

Living the stations: Holy Family, Trinity eighth-graders perform Passion of the Christ (with photos/video)

Brett Herrmann Apr 14, 2017



Chris Yucus

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Jesus, played by Logan Griggs, is pushed by a guard played by Brandon Green as fellow guard James Sanchez looks on during Trinity Catholic Academy's

What do you look for when you're selecting the next Jesus?

For the eighth grade class at Holy Family School in Oglesby, the main requirement is height.

"Jesus usually has to be tall enough to wrap his arms around the cross. It's a tall cross so he has to be able to reach up and hold it," said eighth grade teacher Lynn Quick.

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Jacob Shirz, who stood about a head taller than everyone else in the class, took on the role of Jesus for the living stations of the cross, performed last week by the eighth grade class. It's a part that requires some range for an eighth-grader, considering they play a 33-year-old carpenter from Nazareth.

At La Salle's Trinity Catholic Academy, the role didn't have any height requirements, but it was a very physical role.

For the three instances during the performance where Jesus falls, Logan Griggs took the direction very literally, throwing himself onto the carpeted floor as the wooden cross he carried landed on top of him.

"These kids make it their own performance," said Trinity eighth grade teacher Deb Myers. "After 20 years of presenting the Passion of the Christ the script is still the same, the songs are the same, but the message is still relevant."

And there was a fair amount of preparation that went into making those falls look dramatic.

"It took a couple of days to get them down right," Griggs said.

The production

Stations of the cross doesn't always follow the same format. It really depends on what the church is working with as many have different variations of the narrative, although they all follow the same 15 steps.

Trinity's performance had a lot more singing, with the weeping women harmonizing between stations.

Myers said the girls had been working on the songs for about two months. The rest of the performance had been practiced over about a month, but it's a familiar script for everyone involved.

"A lot of these kids have seen the performance since preschool and kindergarten so they know what it's like and how they want to make it their own," Myers said. "I think a lot of them have their parts picked out before they start the school year."

Stations are also a weekly event at Holy Family during Lent, and getting to perform the living stations is highly anticipated by the eighth grade class, Quick said.

"It's something they look forward to every year. It's a spiritual event for them and we're very proud of the work they do," she said.

Special Effects

Griggs had streams of blood painted on his face and a crown of thorns atop his head as he was "hammered" to the cross by the guards.



The sound of nails pounding echoed through the church, which came from speakers. They also played the sound of thunder when Jesus died on the cross.

Holy Family also simulated a thunder sound at that point, but with a more practical effect. A foley man used sheet metal to simulate the noise.

"And then they just flashed the lights on and off," said the Rev. Gary Blake.

Costumes and props

From Veronica's wash cloth to Jesus' blood stained clothes, a lot of attention to detail goes into the costumes. Some of the garments are recycled through the years.

"Many of the parents have made the costumes through the years and some donate them back to the classroom," Quick said.

She said that the Roman soldier costumes and Veronica's costume were recently donated by a church benefactor. The cross, which has been used for the 15 years the act has been going on at Holy Family was also built by church members.

Trinity's costumes are also hand-me-downs with some outfits being older than the kids who are wearing them.

"Jesus has worn the same garments pretty much all 20 years," Myers said.

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