

Messenger

A quarterly publication by the Missouri Catholic Conference

MISSOURI
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE



STRENGTHENED BY OUR PAST, PREPARING FOR OUR FUTURE

Two centuries ago, St. Rose-Philippine Duchesne ventured from her birthplace in France to establish Sacred Heart school in St. Charles, Missouri, at the request of Bishop DuBourg of the Louisiana territory. On its opening day, September 8, 1818, the school became the first free school west of the Mississippi, and the first Catholic school in what would soon become the Archdiocese of St. Louis. So began the history of Catholic education in Missouri, a history that many of us have found ourselves playing a part in as Catholic students, parents, or educators. St. Rose-Philippine Duchesne and those who followed in her footsteps have faced many challenges in Catholic education. Schools were built and later shuttered due to dwindling populations, lack of funding, natural disasters and diocesan changes. Yet, through all of this, we've persevered. Two centuries later, Catholic education is still flourishing in Missouri, and across the nation. Yes, many schools are closing or consolidating, but many new schools are being built in their place, ready to welcome a new generation of Catholic students. The word of the Lord still rings throughout our halls as schools find strength through the past, all the while striving toward the future of Catholic education.

The beginning of each year marks another celebration of Catholic education with the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) sponsored Catholic Schools Week (CSW). For the first *Messenger* of the year, in concurrence with CSW, the MCC visited one Catholic school from each diocese in Missouri to share the history and take a look into the future of Catholic education in our state. The MCC consulted with the education departments of each diocesan office to choose a school to visit. From our Jefferson City office, we ventured north to Holy Rosary in Monroe City, then down to the bootheel to St. Eustachius in Portageville, headed west to St. Michael the Archangel in Lee's Summit, and finally took an eastbound path to Annunziata in St. Louis. Each school had a different story to tell, but the common denominator was the dedication to preserving the tradition of Catholic education in our state. It was impossible to squeeze the full stories of each of the schools into a single four-page issue of *Messenger*, so we have extended this issue in a special online-only format at mocatholic.org.

Did you know?

The Missouri Catholic Conference has a long history of involvement in Catholic education; the conference was founded in 1967 as the public policy agency for the church in Missouri, with the purpose to address legislation that would promote the interests of Catholics, specifically Catholic students. An excerpt from *A Short History Of The Missouri Catholic Conference: 1967-2007* gives more detail. Read the full version at mocatholic.org.

In 1965 Congress authorized the first significant federal intervention into elementary and secondary schooling by enacting the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The new law required local public school districts to provide services to eligible private school students on a comparable basis to those provided to public school students. But the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) refused to comply with the law, citing state constitutional restrictions on aid to religion. When Msgr. Michael McAuliffe, superintendent of the Catholic schools of Kansas City-St. Joseph, visited Missouri Commissioner of Education Hubert Wheeler, the commissioner kept discussion to the mysteries of his new phone system and offered no remedies for the discrimination faced by the private school children. This impasse triggered discussions among the Catholic school superintendents about forming a statewide organization that could promote the interests of Catholic school students.





Catholic Schools Week 2019 Jan. 27 - Feb. 2

Sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) Catholic Schools Week is an annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. Schools typically observe the week with Masses, open houses and other activities for students, families, parishioners and community members. Through these events, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to Church, local communities and the nation.

This year's theme is Catholic Schools: Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed. Learn more about NCEA and Catholic Schools Week at www.ncea.org/csw!



The chapel inside St. Michael the Archangel High School in Lee's Summit

"In order that the Catholic school and the Catholic teachers may truly make their irreplaceable contribution to the Church and to the world, the goal of Catholic education itself must be crystal clear. Beloved sons and daughters of the Catholic Church, brothers and sisters in the faith: Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others." – Message of John Paul II to the National Catholic Educational Association of the United States, April 16, 1979



Looking ahead: 2019 Annual Assembly— RAISING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CATHOLIC ADVOCATES

The students in our Catholic schools today are gaining a wealth of knowledge about their faith and the world that will lead them to become the next generation of Catholic advocates. At the 2019 Annual Assembly, we will dive into the important role this next generation will have in the formation of future public policy, and how we can help raise them up to do so in a positive, effective way. We invite all students, teachers, parents and others to hear from the founder of FOCUS, Curtis Martin. FOCUS is a Catholic collegiate outreach whose mission is to share the hope and joy of the gospel with college and university students. Trained in Church teaching, prayer, sacred Scripture, evangelization and discipleship, FOCUS missionaries encounter students in friendship where they are, inviting them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and accompanying them as they pursue lives of virtue and excellence. Through Bible studies, outreach events, mission trips and one-on-one discipleship, missionaries inspire and build up students in the faith, sending them out to spread the good news and to live out the Great Commission: Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19). This year's Annual Assembly will be in the State Capitol building, which means our tradition of hosting a mock legislature for school-aged youth will recommence. Students will be welcomed into the Senate chamber, where they'll debate actual bills that have been discussed in the Missouri General Assembly. Participants will be asked to follow all rules and procedures that Missouri Representatives and Senators must follow in the Missouri General Assembly. In preparation for this mock legislature, students are asked to research the bills that will be debated beforehand. We encourage teachers and parents to use this opportunity to enhance your students' knowledge of government and public policy—the future of public policy needs strong Catholic advocates!



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS | Annunziata, St. Louis

Catholic schools and public schools have a common goal: to get kids through high school and on to adulthood, outfitting them with the skills and knowledge that will help them succeed in the world. But Gerre Book, principal at Annunziata school, has a higher goal: to get her students to heaven. It was a visit from a priest before the school year opened that brought this ultimate goal to light. It's a story she recounts to every new teacher who comes to the school. "He came to one of our open houses and we were all just nervous wrecks," Book recalls. "We were all new teachers and we were worried about whether the bulletin boards were straight and if the staplers were in the right spot. He walked down the hall and said, 'All you want to do is get these children to heaven. Why are you worried about all of this? Just get them to heaven.'" For Book, her staff, and her students, that's the message that gets them through each school day. "That's what we're about," she says. "I think that's where God graces us and blesses us. Not that we don't fall, but we get back up."

Annunziata Parish school is one of three stand-alone schools in the Archdiocese of St. Louis that are dedicated to serving kindergarten through 8th grade students who have special needs. The Archdiocese was the first diocese in our nation to step away from institutionalization for special needs children, and step into a special education program. Decades later, the Archdiocese continues this great effort in several schools, with the ultimate goal being to have the capacity to serve the full spectrum of special needs families. Dr. Cathy Johns, associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction, says. The model seeks to serve families who prefer a fully inclusive environment, one where students with special needs attend "general education" schools such as parish schools and Catholic high schools, as well as others who prefer to have their children educated at a stand alone school, where their student will learn alongside other students with special needs. "We are continuing to morph, because you will see that society is much more open and accepting, more inclusive in education," she says. "So we are trying to bridge that gap—how can we meet the needs of children who have learning issues in the least restrictive environment...the goal is to provide what we can at schools so that there is an option and a choice for Catholic families or families with children who want a Catholic education."

Johns and Book have the same end goal, to get the students to heaven, but there are lots of milestones in between, including getting the students back to general education Catholic schools when possible. "My goal is never to accept a child into our school with the thought that they will stay with us forever," Johns says. "It's to accept them with the thought that they'll stay with us for as long as they need...we work with a diagnosis so that we know how to provide what they need, but we don't let the diagnosis direct where they can be placed." ***Read more about Annunziata at mocatholic.org***

DIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY/ST. JOSEPH | St. Michael the Archangel, Lee's Summit

Michael D'Angelo, known as Mike, is a favorite staff member among students at St. Michael the Archangel High School, which opened in Lee's Summit in 2017. Mike joined the team as the Director of Love and Hospitality; his salary comes in the form of treats, love, attention, and walks. Oh, and he's a puppy!

Mike is just one of the many elements that makes St. Michael a unique addition to Missouri's Catholic Education program. Principal Jodie Maddox says every single aspect of the school was chosen with great intention—including Mike. "The architecture in this building is very intentional," she says. "It's a 21st century school, but our chapel, when you go inside, is very traditional and old world, because that's who we are. We are a school that's rooted in the ancient but striving toward the future. We're a 21st century school rooted in God's grace and tradition." All students are equipped with laptops, have the opportunity to enroll in a variety of educational programs including aviation, participate in varsity sports, and to attend Mass daily. New ideas intertwine with the tradition of Catholic theology, answering the greatest call to 'know truth, love God, and serve others,' the mission of St. Michael the Archangel. "We know that truth is in everything we do," Maddox says. "There is an ultimate truth, and that is true with everything including science, including math, and so we can talk about that truth in many ways, but to exclude Christ would not bring the actual truth to it. Knowing truth, teaching truth, teaching children that service is love, love is not anything other than an active piece of who you must be. You have to participate in order to love."

You'll find Mike in the S.M.I.L.E. (St. Michael Inclusive Learning Enhancement) Zone, St. Michael's special needs learning center. Here, he's teaching students valuable life skills. "They are learning so many skills with Mike," Maddox says. "They're learning empathy, responsibility, all those great things, but really they're learning what friendship looks and feels like...they're learning how to care for him as well as their own needs at the same time." These students also run the Guardian Grind, which is a coffee bar inside the school, as part of a business math class on Tuesdays and Thursdays. "They not only learn math skills, but they also learn marketing," Maddox says. "They do all the shopping, they have a seasonal latte that they serve, black coffee and then a smoothie that they create. They create all the recipes, they do the trial and errors...it's their business, they make money...it's a full life-skills learning lab." ***Read more about St. Michael HS at mocatholic.org***

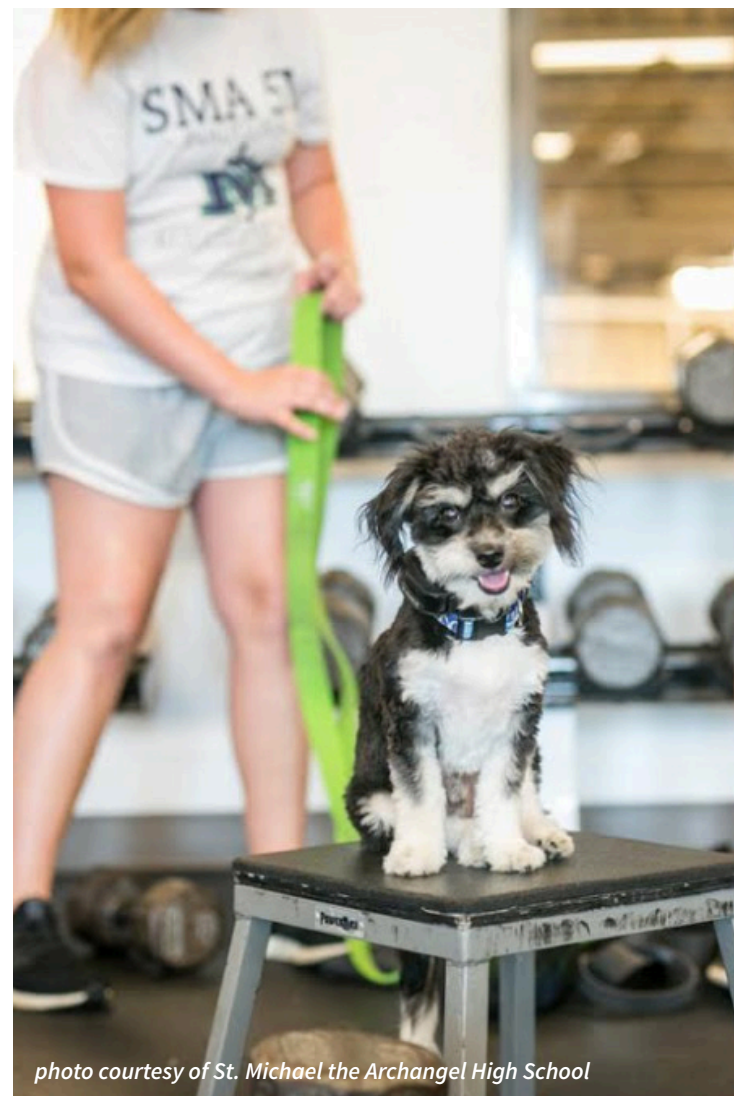


photo courtesy of St. Michael the Archangel High School



DIOCESE OF JEFFERSON CITY

Holy Rosary, Monroe City

Years before they married, Pete and Thelma Saunders declared their love for one another in bright yellow paint in the basement of Holy Rosary school. “Pete plus Thelma,” the hand painted declaration read. In another area of the school, in a small space under a set of stairs, where nearly a century ago (the school hasn’t had a football team since the ‘20s) football players had stashed helmets and other equipment, a play, marked with Xs and Os was chalked on the wood. Thousands of memories were made permanent at the school, which is in the final stages of demolition in early 2019.

For over a century, Catholic education has flourished in the rural community of Monroe City in northeast Missouri. Holy Rosary school first opened in 1901, its four rooms bursting at the seams, as nearly 90 students gathered to learn inside. A new school was erected in 1920 and saw thousands of students pass through its halls and classrooms until 2016, when time and weather finally rendered the building unusable. But the community and parish did not see this as an end to Catholic education in the area; instead they came together to pledge enough to build a brand new school to continue the Holy Rosary legacy. Today, the new school is host to 175 pre-k through 8th graders and a staff of roughly a dozen, many of whom are former Holy Rosary students.

Principal Sr. Suzanne Walker is one of those former students. She’s spent most of her life at the school, attending through high school graduation, then returning years later as a teacher. In 1984, she became principal, succeeding a number of Dominican sisters before her who have fostered a sense of spiritual learning in their students. Sr. Suzanne has seen the best and worst days of the school building. On the hottest days, Holy Rosary would shut its doors before noon, letting students escape the unairconditioned space. On the coldest days, Sr. Suzanne would slip out of her bed half an hour earlier than usual, throw on several warm layers and boots, and head across the street to the school to light the boiler, the only source of heat in the old school. She doesn’t miss that. For her, it’s the simple things about the new school that make it so great. “This new building is so comfortable,” she says. “The old building was almost 100 years old. We were at 96 years. Three flights [of stairs], and the plumbing was bad, and the heat was only on or off, with an old boiler system. No energy efficiency, no air conditioning anywhere in the old building. This one is just so bright and spacious.”

Though the building was no longer suitable for a school, its bones still had value. Almost everything from the old school was sold or repurposed. “They took up the old wood floors plank by plank, and it’s yellow pine,” Sr. Suzanne says. “There’s a big call for that, people love to take them and refinish and repurpose them. It’s so good to think that’s not being taken to a landfill, all that great wood.” The fir subfloors went to China, doors and doorknobs all over the country, and some statues and artifacts made their way into the new school building. ***Read more about Holy Rosary at mocatholic.org***

DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD/CAPE GIRARDEAU

St. Eustachius, Portageville

No one really knows when or why Spanish architecture became the face of the grounds of St. Eustachius school and parish in Portageville, but it’s certainly become part of the history, and the future, of the small town. So when plans were drawn up for a new school, the vision was important. “We really wanted it to just flow and look like we just set it down, that it’s been here for a while,” Principal Tricia Rone says. “We didn’t want something that looked brand new or different or anything else.” This vision was more than aesthetic; the goal was to maintain a unified school that delivers quality education rooted in Catholic tradition, as it has since 1917—only this time with better plumbing.

Throughout its 100 years, the old school building gathered many memories, but near the end, had developed even more problems. Crumbling plaster, constant plumbing issues, lack of proper heat and AC and the general lack of space restricted the reach of the school’s educational capabilities. This August, after years of planning and fundraising, Rone and her students celebrated the century-old history by opening a new chapter of their story in a brand new school building.

St. Eustachius school and the parish are closely intertwined, even though many of the parish members have no direct tie to the school population. The students and parish members participate in a prayer buddy program, an act which “keeps the parish young” says Bob Darst, who coaches the school basketball team, serves on the building committee, and whose wife is also a teacher at St. Eustachius. “It’s designed for parishioners who don’t have the tie in, don’t have a kid in school or a grandkid in school. Those kids love it, they have a special day for it every year. I remember my prayer buddies all through the years, they’re special in that way. They do a really good job of writing letters four or five times a year. They’ve made it where the idea is to pray for your prayer buddy and they’ll pray for you, meet at a couple events throughout the year and take pictures. It’s amazing how many people’s houses you walk into, they have a picture of their prayer buddy on the refrigerator.”

Portageville’s population is not overwhelmingly Catholic, but the support for St. Eustachius school has always been abundant. As seen in many other Catholic schools, a number of students are not of the Catholic, or even Christian, faith. But that hasn’t made a difference in the way Catholicism is intertwined in daily education. This commitment has led to conversions of the heart for several students and families. Darst has seen the power of Catholic education change the lives of students. “I could give you testimonies all day,” he says. One of the most meaningful to him has been a niece whose parents are non-practicing Catholics. “She decided on her own this year that she wanted to become Catholic,” he says. “It’s crazy, an 8th grader who decides that. What’s even been better about the whole deal is that she never misses church; I was up in New Madrid Saturday morning for the 8 am mass for the holy day and I looked behind me in the pew and she was there with her grandmother. [Her grandmother] said, ‘she told me we needed to go.’ To me that’s a real testimony to what they do here at the school. That’s what impacted her. What she’s learned inside these walls prompted her to become Catholic.” ***Read more about St. Eustachius at mocatholic.org***

