



T E N N E S S E E REGISTER

JANUARY 20, 2012 | A Voice of Tennessee Catholic Life since 1937 | www.dioceseofnashville.com



Photo by Rick Musacchio

Passing the faith to a new generation



Students at St. Ann School in Nashville rush past a statue of St. Ann and Mary in the school hallway on their way to class. Since the Diocese of Nashville was established in 1837, Catholic schools have been an important tool for passing the faith to the next generation. As we head toward Catholic Schools Week Jan. 29-Feb. 5, with the theme of “Catholic Schools – Faith, Academics, Service,” the *Tennessee Register* is taking a look at the history of Catholic schools in the diocese and their future. See pages 10-15 for stories and photos. For Catholic Schools Week, the diocese’s 21 elementary and high schools will be hosting a variety of events. Check with your nearest Catholic school for a schedule of events.

Cathedral series studies Islamic and Catholic relationship

Ned Andrew Solomon

The Cathedral of the Incarnation is hosting a series of adult education classes in January that organizers hope will build a bridge of understanding between Muslims and Catholics.

“When trying to understand a culture different from one’s own, it is important to see that culture as it sees itself,” said Ron Messier, professor emeritus in history at Middle Tennessee State University, who presented the first class in the series on Jan. 8.

“Once we feel that we understand the paradigm, we should not assume that everyone within the culture under study fits the paradigm exactly in the same way,” he added. “There is a wide range of beliefs on most issues within both Christianity and Islam.”

The series began during National Migrant Week, and was planned by Joceline Lemaire, director of adult formation at the Cathedral, in collaboration with its Social Justice Committee.

Through presentations by renowned experts in the field, the classes will explore

the teachings of Islam, the relationship between Islam and Catholicism, and the experience of Muslims moving to this region.

“The main impetus for this series was a news article in *The Tennessean* in July 2011, reporting on ACT!, a Virginia-based national organization opposed to the growing Muslim presence in the U.S.,” explained Lemaire. “It was said that Tennessee had the largest membership in this organization. We thought we had a responsibility to learn and teach from a balanced perspective about Islam and the

Muslim presence in Middle Tennessee.”

While conducting research to help develop the series’ curriculum, Lemaire said, “I was fascinated to learn that the opposition to the building of a new mosque in Murfreesboro closely parallels the opposition to the building of a Catholic Church in Murfreesboro in the 1920s. At that time, the KKK marched in opposition.”

The program covers a variety of perspectives on the relationship between Islam and Catholicism. On Jan. 8, Messier spoke “Jesus, One Man Two Faiths: A Di-

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From start, schools key initiative for diocese



ANDY TELLI

From the earliest days of the Diocese of Nashville, the Church has invested in Catholic schools as an important tool to pass the faith from one generation to the next.

Some were housed in grand old mansions, others in sturdy brick buildings that still stand more than 100 years later, others in log cabins built on what was still a frontier. They've been filled with the rich and the poor, the sons of farmers and the daughters of factory workers, new arrivals to the country and those with deep roots in the Catholic community.

But in every year since the diocese was established in 1837, and in every location, and in every circumstance, the aim of Catholic schools remained the same.

In his 1985 book "The American Catholic Experience," University of Notre Dame Professor Emeritus Jay P. Dolan quotes from a letter from Ignatius F. Horstmann, the bishop of Cleveland at the turn of the 20th century, to one of his priests:

"The parochial school is a rock foundation, the soul of the future. Their divine faith understood fully is the most precious inheritance parents can leave their children. With it practically lived up to they will gain heaven. Without it all else is valueless – a priest's work without a parochial school can only be half done and is very discouraging."

The American bishops' interest in supporting and promoting Catholic schools has a long history. The bishops of Nashville shared that interest with their colleagues around the country.

Determined to develop a native born clergy to serve his far-flung flock, Nash-

ville's first bishop, Richard Pius Miles, opened a seminary in the Cathedral in his first few years. However, the seminary did not survive long.

In 1842, Bishop Miles dedicated St. Michael Church in Robertson County. And soon after, the church, which is still in use today, opened a boarding school, St. Michael's Male and Female Academy, with the mission of improving students in "Religion, Morals, Good Breeding, and Health," according to a handbill of the time.

The academy closed in 1855 for lack of funds, and all that remains is a historical marker a few miles from St. Michael Church.

Bishop Miles continued his efforts in providing Catholic education in the diocese when he invited the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Ky., to establish St. Mary's Female Academy in Nashville in 1851. But a dispute with the bishop prompted the sisters to leave Nashville and the school was closed before the decade was out.

Bishop Miles, whose diocese covered the entire state of Tennessee, had more success in Memphis where he invited Dominican sisters from Ohio and Kentucky to establish St. Agnes School for girls in 1855.

His successor, Bishop James Whelan, convinced the congregation of Dominican sisters in Somerset, Ohio, to come to Nashville to open a school for girls. They arrived in August 1860 to open St. Cecilia Academy and establish a new congregation of sisters. Both are thriving today, more than 150 years later.

The third bishop of Nashville, Patrick Feehan, continued the growth of the diocese with new parishes and new schools. It was Bishop Feehan who in 1866 invited the Sisters of Mercy to Nashville to open St. Mary's School associated with the Cathedral. Two years later, they opened St. Bernard Academy, which still operates today as an independent school.

From Nashville, the Sisters of Mercy carried their varied ministries – including schools and hospitals, among others – to nearly every corner of the diocese.

Bishop Feehan also oversaw the establishment of the forerunner to Chris-



Cathedral High School was established by Bishop Thomas Byrne soon after the construction of the Cathedral of the Incarnation in the early 1900s. The school had students in grades one through 12; the high school was one of three all-girl Catholic high schools in Nashville, along with St. Cecilia Academy and St. Bernard Academy. Cathedral High School closed in 1970.

tian Brothers University and Christian Brothers High School in Memphis in 1871; the establishment of parishes and schools for German immigrants settling in the Lawrence County towns of Lawrenceburg, Loretto and St. Joseph; the opening of a school at the Church of the Assumption in Nashville; the establishment of Notre Dame de Lourdes School for girls by the Nashville Dominicans in Chattanooga, which was the forerunner to the current Notre Dame High School there; and numerous parishes and schools in small towns along the rail lines that crisscrossed the state, including Pegram, Sneedville, Newsome Station, McEwen, Brentwood, Franklin, Thompson's Station, Columbia, Antioch, Smyrna, Murfreesboro, Tracy City and Winchester.

Bishop Feehan continued his energetic efforts to establish parishes and Catholic schools after he was named the first Archbishop of Chicago in 1880. Meanwhile, in the Nashville Diocese, bishops continued to grow the network of Catholic schools in the state.

Bishop Thomas Byrne convinced the order of religious sisters founded by St. Katherine Drexel to open Immaculate Mother Academy in Nashville to serve African-American children. When Bishop Byrne built the Cathedral of the Incarnation, he opened a school on the site.

But the bishop, who had an impressive record of establishing all sorts of Catholic institutions in Tennessee, failed in one effort: the establishment of a Catholic high school for boys in Nashville.

That was left to his successor, Bishop Alphonse J. Smith, who opened the Nashville School for Boys at the Cathedral in 1925. Three years later he moved the school to Elliston Place and renamed it Father Ryan High School.

More than 80 years later, Father Ryan, with more than 950 students, is the largest school in the diocese.

Bishop William Adrian, who followed Bishop Smith, also oversaw tremendous growth in the diocese, particularly in the post-World War II boom years of the 1950s. Among the parishes and schools established during that decade were St. Edward, Holy Rosary, St. Joseph and St. Henry in Nashville and St. Paul the Apostle in Tullahoma.

"The 1950s are really remarkable," said Father Stephen Klasek, pastor of St. Paul and the director of pastoral planning for the diocese. Holy Rosary, where he used to be pastor, opened its school in 1954 "and doubled in size every year for five years," he said.

That growth was driven by the Baby Boom as well as more Catholics moving into the area from out of state for jobs, Father Klasek said. "It was a new community," he said.

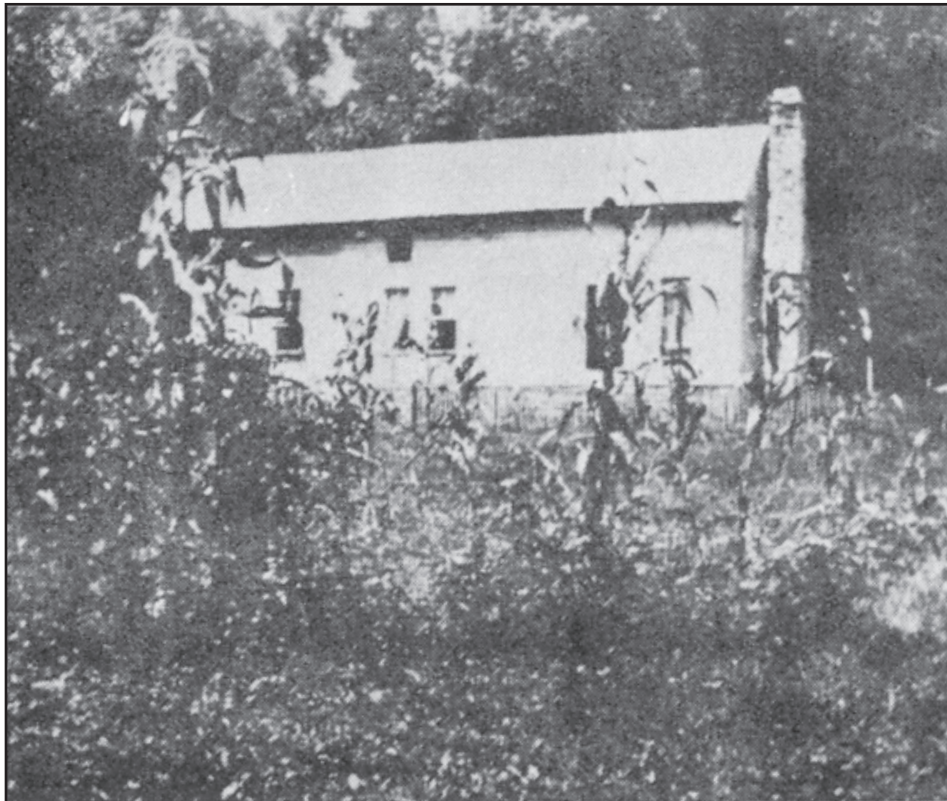
'Center of our lives'

Dr. Therese Williams, superintendent of schools for the diocese, saw a similar experience growing up in St. Edward Parish. Her parents were among the first parishioners, and her mother was a patrol mother and her father coached the school football team.

"It was a brand new neighborhood," said Williams, who grew up across the street from the school. "As people moved in, the Catholic families got to know each other very quickly."

The church and school soon became "the center of our life," she said. "Almost everything we did involved the church or the school."

The Mercy Sisters staffed the school, Williams said. "They really taught us to be a part of the community we lived in, and they taught us to serve others."



St. Michael Male and Female Academy near Cedar Hill in Robertson County, which opened in 1842, was one of the first Catholic schools established in the Diocese of Nashville. The school closed in 1855 because of a lack of funds. St. Michael Church is still in use.

Today's students might not recognize the school then. "The classes were very big," Williams said. "We had probably 45 students in a classroom. We would have to move the desks to line up to go to lunch. And we didn't know any different," she said.

Alice Valiquette and Sister Judith Coode, R.S.M., tell similar stories of their days growing up the Cathedral parish and attending the Cathedral High School, also staffed by the Mercy sisters.

"Cathedral School was a great school," said Valiquette, a former teacher and principal at Christ the King School and now director of curriculum for the diocesan schools office. "When I think of it, I'm just filled with gratitude. There was a real community there."

"The parish sort of revolved around the school because all the children went to the school," said Sister Judith, who entered the Sisters of Mercy after graduating from Cathedral High School. "It was like we were a family. We all knew one another. The sisters knew us all. They cared about us. They didn't only teach us, they encouraged us."

The sisters "were very dedicated in making sure they were passing on the religious faith to the students," Valiquette said. "That is a real inspiration to me even today."

That sense of community that surrounded the schools wasn't prevalent only in Nashville. In the small town of Loretto, Sacred Heart School has been a gathering point for the parish and community since they were established by German Catholic homesteaders in 1872, said Catherine Bradley, who grew up in the parish and has worked at the school since 1969, the last 17 years as principal.

"In the parish community, the school was essential," she said. "Everybody worked together and everybody supported it."

Like today, Sacred Heart had more than one grade in each class, Bradley said. "The room was full of desks," she said. "We didn't have any kind of teaching aids" common in classrooms today, she added.

Most of the students lived close to the school and many went home for lunch every day, Bradley said. "Today, I shudder to think of all the papers that we would need signed for the safety of so many leaving school and returning in the middle of the day."

Birth dearth

But as the 1950s and 1960s moved into the 1970s, enrollment at schools across the country, Catholic and public alike, began to fade, said Father Klasek.

In the 1970s "what happened nationally is the Baby Boomers didn't get married or have children," Father Klasek said, so there was a birth dearth. "Schools of all types were closing."

While enrollment was falling, costs were increasing, Father Klasek said. For generations, the Catholic Church relied on an inexpensive and deep labor pool of religious sisters and priests to staff their schools. But as religious orders began to lose members in the years after the Second Vatican Council, schools were forced to replace them with lay teachers who received much higher salaries, he added.

"When I look back on it, that probably should not have been the case when it was happening," Valiquette said of the lower salaries and limited benefits



The band at Assumption School, where the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia taught from 1899 to 1961 when the school closed, poses with their teacher and Assumption pastor Father Henry Japes. The parish opened the school in 1874. Cardinal Samuel Stritch of Chicago and Archbishop John Floersh of Louisville, both attended Assumption School as children.



Father James Niedergeses, who later became Bishop of Nashville, teaches a class at Father Ryan High School, his alma mater. Most of the faculty members at Father Ryan, which was named for Father Abram Ryan, right, were diocesan priests through the 1950s. Over the years, nearly 75 Father Ryan graduates have become priests or have entered religious life.

the religious received for teaching in Catholic schools. "The sisters should have been compensated more than they were."

In some parishes, the young families with school aged children were moving out of the neighborhoods, he said, pointing to Holy Name Church in East Nashville. The parish "was thriving place with lots of kids," until families started moving into Madison and Hendersonville, Father Klasek said.

There were other problems facing schools, Father Klasek said. "The expectations of the schools changed significantly," he said, and many of the buildings were no longer adequate.

"If you don't have any kids and don't have any money, you can't really do that

kind of capital investment," he said.

"You went from totally free to pretty expensive and then you didn't have enough kids," Father Klasek said. "You really couldn't successfully operate them."

Schools at Immaculate Conception in Clarksville, St. John Vianney in Gallatin, St. Rose of Lima in Murfreesboro and Holy Name all eventually closed.

Resurgence in enrollment

But in the 1990s, there was a resurgence in the population of Catholic school-aged children and a spike in the number of Catholics moving to Middle Tennessee. The demand for Catholic schools returned.

"All the Catholic schools were booming in the 1990s," Father Klasek said, and in the late 1990s and early 2000s, five schools opened in the diocese and many schools were expanded and renovated.

The five new schools were St. Rose in Murfreesboro, Immaculate Conception in Clarksville, Pope John Paul II High School in Hendersonville, St. John Vianney in Gallatin and St. Matthew in Franklin.

When Valiquette took over as principal of Christ the King in 1989, the enrollment had dropped to the point it threatened to force closure of the school, she said. By the time she retired in 2003, the school was at near capacity and has remained that way since.

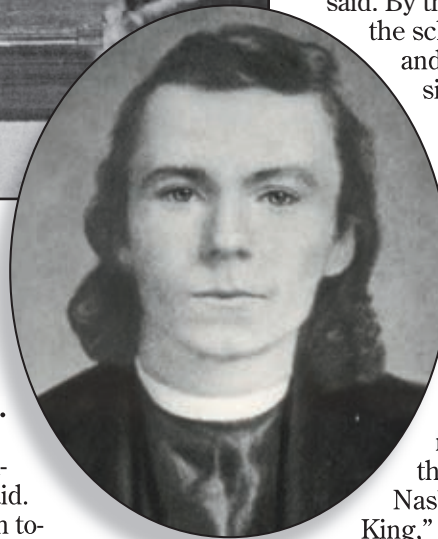
Bishop James Niedergeses brought in consultants to help Catholic schools market themselves, Valiquette said. "The idea of marketing Catholic schools absolutely was new," she said, but it was a valuable tool.

It also took some hard work. "I contacted every realtor in Nashville to tell them about the best school in Nashville, which was Christ the King," she said.

Many of the families who were enrolling their children in Catholic schools were returning to their roots, Valiquette said. "I was struck and really touched by the fact that so many parents ... said they went to Catholic school and 'you know I left the Church for awhile but I want my children to have the Catholic education that I had.'"

In good times and bad, the mission of Catholic schools has remained the same: to pass the faith to the next generation.

"I feel deeply committed," Valiquette said, "to prepare our young people to be involved in the church of the future." ♦



Catholic identity is foundation of schools

THERESA LAURENCE
ANDY TELLI

In the early days of the diocese, a Catholic school was often no more than a young woman teaching a handful of students in a one-room log cabin; tuition was paid with spare change.

Catholic schools today, with kindergartners using iPads and young men playing football inside multi-million dollar athletic complexes, may seem a long way from these humble roots, but the core values of Catholic education have not changed.

"In all of our schools, Catholic identity is our strongest element," said Dr. Therese Williams, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Nashville. "I think we live it. We really model it for our students. We give them the opportunity to be active in their church."

From Nashville to the suburbs to small towns scattered around the diocese, Catholic schools continue to offer a high quality education and serve as ambassadors of the faith to the community at large.

Barby Magness, principal of St. Matthew School in Franklin, tells the story of a non-Catholic mother who learned of the school from seeing students come into her dental office, so neat and well-behaved in their St. Matthew uniforms. "She decided she wanted that for her son and they've been extremely happy here," said Magness.

Families living in Williamson County have access to an excellent public school system, but some still find it lacking, and often discover what's missing at St. Matthew. "They want a Catholic, faith-based education," said Magness. "There's none other like it," added Magness, who worked for both independent private schools and in the public school system before becoming St. Matthew's first principal.

One of the newest schools in the diocese, St. Matthew, opened in 2001, is also one of its biggest success stories. It grew to capacity ahead of schedule and remains nearly full year after year. There are currently only a handful of open slots in the whole school. But even with this good fortune comes some challenges. "Sometimes we can't take a whole family if we don't have space for all the children," Magness said. "We hurt in that way," she said.

Even in wealthy Williamson County, paying \$5,000 a year for tuition can be a hurdle for some families. "We have a higher percentage of families seeking tuition assistance than ever before," Magness said. "Some families have lost big jobs and had to move," she said, but "more are moving in."

Attracting students is not much of a challenge for St. Matthew the way it is for older schools located far from the diocese's headquarters in Nashville.

"We're always trying to recruit," said Kelly Doyle, principal of Good Shepherd School in Decherd, Tenn., in the far southeast corner of the diocese. "We lost students two years in a row, but we're up 13 students from last year so I feel optimistic," she said. Thirteen is a big leap when there are only 74 students in the entire pre-K through seventh grade school. This year, there is no eighth grade class at Good Shepherd.

A fixture in the area for over a century, Good Shepherd enjoys a good reputation in the community, but faces plenty of



St. Matthew School principal Barby Magness, left, Father Mark Beckman, and others cut the ribbon for the new athletic field dedicated at the school in 2009. Opened in 2001, St. Matthew is one of the largest and fastest growing schools in the Diocese of Nashville. The only Catholic school in Williamson County, it is a big draw for many new families moving to the area.

competition. A new private school, Winchester Christian Academy, just opened nearby, and the local public school system now offers pre-K. "That has changed the dynamics," Doyle said.

One of the smallest schools in the diocese, Good Shepherd is not able to offer much tuition assistance to its families, but works hard to keep Catholic education affordable. They do have one of the lowest tuition costs of any school in the diocese, but still "tuition is the biggest roadblock" to boosting enrollment, Doyle said.

Catholic and non-Catholic families alike are attracted to Good Shepherd because of the small class sizes and sense of family at the school. "It's a very joyful place," Doyle said. About half of the students at Good Shepherd are not Catholic, she added.

Catholic identity

It is not uncommon at the more rural schools to have such a high percentage of non-Catholic students. St. Paul in Tullahoma, for example, has a similar balance of students. Of the Diocese of Nashville's approximately 6,300 students enrolled in the 18 elementary and three high schools, less than 1,000 are not Catholic. Most schools charge higher tuition rates for non-Catholics, but parents are willing to pay the price because they see the value of a Christian education.

Catholic elementary schools in small towns like Decherd, Tullahoma, McEwen, Lawrenceburg and Loretto play a unique role in their communities, said Father Stephen Klasek, pastor of St. Paul Parish in Tullahoma. They can evangelize the non-Catholic students and are the pri-

mary reinforcement of Catholic identity for young people.

In the Nashville area there are other Catholic institutions that help build the Catholic identity for young people, such as the three high schools, the SEARCH program, Camp Marymount and others, Father Klasek said. Even though the Catholic population in the Nashville metropolitan area is a small minority, it is still big enough to support people's sense of a Catholic identity, he said.

But in most of the smaller towns of Middle Tennessee, Catholics are an even smaller minority and can feel isolated. The Catholic infrastructure present in Nashville is not as strong in the smaller towns, said Father Klasek, so the Catholic elementary schools play a crucial role in reinforcing children's Catholic identity.

"In smaller towns, schools are the only institution that we can control and offer that goes beyond what the parish can do in maintaining that (Catholic) identity," he said.

"This is the commitment they've made to maintaining their Catholic identity for their kids," Father Klasek said, even in situations where at first glance it doesn't make financial sense to have a Catholic school. Building Catholic identity is "a powerful incentive to keep these schools open."

"The parish just probably couldn't imagine not having a school," Father Klasek said.

Counter-cultural message

The mission of Catholic schools is first and foremost to educate students and shape the faith of Catholic young people, to develop the whole child in the image of Christ.

"We are helping them to know the person of Jesus Christ and understand themselves in light of that," said Sister Mary Thomas, O.P., principal of St. Cecilia Academy. St. Cecilia emphasizes to its students that they and every other human person are made in the image and likeness of God, and "we allow that vision of faith to imbue everything else," Sister



Angie Smotherman, sixth grade teacher at St. Joseph School in Madison, helps her students with a class assignment. Smotherman graduated from the teacher education program at Aquinas College and said she benefited from the Dominican Sisters' approach to teaching in Catholic schools.

Tennessee Register file photo by Theresa Laurence



Tennessee Register file photo by Theresa Laurence

The inaugural Italian Lights Festival was held in 2010 to benefit St. Pius X Classical Academy. To keep tuition affordable, Catholic schools must find creative ways to fundraise and market to the community. At right, Father Ryan High School senior Courtney Panther and junior Cole Pickney, photo at right, help fill some of the Ladies of Charity Christmas food baskets last December. More than 770 food baskets were distributed to needy families for Christmas through various parishes and agencies in the Nashville area. All Catholic schools in the Diocese of Nashville encourage service to others and the high schools require students to complete service hours every academic year.



Tennessee Register file photo by Andy Telli

Mary Thomas said.

Whether their schools are big or small, new or old, Catholic school principals are quick to tout their family-like atmosphere.

"Community is the word I always use to describe Father Ryan," said school president Jim McIntyre.

No matter if the student's last name gives them away as a fourth generation legacy at the school or they are a newcomer, every student is a part of the school's rich history. "New families very quickly have that same sense of belonging and feeling like part of the community," said McIntyre.

Catholic school today serve as sort of a safe haven from the constant barrage of negative messages young people receive from outside influences.

In earlier decades "the culture outside (of school) was what we were learning in the school," said Catherine Bradley, who attended Sacred Heart School in Loretto as a child and is now its principal. "Now we teach counter culture."

Catholic beliefs such as that a marriage lasts for your life, and Catholics should attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, today don't fit with the message of the broader culture that students and teachers live in. "What we teach now is not what the world teaches, as far as major values," said Bradley, who started teaching at Sacred Heart in 1969 and has been principal since 1994.

When she was a child, what the students learned at Sacred Heart was what they saw practiced in the community, she said.

Catholic schools are places "where the faith is lived out and the moral life is honored," said Pope John Paul II Headmaster Faustin Weber. At JP II, like all Catholic schools, prayer is interwoven throughout the day and the student body celebrates Mass together every week. All students participate in service projects every year. "The practice of the faith is so prevalent" at JP II, Weber said, "it's almost like breathing."

Catholic high schools have a particular mission to help teenagers own their faith and keep it with them as they prepare for

college and beyond. High school students are at a crossroads, poised to decide "whether their faith is going to be an artifact from their childhood or integral to their life as adults," Weber said.

Addressing affordability

As Catholic schools have changed over the decades, new challenges have arisen, particularly the cost of a Catholic education, Williams said. While Catholic schools offer a top notch education and great opportunities for students, they still remain out of reach for many families.

"We have to get creative" in addressing the issue of affordability, Williams said. "It's a real discussion. It's a fine line between fair and just wages for teachers and not raising tuition too high."

Every school offers some form of tuition assistance, she said.

Tuition does not cover the full cost of operating Catholic schools, Williams said, so schools must look for other sources of revenue. Some schools look for donors to sponsor children who need tuition assistance and schools seek support from the broader community, asking people to give back to the schools, she added.

Catholic schools ask those families who can pay the full cost of the tuition to pay and allow others to receive a reduction, Williams said. Some diocesan schools have students who qualify for free and reduced lunch programs, she said, and some provide donated books and uniforms for families that need the help. Other schools offer tuition discounts for families with more than one child enrolled in school.

"Schools do a lot of little things that assist families," she said.

The only diocesan wide tuition assistance offered is through the Endowment for the Advancement of Catholic Schools, and the amount distributed each year, between \$15,000-\$20,000, falls far below requests from the schools, which annually exceeds \$100,000.

Catholic schools continue to reach out to lower income families, Williams said. "It's part of our mission to serve everyone."

Welcoming newcomers

One segment of the Catholic population that is conspicuously absent from Catholic schools is Hispanics. Hispanic immigrants have the highest birth rate but have not enrolled their children in Catholic schools in any great numbers. In fact, there are only about 200 Hispanic children enrolled in the entire diocesan school system.

"If all the Catholic Hispanics sent their kids to Catholic schools, our schools would be overflowing," said Father Klasek, who is also director of pastoral planning for the diocese and recently finished compiling the diocese's quinquennial report, which gives an overview of the state of the Diocese of Nashville.

Father Klasek suspects the practice of Hispanic families using public schools rather than Catholic schools, even those from heavily Catholic countries, is a tradition they have brought to the United States from their homeland where parish schools aren't as common.

Catholic school administrators have to be patient and continue to invite Hispanic families to consider sending their children to a Catholic school, Williams said.

"We have to educate this first generation what Catholic schools offer their children," Williams said. "It's a culture they have to learn the value of," she said. And, "We need to learn more about their traditions and they need to learn more about our schools."

Faith formation and helping immigrants assimilate into American society and the American church are still viable and valuable goals for Catholic schools, Williams said.

Growth and change

As the Catholic population moves out of neighborhoods and into others, it can pose challenges for diocesan schools. When some schools were built, there was a thriving Catholic community living in the neighborhood and keeping the schools filled, Williams said. But as Catholics have left those neighborhoods, it puts a strain on the school's enrollment.

For some schools, that has meant at-

tracting students from other nearby parishes, Williams said. For example, St. Joseph School in Madison draws a large number of its students from Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Hendersonville, and Holy Rosary Academy in Donelson draws significant numbers of students from St. Stephen parish in Old Hickory.

On the other hand, "some of our most populated areas don't have Catholic schools," Williams said. "How do we need to address that?"

Williamson County has four parishes, some among the largest in the diocese, but only one Catholic school, St. Matthew. However, other Catholic schools recruit families from Williamson County, Williams said, noting that St. Edward School, Christ the King School and St. Bernard Academy all have large numbers of students who live in Williamson County. In fact, she added, St. Bernard provides bus service from Brentwood to its campus in Hillsboro Village.

"The areas where we don't have Catholic schools are where we're hurting," Williams said.

As Catholic schools in the Diocese of Nashville look to the future, they will continue to grapple with the always-present tuition conundrum, look at where to possibly add new schools, and how to support struggling schools. All the while, diocesan schools will continue to teach the counter-cultural gospel message of service to others.

All the schools encourage service, and the diocesan high schools require students to participate in service projects every academic year. "It encourages young people to be living examples of the gospel and active participants in their faith," McIntyre said. "The more they live out their faith, the more likely they are to maintain and keep it."

While the broader culture may espouse an "Every man for himself" philosophy, Magness said, the emphasis at St. Matthew, and all Catholic schools is doing unto others. "That's what's so unique about Catholic education," she said. "I don't think you get that anywhere else." ♣

Catholic schools provide models for religious vocations

ANDY TELLI

Father William Bevington, who celebrated the 60th anniversary of his ordination last December, was among 50 students who graduated from Father Ryan High School in 1942. From his class, seven eventually became seminarians and six became priests.

Father Ryan, as well as the other Catholic schools he attended in his life, the Cathedral School, Overbrook School and the University of Notre Dame, had "a great impact on me as far as my vocation," Father Bevington said.

It is a story that has played out for centuries and continues to unfold today.

"Catholic schools lay a foundation for a deeply rooted relationship with Jesus Christ," said Sister Mary Emily Knapp, O.P., the director of vocations for the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation based in Nashville. "It's only in this relationship with Jesus Christ that one can hear Christ calling to be a priest or a sister."

The Nashville Dominicans, one of the fastest growing religious orders in the United States, have 60 sisters in formation, and of that number 60 to 70 percent at some point in their life attended a Catholic school. And the Congregation has many sisters who were introduced to the Dominicans when attending one of the many schools across the country where the Dominicans have served as teachers or principals.

Although Catholic schools are not the only path to a religious vocation, said



A newly ordained Father William Bevington, center, celebrates his first Mass at the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Nashville on Aug. 31, 1952. The late Msgr. George Rohling, at left, was Father Bevington's teacher at Father Ryan High School and encouraged him to explore his priestly vocation. Throughout the Diocese of Nashville's history, Catholic schools have been integral to fostering religious vocations.

Sister Mary Emily, who herself attended public schools until she enrolled at Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, as a college freshman, they are helping to

build a culture of vocations.

"Recent initiatives in Catholic schools have fostered a greater awareness that each person has a unique calling from God

and opened their horizons to the possibility of a call to the priesthood or religious life," Sister Mary Emily said.

Building a culture of vocations in Catholic schools at every level begins with encouraging students to pray about what God's plan for them is, Sister Mary Emily said. "Every young Catholic man or women should ask the question are they being called to be a priest or religious," said Sister Mary Emily.

Catholic schools also can expose students to priests and religious so they can learn about their lives, said Sister Mary Emily, and remind them "this is a possibility." She and other sisters are often invited to speak at Catholic schools at every level about their vocations and their lives. They also are contacted often by students who have been assigned by their teachers to interview a sister, she added.

The last step in building a culture of vocations is to invite people to consider whether they have a religious vocation, she said.

"I think it is important that teachers, priests, religious, parents and even grandparents are not afraid to encourage a young woman or man to the religious life or the priesthood," Sister Mary Emily said. "If nothing else, this plants a seed and lets them know that they could make a good priest or religious sister. ...

"This small word of encouragement could be just what is needed to take the step to the seminary or convent," she added.

Father Bevington and Mercy Sister Judith Coode found inspiration for their

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CAMP ST. CECILIA 2012

BAKING
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Aquinas College poised to enter new era

ANDY TELLI

When Sister Mary Sarah Galbraith, O.P., is inaugurated as the 11th president of Aquinas College on Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, she will usher in what she hopes will be a new era for the college in its 50th year.



Sister Mary Sarah Galbraith

The keys to the new era are plans to offer for the first time on-campus housing and master's degrees.

The changes to the college that would be triggered by the addition of on-campus housing would be like "night and day," said Sister Mary Sarah.

"There is something that happens in residential life that is unique," expanding possibilities for students, she said.

The college is considering plans that will allow the college to provide housing for up to 90 students beginning next fall while also working toward a long term solution that she hopes will be in place in the next five years.

Eventually, Sister Mary Sarah would like to house up to 600 students on campus. Currently, Aquinas has an enrollment of about 580 students, she said.

"With our plans for residential life, we hope to reach a national community that will draw people to this great city and this

great diocese," Sister Mary Sarah said.

The school is awaiting approval from accrediting agencies to begin offering a Masters of Science and Nursing that would qualify people to teach nursing, Sister Mary Sarah said.

The new master's degree would be an addition to Aquinas' nursing program, which is the college's largest and best known in the community.

Tennessee currently is facing a shortage of nurses. "Who's going to teach those nurses?" Sister Mary Sarah asked.

Aquinas' proposed new master's degree "is the college's attempt to meet the demand for more nurses at its bottleneck," said Bill Smart, director of liberal arts at the college.

The college also is working to launch two master's degrees in its teacher education program, a Master's of Education and a Master's of Arts in Teaching.

The Master's of Arts in Teaching degree would be for those who already have a bachelor's degree in another field and are looking to become a teacher as a second career, Sister Mary Sarah explained.

"Our response on both of those have been really strong," Sister Mary Sarah said. "We feel we'll fill both programs quickly" once they are launched.

With the master's degrees, she said, "We hope to reach a wider segment of the Nashville community."

Being able to offer master's degrees will move the college from its current accreditation as a level two school to level three, said

Smart, and is an important benchmark for the school, which is one of only two Catholic colleges in Tennessee, the other being Christian Brothers University in Memphis.

The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation opened Aquinas in 1961 as a junior college. And its roots stretch back even further.

The Congregation had been established in Nashville after four Dominican sisters from Ohio arrived to open St. Cecilia Academy in 1860. In 1915, the Congregation established the St. Cecilia Normal School to train its novitiates as teachers for its primary apostolate of education.

The normal school became affiliated with the Catholic University of America in 1928, and in 1960 the Congregation decided to establish Aquinas Junior College for women on its Overbrook property on Harding Road in Nashville.

Besides continuing the mission of preparing Dominican sisters to be teachers, the new junior college also provided classes in general academic subjects to the students in nursing school then operated by Saint Thomas Hospital.

Aquinas' first graduating class in 1962 included Sister Mary Evelyn, O.P., who would later serve as the college's president in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as well as Sister Rose Marie, O.P., a former prioress general of the Congregation, and Mother Ann Marie, O.P., the current prioress general.

In 1962, the college became co-educational when two men with the Saint Thomas Nursing School enrolled.

Through the In the 1960s and 1970s, Aquinas added programs in various fields of study that included an associate degree in law enforcement that drew many Metro Nashville police officers until the department opened its own training academy, courses for business executives, and a series of allied health programs including training in radiologic technology, respiratory therapy and dental auxiliary training.

As the programs were growing, so were the facilities. In 1968, the college broke ground on a new library wing that included space for extra classrooms and chemistry laboratories, and in 1976 the college completed construction of a physical education building.

Aquinas had successful baseball and basketball programs and the basketball team won a junior college national championship in 1990.

Mass for the Inauguration of Sister Mary Sarah Galbraith, O.P., as the 11th president of Aquinas College

4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, 2012,

at the Cathedral of the Incarnation Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., of Philadelphia will be the main celebrant and homilist

Saint Thomas had closed its nursing school in 1970, and in 1983 the hospital collaborated with Aquinas to launch an associate's degree nursing program, which opened with 28 students.

In 1993, Aquinas became a four-year college with the addition of a bachelor's degree in teacher education. In the years since, the college has added bachelor's degree programs in nursing, business administration and liberal arts with majors in English, theology, history and philosophy.

Sister Mary Sarah has been serving as Aquinas' president since last June and has been impressed with the strength and quality of the faculty and staff, she said.

The college's goal is to help students understand they are made in the image and likeness of God, "so they know they are meant to make a difference in the world," Sister Mary Sarah said.

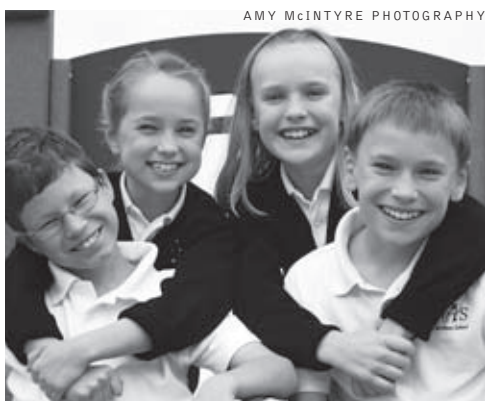
Accompanying that sense of that God has a plan for them, "is a great set of skills in their field of study, whether it's nursing, business, teacher education or liberal arts," she said.

With Aquinas graduates serving in schools, hospitals and businesses throughout the Nashville community, college officials often receive comments about the success of their alumni and their excellent preparation, Sister Mary Sarah said.

"The purpose of higher education is to return back to the community," Sister Mary Sarah said. "It's not something you keep for yourself." ✠

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Models for religious vocations

Continued from page 14

vocations in their teachers at Nashville's Catholic schools.

For Father Bevington, it was the late Msgr. George Rohling, who was one of his teachers at Father Ryan.

"To me Msgr. Rohling was the best possible model of a priest," Father Bevington said. "He was very humble, a very cheerful disposition. I never saw him angry."

Msgr. Rohling took a personal interest in all of his students, including Father Bevington. "He got me involved in the school newspaper and also the service clubs," Father Bevington said.

When Father Bevington began considering whether he might have a vocation to the priesthood, Msgr. Rohling was one of the few people he talked to about it. "I didn't want to become a priest because somebody wanted me to. I wanted it to be between me and God," Father Bevington said. "The ones I did talk to, thank goodness, didn't put any pressure on at all. They were there to listen. That's what I needed."

After graduating from Father Ryan, Father Bevington enrolled at the University of Notre Dame to study engineering through a U.S. Navy program. After the war, he went to work for the McDonnell Aircraft Corp. in St. Louis, but continued to talk to Msgr. Rohling about becoming a priest. It was a nudge from Msgr. Rohling that finally convinced him to give the seminary a try. "It was now or never," Father Bevington recalled thinking.

Sister Judith attended the old Cathedral

School for elementary and high school, and was taught by the Sisters of Mercy throughout her school years.

"They wanted us to do the best that we could do, to reach our full potential," Sister Judith recalled of her Mercy teachers. "They were very encouraging, supportive."

She too was inspired by one of her high school teachers. The late Sister Adrian Mulloy, R.S.M. "was very instrumental in my life," said Sister Judith, who was a teacher and principal for more than 30 years and recently retired as the community coordinator at the Mercy Convent on Pennington Bend Road in Donelson.

Her family also helped nurture her faith and her vocation, and she followed her sister into the order after graduating from Cathedral High School.

Her experience wasn't unusual. Many of the Mercy sisters from Tennessee were first introduced to the order by attending one of the many schools in the state where the Mercy Sisters taught, including the Cathedral School and St. Bernard Academy in Nashville, Immaculate Conception High School in Memphis and Knoxville Catholic High School, Sister Judith said.

Catholic schools continue to play an important role in fostering vocations, said Father Bevington, who served as a teacher and principal in Catholic schools during his priesthood.

Teachers provide important models for students of adults living their faith, he said, and "you learn your religion better if you're in a school where the whole philosophy is immersed in Catholic teaching." ☩



SCA students help stock children's store at Cottage Cove

St. Cecilia Academy students recently collected more than 1,100 items for a children's store at Cottage Cove, a faith-based inner-city arts ministry for at-risk children in Nashville. The collection was spearheaded by sisters Emily and Molly Humphreys, from left, who volunteer at Cottage Cove as a part of their St. Cecilia Academy service hour requirements. Helping them deliver the donations were Clare Sherlog, center, and Emma MacCurdy, right. Approximately 50-70 children ages kindergarten to grade eight visit Cottage Cove daily and they can purchase items as part of a merit system. The donation drive brought in items including school supplies, glue, pencils, pens, notebooks, backpacks, binders, tape, scissors, rulers and more. Toiletries were also collected such as shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hairbrushes, deodorant, hair accessories, soap and more.



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