



Photo provided)



## Rockford youth head north for adventure

**LEFT:** Youth from St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Rockford begin their recent Expedition Unlimited adventure in Baraboo, Wis., with prayer and Mass.

### VOCATION CORNER

## Mexican martyrs die for Christ, Mary

**W**hat do a celibate man, a guy who is dating, a married man, and a priest have in common? Apparently just being men, since each one of them lives a different vocation.

But almost 91 years ago on Aug. 15, 1926, despite being so different in their vocations, four men sealed with their blood a story of love.

Salvador Lara, David Roldan, Manuel Morales, and Father Luis Batís, like many other witnesses, lived in a time of persecution of the Catholic Church in Mexico. They decided to

stand firm in their faith, to live what they believed, and peacefully defend their faith.

Salvador, David and Manuel founded a local group of the A.C.J.M. (Catholic Action of the Mexican Youth). For this they were apprehended on Aug. 14, 1926, to be executed with Father Luis Batís, on Aug. 15, 1926.

The commanders of the army asked them to renounce their faith, and said they would be released without punishment. But the men, filled with the courage that only faith can give

responded, "Long live Christ the King and Holy Mary of Guadalupe."

Father Luis Batís was pleading for Manuel Morales. "The only thing I ask you is to release Manuel Morales," he said. "He has to take care of his three young children. He has a family. I offer my life for him. I will be a victim. I am willing to be." The soldiers did not listen to the priest. Manuel cried, "God will watch over my children."

The bullets of the military took their earthly lives, but they gave them entrance into the heavenly life by turning them into martyrs of the



By **FATHER MANUEL GOMEZ**  
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faith in Christ the King and Mary of Guadalupe.

Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. We have the opportunity to renew our faith and devotion to Christ present in the Holy Eucharist. Although each of us has a different life story, we are joined by the same story of love for Christ alive and present in each one of us, but especially in the Eucharist.

*Happy Corpus Christi!*

## Refugee poet

### She knew no English, now she's a poetry champ

By **JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES**  
Catholic News Service

**B**elise Nishimwe remembers what it's like to feel voiceless. Born in a refugee camp in Tanzania, she came to Portland, Ore., at age 5 unable to speak or understand English. She couldn't pass her first year of kindergarten.

But at the end of April, Nishimwe shared her vocal and inner power at a national poetry competition in Washington.

The St. Mary's Academy sophomore was named Oregon's Poetry Out Loud champion in March, beating about 8,000 high school contestants in the state, according to the Oregon Arts Commission.

"Other students gave beautiful recitations — performances — but Belise does not perform her poems; she speaks them as though they were her words; she inhabits them," said Ellie Gilbert, an English teacher at St. Mary's who coached the 17-year-old for the competition.

Poetry Out Loud competitors select poems, then study, memorize and recite them.

Nishimwe won first place for her recitation of "Love's Philosophy," by Percy Bysshe Shelley, an English Romantic poet; "If We Must Die," by Jamaican-born Claude McKay, a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance; and "Worth," by Marilyn Nelson, whose work examines race, being a woman and the ongoing trauma of slavery in America.

"People often have labels tied to them — 'refugee,' 'immigrant,' 'woman' — and others don't think about their ability to love. (Shelley's) poem was to show that I can be playful and loving," she told the *Catholic Sentinel*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Portland.

"If We Must Die" is a call to act against oppression. "I imagined making a speech like MLK," said Nishimwe, referring to slain civil rights leader the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "It exemplifies using my voice to empower others to do good."

She was drawn to the title of "Worth," a poem that addresses being black and a woman. "I tell myself that I'm worth something, and others in situations like mine that they are worth something."

Nishimwe's family escaped genocide in Burundi and spent about 10 years in



(CNS photo/courtesy Oregon Arts Commission)

Belise Nishimwe, a sophomore at St. Mary's Academy in Portland, Ore., performs March 9 at Oregon's 2019 Poetry Out Loud competition, which she won.

a refugee camp. They resettled in the U.S. in 2007 with help from Oregon Catholic Charities and parishioners of Holy Redeemer Church in North Portland.

"They made it possible to keep my family together and get my entire family to America," said Nishimwe, who has seven siblings. "I know many refugee families are separated."

Once she knew the language, Nishimwe began writing poetry and dreamed of being an author. But she stopped composing pieces in middle school when it became increasingly difficult to juggle homework and responsibilities at home.

Like her older siblings before her, Nishimwe helps her parents, who speak little English, navigate life in the U.S. She fills out forms for insurance and taxes and writes checks and permission slips.

"It's been hard a lot of times taking on these parental roles," said Nishimwe. "Sometimes I'm frustrated or angry and have to come to school happy and willing to learn. I can't always talk to my peers about it because they aren't going through the same thing."

She said the Poetry Out Loud competition "felt like a door back into writing poetry" and the joy it brings.