



Department of Communication

Archdiocese of San Antonio

For Immediate Release

May 16, 2007

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Schools to close after more than 20 years of service

Mrs. Marianne Mongiello, has announced to parents of students of Our Lady of Peace Catholic School that the school would permanently close its doors May 31, 2007. The school, located on Merida Street, has served the city's Westside since 1985.

For the past two years, a group of enthusiastic and dedicated parents and teachers worked hard to help recruit a minimum of 80 students. Despite their best efforts and the dedication and support of the principal, Mrs. Marianne Mongiello, and the school's designated pastor, Rev. Martin Elsner, S.J., the goal was not reached. The School Council of Our Lady of Peace Catholic School reluctantly reached the conclusion to close the school.

Ms. Jo Ann Norris, School Council President, informed Archbishop José H. Gomez of the Council's recommendation to close the school. In his letter of response, Archbishop Gomez notified the School Council of his acceptance of the board's decision and commented on the hard work done by those involved; "While it is not my wish to see any of our Catholic schools close, I realize that low enrollment and lack of additional funds have seriously damaged the future viability of this school. I am also aware of the efforts made by this fine pastor, principal, teachers, and parents to maintain the educational program at Our Lady of Peace. I know that this has not been an easy task."

Sr. Carla Marie Lusch, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, and her staff, will provide whatever assistance is needed to help Our Lady of Peace families become acquainted with other Catholic schools. They will also assist teachers and staff in identifying possible new positions.

The archdiocese continues to develop a comprehensive plan to confront the challenges faced by Catholic schools. Two years ago, the Archdiocese of San Antonio initiated a research study that examined the perceptions of parents and why they choose Catholic, public, or private schools. The results of the study have been used to create a new brand platform to better inform the public about Catholic schools. A viability study is also in progress that is engaging school communities in looking at their present and planning for future programs and needs.

In addition, a new fund is being established to raise additional money to assist families who find it difficult to finance a Catholic school education. Proceeds from this fund,

called *Hope for the Future*, will be available for tuition assistance for the 2008-09 school year. Catholics from throughout the Archdiocese are being called upon to accept the challenge to support Catholic schools so that they can be accessible and affordable to those who desire a Catholic education.

Our Lady of Peace Catholic School opened under the name Westside Catholic Inter-parish School; in 200? It changed to its present name. The school is located on the grounds of Immaculate Conception Parish. This new concept in Catholic education was born at the time that Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish was no longer able to support its own parish school.

The school reached an enrollment peak of 242 students in 1992, but the enrollment has gradually declined since that time. The school presently serves 65 students in PK3 through Grade 8. This year's graduating class consists of six students.

The Archdiocese of San Antonio has 38 elementary schools and 9 high schools with a total enrollment this year of 14,234 students.

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