



## DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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April 24, 2026

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This weekend we enter into the fourth week of Easter. Eastertime, above all, is a time to share the Good News of the victory of the Risen Christ and affirm our call to salvation and eternal life through our Catholic ministries.


Our Catholic Schools are a vital and important part of this ministry. Our schools form our students not only intellectually, physically, and socially but also morally and spiritually. Our schools are some of the best ways that we share the Good News of Christ. Therefore, it is a very sad thing when a Catholic school, especially a parish school, must close.

On March 10, 2026, I received a letter from Fr. Doug Krings, Pastor of Holy Spirit Parish and St. Patrick's Academy East, indicating that he had decided, after consulting with his Parish Finance Council, to close St. Patrick's Academy East at the end of this school year, due to long term financial challenges. Although the Finance Council voted unanimously for this unfortunate decision in order to preserve the parish from a massive and unbearable deficit, I advised Fr. Doug that he needed to also consult his Parish Pastoral Council. This he did on March 17.

Fr. Doug informed me by letter on March 18, 2026, that, after a lengthy conversation, most of his Pastoral Council also voted to close St. Patrick's Academy East, recognizing the unsustainable financial burdens. Therefore, respecting the authority of Fr. Doug in this matter, and the strong advice given to him, I saw nothing that could or should prevent Fr. Doug from putting his decision to close the school into place. I have therefore confirmed this decision.

Of course, closing a school is very sad and something that nobody wants to happen. It lessens the ministry and service of the Church. Nonetheless, with strong hope in Christ, St. Patrick's Academy is committed to continuing its service to all existing and new students and families. There is a place for every child from the St. Patrick's East Campus at the West Campus. We are in this together as a community of hope and communion. As Our Lord conquered sin and death through his own suffering, we believe that he can bring us through this pain into glory.

In Christ's love, peace, and joy.

  
Bishop Jeff Fleming