Prayerfully consider joining the Deo Gratias Society with your gift to the 2023 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. In addition to spiritual benefits, membership includes an annual Mass and a special recognition in our publication for society members.

Educating children and adults in the faith through Catholic schools and religious education
Ministering to people of all ages, abilities and ethnicities
Honoring the dignity of life
Serving our brothers and sisters in need through Catholic Charities
Strengthening vocations, educating seminarians and supporting clergy
Serving and protecting children and parishioners

2022 CMAA ALLOCATIONS

In 2022, gifts to the Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal supported essential ministries in the Diocese of Joliet.

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<tr>
<th>PARISH/MISSION</th>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>CMAA GOAL</th>
<th>2022 CMAA GOAL</th>
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<td>St. Anne Parish</td>
<td>Joliet</td>
<td>$5,100</td>
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<td>Sacred Heart Parish</td>
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<td>Immaculate Conception Parish</td>
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<td>Divine Savior Parish</td>
<td>Downers Grove</td>
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<td>Queen of Heaven Parish</td>
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When we join together, we make a difference in the lives of many.

Our seniors belong to God.

When Joyce signed up for Catholic Charities’ Senior Companion Program, she needed the type of assistance many older adults who live alone do: “I’m not able to drive my car, and I really felt isolated,” she said.

Not only did she find someone to help her run errands and take her to the doctor, but she also gained a close friend in companion, Charlie Williams. “I appreciate everything she does for me, and I really appreciate having a friend,” Joyce said. “I just love her. We’ve developed a bond, and I feel very fortunate for that.”

Charlie began volunteering after she retired and learned about the Senior Companion Program at her church. After she completed 50 hours of training, Catholic Charities matched her with Joyce. The two visit regularly as well as talk on the phone. Charlie has connected Joyce with other resources from the agency and community partners.

“I realized I need to help others to further develop my faith, and also to put my faith into action,” Charlie said. “She’s helped me also, by just being a friend.”

The CMAA supports Catholic Charities and helps older adults stay independent.

Our children belong to God.

Every morning, students at Mother Teresa Catholic Academy in Crete make their way to the gym so the school community can begin their day together, in prayer.

“The kids know that prayer is central to all we do,” said Annie Murray, principal.

The school is dedicated to being both academically excellent and what Annie calls “unapologetically” Catholic. Students attend Mass every week and gather monthly to pray the Rosary and the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy. From an early age, they learn how to lead their classmates in prayer as well as how to pray spontaneously and share those conversations with God with others.

As principal, her goal is for Mother Teresa students to realize that they can call on Jesus in prayer.

“God is always standing there waiting for us, arms wide open — we just have to turn around and look,” she said. “He really wants us to understand that belonging to God means that we are deeply, passionately loved.”

The CMAA supports the Catholic Schools Office, which serves Catholic elementary and high schools in the diocese as well as the administrators, teachers and staff members forming students academically and spiritually.

Our seminars belong to God.

Deacon Frank Pustari was just seven years old when a classmate asked if he was going to be a priest. He’d received a scapular for his First Holy Communion and, apparently, wearing it on the outside of his clothes like a priest meant he was going to be one too.

The idea stuck with him and became a spark that was nurtured through the years by parish priests at St. Walter in Roselle and the saints, whose lives he studied and considered emulating as a member of a religious community. But junior year in college, during a silent retreat he helped organize, he felt God calling him to the diocesan priesthood.

“One thing emphasized throughout the retreat was, if you give God this time of silence, He’ll speak to you,” Deacon Frank said.

Since his heart had been set on joining a religious order, he decided to pretend he had not heard the Lord and instead went on to graduate and start his job search. But that summer, while volunteering with the Catholic youth program Totus Tuus, he got to know several Diocese of Joliet seminarians.

“I could imagine myself being one of them,” Deacon Frank said. “Within a month, I was talking to the vocations director and applying to the seminary.”

Deacon Frank is now in his final year at Mundelein Seminary, preparing for his ordination to the diocesan priesthood. “This is where God wants me to be,” he said.

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

Our most vulnerable belong to God.

Throughout the Gospel, Christ calls upon His followers to care for the most vulnerable among us.

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops established the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People to address allegations of the sexual abuse of minors by clergy and to provide dioceses with guidelines for reconciliation, healing and accountability and steps to prevent abuse.

In accordance with the charter, and to maintain safe environments for children and vulnerable adults, the Diocese of Joliet requires all clergy, employees and volunteers who minister with those vulnerable populations to comply with diocesan safe environment compliance requirements. This includes participating in a VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children for Adults training and submitting to a criminal background check.

The diocese also gives assistance to victims-survivors of abuse and their families.

Our diocese has a victim assistance coordinator who is available to talk with and listen to victims-survivors and help them make a report to civil authorities.

“The importance of this ministry to maintain safe environments isn’t only for the safety of our children and vulnerable adults, but also for those of us who minister to them,” said Leah Heffernan, director of Child and Youth Protection.

The CMAA supports the protection of children and vulnerable adults in our diocese.

Those with special needs belong to God.

Each autumn, families gather at the Mass for those with special needs, which Bishop Hicks celebrates at the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus in Joliet. Ensuring that every child in the Diocese of Joliet is formed in the Catholic faith, especially those with special needs, is Renata Cichowicz’s mission and passion in life.

As a leader of pastoral outreach for the diocese, Renata overseas religious education for children and adults with Down syndrome, autism and other disabilities, as well as hearing loss — those she considers the “precious gems in the community.”

Currently, too few such programs exist in the diocese. Her goal is to increase the number of parishes offering different stages of this specialized faith formation, as well as continuing spiritual formation for adults with special needs, so all families have an option. She also plans to provide education to parishes about how to embrace those with special needs and make them feel welcome.

“As long as they feel safe and have attention, they really can point us to what love is all about — that it’s unconditional,” she said.

The CMAA supports faith formation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.