



EARLY CHILDHOOD NEWS & NOTES

Office of Catholic Education

Winter, 2010/2011

Reasons for Celebration

As we enter the month of December, our minds and hearts are filled with the many reasons for celebrating. Let's look at a few of these.



Our first reason for celebrating is **Advent – Waiting for Jesus Christ**. Each year, the Church gives us these days of waiting and watching so that we can prepare our hearts for Christ. Yes, we are busy with shopping for

gifts, decorating our homes, and planning for our family gatherings. Yet, in the midst of all of this, the rituals and practices of the Catholic liturgies during this season remind us that we need to spend time in thoughtful reflection in order to be ready for the coming of Christ on Christmas.

On **December 6th** we celebrate a special feast – the **feast of St. Nicholas**. Children of all ages love this annual festivity. On this day we remember a fourth century bishop who is known as the patron saint of children. Throughout history the feast of St. Nicholas has kept alive the stories of his goodness and generosity. In Germany and Poland, boys dressed as bishops begged alms for the poor—and sometimes for themselves! In the Netherlands and Belgium, St. Nicholas arrived on a steamship from Spain to ride a white horse on his gift-giving rounds. In many countries, December 6th still remains a day for gift giving and merrymaking. In the Netherlands St. Nicholas is celebrated on the 5th, the eve of the day, by sharing candies (thrown in the door), chocolate initial letters, small gifts, and riddles. Dutch children leave carrots and hay in their shoes for the saint's horse, hoping St. Nicholas will exchange them for small gifts. Simple gift-giving in early Advent helps preserve a Christmas Day focus on the Christ Child.



How will you celebrate this day with your children?



Each December we celebrate a special feast of Our Lady – the **Feast of the Immaculate Conception** on **December 8th**. On December 8th, 1854, Pope Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in *Ineffabilis Deus*. Since that time we have celebrated this feast in a special way. In 1864 there was a gathering of all

U.S. bishops in Baltimore for the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore. At this Council, the bishops issued a decree in which they named Mary, the Immaculate Conception, as the Patroness of the United States. In 1847, Pope Pius IX named the Blessed Virgin Mary patroness of the United States under the title of the Immaculate Conception. In 1913, Pope Pius X approved plans for the building of a national shrine in the United States, and made a personal contribution for its construction. The cornerstone of the National Shrine was laid in 1920. The first Mass was held on Easter Sunday 1924.



And then there is the blessed feast of **Christmas**. Let us reflect on this day of celebration and use the Christmas Prayer of Pope John XXIII.

O sweet Child of Bethlehem,
grant that we may share with all our hearts
in this profound mystery of Christmas.
Put into the hearts of men and women this peace
for which they sometimes seek so desperately
and which you alone can give to them.
Help them to know one another better,
and to live as brothers and sisters,
children of the same Father.
Reveal to them also your beauty,
holiness and purity.
Awaken in their hearts
love and gratitude for your infinite goodness.
Join them all together in your love.
And give us your heavenly peace. Amen.
Pope John XXIII



After Christmas, reasons for celebrating continue into the New Year. We celebrate the Epiphany, the Holy Innocents, the Solemnity of Mary – the Mother of God, the Baptism of Jesus and many more. What are your reasons for celebrating?

Merry Christmas

Re-Visiting the Diocesan Preschool Guide

In 2002 a group of your colleagues gathered together to work with the Office of Catholic Education to develop a Preschool Guide. During the past months I have been reviewing the new Standards being developed by the Ohio Department of Education. These new standards are significantly different from the previous standards. If you have taken any time, in your busy schedules, to look at the new standards, you will see that preschool is now included in the overall standards. Therefore, as we begin to ponder the revision of our Preschool Guide we will be looking at all of the revised Academic Content Standards for Ohio. If you have not already examined some of the work of the state with regard to standards I would encourage you to do so. Their site is: www.ode.state.oh.us.

According to our Curriculum Revision schedule we will not be revising the Preschool Guide for perhaps another year. That being the case, I encourage you to reconsider our existing document to see how your program is doing in providing a quality environment for your students.

The Philosophy and Goals section of the document states the following:

A Catholic Prekindergarten program strives to provide a creative learning environment for the young child. Interaction with other children and adults, in an atmosphere of Christian love and concern, promotes the healthy development of each child. In partnership with the church, parish community, and the family, a Catholic Preschool provides a Catholic Christian education through which gospel values are presented, lived and fostered.



A quality early childhood program promotes a safe and stimulating environment that promotes the spiritual, social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth of a child. Children should be provided with opportunities to investigate and explore their world creatively

in a hands-on environment. Children are unique individuals who are eager to learn, and we should value their differences, needs, learning styles, experiences and interests. (Page vi)

What about the early childhood program at your school? I would like to challenge each of you to reflect on these

FEASTS TO CELEBRATE...

December 6 St. Nicholas
December 8 Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin

December 25 Christmas
December 28 Holy Innocents
December 31 The Holy Family



January 1 Mary the Mother of God
New Year's Day

January 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
January 5 St. John Neumann

January 21 St. Agnes
January 24 St. Francis deSales
January 25 Conversion of St. Paul

January 26 St. Timothy & St. Titus
January 27 St. Angela Merici
January 28 St. Thomas Aquinas
January 31 St. John Bosco



February 2 Presentation of Jesus in Temple

February 3 St. Blaise
February 11 Our Lady of Lourdes
February 21 St. Peter Damian
February 22 Chair of St. Peter



words and the environment you are providing. Are we meeting our goals?

1. Are we providing a creative learning environment?
2. Do we provide time for the children to interact with other children? with adults?
3. Do we provide an atmosphere of Christian love and concern?
4. Does our program promote the healthy development of each child?
5. Working with others, do we provide a Catholic Christian education through which gospel values are presented? lived? fostered?
6. Is the environment safe and stimulating?
7. Does the environment promote spiritual growth? social growth? emotional growth? physical growth? intellectual growth?
8. Do we provide children the opportunity to investigate and explore their world creatively? in a hands-on environment?
9. Do we value the uniqueness of each child?
10. Do we value their differences? their needs? their learning styles? their learning experiences and interests?



Being a Gift to Others...



“Being a gift means that the burden ultimately rests with God, who gives to others through us. There is great rest in knowing that he is doing the giving. Our responsibility is simply to learn to respond to him, so that he will be able to make us the gift he intended. It’s to this end that Jesus promised, ‘my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’” (Mt 11:30)

“Being a gift also brings to mind our distinctiveness. A gift is special because it is distinctive. Scripture constantly attests to the fact that God fashions each of our lives differently, in order to make us each a unique gift to others. Throughout the pages of Scripture we encounter hundreds of individuals who were loyal to God and did his will, yet displayed profound individuality. Never do we sense that God wanted any of his servants to become a clone of any other.”

“God has given us each a one-of-a-kind mix of qualities. We each have certain talent and potential, a particular energy level, tastes and affinities that make us different from anyone else as our fingerprints. As we come to understand our distinctiveness, we are called to invest ourselves in the most effective possible way to help other people. Yet we are also obliged to be good stewards of the gift that God has made us to be. This means placing limits on ourselves--not for the sake of laziness or self-indulgence, but to be the best gift possible in our service for Christ.” (<http://nehemiahministries.com/savior3.htm>)



Professional Development Opportunities

Early Prevention of School Failure Training Session
March 1 & 2, 2011 – St. Christopher School

Early Childhood Workshop
March 7, 2011 – St. Basil Campus

Early Childhood Workshop
April 15, 2011 – Cleveland Museum of Art

Register Online at:
www.oce-ocs.org/oce/register

Interesting Web Sites...

Check out the following Web sites. Loads of good ideas for learning experiences and activities in the classroom.

1. PreSchool Themes for every Season
www.preschoolexpress.com/theme_station.shtml
2. PreSchool Activities Galore!
www.kidschalkboard.com/
3. A to Z Stuff for Pre School
<http://atozteacherstuff.com/>
4. PreSchool Resources
www.kidsparkz.com/index.html
5. PreSchool Link Express
www.preschoolrainbow.org/resources.htm
6. Sites for Teachers
www.sitesforteachers.com/
7. First School – PreSchool Crafts and Activities
<http://www.first-school.ws/>

SPECIAL DAYS TO CELEBRATE

Pearl Harbor Day

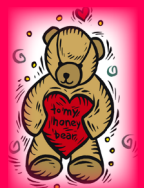
December 6 – St. Nicholas Day
December 7 – Pearl Harbor Day
December 9 – Christmas Card Day
December 12 – Poinsettia Day
December 13 – Ice Cream Day
December 20 – Go Caroling Day
December 21 – Humbug Day
December 26 – Boxing Day



January 1 - New Year's Day
January 4 – Trivia Day
January 5 – National Bird Day
January 11 – Milk Day
January 12 – Work Harder Day
January 17 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
January 18 – Winnie the Pooh Day
January 21 – Hat Day
January 24 – Compliment Day
January 25 – Opposite Day
January 31 – Backwards Day



February 2 – Groundhog Day
February 3 – Chinese New Year
February 10 – Umbrella Day
February 11 – White T-Shirt Day
February 14 – Valentine Day
February 15 – National Gumdrop Day
February 21 – Love Your Pet Day
February 22 – World Thinking Day



Dr. Ruthann Heintschel
rheintschel@dioceseofcleveland.org
216.696.6525 x3240

Office of Catholic Education
1404 East 9th Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44114