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Contacts: Fr. James Shanley, David Elliott  
Secretariat for Communications and Public Relations  
Archdiocese of Hartford  
134 Farmington Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06105  
(860) 541-6491

OR

Maria Maynard  
Deputy Superintendent of Catholic Schools  
(860) 242-5573, ext. 2657

**Archdiocese Announces Middle School Division of Sacred Heart High School**

**HARTFORD, Conn. – (March 14, 2019)** The Office of Education, Evangelization and Catechesis of the Archdiocese of Hartford is announcing the creation of Sacred Heart Middle School, a division of Sacred Heart High School in Waterbury. Sacred Heart Middle School will open to students in grades 6, 7 and 8 in September 2019. Its creation coincides with the closing of SS. Peter and Paul School, which will be effective at the end of the 2018 – 2019 academic year. The middle school grades at SS. Peter and Paul School, whose numbers cannot be fully accommodated at other Waterbury Catholic elementary schools, will be welcomed into this new educational model, designed to enhance the long term viability of Catholic school education in the city of Waterbury. With this addition, Sacred Heart becomes the only Catholic high school in the Archdiocese to offer grades 6 – 12.

As a premier program of Catholic school education, Sacred Heart Middle School will offer students the opportunity to be part of an innovative initiative that will comprehensively prepare them for high school while assisting in strong character formation. Emphasis will be placed on critical thinking, effective written and oral communication, opportunities for advanced math and science, foreign languages, technology integration, reflective problem solving, creativity, teamwork, commitment to service, and the development of a strong value system based on Gospel truths. Students in the Middle School will have the opportunity to earn advanced high school credits within their curriculum, and will have access to a full array of clubs, extra-curricular activities, and athletics.

To distinguish it from Sacred Heart High School, the middle school division will be located on the second floor of the high school, utilizing a dedicated entrance and exit. Their daily schedule will run from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., differing from the high school schedule of 7:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. The administrators of Sacred Heart High School, President Eileen M. Regan and Principal Anthony R. Azzara, will also oversee the new division of the school.

Current students in grades 5, 6, and 7 at SS. Peter and Paul School are being encouraged to take advantage of this new educational opportunity as their school closes. Middle school families from SS. Peter and Paul School are invited to learn more about Sacred Heart Middle School at an information session to be held on Wednesday, March 20 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Sacred Heart High School.

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Students in the primary grades at SS. Peter and Paul will be welcomed at any of the other Catholic elementary schools in the area: Catholic Academy of Waterbury, Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, both in Waterbury, as well as St. John the Evangelist School in Watertown, St. Mary Magdalen School in Oakville, and St. Bridget School in Cheshire. This plan provides a variety of choices for those families seeking a Catholic school education of excellence for their children.

These developments reflect a strategic vision that encourages the continued growth and improvement of Catholic school education in Waterbury. Rev. John L. Lavorgna, Pastor of Mary Mother of the Church Parish which includes SS. Peter and Paul School, in consultation with his parish leadership, concluded that it was not possible to maintain the financial and educational viability of the school. This decision is due to a combination of factors including a decrease in enrollment and finances, demographic shifts, an aging physical plant, and impending increases in costs for salaries, benefits, campus maintenance, technology upgrades, academic materials, and supplies. Despite substantial budget cuts and other economies, the long term viability of the school could not be secured.

Father Lavorgna is committed to encouraging returning and new students to continue their education in Catholic schools. “While this is a sad loss to our parish community and to Waterbury, I know that a Catholic school education remains a priority for these families, and it is important to support that preference. I am pleased that our middle school students will have the chance to be part of something as educationally exciting and innovative as the new Sacred Heart Middle School, while the younger children will be able to take advantage of the other excellent Catholic elementary school options in the Waterbury area. Though our students will no longer receive their Catholic school education at SS. Peter and Paul School, it is a comfort to know that they will be formed in faith and knowledge at one of our other exemplary Catholic schools.”

Provost for Education, Evangelization and Catechesis for the Archdiocese of Hartford, Sr. Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ, Ph.D. concurs with Fr. Lavorgna’s perspective. “Although the closing of any Catholic school is a great loss, we are so optimistic about the creation of this new educational entity, and grateful to Fr. Lavorgna for supporting the innovative restructuring of Catholic school education in Waterbury, a change which will definitely contribute to its future viability and strength. Families can be assured of access to an outstanding selection of Catholic school choices in the Waterbury area, now including the premier Sacred Heart Middle School.”

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