

The Advent Journey at Holy Family-St. Mary's Catholic School

Advent. The season of preparation. The season of anticipation.

As any parent or teacher can tell you, Advent is a time of extreme excitement for a child - the waiting, the anticipation. In our society today, too often the focus for children at that time of year is on what gifts they will receive, the candy and treats they will eat, and the parties they will attend. It is up to all of the adults in these children's lives to keep the focus where it needs to be - on Christ Jesus and the fact that he came into this world so we can be granted eternal salvation.

At Holy Family-St. Mary's (HF-SM) Catholic School in Grand Forks, the focus of Advent was definitely on Jesus. Beginning with daily morning prayer, Principal Charles Scherr taught the message of preparing for Christ Jesus. Principal Scherr not only spoke about preparing for the baby child Jesus, but also for making room in our hearts and lives for Jesus today and for his second coming. The students also focused on the power of prayer and spreading God's message in the world today.

A message of service has been instilled deep in the hearts of all the students at HF-SM. Each week of Advent had a special focus. The first week of Advent the focus was on hope - "Hope for the Hopeless." The families and students made donations of food, toys, and personal care items to the St. Vincent DePaul Society. In the second week, the students focused on peace - "Peace for the Peacekeepers." Appreciation was shown to the Sheriff's Department, the Police Department, and the Border Patrol by delivering Christmas treats to these organizations. The third week of Advent was the time to celebrate - "Joy for the Joyful." The students of HF-SM gave cards and gifts to those who have been baptized in the past year at Holy Family and St. Mary's parishes. Finally, the fourth week of Advent culminated in the presentation of our Christmas Play.

The Christmas play is a very special project each year at HF-SM. In the midst of all the other Advent preparations, the students worked hard on the annual Holy Family-St. Mary's School Christmas play. This year's play, "Come, Celebrate Christ's Birthday," showed us that just as a candle lights our way in the darkness, the star that shone brightly over the stable that holy night 2,000 years ago helps to bring us out of our spiritual darkness. Behold the miracle. It's Christ's birthday. In a way that helped children understand this season, they learned that decorating, shopping, Santa and the elves working are all ways of preparing for Christmas; ultimately, though, the moment of Christ's birth outshines everything else.

The Holy Family-St. Mary's Christmas play has become an annual, heartwarming event for many people in Holy Family and St. Mary's parishes and community. This is the seventh year that the Christmas play was written specifically for HF-SM's School by LoRia Novak, third grade teacher at HF-SM. Each student plays an active role onstage as they deliver the true Christmas message, all the while they are strengthening their public speaking skills, musical performance abilities, and self confidence on stage.

Happy Birthday Jesus. The students at Holy Family-St. Mary's remember the true reason for this blessed season.