



Our Mother of Mercy Catholic School to Transition to Cristo Rey College Prep High School

Bishop Michael F. Olson announced Friday that the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth will transition the historic Our Mother of Mercy Catholic School into a Cristo Rey Catholic co-ed high school, pending the completion of a feasibility study. The new high school will be named Cristo Rey Fort Worth High School at Our Mother of Mercy.

Cristo Rey schools seek to *transform urban America one student at a time* by providing a college-preparatory high school education serving underrepresented urban youth through rigorous academics, coupled with real world work experience. Pending completion of an in-depth study by the Cristo Rey Fort Worth Feasibility Study Committee, the school is projected to open in the Fall of 2018.

The Diocese will provide the Our Mother of Mercy Catholic School property, located at 1007 E. Terrell Avenue, for the planned new high school. To prepare for the transition of Our Mother of Mercy School, current students will be offered opportunities to attend other Catholic elementary schools in Fort Worth beginning in the Fall semester of 2016.

“Our Mother of Mercy Catholic School, through the generous service of its parishioners, priests, teachers, parents and the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, has educated and formed many community leaders in Fort Worth and beyond,” Bishop Olson said. “Faithful to Christ and His Church, this mission has included men and women of many faith traditions. Cristo Rey Fort Worth High School at Our Mother of Mercy will renew the scope of this Catholic mission as it reaches out to members of the community without access to a college preparatory high school education. Cristo Rey Fort Worth High School at Our Mother of Mercy will join, in cooperation with Nolan Catholic High School and Cassata Catholic High School, in our Catholic community’s response to Christ’s call to teach all nations.”

An historically African-American Catholic school located in the Historic Southeast Side, Our Mother of Mercy School was established in 1929, and over the years has educated thousands of children. Many alumni have become leaders in politics, education, society and other areas. The current school building was constructed by the Diocese and opened in March 2008. The school features a full-service cafeteria, nurse’s office, multi-media library center, a networked computer lab, music room, art room and science laboratory. The current school will undergo renovations to transform it into a larger high school facility.

Cristo Rey Fort Worth is projected to begin accepting applications from potential students in the Summer of 2017. The inaugural freshmen class will begin their academic year and the Corporate Work Study Program in August 2018. After adding a class each year for the ensuing three years, enrollment at Cristo Rey Fort Worth at Our Mother of Mercy will reach about 500. The school will be located next door to Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church.

The proposed school will help to revitalize Southeast Fort Worth where underserved neighborhoods with low employment and minimal economic activity exist. The school will serve only economically disadvantaged youths. Nationwide, the 2015 average annual income for a family of four sending a student to a Cristo Rey school was \$35,326.

The study includes coordinated planning with the two excellent existing Catholic high schools, Nolan Catholic High School and Cassata Catholic High School. Erin Vader and Trinette Robichaux, presidents of the two schools respectively, are

members of the Feasibility Study Committee. Cristo Rey Fort Worth at Our Mother of Mercy will augment the already existing educational ministry provided by Nolan Catholic and Cassata Catholic. Cristo Rey Fort Worth at Our Mother of Mercy will be an independent Catholic school operating under the religious sponsorship of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth.

“As all of the schools in the Fort Worth Catholic Diocese work together for the good of the children in Fort Worth, Cristo Rey will bring with it needed resources that have been proven to work not only in their respective communities, but also with the existing schools within those communities,” said Diocesan School Superintendent Jennifer Pelletier. “The Fort Worth Catholic schools are thrilled to welcome the Cristo Rey Network.”

“The Cristo Rey Network is excited about the possibility of opening a school in Fort Worth, one of the fastest growing cities in America,” said Brian D. Melton, Chief Network Growth Officer and General Counsel.

The highly acclaimed and nationally recognized Cristo Rey schools utilize a rigorous academic model, supported with effective instruction, to prepare students with a broad range of academic abilities for college success. Cristo Rey schools employ an innovative Corporate Work Study Program that provides students with real world work experience. Every student attends school four days a week and shares a full-time job five days a month to fund the majority of his or her education, gain job experience, grow in self-confidence, and realize the relevance of education. Students work at law firms, banks, hospitals, universities, and with other professional Corporate Partners. The Corporate Work Study Program is real work for real pay, and has been approved by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth is setting the wheels in motion for the creation of the new high school by providing the school facility and committing to providing two full-time equivalent jobs.

The Feasibility Study Committee, comprised of corporate and community leaders and educators, is currently working to raise \$2.6 million for start-up operating costs, plus capital costs from private philanthropy as well as obtaining 35 letters of intent from Corporate Partners who will provide jobs for the students. The job price for a team of four students rotating days to cover the equivalent of one full-time entry level position is \$32,000 for a ten-month school year.

Corporate Partners will pay the job wage to the Corporate Work Study program which will handle all aspects of corporate partnerships, including payroll, legal, taxes, insurance, logistics and transportation issues. The Corporate Work Study program will use the funds to cover more than 50 percent of the tuition costs for the student workers.

The first high school in the Cristo Rey Network was founded by the Jesuits in 1996 in Chicago. Today 30 schools around the U.S. are a part of the Cristo Rey Network and educate almost 10,000 students annually, with new Cristo Rey high schools set to open this year in Tampa and Baton Rouge. A Cristo Rey high school opened in the Diocese of Dallas in 2015 serving a freshmen class of 128 students. Cristo Rey schools are often located in the center of underserved neighborhoods with minimal employment and economic activity. In 2015, 100 percent of the graduates nationwide were accepted into college.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: For more information, contact Diocesan Communications Director Patrick Svacina at 817 996-9609. For more information on the Cristo Rey School Network, visit www.cristoreynetwork.org. An overview of the Cristo Rey Network and Southeast Fort Worth is attached. The Cristo Rey Fort Worth at Our Mother of Mercy web site is: www.cristoreyfortworth.org