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## **A semester to remember**

Tanya Watterud

Students of Holy Spirit Elementary School had an unusual and blessed first semester of study this year. After summer flooding caused by sewer backup led to extensive repairs for their school and church, Holy Spirit in north Fargo, the students began the school year in a new setting - Cardinal Muench Seminary.

A few months earlier, the seminary's final graduation Mass was celebrated. Enrollment had been low at CMS for some time, increasing the cost of education. The seminary program at CMS ended in the spring and the building was prepared for sale. When Holy Spirit School needed a temporary home, the facility where high school and adult men had once studied was ready for the students.

Msgr. Jeffrey Wald, Holy Spirit pastor, used the opportunity of the seminary setting to encourage the students to pray for vocations every day. On the final day of class at the seminary, students sang Christmas carols while walking down the hallway, others decorated gingerbread houses and played games during parties. Rooms and corridors were alive with action.

"I enjoyed being here," fifth-grade teacher Chris Dalton said. "It brings back a lot of memories from when I was a seminarian... and to see that my students are learning in this environment is just wonderful." His classroom was the seminary's Father Arth Room, where priests gathered during the annual Presbyteral Days, he said. "It kind of feels like the last day of school and we're getting ready for a new school year again," he said.

Sherri Simon, a secretary for Holy Spirit School, said she remembers the seminary's impact on her as a child. "My family would come for the carnival all the time and we would work for the carnival," she said. "Before I got my job at Holy Spirit, I prayed to work up here as a receptionist." God answered that prayer through the school's temporary move to the seminary this fall. Although she loved the seminary atmosphere, "it will be nice to be back, to be home [at Holy Spirit] again," she said.

Students weren't the only ones displaced by the flooding. Parish offices were moved into the rectory and repairs were made in the church. But before that happened, Cherylynn Fausel, parish secretary, had work to finish. "It was Tuesday and I had to get the bulletin sent in," she said. She put the final touches on the bulletin while work began to clean the soggy carpet. "All I could think of was the Minot people with water up to their roofs," she added, referring to the devastating flood that had hit that city.

After working for months in cramped quarters, Fausel said it was wonderful to be back in the improved office space at the church building. "It's so warm here," she said, noting the new paint, carpet and furnishings. "When the artwork started going up, it all came together."

In January, with students, teachers, furnishings and supplies moved back into Holy Spirit School, Principal Jason Kotrba spoke about the first day in the newly painted and repaired school. "Yesterday was a whirlwind. To be honest with you, it felt like the first day of school and this is why - you have pre-K and kindergarten [students] who had never been here

before," he said. Three teachers and a school cook also had never worked in the school. But the blessings were many. Kotrba said everyone liked the brightly painted rooms, new ceiling tiles, having bathrooms and coat areas near the classrooms, and much more.

Msgr. Wald said that his experience during the construction process was fantastic because of the leadership of Superior Steam Cleaning and the gift of all of the workers involved. Completion of the project now allows him to "hear in the background children's voices and the joy that youth brings to parish life."

He said he looked out his office window one day after the move and watched the snow falling. "I said, 'Everything's back to normal - snow in December and the school's back. Everything is nice.'"