

Walking Side by Side:
Supporting New Catholic School Leaders

When Colleen Carroll stepped into her role as principal of St. Jude Catholic School in New Lenox, she wasn't alone. Through the Emmaus Mentor Program, supported by your gifts to the Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal, she was paired with veteran principal Carol Albreski of St. Andrew the Apostle in Romeoville.

"The Emmaus Mentor Program has helped to make me more confident in my decision making, and that's had a ripple effect on my teachers and my students as I lead the school," shares Colleen.

The program, developed by the Catholic Schools Office, pairs experienced principals with newcomers, creating a support system that extends far beyond the principal's office. "It gives the mentees a person to reach out to, someone they can contact when they have questions," explains Carol, who has mentored principals for two years. Through monthly meetings, school visits, and ongoing mentorship, new leaders gain the confidence and guidance they need to succeed.

The impact reaches students like eighth-grader Josh at St. Jude. "I like St. Jude because we learn about Jesus, our faith, and to follow Him," Josh says. "We have religion every day and go to Mass on Thursdays, so we learn more about Him and grow stronger in our faith."

Your generosity ensures new Catholic school leaders have the support they need to form the next generation of faithful disciples.



Scan the QR code to see how your gift impacts students in our Catholic schools.

Why We Give

For Michelle and Brian Kibler, generosity has always been rooted in meaningful relationships with others. Their giving journey has been shaped by their parish, mission trips, and family, with renewed purpose in recent years through their nephew Josh, a seminarian in the Diocese of Joliet.

The Kibler's charitable giving has evolved intentionally over time. What began with support for their parish, Our Lady of Mercy in Aurora, expanded to embrace the Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal and the Seminarian Education Endowment Fund—ensuring that future priests receive the formation they need.

"We wanted to be generous with our parish," Michelle reflects. "As time went on, the Lord started tugging. When our pastor spoke about the CMAA, we realized we are part of something far greater than our own community. The Church is so much more than just our parish."

Through their nephew and the young men in seminary, the Kibler's have witnessed firsthand the dedication required to answer such a profound calling. "We have been blessed to meet seminarians and young priests coming out of seminary on fire," Michelle says. "There is a spark in all our hearts because of them. By giving to the CMAA, we are helping young men enter the seminary and blessing them for their courage to say yes."

Brian offers practical counsel to those considering similar support: "Meet the priests and seminarians. Attend the events, ordinations, and receptions afterward. Once you make those relationships, you understand that your giving goes to the people—not to buildings or something not tangible. It becomes real."

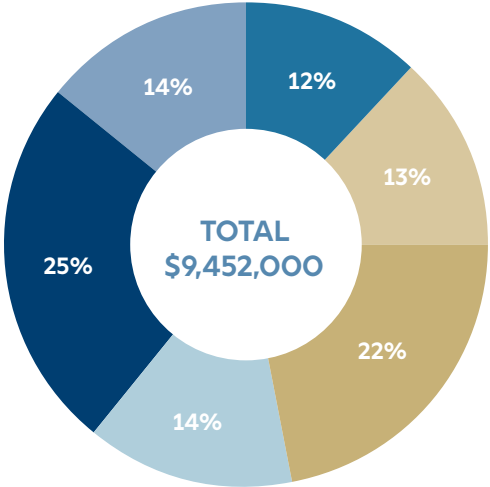
He adds, "The Lord is not judging us on the dollar amount, but simply that we offer gratitude for all He has done."



2025 Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal

In 2025, 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
- 13% Educating children in the faith through Catholic schools
- 22% Strengthening vocations, educating seminarians and supporting clergy
- 14% Catechesis and evangelization to all ages and abilities
- 25% Serving parishioners and parishes
- 14% Rebates to Parishes

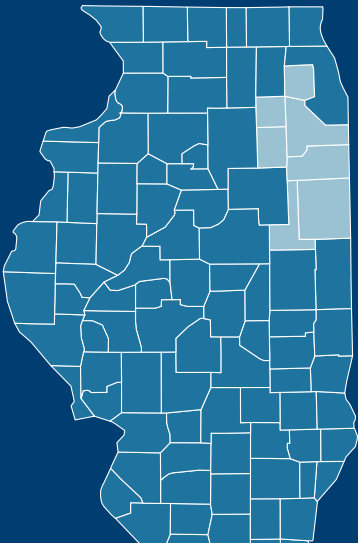


100% Total: \$9,452,000

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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.



BEYOND ALL EXPECTATIONS:
Faith that Elevates!

2026 | Diocese of Joliet



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Our Catholic Youth — On Fire with Faith!

Last summer the Joliet Diocese hosted a youth conference that called nearly 2,000 teens together in worship, adoration, and spirited activities that enriched their faith and planted seeds for their commitment to the future of the Catholic Church!

Young lives were changed profoundly alongside dynamic clergy and inspirational speakers. Xander, a high school junior in attendance, felt “On fire with his faith!” “I used to look at my faith as something I did, like homework. I realize now, it’s much more, it requires ALL of me.”

Before Bishop Hicks gave his final blessing at the closing Mass, the spirit moved a group of teens to come forward who weren’t Catholics to ask about becoming baptized. More than 50 young women shared their interest in becoming a sister or nun. And, over 100 young men said they were open to the possibility of becoming a priest!

The CMAA supports young Catholics on their journey to becoming the future of our Church.



Scan the QR code to view our youth on fire with their faith!



“It was a beautiful witness to the hunger our youth have for God—and the future of our Church!” said Bishop Hicks. He acknowledged that the event would not have been possible without the generous support of the CMAA donors. *“You made this happen!”*



From Pre-Med to Priesthood, One Seminarian's Journey

Joshua Solarz was captain of his high school varsity soccer and tennis teams, crowned homecoming king, and graduated class valedictorian. Yet, he felt empty inside. He was raised Catholic but had fallen away. “I knew something, or someone, was missing,” he said.

While studying pre-med, at the University of Notre Dame, he connected with a group of students who were “fully alive!” “We had a lot in common, but these guys had something more,” Joshua shared. That something was a personal relationship with Christ.

Encouraged by his new friends, he started attending daily Mass and revisited the Sacrament of Reconciliation. While leaving the confessional, “Jesus invited me to make him the center of my life.” Joshua felt Jesus’ words. “You’ve tried everything to be happy, why not give me a try?”



Scan the QR code to view Josh's story.



After graduation, while working as a medical scribe, he was struck by how most patients talked about their emotional sadness versus their physical pain. He felt the Holy Spirit nudge his heart, saying: “Remember, Josh? This was you! What they’re missing is faith.”

He went on to join a young adult group where a wise diocesan priest offered him direction. There are three types of doctors: Doctors of the body. Doctors of the mind. And Doctors of the soul — Catholic priests.

“I finally knew what I was being called to do!” said Joshua.

He is now in his third year at Mundelein Seminary and will be ordained a priest in 2027.

The CMAA supports The Office of Vocations which helps educate and prepare our seminarians for the priesthood.

The CMAA supports Catholic Charities Counseling Services to reach those in need of mental health care.



Scan the QR code to view the story on mental health.



Where There's Community — There's Healing

The trauma of homelessness takes a toll on mental health. Thanks in large part to CMAA donors, the counseling services of Catholic Charities has broadened their client base to include Daybreak Center, an emergency shelter in Joliet. Working with individuals and families, their mission is strong: to help navigate the healing journey.

Building community aids in the healing process. Group therapy is one way to do this. As is the program’s open-door policy that invites clients to continue therapy after they’ve secured housing outside the facility. “We want them to know they are an important part of our community and welcome back as needed,” shared Division Director, Dr. Corinna House.

Dr. House recognizes the benefits of counseling and its positive impact on stable housing. “We realize that in order for our clients to secure and sustain housing, we need to address mental health.”

Jane O’Connell, a licensed therapist at Daybreak, finds tremendous joy in walking with her clients on their journey to wellness. “They’re human beings— just like me.” She is truly grateful for the CMAA donors.

“Their generosity keeps our programs at the shelter and in our community going!”