

## Catholic schools back in session - 'We are all here because of you,' says bishop to first class of John Paul II

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Parents buying uniforms and school supplies, faculty members attending inservices, the community rallying around the opening of a new school.



All of these events were carried out locally for one specific group of individuals students.

We are all here because of you, said Bishop Edmond Carmody, whose words could have been applied to any of the incoming classes at the 18 Catholic schools in the diocese.

This time they were spoken to the students of the first class of the new Pope John Paul II High School during an Aug. 1 Mass which officially opened their 2006-2007 academic year.

The day also marked the beginning of class for the other Catholic schools in Corpus Christi and Robstown. Alice, Kingsville and Rockport Catholic schools were set to start the year later this month in conjunction with their public school counterparts.

**Over 350 faculty members from all of the Catholic schools in the diocese had gathered the previous week for two days of inservices, with one serving as a retreat day and the other for professional development.**

**The July 26 and 27 inservices held at St. Pius X had the same focus as the bishop's message on the first day of class at John Paul II Catholic schools and all the work and preparation that goes into them, exist for the good of the students.**

**Our schools have to be about giving hope, said Father Richard Wosman, a Marianist priest, who serves as Director of Catholic School Leadership Program at St. Mary's University in San Antonio. He addressed faculty members July 26 at a one-day retreat for teachers entitled The Qualities and Role of the Catholic School Educator. He had an upbeat approach to an important topic and encouraged teachers to keep a positive attitude for their students.**

**We do the best we can with what God has given us, that's all God asks, said the priest to the crowd of teachers, principals and other faculty.**

The following day, Sister Mary Angela Shaughnessy, a Sister of Charity of Nazareth, who is a veteran educator, author and practicing attorney, led the professional day on Legal Issues and the Catholic Schools: Issues for the 21st Century. She also had a light-hearted approach to a serious topic, addressing boundary issues, including avoiding the appearance of impropriety. A preventative message to teachers included, Create a climate where all are valued, said Sister Shaughnessy.

At the opening Mass at John Paul II Bishop Carmody ensured the 128 students in the first freshman class that they would be valued. He also acknowledged the school's advisory council, those working on raising funds for scholarships, and the Kenedy Memorial Foundation for helping to make a Catholic high school education affordable on the city's southside.

Thank you for making the decision to be part of John Paul II, said the bishop to the students. Many people are praying for your success.


Incoming freshman, Nathan Humpal, 14, a parishioner at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, said he felt good about the first day of his high school career. It's good to have a school and the church working together to help lead the students, he said.

Pope John Paul II Spanish teacher, Cynthia Gonzalez agreed. She liked the idea of the new school so much that she came out of her two-year retirement from the Corpus Christi Independent School District to be part of the JP II faculty.

She said that Mr. Almendarez and the Lord's calling brought her to the new school. She had taught previously at Moody and King high schools, where JP II principal, Rick Almendarez, served as administrator, and said she was happy to be working with him again.

Following the Mass, a bronze-coated statue of John Paul II, made possible by area Knights of Columbus, was unveiled. The bishop then blessed unique Bethlehem crosses and gave one to each teacher to hang at the entry of their respective classrooms.

One of the attending priests, Father John Forbus, parochial vicar of St. John the Baptist Parish, said being at the event was a flashback to the days he was at the campus when it was Corpus Christi Minor Seminary. He said he had one hope for the students: That they love what they learn.

As students and teachers began making their way to their classrooms and desks, principal Almendarez summed up months of preparation, in words that may be echoed by all principals on the first day of school, We made it! 

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