



St. Ed's 'seasonal help'



(Photos provided)



St. Edward Central Catholic High School students in Elgin braved single digits at their Donation Drive-Through on Dec. 7. They collected gifts for the school's annual fundraiser, Tidal Wave, in April.

LEFT: On Nov. 24, students in the religious education program at Church of the Holy Spirit in Roscoe celebrated the end of the Year of Faith by inviting parishioners on a pilgrimage to their classrooms which were decorated to represent shrines and holy places in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan. Father Steven Sabo led the "pilgrimage" and blessed the students and others. Among locations depicted were Holy Hill and Sinsinawa Mound in Wisconsin and Solanus Casey Center in Michigan.

Yo on the record

By CHARLIE MARTIN | CNS

Chris Daughtry has to be considered among the top three most successful artists to come out of the "American Idol" TV series. Even though he was not the series winner for his season, like Kelly Clarkson and Carrie Underwood, his success nearly matches theirs and exceeds that of other winners or contestants.

Recently, he released the album "Baptized," and off it is the current single "Waiting for Superman."

The song describes a woman "waiting for Superman" to come "pick her up in his arms ... lift her up and take her anywhere," and "show her love."

However, Superman has not shown up. She tells herself that "he's still coming, just a little bit late ... stuck at the laundromat washing his cape." She needs this savior because she's been "chasing an answer, a sign lost in the abyss, this Metropolis." She's hoping that Superman will "save her now before it's too late."

All of Daughtry's metaphors speak to a life that is not working well. We all know that Superman exists only in films and graphic novels. Yet, in times of discouragement, it is natural to want someone else to show us how to get beyond the pain that has settled.

The song invites us to consider two points helpful to how we live. We all need support as we craft what our lives will be. Where would any of us be without the caring presence of family, friends, mentors and others who bring their concern into our lives?

Yet, each of us also holds the power to make our lives our greatest work. We create this "art" out of the gifts, interests and attitudes that we each possess.

God placed within us the ability to find satisfaction, adventure and learning. Yet, for most of us, not every choice works out well. In the face of disappointment and mistakes, we may wish for "Superman" to come fix what is wrong or hurtful. Eventually, we discover that it is up to us to fix our problems.

Often remedying what is wrong or painful requires change. For example, the song's character seems to face loneliness and a lack of connection for sharing love with others. Living with this loneliness is difficult, discouraging. However, opportunity always exists.

She could make the choice to stop "counting the stars" and "making a wish on a passing car." Instead, she can change her approach and venture out to engage the world. One way to do so is to volunteer to help others. Most parishes offer a variety of groups and ministries that would welcome her presence. Superman will not arrive, but in reality, she doesn't need him.

She has herself and God's guidance. With both of these, change is possible.

The song also emphasizes how much difference each of us can make in the life of others. While no one can be a "Superman," each of us possesses divine purpose.

Our lives are not just about what happens to us. As today's disciples of Jesus, we want to use our time, our abilities and our vision to help the world become a more loving and caring place. We are not asked to find a cape and "save" others, but it is amazing what good can happen when we care for the well-being of others.

Waiting for Superman

Sung by Daughtry
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(Photo/ www.daughtryofficial.com)

She's watching the taxi driver, he pulls away
She's been locked up inside her apartment a hundred days

She says, yeah, he's still coming, just a little bit late
He got stuck at the laundromat washing his cape
She's just watching the clouds roll by and they spell her name like Lois Lane
And she smiles, oh, the way she smiles

Refrain:

She's talking to angels, counting the stars
Making a wish on a passing car
She's dancing with strangers, she's falling apart
Waiting for Superman to pick her up
In his arms, in his arms
Waiting for Superman,

She's out on the corner trying to catch a glimpse
Nothing's making sense
She's been chasing an answer

A sign lost in the abyss, this Metropolis

She says, yeah, he's still coming, just a little bit late
He got stuck at the Five and Dime saving the day
She says if life were a movie, then it wouldn't end like this
Left without a kiss
Still, she smiles, the way she smiles, yeah

(Repeat refrain.)

To lift her up and take her anywhere
Show her love and flying through the air
Save her now before it's too late tonight
Oh, at the speed of light
And she smiles

(Repeat refrain.)

Consequently, Jesus' disciples are always on the lookout for ways of being kind, generous and encouraging. Think about this today: Who will you support with such attitudes and actions? You cannot make right everything for others, but your smiles, your words of support and other acts of kindness are the light of God helping others see past their difficulties.

You are not Superman, but you are a disciple of Jesus, and there's a difference you can make.

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

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VOCATION CORNER

Are you part of a saints club?

A few weeks ago, a principal from one of our fine diocesan schools wrote me a letter that touched my heart and excited me as to the future of our diocese. She explained to me that a third-grader had sent her a note asking if he could start a new club at the school. The note read like this: "Can I make a club for kids that want to become saints? For kids who want to become deacons, priests, bishops, popes and nuns! Kids that want to know more about the Bible?" After reading this note I thought to myself: "I want to join this club!" This note encourages me because it shows that at a young age this little saint-in-the-making already understands two very important things that many teens and adults can forget from time to time! First, the most important thing that any of us can strive towards in life is sanctity; all of us, without exception, are called to be saints! The second lesson that he understands is that all of us need a support system on this journey. The media daily bombard us with things that seem to tear down all that we stand for in our quest for holiness and sanctity. In light of this we need to combat this negativity and secularism by surrounding ourselves with people who will build us up and challenge us to live out our life in Christ! So today, let us ask ourselves what we can do to grow in holiness and how we can help others do the same. Make the decision to form your own unofficial saints club!

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



(Photo provided)

On Nov. 26, orphans from of El Salvador visited Holy Cross Parish in Batavia and surrounding parishes. The Central American country is the home of Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos, an organization that cares for abandoned, abused, and homeless children. Ten children from NPH came to spread awareness and collect funds for their foundation by singing and dancing. Visiting students were guests of parish families, where a few found time to try some balancing tricks at dinner.

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YO Father questions are answered by Msgr. Aaron Brodeski. Send your questions to youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org.



(Photo provided)

On Oct. 27, the Youth Foundation for God's Nation, based at the parishes in Galena and Scales Mound, held a monthly gathering with the theme of 'Praise and Worship.' Youth Ministry teens from parishes throughout the tri-state — Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois — area gathered, along with Seminarian Kyle Manno (back, right) from the University of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, three musicians from Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and Kat Edwards, youth ministry intern in the Illinois parishes. The musicians, along with Kat and Kyle, led the 28 teens who attended in an evening of song and praise.

Q I know you've talked about vocations for people who are interested in being a priest or a sister, but is it wrong of me to pray for the vocation of marriage? The way some of my friends talk, I think they all plan to live with someone and then decide whether they want to get married.

A I think praying for the vocation to marriage is a wonderful idea! And very much needed today! Let me offer a few thoughts on this.

Praying for your vocation is very important. But, in all truth, there may even be something necessary for many people even before they pray for their vocation.

Namely, they need to realize they actually have a vocation.

Perhaps to some this seems like an obvious statement but I'm guessing that more people than you realize do not even understand the idea of a vocation as they grow and begin to look at their future. Many just presume they will fall in love one day and get married and all will be well. And though this may be the case for many, there is still a step or two missing.

I think the first thing that all young people need to realize is that God has a plan for your life. So, I suggest to all teens and college-age students that you begin by the realization that God has a perfect plan for your life and the key is to discern this. A good prayer to pray every day is something like, "Lord, I say yes to your will in my life. I may not know it yet, but whatever it is, I desire to follow that plan alone. Give me the insight to discern that plan and the courage to say yes to it every day."

From there, when someone truly discerns a calling from God to marriage, the process has just begun. It's not so much about simply going out and "falling in love." Rather, it's about letting the Holy Spirit guide you to the person you are called to marry. When you meet someone, I'd suggest you spend a lot of time in prayer asking the Lord for guidance in your relationship.

Keep the relationship pure and Christ centered.

Challenge the person to treat you as a child of God and with love and respect. And, of course, strive to do the same yourself. If Christ is at the center of that relationship and if you are continually seeking God's will, then little by little the Holy Spirit will confirm in your heart that this marriage is your vocation and that this particular person is called to be your spouse.

I realize that many people may not follow this process of discernment so it's also very important to note that once a couple enters into marriage, and especially marriage as a sacrament within our Church, God's grace will be there calling you to now live the vows you made. Prayer to live those vows well is so essential these days. Many marriages are wonderful and fulfilling. But way too many bring great pain and hardship. Continually saying yes to your vows, being faithful to them, deepening your unwavering commitment and striving to give yourself to your spouse in the same way that Christ gave himself to the Church is the key. And this requires much prayer. So prayer before and during marriage is essential.

And to your last point about living together — this is a popular idea today. However, I can assure you that it is always a bad idea. It will always weaken the foundation of your vows and married life. Living together is not a "test marriage" since there is no permanent marriage covenant there yet. In fact, I'm confident in telling you that living together before marriage greatly increases your chances of divorce and an unhappy marriage down the road. The statistics support this statement too. So approach dating, engagement and marriage the way God's grace leads you and you will not regret it!



(Photos provided)

Parish teens attend national conferences in Indiana



High school students from St. John Neumann Parish in St. Charles, St. Margaret Mary Parish in Algonquin, and SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Cary joined 23,000 other high school students at the bi-annual National Catholic Youth Conference Nov. 21-24. Six young adults also joined them to attend the National Catholic Collegiate Conference at the same time. They heard great speakers and musicians like Matt Maher, Ansel Augustine, Bob Perron, John Angotti, Indianapolis Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin and Auxiliary Bishop Christopher J. Coyne, and some even saw Rockford native Bishop Timothy Doherty of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana.