



(Photo provided)

Aurora KC Essay Winners

Aurora students who won the Knights of Columbus Cardinal Bellarmine Council 4849 essay contest are (not in order) Mikayla Cassidy, Holy Angels; Alexa Escobeda, Sarah Slas and Damon Becker (not pictured), Aurora Central Catholic High School; Brendan Labbe, Marmion Academy; Anna Gayford, Madeleina Paschoud, Hannah Regan, Katherine Danos (not pictured) and Riley McCue (not pictured), Rosary High School. The essay theme was "The Importance of Religious Freedom."

VOCATION CORNER

What do you say 'yes' to?

Once heard a true story of a young man who felt a strong calling to the priesthood and as a result told his parents that he wanted to enter the seminary. His dad was pretty indifferent, but his mom desperately wanted grandchildren so she made it clear that she didn't think that priesthood was a good idea.

He was quite convicted of this calling however, so after a few more weeks of prayer, he informed his mom that he had made a decision and that he was going to go to seminary in the fall. She in turn said that she too had made a decision: the decision to buy him a new car!

This was the catch though: he could only get the car if he didn't go to seminary. I don't know where he ended up that next fall, but I know that wherever it was, he got there in a new car!

This of course is a drastic example of what can happen in our lives, but I think that sometimes we can feel drawn towards fulfilling a call that God has placed upon our hearts, and we really want to carry it out . . . until a seemingly better offer comes along.

Quite often the reward of following God comes to us off in the future. There is no instant gratification.

On the other hand the rewards that the world offers are right in front of us and we can literally drive off with them! Try to figure out in your own heart what kinds of things might derail your commitment to follow Christ, so that when they are offered, you might have the strength to say "yes" to God and "no" to the car.

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

Service Above Self Honorees

Marmion Academy seniors Rodney and Ryan Frias of Aurora received 2016 Service Above Self Awards Jan. 18 from Aurora Mayor Thomas Weisner. Mark Malkowski, Marmion's director of Campus Ministry, nominated them.

"Rodney and Ryan are consistently and selflessly involved in Marmion Academy's nursing home visitation program, ... Special Olympics and Hope Wall School. ... Rodney and Ryan also serve as student ministers to children in local Catholic parishes through Marmion's Ministry Outreach Team."



(Photo provided)

YO CALENDAR

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

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

YO on the record

By CHARLIE MARTIN | CNS

Nick Fradiani's "Beautiful Life" shows us what may be some biographical material about the professional journey of his life.

In the video, he celebrates an evening with his friends before he heads away from his hometown to seek his musical fortunes. The affection among the friends is apparent as they say their heartfelt goodbyes to him. The message is clear: This type of friendship describes part of what it means to have a "beautiful life."

The same message is apparent in the song's lyrics. The song's character says that "we got so much to say, we got someone to love, we got good friends." Moreover, like in any group of friends, "we've got too many hopes, we've got too many dreams," and yet, "we try to live like it's all we've got 'cause for all we know this could be the last night of our lives."

The song's protagonist wants to spend this night fully engaged with his friends. For him, that's a "beautiful life."

The song reminds us how important friends are in our lives.

Most of us have families, and if we are fortunate, we establish enduring, loving relationships with siblings and parents. But sometimes, this doesn't happen. During those moments, our friends become our spiritual family and it is with them that we journey through life's successes and disappointments.

That's why it's important to learn to deeply value your friends. Not every friendship can last forever. Regardless of its length, it can offer support and emotional intimacy that nurtures our well-being.

This is one reason why we should appreciate our

friends. Tell your friends that you are grateful for time spent together, for fun times and even for shared tears. Without friends, life would feel more isolated and less meaningful.

As the song mentions, one gift we can bring to our friends is to help empower their dreams. Surely when Fradiani entered the "American Idol" competition that gained him fame, he knew that he would encounter other contestants with immense talent. Most likely, he relied on the support of his friends to help his work and sustain the hope that he could do well.

Listen carefully to your friends. Hear what desires and hopes burn in their hearts. Offer a forum where they can explore these hopes no matter how unlikely they seem to be.

Yet, also recognize this: Empowering them to follow their dreams could easily create distance between you and them. Sometimes, the most loving thing you can do for a friend is to bless them as they go forward into a life that will require them to move far away.

In our modern world, we have many ways to stay in contact, but nothing really replaces physical presence and time together. Yet, this is genuine love, to help a friend find the life that he or she

Beautiful Life

Sung by Nick Fradiani
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(Photo/www.bigmachinelabelgroup.com/artist/nick-fradiani)

We got so much to say
We got someone to love
We got good friends
They're so good to us
And haters can hate
And fakers can front

Refrain:

So we try to live
Like it's all we've got
'Cause for all we know
This could be the last
night of our lives

Gonna chase down our
every desire
We blaze the night
With all we've been
waiting for
All this time
Reaches such great
heights

Gives us just one
perfect night
To say oh what a
beautiful life
Oh, oh, oh
Oh, what a beautiful life

Here it comes out of the
dark
We've got nothing to fear
We've got nothing but
heart
Can't just wait here
To see what it brings
We've got too many
hopes

We've got too many
dreams

(Repeat refrain.)

Last night of our lives
Gonna chase down our

every desire
We blaze the night
With all we've been
waiting for
All this time
Reaches such great
heights
Give us just one perfect
night
To say, oh, what a
beautiful life

(Repeat verse above.)

Beautiful life
Oh, what a beautiful life
Oh, what a beautiful life
Oh, oh, oh
Oh, what a beautiful life

wants to pursue and to help him or her follow it, even at personal cost to you. This kind of love is at the heart of a life well-lived.

Finally, pray often for your friends. To pray for someone is to bring powerful love into their lives. Your prayer becomes a loving bond that is rooted in God but also connects your soul with others no matter where they go. Yes, it is true -- finding and nurturing friends is at the heart of a "beautiful life."