

A message from Father Daniel Caruso:

This week we announced that our beloved parish school would be closing in June. This is difficult news for all of us. During my time with you as your pastor I have always said that what we do in that school is what pleases God the most in terms of ministry at our parish. I stand by that today. As a pastor I could not be more pleased than when I see the love, concern, compassion and generosity of this community for the children in our school. Its closing is not because of a lack of commitment on the part of this parish or the school staff. Our enrollment has been decreasing and I shared with you during Catholic Schools' Week in January that we were facing very difficult financial challenges. The diocese and I agreed that this decision, although painful, was the right one.

The closing of the school does not mean that the parish is closing. The strength of our community is seen in all that was done to support the work of our school, including the many volunteers who gave so much of themselves. We can't, however, allow ourselves to now exist only to take care of ourselves. Our continued strength as a parish will be found in doing what was done in our school, namely, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with those around us. Our school was founded 98 years ago to reach out to new Americans to help them to become good citizens and good disciples. For the last 18 years, our school was doing that again. The trustees and I have begun discussing ways to use our school building to continue that mission. The parish leadership will begin to look at options after Easter.

The school will continue to fully function throughout the remaining months of this school year. I'd like to ask for your continued prayerful, generous support for the school. We'd like to make these remaining months as special as possible for the children and I would ask that we all be as present to them during their celebrations as we possibly can.

On Friday morning, the day after the children's parents had been informed of the closing of the school, the principal, a school counselor and I went into each classroom to talk to the children to help them understand what is happening and to address their immediate concerns. We talked about how change; how change is difficult, and it often brings us sadness over what we are losing. But it also brings us the opportunity to hope for new things. For the students, they thought about meeting new people, making new friends, going new places. You may remember from a past homily that I hate change; therefore, I was deeply moved, and humbled, by how the children, dealing with fresh sorrow, were still able to look ahead to an unknown future with a sense of hope and excitement. I pray that all of us, in the parish and the school, may be able to do the same.

We also talked to the children about how this Sunday was Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. It thrilled me that they knew about Jesus walking the road to Calvary, they knew of His carrying the cross, they knew of Simon of Cyrene who helped Him to carry the cross, they knew of His death on the cross, and, most wonderfully, they knew of His Resurrection, His Victory over death. This year, all of us, students, parents, faculty and parishioners, have been given a heavy cross to carry. May we be Simon to each other, may we encourage each other to trust the Lord to help us with this burden, and may we find hope, joy and peace in the Lord's resurrection.

During these holiest of days, let us pray for our students and their families, the faculty and staff, and one another.