

April 27, 2019

Dear Assumption BVM Parents,

You have likely heard the intention to close St. Ambrose School at the completion of this school year. As some of you know from personal experience, this is a very sad time for our students, parents, faculty, and staff. Perhaps like us, you have been acutely aware of decreasing enrollment over the last several years. In part, enrollment has decreased because of class sizes being “too small.” Although your enrollment is greater than that at St. Ambrose, we know this is not a foreign issue to you. We have come to understand that ultimate survival as separate entities of St. Ambrose and Assumption BVM Schools is unlikely. We live in the same communities and have heard rumors of merging the two schools for years. We have had discussions with some of you and have heard by word of mouth from others some of the structural, maintenance, and safety concerns that you as parents at Assumption BVM face on a daily basis. We are aware of school closures for broken pipes and shutdowns of city blocks as a result of acts of violence in the general vicinity. We were of the impression these things would be taken into account in discussion of any potential merger scenario. St. Ambrose School is a much newer building in an open and safe environment with ease of access and ample parking. We have a one story building with three exits in each classroom in the event of a fire. The Church is on the same property and doesn’t require a walk along city blocks. The grounds are large and have an abundance of space for outside play at recess. The enrollment at St. Ambrose had previously been much larger and there is certainly enough space to accommodate students from both facilities. This may even help to increase enrollment that has suffered because of classes that were “too small.”


We share your desire for high quality Catholic education in a safe environment and have had a great experience at St. Ambrose. While we understand concerns you may have regarding traveling to Schuylkill Haven, we suspect as parents your desire for a safe and well maintained facility for your children may outweigh this. We have families at St. Ambrose that travel from distances to attend school here and have found this sacrifice to be worthwhile.

We are reaching out to you because we have become aware that recent plans for discussion of a potential merger of our two schools were refused by the Assumption BVM Council of Pastors. Our schools would likely be much stronger in combination, but it seems less sensible to remain in a building with so many structural and safety concerns when a newer, safer building is available. We fear that the best interests of all of our children were neglected because of logistics and politics. Please understand that the purpose of this letter is to explore mutually beneficial solutions. Again, from what we have heard from some of you, it sounds as if your concerns have not been heard or represented by your Council of Pastors. We are parents to five of the 49 St. Ambrose students affected by this closure. We have had discussions with other St. Ambrose parents, who have expressed the same concerns voiced above. If our closure has been presented to you as an opportunity for a significant increase in your enrollment, you may want to really consider this additional information. If you share our concerns, please urge your Council of Pastors to reconsider their decision to have open discussions regarding a merger or at least comparison of the school facilities. You are welcome to send any correspondence to this effect directly to us at schuylkillcatholiceducation@gmail.com, and we will gladly forward our

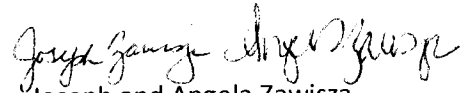
common sentiments to Bishop Schlert, as he has the power to make such discussions occur, particularly if he knows the parents of both schools have a common goal. We fear that if action such as this is not taken, your physical facility may not be sustainable for many more years and you will be in a similar difficult situation.

We have no way of formally distributing this letter to you and apologize for any delay in you receiving it. We are counting on you as concerned and well minded parents to pass it along to one another and anyone else interested in the success of Catholic education in Schuylkill County so you can make the most informed and best decisions for your families and school community. We, with you, continue to pray for strong and sustainable Catholic education in Schuylkill County.

Sincerely,



David and Margaret Young



Joseph and Angela Zawisza