

JANUARY 27,  
2017



# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

*Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service*

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE CATHOLIC STAR HERALD



Photo by James A. McBride

Second grader Zoe Toraya gets help with her vowels from Claudia Trani-Melgar, Spanish teacher and “*Madrina*” at Guardian Angels Regional School in Gibbstown and Paulsboro. See page S-3.



**A DOG IN THE CLASSROOM:** Paul VI student trains a guide dog. S4



**ELECTIVES AND CLUBS:** Students explore hobbies, talents, academic interests and life skills. S16



**PLANTING SEEDS FOR VOCATIONS:** A look at the link between Catholic schools and religious vocations. S19

# Prayer, learning and service to others

By Mary Boyle

I have been thinking a lot lately about a letter I received from Allison DeCarlo, a young teacher at Saint Vincent de Paul Regional School in Mays Landing.

She wrote: "Teaching has been my passion for as long as I can remember; however, it was not until I began my career at Saint Vincent's that I realized how much my faith has impacted my teaching. Being a second grade teacher, I am entrusted with the duty of preparing my students for two important sacraments in the Catholic Church. My experiences have made me realize the connection between faith and teaching, and I honestly cannot picture my classroom any other way."

Allison's words are beautifully aligned with the mission and vision statements, logo and tagline we developed for South Jersey Catholic Schools in 2016. Our mission, to educate and inspire young minds spiritually, academically and in service to others, can only be achieved with, as Allison puts it, "the connection between faith and teaching." Inherent

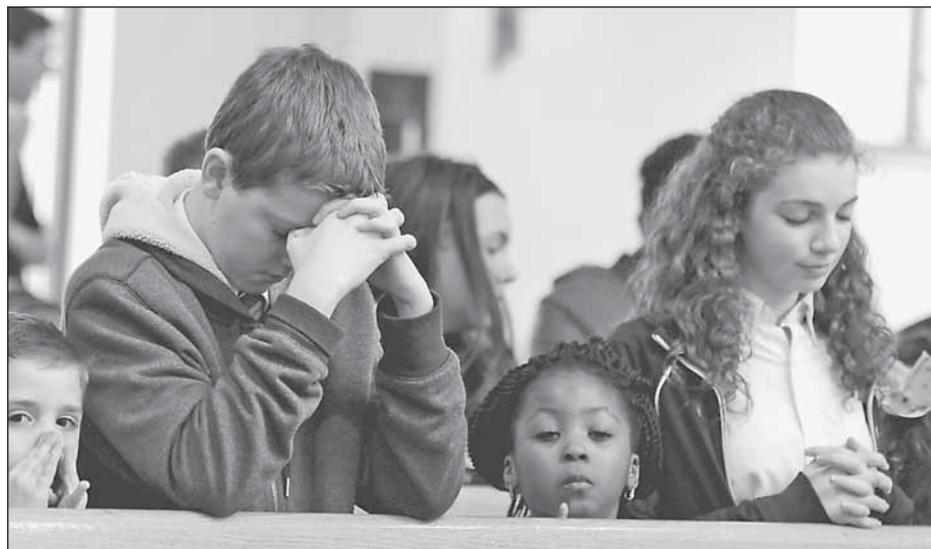


Photo by Alan M. Dumoff

Students of Saint John Paul II School, Stratford, pray during a school Mass.

in that connection is a desire to serve others. And what better example of service to others than the commitment to teach in a Catholic school?

Our tagline, the gift of a lifetime, does not end with the children who attend our schools. The gift is spread through prayer, learning and service to others. It's a gift that keeps giving as our students become faith-filled adults

who, led by gospel values, shape our world with knowledge, integrity and compassion, fulfilling our vision for South Jersey Catholic schools and supporting the broader mission of our church. The gift of a lifetime transcends generations as families continue the Catholic school tradition.

Allison said she sees "some of her own roots influencing [her] experience

now." A graduate of the former Blessed Sacrament School in Margate, she went to Holy Spirit High School, then Rowan University, where she became involved in the campus Newman Center and saw her faith deepening. Wanting to connect her faith with her career, she applied for a teaching job within the diocese. Her application came with highest recommendations from a priest who knew her character and level of commitment.

Soon, Allison will celebrate another important sacrament, marriage. Unfortunately relocation comes with the package, and she will not be able to commute to Mays Landing. She is open to all possibilities but hopeful a job in another Catholic school will open up near her new home.

"I have given a lot of thought to where I want to teach. ... I know that my heart is in Catholic education. ... I truly believe that is where I belong," she wrote.

Student turned teacher, still receiving and still giving the gift of a lifetime.

*Mary Boyle is superintendent of schools, Diocese of Camden.*

## The high school and college connection

By Peter G. Sánchez

The final year of high school can be an exciting time for seniors as they look forward to what's ahead, but also a stressful one, in filling out college applications, waiting for a decision and finding the right fit.

The Camden Diocese's high schools are partnering with college institutions, to ease the important transition.

Last fall, Absecon's Holy Spirit High School entered into an agreement with Georgian Court College in Lakewood, that includes conditions for guaranteed admissions, scholarship opportunities, and college course offerings for Holy Spirit's students.

"The partnership is a wonderful opportunity for students and allows them to remain in Catholic schools. We see the value of not only K-12, but K-16," said Susan Dennen, principal.

Students are guaranteed full-time admission into Georgian Court provided they graduate with a high school diploma; earn a minimum 2.50 GPA or better; score 900 or better on the SAT, or a 19 or better on the ACT; and satisfy all other admissions application requirements. Those falling short of these requirements, the agreement states, will be evaluated on an individual basis.



Representatives of Georgian Court University, Lakewood, N.J., and Holy Spirit High School, Absecon, sign an agreement to give the high school students admission advantages, scholarship opportunities, and college course offerings.

As well, Georgian Court has agreed to waive the admissions fee; provide on-site admissions and financial aid advisement to prospective students and their parents; and award academic scholarships to qualified Holy Spirit schools.

Dennen notes that on a recent Decision Day at Holy Spirit, 10 students were automatically accepted to Georgian Court. Next year, dual-credit online courses, designed by Georgian

Court, will be available for students, she says.

At Haddonfield's Paul VI High School, Donna Camardo, director of Team Development and mathematics teacher, says students participate in the Camden County College High School Plus Program.

Here, "math, science and languages are just a few of the subject areas offered to our students in which they

can receive both high school and college credit. Currently, over 100 students are involved in the program."

Saint Joseph High School in Hammonton has agreements for guaranteed admission and scholarship opportunities with multiple schools, including Georgian Court, Holy Family University, and Delaware Valley University; and dual-credit courses with Georgian Court, with hopes for more dual-credit course agreements with other colleges.

The high school/college partnerships "strive to offer educational opportunities for intellectual and personal growth," says Louise Fourney, director of Guidance at Saint Joseph.

"We are committed to providing quality education that fosters spiritual development, excellence in scholarship, lifelong learning and enlightened citizenship," she said.

Other schools that work with colleges, in one way or another, include:

- Camden Catholic, Cherry Hill (Camden County College, Rowan College of Gloucester County and Seton Hall University)
- Gloucester Catholic, Gloucester City (Rowan College of Gloucester County)
- Wildwood Catholic (Seton Hall University, Cabrini College).

# Ambassadors for Hispanic families

By Peter G. Sánchez

GIBBSTOWN — Stepping into a classroom here at Guardian Angels Regional School, Claudia Trani-Melgar immediately was greeted by the second graders, who jumped out of their seats.

“Good morning, *Maestra* Claudia!” came the enthusiastic welcome, with the students appropriately using the Spanish word for “teacher” to address the school’s Spanish instructor.

This past year, she received another title: “*Madrina*,” or “Godmother.”

Trani-Melgar is one of the nine individuals thus named that serve South Jersey Catholic schools, in an initiative of the Diocese of Camden’s Catholic Schools Latino Enrollment Program.

The *madrinas* serve as school ambassadors and welcome new and current Hispanic families, all with the goal of “providing them access to Catholic education,” said Trani-Melgar.

No stranger to the school, for the past seven years the Bolivia-born woman has taught her first language, Spanish, to students from PreK-8 at Guardian Angels. Her own children are enrolled in the school, Luciano, now in fifth grade, and Gianna in third.

She also has experience with getting the word out, having been a writer for both The Courier Post and Philadelphia’s *Al Dia* newspapers.

These qualifications made her an ideal candidate to reach out to Hispanic families, said Marianela Nuñez, field consultant for the Latino Enrollment Program.

This past summer, Trani-Melgar addressed families attending the Spanish Masses at Saint Clare of Assisi, Swedesboro; and Saint Gabriel, Carneys Point, explaining to them the value of a Catholic education for their children. As well, she assuaged their financial fears, assuring them that “we’re going to help (you) make it affordable.”

“The pastors of these parishes (Father David Grover and Father Charles Colozzi) have been supportive” of our efforts, she said.



Photo by James A. McBride  
Claudia Trani-Melgar, Spanish teacher and “*Madrina*” at Guardian Angels Regional School, helps second grader Samantha Vicente Matteo with her vowel patterns recently at the Gibbstown campus.

Currently, 13 Hispanic students are enrolled at Guardian Angels, studying at the Gibbstown and Paulsboro campuses.

From the moment they enter the school, Trani-Melgar “makes the families feel like a part of the community,” Nuñez said, whether it is assisting them with paperwork; coordinating the monthly school community get-togethers; or matching up a new Hispanic family with an already-established family for support and fellowship.

“We want to make sure that they feel a part of this community, with faith at the center,” Trani-Melgar said.

Guardian Angels school principal Sister Jerilyn Einstein called Trani-Melgar’s “exuberant personality and enthusiasm” a much-needed asset for the school and parish communities, ensuring “that our Latino families feel at home, loved and supported.”

As Spanish teacher to the entire school community, in addition to her role as *Madrina*, Trani-Melgar “is able to help our children and families by teaching acceptance, and by instilling in them appreciation for other cultures and traditions,” Sister Jerilyn added.

Nuñez and Trani-Melgar hope that as the families get acclimated, they will tell their neighbors of their positive experiences, and convince them to enroll their own children at the school.

“The hope is that we create momentum,” Nuñez expressed.

With her new role at the school, along with the eight other *madrinas* connecting with Hispanic families, Trani-Melgar sees hope.

“I feel lucky and blessed to change the lives of so many children.”

Not just the lives of the Hispanic students she sees walking through the doors, but all of the students, making new friends and embracing different cultures.

“Previously in my Spanish classes, when I asked why they wanted to learn Spanish, students told me they wanted to learn because it would help them when they went to some exotic place for vacation,” she said.

“Now, my students tell me they want to learn it, so they can talk with their classmates.”

## Catholic schools earn high marks on Nation’s Report Card

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), often referred to as the Nation’s Report Card, is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what students know and can do in subjects such as mathematics, reading, science and writing.

The assessment results for grades four, eight and 12 show that Catholic schools consistently outperform public schools in science.

“Academic excellence in Catholic schools is proven time and again through tests such as the SAT and AP exams, as well as through assessments such as NAEP,” said National Catholic

Educational Association (NCEA) President/CEO Dr. Thomas W. Burnford.

“Catholic schools are sacred places of faith formation, and where 1.9 million Catholic school students receive an outstanding education,” he said.

There are four achievement levels for this assessment: below basic;

basic; proficient and advanced. An overall scale score of 0 – 300 is derived from the testing results of all four levels.

Catholic schools have a scale score of 167 for the fourth, eighth and 12th grade levels compared to the public school scale scores of 153 for grades four and eight and 149 for grade 12.

# Training includes walking the school hallways

By Peter G. Sánchez

For Paul VI High School, Haddonfield, freshman Kathryn Robinson, classroom talk recently went from “my dog ate my homework” to “my dog is joining me in school today.”

Robinson, 14 years old, and her family have become puppy raisers for “Miranda,” a black Labrador currently being trained as a guide dog.

In socializing Miranda in places such as Paul VI, or a church, or a mall, and getting her used to large crowds of people, the Robinsons are getting her prepared for the day when she will take on the important role of guiding a blind individual, said Kathryn’s father, Frank, a Latin teacher at the school.

“She’s learning how to stay focused” amidst her surroundings, he said.

The Robinsons, residents of Marlton, are working with The Seeing Eye, a Morristown-based organization that breeds and raises puppies to become guide dogs, which in turn will enhance the independence, dignity and self-confidence of the blind.

The black lab has not only gotten favorable responses at such places such as Paul VI, but at local churches for Sunday Mass, where “priests have



Miranda waits patiently for class to end.

given her special blessings,” Frank said.

His wife, Kelly, has understood what socializing a dog at a church service can mean, as she has heard of a blind individual specifically requesting a canine that had been to church.

Miranda became matched with the Robinsons in February 2016, after a month-long application process to determine puppy raisers’ suitability.

The family already having a now 11-year-old German shepherd mix, Cocoa, helped.

“She has become a member of the family,” Frank said of Miranda, adding that her care has been a “family effort, but Kathryn is mainly responsible.”

The primary caretaker of Miranda, when not at school (or taking her to school), Kathryn has walked, fed, and groomed the black lab for the past year.

After another month and a half, Miranda will return to The Seeing Eye for four months of formal training, and she and a blind individual will join the 16,000-plus pairs matched up since the organization’s start 88 years ago.

As Kathryn has seen Miranda mature from a puppy into an adult, and will soon see her go off to fulfill her calling, the freshman sees her



Photos by Alan M. Dumoff

Kathryn Robinson walks Miranda through the halls of Paul VI High School, Haddonfield, with her friend Kiera Nasoff. Miranda is being trained as a guide dog.

friend’s impending departure as bitter-sweet.

“I’m excited, though, because she’s going to be a big part of somebody’s life,” she said.

The Robinsons’ ties to The Seeing Eye will not end soon, though. They hope to be a puppy raiser for another dog and change the life of another blind individual.

## Serving others at the core of Catholic schools

Serving others is at the core of South Jersey Catholic Schools’ mission and vision. From around the corner to around the world, students are involved in efforts to feed the hungry, fight and care for the sick, elderly and marginalized, honor veterans, bring hope and warmth to the poor, raise money to fight life-threatening diseases and care for the environment. Some examples:

### For the Environment

Students at Our Lady Star of the Sea in Atlantic City have shown care for the environment through coordinated beach cleaning efforts with Rowan University. At Good Shepherd School in Collingswood, a new recycling club is educating the school community and

spearheading efforts to collect recyclable materials.

### Fundraisers

Creative approaches to fundraising help schools raise money to support many causes during the year.

It is Manuary at Camden Catholic, where 15 junior and senior male students are growing beards to raise money for Congenital Central Hypoventilation Syndrome (CCHS), a rare disorder that affects many automatic functions of the body, most commonly resulting in an inability to control breathing. CCHS was chosen in honor of Luke Martine, who suffers from the disease. Luke’s nurse, a Camden Catholic parent, introduced Luke to the Camden Catholic community, where Luke was adopted as mas-

cot by the field hockey team and is an inspiration to all. Young men who commit to raising a minimum of \$100 are eligible for a dispensation on the rules about facial hair and are free to grow beards until the end of Manuary. Luke and his family will accept the Manuary donation on behalf of the CCHS Foundation Jan. 30, the start of Catholic Schools Week. Manuary awards will be given for “best beard,” “most money raised” and “most pathetic attempt.”

Good Shepherd school is raising money for Kisses for Kyle. The Kisses for Kyle foundation was founded by the mother of Kyle Snyder, who lost his life to leukemia just before he turned two. Funds support families battling childhood cancer. Several grades at GSS donate their liturgy money to

the foundation in honor of a fellow student who is battling leukemia.

At Holy Spirit High School, the Lady Spartan field hockey team dedicated a fall game in support of Atlantic City Police Officer Josh Vadell just after he was shot in the line of duty. The girls sold special T-shirts and baked goods, lined the field in blue and wore special jerseys for the GO BLUE game. They raised \$640 for Officer Vadell and his young family.

### With Hands and Hearts

Freshmen from Saint Joseph High School in Hammonton recently spent a service day packing meals at Philabundance. Twenty-eight students packed approximately 800 boxes in less than three hours.

(continued on page S5)



**DAY OF SERVICE** — Dino Buffetta of Gloucester Catholic High School and Elena Bizzoco of Paul VI sort books at the Saint John of God Community Services' Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service on Jan. 16. Left, Maggie Thompson of Paul VI works with a student.

Photos by Colin Soper

## Packing meals, growing beards and other good works

(continued from page S4)

Students at Cape Trinity, Wildwood, Saint Rose of Lima, Haddon Heights and Saint Mary's, East Vineland, will spread cheer and thanks during Catholic Schools Week by making cards for nursing home residents, clergy, religious, police, fire and rescue staff, emergency teams, military personnel and veterans, nurses, crossing guards, cafeteria staff and school volunteers. Saint Mary's students will also create placemats for a soup kitchen, snack bags for firefighters, gift bags for nursing home residents, and care packages and toys for sheltered animals.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Berlin has a relationship with the Vineland Veteran's Memorial Home, where students spend time visiting, playing games and sharing their faith with residents. The 2017 House of Charity – Bishops Annual Appeal video features the Veteran's Home and OLMC students. Students will be collecting toiletries and books to create prize baskets in preparation for their next visit. Students are also making snack packs for clients of Angel of God ministries, which operates a food pantry/clothing shop in Pitman.

Saint Mary, Williamstown, has a unique way to help veterans and recycle paper at the same time. Students collect expired coupons for military families. Coupons are donated by school families



Students of Saint Mary School, Vineland, take part in a clothing drive for the Saint Vincent DePaul Food Pantry at the Parish of All Saints Parish in Millville in December 2016. Elementary and high schools participate in many types of service activities throughout the year.

and a small group of caring individuals in the community. With thousands of donated coupons, which students clip and sort based on known preferences, the program has helped 18 families in the past four years.

### In Solidarity

During Catholic Schools Week, eighth graders at Saint Peter in

Merchantville will participate in an interactive retreat that focuses on global solidarity. Saint Peter parishioners Paul and Chery Foti, who have extensive experience working with Cambodian missionaries in Uganda, will lead the retreat and address four areas of crisis in that country: hunger, education, water, and health.

The Fotis will offer a short presentation of their work in Africa, followed by reflection and a series of interactive activities designed to help the students understand the daily plight of people in Africa and design solutions to their problems. The retreat also features a simple lunch that is modeled on the diet of the African people they serve. Saint Peter School will host a fundraiser to support a Ugandan relief project initiated by the eighth grade students. The project will address one of the four areas of crisis.

Students throughout the diocese are active in pro-life clubs and events. For a recent open house, the newly formed pro-life club at Saint Joseph High School, Hammonton, made cupcakes to honor unborn babies who did not get to celebrate birthdays.

Approximately 125 diocesan high school students and chaperones are headed to Washington D.C. for the Jan. 27 March for Life. Some have joined other organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus and local campus ministry groups. All are marching to protect the most vulnerable lives.

Service to others is a way of life at South Jersey Catholic Schools. The events and activities described above offer a snapshot of Catholic schools making a difference in local communities and the world.



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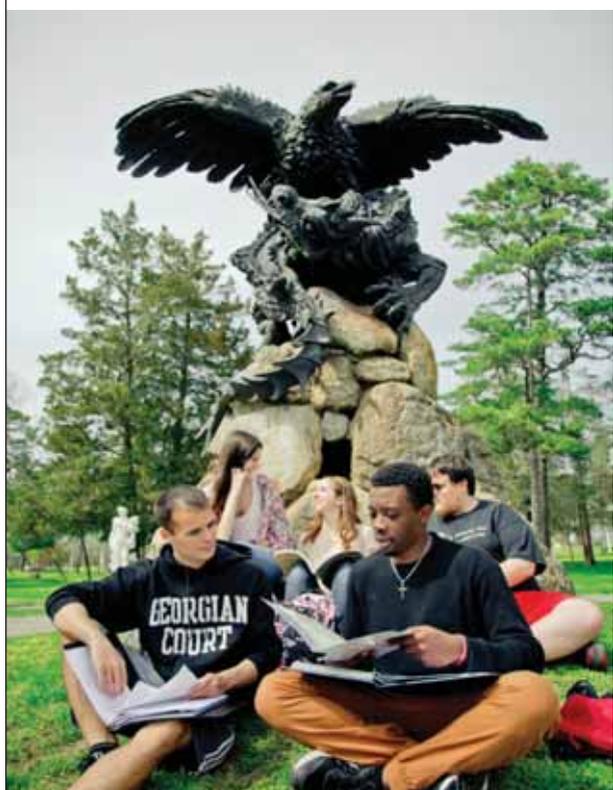
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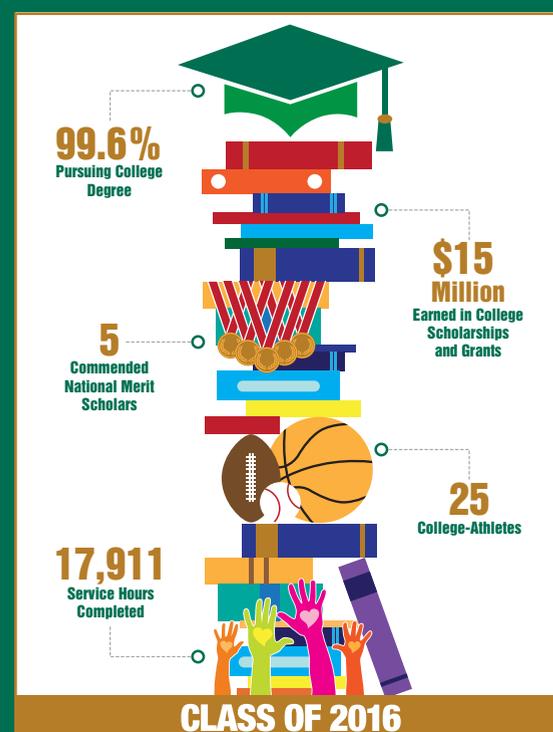
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NUMBER OF TIMES STUDENTS IN GRADES 3-8 CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR:

**TEN**

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**65%**

% of CATHOLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO ATTEND COLLEGE

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- February 18, 2017 (General Registration) 9am-Noon
- March 9, 2017 (Final Registration) 9am-Noon

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January 29 - February 5, 2016



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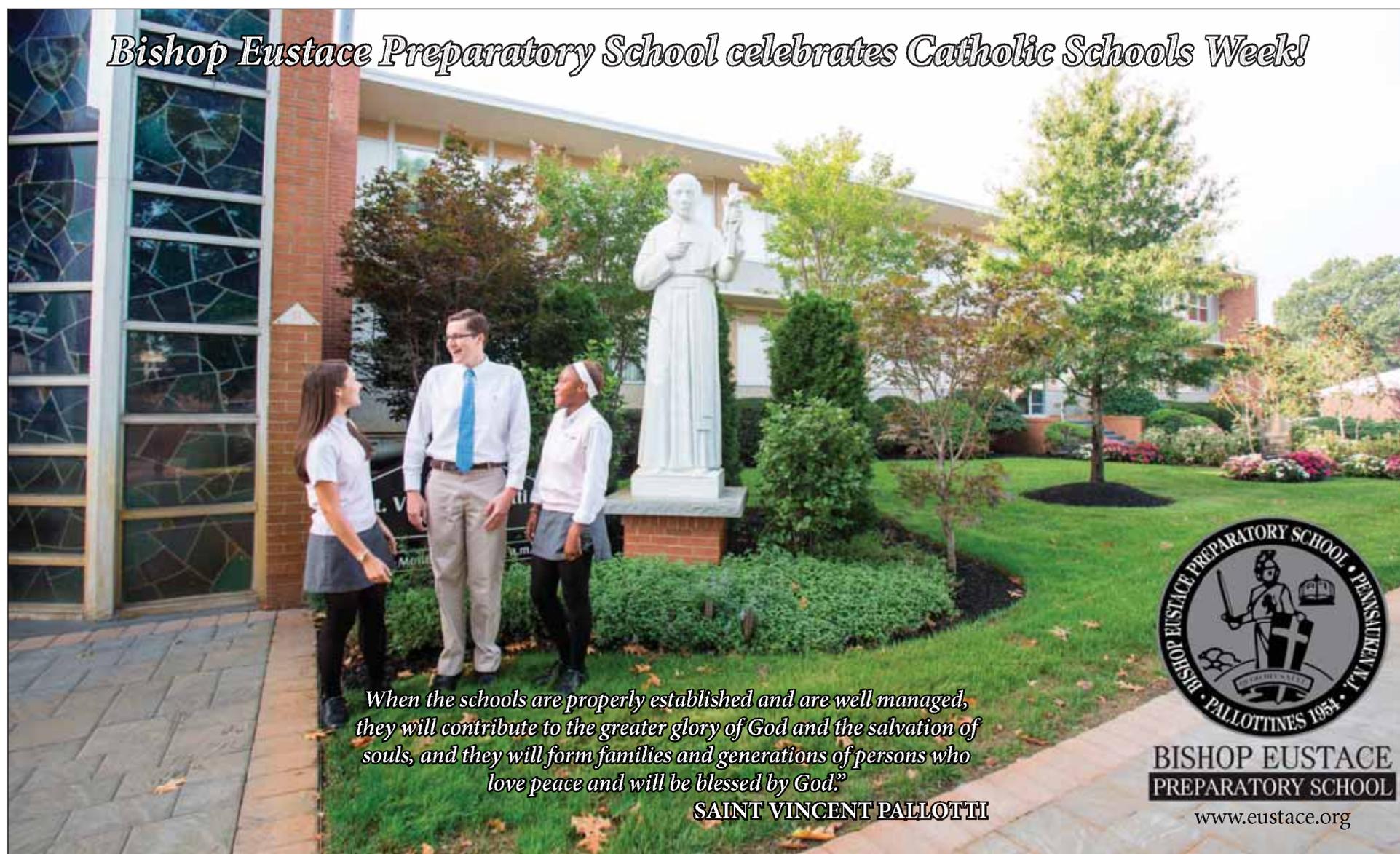
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# From cookies to computers: electives and clubs

By Mary Beth Peabody

**M**ike Klein is a volunteer teacher at Bishop McHugh Regional School in Cape May Court House. He is also 13 years old and a Bishop McHugh student. Mike teaches computer coding, which draws about 25 third through eighth graders who stay after school to build computer programs from blocks of pre-written code. Mike likens the blocks to Legos.

“These are the building blocks behind anything in computers,” he said. Mike approached principal Tom McGuire with the idea after taking an online coding course last summer.

Electives and clubs in South Jersey Catholic schools help students explore hobbies, talents, academic interests and life skills. They also give students like Mike a chance to lead and teach.

At Saint Teresa in Runnemede, student leaders Michael Alvarez and Lexi McNeill developed a club for Lego enthusiasts in first through sixth grades. They solicited donations of Legos, encouraged students to join and direct the meetings.

Scrabble and chess are classic pastimes—and skills—cultivated through after-school clubs at Saint Mary’s in Williamstown. The school also has a garden club, started in memory of a deceased parent volunteer. Club members in all grades care for the garden throughout the year.

Volunteers are at the heart of clubs and electives in many schools, for example Saint Michael the Archangel in Clayton and Good Shepherd in Collingswood. Good Shepherd relies on middle school teachers and community volunteers to lead courses like advanced art, culinary arts, understanding of self, sports, key-boarding, developing a student newspaper, current literature and its impact on society, and advanced writing.

At Saint Michael, 47 electives are taught by a combination of teachers, parents and community members. Some electives fulfill curriculum requirements in areas such as language, gym, art and technology, while others lead students to new and developing interests, and build skills, knowledge, and confidence.

Saint Michael seventh grader Autumn Zeak has mastered cookies, mac-n-cheese and camel eye (toasted bread with egg in the middle) in an elective cooking class. In mental math, led by principal Janice Bruni, Nicholas Rosa loves the challenge of solving equations quickly without paper, pencil or calculator. Access to film production opportunities will influence JT Klein’s decision about



Photo by James A. McBride

Students from different grades work together after school during a meeting of the Lego club at Saint Teresa School, Runnemede, on Jan. 24.

high school. Fortunately, the diocesan high schools nearest him have production facilities, courses and clubs to support his interest, which was sparked by script writing and film production electives.

Diocesan high schools also offer programs designed to help students discover hidden talents and new interests.

In 2016, Camden Catholic High School took part for the first time in NJ Envirothon, a state-wide competition that equips high school students with knowledge and skills to be young leaders and decision makers,

able to solve today’s concerns about natural resources. The competition required months of preparation and a night of sleep under the stars. Students listened to bird calls, identified freshwater macroinvertebrates as a way to determine a stream’s health, learned about soil types to determine best use of land, and measured trees to calculate potential lumber. Students also prepared a five-minute presentation about how to prevent the spread of an invasive species. Sophomores, David Nguyen, Jacob Weismer, Shane Costello, and Wei

Zhang, placed second among all new teams.

Technology investments at Paul VI in Haddonfield have yielded a new computer facility and software to support courses in computer aided drafting, graphic design, AP computer science, accounting, digital forensic science and app development. Several media courses are available as well, such as TV, film and documentary production and digital photography. New for the 2016-17 school year is a course in robotics, an advanced application of computer science. Shared robots emphasize the collaborative nature of computing. In order to design, build and improve their robots, students need to apply effective team practices and understand the different roles that are important for success.

Bill Watson, director of Curriculum for the Office of Catholic Schools, believes clubs and electives help support the diocese’s goals to educate the whole person.

“Our schools work hard to provide opportunities for students to become leaders, explore different career options, learn new skills and refine talents,” said Watson. “Some of our schools have really unique programs,” he added. Watson attributed the success in large part to time and expertise donated by parents and other community members and to the dedication of principals and teachers to education beyond the classroom.



Photo by Alan M. Dumoff

Mike Klein, 13, teaches computer coding after school to 25 other students at Bishop McHugh Regional School in Cape May Court House.

# Catholic schools should promote selling points

By Carol Zimmermann  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Catholic schools should face the challenge of enrollment decline by actively promoting what they do best: their high academic achievement and their role in forming leaders, said Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio.

“It’s important to do very good public relations,” said the bishop, who is chair of the Committee on Catholic Education of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and chair of the board of directors of the National Catholic Educational Association.

The bishop is a Camden native and a graduate of Camden Catholic High School, Cherry Hill.

He has stressed this urgency in meetings around the country with educators and was able to quickly rattle off Catholic school accomplishments in a Jan. 19 interview with Catholic News Service, pointing out that Catholic schools continue to score higher in national assessment tests and Catholic high schools have a 99 percent graduation rate. He also said there

is plenty of data showing that Catholic schools outperform their public school counterparts on test scores and academics.

But the bishop also knows the sobering statistics on Catholic school closings and enrollment decline. Figures released by the NCEA show 1,648 Catholic school closings or consolidations from 2005-15 with 336 school openings and during that time period the number of students declined by almost 20 percent.

The growing decrease in Catholic school enrollment — which Bishop Murry attributes to shifting demographics, tuition costs and changes in faith practice — is something he thinks should be faced head on.

Last fall, in a keynote address at the NCEA Catholic Leadership Summit in Indianapolis, he told diocesan leaders that the overall national enrollment decline of Catholic schools is a responsibility for everyone to take up: “the entire church and society at large.”

“Catholic schools are a gift to the nation and need us all to work together for their growth, both through local



BISHOP GEORGE V. MURRY

action in our particular schools and at the national level across the country. And there is much that we, as professional educators, teachers, principals, staff, superintendents, pastors and bishops, can do and indeed are doing to grow enrollment in our Catholic schools,” he added.

He told CNS that years ago, Catholic school leaders went through a period of anxiety that they were not putting enough emphasis on their Catholic identity. Although that always deserves attention, he said, he thinks many schools should focus on emphasizing their successes and why

parents should consider sending their children there.

Along that line, he said church leaders are working to promote efforts to make Catholic schools more affordable and he pointed out that 27 states and the District of Columbia have legislation providing financial assistance to parents who choose private or faith-based schools.

He also said church leaders are being more intentional in their outreach to welcome Latino students while also remaining committed to African-American students in the inner city.

“So many students, myself included, got opportunities from Catholic schools. It is important we remain in our cities,” he said.

“We have to reach out those who’ve drifted away and instill in them importance of training their children in what the faith is about,” he told CNS.

He said Catholic school teachers are frequently reminded in retreats and diocesan programs that they are in a missionary role to help students develop their mind and specific skills but they also need to help students develop a relationship with God.

# Catholic schools united by a common mission

By Mary Beth Peabody

South Jersey Catholic Schools are united by a common mission: to educate and inspire young minds spiritually, academically and in service to others. While each school has a distinct culture and personality, there are opportunities for students join forces and share resources, demonstrating the power of shared goals and values.

## CCHS and JP II girls talk leadership and self-esteem

Camden Catholic High School’s motto is “College Starts Here.” To help students prepare for college and a 21st century career, the school has created the Leadership Academy, a collection of courses, retreats and programs designed to help students reach their potential.

Nine miles south, a group of sixth grade girls are finding their voices in “Girl Power: Developing the Leader in You,” a new elective at Saint John Paul II in Stratford. A recent session of Girl Power brought the two groups together, with Camden Catholic seniors Maura Gallagher and Sarah Robbins as guest speakers.

“The high school girls are just at that next level, said Christine Willard, advancement director at Saint John Paul II and moderator of Girl Power. “[Our] girls look up to them, but they can also imagine being where the older girls are.”

Camden Catholic advancement director Kate Bieg agrees. “It’s a great model for middle schoolers to see and think, ‘Wow, that could be me in a few years.’” Bieg and Willard coordinated to bring the two schools together.

Gallagher and Robbins are not new to the world of sixth grade girls. They lead Irish Synergy, a leadership seminar for middle school girls sponsored by Camden Catholic each October as part of the Leadership Academy. They also remember sixth grade.

“I would have loved a program like this,” said Robbins, referring to her own middle school years. She acknowledged that many “unfortunate events” can happen during those years, adding to girls’ insecurity. Robbins believes sixth grade is the perfect time to help girls develop a sense of empowerment and awareness of their own abilities.

The high school duo began with a formal presentation and asked the girls what leadership means to them. Through that discussion and Gallagher’s personal story, the sixth graders began to share their views and feelings, shifting from presentation to conversation.

The combined group talked about self-esteem and how it adds to being a leader.

They shared common stories about being told they couldn’t do certain

things or play certain games because they were girls — and not being taught to believe otherwise. In the context of faith, they explored skills and concepts designed to avoid stereotypes and build confidence.

“You have to be confident to shed the light of Christ,” said Robbins.

“Hopefully, the girls saw that... [and] appreciate all God has given to us,” added Gallagher.

Faith is integral to Girl Power. By design, the course combines leadership with service. At the outset, the girls chose refugees as their area of focus and invited a speaker from Catholic Charities to help them understand the challenges refugees face. The girls then created work groups to plan their project, made posters, spoke in every classroom to solicit school-wide support, and have been collecting and sorting donations for refugee families in South Jersey.

Early February will mark the start of a new quarter and the end of the inaugural session of Girl Power. The eight girls who pioneered the elective have a lot to show for their time in the class, not the least of which are several laundry baskets filled with toiletries, blankets and kitchen items for local refugees. As they give those items away, they will store new-found resolve: “Don’t be afraid of what others think,” and “don’t be told it can’t be done.”

## CAB Returns

Musicians, singers, actors and artists will have a chance to gather at Saint Mary, East Vineland for the second annual CAB (Creative Arts and Beyond) Fair on May 16.

Hosted by Saint Mary’s, the fair debuted in 2016, giving South Jersey Catholic school students a chance to showcase their talents and receive feedback and encouragement from professionals.

Saint Mary’s art teachers, Grace Hoffner and Loren Train, developed the CAB program last year in an effort to promote enrichment programs throughout South Jersey Catholic schools.

In its first year, students from Assumption in Galloway, Saint John Paul II in Stratford, Saint Michael the Archangel in Clayton and Saint Anthony of Padua in Camden accepted Saint Mary’s invitation and joined the host school to dance, sing, perform monologues and show scenes, and display original artwork

“Last year’s event was such a great success that other schools jumped on board to a part of a CAB Collaborative Committee in order to share in the planning,” said Hoffner, adding that Saint Joseph High School, Hammonton and Saint Michael are slated to be part of the committee. “We are anxious to have more of the diocesan schools join this coming May.”

# Pastors and their parish elementary schools

Since 2014, 16 pastors from the Diocese of Camden have attended the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) School Pastors' Institute (SPI), a leadership forum held at the University of Notre Dame for pastors responsible for a Catholic elementary school. The program explores the role of pastors in schools and promotes collaboration and adherence to best practices.

Father Robert Sinatra, pastor at Saint Padre Pio Parish in East Vineland, said his experience at SPI "showed the essential nature of Catholic education," citing statistics that show the majority of individuals who practice their faith attended Catholic school.

"The future of the church depends on the growth and health of [Catholic] schools. If we want the church to thrive, there is nothing more important," he said.

Faither Sinatra believes his own formation in Catholic school is integral to his vocation and life as a Catholic. As a pastor with responsibility for Saint Mary School in East Vineland, he wants to share that foundation with others.

"Next to the sacraments, it's the most important thing I do as a pastor," he said.



Photo by Alan M. Dumoff

Father Robert Sinatra, pastor at Saint Padre Pio Parish in East Vineland, celebrates a school Mass on Dec. 7, 2016.

## Pastors' Institute Attendees

Msgr. John Burton, Christ the Good Shepherd Parish, Vineland, Bishop Schad School

Father E. Joseph Byerley, Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Haddon Heights, Saint Rose of Lima School

Father Mark R. Cavagnaro, Saint

Brendan the Navigator Parish, Avalon, Bishop McHugh School

Father Nicholas Dudo, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Galloway, Assumption School

Father Joseph Ganiel, Holy Child Parish, Runnemede, Saint Teresa School

Father David Grover, Saint Clare of Assisi Parish, Swedesboro, Guardian Angels School

Father Edward Heintzelman, Saint Vincent de Paul Parish, Mays Landing, Saint Vincent de Paul School

Father Jaime Hostios, Saint Joseph Pro-Cathedral Parish, Camden, Camden Partnership Schools

Father Hugh Macsherry, OFM, Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, Camden, Camden Partnership Schools

Father Anthony Manuppella, Saint Gianna Beretta Molla Parish, Northfield, Saint Vincent de Paul School

Father Jaromir Michalak, Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, Clayton, Saint Michael the Archangel School

Father Edward Namiotka, Saint Joseph Parish, Somers Point, Saint Joseph School

Father Thomas Newton, Christ Our Light Parish, Cherry Hill, Resurrection School

Father Joseph Pham, Infant Jesus Parish, Woodbury, Saint Margaret School

Father Robert Sinatra, Saint Padre Pio Parish, Vineland, Saint Mary School

Father Joseph T. Szolack, Our Lady of Hope Parish, Blackwood, Our Lady of Hope School

## The beginnings of the Catholic school system in America

By Father Jason Rocks

When Father John Neumann arrived in Philadelphia, he found many children, especially boys, out on the streets. Although some would have been working, most of these children were not engaged in any productive activity. Immediately, Father John knew this was not good. Father John realized that our young country needed well-educated citizens if it were to prosper; that the democracy upon which our country is based needed leaders who would know how to add and to subtract, to read and to write, along with a general knowledge of science and history.

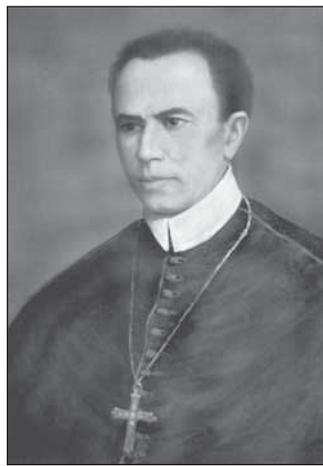
Father John further understood that such a basic knowledge would not be enough. The future leaders of the country, as well as its citizens, would also need moral guidance, so to be able to establish justice, allowing for peace within the nation. Knowing that our country was founded upon Christian principles, such a moral education would need to be grounded in the faith of the Apostles, the faith of the Catholic Church. For this reason, Father John helped to organize the Catholic School system.

These Catholic Schools would be places where students would learn the

fundamentals of reading, math, science and history. Yet, this curriculum would be guided by the teachings of the faith, leading the student to a deeper faith. Such a faith leads to living a life of hope and charity. This education was to lead the student to live a virtuous life, judging all things by the truth; the truth knowable by reason, further enlightened by faith. Simply put, the Catholic education was

to lead the student to see and judge all things in the light of God's plan for creation, including our redemption and sanctification.

Catholic schools still provide this same service today. Catholic schools are places where the faith is taught and lived along with the other subjects necessary to live well in our nation, as well as in the world. Too often we can neglect this aspect. When promoting Catholic schools we tend to speak of all the various activities and wonderful opportunities they provide the students. We need to promote too that our Catholic schools are places where the faith is taught. That Catholic schools



SAINT JOHN NEUMANN

help to shape their students into being good moral upright people. People who will help shape the future of our nation.

The morality taught in the Catholic schools is grounded in the understanding that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. That human beings are good and called to be God-like. Such a morality teaches that each human person

is good and that this inherent goodness is to be respected, promoted and protected. Catholic schools not only teach about justice and the evils of greed, but also the respect for life and human sexuality, while promoting the importance of marriage and family, the very foundation of society.

Respecting the goodness inherent in others, as well as our own, demands virtuous living. The virtues help us to know and live by the truth, that is the reality in which we have been created. The so called intellectual virtues of wisdom, understanding and knowledge help us to reason properly, allowing us to make proper judgements. The moral

virtues, such as prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice help us to act in accordance with the truth we have come to know through proper, truthful reasoning. When these virtues are enlightened by faith, enlivened by charity and strengthened by hope, we can truly love our neighbor, while giving good example even as some may mock us for not being like the rest of society.

We live in an age of competing ideologies and opinions, most of which diminish the dignity of the human person. All these ideologies compete for our adherence. This is not new. Saint Paul cautions us not to be "tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming. Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ" (Eph. 4:14-15).

Our Catholic schools can be places of steady, truthful learning forming its students to be moral upright citizens, from whom will come leaders who will be able to assist our nation to truly prosper.

*Father Jason Rocks is currently in Rome at the Pontifical North American College for advanced studies.*

# Catholic schools plant seeds for vocations by example

## From staff and wire reports

WASHINGTON — Although priests and women religious say a variety of reasons led them to pursue their vocation, one thing many of them have in common is that they went to a Catholic school.

Attending Catholic school certainly isn't a magic bullet that leads to a vocation but for some it proved that a religious vocation was not only a possibility but also looked appealing because of the example of priests and women religious they saw on a regular basis.

Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, chair of the USCCB Committee on Catholic Education and chair of the board of directors for the National Catholic Educational Association, said the example of priests in the Diocese of Camden who taught him were key to his vocation. The Catholic school experience at Saint Bartholomew, Camden, also led him, as a Methodist, to join the Catholic Church as a fifth grader.

The bishop also attended Camden Catholic High School in Cherry Hill. He was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1979, and said he wanted to be like his parish priest and the priests who taught at his high school. "I saw them as happy people — people we could put our trust in; day after day at the school or the parish, they were helping us and guiding us," he said.

His experience confirms a 2014 study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate based at Georgetown University that linked Catholic schools to vocations. The report: "Catholic Schools in the United States in the 21st Century: Importance in Church Life, Challenges and Opportunities," points out that half or more of new priests and brothers attended Catholic primary schools as did 41 percent of new women religious and 45 percent of young lay ministers.

"If fewer and fewer Catholics enroll in Catholic schools, it will become ever more challenging for the Catholic Church to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life," the report said.



Bishop James Checchio of Metuchen poses with students of Good Shepherd School, Collingswood, after saying Mass for them at Saint John Church Dec. 19, 2016. The bishop graduated from Saint John School.

**"As a product of Catholic schools, I know the influence they had on my own growth in faith."**

Father Michael Romano, vocation director,  
Diocese of Camden

Bishop James Checchio of Metuchen has positive memories of his Catholic school experience, which included Saint John School in Collingswood (now Good Shepherd) and Paul VI High School in Haddonfield.

Speaking after being named a bishop in March 2016, he said, "In all those years of Catholic education, I had priests, sisters and teachers who nourished and encouraged me.

"As a matter of fact, at Saint John's I often heard our good and generous Mercy Sisters speak loving-

ly of their community and mother-house," he said.

Father Michael Romano, vocation director for the Diocese of Camden, said that both he and many current seminarians had positive Catholic school experiences.

"As a product of Catholic schools, I know the influence they had on my own growth in faith," he said. "The priests and women religious I encountered as teachers and administrators witnessed to their vocations in a joy filled way. They had a tremendous impact on my coming to realize a call to the priesthood.

"While the number of priests and religious in our schools has diminished, the influence our schools have on vocations continues. Of our current seminarians, over two-thirds attended one of our schools," he added.

Dominican Sister John Mary Fleming, a member of the Dominicans' Saint Cecilia Congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, is the executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. She is convinced she wouldn't be a sister had it not been for the example of the women religious who taught at her school, Providence High School in New Lenox, Illinois, which was a Joliet diocesan school at the time and is now run by the Augustinian order.

The teachers there in the 1980s came from five to seven women's orders and men's congregations along with diocesan priests. Their example — of living their faith and being happy — "debunked the myth that living a faith-filled life was not a happy thing," she told Catholic News Service.

## Paul VI High School to honor graduates with religious vocations

On the feast of Candlemas, Feb. 2 at Paul VI High School, Haddonfield, Father John Rossi, assisted by student representatives, will bless all the candles to be used throughout the year in the chapel and during all school liturgies.

The school also will recognize and

thank those Paul VI alums "who have said yes to God to do the very important work of bringing God's Light to the world through their vocations":

Msgr. Dominic Bottino, '70  
Father Timothy Byerley, '72

Sister Barbara Bradley, OCD '73  
Deacon Peter Powell, '74  
Sister Donna Cicalese, SSJ, '77  
Father Christopher Bakey, '79  
Sister Alicia Perna, SSJ, '79  
Father Robert Hughes, '81  
Father E. Joseph Byerley, '82  
Father Brian Frain, SJ, '82

Bishop James Checchio, '84  
Sister Leslie Draper, M.P.F., '93  
Father Robert Yetman, '96  
Father Christopher Markellos, '97  
Father Michael Romano, '99  
Sister Kathleen Gilbert, OCD '03  
Seminarian Peter Gallagher, '12  
Seminarian Henry Laigaie, '12

# Secrets of the small but mighty schools

By Mary Beth Peabody

South Jersey Catholic Schools come in many shapes and sizes – from an intimate 139 students to a bustling 1,100. Not including preschoolers, South Jersey Catholic elementary schools range from 130 to 480. But size alone does not define success. Principals from four “small but mighty” diocesan elementary schools recently shared some of the reasons their schools thrive.

## Flexibility and Targeted Academics

Principals see the smaller size as a distinct advantage for creative staffing and meeting students’ academic needs.

Cape Trinity’s Donna DiPasquale was ready to give up the full-time responsibility of eighth grade home-room and multiple subjects. Instead of retiring, she moved to part-time status and teaches her favorite subject, English, to all seventh and eighth graders.

“Her ability is phenomenal,” said school principal, Sister Sheila Murphy SSJ, “especially with literature and writing. She raises students up, gets them to reach beyond [grade level].”

Since there are now two English classes in both seventh and eighth grades, DiPasquale’s class size has been cut in half. The smaller class size makes it easier for DiPasquale to work with students who may need extra help.

DiPasquale teaches all her classes in the morning, which leaves her afternoons free. The part-time salary helps the school manage costs, and students benefit from an outstanding teacher. The arrangement has worked so well the school now has part-time math and language arts teachers in fifth and sixth grades, allowing for smaller class sizes and more focused instruction. The school was able to staff an additional part-time teacher to help students with reading comprehension.

Sister Nancy Kindelan IHM, principal at Saint Teresa School in Runnemede, believes the smaller school size is a distinct advantage for students academically.

“Smaller classes mean a greater opportunity to work one on one with students,” she said, citing a safer, more comfortable environment and the opportunity to establish a better rapport with students and parents.

At Good Shepherd School in Collingswood, principal Don Garecht said, “[Our] students get many opportunities to work one on one with an instructor. I have two teachers I free up one period daily to [provide] extra help, organizational skills and homework help.”



Photos by James A. McBride

Sister Jerilyn Einstein FMIJ, principal at Guardian Angels School, is pictured with students and Father David Grover, pastor of Saint Clare of Assisi Parish, Swedesboro. Below, Saint Teresa School in Runnemede.



“Every faculty and staff member knows every student by name. We are a family.”

Sister Nancy Kindelan IHM, principal,  
Saint Teresa School, Runnemede

A former high school math teacher, Garecht also loves being able to teach seventh and eighth grade math, something he probably could not do in a larger school.

“I do this to keep my hand in teaching. I also want our students in the middle school to receive a high quality math education.” Garecht said, noting that his seventh grade pre-algebra and eighth grade algebra classes are actual courses taught in high school. Garecht

said his math students enter high school well prepared.

## Dedicated Faculty and Staff

Sister Jerilyn Einstein FMIJ, principal at Guardian Angels School, splits her time between two campuses (Gibbstown, Pre-K-third grade; Paulsboro, fourth-eighth grades).

“I am very blessed to have a wonderful staff who never fail to give their ‘all’ and even more,” said Sister

Jerilyn, adding that she never has to worry when she is moving between buildings.

Sister Nancy feels equally blessed. “Every faculty and staff member knows every student by name. We are a family,” she said.

Sister Nancy also praised the Saint Teresa faculty for being life-long learners. “They willingly choose to participate in professional development. When asked to try new things, they share ideas so enthusiasm grows,” she said.

Garecht summed it up when he said, “At GSS, we thrive on being a family.”

All four principals described their teacher/staff cohorts as close-knit, caring, family-like communities and attributed those qualities to their smaller size.

## Pastoral Support and Catholic Identity

The most successful schools are those with strong pastor and parishioner relationships. The four profiled schools all feel supported by a host parish and pastor, which helps enhance Catholic identity in the schools. Guardian Angels students participate as a group in Sunday liturgies twice a month. In turn parishioners — even those without children in the school — attend school events, such as plays and talent shows.

“Parishioners love to see our children ‘in action’ and always comment on how well behaved and polite they are,” said Sister Jerilyn like a proud mother. She also acknowledged the unending support of pastor Father Dave Grover, whom she considers a partner in running the school.

Although she is in her first year at Saint Teresa, Sister Nancy is developing a similar relationship with Holy Child pastor, Father Joseph Ganiel.

“Father Joe is very present to the school community... celebrating weekly Mass, teaching, visiting classes, working on projects around school and giving a high five to every student after Friday Mass.”

When an eighth grader was recently asked what makes Saint Teresa school special, her immediate reply was Mass on Friday, and she acknowledged that a lot of schools do not have a church nearby.

Like most Catholic schools, the “small but mighty” schools operate on a tight budget that must be meticulously managed. They succeed by creating supportive, faith-filled communities of teachers, parishes and families. The principals expressed pride in their schools — as Sister Nancy described it, heart and soul — and gratitude for the many blessings that keep the schools vibrant.