



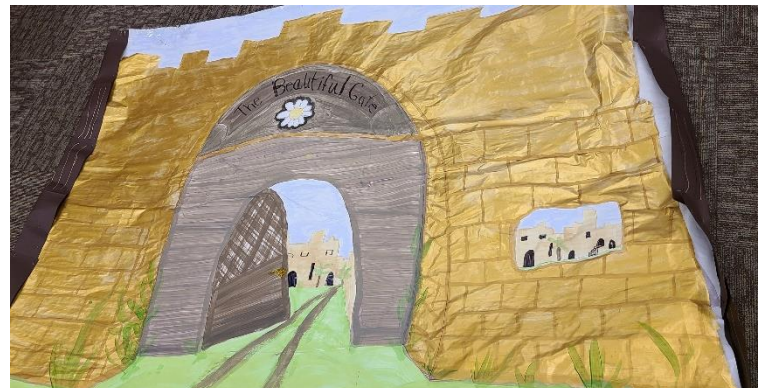
The 2021 VBC that was just the Ticket! ... "Trust Jesus!"

By Jody Glodowski

At the Rocky Railway Catholic Vacation Bible Camp (VBC), co-Conductors, St. Bronislava and Holy Spirit parish VBC teams, helped kids and youth keep on track this summer! We were called "All Aboard with Jesus!" on the Rocky Railway. We missed having VBC in 2020, so summer 2021 was an extra exciting faith-filled week of adventure! We imagined what it would be like to travel by steam train through the mighty, majestic Rocky Mountains while discovering that trusting Jesus pulls us through life's ups and downs. We welcomed over 30 camp kids (age four through grade 5) and over 30 youth / adult volunteers from our parish and area parishes make this VBC a highlight of the summer!

The environment would not have been possible without the talents of our artists! We started VBC with gathering the recycled cardboard from KP Appliance (thank you!) and creating signs, interactive railroad tracks, and a child-size steam engine pulling cargo, including M&M's! We further recycled our décor and props by collaborating with the Wausau Deanery to pass on most of our creations for their Rocky Railway VBC later in July.

(Photos of decorated environment)





What is a Vacation Bible Camp? We set aside days of summer for a fun, engaging, and hands-on bible learning experience for our children and youth. Planning involves recruiting volunteers, promoting our event, decorating an environment, and planning for snack time, games, discovery and crafts.

What makes it Catholic? We chose Group Ministry, an interdenominational company, as our VBC resource guide. Then, we added in our Catholicism to the program. We attended morning Mass together and taught about a Saint of the Day. This year, Julie Meadows, Faith Formation Director at Holy Spirit, led the focus on Mary, known as Our Mother, Our Lady of the Rosary, and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. We also added other Catholic teaching on sacramentals, prayers, and doctrine relating to the theme of the day.



How it worked... We gathered at the beginning and end of our mornings as a large group in the Mary Room for announcements, songs, skits, and learning about our Catholic ID. We learned about railroad history when the “golden spike” connected the intercontinental railway. VBC is even more fun with the entertainment and lessons learned from the Railway Express Celebration skits. The Bible Points of the day were reinforced by leader, Sarah Z. and Conductor Chris. Through the Rocky Railway skits, Conductor Chris learned to be strong, hopeful, bold, and a good friend.

(Photos of Railway Express Skits and Finale with the Golden Spike!)



Each day at Rocky Railway VBC, the kids tracked through rotations of activity stations that reinforced relevant Bible Points and immersed kids in new adventures. Here are some highlights:

VBC music is always popular with the kids! Parents say that they get to know the songs, too, since their child(ren) sing songs over and over and over! At Railway Express Celebration, we all sang and moved about with variety of videos, simple sing-along songs such as *I've Been Working on the Railroad*, or old favorites like *Big House* and *Let's Get Crazy*. Our VBC theme song *Your Power Will Pull Us Through* was our go-to song in Celebration and *Everywhere I Go* was our opening song at Mass.

Anna Connell, St. Bronislava Director of Music, and Lizzy Novak from Holy Spirit, teamed up to take small groups to teach them songs, such as the *Hail Mary* prayer and *Go Make a Difference* by Steve Angrisano, which was our closing song at Mass and our final Celebration song. Also, they had fun with music movement activities. Even on Fr. Eric Mashak's first day with St. Bron's, he jumped right in on the fun!

(Musical Chairs with Fr. Eric Mashak)



(Photos of Railway Express Celebration and Music time)



Our own Conductor Chris was a favorite with the kids! He guided the Rocky Bible Adventure with the help of Mateo Koch and Emerson McKibben. Conductor Chris invited the children into the bible story environment where they heard and participated in each of the bible stories. They met a frightened Ananias, who was asked by God to do a hard thing: go and restore Saul's sight. They sailed with Paul on a journey which ended in a shipwreck, but there was hope! They witnessed the healing of the lame man as he lay before the Beautiful Gate in Jerusalem. The children learned about how God really loves all of us and sent Jesus to us to save us from sin. The children gave their hearts to Jesus on the cross. Truly, the children learned to "Trust Jesus!". Then, the small groups were surprised with a celebration of the first Christians where they became good friends.

(Photos of Rocky Bible Adventure)



At Depot Discovery and Crafts, led by Sarah Z and a creative crew, the kids discovered the power of Jesus through team-work activities and reflecting on what Jesus means to all of us. The kids made train car posters and filled in the blank: Jesus is my _____. They completed with words like *savior*, *hope*, *light*, and we did have one "dinosaur". The lantern craft was definitely a bright project to take home.

(Photos of Depot Discovery & Crafts)



During Chew Chew Snacks led by Dawn C. and a culinary crew, the kids built a sweet steam engine and some train signals & signs from some favorite treats. Yum Yum!!

(Photos from Chew Chew Snacks)



At. Loco Motion Games with Jessica E. and the crew, the kids learned to direct their POWER in positive ways while helping one another. They had a blast staying on track using the BIG feet and getting wet!!!

(Photos of Loco Motion games)



VBC would not be possible without all of the volunteers. Their talents and time are necessary, valuable, and appreciated for the ultimate VBC experience.

Sidney Trzebiatowski and Chloe Kindler signed on to VBC together as small group leaders. They agree that they would tell other others to volunteer for VBC. Chloe says, "I would 100% tell them YES! It's a great opportunity to get to know and work with kids and spread your knowledge about Jesus." Sydney adds that her highlight "is getting to see all the kids get excited about Jesus!"

(Small group photos)



Betty Kieliszewski is our front desk volunteer. She says, "I love the position I have at VBS. I have the opportunity to see the campers and team leaders at the start of the day when everyone is fresh and ready for the day's adventure." She adds, "I loved attending Vacation Bible School when I was a child, but it was not as creative or interactive as Ms. Jody's. Each year I am amazed at the development of the themes and activities she creates. Thank you for another amazing VBS!!"



Betty witnessed the kind acts of the campers towards each other. She saw a fourth grade boy helping out another boy when he needed help to find the restroom and refocus. Betty was impressed that the crew leaders showed patience and energy with grace and a smile and also with the listening and participation of the campers during Mass.

(Photo of Front Registration Desk)

Everyone learned about different ways that Jesus' power helps us do hard things, have hope, be bold and be good friends. Ultimately, we all just "TRUST JESUS!". Jesus' power will pull us through life's ups and downs. The children and youth will keep talking about their awesome VBC experience for years to come. I'm looking forward to VBC in 2022 and seeing more of our kids have the opportunity to join us.

PROJECT FRESH START Mission:

This year, our parish has the opportunity once again to participate in Project Fresh Start. This United Way of Portage County Volunteer Center program provides necessary school supplies to students in Portage County who qualify for free or reduced priced meals through their school.

The 2021 Rocky Railway VBC mission was to help give POWER to kids to plan for a better future by getting the supplies they need for school. We collected a variety of school supplies for Project Fresh Start, such as pencils, pens, markers, colored pencils, glue, pencil bags, rulers, scissors, notebooks, folders, some money, and other items according to individual grade requirements. Items were brought in and placed in the collection TRAIN CAR, located under the bulletin board in the Mary Room.



The start of a new school year means buying school supplies. For lower-income families, it can be a time when money is tight. Project Fresh Start depends on the support of our community to help provide school supplies to students in need. Our community can continue to collect school supplies for Project Fresh Start through mid-August. Backpacks and money donations also accepted. *For more information on this program, check out United Way of Portage County, www.volunteersrock.org/pfs/*