

# A NOTE FROM FR. IVAN ABOUT THE STATE OF ST. PETER'S SCHOOL

July 2021

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

Those who have the following events connected with the future of St. Peter's School might recall the message that I wrote for the August 9, 2020 parish bulletin and posted on the parish website. I had informed you then that, because of the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic and the lower student enrollment that this caused, the Archdiocese of Newark was asking us to close down St. Peter's School. This was because of the financial burden that our school, as well as the seventeen other schools that did close down last summer, would cause for the Archdiocese.

Back in August I informed you that Cardinal Tobin had accepted our proposal to keep St. Peter's School open as a parochial school (meaning that the parish would administer the school and cover the losses that would ensue). This was an agonizing decision to take (which also kept me awake many nights during the past year!). I also enumerated the reasons why I felt it would be a wrong decision to close down the school, especially at a time when Catholic Schools are needed more than ever and explained that we would entrust the matter to Divine Providence.

A year later, I am happy to report that, in spite of all the difficulties that we encountered - especially the challenges caused by the pandemic - our school enjoyed a successful year. In June, twenty-one students were added to those thousands who have graduated from St. Peter's School during the past 154 years. It is almost comical to report that we had to shut the school down on more occasions (and have classes only remotely) because of snow (7 days) than because of Covid-related precautions (6 days)! This would not have happened if it were not for the painstaking efforts and cooperation of our principal, teachers, parents and students.

It continues to be a joy to visit the classrooms and hear the younger students recount what they learned during their religion class, and the older students getting ready to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and move on to High School and beyond.

During the past year we have continued to develop a great working relationship with the Belleville Board of Education, which has been mutually enriching and beneficial. We are also happy to see that a good number of our students continue to benefit from a partial-scholarship offered by the Inner-City Scholarship Fund of the Archdiocese of Newark.

I hope that once the Financial Report for the past fiscal year is completed, we will be in a position to let you know the amount of the subsidy that the parish had to fork out in order to keep St. Peter's School open. In the meantime, I can assure you that the amount is nowhere close to the originally-projected shortfall that the parish was expected to underwrite. This would not have been possible without responsible fiscal management and good use of the resources at our disposal, as well as the many signs that the Lord gave us that He wants the school to continue with its mission.

As St. Peter's School plans on re-opening for the upcoming school year, I thank all those who have taken an active interest in the school, especially during the past year. Some offered their prayers and moral support, others held fund-raisers for the school (such as the Knights of Columbus), while others were generous with their means (some even bequeathing estate monies). I am particularly thankful to those who dug deep into their pockets and offered a partial-scholarship to an under-privileged student who would otherwise not have been afforded a Catholic education.

We continue to face the challenge of convincing parents that Catholic education is actually more affordable than they think. For this reason, we have kept the increase in tuition for the upcoming year to a bare minimum. We are here to help them in any way we can towards fulfilling their desire that their children grow in the truths of the Gospel as they also receive an excellent academic formation in a disciplined and God-fearing environment. So, please help us get the word out!

Anyone, particularly *alumni* of our school, interested in assisting a prospective student with a partial-scholarship, is certainly welcome to talk to me. More importantly, please pray that the Lord may continue to give us the strength to fight for our school and for His precious children.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Fr. Ivan Sciberras*  
pastor@spbnj.org