



Catholic Diocese of Richmond

Press Release

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HOLY CROSS REGIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL TO CLOSE AT THE END OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

Continued Low Enrollment and Financial Shortfalls Major Factors for School Closing

(RICHMOND, VA) – Today, the Catholic Diocese of Richmond’s Office of Catholic Schools announced that Holy Cross Regional Catholic School in Lynchburg will permanently cease operations at the end of the 2019-2020 school year in June.

“More than ever, we want our schools to flourish as they form and nurture our young people in the Catholic faith,” said the Most Rev. Barry C. Knestout, bishop of Richmond. “It is with sadness that we announce the closure of a Catholic school that has been part of our diocese for 140 years. I want to express my gratitude to the many teachers, staff, administrators and families for your service and dedication to Holy Cross and the support you have given and provided to the students. Please keep the Holy Cross Catholic School community in your prayers during this time.”

For the last 17 years, Holy Cross Regional Catholic School’s enrollment has declined by 61 percent between the 2001/02 academic year compared to the 2019/20 academic year. The decreased enrollment has resulted in increased financial challenges.

“This announcement is painful for our Holy Cross Catholic School students, families, faculty, staff and alumni. We realize the impact this will have on them,” said Kelly M. Lazzara, superintendent, Office of Catholic Schools. “We will do all we can to support our families by offering them access to resources to assist during this period of transition. Additionally, we will work with our students so that anyone who wants to continue their Catholic education will be welcomed at one of our neighboring schools.”

According to the National Catholic Education Association’s (NCEA) annual report, enrollment decreased 18 percent nationally for Catholic schools in the last decade compared to a 12 percent decline experienced by Catholic schools in the Richmond Diocese during the same time period.

“The closing of a Catholic school is a decision that is not taken lightly, and the determination was made only after numerous attempts were made in recent years to support the financial operations of the school,” said Chief Financial Officer Michael J. McGee.

Since 2012, the diocese offered guarantees so Holy Cross Catholic School could obtain over \$3 million in low interest-rate loans to give the school time to implement strategies to grow enrollment and raise additional funds.

“In addition to the financial support provided by the parishes of the diocese, the McMahon-Parater Scholarship Foundation allocated additional needs-based financial aid to Holy Cross. Even with the allocation of additional funds, the school had annual operating losses ranging from \$95,000 to \$360,000 in each of the past five fiscal years,” said McGee. “Unfortunately, despite these significant efforts, the financial condition of the school continued to decline to the point that closing the school became unavoidable.”

Holy Cross Regional Catholic School has served the Lynchburg community with a Catholic education since 1879. It is one of six Catholic schools located in the Southwest region of the state.

In all, the Richmond Diocese has 30 Catholic schools serving more than 8,400 students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The last time the diocese closed a school was Holy Trinity Catholic in Norfolk in 2010.

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The Diocese of Richmond covers approximately 33,000 square miles and serves more than 220,000 Catholics.

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