



Catholic Schools  
United in Faith and Community

# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC SCHOOL PERRYVILLE, MISSOURI

## WE ARE A PROUD CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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# Faculty preparing for Catholic Schools Week

By Justin Hotop  
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St. Vincent students and faculty are getting ready to celebrate their Catholic Education next week.

Since 1974, National Catholic Schools Week is the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. It starts the last Sunday in January and runs all week, which in 2024 is January 28 – February 3.

The theme for National Catholic Schools Week 2024 is “Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community.” Schools typically observe the annual celebration week with Masses, open houses and other activities for students, families, parishioners and community members.

Through these events, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to our church, our communities and our nation.

In what has become a staple for St. Vincent during the week. The students attend the “Pass the Light” Mass in which senior students and the kindergarten class are recognized during a special ceremony as the seniors pass on traditions and welcome the younger students into the student body.

“Passing the Light during our CSW Mass is rich in tradition. The seniors are now ready to take their light into the world. This Mass in-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

St. Vincent Elementary and High School students are eagerly awaiting a week-long series of activities devoted to celebrating Catholic education. Since 1974, National Catholic Schools Week is the annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. It starts the last Sunday in January and runs all week.

volves our seniors handing the light over to our kindergartners as a testimony to continue igniting their light while at SV, so they too can develop and learn to be everything God created them to be,” St. Vincent Elementary School Principal Diane Unterreiner said. “All

attending this Mass are able to see the transformation of a child from early steps to the present.”

In past years, local businesses have provided teachers and staff with a special lunch. Students have presented placemats for retired priests in the area.

Rake Day, typically held the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving, is one-way students at the St. Vincent community have given back.

Other examples for this include making blessing bags for those in need, and giving to the local food pan-

try,

St. Vincent has celebrated the nation and the community leaders. St. Vincent had the VFW color guard at SV for a flag blessing by Father Jay Jung and a flag raising ceremony by the VFW color guard.

It was a K-12 event at the SVHS flagpole. After the flag ceremony, Students met in the HS gym and Mayor Larry Riney and Caitlin Pistorio spoke to SV students about why faith is important, why Catholic education is important, and how one or the other shaped them into who they are today and how it helps them

in their daily careers and life.

St. Vincent Schools, located at 210 S. Water St., has been recognized as a Catholic Education Honor Roll school system. St. Vincent is ranked in the top five percent of Catholic schools by the program, so one knows that they offer a quality education. Along with serving grades K-12, St. Vincent also offers successful varsity sports for the athletic enthusiast, and that includes back-to-back Class 1 state championships for the girls’ soccer team, along with multiple clubs and other extracurricular activities.

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### SV students help in community

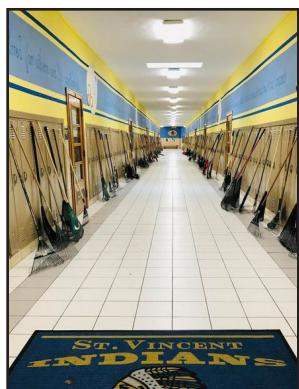
R-M staff

Rooted in faith and tradition, St. Vincent strives to always help out in the community.

"All students at SV have the opportunity to give back to our community throughout the school year," said Morgan Wheeler, administrative assistant at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic High School.

Students grades 8-12 complete service hours per year. Each St. Vincent graduating class completes a required amount of service hours. Many of the hours are completed through certain projects.

Some of the service projects students participate in are Operation Christmas Child, Options for Women drive, assisting at the SV Food Pantry, March for Life, Penny War for the Annual Catholic Appeal, serving mass for weekday and weekend religious services, serving funeral services and Rake Day along with many other events.



Rake Day has become a well-loved tradition at SV Jr/Sr High. Students and staff visit community members in need of help raking their yards. This could be the elderly, disabled, or ill members in the Perry County community.

"Students and staff will bring rakes and equipment from home and break out in small groups to efficiently clean the yards for those in need," Wheeler said. "This year, we were able to service roughly 40 Perry County yards."

### Pass the Light Mass a big tradition at St. Vincent

By Justin Hotop  
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Traditions are huge for any community or school. St. Vincent is no different as the school uses the "Pass the Light" Mass to kick off Catholic Schools Week.

All families of seniors and kindergarten students are invited to the "Pass the Light" Mass, which starts Monday, Jan. 30, at 8 a.m. The entire student body attends the special mass.

"Passing the Light during our CSW Mass is rich in tradition! The seniors are now ready to take their light into the world. This Mass involves our seniors handing the light over to our kindergartners as a testimony to continue igniting their light while at SV, so they too can develop and learn to be everything God created them to be," St. Vincent Elementary School Principal Diane Unterreiner said. "All attending this Mass are able to see the transformation of a child from early steps to the present."

During the ceremony, St. Vincent seniors and St. Vincent kindergartners process into the St. Vincent de Paul Church and perform a ceremonial "passing of the light." Seniors pass a



candle to the kindergarten students to signify passing the St. Vincent tradition to the kindergartners. As the seniors are leaving, kindergartners are entering their journey to Catholic faith.

"We are rich in tradition much like the Catholic religion is," Unterreiner said. "We want our hearts to be quiet enough to be open and let the Holy Spirit in."

During normal weeks, elementary students attend chapel on Wednesdays

while high schoolers take part in a weekly chapel mass Thursday morning. An all-school mass for kindergarten through 12th grade students is held once per month.

The 'Pass the Light' Mass is a big deal within the school.

"Parents and grandparents take off," Unterreiner said. "Our faith is a big deal and being able to build that relationship with God is huge. While academics are a huge part of school life at St. Vincent, creating a rela-

tionship with God while we are here is also important."

In the past, there have been relatives within the school who have been a part of this special ceremony, but regardless, Unterreiner noted that the seniors become role models for their younger St. Vincent counterparts in the process.

"These kindergartners look up to these seniors," Unterreiner said. "You can see it in the younger students' eyes sometimes, just how much they want to be a part of the older students' lives. It's a beautiful thing. As the elementary principal, I often share with my upper grade students that they are a hero in the eyes of those who are younger than them and each hero sets the example of the hero they want for them. This is like what happens during the Mass as our kindergartners look up to our seniors as their hero because of the example each SV senior provides."

Unterreiner noted that she looks forward to this particular ceremony each year.

"It's one of the best things we do here at St. Vincent, in my opinion," Unterreiner said. "It celebrates our faith as well as welcoming the kindergartners into the St. Vincent family."

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