

Catholic Schools—Difference

By Joyce H. Michalek
Every third grader studies math and science, reading and spelling. But in Nancy Farrell's third grade at St. Andrew's School, the students have the opportunity to live what they learn.

Each Wednesday the class attends Mass, joining the priest at the altar as they live their role in the faith community. This personal involvement and unity will spill over into their school day. Whoever comes in contact with these children—parents, teachers, fellow students, are touched by their spirit of kindness and their joyful manner. Following Mass, these third graders cook pancakes or cinnamon toast and have a special sharing breakfast in their room.

The work of the day has begun but is always colored by their teacher's personal philosophy — "...the importance of taking time to do the little things."

"Little things" include individual homemade gifts at Christmas for each student; class-designed cards for adults celebrating feast days, birthdays and other special events; student badges for improved school work and good citizenship. Religious values may be expressed through poetry, art or music, as well as phrases for handwriting practice.

Mrs. Farrell has a special talent for blending several subjects into an overall theme. This is seen in creative 3-D projects such as "Indian Life" and "The Solar System" which are trademarks of her third grade.

Many basic studies which

could become tiresome are sparked by the spontaneity of their teacher. Such as the day the math students were turned loose with their metric sticks to roam the school — quietly measuring whatever they found in classroom or hall.

Inside the classroom things are kept humming by the spirited sounds of music ranging from children's lyrics to Mrs. Farrell's favorite disco tunes.

The dismissal bell signals the end of the students' academic day, but the continuation of much of their social Christian education. An excess of children volunteer for classroom chores each day.

Then, in warm weather, it's off to play baseball with Mrs. Farrell or down to the auditorium for disco-dance lessons and rehearsals as the third graders prepare for their annual dance recital.

Throughout the year the students stage smaller holiday "productions" centered around song, recitations and drama. Nancy Farrell uses all these activities so that each of her students find success in some aspect of school life.

Parents frequently see their child in a new light, and the child realizes the responsibility of others depending on him. And, as Mrs. Farrell simply stated, "It is another experience to share together."

Sharing goes beyond school and rehearsals. Teacher and students have frequent pizza suppers together, a real Thanksgiving dinner courtesy of Mrs. Farrell, roller skating parties and "sleep-overs" at Nancy's

house. The latter includes homemade spaghetti and happily coincides with semester breaks and long weekends.

A quote from Proverbs graces Mrs. Farrell's desk:

"A wise teacher makes learning a joy." In this third grade, learning is a joyful experience, and inspired teachers like Mrs. Farrell make the difference in Catholic education.

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Wiedemer played hockey and was second in league scoring in 1971. He was also named to the first All-Star Team in 1971, when Aquinas won the county league cham-

ionship.

A graduate of the University of Dayton, Wiedemer played hockey and was named to the Midwest NCAA Division II first team and voted most valuable player in 1974-75.

He is a salesman for Cable-Wiedemer, and has coached at Canandaigua, Webster and at the Pee Wee and Bantam level.

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