

VOCATION CORNER

Guys: Is God calling you? Join me and listen

Well, we've all finally made it to the time of year where things get busier than we could ever think possible! Work parties, family gatherings, shopping events, and so much more!

Of course the most important thing is to keep God right in the middle of all of our plans.

In light of this important task, I'm pleased to announce that over Christmas break the Vocation Office is going to be offering a retreat for young men in high school and college who are open to discerning a call to the priesthood.

This is going to be a more focused event than the summer camps, with more opportunity to allow the Lord to speak through prayer.

If you fit the description of a high school or college guy who is open to a call to the priesthood, then you have nothing to lose. And if you don't fit this description, but know someone who does, maybe you could give them a great Christmas gift of an invitation to attend the retreat.

The event is going to be held at Bishop Lane Retreat Center in the main building. It will run from 7 p.m. Dec. 27 to 3 p.m. Dec. 28, and costs \$50

to cover a portion of the expenses of lodging and breakfast and lunch on Monday.

I'm looking forward to seeing what the Lord has in store for this weekend, and I hope that many young men from our diocese will experience what God has been planning for them, so please help me to get the word out.

Send if you are interested, e-mail me at kromke@rockforddiocese.org for more information

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

Huntley scout earns Eagle honors



O'Sullivan

HUNTLEY—Ryan O'Sullivan of Boy Scout Troop 157 was awarded Eagle honors Oct. 11 at a Court of Honor held at St. Mary Parish, here.

O'Sullivan is the son of Ryan and Marie O'Sullivan.

O'Sullivan's Eagle project was the creation of the Msgr. Steve Knox Flame of the Holy Spirit Fire Pit.

The renovated fire pit was dedicated Aug. 22, 2014, and has seen plenty of use since then.

The St. Mary Knights of Columbus Council, along with businesses in the local community, supported the project with both money and labor.



YO CALENDAR

Feb. 6, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

What: Date or Danger, a workshop about understanding teen dating violence, for seventh- through 12th-grade students
Where: St. John Neumann, 2900 E. Main St., St. Charles
Info: Jim Kintz, 630/338-9772

YO on the record

By CHARLIE MARTIN | CNS

The time between Christmas Day and before the start of the New Year is an important time. It invites us to consider our lives and envision how we want to enter 2016.

Each year is a gift. But when are prompted to evaluate whether we are living well, we can also take the time to evaluate our role as a disciple of Jesus.

To help us with this process, I chose Josh Groban's acclaimed 2004 hit "You Raise Me Up." The song is a testament to the power of God in our lives.

The song's character speaks eloquently about how life can be hard as "when I am down," and "oh my soul, so weary" and "my heart burdened." He also knows that "each restless heart beats so imperfectly," and yet, in the presence of God, "I am filled with wonder."

Thus, he can strongly affirm: "You raise me up so I can stand on mountains, you raise me up to walk on stormy seas, I am strong when I am on your shoulders, you raise me up to more than I can be."

Looking back on 2015, you might see that during this year you encountered "stormy seas" or a "burdened heart."

But as you envision 2016, I encourage you to tell God how you need Him to "raise" you up. No matter what challenges arise as you begin the upcoming year, make God your ally and most trusted friend.

Tell Jesus what you need. God's miracles of healing and opportunity are given freely.

Consequently, seek God's help and then be open to surprise. As the creator of the universe, our God is quite inventive in how He helps us. Put

aside expectations of how God should answer, and then open your heart to receive what He gives you.

As disciples of Jesus, we also know that our focus must go beyond ourselves. Ask how you can help others.

In fact, look around at members of your immediate family, at school, and elsewhere in your community. Assess how you can help others. Determine who can use your understanding, compassion, and encouragement.

None of us can "fix" the lives or problems of others, but God works through you to bring hope to others.

It may be a hope that can help individuals improve their lives. Make a commitment to be the type of person who helps others find their inner strength.

There is much suffering on this planet. And yet, who does God send to "raise" up His family to a new way of being, a new way of healing? You. None of us can solve humanity's problems but all of us can do something.

I encourage you to set one goal or plan an action that will help others in God's family in 2016.

Make a commitment in your local community,

You raise me up

Sung by Josh Groban
© 2004, Reprise Records/Warner Bros. Records/143



(Photo/www.joshgroban.com)

When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary
When troubles come and my heart burdened be
Then I am still and wait here in the silence
Until you come and sit awhile with me

You raise me up so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be

There is no life, no life without its hunger

Each restless heart beats so imperfectly
But when you come and I am filled with wonder
Sometimes, I think I glimpse eternity

You raise me up so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be

You raise me up so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be
You raise me up to more than I can be

parish, or school, or maybe as a project to support our brothers and sisters in some other part of the world. Regardless of what you choose, be sure to answer this question: What will I do in 2016 that raises up God's family, with my talent, my time, or my financial support?

We are fortunate to have a new year, a new chance to raise up ourselves and others. May each of you be blessed during 2016.

Send comments to Charlie Martin at chmartin@hughes.net or at 7125W 200S, Rockport, IN 47635.

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Batavia Girl wins first Stars and Stripes award in Illinois, Project Aids Parish



(Photo provided)

Madison Goodwin of Batavia is the first in Illinois to receive the American Heritage Girls Stars and Stripes award.

Madison Goodwin of Batavia is the first in Illinois to receive American Heritage Girls highest recognition award: The Stars and Stripes Award.

She is the daughter of Frank and Julie Goodwin and a member of Holy Cross Parish in Batavia.

A senior in high school, she is a member of American Heritage Girls Troop IL-0224, chartered by her parish.

Goodwin began her scouting journey in 2009 and has held many leadership positions within her troop along with earning more than 40

badges and investing more than 350 hours of service into her community.

Goodwin has attended AHG's local and regional camps as well as national conventions.

She has received the religious recognitions: I Live My Faith, Marian, and Spirit Alive.

Her Stars and Stripes project consisted of documenting, photographing, and recording the valuables within Holy Cross Parish. The document will benefit the parish in case of a disaster such as fire, tornado, or theft.

"This was a big project, but (Goodwin's) leadership and organizational skills allowed the project to be completed very professionally," said Deacon Larry Motyka.

He was a direct contact for Goodwin during the planning and completing her project.

As she enters college in the fall of 2016, Goodwin plans to pursue an English major and a minor in journalism.

A Court of Awards ceremony honoring her will be held on Jan. 16.

confidence building, and character, social and spiritual development.

About AGH

American Heritage Girls, a Christ-centered character-development organization for girls, 5-18, is dedicated to building women of integrity through service to God, family, community, and country. AHG is celebrating its 20th

anniversary this year. Membership has averaged 30 percent growth annually since 2010 and has more than 40,000 members and more than 900 Troops in 49 states.

AHG focuses on six program emphases: life skill enhancement, girl leadership, teamwork and

About Stars and Stripes

The Stars and Stripes award is a multi-faceted award that honors girls who develop servant leadership skills that are needed to lead with integrity.

Marmion Students Certified to Begin Engineering and Design Careers

Students in Marmion Academy's engineering design course have been certified in SolidWorks, a computer aided design program. Students become a Certified SolidWorks Associate (CSWA) by passing the first level of the program, which gives them the ability to do 3D modeling in engineering and design careers. This first group of CSWAs is helping companies with engineering problems. Twenty-six were certified in the first group and 50 additional Marmion students are on track to be certified this school year. After becoming a CSWA, students begin to work with Dr. Victor Pinks II '72, who directs Marmion's CPARC Engineering Center. Dr. Pinks coordinates internship activities of students with the research and development needs of businesses. The Marmion course is taught by Jeanne McLean.



(Photo provided)



Q A guy I like just broke up with a girl from another high school and I think he's going to ask me out. He's really nice and I know he could go out with any girl he wanted. But I've heard he's had sex with some girls already. If he does ask me out, do you think he would be different with me? How can I tell him I'm not ready for sex with anybody yet?

A This is a great question, and I'm glad that you asked it, because I have a feeling that you're not the only person who struggles with knowing whether or not to date someone based upon certain things that have happened in their past.

I think when it comes to dating that it is important that we be **very** selective and prudent!

The whole point of dating believe it or not, is **not** about having fun, or being able to be seen with the most attractive or most popular guy, or wanting to be accepted.

The point of dating is to see if someone is future marriage material.

And this means that anyone who you'd even consider dating should be someone that you would be comfortable having as the father of your future children. This means that you should want to date guys that truly respect women!

A huge part of this would be making sure that the

guy wants to protect you and keep you safe, both from dangers in the world, as well as from his own desires.

This may be harsh for me to say, but any guy who sleeps with a girlfriend before marriage is not keeping her safe, because through this action both of them are hurt spiritually.

True love seeks the good of the other, and it is willing to sacrifice in order to see that good upheld.

I would say that the only way that you should give any guy a chance to date you is if he makes it very clear that he is going to respect your desire for purity.

Regarding how you could tell a guy that you're waiting until marriage, I would say that you can simply tell him that you care about him enough not to want to put his soul in danger by acting in a way that would pull both of you away from God.

If he just laughs at you, or if he doesn't understand, or if he disagrees, then walk away and know that you've dodged a huge bullet because in that very action he would be revealing that he wouldn't respect you in a relationship.

If a guy says that he understands and that he respects and agrees with your stance, then I'd say that you could consider dating him, but be true to yourself and your convictions. Then, if at any point in your relationship he begins to act differently than he said he would, get out of the relationship as soon as possible!

Regarding your specific situation, with this guy who has slept with other girls before, although I don't know him, it sounds like this has happened multiple times before. This would not give me a lot of confidence that he is mature enough to respect your beliefs and

convictions.

Of course it's important that we don't judge others but at the same time we have to be prudent!

So I would recommend that you don't put yourself in a situation that will most likely cause a lot of tension and most likely even put you in a very uncomfortable situation where you might be tempted to go against your beliefs and morals. It's just not worth it.

There will be other guys, better guys, and you'll be glad that you waited for one who truly respects women and who will love you for who you are as a person and not just for any benefits that he thinks he could achieve from a relationship with you.

As a final litmus test on whether or not you should date a certain boy, especially if you know about some past behavior that you don't really care for, I'd ask you to consider this: If you had a daughter, knowing what you know, would you feel comfortable with her dating this guy?

If you think that as a mom you would even be the slightest bit hesitant to have your daughter date the guy, then don't date him yourself!

Finally, I'll close by saying this: All of us want to be loved, cherished, and accepted, and that is why we seek out certain relationships. The best source of love, whether you are single or married, will always come from God.

So whenever you feel alone or lonely remember this: That loneliness is an invitation to intimacy with God. Spend time with Him and know that **He** will never let you down

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

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.