

SAINT CLARE PARISH PROFILE

JILL KOLA



Jill Kola has been teaching in Catholic schools for 25 years, including the past 11 here at St. Clare Catholic School.

“And I can’t imagine doing anything else,” she said.

Jill teaches math, religion and social studies to students in grades six through eight at St. Clare.

“I teach math, which I love, and the Catholic faith, which I love,” she said. “You can’t get anything better than teaching the two things you are passionate about.”

Jill joined the St. Clare staff in 2009, the first year of the “new school” following the parish merger that united St. Mary School in Greenleaf and St. Paul School in Wrightstown.

Previously, from 1995 to 2003, she taught math and religion to grades six through eight at Columbus Catholic Middle School in Marshfield. And from 2003 to 2009 she taught math to the same grade levels at Oshkosh Lourdes Middle School in Oshkosh.

Jill embraces the subject matter of her classes as well as the family atmosphere and rural

surroundings here at St. Clare.

“St. Clare’s family atmosphere and rural setting is something I was not used to coming from the ‘middle school’ environments in Oshkosh and Marshfield,” she said. “I was a bit apprehensive at first about teaching combined classes of sixth and seventh graders, having smaller classes and being in a PK-8 school.”

But, she said, a smaller PK-8 school provides for a more robust family atmosphere than being in a school with only middle schoolers.

“It is awesome to see the older students interacting and helping the younger students, and natural for them as well,” she said. “St. Clare runs smoothly like a gentle wind, as compared to larger schools which can be whirlwinds at times. That smooth atmosphere helps to keep the students calm as they go through their daily routine.”

Jill found her calling to be a teacher while attending the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

She was majoring in accounting before she began helping her friend with math and realized “I really enjoyed teaching math.”

“My friends encouraged me to change my major to teaching math, and it was the best decision I could have made,” she added.

Jill earned a bachelor’s degree in math education for grades 6-12, “and I love my Catholic faith, so for me this is the best of both worlds.”

She noted that she has a “special love” for the saints of our Catholic Church and enjoys teaching St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body to her eighth-grade students.

“Middle school students are my favorite age, as they are so interested in learning about the truth in the world,” Jill said. “Middle schoolers are young enough to not be overwhelmed by the big issues in life, yet old enough to understand jokes and ready to learn bigger concepts. They love to laugh and be silly, which keeps me young at heart.”

When students graduate from St. Clare Catholic School and move on to high school, Jill hopes “they will keep God No. 1 in their lives and stay focused on the goal of heaven as our final destiny.”

When asked the ultimate compliment she could receive from a student, Jill replied: “I would consider it a compliment if they were to tell me years later that they remembered their Catholic faith and stood up for what is right in high school or college, or helped a friend get back on the right path in life.”

She holds several school-related activities dear to her heart, including: arranging and attending the St. Clare Family Ski Trip to Ski Brule; helping the eighth-grade students put on the annual St. Valentine’s Day Dance; and taking the eighth-grade students to Wisconsin Dells for their end-of-the-year class trip.

“These events are wonderful memory makers, and it’s awesome to hear the eighth-graders reminisce about the fun they had here at St. Clare Catholic School,” she said.

Jill has been a member of St. Clare Parish since 2016. She has four children — Nate, Megan, Abby and Elise — all of whom she taught. During her free time, Jill enjoys landscaping and gardening.