

The bishop of Kansas City knew he had to restructure his diocese. Priests were few, parishes needed new buildings, and Catholics were moving; they no longer lived where they used to. The bishop knew he had to make changes. He knew they would hurt people. Throughout his 70+ years he was known for his vision, so with that vision he created a new diocese. The year was 1956. The new diocese was Kansas City-St. Joseph. Its bishop was Edwin Vincent O'Hara. They named a school after him.

His resume was unbelievable:

Education: O'Hara received a doctorate of letters from the University of Notre Dame. He taught at Notre Dame and Catholic University.

Catechetics: After his first month as a bishop O'Hara started CCD programs in every parish in Great Falls, Montana. CCD means "the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine," but people still use it as shorthand for religious education. Later he chaired the bishops' committee for the National Center of CCD. At the suggestion of Apostolic Delegate Cicognani O'Hara revised the Baltimore Catechism. He made high schools co-educational.

Labor: O'Hara helped write the first minimum wage law in the United States and defended it before the Supreme Court.

Farms: He convoked the first National Catholic Rural Life Conference in St. Louis. He presided at the first International Rural Life Conference in Rome.

Minorities: O'Hara personally escorted the first black student to attend Loretto High School in 1947. He opened all Catholic schools in Kansas City to minorities long before the Civil Rights movement.

International affairs: He visited Mexico City for a seminar on relations with Mexico.

Scripture: O'Hara helped found the Catholic Biblical Association and its excellent periodical, the Catholic Biblical Quarterly. Under his influence the Bible was translated into modern English for the first time in 350 years.

The Laity: O'Hara fostered a movement called Catholic Action, recognizing that lay people share in the apostolate of the Church. He wrote a pastoral letter on this theme.

Liturgy: O'Hara promoted the restoration of the permanent diaconate. He began work to bring the use of English into the liturgy in 1951, 18 years before the Mass could be said completely in English.

So great and so many were his achievements that he received the title archbishop. Kansas City, Missouri, was never an archdiocese, but we once had an archbishop.

In 1956 O'Hara oversaw the restructuring of the diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. It became official on August 29. On September 6, O'Hara celebrated his 75th birthday in Italy. On September 11, two weeks after the birth of our diocese, he died in Milan. The Cardinal who led his funeral Mass was Giovanni Battista Montini, later known as Pope Paul VI.

This man, Edwin Vincent O'Hara, was bishop here--here in Kansas City. His remains lie at the foot of the stone tower in Mt. Olivet Cemetery. After this illustrious career, he's spending eternal life in Raytown.

But the spirit of O'Hara is alive and well. Today our 70-

year old bishop oversees the restructuring of his diocese. Here the Church continues to promote Catholic schools, ministry to the oppressed, and liturgical renewal.

Thinking over O'Hara's accomplishments, I remember when I was a kid I had a classmate who chose not to go to the seminary because he thought priesthood was a place he could not use talents. Priesthood is a place where you can change the world. The world. The Catholic Church is one of the most forceful movements in history. We're proud of our Church, and we share that pride through education in fine schools like O'Hara High.

O'Hara was a dreamer. He made our diocese, our Church and our world a better place. We still have our dreamers. We still have those who will guide our Church into the 21st century. Where are they? Seated in desks under the roofs of our schools.

To the faculty and staff of O'Hara, I congratulate you on your brave ministry. To the alumni of O'Hara, I challenge you to put your education into action for the Church. To the students of O'Hara, I urge you to dream. To dream of a better world thanks to a better Church. Then join in and make O'Hara proud.