



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

**News Meeting**  
**Introduction of Diocesan Staff**  
Kansas City, Missouri

As you know, on May 24, Tuesday of this week, the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI accepted Bishop Boland's request for retirement. We continue to be grateful for his gracious ministry as the fifth bishop of this diocese. He and his predecessor bishops have shaped and guided the Diocese in a very wonderful way.

I wish to take this opportunity to invite everyone to a celebration in thanksgiving for Bishop Boland's tenure as bishop. This Mass will take place in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Thursday, June 23, at 7:00 p.m. with a reception to follow.

Now that I have been asked to assume these responsibilities, I ask for your prayers and support that, with God's help, I will persevere in service to the whole people of God and effectively foster the life of the Church in this Northwest corner of Missouri. To all of you here and to the faithful throughout the Diocese I pledge my love and service and I say to you: You must pray for me and support me. Without this unity of mind and heart before God we cannot carry out this truly supernatural work for the good of God's people.

Though the work is significant I am consoled by the fact that this is not a responsibility I take on alone.

In the last months I have spent much time, studying, consulting and praying about some questions I am asked most frequently: What is my vision for the Diocese? What are my plans for the Diocese? Most recently, "Are you going to change anything?"

At the risk of disappointing you, I must say that much of this vision and these plans will still have to be formulated in more concrete terms. For this I will depend on a host of advisors, co-workers, and faithful parishioners as time goes on. The vision must always be consistent with the light and wisdom of our Catholic Tradition, and in total and clear accord with the Holy Father. The People of God expect nothing less. The planning will not be done only in the Chancery office, and if it is to be fruitful, it will require time, hard work, sound social science, persevering collaboration and much prayer.

Kingdom of God in the agencies and offices of the diocese.

The Vicar General of the Diocese is the bishop's "Right Hand Man." He is a "vicar" that is, a representative of the bishop, and he has broad or "general" jurisdiction. The Vicar General is also Moderator of the Curia, overseeing the whole work of the curia – or agencies – that minister to the needs of the people of God.

The Chancellor is the official notary and archivist of the diocese, who in this capacity docu-

ments the actions of the local Church and – in short – does anything else that needs to be done!

As Vicar General I have chosen Father Robert Murphy, and as Chancellor I have chosen Father Bradley Offutt. They are two pastors who have broad experience in the work of the parishes – the place where so much of the life of the Church subsists. I have found them to be respected by their brother-priests and by the laity they have worked with and served in a variety of parish and other assignments. Father Murphy and Father Offutt are thoughtful, prayerful, hard-working, and completely dedicated to the mission of the Church. In this they will provide good continuity with their predecessors in these offices.

Although Father Murphy will have ultimate oversight over the Curia, and especially areas of administration, Father Offutt will supervise some areas and offices of services and ministries. Father Murphy will be the “Vicar for Clergy,” which includes responsibilities for priests and deacons. He will continue Father Patrick Rush’s diligent efforts to fulfill all policies and practices concerning the protection of children and young people.

Father Offutt will oversee planning for the Diocese. He will gather and provide assessment of data on demographics as well as pastoral needs so that, together with all my consultors I can make prudent decisions about parishes, schools, and other diocesan priorities and goals. I have also asked him to form a Pastoral Council for the Diocese, made up of a representation of laity and some pastors from all over the diocese. This group will advise me concerning the needs of the local Church.

Now please don’t ask them too many specific questions about these major responsibilities, because they are still full-time pastors and are only now getting oriented to these new roles and duties!

I have also appointed a Vice-Chancellor to assist the Chancellor, and specifically to be the Moderator of our efforts in Catechesis and Evangelization for the Diocese. Dr. Claude Sasso is a professor of history and life-long educator. About six years ago he also founded a successful educational initiative called, “Catholic Faith and Reason,” an association of lay Catholics, which provides programs of catechesis or instruction in the Catholic faith. More than 4000 people have participated in the programs and seminars of Catholic Faith and Reason. He has also been instrumental in the successful effort to bring Catholic radio to our area, and his programs of apologetics and instruction in the faith have reached many more people through this medium.

Dr. Sasso will advise me in my work of evaluating programs of religious education, and other initiatives in the work of building up the Catholic Faithful in their vocation to holiness.

I have asked Dr. Sasso to take up a particular project that I believe will be very exciting and helpful to this work of adult religious education throughout the diocese.

The new Vice-Chancellor will form a special commission. This working group will gather information from many sources around the diocese, and seek to determine the whole wide array of needs that the Catholic faithful have for religious formation and education. The work of the commission will not, at this moment, look at our elementary and secondary schools, but primarily focus on needs for adult religious education.

For example: Do pastors and parishes need catechists? teachers of religion? Do Catholics need and desire opportunities for spiritual enrichment? Bible study? Theological coursework? Retreat opportunities? The premise of the commission's work will be as a "zero-base" study that says, in effect, **IF** we did not have anything in place, what would we need to provide so that Catholics can grow in a sound and mature faith and live this faith life more fully?

After this broad survey is completed the same commission or a different such group will then look at many different "delivery systems" for providing these opportunities in the best way possible. Given our resources, and studying the "best programs and structures" of our own and other dioceses, what programs do we want to initiate to provide these opportunities for our faithful?

The Diocese has a rich history of adult lay formation and we need to capitalize on the momentum of this strong tradition. At the same time, I think it is rather exciting to put all our preconceived notions and programs aside and attempt to look at this in a "new" way. I believe Dr. Sasso will do a wonderful job in guiding this study and the recommendations that will come from it a year or so from now.

A new position on the Diocesan staff takes into account the richness and diversity we have in terms of Religious priests brothers and sisters. The diocese is served by representatives of at least eight orders of religious men, and almost 30 orders of Religious women. I have asked Sr. Connie Boulch of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Eucharist to be Director of a new office of Consecrated Life. Sr. Connie is finishing her second term as Superior General of her Congregation with its headquarters here in Independence.

Her role and availability as Director to these hundreds of dedicated religious will serve to assure the many Religious order priests, brother and sisters of our deep esteem for them and their apostolates within the diocese.

I have also asked Sr. Connie to give a portion of her time to our Diocesan Vocation Office. In this way it is my hope that she will help us reach out even more to men and women considering a call to a religious order or some other form of consecrated life.

I also want to take advantage of this gathering today to welcome Mrs. Paula Moss as our new Diocesan Director of Stewardship and Development. Mrs. Moss has been serving in a similar capacity with Catholic Charities here. In her role as Diocesan Director she will be heading up stewardship education for our pastors and parishes, the annual appeal and a host of other very important efforts that help us fulfill our mission. Paula brings expertise and energy to her new role and I am very happy that she will guide such an important part of the work of the Church.

Dear friends, no one can come to know Jesus Christ fully without experiencing Him in His Church. You and I must be the living members of His Body and participants in the work of redemption. The mission of the lay faithful, in particular, is to go into the family, the workplace, the marketplace, the crossroads of society and effect the transformation of the world in Jesus Christ. Specifically in sanctifying their ordinary daily work, whatever it may be, and by growing in holiness, they will bring about the transformation of our culture.

For the sake of this apostolic mission, I commend the Diocese and all these efforts to our heavenly patrons: first and foremost to Mary, our mother and queen and particularly under her title as the Immaculate Conception. I also ask the prayers and assistance of St. Joseph, that

just and prudent man who became the guardian of the Redeemer. And to St. John Francis Regis, our secondary patron, who reminds us of the rich heritage of Religious life by which the faith was brought to the new world.

May they all lead us safely and faithfully to Jesus Christ, the one Savior of the world and the only name in which we find salvation. May He be praised for ever.