

Religious Education Program - Update

Throughout the months of September - November, our dedicated catechists prepared many enriching activities for the Grade Kdg.-7 students. We are grateful to the parents for showing their children the importance of classes and bringing them weekly. There has been an outstanding attendance of students at the Saturday classes.

On the opening day of classes our pastor, Father Joseph Bayne, OFM Conv, met with the parents to acknowledge their role as the first faith formators of their children and emphasize their responsibilities. Highlighting the vocation of a parent, Father stressed the importance of attending weekly Mass with the children and praying with them daily.

The catechists began their respective classroom curriculum instruction with correlating activities. The primary grades viewed DVD's that taught of the Guardian Angels, the Saints, Prayer, and the Rosary.

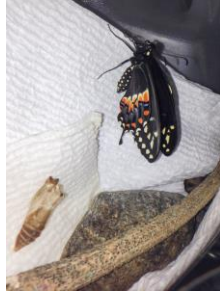


Brother Michael Duffy, OFM Conv. and Deacon Joseph Peters gave the seventh graders a tour of the **Care Van** which is parked behind the church and makes it way to Chicopee Center every Sunday to provide for the needs of the community. People benefit from some health services along with the distribution of food provided by the parish sandwich ministry and clothing donations.

Brother Paschal Kolodziej, OFM Conv., taught the seventh graders about the Franciscan way of life and his ministries of Friars. Sister Agnes Negru, FMSA spoke to the Grade 6 and 7 students about the parish ministry to the parishioners who are homebound or in nursing homes. She gave them an account of how many visits with them were made by Eucharistic Ministers, how many Rosary prayer services are held in nursing homes, how many times the Sacrament of the Sick is provided in the Church and how many individuals are visited annually. This session challenged our youth to remember those who are sick through prayer or with greetings.



In October, in recognition of the Feast of St. Francis, all classes visited the **Peace Pole and Peace Garden** located on the Cyman Drive side of the school. The students held a prayer service and learned the meaning of the Peace Pole and Mural. The middle grade students were interested in and successful in deciphering the various languages on the Pole which translate to "May Peace Prevail." Catechist Mrs. Jan Peters was the artist responsible for completing the mural honoring St. Francis of Assisi. She told the students that the doves on the art work were formed by the hands of children.



On that day the Primary grades watched two **butterflies** leave their temporary 'home'. Catechist Mrs. Roma Wilk had been caring for the growth of the caterpillars and brought them into classes during their various stages of development.

The students also viewed DVDs about the life of St. Francis.

The Middle grades students made greeting cards for Soldiers Home Residents as community projects. Students in the 6th and 7th grades made Rosaries for the students in Kdg and Grade 1. They enjoyed the activity and bringing the rosaries to the children. There are plans for the middle grades and primary grades to work together on certain projects in the future.



The students offered a 'living Rosary' in the school library during their Nov. 3rd class. After each Hail Mary, students took turns placing a candle near the statue of Our Lady. They prayed for many intentions.

Students in Grade 2 completed their session on SEED which stands for *Safe Environment Every Day*. This is a Diocesan requirement for the Protection of Children. Parents must sign a form agreeing to have their child attend this class. They are also able to submit an Opt-Off signature. An annual report is issued to the Diocese indicating when the classes were presented and how many students attended or submitted opt-out forms. As you are perhaps aware, all of our catechists undergo the CORI Check and the Virtus training to be in the classes with children.



Parents and children attended the November 17th **Advent Project** event held in the school cafeteria. Sister Andrea offered some thoughts on possible ways to spend Advent with their children - especially treasuring some time to be present to each of them. The event included a prayer service and the making of an advent wreath. The 'craft' results were beautiful. It was a blessing to watch the parents interact with the children in this faith formation exercise.



Parents of children preparing to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation attended one of the Enrichment sessions (Nov, 3rd or 5th) conducted by Fr. Joseph Bayne, OFM Con., Father read the words that were proclaimed at the child's baptism and the commitment that the parents made to bring their child up in the Faith. This gathering was an opportunity for parents to reflect on their role, on the importance of their child receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the parental model of also receiving the sacrament. Father spoke of the importance of remembering the love, mercy and compassion of our God and teaching our children to not be afraid of this sacrament as they encounter Christ.



Fourteen high school students were confirmed by His Excellency, Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, Bishop of Springfield in St. Stanislaus Basilica at the 6 PM Mass on October 6th. We extend our congratulations to those confirmed and thank the catechists for their devoted service in preparing the students.

There are now forty-eight students registered in high school religion classes and their classes are based on a program entitled "Chosen." In addition to a student manual and DVDs, this program includes a Parent's Guide and a Sponsor's Guide to instruct, encourage, and inspire parents and sponsors to actively participate in the preparation process for the reception of the sacrament. Father Joseph Bayne, OFM Conv., Pastor addressed all parents and students at their initial session, explaining expectations in preparation for this Sacrament of Initiation. Students and parents signed an Inscription Form, indicating their willingness to fulfill their obligations.

At subsequent sessions Father Joseph spoke to:

- students and parents in response to Called to Protect and sexual abuse.
- students about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, how to prepare to receive it and the unconditional love, mercy and compassion of God