



(Photo provided)



Red carpet celebrity

LEFT: Boylan Central Catholic High School sophomore Florenca Lowenthal and junior Gabriela Bruscato accompany Miss Illinois 2013 Brittany Smith to Kishwaukee Elementary School for a Red Ribbon Week presentation in Rockford, Oct 18.

'Blue-blood' royalty

RIGHT: Aquin Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School's homecoming court in Freeport was led by King Troy Doty and Queen Erin Glick. School colors are blue and gold.



(Photo provided)

VOCATION CORNER

Trust in God!

Unfortunately, fear is a common element that is present in many of our lives. For some of us this may be a big problem while for others it may just creep in from time to time. The tough thing about fear is that it takes our focus away from the Lord. The key to beating this difficulty in our life is to **trust** in God. This is, of course, easier said than done, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't put in the effort to grow in our level of trust. The key to trusting is to remind ourselves that God has a plan for our lives. When we find ourselves paralyzed with fear, we have to stop and ask ourselves, "Do I believe that God is a good and loving God who desires my fulfillment and well being?" Hopefully, the answer is "Yes!" From that point, we simply have to apply that principle of God's good plans for us to whatever situation we may be in. We need to cling to the known (God's loving goodness) in the midst of the unknown (whatever may be causing our fear). With a newfound trust we will be better able to discern God's will and to carry out His plan for our daily lives!

— Father Keith Romke, Diocesan Director of Vocations
Write to him at kromke@rockforddiocese.org.



(Photo provided)

Galleon sails into Boylan

Boylan Central Catholic High School in Rockford recently received a hand-made replica of the San Marcos, a Portuguese galleon that was part of the Spanish Armada from Ronald Ramlow (center). His hobby is building models of warships from the 1500s, 1600s and 1700s. Surrounding the artist and his boat are students from Jennifer Kazmerski's Spanish IV class who attended the presentation Oct. 18.

Helping

IN INDIANA



Adam Loelke

St. Mary Parish in Sycamore sent 20 teens and five adults to Mishawaka, Ind., to take part in a Catholic Heart Workcamp June 8-14. The group joined 300 other teens and adults for the week to help local residents and social agencies with repairs, clean-up, construction, yard work, food pantry help, soup kitchen service, and distributing donated goods. They also participated in daily Mass, reconciliation, and evening programs designed to enrich their service experiences, faith and understanding of Catholic social teaching.



Kayla Barton



Trent Englum



(Photo provided)

Stuebenville's spectacular

123 students and chaperones from St. Mary Parish in Sycamore, St. Mary Parish in DeKalb, St. Catherine Parish in Dundee and St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Hampshire traveled to Rochester, Minn., to attend Franciscan University's Steubenville North Conference last summer. The conference featured several prominent speakers, including Father Mike Schmitz, Jason Evert, Jackie Francois and Steve Angrisano. The Catholic band Sonar led worship for the weekend which included Mass, reconciliation, eucharistic adoration and fellowship. Here's what some said: "I experienced a physical and spiritual healing which brought peace and comfort." "God is real." "My faith was extremely strengthened and I felt closer to God especially during adoration. The speakers had a big impact on my experience and so did all my friends." "Steubenville this year brought me much closer to God and is making me rethink parts of my life."

YO FATHER

YO Father questions are answered by a priest of the Rockford Diocese. Send your questions to youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org.

Q I was talking with some friends the other night and they pretty much all believe it's OK for gays to get married. They were asking me why Catholics are against it, and all I could say was it's from the Bible. Can you tell me where in the Bible it says that? Are there any other reasons the Church is against it?

A This is a topic that requires a lot of attention these days. It requires both great clarity as well as great compassion. There are several references to homosexual acts in the Bible. Let me go through some of them and comment on them.

In **Genesis 2:24**, we see the plan and design of God for marriage. I believe this is the most important Scripture to consider when trying to understand the problem with homosexual marriage. By looking at the natural design and intention of God in creating male and female we discover that marriage is made for the joining of two people of the opposite sex. I think that sometimes this fact is so obvious that it is often overlooked.

Leviticus 18 deals with laws relating to sexual behavior. Verse 22 says, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination." This passage is not so much about homosexual marriage as it is about homosexual sex. The passage could not be more clear.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says this, "Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor sodomites nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God." Again, this refers to people having homosexual relations (sodomites). The word "sodomy" of course comes from **Genesis 19** where we see the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah to, in part, be homosexual activity. We see this warning repeated in **1 Timothy 1:10**.

Romans 1:26-27 is perhaps the most convincing passage about homosexual activity: "Their females exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the males likewise gave up natural relations with females and burned with lust for one another. Males did shameful things with males and thus received in their own persons the due penalty for their perversity."

With all of these passages quoted I want to reiterate what I said in the first passage. There is a distinction to be made between homosexual activity and homosexual marriage. Both are contrary to God's natural plan for marriage and sexuality. But I do think it's important to see them as related but distinct issues.

I wouldn't want to quote all these Scriptures without saying one more extremely important thing. If you have a same sex attraction, please know that this does not change God's love for you one single bit. Regardless of any sexual feelings or desires you may have, you are of infinite value and precious in God's eyes.

Sexual feelings are very easily stirred up to feel and desire all sorts of things. These feelings are easily confused. Please do not ever take your identity from your sexual feelings alone. You are so much more than sexual desires. God wants to help you sort them out. I believe this is the most important and most loving advice we can give to anyone who deals with a same sex attraction.

Sadly, when someone supports gay marriage they are simply telling that person to act on their feelings and passions rather than on the truth of their sacred dignity. This is a great disservice to the person who struggles with these sorts of desires. True love always is centered in the truth of God.

on the record

By CHARLIE MARTIN | CNS

I've been a James Blunt fan since the release of his debut album "Back to Bedlam" in 2004. His big single off that disc, "You're Beautiful," brought him international recognition as a recording artist. The album still ranks at the top of all discs sold in the United Kingdom at the turn of the millennium. His fourth, and latest, studio album, "Moon Landing," features the disc's lead single "Bonfire Heart."

The song is about a romance in which he tells his partner that "everybody wants a flame, but they don't want to get burnt." While these words express his apprehension about getting involved, he also realizes that now it "is our turn." He believes that "people like us, we don't need that much, just someone that starts, starts a spark in our bonfire hearts."

While the song refers to a romantic "connection," love is much more than romance. Another way to look at the song is to ask: How many sparks of love will you bring to others each day?

The song mentions that "this world is getting colder, strangers passing by, no one offers you a shoulder, no one looks you in the eye." As disciples of Jesus, that is not our world. There are many who face difficulties without the grace of encouragement. They encounter hurt without assurance of healing, and suffer injustice without the hope of fairness and change.

Today's disciples do not deny such "cold" circumstances. We are committed to respond.

We are willing to bring the spark of genuine caring to all who are near us.

Consider your peers in school. As you know, teen life is filled with many emotional ups and downs, surprise difficulties, and uncertainties about where one fits in a school social system.

However, those committed to bring the "spark" of God's presence look past their concerns to see the problems in the lives of others. They try to treat every peer with kindness, even those who don't return the kindness.

They refuse to be locked into a particular social group and look to be friendly with all, regardless of cultural and social background. It makes no difference to them whether the other teen is a theater diva, a sports jock, a geek, or anyone else. They are friendly and encouraging.

Family life is another place where they bring their "bonfire hearts" and look to start fires of genuine love.

Even during moments when siblings can drive others crazy, a person with a bonfire heart can keep a sense of humor and be genuinely interested in what is happening with the other person.

Sometimes siblings become real friends, and sometimes not, but those who want to give sparks of love seek any opportunity to spread the love of God.

Besides home and the family, look at organizations where you can promote your sparks of caring. Maybe you could join a group that serves meals to homeless individuals or bring your muscles to a

Bonfire Heart

Sung by James Blunt
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Your mouth is a revolver firing bullets in the sky
Your love is like a soldier, loyal till you die
And I've been looking at the stars for a long, long time
I've been putting out fires all my life
Everybody wants a flame, but they don't want to get burnt
And today is our turn

Days like these lead to nights like this, leads to love like ours
You light the spark in my bonfire heart
People like us, we don't need that much
Just someone that starts, starts the spark in our bonfire hearts

This world is getting colder, strangers passing by
No one offers you a shoulder, no one looks you in the eye



(Photo: www.jamesblunt.com)

But I've been looking at you for a long, long time
Just trying to break through, trying to make you mine
Everybody wants a flame, they don't want to get burnt
Well today is our turn

Days like these lead to nights like this, leads to love like ours
You light a spark in my bonfire heart
People like us, we don't need that much
Just someone that starts, starts a spark in our bonfire hearts

group that builds homes for those who need them. If you are a member of a parish youth group, show leadership and get your group involved in a service project.

Some of this work may lead others to a type of work that gives to the community. There are countless ways to ignite sparks of concern and service. Disciples of Jesus see an alternative for those who do not experience a genuine connection, for those who populate a cold world. They want to bring the warmth of the love and caring that exists in their bonfire hearts.

Send comments to Charlie Martin at chmartin@chmartin@hughes.net or at 7125W 200S, Rockport, IN 47635.

Write to youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org.

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