



## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

### Nativity Catholic School: A STEM School of Excellence

*by Jane Curtis, Outreach Chair*



Nativity Catholic Church in Burke, one of ECHO's supporting faith organizations, has a private school for pre-kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Recently, the school was awarded the designation of STEM School of Excellence by the ITEEA (International Technology and Engineering Educators Association). STEM is the acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. This year's recognition was given to only 34 schools, including 3 schools in countries outside the US.

Integrative STEM education may be described as combining the subject matter of two or more STEM subjects into a joint learning experience to encourage cross-disciplinary thinking. Ms. Maria Kelly, principal of Nativity School, said that the school has focused on the integration of STEM into their curriculum for more than ten years, with a particular emphasis during the past eight years. She says that, while the school follows the curriculum of the Diocese of Arlington, they integrate STEM learning in all subjects. They also have a Robotics and Makerspace class. Ms. Kelly says, "Every teacher at Nativity has earned STEM Certification...through many years of Professional Development."

Nativity School teachers are now working toward School STEM National Certification, an extensive process offered by the National Institute of Stem Education (NISE). The NISE calls this certification process "a transformative experience that establishes a STEM culture and raises student achievement..." Ms. Kelly says that the faculty will be finished with this certification by early summer. They expect to celebrate the achievement next fall. Students of Nativity are rightfully excited about the recognition of their school and proud of the hard

work that resulted in this accomplishment. The school was notified of the award last December and received it in April. They received a large banner to denote the award. There is a beautiful [video](#) of Nativity classrooms, students and teachers on the ITEEA website. To view it, look under the heading, Activities/Awards and Scholarships/STEM Schools. Scroll down to the list of 2024-2025 awards and click on Nativity.



Receiving recognition: Dr. Vorbach; Ms Maria Kelly, Principal; ITEEA Representatives; and Monsignor Bob Cilinski, Nativity Pastor