



PRESS RELEASE — *For Immediate Release*

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Governor McMaster commends S.C. Catholic school commitment to educating the underserved

COLUMBIA – Gov. Henry McMaster delivered his sixth State of the State address on Wednesday evening. In his speech, the governor highlighted the prosperous growth of South Carolina and charged the General Assembly to continue to work for the common good.

Gov. McMaster also expressed his support and gratitude for Catholic education in South Carolina, particularly its service to lower-income communities. He noted the Diocese of Charleston’s participation in First Steps — a 4K non-public school choice initiative that offers free tuition for eligible families across the state.

“Last year, there were 18 children eligible to participate in the state-funded, full-day 4K program at St. Martin de Porres Catholic School ... This year, parents of nine of those children wanted to enroll their children in five-year-old kindergarten at the school but could not afford to pay the tuition. Thanks to the generosity of the Catholic Church, they were able to continue their education at St. Martin’s,” McMaster said.

“Jonathan McMillan is one of those children,” the governor added. “He participated in the full-day 4K program last year and is now enrolled in five-year-old kindergarten at St. Martin.”

Johnathan was in attendance last evening for the address. He was accompanied by his mother, kindergarten teacher and the school’s principal, Delores Gilliard.

“According to his mother and teachers, Jonathan has been saved from further struggle and challenge by staying at St. Martin,” McMaster said. “He had challenges upon his arrival. He had different social skills that required the intentionality of our educational team. Jonathan is not shy; he is brilliant and a determined leader. His teacher, Ms. Hare, says that her goal is to help him find his light so he can brightly shine to the world around him.”

Delores Gilliard is a 40-year veteran of public education and has been the principal of St. Martin de Porres for five years.

“Johnathan was so excited and happy to meet Gov. McMaster,” Gilliard said. “The governor made him feel so special — Johnathan even got to sit in the speaker’s chair. It was a great learning opportunity for him, and he loved every minute of his night.”

Presently, the diocese has 10 schools participating in First Steps.

“Every student, no matter their race, religion or socioeconomic status has the right to a quality education,” stated Most Rev. Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS, Bishop of Charleston. “This is why the

Church supports and seeks to provide education initiatives that prioritize children’s individual needs.”

“We need additional school choice options, like ESAs, in our state,” added Gilliard. “It will provide the opportunity for more students, like Johnathan, to receive a wonderful education.”

For more information on Catholic schools in South Carolina, visit: charlestdiocese.org/schools/

ABOUT THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

Founded in 1820, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Charleston is comprised of 114 parishes and missions, 32 Catholic schools, and 350,000 people. It encompasses the state of South Carolina.

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