



Providing tuition assistance to students at Community of Saints Regional Catholic School

COS students in third and fourth grades put their thoughts and concerns into prayers and words of hope.

## I pray...

I pray that all parishes on Earth stay close to God in spirit, heart, and action.

I pray for my mom and dad because they work so hard all day.

I pray for kindness in the world community.

I pray for the end to all war and arguments, and for there to be peace around the world.

I pray to God that people respect all cultures.

I pray for my friends and my family that they don't get taken by ICE.

I pray that people treat others how they want to be treated.

I pray for all the people in need and people who are getting deported.

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## A Conversation with Bishop Kevin Kenney

*Bishop Kevin Kenney learned a lot during his eleven years as pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe (OLG), which was the first Mexican American Catholic parish to be established in the archdiocese and is one of Community of Saints (COS) sponsor parishes. After COS opened in 2012, Bishop Kenney served on the school's first board of directors.*

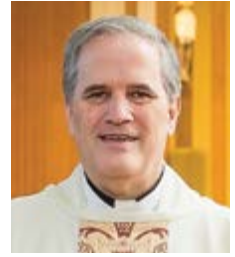
*During the federal government's Operation Metro Surge, ICE agents maintained a heavy presence in the neighborhoods around OLG, disrupting the lives of many families at Bishop Kenney's former parish. In a recent conversation, Bishop Kenney shares his thoughts about immigration, how Catholic social teaching can guide us, and what each of us can do to help unite a divided society.*

**When you think back on your time at Our Lady of Guadalupe, what memories or lessons stand out?**

I started during Holy Week. Everything was bilingual and I hadn't spoken Spanish on a daily basis for 10 years, so I was pretty rusty. Later, people laughed and told me, "We really didn't understand what you were saying for the first month."

Our Lady was always considered to be a poor parish, a mission type parish in the archdiocese, but it really wasn't. It was rich in culture, rich in people selling our tacos and enchiladas. A lot of struggle comes with the people and their history, and that gets passed down from generation to generation. It took a while to be able to enter into that culture and walk with them, to become one in spirit and really worship together.

— Continued on page 3



## Celebrating the Gift of Curiosity

I've mentioned before how much I enjoy asking questions during the homily at our school Masses. Students in younger grades, especially, are always eager to answer questions — usually about our faith.

Last month, I was the one answering questions. At the invitation of middle school teacher, Nick Yannarely, I visited the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classes where students peppered me with their questions. Some questions had been prepared in advance and more arose during our time together. There was certainly no shortage of curiosity.

Many students asked about my life and what it's like to be a priest. Sixth and seventh graders wanted to know about my childhood, whether I had pets and what sports I played. They were curious about what I did before I entered seminary and what life was like after I was ordained.

Some questions from eighth graders were similar, although of a more practical nature. They asked whether priests get paid and how that works. In some ways, I could see them already thinking about life beyond Community of Saints, which is healthy and appropriate for a class preparing to graduate and start the next chapter — high school.

Other questions asked by eighth graders touched on topics that weren't so simple. They were curious about what inspired me to become a priest, how religious my parents were and how they influenced me, and why women aren't priests. We also discussed the sacrament of Confirmation, which many of the students are preparing to receive this spring.

Looking back, I can see how my own curiosity played an important role in awakening my call to the priesthood. This curiosity reflects how we are uniquely created as human beings — to ponder, to seek, and to grow in both knowledge and faith. It is inspiring to see how Community of Saints nurtures that sense of awe and wonder — qualities that will serve students throughout life.

I once heard a beautiful description of heaven: because God is infinite, eternity will be spent joyfully learning more about our loving Creator and seeing all creation through God's eyes — so we will never be bored. On this side of heaven, when students face daily life, moments of boredom, or moments of strife, their curiosity keeps them engaged and growing. It is a privilege to witness how their learning, faith, and enthusiasm flourish here at Community of Saints.

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When Fr. Paul met with COS middle school students, he answered questions about the Church, sacraments and his life as a priest. He is pictured here with eighth grade students.

## A Conversation with Bishop Kevin Kenney, *continued from page 1*

During that time, my devotion to our patron saint, Our Lady in Guadalupe, really grew. Her mission to bring us all together, and the faith the Latino people brought — it renewed life within me.

**You were here when Community of Saints opened. At the time it was one of the first regional Catholic schools in the archdiocese. What was that like?**

Our Lady of Guadalupe was involved because a lot of our children attended one of the Catholic schools that merged into Community of Saints, and the students were wonderful! I think a community school is a beautiful school. It brings everyone together.

**A majority of students at COS are Latino. As a bishop, can you speak to the impact immigration has had across the Archdiocese in recent years?**

We have immigrants throughout the whole archdiocese. Twenty-three parishes currently have Mass in Spanish, and a couple more want to begin. And it's not just Latinos. We have many different immigrant groups here. Immigration has brought a big influx of youth into the church. It's not only numbers; it's also the sense of faith they bring.

When you can build that bridge between different ethnic communities, it really brings out the vibrancy in a parish. It's a great gift to get to know your neighbor, somebody you might consider different from you, until you realize they're not that different and we're able to work together to build God's kingdom.

**What does Catholic social teaching say about the issue of immigration?**

The Catholic Church does not advocate for open borders where people can just come and go. The Church believes in closed borders, but human dignity must come first. Catholic social teaching says that people have a right to migrate if they aren't safe at home.

We have to look at the system. So many people have tried to get into the immigration system to get permission to work, and get legal residency or citizenship, but it takes forever. People just lose



*It's a great gift to get to know your neighbor, somebody you might consider different from you, until you realize they're not that different and we're able to work together to build God's kingdom."*

— BISHOP KEVIN KENNEY

patience because they have to work to survive.

Over the past few months, many families have been afraid to leave their homes or send their children to school. People were afraid to go to work or buy groceries. At one point, the number of people attending Spanish-language Masses was down 70%.

Most immigrants work, pay taxes, contribute economically to our country, and are very family oriented. They're hard workers and make a real effort to be good citizens.

**Right now it feels like people, Catholics included, are divided on this and many issues. What can be done?**

We need to be able to listen to one another. In the past, you could have a discussion with someone and still leave as friends by agreeing to disagree. But today it's just so hard to do because people don't want to listen to each other. Too often we've lost the skill to truly focus on what somebody is saying, instead, we're always thinking — okay, how am I going to respond to this? So, listening is a big skill we all need, and I think everyone in Catholic schools needs to be taught — teachers, students, and parents.

I think the role of the archdiocese will be figuring out how we recover from this and chart a path forward for healing and forgiveness. And then we need to work towards meaningful immigration reform.

**What is your hope for the future?**

My hope is that we all still believe this is "one nation under God with liberty and justice for all." That we can live together with all our differences in a humane and compassionate way, without fear, and see the good in everybody.

After witnessing the love Minnesotans have shown for one another over the past few months, I think there is reason for hope. To see people really wake up and care for their neighbor is one of the good things to come out of this. It really proves that we are a strong and caring people, even when it's 21 below zero outside.

“Students are trying to balance all the stresses of life. And they each have different stressors.”

— NICK YANNARELLY,  
COS VICE PRINCIPAL AND  
MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER



PHOTO BY JEANNINE OF BLOCK PORTRAIT STUDIOS

## Making Time for Student Questions Leads to Better Listening, Greater Empathy

As the social studies and religion teacher, Nick Yannarely knows his eighth grade students have lots of questions — big questions. “In religion, a student preparing for Confirmation will say, ‘I have questions about the Church, who do I ask?’ Or in social studies when we’re learning about the geography of Latin America and Europe, students will ask about current events,” Yannarely explained.

Yannarely is young enough to remember what it was like to have questions you weren’t sure who to ask, or even if it was okay to ask. His problem was that he never felt like there was enough time in class to open the floor to students questions and still get through the required state standards. But this January, Yannarely decided to make time.

“I have questions about all the sacraments we receive and why it is necessary for our faith...” — COS Student

I really want to know if high school is going to be hard, and if I’m doing good enough in school to be successful...” — COS Student

“I think we should talk about what’s happening in the world without sugarcoating things...” — COS Student

“Students are trying to balance all the stresses of life,” observed Yannarely. “And they each have different stressors.”

Yannarely took advantage of social studies class time with his students. He made a list of questions and invited them to respond to any they chose.

“I told them they have 15 minutes to free write whatever was on their mind.” said Yannarely. “I gave them some open-ended questions like, *How are you feeling about life right now? What are the three things that matter most to you and why? How does hearing about news events from social media affect you?*”

The assignment was ungraded, but students quickly pulled out their Chromebooks and started typing.

“I understand that ICE can be a sensitive topic to some people, but I feel like we should talk about how we feel and what to do if we encounter ICE...” — COS Student

“I want to know about the rights that I and others have...” — COS Student

“With all that’s going on in the world, I think it would be nice to talk about how everyone is doing...” — COS Student

Yannarely was impressed by their responses and realized his students were eager to talk. The following week he formed small groups and gave the class 10 minutes for discussion. The room buzzed with conversations.

“It was really cool to watch groups of three or four students take turns and demonstrate active listening,” said Yannarely. “You hear a lot about how we just need to listen to each other, but society isn’t structuring ways for us to do that. As an educator, that’s something we need to do.”

“Multiple people I know have been affected by ICE. You can’t go places without fear, even if you’re a citizen...” — COS Student

Not surprisingly, initial conversations focused on Operation Metro Surge which was still in full swing at the time. As students shared what their families were experiencing, Yannarely noticed how some students displayed a deep understanding about what was happening in their neighborhoods. “At COS, we’re proud of our diversity, and in this situation, it means some of our school families were more directly affected by federal immigration agents than others,” he said.

As students discussed the the impact of the federal immigration officers, they also talked about how the community had responded. “Some students saw their families being supported by the local community and felt good about that, while others saw how their own families had stepped up to support their classmates,” said Yannarely. “I think all of the students learned — this is how the world should work. We step up for each other and can rely on each other.”

“Sometimes I feel like the Bible can be very confusing and I want to get a better understanding...” — COS Student

Eighth grade students preparing for Confirmation had questions about the church and wanted to know where they could ask those questions. It got Yannarely thinking about how he could do a better job teaching religion. “We encourage students to have a personal relationship with God, but it’s hard for them to understand what that means or looks like,” said Yannarely. “A 13 year old who’s trying to make sense of the world wants to know why we believe what we believe. We can’t just tell them, we need to model what we truly believe.”

Yannarely let students know up front that he won’t have all the answers, but he’s open to bringing in people who can help. As a result, Yannarely invited Fr. Paul Treacy to visit each of the middle school classes and field questions from students (*see page 2*).

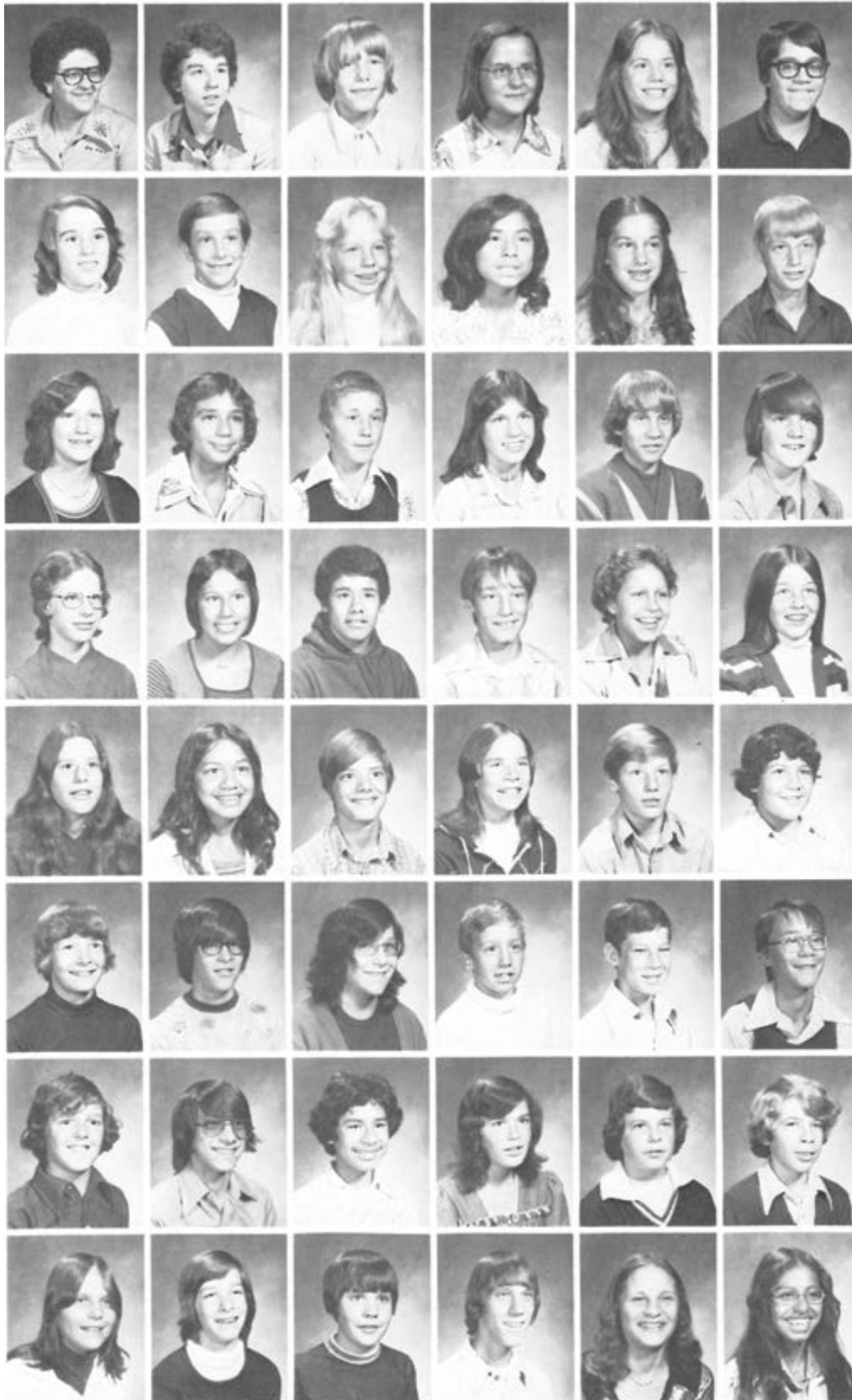
“I want to learn about more ways we can help our community...” — COS Student

When Yannarely decided to give students a space where they felt free to ask questions — any questions — he wasn’t sure where it would take them. Now, he sees how it’s led his students to build valuable skills, become better listeners and ultimately, more empathetic humans.

“I have so much hope for these students after listening to them talk about the role young people can play in their community during times of stress,” said Yannarely. “My job is to empower them and help them develop the skills they’ll need so they can actually achieve the positive impact they hope to make.”

# St. Matthew's Class of 1976

MS. FREIER'S AND MS. KENNEDY'S CLASS



## MRS. BAETZ'S CLASS



## MS. FREIER'S AND MS. KENNEDY'S CLASS

**Top Row** | Ms. Freier, Ms. Kennedy, Perry Altendorfer, Margo Bachel, Sue Brown, Brian Brunner

**2nd Row** | Karen Costello, Mark Goldberg, Sherry Goldenstein, Juanita Hernandez, Julie Herzog, Kevin Jenniges

**3rd Row** | Jacqueline Lannon, Robert McHolland, Dennis McNaughton, Vickie Meisinger, Joseph Mooney, William O'Donnell

**4th Row** | Peggy O'Neill, Connie Palacio, Aaron Ramirez, Peter Renteria, Susan Tackaberry, Colleen Topritzhofer

**5th Row** | Elizabeth Wolf, Margaret Ackerman, Mark Adams, Ann Bade, Jim Buse, Jim Castor

**6th Row** | Gregory Cubus, Kurt Erickson, Diana Gubash, Ronald Heitzinger, Timothy Hurley, Father Bradley Jenniges

**7th Row** | Robert Langlois, Gregory Maher, Thomas Medina, Stephanie Norton, Scott Rosenberger, Shawn Schmidt

**Bottom Row** | Lori Singer, Cindy Stagg, Mark Stellmach, Bruce Uhler, Kathy Willems, Elvira Yanez

## MRS. BAETZ'S CLASS

**Top Row** | Mrs. Baetz, Matthew Achman, Jerry Adams, Sarah Andersen, Jim Behan, Richard Boldt, Theodore DeGraw

**2nd Row** | Annette De Lao, Gary Ewald, Leoncio Fernandez, Michele Gabriel, Angela Gangl, Liz Goulette, Michael Helsper

**3rd Row** | Mark Hernandez, Jim Hinze, Mary Leahy, Anne Maloney, Bernard Mike, Joe Morin, Patti Ohmann

**Bottom Row** | Timothy Rogers, Steve St. Martin, Walter Schoumaker, Thomas Tonda, Paul Wenner

## St. Michael Class of 1976



**Top Row** | Eva Johnson, unknown, Patty Karas, Chris Berg, Lisa Huntress, Scott Schmitt, Mary Roubik, David Kettler, Jeanette Mugglie, Paul Schendel, Patricia Blaeser

**2nd Row** | Susan Schuweiler, Mary McEllistrem, Joel Cade, Pam Valentine, Jeffrey Seidl, Theresa Price, Mickey Galvin, Joyce Wadell, Jeff Gutzmann, Joan Weegman, Jim Mansur, Mary Ellen Volk, Jay Maher

**Bottom Row** | Dick Deziel, Judy Wolter, Ed Rumpza, Julie Elliott, Terry Winter, Cheryl Madigan, Jerry Fraher, Maureen Thomas

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## A FEW MEMORIES FROM ST. MATTHEW'S CLASS OF 1976



Kevin Jenniges remembers...

"Beating St. Mark's at football at McMurray Field. We barely had enough kids to field a football team. Before the game, Coach Joe Rowan gave a speech. He said, 'We haven't beat St. Mark's yet.' He got us all worked up and we beat them 14 to nothing. Coach Rowan was elated. He was my mentor, taught me how to be tough."



Stephanie Norton Langer remembers...

"When I went to Humboldt from St. Matt's I learned how advanced our education had been. At first they told me I'd have to take algebra at Humboldt and I said, 'I have to take algebra again?' And they said, 'What do you mean, 'again?' I told them I took algebra in sixth and seventh grades, and geometry in seventh and eighth grades. Then they told me I could go on to algebra 2, but I said, 'No thanks, I'll go back to geometry.' Because we had all of that math at St. Matt's, I hardly had to take any math classes at Humboldt."



**SAVE THE DATE — Saturday, October 24, 2026**

St. Matt's Classes of '70 & '71 are planning a combined reunion. For more information, contact Kathy Koehnen Schowalter at **651-451-6150** or [alschowalter@msn.com](mailto:alschowalter@msn.com).

# Snapshots from St. Matthew's 1976 Yearbook



St. Matthew's girls basketball team were named City Champs.

School chorus with Sr. Anne Becker as instructor.



Custodians Mr. Smith and Mr. Adams



"Matthew's Moments" Staff, Mrs. Kennedy, Director



Hot Lunch Staff

# Celebrating Values of Faith, Inclusivity, Love and Service

Principal Bridget Kramer is grateful to everyone who came together to support the school community over the last few months. The help was broad and deep. From school parents who organized and provided ride shares to make sure no students missed school, to all those who dropped off and packed food donations for families in need, and the many generous contributors to the COS Emergency Family Fund that helped families struggling to pay rent.

At a time when nothing felt normal, the school community leaned into its core values of faith, inclusivity, and love. Kramer thinks students noticed and that it will strengthen an already robust commitment to community and service. Here are a few ways students have been involved in the community over the last few months.



## Packing Isaac's Blessing Bags

Current COS students and recent alums got together to pack items for Isaac's Blessing Bags, a ministry that serves unsheltered people by collecting and distributing everyday essentials. The young people assembled bags full of donated items such as gloves and socks, toiletries, and nonperishable food. The ministry was launched in 2016 by Isaac Garcia, when he was a sixth grade student at COS.

## Serving at Lenten Fish Fry

COS students and their families are core volunteers for the St. Matthew's Fish Fry which serves 300–400 dinners every Friday night during Lent.



## Singing at Youth Mass

Members of the COS choir, led by COS music teacher, Kristina Guiffre, volunteered to lead St. Matt's congregation in song at two Sunday Masses over the winter. The Masses were an opportunity to showcase young people in the church and celebrate Catholic Schools Week.



## Food Drive for Our Lady of Guadalupe

This year's annual COS food drive benefitted the food shelf at Our Lady of Guadalupe where demand began to explode with the launch of Operation Metro Surge. COS seventh grade student, Joaquin Yanez, and his family are members of OLG and they helped coordinate the effort. "We just want to be generous and help the people who are afraid to leave their house because of immigration," explained Joaquin.

Joaquin's family took on the job of transporting all the donations from the school to the church, but it turned into a bigger undertaking than expected. First, Joaquin helped his grandmother load her car with donations, and when it was full, he called his mom so she would bring the family van which also got packed. After both vehicles were unloaded at OLG, the donations filled two rooms. Joaquin's grandmother said they dropped off the donations on Friday, and by Saturday, they were all gone. Over 100 bags of groceries had been delivered to families in crisis.

Joaquin is proud of what his family and school were able to accomplish. "We have a strong community," he said. "We were able to work together and help people who are not doing so well."



## Loyalty Circle **Spotlight**

# Roy and Mary Jane Ferber

Loyalty Circle members have been critical to our mission of removing tuition as a barrier to families who want to send their children to COS. We would like to thank all the members of our Loyalty Circle for their consistent and generous support.

In 2007, Roy Ferber helped launch Alums & Friends & Families (AFF) to raise money for tuition assistance. A few years later, Roy recruited his sister, Mary Jane, who'd just retired from a career in education.

Roy and Mary Jane aren't shy about asking any of their many siblings to help out or chip in when it's needed, because that's how the Ferbers roll, together, as a family. Those tight sibling bonds were forged while growing up in a modest house on the West Side, just a few blocks from St. Matthew's, where all eight siblings went to school.

### Lessons Learned

After forty years working for St. Paul Public Schools, one of the lessons Mary Jane learned was how important the culture of a school is to its success. "Things like how the teachers and students interact, and staff morale really matter," explained Mary Jane. "When I walk through the halls at COS I can see everyone is having fun. There's real kindness. And test scores show the kids are getting a great education."

Mary Jane used to write out a check each year to AFF, but now she prefers to use the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from her 401k to make her contribution. Despite that change she still makes sure her donation lands during one of the matches. That's because Roy is one of the donors who often sponsors the match and she likes the idea that her brother has to double her gift. "I just ask Roy, 'when is your match?' And that's when I give," laughed Mary Jane.



Roy Ferber invited his sister, Mary Jane, to join the AFF committee in 2013.

Roy feels fortunate to be able to provide that kind of support. It didn't come easy.

After years of running companies for other people, Roy decided to start his own business in 1990, but the first few years were rough. "I remember nights waking up my wife, JoAnn, because I didn't know how to make payroll," said Roy. "It took us four years to turn a profit."

Roy's business involved shipping lightweight packages, and in the early years he sometimes asked his family for help. Mary Jane recalls how her parents and siblings would meet at the freight terminal in Fridley, where they weighed and scanned packages before packing the trucks. "He couldn't afford to pay us," recalled Mary Jane. "But Roy and JoAnn have been extremely generous to all of us over the years."

Thirteen years after Roy started his business, it had grown to 500 employees with \$100 million in sales. By then, big companies like UPS and Federal Express were moving in and he decided it was time to sell. "I never felt like I had money until I sold the business," said Roy.



Ferber siblings oldest to youngest: Jack Ferber, Sharon Ferber Koran (deceased), Roy Ferber, Peggy Ferber Tate, Mary Jane Ferber, Kathleen Ferber Gobeli, Patti Ferber Lofgren, Denise Ferber Bohrer.

### Proud of What We've Built

Roy used to donate to causes all around the world, but eventually, he decided to focus his giving where he grew up. Through his work on AFF and as a member of the COS Board of Directors, Roy has played an important role in the school's success. "I'm very proud of what we've been able to do at Community of Saints," he said.

Every month, when Mary Jane calls donors to thank them for their gift, she likes to let them know what their contribution is helping to build. "Not only are kids getting an excellent education, they're learning to give back to their community, to be good to people, to show respect and care for others," said Mary Jane. "It's a wonderful school."

**COMMUNITY OF SAINTS  
REGIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

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Wednesday, May  
20 | 7:30-8:30  
am



# Join Us for Breakfast with the Stars

Breakfast is free so bring your friends and family. We want to introduce you to Community of Saints and share our commitment to academic excellence in a community rooted in faith, inclusivity, and love. Together we can give all students a chance to shine.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 20 | 7:30-8:30 AM**

Community of Saints School  
335 Hurley Street East, West St. Paul

**TO REGISTER**, visit <https://communityofsaints.org/shining-stars-breakfast>, or scan the QR Code.

For more information, contact Natalie Hartung at [nhartung@communityofsaints.org](mailto:nhartung@communityofsaints.org).

