

# YO FATHER

**Q** I know that the Youth Summit is coming up. What do I have to look forward to this year?

**A** I'm so glad you asked, because I couldn't be more excited about this year's event!

It is truly one of my favorite days of the year because I love being able to see such an incredible range of emotions on the faces of the teens like you from our diocese — from laughter and joy to deep contemplation and a sense of longing to delve deeper into your relationship with the God who loves you infinitely.

There is nothing quite as rewarding or inspiring as seeing the look on someone's face when I can tell the Light of Christ is shining upon him or her and everything is clicking into place!

Each year the Youth Summit offers us an opportunity to take a welcome

pause from all of the other things we are busy with in life so we can focus on the most important aspect, which of course is our relationship with God.

This year's theme is "Belonging" and the day's talks and interaction will touch upon how all of us desperately long to know we are loved and we belong, and how it is Christ who fills this longing when we encounter His love.

**I know all of the speakers well and I can guarantee you are in for a treat!**

One of the highlights each year is when Bishop David Malloy comes to celebrate Mass (**which is awesome!**). He truly loves spending time with all of you at lunch, as well as continuing to spread Christ's love in his top-secret,

post-lunch segment which is always a huge hit!

His presence makes it clear to me that we all belong to the family of the Church, which has a loving bishop at its head as our spiritual father!

**Finally, we'll have Jesus in the house!**

I say this because we have Mass as well as a very powerful and moving time of eucharistic adoration planned.

So, too, there will be multiple opportunities to have one's heart cleansed and sins forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

So as always, the Youth Summit is going to be an epic opportunity to celebrate the gift of our faith and to



YO Father is answered by Father Keith Romke, diocesan director of vocations. Send your questions to [youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org](mailto:youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org)



participate in worship with thousands of others.

The scale of this event is itself a powerful thing, as it can be quite moving and impactful to see many others who believe and are on fire for the same things that we hold and believe!

I look forward to seeing you there!

(If you haven't already signed up at your parish, ask your youth minister or religion teacher **right away**, it's next Sunday, Oct. 29.)

## NIU parish hosts first Cardinal Newman day



Freshman Erin Duffy had her portrait drawn by caricature artist Laura Devine (far left).



A diner tops his sandwich with his favorite condiments.



Shawn O'Neill from NIU Outdoor Rec helps youngsters with a game.



Christ the Teacher University Parish in DeKalb is home of the Northern Illinois University Newman Center. It held its first Cardinal Newman Festival recently with fun for everyone — children, college students, parents and even a few grandparents. A 5K race (right) was among games and activities for parishioners and other NIU students. NIU Running Club members were among many students who took part. There was also a Mass and talk about Cardinal John Newman, for whom the student center is named.



Matthew Tucci, an NIU student and Knights of Columbus member, mans a grill for the day.



After being first across the finish line, five racers relax.



Claire Wright, Savannah Price, Devin Vanwalleghan, and Elizabeth Johnesee

# It's all about love

## University parish members promote life at Sandwich fair

**F**our students from the Newman Center at Christ the Teacher Parish in DeKalb brought a pro-life message to the Sandwich Fair, Sept. 6-10.

The parish serves students at Northern Illinois University.

Claire Wright, 20, a music major; Savannah Price, 20, a home-health CNA; Devin Vanwalleghan, 23, a customer service coordinator at Farm and Fleet; and Elizabeth Johnesee, 20, an NIU veterinary technology major, represented Illinois Right to Life during the five-day fair.

They answered questions from men, women and children about how to love the pre-born.

Vanwalleghan is a Catholic convert

who completed RCIA and joined the Church at the Easter Vigil last year. He enjoys being a Catholic at Christ the Teacher, where so many are helping others.

"It's just a big, happy family there," he said.

Vanwalleghan, along with Price, are taking part in the Rockford Diocese Lay Ministry Formation program, directed by John McGrath.

They are all active at the DeKalb parish.

The four have joined 160,000 others at the National Right to Life March in Washington, D.C., and have helped organize the annual Kairos retreat at the Newman Center. They have also traveled to West Virginia on spring break mission service trips and have

helped with Head Start and preschool programs.

They work closely with Denise Sanders, who has led the Newman Center youth group for many years.

### Why do pro-life work?

Vanwalleghan says, "It's because we have the truth that every human life is important and deserves to live," that he is involved in pro-life activities.

He also says his faith has grown a lot at the university parish.

"I am better able to see the good in every situation, and in other people, too — even in difficult people. When a situation seems bad, like abortion, I know God is still at work and God is letting bad stuff happen so we can better understand His love for us."

Price says she has benefitted through meeting people at the parish who are "on fire" for their faith and are showing "silent joy," which she describes as an inner love for God that sees His work in people in everyday situations.

Vanwalleghan adds, "No matter how bad our culture seems to be getting, never forget that God is still working. He will never give up on us if we ask for His help. It's all about love. It's all about forgiveness."

He says everyone should remember what Jesus said in John 16:33. "Have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage; I have conquered the world."

— Elsie Campbell Morrissey

### VOCATION CORNER

## Infinite desire



By FATHER ROBERT GONELLA | Assistant Vocations Director

**W**e all have certain desires in life. Whether we desire possessions, experiences, or relationships, we all have things in mind that we think will bring us to fulfillment and happiness.

The trouble is that human beings are made for the infinite. Every human has an infinite desire for truth and beauty and goodness.

We all have an infinitely

big hole in our heart, and when we try to fill that hole with finite and earthly things, we always fall short.

We realize, of course, that only God can fill that hole because He is the only one who has the infinite capacity to perfect us with Himself. He is truth, beauty, and goodness itself.

He is the only one that can quench the desires of our hearts.

So often when we make plans for our own lives, we are settling for less than full happiness. We accept the partial happiness that we present to ourselves rather than trusting in the perfect plan of God for our lives.

It is only in trusting the plan of God for us and being in right relationship with Him that we are brought to true fulfillment. We have to trust that His plan is the best, truest, and most beautiful

plan that could ever be imagined for us!

Perhaps God is calling you to be a priest. Perhaps He is calling you to be a religious brother or sister. Perhaps He is calling you to get married.

Whatever His plan for you, trust that it is better than anything you could come up with for yourself, and allow Him to fill that infinite hole in your heart with the fathomless love that He has for you.