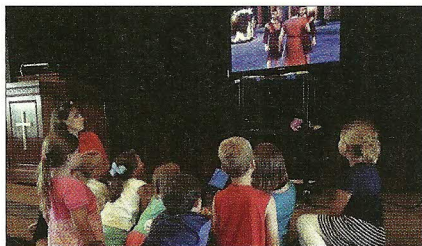
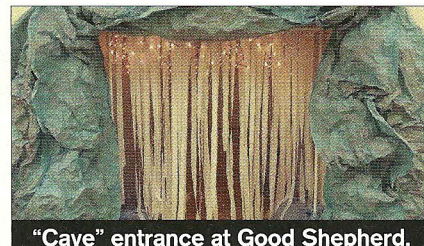




Saint Egbert, Morehead City



Saint Mildred, Swansboro

"Cave" entrance at Good Shepherd,
Hope Mills

Holy Infant, Durham



Saint Raphael, Raleigh

Vacation Bible School: growing faith, having fun

► Did the children in your family scale Mt. Everest this summer? Were they in the dugout with teams like the Angels, Saints, Padres, Cardinals, or Mary-ners? Perhaps they were busy defending the Kingdom? If they were doing any of these things, chances are they were in a Vacation Bible School or Camp this summer.

At Raleigh's Saint Raphael the Archangel Vacation Bible Camp, approximately 40 children spent five intense days having fun while learning about God. Linda Lenzmeier, Children's Faith Formation Coordinator, rotates between three programs offered by Loyola Press. This year was, "Living in God's Kingdom" and evidence of the kingdom was all around as participants were greeted with a "castle" entrance and a plethora of great food, fun activities, and innovative crafts that helped them learn more about the theme for the week. One teen volunteer, Mary, said, "It was especially nice being with the children and seeing their faces." Mary wasn't the only teen supporting the program: Ivana, Angelina, and Marita joined Mary to assist adult leader, Beth, with all the exciting crafts.

At Good Shepherd Parish in Hope Mills, children were able, quite literally, to climb a mountain through their participation in a "Totally Catholic VBS" by Our Sunday Visitor. Long-time veteran, now retired Director of Religious Education Jan Carnahan helped the children in "Conquering Challenges with God's Mighty Power" as they climbed "Everest." Jan and her group actually brought in a mobile climbing wall for the children while Meg Hunter-Kilmer pointed out that "sometimes God asks us to do something really hard – like climbing a mountain." There were "Mountain Top Treats" and "Bible Memory Buddies," "Base Camp" and "KidVid Cinema," "Imagination Station" and "Glacier Games." Adults were not left out in the cold either as they had a strong adult program coinciding with the children's program. There were 30+ adults present!

If going to the ball park is your idea of a great summer, then Saint Mildred's in Swansboro was the place to be! The chil-

dren there were "Playing for God's Team" in a program from Loyola Press. Entering the ball park with Director Francine Sabisch meant joining 70 children and 42 volunteers making pennants and megaphones and "Good Deed Beads" made from tiny baseballs. There were Bible stories and video presentations, a snack stand (popcorn and corn dogs included), and a special matching game where children had to match pictures of holy men and women. Trading cards were in abundance and there were pictures of saints on each one. Everyone in the parish participates in this program: the Knights of Columbus help with food and the Women's Guild covers the cost of supplies. One parishioner, Alvie, has brought her 3 great-grandchildren every year!

Holy Infant Parish in Durham offered another opportunity to climb Everest, with Director of Formation Laura Anderson. Volunteers there served 355 evening meals over the course of their week of Vacation Bible Camp. There was music and there were ice caves and treats and lights! Most impressive there was the concerted effort by the parish to include all children – especially those children with special needs.

In every single program, two things always stood out. First, children were having loads of fun learning about God. Secondly, children were being connected to social justice. Food was collected and good deeds were encouraged. Children were not only learning about the Catholic Church, they were learning to be Catholic. Next year, bring the children in your family. They'll love exploring all of God's wonderful world!

– Diane M. Quintal is Director of Catechesis and Faith Formation for the Diocese of Raleigh.