

Catholic Diocese of Palm Beach

Diocese of Palm Beach
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Retirement Celebration Held for the Superintendent of Catholic Schools

(Palm Beach Gardens, FL) June 17, 2011 – Principals, colleagues and staff recently gathered to honor Sister Joan Dawson, O.S.F., who is retiring this month as the Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Palm Beach. For 20 years, Sister Dawson has been the lead administrator for the Diocese’s schools which include 16 elementary schools, three high schools and two preschools in four of the five Diocese’s counties: Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River. More than 6,500 students attend diocesan schools.

When Sister Joan first came to the Diocese of Palm Beach in 1991, the school system was relatively new. The schools were previously within the Diocese of Orlando and the Archdiocese Miami, and became under the Diocese of Palm Beach in 1984. At the luncheon, Sister Joan was praised for bringing unity to the schools. Colleagues also spoke of qualities that make her an educational champion and a leader.

“Sister Dawson brought order to the Diocesan schools and helped us get accreditation. She is a great listener who gave suggestions and ideas, but also understood sometimes we just needed someone to talk to, not necessarily someone who would solve our problem,” said Andrew Houvouras, principal, St. Clare School, North Palm Beach.

The Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito, Bishop of the Diocese of Palm Beach, also spoke of Sister Dawson’s remarkable service of distinction.

“Sister Joan has truly built up an office of education that is of the highest professional caliber within the province of Florida and is recognized as such by the Florida Catholic Conference. When you receive a gift from God, you thank God for that gift. Sister Joan is a gift to us. She will be missed,” stated Bishop Barbarito.

Sister Joan is a product of Catholic schools herself, having attended schools in Rochester, New York. She furthered her education at St. Bonaventure University in New York, the University of Notre Dame in Indiana and earned her doctorate at Wayne State University in Detroit. She also holds memberships in educational organizations including the National Catholic Educational Association, the Chief Administrators of Catholic Education and the Florida Catholic Conference Accreditation Committee.

Sister Dawson's career and dedication to Catholic education includes teaching in New York, New Jersey and Florida, and serving as high school administrator in Fort Myers. In 1979, she served as Superintendent of Schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg before coming to the Diocese of Palm Beach.

In her retirement, Sister Dawson will continue to reside in the area and will remain involved with the Florida Catholic Conference. She also plans to edit books and prayer materials for her religious community, the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. Sister Dawson entered the order when she was 18 years old. In May 2010, she celebrated her 50th anniversary of religious life.

To view photos from the event, please click [here](#).

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