

## **To the families, educators and staff of Mother Seton Academy:**

As Co-Directors of Mother Seton Academy, we write to you today to announce a sad, but unavoidable decision about the future of our school. After careful analysis of enrollment and financial challenges; consultation with advisors at the parish and diocesan levels, and prayerful discernment of any available options, we must formally announce the closing of Mother Seton Academy at the end of the present school year 2021-2022.

Despite the important and worthwhile effort to keep a Catholic school education available in our area, and the hard work invested in this ideal by so many in our community, we have been impacted by factors that impeded our ability to reach our goals. The most profound challenge has been declining enrollment, which, along with the coronavirus pandemic, has compromised our ability to sustain operations without significant outside assistance.

Since its establishment in September 2019, enrollment at Mother Seton Academy has been a persistent concern and has now seriously declined. Whereas the two schools that merged to form MSA in 2019 together had more than 300 students, we now have fewer than 126 children in grades 1-8. This is well below the level of academic and financial sustainability for any Catholic school and has led to a deficit in the school budget of \$140K as of September, 2021. Despite a subsidy from the Diocese of Trenton of more than \$250K over the past two years and additional funding from the two parishes, the school will not be able to have a sound financial footing without much higher enrollment levels; something that is unrealistic given current demographic trends in the area.

Due to COVID-related challenges, St. Aloysius Parish and St. Veronica Parish are unable to cover more of the school's expenses. The shut-down of churches for many months led to catastrophic loss of income for both parishes.

It is clear that for all of these reasons, Mother Seton Academy cannot remain open beyond the current school year. Both parish Finance Councils have been unanimous in their support of this decision. That input, along with consultation of the Diocese of Trenton's Department of Catholic Schools and the Diocesan Office of Finance, was recently presented to Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M. The Bishop accepted the recommendation that Mother Seton Academy be closed, effective June 30, 2022.

This announcement is painful for us personally and to us all. We acknowledge the disappointment that this news brings to our dedicated faculty, staff, children and families of the Academy.

The Diocese will work to assist our faculty and staff in planning for their next steps. It is our profound hope that our school families will continue to pursue a Catholic education for their children in one of the many fine Catholic schools in the area.

While we come to terms with this news and prepare for the best transition possible, we are deeply grateful for all your continued help and support of Mother Seton Academy. You have given tremendously and selflessly to a legacy of Catholic education in our parish family communities in Howell and Jackson. May God bless you throughout the rest of the school year and in your future endeavors.

United in prayer and faith,

Rev. Peter James Alindogan

Very Rev. John P. Bambrick, V.F.