



CARDINAL CONNECTION

St. Catherine School Alumni Newsletter † Spring 2023

Inspiring excellence through faith, learning and service.

540 3rd Ave. NE
Valley City, ND 58072

701-845-1453

stcatherine.k12.nd.us

Pastor
Father Paul Duchschere

Principal
Mr. Nick Lee

The Cardinal Connection is published by the St. Catherine School Education Board

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Father Paul Duchschere: One (School) Year Down...



It's June, and my first year as pastor at St. Catherine's is done. A lot has happened during my first year at the parish, and a big part of that has been St. Catherine's School. For those of you who pre-date my arrival, there were some new things at the school

this past year – like a new principal. For myself, *everything* was new at the school this past year. And I can also state quite sincerely that (almost) everything at the school has been a pleasant and even rewarding part of my first year as pastor here. (I have to qualify that last statement with an “almost” since the various leaks, backups, and other infrastructural deficiencies in our older buildings were not pleasant or rewarding... On the other hand, all things considered, even our “older buildings” did quite well, considering all that mother nature threw at them this past year.)

When I first toured the school building upon being named the new pastor last year, I was immediately enamored of the chapel space. I decided we would use it once again for the weekly school Mass, while continuing to hold the monthly “All School Mass” in the big church. With our smaller enrollment at present, our school chapel holds everyone quite comfortably. I am glad that decision was made. It has been a real blessing to worship our God in the Mass each week in the school itself, in a chapel dedicated especially for that.

I can already feel a bit of the bittersweetness of having our sixth-graders moving on to another school, but I am also excited about the new class of kindergartners to come at St. Kate's this fall. In the meantime, let's all appreciate and enjoy the beautiful season we call “summer” here in the northern plains as the gift it is from Our Lord! St. Catherine of Alexandria – pray for us.

Principals Office: Mr. Nick Lee

Wow! I cannot believe that the first school year at St. Catherine School is at its close. This year has flown by! There has been fires to put out and tough days at work. However, this school is a special place, and I am so thankful that God called me here. Next year, my oldest two sons will be joining me at the school. Micaiah will be in 2nd grade and Eliam will be in kindergarten. I said during Kindergarten Round-Up in February to a group of prospective parents that the highest praise that I could give this school is that I WANT my own kids at this school. Not only do I WANT my own kids here, I KNOW that this is the best choice for them. I have worked in public schools and the level of attention and care that I see here daily is second to none. The teaching staff are exemplary and the non-teaching staff are second to none. I could not ask for a stronger team at

St. Catherine School. I KNOW that my kids will be guided and understand that there are expectations of them as they progress through their academic journey here and beyond. Since the founding of the school over 100 years, parents have been making the choice to send their kids here with the knowledge that they will grow both academically and spiritually. God is present in these halls and in these classrooms. Catholic Schools are vital now, more than ever, to help guide students and shape them. Share your story about St. Catherine School with those you know in the Valley City area. How did St. Catherine School impact you? Encourage anyone you may know to consider this school. It is a special place and one that I pray more students will know the gift of.



Q&A

with St. Catherine Teachers

We asked all of our teachers the same five questions. Each issue we will feature two of them.



Miss. Calista Miller
1st & 2nd Grade

What is your most fond school memory?

My most fond school memory would be music programs. I love music! Even though, I am not the best signer I still enjoyed learning new songs.

What was your favorite subject in school?

My favorite school subject in school is language arts.

What is your favorite activity outside of school?

I enjoy spending as much time outside as the ND weather will allow. So that ranges from going on walks to reading a book on my hammock.

What helped you decide to become a teacher?

I also knew I wanted to be a teacher from a young age, because I've always loved helping children learn.

What do you like best about St. Catherine School?

The thing I like the most about St. Catherine School is the community.



Mr. Austen Meyer
Language Arts/Title 1

What is your most fond school memory?

The first thing that comes to mind when I think of elementary school memories would be doing book studies where we would either read a book in groups or a class and then once we finish the book, we watched the movie that went along with it.

What was your favorite subject in school?

Growing up my favorite subject other than PE would be science because I enjoyed doing experiments and other hands-on activities.

What is your favorite activity outside of school?

My favorite activity is fishing. I love spending time on my boat fishing.

What helped you decide to become a teacher?

Between having younger family members and coaching youth hockey I realized I really enjoy working with kids.

What do you like best about St. Catherine School?

The smaller feel where I can get to know each student in the entire school not just the students in my classroom.

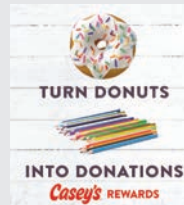
Retirement Congratulations



Mrs. Sandi Mielke has been our Food Service Director for the past 6 years. She keeps our tummies full of delicious, nutritious meals so our minds are fueled well for learning! Sandi is retiring at the end of May and we will greatly miss her!



Casey's Rewards



Our school is participating in Cash for Classrooms, part of Casey's Rewards.

This opens up St. Catherine School to new funding opportunities to help improve learning environments for students.

The best part? Donations don't come out of your own pocket. When you buy from Casey's and use their rewards program you can simply turn your points into a donation to our school.

Help St. Catherine School make the most of this program and learn more at <http://casesys.com/schools>.

Nearly Nu

Did you know... Each year the Nearly Nu Consignment and Emporium, in Valley City, donates a large sum of money to St. Catherine School! By supporting the Nearly Nu with shopping, donations, consignments, and even volunteering, you also support St. Catherine School.

The PTO also has a consignment number for your use! By using **consignor number 912**, instead of your own, the Nearly Nu gives the St. Catherine PTO 100% of the proceeds!

The PTO pays for many activities for the school and greatly appreciates the funds generated by the Nearly Nu sales.

ALUMNI UPDATES: Do you have updated contact information?

Please send name/address/phone/email changes to tara.praska@k12.nd.us





I have enclosed a CHECK or CASH in the amount of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other _____

- Please make checks payable to St. Catherine School
- Mail to: St. Catherine School, 540 3rd Ave. NE, Valley City, ND 58072

PLEASE HELP KEEP OUR ALUMNI LIST CURRENT, FILL OUT THE INFORMATION BELOW:

First	Last	Maiden	Graduation Year
Address	City	State	Zip
Phone	Email		

-OR- Online Giving at St. Catherine's SAFE, EASY, AND CONVENIENT!

A safe and easy way to help provide financial support for the needs of the parish and school.

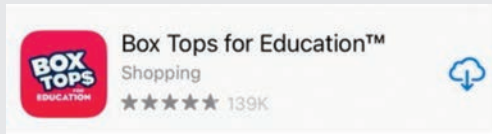
www.catherineofalexandria.org/online-giving

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Box Tops for Education™: A simple way to EARN FREE MONEY for St. Catherine School

In just a few steps you can earn \$\$ from Box Tops by scanning your receipts in the App on your phone.

1. Go to your App Store and download the Box Tops for Education App.



2. Create a login account to sign in. It can be as easy as typing your email address in and making a password.

3. It will then ask you to Complete your Profile. You'll enter your First and Last Name, Birth date and Zip Code.

4. Then you will need to Find A School. Type in the search box 58072, which will bring up the schools in Valley City. Please select St. Catherine School.

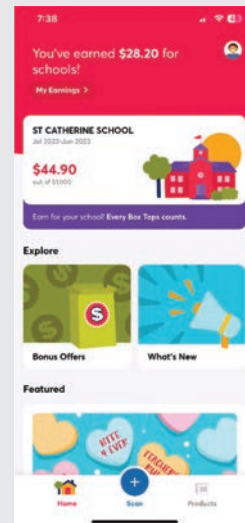
5. A Welcome screen will appear, and you'll hit Let's Go.

6. The two pictures (right) are as follows:

a. (Left) The main screen you will see each time you enter the app. When you have the receipt and are ready to scan, you'll lay it flat on your counter and hit the Scan button at the bottom of the screen, and choose paper receipt.

b. (Right) You'll then take the picture of the receipt and hit Confirm in the lower right-hand corner.

7. If there are eligible items that you've purchased, it will automatically send the \$\$ to St. Catherine School and you can then throw away your receipt. One thing to note, there is a 2-week expiration on receipts. Thank you!



Alumni Spotlight: Maggie (Gassmann) Oakland



Margaret Gassmann, 9th grade Class of 1988

My name was Margaret Gassmann when I attended St. Catherine school from 1978 until 1988. I was raised on a fourth-generation family farm, a cherished legacy to our homesteaded family. My father and grandfather attended St. Catherine before me. My son, John Oakland, is "graduating" with the St. Catherine sixth grade class in May of 2023, representing the fourth generation of my family to have attended St. Catherine School.

For better or worse, my parents started me in Kindergarten at age four to get me out of the house and in the company of other children. Sister Debra Berry taught our class of twenty. Ten years later, I was one of the final twelve ninth graders to "graduate" from St. Catherine. My classmates and I studied French with Sr. Eugene

Marie and learned to type on manual typewriters. Sr. Mary Severin helped us in the library and sold us cute, hand-painted ceramic figurines from Maryvale. In those years, we had many lay teachers but also still received instruction from some Sisters of Mary of the Presentation. My second grade teacher, Sr. Albert Marie, made a lifelong impression upon me as one of the most loving, humble, and patient individuals I've ever met. Mrs. Gulmon was new at St. Catherine, when she taught my fourth grade class. We used card catalogues, encyclopedias, and rotary phones. We had never heard of the Internet.

"Google" was known only to mathematicians and only as the misspelled name of a very large number. In junior high, we had a blast taking turns playing "Oregon Trail" on the green screens of four large, shared PCs. We had a basketball team, "The Cardinals," and cheerleaders, which filled our gym bleachers with energy and pride. Our ninth-graders chronicled those days in soft-covered yearbooks. Mrs. Cheryl Rowekamp, Mr. Tom Ukestad, and Mr. Jerry Lukes were junior high teachers, and Mr. Ralph Dyrness was our Principal. Around the time our class received our ninth grade "diplomas", parish parents received a letter from Bishop James Sullivan, advising that St. Catherine junior high would be closing due to underutilization. He said he hoped the closure would be temporary. It wasn't.

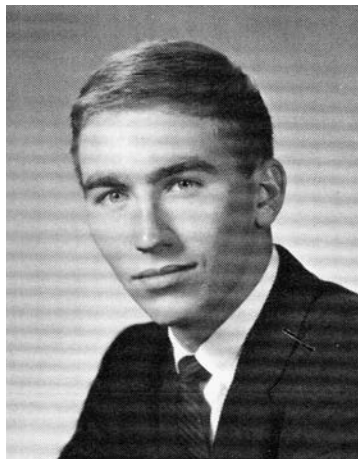
After St. Catherine, I attended St. John's Preparatory School in Collegeville, MN for two years, returning home as a senior to graduate from VCHS in 1991. I worked various jobs while attending college part-

time, eventually obtaining my Bachelors in Psychology and Mathematics from UND. In those years, I volunteered with a homeless shelter and with the American Red Cross. My most memorable volunteer assignment involved traveling to Manhattan in 2001 to help survivors of the 9-11 disaster. After college, I worked as a case manager for Northeast Human Service Center for nine years while also playing keyboards and singing full-time with the band FIRE. I married my favorite guitar player and best friend Dave Oakland in 2006. Our son John was born in 2011, prompting me to quit the band. I subsequently completed a Masters in Counseling at UND and returned with my family to Valley City to work as a licensed professional clinical counselor (LPCC). Today, I see people having addiction and mental health needs all over North Dakota via telehealth, to provide diagnostic assessments and recommendations for their behavioral health care. I am also a national certified guardian (NCG) with Lighthouse Associates, and I play a few music jobs each year with my family band, Oakland Grove.

My advice to current students: cherish the best experiences you have and learn from the worst ones. Remember you can appreciate diversity while remaining true to your own values and heritage. Practice whatever you want to master, but practice compassion above all. Finally, carry your faith in your heart wherever you go: It will give you direction and peace in difficult times.



*John Aloysius Gassmann,
St. Catherine Boarding School*



*John Thomas Gassmann,
St. Catherine Class of 1964*



*John Oakland, St. Catherine
6th grade Class of 2023*



*Maggie with Sr. Albert Marie,
circa 2002*



ST. CATHERINE SCHOOL 2023 GRADUATES

MRS. IHRY • BRYCEN • CHLOE • ELIJAH • JOEY • JOHN • KAYDENCE • LEXI • MYLES • PETER



▲ Graduation Mass took place on May 24, 2023.

◀ Back Row L to R: John Oakland, Peter Eberle, Lexi Svenningsen, Joey Saylor, Myles Elliott
Front Row L to R: Elijah Praska, Brycen Berg, Chloe Liebersbach, Kaydence Blunck

▼ Four of the nine 2023 St. Catherine School 6th grade graduates have alumni parents!



Bridget (O'Brien) Blunck and daughter, Kaydence



Maggie (Gassmann) Oakland and son, John



Tara (Kohler) Svenningsen and daughter, Lexi



Heather (Conlon) Elliott and son, Myles



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Memorable Moments from 2022–2023

1. 6th graders attended Eco Ed in the fall. They made their school proud by being attentive, polite, and respectful listeners and participants!
2. All Saints Day parade on October 26, 2023. Students, teachers, and staff dressed as Saints and paraded around the church for parents and parishioners.
3. Science in September with STEM at VCSU! 5th and 6th graders walked to the college weekly and learned about the LEGO EV3 Robotics kit. Thank you Mr. Wirth and Mr. Docker.
4. K–2 had so much fun learning all about fire safety! Thank you, Will Blunck, for making time to come in, read to us, show us the truck, and even give rides!
5. St. Catherine parishioners collected items for the Barnes County Food Pantry. 5th and 6th grade helped load the items into the Nearly Nu trailer and delivered them to the food pantry.
6. Students had a blast riding in the 2022 Homecoming Parade.
7. Mrs. Ihry's 5th and 6th grade class participated in the *River of Dreams* program. Learn about it at this website and read the student's creative stories about their canoes!
<https://riverofdreams.org/launches/20230508/canoes>



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8. May Crowning Mass. It is a tradition that the oldest and youngest students in the school place the crown on Mary. 1st and 2nd graders participate as the honor guard.
9. 3rd and 4th graders took a field trip to the National Buffalo Museum, Frontier Village and the 1883 Stutsman County Courthouse!
10. Kindergarten had a fun afternoon at the bowling alley.
11. Dress-up day for Catholic Schools Week. These men were dressed to impress!
12. The 5th and 6th grade class took the long trek to Washburn to visit the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.
13. A is for Adoption. F is for FAMILY! As a school family we attended the Adoption ceremony for Chloe. Priceless experience. We are a family: we cry together, we cheer together, and we celebrated together with inflatables in the gym that afternoon.

CARDINAL CONNECTION • ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

God is Good—All the Time!

St. Catherine Elementary School
540 3rd Ave. NE
Valley City, ND 58072

Parents: If this issue is addressed to your son or daughter who no longer lives at this address, please email tara.praska@k12.nd.us with an updated address. Thank you for helping us keep our records current.

It's not the ride, it's who you're riding it with.

**ST. CATHERINE SCHOOL'S
51ST ANNUAL AUCTION
SAVE THE DATE: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2023**

