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New Jesuit High School Unites with Austin Community

Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School will deliver college-prep education to underserved students on Chicago's West Side

CHICAGO – September 12, 2007 – The Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus and the Archdiocese of Chicago announce the opening of the first new Catholic high school on Chicago's West Side in 85 years.

Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School, following the highly successful Cristo Rey Network® model, is uniting with the Austin community to build solid, high-quality, faith-based, college-prep, leadership-focused education. The Austin neighborhood has more than 14,000 high-school-age youth, but only 7,000 spaces available at nearby high schools.

“Through the invitation of the West Side community, we have spent over a year working to ensure that Christ the King and its model are the right fit for students, their parents and the community,” said Rev. Christopher J. Devron, SJ, president of Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School. “It is my goal to ensure students in this community receive an education that is rooted in the centuries-old Catholic Jesuit education tradition of academic excellence and leadership development.”

The feasibility process, commissioned on June 12, 2006, included surveys of 531 students, 119 parents and 88 community leaders, which showed overwhelming support for a faith-based, Christ-centered high school in Austin. Though the majority of parents and students surveyed are not Catholic, the study found that 90 percent of parents support the establishment of a high school following the Cristo Rey model.

That model includes a longer school day and year, an expectation that every student could go to college, and an internship program in which all students work to earn tuition. Students at Christ the King Jesuit Prep will earn about 75 percent of their tuition costs while gaining valuable, life-changing skills and experiences through jobs at Chicago-area companies. To date, approximately 70 companies already have signed up to be partners in this endeavor.

Christ the King will be the 20th Cristo Rey Network® school in the U.S. and the second in Chicago. The Cristo Rey Jesuit high school, which serves 535 students in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, was the first school of its kind and led to the creation of the Cristo Rey Network®.

Christ the King will open in the 2008-09 school year, serving 120 freshmen at its anticipated interim site, sharing the Circle Rock Campus of the Catalyst Charter School at Washington Boulevard and Central Avenue. The school will add a new freshman class each of the following three years, enrolling 600 young men and women at capacity. The permanent campus, 5058 W. Jackson Blvd., is being designed by award-winning architect John Ronan and will open in 2009.

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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 Prep, please visit www.ctkjesuit.org.

About Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus

The Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus consists of 219 Jesuits serving in a number of ministries including two parishes, two retreat centers, a publishing house, six high schools, two universities, and one Nativity-model middle school. Chicago area ministries include Chicago Jesuit Academy, Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, Loyola Academy, St. Ignatius College Prep, Loyola University Chicago, Loyola University Medical Center, Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House, Charis Ministries, Cook County Hospital Chaplains, and St. Procopius Parish. The Jesuits are the world's largest order of Catholic priests. To learn more about the Chicago Province, please visit www.jesuits-chi.org.

About The Archdiocese of Chicago

Established as a diocese in 1843 and as an Archdiocese in 1880, The Archdiocese of Chicago serves more than 2.3 million Catholics in Cook and Lake Counties in Northeastern Illinois, a geographic area of 1,411 square miles. The Archdiocese is divided into six vicariates and 25 deaneries. This local church is pastored by Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., assisted by six Episcopal Vicars, each responsible for a vicariate (region).

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