



NEWS RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ERIE

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St. Stephen School in Oil City receives gift to support Catholic education

The Diocese of Erie is pleased to announce the creation of a designated fund to support St. Stephen School in Oil City. This important step reinforces the diocese's ongoing commitment to the mission of Catholic education in the region.

The fund – in the amount of over \$372,000 – will be used to support the continued operation and mission of St. Stephen School, including program development, recruitment efforts and the ongoing maintenance and sustainment of the school property.

The fund was made possible from the recent [Venango Catholic High School property sale](#) to the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism (ORA), a regional economic development organization located in Oil City, in February of this year. Back in 2024, the members of the Venango Region Catholic School (VRCS) Association announced that [Venango Catholic High School in Oil City](#) would close at the end of the 2023-2024 academic year leaving a vacant building.

“The sale of the property that was once Venango Catholic High School opened up an opportunity to invest back into Catholic education in the Oil City region,” said The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie. “I am pleased to be able to provide support for St. Stephen School and trust that the Venango Region Catholic School Association will continue to provide sound leadership and guidance for our Catholic school students.”

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The VRCS is an association formed by the Diocese of Erie, St. Joseph Parish and St. Patrick Parish that operates the preschool-through 8th grade elementary school on the St. Stephen School campus.

“This decision reflects the diocese’s strong belief in the value of Catholic education and our desire to see it thrive in Oil City and the surrounding areas,” said Bob Puleo, board chair for the Venango Region Catholic School Association. “St. Stephen School is on solid financial footing. This gift will support its continued growth and success.”

The Diocese of Erie consistently emphasizes that Catholic education in Oil City is both highly valued and strongly supported. While there are no specific initiatives identified at this time, the overall focus remains on strengthening the elementary school and its long-standing service to the Oil City community.

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