



## VOCATION CORNER

### God makes things happen

The other day I was explaining to my pastor all of the different things that I had on my plate for the upcoming week, and all of the different variables and things that could potentially go wrong. As my list got longer and longer I began to get more and more worked up and anxious.

Meanwhile, my pastor just remained calm and nodded with each passing concern. Finally, when I finished he simply said, "You can't control any of those variables. You simply have to put your best effort in and trust that God will take care of the rest. If God wants something to happen, He'll make it happen."

That reminder of God's providence was exactly what I needed. My guess would be that most of us feel overwhelmed at times, and again that we sometimes feel like we don't know how things are going to get done or if things will turn out how we want them to.

But the bottom line is that things will turn out how God wants them to, and if we're along for the ride, we'll find peace and joy along the way.

This is a crucial reminder for discernment, especially for someone who is actively trying to figure out what God is calling them to do with their life. We all need to remember that we can't produce our vocation, and what we really need to do is to pray, remain open, and trust that God will lead us where He wants us to be, because if God wants something to happen, He'll make it happen!

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

## YO CALENDAR

Oct. 25, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.



**What:** 2015 Catholic Youth Summit. Bishop David Malloy, Father Keith Romke and Paul Vogrinic with the Arise Band will be back. Keynote speaker will be Mary Bielski.

**Cost:** \$25 youth; \$15 chaperones

**Info:** Your parish or [www.rockforddiocese.org/youthsummit](http://www.rockforddiocese.org/youthsummit)



On Aug. 11, three seminarians were accepted into candidacy by Bishop David Malloy in the chapel (below) at the Diocesan Administration Center in Rockford. This stage is the time when the men publicly state their intention to study for the priesthood. The three will begin theological studies this fall. They are (from left) Robert Blood, Jacob Bjork, and Charles Warren.



(YO photos by Amanda Hudson)

## Aurora Eagle takes St. George trek

DeKalb Eagle Scout Keegan Donnelly recently traveled to the Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico.

Most scouts take this trip with their own troops and Scoutmaster, traveling as a unit, but Donnelly traveled on his own to meet up with 80 other scouts and venturers whom he had never met before.

Another difference in this trek is the leaders were all priests and seminarians of the Catholic Church, and were all members of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting.

The adventure is called the St. George Trek. It is limited to scouts

who are interested in deepening their relationship with nature and its creator, and strengthening their faith.

Potential candidates are nominated locally and go through an interview process. Only one scout from each council and each diocese is allowed to attend.

Donnelly represented the Three Fires Council and the Rockford Diocese.

At home he will be expected to share his experiences with other Catholic scouts. Donnelly's first presentation will be at the 63rd



Keegan Donnelly

annual Cathoree at Camp Big Timber in Elgin Sept. 11-13. The Cathoree is a weekend campout where Catholic Boy Scouts from all over the Three Fires Council gather to pray, share, and deepen their faith in God and Jesus Christ.

Info: <http://www.threefirescouncil.org>



(Photos provided)

## Rosary grad off to West Point

Jill Bottarini, who graduated from Rosary High School in Aurora this spring, became an official West Point cadet Aug. 15. She is the daughter of Jay and Trisha Bottarini of Aurora.

She has already completed seven weeks of cadet basic training at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

At Rosary, Bottarini was a St. Catherine of Siena Scholar and a member of the National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, the senior

retreat team and the Dominican Preachers. She earned the Outstanding AP U.S. History Award, Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizens Award and the Illini Girls State Outstanding Citizens Award. She amassed more than 100 service hours.

She was team captain for the Rosary Beads swim team, came in third at State in the 200-meter free relay, and earned the Ideal Bead Award.



Jill Bottarini

## Share your 'Catholic life'

If you are a high school or college student who is interested in sharing your faith journey, tell us in about 250 words. Write about how you live your faith in the world. Talk about what being Catholic means to you.

Send your essay and a photo of yourself to [youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org](mailto:youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org). Put "My Catholic Life" in the subject line. Be sure to include your age, phone number (not for publication), school, parish and town.

# Caught in a NET

By PAT SZPEKOWSKI | Observer Correspondent

**B**rendan Slovacek, 18, a member of Church of Holy Apostles in McHenry, graduated this year from McHenry East High School. Instead of heading off to college this fall, he is waiting for his ministry assignment with a National Evangelization Team (NET).

NET Ministries, a nonprofit organization with national headquarters in West St. Paul, Minnesota, challenges young Catholics to love Christ and embrace the life of the Church. Every August, 150 Catholics, 18-28, leave behind their jobs, school, family, and friends to devote nine months to serving with NET.

Brendan left his parents, Mark and Cindy, and brother, Brett, Aug. 10 for his NET training that began in nearby Wisconsin for one week of music ministry and then moved to Minnesota for specific training programs. He will have limited access to his cell phone and a computer, but Slovacek views this as "time with God."

He didn't know before he left home if he'd be part of the traveling youth ministry, which embarks on 150 retreats serving eight dioceses across the country, or staying put to assist at one school for the nine-month program. His answer will come after the six weeks of training. He anticipates working one-on-one with 7,000 teens during the next year and NET ministries, as a whole, will work with more than 200,000 teens.

Along the way, Slovacek will stay with host families in the communities they serve. He is not intimidated by meeting new people. In fact, his own family has hosted youth ministry participants and leaders.

The leadership challenges are exciting to Slovacek, who says he wants to "empower teenagers who have no relationship with God."

For a time "when I was trying to find myself after a sports injury, recovering from a breakup, and not knowing where I exactly fit in," he felt called to such service.

By a fluke, or engineered by God's plan, Slovacek said he attended a junior youth ministry program at his church coordinated by Joe Filpi, assistant youth minister.

"I really went for the free food," he said, "but it was so special that I enjoyed the activities and wanted to get involved."

John Jelinek, youth minister at Church of Holy

Apostles, has been an inspiration to him.

Another person who made a deep impression on Slovacek is Father Robert Sherry, the founding and former pastor of Church of Holy Apostles, who now serves as chaplain of Dynamic Catholic.

And the concept of peer ministry appeals to Slovacek.

"NET came to our parish," he said, "and I was hooked. It's like evangelization on steroids!"

"NET Ministries is unique in that the missionaries are teenagers ministering directly to other teens," he says. "Both teens and adults should work together to supplement youth ministry and religious education programs.

**"If you surround a teen with other teens pressuring them to do positive things, like come to youth group and church, that teen will be more likely to make better decisions."**

Slovacek has scripted and conducted a skit for teens for the Luke 18 three-day retreat for eighth graders at his parish. It relates to his own confusion about life, love and faith. In it, he refers to Father Sherry and his explanation during a homily of the parable from Matthew 20:1-16, "... so the last will be first and the first will be last."

In his talk, Slovacek said, "It meant that no matter where you are in your faith life, if you turn to God even in the final moments of your life and choose God, there will be a place for you in heaven."

Slovacek is energized by the youth ministry programs and how teens relate to one another.

"Together, we feel closer to Christ," he said, "and the Holy Spirit really fills the room."



Brendan Slovacek of McHenry is in training to spend nine months as a NET minister. (Observer photo by Dan Szpekowski)

After consideration, Slovacek said he felt "called to NET and youth ministry in general."

He applied to become part of NET and once accepted, was able to raise donations to support his work with the NET Ministries.

It takes \$3 million a year to support NET Ministries and 70 percent of that money comes directly from donations.

"The final thing we ask for is prayers and safe travels for all our missionaries," said Slovacek, "and that especially all the teens we minister to will be filled with the Holy Spirit throughout their lives."

When his NET Ministries assignment is complete, Slovacek would like to attend Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, where he anticipates studies to embark on a career in youth ministry.

Info: visit [www.netusa.org](http://www.netusa.org).



**Q** I usually go to confession when we have it during religious ed. But lately I've been feeling like the priest doesn't like me. I don't think my sins are any different than they've ever been. Is there anything I can do?

**A** Let me begin by saying that I'm sorry that you're feeling this way! I'll also add in that although it may seem like the priest doesn't like you, my guess would be that this is far from the truth!

Priests love hearing confessions simply because it gives us the opportunity to dispense God's mercy, and it doesn't even cost, making it the best deal out there!

Sometimes though, when a priest is aware of the fact that there are many people in line desiring to

go to confession (like during religious education), unfortunately he doesn't have time to go in-depth in giving advice or talking through certain situations simply because if he did that with everybody then he'd be sitting there for hours (and people would be waiting in line for hours too!).

**In light of this, it may seem sometimes that since the priest doesn't have time to go in depth, that he doesn't care, but let me assure you that he does care and that he is glad to forgive your sins!**

Let me assure you as well that the content of your confession would not in any way cause a priest to not like you! In fact, I once had someone say to me: "Father, I have something that is really difficult to confess and I don't want to say it because you'll think differently of me." They continued and asked "will you think differently of me?"

I paused for a moment and then replied "Yes, I will ... I will think even more of you than I already do because I will be proud of you for having faith in God's mercy and for knowing that God's love for us is constant no matter what we do!"

Finally, I'll just say that our experience of confession, whether it feels like a good experience or a bad one, should ultimately be based on two things:

- 1) Did we confess everything and hold nothing back?
- 2) Did we receive absolution from the priest?

In the end the thing that should give us the greatest joy, even more than being affirmed by the priest, is being affirmed by God through the gift of love and mercy that He lavishes upon us in this sacrament.

So my answer to your final question of "Is there anything that I can do?" is this: continue to persevere, continue to go to confession, and delight in the gift of absolution more and more, no matter what else you may or may not experience in your confession.

Cling to the fact that in the end you will walk away forgiven and full of God's grace, and let that knowledge spur you on to a love of this sacrament!

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

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