



Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

West Virginia Catholic Schools



2026

Aquinas and St. Sebastian
Honorees



Congratulations

TO ALL RECIPIENTS OF THE
AQUINAS
AND
ST. SEBASTIAN
AWARDS





DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

1311 BYRON STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 230
WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA 26003

March 19, 2026
Solemnity of St. Joseph

Dear friends of Catholic education,

Catholic schools have the noble purpose of forming young people as disciples of Jesus Christ, along with giving them a sound education on which to build their adult lives. Our Catholic faith is a way of life that can guide and encourage us both when we are young and when we are old. To the degree that they help young people embrace this Christian way of living, our Catholic schools are serving them well for this life and eternity.

The Aquinas and St. Sebastian awards recognize that some of our students show exceptional signs of grasping not only the teachings of our Catholic faith but also its implications for spiritual growth and moral living. I congratulate you who have been given these awards and I pray that you may always cherish the faith in which you are formed.

I salute as well the teachers, principals, coaches, parents, pastors and chaplains who have accompanied these young people on their journey of faith. There is no way to measure the impact of your witness to Christ and his Gospel values except by the commitment your young students make to love God and neighbor. Only at the Last Judgment will the fruits of your labor and love be made clear. For now, as St. Paul tells us: We walk by faith and not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7). So, continue walking by faith and with confidence that what you do to guide young people to Christ will bring eternal dividends.

We can be proud of the efforts that our small but vibrant Catholic community in West Virginia makes to instill a vigorous faith and Gospel truth in young people. May the Lord continue to bless our efforts and make them bear good fruit for students, their families, their schools and the Church.

Faithfully in Christ,

+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston



Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

West Virginia Catholic Schools

Jennifer Hornyak – Superintendent of Catholic Schools

March 20, 2026

It is a joy to introduce this year's Aquinas and Saint Sebastian Medal recipients! As you read through this program, you will see a group of bright, faith-filled students who are shining lights for our community. These students truly understand their purpose in the world, leading with their hearts and serving others with grace. We are so proud of each of them!

The Aquinas and St. Sebastian awards are a true testament to our mission of Catholic schools. These honors recognize students who have demonstrated an exceptional understanding of the Gospel and, more importantly, have allowed those truths to transform their daily lives. These students are excellent examples of how we can live our Catholic faith and make a profound impact on those around us. These students are leaders in our schools and our communities across the state of West Virginia.

Thank you for being here to honor our students and the gift of Catholic education in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. Your prayers and continued support allow us to offer such a vibrant, Catholic educational experience throughout West Virginia.

It is a privilege to celebrate our students and our schools with you today. I ask that each of you continue to pray for these students as they move forward to the next chapter of their lives.

May God continue to bless them abundantly!

Jennifer Hornyak

Superintendent of Catholic Schools

Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston



Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

West Virginia Catholic Schools



A Snapshot of Catholic Schools Faith, Tradition, and Excellence

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is committed to providing excellent Catholic schools with strong academics while nurturing responsibility, accountability, citizenship, and empathy in a Christ-centered learning environment.

2025-2026

System at a Glance

18 Elementary Schools | 7 High Schools

458 Professional Staff

12 Counties served by Catholic Schools

11:1 Professional Staff to Student Ratio

45% of Catholic School students are non-Catholic

Growing Enrollment

Enrollment has increased across our WV Catholic schools over the last three academic years.

2023-2024



4,452
Students

2024-2025



4,673
Students

2025-2026



4,904
Students



From the Desk of the Superintendent: Jennifer Hornyak

In our Catholic schools, we see education as a lifelong journey of both the mind and the soul. From our youngest learners to our graduating seniors, we provide a supportive environment where academic rigor meets deep-rooted Catholic faith. As partners with parents, their children's first teachers, we work side-by-side with families and local communities to ensure our students grow into compassionate, faith-filled citizens who lead by example. By weaving Gospel values into every lesson, we help our youth discover the vital role faith plays in their daily lives and the larger society.

We are entering an exciting era for our families as the HOPE Scholarship program expands eligibility for the

2026-2027 school year. To build on this momentum, our schools are working to align tuition more closely with the actual cost to educate (ACE), allowing us to continually improve our schools in many ways including expanding academic programs and enhancing operational vitality.

We are so proud of our students for their achievements made possible through their hard work, faith and perseverance in all areas of their lives. As our students and academic honors continue to flourish, we thank those who have been on this journey with us over many years and we invite others to be a part of our flourishing story.



Strong Foundation



Faith & Tradition

Our mission includes ensuring that students are educated in the basic truths of the Catholic faith and that Gospel values permeate all subjects and are practiced by the entire school community. We provide a holistic curriculum to assist our youth in seeing and understanding the role of faith in one's daily life and in the larger society. Combining our focus on faith along with Catholic traditions, we provide many opportunities for our students to grow academically and spiritually.



Gospel Values



Service

- ✦ Supporting the development of a genuine community of faith, steeped in a Catholic worldview, among students, faculty, and the whole school community
- ✦ Daily prayer, weekly and monthly masses, and retreats
- ✦ Participation in the annual Assessment of Religious Knowledge (ARK) to build on our strengths and provide direction in our teachings and programs
- ✦ Fostering awareness and missionary discipleship of peace and justice issues by encouraging Christian service
- ✦ Preparing students to receive sacraments including First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation



DWC Average Student Score



Excellence

Excellence is the hallmark of a Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Catholic School, and the proof is in our faith formation and academic achievements. As part of our mission to integrate lessons and build students' knowledge of the Catholic faith, we have partnered with ARK to assess the religious knowledge and beliefs of students in grades 2-12. This assessment helps us focus on strengths as well as growth opportunities. Students respond to questions on the following domains: creed and salvation history, living discipleship, morality, prayer, sacraments and liturgy, and virtue. Based on 2025 assessment data, our students' strongest domain performance was: morality. Annual review of this data will assist us in helping our students grow in their knowledge of the Catholic faith.



Nurturing Environment



Faith



Success



Our students participate in the NWEA MAP Growth assessments three times per year to help schools monitor student achievement and growth in reading, language, and mathematics. Performance data indicates performance scores in the high average range and show growth across all schools, grade levels, and subjects.

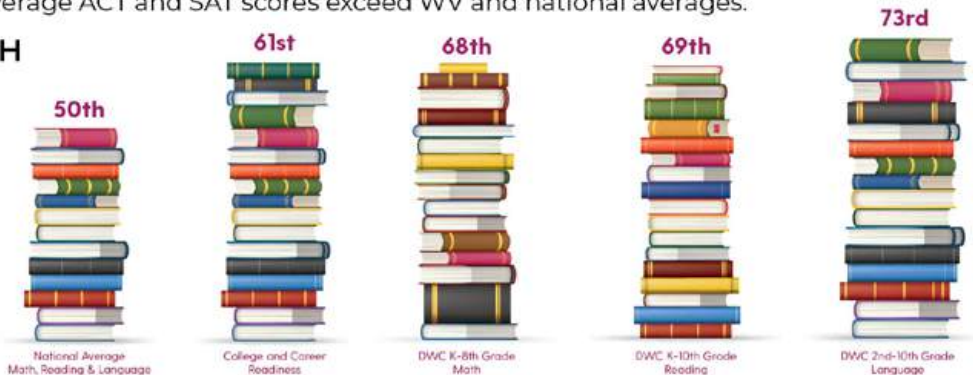
Secondary students also participate in college preparatory examinations including the SAT, ACT, and PSAT. Our average ACT and SAT scores exceed WV and national averages.

MAP GROWTH FALL 2025 ACHIEVEMENT DATA

**Average Range
(41-60th percentile)*

**High Average Range
(61-80th percentile)*

**High Range
(81-99th percentile)*



CELEBRATING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS throughout West Virginia

The Class of
2025 had a 99%
graduation rate.



Theology of
the Body is
implemented at
all of our schools.

ALL Catholic schools in the
Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston are
accredited through
COGNIA, which
provides school
accreditation at the
national level.



9 of 18 of our Elementary
and Middle Schools
have a waiting list
for one or more
grade levels.



HOPE SCHOLARSHIP
expands eligibility for the
2026-2027 school year.
Visit: hopescholarshipwv.gov

11:1 Professional Staff
to Student Ratio.

100% of students participate in
various community service
projects throughout the
school year.

1 MILLION DOLLARS
in Tuition Assistance is
available to both Catholic and
non-Catholic families in need.

Aquinas Award Recipients



2026 AQUINAS MEDAL WINNERS CRITERIA

The Aquinas Medal is named for St. Thomas Aquinas, the patron saint of Catholic schools and students. St. Thomas combined his powerful intellect with an all-embracing love of God, dedicating himself to sharing an awareness of God with all his students, just as your teachers do. The Aquinas Medal commemorates St. Thomas's dedication to learning and his love of God. It is presented each year to the one student from each school who best embodies the qualities of Catholic school education: excellence in learning, faithful discipleship, leadership, and service to school, parish and community.

Elementary Schools



Milano Ammirante

St. Vincent de Paul Parish School, Wheeling
Eighth Grade

“The small class sizes, the faith-centered environment and close relationships with the staff are the best part about attending a Catholic School.”



Ria Asaithambi

St. Francis de Sales School, Beckley
Eighth Grade

“Catholic School allows us to get closer to God each day.”



Lilah DeSimone

St. Paul School, Weirton
Sixth Grade

“I enjoy the small class sizes and more individualized attention from my teachers. Teachers not only know every student by name, but they also continue to support our dreams outside of the classroom.”



Jaxen Dragisich

St. Joseph the Worker Grade School, Weirton
Sixth Grade

“I like learning about my faith and going to school Masses.”

Elementary Schools



Alana Espenlaub

St. Joseph School, Martinsburg

Eighth Grade

“I am able to meet so many amazing people that share the same faith as me.”



Aiden Glenn

Our Lady of Peace School, Wheeling

Eighth Grade

“Smaller classes make a Catholic school special. The teachers get to know the students really well. The teachers are interested in our success in and out of the classroom.”



Hadley Heumann

St. Francis of Assisi School, Saint Albans

Fifth Grade

“I am able to attend Mass once a week, learn to be an Altar Server, receive my first communion with my classmates, and build a strong foundation for my future.”



Chase Huggins

Corpus Christi School, Wheeling

Eighth Grade

“Not only do I get to have a good education, but I also get to learn about the Lord and express any feelings or opinions I have about the Catholic faith. I would not be able to do that in a public school.”

Elementary Schools



Austin Lucas

Our Lady of Fatima Parish School, Huntington
Eighth Grade

“What I find special about attending a Catholic school is that we get the privilege to go to weekly Mass and get an amazing Catholic education.”



Lillian Magruder

St. Francis de Sales Central Catholic, Morgantown
Eighth Grade

“We can expand our faith in a class where we can ask questions and analyze the Word to each student’s needs, rather than having to try to understand it on our own.”



Vincent Marshall

Sacred Heart Grade School, Charleston
Fifth Grade

“Catholic school has taught me how to help others, develop strong study habits, become a successful student, and grow in my Catholic values.”



Riley Muto

St. Joseph Catholic School, Huntington
Eighth Grade

“Catholic school is special because I get to learn to embrace my faith.”

Elementary Schools



Joseph Pickens

St. Patrick School, Weston

Eighth Grade

“It is special attending a Catholic school because you learn about God and are able to go to church and confession.”



Audrey Satterfield

Fairmont Catholic Grade School, Fairmont

Eighth Grade

“Catholic school nurtures faith through regular access to Mass, meaningful faith education and a welcoming community that supports spiritual growth and commitment to God.”



Vincent Scalise

St. Mary’s Grade School, Clarksburg

Sixth Grade

“In addition to academics, I get to learn about my Catholic Faith and practice it daily. I have the opportunity to strengthen my heart and mind, surrounded by positivity and moral guidance.”



Macie Ann Smith

Parkersburg Catholic Elementary School, Parkersburg

Fifth Grade

“I like to learn about religion. Some kids can’t learn about being Catholic at school and I find special that we can.”

Elementary Schools



Giuliana Voellinger

St. Michael Parish School, Wheeling
Eighth Grade

“I am thankful to attend a school that not only promotes strong academics but also incorporates the gospel and strong faith-based values into our education. We are very blessed to be able to praise God while in an academic environment.”

High Schools



Julie Blatt

St. Joseph Central Catholic High School, Huntington
Senior

“It is more than just high academic honors; it also shapes you into who you are as a person. I have been taught daily to lead with integrity, compassion, and faith.”



Samuel Brooks

Madonna High School, Weirton
Senior

“It’s a place where we can all come together and worship Jesus through everything we do.”

High Schools



Grant Huffman

Parkersburg Catholic High School, Parkersburg

Senior

“Catholic school is special because it allows students to learn in an environment where our faith is at the center of everything we do.”



Brady Jordan

Notre Dame High School, Clarksburg

Senior

“The family-like environment where I know everyone and everyone knows me.”



Mateo Francis Lao

Charleston Catholic High School, Charleston

Senior

“I enjoy the smaller and tight knit community. The focus on Catholic values and stewardship better prepares me to be a valuable member of my school and society.”



Jacob Perry

Central Catholic High School, Wheeling

Senior

“Being able to learn and spread the faith in a safe environment.”

ST. SEBASTIAN AWARD RECIPIENTS



2026 ST. SEBASTIAN MEDAL RECIPIENTS CRITERIA

The St. Sebastian Award is intended to recognize our high-achieving student athletes in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. The student athletes selected will have demonstrated throughout their high school careers the qualities necessary to be a well-rounded athlete such as sportsmanship, teamwork, academics (maintaining a 3.0 or higher GPA) and a high degree of respect for school, classmates, teammates, opponents, Parish and the community at large. The student ought to be the best example of a student athlete in his/her respective sport in the school.

Central Catholic High School



Erin Maxwell

Senior

“The students and faculty are always so positive and uplifting before and after sports events. Even off the floor, I know that I will always feel appreciated and loved.”



Eli Sancomb

Senior

“I get to grow in my faith and before meals we pray together and always before every game we say, a ‘Hail Mary’ with our coaches.”

Charleston Catholic High School



Kieran Moran

Senior

“The opportunities to grow both spiritually and academically are unlike any other school.”



Mary Rushworth

Senior

“Praying before every game or race is something that I appreciate about playing sports at a Catholic School.”

Madonna High School



Rylee Birkhimer

Senior

“Faith and sports are connected, teaching you to lead with respect and discipline. The close-knit community also means coaches and teammates support you not just as an athlete but as a person.”



Jacob Lazear

Senior

“Our prayers before games and after practice. Being able to represent our school and church community on the field and in a Christian way.”

Notre Dame High School



Lexi Shaffer

Senior

“Being able to represent my faith and have extra support from everyone around me.”



Jack Stalnaker

Senior

“I play not only for myself, but for my faith as well. It serves as a balance and allows me to be humble.”

Parkersburg Catholic High School



Luke Anderson

Senior

“I am surrounded by people who help me become a better person, not just an athlete.”



Megan Roedersheimer

Senior

“We pray together before and after every game, it’s really special.”

St. Joseph Central Catholic High School



Ava Gallion

Senior

“Everyone shows up for everybody and everything. This is extremely special as a student-athlete because the fan base is always so supportive and engaged.”



Brier Wagner

Senior

“From an athlete’s perspective, one of the best things about attending a Catholic School is that as a player, I have such a close bond with my coaches and teammates that I do not feel I would have anywhere else.”



DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

MS. JENNIFER HORNYAK
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