

January 19, 2012

Dear Parents,

We would like to address several misconceptions that have arisen following the announcement of the closing of six elementary schools in June 2012. First, some are saying that the Diocese is not committed to retaining all students from the schools that are closing. To the contrary, our goal and expectation is that all students impacted will register at neighboring Catholic elementary schools. We **have** the capacity for **all** of the students to be able to attend a Catholic school. Information Sessions and Open House visits have taken place to assist families in their selection of a new Catholic School in their area and many families have begun to register their children in new schools.

In 1992 when we closed twenty-two schools in June and re-opened ten regional schools in September, we lost no students and continued to increase enrollment for the next seven years. Our hope is to retain all students in the closing schools again this year. The decrease in school age children and the difficult economic climate on Long Island, among other factors, have resulted in fewer students in our schools and have brought us to the painful decision to close schools.

The second misconception is that the committee did not consider students in Nursery and Pre-Kindergarten in making their decision regarding which schools were closed. The committee did look at enrollment in all grades and in particular evaluated the number of students continuing from Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten. The enrollment quoted in the letters announcing the closings did not include Nursery and Pre-Kindergarten because many of these students are not full-time and do not continue to Kindergarten and beyond.

We are committed to working on our marketing of Catholic schools on Long Island and to getting the word out about how good our schools are academically and the importance of the faith formation of our young people. Catholic schools provide the best way to educate in the faith and offer an advantage for life for the students who attend.

While this first step is painful, we are ready to implement all the next steps that will strengthen Catholic elementary education going forward. We need to do this together for the sake of the children. We continue to pray for all students, parents, teachers, administrators, and pastors who have been impacted.

As we approach Catholic Schools Week, the theme **Faith, Academics, Service** reminds us of what we are and must be about in the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre. Thank you for your continued commitment to Catholic education for the students and families on Long Island.

The Bishop's Advisory Committee