

2026

IMPACT REPORT



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
FOUNDATION
DIOCESE OF JOLET



A brighter future for Catholic schools. **A faith-filled education** for future generations.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We value Catholic education, and we know you do too

Dear Friends,

For 30 years, the Catholic Education Foundation has partnered with people who believe deeply in Catholic education—and want it to thrive for generations to come.

This past year, your generosity made a meaningful difference. Together, our partners provided **\$2,847,450 in financial assistance to 1,653 students attending 34 elementary schools and 7 high schools throughout the Diocese of Joliet.**

Behind those numbers are students learning and growing in faith-filled communities, parents working hard to make Catholic education possible, and donors helping keep it within reach.

As we celebrate three decades since CEF was incorporated, I am grateful for all we have accomplished together and energized by what comes next. Affordability remains a real challenge for families, but we also have a clear opportunity to strengthen Catholic schools and open their doors to more students.

Thank you for partnering with us.

Sincerely,



Jeff Arseneau
Board Chairman
Catholic Education Foundation

YOUR IMPACT

Your generosity makes it possible to bless hundreds of lives each year—and we are deeply grateful.



\$2.85 Million

Awarded in Financial
Assistance



1,653

Students
supported



41

Catholic Schools Served
34 Elementary Schools
7 high schools



“Today for us, tomorrow for somebody else.”

For the Castellanos family, Catholic education is about more than academics. It is helping their children grow in faith, values, and relationship with God.

When Rigoberto and Norma Castellanos began considering Catholic school for their children, they were looking for something more.

“We were looking for a good education with principles and values, not just any education,” Rigoberto said.

Catholic education has become an important part of family life. Their son graduated from Joliet Catholic Academy, daughter Abigal is in her junior year at JCA, and Alejandra is in eighth grade.

“We like it, and we just don’t want to leave it,” Rigoberto said. “We know we made the right decision.”

For the Castellanos family, that decision has strengthened not only their children’s education but also their faith.

Alejandra says that what she learns helps her better understand God and Jesus and think more about her faith. Rigoberto sees that growth, too, whether the family is praying together before meals or discussing the Gospel.

With CEF financial assistance for this school year, the family can continue the Catholic education that has become so meaningful.

Rigoberto is grateful to the donors who make that possible, and hopes his children will carry that generosity forward.

“I want to thank the donors for all the help they give us,” he said. “My kids, someday, will do the same for future generations.”

For the Castellanos family, the blessing of Catholic education does not end with them.

“It’s today for us and tomorrow for somebody else.”



"I see the sacrifices they make."

Sixth-grader Thiago Duarte Fonseca understands that being at St. Isidore is an opportunity made possible by many people—and he does not take it for granted.

Thiago Duarte Fonseca has been part of St. Isidore Catholic School since preschool.

Now in sixth grade, he can already put into words what the experience has taught him: to follow the example of Jesus and Mary, to think about his choices, and treat others with respect.

His parents, Erika Fonseca Moreno and Diego Duarte Caro, hoped for exactly that when they enrolled him.

The family moved to the United States from Colombia nearly eight years ago. Because faith was incorporated into education in their home country, Erika and Diego wanted their children to learn about God throughout the week, not only on Sunday.

For Thiago, St. Isidore has become a place to learn, serve, and belong. As he has gotten older, he also recognizes what his parents do to make his education possible.

"I am very thankful," Thiago said. "I see the sacrifices they make. They always sacrifice time and money for me to come here."

CEF is helping ease that sacrifice with **financial assistance for this school year.**

"Thank you for helping me achieve my dream."

— Thiago Duarte Fonseca

When Thiago learned that he had received support, he shared his own message of thanks.

"Thank you for helping me achieve my dream of moving forward with my family and carrying high the name of God in our community," he wrote.



A PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE

There is always so much joy and relief among the families when we speak to them after they learn they have received a CEF scholarship. They immediately share their gratitude for the Catholic Education Foundation for helping to make attending Bishop McNamara a reality for their children. Many families will tell us that **without CEF, their child would not be able to attend our school.**

“The impact that these gifts have on our community is so hard to describe.”

I personally want to thank all of our donors for their gifts and prayers. The impact that these gifts have on our community is so hard to describe. I truly feel it is because of CEF that we are able to continue Catholic Education in Kankakee County; your gifts continue to allow our hard-working families to afford Catholic education. The gifts and support give hope to our families and the students when they realize that there are people out there praying for our students and supporting our students because they know the benefit of Catholic education. Our donors truly are disciples of our Lord, continuing to give, love, and serve in order to help others along the way. **We have future priests, teachers, doctors, scientists, and world leaders walking our halls today because of the gifts of CEF!**



CEF's support of McNamara families allows our community to continue to be culturally diverse, centered on faith, and dedicated to serving anyone who feels the call to Catholic education. I truly believe that financial need and socio-economic status should not stand in the way of a child receiving the Catholic education that they deserve. Thanks to CEF, this is possible for so many of our families at Bishop McNamara Catholic School.



Kaelyn Bess
Principal/President
Bishop McNamara Catholic
School

MESSAGE FROM BISHOP SPIES



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Catholic education is an important ministry of the Church and a tremendous blessing to our Diocese. In our schools, young people grow in knowledge and faith, learn to serve others, and discover who God is and calls them to be.

We want that opportunity to be available to every family that desires it. Yet for some families, affordability can stand in the way.

During the 2025–26 school year, the Catholic Education Foundation and its partners provided **\$2,847,450 in financial assistance to 1,653 students at 34 elementary schools and 7 high schools** across the Diocese of Joliet.

As the Catholic Education Foundation marks 30 years since its incorporation, I am grateful for three decades of generosity that have helped students attend Catholic schools and strengthened Catholic education for the future.

Together, we can keep Catholic education within reach for more families. Thank you for sharing your blessings in support of this important work.

May God bless you and all those you help through your generosity.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Dennis Edward Spies
Auxiliary Bishop of Joliet
Diocese of Joliet

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AT A GLANCE



Helping close the affordability gap

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

992 students supported
\$1,532,000 awarded
\$1,550 average CEF award
Average Tuition: \$5,950

HIGH SCHOOL

537 students supported
\$571,450 awarded
\$1,990 average CEF award
Average Tuition: \$15,400



ADDITIONAL KAZMA FAMILY FOUNDATION SUPPORT

124 students received Kazma Family
Foundation awards
\$744,000 awarded
\$6,000 average award

Partner with us and make Catholic school available for more families

The impact of this report belongs to an entire community of people who believe Catholic education matters.

Parents believe it.
Students experience it.
School leaders see it every day.
And partners like you help make it possible.

There are still families throughout the Diocese of Joliet for whom affordability is a challenge. Together, we can continue meeting today's needs while building a stronger future for Catholic education.

Catholic Education Foundation

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Crest Hill, IL 60403
815-221-6127

To learn how to partner
with us visit our website

CEFjoliet.org

