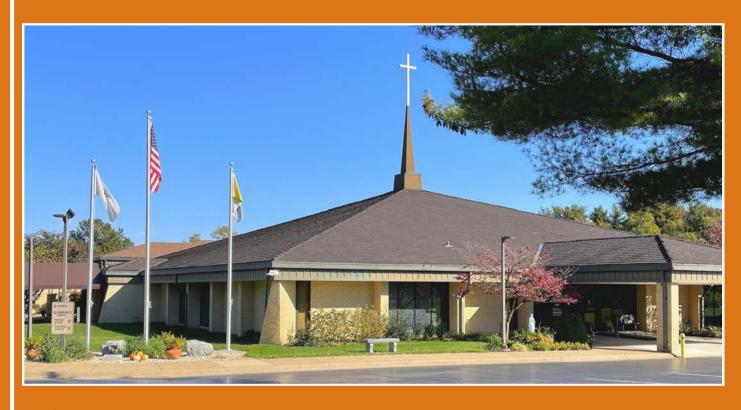
ST. AMBROSE PARISH STEWARDSHIP REPORT





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LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends of St. Ambrose Parish Family,

We are happy to provide you with this second annual Stewardship Report for our parish family. As you know, St. Ambrose Parish is comprised of St. Ambrose Church and School in Godfrey, and St. Michael Church in Beltrees. Our parish thrives because of the generosity of members of both Churches.

Our goal is to help each other get to heaven. Although eternal life is an undeserved gift we are already living, we express our gratitude to God through lives of service. This service leads others to experience the love of God. We recognize that we ARE the presence of Christ to others as they ARE to us.

St. Ambrose Parish offers many opportunities to share one's blessings, skills and talents. For the healthy functioning of our Church and School, the support of everyone is necessary through volunteerism and financial gifts.

In this post-Covid time we are still adjusting to the "new normal." We cannot return to the way it was before Covid. St. Ambrose Parish exceeds the national average of Catholics who have returned to Mass after the Covid lockdown, but there is still plenty of room for worshippers. We encourage you to invite (or bring) the neighbor or friend who has been away from the Catholic Church or has no Church family to which they belong.

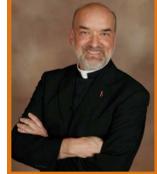
Our primary temporal concern revolves around safety and security of our campus, especially St. Ambrose School. Through many generous grants and donations we have improved safety significantly. This project is on-going and never-ending as we respond to the latest tactics of those who would do harm to our children or parishioners.

We cannot function without you. As St. Paul reminds us, "The body is one and has many members." Each member is essential to the proper functioning of the body. No gift is too small or insignificant to share.

Thank you for your stewardship to our parish family, larger Church, and local community!

God bless you!

Steven Janoski Pastor



THE FOUR PILLARS: HOSPITALITY

Bereavement Committee & Funeral Lunches

Our Bereavement Committee consists of four teams with about 35 on each team. The teams prepare and serve lunches. The committee organizes funeral luncheons for families and friends who are buried from St. Ambrose (or St. Michael). This is a much-appreciated ministry for our parishioners at a time of need.

The Bereavement Committee also assists with the annual All Souls' Day Memorial Mass.

Women's Group

The purpose of the Women's Group is to serve through fellowship and outreach both within the parish and the surrounding community. The group has been in existence for over 20 years. Last year we celebrated one of our members' 100th birthday with her sharing her life story. We also had several other members sharing their stories and experiences of living in other countries. One member shared her experiences of



being part of a teacher exchange program in Australia.

Day trips included a visit to the Missouri Botanical Gardens, the St. Louis Fox Theatre, Kirkwood Performing Arts Centre, "Little Italy" in St. Louis and a Nashville Country Christmas trip.

The annual coat drive, Christmas Giving Tree and the Alton Area Warming Center collection continues to be a success in helping those in need. Through our fundraising efforts of pecan sales and our Spring Salad Luncheon, the group has helped with various projects throughout the parish. Members also volunteered at the Applefest, Fellowship Sunday plus other St. Ambrose school and church events.

All women of the church are considered members and are welcome to attend any meeting or event.

THE FOUR PILLARS: HOSPITALITY

Welcoming Committee

The St. Ambrose Welcome Committee offers newly registered families a meal and fellowship several times a year. The families receive a special invitation to have lunch with other parish members and learn how to get involved in the parish community. Members of established organizations are on hand to explain their ministry at St. Ambrose and to offer membership to the new parishioners. The welcome committee offered a spaghetti luncheon in March and a soup luncheon in November for the new families.

Hospitality weekends are typically the second weekend of the month after Mass. Donuts and coffee are usually served at these events on Sunday mornings. Other food such as chili is served on Saturday evenings. This is a great time for parishioners to get to know each other and share fellowship.

Our goal is to make sure every parishioner feels welcome and a part of our larger community here at St. Ambrose.



THE FOUR PILLARS: PRAYER

Prayer-Liturgy

Ministries

Altar Servers

We have 49 young Catholics who serve at Mass. It is always a joy to see them participating in the Mass and sharing the faith. The current record is 12 servers at one Mass. Six of our St. Ambrose members served at Mass for the Confirmation and First Eucharist on 4 November at the Cathedral in Springfield.



Eucharistic Ministers

We have 114 mandated/commissioned Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith, St. Ambrose Eucharistic Ministers put this faith into action by assisting in the distribution of Communion at Mass, at assisted living facilities, and in parishioner's homes.

St. Ambrose continues to provide Communion Services at Cedar Creek, Cedarhurst, Asbury Village, Bria of Godfrey, Rivers Crossing, Skyline Towers of Alton, and area hospitals. Parishioners are encouraged to contact the Parish Office if they would like to have Communion brought to them or a neighbor.



THE FOUR PILLARS: PRAYER

Lectors

The Ministry of Lector is essential in the proper celebration of the Mass and other liturgies. Those who are called to serve as Lectors (Readers) are trained and provided materials to assist them with meaningful proclamation of the Word. This ministry is rooted in personal prayer and reflection on the Word of God so that it is truly PROCLAIMED from the heart and not simply READ. If you are interested in participating in this ministry, contact Fr. Steve.

Music Ministers & Choir

There is an ancient proverb attributed to St. Augustine: "Those who sing pray twice". At St. Ambrose music is incorporated into all Masses and liturgical celebrations, through the sharing of musicians (guitar, keyboard, strings and percussion) along with cantors and choir members.

All told we have about 25-30 people who provide this essential ministry.



Music ministers meet with Fr. Steve to select music for liturgies. In addition to the annual "Breaking Bread" hymnal, a "large print" worship aid is available for the congregation to encourage and enhance singing.

Monthly Adoration

Holy Hour - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist is held every Thursday.

Prayer Chain

St. Ambrose has a small group of prayer warriors who pray for those requesting prayers. If you would like to join the prayer chain, contact the Parish Office or Susan Wilkinson.

THE FOUR PILLARS: PRAYER

St. Michael Church, Beltrees

St. Michael Church in Beltrees (Jersey County), constructed in 1877, with its first mass being said on March 9, 1878, is a quaint little church, it is nestled on a hillside among farmland and pastures in southern Jersey Co. St. Michael is an integral part of St. Ambrose Parish. St. Michael's has and still today provides the community with the opportunity of attending Mass on occasion throughout the year, including Christmas, Easter and Feast of St. Michael. Each year a Memorial Day Mass is held in the cemetery honoring our deceased veterans. This year there was one Baptism and two funerals took place at St. Michael Church. During the season of Lent, Stations of the Cross and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are offered weekly. We would especially like to thank Tom Bechtold and all those who help him.

It is through the generosity and dedication of members of St. Michael Church, past and present that the church and cemetery thrives and continues to be a place for many to come together and give thanks to God and lay their loved ones to rest.

For nearly 150 years the members of St. Michael's, many of whom are now parishioners of the St. Ambrose Parish family, continue their dedication to the parish they refer to as "the little church on the hill."



Bible Study

Participants in Bible Study obtain a richer understanding of the readings and apply them to their lives.

Bible Study is offered on Saturday mornings for men and women of the parish. The men meet at 8:00 a.m. and the women at 9:30 a.m. with Bible Study leaders Greg Mattingly and Deacon Tom.

This year the Bible Study group covered "Comparative Religions", "The Letter of James", and "First Corinthians".

Cursillo

God's blessings never end! 2023 has been a well-attended year for Quincy Cursillo. All of the weekends have been filled with inspiring men and women on the teams. The attendance of candidates has also grown as we reach out and ask for their time to attend a Cursillo weekend. It truly is "a short course in Christianity". God is good all the time! With a lot of prayer, 2024 will be the same.

The schedule for 2024 upcoming Cursillo weekends:

Jan 18-21 Men's Feb 15-18 Women's March 21-24 Men's April 18-21 Women's June 20-23 Men's July 18-21 Women's Sept 12-15 Men's Nov 7-10 Women's



With God's grace, 2024 will be filled with many candidates attending Cursillo weekends.

Eucharistic Revival

St. Ambrose participated in the Diocesan Eucharistic Conference held at the Bank of Springfield (BOS) Convention center. St. Ambrose provided a bus for the event.

For the Diocesan Year of the Eucharist which started on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception December 8, 2022, St. Ambrose has highlighted a different miracle every month from the Blessed Carlos Acutis collection of Miracles of the Eucharist Across the World.



Ongoing Faith Formation

Continuing use of multimedia presentations for Adult Faith Formation from St. Benedict Press. Completed in the Fall, The Gospel of St. Luke and in the Fall a reprise of The Doors of Mercy. Offered two times a day with about 30–40 Participants. All of our Efforts have been Scripture Based. With efforts on the Eucharist, we encouraged St. Benedict/TAN to develop a series on The Eucharist. It will be offered next Spring: The Eucharist: The Heart of the Christian Life.

We have given Advent and Lent pamphlets and calendars to the entire Parish with specially chosen ones for children and adults. A Christmas and Easter book is given to as a gift for each Celebration. We continue to make available the publication: My Daily Bread.

Ongoing Faith Formation

Conducted on-premise Faith Formation for our School Faculty. In the Fall-Spring concluded an 8-part series of Sacraments. This year we are doing one on Doors of Mercy—the root of the Apostolic Ministries such as Education, Healthcare and Charities Ministries.

We also visit 26 Federal Detainees who are in essentially solitary confinement with Breaking Open The Word with two publications: The Word Among Us and My Daily Bread. We visit the men in the cell block and share the Good News with them individually. Though a Parish ministry, we were joined by the Oblate Mary Immaculate Novices as part of their apostolic formation.

We have formalized a program on Children's Liturgy of the Word for Sunday Masses. Children are invited to go into our adjacent space after the Opening Prayer and return for their participation in the presentation of the gifts.

Continue in our efforts to use existing outreach science. Have a longstanding effort to encourage those who have been distracted in their faith to rejoin with us. This was superseded with the Diocesan Eucharistic Congress but will be picked up again.

Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA)

With the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the husband of a long-time parishioner presented for formation and Baptism. Additionally, our Parish was gifted to have another adult previously baptized to join with us. We have ventured into our School and have identified a number of our children yet to be Baptized. The fruit of which will be to encourage parents to embrace the faith.



Parish School of Religion (PSR)

St Ambrose PSR program is currently in session. This year we have 3 groups that the students are divided into. The Pre-Sacrament group is for those students who are currently too young to be receiving the sacraments. This group meets on Sunday mornings from 9:15-10:15. The class is led by Kathy Wittich, Janet Zerr, and Sue Stirnaman.

Parish School of Religion (PSR)

The current theme for the class is prayer and faith foundations. The Sacramental prep group includes those students preparing to receive the sacraments this year. This class is led by Carol French and Michele Pulaski. It also meets on Sunday morning from 9:15–10:15. These students received the sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist on November 5 and then transition into the next class. The third group is for those students who have received the sacraments and are continuing their religious education. This class meets on Monday evenings from 6:15–7:15. This class is led by Kathy Wittich and Janet Zerr. The current theme for the class is Bible Basics and will move on to the mass and faith formation.

Sacraments

Baptisms

We have had 14 Baptisms this liturgical year. These pictures are just two of them.





Confirmation & First Eucharist

Three Adults were confirmed members of St. Ambrose and fully initiated into the Catholic Church this year. Sixteen of our school aged children were confirmed and received First Communion at the Cathedral this year.





Marriages

We clergy at St. Ambrose have had the honor to officiate at three weddings this last year.

We have also had the distinct pleasure to assist five couple in their Marriage Preparation.

Funerals

At the annual All Souls' Day Mass this year we remembered 44 members of St. Ambrose who have gone before us in faith.

Celebration of the Holy Mass

2023 LITURGICAL YEAR MASS ATTENDANCE 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT TO FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING



St. Ambrose School

St. Ambrose Catholic School begins the faith formation process when students enter our school, whether it be for the first time as a preschool or Kindergarten student, or as a transfer in later years of school. Students are provided multiple prayer and spiritual growth opportunities throughout the school day and the school year.

Students in grades K-8 attend weekly Mass and periodically plan masses with our Pastor and Deacons. Throughout the school year there are many celebrations of our faith that are meant to strengthen a student's connection to God, including Rosary ceremonies, March for Life events on campus, May/December Crowning of Mary, Vocation events, Liturgy services, and celebrations of feast days of Saints.

Religion is part of the core academic curriculum and is taught at all ages. Students participate in the Character Counts program, which reinforces the importance of RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS, CARING, FAIRNESS, CITIZENSHIP, and INTEGRITY. These traits are emphasized to the students in the Character Counts program and are best modeled by Our Lord Jesus Christ.





Prayer is an essential part of the daily process for students at St. Ambrose. Each month students learn a new prayer and recite that prayer daily during the month with morning announcements. Students pray before mealtimes, with their classes, and other times during the school day and year. The Sacramental preparation process typically includes the Sacrament of Reconciliation in 2nd grade, and the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation in 3rd grade.



Vocations Day with Bishop Paprocki with 6th graders from all of the Alton Deanery Catholic elementary schools. Gathered together to focus on team building, religious vocations, and on secular vocations.

Vacation Bible School

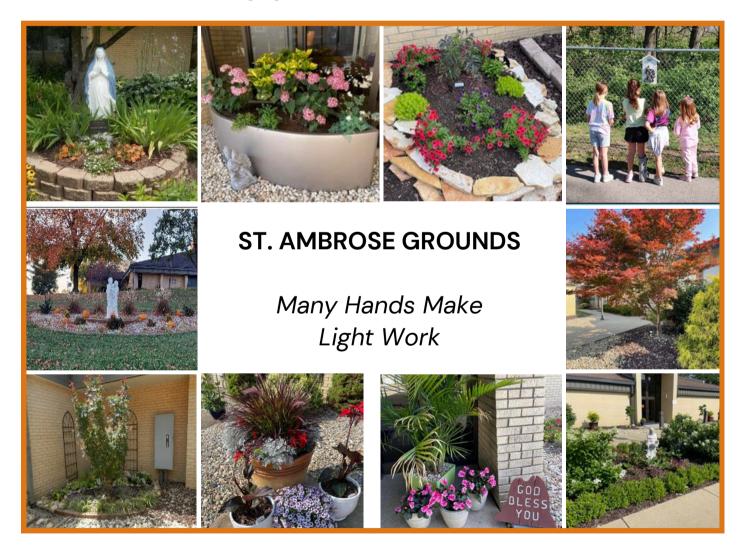
Vacation Bible School utilized the OSV Series "Totally Catholic Monumental Celebrating God's Greatness". We had a good effort by our 20 VBS Volunteers including high school students, Youth Leaders, and parents. Over 80 children had a good time growing in their faith and VBS was well attended.



Building & Grounds

The St. Ambrose building, and grounds continue to look great. This is a true example of divide and conquer. Different groups or individuals have taken responsibility for different areas to make the grounds look so welcoming.

St. Ambrose was chosen as a highlight to Godfrey Pride Inc. Garden Tour this year.



We've added outdoor Stations of the Cross to the walking track in the school playground.





Empty Nesters

A time for adults to gather on a regular basis to share life's moments and to ask God to guide us as we continue his work on earth. We strive to assist with the needs of others and grow in our faith by doing so.

Facebook Live Stream

We now have a group of volunteers to run the Mass live stream to Facebook cameras at 4:30 Mass. The center aisle PC camera has been replaced with two Axis IP Cameras that can change views in real time.



Finance Committee

Assisted in development, review, and approval of Parish & School budgets. Performed monthly monitoring of Parish and school financial statements. Provided review of financial need and recommendations for financial tuition assistance for school parents at St. Ambrose.

Reviewed eligibility for and oversaw application for Employee Retention Credits, provided under the federal government Cares Act. Our application was approved, and we expect to receive funds in Fiscal 2024.

Continued needs assessment for enhancement and implementation of school safety issues including structural upgrades, communication systems and other procedural requirements.

Stepped up review of future Parish/School capital needs and consideration of ability to finance major projects.

Grief Support

Grief support is provided under the direction of Tom Schmidt, retired grief and trauma counselor. Grief support is for anyone grieving the loss of a spouse, parent, child, grandchild, sibling, friend, or pet. Grief Share meets every Monday at St. Ambrose from 5:30 – 7:00 PM and Compassionate Friends meet the last Friday of the month 6:30–8:30 PM.

Knights of Columbus Council 7804

The Knights of Columbus Council 7804 of Godfrey had another active year. We meet the 1st Wednesday of every month at 7:30 at the McNichols Hall on Stamper and Pierce Lane. We have our annual Fish Fry during Lent, we host the Applefest spaghetti dinner, Intellectual Disability drive (tootsie rolls), and new member hospitality lunches. We contribute funds to the school and parish projects. If you have any questions or want to join our membership call Dave Stafford, Grand Knight @ 618-225-7516.



Annual KC Sponsored Free Throw Contest

Knights of Columbus Council 7804







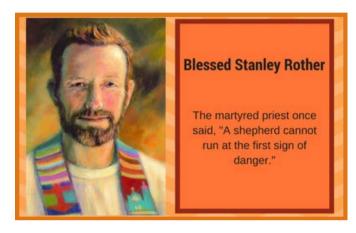


Library

St. Ambrose Church has a library collection of religious books and CDs available in the church office for anyone to sign out. The subject matter consists of such subjects as scripture, biographies, heaven, saints, prayer, spiritual journey and many more. The library is maintained by Maggie Behrens and Kris Kline.

Missions | Sister Parish San Juan Batista - Guatemala and Rice Bowl & DCJH)

Sister Parish San Juan Batista – Guatemala
The St. Ambrose Missions Ministry involves the
parish's relationship with our sister parish, San Juan
Bautista in Jutiapa, Guatemala. This sister parish
relationship is facilitated through the work of
Missions International. San Juan Bautista is very
active, and the parishioners spend their entire
Sunday walking to church, worshiping, eating lunch
together and celebrating with each other. The
parish is the heart of the people and St. Ambrose is
proud to know they are supporting it financially and
prayerfully.



The next visit to our sister Parish is scheduled for July 11-17, 2024. This 4-day and 3-night visit is being organized by Mission International. Please contact the Parish Office if you are interested in going. There will be a one-day pilgrimage to Lake Atitlan where Blessed Fr. Stanly Rother was martyred.

Rice Bowl & Diocesan Campaign for Justice and Hope (DCJH)

Understanding that Catholic means universal, St. Ambrose generously contributes to the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Diocesan Campaign for Justice and Hope

Money Counters

St. Ambrose relies on those parishioners that are willing to donate their time and talent to keep us running smoothly. Thank you to those 22 parishioners who take turns volunteering to count the weekly offerings received. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Michelle Pulaski in the Parish Office.

Oblates Mary Immaculate (OMI) Novitiate

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate are an international religious order serving the needs of God's people in countless ways. The Novitiate for the Oblates is within the boundaries of St. Ambrose Parish where they minister in many ways. The Novitiate year is an intense time of



discernment of God's call. They spend time in prayer, study, and service. The Oblate priests assist with Mass at St. Ambrose on a regular basis. The Formators and Novices participate in various parish ministries as part of their formation. They visit skilled care facilities, the homebound and the imprisoned. They assist at Mass as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The novices visit with our school children to share their vocation stories and stories of their homelands. St. Ambrose is blessed to have this house of formation as part of our parish family.

Pastoral Council

The St. Ambrose Parish Pastoral Council is called by the Pastor and Parish to serve as a consulting and advisory board to the Pastor by promoting and ensuring that all aspects of Parish life reflect the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ in accordance with norms, rules, and customs determined by the diocesan Bishop and universal Church. The Pastoral Council consists of a minimum of eight lay parishioners and clergy assigned to St. Ambrose. The council meets monthly. The Pastoral Council is subdivided into committees that meet regularly outside of the usual Pastoral Council meeting:

Committees:

- Liturgy
- Faith Formation/Education/Evangelization
- Stewardship/Discipleship
- Community Builders/Hospitality
- Social Justice

Right to Life

St. Ambrose is active in right to life activities and aided in the 40 Days for Life praying in front of the Granite City abortion facility this spring and fall.

Members of St. Ambrose actively participate in the Luncheons 4 Life, the Life Chain the first of October and other pro-life efforts. We support THRIVE Metro East in their work with women seeking guidance and support during a pregnancy.

Sacristan, Church Decoration and Cleaning, Church Linen Launderers

The Parish Sacristan oversees the smooth functioning of the liturgy by making sure there are such items as candles, wine, hosts, altar linens, worship aids, bulletins, children's coloring pages, envelopes, etc. available. The sacristan secures the church after liturgies and prepares it for the next event. Current sacristan: Sheila Mullen

The sacristan is assisted by those who volunteer to launder the church linens and server robes. Contact: Mary Jo Zykan at the parish office

A dedicated group volunteers to clean the church in preparation for the weekend liturgies. Contact: Mary Jo Zykan at the parish office

Seasonal decorations in the church are provided by volunteers who strive to make the worship space vibrant and appealing to the eye, with the sole purpose of leading the faithful to an encounter with the Holy. Volunteers are always needed especially for the Christmas and Easter Seasons. Contact: Linda Wickenhauser.

School Board

St. Ambrose School Board, with Erin Kochan serving as Chair, is an advisory body who meets for matters pertaining to the educational programs and facilities of the school. The purpose of the Board is to advise the Pastor on policies and development of goals and objectives relative to the school as well as advising the principal in the implementation of these policies. The Board considers all aspects of the educational program of the school while aiming to integrate the teaching of Catholic values within the total school curriculum.

Our board consists of nine voting members, Fr. Steve, Mr. Baird, and Deacon Jay. We meet monthly in the community center. In the past year, the board has advised on the dress code and bullying policies, safety and security, Math and Science curriculums, the Family School Agreement, volunteer hours, calendar items, and many more.

St. Ambrose Community Outreach (SACO)

St. Ambrose Community Outreach is a parish sponsored organization dedicated to helping those in need. Through the generosity of St. Ambrose parishioners and the efforts of twelve dedicated individuals and several support personnel, SACO was able to assist people with water and electric bills, food, gas, burial expense, career training expense, a wheelchair ramp for a quadriplegic and numerous other need.

In addition, SACO provided 4,415 pieces of fruit for the Serving Area Kids (SAK) lunch program for children in the Alton area. SACO also provided monetary support to Crisis Food Center, Community Hope Center, Catholic Charities, and the Alton Overnight Warming Center. SACO members assembled and delivered Easter baskets to Oasis Women's Center and Catholic Charities. SACO also provided bags of goodies at Easter and Christmas for homebound St. Ambrose parishioners.

SACO welcomes other St. Ambrose parishioners who wish to assist in administering assistance to the poor and needy in the Godfrey and Alton area.

St. Ambrose Parent Association (SAPA)

It is the mission of SAPA to support St. Ambrose School through volunteer work, funding efforts, parent education, and sponsoring and coordinating various events within the school community. Our goal is to support educational opportunities for our students while also supporting the Administration's efforts to enhance the teaching and learning environment. We also strive to foster pride in St. Ambrose School by building and sustaining a community among the parents, students, faculty, administrators, staff, and alumni.

The Parent Association was busy this year with fundraising events. SAPA raised over \$14,000 this last calendar year. Events included Night at the Playground Back to School Playdate, the Halloween Parade, Back to the 90's Trivia Event and the Toys for Tots Community Christmas event. Our upcoming events are the Polar Express movie night, Christmas feast for all the students, Father/Daughter Dance, Cash Bash, Ice-Skating event, and our Golf Tournament. With the proceeds from these events, we can provide treats and lunches for our teachers to show our appreciation.











St. Ambrose School Volunteers

The volunteers have been very active this year helping our children with the daily lunches, worked in the library, and worked with the children in the ROAR reading program. There were parents who worked on special projects in the classroom and acted as chaperones for field trips. Other worked to make days special when they assisted with Picture Day, Catholic Schools Week, Fat Tuesday, class parties, and Candle & Rose Mass. There are volunteers who shared their talents by helping with the yearbook, IT, fundraising, and coaching. Everyone helped with the donations for food drives, monetary collections for charities and missions, and helping with all the tasks associated with athletics.









St. Serra International (Vocations)

We had a busy year with St. Serra activities. We meet on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at St. Ambrose. After co-sponsoring our regional convention at the end of last year at Our Lady of the Snows, we had some very interesting speakers at our monthly lunches. The highlight of the year was our Fully Alive Vocation Program for all 6th graders in our deanery. It was held at Holy Angels in Wood River for 220 children. It was conducted by Sr Karolyn Nunes FSGM and Fr Rob Johnson, Maryville, Bishop Paprocki performed Mass. We also had an appreciation lunch for the SFGM sisters and a lunch at Moonlight for the retired Priest and religious in the area. Our annual fall river cruise for our Priest had to be delayed due to mechanical problems.

Ushers/Greeters

Our ushers are ministers of hospitality. St. Ambrose ushers are the first one's people meet as they enter our doors, and the goal of all ushers is to make everyone feel welcomed. We have 30 Ushers who help all the Masses run smoothly and are in need of more volunteers. A few of our school age boys have moved from Altar Server to Usher.