



**CHRIST THE KING**  
JESUIT COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Fran Thompson, (847)772-6429  
fthompson@ctkjesuit.org

**\$28 Million State-of-the-Art College Prep High School Opens as Beacon of Hope for Low Income Families on Chicago's West Side**

**CHICAGO – January 18, 2010** – Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School (CtK), the first Catholic school to be built on Chicago's West Side in 85 years, welcomed 160 freshmen and sophomores back from winter Break with a belated Christmas present--a 100,000 square foot, \$28 million state-of-the-art school building. Six-hundred individuals and special guests are expected to participate in a special Building Dedication and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration Today.

Construction on the new school building, located at 5088 W. Jackson Boulevard in the Austin neighborhood, began in June 2008. Commitment to the school has been strong, even in this weak economic climate.

When asked about building a brand new school building in the midst of a recession, Chairman of the Board Dr. Anthony Barbato, retired chief executive officer Loyola University Medical Center says, "The efforts of people who have stepped out of these hard times to give and help has been amazing to watch. There is no right time. We believe these kids need the school now more than ever, and that is what this is all about." The school still needs \$17 million for the building.

Ultimately, CtK seeks to provide a safe, affordable, quality, college prep option for 600 young people on the West Side. Families and young people on the West side need a college prep high school. Perched along the Eisenhower Expressway, Austin is a hot market spot for drug trafficking, which drives the area's crime and gang violence. The neighborhood's predominantly African-American families make less than \$30,000 annually and the unemployment rate is double the rest of the nation. Since the closing of Austin High School, there are only 7,500 seats at local high schools for the 14,000 high-school-aged youth in the area. Less than half of students finish high school, and of those, only 38 percent go on to two and four year colleges. Only 11 percent of the students meet state standards, 88 percent of CtK students come from the immediate area and 66 percent come from public grammar schools.

As Cristo Rey model Jesuit high school, CtK provides an affordable, private school alternative through an innovative work-study program. Students earn 75 percent of their tuition through jobs at Chicago-area companies such as hospitals, banks and law firms. Lauded nationally and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Cristo Rey model high schools have a 12-year track record of success--99

percent of Cristo Rey model high school graduates are accepted into a college or university. Ctk is open to students from all backgrounds: 90 percent of the students are not Catholic and 75 percent qualify for reduced and free school lunch.

The new building's unique open design, by award-winning architect John Ronan, conveys the school's mission of bringing hope to the community. "The building is designed to inspire," says Rev. Christopher J. Devron, SJ, president of Christ the King. "With God's grace, we are creating a beacon of light and hope—a place where our young people will become tomorrow's leaders; leaders who not only better themselves, but commit to serve and lift up their community."

Faculty and Staff have worked to design a "building as a teacher." From the state-of-the-art science labs to the classrooms to the counseling suites, each room displays a placard which highlights a famous Chicagoan or African American leader. "Our students and families deserve the same quality learning environment that students at all Jesuit schools enjoy—no matter what zip code their home is in," says Devron.

School leaders also have the community in mind. Construction of Ctk's building has created a significant number of jobs in the community. One of the largest community development projects in the Austin neighborhood, Ctk provided 48 new jobs to community residents through a comprehensive local employment program at the construction site. Additionally, the building will be accessible for community as well as student usage. Areas available to the community include a large gym/auditorium, computer labs, the cafeteria and the library. Following the example of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School—Ctk's sister Jesuit high school in Pilsen—the school will work with local, community-based organizations that support programs for seniors, development of computer skills, culture and the arts, and recreation.

#### About Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School

Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School is a Catholic Jesuit, independent, coeducational, college preparatory school for students from families on Chicago's West Side who would otherwise not have access to a private high school education. Sponsored by the Chicago Province Jesuits, Christ the King offers students a strong academic and spiritual foundation integrated with a Corporate Internship Program in a safe, disciplined, faith-based and nurturing environment. To learn more about Christ the King Jesuit College Prep, please visit [www.ckjesuit.org](http://www.ckjesuit.org).

###