

**NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2012**

A NEW YEAR

May God's blessings be with each of you as we begin 2012.

Each time another year presents itself, we are given the opportunity to stop and review the past and realize how far we've come and think on how our journey has evolved and affected us in the here and beyond. Each year gives us another chance to create goals and visions to look forward to accomplishing those objectives.

As we look back over the previous year, it is good to ponder on those events or people that have blessed us, renewed us, enriched us, and filled us with an awareness of God's presence in our lives as well as the joyful hope in God and the people of God.

With this in mind, we have the great assurance that God journeys with us during this New Year. "Be confident. Go where you will, your God is with you" (Jos.1:9). As we enter the New year, let us trust in God with our lives and begin anew to live the Word of God and recognize that Word in ourselves and others.

May 2012 be a year of love and prosperity, peace and joy for all of us as we continue to be a hope – filled people. May God be with all of you throughout your journey in the New Year.

In Christ's Peace,
Mr. Scott Manns

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

St. Thomas Aquinas is the patron Saint of study and homework. He was born in Italy into a family of nine children. He was very intelligent, but never boasted about this gift. St. Thomas had such insights about God that people all over the world have used his writings for centuries. Place a statue of St. Thomas Aquinas where the homework is done and ask for his guidance. January 28 is St. Thomas' feast day. On this day, pause and reflect on how much you have learned in the past year and what you are to learn this year.

DRESS CODE REMINDERS

All students in Grades 1 through Grade 7 may wear white, light blue, or navy blue, short or long sleeve polo or button down shirts or long sleeve turtlenecks. They may wear solid white, navy blue, or red cardigan or pullover sweaters over their shirts. Aquinas Academy crew neck sweatshirts may also be worn. Banded bottom shirts do not have to be tucked in but all other shirts must be tucked in at all times.

Students may wear white short-sleeve undershirts or camis under their official uniform shirt. Undershirts and camis must be tucked in at all times, including when wearing banded bottom shirts. Students may not wear long sleeve shirts under short sleeve shirts.

Navy blue uniform style pants and shorts (April through Oct) are permitted. Cargo style pants and shorts are not permitted. Belts should be worn with all pants and shorts.

Boots may be worn to school but students must change into shoes during the school day. This also applies to dress down days. **Please refer to your Student Handbook for more information.**

WEATHER DELAYS & CANCELLATIONS

We have been very lucky in regards to the weather throughout November and December. However, in the event of impertinent weather, please tune into WPXI and WTAE for delays and cancellations and follow **Aquinas Academy, Greensburg** (not Gibsonia) for delay and closing decision. You may also call the school at 724-834-7940 then press 1 and listen to the closing or delay information provided. Delay and closing will also be posted on our website. For further information, please refer to the yellow delay and cancellation sheet that went home in last month's family envelope.

RE-REGISTRATION

Re-registration forms for the 2012-2013 school year are enclosed in this month's family envelope. Forms are due in the office by **January 20**. A \$75.00 non-refundable fee but applicable toward next year's tuition is due upon re-registration. This fee completes your registration for the 2012-2013 school year.

FALL FUNDRAISER "CALENDAR TICKET"

The Calendar Ticket Fundraiser has been a huge success! **Allison Willis and Missy Kenney** co-chaired this event. They have been working on this project since August and it has paid off!

Thank you to all of the families who helped Allison and Missy to make this such a successful project. Families were asked to sell 10 tickets and many of you not only sold 10 but came back and asked for additional calendars. To date the project has raised \$45,000. This number represents a gross figure. We expect to pay out \$15,000 total in prizes, leaving the fundraiser with a net total of \$30,000.

A very special thank you to calendar sponsors:
Rostraver Drug Store
The PT Group
Van Dyk Business Systems

Artwork sponsors include:

Chad & Andrea Bossert Family
Grandparents of Riley & Lucy Reese
Lou Biondi & Family
Pat & Dana DiCesare Family
Jason & Allison Willis Family
Jeff & Shannon Pallitto Family
Nate & Missy Kenney Family
Grandparents of Makenzee Kenney
Leonida Family
Greg & Audrey Bisignani Family
Bill & Daniele Douglas Family
Geof & Kelly Bisignani Family

Many families helped to assemble the tickets and to sell the extra calendars at the area churches.

They are:

Mary Beth Appleby	Gloria Rehak
Audrey Bisignani	Chrissy Schaeffer
Cathy & Glenn Campbell	Kiersten Shevchik
Maria Cochenour	Joe & Gerri Shoplik
GinaMarie Czarnecki	Kathy & Joe Stofko
Bob Gnieski	Julie Tinney
Kim Gorr	Theresa Very
Dina Henninger	Natalie Williams
Kim Hutchins	Allison Willis
Jen Kratzenberg	Bill & Denise Winslow
Patty Neil	Lisa Yohman
Carol Palcic	Carla Zema
Julie Petnuch	

A very special thanks to Msgr. Ray Riffle, Fr. Tom Federline, Fr. Paul Lisik, Fr. Martin Bartel, Fr. Bill Berkey, and Fr. John Foriska for inviting us into the churches to help us sell the tickets!

THE BETHLEHEM PROJECT

Many thanks go to those students and families who contributed so generously to The Bethlehem Project, which helps the homeless in Westmoreland County. We raised **\$600**. May God bless you for your generosity.

BOB EVANS

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER

A big thank you goes to all our families, relatives and friends who made our community fun day on December 8, 2011 at Bob Evans a success. The food was good, and it was nice to see so many of our families and parish priests participating throughout the day. We had 100 families participate and our profit was **\$376**. Again, I want to thank our parish priests for distributing and allowing our flyers to be made available in their church and for announcing our fundraiser at all the masses.

CYBERBULLYING SPEAKER

All parents of children in a Diocesan School are invited to hear Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D speak on Cyberbullying and Cyber-Integrity. This is an important message for parents, and I encourage you to attend. It will be held on January 10 at 8:00 PM in the Greensburg Central Catholic Auxiliary Gym. See flyer in this month's family envelope for more information.

PRESCHOOL NEWS

This month, our Preschoolers learned that Advent is a time of waiting and preparing. It is a time that we do special things to get ready for Jesus' birthday. Our PreK 4 classes made Advent wreaths that we hung in the hall. Each week, they added a flame to another candle, and they were taught that the four candles stand for the four weeks during Advent. Our PreK 3 classes counted the days on the calendar, and covered a star each day on the Advent board. We continued our theme of kindness, as this is very important while we are waiting. The children in Preschool also focused on the concept of giving. They worked very hard with holiday preparations as they made gifts and cards for their families.

Wonderful Christmas parties were held on Tuesday, December 20, and Wednesday, December 21. The party committees planned enjoyable activities for the children, and everyone had a great time. We would like to thank

everyone who helped make the festivities such a success.

KINDERGARTEN NEWS

Throughout the month of December, the students participated in many Advent activities. They kept track of the days until Christmas by coloring hearts on a daily calendar. They enjoyed singing the songs "Stay Awake" and "This Little Light of Mine" as they "lit" the weekly Advent candles and as they built a quilt for Baby Jesus.

The students are learning to read color words and sight words. They created a book of colors and especially enjoyed making a class poster for each color. The students are reading words and sentences with great excitement and are thrilled with their accomplishments.

The holiday season may be filled with sweets but the kindergarten children learned that it is important to eat a variety of foods. They enjoyed looking at their snacks and lunches and trying to decide into which food group the item might belong.

The children will celebrate Christmas by having breakfast in school! After breakfast, the students will make a craft, play games, and work on Christmas activities. They will attend the Christmas concert, spend some time with their prayer partners, and attend the Advent prayer service. A special thank you goes to our wonderful parents who help to plan and prepare for our holidays. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated.

We wish all of you a blessed Christmas. Enjoy this special time with your loved ones. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

FIRST GRADE NEWS

What a busy month!

The first grade students have been preparing their hearts for Jesus in many ways. They made three

“good deed” ornaments, placed them on our classroom tree, and have been working on them daily during Advent. They are learning the true meaning of Christmas. We are trying to keep our “inner candles” burning brightly.

The highlights of December included: a visit from St. Nick, our classroom elf, Jingle, shopping at the Santa Workshop, and meeting with our Prayer Partners.

In reading, the students' vocabulary is growing every day, and many students are beginning to read with fluency. The students are encouraged to practice the vocabulary and read their story every day. In January, the students will begin the story, Masks, Masks, Masks.

In math, the students are working on subtraction. They are encouraged to practice their math facts daily and use flashcards to facilitate memorization of addition and subtraction facts.

Thank you to all the parents who helped plan our Christmas “Party” Breakfast. I know it will be a wonderful success. May all of you have a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Looking forward to a fabulous 2012!

SECOND GRADE NEWS

The second grade students have been learning about the meaning of the Advent season. They made Advent wreaths. They also enjoyed counting down the days until Christmas using the Countdown Calendars made by the students in grades 4-7 computer classes. They honored St. Nicholas on his feast day by learning about his life and by making St. Nicholas art projects. They were thrilled to find a treat from St. Nicholas on their desk that morning!

The children also made “Stockings for Jesus” illustrated with a gift that they would give to Baby Jesus. The gift that each student illustrated on their stocking depicted something that each

student would do or say to show their love for Jesus during this Advent season.

They also spent time learning about St. Lucy, the patron saint of eyes and finding out about St. Lucia Day, a feast day celebrated in Sweden on December 13. During this special time of waiting for the birth of Jesus, they have given a good example of His command to love God and one another.

In English they re-wrote the story of Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. In these stories, the young writers explained how Rudolph got a different colored nose. Each child chose a color and explained the origin of the nose. After writing the story, the students decorated their versions of Rudolph. There were quite a variety of colors and patterns!

During science class, the students just began a unit about rocks and soil. Many interesting experiments and observations are planned. In social studies, students are learning about landforms and bodies of water. Students completed a 50 States of the U.S. Scavenger Hunt, viewed Discovery Ed videos about landforms, and used a blue Christmas ornament to create a model of the Earth.

On December 21, second grade parents hosted a delicious Christmas breakfast. The children enjoyed a variety of hot and cold entrees and drinks. They also played a game and made a Christmas craft. Second grade appreciates the time and planning of the parents who planned and served the breakfast: **Mrs. Kratzenberg, Mrs. Steffensen, Mr. Campbell, Mrs. Polomoscanik, Mrs. Williams, and Mrs. Schaeffer.**

After the breakfast, students participated in the Sing Along, met with their prayer partners, and attended an Advent Prayer Service. Second grade students are full of good cheer and love, and we wish the same to our teachers, friends and families during this Blessed Christmas Season.

THIRD GRADE NEWS

In religion, third grade has been busy completing their advent wreaths, Jesse tree, and count down till Christmas. St. Nicholas visited them on Dec. 6. The Advent season gives many opportunities to practice the mission of being Christ to all we meet. In reading, they enjoyed Here's My Dollar and Castle on Viola Street. Students have now completed two of the six units in the new reading series. In social studies they just finished learning about Jamestown and the Indians who helped the colonists survive.

Learning about rocks and dinosaurs is their next adventure. After Christmas they will be focusing on multiplication tables in math. Get those flash cards ready! They are looking forward to the new year and the new learning experiences it brings.

FOURTH GRADE NEWS

Mrs. Mahoney read aloud the *The Best/Worst Christmas Pageant Ever*, by Barbara Robinson to the students and then they all watched the Herdmans come alive in a video. The students also took an AR test on this book. The students are looking forward to hearing about the outlandish Herdman family in *The Best/Worst School Year Ever*.

Multiplication Rocks

Fourth Graders are taking the multiplication facts seriously. Timed tests and flash card games help to reinforce this important skill. Students will be using these facts as they progress to two and three digit multiplication and long division.

Hands on Science

Mrs. Beth Vukmaravich, mother of Luke, visited the fourth grade to tell about her job in relation to what the students were learning in science – the human body. Mrs. Vukmaravich is a regional manager in selling surgical equipment to many hospitals. She brought along to show students what doctors use when they do laparoscopic surgery. All students got to try their hand at picking up small objects such as mini-

marshmallows and candy corn with the surgical instruments. Not an easy task! Mrs. Vukmaravich also brought with her pigs feet to help with demonstrations. Using the pig's foot to model the human body, she demonstrated how a doctor would suture a cut on the body or use a special instrument to staple instead of using stitches. Students had the opportunity to use the tool to staple as well as suture a cut on the pig's foot. Thank you, Mrs. Vukmaravich, for your time and all the equipment that you brought to our classroom.

FIFTH GRADE NEWS

Service Project

The fifth grade students and teachers participated in the "Stockings for Our Troops" program sponsored through the Barnhart Funeral Home. The students donated their "pocket change", brought donations from home and the teachers added their donations for a total of **\$76.37**. We then purchased items from a "suggested gifts" list and the students made cards to go into the stockings. We were able to fill six stockings to capacity. The funeral home directors then boxed the stockings to be shipped to the soldiers who are overseas and won't be home for the holidays. (There was a picture in the Tribune Review of some of the stockings which numbered about 1,400!) We were very proud of our students' generosity!

Redstone Highlands Visit

On December 9, 2011 the fifth grade students visited The Redstone Highlands Nursing Home. As part of a class project in Mrs. Spessard's art classes, the students made and designed scented peppermint "candy pieces" tree ornaments. They then took them to the nursing home and used them to decorate one of the many trees that adorn the facility. The students also spent part of the afternoon singing Christmas carols to the residents. They caroled through the resident's hallways to entertain them as they eagerly watched. It was a delight to have many of the residents join in on their favorite carols. It was an

experience that helped the students to extend a kind and heart-warming gesture to the elderly.

A special thank you to the parents who drove for us: **Mrs. Bisignani, Mr. Douglas, Dr. Jacobson, and Mr. Riley.** We really appreciate that you joined us for the afternoon!

Walk as Mary and Joseph Did

On December 12, 2011 the fifth grade did a reenactment of Mary and Joseph's walk to Bethlehem. We left school and headed to Mary's Grotto at Seton Hill University. The class did a short prayer service remembering how Mary and Joseph followed God's directives to fulfill the prophecies according to His plans. We sang a Christmas hymn before each homeroom recited the Consecration prayer to Mary as a group. We then continued on our "journey" back to school to enjoy some hot chocolate and cake in the cafeteria. A special thank you to **Mrs. Taormina** for accompanying us on the walk!

Peace Corps Experience

On December 14, 2011 the fifth grade had a visit from **Mrs. Bisignani** who told the class about her experiences in the Peace Corps. This gave them more information to go along with a story we read in our textbook about Mae Jemison who had been a member of the Peace Corps. Mrs. Bisignani served in Tanzania, located in eastern Africa, which has an abundance of resources and wild animals; yet it is one of the poorest countries in the world.

The Peace Corps began in 1961 with the first group of 61 teachers going to help those less fortunate than we are in the United States. The Peace Corps has several goals to serve as their purpose in over 75 countries today. The areas they promote are to help the people by: educating the inhabitants by training them to care for themselves; health and HIV/AIDS to make them healthier; taking care of their environment; developing the youth; teaching ways to better their agricultural ways and lastly improving technology.

The Corps often go to colleges looking for young people to commit to this two year service.

Mrs. Bisignani had a slide show presentation to give the children an idea of what it was like to live in Africa. They were able to see the homes, roads, restaurants, etc. She was able to participate in a safari during her stay when she was given a "vacation" from her work. The class especially liked seeing the various types of animals, some spices & fruits that she was able to capture on film. She generally rode a bicycle to and from her work; but Zanzibar did have public transportation where for two pennies she could ride on the back of a pickup to go longer distances. There wasn't any refrigeration so she had to shop on a daily basis. She brought a few pieces of clothing and showed them how they were used to carry their babies & to carry heavy objects on their heads.

The students brought in empty egg cartons that were used to make a "Mancala" game board. The class was given a set of beads and the directions so they were able to play a game with a partner to end the afternoon! Everyone really enjoyed hearing about Mrs. Bisignani's experiences!

SIXTH GRADE NEWS

Fractions and number theory have been the hot topics in sixth grade math class. Prime numbers, GCF, and divisibility rules are among some of the concepts learned these past few weeks. They have also learned Ancient Egyptian math symbols and measurements in correlation with their social studies unit on Egypt. In social studies students have been working on an "Egyptian" project in class. Each student designed a four-sided pyramid and wrote a short description about the important things they would like to have with them in the after-life.

The students had a chance to show off their special skills and talents in English class when they wrote "How-to" articles. These articles were then turned into speeches which showcased each student's area of expertise.

In religion class, sixth grade learned about the legend of the Christmas spider and then made golden, glittery spiders to hang on their trees at home and to share with their families. Sixth grade also made Advent candles on which they wrote good deeds to work on during this season of preparation for the Christ Child. At the end of the week, their “flame” was lit to indicate that the good deed was accomplished.

In the spirit of the season, sixth grade students made their second grade prayer partners Christmas cards filled with many wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. They also had a great time making each of their prayer partners a fun surprise. We are truly blessed to have such great prayer partners!

SEVENTH GRADE NEWS

Science

Following the Christmas break, students will be studying Viruses and Bacteria. Students will research a virus and create a Wanted Poster identifying many of the characteristics of the “wanted” virus.

Watershed Awareness Program

In January, students will be participating in a two session program designed from the Watershed Awareness. The first session addresses water basics (the water cycle, uses of water, where earth’s water is located, and watershed vocabulary). Session two goes into depth about the watershed (what it is, what watershed the students live in, and how human activity on the land affects water quality). We’ll use an EnviroScape 3-D watershed model to see how nonpoint source pollution from a variety of sources accumulates in our rivers and streams.

Algebra

Students will begin an intensive study of fractions in January. Students will apply previously learned skills to the fractions and begin incorporating variables into the problems. Students continue to

work on First in Math. They should spend a little time each week working on FIM.

English

The students recently finished a unit on writing personal narratives. The topic was “My Most Memorable Day”. After completing a written narrative, the students presented their stories to the class in the form of a speech. It was interesting to hear the various experiences that the students chose to share with the class.

In literature class, seventh grade is reading the drama adaptation of Charles Dickens’ classic novel, A Christmas Carol. The students took turns acting the parts of the various characters. They also enjoyed watching Scrooge, Marley and the other characters come alive as they watched the movie adaptation of the novel. This classic tale of redemption teaches us to honor Christmas in our hearts and try to keep it there all year long. From Scrooge’s experiences in the play, students learned about the importance of being kind, generous and compassionate.

Religion

In religion class, seventh grade is learning about the Infancy Narratives. These are stories about Jesus’ birth and early life that are written in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. They proclaim the Good News and show all aspects of God’s love. The main message of the narratives is “Jesus is Lord, the Son of God who saved us”.

Seventh grade students have also learned about the O Antiphons. These are short prayers based on the prophecy of Isaiah that states that God will give Israel a sign that will be called Emmanuel which means “God with us”. We sing these O Antiphons in the Christmas carol “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”. Symbols of these titles were made and are hanging in our hallway.

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Students in **grades K-7** are working on using the different computer programs available to them. Students in grades **K-2** are working on practicing the homerow keys and have been introduced to Microsoft Word 2010. **Kindergarten** students are practicing typing their name and **first and second graders** are typing a Christmas list and adding a picture from Clip Art.

Students in grades three to seven continue to practice typing skills and Christmas related activities. We have begun using the shelves to cover the keyboard to help improve our skills. Christmas activities were created using Microsoft Word and Publisher 2010. Activities included Christmas Countdown Calendars, Christmas cards, newsletters, and recipes.

Students are welcome to stay after school any Monday through Thursday until 3:30 to make up missed or incomplete work. If your child is interested in doing this, please send a note to school on that day and pick your child up in the office at 3:30. Remind your child to see me on the day they wish to stay so that I will know to look for them.

ART NEWS

All grade levels have been focusing on the Christmas season during the month of December. **Fifth grade students** made ornaments to decorate a tree at the Redstone Highlands Home. On December 9 they decorated a Christmas tree, sang carols and visited with the residents of the home. **Grade six students** made “Chrismon” ornaments. Chrismons are based on the monogram of Christ. Each is a unique Christian symbol. After learning shading techniques, **grade seven students** are sketching a winter still-life setting.

Square 1 Art orders should be arriving very soon.

ATHLETIC NEWS

GCCMS Soccer – Congratulations to the Aquinas students who participated on the GCCMS Soccer Team. They are: **Jack Liberatore, Jacob Schwab and Michael Ulishney.**

Boys Basketball – Aquinas boys in grades four through six will be participating in the Diocesan CYO Basketball League during the winter months. We wish all the teams the best of luck during the season. The season will conclude with the Diocesan Tournament during the months of February and March.

Winter Intramurals – Intramural programs during the winter months include bowling and basketball. Both programs will begin during the month of January. The bowling program is open for students in grades K-7. The basketball program is for students in grades 1, 2, and 3. Parent volunteers are needed for both programs. A flyer will be sent home with each student regarding these programs after the Christmas Break.

Girls Volleyball – Girls in grades four through seven, interested in participating in the Aquinas Volleyball Program will be asked to sign-up for the program during the month of January. Announcements will be made daily in school.

LIBRARY NEWS

Memorial Book Donation

The Dictionary of Folklore donated by Michelle and Monica Douglas in loving memory of **Ricardo Jose Rincon Gomez**

GENTLY USED BOOK DRIVE

Thanks to the sixth and seventh graders for graciously donating 277 gently used books during the Scholastic Fall Book Fair! All book donations were given to the YMCA After-School Program located in the YMCA Annex on Pennsylvania Avenue.

PLAYGROUND NEWS

Way to go, to date we have raised approximately \$28,853.65 thanks to everyone's fundraising support and personal donations. We are hoping to purchase an additional slide in January.

If you would like to make a private donation, you may send your check to the school office in an envelope marked with your family name, "Playground Donation", attention Kathy Hill. Write playground donation in the memo area of your check. Donations in the amount of \$100 or more will be recognized with a bronze plaque with your family or company name on it. Recently, we have ordered another batch of plaques and need about 8 more donations to complete them.

The next Chick Fil A night will be Friday Jan. 16.

Our next Smencil sell will be Friday January 13.

We are still accepting electronics for recycling. The only items that can be sent to recycle are the following:

Cell Phones
Laptop Computers
Digital Cameras and Video Cameras
MP3 Players
Inkjet Cartridges (NO TONER)
GPS Devices Radar Detectors
Electronic Book Readers
Gold, Silver & Platinum Jewelry.
NO CORDS

You may drop off items in school office.
Thanks for all the support we have received for our Playground project.

Keep those donations coming!!

The Playground Committee

KIDS' CORNER

During the weekend of December 9-11, 2011, the Seton Hill University Dance Academy presented "Holiday Magic" 2011. This production of talented dancers showcased several Aquinas

Academy students who spent many hours of rehearsal this fall to perfect their dance magic.

The show depicts Rudolph following Santa down the chimney and being left behind. As all the presents come to life, Rudolph meets some nice toys as well as some mean ones! With the help of the nice toys, Rudolph eventually changes the hearts of Ms. Grinch, Jackie Frost and Heat Miser before he returns to Santa's sleigh.

The following students performed in the show:
Grade 5: **Sarah Petnuch; Gabrielle Rodriguez** (Christmas Children, Grinch Dogs)
Grade 4: **Sarah Liberatore** (Christmas Children, Grinch Dogs)
Grade 2: **Emily Campbell, Anastasia Shevchik, Rachel Tinney** (Presents and Gingerbread Cookies) **Grace Petnuch** (Misfit Elf, Cindy Lou Who)
Kindergarten: **Marion Williams** (Reindeer)
Preschool: **Riley Campbell, Alexandra Shevchik** (Reindeer)
Aquinas Academy Alumnae, **Caroline Kettering** (Class of 2010), portrayed Ms. Grinch.

Congratulations girls for the wonderful performances!

UPCOMING EVENTS

February
1-4 Catholic Schools Week
14 1:45 Gr K-7 Valentine Parties
20 No School (Possible Snow Make Up)
22 Ash Wednesday Day A
22 1:30 Gr K-7 Prayer Service
24 Gr 5-8 BSC Stations of the Cross
25 Gala Gbg Country Club

Enclosed With Newsletter:

Calendar
Cyberbullying Speaker Flyer
Market Day
Menu
Re-registration Form