



THE MORNING STAR INITIATIVE

www.morningstarinitiative.org



THE CHALLENGE

Enormous challenges confront Catholic education on Long Island. Enrollment has declined over 36% in the past ten years, and less than 10% of Catholic elementary-aged children are enrolled in Catholic schools. Catholic school facilities face tens of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance, and Catholic educators earn only a fraction of the salaries of their public school peers. Catholics across Long Island have grown accustomed to a steady closing of schools year after year. Yet, studies have shown that graduating from a Catholic school is one of the strongest indicators that students will: participate in the Church as adults; consider a vocation to the priesthood or religious life; pursue a career in service; or live as Catholics sanctifying their work in a secular career.⁽¹⁾ As Pope Francis told the young pilgrims at World Youth Day 2019 in Panama: "You, my dear young people, you are not the future but the now of God."⁽²⁾ Indeed, a new era of Catholic evangelization and *dramatic missionary growth* in the Diocese of Rockville Centre will be impossible without vibrant Catholic schools. Faced with dark days ahead for Catholic education, what are we to do? Must we resign ourselves to inevitable decline or do we dare imagine a renewal of Catholic education on Long Island?

In the opening words of his Gospel, St. John assures us that "light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (*Jn* 1:5). The Diocese of Rockville Centre chooses light over darkness, hope over despair, and revitalization over diminishment. We invite all Catholics to join us in this hope-filled mission for the future of our children and the strengthening of our parishes and communities.

THE MORNING STAR INITIATIVE

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. Under the protection of Mary, the Morning Star, the Church on Long Island pleads for a "new dawn" of Catholic education which draws the children of our diocese and their families ever closer to Jesus, who is "the true light that enlightens everyone" (*Jn* 1:9).

Catholic schools will survive and thrive through a strong Catholic identity fostered in our students, faculties and families; an identity centered on the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. With a clear understanding of who we are as Catholics, we will strengthen Catholic education, forming families that in the words of Pope Francis, "transform the world and history."





THE INSPIRATION

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have invoked the aid of the Blessed Virgin as the “Morning Star.” Mary is the bright and shining star of humanity who reflects the light of the Creator and Redeemer and exalts His glory. St. John Paul II hailed her as the “Star of the New Evangelization,” who “appeared on the horizon of salvation history before Christ,”⁽³⁾ and points the way to Him as the “radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps.”⁽⁴⁾

St. John Henry Newman honors the Blessed Virgin as the Morning Star which appears “after the dark night but always heralding the Sun.” Of all the images ascribed to her, St. John Henry Newman writes, the star is the most fitting: “Mary, like the stars, abides forever, as lustrous now as she was on the day of her Assumption; as pure and perfect, when her Son comes to judgment, as she is now . . . When she appears in the darkness, we know that He is close at hand.”⁽⁵⁾

THE PILLARS

The Morning Star Initiative of the Diocese of Rockville Centre builds on four pillars, which aim to renew and transform Catholic education on Long Island.

1. OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WILL CULTIVATE A ROBUSTLY CATHOLIC CULTURE CENTERED ON THE SPIRITUAL, INTELLECTUAL, SACRAMENTAL, AND LITURGICAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

- Serious prayer and study of the Sacred Scriptures, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and age-appropriate Catholic apologetics in the Catholic intellectual tradition
- Prayerful and thoughtful engagement with the lives of the saints as models of the universal call to holiness, mission, and service
- Meaningful development of a life of prayer, virtue, and sacramental participation, expressed especially in fidelity to the Sunday Mass
- Impactful encounters with teachers as exemplary models and mentors of the Catholic Faith

2. OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WILL PROVIDE A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY THAT RECOGNIZES THE DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON AND PROMOTES HUMAN FLOURISHING IN A FAMILIAL ATMOSPHERE.

- A welcoming community where young people are safe and supported, cherished and challenged
- A nurturing community — rooted in the Splendor of Truth of the Sacred Scriptures and Catholic teaching on the Creed, Sacraments, Morality and Prayer — where every student is valued as a unique human person beloved of God
- A community of the Catholic Faith committed to the Gospel of Life and Catholic social justice teaching, forming disciples of Christ who will give a courageous witness in the public square
- A truly Catholic (universal) community, supportive of families of all ethnic backgrounds raising children of strong Christian character



3. OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WILL OFFER ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, WHICH FOSTERS INDIVIDUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO TIME-TESTED, CATHOLIC FAITH-BASED MODELS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING.

- Integrating our rich Catholic intellectual tradition with the exciting opportunities of the 21st century
- Assisting students in seeing the harmony between faith and reason in all subjects and opening them to the contemplation of the good, the true, and the beautiful
- Investing in strong evangelizing teachers who encourage and inspire all students to reach their full potential
- Building a strong foundation for future success in high school, college, and careers

4. OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ARE HERE TO STAY.

- Revitalizing Catholic education to meet the changing needs of our community
- Renewing our commitment to strong and sustainable Catholic education on Long Island
- Providing the resources to attract, develop, and reward talented educators committed to the mission of Catholic education
- Ensuring responsible stewardship of personnel, facilities, and finances



THE PARTNERS

Under the leadership of Bishop Barres, the Morning Star Initiative seeks the support of the entire People of God on Long Island in this Catholic evangelization initiative of renewal and transformation. The process of stakeholder involvement will be spearheaded by the Bishop's leadership team with the assistance of our trusted advisors:

- The **Brothers of the Province of Meribah**, who bring two centuries of Marianist educational wisdom and experience under the banner of the Blessed Virgin to the Morning Star Initiative. For 90 years, the Marianist schools on Long Island (Chaminade High School, Kellenberg Memorial High School, the Brother Joseph C. Fox Latin School, and St. Martin de Porres Marianist School) have educated and formed in the Faith generations of young men and women who provide outstanding leadership in our Church and communities.
- A team from the consulting firm of **Alvarez & Marsal**, a nationally recognized leader in organizational transformation. A&M brings expertise in fact-driven and action-oriented analysis and the combination of professional skills necessary for successful revitalization. A&M has assisted in the transformation of many educational institutions.



In addition to this core team, we are proud to have the support of the Tomorrow's Hope Foundation, which will look to strengthen its support of Diocese of Rockville Centre schools and students throughout the Morning Star Initiative. Over the past 13 years, Tomorrow's Hope has provided over \$21 million in scholarships and school aid, and helped thousands of families across Long Island.

OUR PRAYER

*Mary, our Morning Star, inspire us to imagine
a new dawn for our Catholic schools
so that our children may be formed in the likeness of your Son.*

*Mary, Star of Evangelization, help us to fulfill the mission of education which
your Son has given to his Church
and which falls to us as his disciples and your children.*

*Mary, Help of Christians, we offer ourselves to you in the work
of carrying the Gospel ever deeper into the hearts and lives of young people.*

*We entrust to you our missionary mandate
and commit our cause totally to your prayers.*

*To Jesus Christ your Son, with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit
be praise and thanksgiving forever and ever. Amen.*

*Holy Mary, Star of Evangelization, you point us to the Light of the World. Be
always close to us, enlightening our steps in the darkness.*

*Holy Mary, Morning Star, you lead us to your Son, the Father and the Holy
Spirit. Be always close to us, guiding us to the Blessed Trinity.*

1. "Catholic on the Inside: Putting Values Back at the Center of Education Reform,"

Porter-Magee, Kathleen. Manhattan Institute, December 12, 2019.

2. Pope Francis, Homily for the Closing Mass of World Youth Day 2019, January 27, 2019.

3. Pope St. John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater, 3, Encyclical Letter, March 25, 1987.

4. Pope St. John Paul II, Novo Millennio Ineunte, 59, Encyclical Letter, January 6, 2001.

5. St. John Henry Newman, Prayers, Verses and Devotions, pp. 178-79. Ignatius Press, 1989.

ORIGIN OF THE ICON (IMAGE)

The icon of Mary, Star of Evangelization, was written by Br. Claude Lane, OSB of Mount Angel Abbey in St. Benedict, OR in 2003. Brother Claude summarizes the image by saying "there are the three apparitions of Mary – three visitations of Mary – this is a visitation icon. She visits her cousin, she visits the people of America in an actual apparition, and now she is visiting us. The daughter of Zion is made visible and bears the Word made flesh. We are evangelized through the Word so we in turn can evangelize." The icon is used with the permission of Mount Angel Abbey.



Diocese of Rockville Centre

50 North Park Avenue, Rockville Centre, New York 11571-9023

Ph: 516.678.5800 | www.drvc.org

www.morningstarinitiative.org | morningstar@drvc.org

Produced by DRVC Office of Communications/Jan.2020