



ONE CHURCH  
ENCOUNTERING JESUS  
EQUIPPING DISCIPLES  
LIVING MERCY

February 13, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you are aware, the Archdiocese of Omaha is currently engaged in the Journey of Faith, our archdiocesan pastoral planning process. The primary objective of this process is to assist our parishes in becoming missional communities. The context of this process is a number of significant demographic changes we have already experienced in recent years and can expect to experience in the years to come. It is our hope that this process will position our parishes to flourish in new and fruitful ways far into the future.

While the Journey of Faith focuses first on parishes, our schools are deeply connected to this process. The reason for this is that our schools, which have been tremendous benefit for generations, are supported so strongly by our parish communities. Just as we desire flourishing for our parishes, we desire flourishing for our schools.

A particular challenge in recent years has been acutely felt in education. More and more, the national and state teacher shortage has left schools unable to hire enough certified teachers who teach in their endorsed subject matter. In many schools, this has led to a rise in creative solutions, including the use of virtual learning. Our schools are to be commended for their resourcefulness and ingenuity in facing these problems of our time.

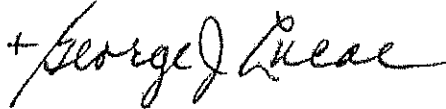
All the Catholic secondary schools in the archdiocese are Rule 10 schools accredited by the State of Nebraska, as outlined in Rule 10. Currently, the state is granting significant flexibility due to the teacher shortage. However, the teacher shortage is already notably felt in all grades and hiring for high school teachers will continue to be a challenge. This challenge directly impacts the ability of our schools to provide a sufficiently robust education, despite their best efforts, or even to meet the minimum standards for Nebraska schools.

Having consulted locally on the question of the future of Catholic education in northern Platte County over the past year, I have come to the decision that now is the time to merge grades 7-12 of the schools at St. Francis in Humphrey and Holy Family in Lindsay into one secondary school, in order to position Catholic secondary education more securely in the coming years. This merger will take place by the fall semester of 2024. This merger will involve all aspects of middle and high school life. The future of both schools is only together. Their geographic proximity provides a unique opportunity to secure the blessing of Catholic education for future generations by combining resources.

Staff from the Catholic Schools Office will be available for consultation for assisting with this merger. Both schools should put together a planning team to work on this project, under the guidance of your pastor, Fr. Eric Olsen. A written, detailed proposal for the merger should be given to me for my approval by December 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.

I understand that there is much history between Humphrey and Lindsay. I encourage you strongly to let this moment be an opportunity to be a shining example of charity, unity, and collaboration for the Kingdom. With prayers for this time, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ George J. Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. George J. Lucas  
Archbishop of Omaha