

Families investing in Catholic education appreciate value

Gianna Miritello
senior reporter

Parents of Catholic high school students make a significant investment in their children's education by choosing to pay tuition on top of the property taxes that fund their local public schools.

This year, 21,936 students attend the 33 high schools in the archdiocese. Marist's enrollment is 1,629, making up 7.4% of the archdiocese's total high school student population.

Prospective students and their families will visit our school at open house this weekend. Last year, over 200 families attended open house, 570 students took the entrance exam at Marist and 430 freshmen became RedHawks.

Currently, over 200 families have made an even greater investment in Catholic education by enrolling more than one student here at the same time or within a few years.

The Stinites family is one of those families.

The Stinites' four children are all one year apart. Max graduated in 2016, Nate graduated in 2017, Grace is a senior and Annie is a junior.

"[Max, Nate and Grace] looked at other schools, but felt most comfortable here," Mrs. Julie Stinites said. "Annie was certain about Marist from the start."

Stinites believes that the strong Catholic faith her children developed here is worth the investment.

"It is worth every penny," she said. "Everything at Marist is faith based and immerses our kids in a Catholic way of living."

The Stifter family also has four children who have graduated from or are currently attending Marist. Anne Marie graduated

in 2016, Claire is a senior, Eddie is a junior and Jack is a freshman. Their father, Mr. Ed Stifter, graduated in 1979.

"There are several Catholic high schools in the area, but we believe Marist offers the highest quality education," Mrs. Cindy Stifter said.

Stifter believes that Catholic school reaches beyond academics in a way public schools do not.

"Catholic education provides structure, discipline and a strong sense of community," she said. "There is a sacrifice, but you realize the value of Catholic education as you see your kids grow into responsible adults."

By 2021, the O'Connell family will also have sent four children here. Tim graduated in 2015, Carolan graduated in 2016, Abbie is a senior and Jack is a freshman. Their father, Tim O'Connell, graduated in 1984.

"We live in LaGrange and expected Tim to choose a high school around there, but he didn't like any of them," Mrs. Nancy O'Connell said. "After shadowing at Marist, he loved it. We weren't sure about the commute, but we couldn't be happier. Marist wasn't the easy choice, but it was the right choice."

Both parents grew up in Catholic households and decided to raise their children the same way.

"We wanted our kids in a faith-based environment," O'Connell said. "Catholic education better develops their character and forms lifelong values and practices. It requires some sacrifice, but it's worth it. I encourage families not to dismiss the idea for financial reasons and have conversations with the school to work something out."

The Gass family has four children here, senior Grant, sophomores Parker and Samantha and freshman Carter.

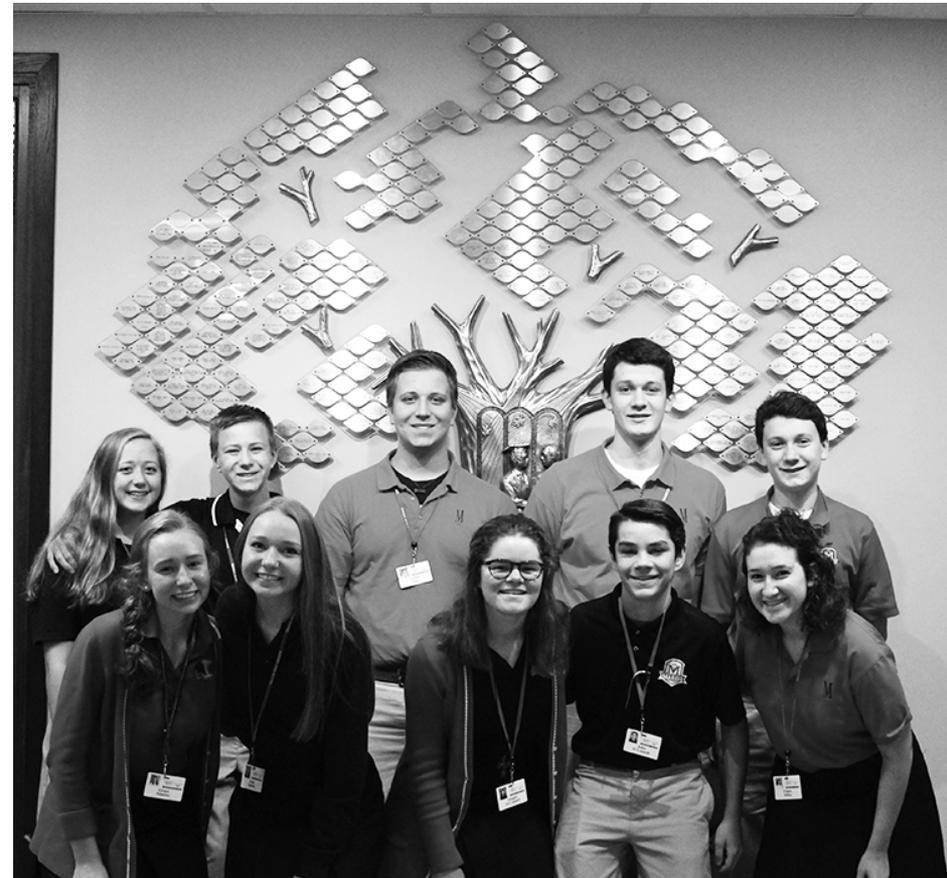


photo by Gianna Miritello

Members of the Gass, Stifter, Stinites and O'Connell families gather in front of the family tree in Champagnat Square. These four families have a total of 16 RedHawks, and there are over 200 families with two or more students currently enrolled here.

"It was important that our kids have religion every day in their lives," the Gass' mother, Mrs. Shari Sagotz, said. "We love Marist. Grant looked at several other schools, but chose Marist, and our other kids followed. My husband and I are both teachers and truly love the quality of education that our children receive here."

As families visit during open house Sunday, Director of Admissions Mrs. Alex

Brown looks forward to highlighting the faith-based education offered here that prepares students for college and life.

"Our Catholic environment fosters a level of respect and kindness toward others," Brown said. "It's fun to go here. We offer so much more outside of the classroom that makes students and families feel like they are a part of something truly special."