



**Our Lady
of the Lake**
CATHOLIC CHURCH

December 22, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We write to you today with a shared sense of hope and purpose for the future of Catholic education in northern Middle Tennessee. As pastors and educators, we are united in our commitment to form young people in faith, excellence, and love for Christ and His Church.

Much of northern Middle Tennessee is experiencing remarkable growth, and with it comes both opportunities and responsibilities. More families are moving here, and many are seeking a strong Catholic education for their children. We recognize that to serve this growing community well, we must look beyond individual parishes and schools and embrace a spirit of collaboration.

God has blessed us with strong parishes and thriving schools. As Saint John Vianney, Our Lady of the Lake, and Pope Saint John Paul II Preparatory School continue to serve Sumner County well, a vibrant discussion centered around school collaboration in northern Nashville has begun. An important factor in this conversation is the possibility of a new school at Our Lady of the Lake Church. What has become clear is that all parishes and schools share a unity of purpose and a desire for ever stronger collaboration. The level and closeness of this collaboration remain part of an ongoing conversation.

To guide this effort, we have brought together a steering committee of educators, parents, and professionals to lead us in making thoughtful, well-informed, mission-aligned, and collaborative decisions. The committee is currently discerning and leaning toward the possibility of opening a new K-1 school for the 2027-2028 school year, with plans to add one grade each subsequent year until reaching 5th grade. Our goal is simple yet ambitious: to ensure that as many children as possible in northern Middle Tennessee have access to a vibrant, faith-filled Catholic education. This is not about competition between our schools but about

partnership and stewardship. We believe that by working together, we can build something stronger than any one of us could accomplish alone.

We invite you to pray for us and with us as we continue this important work. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we are confident that the future of Catholic education in northern Middle Tennessee is bright. Together, we seek to create opportunities that will form young disciples, strengthen families, and build up the Body of Christ for generations to come.

In Christ,



Rev. Austin Gilstrap
Pastor, Our Lady of the Lake Catholic
Church



Rev. Richard Childress
Pastor, St. John Vianney Catholic Church



Dr. Erick Chittle
President, Pope Saint John Paul II
Preparatory School



Dr. Shana DeSouza Druffner, J.D., Ed.D
Superintendent of Catholic Schools