



All Saints Catholic School Norman, Oklahoma

RUTH A. MATHENY

Photography Class

Although the seven Catholic social teachings are sometimes called the best-kept secret of the Catholic Church, they are alive and flourishing at All Saints School in Norman, OK. The school, which serves three parishes with more than 400 students, is living its purpose as a place "Where Christ's Light Shines Through Children."

Assistant principal Dr. Theresa Bragg, who is also an honored photojournalist, teaches photography and yearbook classes in grades 6 to 8. As she sought to integrate Gospel values into both classes, she looked to the major social teachings of the Church.

When Dr. Bragg added basic photography to the list of electives for junior high students, the response was so overwhelming that she divided respondents into two classes. One is a basic photography class, primarily made up of sixth graders. The other is a basic photo/yearbook class for seventh and eighth graders. Both classes have studied the impact of photography, especially of Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs, on social justice.

A video from the History Channel titled *Moments of Impact: Stories of the Pulitzer Prize Photographs* helped the children to see how a photo can affect social justice issues and even legislation. Through related discussions, they learned about the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, the John F. Kennedy era, and other major social movements in our history.



But students needed to understand that it was not necessary to travel around the world to find illustrations of the social teachings. Situations could be found right in their own community. Armed with cameras and the assignment to illustrate two of the seven social justice issues, the students visited nursing homes, elderly neighbors and relatives, the handicapped, and others. In so doing, they experienced the teachings instead of just learning about them. Their photos have traveled throughout Oklahoma, including a six-week gallery showing at the Norman Arts Council Gallery.

Last spring, Dr. Bragg introduced the ART (Act, Reflect, Transform) of the social teachings to the faculty. Although students had done a good job of acting on social justice issues, they needed to go one step farther: to reflect on the problems and suggest ways to transform them. Staff members now integrate the teachings throughout their curriculum and plan ongoing service projects. The junior high is working on the "R" and "T" through programs such as Project Citizen, in which they select a

social issue or problem, research its causes and reflect on them, and institute a solution. Eighth graders chose to promote help lines to assist troubled teens with wellness, depression, hunger, and housing issues. They worked up a campaign with posters and flyers which were distributed in "teen hang-outs." Their project, selected as one of the best in the region, was presented to the Oklahoma Bar Association.

Little wonder that Sr. Catherine Powers, C.N.D., superintendent of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, says, "We are so proud of All Saints Catholic School. In the past five or six years we (Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Catholic Schools) have placed great emphasis on integrating the social teachings of the Catholic Church into all areas of the curriculum.... They found a way of integrating [them] in a way that captured the interest of the students."

For Dr. Bragg, the goal of bringing Catholic social teachings into the photography and yearbook classes has done that and much more. Young students are experiencing those teachings and seeking responsible solutions. They are a secret no more. ♦

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