



The Cross and Community

A Holy Cross Academy Newsletter



Issue No. 3 | September 2025



Family Faith Reflection :

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. In life, we celebrate our achievements and victories with various trophies and medals. The cross or crucifix that you keep in your home or that you wear, is a symbol of God's victory over death. Jesus died on the cross, but because of his Resurrection, the cross has become for us, not a symbol of defeat, but a symbol of victory. Exaltation means to raise high, to lift up.

As a family, talk with each other about the cross and what it means to exalt and praise God for loving us so much that he gave us his only Son, Jesus. You can also use today's gospel to talk

with your children about the prayer of the Sign of the Cross. Today is a good reminder that the Sign of the Cross, something even our youngest children can learn, is a prayer unto itself rather than a quick gesture before and at the end of prayer. Perhaps a monthly prayer challenge for your family is to mark your child's forehead with a cross to send them forth and have your child sign herself to get her centered at the start of each day.

"Most High glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart. Grant me an upright faith, secure hope, and perfect charity. Fill me with understanding and knowledge that I may fulfill your Command." Saint Francis

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, so that whom believes in Him may have eternal life. John 3:13-17

President's Message

Dear HCA Families,

We are officially one month into the school year and by the feel of it, everyone is settled in. The classrooms are bustling with activity. The playgrounds are filled with laughter and running. Our Holy Cross Academy Parents Association has also been busy creating parent community and supporting our teachers with snacks and treats in the lounges. We regularly post pictures and daily events on Facebook and Instagram. Follow us there!

We had a wonderful All-Academy Day. Thank you for your wonderful donations to fill our Blessing Bags donated to Peter and Paul Community Services. Below, I have a couple of requests of our families. Thank you for your time, talent, and treasure.

Gala/Auction

Over the next weeks, there will be a heavy focus on our Auction/Gala held on November 8. The Auction is the Academy's largest fundraiser. Because of the success of the Auction, HCA has been able to keep tuition affordable for most families and to provide assistance to others. Our operational needs for faculty and staff salaries, curriculum, supplies, and more are not covered fully by our tuition revenue. Additionally, the auction, through the Fund-A-Need allows the school to choose a focused area to improve the offerings and rich experience for our students at Holy Cross.

You will see an article below about how your generosity with the Fund-A-Need last year allowed HCA to purchase and implement a new math program. We've also been able to purchase needed science text books in middle school and provide curriculum rich professional development for our faculty.

What can you do to support the Auction?

Get a table together or purchase individual tickets. Invite your neighbors, grandparents and friends. Go to your favorite restaurant or spa and ask them to donate a gift certificate. Do you own a business? Consider an ad or a sponsorship. Consider volunteering the night of the event. All of the request forms and details can be found under our Legacy Gala tab on the website.

New this year, we will have honor or dedication pages for our 8th graders in the gala program. Parents, coaches or grandparents are welcome to include a special page for your special 8th grader.

Enrollment Committee

HCA's enrollment has maintained steady over the last few years. We currently enroll 520 students from ECEC through 8th grade. With that said, we would like to be more intentional with our enrollment efforts at the natural entry points of kindergarten and 6th grade.

We are seeking parents that are interested in being on an enrollment committee. This committee will brainstorm ideas and then also execute or implement several initiatives that are already in the beginning phases. (We are currently exploring hosting a middle school open house in late October, for example.) If you are interested in being on the committee, please email Janie (jafechter@hca-stl.org) or me directly.

Have a wonderful rest of September. Thank you for entrusting Holy Cross Academy with your children. Please be assured of our daily prayer intentions for you and your family.

Many Blessings,
Toni Ponder

All Academy

We celebrated our Feast Day, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, on September 12 with an All Academy Mass and Retreat Day. Grades Pre-K to 8th grade came together at the Intermediate Campus at Our Lady of Providence to celebrate this special moment in our community. Mass was celebrated by Fathers Esswein and Ferrara.

After mass, students traveled to different stations. The stations included outdoor games, art projects, bingo, and a service project. All of the stations had one theme in mind: Serve. Through the generosity of our HCA families, our students made over 500 blessing bags for Peter and Paul Community Services. The Blessing Bags were delivered by our faculty and staff. Our large group received a tour and learned more about the unhoused community in St. Louis. All Academy days are so special and filled with faith, love, laughter, and togetherness.





Faculty & Staff Corner

Ms. Johnson Shares Life Changing Experience in Jamaica

This past summer, HCA Primary and Intermediate art teacher Ms. Latay Johnson traveled to Jamaica to take part in the *Teach for Teachers* program, an international initiative that provides training and support for local educators. Ms. Johnson joined the program after being encouraged by her mom, who had previously participated. “Since I’m still fairly new to teaching, it helped me build confidence in front of a class while also giving me the opportunity to learn and grow,” she shared. As part of the Computer Team, Ms. Johnson guided participants through practical skills like creating emails, designing Google Slides, and using educational websites. One of her most memorable experiences was helping a participant named Anthony send his very first email. “He was so grateful that we took the time to sit with him, and to this day, he still emails me,” Ms. Johnson said. Beyond acquiring teaching skills, this experience left a lasting spiritual and personal impact. Each day began with scripture, singing, and gratitude. “The love and appreciation in that classroom was so genuine – it really opened my eyes to how much I take for granted,” she reflected. Ms. Johnson returned with new confidence in the classroom and plans to incorporate some of the tools she discovered into her art lessons. More importantly, she brought back a renewed perspective on the power of connection.

“This experience changed how I view both learning and life. I encourage everyone to step out of their comfort zones, to serve, learn, and connect with others – whether here in the U.S. or around the world.”



Q & A with Fr. Ferrara

What is your role at HCA?

I am an administrator in my role as Pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish at the Primary Campus.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I like to cook and play guitar.

What is your favorite book?

The Bible.

If you could give one piece of advice to students or families, what would it be?

Make sure you are regularly practicing your faith.

Favorite STL restaurant?

The Pasta House CO.

Favorite HCA memory?

When I found out couples had bid on my auction dinner!

Holy Cross Happenings



Nurse's Corner

To help everyone stay healthy, here are a few important health and wellness reminders from our school nurses:

Preventing Colds & Flu

- **Handwashing** is the best defense - remind children to wash often with soap and water.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes** with a tissue or elbow
- **Stay home when sick.** Students with a fever (100°F or higher) should remain home until fever-free for 24 hours without medication. If your child vomits, please keep them home for 24 hours after the last episode.
- **Flu vaccine** - an annual shot is one of the best protections.
- **Rashes** - have unexplained rashes evaluated before returning to school.

Managing Head Lice

Head lice doesn't spread illness, but they do spread. Please check your child's hair regularly. Watch for:

- Persistent itching
- Nits (small white/yellow eggs near scalp)
- Live lice, especially behind the ears or neck

If you find lice or nits, notify the school and begin treatment before your child returns. To prevent spread, remind children not to share hats, combs, or headphones.

Extra Reminder: ECEC parents - please wash nap mats and blankets before sending them back on Mondays.



HCA Choir

Under the direction of Mrs. Peggy Pancella, HCA's Music Teacher, the Holy Cross Academy Choir continues to offer students a joyful way to share their musical gifts throughout the year. The choir's primary mission is leading music for occasional weekend Masses at all four of our parishes, giving students the chance to experience new parish communities while living out the Academy's core values through their music and leadership. The choir will also sing for All Academy Masses, parish concerts, graduation, and will participate in a regional choir festival. The fall semester dates for singing at each Parish are listed on the All Campus Calendar.

HCA Choir Dates:

Sept. 28, 9 am at **Seven Holy Founders**

Oct. 19, 10:30 am at **Our Lady of Providence**

Nov. 8, 5 pm at **Annunciation**

Dec. 14, 10 am at **St. Michael**

We are encouraging HCA families to attend masses on the days the HCA choir sings to support our students. For more information, contact Mrs. Peggy Pancella.

From the Pews

Seven Holy Founders

Save-the-Date

SHF Men Winter Retreat

Men of the parish please save the dates of January 9-11, 2026 for the SHF Men's Winter Retreat at King's House at the Our Lady of the Snows' hotel.

The retreat is two nights, Friday evening dinner through Sunday lunch.

Most retreatants miss no work to attend the entire session, less than 48 hours.

Call Carl Gudiswicz, 314-849-1013 or Greg Hempen, 314-608-5843, for information.

However, if you have not been on a Men's ACTS Retreat as yet, first consider registering for the November 20-23, 2025, Men's ACTS Retreat.

The Parish offers the opportunities of Summer & Winter Men's Retreats annually.

St. Michael's

St. Michael's
Oktoberfest
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2025
Authentic German food, desserts and music
German and Oktoberfest beer
Strolling Accordion Player from 5:30-6:30 p.m.
Music by the Wendl Band from 7:00 -10:00 p.m.
FOOD
Sauerbraten, jaeger schuitzel and bratwurst dinners will be served from the gym from 5:00 - 8:30 p.m. Choice of two sides includes spätzle with gravy, red cabbage, German potato salad, coleslaw, and applesauce.
Brats, hot dogs and Schnitzel sandwiches on pretzel buns, fries, pretzels, Bier and beverages served from the pit from 5:00 -10:00 p.m.
Delicious homemade German desserts sold separately at dessert booth.
RESERVED PAVILION SEATING
Reserved Pavilion seating for eight is available for \$25. Tables will be decorated for you and seven guests. One Reservation per family.
To reserve your table, contact Jane Azar at jharta@svbells.net.
Payment by cash or check.
All checks must be made payable to St. Michael the Archangel

Our Lady of Providence

COME CELEBRATE
- OCTOBER 11TH -
ProvidenceFest

Join us for the 2025 event!

SAVE THE DATE!

Providence Fest 2025

Saturday, October 11th

Food, Games, Live Music

More information to Come!

Annunciation

TRIVIA NIGHT
BROUGHT TO YOU BY 
Saturday, September 20 - 7-10 p.m.
Annunciation Church - 12 W. Glendale, Webster Groves, MO 63119
10 Rounds of Trivia for Teams of 8
Beer, wine, soda and water provided
Play for a chance to win cash prizes!
\$25 per person - \$200 table of 8 • Doors open at 6 p.m.
Register before August 30 for a free mulligan
Visit GoAnnunciation.com/Trivia-Night.html to register!

It's Gala/Auction Time

Details to Know

When: Saturday, November 8, 2025

Where: Middle School Campus at Annunciation. 12 W. Glendale Rd., Webster Groves, MO

Why:

The Auction is HCA's largest fundraiser. The money supports the gap between the actual cost of educating a student versus the tuition charged. These funds are essential to our school community to continue to operate.

Legacy Gala Opportunities

Interested in getting involved? Click the options below.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Advertisements

Donations

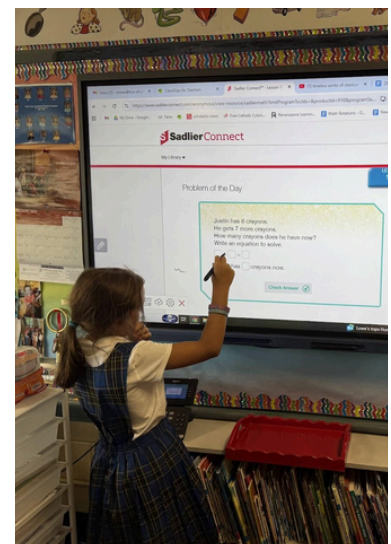
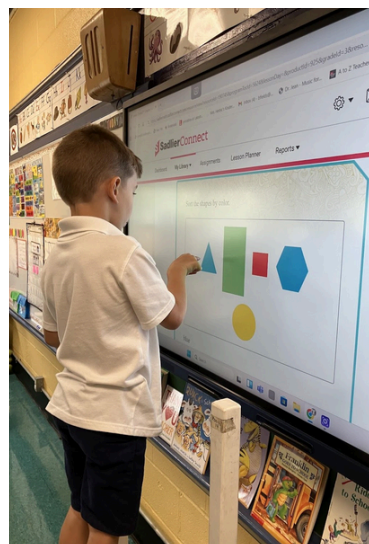
Legacy Gala Award Call for Nominations

For more information, visit our website at holycross-stl.org.

Fund a Need - Math Resource

Thanks to the 2024 Holy Cross Academy Gala Fund-A-Need, we have purchased a K-8 math resource that aligns our math program across the campuses. Last fall, our math teachers reviewed five math series and narrowed the selection down to two programs. Then they piloted both series in February and early March of 2025, rating each on a variety of categories (student-focused, instructional supports, technology, practice and assessment). The teachers selected the math series published by Sadlier (Sadlier Math K-6 and Progress in Mathematics 7-8). We had our "get started" professional development in August and are excited about the continuity across the Academy with our math instruction. Many thanks to all who contributed to the Fund-A-Need!

Submitted by Ms. Stephanie True,
Curriculum Coordinator



Making Us Proud

Alumni Spotlight - Charlie Frein

HCA Graduate Charlie Frein ('22) still carries the lessons, friendship, and memories from his time at HCA into everything he does today.

Charlie credits his teachers - especially in 8th grade - for preparing him for the future. "My teachers made sure the focus was on preparing us for what's next. I can give a lot of credit to HCA for gaining my confidence in myself, my work and everything in between," he shared.

Today, Charlie is a senior at DeSmet Jesuit High School. Charlie is still involved at HCA, working nearly everyday at the ECEC After School Program and spending this past summer full time at ECEC.

His advice to current students? "Remember to enjoy where you're at now - you're going to miss it. Whether you're in Kindergarten or 8th grade, make each day something worth looking back on. Take advantage of every opportunity HCA offers. Stay kind and keep your friends and family close - you're going to need them every day."

Best Trellis Award: Nash

Holy Cross Academy's Providence Garden was honored with the award for "Best Trellis" in the *First Peas to the Table* contest, hosted this past spring by Seed St. Louis. The competition brought together school gardens from across the area to showcase creativity and resourcefulness. The winning design, titled "Field Goal," was created by current 6th grader **Nash** during STREAM class. Built from repurposed PVC pipes used during COVID - the trellis is a wonderful example of both innovation and sustainability. Congratulations to Nash - what an inspiring way to see creativity, resourcefulness, and learning come together to grow something truly special!



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Holy Cross Parents Association

Recap

The start of the school year has been busy for HCPA. From the Rescheduled July Jamboree on August 10, to enjoying the Middle Schoolers at Mini Golf and Shaved Ice at Aloha, lots of events are underway. HCPA is still looking for volunteers. Please see the sign up genius linked [here](#) to volunteer.



Upcoming HCPA Events

HCPA Quarterly Meeting

- Tuesday, September 17 at 7:00 p.m. at the Primary Campus

Mom's Night Out

- Thursday, October 2 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. at Helen Fitzgerald's. All moms are invited. Click [here](#) for more details and to RSVP.

Trunk or Treat

- Saturday, October 18 from 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. at ECEC Campus

Uniform Resale

- Sunday, November 2 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Primary Campus

Magic House Event

- Sunday, November 23 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. ECEC and Primary families invited.

Christmas Collection

- Monday, December 1.