



Archdiocese of Newark

Office of Catholic Schools



May 7, 2020

Dear Members of The Academy of Our Lady of Peace Community,

It is with deep regret and profound sadness that we announce the permanent closure of The Academy of Our Lady of Peace at the end of the current academic year, effective June 30, 2020.

This difficult decision was reached following extensive consultations and is due to a variety of factors. These include a rapidly decreasing pool of students choosing Catholic school education, and continuing economic challenges faced by schools — with heavy and escalating reliance on archdiocesan financial support over time.

The decision to pursue closure was made after thoughtful and exhaustive discussions with the FY'20 Schools Strategy Committee, comprised of religious and lay professionals, including education experts with in-depth knowledge of Catholic education and the local situation. Consideration was also given to the results of ongoing efforts by school leadership to address enrollment decline.

The process to identify consolidating school communities and pursue this plan began long before the COVID-19 crisis, and the decision is not directly linked to this pandemic; however, the crisis has unquestionably further weakened the economic position of many ministries, including our schools.

Despite the sincere efforts of Father Bill Mahon, Pastor, Joel Castillo, Principal, and other community leaders to keep the school operationally viable, decreasing enrollment and the need for increased financial support makes the school's continued operation unsustainable.

Student enrollment at The Academy of Our Lady of Peace, has decreased resulting in significant subsidy. In Fiscal Year '15, enrollment was 151 students, and in the current year (FY '20) enrollment is approximately 121 students. Over the same five-year period, subsidy will have totaled an estimated \$1.5M (including the current fiscal year projected subsidy).

An effort to continue sustaining The Academy of Our Lady of Peace would require continued subsidy increase to cover operating expenses, which would contribute to the deterioration of the total educational program.

Our archdiocesan schools are not alone in experiencing enrollment challenges. Across the United States, demographic changes and other factors are affecting the sustainability of Catholic elementary schools and other Catholic institutions.

We have identified “matched” schools for each affected school community – matched schools would provide a strong, sustainable option for continuing your student's Catholic education. Every effort will be made to find a Catholic school for those families interested in continuing to provide a Catholic education for their children in the next academic year (2020 – 2021). To help families transition to other Catholic schools in the archdiocese, special tuition assistance will be available for the 2020-2021 school year. The

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special tuition assistance will be offered to affected families whose 2020-2021 tuition rate at their new Catholic elementary school in the Archdiocese of Newark is greater than their 2019-2020 tuition rate at their current school.

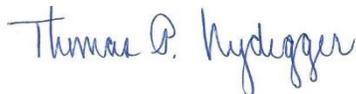
In the coming days and weeks, we will provide you with resources and support to help you learn more about options for continuing your student's Catholic education. This will include a parent guide with information about matched schools and contact information for school leaders, archdiocesan staff, and other individuals who can provide assistance and enable a smooth transition.

The closure of a school and the consolidation of a school community is not easy for anyone. It is an emotional time, and it affects the lives of many. We understand the strong ties—both emotional and historical—you have with your school. Also, we realize the importance and value of faith and holistic formation in your student's life. We are grateful for the faith-filled communities the pastor, principal, teachers, and staff have built at The Academy of Our Lady of Peace.

Please understand the actions we take now are for the long-term benefit of our students and their families, and to promote the sustainability of Catholic school education in the Archdiocese of Newark. We are committed to providing the highest-quality Catholic education and to fostering vibrant, faith-centered learning communities.

These are difficult times, and we pray that God will give each of us the wisdom and grace to move forward in faith.

Sincerely,



Rev. Msgr. Thomas Nydegger, Ed.D.
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia



Barbara Dolan
Acting Superintendent of Schools

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