

JAGUAR



PAGE

Learning by Heart at St. James School

St. James students have been busy enhancing their minds and forming their hearts by memorizing poetry. On the evening of Tuesday, October 19, each class offered a choral recitation of poems selected by the teachers. Then individual children, as well as a few faculty members, shared poems of their own choice to an audience of proud parents and parishioners.

Some of the poems were simply for fun. “Fun to say, fun to know, fun to have with you as you grow,” quoted first grade teacher Sister Peter Marie. Taevon Reffett, one of Sister Peter Marie’s students, recited the delightfully silly poem “**Way Down South**” at the evening’s performance:

**Way down South where bananas grow,
A grasshopper stepped on an elephant’s toe.
The elephant cried with tears in his eyes,
“Pick on someone your own size.”**

Adding to the enjoyment of the evening, a grinning third grader, Landon Lopez Garcia, narrated “**W**” by James Reeves.

**The King sent for his wise men all
To find a rhyme for W.
When they had thought for a good long time
But could not find a single rhyme,
“I’m sorry,” said he, “to trouble you.”**

Other poems chosen by the students were more formative of character. Fifth graders, Tate Clarke, Archer Heath, and Bracehn Messman proudly proclaimed “**Be Strong**” by Malthie Davenport Babcock.

**Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do and loads to lift;
Shun not the struggle, face it, ‘tis God’s gift.

Be strong!
Say not the days are evil—who’s to blame?
And fold the hands and acquiesce—O shame!
Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God’s Name.**

**Be strong!
It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day, how long;
Faint not, fight on! Tomorrow comes the song!**

Memorizing poetry is a part of St. James School’s newly developing liberal arts curriculum. “St. James School has been in Crete since 1897,” explained Principal Sister Mary Alma. “Our senior alumni and parishioners speak fondly of poems and prose which they learned in grade school. Bill Murphy remembers learning “**The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere**” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Kathy Springer still loves the poem “**Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue**” by Mary Dixon Thayer, while Barb Lorenz recollected memorizing “**The Gettysburg Address**.” Carolyn Holmes recalled E. E. Cummings’ “**Maggie, Milly, Molly and May**” with its beautiful ending:

**For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
It’s always ourselves we find in the sea.**

“Undoubtedly it is hard work to memorize, but children enjoy the challenge and are really proud when they have accomplished the task,” explained fourth grade teacher Mrs. Sharon Maron. “It is

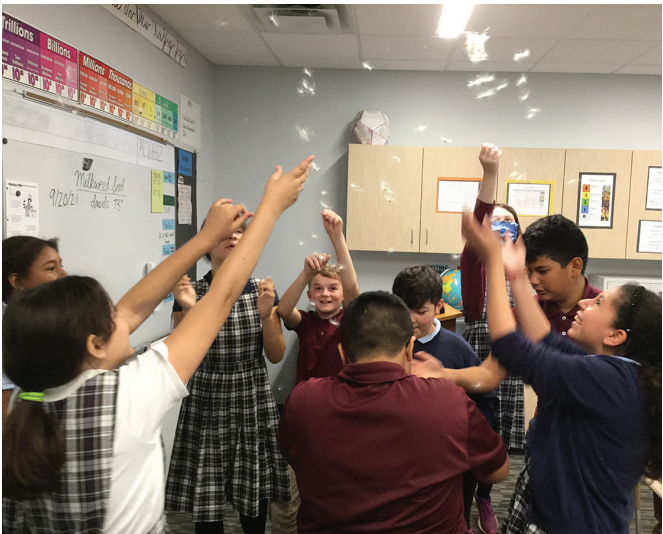
as if something within them has grown.” Even, and perhaps especially, if a poem has difficult vocabulary or concepts, St. James’ teachers believe it worthwhile learning. Mrs. Avery Uhing’s third graders, for example, memorized “**There is No Frigate Like a Book**” by Emily Dickinson. She and her students looked up words together and discussed the meaning of the poem.

**There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away,
Nor any Coursers like a Page
Of prancing Poetry—
This Traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of Toll—
How frugal is the Chariot
That bears a Human Soul.**

But is it really worth the effort to memorize poetry when it is so easily accessed these days? “Looking up a poem on the internet is far less than having it within you,” explained Principal Sister Mary Alma. “We understand memorization as learning by heart,” she continued. “When you make the effort to memorize beautiful words, they sink down deeply and their meaning grows more and more within you. We love our St. James children very much and want them to know that they themselves, their choices, and their lives are never mundane. Beautiful poetry, especially when learned by heart, is one of God’s frugal chariots that lifts the soul and gives it a glimpse of the grandeurs of life, the wonders of the human person, and the glories of our eternal destination. It is well worth the effort.”



Some fifth grade boys chose to memorize the poem “Be Strong” by Maltbie Davenport Babcock.



Poetry can be a chariot which lifts the soul!



Bryan Jaimes of grade 4 practices “Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost.



Allisson Rios Murillo, grade 5, finds nature to be poetic.



Memorizing poetry can take some hard work as sixth graders Preston Havlat and Yair Vasquez Loez well know.



Fourth graders practice their class poem “Try, Try Again” by T.J. Palmer.

Bryan

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