



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



HOMILY FOR THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS FROM TEXAS THE AMERICAN AIRLINES CENTER

IRVING, TEXAS
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As a pastor back in Illinois, my feet used to take me to the grade schools of the parishes where I was assigned for many tasks: classes, blessings, meetings, staffing, etc. You know the drill! Some of my steps to the school were joyful and anticipatory; some were anticipatory but not so joyful! (Staffing, suspensions, corrections, etc.... You know... you all have been there!) As educators, our feet do indeed take us many places in our daily ministry of Catholic education, but do we think of our daily footsteps as footsteps of Faith? That is what Pope Benedict XVI told the Catholic school educators in Washington, D.C. three years ago, and is not that what St. Paul tells us today?

The next time those classrooms halls of your parish schools and high schools are walked, the next time your footsteps take you to all of your school activities, I hope you remember and reflect that these days together - as Catholic school administrators working together in our great State of Texas - teach us that footsteps, the feet, must be those feet that bring the Good News! And, not only bringing the Good News, but at the same time realizing that our footsteps help to forge and form bonds of communion and Faith. The theme of the footsteps, and the beautiful feet in those footsteps, finds its way woven through the readings and the Sacred Liturgy for today's Mass, St. Paul being the most explicit about "how beautiful are the feet of those who bring the Good News."

In the Old Testament, Isaiah speaks of going to the mountain of God, to the House of God... nations streaming toward it. Is that not walking as well? Do not our students, with their footsteps, stream toward the mountain of God, toward God in our schools each day, [*Parking lots of our schools in the morning and the evening!*] not only to receive instruction, but to learn how to walk in the ways of God? That is the also the charge and calling where our steps take us, to teach our students to always walk in the ways of God.

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Finally, we listen to the Gospel of St. John where Jesus, in what is sometimes called His farewell discourse, speaks about sending His disciples into the World, to consecrate them in Truth, that he prays for them, and that they may know that He loves them just as His Father loves Him.

I think that we forget sometimes the world in which the Disciples were sent and in which the Gospel was written by St. John years after the events, when he remembered how the Lord said that he was sending them forth: into what is sometimes called a “pagan” world, that in the culture of the Roman empire of that time, life was not valued, and where those who believed in Christ would be isolated, marginalized and persecuted.

We are in similar situation today, in this post Christian world. We are preparing our students to be sent forth into this world where what we teach, believe and live will not be valued or understood many times. We have often experienced that situation ourselves. Have we not? As we pray each day in the Canticle of Zechariah that our steps “may be guided into the way of peace,” and not only guided but always carry the message of Truth of the Gospel with Love.

We, as significant documents of the Church remind us [particularly Pope John Paul II], now living and ministering in a time of “new evangelization.” This is not a new message or a new Gospel, but teaching and living in our words, lives and footsteps a renewed and vigorous proclamation and representation of the Gospel in our post-Christian age. In that task, as we hear the words of the Lord for His Disciples as He sends them out to “walk and journey with their feet”. These very same words of the Lord are for us today also. He does indeed pray for us, just as he prayed for the Disciples. Let us remember that each day as we put on the shoes on our feet carry us to carry the Good News to the students and families whom the Lord in His providence entrusts to our care. “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the Good News.”! My friends, brothers and sisters -- that is YOU! God bless you and thank you for all that you daily in the essential ministry of Catholic education here in our Dioceses in Texas!

+ Bishop Kevin Vann

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