

# Veggies teach about faith

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

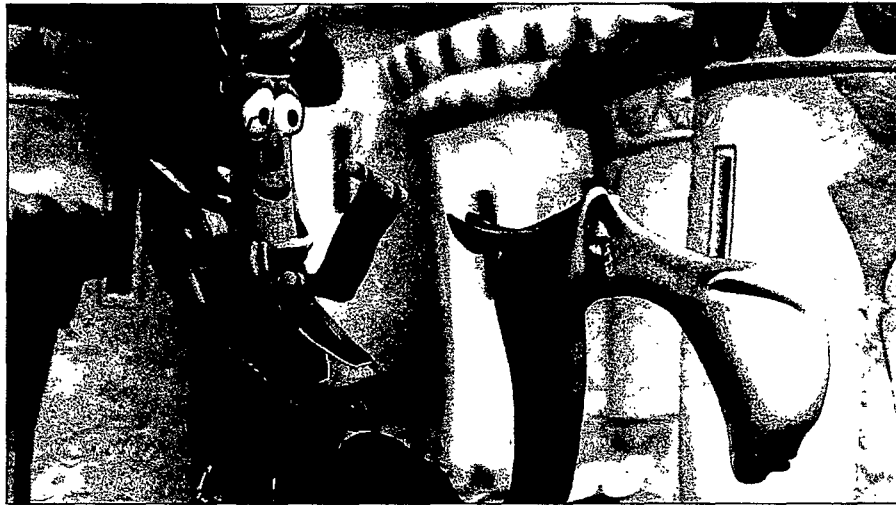
Singing vegetables, talking dogs and a cartoon character who comes to life: Are these things part of an elaborate fantasy journey, or a way to help children learn about their Catholic faith?

Those characters are some of the stars of "Veggie Tales," "Davey and Goliath" and "McGee and Me!," three video series that are being used to teach children about the Catholic faith. According to Scott Rutan, coordinator of adult and family faith formation for St. Patrick's Parish in Victor, all three of these series contain "really well-done videos that teach us a Christian message."

Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber star in "Veggie Tales" videos, which teach a moral or life lesson through songs, situations and Bible-story skits. "Davey and Goliath" features claymation characters, Davey and his talking dog, Goliath, learning about making right choices. "McGee and Me!" stars an 11-year-old cartoonist and his cartoon alter ego and creation, McGee, learning about life situations.

Children may react better to this type of teaching because they are often visual learners, according to Pat Fox, director of faith formation for St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield. For this reason, many parents, religious-education instructors and faith-formation directors are turning to technology for help capturing the attention of their children and students.

Besides videos, there are many interactive Catholic Web sites for children and families to explore, Fox said. Adolescents in Rutan's



Artisan Entertainment/CNS

Jonah, played by Veggie Tales character Archibald the Asparagus, rides his camel, Reginald, in the animated feature "Jonah — A Veggie Tales Movie."

parish frequently visit *DisciplesNow.com*, where they can learn about their faith and chat with other Catholic teens. Fox said that families in his parish often use *Faith-First.com*, the Web site of publishing company Resources for Christian Living. This site has different sections for children of different ages and includes age-appropriate games, Bible stories and a saint of the day, as well as information and resources for adults.

"Kids begin raising challenging questions. Adults have to be comfortable with themselves talking about their faith, and they may not feel rooted enough," Fox said.

Kevin Doser of St. Paul's Parish in Webster realized he needed some help finding the answers two years ago, when his then-5-year-old

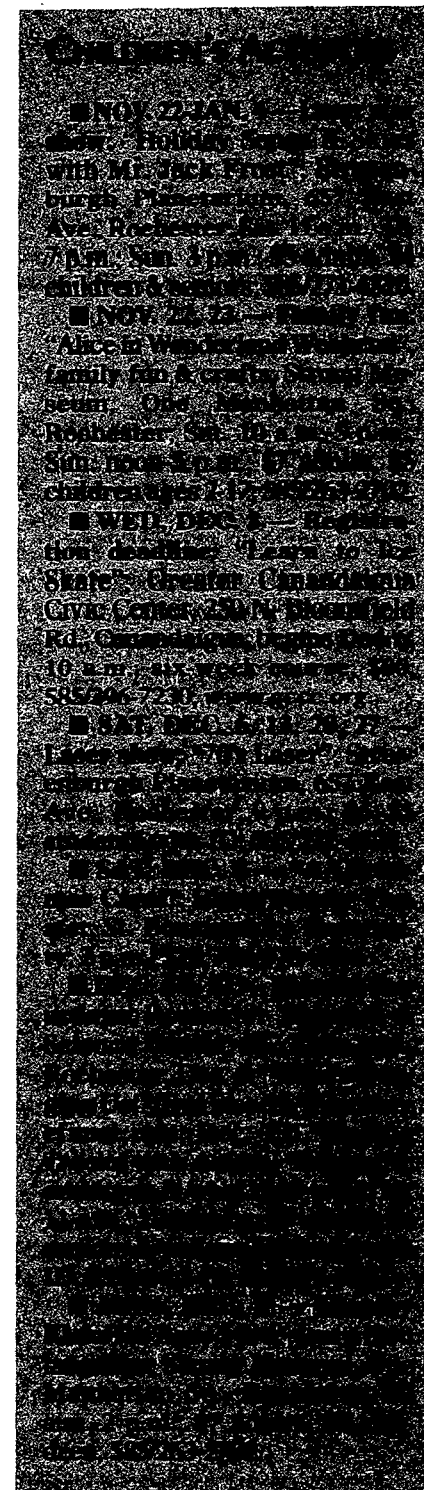
daughter, Stephanie, began asking questions about God.


"I went to Catholic schools, so I had a few of the answers," Doser said, but he knew he needed more. He took his daughter to St. Paul's, where Linda Pepe, the parish's faith-formation coordinator for children, gave Stephanie a "Veggie Tales" video to borrow.

"She'd pay attention, and she would really get the point. We'd go over things, and I'd ask her what she learned from it. I can see things in her life where she kind of reflects back on it," Doser said.

Rutan said that it's important for parents to understand that in order for their children to develop a strong faith, they have to do more than just pop a video into the VCR.

"It shouldn't be the baby-sitter and it shouldn't be the catechist, but the video can be the sharer of faith and it can support what parents say and do," Rutan said.





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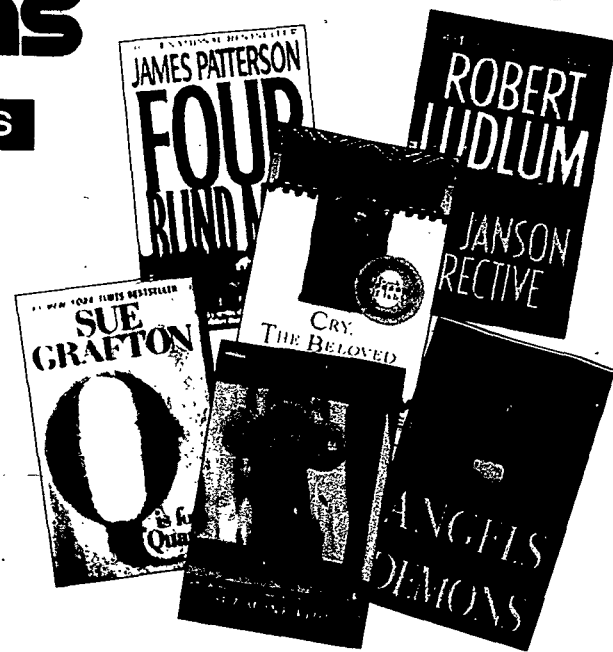
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