



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Communications • *The Long Island Catholic* • *Fe Fuerza Vida*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE ANNOUNCES TWO SCHOOL CLOSURES

- *Department of Education working with affected families and employees*

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NEW YORK – March 16, 2021 – Due to declining enrollment and parish finances, two elementary schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre have announced that they will close at the end of this school year and not reopen for the Fall 2021 academic year: Saint Raymond School, East Rockaway, and Saint Thomas the Apostle School, West Hempstead.

While financial pressures due to enrollment decline existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic at these two schools, the impact of the crisis on school families and parish communities has placed significant burden on already-struggling schools. After consultation with financial experts, advisors, and representatives, the pastors of the parishes that support each school have made the difficult decisions to close.

Students from Saint Raymond School and Saint Thomas the Apostle will be welcomed into any Catholic elementary school in the Diocese of Rockville Centre. School leaders and the team at the Department of Education will assist parents and students in the process of selecting and transferring to any of the strong Catholic schools in the area.

“We are deeply saddened by the closings of these two elementary schools,” said Sean P. Dolan, Director of Communications, Diocese of Rockville Centre.

“The Diocese of Rockville Centre thanks the dedicated and committed principals and teachers, both lay and religious, who have taught in these schools,” said Dolan.

Each of these schools has experienced a sharp decline in enrollment over the last several years. “Unfortunately, enrollment loss combined with the impact of COVID-19 on both parish offertory collections and fundraising efforts, has made it clear that it is not feasible to maintain these schools financially,” said Dolan.

Saint Raymond School, East Rockaway

Saint Raymond School was founded in 1927 and run by the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the campus of the Parish of Saint Raymond in East Rockaway. The school, its staff, faculty, and leaders have had a tremendous impact on countless Catholic families in the East Rockaway area.



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Over the last five years, Saint Raymond School experienced a Nursery through eighth grade enrollment decline of 49% to 130 students at the start of the 2020 school year. Unfortunately, to sustain operations during these five years, the parish has provided over \$1 million in direct support to keep the school running. In the 2019-20 school year, the school sustained itself through \$330,000 in support from the parish and the Diocese of Rockville Centre. While the school has provided an excellent learning experience both digitally and in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic, operating in this environment has exacerbated financial challenges faced by the parish and school. Given these pressures, the parish can no longer support school operations.

Saint Thomas the Apostle School, West Hempstead

Since 1950, Saint Thomas the Apostle School has played a vital role in forming future generations of young Catholics in the West Hempstead area. Originally run by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Thomas the Apostle School has a long history of achievement.

Unfortunately, the last five years have been very challenging for the school. Since 2015, Nursery through eighth grade student enrollment has declined 35% to 209 students. To continue operating, the parish has had to provide over \$1 million in direct support in the form of subsidies over five years to keep it running. During the 2019-2020 school year, the school sustained itself through \$272,000 of support from Saint Thomas the Apostle parish and the Diocese of Rockville Centre. The school opened last September offering in-class instruction in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic increased the costs for operating the school safely and also reduced the parish income which helps support the school.

The Diocese continues to invest in Catholic Education through the operation of 33 Parish and Regional Elementary Schools across Long Island. For additional information on the closings of Saint Raymond and Saint Thomas the Apostle schools visit www.drvcschools.com. A special hotline (516-280-4124) and dedicated email address (education@drvcschools.org) have also been established for comments and questions during this time.

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