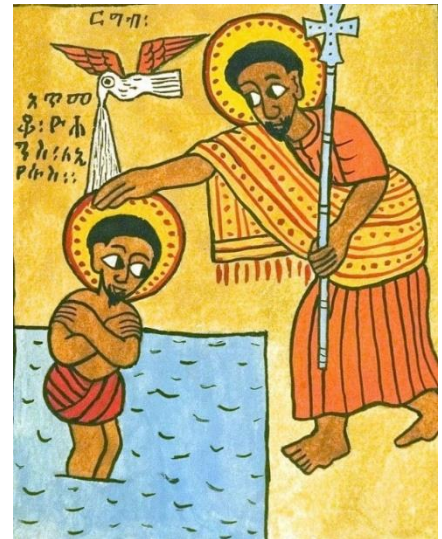


Dear SMS Families and Friends,

January is the month that we, universally, pray with the Holy Name of Jesus! It is also the month in which we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus.

In Religion class with me, Kindergarten has been fascinated by learning about Jesus' Baptism and the gift of Baptism that Jesus gave to us. (The picture to the right is an Ethiopian Icon of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus, that Kindergarten studied and replicated.) Comments abounded like, "No way!!!", "Is this really real?!", "Are you even kidding right now?!", "WOW!!!" Kindergarten is right in their wonder, joy, and excitement!



I don't think we stop enough to take time and ponder the great gift and mystery that Baptism is: not only to us, but to the family of God, and really to the whole world!

Some wonderful things about Baptism:

- ✓ Baptism cleanses us from our Original Sin. In 7th and 8th Grade Religion, we reviewed the effects of Original Sin and the four deaths that came from the Fall. Once Adam and Eve, our first parents, disobeyed God and committed the first sin, humans experienced four deaths:
 - humans and nature
 - body and soul
 - person and person
 - person and God
- ✓ Through Baptism, God adopts us as His sons and daughters, and we become part of His family. With the Kindergarteners, we recognized that God is the King. Therefore, if we are His sons and daughters, we are princes and princesses in the Kingdom of God.
- ✓ When we are Baptized, our soul is marked with an indelible mark, meaning our soul actually looks different from someone's soul who is not Baptized.

Why did Jesus get Baptized? He had no Original Sin, He is already the Son of God, and His Soul is completely human and completely divine. He is the only one in the history of humanity that did NOT need to be Baptized! John the Baptist, His cousin, even recognized this when Jesus presented Himself at the Jordan River to be baptized when he said, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14) You can hear John's incredulity to this reversal of positions. Jesus, however, presents Himself anyway, thus giving us the example He wants us to follow. Later, when talking to a Pharisee named Nicodemus, he doubles down on Baptism by saying, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit." (John 3:5)

Baptism is SO important, that according to the Gospel writer, St. Matthew, Jesus' last commandment was to Baptize! "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20) Don't wait to have your child baptized or make the decision when they are older! Don't let them miss out on the abundant Graces God has prepared for them NOW!

Here's the latest peek into our classrooms:

- ❖ PreK3 with Mrs. Forsythe in Science, mixed cinnamon and applesauce together, rolled it out, and made gingerbread cutouts, which they then painted. For Religion, they made their own Advent wreaths and counted down the days of Advent by learning Jesus' different titles in the Bible. Each day, a child would pick a strip of paper that had a different title that Jesus went by in the Bible. The students would all repeat the name and then hang it in their room!
- ❖ PreK4 with Mrs. Dorio and Mr. Neral they did a fizzy candy cane experiment where they learned about solids, liquids, and dissolving. In Religion, they learned about the journey to Bethlehem and counted to Jesus' birthday using AB patterns.
- ❖ Kindergarteners with Mrs. Toy wanted to share that they learned about the 5 senses through popcorn: hearing the crunch; tasting the butter; feeling the salt; seeing the popcorn; smelling yummy popcorn! In History, they learned about Mesopotamia and the epic of Gilgamesh. With Mrs. Cawley in Art, they talked about snow and the basic types of snow (i.e. dendrites, plate-like, and columnar), then drew snowmen!
- ❖ 1st Graders with Mrs. Maloney finished *Frog and Toad* and will start reading *Caps for Sale* in Reading class. In Nature Studies, students learned about the skeletal system and built a life size paper skeleton. In History, they talked about what brings us happiness in life started a lapbook on Ancient Greece. They also got to celebrate their class's patron saint, Our Lady of Guadalupe, by making tilmas and enjoying Mexican Christmas cookies and hot chocolate! With Mrs. Cawley in Art, they drew mittens and talked about Snowflake Bentley and snowflakes. They also created boarders for mounting on their Minoan frescos.
- ❖ 2nd Graders with Miss Zuschlag finished *Animal Folk Tales* and is starting to read *The Courage of Sarah Noble*. In Nature Studies, they are studying meteorologists and the weather. They will also be making lapbooks on Weather. In History, they finished Advent readings and packet. They will also start working on a lapbook for Ancient Rome! With Mrs. Cawley in Art, used oil pastels to create bear/hibernation drawings!
- ❖ 3rd Graders with Mrs. Endicott started focus units on simple machines as well as knights and castles! In Religion, the students made Advent lapbooks. With Mrs. Cawley in Art, they used papier-mâché to create fish and parts of a fish. They also learned calligraphy lettering related to monks' handwriting of texts!
- ❖ 4th Graders with Mrs. Knicely began to design catapults that they will be building to demonstrate potential and kinetic energy. In History, they started learning about the southwest states, capitals and fun facts about each. With Mrs. Cawley they drew northwestern PA winter birds and listened to their calls!
- ❖ 7th and 8th Graders with Deacon Marty propagated plants by rooting plant leaves. They also are looking forward to raising tadpoles in a classroom ecosystem. Students are researching their genealogy to discover how God and our ancestors influence our lives! With Mrs. Cawley in Art, they completed Aztec masks and created Oaxaca animal drawings!
- ❖ Music classes with Mrs. Giffone learned the meaning of Christmas carols and are reading notes on a variety of instruments! Gym classes with Mrs. Giffone focused on ball handling skills and also had a snowball fight!

Looking back on December. This past month, we...

- ✿ adored Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament on First Friday,
- ✿ welcomed back 8th Grade student, Giovanna Ryckman, who attended SMS from Kindergarten through 4th Grade,
- ✿ prayed together during our weekly Advent wreath lightings and enjoyed watching the 7th and 8th Graders act out the stories of Luke's Christmas narrative,
- ✿ celebrated St. Nicholas Day (Kindergarten's patron saint) by receiving golden (chocolate) coins, oranges, candy canes, and St. Nicholas prayers,
- ✿ shopped for our families at Santa Land, hosted by the PTO,
- ✿ went to Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception,
- ✿ received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for those who were of age and Catholic,
- ✿ celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (1st Grade's patron saint) and the feast of St. Lucy/Santa Lucia the next day,
- ✿ welcomed Mrs. Danielle Belony (mother of students Rachel and Daniel) to talk to us about the nonprofit mission that she leads called *Bringing Hope to the Caribbean*,
- ✿ raised \$158.28 for our Casual for a Cause: *Bringing Hope to the Caribbean*,
- ✿ enjoyed a Breakfast for Lunch Hot Lunch, sponsored by the PTO,
- ✿ thought of and wrote out gifts that we would give to Jesus, like the Little Drummer Boy, displaying them on a school-wide bulletin board,
- ✿ created a Nativity scene day-by-day, piece-by-piece with the Kindergarteners,
- ✿ rejoiced in the story of the first Christmas with our Christmas Family Night Program,
- ✿ had birthday parties for Jesus, rather than secular Christmas parties the day before Christmas break,
- ✿ enjoyed a long Christmas break and came back ready and renewed to learn,
- ✿ and, of course, continued the wondrous adventure of learning in all our subjects this year!



**May God richly bless you, your child, and your family!
Mary, Cause of our Joy, pray for us! St. Michael, pray for us!**

Love,

Miss Emily Zgonc, Principal :)

*"Open wide the doors of your heart to Christ! Do not be afraid!"
-St. John Paul the Great*

