

WOBURN, MA - Over 50 Archdiocese of Boston Elementary School Principals gathered on Friday, April 8th for the Archdiocesan Elementary School Principal Association's (AESPA) Annual Spring Convention. The meeting, held at the Holiday Inn in Woburn, was designed to highlight to school administrators their important role in fostering the faith formation and Catholic identity of their students in addition to presenting an opportunity for the attendees to share best practices and foster an atmosphere of collaboration across area schools.

The charge to the conference attendees was provided by both the Secretary of Education/Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mary Grassa O'Neill, as well as the event's keynote speaker, Sr. Maureen Sullivan, O.P., an associate professor at St. Anselm College in New Hampshire and the author of two books: *101 Questions and Answers on Vatican II* and *The Road to Vatican II: Key Changes in Theology*. Following an opening prayer and welcoming remarks, Dr. O'Neill discussed the need for fostering student faith formation and Catholic identity to have a place of importance commensurate with the pillars of ensuring strong academic performance and long-term financial viability. She further noted that this mission is advanced and cultivated in Catholic Schools largely by their leaders, such as the group of principals present at the convention.

Building on this theme in her address, Sr. Maureen Sullivan remarked that the assembled school administrators "have received a holy calling to bring the gospel to a new generation of God's people" and that for Catholic educators "to be involved in the evangelization process is an incredible privilege as well as an awesome responsibility." Sr. Maureen rooted this inspirational calling in the changes inspired by the Second Vatican Council, following which she stated that the Church has "come to recognize that all members are called to participate" and that school leaders like the assembled principals are at the forefront of that calling. Following her remarks, Sr. Maureen was graciously responded to several questions from the assembled educators.

Following the addresses, the assembled school leaders partook in a closing mass celebrated by Pastor Timothy Kearney of St. Joseph School in Holbrook and supported by the singing of a contingent of students from St. Joseph's Elementary School in Needham. Following mass, the school leaders were invited to remain for lunch and continue to reflect upon the morning's discussion.

For more information regarding Catholic education, please visit the Boston Catholic Schools office website at www.catholicschoolsboston.org/.

By Sean Murphy, Catholic Schools Office