



**Most Reverend Robert W. Finn**  
**Bishop**  
**Diocese Kansas City ~ St. Joseph**

Convocation Mass of the Holy Spirit  
St. Therese Parish, Parkville, Missouri  
Homily  
August 16, 2010

Dear Pastors,  
Dear Administrators and Teachers,  
Friends in Christ all,

In my time as Diocesan Bishop so far, I have sealed thousands of our young people with the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of Confirmation is a special part of my work as bishop. In about 55 to 60 such events per year, I enjoy meeting these budding men and women – all dressed up, often fidgety, particularly in the first half of the Mass waiting for the Sacrament to be bestowed. Afterward they are more at ease, while we get together for photos or cookies and punch. I realize after spending 13 years in full-time high school work, I have the privilege of spending moments with them when they are at their best, and then I get to walk away and leave them to you and their parents!

This morning I have a different joy – to meet with you and ask the grace of the Holy Spirit upon you and your efforts. You men and women exercise an extraordinary, dignified, holy, and challenging work in the Church – the education and formation of our young people. I count you among my most valuable co-workers. In turn, you and I, and your pastors, take our place at the service of the parents, whose love for their sons and daughters urges them to seek our expert help and dedication in the forming of precious bodies, minds, souls. We all know – parents, pastors, and teachers alike – that these students are, after all, the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father, created in His image, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and destined for eternal salvation. Nothing is as important – nothing – but that we see them live good and full lives, learn the truth deeply and with integrity, grow in holiness, and get to heaven.

Today, I am here to encourage you, but also, to call down upon you the same Holy Spirit who ignited apostolic hearts at Pentecost and sacramentally seals the confirmed, so that we can become more and more God's instruments for this work. It is the work of the Church, and I call you to fulfill it well with God's help.

These past years, we have undertaken a comprehensive planning study for all our diocesan schools. The pillars of that plan are now being promulgated. I spoke about them in my column last week in *The Catholic Key*. Our schools are to be *distinctly Catholic, academically excellent, and fiscally stable*. You are probably thinking: Bishop, this is not new. These are the goals we have had and tried to live, and so it is true. What is different? Perhaps this: that we are signaling a new moment and putting into place some additional resources, more specific and consistent planning toward these ends. At our recent Diocesan Stewardship Conference, I asked for a New Moment in Stewardship, a renewed, comprehensive effort. There is much work ahead. You and the Diocesan School Office, Dr. Dan Peters, Vincent DePaul Schmidt, and Pat Burbach, and I –together with our Diocesan School Board and many local and parish

school boards, must work in some ways to strengthen and make real this new start. Why? Because, the challenges are real, and as the Council stressed a generation ago, and as the Church has restated so many times before and since, the apostolate of the Catholic schools *must* continue.

We are working to assure the stability and strength of our schools. We know that – as necessary as they are – they won't succeed on their own. We have to engage our insight and devotion to assure their effectiveness and keep the authentic mission in focus.

Great emphasis was rightly given by the Council to the role of parents as the first and most important teachers of their children in the life of faith. Paragraph #3 of the Council's Declaration on Education, says that because they are the principal educators, *"It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow man. It is in the Christian family – that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor."*

This right and responsibility is proclaimed at the baptism of the child, when the mother and father, assisted and supported by the Godparents, make the Profession of Faith for the child and promise solemnly to bring up their son or daughter in the practice of the faith. Prayer and worship are vital elements of this formation, and Covenant agreements for Sunday Mass attendance have been applied meaningfully in several of our schools for many years. Last year, we proclaimed this agreement and commitment together, and I believe it is important for us all to renew it today, and often.

We gather here this morning, dear teachers, in part, because parents look to us – and to the apostolate of the Catholic school – for help in forming children in every field of study, in the promotion of human culture; and in the continuity of the life of faith.

It is clear to me through my observation of our schools, and from the Church's own teaching, that your sacrifices with and for students and their families are so much more than a "job." You make this clear by your dedication. I think your joy in caring for your students is a powerful indicator of your love. Yours is a holy vocation within society and within the Church. You are forming these children in supernatural faith, hope, and charity and helping them live these values in their life. This is the meaning of the Catholic school.

Our determination to see our Catholic schools continue and flourish in every dimension of the mission is undiminished, despite the formidable challenges we face. I am extremely grateful for the sacrifices you all make: as teachers and school administrators. I am thankful to our Diocesan School Office leaders, diocesan and local School Board members, our pastors, parents and families of our students – and some of our students themselves work to pay their tuition – and all the faithful in our parishes and many others in our community, who help us secure the future of our schools.

As we prayerfully inaugurate the new year – *our best ever!* – let us turn to Mary and Joseph, who were entrusted with the care and human formation of the child Jesus in the home "school" at Nazareth, to assist us with their prayers.