WHY ARE THESE SCHOOLS CLOSING?
Changing demographics and increased competition from public and secular private schools have contributed to ongoing declines in Catholic school enrollment nationwide. With significant enrollment declines, there has been a growing necessity for parish financial support to the schools. While these financial pressures existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of the crisis on school families and parish communities has placed a significant burden on already struggling schools.

WHAT HAS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 BEEN ON SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH AND SCHOOL?
COVID-19 has had a significant financial impact on some parishes and schools within the Diocese. The economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis is felt both at the school and the parish. Mass cancellations have in many parishes greatly diminished offertory collections, and many of our families have been hard hit by job loss during the pandemic. The financial challenges our communities face further reduce offertory collections and have led some parents to hesitate to commit to another year of private education. These combined pressures have resulted in the difficult decision to close St. Raymond School, East Rockaway, and St. Thomas the Apostle School, West Hempstead.

WHY IS SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL CLOSING?
The primary reasons are declining enrollment and growing need for parish financial support of the school. These pressures have been exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2015, Saint Thomas the Apostle has seen enrollment decline 35% to 209 students. To sustain operations during these five years, parishioners have provided over $1 million in direct support the form of subsidies to keep the school running. During the 2019-2020 school year, the school sustained itself through $272,000 of support from the parish and the Diocese. The decline in offertory collections due to COVID-19, as well as lower anticipated revenues from tuition and fundraising, has made it clear that the school cannot be financially sustainable in the 2020-21 school year and beyond.

WHEN WILL SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL CLOSE?
The school will close in June, at the end of the current 2020-21 school year.
WHERE MIGHT AFFECTED SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE STUDENTS ATTEND SCHOOL IN FALL 2021?

Students from Saint Thomas the Apostle School will be welcomed into any Catholic elementary school in the Diocese of Rockville Centre. We want all our students to remain in the Catholic school system. School officials and representatives of the Department of Education will assist parents and students in the process of selecting and transferring to any of the excellent Catholic schools on Long Island.

Some strong neighboring schools parents can consider include:

- **St. Anne’s School**, Garden City
- **St. Brigid/Our Lady of Hope Regional School**, Westbury
- **St. Joseph School**, Garden City
- **Our Lady of Lourdes School**, Malverne
- **Our Lady of Victory School**, Floral Park
- **St. Martin de Porres Marianist School**, Uniondale

WILL THERE BE ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES OF SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL TO HELP MAKE THE TRANSITION AS EASY AS POSSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE?

Yes, tuition for transferring students will be held at the current level for at least one year if the tuition of the receiving school is higher than that of Saint Thomas the Apostle School.

WILL TOMORROW’S HOPE SCHOLARSHIPS BE CARRIED TO THE STUDENTS’ NEW SCHOOLS?

Yes. Tomorrow’s Hope Foundation is committed to continuing to support students as they transfer to any Catholic school in the Diocese of Rockville Centre. Families need to apply again for the 2021-22 school year by completing the Tomorrow’s Hope application.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, AND STAFF AT SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL?

Current staff and administration will be offered the opportunity to apply for positions in other schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

WHAT CONSULTATION WAS MADE IN REGARD TO THESE DECISIONS?

Following much analysis and discussion with stakeholders at both the diocesan and parish levels, the pastor of Saint Thomas the Apostle parish made the difficult decision to close. While this closure is regretful and comes after much deliberation, the Diocese of Rockville Centre continues to pursue its goal of strengthening and revitalizing Catholic education on Long Island.
IS THIS SCHOOL CLOSING THE RESULTS OF FINANCIAL PRESSURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHILD VICTIMS ACT (CVA) AND THE CHAPTER 11 FILING BY THE DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE?

No. The painful decision to close St. Thomas the Apostle School is not related to the CVA or the filing for Chapter 11 under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code by the Diocese of Rockville Centre. The sad truth is that St. Thomas the Apostle School already suffers from low enrollment and high reliance on parish subsidies which is exacerbated by COVID-19. Additionally, schools are ministries of legal entities (parishes) and incorporated independently of the Diocese; therefore, they will not be directly involved in the Chapter 11 filing by the Diocese.

WERE THESE SCHOOL CLOSINGS PART OF THE MORNING STAR INITIATIVE (MSI)?

No. This school closure was a parish decision and is a direct outcome of financial and enrollment trends, which pre-dated the Morning Star Initiative. These pressures have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted enrollment projections and parish offertory collections. The Diocese of Rockville Centre’s Morning Star Initiative is a bold plan for the revitalization of Catholic elementary education on Long Island. The initiative builds on four pillars to renew and transform Catholic education: Emphasizing a Robustly Catholic Culture, Creating Safe and Supportive Communities, Prioritizing Academic Excellence, and Ensuring that Catholic Schools are Here to Stay. In partnership with the Marianists, the Morning Star Initiative aims to position Catholic education for a bright future, with a community of strong and sustainable schools. Its overarching goal is to strengthen our Catholic schools.

HAS THE MORNING STAR INITIATIVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

No. The Morning Star Initiative has not faltered in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, its mission was reinforced as the MSI Team provided critical support to our schools amidst unpredictable challenge, leading coordinated efforts to support and strengthen our capacity for distance learning, and helping our schools navigate the financial and operational challenges of COVID-19.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING ONCE IT IS VACANT?

Any decision on future usage of the school buildings will be made by the pastor of the parish in which each school building resides.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLOSING?

To help answer your questions, the Department of Education has set up and is staffing a telephone information line (516-280-4124). It has also set up a special website (www.drvcschools.com) where you can go for more information. Questions can be emailed to a dedicated email address: education@drvcschools.org.

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