



*St. Clare School*

Issue No. 1  
Fall 2021

# Connection



*Dear St. Clare Families and Friends,*

It is with great excitement that I write this letter of introduction as the new principal for St. Clare Catholic School. I have been dedicated to the field of education for nearly 20 years, which includes teaching STEM and gifted students in grades 5–8 at Holy Trinity Catholic School before later serving as Advancement Director and Assistant Principal. Prior to that I spent three years as a middle school teacher at Whiteside School. I received my bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Illinois State University, and I hold a master's degree in Administration and Leadership from McKendree University. My husband, David, and I have three sons who are products of Catholic school. We chose Catholic education for our children because we wanted a school community that inspired students to excel as leaders, encouraged critical thinking, and developed responsible citizens in a Catholic community.



When considering my next step in the Catholic school system, I wanted to be the principal at St. Clare because of its rich history, support from the O'Fallon community, and the dedication of the three parishes—St. Nicholas, St. Clare of Assisi, and Corpus Christi.

This is an exciting time to be part of St. Clare! The halls are filled with the energy of teachers who are passionate about education and focused on what makes Catholic schools great: a curriculum infused with our faith, strong traditions, discipline, and academic excellence. Additionally, St. Clare is blessed with dedicated school families who partner with us in this process of education and faith formation for all students.

**Faith Formation:** All-school Masses have resumed this year! We love to see students serving, cantoring, and reading at weekly and all-school Masses. It feels good to also be using the St. Clare Chapel again. It is not only a place to attend Mass but also a classroom where teachers can give lessons on parts of the Mass, the meaning behind different parts of the Chapel, and the importance of being reverent. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful space for students to use daily.

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**Curriculum:** Teachers are working with Mrs. Christina Howard, Assistant Principal, to ensure their curriculum aligns to standards. Consistent and intentional professional development for teachers enhances our curriculum and creates a culture where teachers are confident in their skill sets. We are excited that two of our teachers recently attended an intense 40-hour training on Orton Gillingham, a multisensory approach for a more effective literacy program. This is a highly structured teaching method that introduces the idea of breaking reading and spelling down into smaller skills involving letters and sounds, then building on these skills over time. We believe this approach will benefit all younger students, and ultimately all K-3 teachers will be trained on Orton Gillingham in order to achieve consistency in our elementary ELA instruction.

**Technology:** Our new Makerbot 3-D Printers have arrived, and we have added how-to lessons to the technology curriculum for 7th and 8th grade students. After completing online courses on how to use the 3-D printers, our junior high students will receive Makerbot Certification status. 3-D printing allows students to foster creativity, communicate, collaborate as a team, and create digital designs that translate into objects. These are all skills that will serve them well as they move forward in their education.

**Specials:** K-5 students participate in Art, Spanish, PE, Band, Drama, Technology, and Music, and students in grades 6-8 participate in Art, Technology, Music, PE, Drama, and Band. We are fortunate to be able to offer these additional options to ensure students have the opportunity to explore their passions and creativity while also beginning to develop cultural competence and appreciation.

Everyone who has helped build this St. Clare School community over the past 150-plus years has left an enduring legacy. I am honored to continue their mission, and I am dedicated to making St. Clare the best it can possibly be for all of our students. I value the support of our priests, parishioners, families, alumni, and community in this exciting endeavor.

*With gratitude,*  
Mrs. Monica Ybarra



## Knights Give Back

Community leaders recognize the importance of serving the community that supports them, which is why we regularly seek out opportunities to give back to those around us. In honor of St. Vincent de Paul's feast day, students brought in 498 nonperishable food items to donate to the O'Fallon Food Pantry. We also held a Halloween collection event and used those donations to create goodie bags for people in need throughout the Belleville Diocese.



Of course, we don't just think it's our students who should be giving back. Faculty and staff members spent one Saturday morning in October preparing and serving food at the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen.

"Being able to serve others as God asks is truly a privilege. Recently I had the opportunity to support others by taking part in preparing and serving a meal at Cosgrove's Soup Kitchen located in East St. Louis. Working together with other faculty and staff members to complete God's work not only helped those in need but brought us closer with a wonderful shared experience. We worked together to complete the common goal of helping others and enjoyed each other's company as well. Giving of ourselves truly became the greater gift than the help we offered."

- Jennifer Fischer  
5th grade teacher



## Reflections

I have the great privilege of living across the street from our lively St. Clare School. At certain times in the day, a great smile comes across my face as I hear these joy-filled voices echoing from the playground, Stations Garden, or a PE class. The joy and energy in our student's voices are a real blessing to our neighborhood here in downtown O'Fallon.

Their Spirit-filled voices make me think about how we use our own adult voices...in our homes, neighborhoods, or in the larger community. Do our young people hear us adding joy, love, and forgiveness in what is coming from our mouths? We often underestimate the influence we have on others in the way we talk and act. Thanks to all our parents and grandparents and all supporters of our school for helping us form our children in the example of Jesus' Love, which is the primary purpose of our school.

Our St. Clare School is a true asset to our parishes as well as our local community. Your support of our school is truly forming disciples of Jesus Christ...and adding Joy to the neighborhood!

- Fr. Jim



On October 24, 2021, Corpus Christi held a jubilee celebration of the 50th anniversary of ordination for Monsignor James Margason. Many diocesan and religious priests attended the special Mass, including Bishop Michael McGovern and Cardinal Wilton Gregory, who shared a homily with the parish family. A reception was held at the Regency Conference Center to celebrate the jubilee and to wish Fr. Margason a very happy 80th birthday! Continued blessings to him and the entire Corpus Christi community!



## Focus on Faith



This fall, our 6th graders received Bibles blessed by Fr. Jim Deiters. This annual 6th grade tradition marks the start of students' journey toward learning the Sacred Scriptures.



On All Saints Day, Fr. Bill Hitpas celebrated Mass and explained to students that we are all called to be saints. His homily fit well with this year's "Shine a Light" theme, which reminds us to let Christ's light shine through us.



# Gift Giving Donor List

## PLATINUM MAJOR DONORS

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Anonymous Donor  
Mr. & Mrs. Duane & Patti Daniels  
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Mr. & Mrs. Norman Wilke

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Please note, to reduce printing and mailing costs we have changed the format for displaying participants' names. Each name will be listed one time. In the past, Parents, Grandparents, Parishioners, School Board, Faculty, and Staff were repeated in separate categories.

## Gift Giving Campaign

For more than 150 years, St. Clare Catholic School has guided our students on a journey where academic excellence, a strong Catholic education, and a Christ-centered environment are at the center of that experience. As we prepare current students for their next steps as future leaders in our community and in the Church, we must ensure educational opportunities for the next generations of students, too.

The annual St. Clare School Gift Giving Campaign is essential in helping maintain existing school activities and programs not fully funded by tuition. Each year, the tuition that families pay covers only about 55% of the actual cost of a child's education. Thirty-five percent is covered by the three parishes and another 10% comes from school fundraisers. In some years, gifts from the gift giving campaign also provide for facility upgrades that ensure our physical spaces remain safe and dynamic learning environments.

St. Clare is a community defined by giving, one that grows stronger through the participation of every member. We rely on the entire community—parents, parishioners, grandparents, friends, and community members, just like you—to help support our mission each year. Every gift, no matter the size, helps close the gap between the actual cost of a high-quality Catholic education and the price of tuition. But, we can't continue to grow without your help!

Your continued investment in our students is a gift that will continue to shine in those served by our school. Please join us in preparing our students, who will one day move on from St. Clare Catholic School, to provide loving service to this world. Your participation in the campaign, at any giving level, is greatly appreciated.

To donate today, please visit  
<https://givebutter.com/stclaregiftgiving>



or mail your contribution to:  
**St. Clare Catholic School**  
214 W. 3rd Street  
O'Fallon, IL 62269

## Empower Illinois Scholarships

St. Clare Catholic School has been incredibly blessed by our Empower Illinois scholarship donors. This year we had 12 donors, along with a generous individual who created a 1-to-1 matching gift program that doubled our donations (up to \$15,000). For the 2021–2022 school year, we awarded 20 scholarships to our students for a total of \$60,748.30!

Empower Illinois is a 501(c)(3) organization that advocates for innovation in Illinois education and provides private school scholarships to low-income and working-class families. These scholarships are part of the Invest in Kids Scholarship Tax Credit Program, which was authorized in 2017 under the Invest in Kids Act.



The State of Illinois had intended to let the Invest in Kids Scholarship Tax Credit Program expire in 2020. This past spring, Christina Howard, assistant principal, Clarice McKay, former principal, and Eileen Yahl, bookkeeper, lobbied to keep this important program intact by traveling to the Illinois State Capitol. They spent an entire day speaking

to legislators and making phone calls alongside many other Illinois educators. A week later, Illinois legislators reached a bipartisan agreement, extending the program for an additional year.

If you, or someone you know, would like to help children from low-income families receive a Catholic school education, now is the time! The Empower Illinois Scholarship Program offers a 75 percent income tax credit to individuals and businesses that contribute to St. Clare Catholic School under the Invest in Kids Act.

For more information, please visit  
<https://empowerillinois.org/donors/donate>



*Your Shining Knight*

*Save the Date*  
**March 19, 2022**  
St. Clare School Auction  
Regency Conference Center  
in O'Fallon, IL

# Good Shepherd Preschool

Good Shepherd Preschool provides our youngest students a foundation for quality Catholic education through prayer, song and play! Many of the materials used are designed to help the children “fall in love with God” as they explore the fundamentals of our faith. Students spend some hands-on, quiet time working with the materials each week, connecting with things they see at church in a special room, called the Atrium. There, they sing and pray together, and hear short stories and parables about Jesus.



## Open House



### OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, January 30<sup>th</sup>  
1:30-3:00 PM

214 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, O'Fallon, IL 62269

Come join us to learn about our pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade education and meet our faculty and school families. See why our school will be a good fit for your child and family.



Scan the QR code for the Sign Up Genius link so you can sign up for a time that works for you and your family. We look forward to seeing you!

# Pep Rally



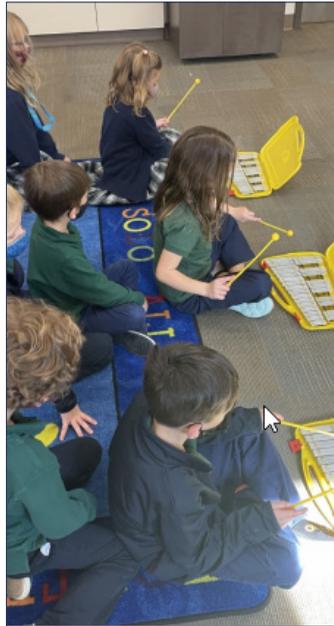
We had our first all-school pep rally in October to kick off the raffle-ticket season. It was wonderful to gather together and have some fun. We even saw Mrs. Ybarra and Mrs. Howard try to knock each other down with bumper balls. The raffle was a huge success, too! We raised \$64,820! We celebrated with out-of-uniform days, a donut party, and some strategically sprayed silly string.



## Specials

Our younger grades made a joyful noise with their xylophones and bells in Music class. These new instruments were generously donated by families so our students can safely get hands-on experiences making music.

We've also been commemorating holidays in memorable ways. After learning about Día de los Muertos in Spanish, students shared photos of their deceased loved ones, and Mrs. Fuentes artfully arranged them on our very own ofrenda. These photos were then displayed in the chapel throughout November.



Next up, each and every student painted a handmade animal ornament to help decorate one of the Christmas trees at the Shrine's annual display. Our tree's theme—"Shine a Light on God's Creatures, Great and Small"—ties together the story of Noah's Ark and the birth of Jesus at the Nativity. Noah foreshadowed Christ in the great task he was given: to build an ark and bring with him those whom God would save. The many animals on our tree are a symbol of coming together as one through Christ our Lord. Be sure to visit the Shrine this Christmas season to see this creative labor of love!



## Athletics



Soccer is strong at St. Clare! This sport is available at all grade levels and makes for a great start to the athletic year. From learning how to work as a team in Kindergarten to winning championships, Knights know how to kick it. Congratulations to our Parochial Girls and Junior Boys for being the 2021 Diocesan Champs!



## Alumni

Do you know an **Alumni** that deserves the spotlight?

Email [alumni@saintclareschool.org](mailto:alumni@saintclareschool.org) to nominate a St. Clare Alumni to be featured in the next issue!





*St. Clare Catholic School*

214 W. Third Street

O'Fallon, IL 62269



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We are thrilled to be able to spend time with Buddies again this school year! The St. Clare Buddy Program pairs younger students with older students to help them form connections outside of each other's classrooms. Kindergartners met their new 5th grade Buddies in September and later celebrated with a beach party in the parking lot. The Buddy fun continued in October with a field trip to Relleke Farms for a little pumpkin picking and a lot of playing.

