

Helping

IN ELGIN



(Photo provided)

St. Ed Spanish students help South Americans

Students in the Spanish Club at St. Edward Central Catholic High School in Elgin take part in a nationwide service project, supporting fair-trade employment in Nicaragua and Guatemala. Called the Pulsera ("Bracelet") Project, the students sell hand-made bracelets that are crafted by local artisans in South America. They raised about \$800 for the project.



YO
CALENDAR

May 7, 7 p.m.

Matt Maher Saints and Sinners tour, with guests John Guerra and Vertical Church Band at St. Mary Parish, 10307 Dundee Road, Huntley. G.A. \$21, 6:30 p.m.; VIP \$50, 5:30 p.m.; backstage; \$160, 4:30 p.m. Info: gopromoters.com

VOCATION CORNER

What's holding you back?

I know that I've probably written about this topic before, but it has been on my mind recently so I figured maybe it would be worth mentioning again.

So often as we discern we can try to think about and focus on the things that God may be calling us to. This of course is a good thing. However, sometimes we feel stuck, as if God isn't telling us one way or the other what the next step is or in what direction He wants for us to go.

When this happens I think that it can be helpful to shift our focus away from a consideration of the things that God might be calling us to and instead to spend some time thinking really hard on the things that God might be calling us to let go of.

If God is calling a young man to the priesthood, but the man is only discerning which of two high powered corporate jobs God might be calling Him to, he'll never hear God's true call even though he is "discerning." The only way that he will receive the

true answer is if he takes some time to consider what God might be calling him to let go of.

Remember, it is only when we are empty (by letting go of our ideas and desires) that we will be capable of being filled by God/ So pray about what holds you back, and then maybe you'll find it easier to go forward.

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

YO on the record

By CHARLIE MARTIN | CNS

Rachel Platten's recent single "Stand By You" describes one person's commitment to another. The song's character invites the romantic partner to "put your hands in mine" and "if your wings are broken, please take mine so yours can open, too."

She believes that together "even if we're breaking down, we can find a way to break through." She promises this person that "you're not alone, cause I'm gonna stand by you."

The song presents itself as an anthem for the power of good that we can offer others.

While the song has an overtone of romance, the commitment we bring to any type of relationship can sustain any true and enduring friendship.

So, think about your life, and in particular, your circle of relationships. What level of commitment can you bring to these people? None of us can offer everything that another needs, but all of us can learn to give something.

For example, let's say you have a friend who feels lost about how she wants to go forth in life. Perhaps school is no longer inspiring her and her grades show it. Maybe she doesn't feel included in social groups of peers as she wishes. Consequently, a sense of loneliness burdens her mood.

Such a scenario would point to a very difficult episode in the person's life. However, if you were this person's friend, you could try to understand these feelings without getting lost in her depression and discouragement.

While you should not try to "fix" her situation, you can check in with the person often, perhaps even daily. You could also help the person consider

possibilities, acknowledging the painful reality but also helping her see that life often presents new ways to proceed.

You begin with the needed acceptance, but you also attempt to be a source of hope for how her life can gradually improve.

So many times in the Gospels, we see this is how Jesus interacted with others.

He brought his acceptance, his compassion, and he also encouraged the other person to look beyond current circumstances. He was always ready to stand by the individual before him, was always ready to convey the endless love of God for each person and was always ready to challenge the person to use his or her gifts.

As modern disciples of Jesus, it is now our turn to do the same. God has given to you parents and siblings, friends, even casual acquaintances. All are just like you, sons and daughters of God. Will you keep your awareness up, looking beyond your problems and difficulties to be a source of friendship and caring for these people in your life?

Stand by you

Sung by Rachel Platten
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(Observer photo / www.columbiarecords.com/news/825)

Hands, put your empty hands in mine
And scars, show me all the scars you hide
And hey, if your wings are broken
Please take mine so yours can open too
'Cause I'm gonna stand by you
Oh, tears make kaleidoscopes in your eyes
And hurt, I know you're hurting, but so am I
And love, if your wings are broken
Borrow mine so yours can open too
'Cause I'm gonna stand by you

Refrain:

Even if we're breaking down, we can find a way to break through
Even if we can't find heaven, I'll walk through hell with you
Love, you're not alone, 'cause I'm gonna stand by you
Even if we can't find heaven, I'm gonna stand by you
Even if we can't find heaven, I'll walk through hell with you
Love, you're not alone, 'cause I'm gonna stand by you

Yeah, you're all I never knew I needed
And the heart, sometimes it's unclear why it's beating
And love, if your wings are broken
We can brave through those emotions too
'Cause I'm gonna stand by you
Oh, truth, I guess truth is what you believe in
And faith, I think faith is helping to reason
No, no, no, love, if your wings are broken
Borrow mine so yours can open too
'Cause I'm gonna stand by you

(Repeat refrain.)

I'll be your eyes when yours can't shine
I'll be your arms, I'll be your steady satellite
And when you can't rise, well, I'll cry with you on hands and knees
'Cause I (I'm gonna stand by you)

(Repeat refrain.)

God has filled your life with divine purpose. There are so many ways that the grace of God can flow out from you to the people around you. One of the best ways is to be a faithful, accepting friend who stands by others.

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

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Teens hear message

Daters: Be ready, be aware

By Louise Brass | Observer correspondent

There is a big difference between flirting and sexual harassment. Teens and parents attending the “Date or Danger—In Their Shoes,” conference at St. John Neumann Church in St. Charles on Feb. 6, learned many reasons to know the difference, such as:

- Flirting should make you feel happy, flattered, in control of yourself, attractive, desired and important.

- Sexual harassment makes victims feel angry, sad, powerless, ugly and unimportant.

Some abusive activities begin with verbal criticism or humiliation of the date partner, usually leading to physical attacks on the victim including punching and choking — sometimes even ending in death — unless someone cares enough to intervene, organizers of the program said.

One in three teens nationally will be involved in some way.

Angela Kvittek, 16, from Holy Cross Parish, Batavia, said she was invited to attend the conference by her mother.

“I came because I have not been involved with this, but people close to me have.

“It’s really important that teenagers involved with this get out before it becomes really serious.

“I just wanted to prepare, just to learn to recognize it so I don’t become that way,” she added. “I definitely think this should be in all the schools. This is very helpful.”

Kayla Dalisay, 15, of St. John Neumann, has assisted her mother, Cheryl Dalisay, in presenting a number of the programs.

“Sometimes this gets extremely deep and it gets a little difficult. It gets easier over time. My mom is incredible,” she said.

Teenagers should

understand themselves, and recognize “red flags” in their behaviors and the behavior of others, she added.

“Know yourself,” she said. Make sure you have other people there for you. Know that you are priceless; all women should know they are priceless. You should be respected because of that.

“I recently figured out that God is always going to be my Father. He created me. He is my guardian, my protector.

“Going through this without God would be very difficult.

“God sent you friends. God sent you parents, but if they are the issue you need to talk to other people,” she said.

Megan Mingi, 16, also of St. John Neumann, said the program exposed the truth about dating violence.

“I thought it was really eye-opening to see these different stories about women and men who are stuck in

difficult relationships, and the decisions they had to make, and the people who were there to help them get out.

“I would tell them I am always there to help them if they needed it.

“I would be there without judging them,” she added.

“I would come to this again and bring my friends,” she said, adding that she knows someone who already needs that kind of help.

Omar Licon, 14, of Holy Cross, said he has never been to a program like this before. He came with his cousins and his aunt to learn about the issue.

“I came to learn about this. It’s a problem,” he said.

“You need to be respected and you don’t have to go through that.”

If he discovers people in abusive situations, he said he plans to let them know they don’t have to stay in the relationship.

“There’re many people who can help you and you are not alone. I learned a lot from this,” he said. “It really changed my viewpoint on what to look out for in a relationship,” he said.

Elizabeth Kvittek, 16, also of Holy Cross, attended the program for the first time.

“I haven’t attended this before. My mom wanted me to, but then I also wanted to learn about it. I’ve seen people who are not very nice to others.

“I haven’t had a boyfriend yet myself, but I want to prepare myself.

“It makes me really sad to see people treated like that,” she said. “Nobody deserves to be treated like that and maybe I can help others.

“It surprised me how much it goes on. It’s like one in three people.

“I didn’t know it was that bad,” she said.



Angela Kvittek



Kayla Dalisay



Megan Mingi



Omar Licon



Elizabeth Kvittek

YO FATHER

Q I really wanted to go to the March for Life in Washington this year, but my parents wouldn’t let me. I think it’s important to be public about being pro-life, but they say everyone doesn’t need to go out and march about everything. Is there something I can say to them so I can go next year?

A Let me begin by affirming you in your convictions to defend and uphold the dignity of life! God has given us a precious gift in each and every child that is conceived, so thank you for your recognition of this as well as your desire to go out and make a difference!

Now regarding your situation, I don’t think that you’re alone in your dilemma. You see, all throughout our lives we will have opportunities to go out and make a difference, yet oftentimes we face a dilemma because others don’t see the same value in it.

In fact I’d say that sometimes we even do this to ourselves, in our own minds, when we come up with a good idea of how we could make a difference for a given cause, but then we talk ourselves out of it because we don’t see how we could make that big of

an impact on our own.

I think that the biggest issue at hand is that whenever we have a chance to help a good cause, even if it seems to be in a little way, it is well worth taking.

Sure, one person walking down a street might not seem like something that would make that big of a difference (but it actually does because the power of even just one person praying is more than we will ever know). But when you get a group of people standing and praying for a cause, it does make a difference!

Perhaps some may say that nothing changes as a result, but I would say that they are wrong. Marching at the March for Life in Washington changes hearts.

When people encounter the joy and energy of loving people who desire to say that all life has value, that elicits a joy within those who witness it.

Now, I guess your parents could say that this difference in others will happen whether or not you are there, but let me propose that your own heart can be moved by the experience.

All of us need to know that we are supported, that our beliefs are held by others, and that there is a joy and an energy behind our cause. The March for Life allows every single participant to experience the hope that God has for His children. And for this reason alone it is valuable to get out and march.

Another consideration comes from the very

basic human realization that if we never took the first steps to go out and make something happen, then nothing would ever get done in life.

Jesus says that whoever is faithful in small matters will also be faithful in bigger ones. Doing something like the March for Life is a way to begin to take steps forward in the pro-life cause.

So too, growing in virtue begins one step at a time, and standing up for and promoting a good cause allows us to grow in the virtues of courage and fortitude.

Finally I’d say that Jesus’ ministry began with Him and a group of 12 others who walked about from town to town spreading a message and promoting a cause. Each of them played a role in the Church being established and becoming what it is today.

I think we’d agree that the Church has grown bigger just like the march grows each year (at least when there’s not a major blizzard that gets in the way!).

So I encourage you to ask your parents to let you go next year so that you can get practice standing up for a good cause, so that you can inspire others, and so that your own heart can be bolstered and that you can grow in the virtues that will allow you to be the kind of person that your parents want you to be!

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