

What's on your Christmas 'to do' list?

We'd like everyone to know what your high school or college group is doing to help others in honor of Jesus' birthday.

Take a picture of your group in action and send it to Young Observer by Dec. 9 so we can show off your Christmas love in the next Young Observer.

Attach a high-resolution .jpg to the form at <http://observer.rockforddiocese.org/observerform>.



(Photo provided)

Helping IN AURORA

Rosary's Justice League collected bars of soap on a Jeans Day Friday in September. Students could donate a bar of soap or a dollar to dress in jeans. With the soap and cash donations, the club presented 526 bars of soap to the Holy Angels Food Pantry. Showing the proceeds are (from left) Hannah Wilson, Emily Neidermann, Frances Phelan of Holy Angels, Maggie Neff and Angeles Ponpa.



VOCATION CORNER Life can be crazy

I feel as if lately more often than not when I'm asked "How have you been lately?" I quickly reply without even having to think "It's been crazy! I've been so busy!"

Something tells me I'm not alone in this.

Then at the same time, if I'm honest, I have to say that there's no end in sight to the busyness! This is just the reality of life. But as we struggle with this reality that we can't avoid, we have to make sure that we keep the reality of God's presence in our lives at the forefront of our minds.

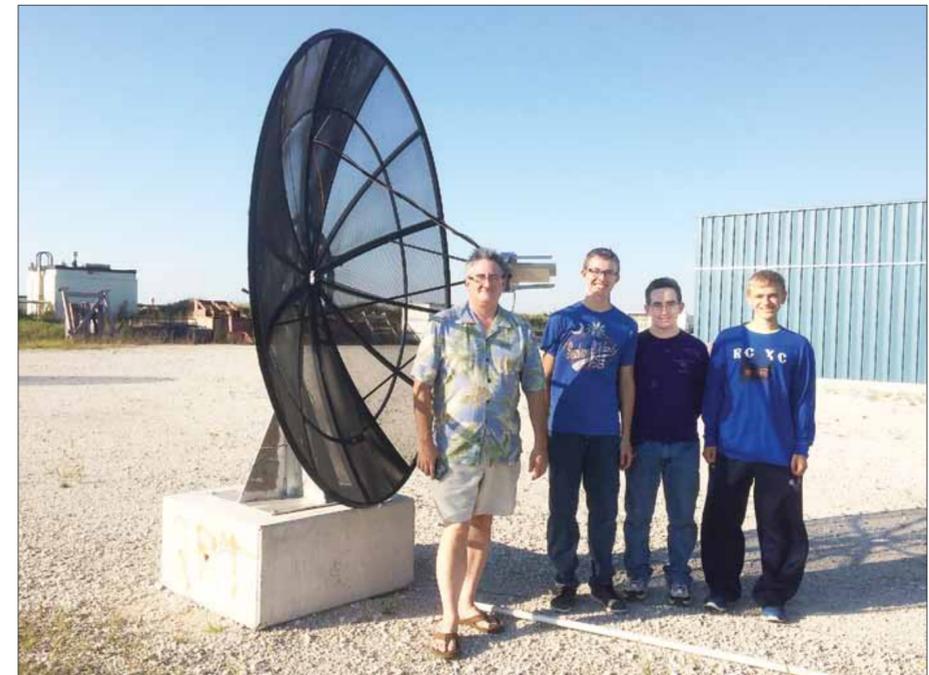
I think we can do this in two ways.

The first is to realize that in the midst of many things that we have to do, we can meet the Lord there and try to recognize how He is at work in them.

The other thing that we have to do is to make sure that the busyness doesn't keep us from taking time to invest in our relationship with the Lord.

I'll admit that sometimes after a busy day it is easier to want to relax in front of the TV rather than to rest with the Lord in prayer. If we want to do His will, however, then we need to invest our free time in our relationship with Him. Trust me, it's worth it and it pays off!

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



(Photo provided)

Dr. Chris Stoughton of Fermilab is working with Marmion Academy students (from left) Lucas McDonald, Dave Carrano, Jonathon Groom, (not pictured) Ryan Thornton and Keith Mokry in the QuarkNet Radio Telescope Project.

Marmion helps in QuarkNet radio telescope project

Students at Marmion Academy in Aurora are taking part in the QuarkNet Radio Telescope Project QuarkNet, a national program sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Energy.

The collaboration creates professional development for high school teachers and engages high school students in high energy research and cosmic ray detection. Multiple high schools across the country are participating in the QuarkNet project in order to collect a large amount of data that can be shared and analyzed to create a clean map of the universe.

Marmion students, under the direction of physics teacher Danila Colosi-Carrano and in collaboration with project manager Dr. Chris Stoughton of Fermilab's Experimental Astrophysics Group, are detecting neutral hydrogen atoms through radio telescopes.

The students involved in this year-round project are seniors Dave Carrano and Lucas McDonald, juniors

Jonathon Groom and Ryan Thornton, and sophomore Keith Mokry. They will be responsible for designing and building a feed horn for data collection. An antenna will be deployed in the radiotelescope. From the antenna, the data will be amplified and transformed in to electrical signal to be sent to a computer for future analysis.

Marmion Academy's science department is offering the QuarkNet Radio Telescope project as an extra curricular project. Interested students had to apply and the five chosen were the most qualified candidates.

"Through this project our students will have the unique opportunity to work as scientists with scientists to exchange data across the country," said Colosi-Carrano.

Fermilab, America's particle physics and accelerator laboratory, is a 6,800-acre site in Batavia. It is managed by the Fermi Research Alliance LLC for the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science.

YO on the record

By CHARLIE MARTIN | CNS

If you are ever having a bad day and you want to change the way your day is going, try to practice the attitude of gratitude.

Few spiritual qualities have more power than gratitude. Thanksgiving is approaching, but why focus on just one day out of the year to be thankful? I wanted to focus on how we can increase being thankful in our lives.

To help us focus on this important quality, I chose Keyshia Cole's 2010 release "Thank You." Cole is an established R&B star. A special feature on this song is that Cole is joined on the recording by her mother, Yvonne Cole (the "singing mamma" mentioned in the lyrics).

Cole's perspective on gratitude begins with her relationship with God. The song acts as a type of prayer, with Cole telling God that "you are my strength, you are my life." She wants to "glorify your name" because "you heal all my pain."

She thanks God for "never turning your back on me" as God is always "standing by my side." For all the support and love, she expresses a heartfelt "thank you."

Each of us should pause, not just at Thanksgiving, but as often as we can and give thanks to God. However, gratitude is not just a gracious response for all the blessings in our lives. Rather, gratitude offers the power to transform our lives.

We all know how difficult life can be, at times surprising us in how it can leave us hurting or diminished. This was certainly my experience in 2015 as I went through a serious accident, falling off a ladder and ending up in the hospital for two weeks.

In a matter of moments, my life was changed, and a new and difficult path unfolded before me. Even though everything turned out OK, I had to deal with pain and rehabilitation.

I refer to my own experience only to give an example of how quickly our lives can change. But also in giving thanks for what I had each day, I learned that the practice of gratitude can affect us in

positive, transformational ways.

It is not based on some rosy evaluation of how everything is always good. Real hurt, whether emotional, physical, psychological, spiritual or some combination of all four, can sometimes bring us to appreciate what we have.

I emphasize the power of gratitude even as I validate how much life can hurt. It is my experience that it is precisely in these difficult circumstances that we most need what gratitude can do for us. But how do we access its power?

Gratitude grows with a certain discipline.

All of us can benefit from a daily practice of gratitude. I suggest that even before you get out of bed in the morning, thank God for this day, for what you might learn by living it, and how you might give and receive love.

Even in difficult and painful situations, these opportunities are still there. A day of pain without gratitude is just that — another day of pain. I had many days of pain, so I had to really learn to accept the pain while also looking for moments of grace.

When you look for grace, it always finds you, and then, there are more opportunities for gratitude. So, practice!

And how should you practice? I suggest this approach between now and the end of the year: Write down in a journal or somewhere else three things that day that affected you in a positive way. Challenge yourself to find diverse experiences, people or situations each day.

Thank you

Sung by Keyshia Cole
© 2010, Geffen/Interscope Records



(Photo/www.keyshiacole.com)

You are my strength, you are my life The only reason I'm here today, giving you all the praise Father, I glorify your name, you heal all my pain I just wanna give you all the praise, I want you to hear me say I love you and I'm thankful for all the things you've done for me When no one was by my side, I thank you	I thank you (come on), thank you, Lord And only you and I know, how much I've grown Every day I thank you, Father, more and more For never turning your back on me, when things got cold And that's why I wrote this song for you, just to let you know That you are my strength, you are my life The only reason I'm here today, I'm giving you all the praise Father, I glorify your	name, you heal all my pain I just wanna give you all the praise, I want you to hear me say I love you. And I thank you (Thank you, thank you, Lord) For standing by my side. Thank you You, you changed my life, you changed my life Thank you You've heard my cry, thank you Thank you Thank you
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You should have a list of many positive things that are of value to you. They need not be significant in the eyes of the world, just meaningful to you. As you build your list, just like Cole in her song, simply say to God, "I thank you, thank you, Lord."

If you do this, what will happen? You will enter 2016 in a brand new way. No matter what happened in the past, you will have added a layer of gratitude to what it means to live. Pain from the past, regardless of its source, will heal.

Through the grace of God and the power of your gratitude, you will discover that you are on the path of personal transformation.



(Photo provided)

Boylan Central Catholic High School, Rockford, held its fall National Honor Society induction of new members on Nov. 2. Seventeen seniors were selected for membership by the faculty who based their evaluations on the candidates' scholarship, service, leadership, and character. The newly inducted students are Haley Beck, Philip Foti, Carson Giardini, Grace Ikenberry, Cassandra LaMay, Matthew Mark, Cassandra Overton, Morgan Pietruch, Adam Rehfeldt, Benjamin Satterlee, Grace Schaefer, Thomas Schmid, Isaac Spanier, Cassandra Stear, Clarita Sullivan, Ericka Vega, Sean Wisbey. Fifty-seven members of the Class of 2016 are in Boylan's National Honor Society chapter.

Young women invited to June leadership forum

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Young women interested in using their talents to serve the Catholic Church and the world will be part of a weeklong conference in June sponsored by the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious.

The GIVEN Forum, set for June 7-12 at The Catholic University of America in Washington, will bring together about 300 women between ages 20 and 30 for immersion in faith formation, leadership training and networking.

Organizers said the program is a response to St. John Paul II's call to activate women's gifts in the church. They expect that the women will be inspired enough to return to their home diocese, workplace or university "motivated to use the insights and tools acquired ... to unleash the gifts of the feminine genius in the church and the world."

Planners will select participants to receive scholarships covering the cost to attend based on an online application. The application deadline is Feb. 2.

Info: www.givenforum.org



(Photo provided)

Dia de los Muertos at St. Ed

The Spanish club at St. Edward Central Catholic High School in Elgin held a Day of the Dead celebration recently. These students with their teacher, David Wunderlich, had their faces painted for day.

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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. Put "My Catholic Life" in the subject line. Be

sure to include your age, phone number (not for publication), school, parish and town.