



# MIDDLE VILLAGE PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL

WHERE EVERY CHILD IS OUR...  
...**MOST VALUED PERSON**

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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May 11, 2017

JOSEPHINE LUME  
CHAIRPERSON

Dear Families and Friends of Middle Village Preparatory Charter School,

SERPHIN R. MALTESE  
VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Our school last week received a very distressing and borderline threatening letter from lawyers for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn that attempts to order us not to recruit additional students for the upcoming academic year. This letter is part of the Brooklyn Diocese's ongoing legal efforts to have us evicted.

MARGARET OGNIBENE  
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VERONICA COKLEY  
ASSISTANT TO THE BOARD

In the May 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, the Diocese's Wall Street attorney states our continued efforts to enroll students at our school "may be punishable by fine or imprisonment or both for contempt of court." The Diocese opposes our location within the Christ the King High School Campus. Christ the King High School, which, while Catholic, is operated independent of the Brooklyn Diocese and has been independent for over 40 years. The Diocese has gone to court to have its view enforced and evict MVP.

We have tremendous respect and admiration for the Diocese, Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio and its other leaders. However, we will not allow ourselves to be bullied out of fulfilling our mission to educate children in our community to the best of our abilities.

## ADMINISTRATION

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NANCY VELEZ  
PRINCIPAL

I want to make sure you understand that the Diocese is suing Christ the King High School, not Middle Village Prep. The legal technicality is – they want us out of the building. Our students and families, and our school's future, will be irreparably damaged if the Diocese is successful.

MICHELE ALLOCCA  
DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM

Our school is at this very moment pursuing our options in court to see that our rights are protected and our high-achieving school can remain and grow in its current home for years to come. We are confident that we will prevail.

CHRISTIAN QUEZADA  
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

ANDREW BURTON  
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

As a brief history lesson, in the beginning from 1962 on, the Diocese did run CTK but closed it in 1975, together with numerous other Catholic high schools. A group of parents of Christ the King students and community leaders led by parent Serphin Maltese, came together to save CTK and operate it as a Catholic school independent of the Brooklyn Diocese for the last 40 years. The "new" independent CTK acquired the school property from the Diocese pursuant to an agreement.

The Diocese asserts that the agreement prohibits the CTK property from being used for anything other than a Catholic high school or for purposes consistent with running a Catholic school. CTK strongly disagrees and believes Middle Village Prep's location in the building is

completely appropriate. As you know, Middle Village Prep is a public charter school. Since the Bishop and the Diocese permit similar charter schools to coexist in Catholic schools, we find the Diocese's position puzzling. The high school is pushing back against the Diocese in court. The court has so far ruled partially in the Diocese's favor and against Middle Village Prep. All of us on the CTK campus believe a judgement is in error and we will be fighting the Diocese on behalf of Middle Village Prep in every way possible.

It's hard for us to understand why Bishop DiMarzio and the Diocese would want to inflict hardship on our school and close us down.

It's true that as a public school we cannot teach religion, however, the education we provide is as beneficial as any Catholic school in Queens. We instill in our 380 middle schoolers the same kind of classical virtues and high character traits that Diocesan-run schools also seek to instill in their students.

Our school is one of the best in our community and our county, and recently was recognized by the New York State Education Commissioner as a "Reward School," one of 220 high achieving and high progress schools in the entire state. Every student takes 3 Regents Exams and courses including Latin & regents level science, history and math.

Middle Village Prep is so successful that not only are we fully enrolled, we have 250 families on the waiting list.

I don't have to tell you how invaluable our partnership with CTK is, considering our shared use of the Gymnasium, Auditorium, Multi-purpose room and Cafeteria as well as the entire campus grounds. Our school population reflects our community: Over 80% of our students are Catholic. Many of our students go on to Catholic high schools, some on full or partial scholarships. Half our student body is considered economically at risk and 16% receive special education services.

What's more, our students this past year spent Veteran's Day honoring fallen veterans by cleaning up and then decorating their gravesites at All Faiths Cemetery and annually recognized 9-11 so that the importance of that day is not lost on generations who did not experience it.

As parents, you know the value our school brings to your children, your families and our community. Were the Bishop and the Diocese to succeed in their lawsuit and close MVP, your children would likely be forced back into one of the city's most overcrowded school districts. Given that CSD 24 is at roughly 150% of capacity and school space is non-existent, Middle Village Prep would close if not for the space at Christ the King.

Closure of Middle Village Prep would be a tragic loss to our students, our families and our community. It would deny current and future students:

- Our highly acclaimed and integrated three-year high school and college prep curriculum, which is not offered in the local city schools;
- Our dynamic Speech and Debate program, which teaches students the art of public speaking and utilizes the Lincoln-Douglas debates format;

- Our music, drama and art programs;
- Our STEM programs;
- Design and Engineering, Robotics, and engaging extracurricular mathematics programs;
- Community engagement and volunteerism opportunities;
- Robust sports programs for boys and girls.

We invite you to attend MVP's board meeting on May 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. in the Hugh P. Kirwan Performing Arts Center. There, the board will answer any questions or concerns you may have. Please make every effort to attend this meeting. The board can also be contacted at [boardoftrustees@middlevillageprep.org](mailto:boardoftrustees@middlevillageprep.org).

We look forward to serving you and your children for years to come.

Sincerely,  
Josephine Lume  
Board Chair