



VOCATION CORNER

God makes things work

I always enjoy having the opportunity to share the story of my own discernment of God's call in my life with anyone who is willing to listen. The reason why is that I think it demonstrates and makes evident the facts that following God's call often requires sacrifice but at the same time God desires for all of us to be truly happy.

I say this because for the longest time my plan for my life was to have the single most awesome family in the history of the world! Eventually however, I felt a strong tug at my heart that God was calling me to be a priest.

Of course, I was faced with a big problem because I knew that it would be impossible to do both at the same time. So, for a while I spent time and energy trying to figure out how I could make both plans work . . . but it just wasn't possible.

So finally, I loosed my grip on my plan and let it go, because I knew that somehow and some way, God's plan would be more fulfilling. As a result of following God's plan I went through seminary and became a priest.

I look back at it now and smile, however, because in the end my plan actually did end up getting fulfilled, albeit in a different way than I expected! People call me "Father" because I am now a spiritual father of the Church, which has become my family.

The best part is that the Church isn't just any family, it is **the** single most awesome family in the history of the world! So, I encourage you to let God lead, and to let Him amaze you in how everything will work out.

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

From east to west

HS students bring Lent into their lives

Through almsgiving ...



(Photos provided)

This year at **St. Edward Central Catholic High School** in Elgin, the theology classes sponsored an all-school food drive. Food collected will be delivered to the Elgin Knights of Columbus for the St. Vincent de Paul Society to distribute to area families in need. Among students organizing the drive are (front) freshmen Anthony Calabrese and Evin Jorgenson, juniors John Paul Pagulayan and Jimmy Harkins, freshman Mariel Franco, (standing, back) sophomores Molly Eisen, Emily Stapay, and Sarah Julseth, and freshman Gloria Stoltz.



Boylan Central Catholic High School students and faculty in Rockford collected a record-breaking \$10,532 this Lent for the people of Haiti. The money will be divided equally between the Hope for Haitians and the Haitian Project. Posting with a giant check are (from left) Porter Knighton, Jonathan Alvarado, Tyler Callison, teachers Paula Sentovich and Sandra Blevins (project coordinator), Alison Laga and Margaret Szymanski.

At **Rosary High School** in Aurora, the theme for Lent this year is "Leaving Your Fingerprints on God's World." The Lenten almsgiving project is to build another house in Haiti, as it has since 2013. Each house is made of 1,220 cinder-block bricks, which cost \$5.25 each. Supporters may purchase bricks for \$5 each. For every \$5 contributed, Sandra and Paul Iwanski, campus minister and theology teacher, respectively, will add 25 cents as their own Lenten almsgiving. Seniors Megan Conlin and Katie Paradis (right) stand in front of a "brick" house in the Rosary foyer where donors will be acknowledged. To help raise more money for bricks, Rosary and several Fox Valley churches, will co-sponsor a screening of "Girl Rising" at Rosary High School, March 22. The film introduces nine ordinary girls from the developing world who overcome nearly impossible odds to pursue their dreams.



will tell me it's a bad idea. Do you have any suggestions for how I can talk to her about this?

A The first thing that I'll say is that I'm proud of you for taking Lent seriously and for trying to offer up something that really matters to you, after all, food is great!

As for how to talk to someone about what you are doing, I'll begin by simply pointing out that your Lenten practice of fasting on Fridays, is your particular way of practicing what we would call self-denial. I think that the first step in helping someone to come to recognize

that what you are doing is a good thing, is to help them to understand the importance of self-denial, which is a good thing for all of us!

If we always gave into our desires 100 percent of the time, we would have a big problem. Here's an example: My guess would be that if someone were drawn to do drugs, or to steal things, or enter into immoral behavior, that we would tell them that they have to refrain from engaging in that behavior. In that case, we would say that just because someone desires to do something, this doesn't mean that

Lent into their lives

and prayer ...



At **Aquin Central Catholic Junior/Senior High School**, junior Josie Ehlbeck (left) and freshman Mary Fellers narrate a live station of the cross, presented by members of the school's Christian Identity Group. Principal Rosemarie Brubaker introduced the stations, talking about the importance of taking up their own crosses. Six students took on the roles of Jesus and others who appear in the stations, creating silhouettes on the stage (in video screen above and at right), while a few others helped backstage. All the classes in the school will take part in the presentations during Lent.



Marmion Academy in Aurora began Lent with an Ash Wednesday all-school Mass in Alumni Hall. Father Michael Burrows, OSB (class of 1970) was celebrant and homilist. Noteworthy was the entrance procession with the cross. At the end of the Mass, students, faculty, staff, and guests were invited to approach the cross and make a silent offering to the Lord of their proposed Lenten good works. Student musicians and choir provided music for the Mass. For its almsgiving project, Marmion is helping by contributing toward construction of an eighth village in Haiti through the Hope for Haitians project. Marmion will try to collect \$6,405 for a home by selling cinder-block bricks for \$5 each. An additional 25 cents per brick will be donated by a Marmion benefactor. For each \$5 donation, Marmion adds a paper "brick" with that individual's special intention to a rendering of their "house" (left) in the cafeteria hallway. Donations can be made online at marmion.org/lent2015 through April 1.



Julia Kranenburg is a junior at Marian Central Catholic High School in Woodstock. Her poem was the winner of a February poetry contest for students sponsored by the school library.

Goodbye, My Dearest Mother

A poem on abortion told from the point-of-view of the unborn child
By Julia Kranenburg

Can no one ever hear me screaming into my everlasting night?
One day, will I wake up to the everlasting light?

Please, I beg you,
I'm not prepared.
Mommy, don't do it.
Please, I'm scared.

I want to wake up and see the sun so bright.
I want to go to sleep underneath the starlight.

I want you to hold me close and tell me that you love me.
I want to hear you whisper my name, but sadly, that cannot be.

You've made your decision. I can hear it in your heartbeat.
Faster and faster—well, my short life was sweet.

Goodbye, my dearest mother, I wish I could have known you. I guess my end is soon.

You have my love, whatever you do.

So long to this world that I never knew.
I see the everlasting light, that's my cue.

At least where I go, I will be happy and wanted. Even though by my image, you may always be haunted.

When you reach your end, I'll be waiting at the gate. I'll tell you that I love you, that you, I could never hate.

Until then, goodbye, I'm off to meet my Lord — the one who always loved us. It is by Him that I will be adored.

Goodbye, goodbye finally, the end is here. Goodbye to this world and to you, my mother dear.

it is good to do.

Now, while this may be an extreme example, we all have things that we might want to do that we know aren't good. And at times, it can be really hard to say no to our desires, even if we know that they are bad.

The key to refraining from indulging in poor choices is to practice self-denial on a daily basis in regards to good things: like food! If we practice saying "no" to our good desires from time to time, then we strengthen our ability to say "no" to our will. Then, after doing this for a while, it will become easier and easier to resist

temptations to sin. It's just like any sport: if we don't practice on a daily basis, then we won't be able to perform when the game is on the line!

So, I'd say that your Lenten practice of fasting on Fridays — saying "no" to something good — is a great way of ensuring that you'll be able to also say "no" when it comes to temptations to sin that might come your way from time to time. Something tells me that this would be something that any mother could agree with!

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



Q This Lent I've been trying to fast from everything on Fridays, not just meat. I do have some water throughout the day. I'm a little worried about how to handle that at home when I go for spring break. I'm sure my mother

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