



The Saint Teresa Times

VOLUME 29 ISSUE 1 OCTOBER 2025



ICLE 2025

Cultivating the Heart

By Mrs. Kelly Pokojski,
Theology and Art teacher



**God. Love.
Imagination.
Gratitude.**

These four words summarize the most important wisdom received during the ICLE (Institute for Catholic Liberal Education) National Conference this summer held in downtown Lincoln, Nebraska.

God. The foundation of all schools using a Catholic, liberal curriculum is God-centric, bringing His truth and goodness into each aspect of the school community. Each part of the conference began and ended with a focus on God, always reinforcing the main goal of all the members present, to help our students put into practice the virtues and truths of the Catholic faith so they may one day enter Heaven.

Love. God is love. Love is His first gift, containing all others. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (CCC 733). The conference extended this definition that all teachers should pour our love, hearts, kindness, and understanding into our students to help them become faithful, loving, confident children of God.

Imagination. This word was repeated in every session and by almost every keynote speaker. Imagination is the foundation of creativity and critical thinking. Imagination is responsible for man's landing on the moon; man had to imagine or dream before creating a plan of action to achieve it. This is equally true in education; students need to see a variety of outcomes, imagine different scenarios, and learn ideas that, until concrete, require a bit of faith and often a lot of imagination.

Gratitude. Every member of Saint Teresa's school who attended the conference was extremely grateful for the

*Continued on back page—see **ICLE***

"Cultivating the Heart" was the theme of the 2025 Institute for Catholic Liberal Education (ICLE) National Conference held in Lincoln in July. The more than 500 participants included 5 bishops, dozens of clergy and religious, and Catholic educators from 187 schools in 63 dioceses, including over 80 attendees from the Diocese of Lincoln.

Dr. Ryan Messmore, president of ICLE, noted during his address that Catholic liberal education is best understood as "Catholic liberating education."

"We're trying to liberate students from ignorance, from being slaves to their passions and the trends of the day," he said. "Instead, we're liberating them to flourish as children of God, as people who were created in His image to think, to create, to make culture, and to enjoy the good, the true, and the beautiful."

Every St. Teresa School teacher and most staff members attended (*pictured together above*). Bishop James Conley moderated a panel discussion, and principal Sr. Mary Michael, C.K. and music teacher Mrs. Terri Schilmoeller each presented breakout sessions.

FILLED WITH THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

By Sr. Mary Michael, C.K., Principal

Last spring we endeavored to take our 7th grade class on a three day campout at Camp Kateri near York. Not only did we live, we were filled with life. There is a scene from an old John Bosco movie where the boys in his school/care were out for the day in the country enjoying the great outdoors and playing with one another. In the movie there was “playful” music in the background and it

many new experiences. Creek exploration, ax throwing, archery, knot tying, obstacle course racing, campfire cooking, orienteering, newspaper writing, tent assembly and tug of war all proved to thoroughly engage all involved.

I was going to describe a few of the children’s reactions, but the “newspaper” the kids created in one of the sessions says it better than I would. You should read it in their words. Here is one example:

MEMORABLE MOMENT by SD: “My favorite moment was probably when my group went to the creek. There was a big log that my group had to walk on. The log was a bit slippery, so everyone had to be careful. I also liked when we first got into the water. It didn’t reach any higher than our knees due to the path it took. Part of the route was rugged with thorns, sticks, and brambles. At the end we took our own path. It was definitely not the best idea. Some advice I’d give to next year’s 7th graders is to really enjoy every moment you have at the camp, even if activities might not be your favorite.”

I do need to comment further on the “Creek Exploration”. I took Miss Hums to the creek to get a few pictures and to observe. Miss Hums ended up in the creek (on her own volition), and I thoroughly enjoyed the event safely up on

almost looked like a scene from heaven. Now, I don’t want to get carried away, but this was as close as I have come for three days in a row to such goodness. Joy proper to youth exuded frequently from children and adults alike.

When we arrived we had a short meeting after they had found their cabins and changed clothes. Early in that meeting Sister Mary Gabriel (who used to teach at our school, and was on our faculty crew) gave the kids a fervorino on being open to trying new things, even if they were a little scary. It set the tone for the



the bank. Every half a minute or so you heard a girl scream. Mrs. Shanahan, the leader of the exploration, appeared deaf to the screams. As near as I could tell the shrieks were due to one of the following: cold water, mud, bugs, snakes, shells, flying mud, playful nudges, a small drop-off in the creek bottom or getting stuck in the mud. I do have to admit when Elise came toward me with a snake and asked me if I wanted to hold it, I was glad there was a steep bank between her and me, so I hardly even had to say, “no thank you.”

Another one of my favorite events was building a huge fire and helping/ watching the children cook their campfire meals which they assembled. Building a good fire is one thing, seeing it used through to the end is yet another. Also to be noted, for the second fire, it was the first time I lit a fire with no matches. Flint and a striker caused the ignition. I, too, was a good camper!

Thank you, Lord for the goodness of the event, and Your blessing on all. May the fruit of the experience show itself into the indefinite future.



HADESTOWN AND GREEK MYTHOLOGY

*By Mrs. Terri Schilmoeller, Music teacher
and Mrs. Brittany Kudron, Literature and English teacher*

During the 2024-2025 school year the 6th-8th grade students were part of a cross-curricular study that culminated in the attendance of nearly all of them attending the Broadway performance of *Hadestown* in March at Omaha's Orpheum Theater.



Hadestown is a recently composed musical which began as a collection of original folk songs by Anaïs Mitchell, morphed into a concept album, and finally premiered on Broadway in 2019. It tells a version of the Greek myths of Orpheus, Eurydice, Hades and Persephone using elements of folk music, blues, and New Orleans jazz.

In addition to the usual singing, music theory, and music history content in the music class curriculum, teacher Mrs. Terri Schilmoeller likes to find units of study that middle school kids will find engaging and relatable. When she discovered the *Hadestown* soundtrack at some high

school students' recommendation, she immediately loved it, saying the music is catchy and the lyrics are clever, thoughtful, and thought-provoking. She

knew that middle school students would enjoy listening to it and it was clear to her that there were plenty of compositional elements and moral questions that would make for lively class discussions.

The students spent a few months in music class listening to the soundtrack, watching and discussing interviews with the composer, and identifying the particular compositional choices that make the music so compelling. They also had several interesting seminars in which kids debated the motivations and moral choices of various characters.

Because 6th grade studies The Ancient Year, this musical storyline fit in very well with their study of Greek Mythology. The 7th and 8th grade students had read and learned the traditional stories of these Greek gods and goddesses in Literature class in their 6th grade year, and the current 6th grade was just beginning the mythology unit.

The entire unit culminated in a Sunday afternoon field trip to Omaha, where the students were able to see the live Broadway performance of *Hadestown*. The group secured student pricing on tickets, and the entire cost was covered with grant funds for enrichment activities for our students. Many of the students had never been to the Orpheum and got off

the bus wide-eyed to see the fancy building with our school name on the marquee. The show itself was also incredible – the pit orchestra (which is really more of a jazz band) is on stage the whole time. A 7th grade trombone player was heard during intermission exclaiming excitedly, "Did you see that? He was using a plunger mute!"

With their literary background knowledge in mind, new conversations were sparked by the interesting depictions of these characters in *Hadestown*. After the show students compared and contrasted how the various characters were portrayed by the actors, why those choices were made, and how many of the characteristics still held true to the traditional stories of gods and goddesses that were studied in 6th grade.



The 6th grade also extended their study by making this story of Orpheus and Eurydice the focus of their drama unit in the fourth quarter. They took an even closer look at the Greek myth, depicting these characters themselves in a performance of the play for the rest of the student body in May (see photo, left).

Continued on back page—see [Hadestown](#)



FORAY INTO FALL

Right: After learning how different birds build nests and examining real examples, 1st graders partnered up to build nests of their own made from materials provided and found in nature.

Below: Pre-kindergarten students fine tune their fine motor skills with manipulatives.



ICLE, continued from page 1

opportunity to experience new ideas, reinforce familiar practices, and spend time together, sharing our love of God and the Catholic faith. Most importantly, we need to share and grow our vocation, teaching. Together, we learned, laughed, loved, imagined the possibilities, discerned new ideas, and prayed for the school family. We grew stronger as a team, returning renewed and invigorated for the 2025 – 2026 school year.

Hadestown, continued from page 3

It became very evident that this trip to see Hadestown would create a lasting memory for our junior high students. Not only did they come back with more excitement about the overall show and the appreciation for Greek mythology, but songs from the show could be heard being hummed and sung by several students during passing periods and free time for many weeks to follow. It became a constant little reminder of the beauty of the music that we heard and the time enjoyed by all of us!



THANK YOU, KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Thank you to St. Teresa Knights of Columbus Fitzgerald Council #833 who provided a hamburger and hot dog meal at Jayhawk Jumpstart (*pictured above*). Students and their families met teachers, dropped off school supplies, and toured the building while having the opportunity to connect with friends and other school families before the first day of school.

ATTENTION ALUMNI

We celebrate 100 years as a parish next year and as a school in 2030. We are very proud of our heritage and our alumni! We have mementos from every decade of our past, and are further developing that heritage as we look to the future. While we are proud of our past, we are being overrun by trophies. We need to cull some of the collection. If you had a part in acquiring any of those trophies and would like to own any of them as a memento, please let us know. Send an email to sr.mary-michael@cdolinc.net or you can give us a call at 402-477-3358. I can imagine the cheer that went up with each of the many victories documented by the trophies!

