



The Academy of Our Lady of Peace is a Catholic secondary school for young women sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. The mission of the Academy is two-fold:

1. *To assist and enable parents to fulfill their roles as the primary educators, and*
2. *To inspire its students to grow as committed Christians who are building Christ's kingdom of justice, love and peace.*

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Through a college preparatory liberal arts program, each student is challenged to become a responsible woman educated to the needs of society.

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May 4, 2009

Dear Friends,

It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors for the Academy of Our Lady of Peace to ensure that the school's mission statement is implemented. The past several years have been challenging ones for us as we worked to create a long range plan for OLP. The centerpiece of this plan is a modernization effort designed to lay the foundation for OLP's next 100 years. The design criteria driving the modernization plan are:

- an integral campus with all parking, classroom and administrative space within a securable perimeter;
- the preservation of the historical areas of the campus;
- a centralized administrative office area providing space for all workers;
- a centralized science and technology hub;
- the replacement of substandard classroom and office spaces that are in basements, or have pillars blocking sight lines;
- and additional parking.

With due diligence and every effort made to produce a plan that would meet the Catholic educational needs of our students, we undertook the arduous task of having the plan approved by the City of San Diego. Despite unanimous approval from the San Diego Planning Commission, we were disappointed that the City Council did not give us permission to implement this plan. With that decision, we find that we now have three options available to us:

**1. We can do nothing.**

As a Board, we agree that this alternative is unacceptable. This option negates our ability to carry out our mission and endangers the long-term viability of the Academy. We have carefully surveyed the needs of the Academy and concluded that the modernization plan is necessary.

**2. We can begin the development process over again.**

The modernization plan that we presented to the City of San Diego was the culmination of an expensive and time consuming process involving many constituencies. For more than three years, we wrestled with designing a project that would meet all of our educational needs while still being affordable and aesthetically pleasing. We've looked at many options, including adaptive reuse. Given the constraints of our physical campus, we think that if we began the process over again, we would still come up with a plan very similar to the one we already submitted. Furthermore, there is no guarantee

that any new plan would be approved by the City of San Diego. Indeed, the City Council expressly rejected the parts of the plan that were essential to fulfilling our religious educational mission.


### **3. We can seek a legal remedy.**

Under the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA), religious institutions are protected from religious discrimination and unnecessary burdens on religious expression imposed by local government zoning requirements. Our modernization plan is necessary to further the mission of the school. We believe that the City's decision unfairly discriminates against our Catholic identity; the denial of the implementation of our modernization plan places a substantial, if not impossible, burden on us to carry out our mission. Because of this, we believe that challenging the City's decision under this statute is our best alternative. While we don't relish the idea of litigation, we must be true to our call to provide our students with the best education possible.

As a Board, we don't believe that the modernization plan approved by the San Diego Planning Commission is inherently flawed. We are very disappointed that the San Diego City Council did not approve it as well when they granted us an amended Conditional Use Permit (CUP). **Instead, they chose to put the needs of a small constituency of neighbors ahead of the much larger Catholic community of San Diego.** We occupy a unique niche in the San Diego Catholic community. *What we are asking for is a modernization plan that will give us the flexibility to meet the needs of both today's students and those of the future.* Fifty years ago, there were eleven private Catholic high schools located in the San Diego diocese. Today there are only five, one of which is in Calexico. OLP must be allowed to update and modernize if we are to fulfill the mission begun here more than 127 years ago.

As chair of the Board, I am asking for your support as we commit ourselves to this plan of action. No doubt, this will be a difficult process. But we must persevere if we are to continue to survive as an institution dedicated to the development of Christian values, leadership skills and excellence in education. We would appreciate your prayerful remembrance with the offering of a *Hail Mary* each day until this matter is resolved. Please ask Our Lady of Peace to pray for us. We know that her intercessions are dear to the heart of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. We appreciate your help in ensuring that our Catholic heritage continues to serve future generations of young women.

In the Peace of Jesus Christ,



Mrs. Mary Caratan Sloper '58

Chair

*on behalf of the Academy of Our Lady of Peace Board of Directors*

Sr. Dolores Anchondo, CSJ  
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