



Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

MOST REVEREND JOHN C. NIENSTEDT

January 14, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The closing of a Catholic school always involves sad and difficult decisions. Families and school staff are deeply impacted, as is the entire parish and school community. We may take comfort, however, in knowing that when a school building closes, the history and tradition of the school community lives on in the generations of students who walked its halls and were formed in its classrooms.

This week, I accepted the recommendations of local school leaders from St. Joseph School in Red Wing and St. Mathias School in Hampton that their schools should close at the end of the 2010-2011 school year. Task force members at these schools carefully examined demographic, financial, and other data in making a realistic recommendation regarding their schools' viability. Additionally, leaders at San Miguel Middle School of Minneapolis, an independent school administered by the De La Salle Christian Brothers, have announced that their school will also close at the end of this school year.

Viable Catholic schools are an essential element in fulfilling the mission of the Church in this Archdiocese even as they are beneficial for our society as a whole. In addition to receiving a high quality academic and religious education, Catholic school students are given an opportunity to live out their faith in service to the larger community, providing a foundation for students to become faith-filled ethical leaders in the local and global community.

Catholic schools face the challenge of remaining viable while also being affordable to all families who desire a Catholic school education for their children. Catholic schools encounter many of the same shifting dynamics that impact public schools: there are fewer school age children than several decades ago; buildings are aging; and providing the skilled teachers and up-to-date technology to educate the leaders of tomorrow costs more today than it did just a few years ago.

Under the Strategic Plan for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, which was announced in October 2010, all Catholic Schools will engage in ongoing evaluation of sustainability and a structure of greater accountability aimed at strengthening the fabric of Catholic schools within the Archdiocese. Catholic school viability is measured against criteria in four areas: Catholic identity, academic quality, financial management, and community outreach.

The Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools is working with Catholic schools from across the Archdiocese to reach out to families from the schools that will close at the end of this school year. Together, we will do everything we can to help these families find a new Catholic school to meet their needs. Families wishing additional assistance may call the Catholic Schools Hotline at 612-SCHOOLS (612-724-6657).

I am also asking staff from the Office of Catholic Schools to work with the teachers and administrators affected to assist them in finding employment in other Catholic schools.

May God continue to bless you and the members of your parish and school community as we strive to provide for the mission of the Church during these difficult times.

Cordially yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis