

Advent project teaches kids peace

Jennifer Burke/Contributing writer

Peace came to St. Cecilia Parish in Irondequoit Dec. 15, and it was brought by children of all ages.

The theme of the parish's annual Advent Family Mass was "Let Peace Begin With Me," and more than 40 of the parish's youngsters participated. They sang in the choir, presented the gifts at the offertory, read the petitions and brought in handmade banners that represented what peace means to them. Participants of the faith-formation program have worked on creating the banners since September.

"The children were asked to make the banners represent ways in which they can personally bring peace into the world," said Mary Ann Noto, faith-formation administrator.

Patrick Walsh, 11, carried one of the banners during Mass.

"We all had our handprints on it, with pictures of America and a picture of a dove in the middle with a halo over it," he said.

Peter Wagner, 11, also carried a banner and said he enjoyed showing



Jason Rearkick/Catholic Courier

Three-year-old Zach Wagner (right) and 5-year-old Sarah Konzel lead a procession of Advent peace banners for the Dec. 15 Mass at Irondequoit's St. Cecilia Church.

it off to the parish.

"I think it just reminded me that peace is important and that we should make peace," he said.

Noto said that the current world

situation can sometimes be scary for children, especially if they don't feel that there is anything they can do about it. The banners have brought about a lot of discussion about this in the faith-formation classes.

"We were trying to think of a way to make the kids more involved in the whole situation of the world. With all the violence and bullying in schools and in the world today, kids often wonder what they can do. We hope to stress the importance of tolerance and compassion, starting with our young people," Noto said.

Following the Mass, a reception took place in the parish hall, where parishioners of all ages were welcomed to enjoy food and conversation, learn "Silent Night" in sign language and make Christmas crafts.

"We've been trying very hard to include and encourage more participation from your young people and families. We're trying to get them involved in the liturgies in any way they can help," Noto said.

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