



SACRED HEART OF JESUS PARISH

Bath, Pennsylvania

10 June 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As Pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, I wrote you on June 1st to inform you of the serious financial challenges facing our school given our current and projected enrollment. We opened the 2019-20 school year with 83 students and to date only 60 students have registered for the upcoming school year (Grades K-8).

With enrollment declining over the last several years, to balance the school budget, the subsidy from the Parish to the School was increased. This year, the parish subsidy in the school budget was set at \$160,000, but the school will need another \$250,000 on top of that from the parish in subsidy. Under normal circumstances, this could not be sustained. Unfortunately, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the weekly parish collections over the last ten weeks have been far less, below fifty percent of the pre-pandemic average. With declining school enrollment, limited unrestricted parish reserves, and substantially less weekly parish income, Sacred Heart Parish can no longer generate the needed subsidy amount to allow the school to remain open. I regretfully announce that Sacred Heart School will close at the end of the current school year in June (2020).

I am so grateful to Mrs. Thomas and the teaching staff for all of their dedicated efforts with our students and to our parents for the many sacrifices you have made to support Sacred Heart School. Our enrollment has been low for several years and I have hoped that our situation would improve, unfortunately, it did not.

Prior to this decision, I met with our principal, finance director, leadership of the Parish Finance Council, Pastoral Council, and School Advisory Board. The situation was also reviewed by the Diocesan Council of Priests and the Diocesan Board of Education. After review of the financial, enrollment, and parish information, along with the educational offerings of a school with so few projected students, a recommendation was made to Bishop Schlert that Sacred Heart School close at the end of the present school year (2019-2020). After prayerful consideration, Bishop Schlert accepted the recommendation for closure.

The decision to close Sacred Heart School was not an easy one for me to make, however, I must be responsible for the good of the school and the parish. As the lone sponsoring parish for our school, given the number of students and the needed subsidy, we could no longer continue to operate the school without jeopardizing the financial viability of our parish.

I remain committed to provide our children with the opportunity of a Catholic education, via the Catholic School Continuation Grant. Information regarding the Catholic School Continuation Grant is included with this letter along with Catholic elementary schools in Northampton and Lehigh Counties.

I will keep all of you in my prayers, particularly those most affected by the closure, and I would also ask for your prayers as well during this time.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Christopher S. Butera

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Pastor