

## Homily by University President Rev. Scott R. Pilarz, S.J. at the Aug. 30, 2007, Mass of the Holy Spirit

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MASS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
AUGUST 30, 2007  
SCOTT R. PILARZ, S.J.,  
UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON PRESIDENT

Good morning. Welcome and welcome back. Of all the rituals of the academic year, this Mass of the Holy Spirit deserves to rank among our very favorites. It affords us the opportunity to reflect on first principles and foundations as well as presuppositions that should infuse all our exercises and endeavors. It affords as well a clear connection with our wider Catholic context. All around the world Catholic schools, and especially Jesuit schools, are gathering around God's table to ask for the outpouring of the spirit on their efforts. In doing so, we affirm and give thanks for the sacredness of academic work. The Mass is our primary source of inspiration and consolation and the graces of this sacrament are grounded in gratitude. The Mass is the great prayer of thanksgiving so let's pause first and give thanks for Scranton graces. Let's acknowledge how good God is to us on this campus. Good in calling us together. We are here not by accident but by invitation, by vocation.

God has called us to Scranton with particular purposes in mind. Our work in the months ahead is God's work. We have a mission as clear as the one described by Isaiah in today's first reading. Isaiah articulates a plan for the fullness of life. The work he prescribes for God's people promotes healing and hope. Isaiah's mission statement invigorated the people of Israel. It is a call for renewal, a source of energy and enthusiasm. Our mission statement is as well. Walking the Commons in these waning days of summer is an exhilarating experience. There is nothing quite like the start of the school year. In education, as in nowhere else in life, does every August present us with clean slates, literally and figuratively. We have an opportunity in light of our mission to write the history of The University of Scranton anew. We stand on the shoulders of generations who came before us, and from that perspective we gaze into the future so filled with possibilities. Our past and present perspectives are good reason for giving thanks.

Isaiah's clear statement of purpose should urge us to pause today and consider why we are here, why we have been chosen, as St. Paul suggests, "to hear the word of truth and be enlightened." In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he suggests that God gives us a glorious heritage that reflects the immeasurable scope of God's power. At a University, and especially at The University of Scranton, we have access to that glorious heritage in and through every academic discipline and the full range of human endeavors as well. Clearest for us at a University is God's presence in the life of the mind. In classrooms, laboratories, and the library we can find God's will for us. The same is true in every corner of our campus. This is holy ground. It is here that in the words of St. Paul, "we are granted a spirit of wisdom and insight to know God clearly."

We will come to know God in the months ahead mostly through the great grace of human interaction: faculty with students, students with staff, and even, God help us, through interaction with administrators. Among the graces for which we give thanks at this Mass of the Holy Spirit is the unique spirit of this community. At the start of *The Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius Loyola suggests a presupposition for how we ought to deal with one another. That presupposition is, in my experience, shared by members of this community. We extend to one another a sense of dignity and appreciation. Here at Scranton, as in the Body of Christ, we enjoy different gifts from the same spirit. Together we represent tremendous talents. Let me try an analogy. Last week I put on my hard hat and walked through the DeNaples Center where there are nearly 200 craftsmen and skilled workers building our new home. I marveled at the ability of so many to work simultaneously in achieving a singular purpose. That same sense of wonder should strike all of us as we consider the different ways in which we contribute to the life of the University.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks to the kind of life he wants for us, a life infused by the presence of the Holy Spirit. That presence is Jesus' abiding promise to us. That spirit enables us to learn and grow and stretch, to be transformed. That spirit, for which we pray again today, guarantees that the good work begun in us will come to fruition at Scranton in the coming year. My prayer for the University community as we begin this new academic year is that we will evermore appreciate how good God is to us, how good we are for each other, and how good it is for us to be here sharing in the work of this great Catholic and Jesuit University.

God bless you. God bless The University of Scranton.