



Blessed Sacrament Parish & Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish

PARISH NEWSLETTER

A LOOK BACK AT A GREAT YEAR AT OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE SCHOOL

Celebrating Many Accomplishments and Highlights of Our School Family

As the school year winds down, it's clearly been a joyful and fruitful one for students and staff alike. Throughout the year, the school community has celebrated many traditions, learned new things in the classroom, and continued growing together in faith. From special events and service projects to daily lessons and prayer, students have been encouraged to develop both academically and spiritually. As the community looks back with gratitude on the year's many highlights, it also prepares to say goodbye to the eighth-grade class, celebrating their accomplishments and wishing them well as they begin the next chapter of their educational journey.

A highlight of the year at Our Lady Queen of Peace is that some of the younger students were baptized.

"This is a great testament to our school helping to grow the faith in our younger students," says Principal Michelle Tidwell.

Mrs. Tidwell wants to offer big congratulations to the 15 eighth-graders as they embark on the next steps into high school. Their presence at the school will be missed. On the morning of graduation, there is an all-school Mass — so the



The Epiphany door blessing

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students can see the graduating eighth-graders in their caps and gowns. The graduates go for breakfast, and the graduation is in the evening. Another tradition for the eighth-graders is an overnight camp in early April.

The theme of the year was “Setting the Stage for Saintly Success.” Of course, faith is a big part of every moment at the school. This past school year, there was a big focus on the saints — each month, students learned about a saint and the fruit of the Holy Spirit that they exemplified.

“The third-graders chose St. Joseph for March, so each day, I challenged the kids with one thing they could do to show goodness, and then we prayed to St. Joseph,” Mrs. Tidwell says.

Another fun event this year was the Epiphany door blessing, on the new doors, where the kids got to take home their own door blessing kit.

This year, an addition to the curriculum was a new art program. A teacher comes in once a week, and the program has been a hit with the students.

What stayed the same is the family atmosphere at Our Lady Queen of Peace.

“Our school is really very much a family — everyone just really comes together and works together toward our common goal and towards our mission,” Mrs. Tidwell says.

Another definite highlight of the school year was Catholic Schools Week. One way that students and staff celebrated was by collecting canned goods — more than 400 items — while also celebrating the Super Bowl. The week kicked off, as always, with a Mass, followed by coffee and donuts. The students went on a bowling trip, as well.

“Also, the kids all had a great time with religion trivia and theme days,” Mrs. Tidwell says. “They made Valentine’s Day cards for the folks at the Benedictine Living Center.”

As always, Mrs. Tidwell looks forward to the next school year. She enjoys welcoming new students and families.

“As we start to wrap up the school year, we look forward to our spring carnival, our field day, First Communion, and all of the field trips,” Mrs. Tidwell says.



Pep rally during the week of the Super Bowl



The Backpack Blessing in August, kicking off the school year

Parishioners are invited to get involved at the school — volunteers are needed in many capacities. To learn more, call the school at 618-234-1206.



A LETTER FROM OUR PARISHES' ADMINISTRATOR

FAITHFULNESS AS WE MOVE TOWARD

Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners,

Much of the Christian life is lived outside of the Church's most intense seasons. As we move through the weeks of the Easter season and look ahead to Ordinary Time, the Church gently shifts our focus toward the steady, everyday practice of discipleship. The month of May invites us to reflect on this rhythm and on the role that faithfulness plays in shaping our relationship with Christ.

The weeks that lead us toward Ordinary Time remind us that following Christ is not sustained only by great moments or special celebrations. It is sustained by consistency — returning to Mass each week, making time for prayer even when life is busy, and remaining connected to parish life through seasons of change. These simple decisions carry lasting spiritual weight and help form habits of faith that keep us rooted in Christ.

This steady faithfulness is closely tied to stewardship. Stewardship is not a one-time response, but a way of living that flows from recognizing that everything we have comes from God. Our time, our abilities, and our material resources are gifts entrusted to us, and faithfulness means offering those gifts consistently rather than occasionally.

Living stewardship in this way requires intention. It asks us to move beyond convenience and toward commitment. When we give our time in prayer and service, share our talents through ministry, and



support the parish financially with regular generosity, we help ensure that the Church can continue her mission. These quiet acts of faithfulness allow ministries to function, needs to be met, and the Gospel to be proclaimed.

Parish life depends on this steady commitment. A parish grows strong not only through special events or major initiatives, but through the faithful participation of parishioners who understand that their presence matters. When many people contribute what they can, the Church becomes a place of welcome, stability, and hope for all who enter.

The month of May is a good time to reflect on how we are preparing for the longer stretch of Ordinary Time ahead. Are we making prayer a priority? Are we engaged in the life of the parish? Are we offering our gifts with consistency and trust? These questions are not meant to burden us, but to help us grow as disciples who live with purpose.

May God strengthen us in these weeks of the Easter season and prepare our hearts for the work of faithful discipleship in the time ahead.

Peace,

Fr. Jim Buerster
Parish Administrator

THE SCHOOL AND

Supporting the Continuing Legacy of Education



Special liturgies given by each class are a cornerstone of faith formation at Blessed Sacrament.

Our next generation is what keeps our community going. Blessed Sacrament School cannot function without the support of the parish and community. Principal Claire Hatch has been with the school for 48 years and has served as principal for 35 years, so she certainly understands the importance of this support.

“The annual fund is a yearly donation system to help support our school,” Ms. Hatch says. “It’s been going on for about 30 years, and it’s supported by our alumni, parishioners, and friends of Blessed Sacrament. We send out annual letters to them and reminders. Once they’re on our list, they usually keep giving annually.”

The school also receives support from some local businesses. Donations can be made via mail, online, or even through

Facebook. These donations are vital to the school’s success.

“It’s to help pay for expenses,” Ms. Hatch says. “We’re doing a lot of school improvements, building repairs, and school updates. It helps pay for technology resources, which are pretty expensive, and school programs — kind of everything. It helps keep the school going. We rely on that.”

Currently, this school year is finishing with 140 students, 15 full-time teachers, and four part-time teachers, plus staff. The annual budget not only supports these students and staff but also the legacy of Blessed Sacrament.

“This year we’re celebrating our 100th anniversary of both the school and parish,” Ms. Hatch says. “They started at the same time.”

This monumental anniversary for the parish and school is marked with many big events.

“We kicked it off with Catholic Schools Week in January with a big celebration,” Ms. Hatch says. “We’re having a big Mass with our bishop and a big celebration for parishioners and alumni. Then, on July 18, the actual start of Blessed Sacrament, we’re going to have a birthday party. Then, the theme of our August picnic will be ‘Coming Home for 100 Years.’ We’ll hopefully get a lot of alumni. We have a big auction fundraiser in November, and that theme is ‘Celebrating 100 Years.’ So, there are lots of celebrations happening, banners being put up on the streets of Belleville, and all that.”

The opportunity to support this legacy is an opportunity for stewardship. Parishioners, alumni, families, and community members can offer their treasure to support the school, but there are other opportunities for stewardship as well.

“They also give us their time and talent to volunteer at the various activities we have,” Ms. Hatch says.



First-grade teacher Ms. Smith feels blessed to work at such a special school.



ANNUAL FUND

Education and Faith at Blessed Sacrament School



The Blessed Sacrament Big/Little Buddy program is a favorite tradition.



The fifth-grade class is ready for a great day of learning!

The school raises young people with Catholic values and a solid education from pre-K through eighth grade, preparing them for high school and beyond.

“Academically, our students rank in the top 10 percent of the nation,” Ms. Hatch says. “It shows we’re doing something right. Our kids do really well when they get to high school.”

Raising the next generation, Blessed Sacrament hopes to continue for another 100 years. Last year’s annual fund raised around \$75,000. This year, the goal is \$85,000. Donations are accepted all year, though donations received before July 1 will go into this year’s annual fund.

“It’s an integral part of our school budget,” Ms. Hatch says. “Without it, we would really be hurting. We appreciate all the support from everyone, helping to keep our school moving forward. Many people still support us in other ways, but annually giving is a big facet of keeping the school running. It’s a great school on the west end of Belleville, and it’s strong in the city of Belleville.”



Special liturgies given by each class are a cornerstone of faith formation at Blessed Sacrament.

***Donations can be made through the school website,
blessedsacramentbelleville.com/ways-to-help,***

or by mailing a check to:

Blessed Sacrament School

8809 West Main Street

Belleville, IL 62223

***Any questions can be directed
to blsacoffice@gmail.com.***

PATRON SAINT OF HOLY FUN

The Faith Journey of St. Philip Neri

Can a saint have fun on the way to attaining holiness? Many would say that St. Philip Neri definitely fits that bill.

Born in 1515 in Florence, Italy, St. Philip Neri showed his fun side from a young age. One such incident almost cost him his life. Seeing a donkey loaded with fruit for market, the impulsive and spontaneous little boy

jumped on the donkey's back. Surprised, the donkey lost his footing and, along with the fruit and young Philip, tumbled into a cellar. Miraculously, Philip was unhurt.

Philip's father struggled financially, so 18-year-old Philip was sent to work with an older cousin who was a successful businessman. During this time, Philip found a favorite place to pray in a spot upon a mountain that had been turned into a chapel.

During these hours of prayer, Philip is said to have decided to leave worldly success behind and dedicate his life to God.

Eventually, Philip went to Rome. In 1548, Philip formed a confraternity with other laymen to minister to pilgrims who came to Rome without food or shelter. The spiritual director of the confraternity convinced Philip he could do even more work as a priest. After receiving instruction from this priest, Philip was ordained in 1551.

As a young priest, Philip learned to love hearing confessions. Young men especially found in him the wisdom and direction they needed to grow spiritually. But Philip began to realize these young men needed something more than absolution — they needed guidance. So, Philip began asking the young men to come by in the early afternoon to discuss spiritual readings, and then to stay for prayer in the evening.

Philip understood it wasn't enough to tell young

people not to do something — you had to give them something to do in its place. So, at Carnival time, when the worst excesses were encouraged, Philip organized a pilgrimage to the Seven Churches with a picnic, accompanied by instrumental music for the midday break. After walking 12 miles in one day, everyone was too tired to be tempted!

Philip was known to be spontaneous and unpredictable, charming and humorous. He seemed to sense the different ways to bring people to God. One man came to the Oratory just to make fun of it. Philip wouldn't let the others throw him out or speak against him. He told them to be patient, and eventually the man became a Dominican. On the other hand, when he met a condemned man who refused to listen to any pleas for repentance, Philip didn't try gentle words. Instead, Philip grabbed the man by the collar and threw him to the ground. The move shocked the criminal into repentance, and he made a full confession.

Humility was the most important virtue he tried to teach others, as he continually worked to learn it himself. Some of his lessons in humility seem cruel, but they were tinged with humor — like practical jokes — and were related with gratitude by the people they helped. His lessons always seemed to be tailored directly to what the person needed.

Philip did not escape this spiritual mortification himself. As with others, his own humbling held humor. There are stories of him wearing ridiculous clothes or walking around with half his beard shaved off. The greater his reputation for holiness, the sillier he wanted to seem.

But Philip was very serious about prayer. He was so easily carried away that he refused to preach in public and could not celebrate Mass with others around. But when asked how to pray, his answer was, "Be humble and obedient and the Holy Spirit will teach you."

Philip died in 1595 after a long illness. His feast day is on May 26, just in time to kick off the season of summertime fun.



Prayer to St. Philip Neri:

St. Philip Neri, we take ourselves far too seriously most of the time. Help us to add humor to our perspective — remembering always that humor is a gift from God. Amen.



AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE ST. PEREGRINE DEVOTION

Praying for a Cure

On Nov. 4, 1999, Queen of Peace Parish held its first St. Peregrine Devotion with about 80 people present. The devotion was founded through faith and perseverance by the late parishioner Sue DeMarse. Before Sue passed into eternal life, she not only started the devotion but also found a local artist to paint a picture of St. Peregrine and set up a little shrine with a candle rack, as well as working with Msgr. Jack McEvilly and Cardinal Wilton Gregory to petition Rome for a relic of St. Peregrine. This first-class relic is used to bless all those in attendance at the devotions and present during Adoration on his feast day in May.



Parishioner Anna O’Gara now plans the monthly St. Peregrine devotions and is honored to continue the work that Sue began.

“The devotion provides a prayerful chance of peace and comfort to those who are suffering from cancer and their loved ones,” Anna says. “Recently, a group of women came with their friend who was facing a cancer diagnosis, and just the opportunity to pray for and with their friend helped. Also, a couple of years ago, the eighth-grade class attended a few times to pray for a classmate who was undergoing treatments. Although these patients have not been cured of their disease, the devotion gives a sense of calm when dealing with the challenge.”

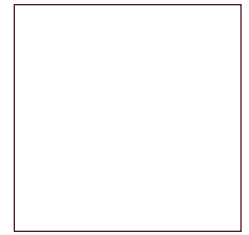
The St. Peregrine devotion follows the 8:15 a.m. Mass on the first Thursday of every month at Queen of Peace. Anyone is welcome to attend and can add names to the prayer list that is placed in front of the relic. The month of St. Peregrine’s feast day is May, and for the last 22 years, the devotion has sponsored a Cure for Cancer Prayer Day on the first Thursday in May. Refreshments are served in the parish center following Mass, and the Church stays open until 1 p.m. for Eucharistic Adoration. This year’s celebration will fall on May 7.



“We have 26-plus years of names in the notebooks we place by the relic each month,” Anna says. “The two notebooks hold prayer requests since the beginning of the devotion in 1999. Now, participants come from all over each month. Sue truly created an area-wide devotion with representatives from the parishes in Belleville and the surrounding area. People come regularly from Smithton, O’Fallon, and Fairview Heights to join those in Belleville

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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

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE ST. PEREGRINE DEVOTION

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in the devotion.”

The framed picture of St. Peregrine was painted by Loretta Keeley Roberts, a parishioner of Blessed Sacrament who passed away last year, and the original can be found in the vestibule of Queen of Peace, where the shrine to St. Peregrine is, which allows anyone to light a candle at any time.

“Many of the original people from the group have passed, but friends and family members still face cancer diagnoses every day,” Anna says. “As long as there is a need for this healing, the devotion will continue.”



*Those interested in knowing more about the
St. Peregrine devotion may contact Anna O’Gara
at annavogara@yahoo.com or 618-972-8504.*