



Cardinal Francis George Launches Saint Viator's 50th Anniversary Year

January 30, 2011



Cardinal Francis George (center), joined by Br. Jim Lewnard, C.S.V., religion teacher at Saint Viator High School (left), the Rev. Thomas von Behren, C.S.V., provincial for the Clerics of St. Viator, and the Rev. Robert M. Egan, C.S.V., president of Saint Viator High School, presided over the 50th anniversary Mass for Saint Viator High School.

Nearly 1,500 people converged Sunday afternoon on Saint Viator High School's Cahill Gym for its historic 50th anniversary Mass celebrated by Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago on Sunday, Jan. 30.

On the altar with the cardinal was Bishop George Rassas, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago who oversees parishes in Northwest suburban Cook and southern Lake counties, and the Rev. Thomas von Behren, C.S.V., Provincial for the Clerics of St. Viator.

Together, they led a delegation of nearly 20 priests, including members of the Clerics of St. Viator, who opened the Catholic High School in 1961, and pastors from neighboring parishes.

They included the Rev. Edward Fialkowski of Our Lady of the Wayside Church and the Rev. William Zavaski of St. James Church, both in Arlington Heights; the Rev. Bernard Pietrzak of St.

Anne's Church in Barrington, and the Rev. Curtis Lambert of St. Alphonsus Church in Prospect Heights; as well as the Rev. Terry Keehan of Holy Family Church in Inverness and the Rev. Michael McMahon of St. Peter Church in Antioch, both alumni of Saint Viator.

In welcoming worshippers, George called Saint Viator a "very important ministry and high school in the Archdiocese of Chicago."

"What is distinctive about your school is the deep cooperation between the school and students' families --- and the church --- as well as teachers, parents and pastors," George said. "If that cooperation is working right, then relationships, like family, can be born. It is a family rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Members of Saint Viator's 50th anniversary committee planned the liturgy to occur during Catholic Schools Week. Originally, George had been scheduled to attend meetings with the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Rome, but he rearranged his itinerary to preside at Saint Viator first, he said.

In attendance were students, their families, alumni, faculty and former faculty members. Students sang in the choir, and served as musicians, greeters and acolytes.

Mayor Arlene Mulder of Arlington Heights also attended the Mass. As a former teacher, she took in all of the photo displays set up around the school, representing each of the five decades.

"Just look what this school has become to this community," Mulder said.

It was the cardinal's first visit to Saint Viator High School, and he thanked all the priests and brothers in the Viatorian community for answering the call from the Chicago Archdiocese to open a Catholic high school.

"I want to thank them for their generosity," George said. "In coming here, you have created a Catholic community, and with the help of others, you have stayed."

Saint Viator officials said the Mass was the first of several anniversary events, including a speakers' series that address the arts, technology and service, as well as the Night of the Lion gala planned for April 9 on Navy Pier.

The Rev. Robert M. Egan, C.S.V., president of Saint Viator, thanked the Cardinal and the bishop for presiding over the school's opening celebration, but he stressed it was just the beginning.

"We are here not only to celebrate the memories of the past 50 years," Egan said, "but to commit to shaping the future and the next 50 years."