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Sing We Now of Christmas

By Nina Cardillo

The annual Christmas Program at St. Raphael School celebrated Jesus, the reason for the season, through songs and performances by each of the classes and culminated in the Nativity story sweetly re-enacted by kindergarten. This year's program included a thoughtful rendition of "Mary Did You Know" by the seventh grade and the lively chiming of "Carol of the Bells" by the fifth grade. Eighth-graders in colorful Hawaiian shirts brought sunshine to the stage

in their performance of "Mele Kalikimaka (Hawaiian Christmas Song)," and third-graders sang a festive "Mi Burrito Sabanero" in Spanish. The fourth grade charmed the audience with their version of the classic "Old Toy Trains," and the whole school joined in the finale "Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus!" Our preschoolers also delighted audiences by telling—and especially singing—the story of the birth of Baby Jesus. All of the performances reminded us of the joy of the Christmas season, the blessing of being together, and the gift of a Savior.

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At left, St. Raphael Nursery School students joyfully tell the story of the birth of Baby Jesus.

Below, Grades K-8 express the spirit of the season at St. Raphael School's annual Christmas program.



Photo by Susan Rusbrook



Photo by Malu Rios

Photo by MJ Zafis-Garcia / St. Raphael School
Above, St. Raphael School middle-schoolers help feed the hungry at the annual Mother Teresa Luncheon.

Photo by MJ Zafis-Garcia / St. Raphael School

Making Spirits Bright through Service and Outreach

For the 23rd year, St. Raphael's hosted about 85 guests from two Washington, D.C., centers run by the Missionaries of Charity. Our guests attended Mass, celebrated by Fr. Tom Morrow, along with Mrs. Roche's fourth-grade class. Afterward, SRS seventh- and eighth-graders and other volunteers, including St. Raphael Sodality and the Knights of Columbus, served a traditional, Christmas-inspired meal to our visitors, who joyfully participated in a piano sing-along and enjoyed a performance by St. Raphael Nursery School 4-Plus students. Before leaving, our guests were given a rain poncho and bag of personal toiletries, a handmade scarf (knitted/crocheted by St. Raphael's Labor of Love volunteers), as well as a bag of candy as a treat. This special event is one that we at St. Raphael's and the residents of the Missionaries of Charity houses look forward to every year.

In partnership with Catholic Charities' sixth annual Coats of Many Colors Drive, St. Raphael School and Nursery School collected new and gently used winter coats, scarves, hats, and gloves. At the school, SRS students wrote notes or prayers that were tucked into the pockets of every coat as a small token of love and encouragement. St. Raphael's is proud to collaborate in this archdiocese-wide collection to help those in need, and grateful for all the generous donations and support!

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It's hard to keep anniversary years straight at SFIS

Saint Francis International School is in a unique position in the Archdiocese of Washington. On one hand, SFIS is young school having been founded in 2010. The first SFIS programs started with Summer Camp at St. Mark the Evangelist in June, 2010, and the first classes took place at St. Camillus in August, 2010. That means that next school year SFIS will mark a milestone with its tenth school year.

But, Saint Francis International School is also officially the successor to several parochial schools whose legacies go back decades. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of St. Mark the Evangelist parish and school in Hyattsville. In October, Fr. Roberto Cortes-Campos celebrated a special mass at SFIS honoring the Religious of Jesus and Mary who founded St. Mark School and thus laid the foundation for Saint Francis International School. On Sunday, January 27, at the 9 am mass the SFIS school choir will be providing the music ministry at St. Mark and the parish will be honored with a plaque from the National Catholic Educational Association recognizing their 60 years of commitment to Catholic education through St. Mark School and now SFIS.

St. Camillus School was founded in 1954, which means that the 2019-2020 school year will mark the 65th year that St. Camillus parish has sponsored a Catholic school. The ongoing commitment allows SFIS to serve over 440 students this year age three through eighth grade. This spring, the first students to graduate from SFIS back in 2011 will be graduating from college.



At left, thanks to Franciscan Br. Gino, St. Nicholas made his annual feast day visit to SFIS and even left gold (chocolate) coins in students' shoes.

Below, Mr. Henry Herrera directed another amazing Christmas concert for grades 1-8 and they were joined this year by the school bands.

SFIS continues the ministry of St. Mark and St. Camillus Schools that has now prepared thousands and thousands to become wise and faithful members of our world.

SFIS is proud to count as its alumni not only those young men and women who have graduated from Saint Francis International School but the thousands of men and women who have attended SFIS, St. Mark School, and St. Camillus School since the 1950s. The education at SFIS today seeks to continue the good work of so many parishioners, pastors, teachers, and the Sisters who set high standards for what can be accomplished when a community is committed to Catholic schools.

With the recently renovated Camillia Room at Saint Francis, the school is inviting alumni of St. Camillus, St. Mark, and SFIS to consider organizing reunions marking these major anniversaries. Alumni interested in reunions or other events are encouraged to contact SFIS at office@sfismd.org or 301-434-2344.

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St. Francis International School

www.saintfrancisinternational.org

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St. Raphael

Jingle All the Way! CYO Basketball is Underway

Another exciting CYO basketball season has started for SRS Angels in third through eighth grades. Spirit Day kicked off the season with a teachers-vs.-students game full of energy and enthusiasm. This CYO season promises to be filled with fun—go, Angels!

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Coming up in the New Year

Registration for St. Raphael School and St. Raphael Nursery School for 2019-20 is open. Visit the Admissions Page of our website at www.straphael-schoolmd.org for more information.

Jan. 27-Feb. 1: Catholic Schools Week celebrates Catholic education and all who make it possible with a full schedule of special events.

Jan. 28: SRS and SRNS double open house (new date) invites interested parents to learn more about our schools and tour our campus. SRNS (3's, 4's, 4-Plus) is at 9:15 a.m., and SRS (K-8) is at 10:45 a.m.

Feb. 25-28: Read Across

A Busy Season for St. Raphael Sodality

St. Raphael's Sodality participated in many activities offered by the parish during the Advent season. At the Mother Teresa Luncheon, we served food to the homeless who attended with the Little Sisters of the Poor. We also joined them in singing Christmas carols and socializing during lunch. Sodality coordinated a Christmas party for the seniors at Raphael House. The fifth graders of St. Raphael School sang Christmas songs with the seniors and handed out stockings that we filled with gifts. Sodalists also contributed gifts to the many charities on the Giving Trees in our church.

St. Raphael Adult Club and Sodality visited the Museum of the Bible, a 430,000 square foot building featuring rare artifacts spanning 3,500 years of history. This spacious museum offers an immersive and personalized experience with the Bible and its historical and ongoing impact on the world. We saw exhibits from the Vatican Museums and Vatican Library; original handwritten scrolls; an exhibit from the



Sodalists Mihuryl Hernandez, Shirley Lee, and Esther Stello visit the Museum of the Bible.

Israel Antiquities Authority; and stories of the Bible from Abraham through the creation of Israel to the ministry of the church.

In February we will have our Annual Sodality Tea with a Noteworthy (musical) theme. We will enjoy delicious tea sandwiches and desserts and sing our favorite

songs. In March we will again join with the Adult Club for a Lenten retreat at St. Anthony's Monastery in Ellicott City.

Sodality continues to faithfully pray the Holy Rosary after the 6:30 am and 9:00 am daily Masses. Please join us.

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