



Principal's Desk

March 3, 2008 – Called to Be Church

First, let me assure you that our school is not closing or merging. It will not happen while I am here, nor while you are here. Change at St. Thomas *may* happen when your children's children are attending Catholic school. As parents, we will be grandparents, and our children will be parents. Over the next 20 years, it is likely our understanding of Church will change dramatically, and so will our Catholic schools. Think about the changes that have occurred in the past 20 years in Catholic schools? Change is inevitable, so we must plan for it.

As many of you know, our diocese is in the middle of a pastoral planning process titled Called To Be Church. This planning process is necessary for our diocese because we are facing a dramatic decline in the number of priests who can serve the faithful, as well as changing demographics with regard to the Catholic population. It will change our way of thinking about Church.

When people hear about the pastoral planning process and some of the changes that are being proposed, Catholic schools get mentioned, and questions are asked.

The fact is: Catholic schools will be here as long as we want them and support them. This has been true since the French missionaries came to North America in the 17th century and founded this continent's first Catholic school in what is now New Orleans. It was true in the 18th century when the first parish school was founded in Philadelphia. It was true in the 19th century when all parishes were required to have a Catholic school, and into the 20th century when the Church's teaching required all Catholic children to be enrolled in Catholic schools.

All of this changed in 1965 with Vatican II because our Church changed. It is no coincidence that Catholic school enrollment in our nation peaked in 1965, and that it has declined for the past 42 years just as the number of priests and women in religious orders have declined during that time.

So, where does that leave us today? Right where Vatican II tells us to be: WE ARE THE CHURCH! I want Catholic schools. Our teachers want Catholic schools. Our families want Catholic schools. Our parish wants Catholic schools. Therefore, OUR CHURCH wants Catholic schools. This is CHRIST'S SCHOOL, and as members of the Body of Christ, it is OUR SCHOOL.

Called To Be Church is a plan for when change happens. It makes sense to be prepared. It is our calling to BE THE CHURCH. Recommendations will be presented in the coming months. Get involved in reviewing these recommendations. Make your voice heard. YOU are the Church and the Church needs you now.

Thank you,
Thomas J. Kane
Principal