



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

February 19, 2025

Bishop Soto, the Department of Catholic Schools and the faithful of the Diocese of Sacramento are grateful that the incident involving a former student attempting to enter St. Mary Parish School's Ash Wednesday Mass with a gun was resolved safely and that no students, teachers or staff were harmed.

The off-duty law enforcement parents of the St. Mary community who were volunteering their time to act as parent observers for the school Mass prevented the former student from entering the Church and detained him until on-duty police arrived. We are grateful for their vigilance and the safety protocols in place at St. Mary School.

This incident has raised concerns amongst our school communities regarding school safety, specifically at Mass. Please be assured that the safety of our students remains our highest priority.

Each Catholic school in the Diocese is required to have an active School Safety Committee led by the school principal and a designated Safety Captain. Each School Safety Committee consists of various stakeholders. Safety Captains receive annual training and resources directly from the Diocese, including guidance from law enforcement and safety professionals, to ensure that schools remain current on best practices and emergency protocols.

In addition, every school follows a comprehensive safety checklist throughout the academic year. This includes monthly fire drills, annual earthquake and lockdown drills (conducted in collaboration with local law enforcement), CPR and first aid certification for staff, and regular Catholic Mutual safety trainings on topics such as severe weather preparedness, playground safety, and anti-bullying awareness. These measures are not optional, rather they are an essential part of school culture.

The Diocese also provides schools with ongoing access to resources and training opportunities through private, local, state, and federal partners, including the FBI School Safety Symposium and active threat prevention programs. We share digital safety education with families, provide emergency management resources, and make mental health and trauma-informed support tools available to school leaders.

Together, these efforts reflect our deep commitment to protecting the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of every student. A Catholic education must form the mind, body, heart, and soul. This requires an environment of reverent prayer, safety, trust, and mutual respect.

We invite all parents to continue partnering with us in prayer and vigilance. May the Lord Jesus, our rock and our refuge, watch over the schools and bless our children with peace and security.

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