

Principal's Weekly Bulletin

November 6, 2009

Dear Parents,

We were very fortunate today to have the services of our fantastic **8th Grade class singing and doing the readings at Mass**. It was a special Mass, their chance to shine in front of the entire school and their parents. They will give an encore performance this Sunday at the 9:00 Mass, so if you did not get to see them, do your Mass at 9!!

St. Francis takes first place in Justin-Siena math competition !

The annual Justin-Siena Math Contest was held on Saturday, October 31. The St. Francis Solano team, consisting of Natalie Avellar, Jack Biaggi, Richie Denning, Clay Dunkle, Ben Gutierrez, John Lokey, Hallie Stava and Jay Swisher managed to outscore the competition, placing first in both the preliminary and final rounds. Math teacher/coach, Chris Stava is very proud of the team who not only spent elective time preparing for the contest, but after school time as well. Nine Bay Area schools competed in the college-bowl style competition.

Can we talk academics? I thought so. We just received the test results from our **ITBS tests** we took last month. We also received the results for the Diocese as a whole. You parents will be getting your child's test scores with the trimester report cards in a couple of weeks. Included with the results will be an explanation from the Superintendent John Collins describing the nature of the test. Many people have asked me why we do this test in the fall and not at the end of the year. The short answer is that the public schools do the STAR test in the spring to see how they are doing as a school in comparison to other public schools. But us Diocesan schools do it near the beginning of the year so we can see what we need to work on **THIS** year while the knowledge is fresh in our heads. We are concerned with individual students who may need to get up to speed in certain areas, as well as noticing any glaring holes in our scores as a school. We also have the luxury of comparing ourselves to the rest of the Diocesan schools. As a whole, we matched up very favorably to the Diocese. In the six main areas (math, reading, language, science, social studies and overall composite) we were above the Diocesan average in four areas, even in one and slightly below in one. The one glaring thing that came out of the test was that the entire Diocese was low on the National percentile ranking in one particular component of the four math parts. That was in math computation. I talked to the other Principals and we have come to the conclusion that since the new California Math standards and books have come out, we have all spent too much time trying to follow the book and attempt to hit all of the concepts at the expense of drilling the kids in their math facts. The result of which is that our kids do not perform well on quickly paced sight recognition simple math problems. We do fine with concepts and word problems and longer problems, but make errors on basic addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. Another possible factor in this phenomenon is that language and reading are reinforced daily in many subjects, while math is not (the occasional science equation notwithstanding). We have addressed this as a faculty and will put back in some "mad math minute" exercises, but I would also like to enlist the help of you parents in this process by having you occasionally print out some very simple math problems (single digit stuff) from the internet at whatever level your child is at and sit down with them before dinner and have them answer as many as they can in one minute. They need to memorize these math facts so they do not make simple function mistakes when they do larger math equations. There are plenty of websites out there that have loads of simple exercises. In the coming weeks, we will put some of these sites up on the teachers

webpages on our website.

This past week **Sean Walsh of Walsh's ChemDry** performed a herculean task by ripping out the carpet in our nurse's station and replacing it with linoleum. What a difference that will make next time the callings of an upset stomach beat the speed of the kid to the bathroom! Thank you Sean!! Call Sean at his office (939-9495) if you ever need carpets or upholstery cleaned or to repair water damage in your home or business.

The Second Graders have chosen to do a monthly service project to help others in our community. In October they collected over 50 cans and boxes of food to donate to the St. Vincent de Paul Pantry at the rectory. The children took the food to the pantry and were able to help place on the shelves, which were almost bare. Some of the students had done extra chores at home in order to earn the money with which to purchase their food item.

This month we will be participating in the school-wide collection of food for the annual Thanksgiving food gifts. Then in each of the remaining months of the year we will continue to collect food as our service project. This project has been a great learning experience for the children.

Remember that Monday is the day we honor our Veterans, so no school! Have a great weekend everyone!

Matt

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Matt Vukicevich
Principal
St. Francis Solano School

"Your future is only as bright as your mind is open"