



## **DIOCESE OF TRENTON**

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## **Trenton Catholic Academy to close in June; Diocese to offer resources for students to continue Catholic education**

In the last 15 years, Trenton Catholic Academy's Upper and Lower Schools in Hamilton Township have built a strong legacy in the areas of academics, athletics, faith formation and service to the community. With limited funding and resources, the pre-K3 through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school has successfully served tens of thousands of students from diverse ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, aided significantly through diocesan subsidy and a specially-established fund, as well as a strong network of benefactors, community partners and supporters of its mission.

Since opening its doors, the Upper School has graduated nearly 1,000 students, sending many of them to top colleges and universities. TCA alumni have gone on to prestigious careers and several have advanced to play professional sports. Most importantly, the school has succeeded in meeting the hopes of the school's late founding president St. Joseph Sister Dorothy Payne, who wanted her students to be: "Good kids that live good lives that make the world a better place."

Unfortunately, the growing cost of providing a quality, innovative education has consistently outpaced tuition and fundraising income, leaving the school with a \$2 million deficit each year and a cumulative need for \$24 million in financial support over the past 12 years. Additionally, the special fund once established for the school has been nearly depleted. The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic has dealt a serious blow to families' abilities to afford tuition and to strategic plans that had aimed to increase revenue. As a result, the Diocese of Trenton has regretfully accepted the recommendation of TCA president Michael Knowles that the Upper and Lower Schools -- which together educate some 550 students -- should close this coming June.

Acknowledging that every possible option was considered before reaching this conclusion, Knowles stated, "We have truly been blessed by so many generous people who believed in this mission and backed it up with their 'sweat equity.'" Knowles, who has served as president since the death of Sister Dorothy in 2019, added, "We have had the most incredible leadership and dedication in our administration, our faculty and our staff. We are very proud of all of our students and the difference they will continue to make in their communities and beyond."

Diocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools Dr. Vincent de Paul Schmidt pointed to steps that the Diocese will take to assist TCA students transitioning to a new Catholic school next year. He said, "TCA students will be welcomed at Notre Dame High School in nearby Lawrenceville and at a number of

Catholic elementary schools in close proximity to TCA so that Catholic education might continue to be available in Mercer County.”

Dr. Schmidt also announced that the Diocese of Trenton intends to make some transitional scholarship monies available for the 2021-22 school year to students seeking to continue their education in one of the Catholic schools affiliated with the Diocese or its parishes. Knowles said that with the funds made available by the Diocese, a transition plan will be worked out with TCA families.

A team of diocesan representatives will meet with the 57 TCA employees to review severance and benefits packages, and to offer assistance in finding employment.

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