

Fr. Kolvenbach Speaks to Board Members and Parish Councils October 8th, 2004

Thank you very much, Frs. Schlegel, Merkel, Michalski, Thelen, and Dundon. I thank you for gathering this group of leaders to whom are entrusted to a great degree the future of the cooperation in mission that I spoke about last evening. Your leadership in empowering and companionship these leaders, our colleagues in the governance of these Jesuit sponsored ministries, is critical. They look to you to understand and grow in their roles in guaranteeing that these works thrive as Jesuit schools and parishes.

And thank you, our friends and partners. I won't repeat all of what I said last night. I do want to take this special opportunity to thank you for your support and leadership.

This university, high school and middle school are not "owned" by the Society of Jesus, and even less so by the Jesuits who serve here. They are held in trust, and you are the trustees.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to you for your generosity, for your experience and expertise, and for the many ways you take care of the many relationships that guarantee the stability and success of these institutions. As you know, you are also asked to bear a critical fiduciary responsibility in safeguarding the Mission and Identity of these schools as well. This can no longer be the sole responsibility of the Jesuit President or the few Jesuits who serve the school. They can and do have an important role that is uniquely theirs. They inspire, animate and serve the school community and all its constituents, as Jesuits. However, your role is to ensure, with every decision you make, with every priority and policy you set, that the distinctive character of these schools is always Jesuit, in the way the Society understands "Jesuit" today. So, it is you who will have to continually ask: "Are we choosing to act in service of a Faith that does Justice?" "Are our faculty and staff helped to understand and contribute to this Mission?" "Are our students becoming what we hope them to become?" "Are we in dialogue with our culture, and engaged in critiquing it?" "Are we laboring to ensure that our education is done in the context of the entire global community, which is becoming increasingly inter-dependant?"

And, in order to perform this role, you must see to it that you are continually forming yourselves to grow in a sense of the characteristics of Jesuit identity and pedagogy, even ensuring, through retreats and times of reflection together, that you can benefit from the graces of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which are the wellspring of this Mission.

And you who serve on these two Parish Councils, thank you for accepting the role the Church gives you. You know that the governance of these Jesuit sponsored, diocesan parishes is your responsibility. You must ensure that these parishes continually call forth the gifts of the baptized to form a community of faith on mission. Distinguish your communities in living the charisms that come from the *Exercises* and the demands of the Gospel in all its force. Keep forming yourselves, and all the leaders of your faith community in this vision of Church so needed for today.

You are all the leaders to whom the Society looks to work with us in maintaining and strengthening the Jesuit and Lay Partnership in ministry that has thrived for 125 years here in Omaha.

I welcome your questions or insights for the remainder of our time together.