



DIocese of ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 5, 2011

Dear Parent:

Today we have announced that six elementary schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre will close as of June 2012. I have affirmed the continued operation of forty-three Catholic schools which will continue as they currently are. In one section of Suffolk and one in Nassau I have asked pastors to work together with school and diocesan leadership to collaborate in strengthening the schools involved so that we will have good, sound Catholic schools for the future in both areas. Your school **will remain open** and we are counting on your school going forward to help us achieve our goal of providing, and sustaining into the future, quality Catholic education for families and children on Long Island.

Catholic elementary schools are an essential part of the life of our Diocese. We all are grateful for those who built, staffed and promoted Catholic schools for over 100 years. I am grateful to the parents, Catholic and non-Catholic, who have seen the value of Catholic elementary schools and sent their children to receive formation and education in our schools. To the pastors and parishioners, the principals and teachers, those who provide staff support and those who provide material and financial support, we all owe a debt of gratitude.

For some time we have been witnessing changes that have affected Catholic schools in our Diocese. The first came when the schools became less and less staffed by religious. Changing demographics and difficult national and local economic conditions have added to the pressure on our schools. In all of this we must also acknowledge that parents of Catholic school children do not get the support from the government that it is owed to them in justice. As a Diocese we cannot and will not abandon Catholic elementary education because it is the best way we have to form leaders for our Church and our society in the years to come.

During my ten years as your pastor, we have tried to keep schools open and have closed them only when there was no choice. While well intended, that approach leaves parents with great uncertainty about the future of a particular school, with all the attendant worries about their own child's education. This then leaves the schools as victims to potentially harmful speculation. To reassure parents, I convened a group of dedicated individuals to form the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Catholic Education to develop a Strategic Plan for the future of Catholic elementary schools in our Diocese. This Committee's charge was to develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan, using the criteria they developed which I approved. This plan can be found on the diocesan website, www.drvc.org. Using those criteria the Committee made its

recommendations to me. Their goal and mine is to ensure the long-term sustainability, growth and excellence of Catholic elementary schools.

Today's announcement is the result of a thorough analysis of the viability of each of our schools as part of the implementation process of the Strategic Plan for Catholic Elementary Schools that was announced in September, 2011. The Bishop's Advisory Committee has completed an evaluation of each school's ability to provide, and sustain into the future, a quality Catholic education program. This study included an extensive analysis of enrollment and school age demographic trends, the financial position of schools and parishes, and a review of the facilities, technology and programs offered. Given the decline in school-age population and the economic climate on Long Island we, like many public school districts, must face the harsh reality that we no longer need as many school buildings as we may have in the past.

While these choices have not been easy and closing schools is one of the most painful parts of my ministry, I want to assure you that you and your children are uppermost in my mind and in my heart. My goal was to make decisions now that will allow us to say that there will be no more school closings beyond my time as your bishop. My hope is that through our continued investment in Catholic elementary education and the execution of our Strategic Plan for the future, we will be able to deliver Catholic education to more families and students where to date we have not had this unique gift and extraordinary blessing.

Please be assured that we will do our very best to make the transition as smooth and positive as possible for the families and children impacted by today's decisions. We know that your school community will welcome these children and families into your schools. Additional information on the Strategic Plan and the reorganization of schools, including a list of questions and answers that may address your concerns, can be found at www.drvc.org.

I close this by assuring you of my commitment to serve you, your families, and especially the children, of our Diocese, as your pastor and bishop so long as the Holy Father grants me this singular privilege to be the Bishop of Rockville Centre. May Mary, Mother of the Church and our Mother, watch over us and our children now and in the future.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "W" and a long, sweeping tail.

Bishop of Rockville Centre