



## **Pastoral Council**

We Know Who and Whose We Are

April 2, 2017

Dear Bishop Barber and Diocesan Board Members of Oakland,

With this letter, we request to meet with you to discuss the state of our Catholic Schools, to ask that St. Martin de Porres (SMD) Catholic School be included in the Consortium Network, and to appeal closure reconsideration of this school.

We are your co-workers in Christ Jesus, humbly seeking to understand your decision-making process to close several Catholic schools in the Diocese, thereby displacing approximately 600 students. We particularly want to understand your decision to close SMD Catholic School. As you know, SMD was formed when five other Catholic Schools were closed, several years ago. Closing SMD will essentially leave no Catholic School presence in West, Central, or North Oakland, greatly impacting children and families across the city. Moreover, the closure negatively affects underrepresented minorities/people of color.

We are a diverse parish community that gives credence to the fact that “in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.” We strongly believe it is crucial to keep Catholic Schools open in Oakland, in as many diverse locations as possible to embolden our youth towards their greater purpose in Christ, and to ensure that generations to come will continue to thrive.

Saint Columba Catholic Church is a vibrant and thriving Catholic community, dedicated to preserving the African – American Catholic tradition, in no small part thanks to the impact of Catholic education. Many of our highly accomplished parishioners have benefitted from the Catholic School system and have become doctors, lawyers, activists, scientists, and educators, who serve as mentors to our youth and contribute to society as beacons of light, hope, and mercy.

We actively support PICO and conscientiously strive to raise Catholic Social Justice awareness. It is with this avocation that we petition you to an open and transparent dialogue with each stakeholder, providing viable options for the poor and defenseless, allowing the laity, as the Second Vatican Council decreed in APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM, “to provide helpful collaboration for every apostolic and missionary undertaking.”



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We continue to pray with and for you during this difficult time. We understand that you inherited this situation. We are with you in love and mercy.

We look forward to receiving a response from you to meet for discussion and redirection of action.

In Christ,

Michelle Y. Batista

Kevin L. Nichols

Ruthie Bolden Monifa

Francine Peters

Laureteen Brazil

Michael Sahlman

Kevin Dwyer

Joyce Scotlan

Timothy Gholston

Joan Morris

Vernon Whitmore

Saint Columba Catholic Church Pastoral Council

cc: Fr. Aidan McAleenan  
Presbyterial Council  
Fr. Larry Young, Superintendent to Schools