

**REMARKS**  
**BY ADAM CARDINAL MAIDA**  
**Grand-Opening of the Covenant House**  
**Life Skills Center-Central**  
**AUGUST 14, 2007**

Mr. Joseph and Members of the Covenant House Community, Benefactors and Supporters of Covenant House; Fellow Religious Leaders, and Representatives of the Business and Civic Communities:

On this mid-summer day, we gather for a most joyful occasion—the dedication and grand-opening of the new Life Skills Center here on the campus of Covenant House. First and foremost, we praise and thank Almighty God, the Heavenly Father, Lord of heaven and Earth, the source of every gift, blessing, and inspiration. It is His love which brings us together today as we strive to continue the mission of Christ, His Son, a mission of loving concern for the least of our brothers and sisters.

I know you join me in commending Sam Joseph for the vision, creativity, and energy he has given to this project and the way he has developed and expanded the mission of Covenant House here in Metro Detroit.

We also want to publicly acknowledge and thank the donors whose generosity has made this day possible. It is indeed fitting that the three buildings which comprise the Life Center should bear their names:

- Kathleen & William Brodhead Education Building
- Richard & Angela Wolohan Commons Center
- Peter & Connie Cracchiolo Youth Home.

An essential component of the Covenant House process of rehabilitation includes educational formation in the widest possible sense. It is one thing to be a refuge or an oasis for young people who are troubled or have no home of their own. It is yet another thing to teach people a skill-set for future employment. And still more, it is a good and sacred thing when such ministry happens within a faith context. Residents need quality academic formation within a supportive environment. The new Life Skills Center we dedicate today allows for all dimensions of the Covenant House program to be fulfilled; residents will be able to enjoy a full spectrum of athletic, social, and religious opportunities.

Today we celebrate partnership—the partnership of the Archdiocese and the work of Covenant House, as well as the partnership of many benefactors and members of the business and civic communities. Over the past decade, the Archdiocese of Detroit has partnered with Covenant House and their mission in a variety of ways. The 5.3 acres on which we stand is owned by the Archdiocese, and Covenant House has set up programs at various Catholic buildings over the years, including Holy Redeemer and St. Monica and Augustine Parishes. Based on our positive experience of partnership and our common concern for quality

Catholic education for all young people, I would like to take today's occasion to share with you a few hopes and dreams for future possibilities here in Metro Detroit. I will especially focus on a concern we all share—education for urban youth.

Even though the Church had to close a number of schools within the city and the suburbs a couple of years ago, we still maintain 12 Catholic schools in the city of Detroit—10 elementary and 2 high schools. Thanks to dedicated administrators, experienced educators, faith-filled parents, and the generous support of Catholics throughout the Archdiocese, our schools in the city continue to accomplish great things. By closing and merging some of our smaller facilities, we have been able to focus our energies and resources, thus strengthening our presence and our mission.

I am also delighted to publicly commend the planned 2008 opening of the Detroit Cristo Rey High School for young men and women of high school-age; in keeping with the national model for Cristo Rey Schools, their program will include a work–study component, thus allowing students to obtain financial assistance for their tuition while, at the same time, learning skills for the marketplace.

Over the last dozen years, the Archdiocese has partnered with various colleges and management groups by leasing closed facilities to charter schools. As the mayor himself stated in his State of the City Address earlier this year, the

Detroit Public Schools cannot possibly be the solution for every child and family. I note the mayor not only commended the work of charter schools, but also praised private schools and parochial schools as other worthy alternatives to the public system.

With all of these things in mind, I would like to articulate today my hope to further enhance use of closed Catholic school buildings. I am asking my staff to look into ways we could make more of these buildings available for groups wishing to provide educational services for students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Hopefully, these services could include: GED education, vocational work, family counseling, drug treatment, etc. In much the same way that Covenant House emphasizes the whole spectrum of gifts and needs, I would hope we could do something similar, creating a comprehensive program of formation.

Right from our beginning as a city in 1701, the Catholic Church has been a strong presence, voice, and witness to the wider civic community through its commitment to quality education. We can proudly point to the Servant of God, Father Gabriel Richard, the famous priest, statesman, and educator. All of my predecessors, without exception, have given time and energy to the building of schools, and each, in his own way, had to come up with creative strategies to maximize the use of resources, responding to the needs of the day. I believe we are doing the same here and now with my proposal.

As the Catholic Church, we bring to the table—buildings, vision, and experience as educators. As people committed to the Gospel, we stand ready to partner with members of the business and civic communities in providing ever-new solutions for the young people of our urban area.

It is my hope and dream the ideas I have sketched out this day will give birth to something new, yet very practical, fulfilling everyone's dream of quality education for all of our young people. From such a foundation, we will have reason for hope for a brighter future for our city, our state, and our society.

Again, I offer my congratulations to Sam Joseph and my thanks to the generous donors.