



CATHOLIC CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

## School Newsletter

December 2008/January 2009

### From the Principal's Desk:

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope you enjoyed the Thanksgiving weekend with family and friends and are looking forward to the celebration of Christ's birth this month. For me these holidays are times to give thanks to God, to be with family, and to share the gifts that we have been given with those around us who are less fortunate. The gift of Catholic education that we share together gives our staff and your children an opportunity to do all of these things.

We celebrated Thanksgiving Mass together as a Catholic Central family on November 25<sup>th</sup>. In this celebration of the Eucharist we were able to thank God for what He has given to us and through the Thanksgiving Food and Clothing drives we were able to give warmth, comfort and nourishment to many people who live in our immediate neighborhood. As we enter into the season of Advent and our preparation for Christmas begins, we will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation together on December 4<sup>th</sup> and throughout the month of December will be working together on our traditional Christmas Families Project.

In addition we have partnered with Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish to bring Matthew Kelly to Catholic Central to speak to our students on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Matthew's message will focus on helping students reflect on their lives and what God is calling them to do. He will promote living a life of holiness and how that will help them achieve authentic happiness in their lives. Each student will receive Matthew Kelly's book *The Rhythm of Life* prior to his visit and will preview sections of the book in their Religion classes. You can learn more about Matthew Kelly at [www.matthewkelly.org](http://www.matthewkelly.org)

Through the Education Committee of our Catholic Secondary School Board and the administrations of both high schools we are addressing some questions and concerns of parents in two areas. The first is with our policy of awarding honors points to students who are taking honors or Advanced Placement courses and the second is with our grading scale and how it may impact college admissions and scholarships.

In January 2007 the Catholic Secondary School Board adopted the policy that beginning with the Class of 2011 (includes this year's 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders) a "value added" method of calculating grade point averages and class rank would be used. After analyzing much data and input the "new" system of adding honors points onto a student's base GPA when taking honors or AP classes was determined to be a fairer system. Even though the system is calculated differently students are still given a similar incentive to take honors and AP courses. The policy specifics are outlined on page 20 of Catholic Central's Curriculum and Academic Policy Guide that can be found in the Academics section on our website.

#### **Important Phone Numbers**

Main Office: 233-5899  
Attendance: 233-5812  
Guidance Office: 233-5810  
Athletic Office: 233-5898  
Business Office: 233-5976



Steve Passinault, **Principal**

Tom Maj, **Assistant Principal**

Heidi Clark-Smitley, **Director of Guidance**

Todd Kolster, **Athletic Director**

Kathryn Walsh, **Campus Minister**

Mary Ottenwess, **Technology Director**

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## From the Principal cont.

The seven point grading scale (p. 18 of the Student/Parent Handbook or p. 7 of the Curriculum and Academic Policy Guide) has been in existence at Catholic Central for over 30 years and requires students to work hard to earn their grades. In recent years some high schools have decided to lower the standards required to earn a particular grade. The CSS have not. One question is how this affects our students and how they compete for college admissions and scholarships. CSS students are accepted into colleges and universities across the country and earn scholarships at rates higher than almost all of the schools in West Michigan.

In part this success is due to the fact that CC expects more of its students in the classroom and subsequently they are well-prepared for college entrance tests and college success. As the Education Committee addresses this issue the counseling office will give colleges or universities who might want additional information about a student the percentage earned in classes, along with our equivalent grade, for comparison purposes. As always we will continue to include the CSS grading scale with transcripts.

For the fifth consecutive year Catholic Central was selected to the National Catholic Honor Roll as one of America's Top 50 Catholic high schools. It is an honor to be shared by everyone involved in our school and community, past and present. The honor is based on excellence in Catholic Identity, Academics, and Civic Education. We are very proud of this honor and will add the year 2008 to the Top 50 banner hanging in the gymnasium to commemorate this occasion.

As we finish up the year 2008, we have much to be thankful for as a Catholic Central community. I am thankful for the parents, students, and the many others who support Catholic Central and I wish you all a happy and holy Advent and Christmas season.

I ask for your continued support and prayers as we strive to successfully educate all of our students in spirit, mind and body.

May God bless you and your family,

Steve Passinault

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## From the Assistant Principal

**Winter weather** is arriving, students should allow for extra travel time in order to arrive to school on time and safely. Please review the Policy on "Delay of school/weather related" (p. 16 Student Handbook). If school is to be delayed or cancelled, notification will be given through the local media. If there is to be a two hour delay, school will begin at 10:00 a.m. with first hour. Zero hour classes would be cancelled.

**Cell phones** continue to be a nuisance at school and during class time. We ask that all messages be sent through the Main Office.

**Exams** are January 13 through January 16. All obligations are to be discharged by that date: library fines, uniforms, detentions, tuition balances, text book, etc. Students may be held out of exams if they have any debts.

### Reminders:

- In the event that your son/daughter will be absent, we ask that you call by 10:00 a.m. to the Attendance Office (233-5812).
- Money can be deposited into lunch accounts at any time. We ask that it be done before 8:00 a.m. to avoid delays during lunch.

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## Guidance Office News

Your role as parent is vital for student effort and success. During this semester, please continue to encourage your student to complete all assigned work in a timely manner (see Student Handbook for school policy on late work), to assist your student in seeking help from teachers as needed, and to support a conscientious effort to prepare for final exams in January. Meanwhile, feel free to contact your student's teachers through email. *If you are having difficulty accessing grades from the Portal, please contact the Guidance Office at 233-5810.*

Our top recommendations for academic improvement include:

- Seek extra help from teacher(s) before or after school
- Use planner to track daily homework and differentiate study time
- Create a routine for doing school work at home including location, time frame and accountability from a parent or tutor
- Identify a tutor or study partner for regular contact during the week or on the weekend (see CC website for NHS volunteer tutors)
- Practice different study techniques outside school such as verbal, tactile and visual props (ask teacher or counselor for suggestions)
- Write grade goals for specific courses and track through the Portal weekly
- Meet with school counselor to manage the responsibilities of academics, extracurricular activities and relationships
- Study for final semester exams during the Christmas Break

**Seniors & Parents:** The Financial Aid Information Night will be held on Wednesday, December 10, at 7:00 p.m., in our cafeteria. Our speaker for the evening will be Mr. David Steffee, who is the Director of Financial Aid at Aquinas College. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – the form required by virtually all colleges and universities for determining eligibility for financial aid – will be explained at this meeting.

Another reminder for seniors and their parents: Students who are applying for college admission should be finishing their application forms. Many schools have deadlines of December 31. Thus, seniors **MUST** submit recommendation forms/applications/transcript requests no later than Monday, December 8. When requesting a transcript or letter of recommendation, students need to take into consideration both the volume of applications we receive at this time of year, as well as the Guidance Office being closed during Christmas break.

Parents are encouraged to send to the Guidance Office a copy of any award letters and scholarship offers your student receives so that we can include this recognition in our graduation program this spring. The total amount of scholarship dollars received by the Class of 2009 is reported in publications about our school, so we appreciate your help in collecting this important information.

**Juniors & Parents:** The Michigan Merit Exam which includes the ACT will be given during the school days of March 10, 11, 12. There is no charge to take the ACT on this occasion. Further information will be mailed home at the end of January. Test prep workshops are optional and will be advertised by the beginning of February.

Juniors who are involved in a spring sport often find that they have a conflict with a contest that is scheduled for the same day as the ACT such as the June 13, 2009 test date. Other test dates to consider are February 7 and April 4. Information about ACT registration is available from the Guidance Office, or can be found at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Information about SAT and SAT II Subject Tests are found at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

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## From the Campus Minister:

Dear Catholic Central Family,

Our Thanksgiving Drive this year was very successful. We asked students to commit to bring in at least one item of clothing and one food item, aiming for 100% participation in each 1<sup>st</sup> hour class. The Liturgy Planning class collected all the items and we divided them and kept them in the cafeteria for all to see the amount of donations we had to give to the Cathedral Outreach Center (clothing) and the Downtown Churches' Food Pantry (Food). Our Thanksgiving Drive has traditionally been to benefit our neighbors in the Heartside Neighborhood. The collection bins were overflowing! We celebrated our Thanksgiving Mass on the Tuesday before the holiday. Our celebrant for this Mass was Fr. Andy Thompson, CSSR, from St. Alphonsus Parish.

Our school Advent Theme is **"Prepare Your Hearts . . ."** We will be using the theme in several ways throughout Advent, beginning with RECONCILIATION. On December 4, students will be given the opportunity, during their Religion class time, to go to confession. This will be happening throughout the day. We hope to have 8 to 10 priests available for students. Students will participate in a preparation service with an examination of conscience the day before in their Religion classes. We began this method of making the Sacrament available for our students during Advent of last year. It seemed to work well for all. We focus on PEACE in our Preparation this first week of Advent..

We will begin Christmas families during the first week of December. Mrs. Jeanine Gasper and Student Congress are coordinating Christmas Families this year. Every 5<sup>th</sup> Hour class will receive information about a family that has been screened by the Cathedral of St. Andrew. Most are members from the parish, many are Hispanic, some have not lived in the area for very long. The need is great and we need your help. Most of you probably met your student's 5<sup>th</sup> hour teacher, so you will be familiar with the person coordinating your student's Christmas Family. We will be delivering on the morning of December 19, after Mass, and we must have adult drivers for every family. This activity is one of the Catholic Central traditions that I love the most! See Jeanine Gasper's article for more information.

On December 8 we will commemorate Mary's Immaculate Conception. With this feast we are reminded that Mary was conceived without sin. Fr. Steve Cron, the pastor of St. Joseph's Parish will return to the Cathedral to be our celebrant. This week is also the Marian feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We focus on FAITH in our Preparation this second week of Advent

On Monday, December 15, Matthew Kelly, a well known author and speaker will be speaking to our school about Authentic Happiness. This is also the final week of Christmas Families – we will focus on JOY in our Preparation during the third week of Advent.

On December 19 we will gather for our traditional Advent/Christmas Mass which precedes the delivery of Christmas Families. Fr. Lou Stasker, will be the Celebrant for this Mass

The Eucharistic Minister Training scheduled for November has been changed to January 9. Fr Tom Tavella, CSP from the Cathedral, along with Dennis Rybicki and I will be training confirmed juniors and seniors who are interested in becoming Eucharistic Ministers. This training is designed for high school students and emphasizes Eucharistic theology and the History of the Eucharist as well as the rubrics of distribution of the Sacred Body and Blood. Students can still Eucharistic Minister at our school liturgies if they have been trained in their Parish for this ministry. We do ask for a phone call or note from someone at the Parish notifying of the training. The training will be from 3:15 to 5:30 and we will serve pizza at 5:30 for those students who wish to stay for the "supper" after. We will be signing students for the training after Thanksgiving.

Many of our students are signing up for all the service opportunities this season. They still seem to find time to meet the needs of others although we all know they too are living very busy lives. God bless them!

The Liturgy Planning Team and Dennis Rybicki are looking forward to planning a fun week for Catholic Schools Week at the end of January. It is always fun to celebrate who we are after we have gone through the stress of exams. Fr. Tom Tavella, CSP will be the celebrant at our Catholic Schools Mass on January 28. We will commission the new Eucharistic Ministers at this Mass.

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## Campus Ministry Cont.

God bless you and your families during this Advent season. Liturgically, it is a season of waiting and preparing. I hope you can make the time to prepare spiritually and take advantage of all the wonderful readings and activities throughout this season. Many parishes have evening services during the week, some families try to have a prayer time every evening around an Advent wreath. Find some time together. Please keep those who are lonely, sick, and mourning in your prayers. I will remember all of you in my Advent and Christmas prayers. Thank you again for your children and all you give and do for our school.

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## We Care News

We Care provides safe social experiences for the students of CC and encourages networking between parents. Experience has taught us that when parents know each other, kids are safer. In addition, the parents have fun, too. Watch for upcoming news on parent socials designed to help you meet other parents of your child's class.

WE CARE was formed in the early 1980's and has supported many different activities since that time. We try to respond to the changing needs of families and students. Direct participation in the WE CARE activities has always been strong, as evidenced by the large number of parents that return the volunteer forms that are included in your packets each August.

The steering committee of WE CARE is in the planning process for the 2009-10 school year and would like to invite you to continue that tradition of support by volunteering for one of the many WE CARE sponsored activities or by your donations

Other WE CARE news:

Our second presentation in the Parent Speaker Series featured Father Mark-David Janus and Dr. Carolyn King from Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services discussing teenage depression and suicide.

Details were given on the severity of the problem in our society. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among people ages 15-24 in the United States. Each day 1000 American teenagers attempt suicide and 18 die. Few suicides happen without warning, but they are preventable.

Fr. Janus and Dr. King emphasized that **depression is a disease just like diabetes or heart disease**. The good news it can be treated with counseling and medication and has the same rate of success as other illnesses.

Some of the warning signs include sudden changes in behavior, recently experiencing a significant loss, giving away possessions, tying up loose ends, becoming aggressive, rebellious or disobedient, self destructive behavior, isolating oneself, or loss of self esteem.

Fr. Janus and Dr. King encourage parents who think there may be a problem to get help as soon as possible. Do not wait. The sooner it is treated, the better the results. Your primary care provider is the first step on the road to recovery.

Both speakers left handouts of their presentations and Pine Rest contributed materials on teenage depression and suicide. We also have a DVD video of the night's presentation available for check out. All are available in the main office.

Watch for more information on the final topic in this series scheduled for next spring. The next speaker and topic will be announced in the next newsletter.

Sincerely,  
Russ Armock, Chair-WE CARE

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# Catholic Central Spring Musical

## Catholic Central High School Presents:

It's not too early to be thinking about Catholic Central's Spring Musical. *Children of Eden*, a musical loosely based on the stories in the book of Genesis will be presented **March 18-21, 2009** at Circle Theatre on the campus of Aquinas College. Auditions are approaching fast! They will be held on Wednesday, **December 10th** beginning at 3:30 in the music room at CCHS. Any student interested in becoming involved is welcomed and encouraged and can seek more information from Mr. Schrems or Mrs Walsh. In addition, we will be seeking the talents and skills of parents and students interested in creating costumes, props, and set. If you can assist, please let us know who you are so that we can add you to the list gracious folks who will help to make this musical an amazing experience. You can e-mail Tim Schrems ([timschrems@gcss.org](mailto:timschrems@gcss.org)) or Kathie Walsh ([kathiewalsh@gcss.org](mailto:kathiewalsh@gcss.org)) or call 233-5857. If you or your child have not been involved in a CC production before, this is the year to step forward. No contribution is too small and you will not regret becoming

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## Yearbook

From the everyday routines to the extra special events, from the first freshman in alphabetical order to the senior whose last name begins with a Z, we are packing this year's Spires with photos to showcase CC's personalities, interests, traditions, and accomplishments. Reserve your copy by returning to Josten's the order form that was mailed to students' homes in October. If you did not receive an order form, or if you need a new one, please contact Mary Burns, the yearbook adviser, at [maryburns@gcss.org](mailto:maryburns@gcss.org).



### Holiday Gift Ideas:

**Happy Holidays from the Cougar Den!** Can't figure out what to get your student or CC fan for Christmas? How about CC Spirit wear. We carry many items for your discerning Cougar. We have Fleece Jackets & Vests, Hooded Sweatshirts, T-Shirts, Baseball Hats, Youth Sweatshirts & T-Shirts. Cougar Den hours are M-F 7:30-3:00, it is located outside the Guidance Office - see Lauri in the Guidance Office.

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### Freshman Parents:

Save the Date!!

Mark January 31st on your calendar for the freshman class social for parents. This will be a great opportunity to get to know parents of your child's friends. We will have games, raffles, food, and drink. If you would like to take part in the organization of this party please email Jen at [cclassof2012@yahoo.com](mailto:cclassof2012@yahoo.com).



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# Athletics

**Winter Sports Feature:** This winter we are hosting a Boys Basketball Game at Van Andel Arena on January 26<sup>th</sup>. It is this year's Jam at the Van. The first game will be Zeeland East vs. Zeeland West at 6:15pm and Catholic Central vs. Wayland starting at roughly 8:15pm. Tickets will go on sale December 15<sup>th</sup> in the main office. Tickets are \$6 for pre-sale tickets, with \$2 going to the school and \$8 at the gate. Catholic Central only gets a percentage of tickets bought at our school.

**Team Schedules:** Please visit the school website, [www.grcatholiccentral.com](http://www.grcatholiccentral.com), for up-to-date information for all our teams. Under "Athletics" at the website, the "Schedules" has cancellations, team results, and important announcements (open the "Chalkboard"). The "Schedule" item allows you to select a view showing all athletic events for a week, a month, or a season schedule for any team. These are new features to improve communication with you.

**Vacation time:** Parents, if you have a family activity that conflicts with practices or games, please discuss directly with the coach as soon as possible. Our policy is covered in the school handbook. Athletic season dates are known well in advance and can be provided by calling the Athletic Office at 233-5898.

**TICKETS:** Our ticket prices are mandated by the OK Conference. The policy is to charge for all adults and students \$5 for all admissions. We will be adding a 5 and under clause into the ticket policy. Children that are 5 and under will no longer be charged admission into Catholic Central Home events only.

<u>Basketball</u> FR/JV/Varsity	Adult	Student	Child(<5 yrs)
At Door	\$5.00	\$5.00	Free
Pre-game	\$5.00	\$5.00	Free

Ticket prices for the Girls West Catholic Christmas Showcase and Boys Holiday Tournament at Aquinas College will be announced. Single game tickets for the next OK-Gold game (Home and Away) will available in the school office 7:30am-3:00pm, Monday-Friday, at pre-game prices.

**Review the CC Handbook** you received last August. The Athletic section provides guidance regarding academic, student conduct, and health requirements to maintain eligibility for school sports.

# Big Blue Auction

March 14, 2009 @ The CAT [www.greatholicecentral.com](http://www.greatholicecentral.com)

Mark your calendars for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Big Blue Auction Party which is slated for Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at the CAT Fieldhouse. The party will offer food, games, raffles, silent and live auction and lots of fun!! Your donations of goods, services or financial contributions are encouraged and very much appreciated. Please complete and return the form below if you wish to make a donation.

The proceeds from this event will be used to enhance a wide range of spiritual, academic and extra-curricular programs; including retreats, curriculum, the arts, athletics, technology and specific building needs. All Catholic Central students will benefit greatly from your generosity. Look for more info in upcoming newsletters!

## Donate A Gift

Yes, I will happy to provide the following auction item or cash donation to the Big Blue Auction:

Gift Name	
Gift Description	
Approximate Value of Gift \$	
Donor Name(s)	Contact Phone

Grand Rapids Catholic Secondary Schools  
And  
The Drama Departments of Catholic Central and West Catholic High Schools  
Present

# As You Like It



by  
William Shakespeare

January 22-24

7:30pm

January 24

2:30pm

In The Performing Arts Center Aquinas College



# CLASS OF 2009

## SENIOR ALL NIGHT PARTY!

Parents of the Class of 2009,

A few reminders about the All Night Party being planned for our sons and daughters:

### **Party will be held immediately following graduation on May 19**

A letter was mailed on November 10 to all senior parents explaining more about the event, including info about an **IMPORTANT mandatory parent meeting to be held Jan. 21, 7 p.m., CC cafeteria**. If you did not receive this mailing, please contact Bill or Amy DeWitt at 616-534-8398 or [bakldewitt@hotmail.com](mailto:bakldewitt@hotmail.com). Please remember to sign and bring the forms that were in this mailing with you to the January meeting!

### **Holiday Fundraiser Orders**

THANKS to all who ordered goodies! THANKS also to the parents who have made significant financial contributions "just because"! – we are well on our way to raising significant funds for the Senior Party!

Holiday orders arrive on Saturday, December 6, CC cafeteria, and can be picked up that morning.

Can you help out with distribution in the cafeteria? Please contact Mary Beth Underhill for details re helping out (students may also volunteer for service hours). Mary Beth can be reached at 538-2068 or [Underhill5726@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Underhill5726@sbcglobal.net).

### **Senior All Night Party Parent Social/Horseracing Fundraiser**

Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 7 – a great night of fun for all at Catholic Central. Details to follow soon.

### **Spring Garage Sale**

Start cleaning out those closets and saving those items for our class garage sale to be held on April 24 and 25, taking place at the home of the Berlin Family. Many volunteers will be needed.

### **Donations**

Could you – or your company – possibly send a cash donation to help us meet our budget and also to help out students who will need financial assistance with attending the All Night Party? Tax-deductible donations can be mailed to Matt & Mary Beth Underhill, 5726 Bethanne Dr SW, Grandville, MI 49418. Please make checks payable to "CCHS Class of 2009."

### **We want your photos!!**

Start collecting your favorite photos of your son's or daughter's years at Catholic Central for a DVD we're creating. The DVD will be shown during the Senior All Night Party on May 19. We're looking for about 10 photos per student. Digital photos on CD preferred. Mail to: Gretchen Tierney, 2910 Alger SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

