

# 2016 Woman of Faith is “in love with the service of God”

Kathleen A. Cepelka, Ph.D., has made a mark on education over four decades as a teacher, principal, and associate dean. Now, as superintendent of Catholic schools for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, she’s building a spirit of community to improve education outcomes in urban Catholic schools that have been struggling to serve families with scarce socio-economic resources.

The Sisters of the Divine Savior will present our 2016 Woman of Faith Award to recognize Dr. Cepelka’s leadership in launching Seton Catholic Schools. Ellen Bartel, president of Milwaukee’s Divine Savior Holy Angels High School, nominated Dr. Cepelka for the award. She describes Kathleen’s lifelong commitment to Catholic education as “unrivaled,” and says Seton would not have become reality “without Dr. Cepelka’s vision and ability to bring others to believe it must be possible.” Ellen observes, “In every setting and with all people, Kathleen leads with faith as her foundation.”

Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome Listeck endorsed Ellen’s nomination of Kathleen. He credits Dr. Cepelka’s leadership with inspiring a cadre of community leaders to focus attention on the dire needs of urban families. William Henk, dean of Marquette University’s College of Education also endorsed Kathleen saying, “Dr. Cepelka has rejuvenated our Catholic schools in uncommon ways.” Dean Henk recalls a treasure trove of Kathleen’s memorable quotes from her years as associate dean, but none more powerful than her saying, “I’m in love with the service of God.”

To Kathleen, serving God through Seton Schools is a matter of justice to ensure quality education for all children to reach their God-given potential. Kathleen says, “Good enough isn’t good enough. Seton

*“Every year we wait, thousands of children are being deprived of the chance for success.”*

— Kathleen Cepelka



is about giving these children the best we have.” Its simply stated mission couldn’t be more daunting: *To prepare Seton graduates academically and spiritually for high school and beyond.* Seton gives families with very few resources access to a network of high-performing K-8 urban Catholic schools. Kathleen stresses the word *families* and describes her vision for Seton as an “intergenerational” model. She says, “We’re not just caring for children ‘in the seats’ but their families too.”

Seton’s model for Catholic education goes way beyond folding 26 urban schools into a new 501(c) (3) corporation. Shared resources and administrative efficiencies are critical to Seton’s success, but they are the means to a much more vital end: evangelization of faith and educational

excellence. Seton leadership is working closely with the St. Clare Center of Cardinal Stritch University and Marquette University’s Institute of Catholic Leadership to enhance professional development for Seton faculty and staff. Kathleen attributes the potential for Seton Schools to the quality of its leadership all around. She says, “It would not be possible without the A-level team being hired and serving on the board.”

As the first nine schools launch under the Seton banner this fall, there are many more pieces to fit into place. But Kathleen knows there’s no time to lose. Her question, “If not now, when?” keeps her reimagining what Milwaukee’s urban Catholic schools can be. ☩



WOMAN OF Faith AWARD

Please join us to honor  
**Kathleen A. Cepelka, Ph.D.**

Superintendent of Schools – Archdiocese of Milwaukee  
*Helping children reach their potential by revitalizing urban Catholic schools*

**Thursday, September 15, 2016 - 7:00 p.m.**

SDS Community House • 4311 N. 100th Street, Milwaukee  
Please register for this free event by September 9.

Go online: [www.sistersofthedivinesavior.org/2016wof](http://www.sistersofthedivinesavior.org/2016wof) Or call: 414-466-7414