



# Aquinas Catholic ALUMNI NEWS


Volume 55 No. 2


Spring 2024


OFFICIAL AQUINAS, ST. MARY'S, ASSUMPTION & MARIETTA ALUMNI NEWSLETTER


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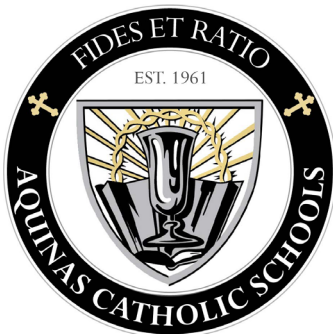
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## ALUM LEADS The Nicaragua Bee Project

**G**rowing up on the family farm west of Brainard, my dad, Joseph V. Havlovic, kept bee hives in the orchard to pollinate the fruit trees. I didn't extract any honey but I do remember getting stung by the bees when picking fruit. Sixty years later I'm still getting stung but it's a "good feeling" as I'm training beekeepers in Nicaragua.



entirely by donations. All donations go to purchase beekeeping starter kits and provide transportation support for our 2 bee technicians located in Nicaragua. No salaries or management fees are paid, and beekeepers traveling to Nicaragua pay their own expenses.

The Nicaragua Bee Project began in 2014. The annual rural income in Nicaragua is about \$520 and the sale of honey from 1 hive can be as much as \$240. Anyone can become a beekeeper. One doesn't need to own land to locate bee hives. Plus, Nicaragua honey is recognized as "organic", due to not using many chemicals.

The mission of the Nicaragua Bee Project is to train and equip beekeepers in Nicaragua. This is accomplished by volunteer beekeepers from the USA (and Canada) traveling to Nicaragua to conduct hands on training for people interested in beekeeping.

Prospective beekeepers are provided with a "BEEKEEPING STARTER KIT". This kit costs \$400 and includes 2 colonies of bees, 2 bee hives (4 boxes) with frames (40 frames), 2 bee suits, gloves, smoker and hive tool. 2 bee suits are provided to encourage the beekeeper to have a family member or friend join him/her in the bee yard as 2 pair of eyes and 2 brains are better than one.

The Nicaragua Bee Project has an annual budget of approximately \$12,000 and is funded

Many people will donate \$400 to adopt a beekeeper. Follow us on Facebook at "Nicaragua Bee Project" or visit our website [www.nicaraguabeeproject.org](http://www.nicaraguabeeproject.org).

Better yet, join us on our next trip to Nicaragua this November 2024. You don't have to be a beekeeper to travel with us. We have days off where we visit volcanoes (active), the beaches, old cities, and best is spending a day with a farm family seeing how they live. You do not need to speak Spanish as we have translators on our trips to Nicaragua.

60 years ago I remember dad saying "Au, to boli" when getting stung by a bee, now I say "Uy, eso duele". How times have changed but beekeeping is still the same. LOL.



Marty Havlovic,  
Class of 1970





## A Message from Aquinas Catholic School's Chief Administrative Officer

**Dear Aquinas Alumni,**  
Greetings from Aquinas Catholic Schools! I hope this Newsletter finds that 2024 has been good for you and your families. We started the semester with five snow days as we received over 20 inches of snow in less than a week. What looked like a long hard winter turned into a warm February with no days below freezing. We hope for some more moisture for our farmers before the planting season!

Lent is full swing with Bible studies for students, faculty prayer groups, and Stations of the Cross

on Fridays.

The third quarter will be wrapping up leaving us with just the fourth quarter left for the 2023-2024 school year. I am pleased to announce Baccalaureate Mass will be May 15th at 7pm and Graduation will May 19th at 4:30pm. Please join us that weekend as we celebrate the graduating Class of 2024!

As usual, lots of good things are happening here this Spring Semester. We will host TEC (Teens Encounter Christ) Retreat March 16th-18th for some 30 high school students throughout the

six high schools in our Diocese. Please pray for a great encounter for them. Our Drama Department is preparing for the Spring Musical. This year's musical is the fun Broadway hit *Godspell*. Speech is in full swing with students doing very well in their first few meets. Track and golf teams have begun their practices as we look forward to their seasons.

The Wrestling program has done it again winning State Duals, being Conference Champions for the 7th year in a row and taking State for the 3rd year in a row. A big congratulations to our wres-

tling team! Go Monarchs! Always know that you are a valued part of the Aquinas community. Your success is our success.

As we approach the great solemnity of Easter, I pray for you and your loved ones, that they might find joy and hope. Most especially, may you find the one who is "*the way, the truth and the life*" (Jn 14:6), Jesus Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Fr. Michael Venturini*

Chief Administrative Officer  
Aquinas Catholic School



## A Message from Aquinas Catholic Advancement & Alumni Office

**Dear Aquinas Alumni,**  
I can't say enough how proud I am of all of our alumni! You continually amaze me with your ongoing support and love of Aquinas and the Catholic faith.

The annual appeal and phone-a-thon is going strong so far this year. We are just shy of our goal. I

had such a good time with the alumni that came in to make the calls for Phone-a-thon last fall. We will do that a little differently next fall, but the calls will still be made! We get so much positive feedback from visiting with several alumni during these calls. What Aquinas has, is truly a gem.

Due to the cost of printing almost doubling in the last year, we have decided to start an Annual Alumni Newsletter that will go out in the Spring time. So the next newsletter you will get will be in Spring of 2025. We will be able to have a higher quality letter by doing this. The Annual Appeal and Annual Report will still go

out in the Fall.

If you have your own story to share or hear about another Alumni doing good and serving others, we love to hear them.

Sincerely,

*Michaela Moravec*  
Alumni Director  
Aquinas Catholic Schools

# Importance of Spiritual Direction

The Spiritual Direction Program is in its 5th year at Aquinas Catholic. The experience for students to meet one on one or two on one with a director has an impact that is not always seen, but the interior of hearts and minds can potentially be impacted in profound ways.

Many Aquinas alumni, of all ages have stated how they wished they would have had this opportunity when they were in school. It is rare in the busyness of the current culture, that teens have an opportunity to simply stop and have a face to face conversation pertaining to their faith life.

Being heard and experiencing the modeling of prayer, helps a student know he/she is valued. The ultimate goal is to help students develop a relationship with Christ and have a prayer life. It is a time for developing a relationship of trust talking about the interests of the student as well as walking through struggles or sharing successes. At times it is planting seeds and other times there is a significant impact and growth in one's faith, that will potentially have a big impact on their life, while in school or in years to come.

*-Spiritual Director: Beth Nemec*

*"Spiritual Direction at Aquinas has changed my life and shaped my heart. It was in my freshman year that I learned that God uniquely spoke to me. It was the ongoing direction that has allowed me to direct others to see the love Jesus."*  
current Aquinas student

*"When I first started spiritual direction, it was a little awkward, but then I started liking it. After going to college, I realized that I really needed to continue to have someone to talk to, who could help me make good decisions and stay strong in my faith. I found a new spiritual director."*  
Aquinas Alumni



# Alumni Serving Our Nation

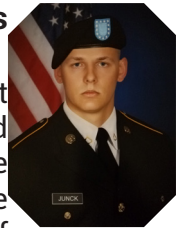
**Ethan Schmid, Class of 2022:** Private First Class, graduated from Marine boot camp in San Diego on Nov. 8, 2023. He was ranked 2nd out of 555 and received an award of Honor Graduate. He is now stationed at Camp Pendleton, CA awaiting School of Infantry.



**Caden Kozisek, Class of 2020:** Sergeant(E-5). He is a part of the National Guard and is part of the 623rd Engineers out of Wahoo. His job is to operate heavy equipment and has worked on many projects around the state. He plans to retire from the after 20 years of service.

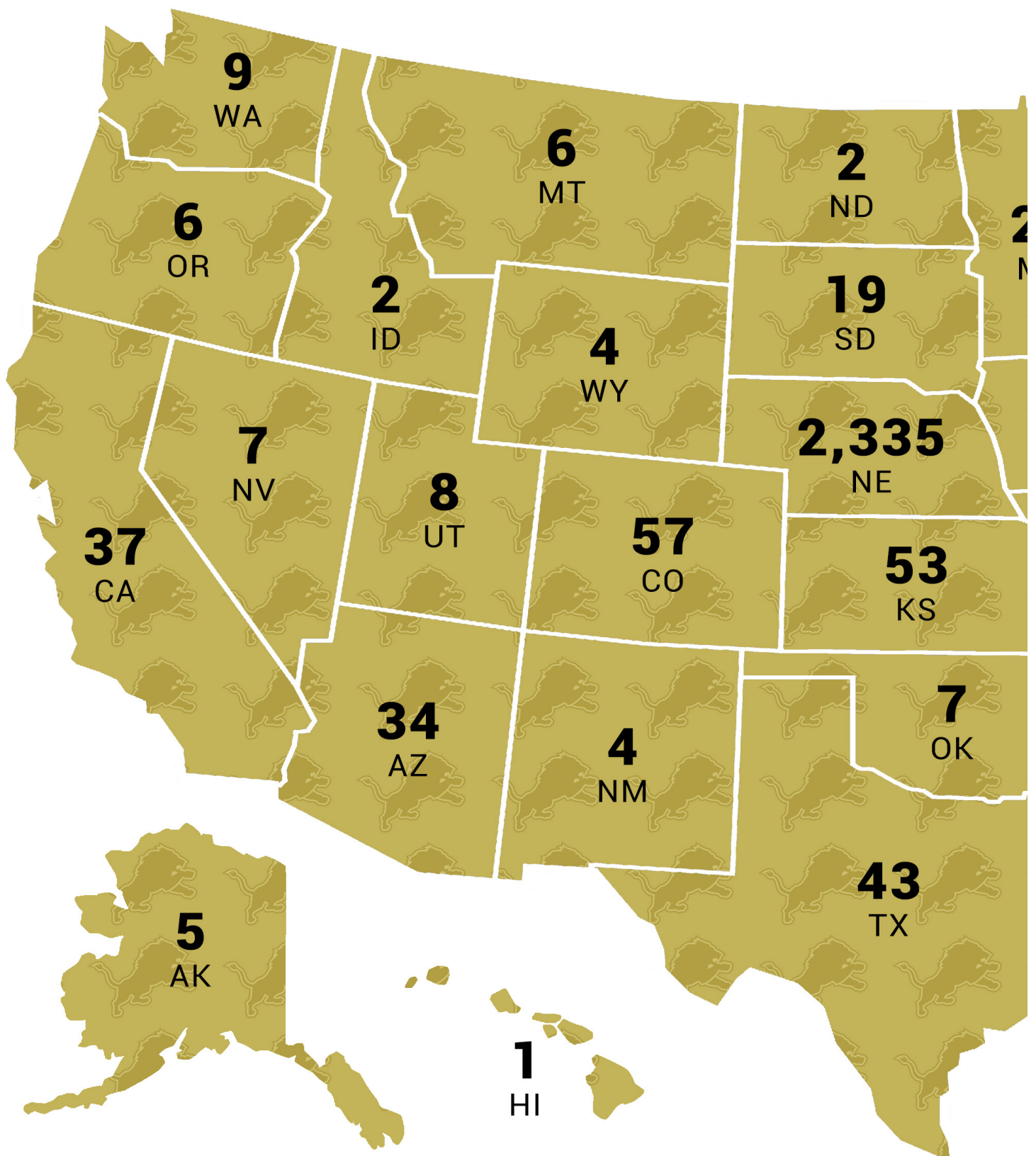


**Nate Junck, Class of 2020:** Sergeant. He is part of the National Guard and is part of the 192nd Military Police Detachment out of Omaha. He first enlisted on July 9, 2019. In February 2021, he was deployed to Jordan for Operation Spartan Shield. He was stationed there until December 2021. Nate is still serving his country.

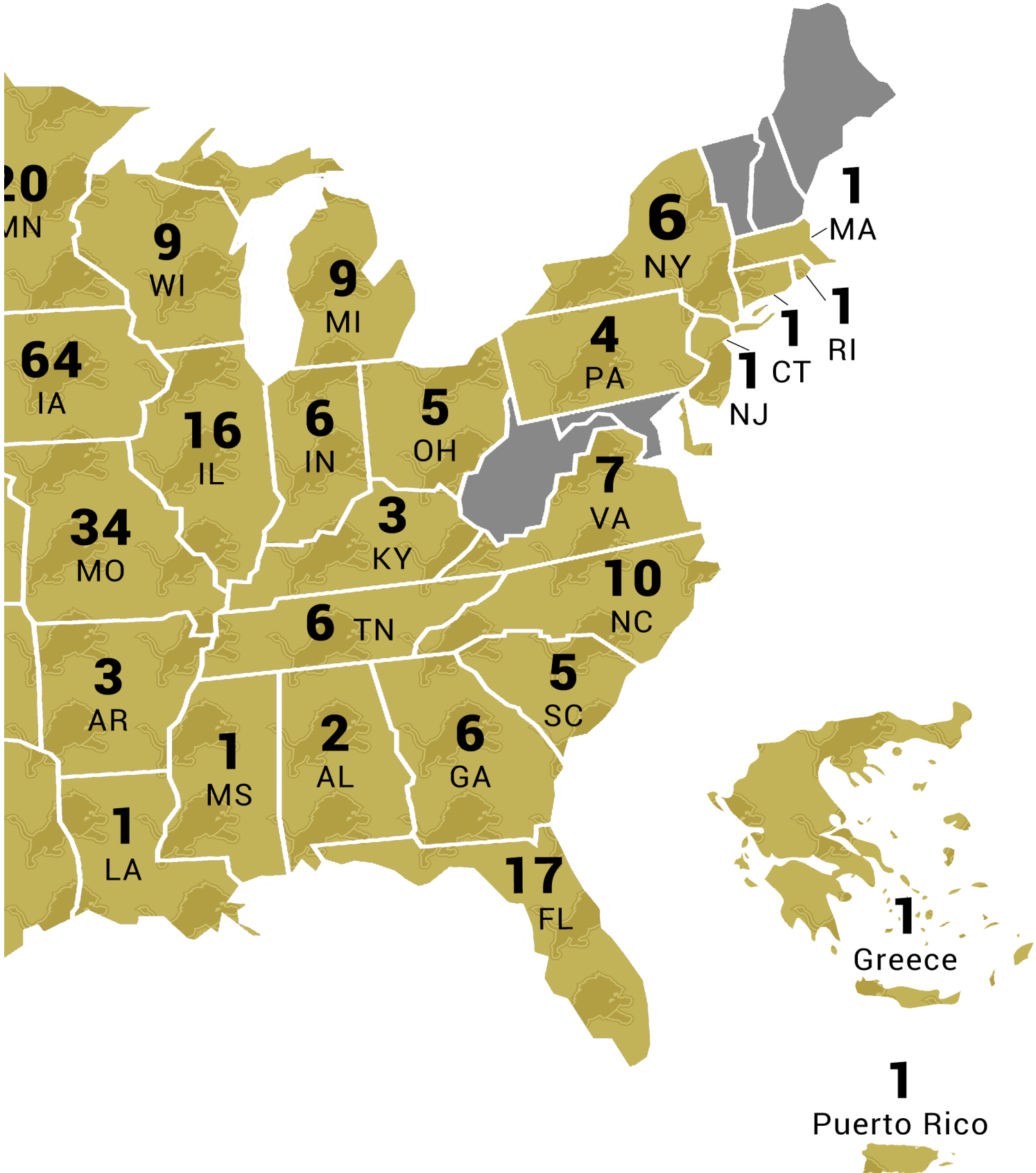


***May God bless our alumni and all who are serving or who have served our country.***

# AQUINAS ALUMNI:



# Where are they now?





## Mini Monarchs

Adriana(Meysenburg) '12 and Jake McCain, baby boy Alexander Patrick born 6-30-23  
 Brian '15 and Sydney(Wynn) Andel, baby boy James Lawrence born 6-30-23  
 Elliot '09 and Jaclyn Rech, baby girl Ava Marie born 9-11-23  
 Jessi(Vavrina) '15 and Chris Gallegos, baby boy Noah Lee born 10-24-23  
 Britny(Novacek) '08 and Nick Brichacek, baby girl Zelig Louise born 11-12-23  
 Taylor(Pelan) '09 and Taylor Murren, baby girl Landon Elle born 11-12-23  
 Trevor '12 and Taylor Eller, baby boy Henry Michael born December 17, 2023  
 Bryan '03 and Jennifer Hein, baby girl Laney Jo born 12-21-23  
 Heath '15 and Elizabeth Ketteler, baby girl Eleanor Therese born 12-31-23  
 Clete '09 and Sarah DeWispelare, baby girl Marietta Lynn born 1-3-24  
 Trent '12 and McKenzie Jakub, baby girl Merritt Mary, born 1-10-24  
 Clint '06 and Shelby Zegers, baby girl Madilynn Marie, born 1-12-24  
 Katie(Svec) '09 and Weston Sieck, baby girl Cecilia Shirley born 2-4-24  
 Julia(Daro) '15 and Robert Messbarger, baby girl Hannah Eveliene born 2-13-24  
 Cambria(Klement) '17 and Sean Mann, baby boy Clayton David born 2-17-24  
 Ryan '14 and Katie Vavrina, baby boy Fischer Alan, born 8-21-23  
 Seth '13 and Rebecca Hoffman, baby boy Harlyn Curtis, born 8-29-23



## Vocations

### Priests

+Rev. Rudy Oborny '63  
 Rev. Jim Meysenburg '81  
 Rev. John Birkel '82  
 Rev. Doug Daro '09  
 Rev. Matthew Kovar '13  
 Rev. Scott Nemecek '15

### Religious

Sr. Marilyn Geiger, OSF '62  
 Sr. Frances Pytlik, ASC '65  
 Sr. Frances Stanislav, MS '66  
 Sr. Patricia Ann Hanus, MS '70  
 Sr. Barbara Smith, ASC '71

Sr. Jeanette Rerucha, MS '77

Sr. Mary Markita Kratochvil, TOR '99

Sr. Fiat Marie Eller, CK '10  
 Sr. Guadalupe (Marissa DeWispelare) '13

### Deacon

Augustine Reimers '16

### Seminarians

Jon Kadlec '16  
 Cody Hein '18

### Novice

B. Caleb Joseph (James Buresh '13)



## Leaving a Legacy

This past year, two new scholarships were formed by Aquinas Alumni!

Mark Schaecher, Class of 1979, has generously set-up a scholarship to help kids that are going into the field of engineering.

A scholarship was also set-up in memory of Raymond Kohout, Class of 1972. This scholarship is available for kids going into a trade school.

Contact [michaela-moravec@cdolinc.net](mailto:michaela-moravec@cdolinc.net) or call 402-367-3175 if you are interested in setting up a scholarship!



## Summer Reunions

**Class of 1964**-- June 8, 2024 (Betty Betzen or Mary Jane Hilger for more info)

**Class of 1969**-- August 23, 2024 @ Northside, David City

**Class of 1974**-- August 17, 2024 @ Frommy's Bar in Bellwood starting at 2:00pm

**Class of 1979**-- July 20, 2024 @ Flatland Bar, Bee Nebraska - more details to come

**Class of 1984**-- July 12, casual meet up - July 13th 4pm Mass & Tour - then Northside for Dinner and to the Butler County Fair

**Class of 2004**-- June 22, 2024 4pm Mass & Tour - then The Round Barn - Butler County Fair Grounds

**Class of 1989, 1994, 1999, 2009 & 2014**--Not available at print time



## Monarch Marriages

Andrew Duke '15 to Megan Oeltjenbruns, 2-16-20  
 Benjamin Duke '17 to Maria Pinkerton, 10-22-22  
 Lauren Campbell '17 to Brody Voichoski, 9-16-23  
 Matthew Duke '19 to Maria Consbruck, 9-16-23  
 Kelsey Baer '18 to Brady Papineau, 9-23-23  
 Michael Coufal '18 to Hailey Rotherman, 9-30-23  
 Alison Timoney '12 to Grant Snyder, 10-7-23  
 Julie Humlicek '18 to Ethan Cromer, 10-11-23  
 James Kobza '16 to Amanda Wubbenhorst 10-21-23  
 Peter Sisco '21 to Alli Hartman '21, 12-9-23  
 Jackson Jakub '19 to Grace Zelansney, 2-24-24

## In Memory Of...



**Richard Kotera**, died July 31, 2023. He was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1963. He was born to Louis & Marie (Policky) Kotera. Richard is survived by his wife: Jeannette; sons: Darin(Carrie) Kotera, Dwayne(Lisa) Kotera; 4 grandchildren; siblings: Gerry Policky '57, Ray Kotera '60, Al Kotera '61, Clarence Kotera '69, Jerome Kotera '72, Bernie Kotera '75 and Barb German '76.

**Don Birkel**, died September 18, 2023. He was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1969. He was born to Thomas & Betty (Martin) Birkel. Don is survived by his siblings: Pat(Birkel) Brown '68, Marty Birkel '71, Deb (Birkel) Litchfield '71, Sandy Litchfield and Bob Birkel.

**Doug Whitmore**, died September 19, 2023. He was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1976. He was born to Ray & Dorothy Whitmore. Doug is survived by his siblings: Leon Whitmore '72, Renee (Whitmore) Schmid '78, Fran(Whitmore) Hilger '80 and Jay Whitmore '85.

**Shirley (Turner) Moore**, died September 27, 2023. She was a graduate of St. Mary's High School in 1958. She was born to Arthur & Ann Turner. Shirley is survived by her children: Tom(Cyndi) Moore, Kelly(Dewane) Wright; 3 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

**Paula(Behrns) Kriz**, died October 14, 2023. She was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic

High School in 1973. She was born to John & Millie Behrns. Paula is survived by her husband Dennis '73, children: Angie Klein, Ryan Kriz, Jonathan Kriz and Zach Kriz; siblings: Judy(Behrns) Kriz '64, Pat Behrns '68, Barb(Behrns) Fry '70, Rick Behrns '75, Lisa Behrns '80 and Beth Behrns.

**Sheila (Kelch) Smith**, died October 19, 2023. She was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1965. She was born to John & Teresa Kelch. Sheila is survived by her husband: Robert; children: Rob Smith and Renae Wilson; 1 grandson; 6 great-grandchildren; siblings: Delores Kelch '69, Kate Drapal '71 and Marilyn Bobert '77.

**Kenneth Dill**, died November 5, 2023. He was a graduate of St. Mary's High school in 1957. He was born to OB & Irene Dill. Ken is survived by his wife: Dora; children: Deborah, Kevin and Karen; 6 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren and a brother-in-law: Jerry Adams.

**Elizabeth "Betty" Nicolas**, died December 9, 2023. She was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1971. She was born to Leonard & Bernice(Romshek) Nicolas. Betty is survived her siblings: Vernon Nicolas '68, Dr. Jo (Jim) Witter '80 and Julie (Steve) Reiter '84, and many nieces & nephews.

**Robert Schindler**, died November 10, 2023. He was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1968.

He was born to Edmond & Patricia Schindler. Robert is survived by his sisters: Barbara(Schindler) Majerus '69 and Patricia Schindler '74.

**Carol Berglund**, died January 14, 2024. She was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1965. She was born to Al & Mildred Berglund. Carol is survived by her siblings: Burdette Berglund, Roger Berglund '63, Cathy Greguras '69, Barb Tomek '71, and Cheryl Arneson '74.

**Jenny(Shibley) White** died January 20, 2024. She was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1992 and worked as the head cook from 2018-2023. She was born to Darrell and Rita Shibley. Jenny is survived by her husband: Mike; children: Rebecka Stapleton '14, Mitch White '16 and Garrett White; her mother: Rita Shibley; mother-in-law: Delores White; siblings: Deb(Shibley) Navratil '74, Kathy(Shibley) Kinnett '75, Mary Jo(Shibley) Leininger '78, Terri Shibley '79, Tim Shibley '84, Dr. Rob Shibley '87, and Chris Shibley '95; 2 grandchildren and several nieces & nephews.

**Dennis Fiala**, died January 28, 2024. He was a graduate of Dwight Assumption High School in 1960. He was born to Michael & Evelyn(Kozisek) Fiala. Dennis is survived by his children: Jim Fiala, Larry Fiala, David Fiala, Jeannie(Fiala) Damm, Janelle(Fiala) Smith, Andrea(Fiala) Furasek, Andy Fiala, Steve Fiala and Susie(Fiala) Farr; 25

grandchildren; and brothers: Leroy, Lloyd and Joe '63 Fiala.

**Rodney 'Sod' Rech**, died February 7, 2024. He was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1968. He was born to Elmer and DeLores Rech. Sod is survived by his wife: Sandy(Schmit) '71; children: Rebecca Johnson and Laura Runquist; 2 grandchildren; siblings: Randy Rech '71 and Judy (Rech) Pollak '73.

**Charles Ekeler**, died January 24, 2024. He was a graduate of St. Mary's High School in 1961. He was born to Dr. Louis & Mary Ekeler. Charles is survived by his wife: Jan; children: Amy, Mark and Chris; 7 grandchildren; and siblings: Bob(Deanna) '58, Jack(Judy) '64 Carol Kirby(Dan) '67, Steve '70, and Jim(Janelle)'72.

**Patrick Osmera**, died March 1, 2024. He was a graduate of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1970. He was born to Gerald & Sally Osmera. Pat is survived by his wife: Judy; children: Jessica Asmus '97 & Aaron Osmera '03 and 2 granddaughters.

**Gerald Kosch**, died March 5, 2024. He was a graduated of Aquinas Catholic High School in 1968. He was born to Art & Elizabeth Kosch. Gerald is survived by his siblings: Ken(Renee) Kosch '75, Vicki(Kosch) Manion '73 and Mary Beth(Kosch) Ekeler '71; and several nieces & nephews.



**Aquinas  
Alumni News**  
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*IT IS ALWAYS A GREAT DAY TO BE A MONARCH!*

**Aquinas Alumni,  
we are challenging YOU  
to donate \$10 to the NE  
Catholic Day of Giving.**

Catholics throughout Nebraska will come together on May 1 to celebrate and support the state's Catholic parishes, schools and ministries during the **first Nebraska Catholic Day of Giving** (NCDG).

This 24-hour fundraising event will showcase the tremendous impact Catholic organizations have on our state.

For more information on NCDG, visit <https://nebraskacatholicdayofgiving.org/>



**SAVE THE DATE**

**05 | 01 | 24**

Month

Day

Year

**Nebraska.iGiveCatholicTogether.org**