

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church

1000 Fifth Avenue,
Picayune, Mississippi 39466

Friday, January 28, 2022

To all of our School Families,

This letter is to inform of the closing of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic School at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. I know most won't understand the closing of the school, and there will be shock, disappointment, painful sadness, and even anger. These are very understandable feelings especially in the light of all the great success of these past years.

With the principal Jenny Seymour leading the school we have had the best years ever. The great generosity of all the staff, teachers, and parents has been heroic. The school has brought to the parish a spirit of fresh life and great joy. Yet if it were not for the Covid grants, and the few very generous donors the school would not have made it this long.

There are many factors for the decision but financial concerns are central: With church support to the school, and the school income, we could not cover payroll, much less crucial building issues and the many other ordinary school costs. Again we depended on Covid monies and a few donors to cover just payroll.

The question "Why did we not know?" surely comes. As we have experienced so many times in the history of the school with a little bit of negativity or change, families take their children out of the school. We tried to fix it in the most positive ways and yet there were too many factors to overcome.

After witnessing the generosity, the great joy and love for the school; as well as knowing all the intense sadness this causes for families and teachers, I say in all truth THIS WAS NOT AT ALL A LIGHT NOR HASTY DECISION. And for me as a priest and product of Catholic Elementary and High school as well as witnessing the horrors of the culture there would be nothing I would not do to see this school survive. This tragedy is not unique at all to our parish, unfortunately it is happening in many parishes. How do other Catholic Schools make it? When we look at the nearest: the lower rate of tuition is over \$5,000.00 and that does not include additional fees. Those same schools have over 200 children, with other resources as well. It is beyond all our means.

So where do we go from here? We are committed to the continued support of our school families and students of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic School. Mrs. Seymour and her team will be reaching out to individual families to listen to concerns, provide guidance, answer questions and offer assistance during this transition. Our parish will now work double-time to make greater opportunities of faith formation for our children, investing that same time and energy for all parish families. We still call on yall to claim this parish as your own with the same love and enthusiasm which built the school: and to bring that now to transform our parish. Let us lose nothing but build in a new way.

My love and prayers are with each of you as you process this painful reality.

Fr. Bernie