

December 16, 2023

Dear Our Lady of the Lakes Parish Community,

On Tuesday morning, myself, Lynne Strutzel, and our Business Manager, Mike Hogan, met with Matt Walter, Chief Operating Officer for the Office of Catholic Schools, Marvin Sabido, Director of Vicariate Operations and Tammy Kleckner, Regional Director. The purpose of the meeting was to follow up on the three year plan developed last year with the Office of Catholic Schools.

We are writing today to share the financial status of our school and offer you the opportunity to support St Bede school for future viability. Please take time to read through this letter and review the subsequent graphs and determine how you can help.

When the two parishes of St. Bede and St. Peter were merged and St. Peter's School was closed, the St Bede School debt was 1.3 million dollars. The Archdiocese forgave \$900,000 of that amount. Since that time we have been unable to make any headway on the remainder of that debt, leaving us at this time with a \$400,000 debt. This inability to take hold of the debt is a result of the changing economy, the decrease in the number of babies born in Lake County, and the cost-of-living increases, which have affected our costs and our enrollment. Indeed, families are faced with tough decisions around educating their children.

In 2017, the state of Illinois began a program called Tax Credit Scholarships, whereby students with financial need could apply to earn a scholarship for their students to attend school. St. Bede School benefitted from this program receiving over \$175,000 at one point. This past November the Illinois government did not renew this program for the 24-25 school year, thus leaving a gap in funding for students to continue to choose Catholic education at St. Bede. During this current school year, 31 students received a total of \$145,000 to pay tuition. This loss of funding will increase the deficit for the school, having a tremendous impact on our operating budget.

St. Bede School and Our Lady of the Lakes Parish created key targets and benchmarks as part of a three-year plan. At that time this plan was signed by the Pastor, Parish Council, Finance Council and School Board. Based on last year's enrollment and funding, the school deficit required \$200,000 in support from the Archdiocese. Both last school year and this current School year, there has been an endowment fund available to help with school operational funding. At the end of the 23-24 school year, that fund will be depleted and not available as a future funding source. The plan entailed an enrollment of 205 this year and 220 for the 24-25 school year. With lower-than-expected enrollment this year, coupled with increasing operating costs, the school is projected to need \$175,000 from the Archdiocese at the end of this year and current projections indicate the need for more than \$300,000 for next school year.

The loss of the Tax Credit Scholarship along with the projected deficits for this year and next have created the need to mobilize our parish and school community. The Archdiocese can commit \$50,000 to school support for the 23-24 school year and the 24-25 school year. This

leaves us to raise \$400,000 with a need to achieve this goal in 39 days, by January 26, 2024. While that number seems overwhelming, our community is strong, and I know each of you will discern how you can help.

Obviously, we need our regular collection to remain stable for the good of our parish. Any extra help you can give would be greatly appreciated. As you prayerfully consider helping our school, here are some ways you can take action. Begin by donating yourself, then ask your family and friends to support Catholic education. Make a phone call or send an email to find out if your place of employment offers matching funds or donations when an employee volunteers. Go to our [Go Fund Me](#) page and make a contribution. Any funds contributed to our school will be recorded and put into a separate account. If we are unable to reach an amount that satisfies the Archdiocese, this money can be returned to our donors. This effort will take all of us.

Respectfully,

Reverend George Koeune, Pastor  
Lynne Strutzel, Co-principal  
Dr. Lynne Saccaro, Co-principal  
Michael Hogan, Operations Manager

### St. Bede School Financial Overview

2017	2018	2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tax Credit Scholarship (TCS) program initiated. St. Bede school has benefited from up to 175,000 annually from the program.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parish and School Merge with St. Peter and Become Our Lady of the Lakes</li><li>• Archdiocese forgives \$900,000 in school deficit.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• '3-year plan created around enrollment, income and decreasing the annual deficit.</li></ul>

Current Status: Enrollment and income below 3-year projected plan, the loss of TCS creating an operating deficit projected for \$175,000 this school year and \$300,000 for the 24-25 school year. Archdiocese will support \$50,000 in each year.

Call to Action: Starting today! Our community needs to raise \$400,000 by January 26, 2024. How can you help?