

St. Mary Church

34530 West Michigan Avenue

Wayne, Michigan 48184

February 16, 2018

Dear parents of students at St. Mary School:

I wish to share with you some information regarding St. Mary School, which has served this parish and the community with distinction since 1925 with dedicated administration, faculty and families. I am saddened to conclude that it cannot continue past this school year under the present circumstances. The parish will continue to operate and serve this local community now and into the future.

Please be assured that this difficult decision was made only after careful prayer and with the needs of our children, parents, faculty and staff at the forefront.

For many years now, St. Mary Parish and School have struggled with enrollment and financial issues that have severely impacted operations. The parish carries a debt of almost \$5,000,000, much of which dates back over many years. Until recently, this debt continued to escalate through operational deficits and unpaid CSA and Archdiocesan assessments.

Enrollment in 2017-18 is 122 in K-8, down from 157 in 2016-17 and 243 in 2010-11. Three grades (kindergarten, first, and sixth) have fewer than 10 students this year. Optimistic projected enrollment for next year would be in the range of 110-113 students.

The current tuition rate for 2017-18 is \$4,470 for one child (\$5,200 out of parish), while operating costs are \$5,900 per student. Projected costs for next year increase to \$6,900 per child. A number of families have sought and received Archdiocesan scholarships. The projected budget for the parish/school for 2018-19 would require a subsidy of approximately \$250,000, resulting in a growing parish operational deficit of the same amount. Tuition rates do not have room to grow, as they are already the highest in the area.

It has become clear with the data available that it is not responsible to accept registrations for the 2018-2019 school year. Without a continued, substantial infusion of outside resources, the school is simply unable to open its doors.

Over the years, the Archdiocese has been exceedingly generous to the school and the parish. No interest has been charged on our loan in 10 years, and this year the school received a special grant of \$75,000 plus an additional \$49,000 to make up for prepaid tuition that had been used the previous year. The parish also received almost \$50,000 in grants to cover certain parish program expenses. For this we are most grateful, but it is clear we cannot sustainably run a school in such a fragile financial situation.

I have carefully reviewed and sought input from the Superintendent of Schools as well as other Archdiocesan staff. They have all been very helpful. With these conversations in mind, and based on the data available, I have requested authorization from the Archbishop to close St. Mary Parish school, and that authorization has been granted.

In his pastoral letter *Unleash the Gospel*, Archbishop Allen Vigneron called for our schools to be centers of evangelization, accessible to all Catholic families. While it has unfortunately become impossible for St. Mary School to provide this important ministry, we are absolutely committed to assisting our families in every way possible to enroll in another Catholic school this fall, to continue accessing the best Catholic education available.

Decisions such as these are never easy. In fact, these are painful decisions. In a spirit of faith, we must look to a future guided by the Spirit, recognizing that the Lord journeys with us. Please join me in praying for our entire school and parish community, as we walk together through this difficult time.

With good wishes and gratitude for your support and understanding at this difficult time in the life of our parish,

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Walter C. Hurley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Bishop Walter Hurley
Administrator