



Connection



*Dear Families and Friends
of St. Clare Catholic School,*

Greetings! Welcome to St. Clare Catholic School, home of the Knights! Our school is the largest in the Belleville Diocese, hosting more than 420 students from Preschool through 8th grade. We are spiritually led by Msgr. William Hitpas and Fr. Jim Deiters, and we are blessed to have 26 dedicated, certified teachers, 10 committed staff members, and 2 devoted administrators. The 2022–2023 school year is one of celebration and growth, and we hope our local community will get to “Know Us by Our Love,” our current schoolwide theme.



Our new Director of Campus Ministry, Mrs. Sarah Ayran, is already a complement to our school, supporting teachers, students, families, and parishes in their faith journey and staying true to our mission—to teach our children to know, love, and serve God and prepare them to be responsible members of the world community. Catholic identity is a keystone for the evangelizing mission of all Catholic education communities. It is expressed in structures and processes; in curriculum and the learning environment; in the formation of staff to support, teach, and lead; in strategic planning and community culture; in the well-being of students; and in the engagement of parents, parishes, and the wider community.

This school year we have also added to our fine arts and extracurricular programs for students and implemented a new Challenge class and an Honors English/Literature block for 8th graders. These offerings are meant to broaden opportunities for participation, education, and development for students at all grade levels. Our

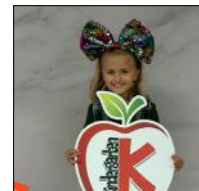
dedicated teachers and volunteers are collaborating with our students to promote and produce effective programs! This year we are proud to offer the following:

- Band
- Bricks4Kidz
- Chess
- Drama
- Flying Fish Running Club
- Garden Club
- Mad Science
- Photography Club
- Safety Patrol
- Scouts
- St. Clare Innovator Club
- St. Clare School Choir
- St. Vincent de Paul
- School Newspaper/Magazine
- Student Council
- Tech Club
- Yearbook

Though I am proud of our many added programs, I would be remiss not to acknowledge our faculty and staff who constantly strive for the advancement, safety, and well-being of each student. They choose to be team members in a Catholic school because they consider their profession a mission, not just a job. Our goal at St. Clare Catholic School is to build for the future. This bright future does not just happen; we plan it, build it, and welcome it. Our foundations are threefold: We build on faith, academic excellence, and tradition. We believe these pillars will set a strong foundation in molding our students while paying dividends that will last a lifetime.

We will be hosting an Open House on January 29, 2023, and I encourage all potential families, grandparents, and alumni to stop by and tour St. Clare School to understand how we are able to provide a unique Catholic learning experience for students.

*Blessings and Sunshine,
Mrs. Monica Ybarra*



Focus on Faith



New this year, our 8th graders had the opportunity to participate in an all-day retreat at Camp Ondessonk. Students participated in faith- and spiritual-based activities, group challenges, adventures, meditations, and group discussions. Fr. Thomas Lugge not only attended the retreat but also presided over the concluding Mass. Camp Ondessonk's spiritual retreats foster stronger relationships with God, His creation, and other people while promoting personal growth, faith, and fellowship.



One of St. Clare Catholic School's favorite traditions is our annual Pet Blessing, which helps us remember Saint Francis of Assisi's love for all creatures. Families bring animals of all kinds, from dogs and cats to hamsters and horses, to school for this special ceremony presided over by Deacon Dennis Vander Ven and our 5th graders.

The love we give to our pets—and receive from them—can draw us more deeply into the larger circle of life and into the wonder of our common relationship with our Creator.



Focus on Faith

For many reasons, Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. I enjoy the process of cooking a meal and preparing my home to host family and friends. I spend a lot of time looking up new recipes and gathering familiar family ones. Each of my sons has a favorite dish that he prepares, and each looks forward to making his own contribution to our feast. Thanksgiving also has special significance in our family because my grandparents got married that day and both my parents and my husband and I got engaged then. So every year we remember these precious moments in our family's history in addition to celebrating the regular holiday.

Mass, specifically Sunday Mass, is the same concept. Eucharist comes from the Greek word eucharistia, which means "thanksgiving," so truly the Mass is a special Thanksgiving meal. Just as we prepare a meal, we should also spend time preparing to celebrate Mass. For example, we are encouraged to read and think about the Sunday readings before attending Mass and ready our souls by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

At many family meals we tell stories. Some are recent events in our lives, some are well-known stories that never get old. At Mass we hear the stories of our faith. The atmosphere of the Church can also help us recall our history of faith. The holy water helps us remember our baptism, and our favorite songs stir our souls when we hear them. Even the language of the Mass is familiar to Catholics. One of my cousins used to travel to Europe for work and still attended Sunday Mass while overseas because the language of the Mass, even though it was in a foreign tongue, was a comforting reminder of home.



Many times I go to my parents' house on Tuesday evenings to eat dinner with them while my youngest is at gymnastics. I will probably do this on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving as well, but just because I had dinner with my parents two days before doesn't mean I'll skip Thanksgiving dinner. Is anything really different between these two meals? I offer thanks at both for the food and for the people I'm eating with, and both meals nourish my body. In the most basic sense, these two meals are the same, but I would never skip Thanksgiving dinner because I just had dinner with the same people two days before.



The same comparison can be made between Sunday Masses and weekday Masses. At their core, these Masses are the same: Jesus is present, we receive Him in the Eucharist, and we are sent out into the world. However, Sunday Mass has a different meaning and feel to it than a weekday Mass, just as a Thanksgiving meal differs from a Tuesday evening meal. Sunday Mass calls us to the mystery of faith in a deeper way than a weekday Mass does. Although it may seem as if Sunday Mass and weekday Mass are the same thing, take a moment to recall that the Eucharist is a Thanksgiving meal and that we should never miss the opportunity to celebrate a special meal with those who are closest to us.



- Sarah Ayran
Director of Campus Ministry



School Improvements

Students and faculty returned from summer break to discover that several areas of the school had been spiffed up while they were gone. Some of the most noticeable improvements were found in the cafeteria, starting with longer windows that allow more natural light to fill the room. The cafeteria walls were also refreshed with new paint, and new baseboards and ceiling tiles were added to create a warmer look and feel. A new food warmer, freezer, and dishwasher—plus a complete deep clean—were all welcome complements to the project.



The STEM lab was also a busy area over the break. Students returned to find an enhanced space for projects, encouraging them to use their creativity and giving them a great opportunity to express their ideas. The Lego wall was a huge success, along with other STEM supplies such as Makey Makey circuits, SNAP circuits, robot building, and KNEX. The 3D printer has received lots of student attention, with 7th graders excited to start new projects and younger grades looking forward to their own opportunities. Lastly, the marble runs and donated Hot Wheels tracks have been a hit. All of these STEM-related improvements have quickly proven popular, with many students commenting about how cool the new room is.

The art room also underwent a summertime transformation. New tables and chairs were added to help with classroom flow, the interior was repainted, and the cabinets were refinished. The students have been enjoying the new seating layout, including new overhead mobiles that help them identify their tables.

Gift Giving Campaign

For more than 150 years, St. Clare Catholic School has guided young Knights on a journey rooted in academic excellence, a strong Catholic education, and a Christ-centered environment. 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 Catholic School Gift Giving Campaign is essential for helping maintain existing school activities and programs not fully funded by tuition. Each year, the tuition that families pay covers only about 55 percent of the actual cost of a child's education. Another 10 percent comes from school fundraisers, with the remaining 35 percent covered by our three supporting parishes. 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.

Your ongoing 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.

Please visit <https://givebutter.com/giftgiving2022> to donate today. Or you can mail your contribution to:

St. Clare Catholic School
214 W. 3rd Street
O'Fallon, IL 62269



Gift Giving Donor List

PLATINUM MAJOR DONORS

(\$3,000 and over)

Anonymous

Mr. & Mrs. Duane & Patti Daniels

Russell and Eleanor Thoman Charitable Trust

O'Fallon Knights of Columbus

Council No. 4239

GOLD MAJOR DONORS

(\$1,000 and over)

Bank of O'Fallon

Mr. & Mrs. Andrew & Joanne Blassie

Dr. & Dr. James & Ellen Bollmeier

Davidson Foundation

Mr. & Mrs. Clinton & Lisa Rybak

Mr. Jim Thoman

Mr. & Mrs. Rick & Patti Thoman

Mr. & Mrs. Russell & Patty Thoman, Jr.

Wilke Family Fund

SILVER MAJOR DONORS

(\$500 and over)

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Mr. & Mrs. Michael & Sheryl Bringas

Mr. & Mrs. Aaron & Marisa Byram

Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Margaret Eros

Dr. & Mrs. Kevin & Cathi Ponciroli

Mr. & Mrs. David & Karlynn Slaydon

MAJOR DONORS

(\$300 and over)

Mr. & Mrs. Steve & Renee Ignatz, Jr.

FRIENDS

Anonymous

Mr. & Mrs. Michael & Mary Anne

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Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey & Jill Dorries

Ms. Jennifer Dunker

Mr. & Mrs. Dennis & Barbara Furdek

Ms. Ann Harvilla

Mr. & Mrs. Leonard & Carolyn Johnson

Ms. Judith Lemansky

Mr. & Mrs. Glenn & Cynthia Mackey

Mrs. Clarice McKay

Ms. Arlene Pelak

Mr. & Mrs. Rick & Terry Plomedahl

Lt. Col James Lee Smith & Pok Sun Smith

Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Monica Vecera

Ms. Debra Wierciak

Mr. David Witter

Ms. Rita A. Zinn

MATCHING GIFTS

PNC Bank, N.A.

Elevance Health

EMPOWER ILLINOIS

(\$3,000 and over)

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Anonymous

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph & Heather Ertel

Mr. & Mrs. Justen & Nicole Holland-Hong

Schreiber Family Match

EMPOWER ILLINOIS

(\$1,000 and over)

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Mr. Edward Seipp

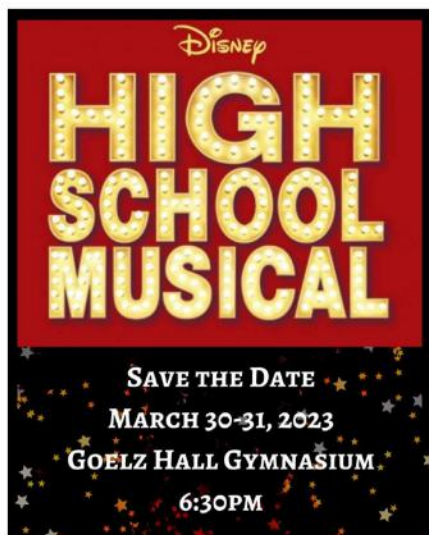
Mr. James Thoman

Mr. & Mrs. Russell & Patty Thoman, Jr.

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.

Additionally, we are working to recognize alumni for their continued support by including their last year of attendance or graduation. If you are alumni, please let us know your graduation year.

Specials



Mrs. Patti Curtright has joined us as our new Band Director. She comes to St. Clare with more than 20 years of experience teaching general music, band instruments, and handbells. Under her direction, the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in Concert Band have resumed weekly rehearsals as well as sectionals. Additionally, the 13 new Beginning Band students in 4th and 5th grades have started learning how to play their chosen instruments and read music. New this year, members of both bands have the opportunity to take private lessons with OTHS students, which gives them the chance to practice more and receive extra guidance on how to play their instruments. The students have been very excited to learn from these talented young teachers.

Our older band members had their first performances early in the school year as part of feeder events at OTHS and Mater Dei. They played the Star-Spangled Banner and school song. Both bands will give their first concert at St. Clare in November. We're excited to feature a xylophone ensemble at this performance.

Empower Illinois Scholarships

Since the inception of Empower Illinois in 2018, the program has raised more than \$100 million to help expand quality education options for low-income and working-class families by partnering with 92 percent of the state's recognized private schools, including St. Clare Catholic School. Empower Illinois supports schools in their tax credit scholarship fundraising efforts, assists students and their families through the awards process, and leads advocacy efforts to support and expand the Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

We're thrilled to share that we have received the greatest number of Empower Illinois applications, raised the most donations, and awarded more scholarships than any other participating school. For the 2022–2023 school year, we raised \$56,827.50, which allowed us to provide a scholarship for all 20 students on our list. Visit <https://Donations.Empower-Illinois.org/Donations> to learn how you can contribute to Empower Illinois on behalf of our young Knights.



1. Establish a MyTax Illinois Account

To earn a state tax credit on your gift, you must first create a MyTax Illinois account with the Illinois Department of Revenue.

- Visit MyTax.Illinois.gov
- Click on: **INDIVIDUALS** (blue button on the left)
- Select: **Request a Letter ID** (under Miscellaneous)
- Enter social security number and one of the following: IL drivers license number, state ID number, IL-PIN, most recent AGI
- Within 10 days, a letter ID will arrive via U.S. mail. This is needed to proceed to step 2.

Use your letter ID to activate your MyTax Illinois account by visiting MyTax.Illinois.gov and clicking "Sign Up" and following the prompts.

If you already have a MyTax Illinois account, you can skip to step 2.

2. Reserve Your State Tax Credit

Visit MyTax.Illinois.Gov to can reserve your state tax credit.

- Login to your MyTax Illinois account
- Click on: **INDIVIDUAL** (blue button on the left)
- Under "I Want To" (far right) click on: **Contribute to Invest in Kids**
- Check: **Invest in Kids Region** and select the region and **SGO** (Empower Illinois) where you will make your gift.

Once you reserve your tax credit, you have 60 days or until December 31, whichever comes first, to make your donation.

REMINDERS

- Make sure the names on your CAC and the account used for your donation match.
- **Donations made with trusts are not allowed to be designated**, per the Invest in Kids Act. Corporate donors can only designate to a region.

3. Retrieve Your Contribution Authorization Certificate

- Log out and log back in to your **MyTax Illinois** account
- Click on: **View More Account Options**
- Click on: **Letters**
- Click on: **Invest in Kids Contribution Application**
- This is your CAC. Save it to your computer. You will need it for step 4.

REMINDERS

- If you have a pop up blocker installed, allow pop ups from MyTax.Illinois.gov when accessing your CAC.

4. Donate To Your Favorite School With Empower Illinois

Once you have your CAC, you can make your donation to your favorite school. A full list of participating schools can be found on our website under the **Partner** tab.

- Go to: Donations.EmpowerIllinois.org/Donations
- Click on: **I Have My Certificate**
- Complete the Empower Illinois Donor Wizard

REMINDERS

- You can donate via credit card, ACH, check, or stocks/bonds and designate your gift. **Donations made with a trust cannot be designated**. Corporate donors can only designate to a region.

Looking for help with your donation? Our team is happy to assist you. Call us at 800-616-7606 or email us at donors@empowerillinois.org.

Parents and Friends



In keeping with the spirit of Saint Clare and the love she had for children, our Parents and Friends organization is devoted to keeping the children as the focus of each event we host and using all funds raised to support the students. In addition to providing classroom celebrations for holidays, Parents and Friends either hosts or co-hosts the following events for our school families to help promote fellowship and community building:



- Kindergarten Meet and Greet
- Fall Festival
- Halloween Parties
- Santa's Fun Shop
- Christmas Parties
- Teacher Appreciation Lunch
- Pancake Breakfast
- Valentine's Day Parties
- Daddy Daughter Dance
- Second Grade Communion Reception
- Kindergarten Graduation Reception
- Field Day
- Eighth Grade Awards Ceremony



Please contact kshees@aol.com to get involved with this fun group!



The St. Clare Pom Squad is made up of students in grades 2, 3, and 4, and is coached by parent volunteers Amy McKendree and Ashley Brown. The squad performs during halftime at basketball and volleyball games.



Good Shepherd Preschool

At the Good Shepherd Preschool, we are committed to encouraging the spiritual, social, physical, academic, and emotional development of each child in our care through hands-on learning. Our classroom religion instruction and the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd provide the foundation for Catholic growth and spirituality through prayer, song, play, and storytelling, and our curriculum is a discovery-based learning experience that aligns with the state's early childhood learning standards. These standards cover language arts, mathematics, science, social science, and Spanish language learning. They also address physical development, including fine and gross motor skills and health. Children are given the opportunity for independent play, participation in small-group activities, and movement through learning areas. We strive to create learning experiences to nurture the unique potential of each child.

What makes our program unique? We use the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, which is an approach to the religious formation of children that is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the Church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. Children gather in an "atrium," a room prepared just for them, which contains simple yet beautiful materials for them to use.

How do these materials help the religious life of children? If an adult hears a beautiful passage from the Bible, he or she might take a Bible, find the passage, and read it slowly again and again. That same adult might then think deeply about the words and perhaps speak to God in a thankful or hopeful prayer. But a young child who has not yet learned to read needs another way. In our atrium, our youngest learners can ponder a biblical passage or a prayer from the liturgy by taking the material for that text and working with it. For example, they might place wooden figures of sheep in a sheepfold of the Good Shepherd, set sculpted apostles around a Last Supper table, or prepare a small altar with the furnishings used for the Eucharist. Older children who have learned to read often copy parables from the Bible, place written prayers from the rite of Baptism in order, or label a timeline showing the history of God's kingdom.

Many Blessings,
Ms. Sherri and the GSP staff and students





OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, January 29
11:30-1:00 PM

The Good Shepherd Preschool
*A regional preschool affiliated
with St. Clare Catholic School*

629 Saint Nicholas Drive, O'Fallon, IL 62269



St. Clare Innovators Club

For the 2022–2023 school year, St. Clare School further bolstered its STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math) initiatives with the addition of the extracurricular St. Clare Innovator Club (SCIC). Students of all interests and abilities from grades 5 through 8 were invited to participate. The idea proved to be popular: The 16 available slots filled quickly and overflowed to a waiting list. SCIC is led by two St. Clare parents, professional toy designer Michael Gramelspacher and hobbyist game designer Jon Harter. The Gramelspachers have sons in 8th and 5th grades, and the Harters have a son in 1st grade.



SCIC's objective is to help students learn how to devise an original concept and convert that idea into a prototyped, functional product. The group's young innovators experience the entire process of inventing—brainstorming concepts, reviewing/refining ideas, creating and testing prototypes, and pitching the final product to others. This is achieved through weekly after-school meetings, work on the students' own time, and occasional longer workshops on early dismissal days. SCIC's efforts culminate in two target events: the St. Clare School Toy Fair and the People of Play Young Inventor Challenge.

The Toy Fair was similar in format to a science fair and gave SCIC members the opportunity to showcase their processes and exhibit their creations to the rest of the student body and school families. Students were evaluated by and received feedback from a group of local full-time toy designers and toy store owners. Although there were no rankings or prizes for participation in the Toy Fair, the judges reviewed each concept and gave written feedback to each team. Students will use this feedback to refine their projects prior to submitting them to the Young Inventor Challenge.

Ultimately, the decision to participate in the Young Inventor Challenge is up to the students and their families. Those who choose to participate can either submit their projects virtually or present them in person at the Chicago-based event held at Radio Flyer headquarters. In past years, some of the winning projects have gone on to be licensed by toy companies and eventually found their way to store shelves!

8th Honors English/Literature

After evaluating Iowa standardized testing data from 2021, it was apparent that many St. Clare students were scoring in the top 10 to 15 percent in the English Language Arts (ELA) category. Because students with these scores tend to qualify for Honors English in high school, we wanted to serve these top ELA students in a way that is unique to our school.

We have introduced an 8th grade Honors English/Literature class for students with cumulative ELA testing scores at or above 90 percent. During this ELA block, we study both English grammar and writing, as well as stories from the Literature textbook and classic novels. The academic rigor is enhanced within this course; however, the students are also given opportunities for rich discussion, writing feedback, and creative projects.

During the first quarter, Honors English/Literature students read *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Currently they're diving into the gothic novel *Dracula*. In the third and fourth quarters, we'll be reading and discussing the themes, historical contexts, and literary elements present in *The Great Gatsby*, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, and *The Outsiders*, in addition to provided content within the Literature textbook. Students will also have opportunities to write varied styles of essays and creative pieces.

It is my sole objective to prepare the 8th graders in this program for success in their high school English/Literature classes. If their growth over the first quarter is any indication, they should be more than ready when they graduate. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with these fine students in the subject areas where I find so much personal joy. Thank you, St. Clare administration and families, for trusting and supporting me to develop this Honors English/Literature program, and rest assured we will continue to reevaluate the criteria and curriculum to ensure we are meeting students' needs as the year progresses.

-Mrs. Natalie Schultz



Challenge Program

Most schools are able to offer assistance for students who need extra support with regular curriculum, but very few are able to offer programs that serve high-achieving students. Mrs. Ybarra and I noticed this gap in curriculum programming while working together at another school, which inspired us to earn a micro-credential in gifted education.



At St. Clare we have designed and initiated a Challenge Program to provide students with broad-based experiences, units, and projects that facilitate collaborative group work as well as abstract, independent, and critical thinking. By using a scoring matrix, I was able to identify 38 St. Clare students with high scores on the Iowa ELA, Iowa Math, and CogAT standardized tests. Each year, I will continue to reevaluate the data in order to identify students who meet the scoring criteria after a new round of testing. Once students are invited into the program, they'll continue to be included in future years. Additionally, because the program is designed for pure enrichment, no grades will be taken.

Within the program, students meet weekly in paired groups—3rd graders with 4th graders, 5th with 6th, and 7th with 8th. In order to serve the 1st and 2nd graders, I facilitate whole-class enrichment lessons for those homerooms twice a month. The units I facilitate are designed around themes, such as Innovators (Authors, Inventors, Mathematicians, Artists, Engineers), Belleville Gingerbread Contest, the St. Louis Symphony Picture the Music Contest, Space, Architecture, and Stories.

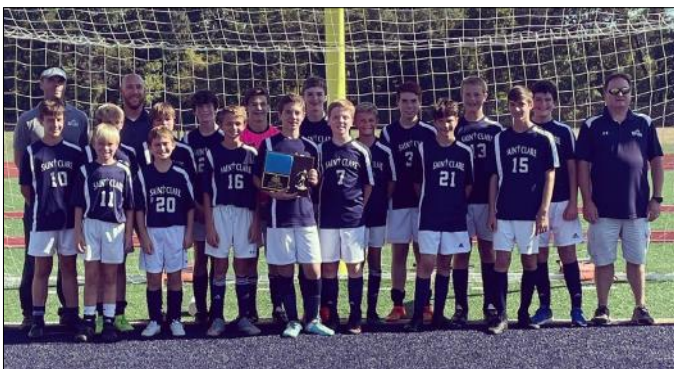
I feel privileged to teach at a school like St. Clare, which has integrated this unique program into the curriculum for 1st–8th grade students. As with any new initiative, as the year progresses, I will continue to reflect on the data, feedback, and logistics so that I can better serve the high-achieving students within our school community in the coming years. I hope that the Challenge Program will provide enriching and engaging opportunities for St. Clare students to dive into collaborative, out-of-the-box, and inquiry-based topics of study.

-Mrs. Natalie Schultz

Athletics



Congratulations to our soccer teams! Our Junior Girls, Junior Boys, and Parochial Girls won the Diocesan Championship! Our Parochial Boys finished a close game in 2nd place. Way to go, Knights!



Alumni Spotlight



Max and Parker Bruening have finished their final golf season together at Althoff. The Bruening brothers helped Althoff bring home its first regional title in five years, and both athletes qualified for the IHSA State Golf Tournament. Congratulations to Max Bruening (Althoff '23, St. Clare '19) and Parker Bruening (Althoff '24, St. Clare '20) on their fantastic appearances at IHSA State: Out of 110 golfers, Max placed 13th, and Parker placed 30th. Additionally, Max was selected as the 2022 Player of the Year and Parker was named to the 2022 First Team, All-Area Team by the Metro East Golf Coaches Association.



We had the pleasure of welcoming back Mary Jo Kosco and Chrissy Meier, two members of the 1988 undefeated girls' basketball team that went 20-0 to win the Belleville Diocese basketball tournament. Their team was the first to win a Diocesan Championship in any sport at St. Clare. We love it when alumni return for visits to see how the school has changed but the Knight spirit remains the same!



St. Clare Catholic School

214 W. Third Street

O'Fallon, IL 62269



**Saint
Clare
Catholic
School**

OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, January 29

1:30-3:00 PM

214 W. 3rd Street,
O'Fallon, IL 62269

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



Scan for
the Facebook
Event.

**WE LOOK FORWARD
TO SEEING YOU!**

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