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Poster contest teaches children about meaning of Christmas

By: CORINA MILLER , Staff writer

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For the past 25 years, the Knights of Columbus have worked to spread the message that Christ's birth is the heart of Christmas. This year, the St. Francis of Assisi chapter turned to local children for help.

The local chapter of the national group held a poster contest for the youngest parishioners at St. Francis. Children from kindergarten through 12th grade were challenged to create a poster bearing the theme, "Keep Christ in Christmas."

To participate in the contest children and youths were invited to produce an original artwork that mirrored the theme of "Keep Christ in Christmas." Artwork was completed on 11"x17" paper and could be done in any medium, whether in ink, pencil, crayon, watercolor or more.

Works reflected a variety of ideas. One work showed the baby Jesus lying in his manger, with the words, "Thank You Jesus" lettered beside him.

Another included a heart with the words "love" and "amor" beside it. A rendition of the Virgin of the Streets with an infant clutched to her chest was also included in the contest.

Still another entry showed a three-dimensional back view of the traditional nativity scene, in which Joseph and Mary have their backs turned to the artist.

As of Dec. 12, the contest entry deadline, more than 390 children entered work. Art work was then categorized according to grade level. Three grand-prize winners were selected and received a \$25 gift certificate. Winners - including Andrew Dunn, Parmeno Medrano and Gabriela Garcia - were selected by the attendees of the Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary Christmas party. Dunn received a \$25 gift certificate to Target while Garcia received one to Best Buy. Medrano received a certificate from Old Navy.

Mauricio Frye, a member of the St. Francis chapter of the Knights of Columbus, said the idea to hold a poster contest came from several magazines.

"I saw the idea for the poster contest in one of several Knights of Columbus magazines I get, as a way to promote the concept/theme," he said. "The phrase 'Keep Christ in Christmas' is copyright by the Knights of Columbus and has been used by the Knights for over 25 years. I don't recall if the article mentioned if any other councils nationwide have held a contest or not. This is the first time that our council has tried the contest.

Frye's hope was to get youngsters to look past decorations and presents and instead focus on the true meaning behind Christmas celebrations.

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"In the beginning I had hoped that the contest would get the kids thinking more about the original story of the Nativity - Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, Jesus' birth, the visit of the Angel and Wise Men, and mostly why God sent him to us - instead of Santa Claus, Rudolph, shopping for presents and most of the other commercialized images we have today," he said.

After a discussion with St. Francis of Assisi Director of Religious Education Emily Dzurisin, Frye also thought perhaps children would start to see Christmas as an opportunity to share the gifts they have, specifically their time and talent, to help others.

Frye said he was pleased with the response the contest received.


"All of the parents have been very positive and think it was a great contest. They've really enjoyed looking at the entries and seeing the various ways the kids have expressed their ideas," he said. Since I (serve as an) usher, my duties keep me busy prior to and after Mass, so I haven't really had an opportunity to speak with any of the children. However, I have been able to watch from a distance as the children explain, with excitement, their entries to their parents and others."

Frye expressed gratitude to Dzurisin, Mark Henry, grand knight of Council #12480 who encouraged Frye to organize the contest, Council Youth Program Director Sean McCarthy and St. Francis of Assisi Pastor Msgr. Leon Duesman.

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