



O'Hara Catholic School



Press Release
For Immediate Release
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O'Hara Catholic School Receives National Award

March 3, 2008, Eugene, Oregon—O'Hara Catholic School has been selected by the professional journal, *Today's Catholic Teacher*, to receive the **2008 Catholic Schools for Tomorrow Award for Innovations in Education** in the category of Total Community Involvement. The award annually honors 12 Catholic elementary and secondary schools across the country that have led the way by implementing exemplary, innovative programs to improve teaching and learning. O'Hara is the only school in the northwest selected for this 2008 award.

The winning submission was O'Hara's 6th grade Annual Living Saints Project, led by middle school teacher Maryanne Obersinner. Over a three-month period, each student studies a saint and prepares a living presentation with the involvement and guidance of teachers, students, parents, local religious, art scholars, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, and the public library.

The Living Saints Project was created by Maryanne Obersinner in 1998 and has become an impressive and extensive cross-curriculum educational project for 6th graders. It was featured in *The Catholic Sentinel* in the summer of 2007 and was the subject of a research paper written by a University of Washington student who cited the Living Saints Project as an excellent collaboration between the school and public library.

As a national award-winning school, O'Hara has been featured in a special section in the March issue of *Today's Catholic Teacher* (see next page). O'Hara will be presented the award at a special celebration banquet at the annual National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) conference in Indianapolis on March 26th. Artwork samples of this year's 6th grade Living Saints Project will be on display in the Eugene Public Library this spring. The 2008 Living Saints Presentation will take place on Friday, June 6 at O'Hara Catholic School. Over 1000 people visited the 2007 presentation.

About *Today's Catholic Teacher*

Today's Catholic Teacher is published six times during the school year and has a circulation of 50,000 with a readership of 200,000. There are 7,500 Catholic schools in the United States, six of which are featured in the magazine each school year.

About O'Hara Catholic School

O'Hara Catholic School serves students in Pre-School through 8th grade of all religious, racial, ethnic, and income backgrounds. For more information about the curriculum, admissions policies or registration, contact Principal Dianne Bert at (541) 485-5291 or visit www.oharaschool.org.



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Living Saints

The Living Saints Project at O'Hara Catholic School in Eugene, OR, goes far beyond students dressing as favorite saints. Completed over a period of three months, the project involves many members of the community, from students and parents, to local religious, to art scholars and the public library.

The project begins with each student selecting a saint to study, followed by writing reports, practicing acting techniques, and completing several artistic projects. Letters go out to the Pope, the Archbishop, and local priests, sisters, and religious communities requesting prayerful support and, if possible, their presence at the final project presentations. For the last three years, the Pope and Archbishop have sent their blessings to the students. Local priests, sisters, and religious meet with the students and attend the presentations in generous numbers.

O'Hara's parents are extensively involved with the project, and even parents of graduated students return to help. One parent, an iconographer, takes time off work to help the students create icons every year.

The University of Oregon Arts-Bridge Program has awarded a grant for several years which allows an art scholar to work with students on their art projects, and the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art at the university gives students a private tour of their icon collection. The Eugene Public Library offers special after-school research days, and it will publicly display project artwork this spring. The *Catholic Sentinel* ran a cover story on the project in the summer of 2007, and a University of Washington student completed a research paper on the project, citing it as an outstanding example of a public library/school partnership. Teachers and students from other schools, as well as local parishioners, swelled the ranks of attendees at last year's presentations to more than 1,000 guests.



Award Category
Innovation in total community involvement

Location
Eugene, Oregon

Archdiocese
Portland

Principal
Dianne Bert

Students
511

Grades
PreK-8

Website
www.oharaschool.org

