

Our Mother of Sorrows
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OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS
HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Holy Cross Church
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May 2026

Dear Parishioners:

Here at Holy Cross in Charlotte, we have a long history with youth cheerleading. It is always great to see our youth cheering at a basketball game or parish events. It is helpful to know that the three aspects of our Holy Cross youth cheerleading consist of 1) growing in and celebrating a life of FAITH in Jesus Christ, 2) cheering at athletic games as well as parish events, and 3) regional competitive cheerleading.

For several months now I have been in conversations with the Diocese of Rochester regarding our cheerleading program at Holy Cross. There is a concern that competitive cheerleading, the above aspect 3), poses a significant liability in certain moves (e.g., making human pyramids) can seriously injure participants. Thanks be to God in the long history of our cheer program at Holy Cross no child has been significantly injured. However, in another parish in our diocese a few years ago, a young girl suffered a broken back while cheerleading. This resulted in a lawsuit settlement that cost over \$1,000,000 not to mention the emotional trauma suffered by the young girl and her family. Just from a search online, one can learn that competitive cheerleading “is considered a high-risk sport, frequently resulting in catastrophic injuries—specifically head, neck, and spinal injuries.” This is the reason why no other diocese in the state of New York hosts competitive cheerleading programs.

The team of parish leaders who lead the Holy Cross Cheer program do an amazing job in guiding our youth and keeping them safe. To continue to build on their dedication and help promote the safety of our youth cheerleaders and protect our parish and school from potential lawsuits, the Diocese of Rochester has established guidelines for a youth Cheer Club (see handbook) that will be operated out of our school office not under CYO. The new Cheer program will perform at CYO games and be open to both children who attend our school and those who are parishioners of our parish.

Over the past few months, I have given this topic of youth cheerleading a great deal of thought and prayer. Our goal is to continue for years to come the first two aspects of the Holy Cross program: 1) growing in and celebrating a life of FAITH in Jesus Christ, and 2) Cheering at athletic games as well as parish events. I pray these aspects will always continue. However, aspect 3), competitive cheerleading at Holy Cross will end in that it comes with significant physical risk.

I realize that this will be a difficult decision for some people to agree with. However, continuing competitive cheerleading is not only considered unsafe from an athletic point of view, but also highly risky from an insurance and legal perspective. It would pain me and our parishioners if in the future a child were to be seriously injured in a Holy Cross competitive cheerleading activity and

sustain life altering injuries. Secondly, when a lawsuit were to be eventually settled it could potentially result in the closure and sale of the parish and school to reach a settlement.

Our goal is to ensure that our entire campus be a sanctuary, a safe place for all children in God's family. Thank you to all those who have worked tirelessly over the years to ensure the safety of our parishioners, especially our youth. I look forward to collaborating with you and all people of goodwill in ensuring that Holy Cross is a place where all people are encouraged to grow in and celebrate a life of FAITH in Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William G. Coffas". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "In Christ,".

Rev. William G. Coffas
Pastor of Holy Cross + Our Mother of Sorrows