



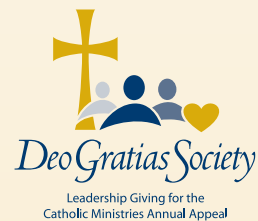
### IN GIVING WE RECEIVE JOY

For John Schmit, a member of the **Deo Gratias Society**, giving was always something he knew was important, he just never knew how much happiness it would bring him. Following the example set by his father, John said, "I get great joy from giving because God blessed me so much with my job and I owe it back to God. The giving, and the joy I receive, is something I have been looking for my whole life."



### YOU'RE INVITED TO JOIN

When you pledge \$100 a month for 10 months to the Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal, you are welcomed as a member of the **Deo Gratias Society**. Members take a leadership role in the work of the Church, becoming partners in a shared vision for the future of the Diocese of Joliet.



### HAVE YOU MADE PLANS WITH GOD YET?

Each year the Catholic Schools Office is host to nearly 800 junior high students across the Diocese of Joliet. The **Called by Name** conference explores the Catholic vocations of priesthood, marriage, religious life, and single life through music, dynamic guest speakers, and Eucharistic adoration.

Christopher Hueg is a religious education teacher and campus minister at St. Mary Immaculate School in Plainfield. He appreciates the positive impact this event has on his students. "**Called by Name** gives our students a chance to reflect on what God is calling them to be, leaving them with a new sense of energy!"

Sonny, a local seventh grader, feels marriage may be his vocational calling. He looks forward to passing on all he's learned about God to his children one day, while encouraging them to cultivate their own relationships in faith.

Listening to the seminarians tell their vocation stories was a highlight for Sonny. "Hearing how they found the perfect path to follow God's footsteps inspires me to do the same in whatever He calls me to do!"



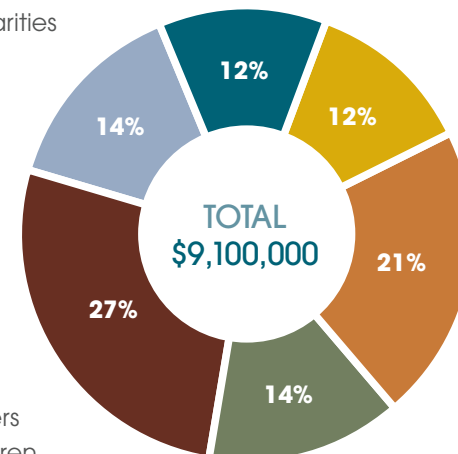
*The CMAA supports the Catholic Schools Office that helps provide students with the curriculum and programs essential to living lives rooted deeply in faith.*

### 2024 CATHOLIC MINISTRIES ANNUAL APPEAL

In 2024, gifts to the Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal supported essential ministries in the Diocese of Joliet.

Thank you for making an impact last year!

- 12%** Serving our brothers and sisters in need through Catholic Charities
- 12%** Educating children in the faith through Catholic schools
- 21%** Strengthening vocations, educating seminarians and supporting clergy
- 14%** Catechesis and evangelization to all ages and abilities
- 27%** Serving parishes, parishioners and protecting God's children
- 14%** Rebates to Parishes



**100%** Total \$9,100,000

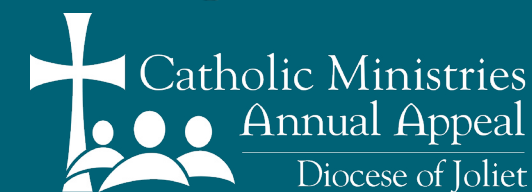
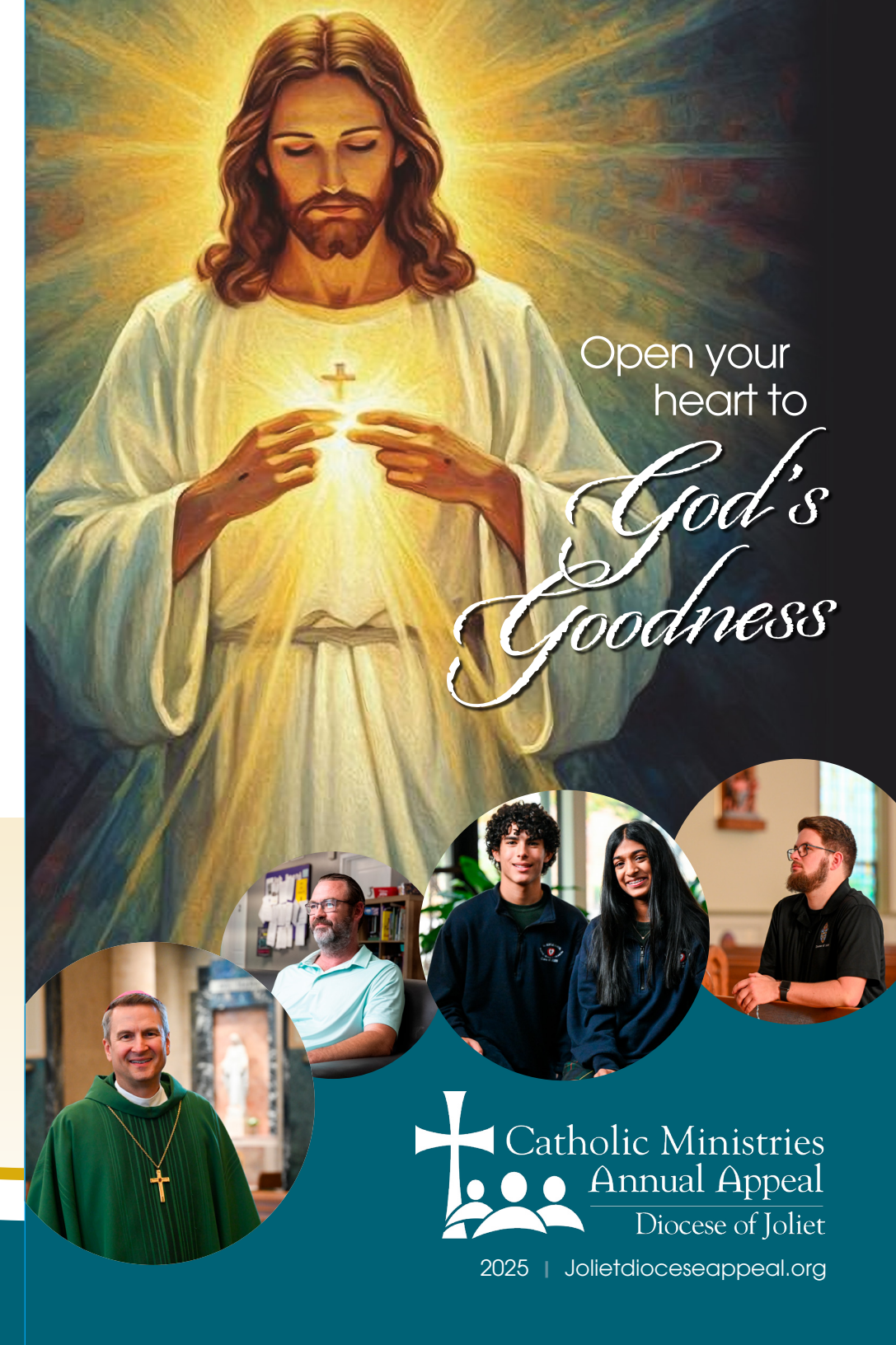
#### DIOCESE OF JOLIET

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#### COUNTIES OF THE DIOCESE

DuPage, Ford, Grundy, Iroquois,  
Kankakee, Kendall, Will

*The Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal supports the mission and ministries of the Diocese of Joliet. No CMAA gifts are used to settle claims of any nature against the diocese.*



2025 | Jolietdioceseappeal.org



## PLEASE PICK UP — IT'S GOD CALLING!

When Matthew Bernhard was in second grade, his pastor spoke to his class about religious life. Listening intently, young Matt felt an immediate sense of peace and desire for the priesthood. But, because he was so young, he wasn't sure if God was "officially" calling him.

Fast forward to high school. Matt was attending a Steubenville Youth Conference, when during the Eucharistic Adoration, he felt God's love profoundly. "At that moment, I knew in my heart, that God was reminding me of my calling in second grade!" Matt exclaimed. "It was time to start actually doing what He was asking me to do."

Matt is now in his sixth year of formation at Mundelein Seminary. After applying, a weight was lifted from his shoulders. He had always been independent, but now felt someone beside him, that someone was God. As part of his formation, Matt spent time on retreat in a retirement home run by an order of Catholic nuns. "The love the sisters had for those they were serving was beautiful and so infectious," he shared.

Matt will be ordained in 2027 and looks forward with great joy to serving his future parishioners. What excites him the most? "Walking with them day by day, helping them grow deeper in their relationships with Jesus, and reminding them how deeply our Lord loves them!"

*"Your generosity gives seminarians, like me, the freedom to discern God's will for our lives, as we devote ourselves fully to the Church."*  
—Matthew

**The CMAA supports men who are discerning vocations to the priesthood and who are in seminary formation for the Diocese of Joliet.**

Matt offered his sincere thanks to the CMAA donors, "Your generosity gives seminarians, like me, the freedom to discern God's will for our lives, as we devote ourselves fully to the Church."



Scan the QR Code to view Matthew's story.



## HOPE, HOUSING AND HAPPINESS ALL UNDER ONE ROOF

The Kathy Paulsen Hope House provides temporary, emergency shelter and supportive services to individuals and families who are situationally homeless. During their stay, participants work toward securing employment and permanent housing with caring guidance and personal goal-setting.

This ministry goes well beyond furnishing a roof over one's head. It gives those who have hit a bump in life's road a chance to rebuild their confidence and capabilities to live happily and independently again. "Hope House embodies the spirit of its name. Folks come in with no light in their eyes or very little. As they start meeting their goals and having successes, the light comes back on!" shared Inger Erickson, Supervisor of Hope House.

Stephen has benefitted immensely from the safe haven that is, Hope House. Just two days after he became homeless, he lost his job. Faced with two crises simultaneously, he found himself sleeping in his van before being referred to Hope House. Shortly after moving in, he secured a job, is on track for a promotion, and is looking forward to living in a home of his own.

"Hope House has lifted a heavy burden off my shoulders by giving me a place to lay my head at night and food on the table," Stephen said.

In addition to providing shelter, Hope House serves the community in need, within the Diocese of Joliet, with clothing and personal care items. The facility accommodates 15 to 20 clients over a six to eight-week period. Roughly 150 people benefit annually from its services, so funding is crucial.

Stephen offered his deep gratitude and personal thanks to all the CMAA donors, "Without your help, I would not be sitting here, this program would not exist, and people in situations like mine would have nowhere to turn."



Scan the QR Code to view Stephen's story.



**The CMAA supports the work of Catholic Charities who serves those in need of emergency housing.**



## SPARK THE FIRE WITHIN OUR YOUTH!

Last summer the Catechesis and Evangelization team hosted Joliet Youth Day at Lewis University in Romeoville, as part of a three-year plan supported by Bishop Hicks and the Diocese.

The conference attracted a record 1,200 teens from around the Diocese, including Amelia, a local high school student. She loved the music, the speakers, and the intimacy of Eucharistic Adoration. Amelia shared this insight, "In grammar school you're **required** to attend religious events, but as high schoolers we **chose** to be here to help draw us closer to Jesus."

Jim Elias, Catechesis and Evangelization lead, appreciates the profound impact these events have on its attendees. "The experience lights a fire within that creates a higher level of energy around our diocese," said Jim.

Youth Minister Tom Blue of St. Mary's in Mokena was humbled by what he witnessed. "Growing up, religion included a lot of memorization, but these kids want a more active experience to move their hearts and connect with God."

Due to the overwhelming success and your generous support of the CMAA, plans are in motion for a weekend-long retreat this summer!

**The CMAA supports ministries that help our youth stay active and growing in their Catholic faith.**



Scan the QR Code to view Amelia's story.

