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Austin Catholic Academy Groundbreaking Moves Northern Macomb County School Closer to Reality

Macomb Township – Groundbreaking ceremonies were held February 14 for Austin Catholic Academy in Macomb Township. It was the culmination of a decade-long effort by committed parents and the Archdiocese of Detroit to provide a coeducational Catholic secondary school for children in northern Macomb County.

Freshman high school students could start classes in September of 2009 in the new facility that is being built on a site provided by the Archdiocese of Detroit on the north side of 23 Mile Road, just west of North Avenue. The school will be operated by the Midwest Province of the Augustinian Fathers and Brothers. One grade will be added each year. Enrollment is expected to reach 800 students.

Cardinal Adam Maida, archbishop of Detroit, gave his insight into the role of Catholic schools in providing a rich Christian philosophy and participated in the groundbreaking ceremony on the 107-acre site.

“We have only admiration for the parents of this community who have realized the need for a Catholic education for their children,” said the cardinal. “The archdiocese is proud to play a role in helping to turn their vision into the reality of today’s groundbreaking for the Austin Catholic Academy.”

Among those joining Cardinal Maida at the groundbreaking were the pastors of the four sponsoring North Macomb parishes: Fr. Michael Hydziuszko of St. Isidore, Macomb Township; Fr. Robert Fisher of St. Lawrence, Utica; Fr. Andrew Tomasko of St. Therese of Lisieux; Shelby Township; and Fr. Jerome Machlik of St. John Vianney, Shelby Township.

Fr. Machlik, who also serves as vicar of the North Macomb Vicariate, noted that Catholic education was one the vicariate’s priorities. “Austin Catholic Academy has been well worth the wait,” he said.

Father David Brecht, O.S.A., a 1956 graduate of Detroit’s Austin High School, will serve as Austin Catholic Academy’s first headmaster. “Austin Catholic Academy has a great heritage and an exciting future,” said Fr. Brecht.

“It is founded in the Augustinian traditions of Christian virtue, academic excellence and leadership development. The Augustinian Order will offer a stable and challenging academic environment, as well as exceptional extracurricular activities for the students,” he added.

Leonard Brillati, president of the volunteer group that initiated the *Journey of a Lifetime* capital campaign, noted the school was being built in one of the fastest-growing suburban areas in the United States, an area where there was only one Catholic high school at the time the effort began.

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Austin Catholic Academy Groundbreaking

“Over the years, this small group of dedicated parents has grown to dozens of volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make Austin Catholic Academy a reality,” said Brillati. “Their efforts have raised over \$9 million, but this is just a first step and the campaign will continue to ensure the success of this great institution.”

Fr. Brecht indicated that with 275,000 Catholics living in Macomb County, there currently is just one all-male Catholic high school with 800 students and one all-female Catholic high school with approximately 600 students. A recent survey of Macomb County Catholics found 76% willing to support a new Catholic high school.

Funding to build and initially operate Austin Catholic Academy is being underwritten by \$32 million in long-term, tax-exempt bonds. Its “Journey of a Lifetime” capital campaign has raised over \$9 million, which represents generous commitments from individuals, parishes and businesses.

In addition to its classrooms, Austin Catholic Academy will house a chapel that will provide a distinctive image for the Catholic community. The school building is traditional in design, but will include the latest “green” and electronic technology to provide a quality education.

The “green” efforts are accomplished through daylighting, super insulation, renewable energy and storm water management.

Brillati said the planning committee decided early in the process that portable technology, accessible to students and faculty, would play a major role in providing a quality education. This portable technology was achieved through a wired and wireless network, a local data network and an intranet for use by students and teachers. Ceiling-mounted projectors, smart boards, video broadcasting equipment and sound systems will also be added.

“Austin Catholic Academy will provide residents in Macomb County and the surrounding area a unique opportunity to build upon the current strengths of the Catholic school system, implementing the latest educational, technology and strategies to provide a state-of-the-art education within a Catholic learning environment,” Brillati noted.

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