



## **Archdiocese of Newark**

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### **St. Mary of the Assumption High School in Union County to Close**

Newark, NJ — The Archdiocese of Newark and St. Mary of the Assumption Church announced today that St. Mary of the Assumption High School, which serves students in grades 9-12 in Elizabeth, Union County, will close June 30, 2019.

Despite a valiant effort by faculty, staff, alumni and other stakeholders of the storied urban Catholic high school, the closure is necessary due to a steady decline in enrollment in past years and an escalating fiscal deficit nearing \$1.5 million in June 2019.

“We truly appreciate all of the generosity and support of parents, alumni and other St. Mary’s school community members,” said Dr. Margaret Dames, the Archdiocese of Newark’s Superintendent of Schools. “But given that the school was facing a number of years of continued challenges, the Archdiocese finally had to recognize that the necessary financial stability would not be reached in the foreseeable future.”

According to Dr. Dames, the school’s difficulties became evident approximately five years ago, at which time, school leadership and Archdiocesan school and finance officials began a series of strategic meetings to provide oversight and guidance to strengthen the school’s operating model. More than 40 strategic meetings were conducted to focus on overcoming obstacles. Additionally, St. Mary of the Assumption Church’s trustees and finance council provided moral and financial support in an effort to help sustain the school.

To date, the Archdiocese of Newark has absorbed more than \$2.1 million for operations and pensions, insurance and healthcare for staff.

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“The school’s administration team has done a wonderful job in holding together the school over the past year in the midst of its struggles,” said Dr. Dames. “Unfortunately, at this point, it would be a disservice to the students and their families to continue in this declining situation.”

Officials from the Archdiocesan Schools Office acknowledge the disappointment and difficulty of the decision to close the school at the conclusion of the academic year. The hope was that 2019-2020 student registration would improve to a point that would permit the school to continue operating. Regrettably, that expectation did not materialize.

Consequently, the Archdiocesan Office of Schools’ superintendent announced that attention now must focus on the best interests of the students by assisting them in finding alternate Catholic school choices for the remainder of their high school years.

Roselle Catholic Regional High School in Roselle, which is in close proximity to St. Mary’s High School, is prepared to accept and accommodate 71 students from St. Mary’s whose parents already committed to continuing their children’s Catholic education for the upcoming school year. In the coming days, school administration and the Archdiocesan Schools’ Office will work with parents of St. Mary’s students to assist with the transition to other Catholic schools within the Archdiocese.

St. Mary of the Assumption High School was founded in 1930 as a parish high school affiliated with St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Elizabeth. St. Mary of the Assumption High School sought to foster the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical and social development of each student who became part of the St. Mary’s tradition.

A number of factors over more than a decade contributed to the drop in the school’s enrollment. Fewer school-age children in urban settings, the rising cost of education, and the significant expansion of free charter schools competing for this smaller group of students all placed Saint Mary’s in a less competitive position to attract the students it had served traditionally.

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