



the MEASURE of
SUCCESS

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Catholic Schools of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

Catholic Schools Office Mission

Create a community of learners who joyfully navigate faith and reason in order to propagate our Catholic beliefs.

Ensure vibrant and enduring communities of faith by:

- Fostering a sense of belonging,
- Providing a framework of operational support,
- Helping to bring our community of learners closer to their God-given spiritual and academic potential.

Diocesan Advisory Council for Catholic Education 2023-24

Margaret Dubose, *Ex Officio*

Vince Bruno, **Chair**

Joe Ross, Ph.D., **Vice-Chair**

Meghan Hendrick, **Secretary**

Maria Jose Bonilla

Frank Chapuran

Mary Jane Dorn

Tom Economy

Douglas Hess

Fr. Bradley Jantz

John Maloney

Cappy O'Halloran

Mark Proper

John Rivenburgh

Andy Rothery

Sara Turner

Dede Tynes

Cindy Westbrook



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF **BIRMINGHAM** *in* **ALABAMA**

Catholic school education is more than preparation for a career; it is preparation to reach our highest potentials, to become good Christians who contribute something more to family and society. With Christ as our foundation, our Catholic schools are preparing students for tomorrow's world, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and moral compass needed to love God and live faith-filled productive lives.

+ *Steven J. Raica*

MOST REVEREND
STEVEN J. RAICA

Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama

the MEASURE of SUCCESS

Our Catholic schools are special places. Anyone who has visited one of these vibrant institutions during the school day, attended a school event or a school Mass has experienced this difference firsthand. Anyone whose child has asked questions about the faith as they extend and process their understanding from what they learned at school that day has experienced this difference. The 25 students and their families who chose to enter the Catholic faith during the 2023-2024 school year certainly understand this difference.

What defines the Catholic school difference? Our schools are rooted in the Blessed Sacrament, the cornerstone of our mission. This cultural distinction is palpable and flows from the celebration of school-wide Masses and times of prayer before our Lord in the Eucharist. The graces of the Blessed Sacrament are manifested in the joy of the students, the welcoming atmosphere, the celebration of achievements with gratitude to God, the cultivation of virtues, and the nurturing of a profound love for God, the sacraments, and one another. Together, these elements create an educational environment that is truly unparalleled.

In the Diocese of Birmingham, each person in each school is united with Christ through the sacraments, as we learn, love, and grow together. Everyone in our schools is called to embody the spirit of Christ, characterized by love and care for one another, guiding each other toward a more sanctified life.

This is the difference. The shared and lived spirit of Christ is what you feel when you enter a Catholic school in the Diocese of Birmingham. This is what you are part of when you enroll in or work in one of our schools.

I invite you to explore the pages of this 2024 edition of *The Measure of Success* and witness this difference for yourself. Even better, reach out to your local Catholic school to schedule a visit. You won't regret it.



MARGARET
DUBOSE

Superintendent
of Catholic Schools

“Our schools are rooted in the **BLESSED SACRAMENT**, the cornerstone of our mission.”

SACRAMENTS

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL DIFFERENCE

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH A CULTURE OF FAITH



During the 2023-24 school year, 25 students from our schools joined the Catholic Church, with their school communities playing a significant role in their decision.

Within the Diocese of Birmingham Catholic school community, each person in each school contributes to the collective body, united with Christ through the sacraments. As members of the Church, everyone in our schools is called to embody the spirit of Christ, characterized by love and care and guiding each other toward a more sanctified life. Catholic education is an anchor of hope that carries students throughout their lives, each person living out their call to follow Christ in the ways God has intended. A powerful example of this is the increasing numbers of students entering the Catholic Church during the past few years.

1. St. John the Baptist Catholic School students Harper Reed (center) and Aashiyana Arora, pictured with Father Bryan Lowe, joined the Catholic Church at the school Mass during Holy Week.

2. Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School middle school student Iris Larkin, pictured with her parents, expressed a strong desire to be Catholic, receiving reconciliation and Holy Communion on May 24 and currently preparing for confirmation.

3. Sacred Heart Catholic School second grader Auggie Carter was baptized by Father Patrick Egan and received his first Holy Communion with his class.

4. Five students from John Carroll Catholic High School received the sacraments of initiation, and one student received the sacrament of confirmation at a school Mass on April 29. The students with their sponsors are pictured with Deacon Doug Mooror (left) and Father Kevin Bazzel.

5. Father Bazzel anoints a student confirmand.





“I started to dig into Matthew 16 and read more about the apostolic succession of St. Peter. When I realized Catholicism was the truth, I couldn’t stand not being Catholic anymore.”

- John Gaddy, Confirmand
John Carroll Catholic High School



Gracie Morrison developed a relationship with Christ in her four years at **Holy Spirit Catholic High School**, inspiring a desire to unite more closely with Him through the sacraments. She received the sacraments of initiation as a senior in the 2023-24 school year.

SCHOOL YEAR 2023-24

4,325

TOTAL STUDENTS

2.7% Increase

CATHOLIC

3,270

NON-CATHOLIC

1,055

Students receiving

Title I Services

471

Students eligible for free
and reduced lunch

588

Students with disability,
diagnosed by local
education agency

340

International students

8

Students assisted by scholarship
granting organizations

592

484

TOTAL STAFF

90.6% Retention from 2023

CATHOLIC

332

NON-CATHOLIC

152

Statistics include
diocesan schools only

28,092

SQUARE MILES
SERVED BY CATHOLIC
SCHOOLS

12

DIOCESAN ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS

3

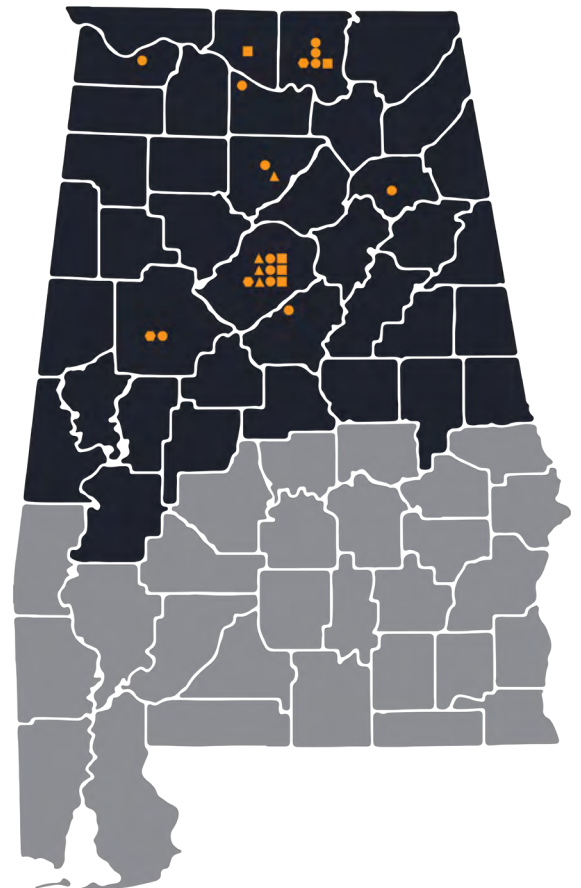
DIOCESAN HIGH
SCHOOLS

5

DIOCESAN EARLY
LEARNING CENTERS

4

INDEPENDENT,
NON-DIOCESAN
SCHOOLS



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

IN THE DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM

ATHENS

St. Paul Catholic Preschool (3K, 4K, K) **NEW**
www.stpaulcatholic.school

BIRMINGHAM

Holy Family Catholic Academy* (4K, K, 1)
www.hfcatholicacademy.org

Holy Family Cristo Rey Catholic High School* (9–12)
www.hfcristorey.org

John Carroll Catholic High School (9–12)
www.jcchs.org

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School (3K–8)
www.olsschool.com

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Children's Learning Center
(6 weeks–4K)
www.ourladyofsorrows.com

Our Lady of the Valley Catholic School (3K–8)
www.olvbirmingham.com

Prince of Peace Catholic School (3K–8)
www.popcatholic.net

Prince of Peace Adventure Ark Playschool
(6 months–2 years)
www.popcatholic.org

St. Francis Xavier Catholic School (3K–8)
www.sfxcatholic.com

St. Peter's Child Development Center (6 weeks–4K)
www.saintpeterscdc.com

St. Rose Academy* (3K–8)
www.strosebhm.org

CULLMAN

Sacred Heart School (3K–6)
www.shscullman.com

St. Bernard Preparatory School* (7–12)
www.stbernardprep.com

FLORENCE / DECATUR

St. Ann Catholic School (3K–8)
www.saintanndecatour.org

St. Joseph Regional Catholic School (3K–8)
www.catholicill.com

GADSDEN

St. James Catholic School (3K–8)
www.stjamesgadsden.org

HUNTSVILLE / MADISON

Good Shepherd Catholic Preschool (10 months–4K)
www.goodshephsv.org

Holy Family Regional Catholic School (4K–8)
www.holy-family-school.com

Holy Spirit Regional Catholic School (4K–8)
www.hstigers.org

St. John Paul II Catholic High School (9–12)
www.jp2falcons.org

St. John the Baptist Catholic School (4K–8)
www.stjohnb.com

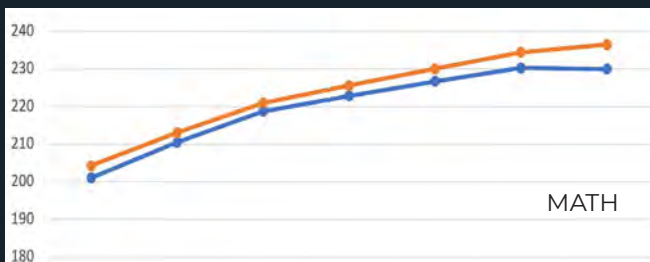
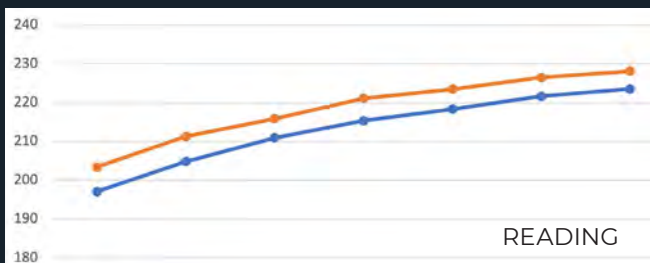
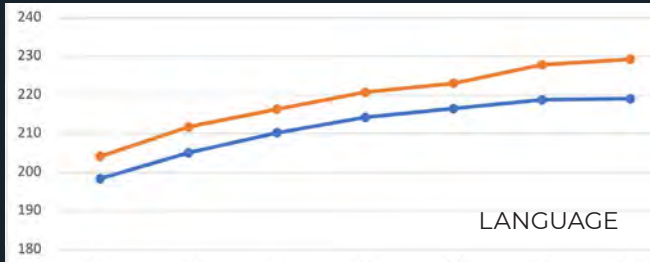
TUSCALOOSA

Holy Spirit Catholic School (3K–5) (6–12)
www.holyspirit-al.com

* An independent, non-diocesan school

MAP® National Evaluation Norms

Diocesan schools exceeded MAP National Evaluation Norms. The yearly testing measures student achievement and growth in key academic areas for grades 3 - 9.



Grades 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

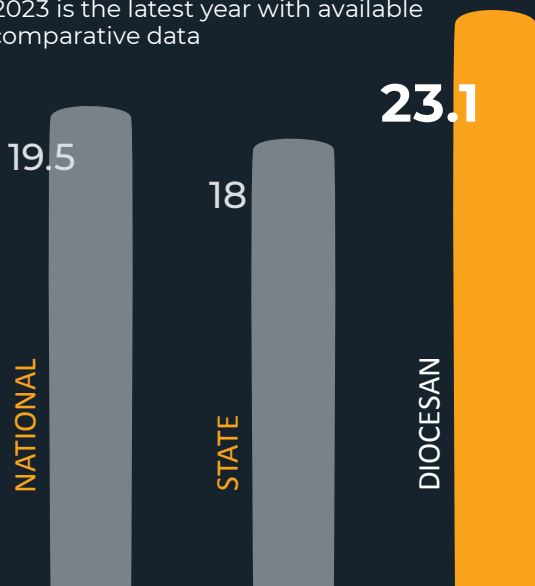
Grades

Diocesan National

Average ACT® Composite Scores

(Class of 2023)*

* 2023 is the latest year with available comparative data



EXCELLENCE RECORDED

Rigorous academic standards, developed by our own teachers and leaders, align curricula with each school's mission. Cultivation of critical thinking skills and the virtues of self-discipline and perseverance prepare students for their future roles in society. Standardized assessment scores for the Diocese of Birmingham schools consistently surpass both state and national averages, informing instruction and facilitating individual student growth.

NWEA MAP® EVALUATION



Normative averages continue to indicate overall consistent growth throughout the diocese, exceeding national norms.

The MAP® (Measures of Academic Progress) Growth™ evaluation, developed by NWEA (Northwest Educational Assessment), measures achievement in key subject areas. Results provide teachers a reliable, consistent source of information that can help development of instructional strategies.

ACT® RESULTS



Diocesan schools earned an average ACT® Composite Score of 23.1, well above the national and Alabama scores of 19.5 and 18, respectively.

The ACT® (American College Testing) is a college admissions test that helps institutions of higher learning assess college readiness and can have broad impacts for high school students, including access to scholarships, college acceptance, and course placements.

ASSESSMENT of RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE



Diocesan schools post excellent scores in assessed belief and behaviors of the Catholic faith.

Assessment of Religious Knowledge (ARK) guides our schools in understanding what our 2nd-12th grade students, faculty, and staff know and believe about the Catholic faith in six domains: sacraments and liturgy, the creed and salvation history, morality, prayer, virtue, and living discipleship.

“Our schools in the Diocese of Birmingham continue the Catholic school tradition of excellence in academics and spiritual formation.”

- Superintendent Margaret Dubose

GRADUATES CLASS of 2024

The 216 Class of 2024 graduates in our three diocesan high schools—Holy Spirit Catholic High School, John Carroll Catholic High School, and St. John Paul II Catholic High School—have once again delivered impressive results.

Students in our high schools achieve high levels of academic excellence, continually exceeding state and national ACT composite scores while still excelling in service to their communities and achieving in athletics and the arts.

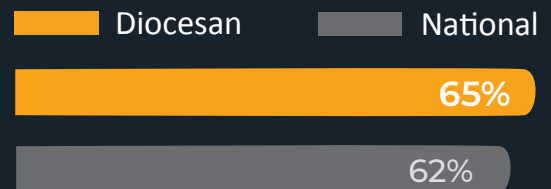
ARK Evaluation Highlights

Yearly testing of diocesan schools using ARK norms indicate outstanding scores in the Belief and Behaviors Domain in addition to recording above average scores in the Knowledge Domain.

2024 Belief and Behavior Average Combined Scores

Virtue	89%
Sacraments and Liturgy	72%
Prayer	79%
Morality	82%
Living Discipleship	76%
Creed & Salvation History	87%

2024 Combined Knowledge Scores Exceed National Average



Class of 2024 Statistics

Graduation Rate:
100%

2024 Scholarships:
\$19,362,620

Student Athletic Scholarships:
19

Hours in Service to their Communities:
18,857

Hours in Prayer, Mass, and Adoration:
Incalculable

THE HEART OF OUR MISSION

LEARNING OUR FAITH



Many schools, public and non-public, produce students with high academic and extracurricular achievement, who attain success in their future. Catholic schools, however, do this consistently, while also forming the souls of our students to be focused on Christ throughout their lives. Only in Catholic schools can students experience **daily instruction in the Catholic faith**, regular opportunities for **adoration and the sacraments** with their peers, frequent practice of **praying the Rosary**, and opportunities to connect with and learn about **the saints** and their virtues. **Retreats** foster both communal and personal aspects of the faith. An **emphasis on vocations** allows students to consider devoting their lives to God through priesthood or religious life.

1. Religious brothers meet with students at **St. John Paul II Catholic High School** about a call to religious life.

2. Students at **Prince of Peace Catholic School** dress as saints as part of an All Saints Day study.

3. Students at **John Carroll Catholic High School** spend time together on retreat.

4. Sister Emma teaches students at **St. Francis Xavier Catholic School** about praying the Rosary.





The **2023-24 Catholic Identity Student Council** met with Superintendent Margaret Dubose (*far left*) in Spring 2024 to present the faith initiative work accomplished at their respective schools.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY STUDENT COUNCIL GIVING STUDENTS A VOICE

The Catholic Identity Student Council engages high school students in ensuring that our Catholic schools foster lifelong discipleship and faith-filled environments where students can encounter Christ. Student representatives from Holy Family Cristo Rey Catholic High School, Holy Spirit Catholic High School, John Carroll Catholic High School, and St. John Paul II Catholic High School meet semi-annually with Superintendent Margaret Dubose to share insights and progress within their respective schools. The Catholic Identity Student Council members identified the following topics of student engagement with the faith as areas to further develop within our schools for the 2023-24 school year:

- Theology of the Body and health
- Student-led organizations and opportunities
- Student orientation and mentoring

Each school chose one of these topics to create an action plan to implement principles related to their topic at their schools. At the Spring 2024 meeting, students presented the plan for their school's engagement to Superintendent Margaret Dubose.

A prayer for schools composed by the Catholic Identity Student Council comprises the last page of this edition of The Measure of Success.

STRATEGIC PLAN GUIDING PROGRESS



The future is bright for Catholic Education in our diocese. Through the leadership of the Catholic Schools Office and the Diocesan Advisory Council for Catholic Education, great progress has been made in achieving the goals of the Strategic Plan for Schools. Although the work of continuous improvement is never complete, our school communities are currently experiencing growth and advancement at all levels. These strategic efforts will enable this vital ministry of the Church to thrive for years to come, and continue to be a blessing for the families we serve.”

- Vince Bruno, 2023-24 Chair
Diocesan Advisory Council for Catholic Education

Key accomplishments for 2023-24 include:

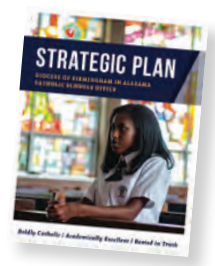
- ✓ **Promotion of the Faith in Education Endowment**, a financial and spiritual commitment to advance the mission of Catholic education, now and for years to come.
- ✓ Continued efforts in **school safety** to ensure the safest environment at all levels.
- ✓ Expanded communication efforts to build a **collaborative view of Catholic education in our diocese** through initiatives such as the Aligning for Success workshops and our annual report, *The Measure of Success*.
- ✓ Research to **improve standards and benchmarks** for language arts and social studies to address continued academic rigor, 21st century skills, and affective dimensions of learning.
- ✓ A focused initiative to promote a **deeper student understanding of vocations in life and career opportunities**, both religious and secular.

Priorities for 2024-2025 include:

- ✓ **Building a foundation of funding sustainability** for the Faith in Education Endowment and the Monsignor Michael F. Sexton Continuing Education Endowment.
- ✓ **Ensuring accessibility of Catholic education** in our diocese by maximizing the CHOOSE Act educational savings accounts and the Alabama Accountability Act tax credit scholarships and by establishing St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School in Montevallo and St. Paul Catholic Preschool in Athens.
- ✓ **Supporting school personnel** through revision of the *Policy Manual for Catholic Schools*.
- ✓ **Ensuring schools form lifelong disciples** through further virtues programming, vocations partnerships, and student-led faith initiatives.
- ✓ **Measuring the impact of the *Strategic Plan for Catholic Education*.**

A comprehensive strategic plan, guided and led by the Superintendent of Schools, reaches into all areas of our school mission, including operations, curriculum, Catholic identity, governance, and development. Begun in 2019, implementation has led to the advancement of many initiatives to support our schools, including normative assessments for academics and religious knowledge, dedicated guidance for human resources and facilities, and more.

A copy of the Strategic Plan is available for download at bhmdiocese.org/schools.



ENDOWMENTS ADVANCING OUR MISSION

MONSIGNOR MICHAEL F. SEXTON CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STAFF

The Monsignor Michael F. Sexton Continuing Education Endowment provides annual scholarships for professional staff in diocesan Catholic Schools who wish to continue their education or pursue advanced degrees. The endowment honors Monsignor Sexton's tireless support of Catholic education during his 62 years of priesthood in our diocese. Awards cover up to 80% of the recipient's tuition.



The 2023-24 award recipients noted their goals for advanced study (*pictured above, left to right*):

Mrs. Courtney Magee, principal at St. Joseph Catholic School in Florence; a graduate degree in Instructional Leadership from the University of North Alabama

"The St. Joseph School community is unmatched. I hope to lead our faculty as we continue the tradition of educating generations in the Shoals for years to come."

Mrs. Vicki Jordan, teacher and counselor at Prince of Peace Catholic School; a Certificate in Leadership and Instruction from the University of North Alabama

"Through this program, my goal is to contribute to the growth and success of both my school and the broader Catholic educational community."



FAITH IN EDUCATION ENDOWMENT GRANTS FOR SCHOOLS

The Faith in Education Endowment is a financial and spiritual commitment to assist schools from the diocesan level to address priority needs, advance programming in areas that may be outside the established school budget, or meet an unplanned need. Gifts from across the diocese contribute to making Faith in Education grants a reality.

In September 2023, Superintendent of Catholic Schools Margaret Dubose presented the 2023-24 awards to the principals of the schools receiving grants (*pictured above, left to right*):

St. Ann Catholic School, Decatur: *Service and Curriculum-Based Outdoor Garden*;
Mrs. Brandi Lumley, Principal

Our Lady of the Valley Catholic School, Birmingham: *Virtues Curriculum*;
Mr. Andrew Rothery, Principal

St. James Catholic School, Gadsden: *Safety Upgrades*; Mr. John Parker, Principal

John Carroll Catholic High School, Birmingham: *Robotics Program*; Mr. Ronald Steele, Principal

St. John Paul II Catholic High School, Huntsville: *Safety Upgrades*; Dr. Jeremiah Russell, Headmaster

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

CREATING OPPORTUNITY

Diocese of Birmingham Catholic Schools are committed to ensuring that Catholic education is affordable and accessible for families. Our partnerships with state-based scholarship programs along with local financial assistance options help make a Catholic education possible for families in our diocese.

[More information on all programs below at https://bhmdiocese.org/schools](https://bhmdiocese.org/schools)

NEW THE CHOOSE ACT

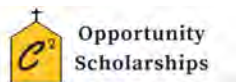
EDUCATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

The CHOOSE Act, signed into Alabama law on March 7, 2024, will empower families across the state with greater access to a Catholic education. This new law makes refundable income tax credits available in an educational savings account (ESA) to pay up to \$7,000 of tuition and other qualifying educational expenses. Applications for the 2024-25 school year are open January 2, 2025, until April 7, 2025, or until funding is met. Priority recipients for the first year include students whose family's adjusted gross income from the preceding tax year does not exceed 300% of the poverty level, students with special needs, and dependents of active-duty service members zoned for a priority school.

SCHOLARSHIP GRANTING ORGANIZATIONS

NO-COST REDIRECTING OF TAX LIABILITY

The Alabama Accountability Act allows donors to redirect up to 100% of their state tax liability toward tax-credit scholarships for qualifying students who wish to attend the non-public school of their choice. Donors receive a tax credit, and students receive access to a Catholic education that they otherwise could not afford, providing these students with an education filled with faith, joy, and grace. Scholarship Granting Organization that serve schools in the Diocese of Birmingham are listed below.



DIRECT GIFT FROM IRA

TAX-FREE CHARITABLE GIVING

Supporters over age 70½ can give any amount (up to a maximum of \$100,000) per calendar year from an IRA directly to a qualified charity such as our schools or our diocesan endowments, without paying income taxes on the donated gift.

LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES

SCHOOL- AND PARISH-BASED ASSISTANCE

Many of our schools and parishes have local opportunities for financial support for families. The school's principal, pastor, or admissions director can discuss available options for their school.

LORD JESUS CHRIST, we express our gratitude for the gift of the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Birmingham. Ignite the fire of Your Holy Spirit in the lives of all who work in, attend, and support these school communities.

WE PRAY FOR OUR STUDENTS. Grant our students the courage to embody their faith throughout their lives. Keep their focus on You and shield them from temptation. Grant our students the courage to embody their faith throughout their lives. Guide them along the path You have set for them and lead them in their pursuit of their education and life goals.

WE PRAY FOR OUR TEACHERS, STAFF, AND SCHOOL LEADERS. Fill them with the fruits of the Holy Spirit and assist them in utilizing their talents to lead others to You. Bestow upon them Your grace as they guide our students.

WE ALSO PRAY FOR ALL THOSE WHO SUPPORT OUR SCHOOLS WITH THEIR TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE. We offer our heartfelt thanks, Lord Jesus, for those who have responded to Your call to be faithful stewards of the gifts You have bestowed upon them. Amen.



ENVIRONMENTS OF LOVE & CARE,
OF THE HIGHEST MORAL & ACADEMIC STANDARDS
CENTERED ON CHRIST,
AND OF JOY-FILLED LIVES OF MISSION AND
PURPOSE INTENDED BY GOD



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
BIRMINGHAM *in* **ALABAMA**