



All Saints Catholic Academy is a faith-filled community that focuses on families and the child as a whole person, made in the image and likeness of God. God is all accepting, and ASCA strives to be that community for all that want to be a part. The first things you may notice when you enter our main hallway, are the picture displays sharing the smiles and happy moments of our school students with their families. All Saints Catholic Academy (ASCA) doesn't enroll students, but families. We strive to be a community for all! We are reminded visually of being that community for all through many spiritual and physical reminders - there is a large cross next to a full length mirror with the message on the mirror - God Loves You. The school sign along our Rosemont Street entrance welcomes families (the message facing the road), but the message facing the front glass hallway for all students to read daily as they move about the main hallway- "You are loved." Messages and physical reminders of what we want our students to feel and know each day. The school prayer table containing our Book of Intentions is open, inviting anyone to write an intention in the prayer book, allowing our entire community to pray on it. It is comforting for students and staff alike to know they are supported and surrounded by others praying with, and for you. Looking around our entire school, you will find symbols of our faith, and ways for students to interact with those important Catholic symbols and meanings.

There is a faithful connection within our school to the teachings of Jesus. We are most proud of a few things - Daily prayer as a school community unites us all, from the youngest to the oldest. The Liturgical Year is evident through Advent wreaths in classrooms, and window displays shining bright for the community to see from the outside looking in. Through the visual arts, students and staff are visually reminded that Jesus is among us. The addition of our chapel area two years ago, for student theology classes and adoration, brings the heart of our faith - the teaching of Jesus and the Eucharist to all that enter the peaceful place.

We believe that students need to feel connected to their faith to fully understand it. It is our belief that through annual traditions and liturgical celebrations, that children will build that meaningful and personal connection. An example is - during the last days of Lent, our students are given the opportunity to take part in reconciliation. During the Lenten service, the students are asked to write a message pertaining to something they want to be forgiven for. Those messages are then blessed during the prayer service, and then burned. It is the hope that the messages, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, will be heard and forgiven. This annual prayer service helps our students to understand the gifts we have been given through our faith.

Mass and Eucharist, being pivotal pillars of our faith, need to be celebrated with students on a regular schedule. Although COVID made things more difficult, we have still found ways to celebrate as a community. Livestream Mass is a wonderful way to still bring the Gospel alive in our classrooms, while Parish Eucharist Ministers bring communion to our school immediately



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following a parish Mass. This COVID accommodation allowed us all to partake in the body of Christ. Students who are unable to receive Eucharist are strongly encouraged to receive blessings, so that they too may be a part of this celebration. During non-COVID times, our regular school masses and prayer services are led by students. Students plan the Masses and ensure that the readings and intentions connect with all students.

Just teaching religion does not make you a great Catholic school. A culture of love, support, kindness, empathy, encouragement, and prayer makes us a great Catholic school community. ASCA's religion curriculum is centered around the four pillars of Creed, Sacraments, Prayer, and Christian Living. We also strive to not only educate the next generation of Catholic school students, but through a framework of believing, celebrating, living, and prayer, our actions and role modeling helps to shape who those Catholic school students become. ASCA believes that a connected school family can also be a connected parish family. Many families join us for our school environment and programming, and eventually become members of our school parish, or our linked parishes in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Our second grade students are blessed with a school year filled with love and tradition. Second grade students will spend their year learning about the sacraments, specifically preparing for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. This amazing time in their elementary schooling is a most blessed and special time. The second graders, in connection with our school and linked parishes, remind us each year through their special Mass and Crowning of Mary why our faith is all encompassing.

COVID created a challenge for students to interact with their faith, and allow them to be of service to others. Our monthly Spirit Days (Got Spirit?) is one way we connect our school community to a need in our larger community. Each month a local charity is chosen to be supported. The students collect items or funds to help those in need. Whether it is raising money for Down's Syndrome, collecting needed items to bring some fun and happiness to seniors, or bringing in supplies for a dog rescue, our students learn that people of faith help one another. It is not only about being a good Christian, but being good, loving and empathetic individuals. Our dedication and commitment to local causes and charities continue to keep us connected to the larger area of the Capital District through the gift of service to others.

This past year we launched a Character Education Program that intertwines with the teachings of Jesus. Students, through literature and conversation, are learning that the teachings of Jesus are not just evident in the bible, but are all around us. One theme that comes to mind is kindness.



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Practicing Kindness - Living as Jesus did and wants us to do.

- Students have support everywhere they go, as we all promote the Golden Rule-Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- Modeling Kindness through eye contact, asking questions, and a genuine feeling of being loved and cared for here at school.
- Class meetings, mediations, and opportunities for students to just listen to one another happen regularly, as a way to not only resolve what is wrong, but to also model conflict resolution to our students. Vital life skills!

ASCA educates the entire student's body, mind, and soul. That is what makes us an excellent choice for Catholic education within the Capital District. The following resources assist teachers with connecting their students with their faith -

- Sunday Visitors *I am Special*- Early Childhood Program for 3, 4 and 5 year olds
- Digital Resource Library - Diocese of Albany (www.albanycatholicdigitlibrary.org)
- *Catechist Formation and The Catholic School Teacher* - provided by Catholic School Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany
- *The Catholic Children's Bible* St Mary's Press (grades 3-6; each student buys one in grade 3 and uses it throughout their enrollment)
- *The Catholic Youth Bible* - middle school use
- Respect Life Curriculum Guide - PK - Grade 8 - provided by the Catholic School Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany
- *Schools of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany Religion Curriculum Map*
- *Curriculum Framework for Parish Catechetical Programs* - Diocese of Albany
- Pflaum Weekly - (Our composting program was even published in it!!)
- Literature Study - ie. *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* (grade 8) & *Tuck Everlasting* (grade 5)



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