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Blast From the Past: Archbishop John Ireland

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 4, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Archbishop John Ireland, the first Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, was known as the ?Consecrated Blizzard of the Northwest? because of his fiery commitment to his views and his strong personality. He was profoundly committed to seeing Catholics become full partners in the building up of the American nation as this episode from Gerald Fogarty?s ?The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870 to 1965? demonstrates.

?The Third Plenary Council, as was seen, legislated that every parish was to have a school within two years of the end of the council, an ideal which was impossible to realize. For the Germans, the parochial school was a choice means of preserving their culture in a foreign land. For the Irish conservatives, praise of the public school was tantamount to promoting religious indifference. For European conservative Catholics, public education was inextricably linked with the liberal State?s exclusive demand of the right to educate with the consequent denial of that right to the Church. From the American liberals, praise of the public schools was soon forthcoming. Addressing the American Education Association in 1890, John Ireland spoke of the public school as ?our pride and glory. The Republic of the United States has solemnly affirmed its resolve that within its borders no clouds of ignorance shall settle upon the minds of the children of its people. In furnishing the means to accomplish this result its generosity knows no limit. The free school of America! Withered be the hand raised in sign of its destruction!??

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