

# Transfiguration children blast-off to biblical history



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Jeanette Sens' class of "Bedouins" set out on a nomadic trek. The group later discussed what life was like in the time of Christ.

## Kids wanted more of creative program

By Karen M. Franz

For today's children, the Holy Land in the biblical era must seem as far off as a distant galaxy. Their world — filled with Smurfs and Transformers, television and computers — is light years from that of Moses, Abraham and Jesus Christ.

An innovative Bible school at Transfiguration Parish in Pittsford brought these two worlds together on the time-space continuum to show children that religious education is fun.

Beginning each day in the "communications center" with mail delivery and a puppet-show blast-off, the 91 children took a time-capsule journey back through the centuries to get a glimpse of life in biblical days.

The programs for each age group followed specific themes — from recreating a Palestinian village to acting out the lives of the prophets. A variety of activities, including crafts and a biblical obstacle course, tied into the various themes.

In addition to these creative activities, the school also included music, gym sessions and Bible study made entertaining by the use of such devices as a cardboard whale and the Jonah-and-the-whale story area.

Although the school only lasted five days — July 7 to 11 — organizers began planning for it at the start of May. Preparations were extensive, including the construction of the cardboard whale and time capsule, manufacture of five days worth of "mail" for each student, decoration of classrooms, etc. According to Mary Presutti, Transfiguration's minister of Christian education and director of the Bible school, 63 people in all worked on the project, with 52 of them present each of the five days.

"Bible school is a funny thing," Presutti said. "It takes a tremen-



A student pats a camel as her class heads outside for more activities.



Barrett Van de Grift, 4, gets a lift out of a parachute game designed by Nick Presutti.



Children sitting in the mouth of a cardboard whale listen as Jennifer Howard "projects" a Bible story.

dous amount of effort." That effort culminated in what felt like "48 hours a day for a three-hour program," Presutti said. She and her assistant, Barb Swiecki,

said the Bible school staff wouldn't have had the stamina for another week of school.

Besides, the fun-filled week may have whetted participants' appetites

for more religious education, making them anxious for classes to resume in the fall. As Presutti said, "Our kids left happy, wanting more."