

REDCOAT RUMBLINGS



Volume I

March 1989

No.7

Gerard to Close in June

This headline may come as a shock for out-of-state alumni. Arizona alumni have already learned that Gerard will have its final graduation this June. The out-of-state alumni, however, were not included in the mailing inviting them to attend the meeting on Wednesday, February 22, to listen to Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien explain his reasons for closing the school.

Parents and students, angered over the seemingly sudden announcement, refused to believe the Bishop when he told them that the closure was due to declining enrollment and escalating operating costs. Emotions ran high as students picketed the school while newspaper and TV reporters scurried to lap up the sensational story.

Much has been written, pro and con, as to the wisdom of the Bishop's decision. Only time will tell. But out of the dozen or so articles that were written about Gerard, the following editorial, which appeared in the Phoenix Gazette on February 23¹, stands out as the best:

A School Closes

"Gerard High School is closing its doors. The 27-year-old school became a victim, as they say, of the numbers game: high operating costs, too few students. Familiar facts. It has happened before. It probably will happen again.

But there's more to this story. And the Catholic

Diocese of Phoenix, which decided last week to shut Gerard down, must think long and hard about how it happened and why. It is sad whenever a school closes. But there is a special loss when it occurs at a parochial school- built to serve a particular mission in society. A Catholic school isn't founded just to educate and train, but to pass on a set of ethical values and traditions. But in recent years the east Phoenix school couldn't persuade students or their parents that Gerard had anything special to offer, at least in comparison to its hefty tuition.

This was not always so. Founded in 1962, at the height of the postwar baby boom, Gerard took it upon itself to prepare a generation of Catholic children, teaching them biology, U.S. history and algebra, but also trying to instill in their hearts certain religious traditions and values, the same sense of purpose that inspired the Holy Ghost fathers who taught there.

In that sense, Gerard will live on, beyond its formal closing in June, through the achievements of its many graduates, the oldest of whom are reaching their 40's this year. Several already hold positions of influence - principals, attorneys, newspaper executives, teachers. One, Catherine Hicks, is a well-known Hollywood actress.

Not a bad legacy for a small parochial school, whose passing is mourned by all who cherish strong education and stronger values."

¹The Phoenix Gazette folded in January, 1997