

# An Olympic Style Vacation Bible School

The theme of Vacation Bible School July 19-23 at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Ann Arbor was styled after the Olympics. Guest visitors Christina (Seufert) Sholtis, bronze medallist winner for diving in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics; Jim Herrmann, Defensive Coordinator for the University of Michigan football team accompanied by seven U of M football players; and Mitchell Garner, long distance



*Above:* Players for the U of M football team demonstrate to the children how to hold their hands to catch a football during the recreation period of Vacation Bible School.

runner, gave inspirational talks and taught the children skills from their field of expertise.

Sholtis brought her Olympic medal and the Olympic torch to show the children July 21. She spoke to the children of the importance of education and encouraged the children to stay far away from the harm of drugs.

"The word impossible is an opinion not a fact," Herrmann told the children. Herrmann encouraged the children to reach for high goals and not to be afraid when others discourage them in their talents or in their faith. Herrmann and seven

football players for U of M team taught the children how to catch and throw a football during the recreation period of Vacation Bible School on July 22.

Garner, a long distance runner who placed in the Boston Marathon (26.2 miles), spoke to the children about the training necessary for running and the importance of the Catholic faith in his life. Garner had just returned from the Olympic trials

where he was encouraging a family friend who subsequently made the US team for the Olympics to be held in August. During the recreation period in Vacation Bible School, Garner demonstrated stretching exercises and taught the children the proper way to run.

Fr. Jim McDougall, pastor, opened the week by telling the first of several bible stories about the life of

Paul. Each day under a tent the stories taken from the book of Acts were told. The stories told of Paul from his conversion, to his struggles, including his escape from Damascus and his shipwreck, to his preaching to the Athenians, describing the unknown God as the God of Jesus Christ, to his journey to Rome, where the victory is achieved in preaching Jesus Christ.

To the laughter and delight of the children, newly arrived parochial vicar for St. Francis, Fr. Kusi Cobona, demonstrated the "war dance" prior to the Rugby games of his native Fiji. A closing fanfare and



*Above:* Caitlin Ritenour, 6 years old, wears the bronze medal and holds the Olympic torch that Christina (Seufert) Sholtis (*to Caitlin's right*) brought to show the children during Vacation Bible School.

picnic ended the week with the children and volunteers wearing t-shirts specifically designed for the week. A flash of bright yellow bearing the symbol of three rings for the Holy Trinity and accentuated by the autographs of guest speakers and fellow classmates highlighted the closing.

In all, 215 children aged preschool to fifth grade, 104 youth aged 11-17 years, and 51 adult volunteers participated in this year's Vacation Bible School.

We are truly fortunate at St. Francis to have the commitment, energy, and enthusiasm of so many volunteers. To all the volunteers who gave of themselves to create this experience of growth in love and understanding of our Faith for our children: **Thank you!** A Mass will be said on August 29 for the intentions of all those who volunteered for Vacation Bible School. God bless you!