

WEBSTER'S M.A.T. DIRECTOR

A Religious Educator Who Believes in Change

"The most exciting place to be these days is in an elementary school, and if it has as a special feature an experimental religious education program such as that of the Webster College School this contributes even more to the excitement."

This is the belief of Sister Anna Barbara Brady, S.L., director of the Master of Arts in Teaching program at Webster College, who is extremely concerned about the role of the parochial school and the entire system of education which it represents.

People are her hobbies. She enjoys every minute she spends with the children in the College School, especially in the campus school of religion, which is her "brain child" and which gives Catholic and non-Catholic children together an opportunity to learn about Scriptures historically in a very fascinating way. She likes to talk to parents, encouraging them to give more time and thought to the religious training of their sons and daughters. She is pleased that she has the opportunity this year to live in a residence with a group of college girls, getting to know them well and sharing their interests.

Sister Anna Barbara, an exceedingly pretty woman with big, expressive eyes and a beautiful complexion, looks seriously at the world around her and hopes that she can help to find the answers to some puzzling questions concerning elementary education in general and religious training in particular.

Not only her educational background which has encompassed extensive theological study both in the United States and abroad but her work with the Master of Arts in Teaching program can be credited with her crusading interest in advocating a revision of the parochial school system.

The Master of Arts in Teaching department of Webster College, which offers in-service teachers an opportunity to become specialists in a specific field upon the completion of approximately thirty hours of graduate work, has attracted educators from many states as well as from the St. Louis area. Many public school teachers have enrolled, and a record enrollment is expected for the next summer session when work will be offered in five different departments—language arts, mathematics, religious studies, science and social science.

"As I have worked with public school teachers in the M.A.T. program I have begun more and more to question the future of the Catholic parochial school system," Sister Anna Barbara declares. "Modern trends in education require more equipment and smaller classes which the parochial schools find difficult—practically impossible—to provide. Economically they can't maintain the plant and equipment necessary for a flexible and individual approach to learning. Worse still, the members of the religious orders with the "bread and butter" type of salary paid to their parochial school teachers have difficulty financing the higher or professional training necessary today."

"A possible answer, as I see this problem,



Sister Anna Barbara Brady, S.L.
Director, Master of Arts in Teaching Program

is to revise the parochial school set-up and establish separate Schools of Religion. Some parishes are experimenting with this now. It seems the logical solution. Personally, I would like to see two experiments tried. One experiment would be in a parish that has a parish school. Here each class would be limited to twenty-five children. Those who cannot be accommodated would be given religious training at the same pro-rated cost per child in an after-school-hour schedule or, ideally, on a released time basis. The other experiment, in a parish that doesn't have a parish school, would be to try to estimate the cost of establishing a parish school and put a comparable amount of money, instead, into a parochial school of religion with professional workers in charge."

Sister Anna Barbara believes that many parents get the wrong idea about the religious training of their children. They think, she comments, that if they send their child to a Catholic school they have done their duty. Parishes, also, put almost the entire job on the parochial schools, in her opinion.

"Psychologists who are trying to test and evaluate the growth of religious attitudes are increasingly concerned that the seeds for correct religious attitudes be placed in the home in the first six years of a child's life," Sister Anna Barbara reports. "The home is responsible for the daily life of the child. How he lives his religion must be taught there. A more systematic presentation should come in a school setting, but shouldn't the parish itself accept the responsibility for the sacramental and liturgical initiation of the young Christians?"

As Sister Anna Barbara discusses her views and her hopes for changes in elementary education, one realizes that she has studied the situation from significant and

varied vantage points. She has lived in many parts of the world and has attended many different schools. She has known personally students of elementary, secondary and college ages as well as educators enrolled as students in the M.A.T. program. Her experiences with the Parish School of Religion have contributed to her convictions.

The daughter of a regular army officer, Colonel W. I. Brady, Sister was born in Fort Monroe, Virginia, where her father was stationed. She began elementary school in Lawrence, Kansas, while her father was an instructor in the R.O.T.C. program at the University of Kansas. She lived twice in Hawaii. Her third and fourth grades of elementary school were there. The family was living in California when the war broke out. Then came a transfer to El Paso, Texas, and an assignment overseas in France and Germany for the Colonel while the family remained in El Paso and Sister was taught by the Sisters of Loretto. Following the war the family moved to the Washington, D.C. area where Sister finished high school. Now the Colonel is retired and Sister's father and mother are living in Kansas City which also is the home of Sister's married brother and her sister.

Sister Anna Barbara studied one year at St. Mary's of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, before entering the Novitiate of the Sisters of Loretto. After two years there she came to St. Louis and taught in St. Ann's School in Normandy, while studying at Webster on Saturdays and summer sessions to obtain her A.B. Degree. She received her degree in 1956. Continuing her teaching and summer studies, she obtained her Master of Education Degree at Loyola University, Chicago, in 1960.

This was followed by a year abroad. Sister studied at Lumen Vitae, Brussels, Belgium, from which she received her diploma in religious education. This is an international center for religious education with all courses taught in French. She did not know any French when she arrived there in June but classes did not start until October, so she made the most of the time available to study the language. This was the first year of the Vatican Council. The leaders who started Lumen Vitae and many of the guest lecturers were in the forefront for religious renewal. She had contact with many theologians who, as Pope John said, were "opening the window to let in the fresh air." Considerable travel in Germany and Italy and a trip to the Holy Land were additional broadening experiences.

Returning to Webster College, Sister was assigned to work with the religious teachers not only in the college but in the Parish School of Religion which was getting underway. Because of the shifts in the personnel of the college, she assisted in the entire area of preparation of teachers. As the Master's program began gaining momentum this required full time. The M.A.T. in religious studies proved of particular interest to her because of her special training and experience.