

ST. CATHERINE SCHOOL
 Inspiring excellence through faith, learning and service.



2024 REACH Banquet

On Thursday, April 18, 2024, the annual REACH banquet was held at the Valley City Eagles Club with 60 guests in attendance. Music was performed by Valley City High School Choir Students, with Dianna VanBruggen providing piano accompaniment. Most unfortunately, our vocal microphone was not located until after the music was over. However, those sitting in close proximity to the vocalists enjoyed a lovely performance.

Father Paul thanked all in attendance and led the opening prayer. Guests enjoyed a long-popular roast beef entrée with salad, potatoes, vegetables, and dessert.

Jeff Trumbauer, Principal of St. John's Academy in Jamestown, ND, was featured as the keynote speaker. A "cradle Catholic" from Battle Lake, MN, he shared about his journey as a basketball coach and advancement director prior to being called upon by Monsignor Wald to serve as the principal at St. John's. He urged listeners to stay focused on the mission of passing on the faith, remarking that faith and love cannot simply be taught but must be shown by lived example. We are navigating a changing culture. Mass attendance has gone down and annulments have increased, indicating an erosion of faith among the general population. Nevertheless, there is hope: we can overcome the challenges we face through Jesus Christ. While our resources may seem scarce at times, they are abundant compared to what the Apostles had to work with two thousand years ago. God works through each of us, and he is in control. We must be bold in sharing our stories and in fighting for our kids.

Following the keynote address, our annual business meeting was held. REACH celebrated having donated \$15,000 to St. Catherine School for the 2023-2024 school year and welcomed new board members Valerie Holm and James Nelson. Forty-one active members were recognized for their support.

Before the night was over, St. Catherine alumnus Dale Sauer, who has done wood turning since 2008, presented a beautiful handmade wooden bowl to the school, to be donated for the 2024 Fall Auction. His craftsmanship and his generosity were deeply admired by those in attendance.

Mikki Isensee and Carol Knutson won the door prize bouquets, and Father Don Leiphon shared his joy in having been ordained for 55 years. We now look forward to the 2025 banquet, which will take place on April 3.

From the President's Desk

Greetings REACH members and Friends!



St. Catherine School became a part of my life's journey when I entered kindergarten in 1978, within just a few years of the REACH club's formation. In those days, the Sisters of Maryvale still had a prominent presence within the school. Sr. Debra was my Kindergarten teacher, and Sr. Albert Marie taught my class in second grade. Sr. Mary Severin helped us in the library, and Sr. Eugene Marie taught us French. However I remember that even back then, as a child, I noticed a subtle shift that was happening in this Catholic school and others, as the torch of teaching was gradually being passed from the Sisters, and more broadly, from the religious communities, to the laity.

Today, ample evidence shows that St. Catherine School faculty and staff still manifest a spirit of service and still feel called and intrinsically driven to do the important work that they do. However those faculty and staff live in a different world than the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation (SMP)

educators who preceded them.

North Dakota news outlets reported last year that the average starting teacher salary in North Dakota was just a little under \$21 per hour. To give that better context, keep in mind that teacher salaries in rural areas of the state tend to be at least 15% lower than in urban areas and that the teachers working in our privately funded St. Catherine School have historically made significantly less than their public school counterparts. Meanwhile, the cost of living in our beautiful community of Valley City has continued to increase over time. Unlike their SMP predecessors, today's teachers at St. Catherine may well have student loans to pay and children of their own to support. No amount of faith, altruism, or intrinsic motivation will enable them to literally and figuratively stay present for our children, if the numbers don't balance. This is one of the primary reasons why I have chosen to support REACH in the ways that I do. In supporting the school consistently over time, our organization supports the teachers who have always been, and who remain, so critical to its mission.

We hope you will enjoy the updates and pictures we've compiled here to keep in touch with our membership, the heart and soul of REACH. Thank you so much for your prayers and generous support of our organization and of St. Catherine school!

Maggie Oakland, REACH Board President

A SPECIAL VISIT TO A SPECIAL SCHOOL

This school year of 2024-25 at St. Catherine's School is my third now as pastor of this parish family. What a blessed school year it has been so far! And . . . just this very day as I write this (Thursday, February 13) was a great example of how special this place is.

Today the Bishop of Fargo, John Folda, came to Valley City and to St. Catherine's School in particular for a visit. This morning all the students, faculty and staff began the school day in our school chapel with Bishop Folda offering Mass with us.

We usually have a weekly Mass every Thursday during the school year in our school chapel, but you can imagine how special this one was with our bishop present among us.

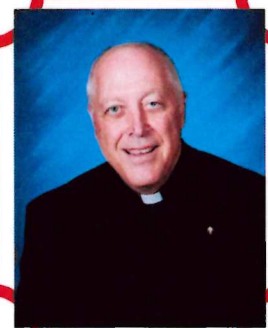
After Mass, Bishop Folda visited each of the classrooms, answering their questions and letting them get to know him. He even had a chance to drop in on the band class and listen in on one of their tunes!

Finally, after the classroom visits Bishop Folda had lunch with our 6th grade students and Mr. Lee and was able to continue his conversation with the older ones and share the school meal. You could tell the bishop enjoyed his time with us today - and you could also tell the students and staff enjoyed his visit.

What a blessing for these kids! To have Mass and worship the Lord God with a real bishop, to have him come to their classrooms and visit with them and answer their questions, to have lunch with them and share that time with them . . . And all because St. Catherine's School is a *Catholic* school, and we are able to do things like that in this school.

I appreciate your support of St. Catherine's School. My prayer is that it will be here for untold years to come, so that all the kids who are to come have a chance to have a day like these ones did today!

Fr. Paul Duchscher
Pastor





Principal's Page

A Legacy of Faith, Learning, and Service: Our Mission in Action

One of the greatest testaments to the strength of our school's mission is the number of alumni who choose to enroll their children here. This generational legacy is more than a tradition—it is a living, breathing example of how **faith, learning, and service** shape lives for years to come. Families who once walked these halls as students now entrust us with their children's education and spiritual growth, a tangible reminder that the work we do here is not just for today but for the future.

At the heart of our school's mission is a commitment to **inspiring excellence through faith, learning, and service**. This is not just a slogan: it is something we see and live every day. Our students grow in their knowledge, deepen their faith, and learn the value of service to others. As alumni return, now as parents, we are reminded that our school is more than a place of learning—it is a **community of faith** that endures through generations.

We are blessed with a new and exciting opportunity as we look ahead. This January, we received the go-ahead to **pursue a school-owned and operated daycare**. This initiative is not just about growth; it is about **fulfilling our mission in an even more substantial way**. Providing a faith-filled foundation from the beginning of a child's life is an incredible gift. It allows us to **welcome more families, nurture young hearts, and continue our work of opening the door to the love and mercy of Jesus Christ**.

However, we cannot do this alone. Now more than ever, **we need your support**—through prayer, encouragement, and any way that you feel called to give. This daycare is an opportunity not just to expand our school but to **share and grow the faith**. It is a chance to ensure that **the legacy of our mission continues for generations to come**.

As we embark on this next chapter, we ask for your prayers, support, and belief in our work. May we continue to walk this journey together, **guided by faith and dedicated to the mission of our Lord**.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible community and for all that you do to make our school a place where **faith, learning, and service thrive**.

With gratitude and faith,

Nick Lee | Principal

Treasured Moments: by Sr. Debra Berry, former educator and first kindergarten teacher at St. Catherine School

As I reflected on what Catholic Education means to me and how it has been an integral part of my life, I remembered my days of going to a Catholic school. When I was six years old, my parents, realizing the importance of Catholic education, enrolled me into St. Patrick's School in Washington, Illinois. I attended all eight grades at St. Patrick's and was privileged to have the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation as some of my teachers. My parents valued their faith and wanted to instill the same love for it in us, their children. Going to St. Patrick's helped to deepen my faith, along with my parents, who took every opportunity to share their faith with me, my sister, and my brother.

After I graduated from High School, I attended a Catholic college for one year before coming to North Dakota to enter Religious Life. The seeds of Religious Life were planted in me by my parents and also by the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation. I am so grateful for the seeds that grew within me and helped me to become the person I am today.

Attending the College of St. Teresa in Winona, Mn., I decided to go into Elementary Education with a major in Early Childhood. After graduating, I came to St. Catherine's and taught 2nd grade. When the School Board decided they wanted to increase their enrollment, they decided to start a Kindergarten. It was then that my dream of teaching Kindergarten became a reality. Today we would probably say it was on "my bucket list!" To help us begin the kindergarten, we were blessed to have an anonymous donor to help us with the cost.

After teaching at St. Catherine's, I went to Illinois and taught 1st grade in Washington, where I had gone to school. In fact, I taught 1st grade in the same classroom where I had been a 1st grader! I taught at St. Patrick's in Washington for 3 years. Then the community asked me to become the Vocation Director, so that brought me back to North Dakota. For the next 10 years, I was in Grand Forks at the Newman Center (1986-96) doing Vocation Ministry and Campus Ministry. In 1996, I left the Newman Center and returned to Maryvale, where I was appointed the Assistant Provincial for 5 years.

In 2001, I went on a 9-month Sabbatical in St. Louis to discern where God was leading me. Sight unseen, I accepted a position in Parish Ministry in a small town of Fosston, Minnesota. For 12 years I served 2 small parishes as the Pastoral Associate. Then, after a mini-Sabbatical, God surprised me, and I accepted a position as the Pastoral Care Director at St. Gabriel's Long Term Care facility in Bismarck. After 5 years in Bismarck, I came back to Valley City and am currently the Pastoral Care Director at St. Raphael Long Term Care facility. When one is open, it is amazing where God's journey leads. It is one awesome adventure!"

My years at St. Catherine's hold many special, sacred memories. Being part of a faith-filled community helped me to grow spiritually and emotionally. I will forever treasure the years I spent at St. Catherine's and the students that I taught. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your faith community and your history.



From the Secretary's Desk

Before I started working at St. Catherine School, I had lost my connection with God and with anything religious for that matter. My faith life consisted of going to the occasional wedding, funeral, baptism or confirmation of one of my family members or friends. Now, working at St. Catherine School, I am slowly building that connection back up. My job at St. Catherine has been a huge part of my journey, as I reconnect with my faith. Without the support of REACH, this blessing in my life would not be possible. Thank you REACH, for your continued support of the school. It is greatly appreciated by many.

Terra Giesen



Kindergarten News



Hello! I am Cayla Rose, and this is my twelfth-year teaching Kindergarten at St. Catherine Elementary School. In the Kindergarten classroom this year, we have seven little cuties who absolutely LOVE learning! We just started our dinosaur unit, which is always a huge hit. Students get to become paleontologists and use their dinosaur knowledge to write their favorite fact and then make an art masterpiece of their dinosaur.

My class was also a huge help at the kindergarten round up this year: they were incredible role models to their preschool friends. At Kindergarten round up, we get to welcome preschool kids and parents to join our morning chapel. Then they split off, and the parents get to become informed about the school and what we have to offer, while the kids get to come down to the kindergarten room and do science, art, movement games, and even learn what it is like to go to a music class! It really is such a great experience.

In March we have been so thrilled for Fat Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Reading in the Dark, and Pie Day, which is something new this year. Going into April, we have Easter and the Fairy Tale unit, which is always a huge hit! Students get to perform their favorite fairy tale to the class, give a special performance for their parents, and sometimes, they even get to perform their fairy tale for the whole school!

Thank you so much for your support in making all of this possible.

Mrs. Rose Kindergarten Teacher
St. Catherine Elementary Valley City, ND



First and Second Grade News

Hi! My name is Kamren Saue, and this is my first-year teaching at St. Catherine Elementary. I grew up in Montevideo, MN, attended Concordia College, and taught one year in Moorhead before moving to Valley City with my fiancé. I'm looking forward to getting married this summer and will be starting next school year as Mrs. Burchill! I love being active. Some of my favorite joys include taking my Golden Retriever on walks and participating in all things sports-related! In the fall, I coach c-squad volleyball for the Valley City Hi-Liners.

I have an incredibly sweet, fun group of students in my classroom this year. There are five second graders, who are fantastic role models for the seven first graders. These students, along with all the wonderful staff members at the school, make St. Catherine an amazing place to work every day!

I have noticed that being able to incorporate God into our everyday learning does wonders for these kids! It starts right away in the morning with the calming environment of Chapel and continues throughout the days with Religion classes, virtues discussions, Adoration on Tuesdays, Mass on Thursdays, and All-School Mass once a month. At the same time, we are spending our days learning important academic subjects like Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, Art, and of course, some special classes like PE, Health, Music, and Library!

Thank you, REACH members, for your prayers and financial support. You help families in the area choose St. Catherine Elementary and become a part of all the meaningful opportunities this Catholic centered school provides. This is truly a special place, and I could not be more grateful!





Third and Fourth Grade News

My name is Beka Hilgemann, and I am the 3rd and 4th grade teacher. This is my fifth year at St. Catherine School. I am so grateful for the opportunity to teach at St. Catherine during the 2024-2025 school year.

I am extremely grateful for the REACH program. Your contributions to St. Catherine School have enabled me to help students grow both spiritually and academically, and I am so thankful to be able to grow along with them in their Catholic faith. I am looking forward to joining the Church this Easter.



Fifth and Sixth Grade News

Generosity is one of the first virtues we discussed in my classroom this school year. The REACH organization is generosity in action. Its yearly donation to St. Catherine School provides necessary funds to continue the school's mission and to provide an invaluable service to families in our community. Teaching at St. Catherine School is a gift. This journey has allowed me to be a part of many children's lives and for that I am forever grateful. Seeing through the eyes of a child has taught me more than I will ever be able to teach them. Spending my days with colleagues who are striving to show others the love of Jesus is a privilege. Thank you, REACH members, for your dedication, commitment, and love of St. Catherine School. May God continue to bless St. Catherine School and each of you.

Mrs. Ihry



Library News

Greetings from your friendly neighborhood librarian, Carol Gulka, still "living the dream" at St. Catherine School. It is such a blessing to me to be able to be here. Seeing the students excited about reading has always made me a very happy librarian, and it probably always will.

As I write this, we are reading as a school books nominated for the North Dakota Flicker Tale award. We will vote on our favorite at the end of April. We meet in the hallway outside of the library, and each teacher takes a turn reading aloud. Then we are off to the chapel to begin our day with prayer.

I have been a part of this school for a very long time. It never grows old for me. I still love getting up and coming to work each day. My role has changed but not my love for, or my commitment to, St. Catherine School. As blessed as I have been in my time here, I want to recognize that we could not continue the school's mission without the love and commitment of the many people who are willing to donate and pray for the school's success. May God bless all of you, and by the way, keep reading.

Carol Gulka



From the Teachers' Aid

Hello! I am Halley Thoreson and this is my second year as a paraprofessional and teacher aide at St. Catherine Elementary School. I am an alumni of St. Catherine and am so happy to be back working in the school that shaped me. It has been fun getting to step into a different role, where I was once a student. Most days, you can find me working with young learners one-on-one and helping out the teachers in their classrooms. I love getting to spend my days here, helping the students grow academically and in their faith. Thank you for your continued support of St. Catherine School. It does not go unnoticed or unappreciated





Music News

My name is Alexis Busch, music teacher at St. Catherine School. I'm from Barney, ND and currently attend VCSU as a full-time student, studying music education. At St. Catherine, I have found a true, caring family that has made a substantial impact on me, as I learn by doing, anticipating graduation from my college program in December 2025. I thank you for your generosity and support of our school. The care and solidarity you have shown have made a difference, enhancing our connection to the community and empowering us to nurture each student to develop to their fullest potential in faith.



Title and Team News

Hi! My name is Elaine Jenison. It is my first year of teaching at St. Catherine School. I am the Title 1 Reading and Language Arts Teacher. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the St. Catherine School community. It has been a wonderful experience to combine faith with teaching young children.

In Title 1, I provide 1-1 and small group interventions to help the students in reading. It is truly a joy to see them make progress.

In 1st grade Language Arts, we are working on foundational skills in reading as well as reading more fluently. It is fun to see the first graders developing a love of reading and getting excited about AR books and finishing reading challenges.

In 3rd grade Language Arts, we are finishing a novel study of The Tale of Despereaux. The students have had great discussions about the themes of forgiveness, compassion, courage, and bravery.

St. Catherine School is dear to my heart. I am very blessed to work with amazing colleagues, parents, parishioners, and students. It is truly like a family where we are all growing in our faith, learning, and service. Thank you for your generous support of St. Catherine School. God bless you!



Health and PE News

Wow! Where has this school year gone? We have been keeping very busy in Health & Physical Education. We have been learning about our bones, our skin, and even some gross facts involving sweat, vomit and digestion. We have also been practicing hard in the younger grades on tying shoes. I love seeing the excitement, when a student gets the shoe tied and realizes he or she can do it! Teaching at St. Catherine is truly amazing, as we can look at so many things in all aspects of our health (physical, emotional, mental, social & spiritual).

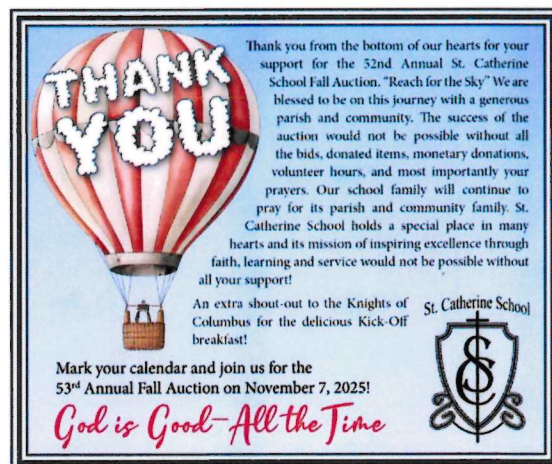
We also recently wrapped up our Kids Heart Challenge, where we collected donations for the American Heart Association and kids with special hearts. We raised \$2,689 this year: truly a testament to the giving nature our kids find in themselves and the giving that they bring out in others.

Mrs. Johnston



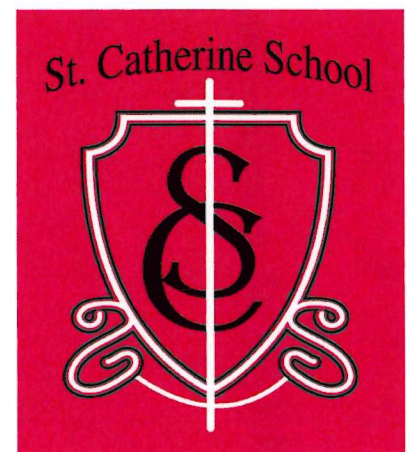
Fall Auction

“Reach for the Sky” was the theme of the 2024 St. Catherine School Fall Auction. In their longstanding tradition, the Knights of Columbus opened the event with an auction kick-off breakfast on Sunday, November 3, assisted by members of our school family. The following Friday night, November 8th, the stage was set at the Valley City Eagles Club for the Amelia Earharts, Charles Lindberghs, and Maverick Mitchells of our school/ parish community to make their appearances in dapper and adventure-ready attire. Helpful flight attendants could be seen traversing the aisles, just in case someone might need refreshments and/ or a refresher course in how to apply an oxygen mask or locate the nearest exit. Alison Kasowski soared above expectations this year as the auction committee chair. Brad and Patricia Buck led the decoration committee and made the event look out of this world! St. Catherine students got in on the act by constructing paper mache hot air balloons with their pictures, filling the club with colorful, light-hearted reminders of why we were there and what we were doing. In a special moment, Principal Nick Lee took time to recognize Sr. Debra Berry, who was working hard clerking bids, for her important role as the school’s first Kindergarten teacher. The event’s success rocketed through the stratosphere, with over 400 in attendance and over \$110,000 raised. “It was a great night,” said Principal Lee. “It’s always humbling to see people come out and support the school.” Teachers, staff, students, and families of St. Catherine are grateful beyond words for the amazing support received via the auction from friends and benefactors near and far.



“This is true education: accompanying young people so that they discover in service to others and in academic rigor the construction of the common good.”

-Pope Francis



TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) Donors:

The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), managed through St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish, exists to assist families who wish for a Catholic education for their children but who lack the financial resources to pay standard tuition at St. Catherine School. Donations to specifically support the TAP program can easily be made online by going to the St. Catherine Parish website, selecting the “online giving” page, and selecting the “Tuition Assistance Program” option. <https://catherineofalexandria.org/online-giving>

2021-2022

Claude Beach
Don & Sharon Schaack
Darlene Kerzman
J. Dennis Nelson- in memory of Marge Sayler and
Doreen Sayler Larry & Mary Ann Leier- in memory
of Marge and Doreen Sayler
Doug & Amber Muske- in memory of Doreen Sayler
Brenda Ingstad- in memory of Doreen Sayler
Chris & Valerie Holm- in memory of
Doreen Sayler
St. Catherine School Fall Auction
Lloyd Nelson, Jr.
Donna Pease
James Nelson
Stephanie Salto
Catholic Daughters of the Americas

2023-2024

Claude Beach
Msgr. Dennis Skonseng
Lee & Micki Isensee
Catholic Daughters of the Americas

2024-2025

Claude Beach
Msgr. Dennis Skonseng
Catholic Daughters of the Americas
Nick and Kaitlen Lee

2022-2023

Jim & Mary Spenningsby
DeVerne & Margaret Hoggarth
Jeffrey Hafner in Memory of Joyce Hafner
Claude Beach
Msgr. Dennis Skonseng
Tom and Jodie Provost
Robert Stack
St. Catherine School Fall Auction



2023 - 2024 Memorial Donations

Greg Tinjum

Killoran and Tinjum
Families Michael Killoran

Bertha Schell

Ken & Sue Kohler
Dick & Deb Gulmon
Tom & Cheryl Rowekamp

Joyce Hafner

Jeffery Hafner

Florence Retterath

Dick & Deb Gulmon

Sister Muscha

Carrie Maresh

Larry Zaun

Dawn Ihry
Lonny & Jodie Scherr
Tom & Cheryl Rowekamp
Peter & Karen Richman

Jerome Wieland

LeRoy & Mary Kay Hagen

Tom Ihry

Dawn Ihry

Darrell Machtell

Peter & Karen Richman

Tyce & Josie Musgrave

Dave & Larissa Musgrave

Annette, Charles & Bernadine Winkels

Bob and Carrie Maresh

Cynthia J Berger

George Berger

Judy Uecker

Dawn Ihry

Bob Maresh

Dick & Deb Gulmon

Jeff Differding

Dick & Deb Gulmon

Gigi Goven

ST. CATHERINE SCHOOL

Inspiring excellence
through faith, learning and service.

2024 - 2025 Memorial Donations

Avis Klinkhammer

Mary Beauclair

Sister Merian Braun

Ina Thomsen

Duane Stahl

Gigi Goven

Corey Neseth

Dick & Deb Gulmon

Darlene Goven

Lonney & Jodie Scherr

Mylo Falstad

Karen Richman

Carol Louise "Suzie" Doyle

Lonney & Jodie Scherr

Don Lemnus

Karen Richman
Dick & Deb Gulmon

Bill Magee

Tom & Cheryl Rowekamp
Dick & Deb Gulmon
Marion Magee
Darlene Kerzman

Diantha Scherr

Lonney & Jodie Scherr
Karen Richman

Richard "Dick" Meyer

Tom & Cheryl Rowekamp

TJ McGough

Lonney & Jodie Scherr

Francis Hafner

Sean & Jean Magee

Darlene Kerzman

Trevor & Elizabeth Jacobsen

Sheldon Etzell

Gigi Goven

Anne & Bob Wuolu

Adeline & John Schwehr

Deacon Joe & Deborah Leitner

Dawn Ihry

Marilyn Beach

Emmie Fiebiger

Darlene Kerzman

"There is nothing more powerful than the education of the young."

St. John Bosco

St. Catherine Church & REACH Program
540 3rd Avenue NE
Valley City, ND 58072

Return Service Requested



Check us out on the web at
[Www.stcatherine.k12.nd.us](http://www.stcatherine.k12.nd.us)

The REACH Newsletter
is Published Annually

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit 22
Valley City, ND

REACH (Religious Educators Advancing Christian Heritage) is an organization formed to provide a way for concerned and interested friends to financially support St. Catherine School. The **REACH** Organization is designed for people who genuinely believe it is in the best interest to support Christian-oriented education. The **REACH** Organization will ensure continued stability and expanded educational opportunities. CONSIDER LENDING YOUR SUPPORT!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Type of Membership: ☐ New ☐ Renewed

- ☐ St. Elizabeth Ann Seton \$50 - \$99
- ☐ St. John Bosco \$100 - \$499
- ☐ St. Thomas Aquinas \$500 - \$999
- ☐ St. Catherine of Alexandria \$1000 +

Is this to be a memorial in honor of/remembrance of someone?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, print the name of the person so honored (i.e. John F. Henry)
(The memorial plate will be placed on the REACH memorial plaque in the basement of the church) _____

Do you wish to have a memorial plate for yourself? Yes ☐ No ☐

Payment Schedule Desired

(Memberships are yearly July 1st - June 30th)

- ☐ Annual ☐ Semi-Annual ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Automatic Withdrawal
- ☐ Other (specify) _____

Amount Enclosed (first installment requested):

Would you like to make a one-time donation not associated with a membership? ☐ Yes ☐ No

\$ _____ (Any amount appreciated)

Signature: _____

Name (please print): _____

Contributions are tax-deductible under IRS regulations.