



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Fourth-grader Victor Adaniel prepares to throw a ball of yarn made up of scraps students brought from home. Standing in a circle, students tossed the ball back and forth, creating a multi-colored web.

## Corning children picture peace as growing circle

By Teresa A. Parsons

If you could peer into the minds of students and teachers at Corning Catholic Schools, you might be surprised to find the image of a simple green circle. Or you might be confounded by the vision of a strange, composite creature known as a churkendoose.

Unlikely as they may seem, both symbols represent peace and remind adults and children alike that peace doesn't start at some far-off negotiating table, but rather in their own hearts.

The churkendoose and the green circle are remnants of a singular educational experience that, strangely enough, began with the U.S. bombing of Libya and culminated Friday, May 30, with a celebration known as "Corning Children for Peace Day."

As they gathered for lunch on April 15, teachers heard the news of the U.S. attack. That incident, combined with recent controversy over U.S. and Soviet testing of nuclear weapons, prompted discussion among the teachers on the effect such events were having on their students. Sister Mary Dominic, RSM, a fourth-grade teacher, proposed to Principal Sandra Andra that the school organize something "very non-political" dealing with peace for the children. Andra agreed, and so teachers and parent volunteers began meeting weekly to plan the event.

Originally, they envisioned including public school students in a secular celebration. But their invitations were politely declined because of the short notice and the pressure of year-end activities, Andra said. As a result, a children's liturgy was added to the agenda.

Classroom activities began a full week before the celebration with "Green Circle Orientation" conducted by Linda Shaddock of Corning and Marjorie Melville of Elmira Heights. Green Circle, a program that originated with the Girl Scouts of America, is designed to build children's self-esteem and teach them how to get along with others.

"The green circle starts with just you in the center," explained Linda Case, a first-grade

teacher. "As you grow as a person, the circle enlarges. First you add your family and then, when you go to school, you let in friends of all shapes and sizes, tall and short, fat and thin, all different races and religions."

Throughout the week, the green-circle theme continued with classroom games and stories, like that of the churkendoose, a mythical barnyard creature that's part chicken, part turkey, part duck and part goose. Cast out and ridiculed by the other animals, the churkendoose is only accepted after he unwittingly saves them from an invading fox. Suddenly, he's a hero, but he doesn't understand why.

"It teaches children that just because people are different doesn't mean they aren't special," Case said. "It asks them how they would feel if they were outside the circle."

All 200 K-5 students brought a week's worth of such thoughts and activities to the Peace Day celebration, which began with a story and peace songs led by Corning composer Mary Lu Walker.

To her delight, many of the children were already familiar with her songs and joined the singing right away. Thanks to Walker's simple tunes and repeated refrains, the rest weren't far behind. Among their favorites was "A Little Peace Song," which Walker taught the children to repeat in sign language.

Later in the day, students, teachers and parents gathered for the Peace Mass, celebrated by Father Robert C. MacNamara, pastor of St. Vincent DePaul, and a brief speech on "Peace in the World" by Father Charles Mulligan.

For the children, the undeniable highlight of the day and week was the launching of 180

### Archbishop's message returns

The collected works of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, including the award winning television series "Life Is Worth Living," have been exclusively acquired by Sheen Communications, Ltd., according to chairman and radio and television pioneer, Edward Weston.

Bishop Sheen's achievements on radio and



Father Robert C. MacNamara talks to children about the "Peaceable Kingdom," in which "nothing is bad and nothing is wild."

multi-colored balloons with notes attached. Each note included a child's name and his or her definition of peace, along with the school's address and a request that, if found, the card should be returned with a reply.

Seven-year-old Jodi Olander wrote to the world at large that "peace means to pray and be nice." Brian Velie, 9, defined it as "not fighting, no war between two countries."

"Being happy with your classmates," was 10-year-old Sarah Hatton's explanation.

To date, nearly 10 cards have been returned, extending the school's "green circle" to such far-away places as Middlebury, Conn., Ulster, Pa., and Wappinger Falls, N.Y. (near Poughkeepsie).

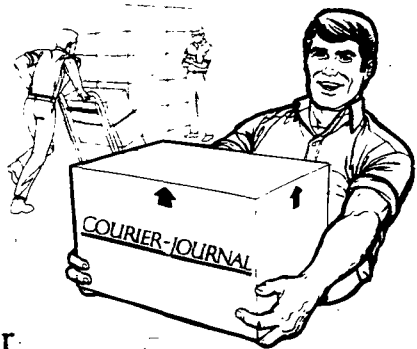
So far as Case and the other teachers and parents are concerned, that's as it should be. "Everybody is part of one big circle — the whole world... and it should always be green and growing," she said.



This Corning North student waits for the signal to release her balloon with attached peace message.

## WE'RE MOVING!

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Courier-Journal is moving to a new location. As of July 1, 1986, the Courier-Journal's new address will be: **1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624.** After July 1, all correspondence should be mailed to the new address. Our new telephone number will be: **(716) 328-4340**



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