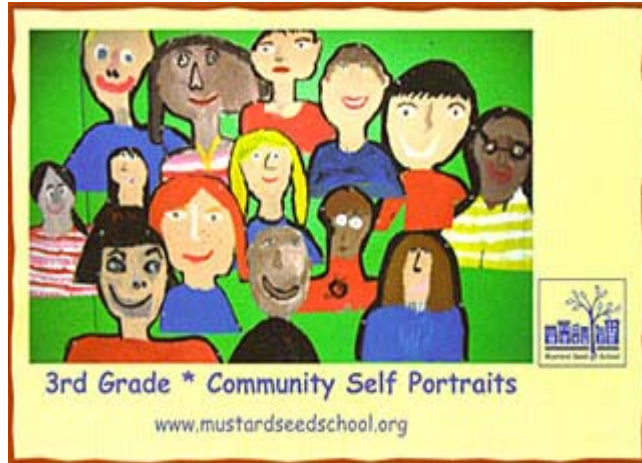


Pen Pals in the Spirit

by **Sister Theresa Calviello, SFP**

Last year, I met Cindy Kuperus, a third grade teacher in [Mustard Seed School](#), a non-denominational charter school in Hoboken. She was in search of pen pals for her fourteen students and I agreed to be one of them.

In September, I heard from Zoe Grace, who was very interesting. For Christmas the school sent me a self-portrait of the class on a special post card. Zoe explained that she was the person in blue with a silver necklace! We corresponded twice after that.



3rd Grade Community Self Portraits
(Zoe Grace is pictured at bottom row, far right)

Early in April, Cindy called asking if I would be free to attend the school's Worship Service from 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. and get acquainted. Cindy thought it would be a good idea if she and I met first since she had some questions that would be of interest to the class. Cindy gave me two hours of her time, introducing me to the teachers and showing me the classrooms for creative subjects like drama and art.

Finally the day came for the Worship Service I was to attend, and what a joyous atmosphere for worship. I was surprised – this is how they begin every day! Strangely enough, the San Damiano cross was on the wall. Some parents also attended with their younger children. During worship, I was introduced and they prayed for me. At the service, I was asked about my ring and why I was called "Sister." There were pictures of the elderly, grandparents and a lighted candle celebrating Senior Month.



Sr. Tiziana Merletti receives the vow renewal of Sr. Theresa Calviello, SFP on the occasion of her 50th Jubilee.

Returning to the classroom, I observed the children while their day unfolded. They read poems which the students knew by memory, and we heard the Indonesian version of the story of Cinderella. There was a math project and snack time. I mingled with the group, getting acquainted with them. They also asked questions like how much milk and gasoline cost when I was their age – and what was school like without a computer?

The teacher offered me a cup of coffee and Zoe brought it to me. She also shared her school work. Then we went to drama, where in five minutes a play evolved about a tree that the birds didn't want to be cut down. Zoe was the wood cutter, so all the children were chasing her!

Afterwards I thanked everyone for an enjoyable visit. Two students accompanied me to the door, asking me to return again some day. It was a great experience and I found out that learning is fun!



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