

Saint Joseph Catholic Church

Celebrating over 170 Years of Service

Dear St. Joseph Parish Community,

June 27, 2023

I write today with difficult news. St. Joseph Catholic School has provided Catholic education in the West End community of Cincinnati for more than 100 years. It has been a rich and beautiful example of Catholic ministry during its long history. However, when operating a school in an older building, the maintenance - and, at times, deferred maintenance - is always a concern. This past spring, specific safety concerns came to the attention of school leadership and a professional engineering study was completed on site.

The findings of this study are not favorable. Most of the school building's mechanical systems are at the end of their functional life and therefore must be repaired, upgraded, or replaced. Additionally, the roof is in need of total replacement, along with a large amount of tuckpointing, in order to make the building watertight. If all maintenance issues were addressed, the total cost would be greater than \$2.5 million.

After consultation with the Catholic Schools Office and leadership of the archdiocese, a combined parish council and finance committee meeting was held to review the study. The group reviewed the situation, explored all possible options, and ultimately came to the consensus that, in its current state, the building represents a serious safety concern. Due to these concerns, and the inordinate cost to address them, the majority of the parish council and finance committee members recommended closure of St. Joseph Catholic School for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year. A letter requesting closure of the school was sent to the Office of the Archbishop and has been accepted. St. Joseph Parish continues to explore future options.

This decision affects the school only - St Joseph Parish remains open.

This is not the outcome anyone wanted. It is both unexpected and heartbreaking. This decision prioritizes the safety and well-being of students and staff, but I recognize it brings both grieving and the burden of an unknown future for our school children. The neighboring Catholic schools have been informed of the closing of St. Joseph School and have been asked to place our students as a priority for registration and acceptance into their schools. A list of these schools has been shared with school families. The Catholic Schools Office and Ms. Ashley Toney, principal, are available to assist families during this transition.

In conclusion, scripture tells us "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). Our beloved St. Joseph School may be closing, but its legacy lives on in the many generations of students who have been formed by the Good News of Jesus Christ. May God bless you and your family.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Fr. Rodolpho Coaquira-Hilaje, M.C.C.J.
Pastor

