

# COVER

STORY

## New Approaches Help Make School Days Golden Rule Days

Schools! A day doesn't go by without someone taking a good, hard look and asking, "Is learning going on here?" Several years ago Fr. Michael Krank pondered that very question. He arrived at some negative answers.

Explains Fr. Krank, who presently teaches an extension course from North Dakota State University and who also is principal at Emmons Central High School in Strasburg, N.D.: "I became more and more dissatisfied with the suffering people caused each other—whether it was between student and student, husband and wife, or neighbor and neighbor. I realized some important changes in human relationships had to occur, and that they could be achieved right in the school."

**Newer Problems.** Searching for answers, Fr. Krank, who already had a master of arts degree in education, began taking as many psychology courses as he could. That was in the 1960s. The whole educational world was in ferment, he added. New ideas and new educational methods were constantly being offered and tested. But when Fr. Krank and his faculty at Emmons Central began implementing some of those newer methods, they were discouraged by the results. Unfortunately, newer sets of problems frequently arose.

Says Fr. Krank: "I became convinced that changing a method does not necessarily improve learning. It merely creates different problems. The shortcoming of the 60s was that too many educators relied on educational methods to make the change. They failed to realize that a change in human relationships was also required."

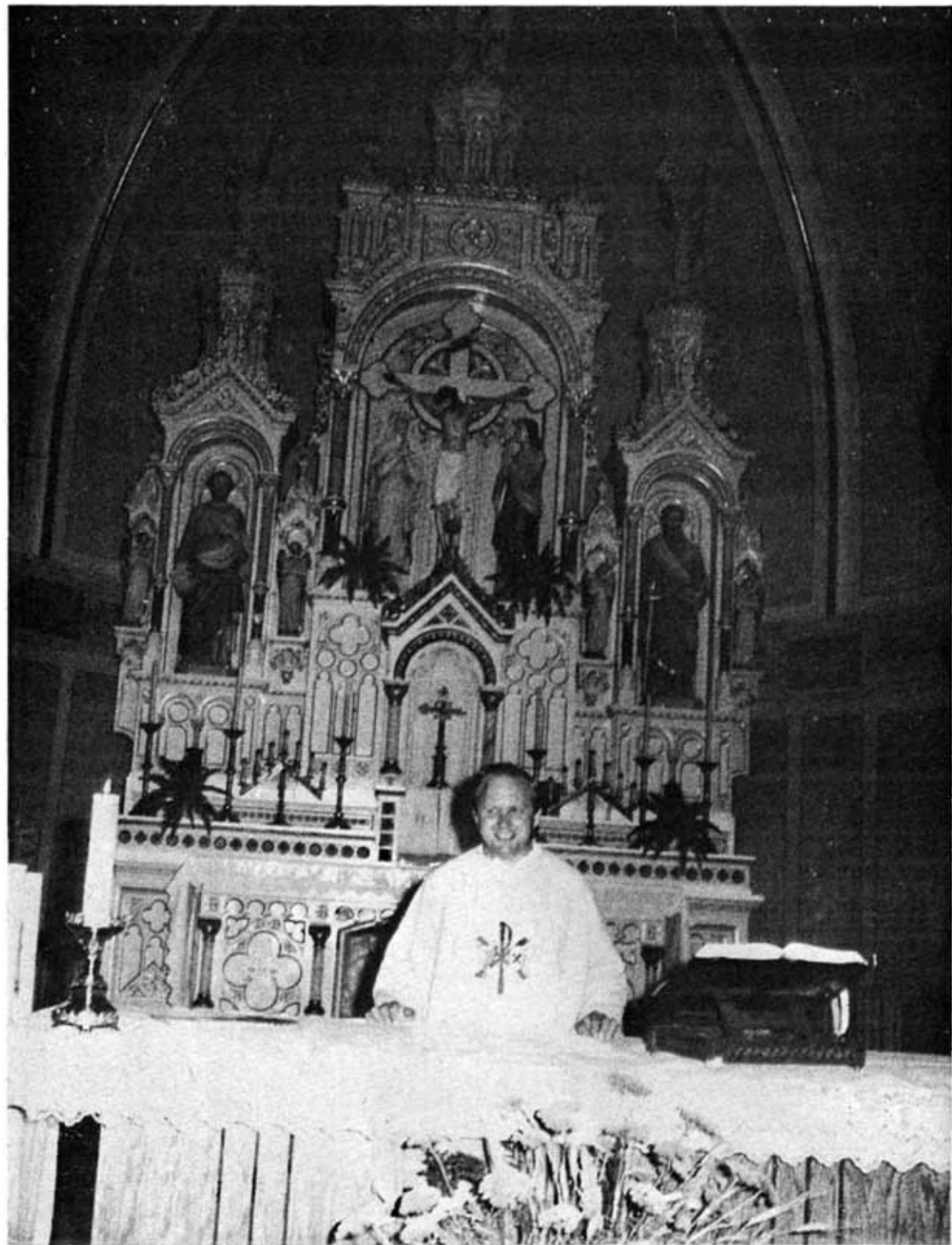
**Solutions.** While doing research, Fr. Krank said he found it interesting to discover many of the new theories regarding behavior and relationships with people popularized recently by



Fr. Michael Krank, principal of Emmons Central High School in Strasburg, N.D., is one of 15 educators in North Dakota leading teacher-effectiveness seminars. People enrolling in the course receive graduate credits at North Dakota State University. Fr. Krank is presently offering a seminar in Wishek, N.D. Speaking of his own school at Emmons Central, Fr. Krank says: "We're a team and not a power structure. I see my role here as principal mainly as a coordinator."



Students at Emmons Central commented that they appreciated the good environment. "It's like a family," some said.



Fr. Linus Evers, one of the faculty members at Emmons Central High School, led a worship service for both Emmons Central and Strasburg High School at the time of the latter's homecoming. The two schools competed against each other at the football game. At the service, Strasburg's homecoming royal court was honored. Contemporary hymns with guitar accompaniment were sung by the students from both schools.



such best sellers as "I'm O.K., You're O.K." were essentially the same as what Jesus had advocated 2,000 years ago: get involved with people, listen, try to understand the other person's viewpoint, be concerned, be loving.

With Fr. Krank's seminary and clerical background as additional advantages into the insights of human behavior (Fr. Krank also serves as pastor to the St. Mary's Catholic congregation in Hague, N.D.), he began experimenting and developing educational theories of his own.

Soon universities and other educational circles were taking notice.

**Extension Courses.** Today Fr. Krank is one of 15 educators in North Dakota instructing seminars designed to help teachers become more effective. Within the last five years, over 3,000 teachers have studied under the ten-week programs. Just last year, a successful course was completed in Ashley, N.D. A similar course is now being conducted at nearby Wishek, N.D. "Over 39 people enrolled in Wishek, and made it necessary to have two sessions per week instead of only one," beamed Fr. Krank. The sessions there are on Monday and Wednesday evenings. Each session meets three hours per week for ten weeks.

So what is the reason for such widespread interest? Offers one teacher who recently took the course: "I just got tired of being a policeman instead of a teacher! I wanted to equip myself with some skills to enable me to better meet some of the ordinary,

day-to-day classroom problems."

Developing those skills is the heart of the popular teacher-effectiveness seminars.

—Example: Every person operates under three ego-states—parent, adult, or child. Recognizing the ego-state from which a person is operating enables the teacher to choose suitable responses.

—Example: Reflective listening. Verbalizing back to the other person what he has just said, but in different words, helps him to better realize his problem—and thus achieve a solution.

—Example: Giving the student an "I'm O.K., You're O.K." feeling helps him accept the significance of himself, fellow classmates and his teacher.

**Don't Demean.** Fr. Krank also talks about the importance for a school to develop what he describes as the proper "feeling-tone," or atmosphere. He believes not too many high school students can handle excessive freedom. They need pressure—but without its being demeaning. Also, he has found that students appreciate discipline if limits are set and if it is not threatening. At Emmons Central, Fr. Krank often discusses disciplinary problems with the student involved, and infrequently the two of them figure out what should be done to improve the situation. Sometimes punishment is involved; sometimes it isn't.

Schools should be run on love, Fr. Krank insists. Still, authority should be present too. He thinks Emmons

Central stresses individualized instruction to its students, and has achieved amazing educational results. Above, Fr. Krank discusses last minute details with some of the school's personnel.

Central is achieving great progress. For example, destruction of property is minimal—less than \$50 per year, and "that is mostly accidental. It indicates that the kids are happy—they don't need to rebel," he states.

And when a student is happy and secure within himself, he is more apt to be ready to learn.

Fr. Krank was raised on a farm near Dickinson, N.D. He trained for the Catholic priesthood at St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota and received his master of arts degree in school administration at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He has since picked up additional graduate credits in psychology equivalent to another master's degree. Fr. Krank was principal at St. Mary's Central High School in Bismarck, N.D. for six years. During the last ten years he has been principal of Emmons Central, a private Catholic school "which accepts students of all denominational backgrounds," he adds.

It is obvious that Fr. Krank finds inspiration and satisfaction in his role as educator and pastor. Speaking of the people in this section of the

Dakotas, he exclaims: "These are my kind of people. I like their warmth, genuineness and directness."

**Problems.** He thinks an important function of education—indeed, of life—is to develop healthy self-concepts. If a person has a good awareness of himself and others, he can more easily grasp what he needs to learn. For example, Fr. Krank was at one time a heavy cigarette smoker. But he wanted to quit. One reason was he believed smoking showed a sign of weakness in him to his students. He said he wanted to work on himself so that he could share his knowledge with others. Insights from transactional analysis and other behavior concepts he had learned helped him stop smoking. "When I craved a cigarette, I recognized the need and said, 'O.K. I'll find another need to substitute for this cigarette need.'"

As Fr. Krank frequently says: problems are good as long as they are stepping stones to progress.



The end of the school day.  $\triangle$

Students at a pep rally.  $\nabla$

