, CCHR.

Following the release of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' 1958 statement against segregation and the actions of Charleston students who sat-in at local lunch counters in April of 1960, Monsignor Joseph Bernardin, chancellor of the Diocese of Charleston, released an article entitled "The Church and the Negro" in *The Catholic Banner*, the newspaper of the Diocese of Charleston. This article, published in December of 1960, echoed the national Church hierarchy's words by calling on white Catholics to support their black brothers and sisters. Bernardin wrote, "certainly the events of the past several years have raised problems of conscious for many. Ultimately, in order to resolve these problems, there will have to be a change of mind and heart. The virtues of justice and charity will not co-exist with some of the thinking that is prevalent." Bernardin also spoke directly to Catholic Charlestonians, declaring that Catholic desegregation would take place despite their resistance, as "Honest efforts toward the solution of these problems must continue to be made. Where these efforts have not been started, they must be begun. The problems cannot be ignored forever."⁵⁷

In the same issue of *The Catholic Banner*, Bishop Paul Hallinan published "Deeper as Years Go On." His article echoed Bernardin's, saying that the Church started Negro missions and schools "not to segregate them, but to reach them." The Bishop had faith that the people of Charleston "will break with old ways, because in spirit, these ways were not Christian ways."⁵⁸ Focused on a white audience, these articles helped ease Catholics in the Diocese of Charleston into the Church's stance against segregation. However, black Catholics did not view these statements favorably, instead believing that

⁵⁷ Rev. Joseph L. Bernardin, "The Church and the Negro." *The Catholic Banner*. (Charleston, SC) Dec. 4, 1960, 21-22, 58; Newman, "Desegregation," 33.

⁵⁸ Bishop Paul J. Hallinan, "Deeper as Years Go On." *The Catholic Banner*. (Charleston, SC) Dec. 4, 1960, 53.

the Church “did not want to look bad in the eyes of the world and of Charleston, so they stepped out.”⁵⁹

Just two months after denouncing segregation in the Church, Bishop Hallinan asked priests in the Diocese of Charleston to read a pastoral letter during their Sunday Masses. The Bishop’s letter, dated February 19, 1961, announced that the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, which touched approximately 3800 African Americans, would desegregate.⁶⁰ Hallinan purposefully promised that Catholic schools would desegregate “as soon as this can be done with safety to the children and the schools. Certainly this will be done not later than the public schools are opened.” In general, Charlestonians accepted the Pastoral calmly. The Chancery in Charleston only received ten letters of opposition, three of which remained anonymous. Hallinan remarked that the reaction was “milder than expected.”⁶¹

Part of the reason for the quiet acceptance of this announcement could be attributed to the anticipatory actions of the Church. A few days before the release of his February 19th Pastoral Letter, Bishop Hallinan sent copies of the document to all the clergy in the parish, along with a letter reminding them of the Church teaching. Following the release of the Pastoral, Bishop Hallinan sought to respond to and calm any concerned Catholics. He composed a list of several questions and answers to his letter and was sure that priests in the diocese were well versed in how to respond to troubled parishioners. Following the release of his February 19 Pastoral Letter, Bishop Hallinan is quoted as saying, “The priests of our Diocese have evidenced the deep priestly qualities

⁵⁹ Ruth Dowty, interview with author, 16 February 2015.

⁶⁰ Bishop Paul J. Hallinan. Pastoral Letter. Feb. 19, 1961, box 62, folder 720.3, Catholic Diocese of Charleston Archives, Charleston, SC.

⁶¹ *Catholic Banner*, March 19, 1961, box 22, folder 707.1, CDCA.

that have always characterized our clergy. They have patiently spent hours with troubled Catholics, explaining the implications of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and the virtues of justice. The reward of this dedicated service will be the unity of all our people when eventually the changes are made.”⁶² In his 1961 Pastoral Letter, Bishop Hallinan introduced a “program of preparation” for the diocese in which “pastoral letters, sermons, study clubs, and school instruction” would help clarify the Church’s teaching on racial justice and help Catholics fulfill their faith’s duty to understand the Church’s stance.⁶³

As part of Hallinan’s program of preparation, a “Syllabus on Racial Justice” appeared in Catholic grade schools in 1961.⁶⁴ Charleston’s syllabus also spread to other Catholic dioceses in the South, with the Archdiocese of New Orleans requesting a copy of it.⁶⁵ The purpose of the Syllabus was “to give young Catholics a fresh insight into the Church’s teachings on one of our most urgent social problems—relations between the races.” The Syllabus explained, “We are only indirectly responsible for the legal, economic, or political course to be followed. But we are directly responsible for the moral course our Catholic people follow.” Including curriculum for grades 7-8, prepared by Sister Mary Bernard, O.L.M., as well as for grades 9-12, prepared by Reverend Croghan, the rector of Bishop England High School, the syllabus discussed the Church’s stance on race relations, resting on the traditional arguments in support of desegregation,

⁶² *Catholic Banner*, March 19, 1961, box 22, folder 707.1, CDCA.

⁶³ Bishop Paul J. Hallinan, Pastoral Letter, Feb. 19, 1961, box 62, folder 720.3, CDCA.

⁶⁴ Diocese of Charleston, “A Syllabus on Racial Justice for Use in the Catholic Schools Grades 7-12,” (South Carolina Department of Education: Charleston, 1961), box 22, folder 707.1 CDCA.

⁶⁵ “Plan to Implement His Excellency’s Orders to Desegregate Parochial Schools,” box 1, folder 13, CCHR

discussed earlier.⁶⁶ The syllabus included specific lessons, divided into three units, one on the Universality of the Church, one on the Mystical Body of Christ, and another which focused on the virtues of Justice and Charity. The first two units correspond with the traditional dual-argument for the morality of desegregation.

In addition to discussing Church teaching, the Syllabus included several stories and biographies of African Americans in order to “give students a clearer sense of identity with people of other races.” As the syllabus progressed through the grades, it began to tie in other social justice issues, such as “unjust wages, unsatisfactory dwelling places, and inequalities of opportunity in today’s society.”⁶⁷ Additionally, the Syllabus emphasized the fact that this announcement was not a sudden change in Catholic thinking. The teaching on the morality of desegregation followed the Church’s teaching, grounded in ideas about the Universality of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, and the virtue of Justice.

This syllabus provided a pathway to prepare students for the desegregation of their schools, and Reverend Croghan reports that most religion teachers had included lessons from the Syllabus by February of 1962.⁶⁸ According to Father Croghan, “The students participated in class discussions and seemed willing to learn and cooperate.”⁶⁹ His report to the Catholic School Journal included encouraging testimonial from both students and teachers but also noted that some students were resistant to the Syllabus, commenting,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ J.E. Richardson and Gloria Ann Franchi, “Youth Education and Interracial Justice: A Report on Some Projects,” (National Catholic Council for Interracial Justice: Chicago, 1964).

⁶⁸ Rev. W. J. Croghan. “Social Justice Program for the High School Curriculum: A New Program—An Old Problem,” *Catholic School Journal*, May 1962. box 1, folder 13, CCHR.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

As might be expected, all of the students did not respond in a totally favorable manner. There were some who, while professing belief in the Church's teachings, still refused to act logically and to change their views. There were others who admitted prejudice and would not have an open mind on the subject. The faculty is in agreement on one point: these two groups of students are no longer in the majority; we believe they constitute a very small minority of the school population. Teenagers are basically fair and honest, and are quick to recognize injustice. That is why we have great hope for our social justice program. We believe that instruction of our high school students on the matter of race relations is most important. It is our new program for an old problem.⁷⁰

Father Croghan's observations uncover the atmosphere within Catholic schools in the year preceding school desegregation. Despite the Church's best efforts to educate students on the morality of desegregation, there was still a small minority whose hearts remained unchanged.

The Diocese of Charleston continued to make progress towards desegregation, but leadership of the Diocese transferred from Bishop Hallinan to Bishop Francis Frederick Reh. Although public officials used any means possible to avoid and delay school desegregation, on August 22, 1963, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of South Carolina ruled in favor of the African American plaintiffs in the case of *Millicent Brown et. al. vs. Charleston County School Board District no.20*. Judge Robert Martin ruled that Charleston public schools would desegregate that fall. Arthur McFarland recalls that the "summer of '63 was a time when there was a lot of civil rights activity in Charleston."⁷¹ As a result of this court decision, Bishop Reh convened a special meeting to re-examine the admission policy of Catholic schools in Charleston. Because Hallinan's pastoral letter stated that integration would take place no later than the public schools, Reh moved the date for the desegregation of Catholic schools forward

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹ Arthur McFarland, interview with author, 29 January 2015

to the fall of 1963 so that the Catholic schools would desegregate alongside public schools.⁷²

Bishop Reh, like Archbishop Rummel in New Orleans, took a strong stance on the sudden announcement of desegregation, saying, “Christ in his lifetime introduced a revolutionary idea in the pagan world and since then one finds that Christianity is so frequently not a convenient way of life. I must preach the full gospel of Christ and I expect those who follow Him to be understanding and courageous.”⁷³ In another article Reh asserted, “Integration cannot be avoided by an ostrich approach—sticking one’s head in the sand and saying, it can’t happen here. It’s happening here, and can’t be stopped here or anywhere.”⁷⁴

By desegregating alongside public schools, the Catholic diocese of Charleston maintained the moral high ground. While the diocese announced its intent to desegregate before court-ordered desegregation of public schools, the diocese of Charleston would desegregate concurrently with the public schools. To desegregate before the public schools could have resulted in flight from the Catholic schools, a concern that was common among many southern dioceses. Desegregating concurrently, however, diminished white flight from the public schools. In fact, the desegregated Catholic schools in the diocese of Charleston opened the 1964 year with a record 10,080 students enrolled.⁷⁵ In announcing the intent to desegregate before this was a trend, the Church

⁷² “Statement of the Diocese of Charleston Concerning the Admission Policy of Parochial and Diocesan Schools in South Carolina” *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC) Sep. 1, 1963, 2.

⁷³ “Integration of Parochial Schools Set for Sept. 1964” *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC) July 7, 1963, 1.

⁷⁴ “Bishop Calls for Positive Approach to Integration” *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC) Sep. 8, 1963, 1.

⁷⁵ “Enrollment Sets New Record in Parochial Schools,” *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC) Sep. 13, 1964, 1.

adopted a moral stance on desegregation, but in prolonging desegregation until the public schools did so, the Church forfeited much of its impact.

The Church adopted a careful approach to desegregation through its preparation programs that communicated a genuine interest in peacefully desegregating and protecting schools. During the interim between announcing desegregation and the date the schools opened, Bishop Reh instructed the priests in his diocese to recite the following prayer on every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation: “Let us pray for racial peace based on justice and love for all men.”⁷⁶ The Bishop hoped to bring desegregated schools to the diocese with a firm, supportive hand. He understood that the opinions of the diocese were often not in line with those of the Church but worked to unite the two. However, his efforts went relatively unnoticed in the historically black Catholic dioceses.⁷⁷

While Bishop Reh announced that Charleston’s Catholic elementary schools would desegregate alongside public schools in the fall of 1963, he allowed Bishop England High School, the principal Catholic high school in Charleston, a one-year grace period, as the school was already overcrowded. This additional time allowed the school additional time to prepare faculty, parents, and students for the monumental changes that would take place in the school’s golden anniversary term.

Reverend Croghan, the rector of Bishop England High School, used the extra year to implement a preparation program for desegregation. His program included an Adult Lenten series for parents, programs for the faculty, visits and talks to all the homerooms

⁷⁶ “Prayers for Racial Peace to be Said” *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC) Sep. 1, 1963, 1.

⁷⁷ Carol Fokes, interview with author, 9 February 2015; Arthur McFarland, interview with author, 29 January 2015; Ruth Dowty, interview with author, 16 February 2015.

on a regular basis during the year, meetings with new student leaders for next year, meetings with parents of the African American students who were transferring to Bishop England from Immaculate Conception School, meetings with the black students themselves, and a tutorial program for the African American students.⁷⁸ Although the intention of the month-long summer tutorial program was to bolster the black students' reading and math skills, participants recall the experience as a way to ensure they wouldn't cause trouble the following year.⁷⁹

Additionally, the leaders of Bishop England High School worked with those of Immaculate Conception School (ICS), the black middle and high school, to encourage select students to apply to transfer. As Arthur McFarland, one of the students to transfer from ICS to Bishop England, recalls,

I can tell you that when Bishop Underkefler decided to integrate Bishop England, I take it that there was some discussion among the nuns. And it really was the approach of one of the sisters about my transferring from ICS to BE that got me on that track. During the period of desegregation there was always an effort to make sure that those who were the first had been chosen almost and picked because...the racism that existed tended to believe that African Americans could not perform as well as white kids. And so the nuns knowing those in the school who were among the top performers, you know, initially selected or asked us to attend.⁸⁰

However, not all students who transferred were among the top performers. Despite remembering that "they only wanted to send the students who were straight-A students, and they expressed that to us...they only wanted students who they knew were going to be successful," Carol Fokes, who was not one of the top performers in her class, decided

⁷⁸ Reverend W.J. Croghan, "BEHS Report School Year 1963-1964," Aug. 1, 1964, box 26, folder 708.7/1, CDCA

⁷⁹ Carol Fokes, interview with author; Ruth Dowty, interview with author.

⁸⁰ Arthur McFarland, interview with author

to transfer to Bishop England High School for her 9th grade year.⁸¹ Several other students made the decision to attend Bishop England as a group, as they were already close friends at ICS.⁸²

Because parents were often the persons most opposed to desegregation, the Adult Lenten Series was a vital part of the preparation plan. The series provided parents “with facts, Church teachings, study, [and] exchange of ideas.”⁸³ It also provided “answers to many of the ‘usual objections’ voiced against racial integration and against the Civil Rights Movement in general,” helping parents to understand the Church’s teaching on desegregation so that they could fulfill their duty of faith. The Lenten Series aligned perfectly with the spirit of the Lenten season, a time when Catholics are supposed to focus on their faith in preparation for Easter by fasting, performing penance, and praying more often. The Adult Lenten Series addressed the following commonly raised objections against desegregation: that the “Church was not in favor of integration, that the Negro was inferior, that the Negro did not want integration, that separate but equal was okay, that the Negro had not earned his rights, that integration was moving too rapidly, that Negroes were stirring up violence, that there were religious objections of race mixing, and that it went against conscious.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ Carol Fokes, interview with author

⁸² Laverne Harrison, Lydia Pazan, and Celeste Perez decided to transfer together. Laverne Harrison, interview with author, 23 January 2015.

⁸³ Bishop England High School Rector’s Newsletter, Jan. 30, 1964, box 62, folder 720.3, CDCA, 4.

⁸⁴ 1964 Adult Lenten Series. “Religion and Race: Answers to Usual Objections” box 22, folder 707.1/1, CDCA.

The Adult Lenten Series was a far greater success than the school had anticipated. There were over 150 families participating, and weekly attendance was over 200.⁸⁵ The expectation placed on Catholics to believe and to understand the teachings of the Church encouraged families to attend, in addition to the expectations placed on Catholics during the Lenten season. In general, parents were very enthusiastic about the series. After the final lecture, one parent wrote, “I enjoyed every phase of the program and know that I have benefitted greatly from the perspective that you have given us. I promise my complete support and cooperation with the school and I pray that God will bless our efforts on this new frontier.”⁸⁶ This level of support and obedience was twofold. Not only did Bishop England’s leaders have the benefit of their position of power within the school; they also had the benefit of the Church’s position of power within families’ lives.

In addition to the Adult Lenten Series, the “Notes to Parents Section” of the rector’s newsletter, which was mailed out to all the families of Bishop England High School, focused on “a topic chosen after much thought and serious deliberation” during the 1963-1964 school year. Each month’s section featured various comments on race relations and desegregation from the Church’s viewpoint. Reverend Croghan explains in the first Notes to Parents,

This is a year of preparation; and we all—teachers and parents—need now to do much logical thinking and planning; we need to be guided by correct principles of Christian Justice and Charity. What is written, then, in these ‘Notes’ is written for this purpose: to help you, the parent, to guide your students, both by word and example. In this way, we here at the High School hope to be of real and valuable service to our parents and our students.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Bishop England High School Rector’s Newsletter, Feb, 24, 1964, box 28, folder 708.13, CDCA, 1.

⁸⁶ Bishop England High School Rector’s Newsletter, March 26, 1964, box 28, folder 708.13, CDCA.

⁸⁷ BEHS Rector’s Newsletter, Sep. 27, 1963, box 22, folder 707.1, CDCA.

Following the Adult Lenten Series, the Notes to Parents included a true-false self-reflection on race relations directed towards parents and students who did not attend the Lenten Series. The true-false section posed scenarios such as “I have made really very little effort to train myself to think positively of the colored race; rather I have more or less accepted the past judgment and remarks of my white environment and made them mine.” Another scenario asked readers to consider the following: “Since I do not distinguish the colored as individuals, I am very much inclined to think that they all think alike, that they all want the same things, that they all will react similarly in any given situation.”⁸⁸ Father Croghan hoped that this true-false examination would help parents and students evaluate their stance on the race question so that they could begin to change their views to be in line with Church teaching. He also realized that although students may learn the Church’s teaching on desegregation in school, they would be strongly influenced by their families at home. Therefore, the rector targeted parents with children in Catholic schools through his preparation programs, in addition to the preparation that took place within the school itself.

Although Catholic school desegregation in Charleston was much less hostile and volatile than in New Orleans, many of the unique contributions remain the same. Both Archbishop Rummel and Archbishop Bernardin announced their intent to desegregate Catholic schools before the desegregation of public schools in their area appeared inevitable. They tied the issue of desegregation to morality and church teaching, espousing the church’s views through pastoral letters, prayers in Mass, and literature produced to educate parishioners, such as the Syllabus on Racial Justice, the CHR’s

⁸⁸ BEHS Rector’s Newsletter, Feb. 24, 1964, box 22, folder 707.1, CDCA, 3-6.

Handbook on Catholic School Integration, the Adult Lenten Series, and Bishop England High School's Notes to Parents newsletter. Additionally, their approaches to desegregation maintain similarity in the ways they planned to avoid media attention, with both dioceses formulating an official policy with regards to the news media. Given that both Charleston and New Orleans opened in their first year of desegregated schools with comparable or greater enrollment, their plans appear to have been successful in preventing an exodus from Catholic schools. However, the voices of those who desegregated Catholic schools in New Orleans and Charleston show that the dioceses' plans were only minimally effective in decreasing the harassment they experienced at the hands of their white peers.

Experience of Desegregating Catholic Schools

After years of planning, moments of trailblazing, and lots of postponement, formerly-white Catholic schools in New Orleans and Charleston opened their doors to an integrated student body on September 4, 1962, and September 3, 1963, respectively (with the exception of Bishop England High School, which had a one year grace period due to overcrowding).⁸⁹

While the opening day of desegregated Catholic schools did appear in the news, both dioceses had plans to minimize media coverage. After witnessing the turbulent media frenzy surrounding public school desegregation in cities such as Little Rock and New Orleans, the Church took steps to formulate a plan for dealing with the media. In New Orleans, the Public Relations Committee of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice suggested to Archbishop Rummell that the diocese approach the news

⁸⁹ "Charleston Area Parochial Schools Admit 15 Negro Students," *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC) Sep. 8, 1963; "Orleans Desegregation Extended to 46 Schools," *Southern School News* 9, no. 3, (September 1962), box 1, folder 7, CCHR.

media “with an appeal for fair and accurate coverage at the time the schools open and treatment in depth later so that the New Orleans story might be properly told.”⁹⁰

Additionally, the committee suggested that the archdiocese adopt a policy of not releasing information pertaining to race, particularly racial demographics. They argued “that to adopt a policy of not releasing such information is a position of strength based on principle. To give statistics of this kind in itself points to racial differentiation whereas to adhere firmly to a policy of not providing them upholds the stands of the Church that, as all are one in Christ, there should be no racial bias.”⁹¹ Similarly, the superintendent of Charleston Catholic schools, Reverend J. Fleming McManus ordered the media to adhere to the following precautions: “1. No photographs on the school grounds or in the buildings. 2. No children are to be interviewed. 3. A responsible person will be at the school for information, the pastor or the school principal.”⁹² The Church hoped to avoid the inflammatory media coverage that accompanied public school desegregation in order to preserve the moral high ground, maintaining the dignity of the Church and the human dignity of those involved with school desegregation.

These predetermined policies for dealing with media coverage strengthened the Catholic schools’ plan for desegregation. Although it is difficult to determine if Catholic school desegregation received little press coverage due to the effect of these policies or some other circumstance, the desegregation of Catholic schools in both Charleston and

⁹⁰ Public Relations Committee Meeting Minutes. June 7, 1962. Included in Henry Cabriac, “Confidential: report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice 1961-1962,” box 1, folder 2, CCHR.

⁹¹ Public Relations Committee Meeting Minutes, March 27, 1962, Included in Henry Cabriac, “Confidential: report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice 1961-1962,” box 1, folder 2, CCHR.

⁹² Barbara J. Stambaugh, “Minimum Publicity Sought On School Desegregation,” *News and Courier*. (Charleston, SC), Sep. 3, 1963. 1A-2A.

New Orleans did not take place in the midst of a media frenzy. The coverage the Catholic schools did receive appears to be both factual and fair. Headlines such as “Start of Catholic School Term Quiet,” “Quiet Prevails at N.O. Schools,” “Calm Rules in 1st Week of School,” “Charleston Area Parochial Schools Admit 15 Negro Students,” and “Parochial Schools Set for Record Enrollment This Year” were the norm.⁹³ Several of the first students to desegregate Catholic schools in these locales also remember the lack of media attention they received, commenting that it helped smooth over the first few weeks. Laverne Harrison commented, “now had the media been right there following us around day to day, they probably would have blown it out more [than] what it was.”⁹⁴

Catholic schools in both Charleston and New Orleans opened in their first year of desegregation with an increase in enrollment. Although some students did leave Catholic schools to attend private schools, Catholic school enrollment on the whole increased.⁹⁵ Charleston Catholic schools set records for enrollment in both 1963 and 1964, and New

⁹³ “Start of Catholic School Term Quiet,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Sep. 4, 1963; “Quiet Prevails at N.O. Schools” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), Sep. 5, 1963, box 4, folder 3 CCHR; “Calm Rules in 1st Week of School,” *Catholic Action of the South*, Sep. 16, 1962; “Charleston Area Parochial Schools Admit 15 Negro Students,” *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC), Sep. 8, 1963; “Parochial Schools Set for Record Enrollment This Year,” *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC), Aug. 23, 1964.

⁹⁴ Laverne Harrison, interview with author; Arthur McFarland, interview with author; Lawrence Haydel, interview with author

⁹⁵ In New Orleans, the number of white students attending private, non-Catholic schools almost doubled within two years, going from 5,946 students in 1961 to 10,777 students in 1963. Charleston saw a similar increase in private school enrollment, with the percentage of the city’s white children who attended private schools doubling from 34 to 68 percent between 1960 and 1970. However, it is hard to determine what percentage of these children left Catholic schools. The following authors provide more details of privatization and segregation academies in New Orleans and Charleston: Maxie M. Cox, *1963—The Year of Decision: Desegregation in South Carolina* (Ph.D. diss. University of South Carolina, 1996); Scott R. Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles of Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926-1972*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006); and Isabella G. Leland and Robert N. Rosen, *Charleston: Crossroads of History*. (Sun Valley, CA: American Historical Press, 2003).

Orleans Catholic school enrollment was on par with the previous year.⁹⁶ Additionally, attendance at Mass, reception of the sacraments, and donations to the Church, three common concerns of Church leadership, were comparable to previous years.⁹⁷ Although the church's preparation plans prevented a drop in enrollment as a result of school desegregation, the plan did not succeed in changing the attitude of white students in desegregated schools. The students who desegregated schools such as Bishop England High School in Charleston and Jesuit High School in New Orleans experienced harassment similar to that experienced by the students who desegregated the public schools in the city.

Students who desegregated Catholic schools in the first year, referred to as "first children," remember their first day of school in varying ways.⁹⁸ Laverne Harrison, who desegregated Bishop England High School in Charleston as a freshman, recalls being scared because she didn't know what she was about to walk into. She recalls being asked, "'Which one are you,'" by a school administrator on her first day. In contrast, for Arthur McFarland, who desegregated Bishop England High School alongside Laverne Harrison, the day does not stand out in memory. Students at Jesuit High School in New Orleans

⁹⁶ "Parochial Schools Set for Record Enrollment This Year," *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC), Aug. 23, 1964; "Enrollment Sets New Record in Parochial Schools," *The Catholic Banner* (Charleston, SC), Sep. 13, 1964; "No Enrollment Decline Evident As Catholic Schools Register" (Unidentified newspaper clipping), box 1, folder 7, CCHR; Confidential: report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice 1961-1962, Written by the Executive Director, box 1, folder 2 CCHR; Catholic Council on Human Relations Newsletter, November 1962, Vol. 1, No. 5, box 1, folder 6, CCHR

⁹⁷ Robert S. Bird, "New Orleans Catholic 'Revolt' Gets Nowhere," *The New York Herald* (New York, NY), Aug. 5, 1962, box 1, folder 7, CCHR; Catholic Council on Human Relations Newsletter, November 1962, Vol. 1, No. 5, box 1, folder 6, CCHR; "Confidential: report of the Southern Field Service of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice 1961-1962," box 1, folder 2, CCHR; "No Enrollment Decline Evident As Catholic Schools Register" (Unidentified newspaper clipping) box 1, folder 7, CCHR.

⁹⁸ Dr. Millicent Brown's "Somebody Had To Do It" Project refers to the students who desegregated schools in the first year as "first children" or "first students." The term is adopted from her work.

remember being walked in by police on their first day and the following few weeks, a characteristic similar to public school desegregation in the city.⁹⁹

Opening desegregated Catholic schools concluded the period of preparation within Catholic parishes. After speaking with several of the first children in New Orleans and Charleston, the Catholic Church's planning seems to have been minimally effective. Despite suppressing press coverage, the atmosphere inside of Catholic schools was not all that different from other desegregated schools. All of the first children remember incidents with other students. At Bishop England, Carol Fokes remembers having trash thrown at her and another black student, Ruth Dowty. Laverne Harrison recalls teasing while changing for gym class, and felt that she received particularly poor treatment because of her dark chocolate skin. And despite feeling "well received" as an honors student and basketball player, Arthur McFarland remembers the uncomfortable feeling of knowing members of the basketball team did not want him playing. Fellow first children who desegregated Jesuit High School blame the expedited death of Leon Adams, who died before the end of his first year at Jesuit due to preexisting health complications, on the stress and anxiety that came with integrating Jesuit.¹⁰⁰

Despite all recalling various forms of mistreatment within Catholic schools, whether from students, teachers, or administrators, the first children credit the Catholic schools' rigorous discipline with reducing the abuse they received. The principals and disciplinarians dealt swiftly with misconduct from any student. As Ruth Dowty recalls, "I wouldn't say the experience was bad or anything because I don't think it was any

⁹⁹ Laverne Harrison, interview with author; Arthur McFarland, interview with author; Lawrence Haydel, interview with author, 18 February, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Carol Fokes, interview with author; Ruth Dowty, interview with author; Laverne Harrison, interview with author; Arthur McFarland, interview with author; Lawrence Haydel, interview with author.

different from a public school setting, other than...the discipline was different. We wore uniforms. We behaved differently. The expectation about your behavior was different... No one ran in the hall, there was no arguing in the halls or any craziness. We walked in a single-file line.” Laverne Harrison, adds, “they tried to settle [things] as best as they could.”¹⁰¹

The first children also credit the Catholic school system for their thorough academic education preparation, as they did not feel inadequately prepared for the academic environment at the Catholic schools they desegregated, a characteristic which contrasts with public school desegregation. Lawrence Haydel, who desegregated Jesuit High School, recalls being ahead of his white classmates in mathematics. Additionally, both Arthur McFarland and Sonja Perry were honors students at Bishop England. Many other first children were academically successful at the Catholic schools they desegregated, and all of the students that the author interviewed went on to attend college. Although many New Orleans first children received specialized tutoring in the summer and Charleston first children benefitted from the tutorial program that Bishop England High School ran in the summer, these students felt academically on par with their white peers and credit their black Catholic schools for their educational success.¹⁰²

The first children suggest that the strengths of Catholic school desegregation lie less in the preparation and planning phases and more in the innate qualities of Catholic schools, the structure an order typically associated with Catholic schools.¹⁰³ Still, the

¹⁰¹ Laverne Harrison, interview with author; Lawrence Haydel, interview with author

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Andrew Greeley’s *Catholic High Schools and Minority Students* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982) recognizes the advantages of the discipline structure that is typically associated with Catholic schools. His study cites data which show the sharp disparity in discipline problems between public and Catholic schools. Additionally, his data show that both white and black

preparation is unique. It certainly succeeded in preventing a media frenzy and mass exodus from Catholic schools. This offers some proof that the preparation programs succeeded in convincing parishioners of the morality of desegregation. However, most of the preparation focused on white parents and failed to change the attitudes of white students in desegregated schools, who continued to harass the first children. Despite this failure, the Catholic Church's programs of preparation for desegregation had success in less intended areas.

Findings

Taken together, the stories of New Orleans and Charleston display the similar characteristics of Catholic school desegregation. Despite recognizing the need to desegregate early on, the dioceses did not take immediate action. Instead, they implemented programs of preparation for their dioceses, which were intended to educate parishioners on the morality of desegregation with hopes of preventing withdrawal and alienation from the Church. Lecture series, brochures, pastoral letters, and prayers in Mass, among others, appeared in the Catholic dioceses during the years preceding school desegregation.

This early recognition and acceptance of the inevitability of Catholic school desegregation broadens our understanding of school desegregation and expands the historiography to include the history of Catholic schools. While the Catholic dioceses did receive guidance from the national Church hierarchy, the dioceses were mostly left alone to deal with desegregation as they chose. For some dioceses, such as St. Louis and Indianapolis this meant early desegregation, with Indianapolis beginning school

students in Catholic schools perceive their schools' discipline as more effective and fair than students in public schools.

desegregation as early as 1938 and St. Louis desegregating schools in 1947. For Southern dioceses, however, the period surrounding the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision was saturated with paradoxes. Despite Church leadership wanting to desegregate, and announcing their intent to do so early on, they had to balance the backlash from parishioners in order to prevent decreasing their number of adherents. Resultantly, the Catholic dioceses of Charleston and New Orleans launched into periods of preparation for desegregation, a contribution unique to the Catholic Church.

While the various preparation programs that the church instated succeeded in preventing withdrawal from the Church and Catholic schools, with school enrollment and monetary contributions remaining level, the programs did not go so far as to change the attitudes of the students within schools that desegregated.¹⁰⁴ However, the Church's plan for limiting media exposure did alleviate the pressure that accompanied intense media scrutiny, maintaining the dignity of both the Church and those individuals who desegregated Catholic schools.

These preparation plans for Catholic school desegregation situate Catholic schools in position to better serve minority students than public or private schools, a trend that continues today. During the period of school desegregation and continuing to the present, many non-Catholic minority students enroll in Catholic schools, which scholars

¹⁰⁴ In the fall of 1964 there were 10,080 students, a record number, in Catholic schools in South Carolina. Both the diocese as a whole and the Charleston Catholic schools had a record enrollment. "Parochial Schools Set for Record Enrollment This Year," *The Catholic Banner*. In New Orleans, 73,514 pupils preregistered for classes in April, totaling 98% of the previous years' enrollment. Church officials expected the figure to rise to an equal level on the first day of classes, as not all families preregister. "No Enrollment Decline Evident As Catholic Schools Register;" "Confidential: report of the Southern Field Service."

suggest are able to provide better academic outcomes for these students.¹⁰⁵ As Andrew Greeley finds, while whites in Catholic schools may receive higher scores than blacks in Catholic schools, the margin that separates the two is not as large as in public schools. In addition to academics, minority students who attend Catholic schools are more likely to expect to attend college and to plan a professional curriculum once there.¹⁰⁶ These findings, combined with the history above, situate Catholic schools in a position of historically providing for minority students in ways that public schools do not. The history of Catholic school desegregation provides a lens through which to better understand how desegregation unfolded differently across the South and to provide a historical context to those interested in better understanding contemporary reform efforts that follow the Catholic school model.

¹⁰⁵ In Charleston, specifically, Joi Mayo's masters thesis, "Beacon Light: Immaculate Conception School's Encouragement of Charleston's Black Middle and Upper Classes" (The College of Charleston and The Citadel, November 2010) discusses the ways that ICS provided for black students in Charleston from 1930 to 1940.

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Greeley, *Catholic High Schools and Minority Students*