



Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac School

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Sisters announce plans for new Catholic high school in Temecula

Project has key backing from Bishop Gerald Barnes

TEMECULA –St. Jeanne de Lestonnac Catholic High School in Temecula will welcome its first freshman class in the 2017-2018 school year, according to the Sisters of the Company of Mary, a religious community that has committed to build the school.

After months of prayer and discernment, and the completion of a two-year feasibility study, the Sisters announced Tuesday that the new high school will be built on the 17-acre campus that also houses the kindergarten through eighth grade school that they founded.

“This will complete the picture, the dream we have always had of providing strong, faith-based education all the way through the high school years,” said Sister Ernestine Velarde, ODN, President of St. Jeanne de Lestonnac School. “It will be an exciting and challenging project and we know that we won’t be in it by ourselves. The community will be with us as they always have.”

A key supporter of the project is Bishop Gerald Barnes of the Diocese of San Bernardino, which includes the Temecula area.

“I give my full and formal support to this effort by the Sisters of the Company of Mary,” Bishop Barnes said. “They have a 14-year track record of providing the best in Catholic education to the Temecula area. Now, that will extend to those important and formative years in high school.”

The Sisters plan to phase in the high school one grade at a time, beginning with a freshman class of about 70 students for the 2017-2018 year. A feasibility conducted by Milwaukee-based Meitler conservatively estimated that the high school could have an enrollment of more than 400 students in six to seven years. Projected growth in the school-aged population in the greater Temecula area and the high number of children in Catholic religious education classes were cited as positive data in support of building a new Catholic high school.

“The community needs this,” said Rob Crisell, who has a child in public high school in Temecula and one at St. Jeanne School. “So many of our Catholic kids have to go to Riverside or to San Diego County to attend Catholic high school.”

With the decision to build the high school now made, the Sisters will now focus on the design of the new campus and embark on a fundraising campaign.

The new high school would draw from the cities of Temecula, Murrieta, Canyon Lake, Wildomar, Lake Elsinore and Winchester as well as some communities in Northern San Diego County. It would also draw from many Catholic parishes including St. Catherine of Alexandria in Temecula, St. Martha in Murrieta, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta in Winchester, St. Frances of Rome in Wildomar and St. Vincent Ferrer in Sun City.



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“It will uplift everybody in the [Temecula] Valley,” said Father Tom Burdick, pastor of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish. “All will benefit from a spiritually-led and spiritually-centered high school.”

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