



Rooted in the Eucharist and Christ's love for all, Catholic schools change lives

Editor's note: The theme for our Catholic Schools Week Supplement focuses on the gift and the blessing of Catholic schools in the archdiocese—that our 67 schools are a faith-filled and life-changing choice for students, families and educators.

In a nod to the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival and the National Eucharistic Congress being held in Indianapolis on July 17-21, the supplement also features an emphasis on the difference that the celebration of the Eucharist is making in the lives of children and adults who are connected to a Catholic school in central and southern Indiana.

The supplement also includes inspiring stories and photographs that capture the joy, faith, service and

successes of students in our Catholic schools.

Just as important, there is information showing how a Catholic education in the archdiocese is affordable for nearly every family who wants that faith-filled educational experience for their child.

We hope you enjoy this salute to the tremendous influence of Catholic education in the archdiocese and in the world.

Photo above: The diversity of interests and activities that Catholic schools in the archdiocese offer shows in these students from Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School and Pope John XXIII Elementary School, which comprise the Prince of Peace Catholic Schools in Madison.

(Submitted photo)

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Our 67 Catholic schools share a primary focus: 'salvation of souls'

Dear Friends in Christ,

The national theme for this year's celebration of Catholic Schools Week, "Catholic Schools:



Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

United in Faith and Community," should prompt us to consider the impact our Catholic schools have on individuals, families and the larger community. Here in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, we are blessed with 67 Catholic schools throughout central and southern Indiana.

While our Catholic schools excel in several areas—such as academics, athletics, the arts and service—they are meant to serve

the Church's fundamental task of evangelization and catechesis. More notably, in recent times, there is a growing appreciation for greater emphasis on "evangelizing catechesis."

With a primary focus on "salvation of souls," our Catholic schools strive to form and educate individuals to be missionary disciples embracing the two-fold command to love God and neighbor. The impact of this focus is meant to transform individuals, both students and educators, families and society.

Each baptized member, as emphasized in the synodal expression of co-responsibility, is called to a life of holiness and mission. Similar to the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child," it takes a community of believers to enable children, youths and adults to mature in faith. Of course, if authentic, that faith must be rooted in a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

For our Catholic schools to be effective instruments of the Church's task of evangelization and catechesis, both students and educators must open their minds and hearts to the divine wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Such openness must necessarily be rooted in prayer, both personal and communal, the word of God, the grace of sacraments, teachings of the faith and oriented toward service.

Catholic teaching is predicated on the firm belief that one is saved only through the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that Catholic schools are equipped with crucifixes, immersed in daily prayer and find their ultimate meaning in the celebration of the Eucharist at Mass, the source and summit of our identity and mission as Catholics.

This year's celebration of Catholic Schools Week is further enhanced by the

ongoing National Eucharist Revival and upcoming National Eucharistic Congress, to take place this summer in Indianapolis on July 17-21. As taught in each of our Catholic schools, the Eucharist is the Real Presence of Jesus Christ—Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity—which unites us to God and one another.

It is the nourishment that sustains our baptismal call to holiness and mission. It is the true source of our identity as Catholics, as children of God, as missionary disciples, as beloved sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ.

Wishing all a happy and blessed Catholic Schools Week, with assurance of my continued prayers, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Charles C. Thompson

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson



In her first year as a Catholic school educator, a woman finds joy and learns about the changing state of Catholic education

By John Shaughnessy

If you need an extra touch of joy in your life today, it's there in Emily Schuler's voice.

In this moment, the principal of St. Patrick School in Terre Haute is describing the reaction of her kindergarten and pre-kindergarten students to a group of special visitors.



Emily Schuler

"They had three hours of sheer excitement today," Schuler says. "We had a visit from the fire department. They brought the truck in, talked about what they do, and let them see their equipment. It's that age when, 'I want to be a firefighter!' It was just super exciting for them."

Schuler also uses "exciting" to describe her first year as an educator in a Catholic school community, a choice she made after working 15 years in public schools in Indiana and Mississippi.

"In my mind, I thought that maybe this would be an awkward transition from public to Catholic school, that maybe it wouldn't be fulfilling or what I wanted. I couldn't have been more wrong," Schuler says. "I think it's the best decision I've ever made professionally. It's been really exciting right from the beginning."

Part of that excitement for her stems from a change she sees in Catholic schools today from when she was a student at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Carmel, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese. And make no mistake, as a 2000 graduate of her elementary school, she holds a special place in her heart for her experience there.

"I loved it. I have friends that I have had since I was 5," says 38-year-old Schuler. "It's cool to look back as an adult and think about that school and how, from the age of 5, it had such an impactful experience on me."

At the same time, "you almost took for granted that everyone believed the

same things, and everyone had the same understandings, and we were all getting the exact same things at home. You almost took for granted that there was this spiritual experience we all kind of had."

The experience that every student in a Catholic school is steeped in the Catholic faith is no longer the reality, Schuler says, and that's part of the excitement for her.

The state of Catholic education and the story of a girl

"What's really exciting now about Catholic schools is that we see families choosing to be here who aren't Catholic, and they're choosing it because of who we are and what we believe and how we live out our faith—and what that looks like in our families and our communities."

"The state of Catholic education right now is a real-life testament to the fact that we are literally introducing people to Christ and the Church on an everyday basis. You see kids who don't have any religious background or knowledge or understanding, and they get so excited hearing about the faith, understanding what the Eucharist is, and understanding what the history of the Church is."

"To be even a small part of that for students and their families has been incredibly exciting."

Her excitement and joy continue to overflow as she shares one incident involving a prospective student.

As she checked out the school, the girl was accompanied by a modern family of "multiple parents, partners and family members," Schuler says. The family wasn't Catholic, but everyone was open to the girl attending St. Patrick.

During a tour of the school and the campus, the girl noticed the church and asked if she could see what was inside that building.

"We go over there, all the lights are off, so we flip them on. Our church is beautiful, and to hear the reaction of the child to seeing all the different artwork, the stained glass and the altar was amazing," Schuler recalls. "Everywhere they were turning, they were amazed by something else. Or they had questions."

The girl had a question about one of the statues at the front of the church.

"She turns and points and says, 'I see that man over there.' I said, 'That's St. Patrick. That's who our school and our parish are named after.' I told them a little about him. They asked, 'He was a normal man, right?' I said, 'He was a normal man, but he was able to do unusual things with the help of God.' The girl turned around to her family and said, 'I want to go here.' It was such a cool moment."

The story doesn't end there.

An opportunity for faith to blossom

"That student has maintained her interest and amazement in figuring out everything she can and learning everything she can," Schuler says. "And she is really interested in the saints. It's been fun to see her blossom, and to see all the ways the Catholic experience has taken shape for families and what it means for families."

While the experience of being part of the St. Patrick School community of 350 students has been a time of blossoming for that girl, the same has been true for Schuler in her first year as an educator at a Catholic school.

She says it has deepened her faith and her relationship with Christ.

"Absolutely. I took a lot of aspects of my faith for granted."

One area of her Catholic faith that she has stressed this year is eucharistic adoration and "the power of the Eucharist."

Since St. Patrick Church has a eucharistic chapel, the school sets aside Wednesdays as a time when the different classes get to visit the chapel for adoration.

Schuler also has made eucharistic adoration a priority for the St. Patrick School staff.

"It was important for me to get my staff to understand the significance that it's had for my life," she says. "We have quite a few staff who are not Catholic. We did an instructional Mass, and after that, we did adoration."

"I spoke about the role it played in my



Emily Schuler, the principal of St. Patrick School in Terre Haute, helps students from kindergarten and first grade with an art project.

(Photo courtesy of Kelli Carney, first-grade teacher at St. Patrick School)

life. It's so significant to my own faith maintenance, development, strength and growth that I hadn't really thought about it. For me to stand up and verbalize it was such a moment. I had never given my own story of the power of it for me."

A gift of grace

Schuler has strived to make eucharistic adoration a continuing part of her life.

"If I have a stressful day, I'll take 15-20 minutes, step out quickly, go to the adoration chapel and have some time in adoration. To me, that's something I've been really able to explore and deepen. I'm incredibly thankful that I'm in a place to really be mindful about that. It's made me closer in my relationship with Christ."

She also believes it's made her a better principal and even a better person.

"I don't always find myself being patient or letting things settle a little bit," she says. "I feel there's been a lot of grace that has made its way into my decision process and my leadership style—to be a little more gracious, be a little more patient, be a little more willing to be vulnerable."

For her, it's all part of the grace of being an educator in a Catholic school.

"I'm incredibly thankful to be in this community," she says. "It's such a blessing." †

Why choose Catholic schools? The Eucharist is our foundation

By Brian Disney

Superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese

"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children"

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2223). Therefore, parents should have the right to choose the educational option that best meets the needs of their children.

Our great State of Indiana recognizes these God-given rights by supporting all forms of k-12 education and providing state education funding to parents for public or private education, except for families earning over 400% of free/reduced eligibility who can only receive funding for public schools.

Parents in Indiana have many great educational choices for their children, so why should they choose Catholic schools? Parents should choose Catholic schools because the Eucharist is the foundation and goal of everything we do.

The Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the Catholic faith and the

Christian life (*CCC*, 1324-27). The Eucharist is also the source and summit of our Catholic schools and every ministry of our Church. The Eucharist is food for the spiritual journey home to heaven where we will celebrate full communion with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Eucharist is also the food that nourishes our Catholic school communities on our common journey through this life and into the next.

Families choose our Catholic schools because of our academic rigor and excellence. Our teachers challenge students to grow in knowledge, wisdom and truth through lessons that engage minds, bodies and spirits. Catholic schools develop the full human potential of each student because we know that human beings have an eternal destiny.

Our students' performance on standardized assessments is equal to or better than students in other schools. Our students earn many college credits while in high school and graduate at high rates.

Families choose our schools because the strong moral values we teach mirror what the parents are teaching at home. Our schools are centered on the person of Jesus Christ, Gospel values and teachings of the Church. Our daily lessons in the Catholic faith reinforce

and support the strong religious foundation taught at home.

Our students participate in daily prayer, regular school Masses, religion classes and eucharistic adoration. Our students grow as ethical and moral decision-makers by learning to apply Catholic beliefs and human reason to real-life situations. Our students develop strong moral characters that are necessary to withstand the changing values of secular culture.

Families choose our schools because of our safe and disciplined learning environment. Every student is recognized as a child of God who needs to be seen, valued and loved. In educating the whole child, Catholic schools form students spiritually, emotionally and socially.

Lessons grounded in the Gospel values help students to love God, themselves and others. This culture of respect, love and forgiveness permeates our classrooms, hallways and cafeterias. Students are held to high standards of caring for themselves, their classmates and the school.

Families choose our schools because parishes and schools create a community for the entire family. Catholic schools are communities of learners and communities of faith. School families

develop a sense of community with fellow parishioners and have opportunities for friendship, fellowship and service.

Each of us is called to be a Gospel witness who understands and accepts the teachings of the Church and the demands of the Gospel. Catholic school educators partner with parents (the primary teachers) in the formation of their children. Our school communities are villages needed to raise our children. The Eucharist brings us together as one family and provides spiritual food to serve others.

Families choose Catholic schools because they are great investments in their children's earthly and heavenly futures. Our graduates excel in colleges and careers. They actively participate in our country's democracy, serve others in our communities, and lead in business, government, education, healthcare, science and other careers.

Catholic school graduates are also more likely to retain their Catholic identity, pray daily and attend Mass as adults. Our schools prepare students for life on Earth and in heaven. The return on investment in a Catholic education is unmatched.

Why choose Catholic schools? The foundation and goal of our schools is the Eucharist. †



Catholic high school creates a life-defining transformation on teenager

By John Shaughnessy

There's a poise about Tanner McCormick-Messer, a quiet confidence that's marked by touches of humility and humor that shine through in a flowing conversation, especially when he smiles and says, "I used to not talk at all, but look at me now!"



Tanner McCormick-Messer

The transformation of teenagers during four years of a Catholic high school can be life-defining in a number of ways, and 17-year-old Tanner quickly credits Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis for having that impact on him.

For someone who says he didn't talk much at all before reaching high school, he's now using his voice in a number of creative ways.

A senior, he's heavily involved in the theater department at Scecina as an actor and a vocalist. He represents the school in statewide music contests. And he performs outside the school, in community theater. Then there's his involvement in student council and the National Honor Society, plus he uses his poise and polish to serve as an ambassador for Scecina.

"My experience at Scecina has been really great," he says. "It's a tight community that has helped me make improvements in my life. Because of Scecina, I have branched out to so many things. I'm a lot more involved in theater, but before that, I had never done a show ever."

He had also never been outside of Indiana until he made a trip to New York City in his junior year with other members of the school's theater department.

"It was probably the best week of my life," he says with a smile. "Just experiencing things outside of Indiana because I've never really gone out of state. That was my first time. And just getting a diverse new look on things into the real world was really helpful for me. And it was really beautiful to come together with my fellow classmates on the trip."

As much as he has accomplished and experienced at Scecina, Tanner shines the spotlight instead on his senior classmates and the influence they have had on him during the past four years.

"I really like my class," he says. "They have taught me patience, taught me leadership, taught me diversity. They're a really nice bunch."

One of the qualities he especially appreciates about the school and his class is how diverse it is and how there's a common connection at the same time.

"There's so much diversity when it comes to faith and religion there," Tanner says. "Even though it's a Catholic school, not everyone is Catholic. But even though there are so many differences in faith, there are no differences



Playing the role of Donkey in a scene with Shrek in the 2023 spring musical at Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis, Tanner McCormick-Messer, right, shares the stage with Andrew Causemaker, who graduated from Scecina in 2023. (Submitted photo)

in morality. We all think the same about the common good of each other."

That approach guides Tanner in his relationships with his fellow students. The words flow naturally from him as he says, "I just try to be kind, to do little things for them. When I appreciate them, I tell them. When I think they're doing good, I'll tell them. When I think they need help, I'll help them." †

A senior retreat brings 'a family' even closer together

By John Shaughnessy

At 18, Yolett Perez shares something in common with many of the 1,350 seniors in Catholic high schools in the archdiocese.

A senior at Father Michael Shawe Memorial High School in Madison, Yolett has experienced one of the most defining and emotional times of her past four years in school—a retreat with her senior classmates that has brought them closer to each other and to God.

"That's the moment where I experienced why Shawe is super important to me," Yolett says. "It was

a three-day weekend retreat where our class got to get together in a cabin. We all got a lot closer, and we opened up about things that we might not have known about each other. That was a great experience.

"It meant a lot to me to learn more about each other because we've been going to school together all our lives, and sometimes we don't know what people are going through. It just opened up a lot for me. It makes me closer to them. It makes us unite a little more,

makes us feel more together."

That insight also reveals a great deal about Yolett, who has played on the girls' golf, soccer and basketball teams at Shawe and is a member of the school's National Honor Society and its French and Spanish clubs. After all, she has experienced most of her life so far with her classmates.

"I've been going to Shawe and Pope John XXIII School since kindergarten," says Yolett, a member of Prince of Peace Parish in Madison. "The schools are right next to

each other. I've known everyone there my whole life. And I like how small it is."

She also appreciates the immense impact that Shawe has on her faith. "Being at Shawe has made me realize the importance of my Catholic faith. We go to church once a week. We do rosaries, and we participate in the Catholic teachings."

Then there is the life-changing impact of her classmates on her.

"Most of us have known each other since kindergarten," she says. "We're all just like siblings basically. We're all just one big family." †



Yolett Perez

Eye-opening moments lead a senior closer to God, his faith and his classmates

By John Shaughnessy

A moment with small children opened Diego Julian's eyes and left him with a feeling he will never forget.

That moment happened as Diego was helping deliver furniture to a young family in need—part of his high school's volunteer efforts with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

"The parents were going from job to job, and they didn't really have the kind of paycheck to get furniture or even beds for their kids," recalls Diego, a senior at Seton Catholic High School in Richmond. "They just had a mattress and not a box spring or anything. Being able to bring those to the kids and seeing them getting onto their bed, they were so thankful for it. The kids gave us hugs because they were so appreciative. It was eye-opening.

"People give us a lot of thanks. They'll even do a little prayer with us afterward. The smiles on their faces bring me more joy than I can ever imagine."

That story helps show the growth that Diego has experienced in himself during his four years at Seton Catholic. It's a growth that has touched different parts of his life and his Catholic faith.

Entering Seton as a freshman, Diego said, he wasn't excited about taking another religion class. Now, he embraces his faith, from being able to say prayers at the start and the end of each school day to participating in Mass at a deeper level.

"It's not just showing up. It's more that I'm in God's presence. God is welcoming me into his home," says Diego, Seton's student council president. "I can go to him at any time, and he will always be there for me. It's more of a thank you to my Lord. It's more of honoring him."

Another defining moment in that change occurred during the summer between his sophomore and junior years when he took part in a Catholic Heart Workcamp in Pennsylvania, helping people in need while also growing in his faith with other teenagers from different schools.

"That really opened my mind. I saw hundreds of kids wanting to do the same thing I was—opening their faith more, not just to themselves but to each other. Seeing there were kids like me going through the same struggles, it pushed me to open up to my faith more. I know God is there for me."

He has the same feeling about the people he has encountered at Seton. He felt that support immediately as a freshman, including as he has played on the soccer, basketball and baseball teams.

"The first year, I was shy. I didn't know what to do. Typical freshman," he says. "The seniors I've had through the years, they were always so kind, offering to give me rides, offering to do certain things for me if I needed it. Really welcomed me onto the team no matter what sport it was. Making me feel like I was one of their close friends.

"It made me think this is what I want to do when I'm a senior. That no matter what grade you're in, you're one of my best friends. That's what I try to do for every kid in the school."

That approach has been at the heart of the way he views his teammates on the boys' basketball team this year.

"All of us bond. We work as a team. We work as a family," he says. "Our coach always says, 'Don't be a coach-led team, be a player-led team.' We're working so hard toward that this year. We try to help the younger players, too, to make a better team for the future."



Diego Julian has embraced his four years at Seton Catholic High School in Richmond with joy. (Submitted photo)

Diego also uses the word "family" to describe the bond among the 22 members of Seton's Class of 2024.

"We've grown as a family," he says. "It's nice knowing we have that close bond with each other. Through the years, I've become closer to my faith, and it's good knowing there are 21 other students going through the same thing I am—wanting to be closer to God. We all have the same mission—pushing each other and making sure we're all doing OK.

"God always tells us to put others before yourself. He wants us to love each other as he does us. We all live as a family of God." †



A challenging time for a family shows the love they found in Catholic schools

By John Shaughnessy

Kathie and Brian Van Gheem were at a loss of where to turn following the birth of their eighth child, who was rushed to an Indianapolis hospital's neonatal intensive care (NIC) unit immediately after his early arrival in the world.

Their families lived in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and Kathie's mother had just been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. And while Kathie mostly stayed around the clock at the hospital to be near their son, Aaron, Brian tried to keep everything going at home, working and trying to be there for their seven other children.

"It was a really hard time for our family," Kathie recalls.

Yet in the midst of that fearful and uncertain time, Kathie says, another family rallied around theirs—the family that has embraced them at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis.

"I will never be able to express enough our thanks for what Cardinal Ritter did," Kathie says, noting all the help that flowed from the school, starting with its president, Jo Hoy, and its principal, Kari Jost. "I remember Mrs. Hoy calling me when I was in the NIC unit and saying, 'Whatever you need.'

"They sent us \$200 in gift cards to eat out, which was a huge blessing for our family because we never eat out. Every single teacher at Ritter signed that card and said how much they were praying for Aaron and hoped he would get home soon. He came home much earlier than the doctors ever thought possible. And I really think it's because of the prayers of the staff and faculty of Ritter. They really carried us through what was a really hard time for our family."

That outpouring of love and support from the Cardinal Ritter family four years ago reinforced the choice that the Van Gheems made when they were married 24 years ago.

"When we got married, we knew that no matter what sacrifices it took, our kids were going to Catholic schools," Kathie says.

"My husband and I both went to Catholic schools growing up, so it's been a part of our lives since we were very young. And both of our parents had a strong emphasis on our Catholic faith and Catholic schooling. So, it's something we knew right away when we got married that we wanted Catholic schooling to be a part of our kids' lives every day."

The couple feels blessed that they found exactly what they were looking for when they moved from Minnesota to Indianapolis 21 years ago, sending their children first to St. Christopher School in Indianapolis and later to Cardinal Ritter. Three of their children are now students at Cardinal Ritter and two are at St. Christopher.

"The thing I love the most about Indianapolis is we have really great Catholic schools and lots of choices for Catholic schools based upon what you want," Kathie says.

"We have found a really good fit with St. Chris, and most especially with Cardinal Ritter. We have been so happy with the faith formation that happens in the schools. But most importantly, what we love the most is that these schools have become like family. All our relatives are up in Wisconsin and Minnesota. And so, these schools and the teachers have really become our family."

One of the qualities that the Van Gheems particularly appreciate about Cardinal Ritter is the school's diversity, bringing together students and families from different ethnic and racial backgrounds as well as different economic backgrounds.

"It really represents what our world is right now," Kathie says. "That's a very diverse melting pot."

The Van Gheems know they are part of that diversity, as families with eight children aren't exactly the norm in today's world, Kathie says.

"We can be overwhelming to a lot of people. We always have a lot going on," she says with a laugh about life with their children who range in age from 4 to 22. "But everyone we've met at St. Chris and Cardinal Ritter, they've never felt overwhelmed by our family. They've always embraced them and loved them and told us how great it is that we've let our faith guide how many children we have."

"That's what we love the most about Catholic schools—how much they love our family, how much they embrace the sanctity of life in our kids. That has been huge for us."

So has the faith formation that the schools have provided for their children. Kathie believes it's helped their two oldest children continue to embrace their faith in college.

"They go to church every weekend, and I really believe it's the faith formation that was instilled in them



With eight children ranging in age from 4 to 22, Brian and Kathie Van Gheem have enjoyed having their family embraced by the communities of St. Christopher School and Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School, both in Indianapolis. From oldest to youngest, their children are Megan, Patrick, Molly, Daniel, Timothy, MaryAnn, Meredith and Aaron. (Submitted photo)

when they were at Ritter. Mrs. Hoy says, 'No, no, Kathie, that's you guys at home.' And I tell her, 'You guys carried them through.'

That connection between their family and the family they've found at Cardinal Ritter and St. Christopher has been worth all the sacrifices the couple has made to provide a Catholic education for their children.

"With eight kids, Catholic school is not cheap," Kathie says. "Even with the wonderful help from the vouchers and the Choice Scholarship program, it's still not cheap. We have to give up a lot. We don't drive fancy cars. We never go on vacations. But we feel that the sacrifice we make is so worth it to have these wonderful schools as an extension of our family and also an extension of our faith."

"Our kids are getting our faith morning, noon and night. And they tell me they wouldn't change it for the world. They love where they go to school." †

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A choice to embrace the Eucharist: Students live the essence of the Catholic faith

By John Shaughnessy

If you want to know the impact that a Catholic school experience can have on a child's appreciation of their faith and the Eucharist, have a conversation with 12-year-old Oliver Kaczorowski about the choice he has made.

Oliver admits that in his younger years, he became bored during the school Masses for him and his fellow students at St. Joan of Arc School in Indianapolis, but he still had this longing for a close relationship with God.

So, in November of 2022, Oliver chose to sign up to be an altar server at school Masses. And ever since then, the now-seventh-grade student has also become increasingly involved in serving at Masses for the parish—plus being a part of the school's first eucharistic procession at the start of this school year.

"I wanted to do something to get closer to God," Oliver says. "It's been better than I expected."

At 11, Josephine Maksimovich has also seen her faith impacted by her first year at St. Joan of Arc—an influence that has also been enhanced by her relationship with her grandmother, Sue Bradford.

"Me and my grandma have a really close relationship. She wants to teach me about God and the Eucharist. I want to take the Eucharist so I can be closer to God," says Josephine, a sixth-grade student who will make her first Communion this year.

The experiences of Oliver and Josephine are just what St. Joan of Arc's theology teacher Kyle Murphy wants for students in this year of the National Eucharistic Congress, which will be held in Indianapolis on July 17-21.

"This year, we have a large number of older students who are choosing to receive the Eucharist for the first time," Murphy says, explaining that some of the children were already baptized while others needed additional formation to prepare to receive the sacrament. "And there's been a real uptick in the people wanting to be servers."

"It really gives me a great feeling seeing the students

are desiring a closeness to the Eucharist and a deeper relationship with Christ through that. Our school is truly focused on Jesus—to serve Christ and his people."

Beyond the effort to start the school year last August with the eucharistic procession, St. Joan of Arc's school leaders have continued the focus on the Eucharist through Benediction at the beginning of each month and through having students participate in the parish's First Friday adoration.

Eighth-grade student Clare Murphy has tried to make the most of these opportunities—and the sacrament of reconciliation.

"It's about trying to get a deeper relationship with Christ at this point," says Clare, the daughter of Kyle Murphy. "It's good for me to grow as much as I can now and continue on for the rest of my life."

That emphasis was also at the heart of the first eucharistic procession that Roncalli High School in Indianapolis held on Nov. 3.

"Honestly, I was amazed that we pulled it off with so many people," says Katie Hibner, Roncalli's director of campus ministry. "We had never done it before. The students were prepped really well, but really what was so amazing—and I got teary-eyed quite often during it—was just the extreme reverence that our students and our staff showed. It was unbelievable."

Hibner was also thrilled by the impact it had on the students.

"A lot of students said they'd never done it before, and they enjoyed it. In fact, it was a half day of school when we did it. Students told me, 'Man, I really thought about not coming to school because it was a half day, but I really wanted to see what this is all about.' So, they came, and they were pleasantly surprised. It was a really cool experience."

Being part of the procession also was powerful for Hibner, who watched it unfold from a defining perspective.

"I was very fortunate enough to stand in the back of the line," she says. "As the students were weaving into the procession, I followed the back of the line. As I looked in front of me, I thought, 'O my gosh, I am so lucky to be part of it!' It was such a humbling, very cool feeling for me, that I got to be involved in the planning of it."

"It's just a reminder that the Church is so big, and our faith is so much bigger than us."

Similar to St. Joan of Arc School, Roncalli has strived to keep the momentum of the eucharistic procession going forward.

"We have adoration twice a week before school," Hibner says. "On Wednesday mornings, we have students who lead music during it. On Fridays, it's a silent adoration. Both are really well-attended. Once they go the first few times, it's like, 'O my gosh, I really do need this!'"

"I've had several students stop me in the hallway and say, 'I'm so glad I go to chapel in the morning. It's so nice. I really need that.' It's a reminder of that need for that kind of prayer and for setting aside time for that."

Ava Maled is a Roncalli junior who has embraced



As students at St. Joan of Arc School in Indianapolis, Clare Murphy, left, Josephine Maksimovich and Oliver Kaczorowski have had their lives impacted by the school's focus on Jesus and the Eucharist. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

every part of the school's efforts to celebrate the importance of the Eucharist in a person's life, including the eucharistic procession.

"It was awesome how we all came together as a school to process," Ava says. "It was really cool

because the Eucharistic Congress is happening this summer, and people are processing to it from all four corners of the country. And I thought it was cool to have a mini-experience of what will be happening in our country. It was an amazing opportunity to worship and see all of your classmates gathering to worship the same God as you."

Ava's first experience with eucharistic adoration at Roncalli came during finals' week of her freshman year.

"I decided I would go because I heard it was really calming, and that is definitely a stressful time. And it was just amazing," she says. "I loved being able to look at God and have God look back at me because he's truly present in the Eucharist. So, I've continued that devotion. It's just amazing there are opportunities to grow closer in my relationship to God and my relationship with Christ in the Eucharist."

It all leads to her goal of how she wants to live, how she wants to bring the love of Christ to others.

"I'm always striving to love like Jesus did because he's the ultimate example of love," says Ava, a member of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis.

"I strive to show that love to others. I desire to have a full relationship with God and to have him be the center of my life and not just a little part of my life that I just access in certain times. I really want him to transform my life. I try to make sure that all of my actions are because of him—and to always live like him." †



The gift of the Eucharist was celebrated during the first eucharistic procession that Roncalli High School in Indianapolis held on Nov. 3. (Submitted photo)

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From a beautiful transition to a lasting impact, pastor sings the praises of Catholic education

By John Shaughnessy

The transition was quick and beautiful. At the end of the school Mass, the children who packed the church erupted in a joyous song of praise to God. Moments later, that burst of joy was followed by a reverent silence as Father Timothy Wyciskalla placed the Eucharist in a monstrance and the children bowed their heads and folded their hands in prayer during this time of adoration.

In a way, that sudden transition captured what Father Wyciskalla considers as the essence of Catholic education—that it is rooted in the Eucharist.

“The benefit of Catholic education is that you have the academic formation, but we can also do spiritual formation—which as Catholics is rooted in the Eucharist. Then what we get is really human formation,” says the pastor of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. “That’s the most important part of Catholic schools.

“And if there’s anything a Catholic school can do, teaching the kids devotion to the Eucharist is the most important, especially this year when we’re doing the [National] Eucharistic Congress. It helps teach them, especially the little ones, how sacred it is, how important it is. They’re there in silence, in quiet time with Christ, which I think is great.”

That emphasis on the Eucharist, his appreciation of Catholic schools and his drive to help children draw closer to Christ are among the reasons that the archdiocese’s Office of Catholic Schools has nominated Father Wyciskalla for the National Catholic Educational Association’s highest honor for a pastor—its Lead, Learn, Proclaim Award.

His different ways of connecting with students already make him beloved by St. Mark’s children, according to the school principal, Jen Kocher.

“He goes above and beyond to be present in our school and is a model for how to live your life—to become a ‘superhero saint,’” she says. “He volunteered to be a

chaperone for our fourth-grade field trip to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and was the driver for the minibus.

“He often comes to many extracurricular and sporting events to support students and demonstrate for them how to support each other. His value for Catholic education shows in all he does for our students and staff.”

That’s especially true in his spiritual approach to the 525 students at the school, Kocher says.

“Father Tim works closely with the school to teach our students the many ways of practicing and modeling our Catholic faith, such as adoration, Stations of the Cross, praying the rosary and reconciliation,” the principal says. “A perfect example of his leadership is the patience and time he invests in training new [altar] servers for our school and parish Masses.”

He also strives to be there for the school and the parish in heartbreaking times. Last year, three tragedies involved Burmese members of the parish and school community.

“A little boy going from kindergarten to first grade had a drowning accident and passed away. Then a couple of parents died very young of cancer,” Father Wyciskalla recalls.

“To see the way the kids came together to pray for that situation and be there for the two kids who lost their parents—to be an extension of Christ for them—was incredibly powerful.”

That empathy in those tragedies also reflects how the Burmese members have become such an integral part of the parish and the school, the pastor says.

“The school and the parish have been revitalized by the Burmese community,” he says. “They were religious refugees, persecuted for being Catholic or Christian. The parish was very welcoming to them. They were able to find a home where they knew they could send their kids and their faith would be passed on. The faith for so many of them is why they’re here. And we’re so blessed now as well. It really grew the parish—not just with refugees and immigrants from Myanmar, but a vibrant and diverse parish also attracts others as well.”



Father Timothy Wyciskalla enjoys spending time with students at St. Mark the Evangelist School in Indianapolis, giving him the opportunity to talk about God and faith with them. (Submitted photo)

Father Wyciskalla gives a lot of credit to other people for that growth and for the spirit that exists at St. Mark.

He credits former principal Rusty Albertson for initially welcoming the Burmese families to the school and current principal Kocher and her staff for being the every-day ministers of the faith to the students from all backgrounds. He also praises the impact of associate pastor, Father Hau Hawm “John” Mang, for his ability to speak to adult Burmese parishioners—and share the sacraments with them—in their native language.

At the same time, Father Wyciskalla doesn’t downplay his commitment to Catholic education and the ever-extending ripple effects of its influence.

“Of all the parish ministries—and they’re all important—I really think a Catholic school is the best at getting us our next generation of Catholics because we’re educating them, and we’re also able to give them the fullness of human formation, which includes spiritual formation.

“A strong Catholic school is a strong parish, and it’s also the future of that parish. It’s an incredibly important ministry.” †

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Schools instill in students ‘the value of service in the parish and beyond’

By Natalie Hoefler

“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve ...” (Mk 10:45)

Dedicated to the responsibility of joining with parents to form children in imitation of Christ, Catholic schools across central and southern Indiana impart the importance of service to its students.

A random act of kindness. Writing a letter to a veteran. Weeding a garden. Stocking shelves at a food pantry. Whether as a class or school-wide endeavor, students at Catholic schools in the archdiocese learn service through practice throughout the academic year—and sometimes beyond.

Following are highlights of how three Catholic schools in the archdiocese—SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi in Greenwood, Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg and Providence Cristo Rey High School in Indianapolis—teach this essential Christian value.

‘Serving in the parish and beyond’

At SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi, students learn about faith in action by a monthly service program aptly named “Faith in Action.”

Each month of the school year, a different grade level participates in a service project, says principal Betty Popp.

“For our pre-school students, it may be as simple as random acts of kindness, something they can wrap their minds around,” she says. “Other classes might spearhead a project that involves the whole school.”

Some projects are annual, like a toy drive for the *Pro Vida* (Pro Life) ministry of St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis or a November food drive for the parish’s food pantry.

For the food drive, the coordinators of the pantry talk with the students about “what purpose it serves, who it serves and how they can get involved,” says Popp.

“The last time we did the food drive, it was the seventh grade’s project for the month. Even though the whole school comes together to donate and stock the pantry, the seventh-graders got to go to Gleaners [Food Bank in Indianapolis] to learn what they do and [to] go beyond our campus.”

Projects have ranged from holding a baby shower for the Gabriel Project’s mothers in need—including writing the moms encouraging notes—to sending letters and



Students of Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception in Oldenburg care for the campus grounds on Earth Day, April 21, 2023, as part of an annual day of service to the school and local community. (Submitted photo)

cards to veterans, to putting together care packages for children in an orphanage in Romania.

One popular new project last fall involved the Sisters of St. Benedict at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

“Every class adopted a sister, and they write back and forth,” Popp explains. “The sisters are excited, and the kids just love it. It’s been delightful.”

Whatever the monthly Faith in Action project may be, “The goal is for the kids to learn about the greater needs of the community and how they can help even in simple ways,” says Popp. “We hope to instill in them the value of serving in the parish and beyond.”

Forming students into ‘servant-leaders’

That goal is echoed at Oldenburg Academy, where service is promoted “for the students to realize that they are a part of something much more than themselves,” says principal Angie Parmer.

Some projects are built into the school year, such as a focus on community service during each student’s sophomore year or the school’s annual Earth Day beautification project on the academy’s grounds and in the town of Oldenburg.

Many athletic teams “take on charitable projects throughout their season,” Parmer says.

“Our basketball teams adopted a family to buy Christmas gifts for,” she says. “And our volley team does ‘Volley for Hope,’ where they chose a family in crisis and collect money to help them.”

One form of service at the school is a program started 20 years ago by two seniors in which a student can adopt a sister of the Third Order Regular Sisters of St. Francis. The convent for the order, which founded Oldenburg Academy, is located next to the school.

“Students have lunch with them twice a month, they build fellowship and learn about each other,” explains the school’s president, Annette Hunger. “It allows students to learn about religious women, their mission and their own years of service.”

She notes that service “is an important Franciscan value, and as a Franciscan-founded school, it’s important to us.

“Our goal is to develop our students to be servant-leaders not only while at the academy but as they launch out into the world from college to career, that they understand what it means to be a good servant-leader.”

‘Christ is present in everyone around us’

When it comes to promoting service at Providence Cristo Rey High School, “Part of Catholic education is that this is something we are called to do, something that God models for us,” says Facundo Gonzalez Icardi, the school’s director of campus ministry and student life.



Students of Providence Cristo Rey High School in Indianapolis gather for a photo at Shepherd Community Center in Indianapolis on Sept. 1, 2023, when students and faculty of the school participated in its annual Day of Service. (Submitted photo)

To emphasize the importance of service, all of the students, faculty and staff participate annually in “a big day of service at the beginning of the year,” says Gonzalez Icardi. “This year, we sent everyone to one of 14 organizations in Indianapolis.”

The school encourages students to take part in three optional service projects per semester. The activities have ranged from caring for the school grounds, writing letters to those in the military and sending Christmas cards to elderly citizens in the local community.

The senior theology class focuses on learning about service, says Gonzalez Icardi.

“They learn the seven tenets of Catholic social teaching,” he says. “And they come up with and lead a service project for the school to carry out.”

Two years ago, he began offering a service immersion spring break trip called Being Light and Salt Together, or BLAST.

“I was surprised—we had nearly 50 applicants for the 24 spots within the first two weeks after the application was posted,” says Gonzalez Icardi.

The weeklong service opportunity was built on four pillars: service, spirituality (“time in reflection and prayer”), simple living (“simple accommodations—we even made our own meals—and no technology”) and community (“spending time getting to know each other”).

“They really valued so much more after going on the trip, seeing their own blessings,” Gonzalez Icardi says. “They recognized that, regardless of how little they have, they can still help others in the community. It doesn’t have to be a trip—it’s something they can do in their own community or church. It was really rewarding, seeing them come to these realizations and hearing them share with their peers.”

The school’s emphasis on service “all goes back to our call as Catholics to be constantly ministering to those around us by the example set by Christ,” he says. “Christ is present in everyone around us. We have to follow the model he laid out for us.” †

The chosen: two archdiocesan schools named national Blue Ribbon School

(Editor’s note: This story is a shortened version of the original one that appeared in *The Criterion* on Sept. 29, 2023.)

By Sean Gallagher

Two Catholic schools in the archdiocese were named a national Blue Ribbon School during this academic year, adding to a 41-year tradition of excellence.

St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington and Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis are the latest recipients of the honor from the U.S. Department of Education.

Only 11 schools in Indiana received the recognition, with only three private schools among them.

With St. Charles and Bishop Chatard earning the distinction this year, schools

in the archdiocese have now received 39 Blue Ribbon School honors since the program was started in 1982.

Blue Ribbon schools are recognized for their academic excellence. To receive the honor, they have to be nominated by their state’s secretary of education and pass through a rigorous application process.

“We are extremely excited for the St. Charles Borromeo and Bishop Chatard school communities for being honored among the highest-performing schools in the country,” said Brian Disney, superintendent of Catholic schools in the archdiocese. “In addition to academic excellence, both schools are committed to teaching and living their Catholic faith every day.”

John Hasty, Bishop Chatard’s principal, viewed the Blue-Ribbon honor

as “an amazing acknowledgement of the selflessness and commitment that so many people here have made to something far greater than themselves—teachers, parents, students, staff across the board. It affirmed what I already knew was happening that makes this place special.

“Our parents are invested in that partnership. They’re invested in our kids-first teachers. They share with us their responsibility of human, spiritual and academic formation of their children. That’s a lot. I’ve been blown away by the amount of trust and support in that partnership. It’s a powerful community.”

Victoria Arther, St. Charles’ principal, viewed the Blue Ribbon honor as a reflection of the sacrifices that the school’s students, teachers and administrators made in the fall of 2020

when, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, it re-opened its doors when surrounding public schools remained closed.

“We kept on going as usual and did not see a learning loss,” Arther said. “Our kids kept pressing forward and did a great job. It’s why we were able to get this Blue-Ribbon recognition.”

At the same time, Arther knows that the foundation for academic excellence at St. Charles was laid long before the pandemic.

“We do well, year in and year out,” Arther said. “Even before being a Blue Ribbon School, we knew that we had something really special here at St. Charles. This is now going to allow us to really highlight that with others. It’s a distinct honor to be a Blue Ribbon School.” †



A touch of Providence guides principal in his response to students

By John Shaughnessy

Sixteen years have passed, but Steve Beyl has kept all the cards and notes—physical reminders of the most difficult and defining time of his life.

Just 27 then, Beyl was diagnosed with cancer, five months after his wife Corinne gave birth to their son Kramer.

Two surgeries and a draining round of chemotherapy took a toll on his body. The devastating ordeal also challenged his faith, which showed through in his questioning of God during several conversations with the chaplain of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville, where Beyl worked as a teacher that year—2008.

Yet, amid that hardest time in his life came two strong sources of faith, hope and love, starting with his wife, a Providence classmate whom he began dating in 1999, near the end of their senior year.

“She’s the unsung hero of all of this,” he says. “We had been married three years at the time. On our third anniversary, I was getting chemo.

“She was somehow able to manage a full-time job as a teacher, being a first-time mom and taking care of a husband with cancer. I’m in awe of how she handled all of that.”

He’s also still in awe of the support that the Providence community gave him then. He’s still touched by the Masses that were offered for his recovery. And it’s why he still keeps all the cards and notes from students, their parents and staff members who encouraged him and shared that they were praying for him.

“I tell people that early on, I wasn’t in a good place. But I came around. I could see the beauty in it,” he says.

“I could see the people here cared for me as a person, cared for me as a friend. It meant everything to get that from the school, the community, the parents, the kids. It gave me something to live for—and something to get back for. It left an impact of what it means to work in a Catholic school. Because of all that, I was able to use my faith to help me get through everything.”

‘They have to feel we value them’

Fast forward from 2008 to 2024, a time when Beyl is in his second year as the principal of Providence. Sixteen years may have passed, but the memory of that time in his life guides him in the approach he takes to the 371 students at the school.

“It starts with just knowing the students, that I see them for who they are and where they are,” Beyl says.

“When kids know I know their name—and they know that I know what they do in school and outside school—it breaks down barriers. It lets them initiate conversations with me if there are things they are struggling with or they need to talk about. That’s the goal—making the kids feel comfortable and letting them know that we’re here to help them any way we can. They have to feel we value them first or we’ll never be able to do that.

“We have learned things that you would never suspect that are going on in a student’s life. Students that are struggling with challenges that I would not have been able to handle as a high school student.”

In dealing with those realities that touch every school, Beyl says he and his staff strive to approach them from a foundation of building trust.

“Parents and kids sometimes share sensitive things with me and my team, and they wouldn’t do that if they didn’t trust us. That’s a privilege I don’t take lightly,” he says. “It helps that we are aware of what’s going on for that student. It might be nothing more than that next time you’re in the hallway or the cafeteria and you see them, you make sure they’re doing OK.”

Beyl knows how important that feeling can be. The feeling of family and community that has long been a major part of Providence changed his life.

It’s a life now that includes his marriage of 18 years to Corinne, who is in her 13th year of teaching at Providence; a life that includes 15-year-old Kramer who is in his freshman year at Providence; a life that includes their 10-year-old son Truman, a fourth-grade student at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in New Albany.

It’s also a life centered around a continuing connection



Married 18 years, after being classmates at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville, Steve and Corinne Beyl continue to be tied to the school as educators. Steve is principal while Corinne is a Spanish teacher. Their son Kramer is a freshman at Providence while Truman is a fourth-grade student at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in New Albany. (Submitted photo)

between the Catholic faith and a Catholic education that has shaped him.

“If I wasn’t in a Catholic school, I wouldn’t be able to visit our chapel in the morning to speak to God about whatever is on my mind—whatever challenges I may be facing, whatever challenges the school many be facing, whatever struggles the students may be facing.

“It’s a comfort and a blessing to discuss our faith, to share our faith and make that part of the overall education experience. It’s woven into everything we do here.

“I’m just grateful for what Providence has done for me.” †

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As she leads by example, a teacher hopes her students choose Jesus in their hearts

By John Shaughnessy

As soon as she walks into the school building, Kristen Christenberry focuses on her main goal for her life and her primary hope for her students.

"I want my words and actions to reflect my love for God," says Christenberry, who has taught in Catholic schools for 17 years. "I never want anyone to question whether or not I am a Christian. Jesus said in the Gospel of John, 'As I have loved you, so you should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn 13:34-35).

"This is something that I promote in my classroom every single year, as I invite students to have their own relationship with Jesus."

As a teacher at St. Monica School in Indianapolis, Christenberry has also always strived to create close relationships with her students, even going the extra mile during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when instruction went completely virtual.

"Kristen went to the homes of high-need students to ensure they had face-to-face check-in and instruction," notes Eric Schommer, St. Monica's principal. "Our children in her care know they are loved by God."

That quality shines through in a story from her days as a first-grade teacher, when one of her students was struggling with sight words and reading in the classroom—even though the child's mother said he was able to do both at home.

"I decided to meet with the student at his home, with mom's permission," says Christenberry, a finalist for last year's Saint Theodora Excellence in Education Award, the highest honor that the archdiocese gives to an educator.

"I suspected that he wasn't able to focus in the classroom long enough to work with me. At his home, we would read and work on sight words. Mom was right. Her child was reading. Seeing how he was able to have success in his kitchen helped me know what I needed to change to work with him at school."

'It's a whole different level of awesome'

In nominating Christenberry for the award, one parent noted, "She meets every child where they are physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally, and pushes them in a loving manner to achieve and become more."

That level of attentive caring also shows in the way that Christenberry, a mother of two, looks out for children in a school where students come from diverse backgrounds of race, economics and ethnicity, and where a number of students have special needs.

"I have had children in my class with disabilities, including ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder], emotional disorders, autism and Down syndrome," she says. "With each new year, I learn more about these children and understand better how to teach them successfully."

That personal connection extends to watching out for students who come from families who struggle economically. If she notices a child doesn't have a warm winter coat and hat, she'll work to find them for the child.

She also pays close attention to her students' families at Christmas, ever since one of her students returned from Christmas break and told her and his classmates that what he got for Christmas was a carpet for his bedroom.

"I talked to the mom, and she said, 'We had no money, we needed the carpet.' After that, I started reaching out to families to find out if they needed any assistance for gifts for their kids."

After years of teaching first grade, Christenberry requested to teach sixth-grade students for this school year.

"I could not tell you which grade I love better. I love them both equally for different reasons," she says. "You



Kristen Christenberry has a close bond with her students as she strives to help them have a personal relationship with Jesus. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

really have to work hard with sixth-graders because they don't buy in as easily as a first-grader does. When the sixth-graders finally allow you to get to them and they have that a-ha moment or you see they are finally making the connections, it's a whole different level of awesome."

She especially strives for these break-through moments as she integrates the Catholic faith into every part of the school day.

"Ultimately, it comes down to preparing our students to know and love God so that they can go out into the world and be the face of God," she says. "My goal as a Catholic school teacher is for each and every one of my students to leave my classroom knowing how much God loves them and how to build a relationship with him. I hope that someday they choose Jesus Christ in their heart."

"The earlier we start them having a love for God, the hope is that each year it flourishes a little more. I try every day to lead by example." †

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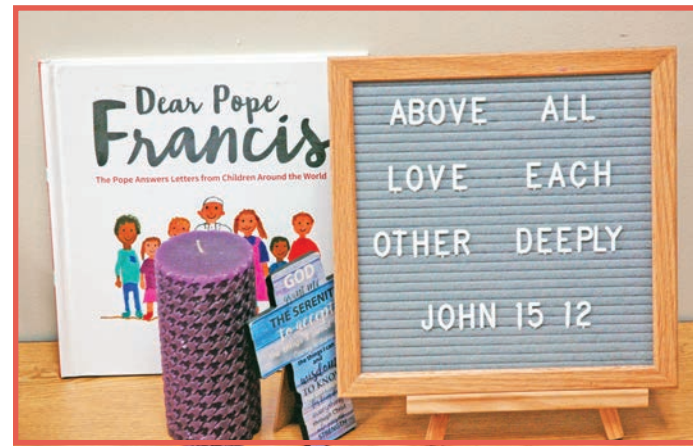


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Curious children lead a teacher to a ‘home’ where God wants her to be

By John Shaughnessy

As she looks back on the choice that has come to define her life, Cassie Echegaray has a group of curious fourth-graders to thank.

At the time, she was completing her student teaching in a public school—a time when she was trying to decide where she would apply for a permanent teaching position. Amid that soul searching, a conversation with her fourth-grade students in the public school became a deciding factor.

She was asked three questions by the children: Do you believe in God? What is your faith? Where do you go to church?

“They were curious fourth-graders,” she recalls about that moment nine years ago. “Sadly, I had to simply reply, ‘I am not allowed to discuss those things with you.’”

“This short conversation weighed heavily on me and ultimately pushed me to apply to Catholic schools.”

Ever since, Echegaray has been a teacher at Little Flower School—the place she calls “home,” the place where she believes God wants her to be.

“I do not see it as teaching. I see it as living out the vocation that God had planned for me,” says Echegaray, one of the finalists for the 2023 Saint Theodora Excellence in Education Award, the highest honor the archdiocese gives an educator. “Day in and day out, my students see me living out my faith through my work.”

“They know the passion and love that I have for my vocation. They know that I will be there for them regardless of the situation, and that I will do whatever it takes for the school community.”

Echegaray teaches the subject she loves—math—to third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students at Little Flower, the Indianapolis school named in honor of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus.

“I love this age group because they’re old enough to understand some harder things, yet they’re young enough to have fun with it, to get up and do dance moves with, whatever the topic is.”

“I love being able to make learning fun for them. I’ve had some phenomenal teachers through the years. And

when I look back, the ones who were most meaningful made it fun. I love for my students to feel confident in themselves, to get those lightbulb moments, and just see the excitement on their faces when they understand something.”

She also loves finding ways to share her faith in her math classes and her religion class with her fifth-graders.

“I can share my faith journey with them and help them to see that they can make a difference even at their age,” she says. “I have found that if we allow them to be curious, ask questions about their faith, and be honest about our own understanding, then they gain so much more insight and awe about the Catholic faith.”

Her approach includes sometimes sharing her struggles.

“I always make sure they know there are going to be times in your life where you’re stronger in your faith, and other times where you’re a little bit further away from the Church and less active. I tell them for me, college was really hard. My faith wasn’t a priority. And then how I came back once I was engaged to be married in 2013. That’s when I was jumping in, diving in.”

“I tell them that when I’m struggling with something, the first thing that I do is pray to God, that I can see what his vision for me is. I also tell them that’s why I got into teaching. It was something that kept pulling at me, and I finally listened to God. And ultimately it led me to a Catholic school.”

As Little Flower’s principal, Kevin Gawrys is thrilled it did. In nominating Echegaray for the Saint Theodora honor, he shared this insight: “Students, teachers and parents are all drawn to Cassie because she is a ‘bucket-filler.’ She is able to see the needs of others and fill them. Her commitment to her Church and her faith are obvious. She began a program to provide all fifth-graders with their very own Bible.”

Her influence continues into the parish community. A parent of three young children—ages 8, 6 and 3—with her husband Kevin, she has served as president of the parish council, volunteered as a basketball coach in the archdiocese’s Catholic Youth Organization, shares Christ’s body and blood as an extraordinary minister of



The combination of joy and faith marks the approach of Cassie Echegaray in teaching her students at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) School in Indianapolis. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

holy Communion, and leads students in volunteering at a food pantry.

She views her approach as striving to live life “as St. Therese lived hers.”

“My students are able to see me practicing my faith at Mass, volunteering at parish events, leading faith discussions, praying, and giving grace to others, even in times of distress,” says the 2007 graduate of Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis.

“Living out Christ’s teachings is the most effective way to share our faith with others and impact the world, especially impressionable children.”

Living Christ’s teachings has also left an impact on her—on her teaching and her life.

“My faith is a lot stronger than where it was 10 years ago. I used to have a lot of anxiety about just a lot of different stuff. Over the last 10 years, just growing closer to God and learning more, especially with teaching, I notice that a lot of things I was anxious about have dissipated. I feel those burdens are lifted off me now because of my faith.” †

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MTCA food pantries relieve hunger, stress of students and families

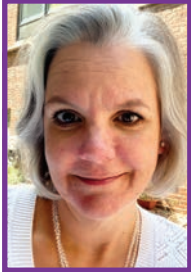
By Natalie Hoefler

A bag of snacks can go a long way to help a student facing food insecurity on the weekend.

A pantry with food staples and healthy options to help feed the whole family throughout the week can go even further.

Those benefits are being felt by families of students of the three Mother Theodore Catholic Academies (MTCA) in Indianapolis' inner city.

With help from a donation, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and Gleaners Food Bank, both in Indianapolis, two of the MTCA schools opened a food pantry for students' families last fall, and the third is scheduled to open by February.



Elizabeth Ewing

"Instead of buying retail, prepackaged snack food for a handful of students, we can provide much more food to every school family," says Elizabeth Ewing, MTCA nutrition program manager. "And in addition to feeding [students] three meals a day, we're able to provide them food for evenings and weekends."

The new program is made possible in large part by a multi-year donation to purchase food for MTCA students at risk of the negative impacts from weekend food insecurity.

'It's a better fit for our families'

For the last several years, MTCA has had "a weekend program that was funded by a very generous donor where we had a team of volunteers assemble bags of kid-friendly food for students facing food insecurity on the weekends," Ewing explains. "Those children were identified at each school by [its] social worker and principal."

It was a helpful program, but Ewing desired to do more.

"Those kids getting bags, maybe they had siblings

at home that weren't getting a bag," she says. "Now this child is obligated to share their food, so now we're not even meeting the needs of that one child. Some children even felt the need to hide the food."

What if there was a way to help not just more students but their families too? Ewing wondered.

She spoke with the donor about the idea of creating a pantry in each of the MTCA schools—Central Catholic, Holy Angels and St. Philip Neri—with the donated funds supplying healthy food and grocery basics for a student's entire family.

"It gives the ability to provide food to students back to the parents," Ewing says. "And it allows us to meet the need of the whole household, which in turn allows us to serve that individual child better."

The donor was on board.

Gleaners donated a refrigerator, freezer and shelving for the pantry at St. Philip Neri, while St. Vincent de Paul and an associated donor provided the refrigerators, freezers shelving and more for Central Catholic's and Holy Angels' food pantries.

"With this equipment, instead of just offering shelf-stable food, we can provide milk, meat, eggs, cheese and other freezer and refrigerated items," says Ewing. "It's a better fit for our families."

'Worked out great to meet their needs'

To make the fit even better, each school can tailor how to operate its food pantry and offer demographic-specific food.



Teachers and staff of St. Matthew the Apostle School in Indianapolis assemble "birthday-in-a-box" kits for the food pantry at St. Philip Neri School in Indianapolis, a Mother Theodore Catholic Academy, on Dec. 5. (Submitted photo)

For instance, St. Philip Neri was able to create space enough to make theirs a client-choice pantry. It is open for two hours after student dismissal twice a month, "as well as on an as-needed basis if a family is in crisis," Ewing notes.

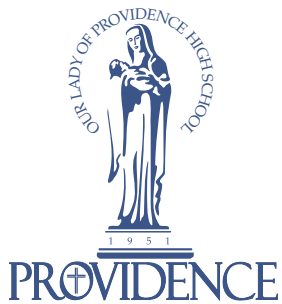
At Central Catholic, the school "is full, jam packed—which is great," says school social worker Kay Holland. "But we didn't have space to do a client choice pantry."

See MTCA, page 14B

NEW ALBANY DEANERY SCHOOLS

New Albany Deanery Catholic School System

PK-12



Our Lady of Providence H.S., Clarksville
Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, New Albany
St. Anthony of Padua School, Clarksville
Sacred Heart Catholic School, Jeffersonville

Holy Family School, New Albany
St. Joseph Catholic School, Corydon
St. John Paul II Catholic School, Sellersburg
St. Mary of the Knobs Catholic School, Floyds Knobs

Celebrating Catholic Schools Week



Volunteerism helps create a ‘family feel’ between a parish and its school

By Sean Gallagher

Parish schools everywhere depend on the volunteer help they get from members of the faith community that sponsor it.

But for Amy Wilson, the principal of St. Roch School in Indianapolis, that reality goes far beyond simply making sure that lunchroom duty is accounted for or well-trained hands are found for a renovation project.

She’s led the school of the Indianapolis South Deanery faith community for the past seven years and has been on its staff for 23.

During that time, she’s seen countless times how the ministry of the school is wholly integrated into the service of the parish as a whole.

“There’s always been, in my opinion, that connection between the parish and the school,” Wilson said. “We want for nothing because of our parish. The school thrives because of the parishioners who put so much time and love into it.”

Father Douglas Hunter, who has led St. Roch Parish since 2018, agrees, saying that the school “allows us to truly live out our faith.

“It’s an active participation not only in the Eucharist, but in life outside of a church building.”

Doing small things with great love

Most of the time, the help that members of St. Roch Parish give to its school happens in small ways that can easily go unnoticed. It might be the parish’s women’s club donating paper towels and tissues for use in classrooms, the school’s parent-teacher organization coordinating a Halloween party or volunteers staffing the cafeteria at lunchtime.

“St. Teresa of Calcutta said to do small things with great love,” Wilson said. “That’s what St. Roch does. And all of those small things multiply. It’s like a snowball.”

Getting parents, grandparents and other parishioners to give time to the school in small ways frees up teachers to put more of their focus on instruction, Wilson added.

“It’s our goal to make sure that they have as much time during the day as they can,” she said. “Our volunteers help us to be able to do that. Without them, we’d have to have two or three teachers down in the cafeteria every lunch to help.”

Lori Tobin once had grandchildren who were students at St. Roch. Although they’re no longer there, she continues to volunteer at the school because she sees the effect that she and fellow volunteers have on the students.

“The kids have a sense of security around us,” Tobin said. “They want to tell us stories like they would tell their grandma. There’s a comfort, a compassion and energy here. They want a hug. And they know that if they have a problem that they’ll be helped.”

Wilson noted that the students witnessing the generosity of the volunteers in the school is an important part of the formation in the faith they receive there.

“It forms them into the disciples that we want them to be,” she said. “Our job here is to get them to heaven, to make them saints. These kids witness these people

coming in and showing what it’s like to be a true-life disciple.”

‘That’s such a big part of our faith’

The test of a true disciple sometimes happens when hard times arrive.

For Christina Murray, the community at St. Roch passed that test with flying colors.

Cam, her youngest child and now a kindergartner at St. Roch, was diagnosed with leukemia last year.

When the diagnosis became known in the St. Roch community, support came flooding in.

Around the same time, another family in the school community—one that had helped the Murray family after Cam’s diagnosis—had a child develop a serious illness.

“We did a meal train for months,” Wilson said. “We did a prayer service where a lot of the parish came out and prayed with us for [the sick children]. It’s been amazing to watch this parish rally around these families.”

“I can’t describe the support we have had from our St. Roch community,” Murray said, holding back tears. “It just speaks to St. Roch as a family. Everyone is like my family. It extends so far beyond the walls of the school. It’s the people.”

Although the support given to and through the school has great personal meaning for Murray, she knows how much it means to the school’s mission, serving as she does as president of the school’s parent-teacher organization.

“That volunteerism makes it really easy as a parent to say to my kids that they have to be a part of something bigger than themselves,” she said. “That’s such a big part of our faith.”

‘That family feel’

The service that a broad array of people give to St. Roch contributes to building a strong community that then becomes a seedbed for strong faith.

Seminarian Samuel Hansen experienced that as a student at St. Roch in the connections he made with staff members and volunteer coaches, many of whom came from families with a long and continuing history in the



Mila Baker, left, a pre-kindergarten student at St. Roch School in Indianapolis, smiles during a lunch period at Lori Tobin, a member of St. Roch Parish who volunteers in the school’s cafeteria. (Submitted photo)

parish and its school.

“It really had a family feel,” said Hansen, who is in formation for the priesthood at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. “I still see that when I come back. A lot of the same families are here. It’s incredible.”

Looking back on what led to his discernment of a possible priestly call, he gives a lot of credit to what he experienced at St. Roch.

“My conception of ministry began here with coaches, teachers and lunch ladies, people doing small things,” Hansen said. “Ministry is doing God’s will. I saw that here long before I considered the priesthood.”

The strength of the community in St. Roch and its school has built ties that have bound many in it for a long time, said Wilson.

Although she’s been on the school’s staff for 23 years, she said there are many others who have more seniority there than she does.

“People come in and they stay,” Wilson said. “That’s a testament to this community. We’ve built something here that people want to be a part of. I think that’s what makes St. Roch so special.” †

MTCA

continued from page 13B

As coordinator of the food pantry, she devised a drive-through plan where 68 identified families receive a bag of food while picking up their children after school. She includes a recipe card that comes with the items in that week’s bag.

Ewing stopped by one day to observe the process.

“They had families set up to receive food, and then there were a few additional families that walked up and said, ‘Hey, I’m not on the list to receive this week, but I need something,’” she says. “It worked out great to meet their needs.”

Food for the pantries is purchased at a reduced rate from Gleaners using funds from the food-designated donation. Each MTCA pantry coordinator orders separately, allowing them to provide food based on the unique needs and preferences of their school’s community.

Holland and Liz Davis, social worker and food pantry coordinator

for St. Philip Neri, appreciate the free milk, eggs and fresh produce that Gleaners also offers.

Davis says a recent delivery by Gleaners “had apples, melons, onions, blueberries and sweet potatoes. We set up five or six long tables at dismissal, so as families drove into the parking lot to get their kids, they could come get whatever they needed. We had enough for all of our families and nothing left over.”

Holland notes those are “the kind of expensive, healthy foods that are so good for us and that families struggle to get.”

‘They’re able to focus on school’

Such food is important for students and families on several levels.

“Physically, it just helps them be able to have that healthy body and healthy brain to learn,” says Holland.

And not being hungry helps students learn, Davis adds.

“If kids aren’t coming to school hungry or have to go home hungry in the evening, they’re able to focus on school,” she says. “That overall can have

an impact on their academics.

“I think it has overall impact on mood, too. People joke about being ‘hangry’ [angry from hunger], but it’s true. If you’re hungry, you don’t want to do what you need to do. If that’s not an issue, students are more able to relax and take part in what’s happening in school.”

As for families, says Davis, “It’s good for them not to have to worry about where food will come from, so they don’t have to stretch their budget. If you have to worry about how basic needs will be met, that adds to all the other stressors they have in their lives. If we can relieve that in just this simple way, that’s huge.”

Even helping families provide a birthday celebration for their children helps relieve anxiety. The teachers and staff of St. Matthew the Apostle School in Indianapolis recently put together 60 “birthday-in-a-box” kits with everything needed to make a cake—including a foil pan—plus frosting, candles and a balloon, and donated them to St. Philip Neri’s pantry.

Ewing’s list of gratitude surrounding

the MTCA food pantries is long. It includes the generosity of those donating funds and equipment, volunteers and her nutrition staff, who have “really gone above and beyond their duties as nutrition employees and serving our kids. I’m super proud of them, and I love the team—they’re very special people, and every day I’m just so grateful I get to work with MTCA.”

Perhaps most rewarding is the gratitude of the families.

“They are so grateful and awed by the food that we’re able to get them,” says Holland. “I get so many ‘Thank you,’ ‘God bless you’ and ‘This makes a big difference to my family.’”

“It just makes me feel really good that we can do something so beneficial to our students and families.”

(For more information on Mother Theodore Catholic Academies, go to mtcaschools.org. To donate money for household items for the MTCA pantries such as paper towels, toilet paper, soap, laundry detergent, etc., contact Elizabeth Ewing at 317-236-1584 or ewing@archindy.org.) †



A year of celebrating the fun and friendships of the Catholic Youth Organization



Catholic high schools continue their success in sports

By John Shaughnessy

In any given year, sports teams and individuals of Catholic high schools in the archdiocese always compete—and often win—state championships.

That reality has once again been true this school year. Cameron Todd of Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis started the state championship success by winning Indiana's cross country state championship for boys on Oct. 28 in Terre Haute. His winning time of 14 minutes, 55.5 seconds on the 5-kilometer course was the seventh-fastest time in the history of the state meet.

The girls' volleyball team of Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville earned Indiana's Class 3A state championship on Nov. 4, beating the previously top-ranked team of Belmont High School. The state championship was the second in a row for Providence's volleyball program and the fifth one in the past 11 seasons under the leadership of head coach Terri Purichia.

The football team of Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis also won Indiana's Class 3A state championship, defeating the team from Heritage Hills High School on Nov. 25. It was also the second in a row for the Trojans and the fourth in the past five years under the leadership of head coach Rob Doyle.

Both coaches saluted the influence of their seniors. "They're such a committed group and their

dedication just has shown in so many ways," Purichia said about her 10 seniors. "They're also really good students. All 10 of them are Academic All-State. They're leaders of the school and leaders in the classroom. They're just great, great people who have done so many awesome things for our program."

Doyle had similar praise for the Bishop Chatard seniors who led the team to a perfect 15-0 record.

Describing the seniors as smart and hardworking, Doyle added, "Our seniors were willing to help the younger guys and bring them along. I think it's really important when your best players are generous to those who are younger than them. When you can bring someone else along with you and help them out, it makes for a pretty full life."

Other teams and individuals from Catholic schools in the archdiocese also had notable sports seasons.

In girls' cross country, Julia Score of Bishop Chatard finished third in the state championship meet.

In football, Providence's team went undefeated during its regular season.

In soccer, the boys' team of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis made it to the championship game of the state's Class 3A tournament, finishing as runners-up.

The Cathedral girls' soccer team was among the final four teams in the state's Class 3A championship. And



Cameron Todd of Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in Indianapolis surges toward victory in Indiana's cross country state championship meet for boys in Terre Haute on Oct. 28. (Submitted photo)

the boys' soccer team of Brebeuf Jesuit made it to the final four of the state's Class 2A tournament.

In girls' volleyball, the team of Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School in Indianapolis was among the final four teams in the state's Class 2A tournament while the team from Roncalli High School in Indianapolis also achieved that distinction in the state's Class 4A tournament. †



Indiana's 'Choice' program helps families seeking a Catholic education

By John Shaughnessy

John Elcesser allows himself a small smile when he talks about the expansion of Indiana's school choice program, a program which now makes 97% of the state's families eligible to choose the school they believe is the best fit for their daughter or son.

"It's about time," says a smiling Elcesser, the executive director of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association (INPEA), which represents the state's more than 400 non-public schools, including 175 Catholic schools.

The statistics already show the impact that has resulted from the Indiana General Assembly's decision last spring to expand the school choice program and to simplify the process for families to take advantage of that opportunity.

"Last year, we had about 53,000 students participating in the Choice Scholarship program," Elcesser says. "This year, it's over 69,000. So, there's significant growth in the participation of the program."

Beyond the numbers, Elcesser also knows the impact that the state's commitment to school choice has made to Indiana families.

"I've gotten to meet with families whose lives have been changed, who never thought they'd be able to afford private schools, let alone a faith-based or Catholic school," he says. "And there's lots of those stories. Those are what keep you moving forward."

The state legislature's decision to expand the Choice Scholarship program is the latest development in providing school vouchers for Indiana families, an opportunity that first was made available to low-income families in 2011.

Now, nearly all families in the state are eligible for the Choice Scholarship program. As an example, a student from a family of four that earns up to \$220,000 annually can receive a Choice Scholarship or voucher to attend any school the family chooses.

"Legislators are finally realizing that all families are taxpayers, and that tax dollars are not owned by a particular entity," Elcesser says. "They are funds that everybody contributes to, to the support of things like education."

"In 2011, the focus was to provide choice opportunities for folks who could not afford it. But that paradigm has shifted in the last couple legislative sessions to the point of, 'Yes, we accomplished that. Families who couldn't afford it now have that opportunity in varying degrees. Now the paradigm is that every family should be able to use a small percentage of their state tax dollars

to support their private school choice or to support other families' private school choice.'"

Elcesser shared that belief in his efforts to convince state legislators to expand the Choice Scholarship program.

"When we look at the overall \$44.3 billion budget, we're talking about less than 2% going to the Choice Scholarship program," he says. "And one of the things I've shared with folks too—and what I said to the Senate funding committee—was I was a Catholic school principal and a Catholic school superintendent, so it was a no-brainer that my kids were going to Catholic school, kindergarten through 12."

"In those years, I paid tuition, and I paid my taxes, and I knew I needed those taxes to support our public educational system because we need to have quality public schools. It's essential to the state. But I also have no problem with less than 2% of my tax dollars going to support private school choice."

Elcesser stresses that there's a cost-benefit in school choice for the state, too. Since qualifying students can receive up to 90% of the local per-student state funding amount, "the state saves 10% of what they would have been paying if that student had been going into a public school," he says.

Besides expanding the program to include families from nearly all economic backgrounds, state legislators also simplified the process to be eligible for a Choice Scholarship. They removed certain "tracks" or qualifications that families previously needed to meet.

"I used to joke with people that it takes a Ph.D. to understand who's eligible," Elcesser says. "The only way kindergarten kids were eligible were if they had a sibling who was already getting a voucher. By removing the tracks, not only does it open the door for additional families, but it simplifies the program."

As pleased as he is with the expansion of the school choice program, Elcesser says there's another goal to reach—making school choice available to 100% of Indiana families.

"I think there are seven or eight states now that have universal choice. Indiana has historically been leading the way, so now we want to catch up," he says about his hope when the legislature makes its next biennial budget in 2025.

It's a goal he's been striving toward since 2008, when he started working for INPEA, which was then under the leadership of Glenn Tebbe.

"I feel very blessed," Elcesser says. "People like Glenn Tebbe and others worked for many years to get us toward this point. I'm a small cog in a very large wheel, but when



As the executive director of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association, John Elcesser is striving to make school choice available to 100% of Indiana families. (Photo by Andrea Anderson of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association)

I go to bed at night, I feel like we've done something to make a difference in families' lives. So, there's a personal satisfaction in that. But we're not done."

There's also one more goal he has, a reflection of all the years he dedicated to Catholic education since 1979—as a teacher of children with special needs, an elementary school teacher, a high school principal, and as superintendent of Catholic schools in the dioceses of Wheeling-Charlestown, W. Va., and Richmond, Va.

"We always have to be cautious that we protect some degree of our independence, and in particular that we protect our mission. I say all the time, there's been a lot of give and take. Our schools take the state test, they do all this reporting to the state, and there's regulations that come with it. But the line in the sand is always, 'Don't mess with our mission.'"

"We've been able to protect that. We should be able to operate out of our faith, beliefs and values." †

Tax-credit scholarships now available for early childhood education programs

By Sean Gallagher

For Kathryn Kutan, educational choice is not just near and dear to her heart. It's personal.

When the state taxpayer-funded Choice Scholarships (commonly known as vouchers) were first made available in 2011, her son was in the eighth grade at St. Lawrence School in Indianapolis.

"He was able to attend a Catholic high school because of that voucher," Kutan recalled with gratitude. "School choice is deep in my heart."

As the director of St. Lawrence's early childhood program, she is well acquainted with how educational choice has a positive effect on many families.

Kutan has been involved in educating 3- and 4-year-olds at St. Lawrence for more than 20 years.

"I'm seeing more and more of our children in early childhood who can afford to continue their education at St. Lawrence," she said. "So, I get to see them grow up until eighth-grade graduation. I usually give them a gift and a last hug goodbye. It's amazing."

While Choice Scholarships are not available for pre-kindergarten programs, there are other state-funded supports for early childhood education.

Those were expanded last year by the Indiana General Assembly when it allowed scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) to award scholarships to families with 4-year-old students in pre-kindergarten programs.

The state encourages contributions to SGOs by offering a 50% tax credit on such donations, with an overall cap of \$18.5 million on the tax credits.

The state legislature giving SGOs the ability to award scholarships for early childhood programs last spring was overshadowed by its expansion of the income guidelines for vouchers, making them now available to nearly all Hoosier families.

Kutan knew of the added support for early childhood education, though, and was grateful.

"It's been a phenomenal year for early childhood education," she said.

Sarah Watson previously was a colleague of Kutan at St. Lawrence, serving as the school's principal. The two of them together worked to bolster St. Lawrence's early childhood program.

Watson is now an assistant school superintendent for the archdiocese, focusing on elementary education. She sees the newly added support for pre-kindergarten programs as another pathway for families to be eligible for a voucher for their children's further education.

"By allowing tax credit scholarships for the preschool-aged children of our archdiocese, we open the door for Catholic education to many more families," Watson said. "Using these funds in preschool allows students to be eligible for Choice Scholarships as early as kindergarten, affording them an additional two years of Catholic education."

Kutan knows well the positive impact that early childhood education can have. English is a new language for about half of the preschool students at St. Lawrence, with many of them speaking only Spanish. She added that there is a growing number of students of a Haitian background whose primary language is Creole.

"I had some children who started pre-school knowing no English that are now in the second or third grade who are further along than some of our kids who started in kindergarten or first grade," Kutan said. "It proves how important early childhood education is in a quality program."

Watson agreed.

"Early learning paves the way for a strong educational foundation for life," she said. "Strong early learning foundations, which our Catholic schools provide, help children develop skills spiritually, physically, socially and emotionally. Thus, they are ready to begin learning their math facts and alphabet on day one of kindergarten."

John Elcesser, executive director of the Indiana Non-Public Education Association, has long been an advocate for educational choice at the Indiana Statehouse and was on hand during last year's General



Kathryn Kutan, director of early childhood education at St. Lawrence School in Indianapolis, works with Nahomy Brigitte Sanchez, a student in the program. (Submitted photo)

Assembly session to back allowing SGO scholarships for early childhood programs.

"Preschool costs can be challenging for some families, and since voucher funding is not available at that level, shifting the use of private donations through an SGO again seemed logical," Elcesser said. "Some also believe that allowing funds to be used in preschool may encourage another sector of donors with a commitment to early childhood."

Watson sees the availability of SGO preschool scholarships as one more way to support the overall mission of Catholic education.

"When our schools can help families pay for this education through tax credit scholarships, we are not only serving our students better," she said, "we are meeting the mission of the school and the global Church."

(Contact your local Catholic school to learn more about receiving a scholarship from a scholarship granting organization for a 4-year-old preschool program or about how to contribute to an SGO.) †



How to afford A CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

Understanding Tax Credit Scholarships and Indiana School Vouchers

Choice Scholarship (Vouchers)

I meet these eligibility requirements:

- Indiana resident
- Must be 5 years of age by Oct. 1
- Apply from March 1 through Sept. 1
- My family meets the financial eligibility criteria (see chart below)

K-12 SCHOOL CHOICE SCHOLARSHIP (VOUCHERS)

What is an Indiana School Choice Scholarship (Voucher)?

A Voucher is a state-funded scholarship that helps cover the cost of tuition at a private school. Qualifying students in grades K-12 can receive up to 90% of the local per-student state funding amount.

How do I apply for an Indiana School Choice Scholarship (Voucher)?

1. To see how much tuition assistance you are eligible for, first register at your Catholic school of choice.
2. Families can apply for both the Tax Credit Scholarship (SGO) and the Choice Scholarship (Voucher) Program at the Catholic school of their choice.

A new Education Scholarship Account program, serving students with special needs, was introduced this year. For more information, visit www.in.gov/tos/inesa/home.

“On My Way” Pre-K vouchers, operated by FSSA, are available at participating schools/programs in all Indiana counties. For more information, log onto www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/4932.htm.

Tax Credit Scholarship (SGO)

I meet these eligibility requirements:

- Indiana resident
- Must be 4 years of age by Aug. 1
- My family is at least 400% or below the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Income Guidelines* (see chart)

TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP & VOUCHER INCOME ELIGIBILITY

2023-2024 TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP INCOME GUIDELINES

Household Size	Household Income
1	\$107,892
2	\$145,928
3	\$183,964
4	\$222,000
5	\$260,036
6	\$298,072
7	\$336,108
8	\$374,144
9	\$412,180
10	\$450,216

* Income levels are based on adjusted gross income and are 400% of the cap for Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program guidelines. SGOs may set their income limits lower than 400% if they so choose.

What are Tax Credit Scholarships?

The Indiana Tax Credit Scholarship Program provides scholarship support to families who want to enroll their children in the Catholic school of their choice.

Who qualifies for a Tax Credit Scholarship?

- A student whose family meets the income eligibility guidelines of 400% of the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program (see chart), AND
- A student who is enrolled in an eligible Catholic school.
- For more information about SGO assistance and how to apply contact your local Catholic school.

How do I apply?

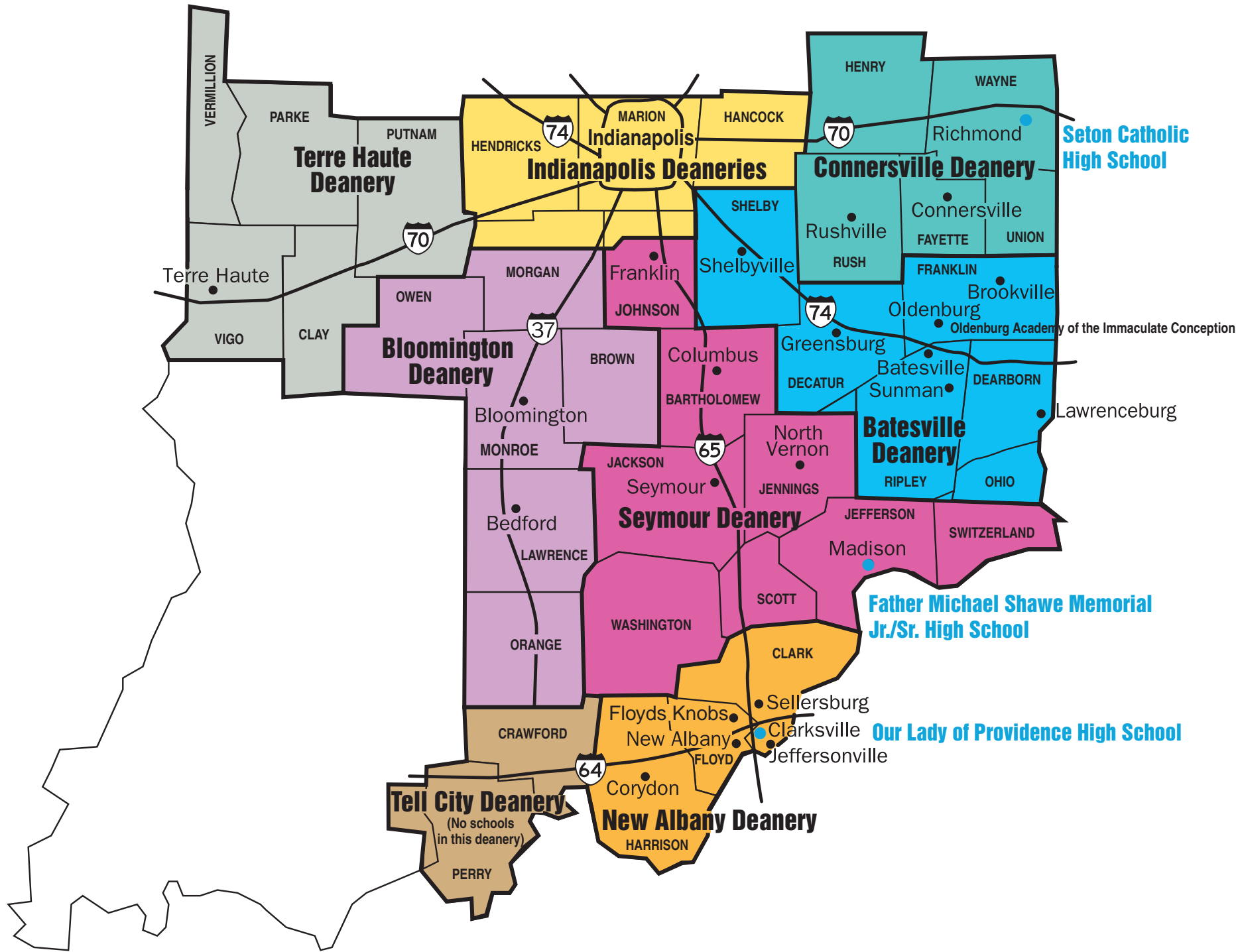
1. To see how much tuition assistance you are eligible for, first register at your Catholic school of choice.

Additional local scholarships
may also be available.
Contact your local Catholic school.





Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis



DEANERY SCHOOLS

Batesville Deanery

- Batesville**
St. Louis School (PK-8)
17 St. Louis Place
Batesville, IN 47006
812-934-3310
- Brookville**
St. Michael School (PK-8)
275 High St.
Brookville, IN 47012
765-647-4961
- Greensburg**
St. Mary School (PK-8)
1331 E. Hunter Robbins Way
Greensburg, IN 47240
812-663-2804
- Lawrenceburg**
St. Lawrence School (K-8)
524 Walnut St.
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025
812-537-3690
- Ripley County**
St. Nicholas School (PK-8)
6459 E. St. Nicholas Drive
Sunman, IN 47041
812-623-2348
- Shelbyville**
St. Joseph School (PK-5)
127 E. Broadway
Shelbyville, IN 46176
317-398-4202

Bloomington Deanery

- Bedford**
St. Vincent de Paul School (PK-8)
923 18th St.
Bedford, IN 47421
812-279-2540
- Bloomington**
St. Charles Borromeo School (PK-8)
2224 E. Third St.
Bloomington, IN 47401
812-336-5853
- Connersville Deanery**
Connersville
St. Gabriel School (PK-6)
224 W. Ninth St.
Connersville, IN 47331
765-825-7951
- Richmond**
Seton Catholic High School (7-12)
233 S. 5th St.
Richmond, IN 47374
765-965-6956
- St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School (PK-6)**
801 W. Main St.
Richmond, IN 47374
765-962-4877
- Rushville**
St. Mary School (PK-6)
226 E. Fifth St.
Rushville, IN 46173
765-932-3639

New Albany Deanery

- Clarksville**
Our Lady of Providence High School (9-12)
707 Providence Way
Clarksville, IN 47129
812-945-2538
- St. Anthony of Padua School (PK-8)**
320 N. Sherwood Ave.
Clarksville, IN 47129
812-282-2144
- Corydon**
St. Joseph School (PK-8)
512 N. Mulberry St.
Corydon, IN 47112
812-738-4549
- Floyd County**
St. Mary-of-the-Knobs School (PK-8)
3033 Martin Road
Floyds Knobs, IN 47119
812-923-1630
- Jeffersonville**
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus School (PK-8)
1842 E. Eighth St.
Jeffersonville, IN 47130
812-283-3123
- New Albany**
Holy Family School (PK-8)
217 W. Daisy Lane
New Albany, IN 47150
812-944-6090
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help School (PK-8)**
1752 Scheller Lane
New Albany, IN 47150
812-944-7676

- Sellersburg**
St. John Paul II School (PK-8)
105 St. Paul St.
Sellersburg, IN 47172
812-246-3266

Seymour Deanery

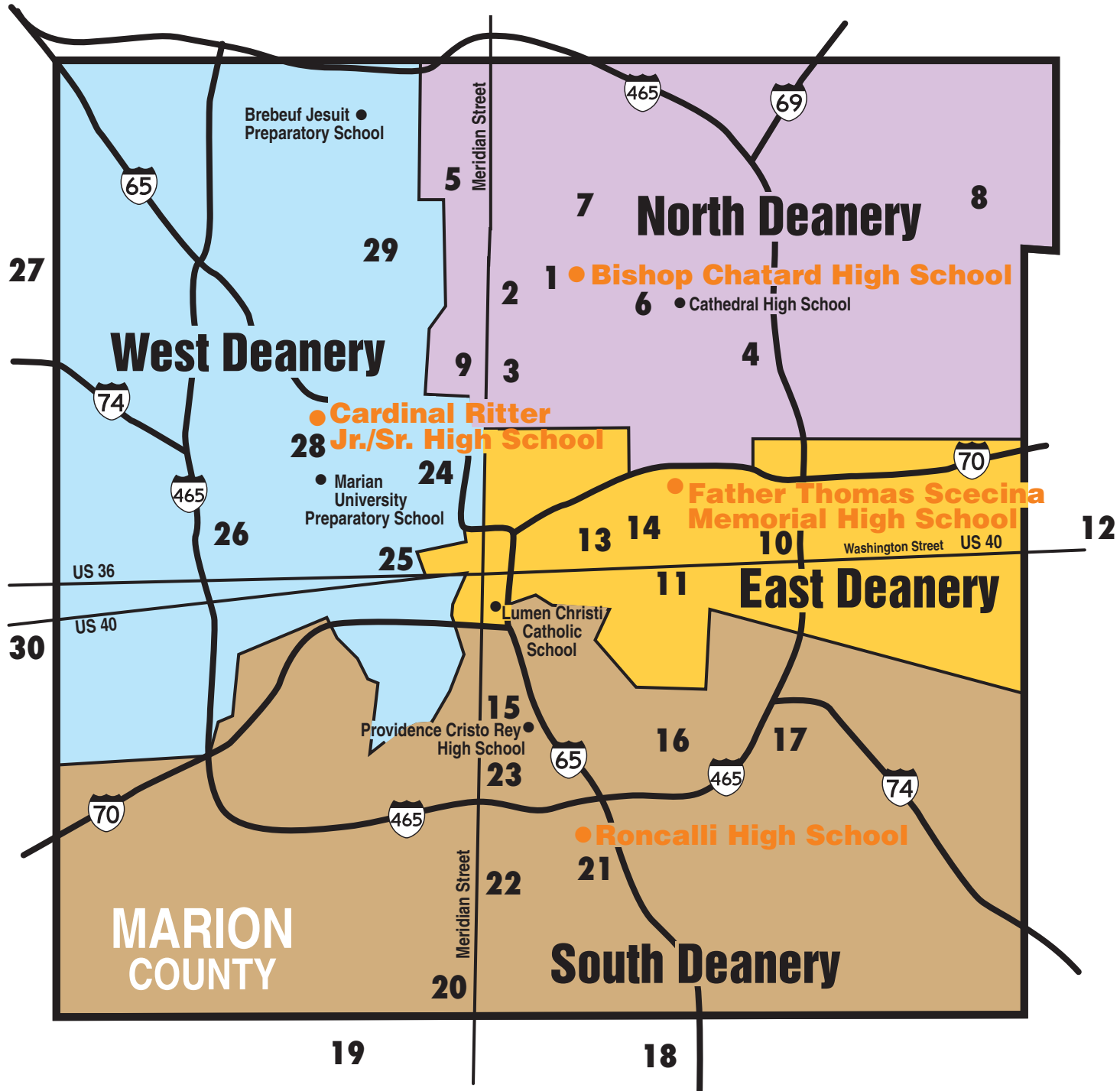
- Columbus**
St. Bartholomew School (K-8)
1306 27th St.
Columbus, IN 47201
812-372-6830
- Franklin**
St. Rose of Lima School (PK-7)
114 Lancelot Drive
Franklin, IN 46131
317-738-3451
- Madison**
Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School (7-12)
201 W. State St.
Madison, IN 47250
812-273-2150
- Pope John XXIII School (PK-6)**
221 W. State St.
Madison, IN 47250
812-273-3957
- North Vernon**
St. Mary School (PK-8)
209 Washington St.
North Vernon, IN 47265
812-346-3445
- Seymour**
St. Ambrose School (PK-8)
301 S. Chestnut St.
Seymour, IN 47274
812-522-3522

Terre Haute Deanery

- Terre Haute**
St. Patrick School (PK-8)
449 S. 19th St.
Terre Haute, IN 47803
812-232-2157
- Private High School**
Oldenburg
Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception (9-12)
1 Twister Circle
P.O. Box 200
Oldenburg, IN 47036
812-934-4440



Catholic Schools in the Greater Indianapolis Area



GREATER INDIANAPOLIS DEANERY SCHOOLS

Indianapolis North Deanery

- **Bishop Chatard High School (9-12)**
5885 N. Crittenden Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46220
317-251-1451
- 1. **Christ the King School (K-8)**
5858 N. Crittenden Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46220
317-257-9366
- 2. **Immaculate Heart of Mary School (K-8)**
317 E. 57th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46220
317-255-5468
- 3. **St. Joan of Arc School (PK-8)**
500 E. 42nd St.
Indianapolis, IN 46205
317-283-1518
- 4. **St. Lawrence School (PK-8)**
6950 E. 46th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46226
317-543-4923
- 5. **St. Luke the Evangelist School (PK-8)**
7575 Holliday Dr. East
Indianapolis, IN 46260
317-255-3912
- 6. **St. Matthew the Apostle School (PK-8)**
4100 E. 56th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46220
317-251-3997

- 7. **St. Pius X School (K-8)**
7200 Sarto Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46240
317-466-3361
- 8. **St. Simon the Apostle School (PK-8)**
8155 Oaklandon Road
Indianapolis, IN 46236
317-826-6000
- 9. **St. Thomas Aquinas School (PK-8)**
4600 N. Illinois St.
Indianapolis, IN 46208
317-255-6244

- 10. **Holy Spirit School (PK-8)**
7241 E. 10th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46219
317-352-1243
- 11. **Our Lady of Lourdes School (PK-8)**
30 S. Downey St.
Indianapolis, IN 46219
317-357-3316
- 12. **St. Michael School (PK-8)**
515 Jefferson Blvd.
Greenfield, IN 46140
317-462-6380

- **Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School (9-12)**
5000 Nowland Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46201
317-356-6377

Indianapolis East Deanery

- **Father Thomas Scecina Memorial High School (9-12)**
5000 Nowland Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46201
317-356-6377
- 13. **St. Philip Neri School (PK-8) ***
545 N. Eastern Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46201
317-636-0134
- 14. **St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) School (PK-8)**
1401 N. Bosart Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46201
317-353-2282
- 15. **Central Catholic School (PK-8) ***
1155 E. Cameron St.
Indianapolis, IN 46203
317-783-7759
- 16. **Holy Name of Jesus School (PK-8)**
21 N. 17th Ave.
Beech Grove, IN 46107
317-784-9078
- 17. **Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ School (PK-8)**
3310 S. Meadow Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46239
317-357-1459

Indianapolis South Deanery

- **Roncalli High School (9-12)**
3300 Prague Road
Indianapolis, IN 46227
317-787-8277
- 18. **Our Lady of the Greenwood School (PK-8)**
399 S. Meridian St.
Greenwood, IN 46143
317-881-1300
- 19. **SS. Francis and Clare of Assisi School (PK-8)**
5901 Olive Branch Road
Greenwood, IN 46143
317-215-2826
- 20. **St. Barnabas School (PK-8)**
8300 Rahke Road
Indianapolis, IN 46217
317-881-7422
- 21. **St. Jude School (PK-8)**
5375 McFarland Road
Indianapolis, IN 46227
317-784-6828
- 22. **St. Mark the Evangelist School (PK-8)**
541 E. Edgewood Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46227
317-786-4013
- 23. **St. Roch School (PK-8)**
3603 S. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46227
317-784-9144

- 24. **Holy Angels School (PK-6) ***
2822 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St.
Indianapolis, IN 46208
317-926-5211
- 25. **St. Anthony School (PK-8)**
349 N. Warman Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46222
317-636-3739
- 26. **St. Christopher School (PK-6)**
5335 W. 16th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46224
317-241-6314
- 27. **St. Malachy School (PK-8)**
330 N. Green St.
Brownsburg, IN 46112
317-852-2242
- 28. **St. Michael-St. Gabriel Archangels School (PK-8)**
3352 W. 30th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46222
317-926-0516
- 29. **St. Monica School (PK-8)**
6131 N. Michigan Road
Indianapolis, IN 46228
317-255-7153
- 30. **St. Susanna School (PK-8)**
1212 E. Main St.
Plainfield, IN 46168
317-839-3713

- **Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School (7-12)**
3360 W. 30th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46222
317-924-4333

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3360 W. 30th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46222
317-924-4333

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3360 W. 30th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46222
317-924-4333

- **Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School (7-12)**
3360 W. 30th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46222
317-924-4333

Private Schools

- **Lumen Christi Catholic School (PK-12)**
580 E. Stevens St.
Indianapolis, IN 46203
317-632-3174
- **Marian University Preparatory School (K-12)**
2916 W. 30th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46222
855-777-0679
- **Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School (9-12)**
2801 W. 86th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46268
317-524-7128
- **Cathedral High School (9-12)**
5225 E. 56th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46226
317-542-1481
- **Providence Cristo Rey High School (9-12)**
2717 S. East St.
Indianapolis, IN 46225
317-860-1000

* Mother Theodore Catholic Academies



Cathedral

Greatness is Calling



HAPPY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK FROM CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL

"With eyes of faith consider the greatness of your mission and the wonderful amount of good which you can accomplish."

- Blessed Basil Moreau C.S.C., Founder, Congregation of Holy Cross



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