



## Celebrating the success of Catholic schools during Catholic Schools Week

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

Sunday, January 26 begins Catholic Schools Week, an annual opportunity to celebrate our Catholic schools and to thank all who make Catholic education possible. During this week, each of the 50 schools in the Diocese of Columbus will host events and activities to recognize families, show appreciation for administrators and teachers, celebrate clergy and religious, and participate in service activities for the community. It is also a time for inviting new families to take a look at the difference that Catholic schools make in the lives of our students.

This year, the Office of Catholic Schools chose a verse from the Gospel of John as our theme: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, be-

cause without me you can do nothing." This verse reminds us that, as Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, it is only through our union and connection with Him that we will bear much fruit for the benefit of our students, their families, and our Church. Our upcoming celebration of our Catholic school communities reminds us that there are many branches that allow our children to receive an excellent, Catholic education. Joined together by our faith in the Lord, we have accomplished a lengthy list of highlights:

- Enrollment continues to grow in our Diocese. Once again, we have seen steady increases in all areas of the Diocese and continue to surpass previous records. We are blessed to serve nearly 18,000 students across our schools. In fact, our enrollment is growing so quickly that we are facing capacity challenges,

with 60% of the schools on waiting lists, and 20% of the schools at over 90% of capacity. With registration season upon us, capacity challenges remain at the forefront.

- Our growth has prompted a number of capital campaigns for expansion and renovation of school facilities around the Diocese. Bishop Watterson High School recently completed a beautiful renovation of its St Pius X Chapel. St Charles Preparatory School is nearing the completion of the new Brotherhood Center. And Holy Trinity School in Somerset recently broke ground on a new classroom addition. The Diocese and several parishes are also continuing to develop plans for the creation of new schools to serve the growing population of our Diocese.

- Our relentless commitment to supporting authentic and unapologetically

Catholic schools continues this year. Developing a strong, faithful Catholic culture at every school remains a focal point of our work. This year, to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary in October, the students at every school joined together to pray a Rosary led by Bishop Fernandes. It was amazing to see all of our schools united together to honor Our Lady. We also saw participation from every high school (and one elementary school!) in the annual March for Life in Washington, DC just last week. More than 300 of our Catholic school students made the trip along with Bishop Fernandes to put their faith into action and defend life.

- Through Catholic education, we show our students the fullness of creation, inseparable from the love of God. Last year, our administrators began a

*See SUCCESS, Page 15*



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# Delaware St. Mary School grows after transforming curriculum

By Hannah Heil

Catholic Times Reporter

*Everything new is old.*

That is how Diane Roddy, the office manager at Delaware St. Mary School, said she often describes the school's classical curriculum to inquiring families.

While it might be a new concept for some, the curriculum is a traditional form of education that has existed for years.

"The word 'classical education' was never used because it was just assumed that was education. That was the understanding of education," Roddy said. "It's only been in the modern era where we kind of shifted how we even viewed education."

"One of our big focuses at St. Mary is recapturing what education is in general as the Church has always understood it and being rooted in the formation of the human person – correctly understanding the human person as made in the image and likeness of God," principal Eric Pfeifer said.

The school partnered with the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education, which equips educators to renew today's Catholic schools by drawing on the Church's tradition of education, freeing teachers and students for the joyful pursuit of faith, wisdom and virtue. Liberal comes from the Latin 'liber,' meaning, 'free.'

Pfeifer said education helps children become free to be the human person that God created them to be.

St. Mary adopted the curriculum at the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year. Since implementing the program in July 2023, enrollment has increased by 35 percent, he shared.

"We've transformed our curriculum. We've emboldened our staff. We've leaned into our identity as Catholics, and with it, we've seen growth off of that number," he said.

Now in the second year with the curriculum, which is for students in first through eighth grade, the school is committed to making God the center of its students' education.

History is presented as a story taught in chronological order. The chronological and narrative approach begins with the dawn of time and creation, continuing with studying ancient civilizations, the story of the Hebrew people in the ancient Near East and Greco-Roman culture up to the modern era.

Pfeifer explained that students will recognize cause and effect, God's purpose and plan, and how, after the Fall in the Garden of Eden, every era has searched for truth and sought to understand who they are and why they exist.

At St. Mary School, "we're saying, 'Hey, we're starting at 6 years old, helping you understand dates and times and important people who have moved the story forward, so that, when we get to fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade ... we're going deeper into that,'" he said.



Father Pat Toner, administrator at Delaware St. Mary Church, greets students at St. Mary School.



Delaware St. Mary School is taking a classical approach to education with its students.

*Photos courtesy Delaware St. Mary School*

History and English curriculums at the school are integrated. As an example, sixth grade students will study the Middle Ages while reading King Arthur.

"We're focused on good, quality literature that stood the test of time," Pfeifer noted. "We're not reading things that are necessarily written in 2010 ... maybe not with our worldview or our anthropology in mind. ... We're reading books that have had lasting moral questions and lasting true human experiences that we can recapture and then discuss with our children."

Students from third to eighth grade receive their own copy of every novel that they read. Being able to keep the book, they can mark certain parts, annotate and write questions. By the time they graduate eighth grade, Pfeifer said, students will have 20+ books of great literature to keep in their personal libraries.

The curriculum also utilizes song and chants to help with memory. Whether in

poetry or learning grammar rules through song and chant, Pfeifer explained, music is a tool used to increase memory.

The school uses textbooks and resources rooted in the Catholic faith and tradition.

"It really puts before our students the impact the Church has had – good and bad – on the making of the Western world, the world in which they live right now," Pfeifer said.

"That's different than utilizing maybe some of the history textbooks that you see in a lot of our public schools or even some of our other schools – parochial schools – around. We're really leaning into the fact that the Church has shaped and formed the Western world and that its worldview is worth considering again."

The school is experiencing significant results.

Since implementing the classical curriculum, St. Mary School achieved a

school ranking in the 80th percentile nationwide for reading skills. Middle school students ranked in the 85th percentile. Pfeifer shared that 75 percent of middle school students read at a 12th grade level or above.

At the kindergarten level, 90 percent of students are at or above benchmark in early literacy. Kindergarten students read at a first-grade level on average.

All students passed Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee, a state program that ensures no student progresses to the fourth grade without being able to read on grade level. St. Mary's fifth and eighth grade students all scored proficient or better on the state science test.

The school's science curriculum, as opposed to integrated science that is often used in middle school science classes, focuses on one field of science each year rather than multiple sciences in a year.

Sixth grade students learn biology, or life science, and seventh graders study earth science, focusing on geology. The eighth-grade class studies physical science.

Pfeifer said it gives students a "better sense of the whole." Each year, they can study a system entirely rather than in small segments.

"Every one of our subjects is helping us enter into a relationship with the Creator," he said. "That's our end goal. I don't know if there will be mathematics in heaven or not, but entering into mathematics and into science and into history and into literature, all of those are directing us to prepare us for an eternity of communion with God."

He said the school is committed to intentionally living the Church's liturgical life.

As an example, during Advent, community prayer services were held every Monday and silent lunches took place on Wednesdays to help students quiet the mind.

Each day, the school prays a modified version of Morning Prayer, part of the Church's Liturgy of the Hours prayed by clergy, consecrated religious and many laity. The school prays the Angelus every day in the 12 p.m. hour.

The school also has intercessory classrooms.

Each classroom participates in intercessory prayer as a class, and teachers have intercessory boards for students' intentions. Classmates pray with and for each other. Pfeifer said it helps students practice compassion as they recognize each other "truly as humans in all aspects" and breaks down barriers.

Students attend Adoration and Mass weekly in addition to holy days of obligation, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to students every six weeks.

It appears children are embracing the faith. The school has 12 students preparing to enter the Catholic Church through baptism this school year.



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## Hartley students engage in community events

Columbus Bishop Hartley High School students took part in several projects during the fall.

The first was "The Big Table" on Sept. 25, when a group of seniors took time to participate in a community-wide day of conversation.

Through intentional dialogue and connection, participants were encouraged to imagine the next steps toward a kind and just future for all. The Columbus Foundation provided a host guidebook and materials for the conversation,

but each host made the discussion his or her own.

Meeting new people, sharing our lived experiences and actively listening to understand are crucial steps toward building a kind, connected community where everyone has a seat at the table.

The second event was the eighth annual Day of Faith & Service on Nov. 1, the Feast of All Saints.

Bishop Hartley students, faculty, and staff started the day in prayer at an all-school Mass, followed by rotations of

service projects throughout the day.

Juniors from Junior Christian Leadership classes and the entire senior class went off campus to several locations for service projects. Students visited their feeder schools, parishes and various community agencies near Hartley to perform service.

For those who stayed on campus, their mentor groups completed a service project, participated in a poverty simulation with campus minister Sam Agra and watched an episode of "The Chosen," where Jesus turned water into wine. They took time to reflect on the day and what they experienced.



Mrs. Theresa Moore (right), Gianna Dennett (center) and Audrina Glenn participate in Bishop Hartley High School's Day of Faith and Service on Nov. 1.

*Photos courtesy Bishop Hartley High School*



Bishop Hartley students who visited Columbus All Saints Academy on the high school's Day of Faith & Service were (from left) Daniel Anomakoh, Daniel Michael, Yajaira Lima Hernandez, Jennifer Parra Huerta, Zo'Kiyah Broomfield, Esmeralda Bravo Botello, Hermela Lilay, Ryan Cartagena, D'Adja Hollingsworth and James Otieno.



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# Somerset Holy Trinity begins school expansion project

Somerset Holy Trinity has a special reason to celebrate Catholic Schools Week.

The Perry County school recently broke ground on an addition to its building that will accommodate enrollment increases.

The new addition is expected to be completed this summer ahead of the start of the 2025-26 school year.

Middle school classrooms will be located on the upper level and the early childhood center on the lower level for 3- and 4-year-olds and for kindergarten.

At a moment in time when some private schools in less populated areas are struggling, Holy Trinity School is actually adding classrooms for elementary and middle school students and an early childhood center as part of a preschool expansion.

"This is important for the Catholic community down here to have this school," Principal Bill Noll said. "Our enrollment is up. We've been on a steady climb of about nine percent a year for the last nine years, and we've got waiting lists now in some of our classes."

The school attracts Catholic students from Holy Trinity and Somerset St. Joseph parishes, New Lexington St. Rose of Lima and Junction City St. Patrick parishes that make up the Perry County Consortium, and non-Catholics from the surrounding area. Total enrollment stands at 191 students during the current academic year.

The preschool has experienced the largest growth. Holy Trinity offers two-, three-, four- or five-day options, latchkey,



Participating in the groundbreaking for an addition at Somerset Holy Trinity School are (from left) Principal William Noll, Father Emmanuel Adu Addai, pastor at New Lexington St. Rose and Junction City St. Patrick parishes; eighth-grade student Emily Finck, preschooler Zara Moore; Father Andre-Joseph LaCasse, OP, pastor at Holy Trinity and St. Joseph parishes and school pastor; and Sister Nancy Ames, OP of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, the founding order of the first school on the site.

and before and after-school programs. Thirty-six students are currently enrolled in preschool and that number eventually could climb to 60 after the new construction is completed.

"We're one of the few schools here that has latchkey before and after school," Noll said. "We open at 6:15 (a.m.) and close at 5:30 (p.m.). We have families that have no way to work if their kids are not latchkey. It's been phenomenal for them and it's af-

fordable.

"It has brought us extra students who normally wouldn't have come to us, but they come to latchkey, they come to preschool and then they stay for kindergarten."

Holy Trinity draws students from five counties in 12 school districts. New Lexington City Schools, where St. Rose and St. Patrick parishes are located, provides busing for students to Holy Trinity.

Holy Trinity's reputation for preparing

students for high school and beyond is well known in the community. A majority of Holy Trinity graduates go on to public high school, and some attend Zanesville Bishop Rosecrans, Lancaster Fisher Catholic or Newark Catholic high schools.

"Our kids do well," Noll said. "We build the whole citizen."

Noll said Holy Trinity graduates provide

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Excavating began in January for a new addition to Somerset Holy Trinity School. The project is expected to be completed in time for the 2025-26 school year. Photos courtesy Holy Trinity School



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# Watterson students produce weekly news videos

By Elizabeth Pardi

Four seniors at Columbus Bishop Watterson High School recently began producing weekly news videos to keep the school community informed and connected.

The videos, which run several minutes in length, are posted to YouTube and Instagram and cover such topics as highlights from Watterson sports, brief teacher interviews and reminders of upcoming events such as a blood drive.

Colleen Mar, Watterson's director of communications and marketing, is present with the students early Monday morning when they shoot the videos. Social studies teacher John Wallace, who is the student council adviser, also attends the 7 a.m. sessions along with his toddler-age son.

"Michael is usually here (even earlier) setting up the equipment," Mar said, referring to senior Michael DeLuccia, who produces the videos. "(He) has tremendous technical skills for this kind of thing, and he was all about doing this."

DeLuccia, who also works as the audio engineer at Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School among other production jobs, was excited to take on producing the news videos, thanks to his passion for shooting and editing video.

"I really like filming," he said. "We did this one (video of) the eighth graders' visit here and we were filming for that all day, so I didn't have to go to class. I really enjoy walking around and getting different shots and I like just moving along with that vision of the final (product) that I see in my head."

The idea for the news videos originally came from senior Katie Carson, who aspires to be a news anchor as a career.

"She proposed doing a weekly news program," Mar said, "and so (Wallace) and I sat down (with her) and we talked about what that might look like and how that



Bishop Watterson's news crew includes (front row) Mack Murnane and (back row from left) Griffin Steinbrunner, Michael DeLuccia, Katie Carson and Chance Strausbaugh.

*Photo courtesy Bishop Watterson High School*

would work. (Katie) ended up pulling in (DeLuccia, who) I knew had all the technical skills to help."

Asked about her motivation for starting the videos, Carson said, "I wanted to give a voice to the students at Bishop Watterson. I love sharing stories and that's kind of how (it) started. I've always loved researching and (telling) stories and giving a voice to the unheard."

Carson, who is also president of student council, serves as anchor in the production, with seniors Mack Murnane as co-anchor and Griffin Steinbrunner as sports reporter. Mar has been consistently impressed by the dedication and work ethic of all the students.

"You know, it's great to have a big idea, but then when you start getting into the details, that's where the work comes in, but they've been great," she said. "They've really learned a lot from this."

In preparation for the Monday morning shoots, Stein-

brunner finds and documents all of the Watterson athletic events and scores from that weekend and the previous week, and Carson writes the script.

"We (all) discuss it," she said. "We have a little group chat, so I'll be like, 'Hey guys, can I get some help?' or 'Do you have any ideas?' We all ... work together and come up with a plan together."

In regard to where the ideas for their topics come from, Carson said they research to see if there's anything big happening in the community that deserves coverage.

Additionally, she said, "we have a Google form that requests that students share what they want to hear, so if they have a suggestion for our story of the week, they can share that with me so I can take it into consideration. We also have a section for students to share what they've accomplished, like we just had a senior write his own song and it's airing on all major streaming platforms, so that's something we wanted to recognize."

Mar believes greater connectedness and school spirit are some of the benefits the news videos have brought to the student body.

"They're promoting things ... for the entire school," she said, referencing a video from the Advent season in which Watterson students were encouraged to sign up for the prayer app Hallow. She said the news video team "jumped on the opportunity to have on one of the theology teachers (explain and promote) it."

"I have to applaud all of the consistency and the work and the openness to learn that this crew has had," Mar said. "They just have an enthusiasm for this and they've put the work in and made it a unique and fun thing."

The videos can be viewed on the Instagram handle @BWHSnation, or YouTube via the Bishop Watterson High School channel.



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## St. Brigid of Kildare students share 'Seeds of Hope'

Last month on St. Nicholas Day, students from Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare School celebrated the spirit of giving and service by participating in Illumi-NITE, an annual event sponsored by the Cincinnati-based organization Keep Going that focuses on spreading hope, joy and kindness to those in need.

In preparation for the event, students came together to decorate luminary bags, posters and prayer cards, each adorned with uplifting and prayerful messages.

The eighth-grade class, joined by their

families, took the lead in delivering the heartfelt creations to homes in central Ohio, lighting up the evening with symbols of hope and encouragement.

The "Keep Going" message was prominently displayed in the yards of 15 parish and school families alongside the decorated luminary bags contributed by the wider student body. Together, the St. Brigid community embodied their theme of spreading "Seeds of Hope" throughout the local area.

"We are so grateful to the Keep Going Foundation for providing our students and families with the opportunity to make a difference," a school representative said. "It's inspiring to see our students embrace this mission, and we look forward to participating again next year."

Through Illumi-NITE, the students of St. Brigid of Kildare honored the legacy of St. Nicholas as a protector and servant of those in need, bringing light and kindness to their community.



Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare School brings light to the community as part of the annual Illumi-NITE event in December.

*Photo courtesy St. Brigid of Kildare School*



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# Bishop Ready students learn and love with servant's heart

Columbus Bishop Ready High School students received a visit from Rachel Muha, founder of Run the Race and the Brian Muha Foundation, and you could hear a pin drop in the gym as she spoke about mercy.

Rachel's youngest son, Brian, was tragically kidnapped and brutally murdered on May 31, 1999 while attending Franciscan University of Steubenville. She talked with students about raising her children, the days of agony waiting to hear if her son would be found, the road to forgiveness that inspired her work today, and how her faith played a role in all of it.

Bishop Ready administration, faculty and staff are committed to developing servant leaders who make a positive impact on the community while also growing in faith. What better example than "Miss Rachel," as she is lovingly known within the community.

"Rachel and The Brian Muha Foundation/Run the Race Club have been supporters of Bishop Ready and our mission for a number of years," Bishop Ready principal Matt Brickner said. "The relationship between the foundation and our families continues to be one that strengthens our community's faith and commitment to service."

Before Muha's visit, faculty and staff completed a book study on "Legacy



Rachel Muha, founder of Run the Race and the Brian Muha Foundation, speaks with Bishop Ready students.

*Photos courtesy Bishop Ready High School*

of Mercy," which is about her journey. Faculty and staff now bring the book to small groups within the building called Castles.

At the beginning of every school year, each Bishop Ready student is placed into a small family group known as their Castle, a play on the Bishop Ready mascot the Silver Knights. Each Castle honors a patron saint and focuses on a social justice project that spans childhood obesity, youth in foster care, mental health, gun violence, healthy relationships and



Bishop Ready students join a small family group known as a Castle that honors a patron saint and focuses on a social justice project.

substance abuse, among others.

The Castles research their topics, educate one another, discuss connections within their social justice focus and complete service projects. Now, the groups are focusing on how showing mercy within these social justice projects can have a wider impact on the community.

Asked about Castles, Brickner said, "Rachel's visit to Bishop Ready to speak with our students and staff was a meaningful way to begin our 'Legacy of Mercy'



Bishop Ready students post information about foster children as part of their Castle group project.

book study within our Castles. We look forward to incorporating this book and the messages within it into our curriculum throughout the school year."

For the remainder of the year, each Castle will be assigned one chapter of the book and will create a multimedia presentation on that chapter to share with the other Castles. This will lead to a school-wide dynamic summary and impact that "Legacy of Mercy" had on the students and staff of Bishop Ready.



## Celebrating Catholic Schools Week





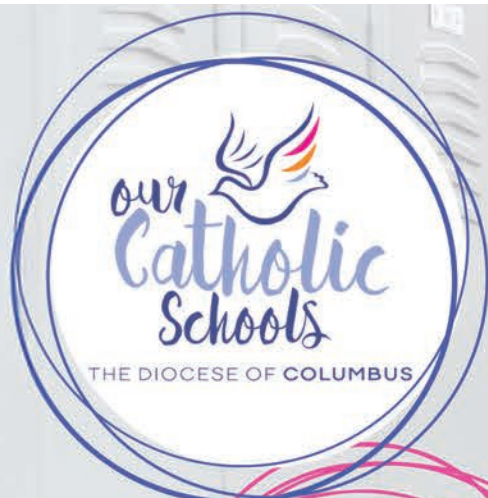

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[www.saintmarylancaster.org](http://www.saintmarylancaster.org)



**Educating K - Grade 8**

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[www.stjpbk-8.org](http://www.stjpbk-8.org)

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Saturday, February 1  
10 a.m.

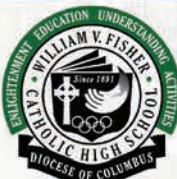
[www.saintjamestheless.org](http://www.saintjamestheless.org)



**Educating PS - Grade 8**

Sunday, February 2  
11:30 a.m.

[www.blsacschool.net](http://www.blsacschool.net)



**Educating Grades 9 - 12**

Sunday, February 2  
2 p.m.

[www.fishercatholic.org](http://www.fishercatholic.org)

**Holy Spirit**  
Catholic School  
*different by design*

**Educating PS - Grade 8**

Tuesday, February 4  
6:30 p.m.

[www.holy-spirit-school.org](http://www.holy-spirit-school.org)



**Educating PS - Grade 8**

Tuesday, February 18  
6 p.m.

[www.saintvdpschool.org](http://www.saintvdpschool.org)



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- Autism Scholarship
- Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship

### DIOCESAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

- Emmaus Road Scholarship Fund
- Diocesan Tuition Assistance
- Catholic Foundation Scholarship Opportunities
- Individual School Scholarships and Financial Assistance

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[education.columbuscatholic.org](http://education.columbuscatholic.org)



# FCCS OPEN HOUSES

FISHER CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF SCHOOLS

**26**  
**JANUARY**  
11AM-1PM

## ST. BERNADETTE SCHOOL

1325 Wheeling Road  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130

[www.stbernadetteschool.com](http://www.stbernadetteschool.com)

PS-7th Grade



**26**  
**JANUARY**  
3PM-5PM

## ST. MARY SCHOOL

309 East Chestnut Street  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130

[www.saintmarylancaster.org](http://www.saintmarylancaster.org)

PS-8th Grade



**2**  
**FEBRUARY**  
2PM-4PM

## FISHER CATHOLIC H.S.

1803 Granville Pike  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130

[www.fishercatholic.org](http://www.fishercatholic.org)

9th-12th Grade





# Fisher Catholic service guilds bestow blessings on communities

Aligned with Catholic social teachings, Lancaster Fisher Catholic High School (FCHS) Guilds strive to make life brighter and better through service to others.

Encountering Christ by Helping Others (ECHO) are opportunities focused on service to others. As 2024 came to a close, the FCHS Guilds worked to deliver meals, gifts, blankets, warm winter jackets and pet food.

Mr. Jacob Burley's Guild adopted families in need, and with the Guild's successful fundraising efforts, Christmas was fully delivered. With nearly \$7,000 in community support, junior Reece Hagy adopted 15 families. All families gathered with Guild members to celebrate Christmas at a special Christmas reception held at FCHS. The main hallway was adorned with an Angel Tree. Mrs. Kathy Mertens' Guild provided more Christmas giving as the ornaments were fulfilled for 12 families.

When sophomores Sammy McGill

and Sam Tencza heard that the pets on the Meals on Wheels routes were in need of donations, over 700 pounds of dog and cat food was collected and delivered. Over 800 families received their Christmas meals from Charity Newsies and FCHS students were on the routes. Warm winter coats and handmade blankets were gathered by Guilds, wrapping young and old in holiday warmth.

While many teenagers were busy attending to their Christmas lists of wants, Fisher Catholic students were engaged in creating Christmas for thousands in our community. True giving is a lesson learned firsthand by FCHS students through ECHO opportunities.

"We don't always see or realize what others need, but our ECHO definitely give us our best lessons," sophomore Savannah Thorne shared.

## Study abroad with the Pope

The day after Christmas, 14 Fish-

er Catholic High School students and chaperones departed for Italy.

The journey began with three days in Venice filled with amazing meals, St. Mark's Square, glassblowing, gondola rides and a train ride into Florence.

Students were enamored of the nave of Florence's Duomo, Basilica of Santa Croce, Pazzi Chapel, leather workshops at Leonardo's, and the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

The group then arrived in Rome by high-speed train to visit the Colosseum, Roman Forum, Palatine Hill, strolling through Piazza Navona, Pompeii and Castelli Romani.

Responding to a special invitation, all were able to celebrate Mass with Pope Francis at St. Peter's Basilica.

The final group event was watching and celebrating an Ohio State football victory over Oregon in the Rose Bowl.



Lancaster Fisher Catholic High School students and chaperones were able to attend a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis during a trip to Rome. Photo courtesy Fisher Catholic

## DELAWARE, continued from Page 3

Pfeifer said it is a testament to God's presence in the school.

For non-Catholic students, he believes a "constant and consistent encounter with the sacraments," although they cannot receive them, is making an impact. They regularly observe their Catholic peers receiving the Eucharist and reconciliation, and they join them in Adoration and prayer throughout the school day.

Some students who entered the Church received the sacraments for the first time during a school Mass.

"The whole school body is standing there as a witness, and it's also a moment of realization for all those students that are there," Roddy said.

"They might not remember their own baptism if they were an infant, but it's not just something that they learned about. Now they're actually witnessing a classmate that they just played football with

yesterday receiving that same sacrament they just discussed in class."

Pfeifer said some students' first experience of the faith might have been through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). CGS, a parish and school program, is an enrichment program at St. Mary School and the religious education program for the parish.

CGS is a method of catechesis based upon the belief that, to best serve children's religious needs and capacities, especially the youngest, there needs to be a prepared environment, an atrium, and a prepared adult, the catechist.

The sacred space, separate from a classroom, known as an atrium, is set aside for a child to develop in their relationship with the Lord, Roddy said.

Pfeifer noted the program "brings to life a lot of the truths of the faith" through hands-on experiences.

## SUCCESS, continued from Page 1

study of Catholic Academic Integration – incorporating a Catholic perspective into all content areas and into all aspects of school life. The schools of the Diocese of Columbus have chosen an anthropology grounded in the Way, the Truth, and the Life, bringing a Catholic worldview into every aspect of our schools. We are continuing to develop this work by reflecting on Catholic instructional practice and methodology, aligning our curriculum and resource selection more with the teaching mission of the Church.

None of the success of our Catholic schools would be possible without the dedicated people who make it a reality every day. During this celebration of Catholic Schools Week, I would like to sincerely thank the administrators who

tirelessly lead our schools, the teachers and staff who educate and care for our children daily, and all of the families that have made the choice to send their children to schools where they can learn and thrive in the fullness of our Catholic faith. We are truly blessed here in the Diocese of Columbus by so many who are motivated by their love of the Lord and desire to create excellent Catholic schools.

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

CGS is also offered once a week for students in first through fifth grade. The program enriches what students are doing in school, he said.

"It is not as if it is a totally foreign experience for them," he added. "It's a very natural outgrowth for what they're getting in their classrooms."

CGS has three levels: Level I, ages 3-6; Level II, ages 6-9; and Level III, ages 9-12. Level I takes place regularly in St. Mary's Children's House.

The term "Children's House" describes a 3- to 6-year-old classroom in a Montessori setting, which includes the school's kindergarten class, said Emily Wu, the Children's House director.

Montessori, developed by Italian physician Dr. Maria Montessori, is a student-led and self-paced education in a multi-age classroom. Students are guided, assessed and enriched by teachers,

the leadership of peers and a nurturing environment.

Everything in the Children's House is child-size and tailored to children.

In Children's House, Wu said, children learn about the world, exploring the continents, biomes, animals and social environments. She said it can be useful for studying ancient civilizations later on.

The school currently has three Children's Houses.

"The human person hasn't changed, but we're restoring that beauty, truth of the Church and their wisdom in how to educate the human person," Wu said.

"We're going back to the core, the center of our tradition of education that is easily lost in the modern age. It feels radical, but it's not. It's not like we're doing something new that has never been done before. It's a restoring of that understanding of the human person."

## SOMERSET, continued from Page 7

56 percent of the valedictorians or salutatorians at the local public school despite making up only four percent of the student population.

"And if you look at our people here in the community, the leaders are from our school -- judge, county prosecutor, dentists, doctors, pharmacist, lawyers," Noll said.

Teaching the Catholic faith is also an integral part of the school. Regular weekly Masses are celebrated by Father Andre-Joseph LaCasse, pastor of the Somerset parishes, and Father Emmanuel Adu Addai, pastor of the Perry County Consortium.

The Somerset Catholic school has a legacy of educating students that spans generations. For many years, the school was staffed by the founding order, the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs (now the Dominican Sisters of Peace).

One member of the order, Sister Nancy Ames, remains as vice principal.

A recently retired Holy Trinity teacher was involved in Catholic education for 47 years, and many of the current teachers have worked at the school for 15 years or longer.

"And as far as families go, the tradition continues on," Noll said. "We have two families that both have 12 grandkids."

Fundraising is continuing for the project. So far, \$1.1 million has been raised.

"Being here in Appalachia, we don't have a lot of money," Noll said. "But the community has come together in a big way, including the local banks and local businesses."

"A lot of alumni have helped out. But we're not there yet. We've only got half the money raised, but I believe it will come."





*St. Josephine Bakhita*  
PARISH & SCHOOL

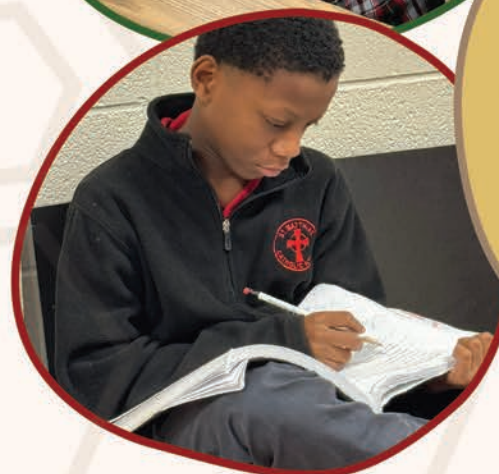
# A LOCAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY

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**Open House  
January 30  
5 p.m.**



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# St. Agatha students make difference through Penny Wars

Columbus St. Agatha School's student council has proved that teamwork and a little friendly competition can lead to incredible results.

A recent Penny War fundraiser, aimed at purchasing a Wildcat mascot costume for the school, exceeded expectations by raising \$2,463.

What began as a simple plan to energize school spirit quickly transformed into a community-wide effort as students, staff and families contributed

generously to the cause. The wildcat mascot, which symbolizes the school's pride and unity, has officially joined the St. Agatha family thanks to the determination and enthusiasm of its students.

The wildcat mascot made its exciting debut at a recent pep rally, where students cheered and celebrated the achievement. The energy in the gymnasium was electric as the wildcat brought smiles and pride to students and staff alike.

Principal Veronica Stemen highlighted the effort and dedication of the students, saying, "The students spent several hours every day for over a week counting the money and double-checking it to ensure they had the right totals. They also announced the daily winners every afternoon during announcements, which kept everyone engaged and excited. Their hard work, teamwork and enthusiasm were truly inspiring."

Father Mark Summers, pastor at St. Agatha, shared his excitement about the initiative, stating, "It's wonderful to see this project

come to life and the joy it has brought to our students and community. The Wildcat is a great representation of our school's spirit."

With funds left over after purchasing the mascot costume, the student council put the extra money to good use. Students were treated to an afternoon movie day with snacks and drinks, creating a fun and relaxing event to celebrate their success. The council also used some of the proceeds to purchase a new laptop for the school's recording studio and games for indoor recess, further enhancing resources for creative student projects.

"This was such a valuable learning experience for our student council members," assistant principal Erica Gowitzka said. "They spent many hours counting and wrapping the coins. What started as a small project turned into a fun and rewarding task. It taught them about teamwork, responsibility and the power of their efforts."

The remaining funds will be used to support student activities throughout the school year, ensuring a variety of engaging and enriching experiences. In a show of commitment to giving back, the student council has also pledged to donate a portion of the funds to a local charity, reinforcing the values of compassion and generosity that St. Agatha



Father Mark Summers, pastor at Columbus St. Agatha Church; Veronica Stemen (center), St. Agatha School's principal, and assistant principal Erica Gowitzka are joined by the school's new wildcat mascot.



Columbus St. Agatha School student council members count change from the Penny Wars fundraising competition to purchase a mascot costume. Photos courtesy St. Agatha School



## Children Learn, Live and Thrive at Saint Agatha School

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*or call to set up a tour*

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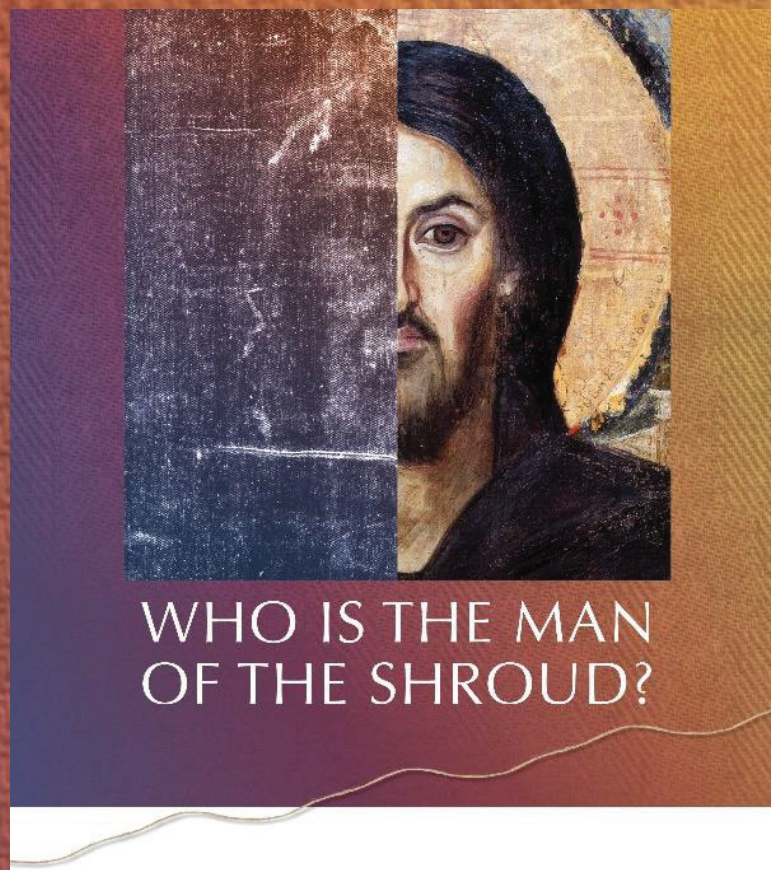
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Scan here to RSVP  
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Shroud of Turin Exhibit  
 March 7-13, 2025  
 St. John Neumann Catholic Church  
 Presentation and Discussion:  
 11:30am Mar 12th and 6:45pm Mar 13th



The Shroud of Turin has been venerated for centuries as the actual burial cloth of Jesus and is widely considered to be the most studied object in the world.

You are invited to explore *faith, science, scripture, and hope* in this new and completely updated exhibit that in July debuted at the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis.

The exhibit was developed by Othonia, a part of the Institute of Science and Faith at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University located in Rome, Italy.

**JOB OPENING:  
 BUSINESS MANAGER**

Our Lady of Peace Parish and School, 20 E. Dominion Blvd., in the Beechwold/Clintonville area of Columbus is seeking a Business Manager who is rooted in the love of God, the Church and neighbor. This position is one of shared ministry with the OLP parish and school team.

**Responsibilities:**

all day-to-day business operations and procedures; reports, budgets, contract preparation; reconciliation of bank-PAF accounts; maintaining records; parish liability, legal and insurance programs and concerns; supervising collections, including counting, recording and depositing funds; parish contact with diocesan offices; payroll processing; working in collaboration with the pastor, school principal, office manager, facilities and other staff and volunteers on office operations and procedures, facilities use and maintenance and human resources.

**Requirements:**

compliance with BCI&I background checks and completion of Protecting God's Children; bachelor's degree in accounting, business management, mathematics or related field, or comparable years of experience; minimum of three years accounting and office management; keyboard and computer experience; understanding of communications and the Catholic perspective; ability to both serve and lead; excellent communications skills; knowledge of QuickBooks and Microsoft software applications; ability to work with others in a collaborative team environment; regular attendance and punctuality.

To apply, send a resume, cover letter and references to [jfortkamp@olp-parish.org](mailto:jfortkamp@olp-parish.org).



## Deaf student fits right in at St. Mary German Village

By Hannah Heil  
Catholic Times Reporter

Faustina Easterday, a fourth grade student at Columbus St. Mary School, located in Columbus' German Village neighborhood, could be considered a trailblazer.

While she follows in the steps of many students who attended Catholic schools before her, she is blazing a trail for future generations of Catholic school students.

Easterday was born deaf.

She proves that students who are deaf do not have to separate their education from their Catholic faith. They can receive a Catholic education, too.

This academic year marks Easterday's first in a Catholic school.

Her parents, Mark and Sam, were eager to make the switch from a public to a Catholic school. St. Mary School was determined to make it happen for them.

Gina Stull, the school's principal, recalled her conversation with the family.

"When they told us about Faustina and wanting to bring her here and have the Catholic school experience, I said, 'Absolutely. I would love to have her, and I would love to see what we can do. How can we support this family?' Because Faustina was created the way she was created, and she deserves that opportunity," Stull said.

Easterday's fourth grade teacher, Linda

Cotter, is in her 50th year teaching at St. Mary School. She taught a child who was deaf at the school previously.

"So, she was also very willing and excited to have Faustina in the classroom," Stull said. "It's been great."

Easterday has an interpreter who accompanies her at school all day and translates what her teacher says in class. The interpreter sits in front of Easterday while the school attends Mass and translates, so she can participate in the liturgy, too.

During lunchtime, Easterday eats with her peers. She desires to try and communicate without her translator present, Stull noted.

"They are all jumping on board to try to communicate with her as well," she said of the other students.

As much as the St. Mary School community appreciates having her, Easterday is enjoying her new school.

Through her interpreter, Devan Akers, who translated for her, Easterday expressed her love of attending a Catholic school. She said she loves everything about St. Mary.

She explained that she made friends easily and recalled students "running" up and embracing her.

She noted that she enjoys math and special subjects at the school, such as gym class.

"Faustina is extremely bright and has

grown leaps and bounds since she's been here," Stull said.

Easterday has demonstrated that being deaf does not exclude her from opportunities outside of the classroom either. For the school's Christmas production this year, Easterday played the role of Mary.

Her mother, Sam, added that Easterday loves "the challenge" of St. Mary School and benefits from the structure.

As an example, she explained that Easterday appreciates the school's "red marks," which are used when a student does not listen and do as they are asked by the teacher. Sam said her daughter likes accountability when students do not behave.

Easterday is on the Jon Peterson Special Needs (JPSN) Scholarship, which provides funds for services for special-needs students in nonpublic schools. St. Mary School is a participating JPSN Scholarship provider.

The amount of scholarship dollars is determined by the category of the disability. Hearing impairment is one of the scholarship's categories.

St. Mary School is in the process of adding an American Sign Language class for



Fourth-grade student Faustina Easterday (in blue) plays the role of Mary in the Christmas production at Columbus St. Mary School.

Photo courtesy Robert Caplin

students so they can better communicate with Easterday. Stull said several students have picked up sign language.

She noted how they benefited from Easterday's presence in the school.

"I think it's just opening up the world to our kids who have never been around a deaf person," she said. "It sort of takes some of the unknown away from those children, and they treat her just like anyone else, and that's great – that's great to see that there's no fear or mystery around her. She's just one of their classmates."



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ATHENS



# College counseling support pays off for Cristo Rey Columbus students

The 96 seniors at Cristo Rey Columbus High School (CRC) had an incredibly busy fall, balancing athletics, extracurricular activities, academics and applying to colleges. By Thanksgiving, 100 percent of the senior class had already submitted college applications and as of the new year had collectively submitted over 850 applications to 179 colleges and universities.

As early admission decisions roll in, one in particular stands out among them so far. Of the three students who applied early to the University of Notre Dame - Joselyn Mancía Rodriguez, Chris Pacheco Posadas, and Sophia Suerdieck - all three received acceptance.

While the students deserve the spotlight, there is a team behind the scenes that makes sure they have the resources and knowledge they need to achieve their college acceptance goals. CRC's College Counseling Department, led by director of college counseling and alumni support Ashley Grasinger, brings expertise in college admissions to CRC, which they use to assist students in navigating the college application and decision process.

"The college application process can be tricky, and many of our young people will be first-generation college students, so we're here to help them prepare for and understand the requirements of that process," Grasinger said. "From recommendation letters to essays to transcripts, we're here to answer all of their questions and provide

guidance so they can submit quality applications that best reflect their strengths."

The process of enrolling in college is much more than applying and being accepted. There's the matter of how to pay the tuition, fees, and room and board costs. The college counseling team provides assistance with this as well, helping students identify and apply for scholarships and submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to receive financial aid packages from colleges.

CRC students begin working with the college counseling team at the end of their sophomore year, when they are encouraged to participate in a college summer program.

During junior year, students begin preparing for the college application process in earnest, starting with completing an in-depth survey about themselves for the college counseling team to review. This allows the team to write informed letters of recommendation for each student that will accompany their college applications. The survey also allows the team to get to know the students' interests and preferences in order to help them build their college lists, where factors like campus culture, areas of study, academic supports, and affordability are crucial to finding the right fit.

After junior year, the college counseling team offers multiple options for rising



Cristo Rey Columbus High School seniors (from left) Sophia Suerdieck, Chris Pacheco Posadas and Joselyn Mancía Rodriguez received early admissions acceptance to the University of Notre Dame. Photo courtesy Cristo Rey

seniors to accompany them on college tours. This past summer, the team visited the University of Cincinnati, Oberlin College and Denison University, among others. Students also have the opportunity to schedule one-on-one office appointments with a college counselor over the summer so they can be as prepared as possible for senior year.

As seniors, students have weekly dedicated time with the college counseling team to work toward the ultimate goal of enrolling in college. After developing a well-rounded list with a mix of "reach"

schools, academic "match" institutions and a few backup options, each student is required to apply to the 8-10 colleges on their list. This approach ensures that students have a variety of choices when decision time arrives.

Once students return from Christmas break, focus shifts toward submitting financial aid applications as part of their Financial Literacy & Economics class, a required course for seniors. The final stage, choosing where to enroll, is made much easier thanks to all of the prior preparation, allowing students to have a clear vision of which college is the best fit for them.

The process is a long road and there is hard work along the way, but for the Class of 2025, that hard work is paying off. Already, 64 percent of CRC seniors have received college admissions offers, including acceptances to 24 Catholic colleges and universities such as Santa Clara University in California, Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and the University of Notre Dame. All 96 seniors plan to receive at least one college acceptance, a milestone that every CRC class has achieved since the school's first graduates in 2017. This goal is reached each year not just because of the effort and dedication of the students but of their biggest cheerleaders -- the college counseling team that supports them from start to finish.

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## All Saints students benefit from house system

Columbus All Saints Academy started something new this year: implementing a house system for grades 5-8.

Principal Laura Miller said it has been an amazing experience to watch students grow and come together as a Christian community dedicated to making Christ-like decisions every day.

One of the best parts, she said, is the houses getting together once a week to forge friendships, set goals, make reflections and work on service projects in mentor groups. Each house is named after a saint and allows students to also learn about these amazing role models.

The system is based on four pillars: kindness, honesty, respect and service. The four pillars and how they relate to virtues are used in discussions and lessons.

The system has been transformational for our student body, Miller said, as students not only look to earn virtue points but also make good choices because it is the right thing to do.

Service is a big part of the system and each house completes a number of service projects each year.

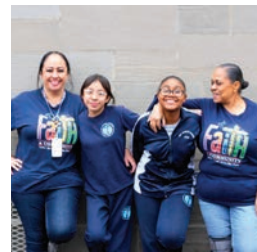
One of these projects involves the Bishop Griffin Resource Center located on campus. The Thomas More house had fifth and seventh graders work in the food pantry. They organized and sorted donations, cleaned shelves and had a tiring but great experience.

This was a successful and collaborative effort at the school and next year a junior house system is planned for younger students.



Columbus All Saints Academy students work in the food pantry at the Bishop Griffin Resource Center as part of a house system service project. Photo courtesy All Saints Academy

## All Saints Academy Celebrates Catholic Schools Week!



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United in Faith and Community



- Educating students from PreK – 8
- Band plus Bell & Vocal Choirs
- Newly-formed House System
- Electives offered in grades 5-8

**Join Us for the Annual Pasta Dinner**  
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## OPEN HOUSE / INFORMATION NIGHT

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025 AT 6:30 PM

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## TCC Environmental Club dedicated to acts of kindness

The Environmental Club at Tuscarawas Central Catholic School has a mission to make a difference in the world with simple acts of kindness throughout the school and the Dover and New Philadelphia community.

The club has grown to 25 fifth- and sixth-grade students and is led by teachers Becky Sedares and Beth Cecil. The group meets each Thursday after school for an hour.

Members pick up trash to help save the environment, and in the fall and spring, they clean up pollinator garden and plant new plants from the seeds they harvested.

The club also planted tulip bulbs and looks forward to seeing them sprout in the spring.

The group recently held a bake sale and raised more than \$300 to help purchase additional shovels, rakes and grabbers for their efforts.



Members of the Environmental Club at Tuscarawas Central Catholic School meet each week.

Photo courtesy Tuscarawas Central Catholic



Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School boys cross country senior leaders are (from left) Peter Haggard, Austin Zacherl, Charles Rizek, Ashton Boyd, and Jacob Reash.

Photo courtesy St. Francis DeSales

## DeSales cross country team runs for the glory of God

Asked to describe the Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School boys cross country team, student-athlete Jacob Reash said it "is a family ... truly."

"Each week, we would put our everything into races for each other, which sums up John 15:13 perfectly, 'There is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for his friends,'" Reash said.

That sentiment captures the unique bond shared by the 2024 cross country team, which credits their success in qualifying for the state meet not just to their training and physical talents but an unwavering commitment to each other and their steadfast faith in God that made the difference.

Several senior leaders reflected on the special memories from their remarkable season.

Reash, one of the team's captains, highlighted the role faith played in their journey, saying, "The bond that we shared brought about this success. The bond was formed first and foremost by our faith, trust in each other, and trust most especially in our Lord."

"There is so much support on the team because we all know we are on a faith journey," he continued. "For me personally, this year myself and one of my fellow teammates (and co-captain), Ashton Boyd, have entered a journey of faith together."

"At the start of the school year, Ashton entered OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation for Adults), and he chose me as his sponsor. Cross country was the impetus for this relationship as we met as freshmen during the first practice."

Boyd reflected on the influence of his teammates, sharing, "As a four-year

member of the cross country team, I am most proud about the people I surrounded myself with. I've never had any other people more influential on my life than my teammates. These guys led me to Christ, and finally this year to convert to Catholicism."

Senior Austin Zacherl recalled a defining moment when he delivered the team speech before the 2024 Central Catholic League Bob Lennon Memorial Championship.

"It was so special because I got to speak on how hard we worked for this moment and how we are prepared to go out together and win," he said. "The best part of that moment was seeing the happiness in each of my teammates' eyes and the determination to go out and win not only for themselves but for the team, and most importantly Christ."

This spirit of love and support and reliance on God has long been the foundation of the DeSales cross country program, aligning perfectly with the school's core pillars of faith, family and tradition. These values also echo the words of the school's patron saint, St. Francis de Sales, who said, "Be who you are and to be that well."

Co-captain Peter Haggard felt an instant connection to the quote, expressing how the team's authenticity impacted him from the beginning.

"The thing that really sold me on XC my freshman year was that everyone, no matter who you talked to, was 100 percent themselves," he said. "They had no fear to be who God has created them to be and let everyone know that. It is one good group of kids, with even better values."



# The CATHOLIC TIMES



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## St. Bernadette students embrace Advent through service, generosity

During the Advent season, Lancaster St. Bernadette School students participated in an Advent retreat focused on their role as "Disciples with Hope to Bring." Through acts of kindness and the Corporal Works of Mercy, they truly embraced the spirit of giving during this sacred time.

During the retreat, students prepared care packages for the sick and homeless, made sandwiches and prayer cards for the Foundation Dinner, crafted scarves for those in need and wrote heartfelt Christmas cards for shut-ins in our community.

The sixth-grade class demonstrated exceptional leadership throughout the retreat, guiding mixed-age groups (preschool through fifth grade) to complete each service project. Their compassion and teamwork helped ensure the day was a success.

Thanks to the generosity of families, all supplies for the service projects were donated. Families shared how the retreat sparked mean-

ingful conversations at home about why they were purchasing items and how their contributions would help those in need.

The students' efforts exceeded expectations, resulting in:

- 453 sandwiches
- 125 scarves
- 130 care packages
- 200 Christmas cards for shut-ins
- 300 prayer cards

Through hard work and enthusiasm, the students truly embodied the true meaning of Advent — giving selflessly to others while reflecting on the joy of the season.

St. Bernadette is proud to fulfill its mission of educating the whole child — mind, body and soul — and guiding students on their journey to heaven.

The retreat was made possible by the generosity of families and volunteers, who demonstrated the power of faith, community and the joy of giving.



Lancaster St. Bernadette students focused on the Corporal Works of Mercy during Advent.

*Photos courtesy St. Bernadette School*



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## Community Meeting



Join us on January 30th at 6:30pm to learn more about our new and exciting plans for our Notre Dame Schools.

School administrators, architects and Diocesan leaders will review and discuss the proposed plans for the new elementary building and high school renovations.



**Thursday**  
30th January, 2025



6:30 pm



**Holy Redeemer Activity Center**



St. James the Less Parish and School    St. John Neumann Catholic Church    St. Michael Catholic Church and School  
Church of the Resurrection    St. Josephine Bakhita Parish and School    Sts. Augustine & Gabriel Catholic Church  
St. Matthew the Apostle Catholic Church and School  
St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and School

our family tree  
rooted  
in Christ

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.” - John 15:5



Celebrating Catholic Schools: Faith, Family and Tradition

*Pictured:*  
St. Francis DeSales High School alumni with their children – all who attend one of Our Catholic Schools.

