



# St. Agnes Academy News

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Headmaster – James Stankiewicz

## Headmaster Headlines...

### Lessons of Humility and Love at Christmas Time

On December 9, Pope Francis delivered his Advent message - a message of hope and change. "To prepare the way for the Lord who comes, it is necessary to take into account the demands of conversion." Conversion requires "changing your attitude," Francis explained. "It leads to humbly recognizing our mistakes, our infidelities, and defaults."

The Pope focused on the invitation of St. John the Baptist, who proclaimed a baptism of repentance as a voice of one crying out in the desert, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."

"The Baptist invited the people of his time to conversion with force, vigor, and severity," Francis said. "Yet he knew how to listen, he knew how to perform gestures of tenderness, gestures of forgiveness towards the multitude of men and women who came to him to confess their sins and be baptized." "Even today, the disciples of Jesus are called to be his humble, but courageous witnesses to rekindle hope," the pope said. The pope suggested that each person asks, "How can I change something in my attitude to prepare the way for the Lord?"

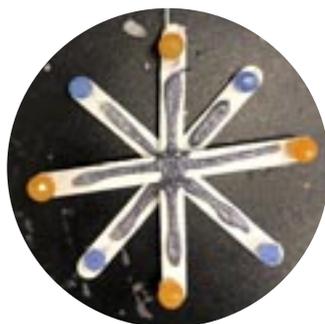
One necessary step is "making concrete gestures of reconciliation with our brothers, asking for forgiveness of our faults," he explained. "The Lord helps us in this, if we have good will."

Christians are called to help people understand that "despite everything, the kingdom of God continues to be built day by day with the power of the Holy Spirit, beginning with ourselves." May your Christmas season be joyful, a time to be with families and loved ones, and a chance to reflect on the importance of being hopeful for the future. May we find strength to be humble and allow the Holy Spirit to give us strength to change where it is needed.

-Jim Stankiewicz

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## Calendar of Events:

- Dec. 24 - Jan. 1 – Christmas vacation
- Jan. 2 – Girl Scouts - School hall
- Jan. 4 – First Friday Mass - 9 a.m.
- Jan. 11 – Second quarter marking period ends
- Jan. 14 – School board - 6 p.m.
- Jan. 16 – Girl Scouts - School hall
- Jan. 21 – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. day - no school
- Jan. 27 – Feb. 1 - Catholic Schools Week
- Jan. 30 – Girl Scouts - School hall
- Feb. 1 – First Friday Mass - 9 a.m.

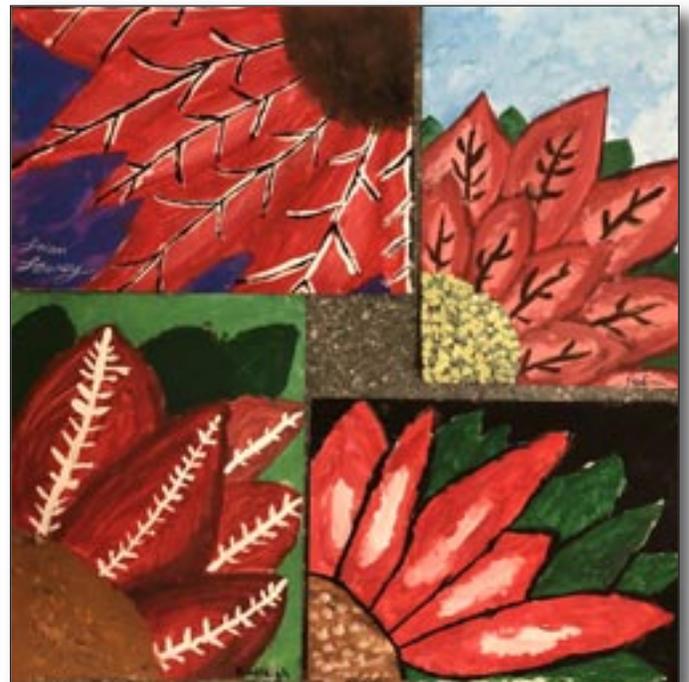


## NEWS BITS...

### Students Start Prep Work For April 10 Science Fair

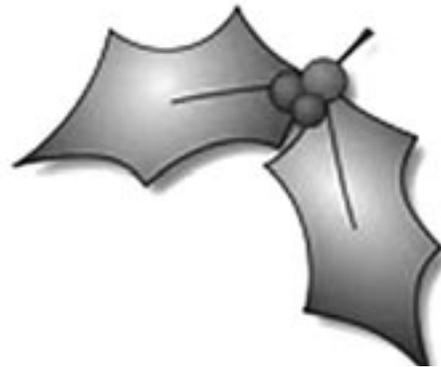
The 8th annual St. Agnes Academy Middle School Science Fair will be held on Wednesday, April 10. It will be open to families and the public from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Students have already chosen their topics, completed their background research, and written their experimental procedures. They are now beginning the experiment phase of the project, which is the most exciting aspect for most of the students. Please be sure to join us on April 10 to celebrate all of their hard work.



Poinsettia paintings by the 8th graders.

# NEWS BITS...



## *School Christmas Concert*

A CAPACITY CROWD IS WOWED

On December 7, our students joined with Mary Verdi, a professional pit orchestra, Dalton Ballet Studio, and the Steiner Strings to present a memorable concert in the church. They performed to a capacity crowd and truly put us all in the spirit of Christmas. Thank you to our parents, students, Ann Marie Desautelle, Mary Verdi, Michelle Furlong, and the Steiner String ensemble!





**In Mrs. Leja's and Mrs. Kulpa's pre-Kindergarten,** Christmas time is always one of the happiest and most exciting times of the year. Each year our four-year-old class takes a magical Polar Express make-believe trip around the world to learn about holiday customs and traditions in other countries.

Our younger class has been having fun learning about our own traditional Christmas customs from Advent to the arrival of Santa and his reindeer on Christmas Eve.

Both classes learned about the season of Advent and ways to prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. We discussed the many ways that we could show kindness for others while we wait for Christmas.

Our final pre-school event for the Christmas season will be our Polar Express Pajama Christmas Party. We will play games, sing songs, and enjoy cookies and hot cocoa. After lunch, we will settle down and watch The Polar Express.



*Pre-K 3 students are busy working on a project.*

**In Mrs. Patti's kindergarten,** it has been a very exciting month. The children are busy preparing for the holiday season and are learning about the true meaning of Christmas. We have learned that Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for Jesus' birthday. During this time, we have tried to be extra good listeners and helpers at home and school. With the help of our eighth grade Big Buddies, the class made Advent chains to help count the days until Christmas. Big Buddies were also very helpful with our little friends at the school store helping them pick out gifts for their families.

In reading, we have finished unit 2 in our Reading Street series and began Unit 3: Changes All Around Us. The children are all doing a wonderful job writing in their journals and reading new words daily.

We have also been busy moving through our math series and are currently finishing Chapter 4 that has been teaching numbers 0-10. The class has been learning to identify, count, and write these numbers and compare groups to show more than, less than, and equal to.

Lastly, we had a very special visitor arrive in our classroom. His name is Elfie and he is our classroom elf who is here from the North Pole! He is here to watch over our class and report back to Santa. He has left notes and treats for the children so far and has been very happy to see that we are a class full of Bucket Fillers!

**In Mrs. Shapiro's first grade,** it is hard to believe that Christmas is almost here. The time has been flying by. We have been very busy learning about the Advent season and preparing our hearts for Jesus' birthday. The children also enjoyed making Christmas cards for the shut-ins and gave them to Father Chris to deliver.

We have finished Unit 1 in our Reading Street Series, and have begun Unit 2. Over the next several weeks, the class will be reading about and discussing the concepts of communities. The Big Question for this unit is What is a Community? First grade guest readers for December at the Dalton Public Library are Maija and Ella.

In math, we have just completed our Chapter 3 and Quarterly 1 Tests. We have moved on to Chapter 4: Data and Graphs: Using Operations. The children also have been working very hard learning their addition and subtraction facts to 12. They seem to be doing quite well.

Lastly, students are enjoying a unit on Holiday Literature. The books showcased in this unit focus on various past and present holiday celebrations for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, and Christmas. The first grade would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

**In Mrs. Blefari's second grade,** December has been a very busy month. We began the month by taking a trip to Pomeroy Manor to visit senior citizens and attend Mass with Fr. Chris. After Mass, the children shared a few Christmas songs. The children also brought angels that they'd made for the seniors. A nice time was had by all. It was a nice way to begin our observation of Advent. We have been lighting up our classroom Advent wreath daily. A calendar of Acts of Kindness was sent home and encouraged. Hopefully the children are using those calendars to help them to better prepare for the coming of the Lord - the true meaning of Christmas.

On December 11, the second and third graders took a trip to the Colonial Theatre to see a robust version of "A Christmas Carol." Although we showed the children the Disney version of the play before we left, the children seemed to find the live version of the show very different. One high point was the disco ball that was used for special effects; 8-year-olds and a disco ball. What's not to love? A wonderful program and the children seemed to enjoy the show despite Jacob Marley's "spooky" demeanor. Many thanks to the PTO for sponsoring our excursion.

Academically, the children have been working hard every day. Concepts such as possessive nouns, verbs, and recognizing inferences have been our focus this month. In math, we have finished our work on disseminating information from charts and graphs. We have



*The Advent wreath is a spiritual tradition as we prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas.*

learned about mode, median, and range. We have been working on problem-solving skills.

We have also come to the end of our second reading incentive program of the year. Our Smart Cookie Program will end on December 21. Each child has read multiple books and will receive a certificate citing the number of books they've read, plus a book to keep the momentum going. My thanks to parents who helped their child keep track of the books they've read throughout this program. Hopefully by now, the children are getting reading into their daily routine. Reading is the key to academics and, hopefully, by getting the children to read daily, we can increase their academic success!



*Second and third grade enjoyed a wonderful performance at the Colonial Theatre.*

**In Mrs. Todriff's third grade,** December has been a busy and exciting month. On December 7, students hosted the First Friday Mass in the morning, and later at night they joined the school community to sing in the Christmas Show with Mary Verdi and Mrs. Desautelle. Such a joyous performance!

In the classroom, we are learning more about the location of Massachusetts on a map and identifying the natural resources. We just completed a Northeast Region puzzle to help us recognize our surrounding states.

Students also completed their Historical Fiction book reports and couldn't wait to present their projects. We learned some interesting facts about the way of life years ago! I was really impressed with all their enthusiasm and work.

Also, third grade joined the second grade to experience the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge in *The Christmas Carol* at the Colonial Theatre. That was a real treat for all of us. Merry Christmas!



*Third graders worked hard on their historical fiction book reports.*

**In Mrs. Adams' fourth grade,** what a busy few weeks this has been! Along with keeping up with our regular studies, we practiced for Mary Verdi's Christmas Show, which was magical and amazing. We also wrote our book for Scholastic, designed Christmas Cards for shut-ins, and said goodbye to Marianna. She will be missed by all. We also made decorations for our Jesse Tree and did Christmas shopping for our friends and family. Thanks to the St. Agnes PTO for all their hard work at the Open House.

**In Ms. Young's fifth grade,** December always seems to be so busy, yet fly by as Christmas break gets closer. The students have been learning about the seasons of Advent and Christmas. We read and discuss reflections in an advent booklet, as well as listen to and watch various Advent and Christmas songs and videos throughout the month of December. The students have also been discussing how the Apostles' Creed was developed and the message that Jesus began to spread after his ascension.

The class has begun work on fractions in math, working on equivalent fractions, the greatest common factor, comparing, and ordering fractions. They have also been working well with Khan Academy as a reinforcement of the skills they are learning in math class. In reading, the girls and boys have been working on their Christmas Compliments, a big writing project that involves using the traits of their peers to create sincere and detailed compliments for one another. In science, the class has begun work on Earth and the planets.



*Grade 5 students pay special attention in music class.*

**In Mr. Lange's sixth grade:**

**Social Studies:** Students are in the middle of several very interesting projects. In Social Studies, both the sixth and seventh graders are recreating the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. They were encouraged to be as creative as possible in their methods, and they have certainly lived up to that challenge! One group is using cake and rice cereal treats to recreate the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. Another group has found a way to make trees from Tootsie Pops and tissue paper, while yet another group is using old clothespins as part of their structure.

**Literature:** The sixth graders have started a new selection, *Blizzard of Glass, the Halifax Explosion of 1917*. This non-fiction selection by Sally Walker chronicles the explosion that occurred in Halifax Harbor in December 1917, after two ships collided. One ship contained munitions destined for the war effort in Europe, causing the accident to be one of the most devastating in Canada's history. Adding to the devastation was a crippling blizzard which hit the region the day after the explosion, leading to delayed relief and recovery efforts. After reading the book, students will take on the role of journalists and retell the story as a newscast, a documentary, or a newspaper article.

**Math:** Sixth graders will be finishing a unit on solving equations shortly after the Christmas break. They will then begin a unit on fractions, which will not only review the fundamentals, but will also compute the four operations with fractions, and lastly solve equations that include fractions.



*Grade 6 takes time for a quick photo before getting ready for gym class.*

**Science:** After the Christmas break, sixth graders will finish their Earth science unit by learning about plate tectonics. Soon afterwards, they will be focusing on biology, more specifically what defines life and living things, and how they are categorized.

**Language Arts:** We finished our unit on sentence variety and structure, and have begun writing more effective paragraphs by elaborating and using supporting details.

**In Mrs. Dudziak's seventh grade:**

**Language Arts:** We have been writing more effective sentences by paying attention to word choice and using more precise language.

**Literature:** We have been discussing the characters, themes, and lessons in myths, legends, and folk tales from many different cultures.

**Math:** Seventh graders have been working with rational numbers: particularly decimals, with a new twist of including negative numbers. The next unit will continue working with rational numbers, but will focus on positive and negative fractions. In both cases, they will add to their algebraic skills by solving equations with both positive and negative decimals and fractions.

**Science:** Students in grade 7 are finishing up their work on fossil fuels and energy resources. After the Christmas break, they will be exploring another important resource - water. Soon after that there will be a unit on Biology, with a focus on ecology, reproduction, and habitats.

**Religion:** We learned about the power of prayer, and how it helps us participate more fully in the mystery of the Incarnation. We also studied Jesus' parables and how to prepare for the coming of God's kingdom.

**Service:** Students are equally busy helping with our current community service project, providing presents for families who are receiving assistance from the Department of Children and Families. This is part of their Religion class, as is their in-depth examination of cathedrals and their importance to the medieval Catholic Church. In social studies, our seventh graders are also involved in the Seven Wonders projects.

**In Mrs. Jamros' eighth grade:**

**Math:** We have been simplifying and evaluating algebraic equations and solving one-step equations. Next, we will solve multistep, absolute value, and literal equations.

**Religion:** We learned about the power of prayer, and how it helps us participate more fully in the mystery of the Incarnation. We also studied Jesus' parables and how to prepare for the coming of God's kingdom.

**Language Arts:** We finished our unit on sentence variety and structure, and have begun writing more effective paragraphs by elaborating and using supporting details.

**Literature:** We wrapped up our unit on myths, legends, and folk tales and have begun reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

**Social Studies:** Students are extremely excited to be working on a unit detailing life in the Middle Ages. The class has been divided into groups, each group taking on the role of a medieval manor. Students have chosen medieval names, will be negotiating a feudal contract with their lord, choosing medieval occupations, and designing their group's manor. Queen Clare (a.k.a. Mrs. Dudziak) is thrilled with their progress and looks for-

ward to seeing how this creative group will continue with the simulation.

**Math:** In Mr. Lange's math class, we are working on equations and inequalities, which include a mixture of rational numbers and situations. The equations are more difficult than the problems they solved in seventh grade, and so far the students are rising to the challenges. This unit is preparing them for a later unit on polynomials and linear functions.

**Science:** The eighth grade has worked through the atmosphere chapter of the unit on atmosphere, weather, and climate. Discussions of and documentaries on climate change will be a major focus of the unit. Afterwards, the class will learn about biology, including photosynthesis, cellular respiration, genetics, and heredity.

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

*Academy Artwork*





## Letter from Burkina Faso

*Sr. Linda Answers the Call*

November 24, 2018



### *An Unconventional Thanksgiving*

Who says you have to eat turkey to celebrate a day of thanks? Our day started out by stopping by a drilling site just in time to see water begin to flow from the ground.

We then continued on to a clinic for malnourished children. Mama, baby, and four-year-old were all good passengers as we made the long drive. The eight-month-old baby weighs only 10 pounds. Her four-year-old sister, though average height, also weighed in below normal. Each was evaluated and determined to be chronically



malnourished. Each will also be given vitamins and antibiotics to get them back on their feet. The family will remain at the clinic where mama will be taught to prepare more nutritious food for her children.

In a short time, they will be released to return to their village where life will continue to be a struggle. But mama will be equipped with new skills and recipes using foods that are available to enrich their basic diet.

There are so many reasons to give thanks! This year I am especially thankful for drilling teams who come to remote regions and give the gift of water to a thirsty people. I am also thankful for clinics where malnourished babies are given a second chance to grow and thrive.

