



***For Immediate Release***  
***February 18, 2009***

***Consolidation in the future of two San Antonio Catholic Schools while one additional school closes its doors at the end of the school year.***

The Department of Catholic Schools, today, made public, plans for consolidation of St. John the Evangelist School with St. Mary Magdalen School effective at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. This agreement was accepted by Archbishop José Gomez after several years of discussion and planning between the two campuses. The consolidation will result in the closing of St. John the Evangelist campus and will grow St. Mary Magdalen's enrollment from 175 to a possible 250 to 275 students.

St. John the Evangelist, 128 South Audubon, which has provided a quality Catholic education to students in grades 3K-8 in the North Central section of San Antonio since 1957, will remain open through the conclusion of this school year, May 29, 2009. The administration of both schools continues to discuss the disposition of St. John's existing technology, textbooks and other resources. The need for additional faculty at St. Mary Magdalen is yet to be determined.

St. Mary Magdalen School, 1700 Clower St., was founded in 1942 with 45 students in grades 1 through 4 and a faculty of 2 Incarnate Word Sisters. As North Central San Antonio began to experience rapid growth, St. Gregory the Great Parish and School was formed in 1956 and St. John the Evangelist in 1957 in order to accommodate the increasing demand for additional Catholic schools. In 1964, Holy Spirit Parish and School also started from the burgeoning population in the St. Mary Magdalen community. At its peak, St. Mary Magdalen School enjoyed a student body of more than 970.

In recent years, St. John the Evangelist School struggled with declining enrollment from its twenty-year enrollment high of 329 students in 1993 to its current enrollment of 134. Combined with the challenges, the current economic uncertainties and the changing demographics of the area, the decision to consolidate was agreed upon by the leadership at both schools in order to ensure the continued availability of a quality Catholic education to the families each school served.

Sister Carla M. Lusch, Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese, also made public that St. Joseph Catholic School will be closing its doors on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009, after 58 years of service to the families of the south-side of San Antonio. The parish and school leadership made this recommendation after following the process prescribed by the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

St. Joseph School was founded by the Franciscan Friars in 1950, providing students with a quality education rooted in the love of Christ. In the past twenty years, St. Joseph enjoyed a student enrollment high of 310 in 1989, while enrollment for the 2008/2009 school year

numbers only 111. The closing of Kelly Air Force Base severely impacted the neighborhood surrounding St. Joseph's and since then it's shifting demographics and the current economic downturn have made it impossible for the current pastor, principal, staff, and parish community to overcome these challenges, despite their significant efforts to redirect the school's resources.

Bishop Oscar Cantú, who oversees the Department of Catholic Schools, pointed to the realities that continue to face Catholic schools, saying, "The situation of the Catholic schools has changed tremendously over the past fifty years. Particularly difficult has been the maintaining of Catholic schools in the inner cities of metropolitan areas across the nation. "

Sister Carla praised the leadership, the faculty and the families who have served these schools throughout the decades: "The lives of thousands of children have been enriched academically and spiritually because of the countless pastors, administrators, teachers, and parishioners who have given of themselves to see that students received a quality education that was grounded in our Catholic faith."

Families will receive \$200 tuition assistance for each student currently attending St. John the Evangelist and St. Joseph Schools to help with their transition to a new Catholic school. The Department of Catholic Schools will conduct a school fair to assist St. Joseph's parents seeking admission for their children into other Catholic schools and they will provide assistance for faculty of both schools in applying for possible teaching opportunities in the Catholic school system.

Addressing the challenges facing Catholic education in the Archdiocese of San Antonio and throughout the United States, Bishop Cantú said, "We remain committed, nonetheless, to Catholic education. The Archdiocese of San Antonio has committed itself to raising scholarship funds so that Catholic schools might be accessible to those in financial need. Our goal is to make Catholic education available to every Catholic child throughout the Archdiocese."