



## **CARDINAL APPOINTS JANET BENESTAD CABINET SECRETARY FOR FAITH FORMATION AND EVANGELIZATION**

**Braintree, MA** -- Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley today announced the appointment of Janet P. Benestad as Cabinet Secretary for Faith Formation & Evangelization in the Archdiocese of Boston. Mrs. Benestad currently serves as Secretary for Parish Life & Evangelization for the Diocese of Scranton in Pennsylvania.

Cardinal Seán said, "We are pleased to welcome Ms. Benestad to this important leadership position at the Archdiocese. Her experience, skills and insight will greatly contribute to our mission of long range planning and development for our parishes and many ministries. We look forward to the benefit of her expertise as we continue the work of strengthening our local Church for the current generation of Catholics and those who will follow us in the years ahead."

The Secretary for Faith Formation & Evangelization is responsible for energizing, innovating and coordinating the various ways that the Archdiocese passes on the Catholic Faith through its parishes, schools and agencies. Mrs. Benestad will oversee ministries including evangelization, youth and young adults, religious education, campus and health care ministry, marriage ministries, and a number of outreach initiatives. She will report directly to the Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia, Very Reverend Richard M. Erikson.

Fr. Erikson said, "Janet is a woman of deep faith who has an inspiring record of accomplishment and expertise. We are honored by her willingness to join Cardinal Seán and the people of the Archdiocese of Boston in our effort to bring the Catholic community closer to God and their faith. We are blessed to be able to benefit from her leadership and ministry in a variety of areas. Her breadth of experience will be essential in meeting the challenges and responsibilities established for the Office for Faith Formation & Evangelization."

Mrs. Benestad thanked the Cardinal for the opportunity to serve the Archdiocese of Boston saying, "I am honored to have been chosen by Cardinal O'Malley for this new position and am looking forward eagerly to the opportunity to serve him and the people of Boston in the work of catechesis and evangelization."

A 1969 Magna cum laude graduate of Marymount College in New York City, she earned her Masters in Political Science from Boston College in 1971.

Beginning in 2000, Mrs. Benestad has served with the Diocese of Scranton first as Director of Religious Education and since 2005 as Secretary for Parish Life and Evangelization. In this position she supervises the second largest secretariat in the Diocese of Scranton, which includes offices for religious education in parishes and schools, youth and young-adult apostolate, ministry to the deaf and persons with disabilities, pro-life/social concerns, family life, ecumenism, campus ministry, Virtus, the diocesan retreat center and the Pastoral Formation Institute, which is the center for adult religious formation. Together this office serves over 350,000 Catholics in more than 180 parishes and 29 schools.

Prior to joining the Diocese of Scranton Mrs. Benestad taught at the high school and university levels including serving as an Adjunct Faculty member in the Departments of History, Political Science and Philosophy at the University of Scranton.

She has served on the Education Committee, Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, since 2005 and the Pennsylvania Conference of Catechetical Leaders since 2000 where she served as Vice-chairperson from 2005 to 2007. From 1988-1995 she served on the Pennsylvania Commission for Women after being appointed by then Governor Robert P. Casey as a Commissioner.

In 2005, she and her husband J. Brian Benestad published "Human Dignity: The Heart of Catholic Social Teaching," in *The Great Life: Essays on Doctrine and Holiness*, Michael Aquilina and Kenneth Ogorek, Emmaus Road.



Most Reverend Joseph F. Martino, D.D., Hist. E.D., Bishop of Scranton, said, "Scranton's loss is definitely Boston's gain. I will very much miss Janet Benestad. She is a genuine Catholic at soul. She is an articulate spokeswoman for our Catholic faith and deeply committed to the Church's teachings. I wish Janet my prayerful best wishes as she begins the newest chapter in her life of service to the Church."

Cardinal Seán thanked the Search Committee for their work including Committee Chair Reverend Richard J. Mehm (Pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Malden), Sr. Mary Johnson, S.N.D. (Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies and Chair, Department of Sociology at Emmanuel College) and Scot Landry (Cabinet Secretary for Institutional Advancement). The Cardinal said, "the search committee put in a great deal of effort and time and we are very grateful for their work. Many people have come forward in recent years to assist us in the work of rebuilding our local Church and this committee exemplifies the spirit and energy of a greater effort currently underway across our Archdiocese."

The Cardinal extended his gratitude to Msgr. John McDonough who has served as Interim Cabinet Secretary for Faith Formation & Evangelization since July 2008 saying, "Msgr. McDonough has served in this role with generosity, grace and a commitment to the people of the Archdiocese. He provided steady and wise leadership and we look forward to his continuing to serve the Archdiocese as we renew our local Church."

Mrs. Benestad is scheduled to begin her service as Secretary for Faith Formation & Evangelization on Monday, April 13, 2009.

**About the Archdiocese of Boston:** *The Archdiocese of Boston was founded on April 8, 1808 and was elevated to Archdiocese in 1875. Currently serving the needs of nearly 2 million Catholics, the Archdiocese of Boston is an ethnically diverse and spiritually enriching faith community consisting of 292 parishes, across 144 communities, educating approximately 48000 students in its Catholic schools and 156,000 in religious education classes each year, ministering to the needs of more than one million patients annually in its hospitals and 200,000 individuals through its social service outreach. Mass is celebrated in nearly twenty different languages each week. For more information, please visit <<http://www.BostonCatholic.org>>.*