



ST. MATTHIAS CATHOLIC ACADEMY

58-25 Catalpa Avenue Ridgewood, NY 11385

Tel. 718-381-8003 | Fax 718-208-4280

stmatthiasca.org

Keri-Ann Wade-Donohue, Principal



April 15, 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians and Friends of St. Matthias Catholic Academy,

It is with deep sorrow and regret that I inform you of the closure of St. Matthias Catholic Academy at the end of June 2024.

Formed as St. Matthias School in 1909, our mission has been to educate the children of the Greater Ridgewood community, and for 114 years we have faithfully served generations of students whose families hoped for their children to receive a Catholic education. Sadly, due to declining enrollment, rising costs, and increasing debt, the Board of Trustees has made the difficult decision to close at the end of this school year.

In the last 10 years, our enrollment slipped from more than 400 to 154. This decline is directly tied to the demographic changes in our neighborhood, as 2020 Census data showed us that there was a 21% decline in the under 18-year-old population in Ridgewood from 2010 to 2020. During the summer of 2020 alone, our enrollment decreased by more than 60 students. Our enrollment forecast for next school year is below 130, and our class size in most grade levels is below 15.

Our finances have suffered as our enrollment declined. When we initially saw enrollment decreasing, the Board began to take steps to condense classes and reduce payroll. Despite our best efforts, our yearly deficits have been as high as \$300,000 since 2020. Government funding which helped small businesses survive the pandemic, and grants from St. Matthias Parish and from the St. Matthias Educational Foundation kept SMCA afloat during the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 school years. Generous benefactors assisted too, contributing nearly \$500,000 during the last 5 years. Sadly, monetary donations alone cannot make up losses from a small student population. By the grace of God, we have survived several years more than anticipated; however, we are no longer financially viable as significant debts have grown in the last two school years.

This was a very painful conclusion for each member of the Board of Trustees, who each have their own personal ties to the Academy dating back over 70 years. Each of us is either a graduate, a former parent, or a distinguished member of the Academy family who believed in, cherished, and were touched by the mission of SMCA. In my own family, I am one of no less than a dozen alumni across three generations. My involvement as a Trustee was a labor of love to ensure generations more were afforded the opportunity of a St. Matthias education like my family was. As my mother did for her two sons, many parents who attended St. Matthias returned so their children could experience the tradition and receive the best education possible from our faculty, the highest honor we could ever be awarded. St. Matthias Catholic Academy was truly a legacy and a family whose bonds extended across time. There will be many emotions over the next several months as we conclude the school year. Our dedicated faculty and staff who have been the bedrock of our school, and current students and their families who have been with us for years will all be asking the question, "what's next?" We promise to support every member of the community as they transition to the next stage.

Words cannot express how thankful I am to Mrs. Wade-Donohue for the spirit and energy she brought to our community over the last year. We have all been touched by Mrs. Wade-Donohue's dedication to our students and families as she opened her heart to all of us.

We have many members of our faculty and staff who have each dedicated decades of service to SMCA and were especially in our minds and hearts when making this decision. Mrs. Moreno, Ms. Colon, Ms. Agron, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Byron, Mrs. Matzelle, Mr. Rivera, and Mrs. Baez have fulfilled a vocation to SMCA's students and families every single day to serve



ST. MATTHIAS CATHOLIC ACADEMY

58-25 Catalpa Avenue Ridgewood, NY 11385
(718) 381-8003 | www.stmatthiaschool.org

as Jesus did, no matter how difficult the circumstances or personal sacrifices. They have gone above and beyond to make the Academy what it is today. I will be forever grateful to each of them.

This announcement is not a mark of failure, nor the end of the legacy of St. Matthias Catholic Academy. We will remember the memories we made, the people we met, and lessons we learned. The clergy, School Sisters of Notre Dame, administration, faculty and staff, alumni, parents and friends, and benefactors who have been part of the legacy of SMCA have left indelible imprints on our hearts and those of the more than 7,200 alumni of St. Matthias. Each one of us has been blessed with a piece of St. Matthias to share with the world.

I hope you will join me throughout the rest of the year at our many events and ceremonies as we reminisce and celebrate the blessings God has bestowed on St. Matthias Catholic Academy. More information is attached to this letter, and we will continue to share more details as it becomes available throughout the remainder of the school year. We will have a parent meeting on Wednesday, April 17, at 7:00pm to answer questions for you. There will be another opportunity for you to speak with local schools who are accepting our students.

Our faith has taught us that God has a plan for each of us. It is in times like these that we must listen for His call and trust in His plan.

St. Matthias, pray for us.

Yours in Christ,

Gregory J. Haufe
Chairperson, Board of Trustees