

NEWS RELEASE**For Immediate Release:** May 11, 2017**Media Contact:** Fr. Augustine Chumo, Pastor
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Immaculate Conception School in Ithaca to close in June

After more than 130 years of educating generations of children, Immaculate Conception School in Ithaca will close its doors at the end of the school year in June.

The recommendation to close the school, presented by Immaculate Conception Parish leadership, was accepted by the Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano, Bishop of Rochester, after consultation with the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, a council of priests from throughout the Diocese who advise the Bishop.

In the current academic year, enrollment at the school is at a historical low of 70 students in grades preK-6 with a projected enrollment this fall of approximately 56. The school has experienced years of declining enrollment and increased financial strain on both the school and on the parish, which subsidizes the school's operation. The school is currently operating with a deficit.

"The difficult decision to accept the recommendation to close Immaculate Conception School was made after much prayer, financial analysis and consultation," Bishop Matano said. "I am deeply grateful to the parish and school communities, which have tried to sustain the school for many years. Now the situation has reached a point where increased costs and projections of further declines in enrollment have created serious and untenable financial burdens that cannot continue."

Reverend Augustine Chumo, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, said he will work diligently to support school leadership, teachers and staff. "I am aware how painful this decision is for all concerned," Father Chumo said. "We will come together as a community of faith. With God's grace, we will support and comfort one another, knowing we did all we could to keep our beloved school open as long as we could."

The school's roots go back to Sept. 5, 1884, when seven Sisters of St. Joseph from Rochester arrived in Ithaca by train to teach. Immaculate Conception was officially dedicated by Rochester's first bishop, Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid, three days later.

"I am very grateful for all the teachers and staff have done to support the school," said Dr. Anthony S. Cook III, Superintendent of Catholic Schools. "I have come to know the dedicated people at the school very well, and have been so proud of their efforts to carry on the school's long tradition of excellence: to send forth students remarkably prepared spiritually and academically to meet the challenges of our world."

Dr. Cook said every effort will be made to find a Catholic school for those families interested in continuing to provide a Catholic education for their children, as well as positions in other diocesan schools for those employed by the school.

For security reasons and to protect the students' privacy, we ask that no news media personnel come to the school without prior authorization/ permission.