



May 8, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today, as the Bishop of Monterey, it is with great sadness, with a hope for a future yet to be known, that I must announce that Junípero Serra School will be closing its doors at the end of this current 2019-2020 academic year. What makes this decision even more challenging is that this school has a more than 75-year history and tradition of providing Catholic education to the Monterey Peninsula at the site of the Carmel Mission Basilica. I know that it has a special place in the heart of many people who have been connected to this community. While this decision is difficult and may be hard to accept, it is final and comes after much analysis and deliberation.

Catholic Education is very important to me and the surrounding community, but as in many other places throughout the country, the viability of Catholic schools has become increasingly challenged in today's world. A great amount of parish and diocesan support has been invested in the school over the last several years due to an ongoing decline in student enrollment. The level of investment that is needed to go forward has proven to be unsustainable. Financial sustainability is always critical, and the devastating financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic being experienced throughout our diocese could never have been imagined. This economic and financial toll has resulted in a current and projected budget deficit that is not recoverable.

I am grateful for the work undertaken by leadership at the school, board, parish and diocesan levels, but also to a special parish 'task force' which was asked to assess the school's present situation involving discussion, data-analysis and deliberation to provide recommendations for my consideration. I regret that I must concede that despite the hard work, dedication, faith and commitment of the school's leadership, board, and staff, continuing the school in the current manner is not viable.

We have reviewed alternative models and school configurations, yet it was determined that the uncertainty of the current time combined with the negative impact COVID-19 has on projected enrollment and resource development initiatives, has resulted in the inability to continue to appropriately provide for the delivery of the quality of Catholic education experience for which the school is known and valued.

Now, my most immediate concern is that those who will be most affected by this decision will be supported for what comes next. I have expressly charged Superintendent of Schools Kimberly Cheng with working with others from our diocesan offices to support our school staff, families, and students in making as seamless a transition as possible. To assist families, the Diocese of Monterey will provide a \$500 scholarship to each Junípero Serra School student who will continue their Catholic education at another Catholic school in our diocese.

“Always forward, never back.” These words are attributed to Saint Junípero Serra, founder of the California Missions and namesake of this school ministry of Catholic education that has positively impacted the lives of many students, families, and alumni. In keeping with this call to the future, my commitment to Catholic education in the Diocese of Monterey remains firm. I look forward to continued investigation, analysis, and planning as to how we can respond and adapt to the current crisis and create a future of hope. We must ensure that the availability of the benefits of a Catholic education on the Peninsula, and throughout the Diocese of Monterey will continue. May God bless all of you!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel E. Garcia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+Most Reverend Daniel E. Garcia  
Bishop of Monterey