



Blessed Sacrament Parish & Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish

PARISH NEWSLETTER

QUEEN OF PEACE CELEBRATES *70 Years of Faith and Community* *Strong in Spirit and Service*

While Blessed Sacrament celebrates its 100th anniversary, Queen of Peace Parish marked a significant milestone of its own — celebrating 70 years in 2025. The parish was officially founded on Aug. 10, 1955. Although the parish was established in August, the people of Queen of Peace gathered for their first Mass on Sept. 18, 1955, celebrated at the former Blessed Sacrament Church. This marked the beginning of a faith community that would continue to grow in worship, fellowship, and service over the next seven decades.

Anna O’Gara has been a member of Queen of Peace since 1992. She agrees with the theme of the 70th-anniversary celebration — “Strong in Spirit and Service.”

“This is a very welcoming and open parish that is rooted in service,” Anna says. “They are always reaching out to help other people. We’ve had a strong social concerns component for a long time.”



The Ladies Sodality and Holy Name Society were both founded alongside the parish. The Sodality still exists today. Anna is very impressed with all the work of the Sodality.

“They have been very active in the parish,” she says. “I’m very proud of how active they are in the school, too.”

The original building for Queen of Peace was a combination school, church, and kitchen, until a new church — our current building — was built

about 10 years later. The first day of class at the school was Jan. 31, 1957.

“The school building was dedicated Jan. 6, 1957 — the Feast of the Epiphany,” Anna says. “We’re going to redo something like that on the Epiphany this year because we just had new doors put in. Father’s going to do the door blessing.”

To commemorate 70 years, the parish held a backpack blessing and hosted coffee and donuts after church

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New Year **RESOLUTIONS**
for Faithful Stewards

As we usher in the new year, it's common for people to make resolutions, setting goals and intentions for the year ahead. These resolutions often revolve around personal growth, health, or career aspirations. However, for Catholics, the new year can be an excellent opportunity to connect these resolutions to living stewardship as a way of life. Stewardship is the practice of recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God and, in return, we are called to be responsible caretakers of those gifts by sharing our time, talent, and treasure with God and our parish. By aligning our resolutions with this principle, we can live a more faithful and purposeful life.

One of the core tenets of stewardship is gratitude for the gifts we have received from God. It's essential to recognize that our resolutions are, in themselves, opportunities to give thanks. When setting goals related to personal health, for example, we can be grateful for our bodies and resolve to take better care of them. When it comes to finances, we can acknowledge the financial blessings we have and make resolutions to manage them wisely and generously.

Stewardship extends to our spiritual lives as well. Many resolutions center on personal growth and self-improvement, which can easily align with our faith. Consider setting resolutions to deepen your spiritual life, such as attending Mass regularly, praying daily, or volunteering at your parish. These actions not only enhance your own faith journey, but also contribute to the spiritual growth of your community.

Another vital aspect of stewardship is the call to be generous and charitable. In your New Year's resolutions, consider how you can integrate acts of charity and service. You might resolve to volunteer more, donate to charitable organizations, or simply try to be

more compassionate and understanding in your interactions with others. These small acts of kindness reflect God's love and grace.

The stewardship way of life must begin at home with our family — our Domestic Church. Consider setting resolutions that prioritize spending quality time with your loved ones, committing to family prayer, nurturing your relationships with each other and Christ, and strengthening your community. Building and sustaining these connections is a powerful expression of stewardship, as it promotes unity and mutual support.

Our financial well-being is another area where stewardship principles can be applied. Make resolutions to manage your finances responsibly, budget wisely, save for the future, and share your treasure with God, the parish, and community. By doing so, you are acknowledging that your financial resources are a gift from God and that you are called to manage them prudently.

Stewardship calls for self-reflection and accountability for our actions. As you work towards your resolutions, periodically assess your progress, and reflect on how well you are honoring your stewardship commitment. Consider seeking spiritual guidance or accountability from a mentor, priest, deacon, or fellow parishioner, to help you stay on track.

Incorporating stewardship into your New Year's resolutions is not just a way to set goals, but a profound way to live out your faith. It transforms ordinary resolutions into sacred commitments that align with your core beliefs as a Catholic. By being mindful of the gifts God has bestowed upon you and actively seeking to be a good steward of those gifts, you can approach the new year with a sense of purpose, gratitude, and a stronger connection to your faith.



A LETTER FROM OUR PARISHES' ADMINISTRATOR

Embracing STEWARDSHIP, THE DISCIPLE'S WAY OF LIFE, FOR THE NEW YEAR

Dear Parishioners,

Grace and peace to you as we begin a new year filled with hope, blessings, and opportunities for spiritual renewal. As we stand at the threshold of 2026, I invite each of us to reflect on how we can more fully embrace *stewardship as a way of life* at Blessed Sacrament and Queen of Peace — not as a program or obligation, but as a joyful response to God's love and a daily expression of our discipleship in Christ.

Stewardship, at its heart, is the disciple's way of life. It is how we live out our gratitude to God for all that He has entrusted to us — our time, our talents, and our treasure. When we approach each of these gifts with prayerful intention, we grow in holiness and strengthen the very fabric of our parish community.

Let us begin with the *stewardship of time*. Time is one of God's most precious gifts, and how we spend it reveals what we truly value. I encourage you to make time for prayer and reflection each day, nurturing your personal relationship with the Lord. Participate regularly in the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments. Consider joining one of our parishes' opportunities for spiritual enrichment — such as Bible studies, prayer groups, or retreats — to grow in faith and fellowship. When we dedicate time to God, our lives are transformed, and our parish life becomes more vibrant and Christ-centered.

The *stewardship of talent* invites us to recognize and share the unique gifts God has given each of us. Every member of our faith family has something vital to contribute. Whether your gifts are best



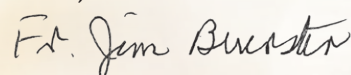
used in liturgical ministry, outreach, education, or behind the scenes, your willingness to serve helps our parishes reflect the compassion and mercy of Christ. I encourage you to review the Ministry Catalog from our 2025 Stewardship Renewal or visit the ministries page on our website at bellevillecatholic.com to discern how you might share your gifts in the year ahead.

Finally, the *stewardship of treasure* calls us to use our material blessings in ways that honor God and serve others. Our financial support of the parishes is an expression of faith and thanksgiving — a tangible way to give back to the Lord who has given us everything. As we

begin this new year, I invite you to prayerfully consider taking a step forward in your giving, mindful that your generosity sustains the many ministries, programs, and outreach efforts that make our faith community such a blessing to so many.

As we journey into 2026, may we each renew our commitment to live as grateful and generous disciples. Together, let us build a faith community rooted in prayer, service, and generosity — a community that radiates the love of Christ and gives joyful witness to the Gospel every day.

Peace,



Fr. Jim Buerster
Parish Administrator



Blessed Sacrament Celebrates **CENTURY OF** *Parish and S*

It's a remarkable milestone in parish history — July 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of Blessed Sacrament Parish and School. Although the official centennial anniversary is July 18, 2026, the whole year will offer a variety of festivities in both the church and the school.

Catholic Schools Week, which traditionally falls during the last week of January, will kick off the celebratory year. Principal Claire Hatch plans to invite alumni from the school to visit for lunch so they can share their experiences with the students. She says that a good number of alumni have stayed in touch with the school over the years.

“Many alumni ask to see a tour, and some have sent me letters,” Ms. Hatch says. “They still feel

connected to the parish where they grew up — they still have that allegiance.”

For school alumni and parishioners alike, the big celebratory dinner and gala is scheduled for April 18 at a local country club, where past and present parishioners, priests, school staff, parents, and school alumni are invited. Guests will be able to take a trip down memory lane and view old photo albums and reconnect with parishioners of all ages.

The centennial theme will continue with a special Mass on July 18, the official date of the founding of the parish. A large reception is to follow. The school will also continue to highlight the anniversary milestone at its annual auction and fundraiser in November.

Ms. Hatch, who is in her 48th year of education, grew up in Blessed Sacrament and has seen many changes as the parish community has grown.

“I was born here, and I’ve lived in this parish my whole life,” she says. “Blessed Sacrament taught me my faith as a child, and I’ve seen firsthand the school and parish grow.”





FAITH AND COMMUNITY

chool Sharing in Joyful Milestone

The buildings and grounds have undergone many changes over the century. The original school from 1926, for example, is no longer standing. Renovations and additions from 1940, 1956, and finally in 1968 make up the current facilities. As for the parish buildings, the convents and rectories have all changed. Ms. Hatch attributes the growth of the parish facilities to new housing developments during the 1950s and '60s.

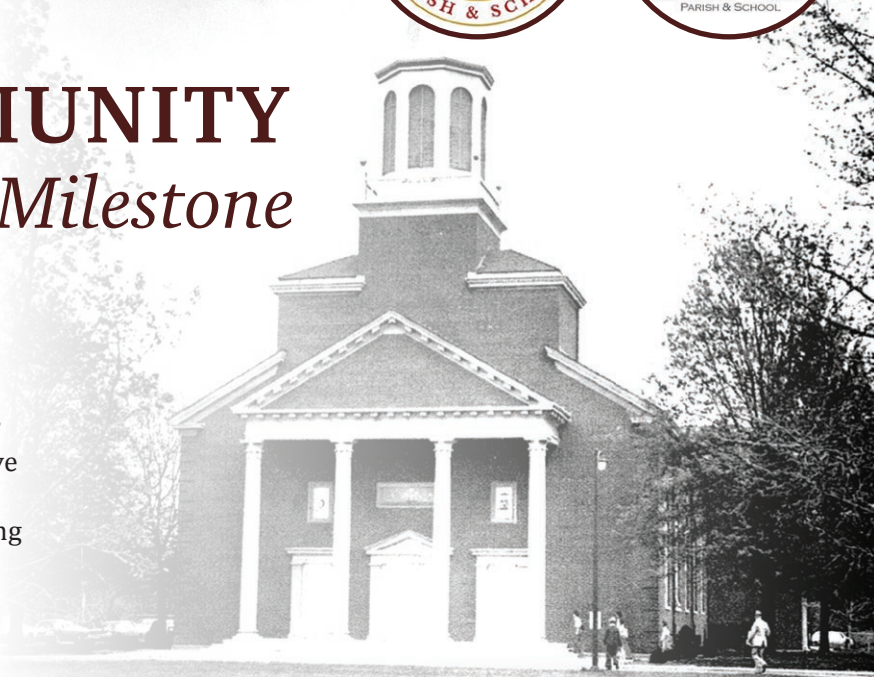
"The original buildings from before 1940 were really tiny," she says. "The place just grew and grew, especially with more housing going in."

But perhaps more significant than the expansion of facilities are the changes within the parish family. Ms. Hatch says she has seen many new families join the parish, as well as old friends move away. She points out that no matter where people end up, many remain connected to the parish.

"The new families moving in have given it new life and breath," Ms. Hatch says. "We lose families who move away, but they still want to be a part of the parish. And we still have a lot of legacy families."

Blessed Sacrament has fostered a family-like environment over the years, both for newcomers and those who have been at the parish for years. Ms. Hatch appreciates the warm atmosphere.

"The parish has a great history," she says. "I still get letters from long-time parishioners, and I've been invited to class reunions. It's neat to have that connection. I think many people feel at home here — even a lot of the new families feel that way. They feel that sense of belonging. It's very welcoming, and that has made it a strong parish throughout the years."



Be sure to save the date for the anniversary gala on April 18!
Please email your photo memories to pictures@blessedsacramentbelleville.com.

ST. JOHN BOSCO:

A Steward of Youth and Hope

Many saints have modeled faithful Catholic discipleship and stewardship, and St. John Bosco is a shining example for January, as we celebrate his feast day on Jan. 31.

Known affectionately as Don Bosco, he dedicated his life to the care, education, and spiritual formation of poor and neglected youth in 19th-century Italy. His legacy continues to inspire the Church today, particularly those who work with young people or seek to serve with generous hearts.

Born in 1815 near Turin, Italy, John Bosco was raised in poverty by his widowed mother. Even in his youth, he demonstrated a deep devotion to the Eucharist, a love for the poor, and an extraordinary ability to engage and teach his peers. These qualities became the foundation for his lifelong mission of stewardship and discipleship.

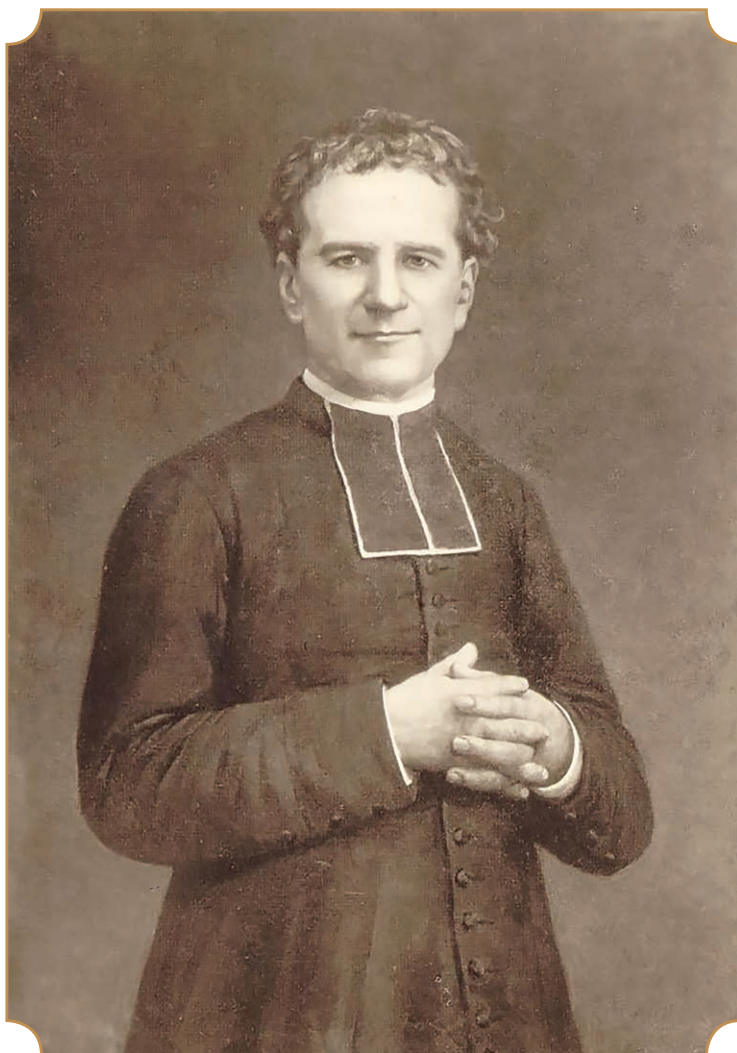
Ordained a priest in 1841, Don Bosco began ministering to the street children and working-class boys of Turin. Many were orphaned, imprisoned, or left to fend for themselves. Rather than ignoring their suffering, he saw them as precious gifts from God and responded with a heart full of compassion. He opened a youth center that provided food, shelter, education, and spiritual guidance — planting the seeds of lifelong faith and purpose in the lives of countless young people.

Central to Don Bosco's mission was the understanding that all our time, talent, and treasure are gifts from God to be used in loving service to others. He saw himself not just as a priest or educator, but as a steward of souls entrusted to his care. His joyful, approachable spirit and tireless work for the good of others reflect the very essence of a stewardship way of life.

In 1859, he founded the Salesians of Don Bosco, a religious congregation committed to the education and evangelization of youth, especially the poor. Today, the Salesians serve in more than 130 countries, continuing his vision of loving and forming young people in a Christ-centered environment.

St. John Bosco's feast day offers us a time to reflect on how we, too, are called to serve others with the same devotion and purpose. He is the patron saint of apprentices, schoolchildren, boys, young people, and juvenile delinquents — a fitting tribute to his life's mission.

As we grow in our own journey of stewardship, may we look to St. John Bosco as a model of faith in action, and respond to God's call with the same love, joy, and generosity.





CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2026

Connecting Students and Alumni as We Celebrate 100 Years of a Strong Community

For thousands of Catholic schools across the country, the end of January marks an important week to express gratitude, reflect, and celebrate — Catholic Schools Week. This year will be an especially significant week for the Blessed Sacrament Parish and School community, as Catholic Schools Week kicks off a year of festivities for the centennial anniversary.

Principal Claire Hatch, who is also a long-time parishioner, explains that while most of the week will include many of the traditional activities and projects that have been enjoyed during past Catholic Schools Weeks, she plans on also inviting alumni to the school to visit with the students as a way to celebrate 100 years of the school's history.

"We want to try and connect our present-day kids with the past, so the students can hear how it was back in the day," Ms. Hatch says.

The week will begin with Mass at the Saturday Vigil. Throughout the following week, activities and theme days aim to celebrate the children of the school. There is normally a talent show and an opportunity for community service in the west end of Belleville. Finally, there is a large, school-wide event. One year, for example, the school visited a roller-skating rink and enjoyed a big picnic together.

Ms. Hatch says that Blessed Sacrament often collaborates with Queen of Peace School, and Catholic Schools Week is a wonderful opportunity to bring the two schools together.

"We've brought the schools together for motivational speakers during the week," Ms. Hatch says. "Many of the kids from each school know each other. We share sports teams, and some even live in the same neighborhoods."

The importance of a Catholic education has been a lifelong passion for Ms. Hatch. This is her 48th year in education. As a young college graduate many years ago, she started out as a second-grade teacher at Blessed Sacrament.

"When I graduated college, the pastor at the time encouraged me to come back to teach," she says. "I thought I would only stay for a year! But it's been a good ride. I love the school, and I feel this is where I am

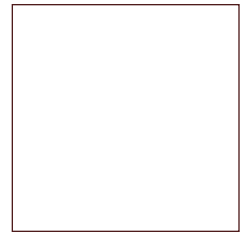
supposed to be. It's a calling, a vocation."

For both Ms. Hatch and the many families who have chosen a Catholic education for their children, Catholic Schools Week emphasizes the reasons to support parish schools while uniting the school community in faith and friendship.

"I'm proud to be working in the Catholic school system and helping kids to grow in their Catholic faith and to put Christ first in their lives," Ms. Hatch says. "That's something they can hang on to, no matter what happens, for their whole lives."



Blessed Sacrament Parish & Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish



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MASS TIMES:

Tuesday:

8:15 a.m. – Blessed Sacrament

Wednesday:

8:15 a.m. – Our Lady Queen of Peace

Thursday:

8:15 a.m. – Our Lady Queen of Peace

Friday:

8:15 a.m. – Blessed Sacrament

Saturday:

4:30 p.m. – Blessed Sacrament

Sunday:

10:00 a.m. – Our Lady Queen of Peace

QUEEN OF PEACE CELEBRATES 70 YEARS OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY

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on Sunday, Aug. 17.

Anna loves reflecting on the history that's been shared for the parish's 70th year.

"The founders started fundraising in January 1956 for that first building and had it all paid for and built within a year," she says.

In addition, Anna is a trustee and a sacristan at Queen of Peace. She has also served as a substitute teacher and a coach at the school.

"I serve because of what Jesus says at the Last Supper, 'As I've washed your feet, go out and do it to others,'" Anna says. "That's always been my calling."

One special part of parish life for Anna is the traditions. She enjoys the fish fries in the fall and during Lent. There is also the bazaar in September, featuring fried chicken dinner, silent auction, kids' rides, a band, and bingo.

"This is a special community," Anna says. "I'm so blessed to be part of it."

