



VOCATION CORNER

Your key vocation is to be holy

Just a week ago the Diocesan Vocations Office put on the annual Jeremiah Days vocation camp. The big thing that is stressed with these young men (entering grades 7-9) is that they need to be open to whatever God is calling them to. Many may say that they are too young to be thinking about a lifelong vocation to the priesthood or religious life, but at this age some are already thinking about dating, which if done properly is meant to be discernment toward marriage, which is also a lifelong vocation!

That being said, the focus of our time with them is to carry out what they are all called to: Sanctity!

One of the young men actually had a t-shirt with the following quote from Pope Francis on the back: "To be a saint is not a privilege of a few ... Sanctity is a vocation for everyone."

- Want to be holy
- Serve others
- Pray

In the homily that this quote came from, the Holy Father also said, "the saints are men and women who have joy in their hearts and spread it to others. Never hating, but serving the other, is the greatest need. To pray and to live in joy: this is the way of sanctity!"

I think that this is great advice for anyone who is seeking to discern where God is calling him or her in life.

Begin by desiring sanctity, and go out to achieve this through living and spreading joy, through serving, and through prayer.

Follow these three steps and know that by doing so you will assuredly be pleasing to God and that He will guide you in the particulars of His desires for you each day.

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

P.S. There's still time to get in on the First Call Retreat for young men in 10th-grade through college. It will be July 20 - 23 at the Bishop Lane Retreat Center west of Rockford. Cost is \$90, but assistance is available. And walk-ins are welcome. Email Father Romke or check www.rockforddiocese.org for information.



(Photos provided)

Camp special  
Retreat to move closer  
New event joins St. Therese Camp line-up

By AMANDA HUDSON | News editor

Five college-age women took part in a new, specialized program at this year's St. Therese Vocation Camp. Their experience was more retreat-like in the original Bishop Lane Retreat Center building, even as 32 younger girls were attending a more traditional summer camp program up the hill at the youth center.

Emily Berglund came from Naperville to the retreat, held June 22-25.

"It was amazing," Berglund said mid-retreat. "I'm really glad they separated us. It was very intimate, (so we were) able to get to know each other and bond. We were able to spend a lot of time with the Lord. ... The talks were very, very helpful. We really grew deeply."

Sister Faustina, a Sister of Charity, was in charge of the older girls' retreat.

"It was wonderful. We had a lot more quiet time," she said. "It allowed them to dig deeper and listen to God. We had more flexibility with the schedule."

Sister Faustina gave the first talk, "Mary, woman of faith, guided by the Holy Spirit," the opening evening of the retreat. Other religious sisters spoke about Mary's life "in intimacy with the mystery of her Son," and about the "revolutionary nature of love and tenderness."

The young women learned about "moments of aridity, darkness and fatigue," and about proclaiming the greatness of the Lord, pondering the Lord, and being of service to others. Morning, evening and night prayer helped to order their days, and other prayers included the rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, adoration



Ana Weickert talks with one of the nuns at breakfast during the St. Therese Camp retreat.



Q I met a guy this summer at my work. He comes in around closing time and gets a coke or something and waits for me to get off. We talk for a few minutes before I go home. I've asked him to come over and meet my parents, but he says no. He doesn't go to my church - I'm not even sure he's Catholic - and he doesn't go to my high school. I'm really starting to like him, and he's asked me to a movie. I'm not sure whether to say yes and see what happens. I don't want to lose him, but I'm afraid if I keep asking him to come to the house first, that's what will happen. What do you think??

A Happy to answer your question because as a spiritual father I always want to help protect and defend your heart and the hearts of all of my spiritual children! I think that before I answer your question, it's important to look at what the motivation of your heart is in the first place.

I believe that the greatest desire of the human heart is simply to be loved, acknowledged, and appreciated! All of us want to be accepted and because of this it feels great to be noticed by others. This of course is why you don't want to lose the attention of the young man. However, at the very same time, you're a smart young lady because you understand that not all attention is created equal!

Love, which we all desire, consists in a whole lot more than feeling appreciated and noticed.

Love at its very core requires respect, mutuality (cooperation), and above all sacrifice.

Looking at the situation at hand, it sure seems like this young man isn't interested in certain things that you see as being important. He seems to be shrugging off what is important to you: introducing him to your parents, which is an important thing for all relationships.

Let's put it this way, if you'd be embarrassed to introduce someone to your parents, or if the young man doesn't want to meet them, then maybe he isn't the kind of person that you should be hanging around with! From the details that you've given me, it doesn't sound like the young man is prepared to sacrifice in the smallest of ways, which would lead me to think that he'd fail in big ways too. In other words, it doesn't seem to me that the formula for true love is present here!

Finally, when it comes to relationships, sharing values and especially sharing beliefs is extremely important.

There are already enough obstacles out there that try to tear down our faith, so it definitely won't help if you establish one of your closest relationships with someone who may challenge your faith and in the process cause you to lose your faith ... it's just not worth it! So my final "Fatherly" advice would be to make sure that you really know a person, and what they truly stand for, before you go entering into a deep friendship with them. The whole point of dating is to see if someone would be a good fit for marriage, and the point of marriage is to lead one's spouse to heaven, so, if someone isn't already inspiring you and leading you closer to Christ right now, then chances are that this won't be their focus down the road either, so it would probably be best to avoid dating them, no matter how funny or cute they may seem!

This month's YO Father question is answered by Father Keith Romke. Send your questions to youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org.



Emily Berglund (left) was among the young women who opted for the retreat portion of the St. Therese Camp.

and the sacrament of confession.

Ana Weickert, 18, of Rockford, named adoration and confession as being "the most powerful experience for me at the camp."

She had noticed information about the camp in her parish bulletin. The retreat "was more than I expected," she said. "I was really nervous about the whole experience, but it was amazing."

Genevieve Philipp, 20, of Roscoe, heard about the retreat from a Sister of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George.

"She emailed me," Philipp said of the sister she had met some time ago at Franciscan University.

"I loved (the retreat)," Philipp said. When asked what was the best part, she smiled and said it was "a tie — between being able to talk with the nuns freely and being able to visit the Poor Clares." And she said she was happy to meet and get to know Sister M. Chiara from the St. Francis of the Martyr order, who served as a presenter on the retreat.

The college-age women joined the younger campers for a visit to the Poor Clares monastery in Rockford, for meals including a cook-out, for a vocation fair that featured booths from several religious orders, and for a closing Mass and question-and-answer time with Bishop David Malloy.

"Lord, going forward, where do you want me in this life?" is a good question to ask, said the bishop in his opening greeting to the campers. He thanked campers of all ages for coming, adding that "we want you to be happy ... a deeper kind of happiness (that is not) what the world gives."



Genevieve Philipp poses with Sister Chiara.

Among other thoughts, Bishop Malloy said there is "one other thing I think you should be looking for in your vocation: Does it make you laugh?" In the midst of the challenges, he added, "there should be the joy reflected in laughter ..."

"I hope you go away from here ... having had a good experience to get to know the Lord better. Think about it. Pray about it. Laugh about it. And don't be intimidated ... Don't have any doubt. Christ will ultimately be clear.

"You have to keep asking (and) keep that listening ear ...."



Not Tom Sawyer, nor Huckleberry Finn, but Eli Bluijstone paints this fence, which is in Toledo, Ohio.

Helping



Matthew Coovert plays with children at a daycare center in Toledo, Ohio.

Sycamore teens travel for Catholic Heart Work Camp

S t. Mary Church youth ministry from Sycamore sent 23 teens and five adults (far left) to Toledo, Ohio, 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

IN TOLEDO, OHIO

Catholic Heart Work Camp

with building repairs, clean-up, construction, yard work, painting, food pantry help, and distributing donated goods. They also participated in daily Mass, reconciliation, and evening programs designed to enrich their service experiences, their faith and their understanding of Catholic social teaching.

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