

ENGAGING THE SPIRIT

Knox parish strengthens families by first strengthening marriages

BY VANESSA NEGRETE
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KNOX - What looked like a knockoff of the popular television game show "The Newlywed Game" was actually the synod in action at one Starke County parish earlier this month.

At St. Thomas Aquinas, participants in a retreat for couples played a game they called, "The Not-So Newlywed Game," answering questions about how well the spouses know one another.

The Dec. 1 retreat was a mix of serious talks and light-hearted moments that involved two ecclesial areas the parish is focusing on in its synod plan, according to parishioner Mary Kleinfehn, a member of the synod steering committee there.

"Marriage and family is one of our priorities," she said. "We connected (the retreat) with that and discipleship."

The rationale was that, to strengthen families, the parish must first strengthen marriages.

"That's why we decided to have this little retreat," she said.

Bishop Donald J. Hying was the keynote speaker for the event. His talk was a highlight of the day, Kleinfehn said.

"He explained really well how Christ's love for the Church parallels a couple's love for each other, and (he explained) the spouses' roles in helping each other get to heaven," she recalled, adding that it was the most poignant moment she took from the event.

The retreat included



Parishioners from St. Thomas Aquinas in Knox gather Dec. 1 at a retreat for married couples as part of the implementation of their parish synod plan. (Photo provided by Father Stephen Loncar)

a talk by Domenica and Gary Hartman, a married couple who spoke about the importance of communication and compromise in marriage, Kleinfehn said.

After the retreat, some couples stayed at the church and attended Mass together and went out for dinner afterward, Kleinfehn said.

The retreat drew about 12 couples, said Father

Stephen Loncar, church pastor.

"They were really into it," he said. "I think the couples were really looking forward to this."

He referenced low marriage rates and high divorce rates as one of reasons a retreat for married couples was needed. Father Loncar added that he would like to see another event that focuses on young couples and

something geared toward married couples who may be struggling.

Kleinfehn said she hopes to make the retreat an annual event and

encourage even more couples to attend. The synod committee also wants to host family game nights and other family events, too, she said.



Loncar said the parish synod plan also includes more youth involvement and events.

For more information about the eight ecclesial areas of focus in the synod, visit garysynod.com. The website highlights the top initiatives in each area and links to hundreds of resources to help parishes implement their synod plans.

To tell us how your parish is following the Holy Spirit's lead in this synod process, contact Vanessa Negrete at vnegrete@dcdgary.org or 769-9292, ext. 246.

*"When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger."
~ LUKE 2:15-16*

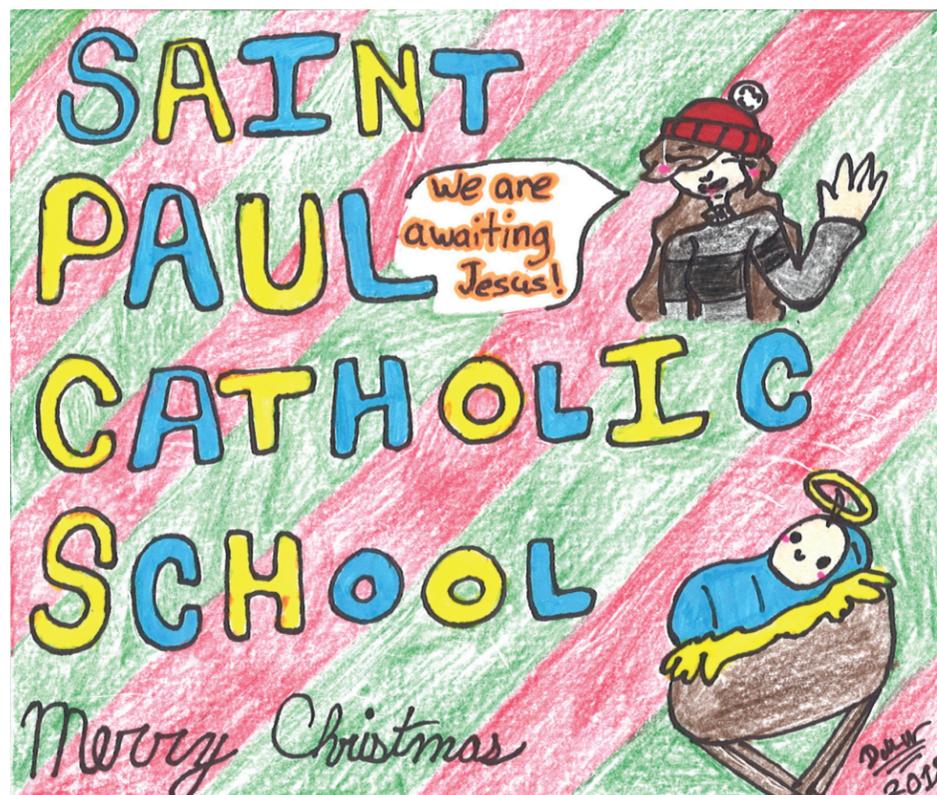
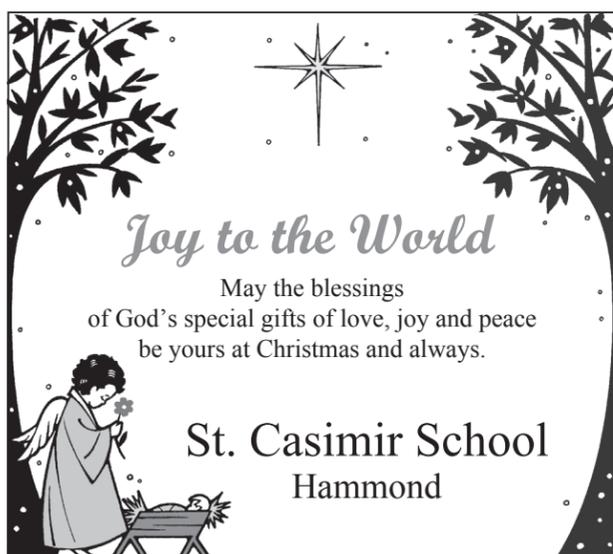
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