



November 2001
No. 1

SAINT MICHAEL

Messenger

SAINT MICHAEL SCHOOL
Santa Rosa, California

Greetings to all in Our Lord Jesus Christ!

As we begin our sixth year as a full-time school in Santa Rosa, we joyfully present our first newsletter. We thank God Who has blessed us greatly in these years in many ways. He has granted us His inspiration, given us wonderful students, provided financial assistance just when we needed it, and blessed us with warm, loving support from parents and our local community.

There have been times that, in our weakness, we felt we could not continue. God let us know that He had other plans. Each September, strength and everything else we needed was



School year 2001-2002 begins
*Fr. Dcn. James Hughes, M. Katherine Hughes,
M. Christine Steineck, and students*





given. We thought that perhaps we could teach up to the sixth grade level. God let us know that He had other plans. We now have a high school student.

Our effort in Santa Rosa started eight years ago when we offered to help the mother of a young girl who was having difficulty in the public school system. We taught her and a few children from our parish two days per week in our community hall. Since the room we were using was also used for many other purposes, we set up and took down our school room twice a week. After two years of this arrangement, we became discouraged, for it seemed that the end had come. Then an apartment in the community became available. We rented the apartment and taught four days a week. We began with one full-time student. Soon another child came, then another.

Each year the school has grown either in the number of students or in the space available to us. After using a one-bedroom apartment for a few years, we expanded by breaking through a wall into an adjacent apartment, the children enthusiastically swinging the sledge hammers.

We now have two full apartments, eleven full-time students and three full-time teachers, as well as parent volunteers. A number of children who are taught at home join our students for certain classes. Our small number allows us to maintain a homey atmosphere which is so nurturing to the children.

Saint Michael School is actually a fruit of efforts begun two decades ago by a group of people dedicated to developing schools which have curricula consistent with an Christian understanding of the human soul. A Christian curriculum must revolve around rightly forming the soul of the child, not just informing his brain. Teaching a child information is not very difficult. Presenting that information in a way that contributes to the moral and spiritual development of the soul is more challenging.

Although our brains may thrive on information, our souls require much more. Our souls, made in the image of God, have more capabilities, more powers, than simply the ability to absorb

information. For example, all of nature reveals that God is an artist. Therefore, a Christian curriculum must provide opportunities for the child to grow in his ability to take raw material and create something beautiful. Christ's incarnation and death on the cross reveal that God is loving and self-sacrificing. Therefore, a Christian curriculum must provide opportunities for the child to serve, to sacrifice, and to work for the good of others.

In striving to understand the nature of our own souls, we have looked to the writings of the early Fathers of the Christian Church, those who lived in the first centuries after Christ and fought to defend the apostolic teaching they had received. This apostolic understanding of the soul is still alive today in the Eastern Orthodox Church. In future issues of the *Saint Michael Messenger*, we hope to elaborate on different aspects of the Orthodox Christian understanding of the soul, and how this understanding can shape curriculum.

Fr. Dcn. James Hughes
Headmaster



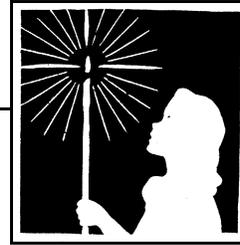
His Eminence Bishop Joseph blessing all the students and teachers for the coming school year



O Michael of the Angels
And the righteous in Heaven
Shield thou my soul
With the shade of thy wing.

From foes upon earth,
From foes beneath earth,
From foes in concealment,
Protect and encircle
My soul 'neath thy wing,
Oh my soul with the shade
of thy wing.

High LIGHTS



The Morning Opening

By Mrs. Christine Steineck

Before classes begin each morning, we gather together for prayers, songs and poetry recitations. The children are enthusiastic and ready to begin the day, happy to be together once again. By now the prayers are known by heart. The icon lamp is lit and the prayers, “O Heavenly King,” the “Our Father,” “Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos,” and an ancient Celtic prayer to St. Michael, “O Michael, the Victorious,” are offered.

This past month we have also been reciting Psalm 137. Nearly everyone has it memorized now, so soon we will choose another to learn.

Songs and poems celebrating the season follow the prayers and are exuberantly delivered. Sometimes there is a short story about the feast or saint of the day. At other times, a rousing game is played. One of the favorites is “scrambled eggs” (or “scrambled tofu” if it happens to be a fast day). This quick-paced game involves the tossing of numerous bean bags.

On Friday mornings other games are included which are not only enjoyable, but help to develop concentration, memory, coordination, and rhythm. Even our oldest students thoroughly enjoy these activities.

We close with the “Prayer Before Lessons,” and then all take their seats for the first class of the day.





High LIGHTS

Nature Journals

By Mrs. Katherine Hughes

The observation and understanding of nature, God's created world, has always held an important place in our studies. We began to use nature journals a couple of years ago when we were discussing how Adam and Eve, after being cast from Paradise, had to toil in the earth to grow their own food. This led to a study of soil and the collection of soil samples from different parts of the county. We began to record what we had discovered.

As one thing often leads to another, a neighbor happened to be planting an apple tree about this time, and we noticed that not only were the leaves and bark different from another apple tree, but the taste of the apples was different also. We bought and studied every different kind of apple in the local orchard fruit stand—and there were twenty-eight different varieties! Once again we recorded our findings.

From this “blossomed” many lessons and activities. We made a study of the different types of trees in our area. Soon we had large books filled with leaf and bark rubbings, drawings of different tree structures, fruits and flowers, soil samples and testing.

We continue to keep nature journals, though their appearance and content differ from year to year. This fall we have taken the occasion to take our journals and colored pencils outdoors to sketch flowers and trees. Sometimes this involves follow-up research to identify the specimen.

This year we each sewed bags made of burlap, with fingerknit or braided shoulder straps, in which to keep and carry our journals and drawing materials. When we go somewhere to observe and draw, we bring along magnifying glasses and a nature book or two to help us identify what we find. Our drawing and observations are not limited to field trips, however, for God's wonders and creatures can be found anywhere, indoors or out.

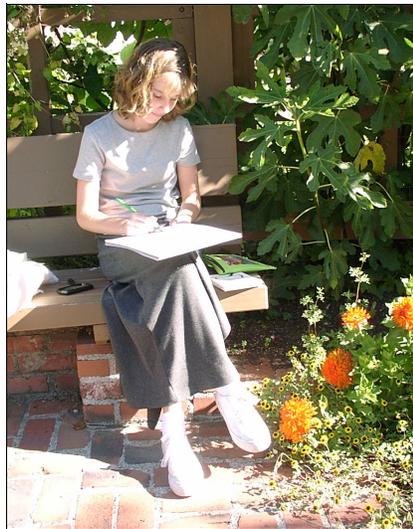
Student Reports



A Trip to Luther Burbank Gardens

By Aneliese Ramsay

Our first field trip of the year was to the famous home and gardens of Luther Burbank. It was a lovely day, even though it was the end of summer, and the flowers were near the end of their season. We brought with us our nature journal sketch pads and colored pencils, and we each chose a plant to sketch. We enjoyed the beauty of God's creation.



***Sketching in our nature journals
at Luther Burbank Gardens***





Student Reports

**St. Michael School Sponsors
Acorn Guessing Booth at Harvest Fair 2001
By Eugenia Killinger**

Every year our church community holds a Harvest Fair here on our property. The fair lasts a good part of the day, and involves craft booths, guessing booths, food booths, sack races, three-legged races, folk dancing, and also musical and dramatic performances.

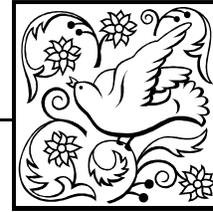
This year the older girls from St. Michael's set up the harvest table which serves as the centerpiece of the event. We decorated it with pumpkins and gourds, fruit and flowers, as well as the cornstalks we harvested from our own garden. Icons and a hanging oil lamp added the finishing touch.

It was Helena's idea to have an acorn guessing booth. There is a gigantic oak tree in our courtyard, which produced a huge amount of acorns this year. Each morning at the start of the school day, we would collect all the acorns that had fallen to the ground and count them. Then we set up the guessing booth at the fair with baskets full of acorns, along with slips of paper for people to enter their guess of the total number of acorns. The winner was only fifteen off. The total was 4,721 acorns!

The older students in our school are in a drama class taught by Fr David. In the evening the stage was set, and we performed Act I of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. When the play was over, we all agreed that it was our best performance yet!



Student Reports



The Bishop's Garden

By Helena Woolums



In our school we not only work with our minds learning arithmetic, spelling, and grammar, we work with our bodies to make our community property beautiful so that all can enjoy God's creation. Of course, there is work that must be done often, such as sweeping walkways, weeding flower beds, raking leaves and many other things. But there was one special thing we just *had* to tackle—the courtyard.

We started the project at the beginning of the last school year. First, we took out all the unwanted plants (otherwise known as *weeds*). Then Fr. James helped us build a pretty white picket fence all around the perimeter. Everyone helped to pound and paint until it was finally done. With Mrs. Hughes help, we searched out the nurseries for all the plants that would grow well in shade and brought them home to be carefully replanted. We created a new entrance to the courtyard with a beautiful wooden archway and made a circular pathway within the garden. Now there is a beautiful place to sit and look at the pretty flowers.



The Bishop's Garden
St. Michael's Community Service Project

In August, our bishop, Metropolitan Joseph, came to our community to consecrate the church. We wanted the courtyard garden to be in his honor, so we named it the Bishop's Garden. We thought this was very suitable also because His Eminence is named after St. Joseph of Arimathea, who had a sepulcher in a garden into which was placed the crucified body of our Lord.



Our Scrapbook

*Snapshots from last spring's assembly,
"Sailing Around the World on The Chieftain"*



Our Scrapbook





SONOMA COUNTY FAIR WINNING ENTRIES

This past summer a number of our students submitted entries into the Sonoma County Fair. Many prizes were awarded! Congratulations for work well done!

Aneliese Ramsay

Best of Show ~ Cookie arrangement
1st Place ~ Christmas decoration
1st Place ~ Lily painting
1st Place ~ Asian painting
1st Place ~ Asian plate
1st Place ~ Photo of younger brother
2nd Place ~ Sunflower painting

Alicia Krueger

1st Place ~ Americana chicken
1st Place ~ Golden Wyandotte chicken
2nd Place ~ Rhode Island Red chicken
1st Place ~ Gingerbread house
1st Place ~ Corn husk doll

Eugenia Killinger

1st Place ~ Water color of sailing ship
2nd Place ~ Colored pencil drawing of Viking boy on a ship

Rebekah Tolbert

2nd Place ~ Knitted recorder case
2nd Place ~ Watercolor of rabbits and Paschal egg
2nd Place ~ Watercolor of winter landscape

John Tolbert

1st Place ~ Knitted sweater vest
2nd Place ~ Watercolor of the pyramids
2nd Place ~ Colored pencil drawing of underwater scene
2nd Place ~ Colored pencil map of Greece

Camden Ramsay

1st Place ~ Ten Commandments on clay tablet
1st Place ~ Knitted pouch
1st Place ~ Moon painting
1st Place ~ Moon plate
1st Place ~ Legos fighter jet model
2nd Place ~ Christmas diorama
3rd Place ~ Carved wooden spoon



ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL is a ministry of the Holy Dormition Orthodox Church, Santa Rosa, CA, under the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church, and His Very Most Reverend Metropolitan Joseph of the Bulgarian Diocese of U.S.A., Canada, and Australia. Fr. Den. James Hughes, Headmaster, Tel. (707) 545-0861.