



Memorial of St. Sebastian, 20 January 2021

Dear brothers and sisters at Our Lady of Hope and Triumph of the Holy Cross Parishes, and parents at St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin Schools,

Last month, I promised you an update on the possible consolidation of your two schools. After more than a year of study, the South Regional Catholic Elementary Schools (SRCES) board in December and January reviewed the data and deliberated concerning the viability of our schools. We are forwarding our recommendations to Bishop David Zubik and will await his approval of our recommendations. ***Though I'd earlier hoped to make an announcement in January, I now plan for early February.*** I am grateful for your patience and understanding.

I remind you of the context:

- The SRCES board began its study in 2019, while it was still merely an advisory board. Many of us visited St. Elizabeth of Hungary School on November 11, 2019, and St Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin School on January 16, 2020. Since then, we've worked closely with Fr. Fred Cain, Fr. John Skirtich, and Fr. Paul Zywan, and their many staff and advisors, through more than twenty meetings and countless discussions to ascertain the best outcome for Catholic education in the neighborhoods associated with these two schools.
- In July of 2020, Bishop Zubik established SRCES and its governing board of directors to provide for the accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of Catholic education in the southern portion of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Our Catholic schools, and the parishes that host them, face daunting demographic and financial challenges.

Catholic education is at the heart of the Church's mission to help parents raise their children as Catholic Christians. Catholic schools teach the truth revealed by the Lord Jesus and allow it to leaven all other studies. In collaboration with parents, we reinforce the habits of daily prayer and weekly worship. And together with parish and neighborhood, we encourage a generous fellowship within the Church and a loving solidarity with all.

On behalf of our pastors, school administrators, principals, and teachers, I thank you all for your support of Catholic education, and especially parents for the sacrifices you make in order to sustain your children's enrollment and engagement with the schools.

Yours in Christ,

(Rev.) Dave Poecking

President of the board of directors, South Regional Catholic Elementary Schools

South Regional Catholic Elementary Schools

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