

August 21, 2017

Dear Families of Cathedral of St. Peter, St. Bernadette and St. James,

Our highest calling is to provide a means for academic education for our children grounded in solid formation in our Catholic faith and identity. The parish and school families of the Cathedral of St. Peter, St. Bernadette and St. James take that calling very seriously.

In an effort to fulfill that calling and provide the **highest quality, sustainable and affordable Catholic education** in the downtown and west side of Rockford, our three parishes have formed a Joint School Committee to evaluate ways in which our schools can collaborate and utilize resources to achieve that Catholic vision both now and in the future.

The committee was formed as a response to the findings of the Faith Forward Strategic Plan, a two-year strategic planning process to strengthen Catholic education in our region and address trends affecting our schools. Key findings included declining enrollments, shifting family values, inconsistent education delivery, and unsustainable levels of subsidy and tuition. To read the full report, www.ceorockford.org and click on the "Faith Forward" link.

Our three-school Joint School Committee, which includes pastors, principals, Education Commission or Parish Education Commission, and Finance Council members, has been meeting since early June to work on a plan to develop a thriving Catholic education program on the west side of Rockford. In that time, we have accomplished the following:

- Hired Larson & Darby, a local architecture firm nationally recognized for their work with schools around the nation, to assess each school's facility starting in August.
- Started financial assessments of each school to determine combined resources and obligations.
- Started identifying ways to enhance the educational program so that our children have a strong foundation in the Catholic faith and the 21st century skills for success.
- Begun investigating ways to maintain an affordable tuition while offering a quality Catholic education.

While it is still early in our process, here is what we can share:

- **We are excited with the spirit of collaboration and the opportunities this presents.** While we are addressing significant challenges, this is also an opportunity to create a solution that strengthens Catholic education in our region, and better prepares our students for success, and happiness as Catholic people.

- **There will be no changes for the 2017-18 school year.** We look forward to welcoming back our current families and are still accepting enrollments for new families at all three schools.
- **We anticipate sharing initial information from the Joint Schools Committee this fall.** We will actively solicit input, feedback and your involvement as we collect information, vet alternatives and develop recommendations.
- **We recognize how important it will be to keep our parents and parishes involved and informed throughout this process.** We anticipate sharing information regularly through announcements in the parish bulletin, through School Speak for school families, on our websites and in additional correspondence.

Most importantly, please pray that God continues to guide us in our efforts.

Sincerely,

Joint Schools Committee