

**St. Mary Catholic Church  
11110 N. Saginaw Street  
Mt. Morris, MI 48458  
(810) 686-3920**

June 26, 2018

Dear Parishioners, Parents, and Staff:

It is with heartfelt sadness that I must inform you that St. Mary School will not open in the fall for the 2018-2019 school year. After much prayer, a consultation with the Diocesan Finance Office, and a lengthy meeting with Bishop Boyea, we have come to the difficult decision that we must begin the process of consolidation. Regretfully, this means that the long tradition and blessings of having a Catholic School on our parish grounds has come to an end. We will continue to be a part of the process of *Ensuring the Sustainability of Catholic Education in the Greater Flint Area* that was begun this spring. Our story is not unique as 1,336 Catholic schools have been either closed or consolidated in the last ten years across the nation. We are part of that narrative, but I want to emphasize that the story of Catholic Education in the United States is not over.

I want to encourage all families to enroll their children in our parochial schools that will open in the fall. These schools will meet the needs of children, and each has its own unique strengths and weaknesses; location, size, diversity, and facilities. St. Mary Church will honor the tuition assistance that was granted to families in need for whichever Catholic school your family chooses to attend in the fall. The process of enrolling is to simply contact the school and fill out the proper paperwork, which will include a request for your child's student records to be sent to the new school.

This change will be particularly hard for long time parishioners and families that have been at St. Mary's for several generations; we understand this and will keep you and the entire community in our prayers. We are in the midst of a paradigm shift in how we think about Catholic education. The parochial model of Catholic schools is no longer financially viable for most parishes. A shift to thinking of regionalized and shared schools (understood collectively as "our Catholic School" needs to begin). Combining resources and students will lead to sustainable, accessible and financially viable schools.

Many will grieve and wonder how the decision leading to an earlier than expected consolidation was made. Simply, it was the result of a perfect storm of many factors converging over several years. Student enrollment has been low for many years. Expenses for staff salaries and benefits have continued to rise. Concurrently, the need for tuition assistance by families desiring a Catholic education for their children has also risen. St. Mary Church has traditionally subsidized the operational budget of the school with money from the Sunday offertory. We have experienced a decline in Sunday Mass attendance over the past ten years, with a concurrent

decline in parish revenue. Fewer people equals fewer dollars--the result being that there was simply not enough money to maintain our facilities and programs, including the school.

The Diocese of Lansing uses a number of 37% of the Sunday Offertory towards the parish subsidy of the school as an indicator of sustainability. Anything below that number is good, while anything above indicates potential problems. St. Mary School is projected to be 61% at the end of this fiscal year, and had forecast an even higher percentage for next year. The demographics and economics of the local area have played a role in these numbers, but we should not place all the blame there. We have a "faith crisis" within the Church that can be readily seen if you read between the lines. It is my great hope that we will begin to address many of these issues with the guidance of the Holy Spirit over the next several years. Until then, we must trust that this is all part of God's providential plan.

In closing, I want to again express my gratitude for your patience and understanding with this difficult decision. It is my hope that you and your family will continue educating your children in the Genesee County Catholic School System. I have included contact information below for your convenience. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Your brother in Christ,

Rev. Roy T. Horning

Holy Rosary  
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Flint, Michigan  
Phone: 810-736-4040    Principal: Mr. Mark Callahan

St. John Vianney  
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St. Pius X  
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