



Our Lady of HOPE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

DAUGHTERS OF ISABELLA

*Growing Together Spiritually,
Serving the Wider Community*

For over 120 years, the Daughters of Isabella have served local communities with a shared commitment to faith, friendship, and service. Established in 1897 at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn., the organization began as an auxiliary to the Knights of Columbus but is not presently considered to be affiliated with the Knights.

There are thousands of members across chapters around the world, serving in various capacities in their own communities and parishes. Their local chapters are also known as Circles. Our local group, Ave Maria Circle #598, was founded in 1936 and encompasses members from various local parishes.

"Our mission is to support one another in spiritual growth while serving our community through charitable, civic, and social programs," says Melea Lunsford. "As Catholic women and disciples of Jesus Christ, we are

called to minister with love, respect, and justice to all people."

Each local circle determines its own focus of outreach, which is based on its community. The Ave Maria Circle #598 primarily focuses on supporting youth and families, with an emphasis on the Respect Life initiatives.

The group fundraises through opportunities such as offering concessions at Bingo and their annual nut sale. Some of the causes they support include St. Elizabeth Coleman Pregnancy & Adoption Services, our local Pregnancy Care Center, youth-focused programs and scholarships, and our parish.

The group's motto is: "Unity, Friendship, and Charity."

"These values are reflected in every aspect of the organization's work — from monthly meetings and prayer



gatherings to fundraising events and volunteer efforts," Melea says.

The group members strive to be a "positive force in their parishes, communities, and the world."

Many of those who join the Daughters of Isabella do so out of a desire to serve others and grow spiritually. For Melea, it was seeing others in action that led her to get involved.

"Personally, I was inspired by the legacy of strong Catholic women in our parish and wanted to be part of a community that uplifts and empowers others," she says. "Serving as Regent allows me to give back to my parish and community while walking

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HOSPITALITY EXTENDS TO

Our Family

AT HOME AND IN OUR PARISH



As Catholics, we are members of two very important family units. First, there are our own families, which consist of our spouses and children. And as a parish community, we are members of a larger “family of faith,” along with our clergy and fellow parishioners. Of course, both types of units share in the Catholic faith, as we gather to celebrate Mass each Sunday.

Yet, all does not appear to be well. The modern media unfortunately seems to place a heavy emphasis on the destruction of both types of family units. Indeed, every day, we are bombarded with disconcerting stories about the various issues that threaten the vital bonds of the family — divorce, abuse, gay marriage, and abortion, just to name a few. At the same time, the “families of faith” in our own parishes have also been threatened by a number of issues, from scandals and

mismanagement of resources, to drops in Mass attendance and school enrollment.

All of these threats and issues most certainly promote a hostile environment for today’s American Catholics. In turn, we may feel that there is little we can do to counter the negativity that is so pervasive within our country towards those practicing the Catholic faith.

The good news is that finding the solution to such seemingly insurmountable problems often begins in the most simple and basic of places — at home. In this particular case, it begins in *two* homes — that of our own family, and in the parish home of our “family of faith.”

Certainly, we would like visitors in our own homes to feel welcome, whether they are extended family, familiar friends or new acquaintances. Therefore, we do whatever we can to make these visitors feel appreciated — we might prepare a

homemade meal for our guests, or serve them a fresh cup of coffee, all while we initiate a friendly and insightful conversation.

Of course, this effort to make visitors to our home feel welcome is a wonderful example of providing *hospitality*, one of the four key pillars of stewardship.

So, if we consider our other family unit — the “family of faith” in our own parish — the same can be applied to those entering our church for worship and fellowship. Whether we make an effort to get to know some of the familiar faces we see at church each Sunday, reach out to someone who is new to the community, or extend a warm welcome to those visiting our parish, we are following Jesus’ example of hospitality at its most foundational and engaging level.

Of course, while hospitality serves to enhance worship and fellowship for the entire parish family, it also impacts our community on a day-to-day basis. If we foster a welcoming environment in our parish home and present the many opportunities to minister and serve, involvement will only increase throughout the community! Therefore, if hospitality continues to flourish throughout the parish and its many ministries, so will the stewardship way of life!

ORDINARY TIME: Living the Extraordinary in the Everyday

Dear Parishioners,

As the Christmas lights fade and the familiar rhythm of daily life returns, the Church enters a period we call Ordinary Time. At first, that name might sound uninspiring, but in truth, there is nothing “ordinary” about it. Ordinary Time offers us the chance to grow steadily and faithfully in our relationship with God — to live out the Gospel in the midst of our everyday routines and responsibilities. It is a season that invites quiet spiritual growth and deep reflection on what it means to follow Christ in all things.

For those striving to live stewardship as a way of life, Ordinary Time reminds us that holiness is not reserved for the mountaintop moments of faith. It is found in the small, daily choices we make to love, serve, and give. Each time we offer a kind word, share our talents, or take a few extra moments to pray, we are living as stewards and disciples. Stewardship is not only about grand gestures or special occasions; it is about allowing God’s grace to shape how we live in the ordinary moments of each day.

This is also a good season to reflect on balance and renewal. After the busyness of the holidays, many of us feel



the need to slow down and restore order to our lives. Let us remember that peace and renewal come not from the world, but from Christ Himself. Taking time for prayer, the sacraments, and community involvement brings a sense of purpose and direction that nothing else can match. I encourage you to look for opportunities to engage more deeply in parish life — whether through a ministry, a small faith group, or simple acts of service that strengthen the bonds of our community.

When we live each day with gratitude and intentionality, we transform the ordinary into something sacred. Christ is present in our work, our families, our joys, and our struggles. Let us carry His light into our everyday lives and continue to build a parish family that radiates His love in all we do.

In Christ,

Fr. Paul Ferguson

Fr. Paul Ferguson
Pastor



LOOKING FORWARD TO CAT *Celebrating Education,*



This drawing by Marie Ringwald won first place during a Catholic Schools Week contest.



Lane Myers carries the cross as Jesus during a reenactment of the Passion while Alexandria Miles comforts him.

Every year, Catholic schools around the country celebrate Catholic Schools Week during the last week of January — and our Catholic school community is no different! Sara Voges, Director of Marketing for Washington Catholic Schools, is looking forward to this year's celebration.

"It's a time to celebrate the gift of Catholic education," Sara says. "Our community keeps us going, and we're grateful. Every year, we take treat boxes of either cookies or thank-you cards the students make, and the students walk them over to businesses around us, such as the courthouse, the YMCA, the sheriff's station, and New End Zone. We use them often for a lot of our school stuff. We want to thank them for continuing to support us."

While the week still includes academics, the celebratory feel is unique to Catholic Schools Week.

"We continue our academics but also incorporate some fun," Sara says. "We want students to be on fire for their faith. They should realize what a privilege it is that we have a Catholic school in such a small town."

Sara's two children have attended Washington Catholic since preschool — currently, Brody is a sophomore, and Max is in seventh grade.

"To me, faith is at the heart of everything we do," Sara says. "We teach students not only academics, but also how to live with purpose and compassion. To me, that's important. You don't get that at every school. They worry just about the academics, but we worry about the entire child.

"It's a family atmosphere," she adds. "Everybody knows everybody. We truly care about every one of these students, and we want the best for them. Teachers and staff members go the extra mile to make sure kids are safe, learning, and loved here at Washington Catholic."

Every year, the week is filled with fun activities, contests, and special events. In the past, there have been dress theme days, Catholic trivia, *Jeopardy!*, and more.

"We also drew teachers' names, and they had to trade grades," Sara says. "Some high school teachers had to go to the elementary, and the elementary had to come to the high school. It's a fun activity to get to know our students and appreciate what our teachers do. We also do different contests, such as drawing or acting. We've had lip-syncing battles. There are winners throughout the week."

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2026

Community, and Faith

Mass for students in kindergarten through 12th grade is held at 9 a.m. on Thursday of Catholic Schools Week. All parishioners are invited to attend.

“This year, I’m really excited because I’m going to invite priests from all over to come to our school,” she says. “Washington Catholic has been here 168 years. That’s a huge accomplishment. Priests appreciate Catholic schools, so they’re going to support it anyway they can.”

This year’s theme is “Building a Future of Hope”. Plans are put together by a team — they’ve been working hard on it all year.

“They’re always trying to make it new and fresh,” Sara says. Parents and parishioners can get involved, as well. We love when parents and parishioners get involved in school activities,” Sara

says. “They just need to reach out. I’m on social media, and most of the parents and parishioners know me and know how to get in contact with me. We absolutely love to have everybody involved.

“I make myself very available,” she adds. “I believe in our mission here at Washington Catholic, which is also a mission of Our Lady of Hope. I believe in everything we do, so I love to spread the message and help others get involved.”

We hope the whole community will help celebrate our Catholic schools, our children, and our faith.

“It’s a crazy world out there,” Sara says. “Inside Washington Catholic, we have Jesus on our side. We’re going to make it the most comfortable, safe place for these children. I don’t want them to worry about anything.”



Fr. Juan Ramirez sits with the Spirituality Committee on World Rosary Day.

Those interested in getting involved for Catholic Schools Week may contact Sara Voges at svoges@evdio.org or 812-486-6456 (call or text).

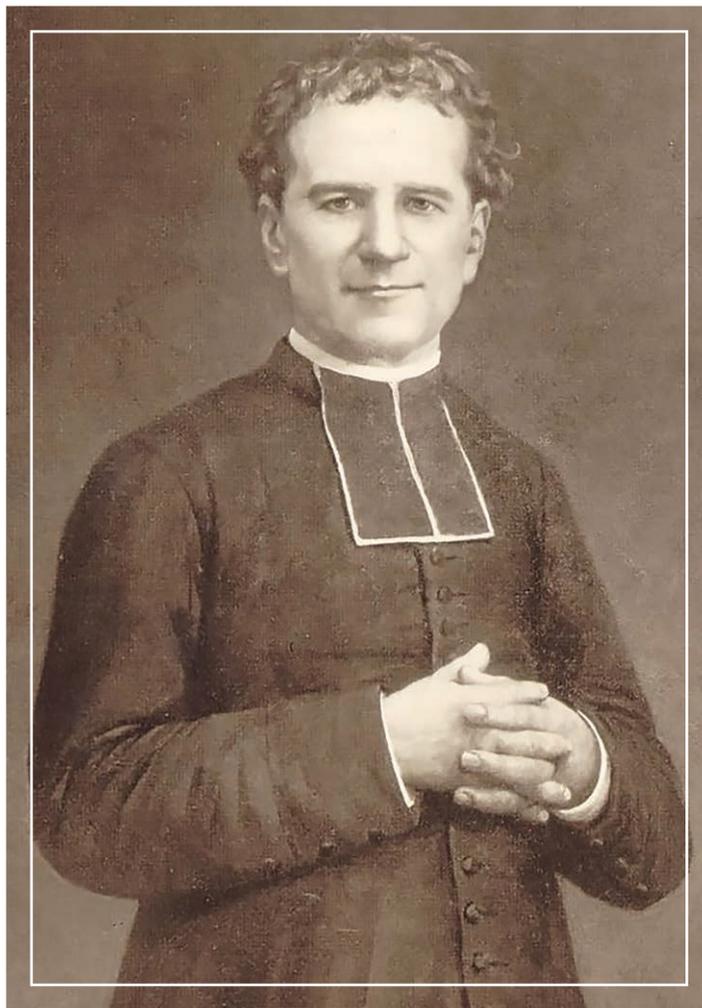
St. John Bosco: A Steward of Youth and Hope

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.

Meet Our Bereavement Ministry

Providing Comfort and Support in Times of Loss

For more than three decades, the Bereavement Ministry has quietly carried out a ministry of hospitality and compassion that touches countless lives. The team prepares luncheons following parish funerals — this offers grieving families not just physical nourishment, but also a place of comfort and fellowship.

When a funeral is scheduled, the parish provides the meat for the luncheon, while a group of volunteers prepares the vegetables, fruit, salads, other sides, and desserts. Volunteers are notified on a rotating basis, so it is not always the same parishioners being asked to provide food.

The Knights of Columbus building provides lots of space for families to gather, talk, and remain together as long as they wish. This relieves the families of the burden of hosting in their own homes and creates a welcoming environment where no one has to worry about cooking or cleaning during their time of grief.

The ministry began more than 30 years ago. In its early days, volunteers would deliver meat trays to grieving families. Over time, they recognized that there was a greater need — a full meal and a gathering place where families could find comfort together. That sparked the formation of the current ministry. Yvonne Evans has been part of the ministry since its formation, and over the years, she has seen the impact that this seemingly simple meal can have on grieving families.

“We serve the people as they are mourning,” Yvonne says. “They are so happy to have this opportunity and are so grateful to whoever is serving. A lot of the time, there are family members who come in from out of town, and the whole family is able to come together and visit with no worries about space or cleanup. It is more than just the food. It provides comfort and space to grieve together.”

Volunteers themselves find spiritual growth through serving as part of this ministry. Preparing food and serving

others in moments of grief helps strengthen their faith and renew bonds within the parish community. Some volunteers have been involved for many years, and they find joy in helping the families, but also in rekindling friendships and deepening their spiritual lives.

The ministry includes many wonderful parishioners who volunteer to prepare and drop off food for the luncheons, as well as 20 to 30 volunteers who assist with calling and organizing food preparation, serving, and cleaning up the meals.

“I would like to give a special thanks to those volunteers who are so in tune with the needs of the parish families who are grieving,” Yvonne says. “I don’t think they always know what a great service they provide and what a profound impact they have on these families.”



To get involved, either to help serve the meals or prepare food, contact Yvonne Evans or Dot Doyle by calling the parish office at 812-254-2883.

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Daughters of Isabella *continued from front cover*

alongside other women in faith.”

The ladies meet on the second Tuesday of each month — excluding July — at 5 p.m. for fellowship, then have a business meeting at 6 p.m. Their meetings take place at the Washington Knights of Columbus.

“Each month, our Circle gathers for a social hour, followed by a structured meeting that begins with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance,” Melea says. “We welcome new members, share a spiritual reflection, and review minutes and financial reports. Committees provide updates on outreach efforts, including support for the sick, Respect Life initiatives, youth programs, and membership growth. We also plan upcoming events and charitable activities.

Meetings conclude with prayer, a reaffirmation of our commitment to the Order, and time for community and connection.”

The ministry seeks to bring women together through fellowship, prayer, and action. It is a great way for parishioners to get to know one another, grow in faith together, and serve our local community.

“Members form lasting friendships and find strength in supporting one another,” Melea says. “By working together on charitable initiatives, we live out our faith in action and deepen our connection to Christ and each other.”

The Daughters of Isabella welcome all Catholic women age 16 and older to join them!

To learn more or get involved, feel free to attend a monthly meeting or contact Melea Lunsford at 812-486-8310.

