



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

Office of Communications

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MEDIA RELEASE

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“SIGNIFICANT” IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN LONG ISLAND’S CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS DUE TO MORNING STAR INITIATIVE, REPORT STATES

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N.Y. – October 31, 2022 – Significant progress has been made in the renewal and transformation of Catholic Elementary School education on Long Island. This is the finding from a new report ([MSI-Impact-Report.pdf \(drvc.org\)](#)) by the Diocese of Rockville Centre’s Morning Star Initiative. The Morning Star Initiative Impact Report cites progress made against the Morning Star Initiative’s four success pillars: 1) Academic Excellence, 2) Robustly Catholic Culture, 3) Safe and Supportive Communities and 4) Fiscally Sustainable Schools.

“Since the Morning Star Initiative was launched in early 2020, we have strengthened the academic rigor of our schools and stabilized enrollment despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economy,” said Brother Thomas Cleary, S.M., Chief Revitalization Officer, Morning Star Initiative.

With more than \$3.5 million in funds raised by the Tomorrow’s Hope Foundation for the Morning Star Initiative and then invested in Catholic education, the Catholic Elementary Schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre have achieved significant academic improvements, safe in-person instruction, strong remote learning, strong marketing and recruitment efforts, innovative new academic programs and stabilization of Nursery – 8th grade enrollment.

In the area of strengthening the pillar that Catholic Schools are here to stay, the Diocese of Rockville Centre Department of Education along with the Morning Star Initiative constantly works to increase enrollment. Some examples include:

- Enrollment increase of one hundred students for the 2022-2023 academic year at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School, Deer Park/Central Islip
- New approaches to school oversight and governance piloted at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School, Deer Park/Central Islip and Holy Name of Mary Parish School in Valley Stream; while serving ethnically diverse and high needs student populations
- Marketing to prospects using Google, Facebook and Instagram
- Principals using technology including webinars to market schools to local communities



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- More than \$700,000 in scholarships for underserved students in grades K-8 across Long Island directed by the Tomorrow's Hope Foundation
- \$2.45 million provided in tuition assistance from Tomorrow's Hope Foundation to nearly 1,200 students in 35 elementary schools for the 2021-2022 school year

In the area of Academic Excellence, philanthropic support of the Morning Star Initiative has enabled the Diocese of Rockville Centre Department of Education to enhance the academic rigor in its elementary schools by investing in technology, teachers and academic programs. For example:

- Thousands of learning devices delivered to Catholic elementary school students across Long Island; more than 2,000 devices for low-income students in underserved communities
- Teachers from across the diocese are pooling resources and sharing expertise with other grade-level and subject-area teachers through the new Curriculum Leads program
- All teachers and principals received increased compensation and professional development for the 2021-2022 academic year. Teachers will also receive a salary and step increase for the 2022-2023 year
- Strong interest in a Dual Language pilot program at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School, Deer Park and Central Islip

The Curriculum Associates' i-Ready® Assessment System implemented in each school, is a new, state-of-the-art tool enabling educators to better understand how individual students are progressing throughout the school year. i-Ready offers teachers criterion-referenced and normative data to deliver impactful, equitable learning experiences in real time. More than 8,000 students have received personalized i-Ready math and reading instruction. When receiving 30 minutes or more of personalized instruction per week, the median student was 8 percent above year-end expectations ("Typical Growth") in Math and 28 percent above year-end expectation in reading.

In the area of a building a Robustly Catholic Culture, the Diocese of Rockville Centre Department of Education, through the Morning Star Initiative has sharpened and enhanced its spiritual, intellectual, sacramental and liturgical capabilities. For example:

- Catholic culture strengthened through the appointment of Father Matthew M. Browne, S.T.L. to the new position of Bishop's Delegate to the Department of Education, to guide integration of a robustly Catholic culture in the elementary schools
- Catholic Identity and Mission is stronger through the hiring of Director of Catholic Identity and Mission. For the first time, the director leads workshops, faculty and student retreats
- Teachers' faith formation strengthened through workshops and online courses



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- A new supplemental Theology of the Body Curriculum now offered for 6th, 7th and 8th graders. This curriculum teaches what it means to be a human person, made in God's image and what it means to be a son or daughter of God

In the area of providing Safe and Supportive Communities, the Diocese of Rockville Centre Department of Education with the Morning Star Initiative was able to respond to unprecedented challenges by providing a safe and supportive community that recognizes the dignity of every person and promotes human flourishing. For example:

- A smooth transition to remote and then in-person learning for all elementary schools amid the Covid-19 pandemic without missing a day of instruction
- Schools safer due to school safety assessments completed. Specific issues addressed including camera placement, fencing, door safety to further improve safety of the school environment
- Licensed social workers and mental health support services now available to students, families and educators through project Alpha
- A free after-school program piloted at Our Lady of Guadalupe School, Deer Park/Central Islip runs from 3:00 – 5:30 p.m. every day; the program is offered at no cost to tuition paying families.

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About the Morning Star Initiative

Approaching its third year of existence (January 2023), the Diocese of Rockville Centre's Morning Star Initiative is a bold plan of Catholic evangelization (living and sharing the Gospel) for the revitalization of Catholic elementary education. In partnership with the Marianists and with the support of the Tomorrow's Hope Foundation, the Morning Star Initiative aims to position Catholic education for a bright future, with a community of strong, expanding, and sustainable schools spread across Long Island. For more information visit: www.morningstarinitiative.com.

About Tomorrow's Hope Foundation

The mission of Tomorrow's Hope Foundation is to ensure the excellence as well as the continuance of Catholic Schools on Long Island by increasing awareness and by providing scholarship and program funding for the needs of students and schools. To donate to Tomorrow's Hope Foundation visit: www.tomorrowshopefoundation.org.

To read the Impact Report click here: <https://www.drvc.org/wp-content/uploads/MSI-Impact-Report.pdf>.



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About The Diocese of Rockville Centre

The Diocese of Rockville Centre (www.drvc.org) was formed in 1957 and covers 1,198 square miles in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The diocese serves approximately 1.4 million baptized Catholics* (total population in both counties is approximately 2.9 million). There are 132 parishes plus 1 campus parish in 115 towns. The diocese is blessed with 336 total priests, 703 religious women, 61 Brothers and 275 permanent deacons. In 2020, 13,526 baptisms, 11,583 confirmations, 11,760 First Holy Communions and 2,169 Catholic marriages took place in the diocese. There are 11,077 students in Catholic elementary schools; 10,407 students in Catholic high schools and 3,409 students in higher institutions. There are 35 Catholic elementary schools (31 parish or regional and 4 private), 9 high schools (2 diocesan, 2 parish and 5 private) and one Catholic college (Molloy College, Rockville Centre) in the diocese. In 2020, there were 66,578 children in parish Faith Formation programs. In 2020, Catholic clergy and community provided consolation to families and loved ones of 9,439 deceased Catholics at 4 diocesan and 20 parish cemeteries. Catholic Health of Long Island is comprised of six hospitals, three health care centers, four homes for the aged, a regional home care and hospice network, and a community-based agency for persons with special needs. More than 17,500 employees and 4,600 credentialed physicians work within the CH system. Catholic Charities provides *Care With Dignity...Life With Hope* to the poor, isolated, vulnerable, and disadvantaged on Long Island. In 2020, more than 600 staff members and 400 volunteers provided over 1.4 million face-to-face services to 45,460 people of all faiths and backgrounds from 60 service sites in Nassau and Suffolk counties. The single largest outreach to the People of God on Long Island is through the diocesan media outlets. The diocese maintains vibrant Facebook, Twitter and Instagram platforms. Catholic Faith Network broadcasts 24/7/365 to millions of homes; the weekly DRVC E-newsletter is emailed to more than 10,000 recipients. The diocesan website drvc.org averages approximately 18,000 unique visitors each month. *As of 2020