

**Catholic School Convocation Mass
August 14, 2018**

Here we are ready to celebrate this Mass as you prepare to start this term with God's holy children, and what scripture does the Lord give us? "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me" (Mt). God is good! Let's see what this all means for us.

First, God tells us that we should receive children in his holy name. Remember to welcome your students as the Lord welcomes them and as the Lord has commanded us to welcome them. They bring their problems, their attitudes, and sure, they can be *traviesos* sometimes, but they are God's children. May we receive them as he has taught us.

We are told that we should learn from them how to live humbly in the Lord. What does this mean? It means that we need to trust in God, just like these children must trust in others in their lives. They have put their trust in you, their teachers and staff, trusting you to teach them, challenge them, and support them. We learn from them how to trust in God, who teaches us, challenges us, and supports us. Give thanks to God today, for your students who help us to learn. May we ask God to help us learn this lesson well. Especially at the start of this year, may each of you entrusted with the care of these dear children, humble yourselves before the Lord again. Give thanks to God for this wonderful calling.

Lastly, Jesus starts his lesson by bringing a child right next to him. Jesus wants you to know how close he is to your students and to you. He wants you right next to him. He is walking with you all, loving you, and guiding you. Remember to pray to him, ask him for help, and to thank him for those blessings in your life.

Jesus goes on to give us the story of the shepherd and his sheep. This is a very interesting story. It does not make much sense for a shepherd to leave 99 sheep alone and go off to rescue one silly sheep who wandered off. But this is how God works. Have often have we been this silly little sheep, my brothers and sisters? These moments are isolating and demoralizing. Sometimes we can even despair. But when we mess up and wander off, God does not give up on us. He goes out to get us and bring us home. God goes the extra mile for us. Teachers and administrators, this is our lesson. Be like our Good Shepherd; do not be satisfied with “good enough.” I know you do this already as educators, but be renewed in your commitment, continue to go the extra mile for these wonderful young missionary disciples. Support each other in this blessed and demanding ministry.

My friends, the word of God is sweet on our lips and in our ears, and it gives warmth to the heart. May this year be a blessed year. Know that I will be praying for you all, and I ask you to pray for me as well. May we be united in the prayers of St. Maximilian Kolbe, and follow his example of love and sacrifice. May we be united in the prayers of our patron St. Anthony of Padua, and those of our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe. Thanks be to God who teaches us with his sweet and eternal Word.