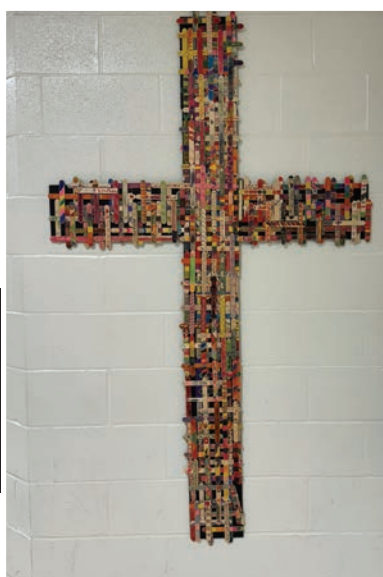
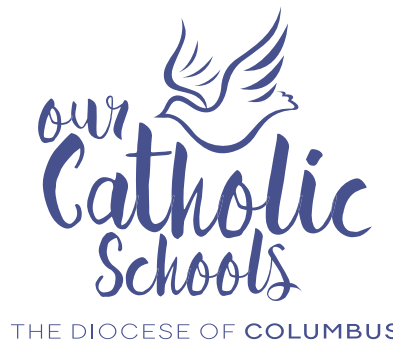


# The CATHOLIC TIMES

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK SPECIAL SECTION  
JANUARY 28, 2024 • FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME • VOLUME 73:2



**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
WEEK 2024**

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# Celebrating the success of Catholic schools during Catholic Schools Week

By **Dr. Adam J. Dufault**  
*Superintendent of Catholic Schools*

Sunday, January 28 begins Catholic Schools Week, an annual opportunity to celebrate our Catholic schools and to thank all who make Catholic education possible. During this week, each of the 50 schools in the Diocese of Columbus will host events and activities to recognize families, show appreciation for administrators and teachers, celebrate clergy and religious, and participate in service activities for the community. It is also a time for inviting new families to take a look at the difference that Catholic schools make in the lives of our students.

Catholic Schools Week is also a chance to share exciting news about the Our Catholic Schools. The Office of Catholic Schools continues to implement the strategic plan that was introduced two years ago. This plan, *Real Presence, Real Future: Our Catholic Schools*, lays out an exciting vision for the future. Framed around three primary goals – Catholic Identity, Academic Excellence, and Sustainability – the plan outlines the action steps that will develop our system of schools in each of these areas. We have seen a great deal of success enacting this plan; so much so that we are fast ap-

proaching the time to begin work on our next strategic plan.

Enrollment across the Diocese continues to experience significant growth. Our nearly 18,000 students in preschool through 12th grade represent the highest enrollment in the past 10 years, and our 11 high schools are seeing their highest combined enrollment in the past 15 years.

Families have responded to the good things happening in our Catholic schools. So much so that we are at near capacity in the majority of the schools in the Diocese. More than a dozen schools are in some stage of planning for an expansion or upgrade in facilities to meet the growing demand. In fact, we are even exploring possible locations for new schools. The future of Catholic education in the Diocese of Columbus is certainly bright.

Welcoming all families who desire a Catholic education into our school communities has become much easier this year due to the great blessing of universal EdChoice. This new program from the State of Ohio offers income-based scholarships to every family in the state, making Catholic school more affordable than ever before and an option for every family in our Diocese. EdChoice scholarships are our tax dollars being used to help parents make the best educational

choices for their children.

Realizing that not all financial needs can be met solely through EdChoice, we have also been working to raise much needed tuition assistance funds through the Emmaus Road Scholarship Fund, an Ohio Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) that allows donors to receive a dollar for dollar tax credit in return for gifts for tuition assistance. In 2022, \$1.9 million was raised. Last year, we far surpassed the previous total and raised \$2.9 million for student tuition assistance. These funds truly make a difference in the lives of our students.

The 2023-24 school year started off in wonderful fashion, as the 1,400 men and women who serve as educators in our schools gathered together for the first time since 2019 for a day of encounter and evangelization. We spent a day in prayer with and for one another, being inspired by our speakers, Fr Dave Pivonka from Franciscan University and Catholic author and broadcaster Katie McGrady, on the great vocation we have as Catholic educators in service to the Church. It was a great day of prayer and renewal – and certainly a beautiful sight to see all of the educators in our Diocese united in Adoration of Our Lord, praying for our schools and our students.

We continue to strengthen our Cath-



Adam Dufault,  
 Superintendent of Catholic Schools

olic culture at every school through the continued implementation of our new Religion course of study, which debuted last year. This year, we have been focusing on incorporating Pope St. John Paul

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THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

# Our Lady of Perpetual Help successful in spreading the faith

By Hannah Heil  
Catholic Times Reporter

Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, or evangelization, can bring souls to Him, the source of salvation.

At Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) School, it appears evangelization is reaping results.

"This is evangelization gone right," said Karen Cook, director of adult faith formation at the parish.

The parish has 25 young people on track to receive sacraments at the Easter Vigil in the spring. Of those children, 11 are students at OLPH, and one is a freshman at Columbus Bishop Ready High School who began his faith formation at OLPH.

Four of the 12 students will be baptized Catholic, while another four students, who had been previously baptized, will enter the Church. The other four students – two come from one family and two from another family – will enter the Church with their families.

Julie Dilley, the director of religious education at OLPH, said the school is observing many "reversions" in families, or families who were previously Catholic, left the faith and are returning to the Church.

The school has an increasing number of students preparing to receive their First Holy Communion at a non-traditional age. Catholic students at the school traditionally receive their First Holy Communion in second grade.

"As a church as a whole, I feel like I'm getting less and less children in our traditional sacramental formation programs," Dilley said. "Traditionally, second grade's First Communion, eighth grade's confirmation.

"For whatever reason, there are families that are maybe not active in the faith as much as they were raised Catholic, but then, what's happening when they come to our school, they are reminded of all that they had when they were this child's age."

The increasing number of conversions and reversions could be attributed to ongoing evangelization efforts at OLPH. Faculty and staff are committed to bringing the Good News of Jesus into

the school and making sure that Christ's Presence is known.

"When you go around the school, Jesus is visible everywhere – the artwork, the classrooms," said principal Julie Freeman. "When non-Catholic families come in for that tour, our building should look very different. We are a Catholic building.

"The artwork is very important to me – that that surrounds them, that those images, the bulletin boards, that they see the verses – they see it everywhere, and the parents see that, too."

Freeman said having visuals for students throughout the school is one of the "big things." Each classroom has a holy water font, a crucifix and pictures of Pope Francis and Bishop Earl Fernandes.

Sacred art is displayed throughout the school, along with the Stations of the Cross in the hallway. Many classrooms also have a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Six years ago, the school was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary. The consecration was suggested by a student, Freeman said. Images of the Sacred Heart and Immaculate Heart of Mary are displayed throughout the building.

The school unites in prayer three times a day over the loudspeaker. Teachers also pray in their classrooms, especially during transitions throughout the day, which, Freeman said, can be challenging times for children.

"This school does a phenomenal job of weaving the faith through everything so that it is normal and natural and incorporated and just a part of how life should be and not something that's compartmentalized," said Melissa Zuk, the parish marketing and communications manager.

Teachers model Christ and Christian discipleship for their students. Father Joe Yokum, the pastor at OLPH, said the "greatest way" the Catholic faith is integrated into the classroom is having the faith modeled by teachers.

Each week, students practice a different virtue. During the first week of December, students practiced gratitude. When Father Yokum visited the school dressed as St. Nicholas on Dec. 6, the saint's feast day, the fourth-grade teacher asked students how they can demonstrate gratitude to Father Yokum for visiting their class.

The school also has "faith families," which are groups of students ranging from kindergarten through eighth grade, led by a staff member. The groups allow students in upper grades to be mentors and role models for the younger ones. Faith families spend time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament together.

There is an expectation every day, Freeman said, to have Jesus in the children's lives. The school community is "very lucky," she said, to have the gift of faith and give that to students, who, possibly, "can take pieces of that and extend it to their family."

Cook, who leads the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA) at the parish, which is for people preparing to enter the Catholic Church, said many adults are returning to the Church because of their children or grandchildren who attend OLPH school.

"It's the students impacting their families, whether it's grandma or whoever, and so, adults are returning, completing sacraments," she said.

To serve the number of children seeking to become Catholic, the parish offered a summer catechesis program for the past two years. The class meets five hours a day for a week.

"They want to be a part of His kingdom, and they want to receive Him in Holy Communion to the point where finally mom's like, 'Our whole family wants to do this,'" Dilley said. "This is something that the kids have really shown. They come in our school. They feel the love. They see Jesus all around them."

The parish also offers a Tuesday night youth OCIA class for students in grades two through 10 who are preparing to celebrate sacraments at the Easter Vigil. The class coincides with the adult OCIA class lead by Cook. Both classes are offered on the same evening.

The catechists work closely, Dilley said, and there is usually a "commonality" between the youth and adult OCIA classes, so parents and children preparing to enter the Church as a family can discuss their faith formation together.

Freeman said many families come to OLPH School for non-faith reasons, such as academics or because they feel it is a safe school. While some families do not come for the faith, their children are impacted by learning in a Catholic environment. Freeman said it is important that parents journey in faith with their children, developing a relationship with Christ and growing in their own faith formation, because, unlike a public school, they are choosing to be there.

"We had a new kindergartner come in this year, a new family to us completely, and he's in my faith family, and we went over to Adoration," Freeman said. "Well, that was his first time in church, and he's like, 'What building is this? Who is that



Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help School students attend Mass.  
Photos courtesy Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church

on the cross?' Like, 'I don't even know what that means,' and those are amazing times, honestly, to help walk with them and to let them know how much they're loved by Jesus."

Students are able to receive the sacraments weekly, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is offered every Friday.

Father Yokum said students have a strong point of contact with him during and after receiving the sacraments. Students attend a weekly Mass, and Father Yokum offers the sacrament of reconciliation for students Monday through Wednesday each week.

"We also have a fair number of our non-Catholic students who desire to come in," he said. "They want to see what their classmates are doing, and they had that opportunity to talk to me and to be able to have that point of contact with a priest and to have that moment of experiencing the reality of Jesus in the priesthood, in the Church, in and through the sacramental life from our weekly Mass to the encounter in the confessional."

Although non-Catholics cannot receive absolution from a priest for their sins through the sacrament of reconciliation, students can learn about the sacrament by observing their peers or speaking to Father Yokum and receiving counsel from him.

"Certainly, the confession for a non-Catholic coming into the confessional is not the same as it is for a student who's Catholic, but that encounter is so important," he said.

Freeman said parents are always invited to attend Mass and Adoration with their children. The school has a "KISS Mass," which is an acronym for "Kids Invite Someone Special" to Mass. The children can invite someone to attend Mass with them.

"Last year, there was a participant in OCIA who had come to one of our KISS Masses," Freeman said. "One of our students invited a relative to the KISS Mass, and her testimony was that because of the KISS Mass, that drew her to partici-



Father Joe Yokum, the pastor at Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, receives the gifts of bread and wine at the altar from Our Lady of Perpetual Help School students during Mass.



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# Faithful schools draw non-Catholics into the Church

By Hannah Heil  
Catholic Times Reporter

At Catholic schools, students are not the only individuals impacted by their religious education. Schools across the Diocese of Columbus are witnessing non-Catholic students choosing to enter the Church.

Some students are impacted by the parish priest or their religion classes. For others, there is a sense of community in the Catholic Church, or they are attracted to the Church's beauty and history.

Whatever the reason for their conversion, many diocesan Catholic schools are seeing students convert to Catholicism, and some are bringing members of their family into the Church.

## St. Vincent de Paul School

Mount Vernon St. Vincent de Paul School had 12 students and two staff members enter the Catholic Church in the past two years.

"In an environment like in our school and all of our Catholic schools, where Christ truly is exemplified in everything that we do, people are really attracted to that," said Cecelia Pitt, the school's principal. "People are really drawn to the beauty of our faith when they experience it firsthand."

"That initial invitation to join us for Mass or for the sacraments is really important because it allows people the opportunity to experience it who might not have otherwise."

She said the presence of the St. Vincent de Paul Church clergy in the classrooms is a significant factor for students desiring to become Catholic.

"Father (PJ) Brandimarti and Father (Mark) Hammond are incredibly involved," she said. "Father Brandimarti, he's in the classrooms a lot, so is Deacon Tim (Birie). Every week he comes in and teaches classes to our kids and sparks that excitement."

"Since they've been in the classrooms and talking about what the faith has done for them and their own conversions stories, I think that the kids are really inspired by that. They're excited to become part of our community."

Students attend Mass each week, and teachers take their classes to spend time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The school also has penance services during Advent and Lenten seasons.

"Our Catholic faith is the center of everything we do," Pitt said. "We make sure that our Catholic identity is never compromised."

Students are involved in the liturgical planning process for Mass each week. They also participate in the Mass by serving as lectors, cantors and bringing the gifts of bread and wine to the altar for consecration.

The Mass sparked the interest of



Chillicothe Bishop Flaget School student server Davis Long stands with Father Frank Brown (hidden) and Deacon Reed Hauser (left) as Davis' parents, Nicole and Shawn, bring the gifts to the altar at Mass. As a second grader, Davis was inspired to become Catholic and his parents joined him.  
Photo courtesy Bishop Flaget School

non-Catholic students. Pitt said she believes those students are impacted by regular exposure to the sacraments, and they desire to join their Catholic peers by fully participating in the Mass.

Parents are invited to attend Mass each week with the school. Pitt said she receives positive feedback from parents who join the students for Mass.

"We always extend the invitation to parents to join us, and a lot of times, parents who attend Mass ... we get the most feedback from about how beautiful the Mass is and how excited they are that their kids are part of something that's so beautiful," she said.

"I think that may spark some interest in families as well, just that initial exposure and that invitation each week to come to Mass with us."

Exposing students to the sacraments and the truth of the Catholic faith, Pitt said, has "excited a lot of people."

Two staff members at the school became Catholic in the past year. One staff member, who serves as the school custodian, entered the Catholic Church at last year's Easter Vigil in April with his son, who is in third grade at St. Vincent de Paul.

"As he started to get involved in our school, he became really excited about our community, and the more he learned about us, the more he was drawn to the Catholic faith," Pitt said.

"He went through (the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA), and then he and his son both came into the Church last Easter."

Another staff member, who is a teacher at the school, entered the Catholic Church at the beginning of the 2023-24 school year.

"She spent the last five years teaching in our school, being exposed to the Catholic faith, learning about the faith, and the more she learned about it, the more excited she was to take the next steps to become Catholic," Pitt said.

The school has an Adoration Club

for middle school students, which was started by the school's eighth grade religion teacher. The club meets once a week after school to adore the Blessed Sacrament together.

The teacher saw the club as an opportunity to increase belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, Pitt said. The club also allows children – who might be unable to otherwise – to spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

## Bishop Flaget School

At Chillicothe Bishop Flaget School, principal Laura Corcoran said students learn about Catholicism in their daily religion classes. She said the school welcomes and reaches out to non-Catholic students and their families, helping them to understand the Catholic faith.

"We have a great opportunity for evangelization in our schools, and it's just a natural flow," Corcoran said. "Jesus said, 'Go forward and teach what I've taught you. Make disciples,' so we have a great opportunity that we need to capitalize (on)."

Corcoran said Bishop Flaget typically has between one and three students a year enter the Catholic Church. She said parents often enter the Church with their child, and families go through OCIA together.

"What we find a lot is that the students become interested," she said. "They want to join the Church, and they bring their parents along with them."

"I've also had parents say ... the people are so welcoming, and they feel like such a part of the family that they want to get more involved and become more a part of the community, which often leads them into learning more about the faith and entering (OCIA) and bringing the whole family along."

Corcoran said students desire to be part of a community, and they find that in the Catholic Church. Students also want to receive the sacraments as their Catholic peers do.

Attending a Catholic school helps non-Catholic students understand the faith, and they learn about the Church in their daily religion classes.

Many students desire to convert around second grade, when they learn about the Eucharist and receiving First Holy Communion. Corcoran said these students want to be baptized Catholic, if they have not been baptized already, or convert and enter the Church.

In addition to daily religion classes and teaching children about the sacraments, Corcoran evangelizes through her communication with families. Her outreach to families is an opportunity to share the Catholic faith.

"I've been trying to get lots of information out there about the need to go to Mass on Sundays and also basic tenants of the faith or explain why we do this or what's this all about ... to help the parents be better teachers," she said.

The school is not connected to a parish, but a tabernacle is present in the school's chapel. Beginning in January, Corcoran said, Bishop Flaget will offer one or two class Masses every Friday, and an all-school Mass will be celebrated each month on First Fridays.

Clergy are available to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation to students, and Fathers Chris Tuttle and Frank Brown, who serve as the pastor and parochial vicar at Chillicothe St. Mary and St. Peter churches and Waverly St. Mary Church, have a regular presence in the school.

"Father Frank Brown and Father Chris Tuttle, they've been coming up to school and just being present," Corcoran said. "Father Brown will come up and have lunch in the cafeteria with the kids."

"I think that's a great opportunity for the students to learn more about their faith but also see what exactly happens with vocations, what does it mean to be a priest, that a priest is just a normal guy, that they like to play video games and watch movies, too. Those are all, I think, essential parts of bringing the faith to life for kids and letting them see what opportunities are out there."

## Our Lady of Peace

At Columbus Our Lady of Peace (OLP) School, Anthony Rosselli, the parish's director of evangelization, agreed that a priest can have a significant impact on students.

Father Sean Dooley, the OLP pastor, is a "terrific witness," especially as a young priest, Rosselli said, and makes Catholicism attractive to students of all ages.

"He's very quirky and funny, and the students definitely think that he's just great," he said. "I think that a lot of kids love to see a priest, somebody who's given their life to God, who they also see making jokes and being funny and

## FAITHFUL, continued from Page 5

laughing and having a good time with students.

"The staff often go over to eat lunch in the cafeteria ... and when Father goes over there, he's like a rock star. All the kids are shouting out to him. I think they look at him, and they think, 'Wow, here's a guy who's young and cool and interesting and funny, and he loves God.'"

The school had 12 students in 2023 and seven in 2022 enter the Catholic Church.

"I think that it has most to do with the Mass and the sacraments and the students coming here, singing together, praying together, listening to Father preach," Rosselli said. "Father often teaches them about the saints, and I think that the whole world of Catholicism sort of reaches into their world, and they find it attractive, and they say, 'I want to be a part of that, too.'"

Students at OLP also have a desire to belong to a community, which several found in the Catholic Church. Some students view the Catholic community as a means to encountering God.

"If there is something that I hear often, it's that Catholicism gives them a sense of community that they've been looking for, and I think it's more than just, 'Oh, my friends are all doing it. I want to do it, too,'" Rosselli said.

"The language that they use is more



Father Sean Dooley, pastor at Columbus Our Lady of Peace Church, gives a tour of the church to Our Lady of Peace School kindergarten students. Photo courtesy Our Lady of Peace

a sense of they found a home. They feel like this is the community within which they're going to find God."

OLP principal Jim Silcott also makes Catholicism "present" and "real" to students every day in school, Rosselli said. Students sing a hymn to the Blessed Virgin Mary every morning.

The school has had students in second and third grade through eighth

grade choose to become Catholic. There is not one grade or teacher who has been particularly influential to conversions, Rosselli said.

Rather, the environment of the school and parish as a whole has impacted non-Catholic students, who sense something beautiful about Catholicism and are drawn to it.

"It's become something attractive to

these students," he said. "They want to start walking down the road of Catholicism, and they're excited about it.

"I haven't seen anything like a group of friends or two or three friends who all decided they wanted to do this together. It's been more individual, for whatever reason, God drawing these specific students into the Church."

The school recently had an eighth-grade student enter the Church. Her mother, who is Hindu, began exploring the faith as a result of her daughter's conversion.

At home, the student shares with her mother what she is learning in her religion classes, and her mother began attending OCIA classes.

"Usually, it's the parents teaching the children, but now it's the child teaching the parent," Rosselli said.

"Her mom was telling me interesting stories about how (her daughter) has this deep desire to take the things that she's learning about in school, things that Jesus is saying, parables and making them come alive in her life – that 'my life can actually be changed if I live this way.'"

### St. Brigid of Kildare

At Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare School, Andrea Komenda, the director of reli-

See FAITHFUL, Page 7

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# Tuscarawas Central Catholic educator in 50th year of teaching

By Ethan Rothrock

This year, Roseann Bonamico celebrates her 50th year in Catholic education.

She is a member of Immaculate Conception Church in Dennison and, to help her sister Margaret and her brother Joe, she volunteers at Trumpet in the Land.

Originally, Ms. Bonamico thought she was being called to married or religious life; however, she was actually being called to Catholic education. According to Ms. Bonamico, “When I student taught

in a public school, I truly enjoyed my students and would have eagerly accepted a job there. And then something happened. It was Ash Wednesday and I was teaching a seventh-grade social studies class when a student asked why some of us had dirt on our foreheads. I proceeded to go through the whole history of ashes and Ash Wednesday. The students had questions beyond words and I answered all of them readily. When the bell rang, it hit me. I wasn’t allowed to talk about this in a public school. Thank goodness my supervising teacher had not been in the

room. At that point I realized I could not teach in a school where I could not share my faith. This is my ministry.”

Ms. Bonamico graduated from Kent State with a Bachelor of Science in History and Government and Social Psychology. Roseann first began teaching in 1974 at St. Joseph Elementary School then began teaching at Tuscarawas Central Catholic in 2009. She has taught American and World History, English, Literature, and Religion. She loves teaching Religion, Literature and English the most. Ms. Bonamico went into Catholic education because she wanted to have the freedom to talk about her Catholic faith in class without fear of repercussions.

Her favorite moment in her teaching career was when she took her students to the Shrine of Elizabeth Ann Seton and the nuns complimented on how prayerful her students were.

Family and faith have been a crucial part of Ms. Bonamico’s life and teaching career. She credits Mother Teresa; her mom; her dad; her pop; and her aunt and godmother, Sister Wilma, as influences in her life. She is also influenced by Anne Frank, who always saw the good in people. Her favorite saint is Francis of Assisi.

Ms. Bonamico has also stated that her favorite sport is tennis, her favorite book is “Mr. Peabody’s Apples” and her favorite music is rock n’ roll, jazz, Motown and

James Taylor. Ms. Bonamico finds inspiration in the following Bible passages:

1 Corinthians 13:13: “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Luke 18:16-17: “But Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’”

Ms. Bonamico sets high expectations for students, and her standards encourage the students’ willingness to get good grades and be respectful to everyone they meet in life. She wants us to enjoy school but be mindful of the rules while doing so. Ms. Bonamico has inspired many through her 50 years in Catholic education, earning the respect of students and staff.

Ethan Rothrock is a freshman at Tuscarawas Central Catholic High School.



Roseann Bonamico  
Photo courtesy Tuscarawas Central Catholic High School

## FAITHFUL, continued from Page 6

religious education at the parish, said the school has had several students enter the Church each year for about the past five years. Komenda works with students preparing to become Catholic.

She said religion class has an impact on the students as well as daily prayer in school. Students practice daily devotions, she said, including praying the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary and the Angelus.

The school follows the Church’s liturgical calendar. As an example, the school primarily focuses on praying the Rosary in May, the month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in October, which is dedicated to the Rosary.

“All of those pieces really give them the liturgical feel for the Church,” Komenda said.

She said this is also teaching students who do not have catechesis or prayer at home, and they can share that with their families.

“Daily school life really is the mouthpiece of the Gospel for that family,” she said. “They are able to know there’s more.”

Komenda noted that the children she works with appreciate the traditions of the Catholic Church and the Church’s history.

“I did a tour of the Church for a few

of my students, and they really liked looking at the altar and seeing the relics placed and seeing the stain glass and hearing stories of why,” she said.

Learning about the Church, praying and being exposed to sacramentals, or tangible realities of the Catholic Church, such as Rosaries or statues, leads students to start “putting together the puzzle pieces of ‘this is more than just a building.’ There is intentionality in all of the things that we do here,” Komenda said.

Clergy members, who are present in the school and St. Brigid community, have an opportunity to teach the children every Thursday at Mass and after Mass, she said, and they are “essential” for transmitting the Catholic faith to students.

Komenda also credited St. Brigid principal Kathy O’Reilly, who, she said, makes catholicity a “central focus” at the school.

“She reminds them to be good disciples every day,” Komenda said.

As a result, Komenda said it “makes sense” that students are drawn to the Catholic faith and desire to become a member of Christ’s Church.



Father Timothy Lynch (right), parochial vicar at Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare Church, and Father James Black (center), the parish pastor, talk with school students. Photo/St. Brigid of Kildare



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## Kairos prison ministry makes impact on Watterson teacher

Math teacher Paul Petrella has been a regular team member for Kairos retreats for seniors at Columbus Bishop Watterson High School and last September took a leap into a different type of retreat ministry.

He spent four days at the North Central Correctional Institution in Marion as one of 42 volunteers on a Kairos retreat for 42 inmates.

Because it was his first Kairos prison

retreat, he was assigned as a table servant for a group of six men.

"The first guy I met was in there for murder," Petrella said. "The first night every volunteer gets connected with an inmate to welcome them. It was like God sent this guy to me.

"He was about 6 foot 4 and like 260 pounds, and I said to him that he had to have played football, and that generated the conversation because he had played

in college.

"He was the nicest guy I ever met. I could tell he already knew Christ, I could tell he was a believer. Just knowing that it's so hopeless in there, I could see that he really relied on his faith."

Petrella's assignment was to serve the attendees drinks and meals, clean up and tend to whatever was needed at the table of six prisoners.

"They didn't want to be served," he said. "They're not comfortable with it. They're in there for all of these years and they have to survive on their own, so this was an adjustment for them. Just interacting with these guys and serving them I had a couple of guys open up to me and told me things I don't think they would have told me if I hadn't been a servant."

Petrella said one of the prisoners was on year 13 of a 15-year sentence and he had been trying to get into a Kairos retreat for the past eight years.

"He finally got in," Petrella said. "It shows you the power of the program that he still wanted to attend after eight years of trying.

"Of the six men at my table, one rededicated his life to Christ and two gave over their lives to Christ. God knows their hearts. I think there was true transformation.

"One guy said he tried to kill himself

before prison and was feeling that way in prison. He decided he was going to attend Kairos and check it out, and he's one of the guys who gave his life over the Christ. How powerful is that?"

Petrella said they've had two reunions already and the former football player is the first person he goes to see, but not just to talk football.

"He's a Bengals fan and I'm a Browns fan," Petrella said with a smile.

"The coolest thing is to go back and see these guys again. All of them said they felt like the people who came in from the outside showed them real love. Many of them grew up without parents or a parent who was terrible to them. We didn't want anything from them, just to show them God's love."

Petrella's attendance at the Kairos prison reunions has dropped off until the end of the college wrestling season. His two youngest children, twin boys Joey and Michael, wrestle for Baldwin Wallace University, their father's alma mater. Michael won the 2023 Division III national championship at 149 pounds and Joey was a national qualifier. Petrella himself was a national champion for Baldwin Wallace at 177 pounds.

Now in his 45th year teaching with the last seven at Bishop Watterson, Petrella

See **KAIROS**, Page 10



Bishop Watterson High School math teacher Paul Petrella (right) talks with students.

Photo courtesy Bishop Watterson High School

The advertisement features a light blue background with various school supplies scattered around, including pencils, notebooks, a stapler, paper clips, and a backpack. On the right side, there is a circular logo for COACE (Central Ohio Association of Catholic Educators) with a ship icon inside. Below the logo is the text "COACE CENTRAL OHIO ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC EDUCATORS". A large quote from a teacher reads: "Thank you to all of our dedicated teachers who provide a place where all students can learn, achieve, and grow in our Catholic faith!" Below the quote is the slogan "TEACHERS WORKING FOR TEACHERS" in bold. At the bottom left, the website "www.Coace.com" is displayed.

SCHOOLS, *continued from Page 2*

It's Theology of the Body into our classes, with help from our friends at Rauh Woods in Cincinnati. I am truly grateful for the work of our principals and teachers to bring this important culture into our schools. We have also completed the first round of high school visitations, in which a visiting team spends a day at a school to assess the Catholic culture and to share best practices and new ideas.

We recently welcomed Dr. Brett Salkeld, the author of a powerful new book, *Educating for Eternity*, to our Diocese. Dr. Salkeld spoke to all of our administrators about infusing a Catholic worldview across the content areas, which we refer to as Catholic Academic Integration. This involves teaching all subjects, including math, science, art, literature, athletics, from a Catholic perspective, always with an eye toward the goodness and grandeur of God. This is being put into practice through our ongoing work of revising the math course of study, a major project for this year.

Knowing that our Catholic culture is front and center in our schools, we are working on finding new and better ways to find and hire excellent, on-mission, and on-fire teachers. It is not just religion teachers who are accountable for the success of our students' formation, but all faculty and staff. Adding to our already wonderful corps of teachers

ensures that the men and women who work with our children everyday love Jesus and want to share that love with every student every day. A jobs fair for our Catholic schools will be held on Saturday, April 13, at the Newman Center at Ohio State. All with an interest in Catholic education are welcome to come and meet our school administrators.

None of the success of our Catholic schools would be possible without the dedicated people who make it a reality every day. During this celebration of Catholic Schools Week, I would like to sincerely thank the administrators who tirelessly lead our schools, the teachers and staff who educate and care for our children daily, and all of the families that have made the choice to send their children to schools where they can learn and thrive in the fullness of our Catholic faith. We are truly blessed here in the Diocese of Columbus by so many who are motivated by their love of the Lord and desire to create excellent Catholic schools.

I ask that you keep our schools, our administrators and teachers, and our students in your prayers. And, of course, please encourage anyone with an interest in learning more about our schools for their children to contact their local Catholic school or visit [www.education.columbuscatholic.org](http://www.education.columbuscatholic.org).

KAIROS, *continued from Page 9*

also served as Columbus Bishop Hartley High School's head wrestling coach from 2001 to 2004 and 2007 to 2010. He is currently helping coach the Hartley youth program in which a grandson, Miles, is participating. Petrella's oldest of six children, Kevin, has been the head coach at Hartley since 2010 with his dad serving as an assistant until recently.

"What I found dealing with kids – and my wife has helped me with this – is to keep it simple," he said. "Don't complicate the message in what you're trying to do because we can be our own worst enemy by making too hard for someone to understand.

"I've always enjoyed Kairos here at Watterson because they're powerful. We tell kids we can't tell you about Kairos, you just have to experience it. The prison Kairos was the same in that respect but even more powerful.

"I think why God's put me into this position is to build relationships with young people and Kairos is building relationships with young or old. I wasn't always good at that, trust me. I had a rough start in teaching because I didn't always understand what it took. I feel that building relationships is what has given me an in to sharing the Gospel with them. If you don't have a relationship with someone, they won't be open to it."

Petrella's message to the little wrestlers he coaches and the high school students he works with is simple.

"The first thing I tell the little ones is 'I love you and I do the things I do because I love you,'" he said. "When I get on you, it's because I love you, and when I encourage you, too. I try to convey that message to the high school students as well.

"Most kids, even the ones I have to give a hard time to get them going in the right direction, they know I care. That's the Holy Spirit working."



Watterson teacher Vince Petrella participates in Kairos retreats for students and inmates.



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## St. Charles plans weeklong series of celebrations

Three years ago, St. Charles Preparatory School created a series of special activities to parallel the themes celebrated nationwide during Catholic Schools Week. With each passing year, the size, success and popularity of these daily activities continue to grow among the students, faculty, parents and alumni. This year is no exception.

Sunday, Jan. 28 marks the beginning of the week with the theme Celebrating Our Parish. In the more than 40 parishes where St. Charles students live and are involved, young men and their family members will be decked out in the school's official colors of red and white. Alumni and friends of the school have also been encouraged to wear these colors to identify their Carolian heritage.

On Monday, Jan. 29, St. Charles will Celebrate our Students with a friendly Quiz Bowl competition between students and faculty members. Initially, students create teams of four that can also include a faculty member. Gathered in the Robert C. Walter Student Commons, each person is equipped with his own laptop tablet or computer and teams battle against each other using the learning platform "Kahoot!"

The five teams with the highest scores go on to compete against members of the school's quiz team. This winning team then competes against a group of four faculty members in a Jeopardy-style game with a moderator asking questions and competitors buzzing in to answer. At the end of the allotted time, the team with the most points will win the match and take the Quiz Bowl Trophy!

Tuesday, Jan. 30 has taken on a special significance during Catholic Schools Week. Designated as Celebrate our Nation Day, St. Charles created a special assembly at which it honors the United States. All those alumni, parents, grandparents and friends of St. Charles who

have served in the armed forces, police, firefighters and/or as first responders are invited to attend. The morning celebration begins with those in each group processing into the Commons together behind special flags designating their service.

This year, St. Charles is blessed to have 1989 alumnus and Navy veteran Joe Dorrian to serve as our special guest presenter. Dorrian was one of eight St. Charles graduates to enter one of the U.S. military academies in the fall of 1989. The program also includes the Bexley Police Honor Guard and comments by Bexley Mayor Ben Kessler. A reception for the honorees and guests is taking place afterward in the school's new Frank E. Murphy '54 Convocation Center.

The school's patron, St. Charles Borromeo, is also recognized during the program for his unique charisms. One of those is humility: Our community strives to emulate our patron who gave selflessly and without regard to status or prestige.

The second is mercy; trusting in God's mercy toward us, the school practices the same mercy toward the marginalized.

And finally is the charism of solidarity, which establishes a unity grounded in brotherhood and the celebration of the dignity of the human person.

All three of these traits are also found in the people that serve the country as First Responders and in the military. As St. Charles celebrates its 100th anniversary, the school honors its patron St. Charles Borromeo by living as an example of Catholic education and faith.

Wednesday, Jan. 31 marks a day when the school will Celebrate our Faith. By focusing on the themes of learning, serving and leading, Catholic schools prepare children to succeed by using



Alumni and other military veterans of the St. Charles Preparatory School community took part in last year's "Celebrate our Nation" program during Catholic Schools Week.

*Photo courtesy St. Charles Preparatory Academy*

their God-given talents to the fullest throughout their lives. The day includes a community Mass that all priests of the diocese have been invited to concelebrate in the Walter Student Commons.

Thursday, Feb. 1 is a much-anticipated day that has been devoted to Celebrating Our Community. Students are encouraged to invite parents, grandparents or others who have impacted their Catholic education to join them for a school-wide breakfast buffet served before classes begin.

Friday, Feb. 2 is Faculty and Staff Appreciation Day that includes a buffet breakfast for administrators, faculty and staff members. The students are treated to a dress-down day.

The week wraps up on Sunday, Feb. 4 with one of the school's most antic-

ipated and beloved events: the annual St. Charles Spaghetti Dinner. The event is hosted by the St. Charles Alumni Association with the family and staff of Berwick Manor managing the cooking duties. Alumni, students, and parent volunteers oversee all of the other duties with more than 1,000 people expected to attend and enjoy a great Italian meal. As an extra treat, the St. Charles Jazz Band, under the direction of Rick Brunetto, plays two different sessions during the afternoon to entertain the diners.

The week includes in numerous ways all those who have influenced the life of the school. That influence is experienced every day, and seven days is still not enough time to express praise to God and appreciation to all who have made that possible.

### OLPH, continued from Page 3

pating in OCIA.

"Later, I read her testimony and thought, 'Wow,' but that's why that invitation is always there for the parents, for the families, for the neighbors, for the community to come and see what we're about because you're hearing these kids say it, you're seeing it in what they bring home, so come join with us."

Communication from the principal is also a form of evangelization.

"Julie (Freeman) is very much an evangelist in the way that she communicates," Cook said. "Every email that comes out from her, it begins with something of the faith, and it's invitational, and it's encouraging."

"All of Freeman's emails reference back to events happening at the parish, as well as all the things that are happening in the school," Zuk said. "She does a really good job of cross-promoting that we are one entity. It's not, the church, and then the

school's a separate thing."

Faith-based communication from the school is also done via radio. The school acquired a license from the Federal Communications Commission, and they broadcast on a local radio station.

"We've now obtained a radio station, a local radio station that we project and pray the rosary at the end of the school day, and so, all the parents ... can join and pray for their students in school as they're waiting in line to pick up their students," Father Yokum said. "It's just another outreach, another point of contact."

The school uses a radio transmitter located in the parish gathering space. The transmitter extends for a mile radius and is broadcast on 101.9 FM.

A parent volunteer leads the rosary Monday through Friday. He also talks about the saints, upcoming middle and high school youth ministry events and spreads aware-

ness about opportunities at the parish to get families involved, Zuk said.

In October, the month dedicated to the rosary, the transmitter was relocated to the school office, and students joined in leading the rosary on the radio station, which also was a way to evangelize to parents.

While Catholic schools are a tool for evangelization, Freeman and Father Yokum said some individuals voiced concerns or fears that the EdChoice Scholarship will change the dynamic of the Catholic school.

Unlike the traditional EdChoice Scholarship, which provides tuition money to families living in a low-performing school district, an expansion of the EdChoice Scholarship was signed into Ohio law in July. All Ohio families, regardless of their zip code, can receive tuition money toward a participating Catholic school of their choice.

Because of the EdChoice Scholarship expansion, more non-Catholic families might choose to attend a Catholic school. By choosing to send their children to OLPH, those families will encounter the person of Jesus Christ.

Freeman said OLPH remains "unapologetically a Catholic school" focused on Catholic social teaching, which is founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ. The Catholic faith is the school's priority.

Some individuals voiced concerns that, as a result of the EdChoice Scholarship, the school could become similar to a public school and lose its Catholic identity by welcoming an increasing number of non-Catholics.

"That kind of saddens me when I have other people say, 'Oh, well, you shouldn't take those kids,'" Freeman said. "This is our opportunity to let everybody know who Jesus is, and this might be their only opportunity."

# CCL schools unite for MLK Day of Engagement

Students from five Central Catholic League high schools gathered on Sunday, Jan. 14 at Columbus Bishop Ready High School for a collaborative event to foster the legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

The second annual MLK Day of Engage-

ment: United Faith and Justice brought together students from Bishop Ready, St. Charles Preparatory School, and Columbus St. Francis DeSales, Bishop Watterson and Bishop Hartley high schools who heard presentations from students and talks by Father Kyle Tennant, the chaplain at Bishop Ready, and Andrea Pannell, vice president of stewardship for The Catholic Foundation.

The students chose various aspects of Catholic social teachings to make presentations in a science fair-style format that, according to organizers, were intended to “channel the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr. and our shared faith to create lasting change within our schools and communities.”

Pannell’s talk focused on how

“Christians and Catholics can actively contribute to positive change in our broader community ... motivating us all to be agents of compassion and transformation.”

The MLK Day of Engagement was organized by Taron Slone, student development coordinator and assistant director of admissions at Bishop Ready, and Darrien Scott, director of diversity and student equity at DeSales, and was held the day before a national holiday in the United States in honor of King, a pastor and civil rights activist who was assassinated in 1968.

DeSales principal Dan Garrick said in a post on the school’s social media that he was gratified to see Scott and the students at the event “to identify ways that we can more fully live our faith in service to others.”

“As Father Tennant so powerfully stated yesterday, social justice is rooted in God’s love for us,” Garrick continued, “a love that we are called to share with our brothers and sisters especially those who have been impacted by injustice and marginalized.”



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Students and leaders from Columbus Charles St. Preparatory School and Columbus Bishop Ready, Bishop Watterson, Bishop Hartley and St. Francis DeSales high schools participated in an MLK Day of Engagement on Sunday, Jan. 14 at Bishop Ready High School.

Photo courtesy Office of Catholic Schools

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# New vending machine dispenses books at London St. Patrick

**By Kristy Zurbrick**  
Columbus Messenger, Madison Editor

There's a new vending machine at St. Patrick School in London, but it's not your typical vending machine. Instead of dispensing snacks or drinks, it dispenses books. And instead of inserting money, users insert tokens earned through positive actions and achievements.

"We're using it as part of our positive incentive for going above and beyond," said Principal Rick Logue. "I've found that kids respond better to posi-



London St. Patrick School installed a vending machine in January with books for all grade levels that are purchased with tokens earned as rewards for good behavior and actions.

*Photos courtesy St. Patrick School*

tive reinforcement. It helps with classroom management and academics and how much they enjoy school. We're shining the light on good things."

Students who are named Students of the Month or who receive Shamrock Shout Outs earn tokens for the vending machine.

Each month, the school promotes a different virtue. In December, it was service. Students who exemplify the chosen virtue are named students of the month. For example, two of December's honorees helped a teacher set up her classroom before school.

The Shamrock Shout Outs are new this school year. They are acknowledgements of students who go the extra mile in their actions during the school day. These actions are recognized not only at the school but also through postcards sent home to honorees' parents. One recent Shout Out recipient comforted a younger student who was nervous at a group function at the school.

Tokens for the book vending machine are another layer of acknowledgement for these students' good deeds and behaviors, Logue said.

The school, which serves students in kindergarten through eighth grade, applied for and received a grant from the Catholic Foundation to purchase the vending machine and a starter set of books with which to stock it. The machine was installed the first week of January.

"Our librarian selected books for all grade levels, from picture books up to novels, plus some action Bibles. It's a little bit of everything," Logue said.

Logue explained that he chose books as incentives because he is a former language arts teacher, books are educational, and St. Patrick students really like to read.

"There was a lot of excitement in the

cafeteria when the vending machine was delivered," he said.

The school will use a variety of methods to purchase books to keep the vending machine stocked, including accepting donations. For details, call the school at (740) 852-0161.

*Printed with permission from the Madison Messenger.*



Taylor Gorman looks over the books available from the new book vending machine at St. Patrick School.



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## Two DeSales seniors choose to Play It Forward

A love of sports combined with a desire to help others served as inspiration for Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School seniors Manu Krac and Jack Jordan to start a new Play It Forward club this year.

The club's mission is to donate new and gently used sports equipment to less fortunate children.

"After playing sports our whole lives, and now with our high school sports careers coming to an end, we had time to reflect on the many life lessons and values our sports have brought us," Krac and Jordan said.

"Lessons of leadership and teamwork and the value of building a culture. We have loved every moment of our sports careers and would be devastated if other kids missed out on these moments because they didn't have the equipment to play."

The club invites others to give youth a chance to learn the lessons of discipline, leadership, and teamwork by joining their efforts with donations of gently used sports equipment.

Contact the club at [playitforward@desales.co](mailto:playitforward@desales.co) to set up a donation drop-off.



Jack Jordan (left) and Manu Krac are the founders of the Play It Forward Club at St. Francis DeSales High School.

*Photo courtesy St. Francis DeSales High School*

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 Sunday, January 28  
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**St. Agatha School**  
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 Sunday, January 28  
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[www.stbrigidofkildare.com](http://www.stbrigidofkildare.com)

**St. Francis de Sales, Newark**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Sunday, January 28  
 12 p.m.  
[www.stfrancisnewark.org](http://www.stfrancisnewark.org)

**St. Mary School, Lancaster**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Sunday, January 28  
 2 - 5 p.m.  
[www.saintmarylancaster.org](http://www.saintmarylancaster.org)

**St. Mary Magdalene**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Sunday, January 28  
 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
[www.saintmarymagschool.org](http://www.saintmarymagschool.org)

**St. Matthew the Apostle School**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Sunday, January 28  
 1 - 2:30 p.m.  
[www.cdstmatthew.org](http://www.cdstmatthew.org)

**Trinity Catholic School**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Sunday, January 28  
 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
<https://trinity.cdeducation.org/>

**St. Pius X School**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Wednesday, January 31  
 6 - 7:30 p.m.  
[www.spxelementary.com](http://www.spxelementary.com)

**Bishop Flaget School**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Friday, February 2  
 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.  
[www.bishopflaget.org](http://www.bishopflaget.org)

**Blessed Sacrament School**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Sunday, February 4  
 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
[www.blsacschool.net](http://www.blsacschool.net)

**Fisher Catholic High School**  
 Grades 9 - 12  
 Sunday, February 4  
 1 - 4 p.m.  
[www.fishercatholic.org](http://www.fishercatholic.org)

**Holy Spirit School**  
 Preschool - Grade 8  
 Holy Spirit Catholic School  
 Monday, February 5  
 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.  
[www.holy-spirit-school.org](http://www.holy-spirit-school.org)

# Honoring Catholic Schools Week Together!

St. James the Less  
Catholic School

SAINT PAUL  
SCHOOL

SAINT  
MICHAEL  
SCHOOL  
WORTHINGTON, OHIO

ST. MATTHEW  
THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

St. Matthias  
CATHOLIC SCHOOL



*“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” ~Matthew 18:20*

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES  
HIGH SCHOOL

SAINT PAUL  
SCHOOL

ST. MATTHEW  
THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

SAINT  
MICHAEL  
SCHOOL  
WORTHINGTON, OHIO

St. James the Less  
Catholic School

St. Matthias  
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Rooted in  
Faith,  
Growing in  
Knowledge