

# Towson Catholic High School to Close

Monsignor F. Dennis Tinder, Pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Towson, has informed Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien that the parish high school, Towson Catholic, will not reopen in the fall due to an insurmountable budget deficit caused by a sharp decline in enrollment.

With only 163 students currently enrolled for the coming school year, a decline of over 80 students and 42 fewer than the budgeted enrollment figure, the school projects a total budget deficit of more than \$650,000, including more than \$160,000 in unpaid tuition from the past school year. The dire financial situation and the lack of late registrations over the summer compelled officials at the parish and school to make the decision to close.

"We want you to know that our administration has made a valiant effort at survival, but the tidal wave of this dire economy has proven to be no match for us," wrote Msgr. F. Dennis Tinder, pastor, and Mrs. Clare Pitz, Principal in a letter sent home to Towson Catholic families today.

The 20-member faculty/staff were informed of the decision today, as were the families of those children currently enrolled at the school. A meeting will take place next week for parents to obtain more information and to meet with representatives of other Catholic high schools.

Towson Catholic is the oldest Catholic co-educational high school in the Archdiocese, and becomes the fourth Catholic school and the first high school this year to announce it will not reopen next fall due to low enrollment, joining

elementary schools, St. Michael (Frostburg), Catholic Community School (Baltimore), and St. Mary (Govans).

During the past decade, enrollment at the school, while low, remained steady with an average of 258 students. Overall enrollment increased by 3.39% in the 10-year period. However, the school experienced a decline of more than 6% heading into last school year and school officials feared an even sharper decline due to the economic downturn. The current enrollment decline represents the largest one-year decline on record for the school. The previous mark was 26 prior to the 2007-08 school year.

Earlier this year, Archbishop O'Brien commissioned a group of 17 educators, business leaders and philanthropists to study the entire Catholic school system in the Archdiocese and recommend a plan that will address many of the financial challenges facing Catholic schools. They are expected to make their recommendations in 2010.

Originally established as a parish school serving the needs of parish families, Towson Catholic's reach eventually broadened, as families from Baltimore City and other areas sought TC's small, co-educational environment and more affordable tuition. The 2008-2009 student body represented a diverse community of families from 56 different zip code areas.

With the closure of Towson Catholic, only two co-educational, parish, Catholic high schools remain: Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Essex and St. Mary's in Annapolis.

Towson Catholic at a Glance:

Founded as a parish high school in 1922

Percentage of students registered at Immaculate Conception Parish: 6%\*\*

Percentage of students who live outside Towson: 86%\*\*

Percentage of students residing in Baltimore City: 45%\*\*

Percentage of minority students: 40%\*\*

Percentage of non-Catholic students: 20%\*\*

Tuition for the 2009-10 school year: \$9,500

\*\* Figures are based on the 2008-09 school year