



OMPH School Scene

Discovering the Science Behind Poinsettias



The OMPH 8th grade class has been using the newly-constructed greenhouse to grow poinsettias this fall. The students researched poinsettias and discovered that the red poinsettia “flowers” are actually leaves, and they change color for the same reason tree leaves

change color in autumn. The green chlorophyll pigment dominates other pigments found in the leaves. When the chlorophyll decays, the other pigments can be observed, a bit like the way stars are always present in the sky, but their light is overwhelmed by the light of the sun in the daytime. They also learned that the color of the stems indicates the color the poinsettia will turn. To change the leaf color, the plant must have a change in the ratio of daylight to darkness. In fact, poinsettias need at least 13 hours of darkness for 6 to 8 weeks for the colors to be observed. Some sources indicate that even a small amount of light during the required dark hours will throw off the plants and prevent the color from changing. The first week in October, the students selected and named their plants. They placed them in the greenhouse they built last year. Thanks to the relatively warm fall, the plants have been able to stay in the greenhouse even overnight, except on the weekends. The students have been bringing their plants home most weekends to take care of them, making sure to cover them at 5:30 pm and uncover them at 8:00 am the next morning. Out in the greenhouse, the plants have been covered over by Mrs. DiNovis at 5:30 every evening, and the students uncover them just before the 8:00 am starting bell. A few extra plants were kept in the greenhouse but left uncovered, to see if any stray light might prevent the color change, or to find out if the natural day/night cycle in the fall is sufficient. Early in November, the students began to see some hopeful changes indicating that we may have red, white or pink poinsettias for Christmas!



Seeing the Beauty of God in Ourselves and Each Other

At Mass on October 27, Father John asked all the children to close their eyes. When they opened their eyes, they found him wearing a Grinch mask. He told the children, “Sometimes we hide behind a mask. We don’t want people to see who we really are, but God always knows, He sees who we really are.” He continued to say that “when we don’t follow God we become like the Grinch, but when we listen to Jesus we become the beautiful people we are. When we pray, that mask comes off and we see the beauty of God in ourselves and each other.”



For more information on OMPH School, contact us at:

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