



# YO FATHER

**Q** I am not Catholic, but I read *The Observer* at a friend's house. I hope you will answer this question. I believe I am being drawn to the Catholic faith. I've talked to my parents — who are not Catholic — and they don't like the idea. They think Catholics aren't really even Christian. But I have been to Mass with my friend a few times and I like the way I feel when I go. What do you think I should do about this? P.S. I'm still in high school.

**A** The first thing that I want to say is that I am proud of you for desiring to follow your convictions and to begin to journey towards where you feel that the Lord is drawing you. That in itself is a big step, and I want for you to know that you ought to be commended for it.

As you have felt this desire to become Catholic begin to grow within you, my hope would be that there have been two things in particular that have arisen as a result of it.

The first of course would be a continued desire to attend Mass and to deepen the love and appreciation of the experience that you have felt and perceived when you have gone with your friend.

The second thing that I truly hope you are drawn to is a desire to learn more about the Catholic Church and the Catholic faith. You see, the very fact

that your parents don't believe that Catholic's are even Christians (and I have to say that in fact many Christians would agree with this false idea about Catholics), the very fact that they don't believe this shows that they don't fully understand the Catholic Church. (On a side note, Acts 11:26 says "It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians." At that point in Church history, the members of the Catholic Church were the only Christians!)

So, I simply want to say that the Church that your parents are seemingly rejecting is simply their own notion of what the Catholic Church is, and not what it is in truth.

**I would say that the best course of action would be for you to study and to learn about the Catholic faith.**

You can do this by attending your friend's Church's

RCIA program (a class for those who want to learn about and possibly become Catholic) by reading good books that explain the faith ("What Catholics Really Believe" by Karl Keating), by reading stories of conversion ("Rome Sweet Home" by Scott and Kimberly Hahn), or even by scheduling a time to meet with one of your friend's priests. By learning more for yourself you will then better understand what it is that you are being drawn to and you will also be better equipped to explain to your parents what the Catholic Church truly is. (Try to do this in a calm and peaceful manner, as a way of teaching and learning rather than as an argument or a way of trying to one-up each other.)

In the end, I hope one of two things will happen: your parents will come to understand your desire, or they at least will see that you aren't making this decision based on a whim, which may help them to

respect your decision.

**So in the end my recommendation would be to pray and then to begin to learn more and more about the Catholic Church so that you really know what you're desiring to enter.**

Then, after a while — there's no need to rush the learning process — have a peaceful conversation with your parents so that they can see how much this means to you and so that they can see that you aren't just doing this on a whim.

Always know that if at any point you are confused, you can talk to one of your friend's priests for clarification and direction.

God Bless you and be assured of my prayers as you continue on this journey!

*This month's YO Father question is answered by Father Keith Romke. Send your questions to [youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org](mailto:youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org).*

## Geneva teens know homeless feeling



Tents, boxes, tarps and as many clothes as they could pile on were what kept "homeless" teens from St. Peter Parish in Geneva warm on Sleep Out Saturday, Nov. 1.

The ROCK Mission Team at St. Peter Parish, Geneva, hosted their first Sleep Out Saturday (SOS) for the Homeless, Nov. 1.

Each high school participant took the role of a homeless person for a night.

The sun was shining brightly, temperatures were warmer than anticipated, and excitement was in the air as sleepers set up the tent- and box-city early in the evening.

The group also attended a rally at Bridge Communities in Glen Ellyn where they heard witness stories from families who have successfully broken the cycle of homelessness. Back at St. Peter, they took part in activities to help them recognize some of the circumstances that lead to homelessness.

Everyone was told to eat before arriving, but unbeknownst to them, some parish volunteers set up a soup kitchen quite late in the evening and served bowls of homemade chicken noodle soup accompanied by bread and hot cider.

The evening activities ended with a prayer service which included a version of Stations of the Cross focusing on poverty and a music video about the

despair felt by the homeless. Watch it at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgEU\\_Lr8ie8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgEU_Lr8ie8).

After prayer, everyone threw on extra layers of clothing and retired to their box, tent, or vehicle.

As overnight temperatures dipped to 25 degrees, the teens sought brief refuge in the indoor warming center where they could use a washroom or just take a few minutes to wiggle their cold and stiff fingers and toes. Those who needed a longer warm-up period prayed the rosary for the homeless.

Neither the teens nor the adult chaperones could escape the frost that quickly formed on car windows, boxes, and tents. Multiple layers of clothing, blankets, and sleeping bags, failed to diminish the pervasive chill inside the sleeping quarters. While Daylight Savings Time provided a delightful extra hour of sleep for most folks that evening, the teens quickly learned that it resulted in an extra hour of overnight misery for those who are homeless.

Breakfast was peanut butter sandwiches and grapes to ease the rumble of hungry stomachs, but it took some time for everyone to warm up after their night of being homeless.

## SOS'ers react to homeless night

- The one night I didn't have a home, I felt lonely. I was with my friends, but there was still something that made me feel lonely. — age 16
- I had many challenges from being freezing with no house to shelter me, to being hungry without a fridge to crack in to. — age 15
- It helped me realize what it is like for the homeless and how much other people can make a big difference even if it is just a bowl of soup or a warm place to settle. — age 16
- I am so grateful for my warm bed. I will think about all of the people who have nowhere to sleep on cold nights and will keep them in my prayers. — age 17
- I got hungry after a couple of hours, but we got to eat soup. Homeless people could go days without food. The ground was uncomfortable, yet I had a box underneath me. People sleep on the streets with nothing. — age 15
- It was cool to see how Bridge helped the two families from the video, and seeing them in person

was amazing. I can't imagine waking up in our car igloo night after night. — age 16

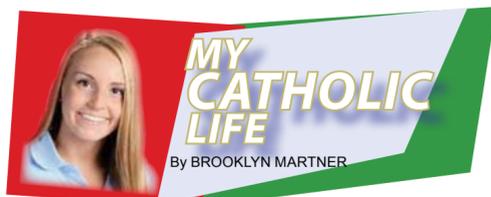
■ I experienced a dreary night spent outside. It has made me realize how fortunate I am and how thankful I should be for a home, food, etc. — age 16

■ There are many hardships for the homeless. I have now experienced some of those personally and think I should spend more time up at Hessed House and talk to homeless people laying around because it just might make their day. — age 15

■ I was cold from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet. The whole night, I was thinking, "praise God I am blessed with a home!" — age 16

■ The life of the homeless is frustrating. Maybe they will find a soup kitchen like we did, but a lot may not be able to get in or find one. There is always a feeling of dependence. I can give and help homeless people in more ways. The reality of being homeless is a scary and sad thing. — age 15

I was fortunate enough to be in a car even though it was cold and small. I'm glad I came because

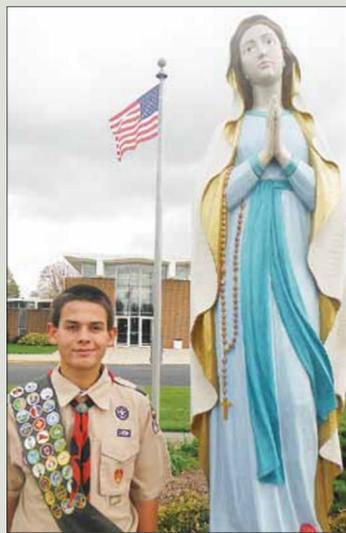


**B**eing a Catholic is not just being someone who goes to church and loves God. Being a Catholic is someone who follows the examples of Jesus and lives a holy and healthy life. Through prayer, study, and reflection, Catholics learn how to grow closer to God and strengthen their relationship. Catholics can express their relationship with God through their actions. Going to church does not mean a person is a good Catholic. A good Catholic is generous, patient, and kind to all those who they encounter. I live my faith everyday through my actions. I try to be an overall good person and Catholic. Following The Ten Commandments, going to church, being a good student, and listening to my parents are all ways I live my faith through my actions.

Although I try to be, I am not perfect. Because I am a teenager in today's society, I am tempted by peer pressure to sin. I sometimes struggle with my decisions to follow the examples of Jesus. I try to make a conscience effort every time I make a decision to do what Jesus would want me to do. For my high school, it is a requirement to turn in ten service hours a year. When I do my act of service, I do not do it because I have to, I do it because I enjoy helping others. I also turn in more service ours than required. I usually help out at Feed My Starving Children and at benefits for my school and park district. I enjoy enriching my faith with God everyday through becoming a better person.

— Brooklyn Martner is a junior at Rosary High School in Aurora.

## Three earn Eagle Scout honors



Keegan Donnelly

Three area scouts have joined other outstanding American citizens who have become Eagle Scouts, among them President Gerald Ford, astronaut Neil Armstrong, and cinematographer Steven Spielberg.

As all scouts know, part of becoming an Eagle Scout involves doing some sort of service project. These three scouts took varied approaches to that requirement.

Keegan Donnelly of DeKalb began his work as an eighth-grader at St. Mary School in DeKalb. As a member of the 2014 centennial graduating class, he wanted to do something for the school that had done so much for him and his family. He met with the pastor and deacon in charge of grounds and they agreed on a combination of ideas, including cleaning up and landscaping the center island in the school's driveway.

By the end, he had not only cleaned up the weeds and landscaped the center island, but had arranged for lighting for the area, repainting the statue of Mary in the island, reworking the ground around the school's entrance sign, installation of an American flag in the cafeteria where many Scout events are held, and mulching all the trees in front of the school.

He sought assistance for the projects from H.I. Stone and Son's, Dave Stran Landscaping, Lowe's Home Improvement Centers, and St. Mary science and math teacher, Kristen Alger, her daughter Maddie, and his mother.

Keegan is a freshman at Aurora Central Catholic High School, where he is active in football, band, and wrestling. He is also the Senior Patrol Leader for his Scout Troop.

Marmion Academy senior Conroy Unruh, son of Brad and Cathy of Batavia, was honored as an Eagle Scout in a ceremony at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve Oct. 12. He is a member of the Three Fires Council, Troop 3.



Conroy Unruh

Conroy's project was a blood drive, for which he recruited donors, and then conducted the drive in his community. His goal was to collect 25 pints of blood. With the cooperation of Aurora Heartland Blood Center, he managed to collect 26 pints.

In Troop 3, Conroy has served in a number of leadership roles, has earned the 50-miler award for canoeing and has attended Camp Freeland Leslie as well as the Welte Survival Campout. His high adventure trips include the Boundary Waters of Minnesota, Superior Hiking Trail, and the Maroon Bells 4 Pass Loop in Colorado.

Conroy is a member of Annunciation Church in Aurora and is a cantor and Eucharistic minister at Marmion Abbey. He is active in cross country, swimming, choir, fishing team, and the school play at Marmion Academy.

Brandon Lach of St. Charles was honored with the Eagle Scout rank at St. Patrick Parish in St. Charles.

Brandon's scouting career began in 2002 in first grade as a Tiger Cub when he joined Cub Scout Pack 110 at St. Patrick Parish, St. Charles.

Brandon's Eagle Scout project was to construct a new food pantry in order to relocate an existing food pantry for St. Vincent de Paul Society.

As a member of Boy Scout Troop 10, Brandon served in many leadership positions and has taken part in VFW Memorial Day Services as well as the Troop 10 Silver Glen Roadside clean-up.

Brandon is currently a senior at Wheaton Academy, where he is active in a variety of extracurricular activities, such as cross country and track, and fine arts, including orchestra where he currently is first chair in the violin section. Brandon plays both electric guitar and violin for the Worship Team.

Brandon is a member of the National Honor Society, has been on the honor roll all four years, and was a member of the mock trial team his sophomore year, when the team qualified for state competition in Springfield.



Brandon Lach

## VOCATION CORNER

### Taking time to pray

**A** couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to spend three days on retreat. During this time I was able to set aside all of the many things that are usually on my plate, and to focus 100% on God and on His love for me. This time spent in deep prayer reminded me of a few things. The first is of course that if we want to hear God and if we want to know where He is calling, then we have to take time to listen. This can't be something that just happens from time to time when we feel like it. Or to put it in other terms, we can't treat prayer like an emergency parachute that we're glad to have in our pack but that we hope we'll never have to use! We need to take time every day to pray and to listen. Even more important though is to make sure that when we pray that we aren't just going through the motions. If you take time to pray every day but allow yourself to be distracted most of the time, then you're limiting your ability to grow in your relationship with God. It is important to lay aside all worries, tasks, and agendas when coming to prayer. Finally, we need to have confidence that if we come to God in prayer, that He WILL answer us. He WILL respond. So, take time to pray and to really delve in deep, and be assured that it will be worth your while.

— Father Keith Romke, Diocesan Director of Vocations  
Write to him at [kromke@rockforddiocese.org](mailto:kromke@rockforddiocese.org).

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