

This past weekend at mass, I found myself sandwiched between two very different families.

The family behind me had four children under the age of 7; the family in front had 3 grown teenagers. You can imagine the differences and the similarities, but more to the point, the children behind me were making audible sounds that vacillated between chattering and crying throughout mass. All very normal to my mind; however, the parents in front were visibly exasperated by the sounds of the younger children. Throughout mass they turned and glared and glowered. My husband and I wanted to reach out and comfort the mom to our front because the serene and smiling mom behind us was doing all she could to maintain order.

So many things to be grateful for and when we forget, there is only one result, unhappiness. In our fifth in a series of discussions on the ten **S**pits, **S**pats & **S**purts of learning for growing preschool success, teaching children the importance of gratitude is fundamental in creating a healthy and happy person.

The most obvious form of gratitude is the words we speak to one another. Manners and politeness are the basis for verbalizing our gratitude. We want to hear lots of “please” and “thank you” in the class and around the lunch table, and it begins at home. There is nothing more self centered than a new born baby, who is completely unaware of anyone else and focused only on his immediate needs. Although we understand that egocentrism also is characteristic of toddlers and preschoolers, we can begin to make young children aware of other’s needs by encouraging gratitude. Too often, we see the opposite, a tendency to foster a sense of entitlement, which is just another form of egocentrism.

There is a far deeper expression of gratitude than mere polite words can express. It is a way of looking at life in moments of joy and moments of despair and moments of challenge. We may desire to give our children the wisdom of gratitude: let nothing disturb you because God is with you always. Words fall short, however, because young children are not ready to listen. Far more important for children are the wordless lessons they

learn from our example. If we take joy in the ordinary wonders of life, they will feel and know the depth of our pleasure and happiness and learn to experience joy as they grow older.

Children instinctively embrace life and rejoice in the everyday. Watch them at play. We can only marvel at the joy of running barefoot or cradling a guinea pig in their laps. All of this fades with time as children begin to face day to day challenges, unless we reinforce the importance of joy and happiness through gratitude. If we marvel at all of God’s mysteries, children will see and permanently open the gate of their understanding of the preciousness of life. Einstein said, “There are two ways to live our lives. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” If only we make time to appreciate the miracles at least once a day, gratitude will become the habit that we pass on to our children.

The solution is learning subtraction. Children do not need *more*. Families today are so rushed, so hurried and so stressed. Today we seek to add more facts, more gadgets, more activities, more



Sienna and Lily (M-W-F Dinosaurs) share a moment of simple awe and gratitude with Fergie, the guinea pig.

desires and hence, more confusion. A parent should try to subtract. If each day you focused on doing one minute less of something and made yourself present to the moment in simple pleasures with your children, your life and theirs would be transformed. The pace of life can blur what's important, and yet, there is the call that continues to beckon us out of the hustle and bustle to fundamental truths.

Prayer is the other solution. When we help children pray, we are helping them to recognize that God is the source of all life, and when we are given a gift we are grateful. "Give thanks to the Lord, for He

is good and His love endures forever."
Psalm 107:1

What is to be learned from this deep down gratitude of life that parents should nurture and grow? Compassion springs from its roots. It is the stirring for thoughts beyond our own needs and wants. It is concern for others. We can only give when we feel safe in our sense of well being. As Albert Schweitzer reminds us, "At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame with us."

My husband and I did want to comfort the lady to our front. If only she had asked, we would have said, "Be grateful." Be grateful and present to this moment of God's gift of life. These small children are God's miracle, and the parents are bringing them to God's altar. Also be grateful that you can "hear" the sounds of life all around you. If we want to be the tools of peace and goodwill, we first must look at life with gratitude and thanksgiving. Lucky is the child who receives this tool for happiness early.

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

-elp♥



CLASSROOM CORNERS

The new year is already one month old. With each passing year, many changes come and go. This year the big change is Snow Day. Unfortunately due to rules and regulations that have made the acquisition of snow cost prohibitive, we have had to cancel an event that the staff, families and children enjoyed immensely. This year we replaced Snow Day with a quickly put together event dubbed Extreme Weather Day. The children had a great time with the many activities: walking on ice flows;

watching the Titanic sink beneath the icebergs, snow sculptures, rainstorms, hailstorms, tornadoes, snow painting and finally a snowball fight. Rumor has it that some were dissatisfied with the attempt to substitute snow with toilet paper, which prompted the Dinosaurs to make snow the following week from a snow cone machine. Whatever makes your Titanic float! The month was very busy upon our return from an even busier Christmas season. Speaking of Christmas, if you purchased a DVD of the Christmas Pageant, they are now available in the school office.

The month was filled with assessments, evaluations and planning. Beginning with the Vision, Hearing & Speech screenings, we then moved to our Parent / Teacher conferencing, all of which benefits our families in determining what is best for the children. If your child was absent during the screenings, I highly recommend that you take advantage of other opportunities to have this done. Dates and times are available in the preschool office. If you were unable to attend a conference during the scheduled days, please contact the teacher to make arrangements to meet at

a later date. Finally, much planning and changing will be occurring next year as we include the new LINK program at the preschool. Please contact the office if you have questions.



THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

The new year has brought so many new wonderful additions to Through the Grapevine. **Cassius Rosaler** excitedly encouraged the new guinea pig Elvis to talk. “Elvis talk to us. Go ahead talk to us,” he cooed. Elvis answered with his space squeal to Cassius’ delight. While cutting a curvy line, **Ryan Silva** exclaimed, “I see the table.” Watching a friend cut, **Ricky Zimmer** surmised, “I think he might do good.” Listening to Christmas music, **Chase Wegner** shared, “I hear the holy song.” **Anton Rosandic’s** mom tried to encourage him to eat his fruits and vegetables. “My teacher eats cookies,” he stated. Asked what an island is, **Paige Van Coutren** said, “It’s a planet surrounded by water.” “When I grow up, I’m going to be

a king,” stated **Christian LaMothe**. While building with blocks, **Carson Muniz** shared, “If a block hits you, it could open your head.” “If I have a bad dream, I can dream of Jesus,” **Ava Kosor** shared.

Charlie Sisley announced opening his V-8, “It’s another way to get your veggies.”

Asked the name of the child who knocked over a block structure, **Vincent Busch**

responded, “Oh, you mean the boy with the blond hair and the circle head.” After

creating a garden in the sand area, **Luke**

Kheriaty declared, “I’m just like God.”

During a Chapel presentation of the three kings, **Thomas Antonic** shared, “It’s the three wise men guy.” In a discussion

about **Fr. Tran’s** birthday, **Sienna Miller**

noted, “He shares his birthday with Jesus.”

After delivering Fr. Tran’s card, **Alex Segal** mused, “I think we made it his best

birthday ever.” “When I grow up, I’m

going to be a princess. I’m a wife now.

I’m Lucas’ wife. He’s dead though,” **Emma**

Foote shared. (**Lucas Robles** was playing

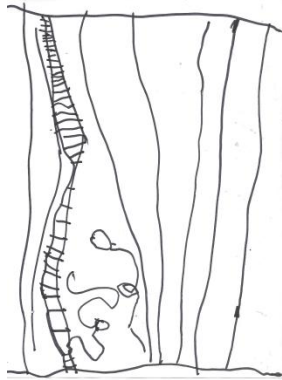
dead.) Speaking about King Herod, Emma thought “maybe he was a greedy king.”

Sean Crvarich was quick to point out that he knew what greedy meant. “That you

have everything to yourself,” he said.

When the children heard that there would

be no snow, **Cameron Raab** suggested, "There is snow in Denver." **Justin Clibon** added, "We can go to Mammoth. They have lots of snow there, you know." "Both **Mia Alcantara** and **Will Schattmaier** said, "Or Big Bear."



A drawing of a fire truck by **Stephen Baker** (T-Th Kitty Kats).

OPEN HOUSE / ART SHOW

The time has come for us to strut our stuff for all of our families. The children are very excited about sharing their rooms, their interests, their work and their art with moms, dads, siblings and any

extended family that can come and share in your child's preschool experience. The Open House & Art Show will be held on Sunday, February 13 after the 9:00 am mass from 10:00 am – 12:00 noon. All of the classrooms will be open, and the Art Show will be featured in the Activity Room and the hallway. The office will feature a variety of Grandma Jeri's homemade breads and cakes. Please join us. We look forward to welcoming you. This is an important experience for your child.



REGISTRATION FOR 2011-12

It is already time to think about plans for next year with your child's educational future. Registration will take place in 3 phases. Re-registration will take place in the school office on Tuesday, February 8 and Wednesday, February 9. This is for families who currently have children in the preschool and will be returning next year. It includes siblings that will be attending next year as well. At the time of registration, you should request your



The T-Th Teddy Bears celebrate the birth of the Baby Jesus during the Christmas season.

desire for next year. You are guaranteed the schedule you have this year. You will be notified by mail within 2 weeks of the registration date. By the time school begins in the fall, most families receive the schedule they need or wish.

Returning family registration will take place on Thursday, February 24 at 8:00 am in the school office. This is for families who have attended the preschool in the past. The cost for registration is \$150 due at the time of registration.

Many positive changes continue to occur at the preschool. This coming 2011-12 school year will include our new program

LINK (Leading into Kindergarten) which replaces the TYKE program. This will be a teacher directed structured program designed to benefit children that could have a kindergarten experience but developmentally need one more year. We recognize that some families want a program that features academic preparation. Details will be forthcoming as to location, teacher, specific curriculum and cost. This will be a 5 day a week half day program. Children born on or before November 1, 2006 will be considered.

On the other hand, we will continue to offer our traditional developmental preschool program that has honored and benefited so many children throughout the years. For children born on or before August 31, 2007, you may choose 2 day, 3 day or a 5 day program.

Beginning this coming year, all children entering preschool must be 3 on or before November 1, 2008. Programs offered for 3 year olds will include 2 day and 3 day options.

Our new family application will take place online beginning at midnight Wednesday, March 2. The cost of an application is \$20.

Families will be notified by mail within 2 weeks of receiving the application. At that time they will be expected to pay a \$150 registration fee.



VALENTINE'S DAY PARTIES

Valentine's Parties will be held on Thursday, February 10 at 11:00 am and 2:30 pm and February 14 at 11:00 am in the classroom. Room moms have created sign-up sheets posted on the bulletin boards. Please look for them. Everyone is invited to join us.

Valentine distribution is up to each teacher. Please speak to the teacher to find out how they would like to handle them. This is a free dress day.



FIELD STUDIES

Every year the preschool plans 2 field studies. This year we are particularly excited about our plans. Last spring the

Santa Ana Zoo had the birth of a new Capuchin monkey Romeo born to his mother Juliet. We will be doing a self guided tour of the zoo with an emphasis on the monkey named for an order of monks. This will take place April 7 and 8. The transportation will be by bus.

Prior to the zoo trip, we will be visiting Soloman's Bakery in Laguna Hills to learn about the business and how to make Monkey Bread. This trip is planned for Thursday, March 3 and Friday, March 4. The transportation will be parent drivers with chaperones. Any driver or chaperone must be fingerprinted and safe environment trained. You still have time to fulfill this requirement, but you must do



The M-W-F Lions consider different options for creating tentacles for their jellyfish.

so through the preschool office. Drivers must also submit a copy of driver's license and a copy of proof of insurance. An agreement must also be signed. This will be available in the office. Permission slips will be available next week with the timing of the trip.

We never take these adventures any earlier than February each year. At that time, the children are comfortable with their teachers and follow directions. We are always highly complimented about our planning, organization and the behavior of our children by the locations that we have visited. The children benefit tremendously from the experience. We so appreciate that many parents generously help us to make this possible. Children must be dressed in their uniform.



DATES TO REMEMBER

Please make note of the following dates on the January calendar:

1. Re-registration for the 2011-12 school year for current families

will take place on Wednesday, February 9 in the preschool office. This includes any siblings who will be ready to begin next year.

2. The PREP Meeting will take place on Wednesday, February 9 at 1:00 pm in the church meeting room.
3. Valentine's Day parties will take place on Thursday, February 10 at 11:00 am and 2:30 pm and Monday, February 14 at 11:00 am. This is a free dress day.
4. The Open House & Art Show will take place on Sunday, February 13 from 10:00 am – 12:00 noon.
5. School will be closed on Friday, February 18 and Monday, February 21 because of the Presidents' Day holiday.
6. Returning family registration will take place on Thursday, February 24 at 8:00 am in the preschool office.

7. February Birthday celebrations will take place Thursday, April 24 and Friday, April 25 at snack time.

A Little Prayer

Dear Lord, help me to be a person of gratitude!
I refuse to take my blessings for granted; to complain about little annoyances and inconveniences; to focus on what I don't have when I live in a land of plenty; to grumble and gossip when there is so much positive to see and say!
Today Lord, I say to You, thank You, thank You, thank You, thank You, thank You!!!
And even as I say thank you, I receive so much in return from You that my soul is renewed and my whole outlook on life is lifted.
Amen



Sarah is ready for a California extreme weather day.